



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

Table with 2 columns: Contributing, Noncontributing. Rows: buildings, sites, structures, objects, Total.

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Education Sub: High school

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Education Sculpture Sub: High school

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Neo-classical Moderne
Art Deco Style

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete
roof Other: membrane
walls brick, concrete
other metal

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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)

- X 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.
X C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

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

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Education and Social History
Architecture

Period of Significance 1938-1958 (A); 1939 (C)

Significant Dates 1939

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above) n/a

Cultural Affiliation n/a

Architect/Builder Smithey & Boynton, architects

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more 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 #

**Primary Location of Additional Data**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: Virginia Department of Historic Resources

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**10. Geographical Data**  
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**Acreage of Property** 7.5 acres

**UTM References** (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting Northing	Zone Easting Northing	Zone Easting Northing	Zone Easting Northing
1 <u>17</u> <u>588753</u> <u>4182089</u>	2 <u>  </u> <u>  </u> <u>  </u>	3 <u>  </u> <u>  </u> <u>  </u>	4 <u>  </u> <u>  </u> <u>  </u>

\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

=====  
**11. Form Prepared By**  
=====

name/title John R. Kern and Michael J. Pulice  
organization Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Roanoke Regional Office date February 2008  
street & number 1030 Penmar Ave. SE telephone 540-857-7585  
city or town Roanoke state VA zip code 24013

=====  
**Additional Documentation**  
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Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

- Maps** A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.  
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs** Representative black and white photographs of the property.

**Additional items** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

=====  
**Property Owner**  
=====

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)  
name Covington City Schools, Tom Long (contact)  
street & number 304 E. Walnut St. telephone (540) 965-1400  
city or town Covington state VA zip code 24426

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

**Covington High School  
City of Covington, Virginia**

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**7. Description Summary**

Covington High School, erected in 1939, is located in the City of Covington, which is independent of surrounding Alleghany County. The school fronts onto South Lexington Avenue, occupies a full city block between West Oak Street and West Chestnut Street, and is surrounded by dwellings and businesses in close proximity. Behind the school, and included in the nominated parcel is Burton Field which has a track and practice field. Across South Craig Avenue from Burton Field is the Casey Field Complex which is used by Covington High School for football and many other activities. The Complex is owned by the City of Covington, but is not included in the nominated parcel. The school is a large facility that encompasses the three-story main block and original wings all built in 1939, with one and two-story additions added to the rear in 1962, and a connecting hyphen and elevation bay added in 1990. All parts of the school are faced with red brick exteriors. All parts of the building are integrated by enclosed hallways. The school facility includes a kitchen and eating area, grand auditorium, gymnasium and locker rooms, and classrooms. It is notable for being architecturally unique in the region. The original parts of the school demonstrate an architectural style that is difficult to define, borrowing from Classical and Renaissance traditions, but also from the Art Deco style that was popular in the 1930s. The added wings are plain and lacking of architectural character.

**Detailed Description**

Designed by Roanoke architecture firm Smithey & Boynton in 1939 in the Neo-classical Moderne style, the original mass of the school is three stories tall and highly rectilinear and blocky in form. Its brick-veneered walls simulate a bond consisting of one Flemish course to every 5 stretcher courses. In Renaissance-inspired fashion, the ground floor is distinguished from the upper levels by its emphasized horizontality, with projecting brick courses at eight course intervals, creating a rusticated effect, topped with a classical cornice. The cornice wraps around the sides of the building and continues across the original two-story wings, which give the building a three-part Palladian form. The building is formally entered through the two-story wings at either end. Above the doorways are curvilinear, flat-roofed canopies of polished aluminum, cantilevered from the wall. The façade's second and third stories emphasize symmetry and verticality, with banks of four windows within tall, corbeled, two-story, recessed panels. The individual windows are each divided by slender brick pilasters, while the recessed panels are divided by heavy, monumental pilasters. Another unimposing classical cornice extends along the two side elevations of the original building, with the parapet wall above the cornice. At each end of the principal elevation are recessed, glass block panels, which provide light to stairwells. The panels are two stories tall, beginning just above the lower story's cornice. All of the windows in the main block are identical 12-over-12 double-hung sash, which are modern, in-kind replacements of the school's original windows. The rear façade has flat wall surfaces divided only by a water table of two projecting courses of bricks, and an ornate string course consisting of a soldier brick course surmounted by two consecutive Flemish courses. Off the back of the building is a two-story, flat-roofed, appendage with a Collegiate Gothic feel owing to its polygonal shape and concrete coping. Around the appendage is a courtyard with benches and a modern, abstract sculpture created by a welding class in recent years (non-contributing object).

The 1962 portions of the school comprise the gymnasium at the northwest corner of the property and the two-story classroom building at the southwest corner. In 1990, an enclosed, elevated walkway connector to the 1962 additions

and an elevator tower were added to the rear of the original school building. Due to the late date of their addition and their lack of architectural character, these appendages are not considered to have architectural significance in their own

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right; nor do they enhance the architectural significance of the greater educational facility.

Like the building's exterior, the interior displays a high level of historic integrity. The interior walls of the school have dados of shiny, smooth bricks with concrete block above. The interior spaces include wide halls with vaulted ceilings and hidden lighting, average sized classrooms retaining all original features such as small closets with French doors and 2-inch-wide wood flooring. At the north end of the original 1939 section of the school is a voluminous auditorium with inclined floor, stage and large balcony. All of its original features have been preserved, such as the decorative trim, seats, flooring and coffered ceiling. Access to the auditorium is through a formal room with marble dados, plaster cornice and corbeled ceiling. The primary light source is an Art Deco-style hanging fixture of shiny polished metal.

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**8. Summary Statement & Justification of Criteria**

Designed by the Roanoke architectural firm of Smithey and Boynton and constructed in 1939-1940 with federal Public Works Administration funds, Covington High School provided educational and community services that bridged the transitional period from the close of the Great Depression through World War II and into the Cold War. The school's founding principal brought strict discipline to the student body along with modern educational opportunities in the fields of academic scholarship, vocational training, public entertainment, athletics, and community service. Covington High School also served as the community's social center for concerts, public health vaccinations, military recruitment, and Westvaco union meetings. Covington High School is eligible for historic designation at the local level of significance under Criterion A because of its association with broad patterns of public

school education in Alleghany County and the City of Covington. Relevant categories of significance are Education and Social History as the high school became a center for public instruction and for community activities and services. The period of significance for Criterion A is 1938 to 1958. The school is also eligible at the local level under Criterion C in the area of Architecture because of the blend of architectural styles referenced in its design, and its association with regionally prominent architecture firm Smithey and Boynton, a prolific designer of public schools. The Covington School appears to be unique in their portfolio, owing to the unusual blend of architectural stylistic references, including Classical, Renaissance, Collegiate Gothic, and Art Deco. For the same reasons, the school appears to be unique in the context of school buildings in western Virginia. While most public schools from the period incorporate classical architectural traditions into their designs, they tend to be more conservative and traditional designs than that of the Covington School. The period of significance for Criterion C is 1939.

## Acknowledgements

RRPO staff thank Covington School Board and Covington High School staff and alumni for their assistance in preparation of this nomination. Tom Long served as point of contact on all aspects of the nomination. Covington High School Principal Ruth Fuhrman arranged for the oral history interviews with alumni: Kenneth Childs, class of 1940; Charles Deacon, class of 1949; Harrison Fridley, class of 1957; Charles Hammond, class of 1957; David Mentor, class of 1944; Sidney Oliver, class of 1940; and Daniel Warlitner, class of 1955. Brenda Tate, class of 1966 and a current teacher at the high school, offered additional information. Covington High School librarian Dr. Ralph Turner provided library copies of high school year books *Puffs and Patches*. Covington School Board employee Shirley Burks provided information on Covington schools for black students before desegregation. Jean McRae, Kelly Spradley-Kurowski, and Quatro Hubbard of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources also provided valuable assistance.

## Covington High School Historic Context

The first Covington High School, a two story frame structure built in 1894, was razed in 1916 to make way for Jeter Elementary School; Jeter Elementary was demolished in the early 1970s. The second Covington High School, a two story Neo Classical brick structure, was constructed by 1913. After completion of the present Covington High School in 1939-1940, the 1913 High School became the Covington City Hall until its demolition in the late 1990s. Thus the present Covington High School, in use for seven decades, stands as the City's only public building for secondary education and as a principal building for community gatherings and social activities.

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In June 1938 the Alleghany County School Board received a federal Public Works Administration grant of \$122,575.50, sufficient funding to cover approximately 45 percent of the estimated cost "for construction of a new high school and a colored consolidated school." Shortly thereafter the Alleghany County School Board resolved to employ the Roanoke architectural firm of Smithey and Boynton to draw plans for the two school buildings and supervise their construction. Smithey & Boynton were highly accomplished at the time the school was designed. Louis Philippe Smithey (1890-ca. 1955) was the senior architect. The firm employed William Greene Chester for many years. Chester is given credit for much of the firm's design work in the 1940s and 1950s.<sup>1</sup> Smithey, and Smithey & Boynton are credited for designing several high schools in Virginia including Salem High School, City of Salem, (1933), Clearbrook High School in Roanoke County (1938), and Whitewood High School in Buchanan County

(1940); as well as the recently demolished Victory Stadium in Roanoke (1942). The school board also contracted with C. W. Barger and J. F. Barbour and Sons to build the new schools. In August 1938 voters in the Covington School District of Alleghany County approved sale of bonds for \$150,000 to finance construction of the schools. In April 1939 Principal Walter R. Curfman, a World War I veteran who had been recruited from the North to head public education, spoke at a groundbreaking ceremony of the new high school, where he noted that the event marked the “dawn of a new day in education for Covington.” Classes in the new Covington High School began in the late summer of 1939 under the supervision of Principal Curfman.<sup>2</sup>

In the spring of 1940 the Covington High School yearbook, *Puffs and Patches*, reported proudly, “Covington now has a high school, which ranks among the finest in the state.” That yearbook stated that all work on the building was completed by March 1940. The year book and included information on sports, boys’ football, basketball, and boxing and girls’ basketball. The new Covington High School had a Band, an Orchestra, and a Glee Club, a Drama Club, girls’ and boys’ Hi Y Clubs, and a Whiteman’s Club dedicated to “good fellowship, good scholarship, good school.”<sup>3</sup>

During World War II in 1943/4, Covington High School had a Military Club, conducted a paper drive, and hosted an army caravan that camped on the football field. In 1945 the high school had a school newspaper, a Beta Club honor society that purchased Christmas gifts for disadvantaged children, and a vocational education Diversified Occupation program that provided co-op employment for 32 students who gained work experience with local businesses.<sup>4</sup>

Seven Covington High students who attended school from 1940 to 1957 participated in oral history interviews for this nomination. All remembered outstanding school administrators and teachers. Principal Walter Curfman practiced strict discipline to enforce regular attendance and punish bad language. Coach Francis “Bootie” Albert, a great Notre Dame football player, enforced Principal Curfman’s school discipline. Latin teacher John Heretick and music teacher Nell Fleshman participated in and directed Minstrel Club shows with singers in black face, shows that sold out three nights running. A total of only about 20 teachers taught 400 to 500 students at the high school.

Covington High School also served as a community center for the Covington School District. The high school auditorium hosted Westvaco union meetings, an Air Force Band concert, and local church singing groups. Military recruiters always met with students in the school cafeteria, and the high school served as a polio vaccination center in 1954/5. Charlie Deacon, class of 1949, remembered that Covington High School was always the center of the Covington community, and that everyone knew everyone in their classes. Danny Warlitner seconded Deacon’s comments on Covington High as the community’s center and closed the interviews by stating the need to preserve the high school: “Once you lose your school, you lose your identity.”<sup>5</sup>

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The Covington City School Board was established in 1959 and then assumed responsibility for administration of Covington High School. School integration began on a voluntary basis in 1964/5; one of the first black students to attend subsequently returned to teach at Covington High School. Covington High remains in operation under the direction of Principal Ruth Fuhrman, herself a former student at the school. The Covington School Board currently has plans to complete some renovations for their historic Covington High School.

Endnotes

1. Most of the office records of Smithey and Boynton from 1922 through 1955 are deposited in Special Collections at the Virginia Tech Library, Blacksburg, Virginia.
2. Alleghany County Public School Record Book 2, 1938-1939, pp. 4-95. Covington High School, Preliminary Information Form, 107-5180, September 10, 2007. Watson Elementary and High School was the “colored consolidated school” built with WPA funds. After desegregation in 1966, Watson elementary became, and still serves as, Jeter-Watson Intermediate School. Telephone interview with Shirley Burks, February 7, 2008.
3. *Puffs and Patches*, Covington High School Yearbook, 1940. Covington High School Library.
4. *Puffs and Patches*, Covington High School Yearbooks, 1944 and 1945.
5. Oral history interviews of Covington High School alumni: Kenneth Childs, class of 1940; Charles Deacon, class of 1949; Harrison Fridley, class of 1957; Charles Hammond, class of 1957; David Mentor, class of 1944; Sidney Oliver, class of 1940; and Daniel Warlitner, class of 1955. Charles Hammond, who also taught at Covington High School, began the interview session by showing historic slides of the school. Covington High School graduate Brenda Tate, class of 1966 and a current teacher at the high school, provided additional information after the conclusion of the oral history interviews of those who attended Covington High School before 1958. All interviews were conducted at Covington High School, December 13, 2007.

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**9. Bibliographical References**

Alleghany County Public School Board. Record Book 2, 1938-1939. Low Moor, Virginia.

Covington Public School Board. Record Book 1, 1957. Covington, Virginia.

Covington High School Preliminary Information Form, 107-5180. September 10, 2007.  
Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Archives. Richmond, Virginia.

Oral history interviews: Kenneth Childs; Charles Deacon; Harrison Fridley; Charles Hammond; David Mentor; Sidney Oliver; Daniel Warlitner; Brenda Tate. Covington High School., December 13, 2007. Covington, Virginia. Shirley Burks, Covington School Board, telephone interview, February 7, 2008.

*Puffs and Patches*. Covington High School Yearbooks, 1940, 1944, 1945, 1955. Covington High School Library. Covington, Virginia.

Wells, John E. & Robert E. Dalton, *The Virginia Architects 1835- 1955: A Biographical Dictionary*, Richmond: New South Architectural Press, 1997, 423.

## **10. Geographical Data**

### **Verbal Boundary Description**

The nominated parcel encompasses Covington High School and the athletic field directly behind it. The parcel is hemmed by W. Chestnut Street, W. Oak Street, and South Lexington and South Craig Avenues.

### **Boundary Justification**

The NRHP boundary of the nominated property, shown on accompanying USGS quad map and GIS-produced aerial image, outlines the historic Covington High School land parcel, dating to 1938.

NPS Form 10-900-a  
(8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

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### **Photographs**

All photographs of:  
Covington High School, City of Covington, Virginia [DHR ID 107-5180]  
Date: January 29, 2008  
Photographer: Michael J. Pulice  
Format: color digital images, archivally printed in grayscale  
Location of originals: DHR archives, Richmond, VA

1. Exterior, facing south
2. Exterior, facing northwest
3. Exterior, facing northwest (wider view)
4. Exterior, south (front) entrance, facing west
5. Exterior, brick detail over south entrance
6. Exterior, facing southeast
7. Exterior, rear elevation, facing northeast
8. Interior, main corridor, first floor (1939 section)
9. Interior, Curfman Hall (auditorium) foyer
10. Interior, Curfman Hall (auditorium) stage and seating
11. Interior, Room 104 (representative classroom, 1939 section)



4959 1 SE  
(CALLAGHAN)  
1185  
WHITE SULPHUR SPRINGS, W. VA. 19 MI.  
CALLAGHAN 4 MI.

4183  
47°30'

WHITE SULPHUR SPRINGS, W. VA. 19 MI.  
4.5 MI. TO VA. 85'

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Covington  
High School  
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