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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any 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.

### 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Switchback School  
Other names/site number: Union Hurst School; DHR No. 008-5042  
Name of related multiple property listing:  
Rosenwald Schools in Virginia (012-5041)  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

### 2. Location

Street & number: 210 Pinehurst Heights Road  
City or town: Hot Springs State: VA County: Bath  
Not For Publication:  N/A Vicinity:  X

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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. I  
recommend that this property be considered significant at the following  
level(s) of significance:

\_\_\_ national X statewide \_\_\_ local  
Applicable National Register Criteria:  
X A \_\_\_ B \_\_\_ C \_\_\_ D

[Signature] 11/4/13  
Signature of certifying official/Title: Date  
Virginia Department of Historic Resources  
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting official: Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Title : State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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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:)

Patrick Andrews  
Signature of the Keeper

12/24/2013  
Date of Action

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

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

**Category of Property**

(Check only **one** box.)

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

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**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>4</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>6</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION/School

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

WORK IN PROGRESS

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

NO STYLE  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: BRICK; WOOD/Weatherboard; METAL/  
Standing Seam; OTHER

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

**Summary Paragraph**

The Switchback School is a one-story, frame, graded public school constructed in 1924-25 in rural Bath County, Virginia. Its construction as a two-teacher type of school was partly funded by the Rosenwald Foundation, a charitable organization founded in 1917 to improve educational facilities for African Americans across the South. The building occupies a sloping site in the hilltop community of Switchback near Hot Springs, Virginia. It was built in three campaigns, starting with the two-room section to the north in 1924, followed by a major addition at the south end in 1933 and a second addition, dating ca. 1960. The building remains substantially intact, although it has lost some historic elements to late twentieth century alterations and neglect. It retains most exterior finish materials, as well as character-defining landscape elements such as retaining walls and entrance stairs.

**Narrative Description**

Site Description

The school, constructed in 1924, is sited on the steeply sloping terrain of its original two-acre parcel above Pinehurst Heights Road on a mountainside immediately northwest of Hot Springs,

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Virginia. In the Great Depression, Civilian Conservation Corps workers created a series of terraces around the school by the addition of three stone walls aligned with the east side of the road. One stone retaining wall lines the front of the building and a second one holds back the hillside behind the school. The brick basement is entered directly from a terrace immediately above the gravel entrance drive. A third stone wall lines the edge of Pinehurst Heights Road at the western edge of the school property. The top of each wall is lined with pipe rails to ensure student safety. What appears to be a one-story frame teacher residence of the same age as the school stands to its immediate south, but is not part of the property today and is not included in this nomination.

### Original Section

The original part of the school building consists of the northern half of the present building. This frame section is covered with narrow weatherboards placed over diagonal board sheathing. It stands on a brick basement that is fully above grade along the front. The side-gable roof, covered in 5V standing-seam metal, features extended eaves supported by exposed rafter ends. Unlike the condition at most Rosenwald-funded schools, there was never any porch or hood over the main entry. The building was originally equipped with metal gutters and downspouts and two brick stove flues.

As seen in historic photographs (Plates 1-3), the west face of the seven-course, American-bond brick basement wall was originally pierced by a door near the southern end and by a door centered under the north classroom of the west façade. A window near the north end of the same wall provided light and air to a room beneath the north classroom. The openings on the basement level underwent alterations, probably in the late 1930s, to provide access to a cafeteria and library that were added in the basement. The window under the north classroom was converted into a door and a series of three-light hopper windows were added near the center of the west front. The two basement doors under the north classroom, added at that time, have upper glass panels above a diagonally paneled lower section.

The west front of the first floor is centered around the original glass-panel main entry door. The door, provided with a tall transom, was originally flanked on each side by a bank of five nine-over-nine sash windows that served to illuminate and ventilate the two classrooms inside. The bank of windows lighting the south classroom is intact and partly boarded up. The windows serving the north classroom have been removed. Access to the main entry is provided by a concrete-floored stoop with a plain pipe handrail served by a flight of poured concrete steps that extend up from the south. Installed in the late 1930s, this deck replaced an unroofed wood platform from which wood steps extended to either side.

The north gable end is not provided with any door or window openings, although a shallow louvered vent has been added in the apex of the gable. A coal hopper door has been added in the brick foundation wall below. A small concrete-block fuel storage room was added c 1950 at the northwest corner. The rear (east) wall of the original section originally featured a central door (now boarded up) flanked by two sash windows on either side.

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First Addition

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The first addition was made at the school's south end in 1933 and contained a third classroom, originally independently entered from the exterior. Due to the topography of the ground, it is placed at a slight angle to the original section. A brick flue rises at the apex of the roof between the original building and the addition. The new classroom was lit by a bank of six-over-six sash windows, now removed, and is entered by means of a door at the north end, served by a poured concrete stoop and steps. The concrete stoop was added at the same time as the first addition, but before the stone retaining walls were built by the Civilian Conservation Corps (see Plate 6).

The entry door to this section is original and is equipped with a tall transom. It features a glass panel above three raised panels. A batten door under the entry porch gives access to the crawl space below the addition. A small metal grate in the brick just below the weatherboard ventilates the crawl space. The main entry door was originally sheltered by a bracketed hood, no longer extant. The rear wall is pierced by a series of sash windows. The addition was originally nearly identical in form and appearance to one half of the Rosenwald-funded Millboro School, an African-American school in eastern Bath County (see Plate 8).

### Second Addition

The second addition, located at the south end of the first addition, was built ca. 1960 to house a cafeteria on the main floor, with its own entrance from the exterior. It is visually linked with the first addition to form a two-classroom unit that resembles other two-teacher schools with entries at the outer ends, like Millboro School. Like the previous addition, the fourth classroom was provided with an entry at the south end. A battery of windows may have been replaced with the current three modern sash windows. The weatherboards on this section are wider than those on the other sections and appear to have been replaced when the west windows were removed. The rear features a series of regularly spaced sash windows. A door and two windows were added in the south gable end, probably in the 1970s. The brick foundation resembles the foundation of the first addition.

### Interior

The interior of the entire building has been altered by the removal of some wall finishes and the addition of partitions to create bedrooms. The finishes were altered and wood paneling and acoustic ceiling tiles were added as part of a motel conversion in the 1970s. The original wood floors remain as does much of the trim around the surviving windows and doors on the west front. A wainscot made of horizontal boards survives under the remaining window battery on the west front. Horizontal paneling survives in the two basement rooms.

### Outbuilding

*Privy, ca. 1950, Contributing Building*

A two-room, four-hole concrete block privy, now roofless, survives to the rear of the school. It is located above an in-ground concrete septic tank. This sanitary privy was built to serve the school

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during the historic period. Although it has lost integrity, it retains sufficient elements of its form, material, and appearance to justify contributing status.

Structures

*Cistern, late 1930s, Contributing Structure*

A rectangular stone and concrete cistern was built into the retaining wall to the rear of the school to supply it with potable water. It was constructed as part of a Civilian Conservation Corps site improvement project in the late 1930s.

*Stone Walls (3), late 1930s, Contributing Structure*

Coursed rubble stone walls were built by the workers from the Works Progress Administration to provide flat ground to the front and rear of the school and to improve site circulation and drainage. A stone clad cistern was incorporated into the retaining wall along the back of the school to provide potable water from rainwater.

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### 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.)

- 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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION

ETHNIC HERITAGE: African American

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1924-1965

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1924

1933

ca. 1960

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Unknown  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Switchback School is located on a .9 acre portion of its original two-acre parcel in the African-American community historically known as Switchback in Bath County, Virginia. The school was completed in 1924 using money from the Rosenwald Fund to leverage educational support from the local African-American community as well as the Bath County school board. The school provided educational opportunities for several generations of students in the Hot Springs area. The one-story, frame building, a well-preserved example of the kinds of rural schools funded by the Rosenwald Fund, stands on its original site and preserves a substantial amount of its original fabric. Switchback School, which began as a two-teacher school and was enlarged by the serial addition of two classrooms, is one of two Rosenwald-sponsored schools built in Bath County and one of approximately 70 that survive of the 364 that were built across Virginia. As one of the two schools constructed in Bath County associated with the program sponsored by the Julius Rosenwald Fund, Switchback School meets statewide significance under Criterion A with significance in the areas of Ethnic Heritage: African American and Education. The period of significance starts with the date of construction, 1924, and continues until 1965 when the school closed with the ending of the official policy of segregation.

Switchback School meets the criteria for registration set out in the Rosenwald Schools in Virginia Multiple Property Documentation Form of 2003.<sup>1</sup> As specified in the MPD, Switchback School was built between 1917 and 1932 using funds provided by the Julius Rosenwald Fund. The school's design, floor plan, workmanship, and materials provide information about the forms selected for Rosenwald-funded schools. The school, although it has lost some architectural integrity during past rehabilitations and deterioration, retains sufficient architectural integrity to permit its form to be legible in the context of the rarity of the building type in the county and state. Secondary resources include a late 1930s stone and concrete cistern and three stone walls, all contributing structures built by the Civilian Conservation Corps; and a ca. 1950 two-room concrete-block privy, a contributing building.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance.)

### Historic Context

Booker T. Washington teamed with Julius Rosenwald, the president of Sears, Roebuck and Company, to improve schools for rural African-American communities, beginning in 1912. As described in the Virginia Multiple Property Documentation listing, the Julius Rosenwald Fund, which operated from 1917 to 1937, was the principal institution devoted to this purpose in the

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<sup>1</sup> Green, Bryan Clark. "Rosenwald Schools in Virginia (012-5041)." Multiple Property National Register nomination report. Washington, DC: National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places, 2004.

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first half of the twentieth century. It represented an important part of the Progressive-era transformation of rural education that began about 1900. During this period, rural schools moved from semi-autonomous units controlled by school boards at the magisterial district level to larger, centrally controlled systems that “reflected a new bureaucratic conception of government.”<sup>2</sup> The improvement of educational conditions among southern African-Americans undertaken under the sponsorship of the Rosenwald Fund was an important part of this movement to raise the quality of rural education by improving the physical layout, conditions, and teaching standards of schools in every part of the country.

The Switchback School was built in 1924 to provide improved schooling for African-American children in the Switchback community near Hot Springs in Bath County, Virginia. Switchback, named after a nearby “switch-back” on the railroad that served the resort, served as the home of many of Hot Springs’ black citizens. It is officially known today as Pinehurst Heights. Many residents worked at the nationally popular Homestead Hotel, operated by Virginia Hot Springs Inc., the county’s largest employer. Switchback School replaced an earlier school that was located until 1919 in a nearby three-room house.<sup>3</sup>

As Virginia school boards slowly moved to improve African-American educational opportunities while maintaining racially segregated schools, they took advantage of the grants made available since 1917, by the Julius Rosenwald Fund to provide up to one-third of the funds for the construction of new schools as a stimulus to local investment. As was a widespread practice among school boards at the time, a committee from the local community was asked to raise substantial private sums in addition to the school board’s commitment of public funds. Most facilities sponsored by the fund were intended to serve as elementary schools staffed by one or two teachers. Half of all the schools in Virginia by the Rosenwald Fund were for two-teacher graded schools like the Switchback School, for which the organization typically contributed between \$500 and \$800.

Most public schools occupied one-room buildings after the full enactment of a program of public schooling in Virginia after the Civil War. Graded two-teacher schools began to replace one-room schools for the white population in the late nineteenth century. One-room, log schools remained, however, in use among white and African-American communities in Bath County.<sup>4</sup> The schools for the black population in the segregated American South were not funded to the same level as schools for white children. Thus, as white schools were consolidated in the 1910s and 1920s, in line with progressive educational standards, black schools were often left behind. In the mountainous regions of western Virginia, where the black population was relatively low,

<sup>2</sup> William Allen Link, “Public Schooling and Social Change in Rural Virginia,” (Ph.D. diss., U of Virginia, 1981) 276, quoted in “Public Schools in Augusta County,” 1985.

<sup>3</sup> Bath County Historical Society, *The Bicentennial History of Bath County, Virginia, 1791-1991* (Marcelline, MO: Heritage House, 1991) 37-38.

<sup>4</sup> The white Millboro Elementary School operated in a one-room log building until it was replaced by a new, brick consolidated school erected in 1916 (Millboro School National Register nomination report. Washington, DC: National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places, 2003).

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segregated schools remained small. This remained the case well into the era of school consolidation in the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>5</sup>

In Bath County, as in much of western Virginia, relatively small populations living in dispersed communities struggled to find adequate education for their children. Black communities were even less well provided for. Bath County had 47 schools in 1910, very few of which were adequate in the eyes of the division school superintendent. Many were missing window-panes, blackboards, paint, and furniture. He wrote that “there is in the county not one school that is in perfect, or I may say, even in good condition” and begged for an increase in funding, so that the county could match the “recent awakening in Virginia” in which other counties are “building new up-to-date school houses. . . equipping those houses with modern appliances for health, beauty, and usefulness. . . .” By 1926-27, there were 32 schools, of which only four were for the black population.<sup>6</sup>

A new Switchback School was built in the 1924-5 season, according to Rosenwald Foundation records (Plates 1 and 2). The total cost of the school was \$4,000, of which members of the black community contributed \$600, the Rosenwald Foundation gave \$700, and the school board paid \$2,700.<sup>7</sup> Due to the relatively small size of the black population, the school was expected to meet all the community’s educational and social needs for the foreseeable future. In fact, it served those needs until the very end of segregation in schooling in the mid-1960s.

The managers of the Rosenwald Fund, based at the Tuskegee Institute between 1912 and 1920 and in Nashville between 1920 and 1937, shared many goals with the Progressive-era school reform movement dating from 1900 to 1930. Schools funded by the Rosenwald Fund resembled projects promoted by the Country Life movement, a Progressive program promoting the improvement of rural schools in terms of their layout, location, furnishings, and curriculum. In return for partial funding, each new school in their program had to meet Rosenwald Fund guidelines for siting, orientation, staffing, equipment, and design.

Until 1920, the design of the school had to win approval of the Extension Department of Tuskegee Institute and, where applicable, the relevant state department of education. This usually meant that each school followed one of the three official designs distributed by the fund and published in 1915. In keeping with the educational strategy of Booker T. Washington, typical Progressive-era school plans were adapted to include a place for industrial training to enable young men to find well-paying employment and to better the conditions for their communities. Initial designs, based on contemporary educational theories about light and ventilation, were provided by Tuskegee architecture professors. Schools built under the guidance of the Tuskegee Institute were not as rigorously organized according to reformist principles as later designs. For instance, lighting was not restricted to a “battery” of windows on either the east or the west wall. In addition, execution of the plans in the field was often less than satisfactory.

<sup>5</sup> Ann McCleary, Public Schools of Augusta County, 1870-1940, Thematic National Register nomination report (Washington, DC: National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places, 1984).

<sup>6</sup> Bath County Historical Society. *The Bicentennial History of Bath County, Virginia, 1791-1991* (Marcelline, MO: Heritage House, 1991).

<sup>7</sup> Julius Rosenwald Archives, Special Collections Library, Fisk University, Nashville, TN.

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A new program was created in 1920, soon after a comprehensive review of the operations of the program at Tuskegee commissioned from school reformer Fletcher Dresslar. The study addressed shortcomings in design and construction standards.<sup>8</sup> Dresslar, a nationally recognized authority on school design based at George Peabody College for Teachers in Nashville, Tennessee, had already published school designs in 1911 and 1914.<sup>9</sup> As a result of the study, Julius Rosenwald moved the program to Nashville and employed Dresslar's student Samuel L. Smith as director.

Responsibility for design was transferred to Smith in 1920. Smith and his colleagues enlarged the fund's repertoire of designs, published under the title *Community School Plans* in 1921, to include 17 plans for schools accommodating from one to seven teachers. Only one plan, however, was provided for one-teacher schools and only three were shown for two-teacher facilities. Rosenwald plans were widely disseminated and used across the nation for schools for both white and African American students. Interestingly, the basic two-classroom school design published in 1921 appears to have been widely adapted by many communities for rural schools for white students.<sup>10</sup>

The new building designs were to be "model schools," exhibiting best design practices in lighting, sanitation, ventilation (by means of "breeze windows"), and furnishings. After 1921, the fund required closer conformance of the schools to its planning, siting, and furnishing requirements, but could still be flexible in approving design adaptations or in allowing alternate plans provided by state educational authorities.

There is evidence of continuity between the plans issued by the Rosenwald Fund in Tuskegee and Nashville. No design for a two-room school was shown in the 1915 bulletin, but a variation of the widely used two-teacher school design shown in the publication of 1921 (Plate 4) was used as early as 1918, when Tuskegee was in charge of the approval of plans.<sup>11</sup> The characteristic two-teacher school used at many Rosenwald-funded locations across the state, with its tight plan and single, small industrial room projecting from the front, was tailored to the realities of education in the impoverished African-American communities of the South.

The Rosenwald Fund plans were closely related to designs published by national school authorities, including the plans issued in 1914 by the U.S. Bureau of Education, once again under the direction of Fletcher Dresslar.<sup>12</sup> Like the Tuskegee plans, they called for one or more small

<sup>8</sup> Mary S. Hoffschwelle, *The Rosenwald Schools of the American South* (Gainesville, FL: University of Gainesville Press 2006), 82-83.

<sup>9</sup> *Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture*, Online Edition (Knoxville, TN: U of Tennessee Press 2002 ~ 2013).

<sup>10</sup> See Othma School in Gibson Worsham, *A Survey of Historic Architecture in Goochland County, Virginia* (Virginia Department of Historic Resources and the Goochland County Historical Society, 2003), 109.

<sup>11</sup> See Phyllis Silber, *The Second Union School, Goochland County, Virginia*, National Register nomination report (Washington, DC: National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places, 2005).

<sup>12</sup> Fletcher B. Dresslar, *Rural Schoolhouses and Grounds*, United States Bureau of Education Bulletin 12, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1914).

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workrooms where manual training would take place, and for the use of the school house as a resource for the entire community. In fact, the Tuskegee design for a one-teacher school is almost identical to the one in the federal publication.

Schools were expected by the Rosenwald Fund not only to provide settings for traditional education, but also for community events and adult education. Progressive-era schools were to be aesthetically pleasing as well as practical: "a beautiful country schoolhouse, appropriately located, will exert a quiet but persistent influence on all who are associated with it."<sup>13</sup> A key word was hygiene; sunlight was believed to cleanse the air. Light was required to enter from wide banks of windows over the left shoulder to minimize shadows on the students' books.

Switchback School began as a two-teacher school, which meant that it held two classrooms, one with the younger students in grades one to three and a second with older students in grades four through seven. The school was originally heated by stoves in each classroom. A photograph shows flues flanking what was probably a central lobby or cross passage behind the entry door (Plate 6).<sup>14</sup> Frame privies were provided to the rear of the building, later replaced by a concrete block sanitary toilet facility. A level space on the hill behind the school was used as a playground. As late as 1959, there was no playground equipment.<sup>15</sup> Historic photos from the Julius Rosenwald and Virginia State University archives show that the stone retaining walls present today were not added until the 1930s.

The site met the Rosenwald standard of two acres, leaving room for sports and supporting structures.<sup>16</sup> The first floor plan met minimum standards for a two-room school, but was missing the industrial room that projected from the front of most schools that were built following published Rosenwald Foundation plans. The industrial component may have been provided in an original basement room, as it was in some of the school plans published by the federal government in 1914. The Switchback School and its sister school at Millboro, built in 1929, were more like the kinds of schools built by localities across the region than they were like any of the two-room models published by the Rosenwald Fund.

The hillside site in this mountainous region probably contributed to the building's final extended form. It was set into the slope on a brick basement, permitting inclusion of some educational functions in a basement (Plate 3). The building did closely correspond to progressive standards for school orientation; an important U.S. Bureau of Education bulletin indicated in 1914 that if a school was sited near a hill that obscured the light during part of the day, the school should be placed so as to get afternoon sun in the main classroom windows.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Dresslar, 1914, 43.

<sup>14</sup> Switchback School from across the road, late 1931-32, Archie Richardson Collection, Virginia State University Archives, Virginia State University, Petersburg, VA.

<sup>15</sup> Henry, Perlista. Personal communication, 29 May 2013.

<sup>16</sup> Julius Rosenwald Archives, Special Collections Library, Fisk University, Nashville, TN.

<sup>17</sup> Dresslar, 1914, 36.

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The Virginia School Building Service began providing designs for public schools in 1920. The state's standard two-room plan incorporated banks of windows in the center with the entries at each end of the long principal façade. The original Switchback School had the banks of windows approved by both the Rosenwald Foundation and the state, but, unlike most schools built under their supervision, it featured a single central entry. The county's other Rosenwald-funded facility, Millboro School, incorporated entries at each end, like a Virginia School Building Service plan. Similar variations of two-teacher school design were increasingly funded during this time by the Rosenwald Fund, including Hickory Grove School in Nottoway County, Purton School in Gloucester County, the Bethel School in Fluvanna, and Promise Land School in Amelia County. By 1928, according to photo records in the Fisk Collection, the majority of schools took this rectangular form with end entries and a small central ornamental gable.<sup>18</sup>

At some point during this period the school was officially renamed Union Hurst. By the 1930s, school consolidation caused the numbers of two-teacher schools to shrink among the white population, but the effects of segregation and their relatively low population numbers meant that African-American students in Bath County would attend small, rural schools for several more decades. In a way, the evolution of Switchback School into Union Hurst School can be seen as a school consolidation project, in which a rural school was modestly expanded to provide the basic elements of a modern education, including a high school, library, and hot, nutritious meals. High school classes began to be provided for rural students in the early twentieth century. There is a record of one local resident, Madie Henry Allen (1893-1987), who worked during this period as a cook at Union Hurst School.<sup>19</sup> She also provided room and board to teachers in her house on Pinehurst Heights Road.<sup>20</sup>

The Mann High School bill, passed in 1906, promised partial funding counties to start high school programs. By 1910 there were 360 high schools across the state. In Bath County, the first high school program for white students was offered at Millboro in 1916. In 1927, two of the largest high school programs were consolidated at Valley High School in Mitchelltown. A high school program was not available to African-American students in the Hot Springs area until 1933, when two years of high school were provided at Switchback School. The high school was housed in an added classroom to the south, constructed in 1933 (Plates 6 and 7).<sup>21</sup> A fourth room was added ca. 1960, further extending the long, low façade. The additions had the same banks of west-facing windows as the original section, but no basement.

At about the same time that the stone walls were added, the basement of the original section was remodeled to add a cafeteria and library. One of the features of the school was the steep slope in front that made entry and movement difficult around the site. As the school was expanded in the later 1930s, Civilian Conservation Corps workers provided extensive stone retaining walls and

<sup>18</sup> McCleary, 1984 and William L. Sherman and Paul Theobald. "Progressive Era Rural Reform: Creating Standard Schools in the Midwest." *Journal of Research on Rural Education*.17:2 (Fall 2001) 84-91.

<sup>19</sup> Bath County Historical Society, 1991, 105.

<sup>20</sup> Henry, Perlista. Personal communication, 29 May 2013.

<sup>21</sup>The date is shown on the reverse of the photograph of Switchback School seen above, from the Archie Richardson Collection, Virginia State University Archives, Virginia State University, Petersburg, VA.

Switchback School

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steps behind and in front of the school with pipe rails for safety. They also incorporated a cistern for water collection into the rear wall.

The high school was discontinued in 1945, after which black students were bused from several localities in Bath County to Watson High School in Covington, 25 miles away.<sup>22</sup> There were fourteen high school students at Union Hurst in 1933. By 1945, 26 students were being bused to a segregated high school in Covington each day.

Switchback (Union Hurst) School remained open as a two-teacher school for another two decades, providing education to another generation of the county's African American population. Perlita Henry, a student from 1953-59, has described the way in which the school was used during her time of attendance.<sup>23</sup> The north room of the original section was the primary room (grades one through four), probably as it had been since the school was built. The southern room housed grades five to seven. The fourth grade students moved to the south room in the afternoon to join the older students for math, science, history, and health. The basement was used as a cafeteria and library during the 1950s. The former high school room was used for programs and meetings. The basement was used as a cafeteria and library during the 1950s. The room that formerly housed the high school was used for programs and meetings.

Switchback School was finally closed in 1965 with the ending of the official policy of segregation in Bath County's public schools. The building, altered on the interior, was used in the 1970s as a motel and apartment building for a short time as a motel by Bath County entrepreneur Ruby Donaldson.

#### Archaeological Potential

The property is close to 100 years old. There may be potentially valuable underground resources that could provide supplementary historical context for the school.

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<sup>22</sup>Cynthia Boteler. "Ethno-Historic Research on the Rosenwald Schools of Bath County: Switchback and the Millboro Schools" quoted in "Uncovering the History of Bath County's Segregated Schools: The Story of Two Rosenwald Schools for the Black Community." Website of the Bath County Historical Society, (Warm Springs, VA: <http://bathcountyhistory.org/images/RosenwaldBrief.pdf>).

<sup>23</sup> Henry, Perlita. Personal communication, 29 May 2013.

Switchback School  
Name of Property

Bath County, Virginia  
County and State

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Archie Richardson Collection, Virginia State University Archives, Virginia State University, Petersburg, VA

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Boteler, Cynthia. "Ethno-Historic Research on the Rosenwald Schools of Bath County: Switchback and the Millboro Schools," quoted in "Uncovering the History of Bath County's Segregated Schools: The Story of Two Rosenwald Schools for the Black Community." Website of the Bath County Historical Society, Warm Springs, VA:  
<http://bathcountyhistory.org/images/RosenwaldBrief.pdf>.

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Switchback School  
Name of Property

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*Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture*, Online Edition (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press 2002-2013).

Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute. *The Negro Rural School and its Relation to the Community*. Tuskegee, AL: Tuskegee Institute Extension Division, 1915.

Worsham, Gibson. *A Survey of Historic Architecture in Goochland County, Virginia*. Virginia Department of Historic Resources and the Goochland County Historical Society, 2003.

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**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 # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
  - Other State agency
  - Federal agency
  - Local government
  - University
  - Other
- Name of repository: Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, Virginia

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** DHR File No. 008-5042

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Name of Property

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** .9 acre

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- |                        |                       |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 38.011539 | Longitude: -79.842787 |
| 2. Latitude:           | Longitude:            |
| 3. Latitude:           | Longitude:            |
| 4. Latitude:           | Longitude:            |

**Or**

**UTM References**

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or  NAD

- |          |           |           |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Starting at point A as shown on the attached site plan, proceeding south 180 feet to point B, proceeding west 150 feet to point C, thence with the east side of Pinehurst Heights Road north 185 feet to point D, and thence returning 200 feet east to point A. The Bath County tax parcel number is 72B-3-11.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundaries include the historic site of the school and the historic landscape and contributing resources associated with its use as an educational facility.

Switchback School  
Name of Property

Bath County, Virginia  
County and State

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### 11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Gibson Worsham  
organization: StudioAmmons  
street & number: 235 N. Market Street  
city or town: Petersburg state: VA zip code: 23803  
e-mail: gibson@studioammons.com  
telephone: 804 722-1667  
date: 8 June 2013

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### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items)

### Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

### Photo Log

The following information is common to all photographs:

Name of Property: Switchback School  
City or Vicinity: Hot Springs vicinity  
County: Bath State: Virginia  
Photographer: Terry Ammons  
Date Photographed: 10/20/12 and 05/08/2013  
Location of Digital Images: Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, Virginia.

Switchback School

Name of Property

Bath County, Virginia

County and State

Photo 1 of 9: VA\_BathCounty\_SwitchbackSchool\_0001

View: Original section of school looking NE.

Date Photographed: 05/08/2013

Photo 2 of 9: VA\_BathCounty\_SwitchbackSchool\_0002

View: West front of school looking NE

Date Photographed: 05/08/2013

Photo 3 of 9: VA\_BathCounty\_SwitchbackSchool\_0003

View: West front of second addition looking SE.

Date Photographed: 05/08/2013

Photo 4 of 9: VA\_BathCounty\_SwitchbackSchool\_0004

View: South end of school looking NW.

Date Photographed: 10/20/2012

Photo 5 of 9: VA\_BathCounty\_SwitchbackSchool\_0005

View: Rear (East) wall of school looking NW.

Date Photographed: 05/08/2013

Photo 6 of 9: VA\_BathCounty\_SwitchbackSchool\_0006

View: North end of school looking South.

Date Photographed: 10/20/2012

Photo 7 of 9: VA\_BathCounty\_SwitchbackSchool\_0007

View: Interior of West wall looking South in second room from the North end.

Date Photographed: 10/20/2012

Photo 8 of 9: VA\_BathCounty\_SwitchbackSchool\_0008

View: Retaining wall and cistern behind school looking SE.

Date Photographed: 05/08/2013

Photo 9 of 9: VA\_BathCounty\_SwitchbackSchool\_0009

View: Privy looking SE.

Date Photographed: 05/08/2013

Additional Documentation:

Plate 1. View from NW. Switchback School, c 1925. Julius Rosenwald Archives, Special Collections Library, Fisk University, Nashville, TN.

Plate 2. View from SW. Switchback School, c 1925. Julius Rosenwald Archives, Special Collections Library, Fisk University, Nashville, TN.

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County and State

Plate 3. Switchback School, 1931-32, Archie Richardson Collection, Virginia State University Archives, Virginia State University, Petersburg, VA. The photograph shows the packed earth of a fenced schoolyard, wooden stair, and steep front entry conditions.

Plate 4. The standard two-teacher school as published by the Rosenwald Fund in 1921 in *Community School Plans*. Adaptations of this basic building form were widely used across Virginia from the late 1910s through the second half of the 1920s.

Plate 5. Three-teacher school plan published by the Rosenwald Fund in 1921 in *Community School Plans*. The front elevation of the school looks most like the front half of the original Switchback School.

Plate 6. Switchback School from across the road, late 1933-34, Archie Richardson Collection, Virginia State University Archives, Virginia State University, Petersburg, VA. The photograph shows a school bus and flues along the ridge of the roof of the original section.

Plate 7. Switchback School, late 1933-34, Archie Richardson Collection, Virginia State University Archives, Virginia State University, Petersburg, VA. The photograph shows older students posed on the front steps of the new high school wing.

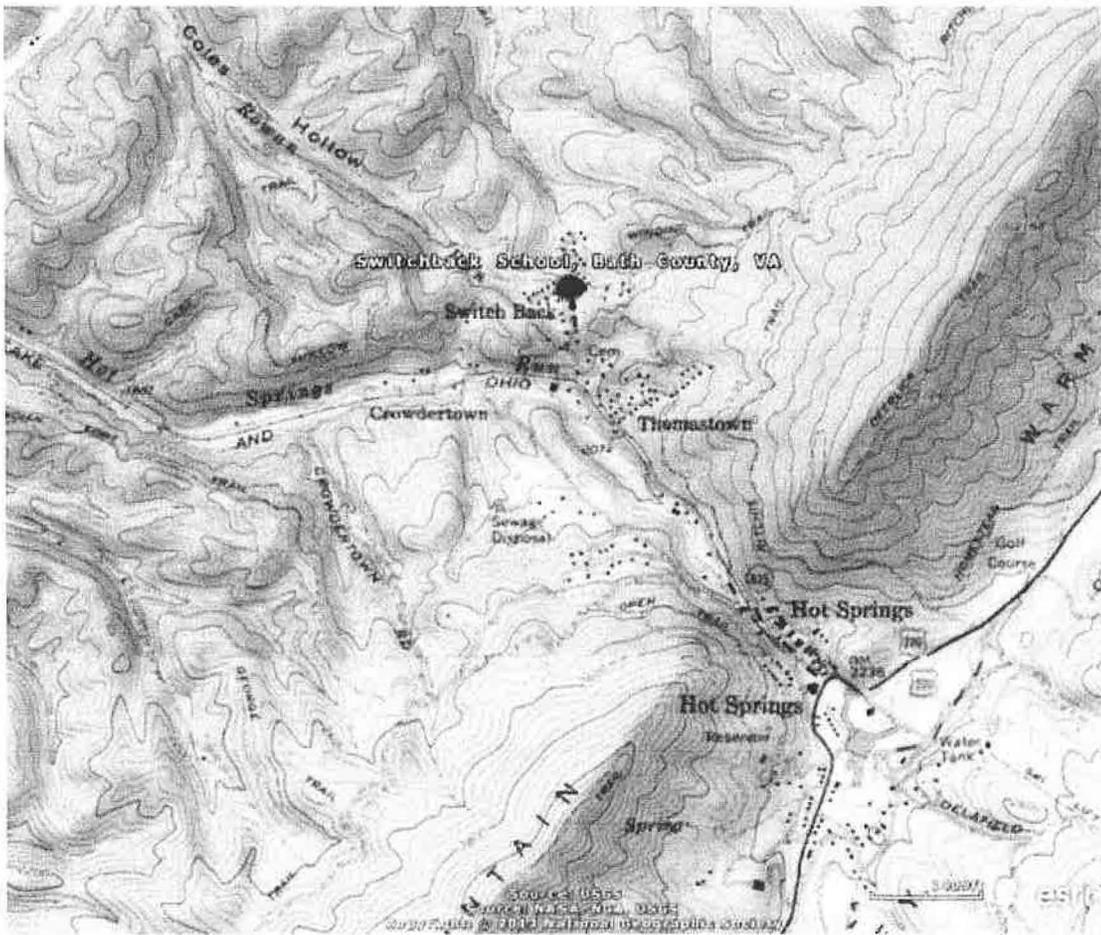
Plate 8. Millboro School (T.C. Walker School) Bath County VA, 1930s. Archie Richardson Collection, Virginia State University Archives, Virginia State University, Petersburg, VA.

Plate 9. Switchback (Union Hurst) School, Bath County VA, late 1930s. Bath County Historical Society, Warm Springs, VA. This photograph shows the added stone retaining walls and railings.

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

**Location Map - Switchback School, Bath County, VA**

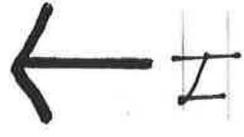


Switchback School  
Bath County, Virginia  
DHR #008-5042

Location Coordinates:  
Latitude: 38.011539  
Longitude: -79.842787

# SKITCHBACK SCHOOL

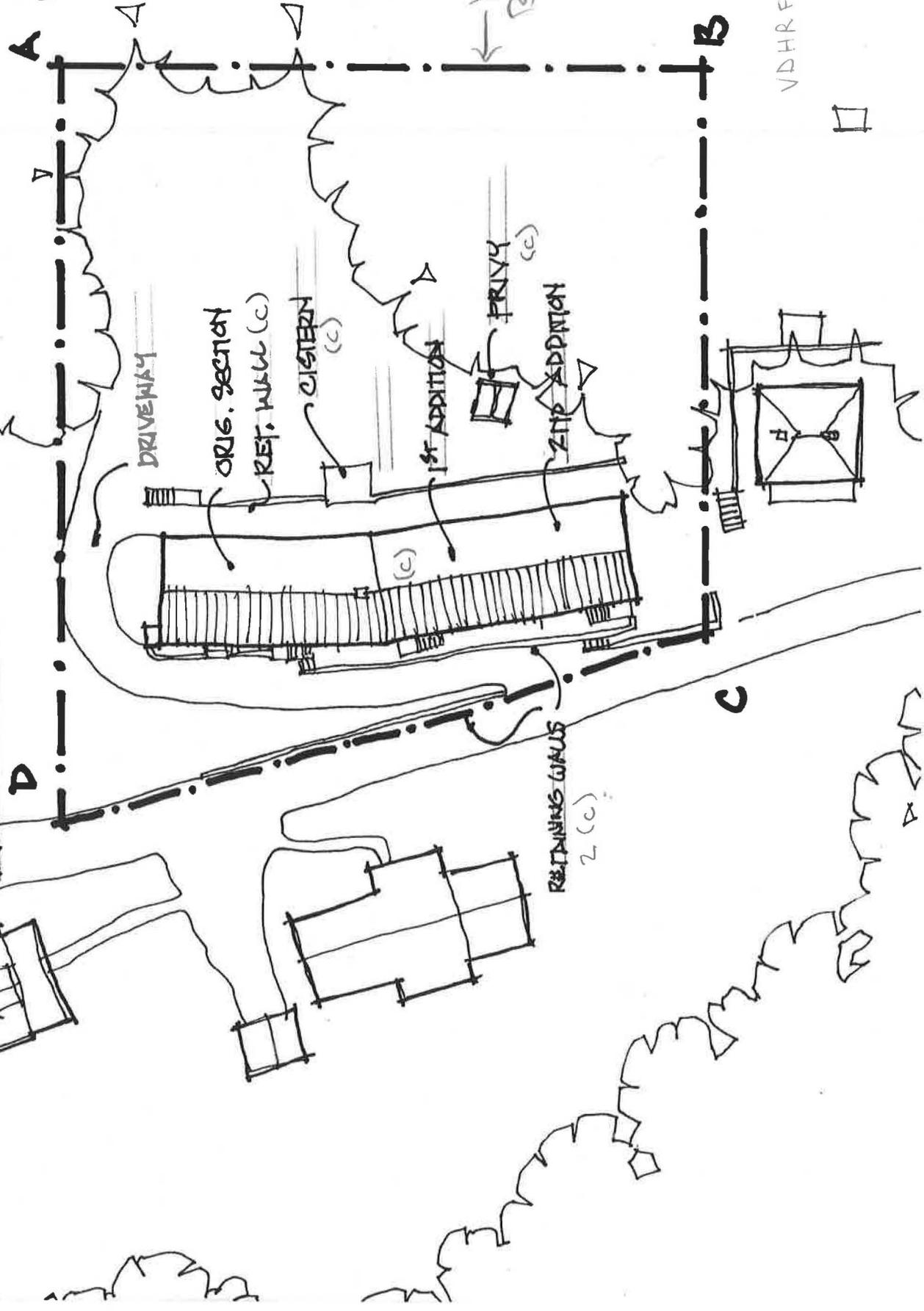
50



Site Plan and Photo Key

PINEHURST RD (RT. 616)

Photo Location  
C=Contributing



Historic Boundary

DRIVEWAY

ORIG. SECTION

RET. WALL (C)

CISTERN (C)

1ST ADDITION

PRIVY (C)

2ND ADDITION

RETAINING WALLS 2 (C)



Plate 1. View from NW. Switchback School, c 1925. Julius Rosenwald Archives, Special Collections Library, Fisk University, Nashville TN.



Plate 2. View from SW. Switchback School, c 1925. Julius Rosenwald Archives, Special Collections Library, Fisk University, Nashville TN.



Add'l Documentation  
SWITCHBACK SCHOOL  
BATH COUNTY  
VDHR: 008-5041

Plate 3. Switchback School, 1931-32, Archie Richardson Collection, Virginia State University Archives, Virginia State University, Petersburg VA. The photograph shows the packed earth of a fenced schoolyard, wooden stair, and steep front entry conditions.

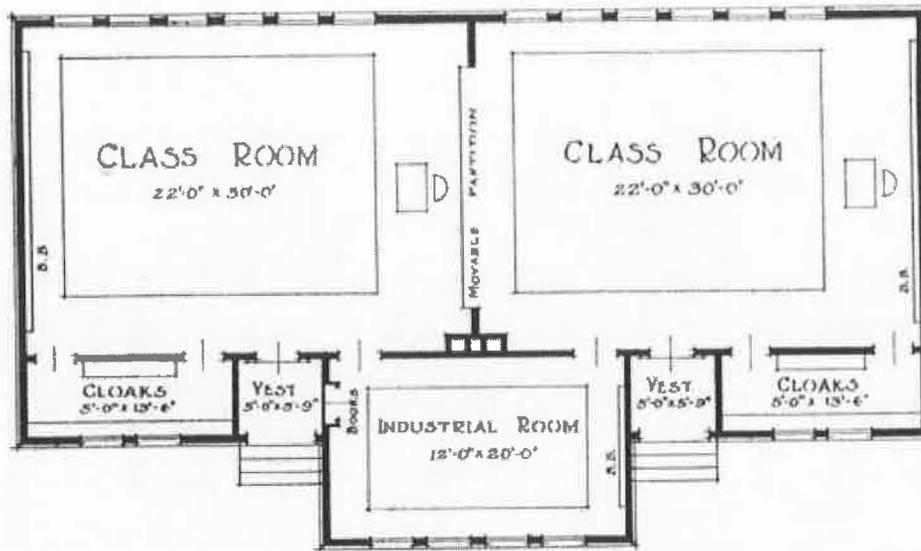
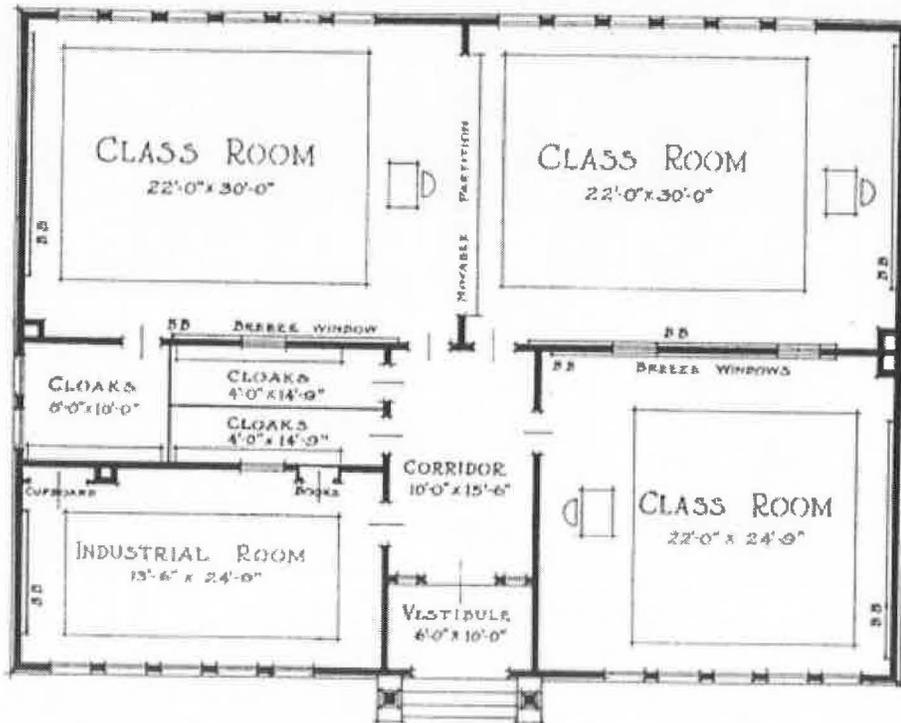


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Add'l Documentation  
Switchback School  
Bath County, VA

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Plate 7. Switchback School, late 1933-34, Archie Richardson Collection, Virginia State University Archives, Virginia State University, Petersburg VA. The photograph shows older students posed on the front steps of the new high school wing.

Add'l Documentation  
Switchback School  
Bath County, VA

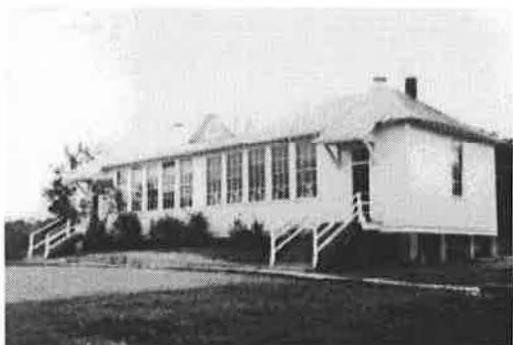


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Plate 9. Switchback (Union Hurst) School, Bath County VA, late 1930s. Bath County Historical Society, Warm Springs VA. This photograph shows the added stone retaining walls and railings.

Add'l Documentation  
Switchback School  
Bath County, VA



















UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Switchback School  
NAME:

MULTIPLE Rosenwald Schools in Virginia MPS  
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: VIRGINIA, Bath

DATE RECEIVED: 11/08/13 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 12/09/13  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 12/24/13 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 12/25/13  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 13000985

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

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

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT  RETURN  REJECT 12/24/2013 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

*Rare surviving example of a Rosenwald School*

RECOM./CRITERIA Accept A  
REVIEWER Patricia Andrews DISCIPLINE Historian  
TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE 12/24/2013

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.



# COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

## Department of Historic Resources

2801 Kensington Avenue, Richmond, Virginia 23221

Douglas W. Domenech  
Secretary of Natural Resources

Kathleen S. Kilpatrick  
Director

Tel: (804) 367-2323  
Fax: (804) 367-2391  
TDD: (804) 367-2386  
www.dhr.virginia.gov

November 6, 2013

Mr. Paul Loether  
Chief, National Register of Historic Places and National Historic Landmarks Programs  
National Park Service 2280  
National Register of Historic Places  
1201 "I" (Eye) Street, N.W.  
Washington D.C. 20005

**RE: Barton Lodge, Bath County; John Wesley Methodist Episcopal Church and Cemetery, Bath County; Switchback School, Bath County; Three Hills, Bath County; Elmwood Farm and Browning Store (2013 Boundary Increase), Culpeper County; C. P. Jones House and Law Office, Highland County; Huntland, Loudoun County; The White House, Page County; Major James Woods House, Nelson County; Robinson House, City of Richmond; Roanoke River and Railroad Historic District, City of Roanoke, Virginia**

Dear Mr. Loether:

The enclosed nominations, referenced above, are being submitted for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. The nominations have been considered, and approved, by the State Review Board and the SHPO has recommended them for listing. Any letters of comment or objection have been copied at the end of the nomination material, along with any FPO notification letters.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. My direct phone line is 804-482-6439.

Sincerely,

Lena Sweeten McDonald  
National/State Register Historian

Enclosures

Administrative Services  
10 Courthouse Ave.  
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Fax: (804) 862-6196

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