

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 PropertyHistoric name: Hickory Hill SchoolOther names/site number: Chesterfield County Training School, Hickory Hill High School, Hickory Hill Elementary School, Hickory Hill Community Center, DHR ID 127-0434Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

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

2. LocationStreet & number: 3000 East Belt BoulevardCity or town: Richmond State: VA County: Independent CityNot For Publication: N/A Vicinity: N/A**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 X B X C D

Signature of certifying official/Title:

Date

Virginia Department of Historic Resources

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official:

Date

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.)

RECREATION AND CULTURE: auditorium

RECREATION AND CULTURE: sports facility

RECREATION AND CULTURE: outdoor recreation

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS: Colonial Revival

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: BRICK; METAL

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 Hickory Hill School is located in the Southside area of the City of Richmond at the intersection of Belt Boulevard and Terminal Avenue. The historic school building sits on a knoll within a 6.98-acre parcel that contains open grounds, a walking trail, and sports fields and courts. The property is surrounded by wooded areas to the west and residential development to the north and east. The 1938 school sits on the same site as the earlier 1915 Hickory Hill Elementary School, as well as the 1925 Hickory Hill Rosenwald School buildings, both of which have been demolished. The 1938 Hickory Hill School is a one-story, nine-bay, Colonial Revival-style brick school with additions dating to 1958, 1961, and 1963. The school features symmetrical fenestration with a projecting central entrance bay and details such as Flemish bond brickwork, brick quoins, jack arches with keystones, a hipped metal roof, and a wood box cornice. The building served as the first brick school for African American students in Chesterfield County during the segregation era. It was architect-designed and built to the State Department of Education's specifications, embodying the formality, symmetry, and functionality of other state-designed schools of the period.

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The school was enlarged in 1958, 1961, and 1963. The first one-story addition to the southwest corner of the main block contained four classrooms, a library, and cafeteria. This addition marked a significant departure from the traditional Colonial Revival aesthetic of the 1938 building and introduced a more modern approach with a focus on horizontality and the use of stacked brick veneer walls, cylindrical porch posts, and a void of windows on the façade. The 1961 and 1963 classroom additions extend west from the 1938 block and 1958 addition and are less modern in decorative treatment, featuring five-course common bond brick, stone or cast sills, and wide window blocks. All additions are covered by flat roofs with metal coping. A c. 1998 rehabilitation of the entire school and overall systems updates resulted in the addition of a covered entryway on the south side of the addition block, interior modifications to the 1958 addition's lobby, and the replacement of window sash throughout the additions.

Overall, the building remains in good condition with limited deterioration and retains its architectural integrity associated with its period of significance. In the 1950s and 1960s, two accessory buildings were constructed on the property to serve the expanded needs of the school, but those buildings have since been demolished. The property has no additional contributing or noncontributing resources. The historic school is on a knoll, set apart from later city developments by acres of tended school grounds retains its integrity of setting. The property has integrity of location, setting, design, workmanship, materials, feeling, and association.

Narrative Description

Setting

The Hickory Hill School is in the Southside area of the City of Richmond at the intersection of Belt Boulevard and Terminal Avenue in a mixed-use area containing residential, communal, and industrial properties. The historic school building sits on a slight knoll within a 6.98-acre parcel that is wooded along the perimeter on north, west, and south sides and facing E. Belt Boulevard on the east side. A dense wooded area west of the school provides a buffer between the grounds and the CSX railroad tracks. The Serene Wildlife Sanctuary is located on the other side of the tracks. Grassy fields immediately surround the school on all sides other than the east, where a U-shaped front driveway leads from E Belt Boulevard to the school's entrance and is separated from the main road by a landscaped median with sidewalk. A large, paved parking lot sits southeast of the main school building and its attached east addition. In addition to the school, the site includes a walking/fitness trail, playground equipment, basketball court, softball/soccer field, and archery apparatus. None of the auxiliary recreational areas date to the period of significance of the school.

Exterior

The building comprises four one-story brick sections, including the 1938 school, 1958 addition, 1961 addition, and 1963 addition. The 1938 school building is distinguished as its own section and retains its exterior cladding with a continuous brick foundation in a pattern of three stretcher bond rows to one Flemish with soldier brick belt course on all elevations. The corners feature

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brick quoins. The building is covered by a moderately pitched, hipped roof with a central gable projection and a wood box cornice sheathed in replacement standing-seam metal.

The primary central entrance bay projects slightly with a front gable roofline and has a recessed central entry door. The double-leaf, metal entrance doors are topped by a sixteen-light, wood-frame transom. The door opening is flanked by a pedimented, wood surround with paneled pilasters and a denticulated cornice. The entrance bay contains one fixed twelve-light wood window on either side of the recessed entrance; these windows feature brick jack arches with keystones and concrete sills.

The identical sections extending on either side of the entrance bay have a continuation of the alternating brick bond, belt course, box cornice, and quoins as on the entrance bay. The original fenestration remains, with fixed twelve-light wood windows with a central triple bank flanked on either side by a single window. The windows on the wings match those of the entrance bay with their concrete sills, but do not have jack arches or keystones.

The north and south wings extend west from the central section of the 1938 building, forming a U shape with the façade at the base of the layout. The wings continue the same decorative treatment as the façade and retain identical fenestration patterns on north and south elevations, respectively, with an off-centered block of five fixed twelve-light windows with a large, fixed four-light metal replacement window on the west side of the block. On the north wing's north elevation, two louvered vents remain below the belt course, with one topped by a jack arch, and a section of wall beneath the replacement window has been infilled with brick in a running bond pattern. A chimney of the same alternating brick pattern extends from the inner south roof slope of the north wing. The unfinished basement is accessed by an enclosed staircase on the north wing.

The west elevation of the 1938 building has three parts: the north wing, central section, and south wing. The north wing's west elevation has no windows, but a pair of double metal doors near the south corner. A hipped roof portico tops the doors and is supported by one wood knee brace at each corner. A set of ten concrete steps with tubular metal railings extends from the entry landing to the ground. The central section of the west elevation forms the base of the "U" layout and contains five windows with a centered triple block of wood fixed twelve-light windows with a single wood fixed twelve-light window on each of its sides. The south wing sits on the other side of the central section and matches the north wing apart from its gable roof and end that was extended to connect the original building to the 1958 addition.

A one-story, hipped addition extends off the western portion of the southwest elevation and a one-story, gabled addition extends from the southern portion of the same elevation. They are clad in the same material as the core of the building. Multiple one-story additions extend from the southwest elevation and continue northeast and southwest. They are covered by a flat roof with metal coping and clad with a brick veneer laid in a five-to-one, common bond. Multiple entrances are located on the additions filled with a single- or double-leaf metal doors. A partial-width, one story porch is located on the northeast elevation of the addition, and it is covered a

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flat roof supported by metal posts. A gabled entryway is located on the southeast elevation, and it is supported by squared, brick posts.

The site includes the location of three previously known school structures, the four-classroom 1915 Hickory Hill School and the 1925 Rosenwald schoolhouse to the north of the 1938 building, and the two-room shop building to the west of the 1938 building.

Interior

The interior arrangement of the 1938 school block consists of a central entry with one classroom on either side, and past the entry hall, a subdividable multi-purpose room, large assembly room with stage, cafeteria, and another classroom stretching the full width of the rear of the building. A 21st century restoration and systems upgrade left original features intact throughout the 1938 block, including hardwood floors, chair rail, crown and baseboard molding, door and window surrounds, wood doors and windows, and closet doors and hardware. Plaster walls, ceilings, and wood flooring were retained, but refinished. Systems were updated and piping is suspended from ceilings throughout, and modern box lights have been installed in ceilings, but its historic character-defining spaces and features remain.

The entrance hall is accessed through double doors from the front stoop, and once in the central hall, one large room sits on either side. The two north and south rooms are equal in size and bear the same fenestration pattern of one window, a bank of three windows, followed by another single window, all evenly spaced apart. The north room retains a square cutout in the wall that could have been filled with glass or left open, had it been an administrative office and/or library. It is accessed from the central hall after the wall cutout or from a hallway beside the stage; both doors are split-panel with solid wood on the lower half and three-light glazing on the upper. The south classroom retains its built-in closets along the north wall. There are five separate bureaus adjoining one another: the west end closet has double 10-light doors atop two base cabinets and retains its beadboard wall veneer at the back. The next three closets retain solid wood two-panel double doors and no base cabinets. The east-end closet is slightly larger and is accessed by a single wood-panel door.

The rooms along the west side of the building include, from south to north: a multi-purpose room/classroom with folding partition wall separating it from the auditorium with stage. An open, subdividable classroom retains its row of five 12-light fixed wood sash windows and all decorative finishes. The auditorium space retains its one-three-one window arrangement along the west wall and its central stage with decorative proscenium with small hallways on either side. To the east of the stage, a small hallway provides access to another classroom. West of the stage provides access to the rear building exit doors and another entry to the northernmost classroom. The open archways from the entry hall to auditorium and those next to the stage match the proscenium in form.

A short hallway dating to the 1958 construction connects the rear of the 1938 block to the later additions. The 1958 addition was the largest and most prominent of the later construction, and included four classrooms, a library, and modern cafeteria. The south side entry vestibule area

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appears to have been opened and the orientation of the reception desk faces north toward the 1938 school. The location of the classrooms at the front of the addition, as well as the cafeteria remains the same. The classrooms are located off the primary east entrance doors, on the south side of the hallway. Three separate classroom spaces remain. The cafeteria is located beyond the classrooms and reception vestibule and remains in its original location. Beyond the reception desk, two window cutouts remain in the hallway walls, one with its original wood six-light casement sash and the other with what appears to be a metal replacement window. The 1958 addition retains its oversized wall tile wainscoting in a stacked block pattern just over halfway up all the hallway walls, which differentiates that section from the later additions. The walls appear to be a mixture of original plaster and drywall replacement and drop ceilings have been added throughout. The metal exterior doors appear to be original, as do the interior wood panel doors and hardware.

The 1961 addition is located to the rear of the 1938 school and attached to it and the 1958 addition by hallways. It originally contained four classrooms, one of which has now been subdivided into two locker rooms, but the other three remain classrooms accessed by one of the two hallways. To access the two locker rooms and other classroom directly behind the 1938 block, a long hallway steps down from the 1958 addition and provides access. That hallway is directly attached to part of the original rear wall of the 1938 school. The 1963 addition sits at the westernmost end of the block and originally contained two classrooms, which now serve as multi-use spaces. The rooms in the 1961 and 1963 additions have walls of concrete block and plaster, and do not have tile wainscoting, differentiating the spaces from the 1958 addition.

Interior modifications that postdate the desegregation of the school do not contribute to the significance of the building as a school. Most of the modifications date to c. 1998 when the building was converted for use as an updated community center. At that time, work on the 1938 block was primarily restorative in nature with only upgrades in systems and refinishing of floors and plaster walls. Changes to the additions include the opening of walls and addition of curved decorative elements in the southside reception lobby, installation of fixed metal windows throughout, the addition of drop acoustical tile ceilings, upgraded systems, and minimal interior wall changes. The historic circulation patterns and corridor configuration, classroom walls, and historic appearance remain the same except for the entrance space.

Integrity Analysis

Hickory Hill School retains its historic integrity. The historic floorplan of the core and later additions are largely intact, and most interior features and decorative elements have been retained. The exterior of the 1938 building retains its historic materials, features, and decorative elements highlighting the Colonial Revival design. Most historic windows have been retained. Additionally, the fenestration pattern appears unchanged and all the window features (sills, opening size, jack arches) are intact. The 1938 block's layout remains intact, as does its connection to the later additions. The 1958 addition has had the most changes; on the south side with a new exterior portico entry and replacement windows on all elevations and on the interior, the opening of reception space and addition of curved ceiling and desk in the south entry hall – changes that were undertaken in 1998 by the City of Richmond. The layout, connections, and

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circulation patterns remain primarily intact throughout all additions. The overall building reads as it would have during the school's period of significance. Therefore, Hickory Hill School retains integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. Additionally, the integrity of setting and location are seen in the large, elevated open parcel, with the original acreage unchanged since the school's 1938 construction. Multiple new recreational areas and apparatuses have been added to the site but are not considered permanent features and do not impact the overall setting. The main block and additions tell the story of the school's development. The property retains integrity of feeling and association as an evolved state-funded-and-designed school for African Americans in Chesterfield County during the era of twentieth century racial segregation.

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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.)

EDUCATION

ETHNIC HERITAGE: BLACK

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1938-1969

1938-1958

Significant Dates

1938

1948

1958

1961

1963

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Spencer, James Preston

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Long, Raymond V., School Architect, State Department of Education

Atkinson, J.W., builder

Norman and Dixon, Architects

Nuckols, T.E., builder

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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.)

The Hickory Hill School was built in 1938 for African American students during the period of racial segregation in Chesterfield County, Virginia. The history of the school provides insight into the extraordinary efforts undertaken by African American families, community members, and educators to provide a quality education for their youths in the face of great adversity.

The Hickory Hill School, also known as Hickory Hill High School and Hickory Hill Elementary School, is a one-story, brick, four classroom and auditorium building with multiple additions, built in 1938. The school was Chesterfield County's first brick school for African Americans and has survived with little exterior alterations. Construction of the school began in 1938, with primary contributions by the local African American community and Chesterfield County. The school provided educational opportunities for generations of African American students within the area as the county's only training school. Over time, the building grew to include three brick additions: a 1958 wing with four classrooms, library, and modern cafeteria; a 1961 two-classroom wing; and a 1963 two-classroom wing, all of which remain. Two earlier schools and a shop building no longer remain on the site: a 1915 frame school and the 1925 Rosenwald School and shop building. From 1915, with the construction of the earliest school building, through the closure of the 1938-1969 school, these resources served the African American community during the Jim Crow era. The remaining school conveys its association with rural, early 20th century segregated educational facilities in Virginia.

The Hickory Hill School is significant as it illustrates the development of education and school construction for African American youth in Chesterfield County following the 1870 establishment of the public school system through the early and mid-twentieth century consolidation and desegregation movements. It was the first brick Colonial Revival school designated for African American students in Chesterfield County and signaled the next phase in the fight for equalization of education administration and facilities. Raymond V. Long designed the Hickory Hill School in his capacity as School Architect for the State Department of Education and the Richmond contracting firm of J.W. Atkinson led the construction of the building, which was completed in March of 1938. The expansion of Hickory Hill School in 1958, 1961, and 1963 by Norman and Dixon Architects were significant events, underscoring its importance for African American students in Chesterfield County.

The Hickory Hill School is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under **Criterion A** in the areas of **Education** and **Ethnic Heritage: Black** and **Criterion C** in the area of **Architecture** with a period of significance of 1938 to 1969, beginning with the original construction of the school and ending with its closure following the racial desegregation of schools in Chesterfield County and anticipating the annexation of the property into the City of Richmond in 1970. The Hickory Hill School is also eligible under **Criterion B** in the areas of **Education** and **Ethnic Heritage: Black** for its

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association with local Civil Rights advocate and leader in education, **James Preston Spencer**. The period of significance under Criterion B spans from 1938 to 1958, encompassing Spencer's tenure as community Civil Rights leader and Principal of Hickory Hill School. Significant dates include the completion of the 1938 building and 1958, 1961, and 1963 additions, as well as the 1948 ruling of the landmark federal case, *Freeman et al. v. County School Board of Chesterfield County et al.*

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

The Hickory Hill School, historically known as the County Training School at Hickory Hill and, later, Hickory Hill High School, is a brick, four classroom and auditorium, one-story building with multiple additions, first completed in 1938. The school was Chesterfield County's first brick school for African Americans and has survived with little exterior alterations. Construction of the school began in 1938, with primary contributions by the local African American community and Chesterfield County. The school provided educational opportunities for generations of African American students within the area. Over time, the school campus grew to include three brick additions: a 1958 wing with four classrooms, library, and modern cafeteria; a 1961 two-classroom wing; and a 1963 two-classroom wing, all of which remain. Two earlier schools and a shop building no longer remain on the site: a 1915 frame school and the 1925 Rosenwald School and shop building. From 1915, with the construction of the earliest school building, through the closing of the 1938-1969 school, these resources served the African American community during the Jim Crow era of segregation. The school conveys its association with rural, early 20th century segregated educational facilities in Virginia and provides a tangible reminder of the sacrifice, struggle, and success of the African American residents of Chesterfield County in obtaining a quality education for their youth. The history of Hickory Hill School is a story of the monumental devotion that African American families and educators had for the education of their children in the state's segregated era.

As early as 1869, a school for African American youth has stood at or near the site of the 1938 Hickory Hill School. A series of schools preceded the latest Hickory Hill, including a 1915 frame building and a 1925 Rosenwald school, and was one of many that served the expansive 480-square-mile county during the segregation era, but was the first brick school to be constructed for African Americans in the county during the Equalization period starting in the 1930s. In 1924, the county's only training school moved from the Virginia Normal and Industrial Institute (now known as Virginia State University) to Hickory Hill and offered high-school level work for African American children in Chesterfield County. As need and demand increased, as did the need for additional space, thus the Rosenwald fund contributed to the construction of a new building. Enrollment and curriculum continued to expand, and in 1938, the Colonial Revival style brick building opened.

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Throughout the early to mid-twentieth century, local advocates and educators including Hickory Hill School principal, James P. Spencer, were at the forefront of pay equalization for African American teachers in Chesterfield County. In 1946, three Hickory Hill teachers and the NAACP took their fight to the United States District Court, challenging the County's discriminatory policies, and won the landmark case with a judgment that set precedence for the rest of the country. The case was of state and federal importance and was one steppingstone in the fight to eliminate racial discrimination in the payment of schoolteachers and principals.

Separate but Equal Public Education in Virginia and Chesterfield County

The records of the federal Freedmen's Bureau indicate that there was a school for African-American students in Chesterfield County named Hickory Hill as far back as 1869.¹ The Freedmen Bureau's records indicate that the funding for the teacher was not provided by the county but rather by the New York Friends (also known as Quakers).² Even before the Civil War, the Friends had a long history of educating African American children, establishing Virginia's first school for African American children in Henrico County in 1784.³ The New York Friends provided teachers for as many as five schools for African American children in Chesterfield County in 1869.⁴

The Freedmen's Bureau was formed in 1865 and charged with aiding the recently freed African Americans, including helping with their education. Abraham Lincoln appointed the very capable Union Army General Oliver O. Howard as commissioner of the Freedmen's Bureau. The Bureau was only authorized to provide building supplies, transport teachers to schools, and make rent payments to the societies operating schools. Records indicate that the free-African American citizens themselves contributed 35% of the amount expended for schools under the direction of the Freedmen's Bureau.⁵

From regular reports to General Howard and his assistants at the Freedmen's Bureau, the sole teacher at the Hickory Hill School in Chesterfield County in 1869 and 1870 was a African American woman named Ann Marie Williams (nee Dyer). Williams taught as many as ninety African American students, forty male and fifty female, none of whom were free before the Civil War. To accommodate that many students, the school had classes during the day and nighttime. The monthly reports indicate that the school was owned by African American citizens.⁶ It is a testament to the importance that the newly freed African American citizens placed upon

¹ Bernard R. Anderson, *A History of Chesterfield County Virginia's Hickory Hill School - A 100-Year Legacy*, unpublished manuscript, 2023, p. 1.

² National Museum of African-American History, *Freedmen's Bureau Records*, M1053, January 1-August 24, 1870.

³ Jay Worrall, Jr., *The Friendly Virginians* (Athens, GA: Iberian Publishing Company, 1994) 252.

⁴ *Freedmen's Bureau Records*, National Archives and Records Administration, Publication Number M1053, Roll 11.

⁵ Aaron Jason Butler, "A Union of Church and State: The Freedmen's Bureau and the education of African-Americans in Virginia from 1865-1871," Dissertations, Theses, and Masters Projects, *William and Mary*, Paper 1539618383, 2013, pgs. 40-43, 88-90.

⁶ *Freedmen's Bureau Records*, National Archives and Records Administration, Number M1053, Rolls 11, 15, 17 and 18.

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education that they provided the Hickory Hill School building in 1869, a period when the south's economy was devastated from the recent war.

Virginia's Public School System was instituted in 1870. The Hickory Hill School was likely among the thirteen African American public schools that the Chesterfield County School Board reported to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction for that year.⁷ By November 22, 1870, the Chesterfield County School Board recorded that thirty-one teachers had been licensed for the school year for "White Schools," while seventeen teachers had been licensed for "Colored Schools." The records do not state that any of the teachers funded by the New York Friends were licensed to continue teaching by the Chesterfield School Board.⁸

The 1869 Hickory Hill School was likely a one-room schoolhouse. There are early undated photographs of unidentified one-room schoolhouses in Chesterfield County for African American children that were taken during a trip of inspection by J.D. Eggleston and Superintendent Owens.⁹ The photographs offer an understanding of the rough facilities that were available in Chesterfield County for African American children at that time. Reports in the press indicate that the Hickory Hill School continued to be taught by a single teacher into the 1890s: "The Manchester District Shool [sic] Board of Chesterfield met yesterday and re-elected all the old teachers for the ensuing scholastic year, with the exception of the ... teacher of the colored school at Hickory Hill."¹⁰

While Virginia's public schools had been racially segregated from the outset, the Virginia Constitution of 1902 was the state's first constitution to legally mandate segregation, declaring that "White and colored children shall not be taught in the same school."¹¹ By the early 20th century, the Commonwealth of Virginia had embarked on an era of educational reform with the passage of the 1906 Mann High School Act, among others, however, most African American schools didn't receive the benefits afforded by these legal statutes as few high schools existed. As such, African American Virginians had to continue working together within their communities to create better educational opportunities for their youth, often donating land and money, and fundraising to fill the void left by local and state government funding. During this time, the School Improvement League and the Virginia Teachers Association members supported expanded educational opportunities and facilities for African American students and teachers. When the two advocacy groups joined the newly formed Negro Organization Society in 1912, the larger union endeavored to improve all aspects of life for African American Virginians with the motto of "Better Schools, Better Health, Better Homes, Better Farms."¹² In the area of

⁷ Anderson, *A History of Chesterfield County Virginia's Hickory Hill School*, p. 1.

⁸ "Chesterfield County School Board Minutes: 1870," The University of Virginia, 2023, <https://ead.lib.virginia.edu/vivaxtf/view?docId=lva/vi04279.xml>.

⁹ Jackson Davis, "Jackson Davis Collection of African American Photographs," Special Collections, University of Virginia Library.

¹⁰ "Teachers Elected," *Richmond Dispatch*, September 11, 1890, p. 1.

¹¹ "1902 Constitution of Virginia," Library of Virginia, 2023, <https://edu.lva.virginia.gov/oc/stc/entries/voting-requirements-of-the-constitution-of-virginia-1902>.

¹² Encyclopedia Virginia, "Negro Organization Society," <https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/negro-organization-society/>.

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education, the organization successfully garnered private donations throughout the state to increase the amount of money available for the improvement of African American education.

In 1910, there was an estimated ten to one per capita wealth gap between the White and African American residents of Virginia.¹³ In spite of this gross disparity in wealth, African American families were required to contribute substantially more toward funding schools for their children. Highly motivated education leagues were established in the African American community to raise funds for purchasing land for schools and to fund school building and improvements. While the state provided seemingly adequate support for White public schools, there was little given to African American students beyond the elementary school level. Without advanced education for even the teachers, students were offered limited opportunities for growth. Educational reform frequently meant extending and improving public secondary education, however, African American students rarely received such improvements, as there were so few high schools.

20th Century Social Reform and Improvements to African American Education in rural Virginia

Multiple philanthropic foundations provided resources for rural southern communities, and under the charge of progressing and improving those communities, supplemented state funds designated for African American education. Organizations and funds, such as the Southern Education Board and the General Education Board, targeted broad educational improvement for African American and White schools, whereas others such as the John F. Slater Fund, Anna T. Jeanes' Negro Rural School Fund, and, later, the Julius Rosenwald Fund exclusively directed their efforts toward African American education. The Slater Fund aimed to develop public secondary education for African American students and established "county training schools" that incorporated an industrial and vocational curriculum modeled by Booker T. Washington at the Hampton Normal and Tuskegee institutes. By 1915, there were five county training schools throughout the Commonwealth, located in Alleghany, Caroline, Nottoway, Roanoke, and York counties.¹⁴ By the 1917-1918 school term, there were seventeen African American high schools throughout rural Virginia, six of which were county training schools. Out of the seventeen schools, only four provided a full four-year program.¹⁵

Growth in Chesterfield County and School Improvements

In 1915, Chesterfield County was a few years away from seeing its first county training school, however, African American residents in the Manchester area were on the way to realizing their goal of establishing a new primary school. In 1914, African American patrons of the African American Educational League Association raised funds to purchase and donate land for a new

¹³ Ellora Derenoncourt, Chi Hyun Kim, Moritz Kuhn, Moritz Schularick, "Wealth of Two Nations: The U.S. Racial Wealth Gap, 1860–2020," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Volume 139, Issue 2, May 2024, pgs. 48-49, <https://doi.org/10.1093/qje/qjad044>.

¹⁴ J.L. Blair Buck, *The Development of Public Schools in Virginia, 1607-1952* (Richmond: State Board of Education, 1952) 205.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 228-29.

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schoolhouse at Hickory Hill. The League deeded the 1 ½-acre site to the School Board of Manchester District on April 15, 1915. At that time, Henry Banks, James M. Brown, and Matthew R. Page were named as Trustees of the League.¹⁶ The 1910 plat of the parcel, drawn by County Surveyor W. W. LaPrade described the donated property as “lots number thirty-one and number fifty in the ‘Sub-division of Blunt's Estate,’” near the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad.¹⁷ In 1915, the School Board constructed the four-room frame Hickory Hill School for elementary students on the land gifted by the League.

A photograph of the Hickory Hill School was included in the 1919 Education Commission's Report to the Assembly of Virginia and described as a “splendid type of four-room rural school.” It was displayed as one of the few glimmers of success in improving the education of rural African American youth in the Commonwealth. The report highlighted the great need to generally improve education for African American students, particularly in the rural counties of the state where only .5% of the enrolled African American students were taking classes at the secondary level. On average, the schools for African American children were open only six months per year. The 1919 report noted that the average pay for African American teachers was only \$30 per month and that, “unskilled labor receives better pay than colored teachers.” The report recommended increasing teacher pay and providing more and better schools for African Americans.¹⁸ In 1919, the Virginia Public Schools Education Commission reported that African American people through their school leagues raised \$150,000 annually for various school improvements.¹⁹

An article in the November 26, 1921, edition of the *Richmond Planet* heralded a rally held by the Hickory Hill School Improvement League, which was raising funds to improve educational conditions at the school. Contributors (highlighted as not yet having pupils in the school) included Henry Banks, Matthew Page, and James Brown.²⁰ These three men were devoted volunteers and previously signed the 1915 land deed that transferred land to the Manchester School District for the Hickory Hill School site. Matthew R. Page served as President of the Hickory Hill School Improvement League and was a prominent member of the African American community, working as an agent for the North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company. Page lived in Chesterfield County and commuted to his office in the Southern Aid Society Building at 214 East Clay Street in Richmond's Jackson Ward community.²¹

In March of 1923, Janet P. Crawley, principal of Hickory Hill School, proposed that the Chesterfield County School Board extend the school year for students from seven to nine months, with the school patrons paying for one additional month and the school board paying for another. The school board agreed to pay for one additional month of schooling with the patrons

¹⁶ Chesterfield County, Virginia, Deed Book 141: 102-03, 1915, Chesterfield County Clerk's Office.

¹⁷ Chesterfield County, Virginia, Plat Book 3: 32, 1910, Chesterfield County Clerk's Office.

¹⁸ “Virginia Public Schools Education Commission's Report to the Assembly of Virginia,” 1919, pp. 199-210, Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/e20000259>.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 209.

²⁰ “Hickory Hill School Improvement League Holds Rally,” *Richmond Planet*, November 26, 1921, p. 1.

²¹ *Hill's Richmond City Directory* (Richmond, VA: Hill City Directory Co., 1938) 793.

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matching the funding for an additional month.²² While the Chesterfield County School Board minutes do not record requiring matching funds from the patrons of White schools, it was standard practice to require matching funds for school improvements from the African American patrons.

On May 21, 1924, the Chesterfield County School Board passed a resolution to move the Chesterfield County Training School from the Virginia Normal and Industrial Institute (now known as Virginia State University) to Hickory Hill.²³ County training schools offered the only high-school level curriculum for African-American children in the non-city schools of Virginia and typically provided two to four years of courses, including industrial training that would be useful in domestic and agricultural settings. A simple course in teacher training typically would have been offered in county training schools' highest grade.²⁴

Between 1912 and 1932, the Julius Rosenwald Foundation contributed to the funding of 382 schools for African American children in rural communities in Virginia, and included supplemental funding for the construction, expansion, and upgrading of county training schools. The fund was established by Julius Rosenwald, President of the Sears, Roebuck and Company, who collaborated with Booker T. Washington in the monumental effort to improve school facilities for impoverished African Americans in rural southern counties. Grants were paid after matching funds were contributed by the community and established standards of safety and sanitation were mandated. Architectural designs for the schools were provided, along with plans for every aspect of the school's physical development to ensure that high standards were realized. The Rosenwald school program was an amazing success, helping to produce 5,357 new educational facilities throughout the south.²⁵

With the move of the training school to the Hickory Hill School site, the facilities needed expansion. On July 30, 1924, the Chesterfield County School Board approved the construction of a new Rosenwald-funded school and also a shop building at Hickory Hill. The Rosenwald Fund provided \$700 for the new structure and the African American community raised \$500 for the school. Additionally, the African American community was required to loan the school board between \$1,000 and \$1,200 to finance the school; in contrast, at the same meeting, the school board approved borrowing \$10,000 from a bank to finance the construction of a school for White students.²⁶ The low bid of \$2678 submitted by E. S. Hogue for building the Hickory Hill Rosenwald School was accepted by the Chesterfield County School Board on January 28, 1925; however, since the bid was higher than anticipated, the Hickory Hill School Improvement League was required to increase their loan to the school board to \$1,378.45, along with the community's required donation of \$500. The Rosenwald Fund's contribution of \$700 made the

²² Chesterfield County School Board Minutes, Chesterfield County School Board Records, Chesterfield County Clerk's Office, March 5, 1923.

²³ Chesterfield County School Board Minutes, May 21, 1924.

²⁴ "Virginia Public Schools Education Commission's Report to the Assembly of Virginia," 1919, p. 200, Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/e20000259>.

²⁵ Phyllis McClure, "Rosenwald Schools," in *Encyclopedia Virginia*, December 7, 2020, <https://encyclopediaofvirginia.org/entries/rosenwald-schools/>.

²⁶ Chesterfield County School Board Minutes, July 30, 1924.

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construction of the new school building possible. By May 20, 1925, the board repaid the loan from the African American community.²⁷

The 1925 Hickory Hill School was one of six Rosenwald schools to be constructed in Chesterfield County. In addition to Hickory Hill, the county training schools included Beulah (Skinquarter), Piney Branch (Chester), Union Grove, Kingsland, and Midlothian.²⁸ In addition to the school improvements supported by the Rosenwald Foundation, the Hickory Hill School also benefited from the assistance of the Anna T. Jeanes Foundation. Jeanes was a progressive Quaker from Philadelphia who made it her life's work to support the education of African American students. The Jeanes Fund assisted nearly 300 counties in southern states to employ supervising industrial teachers. In many cases, the Jeanes supervisor became the lead coordinator of education of African American youths in the county.²⁹ Press reports indicate that in 1925, Mrs. Janet Peyton Crawley, a 1911 graduate of Hampton Institute, was appointed the Chesterfield County Jeanes Supervisor after serving as the principal of Hickory Hill School since 1920.³⁰ Evidently Mrs. Crawley's hard work was successful because it was announced in 1927 that the county training school at Hickory Hill would be placed on the state's list of accredited schools.³¹ By 1931, only ten of the one-hundred counties in Virginia had four-year accredited high schools for African American students. At that time, there were three four-year accredited high schools for White students and one (Hickory Hill) for African American students in Chesterfield County.³² The standards for African American education in Virginia were severely lacking. The accreditation of African American schools in the rural counties of Virginia just prior to and during this period required such minimal standards that the primary concern was to provide adequate sanitation so that the school setting was not unhealthy for the children. In 1919, the Virginia Education Commission decried the minimal pay received by the rural teachers at African American schools and pointed to that as one of the difficulties retaining qualified teachers.³³ While the Commission noted the conditions years prior, the environment surrounding African American education remained the same in the 1930s.

In the Archie Richardson Collection of the archives at Virginia State University, a photograph shows what is believed to be the Hickory Hill Rosenwald School on the right of the 1915 Hickory Hill School building. In the same photograph, a small building shown to the left of the 1915 Hickory Hill School is likely the two-room shop building that was constructed at the same

²⁷ Chesterfield County School Board Minutes, January 28, 1925, and May 20, 1925.

²⁸ Bernard R. Anderson, "Rosenwald schools in Chesterfield County, Virginia: an effort to improve facilities for African-Americans in the early twentieth century," *Messenger of the Chesterfield County Historical Society of Virginia*, January, 2014, pgs. 3-5.

²⁹ "Virginia Public Schools Education Commission's Report to the Assembly of Virginia," 1919, page 207, Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/e20000259>. The Jeanes funds in Virginia were administered by Charlottesville educator, Dr. James H. Dillard.

³⁰ "Chesterfield County Schools Made Splendid Record," *Richmond Planet*, April 25, 1925, p. 1.

³¹ Chesterfield County School Board Minutes, December 20, 1927.

³² Josephus Simpson, "One-twelfth of Virginia's high schools available for colored students, although negro population one-fourth of total," *Norfolk New Journal and Guide*, October 8, 1932.

³³ "Virginia Public Schools Education Commission's Report to the Assembly of Virginia," 1919, p. 42-45, Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/e20000259>.

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time as the Rosenwald school building. In the photograph, the Hickory Hill Rosenwald School faces south for the natural lighting recommended by the Rosenwald program guidelines.³⁴ The nearby Midlothian Rosenwald School, built a year later, appears to have a similar design, and a photograph of the school offers an idea of what the Hickory Hill Rosenwald School could have looked like from the front.³⁵

A problem that plagued the Hickory Hill Rosenwald School was the ongoing lack of transportation of African American students to the school. Chesterfield County was around 480 square miles in size, and it was beyond the means of many families to provide transportation to the school. Children in the far reaches of the county who had no transportation to the school were denied a high school level education. Repeated requests for bus service were often denied, or else patrons were responsible for partially funding the transportation. In October 1923, the president of the Midlothian School Improvement League requested help for transporting “advanced scholars” from Midlothian and Hallsboro to the Hickory Hill Rosenwald School, as much as twenty miles. The Chesterfield School Board denied this request. Even into the late 1930s, patrons continued to request bus service to Hickory Hill from Midlothian, Gravel Hill, Mt. Nebo, and Warrick Road, “... just as is done for other communities.” Finally, in January of 1939, due to persistent lobbying, the school board agreed to provide bus transportation to Hickory Hill from these districts; however, into the 1940s and 1950s, the one bus provided was often cited as being overcrowded. The lack of bus service still was a persistent problem for African American families in the Good Hope, Pleasant View, Winterpock, and Beulah communities. Families from these communities addressed the Chesterfield School Board on three occasions between February 1940 and June 1941, attempting to request bus service. It wasn't until January 1942 that the board offered bus service to Hickory Hill School for African American children from the Good Hope community.³⁶

The shortage of qualified teachers for Hickory Hill School was further compromised by a repressive resolution approved by the Chesterfield County School Board in 1928 that they would not employ married teachers at any of the schools who had not taught for a period of five years previously. The board minutes do not reflect the justification for such a drastic resolution. Following the loss of many teachers and after objections were raised by teachers and their spouses, this decision was reversed soon after it went into effect.³⁷

The Hickory Hill School from 1938-1969

After the Great Depression and further diminishing of resources, the Federal government passed the Economic Recovery and Construction Act in 1932 to invigorate the economy. The goal was

³⁴ “Undated Photograph,” Archie Richardson Collection, Virginia State University Archives; as found in: Anderson, *A History of Chesterfield County, Virginia's Hickory Hill School, A 100 Year Legacy*, p. 5

³⁵ Photograph of Midlothian Rosenwald School, Julius Rosenwald Collection, Special Collections, John Hope and Aurelia F. Franklin Library, Fisk University; as found in: Anderson, *A History of Chesterfield County, Virginia's Hickory Hill School, A 100 Year Legacy*, p. 6.

³⁶ Chesterfield County School Board minutes, October 4, 1923; May 25, 1938; January 25, 1939; February 12, 1940; March 26, 1941; June 25, 1941; January 28, 1942; September 27, 1944; November 20, 1951.

³⁷ Chesterfield County School Board minutes, November 21, 1928.

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to provide financial assistance to local, state, and federal agencies to fund public infrastructure improvement and new construction projects. In 1933, the Public Works Administration (PWA) was created to administer the funding. Throughout the country, the PWA subsidized public projects including construction and/or renovation of schools and other institutional buildings, hospitals, subways, bridges, and dams. From its inception through 1939, the PWA backed 70% of all school construction in the country. While PWA's involvement isn't documented specifically regarding the construction of Hickory Hill, it falls within the period of activity, utilized federal (unnamed) funding, and a state-sponsored design similar to other PWA-sponsored schools.³⁸

During the 1930s, requests were made to the Chesterfield County School Board for an improved high school facility at the Hickory Hill School. In January 1937, Hickory Hill School Principal James P. Spencer made the request for an upgraded and enlarged school building, an increase in teacher salaries, more funding for textbooks and for a nine-month school year, along with a request for additional teacher compensation based upon experience. At the same meeting, a committee of the Chesterfield County Civic Association made "an appeal for the erection of one good modern brick high school, centrally and conveniently located to the masses of Negro pupils and citizens." In May of 1937, resolutions were presented to the school board from the Chesterfield Civic Association, Chesterfield Church Union, and interested school patrons from each magisterial district, requesting improved high school facilities for African American students.³⁹

Plans for a new, modern brick high school at Hickory Hill were soon underway. On March 24, 1937, the Chesterfield School Board directed the Division of School Buildings of the State Department of Education to prepare plans and specifications for a new building at the county training school site. Plans and specifications for a new, brick school building to be erected, as drawn by the Division of School Buildings, State Department of Education and approved by the Division Superintendent, were presented and accepted by the school board on July 6, 1937.⁴⁰ After the architectural plans and specifications were approved, the Chesterfield County School Board swiftly proceeded to put the Hickory Hill School project out for bids. At their meeting on July 28, 1937, they accepted the bid of \$26,864 from the contracting firm of J. W. Atkinson to build the new school.

In 1937, the Hickory Hill Community League raised funds to donate a 2-1/2-acre parcel of land adjacent to the 1915 Hickory Hill School to the Chesterfield County School Board. The land was donated to improve the overall Hickory Hill School site plan in preparation for the new school building; the use of the property was intended as a playground. Matthew R. Page, President of the Hickory Hill Community League, was instrumental in the 1915 donation of the land for the Hickory Hill School.⁴¹ The 2 ½ acres of land adjacent to Hickory Hill had been acquired, likely for this purpose, on March 9, 1935 by Evie Spencer, the wife of Principal James P. Spencer. The

³⁸ Bryan Clark Green, "National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation: Rosenwald Schools in Virginia," Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, August 2004, p. 189.

³⁹ Chesterfield County School Board minutes, January 27, 1937, and May 26, 1937.

⁴⁰ Chesterfield County School Board minutes, March 24, 1937, and July 6, 1937.

⁴¹ "League Presents Property for Hickory Hill School," *Norfolk New Journal and Guide*, August 14, 1937, p. A-12.

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Spencer's deeded the property to the Chesterfield School Board on July 28, 1937.⁴² The deed does not include a plat, but the 2 ½ acres of land had frontage on Bells road and was likely lots 32, 33 and 49 as shown in the 1910 LaPrade plat of Blunt's Estate that was referenced in the 1915 gift of land. The Chesterfield School Board minutes of September 22, 1937 record that "...the deed from Evie and James Spencer conveying to the board 2 ½ acres of land adjoining the County Training school was accepted ... it was ordered that a vote of thanks be extended to the Parent-Teacher Association for this land."⁴³ The value of this property increased because it fronted on Belt Boulevard (Virginia State Route 161), one of the Richmond area's first bypass highways, which was completed around 1934.

Prior to the new school building's opening, local advocates, including Hickory Hill School Principal Spencer and teachers, were at the forefront of pay equalization for African American teachers in Chesterfield County. One of the first salvos was fired on January 27, 1937, when a letter was presented to the Chesterfield County School Board from Principal Spencer requesting an increase in salaries for African American teachers. At the same meeting, a resolution was presented to the board from "a special Committee of Chesterfield County Colored Teachers Association asking for an adjustment in teacher's salaries based upon certification and experience, and for an increase in teacher's salaries ..." At that meeting, the School Board set the pay for African American elementary school teachers at only \$55/month and the pay for African American high-school level teachers at the Hickory Hill County Training School at only \$70/month. By contrast, the school-year salary for White teachers was set much higher at between \$720 and \$975 for elementary grade teachers, and between \$850 and \$1125, based upon experience and advanced education. Since the school year was only eight months for African American elementary schools, this meant that all African American elementary teachers in the County received only \$440 in annual pay, regardless of years of experience or advanced education.

Having received no results from the previous year's efforts, Principal Spencer again made a presentation on January 26, 1938, to the Chesterfield County School Board. Spencer presented resolutions of the Chesterfield County Teachers' Association (representing African American teachers) again requesting that the Board adopt a salary scale for African American teachers based upon training and experience and asking that salaries be increased. He also advocated for a nine-month school term for African American students and for several additional teachers at the Hickory Hill School, as it was set to open that year.

By March 23, 1938, the new brick school building at Hickory Hill was completed and accepted, subject to several minor corrections, and the Chesterfield County School Board insured the new building through the DeJarnette and Paul Insurance Company. This was the first brick school building for African American students in Chesterfield County. The meeting that announced the opening of the new building also recorded that the 1925 Rosenwald school building at Hickory Hill was destroyed by fire on the morning of March 1, 1938. An insurance settlement recorded the full value of the burned Rosenwald school building at \$2,938.88 and the value of the building

⁴² Chesterfield County, Virginia, Deed Book 238: 190, July 28, 1937, Chesterfield County Clerk's Office.

⁴³ Chesterfield County School Board minutes, September 22, 1937.

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contents at \$513. There is no reference to the cause of the fire.⁴⁴ At the May 13, 1938, meeting of the Chesterfield County School Board, a motion was approved to name the new school after its burned predecessor: “[T]he name of the school heretofore known as the County Training School, (sometimes called Chesterfield County High School) was changed to Hickory Hill High School.”⁴⁵

The fight for equalization in African American schools was intensifying during the period of Hickory Hill High School’s construction and continued throughout its operation until 1969 upon full county desegregation in 1970. As early as the 1930s, the Virginia chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) sought to legally expand educational opportunities for African American students, teachers, and administrators and bridge the wide gap between what was offered to each race.

With persistence, determination, and courage, school employees continued their fight for pay parity and their efforts were felt nationwide. A large delegation of African American citizens attended the Chesterfield County School Board meeting on January 31, 1940. Led by Luther P. Jackson, an officer with the Virginia Teachers Association, the group recommended a regular pay scale for African American teachers based upon training and experience [as was approved for the White teachers], an increase in pay for that school year of at least \$150 per teacher, and an extra travel allowance for the Jeanes supervisor. On December 12, 1940, a delegation of citizens representing the Chesterfield County Civic Association and the Chesterfield County Branch of the NAACP presented a petition to the Chesterfield County School Board requesting that immediate action be taken to equalize the African American teachers' salaries with the White teachers' salaries. The petition was filed for future consideration by the school board.⁴⁶ On December 18, 1941, to avoid criticism that the African American and White teachers had different pay scales, the Chesterfield County School Board adopted a new schedule for both African American and White teachers. The caveat to the new schedule was that the position of each teacher on the salary schedule would be determined by subjective criteria, such as the teacher's personality, background, intellectual ability, efficiency, teacher-like qualities, and even by a supply and demand factor.⁴⁷ The African American teachers in Chesterfield County continued to receive lower pay as a result of these subjective criteria. A committee of the NAACP appeared before the county school board on April 26, 1944, complaining about the continued wide discrepancy between African American and White teacher salaries. The school superintendent, referencing the salary schedule, denied that there was any discrepancy in pay.⁴⁸

The issue of pay equalization came to a head on October 23, 1946, when the superintendent presented to the Chesterfield County School Board a petition from NAACP Counsel Oliver Hill on behalf of three Hickory Hill teachers, Rubye M. DeWitt, Dorothy T. Reese, and Arthur M. Freeman: “that the School Board of Chesterfield County and the Superintendent immediately

⁴⁴ Chesterfield County School Board minutes, March 23, 1938.

⁴⁵ Chesterfield County School Board minutes, May 13, 1938.

⁴⁶ Chesterfield County School Board minutes, January 31, 1940, and December 12, 1940.

⁴⁷ Chesterfield County School Board minutes, December 18, 1941.

⁴⁸ Chesterfield County School Board minutes, April 26, 1944.

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discontinue the policy, custom and practice of making any discrimination in the payment of salaries of teachers and principals because of race or color.” The petition noted that relief from the discriminatory practices had been sought over a period of six years to no avail. The school board was dismissive of the petition, responding that, “It has never been the policy of this Board to discriminate with its employees in any manner, and more especially that of race and or color.”⁴⁹

Soon after the rejection of their petition by the Chesterfield County School Board, attorneys Oliver W. Hill, Martin A. Martin, and Spottswood W. Robinson, of the Richmond, Virginia law firm Hill, Martin and Robinson, filed in 1946 a legal challenge to the County's discrimination in pay in United States District Court on behalf of the NAACP and the three Hickory Hill teachers. Styled, *Arthur M. Freeman et al. v. County School Board of Chesterfield County et al.*, Richmond Civil Action No. 644,” this federal case was of state and national importance in seeking to eliminate racial discrimination in the payment of schoolteachers and principals. Among the many statistics filed in the case's evidence was that for the year 1946-1947, “91% of the white teachers received salaries equal to or higher than the maximum paid colored.” This discrepancy was further highlighted by the fact that, “in the 1945-46, 52% of the colored teachers held degrees compared with 27% of white teachers.” The County's one “colored male principal” [James P. Spencer, at Hickory Hill School] was cited in the case as receiving a salary of only \$2300 compared to the average salary of \$3625 for the county's White male principals. Extensive discrimination was documented in the payment of African American teachers, principals, and supervisors; for example, “there is one white female elementary supervisor, whose salary is \$3350, and one colored female elementary supervisor, whose salary is \$2800.”⁵⁰

By the late 1930s, the Virginia NAACP had joined forces with the Virginia State Teachers Association, the professional organization of African American teachers, to form the Joint Committee on the Equalization of Teachers' Salaries. As attorney for the Joint Committee, Oliver Hill began working with teachers in the city of Norfolk and *Alston v. School Board of City of Norfolk* was the first federal court case in which Hill was involved. They lost the case in federal district court, but on June 18, 1940, won a favorable ruling from the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit. The appeals court ruled that the pay scale for African American teachers was clearly discriminatory. The *Alston* case cemented Hill's position as the lead NAACP lawyer in Virginia. In 1942, Oliver Hill opened a law firm in Richmond with Spottswood Robinson and Martin Martin, all Howard University Law School graduates. The firm brought many successful cases representing the NAACP in its fight for the equalization of pay for teachers regardless of race. These equalization cases, including the important Hickory Hill teachers' case, laid the vital groundwork for later cases, such as *Davis v. County School Board of Prince Edward*, which was one of five suits that were consolidated into the pivotal Supreme Court case mandating the desegregation of public schools, *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* (1954).⁵¹

⁴⁹ Chesterfield County School Board minutes, October 23, 1946.

⁵⁰ “Freeman v. County School Board,” 82 F. Supp. 167 (E.D. Va. 1948), Justia US Law website.

⁵¹ Larissa Fergeson, “Oliver W. Hill (1907–2007)” *Encyclopedia Virginia*, December 7, 2020.
<https://encyclopediaofvirginia.org/entries/hill-oliver-w-1907-2007/>.

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The three Hickory Hill High School teachers, Arthur M. Freeman, Rubye M. DeWitt, and Dorothy T. Reese showed great courage in challenging the school board's discriminatory pay structure. Freeman first appeared on the teacher roster for Hickory Hill High School in the 1942-43 school year, while DeWitt and Reese joined Freeman on the Hickory Hill High School teacher roster for the 1944-45, 1945-46, and 1946-47 school years.⁵² A notable June 1948 newspaper photograph with the caption "They Meet To Plan School Facilities and Salary Equalization Cases," shows Hickory Hill School teacher Arthur M. Freeman at a meeting of the Joint State Teachers-NAACP Salary Equalization and Special Facilities Committee with eleven of Virginia's most noted civil-rights leaders, including Oliver Hill, Spottswood Robinson, and Martin Martin.⁵³

Freeman paid a heavy price for his participation in the legal challenge. On April 23, 1947, just a few months after the lawsuit was filed, he was fired from his job as a teacher at Hickory Hill High School by the Chesterfield School Board. Likely hoping that Freeman would drop his lawsuit in exchange for keeping his job, the board invited Freeman to address them, which he declined to do. Hickory Hill High School's principal, James P. Spencer, was reprimanded by the board for not informing them of Freeman's offense.⁵⁴ As reported in the national African American press in Atlanta, Georgia and Jackson, Mississippi, the minor offense for which Freeman was fired was the "reprehensible conduct" of allegedly selling a pint of whiskey to an undercover officer.⁵⁵ Because such a public firing and reprimand were unprecedented in the Chesterfield County School Board minutes, the firing of Freeman and the reprimand of Spencer are suspect as reprisals for the federal lawsuit. After being fired, Arthur Freeman moved to Washington D.C, where he had a successful career as the district manager for the Virginia Mutual Life Insurance Company and was later a professor who taught business classes at Howard University.⁵⁶

In a monumental civil rights victory, the federal court ruled in favor of the Hickory Hill High School teachers. At the August 6, 1948, meeting of the Chesterfield County School Board, the court's final judgment and injunction were read to the board. The superintendent recommended, and the board adopted, a consistent schedule for African American and White salaries based upon years of experience that complied with the order of the court. Even while adopting the new non-discriminatory pay schedule, the School Board noted its intention to appeal the federal court decision.⁵⁷

⁵² Chesterfield School Board minutes, April 25, 1942 ; March 24, 1943; April 26, 1944; March 21, 1945; March 27, 1946.

⁵³ "They Meet To Plan School Facilities and Salary Equalization Cases," *Norfolk New Journal and Guide*, June 26, 1948, p. 3.

⁵⁴ Chesterfield School Board minutes, April 23, 1947.

⁵⁵ "Suing Teacher Fired in Va.," *Atlanta Daily World*, May 10, 1947, p. 7; "Fire Teacher In Equalization Salary Case," Jackson, Mississippi, *Advocate*, May 17, 1947, p. 8.

⁵⁶ Interview with Arthur Freeman, Jr., the son of Arthur M. Freeman, unpublished, Richmond, Va. September 30, 2023.

⁵⁷ Chesterfield School Board minutes, August 6, 1948.

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On December 3, 1948, the Fourth United States Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in favor of the Hickory Hill teachers in the County's appeal of the "Freeman v. County School Board" case. In upholding the ruling of the lower court, in favor of the Hickory Hill teachers, the court determined that the discrimination existed and that the evidence amply supported the findings to support the injunction. Although Chesterfield County school officials claimed that teacher pay had been equalized in accordance with the injunction, they appealed the case to test the validity of the order issued by District Judge Sterling Hutcheson.⁵⁸ The success of the Hickory Hill teachers in their discrimination case was of national news and reported in the African American press in Norfolk, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Washington D.C, and as far away as Los Angeles. The *Baltimore Afro-American* printed a memorable photograph of Hickory Hill Principal, James P. Spencer, and Hickory Hill teachers, Rubye M. DeWitt and Dorothy T. Reese, conferring with noted civil-rights attorneys, Martin A. Martin and Oliver W. Hill, and Virginia Teachers' Association leader, J. Rupert Picott, with the caption, "Chesterfield Teachers Win Fight for Equal Pay."⁵⁹ The "Arthur M. Freeman et al. v. County School Board of Chesterfield County" case had a profound impact upon the equalization of pay for African American and White teachers. Following this success, the law firm of Hill, Martin, and Robinson prepared for a cascade of similar suits on behalf of the NAACP. Some counties moved to avoid similar litigation by equalizing teacher pay without going to court; for example, the Essex County School Board asked for a \$300,000 school bond issue in order to fund the equalization of pay for African American and White teachers in that Virginia county.⁶⁰

In tandem with the Chesterfield County lawsuit for the equalization of pay for teachers, the law firm of Hill, Martin and Robinson, on behalf of the NAACP, won suits against the King George County and Gloucester County school boards for unequal school facilities for African American students.⁶¹ As a result of these successful suits, many counties in Virginia promptly began upgrading the school facilities for African American children. On March 26, 1947, the Chesterfield County School Board determined that it was necessary to build four new schools for African American children in Chesterfield "because of overcrowded conditions and bad state of repairs in the present buildings." Among these four proposed new schools was a new consolidated high school to replace the crowded high school at Hickory Hill.⁶²

The "Separate and Unequal" conditions found inside the 1915 frame Hickory Hill School building were exposed in an April 5, 1947, article in the *Richmond Afro-American*. With accompanying photographs, the article highlighted the stuffy and unsafe conditions in the school's basement where a coal room with a low ceiling was converted for use as a classroom,

⁵⁸ "Injunction Issued In Equalization Suit," *Atlanta Daily World*, December 10, 1948, p. 1.

⁵⁹ "Virginia Teachers Find Cure For Ills In State Court," *Pittsburgh Courier*, May 3, 1947, p. 13; "May Vote," *The Ohio Daily-Express*, June 1, 1948, p. 4; "Chesterfield County Appeals School Salary Injunction," *Evening Star*, Washington D.C., November 13, 1948, p. A-20; "Chesterfield Teachers Win Fight For Equal Pay," *Baltimore Afro-American*, December 11, 1948; "Teachers Pay Decree Upheld," *Norfolk New Journal and Guide*, December 11, 1948, p. D-1; Jewell, Carter, "Virginia Dailies Editorialize Victory in School Bias Case," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, February 3, 1949, p. A-8.

⁶⁰ "More School Suits in Virginia Planned," *Norfolk New Journal and Guide*, May 14, 1949, p. A-1.

⁶¹ "Freeman v. County School Board," 82 F. Supp. 167 (E.D. Va. 1948), Justia US Law website.

⁶² Chesterfield County School Board minutes, March 26, 1947.

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having only a single cord light for lighting. The only exit from the basement was a narrow flight of stairs, which presented a fire hazard to the students who had to use the stairway several times a day. The article exposed the fact that the 168 students at Hickory Hill High School had only four teachers, one of whom was the principal, while the Midlothian High School for White students had seven teachers and a principal for just eighty-four pupils.⁶³

The Chesterfield County School Board moved swiftly to build the new George Washington Carver High School for African American students on fifteen acres of land purchased from Mrs. Clyde Winfree. On July 7, 1947, the board approved the plans for the new high school, as drawn by Dixon and Norman, Architects. By August 6, 1947, the bid of \$348,640 from English Construction Company of Altavista, Virginia was approved by the School Board to build the new Carver High School.⁶⁴

A moving photograph of Hickory Hill High School's last graduation ceremony in 1948 shows the students in their caps and gowns perfectly lined-up before the 1915 and 1938 Hickory Hill schoolhouses. The new Carver High School opened its doors on September 8, 1948, with 347 students. While Hickory Hill High School offered classes only through the eleventh grade, the new Carver High School matriculated students completing the twelfth grade in 1950.⁶⁵ Teachers Rubye DeWitt and Dorothy Reese, plaintiffs in the federal discrimination case, moved from Hickory Hill High to teach at Carver High. A delegation of citizens requested that the school board name James P. Spencer as the principal of the new Carver High School, but, perhaps as retribution for the earlier law suit, the request was denied, and Spencer remained as principal of what then became Hickory Hill Elementary School.⁶⁶ After teaching for one year at Carver High, Rubye DeWitt accepted a job with Richmond Public Schools, where she had a successful career as a supervisor in the speech therapy department; later, DeWitt was a founding board member of the Child Development Resources in Williamsburg, a non-profit devoted to assisting handicapped children.⁶⁷

The baby-boom after World War II resulted in a great surge in the population of Chesterfield County, growing from 31,183 residents in 1940 to 40,400 in 1950, and the county population boomed to 71,197 residents by 1960. African American residents made up 20% of the population of Chesterfield County in 1950.⁶⁸ On January 25, 1950, patrons of Hickory Hill School addressed the Chesterfield County School Board, requesting repairs to the overcrowded 1915 frame schoolhouse. On January 24, 1951, the patrons returned to the board with a petition

⁶³ "Four-Room High School in County Revealed as Decidedly Separate and Unequal," *Richmond Afro-American*, April 5, 1947, p. 20.

⁶⁴ Chesterfield County School Board minutes, March 26, 1947; July 23, 1947; August 6, 1947.

⁶⁵ Jennifer Drummond, "African-American high school's legacy lives on," *Chesterfield Observer*, February 27, 2008, chesterfieldobserver.com.

⁶⁶ Chesterfield School Board minutes, March 26, 1947; July 23, 1947; August 6, 1947; July 28, 1948; August 25, 1948; April 26, 1949.

⁶⁷ "Rubye M. DeWitt, retired speech therapy supervisor with Richmond Public Schools, dies at 101," *Richmond Free Press*, November 15, 2019.

⁶⁸ Michael Eric Taylor, "The African-American Community in Richmond, Virginia: 1950-1956," Richmond: University of Richmond, 1994, p. 15.

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requesting that an addition be constructed on the brick 1938 Hickory Hill School to address the overcrowded conditions. Again, on November 20, 1951, a committee from the school P.T.A. requested that the board build an addition on the brick school building to relieve the overcrowded conditions.⁶⁹

In 1951, the Chesterfield County School Board determined that there was a need for an addition to what was then Hickory Hill Elementary School, but the students had seven more years of crowded conditions before the addition was constructed. On June 18, 1954, the board approved preliminary plans for the Hickory Hill School addition, as drawn by Dixon and Norman, Architects. At the same meeting, the School Board authorized the Superintendent to pursue purchasing additional land for Hickory Hill School from the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad Company.⁷⁰ The acquisition from the railroad of 1.82 additional acres for Hickory Hill was achieved on December 1, 1954. The plat attached to the deed shows a triangular plot of land adjacent to the railroad and south of the adjacent Hickory Hill School property.⁷¹

An aerial photograph of Hickory Hill School in 1955 shows this newly acquired triangular parcel adjacent to the Atlantic Coastline Railroad Company tracks and to the south of the school's manicured grounds. In a 1955 aerial photograph, the 1915 school building is seen to north of the adjacent larger 1938 Hickory Hill School. The small storeroom is seen to the rear of the 1938 building, and visible to the north of the 1915 building is a ground disturbance, probably where the 1925 Rosenwald school building formerly stood.⁷² On July 24, 1957, a bid from Mottley Construction Company in the amount of \$193,000 was accepted by the Chesterfield County School Board to build the substantial addition and upgrades to the 1938 Hickory Hill School building. By August 20, 1958, the work of Mottley Construction Company was accepted by the School Board as completed.⁷³

With the completion of the substantial Hickory Hill School addition in 1958, the school board resolved to demolish the dilapidated 1915 frame building on site that had been the source of bad publicity for the county. The c. 1925 frame shop building, later used for storage, caught fire in 1958 and caused \$2,713.50 in damages, which were covered by insurance. On November 19, 1958, the board authorized grading the area where the 1915 building and storeroom once stood. Also at the November 19, 1958, Chesterfield County School Board meeting, the motion was made to close the Chesterfield County schools rather than integrate them, and to provide no funding for any schools that were integrated. This motion died without receiving a second (a disturbing close call, which could have plunged Chesterfield County into the same dire situation as occurred in Prince Edward County, where the county schools were closed for five years due to Massive Resistance to school integration).⁷⁴

⁶⁹ Chesterfield County School Board minutes, January 25, 1950; January 24, 1951.

⁷⁰ Chesterfield County School Board minutes, June 28, 1951; June 18, 1954.

⁷¹ Chesterfield County, Virginia, Deed Book 366: 599-600, 1954, Chesterfield County Clerk's Office.

⁷² 1955 Aerial Photograph of Hickory Hill School, *Historic Aerials*, 1955. www.historicaerials.com.

⁷³ Chesterfield County School Board minutes, July 24, 1957; August 20, 1958.

⁷⁴ Chesterfield County School Board minutes, November 19, 1958.

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After James Spencer's retirement in 1958, Mrs. Daisy R. Baxter, who had been a teacher at the school since 1950, assumed the role of principal of Hickory Hill Elementary School. Principal Baxter hosted a reception for 600 people at the school on March 27, 1960, to dedicate the new addition to the 1938 building. The addition boasted four modern classrooms, a library, and a cafeteria. Matthew R. Page, who was so instrumental in raising money for the land for the 1915 Hickory Hill school building, and who served for many years as president of the Hickory Hill School Improvement League, presented a history of the school at the dedication event.⁷⁵

As time passed, the fight for equalization across all aspects of education for African American students in Chesterfield County grew. The Superintendent reported on May 26, 1965, of having mailed the school board members a general statement of policies under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, in respect to desegregation of the elementary and secondary schools of Chesterfield County. To comply with the Civil Rights Act, the school board initiated a "Freedom of Choice" plan beginning in the 1966-1967 school year. For the 1968 school year, there was an anticipated enrollment of 710 African American children in formerly White schools; however, the county's "Freedom of Choice Plan" did not comply with the federal Department of Health, Education and Welfare requirement to submit plans for the total desegregation of county schools by July 10, 1968. Having not met the required deadline, the regional Civil Rights director threatened to cut off federal funds to the county in the amount of \$900,000. At the risk of losing such a significant funding amount, plans were put into effect by the Chesterfield County School Board to comply with the total desegregation of the county's schools. As African American students were re-assigned to White schools, this resulted in low enrollment in five formerly African American elementary schools. The school board proposed closing the five schools, including Hickory Hill, where the projected enrollment for the 1969 school term had dropped to eighty-six students. The Chesterfield County School Board minutes indicate that no teachers were hired for the Hickory Hill School for the 1969-70 school year term.

On January 1, 1970, the City of Richmond formally annexed twenty-three square miles of Chesterfield County, including the portion of the county where Hickory Hill School is located. This annexation included the homes of 44,000 residents, 97% who were White; this had the effect of diluting African American voter strength in Richmond from 52% before annexation to 42% after annexation. As part of the terms of the annexation, the county agreed to provide education on a tuition basis through the 1970-71 school year for all children in the annexed area for whom the City of Richmond could not provide classrooms. Former Chesterfield County juniors and seniors were allowed to graduate from their Chesterfield high schools.⁷⁶

After the Hickory Hill Elementary School was closed, the Hickory Hill schoolhouse served several educational and community purposes between 1970 and 1990. It had a close call with demolition in 1991 when the Richmond City Council declared the property surplus and voted on May 28, 1991, to sell the property to a manufacturer of light bulbs for \$781,000. Fortunately, the city ordinance authorizing the sale of the Hickory Hill property was reversed by another city

⁷⁵ "New Addition Dedicated At Hickory Hill School, *Norfolk New Journal and Guide*, April 9, 1960, p. 4.

⁷⁶ John V. Moeser and Rutledge M. Dennis, *The Politics of Annexation: Oligarchic Power in a Southern City* (Cambridge, MA: Schenkman Publishing Company, Inc., 2020) 49, 121-26.

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ordinance two months later, and the sale of Hickory Hill was canceled. In 1998, the Richmond City Council approved a resolution to develop an agreement with the Hickory Hill Preservation Committee for operating a community center at the schoolhouse and funded \$204,000 worth of restoration and renovation work completed by KEI Architects at that time.⁷⁷ Since 1999, the Hickory Hill Community Center has been a thriving success.⁷⁸

In 2023, the property was the subject of controversy when the City of Richmond Fire Department proposed building a three-story, fire-training, burn-building for training firefighters with live fires on the Hickory Hill site. The controversial plan was rejected by the City Urban Design Committee and the Richmond City Planning Commission but was approved by the Richmond City Council and the Richmond Board of Zoning Appeals.⁷⁹ Pulitzer Prize winning journalist Michael Paul Williams described the proposal to build a burn-tower adjacent to the Hickory Hill Community Center as "... using tactics from the old playbook of environmental racism and political exclusion."⁸⁰ The city finally withdrew the plans for the fire-burn building due to the continued opposition led by the Reverend Monica Esparza, who persistently pointed out that the proposal was environmentally insensitive, discriminatory and would damage the integrity of the historic Hickory Hill School site.⁸¹

The Hickory Hill School survives as a physical reminder of the paramount importance placed by the African American community on achieving a quality education. These educational goals were achieved with tremendous determination, persistence, and sacrifice. The building's transformation from school to community center continues to provide a wonderful resource for the citizens, including a library, an auditorium for cultural programming and dance recitals, fitness rooms, computer classrooms, and similar programming. A history display showcase keeps the rich history of the school alive.

Criterion B: James Preston Spencer

When he retired in 1958, James P. Spencer had served as the Hickory Hill principal for approximately twenty years. He was so beloved that the parents, teachers, and Chesterfield

⁷⁷ The City of Richmond, "Legislative Ordinance #99-11-24," January 24, 1999.
<https://richmondva.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=5379918&GUID=E4800E59-0654-4A18-AD00-2FFBE8F50226&Options=ID|Text|&Search=Hickory+hill>.

⁷⁸ Richmond City Council Ordinance 91-175-164 (This ordinance, with Plan DPW DWG N-22176, declared the Hickory Hill property surplus); Richmond City Council Ordinance 91-176-165 (This ordinance approved the sale of the Hickory Hill property to Enterprise Lighting for \$781,000); Richmond City Council Ordinance 91-281-257 (This ordinance appealed the ordinance authorizing the sale of Hickory Hill); Richmond City Council Resolution 98-R84-98 (This resolution authorized developing an operating agreement with the Hickory Hill Preservation Committee for the use of the school property for the Hickory Hill Community Center).

⁷⁹ "BZA 13-2023," The City of Richmond Board of Zoning Appeals, June 7, 2023,
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b_y0-e5aiE4.

⁸⁰ Michael Paul Williams, "A burn tower at a community center? Make it make sense, Richmond," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, July 29, 2023.

⁸¹ Em Holter, "Richmond backs out of fire training tower at Hickory Hill," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, August 1, 2023; Jeremy M. Lazarus, "City reverses course on Hickory Hill," *Richmond Free Press*, August 3, 2023; Samantha Willis, "Out with the green, in with the heat," *Virginia Mercury*, August 1, 2023.

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Teachers' Association gave Spencer and his wife, Evie, a \$1,000 European tour as a retirement gift.⁸² Spencer was a tireless champion for education for the African American children of the county. He repeatedly returned to the Chesterfield County School Board meetings to request for the African American students' equitable bus transportation, better facilities, textbooks, a nine-month school term, and more teachers at Hickory Hill. Spencer was on the forefront of the movement to demand equitable pay for the African American teachers of Chesterfield County; without the strong support of their principal, the three Hickory Hill teachers probably would not have filed their successful federal lawsuit that resulted in the equalization of teacher pay. Indeed, Spencer, "is credited with leading the movement for equalization of teachers' salaries in Chesterfield County."⁸³

James P. Spencer was born on June 15, 1888, in Charlotte Court House, Virginia.⁸⁴ He grew up on a farm owned by his father and it seems that the family valued education because all eight children in the family could read and write.⁸⁵ Spencer volunteered to join the Army in 1917 and served in Europe during World War I. His regiment of African American soldiers with the 370th Infantry won distinction in the Aisne-Marne offensive in France. He experienced discrimination in the army, not receiving disability payment for an injury to his hand because of the prejudice of the examining medical officer.⁸⁶ After the war, he graduated from Virginia Union University with honors in 1931, and later received a M.A. in Education from the University of Michigan. Spencer taught in North Carolina and at the Isle of Wight County Training School before beginning his decades-long service as principal of Hickory Hill. Spencer and his family lived just a few doors away from the school at 3406 Terminal Avenue.⁸⁷

In addition to his remarkable legacy as an educator, James P. Spencer was one of Chesterfield County's foremost Civil Rights leaders. As noted on a Virginia Historic Highway Marker, Spencer was one of the founders of the 1941 Virginia Voters League, which worked with the NAACP and other groups to promote African American voting registration through education and by encouraging the payment of the discriminatory poll taxes.⁸⁸ The slogan of the group was, "Pay the poll tax in order to abolish the poll tax." The League found that in 1944, 89% of African American voters in Virginia were disqualified because they had not met the poll tax requirement. Between 1943 and 1944, with the aid and encouragement of the League, an additional 9,075

⁸² "James Spencer Honored As Retiring Principal," *Norfolk New Journal and Guide*, July 5, 1958, p. 4.

⁸³ "J. Preston Spencer, educator, buried," *Baltimore Afro-American*, November 26, 1960, p. 18.

⁸⁴ "James P. Spencer," Certificate of Death (No. 29576), Commonwealth of Virginia, November 4, 1960.

⁸⁵ 1900 US census, Charlotte County, Virginia, population schedule, "William and Betty Spencer": NARA microfilm publication T623, record group 29, National Archives, 2023, Search Census Records Online and Other Resources | National Archives.

⁸⁶ "Military Service Record: Spencer, James Preston," War History Commission, State of Virginia, with additional signed letter, dated April 26, 1921.

⁸⁷ "True Son of Freedom: The World War I Experience of James Preston Spencer," Library of Virginia, web blog, 2023, <https://uncommonwealth.virginiamemory.com/blog/2018/01/17/true-son-of-freedom-the-world-war-i-experience-of-james-preston-spencer/>; "Charging Hell with a Bucket of Water: The Virginians of the 370th Infantry," Library of Virginia, web blog, 2023, <https://uncommonwealth.virginiamemory.com/blog/2022/07/06/charging-hell-with-a-bucket-of-water-the-virginians-of-the-370th-infantry/>.

⁸⁸ "Virginia Voters League," Highway Marker QA 29, Virginia Department of Historic Resources, 2010.

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African American voters met the poll tax requirement.⁸⁹ Under Spencer's leadership, the League in 1952 began establishing local chapters throughout the state, with the first Voter League chapter established in the Varina Magisterial District of Henrico County.⁹⁰ In 1954, as President of the Virginia Voters League, Spencer took Virginia Governor Thomas Stanley to task for the omission of any African American representatives on the Governor's thirty-two member school segregation study commission. Spencer proclaimed that the "best talent of both races must be invoked to work out a satisfactory solution," after the Supreme Court decision that segregation in public schools was unconstitutional.⁹¹ By 1955, Spencer led the League, in cooperation with the Richmond Civic Council, to push for 100,000 qualified African American voters in the state.⁹² Spencer served twice as President of the Virginia Voters League and was President-Emeritus of the League at the time of his passing in 1960. He was deeply committed to the cause of improving the conditions of African American citizens in the state through increasing the African American voter strength.⁹³

James P. Spencer served as president of the Virginia Teachers Association, the Chesterfield County Teachers Association, and the Third District for the Virginia Association for Education.⁹⁴ The Virginia Teachers Association was founded in 1887 by African American educators for the purpose of providing professional development for African American teachers; it merged with the [White] Virginia Education Association in 1967.⁹⁵ The Virginia Teachers Association strongly supported the equalization of teachers' salaries. On behalf of the Resolutions Committee of the Virginia Teacher's Association, Spencer made a presentation at the January 26, 1938, meeting of the Chesterfield County School Board, advocating for the equalization in teacher salaries at both the high-school and elementary level, for the equalization of the length of the school terms, and for an industrial teacher and an arts-and-music teacher for Hickory Hill School.⁹⁶

The NAACP worked closely with the Virginia Teachers Association in these equalization efforts. James Spencer was one of the founders, around 1930, of the Chesterfield County Branch of the NAACP. By the mid-1930s the Chesterfield County Branch was honored for having the largest membership of any rural Branch in the United States.⁹⁷ Spencer was also a member of the Virginia State Conference of the NAACP and presided at their meetings.⁹⁸ Spencer was featured in a 1952 newspaper article making a donation to the legal defense fund of the Virginia State

⁸⁹ Luther P. Jackson, *The Voting Status of Negroes in Virginia*, for the Virginia Voters League, April 1945, pgs. 4 and 5.

⁹⁰ "Virginia Voters League Expands Civic Programs," *Norfolk New Journal and Guide*, July 5, 1952, p. B-5.

⁹¹ "Stanley Hit On Omission of Negroes," *Washington Post*, September 4, 1954.

⁹² "Groups Campaign for Negro Vote," *Washington Post*, March 29, 1955.

⁹³ "Ex-President of State Voters League Mourned," *Norfolk New Journal and Guide*, November 12, 1960, p. A-17.

⁹⁴ "James Preston Spencer, 72, Former Principal, Dies," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, November 7, 1960.

⁹⁵ "Virginia Teachers Association," Highway Marker Q-6-41, Virginia Department of Historic Resources, 2016.

⁹⁶ Chesterfield School Board minutes, January 26, 1938; "Chesterfield Teachers for Equal Salaries," *Norfolk New Journal and Guide*, February 5, 1938, p. 11.

⁹⁷ Arthur Milton Friend, "Chesterfield County Branch of the NAACP: A Brief History," 2003, chesterfieldnaacp.com.

⁹⁸ "Widely Known Virginians Take Part At NAACP Meet," *Norfolk New Journal and Guide*, October 22, 1949, p. D-18.

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Conference of the NAACP on behalf of the Chesterfield Teachers Association.⁹⁹ Doubtless, it was Principal Spencer who coordinated with the NAACP for the legal representation of the three Hickory Hill teachers in the monumental equalization lawsuit, *Freeman et al. v. County School Board of Chesterfield County et al.* His years in the military steeled Spencer to courageously counter the discrimination that he found in Virginia, and, until his death on November 4, 1960, he never lost his firm resolve that through education, the vote, and court action, the condition of African American families in Virginia would be improved.

There is a poignant picture of Spencer standing beside Mrs. Daisy R. Baxter and the other smiling group of teachers at a surprise party to honor the teachers and principal of Hickory Hill in 1957.¹⁰⁰

Criterion C: Architecture

While the design of the 1938 Hickory Hill School parallels other state-designed schools of the same period, specifically within the same year or two, it was significant in Chesterfield County as the first brick school designed for African American students. It was a substantial departure from earlier, vernacular frame school buildings and served as a symbol of progress with fine-tuned architectural elements such as five-course common bond brickwork, jack arches, quoins, and keystones on the exterior.

The design of the c. 1938 Hickory Hill School stemmed from the centralized facility and curriculum planning of the Virginia State Department of Education, specifically, their guidelines for rural schools. The Hickory Hill School embodies the specialized spaces provided by the Division of School Buildings. The standard one-story plan includes a central foyer opening onto an auditorium, which holds a raised stage on one end. As with other state-designed schools, the auditorium is the focal point of the interior and is accessed directly through the entry hall and small halls adjoining the classrooms and the access hall to the later additions. At the front of the school, one classroom sits on either side of the entrance foyer. Including a larger gathering space for the wider community was another benefit to the central auditorium design.

The Division of School Buildings, under the direction of Mr. Raymond V. Long, AIA., successfully designed many schools for the Chesterfield County School Board. In 1930 alone, the board commissioned six schools designed by the Division of School Buildings, and they were so pleased with the work that they passed the following resolution: "Resolve: That it endorse the Department of School Buildings under the direction of Mr. Raymond V. Long as being of great benefit to the counties of the State, through providing facilities for furnishing plans and specifications and supervision to the counties free of any cost and of nature highly satisfactory to the situations involved."¹⁰¹ When the Chesterfield County Superintendent of Education filed the application to "the United States of America" for a \$45,000 grant to aid in

⁹⁹ "Virginia NAACP Secretary Gets \$50 From Chesterfield County Teachers," *Norfolk New Journal and Guide*, October 4, 1952, p. 4.

¹⁰⁰ "Hickory Hill Teachers Honored At Surprise Party," *Norfolk New Journal and Guide*, March 30, 1957, p. 4.

¹⁰¹ Chesterfield County School Board minutes, March 26, 1930.

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funding the school, the minutes do not specify which type of federal funding he requested, but considering the period and other school construction throughout the state, it was likely Public Works Administration funding.

In designing the new brick Hickory Hill School, Long stayed consistent to his portfolio of work from 1918 to 1942 as School Architect for the State Department of Education. In that role, he and his staff provided plans and specifications for dozens of schools throughout Virginia. Long also served as the Director of the National Advisory Committee on School Buildings in the 1930s, and in the 1940s, served as the Director of the State Planning Board.¹⁰² Under his direction, the State Department of Education improved the quality of education in the state and raised the bar for standards of educational facilities.

Many of the dozens of plans for schools designed under Long's direction by the Department of Education are archived at the Library of Virginia. The plans and specifications for the Hickory Hill School are not included in the collection of architectural drawings. The plans for the Hickory Hill School, however, are noted in the index of the Architectural Drawings for Schools with the project code (3-L-17) and with the date July 1937. Coincidentally, the plans for the Chesterfield County Enon School have the same project code and date in the index. The designs for the Hickory Hill and Enon Schools were likely a variation on the standard one story, six-room school plans with project code 12-R-18. The standard one-story, six-room school plans are similar to Hickory Hill School with a central entrance flanked by classrooms in two wings with a central auditorium. Another notable school designed by Raymond V. Long and the State Department of Education is the Prince Edward Training School, now known as the Robert Russa Moton High School; the detailed plans for the school, with project code 8-L-17, are on file at the Library of Virginia.¹⁰³ The Moton School is listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register and on the National Register of Historic Places.¹⁰⁴ Local contractor J. W. Atkinson was hired to build the school. By 1938, Atkinson had constructed many significant brick buildings in Richmond, including the c. 1921 Highland Park fire engine house, the c. 1922 Colonial Revival fire alarm station in Monroe Park, and three theaters, including the c. 1933 Roosevelt Theater at 406 N. 25th Street, all now demolished. Atkinson also managed residential projects, including the c. 1924 fine stucco Renaissance Revival house at 2222 Lakeview Avenue in the Byrd Park neighborhood of Richmond.

From 1950 through 1951, patrons and the P.T.A. of Hickory Hill School addressed the Chesterfield County School Board, requesting repairs to the overcrowded 1915 frame schoolhouse and an addition to the brick 1938 elementary school.¹⁰⁵ In 1951, the Chesterfield County School Board acknowledged the need for additional space, but the project took another

¹⁰² Encore Sustainable Design, LLC, *Modified Historic Structure Report*, Paul VI Catholic High School, February 2018.

¹⁰³ Virginia Department of Education, "Architectural Drawings of Schools," Accession Number 28487, Misc Reels 1832-1837, Library of Virginia.

¹⁰⁴ Julie Vosmik, et al., "Robert Russa Moton High School," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1995.

¹⁰⁵ Chesterfield County School Board minutes, January 25, 1950; January 24, 1951.

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seven years to finish. In 1954, the school board approved preliminary plans for the brick addition, as drawn by Dixon and Norman, Architects. The firm of Dixon and Norman designed school buildings and additions in Virginia, including the NRHP-listed Hayden High School (145-5012), City of Franklin, and additions to the NRHP-listed John Groom School (301-5063), Mecklenburg County, and the unlisted Louise Archer School (153-5021) and Woodlawn School (145-5012) both in Fairfax County. The additions were primarily to older school buildings and represented a departure from the traditional Colonial Revival style to one of a vernacular modern influence with an emphasis on horizontality including elements such as horizontal casement and ribbon windows, flat roofs, and minimal architectural ornamentation. In 1953, the firm was “experienced for more than 26 years in public schools and public institutions,” with a resume of fifteen education-related commissions at that time.¹⁰⁶

At the 1954 meeting that saw the acceptance of the preliminary addition plans, the school board authorized the Superintendent to pursue purchasing additional land for Hickory Hill School from the Atlantic Coastline Railroad Company.¹⁰⁷ The acquisition from the railroad of 1.82 additional acres for Hickory Hill was achieved on December 1, 1954. The plat attached to the deed shows a triangular plot of land adjacent to the railroad and south of the adjacent Hickory Hill School property.¹⁰⁸ An aerial photograph of Hickory Hill School in 1955 shows this newly acquired triangular parcel adjacent to the Atlantic Coastline Railroad Company tracks and to the south of the school's manicured grounds. In a 1955 aerial photograph, the 1915 school building is seen to north of the adjacent larger 1938 Hickory Hill School. The small storeroom is seen to the rear of the 1938 building, and visible to the north of the 1915 building is a ground disturbance, probably where the 1925 Rosenwald school building formerly stood.¹⁰⁹ On July 24, 1957, a bid from Mottley Construction Company in the amount of \$193,000 was accepted by the Chesterfield County School Board to build the Dixon & Norman addition at Hickory Hill along with upgrades to the 1938 Hickory Hill School building. By August 20, 1958, the work of Mottley Construction Company was accepted by the school board as complete.¹¹⁰

With the completion of the Hickory Hill School addition in 1958, the board resolved to demolish the dilapidated 1915 frame building at Hickory Hill that had been the source of bad publicity for the county. The c. 1925 frame shop building, later used for storage, caught fire in 1958 and caused \$2,713.50 in damages, which were covered by insurance. On November 19, 1958, the board authorized grading the area where the 1915 building and storeroom once stood. Also at the November 19, 1958, Chesterfield County School Board meeting, the motion was made to close the Chesterfield County schools rather than integrate them, and to provide no funding for any schools that were integrated. This motion died without receiving a second (a close call that could have plunged Chesterfield County into the same dire situation as occurred in Prince Edward

¹⁰⁶ “Architects’ Roster Questionnaire,” American Institute of Architects, January 7, 1953.

https://aiahistoricaldirectory.atlassian.net/wiki/spaces/AHDAA/pages/36882181/ahd4001456?preview=/36882181/2194898956/DixonNorman_roster.pdf.

¹⁰⁷ Chesterfield County School Board minutes, June 28, 1951; June 18, 1954.

¹⁰⁸ Chesterfield County, Virginia, Deed Book 366: 599-600, 1954, Chesterfield County Clerk’s Office.

¹⁰⁹ 1955 Aerial Photograph of Hickory Hill School, *Historic Aerials*, 1955. www.historicaerials.com.

¹¹⁰ Chesterfield County School Board minutes, July 24, 1957; August 20, 1958.

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County, where the county schools were closed for five years due to Massive Resistance to school integration).¹¹¹

Even after the construction of the large addition, the school remained crowded due to the booming population growth of Chesterfield County. In 1961 and 1963, two more additions were added to the Hickory Hill Elementary School. Both additions were designed by Dixon and Norman, Architects, the same firm that designed the substantial 1958 Hickory Hill addition.¹¹² Before starting their own architectural firm, Washington Irving Dixon (1899-1985) worked under Raymond V. Long at the State Department of Education, School Building Division from 1926 to 1946, and Macon Gordon Norman also worked for the School Building Division of the Department of Education from 1931 to 1946. Both Washington Dixon and Macon Norman may have participated in the 1937 design of the brick Hickory Hill School by the State Department of Education. Their familiarity with the plans of the existing 1938 Hickory Hill schoolhouse may have contributed to the compatible and sympathetic additions that they designed. The Dixon and Norman architectural firm specialized in public buildings and designed at least fifteen other schools in Virginia, including their 1947 designs for Chesterfield County's George Washington Carver High School and the 1952 design for the Hayden High School in Franklin, which is listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places.¹¹³

On June 27, 1960, the Nuckols Construction Firm, with a low bid of \$29,896, was awarded the contract to build the two-classroom addition designed by Dixon and Norman for Hickory Hill. This addition was accepted by the Chesterfield County School Board as completed on February 2, 1961. On February 13, 1963, the Nuckols firm was again awarded the contract for the second two-classroom addition designed by Dixon and Norman for Hickory Hill with a low bid of \$27,300; the board accepted this addition as complete on July 31, 1963.¹¹⁴ The 1961 and 1963 additions fit with other functional school expansions of the period and were sympathetic to the existing buildings without adding complex architectural elements or designs.

¹¹¹ Chesterfield County School Board minutes, November 19, 1958.

¹¹² Chesterfield County School Board minutes, June 7, 1960; May 23, 1962.

¹¹³ Marcus R. Pollard, "Hayden High School," National Register Nomination Report, VDHR # 145-5012, Section 7, 2012, p. 5.

¹¹⁴ Chesterfield County School Board minutes, June 27, 1960; February 13, 1963; July 31, 1963.

Hickory Hill School
Name of Property

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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

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): VDHR ID 127-0434

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 6.98

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

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

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 37.47987476 | Longitude: -77.46133365 |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

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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 boundary of the nominated property follows City of Richmond tax parcel C0090612020.
See the attached tax parcel map.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary includes the land that was historically considered as part of the Hickory Hill School grounds and athletic fields, including the two parcels of land donated by African American organizations to the Chesterfield County School Board in 1915 and 1937 for the school, and the land purchased in 1954 from the Atlantic Coastline Railroad Company by the Chesterfield County School Board for the Hickory Hill School.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Monica Esparza, Eric Hunter, Issa Esparza, Bernard Anderson, Charles Pool
organization: Hickory Hill Preservation Committee
street & number: 2916 Glenan Drive
city or town: Richmond state: VA zip code: 23234
e-mail: monica.esparza@live.com
telephone: (804) 363-3282
date: April 17, 2024

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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: Hickory Hill School

City or Vicinity: Richmond

County: Independent City State: VA

Photographer: Issa Esparza, Monica Esparza, Joanna McKnight

Date Photographed: 2023-2024

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

Photo 1 of 33 VA_CityofRichmond_HickoryHillSchool_0001
Façade; camera pointed west

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Photo 2 of 33 VA_CityofRichmond_HickoryHillSchool_0002
North Elevation, 1938 school; camera pointed south

Photo 3 of 33 VA_CityofRichmond_HickoryHillSchool_0003
West Elevation, 1938 school; camera pointed southeast

Photo 4 of 33 VA_CityofRichmond_HickoryHillSchool_0004
West Elevation, 1938 school, and North Elevation, 1958 and 1961 additions; camera pointed east

Photo 5 of 33 VA_CityofRichmond_HickoryHillSchool_0005
Southwest oblique, 1958, 1961, and 1963 additions; camera pointed northeast

Photo 6 of 33 VA_CityofRichmond_HickoryHillSchool_0006
South Elevation, 1958, 1961, and 1963 additions; camera pointed west

Photo 7 of 33 VA_CityofRichmond_HickoryHillSchool_0007
Southeast corner, 1958 addition; camera pointed northwest

Photo 8 of 33 VA_CityofRichmond_HickoryHillSchool_0008
Façade, 1958 addition; camera pointed southwest

Photo 9 of 33 VA_CityofRichmond_HickoryHillSchool_0009
Entrance hall toward Library and Assembly Room Stage, 1938 school; camera pointed northwest

Photo 10 of 33 VA_CityofRichmond_HickoryHillSchool_0010
Library, 1938 school; camera pointed northwest

Photo 11 of 33 VA_CityofRichmond_HickoryHillSchool_0011
Entrance hall toward Principal's Office, 1938 school; camera pointed southwest

Photo 12 of 33 VA_CityofRichmond_HickoryHillSchool_0012
Principal's Office, 1938 school; camera pointed west

Photo 13 of 33 VA_CityofRichmond_HickoryHillSchool_0013
Principal's Office attic access, 1938 school; camera pointed west

Photo 14 of 33 VA_CityofRichmond_HickoryHillSchool_0014
Assembly Room, 1938 school; camera pointed northeast

Photo 15 of 33 VA_CityofRichmond_HickoryHillSchool_0015
Assembly Room stage, 1938 school; camera pointed northwest

Photo 16 of 33 VA_CityofRichmond_HickoryHillSchool_0016
SW Classroom attached to Assembly Room, 1938 school; camera pointed southwest

Photo 17 of 33 VA_CityofRichmond_HickoryHillSchool_0017

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SW Classroom from Assembly Room, 1938 school; camera pointed southwest

Photo 18 of 33 VA_CityofRichmond_HickoryHillSchool_0018

SE Classroom, 1938 school; camera pointed southeast

Photo 19 of 33 VA_CityofRichmond_HickoryHillSchool_0019

SE Classroom, 1938 school; camera pointed northeast

Photo 20 of 33 VA_CityofRichmond_HickoryHillSchool_0020

NW Classroom, 1938 school; camera pointed northwest

Photo 21 of 33 VA_CityofRichmond_HickoryHillSchool_0021

NE Classroom, 1938 school; camera pointed northeast

Photo 22 of 33 VA_CityofRichmond_HickoryHillSchool_0022

Assembly Room looking into 1958 addition, 1938 school; camera pointed west

Photo 23 of 33 VA_CityofRichmond_HickoryHillSchool_0023

Hallway, 1958 addition; camera pointed southwest

Photo 24 of 33 VA_CityofRichmond_HickoryHillSchool_0024

Classroom, 1961 addition; camera pointed southwest

Photo 25 of 33 VA_CityofRichmond_HickoryHillSchool_0025

Classroom, 1963 addition; camera pointed northwest

Photo 26 of 33 VA_CityofRichmond_HickoryHillSchool_0026

Classroom, 1963 addition; camera pointed southwest

Photo 27 of 33 VA_CityofRichmond_HickoryHillSchool_0027

Hallway from east (primary) entryway, 1958 addition; camera pointed west

Photo 28 of 33 VA_CityofRichmond_HickoryHillSchool_0028

Dining Room entrance, 1958 addition; camera pointed southeast

Photo 29 of 33 VA_CityofRichmond_HickoryHillSchool_0029

Dining Room entrance, 1958 addition; camera pointed southwest

Photo 30 of 33 VA_CityofRichmond_HickoryHillSchool_0030

Hallway toward 1938 school, 1958 addition; camera pointed north

Photo 31 of 33 VA_CityofRichmond_HickoryHillSchool_0031

East (primary) entrance, 1958 addition; camera pointed west

Photo 32 of 33 VA_CityofRichmond_HickoryHillSchool_0032

Dedication marker at east entrance, 1938 school

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Photo 33 of 33 VA_CityofRichmond_HickoryHillSchool_0033

West grounds; camera pointed northwest

Figures (See Continuation Sheets)

1. Hickory Hill, Ann M. Dyer's School Report to the Freedmen's Bureau, September 26, 1869.
Source: National Archives, NARA Publication Number M1056, Roll 17
2. Hickory Hill, Ann M. Dyer school report to the Freedmen's Bureau, September, 1869.
Source: National Archives, NARA Publication Number M1053, Roll 17
3. Hickory Hill, Chesterfield County, Schedule of Schools, Friend's Freedmen Association of New York, June 30, 1870. Source: National Archives, NARA Publication Number M803, Roll 35
4. Photograph of the 1915 Hickory Hill School building. Source: Virginia Public Schools, Education Commission's Report to the Assembly of Virginia, 1919
5. Photograph of the Hickory Hill School, including the 1925 two-room Shop Building on the left, 1915 four-room frame Hickory Hill School in the center, and the 125 Rosenwald-funded Hickory Hill School to the far right. Source: Archie Richardson Collection, Virginia State University Archives, as found in Bernard Anderson's *History of Hickory Hill*, unpublished manuscript, 2023.
6. Photograph of James Preston Spencer wearing World War I military uniform. Source: Library of Virginia exhibit, "True Son of Freedom, the World War I Experience of James Preston Spencer."
7. 1930 photograph of the Hickory Hill School baseball team on the steps of the 1915 Hickory Hill School building. Source: Bernard R. Anderson, "A History of Chesterfield County Virginia's Hickory Hill School – A 100-Year Legacy," unpublished manuscript, 2023.
8. 1948 photograph of Hickory Hill School teacher, Arthur M. Freeman, and Joint State Teachers, NAACP Salary Equalization and Special School Facilities Committee, including attorneys, Martin A. Martin, Oliver W. Hill, and Spottswood W. Robinson. Source: Norfolk New Journal and Guide, June 26, 1948
9. 1948 photograph of Hickory Hill School Principal James P. Spencer, and Hickory Hill School teachers, Rubye M. DeWitt and Dorothy T. Reese, with attorneys Martin A. Martin and Oliver W. Hill, and head of the Va. Teachers' Association, J. Rupert Picott, discussing the successful outcome of the "Arthur M. Freeman, et al. v. County School Board of Chesterfield County" legal case.
Source: Baltimore Afro-American, December 11, 1948
10. 1948 photograph of the last graduation of the Hickory Hill High School with a student procession in front of the 1938 Hickory Hill School building on the left and the 1915 Hickory Hill School Building on the right. Source: Chesterfield Observer, February 27, 2008

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11. 1957 photograph showing Hickory Hill School Principal James P. Spencer, center, beside Daisy R. Baxter, who would succeed Spencer as principal the following year, along with the other Hickory Hill School teachers who were honored by the Hickory Hill PTA with a surprise party. Source: Norfolk New Journal and Guide, March 30, 1957

12. 1958 photograph showing Principal James P. Spencer, who was honored at his retirement as Principal of Hickory Hill School in 1958. Source: Norfolk New Journal and Guide, July 5, 1958

13. Photograph of James P. Spencer, accompanying his death notice and eulogy in 1960. Source: Norfolk New Journal and Guide, November 12, 1960, page A-17

14. Undated photograph of Hickory Hill School with the 1958 addition. Source: Hickory Hill History Committee.

15. c. 1990 woodblock print of the 1915 Hickory Hill School house by artist Dennis Winston. Source: Hickory Hill History Committee

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for nominations 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.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

Tier 1 – 60-100 hours
Tier 2 – 120 hours
Tier 3 – 230 hours
Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.

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[Ed. Form, No. 3.]

TEACHER'S MONTHLY

SCHOOL REPORT

For the month of Sept 26, 1869.

District or County, Chesterfield

State, Virginia

Name of School, Hickory Hill

Name of Teacher, Ann M. Dyer

Figure 1. "Hickory Hill," Ann M. Dyer's Teacher's Monthly School Report to the Freedmen's Bureau. September 26, 1869. Source: National Archives, NARA Publication Number M1056, Roll 17.

[Ed. Form, No. 3.]

TEACHER'S MONTHLY SCHOOL REPORT

For the Month of Sept 26, 1869.

Age-To contain one entire calendar month, and to be forwarded as early as possible after the close of the month.
Age-A school under the direct control of one Teacher, or a Teacher with one Assistant, is to be reported as one school.

Name of your School, Hickory Hill Location (town, county, or district)? Chesterfield Co.

Is it a Day or Night School? Day Of what grade? _____

When did your present session commence? 1st day When is close? _____

Is your School supported wholly by an Educational Society? No What Society? _____

Is your School supported wholly by local School Board? No Name of Board or Com.? _____ Am't pd. this month? _____

Is your School supported in part by local School Board? No Name of Board or Com.? _____ Am't pd. this month? _____

Is your School supported wholly by Freedmen? No Amount paid this month? _____

Is your School supported in part by Freedmen? No Amount paid this month? _____

Have you had Bureau transportation this term? No

Who owns the School building? People

Is rent paid by Freedmen's Bureau? No

What number of Teachers and Assistants in your School? 1

Total enrollment for the month? 33

Number enrolled last report? 33

Number left school this month? None

Number new Scholars this month? _____

What is the average attendance? 26

Number of Pupils for whom tuition is paid? 26

Number of White Pupils? 32

Number always present? 32

Number absent? 1

Number over 10 years of age? 26

Number in Alphabet? 26

Number who spell, and read easy lessons? 26

Number in advanced readers? 8

Number in Geography? 18

Number in Arithmetic? 18

Number in higher branches? 15

Number in Writing? 15

Number in Needle-work? _____

Number free before the war? _____

Have you a Sabbath School? _____

Have you an Industrial School? _____

State the kind of work done? _____

How much per month?

White? _____ Colored? 32

Male? 33 Female? 32

(Number enrolled last report, by adding new scholars and subtracting those left school, must equal the present total enrollment.)

Schools are to be kept open _____ days per week, and at least _____ hours each day.

How many hours have you taught per day? _____

How many days have you taught this month? _____

Give reasons for deficiency of time, (if any), in teaching.

How many Teachers? _____ How many Pupils? _____

How many Teachers? _____ How many Pupils? _____

To the following questions give exact or approximate answers, prefixing to the latter the word "about."

1. Do you know of any Schools for Refugees or Freedmen not reported to the State Superintendent? _____ How many? _____

2. Give (estimated) whole number of pupils in all such Schools? _____ No. of Teachers _____ White _____ Colored _____

3. Do you know of Sabbath Schools not reported to the State Superintendent? _____ How many? _____

4. Give (estimated) whole number of pupils in all such Schools? _____ No. of Teachers _____ White _____ Colored _____

5. State the public sentiment towards Colored Schools. _____

6. How many pupils in your School are members of a Temperance Society? _____ Name of the Society? New York Friends

Remarks: _____

(Signed) Ann M. Dyer Teacher.

* Or School Committee, either District, Town, City, County, or State.
† A pupil is not to be reported as enrolled until after five days' attendance.

Figure 2. "Hickory Hill," Ann M. Dyer's Teacher's Monthly School Report to the Freedmen's Bureau. September, 1869. Source: National Archives, NARA Publication Number M1053, Roll 17.

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(Ed. Form No. 5.)

SCHEDULE OF SCHOOLS under the *Friend's Freedmen Ass'n of N.Y.* in State of *Virginia*
rental account for the *Quarter* ending *June 30th*, 1870

| Location of School— City, Town, or County. | Name of Teacher. | No. months employed in teaching. | Average No. Pupils. | | | Rent of School- building per mo. | Amount. | |
|-----------------------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------|------------|-------------|-------------------------------------|-----------|--|
| | | | <i>Apr.</i> | <i>May</i> | <i>June</i> | | | |
| <i>Richmond City</i> | <i>Annie M. Jones</i> | <i>3</i> | <i>46</i> | <i>40</i> | <i>38</i> | <i>10</i> | <i>30</i> | |
| " | <i>Augusta M. Woodbury</i> | <i>3</i> | <i>34</i> | <i>31</i> | <i>29</i> | <i>10</i> | <i>31</i> | |
| " | <i>Allen M. Prescott</i> | <i>3</i> | <i>44</i> | <i>41</i> | <i>38</i> | <i>10</i> | <i>30</i> | |
| " | <i>C.D. Hippe</i> | <i>3</i> | <i>56</i> | <i>59</i> | <i>49</i> | <i>10</i> | <i>30</i> | |
| <i>Randall Farm Henric Co.</i> | <i>Mary B. Bowman</i> | <i>1</i> | <i>21</i> | | | <i>20</i> | <i>20</i> | |
| " | <i>Sarah A. Bowman</i> | <i>1</i> | <i>20</i> | | | | | |
| <i>Gravel Hill "</i> | <i>Julia M. Shore</i> | <i>3</i> | <i>30</i> | <i>30</i> | <i>30</i> | <i>10</i> | <i>30</i> | |
| <i>Amherst "</i> | <i>Marilla M. Chapman</i> | <i>1</i> | <i>18</i> | <i>18</i> | | <i>10</i> | <i>10</i> | |
| <i>Oliver Hill Chesterfield Co.</i> | <i>Silas Peterson</i> | <i>3</i> | <i>40</i> | <i>45</i> | <i>42</i> | <i>20</i> | <i>60</i> | |
| " | <i>James H. Gary</i> | <i>3</i> | <i>40</i> | <i>48</i> | <i>40</i> | | | |
| <i>Hickory Hill "</i> | <i>Anna Maria Williams</i> | <i>3</i> | <i>23</i> | <i>33</i> | <i>25</i> | <i>10</i> | <i>30</i> | |
| " | <i>W. A. L.</i> | <i>2</i> | <i>21</i> | <i>45</i> | <i>46</i> | <i>10</i> | <i>20</i> | |

Figure 3. "Hickory Hill, Chesterfield County, Schedule of Schools." Friend's Freedmen Association of New York, June 30, 1870. Source: National Archives, NARA Publication Number M803, Roll 35.

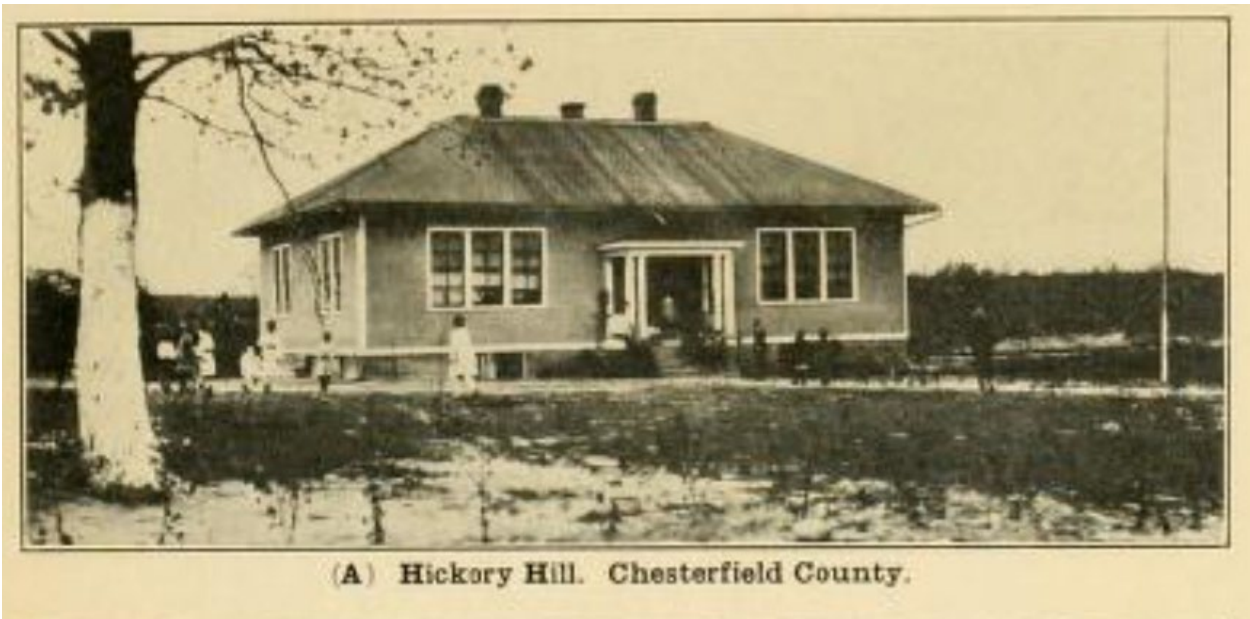


Figure 4. Photograph of the 1915 Hickory Hill School building. Source: Virginia Public Schools, Education Commission's Report to the Assembly of Virginia, 1919.

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Figure 5. Photograph of the Hickory Hill School, including the 1925 two-room Shop Building on the left, 1915 four-room frame Hickory Hill School in the center, and the 1925 Rosenwald-funded Hickory Hill School to the far right. Source: Archie Richardson Collection, Virginia State University Archives, as found in Bernard R. Anderson, *A History of Chesterfield County Virginia's Hickory Hill School – A 100-Year Legacy*, unpublished manuscript, 2023.

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Figure 6. Photograph of James Preston Spencer wearing his World War I military uniform. Source: Library of Virginia exhibit "True Son of Freedom, the World War I Experience of James Preston Spencer."

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Hickory Hill Baseball Team - 1930

Figure 7. 1930 photograph of the Hickory Hill School baseball team on the steps of the 1915 Hickory Hill School building. Source: Bernard R. Anderson, *A History of Chesterfield County Virginia's Hickory Hill School – A 100-Year Legacy*, unpublished manuscript, 2023.

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They Meet To Plan School Facilities And Salary Equalization Cases

New Journal and Guide (1916-); Jun 26, 1948;

ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Black Newspaper Collection
pg. 3

They Meet To Plan School Facilities And Salary Equalization Cases



Shown are members of the Joint State Teachers-NAACP Salary Equalization and Special School Facilities Committee who met in the headquarters office of the Virginia Teachers Association, Richmond on Sunday, June 13. From left to right are W. Lester Banks, executive secretary, Virginia State Conference, NAACP, Richmond; Dr. S. F. Coppage, treasurer, State NAACP, Norfolk; Arthur M. Freeman and Attorney Roland Ealey, Richmond, not members of the committee; H. Arnold Taylor, Lawrenceville, president, Virginia Teachers Association; J. Rupert Picott, Richmond, executive secretary, Virginia Teachers Association; Dr. Luther P. Jackson, Petersburg, secretary of civic education, Virginia Teachers Association; Attorneys Martin A. Martin, Oliver W. Hill, Spottswood W. Robinson of the law firm of Hill, Martin and Robinson, Richmond; H. E. Fauntleroy, Petersburg, secretary, State NAACP; and Dr. J. M. Tinsley, Richmond, president, Virginia State Conference, NAACP.

The demand for equality of educational facilities and opportunities is being actively supported by local parents organizations, the Virginia State Conference and local branches of the NAACP and the Virginia Teachers Association and other groups. Suits recently decided on, now pending in federal courts involve Surry, King George, Gloucester, Chesterfield, Arlington, Pulaski and Sussex counties. There is definite equalization activity in 31 other Virginia counties and 10 cities. The lawyers have recently investigated alleged discriminatory educational practices in twenty-one of these counties and eight cities, including among others, Caroline, Cumberland, Goochland, Greensville, Halifax, King and Queen, Buckingham, Lunenburg, Madison, Mecklenburg, Princess Anne, Southampton, and Frederick counties and the cities of Clifton Forge, Portsmouth, South Boston, Alexandria, Richmond and Winchester.

Figure 8. 1948 photograph of Hickory Hill School teacher Arthur M. Freeman and Joint State Teachers, NAACP Salary Equalization and Special School Facilities Committee, including attorneys, Martin A. Martin, Oliver W. Hill, and Spottswood W. Robinson. Source: *Norfolk New Journal and Guide*, June 26, 1948.

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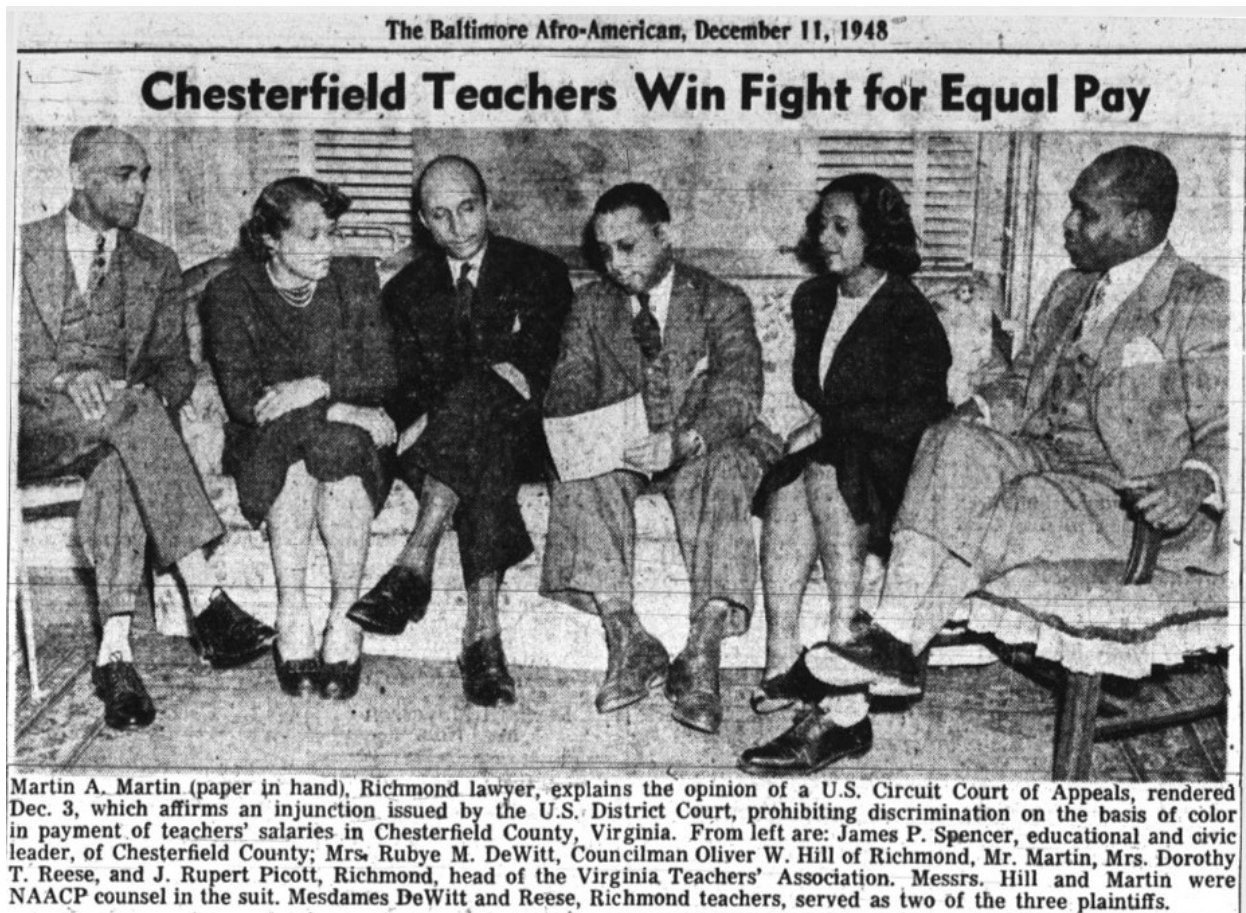


Figure 9. 1948 photograph of Hickory Hill School Principal James P. Spencer, and Hickory Hill School teachers, Rubye M. DeWitt and Dorothy T. Reese, with attorneys Martin A. Martin and Oliver W. Hill, and head of the Va. Teachers' Association, J. Rupert Picott, discussing the successful outcome of the "Arthur M. Freeman, et al. v. County School Board of Chesterfield County" legal case. Source: *Baltimore Afro-American*, December 11, 1948.

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Figure 10. 1948 photograph of the last graduation of the Hickory Hill High School with a student procession in front of the 1938 Hickory Hill School building on the left and the 1915 Hickory Hill School building on the right. Source: *Chesterfield Observer*, February 27, 2008.

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JOURNAL AND GUIDE

**Hickory Hill Teachers Honored At Surprise Party**

The teachers of Hickory Hill School in Chesterfield county were recently at a surprise party sponsored by the Hickory Hill PTA. The teachers received gifts and a large cake with the name of each faculty member inscribed on it. Members of the faculty are shown above.

Reading from left to right: Mrs. Indiana B. Rudd, Mrs. Dorothy M. Tay-

lor, Mrs. Rosa Lee Johnson, Mrs. Marin L. Yates, Mrs. Daisy R. Baxter, teachers; James P. Spencer, principal; Mrs. Hilda Young, retiring president of Hickory Hill School PTA; Mrs. P. A. Walker, Mrs. Madeline H. Washington, Mrs. Grace H. Harrison, Mrs. Thelma B. Gordon, and Mrs. Annie B. Cheatham, teachers of Hickory Hill School, Chesterfield county, Va.

Figure 11. 1957 photograph showing Hickory Hill School Principal James P. Spencer, center, beside Daisy R. Baxter, who would succeed Spencer as principal the following year, along with the other Hickory Hill School teachers who were honored by the Hickory Hill PTA with a surprise party. Source: *Norfolk New Journal and Guide*, March 30, 1957.

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Virginia State News: James Spencer Honored As Retiring Principal

New Journal and Guide (1916-); Jul 5, 1958;

ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Black Newspaper Collection

pg. 4

Virginia State News

James Spencer Honored As Retiring Principal

RICHMOND — James Preston Spencer, retiring this year as principal of the Hickory Hill elementary school in Chesterfield county, was honored by the Chesterfield County Teachers Association with an appreciation service at Mt. Olive Baptist Church.

During the service, Mr. Spencer received many awards which make possible a \$1,000 European tour. This tour is made available through the Virginia Teachers Association in recognition of many years of loyal and faithful service to the organization.

MR. SPENCER is a World War I veteran. He is active in The Inter-Church Movement, Boys Work Committee, Youngstown, Ohio, and Richmond, Va.; Chesterfield County Teachers Association, Third District Teachers Association and the Virginia Teachers Association. On many occasions he has been called to serve as spokesman at the Virginia General Assembly and gatherings designed for the promotion of human rights.

In 1949, Mr. Spencer was cited by "We the People" of New York for the best letter of the year, "They Smack Not of Democracy". In 1954 the Alpha Metal of Citizenship was awarded him for ardent civic and community activities.

DURING the appreciation service, a biography of the honoree was given by Mrs. M. F. Christian, supervisor of elementary schools. Other speakers and subjects were the honoree as: "A P. T. A. Member," Mrs. Mildred Sturdevant; "A Citizen," Mrs. Helen Haskins; "A Church Member," the Rev. George Smith; "As Administrator," Vernard Henley; "As Association Member," L. T. Binford.

The main address was made

by Dr. J. M. Ellison, chancellor of Virginia Union University, who was introduced by Miss M. E. McWilliams, a teacher in the Carver high school. Presentations were made on behalf of the pupils of Chesterfield county by Miss Betty Davis, Hickory Hill PTA by Mrs. Prettie H. Libron and Chesterfield County Teachers Association, by Mrs. Ruby Frazier, president.

SHARING the spotlight with Mr. Spencer was his wife, Mrs. Eric C. Spencer. She was presented a corsage and a hat designed by PTA members, Mrs. Eloise Fisher, and Mrs. Prettie Libron.

Other participants were the Rev. Bishop Gordon, Miss Mozelle Archer, W. C. Cooke, Parnell Avery, and Charles Haskins.

Mr. Spencer will join 15 other VTA members who will leave on June 27th for a 35 day tour of ten countries in Europe.



Gift For Hickory Hill Principal

James Preston Spencer, retiring principal of Hickory Hill elementary school in Chesterfield county, receives an honorarium toward a European tour from Mrs. Ruby Frazier, president of Chesterfield County Teachers Association during an appreciation service held recently in his honor. (Crawley Photo)

Figure 12. 1958 photograph showing Principal James P. Spencer, who was honored at his retirement as Principal of Hickory Hill School in 1958. Source: *Norfolk New Journal and Guide*, July 5, 1958.

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JAMES P. SPENCER
Eulogized.

Ex-President Of State Voters League Mourned

RICHMOND — James P. Spencer, president emeritus of the Virginia Voters League Inc., died Nov. 4 after an illness of several months. He was a hospital patient most of the time.

Funeral service was held Monday, Nov. 7, at Mt. Olivet Baptist church at Stop 12 on the Petersburg Pike at 6 p.m.

MR. SPENCER was a retired school teacher, having spent a number of years as teacher and principal. He was principal of the Hickory school in Chesterfield county and was serving in this capacity when he resigned a few years ago.

He served as president of the Virginia Voters League twice. He had to resign after his health failed over a year ago. He was one of the pioneers in the organization of the Virginia Voters League.

Mr. Spencer was highly honored when he retired. A testimonial was held in the Hickory school with several prominent speakers appearing on the program. He was deeply interested in increasing the voting strength of the residents of Virginia and used his influence and time to help with such campaigns.

Figure 13. Photograph of James P. Spencer, accompanying his death notice and eulogy in 1960. Source: *Norfolk New Journal and Guide*, November 12, 1960, page A-17.

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Figure 14. Undated photograph of Hickory Hill School with the 1958 addition. Source: Hickory Hill History Committee.

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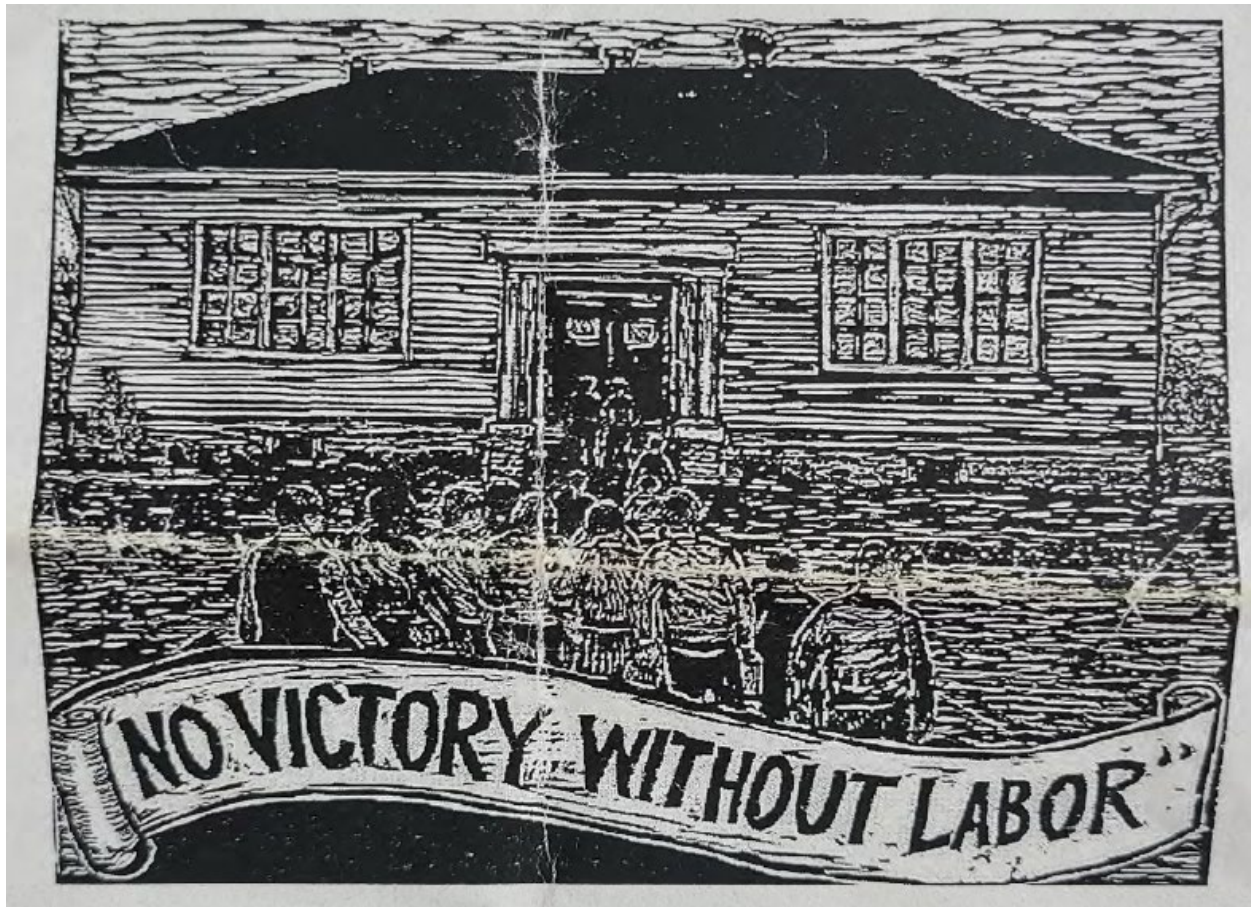


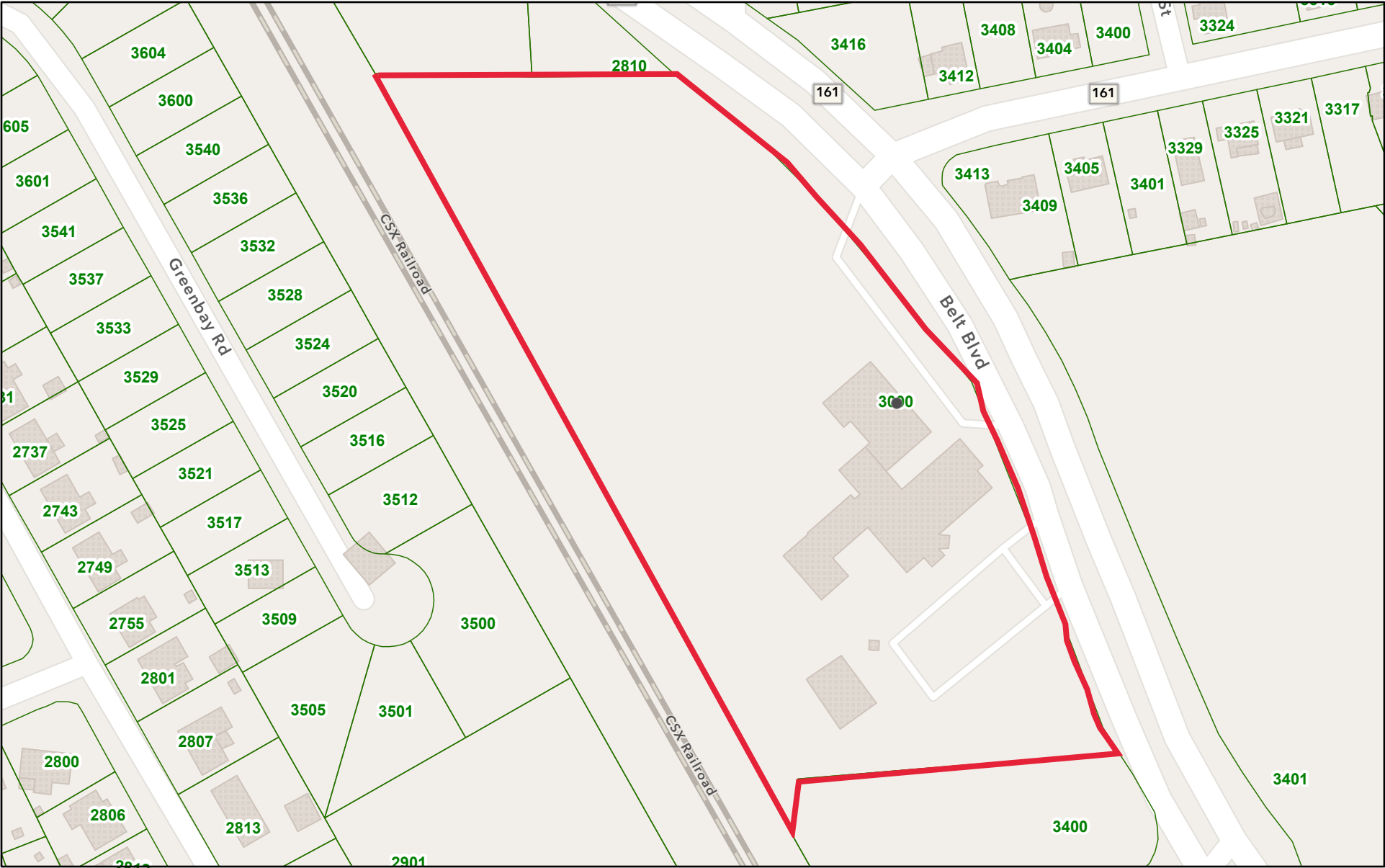
Figure 15. c. 1990 woodblock print of the 1915 Hickory Hill School house by artist Dennis Winston.
Source: Hickory Hill History Committee.

Hickory Hill School #127-0434

Location Map

3000 E. Belt Boulevard, Richmond, VA 23234 Parcel #C0090612020

Latitude: 37.47987476 Longitude: -77.46133365



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CityBoundary

Parcel Boundary

Parcels

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CityBoundary



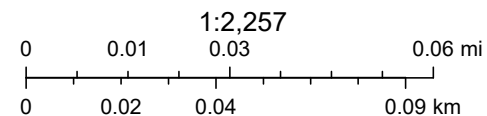
Parcel Boundary



Parcels



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Hickory Hill School #127-0434

Sketch Map

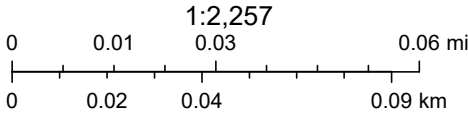
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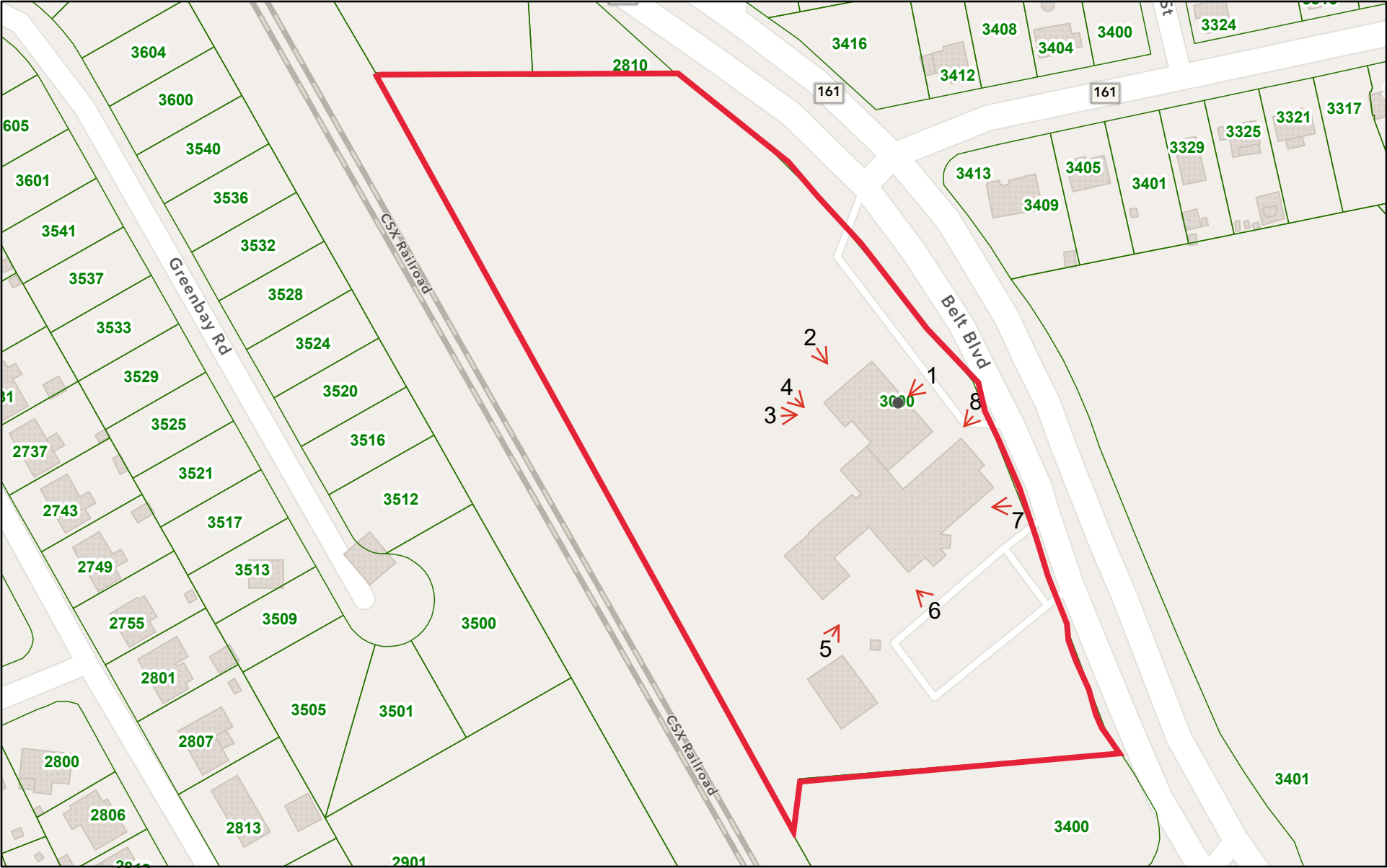
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- Parcel Boundary
- Parcels



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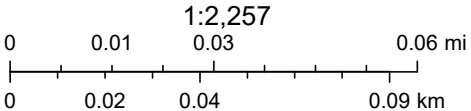
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Hickory Hill School Photo Key
3000 E. Belt Boulevard, Richmond, VA 23234
Parcel #C0090612020



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-  CityBoundary
-  Parcel Boundary
-  Parcels



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