

United States Department of the Interior
 National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Mica School

Other names/site number: School #4 Chickahominy School District, Mt. Zion School, VDHR File No. 018-0211

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

2. Location

Street & number: 11570 Wilcox Neck Road

City or town: Charles City State: VA County: Charles City County

Not For Publication: N/A Vicinity: X

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

I hereby certify that this X nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A ___ B X C ___ D

<p>_____ Signature of certifying official/Title: <u>Virginia Department of Historic Resources</u> State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>	<p>_____ Date</p>
<p>In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.</p>	
<p>_____ Signature of commenting official:</p>	<p>_____ Date</p>
<p>_____ Title :</p>	<p>_____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>

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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

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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Number of Resources within Property

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

EDUCATION: school

Current Functions

VACANT/NOT IN USE

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

OTHER: Frame school on piers

Materials:

FOUNDATION: BRICK

WALLS: WOOD

ROOF: METAL

Narrative Description

Summary Paragraph

Located on a one-acre parcel near the Mount Zion Baptist Church in Charles City County, Mica School sits in a clearing on a wooded parcel surrounded by a state-managed wildlife area. The one-story frame building rests on brick piers, is clad in weatherboards and has a cross-hipped, standing seam metal roof. "L"-shaped in footprint, the building has a small inset entrance porch on the facade. Numerous six-over-six, wooden, double-hung sash windows provide light to the interior. The interior comprises two rooms and a cloak room, the latter of which is adjacent to the entrance porch. Interior and exterior trim is simple and minimal. The building has electrical service, but no plumbing. Despite some deterioration and missing interior fabric, the school retains its historic integrity. The school building is the only resource on the property.

Narrative Description

Mica School is located on the east side of Wilcox Neck Road on a roughly one-acre parcel that is surrounded on three sides by the Chickahominy State Wildlife Management Area. The parcel is approximately 500 feet from Mount Zion Baptist Church, which, along with its accompanying cemetery, is located on the west side of the road. The school parcel is largely wooded, though partially cleared to the north and west of the building. The area around the school is level and grassy. There is no paving, evident landscaping, or subsidiary resources.

The school is a one-story frame building that is "L" shape in footprint. It is clad in wooden weatherboards with slender cornerboards and sits on brick piers that have been supplemented in some places by concrete blocks. The roof is cross-hipped and clad in crimped metal. The roof is currently tarped, but a simple, wooden box cornice is partially visible.

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The facade is divided into two parts, a projecting portion north of a recessed wing. The north portion contains an inset, one-bay porch with wooden decking, supported by a wooden post at its southwest corner. The bay northeast of the porch is framed-in and has most recently been used as a closet, a cloak room during its use as a school. The primary entrance is a single-leaf panel door that is boarded over. The current five-panel door is a later addition; physical evidence suggests that the door frame has been reworked with the original door having larger hinges. The exterior entrance to the cloak room, on its southern elevation adjacent to the primary entrance, is also boarded over but has a damaged five-panel door. Most recently used as firewood storage, the room has no internal connection to the rest of the building. The recessed wing at the southwest has a six-over-six, wooden, double-hung, sash window on its facade.

The southwest elevation includes the cloak room entrance described above. The southwest elevation of the projecting wing has a single six-over-six, wooden, double-hung, sash window centered on the bay.

The southeast elevation of the school has four six-over-six, wooden, double-hung, sash windows and a single-leaf door. The door is located at the southern end of the elevation with one window immediately to its north. A plywood panel covers this entrance, which has a single-leaf, five panel door. The elevation's three remaining windows are grouped together in an evenly spaced arrangement further north along the wall.

The northeast elevation of the school has three six-over-six, wooden, double-hung, sash windows grouped together on the eastern side of the elevation, and no fenestration servicing the cloak room off the porch.

The interior is composed of the primary room to the north, one-room wing to the south, and cloak room. The building has wood flooring of consistent dimension and orientation throughout. Though the partition wall between the larger primary room and the wing have had partial removal of damaged gypsum board, the framing remains intact. Evidence clearly shows interior walls and ceilings were finished with a very early form of gypsum board, possibly "Adamant."¹ The early use of the material is unique for any school building of this period in Virginia. A brick flue is located in the partition wall toward the eastern end of the building. Electrical service has been added to the building and a breaker box is located on the southwest wall.

The primary room's walls and ceiling are largely clad in modern 4'x8' gypsum board panels. Beneath the modern gypsum board are plaster ghosts outlining the original gypsum board panels as installed in the south room (see photo). Note that horizontal framing exists at the 36" vertical divisions between the smaller original panels. On the southeast wall, there are some areas where the cladding is flush wooden plank siding, primarily below the windows and adjacent to the flue. Trim is minimal, consisting of narrow, plain baseboards, flat board door and window surrounds, and plain window stools and aprons.

¹ Thomas Rosell, "Quite Adamant, U.S. Gypsum. Sheetrock's Missing Link," *Preservation in Mississippi*, February 11, 2015, <https://misspreservation.com/2015/02/11/quite-adamant-u-s-gypsum-sheetrocks-missing-link/>.

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The secondary room, housed entirely in the south wing, has similar trim, flooring, and wall and ceiling panels. The existing wall and ceilings retain the original historic gypsum board finishes which appear to have been initially clear coated, likely with shellac or linseed oil, due to graffiti below the current wallpaper. Individual boards are 32"x36" with spackled joints covered by paper strips. The room appears to have been wallpapered, and the remaining paper is failing. Adjacent to the southwest window are two boards affixed to the walls with projecting nails that may have served as hooks for hanging clothes or other items.

The cloak room has some original composite board paneling on its walls and ceiling, and some basic wooden shelving remaining.

Statement of Integrity

The Mica School remains in its original location, thus has integrity of **location**. Though there have been some alterations and deterioration of elements, the integrity of **design** is strong, as the plan and most of the features and finishes from the period of significance remain. The school sits in a wooded setting near the Mount Zion Baptist Church, as it has since its construction, therefore, has a high degree of integrity of **setting**. The surrounding wildlife area has protected the setting from modern intrusions. Much of the original fabric remains, and most alterations appear to have been made within the school's period of significance, thus it retains good integrity of **materials** and **workmanship**. The proximity to Mount Zion and its continued status as a community resource support a strong level of integrity of **association**. The relatively high integrity of location, design, setting, materials and workmanship combine to contribute to the school's strong integrity of **feeling**.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

- 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

- 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

EDUCATION

ETHNIC HERITAGE: BLACK

Period of Significance

1915-1951

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

The Mica School, constructed on land purchased by the Home Mission Society of the County of Charles City, associated with Mount Zion Baptist Church, is significant at the local level under **Criterion A** in the areas of **Education** and **Ethnic Heritage: African American**. Though the school is noted in the Rosenwald Archives at Fisk University, the association is not entirely clear, as the school was constructed before the Rosenwald school funding program began in 1917. Thus, it is not being nominated under the “Rosenwald Schools in Virginia” Multiple Property Document. The school’s period of significance begins in 1915, the date of construction, and ends in 1951, the year the school was closed. Mica School exhibits multiple characteristics of buildings constructed for African American education in Charles City County from the late 19th to the mid-20th century. Architecturally, it incorporates design features popularized by the Rosenwald program and others, most notably with the inclusion of large window banks for ventilation and natural lighting.

The school housed up to fifty students in the small space, and like many African American schools of the period, was overcrowded. The school received used equipment and furniture from White schools, rather than new. Prior to its construction through its useful life as an educational building, the school was shepherded and operated by the local African American community. Area residents took responsibility for managing different issues related to the school, including providing the land, constructing and repairing the building and outhouses, and raising funds for library books. Although Criteria Consideration A applies, as it is owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes, the land was purchased and building constructed for educational purposes, not religious nor sectarian.

Narrative Statement of Significance

African American Education in Charles City County

There are some reports of schools for African Americans as early as the 1830s in Charles City County.² However, in the wake of the Nat Turner rebellion in 1831 in nearby Southampton County, Virginia, the Virginia General Assembly severely curtailed Black education, deeming meetings of “free people of color” for the purpose of education an “unlawful assembly” and assigning penalties for any white person attending such a meeting, being paid to teach at such a meeting, or contracting a teacher for that purpose.³

² D. Gardiner Tyler, *A History and Pictorial Review of Charles City County, Virginia* (Expert Graphics, 1990), 26; J. P. Stagg, “History of Education in Charles City County” in *15th Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction for the year ending July 31st, 1885* (Richmond: Rush U. Derr, Superintendent of Public Printing, 1885), 175.

³ “Virginia General Assembly, An Act to amend the act concerning slaves, free negroes and mulattoes (April 7, 1831),” *Encyclopedia Virginia*, last modified December 7, 2020, <https://encyclopediavirginia.org/primary-documents/an-act-to-amend-the-act-concerning-slaves-free-negroes-and-mulattoes-april-7-1831>.

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After the Civil War, a few initial short-lived efforts toward furthering African American education in the county were documented. There is thought to have been a Freedman's school at Sherwood Forest when Brigadier General Edward Wild, an abolitionist Union General in charge of "Wild's African Brigade," took control of the plantation in 1864.⁴ An 1866 survey by the Freedman's Bureau noted that pastor Samuel Brown had been teaching at Elam Church, though that effort was thought to have lasted only a year.⁵

In the Reconstruction Era, a new state constitution in Virginia mandated that the General Assembly institute a statewide system of free public schools. The constitution was ratified in 1869 and the following year, the General Assembly passed *An Act to Establish and Maintain a Uniform System of Public Free Schools* to implement the constitutional mandate. The Act required that schools be racially segregated and created an avenue for local tax revenues to be used to fund local schools. In Charles City County, the Act caused some resentment, as the tax base was largely composed of a minority White population that perceived themselves as shouldering the larger share of the economic burden of funding education for a sizable Black population in a period of post-war economic recovery.⁶

In 1885, the county's Superintendent of Public Instruction, J. P. Stagg, provided a brief history of education in the county in the post-Civil War era, suggesting that there were no schools of note in the county between 1860 and 1870. In 1871, public schools opened under the direction of a superintendent with jurisdiction over Charles City and New Kent counties. Charles City County established its own superintendent in 1880. Stagg cited a dearth of official records, but by his accounting, from 1881 to 1885, there were eight African American schools in Charles City County.⁷ In that period, the number of Black residents in the county far outnumbered the White, but there were almost equal number of schools with eight to nine schools for White children. In that five-year span, general school attendance of African American students exceeded that of White students, but the higher proportion of Black county residents should be considered when interpreting attendance records.

In his essay, Stagg described an earlier local school program where buildings were temporary and built corresponding to centers of population. William Link, in his book *A Hard Country and a Lonely Place*, reinforces this phenomenon, noting that Virginia's rural schools of the era were "impermanent entities that existed only by adapting to community desires."⁸ At the time of Stagg's essay, however, the system had become more permanent. He noted, "we have schoolhouses permanently and conveniently located, well built out of good timber, with large

⁴ John M. Coski, "The New Old Order in Charles City County: Reconstruction and Race relations 186-1900," in *Charles City County, an Official History*, ed. John M. Coski and James P. Whittenburg. (Salme, WV: Don Mills, Inc., 1989), 77.

⁵ *ibid.*, 79.

⁶ *ibid.*

⁷ In 1883, there was a ninth African American school. Stagg, "History of Education in Charles City County," 176.

⁸ William A. Link, *A Hard Country and a Lonely Place: Schooling, Society, and Reform in Rural Virginia, 1870 - 1920*, The Fred W. Morrison Series in Southern Studies (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 46.

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windows on both sides, with sash and blinds, seats with backs and desks, with blackboards in them all, and good stoves, making them comfortable.”⁹

Through the end of the nineteenth century, the county averaged twenty-four to twenty-five school buildings total, generally split evenly between Black and White schools, though the underlying school-age population of Blacks greatly outnumbered that of Whites. Black schools also suffered from a shortage of African American teachers, as faculty was also segregated, and from the demands of an agricultural labor force.¹⁰

In her 1952 Virginia State College Master’s degree thesis, Willnette Davis Carter, an African American educator in the county, noted that Black education in Charles City County was also typified by the additional contributions of the African American community as whole: “the development of education for negroes in Charles City County, Virginia is characterized by sacrifices and expenditures of money and time on the part of the negro . . . They have contributed too long from their private funds to the cost of their schools . . .” The cost of construction and operation of several Black schools in the county was augmented by African American churches and organizations. In Charles City County and throughout the southern United States, many Black schools also relied on donations from organizations outside of the community, often from northern charities or religious groups. Carter provided brief profiles of African American schools in the county, from the immediate post-Civil War era to the early 1950s. Common themes throughout include: the physical relocation of schools, establishment of societies and associations to fund and advocate for schools, donations of land and/or physical labor to build schools, the re-use of “White” schools by African Americans after White school populations moved to new locations or upgraded facilities, proximity to and/or involvement of churches, and the use of borrowed spaces in buildings with other primary uses.

The active role of the African American community in securing educational opportunities for their children was emphasized by Anne W. Chapman and John M. Craig in their essay on the early twentieth century in Charles City County.

The county government was clearly unwilling or unable to provide the black community with the number of schools that the size of its population demanded. Thus the black community itself bore much of the financial burden for school improvements. Numerous grass roots organizations sprang up to shoulder the burden. Each of the neighborhood schools, which numbered from 12 to 16, claimed communities of patrons or school leagues.¹¹

League members also actively advocated for improvements by petitioning the school board and requesting financial matches for privately raised funds.

⁹ Stagg, “History of Education in Charles City County,” 176.

¹⁰ Coski, “The New Old Order,” 79.

¹¹ Anne W. Chapman and John M. Craig, “Hard Times and Community Solidarity: From the Turn of the Century through the Great Depression in Charles City County” in *Charles City County, an Official History*, ed. John M. Coski and James P. Whittenburg (Salme, WV: Don Mills, Inc., 1989), 89.

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In 1908, county residents led by Alexander Q. Franklin, William A. Wallace, and the Reverend Wesley P. Curl led a movement to educate the Black community in Charles City. To further the cause, delegates from thirteen county African American churches convened at the Parrish Hill Baptist Church to forge a path forward. The convention resulted in the formation of the “Intellectual and Industrial” organization, known as IIA, and thereafter, the organization purchased a three-acre parcel in Ruthville for the construction of a new school. By 1911, two school rooms were finished. In 1918, the IIA deeded the property to the county, but the community, led primarily by church members, worked toward improving educational facilities for Black students. By 1923, the Ruthville School (also known as Ruthville Graded School) had expanded to six rooms with a five-teacher faculty and additional farm shop building, and the school became known as the Charles City County Training School.¹² During this time, the school was not accredited and taught elementary through high school curriculum, so that same year, the school board agreed to furnish public funds for a separate, up-to-date high school of the IIA contributed a total of \$5,000 over a ten-year period, which they accepted. The new school was supported by Rosenwald funding and named the Ruthville School.¹³

During the 1920s wave of school reforms and education improvement movements, including the Julius Rosenwald Fund, county school boards embarked on consolidation campaigns, generally of White schools, replacing multiple small school buildings with those new and larger. Consolidation was reinforced by improvements to roads and transportation. Charles City County’s first accredited high school, for Whites, opened in 1924, having replaced seven neighborhood schools, some of which were then repurposed for Black students. Most African American schools in the early twentieth century were one- or two-room school buildings and those from the 1920s through 1930 in Charles City County were supported by the Rosenwald Fund. Rosenwald and other philanthropic contributions constituted an important avenue for the advancement of African American education during much of the first half of the twentieth century. From 1913 to 1937, the Rosenwald Fund contributed to the construction of 5,358 elementary schools, teacher’ homes, and industrial buildings in 15 southern states. In Virginia, the Fund built 664 schools, 18 teachers’ homes and vocational buildings. The remaining school buildings reflect not only one of the most ambitious school building projects ever undertaken but they symbolize the African Americans’ struggle for educational opportunities in a segregated South.¹⁴

In Charles City County, Mica and Parrish Hill were the two earliest recipients of Rosenwald funds during the 1917-1920 budget term. While Mica School is recorded as receiving funds, its construction predates the 1917 allocation year, but its establishment sits in a transition period from the traditional one- to two-room frame school seen throughout the county to those of intentional planning and architectural designs. Mica School was the smallest of the schools

¹² Jackson Davis, “Ruthville Graded School- Parents Attending Exhibit,” 1915, Jackson Davis Collection of African American Photographs, University of Virginia, <https://search.lib.virginia.edu/sources/images/items/uva-lib:329069?idx=0&x=0.5&y=0.302&zoom=1.08&page=1>.

¹³ Andre Jones, “Ruthville cornerstone dedication,” *New Kent – Charles City Chronicle*, August 29, 2014, <https://nkccnews.com/community/2014/08/29/ruthville-cornerstone-dedication/>.

¹⁴ Bryan Clark Green, “Rosenwald Schools in Virginia,” National Register Multiple Properties Document, 2004, p. 15.

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documented as receiving Rosenwald support, as it is listed as a “one-teacher” school in the Rosenwald Fund’s records. Parrish Hill stands thirteen miles from Mica School and dates to c. 1920. The two-teacher Parrish School cost \$2,675 as opposed to Mica’s \$1,000 listed in records, with Rosenwald funds contributing \$500 for Parrish Hill and \$250 for Mica.

In the 1921-1922 Rosenwald budget term, the c. 1921 Wayside Rosenwald School replaced a c. 1894 school for African Americans that stood in the same location twenty-three miles from Mica. The three-bay frame Wayside School was more complex in its form than Mica School and also contained two classrooms for two teachers with a total cost of \$4,800 with \$800 of that contributed by the Rosenwald Fund.

The c. 1926-1927 budget term funded the Kimages and Union Baptist Rosenwald schools, both of which were two-teacher schools and cost \$4,214 and \$4,179 total, respectively. As time passed, the total costs of school construction and improvements increased, as did the capacities of the buildings. The final Rosenwald School constructed in Charles City County, the Ruthville School, dates to the 1929-1930 budget term with construction costs totaling \$20,600 for the six-teacher school. Of that final amount, the Rosenwald Fund contributed \$2,600. The new school replaced the Charles City County Training School. Of these schools, four definitively remain standing in the county: Mica, Parrish Hill, Wayside, and Ruthville.

Rosenwald schools or not, inequities in education in the county’s “separate but equal” system included overcrowding in Black schools, which served an estimated two to three times more students in the same number of classrooms, as well as disparate spending on facilities and teacher salaries.¹⁵ Willnette Carter’s 1952 thesis was written to collect and aggregate data on disparities to support improved conditions at Black schools. Anticipating the movement to integrate schools, legal rulings mandated pay and facility equalization in Virginia in the 1940s.¹⁶

Charles City County began investing in non-White schools during an era of “equalization” to move toward a divided system that continued to be separate but would more closely approximate “equal.”¹⁷ Improvements were made at the Ruthville School, the county’s Black high school, but most of the other Black schools continued to be antiquated and in need of repair. The county sought funding from the state’s Literary Fund beginning in 1949, and by 1960, the last of the county’s one- and two-room schools were closed due to the consolidation of non-White schools.

The movement to integrate schools in Charles City County was complicated by the fact that there were three school systems—one for Whites, one for Blacks, and one for Virginia Indians. The Chickahominy Tribe built Samaria Elementary School, and later, in 1956, Samaria High School (prior to 1956, high school students attended boarding school in Oklahoma). The schools were strongly tied to their native identity, and it is posited that, “perhaps even more than the whites

¹⁵ Chapman and Craig, “Hard Times and Community Solidarity,” 87.

¹⁶ Johanna M. Lewis, Elizabeth H. McGehee and Laura F. Parrish, “Deliberate Speed: Civil Rights and Economic Development in Modern Charles City County” in *Charles City County, an Official History*, ed. John M. Coski and James P. Whittenburg (Salme, WV: Don Mills, Inc., 1989), 106.

¹⁷ Chapman and Craig, “Hard Times and Community Solidarity,” 107.

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(sic), the Indians desired to retain the existing segregated system as a mean of preserving their cultural heritage.”¹⁸

Despite the U. S. Supreme Court’s ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education*, a brief campaign of “Massive Resistance” in Virginia closed school systems and underwrote tuition vouchers for White children to attend private schools. When the courts deemed Massive Resistance unconstitutional, a “Freedom of Choice” program was adopted wherein students applied for transfers to other schools.¹⁹ In 1963, Richard Bowman applied to have his Black children attend the White Charles City Courthouse School. Though he was discouraged from doing so, he persisted, and in the fall of 1963, his six children integrated the county schools. Others followed, but as was typical throughout the South, no White students attempted to attend traditionally Black schools. The Freedom of Choice program allowed for some mixing of race but served as a bulwark against wholesale integration through administrative bureaucracy.

Bowman participated in a lawsuit coordinated by the NAACP Legal Defense Fund to challenge the Freedom of Choice program, which resulted in modifications to the program, but it was essentially upheld by the courts through the mid-1960s. A challenge to the concept reached the U. S. Supreme Court in *Green v. Board of Education of New Kent County, Virginia*. In 1968, the court decided unanimously that the Freedom of Choice plan violated the equal protection clause of the U.S. Constitution, where it is shown that such a plan would not likely desegregate schools. In the wake of that decision, Charles City County’s program was revisited. One African American witness suggested the program achieved only a “token” integration. White testimony suggested that integration would drive White students out of the county, and Chickahominy testimony hoped that the retention of a “choice” program would allow the tribe to keep their segregated elementary school, as their high school population integrated Charles City High School after 1967.²⁰ Given the overwhelming Black majority and a third racial category in the county, the federal court allowed the Freedom of Choice program to continue in Charles City County, the only county that kept such a plan after the *Green* decision.

The NAACP again challenged the Freedom of Choice program in 1970, citing among other issues the persistence of entirely African American schools. The contest sparked some controversy and activism in the county, though no violence. Ultimately the county was ordered to implement full integration for the 1971-72 school year. The integration of Charles City County Schools coincided with a rise in non-White leadership at the county level, including a school board controlled by African Americans and Native Americans.²¹

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In 1899, Mary Brown, then a resident of Alabama, sold to Thomas Jefferson, George S. Richards, and Earnest L Selden, trustees of the Home Mission Society of the County of Charles

¹⁸ Chapman and Craig, “Hard Times and Community Solidarity,” 107.

¹⁹ Lewis, McGehee, and Parrish, “Deliberate Speed: Civil Rights and Economic Development,” 106.

²⁰ Chapman and Craig, “Hard Times and Community Solidarity,” 108.

²¹ Chapman and Craig, “Hard Times and Community Solidarity,” 109.

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City, a two-acre property known as “Brown's shop” for the sum of fifteen dollars.²² Willnette Carter posited that the impetus for the school came from the church community, which recognized that the closest school for Black children was more than five miles away. The Home Mission Society, also referred to as the Home Mission Club, was organized by parishioners at Mount Zion Church. According to Carter, the club built the school and hired the teacher.²³

In October 1915, Ernest Selden and Thomas Jefferson, trustees for the Home Mission Society, transferred to the Chickahominy District School Board one of the two acres of land they had purchased sixteen years prior. According to the deed, at that time, the land had a school building on it and the deed had a reversionary clause that the land would revert to the trustees or their successors when it ceased to be used for a “colored school.”²⁴ School term reports from 1916 and 1917 reinforce that the school was constructed in 1915.²⁵

Based on Rosenwald Fund records, Mica School received a contribution during the 1917-1920 budget term, but the cause of the stipend is unclear. The Fund may have supported the school retroactively, as the school does not conform to published Rosenwald School designs. While the c. 1915 construction predates the 1917 start of official Fund dispersal, limited funding prior to that year was dispersed, but there is no documentation that any was given in Charles City County.^{26 27} Also possible, the existing school mentioned in the 1915 could have been replaced by the Rosenwald-funded school in 1917. Alternatively, Rosenwald funding could have paid for an addition or other improvements to an earlier school; however, evidence in construction methods and materials indicates the existing school building was constructed at one time.²⁸

While there is a documented contribution from the Fund, Mica School does not conform to any of the Community School Plans that began to be issued when the Rosenwald program was moved to Nashville in 1920. Before then, the program was administered by Tuskegee Institute. Despite publishing guidelines in 1915, Tuskegee did not have the staff to enforce their compliance, which Fletcher P. Dressler, a professor of school hygiene and architecture, documented in his 1919 report to Julius Rosenwald. As a result, during the Tuskegee period, schools were being built that did not follow standardized design. Mica School embodies features of the Tuskegee period, which allowed for more varied interpretation, as opposed to the more precise plans of the post-1920 Nashville management, particularly its unusual floor plan that

²² Other members included Charlie Banks, William Jones, Dick Richards, Wilbur Parker, William Hansley, and the Trowers. Carter, *Development of Education for Negroes in Charles City County*, 77.

²³ Carter, *Development of Education for Negroes in Charles City County*.

²⁴ *Charles City County Deed Book 22*, 396.

²⁵ School Term Reports, Chickahominy School #4, 1916-1921, in the Richard M. Bowman Center for Local History, Charles City County.

²⁶ Holly Roose, “Rosenwald Fund Schools (1912-1932)” *BlackPast*, June 7, 2011.

<https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/rosenwald-fund-schools-1912-1932/>; Nick Tabor, “Rosenwald Schools,” *Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Rosenwald-schools>.

²⁷ The Fisk University collections of Rosenwald data, now offline and inaccessible, indicated that the school received funding before the official Rosenwald program. A screenshot of the data previously on-line lists Mica School, One-teacher type, in Charles City County, “built under Tuskegee” with \$250 Rosenwald funding, \$450 from African Americans and \$300 from the public.

²⁸ Joseph Dye Lahendro, email message to VDHR, August 2, 2024.

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referenced traditional one- and two-room school construction, individual windows spaced apart, smaller windows that do not reach nor come close to the ceiling, an early gypsum board wall and ceiling finishes with no beadboard wainscot for durability, single layer flooring and clapboarding, and a hip roof. While not a strict “Rosenwald plan,” Mica School shares many of the design features for which Rosenwald Schools and other early twentieth century schools are noted.²⁹

In August 1922, the Mica School parcel and several others owned by the Chickahominy School District were transferred to the School Board of Charles City County as the school boards consolidated.³⁰ References to Mica School in the County School Board minutes are scant, and most address wood delivery for the stove. The school board paid for minor unspecified repairs at the school in April 1928.³¹ In 1932, the toilets were repaired, as was the stove. This may have been done by the Mount Zion School League, which received payment of \$5.29 from the school board for repairs. Desks were moved from Holdcroft School, a White school being consolidated into the Charles City School, to Mica.³²

Though the school was operated by the County, which covered the teacher’s salary, wood for the heating stove and other incidentals, the local African American community continued to take responsibility for many of the aspects of funding and operations. In 1935, E. L. Selden, representing the Mt. Zion School League, gave the County School Board twelve dollars, requesting a match from Rosenwald funds, to buy library books for the school.³³ In 1937, the school board agreed to supply lumber to build toilet facilities at the school, “it being understood that the patrons would erect the building if the Board would furnish the materials.”³⁴ Oral history interviews with alumnae confirm that the toilet was an outhouse. The school had no plumbing, and water was gathered each day in a bucket from a stream approximately a mile behind the school.³⁵

Local citizens continued to contribute physical labor to the building’s repair and maintenance into the 1940s. In November of 1940, L. F. Washington addressed the school board as a representative of the “school league at Mica School.” The board provided materials to repair or replace sheetrock and paint the school interior if the local patrons provided the labor.³⁶ While this sort of partnership was common in rural areas in the south in the nineteenth century, into the twentieth century, it tended to be more common for African American schools.

Alumnae of the school recall that the building housed students from first to fifth grades, though some indications suggest it may have reached seventh grade. Though the school board did have

²⁹ *ibid.*

³⁰ *Charles City County Deed Book 27*, 186.

³¹ Charles City County School Board minutes, April 1928.

³² Charles City County School Board minutes, August 1932, September 1932.

³³ Charles City County School Board minutes, February 1935.

³⁴ Charles City County School Board minutes, March 1937.

³⁵ Richard M. Bowman Center for Local History, “Mica/Mount Zion Alumni Interview,” September 16, 1922, video.

³⁶ Charles City County School Board minutes, November 1940.

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complicated transit plans, all alumnae remember walking to school, sometimes being offered a ride by the teacher. It was a one-teacher school, with a single instructor teaching all grade levels. Older students were responsible for starting a fire in the stove for heating. In addition to instruction, the school day included morning religious devotionals and the Pledge of Allegiance.

The closure of the school may have been considered as early as 1943, when the school board minutes, discussing personnel issues, prefaced the discussion of a hiring decision with the words “If the Mica School is operated . . .”³⁷ Mica School was closed in June of 1951.³⁸ In the 1951-1952 school term, Black schools operating in the county included Ruthville, Barnettts, Wayside, Woodburn, Union Baptist, Parrish Hill, Kimages and Little Elam. By 1957, only Ruthville, Barnettts and Parrish Hill remained in use. After its service as a school, Mica became an informal community center to house church and social functions and community meetings. It was later leased for use as a hunting lodge.³⁹

In the 2020s, the Historic Mt. Zion School Foundation of Charles City was established to restore and interpret the school building. Efforts to further their mission include fundraising, recording oral histories with the Richard M. Bowman Center for Local History, sponsoring architectural recordation, and seeking historic designation.

³⁷ Charles City County School Board minutes, May 1943.

³⁸ Carter, *Development of Education for Negroes in Charles City County*, 73.

³⁹ Anonymous, “Micah School students congregate in effort to raise funds for schoolhouse’s restoration,” *New Kent-Charles City Chronicle*, July 20, 2021, <https://nkccnews.com/community/2021/07/20/micah-school-students-congregate-in-effort-to-raise-funds-for-schoolhouses-restoration/>.

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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 # _____

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Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: Richard M. Bowman Center for Local History

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): 018-0211

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property 1

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

1. Latitude: 37.327564 Longitude: 76.926422

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the nominated property is all of that Charles City County Tax Parcel 57-57, as shown in the map entitled "National Register Boundary Map, Mica School."

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes all land historically associated with the school.

Mica School
Name of Property

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11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Mary Ruffin Hanbury
organization: Hanbury Preservation Consulting
street & number: P.O. Box 6049
city or town: Raleigh state: NC zip code: 27628
e-mail maryruffin@hanburypreservation.com
telephone: 919 828 1905
date: June 15, 2024

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.)

Mica School
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Photo Log
Mica School
Charles City County, Virginia
Mary Ruffin Hanbury
January 25, 2024

Exterior, façade, view to SE
Photo 1 of 20

Exterior, façade, view to E
Photo 2 of 20

Exterior, S corner, view to N
Photo 3 of 20

Exterior, NE elevation, view to WSW
Photo 4 of 20

Exterior, NE elevation, view to SW
Photo 5 of 20

Exterior, Façade, view to S
Photo 6 of 20

Exterior, façade, view to SE
Photo 7 of 20

Exterior, porch ceiling, view to NE
Photo 8 of 20

Interior, large room, view to E
Photo 9 of 20

Interior, large room, view to SE
Photo 10 of 20

Interior, large room to small room, view
to S
Photo 11 of 20

Interior, large room to small room, view
to SW
Photo 12 of 20

Interior, small room, view to SW
Photo 13 of 20

Interior, small room, view to SW
Photo 14 of 20

Interior, small room, view to WSW
Photo 15 of 20

Interior, small room, view to SW
Photo 16 of 20

Exterior, seam at porch and cloak room
view to NE
Photo 17 of 20

Interior, cloak room, view to ENE
Photo 18 of 20

Interior, cloak room, view to NW
Photo 19 of 20

Interior, cloak room, view to NW
(ceiling)
Photo 20 of 20

Mica School
Name of Property

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List of Figures

All drawings of Mica School by Josph Dye Lahendro April 2023

Figure 1- floor, foundation plan

Figure 2- roof, ceiling plan

Figure 3- wall section

Mica School
Name of Property

Charles City County, VA
County and State

MICA
SCHOOL
11600 Willcox Neck Rd
Charles City, VA

JOHN PIVE LAURENCE PAIA
ARCHITECT
1000 W. Main St.
PO Box 141, Charles City, VA 23042
434-608-2388 jla@jplpaia.com

April 25, 2025

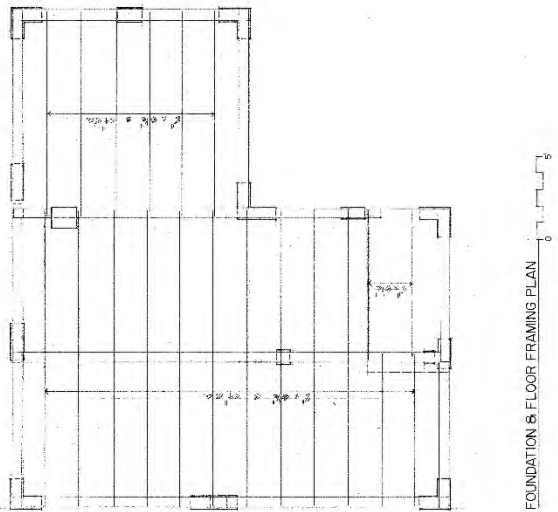
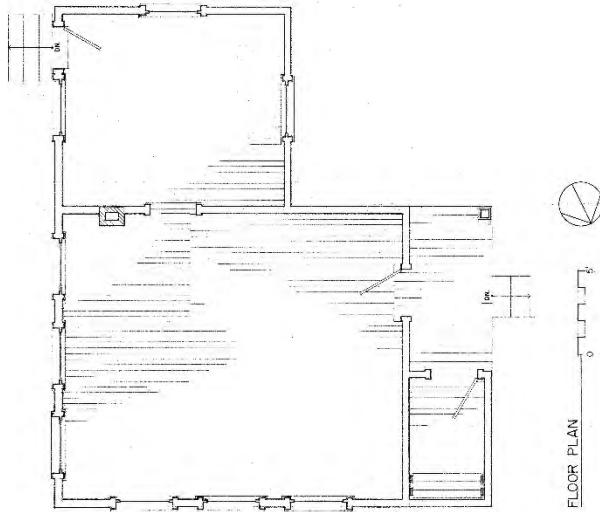


Figure 1

Mica School
Name of Property

Charles City County, VA
County and State

MICA
SCHOOL
11600 Willcox Neck Rd
Charles City, VA
JOSEPH PYLE LAHENDRO, F.A.A.
Historic Preservation Architect
561 Cornett Rd., Charlottesville, VA 22909
434-976-2222 / jlahendro@earthlink.net
April 25, 2008

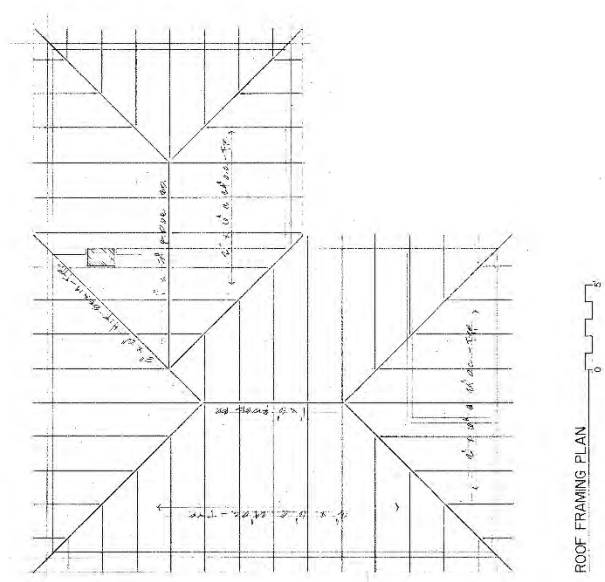
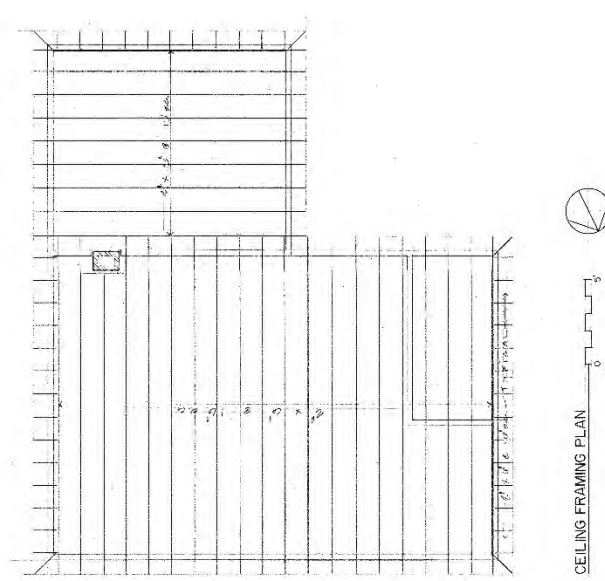


Figure 2

Mica School
Name of Property

Charles City County, VA
County and State

MICA
SCHOOL
11600 Willcox Neck Rd
Charles City, VA

ASTORIA ARCHITECTURE, P.A.
11000 Peachtree Avenue, Suite 100
Atlanta, Georgia 30329
Phone: 404.525.1234
Fax: 404.525.1235
April 23, 2003

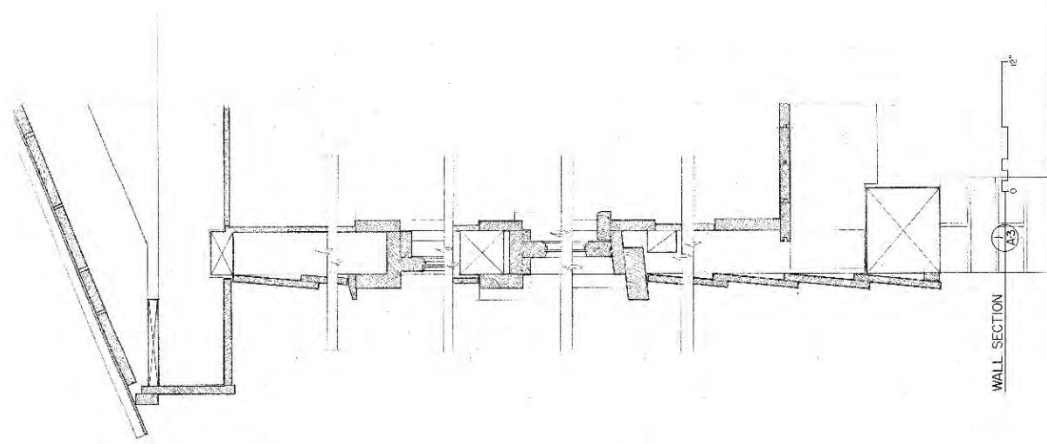


Figure 3

Mica School
Name of Property

Charles City County, VA
County and State

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

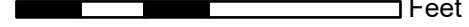
The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201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

LOCATION MAP

Mica School
Charles City County, VA
DHR No. 018-0211

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates
Latitude: 37.327564
Longitude: -76.926422

 Nominated Boundary

0 100 200 400
 Feet





National Register Photo Key

Mica School
11570 Wilcox Neck Road
Charles City County, Virginia
map created by Mary Ruffin Hanbury, June 2024

EXTERIOR



Google Earth

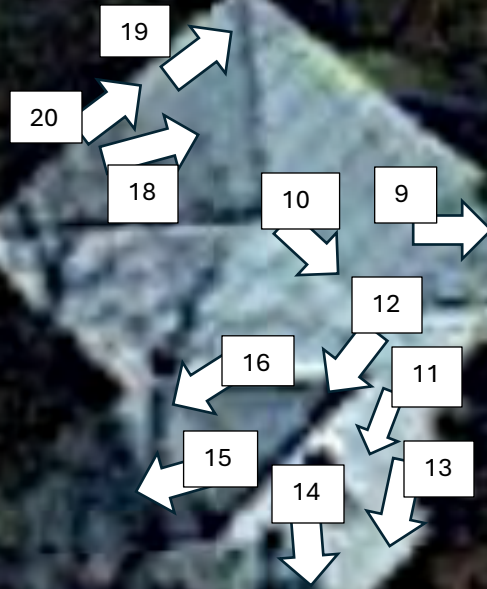


30 ft

INTERIOR

National Register Photo Key

Mica School
11570 Wilcox Neck Road
Charles City County, Virginia
map created by Mary Ruffin Hanbury, June 2024



30 ft

















**NO
TRESPASSING**























