

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

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 Anderson Island School  
other names/site number N.A.

2. Location

street & number Eckenstam-Johnson Road  not for publication  
city, town Anderson Island  vicinity  
state Washington code 053 county Pierce code 053 zip code 98303

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u>      </u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>      </u>	<u>      </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>      </u>	<u>      </u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> objects
			<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:  
Rural Public School Buildings in Washington State

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.

[Signature] SSUPO 5-20-87  
Signature of certifying official Date  
State Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation  
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official 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:)

[Signature] Entered in the National Register 7-15-87

[Signature] Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

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**6. Function or Use**

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Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Education: School

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Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Education: School

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**7. Description**

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Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)Other: hip roof vernacular

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Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete

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walls weatherboard

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roof wood shingle

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other 

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Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Anderson Island School is a wood frame, hip roofed, one-room schoolhouse located in Pierce County, Washington, on an island bearing the same name. The island is located in the Puget Sound off the Nisqually River delta. The school sits in an isolated rural, forested setting with no development in the immediate vicinity. The vernacular structure was reputedly built originally in 1883 by Nels M. Petterson and moved to its present site (and somewhat altered) in 1890. Its exterior design and interior one-room configuration have remained unaltered since that time. The well preserved form and fabric of the building, together with a generally well-maintained condition and isolated setting provide the feeling and association historically related to a rural school.

The building is one story and roughly rectangular in shape. It is of wood frame construction with weatherboard siding and cornerboards. It sits on a concrete foundation. The truncated hip roof has exposed rafter tails and is covered with cedar shingles. There is slight deterioration of the cornice. A brick chimney is located on the southwest corner of the roof. It has a metal hip-shaped vent. Windows on the north and west sides of the building are wood frame, one-over-one double-hung sash in groups of four (west) and five (north). Those on the west have been painted over. Windows on the south are two smaller, horizontally placed eight-pane fixed lights located near the cornice.

The front entry faces east where three steps lead to a full width hipped roof porch. The porch roof is covered with cedar shingles and rests on four slightly turned wood posts. Two wood paneled doors are placed at each end of the porch. The doors have single-pane fixed windows. The building is presently used by the Anderson Island Park Board as space where groups can hold classes. This group has left the simple one-room interior relatively unchanged from the original school use.

The school grounds are not landscaped and contain playground equipment and a paved basketball-tennis court. The only interior or exterior change to the building is that the west (rear) windows have been painted. While moved, this occurred in 1890, seven years after construction meaning that the historic events associated with the school occurred after it was placed in its newer location.

**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  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance

1883 - 1936  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates

1890 (move)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation

n/a  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person

n/a  
\_\_\_\_\_

Architect/Builder

Nels M. Petterson, Builder  
\_\_\_\_\_

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

Anderson Island School is significant for its association with the history of public education in rural Pierce County, Washington. Built in 1883 by Nels Petterson (and moved to its present site in 1890), the school is among the oldest in the county and clearly reflects the first era of rural school development. Like other schools from the period (now mostly gone), the school was the center of education and community life in the area. Today, the well preserved structure is the only public building of any kind remaining from the period of earliest settlement of Anderson Island.

Historical Background: Like other counties in the Puget Sound region, Pierce County was settled in the mid and late 19th century by Americans from more eastern states and by European immigrants attracted by the area's vast forests, rich mineral deposits, fertile farmland, and saltwater harbors. Given these physical features, it is not surprising that the economy was dominated by extractive industries--principally logging but also mining, fishing, and farming. Even in the 1930s, when other industries (notably manufacturing) had developed in urban areas, the county's rural economy was fueled by the products of its forests, fields, and the Sound.

This economic base led to the creation of widely scattered rural communities (usually unincorporated) close to natural resources but often inaccessible to urban areas except by difficult water or overland transportation. While Tacoma had a diversified economy based on heavy industry, trade, and transportation, the sparsely settled rural areas were independent and isolated communities characterized by a single economic mainstay.

Without exception, each of these small rural communities established a school district shortly after the first settlers arrived. As elsewhere in the state, the creation of a district and the construction of school buildings signalled the formation of a community and reflected a belief in both the importance of universal education and the permanence of the community itself. The school buildings were often the first and sometimes the only public structures in the area, and thus served as social and cultural centers as well as centers of education. The typical schoolhouse served all school age children in the area and often doubled as a meeting place for their parents. Between 1853, when Washington became a territory, and the 1940s, when rural school consolidation resulted in the construction of larger schools serving several communities, the small community schoolhouses were the primary public structures on the Pierce County rural landscape and today they often are the only surviving evidence of the once thriving rural communities that dotted the county.

See continuation sheet

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

Cammon, Betsey Johnson, Island Memoirs, Puyallup Valley Press, 1969.

Taped interview with members of the Anderson Island Historical Society, August 6, 1980  
(Caroline Gallacci, tape on file in the Pierce County Department of Planning and Development, 2401 S. 35th St., Tacoma, WA 98409).

See continuation sheet

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

Specify repository:

Pierce County Dept. of Planning & Development, Tacoma, Washington

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreeage of property less than one

UTM References

A 

1	0
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5	2	2	4	5	0
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5	2	2	6	6	0
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Zone      Easting                      Northing

B 

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Zone      Easting                      Northing

C 

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D 

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Quadrangle name: McNeil Island  
Quadrangle scale: 1:24,000

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The Anderson Island School is located on the west side of Eckenstam-Johnson Road near the center of the island in Section 5, Township 19 North, Range 1 East, W.M., legally described as Parcel No. 01-19-05-4-002.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the entire parcel that has historically been associated with the property.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title	Caroline Gallacci, Preservation Planner	(Edited by L. Garfield, OAHF)	
organization	Pierce County Planning Division	date	December 20, 1986
street & number	2401 S. 35th St.	telephone	206/591-7172
city or town	Tacoma	state	WA                      zip code 98409

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Pierce County's rural schoolhouse construction reflected three general periods of development. Shortly after initial settlement, a one-room log or frame schoolhouse was constructed on land usually donated by an early homesteader. As the community grew, two or four-room frame schoolhouses were constructed, indicating increased community stability, the growth of the school age population, and the expansion of the school curriculum. Schools built between statehood (1889) and World War I often reflect this second period of growth and expansion. A third phase of growth is reflected in buildings constructed after World War I, when many frame buildings were replaced by larger brick structures and ancillary structures--including gymnasiums and play shelters--were constructed adjacent to the schoolhouse. This period, which lasted through the 1930s, included structures built by the federal Works Progress Administration during the Great Depression. This third period ended by 1940 when the last WPA projects were constructed and the move toward full-scale rural school consolidation was well underway.

In 1841, Charles Wilkes named Anderson Island for Alexander Anderson and McNeil Island for Henry McNeil, of the Hudson's Bay Company. Barely one-half mile separates the two islands and early Scandinavian settlers on both islands formed a single community. Settlement activity, which began in the 1870's, followed the pattern of land clearance and wood sales to passing steamers. After the land was cleared, farms were developed and a cohesive community of Anderson-McNeil Island residents resulted. Community life centered around the Sune Lutheran Church, located on McNeil Island, and the Anderson Island School. This community cohesion continued until 1953, when the federal government acquired all of McNeil Island for a penitentiary, and the change to automobile transportation caused parts of Anderson Island to be developed into summer and commuter homes for those living or working on the Pierce County mainland.

In 1882, Peter Christensen donated a portion of his land for the school. One year later Nels M. Petterson built the schoolhouse. Four years later, A.J. Hustad added the interior ceiling. In c. 1890, the building was moved to its present site. Existing information does not explain where the building was originally located or why it was moved. Since Christensen also donated property for the cemetery, located less than one quarter of a mile to the east of the school's present site, it might have been considered more wise to separate the two.

The wood frame vernacular building is conveniently located in the center of the island on its main north-south road. Classes in the utilitarian one-room were first only held during the three summer months. By 1886, the school term was extended to six months. At the turn of the century the building was also used for Sunday School classes because the community's only church was located on McNeil Island. The use of the building for school purposes continued into the 1930's when the separate Anderson and McNeil Island School Districts were consolidated and elementary school children from Anderson Island were ferried to McNeil for classes. This arrangement continued until the early 1980's when the federal government relinquished control of the McNeil penitentiary. Ownership in the Anderson Island School building was transferred to the park district which continues to manage and maintain the property.

When the Anderson Island School was constructed in 1883, it was the only building on the island which could be used for community purposes. For church, one rowed the family boat to McNeil. The only other public gathering places were the two post offices. For more elaborate forms of entertainment, families would have to take a steamer to Steilacoom

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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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or Tacoma on the mainland, a luxury affordable to only a few. Until 1931, when a community center was constructed, the only public place for socializing on the island was the school building. It is the only public building remaining on the island representative of its early settlement. Islanders' attachment to this association, in comparison with other communities in Pierce County, explains its survival. It is the oldest in the county, is unaltered, and is well maintained. Only two other properties on the island possess similar associative contexts: the John O. Johnson Farm (c. 1896, now the Anderson Island Historical Society Museum); and the Nels M. Petterson Farm (1882). The relationships are direct. Petterson constructed the school; Johnson was superintendent of the Anderson Island Sunday School, held at the school, and clerk of the board of directors for the school district.

Criteria Consideration: Although the Anderson Island School was moved from its (unknown) original location in about 1890, the property is eligible for listing in the National Register because the property has acquired historical significance at the new location and still clearly conveys that association.

Methodology: The project of surveying and documenting Pierce County's public schools was carried out by James Widrig, architect on the Pierce County Landmarks Commission, and Caroline Gallacci, Preservation Planner for that county. The school buildings being nominated were drawn from a list of 84 school buildings and sites included in the Tacoma/Pierce County Cultural Resource Surveys. This project followed federal survey guidelines for historic properties with the results on file in the Washington State Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation. Every property was physically evaluated to determine its historic integrity. In addition, traditional research methods were used to place each property in local as well as the Rural Public School Buildings in Washington State historic contexts.