

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

BRISTER SCHOOL HOUSE, Winn Parish, LA

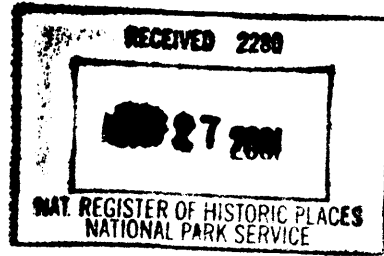
United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Brister School House

Other Name/Site Number:



Handwritten scribble

2. LOCATION

Street & Number Parish Road 240 & Brister School Rd.

Not for publication: NA

City/Town Sikes

Vicinity: X

State: Louisiana Code: LA County: Winn

Code: 127

Zip Code: 71474

3. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria.

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

Nationally: Statewide: Locally: X

Signature of Certifying Official/Title Jonathan Fricker Deputy SHPO Dept of Culture, Recreation and Tourism

Date June 22, 2001

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

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

Signature of Commenting or Other Official/Title

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

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4. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

- Entered in the National Register
- Determined eligible for the National Register
- Determined not eligible for the National Register
- Removed from the National Register
- Other (explain):

Edson H. Beall
Signature of Keeper

8.2.01
Date of Action

5. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property

- Private:
- Public-Local:
- Public-State:
- Public-Federal:

Category of Property

- Building(s):
- District:
- Site:
- Structure:
- Object:

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

- 1
-
-
-
- 1

Non contributing

- buildings
- sites
- structures
- objects
- 0 Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 0

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing: NA

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6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic: Education Sub: School
Current: Vacant Sub: Not In Use

7. DESCRIPTION

Architectural Classification: Craftsman

Materials:

Foundation: Brick
Walls: Clapboard
Roof: Asphalt
Other:

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Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

The Brister School House (c. 1915) stands at the intersection of two dirt roads in a forested, isolated rural section of eastern Winn Parish. The small one room school shows the influence of the Craftsman style and looks much as it did when built.

Precisely dating the school is impossible because the Brister School District was not created until 1920. Records indicate that in that year an addition was made to the Brister School; so clearly a building was in place at this time. (The addition was removed in the late 1940s.) A historic photograph recording the school and some of its students establishes that the candidate is the building that existed in 1920 (rather than the addition), for the age of one of the young girls pictured in the image is known. Ora Smith, the student in question, was born in 1899 and appears to have been a young teenager when the photo was taken. This might date the picture to 1912 or 1913. Buildings in the Craftsman style would have been built in rural Louisiana any time between roughly 1915 and 1925. Thus, it seems appropriate to designate c. 1915 as the construction date for the candidate.

The front of the rectangular clapboard building is raised above grade about two feet. Its height above ground in the rear is less because the land slopes. The structure stands beneath a front facing gable roof with overhanging eaves, brackets, and exposed rafter tails. A second, lower gable on one side of the facade covers a partially enclosed entrance vestibule with three openings. These are an arched entrance flanked by two unglazed rectangular windows. A chimney for a wood stove rises from one front corner of the structure, but the stove itself is lost. The rear and one side elevation are pierced by multiple windows designed to allow light into the school. The other side elevation contains a double door which once connected the c.1915 school to the now removed addition.

The interior contains two spaces, a large classroom and an extremely narrow cloakroom. The latter is located on the side of the building where the addition was appended. (The above-mentioned double doors open into the cloakroom.) The classroom's walls and ceiling (as well as those of the cloakroom and vestibule) are covered by beaded board; the floor is of wood. All of the building's doors feature five horizontal panels.

As noted previously, a one room addition was made to the school in 1920. The school closed in 1940, and the addition was removed in the late 1940s. (An exhaustive search failed to yield a photo showing the appearance of the addition.) Another alteration is the covering of the school's windows by large wooden panels. This was done in recent years to prevent vandals from entering the structure. In addition, a new-looking sign proclaiming the building as the "Brister School House" is mounted above the arched entrance.

Assessment of Integrity:

The principal significance of the Brister School lies in its very well preserved original character (c.1915-1920) as a one room country school – an archetype once quite common but now exceedingly rare. Hence the removal of the addition is not an integrity issue.

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8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Applicable National Register Criteria: A_X B_ C_ D_

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): NA A_ B_ C_ D_ E_ F_ G_

Areas of Significance: Education

Period(s) of Significance: c. 1915-1920

Significant Dates: c. 1915

Significant Person(s): NA

Cultural Affiliation: NA

Architect/Builder: Unknown

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State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

The Brister School House is locally significant in the area of education because it is a rare surviving one room school within rural Winn Parish.

Attitudes toward public education in mid-nineteenth century Louisiana were very different from those held by today's educators and parents. At that time, the prevailing opinion was that education should be the responsibility of the family rather than of state or local government. As a result, parents who could afford the expense sent their children to private schools, and the idea of the "public" school was often equated with "pauper" education.

Although attitudes began to change in the late nineteenth century, opportunities for public education remained limited. The state's 1845 constitution had mandated the creation of public school systems in each parish, but the public-private partnerships which developed thereafter seldom worked properly. Though locals met their obligations by providing churches, lodge halls and other types of buildings for educational use, cost-conscious post-Reconstruction legislators often failed to honor the state's part of the bargain. For example, in 1871 the state owed Bossier Parish approximately \$40,000 in support funds for the so-called "public" schools that parish had established. Thus, for the most part, the responsibility for educating their children still remained in the hands of concerned parents.

As more and more people realized the role which education could play in improving the lives of their children, they responded to this challenge in a variety of ways. As they had in the past, plantation owners hired on-site tutors for their offspring. Other parents banded together to open schools in rooms of private homes or buildings (such as lodge halls) which remained vacant much of the time. Churches played an important role. In South Louisiana, for example, Catholic churches operated a number of parochial schools; while in Protestant North Louisiana churches sometimes allowed private secular schools to use their spaces. Throughout the state, churches and northern philanthropic funds (most notably the Rosenwald fund) made possible educational opportunities for African-American children.

Whether held in the local church, dance hall, lodge, or small building constructed by local citizens for educational use, these semi-public, semi-private schools shared a number of sad characteristics. Usually consisting of only one room, they were crude, stark, often unpainted and improperly heated. They sometimes lacked ceilings, and their furniture was generally homemade by parents of the attendees. Blackboards were usually placed between windows, forcing the students to look directly into a bright glare. Frequently, the schools could afford only one teacher, who was forced to work with children of all ages and grades. Curricula were limited to basic subjects such as math and reading. Well into the twentieth century, this type of building was the archetype for "public" education facilities, especially in rural areas.

The one room Brister School House was one of these semi-public/semi-private educational partnerships. Constructed on land donated for a school by the Brister family some time before 1898, the candidate was built c. 1915 to replace a predecessor destroyed by fire. It is unclear who made decisions regarding the school's operation in its early years, for the Winn Parish School Board did not create the Brister School District until June 5, 1920.

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By that time significant growth in the number of school age children, improvements in transportation which allowed school boards to consolidate many smaller schools into fewer but larger facilities, and a state approved mechanism for raising school taxes and selling school bonds had produced major improvements in education facilities in most parts of the state. However, one room schools remained the norm in poor rural areas such as Winn Parish. There, as late as 1920, the Board was trying to decide how a one room school should operate and when it had enough students (and grade levels) to justify its expansion. "No one-room school shall carry more than seven grades," the Board decided on June 5, 1920. It added a second room to the Brister School House that same year.

Brister functioned as a two-room school until 1940, when consolidation finally closed the facility. Its 1920 addition was removed in the late 1940s, but the original c. 1915 building remains in fairly good condition. It is occasionally used by the local rural community and its former students for reunions. Brister fared better than most of the parish's one room schools. Abandoned and not maintained, almost all have been lost. Where Winn Parish at one time had numerous one room schools to serve its rural population, today only the Brister School House and the Phillips School for African Americans are known to survive.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Deed verifying grant of land for Brister School to patrons of the Brister School House, 1898; copy in National Register file.

Deed re-verifying grant of land for Brister School House to Parish School Board, 1907; copy in National Register file.

Duncan, Patricia L. "Historic School Buildings Make a Comeback," *Preservation in Print*, November 1998, pp, 8-10.

Historic photo of Brister School House; copy in National Register file.

Interviews with former students Jim Brister, Roy Johnson, Helen Abrams Malloy, and Vivian Taylor; held at Winn Parish School Board building, January 2000.

Site visit by National Register staff.

Winn Parish School Board minutes, June 5, 1920; July 2, 1920; July 9, 1920.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS): NA

- Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- Previously Listed in the National Register. (partially)
- 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 (Specify Repository):

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: one acre

UTM References: **Zone Easting Northing**
 15 551060 3540400

Verbal Boundary Description: The legal property description is as follows: "Beginning 70 yards west of the northeast corner of the NE ¼ of NW ¼ Sec. 27, Tp. 12 N.R. 1 W and running south 70 yards, thence west 70 yards, thence north 70 yards and thence east to place of beginning 70 yards, making one acre more or less in the NE ¼ of NW ¼ Sec. 27 Tp. 12 N. R. 1 W."

Boundary Justification: Boundaries follow the property lines of the parcel of land historically associated with the school (i.e., the one acre parcel donated by the Brister family to the Winn Parish School Board).

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11. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: National Register staff

Address: Division of Historic Preservation, P. O. Box 44247, Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70804

Telephone: (225) 342-8160

Date: May 2001

PROPERTY OWNERS

Winn Parish School Board

P. O. Box 430

Winnfield, Louisiana 71483-0430

(318) 628-6936

Brister School House
Winn Parish, LA

Early photo showing school before addition made in 1920.

Ora Smith
b 1899

