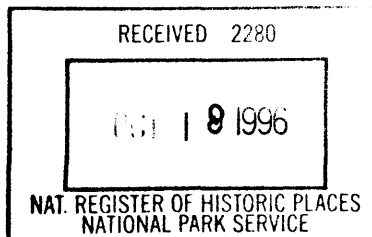


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

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 Free Hills Rosenwald School

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number Free Hills Road

N/A not for publication

city or town Free Hill

N/A vicinity

state Tennessee

code TN

county Clay

code 027

zip code 38551

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 for 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.)

Herbert L. Hays
Signature of certifying official/Title

10/4/96
Date

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, Tennessee Historical Commission

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.) _____

Edson H. Beall
Signature of the Keeper

11-15-96
Date of Action

Entered in the
National Register

Free Hills Rosenwald School
Name of Property

Clay County, TN
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in count)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing Noncontributing

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	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)

SOCIAL: meeting hall

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: Rosenwald School Plan

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE, BRICK

walls weatherboard, VINYL

roof ASPHALT SHINGLE

other CONCRETE

Narrative Description

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

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 boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** moved from its original location.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property
- G** less than 50 year of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION

ETHNIC HERITAGE: African-American

Period of Significance

1929 - 1945

Significant Dates

1929 - 1930

Significant Person

(complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Smith, Samuel L., for the Rosenwald, Julius, Fund

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:

MTSU - Center for Historic Preservation

Free Hills Rosenwald School
Name of Property

Clay County, TN
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property approx. 1 acres

UTM References

(place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

Dale Hollow Dam, TN-KY 329SW

1 16 635160 4047320
Zone Easting Northing
2 _____

3 _____
Zone Easting Northing
4 _____

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 Carroll Van West and Mary S. Hoffschwelle
organization Middle Tennessee State University date September 25, 1995
street & number PO Box 80 telephone (615) 898-2947 (or 5806)
city or town Murfreesboro state TN zip code 37130

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 Clay County Government (Angela Barrett, contact)
street & number Clay County Courthouse telephone _____
city or town Celina state TN zip code 38551

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 listing. 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 20303.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Free Hills Rosenwald School, Clay Co., TN

VII. Description

The Free Hills Rosenwald School lies in the middle of the rural African-American village of Free Hill, along the Free Hill Road, in the vicinity of the county seat of Celina, in Clay County, Tennessee. Built in 1929-30, the school is an original three room, T-plan, asphalt-shingle gable roofed, frame building, with a brick and concrete foundation. Its Craftsman-like roof brackets are the primary decorative feature of the school. The interior floor plan of three rooms, closets, and restrooms retains integrity with minor alterations, with several kitchen appliances from the early 1960s still installed in the "industrial" room used for the teaching of domestic homemaking, crafts, and industrial arts. The original wooden walls, flooring, stage, and ceiling also exhibit a high degree of historical integrity.

In circa 1980, a TVA community development program provided funding and labor to cover the exterior with vinyl siding. The pattern of siding matches that of the original weatherboard, which remains intact under the siding. At the time of the siding, however, some exterior windows on the west side were covered over, but not removed. Community members are now working with officials at the Upper Cumberland Development District to restore the schoolhouse into a community heritage center. Preliminary plans include removing the vinyl siding and following the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation in the restoration work. An architectural firm has been brought in as a consultant on the project. After consulting with staff at the Tennessee Historical Commission in March 1996, community members began to remove the vinyl siding. Wooden protective panels remain over the covered windows at this time in order to keep them protected during the remainder of the restoration process. The removal of the remainder of the siding, and the restoration of the building according to the Secretary's Guidelines, are planned for the summer of 1996. Nomination of the property to the National Register, according to local residents who have taken the initiative to plan for the restoration, will encourage and enhance the efforts of this low-income community to preserve and reuse this school as a community landmark.

The front, or east, facade shows the T-plan nature of the school. The projecting center room is the industrial room, with two six-

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

Free Hills Rosenwald School, Clay Co., TN

over-six double-hung windows symmetrically placed on the east front of the projecting room. Immediately adjacent to the north window is a small air-conditioning unit, installed in circa 1980. The north side of the projecting center room also contains a single six-over-six double-hung window as well as, near its northeast corner, a modern wooden paneled door and wooden steps with bannister, which were added in circa 1980. To either side of the projecting center section are original recessed entrances to the school. Both entrances have an unadorned shed hood over the doorways. The north entrance retains its original five concrete steps; the south entrance no longer retains its steps.

The north elevation is a solid weatherboard wall. Part of the brick foundation has been removed to create a crawl space under the school. This hole in the brick will be repaired during the renovations.

The west elevation contains two symmetrically placed ribbons of four eight-over-eight double hung windows, with a concrete chimney dividing the facade in half. The windows remain underneath the protective wooden panels, which were added when contractors added vinyl siding to this wall circa 1980. At this time before the restoration is finished, the northern set of windows form only a ribbon of three eight-over-eight double hung windows while the southern set show only a ribbon of two eight-over-eight double hung windows.

The south elevation is a solid wall of weatherboard, now covered with siding. Its brick foundation retains an original ventilation port, as well as two additional holes, which were knocked into the bricks to provide access.

The interior plan of the Free Hills Rosenwald School is a variation of floor plan no. 20, documented in the Community School Plans of the Julius Rosenwald Fund, as revised in 1931. The original floors and walls of the rooms are intact; indeed, the contrasting paint scheme of a light color for the top half of the wall, with a darker color for the bottom half, can still be seen in the rooms. The contrasting colors give the rooms the appearance of having wainscoting, which is in keeping with the rules on interior painting published in Community School Plans: "Classroom walls and ceiling should be painted in light colors to

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 3

Free Hills Rosenwald School, Clay Co., TN

improve the light reflection and diffusion. The wainscoting should be darker to avoid too much reflection below the eye level" (p. 2).

The vestibules on either side of the projecting center room enter into two large classrooms, which are divided by a movable partition. The north classroom contains an original stage at its north end. On its east wall are two small cloak rooms, both with their original doors.

The south classroom has experienced some alterations in the last fifteen years. Original walls, ceiling, and flooring are intact. However, in circa 1980, community members installed wooden booths and restaurant-like tables to serve as a dining room for the newly rehabilitated "community hall." They also converted the the original cloak room, near the southeastern corner of the room, into a modern restroom. Then, a smaller restroom, with a new wooden door, was cut into the eastern wall, symmetrically placed between the original cloakroom and the original exterior door to the south vestibule.

The east classroom is the original "industrial" and home economics room. At the eastern end, along the wall, is a sink and cabinets from circa 1960 and then a more recent electric stove from circa 1980. Since 1980, this room has served as a kitchen for the community hall. Linoleum was added over the original flooring in circa 1980; at that date, a serving counter and wooden mesh screen were added to partition the kitchen from the room. This mesh screen and serving counter will be removed during the restoration of the school.

An important part of any Rosenwald School was its siting, so morning sunlight best illuminates the interior classrooms, and its grounds. The Free Hills school sits in the middle of an approximately one acre lot and it retains its rural setting. No outbuildings remain on the property. The only playground equipment is a basketball goal, which was added in circa 1980. Unfortunately, the community dumpster has been placed at the southern end of the property. This will be re-located as the restoration project develops in 1996.

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Section number 8 Page 4

Free Hills Rosenwald School, Clay County, TN

VIII. Significance Statement

Built from 1929 to 1930, the Free Hills Rosenwald School, on the Free Hill Road in the rural African-American unincorporated village of Free Hill, near Celina, Clay County, Tennessee, is a locally significant property eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its role in the development of public education for African-Americans under the auspices of the Rosenwald Fund in Clay County. As the only Rosenwald school ever built in Clay County, it served as a physical tool of educational reform as well as a social center in the local African-American community until it ceased being a rural school in 1966. Consequently, the school is significant under Criterion A for its association with the ethnic heritage of Clay County's African Americans in the early twentieth century.

Sears, Roebuck & Company magnate Julius Rosenwald funded his first school for Tennessee African-Americans in 1915. In 1919, Rosenwald hosted a meeting in Nashville for education reformers who wanted to establish a rural school building program. They created a Nashville office which would review requests from local communities and provide money from the Julius Rosenwald Fund (JRF) according to the number of teachers planned for each school. By the time the program closed in 1932, the Rosenwald Fund had helped to build 354 schools in Tennessee.

"The principles of black self-help and industrial education dominated the JRF school construction plan," according to historian Mary S. Hoffschwelle. (1) The schools included facilities for industrial, agricultural, and home economics instruction. Schools like the Free Hills Rosenwald School offered a thorough curriculum in vocational education, focusing on industrial training for boys and home economics for girls. The east classroom of the Free Hills school served as the "industrial" room. White officials supported these new classes, and even provided more money for supplies and equipment, because the vocational classes produced, in white eyes, a "better trained" and "more reliable" workforce and helped to keep the local African-American workforce in the local area rather than migrating north to new opportunities. Clay County whites supported home economics training for the local African-American

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 5

Free Hills Rosenwald School, Clay County, TN

girls because they assumed that work as domestics in white homes in nearby Celina was appropriate, and their best chance at steady employment.

The Free Hills Rosenwald School, like many other Rosenwald schools across Tennessee, represented a new higher level of commitment by state and local officials to the education of African Americans, although much of new commitment focused only on vocational education offerings. School boards spent more money on the local schools, making new teaching material and resources available to the students. Rosenwald also wanted his schools to be permanent additions to public education, so the principles of industrial/vocational training and black self-help would be taught well into the future. He required that state and local government funds match his contributions as well as those of the local African-American community. In the case of the Free Hills school, the African-American community raised \$200 for its construction, while public coffers provided \$1,775 and the Rosenwald Fund gave \$500.

The Rosenwald reformers believed that local participation and involvement in the school's construction was imperative because it could teach the community how to improve the appearance and sanitation of its own neighborhood. According to Hoffschwelle, reformers maintained "that rural blacks would be reformed first by building their Rosenwald school, which would unite them as a community, and then by the building itself, which would inspire hard work and clean living." (2)

Indeed, the building was to be more than a place for education; it was to be the center for community life. Therefore, the Free Hills Rosenwald School has significant associations with the social history of the rural African-American community of Clay County. It became the only public gathering place for African-Americans not only in this county but in the Upper Cumberland region since neither neighboring Pickett or Jackson county had any Rosenwald schools. Rosenwald publications emphasized that "service to the community" was a top priority for the school building. The 1924 Community School Plans stated:

In planning the schoolhouse it should be kept in mind that the best modern school is one which is designed to

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Free Hills Rosenwald School, Clay Co., TN

serve the entire community for twelve months in the year. Hence in all larger buildings at least a room for industries and for the use of the adult members of the community is important. Wherever possible a good auditorium, large enough to seat the entire community, should be erected in connection with every community school. If there are not sufficient funds for an auditorium, two adjoining classrooms with a movable partition may be made to serve this purpose. While movable partitions are not always satisfactory, they are much preferred to no assembly facilities. (3)

Free Hills Rosenwald School had a designated community room, complete with a small stage which is still extant. The adjacent room could become part of the seating for lectures, performances, and other community events by pushing back the movable partition so that children and adults could view the speaker and hear the speech. The school served as a meeting place for African-American speakers on a variety of topics, from politics to race relations to the agricultural extension service. It also hosted school plays and community pageants. It is still the community voting precinct.

The Free Hills community has achieved a high degree of recognition as an unique African-American community in the Upper Cumberland region. In the 1939 WPA Guide to Tennessee, it was observed that the roughly 300 residents of Free Hills:

are polite and friendly, and have preserved many of the way of their ancestors. They like to play the guitar and to perform the square dances, many are excellent singers. In almost every generation there is someone who is believed to have the power of voodoo. (4)

Folklorists during the 1980s and 1990s were the first to document African-American life and culture in Free Hills. A preliminary survey by the authors identified few extant historic structures from before 1945 in Free Hills. The most prominent community landmarks are the village cemetery and the Rosenwald school. (5)

The Free Hills Rosenwald School in Clay County documents the hopes and dreams of African Americans of the late 1920s as they

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Free Hills Rosenwald School, Clay Co., TN

took advantage of philanthropic programs to improve their quality of life in an age when segregation ruled supreme. The school remained in operation until 1966 when segregation officially ended. The Free Hills Rosenwald School is a only extant artifact in Clay County of the dreams of southern reformers who believed that through new, functional architectural environments education and life would be improved within the rural African-American community. In one sense, the school is like all extant Rosenwald schools in the South. It was part of a major reform effort; it served as an educational and community center for a rural black community for at least 40 years, and its unassuming architecture reflected the quiet dignity of the program and people it served. But the surviving extant remnants of this school program also are very significant artifacts of progressive school architecture, African-American education, and symbols of African-American ethnic heritage, achievement, and pride.

ENDNOTES

1. Mary S. Hoffschwelle, "Rebuilding the Rural Southern Community: Reformers, Schools, and Homes in Tennessee, 1914-1929," Ph:d Dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 1993, 111.
2. Ibid., 112.
3. Community School Plans (Nashville: Julius Rosenwald Fund, 1924), 1.
4. WPA Guide to Tennessee (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1986 [1939]), 508-509.
5. Carroll Van West, Tennessee's Historic Landscapes: A Traveler's Guide (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995), 281-82.

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Free Hills Rosenwald School, Clay County, TN

IX. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Dresslar, F. B. and Haskell Pruett. Rural School-houses, School Grounds, and Their Equipment. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1930.

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Montell, W. Lynwood. Upper Cumberland Country. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1993.

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Stitely, Thomas B. "Bridging the Gap: A History of the Rosenwald Fund in the Development of Rural Negro Schools in Tennessee, 1912-1932." Ph: D Dissertation, George Peabody College for Teachers, 1975.

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 9

Free Hills Rosenwald School, Clay County, TN

X: GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Verbal Boundary Description

The Tax Map for this nomination has the scale 1" = 400'. This scale tax map is prepared by the Tennessee State Board of Equalization for rural areas. In the past, the Tennessee Historical Commission has used this scale map for nominations and has found that the 1" = 400' adequately meets our office needs. The Tennessee Historical Commission does not have the facilities to prepare maps to the scale preferred by the National Park Service.

The nominated boundaries are defined as plot 31 from the attached property tax map 42 from the Clay County Tax Assessor office.

Boundary Justification

The nominated boundaries contain all of the historic property associated with the Free Hills Rosenwald School under a single ownership.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Free Hills Rosenwald School, Clay Co., TN

PHOTOGRAPHS

Free Hills Rosenwald School, Clay Co., TN

Photos by: Carroll Van West

MTSU Center for Historic Preservation

Date: April 3, 1996

Negatives: Tennessee Historical Commission

2941 Lebanon Road

Nashville, TN 37243

East facade, facing west

1 of 13

South elevation, facing north

2 of 13

North elevation, facing south

3 of 13

West elevation, facing east

4 of 13

West elevation and south elevation, facing northeast

5 of 13

North classroom, windows, facing west

6 of 13

Kitchen, east (home economics) room, facing southeast

7 of 13

Ceiling, east (home economics) room, facing west

8 of 13

North classroom and partition area, facing north

9 of 13

North and south classrooms, facing southeast

10 of 13

North classroom, stage, facing northeast

11 of 13

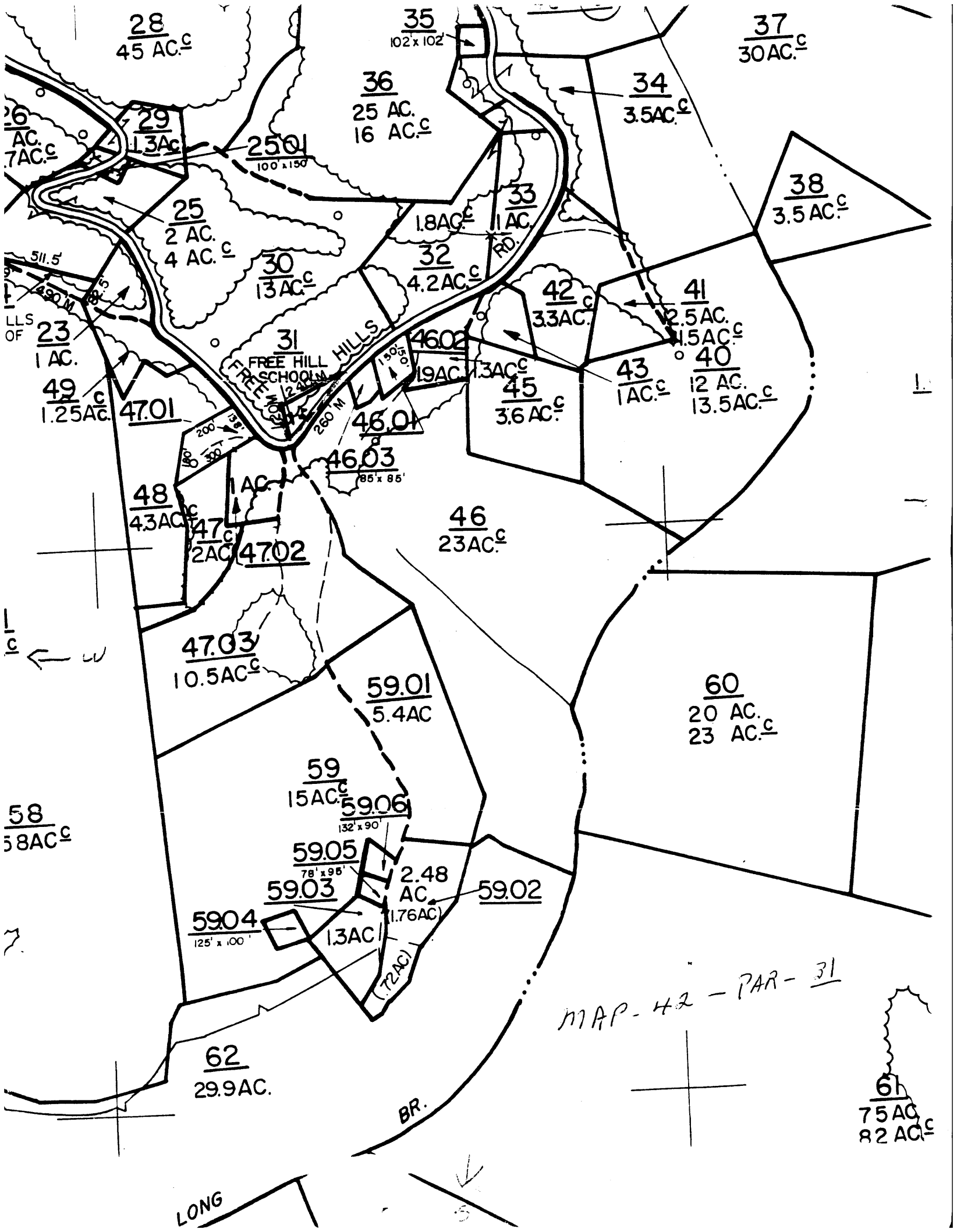
National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Free Hills Rosenwald School, Clay Co., TN

South classroom, facing east
12 of 13

South classroom, facing south
13 of 13



28
45 AC. c

35
102 x 102

37
30 AC. c

6
AC.
7 AC. c

29
1.3 AC

2501
100 x 150

36
25 AC.
16 AC. c

34
3.5 AC. c

38
3.5 AC. c

25
2 AC.
4 AC. c

1.8 AC. c

33
1 AC.
RD.

30
13 AC. c

32
4.2 AC. c

42
33 AC. c

41
12.5 AC.
11.5 AC. c

511.5
490 M
LLS
OF

23
1 AC.

31
FREE HILL
SCHOOL

4602
19 AC. c

43
1 AC. c

40
12 AC.
13.5 AC. c

49
1.25 AC. c
47.01

48
43 AC. c

46.01
1 AC.
46.03
85 x 85

45
3.6 AC. c

46
23 AC. c

47.03
10.5 AC. c

59.01
5.4 AC

60
20 AC.
23 AC. c

58
58 AC. c

59
15 AC. c
59.06
132' x 90'

59.05
78' x 95'

59.03

2.48
AC.
(1.76 AC)

59.02

59.04
125' x 100'

1.3 AC

(7.2 AC)

62
29.9 AC.

BR.

MAP-42-PAR-31

61
75 AC
82 AC. c

LONG