

PLYMOUTH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL APOPKA, FLORIDA



**HERITAGE ASSESSMENT
JULY 2023**

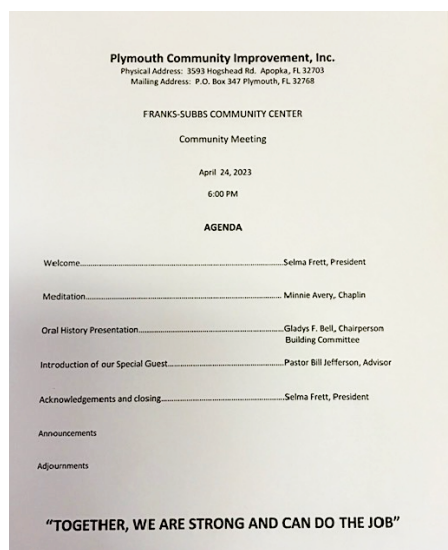
**MTSU CENTER FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION
Carroll Van West, Director
Savannah Grandey Knies, Fieldwork Coordinator**



Project History

In January 2023, Plymouth Community Improvement, Inc. (PCI), a non-profit organization based in Apopka, Florida, contacted the Center for Historic Preservation at Middle Tennessee State University for assistance and an evaluation of the Franks-Subbs Community Center at 3593 Hogshead Road in Apopka, Orange County, Florida. Because of the property's documented role in African American education and as a historic social and community center, the Center agreed to assist PCI as part of its regional effort to assist southern communities with their historic preservation needs.

A preliminary planning meeting took place via Zoom on February 2023, followed by a community meeting of alumni, PCI members, and interested residents and partners in late April 2023 at the community center in Apopka. The community meeting allowed Dr. West and Ms. Knies of the Center to hear first-hand community stories and histories of the property as well as a discussion for the goals of the project and the content of the assessment report.



Mission of the Plymouth Community Improvement, Inc.

The mission of this corporation will be to:

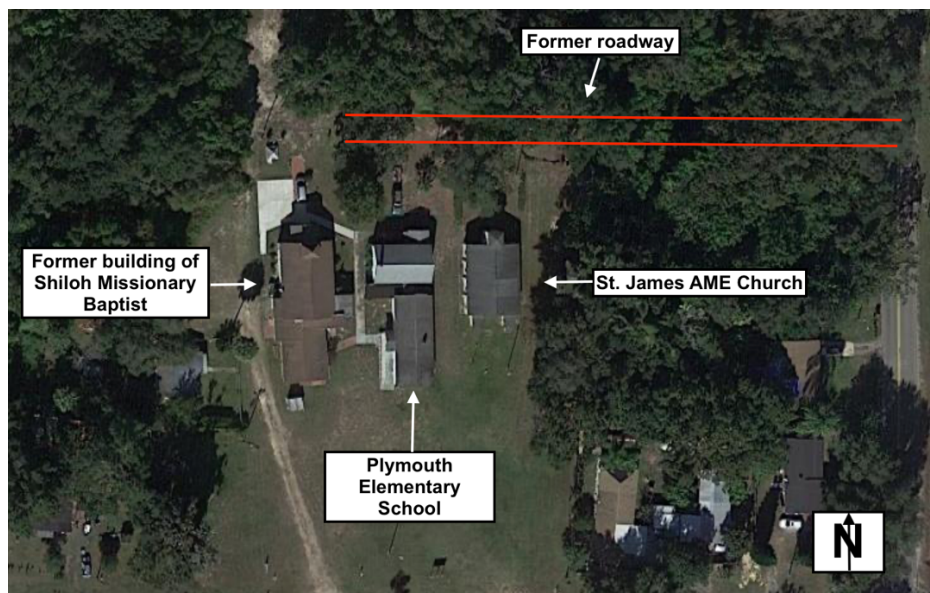
- educate and empower low-income minorities by responding to their need to become self-sufficient
- train low-income minorities to become competitively employed
- organize low-income minorities to work on critical survival issues that affect women, men, and children
- equip parents with techniques for better parenting through training, education, and hands on experiences
- engage in the business and facilitating charitable and educational activities
- improve the economic, public health and social welfare of society.

Why This Place Matters

The historic Plymouth Elementary School building housed the community's all-Black school from c. 1925 until desegregation of county schools c. 1966, serving as the only place African American children in Plymouth could acquire an elementary education during that time. As a place of education and empowerment during the Jim Crow era, the school served as a point of pride and anchor for Plymouth's Black community. The building continues to house an important community institution, as it is the headquarters of Plymouth Community Improvement, Inc., a neighborhood association of local community members and Plymouth Elementary School alumni.

The extant Plymouth Elementary School building was constructed in two phases (c. 1925, c. 1939) to accommodate a growing number of students throughout the first part of the 20th century. Local officials, community members, and historians believe that Plymouth Elementary School is the oldest surviving frame school building in Orange County. Taking into account the severe lack of funding compared to White schools, like other Black schools across the South, Plymouth Elementary is a product of social capital and collective action that saw Black community members funding much of the school's maintenance and operation. As such, the building is a historical artifact of the establishment, development, perseverance, and continuity of Plymouth's Black community and stands as a vital component of Florida's African American heritage.

Additionally, the school building's location between two historic Black church buildings, Shiloh Missionary Baptist and St. James AME, speaks to the school's near-sacred role in the community and the way these institutions worked together to nurture and promote the welfare residents during the Jim Crow era when African Americans were denied equal rights under the law and endured anti-Black discrimination and violence.

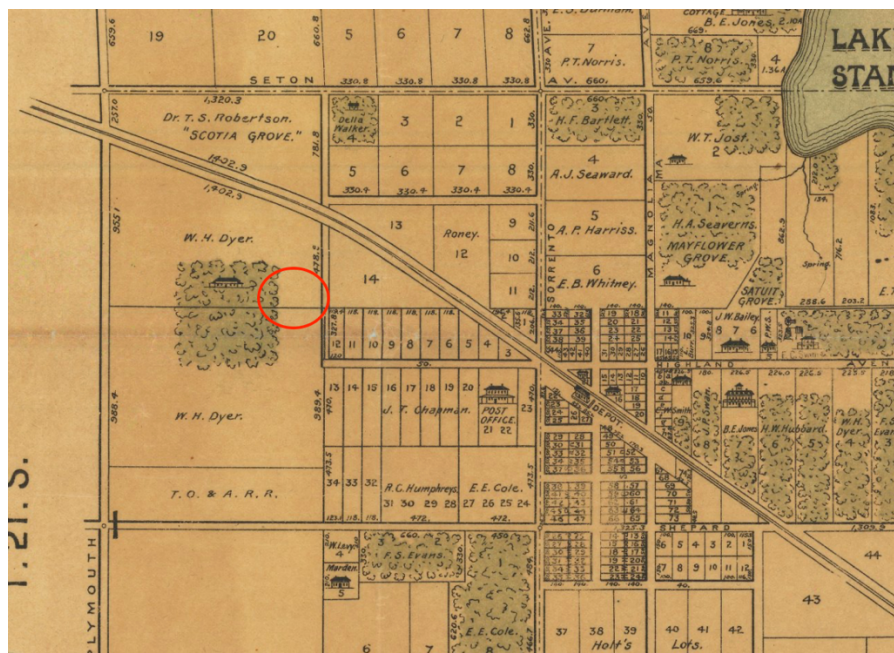


Aerial view of Plymouth Elementary School flanked by two historic Black church congregations. All three buildings face north onto a former roadway that is no longer used.

History of the Plymouth Elementary School

The Plymouth Elementary School building is located in Apopka, Orange County, Florida, in the community of Plymouth, an unincorporated area northwest of downtown Apopka. By the time Apopka was chartered as a town in 1882, this area of the county was home to Black craftspeople, laborers, and families. The area's Black and White population grew as people settled the area to farm, work in young citrus groves, and follow the work provided by the coming of the railroad in 1885. As Jim Crow segregation became more entrenched across the South, so it did in Apopka. By the turn of the 20th century, Black Apopkans had established their own schools and churches, and often lived in areas increasingly separated from White neighborhoods. What would become the most substantial African American section of Apopka began forming south of the railroad tracks, and eventually became known as South Apopka, where Black neighborhoods, churches, businesses, lodges, and schools supported the growing community there.¹

Other Black Apopkans lived in the smaller communities surrounding Apopka such as Plymouth, a settlement near the “muck lands” of Lake Apopka. By the late 1800s, the area contained citrus groves, packinghouses, large estates, a post office, a train depot, and hotels. Being a “citrus town” as one community member described it, the area attracted laborers and farmers of both races.



Cropped image of 1888 *Map of Plymouth, Orange County, Florida*. The map predates the establishment of Plymouth Elementary School; the school's approximate future location is indicated by the red circle.

Orange County's population continued to grow in the early 20th century with the county's public school enrollment doubling from 4,914 students in 1920-21, to 10, 529 students

¹ An 1885 state census of the area indicates the presence of a Black carpenter, blacksmith, laborers, and domestics. *Schedules of the Florida State Census of 1885*; Jerrell H. Shofner, *History of Apopka and Northwest Orange County, Florida* (Tallahassee, FL: Apopka Historical Society, 1982), 32; *1900 United States Federal Census*.

in 1925-26. In Plymouth, the growth and development of the Plymouth Citrus Growers Association, which built “quarters” for its workforce, especially attracted Black families to the area. However, not all Black Plymouth residents came to the area for work. Plymouth’s Black population also included survivors of the Ocoee Election Day Massacre in 1920, an extremely violent and deadly anti-Black catastrophe caused by a deputized posse of White men who chased Black families from their homes and land after Mose Norman, a Black citizen, tried to vote.²

Richard Allen Franks was 18 during the Massacre. Franks lived with his family in nearby Ocoee, a small settlement just south of Plymouth in Orange County where Black residents had built businesses and owned valuable pieces of property. During the Massacre, Franks led his siblings to Plymouth for safety. The story was passed down from Franks to his daughter, Plymouth School alumna and community historian Gladys Franks Bell, who wrote:

The Riot had started. Granddad told his son...to take his siblings and head for Plymouth through the woods so they could not be seen in fear of being hurt or killed. They left in the night with his three sisters and three brothers. One brother, Uncle Babyboy, was paralyzed in one foot and could not walk or run very fast. My Dad had to carry him all the way. It took them some time to reach Plymouth because the woods were very thick, and there was little light from the moon, but that didn’t stop them.³

The Franks siblings were later joined by their parents in Plymouth where they settled. Richard Allen Franks became a community leader in Plymouth, a major supporter of Plymouth Elementary School where his children attended, and an early member of St. James AME Church.

To keep up with the county’s general population growth in the 1920s, the school superintendent announced increased investment in the public school system in the form of more teachers, new buildings, and improvements to extant buildings. It was around this time that the oldest extant section of the Plymouth Elementary School building for Black children was constructed west of the railroad tracks that ran through Plymouth. Though the school building’s construction was not funded by the Julius Rosenwald Foundation (JRF), the building’s character-defining features are the product of Progressive Era school architecture and point to a c. 1925 build date.

These architectural features include:

² “Johnson Gives Facts on Education in Orange County to Radio Hearers,” *Orlando Sentinel*, July 16, 1926; Gladys Franks Bell, *Visions Through My Father’s Eyes: The Ocoee Election Massacre* (Np: Smith and Smith Services, LLC, 2020), 61; Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability, “Ocoee Election Day Violence – November 1920,” Report No. 19-15, November 2019, 3-4.

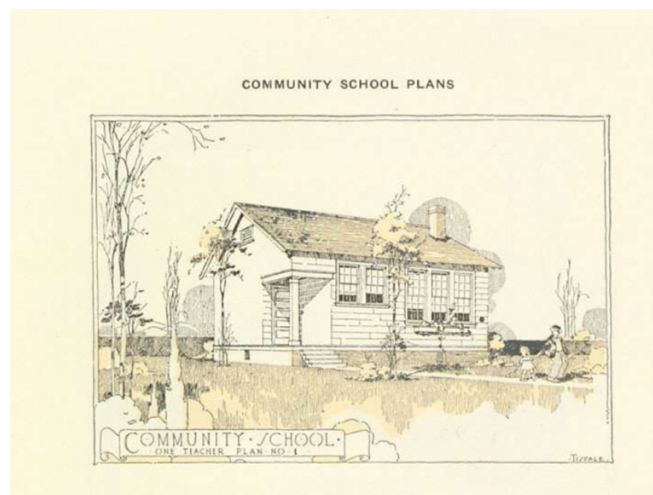
³ Bell, *Visions*, 14.

- the building's overall form and orientation to other infrastructure – The c. 1925 section of the Plymouth Elementary School building, specifically its form and orientation to the former road that once ran in front of it help indicate an early 20th century build date.

Many rural school buildings of the 19th century resembled church buildings. By the turn of the 20th century, Progressive Era reformers sought to standardize a more distinctive school architecture that visually set educational institutions' buildings apart from church buildings. The c. 1925 section of Plymouth Elementary School has its length and eaves side (north elevation) as its primary façade, with its main entrance near the northeast corner of that elevation. This one-classroom building design mimics some of the features of a widely used 1924 one-classroom building plan published by the Julius Rosenwald Fund. The historic primary façade faces the former east-west roadway that used to run north of the school building and the two church buildings next door.



c. 1925 section of Plymouth Elementary School



Exterior design of a one-classroom school building (*Community School Plan No. 1*) in the *Community School Plans* book published by the Julius Rosenwald Fund in 1924.

Architectural features, continued:

- the exposed rafter tails beneath the roof eaves – a common detail found on school buildings of the era
- though the original wood window sashes have been replaced with aluminum, the remaining wood frames surrounding the windows on the north elevation (primary façade) indicate two sets of adjoining windows. The use of contiguous windows maximized how many window openings could fit into an exterior wall, and helped make use of natural light while promoting airflow

The one-room building accommodated students in the first through eighth grades, after which pupils traveled to other schools in the county, such as the Phyllis Wheatley School in Apopka, to take high school classes.⁴

Gladys Franks Bell remembered the demand for education among Plymouth’s Black residents was so high, all the students could not fit into the small building. Children often went to school in two sessions: some children would attend for three-and-a-half hours in the morning, while others attended an afternoon session of equal length. Bell also recalled of the school, “All of the books were either torn or written all over,” indicating the common practice of Black schools receiving damaged, secondhand materials White schools.⁵

The school building was also used by two church congregations. Shiloh Baptist Church held service in the Plymouth Elementary School on the first and third Sundays of each month; St. James AME Church held service on the second and fourth. Eventually, each congregation raised a church building on either side of the school, forming the bedrock of an enclave that served Plymouth’s Black community and reflected its values.⁶

The context in which these kinds of Black institutional landscapes existed emphasizes their vital role in the lives of Black community members. The Ku Klux Klan was very active in Orange County before the Ocoee Massacre in 1920, staging rallies and parades in Orlando to intimidate potential Black voters from casting Republican ballots in the 1920 presidential election. The extreme violence in Ocoee that year was meant to be instructive to any Black Orange Countian who dare oppose the status quo. Later in the decade, when two Black leaders tried to establish a branch of the NAACP in Orlando (the county seat), it reportedly took five years to enlist five members (the requisite number to start a chapter) due to fear of retaliation for joining. Current research indicates Orange County saw the highest number of lynchings in the state of Florida. Surrounded by such hostility and danger, separate places created by Black residents, like the one anchored by Plymouth Elementary School, were vital during the Jim Crow era as these “separate worlds” helped sustain Black communities in the face of discrimination, intimidation, and violence.⁷

⁴ “Johnson Gives Facts,”; Bell, *Visions*, 62.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Bell, *Visions*, 62.

⁷ OPPAGA, “Election Day Violence,” 2; , Tana Mosier Porter, “Segregation and Desegregation in Parramore: Orlando’s African American Community,” *Florida Historical Quarterly* 82, no. 3 (Winter 2004), 297; “EJI Unveils



The north façade of the Plymouth Elementary School building (left), and the former building (right) of the historic Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church congregation which sits just west of the school building. The church building now houses the BrightView Church of God In Christ.



The St. James AME Church building (left) is located just east of the Plymouth Elementary School (right) building.

By the 1930s Black population growth in Plymouth called for a larger public school than just one room, but it took most of the decade for the expansion to happen. The Great

Historical Marker Recognizing Lynching in Orlando, Florida,” Equal Justice Initiative, June 21, 2019, <https://eji.org/news/eji-unveils-historical-marker-recognizing-lynching-in-orlando-florida/>, accessed July 26, 2023.

Depression meant that there was little local, public money available for any new project. By the mid-1930s New Deal agencies, particularly the Federal Emergency Relief Administration and its successor the Works Progress Administration were active in northwest Orange County in the mid-1930s. Black residents in Plymouth requested that county officials work with the federal agencies to improve the existing school.

According to a 1935 deed in the possession of Plymouth Community Improvement, Inc., Allen Franks sold the school board one acre for \$1. The deed stipulated: "The old school building now on the property to be given to Allen Franks, when school board builds new building. Allen Franks to remove the building then."⁸ The building removed by Franks was most likely an older annex formerly used by the school before the construction of the c. 1925 section of the extant building. This is corroborated by Ms. Gladys Bell, who remembered in her book that "one of the houses [owned by Mr. Franks] was part of a school annex that Daddy brought and had moved about 200 or more feet to his land."⁹

According to a local history, by 1938-39, public school officials "were able to permit much-needed improvements to the Apopka white school and the Apopka and Plymouth 'colored' schools" with funding from New Deal agencies.¹⁰ By 1939 the expanded Plymouth "colored" school was in operation. The building was attached to the south elevation (rear) of the c. 1925 section of the building, and restrooms were placed in a space between the two main buildings. Edith Henry Williams was principal in the newly expanded building by 1941 and she served in that role into the 1960s. The school proved successful and the number of students remained steady.¹¹

When the U.S. Supreme Court declared racially segregated schools unconstitutional in the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, local school boards across the South did little to comply. The day after the ruling, an article titled "Officials See Local School Status Quo" ran in the *Orlando Sentinel* newspaper reported the "ban on segregation in public schools will not call for any immediate changes in the Orange County school system" as indicated by school officials.¹² Another article quoted Orange County Superintendent Judson B. Walker: "Our people – both Negroes and whites – are satisfied," and that the school facilities for Black students were "as good or better than the whites."¹³ However, officials conceded that the ruling would likely result in "eventual revision of the school system under a long-range planning program."

⁸ Deed, Allen Franks and Irma Franks to Board of Public Instruction for the County of Orange, State of Florida, book 467, page 134, August 9, 1935.

⁹ Bell, *Visions*, 70.

¹⁰ Shofner, *History of Apopka*, 205.

¹¹ Bell, *Visions*, 62, 64.

¹² "Walter P. Jones, "Officials See Local School Status Quo," *Orlando Sentinel* (Florida), May 18, 1954.

¹³ Emily Bavar, "Court Segregation Ruling No Cause for Alarm Here," *Evening Star* (Orlando), May 18, 1954.



A 1954 aerial view of the American Can Company Plant in Plymouth. Plymouth Elementary can be seen between the two church buildings in the upper right corner (highlighted). The picture was taken when the road that runs north of the buildings was still in use. *Source:* Florida Memory Digital Collection, State Library and Archives of Florida

By the 1959-1960 school year, Orange County schools remained segregated with 16 Black schools and 62 White schools. According to a school census, Plymouth Elementary had four teachers, 112 students, and no lunchroom (one of 19 county schools without a lunchroom). One of the many ways southern school boards sought to circumvent the *Brown* ruling was to improve school facilities, i.e., the previously mentioned “revision of the school system.” These improvements came in many forms, including new buildings, renovation and expansion of extant buildings, and expanding a school property’s boundaries for recreational space. In 1961, the Orange County School Board spent nearly 3 million dollars on school buildings and nearly \$140,000 on school sites. Plymouth Elementary received a small amount of this expenditure when the school board purchased two adjacent lots to expand the school site.¹⁴

In 1962 a group of eight Black families sued the county school board for operating a segregated public school system in the case of *Ellis v. Orange County Board of Public Instruction*. In 1964 the county board filed a limited desegregation plan, with grades one through eight to be desegregated at the end of the 1965-1966 school year. Heart

¹⁴ “County Board Maps Plans For School Near McCoy AFB,” *Evening Star* (Orlando), December 15, 1959; Faye Centofanti, “\$3 Million Spent on Schools, Sites,” *Evening Star* (Orlando), January 12, 1961.

Start classes were underway at Plymouth Elementary in the summer of 1965.¹⁵ County officials closed Plymouth Elementary School in 1966, and the school was described as abandoned in the summer of 1967.¹⁶

In 1967, federal officials from the VISTA program began to work with Plymouth residents on acquiring the old school and converting it into a new use. Established as part of President Lyndon B. Johnson's war on poverty in 1964, Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) used volunteers who served for a year in different communities of need across the nation. In Plymouth, the VISTA worker, only recalled as Tom, began working with Shiloh Missionary Baptist and St. James AME members to acquire the school and convert it into a community center.¹⁷ The county school board rejected the community's first bid of \$1,125 to buy the school.¹⁸ About eight months later, the school board accepted a \$1,550 from the Plymouth Civic Association to buy "the abandoned Plymouth Elementary School and property, with installment payment terms to be worked out. The association wants to turn the school into a youth recreation center."¹⁹

The Orlando *Sentinel* explained more about the project: "The Plymouth Citizens Improvement Committee, Inc., has received a charter as a non-profit organization...The corporation was recently formed by interested citizens for the purpose of studying, planning and developing the human and physical resources of this community to the fullest."²⁰ The Head Start program ran successfully from the building for years. The building was also home to other community service-oriented programs run by the Improvement Committee. However, it was difficult to operate the community center in the historic building due to needed repairs. In 1979, the Orange County Community Development spent \$25,000 to make improvements and concluded that "a long future of renovation that would become quite costly" was ahead.²¹ In the summer of 1983, the county's Community Affairs department moved the popular Head Start program out of the Plymouth School building to Zellwood when the Community Development Department rejected repairs that would have costed nearly \$85,000.

Though the school building no longer provided official services to the county after the summer of 1983, the congregations of St. James AME and Shiloh Missionary Baptist – the two churches that flank the school – continued to use the building for Sunday school classes, and community members held wedding receptions, reunions, and community meetings there. In 1983, an article in the *Sentinel* titled "Plymouth group wants to preserve schoolhouse," chronicled the community's trials of maintaining the Plymouth Elementary School building.²² The piece declared, "Members of the Plymouth Citizens

¹⁵ Susan Schauble, "Project Brightens Pupils' Lives," *Orlando Sentinel*, August 1, 1965.

¹⁶ Brittany Bernstein, "All Deliberate Delay: Desegregating the Public Schools of Orange County, Florida," *The Pegasus Review*, 1 (#1, 2005): 48-57; *Evening Star* (Orlando), June 27, 1967.

¹⁷ Bell, *Visions*, 93.

¹⁸ *Evening Star* (Orlando), June 27, 1967.

¹⁹ *Evening Star* (Orlando), February 13, 1968.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, February 13, 1968; "Plymouth Citizens Receive Charter," *Orlando Sentinel*, April 7, 1968

²¹ Ilene G. Reid, "Group Wants to Preserve Old Schoolhouse," *Orlando Sentinel*, August 19, 1983.

²² *Ibid.*

Improvement Committee have not given up on their old schoolhouse” and called the building a “landmark in the unincorporated community.”

The Plymouth community continued to display their perseverance in saving the historic school building. In 1988, community members held a fundraiser next door at St. James AME “to save [their] 60-year-old landmark schoolhouse.” The event included singing and speeches by local officials. The fundraiser was intended to raise at least \$2,500 to match a \$25,000 block grant for work on the building.²³

Today, the Plymouth community continues to preserve their historic school building as a community center in an area of Apopka that is largely commercial and industrial. Its historic use as a school building is revered and an integral part of the Black Plymouth community’s history and identity. In its current use as a community center, the building is a point of pride and a historical artifact of this community’s collective action and cooperation in the face of adversity during the Jim Crow era.

²³ “Plymouth,” Neighborhood Notebook Section, *Orlando Sentinel*, November, 13, 1988.

Preservation Assessment

The Plymouth community should be applauded for keeping this almost one-hundred-year-old building in use and in good condition in the 50 plus years since county officials closed it as a public school. The building today still looks like the school documented by Dennis Wall of the *Orlando Sentinel* on August 19, 1983, almost 40 years ago.



That news story focused on how the community was beginning a new restoration project of the building, making upgrades and improvements. Plans in 1988 to convert the building into a daycare and adult center did not happen, although the kitchen area of the present building most likely dates to that period of the mid to late 1980s.²⁴

Setting

The Plymouth School was an institutional center for the black community. Its front section, a one-room school building, dates to c. 1925. In circa 1937-1938 the Works Progress Administration of the federal New Deal funded a two-classroom addition that served as the rear wing of the building. In c. 1946, St. James AME Church built a sanctuary to the east of the school while at approximately the same time Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church (now Bright View Church of God in Christ) built a new sanctuary on the west side of the school. All three buildings, at that time, faced a dirt lane that was once a public road in Plymouth. Later road development in Plymouth led

²⁴ "Plymouth residents hope to raise enough," *Orlando Sentinel*, November 13, 1988.

to that road's closure; access to all three properties now come from Hogshead Road.



This image shows the close proximity of the three buildings, with the Bright View Church of God in Christ Church in the foreground and the brown stucco of St. James AME Church at the left edge of the image.

The front, or facade, of Plymouth School is the c. 1925 one-room school building. A portico to cover the entrance, with handicap ramp, dates c. 1983. The facade retains its original three bays although the original windows were replaced c. 1983. The building rests on a concrete block foundation that was installed, probably, c. 1983.



Note historic weatherboard, chimney, and rafters along the roof line.



The handicap ramp, c. 1983, needs repair or replacement; the flowers along the foundation exterior walls should be removed so that moisture is not "trapped" along the concrete blocks and weatherboard wall.

The east elevation of the school has two sections, the gable end of the c. 1925 school and the two-classroom addition from c. 1938. The bays are historic to the original construction but windows have been replaced, c. 1983. The concrete block foundation may also date to c. 1983. A door and transom, with three-step concrete stoop that has wooden hand rails, was installed near the southwest corner of the elevation c. 1983.



Note historic weatherboard, roof rafters, and central chimney that divided the two rooms of the addition. At the southwest corner, the wall is slightly buckling, probably due to the weight of the storage area installed on the interior.



The length of the addition helps to obscure the connection between the two school buildings, but there is a small "hyphen" that created a hallway between the three classrooms.



Vines growing on exterior should be removed.

Detail of concrete steps, c. 1983



The south (rear) elevation is a weatherboard wall. The west elevation contains the primary entrances to the school. At the center of the two-classroom addition of c. 1938, which is accessed by a concrete ramp with metal railing, installed c. 1995, is a double door entrance, c. 1983, covered by a gable roof portico supported with wood posts.



One fixed six-pane window has been replaced and covered but five other windows are intact as is historic weatherboard.

The north end of the west elevation contains two sets (one wood, one concrete) of steps and covered shed entrances, c. 1983, allowing access to both the c. 1925 school building and the c. 1938 addition.

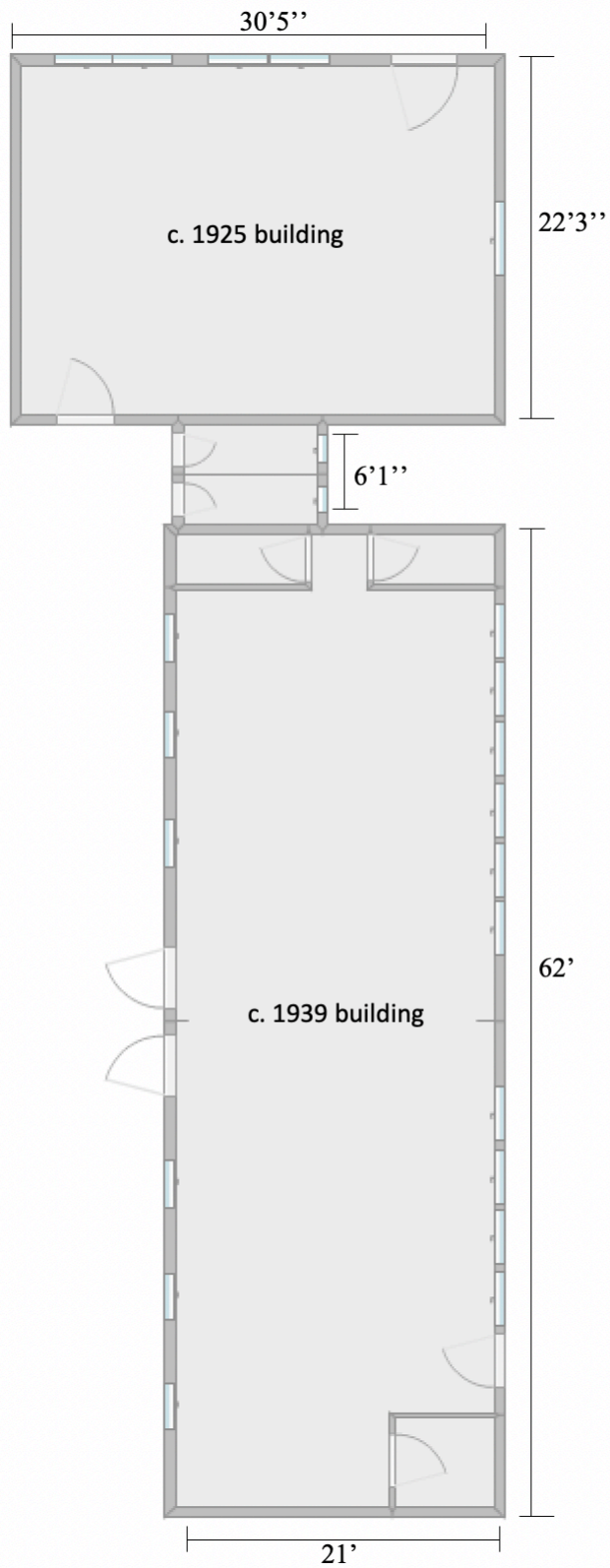


Due to how different roofs meet at this point, water is a recurring issue and here is the one section of the exterior where you can see damage to the original weatherboard. In the last five years, the community organization has repaired and extended the shed roof to address the moisture issue. The installation of the concrete pad to provide access to the hyphen appears to be the major issue, and a future solution may be to remove the

concrete pad and rebuild steps to both the c. 1925 school rear entrance and the c.1938 entrance to the two-room addition.



Interior Assessment



Floor plan, 2023. All measurements are approximate.

The one-room school building of c. 1925 is presently, as in times past, a sanctuary for a startup religious organization. Currently True Pentecostal Holiness Church, Inc., occupies the space.

Although the room has had two periods of restoration--c. 1983 to c. 1988, and c. 2020--the space remains a large, open one-room space. Faux pine paneling, the HVAC system, and the two interior restrooms installed in the west end date c. 1983-1988. Thus, the length of the room is different than its original construction. The drop-ceiling and vinyl covering over the floor was installed c. 1983-1988. Lockers for church materials and robes were installed on the east end c. 2020 and a podium for services was installed c. 2020 at the west end of the room.





Detail of the dropped ceiling and fan, installed c. 1983-1988



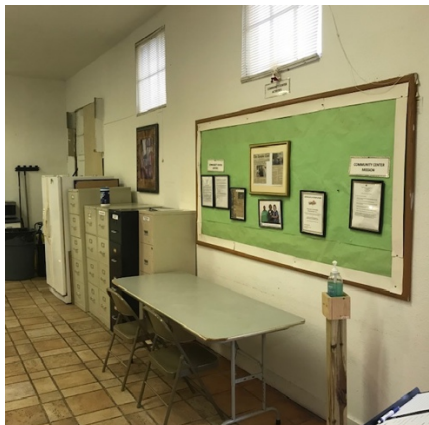
The two classrooms of the c. 1938 addition largely retain their original space. The exception is at the southeast corner where storage was installed when the kitchen was expanded and modernized c. 1988. A serving island was installed c. 1995. Vinyl flooring cover the building's original wood floor. The partition wall that once existed between the two rooms was removed c. 1983. A new ceiling with central fixed lights was installed c. 1983-1988. Both rooms are used for community meetings and limited historical information is installed on the bulletin board on the west wall near the entrance.



South classroom, c. 1938 addition, facing S



South classroom, c. 1938 addition, facing SE



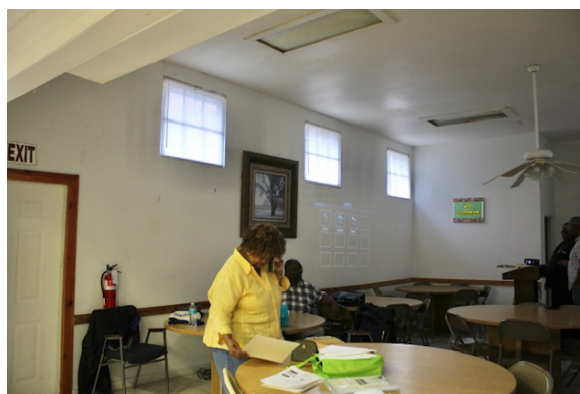
South classroom, c. 1938 addition, facing SW



South Classroom, c. 1938 addition, with exit



North classroom, c. 1938 addition, facing NE



North classroom, c. 1938 addition, facing NW

Preservation Needs

The building is in good general condition. This overview of the building identifies several places for preservation work but the board needs to prioritize the needs, both interior and exterior. Whatever the decision on where to place priority, better drainage around the property is necessary.

Next Steps for Funding

Plymouth Community Improvement, Inc., the owner of the historic Plymouth School, is looking for sources of funding for necessary repair and restoration. Due to the building's significant historical associations with the "long arc" of the Civil Rights Movement, we believe the building is potentially eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. We strongly recommend that the board prepare a grant application of the Civil Rights Landmark program of the National Park Service (see below).

National Park Service African American Civil Rights Grants

"The goal of the [African American Civil Rights](#) grant program is to preserve and protect sites associated with the struggle for equality from the transatlantic slave trade forward.

Who May Apply

- States and Territories
- Indian Tribes that meet the definition in 54 USC 300309 and Native Hawaiian Organizations that meet the definition in 54 USC 300314
- Local Governments, including [Certified Local Governments](#)
- Non-profit Organizations

What Is Funded

Pre-preservation and Preservation Projects

- Preservation projects must range from **\$75,000 to \$750,000** in federal share, of which 20% may go toward pre-preservation costs such as architectural or engineering services. Grant applications that solely involve pre-preservation work must range from **\$15,000 to \$75,000**.
- Preservation projects fund physical preservation of historic sites to include historic districts, buildings, sites, structures, and objects. Projects must comply with laws, such as [Section 106](#) and [NEPA](#), and execute a preservation covenant/easement.
- Eligible costs: pre-preservation studies, architectural plans and specifications, historic structure reports, and the repair and rehabilitation of historic properties according to the [Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Archeology and Historic Preservation](#).
- Properties must be listed in or eligible for listing in the [National Register of Historic Places](#) or designated a [National Historic Landmark](#) either individually or as part of a district.

History Projects

- History grant projects must range from **\$15,000 to \$75,000** in federal share.
- Eligible costs include survey, planning, and documentation of historic sites/events, creation of interpretive and educational materials around significant sites (including oral histories), and conservation of significant civil rights collections.
- Successful applications will emphasize innovative strategies, creative projects with measurable results, and include cross-generational engagement that promote and preserve the community's civil rights resources. Projects should involve public-private partnerships and serve as models to communities nationwide. Your project must fit one of the categories listed below. If a project overlaps more than one category, select the dominant category.
 - Survey and Planning
 - Interpretation and Education
 - Research and Documentation
 - Collections Conservation"

The Plymouth Community Improvement board would need to decide what grant to apply for in this cycle. Since the history of the building is well documented, we recommend that you apply in the Pre-Preservation and the Preservation grant category.

The deadline for applications is stated as follows: "Applications open July 10, 2023, and are due October 10, 2023. All applications must be made through Grants.gov. No paper applications will be accepted. Registration in Grants.gov, SAM.gov, and other federal systems can take up to four weeks so please start early."

The second national program is the African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund, which is administered by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. According to the National Trust, "Since launching the program, the Action Fund has raised more than \$91 million and supported 242 preservation projects nationally. In particular, the Action Fund's national grants have made a total investment of \$20 million since 2018. And by leveraging the Action Fund's scale, resources, and preservation expertise, important sites of Black cultural heritage have been permanently protected and recognized for their role in shaping our American history."

Criteria

"The National Trust, in consultation with the African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund National Advisory Council and external reviewers, will select grant recipients by considering, among other points, the following criteria:

- The historic significance of the property to be assisted and its association to African American cultural heritage
- The extent to which the requested assistance will make a difference in preserving, restoring, interpreting or managing the historic property or site, including what other funds might be leveraged by an existing award
- The level of local support for the project, demonstrated through letters of support and information collected on the full application such as site visitation information, volunteer statistics, and other related metrics
- The potential of the project to be a catalyst for further positive action to benefit other historic properties, neighborhoods or communities
- The adequacy of plans and resources for future maintenance of the property or the continuation of the activity for which grant support is requested
- The ability and willingness of the applicant to carry out the proposed plans or activity within the project's time frame if awarded
- The amount of additional resources being brought to the project, either through additional cash investments or donated materials and services

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Themes

While this is not an exhaustive list, there are several themes we are particularly interested in:

- Activism and Protest Movements
- Achievement and Innovation (education, science, business, politics, etc.)
- Architecture and Black Architects
- Black Architects in Modernism

- Arts, Culture, and Creative Expression
- Cemeteries and Burial Grounds
- Education (Not Rosenwald School Specific)
- Free Black Settlements and Agricultural History
- Historically Black Colleges and Universities
- Churches and Sacred Places
- Sites of Enslavement
- Heritage Landscapes
- Sports & Recreation
- Green Book Sites
- Statewide African American preservation organizations
- Reconstruction Era Sites
- Rosenwald Schools
- Women's History
- LGBTQ+ History
- Cities (addressing issues of displacement, gentrification, and affordability, and advancing solutions for historic urban redevelopment)
- Rural (advancing solutions to grow local economies, heritage tourism, and preservation of Black history)
- Black Craftmanship and Craftspeople as expressed in the Built Environment

Eligibility

Grant-funded projects must focus on African American cultural heritage. If applying for an Organizational Capacity Building grant, the organization's primary mission must be focused on African American cultural heritage or have demonstrated a commitment to this work.

Eligible applicants include:

- Public agencies: State or local agencies including boards, commissions, departments, accredited public colleges or universities, offices, agencies, public bodies, or political subdivisions of the state or of a county or municipality. Examples include state historic preservation offices, city and county preservation offices and planning departments, state and local commissions focused on different aspects of heritage, and publicly owned historic sites and museums.
- 501(c)(3), and other (federally designated) nonprofit organizations: A broad-range of 501(c)(3) organizations are eligible to apply, including state and local preservation organizations, churches, accredited private colleges or universities, historic sites, museums, historical societies, and genealogical associations. Applicants that have received previous National Trust financial assistance are eligible provided that all grant requirements are current. The minimum grant amount is \$50,000. The maximum amount depends on the project category (See below, under Eligible Activities and Expenses). Requests below the minimum amount will not be reviewed.

Only one grant will be awarded per organization in any grant round. Only one type of grant will be awarded for each project phase. Grant recipients from previous rounds of the African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund's National Grant Program are eligible to apply."

We believe that Plymouth School meets several of the criteria and themes of this program. Funding for the new fiscal year has not been announced but is expected this summer.