

VLR - 3/19/09
NRHP - 6/3/09

**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 *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. 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 entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Bluff Point Graded School # 3
other names/site number DHR File Number 066-5052

2. Location

street & number 2595 Bluff Point Road not for publication N/A
city or town Kilmarnock vicinity N/A
state Virginia code VA. county Northumberland code 133 zip code 22482

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide X locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature] 4/17/09
Signature of certifying official Date
Virginia Department of Historic Resources
State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:
 entered in the National Register See continuation sheet.
 determined eligible for the National Register Signature of the Keeper _____
 See continuation sheet.
 determined not eligible for the National Register
 removed from the National Register Date of Action _____
 other (explain): _____

5. Classification

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

Category of Property (Check only one box)

- X private
public-local
public-State
public-Federal

- X building(s)
district
site
structure
object

Number of Resources within Property

Table with 2 columns: Contributing, Noncontributing. Rows: buildings (1, 0), sites (0, 0), structures (0, 0), objects (0, 0), Total (1, 0)

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: schoolhouse

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Social Sub: meeting hall

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

NO STYLE

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete block, brick
roof metal: tin
walls wood: weatherboard
other

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)

- 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.)

- 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

Architecture

Social History

Period of Significance 1912 – 1959

Significant Dates 1912, 1928, 1933, 1937, 1948, 1950s

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above) N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Unknown

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

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

Primary Location of Additional Data

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

Name of repository: Virginia Department of Historic Resources

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.468 acres

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

| Zone | Easting | Northing | Zone | Easting | Northing | Zone | Easting | Northing | Zone | Easting | Northing |
|----------|------------|----------------|-----------------|----------|----------|----------|---------|----------|----------|---------|----------|
| <u>1</u> | <u>18S</u> | <u>382154E</u> | <u>4174326N</u> | <u>2</u> | | <u>3</u> | | | <u>4</u> | | |

N/A 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.) N/A

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Helene Braatz / Secretary and Suzy Swift / Member
 organization Bluff Point Community League date October, 2008
 street & number 151 Orapax Rd. (Braatz) telephone (804) 435-2174(Braatz) (804) 435-6012 (Swift)
 city or town Kilmarnock state VA zip code 22482

Additional Documentation

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 Bluff Point Community League
 street & number 2595 Bluff Point Road, send mail to: P. O. Box 932,
 telephone none
 city or town Kilmarnock state VA zip code 22482

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. 470 et seq.). A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 36 hours per response including the 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 National Register of Historic Places, National Park Service, 1849 C St., NW, Washington, DC 20240.

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

**Bluff Point Graded School #3
Northumberland County, Virginia**

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SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

Bluff Point Graded School #3, a two-room schoolhouse built near Kilmarnock, Virginia in 1912-1913, is a simple wooden, balloon frame building with a rectangular footprint and 1,812 square-feet of interior space. The structure features a wide front porch under the roof line, on the front southwest side of the building. The porch roof covers the separate entrances leading into the two classrooms. There are clusters of three large windows on each of its four sides. Except for the 1937 kitchen and bathroom addition to the back of the building that was added after the building was no longer in use as a school, the schoolhouse looks exactly as it did when the school was in operation.¹

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

The schoolhouse is located on the east side of Bluff Point Road (Route 608). It is three miles southeast of Route 200, the link between Kilmarnock, to the south, and Burgess/Reedville, to the north. The building sits in the middle of a 1.468 acre parcel of land with a 100-foot setback off Bluff Point Road.

Like most of the land on the Northern Neck, it is flat and low, not much above sea level. The cleared lot is bound on the south and east by woods and on the north by Bluff Point Methodist Church. Secondary resources at the school once included a well and privies.

Research comparing Bluff Point Graded School #3 to other historic schoolhouses built in Northumberland County between 1900 and 1920 reveals many similarities. All the buildings were frame structures that had standing-seam metal roofs, all had outhouses, all had sash, double-hung windows, and all were built on one-half to two acre lots. Old Fairfields School (Fairfields District, ca 1910), which was razed two to five years ago, Callao School (Fairfields District, ca 1900), which was razed in the 1960's, and Bluff Point Graded School #3 (Wicomico District, ca 1912-1913) all had/have hipped roofs. Holley Graded School (Fairfield District, ca 1914) and Shiloh School (Wicomico District, ca 1906) have gabled roofs. Callao School, for white students, was a consolidated school for elementary grades 1-7 and possibly high school grades 9-11. This building burned in 1920 and was rebuilt in 1921. In 1921, a high school building was erected on the same property, and, at a later date, a bus terminal and a home economics building were added. The home economics building is the only one that is still standing, although it has been altered to house the offices of Shore Realty. ² Today, Shiloh School, a one-room facility for white students, remains architecturally intact and is being cared for and restored by Northumberland Preservation, Incorporated. Holley Graded School, for black students, and Bluff Point Graded School, for white students, are architecturally intact, privately owned, and used for community meetings and activities. They are the two schools, built in the County in the early 1900's, that are most similar in size, classroom configuration, and present day use. They were both "graded schools" with four and two classrooms respectively, allowing for children to be separated by age and grade level.

Bluff Point Graded School #3 had a rectangular footprint; one room having 625 square-feet of interior space and the other room having 675 square-feet of interior space. It is a two bay, one-story structure clad in weatherboards. When the structure was built, it had a brick chimney to vent the two wood stoves, but this was removed when work was done several years ago to repair a roof leak. The original standing-seam metal tin roof still exists except for additional tin roofing installed over the addition and where the chimney was removed.

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The design is simple, with little adornment. The 205 square-foot corner porch, under roof, is a unique feature that distinguishes the early schoolhouse from others still standing in the Northern Neck. This space provided covered shelter for each of the two exterior classroom doors and served as a communal gathering place for the children. Four 6'X6' posts support the porch, each separated by a top rail and 12 square-shaped balusters. Decorative corner brackets join each post to the porch front. The painted porch ceiling is made up of 1½" beaded, tongue-and-groove hardwood.

The building is supported by brick piers, six bricks high. There are five piers on the north and south elevations and nine on the east and west elevations. In recent years, to provide additional support, cinder blocks were in-filled between these original brick piers.

The original building had a solid interior wall between the classrooms. The wall was removed for the 1928-1929 school year, when the school was converted for grades 1-3. After the school was closed in 1933 and the building was sold to the Lower Northumberland Community League, the League commenced restoration and upkeep of the structure. This resulted in several other revisions to the building. The wood stoves were removed and replaced with a propane heater. Because of troublesome water leaks, and the fact that the chimney would no longer be used, the chimney above the roofline was removed. The opening was covered with roof decking and standing-seam metal roofing. In 1937, after the building ceased use as a school, an addition was made to the back of the building to accommodate a kitchen and bathroom. This added 305 square-feet of interior space to the original structure bringing the total to 1,812 square-feet including the porch. This addition did not affect the integrity of the original structure other than the addition of doorways into these rooms. There is no record as to when the coat closet, where students remember storing their boots, was removed and replaced by an exposed coat rack inside the double-batten front door. In 2002 the interior chimney was removed due to continuing moisture problems and the bathroom was updated to make it handicap accessible.

The building exterior is simple with 4" exposed cedar weatherboard siding in good condition; recent replacement boards on the kitchen addition match the original siding. The framing of the structure is constructed of heart pine. Plain fascia-boards and corner-boards complete the trim. Interviews with former students and people who grew up in the area indicate that the weatherboards and trim were always painted white, as they are now.

In addition to the porch, the most noticeable architectural feature are the 12 large six-over-six, double-hung sash windows each measuring 3½' x 7'. Banks of three windows, trimmed with five-inch flat boards, are located on all four facades of the building. The windows are only 36" above the floor, which allowed ample light for the children in the two classrooms within. Many of the original windows retain the imperfect glass lights that attest to their age. Nine of the twelve windows are original and have been recently restored. Three of the windows are recent replacements that were designed to match the original wood sashes. The replacement windows are located as follows: (Looking at the building from the outside) the left window of the bank of three on the west facade, the right window on the bank of three on the north facade, and the left window on the bank of three on the east facade. The replacement windows have full length screens to provide ventilation, because some of the original windows are difficult to open.

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The two exterior doors off the porch measure 3' x 7' and have a glass transom measuring 36" x 24" high. The door exiting the west side is a double-batten original, mounted with three 8" tee hinges. No record exists of when the adjacent door, exiting to the south, was replaced with one that has a plywood veneer.

The standing-seam metal hipped roof has a generous overhang designed to keep water away from the building's foundation. There are no gutters or downspouts. Due to the rusted condition of the roof, the metal was recently cleaned, primed and painted. As there is no record of the original color, the schoolhouse roof was painted red, which is similar to the roofs of many early schools in the Northern Neck.

The atmosphere of this early 20th century school remains, in spite of the fact that the interior of the building has been modernized over the years to serve as a community meeting house. With the wall between the two classrooms and the coat closet removed, the stark white 12' ceiling and walls frame the large open-meeting area measuring 1,300 square-feet. The kitchen and bathroom additions are entered through separate doors from this area.

Simple window shades cover the schoolhouse windows. The interior walls, wainscoting and trim are painted white. Each bank of three windows is trimmed with 4" flat boards and rosette corner-blocks at the top two outside corners. The walls are traditional plaster over lath. The lower 36" of the walls, below the windowsills, are wainscoted with 1½" vertical battens, capped with a chair rail and trimmed at the floor with 1" shoe molding, all original to the building. Square 9" linoleum tiles cover the original 2½" tongue-and-groove hardwood floor.

The original blackboards and oil lamps, that former students remember so vividly, have long been removed; however, in the past several years, Community League members have been acquiring school artifacts and memorabilia from 1913-1932, the time when Bluff Point Graded School #3 served as a Northumberland County school.

Endnotes:

1. Mrs. Margie Hurst Butler, Kilmarnock, Virginia, interviewed July, 2004, born 1921, attended Bluff Point School from 1928-1929. Her memory was good when questioned by 4th graders from Northumberland Elementary School.
2. Mrs. Emily Lawson, Heathsville, Virginia, interviewed December, 2008, local historian and past president of Northumberland Preservation, Incorporated.

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SUMMARY STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

This nomination describes a rural school in a unique area of Virginia. The location is cut off by the Great Wicomico River from Burgess, Reedville and other areas of Northumberland County; therefore, it was the responsibility of the local residents to provide the educational needs of their children. Bluff Point Graded School #3 is an example of one of the adaptations in school facilities that occurred in the history of rural education in Virginia.

Bluff Point School (1913-1933) existed during a time when education was in a state of evolution. Schools, during the post-Civil War era, operated semi-autonomously, often on private property, with little direction or control from local governments. In the late 1800's into the early 1900's, school districts funded the building of many one-room schools. Teachers taught all ages and grade levels from 1-7. School Trustees directed the operation of those facilities. Bluff Point Graded School #3 represents the next stage in the development of schools in rural communities. During the early 20th century, two and three-room schools were designed to accommodate primary and upper grade children in separate classrooms, thus allowing teachers to better specialize their programs to meet the needs of their students. The final stage closed the smaller schools and eventually did away with District Trustees in favor of County School Boards. Improvements in roads and transportation ushered in the era of consolidated elementary/high schools that had multiple classrooms, resources, and modernized facilities.

Bluff Point School's significance is the fact that there are no other two-room schoolhouses, built for white students, existing in this immediate area of the Northern Neck of Virginia. The school is representative of an important stage in the history of education. This was a time when members of rural communities worked together to build and maintain their early schools, provide an opportunity for their children to obtain a solid education, and provide centers for community activities. After Bluff Point Graded School #3 was closed, the care of the building and later ownership was assumed by the patrons and residents of Bluff Point Neck. During this period of time (1937 – 1959), the school was seen as a focus for community life, and Bluff Point Graded School became known as *The Community House*. The school is eligible for the Virginia Landmarks Register and National Historic Register under Criterion A in the areas of Education and Social History because of the important role it served in the Bluff Point Neck community throughout the early to middle 20th century.

Bluff Point Graded School #3 is also eligible for state and national recognition under Criterion C. Except for a few minor changes, the building remains architecturally intact. The quality of its design and construction exemplifies early 20th century features that were associated with healthy and modern school buildings. It survives as a prototype of a stage of development of rural schoolhouses, and embodies distinctive characteristics of a class of educational resources in the history of the state of Virginia.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Bluff Point Graded School #3 drew students from the approximate six square miles designated as Bluff Point Neck in the Northern Neck of Virginia. Children who began their education at Bluff Point Graded School #3 became prominent citizens in the Northern Neck. Many descendants of these students still live in the area today. Their surnames appear in leadership roles in commercial and industrial enterprises in Kilmarnock and surrounding areas. In spite of the fact that the population of the area has grown, the

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historical schoolhouse continues to be a significant influence in the lives of the residents of Bluff Point Neck. The schoolhouse has been maintained by a league of neighbors, and has served as a social gathering center, available for special, community programs that not only educate the participants, but are relevant to the local citizenry.

The significance of this school can only be appreciated by understanding the geography of its location. The Northern Neck is the northernmost of three peninsulas on the western shore of the Chesapeake Bay. Bluff Point Neck is situated in lower Northumberland County bounded by Indian Creek to the south and Dividing Creek to the north. This neck is the promontory that juts out into the Chesapeake Bay north of Windmill Point. Bluff Point Graded School #3 is located on the east side of Bluff Point Road, one of the two main roads that access Bluff Point Neck.

Surrounded on three sides by water, the area was almost totally inaccessible except by boat. Before the Robert Norris Bridge in White Stone was built in 1957, a ferry carried residents across the Rappahannock River when they traveled to Richmond and destinations to the south. The steamboat landing at Bluff Point Neck, Byrdton Landing, provided transportation to a hospital in Baltimore and was the commercial link between Bluff Point Neck, Washington D.C., and Baltimore.¹ The few "country roads were hardly trails" where horse drawn wagons were the only means of travel by land.² Limited accessibility is the main reason why the Northern Neck remained so isolated in the early 1900s.

Bluff Point Graded School #3, built in 1912-1913, replaced Bluff Point Schools #1 and #2. It is the only remaining schoolhouse of the three schools, all located in close proximity along Bluff Point Road, which were built for the education of rural white children. Another school on Bluff Point Neck, Jones Run (1881-1943), located on Ditchley Road, was established to teach the children of newly freed slaves, and is now a private home.³ Together, the Jones Run and Bluff Point Neck schools helped to fulfill Northumberland County's desire to establish a standardized education for each child on Bluff Point Neck, despite the limits of segregation.

Before the first of these schools was built, some children in the area were home-schooled by tutors or governesses.⁴ Families with money could send their children to private schools out of the area like Northumberland Academy, located just east of Heathsville, the County Seat. This, however, was not the case for the majority of families on the Neck.

The history of Bluff Point Graded School #3 would not be complete without recognizing the contributions of James 4th (his personal identification) and Felicia Kelley. Around the turn of the century, James 4th and Felicia Kelley owned significant acreage on Bluff Point Neck. Their holdings included the Lynhams tract (243 acres where the oldest home in the County, *Lynhams*, is located; circa 1678), and the Port Richland tract (218 acres). Bluff Point Schools #1, #2 and #3 were all built on lots carved from the Kelley's Port Richland holdings.⁵

Bluff Point School #1 (1877) was established only seven years after a system for public education was instituted by the Underwood Constitution of 1870, a partial requirement to be met before Virginia was accepted back into the Union.⁶ The lot on which the school was built belonged to James 4th and Felicia Kelley who kept the property title, never relinquishing it to the school trustees of the district. In 1891, ten years before Bluff Point School #1 was closed, the Kelleys deeded the lot in to local residents "to establish a place of Christian worship".⁷ In that same year (1891), Union Chapel, a simple wood frame

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building, was built on the north side of the schoolhouse. The Chapel's location was where the parking lot of Bluff Point Methodist Church is located today. To this date, there have been no archaeological excavations on that site. There is, however, an unmarked headstone located in the woods east of that site that marks the grave of a seven year old child, William Daniel Demby (1897-1904).⁸ William Demby is credited for donating the first dollar for the building of the new church, Bluff Point Methodist Church, constructed in 1924.

Not much is known about Bluff Point School #2 except that it replaced the original Bluff Point School sometime prior to 1902 for reasons unknown.⁹ The building site at the intersection of Bluff Point Road and Kent Point Road, less than a mile away from the first school, also belonged to the Kelley family. Bluff Point School #2 was also a one-room schoolhouse. Copies of the teachers' contracts from 1911 and 1912 confirm that only one teacher was hired each year.¹⁰ In the fall of 1913, Bluff Point Graded School #3 was opened. It was built on a one and a half acre plot of land, located next to Union Chapel and the original site of Bluff Point School #1. School trustees from the Wicomico District of Northumberland County, T. B. Hurst, Jr., W. H. Tignor, and Edwin Broun, purchased the site for \$100 from James 4th and Felicia Kelley on November 5, 1912.¹¹ This new school was a two-room facility where grades 1-7 were taught. Bluff Point Graded School #3 is the only one of the three Bluff Point schools that is still standing.

The location of Bluff Point Graded School #3 next to Union Chapel, later replaced by Bluff Point Methodist Church, was a gathering place for the local residents and the hub of their activities. Bluff Point citizens were drawn together to attend school, to worship, and to share in fellowship programs at the schoolhouse.

The significance of the three Wicomico District school trustees is evident from their job descriptions in the organization of the public school system at that time. They were the overseers, and were selected because they were respected residents of their magisterial district. They reported directly to the County School Superintendent, along with the trustees of the other three districts in the County: Fairfield, Heathsville, and Lottsburg. The trustees' responsibilities included supervising the building of neighborhood schools, awarding teacher contracts, arranging for transportation to Wicomico High School (built in 1908), and supplying the schools with needed books, furniture, brooms and lamp oil.¹² Each district set its own tax rate according to the number of schools needed. In 1913 the tax rate in the Wicomico District was \$.50 per \$100.¹³

Funds were rarely sufficient to meet all the expenses, so trustees often had to take bank loans or borrow money from local residents. This situation faced the Trustees in 1922 when they did not have sufficient funds to meet the teachers' payroll. School Board minutes reported that the Bluff Point Graded School #3 borrowed \$600 from the Bank of Northumberland in Heathsville, and \$600 from Mr. O. M. Whaley, Trustee. School funds were so limited that parents and local residents were also expected to supply wood for the stove and do needed repairs. The State Superintendent of Schools credited local residents for taking on this responsibility. In his 1914 Annual Report he stated, "Credit for the improvement and care of school grounds and buildings belongs chiefly to the school leagues."¹⁴ The excellent present day condition of Bluff Point Graded School #3 attests to the degree to which the community has continued this tradition of maintaining the building and its grounds for perpetual community events.

Bluff Point Graded School #3 was one of 230 schools opened in the state of Virginia in 1913, bringing the total to 11,256.¹⁵ It was one of the seven schools in the Wicomico District and one of 44 schools in

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Northumberland County.¹⁶ The total cost of construction for the schoolhouse was \$1,600.¹⁷ It is assumed that this included the cost of the land purchased from the Kelleys. "In the establishment of a new school in a neighborhood, it was usually up to the parents . . . to actually build the school. The School Board trustees usually bought the property, and a League of parents . . . supplied the labor to erect the building."¹⁸ Without evidence to the contrary, it is assumed that a League of parents built Bluff Point Graded School #3.

The State Superintendent of Public Instruction, R. C. Stearnes, put great value in larger buildings with more and larger windows, referred to as "modern ventilation systems," and in updating school programs. As stated in his 1913-1914 Annual Report, "There are certain advantages in consolidated schools which none may deny. Better grouping, longer grading periods, more specialized teaching, the inspiration of numbers, lower cost per capita, comforts of an assembly hall, the thought of a social centre, are real and tangible considerations which operate on the minds and hearts of citizens within rural circles whose radii may equal as much as five or six miles."¹⁹ Bluff Point Graded School #3 exemplified this description of an updated school facility and school programs.

With its frame construction, one-story height, porch tucked under the main roof, and large windows, Bluff Point Graded School #3 bears some resemblance to schools constructed using plans developed by the Department of Mechanical Industries at Tuskegee Institute for schools using funds from the Rosenwald Fund. The Rosenwald Fund provided matching funds to communities for the construction of schools for African Americans in Virginia between 1917 and 1932. Rosenwald school plans featured siting to capture the most daylight during the school hours and large windows to light the classrooms and provide ventilation. Bluff Point Graded School #3, however, was constructed prior to the start of the fund's active use in Virginia in 1917. The school was built for white pupils, and no connection to the Rosenwald Fund has been found. Although not influenced by Rosenwald plans, the design of Bluff Point Graded School #3 shows the widespread appeal and availability of plans for healthy and modern school buildings in the early 20th century, even in an area removed from larger population centers. Despite minor interior alterations for classroom use in 1928 and later for use by the community, the school remains a well preserved example of the rural schoolhouse of the early 20th century. It retains most of its original windows, beadboard wainscoting, floors, and trim.

Over the years, Bluff Point Graded School #3 kept pace with the State Superintendent's recommendations to lengthen the school term and improve teachers' salaries. The school term increased from 140 days in 1912 to 160 days in 1916. The starting salary for a Principal doubled from \$35 per month in 1912 to \$70 in 1922.²⁰

At Bluff Point Graded School #3, grades 1-3 were taught in one room and grades 4-7 in another. The two wood stoves and twelve large windows supplied adequate light and ventilation, and the large front porch afforded room for the children to socialize on inclement days. It is a tribute to the citizens of Bluff Point Neck who came together to provide such an updated facility. Under the State school law, compulsory education applied only to children who were 8 to 12 years old. In some cases, this was the only education those rural children would receive, and the residents of Bluff Point Neck provided the best of what was conceivable at the time.

Miss S. Enid Kelley was the first teacher to be hired at the new Bluff Point Graded School #3 as its Principal Teacher. Miss Bettie Harding was hired as Assistant Teacher on November 3rd of that same

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year. As stated in the contracts, "The teacher shall open the school at nine in the morning, give ten minutes (*of break*) at 10:30 o'clock, sixty minutes (*for lunch*) at 12:00 o'clock, and ten minutes (*of break*) at 2:30 o'clock and close the school at 4 o'clock in the afternoon." The Principal was responsible for making monthly and term reports to the Division Superintendent. Duties included starting a daily fire in the wood stove and sweeping the floors.²¹

As reported on a 1913 fifth-grade report card, the following subjects were taught: Spelling, Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, Grammar, History, Geography, and Physiology. Students were graded on average scholarship, deportment, punctuality, and rank in class, qualities that were of most value to the parents in the community. "The conduct and progress of your child in school depends largely on the attention given this report. It will indicate when the child needs encouraging in deportment or effort. Your interest will stimulate him highly."²² Like today, a parent's signature was required each grading period.

When former students of Bluff Point Graded School were interviewed, their thoughts confirmed its educational and social significance in the community. Graduates of Bluff Point Graded School #3 have fond memories of their years at the school.²³ The school days were typical of most rural schools of that era. There were approximately five students in each grade level with no more than thirty students in the whole school. Students walked dusty lanes and roads as far as three to four miles to school, and in some cases, rowed boats across inlets and creeks for part of the way. On wet days they wore boots or rubbers over their shoes because of the mud and stored them in a coat closet that has since been removed.

The teacher used a hand bell to line up students at the beginning of the school day and again to signify the end of recess. Oil lamps provided light, and the building was heated with wood stoves. The double desks, with seats attached for the next two students in front, had holes on the top for individual inkwells. (Note: An inkwell and pages from a math book were found behind a wall during a recent renovation.)

The younger children wrote on little paper pads with pencils, and older children used pens and ink. They often did "board work". Students gathered around the teacher or stood when practicing spelling or when reciting lessons. They learned by listening to other classes or by helping younger students when they were finished with their own work. The teacher punished students for bad behavior by "switching" them on their bottoms or legs with a stick, or by requiring them to stay after school for detention.

Books were small and the few illustrations were not in color. Former students particularly remember their spelling, arithmetic and geography books. Library books could be checked out on Fridays and were stored in a "home-style" bookcase with glass doors that was located in the back corner of the classroom.

Lunches were carried to school in brightly-colored tin boxes or lunch buckets. Food items included: peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, biscuits, leftovers from the night before, fruit, cookies and cake. In good weather, they ate outside on the porch steps.

Indoor plumbing was nonexistent. There were separate outside bathrooms for boys and girls. Drinking water was drawn from an outside artesian well and stored inside the classroom in a large stone jug. The students used folded paper or collapsible aluminum cups for drinking.

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There was no designated playground with special equipment. Recess included activities like climbing trees, playing with balls, and playing games like Chase, Drop-the-Handkerchief, Hide-and-Seek, and Hopscotch. When the students got tired from playing outside, they lined up to drink from an old iron pipe.

In addition to their academic responsibilities, the children helped the teacher with classroom tasks. The boys carried wood and set the fire each day, and the girls cleaned erasers, swept the floors, and straightened desks.

Lula Whittaker, who taught at the school from 1922-1924, drove a horse and buggy to school from *Salt Pond*, her home on Balls Neck. The buggy was equipped with storm curtains and a blanket, helpful during inclement weather, and was drawn by a horse named *Girl*.²⁴ The stable was located at the back of the schoolhouse. Students recalled taking ears of corn to *Girl* at lunchtime.

Past graduates have fond memories of the Halloween parties, school plays and musical programs that the parents attended in the evenings. The students performed on a raised platform that was built by the parents and stored upright against the back of the building until needed.²⁵

In an effort to consolidate state schools and centralize their control, there was a major change in their organization in 1922. An act, passed by the Virginia General Assembly on March 24th, abolished local school magisterial districts. The care of schools then became the responsibility of the counties. On August 30th of that year, for \$1 cash, the ownership of the seven Wicomico District schools and properties was transferred from the Wicomico District School Board to the Northumberland County School Board.²⁶ Snowden Cowman Hall, Sr. was one of the District Trustees who signed that Deed of Transfer.

Snowden Cowman Hall, Sr., a prominent Bluff Point Neck resident and County official, must be credited for the continual care of Bluff Point Graded School #3. He had a compelling reason to take particular interest in the curriculum and the upkeep of the building. His family lived on Bluff Point Neck and his two boys were students at the school. His eldest, Snowden Cowman Hall, Jr., graduated from the school in 1915. His youngest son, Thomas Benjamin Hall, attended the school from 1914 until he graduated in 1921. When the school opened, Snowden Cowman Hall, Sr. served as Clerk of the Wicomico District School Board. In that capacity, he helped to hire teachers and he signed their contracts. When the school closed, he was one of the trustees of the Community League that acquired the building.

While the Kelley family must be credited with the establishment of Bluff Point Graded School #3, Snowden Cowman Hall, Sr. could certainly be called the conservator of the property. Both families still reside in the area and their lives have been significantly involved with the school, the Community League and the Bluff Point Neck neighborhood.

In order to keep pace with the trend in education in the early part of the 20th century to build larger multi-classroom buildings, the Northumberland County School Board voted to close some schools, and consolidate the schools for white children.²⁷ Considering that Bluff Point Graded School #3 was so far away from the larger school in Wicomico Church, the School Board delayed its closing. Instead, the decision was made to convert the building to a one-room

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school for grades one through three. In 1928, the two classrooms were combined into one room. The older children were then transported by unpaved county roads through Balls Neck to the school located in Wicomico Church, a distance of 19½ miles.²⁸ Those who wished, were given the option to attend schools in Kilmarnock (Lancaster County), but they had to provide their own transportation. As a result, Bluff Point Graded School #3 remained open longer than other one and two-room schools in the County.

The final decision to close Bluff Point Graded School #3 came in 1932.²⁹ Improvements in roads and the advent of automobiles made it more feasible to transport the younger children to the larger multi-roomed buildings in Kilmarnock and Wicomico Church. Bluff Point Graded School #3 has the distinction of being the last one-room school for white children, on its original site, to be closed in Northumberland County.

On September 8, 1937, six years after it ceased to serve as a schoolhouse, the property was sold for \$200 cash to Snowden Cowman Hall, G. D. George, and M. E. Howe, Trustees of the Lower Northumberland Community League.³⁰ It was then that the women from Bluff Point Methodist Church raised money to add the kitchen and bathroom. After the 1937 addition, it was simply referred to as *The Community House*.³¹ On March 8, 1976, Patrick H. Conway, the sole surviving trustee of Lower Northumberland Community League, sold the property for \$10 to the trustees of Bluff Point Community League.³² Since that time, the building has been perpetually cared for, sustained and restored by members of this organization.

Bluff Point Graded School #3 and Bluff Point Methodist Church, the church that most families attended, were the anchors that brought the residents of the Ditchley, Lynhams and Byrdton neighborhoods together. Even after the school was closed, the building continued to be used for church and community functions. Because Bluff Point Methodist Church does not have a kitchen or meeting room, the building functioned as an annex. One particular social event that local residents remember fondly before it was closed was the annual Thanksgiving potluck dinner held at the schoolhouse. "The women spent most of the day there getting ready for the crowd, which they always had, no matter what the weather . . . Friends and neighbors visited; men gathered around the stove and talked; and children played."³³ Ray Lee Shehigh Reiblich Keyser, a local resident who grew up in Ditchley, remembers attending these dinners and helping to wash dishes in a large dishpan with water warmed on the wood stove. Ray Lee was also the president of the Methodist Youth Fellowship and reported that their meetings were traditionally held at the Community House. The ladies of the church used the Community House to give a bridal shower for Ray Lee Shehigh before she was married in 1948. Children of the James Conway family, local residents, remember regularly attending Vacation Bible School at the Community House throughout the 1950's.

Today Bluff Point Graded School #3 is a community landmark in the Northern Neck. The building is a memorial to the lives it touched, as well as a testament to the sacrifices made by the residents of Bluff Point Neck whose stewardship has helped it to remain a Community House in the truest sense of the term.

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Major Bibliographical References:

1. John C. Wilson, Virginia's Northern Neck – a pictorial history (Virginia Beach, VA. 1998), p. 67.
2. Minerva Mitchell Reiblich, Remembering Highlights of Happy Days (1976), p. 11, privately published, copy held by Mrs. Rae Lee Keyser, Kilmarnock, VA.
3. Carolyn Jett, "History . . . Three Hundred Years of Education", The Good Life of Northumberland, A Supplement to The Northumberland Echo, Heathsville, VA, March 1, 1984, pp. 3B-23B.
4. Helen Jean King Hall Ball, letter written in mid 1870's, p. 4, Bluff Point Community League archives.
5. Table of Tracts of Land for the Year 1913, Land Book Northumberland County, p. 76.
6. Jean Norris Booth McKenney, lecture referencing "Education in Northumberland County Post Civil War to the Present" at Northumberland Travel Council, Heathsville, VA, Century III Perspective Lecture Series.
7. Northumberland County Deed Book P, p. 349, Northumberland County Courthouse, Heathsville, VA.
8. Viola Dize Blake, long time member of Bluff Point Methodist Church, gave this information to Ray Lee Reiblich Keyser, local Bluff Point resident, when the church history was compiled.
9. Ada Kelley Hudnall, letter written on September 29, 1987 to "Jay" a church member inquiring about the history of Bluff Point Methodist Church, p. 1, Bluff Point Community League archives.
10. "Article of Agreement," (October, 1911), and "Article of Agreement," (1912), original teacher contracts provided by Ida Hall, granddaughter of Snowden Cowman Hall, Clerk of Wicomico District School Board.
11. Northumberland County Deed Book W, pp. 163,164.
12. Northumberland County School Board Minutes, 1922-1932, Callao, VA.
13. R. C. Stearnes, Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the Commonwealth of Virginia, (Richmond, 1913), p. 76, Library of Virginia, Richmond.
14. Ibid., p.21.
15. Ibid., p. 62.
16. Joseph D. Eggleston, Annual report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the Commonwealth of Virginia, (Richmond, 1911), p. 485, Library of Virginia, Richmond.
17. Stearnes., p. 72.
18. Jett, pp. 3B-23B.

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19. Stearnes, p. 20.

20. "Article of Agreement," (October 22, 1913-1922), original teacher contracts provided by Ida Hall, granddaughter of Snowden Cowman Hall, Wicomico District Trustee.

21. Ibid.

22. Fifth Grade Report (November 3, 1913 – April 30, 1914) of Snowden Cowman Hall, Jr., document provided by Ida Hall, granddaughter of Snowden Cowman Hall, Sr., Wicomico District Trustee.

23. "Historic Bluff Point School Project", (2004-2005), Northumberland Elementary School, oral histories as told to 4th grade students by Margie Hurst Butler, Linda Lankford Adkins, and Elinor Hall Haynie, Bluff Point Community League archives.

24. Ada Kelley Hudnall, "Still Sits the Schoolhouse By the Road" (Vol. XXII-1985), p.35, The Bulletin of the Northumberland County Historical Society, Heathsville, VA.

25. Ibid.

26. Northumberland County Courthouse, Deed Book CC, p. 695.

27. Jett, pp. 3B-23B.

28. Northumberland County School Board Minutes, September 9, 1931.

29. Hudnall, p. 35.

30. Northumberland County Courthouse, Deed Book OO, pp. 243, 244.

31. Interview with McCue Conway, April 14, 2008, grandson of Patrick Henry Conway, sole surviving Trustee of Lower Northumberland Community League, Bluff Point Community League archives.

32. Northumberland County Courthouse, Deed Book 180, pp. 347, 348.

33. Reiblich, p. 37.

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Verbal Boundary Description

The boundaries of this property correspond to Northumberland County legal tax parcel #51-1-182. Refer to Bluff Point Methodist Church survey, Parcel B ("1 story frame community house and old school"), Tomlin & Keyser, December 6, 2005. This being the same property described in the Deed of 1912 when Felicia and James 4th Kelley sold the property to Trustees of Wicomico District of Northumberland County (Deed Record W, pp. 163,164). This same parcel of land is again described on the Deed of 1976 when the sole surviving Trustee of Lower Northumberland Community League sold it to Trustees of Bluff Point Community League (Deed Record #180, pp. 347, 348).

“ The grantor grants and conveys ... the tract of land in Wicomico Magisterial District of Northumberland County, Virginia, containing two (2) acres of land, more or less...”

On both of the above mentioned deeds, the property boundaries are described as follows:

“Commencing at center of county road leading from Kilmarnock to Byrdton, a corner with land of Union Chapel running eastwardly with said land and beyond to a small marked gum tree; thence southwardly to a marked tree on a ditch bank; thence westwardly along said ditch to county road, thence northwardly along said road to the beginning.”

Boundary Justification

The 1.468 acres noted on Parcel B of the Bluff Point Methodist Church survey and the wording in the 1912 and 1976 deeds is the historic property associated with Bluff Point Graded School #3.

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PHOTOGRAPH LIST

The following information is the same for all the photographs:

Name of property: Bluff Point Graded School #3

File number: Department of Historic Resources File No. 066-5052

Location: Northumberland County, Virginia

Photographer: Charles R. Lawson, CPP/ The Highlander Studios, Kilmarnock, Virginia

Date Taken: October 14, 2008

Photo 1. The school building as well as Bluff Point United Methodist Church.

Photo 2. View of the building from the northwest corner.

Photo 3. View of the building, facing east.

Photo 4. View of the building, facing east.

Photo 5. View of the building, facing north.

Photo 6. View of the rear of the building, facing west.

Photo 7. View of the building from the southeast corner.

Photo 8. View of the building's interior, facing the south end.

Photo 9. View of the building's interior, facing the south end.

Photo 10. View of the building's interior, facing the south end.

Photo 11. View of the building's interior, facing the north end.

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APPENDIX A
Students and Their Vocations

****Note: Only a few of names of the following students are verified by documentation (see dates following names). Most names have been reported by Senior Citizens of the Bluff Point Community who believed they attended Bluff Point School in the years between 1913 and 1932. Vocations were provided by long time residents of Bluff Point Neck: McCue and M.J.Conway, Ernest Delano, Jean Dize, Virginia Kelley, W.R. and Ray Lee Keyser, Steve Proctor, and Fran Warren.**

Cecil **Ball**

Earla **Ball**

Edith **Ball**

Neville **Ball** – commercial fisherman, farmer

Gertrude **Barrette**

Ethel **Boatman** Saunders (1914-1920)

Gladys **Boatman** Ashburn (1918-1924) - homemaker

Herbert **Boatman** – waterman

Louise **Bussels** Pugh

Ruby **Bussels** Pugh

Luther **Chitwood** - waterman

Edna **Coles** Bonner - homemaker

Goldie **Coles** - waterman

Delma **Conway** (1914-1916) - teacher

James Neville **Conway**, "Buster" (1912-1916) - waterman

Patrick Henry **Conway** (1913-1919) - waterman

Wayland **Crowther** – owner of Kilmarnock heating and air conditioning business and grocery store

William Arthur **Dize** (1918 – 1925) - Metropolitan Policeman, waterman

George **Dize** – farmer, waterman

John Henry **Dize** – Menhaden fish boat Captain, Metropolitan Policeman

J. P. **Dize** – Menhaden fish boat Captain

Viola **Dize** Blake – Post Office worker, and later a saleslady at Dawson's Apparel (Kilmarnock),

Emily **Gaskins** Delano – homemaker, helped run her husband's restaurant in Wicomico Church, saleswoman at a bookstore

Lydia **Gaskins** Lester- homemaker, family business: Lester's Stone and Gravel (Wicomico Church)

Sarah **Gaskins** – housekeeper at Tides Inn (Irvington)

Gordon D. **George** – Pastor Claybrook Church (Weems) and Culpeper Baptist Church, worked in the local newspaper office (*Rappahannock Record*)

Luther **George** - member of the Rescue Squad, farmer, waterman

Elinor **Hall** Haynie (1918-1921) – teacher at middle and high schools in Northumberland and Lancaster Counties

Eugene **Hall** – teacher, Principal of Kilmarnock High School, professor of a West Virginia College

Richard Henry Dulany **Hall**, Jr., "Hal" - commercial fisherman, farmer

Snowden Cowman **Hall**, Jr. (1909-1915) – doctor

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Thomas Benjamin (Ben) **Hall** (1914-1921) – principal of White Stone High School
Winnie **Hall** Proctor – teacher, bookkeeper, secretary
Robert Gawen **Henderson** – owner of Henderson’s Cleaners (Kilmarnock)
George **Hilburt**
Carroll **Hurst** – fuel oil distributor
Charlotte **Hurst** Webb – Post Office Mistress, secretary at Dutton Law Office (White Stone)
Helen **Hurst** - teacher
Lucille **Hurst** Parrish - teacher
Marjorie **Hurst** Butler (1928, 1929) – secretary to the United States Sec. of Labor, worked for the Federal Government
Ada **Kelley** Hudnall - teacher in Lancaster and Northumberland Counties
Amy **Kelley** Culver – teacher, owner of several White Stone Beach businesses
Ardis **Kelley** Connors - nurse
Averill **Kelley** - nurse
Genevieve **Kelley** Adams - homemaker
Gertrude **Kelley** Harvey – homemaker, owner of Cobb’s Hall (Kilmarnock)
James **Kelley** (1917 - 1924) – owner of Kelley’s Seafood business (Kilmarnock)
Lydia **Kelley** Connelly - homemaker
Edwin **Kimble** - barber
Linda **Lankford** Adkins (1926-1930) – she and her husband owned Rappahannock Oyster Co. (Kilmarnock)
Jeanette **Lewis** King
Elizabeth **Mitchell** – factory worker
Annie **Pugh** Hoar – homemaker
Ernest **Pugh** – waterman
George **Pugh** – waterman, manager of a private club
Jane **Pugh** Hoar – homemaker
Leonard **Pugh** - waterman
Lester **Redd** – barber
Johnny **Rock** – food distributor (Lance Products)
Altavieve **Sanford** - homemaker
Edwin **Shehigh** – waterman, worked on a fishing boat
Elias **Shehigh** - waterman
Evelyn **Shehigh** - nurse
Francis Jahu **Shehigh** - waterman
Harriet **Shehigh** Weisbecker – played the organ at Union Chapel (Bluff Point Road)
James **Shehigh** - waterman
Joseph Dewey **Shehigh** – worked on a fishing boat
Margaret **Shehigh** Hurst - homemaker
Mildred **Shehigh** Gibson - nurse
Charles **Voss** - carpenter
Edwin **Voss** – carpenter, did small repair jobs
Franklin **Voss** - painter
Howard **Voss** – worked in a shipyard in Newport News
William **Voss** – building contractor

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**APPENDIX B
Teachers at Bluff Point Graded School #3**

** Names appear on copies of signed contracts in Bluff Point Community League Archives or in Northumberland County School Board minutes (1922-1932), Callao, VA.

| <u>School Year</u> | <u>Name</u> | <u>Position</u> |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1913-1914 | S. Enid Kelley Bettie Harding | Principal Assistant |
| 1915-1916 | Margaret Carter Claire Hunton | Principal Assistant |
| 1916-1917 | Margaret Carter Claire Hunton | Principal Assistant |
| 1917-1918 | S. Enid Kelley Claire Hunton | Principal Assistant |
| 1922-1923 | Lula Wittaker | Principal |
| 1923-1924 | Amy Kelley | Assistant |
| 1925-1926 | Marion Douglas | Principal |
| 1927-1928 | Emma Beane Nellie Gordon Chase | Principal Assistant |
| 1928-1929 | Margie V. Dameron | Principal |
| 1929-1930 | Myrtle Crowther | Assistant |

Lola Dunnaway, Elizabeth Hall Bear¹ - Year and Position not given

Lucy (Mary) Chase² – Year and Position not given

Resources

1. Mrs. Stuart A. Blackwell, "A History of Wicomico High School 1908-1953", publication presented on July 3, 1988, at a reunion of its friends, Bulletin of the Northumberland County Historical Society.
2. Bulletin of the Northumberland County Historical Society, Vol. V – No. 1, 1968, pp. 73-74.

V.S.H. 608
BLUFF POINT ROAD
50' WIDE

BOUNDARY LINE ADJUSTMENT
AND MERGER SURVEY
FOR CONVEYANCE TO
BLUFF POINT METHODIST CHURCH

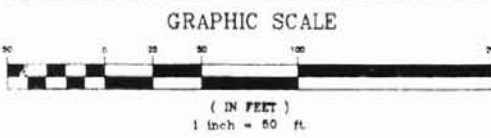
WICOMICO MAGISTERIAL DISTRICT
NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY, VIRGINIA

APPROVED BY:

SUBDIVISION AGENT
NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY, VIRGINIA
DATE:

MAGNETIC MERIDIAN DB. 219 FC. 98

51-1-75



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
12/7/05
PHILLIP L. KEYSER
CERTIFICATION No. 2327
LAND SURVEYOR

I CERTIFY THIS PERIMETER SURVEY IS CORRECT TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEF SUBJECT TO EASEMENTS, SERVITUDES AND COVENANTS OF RECORD.

DATE: DECEMBER 6, 2005 SCALE: 1"=50'

TOMLIN & KEYSER
P.O. BOX 99, V.S.H. 200
BURGESS, VIRGINIA 22432
DRAWN BY: KLN JOB NO. NW 401-B
CHECKED BY: PLK FLD. BK. PG.
SECT. NO. 51-1-181 DATA JOB
DRAWING NAME: BLUFFCHURCH

Bluff Point Graded School #3 Northumberland County, Va. #51-1-5052

