

Virginia Department of Historic Resources PIF Resource Information Sheet

This information sheet is designed to provide the Virginia Department of Historic Resources with the necessary data to be able to evaluate the significance of the property for possible listing in the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places. This is not a formal nomination, but a necessary step in determining whether or not the property could be considered eligible for listing. Please take the time to fill in as many fields as possible. A greater number of completed fields will result in a more timely and accurate assessment. Staff assistance is available to answer any questions you have in regards to this form.

General Property Information	For Staff Use Only DHR ID #: 002-1056
Property Name(s): <u>St. John School</u>	
Property Date(s): <u>1922-23</u> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Circa <input type="checkbox"/> Pre <input type="checkbox"/> Post Open to Public? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Limited <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	
Property Address: <u>1569 St. John Rd.</u> City: <u>Gordonsville</u> Zip: <u>22957</u>	
County or Ind. City: <u>Albemarle County</u> USGS Quad(s):	

Physical Character of General Surroundings
Acreage: <u>2.0</u> Setting (choose one): <input type="checkbox"/> Urban <input type="checkbox"/> Town <input type="checkbox"/> Village <input type="checkbox"/> Suburban <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Rural <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation Corridor
Site Description Notes/Notable Landscape Features: The school is located in a relatively open landscape. There are a few larger trees surrounding the school and smaller shrubs and bushes around the exterior. A large open field is located to the rear of the property.
Secondary Resource Description (Briefly describe any other structures (or archaeological sites) that may contribute to the significance of the property: There is a well located to the south of the structure.
Ownership Category: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Public-Local <input type="checkbox"/> Public-State <input type="checkbox"/> Public-Federal

Individual Resource Information
What was the historical use of this resource? Examples include: Dwelling, Grist Mill, Bridge, Store, Tobacco Barn, etc... <u>School</u>
What is the current use? (if other than the historical use) <u>Vacant</u>
Architectural style or elements of styles: <u>Vernacular</u>
Architect, builder, or original owner: <u>Samuel L. Smith (Fund Director)</u>
of stories <u>1</u> Condition: <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fair <input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated <input type="checkbox"/> Poor <input type="checkbox"/> Ruins <input type="checkbox"/> Rebuilt <input type="checkbox"/> Renovated
Are there any known threats to this property?

Resource Component Information

Please answer the following questions regarding the individual components of the resource. If the component does not exist, answer “n/a.” If you feel uncomfortable in answering the question, please leave the space blank. Photographs of the features can also help our staff identify specific feature components. Usually, priority is given to describing features on the primary (front) facade of the structure.

Foundation: Describe the foundation that supports the structure. Examples include piers, continuous brick, poured concrete. The foundation is a stretcher bond brick foundation with fieldstone pillars in crawlspace.

Structure: Describe the primary structural component of the resource. Include primary material used. Examples include log, frame (sawn lumber), and brick. Also include the treatment, such as a particular brick bond or type of framing, if known. The building has a T-shaped footprint and is of wood frame construction.

Walls: Describe the exterior wall covering such as beaded weatherboard or asbestos shingles. Aluminum siding with wood frame weatherboard possibly still beneath.

Windows: Describe the number, material, and form of the primary windows. This includes the number of panes per sash, what the sashes are made of, and how the sashes operate (are they hinged or do they slide vertically) Have the windows been replaced? Replaced 9/9 and 6/6 double hung vinyl sash windows.

Porch: Briefly describe the primary (front) porch. List the primary material, shape of the porch roof, and other defining details. Inset porch front entrance (originally there were two).

Roof: Describe the roof, listing the shape and the covering material. Standing seam side gabled tin roof.

Chimney(s): List the number of chimneys and the materials used. Include the brick bond pattern if possible. Central stretcher bond brick chimney (original – c.1922) and exterior cinder block chimney on south wall (c.1960s).

Architectural Description of Individual Resource: *(Please describe architectural patterns, types, features, additions, remodelings, or other alterations. A sketch of the current floor plan would be appreciated.)*

The St. John School is an early 1920s Rosenwald School built for the Gordonsville area serving the African American community. The building was built in 1922-23 with the T-shaped footprint seeming to follow Rosenwald Schools plan number 20, a two-room, two-teacher school. After the school's closing in 1954 it was purchased by a private owner and converted into their residence until St. John Baptist Church located just north of the School bought the 2.0 acre property in 2003. The current condition of the St. John School is good.

The St. John School is a five bay, one story, wood frame building. It has a parged brick foundation, which is no longer visible due to a thin layer of concrete plastered over the exterior. There is a standing seam, gabled tin roof. Two bays are on either side of a central projecting bay, forming the industrial room. Two double hung 6/6 vinyl sash windows, with blue-grey trim are located on either end of the west facing front façade. Just north of the central projecting bay (second bay from the left) there is a small, double hung 6/6-vinyl sash window, also with blue-grey trim. Based off of the Rosenwald School plan number 20, and the account of former student Rebecca Kinney, this window exists where an original door once stood, providing an entrance to the northern classroom. Evidence of the door is no longer visible, except in the concrete steps that lead up to the side of the building, directly under this small window. The second bay from the right is where the front entrance is located. There is an inset entrance porch. The door is not original to the building and dates to the period where the building was used as a private residence. The replaced door exists where an original door once stood. The inset porch has concrete step and a wooden railing, both painted blue-grey. The central, front gabled projecting bay consists of a single bank of three 9/9 double hung vinyl sash windows. The original central interior chimney is visible directly over the central projecting bay.

On the north elevation there is a small rectangular wood door inserted into the brick foundation acting as the access point to the crawlspace. Within the crawlspace the original fieldstone foundation pillars are still visible.

In the rear, the building (the east side) has three banks of 9/9 double hung vinyl sash windows (identical to those of the industrial room), one door and a pair of smaller windows. The pair of smaller windows and the door occupies the far left bay also where a small wood deck has been added. From the rear an exterior cinder block chimney is visible, standing on the south side of the building. The chimney dates to the late 1950s-early 1960s as the chimney for the kitchen of the private residence. It could be probable that here the door and pair of windows exist there originally was another bank of three 9/9 double hung vinyl sash windows. All of the exterior windows are not original, however the existing ones are mostly of same size, shape, and location as the originals.

The footprint of the interior space in the St. John School has been altered since its original construction in 1922. The now only front entrance leads into the southern classroom, which has been divided into two smaller rooms with a east-west running partitioning wall. The same can be found in the northern classroom. This wall was added when the structure was converted into a private home, after the schools closing. The plaster wall dividing the building into its two classrooms is original, matching the buildings outer plaster walls. The majority of these plaster walls have painted wood bead-board wainscoting with chair rails and baseboard trim. There is the original approximately 3-inch wide wood flooring running north south throughout, with strong evidence of staining and wear and tear. The interior doors are wood and have wood trim at the doorframes. The replacement windows have been installed in the original openings and retain the wood window trim and narrow sill above the bead-board wainscoting. The ceiling throughout is finished with painted wood bead-board.

The industrial room leads off of the both classrooms. This is of similar finish as the classrooms, but has a brick chimney in the center of its east wall where the central stove once stood. The chimney has two openings, one leading into each of the individual classrooms, which provided heat to the school.

Each of the two classrooms has a large walk-through closet on their west walls. These closet walls are clad in wood siding, resembling the possible original exterior.

The northern classrooms original entrance from the front has been closed in and turned into another smaller closet for storage. Within this space the original exterior wood siding has been preserved. This is also the location of the attic access.

The physical integrity of architectural fabric on the exterior and interior is relatively good. Through there have been alterations made, such as the partition walls, and the addition of electricity, the 1920s wainscoting, flooring, and various other features are still in place.

Significance Statement: Briefly note any significant events, personages, and/or families associated with the property. (Detailed family genealogies are not necessary.) Please list all sources of information. It is not necessary to attach lengthy articles or genealogies to this form. Normally, only information contained on this form will be posted for consideration by the State Review Board.

The St. John Schoolhouse is listed by the Fiske University as having received Rosenwald funds and served the African American community from its opening in 1923 until it closed its doors in 1954. It received \$700 from the Rosenwald fund in 1922 for its construction, and cost a total of \$2,500 to build. According to the Fiske University Rosenwald Fund Card File Database St. John School's source of funds is broken down into four categories. The first, being the Rosenwald fund with the previously stated \$700. The largest contribution came from the public, with \$1,300, while the African American community provided \$400 and the white community contributing \$100.

It originally was given two acres and was designed as a two-room teacher classroom. It follows Samuel Smith's floor plan number twenty from the Rosenwald Fund Office. The St. John School was one of seven built in Albemarle County that received Rosenwald Funds. Four of these schools, including St. John's, were two-room schools. St. John's was built during the same budget year as Crismon, Rivanna, and Whiteville, all also in Albemarle County

The building is relevant as a center of early African American education in the South. The Rosenwald fund contributed to the building of over 5,000 schools in the South. They were built in 83% of Virginia's counties, in mostly rural areas. The Rosenwald fund was important to the advancements of African American education. Before the Rosenwald fund began to build schools, African Americans had limited access to schools, and the buildings were often in poor condition and only operated for a few months every year. The Rosenwald schools were such pivotal contributions to these areas that they often served multiple uses, first as a school and then second also as a community center.

The concept of universal public education took root in Virginia with the new Virginia constitution of 1896 that provided a universal, but segregated system of public education for all. Prior to this change schools were generally either private institutions or sponsored by religious organizations and were not available to most children in Virginia, especially African Americans. The Julius Rosenwald Fund was founded in order to use private money to create a foundation for the availability of public funds in order to improve the education of African Americans in the South.

The St. John School in particular, is recalled in a 2009 article published by "The Hook", but a former student, Rebecca Kinney. According to the article, the Albemarle County Historic Preservation Committee intended to collect oral histories of the building for an alumni reunion, upon completion of a renovation.

In "The Hook" article from 2009, Rebecca Kinney recounts the deep contrasts between her time at St. John School and a typical day of school for an elementary student today. Children would arrive before the school day would start in order to aid in the stoking of the fire. In addition St. John did not have central plumbing or electricity until its conversion into a private residence in the late 1950s, so the children would use the outhouses located behind the school where a parking lot now have been built. In a recent conversation on January 12, 2017 she recalls the environment of the classroom. During her time at St. John there was only one classroom being used, while the second she believes was used for storage. The class was taught by one teacher, and consisted of all ages from 1st through 6th grade. Ms. Kinney mentions the fact that the older children would aid the younger ones in activities they did not understand in order to help the teacher out.

The school matches the description of a Rosenwald school in the National Register Multiple Property Documentation Form. The windows were placed on opposite sides, facing east west, which was dictated by Samuel Smith, the director of the fund beginning in 1920. "Smith was particularly concerned with the maximization of natural light, providing alternative plans for each design to endure an east-west orientation. His plans call for tall, double hung sash windows and dictated paint colors, seating arrangements, window

treatments and blackboard placement,” in an effort to make these schools functional in places where electricity was not always available. The school also matches the description of a Rosenwald School, in that “Rosenwald schools were essentially modest, wood-frame buildings...stylistic details are minimal...” and the school retains its original location as a rural setting and the design, floor plan, workmanship and materials are (or resemble in some cases) of the period of construction and the conditions of the time.

One of the most recognizable architectural features of the Rosenwald Schools were large banks of windows, which can be seen on both the west and east front of St. John School. The large windows providing significant amounts of light to the classrooms even on a cloudy day allowed the children to come to school more frequently, while the central stove in St. John’s front industrial room provided the necessary heat to continue school through the colder months.

St. John School served as a school to the community from 1923 until it closed its doors in 1954, when the students had to start traveling 30 minutes into Charlottesville for school. The building was used as a private home until 2003 when the neighboring St. John Baptist Church purchased the property as a part of an effort to construct a new sanctuary.

Legal Owner(s) of the Property (For more than one owner, please use a separate sheet.)			
Mr. <input type="checkbox"/>	Mrs. <input type="checkbox"/>	Dr. <input type="checkbox"/>	
Miss <input type="checkbox"/>	Ms. <input type="checkbox"/>	Hon. <input type="checkbox"/>	
_____		(Name)	(Firm)
_____		(Address)	(City) (State) (Zip Code)
_____		(Email Address)	(Daytime telephone including area code)
Owner's Signature: _____		Date: _____	
•• Signature required for processing all applications. ••			
In the event of corporate ownership you must provide the name and title of the appropriate contact person.			
Contact person: _____			
Daytime Telephone: ()			

Applicant Information (Individual completing form if other than legal owner of property)			
Mr. <input type="checkbox"/>	Mrs. <input type="checkbox"/>	Dr. <input type="checkbox"/>	
Miss <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Ms. <input type="checkbox"/>	Hon. <input type="checkbox"/>	
_____		(Name)	(Firm)
2801 Kensington Ave		Richmond	VA 23221
_____		(Address)	(City) (State) (Zip Code)
hng2cy@virginia.edu / marc.wagner@dhr.virginia.gov		(804)-482-6099	
_____		(Email Address) (Daytime telephone including area code)	
Applicant's Signature: _____		Date: 01-20-2017	

Notification			
In some circumstances, it may be necessary for DHR to confer with or notify local officials of proposed listings of properties within their jurisdiction. In the following space, please provide the contact information for the local County Administrator or City Manager.			
Mr. <input type="checkbox"/>	Mrs. <input type="checkbox"/>	Dr. <input type="checkbox"/>	
Miss <input type="checkbox"/>	Ms. <input type="checkbox"/>	Hon. <input type="checkbox"/>	
_____		(Name)	(Position)
_____		(Locality)	(Address)
(City)	(State)	(Zip Code)	(Daytime telephone including area code)

Please use the following space to explain why you are seeking an evaluation of this property.

Would you be interested in the State and/or the Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credits? Yes No
 Would you be interested in the easement program? Yes No