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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

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NATIONAL REGISTER

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

1. Name of Property

historic name Buttin Rock School
other names/site number HS-342; Button Rock School; Buttin School; District #85 School

2. Location

Ozark National Scenic Riverways
street & number _____ not for publication
city, town Eminence vicinity
state Missouri code MO county Shannon code 203 zip code 65466

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<u>2</u>	_____ buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>1</u>	_____ sites
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>1</u>	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>4</u>	_____ objects
			_____ Total

Name of related multiple property listing: Missouri Ozarks Rural Schools
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.
Edmund Beard 4/16/91
Signature of certifying official Date
Jeffery H. ...
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.
Clayton B. ... 5 Dec. 1990
Signature of commenting or other official Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer Date
State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:
 entered in the National Register. See continuation sheet.
 determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.
 determined not eligible for the National Register.
 removed from the National Register.
 other, (explain:)
Entered in the National Register 5/31/91
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Education/school

Vacant/not in use

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

Other/vernacular

foundation stone/limestone
walls weatherboard

roof metal/steel
other _____

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

This property is Buttin Rock School, an Ozark rural schoolhouse in the Ozark National Scenic Riverway. Buttin Rock School is located in Shannon County, Missouri, on the east bank of the Current River in Section 28, Bowlen Township. The school is in one of the most rugged landscapes in the Missouri Ozarks. Part of the southern Courtois Hills, the area around it is composed of high ridges cut through by a series of wide bends in the Current that produced a broad terraced flood plain. Rocky Creek is the primary tributary to the Current River in this area, and Buttin Rock Mountain, which "butts in" the river on the west bank, is a significant landmark. The school takes its name from Buttin Rock. The nearest towns are Eminence in Shannon County and Ellington in Reynolds County.¹

The schoolhouse is standing alone at the edge of a small field about 1200 feet due east of the Current River and is not visible from the river. To the front of the building--the east side--is a wooded ridge; behind and to both sides of the building is a series of old fields spreading to the riverbank. To the north of the building are two privies. West of the school and running parallel with the river is a section of a historic roadbed, Buttin

¹Milton D. Rafferty, The Ozarks, Land and Life (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980) 16, passim. Shannon County residents remember Buttin Rock School as Button Rock or Button School. The discrepancy occurred early in its history. The school was originally named Buttin Rock after the mountain described above and was referred to as such in the early school records. As the teachers came and went almost annually, they frequently called the school by its district number (85) and early on began spelling the school Button. Since the 1930s, and possibly sooner, the people of Shannon County have called the school Button Rock or Button. This report, however, uses the original name that corresponds to the school's namesake, Buttin Rock Mountain.

8. Statement of Significance

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

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

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

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)
Education
Social History

Period of Significance
1913-1960
1913-1960

Significant Dates
1913
1913

Cultural Affiliation

Significant Person

Architect/Builder
unknown

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

The Buttin Rock School is typical of Ozarks rural schools serving small student bodies. It is significant because of its function as an educational and social center for the surrounding rural community. The school fits within guidelines established under the multiple property listing "Missouri Ozarks Rural Schools" in architecture, historical context, development, and conduct.

The early American settlers of the Current River region and much of the Missouri Ozarks migrated from the southern Appalachian Mountains. They were from the Kentucky and Tennessee highlands, and they were of a pioneering spirit to venture into the wild and sparsely populated territory. There were only 1.61 inhabitants per square mile in 1850 and 3.60 in 1860.¹ Although the rest of Missouri was no longer considered frontier as of 1860, the Ozarks maintained its frontier status even after the Civil War, with only 3.76 inhabitants per square mile in 1870. The region remained frontier in character as well as definition through this period.²

Through two acts, the Graduation Act of 1854 and the Homestead Act of 1862, the Ozarks gradually became more populated in the latter half of the nineteenth century. More important for settlement than these acts, however, was the entrance of the railroads and the lumber industry. From 1870 to 1920, these two industries purchased land, employed natives, and encouraged migration to the area. They also brought consumer goods and more cosmopolitan ideas, elements of which such as an appreciation of public education were incorporated into Ozark society.

It was during the railroad and lumbering era that the public

¹James Lee Murphy, A History of the Southeastern Ozark Region of Missouri (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1982), 77.

²Ibid, 77, passim.

9. Major Bibliographical References

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 # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

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

Specify repository:

Ozark Natinal Scenic Riverways, NPS

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 2 acres

UTM References

A 1 5 | 6 6 2 4 7 0 | 4 1 1 2 3 4 0
Zone Easting Northing

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

C 1 5 | 6 6 2 5 6 0 | 4 1 1 2 2 5 0

D 1 5 | 6 6 2 4 7 0 | 4 1 1 2 2 5 0

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The Buttin Rock School District is composed of 2 acres in the SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of the SE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 28 of Township 29 N of Range 2 W; Shannon County, Missouri.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

Ozarks rural schoolhouse yards typically were two acres. While a deed was never given for Buttin Rock School that would indicate acreage, one may safely assume that the schoolyard was about two acres. The district needs to include the two privies, the rock "play houses," and sufficient surrounding land to give a sense of the children's playground.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kimberly Scott Little, Historian

organization Midwest Region, National Park Service

date August 17, 1990

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Rock Road. The road is one of the oldest in the county and has not been maintained for several years. It is barely visible in the summer. A maintained road runs along the east ridge above the school, and this provides automobile access most of the way to the school. The easiest access, however, is by the Current River.

The schoolhouse has one room in one story. It is a basic rectangular block. The pier foundation is composed of local limestone, concrete rubble, and wood blocks. The roof is gabled, with the gabled ends opening on the east side, where the entrance is, and on the west side, toward the river. The exterior walls are novelty siding painted white. There are six windows, three each on the north and south sides. The windows are four-over-four and double-hung. There is a double door centered on the east side.

The interior walls are finished with horizontal beaded board, painted an institutional pale green. The floor is standard milled wood. On the west wall there are two blackboards composed of plywood painted black. Flanking the blackboards is a wood frame supporting a brick chimney; the frame was adapted to be used as a bookcase. During the period of use of the school, a potbellied stove stood in the center of the room. A stovepipe running along the ceiling connected the stove and chimney. Neither the stove nor the stovepipe are in the school currently. In the right corner of the room as one enters and on the north wall is a large moveable bookcase. When the school was used as such, several student desks, of the type with the seat attached to the front of the desk, were in the room facing toward the blackboard. A poor store-bought teacher's desk stood in front of the blackboards around 1940 during the tenure of teacher Mabel Phillips, but the most recent teacher's desk, according to Buttin Rock's last teacher Dorothy Ennis, was a carefully constructed home-made desk.² Some of the student desks and some of the classroom books have been retained by the National Park Service and are stored in the area, although they are not in the building currently. There are no other furnishings in the building.

Although there are some small holes in the walls through which pack-rats have entered the building, there are few other signs of deterioration. The floor and walls are in excellent condition for twenty years of abandonment, and the National Park Service has painted the exterior of the building with a preservation-compatible paint. The NPS also boarded over the windows and doors. Maintenance of the building by the NPS, the recent date of abandonment, and the isolated location of the building have

²Mabel [Phillips] Cooper, Interview with Donald L. Stevens, Jr. and author, June, 1990, tape at Midwest Region, National Park Service; Dorothy Ennis, Interview with Donald L. Stevens, Jr. and author, June, 1990, tape at Midwest Region, National Park Service.

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contributed to its excellent condition. Inside the building there are even shades on the windows and rows of exemplary letters tacked above the blackboard. Recent visitors found chalk with which to write their names and the date on the blackboard.

The privies are not as well-maintained as the main building. The frame of the boy's privy, a one-holer, has fallen over, although it may be in condition to be righted. The girl's privy, a two-holer, is standing and in good condition. There is no evidence of the state-recommended privacy screens in front of the privies, perhaps because they are separated adequately.

In addition to these structures, in front of the building near the incline of the ridge, there are several stones piled in a purposeful way. According to a former teacher, these stones were dragged to the site by students, and they mark the edge of "play houses" that the younger students "built." These rocks are one remnant of child's play in the mid-twentieth century at the school.

Buttin Rock School has been owned and controlled by the National Park Service for three decades. Several years ago and under their supervision, a long wooden beam was placed under one side of the building to stabilize it. The beam is visible only from ground-level and is similar to the type that might have been placed under the schoolhouse by the school district if it had sought to stabilize the building at any time. This minor alteration with the goal of preservation does not compromise the integrity of the building. The NPS also re-roofed the structure, using the same type of roofing that was on the structure during its period of significance. This was done to preserve the interior of the building and does not compromise its integrity.

The schoolhouse has locational integrity, despite its being moved once in its early period. At that time, the schoolhouse was moved a few hundred feet to place it on higher ground and further out of the Current River flood plain. This relocation took place around 1920. The building retains its integrity despite this move because its period of significance continued after the relocation. In addition, one characteristic of frame schoolhouses of this type was their mobility. Placed on pier foundations only at the corners of the building, a schoolhouse of this type was designed to be moved into better locations as needs of the community changed. For this second reason, therefore, the integrity of the building was not compromised through minor relocation and, furthermore, is made only more typical by the move. Buttin Rock School is an excellent example of the once-plentiful one-room schools of Shannon County, Missouri, which has a high degree of integrity.

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education system was established in the Ozarks. The state of Missouri had provided nominal legislation for one school per township in the 1840s, but the legislation was inadequate to set up public schools among Southern-bred pioneers who believed in private control of education. The legislature attempted to set up public education again in 1865, but the disarray of the state in the aftermath of the Civil War and the convoluted wording of the laws delayed the rise of public education. Finally, in 1874 the laws were rewritten, and this time the legislation was comprehensible and sufficient to establish the state's primary education system. By 1900, there were more than ten thousand rural, primarily one-room schools in Missouri, and the number continued to rise. Buttin Rock School was a late product of this legislation, having been established in 1913 for the children of the new population of the valley around the school.

As the twentieth century began, Missouri administrators became concerned about the efficiency of and education provided at the multitudes of rural schools in the state. In several pieces of legislation from 1911 to 1948, lawmakers urged one- and two-room schools to consolidate. The schools had become such an important part of the Ozarks culture by that time, though, that local residents were opposed to closing them. Buttin Rock School was maintained as a "hardship school" until 1960 because it was difficult for students in the area to reach other schools. The school district was maintained in name until 1963, fifteen years after the state's request for consolidation. The tenacity of rural schools through this half-century of pressure to close is a testament to the significance they had taken on within the communities which they served.

Buttin Rock School is an excellent example of a small Ozarks rural school. Buttin Rock was one of the last districts in the county to be organized, having been carved from other districts in 1912 or 1913. A district probably was not organized earlier in the area because the population was unusually transient; for example, one of the surrounding farms changed hands about once a year from 1885 until 1907.³ Around that time, long-term owners purchased the surrounding land, and the school was in operation by 1913-1914.⁴

³See Chain of Title for Section 28, Town 29, Range 2 West developed by Charlotte Hunt, Shannon Abstract Company, Eminence, Missouri.

⁴Shannon County District 85 first appeared in the state records in 1915, which would have made that its second year. The school would not have received state funding or recognition in its first year but was listed as receiving local funds in 1913-1914 and

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Buttin Rock School originally was located about a half-mile from its current location. The building was in danger from flooding, however, and it was moved around 1920.⁵ The school was mobile because it is a simple wood frame, set on cornerstones rather than firmly tied to a foundation. This type of construction was typical of one-room schoolhouses, which sometimes were moved to better locations, as Buttin Rock was, or were moved to meet changing population centers.⁶ The school probably was constructed by the M. V. Keller family, who owned the surrounding land from 1907 to 1930.⁷ As aforementioned, the school continued to serve the surrounding community until 1960--twelve years after the legislative order for reorganization plans. And for three years more, the school district officially was maintained, although the only family in the district sent their children to the high school and elementary school in nearby Winona.⁸

The sporadic reports of the local superintendents of Shannon County and of state officials offer much information regarding how Buttin Rock's schoolhouse compared to other schools in the area. In 1915, just a year after Buttin Rock opened, the reports from the state normal school survey and the county superintendent reveal local standards versus educational ideals. While County Superintendent Walter Webb referred to the new schools in his county as being "modern and up-to-date," the representative of the Cape Girardeau Normal School reported that "No school that we

has school records from that year.

⁵There are no available records on the date when the school was moved, although Florence Sconce Knuckles remembered the approximate date in an interview conducted by Neil Mangum, July, 1978, Oral History Project, Ozark National Scenic Riverways.

⁶David B. Tyack, The One Best System: A History of American Urban Education (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), 17.

⁷Chain of Title for Section 28, Township 29 Range 2 West, developed by Charlotte Hunt, Shannon Abstract Company, Eminence, Missouri.

⁸The students involved were the children of Everett Bland. As Shannon Ennis, school superintendent of Shannon County explained in a telephone interview with the author July 24, 1990, the oldest child was in seventh grade in 1959-60, but he was promoted to high school early so that he could go on to the Winona schools. He took his younger brothers with him across the Current River to pick up the Winona school bus on a country road and left them at the Winona elementary school on his way to the high school.

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visited had a modern heating and ventilating system; nor even. . . jacketed stove, but I understand that you have several in the county." Buttin Rock, one of the new schools, was a basic frame construction, and it had no system for circulating air. A pot-bellied stove provided the only heat in the building, and, from the Cape Girardeau report, apparently this was standard Shannon County fare.⁹ In 1931-32, when the most extensive state-sponsored survey of Missouri schools was conducted, there were seventy-eight one-teacher rural schools in the county. Forty-four percent of the county schools had fewer than thirty students attending, with the overall range of students enrolled in one-room schools in the county from four to sixty-three. The 81 one- and two-teacher schools of the county were all frame except five brick and stone buildings. More than eighty percent of the schools were using "unsanitary" toilets--outhouses--and few had electric lights and good ventilation systems.¹⁰ The situation was much the same when the consolidation legislation was passed in 1948. The schools, inefficient and backwards as they may have been by exterior standards, were a vital part of Ozarks life. They remained because the children who attended them could not have gotten an education another way.

Buttin Rock, like many rural schools, never served more than a handful of families at one time. The school had at most two dozen students, and for the large part of its history there were about ten students per year. Families who were served by Buttin Rock over two generations were the Kellers, the Blands, and the Sconces.¹¹ For these families and the other children who attended Buttin Rock, it was their only opportunity for education, and practically the only opportunity for social life. Few people lived in the area, and getting in and out of the river valley could be difficult. Bluffs, including Buttin Rock, rise on both sides of the school and the river. The Current is deep and wide at this

⁹Sixty-Sixth Report of the Public Schools of the State of Missouri (Jefferson City: State Superintendent of Schools, for the school year ending June 30, 1915), 374; W.L. Barrett, Director of Field and Extension Work, Cape Girardeau Normal School, Cape Girardeau, MO, December 6, 1915, to County Superintendent Walter Webb, Eminence, Missouri, in "Writes about Shannon County Schools," Current Wave, December 16, 1915, 1.

¹⁰Eighty-Third Report of the Public Schools of the State of Missouri, Survey of County Schools Supplement (Jefferson City: State Superintendent of Public Schools, 1932), 1442-1458.

¹¹Teachers' Annual Reports, District 85, available from 1913-1963 in the Shannon County Clerk's Office.

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point.

The quality of education at Buttin Rock varied with the teachers who served it, although all of the teachers were required by the one-room situation to be creative. In its first year of existence, before state funds became available to it, the teacher was young, lacking experience, and probably poorly paid. She had a third-grade certificate and no training beyond the eighth grade. In her final report to the county superintendent, she stated that in spelling the school had "followed the state coarse [sic] of study."¹² A new teacher replaced her the next year, although not necessarily because of her training. Most teachers stayed at Buttin Rock only one or two years.

The students and teachers at Buttin Rock were typical of small schools. The average age of students at Buttin Rock was about nine, slightly younger than in schools which drew from a larger population pool. The teachers in the early years were inexperienced and undertrained, although in later years the school had some very well-trained, even exceptional teachers. The student population came from about four families per year, and they were spread out in age and grade level. Teachers also came from these families, or they boarded with one of them, increasing the sense that this was a community school.

Buttin Rock was a very poor district, and here more than in larger districts with wealthier patrons it was necessary for the teacher to supplement what children could bring from home in the way of school supplies. Money from the pie suppers sometimes went into a merit fund, from which teachers would purchase rewards (pencils, tablets, etc.) for good students. If a teacher ran out of pie supper funds, often she felt it was her duty to devote part of her salary to student supplies.¹³

Buttin Rock School provided some social life for the inhabitants of the valley around it. The school did not house worship services or other regular social events, but it was the scene of numerous pie suppers. At the beginning of every school year, Buttin Rock held a traditional Ozark pie and dinner auction. The girls and women of the area baked pies for the occasion, for which the young men of the community bid extravagantly. In purchasing a pie, they also purchased the privilege of eating the pie with its baker. The money from pie suppers was used to obtain supplies for the school--library books, textbooks, musical

¹²Teacher's Annual Report, District 85, 1913-14.

¹³Mabel Cooper, The 3-R's in the Ozarks (Eminence: Chilton Pioneer Printing, 1980),; Mabel Cooper, Interview by Donald L. Stevens, Jr., and the author, June 7, 1990, tape at Midwest Region, National Park Service, Omaha, Nebraska.

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instruments, and student supplies. As in other Ozark schools, a picnic concluded each school year.¹⁴

Buttin Rock School as an educational institution is an example of how rural schools were adapted to meet the needs of communities and changing expectations of educators across the nation. In a small one-room school, the teacher had to be creative in her teaching methods.¹⁵ The state suggested that teachers use alternation of grades in small schools to allow more time for each level of recitation and to create larger classes with more competition. In the first three decades of the twentieth century, schools such as Buttin Rock combined grades three with four and five with six for all subjects except mathematics. Seventh and eighth grades were combined for all subjects, and the math program for those grades was designed to be non-cumulative. Thus, the seventh and eighth grade students studied seventh grade material together in one year, and eighth grade material in the next. Buttin Rock continued to alternate the upper grades in all areas except math and reading in its final year. The larger class sizes created by this system encouraged students to work harder because they had more classmate by which to compare their work.¹⁶

Teachers in small schools such as Buttin Rock also could allow their students to progress at their own pace in lieu of or in combination with alternating grades. The last teacher at Buttin Rock, Dorothy Hunter Ennis, had work stations around the room with work sheets and problem sets for students. Students graded and recorded their own work, advancing as they became secure in their work. She also was able to take advantage of any unusual weather or insects for science study as these things presented themselves. With less than a dozen students, if she changed her schedule for the day to fit whatever lesson presented itself, it was no problem.¹⁷

¹⁴Cooper Interview; Dorothy Ennis, Interview by Donald L. Stevens, Jr. and the author, June 7, 1990, tape at Midwest Regional Office, National Park Service, Omaha, Nebraska; Cooper, The Three R's; Edna Staples, Interview by Neil C. Mangum, June 30, 1978, Oral History Project, Ozark National Scenic Riverways, Van Buren, Missouri.

¹⁵The overwhelming majority of teachers at Buttin Rock School were women.

¹⁶Edith A. Lathrop, "The Organization of a One-Teacher School," Rural School Leaflet No. 10 (Washington: Department of the Interior, Bureau of Education, February, 1923), 5.

¹⁷Ennis Interview.

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Dorothy Ennis also was responsible for the school lunch program at Buttin Rock. This posed some problems since the building was heated with a pot-bellied stove and had only limited electricity. She would begin a big pot of beans every morning in her tiny trailer next to the school where she lived during the week, and when school began she transferred it to the pot-bellied stove in the schoolhouse. By lunchtime, the beans were cooked. Sometimes the children would bring something from their homes to share, such as fresh tomatoes, to supplement the bean soup. Ennis also brought her baby with her to class, because she had nowhere else to leave the child.¹⁸

Buttin Rock incorporated innovation with the old-fashioned one-room school concept. Because of the geography and sparse settlement of the district, the school was needed and allowed to continue until 1960. Because of changing ideals of education, the school adapted to reforms such as school lunch programs. The school was a relict of the past viable in the present of the 1950s because the school board and teachers were willing to adapt. Buttin Rock was an educational center for the surrounding Current River valley for forty-five years, significant to the people whom it served and an example of all small Ozark rural schools.

¹⁸Ennis Interview.

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