The Rocky Branch School was built in 1911 by and for the African American population residing in the Sutherland Community of Dinwiddie, VA. The school closed in the 1963; however, the building still remains today. The school is included on the Civil Rights in Education Trail in South Central Virginia. We are seeking listing of the historic schoolhouse on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places to ensure its recognition and preservation as a valuable resource for regional education and tourism, and encourage community participation by engaging local schools and/or sponsoring social events.

Are you interested in applying for State and/or Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credits? Yes _____ No X

Are you interested in receiving more information about DHR’s easement program? Yes _____ No X

1. General Property Information

Property name: Rocky Branch School

Property address: 6009 Rocky Branch Road (Located at VA Route 636 and U.S. Route 460)
City or Town: Sutherland
Zip code: 23885

Name of the Independent City or County where the property is located: Dinwiddie County

Category of Property (choose only one of the following):
Building X Site _____ Structure _____ Object _____

2. Physical Aspects

Acreage: .970

Setting (choose only one of the following):
Urban _____ Suburban _____ Town _____ Village _____ Hamlet _____ Rural X

Briefly describe the property’s overall setting, including any notable landscape features:

The Rocky Branch School is a two-classroom schoolhouse, located at the end of Virginia Rt. 636, (Rocky Branch Road), and about three-tenths of a mile South of U.S. Highway Rt. 460 (New Cox Road). It is on the left of U.S. 460 when traveling south. The school now sits on the same property as Rocky Branch Baptist Church, the owner of the historic schoolhouse since 1963. There is a wooded area to the left of the school and beyond the paved parking directly behind the school. Across the road from the school is open farmland. The schoolhouse is currently surrounded by paved parking for the adjacent church, on the right side of the school. An historical marker, placed by the Civil Rights in Education Heritage Trail in South Central Virginia, sits in front of the school within a white picket fence surrounded by paved parking. The county parcel ID# is 19-51.
3. Architectural Description

Architectural Style(s): Vernacular, Rural Framed Schoolhouse

If the property was designed by an architect, landscape architect, engineer, or other professional, please list here: ___________________________

If the builder is known, please list here: ___________________________________________

Date of construction (can be approximate): 1911-1913

Narrative Description:
In the space below, briefly describe the general characteristics of the entire property, such as its current use (and historic use if different), as well as the primary building or structure on the property (such as a house, store, mill, factory, depot, bridge, etc.). Include the architectural style, materials and method(s) of construction, physical appearance and condition (exterior and interior), and any additions, remodelings, or other alterations.

As described in DHR’s 2010 survey: “The Rocky Branch School is one of a number of surviving schools in Dinwiddie County and is particularly significant as one of the best preserved of those built for the education of African-American children.” The extant one-story frame school building sits above-grade on stone and brick piers. It has intersecting gabled roofs covered with preformed metal roof panels. The building is an L-plan with the main stem running east-west, perpendicular to the road with its west end closest to the road. This east-west stem is formed of one classroom and represents the 1911 one-classroom school moved from Ocean Methodist Church in about 1913. It has regularly spaced, symmetrical single windows on its three exterior walls. The south wall is mostly shared with the c.1913 addition and has a two-leaf pocket door between classrooms, one door to a small cloakroom, and an exterior door and outside stairs at the small section of exterior wall at its west end. A brick chimney serving a metal stove is centered on the inside of the east wall and is hung several feet below the ceiling by wood framing from the roof structure.

The south leg of the L-plan is formed primarily by a large gable-roofed classroom whose eaves align with the 1911 original classroom. Along the full length its west elevation runs a shorter, shed-roofed appendage with a long entrance porch at its center and small cloakrooms at both ends. The entrance porch is reached by stairs leading to a centered entrance door to the added classroom. The south and east exterior walls have regularly spaced, symmetrical single windows except for a pair of banked windows centered on the long east wall. This classroom addition has a metal stove brick chimney flush with the ceiling and suspended from the ceiling rafters with cast iron hangers. All roof eaves are open with exposed rafter tails.

Briefly describe any outbuildings or secondary resources (such as barns, sheds, dam and mill pond, storage tanks, scales, railroad spurs, etc.), including their condition and their estimated construction dates.

Based upon oral history interviews with former students, Rocky Branch School was originally surrounded by open lawn and exposed ground worn by students’ outdoor games. The schoolhouse is now surrounded by paved parking installed by the church, except for a small section of lawn enclosed by a modern picket fence. Within this picket fence is an historic marker placed by the Civil Rights in Education Heritage Trail in South Central Virginia, and the school’s original historic well now covered with a concrete cap. Oral history also documents a former wood-shed structure, behind the school at the edge of the woods, composed of a storage room for coal and wood, and privies at both ends—girls on the north and boys on the south. This structure no longer exists, nor is there any other secondary resources on the original one-acre parcel of school property.
4. Property's History and Significance

In the space below, briefly describe the history of the property, such as significant events, persons, and/or families associated with the property. Please list all sources of information used to research the history of the property. (It is not necessary to attach lengthy articles or family genealogies to this form.)

If the property is important for its architecture, engineering, landscape architecture, or other aspects of design, please include a brief explanation of this aspect.

In DHR's survey of Dinwiddie County, completed in 2010 by 3north Architects, Rocky Branch School is noted as being first established in 1911 at nearby Ocran Methodist Church by that community's Black residents. This one-room school was later moved two miles to a parcel adjacent to Rocky Branch Baptist Church. After its relocation, a second classroom, two cloakrooms, and an entrance porch were added and appear in a c.1930's photograph. The relocation probably occurred soon after John Walker conveyed in 1913 the one-acre parcel, where Rocky Branch School is now located, to the Trustees of Namozine School District. The school closed in 1963 and was purchased that year by Rocky Branch Baptist Church. It served various support functions for the church since 1963 but is now abandoned.

Rocky Branch School originally held grades one through three in 1913 classroom addition and grades four through seven in the original 1911 classroom. Reading, writing and arithmetic were taught in grades one through seven. Each day school began with a short devotion. Students were also required to recite Bible verses and sing patriotic and gospel songs daily, as well as submitting to a health and cleanliness check.

For many years, transportation was not provided to the school's students, resulting in many boys and girls walking four or five miles to school each day. Despite this fact, attendance was always high, and a large percentage of the school's students continued their education through high school and college.

The school's heating system consisted of a large potbellied stove in the room for grades one through three and a long cast iron stove for grades four through seven. The boys from the sixth and seventh grade classes had the responsibility of keeping the wood dry by stacking it under the school and/or in the fuel shed out back.

When transportation was finally provided for students, often they would arrive at school before the teachers. The students would have to climb through the windows to enter the schoolhouse because only the teachers had keys. In the winter, students would make the fire in the stoves before the teachers arrived. Often, students had to huddle around the stove to keep warm during their lessons. Sometimes the teachers would bring soup for the students so they could have a warm meal at lunch.

The school's wooden floors were cleaned with used motor oil to help settle the dust from outside. Water was supplied by a deep well pump located in front of the school. The outhouses were in the rear of the school, separated for males and females.

The school closed in 1963, but the building still stands as a symbol of education for all its former students.
5. Property Ownership  (Check as many categories as apply):

Private:  X  Public\Local  ____  Public\State  ____  Public\Federal  ____

Current Legal Owner(s) of the Property (If the property has more than one owner, please list each below or on an additional sheet.)

name/title:  See Attached Sheet
organization:  Rocky Branch Baptist Church
street & number:  __________________________
city or town:  __________________________ state:  __________ zip code:  __________
e-mail:  __________________________ telephone:  __________________________

Legal Owner's Signature:  [Signature]  Date:  8/15/2022

**Signature required for processing all applications.**

In the event of corporate ownership you must provide the name and title of the appropriate contact person.

Contact person:  __________________________
Daytime Telephone:  __________________________

Applicant Information (Individual completing form if other than legal owner of property)

name/title:  __________________________
organization:  __________________________
street & number:  __________________________
city or town:  __________________________ state:  __________ zip code:  __________
e-mail:  __________________________ telephone:  __________________________

6. Notification

In some circumstances, it may be necessary for DHR to confer with or notify local officials of proposed listings of properties within their jurisdiction. In the following space, please provide the contact information for the local County Administrator, City Manager, and/or Town Manager

name/title:  W. Kevin Massengill/County Administrator
locality:  Dinwiddie County
street & number:  P.O. Drawer 70; 14010 Boydton Plank Rd
city or town:  Dinwiddie  state:  VA  zip code:  23841
telephone:  (804) 469-4500
Current Legal Owner(s) of the Property
MEMBERS OF THE ROCKY BRANCH BAPTIST CHURCH TRUSTEE MINISTRY

1. Raymond Wrenn, Chair
   11301 Taylor Landing Way
   Chesterfield, VA 23838
   rayLwrenn1@aol.com
   804-677-6740

2. Irene Bethune, Vice Chair
   2701 Tinstree Drive
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   1817 East Boulevard
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   5110 Olgers Road
   Sutherland, VA 23885
   erbrown1@hotmail.com
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5. Donald Williams, Chaplain
   1530 Bluewater Terrace
   Chesterfield, VA 23836
   dj1work@aol.com
   804-837-6377

6. Thomas Burkhalter, Sr.
   5930 Woodpecker Road
   Chesterfield, VA 23838
   Coach4life@yahoo.com
   804-892-5569

7. Dale Moore
   18507 Rollingside Drive
   South Chesterfield, VA 23834
   Ddmoe262@comcast.net
   804-943-7964

8. Nathaniel Pride, Sr.
   22209 Butterwood Road
   North Dinwiddie, VA 23803
   nathanielpride1@gmail.com
   804-479-0292

Department of Historic Resources
8/15/2022
Rocky Branch School
Dinwiddie County, Sutherland Quad
DHR ID: 026-5114
NORTH CLASSROOM FACING EAST

NORTH CLASSROOM FACING SOUTH

SOUTH CLASSROOM FACING SOUTH

ORIGINAL BLACKBOARD & TRAY IN SOUTH CLASSROOM (WITH MODERN PAINT)

ORIGINAL CAST IRON STOVE STORED IN NORTH CLOAK ROOM