

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

VLR 9/5/7  
NRHP 10/31/7

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Hamilton High School  
other names/site number Hamilton School VDHR# 024-0105

2. Location

street & number 1925 Cartersville Road not for publication   
city or town Cartersville vicinity N/A  
state Virginia code VA county Cumberland code 049 zip code 23027

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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] Sept. 14, 2007  
Signature of certifying official Date  
Virginia Department of Historic Resources  
State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting 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 \_\_\_\_\_



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**8. Statement of Significance**

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**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.

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

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

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

Education; Architecture

**Period of Significance** 1910 – 1944

**Significant Dates** 1910, 1944

**Significant Person** (Complete if Criterion B is marked above) N/A

**Cultural Affiliation** N/A

**Architect/Builder** C.W. Dickinson (Cumberland County school superintendent)

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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**9. Major Bibliographical References**

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(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: Virginia Department of Historic Resources (VDHR)

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**10. Geographical Data**  
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**Acreage of Property** 5.0 acres

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

Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing	
17	753397	4171581	2			<u>See continuation sheet</u>

**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 Mike Yengling  
organization Atlantic Preservation Partners date 6/17/2007  
street & number 1302 W. 41<sup>st</sup> Street telephone (804) 232-3970  
city or town Richmond state VA zip code 23225

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**Additional Documentation**  
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Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps** A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.  
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs** Representative black and white photographs of the property.

**Additional items** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

=====  
**Property Owner**  
=====

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

name Wayne and Elaine Whitley  
street & number 1925 Cartersville Road telephone (804) 375-9654  
city or town Cartersville state VA zip code 23027

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**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.). A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number.

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 36 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

**United States Department of the Interior  
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CONTINUATION SHEET****Hamilton High School  
Cumberland County, VA**Section   7   Page   1  **SUMMARY DESCRIPTION****Site Description**

The former Hamilton High School stands at the northwest corner of routes 45 and 690 on a five-acre property in the village of Hamilton in rural Cumberland County, Virginia. The large wood frame Classical Revival building was constructed in 1910 on a parcel donated by neighbor Spencer W. Parker, whose ten children would all eventually attend the school. The irregularly shaped lot slopes gently from Rt. 45, Cumberland Courthouse Road, to its northernmost point along Rt. 690, Columbia Road (historically Flanagan's Mill Road). The prominent façade of the school faces Rt. 45 to the south, and is set back behind a circular gravel driveway. On the rear (north elevation) a hyphen connects the main school building to a c. 1925 auditorium annex. To the immediate east, the former school cafeteria and kitchen building now serves as a single dwelling and is the primary residence for the owners of the property. The earliest portion pre-dates the school and was moved to the property sometime prior to its c. 1948 frame addition. At the northern end of the property stands a c. 1930 agricultural classroom building now referred to as "the cannery." It is separated from the north elevation of the auditorium by raised bed gardens and young fruit trees. The school property once included the c. 1935 Home Economics Cottage, which stands on the adjacent parcel to the west and now functions as a single dwelling. The broader context of the site includes a c. 1880 to c. 1900 Victorian-style dwelling across Rt. 45, which once housed teachers from the school but is now also used as a single dwelling.

**Exterior Description**

The Hamilton School is a two-story wood frame building, constructed in a local adaptation of the Classical Revival style that was popular between 1880 and the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. The building's form is generally consistent with other Classical Revival buildings dating to this period, and reflects the tendency to select dignified but understated building styles for governmental, civic and educational buildings – a trend that can still be seen in present-day American architecture. The building shows the predilection for hipped roofs that predominated within the style until c. 1910, after which time gable roofs became more typical. The central bay on the façade projects two feet and is further accentuated with a pedimented slate-faced gable at each floor. The pyramidal hipped roof and its crowning bell tower/cupola are also clad in slate shingles. The nearly square building is two bays deep and three bays wide, with an exterior footprint of 50 by 57 feet. The foundation is board-formed poured in place concrete and the main exterior walls of the building are clad in wood lap siding (weatherboards) with an average reveal of 5 inches.

At the front of the building, two concrete steps lead to a 16 feet wide by 8 feet deep gabled-roof wood porch with engaged round wood half-columns at the building and paired 4-inch round metal columns supporting the outside corners. The metal columns are not original. Historic photographs show paired unfluted wood columns with simplified Doric capitals, a detail that can still be seen on the now-enclosed rear porch. The porch roof and gable face are both clad in slate shingles. The main entrance is centered on the porch and consists of paired 3-panel, 9-light wood doors. The entrance is flanked by engaged Doric pilasters and surrounded by a diamond pane transom and sidelights. All of the two-over-two

double-hung wood windows on the symmetrical façade are arranged in banks of three, a feature that the Hamilton shares with its predecessor, the 1908 Cumberland High School.

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All of the windows in the building are double-hung wood sash with a two-over-two configuration. The side, or east and west, elevations of the building are less symmetrical than the front, although they do mirror each other. The east elevation has two windows on each floor in the first bay, and three windows on each floor in the second bay. On the west elevation this pattern is reversed, with three windows on each floor in the first bay and – originally - two windows on each floor in the second bay. The two ground floor windows in the second bay were removed and replaced with a roll-up garage door and loading dock when the building was used as a furniture warehouse, as mentioned below under *Alterations*. The total inventory for the main school building windows, all of which appear to be original, is as follows:

Primary façade (south elevation): (15) wood double-hung, two-over-two (2/2).

West elevation: (8) wood double-hung, two-over-two (2/2).

East elevation: (10) wood double-hung, two-over-two (2/2).

Rear (north) elevation: (10) wood double-hung, two-over-two (2/2).

The rear (north) elevation presents the least symmetrical face of the building. Because of the wider northwest corner rooms on both the first and second floors, the rear entrance is shifted to the east relative to the front entrance. The first floor central passageway, which runs all the way through the building, becomes correspondingly narrower where it passes the northwest corner room. The window placement on the north elevation does not correspond to that on the façade (south elevation) of the building. The rear entrance consists of paired 2-panel, 6-light wood doors with the same diamond pane sidelight and transom surround as the primary entrance. Two fire escapes, since removed but most likely not original, have left obsolete door openings on both sides of the second story on the rear of the building.

**Interior Description**

The school building has a slightly asymmetrical central passage plan organized around its primary spaces, the former classrooms. There are four large classrooms on each floor, averaging 20' by 25' each and situated off of the central hallway and its splayed staircase. As mentioned above, the northwest corner rooms on both floors are wider than the others. With exception to one that has been altered (see *Alterations*, below), the classrooms are characterized by 5 feet high wainscoting, slate chalkboards, beaded wood ceilings, picture molding, and abundant light from the large sash windows. Beaded pocket doors, top-hung with weighted ropes, were originally used on the closets although some of them have been removed or replaced. Some of the former classrooms' chalkboards still contain the prices and quantities of furniture from when the building served as a warehouse, displaying its evolution. A ninth room, once housing the principal's office and school library, is situated at the end of the central hallway on the second floor.

The first floor central hall still features its beaded wood ceiling and stained wainscoting, chair rail, door surrounds, picture molding, and crown molding. Immediately inside the front doors, a small vestibule contains paired entrances to the left and right. On the other side of this divided entrance a beautifully crafted maple staircase with turned spindles leads to a landing with a bank of windows overlooking the front of the property. The floors throughout are covered in tongue-and-groove wood flooring oriented along the width of the building. All of the interior doors, original throughout the building,

are 6-panel wood doors with single-light operable awning transoms. The main school building was heated with hot water/steam radiators from the time of its construction, and consequently does not have any chimneys.

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The auditorium annex is divided into two large classroom/meeting spaces on either side of a central corridor that leads directly into the sizeable auditorium itself, with a stage at the north end and seating for approximately 250. The classroom spaces feature wood tongue-and-groove floors, 4 feet high beaded wainscoting, and 6-panel wood doors. Originally, each classroom could be separated from the auditorium space with folding wood partitions. These have since been removed, but the ceiling tracks and pockets in the hardwood floor remain.

**Secondary Resources**

Although the impressive Classical Revival school building dominates the view from the road that it faces, the property as a whole is truly an aggregate that evolved over a period of more than 50 years. There are three secondary resources, all of wood frame construction. All are contributing buildings that were actively used during the school's functional life and associated period of significance. In the mid-1920s, the main building was expanded with a 50 x 80 feet auditorium wing off the rear. The auditorium building is clad in weatherboards with an average reveal of 5 inches, and has a hipped standing seam metal roof. The side (east and west) elevation windows are nine-over-nine (9/9) wood double-hung windows placed over 3-light awning windows. Some of the awning windows on the west elevation have been rebuilt in a single-light configuration. There are 24 side elevation windows in total, with 12 windows on each side organized in pairs. The rear (north) elevation has two nine-over-nine (9/9) wood double-hung windows directly behind the performance stage. The auditorium contains five brick chimneys: four interior chimneys, two rectangular and two square, laid in a running bond pattern with corbeled caps; and one exterior chimney laid in an American bond pattern.

This annex is connected to the main building with an irregular two-part hyphen that enclosed and incorporated the rear porch. Hyphen "A", the southernmost and slightly wider of the two, occupies the original footprint of the rear porch. It is 16 feet five inches wide by 10 feet long and has a slate gable roof, vertical board siding and three six-over-six (6/6) wood double-hung windows on the east and west sides. The rear porch's original half columns are still attached to the north elevation of the building, and the original paired round columns still stand at the outer corners of the concrete porch floor. The floor descends three steps into Hyphen "B", which is 10 feet five inches wide by 21 feet six inches long with a standing seam gable roof and vertical board siding. There are five six-over-six (6/6) wood double-hung windows on the east and west sides, and two six-light, two-panel wood doors that are situated opposite each other on each side. The doors are flanked by engaged pilasters that terminate approximately one foot below the soffit. Hyphen "B" is separated from the auditorium annex by a nine feet deep by 40 feet wide vestibule with a central corridor and Boys and Girls bathrooms on each side. This vestibule has a shallow standing seam hip roof and weatherboards with an average reveal of 5 inches. There are six six-over-six (6/6) wood double-hung windows on the south side, with a bank of three on each side of the connecting hyphen, and two four-over-four (4/4) wood double-hung windows on the east and west sides.

The next secondary resource is a c. 1930 agricultural classroom building that originally housed a classroom, cannery and machine shop. The 25 by 98 feet wood frame building was built in either two or three phases with a later addition at each gable end, and is clad in weatherboards with an average reveal of 6 inches. It has a central brick chimney laid in a running

bond pattern and a shallow gable roof covered in slate shingles on the original central portion. The roofs on the east and west gable end additions are covered in asphalt shingles. On the primary (south) elevation there are eleven six-over-six (6/6) wood double-hung windows, one of which has been converted into a door with a six-light transom and seven of

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which have had their lower sashes covered. The south elevation of the west addition has an entrance door and a large two-over-two (2/2) wood double-hung window. The west elevation has a large barn door and the east elevation has three window openings, all boarded over. The rear (north) elevation has five boarded-over windows, a single entrance door and a sliding barn door.

The final resource is a wood frame building measuring 22 by 60 feet. It is comprised of two parts: the c. 1879 Wayside School, a one-room schoolhouse that was moved to the property from the vicinity of nearby Sportsmen's Lake between c. 1935 and c. 1945, and a c. 1948 frame addition.<sup>1</sup> Currently a single dwelling for the owners of the Hamilton School property, it once housed the school cafeteria and kitchen. It is characterized by narrow weatherboard siding, corrugated metal roof(s), two brick chimneys, and six-over-six (6/6) wood double-hung windows in various sizes. A small gable-roofed portico with square wood columns frames the single-door entrance on the south elevation of the former Wayside School, now the eastern half of the building.

**Alterations**

Architecturally, the Hamilton School property comprises an intact early twentieth century school complex with a high degree of integrity. The main school building is in very good overall condition and has seen remarkably little alteration given its age and varied uses. One classroom, located in the northwest corner of the first floor, was converted to a loading dock when the school was used as a furniture warehouse. This involved the removal of some exterior siding and two windows on the west wall. Some of the original pocket closet doors in the classrooms are missing or have been replaced. With the exception of these changes, the classrooms remain largely as they were when the state sold the building in 1964. Two fire escapes, since removed but most likely not original, have left obsolete door openings on both sides of the second story on the rear of the building.

When the auditorium annex was constructed c. 1925, the rear porch of the school was enclosed and incorporated into a hyphen that connects the two buildings. The original porch elements, including its engaged half columns and paired corner columns, remain in place. In the auditorium annex, some of the awning windows on the west elevation have been rebuilt in a single-light configuration, and the folding partitions which once separated the classrooms from the auditorium space are missing.

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**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

Hamilton High School, renamed the Hamilton School when it became an elementary school in 1944, represents the shift from geographically disbursed rural high schools to consolidated regional schools in Virginia in the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Constructed in 1910 and initially serving the needs of a three-county population that included pupils from northern Cumberland, southern Goochland, and western Powhatan counties, the sizeable building replaced three one-room schools in the northern half of Cumberland County. The school's \$5,000 construction cost was financed through a combination of private subscriptions and state loans – a typical scenario in an era marked by growth in education with limited public funding. When it opened for its first session in the fall of 1910, it was the second high school and the largest wood frame school building ever constructed in Cumberland County. Whereas the three schools it replaced served a total of 60 pupils, Hamilton had a beginning enrollment of 112.<sup>2</sup> The school was by far the largest of its kind in the county at the time that it was built, and to this day it is the oldest surviving high school in the county.

The school quickly made its mark on Cumberland County education. In 1911, less than a year after its inauguration, state authorities selected the Hamilton High School Improvement League as one of two “Model Leagues” in Virginia, and in 1914 the school opened its Normal department, joining the privileged ranks of schools offering certified teacher training programs. Students completing the normal course of study were obligated to teach a minimum of two years in Virginia's rural public schools, solidifying Hamilton High School's role as an important educator of certified teachers and a participant in the drive to increase access to public education. The historic relationship between such progressive education programs and the civil rights movement has earned the former school its current standing as a designated stop on the *Civil Rights in Education Heritage Trail*, which honors the legacy of 41 public schools in south-central Virginia that impacted or helped lead the way to desegregation and a furthering of the American civil rights movement.

Between c. 1925 and c. 1940, the school grew with the construction of a large auditorium, a home economics cottage, and an agricultural classroom building. The auditorium was used as a point of gathering for the surrounding community, hosting school fundraisers, plays, and concerts by well-known state and national traveling musical acts such as the Carter Sisters. Despite its successes, the school was converted into an elementary school in 1944 when the high schools of the county were consolidated at Cumberland High School. This foreshadowed the closing of the school's doors for good in 1964 when the entire education system for the county was consolidated under one roof in the county seat of Cumberland Courthouse. After serving as a furniture warehouse and gas station for local merchants Blanton and Pleasants, the property was acquired by its current owners in 1999.

The eight-room, two-story school, designed in a vernacular adaptation of the Classical Revival style so popular for civic architecture of the period, represents in both architecture and educational philosophy the crucial transitional period between the prototypical one-room schoolhouse and larger regional schools like its successor, Cumberland High School. The building has seen minimal alteration, and its prominent siting near the intersection of routes 45 and 690 in rural Cumberland County achieves a strong visual impact that survives to the present day. Architecturally, the property comprises a complete and intact early 20<sup>th</sup> century school complex with a high degree of integrity. For the reasons outlined above, Hamilton High School is eligible for listing on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places under criteria A and C, for its contributions to education and school architecture between 1910 and 1944.

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**The Origins of Hamilton High School**

The school was constructed on land donated by neighbor Spencer W. Parker, and ten of Mr. and Mrs. Parker's children would attend the Hamilton School. According to their daughter, Dorothy Parker Anderson, the Parkers "required regular attendance in order that we might receive the best education possible." The known history of the property, however, extends as far back as the last quarter of the eighteenth century: the 5-acre plot on which the school was built was subdivided from Mr. Parker's property, which to this day contains the remnants of Irwin Tavern. Formerly known as Old Tavern and dating to the year of American independence, Irwin Tavern was purchased by Mr. Parker shortly following the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Mr. Parker tore down the tavern itself, but retained its massive stone chimney – including the stone inscribed with the date 1776 - and incorporated it into the house that still stands on the property to the immediate east of the Hamilton School. The Irwin Tavern site still features a large rock that was used as a mounting block by guests who arrived on horseback, and as recently as the 1980s the old watering trough, which would later get used by ponies of children who rode to class at the Hamilton School, was still extant.<sup>3</sup>

Although rich in history that extends back to America's early colonial days, most of Cumberland County has remained extremely rural. Constructed in one of these rural areas in the northern end of the county, Hamilton High School counted amongst its pupils the children of the nearby town of Cartersville, three miles away on a bluff above the south banks of the James River. The school's relative proximity to the town – historically a transportation center for central Virginia - reinforced strong social and cultural ties. The school's history can in fact be traced to Cartersville: there, in the fall of 1909, a group of citizens led by local physician Dr. Nash P. Snead met in the Masonic Hall to discuss the possibility of a high school that would serve the northern end of the county. A memorial to Dr. Snead, erected in 1959, stands in front of the 1906 Victorian Gothic-style Cartersville Baptist Church. Most of the town's buildings are wood frame and weatherboard dwellings which, like the Hamilton School, have changed little since their construction in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Located between Cartersville and the pending Cumberland Courthouse Historic District, the Hamilton School provides an important historic link between Cartersville, the northern part of the county served by the school, and the county seat in Cumberland Courthouse.

Charles William (C.W.) Dickinson, Jr., superintendent of the Cumberland County School Board beginning in 1901 and during the Hamilton School's construction in 1910-11, had taught previously in Bedford County, Virginia, Tuskegee, Alabama, and Meridian, Mississippi prior to moving to nearby Cartersville in 1872, where he became a businessman. While continuing to operate his Cartersville business, Dickinson served variously as principal of Hamilton High School, first Director of School Libraries for the State Board of Education, and eventually became superintendent of schools for neighboring Powhatan County.

**The Place of Hamilton High School in Cumberland County and Virginia Public Education**

During Reconstruction, the expansion of Virginia's nascent school system was furthered with the establishment of the Peabody Education Fund in 1866, which led to Virginia receiving 20% of the total funding that went to all Southern states between 1867 and 1877. After that period, funding was distributed according to school population until the balance of the fund was bequeathed to the endowment of the George Peabody College for Teachers in Nashville, Tennessee in 1910.<sup>4</sup>

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Although the Peabody Fund pushed the cause of free public education forward, it was the inauguration of the state public school system in 1870 that truly signaled ongoing governmental support for the endeavor. The school system grew out of the 1870 Virginia Constitution, which contained the first provision for a complete system of public education in Virginia. Convening in December 1867, the fifth constitutional convention consisted of 105 diverse members representing seven Union states and three southern states, plus Washington, D.C., Canada, England, Ireland, and Scotland. Seventy-two of the convention's members were considered "radicals" (as opposed to conservatives), of which 24 were African Americans.<sup>5</sup> Led by Judge John Underwood, these Radical Republicans dominated the convention, the outcome of which was referred to by its opponents as the "Underwood Constitution". In addition to establishing a state school system with mandatory funding and attendance, this constitution extended the right to vote to all male citizens over the age of 21 - thus granting the vote to African American males and earning its other nickname, the "Negro Constitution".<sup>6</sup> This progressive climate in which Virginia's public education system originated would see maturation in the establishment of the Normal school system - in which the Hamilton School played a vital local, if not regional, role in rural education. Further, the participation of African-Americans in the school system's development, though operated on a segregated basis, laid the groundwork for later expansion of true equal access to public education, reflected in Normal schools and culminating in the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s (see below: Normal Schools in Virginia).<sup>7</sup>

Following these statewide developments, public schools came to be scattered around Cumberland County during Reconstruction, and became more common after the State Legislature passed a bill in 1873 requiring each county to provide funds which would keep schools open for at least five months of the year. In 1884, there were 37 schools operating in Cumberland County, most of them rural one-room schoolhouses. By 1887 the records show 47 schools in the county, serving 1,881 children.<sup>8</sup> The first public high school opened in the county seat of Cumberland Courthouse in 1908 when the old courthouse, which had burned in 1905, was reconstructed to house the school. Because the school served a large geographic area of the county, students came from miles around and many had to board locally - a trend that would be echoed at the Hamilton High School. By the following year, there were three one-room high schools serving the northern half of the county: Boston, Cartersville, and Harrison Bridge.<sup>9</sup> Geographically disbursed and with a total of only 60 students, these schools were insufficient to meet the needs of the growing numbers of families that had come to expect publicly-funded education for their children.

In 1910, to address these problems and meet the secondary educational needs of the northern half of Cumberland County, Hamilton High School was constructed with a combination of public and private funds. Initially, the school also received pupils from portions of neighboring Powhatan and Goochland counties. With eight classrooms and a starting enrollment of 112, it was the largest school building in the county at the time of its construction. It would remain so until the construction of a new high school in Cumberland Courthouse c. 1930. Located in the center of the Hamilton District from which it took its name, the purpose-built high school was geographically situated between nearby Cartersville and the county seat in Cumberland Courthouse. Hamilton High School embodied the state and national shift from small and isolated local schools to countywide consolidation by school districts. At a time when the typical rural high school consisted of one or two rooms, the two-story, eight-room Hamilton High School made a bold statement about where education was headed. Students and teachers alike were shifted to the new school, which for many was considered a "home away from home". While students from Cartersville and the surrounding area arrived daily by horse and buggy, students from farther afield boarded nearby and traveled home along the red mud roads to be with their families on weekends.<sup>10</sup> A "two-horse rig", operated by Mr. Sid Kie, provided transportation for teachers and students from

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the immediate south across Rt. 45 from the school, a sprawling Victorian farmhouse that once housed teachers from the Hamilton School (and is still sometimes called “the teachers’ house”) still stands.

During its inaugural 1910-11 school year, Hamilton High School was presided over by College of William and Mary-educated principal Blake T. Newton. Two teachers, Ms. Verna White and Ms. Mary Reynolds, plus music instructor Ms. Ruth Snead, instructed the 112 students. In 1911-12, Mr. Newton continued on as principal, another teacher was added to the faculty, and the Dickinson Literary Society was founded.<sup>12</sup> It has been written that in 1912-13 “some dramas were produced which helped the school’s finances”. The teaching staff was increased to five in 1913 –14.<sup>13</sup> Records indicate that the following individuals served as principals during the next decade.<sup>14</sup> Where known, their previous place of residence is noted:

1912-1913: E.P. Tyndall  
1913-1914: R.C. Warburton  
1914-1915: M.C. Harrison (Petersburg)  
1915-1916: I.E. Schin (Williamsburg)  
1916-1917: C.W. Trainham (Brumpton)  
1917-1918: H.E. Fulcher (Sandidges)  
1918-1919: Roswell Bowles

The school was noted early on for its exceptional program: in 1911, less than a year into the school’s operation, state authorities selected the Hamilton High School Improvement League as one of two “Model Leagues” in Virginia.<sup>15</sup> The League’s effects on the school’s growth and development were profound. Its activities continued to place Hamilton High School at the forefront of Cumberland County education, partially by sponsoring a lecture series that attracted prominent educators from around the state, a precedent that would continue in earnest with the construction of the school’s 250-seat auditorium c. 1925.

Further cementing its place in the historical development of education in Cumberland County, the school was at the vanguard of the Virginia State Board of Education’s institutional move toward teacher training and certification soon after its inauguration. In May 1908, the Virginia Legislature had enacted a law providing for “normal” (i.e. teacher training) school departments, funded by state money, in certain high schools selected by the State Board (see discussion below). Hamilton High School was selected for this honor in 1914, only four years after opening its doors. This coincided with the arrival of the school’s first non-local principal, M.C. Harrison of Petersburg. Three members of the graduating class of 1919 went on to become teachers, the first among many that the school would produce.<sup>16</sup> Between 1910 and 1916, Cumberland County consistently ranked high among the progressive counties of the state in terms of its commitment to education, and Hamilton High was clearly its flagship institution.

In addition to its primary function as a school, the Hamilton School served as a community gathering spot for miles around. With the addition of the auditorium building c. 1925, the school hosted lecturers from prominent institutions, local performances and fundraisers, and concerts by regional and national country music acts such as the Carter Sisters and Sunshine Sue. Hitching posts in a special lot to the west of the school were used to tether horses when community functions were held on the property. During this period, the school witnessed growth both within and beyond its present-

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north end of the property c. 1930. The Home Economics (H.E.) Cottage, built as part of the school between c. 1930 and c. 1935, still stands on the adjacent parcel to the west and now functions as a single dwelling. These additions to the complex would set the precedent for the smaller one-story John Randolph High School, 6 miles from Farmville in southern Cumberland County, which also added a home economics cottage and agriculture shop to its expanded 1.3 acre campus in 1935. By 1935, Hamilton High School had 10 teachers and 232 pupils, more than twice its initial enrollment. That year's principal was W.C. Sweitzer, a graduate of Columbia University.

Hamilton High School's history continued to parallel that of the county and region, with its conversion into an elementary school in 1944 when the high schools of the county were consolidated at Cumberland High School. It functioned as an elementary school for the last two decades of its educational life. To this day, the low height of the sinks and mirrors in the separate Boys and Girls bathrooms remain as a reminder of this period in the building's history. The one-room Wayside School was moved to the property during this period, and along with its c. 1948 addition it functioned as the school's cafeteria and kitchen building. In 1964, the school closed for good when the entire education system for the county was consolidated in Cumberland. Between its closing in 1964 and its purchase by the current owners in 1999, the former school served as a furniture warehouse and gas station for longtime Cartersville-area merchants Blanton and Pleasants.

To this day, the Hamilton School remains the largest wood frame school building ever built in the county. It is a well-preserved example of a late Classical Revival structure from its period, and reflects the tendency to select dignified but understated building styles for governmental, civic and educational buildings – a trend that can still be seen in present-day American architecture. The building has a symmetrical two-story, three bay form with a projecting central bay. Its design sought to elevate its purpose through distinguishing architectural features such as a pedimented façade, bell cupola, and diamond-paned sidelights and transom surrounding its main entrance. While a vernacular adaptation, it embodies distinctive characteristics of the Classical Revival style that was prevalent in civic architecture in the 19th century continuing until c. 1920, also found in the nearby circa 1930 Cumberland Bank building, a contributing resource in the Cumberland Court House Historic District (DHR 024-5025-0031). Hamilton School's pronounced "temple front", unadorned entablature and roof lines, decorative door surround with engaged Doric pilasters, and Tuscan columns on the entrance portico reflect the application of Greek and Roman architectural forms that typify the style.

Where there were 47 schools in operation in Cumberland County in 1887, by 1966 there was only one. The original 1908 Cumberland High School was demolished c. 1930. Although many of the county's early one and two-room schools have either disappeared or stand in ruins, the circa 1917 Rosenwald Pine Grove Elementary School was saved from demolition in the 1960s when a group of African American leaders purchased it. It now functions as the Pine Grove Community Center. Another early school, the nineteenth century Wayside School, was incorporated into the Hamilton School property in the 1930s. In 2006, the first consolidated Cumberland County high school was razed for the construction of a new, even larger school, furthering the trend that began with the establishment of the Hamilton High School in 1910. Today, the Cumberland County Public School System, located in what remains the agricultural belt of central Virginia, is a fully accredited school division with a total of approximately 1,500 students enrolled in one high school, one middle school and one elementary school. The school system is now the largest employer in this rural county, with over 125 full-time teachers.

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**Normal Schools in Virginia: An Overview**

Hamilton High School also made its mark in the educational history of Cumberland County by hosting a normal department. Normal schools took their name from the French “Ecole Normale” and were modeled after teacher training schools in France, Holland and Prussia. The first publicly-funded normal school in the U.S. opened in 1839 in Massachusetts.<sup>17</sup> In Virginia, they developed somewhat later, following the maturation of the state education system. The State Board of Education was established under the direction of State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Dr. Henry Ruffner. His proposed plan for instituting public schools was passed by the state Legislature and signed by the governor on July 11, 1870, when the “Underwood” or “Negro” state constitution was also passed (see above). The progressive climate fostered in this process led naturally to the push for better access to public education. Within three months, 1,400 county superintendents and district trustees had been appointed, and the first schools opened in November of that year. In 1882, the first conference for county and city school officials, held in Richmond, was attended by 89 out of 100 statewide superintendents. Dr. J.L.M. Curry, then-agent of the Peabody Fund, argued that some of the state school fund should be appropriated for teacher training in order to further fulfill the constitutional provision that the “State Board of Education establish the normal schools as soon as possible.”<sup>18</sup>

In the preceding decade, teacher training was carried out through “ambulatory normals” and Summer Normal Institutes. The summer institutes, sponsored primarily by the Peabody Fund, ran for four or six weeks in various parts of the state. In 1882, the same year of the first statewide conference of school superintendents, the first normal school in Virginia - the Virginia Normal and Collegiate Institute at Petersburg - was established. Significantly, this coed school for African Americans addressed the continuing need for black education twelve years after African American members of the Republican party had helped establish the constitutionally sanctioned, though racially segregated, public school system. This cemented the relationship between the Normal schools and access to public education, which was integral to the civil rights movement and, eventually, desegregation. In 1902, the school’s name was shortened to the Virginia Normal and Collegiate Institute. In 1923, its name was again changed to Virginia State College for Negroes, which was shortened to Virginia State College in 1943, before finally being renamed Virginia State University in 1979.<sup>19</sup>

In 1884, the State Normal School was established in Farmville in Prince Edward County. Its fourteen-member board included Dr. Curry and Dr. Ruffner. The latter was elected first president of the new institution, whose explicit purpose was the “training of female teachers for the public schools.”<sup>20</sup> Normal schools responded to the need for more and better-qualified teachers as public education spread throughout rural Virginia, and in the 1920s would evolve into four-year teacher’s colleges – the precursor to liberal arts colleges and universities, of which teacher training was only one part.<sup>21</sup>

Where the 1870 constitutional convention of Virginia galvanized the connection between progressive politics, public education and civil rights, the normal school system reinforced the relationship between teacher training and improved access to education for all citizens: this included African Americans, through institutions such as the Virginia Normal and Collegiate Institute. Though financial support and the allocation of resources continued to be racially unequal, teacher training in Virginia was institutionally formalized in 1908, when the Virginia Legislature passed a law providing for normal school departments in certain high schools selected by the State Board. Appropriated state money was earmarked specifically for teachers within the normal departments, and students completing the normal course of study were

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progressive counties of the state in terms of its commitment to education between 1910 and 1916, and Hamilton High – which received the first normal training department in the county in 1914, just four years after opening its doors – was at the fore of this movement.<sup>22</sup>

Although it began as and remained an all-white school, the Hamilton School's role in normal training and its disbursement of certified teachers throughout rural Virginia between 1914 and 1944 (when it became an elementary school) places it firmly in the context of progressive education.<sup>23</sup> It has been remarked that "The spirit of Hamilton was one of progress. Satisfied with nothing short of perfection, the superintendent, teachers, and patrons labored with zeal in the endeavor to give the children of the community the same opportunities and advantages that were given other four-year high schools in the state."<sup>24</sup> While there were undoubtedly educators involved this movement who also believed that schools should remain racially segregated, as discussed above, progressive education's ties to the desegregation movement are inseparable, and they have since become historically linked. This fact, in conjunction with the Hamilton School's geographic and cultural proximity to neighboring Prince Edward County and the associated hotbed of dissent and "Massive Resistance" legislation that would lead to the *Davis v. County School Board of Prince Edward County* and eventually the 1968 *Green v. School Board of New Kent County* lawsuit, has earned the school a place on the thirteen-county *Civil Rights in Education Heritage Trail*.<sup>25, 26, 27</sup> Hamilton School thus remains as a representative of an important architectural and educational phase in Cumberland County.

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**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

The Hamilton School is located on a five-acre lot at 1925 Cartersville Road in the village of Hamilton, Cumberland County, Virginia (mailing address Cartersville, VA). It is described in the county deed book thus:

Beginning at stone on the north side of Route 45, N. 32 W. 8 chains to stone, N. 32, E. 3.50 chains to stone on Flanagan's Mill Road (Route 690), 5 chains, then S. 32 E. 4.50 chains to stone, thence south along Route 45, 6 chains 32 1/2 links to the point of beginning. (*Conversions:* 1 link = 7.92 inches / 100 links = 1 chain = 66 feet / 10 square chains = 1 acre)

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**

The Hamilton School has been associated with this site since the building's construction in 1910. Being the same land conveyed Hamilton School District #3 by deed dated April 5, 1910, from W.J. Barker et. al., recorded in Deed Book 47, Page 209 on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of April, 1910, and on which property is located the school building known as Hamilton School.

Being also the same property conveyed to Elaine J. Whitley by deed from Ollie Hoyle Pleasants aka Mrs. H.B. Pleasants, dated August 25, 1999, and recorded in the Clerk's Office, Circuit Court, Cumberland County, Virginia.

**PHOTOGRAPHIC DATA**

All photographs are of:

**THE HAMILTON SCHOOL**

1925 Cartersville Road, Cartersville, Cumberland County, VA

VDHR File Number: 024-0105

Mike Yengling, photographer

Taken February 2007

All negatives are stored with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources:

VIEW OF: Façade; view looking north

NEG. NO.: 23500

PHOTO: 1 of 13

VIEW OF: Front porch detail

NEG. NO.: 23500

PHOTO: 2 of 13

VIEW OF: Site from southwest corner; view looking northeast

NEG. NO.: 23500

PHOTO: 3 of 13

VIEW OF: North elevation and auditorium annex; view looking south

NEG. NO.: 23500

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VIEW OF: Site from northeast corner; view looking southwest (includes agricultural classroom building, auditorium annex and kitchen / cafeteria building)

NEG. NO.: 23500

PHOTO: 5 of 13

VIEW OF: Kitchen / cafeteria building (now single dwelling)

NEG. NO.: 23500

PHOTO: 6 of 13

VIEW OF: Second floor rear; view looking north to hyphens A/B, bathroom addition and auditorium annex

NEG. NO.: 23500

PHOTO: 7 of 13

VIEW OF: Site from Rt. 45; view looking northeast (includes former Home Economics Cottage on adjacent property to west)

NEG. NO.: 23501

PHOTO: 8 of 13

VIEW OF: Interior staircase detail; view looking south up stairs to landing

NEG. NO.: 23501

PHOTO: 9 of 13

VIEW OF: Central hallway; view looking north to rear entrance

NEG. NO.: 23501

PHOTO: 10 of 13

VIEW OF: Interior door, casing, transom and wainscoting (typical)

NEG. NO.: 23501

PHOTO: 11 of 13

VIEW OF: Auditorium annex classroom; view looking north

NEG. NO.: 23501

PHOTO: 12 of 13

VIEW OF: Auditorium seating and stage; view looking northwest

NEG. NO.: 23501

PHOTO: 13 of 13

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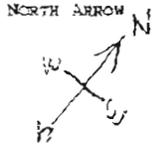
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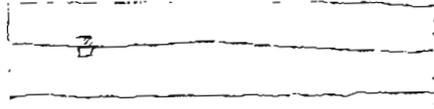
**ENDNOTES**

- <sup>1</sup> An original drawing depicting the post-Wayside School move addition to the building (still referred to as “the cafeteria” by local residents familiar with the property), dated 1948, still hangs in one of the former classrooms of the Hamilton School. Although there is extremely limited information available about the Wayside School, there is one local resident who both studied and subsequently taught at the Hamilton School, and whose mother taught at the Wayside School in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- <sup>2</sup> *Cumberland County, Virginia and Its People*. Cumberland, VA: Cumberland County Historical Society, 1983.
- <sup>3</sup> Frazee, Marie Keller. “Survey Report, Irwin’s tavern site”. *Works Progress Administration Virginia Historical Inventory Project*. Virginia Conservation Commission Division of History, 1936.
- <sup>4</sup> Heatwole, Cornelius Jacob. *A History of Education in Virginia* (New York: Macmillan, 1963), p. 238.
- <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 214.
- <sup>6</sup> Morgan, Lynda. *Emancipation in Virginia’s Tobacco Belt, 1850-1870* (University of Georgia Press, 1992), pp. 160-166.
- <sup>7</sup> Initially almost all of Virginia’s public schools were racially segregated, a fact that would not change until the passage of the national Civil Rights Act of 1964, which ended segregation in the public school system.
- <sup>8</sup> Barker, Melanie. “Old Schools in Cumberland County” (unpublished essay; dated April 7, 1994). [Repository: Cumberland County Public Library, Cumberland, VA] See also “Cumberland County High School History” (online resource: <http://66.4.75.130/schoolhistory.html>)
- <sup>9</sup> “Old School Put To New Use in Cartersville Community”.
- <sup>10</sup> The adjacent Irwin Tavern site still features a large rock that was used as a mounting block by guests who arrived on horseback, and as recently as 1983 the old watering trough – which would later get used by ponies of children who rode to class at the Hamilton School – was still extant. See Frazee, Marie Keller, “Survey Report, Irwin’s tavern site”, *Works Progress Administration Virginia Historical Inventory Project* (Virginia Conservation Commission Division of History, 1936).
- <sup>11</sup> Robinson, Audrey S. “Remembering Hamilton High, 1919”. *Farmville Herald* (June 10, 1992).
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>13</sup> “Old School Put To New Use in Cartersville Community”.
- <sup>14</sup> Seawell, Sue C. “The First Public High Schools of Cumberland County”. *Cumberland County, Virginia Historical Bulletin*, v. 3, no. 1 (July 1986): 28.
- <sup>15</sup> “Old School Put To New Use in Cartersville Community”.
- <sup>16</sup> Robinson, Audrey S. “Remembering Hamilton High, 1919”. *The Farmville Herald* (June 10, 1992).
- <sup>17</sup> Alternate sources indicate that the first normal school in America was established in Vermont in 1823. See Hilton, Fred, “What’s a Normal School?” (Harrisonburg, VA: James Madison University, 2007) and the *Morris Dictionary of Word and Phrase Origins, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.* (New York: Collins, 1988).
- <sup>18</sup> Heatwole, p. 235.
- <sup>19</sup> Emerson, Bruce. *A History of the Relationships Between the State of Virginia and Its Public Normal Schools, 1869-1930* (College of William and Mary School of Education dissertation, 1973), p. 63.
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 248.
- <sup>21</sup> On February 13, 1924, Virginia’s normal schools were officially transformed into State Teachers Colleges by legislative act. See Burks, Benjamin, *What Was Normal About Virginia’s Normal Schools: A History of Virginia’s State Normal Schools, 1882-1930* (University of Virginia dissertation, 2002).
- <sup>22</sup> McIlwaine, Thomas J. “Cumberland Public Schools Have Advanced Steadily in Recent Years”. *Farmville Herald* (March 1935).
- <sup>23</sup> Although information from records through 1919 (when three members of the graduating class went on to become teachers) has survived to the present, the scarcity of official school records was noted as early as the 1970s. See Duncan, Florence, “Old School Put To New Use in Cartersville Community”, *Farmville Herald* (February 4, 1976).
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>25</sup> The former school is an official stop on the Trail. For more information see <http://www.varetreat.com/civilRights.asp>
- <sup>26</sup> *Davis v. School Board* was one of five cases incorporated into the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* case, which ultimately resulted in the desegregation of public schools in the U.S. Among the five cases decided under *Brown*, it was the only one initiated by students themselves, after they walked out in 1951 to protest overcrowding and poor conditions at their school under Jim Crow laws.
- <sup>27</sup> *Green v. School Board of New Kent County* is considered the most important school desegregation case following the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* case in 1954. For additional information on the relationship between the closing of Prince Edward County’s schools and the eventual desegregation of the public school system under the Civil Rights Act of 1964 see “The Closing of Prince Edward County’s Schools”, part of the Virginia Historical Society’s 2004 “Civil Rights Movement in Virginia” exhibition: <http://www.vahistorical.org/civilrights/pec.htm>

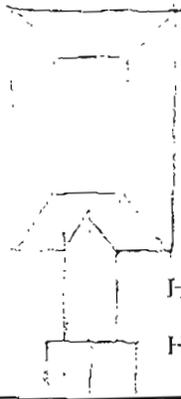


Agricultural classroom building (c. 1930)

RT 690



Auditorium annex (1920s)

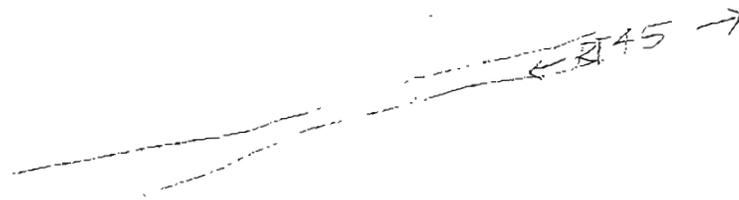
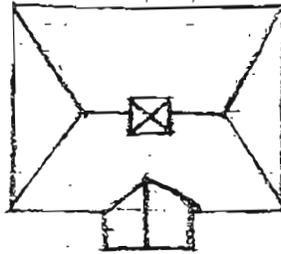


Cafeteria / kitchen building (c. 1879; moved to property in 1930s-40s; addition added c. 1948)

Hyphen "B"

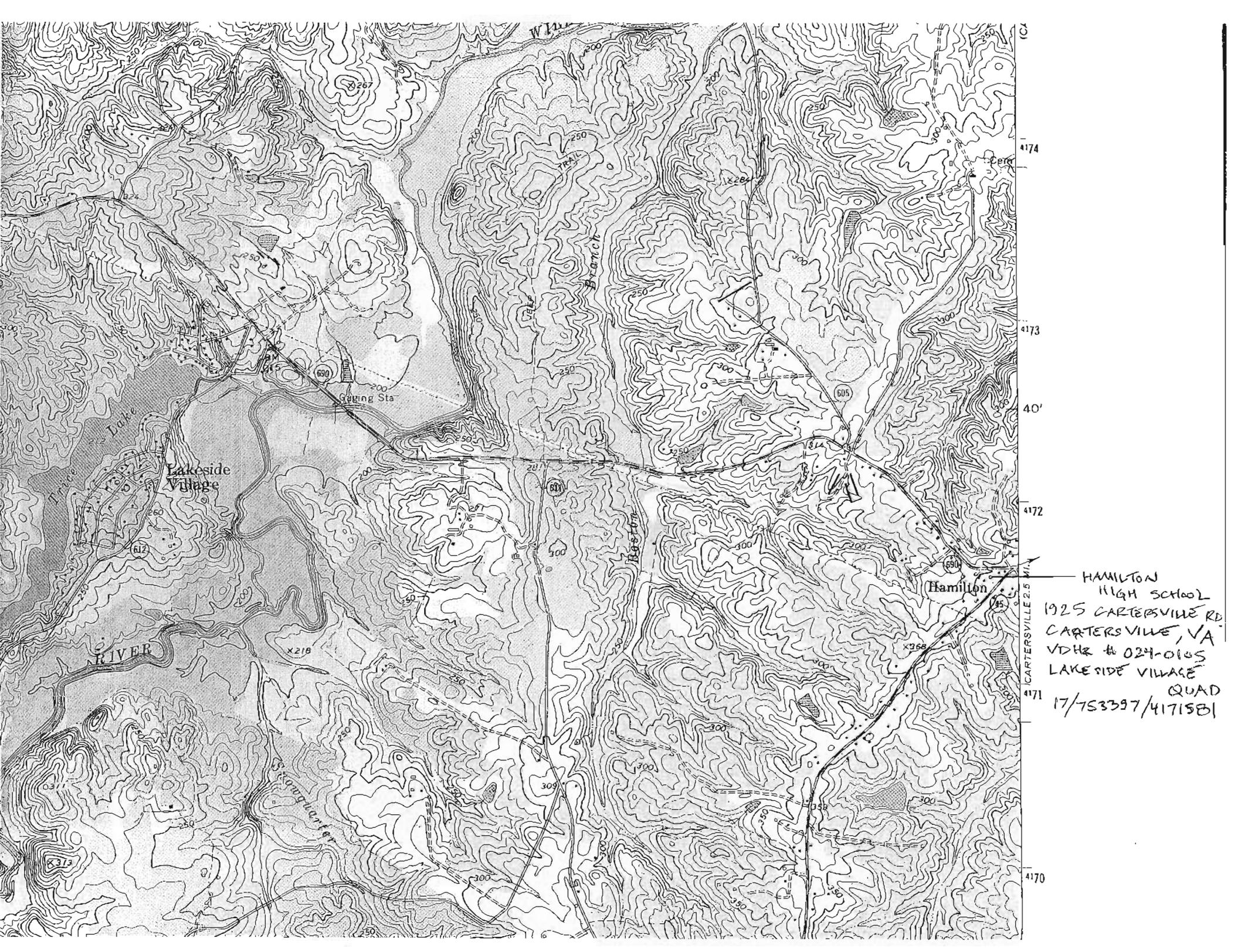
Hyphen "A"

Hamilton School (1910)



Hamilton High School  
1925 Cartersville Road  
Cartersville, VA

Not to scale



HAMILTON  
HIGH SCHOOL  
1925 CARTERSVILLE RD.  
CARTERSVILLE, VA  
VDHR # 024-0105  
LAKESIDE VILLAGE  
QUAD  
17/753397/4171581