

As students and teachers begin their new school year, it's time to take a look at some of the county's school buildings old and new. Today, all of Newberry is covered by one school district. When the Public School system was begun in the late nineteenth century, each community sponsored its own school. In 1900, there were 57 school districts in the county and all but one had both a black and a white school. As the twentieth century progressed, smaller schools consolidated, so that by 1951 the county was down to seven districts and seven high schools. Now, our one district has 15 schools, including adult education.

Begin your tour on the Square in historic downtown Newberry. Travel east on Main Street. Turn right on College Street. On the right at the corner of Johnstone Street is a stucco covered brick building which originally housed the Newberry Female Academy. The school in Newberry was divided into a boy's school and a girl's school. This building housed the girl's school from the 1850's through the 1880's. When the public school was established, the Female Academy building served as the first public school while Boundary Street School was under construction. Turn right on Boundary Street. Just over the bridge on the left is the imposing red brick house built by Dr. Pressley Ruff in 1856. The house is built on the site of the original Male Academy. Turn right on Jessica Avenue. On the left is Oak Grove with its neoclassical Doric portico. Rev. J. Taylor Zealy operated the Newberry Female College here from 1867-8. Turn left on O'Neall Street. Just beyond Scott's Creek is Newberry Middle School. Cross Kendall Road onto Belfast Road. Turn left on Spearman Road. Down the road on the right is Reuben Elementary School. This school was named for Dr. Odell Richardson Reuben (1918-70), a native of Silverstreet who served as President of Morris College in Sumter from 1948-1970. At the end of the road, turn left on Main Street (Hwy 34).

Turn left on School Street. As the name implies, this street leads to the site of Silverstreet School. Though much of the site is in disrepair, the 1926 auditorium on the right is still in use. In 1924, the schools at Deadfall, Utopia, Burton, Mt. Zion, Trinity, Silverstreet, Reagin and Ridge Spring consolidated to form this school. Turn right on Lake Street. Turn left on Church Street. On the right is Silverstreet Lutheran Church. Though the congregation has its roots in the Deadfall Mission of 1874, this church was established in 1908. Turn right on Woodland Way. As the road bends sharply to the right there is a small house which was built out of the old Deadfall Schoolhouse. Turn right on Hwy 34 and then take a sharp left on Deadfall Road. Down the road on the left is New Chapel Methodist Church, founded in the first decade of the 19th century. New Chapel marks the beginning of Utopia community. It was named by the students at the local school who felt their home resembled Thomas Moore's fictional land. In the woods across Beaver Dam Creek was the site of Utopia School.

Across from Hannah AME Church is Hannah School, a Rosenwald school from the 1930's. Philanthropist Julius Rosenwald (1862-1932), who was president of Sears and Roebuck from 1909-1924, established a fund to promote African American education across the South in 1917. The fund contributed to the establishment of over 5,000 rural schools between 1917 and 1948. In the 1960's Hannah, too, was consolidated into Silverstreet. Turn right on Hwy 395. Turn left on Stoney Hill Road.

Down the road a few miles on the right is Stoney Hill School. This school was established in 1924 when two older schools in the area, St. Luke's (circa 1872) and Big Creek (circa 1890) joined forces. Classes

were last held here in 1958. On the left at the intersection of St. Luke's Church Road is St. Luke's Lutheran Church, established in 1828. Stay on Stoney Hill Road. Turn left on Hwy 391 (Mc Neary Street in Prosperity). On the right at Rikard School Road is the Prosperity Cemetery (even on a back to school trip I can't resist a good cemetery). Jog to the right as the road bends and turn left on Main Street. Turn left on School Drive. On the right is the old Prosperity School which now serves as Town Hall. Prosperity can lay claim to being the oldest public school in the county with an ancestry dating back to Crosson Field School of 1868. The present building was built in 1927, when area schools began to consolidate. Turn left on Brown Street and then right on Main Street. Turn left on Grace Street. On the right is Grace Lutheran Church (organized 1859). Turn right on Hwy 76. On the left is Prosperity-Rikard Elementary School.

On the right at the corner of Cy Schumpert Road is the new Mid-Carolina High School, with the Middle School across the street. Mid-Carolina Schools was the result of the consolidation of Prosperity, Little Mountain, Pomaria, Peak, Stoney Hill and O'Neal Schools. Continue on Hwy 76 toward Little Mountain. As you pass Mt. Pilgrim Church Road, Oak Grove Presbyterian Church is visible to the right across a field. There is another Rosenwald School in front of it. Turn left on Mt. Tabor Church Road. On the right is Mt. Tabor Lutheran Church. The congregation started an academy in 1885 that eventually became Little Mountain School. Turn left on Main Street. Turn right on Mill Street. Ahead is Little Mountain Elementary School which is currently being renovated and added on to. The school has been on this site since 1908. The auditorium and some of the classrooms were built in 1929. Turn around. Turn right on Main Street. Turn left on Pomaria Street. On the right is Holy Trinity Lutheran Church (founded in 1891).

Pomaria Street becomes Hwy 202. At the end of the road, turn right on Hwy 176. Down the road on the left is Pomaria Plantation which was built circa 1826. (My first grade teacher, Mrs. Huggins, lived there.) Turn left on Hope Station Road. On the right is St. John's Lutheran Church which was originally established in 1754. On the left are the old church (circa 1809), an old school and the cemetery. The 1763 land grant included land for religious and educational purposes. The school at St. John's operated until 1921 when it consolidated with Pomaria. Return to Hwy 176 and turn left. Turn left on Parr Road. Turn left on Broad River Road. Turn left on Peak Road and left again on Hope Station Road. (Don't worry about the missing bridge; we're not going that far.) On the right, next to St. James AME Church is Hope School, a Rosenwald school which has been renovated as a community center. Return to Peak Road and turn left (this becomes Folk Street as you come into town). On the left is Pomaria Lutheran Church (organized in 1910). This church was the outgrowth of a Sunday school held in the nearby Bethel Academy in 1906. In 1921, Bethel Academy (not to be confused with Mt. Bethel Academy) and St. John's School merged to form Pomaria School which is ahead on the left. Turn right on Holloway Street. Turn right on Hwy 176. On the left is a historical marker commemorating the site of the Eichelberger House, where the Lutheran Seminary was established in 1831, which led to the establishment of Newberry College. Also on the left is Pomaria-Garmany Elementary School. Turn right on New Hope Road. On the left is Bethlehem Lutheran Church (organized circa 1788). Bethel Academy was an outgrowth of this congregation.

Turn left on Graham Road. Before you get to St. Matthew's Road on the right is the site of Pressley School. Schools in this section of the county were so far removed from the county's high schools that many were bused to Monticello High School in Fairfield County. Turn left on Hwy 34. Turn right on Ringer Road. Cross Heller's Creek (several times). Turn left on Mt. Pleasant Church Road. Turn right on Mt. Bethel-Garmany Road. Turn right on Hwy 176 and right again on Molly's Rock Road. In the woods off to the right is the site of Mt. Bethel Academy. Founded by early Methodists, the classical academy opened in 1795. The academy provided most of the first students for South Carolina College (now USC). The school operated for about twenty-five years. Turn right on Hwy 176. Turn left on Old Whitmire Highway. On the right is the site of Long Lane School. A brick school was built here in 1922 when the older schools of Beth Eden Church and King's Creek Church merged. Granite retaining walls can still be seen marking the site.

At the end of Old Whitmire Hwy, turn left on Hwy 76 and right on College Street and return to historic downtown Newberry.