NPS Form 10-900 (Rev. 10-90)

OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

Deusers 3/14/01

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 Walter Herron Taylor Eleme	entary School	
other names/site number Virginia D	epartment of Historic Resource	es File No. 122-0404
2. Location		
street & number 1410 Claremont Avenue	no	ot for publication N/A
city or town Norfolk		vicinityX
state Virginia code VA county Norfolk (independent of the Norfolk (independent)		
3. State/Federal Agency Certification		
Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and profession property X_ meets does not meet the National Register nationally statewide _X_ locally. ( See continuation of the procedural profession and prof	Criteria. I recommend that this pr	operty be considered significan
Signature of certifying official Date <u>Virginia Department of Historic Resources</u> State or Federal agency and bureau		
In my opinion, the property meets does not mee for additional comments.)	t the National Register criteria.	( See continuation shee
Signature of commenting or other official	Date	Actual Control of Cont
State or Federal agency and bureau		
4. National Park Service Certification		
I, hereby certify that this property is:	other (explain):	
entered in the National Register		
See continuation sheet		
determined eligible for the		
National Register	Signature of Keeper	
See continuation sheet.		
determined not eligible for the National Register		
removed from the National Register	Date of Action	

5. Classification		
Ownership of Property (Check as ma	iany boxes as apply)	
private	y conto us uppry)	
X public-local		
public-State		
public-Federal		
Category of Property (Check only or	ne box)	
X building(s)		
district	•	
site		
structure		
object		
Number of Resources within Propert	ty	
Contributing Noncontributing		
_10buildings		
_0		
_0 objects		
_10Total		
Name of related multiple property lis	reviously listed in the National Register _N/A_ sting (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)	
IN/A		_
6. Function or Use		
Historic Functions (Enter categories	from instructions)	
Cat: Education		
Current Functions (Enter categories f	from instructions)	
Cat: Education		

7. Description
Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)
Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals
Materials (Enter categories from instructions)
foundation Brick
roof METAL
walls Stucco
other
Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets
8. Statement of Significance
Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for
National Register listing)
X 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.  X C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction of the con
represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant an
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 Use 1th (Madiains
Health/Medicine
Period of Significance1917 - 1918

Significant Dates	1917 1918
	omplete if Criterion B is marked above) N/A
Cultural Affiliation	N/A N/A
Architect/Builder	John Kevan Peebles
Narrative Statement o	f Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)
9. Major Bibliograph	nical References
(Cite the books, article	es, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)
requested.	mination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been
previously listed i	in the National Register
previously determ	nined eligible by the National Register
	onal Historic Landmark
recorded by Histo	oric American Buildings Survey #
recorded by Histo	oric American Engineering Record #
Primary Location of A _X_ State Historic PreOther State agency	eservation Office
Federal agency	y
Local government	t ·
University	
Other	
Name of repository:	
10. Geographical Dat	ta
Acreage of Property _	
UTM References (Place	ce additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)
Zone Easting 1 18 383720	g Northing Zone Easting Northing 0 4080925 2
3	4
See con	ntinuation sheet.
Verbal Boundary Desc	cription (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)
Boundary Justification	(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepare	ed By			
name/title:	Joanne Berkley			
Organization:	Parents, Alumni and Friends of Taylor	School	date	Thursday, January 15, 1
street & number: _	P.O. Box 11656	telephone	(757) 42	23 – 6033, (757) 623-5444
city or town	Norfolk		sta	ate_VA_zip code_23517
Additional Docum				
Submit the following	ng items with the completed form:			
Continuation Sheet	ts			
	7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the proper historic districts and properties having			s resources.
	plack and white photographs of the prope	rty.		
	Check with the SHPO or FPO for any add			
Property Owner				
` .	n at the request of the SHPO or FPO.) orfolk c/o City Manager James B. Olive	r		
street & number	810 Union Street, City Hall Build	ling te	lephone	(757) 664 – 4626
city or town	Norfolk	state	e Virgini	ia zip code <u>23510</u>
	t Statement: This information is being collected for	rapplications to th	======= e National R	egister of Historic Places to nomin

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.

National Park Service

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Walter Herron Taylor Elementary School Norfolk, Virginia

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#### ARCHITECTURAL SUMMARY

Walter Herron Taylor Elementary School is a three story elementary school designed by John Kevan Peebles, a noted Norfolk architect with a body of work represented throughout several southeastern states. Built in an open area on the fringes of Norfolk, the school was constructed in anticipation of the growth of the West Ghent neighborhood. The school's straightforward style faithfully expresses its use and layout. Two separate issues necessitated a change from the typical four-sided school house footprint: the introduction of an auditorium and a conscious effort to make full use of natural light in the classrooms. While it is difficult to place Taylor's plan in chronological context of school design, it is a definite break from the typical style and plan for schools at that time. The typical school was defined by a plan consisting of classrooms on both sides of a single corridor with a set of stairs at each end. Locating the auditorium in the center of Taylor School shifted half of the classrooms from the north to the east and west (with the other half located on the south) The classrooms were placed in locations allowing sunlight exposure as opposed to having some with a northern, shaded exposure which would have been necessitated by the typical design.

### ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

W. H. Taylor School is a three story elementary school completed and opened in 1917. The school has approximately 42,000 square feet of floor space, 19,000 of which is the actual footprint on the site. The first floor is approximately 32 inches below the average surrounding grade. The middle floor is approximately ten and one half feet above the lowest level, or about seven feet above the surrounding grade, with the exception of the ceremonial main entrance and lobby. The entrance is located in the center of the south elevation, is approximately twenty feet wide, is two feet above grade, and it connects the main entrance to the auditorium. Where this lobby crosses the corridor there are matching stairs on each side up to the main second floor level. The third floor is all one level, approximately fourteen feet above the second level.

The general organization of the plan for the building is based on the location of classrooms on the top two floors surrounding the auditorium. The corridors on each floor form a modified "H" shape. Two short legs run from the center corridor to the south creating the two projecting wings at the front of the school. Two long legs run along the east and west sides of the auditorium. There are three classrooms along each of these side wings on the second and third floors. In the

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middle section of the "H" there is a classroom on either side of a central element. On the second floor, the element is the entry hall leading into the auditorium. On the third floor, there is a classroom above the entry.

The finishes inside the building include terrazzo floors on the second and third floor corridors and painted plaster walls and ceilings throughout. The current floors in the classrooms are a resilient tile installed over wood sleepers and substrate. Because of the recessed classroom floor slab, it is likely that the original classroom finished floors were wood on sleepers. The walls shared by the classrooms and corridors have a series of 3' X 3' windows located about five feet above the floor. The window sash in unpainted, stained wood with muntins set in a four over four pattern. The pattern is very similar to that pattern in the windows facing a garden in the old wing of the Chrysler Museum of Art, also designed by Peebles. The interior windows allow natural light to enter the corridors. They also have the effect of opening up the corridors, so that space seems to flow from room to room, eliminating the sense of being closed in. Adjacent to these windows are oversized wood classroom doors with large single lights, making another visual connection between corridor and classroom. Other interior doors which have no glass are wood and have six veritcal panels. Third floor walls shared by the auditorium and the corridors have scenes of relief figures in plaster. These provide points of visual interest and historical reference.

The auditorium once filled the entire center of the school. Today the original space is split in two. This was done to provide for a media center. The stage and surrounding woodwork appear to be original. Of additional interest is the mural "The Landing at Jamestown" by G. Lattimer Davis to the left of the stage.

The concrete structure itself is clearly expressed in the corridor walls and ceiling as both columns and beams protrude from the surrounding surface. This is an architecture of economy, as the articulation of the structure becomes part of the ornament.

The load bearing parts of the building appear to all be reinforced concrete. Research by the City of Norfolk indicates continuous spread concrete footings. Concrete foundation walls appear to bear directly on the footings with the concrete columns cast right into those walls. The structural loads from the floors and walls are held by the columns and beams. The three floors and roof are all cast-in-place structural concrete slabs. The roof is flat. It should be noted that a building with

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a complete reinforced concrete structure, while rare in some places in 1917, was somewhat typical in port cities such as Norfolk because of its use in warehouses.

On the exterior elevations, Taylor clearly expresses in its large windows that it is a school house. These windows, originally wood double hung, are arranged in groups of five. The original and replacement classroom windows are all twelve over twelve. Two groups are in each classroom. Originally providing fresh air and light, the metal sash replacements still provide as much natural light as any classroom windows in the city. The main entrance at the center is now an aluminum storefront double door. Alumni of the school, however, remember an entrance with sash patterns quite similar to the corridor transoms.

The choice of materials is consistent with the straightforward architecture created by the design strategies mentioned above and probably necessitated by the budget constraints of the school board. Cream colored stucco on a brick substrate provides the exterior finish for the top two thirds of the exterior walls, while the bottom third is a bark brown/red brick with a slightly rough texture. As was customary, the stucco was applied directly to a brick substrate. The stucco has a texture consistent with a finish created while it was still fairly wet. The coping around the top of the wall is the brick turned in a continuous soldier course. At the front of the building directly above the entrance there is a slight rise in the top of the wall to form a very slight gable silhouette.

The stucco finish and the rough texture of the brick derive more from the arts and crafts movement than the more popular classical detailing of most public buildings of the day. Very popular as a look for bungalows in other parts of the country, the detailing of the arts and crafts movement lent itself to a simpler appearance than the classical or colonial revival. Because of this simpler detailing, there was a greater freedom in developing the massing required by the plan and in maintaining the economy necessitated by the budget.

The influence of this school's siting began when the City of Norfolk acquired property for a school in the central location of the then empty twenty year old West Ghent subdivision. The building, play grounds, and connections to the surrounding streets and homes influenced the development of the neighborhood. West Ghent is one of the earliest planned neighborhoods in Norfolk. It was laid out in accordance with the planning strategies of the developing American suburbs at the turn of the century. The school immediately became a catalyst for development;

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as soon as it was finished the neighborhood quickly began to fill in. In the year after Taylor's opening, upwards of fifty houses were under construction to the immediate north of the school, according to contemporary accounts. Taylor's impact upon the location of the surrounding streets is even more direct. Through the early efforts of the P.T.A., the playground moved from its original location north of the building to the south side of the school, negating the planned extension of Baldwin Avenue in order to provide the space. This also had the effect of ending efforts to move the playground west of the school and allowing for the purchase of land to connect Claremont Avenue from Princess Anne Road to Spotswood Road.

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Summary Statement of Significance

Walter Herron Taylor Elementary School qualifies for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A & C. Built in 1917, it was designed by Virginia architect John Kevan Peebles, noted for his work at the University of Virginia, the Virginia State Capitol and the 1907 Jamestown Tercentennial in Norfolk. The school building itself is modest in size and presentation thus being sympathetic to the surrounding colonial revival homes built in the same era. In 1918, shortly after its construction, the school was used as a temporary hospital and morgue during the Spanish Influenza epidemic. It then returned to use as an elementary school and has served Norfolk students to the present day

# Narrative Statement of Significance

The Walter Herron Taylor Elementary School was designed by Norfolk architect John Kevan Peebles and constructed by Jesse Johnson and Sons in 1916-1917. It opened with twelve classrooms and four additional rooms were completed two years later under a separate contract to Seay Brothers. The school was named for Colonel Walter Herron Taylor, General Robert E. Lee's Assistant Adjutant General during the Civil War and the only Norfolk-born member of Lee's staff. W. H. Taylor Elementary is the only remaining school in Norfolk designed by Peebles which is still serving its original function.

When Taylor School opened on September 10, 1917, with approximately 205 students, it was located on the site of the Core farm. The area, now known as West Ghent, is bounded on the south by Redgate Avenue, on the east by Hampton Boulevard, on the north by the Norfolk and Southern railroad tracks and on the west by the Norfolk and Southern coal yards. West Ghent was developed by the West Ghent Boulevard Company, Inc during the first two decades of the 20th century. It served as an enlargement to the existing Ghent suburb, developed in 1890 by the Norfolk Company. As early as 1900, the Norfolk Company's holdings expanded west past Colley Avenue and into current "West Ghent." They developed the area between Redgate Avenue and Ambler Street. By 1914 The West Ghent Boulevard Company had platted the area north of Ambler including the site for the Taylor School.

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Many schools were being constructed in Norfolk during the first quarter of the 20th century. As local suburbs grew around the City of Norfolk and absorbed the growing middle class population in the city, each community had its own school. Enrollment in Norfolk Schools grew from 3,028 in 1896 to 16,517 in 1922. This growth mirrored the growth in Norfolk's population which was 67,452 in 1910 and 115,777 in 1920. New schools or extensions for existing schools were being constructed almost every two years during this period. As Henry Rorer, retired superintendent of the Norfolk Schools writes in his history of the schools,

A 20th century phenomenon in Norfolk public school history was the enormous expansion of our school building program. During the 19th century period of 1801-1900 the total expenditure for school buildings was \$193,445 or an average annual expenditure of \$1,934. During the first 12 years of the 20th century (1901-12) the total expenditure for buildings was \$442,085 or an average annual expenditure of \$37,673. This represents an annual increase of 1600%. In other words, after 1900 the city spent each month more than it had formerly spent on buildings during an entire year.

The need for more classrooms existing long before this building program began, and a major factor in bringing about the 20th century building program was an increasing public recognition of the value of our public schools. <sup>1</sup>

At this time, John Kevan Peebles was a prominent architect. The Walter Herron Taylor Elementary School was the sixth school-related construction commission that Peebles received in the Norfolk area and is the earliest remaining school of his collection still serving its original function. Peebles was also responsible for designing J.E. B. Stuart School (1919-1922) located in the Colonial Place neighborhood (VDHR file # 122-0528), now used for gifted and other special programs, and the addition to Lafayette School (VDHR file # 122-0043), now an apartment building and listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Lafayette, Taylor and J.E.B. Stuart are the only remaining school buildings of the nine known schools designed by Peebles in Norfolk. While two of the three still serve an educational purpose, only W.H. Taylor Elementary School retains its original function as an elementary school.

John Kevan Peebles (1866-1934) had a recognized body of work in Virginia. He was a native of Petersburg and studied engineering at the University of Virginia receiving his degree in 1890.

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He remained at the University of Virginia until 1892, teaching applied mathematics. He moved to Norfolk in 1892 and immediately acquired prominent commissions in the city including Ohef Sholom Temple, and the Royster house. Among his most successful commissions are the numerous buildings he designed on the University of Virginia campus, alterations and additions Virginia State Capital and the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. He was also the chairman of the architectural design board of the Jamestown Tercentennial Exposition of 1907.

Walter Herron Taylor School is a departure to some extent from Peebles' more classically inspired architecture. The school has a more utilitarian feel, with its materials clearly expressed. Its plan and features, particularly its large exterior windows and interior windows to the halls, emphasize the functional needs for light and circulation. Peebles also included an auditorium, not typical in school design of the era, which became a focal point community activities beyond the school's uses. However, even with its emphasis on pragmatic issues, the design does have a type of formal classicism in its strict symmetry and the dominance of the central almost ceremonial entrance leading into the auditorium with stairs on either side leading to classrooms. The symmetry is also evident in the 5 bay facade with a parapet rising to a classically inspired triangular pediment above the central bay.

The use of clearly expressed materials and the stripped down classicism emphasizing the building's function may have been a response to the surrounding community. Homes in the West Ghent neighborhood are largely classical revival in style, but more modest in scale and massing than the more prominent homes along the Hague and Stockley Gardens in Ghent. By adopting an unpretentious design, particularly in exterior elevations, Peebles was sympathetic to the surrounding architecture in the nascent community.

Taylor Elementary School's significance extends beyond its architecture. A year after the school opened, it was closed from 3 October to 4 November and used as a hospital during the Spanish Flu epidemic.

The Spanish Influenza epidemic claimed over 30 million deaths throughout the world during the period of 1917-1918. The worst epidemic in U.S. History, it took over 600,000 deaths with 550,000 occurring during an intense ten month period. Victims died both from the flu itself and from related pneumonia. The nation suffered this catastrophe during the waning months of WWI when most doctors and medical personnel were abroad as part of the war effort. In the month of

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October 1918 there were over 195,000 influenza related deaths in the United States. By early November the scourge lessened considerably and vanished as quickly and mysteriously as it had arrived.

The influenza epidemic in Norfolk, Virginia mirrored the experience of the epidemic in the country at large. Norfolk was particularly vulnerable because of a marked increase in population. Troops and shipyard workers mobilized for the war effort had flooded the area. Norfolk's population had grown from approximately 94,000 persons in the fall of 1916 to 136,500 the following fall. Close quarters aided the spread of the infectious disease and infrastructure and public services could not satisfy the growing demands placed on them.

By 3 October of 1918, the Spanish Influenza had reached grave proportions in Norfolk. The health commissioner ordered all schools and picture theaters closed to try to stem the spread of the disease. Public dancing was banned, dance halls closed and places of worship were requested to discontinue services, which they did. Norfolk's four hospitals were taxed beyond capacity. By 5 October, when Health Commissioner Powhatan W. Schenk ordered that the Taylor school be open as an emergency hospital, the number of official cases was 1,414 and the deaths were 25. Red Cross nurses were requested from Washington but were unavailable having been pressed into service in Washington where the flu was raging. The health commissioner canvassed the city for cots at the makeshift hospital.

Most of the patients housed at Taylor were indigent and could not be cared for in local hospitals. The Red Cross installed beds in six of the classrooms on the first floor and a morgue in two classrooms. Members of the PTA prepared food for the sick in the basement lunchroom.

The influenza epidemic left Norfolk as quickly as it had arrived. Between 28 September and 4 November 1917, 562 Norfolk citizens had died. There were 1,025 official reported cases with the unofficial tally much higher.

1.Rorer, p. 32

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Atlas of Norfolk, Portsmouth, and Berkley, Virginia Norfolk: Sam W. Bowman 1900

Atlas of the City of Norfolk, Virginia and Vicinity Philadelphia: G. M. Hopkins, 1889

Baldwin, J.M. West Ghent (map), Norfolk: Morrie Company, Ledger Dispatch Building, November 1914.

Brownell, Charles E., Calder Loth, William Rasmussen and Richard Guy Wilson, <u>The Making of Virginia Architecture</u> (Richmond: Virginia Museum of Fine Arts) 1992.

Emergency Hospital to be Opened Today Virginian-Pilot and the Norfolk Landmark October 5 1918

Fontanella, Cathy W. H. Taylor Elementary School History (unpublished manuscript) Norfolk, Va 1978.

Influenza Sweeping City Leaving Death in Wake Virginian Pilot and Norfolk Landmark October 3, 1918

Nasca, Stephen Paul Norfolk in the First World War, Masters Thesis, Old Dominion University, May 1979, Norfolk, Va.

Nolte, Kelly <u>Receiving the Lessons--The Work of John Kevan Peebles (1866-1934) with Special Emphasis on the 1907 Tercentennial</u> Masters Thesis, Old Dominion University, Norfolk, Va.

Open Influenza Hospital At Once Norfolk Ledger-Dispatch Saturday October 1918 p.1

Parents, Alumni, and Friends of Taylor School, *Walter Herron Taylor Elementary School: A Uniquely Norfolk History* unpublished manuscript 1997.

Rorer, Henry S. History of Norfolk Public Schools 1681-1968 Norfolk: Henry S. Rorer 1968.

Spanish influenza, Three Day Fever, The Flu Norfolk Ledger-Dispatch, October 5, 1918 (section 1) p.7.

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The American Experience: Influenza 1918 (program #1005). 1998. Produced and directed by Robert Kenner. WBGH, Boston.

Total Number of Cases Norfolk Ledger-Dispatch, October 5, 1918 Section 1 p. 5

Tucker, George Holbert *The 1918 Flu Epidemic Took 562 Norfolk Lives* The Virginian pilot September 8, 1957 p C 1.

Wells, John E. and Robert E. Dalton <u>The Virginia Architects 1835-1955</u> Richmond: New South Architectural Press, 1997.

Zarakov, Barry N. Ghent: Norfolk's Planned Suburb of the 1890s Notes on Virginia # 20 Winter 1980

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Verbal Boundary Description

Part of blocks 1 and 6, 12 and 24 and enclosed street, as indicated on tax plate 576, City of Norfolk.

**Boundary Justification** 

The nominated property includes all of the entire parcel historically associated with the school which is still publicly owned.

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Section Photo Page 12

# All photographs are of:

## WALTER HERRON TAYLOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Norfolk, Virginia VDHR file Number: 122-40 Rick Voight, photographer

All negatives are stored with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources.

DATE: 29 June 1997

VIEW OF: facade, south elevation

NEG. NO: 16460 PHOTO 1 OF 8

DATE: 29 June 1997

VIEW OF:west elevation

NEG. NO: 16460 PHOTO 2 OF 8

DATE: 29 June 1997

VIEW OF: north elevation

NEG. NO: 16460 PHOTO 3 OF 8

DATE: 29 June 1997

VIEW OF: east elevation

NEG. NO: 16460 PHOTO 4 OF 8 DATE: 29 June 1997

VIEW OF: auditorium, facing north

NEG. NO: 16460 PHOTO 5 OF 8

DATE:29 June 1997

VIEW OF: interior hallway

NEG. NO: 16460 PHOTO 6 OF 8

DATE:29 June 1997

VIEW OF: interior first floor hall with

landing

NEG. NO: 16460

PHOTO 7 OF 8

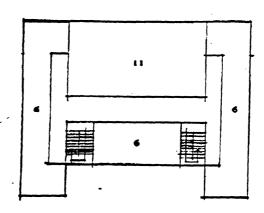
DATE:29 June 1997

VIEW OF: interior, typical classroom

NEG. NO: 16460 PHOTO 8 OF 8

#### W. H. TAYLOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

## NORFOLK, VIRGINIA



#### EGEND

SUPPORT SERVICES

CAPETERIA

ACTIVITY ROOM

MECHANICAL

LOBBY

CLASSROOMS

NURSE

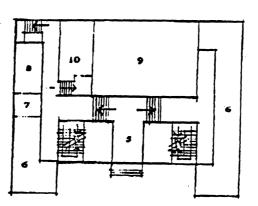
SCHOOL OFFICE

AUDITORIUM

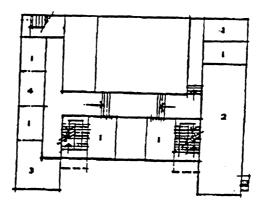
LIBRARY

UPPER AUDITORIUM

#### SECOND FLOOR PLAN



## FIRST FLOOR PLAN



BASEMENT PLAN