

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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. 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.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: St. John School

Other names/site number: DHR No. 002-1056

Name of related multiple property listing:
Rosenwald Schools in Virginia (012-5041)

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: 1569 St. John Road

City or town: Gordonsville State: VA County: Albemarle

Not For Publication: N/A Vicinity: X

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

 national statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

 X A B X C D

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Signature of certifying official/Title:	Date
<u>Virginia Department of Historic Resources</u>	
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

In my opinion, the property <u> </u> meets <u> </u> does not meet the National Register criteria.	
<hr/>	
Signature of commenting official:	Date
<hr/>	
Title :	State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION: School

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

OTHER: Rosenwald School

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: CONCRETE; METAL: Tin, Aluminum;
WOOD: Weatherboard; SYNTHETICS: Vinyl

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The St. John School is an early 1920s Rosenwald School built to serve the African American community in the Cobham and Gordonsville areas in Albemarle County, Virginia. The building was constructed on a 2.0-acre site in 1922-1923 and is an example of the T-shaped "Floor Plan No. 20," a two-room, two-teacher standardized design by Rosenwald Fund director Samuel L. Smith. The former school is a modest, one-story wood-frame building notable for the banks of tall, double-hung sash windows on its front and rear facades – a defining feature of Rosenwald schools aimed at maximizing natural light in classroom spaces. Stylistic details are minimal, with the building retaining the austere exterior appearance characteristic of the typology. After the school's closing in 1954, it was used as a residence until 2003. At an unknown date after 1954, a fire damaged the southernmost room. Partitions dividing the two original rooms, added during this period of ownership, survived the fire and remain the only notable alterations to the original school plan. St. John Baptist Church, located on an adjacent property north of the school, bought the property in 2003. While the window sash have been replaced and some elements of the interior are in disrepair, the current condition of the St. John School is generally good.

Narrative Description

The St. John School occupies a 2-acre site that is part of the larger 6.10-acre lot owned by St. John Baptist Church in the hamlet of Cobham, Virginia. The school is a five-bay, one-story, frame building. The side-gabled roof has exposed rafter tails and is covered with standing-seam

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tin roofing. A small brick interior chimney rises from the center of the roof ridge. The building has a brick foundation covered by a thin layer of concrete plastered over the exterior. The walls are clad with aluminum siding installed directly atop the original weatherboard siding. On the western façade, a central projecting bay is flanked by two bays, each with a single window that has a double-hung 6/6 vinyl replacement sash and blue-grey trim. Just north of the central projecting bay (second bay from the left), there is a small window with a double-hung 6/6 vinyl sash, also with blue-grey trim. Based on Rosenwald School "Floor Plan No. 20," as well as the account of former student Rebecca Kinney, this window exists where an entry historically provided access to the northern classroom. Evidence of the door is no longer visible, except for the historic-age concrete steps that lead up to the side of the building, directly under this small window. The second bay from the right is where the current primary entrance is located within an inset entrance porch. The flush panel wood door with three diagonally placed small lights postdates 1954, when the building was converted for use as a dwelling. The inset porch has concrete steps and a wooden railing, both painted blue-grey. The central, front-gabled projecting bay consists of a single bank of three windows with 9/9 double-hung vinyl replacement sash; the window openings were not altered in size or shape when the new sash were installed. Several examples of the original 6/6 wood sash are stored in a closet inside the building.

The north (side) elevation is devoid of fenestration, but for a louvered vent at the gable peak and a small rectangular wooden door inserted into the brick foundation as the access point to the crawlspace. Within the crawlspace, the original fieldstone foundation piers are still visible.

The east (rear) elevation features three banks of tripartite windows with 9/9 double-hung vinyl replacement sash that are identical to those on the west façade. The window openings were not altered in size or shape when the new sash were installed. A pair of smaller windows and an entry occupy the far-left bay, where a small wooden deck has been added. Originally, this bay also would have included a triple set of windows.

The south (side) elevation has a right-of-center single window with a 6/6 vinyl replacement sash and an exterior cinder block chimney. A louvered vent is in the gable peak. The chimney dates to the late 1950s or early 1960s and was likely the chimney for the kitchen when the building was used as a private residence.

The former school's interior has been somewhat altered since its original construction in 1922, largely due to its post-1954 use as a dwelling. The current primary entrance leads into what historically was the southernmost classroom. The former classroom has been divided into two smaller rooms with a partition wall that run from east to west. A similar partition can be found in the northernmost former classroom. The original plaster wall that divided the classrooms remains unaltered, matching the building's perimeter plaster walls. Most of these original walls have painted wood bead-board wainscoting with chair rails and baseboard trim. The original, approximately 3-inch-wide wood flooring runs north-south throughout the interior; overall it is in good condition but for typical wear and some stains. The doors retain historic plain wood casing with butt joints and single-leaf, stack-panel wood doors. The windows retain original, unadorned

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wood casing with butt joints and narrow sills above the bead-board wainscoting. The ceiling throughout is finished with painted wood bead-board.

Located within the west façade's central projecting bay, the former industrial instruction room is accessible from both classrooms and features finishes similar to the other rooms. A brick chimney in the center of its east wall, marking where the central stove once stood. The chimney has two openings, one leading into each of the individual classrooms, which provided heat to the school. Alumni of the school described starting the fires and keeping them going as a responsibility given to the young boys who attended.

Each of the two classrooms has a large walk-through closet on their respective west walls, where students would store their coats and personal items during the day. The closet walls are covered with narrow wood boards similar to that used on the ceilings. The northern classroom's original exterior entrance porch has been infilled and turned into a small closet. Within this space, the original exterior wood siding has been preserved. This is also where the attic access is located.

A frame, one-story building once stood in front of the school, but it was removed at an unknown date. This building's historic use is not known. It may have been a temporary school building, or could have served as a cafeteria and dining hall for students, as at least one meal was provided to students daily through local food programs. As seen in a historic photograph in the Fisk University Rosenwald Fund Card File Database, the one-story gable-roofed building had an entry on the south gable end and two window openings with wood shutters on the east side wall.

Integrity Analysis

The St. John School overall has been well maintained and today is in good physical condition. Where alterations have been made, they are relatively unobtrusive and are reversible due to the availability of historic records and physical evidence of the building's original design and materials.

The property has integrity of location, as the former school continues to occupy its original two-acre lot. The lot itself has been added to the tax parcel associated with the neighboring St. John Baptist Church. The property's integrity of setting is somewhat intact, as the Cobham area continues to be in a very rural part of Albemarle County. Proximity to a church is a common circumstance with Rosenwald schools, due to the transcendent importance of churches in African American communities. Church congregations also often provided funds and donated land for construction of schools for African American children, including those associated with the Rosenwald Fund. Today the former school is surrounded on three sides by a recently created asphalt parking lot, which may have obscured historic landscape features that once were part of the building's immediate setting, such as privy locations.

The St. John School has high integrity of association as it is an example of a rural two-room, two-teacher Rosenwald school. Such schools were built across Virginia to provide educational opportunities to African American children during the Jim Crow segregation era. In addition to

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the Rosenwald Fund's financial assistance, funding for the schools was partially provided by African American parents, who also often donated land, materials, or labor for school projects from the Reconstruction Era through the end of Jim Crow. Albemarle County's school board also had to approve the school's construction and operation. The former St. John School conveys its historic association by retention of its original footprint and massing, large banks of windows, and only moderately altered interior plan.

The St. John School remains a clearly identifiable example of "Floor Plan No. 20" used by the Rosenwald Fund, which demonstrates that it retains good integrity of design. Although the design's integrity has been diminished by the two non-historic interior partition walls that divide the two former classrooms, as well as the exterior siding and fenestration alterations, these are not entirely irreversible alterations due to the availability of historic documentation of the original design. Historic photographs of the school are available at Fisk University and have been digitized for public use.



C. 1923 photograph showing St. John School's west façade (Image courtesy of Fisk University Rosenwald Fund Card File Database)



C. 1923 photograph showing St. John School's west façade (Image courtesy of Fisk University Rosenwald Fund Card File Database)

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The building's integrity of materials is very good throughout much of the interior as original flooring, plaster walls, wainscoting, door and window casing, and ceiling finishes are all extant. Fire damage remains visible in the southernmost classroom, particularly on the upper walls and ceiling; in-kind materials, however, can be replicated to repair the damage, based on the surviving finishes elsewhere in the building. The exterior integrity of materials is considerably diminished by the installation of aluminum siding (although this is considered reversible as the original weatherboard siding is extant), as well as replacement of one original entry door with a non-historic flush panel door, installation of a rear door that replaced a tripartite group of windows, and enclosure of a front entry porch to create a small closet. The retention of some examples of the original 6/6 wood sash, however, suggests that changes to the building's windows will be reversible in the future.

The workmanship of the former school's original materials remains apparent on the interior and within the crawlspace and attic, where the structural members are visible. Workmanship related to the aforementioned exterior alterations is fair.

In its totality, the St. John School possesses integrity of feeling as a former rural schoolhouse associated with African American education in rural Albemarle County. The integrity of feeling is expressed by the property's continued interrelationship with the neighboring St. John Baptist Church, the overall rural setting, and the former school's varying, but clearly evident, integrity of design, workmanship, and materials. The school also is an important, tangible cultural resource representative of African Americans' resilience in the face of Jim Crow and their continued legacy today.

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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.)

- 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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ETHNIC HERITAGE: African American

EDUCATION

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1922-1954

Significant Dates

1922

1954

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Smith, Samuel L.

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Originally constructed in 1922-1923, the St. John School was built with the support of the Julius Rosenwald Fund, which was established to provide public education for African American children in the rural American South from the 1910s through early 1930s. Locally significant under Criterion C in the area of Architecture, the St. John School is an example of the T-shaped "Floor Plan No. 20," a two-room, two-teacher school designed by architect Samuel L. Smith, who served as director of the Rosenwald Fund starting in 1920. Over 380 schools were constructed across Virginia through the Rosenwald Fund, which provided African American children in rural, isolated communities with state-of-the-art facilities at a time when little to no local public tax funds were designated for their education. The St. John School was one of seven Rosenwald schools in Albemarle County, which today retains an unusually high percentage, almost 75 percent, of those schools. The St. John School served African American students in the Cobham and Gordonsville area of Albemarle County from its opening in 1923 until it closed in 1954, making it locally significant under Criterion A in the areas of Education and Ethnic Heritage: African American. Today it is fondly remembered through the rich oral history tradition from the school's many alumni. The St. John School also satisfies Criteria Consideration A, given that its significance is derived from its architectural, educational, and historical significance for the African-American community in Gordonsville and Cobham. The period of significance spans from 1922 to 1954, beginning with the date of construction and encompassing the period during which the school served African-American students. As a well-preserved example of a Rosenwald school built between 1917 and 1932, the St. John School also meets the criteria for listing specified in the Rosenwald Schools in Virginia Multiple Property Documentation Form of 2003.¹

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Criterion A: African-American Ethnic Heritage and Education

From the 17th century through the late 1860s, Virginia's African American residents had few opportunities for formal education. Teaching enslaved African Americans to read and write was forbidden, starting with state laws passed in 1805 and followed up with additional restrictions in 1819 and 1831. Religious groups, particularly those with antislavery sentiments, such as Quakers, in limited instances provided basic literacy lessons for free African Americans and enslaved people. In even rarer instances, free African American youth attended private subscription or boarding schools.²

¹ Green, Bryan Clark. "Rosenwald Schools in Virginia (012-5041)." Multiple Property National Register nomination report. Washington, DC: National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places, 2004.

² J. L. Blair Buck, *The Development of Public Schools in Virginia, 1607-1952* (Richmond: State Board of Education, 1952), 22-23; Ronald E. Butchart, "Freedmen's Education in Virginia, 1861-1870," *Encyclopedia Virginia*, Virginia Foundation for the Humanities, 2015, <https://www.encyclopediavirginia.org> (accessed May 2017).

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The first glimmers of new educational opportunities for African Americans came during the Civil War. Wherever Union military forces' occupied territory in Virginia, notably in Alexandria and Hampton in 1861, African American educators established schools. Missionary and freedmen's aid societies assisted these efforts by funding building construction and teacher salaries. From 1865-1870, the Freedmen's Bureau, among its many Reconstruction policies, assisted with school organization as well.³ In 1869, a new state constitution mandated, for the first time in Virginia's history, the creation of universal, albeit racially segregated, public education throughout the Commonwealth. In July 1870, the Virginia General Assembly enacted a uniform education law that established a statewide school system headed by a superintendent of public instruction and state and county boards of education. State funding based on population quickly came to be insufficient to cover costs, thus requiring local governments to assess supplementary taxes. Under the racially segregated system, white students received the majority of public funds designated for public schools, while African American children typically received inferior buildings and supplies, shorter terms, and fewer paid instructors who received less compensation than teachers of white students.⁴ Virginia's first state-subsidized public schools opened in November 1870. During the 1870-1871 term, the system served approximately twenty-four percent of the state's black children and almost thirty-eight percent of white youth. After centuries of being denied access to education, however, African Americans seized the opportunities that became available with formal instruction. Reverence for education became a hallmark of African American communities from Reconstruction through the Jim Crow era of segregation.

Overall, public school systems in Virginia remained haphazardly funded, regulated, and operated through the remainder of the 19th century. Most public schools initially occupied one-room buildings, although in more densely populated areas, graded two-teacher schools began to replace one-room schools for the white population in the late 19th century. In 1902, under Governor Andrew Montague, a new state constitution was passed to replace the Reconstruction-era 1869 constitution. Written just a few years after the *Plessy v. Ferguson* Supreme Court decision enshrined the "separate but equal" doctrine in American law, the new constitution did much to disenfranchise African Americans and promulgate Jim Crow segregation across Virginia. However, some Progressive Era reforms also were provided, such as provisions for workmen's compensation, railroad regulation, and, importantly, increased funding for public schools, improved teacher training, and a goal of making high school available to more students.⁵

Under the 1902 constitution, county boards of education implemented more stringent teacher qualification and compulsory attendance standards, undertook building renovation and construction, and consolidated smaller schools. At the same time, however, African American

³ Butchart, "Freedmen's Education in Virginia."

⁴ Ibid.; Buck, *The Development of Public Schools in Virginia*, 65, 69-71.

⁵ Susan Breitzer, "Virginia Constitutional Convention (1901-1902)," *Encyclopedia Virginia*, Virginia Foundation for the Humanities, 20 May 2015, published online at http://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/Constitutional_Convention_Virginia_1901-1902#start_entry. The 1902 constitution finally was replaced in 1971, after the victories of the Civil Rights movement abolished the legal framework for Jim Crow segregation.

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school appropriations declined after the constitution disenfranchised black voters, perpetuating the problem of inadequate and overcrowded facilities.⁶ Thus, as white schools were consolidated during the 1910s and 1920s, in line with Progressive Era educational standards, black schools were often left behind.

Aware of such inequities, various philanthropic individuals and organizations attempted to step in to address where governments failed to provide educational opportunities. These included the Julius Rosenwald Fund, the Jeanes Foundation, the Slater Fund, the General Education Board, and similar private groups. The Rosenwald Fund traces its origins to May 1911, when Julius Rosenwald first met Booker T. Washington. Rosenwald, aware of Washington's work, hosted a luncheon in Chicago for him, with the aim of raising funds for the Tuskegee Institute. Between 1911 and Washington's death in 1915, the two men collaborated on construction of 300 public schools in Alabama, Tennessee, and Georgia. Thereafter, Rosenwald established what became known as the Rosenwald Fund, management for which was based at the Tuskegee Institute between 1912 and 1920 and in Nashville, Tennessee, between 1920 and 1937. Samuel L. Smith, a student of school reformer Fletcher Dresslar, was named director of the program. An important premise of the Rosenwald Fund was commitment by a local community to improving educational access for children. This was demonstrated by contributions of money, labor, materials, and land from community residents, as well as a matching monetary contribution from the local school board.

Smith and his colleagues expanded the repertoire of designs for Rosenwald schools, published under the title *Community School Plans* in 1921, to include 17 plans for schools accommodating from one to seven teachers. The new building designs were intended as "model schools," exhibiting best design practices in lighting, sanitation, ventilation (by means of "breeze windows"), and furnishings. The Rosenwald school plans also were closely related to designs published by national school authorities, including those issued in 1914 by the U.S. Bureau of Education, once again under the direction of Fletcher Dresslar.⁷ In addition to classroom space, the plans called for one or more small "industrial rooms" where manual training would take place, and for the use of the schoolhouse as a resource for the entire community, including adult education. As meeting places and community centers, Rosenwald schools were vital community assets during Jim Crow and the Civil Rights movement, when policing of African American cultural institutions and gatherings was at an all-time high

While maintaining racially segregated schools, Virginia's local school boards gradually began taking advantage of the Rosenwald Fund's provision of up to one-third of construction costs for new schools, as well as cash and/or in-kind contributions from the African American community that would be served by a new school. Most often, a local committee raised the private sums that were used in combination with school board funds. Like the St. John School, most Rosenwald

⁶ Buck, *The Development of Public Schools in Virginia*, 126-139; Rand Dotson, "Progressive Movement in Virginia," *Encyclopedia Virginia*, Virginia Foundation for the Humanities, 2012, <https://www.encyclopediavirginia.org> (accessed May 2017).

⁷ Fletcher B. Dresslar, *Rural Schoolhouses and Grounds*, United States Bureau of Education Bulletin 12, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1914).

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schools were intended to serve as elementary schools staffed by one or two teachers. About 50% of the Rosenwald schools in Virginia were two-teacher graded schools, for which the Fund typically contributed between \$500 and \$800.⁸ Ultimately, Rosenwald schools were built in 83% of Virginia's counties, in mostly rural areas.

The St. John School was constructed in 1922-1923 utilizing money and architectural plans provided by the Julius Rosenwald Fund. A group organized to build the school received seed funding from the Rosenwald Fund in 1922 for construction, while the community had to raise additional money for materials, site preparation, and execution of the construction plan. According to the Fiske University Rosenwald Fund Card File Database, St. John School's received a Rosenwald contribution of \$700, with the local African American community contributing \$400, while the white community contributed \$100. The Albemarle County school board matched these donations with another \$1,200.⁹

The St. John School was one of seven built in Albemarle County that received Rosenwald Funds. Four of these schools, including St. John, were two-room schools. St. John's was built during the same budget year as Cismont, Rivanna, and White Hall, as Albemarle County pushed to provide adequate schooling for black students under the Jim Crow mantra of "separate but equal." St. John and other Rosenwald schools in Albemarle County served predominantly poor communities and received additional support from food programs designed to make sure students had at least one meal while they were at school. Through the school nutrition programs, female students learned to prepare food; their male classmates, meanwhile, learned industrial skills in the industrial training room.

Rebecca Kinney, a former student, reflected on St. John School in a 2009 article published by "The Hook." According to the article, the Albemarle County Historic Preservation Committee intended to collect oral histories of the building for an alumni reunion. Kinney recounted the deep contrasts between her time at St. John School versus a typical day of school for an elementary student today. The Rosenwald schoolchildren arrived before the school day began to help stoke the fires that heated the school. Students also helped to scrub floors and polish windows. St. John did not have central plumbing or electricity until its conversion into a private residence in the late 1950s, so the children used privies located behind the school (the privy sites likely are beneath the current parking lot). In a 2016 newspaper article, Kinney explained, "Our teachers] didn't harp on what we didn't have," she said. "Even though they knew we were using used books and things like that, they gave us the best education they could."¹⁰ In a conversation on January 12, 2017, Kinney also recalled that during her time at St. John, only one classroom was in use, and she believes the second classroom was utilized primarily for storage. The students were taught by one teacher and consisted of all ages from first through sixth grade. Kinney mentioned that the older children would help the teacher by assisting the younger ones in activities they did not understand.

⁸ Gibson Worsham, Switchback School National Register nomination, 2012.

⁹ Fisk University, "Rosenwald Fund Card File Database," available online at <http://rosenwald.fisk.edu>.

¹⁰ Josh Mandell, "Historic Black Elementary School Envisions Second Life," December 3, 2016, available online at <http://cvillettomorrow.org/news/article/25678-historic-black-elementary-school-envisions-second/>.

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St. John School remained in operation until 1954, when it was converted for use as a dwelling. St. John's students were sent to another segregated school in Albemarle County, as Virginia resisted school integration for a decade beyond the Supreme Court decision, *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* finally put an end to racial segregation in public schools.

The school's significance in Albemarle's County African American history and education has not since gone unremarked. In December 2016, a state historical highway marker was installed along the road next to the school. Funds for the marker's fabrication and installation were raised among St. John alumni, members of St. John Baptist Church, and the larger community.



Virginia Historical Highway Marker Erected for St. John School (photo courtesy of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources)

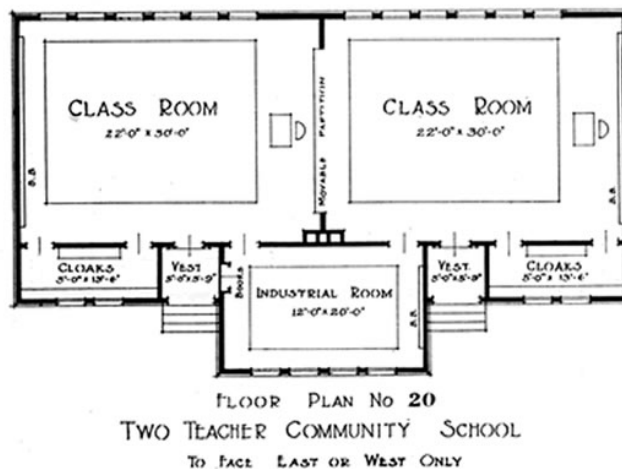
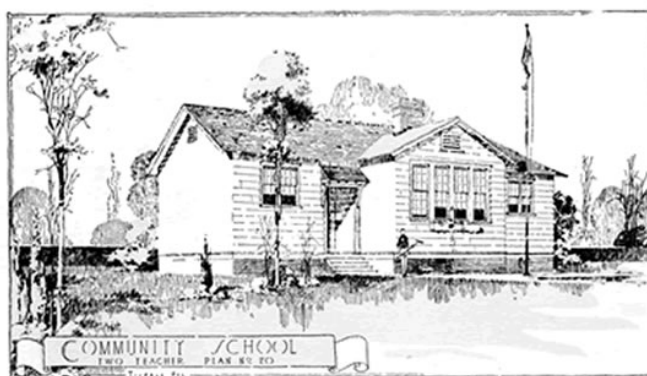
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Since acquiring the school in 2003, the St. John Baptist Church congregation and a nonprofit friends organization have worked steadily toward raising funds for repairing the school and eventually returning the building to public use as a community and fitness center.

Criterion C: Architecture

The St. John School building was situated on two acres and was designed as a two-room, two-teacher school. The acreage allowed ample space for placement of privies as well as recreational areas. The school building closely resembled Samuel Smith's "Floor Plan No. 20 – Two Teacher Community School" from the Rosenwald Fund Office, as seen below.



As originally built, the St. John School featured entries flanking a projecting central bay, two classrooms, and an industrial room in the central bay. Closets were located along the west wall of each classroom and lit by two windows on the west façade. The east wall had four sets of tripartite windows that provided ample natural light during the school day. In Smith's design, the east and west walls had no fenestration; one window is located on the south wall of the St. John School and likely dates to the building's use as a dwelling. The large banks of windows are a

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character-defining feature of Rosenwald schools designed by Samuel Smith, who “was particularly concerned with the maximization of natural light, providing alternative plans for each design to ensure an east-west orientation. His plans called for tall, double-hung sash windows and dictated paint colors, seating arrangements, window treatments, and blackboard placement” in an effort to make these schools functional in places where electricity was not always available.¹¹ The large windows provided significant amounts of light to the classrooms even on cloudy days, allowing the children to come to school more frequently, while the central stove in St. John’s front industrial room provided the necessary heat to continue school through the colder months. The St. John School also is reflective of typical design for Rosenwald schools as it is a modestly scaled frame building with minimal stylistic details.

Registration Requirements

As a well-preserved Rosenwald School in Virginia built between 1917 and 1932 and utilizing funds provided by the Julius Rosenwald fund, the St. John School fulfills the registration requirements provided by the Rosenwald Schools in Virginia (012-5041) Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPD). The modest, one-story, wood-frame school building retains its original design and floor plan taken from Samuel Smith’s architectural publication *Community School Plans*. As previously noted, alterations undertaken during its later use as a private residence include the addition of partition walls that divide each classroom and changes to the building’s fenestration and exterior materials.

The St. John School also retains its original location within a rural setting outside Gordonsville, while its workmanship and materials are – or, in some cases, closely resemble – those of the period of construction and the conditions of the time. Given this relatively high degree of architectural integrity, the St. John School meets the MPD’s registration requirements for listing under Criterion A in the areas of Ethnic Heritage: African American and Education and under Criterion C in the area of Architecture.

¹¹ Green, “Rosenwald Schools of Virginia (012-5041), p. F-17.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Albemarle County School Board Records, Albemarle Charlottesville Historical Society.
December 2017.

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St. John School
Name of Property

Albemarle County, VA
County and State

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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 # _____
 recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

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, Richmond, VA;
University of Virginia School of Architecture; Fisk University Rosenwald Database

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): VDHR #002-1056

10. Geographical Data

Acres of Property 0.23 acre

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

St. John School
Name of Property

Albemarle County, VA
County and State

Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 38.079760 | Longitude: -78.276150 |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

- | | | |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The nominated property boundary includes the St. John's School building and the narrow, grassy strips encircling the building on all sides, but the boundary does not include the adjacent, recently built asphalt parking lot. The true and correct historic boundary is shown on the attached Location Map.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The nominated property boundary includes the St. John School building and immediately adjacent land. Although much of the original 2.0-acre property has been excluded from the nomination, given the recent construction of an asphalt parking, the property, the property's historic setting remains much as it was during the historic period as it now is part of the adjacent, historic-age St. John Baptist Church parcel.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Niya Bates
organization: N/A
street & number: P. O. Box 316
city or town: Charlottesville state: VA zip code: 22902
e-mail: nbates@monticello.org
telephone: (434) 984-7513

St. John School
Name of Property

Albemarle County, VA
County and State

date: June 2018

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: St. John School

City or Vicinity: Gordonsville

County: Albemarle

State: VA

Photographer: Niya Bates

Date Photographed: 12 March 2018

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 25: VA_AlbemarleCounty_StJohnSchool_0001

View: West façade, camera facing east

2 of 25: VA_AlbemarleCounty_StJohnSchool_0002

View: South elevation, camera facing north

3 of 25: VA_AlbemarleCounty_StJohnSchool_0003

View: East (rear) elevation, camera facing west

4 of 25: VA_AlbemarleCounty_StJohnSchool_0004

St. John School
Name of Property

Albemarle County, VA
County and State

View: North elevation, camera facing south

5 of 25: VA_AlbemarleCounty_StJohnSchool_0005

View: Interior, room 2, camera facing northeast

6 of 25: VA_AlbemarleCounty_StJohnSchool_0006

view: Interior, room 1, camera facing south

7 of 25: VA_AlbemarleCounty_StJohnSchool_0007

view: Interior, room 1, camera facing east

8 of 25: VA_AlbemarleCounty_StJohnSchool_0008

view: Interior, closet off room 1, camera facing west.

9 of 25: VA_AlbemarleCounty_StJohnSchool_0009

view: Interior, room 2, camera facing southwest

10 of 25: VA_AlbemarleCounty_StJohnSchool_0010

view: Interior, room 3 (former industrial room), camera facing northeast

11 of 25: VA_AlbemarleCounty_StJohnSchool_0011

view: Interior, room 3, camera facing southwest

12 of 25: VA_AlbemarleCounty_StJohnSchool_0012

view: Interior, room 4, camera facing northeast

13 of 25: VA_AlbemarleCounty_StJohnSchool_0013

view: Interior, room 4, camera facing southwest

14 of 25: VA_AlbemarleCounty_StJohnSchool_0014

view: Interior, closet off room 4 with original exterior weatherboard siding extant on side walls and historic 6/6 wood sash stored beneath new window opening, camera facing west

15 of 25: VA_AlbemarleCounty_StJohnSchool_0015

view: Interior, room 4 showing original plaster and lath wall, camera facing south

16 of 25: VA_AlbemarleCounty_StJohnSchool_0016

view: Interior, room 5, camera facing northeast

17 of 25: VA_AlbemarleCounty_StJohnSchool_0017

view: Interior, room 5, camera facing southwest

18 of 25: VA_AlbemarleCounty_StJohnSchool_0018

view: Interior, original closet off room 5, camera facing north

St. John School
Name of Property

Albemarle County, VA
County and State

- 19 of 25: VA_AlbemarleCounty_StJohnSchool_0019
view: Interior, room 2, damage to plaster between the west entry and room 3 (former industrial room), camera facing west
- 20 of 25: VA_AlbemarleCounty_StJohnSchool_0020
view: Interior, fire damage in room 1, camera facing south
- 21 of 25: VA_AlbemarleCounty_StJohnSchool_0021
view: Interior, room 3 showing original partition wall between classrooms, camera facing north
- 22 of 25: VA_AlbemarleCounty_StJohnSchool_0022
view: Interior, room 2 showing post-1954 partition wall in south classroom, camera facing south
- 23 of 25: VA_AlbemarleCounty_StJohnSchool_0023
view: Interior, room 4 showing post-1954 in north classroom, camera facing north
- 24 of 25: VA_AlbemarleCounty_StJohnSchool_0024
view: Interior, plaster damage in room 2 on west wall, camera facing southwest
- 25 of 25: VA_AlbemarleCounty_StJohnSchool_0025
view: Interior, detail of plaster damage next to primary entry in room 2, camera facing west.

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.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

LOCATION MAP

St. John School

Albemarle County, VA

DHR No. 002-1056

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Latitude: 38.079760

Longitude: -78.276150



Feet

0 20 40 60 80

1:1,128 / 1"=94 Feet

Title:

Date: 3/23/2018

DISCLAIMER: Records of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR) have been gathered over many years from a variety of sources and the representation depicted is a cumulative view of field observations over time and may not reflect current ground conditions. The map is for general information purposes and is not intended for engineering, legal or other site-specific uses. Map may contain errors and is provided "as-is". More information is available in the DHR Archives located at DHR's Richmond office.

Notice if AE sites: Locations of archaeological sites may be sensitive to the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), and the Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA) and Code of Virginia §2.2-3705.7 (10). Release of precise locations may threaten archaeological sites and historic resources.