

(Oct. 1990)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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NOV 20 2015

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

Nat. Register of Historic Places  
National Park Service

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 Mill Neck School  
other names/site number Mill Neck Rosenwald School

2. Location

street & number 123 Mill Neck Road, the portion of the tax parcel south of the road  not for publication N/A  
city or town Como  vicinity  
state North Carolina code NC county Hertford code \_\_\_\_\_ zip code 27938

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.)  
Devin Cherry, SHPO 11/13/2015  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources  
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 W. Beall Signature of the Keeper 1-5-16 Date of Action

Mill Neck School  
Name of Property

Hertford County, NC  
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	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	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**  
N/A

**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)

Other: Two-Teacher Rosenwald School, Floor Plan 20-A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE  
walls WOOD:Weatherboard  
roof METAL: Tin  
other \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

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

See Attached 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**

(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)

- Black Ethnic Heritage
- Education
- Architecture
- 
- 
- 

**Period of Significance**

1927-1959

**Significant Dates**

1927  
Ca. 1928-1930

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

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):**

- 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:

State Archives of North Carolina



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Mill Neck School

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**Location and Physical Description**

Mill Neck School stands on the southeast side of Mill Neck Road, approximately one mile northeast of the village of Como, in Hertford County's northern Maney's Neck Township. Its immediate surroundings are rural. The Mill Neck community's nearest major thoroughfare is US 258, about two-tenths of a mile northwest of the school. Highway US 258 connects Como and northern Hertford County to the peanut mills, paper plant, cotton gins, and other local industries centered in Franklin, Virginia, nearly fifteen miles north. By contrast, Mill Neck Road, with its unpaved sections framed by timber woods and cultivated fields, is a view into the region's past. A 1916 map shows that Mill Neck Road once traveled a northeasterly course through woodlands and a few small farms, before veering eastward to the Riddicksville rural community and Maney's Ferry, established in the eighteenth century, which took passengers across the Chowan River into neighboring Gates County.<sup>1</sup> By 1930, two years after Maney's Ferry was discontinued, Mill Neck Road's eastern stretch to the Chowan was curtailed, and the road, instead, veered sharply into a pre-existing north-south secondary route that, crossing the state line, becomes Virginia State Route 686.<sup>2</sup> Mill Neck Road has remained a rural byway of the eponymous community, with a few ranch houses and mobile homes interspersed between its fields and woods.

Mill Neck School's one-acre lot is at present part of the Mill Neck Missionary Baptist Church and Cemetery's 5.19-acre tax parcel; church and cemetery are located at Mill Neck Road's northwestern side, and the one-acre portion containing the school is sited across the road at its southeastern side. Founded in 1866, the current Mill Neck Missionary Baptist Church, a brick, front-gable building with little exterior decoration, is the third sanctuary on site and built in 1981. Its predecessor, a frame, cross-gabled Gothic Revival building, was constructed at the turn of the twentieth century and had a more compelling visual connection to the 1927-1930 Mill Neck School; however, the 1970s congregation felt that the older building was in bad repair and that a modern building would be more efficient.<sup>3</sup> As with the school, the church's immediate topography is flat and the surroundings devoid of trees.

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<sup>1</sup> 1916 USDA Soil Map of Hertford County, NC, Detail of Maney's Neck Township. North Carolina Maps, <http://dc.lib.unc.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/ncmaps/id/312/rec/2>; Benjamin B. Winborne, *The Colonial and State Political History of Hertford County*, 64, 109-110.

<sup>2</sup> Hertford County Commissioners Meeting Minutes (CCMM), 193 (5 December 1927); 1930 North Carolina County Road Survey of Hertford County, Detail of Como-Maney's Neck area. North Carolina Maps, <http://dc.lib.unc.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/ncmaps/id/2007/rec/3>.

<sup>3</sup> Mill Neck Baptist Church, Como, NC, "Centennial Anniversary 1866-1966," 3; Mill Neck Baptist Church, "One Hundred Fifteen Years of Christian Worship and Service (1981)," 3.

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The school lot is bordered on three sides by timber plantation acreage locally known as the “Big Woods.”<sup>4</sup> The school entrance is positioned facing southwest. The topography is flat and open. Immediately surrounding the school is a wide, grassy lawn with no plantings or trees. There are no surviving outbuildings or structures from the school’s active years; according to former students, the pre-1945 school privy was located east of the building, at the edge of the woods, and a firewood and coal shed stood approximately fifty feet east of the school’s northeast (rear) elevation.<sup>5</sup> A pre-1927 one-story, frame schoolhouse, documented by North Carolina’s Division of Negro Education, stood on this site after the Rosenwald school’s construction; local residents have commented that the older school site is thought to have been a short distance southwest of the current school.<sup>6</sup> Man-made landscape features dating from the school’s period of activity include remnants of a poured-concrete walkway along the school’s front elevation.

Constructed between October 1926 and March 1927, the one-story Mill Neck School is clearly identifiable as the Julius Rosenwald Fund’s prescribed “Floor Plan No. 20-A” for a two-teacher community school.<sup>7</sup> The frame building, its balloon-frame construction and diagonal-board sheathing covered by original weatherboard siding, stands on its original foundation of poured-concrete piers, which are nearly all intact. Recent damage to two of the piers shows each pier as having a wood block form at its core; this is unusual, as rebar or bricks were usually employed for this purpose. 1920s photographs of the school show these piers partly screened by wooden latticework, but the latter has not survived. The roof is covered with standing-seam tin and retains Craftsman-style exposed rafter tails. One interior brick chimney flue rises from the building’s northeast elevation. According to the Rosenwald Fund schematic drawings and surviving interior brick flue openings, there would have been another flue opening at the front elevation, positioned between the Industrial Room and Classroom A.

Two post-1927 additions to the school are a 1940s bathroom extension, and a one-story, side-gable extension, 26 feet by 23 feet, 4 inches, built onto the northwest elevation between 1928 and 1930 to

<sup>4</sup> Caroline Stephenson, Como, NC. 17 May 2015 conversation with Penne Sandbeck.

<sup>5</sup> Paulette Lawrence, Como, NC, 17 May 2015 conversation with Penne Sandbeck and Caroline Stephenson.

<sup>6</sup> Lawrence, 17 May 2015; Fisk University (Nashville, TN), Rosenwald Fund Card File Database (Mill Neck School), images of Mill Neck School and former schoolhouse.

<sup>7</sup> Community School Plans, excerpted in History South Rosenwald website <http://www.historysouth.org/twoteachns/>; W.F. Credle, Raleigh, NC, 14 March 1927 letter to S. L. Smith, Nashville, TN. General Correspondence, Division of Schoolhouse Planning, NC Dept of Public Instruction (NC-DPI) Archives, Archives and History Office, NC Department of Cultural Resources (NC-DCR), Raleigh, NC.

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serve as a third classroom.<sup>8</sup> These additions have altered the otherwise tidy dimensions of the Rosenwald School 20-A plan, the resulting building measuring 23 feet, 4 inches at its northwest elevation, 91 feet, 2 inches long at its northeast and southwest elevations, and 23 feet, 2 inches wide at its southeast elevation.

Mill Neck School's front projecting central section, covered by a hipped roof, contains the school's Industrial Room, two entrances, and cloakroom. This section incorporates two recessed entrances into the classrooms, a band of four, double-hung sash windows lighting the Industrial Room, and a boarded up window in the cloakroom. Originally composed of four nine-over-nine double-hung sash, the front band of windows is of replacement vinyl and the opening is partly enclosed, but its original plain board surrounds remain prominently in place. The Industrial Room is separated from the cloakroom space by the recessed, five-by-ten-foot entry bay, which opened into the Industrial Room (this entrance is now inaccessible, due to the door being affixed) and Classroom B. The six-by-ten-foot cloakroom, accessible from Classroom B, was altered between 1940 and 1950, when it was converted into a corridor for enclosed restrooms, and the sash window once providing a light source to the cloakroom was boarded up. The two restrooms are within the small hipped-roof, weatherboarded extension, measuring approximately eight by ten feet, that is positioned flush to the former cloakroom. This extension partially covers the lower left corner of the three-pane "breeze window" for Classroom B.

There are no window or door openings at the southeast elevation. At the northeast elevation, are boarded window openings for three bands of six, original, nine-over-nine, double-hung sash, lighting each classroom. The windows, which can be seen from within, retain their sash although many of the panes are broken. The 1927 inspection photograph of Mill Neck School shows a paired, nine-over-nine double-hung sash window at its northwest elevation facing Mill Neck Road. This window was removed when the building was extended circa 1928–1930. As with the door openings, all windows retain their plain nailed board surrounds.

The front façade's principal entrance, covered by the center section's engaged roofline and partly supported by a square wood corner post, has the school's painted signage on its northwest elevation and, within, shelters two principal entrances to the school building; the first, on the building's southwest wall, providing entrance into Classroom "A," and the second, positioned on the center section's projecting northwest wall, opening into the school's Industrial Room. The first door's transom has been boarded

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<sup>8</sup> Hertford County Register of Deeds, Deed Book 510:130 [7 April 1995: survey of school property, with measurements], and John H. Moore, "A History of the Hertford County School System" (Master's Thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1930): 91.

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up, but the second door's transom is still visible. The second, recessed, entrance bay is located on the south side of the Industrial Room and is sheathed in flush tongue-in-groove boards, unlike the corner porch's weatherboarding; a non-transomed door on the center section's projecting southeast wall, is the Industrial Room's other outside entrance, and the transomed door (with transom still in place) on the building's southwest wall opens into Classroom "B." The sole exterior entrance to the 1928–1930 addition is a two-panel, wooden door accessed by circa 1950–1960 concrete block steps. All steps have been replaced by simple one-step wood platforms.

Inside, Mill Neck School retains a remarkable degree of historic interior finish. Walls and ceilings remain sheathed in original manufactured beaded board and a vertical, tongue-and-groove wainscot with a chair rail in each room. Windows and doors have uniform plain board surrounds, and flooring consists of nearly all 4-inch, tongue-and-groove pine boards, with some 3-inch, tongue-and-groove patches in Classroom B. Although the ceiling and walls' original paint treatment does not appear to have survived, paint specifications in the Rosenwald Fund's *Community School Plans, Bulletin 3* indicate that the stained walnut finish on Classroom A and B's wainscoting could be an original treatment.<sup>9</sup> In the classrooms, overhead light fixtures consist of a single light bulb screwed into a porcelain socket, and accessed by a string. Most light, in keeping with Rosenwald schools, came from the large bands of windows strategically positioned to keep the school house lit through the day; each band of windows, as stated above, is still in place, although boarded up on the exterior. Surviving chalkboards are in Classroom A and in the 1928–1930 classroom (hereinafter referred to as Classroom C). In Classroom A, the chalkboard is located on the wall opposite the windows, and in Classroom B, the chalkboard is affixed to the southeast wall. The height of Classroom B's chalkboard is a probable indication, given Rosenwald Fund specifications, that upper grades met in this classroom, unlike Classrooms A and C, where the chalkboards are positioned much lower.<sup>10</sup> In Classroom C one chalkboard is located on the room's southeast-southwest corner, and a smaller one is positioned between the now-inactive flue on the southeast wall and the bank of windows. The school also retains custom features such as Classroom A's built-in bookcase, the upright cloakroom partition in Classroom C, and the elevated wood platform in Classroom B. Classroom C's cloakroom partition, approximately twenty-two feet in length and two feet in width, has a support rod built into the wall, where some surviving metal hooks for coats and hats are in place. The partition side facing the room is painted with upper shelving. Rosenwald Fund plans for this schoolhouse type indicate that the cloakroom partition was usually in Classroom A, although examination of Classroom A's flooring did not suggest that the partition was moved. Classroom B's

<sup>9</sup> Julius Rosenwald Fund, *Community School Plans, Bulletin 3* (1924), 29.

<sup>10</sup> *Community School Plans*, 27.



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raised wooden platform extends five feet into the room from the southeast wall; chairs and pews on the platform were placed here between 1959 and 1980.

Except for described alterations, Mill Neck School's floor plan conforms to Floor Plan No. 20-A, its exterior entrances open into Classrooms A and B, as well as the projecting Industrial Room. Classroom A, measuring twenty-two feet wide by thirty feet in length, is mirrored by the identical dimensions of adjoining Classroom B. The movable partition between Classrooms A and B is no longer in place, and, instead, there is a wide, unobstructed opening between the two classrooms. Parts of the partition's support mechanism—a metal frame from which the partition's vertical hinges would have hung—remain in place above Classroom A's threshold. Constructed after 1927, Classroom C's interior mostly conforms to Rosenwald Fund standards, with its band of windows illuminating chalkboards, open and airy classroom space, and neatly-finished cloakroom partition. There is also a flue vent alongside its southeast wall, signifying that all three classrooms were heated. One exception to the interior finish is that Classroom C, unlike the other assembly rooms, does not have any wainscoting.

The Industrial Room is intact, with the exception of its post-1959 linoleum flooring, retaining its wainscoting and applied molding to its chair rail. It also retains two built-in wooden corner cupboards, the lower portions consisting of paired vertical, beaded tongue-and-groove boards hanging from small, manufactured hinges, and the upper portions a single-leaf, two-pane sash cupboard door with comparable hinges. The room's now-inactive flue remains on the northeast wall. Later additions to the Industrial Room are a plain porcelain sink supported by plain wooden brackets, and a 1950s gas stove.

Interior alterations to the building's original floorplan began with Classroom B's cloakroom, located immediately southeast of the front elevation's recessed porch and accessed from an entry at Classroom B's southwest wall. The space retains its flooring and manufactured beaded board sheathing, without wainscoting. However, the six-over-six, double-hung sash window on the room's southwest wall, once lighting the space, has been enclosed from the outside. Then, the small addition seen at the front elevation is a two-stall bathroom, each stall with its own flush toilet and sink. This bathroom implementation is thought to have initially been undertaken in the 1940s, and was most recently updated in the 1970s; stall walls are sheathed with paneled T1-11 siding and separated from the former cloakroom space by hollow plywood doors.

The interior condition of the building is presently stable, although roof leaks from 2011's Hurricane Irene have damaged parts of the ceiling.<sup>11</sup> Vandalism in the last four years also damaged the Industrial

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<sup>11</sup> Caroline Stephenson, Como, NC. 2 May 2015 conversation with Penne Sandbeck.

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Room's replacement vinyl windows and necessitated securing the other windows with nailed plywood boarding. Otherwise, Mill Neck School remains exceptionally intact and evocative of its educational heritage from the 1920s into the 1950s.

**General Statement of Archaeological Potential**

According to North Carolina's Office of State Archaeology, the structure is related to the surrounding environment. Archaeological remains such as trash pits, privies, wells, and other structural remains that may be present, can provide information valuable to the understanding and interpretation of the contributing structure. Information concerning land-use patterns, pre-Rosenwald African American school construction patterns, social standing and social mobility, as well as structural details, is often only evident in the archaeological record. Therefore, archaeological remains may well be an important component of the significance of the structure. At this time, no investigation has been undertaken to discover these remains but it is likely that they exist, and this should be considered in any development of the property.

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### **Statement of Significance**

Mill Neck School meets Criterion A for listing in the National Register. It is significant for its association with African American education in northern Hertford County from 1927 until 1959. This school was one of ten public schools in the county financed and constructed with the assistance of the Rosenwald Fund, established when philanthropist Julius Rosenwald and educator Booker T. Washington formed the basic partnership that led to the construction of these schools for African American children throughout the American South. Mill Neck School served all African American students within the Maney Neck Township communities of Mill Neck, Como, and Riddicksville, which were close to the Chowan River, near the Virginia border, and remote from the rest of the county. The period of significance begins in 1927, the year Mill Neck School's construction was completed, and ends in 1959 when the building ceased its function as a school after its students were transferred to "consolidated," more modern, African American schools in Hertford County. As an intact example of Rosenwald Fund community two-teacher school plan 20-A, Mill Neck School meets Criterion C. The distinctive characteristics of the two-teacher school floor plan, finishes, and design have not been significantly altered by the addition on the north end of the third classroom ca. 1928-30. Although Mill Creek Missionary Baptist Church has owned the lot and school building since 1998, Hertford County Board of Education owned the property during Mill Neck Rosenwald School's operation. Therefore, Mill Neck School meets Criterion Consideration A.

### **Historic Context: Education and African American Heritage**

Located in the northeast region of the state known as the Albemarle (taking its name from the eponymous Sound, as well as being part of the seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Albemarle Precinct), Hertford County remains a mostly rural county with a handful of small towns, and two fairly prominent regional hubs, Ahoskie in the south and Murfreesboro in the north. This northeastern section of Hertford County, in Maney Neck Township, derived its economy from agriculture and from trade along the Chowan River. This continued into the twentieth century. In a 2012 interview, state educator Dudley Flood, an African American who had grown up in northern Hertford County during the 1940s, alluded to the region's reliance on the Chowan River and that, without the persistent encouragement of his family to stay in school, he, like others would have found his occupation along the river, whether through seine fishing, ferrying passengers across the Chowan, or transporting lumber.<sup>12</sup> Another

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<sup>12</sup> Dudley Flood, Winton, NC. Interview, "Children, Go Where I Send You" [Documentary, Caroline Stephenson and Joachim Kunstler, c. 2012].

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regional reliance was on African-American labor; older residents recalled school time being curtailed in favor of the harvest season, thus winter being the most productive time for school.<sup>13</sup>

Lacking local public educational support, African Americans turned to their own institutions after the Civil War to bring education to their children. Black churches were instrumental in founding small schools during this time, sometimes with the assistance of whites. One example of this practice was Maney's Neck's Mill Neck Missionary Baptist Church, founded in 1866. Mill Neck Church's early members were former slaves who had attended Buckhorn Baptist Church before the war, one being "Abron of Vann," who as a Freedman became Abraham Vann.<sup>14</sup> These early members, after politely requesting letters of dismissal from the church, initially worshiped in an arbor shelter near Buckhorn Baptist Church.<sup>15</sup> Julien Picot, a white Buckhorn Baptist Church member, deeded them land for a church and school on Mill Neck Road in 1866 at its present site with the church on the road's north side, and the school on its south side, with the provision that the land return to Picot if its use changed. Picot also gave Mill Neck Missionary Baptist Church's new congregation permission to gather firewood on his adjacent land "as long as they continue in sessions and sittings" when the buildings were completed.<sup>16</sup> A school was constructed by 1868, when a Murfreesboro teacher by the name of Starling Hart was instructing African American children.<sup>17</sup>

Fifty years later, according to a 1916 map, Mill Neck Missionary Baptist Church, a frame Gothic Revival-style edifice constructed at the turn of the twentieth century, faced a one-story, one-room gabled schoolhouse across Mill Neck Road.<sup>18</sup> Built between 1890 and 1910, the former schoolhouse, which was taken down after 1927, stood on an open pier foundation, was clad in weatherboard siding, and lit by small six-over-six, double-hung sash windows with plain board surrounds.<sup>19</sup> Its front-gable roofline had pronounced eaves but no gable returns, or other decorative features. There was one brick chimney at the roof ridge's center, which likely meant a "hanging" flue connected to a stove at the center of the schoolroom.

<sup>13</sup> Willie E. Banks, Como, NC, and John R. Porter, Vaughantown, NC. Interview, "Children, Go Where I Send You."

<sup>14</sup> Wayne Simpson, "Historical Record Buckhorn Baptist Church" (Como, NC: Buckhorn Baptist Church, n.d.), 8; Hertford County Register of Deeds, Deed Book A:374.

<sup>15</sup> Simpson, 8.

<sup>16</sup> Hertford County Register of Deeds, DB A:374.

<sup>17</sup> F. Roy Johnson, *The Ahoskie Era of Hertford County*, (Parker Brothers, 1939) 254.

<sup>18</sup> 1916 USDA Soil Map of Hertford County, NC, Detail of Maney's Neck Township. North Carolina Maps, <http://dc.lib.unc.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/ncmaps/id/312/rec/2>.

<sup>19</sup> Photograph of 1890--1910 Mill Neck School, Inspection Photographs circa March 1927, Mill Neck School File, Fisk University Rosenwald Fund Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

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At this time, a new school building program for African American children was spreading across the southeast United States. The Rosenwald Fund was a philanthropic effort on the part of Julius Rosenwald (1862-1932), who was president of Sears, Roebuck and Company by 1909. After a congenial meeting of the minds, Rosenwald and Booker T. Washington of Tuskegee Institute, formed a partnership in 1912 to build rural black schools in Alabama; by 1917, this venture had evolved into the Julius Rosenwald Fund, based in Chicago until 1920, when Rosenwald opened a schoolhouse planning and design office in Nashville, Tennessee.<sup>20</sup> Rosenwald, inspired by Andrew Carnegie's work in getting communities invested in his public library campaign, made state, county, and local participation a condition of his school funding; as stated by Edwin R. Embree, the Rosenwald Fund's President from 1927-1948, "The program was projected not merely as a series of schoolhouses, but as a community enterprise in cooperation between citizens and officials, white and colored."<sup>21</sup> After Booker T. Washington's death in 1915, Rosenwald disassociated the venture from the Tuskegee Institute; the new Rosenwald center in Nashville, Tennessee, aided by the managerial and drafting skills of school designer and Tennessee native Samuel Leonard Smith, became more efficient in terms of planning and building schoolhouses.<sup>22</sup>

Nathan Carter Newbold, who started as a North Carolina rural school agent in 1913, became the state's newly-founded Director of Negro Education in 1921, by which time he had helped implement the construction of several Rosenwald schools in the state. He hired William Frontis Credle (1890?-1950) and George Edward Davis (1862-1959) as his principal Rosenwald liaisons; the two men worked well with the public and one another. W. F. Credle, a native of Hyde County, was white; G. E. Davis, who came from a middle-class family in Wilmington, was African American.<sup>23</sup> Correspondence between the two men showed mutual respect, an important factor in North Carolina's efficient and prolific Rosenwald School building campaign.<sup>24</sup>

Hertford County's earliest Rosenwald schools were Vaughantown School (1918-1919) in the county's central section, and Murfreesboro (1918-1919) in the north, and the county saw a surge in construction with five more Rosenwald schools—Catherine Haynes, Cotton, Mt. Sinai, Union, and White Oak—between 1923 and 1926.<sup>25</sup> Mt. Sinai School, located five miles northwest of the Mill Neck community, was constructed from Rosenwald School Floor Plan 20-A between 1925 and 1926, and admired not just by its new neighbors, but by others who needed a new school house. On October 5, 1926, Hertford

<sup>20</sup> Thomas W. Hanchett, "The Rosenwald Schools and Black Education in North Carolina," *North Carolina Historical Review* 65:4 (October 1988), 395-398, 400.

<sup>21</sup> Hanchett, *NCHR*, 398.

<sup>22</sup> James Leloudis, *Schooling the New South* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 220-221.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, 407-411.

<sup>24</sup> Leloudis, 222-223.

<sup>25</sup> Hanchett, *NCHR*, 435.

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County Board of Education Supervisor, N. W. Britton, sent W. F. Credle an application, requesting \$700.00 from the Rosenwald Fund to build another such school to replace “a colored schoolhouse in Maneys Neck. . . .The people are so well pleased with the house at Mt. Sinai that the people at Mill Neck want one just like it.”<sup>26</sup> With matching funds from the nearby African American community (\$200.00) and public funds (\$2,475.00), the school was completed in March 1927 for a total cost of \$3,375.00.<sup>27</sup> Although specific documentation was not found concerning the additional, third, classroom, there is a citation that Mill Neck School had a third classroom by 1931, indicating that expansion happened fairly quickly after 1927.<sup>28</sup>

Julien Picot’s son Guy had deeded the Mill Neck School lot to Hertford County Board of Education in 1925, two years before the Rosenwald school was constructed.<sup>29</sup> Prior to 1925, the school property, as with the church, belonged to the Picot family as well, since the 1866 deed was not fee simple but upon the provision that Mill Neck Missionary Baptist Church remain in continuous operation.

Mill Neck School served grades 1-7, after which time graduates who stayed in school attended Murfreesboro’s Riverview School for junior high and high school.<sup>30</sup> Students who attended the school from the 1930s until its 1959 closing recalled prominent teachers such as James A. Felton (1919-1994), who also served as the school’s principal before devoting the rest of his career to civil rights; Fostina Worthington, who taught at the school for thirty-two years; and Katie Hart, who became the county’s Colored Schools Supervisor from 1922 to 1936, in addition to driving a bookmobile between the African American schools.<sup>31</sup> One student who attended in the late 1920s, remembered that the three classrooms

<sup>26</sup> N. W. Britton, Hertford County Board of Education, Winton, NC. 5 October 1926 letter to W. F. Credle, DNE, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NC-DPI). DNE Records, NC-DPI Archives, NC-DCR, Raleigh, NC. One sure factor for Mill Creek’s success might have been that Guy C. Picot, as seen on the Hertford County letterhead, had recently become Chairman of Hertford County’s Board of Education. Picot, Julien Picot’s son, maintained a cordial, lifelong relationship with the Mill Neck Church and School, according to parishioners.

<sup>27</sup> Fisk Rosenwald Online Database, Mill Neck School File. Electronic file, [http://rosenwald.fisk.edu/?module=search.details&set\\_v=aWQ9MjY4NA==&school\\_county=Hertford&school\\_state=NC&button=Search&o=0](http://rosenwald.fisk.edu/?module=search.details&set_v=aWQ9MjY4NA==&school_county=Hertford&school_state=NC&button=Search&o=0). Fisk University Rosenwald Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

<sup>28</sup> John H. Moore, “History of the Hertford County School System,” 91.

<sup>29</sup> Hertford County Register of Deeds, Book 83:269.

<sup>30</sup> Caroline Stephenson, Como, NC. Conversation with Penne Sandbeck 2 May 2015.

<sup>31</sup> Alumni Information Sheets (provided by Henry Lee Pope, Donald S. Lawrence, Willie E. Banks, Essie Banks Myrick, Wallace C. Banks Crystal M. Cooper-Thomas), Hertford County Rosenwald School Reunion Day, 3 March 2012. Data provided courtesy Caroline Stephenson, Como, NC. Also, “Mortgage-Burning Ceremony for Mill Neck Baptist Church” [Booklet], Como, NC 24 May 1992; Finding Aid for James A. Felton and Annie Vaughan Felton Papers, Southern Historical Collection No. 05161, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, [http://www2.lib.unc.edu/mss/inv/f/Felton,James\\_A.and\\_Annie\\_Vaughan\\_Felton.html](http://www2.lib.unc.edu/mss/inv/f/Felton,James_A.and_Annie_Vaughan_Felton.html); Joseph Ray Parker, *The Ahoskie Era*

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were divided between kindergarten to second grade, then from third to fourth grade, and then, in the upper-grade classroom, the fifth through seventh grades, the latter group taught by James Boone.<sup>32</sup> Another student, who attended between 1954 and 1959, recalled bringing homemade lunches to school, along with the regional treat of freshly boiled peanuts to share with friends and teachers.<sup>33</sup> A constant thread of student reminiscing throughout the more than thirty years of operation remained how school was a lower priority during harvest and planting seasons. 1930s documentation stated plainly that Mill Neck School operated 120 days a year, roughly, slightly less than four months.<sup>34</sup> When not picking cotton, harvesting tobacco, or “shaking peanuts,” students from the 1950s attended school with their parents’ support.<sup>35</sup> After Riverview (which burned in 1944 and was replaced by a larger school), Mill Neck’s students attended C.S. Brown High School in Winton (itself constructed with Rosenwald funding).

In April 1954, a representative of North Carolina’s Department of Negro Education (DNE) visited four rural African American schools in Hertford County—St. John’s and Menola, in the southwestern part of the county, and Mill Neck and Mt. Sinai, in the northeast and northwest. The representative noted that Mill Neck “gave very definite indications of good work being done in spite of crowded conditions, which prevent the displaying of children’s work to the best advantage.” The report went on to mention that “in the upper grade room science emphasis was most evident,” a fact not mentioned with the other three small schools.<sup>36</sup>

Mill Neck School closed its doors at the end of the 1958-1959 school year.<sup>37</sup> In 1998, shortly after the Picot family heirs deeded the Mill Neck Missionary Baptist Church property to the congregation in fee simple, Hertford County Board of Education deeded the Mill Neck School parcel to Mill Neck Missionary Baptist Church, in fee simple, with no conditions.<sup>38</sup> Since 1998, the congregation has worked to restore and stabilize the school building, and plan for its future use as a community gathering

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*of Hertford County* (Ahoskie, NC: Parker Bros. Inc, 1939): 255—256; Frank Stephenson, *Hertford County* (Arcadia, 2003), 29.

<sup>32</sup> Ruby Myrick Taylor, Como, NC. Interviewed by Caroline Stephenson 11 March 2001.

<sup>33</sup> Alumni Information Sheet (Cooper-Thomas Interview).

<sup>34</sup> Moore, 91.

<sup>35</sup> Marlene Banks Simmons, Interview, “Children Go Where I Send You,” 2012.

<sup>36</sup> Daisy R. Walker, DNE Supervisor, 1954 Hertford County Schools Visitation, 1 April 1954. NC Department of Public Instruction, DNE, Files of State Supervisor of Elementary Education, 1936–1961 (NC-DCR, Raleigh, NC).

<sup>37</sup> Stephenson conversation 2 May 2015.

<sup>38</sup> Hertford County Register of Deeds, DB 534:102, 541:395.

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Mill Neck School

Hertford County, North Carolina

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place and museum focused upon African American regional history and the educational advances realized by the Rosenwald Fund.<sup>39</sup>

### **Architectural History Context**

Mill Neck School's design embodies signature architectural characteristics of the Rosenwald Fund's 1920s standardized school plans, which were drafted to provide students with optimal conditions for ease of learning, as well as for minimal construction cost and maximum efficiency.<sup>40</sup> Samuel Leonard Smith, the Rosenwald Fund's Director of Schoolhouse Planning, was a disciple of Progressive architect Fletcher B. Dresslar (1859-1930), who had dismissed the 1910s Rosenwald-Tuskegee Plan schools as badly designed, with ineffective lighting and climate controls, as well as poorly sited.<sup>41</sup> Smith's 1924 booklet, *Community School Plans Bulletin No. 3*, set the standard for Rosenwald schools according to needs, property orientation, and number of students and teachers. As seen with Mill Neck School's use of Plan 20-A, with the 1928-1930 addition, Smith (and Dresslar)'s Progressive vision triumphs in many places. First, the whole form and design of the building is plain, requiring little upkeep, and fairly low to the ground, which made the school less drafty in winter months. The use of cloakrooms was especially touted for minimizing clutter and bringing order to the classroom space.<sup>42</sup> Within classroom spaces, the bands of tall windows strategically placed according to the building's orientation maximized natural light for teachers and students, and location of chalkboards was evaluated accordingly. High ceilings were useful for acoustics and ventilation. With the innovation of the folding partition door, classrooms could be expanded or separated according to need.<sup>43</sup> Smith also observed that a partition could facilitate less expensive chalkboards if implemented on each side of the doors; he further emphasized that Rosenwald schools were also community spaces, and "if there are not sufficient funds for an auditorium, two adjoining classrooms with a movable partition may be made to suit this purpose."<sup>44</sup> The effect of Progressive design with the Rosenwald School floor plan might be best seen at Mill Neck School in the Industrial Room, a small space that is, nevertheless, with its southwest orientation, light-filled.

<sup>39</sup> Caroline Stephenson and Paulette Lawrence, Como, NC. 17 May 2015 conversation with Penne Sandbeck.

<sup>40</sup> Thomas W. Hanchett, National Register Nomination for Ware Creek School, Beaufort County, NC (1996): 8-5.

<sup>41</sup> Mary S. Hoffschwelle, *Rebuilding The Rural Southern Community: Reformers, Schools, and Homes In Tennessee, 1900-1930* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1998):68--69.

<sup>42</sup> Hanchett, Ware Creek School, 7-3.

<sup>43</sup> Mary S. Hoffschwelle, "Preserving Rosenwald Schools (National Trust for Historic Preservation, 2000)," 4.

<sup>44</sup> Smith 1924, 1 and 28.



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During the 1920s, indoor plumbing was not to be found in Hertford County's African American schools, so that the 1940s construction of bathroom stalls next to the repurposed cloakroom is commendable for taking so little of the building's original space. The 1928-1930 classroom addition is somewhat awkward for its lack of fenestration on the façade, but, inside, is little different from the earlier classrooms, incorporating an identical band of windows, wainscoting, and other interior finish.

At present, of the ten Rosenwald Plan schools constructed in Hertford County between 1918 and 1928, only four are extant. Of these four—C. S. Brown Auditorium in Winton, Pleasant Plains, Mill Neck, and Vaughantown—Mill Neck School is the only two-teacher plan school derived from S. L. Smith's 1924 specifications to survive in Hertford County. Its peer, Mt. Sinai School, was destroyed by fire in 1968.<sup>45</sup> Built between 1920 and 1921, Vaughantown School, located four miles south of Murfreesboro, was a two-teacher plan school constructed with Rosenwald funding, but the school building's form, that of two parallel front gables connected by a flush, side-gable bay, does not conform to any published plans of either the Nashville or Tuskegee formats; it is perhaps an early attempt at Rosenwald School Floor Plan No. 4-A, designed for a four-teacher school.<sup>46</sup> Thus, that Mill Neck School has not only survived but retained so much historic interior and exterior form and finish is exceptional, and it remains an intact example of Rosenwald design principles in practice.

<sup>45</sup> Stephenson, 2 May 2015 conversation.

<sup>46</sup> Stephenson 2003, 41; Jeroen van den Hurk, "Comprehensive Architectural Survey of Hertford County, North Carolina" (NC-HPO Survey and Planning Records, 2011), 130.

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Section 10

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The nominated one-acre area is within the boundaries of the tax parcel with Identification Number 5091-21-3821. The area is located on the south side of Mill Neck Road, as shown by a heavy black line on the accompanying Mill Neck School National Register boundary map, at a scale of 1 inch = 125 feet.

**Boundary Justification**

This area comprises the boundaries and land historically associated with Mill Neck School, and provides an appropriate historic setting.

Mill Neck School, Como vicinity, Hertford County, NC  
National Register Boundary (heavy black line) Source: GIS Parcel Map Scale: 1 inch = 125 feet

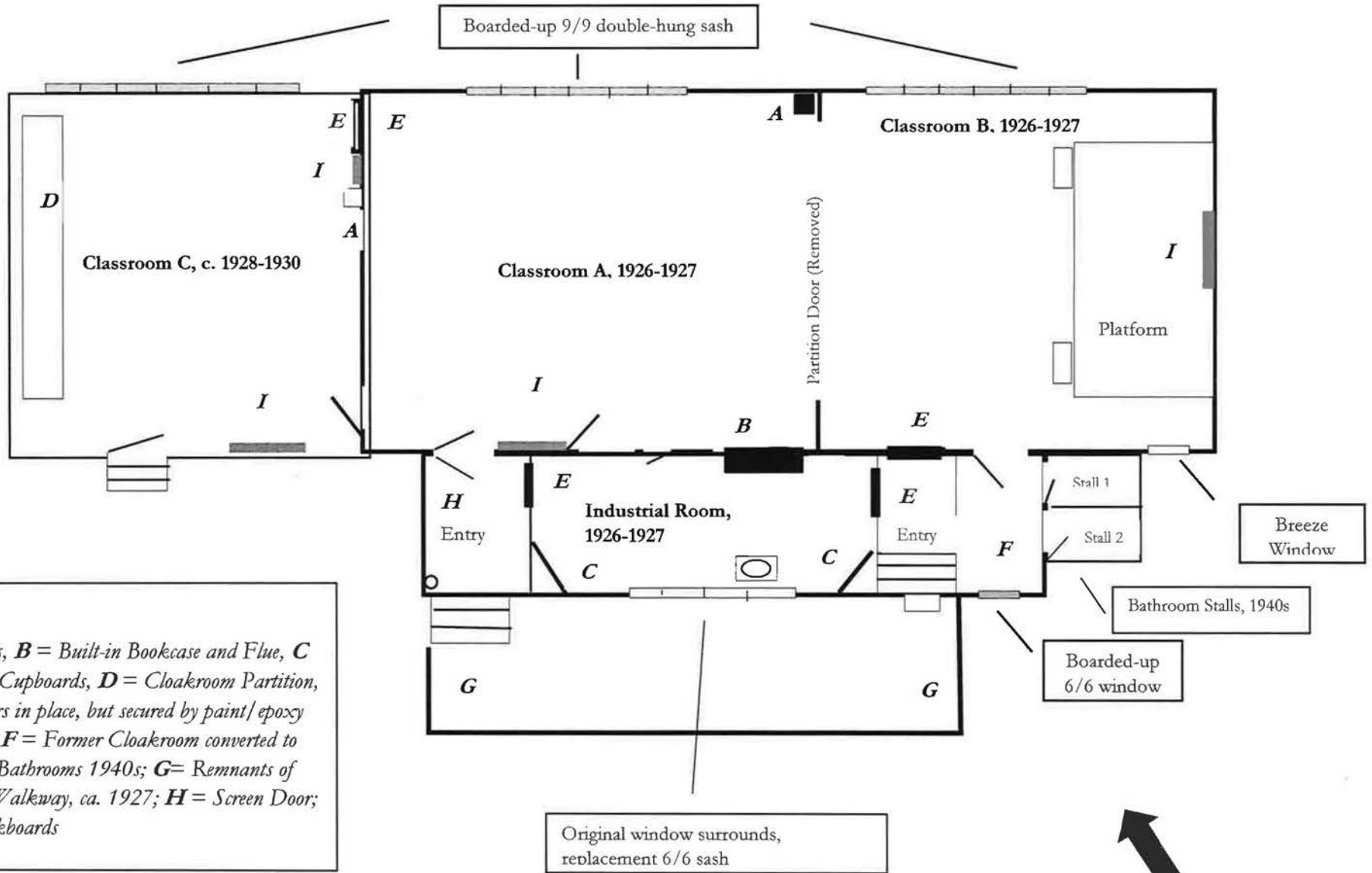


# Mill Neck School

Como vicinity, Hertford County, North Carolina  
Floor Plan with Landscape Feature (Not To Scale)

Penne Sandbeck

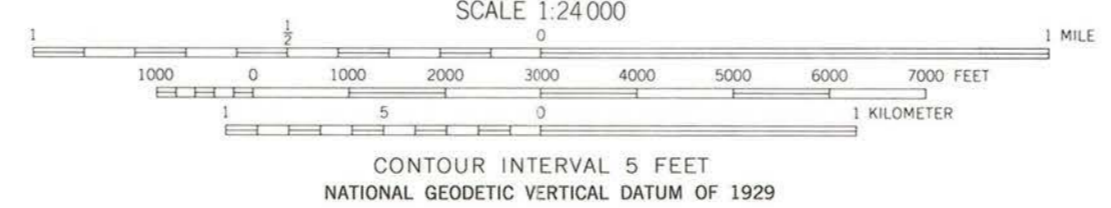
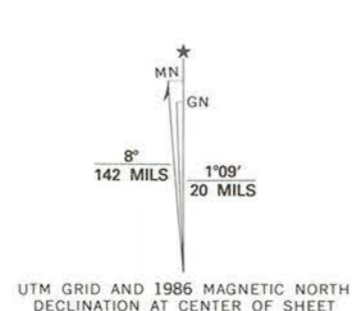
August 2015





Mill Neck School  
Como  
Hertford County  
North Carolina  
zone 18  
E/322260 E  
N/4042460 N  
Riverdale Quad

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey  
Control by USGS and USC&GS  
Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial  
photographs taken 1964. Field checked 1967  
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum  
10,000-foot grids based on Virginia coordinate system,  
south zone and North Carolina coordinate system  
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,  
zone 18, shown in blue  
To place on the predicted North American Datum 1983, move  
the projection lines 12 meters south and 29 meters west  
Area covered by dashed light-blue pattern is subject  
to controlled inundation



THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS  
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092  
AND VIRGINIA DIVISION OF MINERAL RESOURCES, CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA 22903  
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

Revisions shown in purple compiled in cooperation with Commonwealth  
of Virginia agencies from aerial photographs taken 1982 and other  
source data. This information not field checked. Map edited 1986

RIVERDALE, VA. - N. C.  
36076-E8-TF-024  
1967  
PHOTOREVISED 1986  
DMA 5657 III SW - SERIES V834





MILLANECK SCHOOL







**MILLNECK SCHOOL**













UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Mill Neck School

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: NORTH CAROLINA, Hertford

DATE RECEIVED: 11/20/15      DATE OF PENDING LIST: 12/24/15  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 1/08/16      DATE OF 45TH DAY: 1/05/16  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 15000957

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N    DATA PROBLEM: N    LANDSCAPE: N    LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N  
OTHER: N    PDIL: N    PERIOD: N    PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N  
REQUEST: Y    SAMPLE: N    SLR DRAFT: N    NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT     RETURN     REJECT    1-5-16 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

*okay to sign on the 5th*

RECOM./CRITERIA \_\_\_\_\_

REVIEWER J. Cobble      DISCIPLINE \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_      DATE 12-26-2015

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



RECEIVED 2280

NOV 20 2015

Nat. Register of Historic Places  
National Park Service

**North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources**

**State Historic Preservation Office**

Ramona M. Bartos, Administrator

Governor Pat McCrory  
Secretary Susan Kluttz

Office of Archives and History  
Deputy Secretary Kevin Cherry

November 19, 2015

Ms. Stephanie Toothman, Keeper  
National Register of Historic Places  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1201 Eye Street NW (2208) Eighth Floor  
Washington, D.C. 20005

Re: Dr. Neil and Nancy Elizabeth Culbreth House – Columbus County  
Mill Neck Rosenwald School – Hertford County

Dear Ms. Toothman:

Enclosed are the above referenced nominations to be approved for the National Register of Historic Places.

We trust you will find the nominations to be in order. If you have any questions please call Ann Swallow, 919.807.6587.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kevin Cherry".

Dr. Kevin Cherry  
State Historic Preservation Officer

KC/jct: enclosure