

# 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 Webb Public School  
Other names/site number Webb High School  
Name of related multiple property listing N/A  
(Remove "N/A" if property is part of a multiple property listing and add name)

## 2. Location

Street & Number: 938 Walnut Avenue West  
City or town: McKenzie State: TN County: Carroll and Weakley  
Not For Publication:  N/A Vicinity:  N/A Zip: 38201

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,  
I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national  statewide  local

Applicable National Register Criteria:  A  B  C  D

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of certifying official/Title:** **Date**  
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, Tennessee Historical Commission  
**State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government**

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Commenting Official:** **Date**  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**Title:** **State of Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government**

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**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
- Structure
- Object

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	4	buildings
0	3	sites
0	0	structures
1	0	objects
2	7	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION/school

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION

RECREATION AND CULTURE

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

Modern Movement

**Materials:**

Principal exterior materials of the property:

CONCRETE BLOCK, BRICK VENEER, VINYL,  
STEEL, SYNTHETIC RUBBER, and METAL

**Narrative Description**

The Webb School is located in a residential area within the west section of the City of McKenzie’s city limits (population 5,529), in Carroll and Weakley County, Tennessee.<sup>1</sup> The Webb School building sits on 15.1 acres and was constructed in 1958 in the Modern Movement style. The school is a one and two-story building in an irregular plan on a slab foundation and of concrete block construction. The building is covered with brick and vinyl siding and has a flat synthetic rubber roof except for a metal gabled roof over the auditorium on the south end of the building. The Webb School was moved to this property in 1937 after their other school building in town burned down in 1936. The 1937 building was later torn down due to deterioration and the nominated was constructed in 1958. The current school gained historical significance from 1958-1966, when it served as a school for local African American students, grades one through twelve. This school was also the only high school for African American students in Carroll County. The school later desegregated in 1966, however the building continues to be maintained in its current historic state and is used for a variety of community needs.

<sup>1</sup> 2020 Decennial Census, McKenzie, Tennessee, Data.census.gov, [https://data.census.gov/profile/McKenzie\\_city,\\_Tennessee?q=1600000US4744940](https://data.census.gov/profile/McKenzie_city,_Tennessee?q=1600000US4744940).

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**Site and Setting**

The setting of the school remains much as it was historically. The school is located on the far west side of McKenzie's city limits and straddles Carroll and Weakley County. The area around the school is a historically African American neighborhood and is predominately residential, although there is a park and a sanitation/recycling center nearby. Since the school's closure, more rental units and homes have been constructed in this area. Overall, the area retains its historic residential feel with the school as a cohesive component of the neighborhood.

The Webb School's façade is located on the west elevation of the building, facing away from Hinkledale Avenue/West Walnut Road. According to an interview with local community members, the building's orientation was decided due to complaints from white residents who lived across Hinkledale Avenue/West Walnut Road to the south. To appease the complaints, the county placed the front entrance on the west elevation, away from the road and resident.<sup>2</sup> Oakland Drive is located to the west, Park Circle to the north, and J.F. Seets Drive to the east of the property. Three playgrounds were added to the property after the school closed and are located to the north, east, and west of the school building. The north playground has a storage building that was installed in the late 1990s. The west playground has two storage buildings that were added around 2010 and the east playground, behind the auditorium, was installed in 2020. In the 1990s, a pavilion with picnic tables was installed in front of the Webb School near the southwest elevation.

The main alterations to the building include altering the flat roof above the gymnasium to a gabled roof and the addition of several HVAC units and accompanying ductwork around the building. Portions of this ductwork have covered some window openings on the building. During the school's operation, a dormitory was located on the west side of the property but was torn down shortly after the school opened. An Agriculture Building was also located to the west of the school but was torn down in the 1990s. The original school building's gymnasium (constructed in the 1930s) was attached to the north elevation of the nominated school until it was demolished in the 1970s due to deterioration.

The Webb School is located near two National Register-listed properties, both of which are less than a mile east of the school. The First Cumberland Church (NR 06/17/1993) is located on Stonewall Street and the McKenzie Depot (02/26/1996) is located on 85 Bruce Street, both near the city of McKenzie's downtown.

**WEBB HIGH SCHOOL, (CONTRIBUTING BUILDING) 1958:**

**Exterior**

The Webb School is a primarily one story building with two story sections. It is orientated on an east-west axis. The building rests upon a concrete slab foundation and is capped by a flat synthetic rubber roof, with the exception of a gable metal roof over the auditorium. The building is of concrete block construction and is covered in mostly brick siding, with some vinyl present on portions of the building. Most doors are glass within a metal frame, and all other doors are steel. The windows are mostly horizontally oriented metal windows with central awning sections in either the five light or four light configuration. They are all positioned on brick sills.

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<sup>2</sup> Mary Jordan, Ike Gilbert, and Neal Williamson, Interview by Jessica Baker, McKenzie, Tennessee, March 28, 2023.

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*Façade (West Elevation)*

The façade of the school is located on the west elevation, facing the main parking lot, known as J. L. Seets Drive. There are two main entrances on both the north and south ends of the elevation. The north entrance extends westward from the building with a glass double-door entrance on the first floor. A rectangular awning supported by metal posts extends out above the door towards the parking lot. Two brick pilasters are located under the roof line, flanking both sides of the awning. South of the entrance is a metal, fixed, four light vertical ribbon window. This same window composition is located on the south wall of the entrance projection and abuts the previously described four light vertical ribbon windows. Between the two openings are varied groupings of horizontally oriented metal awning windows in the five light configuration. The south entrance is recessed and accessed by two concrete steps. A concrete ramp with metal railing is centered on the entrance. The roof extends over the recessed portion to shelter the entrance. There are three entryways filled with single light, metal double doors. The entryways are separated from each other and the sides of the recessed entrance by four, metal, fixed light vertical windows. Above the doors and vertical windows is a metal, fixed, seven light transom. Moving south, beside the entrance, the school extends westwards and this elevation has a set of two paired and two single, multi-light metal windows with a two-light awning segment and three light fixed segment. The extended section's west elevation does not have any openings.

*South elevation:*

The west end of the south elevation features five sets of horizontally oriented five light metal awning windows. A flat roof projection is located to the east of the last window and projects southward. Three, horizontally oriented four light metal awning windows section pierce the west wall. The south wall features a recessed entry sheltered by the roof overhang. The entry is accessed by four concrete steps flanked on the west by a metal railing that leads onto a concrete porch. The entry walls are covered in particle board and a single six panel metal replacement door fills the only entryway on the projection. Two horizontally oriented four light metal awning windows are located on the east wall of the projection.

Directly east is a slightly shorter flat roof projection, which is attached to the longer projection on the west and auditorium to the north. The south and west wall features horizontally oriented five light metal awning windows

Connected to both of the one story sections is the school's two-story auditorium. Horizontally oriented four light metal awning windows are visible on the elevation, though some have had their panes covered with vinyl siding.

The easternmost flat roof projection contains a single recessed entry sheltered by the flat roof. Eight concrete steps with a central metal railing lead up to an entrance filled with double metal doors flanked on the west by horizontal, metal, fixed light windows and capped by a metal, three light transom. The west wall is pierced by paired horizontally oriented four light metal awning windows partially covered by vinyl siding.

*East elevation*

The two story auditorium is located on the southern end of the east elevation and is flanked on either side by a single story section. Each first story section has their horizontally oriented four light metal awning

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windows partially covered by vinyl siding. The auditorium has two horizontally oriented four light metal windows with central awning sections located on the second floor, and a ribbon of the same windows on the first floor. A single metal door with fixed light covered by cloth awning is located to the north of the first floor windows. Eight concrete steps with central metal railing lead up to an entrance sheltered beneath a flat roof, filled with double metal doors, flanked by two single light metal windows to the east, and capped by a metal two light transom. Four sets of horizontally oriented four light metal awning windows occupy the second story north wall of the auditorium.

The auditorium attaches to the two-story portion of the school. The first two story section (southernmost) is set back from the second section (northernmost). Varied groupings of horizontally oriented four light metal windows with central awning sections are located on the first and second stories. An entrance sheltered beneath a flat roof, filled with double metal doors, flanked on either side by two single light metal windows, and capped by a metal three light transom is located on the first floor. The second two story section is filled primarily with varied groupings of horizontally oriented five light metal windows with central awning sections, though the northernmost end features horizontally oriented four light metal awning windows.

A single story addition is located on the north wall of the auditorium. The east wall of the addition features horizontally oriented four light metal awning windows partially covered by vinyl siding. A recessed entry is located on the north wall of the addition.

On the east elevation, the first-story section has a window that has been covered with vinyl siding except for the top section which shows a paired, two-light horizontal window. The two-story auditorium rises beside the one-story section with a group of five-light, awning windows set in a horizontal ribbon on the first floor and a single door on the north end. On the second floor the auditorium has two, four-light awning windows on both ends of the second floor. Moving north on the east elevation is another one-story section that matches the first section on this elevation. The one-story section and the auditorium both have a north elevation and this elevation matches the south elevation. A few of the panes have been covered with vinyl. A first-floor exit is positioned on the far north end of the building with a centered metal framed glass double-door. Above the first-floor exit, vinyl siding covers a second-floor level that connects to a 1960s one-story brick addition.

A one-story addition was added in the early 1960s and was attached to the north end of the building in a square plan. This addition was constructed for use as a music room and is currently used as a conference room. The addition features a slab foundation, brick veneer siding, and a flat roof. The south elevation of the addition has one door and the east elevation has a set of two, four-light awning windows set in a horizontal ribbon with vinyl lintels. The addition's north elevation has an exposed concrete block exterior wall.

*North elevation:*

The north elevation consists of the north end of the school and is covered in vinyl siding where the gymnasium once was attached. The school's north elevation has a metal framed glass double-door entrance with a metal awning and a paired one-over-one fixed window, which appears to have replaced another double-door entrance at one time.

Approximately during the 1960s to 1970s, the school's agriculture building, dormitory, and cafeteria were torn down which had been there since before the 1958 school. The gymnasium was also torn down during

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the late 1970s due to much deterioration. Also, during the 1980s a few windows were covered with duct work and new windows were installed around the northwest entrance for the Head Start Program. There was also a playground located on the southeast boundary of the property and this was torn down in 2015. Three playgrounds have been added to the grounds: a north playground was installed in the 1990s, a west playground was installed in 2010, and an east playground was installed in 2020.

### Interior

The interior of the building consists of two main hallways with classrooms and offices on both sides. The museum, kitchen, auditorium, and two wings off the auditorium are all within the one-story section of the building and connect to the second-floor hallway from the south end of the building. From the southwest entrance lobby there are steps that lead up to the second-floor hallway and a staircase that descends to the first-floor level. The second-floor hallway continues with classrooms on either side until it reaches a staircase at the north end. This staircase in turns leads down to the first floor. The northern end of the first floor consists of offices, a rear exit, access to the attached addition (which currently serves as a conference room) and then a main hallway with more offices, storage rooms, and a large boiler room. At the end of the hall, a staircase leads back up to the main floor on the second-level where the south entrance is located.

Throughout the building, there are painted concrete walls, vinyl floors, steel doors, tiled ceilings, and florescent lighting. A few of the office doors on the first-floor are wood with fifteen panes, however most doors are steel doors with one small window. The second-floor has a large office area with a wood paneled wall and in some areas of the auditorium there are wood plank ceilings. The interior had most of its changes on the north end of the building. Most of the changes occurred in 1978 to the interior on the first floor of the north end for the Head Start Program and these changes included new doors, painting of the walls, added drywall, and vinyl and carpeted flooring. In the early 1980s, central heat and air units were installed around the entire building.

The hallways on the first and second floor are flanked on both sides by classrooms and offices and have vinyl flooring, painted concrete block walls, and tiled ceilings. In general, the classrooms on the second floor all have a steel door with a single light, vinyl floors, concrete block walls, and tiled ceilings. The classrooms on the first floor have been updated the most, they have carpeted floors, painted concrete block and sheetrock walls, and tiled ceilings.

The north end addition that was added in the 1960s for a music room remains and is now used as a conference room. The addition has carpeted floors, painted concrete block walls, and tiled ceilings. The room is set up with tables and chairs facing a white board on the east wall.

The school's library was turned into a museum in 2016 and is located on the south end of the building. This room has vinyl flooring, concrete block walls, and a tiled ceiling. The auditorium is also located on the south end of the building, past the south's entrance lobby and has vinyl flooring, concrete block walls, wood planked ceilings, and four sets of metal awning windows on both the north and south side of the room. Three sets of original wood bleachers remain in the room on the north end. A stage is centrally located in the auditorium making it the focal point of the room. Navy blue masking curtains hide the stage when closed and spell "WEBB" in gold lettering at the top. Two small rooms on either side of the room give access to the stage. Both rooms have concrete block walls and concrete floors. The stage itself has original hardwood

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flooring. On the south end, two vinyl pull down doors over buffet bars connect to the kitchen since the auditorium was once used as a cafeteria. The kitchen has vinyl and concrete flooring, concrete block walls, and metal awning windows giving light throughout the room. The kitchen has a freezer and a cooler room and cooking equipment remains and continues to be used when events are held in the auditorium.

### **Integrity**

The Webb School retains its integrity and ability to communicate its historical significance as a center for education within the local African American community. The school retains its integrity of location and setting, as the building remains on its historic property from its period of significance and the area continues to be surrounded by residential buildings in a historically African American neighborhood. There have been some alterations to the overall design, materials, and workmanship of the school, including the demolition of the gymnasium in the 1970s due to deterioration, and the addition of ductwork and covering of some windows in the 1980s. Additional changes to the school grounds includes the removal of the school agricultural building, dormitory, and cafeteria in the 1960s. However, with the exception of the gym, these other buildings were not attached to the Webb School, and the exterior of the building retains its signature horizontally oriented awning windows, brick siding, flat roof, and original fenestration. Interior changes took place in the late 1970s, which included new floors, paint, and updated classroom doors. However, these interior changes had minimal impact on the integrity of the school, as it retains its original hallway, office, and classroom configuration. As a result, the Webb School also retains its integrity of association and feeling.

### **NORTH PLAYGROUND, (NON-CONTRIBUTING SITE) CIRCA 1999:**

The north playground is a Non-Contributing site that was installed for the Northwest Tennessee Economic Development Council's Head Start Program circa 1999. The playground has a chain link fence around the perimeter and the area consists of three awnings, a playhouse, and two plastic/metal play centers with slides and swings. The site is Non-Contributing due to its age and because it was not associated with the property during its period of significance.

### **STORAGE SHED (NORTH), (NON-CONTRIBUTING BUILDING) CIRCA 1999:**

A storage shed is located by the north playground. It was added circa 1999 and is a Non-Contributing building. This shed has an asphalt single gable roof and fiber cement siding. The site is Non-Contributing due to its age and because it was not associated with the property during its period of significance.

### **WEST PLAYGROUND, (NON-CONTRIBUTING SITE) CIRCA 2010:**

The west playground is a Non-Contributing site that was installed for the Northwest Tennessee Economic Development Council's Head Start Program in 2010. The playground has a chain link fence around the perimeter and the area consists of one large awning, playhouses, and one plastic/metal play center. The site is Non-Contributing due to its age and because it was not associated with the property during its period of significance.

### **1<sup>ST</sup> STORAGE SHED (WEST), (NON-CONTRIBUTING BUILDING) CIRCA 2010:**



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A storage shed is located west of the school by the west playground. This storage shed was placed on site in 2010. The shed has an asphalt shingle gable roof with fiber cement siding. This is a Non-Contributing building due to its age and because it was not associated with the property during its period of significance.

**2<sup>ND</sup> STORAGE SHED (WEST), (NON-CONTRIBUTING BUILDING) CIRCA 2010:**

A second storage shed is also located west of the school by the west playground. This storage shed was placed on site in 2010. The shed has an asphalt shingle gable roof with fiber cement siding. This is a Non-Contributing building due to its age and because it was not associated with the property during its period of significance.

**PAVILION (NON-CONTRIBUTING BUILDING) CIRCA 1990S:**

A metal gable pavilion with wood posts was constructed on site directly west of the school, near the second entrance circa 1990. Currently there are five wood picnic tables under the pavilion. The building is Non-Contributing due to its age and because it was not associated with the property during its period of significance.

**EAST PLAYGROUND (NON-CONTRIBUTING SITE) CIRCA 2020:**

An east playground was installed behind the school's auditorium in 2020 for the Northwest Tennessee Economic Development Council's Head Start Program. The playground has a chain link fence around the perimeter and the area consists of a wood play center/swing set, a plastic tunnel, and a ace flyer teeter totter. The site is Non-Contributing due to its age and because it was not associated with the property during its period of significance.

**WEBB PUBLIC SCHOOL SIGN (CONTRIBUTING OBJECT) CIRCA 1956:**

A metal sign is located on the south boundary of the property that reads: "Webb Public School, Class 1956, McKenzie, TN." The sign is Contributing, as it retains its integrity and was associated with the property during its period of significance.

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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.)

Property is:

N/A

- 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.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION

ETHNIC HERITAGE: AFRICAN

AMERICAN

**Period of Significance**

1958-1966

**Significant Dates**

N/A

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

UNKNOWN

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### **Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph**

The Webb School in McKenzie, Carroll and Weakley County is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A at the local level of significance for its association with themes of African American heritage and education. From 1958 to 1966, Webb School served African American children in Carroll County as the only public high school available to them during the late Jim Crow era. The school offered grades one through twelve and taught courses in subjects such as Social Studies, Math, Agriculture, and Language. Students also participated in extracurricular activities such as sports, band, and glee clubs. These experiences provided students with a quality education that earned the school a reputation for academic excellence across northwest Tennessee. The period of significance for the Webb School is from 1958 to 1966, which corresponds with the year the school opened and the year the school closed following desegregation in Carroll County, respectively.

### **Narrative Statement of Significance**

#### Context:

The Webb School is located in McKenzie, Tennessee, and straddles the Carroll and Weakley County line. The City of McKenzie was organized in 1867 when the Nashville and Northwestern Railroad completed its track and intersected with the Memphis and Ohio Railroad. The town was first known as McKenzie Station and was soon shortened to McKenzie. The name of the community derived from the family of James Monroe McKenzie, son of Colonel John D. McKenzie, who previously owned the land where the railroads crossed.<sup>3</sup> The growth of the town came to a standstill during the Civil War, but soon after developed rapidly following the arrival of the railroad. McKenzie was officially incorporated by the State of Tennessee on January 22, 1869.<sup>4</sup> The lure of the railroad attracted many residents to move to McKenzie from nearby established communities. The people of the large and prosperous communities of Caledonia and McLemoresville moved their homes and businesses to McKenzie in order to take advantage of the facilities supplied by the railroads. Both communities also moved their colleges to McKenzie. Caledonia College in Caledonia moved to McKenzie in 1876 and later changed its name to McTyeire Institute in 1882. Bethel College (previously known as Brick College) in McLemoresville also moved to McKenzie in 1872.<sup>5</sup>

The size of the town doubled in the 1880s and business continued to thrive. On October 15, 1887 the President of the United States, Grover Cleveland, visited the bustling town by train and stayed the night at the McKenzie Hotel, one of the three largest hotels in the state at that time.<sup>6</sup> By the turn of the century, the city boasted a park, public schools, and paved gravel roads. The town continued to expand at a steady rate until the Great Depression struck in October of 1929. Banks and businesses closed their doors and the community's labor force dissolved overnight. It was not until 1936 that conditions began to show economic growth and improvement once again.<sup>7</sup> Just prior to the Second World War, the Federal Government began construction on an ammunitions plant and arsenal in nearby Milan. During the war, the plant hired thousands

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<sup>3</sup> Carroll County -1822 Tennessee 1972 150 years of progress – Carroll County Sesquicentennial County,” 1972.

<sup>4</sup> City of McKenzie, Tennessee, “History.” <https://www.mckenzieln.org/mckenzie-101/history>.

<sup>5</sup> Carroll County Homecoming 1986 Historical Book Committee, “History of Carroll County, Tennessee volume 1,” Turner Publishing Company, 1987.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> City of McKenzie, Tennessee, “History.” <https://www.mckenzieln.org/mckenzie-101/history>.

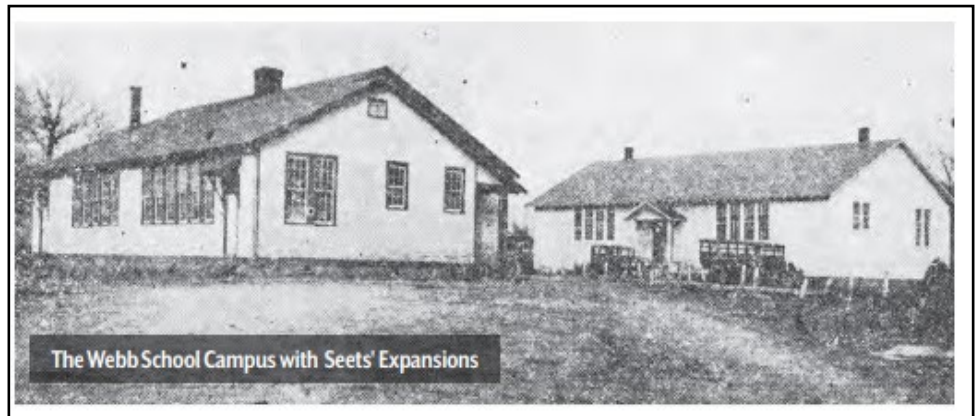
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of laborers and increased the population of McKenzie more than any time in its history. Between 1940 and 1950, the population of the city increased by over 1,300 people.<sup>8</sup>

Though private schools flourished in McKenzie, there were very few public schools during the mid to late 1800s. This was due in part to the public's opposition of the increased taxes needed to fund public education. The first school in McKenzie was a log building belonging to Marietta Trading Post called the Old



Denison House. In 1867, after the Civil War, the school was moved to the Masonic Hall.

**Figure 1. Webb School in the early 1900s**

(Source: Carroll County, Tennessee, Sesquicentennial Booklet Committee. "Carroll County 150 Years of Progress – Tennessee 1822-1972 Genealogy," January 1, 1972.)

The Masonic Hall eventually became impossible to maintain, prompting the construction of a new school in 1894, which also housed the Masons. In July of 1903 the Mayor and Aldermen ordered the establishment of public schools in McKenzie. A public school opened with 188 students soon after in 1906. By 1918, the public school offered grades up to the twelfth grade. In the fall of 1923, an additional building with three stories was constructed for high school grades beside the grammar school. When the grammar school burned in 1930 the high school hosted classes for the displaced students until a new elementary school was constructed in the same location in 1937. McKenzie's high school building constructed in 1923 grew too old to maintain and in 1975 a new facility was built. Today, McKenzie has three public schools within their city limits: McKenzie Elementary, McKenzie Middle, and McKenzie High. The Bethel College also continues to reside and thrive in McKenzie.<sup>9</sup>

During the settlement years of Carroll County, African Americans were brought to the area as slaves and the community built their towns using slave labor.<sup>10</sup> Most African American neighborhoods throughout the county were located within walking distant near their schools and churches. In the fall, all ages of family members in the Black community helped with harvesting cotton in the area. Children were given six weeks off school in order to pick cotton to help earn money for their household.<sup>11</sup> In 1880, African Americans made up twenty five per cent of Carroll County's population, however as the county's population increased over the years, the percentage of African Americans have decreased.<sup>12</sup> Despite their small population,

<sup>8</sup> City of McKenzie, Tennessee, "History." <https://www.mckenzieta.org/mckenzie-101/history>.

<sup>9</sup>Carroll County Homecoming 1986 Historical Book Committee, "History of Carroll County, Tennessee volume 1," Turner Publishing Company, 1987.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Forester, Karen. "Black History Remembering. Honoring. Uplifting. Voices & Stories." The McKenzie Banner, McKenzie, Tennessee. February 21, 2023.

<sup>12</sup> Goodspeed's Publishing Company. "The Goodspeed History of Tennessee – Carroll, Henry, and Benton Counties." Southern Historical Press, 1887.

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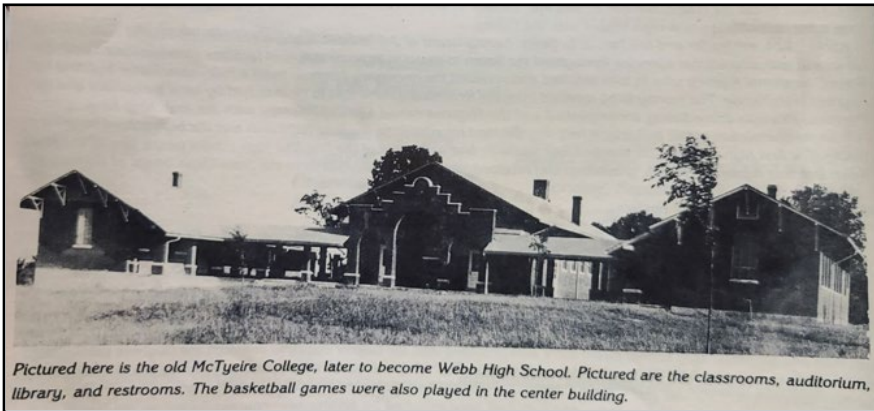
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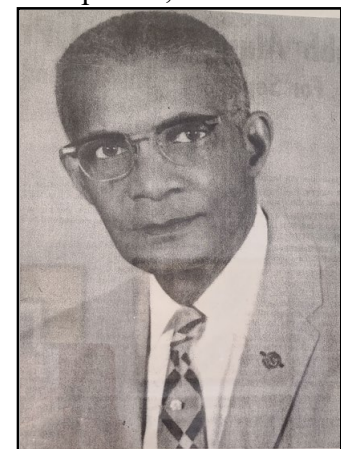
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African Americans made a lasting impact on their county. When Carroll County was officially established, African Americans were said to be the “best neighbors anyone could have.” The Black community always strove to be a productive member of society and to make the world a better place.<sup>13</sup>



**Figure 2. The former McTyeire College that became the Webb School in 1937**  
(Source: Carroll County, Tennessee, Sesquicentennial Booklet Committee. "Carroll County 150 Years of Progress – Tennessee 1822-1972 Genealogy," January 1, 1972.)

one-room schoolhouse with one teacher. With the assistance of local student’s parent, the one-room schoolhouse received an addition in 1900 to become a two-room schoolhouse. The two-room school served students from first grade to eighth grade for more than twenty years. The need for further expansion became apparent and in 1924, Booker T. Washington’s Principal, James Seets (J. L. Seets), contacted Julius Rosenwald, a philanthropist who helped fund schools for Black children throughout the southern United States. Funds were raised by the Black community in the county and matched by Rosenwald, resulting in the construction of a new four-room schoolhouse that became the only high school for African American students in Carroll County. Supervision of the school changed from the McKenzie School Board to the Carroll County Board of Education. The school’s name also changed to the Carroll County Training School.



**Figure 3. James L. Seets, First Principal at Webb School**  
(Source: Courtesy of Webb Alumni Association Collection)

The influx of students from all around the county created a need for further expansion. The community raised \$4,000 in funds for a new school. These funds and additional money from the Rosenwald Fund resulted in the construction of two additional buildings on the existing campus. One building was designated for use by the high school, and the other was a dormitory to house out-of-town students. Two school buses were also purchased to transport students to the school throughout Carroll County. Mr. John L. Webb, a Black resident, was the highest single donor for the expansion drive. To honor his contribution, the school’s name

<sup>13</sup>Forester, Karen. “Black History Remembering. Honoring. Uplifting. Voices & Stories.” February 21, 2023.

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was changed to Webb School. In the summer of 1936, a fire of “undetermined origin” destroyed the school and for a year, classes were held at the McKenzie Masonic Hall and a graduation was held at the Enon Baptist Church.<sup>14</sup>

In 1937, the Mayor of McKenzie, Glen A. King, and the citizens of McKenzie helped to secure the abandoned McTyeire College as the new location for the Webb School. The McTyeire College, originally constructed for white students in 1882, had been abandoned since 1931. The old college was on thirty-acres and consisted of five brick buildings in need of repair. Professor Seets sought out federal assistance from the New Deal Agency (National Youth Administration) Program and was able to receive funding through a work study arrangement for high school students. The program provided funding but only if students assisted with making repairs to the school.<sup>15</sup> Webb students assisted with the construction of a brick gymnasium, which was considered by some to be the best gymnasium in the area.<sup>16</sup> Though a legislative act passed in 1945 made McKenzie Special School District independent of the county system, high school aged Black students all over the county continued to attend Webb School since it was the only African American high school in Carroll County.<sup>17</sup> Neighboring counties east of Carroll, including Benton and Humphreys, also sent high school students to attend Webb. The increase in students and deterioration of the building created the need for a new school building. As a result, the building was demolished in 1958 and a new school was quickly completed that same year in time for the beginning of the fall semester.

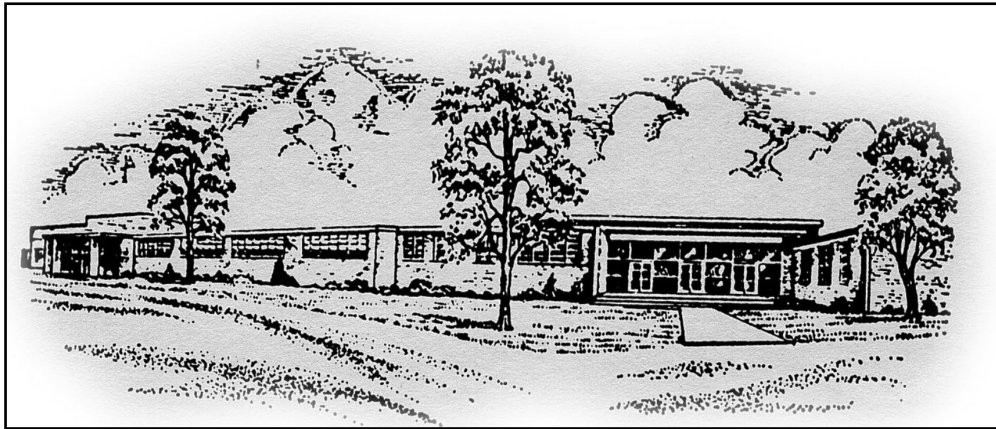


Figure 4: Historic Sketch of Webb School  
(Source: Courtesy of Webb Alumni Association Collection)

<sup>14</sup> Carroll County Homecoming 1986 Historical Book Committee, “History of Carroll County, Tennessee volume 1,” Turner Publishing Company, 1987.

<sup>15</sup> Roscoe McKenzie, “The Webb Story, where there is unity, there is strength,” 1998, Webb Alumni Association Collection.

<sup>16</sup> Mary Jordan, Ike Gilbert, and Neal Williamson, Interview by Jessica Baker, McKenzie, Tennessee, March 28, 2023.

<sup>17</sup> Carroll County Homecoming 1986 Historical Book Committee, “History of Carroll County, Tennessee volume 1,” Turner Publishing Company, 1987.

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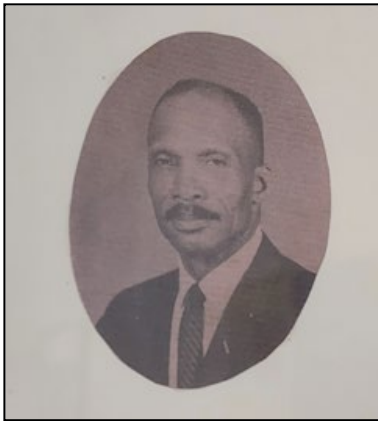
Webb School (1958-1966):

The new 1958 school building could accommodate seventeen teachers and housed elementary, junior high, and senior high school students all under one roof. The previous school's dormitory facilities, agricultural building, and gymnasium were all that remained on the grounds from the 1930s. The students did not miss school that year because the building was built in phases for the students to utilize some sections of the school while the rest of it was being constructed. Webb's dormitory facilities continued to accommodate out of town high school students as well as teachers.



**Figure 5. Webb School Gym, built in 1937**  
(Source: Carroll County, Tennessee, Sesquicentennial Booklet Committee." Carroll County 150 Years of Progress – Tennessee 1822-1972 Genealogy," January 1, 1972.)

James L. Seets served Webb School for forty-one years as both principal and professor and was well admired by the community.<sup>18</sup> In the Fall of 1957, Seets was required by the "Forced Retirement Law" to retire due to having reached over seventy-years of age.<sup>19</sup> With big shoes to fill, Thornton A. Warford became the new Principal of Webb School.<sup>20</sup> Warford had attended Carroll County Training School and received his



**Figure 5. Principal Thornton A. Warford**  
(Source: Courtesy of Webb Alumni Association Collection)

Bachelor of Science Degree from Lane College and a Master's Degree in administration and supervision from Fisk University (NR 1978) in Nashville. Warford originally joined Webb School in 1939 as a science teacher. After serving in WWII, Warford returned to Webb School in 1945 to teach and coach basketball and football.<sup>21</sup> Warford served as principal until the school closed in 1966. The Webb School enjoyed a strong academic reputation throughout Northwest Tennessee. Most of its teachers and faculty graduated from Webb School themselves and had received either a Bachelor's or Master's Degree.<sup>22</sup> Webb's School teachers taught a wide array of classes such as Social Studies, English, Math, Home Economics, Agriculture, Music, Science, Cosmetology, Art, Physical Education, Audio/Visual Aids, languages, and even vocational classes. In addition to teaching classes, faculty members were also known to sponsor clubs and coach athletic teams at the school.<sup>23</sup> It was well known that students who graduated from Webb received an excellent education that encouraged graduates to earn higher degrees. Many of its students went on to become doctors, lawyers, teachers,

<sup>18</sup> "Tell's 'em What He Thinks," *The Memphis Press-Scimitar*, Memphis, Tennessee, October 24, 1961.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> "Carroll County Teachers, Elected for School Term," *The Jackson Sun*, Jackson, Tennessee, June 1, 1961.

<sup>21</sup> "Thornton A. Warford," Poster Exhibit, Webb School Museum.

<sup>22</sup> "In Memory of Two Nashville Webbities, Ada Francis Dotson Walker 1922-1984, George Melvin Waters 1933-1984," Webb Alumni Association Collection.

<sup>23</sup> "The Faculty of Webb High School," Poster Exhibit, Webb School Museum.

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skilled trade persons, entrepreneurs, and other gainfully employed citizens.<sup>24</sup> The first two students to graduate from Webb did so in 1929. By 1966, Webb had produced over a thousand graduates.<sup>25</sup> Graduate Donnetta Strayhorn Butler shared that the teachers instilled life skills in their students for them to become well rounded adults.<sup>26</sup> Neal Williamson, a 1966 Webb graduate, accredited the education he received to the devoted and caring teachers at Webb. Williamson believed that Webb prepared him for the challenges of higher education and was the pillar of his stability throughout his career.

Sports, music, and other extra-curricular activities were another significant part of the school's history. Sports offered to high school students at Webb included football, basketball, and tennis. The Webb Basketeers had both a junior and senior high school team. Webb School competed with several other African American schools in the area, including Mary High in Jackson, Central High in Paris, Weakley County Training School in Martin, Gibson County Training School in Milan, and other schools in Trenton, Humboldt, Lexington, Denmark, and South Fulton. Webb School boasted a robust musical program. Musical opportunities offered to students included a boy's quartette, a glee club for girls, a co-ed glee club, a choral club, and a marching band.<sup>27</sup> The choral club was part of the Webb School curriculum from the beginning, and the school's marching band was a fixture in many of McKenzie's public parades.<sup>28</sup>

Club meetings and other events were sometimes held at Webb, such as the Boy Scouts of America and Theatre Guild Performances from the Stigall Schools Department in Humboldt. The Boy Scouts of America in the West Tennessee Council had scheduled for the Johnson – Travis District to hold regular meetings at Webb School and the Theatre Guild of Stigall Schools Department would hold performances at both Webb School and at the Polk-Clark High School in Milan.<sup>29</sup> The performances included orations, dramatic readings, vocal solos, instrumental solos, modern commercials, creative dances and an over-view of literature.<sup>30</sup>

*Closing of Webb School and Desegregation in Carroll County, Tennessee (1966):*

Carroll County was still segregated in 1958 when the current Webb School was constructed. On August 31<sup>st</sup>, 1965, a "four-grades-a-year desegregation plan" was ordered for Carroll County Schools by United District Judge Claude F. Clayton.<sup>31</sup> The Carroll County Board of Education declared integration would be completed in the county by September of 1966. Before Webb School was desegregated, the school went back under Carroll County's control and was one of the last three African American schools to desegregate in the

<sup>24</sup> "Appreciation Day for Retiring Principal J. L. Seets @ McKenzie," Webb Alumni Association Collection.

<sup>25</sup> Jason Martin, "Webb School and Professor J. L. Seets – Part 2 – The Leading Force In African-American Fortitude in McKenzie," *McKenzie Banner*, McKenzie, Tennessee, February 12, 2019.

<sup>26</sup>Forester, Karen. "Black History Remembering. Honoring. Uplifting. Voices & Stories." February 21, 2023.

<sup>27</sup> "Music at Webb School" Poster Exhibit, Webb School Museum.

<sup>28</sup> "McKenzie Plans Yule Parade," *The Jackson Sun*, Jackson, Tennessee, December 6, 1964.

<sup>29</sup> "Scouts Plan Six Meetings," *The Jackson Sun*, Jackson, Tennessee, March 21, 1965.

<sup>30</sup> "Stigall Pupils to Give Program," *The Jackson Sun*, Jackson, Tennessee. April 28, 1964.

<sup>31</sup> "Carroll Desegregation Is Ordered," *The Commercial Appeal*, Memphis, Tennessee, September 1, 1965.



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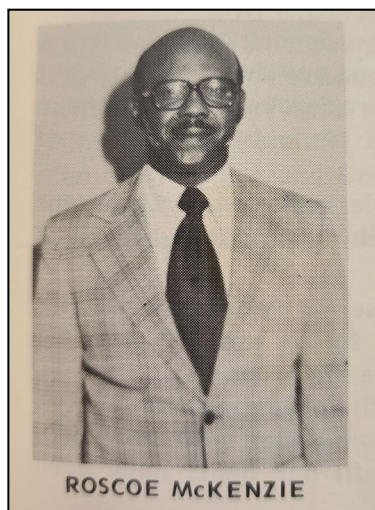
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county.<sup>32</sup> Elementary school students were required to attend schools in their own districts and high school students were accepted on transfer to any high school to which transportation was available to them. This requirement made all school buses desegregate as well.<sup>33</sup> Schools in Carroll County soon felt the growing pains of integration. Three African American schools with a total student body of eight hundred students had to be absorbed by other county schools under the federal school integration program.<sup>34</sup> African American teachers in Carroll County were assigned to county schools and others were employed by the special school district board.

After Webb desegregated, the school started to be cleaned out and important school documents were disposed of. Much of Webb School's history was thrown out, however former students of Webb tried to save as much as they could. Years later, the alumni members collected their saved documents together and created a small museum within the school to showcase the history of Webb School.

Webb Alumni Association:



**Figure 6. Roscoe McKenzie, founder of the Webb Alumni Association**

(Source: Courtesy of Webb Alumni Association Collection)

In 1969, three years after Webb School desegregated, the former students and graduates of Webb joined together to form the Webb Alumni Association Incorporation in order to preserve their heritage and to continue the school's educational legacy. Former Principal, J. L. Seets, encouraged Webb graduate Roscoe McKenzie to organize and lead the alumni association. McKenzie was elected as national president of the Webb Alumni Association, which was based in Indiana where he resided. The association organized chapters across the country where Webb Alumni members were located. Chapters were formed in Detroit, Elkhart, Champaign, Chicago, Cedar Rapids, Milwaukee, Nashville, Dayton, Indianapolis, Cleveland, Washington D.C., and Los Angeles.<sup>35</sup> In 1973 the Webb Association made plans at one of their high school reunions to purchase their beloved Alma Mater from the Carroll County School Board. A legal corporation was then formed called the Webb Development Group to promote activities in order to raise funds to bargain with the County Court for the purchase the school. Through pledges from members in the group, the association proposed to pay for the building over a period of ten years. On April 15<sup>th</sup>, 1976, the Carroll County Governing Board unanimously approved a resolution to allow the Webb Development Group to purchase the building for \$95,000.<sup>36</sup> On May 8, 1976, the Webb Development Group paid a \$12,000 down payment to the county judge and the Webb Alumni Association was officially designated the new owners of the former Webb

<sup>32</sup> "Carroll Desegregation Is Ordered," *The Commercial Appeal*, Memphis, Tennessee, September 1, 1965.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Guy R. Kirk, "199,000 Huntingdon School Stands Vacant," *The Jackson Sun*, Jackson, Tennessee, February 14, 1967.

<sup>35</sup> Roscoe McKenzie, "The Webb Story, where there is unity, there is strength," 1998, Webb Alumni Association Collection.

<sup>36</sup> Carroll County, 1969 Warranty Deed, Webb Alumni Association Incorporation, Webb Alumni Association Collection.

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School.<sup>37</sup> The deed contains a covenant that the “Webb Alumni Association Inc. would continue to use the building and property for the services and programs that are presently being carried out or offer the equivalent. In the event the Alumni Association ever desired to sell, the county will have the first option to purchase the property for the same amount of principal that the Alumni Association has in the property.”<sup>38</sup>

The Webb Development Group dissolved a few years later and merged with the Webb Alumni Association. The association took on the role of raising funds to pay off the school and to fund the building’s maintenance needs. On October 15, 1999, the Alumni Association made their final payment to the county. The association established creative ways throughout the years to raise funds, including selling bricks with the funder’s name engraved and then having the bricks laid right outside the school’s entrance. The Alumni Association also began a tradition of hosting two alumni reunion meetings for all graduating classes and their families during the fourth weekend in April and then again on Labor Day Weekend. During the reunion, funds were raised amongst the graduates and their families. Some of the funds raised also went towards the Roscoe McKenzie Scholarship.<sup>39</sup> The scholarships were awarded to deserving students for their college education.

As agreed upon, a variety of programs continued to be carried out in the building because of the efforts of association members. Programs over the years included a day-care center, a self-help program, a senior citizens club, a community youth organization, a home-management class, a good food and nutrition class, a garden club, a clothing store, and a crafts class. Today, the former Webb School currently houses the Northwest Tennessee Head Start Program, which has a child care program within their building and three playgrounds on the grounds for the children.<sup>40</sup> The association also established their own Webb Historical Museum in 2016 which is open to the public within the former library in the Webb School. The Webb Alumni Association set out determined to protect their heritage, promote their facility and grounds, and to develop a sense of responsibility and pride within their community. The members progressed throughout the years while remembering their slogan, “Where there is unity, there is strength.”<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Roscoe McKenzie, “The Webb Story, where there is unity, there is strength,” 1998, Webb Alumni Association Collection.

<sup>38</sup> Carroll County, 1969 Warranty Deed, Webb Alumni Association Incorporation, Webb Alumni Association Collection.

<sup>39</sup> “Webb Alumni,” *Carroll County News-leader*, Carroll County, Tennessee, August 28, 2013.

<sup>40</sup> “Webb Alumni,” *Carroll County News-leader*, Carroll County, Tennessee, August 28, 2013.

<sup>41</sup> Roscoe McKenzie, “The Webb Story, where there is unity, there is strength,” 1998, Webb Alumni Association Collection

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):		Primary location of additional data:	
preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)			State Historic Preservation Office
previously listed in the National Register			Other State agency
previously determined eligible by the National Register			Federal agency
designated a National Historic Landmark			Local government
recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #			University
recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #		X	Other: Webb School Museum
recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey #			Name of repository:
Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): N/A			

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### 10. Geographical Data

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**Acreeage of Property** 15.1 **USGS Quadrangle** McKenzie, TN Quad

#### Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: N/A

1. Latitude: 36.131416	Longitude: -88.529254
2. Latitude: 36.131507	Longitude: -88.531153
3. Latitude: 36.131593	Longitude: -88.531162
4. Latitude: 36.131628	Longitude: -88.531999
5. Latitude: 36.130928	Longitude: -88.532058
6. Latitude: 36.130965	Longitude: -88.533058
7. Latitude: 36.129516	Longitude: -88.533171
8. Latitude: 36.129671	Longitude: -88.531205
9. Latitude: 36.129799	Longitude: -88.530808
10. Latitude: 36.130027	Longitude: -88.530315
11. Latitude: 36.130124	Longitude: -88.529934
12. Latitude: 36.130139	Longitude: -88.529314

#### Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the Webb Public School is shown on the accompanying map entitled "Webb Public School Boundary Map."

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**Boundary Justification**

The nominated boundary includes all of the land and resources historically associated with the Webb High School during its Period of Significance. This includes land to the west of the school, and the school's front yard. Available information suggests that both portions of land were historically associated with the Webb School during its Period of Significance and were utilized by the school for its operation. Additionally, the western portion of the chosen parcel contained many former buildings on the property during its Period of Significance that are no longer extant. However, the land still communicates the historical importance of the school as a large operation and contributes to the school's setting. As such, the western portion is included in the boundaries in addition to the east yard. .

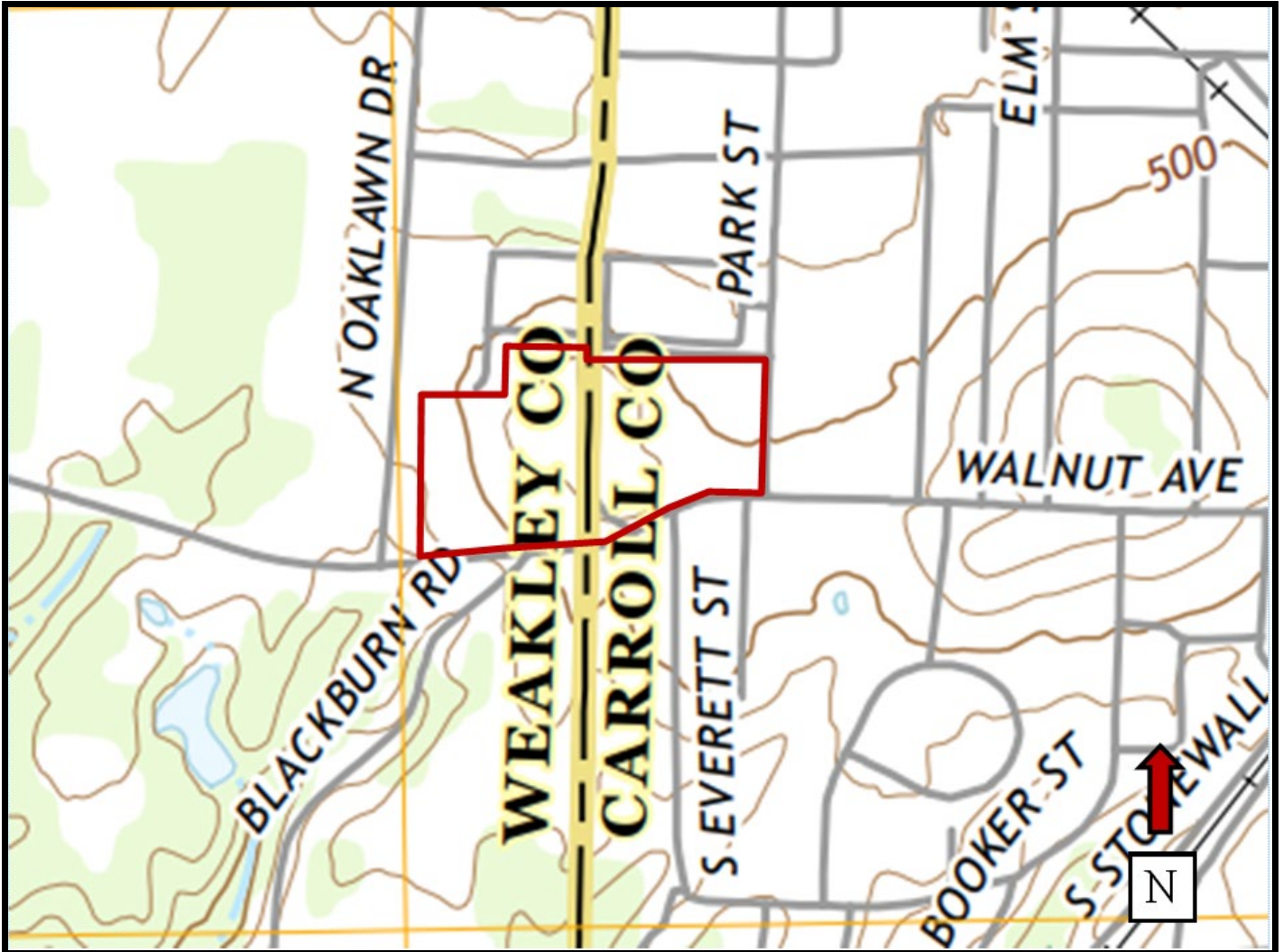
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USGS Topographic Map



Property is depicted by the red line. Image Courtesy of the United States Geological Service, 2019.



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### Webb Public School Boundary Map

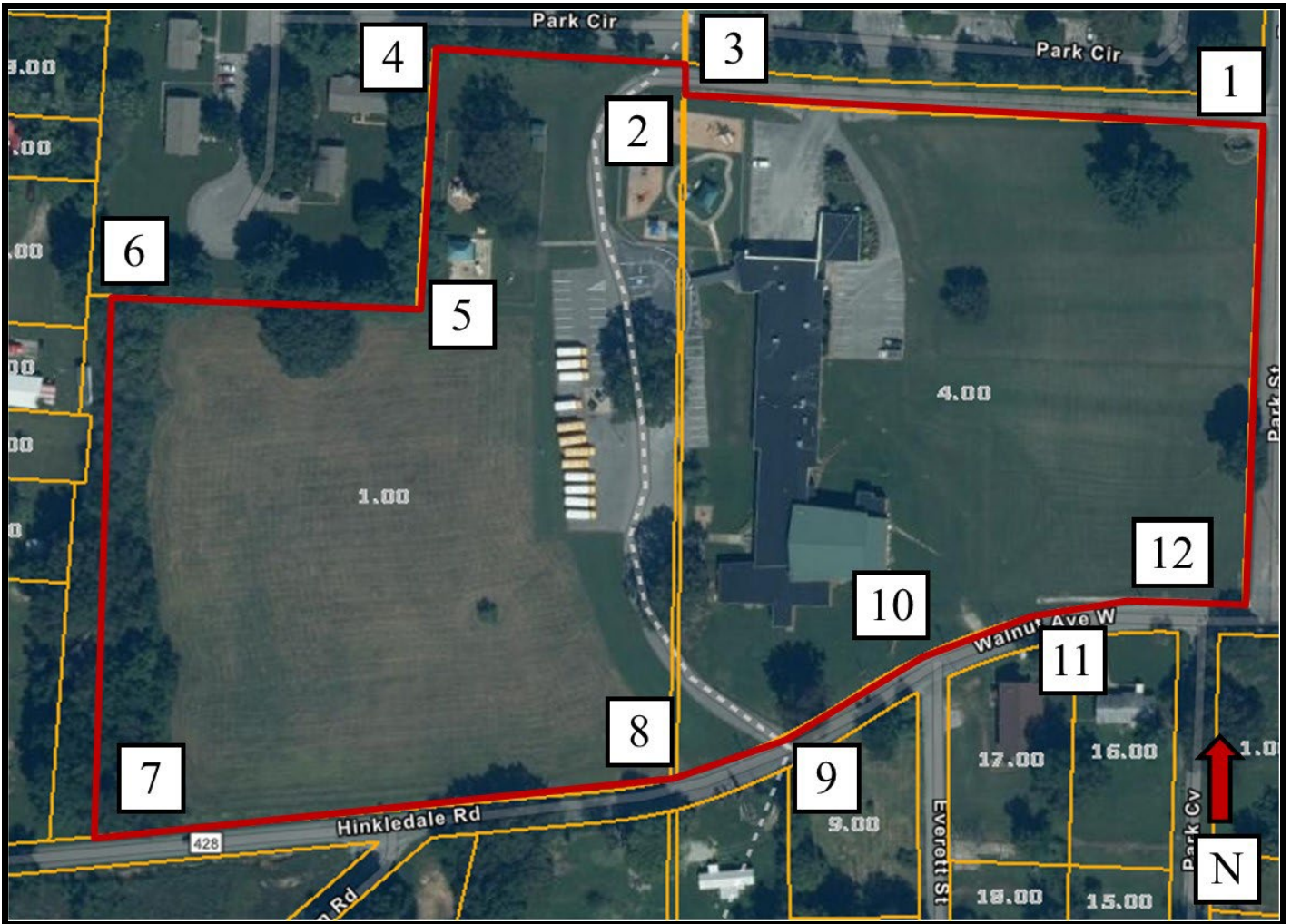


Image Courtesy of State of Tennessee Comptroller, 2024



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### Photo Log

Name of Property: Webb High School  
City or Vicinity: McKenzie  
County: Carroll State: TN  
Photographer: Jessica Baker  
Date Photographed: 3/28/2023

- 1 of 25. Webb School façade: Photographer facing east.
- 2 of 25. Façade: Photographer facing northeast.
- 3 of 25. Exterior view – south elevation: Photographer facing north.
- 4 of 25. Exterior view – south elevation: Photographer facing north.
- 5 of 25. Exterior view – south elevation: Photographer facing northwest.
- 6 of 25. Webb Public School Sign: Photographer facing northwest.
- 7 of 25. Exterior view – east elevation and playground #3: Photographer facing west.
- 8 of 25. Exterior view – east elevation: Photographer facing southwest.
- 9 of 25. Exterior view – east elevation: Photographer facing southwest.
- 10 of 25. Exterior view – north elevation: Photographer facing south.
- 11 of 25. Exterior view – façade: Photographer facing southeast.
- 12 of 25. Exterior view – playground #2: Photographer facing southwest.
- 13 of 25. Exterior view – playground #1: Photographer facing northeast.
- 14 of 25. Interior view – Webb Historical Museum Entrance: Photographer facing south.
- 15 of 25. Interior view – Webb Museum: Photographer facing northeast.
- 16 of 25. Interior view – entrance lobby: Photographer facing east.
- 17 of 25. Interior view – entrance hall: Photographer facing south.
- 18 of 25. Interior view – stairwell to first floor and rear exit: Photographer facing east.

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- 19 of 25. Interior view – auditorium: Photographer facing east.
- 20 of 25. Interior view – auditorium’s stage: Photographer facing north.
- 21 of 25. Interior view – kitchen: Photographer facing east.
- 22 of 25. Interior view – main level hall (2<sup>nd</sup> floor): Photographer facing north.
- 23 of 25. Interior view – first floor: Photographer facing west.
- 24 of 25. Interior view – first floor hall: Photographer facing south.
- 25 of 25. Interior view – conference room on first floor: Photographer facing northeast.

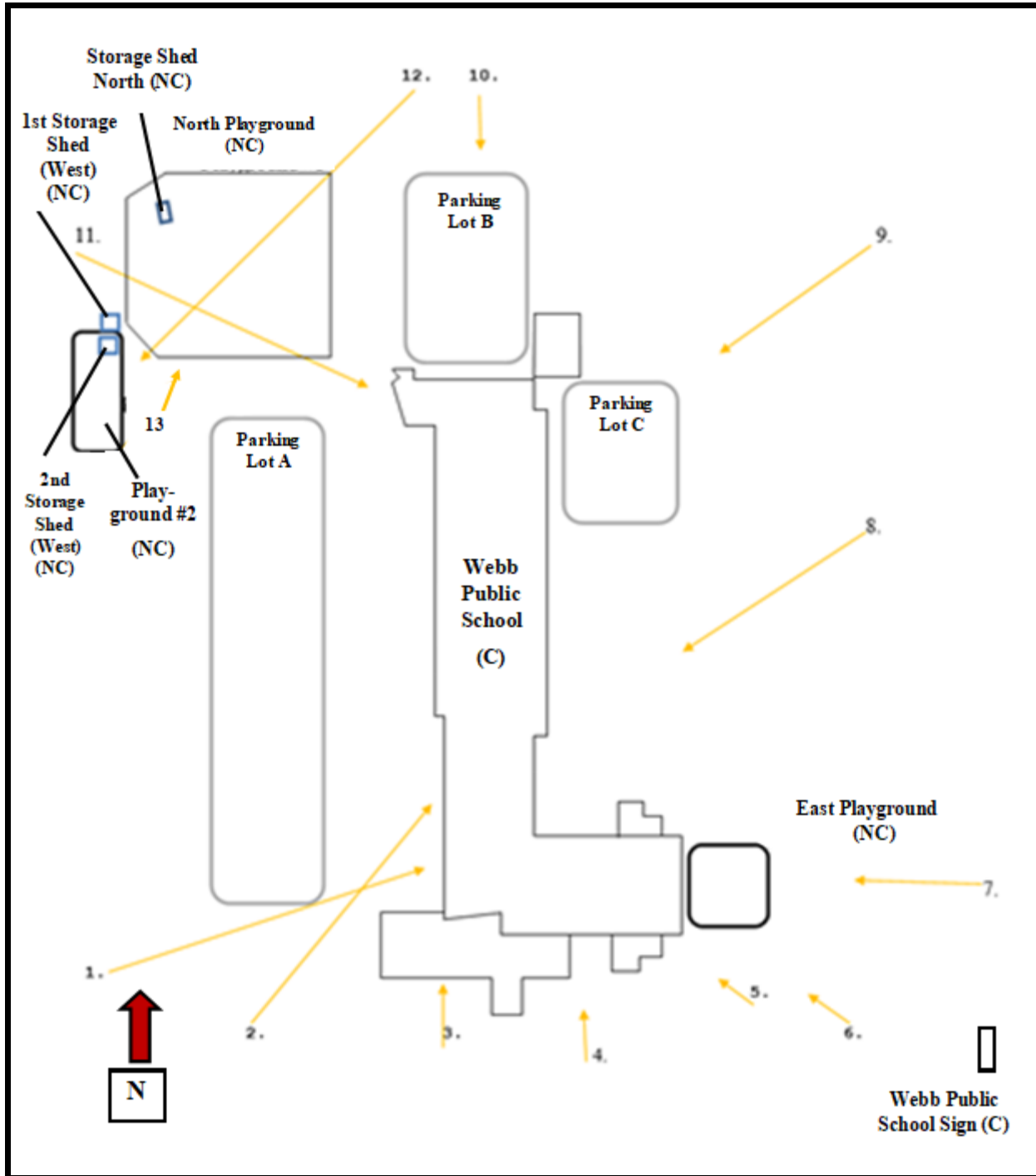
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Site Plan (Not to scale)

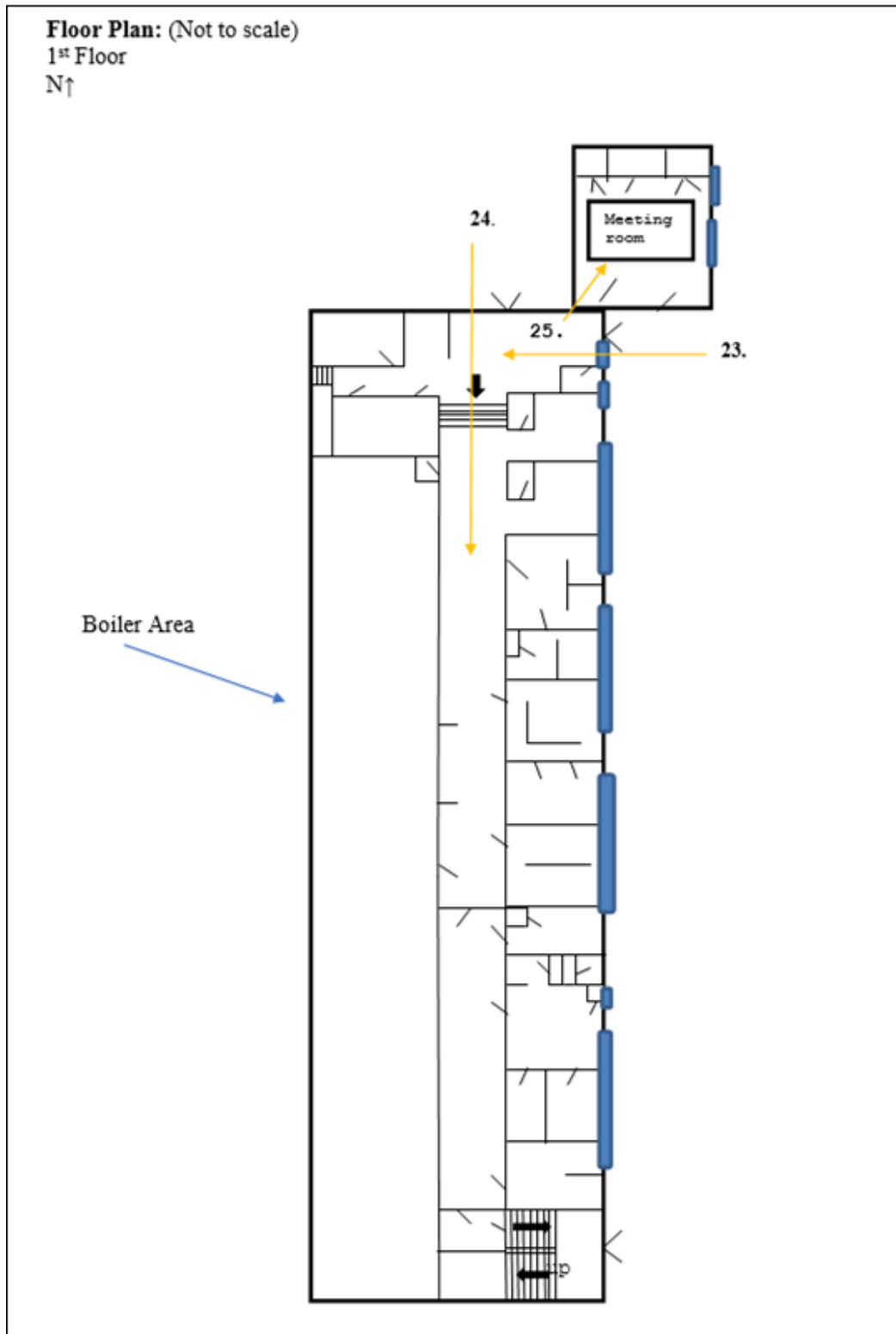


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Floor Plan (Not to Scale)

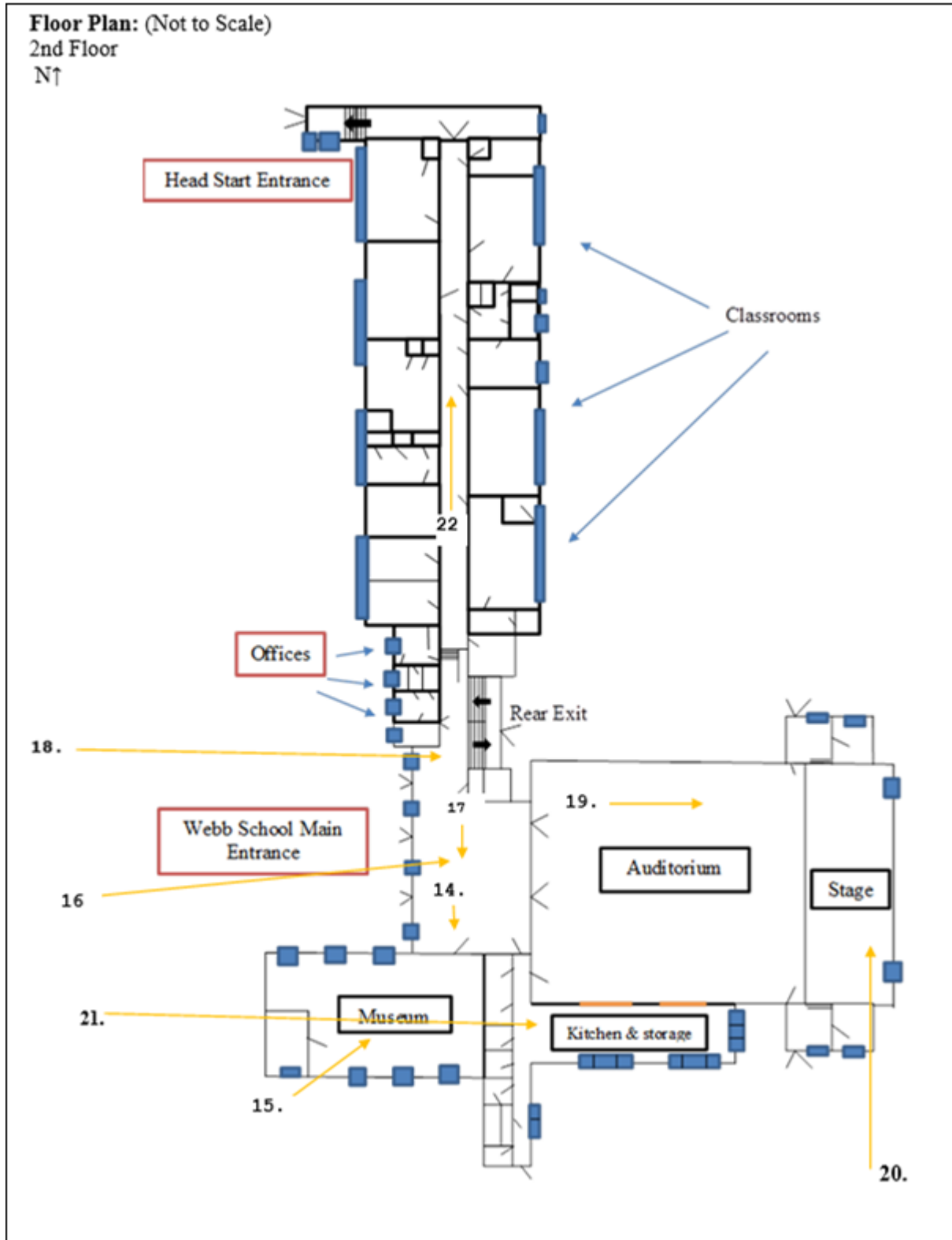


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Floor Plan, Second Floor (Not to Scale)



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**Property Owner(s):**

(This information will not be submitted to the National Park Service, but will remain on file at the Tennessee Historical Commission)

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Name Webb Alumni Association, Inc

Street & Number P.O. Box 293 Telephone 731-535-1887

City or Town McKenzie State/Zip TN / 38201





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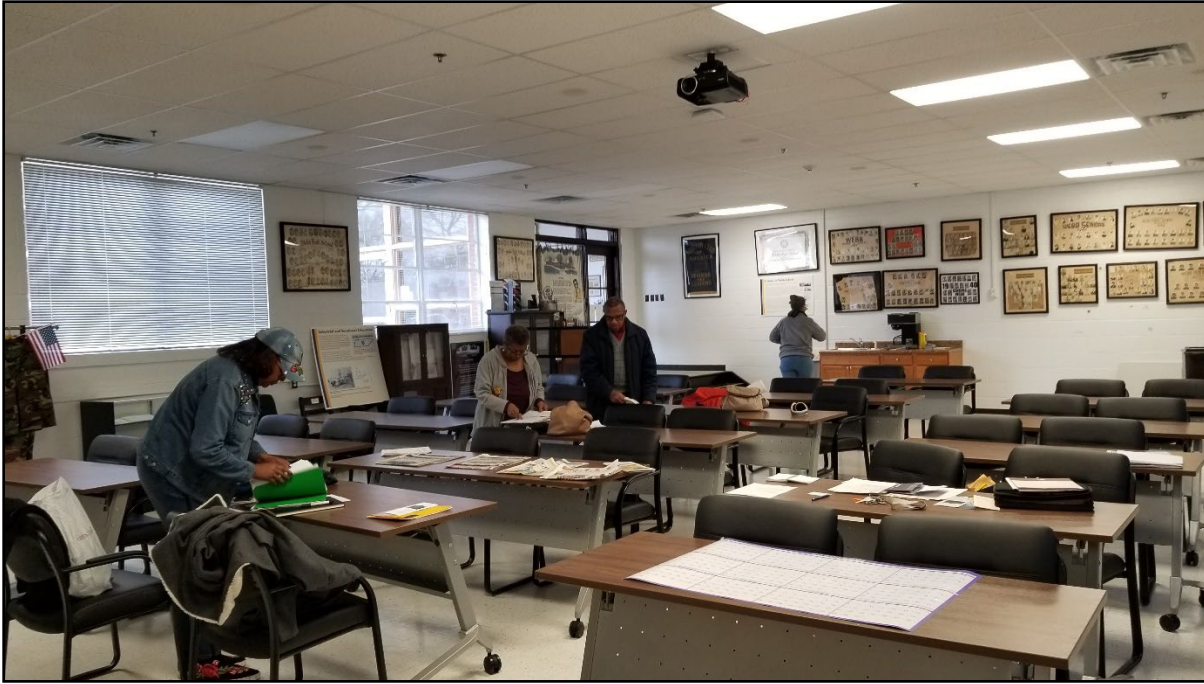
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