

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. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

historic name Laurel Hill District School
other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number U.S. Route 33 West and County Route 5/9 not for publication
city or town Spencer vicinity
state West Virginia code WV county Roane code 087 zip code 25276

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,
I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.
In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:
 national statewide local
Susan M. Perice Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer August 20, 2019
Signature of certifying official/Title Date
West Virginia State Historic Preservation Office
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 _____

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): _____
Barbara Wyatt 9-19-19
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Laurel Hill District School
 Name of Property

Roane County, West Virginia
 County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
 (Check as many boxes as apply.)

Category of Property
 (Check only **one** box.)

Number of Resources within Property
 (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	private
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
 (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

**Number of contributing resources previously listed
 in the National Register**

N/A

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

Current Functions
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION

WORK IN PROGRESS

7. Description

Architectural Classification
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

Materials
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

OTHER/NO STYLE

foundation: STONE/Sandstone & CONCRETE

walls: WOOD/Weatherboard

roof: METAL/Aluminum

other: ASPHALT (Porch roof)

Laurel Hill District School

Roane County, West Virginia

Name of Property

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Laurel Hill District School

Roane County, West Virginia

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Summary Paragraph

Located at the intersection of U.S. Route 33 and Field Hollow Road, County route 5/9, the Laurel Hill District School sits on bottom land on the headwaters of Laurel Run of the Left-Hand Fork of Reedy Creek. The deeded parcel to the school district was 1.11 acres (see Figure 1); however, in 2009, a 0.21-acre parcel was negotiated in order to adjoin the property with secondary route 5/9, Field Hollow Road. Laurel Run is divided into two branches on the property: to the south, it gradually ascends adjacent to Field Hollow Road (CR 5/9) to the top of the watershed dividing ridge it shares with Lick Fork; and, to the east, it ascends steeply from this bottomland point of its confluence up to the top of the ridge at county road 5/10, Lion Fork, a watershed dividing ridge road. This steep hill just to the east of the school is deeply shaded and still has a few remnants of laurel shrubbery, hence its name-Laurel Hill District School.¹

Narrative Description

See continuation sheets

¹ James Paxton, an elderly man and former student who attended Laurel Hill School in the 1940s, remembers thicker growth of laurel on this hill. This information was obtained during a 2016 oral interview conducted by the author of James Paxton.

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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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION

Period of Significance

1898-1967

Significant Dates

1898

1927

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Board of Education of Curtis District

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Period of Significance (justification)

See continuation sheets

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

The Laurel Hill District School was moved ca. 1927 during the property's Period of Significance. Knowing this, the property must meet Criteria Consideration B: Moved Properties. The property is significant under

Laurel Hill District School

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National Register Criterion A: Education as the sole surviving district school on a main corridor in Roane County. The building's 'new' location (since 1927) has a setting and general environment that is compatible with its historic (1898-1927) location and is located less than 400' away from its original location. Despite its move, the school building seamlessly functioned as an educational facility during the entire Period of Significance. For more than half a century, the Laurel Hill District School operated in the same manner: offering a free education, and more, to local children; thus, the building is locally significant under Criterion A: Education and meets Criteria Consideration B.

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

A venerable one-room schoolhouse built in the peak era of the one-room sub-district schoolhouses, the Laurel Hill District School remained a viable educational edifice and adapted to both the age of utility services and the mandate for hot lunches well into the paradigmatic shift of public education to the consolidated school model. Laurel Hill retains its most original elements of form and material integrity, unfolding this story within its architecture well into the twenty-first century as the lone remaining sub-district school on a main corridor in the county. The Laurel Hill District School is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under *Criterion A: Education*. The period of significance is 1898 – 1967 which represents the school's period of operation.

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

See continuation sheets

Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)

See continuation sheets

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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

See continuation sheets

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- 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: Roane County Historical Society Archives

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): RO-0411

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.11 acres
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>17N</u> Zone	<u>462817E</u> Easting	<u>4292748N</u> Northing	3	<u> </u> Zone	<u> </u> Easting	<u> </u> Northing
2	<u> </u> Zone	<u> </u> Easting	<u> </u> Northing	4	<u> </u> Zone	<u> </u> Easting	<u> </u> Northing

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

See continuation sheets

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

See continuation sheets

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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Frank Unger, Vice President
organization Past Respects, LLC date November 2018
street & number 412 Church Street telephone 304-927-1717
city or town Spencer state WV zip code 25276
e-mail frank@pastrespects.com

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

See continuation sheets

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 18 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.

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Narrative Description (continued)

Exterior Description

The original Laurel Hill District School, a twenty-two-foot-wide by thirty-foot-deep wood frame single room structure, was placed in service as a school in 1898. Language in a Roane County Deed of sale (recorded in Deed Book 103 page 482) places the general timeline of the construction between 1887-1897. The same deed, along with a map (see Figure 2), validates the removal of the school building, from its original location, which was in the center of the current US 33 highway. The upgraded highway right-of-way made it necessary to relocate the school to its current location, ostensibly around 1927. The new site was a slight down slope in elevation from the original site.²

The single-story, front-gable frame building is clad in weatherboard and sits on piers made of sandstone (original) on the girder beam and concrete (new) on the perimeter (Photo 9). A twelve-foot-deep addition was added to the front of the small wood frame 1898 building, providing service bays for the students - a cloak room on the left side (East) of the front entry foyer and a kitchen on the right (West) - both with entry doors from the foyer passage.

The four-bay west elevation of the former schoolhouse has three large six-over-six single hung windows spaced equally along the wall, along with a one-over-one single hung window in the center of the front addition wall (Photo 3). The west and south elevations both provide ample banks of natural light into the former school, although the south elevation features only two of the same large six-over-six single hung windows. The east elevation had no windows, as this was reserved for the blackboard, which extended the entire length of the wall. The blackboard was replaced by two modern windows in a later renovation. The north elevation (façade) contained a simple stoop over a centered door with a transom window. A shed roof porch was added when it was converted to a residence in the 1960s. On the north gable is the original placard dating the school to 1898. All overhangs on the school are 12" with full poplar soffits.

² Although moved during the Period of Significance (1898-1967), the building remains eligible for the National Register as it meets Criteria Consideration B. The school is the sole surviving district school in Roane county on a main corridor. In addition, the new setting is compatible in character with the original setting, approximately 400' away (see Figures 5 & 6).

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Typical on one elevation of these one-room schoolhouses is a continuous bank of windows, which floods the school room with sunlight. Thusly, the natural light determines the optimal student seating orientation. This west and south elevation window placement of the Laurel Hill District School is not ideal; it is conjectural whether Laurel Hill's builders considered these principles of natural light design and placement. Also, the school was moved and could have been reoriented. One author prescribes that certain builders followed this ill-advised west and south elevation placement of windows: "A.....flawed design was one in which they placed windows just on the south and west sides of the buildings. They believed that with north-side windows, light would double-shadow the students' work area. As a photographer, I find this idea inconceivable, because north light is so soft that it only acts as a fill to the contrasting light that comes from south-side windows. [Too], school sessions took place during the months of a low sun, so having just south and west windows only worsened the contrasting lighting situation."³ This design element was usually prioritized in these early one-room schoolhouses that were built before electric lighting. So, the lighting within the schoolhouse was less than satisfactory; a lighting upgrade was a needed improvement as soon as electricity became available. In addition, the site is restricting to the east where Laurel Hill and its mature stand of trees blocks much of the morning sun, so the orientation of the site is not ideally gifted with a continuous bathing of the solar path. The three-window fenestration of the west elevation was correct as to desk orientation and the preference for light streaming over the non-writing shoulders of the dominant right-handed scholars. According to the existing evidence and an interview with three siblings who attended the school, the seats faced northerly, towards the front of the school room.⁴ The east elevation (or blackboard wall) has two modern window units, probably placed into the wall in 1967, when the school was renovated and converted into a residence.

Interior Description

The walls, ceilings, and floors are all original tongue and groove three-quarter inch planking. At the center of the large room ceiling is a uniquely supported stone chimney, which would have originally been the flue for a stovepipe. The bottom stone, the bearing ceiling thimble, is a unique T-shape hand cut piece. The usual bearing seat for the ceiling thimble stone (Photo 12a) is compression and relies on short cross-section header joists installed at an inward angle to allow for full wedge support (see Photo 12b). The fourteen by fourteen by eight-inch high hewn flue stones have a six-inch diameter port. The chimney capstone is served by a smaller port on each gable end, which ports connect to the center port (see Photo 13).

A full width single bay ten-foot deep addition was added to the front of the schoolhouse circa 1927. A four-fuse panel box and electrical service was installed on the front wall in the cloak room. The kitchen, also located in this front addition, was also plumbed at this time and was located along the west elevation opposite the cloak room. The evidence suggests that the addition and these utilities were added during the major improvements initiated in 1927. At this time a well was drilled in the front west corner of the

³ Paul Rocheleau, *The One-Room Schoolhouse*, New York: Universe Publishing, 2003, p. 48.

⁴ Frank D. Unger, Oral interview with three Paxton siblings (followed by years of attendance): Alice (1933-1941), Gladis (1940-1947), and James (1943-1951), 2016.

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schoolhouse (see Figure 3) to provide water for the new kitchen (it was covered over later and is no longer in existence).

Logic dictates, too, that this major upgrade, the addition and introduction of utilities, would be done after securing the deed. The two windows placed in the addition, one each in the cloak room and kitchen, are also different in style and composition than those original wood sash in the west and south elevations. They are one-over-one single hung units; several of the panes in the six-over-six windows in the main/original school room are wavy float glass, supporting a pre-1910s construction. Too, the understructure joists in the classroom run typically crosswise to the length of the original schoolhouse, while the joists in the front addition run parallel to the length of the original school.

Alterations

In 1967, the building ceased to operate as a school, and the deed reverted to the property heirs. The school was then converted to a residence. At that time a front porch was added (to the c.1927 addition), and the interior space of the main room was subdivided into a living area, two bedrooms, and a bath for its use as a single-family dwelling. The kitchen remained in use as such and the cloak room was converted to a utility room. All the interior walls and ceilings were covered with paneling and panel boards. Upon selective demolition of the original joining wall between the main classroom and the kitchen in the winter of 2009, an inspection certificate slipped in a plastic sleeve, issued by the State School Superintendent, was discovered still hanging on the tongue and groove wall sheeting. It indicated that the school was inspected in 1965 and it was judged to be in good standing for three more years. The interior has been untouched since that time.

Statement of Integrity

Although renovated into a single-family home shortly after it ceased to function as a school in 1967, the renovation materials were attached to and/or covered over the original interior walls, floors, and ceiling- all tongue and groove three-quarter of an inch planking. The original trim and openings were used in the new layout, as were the five panel door slabs and stamped metal New York style hardware, all of which will be reused in existing original openings. The hand cut stone chimney pieces were all in place. A new cap was hand crafted to match the badly deteriorated one. The ceiling thimble was simply "capped" at the ceiling with a suitable size steel can stuffed into the six-inch flue. The six-over-six single hung wood sash were original and were shop rehabilitated using existing wavy pane glass. They are awaiting installation into the restored existing frames. Eighty percent of the wood clapboard siding and soffit, as well as window/door frames and trim are in place and will be rehabilitated. The roof is a 2012 installation of 5-V groove metal to replace the badly worn metal roof. The entire structure was lifted ten inches and leveled to facilitate the installation and maintenance of modern crawl space mechanical systems. New perimeter foundation piers of same size as the badly deteriorated 1927 installed/poured concrete piers were replaced in exact locations. The original girder beam piers are sandstone and still in place.

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Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

Educational History in Roane County and Spencer, West Virginia

"...in the month of July 1863, the county was divided into seven townships (changed to district by Constitution, 1872) [Curtis was one of the districts] ...each of these had its own Board of Education, consisting of three residents of the district, elected by the voters of the district. The Board of Education by the law divided its district into units, numbering them for identification and calling them sub-districts, and provided a teacher for each sub-district."⁵ Independent free schools were slow getting started in these districts until Legislative Delegate H.T. Hughes introduced and secured passage of a bill in 1873 to create an Independent School District carved from 1,000 acres lying in and adjacent to the Town of Spencer. This legislation was the motivation for other districts to activate their own boards and to finally provide locally accessible free public education.

The elected Boards of Education of these districts were also authorized through the Legislature to hold bond issue elections to make improvements and build new facilities.⁶ These "schools came to be established in [sub-] districts small enough that every child could walk to school. Members of local school boards were elected [and even held elections] to pass [bond levies]. They discussed and decided the school's location at a country cross-roads or on an acre of land donated by a local farmer, usually in the center of the [sub-] district. Most of these schools [pre-1910s, before standardized plans] were wood frame buildings of a vernacular type."⁷ Unknowing of these retrospective standards, the newly formed Board of Education for the Laurel Hill sub-district of the Curtis District chose a one-acre plat of bottomland from the H.H. Robey farm centrally located within its sub-district to build its vernacular inspired wood frame school house.

A new school was built in Spencer (county seat for Roane County) in 1896; it was expanded in 1898 and again in 1902. One of the two rooms in the 1902 addition was "fitted and furnished for the high school department in 1905. A high school course of two years was prepared by W.S. Morris, and the same was adopted by the Board of Education August 20, 1906."⁸ Laurel Hill District School, built just ahead of the high school department, would continue to serve as a feeder school for the new high school, scarcely five miles to the east, for the next sixty years. The decision to add on to the Laurel Hill school in 1927 also rested with the Board of Education of the Curtis District, for just a few years later "the County Unit Bill became a law on May 22, 1933. [This law] abolished 398 districts and their governing boards, 54 of which were independent, and substituted in their stead 55 county districts and as many five-member boards of education."⁹

⁵ William H. Bishop, *History of Roane County West Virginia-From Settlement until 1927 A.D.*, Spencer: West Virginia Historical Society, 1927, p.123.

⁶ State Superintendents Report, "The History of Education in West Virginia", Charleston Tribune Printing Co., 1907, p. 231.

⁷ Raymond Bial, *One-Room School*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999, pp. 8-9.

⁸ State Superintendents Report, 1907, p. 232.

⁹ Ambler, Charles. H., *A History of Education in West Virginia*, Huntington, WV: Standard Publishing Company, 1951, p.

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A ca. 1956 article from the Roane County Reporter indicated that during the 1925-26 school year, [William] Bishop listed 155 [school] houses and lots on which they stand, with 6,311 pupils and each school having a term of nine months. For the then current year, 1955-56, there were two (2) high schools, seven (7) consolidated (grade) schools, one (1) two-room school, and seventy (70) one-room schools. At the beginning of the term (1955-56) there were 71 one-room schools, but the Ryan School was closed at the end of the sixth month. Curiously, a consolidated K-8 school was built in Spencer in 1949. Reason would dictate that this ultra-modern post-war educational edifice, representing the new paradigm in public education, would have supplanted the Laurel Hill School, especially in the face of thirty-four years of this new centralized decision making; yet, Laurel Hill survived as a public school.

History of Laurel Hill District School

As the only surviving wood frame schoolhouse on a major corridor in Roane County, the Laurel Hill District School spanned the entire "golden age" of the development and evolution of free, accessible public education in Roane County.¹⁰ Laurel Hill District School was constructed by a nascent District Board of Education empowered by the West Virginia Legislature authorizing both its creation and ability to electioneer levies at the ballot boxes. "The first report of the first county superintendent, Thomas Boggess, covering the term ending in 1866, gives the number of schools as 17. By 1927, there were 155 schools and lots on which they stood that belonged to several district boards of education."¹¹ The Curtis District Board of Education wasn't content with the one room school house model of the time, for it was expanded by two service rooms in 1927 and continued on through this period of local operation and control well into the era of the county-wide central school board model. Despite the paradigmatic shifts in education, such as utilities to the outlying rural regions (1920s and 1930s), hot lunch program (National School Lunch Act of 1946), and the post war transportation enhancements and its concomitant, consolidation, it continued to thrive as a public school from 1898 until its closure in 1967.

With its addition, the schoolhouse quickly responded to the utilities of a secure, safe water supply and electricity; the kitchen serving hot meals was ahead of the 1946 National School Lunch Act.¹² Laurel Hill was built in the midst of the grand era of the one-room district schoolhouse, and that it continued its vitality as a venerable stalwart and credible school well into a new era in such close proximity to the grand capital educational outlays in the Spencer District is highly improbable.

The original Laurel Hill sub-District School, approximately twenty-two-foot-wide by thirty-foot deep frame structure, was constructed ca. 1898. Deed book 103 page 482 places a general timeline of the construction of the schoolhouse between 1887-1897. However, the following firsthand account came from an interview

¹⁰ See section titled "Developmental history" at conclusion of Section 8.

¹¹ Jack Nida, *Images of America: Roane County (WV)*, Mt. Pleasant, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2007.

¹² Unger, oral interview, 2016.

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the author had with the eighty-five-year-old neighbor up Field Hollow from the school, Mr. Bales, on December 19, 2014:

Mr. Bales began, "The schoolhouse was built in 1898, for the dummies who painted the school last, in the seventies, against Mrs. [Francis Robey] Sutton's¹³ advice, painted over the wording on the sign. It reads *Founded in 1898*, I remember." Mr. Bales continued with more enthusiasm, "there was a well here somewhere," while looking around and under the schoolhouse. Then I followed him inside as he continued his story. "Mrs. Sutton told me when they put the kitchen in way back when they plumbed it in." Mr. Bales asked, "Was there a sink there?" to which the author replied, "Yes." "Was there a pump under the sink?" Mr. Bales asked, to which the author again responded, "yes, a shallow well pump", but reasoning there was a cistern that collected roof water, the author offered "and see the depression over there?", pointing to the depression just along the structure. Mr. Bales corrected, "No. That was the septic system installed later when the school was remodeled into a house", he retorted "Now go find your well".

We both looked under that area of the school and found a three-quarter polybutylene line snipped just above grade. In a sense of finality, he enthused, "I'll bet that is it, now go follow it young man. You'll find the well". I have yet to trace the well; yet, the old school plaque is still painted over and mounted on the top of the front gable.

The school functioned in this above expanded fashion for the next forty years, from 1927 through 1967, when its use was discontinued and a reconveyance clause returned the land and improvements back to the H.H. Robey heirs. The Robey heirs renovated the school to a single-family residence, which it remained as such for some twenty-five years, into the early 1990s, when it was abandoned. The heirs sold the property in 2010 to Past Respects, LLC, an historic preservation company, who then entered into a sales agreement and construction contract with a local oil and gas company. This rehabilitation will return the venerable schoolhouse once again to an educational facility, as it will serve as a corporate training center for its new owner.

Developmental history/additional historic context information

In order to substantiate the claim that the Laurel Hill District School is the only remaining schoolhouse along a major transportation corridor/thoroughfare in Roane County, the WV SHPO's historic property inventory was consulted (examining previously identified and documented properties in Roane County), focusing on the results of a county-wide (unincorporated areas only) survey conducted in 2011 by Skelly & Loy. The survey studied historic properties along routes 36, 27, 60, 58, 56, 119, and 19 in the southern part of the county and 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 13, 16, and US Route 33 (which roughly follows the former Gilmer,

¹³ Mrs. Frances Robey Sutton is the daughter of H.H. Robey, now deceased. She leased the Robey farm long-term to Mr. Bales and also rented the school out for a residence from 1967 into the 1980s.

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Ripley and Ohio Turnpike) in the northern part of the county. The survey identified 295 resources: 230 dwellings, 36 churches, and the remaining documented buildings were schoolhouses and/or commercial buildings.

Due to the somewhat dated nature of the Skelly & Loy report and to determine both the locations and integrity of the extant schoolhouses, the nomination preparer, Past Respects, LLC, conducted a follow-up windshield study in October 2018. Roane County has four main highways that intersect in the town of Spencer. US 33 dissects the town east and west. US 119 comes into Spencer from the south and follows US 33 east out of the county. State Route 14 (Parkersburg Road) comes into Spencer from the North. The October 2018 driving tour focused on these primary routes and concluded that no other schoolhouses existed on these main routes except for the Laurel Hill schoolhouse.

There is a District school that has been relocated and used as a museum. In 1986, the Newburne School, was relocated from the Smithfield district near Looneyville, to Heritage Park in the city limits of Spencer, less than four miles to the east of Laurel Hill school. It is open to the public only during special events to demonstrate a typical District schoolhouse. It has been restored and is furnished with period specific desks and books.

In October 2018, copies were obtained of the Grantee record for Roane County Board of Education (BOE) from 1866-1972 showing Grantors from which property was purchased. Each of the first six pages of the nine-page list (legal size) spans approximately 10 years per page, evident of the volume of purchasing schoolhouse property until 1929. As evidenced by the list, each entry cannot be counted as one school. The Board of Education sometimes needed more land than was available from one owner so they would purchase adjoining parcels of land from separate owners for the same schoolhouse property. Duplicate entries were noted from the same owner where separate adjoining tracts of land were purchased. Laurel Hill School is one of these with two entries from the same owner.

Copies were also obtained of the Grantor record for Roane County Board of Education from 1866-1976 showing Grantees to which property was sold. Quite a number of these sales were Right of Way easements for utility companies. The deeds included a Reversion Clause, whereby the property would revert back to the owner, or their successor, upon the school ceasing operation. Included in many, but not all, deeds was a statement similar to "building to be removed within 6 months" or "school to be torn down" or "building has been dismantled." Beginning in 1955, the number of properties sold increased substantially. Interestingly, the first three pages span almost 100 years (1866-1957) while the last three pages span almost 20 years (1957-1976). This demonstrates that the BOE would no longer possess property every two or three miles, as consolidation was well underway, and the era of the district schoolhouses was drawing to a close.

One school from this era is the Billings school on Reedyville Road (Rt 10) off State Route 14. It is privately owned and has been published in the local paper for its preservation activity. Another school still standing is on Big Creek Road (Rt 15/4) off River Road (Rt 34) in Walton, 14 miles south of Spencer on Rt. 119. It has been converted to a house. A few have been turned into camps. The greatest majority are either abandoned

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Laurel Hill District School
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Section number 8 Page 8

and in poor condition or already demolished. Without a comprehensive field study that is specific to district schoolhouses, a definite number cannot be determined. Although, in comparison to the original 150 plus, there is a small number of schoolhouses remaining at all.

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Laurel Hill District School
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BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Laurel Hill District School
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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated boundary of Laurel Hill School is shown on the accompanying survey map. The nominated boundary includes the original 1.11-acre tract known as "FIRST TRACT" as described in Deed Book 471, page numbers 137-141, Roane County Courthouse.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The recommended National Register boundary follows that property described as the 1.11-acre tract in Deed Book 471, page 141, Roane County Courthouse. The land was associated with the Laurel Hill District School from 1898 through 1967, the period of significance.

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Laurel Hill District School
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PHOTO LOG

Name of Property: Laurel Hill District School
Address: U.S. Route 33 and County Route 5/9
City or Vicinity: Spencer
County: Roane
State: West Virginia
Photographer: Frank D. Unger, Past Respects, LLC
Date Photographed: August 16, 2019

Photo 1: North Elevation
Photo 2: South Elevation
Photo 3: West Elevation
Photo 4: East Elevation
Photo 5: Cloakroom facing south elevation
Photo 6: Classroom facing south elevation
Photo 7: Original bead board/trim, corner at classroom/kitchen wall, facing north
Photo 8: Kitchen facing southwest
Photo 9: Pier detail south elevation, west elevation corner
Photo 10: 6 over 6 single hung window facing west elevation
Photo 11: Foyer, front entry facing south elevation
Photo 12a: Chimney thimble in ceiling
Photo 12b: Chimney thimble in attic
Photo 13: Chimney cap, facing west
Photo 14: Restored sash in shop
Photo 15: Landscape of parcel facing north
Photo 16: Doors from kitchen, cloakroom and foyer in shop

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Photo 1: North Elevation



Photo 2: South Elevation

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Photo 3: West Elevation



Photo 4: East Elevation

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Photo 5: Cloakroom facing south elevation



Photo 6: Classroom facing south elevation

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Photo 7: Original bead board/trim, corner at classroom/kitchen wall facing north



Photo 8: Kitchen facing southwest

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Photo 9: Pier detail south elevation, west elevation corner



Photo 10: 6 over 6 single hung window facing west elevation

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Photo 11: Foyer, front entry facing south elevation



Photo 12a: Chimney thimble in ceiling

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Photo 12b: Chimney thimble in attic



Photo 13: Chimney cap facing west

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Photo 14: Restored sash in shop



Photo 15: Landscape of parcel facing north

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Photo 16: Doors from kitchen, cloakroom and foyer in shop

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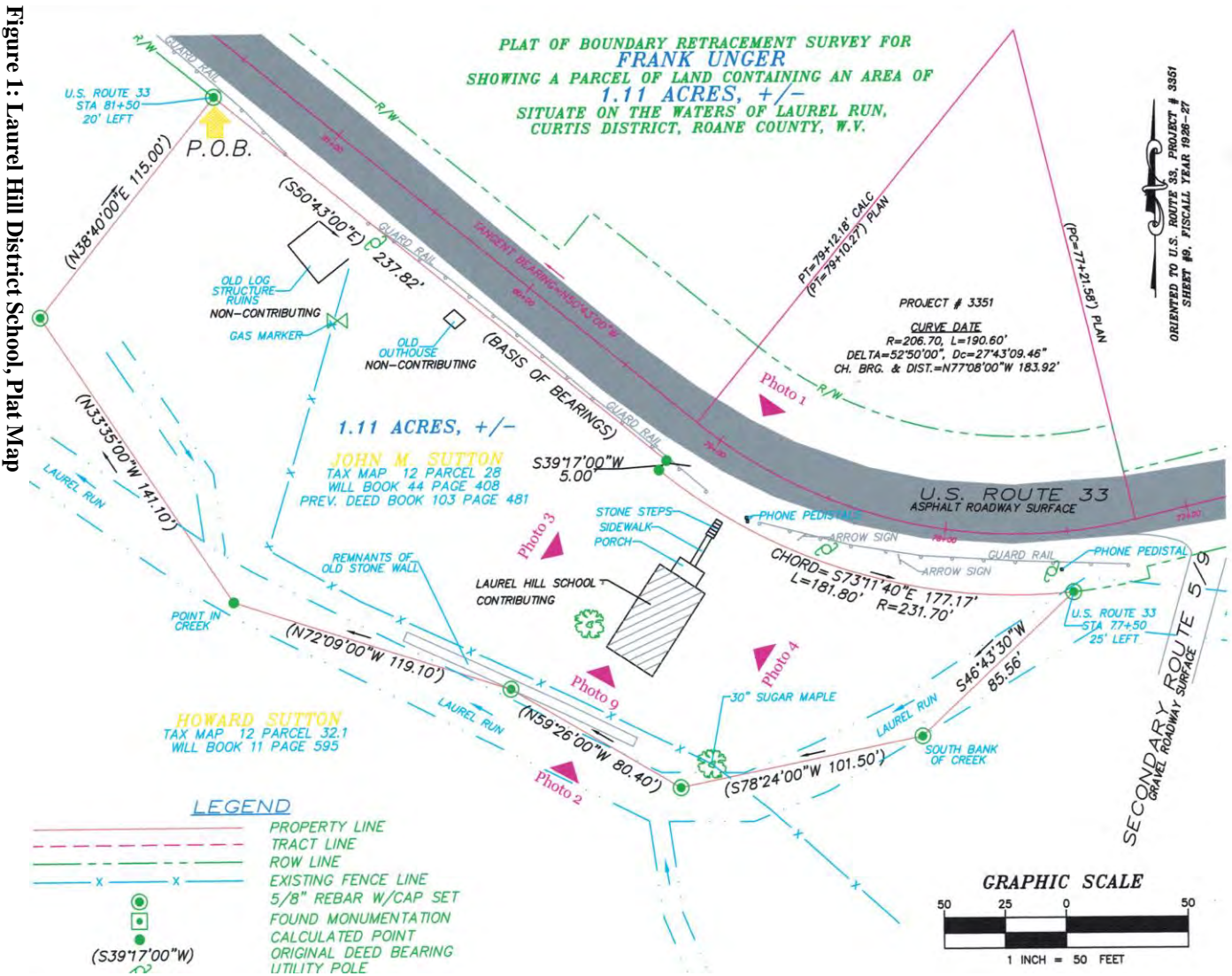


Figure 1: Laurel Hill District School, Plat Map

United States Department of the Interior
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Original Location

New location as of 1927

Figure 2: Pre-1927 map obtained at the Roane County Courthouse, Flag indicates original schoolhouse location

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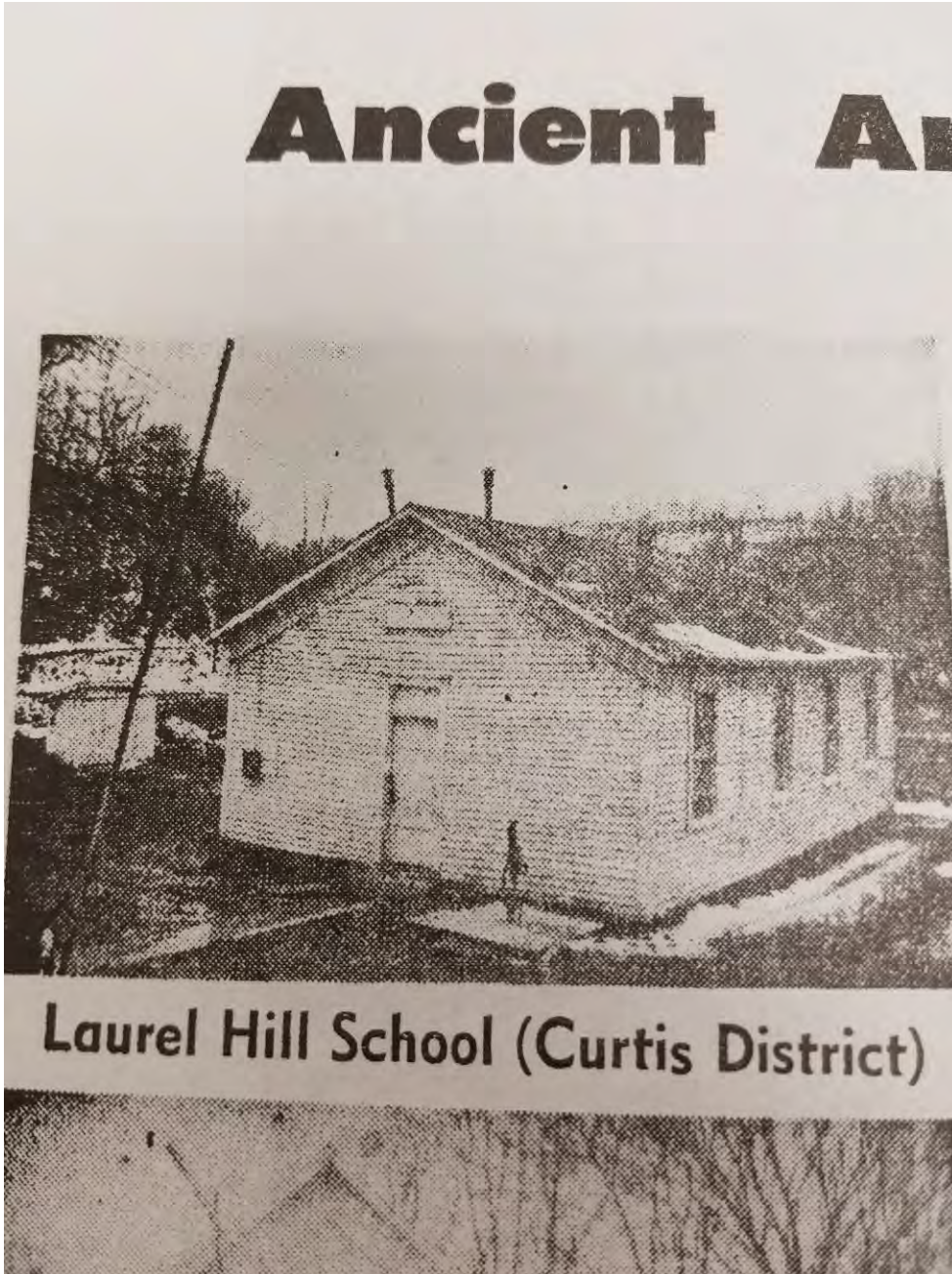


Figure 3: Historic photo dated ca. 1927. Courtesy Roane County Historic Society.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Figure 4: Certificate of Classification found in the Laurel Hill District School. Courtesy of Frank D. Unger.

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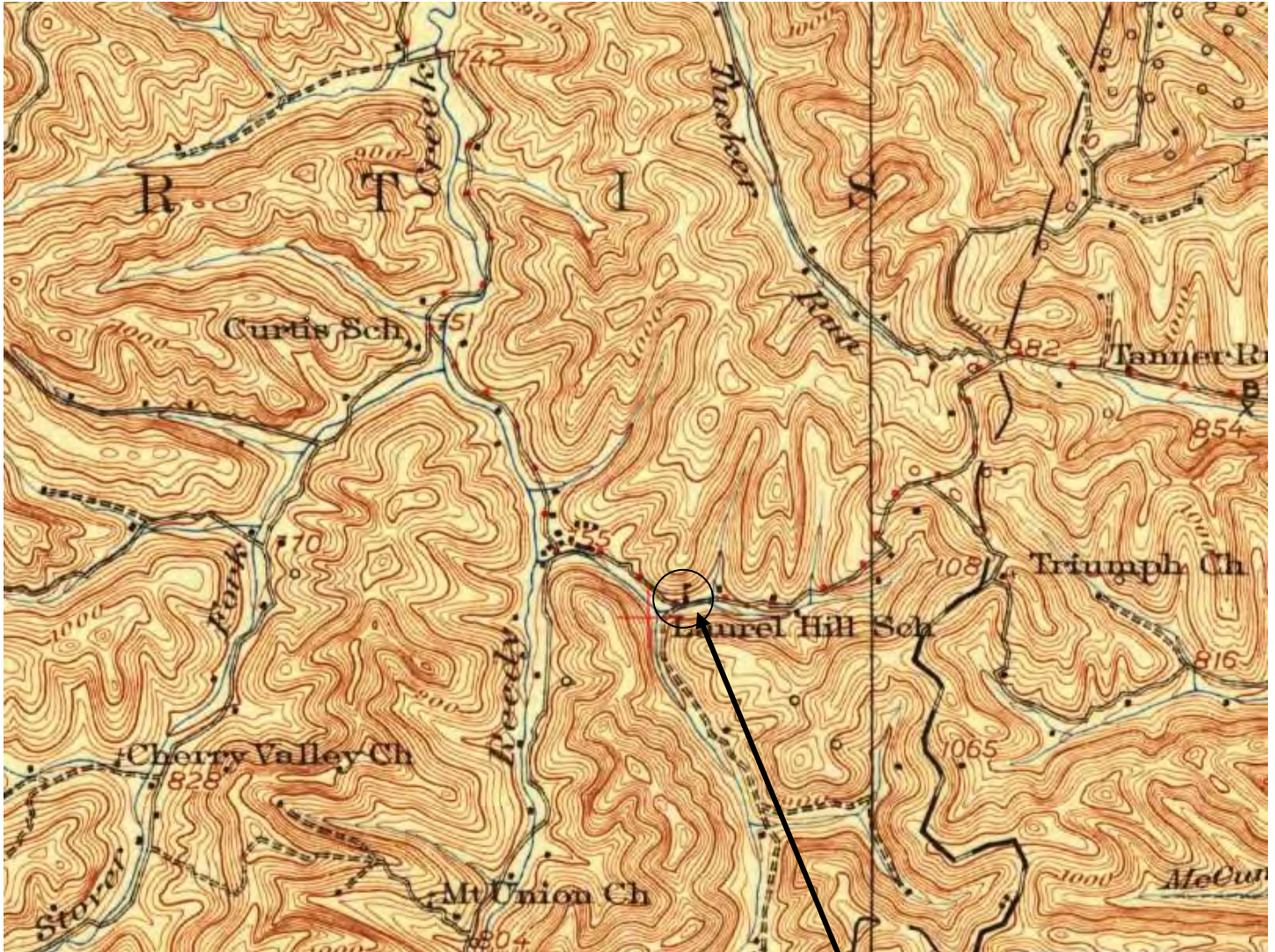


Figure 5: USGS Topo Map, 1928 Spencer Quad, showing original school location

United States Department of the Interior
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Figure 6: USGS Topo Map, 1957 Penial Quad, showing location following ca. 1927 move

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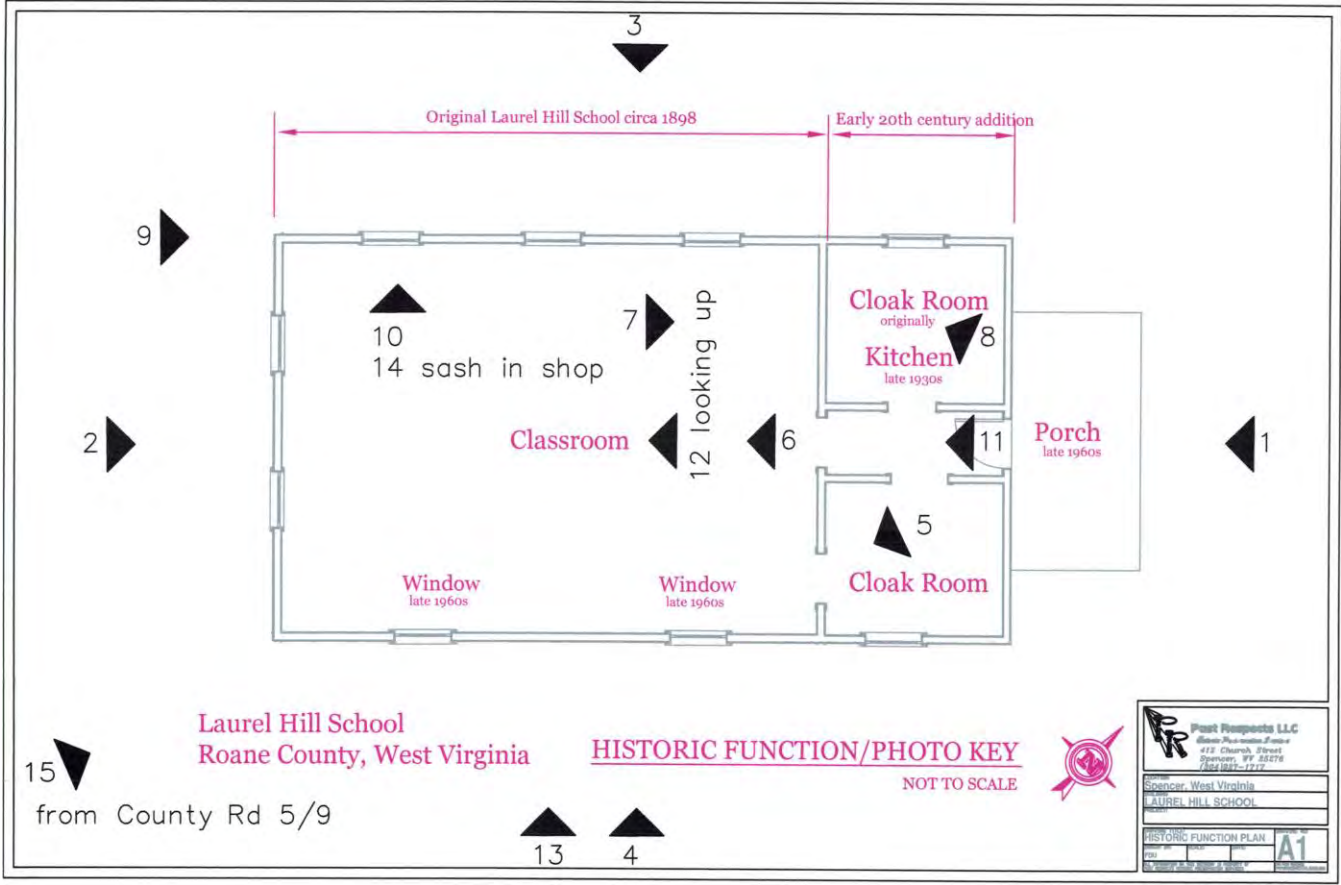
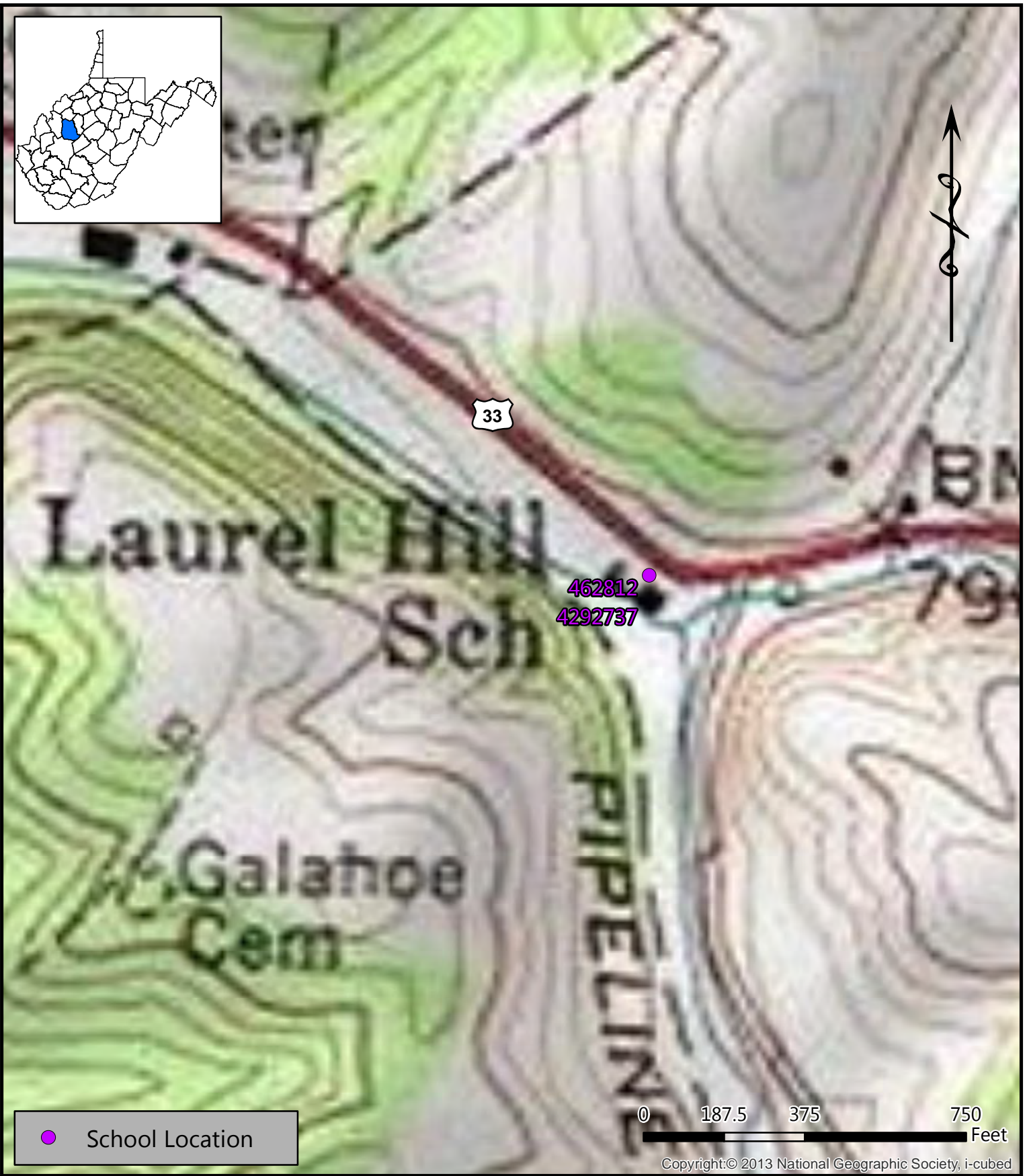
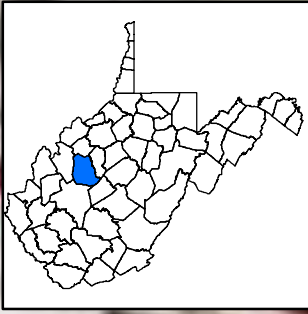


Figure 7: Photo log and floor plan



● School Location

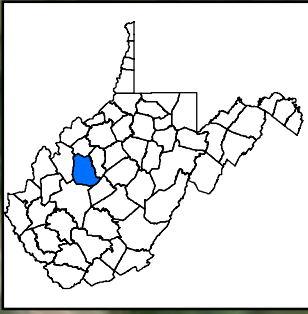
Copyright:© 2013 National Geographic Society, i-cubed

Quad: Peniel
Date: 5/21/2019

Laurel Hill District School

Roane County - West Virginia





33

462812
4292737

0 62.5 125 250
Feet

● School Location

Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AEX, Getmapping, Aerogrid, IGN, IGP, swisstopo, and the GIS User Community

Quad: Peniel
Date: 5/21/2019

Laurel Hill District School
Roane County - West Virginia





































National Register of Historic Places
Memo to File

Correspondence

The Correspondence consists of communications from (and possibly to) the nominating authority, notes from the staff of the National Register of Historic Places, and/or other material the National Register of Historic Places received associated with the property.

Correspondence may also include information from other sources, drafts of the nomination, letters of support or objection, memorandums, and ephemera which document the efforts to recognize the property.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action:

Property Name:

Multiple Name:

State & County:

Date Received: 8/22/2019 Date of Pending List: Date of 16th Day: Date of 45th Day: 10/7/2019 Date of Weekly List: 9/23/2019

Reference number:

Nominator:

Reason For Review:

Accept Return Reject 9/19/2019 Date

Abstract/Summary
Comments:

Recommendation/
Criteria

Reviewer Barbara Wyatt Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2252 Date _____

DOCUMENTATION: see attached comments : No see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.



The Culture Center
1900 Kanawha Blvd., E.
Charleston, WV 25305-0300
Randall Reid-Smith, Commissioner
Phone 304.558.0220 • www.wvculture.org
Fax 304.558.2779 • TDD 304.558.3562
EEO/AA Employer

Ms. Joy Beasley, Keeper
National Register of Historic Places and National Historic Landmark Programs
National Park Service
1849 C Street NW
Mail Stop 7228
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Ms. Beasley:

For your review, we are submitting National Register of Historic Places registration forms for the following properties:

Oak Hill High School, Fayette County, West Virginia
Laurel Hill District School, Roane County, West Virginia

These nominations have been processed in accordance with 36 C.F.R. § 60 and approved by the West Virginia Archives and History Commission. **The enclosed discs contain the true and correct copies of the nominations for the above-mentioned properties for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.**

In addition, we are submitting Additional Documentation for the following National Register-listed property:

Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Building, Fayette County, West Virginia

Should you have any questions please contact Jeffrey S. Smith, National Register Coordinator, at 304.558.0240, extension 121.

Sincerely,

Susan M. Pierce
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

Enclosures

SMP/JSS

41284



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. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

historic name Laurel Hill District School

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number U.S. Route 33 West and County Route 5/9 not for publication

city or town Spencer vicinity

state West Virginia code WV county Roane code 087 zip code 25276

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,
I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national statewide local

Susan M. Perse Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer 7/2/2019
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

West Virginia State Historic Preservation Office
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

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:)

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Laurel Hill District School
Name of Property

Roane County, West Virginia
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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

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

Returned

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

WORK IN PROGRESS

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

OTHER/NO STYLE

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: STONE/Sandstone & CONCRETE

walls: WOOD/Weatherboard

roof: METAL/Aluminum

other: ASPHALT (Porch roof)

Laurel Hill District School

Roane County, West Virginia

Name of Property

County and State

Laurel Hill District School

Roane County, West Virginia

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Summary Paragraph

See continuation sheets

Narrative Description

See continuation sheets

Returned

Laurel Hill District School
Name of Property

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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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION

Period of Significance

1898-1967

Significant Dates

1898

1927

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Board of Education of Curtis District

Returned

Period of Significance (justification)

See continuation sheets

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

The Laurel Hill District School was moved ca. 1927 during the property's Period of Significance. Knowing this, the property must meet Criteria Consideration B: Moved Properties. The property is significant under National Register A (Education) as the sole

Laurel Hill District School

Roane County, West Virginia

Name of Property

County and State

surviving district school on a main corridor in the county. The building's 'new' (since 1927) location has a setting and general environment that is compatible with its historic location and is located less than 400' away from its original location. Despite its move, the school building seamlessly functioned as an educational facility during the entire Period of Significance. For more than half a century, the Laurel Hill District School operated in the same manner: offering a free education, and more, to local children; thus, the building is locally significant under Criterion A: Education.

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

See continuation sheets

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

See continuation sheets

Returned

Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)

See continuation sheets

Laurel Hill District School
Name of Property

Roane County, West Virginia
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9. Major Bibliographical References

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

See continuation sheets

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- 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: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): RO-0411

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.11 acres
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

Returned

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	17N	462817E	4292748N	3	_____	_____	_____
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

2	_____	_____	_____	4	_____	_____	_____
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

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

See continuation sheets

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

See continuation sheets

Laurel Hill District School
Name of Property

Roane County, West Virginia
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Frank Unger, Vice President
organization Past Respects, LLC date November 2018
street & number 412 Church Street telephone 304-927-1717
city or town Spencer state WV zip code 25276
e-mail frank@pastrespects.com

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

See continuation sheets

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 18 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, N.W., Washington, DC.

Returned

United States Department of the Interior
 National Park Service

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Continuation Sheet

Laurel Hill District School
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Narrative Description (continued)

Exterior Description

The original Laurel Hill District School, a twenty-two-foot-wide by thirty-foot-deep wood frame single room structure, was placed in service as a school in 1898. Language in a Roane County Deed of sale (recorded in Deed Book 103 page 482) places the general timeline of the construction between 1887-1897. The same deed, along with a map (see Figure 2), validates the removal of the school building, from its original location, which was in the center of the current US 33 highway. The upgraded highway right-of-way made it necessary to relocate the school to its current location, ostensibly around 1927. The new site was a slight down slope in elevation from the original site.²

The single-story, front-gable frame building is clad in weatherboard and sits on piers made of sandstone (original) and concrete (new). A twelve-foot-deep addition was added to the front of the small wood frame 1898 building, providing service bays for the students - a cloak room on the left side (East) of the front entry foyer and a kitchen on the right (West) - both with entry doors from the foyer passage.

The four-bay west elevation of the former schoolhouse has three large six-over-six single hung windows spaced equally along the wall, along with a one-over-one single hung window in the center of the front addition wall (Photo 3). The west and south elevations both provide ample banks of natural light into the former school, although the south elevation features only two of the same large six-over-six single hung windows. The east elevation had no windows, as this was reserved for the blackboard, which extended the entire length of the wall. The blackboard was replaced by two modern windows in a later renovation. The north elevation (façade) contained a simple stoop over a centered door with a transom window. A shed roof porch was added when it was converted to a residence in the 1960s. On the north gable is the original placard dating the school to 1898. All overhangs on the school are 12" with full poplar soffits.

² Although moved during the Period of Significance (1898-1967), the building remains eligible for the National Register as it meets Criteria Consideration B. The school is the sole surviving district school in Roane county on a main corridor. In addition, the new setting is compatible in character with the original setting, approximately 400' away (see Figures 5 & 6).

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Section number 7 Page 2

Typical on one elevation of these one-room schoolhouses is a continuous bank of windows, which floods the school room with sunlight. Thusly, the natural light determines the optimal student seating orientation. This west and south elevation window placement of the Laurel Hill District School is not ideal; it is conjectural whether Laurel Hill's builders considered these principles of natural light design and placement. Also, the school was moved and could have been reoriented. One author prescribes that certain builders followed this ill-advised west and south elevation placement of windows: "A.....flawed design was one in which they placed windows just on the south and west sides of the buildings. They believed that with north-side windows, light would double-shadow the students' work area. As a photographer, I find this idea inconceivable, because north light is so soft that it only acts as a fill to the contrasting light that comes from south-side windows. [Too], school sessions took place during the months of a low sun, so having just south and west windows only worsened the contrasting lighting situation."³ This design element was usually prioritized in these early one-room schoolhouses that were built before electric lighting. So, the lighting within the schoolhouse was less than satisfactory; a lighting upgrade was a needed improvement as soon as electricity became available. In addition, the site is restricting to the east where Laurel Hill and its mature stand of trees blocks much of the morning sun, so the orientation of the site is not ideally gifted with a continuous bathing of the solar path. The three-window fenestration of the west elevation was correct as to desk orientation and the preference for light streaming over the non-writing shoulders of the dominant right-handed scholars. According to the existing evidence and an interview with three siblings who attended the school, the seats faced northerly, towards the front of the school room.⁴ The east elevation (or blackboard wall) has two modern window units, probably placed into the wall in 1967, when the school was renovated and converted into a residence (see Photo 6).

Interior Description

The walls, ceilings, and floors are all original tongue and groove three-quarter inch planking. At the center of the large room is a uniquely supported stone chimney. The bottom stone, the bearing ceiling thimble, is a unique T-shape hand cut piece. The usual bearing seat for the ceiling thimble stone is compression and relies on short cross-section header joists installed at an inward angle to allow for full wedge support (see Photo 11). The fourteen by fourteen by eight-inch high hewn flue stones have a six-inch diameter port. The chimney capstone is served by a smaller port on each gable end, which ports connect to the center port (see Photo 13).

A full width single bay ten-foot deep addition was added to the front of the schoolhouse circa 1927. A four-fuse panel box and electrical service was installed on the front wall in the cloak room (see Photo 5). The kitchen, also located in this front addition, was also plumbed at this time and was located along the west elevation opposite the cloak room. The evidence suggests that the addition and these utilities were added during the major improvements initiated in 1927. At this time a well was drilled in the front west corner of

³ Paul Rocheleau, *The One-Room Schoolhouse*, New York: Universe Publishing, 2003, p. 48.

⁴ Frank D. Unger, Oral interview with three Paxton siblings (followed by years of attendance): Alice (1933-1941), Gladis (1940-1947), and James (1943-1951), 2016.

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the schoolhouse (see Figure 3) to provide water for the new kitchen (it was covered over later and is no longer in existence).

Logic dictates, too, that this major upgrade, the addition and introduction of utilities, would be done after securing the deed. The two windows placed in the addition, one each in the cloak room and kitchen, are also different in style and composition than those original wood sash in the west and south elevations. They are one-over-one single hung units; several of the panes in the six-over-six windows in the main/original school room are wavy float glass, supporting a pre-1910s construction. Too, the understructure joists in the classroom run typically crosswise to the length of the original schoolhouse, while the joists in the front addition run parallel to the length of the original school.

Alterations

In 1967, the building ceased to operate as a school, and the deed reverted to the property heirs. The school was then converted to a residence. At that time a front porch was added (to the c.1927 addition), and the interior space of the main room was subdivided into a living area, two bedrooms, and a bath for its use as a single-family dwelling. The kitchen remained in use as such and the cloak room was converted to a utility room. All the interior walls and ceilings were covered with paneling and panel boards. Upon selective demolition of the original joining wall between the main classroom and the kitchen in the winter of 2009, an inspection certificate slipped in a plastic sleeve, issued by the State School Superintendent, was discovered still hanging on the tongue and groove wall sheeting. It indicated that the school was inspected in 1965 and it was judged to be in good standing for three more years.

Statement of Integrity

Although renovated into a single-family home shortly after it ceased to function as a school in 1967, the renovation materials were attached to and/or covered over the original interior walls, floors, and ceiling- all tongue and groove three-quarter of an inch planking. The original trim and openings were used in the new layout, as were the five panel door slabs and stamped metal New York style hardware, all of which will be reused in existing original openings. The hand cut stone chimney pieces were all in place. A new cap was hand crafted to match the badly deteriorated one. The ceiling thimble was simply "capped" at the ceiling with a suitable size steel can stuffed into the six-inch flue. The six-over-six single hung wood sash were original and were shop rehabilitated using existing wavy pane glass. They are awaiting installation into the restored existing frames. Eighty percent of the wood clapboard siding and soffit, as well as window/door frames and trim are in place and will be rehabilitated. The roof is a 2012 installation of 5-V groove metal to replace the badly worn metal roof. The entire structure was lifted ten inches and leveled to facilitate the installation and maintenance of modern crawl space mechanical systems. New foundation piers, of same size, replaced in exact locations the badly deteriorated 1927 installed/poured concrete piers.

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Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

Educational History in Roane County and Spencer, West Virginia

"...in the month of July 1863, the county was divided into seven townships (changed to district by Constitution, 1872) [Curtis was one of the districts] ...each of these had its own Board of Education, consisting of three residents of the district, elected by the voters of the district. The Board of Education by the law divided its district into units, numbering them for identification and calling them sub-districts, and provided a teacher for each sub-district."⁵ Independent free schools were slow getting started in these districts until Legislative Delegate H.T. Hughes introduced and secured passage of a bill in 1873 to create an Independent School District carved from 1,000 acres lying in and adjacent to the Town of Spencer. This legislation was the motivation for other districts to activate their own boards and to finally provide locally accessible free public education.

The elected Boards of Education of these districts were also authorized through the Legislature to hold bond issue elections to make improvements and build new facilities.⁶ These "schools came to be established in [sub-] districts small enough that every child could walk to school. Members of local school boards were elected [and even held elections] to pass [bond levies]. They discussed and decided the school's location at a country cross-roads or on an acre of land donated by a local farmer, usually in the center of the [sub-] district. Most of these schools [pre-1910s, before standardized plans] were wood frame buildings of a vernacular type."⁷ Unknowing of these retrospective standards, the newly formed Board of Education for the Laurel Hill sub-district of the Curtis District chose a one-acre plat of bottomland from the H.H. Robey farm centrally located within its sub-district to build its vernacular inspired wood frame school house.

A new school was built in Spencer (county seat for Roane County) in 1896; it was expanded in 1898 and again in 1902. One of the two rooms in the 1902 addition was "fitted and furnished for the high school department in 1905. A high school course of two years was prepared by W.S. Morris, and the same was adopted by the Board of Education August 20, 1906."⁸ Laurel Hill District School, built just ahead of the high school department, would continue to serve as a feeder school for the new high school, scarcely five miles to the east, for the next sixty years. The decision to add on to the Laurel Hill school in 1927 also rested with the Board of Education of the Curtis District, for just a few years later "the County Unit Bill became a law on May 22, 1933. [This law] abolished 398 districts and their governing boards, 54 of which were

⁵ William H. Bishop, *History of Roane County West Virginia-From Settlement until 1927 A.D.*, Spencer: West Virginia Historical Society, 1927, p.123.

⁶ State Superintendents Report, "The History of Education in West Virginia", Charleston Tribune Printing Co., 1907, p. 231.

⁷ Raymond Bial, *One-Room School*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999, pp. 8-9.

⁸ State Superintendents Report, 1907, p. 232.

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independent, and substituted in their stead 55 county districts and as many five-member boards of education."⁹

A ca. 1956 article from the Roane County Reporter indicated that during the 1925-26 school year, [William] Bishop listed 155 [school] houses and lots on which they stand, with 6,311 pupils and each school having a term of nine months. For the then current year, 1955-56, there were two (2) high schools, seven (7) consolidated (grade) schools, one (1) two-room school, and seventy (70) one-room schools. At the beginning of the term (1955-56) there were 71 one-room schools, but the Ryan School was closed at the end of the sixth month. Curiously, a consolidated K-8 school was built in Spencer in 1949. Reason would dictate that this ultra-modern post-war educational edifice, representing the new paradigm in public education, would have supplanted the Laurel Hill School, especially in the face of thirty-four years of this new centralized decision making; yet, Laurel Hill survived as a public school.

History of Laurel Hill District School

As the only surviving wood frame schoolhouse on a major corridor in Roane County, the Laurel Hill District School spanned the entire "golden age" of the development and evolution of free, accessible public education in Roane County.¹⁰ Laurel Hill District School was constructed by a nascent District Board of Education empowered by the West Virginia Legislature authorizing both its creation and ability to electioneer levies at the ballot boxes. "The first report of the first county superintendent, Thomas Boggess, covering the term ending in 1866, gives the number of schools as 17. By 1927, there were 155 schools and lots on which they stood that belonged to several district boards of education."¹¹ The Curtis District Board of Education wasn't content with the one room school house model of the time, for it was expanded by two service rooms in 1927 and continued on through this period of local operation and control well into the era of the county-wide central school board model. Despite the paradigmatic shifts in education, such as utilities to the outlying rural regions (1920s and 1930s), hot lunch program (National School Lunch Act of 1946), and the post war transportation enhancements and its concomitant, consolidation, it continued to thrive as a public school from 1898 until its closure in 1967.

With its addition, the schoolhouse quickly responded to the utilities of a secure, safe water supply and electricity; the kitchen serving hot meals was ahead of the 1946 National School Lunch Act.¹² Laurel Hill was built in the midst of the grand era of the one-room district schoolhouse, and that it continued its vitality as a venerable stalwart and credible school well into a new era in such close proximity to the grand capital educational outlays in the Spencer District is highly improbable.

⁹ Ambler, Charles. H., *A History of Education in West Virginia*, Huntington, WV: Standard Publishing Company, 1951, p. 610.

¹⁰ See section titled "Developmental history" at conclusion of Section 8.

¹¹ Jack Nida, *Images of America: Roane County (WV)*, Mt. Pleasant, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2007.

¹² Unger, oral interview, 2016.

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The original Laurel Hill sub-District School, approximately twenty-two-foot-wide by thirty-foot deep frame structure, was constructed ca. 1898. Deed book 103 page 482 places a general timeline of the construction of the schoolhouse between 1887-1897. However, the following firsthand account came from an interview the author had with the eighty-five-year-old neighbor up Field Hollow from the school, Mr. Bales, on December 19, 2014:

Mr. Bales began, "The schoolhouse was built in 1898, for the dummies who painted the school last, in the seventies, against Mrs. [Francis Robey] Sutton's¹³ advice, painted over the wording on the sign. It reads *Founded in 1898*, I remember." Mr. Bales continued with more enthusiasm, "there was a well here somewhere," while looking around and under the schoolhouse. Then I followed him inside as he continued his story. "Mrs. Sutton told me when they put the kitchen in way back when they plumbed it in." Mr. Bales asked, "Was there a sink there?" to which the author replied, "Yes." "Was there a pump under the sink?" Mr. Bales asked, to which the author again responded, "yes, a shallow well pump", but reasoning there was a cistern that collected roof water, the author offered "and see the depression over there?", pointing to the depression just along the structure. Mr. Bales corrected, "No. That was the septic system installed later when the school was remodeled into a house", he retorted "Now go find your well".

We both looked under that area of the school and found a three-quarter polybutylene line snipped just above grade. In a sense of finality, he enthused, "I'll bet that is it, now go follow it young man. You'll find the well". I have yet to trace the well; yet, the old school plaque is still painted over and mounted on the top of the front gable.

The school functioned in this above expanded fashion for the next forty years, from 1927 through 1967, when its use was discontinued and a reconveyance clause returned the land and improvements back to the H.H. Robey heirs. The Robey heirs renovated the school to a single-family residence, which it remained as such for some twenty-five years, into the early 1990s, when it was abandoned. The heirs sold the property in 2010 to Past Respects, LLC, an historic preservation company, who then entered into a sales agreement and construction contract with a local oil and gas company. This rehabilitation will return the venerable schoolhouse once again to an educational facility, as it will serve as a corporate training center for its new owner.

Developmental history/additional historic context information

In order to substantiate the claim that the Laurel Hill District School is the only remaining schoolhouse along a major transportation corridor/thoroughfare in Roane County, the WV SHPO's historic property inventory (examining previously identified and documented properties in Roane County) was consulted, focusing on

¹³ Mrs. Frances Robey Sutton is the daughter of H.H. Robey, now deceased. She leased the Robey farm long-term to Mr. Bales and also rented the school out for a residence from 1967 into the 1980s.

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the results of county-wide (unincorporated areas only) survey conducted in 2011 by Skelly & Loy. The survey studied historic properties along routes 36, 27, 60, 58, 56, 119, and 19 in the southern part of the county and 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 13, 16, and US Route 33 (which roughly follows the former Gilmer, Ripley and Ohio Turnpike) in the northern part of the county. The survey identified 295 resources: 230 dwellings, 36 churches, and the remaining documented buildings were schoolhouses and/or commercial buildings.

Due to the somewhat dated nature of the Skelly & Loy report and to determine both the locations and integrity of the extant schoolhouses, the property owners, Past Respects, LLC, conducted a follow-up windshield study in October 2018. Roane County has four main highways that intersect in the town of Spencer. US 33 dissects the town east and west. US 119 comes into Spencer from the south and follows US 33 east out of the county. State Route 14 (Parkersburg Road) comes into Spencer from the North. The October 2018 driving tour focused on these primary routes and concluded that no other schoolhouses existed on these main routes except for the Laurel Hill schoolhouse.

There is a District school that has been relocated and used as a museum. In 1986, the Newburne School, was relocated from the Smithfield district near Looneyville, to Heritage Park in the city limits of Spencer, less than four miles to the east of Laurel Hill school. It is open to the public only during special events to demonstrate a typical District schoolhouse. It has been restored and is furnished with period specific desks and books.

In October 2018, copies were obtained of the Grantee record for Roane County Board of Education (BOE) from 1866-1972 showing Grantors from which property was purchased. Each of the first six pages of the nine-page list (legal size) spans approximately 10 years per page, evident of the volume of purchasing schoolhouse property until 1929. As evidenced by the list, each entry cannot be counted as one school. The Board of Education sometimes needed more land than was available from one owner so they would purchase adjoining parcels of land from separate owners for the same schoolhouse property. Duplicate entries were noted from the same owner where separate adjoining tracts of land were purchased. Laurel Hill School is one of these with two entries from the same owner.

Copies were also obtained of the Grantor record for Roane County Board of Education from 1866-1976 showing Grantees to which property was sold. Quite a number of these sales were Right of Way easements for utility companies. The deeds included a Reversion Clause, whereby the property would revert back to the owner, or their successor, upon the school ceasing operation. Included in many, but not all, deeds was a statement similar to "building to be removed within 6 months" or "school to be torn down" or "building has been dismantled." Beginning in 1955, the number of properties sold increased substantially. Interestingly, the first three pages span almost 100 years (1866-1957) while the last three pages span almost 20 years (1957-1976). This demonstrates that the BOE would no longer possess property every two or three miles, as consolidation was well underway, and the era of the district schoolhouses was drawing to a close.

One school from this era is the Billings school on Reedyville Road (Rt 10) off State Route 14. It is privately owned and has been published in the local paper for its preservation activity. Another school still standing is

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on Big Creek Road (Rt 15/4) off River Road (Rt 34) in Walton, 14 miles south of Spencer on Rt. 119. It has been converted to a house. A few have been turned into camps. The greatest majority are either abandoned and in poor condition or already demolished. Without a comprehensive field study that is specific to district schoolhouses, a definite number cannot be determined. Although, in comparison to the original 150 plus, there is a small number of schoolhouses remaining at all.

Returned

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated boundary of Laurel Hill School is shown on the accompanying survey map. The nominated boundary includes the original 1.11-acre tract known as "FIRST TRACT" as described in Deed Book 471, page numbers 137-141, Roane County Courthouse.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The recommended National Register boundary follows that property described as the 1.11-acre tract in Deed Book 471, page 141, Roane County Courthouse. The land was associated with the Laurel Hill District School from 1898 through 1967, the period of significance.

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PHOTO LOG

Name of Property: Laurel Hill District School
 Address: U.S. Route 33 and County Route 5/9
 City or Vicinity: Spencer
 County: Roane
 State: West Virginia
 Photographer: Frank D. Unger, Past Respects, LLC
 Date Photographed: November 15, 2009

- Photo 1: North Elevation, facing south
- Photo 2: South Elevation, facing north
- Photo 3: West Elevation, facing east
- Photo 4: East Elevation, facing west
- Photo 5: Cloak Room Electric Service/Fuse Panel, facing north
- Photo 6: Classroom before demolishing paneling, southeast corner, facing southeast
- Photo 7: Original bead board/trim, corner at classroom/kitchen wall, facing north
- Photo 8: Kitchen, facing south
- Photo 9: Pier and lift detail southwest corner, facing northeast
- Photo 10: 6 over 6 single hung window, facing west
- Photo 11: Attic, chimney, facing south
- Photo 12: Chimney Thimble @ Ceiling, facing skyward
- Photo 13: Chimney Cap, facing west

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Photo 1: North Elevation, facing south.



Photo 2: South Elevation, facing north.

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Photo 3: West Elevation, facing east.



Photo 4: East Elevation, facing west.

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Photo 5: Cloak Room, showing Fuse Panel, facing north.



Photo 6: Interior, Classroom, southeast corner, facing southeast.

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Photo 7: Interior, original bead board/trim; corner at Classroom/Kitchen wall, facing north.

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Photo 8: Interior, Kitchen, facing south.



Photo 9: Pier, Detail, Southwest corner, facing northeast.

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Photo 10: Interior, 6/6 double-hung window, facing west.

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Photo 11: Interior, Attic, Chimney stack, facing south.

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Photo 12: Interior, Ceiling detail, Chimney Thimble, facing skyward.



Photo 13: Exterior, Chimney Cap on Roof Ridge, facing west.

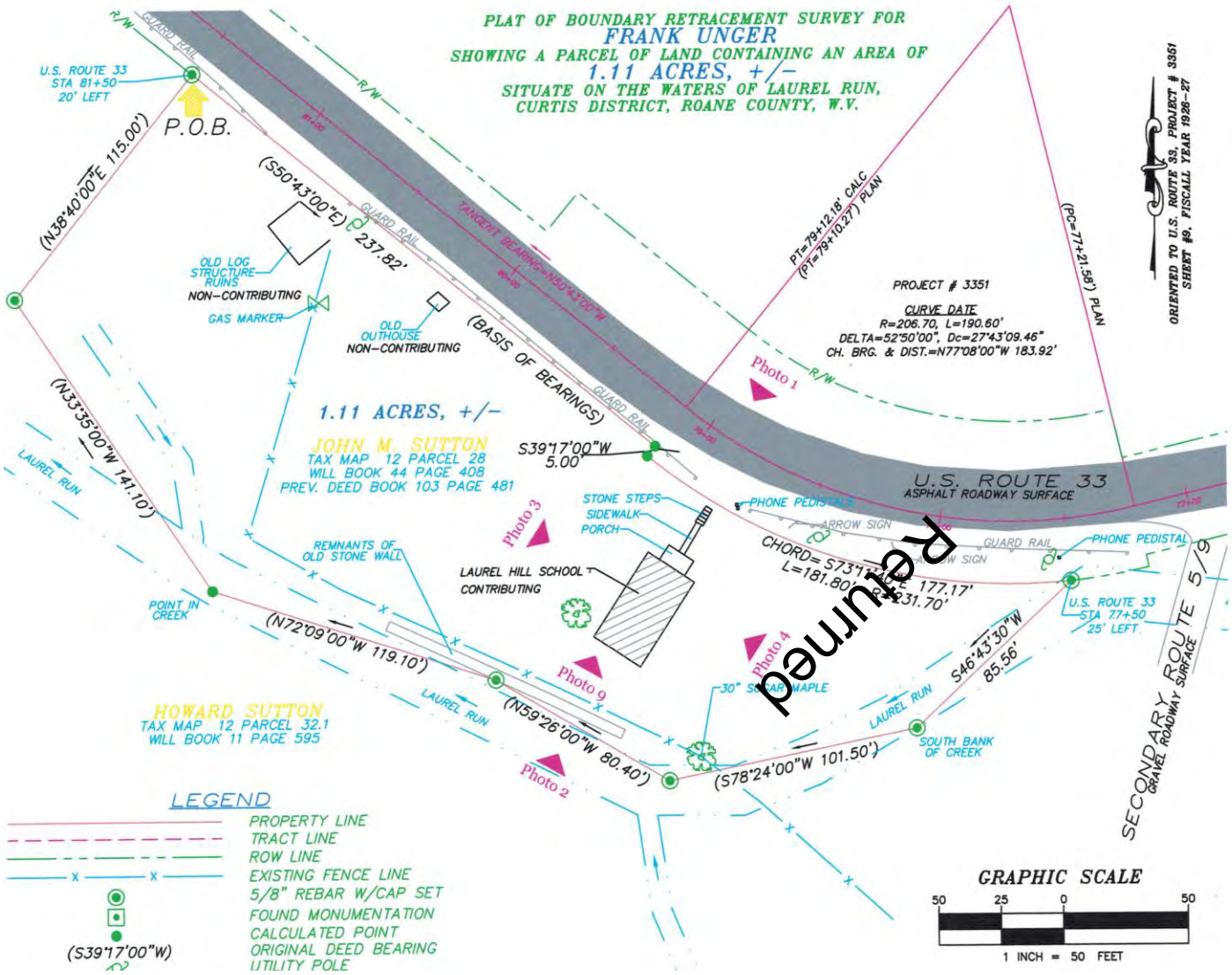
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Figure 1: Laurel Hill District School, Plat Map



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Original Location

New location as of 1927

Figure 2: Pre-1927 map obtained at the Roane County Courthouse, Flag indicates original schoolhouse location

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Figure 3: Historic photo dated ca. 1927. Courtesy Roane County Historic Society.

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Figure 4: Certificate of Classification found in the Laurel Hill District School. Courtesy of Frank D. Unger.

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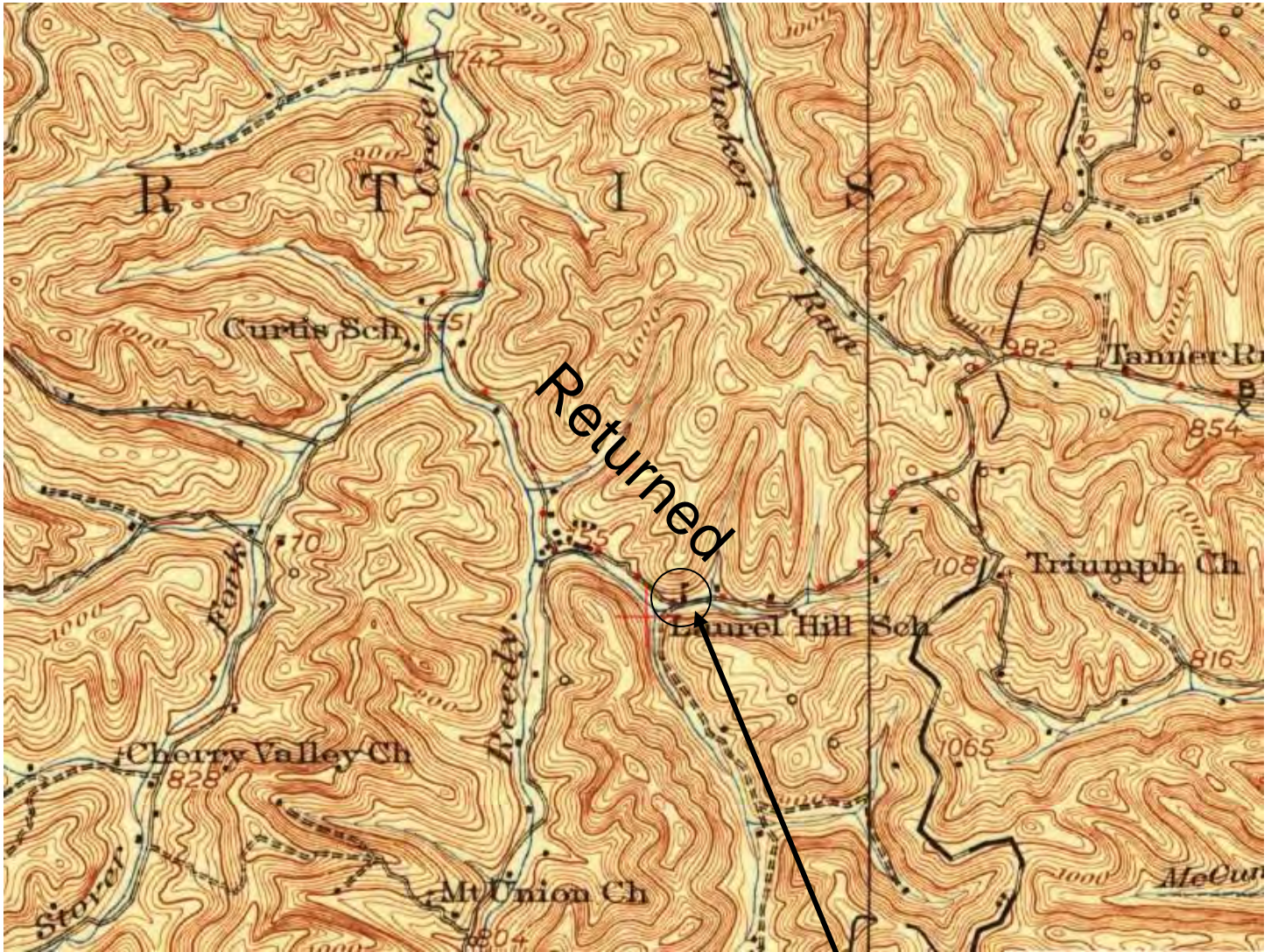


Figure 5: USGS Topo Map, 1928 Spencer Quad, showing original school location

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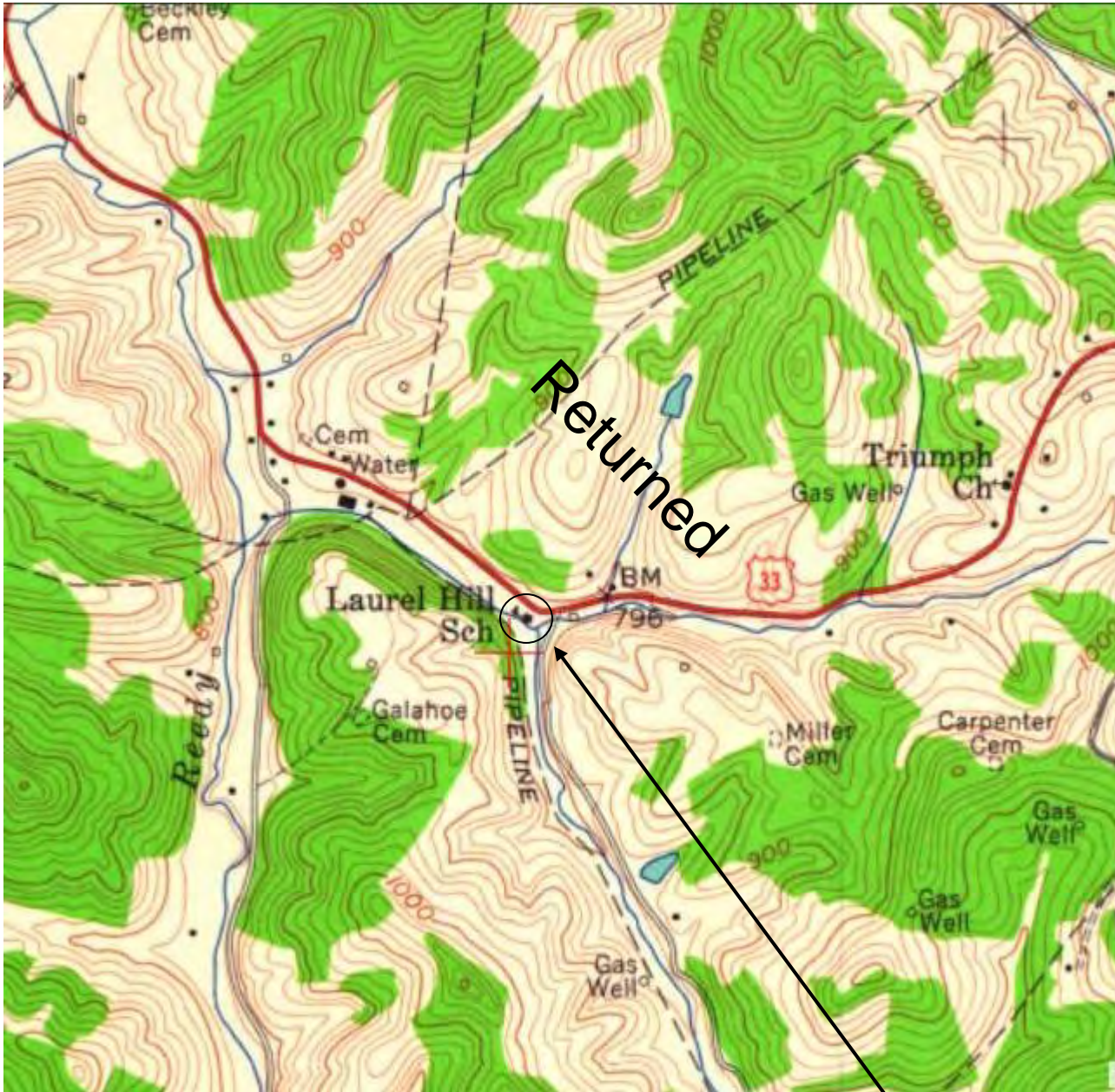
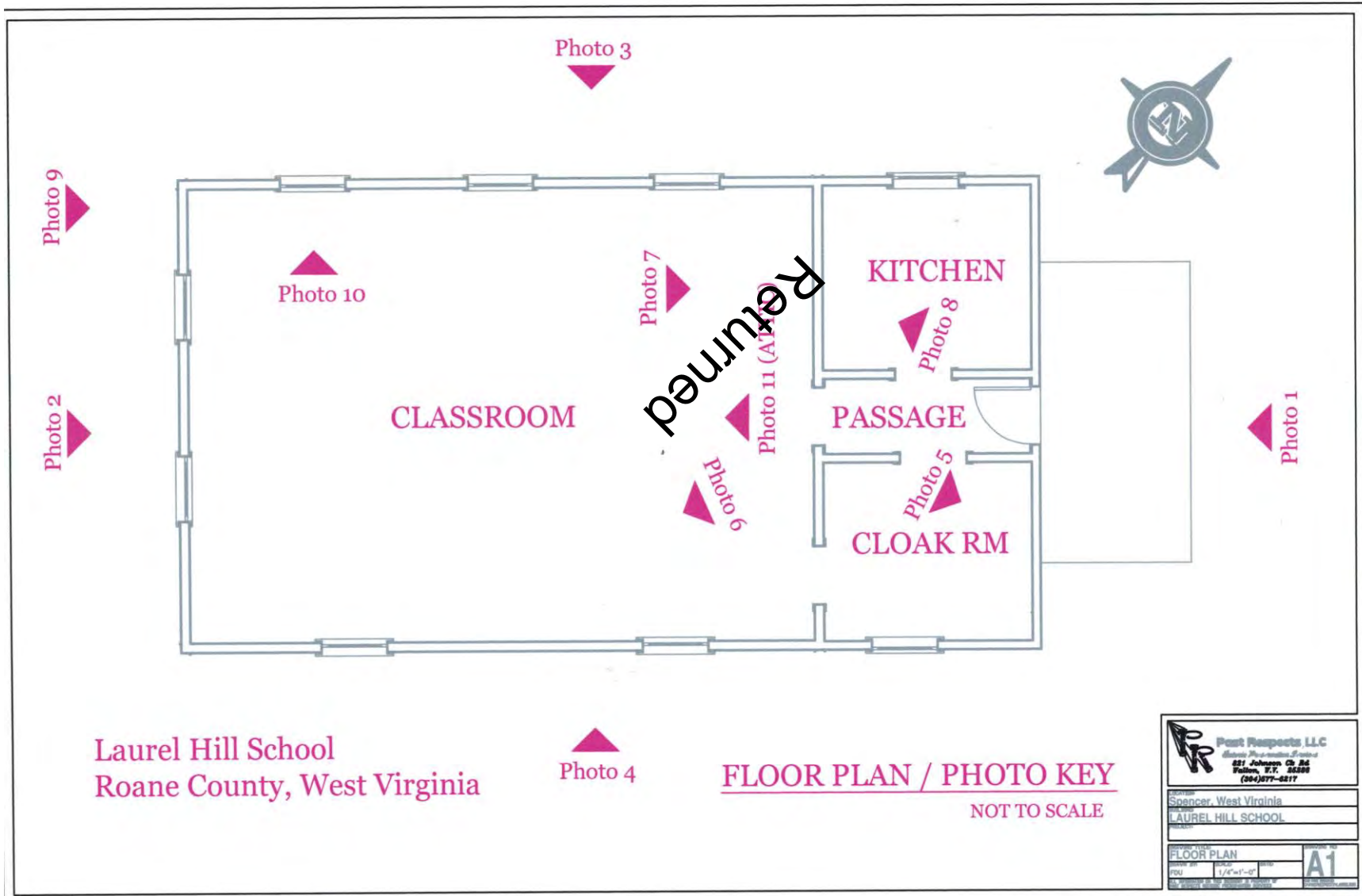
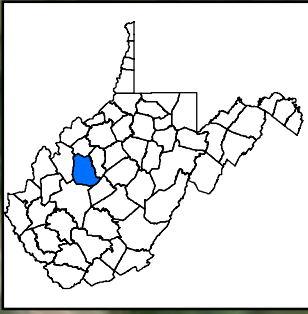


Figure 6: USGS Topo Map, 1957 Penial Quad, showing location following ca. 1927 move





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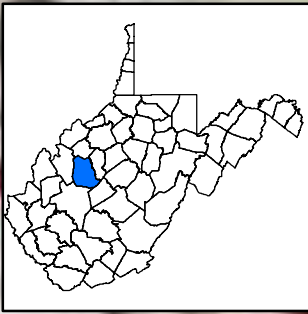
● School Location

Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AEX, Getmapping, Aerogrid, IGN, IGP, swisstopo, and the GIS User Community

Quad: Peniel
Date: 5/21/2019

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● School Location

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Quad: Peniel
Date: 5/21/2019

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action:

Property Name:

Multiple Name:

State & County:

Date Received: 7/8/2019 Date of Pending List: 7/30/2019 Date of 16th Day: 8/14/2019 Date of 45th Day: 8/22/2019 Date of Weekly List:

Reference number:

Nominator:

Reason For Review:

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Appeal | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PDIL | <input type="checkbox"/> Text/Data Issue |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SHPO Request | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape | <input type="checkbox"/> Photo |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waiver | <input type="checkbox"/> National | <input type="checkbox"/> Map/Boundary |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Resubmission | <input type="checkbox"/> Mobile Resource | <input type="checkbox"/> Period |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other | <input type="checkbox"/> TCP | <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 50 years |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> CLG | |

Accept Return Reject 8/14/2019 Date

Abstract/Summary Comments: The nomination for the Laurel Hill District School is being returned for additional information. The photographs submitted do not seem to represent the current appearance of the school. The photo log on page 11 attributes the photos to Frank D. Unger, who photographed the property on November 15, 2009. Although a later date is not given, an exception may be the last photo that shows the new roof with the cap. In contrast to the description in Section 7, the rest of the photos show a deteriorated metal roof instead of the 5-V groove metal roof referenced on page 7-3. The piers shown in some photos may be the new concrete piers, referenced on page 7-1, but the school is also shown resting on concrete block piers. It is not clear what else may be different. Without accurate photo coverage and accurately dated photos, the integrity of the school cannot be evaluated. Its conversion to a house and later upgrades to adapt it for a corporate training center may have had an impact on qualities that characterized it as a school, especially the interior. The integrity of schools nominated under Criterion A relies to some extent on the authenticity of the interior spaces. Please submit current photographs of this nominated building, including all elevations, various interior views, and photos of the site and setting. The submission of a floor plan will help clarify some questions about this property. Also, in Section 3 on the first page "meets" needs to be checked.

Recommendation/
Criteria

Reviewer Barbara Wyatt

Discipline Historian



RS 4284

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EEO/AA Employer

Ms. Joy Beasley, Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places
National Park Service
National Register Program
1849 C Street NW
Mail Stop 7228
Washington, DC 20240



Dear Ms. Beasley:

For your review, we are resubmitting the National Register of Historic Places registration form for the following property:

Laurel Hill District School, Roane County, WV (NR Ref. No. SG100004284)

As you may know, this nomination was originally presented to and approved by the West Virginia Archives and History Commission on May 31, 2019. Our office mailed the original nomination package to your office for review on July 3, 2019.

Barbara Wyatt, West Virginia's National Register reviewer, reviewed the originally submitted nomination. Ms. Wyatt returned the original submission on August 14, 2019 and provided the reasons for the return on an Evaluation/Return Sheet dated August 14, 2019. In response to Ms. Wyatt's comments, articulated on the Evaluation/Return Sheets, we offer the following comments:

- Section 3: As requested, "meets" has been checked.
- Section 7: The 'Alterations' and 'Statement of Integrity' sections on page 7-3 have been revised in response to questions posed in the Abstract on the Evaluation/Return Sheet. No work has been done to the interior of the former school building since the selective demolition of the post-1967 interior materials when the former schoolhouse functioned as a residence. Exterior work includes new perimeter foundation pier installation (replacing the c.1927 deteriorated concrete piers), structural beam and sill repairs, a new roof, and chimney repairs. This work dates to 2010-12 and the building has since been "mothballed." Work to convert the former school into an oil and natural gas training classroom will commence in the fall of 2019. **Note:** the three original interior panel doors and hardware were removed and placed in storage to prevent vandalism or theft (see



photo 16).

- Photos: As requested, recent photos (dated August 2019) have been embedded within the nomination continuation sheets (see Photos section). These photographs visually convey the appearance of both the building and its immediate setting. All elevations are shown as well as various interior views and the intact historic building fabric. The photos also illustrate the aforementioned alterations. The photo log has been updated to reflect the 2019 photos and a new photo key is reflected on an existing floorplan.

The nomination and accompanying photo disc have been prepared in accordance with the current National Park Service nomination submission guidance.

We recommend that the nomination be accepted as revised.

Should you have any questions regarding this submission, please contact Jeffrey S. Smith, National Register Coordinator, at 304.558.0240.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Susan M. Pierce", is written over the typed name.

Susan M. Pierce
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

SMP/JSS

Enclosures