

NORTH CAROLINA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE
Office of Archives and History
Department of Natural and Cultural Resources

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Ridge Road School

Hillsborough Vicinity, Orange County OR1104 Listed 12/12/2023
Nomination by Heather Fearnbach, Fearnbach History Services, Inc.
Photographs by Heather Fearnbach, November 2022



Southwest oblique.



Northeast oblique.

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 *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an 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. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Ridge Road School

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 2705 Coleman Loop Road

N/A not for publication

city or town Hillsborough

vicinity

state North Carolina

code NC

county Orange

code 135

zip code 27278

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this 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 for in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature]
Signature of certifying official/Title: State Historic Preservation Officer

10/20/23
Date

North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See Continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet

determined eligible for the National Register.
 See continuation sheet

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

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	1	structures
0	0	objects
1	1	Total

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

Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register
N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION: School

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

NO STYLE

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK
walls WOOD: Weatherboard

roof METAL

other _____

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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.)

Property is:

- 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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Education

Ethnic Heritage: Black

Architecture

Period of Significance

1932-1951

Significant Dates

1932

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Forrest, R. J., builder

9. Major Bibliographical References**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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 _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: Orange County Schools Office,
Hillsborough

State Library, Raleigh

Ridge Road School

Name of Property

Orange County, NC

County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Approximately 1.75 acres

See Latitude/Longitude coordinates continuation sheet.

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1
Zone Easting Northing
2

3
Zone Easting Northing
4

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Heather Fearnbach

organization Fearnbach History Services, Inc.

date 2/7/2023

street & number 3334 Nottingham Road

telephone 336-765-2661

city or town Winston-Salem

state NC

zip code 27104

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Jones Grove Missionary Baptist Church, c/o Pastor Tremaine Royster

street & number 2713 Coleman Loop Road

telephone (919) 732-9404

city or town Hillsborough

state NC

zip code 27278

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listing. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P. O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20303.

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Orange County, NC

Setting

Ridge Road School is located in rural north-central Orange County one-quarter mile south of the intersection of NC Highway 86 and Coleman Loop Road, which was unpaved and known as Ridge Road during the school's operation. Since the primary access to the school was from NC Highway 86, the building faces east rather than west toward Coleman Loop Road. Hillsborough's commercial center is approximately three miles to the southeast. Neighboring crossroads communities include Schley about three miles to the northeast and Cedar Grove around four miles to the northwest. The area's gently rolling topography, rich soil, and proximity to the Little and Eno rivers and their tributaries are conducive to farming. Black and white farmers in the Ridge Road community grew tobacco, corn, wheat, oats, hay, cotton, sorghum, Irish potatoes, sweet potatoes, berries, home gardens, and fruit trees, and tended dairy and beef cows, hogs, and chickens.¹ Although fields, pastures, and wooded areas remain, many agricultural tracts have been gradually subdivided to facilitate residential development.

The one-story, side-gable-roofed, German-sided, two-classroom Ridge Road School is situated south of Jones Grove Church Road, an unpaved drive that leads east from Coleman Loop Road. Jones Grove Missionary Baptist Church stands on the drive's north side. The front-gable-roofed concrete-block 1961 sanctuary was built to replace the congregation's original front-gable-roofed weatherboarded 1928 church, which stood to the west and was demolished upon the 1961 building's completion. The sanctuary, enlarged with a rear addition in the mid-1970s and a fellowship hall in 1991, continues to serve the congregation, which owns Ridge Road School. The gravel lot in the northeast portion of the school parcel provides church parking. A gravel drive extends southeast from the parking area to the residential tract at 2618 NC Highway 86 that contains a two-story 1990 residence owned by Luther K. and Kimberly M. Brooks until February 2023. Reverend Luther Brooks is the grandson of Joe B. Brooks, the first pastor of Jones Grove Missionary Baptist Church, and was an associate pastor of the congregation. The gravel drive intersects an asphalt-paved driveway that extends to the highway. The abandoned Cedar Grove Road bed straddles the north property line. The one-story, side-gable-roofed, 1985 dwelling to the north at 2702 NC Highway 86 occupies the parcel directly east of the school.²

The school was built in 1932 on land owned by Black farmers Walter and Maggie Torian, whose residence, outbuildings including tobacco and livestock barns, and sorghum mill stood to the south. Area farmers brought their mules and sorghum cane to make syrup they stored in barrels for use throughout the

¹ Louis K. Watkins, telephone conversation with Heather Fearnbach, February 25, 2023. Watkins was a student for four years beginning in 1942 when he entered first grade. Many of his nine siblings were also students. His family's 159-acre farm was located about one mile south of the school off Ridge Road.

² Cedar Grove Road (SR 1380) spanned the distance between NC Highway 86 and Coleman Loop Road. USDA Historical Aerial Photographs, 1938 (AJV-8-154), 1955 (AJV-6P-145), 1975(37135-176-95), University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill University Libraries; Deed Book 6808, page 1746; Orange County property record cards.

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year. The Torians supported the operation of the school, which their children attended, and supplied water from their well.³

Walter and Maggie Torian had seven sons and a daughter, Emma, many of whom lived and worked as adults on the family's sizable farm that flanked Coleman Loop Road. Walter died in April 1958. In February 1963, Maggie, her children, and their spouses conveyed a 0.79-acre parcel west of the school fronting Coleman Loop Road to Emma and her husband Reverend Walter Warren Jones, whose family owned a neighboring farm. The Joneses subsequently erected a weatherboarded residence that was demolished after Emma donated the property to Jones Grove Missionary Baptist Church in 2001.⁴ The Joneses' small, hip-roofed, brick, late-twentieth-century well house remains near the parcel's northeast corner. The gravel drive that extends from the grass lawn north of the school forks and continues west to what was the Joneses' lawn and north past the well house to Jones Grove Church Road. Remnants of the Joneses' landscaping include circular fieldstone borders around tree bases in the lawn. The south portion of the school parcel is also wooded. The 1.75-acre National Register boundary includes the school and west lots.

Ridge Road School, 1932

Exterior

The one-story, side-gable-roofed, German-sided, two-classroom school has a north-south orientation with the primary façade facing east. On that elevation, two small shed rooms flank the entrance porch. Each shed room is lighted by a single double-hung four-over-four sash wood window on its east elevation. Plywood secures the openings. Four wide concrete-block steps rise to the porch, which has a narrow-board floor in deteriorated condition and a beadboard ceiling. Two single-leaf five-horizontal-panel doors provide classroom egress.

The north and south elevations of the shed rooms and main block are blind. On the west elevation, groups of three double-hung eight-over-eight wood sash windows illuminate each classroom. Some glass panes are missing. Siding infill indicates that taller windows originally filled wider openings. The extant sash were likely installed in the 1960s. Although the original window configuration is unknown, architectural evidence indicates that perhaps as many as five double-hung multi-pane windows initially filled the openings. School plans and specifications published in the 1930s by the North Carolina Department of

³ Louis K. Watkins, telephone conversation with Heather Fearnbach, February 25, 2023.

⁴ Ibid.; U. S. Census, Population Schedules, 1930-1950; "Walter E. Torian," *Durham Morning Herald*, April 19, 1958, p. 2; Orange County Deed Book 2345, pp. 256, 259; Plat Book 54, p. 194; Plat Book 81, p. 108; Doris Yvonne Brooks Johnson, telephone conversation with Heather Fearnbach, February 28, 2023. Johnson was a student for three years beginning in 1948 when she entered first grade. She walked to school with her older brothers from her family's farm approximately 1.5 miles to the northeast off Brooks Road.

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Education recommended nine-over-nine sash windows approximately seven feet, seven inches tall. The Jones Grove Missionary Baptist Church congregation installed the particle-board panels that cover the windows from the exterior to deter vandals.

The school rests on brick piers and is sheltered by a 5V-crimp metal-panel roof. A tall, square, brick interior chimney with a corbelled stack pierces the west roof slope. Exposed rafter ends support deep eaves. Although much of the siding is in good, albeit weathered, condition, a few boards are missing on each elevation. The original siding color appears to have been white. The building was not insulated.

Interior

The substantially intact interior is characterized by painted beadboard-sheathed walls and ceilings, narrow-board wood floors, flat-board window and door surrounds, and single-leaf five-horizontal-panel doors. The ceilings and upper portions of the walls are painted white, while the approximately three-foot-tall lower portions of each wall are painted dark brown to emulate wainscoting. The interior window and door surrounds and doors are also painted dark brown. The wide opening in the central partition wall contains a beadboard panel that slides up into the wall cavity. The blackboard that was mounted on the sliding panel's south face has been removed, as have large black and bulletin boards on the south room's south and east walls. Black-and-bulletin-board size is indicated by unpainted areas of wall sheathing.⁵ The status of these features in the north classroom is unknown, but they were likely removed when the walls were covered with faux-wood paneling in the 1970s.

Wood-burning metal stoves with round flues project at an angle from the chimney abutting the west elevation's center into each classroom. In the north room, a piano occupies the east end of the stage that spans the north wall. Some metal-frame school desks remain in the room along with simple wood pews from the 1928 Jones Grove Missionary Baptist Church.

The shed rooms retain single-leaf five-horizontal-panel doors. In the south room, which functioned as a kitchen, wall and ceiling beadboard is painted pale green. Cabinets with vertical-board-and-batten doors span the south and west walls. The base cabinets have wood countertops. As there was no plumbing, water for meal preparation, washing, and drinking was procured from a well on Walter and Maggie Torian's farm to the south. In the north shed room, a coat closet, three wall-mounted single-board shelves span the south wall. The warped plywood shelves on the north wall were likely added in the 1970s. White-painted beadboard sheathes the walls and ceiling.

⁵ The only historic photograph of the interior that has been located shows students adding items to a bulletin board. "Classroom Procedures Take on Newer Trends in Orange Negro Schools," *News of Orange*, April 18, 1951.

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Well House, late-twentieth century, noncontributing structure

An asphalt-shingled pyramidal hip roof tops the approximately two-foot-tall brick walls of the small well house northwest of the school. The well house provided water for the no-longer-extant home of Reverend Walter Warren Jones and Emma Torian Jones to the west.

Integrity Statement

Ridge Road School retains integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association as it occupies its original site and maintains its historic relationship with Jones Grove Missionary Baptist Church and the surrounding community. The one-story, side-gable-roofed, two-classroom building also possesses integrity of design, materials, and workmanship due to the retention of character-defining features of early-twentieth-century school architecture including building form, finishes, plan, and circulation pattern. Original elements such as German siding, a 5V-crimp metal-panel roof, single-leaf five-horizontal-panel doors, painted-beadboard-sheathed walls and ceilings, narrow-board wood floors, flat-board window and door surrounds, the beadboard panel that slides up into the central partition wall cavity, and the stage are in good condition. The shed rooms retain original double-hung four-over-four sash wood windows. Although the groups of tall multi-pane wood sash classroom windows on the west elevation are smaller than the original sash, original opening size is apparent. The north and south elevations remain blind as designed. A section of the faux-wood 1970s paneling that covers the north classroom walls has been removed to reveal original painted beadboard sheathing.

Archaeological Potential Statement

Ridge Road School is closely related to the surrounding environment. Archaeological remains such as trash pits, privies, wells, and other structural remains which may be present can provide information valuable to the understanding and interpretation of the contributing structures. Information concerning land-use patterns, the structural evolution of African American school buildings, social standing and social mobility, as well as structural details, is often only evident in the archaeological record. Therefore, archaeological remains may well be an important component of the property's significance. At this time no investigation has been done to discover these remains, but it is likely that they exist, and this should be considered in any development of the property.

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Statement of Significance

Ridge Road School possesses significance at the local level under Criterion A in the areas of education and Black ethnic heritage and Criterion C for architecture. The school was built in 1932 on land owned by Black farmers Walter and Maggie Torian, whose house and outbuildings stood to the south. Community members supplied the lumber used by contractor R. J. Forrest to erect the two-classroom building. Teachers Ruth Stanfield Torian and Alethea Burt provided first- through seventh-grade instruction to African American youth during most of the school's operation from 1932 until spring 1951. In the fall of that year, students were assigned to Central High School in Hillsboro, which accommodated all grades. Ridge Road School subsequently functioned as a community gathering place, hosting civic meetings and educational programs. The one-story side-gable-roofed building is a rare intact example of a rural early-twentieth-century Orange County public school erected to serve African American children, one of only a few remaining in the county. Although original drawings for Ridge Road School have not been located, its form, plan, fenestration, and simple finishes are typical of the one- and two-room frame schools built during the 1930s based on standardized floor plans, elevations, specifications, and guidance issued by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction's Division of Schoolhouse Planning. Ridge Road School displays standard characteristics including German siding, a 5V-crimp metal-panel roof, single-leaf five-horizontal-panel doors, double-hung four-over-four sash wood windows in the shed rooms, large classroom window openings, painted-beadboard-sheathed walls and ceilings, narrow-board wood floors, flat-board window and door surrounds, a beadboard panel that slides up into the central partition wall cavity, and a stage. The period of significance begins in 1932, when the school was constructed, and ends in 1951, when it ceased to be used for its original purpose. Although the building is owned by a religious institution, it meets the standard for Criteria Consideration A since its significance lies in secular themes independent of religious doctrine.

Educational Context and Historical Background

Although the community's name was originally spelled "Hillsborough," the name was shortened to "Hillsboro" during the nineteenth century and that spelling was maintained until 1966. Therefore, "Hillsboro" is used in historic references and "Hillsborough" in current references.

North Carolina's African American children were afforded limited educational opportunities during the nineteenth century. Religious groups including Moravians and the Society of Friends, known as Quakers, provided basic literacy lessons for free Blacks and enslaved people, and according to oral tradition, continued even after the General Assembly in 1830 enacted legislation forbidding the education of North Carolina's enslaved population. Public schools served only white children in some urban and rural areas beginning in 1840. In Orange County, the Board of Superintendents of Common Schools, organized in August 1839, divided the county into five-square-acre districts. During the 1844-1845 term, 1,347 male and 945 female white students received instruction from sixty teachers at fifty-seven schools. Enrollment

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remained comparable through the 1859-1860 term, when fifty-six schools in fifty-two districts served 2,059 of the county's 4,237 white pupils. Terms were short and facilities primitive. Private academies provided more comprehensive courses of study for white students but charged tuition that was cost-prohibitive for the average family. In rare instances, free Black youth attended private North Carolina schools before 1865, but that was not the case in Orange County. Private schools for white youth operating in 1867 included Hillsboro Military Academy supervised by General R. E. Colston, Cedar Grove Academy managed by its founder Samuel W. Hughes, Little River Academy established by J. L. Brower and W. S. Guthrie, the Nash-Kollock boarding school for girls in Hillsboro headed by Chief Justice Frederick Nash's daughters Sally and Maria Nash and their cousin Sarah Kollock, and Miss M. P. Magnum's boarding school for girls in Flat River.⁶

Although Reconstruction policies included the promise of universal access to quality academic instruction, this pledge was not fulfilled. The Orange County Board of Superintendents was reconstituted as the Orange County Board of Education (OCBE) in 1872, at which time 1,754 African American and 3,080 white youth resided in fifty-two school districts. In 1874, there were two public schools for Hillsboro Township's 549 African American children and six public and seven private schools for 668 white children.⁷ The North Carolina General Assembly, mandated by the state's 1868 constitution to provide free public education for all children, adopted in 1875 an amendment that allowed for the creation of "separate but equal" schools. As educational facilities relied on inequitably distributed local funding, this policy left Black students with inferior buildings and supplies, shorter terms, and fewer instructors. Despite these challenges, African American leaders promoted education as a means of realizing individual potential and strengthening communities by facilitating access to future opportunities. The State Colored Education Convention, composed of 140 delegates from forty counties, met in Raleigh in 1877 to plan systemic educational improvements. Politicians in Charlotte, Greensboro, Raleigh, Washington, and Winston soon sponsored initiatives to create the state's first Black graded schools. Aspiring African American teachers undertook advanced studies at normal schools established by religious denominations and private entities in Charlotte, Concord, Elizabeth City, Fayetteville, Franklinton, Greensboro, Goldsboro, Plymouth, Raleigh, Salisbury, and Winston.⁸

⁶ Emma King, "Some Aspects of the Works of the Society of Friends for Negro Education in North Carolina," *The North Carolina Historical Review*, Volume I, Number 4, October 1924, 403; Jeffrey J. Crow, Paul D. Escott and Flora J. Hatley, *A History of African Americans in North Carolina* (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1992), 153; U. S. Census, 1860; Hugh Lefler and Paul Wager, *Orange County, 1752-1952* (Chapel Hill: Orange Print Shop, 1953), 139; Levi Branson, *Branson's North Carolina Business Directory 1867* (Raleigh: Levi Branson, 1867), 87; Ruth Blackwelder, *The Age of Orange* (Charlotte: William Loftin, 1961), 125, 130-131, 138, 146-147.

⁷ U. S. Census, 1870; Levi Branson, *Branson's North Carolina Business Directory 1872* (Raleigh: Levi Branson, 1872), 180; Orange County Board of Education (hereafter abbreviated OCBE), meeting minutes, April 7, 1873, and 1874 census of children.

⁸ Crow, et. al., *A History of African-Americans in North Carolina*, 79, 81, 100-102, 153-155; Hugh Victor Brown, *A History of the Education of Negroes in North Carolina* (Raleigh: Irving Swain Press, Inc., 1961), 32-34.

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Public schools were more uniformly operated after North Carolina legislators established standards for county boards of education in 1885. The Orange County school district boundaries were regularly redrawn and district quantity fluctuated. Students received instruction in small, log or frame, purpose-built, publicly owned schools as well as in churches, homes, and other buildings on private property. Funding was apportioned based upon census data rather than enrollment, an important distinction in rural areas where enrollment was low and attendance sporadic, particularly during planting and harvest seasons when children worked longer hours on family farms. In 1886, 1,290 African American children attended thirty-two Orange County schools and 1,505 white youth studied at thirty-seven schools. Black enrollment represented around seventy-one percent of the school-age population, while white enrollment was about fifty percent. During the 1889-1890 term, 1,048 African American children studied in seventeen frame and seven log buildings. Thirteen frame and thirty log buildings served 1,425 white children. Some of the aforementioned buildings were churches. Ten years later, thirty public and two private schools served Black youth, while white children attended thirty-five public and nine private schools.⁹ Although George W. Tate's 1891 map of Orange County delineates the approximate sites of some public and private schools, precise locations of most are unknown.

When state subsidies for public education became available in 1897, legislators did not apportion funds to Black schools, but local taxes and citizen contributions continued to make school operation possible. Small austere buildings served most Orange County students. During the 1899-1900 term, 667 African American youth received instruction in twenty log and fourteen frame schools, while 1,506 white youth studied at forty-five schools, almost equally split between log and frame construction. The term length averaged fifteen to sixteen weeks. There were no schools in some districts, forcing students to travel long distances to attend classes. In Hillsboro Township, for example, African American youth residing in the Ridge Meeting House district were assigned to the Rail Road district school. In 1910, African American children studied at twenty-five rural primary schools, all but one with a single teacher. Eight were log; the rest were frame. White youth attended two high schools in Hillsboro and Chapel Hill and forty-two rural primary schools, twenty-four of which had only one teacher.¹⁰

More state funding became available in the early 1910s when the general assembly designated capital for extensive improvements to all public schools. Municipal and county boards of education implemented more stringent teacher qualification standards, undertook building renovation and construction, and consolidated smaller schools. Between 1910 and 1912, rural North Carolina communities erected 132 African American and 574 white schools, many using plans distributed by the Department of Public Instruction. In 1912, the state enumerated 2,226 rural and 105 urban Black schools and 5,265 rural and 181 urban white schools. Private schools including Palmer Memorial Institute in Guilford County,

⁹ The New School Law," *Carolina Watchman* (Salisbury), March 19, 1885, p. 2; OCBE minutes, January 9, 1886, and annual report for the year ending June 30, 1890; Levi Branson, *Branson's North Carolina Business Directory 1896* (Raleigh: Levi Branson, 1896), 470.

¹⁰ Lefler and Wager, *Orange County*, 140; OCBE meeting minutes, January 1899, July 2, 1900, June 30, 1910.

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established in 1902 by African American educator Charlotte Hawkins Brown, and Laurinburg Institute in Scotland County, created in 1904 by Emmanuel Monty and Tinny McDuffie, remained alternatives for black children.¹¹

The OCBE accelerated its school improvement program when funding became available during the 1910s. During the 1911-1912 term, seven of twenty-three African American schools were log. Nine of the total number were repaired over the course of the year. None of the schools had factory-made desks, but rather eleven were furnished with handcrafted desks and the remainder with benches. Four new buildings were erected for white students, resulting in a total of forty-seven frame schools, twenty-eight of which had manufactured desks. From 1912 until 1917, the OCBE subsidized construction of between two and five frame schools each term, gradually replacing obsolete structures. In November 1915, all school committees were directed to build two sanitary privies at every school in the county. By fall 1917, the OCBE operated forty-eight frame schools for white children and one log and twenty-six frame schools for African American youth. With few exceptions, one or two teachers provided first- through seventh-grade instruction. Some African American children attended Hackney's Industrial and Education Institute, a private school on Merritt Mill Road in Chapel Hill established in 1912 by Rock Hill Baptist Church minister Louis H. Hackney. Black citizens frustrated by the lack of upper-grade public education raised \$3,000 to facilitate the OCBE's 1916 purchase of the Hackney campus to house Orange County Training School. In October 1917, principal Robert E. Malone and his wife and domestic sciences instructor Mollie Holmes Malone (both Hampton Institute graduates) and two other teachers began offering academic, industrial, and agricultural classes. By fall 1919, 215 students were enrolled.¹²

Despite some progress, inherent disparities between Black and white educational facilities prevailed. Prominent educators including Nathan C. Newbold, James B. Dudley, and Charles H. Moore thus began addressing the appalling condition of African American schools. Newbold, appointed Agent for Rural Black Schools in 1913, remained in that role until becoming the state's first Director of the Division of Negro Education upon its 1921 creation. With the aid of philanthropic concerns such as the Jeanes, Peabody, Rosenwald, and Slater Funds, he hired supervisors and teachers for rural schools and

¹¹ State legislators first allocated funds for black elementary schools in 1910. Jim Sumner, "The Development of North Carolina's Public School System through 1940," context essay prepared for the Survey and Planning Branch of the North Carolina Historic Preservation Office, 1990, 5-6; William S. Powell, *North Carolina through Four Centuries* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 445-447; North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, *Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to Governor W. W. Kitchin for the Scholastic Years 1910-11 and 1911-12* (Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton, 1912), 8-9; Crow, et. al., *A History of African Americans in North Carolina*, 155-158.

¹² OCBE meeting minutes, County Superintendent's statistical report for 1911 and 1912, July 1, 1912, and November 1, 1915; M. C. S. Noble, "The Orange County Training School for Negroes," *The High School Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 5 (May 1919), 141-144; "Pioneer Negro Educator Dies," *Charlotte Observer*, December 20, 1937, p. 4.

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orchestrated building upgrades. Newbold regularly traveled throughout the state to promote Black education.¹³

North Carolina strengthened compulsory school attendance legislation in 1919, resulting in escalated enrollment that could not be contained on existing campuses. The Department of Public Instruction's 1921 inventory of 7,467 public schools revealed that 3,698 one-room and 2,460 two-room schools served the state's children. The vast majority of those buildings were frame, but eighty-one log and 248 brick structures remained in use. Most housed first through seventh grades; only seventy of one hundred counties, including Orange, operated at least one rural high school.¹⁴ County school superintendents and boards of education subsequently oversaw widespread building enhancements, new school construction, and a consequent reduction in the total number of campuses and school districts. Statewide road improvements facilitated school consolidation by allowing for more efficient busing.

School curriculums changed in 1920 after the Department of Public Instruction implemented academic benchmarks and high school ratings. The school system mandated that institutions interested in standard high school classification offer seventh- through eleventh-grade courses during school sessions of at least 160 days, possess a minimum of three certified teachers and forty-five pupils in average daily attendance, and execute a department-approved study program utilizing appropriate materials. To improve deficient facilities and instructor caliber, North Carolina disbursed eighteen million dollars in operational funds to public African American elementary and high schools, summer programs, normal schools, and colleges between 1921 and 1925. Of that amount, teacher salaries totaled around ten million dollars, new buildings and equipment five million dollars, and teacher training and higher education almost three million dollars. By the end of the 1920-1921 term, 116 public high schools for white students had attained accreditation. In 1924, the state certified twenty-one Black campuses: four normal, three rural, and fourteen urban schools. At the close of the 1929-1930 academic year, the Department of Public Instruction enumerated sixty white and sixty-eight black accredited high schools.¹⁵

Orange County's public educational system manifested statewide trends as the OCBE consolidated schools and initiated campus improvement projects. As school administrators sought to construct new buildings, they solicited funding from philanthropic concerns, the state, and community members. The Rosenwald Fund, Slater Fund, and General Education Board, all organizations devoted to improving

¹³ Ibid.; Brown, *A History of the Education of Negroes in North Carolina*, 61, 64; James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 204; Hugh Victor Brown, *E-Quality Education in North Carolina Among Negroes* (Raleigh: Irving Swain Press, Inc., 1964), 129-130

¹⁴ Jim Sumner, "The Development of North Carolina's Public School System through 1940," p. 7, appendices.

¹⁵ Sumner, "The Development of North Carolina's Public School System through 1940," pp. 17-18, appendices; North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, "Biennial Reports of the Superintendent of Public Instruction," 1921-1930, State Archives of North Carolina, Raleigh; North Carolina State Board of Charities and Public Welfare, "North Carolina's Social Welfare Program for Negroes," Special Bulletin Number 8, Raleigh, N. C., 1926, 42.

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educational opportunities for southern African American children, provided critical support for the construction and operation of Orange County's Black schools. Between 1915 and 1932, the Rosenwald Fund, in collaboration with local and state boards of education and private citizens, facilitated the completion of 823 North Carolina buildings including schools, teachers' residences, and industrial education shops, more than in any other state. In addition to financial contributions, the foundation provided architectural drawings for buildings of various types and sizes. Four schools were erected in Orange County between 1915 and 1931 utilizing contributions from the Rosenwald Fund. None are extant. Three were one-story weatherboarded buildings: Cool Springs School north of Chapel Hill and Gravelly Hill School southwest of Efland, both two-classroom schools completed in 1922, and Efland School, a three-classroom school finished in 1925. The largest facility, Orange County Training School, an expansive one- and two-story brick building containing nine classrooms and an auditorium/gymnasium, was erected in 1924 at a cost of \$23,112. African American residents raised \$500, white citizens donated \$6,112, the Rosenwald Fund contributed \$1,500, and the State Literary Fund provided \$15,000. The building replaced the school's campus destroyed by fire in 1922.¹⁶

Although economic challenges ensuing from the Great Depression limited facility improvements, the OCBE replaced obsolete buildings when funds were available. Schools were built and enlarged as consolidation continued. In June 1932, the OCBE agreed to provide funding for new buildings or additions that would result in five one- to three-room schools—Merritts, Ridge Road, Sunnyside, White Oak Grove, and Sartin—to serve African American students. Community members were required to supply the lumber necessary for each building. The initial OCBE allocation for the two-room Ridge Road School was \$500. However, additional funds were allotted in August 1932, when R. J. Forrest was engaged to erect Ridge Road School and the one-room Sartin School for a total cost of \$1,135. In 1933, Black Orange County youth attended twenty-seven schools, while white children were consolidated at twelve schools.¹⁷

The OCBE received funding from state and federal agencies for myriad education-related projects during the 1930s. Between 1932 and 1935 the North Carolina Emergency Relief Administration, the state's first New Deal program that created jobs for unemployed citizens, subsidized in Orange County including painting and repairing schools and improving grounds. Chapel Hill architect H. D. Carter was appointed supervisor of Orange County Federal Emergency Relief Administration projects in August 1934,

¹⁶ OCBE meeting minutes, July 5, 1920, October 29, 1923, July 28, 1924, August 24, 1924; "Orange County Schools," Fisk University Rosenwald Fund Card File Database, Julius Rosenwald Fund Archives, 1917-1948, John Hope and Aurelia E. Franklin Library, Special Collections, Fisk University, <http://rosenwald.fisk.edu> (accessed in December 2022); Kyle Obenauer and Claudia Brown, "Rosenwald Schools in North Carolina," National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, 2015, 29, 41, 46.

¹⁷ OCBE meeting minutes, June 15, 1931, June 6, 1932, August 18, 1932.

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replacing J. A. Page. In 1935, he designed new buildings and additions funded by the federal Public Works Administration for nine of Orange County's African American and white schools.¹⁸

Planning for Orange County public school construction and maintenance was deferred during World War II due to material and labor shortages. When the OCBE's school consolidation and improvement program resumed in the early 1950s, an ambitious plan to enlarge and remodel eight white schools, build two new white schools, enlarge Central High School for African American youth, and to build Cedar Grove and Efland-Cheeks schools to serve African American children was executed. Ridge Road and other small rural schools were gradually closed and sold. Cedar Grove School, designed by Durham architect Archie R. Davis, opened in November 1951. Davis also rendered plans for the Efland-Cheeks School erected by general contractors Cole and Crumpler that was finished in fall 1952. The construction of Cedar Grove and Efland-Cheeks schools allowed for consolidation of students from fourteen schools. Facility improvements subsidized by the state and municipal bonds were undertaken throughout the county during the 1950s and 1960s.¹⁹

Ridge Road School History

Ridge Road School was erected on land owned by farmers Walter and Maggie Torian, whose residence and outbuildings were south of the school. The building replaced an earlier school with the same name, likely built during the 1910s, which stood nearby.²⁰ Two teachers provided first- through seventh-grade-level instruction to African American youth from the surrounding area for most of the school's nineteen-year operation. Durham County native Ruth M. Stanfield (1911-1989), who taught younger children (first through fourth grade), was an alumna of Winston-Salem Teachers College and New York University. She married Walter and Maggie Torian's son Charlie William Torian in Durham on February 23, 1944 while he was on a brief furlough from U. S. Army service during World War II.²¹ Johnston County native

¹⁸ J. S. Kirk, Walter A. Cutter and Thomas W. Morse, eds. *Emergency Relief in North Carolina: A Record of the Development and Activities of the North Carolina Emergency Relief Administration, 1932-1935* (Raleigh: North Carolina Emergency Relief Administration, 1936), 504; "Carter Supervisor of Federal Projects," *News and Observer* (Raleigh), August 20, 1934, p. 14; "School Buildings," and "Applications to P. W. A.," *Chapel Hill Weekly*, July 5, 1935, pp. 1 and 4; "Notice to Building Contractors," *Chapel Hill Weekly*, October 18, 1935, p. 4; OCBE meeting minutes, November 8, 1935, December 5, 1935, December 18, 1935.

¹⁹ OCBE meeting minutes, April 1, 1946, March 1, 1948, April 3, 1950, May 1, 1950, June 5, 1950, June 4, 1951, September 4, 1951, October 1, 1951, August 4, 1952, January 5, 1953, February 2, 1953, March 20, 1956; *News of Orange*, August 23, 1951; "Orange Grand Jury Reports Bad Conditions in Schools," *Durham Morning Herald*, December 11, 1952, p. 5; "Schools in Orange," *Durham Morning Herald*, April 22, 1955, Section I, p. 6.

²⁰ The location of the 1910s Ridge Road School has not been determined. The 1922 "School Map of Orange County, N. C." illustrates its approximate location. The 1927 deed conveying the lot to the north to Jones Grove Missionary Baptist Church references Ridge Road School parcel's property line. Orange County Deed Book 101, p. 24.

²¹ Charlie Torian attended Kitrell College for two years before enlisting in the U. S. Army on February 17, 1943. Five of his brothers—Earnest, Andrew, Lewis, Monroe, and Robert—also served in the U. S. Army during World War II. After his return home in February 1946, Charlie worked as a North Carolina Mutual insurance agent. OCBE meeting minutes, May 6,

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Alethea Anne Arrington Burt (1902-1986), a Hampton Institute graduate, instructed older youth (fifth through seventh grade) and was the school's principal after moving from Currituck County to Hillsboro in 1935. Alethea began her career as a physical education teacher in Greensboro, where she met her future husband, Moses Cimuel Burt, a World War I veteran who earned a B. S. in agriculture from NC A&T College in May 1922. He subsequently studied at Hampton Institute and Cornell University. Following the couple's 1929 marriage, they were both public school teachers in Wayne and Currituck counties. During Moses Burt's tenure as Orange County's African American extension agent from 1935 until his September 1958 retirement, he supported vocational agriculture programs at public schools.²²

The African American community supported the school by assisting with student programs and events such as holiday celebrations, raising funds to purchase supplies, and donating food for lunches. The school hosted educational and recreational programs and clinics for myriad civic groups and government agencies such as the agricultural extension service and health department. The beadboard panel in the classroom partition wall was opened during programs. During musical performances and other functions attended by community members, collections were taken to subsidize the school's operation. Jones Groves Missionary Baptist, Mount Zion AME, and other area congregations also made regular donations.²³

Former students provided insight into their tenure at Ridge Road School. Most walked to school from farms located between one and two miles away, although bus transportation was provided in the late 1940s to those residing a greater distance. After Moses and Alethea Burt started the wood-fueled heating stoves in each classroom on cold mornings, older male students gathered wood to feed the fires. Two electric lights in each room supplemented light from large windows on the west elevation. The youngest students were assigned desks closest to the front (north end) of the south classroom. Teachers actively instructed one grade level, assigned students independent work, and moved to the next grade. Children gathered for music lessons in the north classroom, where a piano stood on the stage. Some students brought lunch, while others ate meals, typically sandwiches or soup, prepared in the small kitchen

1940; U. S. Census, population schedules, 1930-1950; marriage records; "Local," *Herald-Sun* (Durham), March 12, 1944, p. 5; "News About Durham Servicemen Received," *Herald-Sun*, February 10, 1946, p. 9; "Ruth M. Torian," *Durham Sun*, February 22, 1989, p. C2; "Ruth Torian," *Chapel Hill Newspaper*, February 22, 1989, p. 9; "Charlie Torian," *Herald-Sun*, April 26, 1996, p. C2.

²² Moses and Alethea's son, Moses C. Burt Jr., was in September 1955 one of the first three African American first-year law students to be admitted to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The three other Black students who enrolled in the law school that fall transferred from other programs. U. S. Census, population schedules, 1930-1950; Fred McGee, "9 Negro Grad Students May Enter UNC This Fall," *Durham Morning Herald*, September 14, 1955, p. 1; "New Negro Agent," *News and Observer*, September 7, 1958, p. 5; "M. C. Burt," *Chapel Hill Weekly*, March 21, 1965, p. 8; Kim Ring Darnofall, "Alethea Burt," *News of Orange*, February 23, 1978, p. 3B; Rosetta Austin Moore, *The Impact of Slavery on the Education of Blacks in Orange County, North Carolina, 1619-1970* (Morrisville, North Carolina: Lulu Publishing Services, 2015), 130-131.

²³ Louis K. Watkins, telephone conversation with Heather Fearnbach, February 25, 2023.

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adjacent to the south classroom. Youth contributed tomatoes, corn, and other vegetables for soups cooked on an oil-burning stove. Older students carried buckets of water for drinking, cooking, and cleaning from Walter and Maggie Torian's to a water cooler on the porch. Some children brought drinking glasses; others used a common dipper to drink from the cooler. Two small weatherboarded, two-seat outhouses painted white were located south of the school at the edge of the woods. Children played baseball, softball, and other games on the lawn surrounding the school. Since the school system did not provide athletic equipment, students made their own balls and bats. Community members hung swings from trees. Moses Burt guided students in horticultural activities such as planting trees on the property.²⁴

Records related to the school's operation are sparse. During the 1934-1935 term, fifty-one of eighty enrolled youth regularly attended classes. Enrollment remained relatively consistent. Daily attendance averaged fifty-seven of seventy-five enrolled children in 1948-1949. The sixth- and seventh- grade contingent was the largest, comprising forty students. Meager instructional equipment included a globe, United States flag, word cards, art supplies, and a 149-volume library. Alethea Burt organized a junior 4-H club during the 1949-1950 term, when sixty-four children enrolled at the school. Older youth remained the majority during the 1950-1951 term, comprising forty-five of seventy-five enrolled students.²⁵ From May 1949 until April 1951, the Ridge Road school district advisory committee appointed by the OCBE comprised A. J. Breeze, James Clark, and Otho Thompson.²⁶

Ridge Road and other small rural schools were closed and sold during the early 1950s. In September 1951, children who had attended Ridge Road School were assigned to Central High School in Hillsboro, which provided instruction for all grades of African American youth. Cedar Grove School, completed in fall 1951, and Efland-Cheeks School, finished in fall 1952, served elementary-grade African American children. White youth attended Hillsboro and Aycok schools for all grades as well as six elementary schools throughout the county. Alethea Burt and Ruth Torian, reassigned with their students, taught elementary grades at Central High School. Alethea retired at the conclusion of the 1968-1969 academic term. After the Orange County School system was fully desegregated in fall 1969, the Central High

²⁴ The date of electric wiring installation at Ridge Road School is unknown. When the OCBE approved electrification of five other rural African American schools in January 1948, community members were asked to fund half of the cost. OCBE meeting minutes, January 5, 1948; Kim Ring Darnofall, "Alethea Burt," *News of Orange*, February 23, 1978, p. 3B; Interviews conducted by Myrtle Garth with former Ridge Road School students Betty Stewart and Sylvester Ross on July 20, 2021; John David Jordan on July 27, 2021; James B. Watkins on July 29, 2021; Doris Yvonne Brooks Johnson and Nabethel Brooks on August 4, 2021; Louis K. Watkins on August 17, 2021; Reverend Charles Thompson on August 26, 2021; Louis K. Watkins, telephone conversation with Heather Fearnbach, February 25, 2023; Doris Yvonne Brooks Johnson, telephone conversation with Heather Fearnbach, February 28, 2023.

²⁵ "Orange County Education Data for 1934-1935," and "Ridge Road School," Principal's Annual Elementary School Reports, 1948-1949, 1949-1950, and 1950-1951, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, Division of General Education, Orange County, State Archives of North Carolina, Raleigh. The latter three documents are the only principal's reports for Ridge Road School on file for the duration of the school's operation.

²⁶ OCBE meeting minutes, May 26, 1949, April 2, 1951.

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School campus became Central Elementary School, from which Ruth retired in the late 1970s at the culmination of a thirty-eight-year career in the Orange County School system.²⁷

Alethea Burt and Ruth Torian were respected leaders with deep community connections. As they attended church services, joined civic organizations, and frequented local businesses, they built relationships that contributed to a nurturing school environment in which students were inspired to achieve and held to high standards. Their pedagogical approach facilitated development of academic, leadership, and teamwork skills and fostered personal growth, thus empowering youth to pursue higher education and realize community uplift. Alethea and Moses Burt attended Mount Bright Baptist Church in Hillsboro and facilitated formation of 4-H clubs, the youth development program of the U. S. Department of Agriculture administered by the Cooperative Extension Service. Ruth and Charlie Torian were members of the nearby Mount Zion AME Church, where Ruth served on laity, Sunday school, and Women's Missionary Society boards. She also held leadership positions including Worthy Matron (presiding female officer) of the Order of the Eastern Star, a fraternal organization open to Masons and their female relatives.²⁸ Louis K. Watkins credits his experiences as a student at Ridge Road and Central High schools and working on his family's farm with imbuing him with a strong work ethic that served him well during his thirty-five-year career as a plant manager, quality control technician, and salesman for Burlington Chemical Company.²⁹

Ridge Road School continued to serve as a community gathering place through the 1970s, hosting civic meetings and educational programs. An Efland-based group held sewing classes and an American Legion chapter regularly met in the building. Walter and Maggie Torian's heirs conveyed the property to Jones Grove Missionary Baptist Church, which still owns the school and is seeking funding to execute necessary repairs.³⁰

Architectural Context: Early-twentieth-century Orange County Public Schools

Although form and finish varies, many rural early-twentieth-century North Carolina public schools were one-story, gable and hip-roofed, frame, one- or two-room buildings simply executed in an economical manner that allowed for rapid construction, flexible use, and future expansion. Schools were efficiently

²⁷ OCBE meeting minutes, September 4, 1951, August 4, 1952; Lefler and Wager, *Orange County*, 141; Kim Ring Darnofall, "Alethea Burt," *News of Orange*, February 23, 1978, p. 3B; "Ruth M. Torian," *Durham Sun*, February 22, 1989, p. C2.

²⁸ The name 4-H references the appearance of the letter H four times in the organization's original motto "head, heart, hands, and health." "Ruth M. Torian," *Durham Sun*, February 22, 1989, p. C2; Kim Ring Darnofall, "Alethea Burt," *News of Orange*, February 23, 1978, p. 3B; Althea A. Burt, *News and Observer*, October 13, 1986, p. 3C.

²⁹ Louis K. Watkins, telephone conversation with Heather Fearnbach, February 25, 2023.

³⁰ Virginia Watkins, telephone conversation with Heather Fearnbach, December 7, 2022; Orange County Deed Book 879, p. 315; Deed Book 2345, pp. 256, 259; Plat Book 54, p. 194; Plat Book 81, p. 108.

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arranged to take full advantage of natural light and air circulation and facilitate connectivity between interior and exterior spaces. Weatherboard sheathing and wood-shingle or standing-seam metal roofs were typical. Brick piers or continuous brick foundations elevated buildings to diminish dampness and insect infestation. Porches and vestibules provided sheltered egress. Small coat, lunch preparation, and storage rooms often projected from the main block. Groups of tall multi-pane, double-hung, wood sash windows illuminated and ventilated classrooms. Windows were typically located on only one elevation, ideally to the left of desks, to minimize eye strain. Interior finishes included narrow tongue-and-groove hardwood floors, plaster-on-lath or beadboard-sheathed walls and ceilings, tall baseboards, beadboard wainscoting, wood door and window surrounds, wood-frame blackboards, built-in coat and storage closets, raised-panel doors with operable transoms, and molded chair rails, cornices, and picture rails. Movable partition walls and folding doors maximized spatial use for instructional purposes and enabled community gatherings. Small stages accommodated performers and lecturers. Heating stoves were located in central corners to share common chimneys, effectively radiate heat at a safe distance from students, and avoid interference with desk placement.³¹

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI)'s Division of Schoolhouse Planning issued standardized floor plans, elevations, specifications, and guidance regarding educational building construction beginning in 1903. Some plans were executed as drawn, while others were adapted by architects and contractors to reflect local needs and site conditions. Publications included detailed building materials lists for schools, privies, dormitories, and teacher residences as well as sample contractor agreements, with the goal of reducing overall cost while improving building quality. Site preparation, sanitation, landscaping, and playground arrangement are first addressed in the 1914 edition. Direction regarding entrance drive, drinking fountain, well house, septic tank, drainage trench, baseball diamond, tennis court, basketball court, and playground equipment configuration and construction followed. Dimensioned drawings detailed typical wall sections, roof and floor framing, entrance canopies, steps and railings, wood trim profiles, window and door frames, doors, windows, cabinets, blackboards, and bookcases. Door, window, and cabinet hardware, and paint and varnish type, proper application method, and color were specified. NCDPI proposed exterior paint schemes including solid white, white siding with light gray trim and white sash, gray siding with white trim and white sash, light cream siding with light brown trim and light cream sash, and dark brown siding with light cream trim and sash. On the interior, ceilings were ideally white or cream and walls cream to reflect light, while a dark color, preferably brown, was suggested for wainscoting, trim, and doors to minimize glare and maintenance.³²

Ridge Road School possesses many of these standard characteristics. Original exterior elements include

³¹ State Superintendent of Public Instruction, *Plans for Public Schoolhouses* (Raleigh: E. M. Uzzell and Company, 1911); State Superintendent of Public Instruction, *Plans for Public Schoolhouses and School Grounds* (Raleigh: E. M. Uzzell and Company, 1914); State Superintendent of Public Instruction, "Plans and Specifications," 1934.

³² Ibid.

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the 5V-crimp metal-panel roof, white-painted German siding, brick pier foundation, brick interior chimney, and fenestration. Two double-hung four-over-four sash wood windows light the shed rooms flanking the east entrance porch that shelters two single-leaf five-horizontal-panel doors. Although the groups of tall multi-pane wood sash classroom windows on the west elevation are smaller than the original sash, original opening size is apparent. The interior features beadboard-sheathed ceilings and walls, narrow-board wood floors, flat-board window and door surrounds, single-leaf five-horizontal-panel doors, and a stage. The ceilings and upper portions of the walls are painted white, while the approximately three-foot-tall lower portions of each wall are painted dark brown to emulate wainscoting. The interior window and door surrounds and doors are also painted dark brown. The wide opening in the central partition wall contains a beadboard panel that slides up into the wall cavity. The blackboard that was mounted on the south face of the panel and all other black and bulletin boards in the classrooms have been removed. Wood-burning metal stoves with round flues project at an angle from the central chimney into each classroom. The south shed room, which functioned as a kitchen, has pale-green-painted wall and ceiling beadboard and cabinets with vertical-board-and-batten doors and wood countertops. White-painted beadboard sheathes the walls and ceiling of the north shed room, a coat closet.

Ridge Road School is one of only a few extant rural, frame, early-twentieth-century public schools erected to serve Orange County's African American children. None of the similar 1920s Rosenwald schools survive. Most comparable schools constructed by the OCBE are in poor condition or have been altered. Carr, Morris Grove, and Jordan's Grove schools are all long-vacant and deteriorated. Carr School, a gable-roofed weatherboarded building in northwest Orange County, was built in two phases, the first room at a cost of \$300 in 1908 and the second in 1920. Funding for the gable-roofed, weatherboarded, two-room Morris Grove School in Chapel Hill Township was approved in May 1929. African American community members contributed \$250 of the cost and provided lumber to builders Louis Webb and Labon Hogan. Jordan's Grove, a gable-roofed, weatherboarded, two-room school in northern Orange County had one room when constructed in 1915; the second was added in 1930.³³

Simply finished one- and two-room frame schools continued to be built in rural Orange County during the 1930s. In June 1932, the OCBE agreed to subsidize construction of new buildings or additions that would result in five one- to three-room schools—Merritts, Ridge Road, Sunnyside, White Oak Grove, and Sartin—to serve African American students. Community members were required to supply the lumber necessary for each building. In August 1932, R. J. Forrest was engaged to erect Ridge Road School and the one-room Sartin School for a total cost of \$1,135. Chapel Hill architect H. D. Carter, an associate of the Durham architecture firm Atwood and Weeks, revised NCDPI drawings in 1933 for the brick White Cross School constructed after the earlier building was destroyed by fire that year. In August 1935, Carter managed the bid process for buildings or additions at four African American schools, indicating

³³ OCBE meeting minutes, July 27, 1908, May 10, 1920, May 6, 1929; Free Spirit Freedom, *Freedom Through Knowledge* (Hillsborough: Free Spirit Freedom, May 2017), 14-17, 20-27.

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that he either rendered drawings or revised standard plans issued by NCDPI. The OCBE selected the general contractor team of Forrest and Roberts to build the two-room White Oak Grove School and to add second rooms to Sartin and Piney Mountain schools. W. H. Woods was hired to erect the one-room New Branch School.³⁴ Of the aforementioned sample, Merritts, New Branch, Piney Mountain, and Sunnyside schools have been demolished. Sartin School was disassembled and removed from its site in 2021. White Oak Grove School was significantly altered when converted into two apartments and is now vacant and in poor condition.

Additional Context: Jones Grove Missionary Baptist Church History

African American farmers Joe Bethel Brooks and John William Jones organized the Jones Grove Missionary Baptist congregation on March 11, 1926. The membership was closely aligned with Lea's Chapel Baptist Church (now Lee's Chapel Missionary Baptist Church) in Cedar Grove, where Brooks and his family resided. The Jones family lived closer to Hillsboro. John's father Joseph H. Jones conveyed a one-quarter-acre portion of his farm to his son, Joe Brooks, and Joe's brother William Brooks, all church trustees, on March 10, 1927. Congregation and community members facilitated construction of the one-story, front-gable-roofed, weatherboarded sanctuary completed in early 1928. Buck Jacobs made a sizable cash donation, while others contributed smaller amounts as well as building materials and labor. John Jones borrowed white neighbor Carl Pope's truck to deliver lumber, William Brooks supplied sand, and Aldolphus Hester provided logs.³⁵

Reverend Joe B. Brooks presided at the sanctuary's March 11, 1928, dedication and served as the congregation's pastor until his death on January 6, 1954. The church, like Ridge Road School to the south, was a vital component of community life. Reverend George W. Davis of Durham assumed the congregation's leadership on September 11, 1954, and remained until 1974. During his tenure, the frame sanctuary was replaced with a front-gable-roofed concrete-block sanctuary. Church members again subsidized construction with financial and material donations. Congregants Otha Thompson and A. J. Breeze were the general contractors and Thomas Watkins supplied lumber. The church was dedicated on June 11, 1961.³⁶

During the mid-1970s, the congregation enlarged the sanctuary with a rear wing that encompassed the pastor's office, restrooms, and a baptismal font, and updated the interior by sheathing the walls with faux-wood paneling. Reverend Theodore C. Nicholson of Durham served as pastor from August 10, 1975, until May 30, 2016. The congregation began planning to build a fellowship hall in the mid-1980s.

³⁴ OCBE meeting minutes, June 6, 1932, August 18, 1932, August 5, 1935, August 19, 1935; "New White Cross School," *Chapel Hill Weekly*, July 14, 1933, p. 5.

³⁵ U. S. Census, population schedules, 1920-1950; Orange County Deed Book 101, p. 24; Catherine Brooks and Amy Dickey, "History of Jones Grove Missionary Baptist Church," 2017, p. 1.

³⁶ Brooks and Dickey, "History of Jones Grove Missionary Baptist Church," pp. 1-3.

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Reverend Joe B. Brook's son Luther A. Brooks and his wife Catherine donated a 0.10-acre tract east of the church to allow for the addition. Construction commenced in spring 1990 and was completed in January 1991. The congregation recognized the contributions of the Brooks family by naming the fellowship hall in their honor on October 13, 1996.³⁷

On October 8, 2000, the congregation celebrated satisfying its mortgage as well as improvements completed that year including carpet, light fixture, and pew upholstery replacement and the addition of a steeple constructed and donated by church deacon Gotha C. Watkins. Reverend Nicholson ordained his wife Bessie M. Nicholson, Ronald H. Brooks, Luther K. Brooks, Shirley Brooks Cates, Clifton L. Tinnon, and Gwendolyn B. Jordan to serve as associate pastors during his tenure.³⁸ Tremaine Royster became the fourth pastor of Jones Grove Missionary Baptist Church on August 27, 2017, and continues to lead members in Sunday morning services, Wednesday Bible Study, and outreach initiatives including operating a food bank.

³⁷ Orange County Deed Book 326, p. 598; Brooks and Dickey, "History of Jones Grove Missionary Baptist Church," pp. 3-5.

³⁸ Brooks and Dickey, "History of Jones Grove Missionary Baptist Church," p. 6.

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Section 10. Geographical Data

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Latitude: 36.128256 / Longitude: -79.119553

Boundary Description

The 1.75-acre National Register boundary encompasses three Orange County tax parcels: 9866457651 (school, 0.93 acres), 9866454477 (triangular 0.03-acre tract at the school parcel's southwest corner), and 9866454437 (0.79-acre parcel where Walter and Emma Torian Joneses' no-longer-extant dwelling was located) as indicated by the heavy solid line on the enclosed map. The Torian family conveyed the west and school parcels to Jones Grove Missionary Baptist Church, but still owns the 0.03-acre tract. Scale: one inch equals approximately fifty feet.

Boundary Justification

The nominated area includes Ridge Road School as well as the wooded lot extending to Coleman Loop Road formerly owned by farmers Walter and Maggie Torian, upon whose land the school was built. During the period of significance, the school and Jones Grove Missionary Baptist Church stood in a clearing bordered by woodlands. The Torian residence, outbuildings including tobacco and livestock barns, and sorghum mill to the south were flanked by fields, pastures, and wooded areas. The dwelling that Walter and Maggie Torian's daughter Emma and her husband Walter Jones erected in the wooded area west of the school around 1963 was demolished in the early twenty-first century, returning the parcel to its condition during the school's operation. The nominated area encompasses the full extent of the property the Torian family conveyed to the Joneses in February 1963 as well as the tract historically associated with the school, providing an appropriate setting.³⁹ The remainder of the Torian farm has been gradually subdivided to facilitate residential development fronting Coleman Loop Road and NC Highway 86.

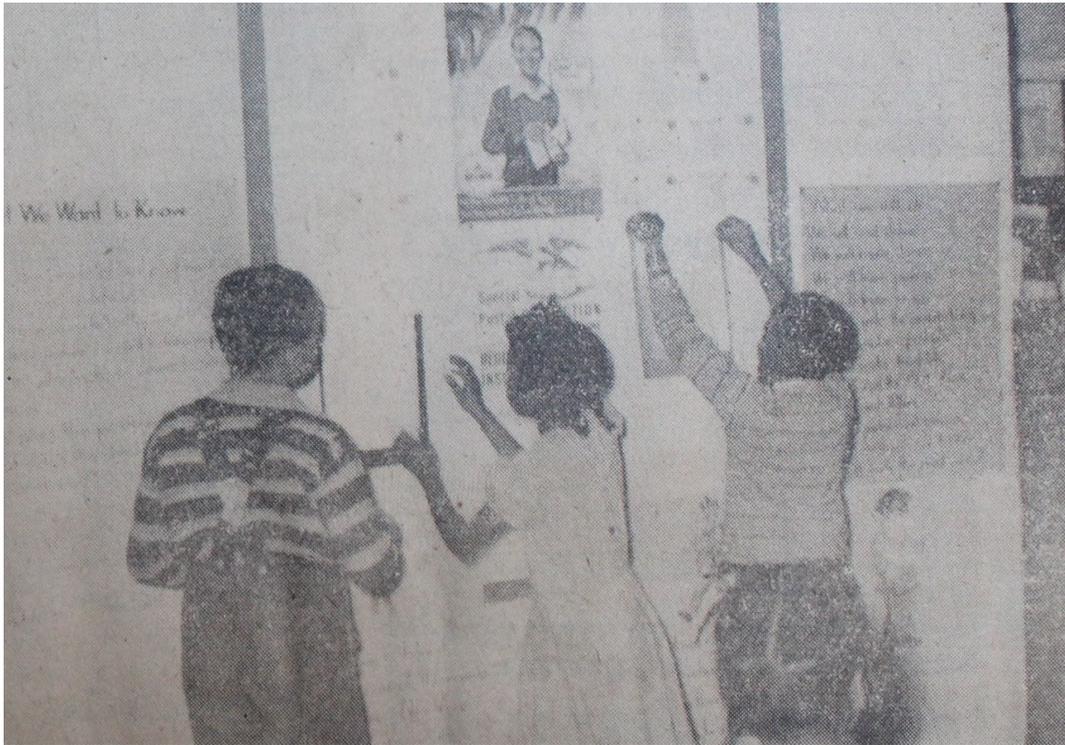
³⁹ It does not appear that Walter and Maggie Torian conveyed the land on which the school was built to the Orange County Board of Education. No deeds have been located, there is no mention of the property's acquisition or sale in OCBE meeting minutes, and family members inherited the land.

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Historic Photograph



Ridge Road School interior photograph from
"Classroom Procedures Take on Newer Trends in Orange Negro Schools"
News of Orange, April 18, 1951

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Section number Photos Page 24 Ridge Road School
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Current Photographs

Photographs taken by Heather Fearnbach, Fearnbach History Services, Inc., 3334 Nottingham Road, Winston-Salem, NC, on November 17, 2022. Digital images located at the North Carolina SHPO.



1. Southwest oblique (above) and 2. Northeast oblique (below)



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3. East entrance porch (above) and 4. South classroom, looking north (below)



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5. South classroom, looking southwest (above) and 6. North classroom, looking south (below)



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7. North classroom, looking northwest and 8. looking north (below)



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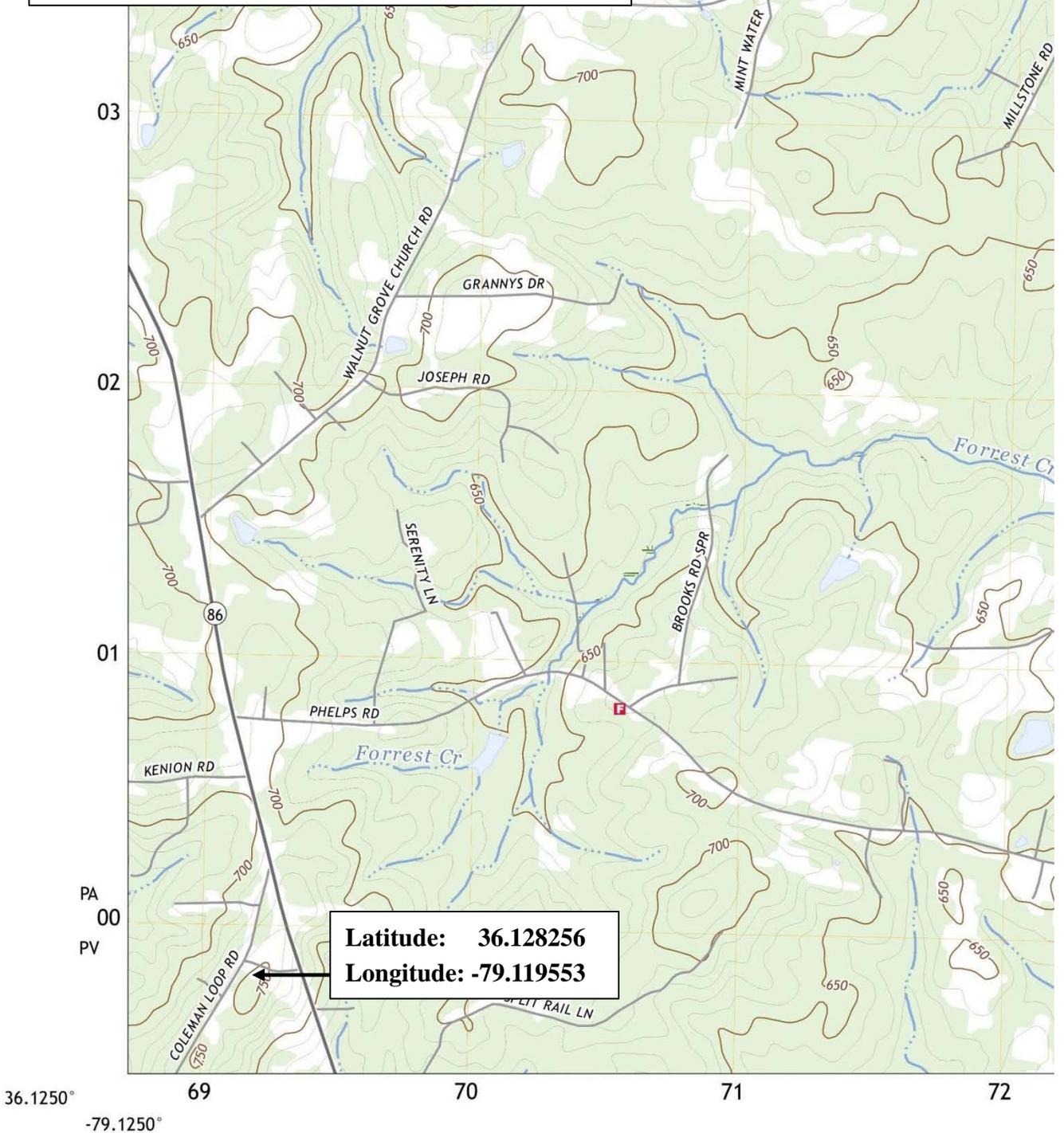


**9. Kitchen adjacent to south classroom (left) and
10. West parcel, looking west, with well house at right (below)**



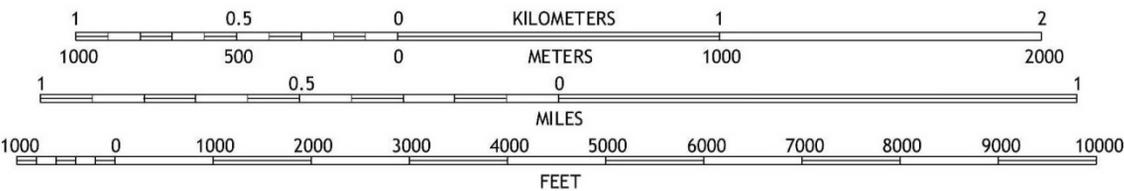
**Ridge Road School, 2705 Coleman Loop Road
Hillsborough, Orange County, North Carolina
National Register Location Map**

U. S. Geological Survey
Caldwell Quadrangle, 2022



**Latitude: 36.128256
Longitude: -79.119553**

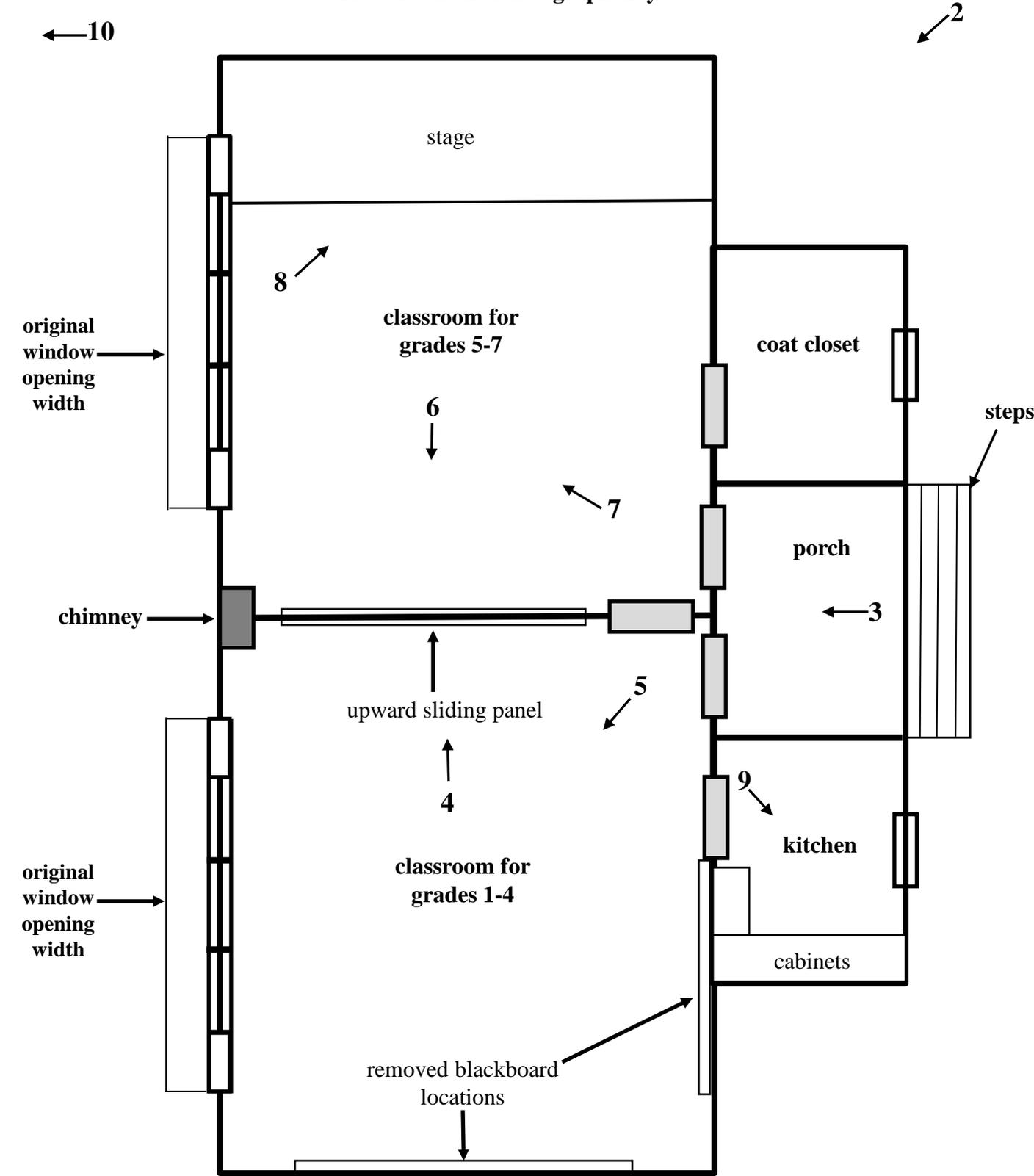
SCALE 1:24 000



Ridge Road School, 2705 Coleman Loop Road, Hillsborough, Orange County, North Carolina, National Register Boundary Map



Ridge Road School, 2705 Coleman Loop Road, Hillsborough, Orange County, North Carolina
 Floor Plan and Photograph Key



1 ↗

N ↗

Not to Scale

■ Door

▬ Window