



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Department of Historic Resources

2801 Kensington Avenue, Richmond, Virginia 23221

Travis A. Voyles
Secretary of Natural
and Historic Resources

Julie V. Langan
Director

Tel: (804) 367-2323
Fax: (804) 367-2391
www.dhr.virginia.gov

April 17, 2024

Alex Dandridge, Secretary to the ARB
Planning & Development Review
City of Richmond
900 E. Broad St., Room 510
Richmond, VA 23219

Re: Hickory Hill School, City of Richmond

Dear Alex Dandridge:

The Department of Historic Resources (DHR), Virginia's historic preservation office, is planning to present the **enclosed** National Register nomination for Virginia's State Review Board and Historic Resources Board for recommendation to the National Register of Historic Places and inclusion in the Virginia Landmarks Register.

Because this resource is within your Certified Local Government, the Architectural Review Board (ARB) is entitled to a sixty-day comment period during which the ARB may review the draft nomination and relay any comments or concerns to the DHR. I hope you will consider the enclosed nomination at your next meeting and relay your comments to us. All comments will be forwarded to the SHPO Director and the Boards for consideration along with the nomination. We have scheduled the nomination for presentation to our boards on **Thursday, June 20, 2024**, and would like to receive your comments by that time in fulfillment of the comment period. This letter serves as notification initiating the sixty-day comment period and no further action will be taken on the nomination until we have received your comments, or the full sixty-day period has passed.

I look forward to receiving your comments. Should you have any further questions regarding the nomination or the register program, please call me directly at 804-482-6445.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Amanda S. Terrell'.

Amanda S. Terrell
Director, Community Services Division

cc: Mayor Levar Stoney; Lincoln Saunders
Enclosure

Western Region Office
962 Kime Lane
Salem, VA 24153
Tel: (540) 387-5443
Fax: (540) 387-5446

Northern Region Office
5357 Main Street
PO Box 519
Stephens City, VA 22655
Tel: (540) 868-7029
Fax: (540) 868-7033

Eastern Region Office
2801 Kensington Avenue
Richmond, VA 23221
Tel: (804) 367-2323
Fax: (804) 367-2391

COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Department of Historic Resources (DHR), 2801 Kensington Avenue, Richmond, Virginia 23221
(804) 482-6446; www.dhr.virginia.gov

Rights of Private Property Owners to Comment and/or Object to a Nomination for Listing in the Virginia Landmarks Register and/or the National Register of Historic Places

The Department of Historic Resources (DHR) is Virginia's State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). DHR administers the Virginia Landmarks Register on behalf of the Commonwealth of Virginia and, as the SHPO, administers Virginia's participation in the National Register of Historic Places, which is managed by the National Park Service. DHR is your primary point of contact for all matters related to the Virginia Landmarks Register (VLR) and the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP).

Supporting and/or Commenting on a Nomination

A private property owner who supports a nomination for listing in either or both the VLR and the NRHP is invited to send a letter of support but is not required to do so in order for the nomination to proceed. Private property owners also are welcome to comment on a nomination even if they do not seek to go on record with either a vote of support for or an objection to a nomination. Copies of letters of support and/or comment are provided to the State Review Board (SRB) and the Board of Historic Resources (BHR) for review, along with the nomination to which they refer, and are included with the nomination if the SRB has recommended it to proceed to the NRHP.

Objecting to a Nomination

In accordance with Virginia Administrative Code 17 VAC10-20-200, a private property owner has the right to object to listing in the VLR or the NRHP, or object to listing in both registers. For a private property that is being individually nominated, each owner or partial owner of the property may object to listing regardless of the portion of the property that party owns. For a historic district that is being nominated, each owner of private property in the district is counted as one individual regardless of how many properties that party owns, and regardless of whether the properties contribute to the significance of the district.

As stated at 17VAC10-20-200, the private property owner's objection to listing must be provided to DHR in writing a minimum of 7 business days prior to the Board meeting. When objecting to listing in the VLR, any owner or partial owner of private property shall submit to DHR a written statement of objection that has been attested and notarized by a notary public, that references the subject property by address and/or parcel number, and that certifies that the party is the sole or partial owner of the private property, as appropriate. Only upon such submission shall such objecting owner be counted by DHR in determining whether a majority of private property owners has objected to a nomination of a property to the VLR.

When objecting to listing in the NRHP, the objecting private property owner must provide their objection in writing and include the same content as specified in the paragraph above; however, objection letters concerning NRHP listing, are not required to be notarized. In accordance with Section 1746 of Title 28 of the U.S. Code, a written objection should state "I declare (or certify, verify, or state) under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States of America that the foregoing is true and correct. Executed on (date). (Signature)".

A property owner may submit a single written objection to listing in both the VLR and NRHP, but in order for the objection to be applied to the VLR listing, the letter must be notarized.

For an individually nominated private property or a historic district nomination, if a **majority** (50% + 1) of the private property's owners object according to the process described above, the nomination will not proceed. In both types of cases, as the SHPO, DHR shall submit the nomination to the National Park Service's Keeper for a Determination of Eligibility of the property for the NRHP. If the property is then determined eligible, although not formally listed, Federal agencies will be required to allow for the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation to have an opportunity to comment before the agency may fund, license, or assist a project which will affect the property.

Letters of objection must be addressed to the State Historic Preservation Officer at the Department of Historic Resources, 2801 Kensington Avenue, Richmond, Virginia 23221.

Letters of objection received a minimum of 7 business days prior to the Board meeting will be copied to the members of the SRB and BHR for review, along with the nomination to which they refer. If, at the Board meeting, the nomination is approved to proceed to the NRHP, all letters of objection will be forwarded to the National Park Service to consider with their review of the nomination, along with any letters of support or comment that DHR has received. Letters of objection to listing in the NRHP may be submitted to DHR even after the Board meeting at which the nomination is approved. DHR will forward any letters of objection to the National Park Service. The National Park Service continues to accept letters of objection up to the date of listing in the NRHP. The National Park Service typically concludes review and approval of a nomination within approximately 55 days of receipt of the nomination from DHR.

Hickory Hill School, City of Richmond, DHR ID# 127-0434

Nomination Synopsis

The Hickory Hill School is in the Southside area of the City of Richmond at the intersection of Belt Boulevard and Terminal Avenue. The historic school building sits on a knoll within a parcel that contains open grounds, a walking trail, and sports field and court, and is surrounded by wooded areas to the west and residential development to the north and east. The 1938 school sits on the same site as the earlier 1915 Hickory Hill County Training School, as well as the 1925 Hickory Hill Rosenwald School buildings, all of which have been demolished.

The 1938 Hickory Hill School is a brick, one-story Colonial Revival school with additions dating to 1958, 1961, and 1963. The primary building served as the first brick school for African Americans in Chesterfield County during the segregation era. It was architect-designed and built to the State Department of Education's specifications, embodying the formality, symmetry, and functionality of other period state-designed schools. The school was originally a one-story, nine-bay brick building and features symmetrical fenestration with projecting central entrance bay, and details such as Flemish bond brickwork, brick quoins, jack arches with keystones, a hipped metal roof, and a wood box cornice.

The school was enlarged in 1958, 1961, and 1963. The school was first enlarged in 1951 with a large one-story addition at the southwest corner containing four classrooms, the library and modern cafeteria. The 1961 and 1963 classroom additions extend west from the 1958 addition. All additions are covered by a flat roof with metal coping and clad with a brick veneer laid in a five-to-one common bond. A partial-width, one-story porch is located on the northeast elevation of the additions and is covered by a flat roof supported by metal posts. A gabled entryway is located on the southeast elevation and it is supported by squared, brick posts.

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

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Department of Historic Resources (DHR), 2801 Kensington Avenue, Richmond, Virginia 23221

Key Points about the National and State Register Process for Property Owners

- Listing in the national and state registers is honorary. It recognizes a historic property's importance to its community, the State, and/or the Nation as well as encouraging good stewardship of the historic property.
- National and state register listings do not place restrictions on private property owners. Owners have no obligation to open their properties to the public, to restore them, or even to maintain them to a specific standard, if they choose not to do so.
- Under Federal and State laws, private property owners can do anything they wish with their Register-listed property, provided that no Federal or State license, permit, or funding is involved.
- If a listed property is destroyed or its integrity is greatly altered, it is removed from the registers.
- To ensure public participation in the nomination process, property owners and local officials are notified of proposed nominations to the National Register and Virginia Landmarks Register and are provided the opportunity to comment. In addition, once a nomination is submitted to the National Park Service, another public comment period is published in the *Federal Register*.
- Federal agencies whose projects affect a listed property must give DHR (Virginia's State Historic Preservation Office) an opportunity to comment on the project and its effects on the property. Further details are provided below.
- Federal and State Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits for rehabilitation and other provisions are available, should a property owner choose to use them. Further details are provided below.
- Owners may also qualify for Federal and State grants for historic preservation when funding is available. Refer to the National Park Service website for Federal grant information (<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1623/index.htm>). DHR administers several State grant programs (<https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/grants/>).
- Owners of properties that have been determined eligible for or listed in the Virginia Landmarks Register are eligible to consider perpetual legal protection of the property through the donation of a historic preservation easement. For more information, see <https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/easements/>.

National Register of Historic Places (NRHP)

Established under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA), as amended, the national historic preservation program is a partnership between the Federal, State, Tribal, and local governments; private organizations; and the public. The Act and its provisions establish the framework within which citizens plan, identify, evaluate, register, and protect significant historic and archeological properties throughout the country. Central to this framework is the NRHP—the Nation's official list of historic properties worthy of preservation, administered by the National Park Service (NPS), U.S. Department of the Interior. Properties listed in the NRHP include districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that are significant in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture.

Historic places are nominated to the NRHP by nominating authorities: the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), appointed by the Governor of the State in which the property is located; the Federal Preservation Officer (FPO) for properties under Federal ownership or control; or by the Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (THPO) if the property is on tribal lands. Anyone can prepare a nomination to the NRHP, at which time the SHPO, FPO or THPO reviews the proposed nomination, and notifies property owners and local officials of the intent to nominate. Nominations submitted through the State must first be approved by a State Review Board (SRB) before being reviewed by the NPS. The members of the SRB, who are appointed by the SHPO, use the same criteria as the National Register to evaluate properties and then recommend them to the NPS for listing in the NRHP.

The NRHP continues to reflect the desire of Americans, as expressed in the NHPA, that “the historical and cultural foundation of the nation should be preserved as a living part of our community life and development in order to give a sense of orientation to the American people.”

Virginia Landmarks Register (VLR)

In 1966, the Virginia General Assembly established the Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission, now the Department of Historic Resources (DHR). DHR is the State Historic Preservation Office responsible for managing

the VLR, the state's official list of properties important to Virginia's history. The Historic Resources Board (HRB), appointed by the Governor of Virginia, is responsible for listing properties to the VLR. Just as the same evaluation criteria are used for the National and State registers, the same register form is also used for both the VLR and the NRHP. Nearly 2300 historic properties are listed in the VLR. This number does not include the tens of thousands of properties within each listed historic district.

Federal and State Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits (voluntary program)

The Federal Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit (HRTC) provides for a 20% Federal tax credit on eligible rehabilitation expenses for comprehensive work done to bring historic commercial, industrial, and rental residential buildings into new or continued use. All work that is completed must meet the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for Rehabilitation*. This tax credit is governed by the following Federal Regulations: NPS Regulations 36 CFR § 67; Internal Revenue Code Regulations 26 U.S. Code § 47; IRS Regulations 26 CFR § 1.48-12; and Public Law No.: 115-97 (December 22, 2017).

Owners of properties listed in the VLR may be eligible for a 25% HRTC for the certified rehabilitation of income-producing and non-income-producing certified historic buildings such as commercial, industrial, or rental or non-rental residential buildings. Owners who rehabilitate an income-producing building listed in both the National and State registers may use both Federal and State HRTCs. The HRTCs are a voluntary program available if a property owner chooses to use them. Individuals should consult a knowledgeable tax legal/accounting professional and the appropriate local IRS office for assistance in determining the tax consequences of the above provisions. Refer also to the National Park Service website (<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/taxincentives/index.htm>) or to the Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit Program on DHR's website (<https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/tax-credits/>).

Results of Federal and State Listing

Property owners, historic district sponsoring organizations, and/or local governments may purchase an attractive official plaque noting designation for properties in historic districts and individually listed properties. Owners of recognized historic properties are also eligible for the Virginia Preservation Easement Program, as well as technical assistance from the staff of DHR. Professional architects, architectural historians, and archaeologists are available to provide technical guidance in the care and maintenance of buildings and sites.

Planning for Federal, federally licensed, and federally assisted projects includes consideration of historic properties. Section 106 of the NHPA requires that Federal agencies allow the SHPO an opportunity to comment on all projects affecting historic properties either listed in or determined eligible for listing in the NRHP. The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (www.achp.gov) oversees and ensures the consideration of historic properties in the Federal planning process. Buildings listed in the VLR may also be considered as part of a state-funded project, such as highway planning. Register listing also requires consideration in issuing a surface coal mining permit. In accordance with the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 (30 U.S.C. 1201-1328; 91 Stat. 445), there must be consideration of historic values in the decision to issue a surface coal mining permit where coal is located. Staff at DHR are available to provide more information about these requirements.

Local governments may have laws to encourage the preservation of their historic places. Such programs are established at the local level and therefore are entirely separate from the Register process managed by DHR. Some local governments have enacted their own identification procedures; some use listing in the National and State registers as an indicator of historic significance. Local historic preservation programs can provide some protection against the possible harmful effects of State-funded, -licensed, or -assisted projects. Some provide limited financial assistance to owners in the form of grants, loans, or tax benefits. They may establish other protections or reviews for preservation purposes. Your local government's planning department can provide more information.

Websites with Additional Information

www.nps.gov/history - National Park Service's main website for Historic Preservation and History programs
<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/index.htm> National Register of Historic Places website
<https://ncshpo.org/resources/national-historic-preservation-act-of-1966/> - Provides the full text of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966

www.dhr.virginia.gov - Department of Historic Resources (DHR) main website

www.dhr.virginia.gov/register/register.htm - Registers Homepage of DHR's website

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: Hickory Hill County Training School

Other names/site number: Hickory Hill Community Center

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

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

2. Location

Street & number: 3000 E. Belt Boulevard

City or town: Richmond State: Virginia County: _____

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

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:</p>	<p>_____ Date</p>
<p>_____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>	

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Name of Property

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In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.	
Signature of commenting official:	Date
Title :	State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- ___ entered in the National Register
- ___ determined eligible for the National Register
- ___ determined not eligible for the National Register
- ___ removed from the National Register
- ___ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

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

Category of Property

(Check only one box.)

- Building(s)
- District
-

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Site

Structure

Object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing

Noncontributing

1

0

buildings

sites

structures

objects

1

0

Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION: school

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RECREATION AND CULTURE: auditorium

RECREATION AND CULTURE: sports facility

RECREATION AND CULTURE: outdoor recreation

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS: Colonial Revival

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: BRICK; METAL

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Hickory Hill School is in the Southside area of the City of Richmond at the intersection of Belt Boulevard and Terminal Avenue. The historic school building sits on a knoll within a 6.98-acre parcel that contains open grounds, a walking trail, and sports field and court, and is surrounded by wooded areas to the west and residential development to the north and east. The 1938 school sits on the same site as the earlier 1915 Hickory Hill County Training School, as well as the 1925 Hickory Hill Rosenwald School buildings, all of which have been demolished.

The 1938 Hickory Hill School is a brick, one-story Colonial Revival school with additions dating to 1958, 1961, and 1963. The primary building served as the first brick school for African Americans in Chesterfield County during the segregation era. It was architect-designed and built to the State Department of Education's specifications, embodying the formality, symmetry, and functionality of other period state-designed schools. The school is a one-story, nine-bay brick building and features symmetrical fenestration with projecting central entrance bay, and details such as Flemish bond brickwork, brick quoins, jack arches with keystones, a hipped metal roof, and a wood box cornice.

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The school was enlarged in 1958, 1961, and 1963. The first one-story addition to the southwest corner of the main block contained four classrooms, a library, and modern cafeteria. The 1961 and 1963 classroom additions extend west from the 1958 addition. All additions are covered by a flat roof with metal coping and clad with a brick veneer laid in a five-to-one common bond. A partial-width, one-story porch is located on the northeast elevation of the additions and is covered by a flat roof supported by metal posts. A gabled entryway is located on the southeast elevation, and it is supported by squared, brick posts.

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

Narrative Description

The Hickory Hill School is in the Southside area of the City of Richmond at the intersection of Belt Boulevard and Terminal Avenue in a mixed-use area containing residential, communal, and industrial properties. The historic school building sits on a slight knoll within a 6.98-acre parcel that is wooded along the perimeter on north, west, and south sides and facing E. Belt Boulevard on the east side. A dense wooded area west of the school provides a buffer between the grounds and the CSX railroad track. The Serene Wildlife Sanctuary is located on the other side of the track. Grassy fields immediately surround the school on all sides other than the east, where a U-shaped front driveway leads from E. Belt Boulevard to the school's entrance and is separated from the main road by a landscaped median with sidewalk. A large, paved parking lot sits southeast of the main school building and its attached east addition. In addition to the school, the site includes a walking/fitness trail, playground equipment, basketball court, softball/soccer field, and archery apparatus.

The building comprises four, one-story brick sections, including the 1938 school, 1958 addition, 1961 addition, and 1963 addition. The primary 1938 school building is distinguished as its own section apart from the additions. It retains its exterior cladding with a continuous brick foundation in a pattern of three stretcher bond rows to one Flemish with soldier brick belt course on all elevations. The corners feature brick quoins. The building is covered by a moderately pitched, hipped roof with a central gable projection and a wood box cornice sheathed in replacement standing-seam metal.

The primary central entrance bay slightly projects with a front gable roofline and has a recessed central entry door. The double-leaf, metal entrance doors are topped by a sixteen-light, wood-frame transom. The door opening is flanked by a pedimented, wood surround with paneled pilasters and a denticulated cornice. The entrance bay contains one fixed twelve-light wood

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window on either side of the recessed entrance; these windows feature brick jack arches with keystones and concrete sills.

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

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

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

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

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

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Integrity Analysis

Hickory Hill School retains all seven aspects of historic integrity. The historic floorplan of the core and later additions are intact and most interior features and decorative elements have been retained. The exterior retains its historic materials, features, and decorative elements highlighting the Colonial Revival design. Most historic windows have been retained. Additionally, the fenestration pattern appears unchanged and all of the window features (sills, opening size, jack arches) are intact. Therefore, Hickory Hill School retains integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. Additionally, the integrity of setting and location are seen in the large, elevated open parcel, with the original acreage unchanged since the school's 1938 construction. The additions and separate buildings also have strong architectural integrity and tell the story of the development of the school. The property retains integrity of feeling and association as an evolved state-funded-and-designed school for African Americans in Chesterfield County during the era of twentieth century racial segregation.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION

ETHNIC HISTORY: Black

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1938-1969

1938-1958

Significant Dates

March 23, 1938

December 3, 1948

August 20, 1958

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Spencer, James Preston

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

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

Atkinson, J. W., builder

Norman and Dixon, Architects

Nuckols, T. E., builder

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

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

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

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

The Hickory Hill School is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under **Criterion A** in the areas of **Education** and **Ethnic Heritage: African American**; **Criterion C** in the area of Architecture, both with a period of significance beginning in 1938, with the construction of the school, and ending in 1969, with the closure of the high school upon racial desegregation of schools in Chesterfield County; and **Criterion B** for its association with local Civil Rights advocate and leader in education, **James. P. Spencer**, with a period of significance spanning Spencer's tenure as Principal of Hickory Hill School from 1938-1958, and his involvement in the landmark federal case, "Arthur M. Freeman et al. v. County School Board of Chesterfield County et al.,". The school is the only resource on the property.

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

The Hickory Hill School, historically known as the County Training School at Hickory Hill and, late, Hickory Hill High School, is a brick, four classroom and auditorium, one-story building with multiple additions, first completed in 1938. The school was Chesterfield County's first brick school for African Americans and has

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

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

Separate but Equal Public Education in Virginia and Chesterfield County

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

¹Anderson, Bernard R., *A History of Chesterfield County, Virginia's Hickory Hill School, A 100 Year Legacy*, unpublished manuscript, 2023, p. 1 (This nomination report relies extensively on the historical research of Bernard R. Anderson on the Hickory Hill School and the Rosenwald Schools in Chesterfield County.)

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

³Worrall, Jay, Jr., *The Friendly Virginians*, page 252

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

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

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

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

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

While Virginia's public schools had been racially segregated from the outset, the Virginia Constitution of 1902 was the state's first constitution to legally mandate segregation, declaring that "White and colored children shall not be taught in the same school."¹¹ By the early 20th century, the Commonwealth of Virginia had embarked on an era of educational reform with the passage of the 1906 Mann High School Act, among others, however, most Black schools didn't receive the benefits afforded by these legal statutes as few high schools existed. As such,

⁵Butler, Aaron Jason, "A union of church and state: The Freedmen's Bureau and the education of African-Americans in Virginia from 1865-1871," 2015, pages 40-43, 88-90

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

⁷Anderson, Bernard R., A History of Chesterfield County, Virginia's Hickory Hill School, A 100 Year Legacy, unpublished manuscript, 2023, p. 1

⁸"Chesterfield County School Board minutes," 1870

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

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

¹¹ 1902 Constitution of Virginia quoted in Tripp, "Chauncey Depew Harmon, Senior," 20.

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Black Virginians had to continue working together within their communities to create better educational opportunities for their youth, often donating land and money, and fundraising to fill the void left by local and state government funding. During this time, the School Improvement League and the Virginia Teachers Association members supported expanded educational opportunities and facilities for Black students and teachers. When the two advocacy groups joined the newly formed Negro Organization Society in 1912, the larger union endeavored to improve all aspects of life for Black Virginians with the motto of "Better Schools, Better Health, Better Homes, Better Farms."¹² In the area of education, the organization successfully garnered private donations throughout the state to increase the amount of money available for the improvement of Black education.

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

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

Multiple philanthropic foundations provided resources for rural southern communities, and under the charge of progressing and improving those communities, supplemented state funds designated for African American education. Organizations and funds, such as the Southern Education Board and the General Education Board, targeted broad educational improvement for Black and White schools, whereas others such as the John F. Slater Fund, Anna T. Jeanes' Negro Rural School Fund, and, later, the Julius Rosenwald Fund exclusively directed their efforts toward Black education. The Slater Fund aimed to develop public secondary education for Black students and established "county training schools" that incorporated an industrial and vocational curriculum modeled by Booker T. Washington at the Hampton Normal and Tuskegee institutes.

By 1915, there were five county training schools throughout the Commonwealth, located in Alleghany, Caroline, Nottoway, Roanoke, and York counties.¹⁴ By the 1917-1918 school term, there were seventeen African American high schools throughout rural Virginia, six of which were county training schools. Out of the seventeen schools, only four provided a full four-year program.¹⁵

In 1915, Chesterfield County was a few years away from seeing its first county training school, however, Black residents in the Manchester area were on the way to realizing their goal of establishing a new primary school. In 1914, Black patrons of the African American Educational League Association raised funds to purchase and donate land for a new schoolhouse at Hickory Hill. The League deeded the 1 ½-acre site to the School Board of Manchester District on April 15, 1915. At that time, Henry Banks, James M. Brown, and Matthew R. Page were

¹² Encyclopedia Virginia. <https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/negro-organization-society/>

¹³ Deroncourt, Ellora et al., Wealth of Two Nations: The U.S. Racial Wealth Gap 1860-2020, Griswald Center for Economic Policy Studies, pages 48, 49

¹⁴ Buck, p. 205.

¹⁵ Buck, pp. 228-229.

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named as Trustees of the League.¹⁸ The 1910 plat of the parcel, drawn by County Surveyor W. W. LaPrade described the donated property as “lots number thirty-one and number fifty in the ‘Sub-division of Blunt’s Estate,’” near the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad.¹⁹ In 1915, the School Board constructed the four-room frame Hickory Hill School for elementary students on the land gifted by the League.

A photograph of the Hickory Hill School was included in the 1919 Education Commission’s Report to the Assembly of Virginia and described as a “splendid type of four-room rural school.” It was displayed as one of the few glimmers of success in improving the education of rural Black youth in the Commonwealth. The report highlighted the great need to generally improve education for Black students, particularly in the rural counties of the state where only .5% of the enrolled Black students were taking classes at the secondary level. On average, the schools for Black children were open only six months per year. The 1919 report noted that the average pay for Black teachers was only \$30 per month and that, “unskilled labor receives better pay than colored teachers.” The report recommended increasing teacher pay and providing more and better schools for African Americans.²⁰ In 1919, the Virginia Public Schools Education Commission reported that Black people through their school leagues raised \$150,000 annually for various school improvements.²¹

Growth in Chesterfield County and School Improvements

An article in the November 26, 1921 edition of the *Richmond Planet* heralded a rally held by the Hickory Hill School Improvement League, which was raising funds to improve educational conditions at the school. Contributors (highlighted as not yet having pupils in the school) included Henry Banks, Matthew Page, and James Brown.²⁵ These three men were devoted volunteers and previously signed the 1915 land deed that transferred land to the Manchester School District for the Hickory Hill School site. Matthew R. Page served as President of the Hickory Hill School Improvement League and was a prominent member of the Black community, working as an agent for the North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company. Page lived in Chesterfield County and commuted to his office in the Southern Aid Society Building at 214 East Clay Street in Richmond’s Jackson Ward community.²⁶

In March of 1923, Janet P. Crawly, principal of Hickory Hill School, proposed that the Chesterfield County School Board extend the school year for students from seven to nine months, with the school patrons paying for one additional month and the school board paying for another. The school board agreed to pay for one additional month of schooling with the patrons matching the funding for an additional month.²⁷ While the Chesterfield County School Board minutes do not record requiring matching funds from the patrons of White schools, it was standard practice to require matching funds for school improvements from the Black patrons.

On May 21, 1924, the Chesterfield County School Board passed a resolution to move the Chesterfield County Training School from the Virginia Normal and Industrial Institute (now known as Virginia State University) to Hickory Hill.²⁸ County training schools offered the only high-school level curriculum for African-American

¹⁸Chesterfield County Deed Book 141, pages 102 -103, 1915

¹⁹Chesterfield County Plat Book 3, page 32, 1910

²⁰Virginia Public Schools, Education Commission’s Report to the Assembly of Virginia, 1919, pages 199-210

²¹Virginia Public Schools, Education Commission’s Report to the Assembly of Virginia, 1919, page 209

²⁵“Hickory Hill School Improvement League Holds Rally,” *Richmond Planet*, November 26, 1921, p. 1

²⁶“Matthew R. Page,” listings in Hill’s Richmond City Directory, 1938, p. 793

²⁷“Chesterfield County School Board minutes,” March 5, 1923

²⁸“Chesterfield County School Board minutes,” May 21, 1924

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children in the non-city schools of Virginia and typically provided two to four years of courses, including industrial training that would be useful in domestic and agricultural settings. A simple course in teacher training typically would have been offered in county training schools' highest grade.²⁹

Between 1912 and 1932, the Julius Rosenwald Foundation contributed to the funding of 382 schools for African American children in rural communities in Virginia, and included supplemental funding for the construction, expansion, and upgrading of county training schools. The fund was established by Julius Rosenwald, President of the Sears, Roebuck and Company, who collaborated with Booker T. Washington in the monumental effort to improve school facilities for impoverished African Americans in rural southern counties. Grants were paid after matching funds were contributed by the community and established standards of safety and sanitation were mandated. Architectural designs for the schools were provided, along with plans for every aspect of the school's physical development to ensure that high standards were realized. The Rosenwald school program was an amazing success, helping to produce 5,357 new educational facilities throughout the south.³⁰

With the move of the training school to Hickory Hill, the facilities needed expansion. On July 30, 1924, the Chesterfield County School Board approved the construction of a new Rosenwald-funded school and also a shop building at Hickory Hill. The Rosenwald Fund provided \$700 for the new structure and the Black community raised \$500 for the school. Additionally, the Black community was required to loan the school board between \$1,000 and \$1,200 to finance the school; in contrast, at the same meeting, the school board approved borrowing \$10,000 from a bank to finance the construction of a school for White students.³¹ The low bid of \$2678 submitted by E. S. Hogue for building the Hickory Hill Rosenwald School was accepted by the Chesterfield County School Board on January 28, 1925; however, since the bid was higher than anticipated, the Hickory Hill School Improvement League was required to increase their loan to the school board to \$1,378.45, along with the community's required donation of \$500. The Rosenwald Fund's contribution of \$700 made the construction of the new school building possible. By May 20, 1925, the board repaid the loan from the Black community.³²

The Hickory Hill Rosenwald School was one of six Rosenwald schools to be constructed in Chesterfield County. In addition to Hickory Hill, the county training schools included Beulah (Skinquarter), Piney Branch (Chester), Union Grove, Kingsland, and Midlothian.³³ In addition to the school improvements supported by the Rosenwald Foundation, the Hickory Hill School also benefited from the assistance of the Anna T. Jeanes Foundation. Jeanes was a progressive Quaker from Philadelphia who made it her life's work to support the education of African American students. The Jeanes Fund assisted nearly 300 counties in southern states to employ supervising industrial teachers. In many cases, the Jeanes supervisor became the lead coordinator of education of Black youths in the county.³⁴ Press reports indicate that in 1925 Mrs. Janet Peyton Crawley, a 1911 graduate of Hampton Institute, was appointed the Chesterfield County Jeanes Supervisor after serving as the

²⁹Virginia Public Schools, Education Commission's Report to the Assembly of Virginia, 1919, page 200

³⁰McClure, Phyllis, Rosenwald Schools, in Encyclopedia Virginia, December 7, 2020

³¹"Chesterfield County School Board minutes," July 30, 1924

³²"Chesterfield County School Board minutes," January 28, 1925 and May 20, 1925

³³Anderson, Bernard R., "Rosenwald schools in Chesterfield County, Virginia: an effort to improve facilities for African Americans in the early twentieth century," Messenger of the Chesterfield Historical Society of Virginia, January 2014, p. 3-5

³⁴Virginia Public Schools, Education Commission's Report to the Assembly of Virginia, 1919, page 207. The Jeanes funds in Virginia were administered by Charlottesville educator, Dr. James H. Dillard.

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principal of Hickory Hill School since 1920.³⁵ Evidently Mrs. Crawley's hard work was successful because it was announced in 1927 that the county training school at Hickory Hill would be placed on the state's list of accredited schools.³⁶

In the Archie Richardson Collection of the archives at Virginia State University, a photograph shows what is believed to be the Hickory Hill Rosenwald School on the right of the 1915 Hickory Hill School building. In the same photograph, a small building shown to the left of the 1915 Hickory Hill School is likely the two-room shop building that was constructed at the same time as the Rosenwald school building. In the photograph, the Hickory Hill Rosenwald School faces south for the natural lighting recommended by the Rosenwald program guidelines.³⁷ The nearby Midlothian Rosenwald School, built a year later, appears to have a similar design, and a photograph of the school offers an idea of what the Hickory Hill Rosenwald School could have looked like from the front.³⁸

A problem that plagued the Hickory Hill County Training School was the ongoing lack of transportation of African American students to the school. Chesterfield County was around 480 square miles in size, and it was beyond the means of many families to provide transportation to the school. Children in the far reaches of the county who had no transportation to the Hickory Hill County Training School were denied a high school level education. Repeated requests for bus service were often denied, or else patrons were responsible for partially funding the transportation. In October 1923, the president of the Midlothian School Improvement League requested help for transporting "advanced scholars" from Midlothian and Hallsboro to the Hickory Hill County Training School, as much as twenty miles. The Chesterfield School Board denied this request. Even into the late 1930s, patrons continued to request bus service to Hickory Hill from Midlothian, Gravel Hill, Mt. Nebo, and Warrick Road, "... just as is done for other communities." Finally, in January of 1939, due to persistent lobbying, the school board agreed to provide bus transportation to Hickory Hill from these districts; however, into the 1940s and 1950s, the one bus provided was often cited as being overcrowded. The lack of bus service still was a persistent problem for African American families in the Good Hope, Pleasant View, Winterpock, and Beulah communities. Families from these communities addressed the Chesterfield School Board on three occasions between February 1940 and June 1941, attempting to request bus service. It wasn't until January 1942 that the board offered bus service to Hickory Hill School for Black children from the Good Hope community.⁴⁴

The shortage of qualified teachers for Hickory Hill School was further compromised by a repressive resolution approved by the Chesterfield County School Board in 1928 that they would not employ married teachers at any of the schools who had not taught for a period of five years previously. The board minutes do not reflect the justification for such a drastic resolution. Following the loss of many teachers and after objections were raised by teachers and their spouses, this decision was reversed soon after it went into effect.⁴⁵

³⁵"Chesterfield County Schools Made Splendid Record," Richmond Planet, April 25, 1925, p. 1

³⁶"Chesterfield School Board minutes," December 20, 1927

³⁷"Undated Photograph," Archie Richardson Collection, Virginia State University Archives; as found in: Anderson, Bernard R., A History of Chesterfield County, Virginia's Hickory Hill School, A 100 Year Legacy, unpublished manuscript, 2023, p. 5

³⁸Photograph of Midlothian Rosenwald School, Julius Rosenwald Collection, Special Collections, John Hope and Aurelia F. Franklin Library, Fisk University; as found in: Anderson, Bernard R., A History of Chesterfield County, Virginia's Hickory Hill School, A 100 Year Legacy, unpublished manuscript, 2023, p. 6

⁴⁴"Chesterfield County School Board minutes," October 4, 1923; May 25, 1938; January 25, 1939; February 12, 1940; March 26, 1941; June 25, 1941; January 28, 1942; September 27, 1944; November 20, 1951

⁴⁵"Chesterfield County School Board minutes," November 21, 1928

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The Hickory Hill High School from 1938-1969

During the 1930s, requests were made to the Chesterfield County School Board for an improved high school facility at the Hickory Hill School. In January 1937, Hickory Hill School Principal James P. Spencer made the request for an upgraded and enlarged school building, an increase in teacher salaries, more funding for textbooks and for a nine-month school year, along with a request for additional teacher compensation based upon experience. At the same meeting, a committee of the Chesterfield County Civic Association made "an appeal for the erection of one good modern brick high school, centrally and conveniently located to the masses of Negro pupils and citizens." In May of 1937, resolutions were presented to the school board from the Chesterfield Civic Association, Chesterfield Church Union, and interested school patrons from each magisterial district, requesting improved high school facilities for Black students.⁴⁶

Plans for a new, modern brick high school at Hickory Hill were soon underway. On March 24, 1937, the Chesterfield School Board directed the Division of School Buildings of the State Department of Education to prepare plans and specifications for a new building at the county training school site. Plans and specifications for a new, brick school building to be erected, as drawn by the Division of School Buildings, State Department of Education and approved by the Division Superintendent, were presented and accepted by the school board on July 6, 1937.⁴⁷ After the architectural plans and specifications were approved, the Chesterfield County School Board swiftly proceeded to put the Hickory Hill School project out for bids. At their meeting on July 28, 1937, they accepted the bid of \$26,864 from the contracting firm of J. W. Atkinson to build the new school.

In 1937, the Hickory Hill Community League raised funds to donate a 2-1/2-acre parcel of land adjacent to the 1915 Hickory Hill School to the Chesterfield County School Board. The land was donated to improve the overall Hickory Hill School site plan in preparation for the new school building; the use of the property was intended as a playground. Matthew R. Page, President of the Hickory Hill Community League, was instrumental in the 1915 donation of the land for the Hickory Hill School.⁵³ The 2 ½ acres of land adjacent to Hickory Hill had been acquired, likely for this purpose, on March 9, 1935 by Evie Spencer, the wife of Principal James P. Spencer. The Spencer's deeded the property to the Chesterfield School Board on July 28, 1937.⁵⁴ The deed does not include a plat, but the 2 ½ acres of land had frontage on Bells road and was likely lots 32, 33 and 49 as shown in the 1910 LaPrade plat of Blunt's Estate that was referenced in the 1915 gift of land. The Chesterfield School Board minutes of September 22, 1937 record that "...the deed from Evie and James Spencer conveying to the board 2 ½ acres of land adjoining the County Training school was accepted ... it was ordered that a vote of thanks be extended to the Parent-Teacher Association for this land."⁵⁵ The value of this property increased because it fronted on Belt Boulevard (Virginia State Route 161), one of the Richmond area's first bypass highways, which was completed around 1934.

Prior to the new school building's opening, local advocates, including Hickory Hill School Principal Spencer and teachers, were at the forefront of pay equalization for Black teachers in Chesterfield County. One of the first salvos was fired on January 27, 1937, when a letter was presented to the Chesterfield County School Board from Principal Spencer requesting an increase in salaries for Black teachers. At the same meeting, a resolution was presented to the board from "a special Committee of Chesterfield County Colored Teachers Association

⁴⁶"Chesterfield County School Board minutes," January 27, 1937 and May 26, 1937

⁴⁷"Chesterfield County School Board minutes," March 24, 1937 and July 6, 1937

⁵³"League Presents Property for Hickory Hill School," Norfolk New Journal and Guide, August 14, 1937, p. A-12

⁵⁴Chesterfield County Deed Book 238, Page 190, July 28, 1937

⁵⁵"Chesterfield County School Board minutes," September 22, 1937

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asking for an adjustment in teacher's salaries based upon certification and experience, and for an increase in teacher's salaries ..." At that meeting, the School Board set the pay for Black elementary school teachers at only \$55/month and the pay for Black high-school level teachers at the Hickory Hill County Training School at only \$70/month. By contrast, the school-year salary for White teachers was set much higher at between \$720 and \$975 for elementary grade teachers, and between \$850 and \$1125, based upon experience and advanced education. Since the school year was only eight months for Black elementary schools, this meant that all Black elementary teachers in the County received only \$440 in annual pay, regardless of years of experience or advanced education.

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

By March 23, 1938 the new brick school building at Hickory Hill was completed and accepted, subject to several minor corrections, and the Chesterfield County School Board insured the new building through the DeJarnette and Paul Insurance Company. This was likely the first brick school building for Black students in Chesterfield County. The meeting that announced the opening of the new building also recorded that the 1925 Rosenwald school building at Hickory Hill was destroyed by fire on the morning of March 1, 1938. An insurance settlement recorded the full value of the burned Rosenwald school building at \$2,938.88 and the value of the building contents at \$513. There is no reference to the cause of the fire.⁵⁶ At the May 13, 1938 meeting of the Chesterfield County School Board, a motion was approved to name the new school after its burned predecessor: "[T]he name of the school heretofore known as the County Training School, (sometimes called Chesterfield County High School) was changed to Hickory Hill High School."⁵⁷

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

With persistence, determination, and courage, school employees continued their fight for pay parity and their efforts were felt nationwide. A large delegation of Black citizens attended the Chesterfield County School Board meeting on January 31, 1940. Led by Luther P. Jackson, an officer with the Virginia Teachers Association, the group recommended a regular pay scale for Black teachers based upon training and experience [as was approved for the White teachers], an increase in pay for that school year of at least \$150 per teacher, and an extra travel allowance for the Jeanes supervisor. On December 12, 1940, a delegation of citizens representing the Chesterfield County Civic Association and the Chesterfield County Branch of the NAACP presented a petition to the Chesterfield County School Board requesting that immediate action be taken to equalize the

⁵⁶"Chesterfield County School Board minutes," March 23, 1938

⁵⁷"Chesterfield County School Board minutes," May 13, 1938

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Black teachers' salaries with the White teachers' salaries. The petition was filed for future consideration by the school board.⁶⁰

On December 18, 1941, to avoid criticism that the Black and White teachers had different pay scales, the Chesterfield County School Board adopted a new schedule for both Black and White teachers. The caveat to the new schedule was that the position of each teacher on the salary schedule would be determined by subjective criteria, such as the teacher's personality, background, intellectual ability, efficiency, teacher-like qualities, and even by a supply and demand factor.⁶¹ The Black teachers in Chesterfield County continued to receive lower pay as a result of these subjective criteria. A committee of the NAACP appeared before the county school board on April 26, 1944, complaining about the continued wide discrepancy between Black and White teacher salaries. The school superintendent, referencing the salary schedule, denied that there was any discrepancy in pay.⁶²

The issue of pay equalization came to a head on October 23, 1946, when the superintendent presented to the Chesterfield County School Board a petition from NAACP Counsel Oliver Hill on behalf of three Hickory Hill teachers, Rubye M. DeWitt, Dorothy T. Reese, and Arthur M. Freeman: "that the School Board of Chesterfield County and the Superintendent immediately discontinue the policy, custom and practice of making any discrimination in the payment of salaries of teachers and principals because of race or color." The petition noted that relief from the discriminatory practices had been sought over a period of six years to no avail. The school board was dismissive of the petition, responding that, "It has never been the policy of this Board to discriminate with its employees in any manner, and more especially that of race and or color."⁶³

Soon after the rejection of their petition by the Chesterfield County School Board, attorneys Oliver W. Hill, Martin A. Martin, and Spottswood W. Robinson, of the Richmond, Virginia law firm Hill, Martin and Robinson, filed in 1946 a legal challenge to the County's discrimination in pay in United States District Court on behalf of the NAACP and the three Hickory Hill teachers. Styled, "Arthur M. Freeman et al. v. County School Board of Chesterfield County et al., Richmond Civil Action No. 644," this federal case was of state and national importance in seeking to eliminate racial discrimination in the payment of schoolteachers and principals. Among the many statistics filed in the case's evidence was that for the year 1946-1947, "91% of the white teachers received salaries equal to or higher than the maximum paid colored." This discrepancy was further highlighted by the fact that, "in the 1945-46, 52% of the colored teachers held degrees compared with 27% of white teachers." The County's one "colored male principal" [James P. Spencer, at Hickory Hill School] was cited in the case as receiving a salary of only \$2300 compared to the average salary of \$3625 for the county's White male principals. Extensive discrimination was documented in the payment of Black teachers, principals, and supervisors; for example, "there is one white female elementary supervisor, whose salary is \$3350, and one colored female elementary supervisor, whose salary is \$2800."⁶⁴

By the late 1930s, the Virginia NAACP had joined forces with the Virginia State Teachers Association, the professional organization of Black teachers, to form the Joint Committee on the Equalization of Teachers' Salaries. As attorney for the Joint Committee, Oliver Hill began working with teachers in the city of Norfolk

⁶⁰"Chesterfield County School Board minutes," January 31, 1940 and December 12, 1940

⁶¹"Chesterfield County School Board minutes," December 18, 1941

⁶²"Chesterfield County School Board minutes," April 26, 1944

⁶³"Chesterfield County School Board minutes," October 23, 1946

⁶⁴"Freeman v. County School Board," 82 F. Supp. 167 (E.D. Va. 1948), Justia US Law website

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and "*Alston v. School Board of City of Norfolk*" was the first federal court case in which Hill was involved. They lost the case in federal district court, but on June 18, 1940, won a favorable ruling from the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit. The appeals court ruled that the pay scale for Black teachers was clearly discriminatory. The "*Alston*" case cemented Hill's position as the lead NAACP lawyer in Virginia. In 1942, Oliver Hill opened a law firm in Richmond with Spottswood Robinson and Martin Martin, all Howard University Law School graduates. The firm brought many successful cases representing the NAACP in its fight for the equalization of pay for teachers regardless of race. These equalization cases, including the important Hickory Hill teachers' case, laid the vital groundwork for later cases, such as "*Davis v. County School Board of Prince Edward*," which was one of five suits that were consolidated into the pivotal Supreme Court case mandating the desegregation of public schools, "*Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas (1954)*."⁶⁵

The three Hickory Hill High School teachers, Arthur M. Freeman, Rubye M. DeWitt, and Dorothy T. Reese showed great courage in challenging the school board's discriminatory pay structure. Freeman first appeared on the teacher roster for Hickory Hill High School in the 1942-43 school year, while DeWitt and Reese joined Freeman on the Hickory Hill High School teacher roster for the 1944-45, 1945-46, and 1946-47 school years.⁶⁶ A notable June 1948 newspaper photograph with the caption "They Meet To Plan School Facilities and Salary Equalization Cases," shows Hickory Hill School teacher Arthur M. Freeman at a meeting of the Joint State Teachers-NAACP Salary Equalization and Special Facilities Committee with eleven of Virginia's most noted civil-rights leaders, including Oliver Hill, Spottswood Robinson, and Martin Martin.⁶⁷

Freeman paid a heavy price for his participation in the legal challenge. On April 23, 1947, just a few months after the lawsuit was filed, he was fired from his job as a teacher at Hickory Hill High School by the Chesterfield School Board. Likely hoping that Freeman would drop his lawsuit in exchange for keeping his job, the board invited Freeman to address them, which he declined to do. Hickory Hill High School's principal, James P. Spencer, was reprimanded by the board for not informing them of Freeman's offense.⁶⁸ As reported in the national Black press in Atlanta, Georgia and Jackson, Mississippi, the minor offense for which Freeman was fired was the "reprehensible conduct" of allegedly selling a pint of whiskey to an undercover officer.⁶⁹ Because such a public firing and reprimand were unprecedented in the Chesterfield County School Board minutes, the firing of Freeman and the reprimand of Spencer are suspect as reprisals for the federal lawsuit. After being fired, Arthur Freeman moved to Washington D.C, where he had a successful career as the district manager for the Virginia Mutual Life Insurance Company, and was later a professor who taught business classes at Howard University.⁷⁰

In a monumental civil rights victory, the federal court ruled in favor of the Hickory Hill High School teachers. At the August 6, 1948 meeting of the Chesterfield County School Board, the court's final judgment and injunction were read to the board. The superintendent recommended, and the board adopted, a consistent schedule for Black and White salaries based upon years of experience that complied with the order of the court.

⁶⁵ Fergeson, Larissa. "Oliver W. Hill (1907–2007)" *Encyclopedia Virginia*. Virginia Humanities, (07 Dec. 2020). Web. 28 Sep. 2023

⁶⁶"Chesterfield School Board minutes," April 25, 1942 ; March 24, 1943; April 26, 1944; March 21, 1945; March 27, 1946

⁶⁷"They Meet To Plan School Facilities and Salary Equalization Cases," *Norfolk New Journal and Guide*, June 26, 1948, p. 3

⁶⁸"Chesterfield School Board minutes," April 23, 1947

⁶⁹"Suing Teacher Fired in Va.," *Atlanta Daily World*, May 10, 1947, p. 7;

"Fire Teacher In Equalization Salary Case," Jackson, Mississippi, *Advocate*, May 17, 1947, p. 8

⁷⁰"Interview with Arthur Freeman, Jr., the son of Arthur M. Freeman," unpublished, Richmond, Va. September 30, 2023

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Even while adopting the new non-discriminatory pay schedule, the School Board noted its intention to appeal the federal court decision.⁷¹

On December 3, 1948, the Fourth United States Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in favor of the Hickory Hill teachers in the County's appeal of the "Freeman v. County School Board" case. In upholding the ruling of the lower court, in favor of the Hickory Hill teachers, the court determined that the discrimination existed and that the evidence amply supported the findings to support the injunction. Although Chesterfield County school officials claimed that teacher pay had been equalized in accordance with the injunction, they appealed the case to test the validity of the order issued by District Judge Sterling Hutcheson.⁷² The success of the Hickory Hill teachers in their discrimination case was of national news and reported in the Black press in Norfolk, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Washington D.C, and as far away as Los Angeles. The *Baltimore Afro-American* printed a memorable photograph of Hickory Hill Principal, James P. Spencer, and Hickory Hill teachers, Rubye M. DeWitt and Dorothy T. Reese, conferring with noted civil-rights attorneys, Martin A. Martin and Oliver W. Hill, and Virginia Teachers' Association leader, J. Rupert Picott, with the caption, "Chesterfield Teachers Win Fight for Equal Pay."⁷³

The "Arthur M. Freeman et al. v. County School Board of Chesterfield County" case had a profound impact upon the equalization of pay for Black and White teachers. Following this success, the law firm of Hill, Martin, and Robinson prepared for a cascade of similar suits on behalf of the NAACP. Some counties moved to avoid similar litigation by equalizing teacher pay without going to court; for example, the Essex County School Board asked for a \$300,000 school bond issue in order to fund the equalization of pay for Black and White teachers in that Virginia county.⁷⁴

In tandem with the Chesterfield County lawsuit for the equalization of pay for teachers, the law firm of Hill, Martin and Robinson, on behalf of the NAACP, won suits against the King George County and Gloucester County school boards for unequal school facilities for Black students.⁷⁵ As a result of these successful suits, many counties in Virginia promptly began upgrading the school facilities for Black children. On March 26, 1947, the Chesterfield County School Board determined that it was necessary to build four new schools for Black children in Chesterfield "because of overcrowded conditions and bad state of repairs in the present buildings." Among these four proposed new schools was a new consolidated high school to replace the crowded high school at Hickory Hill.⁷⁶

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

⁷¹"Chesterfield School Board minutes," August 6, 1948

⁷²"Injunction Issued In Equalization Suit," *Atlanta Daily World*, December 10, 1948, p. 1

⁷³"Virginia Teachers Find Cure For Ills In State Court," *Pittsburgh Courier*, May 3, 1947, p. 13;

"May Vote," *The Ohio Daily-Express*, June 1, 1948, p. 4;

"Chesterfield County Appeals School Salary Injunction," *Evening Star*, Washington D.C., November 13, 1948, p A-20;

"Chesterfield Teachers Win Fight For Equal Pay," *Baltimore Afro-American*, December 11, 1948;

"Teachers Pay Decree Upheld," *Norfolk New Journal and Guide*, December 11, 1948, p. D-1;

Jewell, Carter, "Virginia Dailies Editorialize Victory in School Bias Case," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, February 3, 1949, p A-8

⁷⁴"More School Suits in Virginia Planned," *Norfolk New Journal and Guide*, May 14, 1949, p. A-1

⁷⁵"Freeman v. County School Board," 82 F. Supp. 167 (E.D. Va. 1948), Justia US Law website

⁷⁶"Chesterfield County School Board minutes," March 26, 1947

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converted for use as a classroom, having only a single cord light for lighting. The only exit from the basement was a narrow flight of stairs, which presented a fire hazard to the students who had to use the stairway several times a day. The article exposed the fact that the 168 students at Hickory Hill High School had only four teachers, one of whom was the principal, while the Midlothian High School for White students had seven teachers and a principal for just eighty-four pupils.⁷⁷

The Chesterfield County School Board moved swiftly to build the new George Washington Carver High School for Black students on fifteen acres of land purchased from Mrs. Clyde Winfree. On July 7, 1947, the board approved the plans for the new high school, as drawn by Dixon and Norman, Architects. By August 6, 1947, the bid of \$348,640 from English Construction Company of Altavista, Virginia was approved by the School Board to build the new Carver High School.⁷⁸

A moving photograph of Hickory Hill High School's last graduation ceremony in 1948 shows the students in their caps and gowns perfectly lined-up before the 1915 and 1938 Hickory Hill schoolhouses. The new Carver High School opened its doors on September 8, 1948, with 347 students. While Hickory Hill High School offered classes only through the eleventh grade, the new Carver High School matriculated students completing the twelfth grade in 1950.⁷⁹ Teachers Rubye DeWitt and Dorothy Reese, plaintiffs in the federal discrimination case, moved from Hickory Hill High to teach at Carver High. A delegation of citizens requested that the school board name James P. Spencer as the principal of the new Carver High School, but, perhaps as retribution for the earlier law suit, the request was denied, and Spencer remained as principal of what then became Hickory Hill Elementary School.⁸⁰ After teaching for one year at Carver High, Rubye DeWitt accepted a job with Richmond Public Schools, where she had a successful career as a supervisor in the speech therapy department; later, DeWitt was a founding board member of the Child Development Resources in Williamsburg, a non-profit devoted to assisting handicapped children.⁸¹

The baby-boom after World War II resulted in a great surge in the population of Chesterfield County, growing from 31,183 residents in 1940 to 40,400 in 1950, and the county population boomed to 71,197 residents by 1960. Black residents made up 20% of the population of Chesterfield County in 1950.⁸² On January 25, 1950, patrons of Hickory Hill School addressed the Chesterfield County School Board, requesting repairs to the overcrowded 1915 frame schoolhouse. On January 24, 1951, the patrons returned to the board with a petition requesting that an addition be constructed on the brick 1938 Hickory Hill School to address the overcrowded conditions. Again, on November 20, 1951, a committee from the school P.T.A. requested that the board build an addition on the brick school building to relieve the overcrowded conditions.⁸³

In 1951, the Chesterfield County School Board determined that there was a need for an addition to Hickory Hill School, but the students had seven more years of crowded conditions before the addition was constructed. On

⁷⁷"Four-Room High School in County Revealed as Decidedly Separate and Unequal," Richmond Afro-American, April 5, 1947, p 20

⁷⁸"Chesterfield County School Board minutes," March 26, 1947; July 23, 1947; August 6, 1947

⁷⁹Drummond, Jennifer, "African-American high school's legacy lives on," Chesterfield Observer, chesterfieldobserver.com, February 27, 2008

⁸⁰"Chesterfield School Board minutes," March 26, 1947; July 23, 1947; August 6, 1947; July 28, 1948; August 25, 1948; April 26, 1949

⁸¹"Rubye M. DeWitt, retired speech therapy supervisor with Richmond Public Schools, dies at 101," Richmond Free Press, November 15, 2019, obituary listings

⁸²Taylor, Michael Eric, "The African-American Community in Richmond, Virginia: 1950-1956," 1994, page 15

⁸³"Chesterfield County School Board minutes," January 25 1950; January 24, 1951

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June 18, 1954, the board approved preliminary plans for the Hickory Hill School addition, as drawn by Dixon and Norman, Architects. At the same meeting, the School Board authorized the Superintendent to pursue purchasing additional land for Hickory Hill School from the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad Company.⁸⁴ The acquisition from the railroad of 1.82 additional acres for Hickory Hill was achieved on December 1, 1954. The plat attached to the deed shows a triangular plot of land adjacent to the railroad and south of the adjacent Hickory Hill School property.⁸⁵

An aerial photograph of Hickory Hill School in 1955 shows this newly acquired triangular parcel adjacent to the Atlantic Coastline Railroad Company tracks and to the south of the school's manicured grounds. In a 1955 aerial photograph, the 1915 school building is seen to north of the adjacent larger 1938 Hickory Hill School. The small storeroom is seen to the rear of the 1938 building, and visible to the north of the 1915 building is a ground disturbance, probably where the 1925 Rosenwald school building formerly stood.⁸⁶ On July 24, 1957, a bid from Mottley Construction Company in the amount of \$193,000 was accepted by the Chesterfield County School Board to build the substantial addition and upgrades to the 1938 Hickory Hill School building. By August 20, 1958, the work of Mottley Construction Company was accepted by the School Board as completed.⁸⁷

With the completion of the substantial Hickory Hill School addition in 1958, the school board resolved to demolish the dilapidated 1915 frame building on site that had been the source of bad publicity for the county. The c. 1925 frame shop building, later used for storage, caught fire in 1958 and caused \$2,713.50 in damages, which were covered by insurance. On November 19, 1958, the board authorized grading the area where the 1915 building and storeroom once stood. Also at the November 19, 1958 Chesterfield County School Board meeting, the motion was made to close the Chesterfield County schools rather than integrate them, and to provide no funding for any schools that were integrated. This motion died without receiving a second (a disturbing close-call, which could have plunged Chesterfield County into the same dire situation as occurred in Prince Edward County, where the county schools were closed for five years due to Massive Resistance to school integration).⁸⁸

After James Spencer's retirement in 1958, Mrs. Daisy R. Baxter, who had been a teacher at the school since 1950, assumed the role of principal of Hickory Hill Elementary School. Principal Baxter hosted a reception for 600 people at the school on March 27, 1960, to dedicate the new addition to the 1938 building. The addition boasted four modern classrooms, a library, and a cafeteria. Matthew R. Page, who was so instrumental in raising money for the land for the 1915 Hickory Hill school building, and who served for many years as president of the Hickory Hill School Improvement League, presented a history of the school at the dedication event.⁸⁹

As time passed, the fight for equalization across all aspects of education for Black students in Chesterfield County grew. The Superintendent reported on May 26, 1965 of having mailed the school board members a general statement of policies under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, in respect to desegregation of the elementary and secondary schools of Chesterfield County. To comply with the Civil Rights Act, the school

⁸⁴"Chesterfield County School Board minutes," June 28, 1951; June 18, 1954

⁸⁵Chesterfield County Deed Book 366, pages 599, 600 (with accompanying plat)

⁸⁶Historicaerials.com, website, 1955 aerial photograph of Hickory Hill School

⁸⁷"Chesterfield County School Board minutes," July 24, 1957; August 20, 1958

⁸⁸"Chesterfield County School Board minutes," November 19, 1958

⁸⁹"New Addition Dedicated At Hickory Hill School, Norfolk New Journal and Guide, April 9, 1960, p. 4

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board initiated a “Freedom of Choice” plan beginning in the 1966-1967 school year. For the 1968 school year, there was an anticipated enrollment of 710 Black children in formerly White schools; however, the county's “Freedom of Choice Plan” did not comply with the federal Department of Health, Education and Welfare requirement to submit plans for the total desegregation of county schools by July 10, 1968. Having not met the required deadline, the regional Civil Rights director threatened to cut off federal funds to the county in the amount of \$900,000. At the risk of losing such a significant funding amount, plans were put into effect by the Chesterfield County School Board to comply with the total desegregation of the county's schools. As Black students were re-assigned to White schools, this resulted in low enrollment in five formerly Black elementary schools. The school board proposed closing the five schools, including Hickory Hill, where the projected enrollment for the 1969 school term had dropped to eighty-six students. The Chesterfield County School Board minutes indicate that no teachers were hired for the Hickory Hill School for the 1969-70 school year term.

On January 1, 1970, the City of Richmond formally annexed twenty-three square miles of Chesterfield County, including the portion of the county where Hickory Hill School is located. This annexation included the homes of 44,000 residents, 97% who were White; this had the effect of diluting Black voter strength in Richmond from 52% before annexation to 42% after annexation. As part of the terms of the annexation, the county agreed to provide education on a tuition basis through the 1970-71 school year for all children in the annexed area for whom the City of Richmond could not provide classrooms. Former Chesterfield County juniors and seniors were allowed to graduate from their Chesterfield high schools.⁹⁰

After the Hickory Hill Elementary School was closed, the Hickory Hill schoolhouse served several educational and community purposes between 1970 and 1990. It had a close call with demolition in 1991 when the Richmond City Council declared the property surplus and voted on May 28, 1991, to sell the property to a manufacturer of light bulbs for \$781,000. Fortunately, the city ordinance authorizing the sale of the Hickory Hill property was reversed by another city ordinance two months later, and the sale of Hickory Hill was canceled. In 1998, the Richmond City Council approved a resolution to develop an agreement with the Hickory Hill Preservation Committee for operating a community center at the schoolhouse, and since 1999 the Hickory Hill Community Center has been a thriving success.⁹¹

In 2023, the property was the subject of controversy when the City of Richmond Fire Department proposed building a three-story, fire-training, burn-building for training firefighters with live fires on the Hickory Hill site. The controversial plan was rejected by the City Urban Design Committee and the Richmond City Planning Commission but was approved by the Richmond City Council and the Richmond Board of Zoning Appeals.⁹² Pulitzer Prize winning journalist Michael Paul Williams described the proposal to build a burn-tower adjacent to the Hickory Hill Community Center as “... using tactics from the old playbook of environmental racism and

⁹⁰ Moser, John V., et al., The Politics of Annexation: Oligarchic Power in a Southern City, 2020, pages, 49, 121-126

⁹¹ Richmond City Council Ordinance 91-175-164 (This ordinance, with Plan DPW DWG N-22176, declared the Hickory Hill property surplus.)

Richmond City Council Ordinance 91-176-165 (This ordinance approved the sale of the Hickory Hill property to Enterprise Lighting for \$781,000)

Richmond City Council Ordinance 91-281-257 (This ordinance appealed the ordinance authorizing the sale of Hickory Hill.)

Richmond City Council Resolution 98-R84-98 (This resolution authorized developing an operating agreement with the Hickory Hill Preservation Committee for the use of the school property for the Hickory Hill Community Center.)

⁹² “BZA 13-2023,” Richmond Board of Zoning Appeals, June 7, 2023

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political exclusion.”⁹³ The city finally withdrew the plans for the fire-burn building due to the continued opposition led by the Reverend Monica Esparza, who persistently pointed out that the proposal was environmentally insensitive, discriminatory and would damage the integrity of the historic Hickory Hill School site.⁹⁴

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

Criterion B: James Preston Spencer

When he retired in 1958, James P. Spencer had served as the Hickory Hill principal for approximately thirty years. He was so beloved that the parents, teachers, and Chesterfield Teachers' Association gave Spencer and his wife, Evie, a \$1,000 European tour as a retirement gift.⁹⁵ Spencer was a tireless champion for education for the African American children of the county. He repeatedly returned to the Chesterfield County School Board meetings to request for the African American students equitable bus transportation, better facilities, textbooks, a nine-month school term, and more teachers at Hickory Hill. Spencer was on the forefront of the movement to demand equitable pay for the African American teachers of Chesterfield County; without the strong support of their principal, the three Hickory Hill teachers probably would not have filed their successful federal lawsuit that resulted in the equalization of teacher pay. Indeed, Spencer, “is credited with leading the movement for equalization of teachers' salaries in Chesterfield County.”⁹⁶

James P. Spencer was born on June 15, 1888 in Charlotte Court House, Virginia.⁹⁷ He grew up on a farm owned by his father and it seems that the family valued education because all eight children in the family could read and write.⁹⁸ Spencer volunteered to join the Army in 1917 and served in Europe during World War I. His regiment of Black soldiers with the 370th Infantry won distinction in the Aisne-Marne offensive in France. He experienced discrimination in the army, not receiving disability payment for an injury to his hand because of the prejudice of the examining medical officer.⁹⁹ After the war, he graduated from Virginia Union University with honors in 1931, and later received a M.A. in Education from the University of Michigan. Spencer taught in North Carolina and at the Isle of Wight County Training School before beginning his decades-long service as

⁹³ Williams, Michael Paul, “A burn tower at a community center? Make it make sense, Richmond,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, July 29, 2023

⁹⁴ Holter, Em, “Richmond backs out of fire training tower at Hickory Hill,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, August 1, 2023;

Lazarus, Jeremy M. “City reverses course on Hickory Hill,” *Richmond Free Press*, August 3, 2023;

Willis, Samantha, “Out with the green, in with the heat,” *Virginia Mercury*, August 1, 2023

⁹⁵ “James Spencer Honored As Retiring Principal,” *Norfolk New Journal and Guide*, July 5, 1958, p. 4

⁹⁶ “J. Preston Spencer, educator, buried,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, November 26, 1960, p. 18

⁹⁷ “James P. Spencer,” Certificate of Death (No. 29576), Commonwealth of Virginia, November 4, 1960

⁹⁸ “William and Betty Spencer and eight children,” United States Census, 1900

⁹⁹ Spencer, James Preston, *Military Service Record*, War History Commission, State of Virginia, with additional signed letter, dated April 26, 1921

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principal of Hickory Hill. Spencer and his family lived just a few doors away from the school at 3406 Terminal Avenue.¹⁰⁰

In addition to his remarkable legacy as an educator, James P. Spencer was one of Chesterfield County's foremost civil-rights leaders. As noted on a Virginia Historic Highway Marker, Spencer was one of the founders of the 1941 Virginia Voters League, which worked with the NAACP and other groups to promote Black voting registration through education and by encouraging the payment of the discriminatory poll taxes.¹⁰¹ The slogan of the group was, "Pay the poll tax in order to abolish the poll tax." The League found that in 1944, 89% of Black voters in Virginia were disqualified because they had not met the poll tax requirement. Between 1943 and 1944, with the aid and encouragement of the League, an additional 9,075 Black voters met the poll tax requirement.¹⁰² Under Spencer's leadership, the League in 1952 began establishing local chapters throughout the state, with the first Voter League chapter established in the Varina Magisterial District of Henrico County.¹⁰³ In 1954, as President of the Virginia Voters League, Spencer took Virginia Governor Thomas Stanley to task for the omission of any Black representatives on the Governor's thirty-two member school segregation study commission. Spencer proclaimed that the "best talent of both races must be invoked to work out a satisfactory solution," after the Supreme Court decision that segregation in public schools was unconstitutional.¹⁰⁴ By 1955, Spencer led the League, in cooperation with the Richmond Civic Council, to push for 100,000 qualified Black voters in the state.¹⁰⁵ Spencer served twice as President of the Virginia Voters League and was President-Emeritus of the League at the time of his passing in 1960. He was deeply committed to the cause of improving the conditions of Black citizens in the state through increasing the Black voter strength.¹⁰⁶

James P. Spencer served as president of the Virginia Teachers Association, the Chesterfield County Teachers Association, and the Third District for the Virginia Association for Education.¹⁰⁷ The Virginia Teachers Association was founded in 1887 by Black educators for the purpose of providing professional development for Black teachers; it merged with the [White] Virginia Education Association in 1967.¹⁰⁸ The Virginia Teachers Association strongly supported the equalization of teachers' salaries. On behalf of the Resolutions Committee of the Virginia Teacher's Association, Spencer made a presentation at the January 26, 1938 meeting of the Chesterfield County School Board, advocating for the equalization in teacher salaries at both the high-school and elementary level, for the equalization of the length of the school terms, and for an industrial teacher and an arts-and-music teacher for Hickory Hill School.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁰Library of Virginia, web blog, <https://uncommonwealth.virginiamemory.com/blog/2018/01/17/true-son-of-freedom-the-world-war-i-experience-of-james-preston-spencer/> and <https://uncommonwealth.virginiamemory.com/blog/2022/07/06/charging-hell-with-a-bucket-of-water-the-virginians-of-the-370th-infantry/>

(These two remarkable presentations on the Library of Virginia website devoted to James P. Spencer and to the 370th Infantry, in which he served during World War I, include over two-dozen news clippings and primary documents.)

¹⁰¹"Virginia Voters League," Highway Marker QA 29, Virginia Department of Historic Resources, 2010

¹⁰²Jackson, Luther P., The Voting Status of Negroes in Virginia, for the Virginia Voters League, April 1945, pages 4 and 5

¹⁰³"Virginia Voters League Expands Civic Programs," Norfolk New Journal and Guide, July 5, 1952, p. B-5

¹⁰⁴"Stanley Hit On Omission of Negroes," Washington Post, September 4, 1954

¹⁰⁵"Groups Campaign for Negro Vote," Washington Post, March 29, 1955

¹⁰⁶"Ex-President of State Voters League Mourned," Norfolk New Journal and Guide, November 12, 1960, p. A-17

¹⁰⁷"James Preston Spencer, 72, Former Principal, Dies," Richmond Times-Dispatch, November 7, 1960

¹⁰⁸"Virginia Teachers Association," Highway Marker Q-6-41, Virginia Department of Historic Resources, 2016

¹⁰⁹"Chesterfield School Board minutes," January 26, 1938; and "Chesterfield Teachers for Equal Salaries," Norfolk New Journal and Guide, February 5, 1938, p. 11

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The NAACP worked closely with the Virginia Teachers Association in these equalization efforts. James Spencer was one of the founders, around 1930, of the Chesterfield County Branch of the NAACP. By the mid-1930s the Chesterfield County Branch was honored for having the largest membership of any rural Branch in the United States.¹¹⁰ Spencer was also a member of the Virginia State Conference of the NAACP and presided at their meetings.¹¹¹ Spencer was featured in a 1952 newspaper article making a donation to the legal defense fund of the Virginia State Conference of the NAACP on behalf of the Chesterfield Teachers Association.¹¹² Doubtless, it was Principal Spencer who coordinated with the NAACP for the legal representation of the three Hickory Hill teachers in the monumental equalization lawsuit, "Freeman v. Chesterfield County School Board." His years in the military steeled Spencer to courageously counter the discrimination that he found in Virginia, and, until his death on November 4, 1960, he never lost his firm resolve that through education, the vote and court action, the condition of Black families in Virginia would be improved.

There is a poignant picture of Spencer standing beside Mrs. Daisy R. Baxter and the other smiling group of teachers at a surprise party to honor the teachers and principal of Hickory Hill in 1957.¹¹³

Criterion C: Architecture

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

The Division of School Buildings, under the direction of Mr. Raymond V. Long, AIA., successfully designed many schools for the Chesterfield County School Board. In 1930 alone, the board commissioned six schools designed by the Division of School Buildings, and they were so pleased with the work that they passed the following resolution: "Resolve: That it endorse the Department of School Buildings under the direction of Mr. Raymond V. Long as being of great benefit to the counties of the State, through providing facilities for furnishing plans and specifications and supervision to the counties free of any cost and of nature highly satisfactory to the situations involved."¹³¹

In designing the new brick Hickory Hill School, Long stayed consistent to his portfolio of work from 1918 to 1942 as School Architect for the State Department of Education. In that role, he and his staff provided plans and specifications for dozens of schools throughout Virginia. Long also served as the Director of the National Advisory Committee on School Buildings in the 1930s, and in the 1940s, served as the Director of the State Planning Board.¹³² Under his direction, the State Department of Education improved the quality of education in the state and raised the bar for standards of educational facilities.

¹¹⁰Friend, Arthur Milton, "Chesterfield County Branch of the NAACP: A Brief History," Web essay: chesterfieldnaacp.com, 2003

¹¹¹"Widely Known Virginians Take Part At NAACP Meet," Norfolk New Journal and Guide, October 22, 1949, p. D-18

¹¹²"Virginia NAACP Secretary Gets \$50 From Chesterfield County Teachers," Norfolk New Journal and Guide, October 4, 1952, p. 4

¹¹³"Hickory Hill Teachers Honored At Surprise Party," Norfolk New Journal and Guide, March 30, 1957, page 4

¹³¹"Chesterfield County School Board minutes," March 26, 1930

¹³²Encore Sustainable Design, LLC, Modified Historic Structure Report, Paul VI Catholic High School, February 2018

Hickory Hill County Training School
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Many of the dozens of plans for schools designed under Long's direction by the Department of Education are archived at the Library of Virginia. Unfortunately, the plans and specifications for the Hickory Hill School are not included in the collection of architectural drawings. The plans for the Hickory Hill School, however, are noted in the index of the Architectural Drawings for Schools with the project code (3-L-17) and with the date July 1937. Coincidentally, the plans for the Chesterfield County Enon School have the same project code and date in the index. The designs for the Hickory Hill and Enon Schools were likely a variation on the standard one story, six-room school plans with project code 12-R-18. The standard one-story, six-room school plans are similar to Hickory Hill School with a central entrance flanked by classrooms on the two wings with a central auditorium. Another notable school designed by Raymond V. Long and the State Department of Education is the Prince Edward Training School, now known as the Robert Russa Moton High School; the detailed plans for the school, with project code 8-L-17, are on file at the Library of Virginia.¹³³ The Moton School is listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register and on the National Register of Historic Places.¹³⁴

Local contractor J. W. Atkinson constructed many significant brick buildings in Richmond, including the c. 1921 Highland Park fire engine house, the c. 1922 Colonial Revival fire alarm station in Monroe Park, and three theaters, including the c. 1933 Roosevelt Theater at 406 N. 25th Street, all now demolished. Atkinson also managed residential projects, including the c. 1924 fine stucco Renaissance Revival house at 2222 Lakeview Avenue in the Byrd Park neighborhood of Richmond.

From 1950 through 1951, patrons and the P.T.A. of Hickory Hill School addressed the Chesterfield County School Board, requesting repairs to the overcrowded 1915 frame schoolhouse and an addition to the brick 1938 elementary school.¹³⁵ In 1951, the Chesterfield County School Board acknowledged the need for additional space, but the project took another seven years to finish. In 1954, the school board approved preliminary plans for the brick addition, as drawn by Dixon and Norman, Architects. At the same meeting, the school board authorized the Superintendent to pursue purchasing additional land for Hickory Hill School from the Atlantic Coastline Railroad Company.¹³⁶ The acquisition from the railroad of 1.82 additional acres for Hickory Hill was achieved on December 1, 1954. The plat attached to the deed shows a triangular plot of land adjacent to the railroad and south of the adjacent Hickory Hill School property.¹³⁷

An aerial photograph of Hickory Hill School in 1955 shows this newly acquired triangular parcel adjacent to the Atlantic Coastline Railroad Company tracks and to the south of the school's manicured grounds. In a 1955 aerial photograph, the 1915 school building is seen to north of the adjacent larger 1938 Hickory Hill School. The small storeroom is seen to the rear of the 1938 building, and visible to the north of the 1915 building is a ground disturbance, probably where the 1925 Rosenwald school building formerly stood.¹³⁸ On July 24, 1957, a bid from Mottley Construction Company in the amount of \$193,000 was accepted by the Chesterfield County School Board to build the substantial addition at Hickory Hill along with upgrades to the 1938 Hickory Hill

¹³³Virginia Department of Education, Architectural Drawings of Schools, Accession Number 28487, Misc Reels 1832-1837, Library of Virginia

¹³⁴Vosmik, Julie, et al., Robert Russa Moton High School, Virginia National Historic Landmark Nomination Report, DHR file # 144-0053, 1995

¹³⁵"Chesterfield County School Board minutes," January 25 1950; January 24, 1951

¹³⁶"Chesterfield County School Board minutes," June 28, 1951; June 18, 1954

¹³⁷Chesterfield County Deed Book 366, pages 599, 600 (with accompanying plat)

¹³⁸Historicaerials.com, website, 1955 aerial photograph of Hickory Hill School

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School building. By August 20, 1958, the work of Mottley Construction Company was accepted by the school board as complete.¹³⁹

With the completion of the substantial Hickory Hill School addition in 1958, the board resolved to demolish the dilapidated 1915 frame building at Hickory Hill that had been the source of bad publicity for the county. The c. 1925 frame shop building, later used for storage, caught fire in 1958 and caused \$2,713.50 in damages, which were covered by insurance. On November 19, 1958, the board authorized grading the area where the 1915 building and storeroom once stood. Also at the November 19, 1958, Chesterfield County School Board meeting, the motion was made to close the Chesterfield County schools rather than integrate them, and to provide no funding for any schools that were integrated. This motion died without receiving a second (a disturbing close call, which could have plunged Chesterfield County into the same dire situation as occurred in Prince Edward County, where the county schools were closed for five years due to Massive Resistance to school integration).¹⁴⁰

Even after the construction of the large addition, the school remained crowded due to the booming population growth of Chesterfield County. In 1961 and 1963, two more additions were added to the Hickory Hill Elementary School. Both additions were designed by Dixon and Norman, Architects, the same firm that designed the substantial 1958 Hickory Hill addition.¹⁴¹ Before starting their own architectural firm, Washington Irving Dixon (1899-1985) worked under Raymond V. Long at the State Department of Education, School Building Division from 1926 to 1946, and Macon Gordon Norman also worked for the School Building Division of the Department of Education from 1931 to 1946. Both Washington Dixon and Macon Norman may have participated in the 1937 design of the brick Hickory Hill School by the State Department of Education. Their familiarity with the plans of the existing 1938 Hickory Hill schoolhouse may have contributed to the compatible and sympathetic additions that they designed. The Dixon and Norman architectural firm specialized in public buildings and designed at least fifteen other schools in Virginia, including their 1947 designs for Chesterfield County's George Washington Carver High School and the 1952 design for the Hayden High School in Franklin, which is listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places.¹⁴²

On June 27, 1960, the Nuckols Construction Firm, with a low bid of \$29,896, was awarded the contract to build the two-classroom addition designed by Dixon and Norman for Hickory Hill. This addition was accepted by the Chesterfield County School Board as completed on February 2, 1961. On February 13, 1963, the Nuckols firm was again awarded the contract for the second two-classroom addition designed by Dixon and Norman for Hickory Hill with a low bid of \$27,300; the board accepted this addition as complete on July 31, 1963.¹⁴³

¹³⁹“Chesterfield County School Board minutes,” July 24, 1957; August 20, 1958

¹⁴⁰“Chesterfield County School Board minutes,” November 19, 1958

¹⁴¹“Chesterfield County School Board minutes,” June 7, 1960; May 23, 1962

¹⁴²“Hayden High School,” National Register Nomination Report, VDHR # 145-5012, Section 7, 2012 Page 5

¹⁴³“Chesterfield County School Board minutes,” June 27, 1960; February 13, 1963; July 31, 1963

Hickory Hill County Training School
Name of Property

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Richmond Free Press

Richmond Planet

Richmond Times Dispatch

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

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

Hickory Hill County Training School
Name of Property

City of Richmond, Virginia
County and State

University
 Other
Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 6.98

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

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

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

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

1. Zone: Easting: Northing:
2. Zone: Easting: Northing:
3. Zone: Easting: Northing:
- Zone: Easting : Northing:

Hickory Hill County Training School
Name of Property

City of Richmond, Virginia
County and State

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The Hickory Hill School is in the Southside area of the City of Richmond at the intersection of Belt Boulevard and Terminal Avenue in a mixed-use area containing residential, communal, and industrial properties. The historic school building sits on a slight knoll within a 6.98-acre parcel that is wooded along the perimeter on north, west, and south sides and facing E. Belt Boulevard on the east side. A dense wooded area west of the school provides a buffer between the grounds and the CSX railroad track. The Serene Wildlife Sanctuary is located on the other side of the track. Grassy fields immediately surround the school on all sides other than the east, where a U-shaped front driveway leads from E. Belt Boulevard to the school's entrance and is separated from the main road by a landscaped median with sidewalk. A large, paved parking lot sits southeast of the main school building and its attached east addition. In addition to the school, the site includes a walking/fitness trail, playground equipment, basketball court, softball/soccer field, and archery apparatus.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

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

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Monica Esparza, Eric Hunter, Issa Esparza, Bernard Anderson, Charles Pool

organization: Hickory Hill Preservation Committee C/O Renewal of Life Trust

street & number: 2916 Glenan Drive

city or town: Richmond state: Virginia zip code: 23234

e-mail: monica.esparza@live.com

telephone: 804-363-3282

date: April 17, 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.)

Hickory Hill County Training School
Name of Property

City of Richmond, Virginia
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Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Hickory Hill School

City or Vicinity: City of Richmond

County: N/A

Photographer: Issa Esparza, Monica Esparza (KII Industries)

Date Photographed: 2022; 2023; 2024

Photo 1 of 20 – 1938 Hickory Hill School Exterior building
Looking west to front of the building

Photo 2 of 20 – 1938 Hickory Hill School exterior, 1938
Looking southwest to the northside of the 1938 building front entrance

Photo 3 of 20 – Joining 1938 and 1958 Hickory Hill School buildings
Looking west from front entrance

Photo 4 of 20 – Hickory Hill School 1958 addition
Looking west

Photo 5 of 20 – Hickory Hill Community Center renovated entrance
Looking northwest

Photo 6 of 20 – Hickory Hill 1958 building
Looking northwest

Photo 7 of 20 – Hickory Hill School 1938 building rear
Looking southeast

Photo 8 of 20 – Hickory Hill School 1961 addition
Looking south

Photo 9 of 20 – Hickory Hill School 1938 building rear

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Looking northeast

Photo 10 of 20 – Hickory Hill Field
Looking northwest

Photo 11 of 20 – Hickory Hill School sidewalk marker in front of building
Looking west toward the school building

Photo 12 of 20 – Hickory Hill School steps with sidewalk marker in front
Looking west in front of school

Photo 13 of 20 – Playground sits in front of Hickory Hill building
Looking north from southside of the building

Photo 14 of 20 – Hickory Hill building southside
Looking north

Photo 15 of 20 – Hickory Hill Library, 1938 building interior

Photo 16 of 20 – Hickory Hill Classroom, 1938 building interior

Photo 17 of 20 – Hickory Hill School Assembly Room, 1938 building interior

Photo 18 of 20 – Hickory Hill Dining Area, building interior

Photo 19 of 20 – Hickory Hill Hallway, building interior

Photo 20 of 20 – Hickory Hill Classroom, building interior

Figures

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

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

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

Photograph of the Hickory Hill School, including the 1925 two-room Shop Building on the left, 1915 four-room frame Hickory Hill School in the center, and the 125 Rosenwald-funded Hickory Hill School to the far right. Source: Archie Richardson Collection, Virginia State University Archives, as found in Bernard Anderson's *History of Hickory Hill*, unpublished manuscript, 2023.

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

1930 photograph of the Hickory Hill School baseball team on the steps of the 1915 Hickory Hill School building. Source: Anderson, Bernard, History of Hickory Hill, unpublished manuscript

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 460 et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

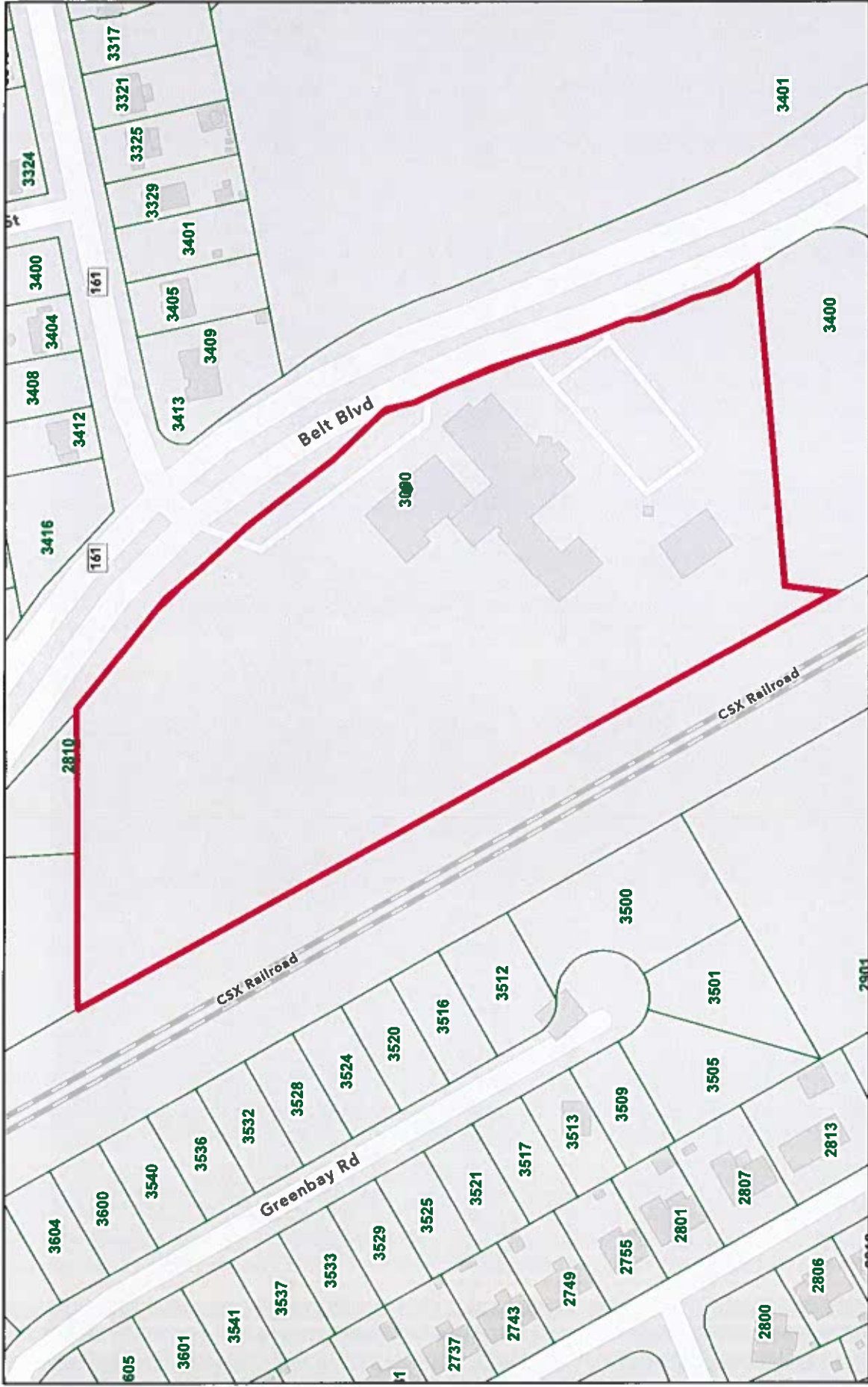
Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

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

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

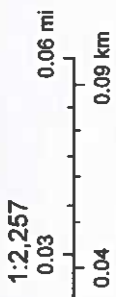
Hickory Hill School Boundary Map

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



11/14/2023, 2:36:21 PM

-  CityBoundary
-  Parcels



1:2,257
Esri Community Maps Contributors, City of Richmond, County of Henrico, VGIN, © OpenStreetMap, Microsoft, Esri, HERE, Garmin, SafeGraph,

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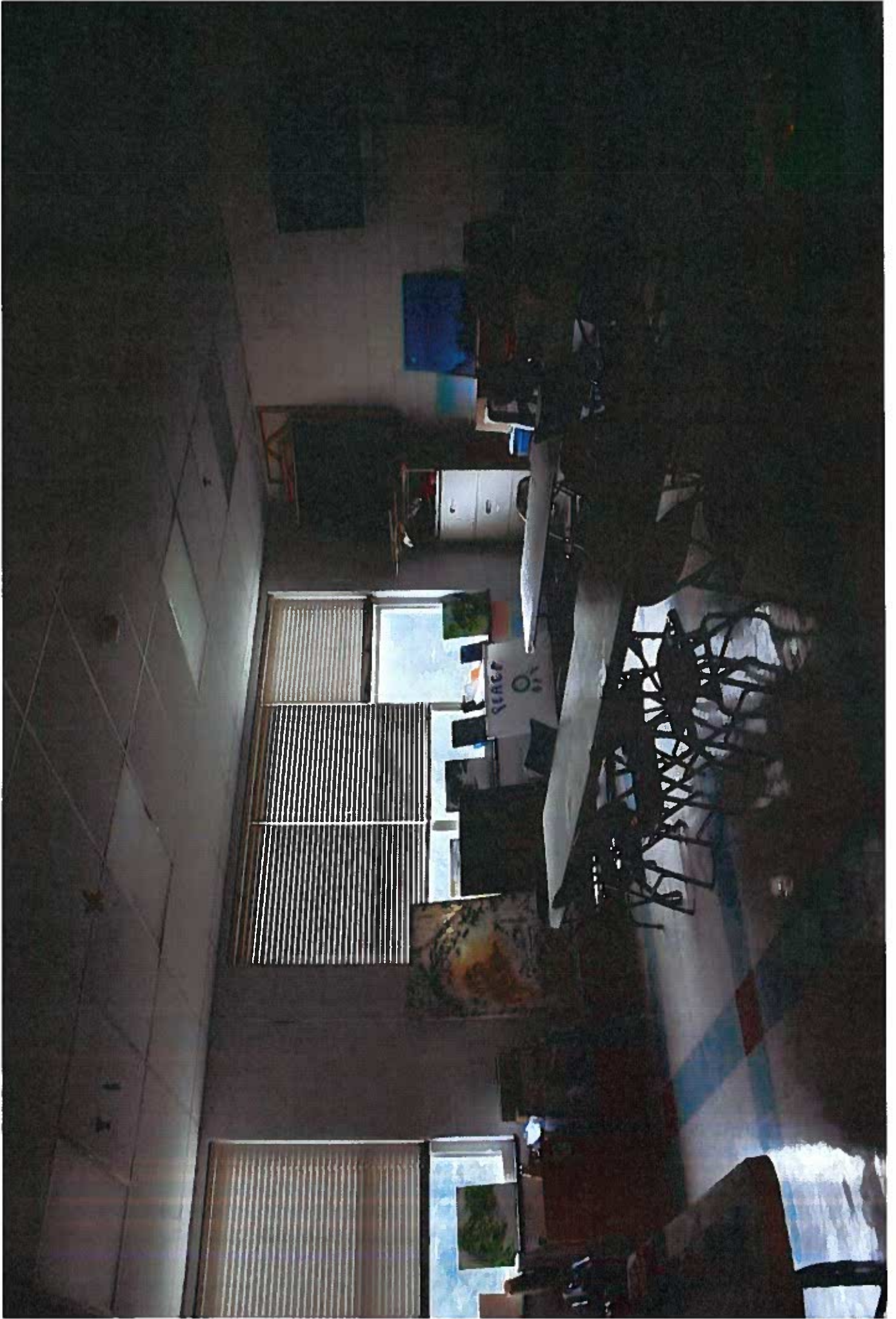












Hickory Hill, Ann M. Dyer school report to the Freedmen's Bureau, September 26, 1869.
Source: National Archives, NARA Publication Number M1056, Roll 17

[ED. FORM, No. 3.]

TEACHER'S MONTHLY
SCHOOL REPORT

For the month of *Sept 26*, 186*9*.

District or County, *Chesterfield*

State, *Virginia*

Name of School, *Hickory Hill*

Name of Teacher, *Ann M. Dyer*

(Ed. Form, No. 8.)

TEACHER'S MONTHLY SCHOOL REPORT

For the Month of Sept, 1869.

All Teachers use entire calendar month, and do so for several months after the close of the month.
 All Schools under the direct control of one Teacher, or a Teacher with one Assistant, to be reported on one School.

Name of your School? Hickory Hill (Answers placed here.)
 Is it a Day or Night School? Day
 Location (town, county, or district)? Charleston Co.
 When did your present session commence? Sept 1st
 Is your School supported by an Educational Society? No
 Is your School supported wholly by local School Board? No
 Is your School supported in part by local School Board? No
 Is your School supported wholly by Freedmen? No
 Is your School supported in part by Freedmen? No
 Have you had Bureau transportation this term? No
 Who owns the School-building? State
 Is rent paid by Freedmen's Bureau? No
 What number of Teachers and Assistants in your School?
 Total enrollment for the month? 33
 Number enrolled last month? 33
 Number left school this month? None
 Number new Scholars this month? None
 What is the average attendance?
 Number of Pupils for whom tuition is paid? 20
 Number of White Pupils?
 Number always present? 25
 Number always present?
 Number over 16 years of age?
 Number in Alphabet? 20
 Number who spell, and read easy lessons?
 Number in advanced readers?
 Number in Geography?
 Number in Arithmetic?
 Number in higher branches?
 Number in Writing?
 Number in Needle-work?
 Number free before the war?
 Have you a Sabbath School?
 Have you an Industrial School?
 State the kind of work done?
 Of what grade?
 What is done?
 What Society?
 Name of Board or Com.
 Name of Board or Com.
 Amount paid this month?
 Amount paid this month?
 How much per month?
 White? 33 Colored? 0
 Male? 33 Female? 0
 (Statistics compiled for report, by adding in- & out- scholars and subtracting those left school, must equal the present total enrollment.)
 (Schools are to be kept five days per week, not six hours each day.)
 How many hours have you taught per day?
 How many days have you taught this month?
 Give reasons for deficiency of time, (if any,) in teaching.
 How many Teachers? _____ How many Pupils?
 How many Teachers? _____ How many Pupils?

To the following questions give exact or approximate answers, preferring in the latter the word "about."

1. Do you know of any Schools for Negroes or Freedmen not reported to the State Superintendent? _____ How many?
2. Give (estimated) whole number of pupils in all such Schools? _____ No. of Teachers _____ White _____ Colored _____
3. Do you know of Sabbath Schools not reported to the State Superintendent? _____ How many? _____
4. Give (estimated) whole number of pupils in all such Sabbath Schools? _____ No. of Teachers _____ White _____ Colored _____
5. State the public sentiment toward Colored Schools.
6. How many pupils in your School are members of a Temperance Society? _____ Name of the Society? St. Mary's

Remarks _____
 (Signed) Ann M. Dyer Teacher

* Or School Committee, either (District, Town, City, County, or State)
 † A pupil is not to be reckoned an enrolled child after five days' attendance.

Hickory Hill, Chesterfield County, Schedule of Schools, Friend's Freedmen Association of New York, June 30, 1870.

Source: National Archives, NARA Publication Number M803, Roll 35

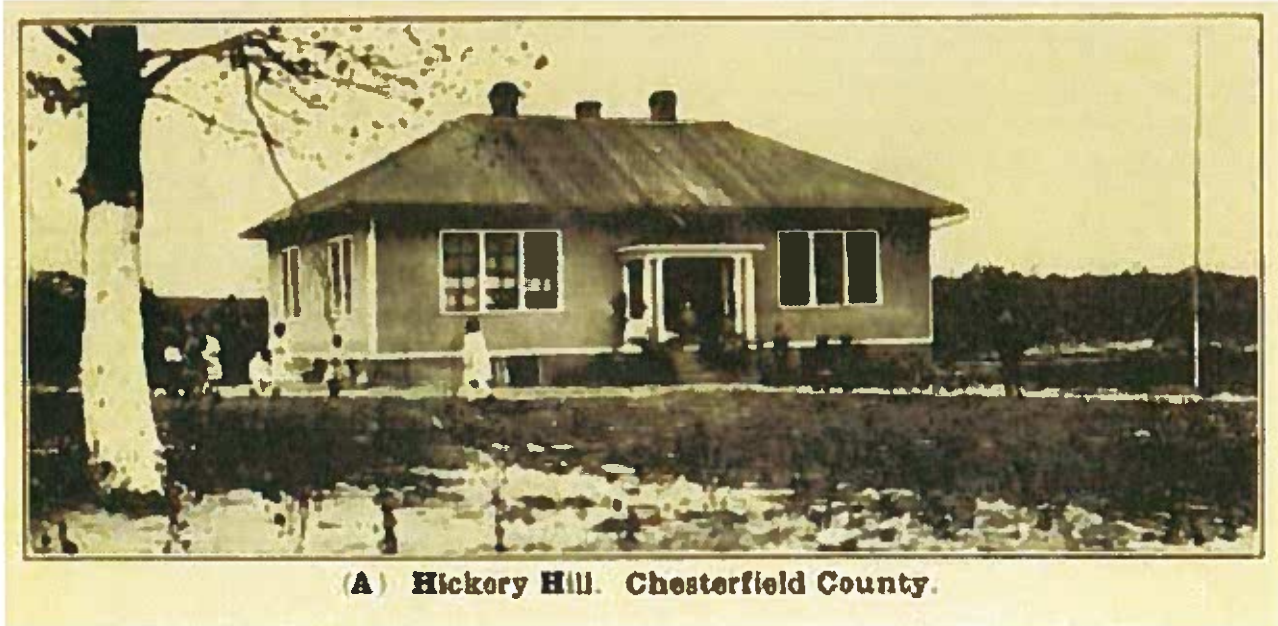
(En. Form No. 2.)

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

Location of School— City, Town, or County.	Name of Teacher.	No months employed in teaching.	Average No. Pupils			Cost of School- building per mo.	Amount.
			Apr	May	June		
<i>Richmond City</i>	<i>Annie M. Jones</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>46</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>38</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>2</i>
"	<i>Augusta W. Woodbury</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>34</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>29</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>2</i>
"	<i>Ellen M. Prescott</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>46</i>	<i>41</i>	<i>34</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>2</i>
"	<i>R.D. Kippe</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>56</i>	<i>59</i>	<i>49</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Central Union Station</i>	<i>Mary B. Bowman</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>20</i>			<i>20</i>	<i>2</i>
"	<i>Sarah A. Bowman</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>20</i>				<i>2</i>
<i>Beach Hill</i>	<i>Julia M. Shore</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Amerson</i>	<i>Mary M. Chapman</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>17</i>		<i>10</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Stone Hill</i>	<i>Silas Peterson</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>42</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>6</i>
"	<i>James H. Gary</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>48</i>	<i>40</i>		<i>6</i>
<i>Hickory Hill</i>	<i>Ann Maria Williams</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>33</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>2</i>
"	<i>W. A. J.</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>0</i>

Photograph of the 1915 Hickory Hill School building.

Source: Virginia Public Schools, Education Commission's Report to the Assembly of Virginia, 1919



Photograph of Hickory Hill School (including the 1925 two-room shop building on left, the 1915 four-room frame Hickory Hill School building in center, and the 1925 Rosenwald-funded Hickory Hill School building on right).

Source: "Archie Richardson Collection," Virginia State University Archives; as found in: Anderson, Bernard, History of Hickory Hill, unpublished manuscript, 2023



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



Hickory Hill baseball team photographed in 1930 on the steps of the 1915 Hickory Hill School building
Source: Anderson, Bernard, History of Hickory Hill, unpublished manuscript



Hickory Hill Baseball Team - 1930

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

They Meet To Plan School Facilities And Salary Equalization Cases

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

ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Black Newspaper Collection

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They Meet To Plan School Facilities And Salary Equalization Cases



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

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

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

The Baltimore Afro-American, December 11, 1948

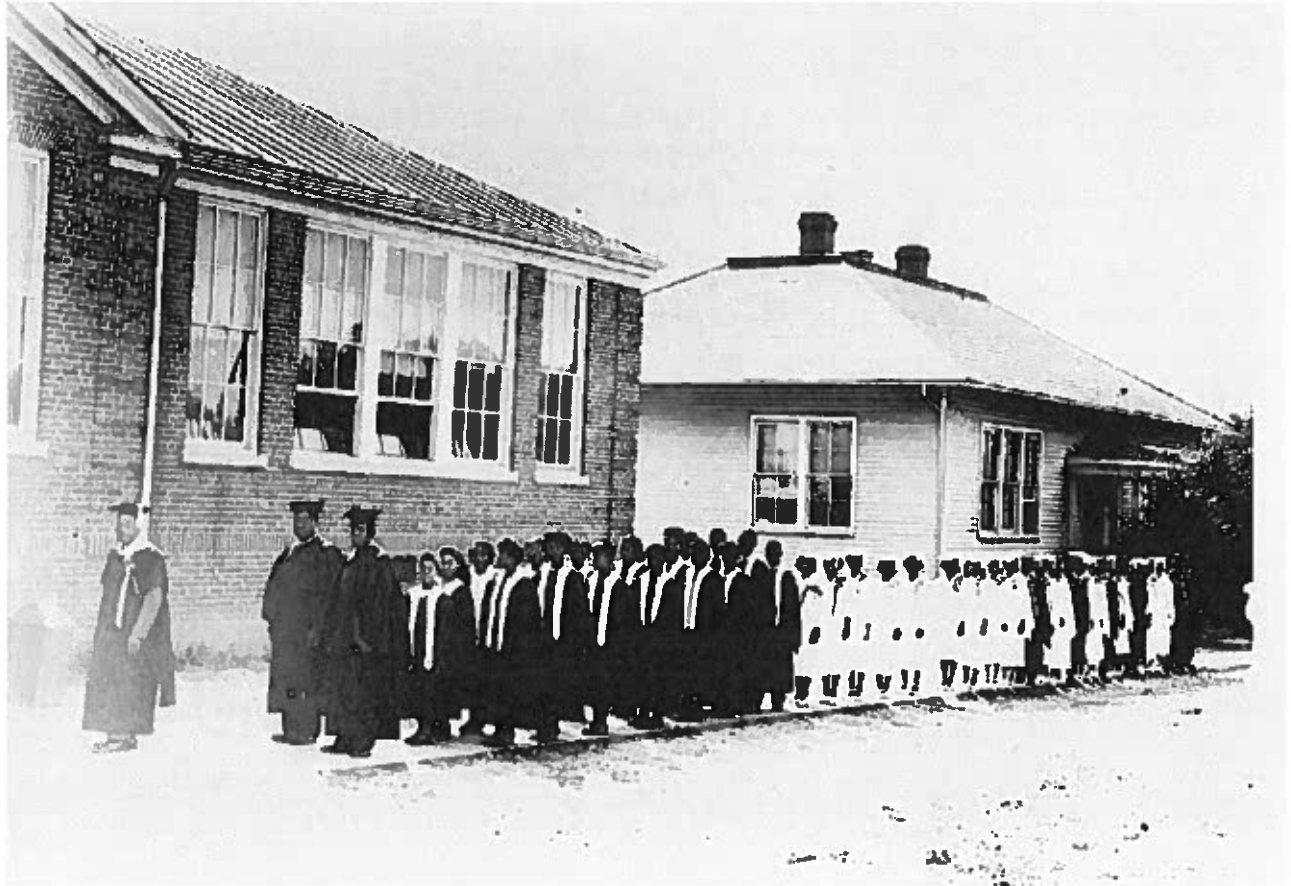
Chesterfield Teachers Win Fight for Equal Pay



Martin A. Martin (paper in hand), Richmond lawyer, explains the opinion of a U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, rendered Dec. 3, which affirms an injunction issued by the U.S. District Court, prohibiting discrimination on the basis of color in payment of teachers' salaries in Chesterfield County, Virginia. From left are: James P. Spencer, educational and civic leader, of Chesterfield County; Mrs. Rubye M. DeWitt, Councilman Oliver W. Hill of Richmond, Mr. Martin, Mrs. Dorothy T. Reese, and J. Rupert Picott, Richmond, head of the Virginia Teachers' Association. Messrs. Hill and Martin were NAACP counsel in the suit. Mesdames DeWitt and Reese, Richmond teachers, served as two of the three plaintiffs.

Photograph of the last graduation of the Hickory Hill High School in 1948 with a student procession in front of the 1938 Hickory Hill School building on the left and the 1915 Hickory Hill School Building on the right.

Source: Chesterfield Observer, February 27, 2008



Photograph showing Hickory Hill School Principal James P. Spencer, center, beside Daisy R. Baxter, who would succeed Spencer as Principal the following year, along with the other Hickory Hill School teachers who were honored by the Hickory Hill PTA with a surprise party.

Source: Norfolk New Journal and Guide, March 30, 1957



Hickory Hill Teachers Honored At Surprise Party

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

Reading from left to right: Mrs. Indlana B. Radd, Mrs. Dorothy M. Tay-

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

Photograph showing Principal James P. Spencer, who was honored at his retirement as Principal of Hickory Hill School in 1958.

Source: Norfolk New Journal and Guide, July 5, 1958

Virginia State News: James Spencer Honored As Retiring Principal

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

ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Black Newspaper Collection

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Virginia State News

James Spencer Honored As Retiring Principal

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

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

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

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

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

The main address was made

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

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

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

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



Gift For Hickory Hill Principal

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

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



JAMES P. SPENCER
Eulogized.

Ex-President Of State Voters League Mourned

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

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

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

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

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

Woodblock print of the 1915 Hickory Hill School house by artist Dennis Winston created around 1990 for the Hickory Hill Community Center.
Source: Hickory Hill History Committee

