

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 an 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 VIRGINIA EPISCOPAL SCHOOL

other names/site number VES/DHR File No. 118-129 224

2. Location

street & number 400 Virginia Episcopal School Road not for publication

city or town Lynchburg (Independent City) vicinity

state Virginia code VA county N/A code 680 zip code 24505

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.)

Hugh C. Miller
Signature of certifying official/Title

8/23/92
Date

Virginia Department of Historic Resources

State of 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 certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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

VIRGINIA EPISCOPAL SCHOOL
Name of Property

Lynchburg, Virginia
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

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

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
7	3	buildings
1		sites
		structures
		objects
		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)

EDUCATION: Secondary School

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION: Secondary School

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th and Early 20th Century
Revivals: Georgian Revival (original complex)

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick
walls Brick
roof Slate
other

Narrative Description

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

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

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 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.

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 # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATIONAL

RELIGION

Period of Significance

1916-1926

Significant Dates

1916 (founding date of school)

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Frederick H. Brooke

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository:

Virginia Episcopal School

Lynchburg, Virginia

VIRGINIA EPISCOPAL SCHOOL

Name of Property

Lynchburg, Virginia

County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 10

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 17 660160 41466000
Zone Easting Northing
2 17 660180 41464400

3 17 659890 41463400
Zone Easting Northing
4 17 659890 41464400

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 Calder Loth, Senior Architectural Historian

organization Virginia Department of Historic Resources date March 1, 1992

street & number 221 Governor Street telephone (804) 786-3143

city or town Richmond state Virginia zip code 23219

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 SHPO or FPO.) Trustees, Virginia Episcopal School

c/o Charles F. Zimmer, Headmaster

name

street & number P. O. Box 408 telephone (804) 384-6221

city or town Lynchburg state VA zip code 24505

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 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 Reduction Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1 VIRGINIA EPISCOPAL SCHOOL, Lynchburg, Virginia

Summary Description

The nucleus of the historic area of Virginia Episcopal School is a complex of four red-brick Georgian Revival institutional buildings designed by Washington architect Frederick H. Brooke and built between 1915 and 1920. The focal point of this original group is the main building, Jett Hall, a three-story general purpose academic and dormitory structure fronted by a Corinthian portico. Immediately to the west is Pendleton Hall, a three-story dormitory and classroom building treated as a subsidiary flanker to Jett Hall. To the southwest of Pendleton Hall is the Langhorne Memorial Chapel, a diminutive but visually prominent structure set off by a Tuscan portico and an ornamental belfry. The distinctive Barksdale Gymnasium, partly engulfed by the later William King Field House, is to the east of Jett Hall. Three additional contributing structures, all residential buildings, located to the north of the original complex, are within the historic area. The oldest of these is the infirmary, know as the Mingea Cottage, a rambling frame farmhouse erected ca. 1890 and underpinned in part by a circa 1800 brick foundation. To the north of the Mingea Cottage is the 1923 Banks House, a stuccoed prefabricated dwelling in a modified Dutch Colonial style. Immediately to the west of the Banks House is a Georgian Revival faculty duplex house designed by Lynchburg architect Stanhope Johnson and completed circa 1926. Also within the limits of the historic area are three non-contributing buildings: the colonial-style Headmaster's Residence (1954), a colonial-style faculty duplex (1959), and the William King Field House, a modern-style structure attached to the Barksdale Gymnasium. All three non-contributing buildings are of red brick. Except for the William King Field House, they are sited to complement the original layout of the grounds. The historic area is unified by handsome informal landscaping consisting of lawns, shrubbery, and a variety of large trees. The principal landscape element is the front campus, a wide, tree-dotted greensward gently sloping southward from Jett and Pendleton halls.

DETAILED ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Setting

The Virginia Episcopal School is situated in the fashionable northern suburbs of Lynchburg, at the end of VES Road with Tobacco Row Mountain forming a distant backdrop. The property, originally a farm, is approximately a half mile west of the James River. Surrounded by woods and playing fields, the grounds preserve a pastoral character. The only element distracting from this character is the modern high-rise Westminster-Canterbury retirement home complex to the south of the front campus. The principal landscape element of the nominated portion of the school is the front campus, a broad sloping lawn informally planted with shrubbery and a variety of both evergreen and deciduous trees. The front campus is an original element of the school's design.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2 VIRGINIA EPISCOPAL SCHOOL, Lynchburg, Virginia

Description (continued)

Jett Hall

The dominant element of the school complex is the main building or Jett Hall, completed in 1916. The exterior of the building survives with practically no alterations to its original appearance. A three-story, U-shaped structure, Jett Hall's mass is tempered by its graceful proportions and by the elegant Corinthian portico fronting the central pedimented pavilion. The three-bay portico consists of paired fluted Corinthian stone columns set on brick piers.¹ (The corners are actually clusters of three columns.) Between the piers are concrete balusters. The columns support a full Corinthian entablature with foliated modillions, all executed in galvanized iron. Above the entablature is a wooden Chinese lattice railing interspersed with paired pedestals. Topping the central pavilion and complementing the flat-roofed portico is a pediment with a tympanum ornamented with garlands tied with bows flanking a wreath-framed roundel in which there is a modern clock face. The pediment cornice as well as the cornice of the entablature surrounding the whole building, is ornamented with large plain modillions. Both the main entablature and the pediment cornice are executed in galvanized iron.

Jett Hall's facade is nine bays wide, the center of which is taken up by a slightly projecting central pavilion fronted by the previously described portico. The first-floor windows are set in shallow blind arches. The lunettes of the two central windows are ornamented with the inscription "VES" in raised brick. The lunettes of the outer first-floor windows are ornamented with lozenges in raised bricks. The front entrance has paired glazed doors topped by an attractive scalloped arch of painted galvanized iron. Unlike the first and second-floor windows, the third-floor windows are paired as are nearly all the windows on the side and rear elevations. Except for the first-floor facade windows, all the windows are topped with cast-stone keystones. The building is covered by a shallow hipped roof sheathed in what is probably the original slate. The brickwork is laid in a variant of Flemish bond consisting of a stretcher course between courses of alternating stretches and headers.

As originally designed, Jett Hall was to be connected by ornamental colonnades to two three-story flanking classroom dormitory structures. Of these, only the west flanker, Pendleton Hall, was built. It was not physically linked to Jett Hall until the 1950s and then by a two-story brick hyphen containing two apartments, rather than by the colonnade. Although the east flanker was never constructed, the first and second-floor doorways that would have opened from Jett Hall's end stairwell onto the colonnade were built, as was a large arched window between the second

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 3 VIRGINIA EPISCOPAL SCHOOL, Lynchburg, Virginia

Description (continued)

and third-story levels.

Jett Hall's interior originally contained classrooms, offices, and a large study hall on the first floor. The second floor had a rector's (or headmaster's) apartment; faculty quarters, and student alcoves were also on the second floor. The third floor was almost wholly given over to students' quarters. In the basement was planned to have laboratories, class rooms, a reading room and a social room. The original plans did not specify a dining room and kitchen as these facilities were planned to be in a separate building. As this was not built, the plan of Jett Hall was modified to have the dining room and kitchen in the basement. These remained until the mid-1960s when they were replaced by new facilities in another building.

The interior of Jett Hall has been modified over the years for updated facilities. The first-floor entrance hall was remodeled in 1949 at which time a visitors' sitting room was provided. The remodeling included adding the fluted pilasters between the sitting room and the lateral corridor. The student alcoves on the upper floors were subsequently replaced with separate rooms. The rector's apartment was also converted to student rooms.

Pendleton Hall

Pendleton Hall, originally known as West Dormitory, is a three-story rectangular structure topped by a plain wooden entablature and shallow hipped roof. The windows on the main (south) elevation are paired, double-hung sash on all three floors topped by brick jack arches with keystones. A belt course is employed between the first and second floors and at the foundation. The building's one entrance, at the eastern end, has been covered over by the modern link to Jett Hall noted above. The first-floor center bay of the south elevation was originally treated as an entrance element, with two columns supporting an entablature with balcony above, however, this bay has always had a window rather than a doorway. The columns have been removed in recent years and substituted by a pair of inappropriate wooden brackets. The west end of Pendleton Hall has been obscured by a modern brick stairwell containing a fire escape. The west end of the building is also linked by a one-story passage at the basement level to a modern dormitory structure not included within the boundaries of the historic area.

The interior of Pendleton Hall is almost entirely utilitarian with no character-defining architectural features. The first floor is divided into classrooms. Above are two floors of

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 4 VIRGINIA EPISCOPAL SCHOOL, Lynchburg, Virginia

Description (continued)

dormitory rooms opening off central corridors.

Langhorne Memorial Chapel

The Langhorne Memorial Chapel, an understated but architecturally attractive building, is conspicuously sited just to the southwest of Pendleton Hall, at the end of the drive in front of Jett and Pendleton halls.² The compact, temple-form structure is fronted by a Tuscan portico sheltering a single entrance with a memorial plaque above. The entrance has a pair of paneled doors with a semi-circular transom. The portico entablature is continued along the sides of the building. A blocking course is employed on the roof where the portico joins the main part of the building. Immediately behind the blocking course is a small but finely detailed domed, octagonal cupola with an open arcade. The building is lighted by large, sliding-sash arched windows. As originally designed, the chapel had shallow transepts, the south one containing an organ case and the north one being used as a side entrance. On the rear of the chapel is a low extension containing the sacristy and choir robing room.

The chapel interior is relatively simple with paneled wainscoting and plain plaster walls above. The main character-defining features are the large timber roof trusses that visually dominate the space. The roof trusses, windows frames, and wainscoting are all natural finished. On the wall opposite the entrance is a blank Palladian window containing the school emblem and ornamental organ pipes.

The chapel was enlarged in 1965 under the direction of Charlottesville architect Milton Grigg. The transepts were extended for extra seating. The altar was removed from the west end and replaced by a free-standing table on a circular platform under the crossing. The choir was rearranged so that it now faces the entrance. The original pews were removed and replaced by the present bench-type pews and the slate floor was added. The original roof trusses, windows, and wainscoting were replicated for the enlarged transepts.

Barksdale Gymnasium

The fourth building of the original complex designed by Frederick H. Brooke is the Barksdale Gymnasium, located approximately one hundred yards to the east of Jett Hall at a slightly lower

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 5 VIRGINIA EPISCOPAL SCHOOL, Lynchburg, Virginia**Description (continued)**

elevation. This architecturally interesting structure unfortunately has had its integrity compromised by the large William King Field House attached to its northwest corner and by a recent addition obscuring most of the south elevation. A proposed second field house, if built as currently planned, would cover the east wall of the building.

The most distinctive aspect of Barksdale Gymnasium is the treatment of the exterior walls, now visible only on the north and east sides. The ground floor is punctuated by paired double-hung windows in each of the bays. On the principal level, marked by a belt course, are large blank panels of bricks separated by pilaster strips. In alternating panels, (not entirely consistent) are small slit windows. Contrasting with these slits is the clerestory, immediately below the eaves. The clerestory has each bay penetrated by three casement windows with the panes of each window following the pattern of Roman lattice.

The lower floor of the gymnasium is given over to locker rooms. The upper floor contains the gymnasium itself which survives almost entirely in its original form and is an interesting example of a physical education facility of the 1920s. A running track suspended on pipes supports extends around the perimeter of the space. Large skylights flood the gym floor with daylight.

Mingea Cottage

The highest point of the grounds is occupied by the Mingea Cottage, a rambling, late-Victorian, weatherboarded farmhouse now used for apartments and the school infirmary. The house has a wrap-around front porch and an irregular roofline. The eastern portion of the house is underpinned by a brick foundation laid in even Flemish Bond with finely tooled joints. The brickwork is typical of the Federal-period Flemish bond of the Virginia Piedmont and probably dates from circa 1800. The foundation apparently survives from an earlier undocumented structure since nothing of the dwelling it supports appears to be earlier than the late nineteenth century. The earlier structure is believed to have burned.³ The first-floor rooms available for examination have undistinguished woodwork of the period and had undergone various modifications over the years.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 6 VIRGINIA EPISCOPAL SCHOOL, Lynchburg, Virginia

Description (continued)

Faculty Duplex

The 1926 faculty duplex designed by Lynchburg architect Stanhope Johnson stands north of Barksdale Gymnasium. Although an unpretentious, modified Georgian-style structure, it is not without character and dignity. The main body of the house is a two-story, hipped roof structure with end chimneys. A two-bay, gable roof section projects from the center. In the reentrant angles formed by the projection are one-story porches with Tuscan columns. The building has undergone no significant changes.

Banks House

The Banks House, immediately to the west of the Faculty Duplex, is a prefabricated house in a modified Dutch Colonial style erected in 1923. The house is faced in rough-cast stucco and is covered by a gambrel roof. The lower portion of the roof retains its early wooden shingles, while the upper portion has been re-roofed with asphalt shingles. School records document that the model for the Banks House is the "Amsterdam," and that it was ordered through the Aladdin Co. of Wilmington, North Carolina.⁴

NON-CONTRIBUTING BUILDINGS

Included in the nominated area are three non-contributing buildings erected less than fifty years ago. Although classified as non-contributing, two of the buildings are architecturally compatible with the contributing structures. A third, the William King Field House, obscures the Barksdale Gymnasium and negatively impacts the original layout of the complex.

Headmaster's Residence

The Headmaster's Residence is a two-and-half-story colonial style dwelling aligned with Langhorne Memorial Chapel on the west side of the front campus. Erected in 1954 and enlarged in 1967, the brick house is a handsome addition to the grounds.

New Duplex

The "New Duplex" is a colonial style brick structure located just south of the Headmaster's

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 7 VIRGINIA EPISCOPAL SCHOOL, Lynchburg, Virginia

Description (continued)

Residence. Built in 1959, the house helps to define the west side of the front campus.

William King Field House

Erected in 1949, the William King Field House is in the unornamented modernist style popular in the post-war years. Its only concession to the architecture of the neighboring buildings is that it is built of brick. The building is attached to the northwest corner of the Barksdale Gymnasium, thus destroying its relation to the rest of original complex. Unfortunately the siting of the field house also precludes the construction of the east dormitory as envisioned by Robert Jett and Frederick Brooke.

FOOTNOTES

1. Because the columns are painted, it is not possible to determine if they are cast stone or real stone.
2. In Frederick Brooke's revised ground plan for the school dated April, 1917, the chapel is shown on the east side of the campus. A dining hall is shown on the site now occupied by the chapel. An undated ground plan by Brooke labeled "Scheme B" shows the chapel in its present location.
3. Until the 1960s, an early nineteenth-century log outbuilding, stood to the west of Mingea Cottage. This building was likely contemporary with the house that preceded Mingea Cottage.
4. Joseph Banks, who long occupied the house, stated that the house was manufactured by Sears, Roebuck & Co. The "Amsterdam" model illustrated in the 1925 reprint from the Sears Roebuck, & Co. Catalogue is similar to the Banks House but more elaborate.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 8 VIRGINIA EPISCOPAL SCHOOL, Lynchburg, Virginia

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Virginia Episcopal School is symbolic of the many dedicated efforts undertaken by religious institutions at the turn of the century to improve the availability of quality secondary education and to foster allegiance to Christian principles among their youth. Through the late nineteenth century, Virginia and much of the South lacked consistent public school systems, thus many private organizations had to seize the initiative. Among the more active Virginia institutions in this endeavor was the Episcopal church, which committed to establishing a system of church schools. In the Diocese of Southern Virginia, the Reverend Robert Carter Jett (later Bishop Jett), envisioned a preparatory school offering educational excellence in a religious environment for boys of moderate means. With the optimism, energy, and commitment typical of the era, Jett secured the necessary funds and support to make his vision a reality. The school was formally opened in 1916 and has been an active, growing institution to the present. Jett had the foresight to realize that much of the success of such a school was dependent on superior facilities and thus engaged the prominent Washington architect, Frederick H. Brooke, to design an appropriately imposing complex. Brooke's dignified Georgian Revival scheme, including classroom and dormitory structures, a chapel, and gymnasium, was largely realized and remains the focal point of the school. The complex is architecturally significant as a cohesive and well-preserved example of a church-affiliated preparatory school of the early twentieth century.

HISTORIC CONTEXT

A general system of public education was not established in Virginia until 1870. Before then, secondary education was handled largely by individuals or private academies. Even after 1870, public schools were uneven in quality especially in rural areas. Furthermore, the public schools tended to stress vocational training at the expense of classical and academic education in the secondary curriculum. For Virginians of moderate means who lived away from population centers, obtaining sound academic training offered significant difficulties. As late as 1911, a newly arrived clergyman in a rural area of Virginia described the local school his children would have to attend. "'It was a . . . one-room building with seats for eighteen pupils and an enrollment of thirty-five; and taught through the fifth grade only.'" When he inquired how the families in his congregation educated their children, he was told that tutors and governesses were employed until the children were old enough to be sent away to private schools.¹

To address some of the problems of education, as well as the need to strengthen the faith of its youth, the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia in 1877 recommended establishing a diocesan system of schools. Although there was agreement on the recommendation, progress was slow; it took

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 9 VIRGINIA EPISCOPAL SCHOOL, Lynchburg, Virginia**Statement of Significance (continued)**

some forty years before an organized system was put in place. By that time the diocese had split into three separate dioceses. The Diocese of Southern Virginia was formed in 1892 and the Diocese of Southwestern Virginia was formed from the Diocese of Southern Virginia in 1919. Thus the diocesan school system envisioned in 1877 was limited to eastern and northern Virginia.

The problems surrounding education were probably greatest in the western and southwestern areas of the state.² This region was largely rural or mountainous with widely scattered towns. Except for Lynchburg and the fast-growing Roanoke, it had no cities of any consequence. For the region's Episcopalians, who were very much in the minority, obtaining quality education at the secondary level was a special challenge. The principal alternatives to the frequently inadequate public schools were either military academies or private boarding schools. The latter were generally expensive and far from home.

An individual acutely aware of the situation, and the effect it was having on Episcopal youth, was Robert Carter Jett, rector of Emmanuel Church, Staunton.³ Jett saw that many boys from Episcopal families of moderate means, especially sons of clergymen, had no opportunity to attend Episcopal church schools. If the public high schools near them lacked adequate quality, the boys frequently were forced to attend church schools of other denominations. This was particularly troublesome for Jett since the boys were being influenced by other faiths at an age when they were making formative religious decisions. Thus not only were the Episcopalians losing the opportunity to expose their youth to their own traditions, they risked losing them to other dominations. A denomination whose membership was small to begin with, especially in southwest Virginia, could ill afford this drain.

Born at Port Conway in King George County, Virginia, Robert Carter Jett (1865-1950) was endowed with a deep religious conviction and an intensity of purpose. A graduate of Virginia Theological Seminary and Washington and Lee University, he was ordained into the Episcopal priesthood in 1890. As early as 1906, while serving in Staunton, Mr. Jett envisioned establishing a religious-orientated college preparatory school for boys of character and ability, where admission could be offered at the least possible cost. He recognized that within a large area of the Province of Washington there was no such institution to meet the needs of those with limited finances.⁴ Jett was firm in his belief that the church must cultivate its youth, for as he stated: "It is from this class of boys that we get our best leaders in business and in church and state."⁵ In addition to building character and strengthening church membership, Jett was especially keen

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 10 VIRGINIA EPISCOPAL SCHOOL, Lynchburg, Virginia

Statement of Significance (continued)

that his school be a vehicle for encouraging its graduates to enter the Episcopal ministry.

In 1906, at a diocesan council, Jett succeeded in having a resolution passed establishing a committee to investigate educational needs. The committee, however, failed to take any action. Finally, at a church convocation held in 1911, Jett was instrumental in getting a second resolution passed--one calling for the adoption of a plan by which a church school for boys might be established in southwest Virginia. The resolution further stated that a committee be appointed to see in what southwest Virginia community it would be best to locate the school, and to solicit endowment funds.⁶

The following year, the committee appointed Mr. Jett as principal of the future school and directed that it be named Saint Andrews School for Boys. This proposed name was soon changed to the present one because a committee member, W. E. Mingea of Abingdon, insisted that Virginia be in the title.⁷ Jett immediately undertook most of the responsibility for raising money and seeing that the school was built and opened. He resigned his position at Emmanuel Church in 1913 and devoted full time to making his vision a reality. His first efforts were directed toward learning everything he could about schools. He investigated design, construction, administration, maintenance, and even food preparation. As part of his research, he visited schools from Massachusetts to South Carolina. So earnest was his dedication that five railroad companies gave him unlimited free passage.

It was on one of his trips that Jett determined the original layout of the school. Describing the moment, he wrote: "As I neared Raleigh, North Carolina, . . . I drew an outline on an envelope of what I conceived to be an adequate and sufficient objective. I wish now I had preserved this first, initial design. However, it was put to good use before it disappeared."⁸ Jett stated that upon returning to Lynchburg, he took his drawing to a local architect, William R. Burnham and had him "make a picture of my proposed school."⁹ The picture to which Jett referred was an impressive colored architectural rendering that Jett used in the solicitation of funds. The rendering, showing a large porticoed main building connected by arcades to flanking three-story dormitories, still hangs at the school.

The committee working with Jett concentrated on finding a site for the school. It considered sites in Bedford and Amherst counties and finally settled on the Howard farm, a tract of one hundred and six acres just north of Lynchburg. The farm was considered an ideal location as it was only five miles from the business center of the city and offered fine views of the mountains and of

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 11 VIRGINIA EPISCOPAL SCHOOL, Lynchburg, Virginia

Statement of Significance (continued)

the James River. It also was accessible to railroad lines. The Howard residence was a rambling late Victorian dwelling built on the foundations of an early nineteenth-century structure.¹⁰ The purchase price of \$18,000 was raised by Lynchburg citizens under the leadership of the Lynchburg Chamber of Commerce.

One of the leading and most noteworthy benefactors of the school was Viscountess Astor (Nancy Langhorne Astor), the first woman member of Parliament. Lady Astor's family home, Mirador in Albemarle County, coincidentally was the childhood home of Robert Jett's wife, Annie Funsten Jett. This fact emboldened Jett to solicit Lady Astor's generosity during one of her visits home. When he arrived at Mirador, he was told Her Ladyship was out riding with a friend. Jett set out in pursuit and encountered the two women just as Lady Astor's dog was attacked by a neighbor's dog. Jett, without hesitation, broke up the fight and in so doing overcame his timidity at asking for funds. Impressed by his vision, Lady Astor complied with a gift of \$10,000 and maintained a keen interest in the school for the rest of her life. She was also instrumental in having her father, Chiswell Dabney Langhorne, donate the school chapel in memory of his wife, Nancy Witcher Keene, resulting in it being named the Langhorne Memorial Chapel.

As previously noted, the initial concept for the school's physical plant was Jett's own. Although Jett had William Burnham translate his idea into an architectural rendering, Burnham was not commissioned to design the buildings. The commission went instead to the distinguished Washington architect, Frederick H. Brooke (1876-1960), who became known to Jett through his work at Episcopal High School in Alexandria. A native of Birdsboro, Pennsylvania, Brooke was a graduate of Yale University and studied architecture at the University of Pennsylvania and the Ecole des Beaux Arts. In 1906 he opened an office in Washington with Henri deSibour. Among the principal works of his long career are the District of Columbia War Memorial and the Portuguese, New Zealand, Swedish and The Netherlands chanceries in Washington. He served as the local architect for the British Embassy, the only American work of the noted British architect, Sir Edwin Lutyens. He also was the architect for the extensive alterations to Dumbarton Oaks, the Washington mansion now maintained as a study center by Harvard University.

Brooke's work at Virginia Episcopal School included the Main Building (Jett Hall), West Dormitory (Pendleton Hall), Langhorne Memorial Chapel, and Barksdale Memorial Gymnasium.¹¹ The scheme for the main building and flanking dormitory generally follow the Burnham rendering but with various refinements. Like Burnham, Brooke planned an east

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 12 VIRGINIA EPISCOPAL SCHOOL, Lynchburg, Virginia

Statement of Significance (continued)

dormitory connected to the main building by an arcade, but construction of this building was postponed until necessitated by future growth.¹²

Brooke's buildings are in the Georgian Revival idiom then fashionable for educational facilities. Although the initial choice of style was probably Jett's, Brooke was able to give the complex a dignified image with gracefully proportioned and detailed structures, devoid of the forbidding monumentality characteristic of many institutions of the period. The buildings were well appointed but in no way lavish. Architectural embellishment was kept to a minimum and then used almost exclusively on the exteriors. The interiors of the Jett Hall and Pendleton Hall were strictly functional. Only the chapel, with its large exposed roof trusses, was given an interior of distinctive character. While a limited budget restricted architectural frills, Jett, mindful that his school was not intended for wealthy boys, probably dictated a somewhat spartan flavor for the accommodations. Whatever, the lean interiors were offset to some degree by Brooke's elegant Corinthian portico for Jett Hall. Brooke gave this normally conventional device a distinctive individuality, and the portico has since served as the school's architectural highlight.

Jett Hall was completed in 1916, the year the school formally opened. Pendleton Hall was completed in 1918 and Langhorne Memorial Chapel was completed in 1919.¹³ Barksdale Memorial Gymnasium was ready for use in 1920.¹⁴ The school's original enrollment was sixty-three boys. It was increased to one hundred eleven with the completion of Pendleton Hall. As rector, Jett continued his deep involvement with every detail of the school's operation.¹⁵ He and his wife lived in an apartment on the second floor of the building later named in his honor. Until the chapel was completed, Jett, along with the Reverend Joseph B. Dunn, the school chaplain, held Sunday services in the hall of rector's apartment. In 1919 Jett was called to be the first bishop of the newly created Diocese of Southwest Virginia. He left the school in April of 1920. Despite his new position Jett's involvement with the school did not cease. As bishop, he served ex officio as chairman of the school's board of trustees until his retirement in 1938.

Virginia Episcopal School remains the product of Robert Carter Jett's vision. Although now a coeducational institution, the principles on which the school was founded are essentially those by which it operates today. These principles, a product the religious fervor and late-Victorian idealism instilled in Bishop Jett at an early age, were well stated in Joseph Dunn's memoir of the school's early days: "On one thing we (Dunn and Jett) were agreed, and that was that it must be a school of Christian learning--and we arrived at the very definite conclusion that a Christian was not just a certain kind of man--but that a Christian was all of a man. That being accepted

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 13 VIRGINIA EPISCOPAL SCHOOL, Lynchburg, Virginia

Statement of Significance (continued)

as axiomatic, then education meant that training with character as its end. Exact scholarship could come only with strenuous endeavor and fidelity to the task imposed; but it had to be borne in mind that study could teach lessons of industry and faithfulness what would be vital long after the memorized dicta of the text-book were forgotten. Again, it had to be remembered that the campus was as important in the training of youth as the lecture-room; and the ethics of play more far-reaching in its effects than the laws of syntax or mathematics. It was with these convictions that we chose 'The Full Stature of Manhood' as the school motto."¹⁶

Although Virginia Episcopal School was founded under the auspices of the Episcopal Church, the school, including the chapel, is an independent, private, non-profit institution owned and governed by its own board of trustees.

ENDNOTES

1. Quoted in D. Ralph Davison, Jr., "The Origins and Goals of the Church Schools of the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia," p. 69: Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church, Vol. LIV, March 1985.
2. Prior to 1919, most of western and southwestern Virginia was within the Diocese of Southern Virginia.
3. Staunton at that time was within the Diocese of Southern Virginia.
4. The Episcopal Province of Washington includes the states of Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware, Virginia, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia.
5. Quoted in "1916-1920," an excerpted section of an unidentified text about Virginia Episcopal School in the archives of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, p. 2.
6. Robert Carter Jett, A Brief History of the Virginia Episcopal School, Lynchburg, Virginia, unpublished manuscript photocopy in archives of Virginia Department of Historic Resources.
7. Mingea reasoned, "If Virginia were part of the name, the school would have a history from the day of its opening." "1916-1920," p. 2-3.
8. "Brief History," p. 9.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 14 VIRGINIA EPISCOPAL SCHOOL, Lynchburg, Virginia

Statement of Significance (continued)

10. The dwelling was later renamed the Mingea Cottage in honor of W.E. Mingea, one of the original members of the school committee and an initial benefactor of the school.
11. Virginia Episcopal School retains ownership of Brooke's original ink-on-linen working drawings for the four original buildings. The drawings were recently transferred for safekeeping to the architectural records collection of the Jones Memorial Library in Lynchburg.
12. The east dormitory building was never constructed and the siting of the William King Field House, constructed in 1949, precludes it from ever being built as planned.
13. The chapel was enlarged in 1965 by the addition of transepts. The architect was Milton L. Grigg of Charlottesville. The remodeling included relocating the altar from the west end to the crossing.
14. It has long been said that the proportional system of the Barkdale Gymnasium is based on that of Solomon's Temple. This claim is substantiated neither on the drawings nor in any of the surviving correspondence between Brooke and Jett.
15. The title of the school's director was later changed from rector to headmaster.
16. Quoted in Devall Gwathmey, "The First Twenty-Five Years, 1916-1941, Virginia Episcopal School," unpublished manuscript photocopy in archives of Virginia Department of Historic Resources.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 15 VIRGINIA EPISCOPAL SCHOOL, Lynchburg, Virginia

Major Bibliographical References

Davieson, D. Ralph, Jr. "The Origins and Goals of the Church Schools in the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia." Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church, Vol. LIV, No. 1 (March, 1985).

Gwathmey, Devall. "First Twenty-Five Years, 1916-1941, Virginia Episcopal School." unpublished Ms. photocopy in archives of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources.

Jett, Robert Carter, Bishop of Southwest Virginia. "A Brief History of the Virginia Episcopal School, Lynchburg, Virginia." unpublished Ms. photocopy in archives of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 16 VIRGINIA EPISCOPAL SCHOOL, Lynchburg, Virginia

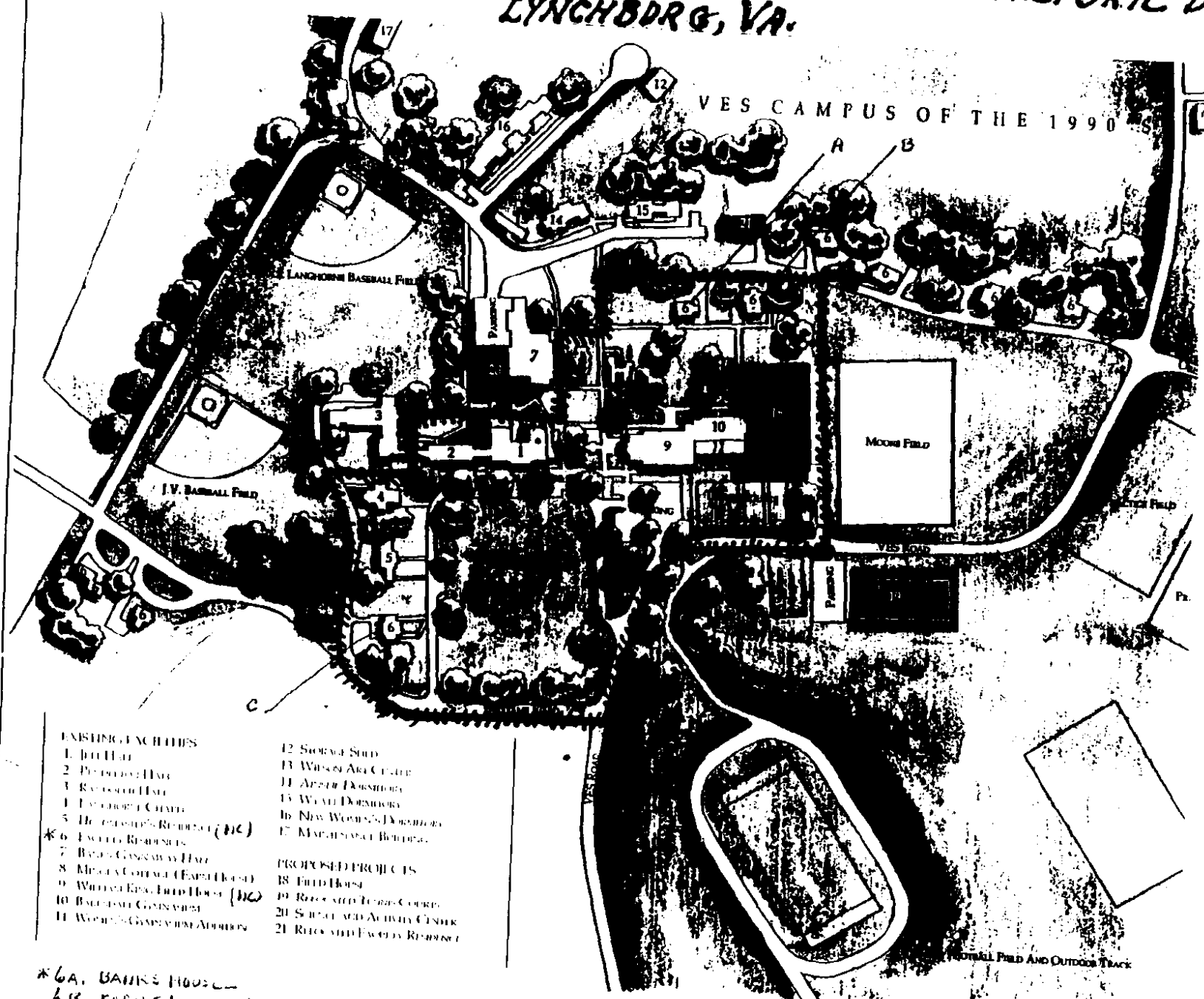
Verbal Boundary Description

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Boundary Justification

The boundaries include the four original Frederick Brooke buildings as well as the Mingea Cottage, Banks House, and Faculty Duplex. The boundaries also include the front campus--the original landscape setting for the complex. The boundaries have been drawn to exclude three school buildings erected since 1960 that are located immediately to the north and west of Jett Hall and Pendleton Hall.

VIRGINIA EPISCOPAL SCHOOL HISTORIC DISTRICT LYNCHBURG, VA.



EXISTING FACILITIES

- 1. J.P. Hall
- 2. Peabody Hall
- 3. Raymond Hall
- 4. Education Center
- 5. Handicapped's Resource (H.C.)
- *6. Family Resource
- 7. Boy's Gymnasium Hall
- 8. Music Center (East House)
- 9. Wilson Eng. Field House (H.C.)
- 10. Basketball Gymnasium
- 11. Women's Gymnasium Addition

- 12. Storage Shed
- 13. Wilson Art Center
- 14. Art/Dormitory
- 15. West Dormitory
- 16. New Women's Dormitory
- 17. Marching Band Building

PROPOSED PROJECTS

- 18. Field House
- 19. Restroom/Toilet Center
- 20. School and Activity Center
- 21. Restroom/Field House

*6A. BATHS HOUSE
 6B. FACILITY/DUPLEX
 6C. NEW DORM (H.C.)

BOUNDARY OF HISTORIC DISTRICT

Virginia Episcopal School

DHR 118-129

UTM References:

A 17/660160/4146600

B 17/660180/4146440

C 17/659880/4146340

D 17/659890/4146440

E 17/659930/4146440

F 17/659930/4146500

G 17/660040/4146500

H 17/660020/4146580

LYNCHBURG QUAD

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BOONSBORO 0.7 MI.

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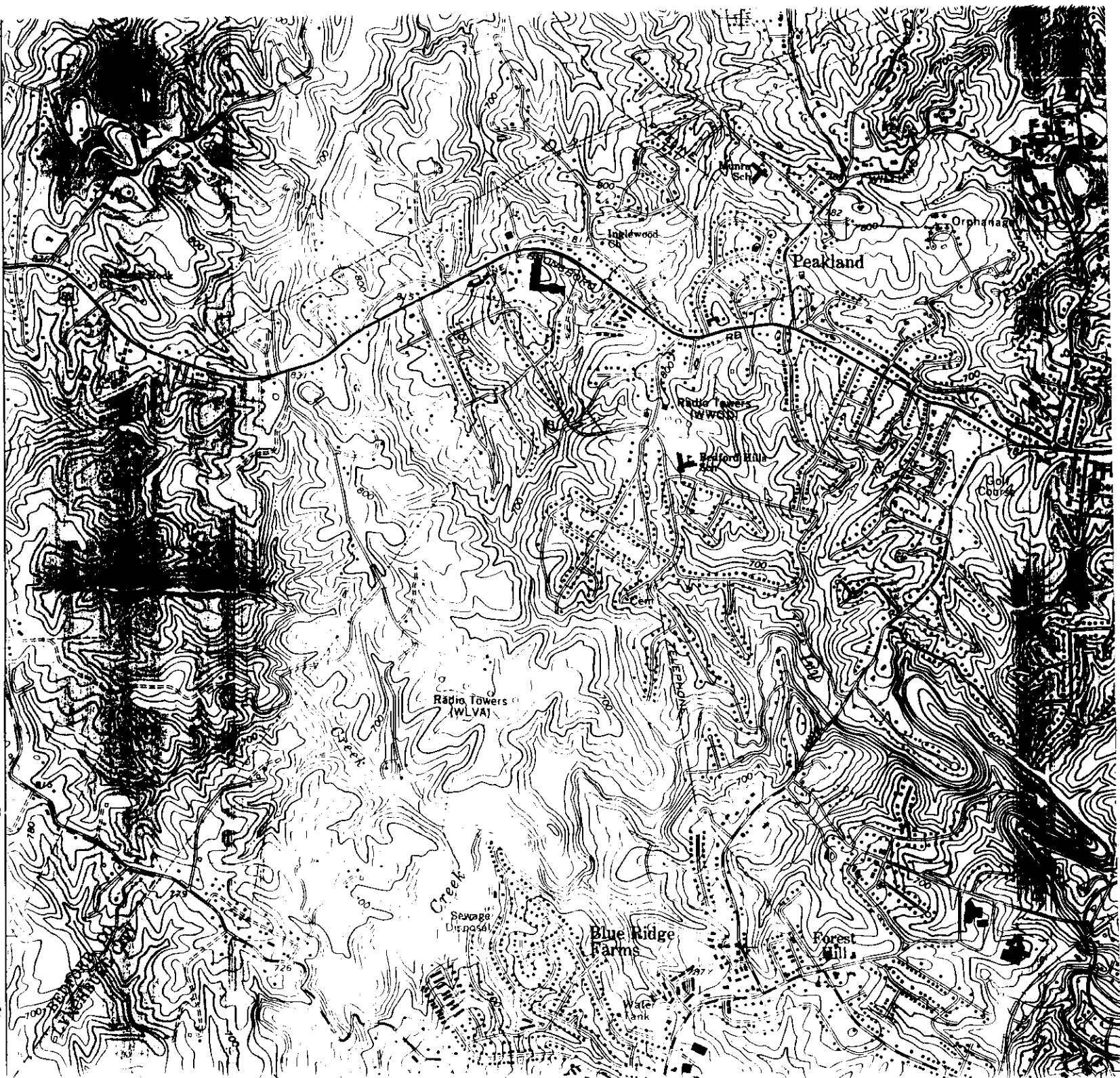
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(BOONSBORO)

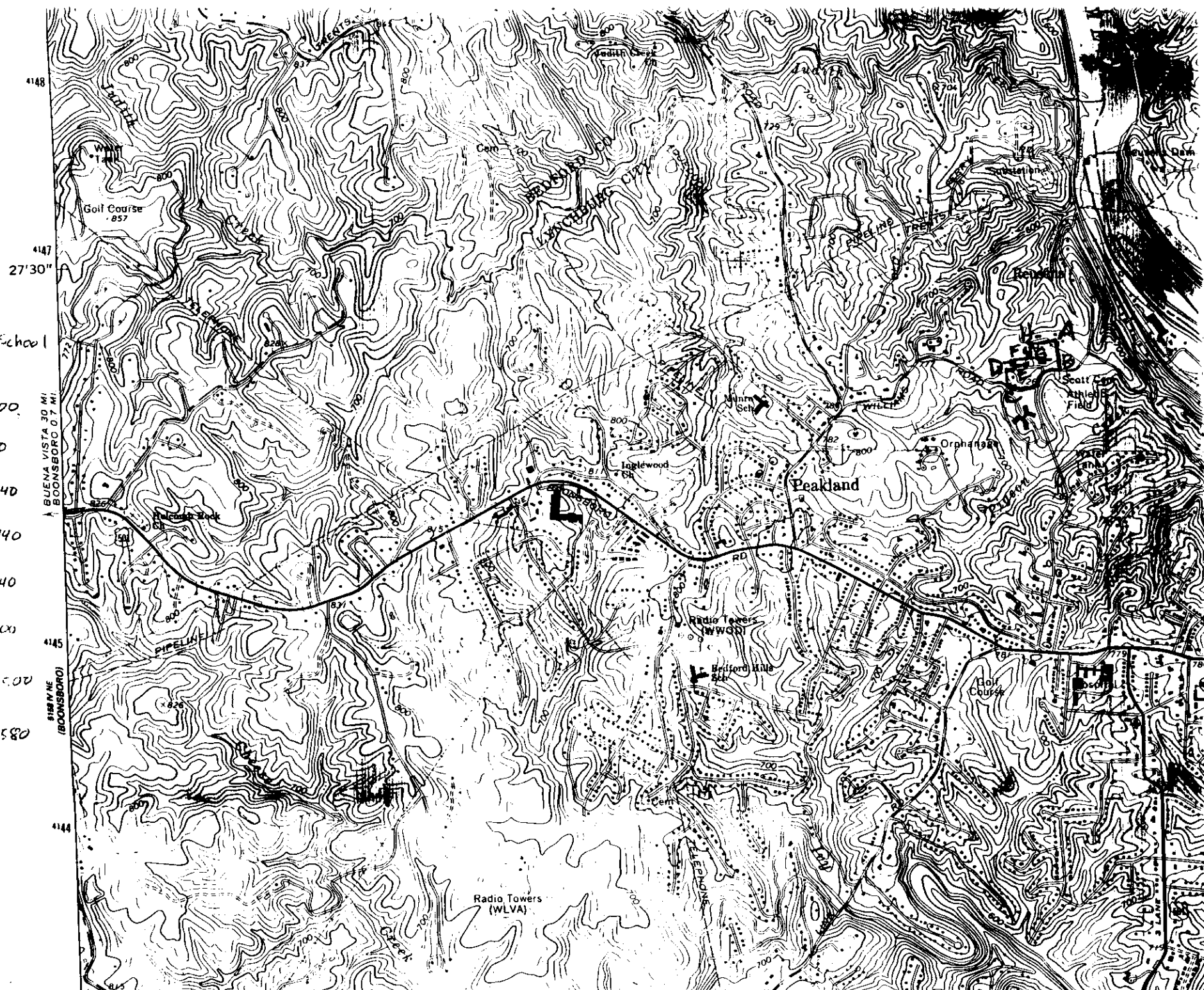
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Virginia Episcopal School
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SHARPE
(BOONSBORO)

Radio Towers
(WLVA)