

# Alabama Register Property Information



## 1. Name

historic THOMASVILLE HIGH SCHOOL

and/or common OLD SCHOOL

## 2. Location

street & number 527 WEST FRONT STREET

city, town THOMASVILLE — vicinity of

state ALABAMA county CLARKE

## 3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

## 4. Owner of Property

name CITY OF THOMASVILLE

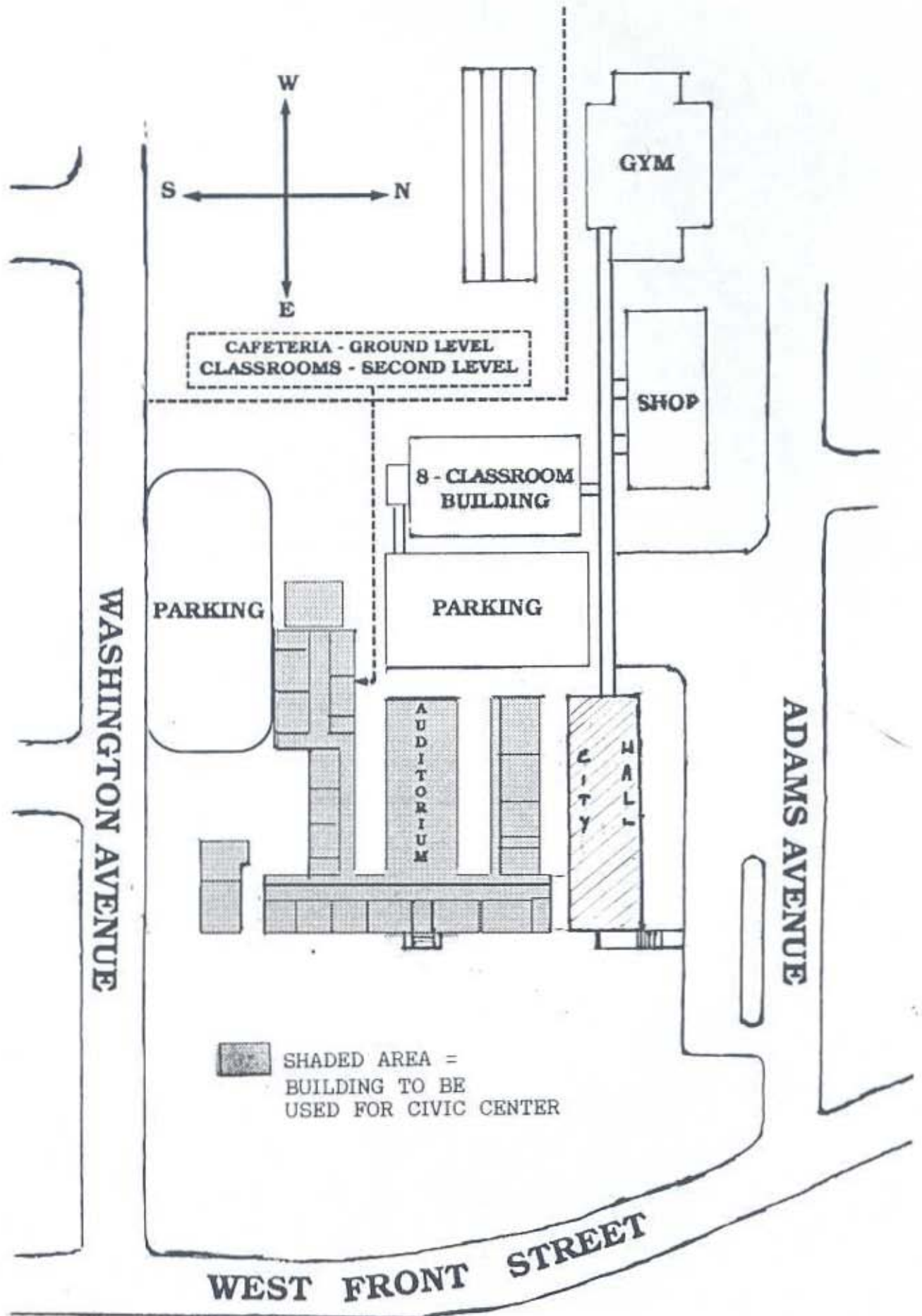
street & number 138 WILSON AVENUE WEST

city, town THOMASVILLE — vicinity of state ALABAMA

## 5. Please use space below to sketch floor plan/site plan.

SEE NEXT PAGE

# THOMASVILLE HIGH SCHOOL SITE



## 6. Description

Condition

excellent  
 good  
 fair *BE TO EEN*  
 deteriorated  
 ruins  
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered  
 altered

Check one

original site  
 moved date \_\_\_\_\_

**Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

All buildings on the property are one story except for the rear half of the south wing of the front (main) building which has two stories.

The structure has a conventional foundation system 24 inches above exterior grade with foundation vents approximately 5 inches above exterior grade.

The framing is rough-sawn wood nailed together, with load bearing partitions.

The exterior wall material is brick veneer. The basic decorative elements occur at the front entrance with a stone arch engraved with "Thomasville High School" (see Exhibit 1). There is a brick and stone basketweave design over the double windows on each side of the front porch (see Exhibit 2). The vent over the front porch is trimmed with brick and stone (see Exhibit 3). There is a brick basketweave pattern used over the windows on one bay on each side of the building (see Exhibits 4 and 5).

There is a small entrance porch at the front (see Exhibit 3). There are also covered porches on each side of the auditorium at the back of the building leading to the nearby wings (see Exhibits 6 and 7).

There are eight bays on the front of the building (see Exhibit 8) and seven on the side.

The shape of the roof is a combination of hips and gables. It has shingle roofing, with painted wood trim. There is one chimney coming out of the boiler room at the rear of the structure.

There is a double door at the main entrance. Each door is a six light over solid wood panel door with a half round arch transom above the pair of doors (see Exhibit 9).

On the front of the building there are 19 windows on the left and 19 windows on the right of the front door (see Exhibit 8). These windows were double hung wood sash windows, but almost all of the windows on the front and the back have been replaced with inexpensive aluminum windows.

The interior doors are five panel doors, but because of vandalism they are beyond repair. The trim is typical 1" x 6" rounded edge.

There are stairs leading to the lower level in the middle of the south wing. The stairs are wood frame with closed string.

There are ceilings and wainscoting of beaded board in all classrooms, the halls and the auditorium. There are also beams on the ceiling in the auditorium. The rest of the walls are plaster, a lot of which have been covered by paneling. There are transoms between the classrooms and the hallways. The wood flooring is oak.

None of the original lighting fixtures or hardware remain. There are individual space heaters remaining, but they are not original.

In 1963 a structure was built on the north side of the main building to provide for additional classrooms. It was later connected to the main building and was referred to as the north wing. It had aluminum windows and a flat roof. It was recently separated from the main building and is presently being totally renovated and will be used by the City of Thomasville as a City Hall. When completed, it will resemble the main building.

The general setting is on a nice raised hill in a residential area with nice trees and potential for great landscaping (see Exhibits 10 and 11).

There are four outbuildings: (1) an eight-room classroom was built in 1976, (2) a home economics/shop building which was later used for classrooms was built in 1955, (3) a gymnasium was built in 1952, and (4) a two room classroom was built in 1950. All of the outbuildings are structurally sound.

# 7. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1929

Builder/Architect Ashland Spinks (contractor)

## Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

In 1887 the Mobile and West Alabama Railroad began making plans to run the railroad through this area. Some progressive men and women moved to the area and began to build a new village. "Thomasville" was chosen as the name of the town in honor of General Samuel Thomas who had been instrumental in bringing the railroad to the area. General Thomas reciprocated by giving \$500 for the building of a school, which was a lot of money in those days. Classes were being taught in a crude cabin at the time. A new school, The Thomasville Institute, was built and ready for occupancy in April, 1890 but it burned to the ground before the first class was formed. Undaunted, the citizens rebuilt the schoolhouse and The Thomasville Public School opened its doors in September, 1890. This school served the white citizens of Thomasville for nearly 40 years until it was replaced with a new school in 1929, the school which is the subject of this application.

In August of 1927, all arrangements had been completed for the financing of the Thomasville High School for the City of Thomasville, Alabama. Sealed proposals were to be received for the construction of a building using the 10-1-B state plan. Local contractor Ashland Spinks was awarded the bid on the project, and in October of that year excavation of the site began. On Monday, January 8, 1929, classes began in the newly completed \$50,000 building. There were 17 students in the first graduating class. The next year the 40 year old white frame grammar school building burned to the ground so room was made in the new school to house the elementary grades also.

Enrollment increased and the campus expanded. The black citizens in Thomasville were served by a separate school, until the late 1960's when the public schools were integrated and the Thomasville school separated from the County school system. Blacks and whites attended public school together in this school and when the campus finally became full in 1971, grades 7 through 12 moved to a new high school, leaving this school with just the elementary grades.

Approximately 20 years later because of termite damage, flooding problems and the need for more classrooms, a new elementary school was built and in January 1991 the hallowed halls of the old school were silent.

In recent years the need for an auditorium in Thomasville has become very apparent to the citizens of the area. In June, 1991 the Thomasville City Board of Education transferred the ownership of the old school property to the City of Thomasville, and a committee was formed reporting to the City Council for the purpose of overseeing the use of the facility and for investigating the possibility of using the facility as a Civic Center which would include an auditorium.

This school has tremendous significance and sentimental value to the residents in and around Thomasville as well as to its graduates scattered around the country. These people have very strong, nostalgic feelings for the old school and want desperately to see it saved in as close to its original condition as possible. Thomasville is not old in comparison to many of the historical cities of our state, but it is typical of many small rural communities that began when the railroad came to the town.

Although we are sure there are many, many stories that could be told about events that occurred in this old building, there are at least four events of historical significance during the administration of the second Principal, Mr. George A. Harris, that should be recorded. As told by his daughter, Virginia Griffin, these are:

In the early 1930's, the generally accepted form of entertainment did not include dancing or playing cards. In fact, most Thomasville people believed that anyone who partook of these "sins" would go to that hot place rather than the promised land. Mr. Harris believed strongly in his school however, and was always raising money to provide for its needs. He and the people who packed the auditorium one evening apparently risked the wrath of God to raise money by having a dance. It was the first public ballroom dance to be held in the area, and a student orchestra provided the music. The report is that evidently the needs of the school children caused God to look the other way and the dance was highly successful.

Later on, in about 1933 or 1934, when Mr. Harris made one of his usual trips to town to pick up the mail, he saw a distinguished looking gentleman to whom he introduced himself. In the ensuing conversation Mr. Harris learned that it was Dr. George Washington Carver, who was passing through town. Seizing the day, Mr. Harris invited Dr. Carver to address the Thomasville students, and at a hastily called meeting of the student body, Dr. Carver addressed them from the old stage in the auditorium.

Also in the same time period, Tony Sarge and his world renowned marionettes were stranded in Thomasville when their bus broke down. Mr. Harris, never one to miss an opportunity, invited and convinced Tony Sarge and his group to put on a performance for the students. While the bus was being repaired, the students thoroughly enjoyed performances of Hansel and Gretel and of Faustis.

A few years later, Mr. Harris happened to learn that Helen Keller was passing through town, and he was able to get her to come to the school and talk to the students.

The building is the typical architectural style of the 1920's, which we have found difficult to describe as any certain style of architecture, but it is a handsome, sturdy structure. We have diligently tried to find out who the architect was that designed it under state plan 10-1-B which was apparently available to many communities, but we have not been able to get this information. It was interesting (and yet horrifying) to many of us who have been working on this project to view the televised reports awhile back showing the fire engulfing the Marbury High School in Prattville. We watched in amazement as from what we were able to see, their school was identical to ours in every detail.

The committee previously appointed by the city has now become the Thomasville Civic Center Foundation, it has received tax exempt status, it has signed a long term (99 year) lease of the main building from the City, and it is in the process of beginning an all-out effort to restore the old school for use as a Civic Center for the citizens of the City of Thomasville and the surrounding area.

The primary industry in this area is wood products, and there are approximately five large pulp and paper mills in a 50 mile radius. The majority of the people in this area work either at these mills and in businesses providing goods and services to these mills, or in numerous other wood product operations. There is also farming, apparel factories, and other small businesses. The retail trade area is considered to be a 30 mile radius with approximately 35,000 people. Walmart built a store here several years ago and the day the doors opened Mr. Walton and others noted that they did not build a large enough store as it became obvious Thomasville draws more people than they anticipated. (Walmart is now in the process of building one of their super stores here.) This is not a wealthy area, but it is filled with hard-working industrious people. The churches are very active and the crime rate is low. We have one movie theater that shows films on Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights. We

have good schools. Our one major drawback is that we have very little in the way of artistic and cultural programs and activities. All the major cities which could provide these programs are at least 100 miles away which makes it pretty much prohibitive to most of our citizens. Consequently this is a need we intend to fill with this Civic Center.

It is the intention of the Civic Center Foundation to preserve the structure in its original state in every way possible. The aluminum windows will be replaced with double hung wood sash windows like the original windows. The beaded board will be retained wherever possible. The paneling that was added in some locations will be removed. The beams on the ceiling in the auditorium will be retained. The wood flooring will be sanded and refinished. The north wing is once more being separated from the main structure. In addition, this north wing is being changed where possible to more closely resemble the original main building (hip roof, etc.) and the City is planning to use this building for a new City Hall. The cafeteria that was on the lower level of the rear of the south wing will be improved and become a lovely reception hall available to area residents and groups for dinner, banquets, receptions, etc.

The only significant proposed design change is in the auditorium which was a typical meeting-room type school auditorium of that vintage. The plans are to remove the present stage to provide for more seating, to build a new stage in back of the present one, to install a small orchestra pit, to incline the floor for comfortable theater seating, and to install appropriate accoustical and lighting systems. The result will be a first class theater/auditorium for this area where local talent will be challenged to excel (and we have a lot of local talent), as well as to provide the facility required to attract touring productions in the performing arts whenever possible.

Some of the classrooms will be used for dance classes, aerobics, art classes, etc. Others will be furnished tastefully by local Civic Organizations who will use them for their meetings and activities, but when unoccupied by the organizations the rooms will be available for use by others. We intend to use the halls and the lobby for exhibiting art work and for showings of the work of local artists and others.

This structure has already begun to deteriorate, and there have been at least three instances of vandalism. There are not many buildings in the area that have historical significance. If preservation of the old school is not accomplished, it is apparent that this area will lose its most outstanding historic structure.



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## 8. Major Bibliographical References

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Dana Dunn, Editor of the Thomasville Times researched most of the historical data from the newspaper files. Additional historical information may be found in the "Thomasville Centennial: 1888-1988 - Yesterday's Memories...Tomorrow's Dreams" brochure and in the "New Beginnings" brochure published by the Thomasville Chamber of Commerce in 1992, copies of which are enclosed. Conversations were held with many, many local residents over the past several months. Those contributing specific information were Virginia Griffin, Francis Nichols, and the staff of the Thomasville City School System.

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## 9. Geographical Data

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Acreage of nominated property \_\_\_\_\_

Quadrangle name \_\_\_\_\_

Quadrangle scale \_\_\_\_\_

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### Verbal boundary description and justification

The center front of the building sits 246.5 feet from Adams Avenue on the north, 209.5 feet from Washington Avenue on the south, and 210 feet from West Front Street on the east. This information together with the dimensions of the building follow, as well as a copy of the deed which covers the entire property conveyed to the City of Thomasville by the Thomasville Board of Education.

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**10. Form Prepared By**

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name/title SHIRLEY A. STAFFORD  
organization SECRETARY THOMASVILLE CIVIC CENTER FOUNDATION date MAY 5, 1994  
street & number Rt 2 Box 192 F telephone (205) 636-5569  
city or town THOMASVILLE state ALABAMA 36784

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**11.** Please submit color slides of the property with this form.

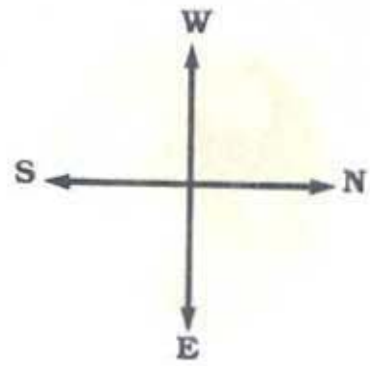
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ENCLOSED

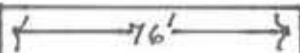
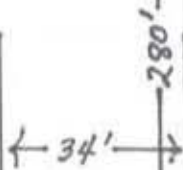
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**12.** Please return ALABAMA REGISTER form to:

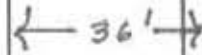
ALABAMA REGISTER COORDINATOR  
ALABAMA HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
725 MONROE STREET  
MONTGOMERY ALABAMA 36130



CAFETERIA - GROUND LEVEL  
CLASSROOMS - SECOND LEVEL



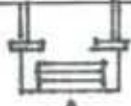
AUDITORIUM



89'  
to Washington Ave.

126'  
to Adams Ave.

210'  
to West Front St.



STATE OF ALABAMA,  
COUNTY OF CLARKE,

)  
This instrument was prepared by  
Ednon H. McKinley, Attorney at Law,  
Thomasville, Alabama.

) 13972

STATUTORY WARRANTY DEED

THIS INSTRUMENT, made and entered into on this, the 15 day of August, 1991, by and between the Thomasville City Board of Education &/s/ the Board of Education of Thomasville, Alabama, party of the first part, and The City of Thomasville, party of the second part,

WITNESSETH:

Deed Tax  
Mig Tax  
Miri Tax  
J. Fee

That the party of the first part, for and in consideration of the following:

1. The party of the second part hereby assuming all responsibility and liability of the party of the first part for any and all EPA and ADEM environmental liens, regulations, and cleanup of the hereinafter described property;
2. Party of the second part hereby warranting, guaranteeing, granting and giving to the party of the first part for school purposes upon request, the free use of the auditorium, now situate or which may be re-modeled or constructed on the hereinafter described property for school functions (such use being scheduled not to conflict with other schedule use of said auditorium);
3. Party of the second part hereby granting and giving to party of the first part free use of the small playground located on the East 155 feet, more or less, of Block 49, as shown on the 1903 map of the City of Thomasville; and
4. Other good and valuable consideration in hand paid, given, granted, assumed or warranted by the party of the second part, the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged, the said party of the first part does hereby grant, bargain, sell and convey unto the said party of the second part, the following described real estate

to-wit:

PARCEL 1: Beginning 518' W of SE corner of SE1/4; thence from said point run Northerly 340'; thence Northwesterly 640' along South line of Adams Avenue; thence Southwesterly 293'; thence Southerly 232', more or less, to Washington Avenue; thence run Southeasterly 240' along North line of said Avenue; thence Easterly 682', more or less, to Point of Beginning. This being part of the SE1/4 of SW1/4 of SE1/4 and part of the SW1/4 of SE1/4 of SE1/4 and part of the SE1/4 of SE1/4 of SE1/4, in Section 14, Township 11 North, Range 3 East.

000188

PARCEL 2: Beginning at the NW intersection of Adams Street and Tyson Street, thence continue westerly 150.64' more or less, along the North right of way Adams Avenue to the Point of Beginning. Thence westerly 90 feet; thence southerly 170 feet; thence southwesterly 302 feet, more or less, (the last three calls and distances being along the North right of way of Adams Avenue as it is presently located) thence northerly 300 feet; thence easterly 377 feet, thence southerly 79.2 feet, more or less to the Point of Beginning; in Section 14, Township 11 North, Range 3 East.

PARCEL 3: Lot in NE1/4 of NE1/4 of Section 23, Township 11 North, Range 3 East, and beginning at the Northwest Intersection of the Rights of Way of Washington Street and West Front Street, thence northwesterly 665 feet, more or less, thence easterly 680 feet to the West Right of Way of West Front Street; thence South along said Right of Way 105 feet, more or less, to the point of beginning.

PARCEL 4: The East 155', more or less of Block 49, as shown by the 1903 map of the City of Thomasville.

It is the intention of the party of the first part to convey unto the party of the second part all of the property used by the Thomasville Elementary School, including Strickland Field and the park, recreation area and buildings adjacent thereto. Said property is also shown and outlined in red on Exhibit "A" attached hereto and made a part hereof.

This conveyance is subject to all public or private easements and rights of way, whether or not recorded of record.

Together with all and singular the tenements, hereditaments, and appurtenances thereto belonging or in anywise appertaining.

TO HAVE AND TO HOLD unto The City of Thomasville and its successors and assigns forever.

By acceptance and recordation of this deed, the party of the second part expressly agrees to those matters of consideration numbered 1 through 3 above.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, we have hereunto set our hands and seals, this the 16th day of August, 1991.

THOMASVILLE CITY BOARD OF EDUCATION  
a/k/a THE BOARD OF EDUCATION OF  
THOMASVILLE, ALABAMA

ATTEST:  
W. L. L. L.  
Secretary 1988 Chairman

Arilla Rice  
Chairperson

David E. Hulsey  
Superintendent