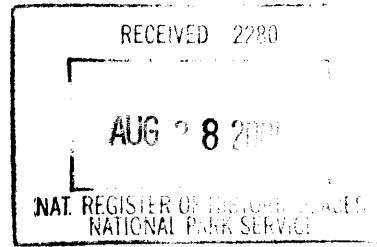


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

1098



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 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: Mt. Zion Rosenwald School
Other names/site number Mt. Zion - Rosenwald Colored School

2. Location

Street & number: 5040 Liberty Chapel Road not for publication
City or town: Florence vicinity
State South Carolina Code: SC County: Florence Code: 041 Zip code: 29501

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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.)

Mary W. Edmonds 8/22/01
Signature of certifying official Date

Mary W. Edmonds, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, S.C. Dept. of Archives and 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):

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

**Entered in the
National Register**

10/12/01

Mt. Zion Rosenwald School
Name of Property

Florence County, South Carolina
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)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

African - American Primary and Secondary
Public School Buildings in SC, c. 1895-1954

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the
National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Category: Education

Subcategory: School

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Category: Vacant/Not in Use

Subcategory:

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Other: Standardized Non-Residential

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation: Brick

Walls: Weatherboard

Roof: Metal

Other:

Narrative Description

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

Mt. Zion Rosenwald School
Name of Property

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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.)

- 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)

Architecture
Education
Ethnic Heritage/Black

Period of Significance

1925 - 1952

Significant Dates

1952

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

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: S.C. Dept. of Archives & History

Mt. Zion Rosenwald School
Name of Property

Florence County, South Carolina
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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: 4 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

See continuation sheet.

Zone – Easting - Northing
1 17 625085 3782740
2 17 625085 3782605

Zone – Easting - Northing
3 17 625031 3782645

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 Lisa B. Randle

Organization

Date May 1, 2001

Street & number 1001 True Street, #112

Telephone (803) 734-8448 (work)

City or town: Columbia State: South Carolina

Zip code 29209

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 Mt. Zion United Methodist Church

Street & number PO Box 1350

Telephone (843) 667-0050

City or town: Florence

State: South Carolina

Zip code: 29501-

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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Mt. Zion Rosenwald School
Name of Property
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Mt. Zion Rosenwald School is located in Florence County, South Carolina, at 5040 Liberty Chapel Road, across from Mt. Zion United Methodist Church, which owns the school. It sits on a four-acre parcel of land located in the Mars Bluff community, approximately one mile south of Francis Marion University campus.

The school is a one-and-a-half story frame structure with exterior weatherboard siding. The building's foundation is brick and the current roofing material is sheet metal. The material used on the original roof is not known. The school is rectangular and is quite simple in terms of construction. The floor plan is a version of a two-classroom rural school typical of the two-teacher community school, floor plan No. 20-A recommended in Bulletin No. 3 issued by the Julius Rosenwald Fund.³⁰

According to available South Carolina Department of Education records and Rosenwald Foundation records, the Mt. Zion Rosenwald School was constructed in 1925. The facility served the black community of Mars Bluff from 1925 to the early 1950s when the school was closed in order to consolidate the student population into the public education system.³¹

The school is situated on an open lot containing no other structures. According to former students, the entire school property was cleared for outdoor activities such as baseball; today, however (2001), a portion to the north and east of the building on the original property is wooded.

The only identifiable exterior structural alteration of the Mt. Zion Rosenwald School is the replacement of the original entrance porch. According to members of the local restoration committee, the original steps and porch to the main entrance were replaced during an initial restoration effort during the early 1980s.

Another porch located at the rear of the building on the eastern elevation is original, but is clearly in need of immediate repair. While there are several additional outside entrances to the school, none of their original porches is extant. There are no known photographs that show the original exteriors of the Mt. Zion Rosenwald School. Likewise, the local committee was unable to provide any early interior views showing the school in operation.

The building's only distinguishing exterior feature is a pair of square gable vents located on the south and north ends of the school. Mt. Zion Rosenwald School is situated on the property with an orientation to allow for the

³⁰ Boykin & Munnerlyn, Architects, architectural rendering; *Community School Plans, Bulletin No. 3* (Nashville, TN: The Julius Rosenwald Fund, 1924).

³¹ Mt. Zion Rosenwald School Community Committee, compiled. *Mt. Zion Rosenwald School, National Register Commemorative Booklet, 1925-2000* (private printing, May 1999) pp. 5 - 6.

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best possible natural light and ventilation. Currently the remaining original window sashes are covered from the exterior by sheet metal for protection against vandalism. An inspection of the building's interior reveals that some of the original windows are intact and removed for preservation purposes. Windows left in place throughout the building need extensive restoration. The remnants of the two exterior furnace chimneys are visible from each side of the building and are in need of restoration work.

Room #1 – This room is located immediately inside the entrance porch and consists of a long narrow hall. Located on the eastern elevation of the school, the space had a dual purpose as the principal's office and a small classroom for fifth grade students. The remnants of a dividing partition or curtain rod are evident upon examining the room. The eastern exterior wall to the right of the entrance contains five windows. The interior wall to the left of the entrance has two separate doors leading into the first of the larger classrooms in the school. At the far end of the entrance hall/class space is another door leading to a rear exit. One of the original furnaces is located at the left rear of this room.³²

Room #2 – This room, located on the western elevation, has a separate outside entrance located in the center of the exterior wall. There is no remaining outside stoop to this entrance. This classroom, used by the third and fourth grades, is on the south end of the school and is adjacent to a combination storage/coat room, which has flanking doors entering the room. The western exterior wall contains a grouping of five nine-over-six windows next to the previously mentioned entrance. Between Rooms #2 and #3 is a dividing wall that once held a large blackboard for Room #2. When the wall size divider was removed a larger space was created and the larger space utilized for special events in the community or school programs. The principal furnace for heating the two opposing classrooms is located next to the center entrance on the western exterior wall.³³

Room #3 – This room, located on the northern end of the school, is essentially the same size as Room #2 with a few minor differences. Room #3, used to instruct first and second grades, has a separate entrance/exit on the eastern wall. Located directly behind the exit hallway is a smaller storage and coatroom containing a single window. Still in place is the blackboard for Room #3 attached to the northern interior wall.

³² Boykin & Munnerlyn.

³³ Ibid.

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Each of the building's interior doorways has transoms to increase the amount of available light and air circulation between the various rooms throughout the school. Moldings throughout the building are plain with no decorative accents. The interior walls are narrow tongue and groove wood sheathing as are the ceilings throughout the school. Much of the original flooring is evident throughout the building.³⁴

³⁴ Remarks from committee members and corresponding information from undated newspaper article indicated some of the original flooring had rotted during the decades following closure of Mt. Zion Rosenwald School and the initial repair efforts during the early 1980s.

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Mt. Zion Rosenwald School
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Mt. Zion Rosenwald School, built in 1925 as a rural black school, is significant as a property associated with:

- The general development of South Carolina public education for blacks from ca. 1895 to 1954;
- One of America's largest non-residential experiments in standardized architecture, approved by state departments of education in the early- to mid-twentieth century, intended to provide "separate but equal" facilities for white and black school children; and
- The Rosenwald Schools, as a reminder of Julius Rosenwald Fund's commitment to the improvement of black education and racial cooperation in the South in the early twentieth century.

Rosenwald Schools are landmarks in black education from the era before federal support of local education. The schools were built with matching funds provided by the Julius Rosenwald Foundation, created by the Chicago entrepreneur who directed the booming growth of Sears, Roebuck and Company. From 1917 to 1932, the building program of the Rosenwald Foundation helped construct over 5300 black school buildings across the South. The foundation not only provided money and architectural assistance to improve school facilities, but also promoted white/black cooperation in the era of Jim Crow. To receive Rosenwald money, the local black community and the local white community both had to contribute funds. Most of the schools were phased out in the 1940s and 1950s as improved roads and the introduction of school buses allowed consolidation of students into more efficient and larger facilities.¹

Black Education before the Rosenwald Fund

Education for black children in the Mars Bluff community of present day Florence County can be traced to the close of the American Civil War. Through the efforts of the Freedmen's Bureau, established by an act of Congress in 1865, the black population of each Southern state was to receive some degree of formal schooling.

The Freedmen's Bureau mandated that each Southern state appoint a superintendent of public schools. South Carolina had never established a public education system during the colonial or antebellum era, and this mandate marked a fundamental change in education across the state. J.K. Jilison, a white Republican and native of Massachusetts, was appointed Superintendent of Education of South Carolina in 1868. The newly adopted state constitution of 1868 mandated the creation of a statewide system of public schools open to both races, however such a system largely existed on paper due to a number of factors. The principal difficulties included an overall lack of funds, an insufficient number of available teachers, the continuing evolution of race relations and the political climate of Reconstruction as a whole.

¹ Embree, Edwin R. and Julia Waxman. *Investment in People: The Story of the Julius Rosenwald Fund* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1949) p. 51.

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State government officials actually had limited control over the daily operation of local schools, and the limitations of such involvement had a clear impact upon black education in South Carolina throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century. While the state subsequently passed a school act in 1870 establishing the methods of educational financing, there is scant written documentation from the period pertaining to local black education during Reconstruction.²

Philanthropic Response for “Jim Crow” and Disenfranchisement

After 1900 white philanthropy for black education sharply increased. A few philanthropic agencies had contributed to black education for many years. The George Peabody Fund, organized by the coal and railroad millionaire in 1867, set the pattern. It focused on training black teachers, and provided money for colleges and universities in the South. The John F. Slater Fund, created by a Connecticut textile tycoon in 1882, funded teacher training, mainly at private colleges.³

After 1900 efforts shifted from education based primarily on vocational training toward the improvement of virtually all aspects of black schooling. The Rockefeller-funded General Education Board, established in 1902, gave Southern public schools grants for all types of projects “without distinction of sex, race, or creed.” Among its programs was matching funds for State Agents for Negro Rural Schools, which ensured that each state education department would have full-time specialist directing efforts. The Anna T. Jeanes Fund, created by a Pennsylvania Quaker woman in 1908, provided “Jeanes Supervisors” for hundreds of black school districts. These specially trained teachers guided healthcare, childrearing, and home economics. The John F. Slater Fund, 1913, undertook research studies which guided other philanthropists. All these agencies shared the belief that philanthropic support of black education would promote equality. Supplementary funding would encourage states and localities to increase money spent on schools. Eventually the differences between white and black programs would disappear, and the private agencies would withdraw. As blacks achieved parity in education, the philanthropists hoped, white racism would end and whites would accept blacks as equals. The capstone of this effort was the Julius Rosenwald Fund, created in 1917.⁴

² Katherine Richardson, National Register of Historic Places, Multiple Property Listing, “African-American Primary and Secondary Public School Buildings in South Carolina, c. 1895-1954” (State Historic Preservation Office: South Carolina Department of Archives & History, June 1995) p. 2.

³ N.C. Newbold, *Common Schools for Negroes in the South*, pp. 3-5; Embree and Waxman, *Investment in the People*, pp. 56-57; M.R. Werner, *Julius Rosenwald: The Life of a Practical Humanitarian* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1939) pp. 112-114.

⁴ Ibid.

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“Mr. Sears-Roebuck” Promotes Cooperation

Julius Rosenwald was born August 12, 1862, in Springfield, Illinois, the son of a German Jewish immigrant who had worked his way from peddler to partner in a clothing concern. Young Julius dropped out of high school at age 17 to be an apprentice in his uncle’s clothing firm. In five years, he had his own business. By 1897, he had amassed enough capital that Richard Sears approached him about investing in the new, fast-growing mail order firm of Sears, Roebuck and Company. In his first three years, Sears’ sales jumped from \$1.4 million to nearly \$11 million. In 1909, Rosenwald became president of Sears Roebuck. When he retired in 1924 yearly sales stood at \$200 million. Along the way he acquired a reputation as an incisive and generous industrial leader, who initiated one of America’s first large profit-sharing plans at Sears in 1916.⁵

He also became known as one of America’s leading philanthropists. Rosenwald took interest in a wide range of causes, including hospitals and health care, colleges and museums, and Jewish charities. However, his chief concern was black equality in the South, particularly in education. Rosenwald’s interest was sparked by fellow philanthropists Paul J. Sachs of the Goldman Sachs investment house and William H. Baldwin of the Southern Railway and by books, especially Booker T. Washington’s *Up from Slavery*. After providing matching grants for a handful of black YMCAs, Rosenwald met the great black educator in 1911 and soon became a trustee of Washington’s Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. It was Washington who suggested that Rosenwald’s help was needed not just with higher education, but with elementary schools throughout the South. Rosenwald’s first effort was a one-room school near Tuskegee in 1913. By the time of Washington’s death in 1915, Rosenwald had already personally given matching funds for eighty black schools in a three-state area.⁶

Two years later Rosenwald set up his foundation to continue and expand the school building program. The late nineteenth and early twentieth century marked the beginning of America’s great foundations. Skeptics claimed that interest in charity rose in proportion to increases in inheritance taxes and the imposition of a federal income tax in the 1910s and point out that the social problems had sometimes been aggravated by the very methods by which the industrialists had piled up their wealth. The Julius Rosenwald Fund was incorporated on October 30, 1917, to carry out all of its founder’s charitable activities. To the consternation of Fund officials, Rosenwald in fact did not entirely stop giving away money from his private fortune. Generally, data on amounts granted and school built seem to refer to activities of the Rosenwald Fund, and do not include Julius Rosenwald’s prior or continuing philanthropies. Fund officials recognized that the problems of black schooling in the South were very broad. Education was so poor that it was hardly worth the name. In all of the South there was not a single standard eighth-grade rural black public school, no black public high school approved for two years of high school work. The schools, such as they were, were open for an average of four months a year, were presided over by teacher whose average training was that of an eighth grade student and whose annual salary in many states was less than \$150.⁷

⁵ Werner, *Julius Rosenwald*, pp. 107-108.

⁶ Embree and Waxman, *Investment in the People*, p. 42; Werner, *Julius Rosenwald*, pp. 107-108.

⁷ Embree and Waxman, *Investment in the People*, pp. 28, 42.

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Julius Rosenwald directed the Fund to attack the most visible problem, poor elementary school buildings. For its initial decade, rural school construction was the Rosenwald Fund's major focus, accounting for all but \$600,000 of the \$4 million spent. Rosenwald sought to use his gifts to break down the barriers between whites and blacks which had led to inequality.⁸

Beginning in 1928, the priorities of the Rosenwald Foundation changed. Julius Rosenwald was nearing the end of his life. He hired Edward Embree from the Rockefeller Foundation to take over administration of the Fund. Under Embree, the Fund moved toward investigation and amelioration of a wide array of root problems underlying black inequality:

Within a year the Fund's program . . . was enlarged to include . . . high schools and colleges, fellowships to enable Negroes of unusual promise to advance their careers, help to Negro hospitals and health agencies, the development of county library services in the southern states, and activities looking toward the distribution of medical services to persons of moderate means.⁹

The Rosenwald library program provided money for books for both blacks and whites, on the condition that "equal service was to be given to all people of the county, urban and rural, white and Negro, and that the service be adapted to the needs of the group." Though the Rosenwald Fund continued its multitudinous activities until 1948, the school building program ended with Julius Rosenwald's death in 1932. While the decision was made well before Black Friday, the sharp decline of the Fund's endowment with the 1929 stock market crash hastened Embree's movement away from constructing funding. "Believing that perpetual endowments could become a hindrance to progress of the present generations," Rosenwald had set a twenty-five year limit on the activities of the Fund. Samuel Leonard Smith kept the Nashville office open for a short while longer, but it closed in 1937.¹⁰

Rosenwald Day, most often held in March, was an annual school festival in hundreds of communities throughout the rural South, an observance encouraged by Fund officials who recognized a need to regularly "re-arouse community interest in schools, encourage the cleaning and beautifying of the school building and grounds, and to raise money for needed repairs or additions to equipment. The Fund supplied the incidental expenses involved by the several state departments of education in issuing circulars and stirring up interest in the festivities."¹¹

⁸ Embree and Waxman, *Investment in the People*, p. 38.

⁹ Embree and Waxman, *Investment in the People*, p. 33.

¹⁰ Samuel Leonard Smith, *Community School Plans*, Rosenwald Fund Bulletin Number 3 (Nashville: Julius Rosenwald Fund, 1924) pp. 106-108; Eliza Atkins Gleason, *The Southern Negro and the Public Library: A Study of the Government and Administration of Public Library Service to Negroes in the South* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1941) pp. 20, 81-82; Embree and Waxman, *Investment in the People*, pp. 34-35; Jerry L Cross, "Julius Rosenwald: His Fund and His Schools, A Brief Historical Sketch of the Rosenwald Fund and Black Education in the South 1917 - 1948," unpublished paper, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1980.

¹¹ Embree and Waxman, *Investment in the People*, pp. 52-53.

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Community School Plans and The Interstate School Building Service

By 1920, the building program was so big that Rosenwald established a Southern office in Nashville, under the direction of S.L. Smith, an experienced administrator previously with the Tennessee state education department. One of Smith's first actions at the Nashville office was to create an architectural department to research and draw school designs. In 1919, Sears had established its own in-house Architectural Division in Chicago.

The schoolhouse office in Nashville was almost certainly a separate entity and it never provided building materials along with its plans, but the concept may well be traced to Julius Rosenwald's commercial involvement in residential architecture. Smith initially issued school designs one at time in four-page pamphlets, "made available upon request to white and Negro schools alike."¹²

In 1924, the pamphlets were reissued in a booklet entitled *Community School Plans*. It included designs for seventeen schools ranging in size from one-teacher to seven-teachers. For each design, the book showed a floor plan and an artist's rendering of the exterior. There were also two plans for teacher's houses, plus a "Sanitary Privy for Community School." The booklet included sample contractor's specifications and advice on site location and size, painting, and landscaping. Once a community chose a design, detailed blueprints and specifications could be obtained from the state education office. Smith suggested that school be erected "as near the center of population as possible," preferably near a public road. The site should be at least two acres, with the school located near one corner, to "give ample space for the schoolhouse, two sanitary privies, a teacher's home, playgrounds for the boys and girls, a plot for agricultural demonstrations, and proper landscaping."¹³

A one-teacher community school would accommodate not more than 45 students, a two-teacher school not more than 90 students, and a three-teacher school not more than 115 to 125. Exteriors were usually weatherboard nailed over a sub-wall of diagonal sheathing. Three exterior color schemes were suggested: "white wood preservative stain, a nut brown trimmed in white or cream would be satisfactory." Brick chimneys carried the smoke from the coal or wood stoves that stood in each classroom. Interior featured a sub-floor topped by oiled wooden flooring, wooden tongue-and-groove wainscoting, and plaster walls. Each room had a blackboard set at a scientifically determined height. The schools included a small porch and a pair of cloakrooms. The Rosenwald designs represented the state-of-the-art in American school architecture. The schools were one-story buildings, a characteristic which did not become prevalent in American schools until the 1950s. Since there was seldom electricity available, the overriding design concern was the maximization of natural light. The architects used groupings of tall double hung sky windows oriented to catch only east-west light.

¹² Embree and Waxman, *Investment in the People*, pp. 38, 52; Smith, *Community School Plans*.

¹³ Smith, *Community School Plans*, pp. 1-2, 24-32

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An injunction in capital letters at the beginning of *Community School Plans* emphasized:

THE BUILDING SHOULD ALWAYS BE SET WITH POINTS OF THE COMPASS, AND THE PLAN SO DESIGNED THAT EVERY CLASSROOM WILL RECEIVE EAST OR WEST LIGHT. A PLAN DRAWN TO FACE EAST OR WEST COULD NOT PROPERLY BE USED TO FACE NORTH OR SOUTH, OR VICE VERSA.

Color schemes, seat arrangements, and even window arrangements were specified to make the fullest use of sunlight. Tan window shades should be used rather than the traditional green, preferably with two shades per window for more accurate regulation of light. Floor plans showed seating always arranged so that the windows were at the children's left side; that way the students' writing arms would not cast shadows on their desktops. The Rosenwald Fund required that interiors not be left unpainted. This was for sanitary, aesthetic, and maintenance reasons, but mainly because, "it will materially increase the amount of light in the classroom." The Fund permitted only two interior paint schemes:

COLOR SCHEME NO. 1 – Cream ceiling, buff walls and walnut wainscoting or dado – is very desirable for the interior of a classroom, as it is pleasing to the eye and reflects an abundance of light.

COLOR SCHEME NO. 2 – Ivory cream ceiling, light gray walls and walnut stain wainscoting or dado – if paint is properly mixed and applied is generally satisfactory.

Contractors were to use non-gloss paint and "not to mix lamp black with white paint in order to make for interior walls, as such a mixture will reflect very little light." Smith warned, "the Fund will not aid in the construction of any building improperly lighted and painted."

An important provision was an "Industrial Room" in every design, something that flowed from Booker T. Washington's writings. The rural schools "were not only formal and theoretical 'book larnin'" but also practical work and to have at least one room for shop and home arts and two acres of land available for farm gardens. The girls were expected to learn sewing and cooking and the boys farming and simple work with tools. The plans included an auditorium or meeting room. Rosenwald envisioned his schools as community centers for adults as well as children. Most Rosenwald buildings were middle-sized, designed for two to four teachers, and most incorporated the movable partition scheme, with either commercially available folding doors or sliding blackboard panels.¹⁴

¹⁴ Samuel R. Spencer, Jr. *Booker T. Washington and the Negro's Place in American Life* (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1955) pp. 51-53; Embree and Waxman, *Investment in the People*, p. 59.

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The Rosenwald Fund set maximum amounts it would contribute to any building, determined according to number of classrooms, rather than mandating any particular proportion between black and white or public and private funding. Where black participation in any organized activity was discouraged, churches provided the single strong institutional framework for black endeavor. Finding cash-money in rural areas was a challenge in that era, and it was especially difficult for black sharecroppers. These families received the necessities of life from their landlords, and paid for them at harvest with a share of the crop. Often no cash ever changed hands. Money for the Rosenwald schoolhouses was gathered a penny and a nickel at a time.¹⁵

The architectural office became a division of Peabody College in Nashville, and the General Education Board and Rosenwald supported it long after the building program ended. Peabody later merged with Vanderbilt University, and the Division of Surveys is now the Educational Services Department. Some early blueprints and records are said to remain in the Department offices; others were transferred to the archives of nearby Fisk University, along with the papers of S.L. Smith. Known as the Interstate School Building Service, it continued as late as 1950 to “supply plans and specifications for a variety of school buildings, together with information on such related problems as landscaping, rehabilitation of schools, playgrounds, etc.” The Interstate School Building Service evolved into the still-active Interstate Building Conference, an annual summer gathering in Nashville of school facilities planners from across the United States.¹⁶

In 1954, the United States Supreme Court ruled that the nation’s black and white students should be desegregated as elsewhere in the South, segregation in public and private institutions persisted.¹⁷

The Role of South Carolina Department of Education in Early Black Education

The attitude toward black education in South Carolina at the start of the twentieth century had been set by the adoption of the 1895 state constitution, as well as the consequences of the “separate but equal” ruling by the United States Supreme Court in *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896.¹⁸

The school planning office was one important early concept of the Rosenwald Fund. Another was that Fund activities be channeled through the state education departments of the Southern states. Rosenwald officials hoped to bring a lasting commitment to black education at the state level by creating a network of knowledgeable, dedicated administrators. In the early 1910s, the General Education Board had provided money to help states hire administrators to deal specifically with rural schools. Julius Rosenwald offered to pay one-half the salary of a trained Negro assistant in each southern state, on condition that the state provide at least half the salary and expenses. The assistants worked directly under the state agents in arousing interest among black schools and communities, helping them to raise money to qualify for the building of Rosenwald schools,

¹⁵ Embree and Waxman, *Investment in the People*, pp. 41-42.

¹⁶ Embree and Waxman, *Investment in the People*, p. 52.

¹⁷ Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas, 17 May 1954.

¹⁸ State Historic Preservation Office. “Rosenwald Schools,” A Brief. (State Historic Preservation Office: South Carolina Department of Archives & History, n.d.) Introduction; Plessy v. Ferguson, 163 US Reports 537, 28 May 1895.

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a county training school, the employment of county Jeanes supervisors, and lengthening the school term, and whatever else the superintendent of the county might want him to do while visiting his county. The Negro Education Office in South Carolina had only two professional staff members and never hired any black administrators.¹⁹

Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the racially segregated school system of South Carolina was a detriment to the quality of education received by both races. Because each county government largely funded and operated their schools, the type of education and the success of students in a particular district varied widely, a result of the degree of available resources.²⁰

Perhaps the attitude of South Carolina's educational establishment early in the twentieth century can best be discerned in light of the idealized view given in *The Handbook of South Carolina*, published in 1907. The booklet speaks highly of the state's efforts to educate the black population following the Civil War. Those compiling the booklet chose to ignore the true state of black education in South Carolina based upon the following text:

It has ever been the policy of the people of South Carolina to treat the Negro right, and especially to give him the advantage of a good common school education. When they were emancipated, there was few of their own race able to instruct them. So when the public school law went into operation in 1868 many educated southern white men and women taught in the negro schools until there was a sufficient number of their own race prepared to do this work. There is a Negro school in every school district in this state, graded schools for negroes in every town where such schools exist for whites. The negro schools have their own trustees, and as far as the law will allow, govern their own schools . . . There are 2,350 negro public schools and 200 negro graded schools. The negro is receiving proper treatment. No people on the face of the earth would act toward him with as much consideration as a Southerner.²¹

While the South Carolina General Assembly, during Reconstruction and beyond, endorsed schools for blacks in theory, the amount of funds set aside for black education at the local level was customarily left up to the district Board of Trustees. The percentage allocated annually varied widely throughout South Carolina. County distribution of funds on the local level, as well as any instructional oversight, remained uneven. Perhaps the best comment regarding local circumstances in South Carolina was written by the state supervisor of elementary rural schools in a 1910 report:

¹⁹ Samuel Leonard Smith, *Builders of Goodwill: The Story of the State Agents of Negro Education in the South, 1910 to 1950* (Nashville: Tennessee Book Company, 1950) p. 177.

²⁰ State Historic Preservation Office. "Rosenwald Schools," A Brief. (State Historic Preservation Office: South Carolina Department of Archives & History, n.d.) p. 1, background.

²¹ Richardson, "African-American Primary and Secondary Public School Buildings," pp. 9-10.

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Frequently the county superintendent does not know where they [the Negro schools] are located and sometimes the district board cannot tell where the negro school is taught. It is customary for the board to allot a certain amount of money to the negroes and allow them to use it as they please. A teacher is employed and no further questions are asked, except concerning enrollment at the end of the session.²²

There is no question that the Julius Rosenwald Fund had a profoundly positive impact upon education in South Carolina, especially during the 1920s at the height of the program. The addition or replacement of educational facilities brought about a marked change in the amount of funding per student for black children in South Carolina. During 1917, the year the Rosenwald Fund was established, the yearly average instructional cost per student was \$2.86. Some ten years later the annual average had increased substantially for South Carolina to an average of \$11.06 per student. Likewise, the number of available black teachers increased dramatically to meet the changing needs inherent in the new facilities. Between 1917 and 1927 the total number of black teachers rose by well over one thousand, to a total exceeding 4,300 teachers as compared to less than 3,100 teachers in 1917.²³

Early African-American School in Mars Bluff Sponsored by Mt. Zion Methodist Church

Following the Civil War, many black educational efforts were initially undertaken through the auspices of various religious denominations. Churches established by blacks immediately after the close of the conflict served as community focal points and this was true for the Mars Bluff community. The earliest documented effort toward educating freedmen in the local community originated with the establishment of Mount Zion Methodist Church. The Third Session of the South Carolina Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in February 1868 organized the Mount Zion Methodist Church as part of the Mars Bluff charge in the South Carolina Conference. The church leadership assigned Reverend J.W. Johnson as the first official minister of the congregation. During this critical period of transition from slavery to independence the minister of black churches often served in the dual role of preacher and educator. Within two years Mt. Zion Methodist Church firmly established the congregation's commitment to local education by taking the step of purchasing property for the purpose of creating a school for area children. The trustees of Mt. Zion purchased one and three-fourths acres of land from R. D. Fladger for \$35.00 in a deed dated February 23, 1870. The document indicated the purchase was for the expressed purpose of building a school "to be used for the education of freedmen irrespective of race or color."²⁴

²² Richardson, "African-American Primary and Secondary Public School Buildings," p. 3.

²³ Richardson, "African-American Primary and Secondary Public School Buildings," pp. 12 - 13.

²⁴ Mt. Zion National Register Commemorative Booklet, p. 1.

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The property deed, recorded on March 3, 1870 in what was then still Marion County, included a plat labeled "Negro Schoolhouse" shows a drawing of a small one-story building. Below the plat the surveyor described the tract as "Dr. R.B. Fladger . . . unto the Reverend J. Dunlop, const, of Free School." Both items certainly indicated the purpose for the property, however whether or not actual construction of a separate school building ever occurred cannot be verified from existing records or oral histories.²⁵

Mt. Zion United Methodist Church presently occupies a portion of the property purchased in June 1875. According to the 128th anniversary history of the church the first mention of a school was a reference to a building identified by residents as a lodge. This particular building was located within view of the current church adjacent to a property feature designated as the "canal." Construction date of the lodge as a separate structure is not known. Although land had been purchased for the establishment of an area free school, there is no further mention during the late nineteenth century of any type of distinct educational facility in the Mars Bluff community.

In *History and Recollections About Schools in Mars Bluff*, author Amelia W. Vernon indicates that a two-story lodge was the first building used by blacks for conducting education in the rural community. One teacher taught all grades. The school opened when cotton picking was completed which could be as late as January. According to Vernon, the first floor was used as a local school with the blessing of those who oversaw the building. The most detailed physical description of the lodge was provided by Mrs. Mable Smalls Sellers,

The lodge was an old frame building . . . between Mt. Zion Church and the canal . . . They would let the downstairs and they would have the lodge meeting upstairs.²⁶

According the accounts of former students, the lodge building was destroyed by fire during the early 1920s. Students who had previously attended school at the lodge were sent to Union Grove Baptist Church.

Mt. Zion Rosenwald School

The construction of a Rosenwald School marked a major change in the educational opportunities for students in the Mars Bluff community. This school was one of fifty new schools funded through the State Department of Education between July 1, 1925 and June 30, 1926.

²⁵ Copy of the plat included with maps.

²⁶ Amelia Wallace Vernon, *History and Recollections about Schools at Mars Bluff* (private printing, August 1993) p. 2. Additional details from Mrs. Sellers.

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The Mars Bluff community did not differ from any other rural South Carolina black community interested in enhancing the educational opportunities for area children. When the lodge building was lost to fire during the early 1920s, the parents of students approached the local school trustees about finding the means to construct a new school. Mrs. Sellers indicated in her recollections, "After the school burned down, the parents went to the trustees to find out if they were going to build a school . . . We didn't have a school before then."

Between 1921 and 1925 the principal churches, Mt. Zion and Bowers Chapel, discussed the possibility of a cooperative effort toward building a new school. However, according to the recollections of Mr. Leon Coker, the two entities simply could not reach an agreement. According to Mrs. Sellers the community was offered the necessary acreage by Mr. Wallace, a school trustee, to later qualify for Rosenwald Fund assistance. Parents turned down an initial property offered by Mr. Wallace, but he then offered another proposal involving the present school property. "Mr. Wallace told them (parents) that if they bought two acres, he would give them two. Starting ten feet from the canal coming back this way, the four acres."²⁷

The first clear indication of construction of the Mt. Zion Rosenwald School was the financial records associated with the funding of the project. The Department of Education's Annual Report of The Julius Rosenwald Fund for the academic year of 1925/1926 showed check #1815 in the amount of \$2,900.00 was issued to underwrite the construction of three separate schools located in Darlington and Florence Counties. Mt. Zion Rosenwald School was listed second among the three facilities funded by this particular payment. The South Carolina Department of Education issued a separate payment of \$900.00 on check #141, dated December 10, 1925, toward the construction of the Mt. Zion Rosenwald School. Together these two payments document the time for construction of the school as a replacement for the earlier school facilities associated with the lodge. Construction of Mt. Zion Rosenwald School represented a major step toward improving the quality of education available in the Mars Bluff community. However, it is unclear how the level of local funding was allocated to the school immediately following completion of the new school.

The Mt. Zion Rosenwald School was typical in construction of a "two or three teacher" type school. The building, like many others, was essentially a rectangular frame building containing tall exterior windows to take advantage of the climate in heating and cooling the structure, as well as available light.²⁸

²⁷ Amelia Wallace Vernon, *African Americans at Mars Bluff, South Carolina* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1993) p. 95; Vernon, *History and Recollections*, pp. 5-7.

²⁸ Richardson, "African-American Primary and Secondary Public School Buildings," p. 19; State Historic Preservation Office. "Rosenwald Schools," p. 2.

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A number of students who completed their education at Mt. Zion Rosenwald School recounted their parents' concerted efforts during the period following the loss of the lodge to raise the necessary funds to construct and furnish the Mt. Zion Rosenwald School during 1925. Interestingly, none of the former students could recall any appropriation of county educational funds for the school held at the lodge.²⁹

Students and Teachers Remember the Rosenwald School

While much is known about the Rosenwald Fund from written records, the majority of information directly pertaining to the Mt. Zion Rosenwald School came from those persons associated with the school during the period of operation between 1925/1926 and the late 1950s. Unfortunately there is no clear record identifying who actually built the school. Mrs. Sellers (1908–1990) recalled that Reverend L.B. Thompson, a local minister, acted as the principal teacher when classes were moved from Union Grove Baptist Church to Mt. Zion. She further recalled that two older students, Rosena Williams and Mattie Mae Spencer assisted in instructing the younger students.³⁰

Mt. Zion Rosenwald School continued the practice of holding a four- to five-month school calendar, despite a requirement by the Rosenwald Fund mandating a minimum five-month school year. Mrs. Claudia Williams (1911–1985), former teacher of grades one through three, verified such an arrangement in discussing her career at Mt. Zion Rosenwald School:

Most of the time [sessions lasted] about three or four months, no longer, because they [the students] had to get out to go on the farms then. We would begin in the fall after they got through the work on the farm. Then when spring came we would get out early for them [the students] to work on the farm. Maybe about the last of April or something like that.³¹

Frances Missouri Johnson (1915–1991) walked four miles to school and four miles home. She has the distinction of being the student furthest attending the school.³²

Mt. Zion Rosenwald School suffered from a lack of instructional materials. Mrs. Williams indicated the school received no textbooks and therefore students were largely taught from personal books. The various teachers compensated by using group and individualized instruction through paperwork and practice on the blackboards in each classroom. Coatrooms adjacent to each classroom were used to store firewood and books. Despite the wealth of personal recollections there was no direct reference to the receipt of used textbooks from the school trustees.³³

²⁹ Vernon, *History and Recollections*.

³⁰ Vernon, *History and Recollections*, p. 8.

³¹ Vernon, *History and Recollections*, p. 9.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

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Mt. Zion Rosenwald School
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Teachers at Mt. Zion Rosenwald School received a modest monthly salary for their efforts to educate the children of the Mars Bluff community. According to Mrs. Williams pay during her tenure ranged from “twenty-five or thirty dollars a month with thirty-seven fifty being the highest figure she recalled.” Like any other school, various faculty members had a definite impact upon the lives of the students who completed some or all of their education at Mt. Zion Rosenwald School. Among the different teachers and administrators recalled by former students were the following: Mrs. Claudia Williams, first – third grades; Mrs. Greer, first and second grades; Mrs. White, third and fourth grades; Mrs. Goldie Martin, Principal, also fifth and sixth grade teacher; and Mr. Houston Person, agricultural teacher.³⁴

Mt. Zion Rosenwald School educated the children of the Mars Bluff community for almost three decades until the facility was retired from use in 1952 after the construction of Mars Bluff School, a consolidated school solely for the black students in the area.³⁵

The schools were centers of small rural black settlements. Such communities, now disappearing, were an important characteristic of the rural landscape of the Carolinas in the first half of the twentieth century. During the 1980s the members, especially former students, of Mt. Zion United Methodist Church began an effort to restore the building for use as a community center. Mrs. Amelia W. Vernon donated the school and surrounding property to the church during 1987.³⁶

³⁴ Commemorative Booklet, p. 6.; Vernon, *African Americans at Mars Bluff*, p. 84.

³⁵ David Shelley, “Old Rosenwald School Being Reborn,” *The Florence News*, June 25, 1983; Vernon, *History and Recollections*, p. 9.

³⁶ Commemorative Booklet, p. 6.

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Name of Property
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Mt. Zion Rosenwald School
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Verbal Boundary Description:

The boundary of the nominated property is shown on the accompanying plat dated 10 December 1987, drawn at a scale of 1" = 200', and recorded in Florence County Plat Book 29, Page 437.

Boundary Justification:

The nominated property is restricted to the historic school and the property associated with it during its period of significance, from 1925-26 to 1952.

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The following information is the same for each of the photographs:

Name of Property: Mt. Zion Rosenwald School

Location of Property: 5040 Liberty Chapel Road, Florence, South Carolina 29501

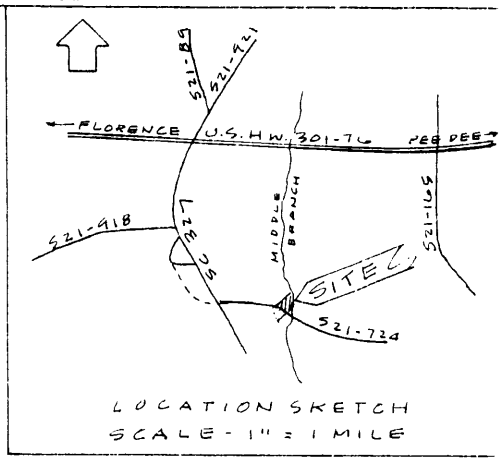
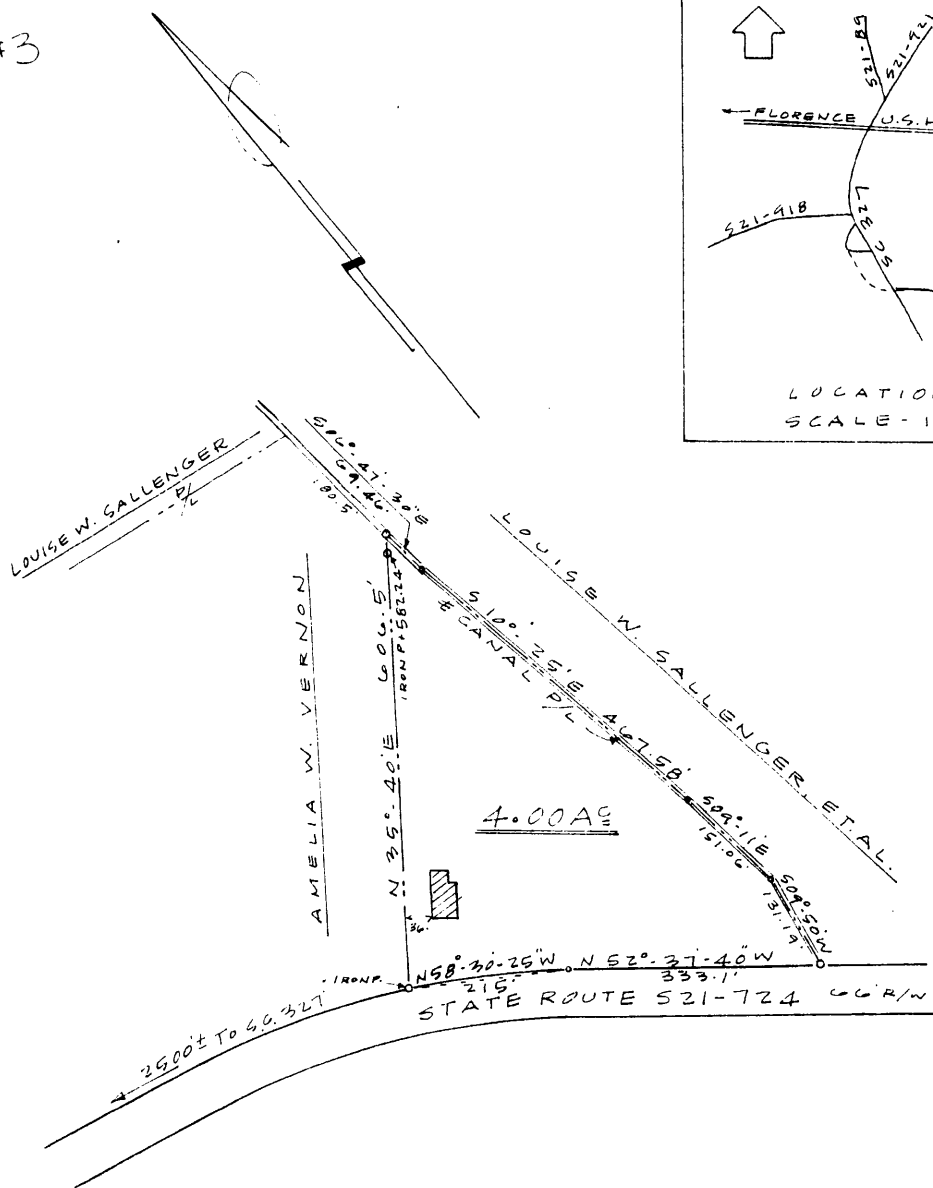
Name of Photographer: Vennie Deas-Moore

Date of Photographs: June 22, 2001

Location of Original Negatives: SHPO

1. Exterior, South View
2. Exterior, West View
3. Exterior, North View, Close Up
4. Exterior, West View, Exterior Door
5. Exterior, East View, Close Up
6. Exterior, East View, Door (Opening Enlarged) and Windows
7. Exterior, East View, Close Up, Windows
8. Exterior, Close Up, Woodwork
9. Exterior, Close Up, Foundation
10. Exterior, Close Up, West View, Doorway
11. Exterior, Close Up, West View, Doorway, Brickwork
12. Interior, Classroom #2
13. Interior, Classroom #2, From Doorway
14. Interior, Classroom #3, Blackboard used as a Portable Wall Dividing Room.
15. Interior, Classroom #3, Ceiling
16. Interior, Chimney Brickwork Detail
17. Interior, Door Detail
18. Interior, West View, Window Detail

#3



COUNTY OF FLORENCE,
STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA.

MAP

OF

FOUR AND 00/100 (4.00) ACRES OF LAND SITUATE
IN FLORENCE COUNTY, S. C., CARVED FROM TAX PARCEL 270-01-010
AS FOUND IN THE TAX ASSESSORS OFFICE FOR FLORENCE COUNTY.

BEING CONVEYED BY AMELIA W. VERNON
TO MOUNT ZION UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

SURVEYED BY: ERVIN ENGINEERING CO., INC.
511 W. EVANS ST., P.O. BOX 3, FLORENCE, S.C. 29503



GRAPHIC SCALE IN FEET

SCALE - 1" = 200'

DATE: DECEMBER 10, 1987

We hereby certify that this map represents a true and accurate survey of the above described property and that there are no encroachments by this or the adjoining property. We further certify that this property does not lie in a designated flood plain

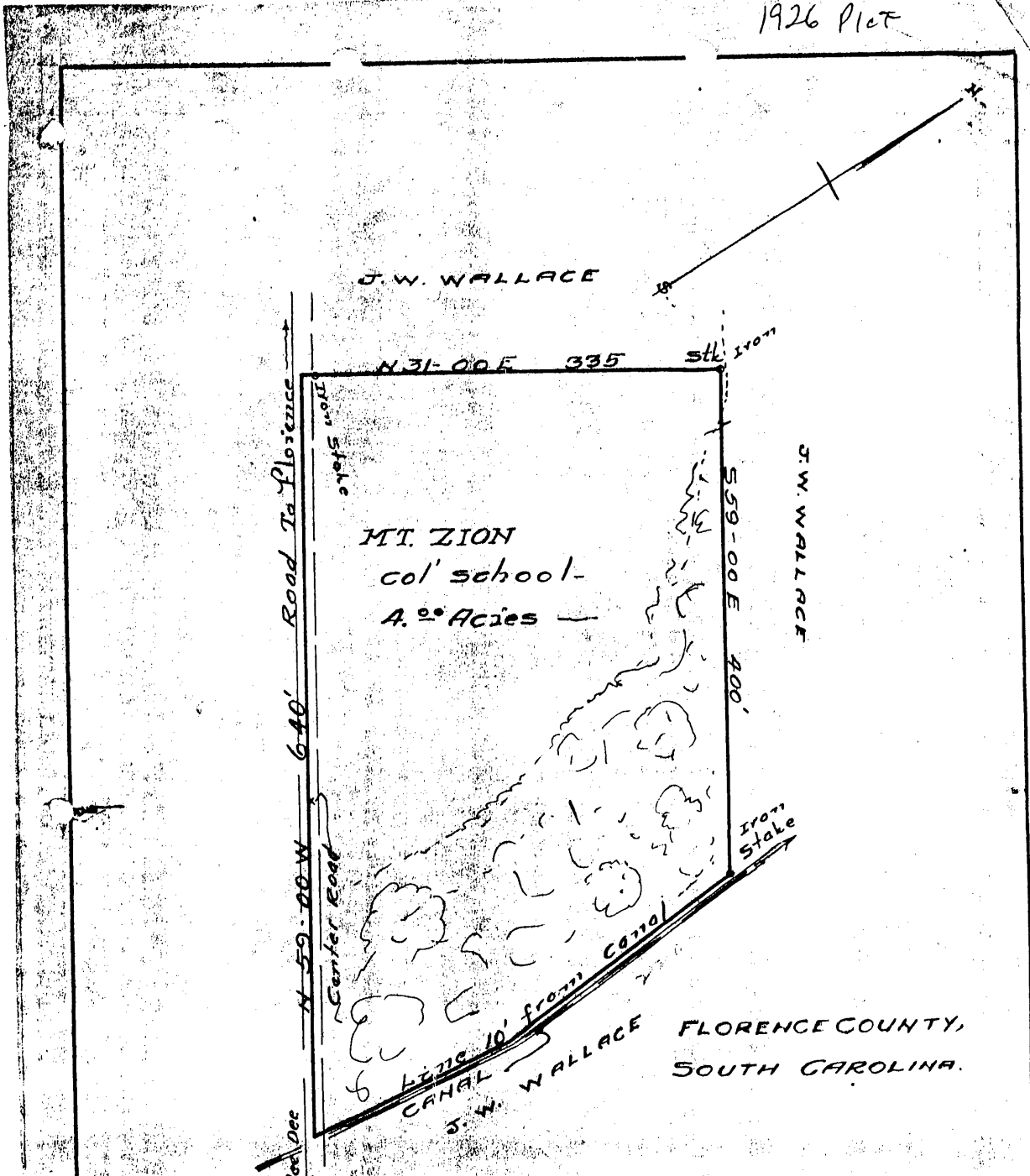
270-01-23

ERVIN ENGINEERING CO., INC.

SURVEY CLOSURE 1:50,000 +

#6

1926 Plat



PLAT
— of —

FOUR ACRES OF LAND IN JEFFRIES TOWNSHIP, FLORENCE CO.,
S. C. GIVEN BY J. W. WALLACE FOR MT. ZION COL-
ORED SCHOOL

SURVEYED AUG. 10, 1926
Scale 1 inch = 100 feet

A. L. Cowan, C.R.

E L B

E -
D - 4