

VLR-12/11/84

NRHP- 2/27/85

PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN AGUSTA COUNTY, VIRGINIA, 1870-1940
 VIRGINIA HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION
 Thematic National Register Nomination Inventory Form

Historic Name: Middlebrook School	Common Name: Middlebrook Grade School
Street Address/Rt. No.: Rt. 670	VHLC File Number: 07-686
Vicinity of: Middlebrook	Owner: William Brubeck
USGS Quad: Greenville 7.5	Middlebrook, VA
Date(s): 1916, 1919	Architect/Builder: Blaire & David Weaver,
Original Use: Elementary and High School	Style: Colonial Revival/Vernacular
Present Use: Storage	
Condition: Fair	
Altered <input type="checkbox"/> ; unaltered <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

Physical Description:

The Middlebrook School illustrates the most common plan for large consolidated schools in Augusta County during the 1910s. **The present building was constructed in two stages.** In 1916, an "L"-shaped, two-story school was built, consisting of the two front rooms, a south ell room, and a central hall the depth of the building. Three years later, the plan was completed into the double-pile, central-passage design with a one-room plan, two-story addition in the north-east corner. Eight examples of this eight-room plan were built in Augusta County during the 1910s.

Besides its very typical plan, the Middlebrook School displays the stylistic and construction features popular in the 1910s. Like most schools of this period, the building is of brick construction, laid in stretcher bond on a concrete foundation. The hipped roof, so common in these early schools, is covered with standing seam metal. The detailing suggests the Colonial Revival Style with the fanlight over the central entrance, the rigidly symmetrical window piercings with 6/6 sash, and the front and back porches. **A raised porch with Doric columns** and plain square-sectioned balustrade, highlights the facade with a simpler and smaller wooden porch with Doric columns sheltering the back door.

The school plan reveals a few variations on the central-passage plan. A cloak closet serving the front southwest classroom projects slightly into the hallway off the front door. An additional cloak closet doubling as a side hall is located between the front north classroom and 1919 classroom addition. On the second floor, a small room at the end of the passage served as a chemical laboratory before the high school was built, similar to the 1917 Craigsville School. **Chimney placement follows the arrangement often found in houses of this plan, with chimneys located along the inside passage wall of each room.** The school had an unfinished basement used primarily for storage purposes.

Much of the interior finish remains and hints at the popular Colonial styles. A large square newel post, turned balusters and molded railing finish the main stairwell off the front door.
 (continued)

Statement of Significance:

The Middlebrook Grade School is significant both individually and as a part of the Middlebrook School complex. First, it remains as the least altered example of the second phase of consolidated school construction in Augusta County in the 1910s. As graded schools larger than three or four rooms became necessary in the mushrooming consolidation drive, the two-story, double-pile, central-passage plan with eight classrooms characterized by this Middlebrook school became the most common large school form in this decade. After the establishment of the Building Plan Service by the State Department of Education in 1920, coupled with new ideas concerning curriculum and building specifications, new school plans changed dramatically from this familiar form. **The Middlebrook School is not only a very typical example of this plan; it has remained unchanged since the school closed in 1967 and retains its original plan, exterior decoration, and interior finish.** Second, this school building, along with a 1922 high school and 1930s agriculture shop, survives as the best-preserved rural school complex in the County. **Many of the progressive communities which built large schools in the 1910s added a second school, usually used for high school, in the 1920s.** In most cases, one of these buildings has either been razed or dramatically altered. **The three Middlebrook buildings are all excellent examples of their types and none have been altered.**

Middlebrook was one of the largest, most prosperous communities in Augusta County by the 1880s, thriving on the turnpike traffic as well as the rich agricultural farmlands. As a reflection
 (continued)

Geographic Data/Acreage: one and one-quarter acres

Verbal Boundary Description: Beginning at a point on the E side of VA 670 approx. 450' S of intersection of said route with VA 252; thence extending approx. 250' ENE; thence (continued)
Boundary Justification: The bounds have been drawn to include the school complex, which includes the Grade School, High School, and agricultural building, along with the immediate school yard.
 UTM: 17/656780/4212660

Prepared By: Ann McCleary, Architectural Historian

Date Prepared: September 1984

Physical Description continued

The door and window frames remaining throughout the building also reflect the Colonial designs. Other interior finish includes plastered walls, wood floors, chalkboards in the rooms, and five-panel doors. Most of the rooms retain their wardrobes and some closets.

The building has not been altered since the school closed in 1967, but it has deteriorated due to lack of use besides storage.

Statement of Significance continued

of this progressive spirit, Middlebrook boasted a three-room school by 1890. By 1908, the grade school had moved to a frame church building, containing three rooms, on the present school site. However, other rooms throughout the town were also used for classrooms due to the shortage of space.

With these crowded conditions, the town decided to undertake the construction of a larger, more modern school building. The building project became a community project, with patrons contributing the money towards materials and providing the necessary labor themselves. Unlike other schools of this period, such as the Craigsville School, the County spent little money on this school. Several local men were closely involved with the construction activities, including Blaire and David Weaver and Mr. Swortzel, a local carpenter. By 1919, a two-story addition with one room on each floor was constructed, creating the square-shaped plan from an earlier "L"-shaped design.

The Middlebrook School housed grades one through seven as well as the high school. Local residents recall that the elementary classes met on the first floor and the high school on the second floor. By the early 1920s, the school had already become too small, with two classes often meeting in the same room. In 1922, Dr. Hyde, a local physician, encouraged Middlebrook patrons to begin a second fund raising drive for the construction of a new high school and community building. After its completion in November 1923, the high school moved to the new building and this building became the grade school.

In 1947, the high school was further consolidated and moved to Fishersville. At this time, the elementary school assumed the use of the old high school building. Also in the late 1940s, the County closed some of the smaller elementary schools in the area, such as Newport, and bused these students to Middlebrook, increasing school population there. The last phase of school consolidation occurred in 1967 when Middlebrook Grade School students were moved to a new consolidated school called Riverheads Elementary. Since the school closed, the building has been used for storage.

Verbal Boundary Description continued

approx. 225' SSE; thence approx. 250' WSW to a point on E side of VA 670; thence approx. 225' NNW along E side of VA 670 to point of origin.

