

VLR-3/19/97 NRHP-6/5/97

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

86-27

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 **Konnarock Training School (preferred)**
other names/site number **Konnarock Lutheran Girls School; DHR site no. 86-0027**

2. Location

street & number **VA Route 603 at intersection of VA Route 600** not for publication
city or town **Konnarock** X vicinity
state **VA** code **VA** county **Smyth** code **173** zip code **24378**

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 X statewide locally (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Bill Danner, Director 10/31/96
Signature of certifying official/Title Date
United States Department of Agriculture
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

[Signature]
Signature of commenting or other official/Title Date
Virginia Department of Historic Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is

<u> </u> entered in the National Register <u> </u> See continuation sheet	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
<u> </u> determined eligible for the National Register <u> </u> See continuation sheet	_____	_____
<u> </u> determined not eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
<u> </u> removed from the National Register	_____	_____
<u> </u> other (explain): _____	_____	_____

Konnarock Training School
Name of Property

Smyth County, Virginia
County and State

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

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	buildings
<u>3</u>		sites
	<u>1</u>	structures
		objects
<u>5</u>	<u>2</u>	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Category	Subcategory
EDUCATION	school
EDUCATION	education-related housing
RELIGION	religious facility
HEALTH CARE	clinic
DOMESTIC	secondary structure
AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE	animal facility
AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE	storage
AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE	agricultural outbuilding

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Category	Subcategory
VACANT/NOT IN USE	
DOMESTIC	single dwelling
DOMESTIC	secondary structure

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th and 20th Century American Movements
Other: Rustic
Bungalow/Craftsman

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation	CONCRETE
walls	CHESTNUT BARK SHINGLE
	WOOD
roof	ASPHALT
other	BRICK
	STONE (RIVER ROCK)

Narrative Description

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

Konnarock Training School
Name of Property

Smyth County, Virginia
County and State

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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION
ARCHITECTURE

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Architect/Builder

MESSERSCHMIDT, HENRY CARL
SMITH, R. E. L.

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

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

- 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 fifty years.

Period of Significance

1925-1947

Significant Dates

1925

1936

Cultural Affiliation

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository:

Konnarock Training School
Name of Property

Smyth County, Virginia
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property approximately 18 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	17	445230	4058430	3	17	445610 4058160
2	17	445390	4058580	4	17	445280 4058160

___ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

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

11. Form Prepared By

name/title	J. Daniel Pezzoni and Leslie A. Giles, Architectural Historians	date	30 September 1996
organization	J. Daniel Pezzoni, Preservation Consultant	telephone	(540) 366-0787
street & number	PO Box 7825	zip code	24019-0825
city or town	Roanoke state VA		

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	U.S.D.A. Forest Service (George Washington and Jefferson National Forests)		
street & number	5162 Valleypointe Parkway	telephone	(540) 265-5211
city or town	Roanoke	state	VA
		zip code	24019-3050

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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Konnarock Training School
Smyth County, VA

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

Summary

Located adjacent to the intersection of VA routes 600 and 603 in rural Smyth County, Virginia, the Konnarock Training School falls within the boundaries of the Mount Rogers National Recreation Area, on lands owned and managed by the USDA Forest Service. The nominated parcel is dominated by the 1925 two-and-one-half-story, chestnut bark-shingled Main Building, which has an attached rear chapel. The parcel includes additional resources associated with the operation of the school, including a Craftsman-style chestnut bark-shingled bungalow (1936) originally used as the school's Health Center, a collapsed two-car garage, an arbor and a farm complex. A modern, board-and-batten-clad storage shed and a concrete block retaining wall are also situated on the property. The grounds immediately adjacent to the two surviving historic buildings feature some open lawn areas, with boundaries and architectural features defined by specimen trees and shrubs that appear to have been planted as part of a historic period landscaping scheme. The parcel's picturesque landscape is further enhanced by the presence of a small mountain spring-fed stream that flows along the property's northeast boundary en route to Big Laurel Creek, and by the impressive backdrop of White Top Mountain and Mount Rogers, Virginia's highest peaks.

Inventory

1. **Main Building. 1925. Contributing building.**

This classroom and dormitory building, the property's primary historic resource, is a two-and-one-half-story, fourteen-bay, hip-roofed, Rustic-style building of chestnut bark-shingled, wood frame construction. The main section of the building stands on a raised basement foundation of unreinforced poured concrete, finished with cement stucco. The hipped roof, with slightly flared edges supported by exposed outrigger-type rafters, is sheathed in green asphalt shingles. Brick and concrete chimneys with cast concrete caps extend above the roof, the latter with three front- and three rear-facing hipped dormers clad in horizontal weatherboards. The centered front entry, featuring a single-leaf Craftsman quartersawn oak door with beveled divided lights, is sheltered by a one-story, three-bay, hipped porch with shingled pillars and balustrade panels and cast concrete steps. The rear service entry, sheltered by an attached porch/pantry at the southeast corner of the building, is similarly detailed. A full-height basement-level entry, accessed by an exterior stairwell excavated below grade, is situated immediately below the service entry. A grade-level door is located along the building's west side elevation, and emergency exits are provided at garret level in the easternmost rear dormer and at the second floor level in locations where they have easy

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access to the roof of the one-story shed-roofed rear porch. Windows in the main section of the building are predominantly one-over-one double-hung sash with simple painted wood casings composed of unmolded boards surrounded by projecting trim; many window openings retain original detachable screen panels and hardware. The gable-roofed, one-story rear chapel, linked to the building by a short hyphen, features the same structural materials and exterior finishes as the main section, though its foundation encloses only a crawlspace. The chapel is accessed from the exterior by two doors that open into the vestibule/hyphen, and by a third door that opens directly into the chapel along the east elevation. Five bays deep, its east and west elevations and south gable end incorporate four-over-four double-hung sash that were installed in the 1950s or 1960s.

Beyond the front door of the main building is a central hall that, with the principal staircase, organizes circulation through a plan that features a chapel, large and small classrooms, a kitchen, a communal dining room and office spaces on the first floor; dormitory-type rooms and bathrooms on the second floor; and workrooms and storage areas in the attic level. A full basement provides storage and mechanical spaces. The chapel, as entered through the rear vestibule, is on axis with the central hall. The chapel is divided into two spaces--a large open sanctuary, and a smaller elevated stage/chancel partially screened by a lancet-arched proscenium. Important spaces of the main building, in addition to the chapel, are primarily located on the ground floor. They include the central hall, which features a Craftsman-style brick fireplace with a cast concrete mantelshelf and an open staircase with square newels, balusters, and an intermediate landing; the dining room, which features a built-in china cabinet, a simple unmolded chair rail and door and window casings; and the kitchen, with a pantry and clearly defined work areas for cooking, preparation, and cleanup. Large classrooms with chalkboards and storage cabinets, together with smaller unadorned classrooms and offices, are situated along both sides of a corridor that extends west from the central hall and terminates at the grade-level west exit. The main building's second floor features a full-length, double-loaded corridor with small dormitory rooms opening off of it; a full bathroom terminates each end of the corridor. The garret level includes one large finished room lit by dormer windows; a bathroom with original fixtures including a clawfoot cast iron tub; storage closets; and an unfinished storage room partitioned off from the rest of the area. Original interior finishes throughout the building include plaster-on-wood-lath walls and ceilings, narrow hardwood tongue-and-groove strip flooring, and tall baseboards with cyma reversa base moldings and quarter-round base shoes. These finishes are somewhat obscured in most rooms on the first and second floors due to the installation of modern panelings and suspended ceilings, and plaster has been damaged in the past by invasive moisture in limited sections of the garret level, but otherwise the building's historic finishes remain intact. Many of the original five-panel wood interior doors, along with brass door and

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window hardware, also survive inside the building. The main staircase also retains, on the landings of all three levels, remnants of the building's original fire-fighting system--fabric firehoses attached to high-pressure water faucets. Some original dormitory furnishings, including steel bedframes and plain handcrafted locker-like closets, also remain inside the building.

2. Health Center. 1936. Contributing building.

This one-story building, a Rustic-influenced Craftsman bungalow, was originally constructed as the Konnarock Training School's Health Center. Presently serving as a single-family dwelling, it is built of wood frame and clad in chestnut bark shingles like those used on the Main Building. An interior brick chimney extends above the low-pitched, side-gabled roof, which is sheathed in green asphalt shingles. The Craftsman character of the bungalow is especially evident in such details as triangular braces in the gable ends and decorative exposed rafter ends. A six-panel, single-leaf door serves as the primary entry to the building. The north-facing gable end features another chimney, this one an exterior stack of uncoursed rubble stone. A partial basement of poured concrete walls and rubble stonework forms the foundation of the building and supports its three-bay front porch. The hip-roofed front porch originally featured chestnut bark-shingled pillars and balustrade panels rather than the extant tapered square columns; a similar shed-roofed porch extended across the rear elevation. Alterations, likely dating from the late 1950s or early 1960s, include casement windows (replacements of the original paired three-over-one sash) and a rear shed addition, clad in board-and-batten sheathing, that contains the building's bathroom and kitchen facilities. The interior plan of the building includes three bedrooms, a living room, kitchen and bathroom, which may reflect in part the original plan of the building.

3. Storage building. ca. 1970. Non-contributing building.

This small side-gabled storage building of frame construction with plywood board-and-batten sheathing features a single-leaf entry door, possibly reused from elsewhere on the property, and exposed rafter ends.

4. Garage (ruins). 1925. Contributing site.

Originally a two-car garage, with a poured concrete foundation that extended partially into the hillside, an asphalt-shingled hipped roof, and chestnut bark-shingled walls. Roof collapsed ca. 1990. Included space for long-term storage of vegetables and other produce.

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**Konnarock Training School
Smyth County, VA**

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5. Retaining wall. ca. 1970. Non-contributing structure.

Low wall of concrete block construction, extending alongside garage ruins and possibly intended to create elevated plant beds.

6. Arbor (ruins). ca. 1940. Contributing site.

Partially collapsed arbor of wood posts and beams (saplings), used to support grape vines.

7. Farm Complex (ruins). 1925. Contributing site.

Complex includes ruins (foundations, partial walls, remnant materials) of: bank-type dairy barn, originally two levels high, with gambrel roof and weatherboarded frame construction, on a rectangular poured concrete foundation; a banded-stave silo on a circular poured concrete foundation; and features associated with several other agricultural buildings and structure.

Integrity Statement

The principal resources on the nominated parcel include two fairly well preserved buildings and three sites of ruinous buildings or structures that date from the historic period of use, 1925-1947. Two non-historic resources, a small storage building built about ca. 1970 and a contemporary concrete block retaining wall, are also located on the property. Overall, the nominated parcel has a high level of historic integrity, as it retains the qualities of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship and feeling. Only the quality of association has been compromised, as the property no longer serves as a school. At a closer scale, the two principal buildings have undergone alterations that minimally reduce their individual integrity. In the Main Building, modern panelings and suspended ceilings obscure some original, though intact, wall and ceiling surfaces; the chapel's integrity of design, workmanship, materials and feeling is reduced due to the removal of its stained and leaded Gothic-arched windows and its furnishings and as a result of severe moisture damage to the floor structure particularly. The Health Center also has lost a degree of exterior design integrity, with the alteration of its windows from three-over-one double-hung sash to modern casements, and the replacement of its original bark-shingled porch supports with compatible Craftsman-type tapered wood columns. Fortunately, most changes to the Health Center have been undertaken so as to be compatible with the original design intent.

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Konnarock Training School
Smyth County, VA

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Summary

The Konnarock Training School (KTS), located near the village of Konnarock in Southwest Virginia's Smyth County, is an Appalachian mission school complex of considerable historical and architectural interest. The school was established in 1924 by the Woman's Missionary Society of the United Lutheran Church in America with church and philanthropic support, and it served both as a private boarding school and a public day school with a special focus on the educational, spiritual, and social development of girls from underprivileged mountain families. The complex consists of a 1925 Rustic-style main building--a combination classroom/dormitory building with distinctive chestnut-bark siding and an attached chapel--a 1936 Health Center in the form of a Craftsman bungalow, and associated outbuilding ruins.

Justification of Criteria

The Konnarock Training School is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under criteria A and C. Under Criterion A, the property is eligible for educational significance as an early-twentieth-century mission school, and as a reflection of the educational component of the Lutheran Church's mission to the southern Appalachians. (The KTS played a religious and social role in its community, but it did so primarily through its educational activities, hence only education is listed as a Criterion A area of significance.) Under Criterion C, the property is eligible for architectural significance as a notable example of Rustic-style design, and for the inspired and unusual use of chestnut-bark siding as a way to make the building harmonize with its mountain surroundings. The period of significance for the property extends from 1925, the date of construction of the main building, to 1947, spanning the early years of the school's operation. The Konnarock Training School is eligible at the state level of significance.

Acknowledgments

A number of individuals and organizations assisted in the preparation of this report. Michael B. Barber, Forest Archaeologist for the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests, based in Roanoke, Virginia, served as the contact for the sponsor, the National Forest Service, and provided guidance throughout the project. Keith Brown, Assistant to the Bishop of the Virginia Synod of the United Lutheran Church in America, based at Roanoke College, Salem, Virginia, made available the Synod's extensive collections relating to the KTS. Hazel Pennington of Troutdale, Virginia, a former student at KTS and later house-mother at the associated Iron Mountain School; John W. Gable of Dickson, Illinois, former pastor at St. Matthew Lutheran Church in Konnarock; and Martin Hassinger

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of Bristol, Virginia, son of the school's first treasurer and head of its building committee, provided first-hand accounts of life at the school. At the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Elizabeth H. Lipford, National Register coordinator, and architectural historians David Edwards, Marc Wagner, and John Wells provided guidance and information. Reed Ingle of Shenandoah National Park shared information on the history and recent preservation efforts of early Rustic buildings at Skyland, located in the park along Skyline Drive.

Historical Background

The Lutheran Church has deep roots in Southwest Virginia. German settlers with Lutheran leanings first appeared in the region during the mid-eighteenth century, and their descendants established congregations in the region's towns and countryside. In the early 1920s, the Lutheran church in Marion, the county seat of Smyth County, began to extend its work into surrounding mountainous areas. The church supported the missionary activity of a young lay preacher named Kenneth G. Killinger, who in 1921 established a Lutheran congregation at Furnace Hill. Through Killinger's energetic proselytism, mountain missions were established throughout Smyth County and adjoining areas during the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s. J. J. Scherer, Jr., one-time president of the Virginia Synod, reported in 1926:

"Mr. Killinger covers a wide region of mountain territory and he is carrying the message and the spirit of the gospel into a large number of homes whose only religious advantages, previous to the beginning of this work, consisted of occasional revival meetings conducted by itinerant preachers of nondescript qualifications and character."¹

Dr. John Jacob Scherer, Jr. had more than a passing interest in the missionary work of the Lutheran Church in Smyth County. "Jay" Scherer had served as pastor of Marion's Lutheran church before moving on to the First English Evangelical Lutheran Church in Richmond, Virginia, presidency of the state synod, and a place on the Inner Missions Board of the national church. He was joined in his interest by his daughter, Laura Scherer Copenhaver of Marion, Virginia, who presented an address entitled "Mountain Folk in the South" to the 1922 meeting of the Women's Missionary Society (WMS) of the United Lutheran Church. The WMS had formed in 1918 to promote missionary work at home and abroad, and as a result of Copenhaver's address it enthusiastically adopted Smyth County as the venue for a "special project."²

¹ Eisenberg, *Lutheran Church in Virginia*, 402-03.

² *Ibid.*, 274, 283; Gable, "Konnarock Girls School,"

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The WMS appointed a committee of three, including Katherine F. Morehead of the city of Salem in Southwest Virginia, to "investigate possibilities of organized work in the southern mountains."³ The following spring, the society retained Mary Phlegar Smith to supervise the work, and in May 1924 a committee composed of Smith, Morehead (representing the Woman's Missionary Society), the Rev. Scherer (representing the Inner Missions Board), and the Rev. J. H. Richard (representing the Virginia Synod) was authorized to draft a prospectus for a mission school to be established near the lumbering community of Konnarock in the southwestern corner of Smyth County.⁴

An undated typescript document survives in Virginia Synod records that may be this prospectus. Entitled "Suggestions as to a General Policy for the Proposed Mountain Mission," the document defined the purpose of the school as:

"Primarily to train the mountain children into true Christian womanhood and manhood; hence their spiritual care should be pre-eminent. The whole policy should be to train them to take an active and useful part in the lifting of the mountain section and the mountain people to a higher plane of living, rather than to educate them away to other fields of activity. In addition to their religious and academic education, there should be such small vocational training as would equip them to lead their community in a proper economic development."⁵

Implicit in the wording of the document, and in most subsequent writing on the school, was the assumption that mountain people would benefit from contact with the "outside" world, and that intervention was required to bring mountain culture in line with national standards. The Lutheran Church of the 1920s was not alone in taking this approach. The peoples of the southern Appalachians had long been the subject of cultural betterment campaigns supported by religious groups and the private sector, leading in later years to the vast public initiatives of the Tennessee Valley Authority and the Great Society.⁶

³"Development of KTS" 1936 typescript report, Virginia Synod records.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Virginia Synod records.

⁶ Historians may debate the pros and cons of this intervention; the men and women who attended the Konnarock Training School consider the experience to have been beneficial to their lives and community (Gable, "Konnarock Girls School").

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Konnarock Training School
Smyth County, VA

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The Konnarock area was chosen for the school primarily because a free site was offered to the church. L. C. Hassinger, a Pennsylvania native who moved his lumber operation to Konnarock in 1906, donated 236 acres for the establishment of a "training school or orphanage or similar institution or work aimed to help the children of the Appalachian section."⁷ Hassinger's involvement in the project was motivated in part by his concern for local families who would be deprived of employment when the forest resources of the section were depleted. The Hassinger property had earlier belonged to the Douglas Land Company, a New York-based lumber and mining concern that controlled tens of thousands of acres in the Smyth County highlands. The Douglas family members who controlled the company (and who included close relatives of Eleanor Roosevelt) had first-hand familiarity with their Virginia properties and with the people who lived and worked in the mountains, and over time they became involved in promoting the welfare of the area's inhabitants. The Douglas interests contributed a thousand dollars to the establishment of the Konnarock Training School.⁸

In 1923, Mary Phlegar Smith had focused her efforts on the Furnace Hill area of Smyth County, where Kenneth Killinger operated, but once the Konnarock area rose to the fore, she shifted her work there. In November 1924, Smith moved to Konnarock, and on December 1 the Konnarock Training School opened. The first school building was a rented dwelling known as the "Farm House." The original staff consisted of Smith, who served as the school's single teacher and also as its house-mother and farm superintendent; Madie Reitzel, the nurse; and "Mamma Belle" Marlin, the cook. Six girl boarding students and eight day students formed the first student body. From the beginning, the Smyth County school system assisted the project. The wife of the county schools superintendent, a Mrs. Copenhaver (presumably Laura Scherer Copenhaver), was credited in one period account as having "first dreamed the dream" of beginning the KTS.⁹

The temporary schoolhouse was inadequate to accommodate the program envisioned for the KTS. The undated prospectus for the school, mentioned above, had set forth requirements for a permanent school building: "The first building should contain about twenty bed rooms, a dining room, library and study room, chapel, kitchen, sewing room, four class rooms, laundry, gymnasium and

⁷ Martin Hassinger (son of L. C. Hassinger), telephone interview, September 26, 1996; Barfield, "Historical Documentation," 2.

⁸ Goodridge, *Smyth County*, 380-90.

⁹ Gable, "Konnarock Girls School": "Development of KTS," Virginia Synod records; and *Marion Democrat*, December 29, 1925.

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infirmary." By April 1925, Jay Scherer had contacted Richmond architect Carl Messerschmidt to prepare schematic designs for the school. Messerschmidt appears to have submitted two proposals: a single two-story building that combined dormitory, administration, school, and chapel facilities, and a campus of three one-story buildings containing the same functions.¹⁰ On June 1, the Mountain School Board (as the KTS's over-sight board was by then known) approved Messerschmidt's one-building scheme.¹¹

Planning and construction work began almost immediately. A building committee of three formed, headed by Mountain School Board member L. C. Hassinger, whose experience in the lumber and general merchandise trades made him the logical choice. A work force under the direction of Abingdon, Virginia masonry contractor R. E. L. Smith arrived on August 6. A week later, steam-shovel excavation for the foundations of the main building and an adjoining garage and barn neared completion. (The garage included a vegetable storage room; other outbuildings built during this period included poultry houses and a pig pen.) Hemlock, pine, and chestnut lumber supplied by the Diebold-Hassinger Corporation and the Hassinger Lumber Company went into the framing, which had been completed up to the floor level of the second story by the beginning of September. Chestnut bark siding--the building's most distinctive architectural feature--went on in mid-October, and the building was ready for occupancy on December 14, 1925.¹²

Finish work on the chapel continued into the following year. Scherer worked with Messerschmidt on the design of the altar, choir, and the window at the back of the chancel, while Hassinger corresponded with the George Handy Payne Studios of Paterson, N.J.--"Specialists in Opalescent and Antique Windows"--on the fabrication of the chapel windows. These windows were:

"made from a special glass carefully selected, shaded and blended to produce the desired effects without the aid of any stains or paints, except in securing the flesh portions. These portions artistically painted and permanently fixed by firing."

¹⁰ J. J. Scherer, Jr., to L. C. Hassinger, April 17, 1925. Letter in the Virginia Synod records.

¹¹ "Development of KTS," Virginia Synod records.

¹² Letter books, Virginia Synod records; Barfield, "Historical Documentation," 4-6. Other contractors involved in the building's construction included plumber Fred Hayes and the electrical firm of Gemmel Brothers, both based in Bristol, Virginia (*Marion Democrat*, December 29, 1925).

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The "flesh portions" appeared in the figured window designed for the back of the chancel, entitled "Christ Blessing the Children."¹³

The new school building allowed the KTS to expand its programs during the latter 1920s. From the fourteen boys and girls who made up the 1924-25 student body, the number rose to seventy-six in 1926-27 and to ninety-nine in 1928-29.¹⁴ In 1930, the thirty-five girl boarding students ranged in age from ten to twenty and came to the school from the mountainous sections of North Carolina, West Virginia, Tennessee, and Kentucky, as well as Virginia.¹⁵ Initially, boys as well as girls were admitted as boarding students, but boys were no longer accepted for boarding beginning with the 1926-27 school year. This shift may have reflected the anticipated 1931 opening of the Iron Mountain Lutheran School for Boys, also located in the Konnarock vicinity, which was intended to provide "training for boys comparable to that being received by the girls."¹⁶ Boys still represented a moiety of the day students after 1926.

The faculty expanded during the 1920s as well. In 1930, the staff of six teachers included a principal (then Catherine Cox Umbarger); three regular instructors who taught music and physical education after school hours; a nurse in charge of health classes, home nursing and hygiene; and a home economics instructor.¹⁷ The influence of these faculty members is reflected in an interesting survey published in 1930 that reported the occupational preferences of the girl students. Nearly a third listed teaching as their first preference, while slightly fewer listed nursing. Other occupations included missionary work and stenography, and one girl gave her ambition as "marrying a preacher."¹⁸

Brochures, reports, letter books, school year books, and other materials in the collections of the Virginia Synod illuminate daily life at KTS. The school day began with morning devotions, a program of religious songs and stories held in the chapel. High-school-aged boarding students then set out for

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Hatcher *Mountain School*, 7-8.

¹⁵ "Konnarock Training School In the Mountains of Virginia."

¹⁶ Eisenberg, 400-01

¹⁷ "Konnarock Training School In the Mountains of Virginia."

¹⁸ Hatcher, 67.

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the public high school in Konnarock, two miles distant, while the grade school boarding and day students began their studies. Home economics courses played an important part in the education of the girls and contributed to the maintenance of the school. The girls made items of their own clothing in sewing class, and in cooking class they prepared hot dishes and soups to supplement the cold lunches brought by the day students. A former first-grade day student fondly recalls being served a glass of chocolate milk and a cookie or crackers as her daily mid-morning snack.¹⁹

Both the male and female students received agricultural instruction, the farm complex in the hollow above the school serving an instructional function as well as providing sustenance to the student body. On the subject of training the girls in farm work, a 1930 study explained:

"The school favors and already practices instruction in agriculture for girls as well as for boys, particularly because the mountain woman is often left to care for the farm, while her husband and older sons go to the mills or the mines, or take to truck driving, or find some other way to earn cash for the family support."²⁰

Extra-curricular activities included Girl Scout hikes, picnics, pageants, and theatricals. In the 1950s, field trips to Washington, D.C., broadcasts of the school choir on Station WMEV in Marion, and television-watching parties were added. The school day often ended with an informal evening worship session in the entry hall/sitting room of the main building.²¹

Health care was an important adjunct of the Konnarock program. An infirmary originally located in the basement of the main building eventually proved inadequate, and a building known as the Health Center was erected in front of the main building in 1936. Local people provided materials and labor for the building of the center, which originally contained a "long front room, an adjoining tiny office, a laboratory, consultation room and in the rear a room for the nurses and one for an occasional neighborhood patient or two."²² In addition to providing a medical service, the Health Center secondarily educated the students and the community on the benefits of hygiene. As explained in

¹⁹ Pennington interview

²⁰ Hatcher, 176.

²¹ Ibid.; "Laurel Leaves from the Southern Mountain Mission" (1942 newsletter); "Konnarock Echoes" (Winter 1950 newsletter, p. 2); and Konnarock Lutheran School Yearbook, 1958. all in the Virginia Synod records.

²² Barfield, "Historical Documentation," 6.

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"Little Joe and the Health Center," a brochure that told the story of a premature baby tended by the center: "To the nurses . . . this was just another chance to demonstrate what cleanly, regular care, with the help of God, would do in a practically hopeless case."²³

Architectural Analysis

Designs for Konnarock Training School were prepared in 1925 by Richmond, Virginia-based architect Henry Carl Messerschmidt (1891-1994, active 1915-1958). Although Messerschmidt's body of work has not been extensively studied or documented, the architect undertook at least two other education-related commissions, both in the Richmond area. Messerschmidt designed buildings at Richmond's Collegiate School for Girls in 1917 and again in 1920; and at the former resort area of Bon Air, in Chesterfield County, Virginia, he designed the Administration Building (1919) and another building (1921) for the Virginia Home and Industrial School for Girls.²⁴

Messerschmidt's design for the Main Building at Konnarock Training School was selected from among a group of designs he submitted to the board of the Women's Missionary Society. Basically, he presented the board members with two choices: that of housing the multiple functions they required within a grouping of several detached buildings, or of creating a single building large enough to contain the entire operation. Presumably for economy's sake, the latter option was chosen. The Main Building as originally constructed housed the school's administrative offices, kitchen, dining room, chapel, classrooms, dormitory rooms, workshops, the health center/dispensary, bathrooms, as well as space for storage and mechanical areas.

Perhaps the most unusual aspect of the design employed at Konnarock Training School was the selection of chestnut bark shingles for the exterior cladding of many of the original buildings on the property. The principal material historically used for most area buildings was wood (frame or log construction), with weatherboard or board-and-batten sheathing as typical exterior cladding. Less often, regional builders produced structures of brick or stone, that were usually located in urban rather than rural settings. Rough, heavily textured bark, though readily available due to the widespread timber resources of the region, was only rarely used during the historic period by traditional builders and then only for crudely finished outbuildings. Bark from chestnut, hemlock, and oak trees was in greatest demand regionally for use in the industrial tanning process, not for architectural projects. Bark shingles did not achieve respectability for use in more ambitious

²³ "Little Joe and the Health Center." Virginia Synod records.

²⁴ Wells interview. Wells and Dalton.

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buildings until mountain resort communities--recreational havens often built by and for industrialists and other leading capitalists seeking to reconnect with nature--developed the Rustic style as the architectural mode best suited to nature-oriented recreation.

The Appalachian Mountains, including the Blue Ridge chain that extends through Virginia and North Carolina, was home to several mountain resorts that adopted the Rustic style during the late nineteenth century and encouraged its development through the first half of the twentieth century. While the Rustic style got its start in upstate New York's Adirondack Mountains during the 1870s, it gained national prominence for use in resort architecture after Yellowstone National Park's Old Faithful Inn was completed in 1903.²⁵ The style is typified by the use of natural, indigenous materials, preferably arranged in simple compositions that accentuate textures and forms. Unquarried stones, logs and saplings with intact bark or exposed crowns, and rough shakes or bark shingles were used to create buildings that harmonized with their settings.

Perhaps the earliest example in the Blue Ridge region of the use of chestnut bark shingles to interpret the Rustic style of architecture is the resort community of Linville, North Carolina, developed initially in the 1890-1920 period. For that community, located in the shadow of Grandfather Mountain, architect Henry Bacon designed several chestnut bark-shingled summer cottages, a small hotel, and an Episcopal church. Bacon may have also been involved with the design of Linville's Mission House, named for its earliest known use--a mission school housing classes for the area's mountain children. Bacon's prototypical use of chestnut bark shingles in Linville was quickly adopted in other western North Carolina mountain resort areas as well, especially Blowing Rock, which also claims responsibility for the origin of the bark shingle style.²⁶ Interestingly, when Konnarock Training School officially opened in late 1925, a reporter for the local newspaper noted that the building was "most novel, as it is covered with chestnut bark, very similar to the buildings of Blowing Rock, N.C. This feature strikes visitors as most beautiful, as it conforms so pleasantly with its surroundings."²⁷

In central and northern Virginia, the Blue Ridge Mountains were also home to important examples of Rustic architecture, perhaps most notably (in the context of this discussion) in the mountain resort community of Skyland, in Page County, which businessman and naturalist George Freeman Pollock developed beginning in the 1890s. At Skyland, Pollock built his 1890s summer cottage, Massanutten

²⁵Bomberger, 3

²⁶Roberts [Brown], 7.4-7.7, 8.0, 8.6. Bishir, 382-383.

²⁷Marion Democrat, 3.

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Lodge, a stone and chestnut bark-shingled dwelling with decorative log railings. Pollock's cottage was one of fifteen or twenty summer houses in the community; it and Bird's Nest Cottage (1906-11) survive at Skyland, although their original chestnut bark shingles were replaced with bark from other tree species during rehabilitation efforts of the early 1980s.²⁸

The use of chestnut bark shingles to express the Rustic style in the Blue Ridge region was therefore well established by the time Messerschmidt was called upon to design Konnarock Training School in 1925. Messerschmidt's selection of the Rustic style as the architectural motif of the Main Building at Konnarock seems to have been a specific response to the dramatic mountain setting and picturesque character of the school's site. His use of chestnut bark shingles seems likewise to have been inspired by regional preferences for the material in Rustic-style buildings of established Blue Ridge resort communities in Virginia and North Carolina. Messerschmidt's decision to utilize chestnut bark siding for a remote mission school was a highly unusual application of the material to a non-recreational building type, though, and may be unique in Virginia. The building's singularity is further heightened by the fact that its principal exterior material is no longer available, due to the blight-induced extinction of the American chestnut in the late 1930s.

Conclusion

In 1958, the Lutheran Church's Board of American Missions deemed that the work of the Konnarock Training School had been successfully completed, and the school closed. According to Hazel Pennington, formerly house-mother at the Iron Mountain School, "times got better" after World War II, and local public schooling improved, so fewer mountain girls needed the kind of environment offered by the KTS.²⁹ Since 1958 the main building has served a number of uses. After it was acquired by the Forest Service it was used as a "spike camp" for the Flatwoods Job Care Center, housing workers employed in the Mount Rogers district. The building is now used on an occasional basis to house the Konnarock Trail Crew, a volunteer group engaged in maintaining local sections of the Appalachian Trail. The Forest Service hopes to rehabilitate the Konnarock Training School for a new full-time use in the future.³⁰

²⁸ Wagner interview; Ingle interview.

²⁹ Pennington interview.

³⁰ Barber interview.

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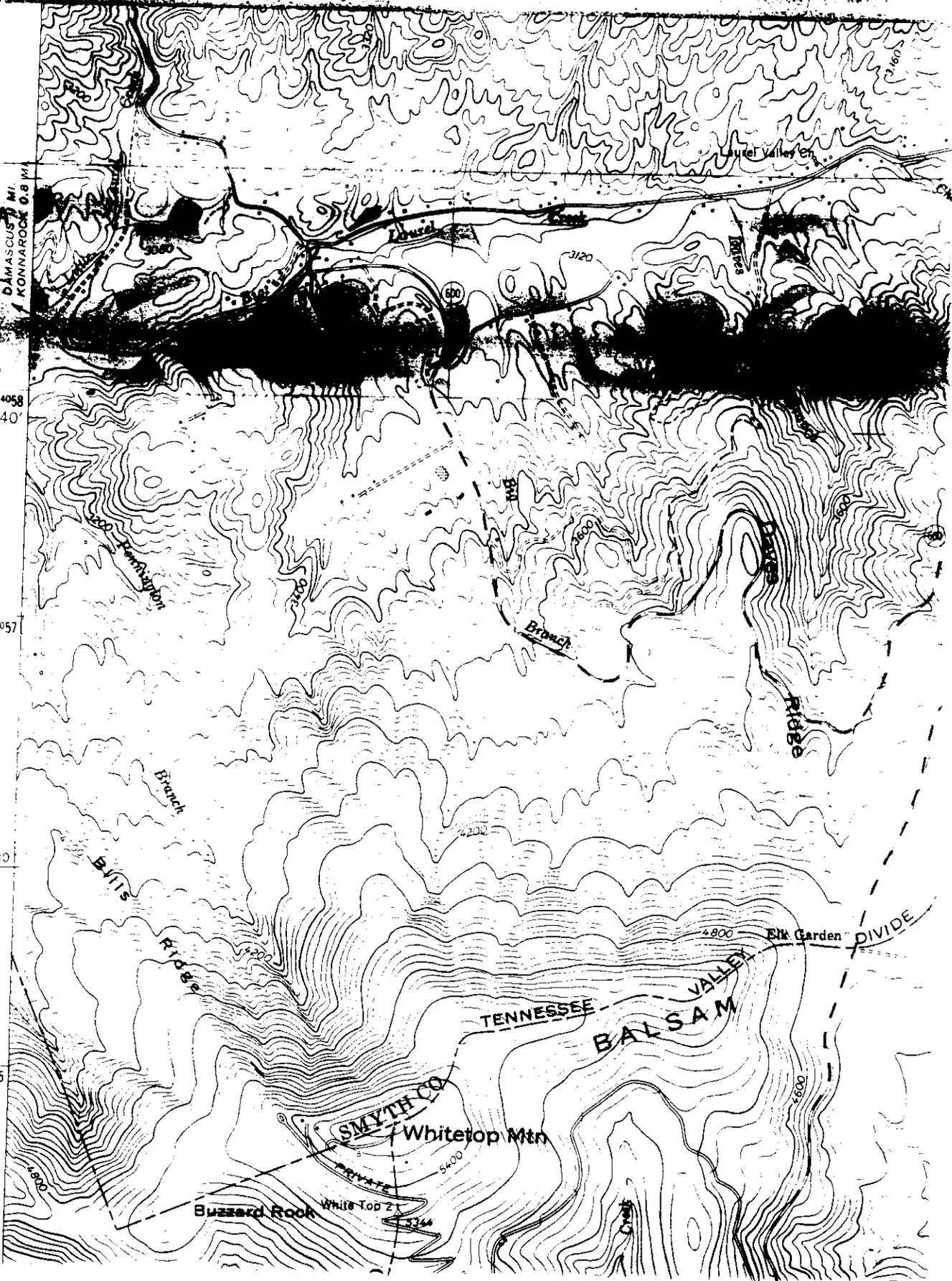
Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated parcel is shown on the accompanying sketch map, derived from Smyth County tax parcel map 86 (A), and drawn at a scale of 1" = 200'.

Boundary Justification

The nominated parcel includes those contiguous portions of the Konnarock Training School's holdings in Smyth County, Virginia, that best represent the socio-educational mission of the school and that have remained in public or semi-public ownership or usage since the historic period of use, 1925-1947. Although contiguous acreage that retains resources associated with school-related farming activities has been included in the nominated parcel, other parcels of farmland in the area that were owned and operated by the Konnarock Training School during the historic period and later sold to private landowners have been excluded.

KONNAROCK
TRAINING
SCHOOL
Smyth County, Va



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