

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

Historic Name: Craigsville School	Common Name: Craigsville Grade School
Street Address/Rt. No.: Railroad Avenue	VHLC File Number: 07-1146
Vicinity of: Craigsville	Owner: Koogler Brothers Construction
USGS Quad: Craigsville 7.5	Rt. 1, Box 510, Fishersville, VA 22939
Date(s): 1917	Architect/Builder: A Staunton contractor
Original Use: Grade School & High School	Style: & Mr. Sneider and Mr. Crittenberger
Present Use: Apartments	Colonial Revival/Vernacular
Condition: Very good	
Altered <u>X</u> ; unaltered <u> </u>	

Physical Description:

The Craigsville School is typical of the first major phase of consolidation and large school construction in the 1910s in Augusta County. During this period, as the size of the larger schools jumped from three or four rooms to six and to eight rooms, one fairly standard form was found. Schools of this period departed from the I-house design used first to a more exploded version of the Georgian form, a large, two-story symmetrical rectangular block with a full double-pile, central-passage plan. The more massive scale of the resulting buildings, brick construction, and belfry's suggested their educational use.

The Craigsville School exterior has been altered very little since its construction. Colonial detailing highlights the fairly stylish design. The original one-story wooden portico still frames the central entrance and flanking windows, although its second-floor balustrade has been removed. A similar portico serving the back entrance has been removed. Granite jack arches embellish the tall 6/6 sash arranged symmetrically around the entire building. Shingled wooden cross gables pierced with fanlights further adorn each of the four sides. The original wooden belfry at the rooftop symbolizes the school's function. The building rests on a raised concrete foundation and has a low-pitched hip roof now covered with composition shingle.

The interior has recently been remodeled into fourteen apartments, following the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Historic Preservation Projects. Each classroom has been divided into one apartment with three additional apartments and a laundry room in the basement. The central hallway has been preserved on each floor, along with most of its woodwork, although the north hall partition wall has been moved slightly south to increase the size of the northern apartments. The original stairwell with its square reeded newel and square balusters leads to the second floor. Narrow matchboard wainscoting typical of school interiors finishes the hallway walls, and the Colonial Revival door trim surrounds the original classroom doors leading into the apartments. In each apartment the ceilings were lowered and

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Statement of Significance:

Craigsville School is an excellent example of the first major phase of large consolidated school construction in Augusta County. Built in 1917, this large-scale brick building, enriched with Colonial detailing and topped with an octagonal belfry, symbolizes the optimism accompanying the early consolidation drive of the 1910s in rural Virginia. The two-story elevation and rectangular plan with four rooms and a central hallway on each floor is very typical of consolidated school plans before the advent of the State Department of Education's Plan Service in the 1920s.

Craigsville was a booming mountain community in western Augusta County at the turn of the century. An early stagecoach stop and later railroad town in the 1850s, Craigsville experienced its largest growth spurt in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a result of the lumbering and quarrying ventures in the surrounding mountains. The establishment of the Fordwick Plant of the Virginia Portland Cement Company in 1899 further augmented the town's growth. This large consolidated school replaced a smaller two-story frame school building, based on the earlier I-house design, on this same site. The construction of this modern plant reflects the tremendous growth in this community during these years.

Unlike the Middlebrook School which was built with local contributions and labor, the Craigsville School was financed largely by the County. The Augusta County School Board hired a Staunton contractor who brought most of his workmen from the city. A Mr. Sneider and Mr. Crittenberger from Staunton were two of the men involved with the school's construction.

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Geographic Data/Acreage: one acre

Verbal Boundary Description: Beginning at a point on the N side of VA 687 approx. 50' W of intersection of said route with VA 684; thence extending approx. 200' NW; (continued)

Boundary Justification: The bounds have been drawn to include the school building and the immediate school yard.

UTM: 17/ 64209Q/4215660

Prepared By: Ann McCleary, Architectural Historian

Date Prepared: September 1984

Physical Description continued

carpet was added in the living rooms, but wood floors were kept in the bedrooms and closets, and wardrobes were preserved if possible.

The basement originally included an auditorium and boiler room. In the 1920s with pressing needs for classroom space, the elementary grades had two classrooms in the basement. After the high school grades moved to the new building, the basement housed a large cafeteria and kitchen in the south end.

The school did not have a gymnasium, but two outdoor basketball courts remain.

Statement of Significance continued

The building originally housed all grades, from one through high school. In the 1920s, the grammar school used all four first-floor rooms, two rooms on the second floor, and two rooms in the basement. The high school utilized two second-floor rooms, the second-floor hall, and a room which served as a chemical laboratory at the back of the second-floor hall. The high school curriculum proved to be more limited compared to other high schools in the County, with no instruction in agriculture or home economics. Also without a gymnasium, the athletic activities were not as extensive.

Due to the crowded conditions in this school by the late 1920s, the County constructed a new high school in Craigsville in 1932. This older building then became the elementary school and continued in use until 1968. At this time, the County moved the high school to a new consolidated high school at Buffalo Gap and the elementary school was moved to the old high school building. This older elementary school building remained vacant until 1983-84, when the building was remodeled into apartments, utilizing tax act credits.

Verbal Boundary Description continued

thence approx. 150' NE; thence approx 200' SE to a point on the N side of VA 687; thence approx. 100' SW along N side of VA 687 to point of origin.