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United States Department of the Interior National Park Service National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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NATIONAL
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Weston Colored School
other names/site number Central W.Va. Genealogical & Historical Library and Museum/Frontier School

2. Location

street & number 345 Center Street N/A not for publication
city, town Weston, N/A vicinity
state West Virginia WV county Lewis code 041 zip code 26452

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>1</u>	<u> </u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>1</u>	<u> </u> objects
		<u>1</u>	<u>1</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. See continuation sheet.

William E. ... 2/16/93
Signature of certifying official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this 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:) _____

Robert R. Savage 4-9-93
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Education/schoolhouse

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Education/library & museum

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation stone

walls brick

roof asphalt shingles

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

DESCRIPTION

The Weston Colored School is a single-story rubbed red brick building located at 345 Center Street, Weston. During the one hundred ten years of its existence, the building has always been used as an educational facility for those considered "different" by the community-at-large. From the time of its construction in 1882 until desegregation in May 1954, it was used as an educational facility for the community's African-American youth. After a short period as a storage building, it was used as the vocational agriculture classroom for the Lewis County High School, then converted for use as a shop for the mentally retarded students of the school system. Its use today as a genealogical and historical library and museum could be considered by some to be "different."

This one-room schoolhouse was erected on a field-stone foundation. A rather plain building with a gabled slate roof, it had three twelve-pane double-hung windows with stone lintels and sills on the south side, and a wooden porch on the front (east). A pointed arched opening in the upper rear end (west), closed with a wooden door, permitted access to the attic.

The original building, measuring 15' to the eaves, was 22' x 28'. It was heated with coal stoves and lit by "lamps" until between 1907 and 1912 when gas for heat and electricity were installed. An outdoor toilet was to the rear (west end) of the building and a hand-dug well on the north side.

The basic structure remained relatively unchanged until ca 1928 when the front of the building was extended to the east

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by 12'6" with the same brick used in the rest of the structure. Two windows, similar to the original ones but 3 1/2" narrower, were incorporated in the north and south sides of the extension.

The facade was changed to include a Mission-style parapet curvilinear gable with a cement coping. The corners are in the form of brick pilasters and extend above the coping. A stone tablet was imbedded in the upper center facade with "Weston Colored School" in raised relief. An arched recessed entrance completes the front elevation.

Separate outdoor toilets for males and females and a narrow cement walk leading to them were installed to the rear of the building. The non-contributing sidewalk is extant.

In the late 1940's a modified hipped-roof structure of pressed brick was added to the north side to house restroom facilities which had previously been of the outdoor variety on the rear of the school lot. This addition blends with the rest of the structure. The outdoor toilets were removed and a cement block building was erected in their stead to serve as the school kitchen and cafeteria.

All interior and exterior woodwork as well as the nine-paned double-paneled front door are of yellow poplar. The transom above the door has been replaced by a single paned window. Interior walls were plastered and finished with paper until ca 1920 when they were stuccoed and painted. Interior lighting is supplied by five chain-hung lights dating to the original installation ca 1910; because some were missing, globes were recently replaced with others of the same era.

Due to repeated flooding of the building during high-water times on the nearby West Fork River, the original tongue and groove poplar floor was warped. In 1983-1984 it was shimmed and covered with plywood to make the room useable for a shop for mentally retarded students. Both floors remain and are covered with commercial grade, flame retardant carpet.

During the summer of 1972 the exterior brick was scraped and painted white. Future plans of the present occupants include pointing of the brick and repainting to prevent

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further deterioration of the surface. The slate roof was replaced in 1991 with 20# gray fiberglass shingles; soffits and facias were also replaced.

Across the front of the school property is a contributing wrought-iron fence, installed ca 1890, similar in design to others located in the nearby Weston Downtown Historic District and around the Weston State Hospital, a National Register Landmark.

To the rear of the property is a non-contributing cement block building which was used for a cafeteria during the time the property was used as the "colored school"; it has since been used as a storage building.

The schoolyard was recently landscaped with older varieties of flowers and trees in keeping with the period of the building and an apple tree has been planted in nearly the same location where former students recall there was such a tree in earlier days.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Ethnic Heritage/Black/Education
Education/One Room School
Architecture

Period of Significance

1882 - 1954

Significant Dates

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Not Known

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

From 1882 through May 1954, this structure served as the only educational facility for Negro youth in segregated Weston; and, except for a brief period ca 1935-1947 when there was a "colored school" on Butcher's Fork several miles from Weston, it was the only black school in Lewis County for most of seventy-two years. This school, the fourth school built specifically for blacks with public funds in the state, was among the first in West Virginia to close after desegregation was ordered by the United States Supreme Court in the "Brown vs Board of Education" decision of May 17, 1954. The structure, therefore, qualifies under Criterion A for its role in black ethnic heritage; and, since it was the only facility in the town and county for the education of black youth in 1953 and 1954, it achieved significance in those years and qualifies under Criterion G.

This one-room brick school for black children, many of whom were the children of former slaves, would have seemed pretentious for its time in a primarily rural area where most children attended school in log or frame structures but for the fact that it was erected in a swampy area that was often flooded. In design it resembled one-room schoolhouses throughout the county; however, the 1920's extension to the front of the building with its Mission-style facade enhances the monumental entrance facade and helps make an architecturally impressive statement. The Spanish flavor of the facade makes the building significant in Weston, in Lewis County, and in West Virginia where most buildings and homes reflect the Victorian era in which they were built and the Mission style of the 1920's is rare. The "Weston Colored School," therefore, qualifies under Criterion C.

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Historical background and significance:

Prior to the Emancipation Proclamation of 1865, what little education the Negro race received in the South, including now West Virginia, was at the hands of benevolent masters; and, there is no way to measure the education received in this manner by the blacks of Lewis County (263 slaves and 33 freemen in 1860).

Following the Civil War, the Freedmen's Bureau and the Freedmen's Relief Commission of the North established some schools with volunteer teachers in parts of West Virginia - but not in Lewis County.

The first constitution of the State of West Virginia failed to address public education of black youth. It was not until 1866 that a law was passed establishing public schools for Negroes; and, the revised West Virginia Constitution, in 1872, specifically provided that whites and blacks should not be taught in the same school. Thereafter, the whites and blacks sometimes used the same building but not at the same time.

However, one requirement of the revised Constitution, twenty-five pupils between the ages of six and twenty-one years, again placed the establishment of a public school out of reach for Negroes in Lewis County where the black population was small and scattered over a large area - only 196 in the entire county in 1870.

In the fall of 1869, under the leadership of Benjamin Owen, English immigrant, businessman and founder of the Weston Sentinel, a much needed "colored" school was opened for a few students in an abandoned church building near the extreme head of Main Street, Weston, with Owen as the teacher. Miss Bird Jodon followed Owen and taught a few terms between 1874 and 1880. This school eventually received public funding for support.

By 1880 the black population of Lewis County reached 383, with 180 living in the Weston Independent School District. Of these, thirty-six were children of school age. Only sixteen were attending the school at the church; most of the remainder were employed as domestics or laborers.

The number of students required for a black public school

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was reduced to fifteen by the West Virginia State Legislature in 1881. The Weston Independent School District quickly took action and began the construction of the "Weston Colored School" on Lot No. 22 on the west side of Center Street (now 345 Center Street) in Weston purchased from Frederic Brinkman "whilst so holding the same in trust" for W. G. Bennett on 18 June 1881. G. W. Lawson, Superintendent of Lewis County Schools, reported in a letter to the Weston Democrat during the spring of 1883 that "the board of education erected a very neat brick school building for the colored children the past year."

The "Weston Colored School" was the fourth school building erected with public funds specifically for black children in West Virginia.

The first teacher in the new building was thirty-year-old George T. Jones, an Ohio-born mulatto, who taught for several terms before pursuing other careers. He entered the ministry and, in 1898, served as a guest editor of the Pioneer Press in Martinsburg during the time that the paper's publisher, J. R. Clifford, represented the black teacher, Carrie Williams, against the Tucker County Board of Education. Ms. Williams was ordered to shorten the school year for black children to five months while white children continued to go for the full eight month term. She defied the edict and continued to teach her students. At the end of the term, she sued the Board of Education for her salary -- and eventually won in the state Supreme Court. The Board of Education was ordered to give her back pay - \$125.

Jones was followed by three white women - Hattie Hood, Grace Rigsby and Anna Wells - each of whom served a term or two. In the late 1890's, William P./M. Crump, Frank L. Jefferson and J. W. Robinson, black men, taught a term apiece before leaving for more lucrative positions elsewhere.

The most dedicated educator at the school was Leroy O. Wilson who came to the position in 1898 at the age of twenty-six. He devoted most of the rest of his life to the black children of Weston, but for a three-year period when he served as Law Librarian at the West Virginia State Law Library in Charleston. He died in February 1918 at the age of forty-seven from pneumonia and was interred in Machpelah Cemetery, Weston. He rests there in a grave near to several

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of his former students; the esteem in which he was held is recorded on his tombstone:

"Sir L. O. Wilson
Aug. 25, 1871 - Feb. 12, 1918
Grand Commander of the
Knights of Pythias of
West Virginia"

During his tenure, Wilson reorganized the school, improved its methods of instruction, and supplied it with a library. He started at a salary of \$40 per month (by 1904 he was paid \$55 per month). Despite repeated offers of better paying positions in other localities, he continued to stand at the blackboard of the Weston Colored School.

In 1913, the substantial offer of \$100 per month as State Librarian of the Law Library of the West Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals brought his removal to Charleston. His appointment by Governor Hatfield was a recognition of his abilities and political prominence and was significant for one of his race. According to Marjorie Price, West Virginia Supreme Court Law Librarian in 1992, "At that time and continuing through the 1950's and into the 1960's, the position of State Law Librarian was one of the highest positions in West Virginia state government that a black male could hope to attain."

His tenure complete, he returned to Weston where he resumed his position at the school.

When he was not working with the black children of the community, he gave his time to the Knights of Pythias, a prestigious secret black fraternal order. Organized with Subordinate Lodges at the local level, Grand Lodges at the state level, and a Supreme Lodge at the top, the Knights of Pythias, together with other organizations of the same kind, gave blacks the opportunity to share in business, social, and civic activities as a body and to participate in lodge benefit programs which assured some financial aid for their families at the time of their deaths. "Sir Wilson" was recognized by his brethren for his astute leadership abilities. After serving as Grand Lecturer for the order for a number of years, in 1910 he was selected Grand

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Chancellor (commander) of the order for the state of West Virginia, a position at the time of his death. His obituary in the Charleston Gazette said that "the order . . . witnessed a wonderful progress under his administration" and that "he was personally acquainted with more colored people than any other man in the state" at the time. L. O. Wilson's tenure as State Librarian and as Grand Chancellor followed in the footsteps of his brethren, Samuel W. Starks, who died in 1908 and whose significant achievements on behalf of his race were recognized in 1981 and 1984 by the National Register.

In ensuing years, various teachers, most of them black, taught in the school where there were usually 20-25 students enrolled in eight grades.

While Benjamin F. Clark was the teacher, there were twenty-three students. During his teaching terms, patriotism was stressed at all schools in West Virginia by a law requiring flag poles at all public schools. The colored school was no exception - a flag pole, the remnants of which can still be seen, was installed to the right of the front door.

Many of the teachers are recalled by former students as disciplinarians; one, Hobart Mick, served as his own truant officer, checking to be sure students were ill when not in school.

This discipline, together with a well-rounded curriculum, prepared the students to go on to segregated high schools in Clarksburg (Kelly-Miller) and Buckhannon (Victoria). Some arose in the early morning hours and commuted to these distant towns, thirty miles and twenty miles respectively, on a daily basis by public transportation; others boarded, by the week, with black families near the high schools. Some graduated; some did not. Some, like Charles Johnson who was the first black to integrate West Virginia Wesleyan College at Buckhannon, went on to college; others, like Charles Perkins, entered the military and fought in our nation's wars. Some became business people, some ministers, and one or two achieved high positions in federal government. Most were ordinary, everyday, workaday citizens who toiled in factories, raised families, attended church, and became the stuff of which America is made.

Perry Arters, the last teacher in the segregated school, had

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only two students, Frieda Perkins and Mary Queen, in the school's final year; yet, he maintained a full schedule of classes with recesses on the school playground that had been installed in the 1940's to the rear of the building and a hot lunch prepared in the school cafeteria, a separate facility on the rear of the school lot, by Mary Perkins, the school cook. The hot lunch program had been started in the 40's in a curtained-off portion of the schoolroom with Sally Perkins as the cook.

Mr. Arters came to Lewis County in from Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, first to teach in a small black school that was kept for a few years on Butcher's Fork in Freeman's Creek District, then at the Weston school. Upon leaving the Weston Colored School in 1954, he became one of the first black instructors at Alderson-Broadus College in Philippi. He retired to his hometown and died there.

The Weston Colored School, except for the color of its students, was not unlike most of the 103 one-room schools in Lewis County at the turn of the century and was well representative of the thousands of others throughout the state. Eight grades were taught to children ranging in age from six to fifteen or sixteen. Sometimes there were as many as thirty-seven students crammed in the 600 square foot interior.

Reading, writing, arithmetic, spelling, history, and geography were taught to students by teachers who were often not much older nor much better educated than the older students whom they were teaching. A license to teach was easily obtained by having an expressed desire to teach and by taking a nominal examination.

Students frequently learned by rote and example - the younger students hearing the older ones recite. It was not uncommon for students to "skip a grade" by passing an examination on materials learned in this manner. Spelling bees, field trips into the surrounding countryside, programs for parents, and graduation day ceremonies for eighth grade students were part of the curriculum.

In addition to instructing the children, the early teachers were charged with keeping the coal or wood stove fired and fueling the kerosene lights. Drinking water, until the installation of that utility in early 1900's, was drawn from

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a hand-dug well on the north side of the building. Housekeeping chores were accomplished either by the teacher or some nearby resident who was paid \$3-\$5 per month for the work.

Because of the immobility of society in the days of the one-room school, particularly in Appalachian West Virginia, students frequently attended the same schools as their parents and were often taught by the young adults of area families. Such was the case with the Weston Colored School. The children and grandchildren of the school's first students were among the students who were present during the school's last days as a segregated institution.

In the 1920's bussing was introduced on the Lewis County school scene. Consolidated schools of three, four and more rooms were built, and the one-room schools began to close. Many of the former one-room schools were converted to use as barns and utility sheds, while others were converted to residences. Still others were demolished. The Weston Colored School, after a short time, became another integral part of the Lewis County educational system, a classroom for vocational agriculture students. Because of racial problems which developed nationally as black struggled for their human rights of the desegregation and the new uses of the building, a board was placed over the name on the front of the building; and, but for the memory of several older town residents and the town's few blacks, the "Weston Colored School" disappeared from the scene.

When the new Lewis County High School was constructed in 1972, room was provided for the vo-ag classes on campus; and, the old school became, once again, a storage building. But not for long. A local group of parents of mentally retarded children organized a school for these special children and held classes in the historic one-room school with support of equipment and some supplies from the Lewis County Board of Education. As a signature of their pioneering ways in educating these children, they named the building "Frontier School." Eventually these classes were assumed by the Board of Education and the building became a workshop for them.

In 1991, a new building was erected on the Lewis County High School campus for the mentally retarded students. This time, however, the old building was not placed in retirement; instead, the Lewis County Board of Education

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leased the building to the Hacker's Creek Pioneer Descendants.

On August 8, 1992, with the board covering its historic name removed, the "Weston Colored School" was dedicated as the Central West Virginia Genealogical and Historical Library and Museum.

One other former one-room school remains dedicated to public uses in present-day Lewis County; located on Buckhannon Run in Hacker's Creek District, the building has not been used for a number of years and will soon revert to the property's former owners. The Weston Colored School is the only former one-room school within Lewis County, perhaps in the state, which is still used on a daily basis for educational purposes.

9. Major Bibliographical References

- 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 # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:
Hacker's Creek Pioneer Descendants
Weston, W.V.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Less than one acre

UTM References

A

17

5	4	6	3	2	0
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4	3	2	1	1	1	0
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Zone Easting Northing

C

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B

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Zone Easting Northing

D

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Parcel number 228 on tax map LE-2-96 on file in the Lewis County Assessor's Office.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundaries selected for the school reflect the property boundaries historically associated with the building.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Joy Gregoire Gilchrist, Editor

organization Hacker's Creek Pioneer Descendants date December 14, 1992

street & number HC-64 Box 38 telephone (304) 269-9789

city or town Alum Bridge state WV zip code 26321

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