



**PRELIMINARY INFORMATION FORM (PIF) for INDIVIDUAL PROPERTIES**

**DHR No. (to be completed by DHR staff)** 043-0741

**Purpose of Evaluation**

Please use the following space to explain briefly why you are seeking an evaluation of this property. The owners are interested in state and federal historic designation.

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

Are you interested in receiving more information about DHR's easement program? Yes  No \*

\*There may be potential interest in RTC and easement in the future.

**1. General Property Information**

Property name: Gravel Hill School

Property address: 5417 Long Bridge Road

City or Town: Henrico

Zip code: 23231

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

Category of Property (choose only one of the following):

Building  Site  Structure  Object

**2. Physical Aspects**

Acreage: 4 acres

Setting (choose only one of the following):

Urban  Suburban  Town  Village  Hamlet  Rural

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

The school is located in a rural area of eastern Henrico County. It is in the small community of Gravel Hill. The area has a cluster of about ten older buildings and some farm fields. There is some new residential development occurring in the area immediate to the community.

**3. Architectural Description**

Architectural Style(s): Colonial Revival

If the property was designed by an architect, landscape architect, engineer, or other professional, please list here: Unknown/Rosenwald Funded

If the builder is known, please list here: Unknown

Date of construction (can be approximate): 1931-32

**Narrative Description:**

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

The school is the only building on the current parcel. It is set back from Long Bridge Road and features a semi circular driveway on the primary elevation side of the building. The parcel is flat with grass cover. There are several large deciduous trees adjacent to the school. There is a playground area with light equipment and a brick sign that is directly in front of the school.

The building is a one-story brick building under a complex hipped metal roof. The primary elevation is five bays wide, including four large triple unit bays. The entrance is recessed with arched brickwork.. There are two brick flues. The entrance features double doors that are multi-paneled with a glazed upper area. The individual window units are original wood double hung six over six sash. There are large window bays on the sides and rear of the school with evidence that the rear had two access doors. There is a protected entrance vestibule on the primary entrance and the main entrance consists of two door leaves with a decorative fanlight above.

The interior features an entrance lobby that leads to a large central Assembly space off of which are three classrooms. The original fourth classroom has been sacrificed to provide a restroom and a kitchen.

The exterior brick, trim, roof are all in excellent condition with high integrity. All of the original 6/6 double hung sash windows are in place. The interior also features original trim: classrooms with wainscoting and black boards, closets, in-wall shelving, and above-door transoms (covered over). There is a later tile floor, most likely over some of the original wood flooring.

The brick bond has alternating courses with dark headers. The roof hip is over the front and side elevations with a flat section over the Assembly Room. There were two rear doors with small bracket supported hoods. One of the entrances was closed, bricked over. The heating was provided by stove. There are two large stove flues, each shared by two classrooms.

Briefly describe any outbuildings or secondary resources (such as barns, sheds, dam and mill pond, storage tanks, scales, railroad spurs, etc.), including their condition and their estimated construction dates. There is a playground area with equipment, a basketball court and a baseball field..

**4. Property's History and Significance**

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

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

Gravel Hill School is one of four Rosenwald funded schools in Henrico County. The four included Gravel Hill, Fair Oaks, a three teacher plan (1925-26), Quioccasin, a three teacher plan (1922-23), and Virginia Randolph School, a ten teacher plan (1929-30). Gravel Hill and the Randolph School, built later than the first two are very substantial brick buildings. Randolph survives and is still being used as a County School (2204 Mountain Rd, Glen Allen, VA 23060). Fair Oaks and Quioccasin are likely not extant, although thorough survey has not been conducted to confirm their original locations.

The current Gravel Hill School replaced a gabled roof frame building that may have been built in 1866. The origins of the Gravel Hill are founded in one of the oldest free African American communities in Virginia. John Pleasants, Sr., a landowner in eastern Henrico County and Quaker, requested in his will that his slaves be freed when each became 30 years old. Pleasants died in 1771, but it was not until 1782 that some of his slaves gained freedom when the Virginia General Assembly approved private manumissions. His son, Robert Pleasants, and a few other heirs freed close to 100 slaves in multiple counties. Robert Pleasants attempted to get all of the family to honor the will's stipulations, which culminated in 1798 when the Virginia High Court of Chancery heard it as a legal case. Future U.S. Chief Justice John Marshall and John Warden represented Robert Pleasants on behalf of the slaves. In 1799, the court ruled in favor of freeing the slaves. Some of the freed slaves settled nearby on Robert Pleasants's land to form the Gravelly Hill community. By 1801, a Quaker school for blacks was established and following the Civil War, the Gravel Hill Baptist Church was founded (still extant). Gravel Hill School, now used as a Community Center, replaced the older frame building. The school became a facility operated by Henrico County in 1970. In recent years, the Community Center has become a private facility associated with Gravel Hill Baptist Church (Henrico County and VDHR historic markers).

In Gravel Hill, approximately two dozen households are descended from the families that lived here in the 1700s, including the Atkins (or Adkins), the Sikes (or Sykes), the Pleasants, Tylers, Youngs and Bagbys. The Rev. Tyrone Nelson, a member of the Henrico Board of Supervisors at the time of this PIF preparation is a descendant (Sinclair, Style Weekly). The community was in the path of high Civil War activity. The battles of Malvern Hill, Frazier's Farm, and, especially, the adjacent Glendale area, decimated the community and in the reconstruction era, Gravel Hill was reconstituted with its church and the frame school

The 1866 school was located across the street from the 1930s building to the south of the church. Residents had bought the property that the school is now located on in the 1930s. The parcel of land to the right of the existing building was owned the Odd Fellows. There was a building there, possibly an Odd Fellows Hall, that was burned down by what was suspected to be the KKK during the 1960's.

Gravel Hill School is being considered under the Rosenwald Schools in Virginia Multiple Property Document. While more research is needed on the Rosenwald era of the school, on the principals, teachers and students, there is high potential for success under Criterion A, Education and Ethnic Heritage: African American. Constructed within a year after the Virginia Randolph School was finished, there is some possible connection between both of these projects. The highly intact building is a superb example of a substantial brick Rosenwald-funded school. It is recommended for Criterion C, Architecture.

The Rosenwald Fund construction record, copied from the Fisk University Rosenwald School Database notes some basic details:

Historic Name	Gravel Hill School
Current Name	
Building Plan	Four-teacher type
Building Type	School
Budget Year	1931-32
Current Address	

Land (Acreage)	5.00
County	Henrico
State	Virginia
Application #	2-K
Total Cost	\$11485.00
Notes	Ins. \$9,000
Additional Comments	
Funding Sources	
» Negroes	\$500.00
» Public	\$9,785.00
» Rosenwald	\$1,200.00

## **Bibliography**

County of Henrico

Gravel Hill. County Historic Marker

<http://henrico.us/locations/gravel-hill/>

Fisk University Rosenwald Fund Card File Database:

[http://rosenwald.fisk.edu/?module=search.details&set\\_v=aWQ9NDg4OQ==&o=0](http://rosenwald.fisk.edu/?module=search.details&set_v=aWQ9NDg4OQ==&o=0)

Green, Bryan

2003 Rosenwald Schools in Virginia 012-5041

Sinclair, Melissa Scott

2012 “The Descendants: Almost 230 years ago, on a Henrico County farm, they became free. And they never left. Style Weekly.

<http://www.styleweekly.com/richmond/the-descendants/Content?oid=1724271>

Virginia Department of Historic Resources

2002 “Pleasants v. Pleasants.” Virginia Historic Highway Marker

**5. Property Ownership** (Check as many categories as apply):

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

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

name/title:  The Reverend Dr. Ray McKenzie, Jr.

organization:  Gravel Hill Baptist Church

street & number:  5426 Longbridge Road

city or town:  Henrico  state:  VA  zip code:  23231

e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ telephone:  (804) 795-5653

Legal 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)

name/title:  Deacon James Greene/Marc C. Wagner (VDHR)

organization:  Gravel Hill Baptist Church

street & number:  5426 Longbridge Road

city or town:  Henrico  state:  VA  zip code:  23231

e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ telephone:  (804) 795-5668

**6. Notification**

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

name/title:  Tyrone E. Nelson, Supervisor, Varina District

locality:  County of Henrico

street & number:  P. O. Box 90775

city or town:  Henrico  state:  VA  zip code:  23273-0775

telephone:  (804) 501-4208

043-0741

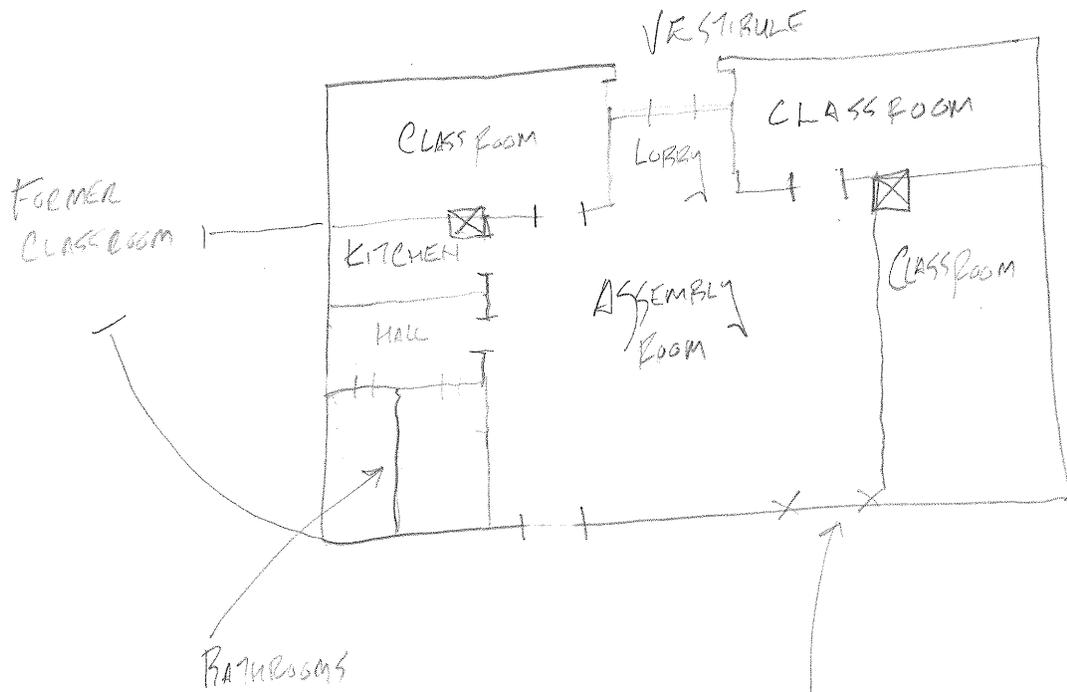


Old Gravel Hill, Henrico County [graphic].

"Following a successful case before the Virginia Court of Appeals in 1777, the slaves of John Pleasants were allowed to follow the dictates of his 1771 will and were freed. His son, Robert Pleasants then gave seventy-eight former slaves 350 acres of his plantation. A community developed known as "Gravelly Hill". Here in 1801, a Quaker school for blacks was established and following the Civil War, the Gravel Hill Baptist Church was founded. Gravel Hill Community center, c 1930, once a public school, became a facility operated by Henrico County in 1970."

GRAVEL HILL SCHOOL  
 HENRICO COUNTY  
 INTERIOR PLAN

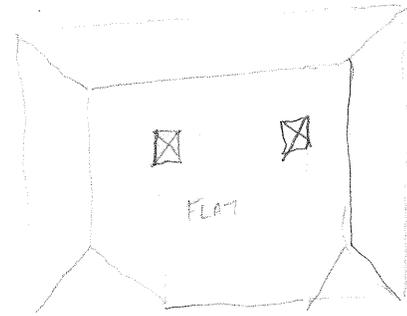
DHR FILE # 043-0741  
 ← NORTH



TOILETS WERE ORIGINALLY  
 OUTHOUSES AT  
 REAR OF BUILDING

FORMER ROAD  
 ENTRANCE

ROOF PROFILE



☒ = STONE FLUES

MCW #/20/17