

VLR- 3/14/01 NRHP- 7/5/01

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

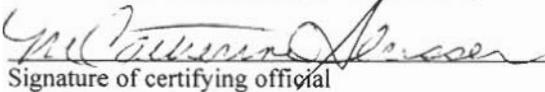
historic name: Orange High School
other names/site number: Belleview School(VDMR #275-5002)

2. Location

street & number: 224 Belleview Avenue not for publication _____
city or town: Town of Orange vicinity _____
state: Virginia code: VA county: Orange code: 137 Zip: 22960-1255

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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 of certifying official Date May 3, 2001

Virginia Department of Historic Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting or other official 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
- See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper _____

Date of Action _____

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**

Period of Significance: **1911-1951**

Significant Dates: **1911 and 1925**

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above): _____

Cultural Affiliation: _____

Architect/Builder: **Charles M. Robinson**

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(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 # _____

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: _____

10. Geographic Data

Acreage of Property: 2.56 acres

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

Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	17 752450	4237340	2	_____	_____
3	_____	_____	4	_____	_____

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: Mary Harding Sadler with Jean McRae and Peter McDearmon Witt	date: January 15, 2001
organization: Sadler & Whitehead Architects, PLC	telephone: 804-231-5299
street & number: 800 West 33 rd Street	zip code: 23225-3533
city or town: Richmond	state: Virginia

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: David S. White, Belleview L.P.	telephone: 804-782-9444
street & number: 1553 East Main Street	zip code: 23219
city or town: Richmond	state: Virginia

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.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Continuation Sheet
Section 7 Page 1

Orange High School
Orange County, Virginia

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

Orange High School is comprised of two brick buildings and their park-like setting. The property lies within a neighborhood of frame four-square houses and bungalows, about four blocks northwest of the center of Orange, the county's seat of government. These two buildings, which front on Belleview Avenue, once served the Orange County school system and have been rehabilitated as apartments for the elderly. Both are Classical Revival in style. The older 1911 Orange High School, two-and-a-half stories tall with a monumental Doric portico, was designed by well-known institutional architect Charles M. Robinson. A square hall and a double cast-iron stair organize the building. The one-story 1925 annex and its 1925 and 2000 additions have a more institutional aesthetic. This later building was based on a Virginia Department of Education standard plan. At its center is a double-height clerestoried space with a stage. While the 1911 building is an imposing block announced with a projecting portico modeled on the Temple of Albano, the 1925 annex presents a low rectangular mass whose entry is recessed behind an arched opening.

ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS

1911 Building

The former high-school building is a cube-like brick mass set on a raised concrete basement. A straight parapet hides the low-pitched gable roof. The exterior walls are faced in pressed red brick laid in American bond. With its two-and-one-half-story portico and spacious site, the original high school building asserts the importance of public school education by recalling the dignity of a county courthouse. The focus of the entrance façade is a pedimented, *araeostyle*, Roman Doric portico with two-story columns raised on plain pedestals. The portico replicates the order of the Temple of Albano which was Thomas Jefferson's model for Pavilion IV at the University of Virginia's Academic Village.¹ Roland Freart de Chambray's seventeenth-century definition of the order aptly describes the high school's portico:

That which is most worthy of remark, and indeed to be admir'd in this Composition, is the richness, and extraordinary form of his Modillions, which lying plumb over the Triglyphs, and being as it were a kind of Capitals to them, produce a marvelous effect, which is yet much augmented by those great Roses of the Sofitto or Eaves of the Corona, which having an extraordinary projecture, render the Order altogether Gigantique; and this is properly that which they term the Grand Maniere." (John Evelyn, trans. *A Parallel of the Antient Architecture with the Modern*, London: 1664, pp.20-21).

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Orange High School
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The school's double-hung wood windows are symmetrically placed, grouped in pairs on the five-bay front and rear (east and west) elevations and in threes on the (north and south) sides. Above the raised basement, which provides a base for the *piano nobile*, the window bays are two-stories tall, enhancing the verticality announced by the massive portico. Simple stuccoed panels separate the two floors. Beneath the portico the paneled entry doors with sidelights and transom are protected by a bracketed wooden pediment. Above the doorway a patterned fanlight tops the paired windows lighting the interior stair. The brick arch framing these windows springs from square cast-stone blocks. On the rear (west) elevation the central projecting bay encloses smaller rooms on the interior and provides service entries.

The interior of the older school building follows a clearly ordered design. The entry vestibule leads directly to a broad cast iron stair and up to the central hall where the stair doubles before continuing upward. This handsome stair, naturally lit from the arched second floor window, is the most significant interior feature. Four corner classrooms open from the central space on the two main floors. At the center rear was the combined principal's office and library. The glazed entry door and paired windows opening from this space bring daylight to the center hall. On the second floor the center hall once provided a common assembly space, which could be enlarged by opening double doors at the rear (above the principal's office). The basement houses four apartments; originally this area held two classrooms, the mechanical room, and restrooms. Roof failure combined with the building's thirty-year vacancy resulted in the loss of much of the building's interior finishes and trim. The cast iron stair, the transomed doorways, and bearing walls are the primary features of its historic interior. Fortunately the building's slow demise was arrested when the property's current owner recently completed a total rehabilitation.

The Annex

The adjacent one-and-a-half story annex building is located south of the 1911 high school. Larger in footprint than the earlier building, the annex is sited at the southeast corner of Newton Street and Belleview Avenue. The annex building is a symmetrical structure with six original classroom areas and a central, two-story, hip-roofed gymnasium/auditorium, into which all classrooms once opened. This grand space with its clerestory windows, pressed tin ceilings, and molded proscenium arch now serves as spacious parlor for the elderly residents of the recently converted apartments.

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Orange High School
Orange County, Virginia

In 1932, one-story wings were added to the annex's north and south sides in a stripped-down approximation of the Classical Revival style. Recently an addition to the rear of the U-shaped annex created a protected courtyard for the building's new residents. Despite its later alterations, the annex has a unified composition and is a good representation of the state's standard for school architecture in the early twentieth century.

The entry façade is a five-part composition in brick with cast-stone ornament and wood trim. The center entry door and its multi-light transom sit within an arched vestibule flanked by brick pilasters. Groups of five 9-over-9 double-hung windows dispose symmetrically on either side of the entry. The building's corners are anchored by projecting pavilions articulated with brick pilasters framing flush panels with cast stone corner blocks. As with the adjacent 1911 structure, the building rests on a cast concrete plinth, capped with a soldier course. The walls terminate with a stepped parapet above the wooden cornice. These simple motifs are continued on the side elevations (north and south), both in the original annex building and in the two 1932 wing extensions. Ranges of double-hung windows alternate with pilaster-framed brick panels. The composition is carefully balanced though clearly driven by function.

On the interior the original classrooms (now apartments) and office flank the entry vestibule. The focus of the plan is the two-story space of the gymnasium/auditorium which features a stage framed by an arched proscenium at its north end. Pressed tin ceilings and maple floors remain in the entry vestibule and in the gymnasium/auditorium space. The two wings are organized by single-loaded corridors that open onto the enclosed courtyard space.

Setting

Both the 1911 building and the 1925 annex are set back from the street in contrast to nearby houses. Enclosing the school property is an established neighborhood of frame four-squares and bungalows. Originally an independent kitchen and cafeteria stood on the school grounds, along with playing fields for various sports. The kitchen building has been demolished and the playing fields are obscured due to years of disuse. An April 20, 1912 newspaper account describes the original school and its setting in glowing terms.

It is conceded by the most prominent educators and architects of the State that the Orange High School building is one of the most complete school buildings in Virginia. With a spacious porch supported by two Doric columns, it has an impressive approach... The boys are now enjoying the use of the recently graded baseball diamond... Two tennis courts have been laid out, and twenty shade and fruit trees have recently arrived. A California privet to inclose [sic] the grounds has been donated by an enthusiastic friend of public education... (*The Orange Review*).

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Orange High School
Orange County, Virginia

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Orange High School opened its doors in 1911 to serve elementary, middle, and high school students. The county built the adjacent annex in 1925 to accommodate the growing student population and added two wings in 1932. The school complex served the county's Madison District until 1970. A single principal directed activities in both buildings.² This elementary and secondary school facility replaced a one-room schoolhouse, which, along with several, small, private institutions, had served the community during the nineteenth century. The Orange High School property meets *National Register Criteria A* because of its role in Orange County's public education. This was the first public school building constructed at the county seat. The original 1911 high school is a good example of the work of Charles M. Robinson, the state's premier school architect from 1908 to 1932. The less prominent 1925 annex, a product of architects with the State Department of Education, exemplifies an early twentieth century school prototype found throughout the Commonwealth. Both school buildings meet *National Register Criteria C* for their notable architecture. During the four-decade period of significance, which began in 1911 with the school's opening and ended fifty years ago, the school served Orange County's students.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Charles M. Robinson

Charles M. Robinson (1867-1932),³ probably the best known of Virginia's institutional architects, designed the 1911 school building. Born in Hamilton, Virginia and son of architect James T. Robinson, Charles Robinson apprenticed with neoclassicist John Kevan Peebles of Norfolk. He became an independent architect in 1901, working first in Altoona and Pittsburg, Pennsylvania. His Richmond office opened 1906 in downtown's Mutual Building at Ninth and Main Streets. Robinson's prolific career was focused on the design of public institutions throughout the Commonwealth. From the start of his practice Robinson sought to be architect for the state's normal schools. His effort first bore fruit in 1908 when he won the bid to develop the master plan and building designs for what is now James Madison University. In his career he designed scores of school buildings for cities including Richmond, Petersburg, Danville, Roanoke, and Portsmouth. By 1920, when he applied for architectural certification, Robinson claimed he had designed 2,000 institutional buildings. He later became a member of the Virginia State Board for Examination and Certification of Architects.

In 1909, Robinson was commissioned to remodel the Orange County Courthouse, several blocks from the Orange High School site. In the same period Robinson was engaged in designing the

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first building of the State Normal School for Women, now Mary Washington College, in nearby Fredericksburg. Robinson used the Corinthian order at Monroe Hall (1911), one of the College's most prominent buildings. Its design closely resembles the smaller scaled Orange High School which was built in the same year. Orange High School stands out among Robinson's secondary school designs because of its monumental Doric portico.

In his practice Charles M. Robinson affiliated with a number of other architects including his son Charles C. Robinson, Benjamin A. Ruffin, and J. Binford Walford. The best known of the architects he worked with was Marcellus Wright, with whom he designed the Acca Temple Mosque (1925, Monroe Park Historic District) in Richmond. Robinson's work included private contracts for hotels, churches, and hospitals, yet he is most often remembered for the landmark buildings he designed for school boards across the Commonwealth. One of his last commissions was the Art Deco design for Thomas Jefferson High School (1930, National Register of Historic Places). His genius was employing standard plans and interior furnishings while dressing each building's envelope in a contextually appropriate style. Robinson died in 1932. Fortunately a complete collection of his firm's drawings remains intact, including those for the 1911 Orange High School.

Orange High School's Early Years

Orange County purchased a four-acre site on Missionary Ridge for construction of the Robinson design. This open field surrounded by farmland had previously been used for tent revivals. The \$16,892 contract to build the school was awarded in April 1911 to Charlottesville Lumber Corporation.⁴ Construction of the Orange High School represented a significant step in the county's public education system, as noted in the 20 April 1912 special edition newspaper that commemorated completion of the school's first year:

There were very few High Schools five years ago, outside of the cities; now there are 432 in the state. Orange has responded to her share of this work. The people of the community and the school officials by their liberal contributions and untiring efforts made the beautiful and well equipped building which now stands on an eminence in the northern part of Orange a possibility...(*The Orange Review*)

The ten-room Orange High School had 320 students in its first year. Construction of the school was part of the town's overall reconstruction following a disastrous 1908 fire. The new school replaced a one-story, one-room frame building two miles north of town.⁵ Somerset High School Principal Margaret Martin rallied community support for the new school when she declared:

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Orange High School
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Show me that man who would purchase a farm in a community with only a one room school in view. People are leaving the country daily to give their children the advantages of a High School education...Every one born during this progressive age has the same fighting chance, and if an obstacle is put in his way to rob him of an education that pupil has been robbed of its birthright. (*The Orange Review*, 1912)

During the school's first decades most children arrived on foot or horseback from town or via wagon from outlying farms. Wagons served as primitive school buses with parallel benches and heavy cloth curtains which could be lowered in rain or cold (Thomas, p. 56).

Orange School 1925-2000

The school's expansion in 1925 with an adjacent annex created new classrooms for an increased student body, a combined gymnasium/auditorium, and a more accommodating library (the previous library shared space with the principal's office). By the 1950s growth in the student population required that a new Orange High School be built off-site. The Orange School then housed students in grades 1 through 7. In 1970 the school was replaced with new elementary classrooms on a remote site. Though the 1911 building was vacant and the annex underutilized for almost thirty years the old school continues to be regarded as a landmark.

Townsppeople protested when the county announced plans to demolish the 1911 building in the late 1990s. Responding to the community's strong sentiments the county sought private developers to rehabilitate the historic school property. In its request for proposals the county recognized that : "Both school buildings...are central features of an intact residential area which abuts Orange's downtown commercial district." (the Downtown Orange Historic District is listed on the National Register of Historic Places). The county supported a proposal that the property be rehabilitated as apartments for the elderly. Rehabilitated in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, the newly re-occupied buildings maintain their architecturally significant features and materials at both interior and exterior. Most importantly, the Orange High School property has been preserved as a community asset and a repository, through its residents, of county history and lore.

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Orange High School
Orange County, Virginia

Endnotes

- ¹ Calder Loth identified the Classical Order applied in the design of the 1911 building.
- ² One of the school's principals, Paul Slayton, provided critical information on the school for the purpose of this application.
- ³ Information concerning Mr. Robinson's career is derived from *The Virginia Architects 1835-1955* by John E. Wells and Robert E. Dalton (Richmond, VA: The New South Press, 1977), pp. 377-386. David Robinson, the architect's great-grandson, generously shared critical information in the course of several January 2001 conversations. It was through him that the original drawings were located. Copies of project drawings were provided courtesy of Boynton Rothschild Rowland Architects, Richmond, VA.
- ⁴ *Manufacturers Record*, April 20, 1911, p. 74 (courtesy of John E. Wells).
- ⁵ Information derived from unpublished notes of Paul Slayton, former principal, Belleview School.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Evelyn, John, trans. *A Parallel of the Antient Architecture with the Modern*. London: 1664.

Guide to Orange County. Orange County, Virginia

Manufacturers Record, Exponent of America (20 April 1911): 74.

Orange Review, The (20 April 1912)

Robinson, David. "Charles M. Robinson and the Richmond Public Schools." Unpublished manuscript in the collections of the Library of Virginia (n.d.).

Slayton, Paul. Unpublished notes of Paul Slayton, former principal, Belleview School.

Thomas, William H. B. *Orange, Virginia story of a Courthouse Town*. Verona, VA: McClure Press, 1972.

Wells, John E., and Robert E. Dalton. *The Virginia Architects 1835-1955*. Richmond, VA: The New South Press, 1977.

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Orange High School
Orange County, Virginia

Verbal Boundary Description

All that property designated by Orange County as parcels 44A3000500220 and 44A300050022A.

Boundary Justification

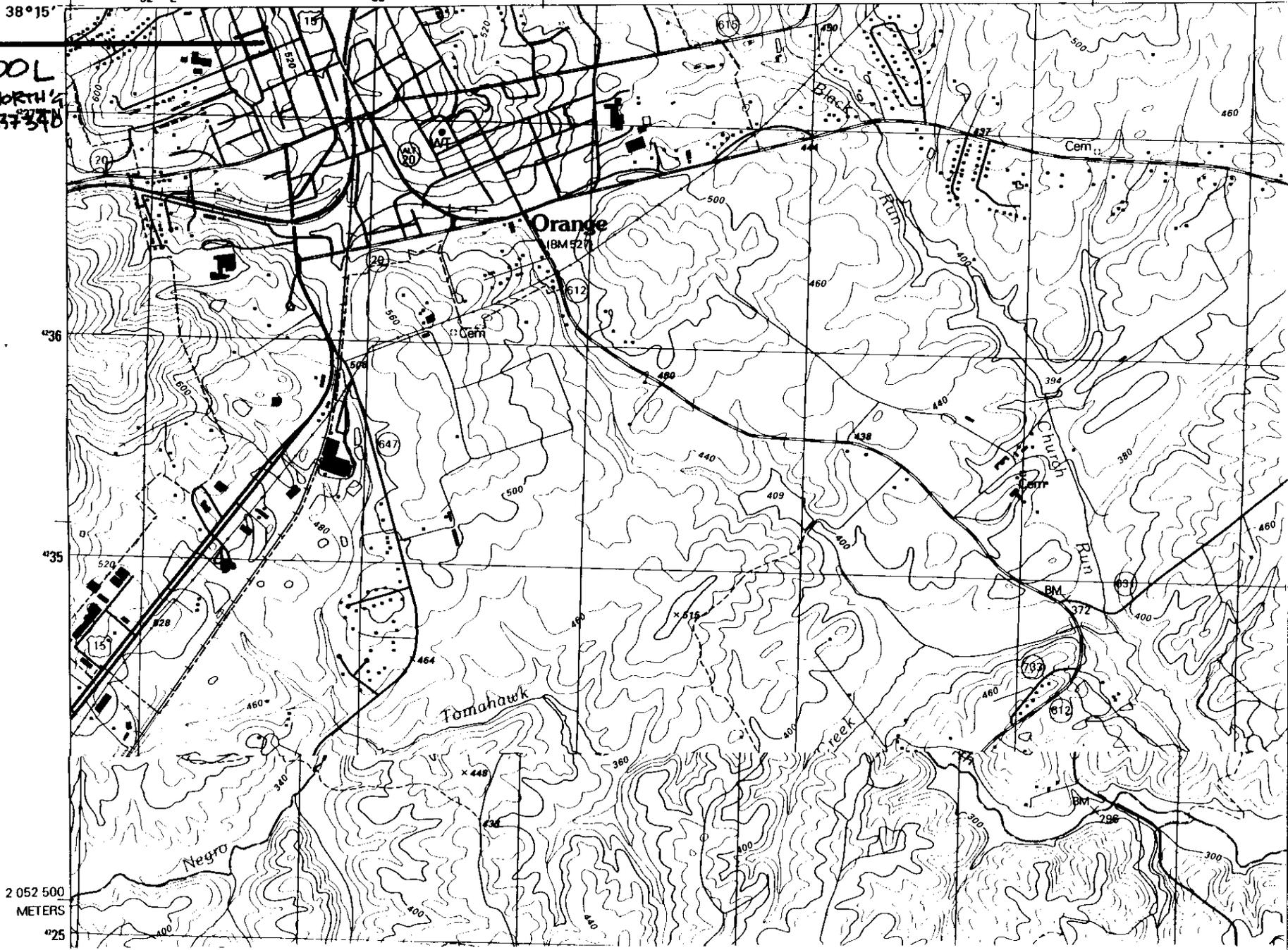
The boundary includes the two parcels containing the 1911 Orange High School Building and the adjacent 1925 annex building. The schools operated together, under the direction of one principal from 1911 to 1970. The property was not divided until the county sought to sell the lot containing the 1911 building in 1998. The county and the present property owner ultimately agreed that both buildings would be rehabilitated; hence the parcels were reunited as a single property.

ORANGE QUADRANGLE
UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
VIRGINIA

COMMONWEALTH
DIVISION OF MINER

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ORANGE
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