

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name Oak Grove School
Other names/site number N/A
Name of related multiple property listing N/A

2. Location

Street & Number: 410 Brantley Road
City or town: Sharps Chapel State: TN County: Union
Not For Publication: N/A Vicinity: N/A Zip: 37866

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

Applicable National Register Criteria: A B C D

Claudia Styr 10/15/18
Signature of certifying official/Title: Date
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, Tennessee Historical Commission
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 of Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain): _____

[Handwritten Signature]
 Signature of the Keeper
 For

11.26.2018
 Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

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

Category of Property

(Check only one box.)

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

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
3	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
3	0	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

EDUCATION/school

Current Functions

EDUCATION/library

7. Description

Architectural Classification

Other: Rosenwald Plan Number 20
Craftsman

Materials:

Principal exterior materials of the property: WOOD: weatherboard; BRICK; METAL; CONCRETE

Narrative Description

Constructed in 1935, the Oak Grove School is located at the intersection of Oak Grove Road and Brantley Road, in Sharps Chapel, Union County, Tennessee. The school is surrounded by rural agricultural land, featuring wooded areas, rolling hills, and large swaths of cleared farmland. The two-room school building was constructed from the 1924 *Community School Plans* issued by the Julius Rosenwald Fund, out of Nashville. Reflecting “Plan Number 20,” the school is a one-story, rectangular-plan building, constructed of wood frame on a continuous brick foundation. The building has an exterior of wood weatherboard siding with a side-gable roof clad in asphalt shingles. Some modest Craftsman details are visible in the overhanging eaves and exposed rafter ends. The school retains a high degree of integrity. Notable features include the meticulously preserved double-hung wood sash windows, and the interior wood partition door. The single alteration since its 1935 construction dates to the mid-1960s, with the addition of an ADA-accessible door and wood ramp on the rear elevation.

Setting

The Oak Grove School is located in a rural agricultural area in the Sharps Chapel vicinity, in Union County, Tennessee. Following recommendations from the *Community School Plans*, the school is oriented towards the east/west, with the façade as the southwest elevation, set back approximately 175 feet from present-day Brantley Road. The school is surrounded by cleared agricultural and wooded land. Located to the southwest

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of the school building is a small waste collection site owned by Union County, featuring several moveable dumpsters and a graveled parking lot. This site was historically used as an outdoor athletic facility for the students, featuring a baseball field and playground equipment. The field and playground are no longer extant.

Oak Grove School (contributing building, c.1935)

Exterior

Oak Grove School demonstrates a standardized plan for a two-teacher school with an industrial room. The school is a one-story building with a cross-gable metal roof, clad in wood weatherboard siding, resting on a continuous brick foundation. In keeping with the standardized plans, the school lacks elaborate detailing, showing Craftsman influences only in the exposed rafter tails and widely-overhanging eaves.

The façade (southwest elevation) is five bays wide and features a projecting center room with four adjoining, nine-over-nine, double-hung wood sash windows and a front-gable roof. On either side of the centrally-located room are two entrances, covered with simple metal shed-roof awnings with diagonal wood bracings. The entrances are recessed into the primary structure, located in small vestibules accessible by two concrete steps. Within the vestibules are original five-panel wood doors, topped by three-light wood transoms. The first and last bays feature paired six-over-six, double-hung wood sash windows.

The northwest elevation is a solid wood weatherboard wall, with one rectangular vent cut into the brick foundation and a triangular, louvered gable end vent.

The northeast elevation features two long bands of windows, with one for each classroom. Each band contains six adjoining nine-over-nine, double-hung wood sash windows surrounded by simple wood trim. The only modification to the original structure is visible on this elevation, with a secondary entry centrally located between the two bands of windows. This entry, featuring a non-historic six-panel door surrounded by simple wood trim, was added in the mid-1960s and is accessible via a long ramp that extends along the building toward the north elevation. The ramp is wood and features simple square wood balusters. The ramp and rear entryway provides access to the building for people with physical disabilities.

The southeast elevation is similar to the northwest elevation, featuring a solid wood weatherboard wall with one rectangular vent cut into the brick foundation. A small square entry is also cut into the brick foundation to provide access to the crawl space.

Interior

The interior consists of two equally-sized classrooms, two small cloakrooms, and a centrally-located room projecting from the façade. The two rectangular classrooms have original wood floors, wood beadboard siding, and wood beadboard ceilings. Within the classrooms, the sole modern alterations are the light fixtures and ceiling fans (added in 2016). The classrooms are separated by two original wood partition doors, which extend from the floor to a height just below the ceiling. The six-panel doors fold in three parts to provide an opening between the two classrooms.

On the northwest wall of both classrooms, two original five-panel wood doors provide entry to the cloakrooms. Originally, these narrow rooms provided storage space for students' belongings. The north cloakroom was converted to a bathroom in the mid-1960s, and the south cloakroom is currently used as

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storage space. Both cloakrooms retain the original wood beadboard siding and ceilings, and the original wood floors.

The central room, described in the original plans as an “industrial room,” originally served as the lunchroom and now functions as a kitchen and storage space. The room is accessed from the southern classroom via an original five-panel wood door. On the other side of the partition, in the northern classroom, a second five-panel wood door is cut in half, to allow for the serving of lunch trays from the kitchen into the classrooms. This room also retains the original wood floors, wood beadboard siding, and wood beadboard ceilings. The original school bell is also in place above the industrial room; it remains operable via a rope pull.

Well house (contributing building, c.1935)

Located approximately two feet north of the school’s northwest elevation, the well house is a square, half-height structure of concrete block. The structure features a flat metal roof and a wood door on the northwest elevation. The structure historically covered a large well that provided water for the school. The water pump is no longer extant.

Storage shed (contributing building, c.1935)

The storage shed is also located just north of the school’s northwest elevation. Resting on a concrete block foundation, the shed is constructed of concrete block, with a front-gable metal roof. The roof features exposed rafter ends, with asphalt shingles in the gable ends. On the northeast elevation, a small window opening is surrounded by wood trim, with three metal, vertical bars in the window. The shed provided storage for food and other kitchen necessities for the school.

Integrity

Overall, the Oak Grove School retains a high degree of integrity. Almost entirely unaltered since its 1935 construction, the rural schoolhouse reflects the exact materials, design, and workmanship prescribed in plan books such as the *Community School Plans*. The Oak Grove School remains where it was originally constructed, therefore retaining integrity of **location**.

The school also retains substantial integrity of **setting** as a small community school in an area marked by rural agricultural development. The school is surrounded by open grassed lands, with a wooded area to the east of the building. The sole detractor from the school’s setting is a waste collection site located immediately west of the property; Union County owns the adjacent parcel and has placed several waste collection bins and a small manufactured shed on site. However, the bins and shed can be easily moved, and the County government has recently expressed an interest in locating the waste collection facility elsewhere. Therefore, this should not be considered as a major detractor from the integrity of setting.

Integrity of **design** is immaculately preserved in the Oak Grove School; the original Plan # 20 documented in the *Community School Plans* remains the same, with modern alterations (a bathroom replacing one cloakroom) adhering to the original plan. A rear entryway, added in the mid-1960s to allow access for people with disabilities, is unobtrusive to the original plan. The school building also retains its original **materials** on both the exterior and interior, including the wood double-hung sash windows, weatherboard siding, wood flooring, wood beadboard interior wall covering, and interior doors. The most notable of the original

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materials are the wood partition doors that were installed to divide the two classrooms. Despite decades of neglect, a clear integrity of **workmanship** is evident in the schoolhouse as the materials and underlying structure of the building have been rehabilitated instead of replaced. Drawing from the retention of all original materials and complimented by the surrounding rural agricultural area, the Oak Grove School retains integrity of **feeling** and **association** that reflect the slow spread of early-twentieth century educational practices and plan book architecture through Tennessee's rural areas.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations
(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)
Property is:

N/A

- 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.

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1934-1965

Significant Dates

1935

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Smith, Samuel L. (Rosenwald Community School Plan designer)

Lynch, Charles H. (carpentry assistance)

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

The Oak Grove School is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for Education and Criterion C in the area of architecture, at the local level of significance. The period of significance begins in 1934, when the school’s construction began, and ends in 1965, when the school closed. Representing a slow spread of trends in standardized public education and schoolhouse architecture through the state’s rural areas, the school reflects a plan from the *Community School Plans*, published a decade prior to its construction. The schoolhouse was built with assistance from WPA workers to replace an earlier school that had been purchased by the Tennessee Valley Authority around 1933 for the Norris Lake Reservoir. The two-room, wood frame schoolhouse is located in a rural agricultural area of Union County and retains a high degree of integrity.

Narrative Statement of Significance

Education

The Oak Grove School is located in Union County, Tennessee, in the vicinity of the community of Sharps Chapel. The surrounding rural area has been primarily marked by small-scale agricultural development since the county’s founding in 1850. Sharps Chapel is located approximately two miles northeast of the county seat of Maynardville, and just north of the Clinch River, which was flooded in 1933-1934 after the construction of the Norris Dam by the Tennessee Valley Authority.

Union County resident Isaac Shoffner deeded the property for the original Oak Grove School to the “school commissioners of the tenth civil district of Union County” in September 1893, though the deed was not registered with the County until February 1897.¹ The property was noted to be accessible by a public road, with “free access to a spring near the creek.”² Shoffner described the property as adjacent to a lot also conveyed to the school commissioners by Nellie Cox in 1873. Oral histories from Union County residents note that the Nellie Cox property most likely held the first school established in the surrounding community, though no records exist from this school.

The first Oak Grove School was constructed on land approximately a half-mile southeast of the present-day schoolhouse around 1897, as a two-room, wood frame schoolhouse. The Oak Grove School is referenced in February 1906, when the same Isaac Shoffner deeded an adjacent parcel of land to the trustees of the Primitive Baptist Church for the construction of a new church.³ The first school building was utilized for first through fifth graders through the early 1900s (see Figure 2 for a 1913 photograph in front of the school). Monthly reports to the Union County superintendent show that approximately seventy-eight students attended the Oak Grove School in 1910.⁴ Only a single teacher was employed full-time in the school; Judd Acuff was paid fifty dollars per month to instruct all seventy-eight children.⁵

¹ Union County Register of Deeds, Book 3, Page 115-116.

² Ibid., 115.

³ Union County Register of Deeds, Book 8, Page 495.

⁴ Union County Board of Education, *Monthly Report to County Superintendent: September 1910*, Union County Board of Education Records, Union County Archives.

⁵ Union County Board of Education, *Teacher’s Abstract: County Superintendent’s Copy*, Union County Board of Education Records, Union County Archives.

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Despite a growing state- and nation-wide push for improvements in public education and school architecture, educational conditions in Union County in the 1920s were very similar to those at the turn of the century. In 1922, there were fifty-four small community schools in the county, most constructed of wood frame. Forty schools only had one teacher, ten employed two teachers, and four schools had three teachers.⁶ In an oral interview, a former student named Dottie Ousley noted that parents often selected schools based not on proximity, but on the teachers leading classes. These rural schoolhouses were small and modestly furnished, with a “combination of home-made and factory-made desks, and benches that were shared by two students.”⁷ Not until a decade after the initial publication of the *Community School Plans* did Union County officials elect to construct several new schoolhouses to modern standards.

Federal projects in the area were another factor in the decision to build a new schoolhouse for the Oak Grove Community. In the early 1930s, the Tennessee Valley Authority began the process of purchasing land surrounding the Clinch River to construct a hydroelectric dam at Norris. Construction on the Norris Dam began in July 1933, and TVA purchased 152,800 acres in Anderson, Union, Campbell, Grainger, and Claiborne Counties.⁸ TVA reports from as early as 1940 recognize Union County as the county most affected by the creation of the Norris Dam and its reservoir, especially due to the County’s relatively small land area and population compared to the other affected counties. Approximately forty-two percent of the land area in Union County was acquired by TVA, with more than 1,100 Union County families directly affected by reservoir land purchase.⁹ Union County property designated as “schools, churches, cemeteries, poor farms, and other nontaxable property” that was purchased by TVA amounted to \$106,324.¹⁰ Land designated to be flooded as part of the Clinch River reservoir was under a mile southeast of the original Oak Grove School; school property in the river basin area was sold to TVA in 1933-1934, and the funds obtained were used by the county to build new schools.¹¹ The first Oak Grove School was purchased and removed by late 1934, and the County Board of Education located a nearby property on which to begin construction the same year.

Another New Deal program that benefitted Oak Grove was the work program provided by the Civilian Conservation Corps and the Works Progress Administration. The WPA began a substantial statewide school construction program in 1935, with 123 new schools built and 480 schools renovated by 1938.¹² New Deal-era school architecture was both “functional and progressive, generally following the standardized plans developed in tandem by the Julius Rosenwald Fund, Peabody College professor Fletcher B. Dresslar, and the state Department of Education in the 1920s.”¹³ The plan selected for the new Oak Grove School in 1934-1935 was Plan # 20 selected from the 1924 *Community School Plans*. Both the CCC and the WPA were present in Union County throughout the New Deal era; CCC camps for company number 492 were located in Maynardville and Sharps Chapel from 1933 to around 1937. Also, the WPA constructed, or assisted in the

⁶ William G. Tharpe, *From Hearth and Hoe: Union County, Tennessee, 1910-1940*, (Maynardville: Union County Historical Society, 1985), 99.

⁷ Tharpe, *From Hearth and Hoe*, 101.

⁸ Tennessee Valley Authority, *The Norris Project: A comprehensive report on the planning, design, construction, and initial operations of the Tennessee Valley Authority’s first Water Control Project* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1940), 60.

⁹ Tennessee Valley Authority, *The Norris Project*, 62

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 64

¹¹ Tharpe, *From Hearth and Hoe*, 105.

¹² Carroll Van West, *Tennessee’s New Deal Landscape: A Guidebook* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 2001), 97.

¹³ Van West, *Tennessee’s New Deal Landscape*, 98.

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building of, approximately twenty-five school buildings in Union County throughout the 1930s.¹⁴ Local historians cite individuals who moved to Union County to work alongside the TVA or WPA and assisted in the construction of the Oak Grove School. Charles H. Lynch, a Union County carpenter who worked with the WPA, provided carpentry skills to the schoolhouse's construction.¹⁵ According to Joe Shoffner, a former student, the first full year of school in the new Oak Grove School was in 1935.¹⁶ The deed for the new building's property was not registered until January 1937, but the Shoffner family, who had also deeded the land for the original building, was comfortable with the school's construction on their property before it could be officially registered.¹⁷

The school provided instruction on reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, and Tennessee history. While an interior partition door could be folded back to make one large room, the school was more often divided into two classrooms. Students were placed into two classrooms based on age and grade, though multiple grades shared one room. The "Little Room" held classes for first, second, third, and fourth graders and the "Big Room" held fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth graders. Each grade had between three and six students, and only one teacher oversaw each classroom.¹⁸

At Oak Grove as in many rural schools, teachers and pupils alike were expected to provide janitorial services. A potbelly stove was located in the industrial room, and older students were tasked with building fires. Robert Ellison, a former Oak Grove student from 1948-1956, told the *Knoxville News-Sentinel* that he was responsible for starting the fire each morning in the winter.¹⁹ Ellison said that the school was first wired for electricity in 1948, though students continued to use outhouses that were located to the northeast of the schoolhouse, along the tree line. The outhouses are no longer extant. In the early 1950s, Bertha Cox was hired full-time to prepare lunches for the students. A baseball diamond was located on the site of the present-day waste collection center, immediately southwest of the school building. There was also playground equipment nearby, including swing sets and see-saws that were installed in 1962.²⁰ Food products were stored in the crawl space below the school and in the nearby extant storage shed.

As this nomination deals with the use of school designs primarily recognized for their advancements in African-American education, it must be noted that Union County was a majority white county through the twentieth century. Very few Union County residents were documented as slave-owners in the years before Emancipation. In 1900, with a population of 12,394, only 79 African-Americans were documented in the census.²¹ There was at least one school for black students in Union County, with records as early as 1883. This school was established in the Pinhook community, approximately two miles north of Maynardville, on property acquired by Samuel Smith, a man who had been emancipated from slavery.²² However, the county

¹⁴ Tharpe, *From Hearth and Hoe*, 105

¹⁵ Oral interview, Bonnie H. Peters, Union County Historian, June 5, 2018.

¹⁶ Oral interview provided to Cindy Taylor, *Union County Shopper News*, "Restoring Oak Grove." June 9, 2012.

¹⁷ Union County Register of Deeds, Book V, Page 587.

¹⁸ Union County Board of Education School Registers. Maynardville, TN: Union County Board of Education Central Office, accessed June 6, 2018.

¹⁹ Mike Blackerby, *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, "Historic School gets paint job," June 4, 2011

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ United States Census, Union County, 1900.

²² Tharpe, *From Hearth and Hoe*, 99.

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and state authorities prioritized the construction of schools for white students. While the Julius Rosenwald Fund was established to better educational and living conditions for black students, the plans they developed were also used in white-only schools, as in Oak Grove. The title “Rosenwald School” is a frequently-used misnomer when it is applied to schools that utilized the *Community School Plans*, but did not receive funds from the Julius Rosenwald Fund and did not serve black students. The Oak Grove School was only open to white students and thus is not an official Rosenwald School.

Classes continued at Oak Grove School through 1965, when the smaller community schools were consolidated into the Sharps Chapel School.²³ The school was used as a temporary library by the County for three years, then served as an office for the county waste management board for under five years, and then sat vacant until approximately 2011. At the present day, what makes Oak Grove School remarkable is its continual community involvement. Starting around 2011, former students spearheaded the school’s restoration project, drawing from the organization of local group Preservation Union County and the expertise of Knox Heritage and the East Tennessee Preservation Alliance. The Oak Grove School received grants from the East Tennessee Foundation and the Union County Community Foundation, and involved former students in monthly workdays to repair flooring, historic windows, and paint the exterior. As of 2018, the building is owned by Union County and utilized as a “book station,” or a smaller version of a library.

Ronald E. Butchart, in *Local Schools: Exploring their History*, argues that the history of local schools is essential to gathering a strong sense of broad historical developments in education.²⁴ While a school that serves approximately eighty students per year may not command the same level of immediate interest as another historic site, its documentation remains crucial to the community’s history. The “larger context in which education developed” is reflected on a small scale in a community’s individual schools.²⁵ To this note, the Oak Grove School is significant in education as it reflects the slow spread of standards in public education and schoolhouse architecture through Tennessee’s rural areas. While 1935 is a relatively late year for the construction of a building whose plan originated in 1921, rural school boards did not necessarily have the means to utilize the new plans immediately after their publication. However, the *Community School Plans* did prove attractive eventually, as the plans were distributed widely and could be utilized for free. Moreover, in their New Deal-era campaign of school construction in rural areas, the WPA preferred to utilize these efficient, modern plans.

The Oak Grove School also reflects the effects of federal involvement on education practices in rural East Tennessee. Located near the Clinch River reservoir that was flooded for the Norris Dam, the original school was one of many that was purchased and closed by the Tennessee Valley Authority. However, the Oak Grove community ultimately benefitted from these projects, as funds gleaned from land transfers to the TVA could be utilized by the County Board of Education to construct a new school building, with construction assistance from the WPA. Ultimately, Butchart argues the study of small local schools allows for the interpretation of “the ways in which formal education is embedded in a social and cultural context.”²⁶ In

²³ Union County Board of Education School Registers, 1964-1965. Maynardville, TN: Union County Board of Education Central Office, accessed June 6, 2018.

²⁴ Ronald E. Butchart, *Local Schools: Exploring Their History* (Nashville, TN: AASLH, 1986), 116.

²⁵ Butchart, *Local Schools*, 116.

²⁶ Butchart, *Local Schools*, 116.

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rural Union County, the Oak Grove School reflects formal education in the early- to mid-twentieth century as oriented specifically towards the immediately surrounding community, receiving delayed benefits from state and national trends in education, and inextricably involved with federal government programs of the New Deal.

Architecture

The Oak Grove School is a strong representation of plan book schoolhouse architecture in the early twentieth century. Tennessee played a major role in the development of planned schoolhouse architecture, and its many iterations spread throughout the state's rural areas. Several schoolhouses were constructed in Union County from plans provided by the state education board and other sources; however, the Oak Grove School is the sole extant example of such architecture, and retains a high degree of integrity. Oak Grove also represents the slow spread of standardized public education and schoolhouse architecture through the rural areas of Tennessee, as it was constructed more than a decade after the plan's original publication.

The development of standardized plans for schoolhouse architecture originated with the Progressive era in educational reform at the turn of the twentieth century. As state governments began to realize the need for heightened standards in public education, architects and school officials also initiated a concurrent campaign for improved schoolhouse architecture.²⁷ They believed students would perform better in class (and ultimately, in society) if they could benefit from an emphasis on sanitary and comfortable conditions, in an aesthetically attractive environment. In 1907, the Tennessee State Legislature authorized the superintendent of public instruction to issue and promote model school plans. The *Plans and Specifications for Public School Buildings* designed by a Chattanooga architectural firm encouraged appropriate classroom lighting and ventilation, with an emphasis on efficient and economical construction.²⁸ Continuing to adapt to technology and trends, the state Department of Education published a *Community School Plans* bulletin in 1921 and the bulletin *Rural School Building Plans* in 1928.

The 1921 Tennessee bulletin featured the designs of two architects who would be crucial to the nationwide promotion and adaptation of *Community School Plans*. Samuel L. Smith, aided by architect Fletcher B. Dresslar, developed the *Community School Plans* with an emphasis on natural lighting, efficient use of materials, and proper ventilation. Soon after the publication of Tennessee's school plan books, Smith and Dresslar combined forces with a nationwide fund for African-American education to make the plans more accessible to the nation's most underserved population. Sears, Roebuck and Company magnate Julius Rosenwald had funded his first school for African-Americans in Tennessee in 1915, and he established a Nashville office of the Julius Rosenwald Fund in 1919.²⁹ Subsequent rounds of *Community School Plans* were published by the Julius Rosenwald Fund to a national audience in 1921 and 1924; these plans incorporated Smith and Dresslar's work with earlier designs created under the Tennessee-based Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute.³⁰

²⁷ Mary S. Hoffschwelle, *Rebuilding the Rural Southern Community: Reformers, Schools, and Homes in Tennessee, 1900-1930* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1998), 23.

²⁸ Hoffschwelle, *Rebuilding the Rural Southern Community*, 24.

²⁹ National Register of Historic Places, Durham's Chapel School, Sumner County, Tennessee, National Register #06000652.

³⁰ Mary S. Hoffschwelle, "Preserving Rosenwald Schools" (Washington, DC: National Trust for Historic Preservation, 2012), 1.

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The plans reflected contemporary discussions of school architecture, with a strong focus on lighting as “an essential aspect of school hygiene.”³¹ Natural light was maximized by the use of “batteries of much taller windows that stretched from the interior wainscot up to the eaves,” so that a single stream of horizontal light could illuminate the classroom.³² As a relatively new tactic, the building’s directional orientation would determine the plan to be selected, so that windows would face either east or west. Schools should be placed on the overall parcel to allow for the maximum space for playgrounds and gardens, to increase the outdoor opportunities for students.³³ Double-hung sash windows were encouraged to provide appropriate ventilation. The *Community School Plans* even offered color schemes and recommendations for interior furnishings, such as an insistence on exterior and interior paint. While the school plans did not adhere to one architectural style, modest Classical Revival or Craftsman details are visible in the designs.

By the end of the 1920s, it was evident that the *Community School Plans* and the Julius Rosenwald Fund in general had “not only raised the bar for African-American schools but had prompted better school plans and construction standards for white schools as well.”³⁴ Rural areas, where public education had not previously been a priority, benefitted from the free distribution of plan books. School officials could select from a variety of plans without having to hire a professional architect. According to Rosenwald School scholar Mary Hoffschwelle, the *Community School Plans* became an integral element of school construction for white students, as they “created a visual vocabulary for southern rural schools that crossed the color line, and suggested that all students could and should learn in professionally-designed instructional environments.”³⁵ As evident in Union County and the Oak Grove School, some state and county school authorities simply “translated Rosenwald designs wholesale into their regular building programs for white students.”³⁶ The free plan books remained in circulation for many years to follow, which resulted in their use by rural school districts even after the end of the official Julius Rosenwald Fund.

Constructed a full decade after the designs’ publication, the Oak Grove School employed Plan # 20 from the 1924 *Community School Plans*. The school fits the exact design of Plan # 20, and also reflects numerous more general recommendations from the document. White paint was utilized on the exterior, with a soft grey-blue color inside, in order to increase the amount of light in the classroom, preserve the durability of the exterior weatherboard, and “be more pleasing and restful to the eyes.”³⁷ The *Plans* recommend the use of a movable partition between classrooms, so that the schoolhouse could also serve the entire community with a gathering space throughout the year; Oak Grove’s foldable wood door allows for the two rooms to be opened into one large interior space. As in Oak Grove, doors should be yellow pine of “well-seasoned material, carefully put together and set plum” in well-made wood frames.³⁸ The plans recommended a roof of good-quality composition shingles, which Oak Grove originally featured, though the current gable roof is clad in

³¹ Mary S. Hoffschwelle, *The Rosenwald Schools of the American South* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2006), 95.

³² Ibid.

³³ “Community School Plans: Bulletin No. 3” (Nashville, TN: Julius Rosenwald Fund, 1924), 1.

³⁴ Hoffschwelle, *The Rosenwald Schools of the American South*, 112.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ “Community School Plans: Bulletin No. 3,” 29.

³⁸ “Community School Plans: Bulletin No. 3,” 27.

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metal. The excellent condition of the Oak Grove School in the present day is a testament to the efficacy of the myriad recommendations in the 1924 *Community School Plans*.

Plan Book Schoolhouse Architecture in Tennessee and the National Register

There are several other extant examples of plan book schoolhouse architecture in Tennessee listed in the National Register of Historic Places, though none are in Union County. The Durham's Chapel School (NR, 11/8/2006) in Sumner County, Tennessee is another example of Plan #20. This two-room schoolhouse is an actual Rosenwald School, in that it received funds from the Julius Rosenwald Fund to provide educational opportunities to African-American students. Durham's Chapel retains the same plan as Oak Grove School, with two adjoining classrooms and a movable partition between. Durham's Chapel also retains several elements recommended by the *Community School Plans* that are no longer extant or were not included in the Oak Grove School, including a stage at one end of the classroom and a potbelly stove in the industrial room. The two privies, the well, and a water pump also remain on the school property.

In East Tennessee, the Dunbar School (NR, 10/5/2007) in Loudon County is a local adaptation of Plan # 20 from the *Community School Plans*. The Dunbar School was also a Rosenwald School, and features several alterations from the basic plan displayed by the Oak Grove School. The shed roof covering the two façade entrances projects from the side of the industrial room projection, instead of immediately covering the entryways. A one-story, concrete block addition projects from the rear elevation. The Dunbar School also has a unique basement section, which was built to provide an interior cafeteria space.

No other Union County schools are currently listed in the National Register.

Oak Grove School
Name of Property

Union County, Tennessee
County and State

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography

- Butchart, Ronald E. *Local Schools: Exploring Their History*. The Nearby History Series. Nashville, TN: American Association of State and Local History, 1986.
- Community School Plans*. Nashville, TN: Julius Rosenwald Fund, 1924.
- Hoffschwelle, Mary S. "Preserving Rosenwald Schools." Washington, DC: National Trust for Historic Preservation, 2012.
- . *Rebuilding the Rural Southern Community: Reformers, Schools, and Homes in Tennessee, 1900-1930*. Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1998.
- . *The Rosenwald Schools of the American South*. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2006.
- Oral interview with Bonnie H. Peters, Union County Historian. Interview conducted in Alcoa, TN on June 5, 2018.
- Tennessee Valley Authority. *The Norris Project: A comprehensive report on the planning, design, construction, and initial operations of the Tennessee Valley Authority's first Water Control Project*. Washington, DC: GPO, 1940.
- Tharpe, William G. *From Hearth and Hoe: Union County, Tennessee, 1910-1940*. Maynardville, TN: Union County Historical Society, 1985.
- Union County Board of Education. *Monthly Reports to County Superintendent*. County Board of Education Records, 1900-1950. Maynardville, TN: Union County Board of Education Archives.
- Van West, Carroll, ed. *Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture*. Nashville, TN: Tennessee Historical Society, 1998.
- . *Tennessee's New Deal Landscape: A Guidebook*. Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 2001.

Oak Grove School

 Name of Property

Union County, Tennessee

 County and State

Previous documentation on file (NPS):		Primary location of additional data:	
<input type="checkbox"/>	preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)	<input type="checkbox"/>	State Historic Preservation Office
<input type="checkbox"/>	previously listed in the National Register	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other State agency
<input type="checkbox"/>	previously determined eligible by the National Register	<input type="checkbox"/>	Federal agency
<input type="checkbox"/>	designated a National Historic Landmark	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Local government
<input type="checkbox"/>	recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #	<input type="checkbox"/>	University
<input type="checkbox"/>	recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other
<input type="checkbox"/>	recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey #	Name of repository: Union County Archives	
Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): UN-174			

Oak Grove School
Name of Property

Union County, Tennessee
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property ~1.25 acres **USGS Quadrangle** Maynardville, 145-SE

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 36.353763 | Longitude: -83.818247 |
| 2. Latitude: 36.353965 | Longitude: -83.817554 |
| 3. Latitude: 36.353389 | Longitude: -83.817243 |
| 4. Latitude: 36.353174 | Longitude: -83.817939 |

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary for the Oak Grove School begins at the northwest corner of the property, where the County waste collection facility intersects with Oak Grove Road. From this point, the boundary runs northwest along Oak Grove Road approximately 225 feet, then runs approximately 235 feet south/southeast along the rear edge of a small concentration of trees. The boundary continues west/southwest approximately 225 feet to the edge of the waste collection facility, and returns approximately 235 north/northwest back to the point of origin.

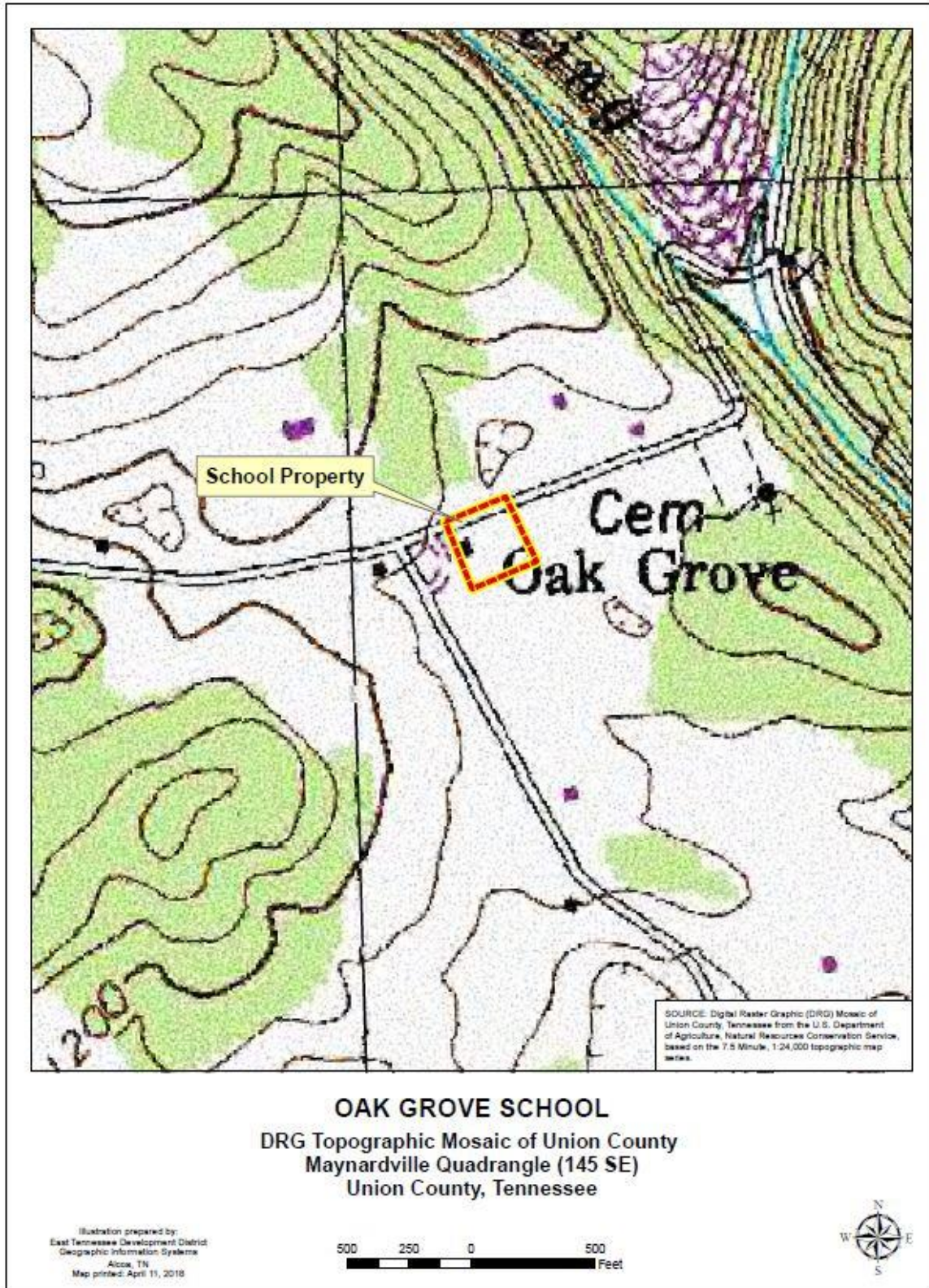
Boundary Justification

The boundary was selected to include the approximately 1.24-acre parcel that has been historically associated with the Oak Grove School, but exclude the county waste collection facility, which is unrelated to the historic Oak Grove School.

Oak Grove School
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USGS Topographic Map, Maynardville Quadrangle, 145-SE. 1952, photo-revised 1987.



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Parcel boundary for Oak Grove School.



Oak Grove School
Name of Property

Union County, Tennessee
County and State

11. Form Prepared By

Name Lindsay Crockett, Historic Preservation Planner

Organization East Tennessee Development District

Street & Number 216 Corporate Place Date June 8, 2018

City or Town Alcoa Telephone 865-273-6003

E-mail lcrockett@etdd.org State TN Zip Code 37701

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to map.
- **Photographs** (refer to Tennessee Historical Commission National Register *Photo Policy* for submittal of digital images and prints)
- **Additional items:** (additional supporting documentation including historic photographs, historic maps, etc. should be included on a Continuation Sheet following the photographic log and sketch maps)

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

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

Oak Grove School
Name of Property

Union County, Tennessee
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Photo Log

Name of Property: Oak Grove School
City or Vicinity: Sharps Chapel vicinity
County: Union State: TN
Photographer: Lindsay Crockett
Date Photographed: May 18, 2018

- 1 of 22. Façade elevation (west). Photographer facing northeast.
- 2 of 22. Northwest oblique. Photographer facing southeast.
- 3 of 22. Southwest oblique. Photographer facing northeast.
- 4 of 22. South elevation. Photographer facing north/northwest.
- 5 of 22. Southeast oblique. Photographer facing northwest.
- 6 of 22. East elevation. Photographer facing west/southwest.
- 7 of 22. Northeast oblique. Photographer facing south.
- 8 of 22. North elevation. Photographer facing south/southeast.
- 9 of 22. Storage shed, north elevation. Photographer facing south.
- 10 of 22. Well house, northwest oblique. Photographer facing east/southeast.
- 11 of 22. Door detail. Photographer facing east.
- 12 of 22. View of surrounding scenery. Photographer facing south.
- 13 of 22. Classroom interior view. Photographer facing northwest.
- 14 of 22. Interior view of partition doors. Photographer facing northwest.
- 15 of 22. Classroom interior view. Photographer facing northeast.
- 16 of 22. Classroom interior view. Photographer facing southeast.
- 17 of 22. Restroom interior view. Photographer facing southeast.
- 18 of 22. Classroom interior view. Photographer facing southeast.
- 19 of 22. Classroom interior view. Photographer facing southwest.

Oak Grove School
Name of Property

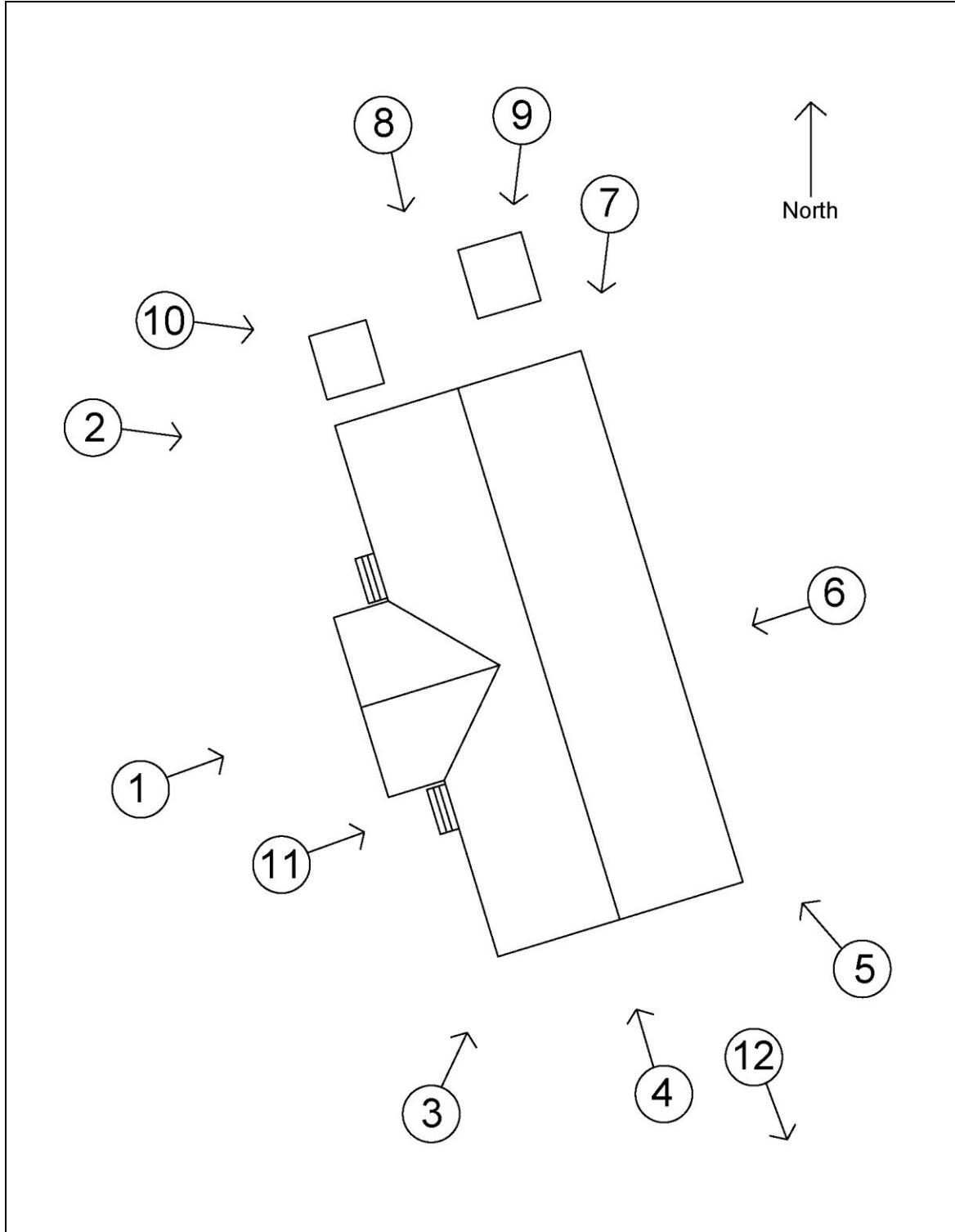
Union County, Tennessee
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-
- 20 of 22. Classroom interior view. Photographer facing northwest.
 - 21 of 22. Industrial room interior view. Photographer facing northwest.
 - 22 of 22. Industrial room interior view. Photographer facing northeast.

Oak Grove School
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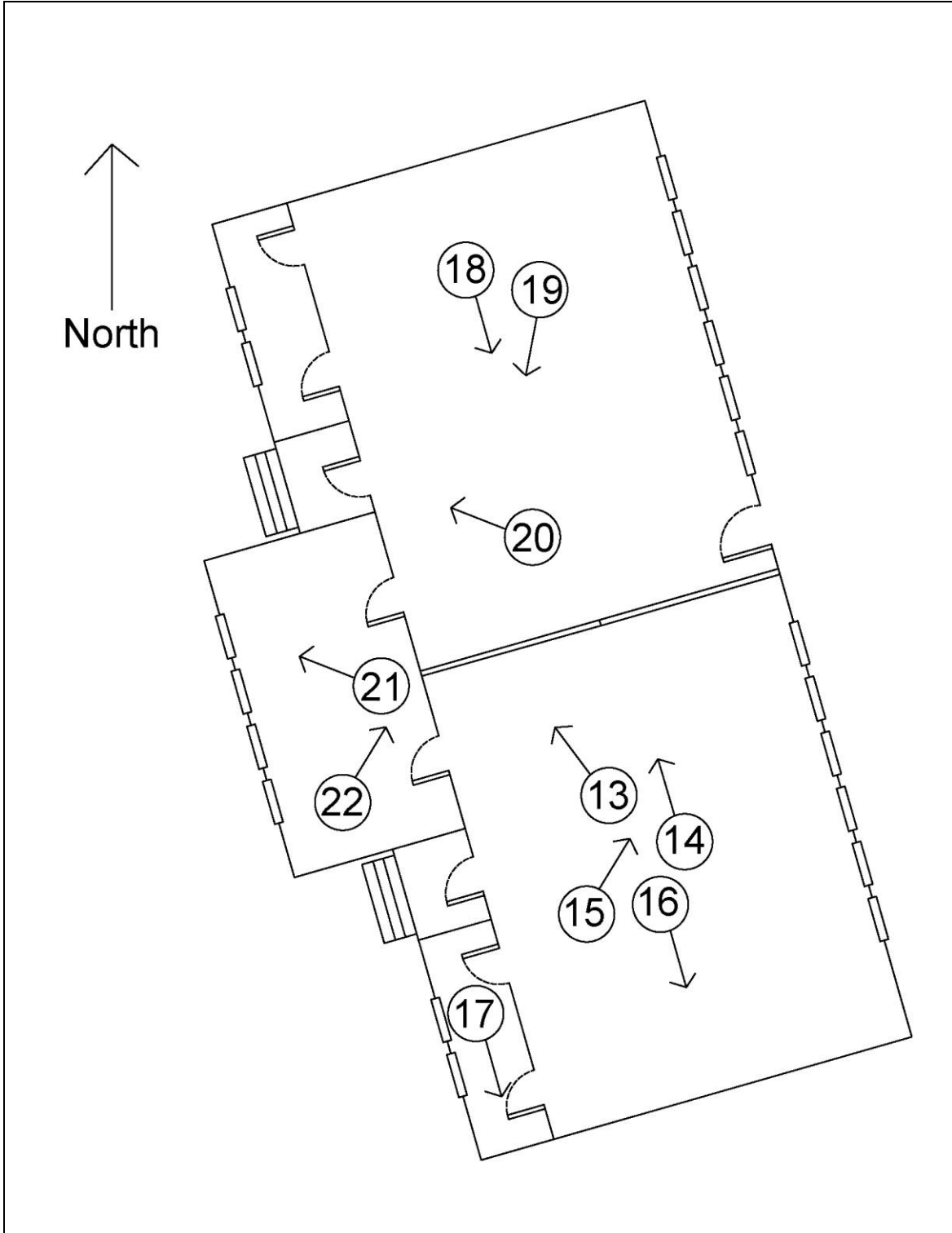
Site Plan (not to scale)



Oak Grove School
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Floor Plan (not to scale)



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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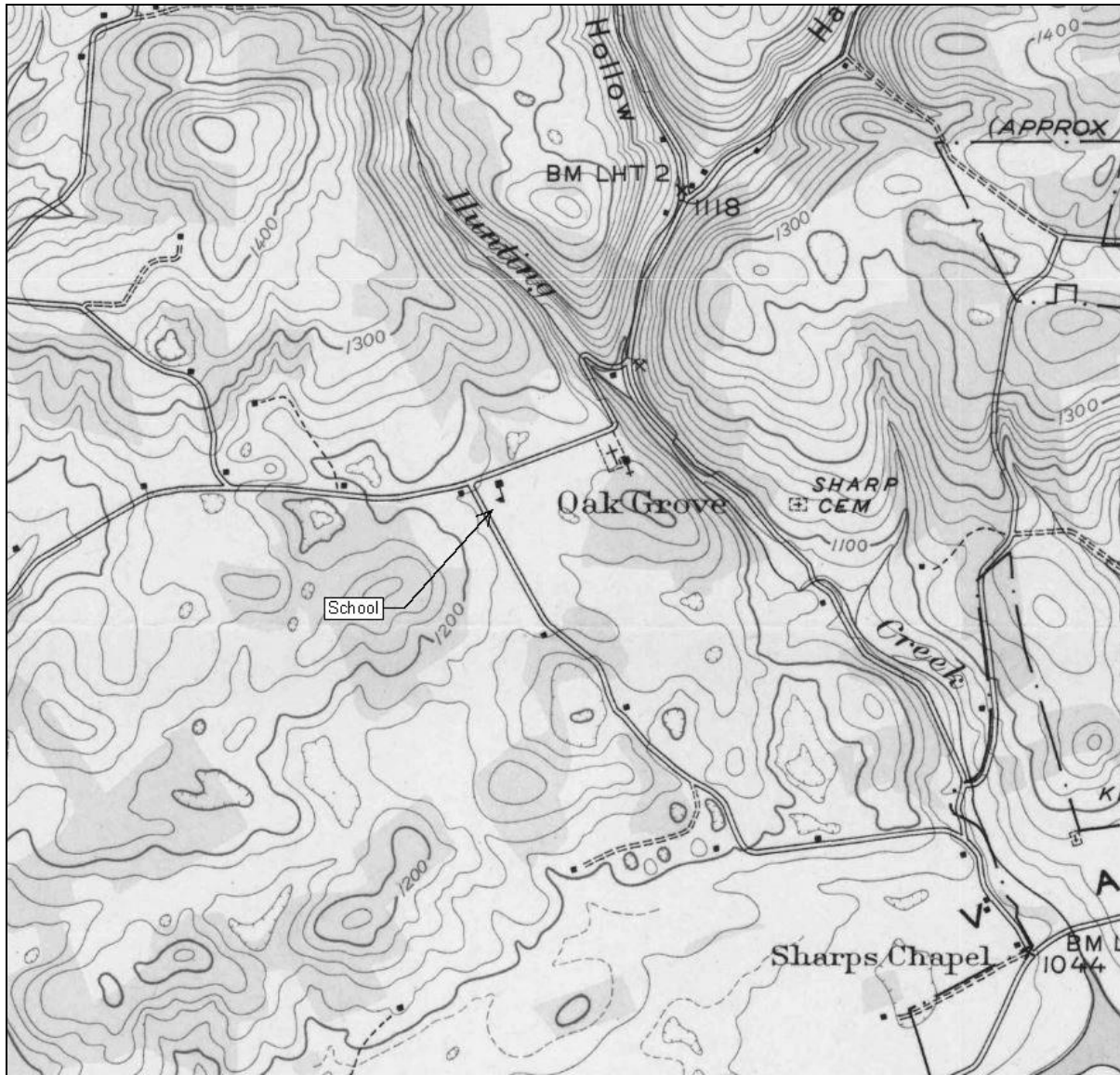


Figure 1: 1941 USGS Topographic Map, Maynardville quadrangle.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
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Figure 2: 1913 Photograph in front of original Oak Grove School. Source: Union County Historical Society.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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N/A
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Section number Figures Page 27

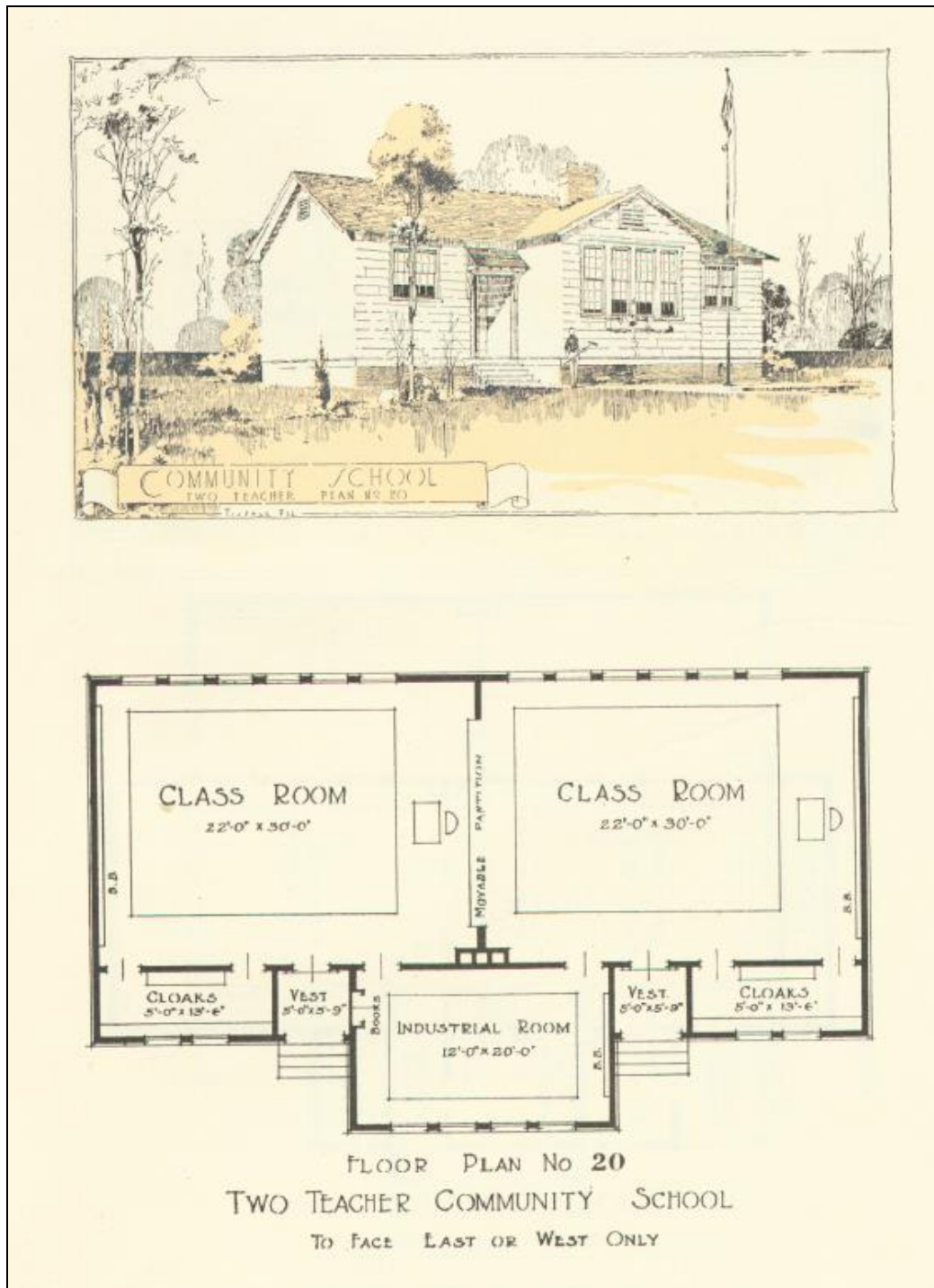


Figure 3: Depiction of Plan # 20 from Julius Rosenwald Fund's *Community School Plans*, 1924.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Figure 4: Oak Grove School, approximately 1950. Source: Preservation Union County.

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National Park Service

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**Figure 5: Oak Grove School with students, 1951-1952 school year.
Source: Preservation Union County.**

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National Park Service

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**Figure 6: Oak Grove School with schoolyard view, approximately 1960.
Source: Preservation Union County.**

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National Park Service

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Figure 7: Bertha Cox in the Oak Grove School Kitchen, approximately 1960. The half-height door is visible. Kitchen furnishings are no longer extant.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Figures 8 and 9: 8th and 6th grade classes, respectively, 1960-1961 school year. Well house and storage shed are visible behind students. Source: Preservation Union County.



























EXIT













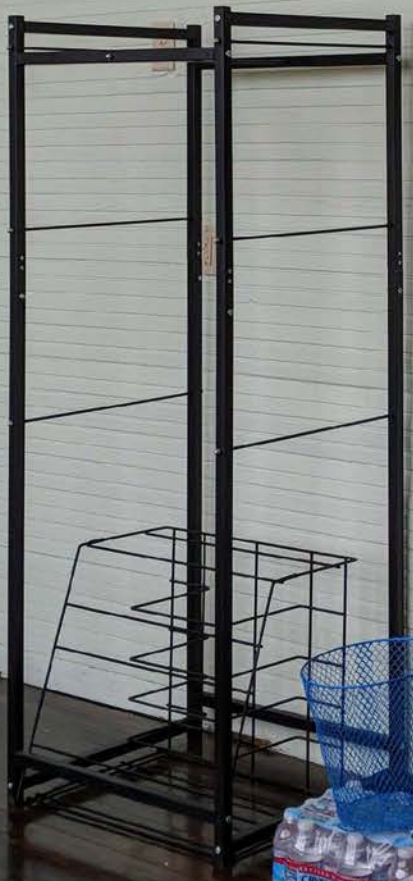


EXIT









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: 10/17/2018 Date of Pending List: 11/5/2018 Date of 16th Day: 11/20/2018 Date of 45th Day: 12/3/2018 Date of Weekly List:

Reference number:

Nominator:

Reason For Review:

Accept Return Reject 11/26/2018 Date

Abstract/Summary Comments:

Recommendation/ Criteria

Reviewer Jim Gabbert Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2275 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.



TENNESSEE HISTORICAL COMMISSION
STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE
2941 LEBANON PIKE
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 37214
OFFICE: (615) 532-1550
E-mail: Claudette.Stager@tn.gov
(615) 770-1089



October 15, 2018

Dr. Julie Ernstein
Deputy Keeper and Chief,
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
1849 C Street, NW, Mail Stop 7228
Washington, DC 20240

National Register Nomination

- *Oak Grove School, Union County, Tennessee*

Dear Dr. Ernstein:

The enclosed disks contain the true and correct nomination for listing of *Oak Grove School* to the National Register of Historic Places. We received no comments.

If you have any questions or if more information is needed, please contact Rebecca Schmitt at (615) 770-1086 or Rebecca.Schmitt@tn.gov.

Sincerely,

Claudette Stager
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

CS:rs

Enclosures(2)