

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 92001683      Date Listed: 12/31/92

Birmingham School      Burlington      NEW JERSEY  
Property Name:      County:      State:

Multiple Name

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This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

*Antoinette J. Lee*  
for \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper

1/5/93  
Date of Action

=====

Amended Items in Nomination:

In consultation with the New Jersey SHPO office, criterion consideration A has been added because the resource was used for religious purposes during its period of significance.

The nomination is officially amended to include this information.

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**DISTRIBUTION:**

- National Register property file
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NOV 16 1992

NATIONAL  
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Birmingham School

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number Birmingham Road  not for publication

city or town Birmingham  vicinity

state New Jersey code 034 county Burlington code 005 zip code 08011

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  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

Assistant Commissioner for Natural & Historic Resources/DSHPO

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register.
  - See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register
  - See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:)

for Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Antonieta A. Lee

12/31/92

Birmingham School  
Name of Property

Burlington NJ  
County and State

**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 (School)		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Education/School  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Vacant/Not in Use  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Vernacular, late 19th Century Schoolhouse  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick, Stone  
walls Wood  
\_\_\_\_\_  
roof Wood Shingle  
other \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See Continuation Sheet.

Birmingham School  
Name of Property

Burlington NJ  
County and State

**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**      N/A  
(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- 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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Education

**Period of Significance**

1879 - 1922

**Significant Dates**

1879

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Unknown

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):** N/A

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

**Name of repository:**

Sybron Chemicals, Inc.

Birmingham School  
Name of Property

Burlington NJ  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of Property less than 1 acre Pemberton, NJ Quad

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 

1	8
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5	2	4	6	6	0
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4	4	2	5	3	2	5
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

  
Zone Easting Northing

3 

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Zone Easting Northing

See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Margaret Westfield, R.A.; Martin Shore, Preservation Specialist

organization Westfield Architects & Preservation Consultants date 4/15/92

street & number 425 White Horse Pike telephone (609) 547-0465

city or town Haddon Heights state NJ zip code 08035

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

**Additional items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Sybron Chemicals, Inc. c/o John McPeak, Production Manager

street & number Birmingham Road telephone (609) 893-1100

city or town Birmingham state NJ zip code 08011

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Burlington County, New Jersey

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### BIRMINGHAM SCHOOL Birmingham, New Jersey

#### DESCRIPTION

The Birmingham School is a wood frame one room schoolhouse located on Birmingham Road in the rural town of Birmingham, New Jersey. The small structure dates to 1879 and was built to be within walking distance of people living in the village. The building was utilized as a schoolhouse until 1922 when, corresponding with the advent of the automobile, children in the outlying rural districts were transported by school bus to consolidated schools. During its years as a schoolhouse and for several years thereafter, it functioned as a Sunday School and a place for worship. The building has had little or no use for the past 65 years, used only for storage by the present owners, Sybron Chemicals Inc. When a portion of the deteriorating roof collapsed in the 1980s, the company removed the stored materials and replaced the roof. The structure is presently vacant.

The schoolhouse is situated to the north side of the Rancocas Creek amidst a grove of evergreen, beech, elm and oak trees. Birmingham Road, the main street of the rural community, is located to the east. The Birmingham School represented the model for a schoolhouse in the mid nineteenth century and reflected the spirit of enterprise in the small rural community.

The Birmingham School is rectangular in plan, approximately 24 x 40 feet with a 12 foot ceiling height. It was built with a cellar measuring 12 x 24 feet, arranged for the storage of coal and wood. The foundation is of uncoursed stone topped by several courses of running bond brick, the brick being visible from the exterior. The wood frame building sitting atop the masonry is sheathed horizontal wood clapboard siding with vertical corner posts. Window and door surrounds are simple milled boards with little decoration. The wood dowelled window shutters are louvered. The wood shingled roof rises above a projecting box cornice and return with an applied cyma recta molding.

The front gable end facade faces east and is symmetrically arranged. A three-panel wood door, centrally placed with some original hardware, is raised up off the ground some two feet. Originally a wood, bracketed portico was located above the entry. Shown in historic photographs, its outline is evident on this clapboard facade. The photographs further indicate that the portico had a wood shingle roof and a wood pediment with a decoratively carved design. The steps leading up to the door are presently missing, as is a substantial brick pavement, which according to early documents led from a fence enclosing the schoolyard up to the stoop. Above the door, under the gable, is a bullseye opening which historically held a four-light window.

The south elevation is three bays in length. The masonry base had a rectangular coal chute opening, now infilled. This elevation has three six-over-six sash windows with wood louvered shutters

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Burlington County, New Jersey

containing original hardware and shutter dogs. To the west side of this elevation, late nineteenth and early twentieth century graffiti, in the form of initials carved by school children, occur with frequency. The density of carving increases on the rear south elevation. At the masonry base, a rectangular opening is located near the center. The north elevation is identical to the south; however, the condition of the woodwork is more deteriorated and only one set of shutters survive. A rectangular opening in the masonry base is located to the east side of this elevation. The new wood shingle roof is experiencing discoloration. Historic photographs show a brick chimney with a terra cotta chimney cap originally projected through the roof ridge near the east end.

The interior of the school is rectangular in plan with an entry vestibule measuring 4 1/2' x 8' leading into the main classroom space. Based upon the existence of hinges, the vestibule appeared to have been separated from the 25' x 35' classroom space by a pair of doors. The vestibule is flanked by a wardrobe and bookcase to the north, and a closet for the water cooler basin and stairs to the cellar on the south. Interior finishes include wood floors, yellow pine painted brown for the wainscotting and chair rail, and plaster for the walls. Above the chair rail, 170 square feet of blackboard surface were created by adding carbon black or other coloring agent to the final plaster coat. These surfaces, as well as the entire interior, exhibit moisture deterioration. Water damage has caused structural instability, especially at the southeast corner of the room where the floor framing has collapsed. This, in turn, is affecting an interior closet wall, which, left unsupported, is in danger of collapse. Several windows are boarded up; however, some contain original single-hung six-over-six wood sash with sash weights and simply appointed wood frames. The original orientation of the room faced west where the teacher's area is raised up one step on a wooden platform. A long blackboard lines the west interior wall, and at the northwest corner, is a built-in cabinet. The cabinet in the southwest corner is no longer intact. According to historical accounts, the original ceiling was wood and a pot belly stove occupied the center of the room. The stove was vented by ducts leading to the interior wall separating the vestibule from the classroom. Evidence of this stack is noted in the wall; however, a newer masonry chimney stack is located at the northeast corner of the vestibule. Other interesting interior features include the raised panel wood doors used along the east interior wall. Some doors contain original decorative cast metal hardware. The wardrobe closets show evidence of metal hooks; however, they have been removed.

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Birmingham School, Pemberton Township,  
Burlington County, New Jersey

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### BIRMINGHAM SCHOOL Birmingham, New Jersey

#### SIGNIFICANCE

The Birmingham School is historically significant as a structure that stood for the growth and development of tax-supported education in New Jersey. This school is typical of those built in small towns in the region during the first decade after the Civil War, largely due to governmental reforms in public education taking place at that time. The planning and the architecture of the Birmingham School are significant because this one-room schoolhouse, situated just north of the Rancocas Creek, represented the best model of its time, generated by educators and architects to better educate the farming community it served. As such, the building became both an important visual element in the community and an essential social institution. The school's architecture and detailing is typical of the period and survives largely intact as a significant, representative rural frame schoolhouse.

Located in Burlington County, Birmingham started out as a manufacturing village in the late eighteenth century. The town grew slowly but steadily, and in the nineteenth century became an important transfer center. This was, in large part, facilitated by the growth of the railroad which transported the area's most important resource, marl, throughout the region. The importance of the town increased as express trains to seaside resorts originated out of the Birmingham train station. Taking advantage of this, the Birmingham Inn, a plush resort hotel, was established in the 1870s catering to the rich from Philadelphia and New York. Birmingham, however, remained a primarily agricultural community, and the location of the Birmingham School was intended to be within walking distance for children living on the nearby farms.

Birmingham had two schools during the nineteenth century. The first was the Brandywine School, located just south of the North Pemberton Road. Birmingham School was the second, built in 1879 on land deeded to the School District by Eayre O. Bartlett, a farmer, merchant, miller and foundry owner in Birmingham, and Samuel R. Gaskill, a proprietor of Marl beds. The schoolhouse was completed and occupied in May 1879.

One-room schoolhouses of this type were typical of the schools being built in New Jersey during the mid- to late-nineteenth century. Their existence was due in large part to education reforms occurring in New Jersey between 1864 and 1874. In 1864, State government agencies noted a problem in rural districts with teacher supervision. By 1865, the New Jersey State Supervisor of Schools issued prototype designs for several types of schools. Of the types included was a one-room school that accommodated 70 students and measured 25' x 40', a



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Burlington County, New Jersey

proportion similar to that of the Birmingham School. In 1866, the New Jersey State Board of Education was established and public taxes were mandated specifically for public school use. By 1867, the State Board of Education had become a centralized body overseeing application of education legislation to schools. In 1871 all public schools were made free of cost, when the State School Fund was formed specifically for the building of public schools in rural areas. This did much to advance education throughout the state and spurred the building of schools.

The Birmingham School was described in an article in *The Mount Holly Herald*, May 24, 1879, which greatly praised the new school house, saying it was "truly a model one" which reflected great credit on all those involved in its design and construction. It is possible that this prototypical one-room school house design could have been influenced by early models, especially those built by Quakers. The Quakers, strong advocates of education, established schools in nearby Burlington as early as 1792. A simple building measuring 26' x 40', this original Burlington School was based upon the design of a meeting house.

An influential source of school design was an 1842 book entitled *School House Architecture* by Henry Barnard. Barnard, an educator, was an advocate for student comfort as well as discipline in school design. These ideas included proper ventilation and furniture, a separate chair for each student, pupils desks placed in rows, free passage between aisles and separate entrances for boys and girls. The ideal setting for a school was in a pastoral location such as a wooded glen away from distractions. It is not unusual that the design of the Birmingham School conforms to these designs. The State School Superintendent saw that Barnard's designs were implemented in school buildings in New Jersey. Similarly, the Birmingham School also served a dual role as a schoolhouse (from 1879 to 1922) and as a religious hall (during those years and until the late 1930s).

By the 1880s, the Birmingham School was being fully utilized. The building was valued at \$1,500 and the amount spent on supplies was \$732.11. While students in the district numbered 93, 78 were registered and average attendance was only 42. Students ranged in age from 5 to 20 years of age. The first teacher was George M. Wells who earned \$43.90 per month. The school term lasted ten months as opposed to the usual nine to accommodate the farmer's schedule. During harvest season, attendance dropped close to zero.

Female teachers were required to be unmarried or widows. That explained the quick succession of teachers in the early 1900s. In addition to teaching, the teachers were required to clean the school, stoke the wood-stove, settle quarrels and serve as practical nurses.

According to first hand accounts dating to the early twentieth century, the typical arrangement of the interior of the schoolhouse consisted of two rows of approximately six desks each on

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Burlington County, New Jersey

either side of the room. A canvas sheet divided the room in half. Kindergarten through fifth grade occupied the south side of the room, while grades six through eight sat on the north side. The desks were of the Victor Folding and Lock type. Three windows on either wall provided ample light and air to the room. The room was heated by a "pot belly" stove placed in the center of the room with an exhaust vent leading to a chimney. Since this space was also utilized as a worship space, an organ was located at the rear of the classroom.

There are several factors that led to the Birmingham School's closing in 1922. Attitudes about education had changed by the early twentieth century. Increased mechanization and modernization signaled that change. What was considered a model design in the 1870s, was called "deplorable conditions" for learning by the State Board of Education in 1922. In that year, Burlington County ranked second of all counties in the United States in the "efficient solving of the rural school problem," meaning that the one-room "little old red schoolhouses" were replaced with modern structures. In fact, by 1922, of the 67 nineteenth century schoolhouses in Burlington County only five remained open. This attitude, coupled with the ability to easily transport children from rural area to modern "consolidated schools" by automotive buses, also meant the demise of most of one-room schoolhouses like the Birmingham School. Fortunately, although the building no longer functioned as a school, the space was used for religious meetings into the 1930s.

The Birmingham School stands today, deteriorated but relatively intact, representing an important chapter in the history of public education in this community and many like it throughout the state. The one-room school house played an essential role in the development of school design and education in the area. To the late nineteenth and early twentieth century community of Birmingham, this one room school was an important visual and social element that symbolized continuity between one generation to the next. There is no other school house in Burlington County individually listed on the National Register that it is a representative example of a rural frame school house like the Birmingham School. (The other two schools in the county, the Quaker School in Burlington City and the Willingboro Schoolhouse, are both brick structures in urban settings.) Therefore, for its association with historical events in education and its embodiment of distinctive architectural characteristics of nineteenth-century one-room schools, the Birmingham school should be listed on the National Register.

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Burlington County, New Jersey

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### BIRMINGHAM SCHOOL Birmingham, New Jersey

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Burrowes, Thomas H. (editor). *A Manual of Directions and Plans for Grading, Locating, Constructing, Heating, Ventilating and Furnishing Common School Houses*. Harrisburg: A. Boyd Hamilton, 1855.

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*Report to the New Jersey State Board of Education and the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, for the School Year Ending August 31, 1874*. Trenton: William S. Sharp, 1874.

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### VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The Schoolhouse and associated schoolyard occupy a portion of Block 778, Lot 12, on the Tax Map of Pemberton Township. The nominated site occupies approximately seven tenths of an acre, and is described as follows:

*(i) Beginning at a point at the intersection of southwestern right-of-way of Birmingham Road and the southeastern right-of-way of the entrance driveway to the Birmingham sewer plant (hereinafter referred to as "Sewer Plant Road"), and (ii) proceeding in a southeasterly direction a distance of three hundred (300) feet along the edge of the right-of-way of Sewer Plant Road to a point, and (iii) proceeding in a southwesterly direction a distance of seventy-five (75) feet to a point at the edge of a steep bank leading down to a stream, and (iv) proceeding in a east-northeasterly direction along the perimeter of said bank until it reaches the edge of the right-of-way on the southwestern side of Birmingham Road, and (v) proceeding in a northwesterly direction a distance of one hundred and twenty-five (125) feet to the place of beginning.*

### VERBAL BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The nominated property includes the parcel historically associated with the schoolhouse.

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Burlington County, New Jersey

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**BIRMINGHAM SCHOOL**  
Birmingham, New Jersey

PHOTOGRAPHS

The following is the same for all photographs:

- 1.) Birmingham School
- 2.) Burlington County, New Jersey
- 3.) Margaret Westfield, R.A., Photographer
- 4.) April, 1992
- 5.) Negatives held by Margaret Westfield, R.A.  
Westfield Architects & Preservation Consultants  
425 White Horse Pike  
Haddon Heights, NJ 08035  
(609) 547-0465
- 6.) View of Birmingham School looking southwest.  
7.) Photograph 1 of 8.
- 6.) View of Birmingham School looking northeast.  
7.) Photograph 2 of 8.
- 6.) Detail of main entry on front (east) facade.  
7.) Photograph 3 of 8.
- 6.) Detail of louvered shutter on south elevation.  
7.) Photograph 4 of 8.
- 6.) Interior view of classroom looking northeast.  
7.) Photograph 5 of 8.
- 6.) Interior view of classroom looking southwest.  
7.) Photograph 6 of 8.
- 6.) Interior view of blackboard on north wall.  
7.) Photograph 7 of 8.

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Burlington County, New Jersey

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- 6.) Detail of original hardware on closet door along east interior wall.
- 7.) Photograph 8 of 8.



Sketch map of boundaries prepared  
 by Westfield Architects using  
 sketch information provided by  
 Atkinson & Walton. Not a legal  
 survey.

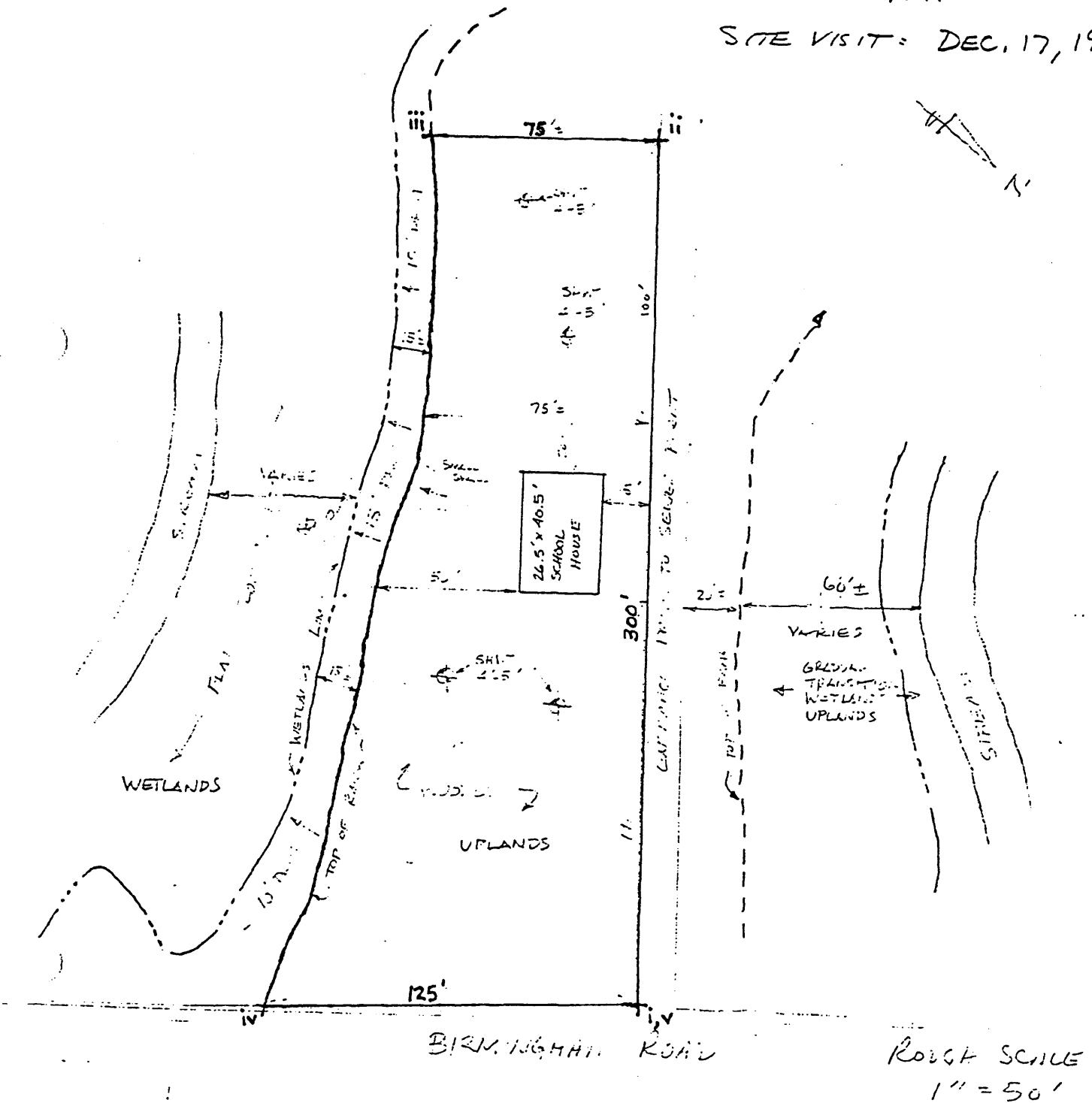
Birmingham School  
 Pemberton Township  
 Burlington County, New Jersey

9:11 AM  
 12/17/91

SEWER LINE

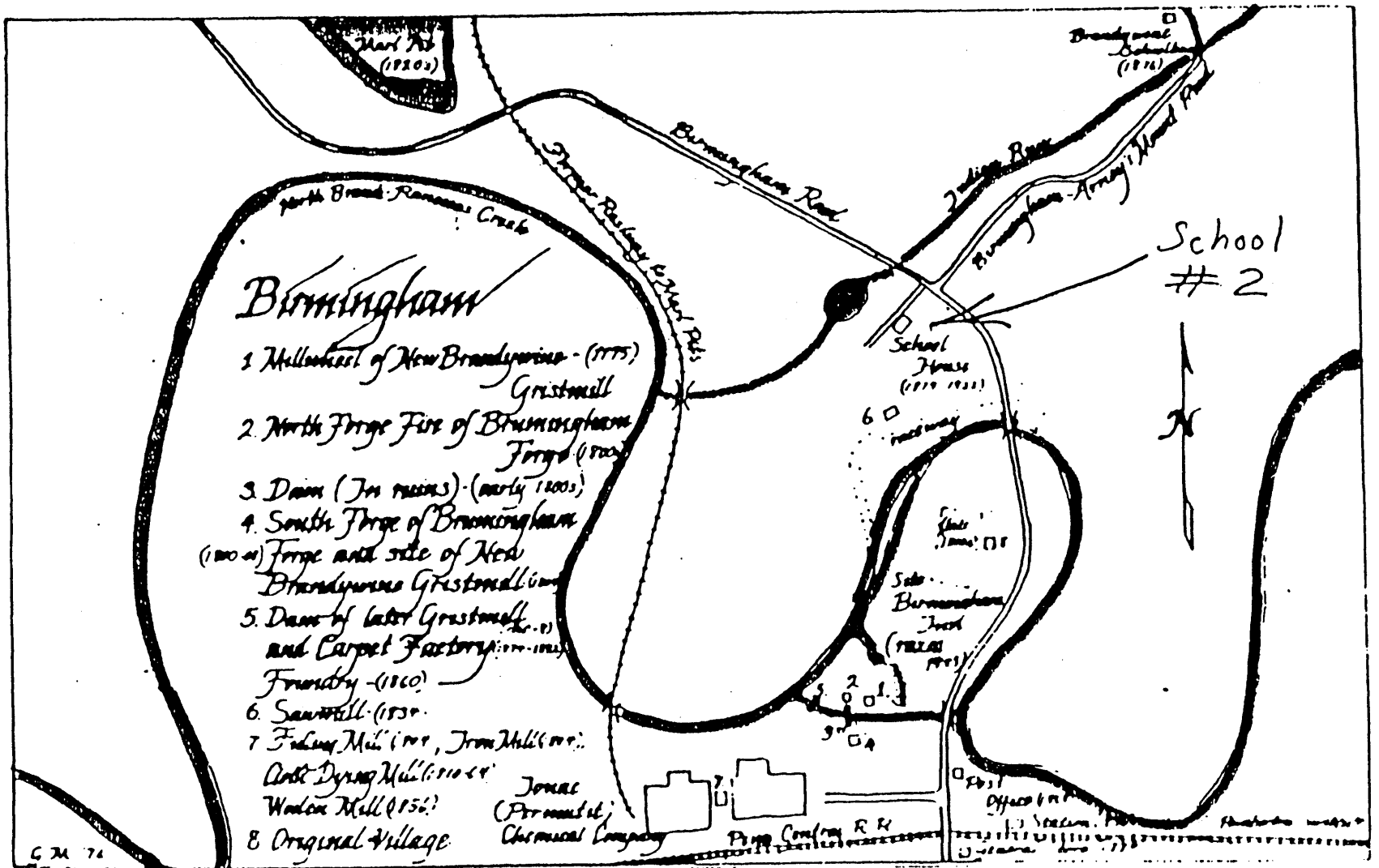
SYBRON # 91529  
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 PEMBERTON TWP.

SITE VISIT: DEC. 17, 1991 (e)

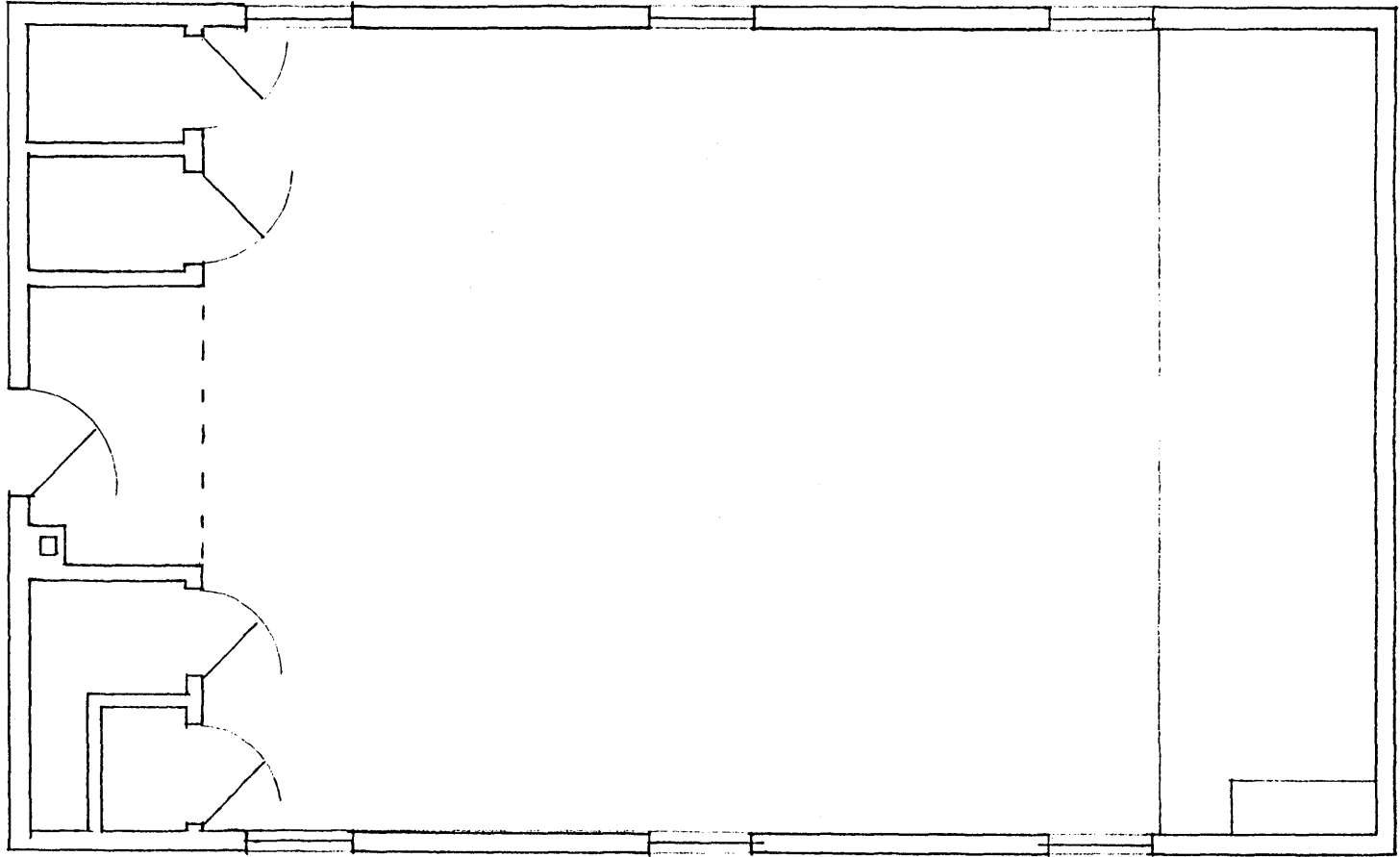




Birmingham School, Pemberton Township,  
 Burlington County, New Jersey



Historic map of vicinity (date unknown), not to scale.



BIRMINGHAM SCHOOL  
3/16" - 1'-0" GROUND FL. PLAN  
BIRMINGHAM NJ (Pemberton Township)



Birmingham School  
Pemberton Township  
Burlington County, New Jersey



Historic photograph of the Birmingham School showing original portico and square-picket fence.