

VLR-12/11/84

NRHP-2/23/85

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

Historic Name: Weyers Cave School	Common Name: Weyers Cave Elementary School
Street Address/Rt. No.: Rt. 276	VHLC File Number: 07-1156
Vicinity of: Weyers Cave	Owner: Augusta County School Board
USGS Quad: Mt. Sidney	Fishersville, VA
Date(s): 1916-17; 1924	Architect/Builder: Unknown
Original Use: School	Style: Colonial Revival
Present Use: Elementary School	
Condition: Good	
Altered <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ; unaltered <input type="checkbox"/>	

**Physical Description:**

The Weyers Cave School exhibits the form popular in Augusta County when state appropriated funds became available for consolidated schools in the 1910s. The six schools built between 1914 and 1918 exhibit a central-passage, double-pile plan which comprises the original 1916-17 core of the Weyers Cave School. In 1923-24 the school was considerably enlarged with a four-room-and-passage block to the south, creating its present form.

The original building consists of the northern entrance and hall with four-bay classroom blocks to each side. Although the balanced, symmetrical form suggests the domestic architecture styles of the period, the larger scale of this structure and the octagonal belfry identify its use as a school. The school architecture is quite typical of this period. The stretcher-brick veneer building rests on a raised concrete foundation. A shingled front gable breaks the hipped roof, covered with metal. The stylistic features reflect the Colonial Revival of the 1920s--a one-story, one-bay wooden portico with Doric columns and square balustrade, the side-lights and transom around the central doorway, and the tripartite central second-floor window.

The brick-veneer addition, built seven years later, added a second front entrance and hallway south of the original south end. Doubling the number of classrooms to eight on the first floor, the addition created a triple-pile plan, adding three rooms to the south side of the new passage, an additional room to the north, and a small room at the end of the hall. On the exterior, the new design matched the older portion with an identical front portico, shingled gables on the front and the sides, and four sets of 6/6 sash lighting each classroom on the facade and side walls. Smaller 6/6 sash replaced the sidelights around the new entrance, but a large tripartite window remains above. The raised concrete foundation continued under the addition, providing additional basement space.

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**Statement of Significance:**

Weyers Cave School is significant both architecturally, as an excellent example of the form of the early consolidated schools of the 1910s, and historically, as one of the most progressive high schools in the County. In addition, it is the oldest school building still in use in Augusta County.

Architecturally, the Weyers Cave School illustrates the large, two-story square brick building that symbolized Augusta County's early attempts at consolidation. In the 1910s, consolidated schools moved from the domestic-scaled one- or two-story frame buildings with three to four rooms to larger, more substantial brick structures which proudly suggested their educational use. Six of the nine schools built between 1910 and 1918 displayed forms similar to Weyers Cave, with four rooms on each floor encased in an imposing modern shell. By 1920, with the establishment of the Division of School Buildings in the State Department of Education, school designs changed dramatically again. The new plans devised by this Division differed from the 1910s buildings in their use of a one-story elevation, occasionally with classrooms or a community center in the basement, and more diverse plans, which often departed from the familiar central-passage model.

Although one of the newer towns in the County, Weyers Cave grew quickly and became known as one of the most progressive communities in the County by the 1920s. The town developed along

(continued)

Geographic Data/Acreage: two acres

Verbal Boundary Description: Beginning at a point on the W side of VA 276 approx. 800' NE of intersection of said route with VA 256; thence extending approx. 350' WNW; thence (continued)  
 Boundary Justification: The bounds have been drawn to include the school building and the immediate school yard.  
 UTM: 17/682870/4239630

Prepared By: Ann McCleary, Architectural Historian

Date Prepared: September 1984

Although the building has continually been adapted to the changing needs of a school, the interior still preserves much of its original character. The single-run stairs inside each front entrance retain large square newels and carved brackets typical of the period. Original finish includes Colonial Revival door and window frames, horizontal panel doors, and chalkboards in each of the rooms. Compared to the smaller "teacher's closets" proposed in the 1920s and 1930s, the Weyers Cave School has larger walk-in closets in the older, north rooms. The school retains plastered walls throughout and wood floors on part of the second floor, but the floors have been laid on the main floor and the ceilings have been lowered throughout. The full basement has linoleum covered concrete floors with plaster walls and plaster and wallboard ceilings supported by lally columns.

Room usage within the school has changed with the 1924 addition and the 1962 conversion into an elementary school. The large 1920s addition permitted more specialized spaces within the school by following the suggestions of the State Department of Education. In its first seven years, the school contained only eight classrooms, four on each floor, for grades one through twelve. The crowded quarters prohibited the development of more specialized spaces. The basement did have an auditorium, an early example of this space in Augusta County's consolidated schools from the 1910s. The floor of the auditorium slanted down to the stage at the north end. The 1924 addition doubled the number of rooms, providing further space for the development of the high school programs. A room for the newly-established Agriculture Department was created in the basement of the older section, and a cluster of home economics rooms were included at the west end of the new hallway. One of the rooms in the older portion was converted into a chemical or science laboratory. Other more specialized spaces included a library and office, dressing rooms, and shower bath.

The two additions made to the school in the 1930s further extended the school facilities. In 1936, the County added a new gymnasium/auditorium with a stage, and it retains its wood floor, glazed tile wainscoting, and block walls. The older basement auditorium was re-modeled into a kitchen and cafeteria, reflecting the new concern for school lunch programs in the late 1930s and 1940s. A cinderblock cannery building was constructed off the south end of the new gymnasium. This utilitarian room retains its concrete on earth floor, unfinished block walls, and exposed wood joist ceilings.

With the conversion into an elementary school, these more specialized rooms were not needed. Most have been converted into classrooms except for the Home Economics Department which is now office space.

Statement of Significance continued

along the railroad in the 1870s, but its development proved more long lasting than other railroad towns. By 1882, Weyers Cave had a schoolhouse located on the main Keezletown Road. The community had outgrown this building by 1904, when a larger two-story frame school was erected for both elementary and high school grades. The community experienced a boom in the early 20th century, and with the optimistic spirit of growth came the need for a schoolhouse more reflective of its community spirit. The present brick school was dedicated September 9, 1916, and finished in January 1917. Seven years later, using funds from the Smith-Hughes Agriculture Act, the large addition was constructed, providing space for a more diversified school curriculum and programs. After the State developed its standards for accreditation, Weyers Cave became the first accredited high school in the County.

Weyers Cave High School has played a leading role in the development of vocational education programs in the County. This was one of two Smith-Hughes agricultural high schools established in Augusta County in 1923-24. With the 1924 addition, a room in the basement of the original building was designated for agricultural classes. By 1926, Weyers Cave had developed a four-year agriculture program related to local farming needs and goals. In March of the following year, Weyers Cave agriculture students, under the direction of E. B. Craun, organized the Future Farmers of Virginia, which aimed to "restore farming to the level of a profession from that of a mere trade of business." The club grew quickly, and by 1928, a nationwide network of clubs had developed. At the 1928 convention in Kansas City, the organization was renamed the Future Farmers of America, and it soon became one of the most well-known high school agriculture clubs across the County.

Weyers Cave was also one of the first schools to introduce home economics into the curriculum, beginning in 1918 with the guidance of the Weyers Cave Home Demonstration Club. Although only a small department taught by students at the State Teachers College in Harrisonburg in its early years, local students proved so interested in the subject that two rooms of the 1924 addition were dedicated to these classes. With the new, improved facilities, the State furnished a teacher in home economics and a two-year course was developed including sewing, cooking, and other home management activities.

Verbal Boundary Description continued

approx. 250' NE; thence approx. 300' SE to a point on W side of VA 276; thence approx. 250' SSW to point of origin.

