

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

VLR 6/17/98  
NRHA 8/14/98

### National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

#### 1. Name of Property

historic name Armstead T. Johnson High School

other names/site number A.T. Johnson High School

VDHR File No. 96-113

#### 2. Location

street & number 0.2 miles NW of the intersection of Va. Rt. 3 and Va. Rt. 202

N/A not for publication

city or town Montross

vicinity

state Virginia

code VA

county Westmoreland

code 193

zip code 22520

#### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally.  See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature]  
Signature of certifying official/Title

July 13, '98  
Date

State of Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

#### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register.
  - See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register
  - See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other. (explain) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

|       |       |
|-------|-------|
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |

Armstead T. Johnson High School  
Name of Property

Westmoreland County, Virginia  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

| Contributing | Noncontributing |            |
|--------------|-----------------|------------|
| 3            | 2               | buildings  |
| 0            | 0               | sites      |
| 0            | 0               | structures |
| 0            | 0               | objects    |
| 3            | 2               | Total      |

**Name of related multiple property listing**

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

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION: School

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION: School

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19th AND 20th CENTURY REVIVALS: Colonial Revival

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick

walls Brick

roof Metal

other

**Narrative Description**

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

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

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

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

**Criteria Considerations**

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

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION

**Period of Significance**

1937-1948

**Significant Dates**

1937

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Architect unknown/Builder: C.E. Nuchals, Raymond

Dowling

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

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

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

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

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

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

**Primary location of additional data:**

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

Name of repository:

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreeage of Property** approximately 4 acres

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

|      |         |          |         |
|------|---------|----------|---------|
| 1    | 18      | 343710   | 4215710 |
| Zone | Easting | Northing |         |
| 2    |         |          |         |

|      |         |          |  |
|------|---------|----------|--|
| 3    |         |          |  |
| Zone | Easting | Northing |  |
| 4    |         |          |  |

See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

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

**Boundary Justification**

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

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Betty Bird

organization Betty Bird & Associates date December 1, 1997

street & number 2607 24th Street, NW, Suite 3 telephone 202-588-9033; 202-588-9059 (fax)

city or town Washington, D.C. state N/A zip code 20008

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

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

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

**Photographs**

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

**Additional items**

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

**Property Owner**

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

name Westmoreland County School Board, c/o Dr. Larry E. Hixon, Superintendent of Schools

street & number Route 2 telephone 804-493-8018

city or town Montross state Virginia zip code 22520

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing 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. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Armstead T. Johnson High School  
Westmoreland County, Virginia

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## SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

The principal structure on the A.T. Johnson High School property consists of the original one-story colonial revival brick building (1937), connected by a hyphen to a much larger one-story non-contributing addition constructed ca. 1964. The original U-shaped school building, which faces southwest, is distinguished by a central, gabled entry. The building is detailed in Flemish stretcher bond. While interior partitions have been added, the original plan and finishes of the building are largely intact. Other structures are located behind the original building to the northeast. Contributing structures on the property include the one-story, frame Industrial Arts Building and the one-story, frame Home Economics Cottage. There is also a concrete block cafeteria building, which does not contribute to the significance of the resource. (Portable classrooms situated northeast of the ca. 1964 addition have not been included in the building count for this resource.) Despite alterations, the original school house, Home Economics Cottage, and Industrial Arts Building retain sufficient integrity to contribute to the significance of the A.T. Johnson School.

## DESCRIPTION

The Armstead T. Johnson High School consists of five structures situated on a four acre property on the north side of Route 3. The original one-story colonial revival brick building (1937) and its much larger, one-story addition (ca. 1964) face southwest onto Route 3, east of the town of Montross. A parking lot on the south occupies the remaining frontage along the road. The Home Economics Cottage and the Industrial Arts Building are situated immediately to the rear of the 1937 school building. A tennis court, basketball court, and baseball field occupy the rear of the property to the northeast. The 1937 school building is surrounded by neatly trimmed box foundation plantings that are shown on ca. 1950s photographs of the school. Similar foundation planting is found around the Home Economics Cottage. The alley of maple trees along Route 3 appears to have been planted after the construction of the ca. 1964 addition. With the exception of the southwestern edge of the property, which lies on Route 3, the property is surrounded by woodland.

The A.T. Johnson High School, constructed in 1937, is a one-story, brick building with a U-shaped footprint. The building faces southwest. The building rests on a brick watertable and is surmounted by a hipped roof of standing-seam metal. The front facade of the building is a tripartite composition comprised of wings flanking a projecting gabled central pavilion. The central pavilion showcases the primary entrance to the building, which is recessed within a pedimented surround and flanked by single windows. The pattern of window openings in the wings reinforces the overall symmetry of the front facade. Each wing features a tripartite window flanked by single windows. The uniform fenestration of 6-over-6 sash extends to the entablature in a manner typical of educational buildings of the period.

The rear (northeast) facade of the building is also treated in a symmetrical manner. The central portion of the rear facade is recessed behind the two wings. Each wing has a covered entrance surmounted by a projecting hipped roof supported by wood brackets. The recessed central portion is lit by a tripartite window flanked by single windows. The side (northwest and southeast) facades are asymmetrical and were originally detailed with five windows grouped within a single opening. This configuration remains at the rear of the center of the southeast facade.

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## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Armstead T. Johnson High School, constructed in 1937, was among the first purpose-built high schools for African Americans on the Northern Neck of Virginia. The A.T. Johnson School is a good example of rural schools built in accordance with State Board of Education plans and the most intact example of an early 20th century rural high school in Westmoreland County, Virginia. The A.T. Johnson School meets National Register Criterion A because it embodies the important role educational facilities played for African Americans during the era of segregation and shows how progressive reforms affecting rural education shifted meaning for African Americans.

## NARRATIVE HISTORY

The A.T. Johnson High School serves as an excellent example of how complex internal and external forces combined to produce an important institution housed within a particular building. While the A.T. Johnson School relates to themes like rural education in Virginia, progressive reforms in state education, and the local history of Westmoreland County, segregation and racial bias alter their meaning for the African American community. More importantly, the building type and the building itself assume a meaning and function that differs significantly from similar buildings serving the white community.

As a building type, African American schools typically serve as a locus for the community. Like churches, they serve a variety of public purposes that extend beyond those provided by the same building type in the dominant white community. Especially in rural areas, public schools were often the only government facility provided for African Americans prior to the Civil Rights Act of 1966. Because African Americans were excluded from stores, theaters, auditoriums, and meeting rooms, churches, schools, and fraternal halls provided the only venues for public assembly and community expression. Schools embody particularly rich meaning since education was viewed as the foundation for racial betterment. Beyond their significance as facilities, school buildings possess added meaning as the physical representation of community and a community's support for its children. Throughout the period of bondage and segregation, African Americans have adopted survival strategies that revolve around collective aspirations and efforts expressed through the extended African American family and clubs and community institutions like churches and schools.<sup>1</sup> Schools not only provided a means of socialization and education, but functioned as a vehicle for developing the emotional fortitude and core of self assurance required to survive in a segregated society.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas Battle, now curator at Howard University's Moorland-Spingarn Collection, and others have written extensively about the importance of community-based institutions as a revision to historiography that portrays African Americans as passive victims.

<sup>2</sup>Betty Bird & Associates, "The Thematic Study of African American Architects and Builders in Washington, D.C." contains 20 oral interviews with successful African American architects and builders ranging in age from 65 to 94. Interview questions asked what led individuals to enter a difficult profession and, more importantly, what enabled them to persist. Although these people were raised throughout the United States, virtually every person interviewed credited teachers and principals in their segregated high schools for their success. All spoke of teachers who insisted on their best effort and of being pushed to achieve beyond their own preconceived limits. This educational strategy instilled an important core belief in students' ability to achieve that would counteract messages of inferiority permeating the

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The community's emotional investment in A.T. Johnson High School can be seen in the concluding paragraphs in Inez Seldon Johnson's history of African American education in Westmoreland County:

Only if you were a citizen of Westmoreland County who had known the acute need for a high school, only if you were a parent who had to skimp and plan to send your children to the city for them to attain a high school diploma, only if you were a member of the delegations who made the annual trips to the school board in quest of this elusive school, only if you were a colored citizen of Westmoreland County could you appreciate the joy and pride that welled up in their hearts when that school was completed.

No student would dare mark a wall. No one, no matter how brash, would throw a stone or trample a shrub. No school has ever been loved more!<sup>3</sup>

Several themes form the backdrop for understanding the context for the A.T. Johnson High School. A.T. Johnson High School must be viewed within the overall context of segregated public education in Virginia and Westmoreland County. Progressive movements for rural education, which stressed the role the school played as an institution serving varied needs of the entire community, dovetailed with the expanded role educational facilities played for African Americans. While A.T. Johnson High School incorporated progressive reforms that were put in place in the 1920s and 1930s, its genesis reveals the impact of segregation on rural and educational reforms.

### Public Education in Virginia

Until the late 19th century, public education in Virginia was established at the discretion of county governments and designed to serve indigent whites. Despite Thomas Jefferson's attempts to establish a public educational system for the Commonwealth, the 1796 enabling act left the establishment of public elementary schools up to individual county governments. Legislation establishing the Literary Fund in 1810, an act creating the forerunner of the State Board of Education in 1811, and 1818 legislation establishing county school commissioners, created the foundation of public education in Virginia. Public education was for whites only; the Revised Virginia Code of 1819 provided penalties for anyone teaching African Americans to read.<sup>4</sup> The legislation was predicated on the assumption that public education was for "poor children" and that public education for these children should extend only through the primary school level. In 1861 the Literary Fund, which had been used to supplement county funding for education, was diverted to military use and Virginia's public schools were closed until 1871.

The 1869 Underwood Constitution required that the Commonwealth establish free public schools. While the Ruffner Act of 1870 provided for the education of African Americans, it also mandated segregation. "White and

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dominant society. As Bernice Carter Hill (Class of 1937) wrote in a letter to the A.T. Johnson Alumni Association (attached), "I think that my early years in Virginia at A.T. Johnson High School gave me the discipl[in]e for a decent life and to raise my children well."

<sup>3</sup>Walter Briscoe Norris, Jr. *Westmoreland County, Virginia, 1653-1983*, p. 587.

<sup>4</sup>J.L. Blair Buck, *The Development of Public Schools in Virginia, 1607-1952*, p. 73.

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colored persons shall not be taught in the same schools, but in separate schools, under the same general regulations as to management, usefulness, and efficiency."<sup>5</sup> Emphasis was still placed on elementary education; for the most part, secondary education remained a private function, especially in rural areas. While state legislation made attendance compulsory only for children age 8 through 12, counties could elect to ignore this provision of the law. In 1919 Virginia and North Carolina had the narrowest age range for compulsory education in the nation.<sup>6</sup> Education was not effectively compulsory in Virginia until 1922.<sup>7</sup>

The Commonwealth of Virginia became increasingly involved in encouraging school construction and modernization in the early 20th century. In 1906 Virginia passed the Mann High School Act, the first legislation to establish a system of public high schools. Loan funds created by the 1906 Williams Building Act for elementary schools, the 1908 Strode Act, and a 1916 act quadrupled the value of Virginia's schools between 1910 and 1923.<sup>8</sup>

As the state's financial involvement in school construction grew, their supervision and control over construction also increased. Virginia even established a plan service to insure that facilities met their standards. The 1906 Williams Building Act required that the state approve plans for school construction or renovation. By 1911 the Department of Public Instruction provided free model plans and specifications for sixteen designs. By 1920 this service had evolved into the Division of School Buildings, which not only provided both standardized and customized plans and specifications to communities building schools, but would also supervise construction. The State plans translated the educational reforms informed by progressive educational philosophy into facilities that could be constructed throughout Virginia.<sup>9</sup> The centralized administration of the Division of School Buildings provided the ideal conduit for Depression-era Public Works Administration funds, which could be used to pay from 30-45% of the costs of school construction. The availability of federal funds encouraged many local communities to undertake building programs, like the one that resulted in A.T. Johnson High School, in the 1930s.<sup>10</sup>

### Rural Education in Virginia

While much of the history of public education in Virginia was determined by the rural character of the state, national concerns for rural reform played an important role in the evolution of the educational system and standards for rural educational facilities in the 20th century. Rural education presented a special dilemma for reformers. Distances and the need for labor on family farms were powerful disincentives to education. Further, the state tradition of requiring localities to fund buildings and equipment placed an enormous burden on poorer, rural counties establishing a single system, much less the dual system required by racial segregation. Northern

<sup>5</sup>Ruffner Act as quoted in Norris, p. 511.

<sup>6</sup>Buck, p. 361. Buck concludes that Virginia's refusal to pass enforceable compulsory education laws was a reaction to black education.

<sup>7</sup>William Allen Link, *A Hard Country and a Lonely Place: Schooling, Society, and Reform in Rural Virginia, 1870-1920*, p. 137.

<sup>8</sup>Ann McCleary, National Register Nomination, Public Schools in Augusta County, Virginia, p. 7-6.

<sup>9</sup>National Register Nomination, Public Schools in Augusta County, Virginia, p. 7-6. Buck, pp. 347-351. Buck writes that the Division of School Buildings, "furnished practically all plans for school buildings in rural communities and small towns and for a number of cities" (p. 348).

<sup>10</sup>Buck, p. 349.



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industrialists who recognized that their vision of the New South depended on a literate workforce, devoted increasing attention to educational philanthropy, which reinforced ideals and standards championed by reformers within the state.

In 1908, President Theodore Roosevelt appointed the Country Life Commission to examine problems in rural America that had been exacerbated by large-scale migration to urban areas in the late 19th century. Among the Commission's findings was that the poor quality of educational opportunity created major problems in rural life. As a solution, the Commission advocated federal assistance to rural schools. This analysis dovetailed with concerns of progressive reformers and led to Virginia's State Board of Education assuming more authority and control over local schools and lessening the influence of local trustees and residents.<sup>11</sup>

The reformers advocated consolidation of one-room rural schools and envisioned rural schools as agents for socialization and civic betterment that would overcome the isolation of rural life. The schools would provide a locus of community for adults as well as children, countering the centrifugal force of life on individual farmsteads. In addition to providing a center for more diversified learning, rural schools would provide a facility that would encourage the formation of clubs and other collective enterprises for both children and adults. A diverse curriculum including home economics, industrial arts, and agricultural programs would serve as a form of uplift, fitting individuals for modern community life. The results of this reform movement can be seen in both federal and state legislation. In 1908 the state established programs in agriculture and home economics at ten agricultural high schools throughout the state. The federal Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 and the 1929 George Reed Act provided impetus for introducing vocational education at the secondary and post-secondary level reinforcing the addition of agriculture and home economics to the curriculum.

#### Public Education in Westmoreland County

Public education in Westmoreland County was for whites only until after the Civil War. In the early 19th century, Westmoreland County, like many other counties, declined to establish public schools.<sup>12</sup> The first known School Commissioners' report from Westmoreland County dates to 1822 and indicates that only slightly over half of the 176 eligible poor white children were enrolled.<sup>13</sup> Those who could afford it attended private schools sponsored by church parishes and private academies. The state chartered Westmoreland County's Washington Academy, near Oak Grove, in 1834. While legislation extended public education to all white children in 1846, the Westmoreland County system continued to serve only impoverished white children.<sup>14</sup>

In 1869 Westmoreland County public schools reopened after the Civil War enrolling 800 students in 20 schools during the 1870-1871 session.<sup>15</sup> Attendance at the seven African American schools averaged 231. The five African American private schools in the county counted 120 pupils. The county superintendent reported that, "the

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<sup>11</sup>National Register Nomination, Public Schools in Augusta County, Virginia, p. 8-3.

<sup>12</sup>Norris, p. 507.

<sup>13</sup>Norris, p. 508.

<sup>14</sup>Norris, p. 511.

<sup>15</sup>Norris, p. 515.

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prejudice against the schools is passing away."<sup>16</sup> Total attendance for both African Americans and whites represented only 30% of the school age population. For the remainder of the 19th century attendance never exceeded 50%.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, the growth of public elementary schools in the county led to an increased demand for education that can be seen in the spate of private post-elementary academies in Westmoreland County founded toward the end of the 19th century.<sup>18</sup>

In 1908 the white citizens of Westmoreland County held a mass meeting to organize a School Improvement League and by 1912 had four high schools, all for whites.<sup>19</sup> Washington-Lee Agricultural High School in Montross was not founded until 1911. As with other schools funded as agricultural institutions, the state required that at least 25% of all instruction be vocational.<sup>20</sup> The establishment of school bus service, the essential requirement for school consolidation, began in Westmoreland County in 1925.<sup>21</sup>

Westmoreland County's African American families organized along similar lines but took longer to achieve their goals. In 1910 Westmoreland's African American citizens formed school leagues to provide financial support for their schools. School leagues held socials, dinners, and fairs to raise funds to operate their schools. When the leagues consolidated to form a county-wide league, it raised \$1893.02 for the proposed high school.<sup>22</sup>

Major disparities still existed between the white and African American system, not the least of which was the absence of public education for African Americans beyond the elementary school level through the 1930s. In Westmoreland County during the 1920s, African American students attended school only seven to eight months of the year compared to eight to nine months for white students. African American teachers were paid approximately \$20 less per month than white teachers possessing similar qualifications.<sup>23</sup>

### The Politics and Funding of African American Education and Rural Reform in Virginia

From state funding to compulsory attendance to universal access, many of the shortcomings of Virginia's public school system can be attributed to the reluctance to use public funds to educate African Americans. Indeed, the price of State Superintendent Ruffner's educational reforms was the establishment of a segregated system that was beyond the funding capabilities of poorer counties and an essentially poor state. It is no surprise that African Americans were essentially shut out of rural reforms in education until 1910.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Norris, p. 578.

<sup>17</sup>Norris, p. 515.

<sup>18</sup>These academies included Home School for Boys (1885), Randolph Institute (1891), the Cottage Home School (1893), the Potomac School (no date), and Wirtland Seminary (1894). (Norris, pp. 512-515)

<sup>19</sup>Norris, p. 516.

<sup>20</sup>Link, p. 162. While boys typically studied farming, girls were trained in home economics.

<sup>21</sup>Norris, p. 584.

<sup>22</sup>Norris, p. 584.

<sup>23</sup>Norris, p. 585.

<sup>24</sup>Link, p. 173.

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The disparity between white and African American education can easily be seen in funding. In 1917-1918, the median cost of instruction for white students was \$13, for African Americans \$4. In 1930-31 the average costs were \$31.82 for whites and \$13.72 for African Americans. That same year annual salaries for white teachers ranged from \$500 to \$1,052.<sup>25</sup> Annual salaries in 1930-31 for African Americans ranged from \$422 to \$552.<sup>26</sup> In 1920 all but three Virginia counties could boast high schools for whites; only 16 counties had African American high schools. Over 22,000 rural white Virginians attended high school in 1920, only 297 rural African Americans did.<sup>27</sup>

While there was virtually no political support for educating African Americans beyond the elementary school level, the need for sufficient African American teachers to staff elementary schools led to introduction of high school education in the guise of teacher training.<sup>28</sup> Beginning in 1914 "county training schools," financed by northern philanthropy, became the first public African American high schools in rural areas. The county training schools were charged with implementing industrial education, especially home economics and agriculture. Academic subjects were to be limited to those required to provide a normal school education for potential teachers.<sup>29</sup>

Much of the statewide impetus for African American education came from northern philanthropic foundations. While their purposes and funding overlapped, in Virginia these foundations carved out particular areas of interest and coordinated their efforts for concrete results. The John F. Slater Fund, established as philanthropy specifically for African Americans in 1882, provided money for county training schools. The General Education Board, established by John D. Rockefeller in 1902, provided for state supervision. In 1910 the Peabody Fund appropriated funds for a State Supervisor of Negro Schools in Virginia. The Anna T. Jeanes Fund or Negro Rural School Fund, Inc., established in 1907, provided salaries for county supervising teachers who would devote themselves to educational improvement.<sup>30</sup> The Jeanes supervisors, many of whom were educated at Hampton Institute, were directed to introduce industrial education and home economics as a means of preparing students for a productive life and as a form of rural uplift. The Rosenwald Fund, founded in 1913, provided additional funds for African American schools based on a formula that matched local fund-raising.<sup>31</sup>

In 1909, Negro leaders at Hampton Institute and Virginia Normal and T.C. Walker, an attorney in Gloucester County, founded the Negro Organization Society (NOS). Because of the importance of churches and fraternal organizations within the African American community, the NOS became an umbrella organization for statewide African American reform utilizing these institutions as a vehicle for its activities. The group paralleled the functions of the Cooperative Education Association and worked with the Jeanes Supervisors to improve African

<sup>25</sup>Buck, pp. 227-228.

<sup>26</sup>Buck, p. 230.

<sup>27</sup>Link, p. 189.

<sup>28</sup>The demand for African American teachers was so great that it could not be met by Hampton Institute and Virginia Normal School alone. (Link, p. 190)

<sup>29</sup>Link, pp. 189-191.

<sup>30</sup>The Slater Fund and Jeanes Fund merged in 1937.

<sup>31</sup>The Rosenwald Fund ceased funding school construction in 1932.

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American education.<sup>32</sup> The Virginia Branch of the National Congress of Colored Parents and Teachers was founded in 1926.<sup>33</sup>

Through the efforts of the General Education Board and the Slater Fund, by 1916 Virginia had five county training schools in Alleghany, Caroline, Nottoway, Roanoke and York.<sup>34</sup> By the 1917-1918 session, the Jeanes supervisors were working in 50 counties, supervising almost 70% of the 2308 African American teachers in the state. There were only 17 African American high schools outside of urban areas; only four of these schools offered a four year curriculum. Six of these schools were considered county training schools. By 1930-31 there were 58 county training schools and 60 Jeanes supervisors serving 57 counties.<sup>35</sup>

### The Anna T. Jeanes Fund

The Jeanes Fund was particularly important to A.T. Johnson School and other schools in rural areas in Virginia. Anna T. Jeanes (1822-1907) was a Philadelphia Quaker who donated over \$1 million "for the purpose of assisting in the Southern United States community, country, and rural schools for the great class of Negroes to whom the small rural and community schools are alone available."<sup>36</sup> In 1905, Jackson Davis, school superintendent for Henrico County, and Virginia Randolph, the county's first Jeanes teacher, pioneered the practice of the Jeanes teacher supervising industrial education in all the small, rural African American schools in a county. James Hardy Dillard, a Virginia native and the director of the Jeanes fund, was so impressed by her year end report that he printed 1000 copies and distributed them to county superintendents throughout the south.

The influence of the Jeanes teachers extended beyond the mandate of promoting industrial education. As Dillard wrote,

No cut-and-dried rules were laid down. The supervising teacher was to introduce and supervise simple forms of industrial work, but beyond this she was free to follow out any line of neighborhood improvement which might open up, or for which she might feel some special fitness. The point was to get a good teacher and let her do the rest. Some excelled in home visiting, some in raising money, some in forming clubs, some in health work, some in promoting gardens. It was always something good and something to be done.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>Buck, p. 206; pp. 308-379 and Link, pp. 192-194.

<sup>33</sup>Buck, p. 380.

<sup>34</sup>Buck, p. 205.

<sup>35</sup>Buck, pp. 228-229.

<sup>36</sup>Benjamin Brawley, *Dr. Dillard of the Jeanes Fund*, pp. 55-57.

<sup>37</sup>Brawley, pp. 59-60.

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The general character of the work of the Jeanes teachers within the framework of rural uplift led inexorably to a movement for better school facilities. As Dillard wrote,

In a report made to the Jeanes Board some ten years ago emphasis was laid on the great need for some movement for better schoolhouses in the rural districts. It was pointed out how impossible it was to teach neatness, orderliness, and thrift in some shack where every look of the child rested upon evidences of the contrary. Many appeals came for aid in building schoolhouses, some from county superintendents, some from the Jeanes Teachers with the approval of their county superintendents, all offering financial cooperation.<sup>38</sup>

James Dillard's position as general director of the Slater Fund and President of the Jeanes Foundation resulted in cooperation between the two foundations to achieve Dillard's goals for rural education.<sup>39</sup> After 1911 the Slater Fund shifted its emphasis from funding teacher training for industrial education to establishing "county training schools" for African Americans. Although the county training schools taught vocational subjects, they also offered high school education to rural African Americans. As a condition for funding the county training schools, the Slater Fund required that the state own the school property and that at least \$750 of teacher salary come from public funds, establishing the principal of public support for African American secondary education.<sup>40</sup>

The Jeanes fund promoted interracial cooperation. In 1910, when the Peabody Fund funded the position of state supervisor for rural white schools, the General Education Board created a similar position for African American schools. Jackson Davis, the Henrico County superintendent who had been instrumental in shaping the direction of the Jeanes program, was named to the position. The state supervisor for rural African American schools coordinated and channeled northern philanthropy, serving as the link between the African American community and the state educational bureaucracy. Among his activities, the state supervisor appointed the Jeanes teachers.<sup>41</sup> In many instances, the Jeanes teachers functioned as *de facto* supervisors for African American education within their jurisdiction.<sup>42</sup>

J.L. Blair Buck credits the efforts of the Jeanes supervisors with increasing demands for new schools for both African Americans and whites throughout rural Virginia. In his 1915-1916 Annual Report, the State Superintendent wrote, "Not only are they (the Negroes) paying larger amounts in taxes, but they are making private contributions that sometimes give their white neighbors a new vision of what it is possible to do by cooperative effort."<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>38</sup>Brawley, p. 61.

<sup>39</sup>Dillard, a former president of Tulane University, became director of the Jeanes Fund in 1908 and director of the Slater Fund in 1910.

<sup>40</sup>Horace M. Bond, *Negro Education in Alabama*, p. 264-265.

<sup>41</sup>Link, p. 186. The state supervisor was always a white male.

<sup>42</sup>Bond, p. 270.

<sup>43</sup>Buck, p. 196.

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Mamie Roane Seldon, who taught at Hague during the 1913-1918 period, was the Jeanes supervisor for Westmoreland County.<sup>44</sup> County School Board minutes show that in 1922, the Westmoreland County School Board provided her with a loan of \$150 for "Industrial Arts" to be repaid by local school leagues.<sup>45</sup> Seldon was instrumental in the drive to build A.T. Johnson High School. A plaque in the school lobby memorializes her contributions:

In memory of Mamie Roane Seldon, Jeanes Supervisor of Westmoreland County in whose heart the seed was sown for the erection of this building. 1917-1933.

A.T. Johnson High School

The creation of A.T. Johnson High School was part of a grass-roots movement to provide secondary education for African Americans in Virginia, a movement that culminated in a wave of school building in the late 1930s. The campaign for a African American high school in Westmoreland County began in the 1920s, spearheaded by Armstead Tasker Johnson (1857-1944). Johnson was a member of a prominent Westmoreland County family, a "venerable leader of this community, a man who had the highest respect of citizens both African American and white."<sup>46</sup> His father, Rev. Thomas T. Johnson, was head of the Potomac Baptist Church. A.T. Johnson, who wrote a history of the Baptist Church in Westmoreland County, began teaching in 1890 and taught in public schools for over 30 years. He also served many years at the Northern Neck Academy, a private school in Richmond County.<sup>47</sup> Johnson was active in the Zion School League and successfully petitioned the County Board for a school in Zion in 1927.<sup>48</sup> Johnson was the first president of the Westmoreland Countywide league that combined the leagues of all the county's elementary schools.<sup>49</sup>

At the A.T. Johnson High School's Fiftieth Anniversary celebration, Dr. William R. Strassner, a retired minister, recalled Johnson's efforts in the 1920s. In 1926, his second year at Virginia Union University in Richmond, Strassner was called to a student pastorate at Zion Baptist. Twice a month he would journey to Westmoreland County by bus and ferry. Johnson would pick Strassner up in Warsaw and Strassner would stay with the Johnsons. In their time together the two men would discuss the lack of educational opportunity for African Americans in the county, lamenting the lack of facilities and programs. After carefully mapping out a strategy, the men wrote a letter to County Superintendent Blake Newton about the need to educate African Americans in the county and requesting an appointment to discuss the matter in detail. Newton's response was encouraging. Strassner recalled that the letter was "graciously received" and that the superintendent "was open to all suggestions" and "willing to cooperate fully with the effort to get the school established." Newton offered to bring the matter before the school board at its next meeting.<sup>50</sup> Johnson, Strassner, and Newton were named to a committee to investigate longer

<sup>44</sup>Norris, p. 580.

<sup>45</sup>Norris, p. 584.

<sup>46</sup>William R. Strassner, oral statement on videotape of A.T. Johnson High School Fiftieth Anniversary.

<sup>47</sup>Norris, pp. 579-580.

<sup>48</sup>Norris, p. 585.

<sup>49</sup>Sibbie C. Jenkins, oral statement on videotape of A.T. Johnson High School Fiftieth Anniversary.

<sup>50</sup>Strassner, videotape.

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school terms for African American schools, which were then only operating for six months of the year because of lack of funds, and the construction of a African American high school.<sup>51</sup>

In 1930-1931 a three room high school was established at Potomac School in Hague. Potomac School was held in the same building used by Potomac Baptist Church, the church associated with A.T. Johnson's family. By 1932, 19 students were enrolled in the upper grades. Spurred by demands for bus transportation to Potomac School, in June 1932 the County Board authorized the purchase of land for a school for African American students in Templemans, some 2 miles from Montross. The County Board expected to construct the school for \$8000, a figure that almost tripled before construction. The Slater Fund was to provide a loan of \$4000. In June 1935, the County School Board resolved to construct a African American high school at Templemans at a cost not to exceed \$10,000, a figure that exceeded their earlier estimates by \$2000. After receiving federal Works Progress Administration funding, at a special meeting in November 1936, the County School Board awarded the contract to build the school to C.E. Nuchals for \$22,772. The contract directed Nuchals to begin work by January 11, 1937. In 1937 the African American community raised \$1803.02 for the school, bringing the community's total contribution to approximately \$3000. In March of that year they requested that the school be named for A.T. Johnson.<sup>52</sup> Bernice Carter Hill (Class of 1937) described the feelings of students in the community as the building was constructed:

Each morning as we passed on our way to Potomac School, we could see the building going up. I remember that the excitement was more than we could bear. Then came the glorious day when the school opened, most of us had never seen anything like it. We didn't have all of the text books we needed, but there was no lack of love and excitement.<sup>53</sup>

Oral tradition holds that Raymond Lloyd Dowling, an African American who was one of the few trained designer/builders of any race in Westmoreland County during this period, was responsible for the local refinements applied to the School Building Service's standard plan.<sup>54</sup> Dowling was born in 1907 in Ambler, Pennsylvania. After graduating from Ambler High School in 1925, Dowling studied architectural engineering at the Germantown School of Adult Education while completing an apprenticeship in drafting and construction. In 1930, he earned a certificate in architectural drawing and completed his apprenticeship program in 1932.<sup>55</sup> In 1933 Dowling moved to Virginia with his wife, who had been born in Westmoreland County. Like many African American young people in the county, she had been sent to live with relatives so that she could receive the high school education denied to her locally.

<sup>51</sup>Norris, p. 585.

<sup>52</sup>Norris, pp. 585-586.

<sup>53</sup>Bernice Carter Hill to A.T. Johnson Alumni Association, October 9, 1997 (attached). Hill's description, "most of us had never seen anything like it," serves as a reminder of how segregation limited the quality and character of the built environment that African Americans in rural Virginia could experience.

<sup>54</sup>The A.T. Johnson Alumni Association listed Dowling on the form initially filed with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources.

<sup>55</sup>Betty Bird & Associates, "Thematic Study of African American Architects and Builders in Washington, D.C.," discusses how technical drawing and architectural engineering served as a common strategy for African Americans pursuing careers in design and architecture in the early 20th century.

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Raymond Dowling established himself as a self-employed designer/builder in Westmoreland County. While his race excluded him from winning major contracts himself, he worked on important projects as an employee of white contractors. In addition to the A.T. Johnson High School, Dowling worked on the Potomac River Bridge. He also designed and built the first Quonset barns in the county and designed a small strip shopping center in Essex County.<sup>56</sup>

The form of A.T. Johnson High School owes much to the centralized facility and curriculum planning of the Virginia State Department of Education, particularly their policies for rural schools. A.T. Johnson High School incorporated the specialized spaces characterizing plans provided by the School Building Service.<sup>57</sup> It exhibits the standard one-story plan that featured a central foyer opening onto an auditorium, which was flanked by classrooms. The dominant element in the plan of the building is the central auditorium space. As part of the rural reform movement, the School Building Service advocated constructing schools with an assembly space that would serve the entire community. They encouraged the addition of a stage to this space as an option because it would serve the dual goals of facilitating the organization of musical, literary, and theatrical clubs and providing a space where the clubs could present their efforts to the entire community. When the state added physical education to the curriculum, these spaces could also serve as gymnasiums. The form of A.T. Johnson High School also incorporated the School Building Service's policy of housing industrial arts and home economics in detached buildings.

The character of the faculty of A.T. Johnson High School contributed to the powerful impact the school as an institution had on its students. Unlike white rural schools, which were typically plagued by constant teacher turnover, A.T. Johnson High School retained a stable core of longtime faculty.<sup>58</sup> Agricultural teacher Joseph J. Roane (1905-1995) exemplifies the high calibre of teacher employed at the school. Roane, a Westmoreland County native, received his elementary education at Kremlin Elementary School but was forced to leave the county to obtain a high school degree. He attended high school in Philadelphia and Petersburg, receiving his Bachelor's and Master's degrees from Virginia State College. Roane and his wife went to Russia where Roane served as an agricultural scientist, teaching Russians American principals of scientific agriculture. He returned to the United States in 1937 and began teaching at A.T. Johnson High School, where he taught from 1937 to 1970. After his retirement, he served as a consultant on Northern Neck crops, insects, and diseases through an affiliation with Virginia Polytechnic University.<sup>59</sup>

Three alumni of the school provide representative examples of the way in which A.T. Johnson High School served as a vehicle for the larger community to communicate strategies for survival and upward mobility to its young people. Charles B. Smith (1917-1991), a pioneer African American aviator and a Tuskegee Airman, was among the first three graduates of A.T. Johnson High School. He received his pilot's license in 1939 and trained under

<sup>56</sup>Information provided by Cherry Dowling Blackwell, daughter of Raymond Dowling.

<sup>57</sup>Jeff O'Dell was unable to locate prototype school plans in his search of Department of Education records. (National Register Nomination, Holley Graded School, p. 8-8.)

<sup>58</sup>Link discusses how increasing professionalization of teachers and the low pay in rural areas made teaching in rural areas unattractive to better educated teachers. (Link, p. 136) The A.T. Johnson Alumni Association estimates that the average tenure of A.T. Johnson faculty was 12-1/2 years. (Ashton to Bird, August 6, 1997)

<sup>59</sup>Obituary in funeral program. Roane's son Yosif is said to be the first child born to African American parents in Russia.



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Charles "Chief" Anderson, the first African American to hold a commercial pilot's license. Smith received his military training at Chanute Field in Illinois and became a member of the famed 99th Pursuit Squadron, the first African American air squadron allowed in combat.<sup>60</sup> Smith received Bronze Stars for service in both World War II and the Korean War. As a civilian, he taught aeronautical mechanics at Aviation High School in Queens, New York, one of the country's premier technical schools for aviation-related training.<sup>61</sup>

Bernice Carter Hill (b. 1922) graduated in the first class along with Smith. Hill's life demonstrates the importance values like confidence, fortitude, and self-discipline played in survival in a segregated society. Hill moved to New York after graduation, but found her initial prospects limited by both race and gender. She cleaned houses while studying dressmaking at night. Eventually Hill found a job processing stocks and bonds for Chemical Bank, a position she held for 30 years. The heritage of Westmoreland County's educational values can be seen in her children, who graduated from a fashion institute and from Smith College.<sup>62</sup>

The life and career of Dr. Edward M. Jenkins (1926-1994) illustrates the firm academic foundation that the A.T. Johnson faculty provided for their students during the era of segregation. Jenkins was one of eight children from a Neenah family who became a doctor of veterinary medicine and a professor of microbiology at Tuskegee Institute. After graduating from A.T. Johnson High School in 1945, he earned a B.S. from Virginia State College in 1949, an M.S. from Catholic University in 1960, a D.V.M. from Tuskegee Institute in 1964 and a Ph.D from Colorado State University in 1972. Jenkins conducted research for the Centers for Disease Control and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and served as a consultant to U.S. Army Medical Research and as a member of review panels for USDA animal health grants.<sup>63</sup>

The struggle to construct A.T. Johnson High School and the profound impact the school had on its alumni provide an excellent example of the full scope of significance of African American institutions during the era of segregation. The history of the school and the lives of its graduates exemplify how African American community-based institutions played a role that extended far beyond the nominal function of similar institutions and facilities in the dominant white society. The history of A.T. Johnson High School well illustrates how African Americans in Westmoreland County focused community effort to adapt educational institutions to enable the survival and upward mobility of their children in a segregated society.

<sup>60</sup>See Bernard Nalty, *Strength for the Fight: A History of Black Americans in the Military*, pp. 143-161. Nalty writes of Chanute Field that "so few blacks were undergoing technical training that separate facilities proved infeasible, [and that] men learned in the same classes without regard to race" (p. 147).

<sup>61</sup>Obituary in funeral program and Nalty, pp. 143-161.

<sup>62</sup>Bernice Carter Hill to A.T. Johnson Alumni Association, October 9, 1997 (attached).

<sup>63</sup>Obituary for Dr. Edward M. Jenkins.

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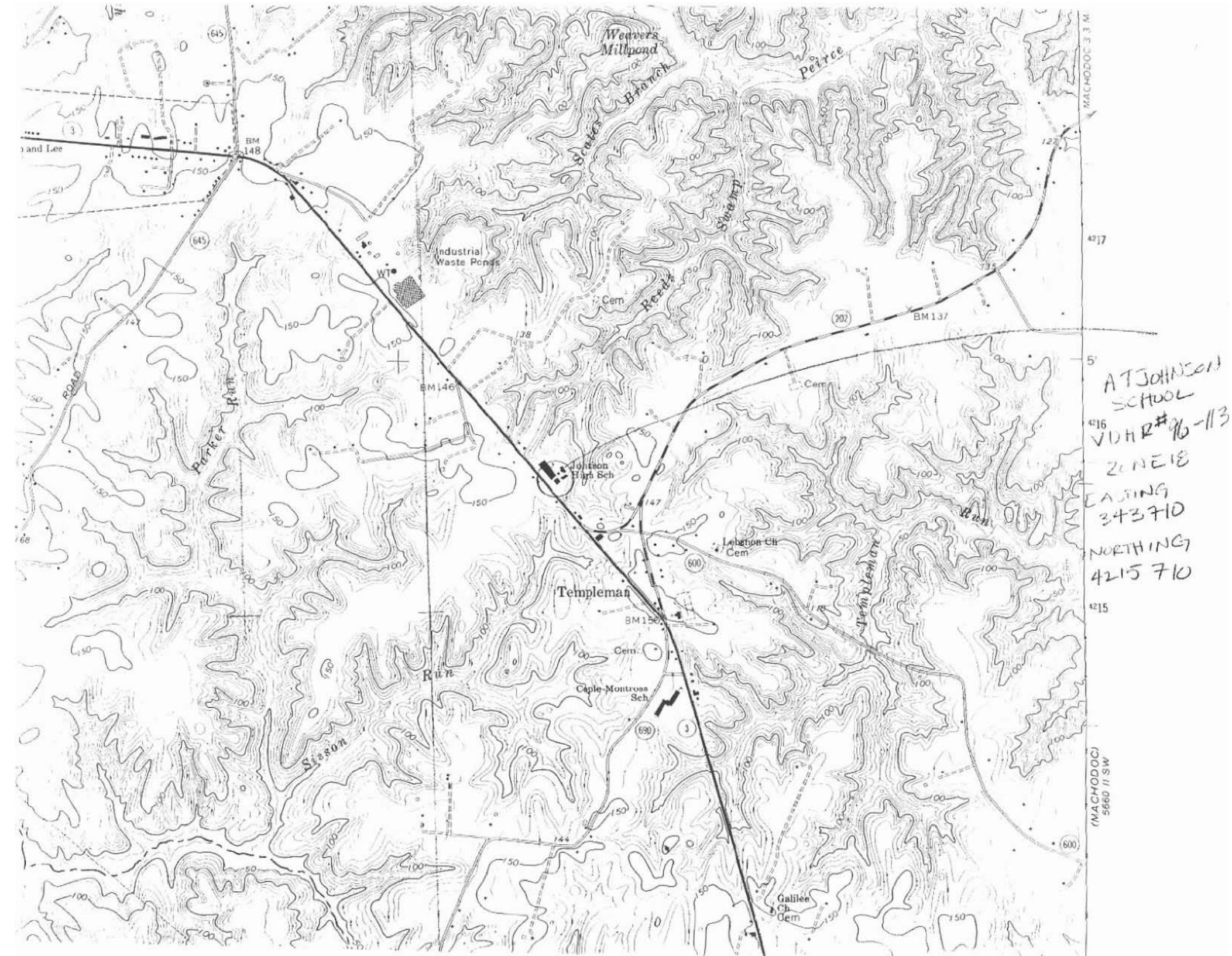
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## VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

All that certain piece or parcel of land as surveyed by Robert L. Parker, Surveyor, on July 6, 1932, and of record in the Clerk's Office at Montross, Virginia, in Deed Book 90, at page 504, and more particularly described in the aforementioned deed as follows: Beginning at a stake on Main State Highway leading from Montross to Templemans; thence North 48-1/2 East 6.67 chains to a stake, corner of J.H. Parker. Thence, south 32 ft. East 6.67 chains to a stake; thence S 48-1/2 ft. West 6.67 chains to a stake on Main Highway; thence with line of Main Highway 6.67 chains to place of beginning containing an area of four (4) acres, more or less.

## BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary corresponds with the legal description of the boundary of the historic school property.



MACHODOC 33 M

4217

5'

4215

(MACHODOC)  
5660 11 SW

AT JOHNSON  
SCHOOL  
VDR # 96-113  
ZONE 18  
EASING  
343710  
NORTHING  
4215 710