

VLR 9/11/02  
NR 11/21/02

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 Hamilton Schoolhouse

other names/site number ~~80-21~~ # 81-21

**2. Location**

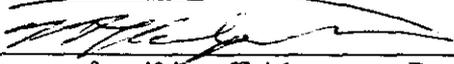
street & number State Route 611 South Buffalo Road not for publication N/A

city or town Lexington vicinity X

state Virginia code VA county Rockbridge code 163 Zip 24450

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property 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. )

 11/4/02  
Signature of certifying official Date  
**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:  other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_  
 entered in the National Register  
 See continuation sheet.  
 determined eligible for the  
 National Register  
 See continuation sheet. \_\_\_\_\_  
 determined not eligible for the National Register Signature of Keeper  
 removed from the National Register Date of Action \_\_\_\_\_

**5. Classification**

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

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

**Category of Property** (Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/>	buildings
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	structures
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	objects
<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/>	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: <u>Education</u>	Sub: <u>schoolhouse</u>
<u>Religion</u>	<u>church</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

**Current Functions** (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>vacant/ not in use</u>	Sub: _____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

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**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification** (Enter categories from instructions)

Other: Log building

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**Materials** (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation field stone

roof metal: steel

walls wood: log

other

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

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**8. Statement of Significance**

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

- 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.

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**Areas of Significance** (Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture, Education

Period of Significance 1823-1928

Significant Dates 1823  
1870  
1910

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder unknown

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: VA Department of Historic Resources

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of Property approx. one acre

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

Zone Easting Northing	Zone Easting Northing
1 <u>17 623685 4173450</u>	2 _____
3 _____	4 _____
<input type="checkbox"/> 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.)

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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name/title: Michael J. Pulice, Architectural Historian

Organization: Virginia Department of Historic Resources date June 27, 2002

street & number: 1030 Penmar Ave SE telephone 540-857-7586

city or town Roanoke state VA zip code 24013

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**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)

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**Property Owner**

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(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name John W. Johnston, trustee

street & number Route 3 Box 299 telephone 540-463-4829 or 464-5382

city or town Lexington state VA zip code 24450

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**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.

**United States Department of the Interior  
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**National Register of Historic Places**

**Hamilton Schoolhouse  
Rockbridge Co. Virginia**

**Continuation Sheet**

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**Summary Description**

Hamilton schoolhouse is a single pen log structure situated on a small tract containing slightly more than one acre on the east bank of South Buffalo Creek and fronts on State Route 611, which bisects the property. The interior consists of whitewashed, exposed log walls, flush pine boards on the ceiling, and unfinished pine floorboards. The only furnishings are pews and a podium that have survived in good condition from the nineteenth century. The building is very well preserved and its historic setting is virtually undisturbed.

**Architectural Description**

The schoolhouse consists of a one room, one-story log structure, 22' x 24', built in 1823 of hand-hewn, yellow-poplar, half-dovetail corner-notched logs from the adjacent woodland.<sup>1</sup> The logs are chinked with a lime and river sand mixture, coated with a heavy limewash. The log walls are original except for the bottom course on each elevation, which was replaced in 1950. A shallow foundation of field stone or river cobbles supports the walls. The original chestnut shingle roof was replaced with green-painted, hand-crimped, standing-seam galvanized steel in the late 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The roof looks brand new in an old photograph probably taken around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The original metal roof has been regularly painted and thus has been preserved to this day. The gable ends are covered with beaded weatherboards that are of an early date, if not original. A small brick chimney in the center of the roof line was added in the early 20th century, replacing the former tin flue that served a wood stove that has since been removed.

There are two windows each on the north and south walls. A fifth window at the rear of the building, directly behind a raised platform or pulpit, may have been added later than the other windows. The double-hung six-over-six sash windows have muntin profiles typical of the mid- to late nineteenth century, but in the old photograph taken around the turn of the century, there are different windows in place. The two-light wide sash shown in the photograph appear to have been awkwardly retrofitted into the openings. Prior to the first windows being installed, the single-leaf batten shutters alone probably sealed the openings. The present rough, circular-sawn batten door is said to have replaced a similar, earlier door in 1950.<sup>2</sup>

The logs are exposed in the interior and have received numerous coats of whitewash over the years. The ceiling consists of whitewashed flush ceiling boards nailed directly to the rafters and crossties. Plain wood trim adorns the entrance and windows. The machine-planed pine floorboards are uneven in places and appear to have been in place many years. There has never been any plumbing or wiring installed in the building.

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**Statement of Significance**

Hamilton Schoolhouse is significant at the local level under Criterion A in the area of education because it represents old ways of life in the remote, mountainous region of southwestern Virginia. It also reflects the self-sustaining independence of the tiny South Buffalo Creek community, as well as the hardships of rural life and the difficulties that were once encountered in securing an education in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. It is also significant under Criterion C because it represents a method of log construction that is all but forgotten. It is the last of the old log field schools built before the Civil War in the area and perhaps in all of Virginia. It is an exceedingly rare surviving precursor of the many log schoolhouses that would be built throughout the south in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Indeed, terribly few of the later examples have survived. The structure has survived the ravages of time with few alterations, in part because of its design and construction based on long-established traditions, and moreover, its important place in the community. Considering the extreme rarity of schoolhouses of this vintage and level of integrity, the Hamilton Schoolhouse is exceptionally worthy of recognition and preservation.

**Historical Background**

Robert Hamilton, whose father, a migrant from the northern Shenandoah Valley, was one of the early settlers in the area, inherited the farm on South Buffalo creek in 1807. In 1808 Robert married Sally Letcher from the Timber Ridge community, the daughter of Jon and Mary Houston Letcher. Mary was a cousin of General Sam Houston of Texas fame. The Hamiltons, after several years and the birth of seven children, recognized the need for a school and a place of worship. Citizens of the community began making detailed plans for a suitable building and Robert Hamilton conveyed approximately one acre of land to William Murphy and William Henderson, as trustees, for the building to be used as a house of worship and a school. Construction began immediately and the plain log structure was completed in the summer of 1823. According to tradition, it was built by a William H. Letcher.<sup>3</sup>

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The building was used more extensively as a school than a place of worship and it became known as the Hamilton Schoolhouse. Limited funds were provided by the Literary Fund set up by the Virginia legislature in 1810, supplementing local support. Schools of this type were designated as field schools for the benefit of rural children and were completely under the control of the community. A fairly complete list of teachers survives, naming some whom served for several years and others whom served at irregular intervals. The building was used as a house of worship periodically, but the names of the numerous ministers who served there were not recorded. Many of them were itinerants of the Baptist and Methodist denominations.<sup>4</sup>

When the public school system became mandatory in 1870 Hamilton schoolhouse became a part of the Virginia education system and from that time, until it was closed in 1928, it was an elementary school with one teacher for all seven grades.<sup>5</sup>

Hamilton schoolhouse was a community center for many years and open to all citizens. It was also a voting precinct, and continued to be used as such long after the school was closed. Other functions reportedly included the use of the grounds by the local militia for drills in the early 1860's and later as a burial ground for poor white and black families. There are no gravestones presently visible, and it is assumed that temporary markers were used at the time of burial and have since disappeared. The Oxford Presbyterian Church began using the schoolhouse for its Sunday school in 1908. Nearby was a deep pool in the creek used as a place for baptismal immersion.<sup>6</sup>

The South Buffalo community is located twelve miles southwest of Lexington and the local roads in the 19<sup>th</sup> century were little more than trails. Consequently the people living in the area were unable to participate in the cultural and social activities located at the county seat of Lexington. Hamilton schoolhouse thus became the local cultural and political center. Political rallies were held there on a regular basis and the door and the surrounding walls of the schoolhouse were used as a community bulletin board, where the local sheriff posted official court orders for public notice.<sup>7</sup> Hundreds of nail and tack holes can be seen today in this location.

Stewardship of the property is presently in the hands of three trustees appointed by the Rockbridge County Court.

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**Hamilton Schoolhouse  
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**Continuation Sheet**

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**Acknowledgements**

The main contributor to this nomination and to the excellent stewardship of the Hamilton Schoolhouse is John W. Johnston of Lexington, who has been a court-appointed trustee of the property for many years. Mr. Johnston prepared the Preliminary Information Form that was the primary source of information referred to by the Department of Historic Resources in finding the property eligible for the Virginia Landmarks Register, and for preparing this nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. In fact, it was Mr. Johnston who brought the schoolhouse to DHR's attention. Trustee Steve Richards was also very helpful in providing information and materials, and in maintaining the schoolhouse. Finally, Dr. John Kern of DHR's Roanoke Office provided valuable assistance in the preparation of this nomination.

**Boundary Description**

Beginning at two white oaks corner to Robert and James Hamiltons land in a flat near the public road, thence N 7 poles crossing said road to the center of Buffalo creek corner to Robert Hamilton and Frederick Frush on James Hamilton's line; thence down the center of Buffalo with Robert Hamilton and Fredrick Frush's line 17 poles to large white oak on south side of creek; thence S 46 1/2 E 6 poles to tow dogwoods at the foot of a hill; thence S 25 1/2 W 14 poles to small white oak on the side of a hill; thence N 50 W 11 poles to the beginning containing one acre and 20 poles. Recorded in Rockbridge County Deed Book "N", pages 348,349. [Rockbridge County tax map Section 94-A-310].

**Boundary Justification**

The property is situated on the east side of South Buffalo Creek and extends back to the foot of the hill at the rear of the building. It encompasses all of the small meadow between the creek and the hill and is bisected by State Route 611.

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**Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup> The date is based on a surviving 1823 deed stating that on the property “a house of publick [sic] worship is to be built and for the use of a school when not occupied by religious worship...” to serve local residents. See also Diehl, *The Saga of Hamilton’s School House*.

<sup>2</sup> Johnston, *Hamilton Schoolhouse Preliminary Information Form*.

<sup>3</sup> Diehl, 19.

<sup>4</sup> “Not until the end of the eighteenth century did Virginia begin to consider the creation of a public school system. All state acts promoting education, including one to provide schooling for the poor, were left to the justices of the counties to implement. During the next fifty years, the Virginia Assembly continued to strengthen the newly emerging public schools. The Literary Fund was created in 1810 was set up to distribute money to counties to educate poor white children. In 1819, the Literary Fund was made available to increase teachers’ pay in public schools, and in 1829 to construct school buildings. There was much prejudice against the free school idea in the antebellum period, and there is little evidence that such schools were popular anywhere in the state. Instead, community schools, where parents from several households would hire a teacher, became the norm for elementary levels of schooling.” [Worsham, Gibson, unpublished Grayson County Survey Report, Virginia Department of Historic Resources, 2002,17].

<sup>5</sup> “Following Reconstruction, Virginia’s Underwood Constitution required the establishment of public schools that were to open for the 1870-1871 school year. The plan called for schools within walking distance of every student in the state. Rural communities quickly adapted and built simple one-room, rectangular, gable-roofed structures, generally with a gable end entrance. The majority of one-room schools were of log construction during the 1870s; a few were built of brick. From 1880 to 1910 almost all one-room schools were of frame construction. Decorative elements were generally limited to eave brackets. Light came from sets of six-over-six or nine-over-nine windows on the side walls. Interiors were also plain, with painted blackboards across the gable end opposite the entrance. Heat came from wood or coal stoves vented by stove flues.” [Kern, John “ Thematic Evaluation of County Public School Buildings in Southwest Virginia,” unpublished report, Virginia Department of Historic Resources, 2000].

<sup>6</sup> Diehl, 20, 36.

<sup>7</sup> Diehl, 22.

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**Continuation Sheet**

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**Bibliography**

Diehl, George West *The Saga of Hamilton's School House*, Lexington, VA, Buffalo Community League, 1956.

Johnston, John W. *Hamilton Schoolhouse Preliminary Information Form*, 2001.

Kern, John "Thematic Evaluation of County Public School Buildings in Southwest Virginia," unpublished report, Virginia Department of Historic Resources, 1999.

Worsham, Gibson, unpublished *Grayson County Survey Report*, Richmond, Virginia Department of Historic Resources, 2002,17.

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**Continuation Sheet**

**Photographs**

All photographs are of:

Hamilton Schoolhouse (DHR #81-21)

Rockbridge County, Virginia

Date: May 2002

Photographer: Michael Pulice

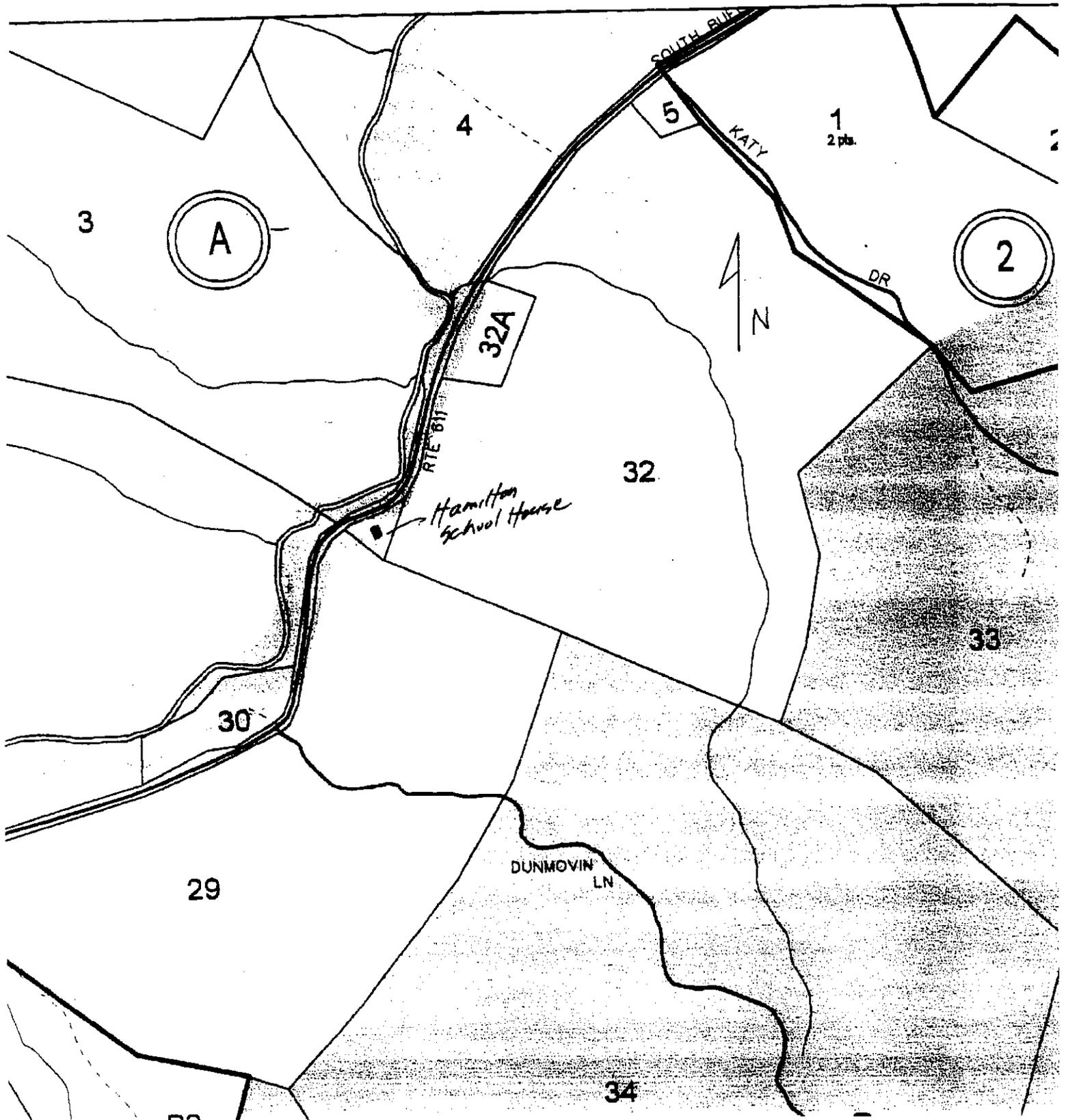
Negative #: 19838

Location of negatives: Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond

1. VIEW OF: Northwest corner
2. VIEW OF: West (front) elevation
3. VIEW OF: South elevation  
and west facades
4. VIEW OF: Southeast corner
5. VIEW OF: Northeast corner
6. VIEW OF: westernmost window on north elevation
7. VIEW OF: Interior looking towards rear
8. VIEW OF: Interior looking towards SW corner
9. VIEW OF: Interior looking towards NW corner
10. VIEW OF: Interior looking towards SE corner

Hamilton Schoolhouse DHR# 80-21

map 94



HAMILTON  
SCHOOLHOUSE,  
ROCKBRIDGE  
COUNTY, VIRGINIA

UTM REFERENCE:

17/623685/4173450"73

