

VLR - 7/2/97
NRHP - 9/12/97

**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 **Tacoma School (preferred)**
other names/site number **Tacoma School Community Center; DHR file no. 097-0001**

2. Location

street & number **4408 Stone Mountain Road** not for publication
city or town **Coeburn**
 vicinity
state **VA** code **VA** county **Wise** code **195** zip code **24293**

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 meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ___ nationally ___ statewide locally. (___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)


Signature of certifying official/Title _____ Date 7/18/97
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/Title _____ Date _____
State or Federal agency and bureau _____

4. National Park Service Certification

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

___ Signature of the Keeper
Date of Action _____

Tacoma School

Name of Property

Wise County, Virginia

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

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

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Category: **EDUCATION**
 Subcategory: school

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Category: **SOCIAL**
 Subcategory: community center

Category: **RECREATION & CULTURE**
 Subcategory: auditorium

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th and 20th Century American Movements

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: CONCRETE
 walls: BRICK
 roof: ASPHALT; SHINGLE

Narrative Description

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

(SEE ATTACHED CONTINUATION SHEETS)

Tacoma School

Name of Property

Wise 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 structure.
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.)

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
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past fifty years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1922-1946

Significant Dates

1922; 1936

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

[based on plans by] **Thomson, Frank K. & Barrett, Charles W.**

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: _____

Tacoma School
Name of Property

Wise County
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property approximately 2 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
17	363550	4088550	3		
2			4		

___ 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	D. Darlene Richardson	date	28 April 1997
organization	Roanoke Regional Preservation Office	telephone	(540) 857-7585
street & number	1030 Penmar Ave., SE	zip code	24013
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	Tacoma School Community Center, Inc.		
street & number	4408 Stone Mountain Road,	telephone	(540) 328-2865
city or town	Coeburn	state	VA
		zip code	24293

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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**Tacoma School
Wise County, VA**

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NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

Summary

Tacoma School is located on the eastern side of VA state route 706, south of U.S. Alternate route 58 (known regionally as the Trail of the Lonesome Pine), in rural Wise County. The brick Tacoma School building was constructed ca. 1922 using plans adopted by the North Carolina state school system in 1911 (Exhibit A). Design No. 4 from North Carolina's "Plans for Public Schoolhouses," features a one-story, 4-room structure with a clipped gable roof and unique windows.¹ Tacoma School may have resembled this plan, however, in 1936, a fire extensively damaged the building. In 1937, the school was reconstructed on its original foundation.² Built of brick and utilizing the same elongated windows, the school building looks essentially as it did when originally constructed in 1922. Additional resources associated with the school are a flagpole, a brick monumental base sign, sheltered picnic area, and a gravel parking lot. The property's picturesque landscape is set against the towering presence of Stone Mountain and the Guest River near the property's southwest boundary. Four early Wise County schools, including Tacoma School, were apparently built based on the North Carolina plans (Exhibit B). Tacoma School is one of only two that survive today.

Exterior

The current Tacoma School is a one-story, nine-bay rectangular shaped brick building. The eight course common bond pattern features a row of alternating headers and stretchers. The foundation is poured concrete with a partial basement under the southeast corner of the building (modern kitchen area). The large hip roof is covered with asphalt shingles. A frame, centered gabled wing covered with asphalt shingles and a return cornice projects over the first story entrance.

The hip roof and transom windows are the school's dominant extant features. There are 23 twelve-over-twelve double-hung sash windows with fixed light transoms: six windows each at the north, west (front), and south elevations; the eastern (rear) elevation has five twelve-over-twelve windows. Two windows on the north elevation and all windows on the west (front) elevation have six-light fixed transoms; the remaining fifteen windows have eight-light transoms. The transom windows retain much of the character of the school's original plan book design, although the original transoms were probably hinged.

The current roof shape was probably not part of the school's original design. According to the plan book, Design No. 4 featured a clipped gable roof covered with pine shingles. However, the 1936 fire destroyed the school's original roof which was rebuilt with its current hip roof in 1937. A later owner modified the roof with built-up flashing along its ridge in the early 1980s. Two interior brick chimneys project above

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Exterior (continued)

the ridge. Modern guttering and downspouts have been added.

The school's front entrance is accented by a projecting centered gable bay. Brick posts support the portico with a frame pediment and return corner ends. Three rows of poured concrete steps lead to recessed double doors. The entry doors are modern metal with a nine-light window opening.

The building has a one-bay, recessed rear porch with a wide painted wood lintel. A 1994 poured concrete handicapped ramp with metal railing was constructed by the Job Corps of Wise County. A pump for water is located on the north side of the concrete handicap ramp.

A gravel parking area has been added to the rear of the school building and a gravel driveway encircles the property. A modern covered picnic table shelter is located near the southern boundary, beside the Guest River. Four concrete slabs are located at the west and south boundaries and formerly supported wooden benches constructed by a previous owner of the property.

Interior Description

Tacoma School's front entry contains a vestibule and central "mall" area from which the original four classrooms are entered (see Exhibit A). Each of the four classrooms had their own coatroom. Two of the original coat rooms, located near the front entrance, remain in use as storage areas today. The two other two coatrooms, formerly associated with the two rear classrooms, have been converted into modern restroom facilities. Vestibule walls have tongue-and-groove wood wainscoting that has been painted. Original integrity of the walls, wooden wainscoting, door and transom surrounds, and wood flooring has been preserved. The original bell is located in the centered gable bay and can be rung from a rope that hangs inside at the front entry.

Classroom #1

Upon entry to the school house, the first room to the left (north) is a classroom preserved essentially in its original condition with original chalkboards and floors. This room has wainscoting of two different components: the south and eastern interior walls are original with painted wood panels; the north and western walls have a brick wainscot. Original tongue-and-groove wood flooring is intact and in excellent condition. Modern fluorescent lighting and ceiling fans are the only modifications to the wood paneled ceiling. This classroom is currently being used as a "period room" with school desks to simulate its original function.

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Interior Description (continued)

Classroom #2

Located directly behind Classroom #1, and entered through the "mall" area, this room has been converted into a modern kitchen and dining area. Although modified, this room retains similar features as Classroom #1 such as its original paneled wood wainscoting, ceiling features, chalkboard, and wood flooring. Modern additions made adaptive use of the room's interior design and spaces: The interior supporting wall is lined with a stove, refrigerator, sink and cabinets.

Classrooms #3 & #4

The original wall that separated these two classrooms was removed after 1993 to create a meeting hall/auditorium. However, original interior features such as the wood panel wainscoting, paneled ceiling, and wood flooring remain in excellent condition. A platform constructed after 1973 features wood panels that are identical to the wainscoting, thereby continuing the schools' historic integrity. A cast iron wood stove sits to the left and midway in the room.

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INTEGRITY STATEMENT

Tacoma School preserves good exterior and interior integrity. Reconstruction of the burned structure after the 1936 fire was made with minimal loss to the 1922 building's original character and architectural integrity. Recent modifications to facilitate the school building's use as a community center have been sensitive to the school's original features and design (Exhibit C). Although modern vinyl replacement windows have been installed, original characteristics such as the twelve-over-twelve double-hung sashes and eight-light transoms have been preserved. Lost associated features include two outhouses, a baseball field, and four benches.

ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS

The design for the Tacoma School comes directly from a 1911 pattern book for public schoolhouses that was officially adopted and instituted by the North Carolina State Superintendent of Schools (see exhibit A).¹ Tacoma's brick school house opened for formally educating local residents around 1922. The school was damaged by a fire in 1936 and was rebuilt in 1937.³ Although the building has changed ownership several times, its architectural integrity has been preserved. In 1973, the Wise County School Board discontinued its use as a school. In 1993, the school was purchased by a non-profit community group which converted the building to its present use as a community and recreational center.

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Endnotes

1. E.M. Uzzell & Co. Raleigh, North Carolina: 1911. State Superintendent of Public Instruction: *Plans for Public Schoolhouses*.
2. Bristol *Herald Courier*. March 27, 1996.
3. Wise County School Board Minutes, Jan. 1936-June 1945 Record Book. January 1936.

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NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Summary

Located in Tacoma, Virginia, the Tacoma School is one of four Wise County schools built during the 1920s which were based on schoolhouse plans adopted by the North Carolina Board of Education in 1911 (see Exhibits A & B). Tacoma School and one other structure, Riverview School, survive; Tacoma School is the only building in public use today. The community of Tacoma is one of the oldest in Wise County and its history is derived from the coal mining and steel rail boom. The significance and use of the Tacoma School building has survived Tacoma's failure to grow into a sizable town. The community of Tacoma is slowly being absorbed by the neighboring town of Coeburn; postal addresses for Tacoma citizens carry the Coeburn name and zip code, and children now attend schools in Coeburn. Tacoma School serves as the sole visible reminder of a public facility in a town that once existed. The school, its architectural character, and identity have been preserved by the local community for many years. After burning in 1936, the school was rebuilt in 1937 preserving the original design and architectural character. The school's nomination will preserve the Tacoma community's name and place in western Virginia history.

Justification of Criteria

Tacoma School is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A as its construction is directly associated with the coal mining and steel rail booms of western Virginia during the late-nineteenth century and early-twentieth century. Tacoma School is also eligible under Criterion C for its design which reflects the influence that North Carolina plans for public schools had on schools built in southwestern Virginia. Tacoma School is eligible at the local level of significance for the years 1922, when its doors opened to educate local children, and 1937-1946 when the structure was rebuilt after a 1936 fire. Tacoma School has been the center of the Tacoma community since its construction in 1922 and this supports its local significance. Local community members recognize the school's value in telling the history of Tacoma, a town that has all but disappeared.

Acknowledgments

Various individuals and organizations have contributed invaluable time, energy, and resources in the completion of this report. R.C. Seaver, Jr., completed necessary photography and documentation. Delmar Wilson, Commissioner of Revenue for Wise Co., provided significant maps, data, and oral history. Wise County School Board staff Roberta P. Smallwood, Greg Perry, and Jennifer Partin furnished deeds, photographs, and school board minutes. Charles Hughes and Mildred Horne, former Tacoma School students, provided useful oral history on the Tacoma School. Daniel Pezzoni and Leslie Giles of Landmark Preservation Services, Inc. provided information on the North Carolina School plans.

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Acknowledgments (continued)

Roanoke Regional Office staff also provided assistance: John Kern conducted some of the school board minutes research; Anne Beckett reviewed the architectural descriptions.

Historical Background

The Tacoma School is the sole surviving legacy of the once-promising coal mining town of Tacoma. The discovery of rich iron and coal deposits in Wise and neighboring counties during the 1870s provided a great catalyst for change in western Virginia. Promotion of the county's coal for mining began in 1880s, but with the nearest railroad tracks being 40 miles away in Bristol, mining was delayed. By 1891, three railroads were built into the coal mining vicinity: the Louisville and Nashville from the Cumberland Gap, the Norfolk and Western from Bluefield, West Virginia, and the Southern from Bristol.¹

Tacoma sat at the edge of the great Trans-Appalachian Basin coalfield along the new Norfolk and Western railroad tracks.² On March 6, 1890, Tacoma was incorporated as a town and ambitious plans for its future prosperity began: the town was laid out into lots and streets were named.³ Norfolk and Western built a depot in Tacoma and other growth soon followed. In October 1890, the Tacoma Improvement Company conveyed a lot to trustees of the Tacoma School District "for the purpose of ... build[ing] a school house and Masonic Hall on said lot of land."⁴

With rail and passenger transportation finally in place, the coal "rush" to Wise and neighboring counties began in 1895: "Hundreds of mines opened and thousands of people of all nationalities, trades, and professions moved to the area."⁵ The Interstate Railroad Company, established in 1896, serviced freight delivery to trading centers such as Tacoma, and other Wise County towns, and connected outgoing coal products to major railroad trunk lines.⁶ An influx of workers and businesses saw Wise County's population double from 19,653 in 1900 to 46,500 in 1920.⁷ The number of regional coal mines in operation grew much faster: 39 in 1901 to 144 in 1905.⁸ Tacoma's population consisted mostly of farmers, coal miners, saw mill laborers, and repairmen and remained fairly constant: 247 in 1900 to 298 in 1920.⁹ Coal mining and rail transportation were tightly intertwined industries which fed and sustained the fragile, but booming, economies in many small towns of western Virginia.

In 1917, additional state funds were allocated to Wise County for public schools. In 1917, Wise County had 6 brick or stone school buildings; by 1927 there were 19.¹⁰ Land for the "new" Tacoma School had been purchased on October 8, 1921 for \$1,750.00.¹¹ The Tacoma School was one of four Wise County schools believed to be constructed based on Plan No. 4 of Barrett & Thomson's plans for North Carolina schoolhouses, plans adopted by that state in 1911: the three other Wise County schools were the Pound Primary School, Hurricane School, and Riverview School.¹² Wise County School Board minutes for the years 1918-1926 are missing and research of other records failed to reveal how Barrett & Thomson's

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Historical Background (continued)

school house designs came to be implemented in Wise County.

In March 1927, the Old Dominion Power Co. won approval to install lights in the Tacoma School. In 1928, Tacoma's four room brick school house was one of twenty-one schools in the Gladeville District; it was one of four brick school buildings in the district and was appraised at \$3,000.¹³ The use of local schools as community centers can be seen in a December 1929 decision made by the Wise County School Board to charge a \$5 fee for the use of school auditoriums for public gatherings.¹⁴ The population of Tacoma peaked to approximately 500 residents by 1930.

Wise County was hit especially hard during the Great Depression. 1931 School Board minutes revealed a request for the state "to take over the cost of instruction so that every child may share equally in the benefits of the public school system."¹⁵ Many children did not attend school "because they [did] not have enough clothes to wear."¹⁶ In January 1932, teachers were asked to take a 10% pay cut rather than shorten the school year to eight months: schools closed one week earlier than normal that year.¹⁷ For the 1933 school year, teachers were to be paid seventy-five per cent of their 1932 salaries.¹⁸ Minutes in February 1933 noted that the Gladeville District was in "better financial condition than any other district in Wise Co."¹⁹

The Tacoma School suffered a fire during 1936. In January 1936, Tacoma School was valued at \$5,000.²⁰ One year later, in January 1937, another building in Tacoma was approved to be used "for school purposes until [the] school building could be rebuilt."²¹ The School Board authorized payments for "labor and material at [the] new Tacoma School building" beginning in May 1937.²² Great care was used in reconstructing the school to its original appearance, and the rebuilt school served Tacoma residents until the 1973.

Tacoma's population and commerce dwindled beginning in the late 1920s and its existence as a town ended during the Depression. Several generations of Tacoma residents attended the Tacoma School until it closed in 1973. For fifty years, Tacoma School was the primary source of education, identity, and memory for the Tacoma community. Children from the Tacoma community now attend schools in neighboring Coeburn. During the 1980s, U.S. Alternate Route 58 was improved as a four-lane highway and its construction physically bisected the Tacoma community. A group of Tacoma and Wise County citizens purchased the building in 1993 in hopes of preserving their beloved schoolhouse and its heritage. Present use of the building includes vote polling, meeting hall, and social activity center where picnics, bake sales, cakewalks, and weekly bluegrass bands bring local community members back to the old schoolhouse.

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Conclusion

Tacoma School is the most significant surviving structure of the former town of Tacoma. The building has long served as a cohesive focal point for the local community: first, as the educational center for residents for 50 years; and now in its modern use as a community and recreation center that unites newcomers, who attend social events there, with oldtimers who attended the school for educational purposes. Of the four similarly designed schools from the mid-1920s, only two survive today and Tacoma is the only property that has returned to public non-profit use.

Endnotes

1. Rossie, William Louis. *Settlement and Development of Powell Valley, Virginia*. Privately published, 1993. Pg. 14.
2. Smith, A.D. & Co. *South-west Virginia and the Valley*. 1892. Pg. 439.
3. Johnson, Charles. *Wise County, Virginia*. Norton Press, Norton, Va., 1938. Pg. 316.
4. Wise County Deed Book 30 Page 343.
5. Rossie, William Louis. *Settlement and Development of Powell Valley, Virginia*. Privately published, 1993. Pg. 15.
6. Coalfield Progress. Special feature publication. No date.
7. Moore, Herbert. *Statistical Abstract of Virginia, Volume One*. University of Virginia Press: Charlottesville, Va., 1996. Pg. 7.
8. Striplin, E.F. Pat. *The Norfolk & Western: a history*. Norfolk & Western Railway Company: Roanoke, Va., 1981. Pg. 132.
9. Kennedy, Ralph Emerson. *An Economic and Social Survey of Wise County*. University of Virginia Record Extension Series, Vol. XII, No. 11: Charlottesville, Va. Pg. 73.
10. Ibid. Pg. 85.
11. Wise County Deed Book 160, Page 189.

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12. State Superintendent of Public Instruction. *Plans for Public Schoolhouses*. E.M. Uzzell & Co., Raleigh, N.C. 1911. Pg. 24.
13. Wise County School Board Minutes, 1927-1936 Record Book. March 8, 1927, p. 8.
14. Wise County School Board Minutes, 1927-1936 Record Book. December 1929.
15. Wise County School Board Minutes, 1927-1936 Record Book. October 1931.
16. Wise County School Board Minutes, 1927-1936 Record Book. November 1931.
17. Wise County School Board Minutes, 1927-1936 Record Book. January 1932.
18. Wise County School Board Minutes, 1927-1936 Record Book. July 1932.
19. Wise County School Board Minutes, 1927-1936 Record Book. February 1933.
20. Wise County School Board Minutes, Jan. 1936- June 1945 Record Book. January 1936.
21. Wise County School Board Minutes, Jan. 1936- June 1945 Record Book. January 1, 1937.
22. Wise County School Board Minutes, Jan. 1936- June 1945 Record Book. May 11, 1937.

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Johnson, Charles. *Wise County, Virginia*. Norton Press, Norton, Va. 1938.

Kennedy, Ralph Emerson. *An Economic and Social Survey of Wise County*. University of Virginia Record Extension Series, Volume XII, No. 11. Charlottesville, Va., May 1928.

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State Superintendent of Public Instruction. *Plans for Public Schoolhouses*. E.M. Uzzell & Co., Raleigh, North Carolina. 1911.

Striplin, E.F. Pat. *The Norfolk & Western: a history*. Norfolk & Western Railway Company: Roanoke, Va. 1981.

Wise County Deed Book Records. Wise County Courthouse, Wise, Virginia.

Wise County School Board Minutes. Wise County School Board, Wise, Virginia.

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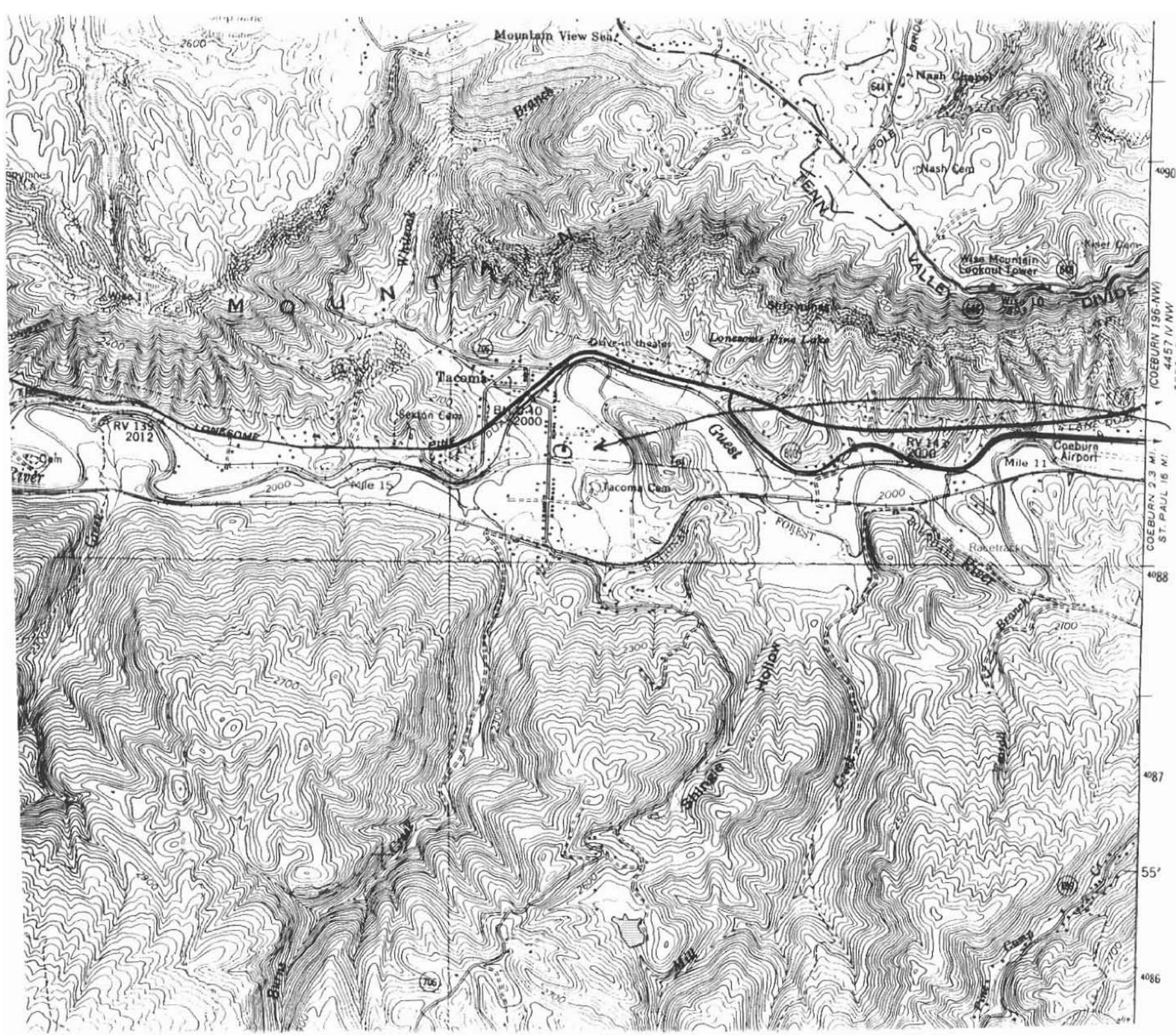
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Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated parcel is shown on the accompanying survey map drawn in 1990 and tax parcel map. Scale of 1" = 200'.

Boundary Justification

The boundaries of the nominated parcel are defined so as to include the principal historic resource, the 1922 school building, and to exclude any adjoining modern resources.



TACOMA
 SCHOOL,
 WISE COUN
 117 N1
 17/363550/
 40885