

VLR-12/11/84

NRHP-2/27/85

PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN AUGUSTA COUNTY, VIRGINIA, 1870-1940  
VIRGINIA HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION  
Thematic National Register Nomination Inventory Form

Historic Name: Mt. Zion Schoolhouse  
Street Address/Rt. No.: Route 747  
Vicinity of: Mt. Solon  
USGS Quad: Stokesville 7.5

Common Name: Mt. Zion Schoolhouse  
VHLC File Number: 07-1165  
Owner: Roy and Louise Sheffer  
Rt. 2, Box 35, Mt. Solon, VA

Date(s): 1876  
Original Use: Schoolhouse  
Present Use: Vacant  
Condition: Fair  
Altered X; unaltered    

Architect/Builder: Unknown  
Style: Vernacular

Physical Description:

The Mt. Zion Schoolhouse remains as the best surviving two-room schoolhouse originally built as two rooms. This class of two-room educational resources follows a fairly standard long, rectangular frame form, topped by a gable roof. In most late 19th century cases, as at Mt. Zion, the facade was on a longitudinal wall with two central doors, each leading into a classroom. The Mt. Zion example contained no flanking windows originally, since the blacked strips extended along the interior of the facade walls. Two windows pierced each gable end wall and the back wall of each classroom. A front porch provided access to both front doors. A brick flue stood against the central board partition dividing the two rooms.

After the schoolhouse was sold in 1948, the new owner, Robert Michael, remodeled the building into two apartments. His renovations brought some changes to the exterior. On the facade, the original two doors were replaced by a single door and a new window was cut on each side of the door. On the back wall, two central exterior doors were created along each side of the partition, one for each apartment. Michael also replaced the windows with ones which were slightly shorter, but kept the 6/6-style sash that had previously been used. No work was done to the older concrete foundation which had been laid when the school was moved here from further down the road ca. 1915.

Although interior changes had been made when the schoolhouse was remodeled, the building still retains a surprisingly large amount of its original finish. Woodsheathing still covers all the interior walls and forms the partition, with wide beaded board wainscoting below a simple chairrail, and unbeaded, more narrow horizontal boards above. The size of the original windows is clearly visible against the wood-sheathed walls. The wood floors do not date from the original build, but were added while the building was still being used as a school. The present owner, a former student from 1938-1942, recalls that the floors were always kept oiled.  
(continued)

Statement of Significance:

The Mt. Zion Schoolhouse remains as the only surviving two-room schoolhouse from the 1870s, the first decade of public school construction. The Trustees of the North River Free Public Schools purchased a 1½ acre tract for this school from John and Virginia Douglas on April 13, 1876. By 1880-1, Augusta County reported ten two-room schoolhouses, most situated in the larger towns such as Greenville and Fishersville. This example, however, was in a more rural section, located several miles west of the thriving village of Mt. Solon. Mt. Zion School had 65 students and an average daily attendance of 34 by 1880. The school acquired its name from its location near Mt. Zion United Brethren Church.

Besides being the oldest surviving two-room school, Mt. Zion is also the least altered of the class of two-room schoolhouses originally built as two rooms. Whereas two fine, virtually unaltered examples of the two-room schools built in two stages survive, most of the remaining examples of the original two-room form have been razed or dramatically remodeled and/or enlarged. Mt. Zion has still been altered more than the two other nominated two-room schools, but has been included as the best example of its type.

Mt. Zion School was first built further west of the present site, but was moved to its present location, closer to Mt. Zion church, by 1915. This was one of the few two-room schools to remain in use for white students through 1942. In its last years, (continued)

Geographic Data/Acreage: One-half acre

Verbal Boundary Description: Beginning at a point on the S side of VA 747 approx. 400' W of intersection with said route with VA 760; thence extending approx. 75' W along (continued)  
Boundary Justification: The bounds have been drawn to include the school building and the immediate school yard.  
UTM: 17/663700/4244630

Prepared By: Ann McCleary, Architectural Historian

Date Prepared: September 1984

Physical Description continued

Michael added partitions to create three rooms in each classroom. The new front entrance leads directly into a triangular-shaped foyer with a door to each apartment and a new central enclosed stair ascending to rooms Michael created in the previously unfinished attic. Michael also constructed a new flue in the center of each classroom. The apartments had electricity but never any running water. The building has not been altered since the Michael remodeling, and still clearly suggests its educational use.

Statement of Significance continued

only one classroom was used for grades one through four and grades five through seven were bused to Towers School, a modern brick consolidated school built in 1925. The second room provided storage space for wood and the water bucket.

Verbal Boundary Description continued

S side of VA 747; thence approx. 175' S; thence approx. 75' E; thence approx. 175' N to point of origin.

