

**Administration Building, Guntown School, Lee County**  
**Mississippi Landmark Significance Report**

prepared by  
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November 12, 2010

**ML log #:**

1. Date considered by committee: Nov. 18, 2010
2. Name of property: Guntown School
3. County: Lee
4. Address of property: Lee County School Board
6. National Register Status: Eligible, not listed



**Property/Legal Description:** See attached

**Resource Description:** Built in 1937, the administration building of Guntown School is a U-plan school of variegated brown brick on a brick foundation and topped by a hipped roof of asphalt shingles. A large square brick chimney rises at the rear of the center hyphen that connects the two wings. The building is ornamented in the Art Deco or Art Moderne style, especially on the front facade where projecting pavilions define the two primary entrances. The left entrance, originally for high school students, is planar with decorative brickwork above the recessed entrance, a circular window to the left, and to the right a cast-concrete bas relief of a Native American and the word “Education” and a tripartite window that turns into a corner window. The right entrance, for grammar school students, consists of broad sawtooth pilasters connected at the top by decorative brickwork and rising above the roofline. Windows (originally six-light awning types on the front and 9/9 sash on secondary elevations) have been replaced throughout the building and now are two-light metal-frame types with a hopper in the lower light. While not an exact fit within the original openings, the windows still retain the basic fenestration pattern of the building. Ganged windows line the side elevations, all with concrete sills. On the interior, the U-plan floor layout is intact, but ceilings have been dropped, doors have been replaced, and hall transoms are boarded. The most serious alteration is in the auditorium, located in the center hyphen, where the stage has been enclosed with a plywood wall and a glass wall further divides the large space. The stage is still intact though, needing only the removal of the partition wall to be re-opened.

**Historical Significance:** Guntown School is historically significant as the center of education, originally for white students only, in Guntown since its construction in the 1930s. Located on the site of the original Guntown School (1870s), the present building was begun in 1935 as PWA Project #1007, after the condemnation of the old school. Thus, in addition to its educational significance, the building attains further historical importance as an example of a federal public works program in the 1930s. The PWA in particular among the public works efforts built scores of substantial architect-designed schools around Mississippi.

**Architectural Significance:** Guntown School is architecturally significant as an example of the work of the nationally recognized architectural firm N.W. Overstreet & A.H. Town of Jackson, Mississippi. Begun in 1935 under the design of Tupelo architect A.E. Hindsman, who produced plans for a U-plan Colonial Revival style building, the Guntown School was for some reason not completed until 1937. The final set of plans, according to Department of Education records, were by Overstreet & Town, and the building they designed was much more modern stylistically, especially the two entrances and the corner windows. As built, the Guntown School provided an interesting small-town counterpoint to Overstreet & Town’s school buildings in nearby Tupelo, all built after the devastating 1936 tornado and all in a bold Art Moderne and even International style.

**Integrity:** Guntown School maintains its integrity of style and form and is recognizable as a historic and architecturally significant building. Unfortunately, the replacement of exterior windows and doors has made the building less impressive than it was originally, but as these materials are showing signs of wear already, there may be an opportunity in future replacements to return the building to its more Modernist character. On the interior, the dropped ceilings reach only to the tops of the transoms, which while covered with plywood appear to still be in place. The most unfortunate change in the building has been the division of the auditorium and enclosure of the stage. Even here though, the original space could be recovered, as the stage remains, with its proscenium intact, although partially covered.

**Designation Intent/Property Description:** The Guntown School designation includes both the exterior and the interior of the administration building. Other campus buildings, all of which appear to date to the 1960s and later, are not included, except as additions or new construction might impact the administration building itself.