

1048

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. 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 any 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 Summerton High School
other names/site number Summerton Middle School

2. Location

street & number South Church Street not for publication _____
city or town Summerton vicinity _____
state South Carolina code SC county Clarendon code 027
zip code 29148

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant X nationally statewide locally.
(See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Mary Watson Edmonds 7/25/94
Signature of certifying official Date

Mary W. Edmonds, Deputy SHPO, S.C. Department of Archives & History, Columbia, S.C.
State or 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 commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the
National Register
See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the
National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain): _____

Chris [Signature] 8/24/94

Signature of Keeper Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)	Category of Property (Check only one box)	Number of Resources within Property		
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>2</u>	<u> </u>	buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
				Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A
 Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)
 Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)
 Cat: EDUCATION Sub: School

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)
 Cat: VACANT/NOT IN USE Sub:

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)	Materials (Enter categories from instructions)
<u>Late 19th and 20th Century</u>	foundation <u>Not Visible</u>
<u>Revivals</u>	roof <u>Asphalt</u>
	walls <u>Brick</u>
	other <u>Wood</u>

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

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 prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a 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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Education

Ethnic Heritage/Black

Significant Dates

1936

1949

1954

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Period of Significance

1949-1954

Architect/Builder

Wessinger, Jesse Walter

Stork, Robert Caughman

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 # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State agency
 - Federal agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acree of Property Approximately 1.8 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	17	560940	3718540	3	_____	_____
2	_____	_____	_____	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 J. Tracy Power, Ph.D., NR Specialist/Historian; Andrew W. Chandler, NR Specialist/Architectural Historian

organization S.C. Department of Archives & History date 20 July 1994

street & number P.O. Box 11669 telephone (803) 734-8610

city or town Columbia state SC zip code 29211

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 the SHPO or FPO.)

name Clarendon County School District I

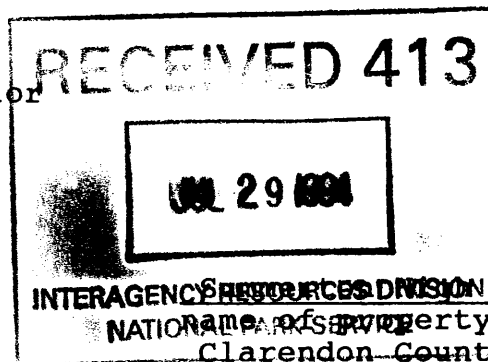
street & number P.O. Box 38 telephone _____

city or town Summerton state SC zip code 29148

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 the 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 Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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Section 7 Page 5

School
NAME OF PROPERTY
Clarendon County, South Carolina
county and State

The Summerton High School, located on South Church Street in Summerton, was constructed in 1936 according to designs by the prominent Columbia architectural firm of Wessinger and Stork.

This one-story hip roof brick building is rectangular in plan, and has a central pavilion featuring a pedimented gable, supported visually by four cast stone pilasters. Between the inner pilasters is a compass-headed portal which is itself accented with cast stone trim and keystone. Recessed within this opening is a double-leaf door with compass-headed, glazed fanlight transom. Flanking the entrance portal and framed by the inner and outermost pilasters are twelve-over-twelve double-hung sash windows with cast stone sills and jack arches with keystones. In the tympanum of the central pediment is a glazed oculus with molded cast stone surround. The seventeen-bay facade features two groups of six nine-over-nine double-hung sash windows with brick sills. At either extreme end of the principal (east) elevation is a six-over-six double-hung sash window, flanked by cast stone pilasters and featuring stuccoed underpanels with decorative iron grille overlays. The grille on the north end of the main elevation is missing. Two louvered semicircular roof vents articulate the slope of the roof on the east (front) elevation, while the north and south elevations each feature one of the same type, and the west (rear) elevation contains three peaked vents. A secondary entrance, with double-leaf door and compass-headed glazed fanlight transom similar to that at the front entrance, is located at the center of the north elevation. The building's interior features a T-shaped central corridor, flanking offices at the entrance, six classrooms, and restrooms at either end of the main block. All walls, original partitions, and ceilings are finished in plaster, and the original steam heat radiators remain throughout the building.

A one-story truncated hip roof brick gymnasium, accented with cast stone and brick corner and wall pilasters on each of its principal elevations, is attached to the south end of the main building by an enclosed brick connector. The connector features on its east (front) elevation a centrally located, double-leaf door with cast stone trimmed brick arch, and flanking six-over-six, double-hung sash windows. The gymnasium is rectangular in plan, and features a one-story flat-roofed frontal projection, containing a triple-arched loggia with two double-leaf door entrances. Flanking the loggia are a ticket office to the north and a storage room to the south, each of which contains a four-over-four, double-hung sash window with simple soldier course lintels on their east elevations and their respective north and south elevations as well. This building contains large tripartite windows with nine-over-nine double-hung sash flanked by three-over-three double-hung sash. An approximately forty-foot tall square stack, originally a part of the coal-fired boiler heating system and articulated with cast stone bands at and near its top, is located immediately to the north of the gymnasium and within the connector. On the gymnasium's interior can be seen the roof structure which consists of frame rafters and joists supported by a steel truss system.

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Summerton High School
name of property
Clarendon County, South Carolina
county and State

The Summerton High School is nationally significant for its close association with the landmark Supreme Court decision in Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas, a decision which struck down the segregation of public education in the United States in 1954. This decision also overturned the Court's earlier decision in Plessy v. Ferguson (1896), which had held that separate public facilities for white and blacks were constitutional as long as those separate facilities were equal, a doctrine which had since formed the cornerstone of legal segregation in the South and elsewhere. The Brown case, commonly referred to as Brown v. Board of Education, was actually five cases from South Carolina, Kansas, Virginia, the District of Columbia, and Delaware, cases that had been consolidated for joint argument before the Supreme Court.¹ The Summerton High School is the only school still standing of the five schools in Clarendon County School District # 22 that were associated with Briggs v. Elliott, the South Carolina case which helped form the basis for Brown v. Board of Education.

Briggs v. Elliott, the first of the five cases included in the Brown case, concerned the disparate quality of education provided by five schools in Clarendon County School District # 22. There were two white schools--Summerton High School and Summerton Elementary School--and three black schools--Scotts Branch High School, Liberty Hill Elementary School, and Rambay Elementary School--in the district. The state of public education in Clarendon County as a whole, with sixty-one black schools serving 6500 students, and twelve white schools serving 2300 students during the 1949-1950 school year, demonstrated the fallacy of the "separate but equal" doctrine in public education, as the county spent \$43 per black child and \$179 per white child in 1950. Though Reverend J.A. DeLaine, a teacher at Scotts Branch High School, had requested as early as 1947 that the Clarendon County school board provide school buses for black students, Superintendent L.B. McCord had refused. When a test case, Pearson v. County Board of Education, was heard in a Federal district court in Florence in 1948 it was dismissed on a technicality. DeLaine and others then approached the South Carolina and national leaders of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and proposed a test case seeking equality of educational opportunity in Clarendon County instead of simply seeking additional transportation.

¹The definitive study of Brown v. the Board of Education is Richard Kluger, Simple Justice: The History of Brown v. Board of Education and Black America's Struggle for Equality (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976); for a useful brief assessment, see Alfred H. Kelly, "The School Desegregation Case," in John A. Garraty, ed., Quarrels That Have Shaped the Constitution, rev. ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1987). For a useful introduction to the background of Briggs v. Elliott, the Clarendon County case which was the first of the five cases consolidated to form Brown v. the Board of Education and which concerned Summerton High School, see Benjamin F. Hornsby, Jr., Stepping Stone to the Supreme Court: Clarendon County, South Carolina, Topics in African American History 1 (Columbia: South Carolina Historical Society, 1988).

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Summerton High School
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county and State

Over one hundred petitioners acting on behalf of the black students in the county then presented a petition to Clarendon County School District # 22 in November 1949. Their petition detailed the obvious differences in expenditures, buildings, and services available for white and black students, and observed that Summerton High School and Summerton Elementary School were "maintained for the sole use, comfort, and convenience of the white children of said district . . . modern, safe, sanitary, well equipped, lighted and healthy . . . uncrowded, and maintained in first class condition." Scotts Branch High School, Liberty Hill Elementary School, and Rambay Elementary School, on the other hand, were described as "the only three schools to which Negro pupils are permitted to attend," "inadequate . . . unhealthy . . . old and overcrowded and in a dilapidated condition." The petitioners further argued that "the Negro children of public school age in School District #22 and in Clarendon County are being discriminated against solely because of their race and color in violation of their rights to equal protection of the laws provided by the 14th amendment to the Constitution of the United States," and warned that court action would result if their petition were ignored.²

On May 17th, 1950, after the county school board did nothing, the Clarendon County branch of the NAACP filed Briggs v. Elliott in Federal district court in Charleston. The plaintiff whose name led the list was Harry Briggs, a service station attendant in Summerton with school-age children, and the defendant was R.W. Elliott, the chairman of the board for Clarendon County School District # 22. The trustees for the district replied to the suit in June, arguing that the public school facilities and services were "separate but equal" and asking the court to dismiss the complaint.

Thurgood Marshall and other lawyers retained by the NAACP changed their tactics at this point. Instead of demanding that Clarendon County take steps to ensure that the separate white and black schools were actually equal, they decided to use Briggs v. Elliott as a test case to strike down segregation in all public schools in South Carolina, on the basis that "separate" was fundamentally not "equal". The case was argued in May 1951 before the Federal district court in Charleston, with Judges John J. Parker, J. Waties Waring, and George Bell Timmerman presiding. Marshall and Robert Carter represented the plaintiffs, while Charleston attorney Robert M. Figg, Jr., represented the defendants. Figg, surprising Marshall and Carter, focused on the issue of equality rather than the issue of segregation, admitting that Clarendon County schools were not equal and promising that the county would take steps in the future to address past inequalities. The court ruled against the petitioners' pleas to

²Petition of Harry Briggs, et al., to the Board of Trustees for School District No. 22, 11 November 1949, Records of Clarendon County, Board of Education, Jeanes Teachers' Records, Negro Rural School Fund, Inc., 1949-1950, South Carolina Department of Archives

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desegregate the schools, but directed the defendants to ensure that equal educational facilities and opportunities for black students were established, and requested a progress report in six months. Waring, for his part, wrote a lengthy dissent, arguing that the simple fact of segregation was the key issue instead of the equality of separate schools, and claiming that "segregation in education can never produce equality and . . . is an evil that must be eradicated. . . the system of segregation in South Carolina must go and must go now. Segregation is per se inequality."³

The NAACP's lawyers appealed the district court's decision to the United States Supreme Court in July 1951, and before they heard from their appeal, Clarendon County school officials reported to the district court in December. The officials explained that they were planning to build three new black schools--one high school and two elementary schools--and that they had already taken steps to make teacher salaries and expenditures for books and equipment equal to those for white schools, as well as providing buses for black students. After the Supreme Court returned the case to the Federal district court for a second hearing, the district court ruled in January 1952 that equality and not segregation was the issue. The court's decision observed that the county was taking steps to ensure equality, claiming, "the educational facilities and opportunities afforded Negroes within the district will, by the beginning of next school year . . . be made equal to those afforded white persons."⁴

On May 10th, 1952, when Thurgood Marshall and Robert Carter appealed the Federal district court's latest ruling to the Supreme Court, they dropped the "equality" portion of the original argument in Briggs v. Elliott in favor of a vigorous argument that segregation in and of itself violated the Fourteenth Amendment's guarantee to "equal protection under the laws." This appeal included evidence from experts who had testified at the first trial before the district court to the effect that segregation on the basis of race and color was harmful to black children. Among those experts was black psychologist Kenneth Clark, whose tests with black children--some of them school children in Clarendon County--had demonstrated that those children often felt an inferiority which was caused, at least in part, by racial segregation in education.

There were four similar cases joined with Briggs v. Elliott on appeal to the United States Supreme Court; they were, in order of their addition to the Supreme Court's docket, Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, which would lend its name to the five school desegregation cases; Davis v. County

³Quoted in Kluger, p. 366.

⁴Quoted in Kluger, p. 534.

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School Board of Prince Edward County, from Virginia; Bolling v. Sharpe, from the District of Columbia; and Belton v. Gebhart, from Delaware.

The Supreme Court convened to hear arguments in these five cases on December 9th, 1952, with Thurgood Marshall representing the plaintiffs in Briggs v. Elliott. Marshall argued that school segregation, in spite of the Federal district court's ruling, was a matter of policy for each state to decide on its own and that segregation in public education violated the Fourteenth Amendment. "The only thing we ask," Marshall said, "is that the state-imposed racial segregation be taken off, and to leave the county school board, the county people, the district people, to work out their own solution of the problem to assign children on any reasonable basis they want to assign them on."⁵ John W. Davis, representing the state of South Carolina, argued in its defense that the state had complied with the ruling of the district court to equalize the schools, that the Fourteenth Amendment did not apply to a state's decision about its public schools, and that the social science evidence of Clark and others on the effects of segregation on black children was not relevant to a question of constitutional rights. He also argued that the Court's decision in Plessy v. Ferguson had not been--and should not be--overturned, and that the doctrine of "separate but equal" should be allowed to stand. Marshall's eloquent rebuttal charged that Davis had missed the main point of the case, that is, that "There is nothing involved in this case other than race and color, and I do not need to go to the background of the statutes or anything else. I just read the statutes, and they say 'white' and 'colored.'"⁶

All the arguments by attorneys for the plaintiffs and the defendants were completed by December 11th, after only three days before the Court. The Supreme Court justices, troubled by all the implications of the cases--perhaps most of all by the prospect of overturning a decision as firmly established as Plessy v. Ferguson--were divided on the proper decision, and deliberated for nearly six months. In June 1953 the Court, instead of issuing a ruling, placed the five cases under the heading of Brown v. Board of Education on its docket for the coming fall, instructing the attorneys for both sides to address the question of whether the framers of the Fourteenth Amendment intended it to apply to segregation in public schools, and if so, then to address the way in which the Court might issue a decree ending school segregation.

Though the NAACP and the plaintiffs in the five cases had not yet won the Supreme Court over to their position, the very fact that the Court was willing to address the issue of what if segregation was ruled to violate

⁵Quoted in Kluger, pp. 571-72.

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the Fourteenth Amendment and what to do next was a significant step in the right direction. When the Court convened on December 7th to hear the rearguments, it had a new Chief Justice, for Chief Justice Fred Vinson had died suddenly in September, and President Dwight D. Eisenhower nominated Earl Warren, a Federal judge from California, to replace Vinson. The arguments lasted for three days, and Reverend J.A. DeLaine from Clarendon County was there to hear them. DeLaine said to a reporter, "There were times when I thought I would go out of my mind because of this cause," but added, "if I had to do it again, I would. I feel that it was worth it. I have a feeling that the Supreme Court is going to end segregation."⁷ John W. Davis, speaking for the state of South Carolina in Briggs v. Elliott, argued that "Your honors do not sit, and cannot sit, as a glorified board of education for the state of South Carolina or any other state. . . . Here is equal education, not promised, not prophesied, but present. Shall it be thrown away on some fancied question of racial prestige?"⁸ He was answered the next day by Thurgood Marshall, who said, referring to the question about "racial prestige," "Exactly correct. Ever since the Emancipation Proclamation, the Negro has been trying to get . . . the same status as anybody else regardless of race."⁹ Marshall's argument seemed to strike home with Chief Justice Warren, who commented in a conference with the other Justices a few days later that the Court could no longer uphold those laws--or Plessy v. Ferguson--because the entire doctrine of "separate but equal" was based on the supposed inferiority of the Negro race.

The United States Supreme Court announced its long-awaited ruling on May 17th, 1954, in the most significant decision of the twentieth century and arguably the most significant decision in all of American constitutional history. Warren, in his first major decision as Chief Justice, read the Court's opinion in Brown v. Board of Education, outlining the way in which the five cases had reached the Court, then saying, "In approaching this problem, we cannot turn the clock back to 1868 when the [Fourteenth] Amendment was adopted, or even to 1896 when Plessy V. Ferguson was written. We must consider public education in the light of its full development and its present place in American life throughout the Nation. . . . In these days, it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education." Warren then asked the question, "Does segregation of children in public schools solely on the basis of race, even though the physical facilities and other tangible factors may be equal, deprive the children of the minority group of equal educational opportunities?" He replied, speaking for all nine

⁷Afro-American (Baltimore), 12 December 1953, quoted in Kluger, p. 667.

⁸Quoted in Kluger, p. 672.

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Justices in a unanimous decision, "We believe that it does." The Court then dismissed Plessy v. Ferguson as based on outdated and simply wrong psychological assumptions about the supposed inferiority of blacks, then offered its opinion:

We conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of "separate but equal" has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal.¹⁰

As Richard Kluger says so eloquently in his monumental study Simple Justice, the decision in Brown v. Board of Education meant that

In the United States, schoolchildren could no longer be segregated by race. The law of the land no longer recognized a separate equality. No Americans were more equal than any other Americans. Jim Crow was on the way to the burial ground.¹¹

Summerton High School is significant as the only extant school of the five schools named in the original 1949 petition which became the basis for Briggs v. Elliott, which was in turn the first of the five cases which were consolidated to become Brown v. the Board of Education. Its close association with Briggs v. Elliott, as one of the two white schools that were targeted by those who sought to end legal segregation in Clarendon County schools, gives the school significance not only in Clarendon County and the state of South Carolina but also on a national scale as well. Though the petitions, court arguments, appeals, and eventual Supreme Court decision in Briggs v. Elliott and Brown v. Board of Education took place less than fifty years ago, the dismantling of segregation in public education is an event of such exceptional significance that the Summerton High School is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

¹⁰Quoted in Kluger, Appendix, pp. 781-82.

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Summerton High School
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Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the nominated property is shown as the pencil line on the accompanying Clarendon County Tax Map 78-11, Parcel 01-004, drawn at a scale of 1" = 100'.

Verbal Boundary Justification

The nominated property is restricted to the historic school building and gymnasium and their immediate settings.

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Section PHOTOGRAPHS Page 14

Summerton High School
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The following information is the same for each of the photographs:

Name of Property: Summerton High School
Location: Summerton, Clarendon County, South Carolina
Name of Photographer: J. Tracy Power
S.C. Department of Archives & History
Date of Photographs: 7 July 1994
Location of Negatives: S.C. Department of Archives & History,
Columbia, S.C.

1. Gymnasium (left) and Main Building (right); Facade left oblique
2. Main Building; Facade left oblique
3. Gymnasium; Facade
4. Main Building; Facade detail
5. Main Building; Facade entrance detail
6. Main Building; Facade right oblique
7. Main Building; Interior view of hallway, looking south
8. Main Building; Interior view of classroom, looking southwest