

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 and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. 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.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: W. Gresham Meggett High and Elementary School

Other names/site number: Septima P. Clark Corporate Academy

Name of related multiple property listing:

Equalization Schools in South Carolina, 1951-1960

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

2. Location

Street & number: 1929 Grimball Road

City or town: Charleston State: South Carolina County: Charleston

Not For Publication: ☐ Vicinity: ☒

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 at the following level(s) of significance:

 national statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A B X C D

Signature of certifying official/Title:

Date

Elizabeth M. Johnson, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official:

Date

Title :

State or Federal agency/bureau
or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

___ entered in the National Register

___ determined eligible for the National Register

___ determined not eligible for the National Register

___ removed from the National Register

___ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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

☐

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Structure

☐

Object

☐

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing

3

Noncontributing

buildings

sites

structures

objects

Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION/school

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Foundation concrete
Walls brick and concrete
Roof asphalt and metal

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The W. Gresham Meggett High and Elementary School in Charleston County, South Carolina, is a Modernist building influenced by the International style. It was constructed with painted concrete masonry unit (CMU) and brick veneer walls, and concrete accents. The main roofing system is low-sloped with a bitumen covering, but the combination cafeteria and auditorium or “cafetorium” has an asphalt shingle gable roof and the gymnasium a metal gable roof. The school is located on Grimball Road on James Island in a historically rural African-American community. It fronts the road on a semicircular drive with mature live oaks and shrubs. A paved parking area is located to south of the school, with open fields to the south and west. The school was built in four construction phases. The intersection between the 1951 and 1952 sections is indistinguishable, but the 1956 annex and 1965 physical education building were originally free-standing. All of the sections contribute to the school’s significance.¹ The school retains its

¹ The dates for the building are based on when contractors for the building were announced in newspapers. The architectural plans for the buildings reflecting period educational architecture and the priorities of the equalization program were completed before bids for contractors were announced. The newspapers did not cover when the additions to the campus were completed for African American schools, but construction appears to have been

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historic integrity because its form, structure, and style are intact. The original entry remains with its original bold metal signage above. Although the windows have been replaced to meet fire code, the building retains its fenestration patterns with the exception of a few windows that were converted into large doorways before being returned to windows. Despite these modifications, the exterior of the building is still easily discernable as a 1950s school. The interiors of the 1956 annex and 1967 gymnasium buildings have the most material integrity, including tile wainscot, bell systems, blackboards, and doors in the annex and flooring, wall finishes, and auditorium stage in the gymnasium. The main 1951-1952 building has a lower level of architectural integrity. The interior retains much of its original configuration, although walls were removed to convert three classrooms into science laboratories. An additional two classrooms were also subdivided into administrative offices. The wall finishes, home economics room, and “cafetorium” have high material integrity, but the classroom doors have been replaced. Hopper windows and transoms in the hallways have been infilled, but their locations are still easily identifiable.

Narrative Description

1) Main Building (Contributing Building)

1951 Section

The original 1951 section consists of the portion of the building fronting Grimball Road. It is a one-story, linear, fourteen bay, three pile, building with low-sloped roof. A painted CMU and brick façade containing the entrance and administrative offices composes the south end. Characteristic of architect Augustus Constantine’s designs and influenced by the International style, the entrance to the school is accentuated from the painted CMU walls with a brick veneer with the original signage above the door. The entrance’s design was the primary façade’s only decorative treatment. One of the windows on the front façade was enlarged into a door during the school’s conversion into a vocational center prior to being reconverted into a window, but the overall fenestration pattern is retained. The windows are replacement paired one-over-one lights installed to meet modern fire code.²

The 1951 section originally had six classrooms located off a central hallway, although walls were removed between the two northern-most classrooms to double their size for use as science laboratories. Bathrooms and a closet are located at the north end of the building. The flooring is linoleum over concrete, while the walls are painted CMU. The wood doors are later replacements as the original doors had a glass pane. The hallways had hopper windows to provide the

completed within a year or two after the contractors were announced. For example, the 1951 section opened in 1953, while the 1952 section was still under construction according to oral histories. The exact years that the 1952, 1956, and 1965 sections opened are unclear in the recollections of former students. Oral interviews do suggest that the gymnasium, which was funded in 1965, was completed in 1967.

² Some of the windows at the W. Gresham Meggett School had to be replaced as early as 1961 after vandals smashed twelve of them. “Thieves Break Into Schools, Restaurant,” *Evening Post*, November 14, 1961, accessed June 7, 2017, Newsbank.

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classrooms with additional light and ventilation. Most of the windows have been infilled with CMU. Likewise, many of the transoms above the classroom doors have also been infilled. Newer doorways that were inserted into the CMU walls have metal bracing above their lintels. Dropped acoustic tile ceilings have been added to cover mechanical and electrical system updates to the building.

1952 Section

The 1952 section is very similar in appearance to the 1951 section because the school board planned this addition prior to the construction of the 1951 section. The 1952 section consists of an L-shaped CMU addition with classrooms and the multipurpose cafetorium. The one-story, L-shaped section with low-sloped roof was appended to the south end of the 1951 section, creating a U-shaped building footprint oriented with the central courtyard opening to the northeast. Rectangular in plan, the cafetorium was added to the southwest side of the building near the main entrance. The 1952 section has the same surface treatments and modifications as the 1951 section including painted CMU exterior walls, replacement windows, and windows converted into doors in laboratory classrooms.

The wing running from east to west retains the original home economics classroom complete with countertops, cupboards, and sinks. The library was also located on this hallway. Although the room was converted into a guidance counseling office, it retains the librarians' offices. The north-south wing originally had eight classrooms, but two of the rooms on the west side of the hall have been divided into offices, while the wall between two classrooms on the east side of the hall was removed to create a large laboratory classroom. There is a girls' bathroom at the southeast end of the hallway and a boys' bathroom at the northwest end.

The cafetorium is located off the east-west 1952 wing. Although incorporated into the main structure, it is completely clad in a brick veneer and has an asphalt shingle gable roof. The interior finishes are the same as the rest of the 1952 section. The room originally had four large vertical windows in the east and west walls, but the northern and southern-most windows have been converted into vents for the air-conditioning system. There is a raised stage with strip wood flooring at the north end of the room. The stage is flanked by two fluted pilasters with the column capitals hidden by the dropped ceiling. The stage wings retain their original doors. The kitchen and pantry are located at the south end of the cafetorium. The food service windows between the cafetorium and the kitchen remain.

2) 1956 Annex (Contributing Building)

The 1956 annex was constructed to the southeast of the main school building. It is a one-story, linear, brick veneer building with a low-sloped roof. The annex retains the original layout of its six classrooms, locker rooms, and bathrooms. The flooring is linoleum over concrete, except for the locker rooms and bathrooms, which have tile flooring. The walls are painted CMU with a green tile wainscot. The classrooms retain their original wood doors with single-pane windows. The annex also had hopper windows in the hallways to increase light and ventilation in the

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classrooms, but they have been infilled with CMU. It also retains early water fountains, original blackboards, and two generations of school bells. Like the other sections of the school, a dropped acoustic tile ceiling has been added. The annex originally stood as a separate building, but was later connected by a covered walkway.

3) 1967 Gymnasium (Contributing Building)

Completed in 1967 to the north of the main school building, the gymnasium fronts Grimball Road on a circular driveway. The gymnasium is an imposing one-story, brick veneer and stucco, gable-end building with a metal roof. The gymnasium is distinctly different from the main school building because it is over twice as tall. Exemplary of Augustus Constantine's later designs, the gymnasium's front façade flirts with Postmodernism, rejecting the "less is more" International style approach taken in the earlier school buildings. The gymnasium's principal façade is historicist, using architectural details from Italian Renaissance churches such as arcades, blind ocular windows, and massive gable roofs to give the building a Mediterranean feel. The ticket office featuring three vertical windows projects from the front of the building. It is flanked by two arcades covering the entrances to the gymnasium. The gymnasium's gable end rises behind the ticket office and arcades. It features stucco spanning from the ends of the arcades to the peak of the roof. The curving edges of the stucco against the building's predominating brick veneer contribute to the building's Mediterranean aesthetic. The front façade's groundlines, arcades, entrances, corners, and rooflines are also accentuated with stucco. There is a blind ocular window in the gable. The gymnasium's other façades are a plain brick veneer.

The basketball court comprises the entire western end of the gymnasium. Restrooms enclosed by CMU walls with decorative metal Chippendale-influenced railings on the roofs are located in the western corners of the room near the entrances and ticket office. Bleachers used to be located along the northern and southern walls. There is a raised, recessed stage at the east end of the room. The stage is accentuated by wooden wainscoting below the stage and decorative brick veneer surrounding the stage opening. The stage is flanked by doorways leading to the locker rooms and tiled alcoves containing water fountains. The flooring in the basketball court is painted parquet, the flooring that used to be under the bleachers is concrete, and the stage flooring is linoleum. The walls are painted CMU. The ceiling has an exposed metal truss system and insulation with suspended lighting. The original locker rooms are located on either side of the stage. They have tile and concrete floors with tile wainscoting in the shower areas and painted CMU walls. The eastern end of the gymnasium was added onto, likely during the 1979 renovations when it became a vocational school. Several workshop rooms, storage, additional bathrooms, and faculty offices were added. The garage door in the southern wall of the gymnasium was also likely added during this period, converting the room into a workshop for mechanics. The addition is also brick veneer with concrete floors and painted CMU interior walls.

Subsequent Changes

Other modifications to the main school building likely occurred during the 1979 renovation.

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Covered metal awnings were installed over exterior doors, as well as between the 1956 annex and the 1952 wing. The large windows resembling garage door openings were also likely added when the building was converted into a vocational school. On the interior of the building, walls dividing some of the classrooms were removed to create larger laboratories. The division of classrooms into faculty offices may have also occurred at this time.

Additional changes to the building have likely occurred since the 1979 renovation, including the installation of exterior doors in the classrooms and the replacement of windows to meet fire safety requirements. Additional metal awnings were constructed over the courtyard and back side of the 1952 wing to cover the new classroom doors. An awning was also built to connect the gymnasium to the 1951 and 1952 sections of the building. Classroom doors were replaced to meet modern school safety requirements.

The land the school is located on also retains much of its historic appearance. Two circular driveways lead to the entrance of the school and the gymnasium with a parking lot located to the south of the school. Large live oak trees stand between the school and Grimball Road. The athletic fields to the east and south of the school have not received any modernizing updates such as lighting.

Despite the modifications to the building after its period of significance, the W. Gresham Meggett High and Elementary School retains its historic integrity and is able to convey the building's feelings and associations to the equalization school movement. The school is in its original location and its setting has changed little since its construction as the live oak trees along Grimball Road and the open athletic fields reflect the school's historically rural environs. The building also retains its design as its overall form, plan, space, structure, and style remain clearly distinctive. Outside of the replaced windows and several removed interior walls, the school has high material integrity. The design and workmanship are characteristic of the school's midcentury construction.

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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 grave
- ☐ D. A cemetery
- ☐ E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- ☐ F. A commemorative property
- ☐ G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION

ARCHITECTURE

ETHNIC HERITAGE/AFRICAN AMERICAN

Period of Significance

1951-1969

Significant Dates

1951

1952

1956

1967

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Augustus Constantine (Architect -1952, 1956, 1965-67)

H. A. DeCosta Company (Contractor -1952)

Arthur Ravenel, Jr. Construction Company (Contractor -1956)

Stehmeyer Construction Company (Contractor -1965-67)

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Constructed in 1951, the W. Gresham Meggett High and Elementary School is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the areas of Education and Ethnic Heritage: African American because it is representative of the consolidation of smaller rural African-American schools during the state's equalization program in the 1950s and 1960s. The school was built as the only black high school for the rural African American community on James Island in an effort to maintain "separate but equal" schools for black and white children. The creation of a public high school provided African American students on James Island with educational opportunities that were previously inaccessible. Paralleling the massive population growth after World War II, the school was expanded three times during the 1950s and 1960s to accommodate the increasing numbers of students until the school system desegregated in 1969. The school is also eligible under Criterion C because its architecture, especially that of the gymnasium, exemplifies the work of local architect Augustus Constantine and new approaches to school design during the postwar period. The period of significance spans from the beginning of the school's construction in 1951 to its desegregation in 1969, covering the entire period of the building's use as a segregated equalization school.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Criterion A: Education; Ethnic Heritage: African American

During the late 1940s and early 1950s, South Carolina officials became increasingly concerned with the disparities between black and white school systems in their efforts to maintain segregated schools. In 1947, the state General Assembly commissioned a survey of the public school system. The survey, conducted by the George Peabody College for Teachers in Nashville, Tennessee, found that school districts lacked adequate funds. Most schools had one or two teachers; seventy percent of these schools were for African American students. The Peabody Survey suggested consolidating the small black schools to increase the tax base, as well as the creation of county school systems to increase funding and better allocate money. It estimated that ninety million dollars needed to be invested to improve school facilities to bring the state schools close to the national average.³

Despite the results of the Peabody Survey, white politicians gave little thought to increasing educational funding, particularly for African American schools, until the *Briggs v. Elliot* case reached the federal district court late in 1950. The lawsuit challenged the segregated school system in Clarendon County, South Carolina. The case later merged with four additional school

³ Rebekah Dobrasko, "Equalization Schools in South Carolina 1951-1959," 2008, p. 2.

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desegregation cases to form the U. S. Supreme Court case *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* (1954). The *Briggs v. Elliot* case spurred white politicians in South Carolina to dramatically increasing state educational funding for both black and white schools because they feared integration. South Carolina Governor James Byrnes created a legislative package to raise funding to equalize the schools based on the Peabody Survey and a 1950 report by the House of Representatives. Byrnes's legislative package used a three-cent sales tax to fund a statewide school construction program. As a part of the equalization program, the General Assembly required the consolidation of small schools, the elimination of local boards of education that had less than seven members, and mandated that school districts conduct surveys of their school building needs prior to receiving state funding.⁴ The school districts also had to hire registered architects and licensed contractors to construct buildings that reflected the latest trends in educational thought and school design. The school buildings often incorporated elements of the International style of architecture, using straight lines, rows of large windows, and horizontality. The windows increased light and ventilation in the classrooms, while the one-story buildings easily accommodated additions, did not require fire escapes, and were believed to appear less imposing to small children.⁵ From 1951 to 1956, the equalization legislation to maintain school segregation and post-World War II building boom had a profound impact on schools in Charleston County, leading to the construction or renovation of 21 schools, including W. Gresham Meggett School.⁶

The W. Gresham Meggett High and Elementary School is a reflection of the changing approaches to African American education during the late 1940s and early 1950s. Anticipating the *Briggs v. Elliot* case, the James Island school board recognized the need to improve African American educational facilities and locate the school closer to the center of the island's rural African-American population. In the summer of 1949, voters approved of a \$25,000 school bond issue to fund an addition to the white Riverland Terrace School and the construction of "a five-room elementary school for negroes to replace the Society Corner frame building."⁷ The Society Corner school building was "in a poor state of repair and entirely too small to care for increased enrollment."⁸ By the fall of 1950, the school board was negotiating the purchase of a six-acre parcel for the construction of a modern elementary school for African American students.⁹

The Society Corner School was representative of the educational facilities available to African American students on rural James Island during the mid-twentieth century. Elementary schools like Society Corner, Cutbridge, and Cherry Beam typically contained two classrooms where

⁴ Ibid., p. 3.

⁵ Ibid., p. 6.

⁶ "Charleston's Post-War Building Boom Highlights The City's Economic Progress," *Evening Post*, October 29, 1953, accessed June 7, 2017, Newsbank. See also Rebekah Dobrasko, "Architectural Survey of Charleston County's School Equalization Program, 1951-1955," 2005.

⁷ "James Island Bond Issue Passed By Vote of 59-8," *Charleston News and Courier*, July 14, 1949, accessed June 7, 2017, Newsbank.

⁸ "Riverland Terrace School Addition Bids Are Opened," *Evening Post*, May 12, 1950, accessed June 7, 2017, Newsbank.

⁹ "County Public White Schools Will Open Tuesday Morning," *Charleston News and Courier*, September 3, 1950, accessed June 7, 2017, Newsbank.

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teachers taught multiple grades. Because there were no buses available to African American students on James Island, many children had to walk for thirty to forty-five minutes to reach school. Some children, such as those living in the former slave quarters at McLeod Plantation, had to walk for two hours to reach their elementary schools. The long walks prevented many children from starting school until the ages of seven or eight. Through the construction of a modern elementary school for African American students, the school board hoped to have a legal basis for maintaining a segregated school system while discouraging African American students from seeking to attend white schools.¹⁰

The implementation of the statewide education finance program in 1951 altered the planning and construction of the W. Gresham Meggett School. The increasing student population, need to consolidate small schools, and requirement that each school district have an African American high school, necessitated the immediate construction of an addition to the planned elementary school to make it into both an elementary and high school. Prior to the construction of the W. Gresham Meggett School, there were no high schools for African American students on James Island. Students who wished to further their educations had to attend the African American private schools at the Avery Institute or the Immaculate Conception School in downtown Charleston. The cost of tuition and distance prevented many of the African American students living on James Island from attending. Students could also attend vocational school at the unaccredited Burke Industrial School in Charleston.¹¹

In order to construct a combined elementary and high school satisfying the requirements set forth by the statewide equalization program, the school board purchased an additional 3.04 acres from Emma Cromwell and 6.0 acres from Prince Smalls to accommodate a larger school facility.¹² The school board decided to construct the building in two phases. During the 1951 construction campaign, six rooms made of concrete block were built as an elementary school with plans to further enlarge the school to accommodate high school students.¹³ In 1952, noted local African-American contractor H. A. DeCosta, Jr. built the addition designed by local architect Augustus Constantine. The addition included “nine classrooms, a home economics room, science laboratory, library, multi-purpose room (also cafeteria) teachers’ lounge, first aid room, reception room, principal’s office, kitchen and book storage.”¹⁴ School officials regarded the building as “completely modern in all respects. The one-story schools are being constructed with modern large-window lighting, green ‘blackboards’ and are radical departures from the old style rural schools now in use.”¹⁵ The State Educational Finance Commission funded the 1952 addition with \$192,000.¹⁶ The James Island school board also made plans to demolish or sell the Society

¹⁰ W. Gresham Meggett Alumni, interview by Katherine Pemberton, Charleston, SC, June 20, 2017.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Charleston County, Register of Mesne Conveyance (RMC), Book Y55, p 334.

¹³ “Construction Under Way At Some Schools: \$8 Million to Be Made Available Over Next 20 Years for Needs,” *Evening Post*, August 16, 1951, accessed June 7, 2017, Newsbank.

¹⁴ “Bids on Construction of Additions to Two Charleston County Negro Schools Opened,” *Charleston News and Courier*, April 18, 1952, accessed June 7, 2017, Newsbank.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ “\$37,800,000 Allotted for Colored Schools,” *Charleston News and Courier*, June 7, 1953, accessed June 7, 2017, Newsbank.

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Corner and Three Trees rural schools in 1952 because their student populations were consolidated with the W. Gresham Meggett School.¹⁷ The W. Gresham Meggett School opened to both elementary and high school students in the fall of 1953.¹⁸

During the early 1950s, enrollment significantly increased as the African American population in the Charleston area, including on James Island, grew.¹⁹ The W. Gresham Meggett School saw an increase of 89 high school students and 35 elementary school students between the 1953-1954 and 1954-1955 school years.²⁰ An additional 38 high school students and 20 elementary school students enrolled the following school year.²¹ The school building could not accommodate these significant increases in the numbers of student attendance, resulting in the need for double sessions. The James Island school board responded by building the Kings Highway Elementary school and a six-classroom addition to W. Gresham Meggett for senior high school students in 1956.²² Architect Augustus Constantine designed the addition, known as the annex, and the Arthur Ravenel, Jr. Construction Company built it. The concrete block and brick addition included two bathrooms and two locker rooms.²³ Funding for the addition came from the U.S. Office of Education, which had allocated \$73,350 to the James Island school district because of the high number of federal employees residing there.²⁴

The opening of the school in 1953 provided the African American students on James Island with educational opportunities not previously afforded in the rural agrarian community. As truck farmers and sharecroppers, students and their parents worked hard to be able to afford school. Students worked in the fields over summers and after school, occasionally missing entire school days, to harvest crops in order to be able to afford clothing and books. At school, students took vocational and home economics classes, as well as academic classes including labs. The academic curriculum was complimented by a number of extracurricular activities. Students were now able to participate in sports, such as football, cheerleading, and basketball. Practice and athletic events took place in the fields to the south and west of the school during the day as there were no lights, despite the prominence of the school's champion football team. The school also had an excellent theatre program, choir, and glee club. Dedicated to the education and enrichment of the students, teachers spent their own money to purchase books and attending

¹⁷ "James Island Negro School To Be Torn Down," *Evening Post*, October 2, 1952, accessed June 7, 2017, Newsbank.

¹⁸ Betty Pugh, "Millions Spent For Enlarging School Plants: Many Fine New Buildings Ready For Record 1953-54 Study Year," *Charleston News and Courier*, August 14, 1953, accessed June 7, 2017, Newsbank.

¹⁹ "James Island School Contract Let," *Charleston News and Courier*, January 11, 1956, accessed June 12, 2017, Newsbank.

²⁰ "School Enrollment Figures Show Nearly Fourth Of County Population In School," *Charleston News and Courier*, November 14, 1954, accessed June 12, 2017, Newsbank.

²¹ "Official Figures Show Charleston County School Enrollment Up 2,101 Over Last Year," *Charleston News and Courier*, October 15, 1955, accessed June 8, 2017, Newsbank.

²² "New School To Open On James Island," *Evening Post*, August 18, 1956, accessed June 12, 2017, Newsbank.

²³ "Low Bid Submitted For School Project," *Charleston News and Courier*, June 20, 1956, accessed June 12, 2017, Newsbank.

²⁴ "\$153,000 Allotted For School Aid In Charleston County," *Evening Post*, March 14, 1956, accessed June 12, 2017, Newsbank.

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classes for certification on weekends. Both the teachers and Principal Dr. Leroy Anderson brainstormed new ideas and tried innovative approaches to improve learning experiences for the students. Because of their outstanding education at W. Gresham Meggett, many graduates went on to attend prestigious universities, becoming doctors, lawyers, educators, engineers, politicians, businesspeople, nurses, writers, military officers, professional athletes, and community leaders. A lack of job opportunities for African Americans outside of agriculture during the 1960s and 1970s forced many of the alumni to leave the Charleston area for a time.²⁵

In 1961, planning supervisor for the South Carolina Education Finance Committee W. B. Southerlin visited the James Island school district. His recommendations included building gymnasiums for high schools, including the W. Gresham Meggett School after it became exclusively a high school in 1963.²⁶ However, James Island residents did not vote on raising the debt ceiling to fund the construction of the gymnasiums at the white James Island High School and the black W. Gresham Meggett High School until 1965.²⁷ Once voters approved the measure, architect Constantine produced designs for the gymnasiums. The Stehmeyer Construction Company built both gymnasiums.²⁸ With the construction of the physical education building, major events such as graduation, concerts, prom, and dances were moved from the cafetorium to the gymnasium.²⁹

Despite the Supreme Court's unanimous decision "that separate but equal facilities are inherently unequal" in the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, Charleston County public schools did not integrate until 1969. In 1968, the federal Department of Health, Education, and Welfare officials created recommendations for the desegregation of the Charleston County school system. They suggested either making James Island High School a senior high and W. Gresham Meggett the junior high, or geographically rezoning the school districts.³⁰ Ultimately, the school district decided to convert the W. Gresham Meggett School into a vocational school for high school students on James Island as vocational school enrollment had tripled during the 1967-1968 school year.³¹ High school students who had previously attended W. Gresham Meggett transferred to James Island High School and Fort Johnson High School. Students enrolled in vocational classes took their academic courses at these high schools and rode buses to W. Gresham Meggett for their vocational classes. The vocational trades offered at W. Gresham

²⁵ W. Gresham Meggett Alumni.

²⁶ "Official Recommends Two New James Island Schools," *Charleston News and Courier*, October 29, 1961, accessed June 12, 2017, Newsbank.

²⁷ "Legalities Delay Issue," *Charleston News and Courier*, November 12, 1964, accessed June 12, 2017, Newsbank.

²⁸ "Gymnasium Bids All Are Above Estimated Cost," *Evening Post*, June 4, 1965, accessed June 13, 2017, Newsbank.

²⁹ "W. Gresham Meggett High Awards Diplomas To 63," *Charleston News and Courier*, May 27, 1969, accessed June 13, 2017, Newsbank; "Meggett Presents University Choir," *Evening Post*, January 28, 1969, accessed June 13, 2017, Newsbank; "Juniors Sponsor Dance At Meggett," *Evening Post*, March 25, 1969, accessed June 13, 2017, Newsbank.

³⁰ "HEW Outlines County School Desegregation Requirements," *Charleston News and Courier*, April 2, 1968, accessed June 15, 2017, Newsbank.

³¹ Margaret, M. Wilcox, "Consolidation Progress Is Outlined By Garrett," *Charleston News and Courier*, November 11, 1969, accessed June 15, 2017, Newsbank.

W. Gresham Meggett High and Elementary
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Meggett included “masonry, electronics, woodworking and carpentry, agriculture, ornamental horticulture and welding.”³²

Criterion C: Architecture

After World War II, educators and architects realized that school designs were not conducive to learning. Classrooms often had poor lighting and ventilation, and furniture was attached to the floor, limiting teachers’ and students’ abilities to configure classroom spaces to meet learning needs. Additionally, educators and architects felt that the neoclassical designs of many schools made the buildings appear too imposing and unfriendly to children. Pressured by these changes in pedagogical ideology and increasing numbers of students during the postwar “baby boom,” architects embraced Modernist architecture in their design of new school buildings, especially through the incorporation of elements of the International style. Postwar schools were linear, one-story buildings with sprawling wings that enabled children to easily access the grounds and eliminated the need for fire escapes and interior stairs.³³ School buildings were inexpensive, functional, and easy to expand through subsequent additions to accommodate the increasing student populations in the postwar period.³⁴ Following Modernist thought, the schools were functional in appearance with little-to-no ornamentation. Horizontal banks of large windows and sometimes glass blocks provided light and ventilation to the interiors. Some schools also had interior windows and transoms in hallways to increase light and ventilation.³⁵

Like the architecture of his other educational facilities in Charleston County, Augustus Constantine’s designs for the W. Gresham Meggett School exemplify postwar trends in school architecture.³⁶ The one-story school building is long and low with large windows, emphasizing its horizontality. The painted CMU walls lack ornamentation, except for the main entrance’s brick door surrounds. The large windows provide light and ventilation. Like many postwar schools, the W. Gresham Meggett School had interior hopper windows and transoms. Although they have been infilled with CMU, the locations of the hopper windows and transoms remain clearly discernible. Similar to other schools designed by Constantine, including Burke Industrial School (Charleston, 1948), James Island Elementary School (James Island, 1955), and Courtenay School (Charleston, 1955), the W. Gresham Meggett School shows few of the hallmarks of his work aside from his contrasting use of brick and CMU painted cream and his unique design for the entrance. According to an interview with architect Demetrios Liollo, Constantine was not heavily involved in designing his schools. Instead, his employees Liollo and John Tracy Powers did most of the design work.³⁷

³² “James Island Attendance Areas Are Altered,” *Evening Post*, August 20, 1969, accessed June 15, 2017, Newsbank.

³³ Dobrasko, “Equalization Schools in South Carolina,” 5-7.

³⁴ Lissa D’Aquisto Felzer, “Avoiding the Theme Park: A Study of the Architecture of Augustus Edison Constantine, and the Need for Preservation Policy Reform in Charleston, South Carolina for the Twenty First Century” (master’s thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 2000), 50-53.

³⁵ Dobrasko, “Equalization Schools in South Carolina,” 5-7.

³⁶ Felzer, “Avoiding the Theme Park,” 39.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 50-51.

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Constantine's use of historicism in his designs for the gymnasium is a departure from postwar school architecture, indicating that he may have been more heavily involved in the design of the primary façade. Although the building is presently a unique representation of Constantine's interest in Italian Renaissance architecture, the no longer extant 1965 gymnasium at the white James Island High School was nearly identical in design.³⁸

In 1979, the W. Gresham Meggett Educational Occupation Center received 26,470 square feet of renovations and site work. Local architect Demetrios C. Liollo designed the renovations.³⁹ During the renovations, Liollo redesigned or modified the shops to increase efficiency.⁴⁰ As the demand for vocational education declined during the late-twentieth century, the school closed in 1993. It re-opened as the Septima P. Clark Corporate Academy for at-risk high school students in Charleston County 1994. The school closed in 2016 and has been vacant since that time.⁴¹

³⁸ "Voters Approve Two Gymnasiums," *Evening Post*, March 24, 1965, accessed June 15, 2017, Newsbank.

³⁹ "Advertisement For Bids," *News and Courier*, January 15, 1979, accessed June 15, 2017, Newsbank.

⁴⁰ Charlotte McCrady, "New Look For Many Schools," *Charleston News and Courier*, August 31, 1979, accessed June 15, 2017, Newsbank.

⁴¹ Charleston County Public Schools Office of Archives and Records Management Services.

W. Gresham Meggett High and Elementary
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9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

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Charleston County. Record of Mesne Conveyance (RMC). Book Y55, p. 334.

Charleston News and Courier. Charleston, South Carolina. Newsbank.

Dobrasko, Rebekah. "Architectural Survey of Charleston County's School Equalization Program, 1951-1955." 2005.

---. "Equalization Schools in South Carolina 1951-1959." 2008.

Evening Post. Charleston South Carolina. Newsbank.

Felzer, Lissa D'Aquisto. "Avoiding the Theme Park: A Study of the Architecture of Augustus Edison Constantine, and the Need for Preservation Policy Reform in Charleston, South Carolina for the Twenty First Century." Master's thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 2000.

W. Gresham Meggett Alumni. Interview by Katherine Pemberton. Charleston, SC. June 20, 2017.

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 # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University

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Other

Name of repository: _____

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Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): 4264

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 15.04

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 32.705211° | Longitude: -79.977425° |
| 2. Latitude: 32.705101° | Longitude: -79.972539° |
| 3. Latitude: 32.706103° | Longitude: -79.973661° |
| 4. Latitude: 32.705839° | Longitude: -79.973722° |
| 5. Latitude: 32.707122° | Longitude: -79.975294° |
| 6. Latitude: 32.707589° | Longitude: -79.975447° |

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

☐ NAD 1927 or ☐ NAD 1983

- | | | |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

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Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary follows the school's property lines. From the southwest corner of the property on Grimball Road, the boundary runs directly east for about 1500 feet to the southeast corner of the property. The boundary turns and runs northwest for approximately 513 feet before turning to run slightly to the southeast for 75 feet. It then runs to the northwest for approximately 669 feet behind the properties on Stalin Smalls Lane. The boundary turns and runs more sharply to the north for about 164 feet until it reaches the northwest corner of the property on Grimball Road. The boundary then turns southwest, following the curvature of Grimball Road to the southwest corner of the property.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

These are the boundaries historically associated with the W. Gresham Meggett School.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Mary Fesak and Katherine Pemberton

organization: Historic Charleston Foundation

street & number: 40 East Bay Street

city or town: Charleston state: SC zip code: 29485

e-mail: kpemberton@historiccharleston.org

telephone: (843) 723-3646

date: August 11, 2017

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

W. Gresham Meggett High and Elementary
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Owner Information (if there are multiple owners, or if there are multiple parcels included within the nomination boundary that are under separate ownership, please include the names of ALL owners)

Owner's Name (individual, organization, corporation, etc.): Charleston County School District

Name of Contact Person (if different from above): Sean Hughes , Director of Operational Planning

Mailing Address: 3999 Bridge View Drive, North Charleston, SC 29405

Telephone: (843) 566-8190

E-mail address (if available): sean_hughes@charleston.k12.sc.us

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: W.Gresham Meggett High and Elementary School

City or Vicinity: Charleston vicinity

County: Charleston

State: SC

Photographer: Mary Fesak; Katherine Pemberton

Date Photographed: June 28, 2017

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 37

W. Gresham Meggett School, front entrance, oblique, looking south west

2 of 37

Meggett School, front/ main entrance, looking south

3 of 37

Meggett School, front/ main entrance, looking southeast

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Meggett School, front, south west portion of front building (cafetorium), looking east

5 of 37

Meggett School, front, showing portions of first and second construction phases, looking southeast

6 of 37

Meggett School, front, looking southwest towards parking lot and ball field

7 of 37

Meggett School, front, northwest section of front building, looking south

8 of 37

Meggett School, front lawn with school entrance behind, looking south

9 of 37

Meggett School, front lawn, looking north west

10 of 37

Megget School, front office, looking north east

11 of 37

Meggett School, looking northeast along interior front corridor, mural of Septima Poinsette Clark

12 of 37

Meggett School, cafetorium stage, looking north east

13 of 37

Meggett School, rear view of cafetorium, looking south west

14 of 37

Meggett School, detail, cafetorium stage, looking east

15 of 37

Meggett School, front building corridor, looking north east

16 of 37

Meggett School, classroom on front corridor, looking north

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Meggett School, interior, front corridor classroom, windows front courtyard, looking south east

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Meggett School, interior hallway connecting front and rear corridors, looking south east

19 of 37

Meggett School, interior courtyard, looking south west

20 of 37

Meggett School, corridor on rear building, looking north east

21 of 37

Meggett School, rear of school, looking north east from rear athletic fields

22 of 37

Meggett School, rear of school, looking north west at annex and main building

23 of 37

Meggett School, Annex Building, looking east

24 of 37

Meggett School, Annex Building, north east side, looking SW from rear of main school bldg

25 of 37

Meggett School, Annex Building, hallway, looking south west

26 of 37

Meggett School, Annex Building, interior classroom

27 of 37

Meggett School, Annex Building, classroom, detail of an original chalkboard

28 of 37

Meggett School, Annex Building, detail of hallway bell system

29 of 37

Meggett School, Gymnasium, front, main entrance, looking south

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Meggett School, Gymnasium, front, detail of entrance, looking south east

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Meggett School, Gymnasium, interior, looking south towards stage

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Meggett School, Gymnasium, detail of stage, looking south east

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Meggett School, Gymnasium, looking northwest from stage to front entry

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Meggett School, Gymnasium, stairs to stage, looking south east

35 of 37

Meggett School, Gymnasium, rear, classroom for vocational training, looking south

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Meggett School, ball field, looking south west from school front, across parking lot

37 of 37

Meggett School, looking northeast towards school and annex

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.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Name of Property: W.Gresham Meggett High and Elementary School
City or Vicinity: Charleston vicinity
County: Charleston State: South Carolina
Photographer: Mary Fesak; Katherine Pemberton

Date Photographed: June 28, 2017

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 37

W. Gresham Meggett School, front entrance, oblique, looking south west



4 of 37

Meggett School, front, south west portion of front building (cafetorium), looking east



8 of 37

Meggett School, front lawn with school entrance behind, looking south



19 of 37

Meggett School, interior courtyard, looking south west



23 of 37

Meggett School, Annex Building, looking east



25 of 37

Meggett School, Annex Building, hallway, looking south west



29 of 37

Meggett School, Gymnasium, front, main entrance, looking south



30 of 37

Meggett School, Gymnasium, front, detail of entrance, looking south east



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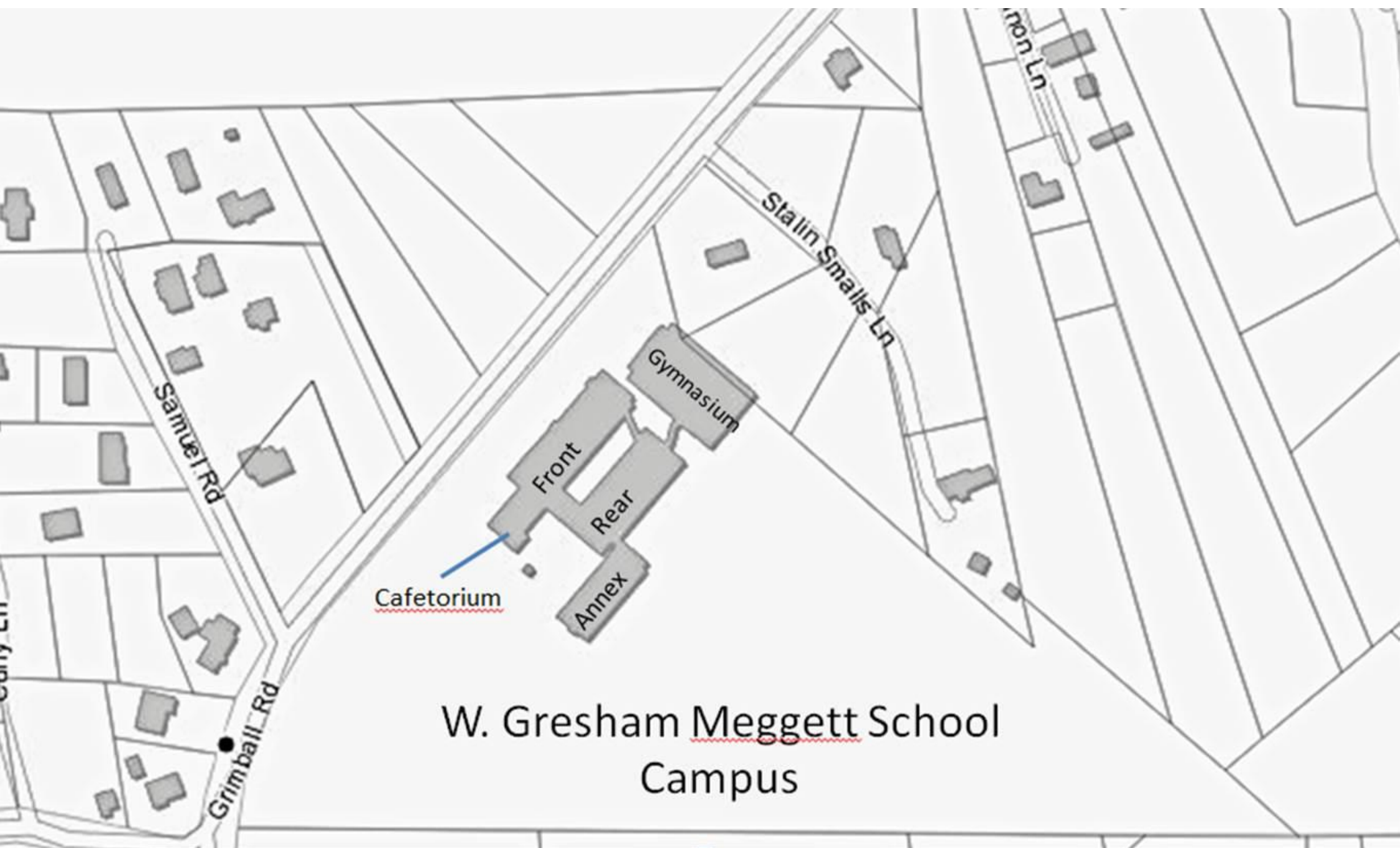
Meggett School, Gymnasium, interior, looking south towards stage



33 of 37

Meggett School, Gymnasium, looking northwest from stage to front entry





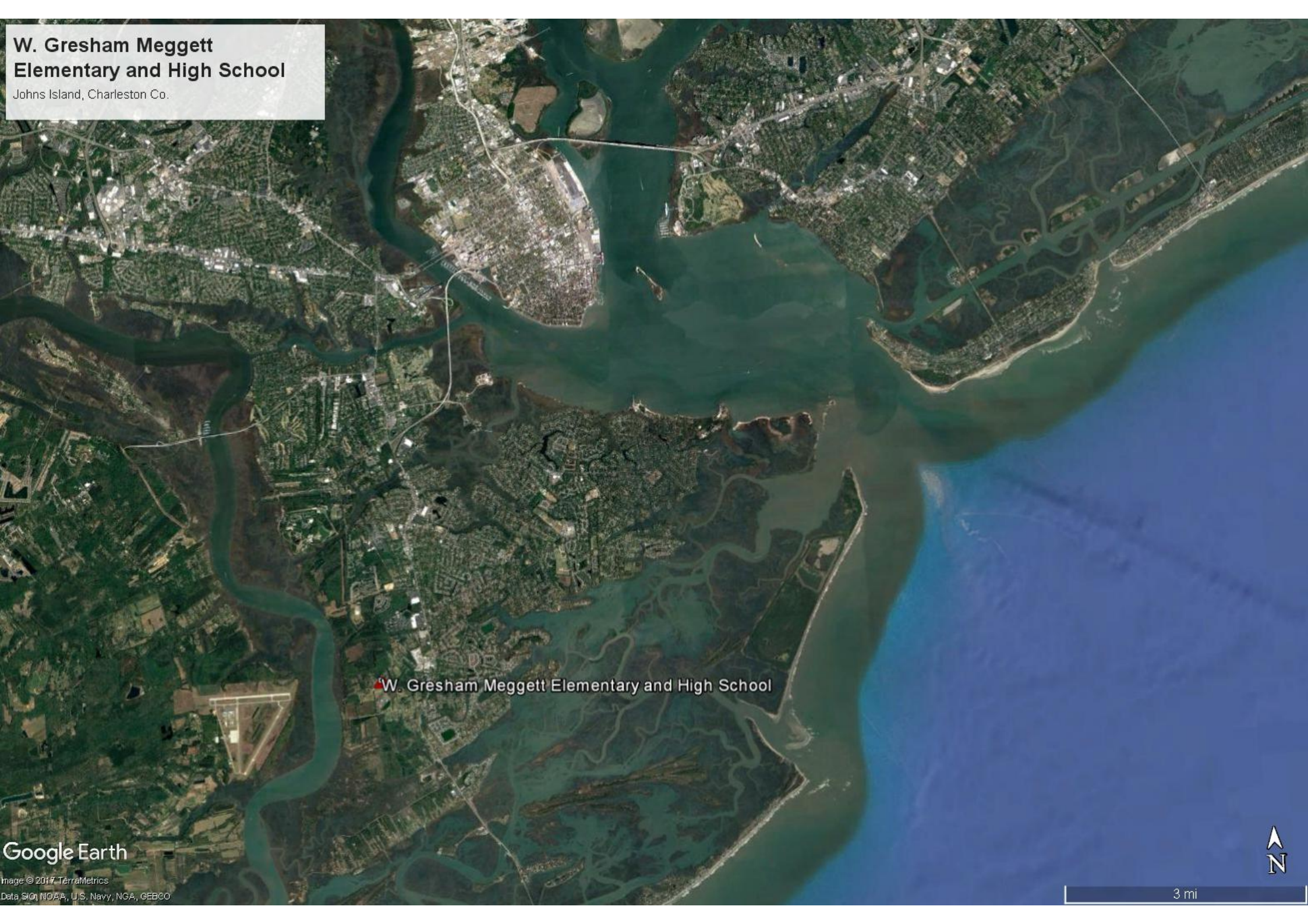
W. Gresham Meggett School
Campus

W. Gresham Meggett
Elementary and High School

Johns Island, Charleston Co.



**W. Gresham Meggett
Elementary and High School**
Johns Island, Charleston Co.



W. Gresham Meggett Elementary and High School

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3 mi

W. Gresham Meggett
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