



# COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

## Department of Historic Resources

2801 Kensington Avenue, Richmond, Virginia 23221

Stefanie K. Taillon  
*Secretary of Natural  
and Historic Resources*

Julie V. Langan  
*Director*

Tel: (804) 367-2323  
Fax: (804) 367-2391  
[www.dhr.virginia.gov](http://www.dhr.virginia.gov)

May 5, 2025

Christian R. Goodwin, County Administrator  
Louisa County  
1 Woolfolk Ave, Ste 301  
Louisa, VA 23093

**Re: Cuckoo Elementary School, Louisa County**

Dear County Administrator Goodwin:

The Department of Historic Resources, Virginia's historic preservation office, has received a completed nomination for the above referenced resource. The DHR is planning to present the proposed nomination to the Virginia State Review Board and the Virginia Board of Historic Resources for recommendation to the National Register of Historic Places and for inclusion in the Virginia Landmarks Register.

For your review and comment, **enclosed** is a copy of the draft nomination as it is to be presented to the Boards on **Thursday, June 12, 2025**. Your comments will be forwarded to the SHPO Director and the Boards along with the nomination for consideration. Should you have any questions regarding the nomination or the register process, please contact Austin Walker, National Register Program Manager, at (804) 482-6439 or [austin.walker@dhr.virginia.gov](mailto:austin.walker@dhr.virginia.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "JL Smith".

Jolene L. U. Smith  
Director, Division of Resource Information & Register

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

**Cuckoo Elementary School, Louisa County, DHR File No. 054-5479**

The 1.33-acre site of the Cuckoo Elementary School is located approximately five miles south of Mineral, Virginia, and 1 mile east of the village of Cuckoo off Route 33 in Louisa County. It is situated on the northeast side of Route 33 and the building is oriented toward the street. The site is relatively open with a somewhat worn grass lawn and minimal overgrown shrubs near the building's perimeter. The property is bordered by a church to the southeast and a residence to the northwest, all loosely bordered by a larger wooded area situated within surrounding cultivated farmland. The site contains a single resource, the c. 1925 vernacular one-story school building, which is a contributing resource. The Cuckoo School retains a relatively high degree of all seven aspects of integrity. It retains a high degree of integrity of location, setting, and association with its use as an African American school at its original location along Jefferson Highway. The property retains the same characteristics as it did historically. The resource also retains a high degree of integrity of design, materials, workmanship, and feeling. The building retains its form, materials, and floor plan. Alumni say that the building overall has not changed much from how it appeared when still functioning as a school. Furthermore, the building retains evidence of its workmanship and materials embodying early twentieth-century vernacular construction methods. As a whole, the building retains the aesthetic and historic components that reflect its history as a small, two-room early twentieth-century African American school. The retention of the physical components associated with the historic property, including integrity of the design and materials, along with setting and location, in particular, help maintain its link to the era of racial segregation in Virginia's public schoolhouses from 1870 to the 1960s.

The Cuckoo Elementary School is a rare surviving two-room schoolhouse in Louisa County Virginia, and the surrounding region. The school was an elementary school which served grades one through seven. The school was constructed in 1925, when most rural schoolhouses for African American students were modest frame buildings with one or two classrooms. It closed as the result of a fire in 1955. The school is locally significant under Criterion A for Education and under Criterion A for Ethnic Heritage: Black, for its association with Black history and culture in rural Louisa County, Virginia, from 1925-1955. Additionally, the school represents an important link to Virginia's era of racial segregation in public education and to the overall use of small one- and two-room schoolhouses from 1870 to the mid-twentieth century. The Period of Significance of the Cuckoo School begins with its construction in 1925 and ends with a fire which resulted in the school closing permanently in 1955. In later years the school building was used by the neighboring Philippi Christian Church for congregation activities. Currently the building is vacant. The Cuckoo School is being nominated under the African American School in Virginia Multiple Property Documentation Form and meets the registration requirements established therein.






**BOUNDARY MAP**

Cuckoo School  
Louisa County, VA  
DHR ID# 054-5479

 Nominated Boundary

0 100 200 300  
 Feet



VITA, Esri, HERE, Garmin, INCREMENT P, NGA, USGS





## The National and State Registers in Virginia

A Quick Guide to the National Register of Historic Places and Virginia Landmarks Register

- Established under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the **National Register of Historic Places** is the Nation's official list of historic properties worthy of preservation, administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. Properties listed in the National Register include districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that are significant in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture.

In 1966, the Virginia General Assembly established the Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission, now the Department of Historic Resources. DHR is the State Historic Preservation Office responsible for nominating properties to the National Register and managing the **Virginia Landmarks Register**, the State's official list of properties important to Virginia's history. The same evaluation criteria and nomination form are used for the National Register of Historic Places and the Virginia Landmarks Register.

### ■ **Key Points**

- 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 and encourages good stewardship.
- National and State Register listings **do not** place any obligations or restrictions on private property owners. Owners remain free to do what they wish with their property within existing laws and regulations and are not required to restore or maintain a property in particular ways as a result of listing.
- To ensure public participation in the process, property owners and local officials are notified and given the opportunity to comment on proposed nominations. When a nomination is submitted to the National Park Service, another public comment period is published in the Federal Register.

### ■ **Benefits of Register Listing**

- Owners of listed properties may qualify for Federal and State Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits, historic preservation easements, and Federal and State grants for historic preservation when funding is available.
- Federal agencies whose projects affect a listed property must give the Department of Historic Resources an opportunity to comment on the project and its effects on the property.

### ■ **Additional Information**

DHR Historic Registers Program:

<https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/programs/historic-registers/>

VLR Online, an online database of State and National Register listings in Virginia:

<https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/>





## The National and State Registers in Virginia

### Rights of Private Property Owners to Comment or Object to a Nomination for Listing

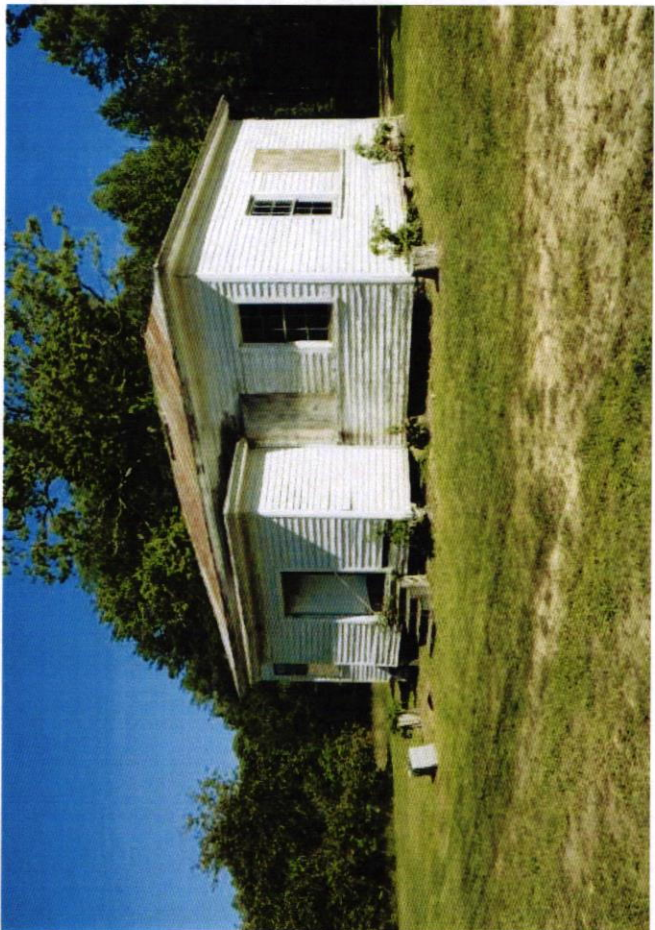
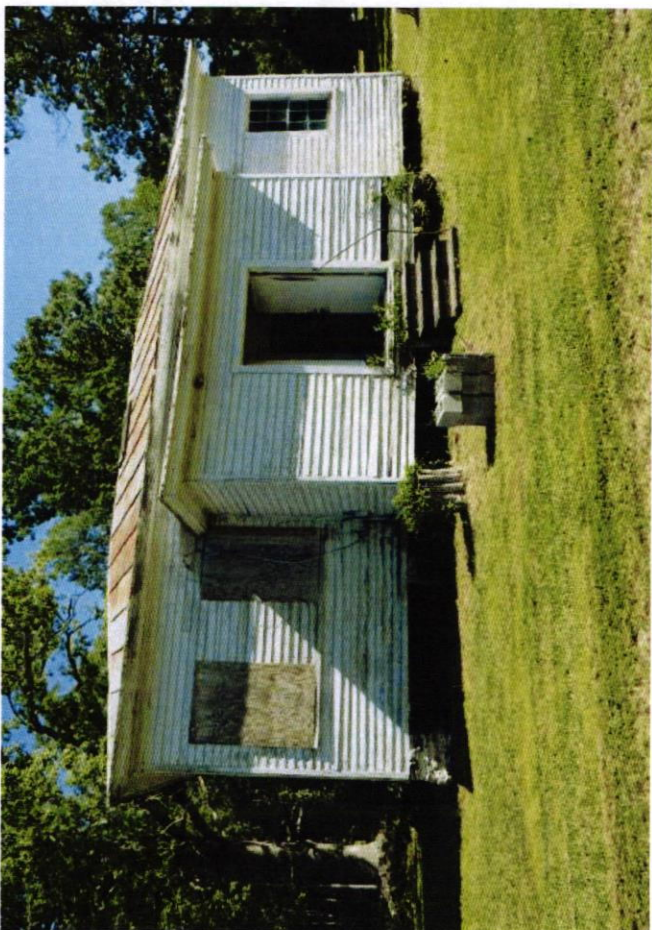
#### ■ Supporting and/or Commenting on a Nomination

- A private property owner who supports a nomination for listing in the Registers is invited to send a letter of support but is not required to do so for the nomination to proceed. Private property owners are also welcome to comment without formally supporting or objecting to a nomination. Copies of letters of support and/or comment are provided to the Boards for review, along with the nomination to which they refer, and are included with the nomination if it is recommended to proceed to the NRHP.

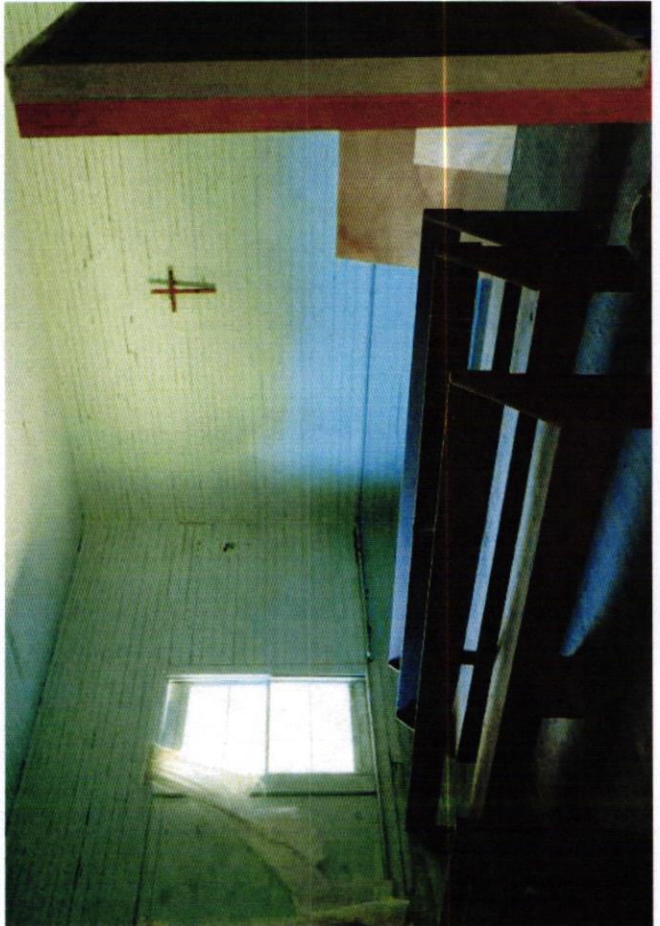
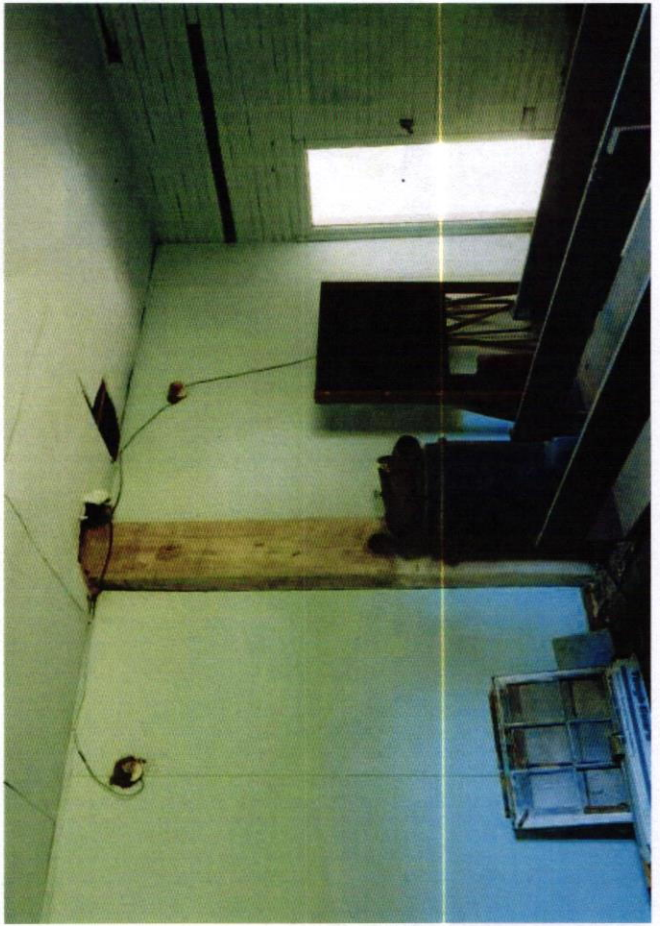
#### ■ Objecting to a Nomination

- Per 17VAC10-20-200, a private property owner has the right to object to listing in either or both Registers. For a private property being individually nominated, each owner or partial owner may object to listing regardless of the portion 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 or whether the properties contribute to the significance of the district.
- An objection to listing must be provided to DHR in writing a minimum of 7 business days prior to the Board meeting. Letters of objection must be addressed to the State Historic Preservation Officer at the Department of Historic Resources, 2801 Kensington Avenue, Richmond, Virginia 23221.
- When objecting to listing, any owner or partial owner of private property must submit to DHR a written statement that references the subject property by address and/or parcel number and certifies that the party is the sole or partial owner of the private property, as appropriate.
  - For objections to listing in the VLR, the written statement of objection must be attested and notarized by a notary public in order to be counted by DHR in determining whether a majority of private property owners has objected to a nomination.
  - Objection letters concerning NRHP listing are not required to be notarized. Per 28 U.S. Code § 1746, 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.
- If a **majority** (50% + 1) of private property owners object according to the process above, the nomination will not proceed to listing. In such cases, DHR is still required to submit the nomination to the National Park Service for a Determination of Eligibility for the NRHP, per 36 CFR 60.6(n).
- Letters of objection received a minimum of 7 business days prior to the Board meeting will be copied to Board members for review, along with the nomination to which they refer. If 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 45 days of receipt of the nomination from DHR.











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: Cuckoo Elementary SchoolOther names/site number: Cuckoo School; DHR #054-5479

Name of related multiple property listing:

African American Schools in Virginia

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

**2. Location**Street & number: 7133 Jefferson HighwayCity or town: Mineral State: VA County: LouisaNot For Publication: ☐ N/A Vicinity: ☐ N/A**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    C    D

Signature of certifying official/Title:

Date

Virginia Department of Historic Resources

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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



Cuckoo Elementary School  
Name of Property

Louisa County, Virginia  
County and State

---

#### 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 ☐
- Site ☐
- Structure ☐
- Object ☐

Cuckoo Elementary School  
Name of Property

Louisa County, Virginia  
County and State

### Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing

Noncontributing

---

---

buildings

---

---

sites

---

---

structures

---

---

objects

---

---

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.)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

---

---

---

---

---

---



Cuckoo Elementary School  
Name of Property

Louisa County, Virginia  
County and State

## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

OTHER: No style

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: WOOD, GLASS, STONE, 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 1.33-acre site of the Cuckoo Elementary School is located approximately five miles south of Mineral, Virginia, and 1 mile east of the village of Cuckoo off Route 33 in Louisa County, Virginia. It is situated on the northeast side of Route 33 and the building is oriented toward the street. The site is relatively open with a somewhat worn grass lawn and minimal overgrown shrubs near the building's perimeter. The property is bordered by a church to the southeast and a residence to the northwest, all loosely bordered by a larger wooded area situated within surrounding cultivated farmland. The site contains a single resource, the c. 1925 vernacular one-story school building, which is a contributing resource. The Cuckoo School retains a relatively high degree of all seven aspects of integrity. It retains a high degree of integrity of location, setting, and association with its use as an African American school at its original location along Jefferson Highway. The property retains the same characteristics as it did historically. The resource also retains a high degree of integrity of design, materials, workmanship, and feeling. The building retains its form, materials, and floor plan. Alumni say that the building overall has not changed much from how it appeared when still functioning as a school. Furthermore, the building retains evidence of its workmanship and materials embodying early twentieth-century vernacular construction methods. As a whole, the building retains the aesthetic and historic components that reflect its history as a small, two-room early twentieth-century African American school. The retention of the physical components associated with the historic property, including integrity of the design and materials, along with setting and location, in particular, help maintain its link to the era of racial segregation in Virginia's public schoolhouses from 1870 to the 1960s.

Cuckoo Elementary School  
Name of Property

Louisa County, Virginia  
County and State

## **Narrative Description**

### **Setting and Landscape**

The Cuckoo School is located approximately five miles south of the town of Mineral, Virginia, and 1 mile east of the village of Cuckoo off Route 33 in Louisa County, Virginia. Situated on the northeast side of Route 33/Jefferson Highway, this 1.33-acre property is loosely encircled by wooded areas, which in turn are surrounded by expansive cultivated farmland, with the building oriented to face the road. The site is roughly bound by Harris Court Drive to the southeast, a wooded area to the northeast, and a driveway of the neighboring property to the northwest. A church, Philippi Christian Church, is located on the neighboring property to the southeast and a residence is located on the neighboring property to the northwest.

The property is accessed by a gravel driveway (Harris Court Drive) on the southeast side of the property, which leads to an informal and lightly graveled parking area at the northeast corner of the site. Otherwise, with the exception of the wooded area along the rear border of the property, the site remains relatively open with a slightly worn grass lawn and minimal overgrown shrubs near the building's perimeter. A few remaining tree stumps indicate that there may have once been a few mature trees on the parcel, but they have since been removed.

### **Description**

#### **School (c. 1925) - Contributing**

This c. 1925 vernacular, one-story, five-bay, T-shaped school building has an uncut stone pier foundation, wood weatherboard siding, and a hipped, standing-seam, metal roof with closed eaves. The façade features a one-bay projecting entry vestibule with a hipped, standing-seam, metal roof. Accessed by concrete steps with a narrow pipe railing on one side, the entrance features double-leaf flush wood doors with a simple flush, wood-frame surround. Two six-over-six, double-hung, wood-sash windows, with a continuous wood sill and continuous wood header between them, flank the entry vestibule on each side. The windows on the northwest side are missing the horizontal muntins, making them appear as if they are a three-over-three configuration, but marks on the vertical muntins indicate that these windows previously matched the six-over-six configuration.

The northwest and southeast elevations each feature two six-over-six, double-hung, wood-sash windows connected by a continuous wood sill and a continuous wood header like the windows on the façade. Each has a single boarded-up window, and glazing and muntins are missing to various degrees. The rear, or northeast, elevation is devoid of any openings.

The building is in poor condition but has been stabilized. The building had a central brick chimney, but it has been disassembled, with the bricks stored on site. The chimney was removed because it had split in half in the attic and the resulting stress it was placing on the framing by



Cuckoo Elementary School  
Name of Property

Louisa County, Virginia  
County and State

leaning against the rafters. Additionally, several of the wood siding boards are missing and many are damaged. Most of the visible damage is along areas of perimeter vegetation. Furthermore, the exterior paint is deteriorating, and there appears to be some water damage along the cornice and above the entry. The stone piers on the foundation are in poor condition with much of the mortar eroding or already missing. The piers have been replaced with concrete block along the rear elevation. The concrete block pier at the northwest corner was replaced recently, while the date of the other replacements is unknown. Underneath the building, the circular sawn floor joists are exposed, and several of them have severe damage from rot. With the replacement of the northwest corner pier, temporary shoring was placed beneath the joists to support the building until it can be properly repaired. Charring and damage visible in the attic and roof framing and on the ceiling were caused by a 1955 fire.

Interior:

The interior floor plan consists of a two-room schoolhouse with an entry vestibule. The vestibule opens to a small entry hall, approximately eight feet by five feet wide, flanked by two small storage rooms that were historically used as cloak rooms. Two doorways (missing doors) lead from the entry into separate, equal-sized classrooms; one is on the northwest side and one is on the southeast side. Both classrooms are open rooms divided by a solid partition wall that has been covered with wallboard, which was added when the church began using the facility for various purposes in the early 1970s. Centered on the partition wall separating the classrooms, a wood stove in each classroom once connected to a brick chimney. The chimney has since been deconstructed and the bricks stored on-site due to the stress it was placing on the framing.

Each classroom, as well as the entry hall, has unpainted tongue-and-groove wood floors and painted double-bead beadboard tongue-and-groove paneling on the walls and ceilings. Modern wallboard has been added to part of the ceiling on each side of the central partition to cover areas damaged by the 1955 fire. Unlike the rest of the spaces, the two cloak rooms remain unfinished. The window trim in the northwest classroom is flush to the wall, while the window trim in the southeast room is surface-mounted, suggesting a possibility that the southeast room was added on at a later date. Other differences between the two schoolrooms include the entrance door height, the flooring, and the chalk tray. The height of the door leading into the northwest classroom is a few inches shorter than the height of the door leading into the southeast room. The direction of the flooring and sizing is different in each room as well. In the northwest room, the flooring runs northeast/southwest, while the flooring in the southeast classroom runs perpendicular to the other room, northwest/southeast. Additionally, a chalk tray remains on the rear portion of the northwest side wall, where the chalkboard used to be located. In the southeast room, there is a surface-mounted horizontal, nominal 2x4-inch board along the rear wall where a chalkboard was historically located.

The attic consists of exposed framing. As a result of the 1955 fire, much of the attic framing, including the hip rafters and common rafters, collar beams, and decking, is charred. Modern

Cuckoo Elementary School

Name of Property

Louisa County, Virginia

County and State

supplementary framing, including rafters and vertical posts, has been added for additional structural support.

Alterations:

While the building has not changed much from its overall historic appearance, there have been a few alterations and modern updates. The most notable change is regarding the window sets on the façade and side elevations. Historically, these were triple-unit window assemblies with three unified sections beneath a shared sill and header (Figure 1). The current configuration retains the flanking windows but replaces the central sash with a solid panel. This change was made during the Period of Significance. On the interior, while there appears to have been a solid wall dividing the two rooms earlier, there was a sliding door partition between the two classrooms when Edna Hackney attended the school (1945-1957) and prior to the 1955 fire. Alumni noted the sliding door was located on each side of the central chimney and opened toward the outer walls and away from the chimney to create one large room. Repairs in the 1970s have converted this back to a solid wall. Alumni also noted that the rear wall of each classroom had a blackboard that extended the entire length of the rear wall.<sup>1</sup> Other alterations include the installation of electricity for lighting in 1950, replacement of the front entry doors at an unknown date, and removal of the interior doors.<sup>2</sup>

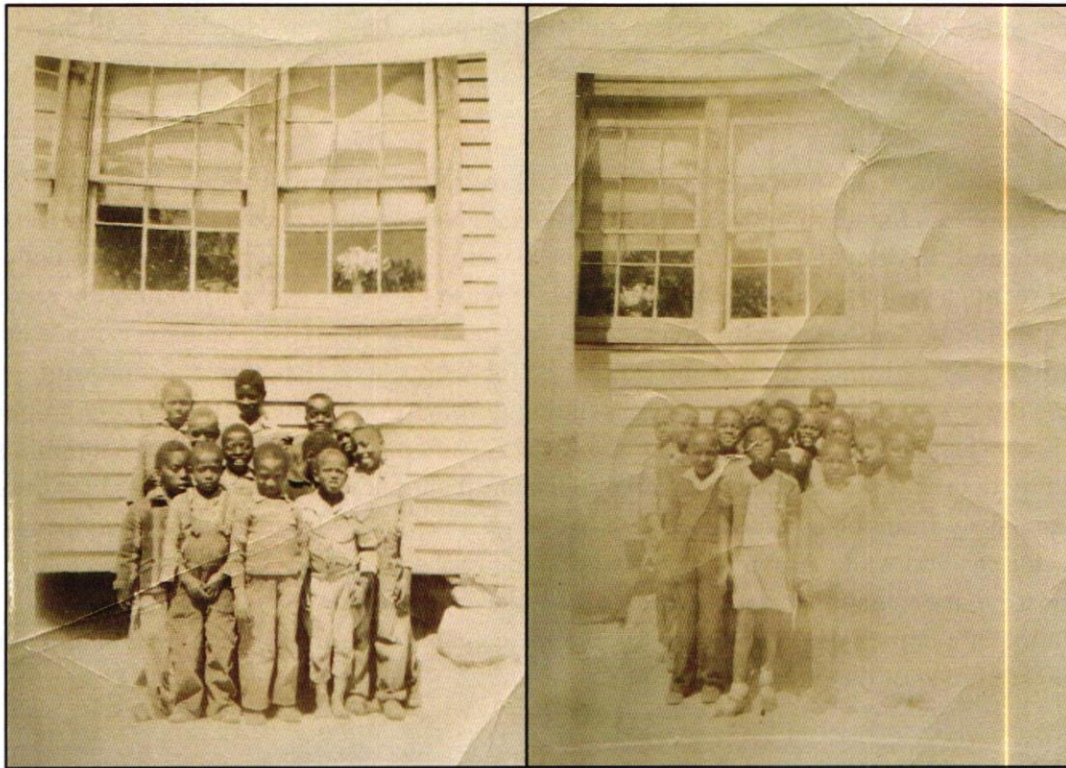
<sup>1</sup> Alumni Group Interview with Jacob Anderson, Doris Tomes, Louise Langhorne, Mary Johnson, Margaret Anderson, and Edna Hackney. Conducted by Jody Lahendro, Alumni Group Responses to Interview Questions, Cuckoo School, Louisa County, June 28, 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Cuckoo School, DHR ID # 054-5479, V-CRIS Architectural Survey Form, Virginia Department of Historic Resources, 2023.



Cuckoo Elementary School  
Name of Property

Louisa County, Virginia  
County and State



*Figure 1: Historic Photos of the Cuckoo School Showing Three Windows in Each Window Unit, Image Courtesy of Alumni Edna Hackney.*

Cuckoo Elementary School  
Name of Property

Louisa County, Virginia  
County and State

### Integrity Analysis

The Cuckoo School retains a relatively high degree of all seven aspects of integrity. It retains a high degree of integrity of location, setting, and association concerning its use as an African American school at its present location along Jefferson Highway. Not only is the building still located in its original location, but the property retains the same characteristics as it did historically. The building is still set within a rural landscape consistent with the original landscape and feeling. In a June 28, 2022, interview with a group of alumni, the former students noted that the grounds around the school historically looked nearly the same as they do today. They noted that the landscape lacked trees, shrubs, planting beds, and most other vegetation beyond the wooded area northeast of the building. The group mentioned that there was not even a flag pole. The only difference identified was that the immediate lawn surrounding the school was dustier due to frequent use as opposed to the fully-covered grass present today.<sup>3</sup> The property remains relatively open with a somewhat worn grass lawn and the wooded area remaining on the northeast edge of the property.

The resource also retains a high degree of integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. While some piers have been replaced with concrete block due to stabilization efforts, it still retains several of its stone piers in the foundation along with the primary materials, such as the wood weatherboard siding, standing-seam metal roof, and wood windows, as well as the interior materials including the wood floors, wood walls, and wood ceiling. Additionally, the building retains its rectangular form and hipped roof. While the building has undergone some minor changes, including changes to the partition between the two classrooms, entry door, and removal of a window in the center of each window group, alumni say that the building overall has not changed much from how looked while functioning as a public school. Furthermore, the building retains evidence of its workmanship as shown by the circular sawn marks on the floor joists, the stone piers, the craftsmanship in the wood windows, and the joinery and other woodworking details, including double-bead beadboard tongue-and-groove interior siding. The retained workmanship in this building demonstrates the construction methods of its time, such as the exterior cladding applied directly to the diagonal wood sheathing, a practice characteristic of the early twentieth century.

As a whole, the building retains the aesthetic and historic components that reflect its history as a small, two-room early twentieth-century African American school. The retention of the physical components associated with the historic property, including integrity of the design and materials, along with setting and location, in particular, help maintain its link to the era of racial segregation in Virginia's public schoolhouses from 1870 to the 1960s until integration. Therefore, the resource also retains integrity of feeling.

---

<sup>3</sup> Alumni Group Interview with Jacob Anderson, Doris Tones, Louise Langhorne, Mary Johnson, Margaret Anderson, and Edna Hackney. Conducted by Jody Lahendro, Alumni Group Responses to Interview Questions, Cuckoo School, Louisa County, June 28, 2022.



Cuckoo Elementary School  
Name of Property

Louisa County, Virginia  
County and State

Inventory

**Jefferson Highway**

**7133 Jefferson Highway**

**054-5479**

*Other DHR Id#:*

*Primary Resource:* **School (Building), Stories 1, Style: Vernacular, Ca 1925**

**Contributing Total: 1**

Cuckoo Elementary School  
Name of Property

Louisa County, Virginia  
County and State

## 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



Cuckoo Elementary School  
Name of Property

Louisa County, Virginia  
County and State

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION

ETHNIC HERITAGE: Black

---

---

---

---

---

**Period of Significance**

1925-1955

---

---

**Significant Dates**

1955: fire closed the school

---

---

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

---

---

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

---

---

**Architect/Builder**

N/A

---

---

Cuckoo Elementary School

Name of Property

Louisa County, Virginia

County and State

**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 Cuckoo Elementary School is a rare surviving two-room schoolhouse in Louisa County Virginia, and the surrounding region. The school was an elementary school which served grades one through seven. The school was constructed in 1925, when most rural schoolhouses for African American students were modest frame buildings with one or two classrooms, and closed as the result of a fire in 1955. The school is locally significant under Criterion A for Education and under Criterion A for Ethnic Heritage: Black, for its association with Black history and culture in rural Louisa County, Virginia, from 1925-1955. Additionally, the school represents an important link to Virginia's era of racial segregation in public education and to the overall use of small one- and two-room schoolhouses from 1870 to the mid-twentieth century. The Period of Significance of the Cuckoo School begins with its construction in 1925 and ends with a fire which resulted in the school closing permanently in 1955. In later years the school building was used by the neighboring Philippi Christian Church for congregation activities. Currently the building is vacant. The Cuckoo School is being nominated under the African American Schools in Virginia Multiple Property Documentation Form and meets the registration requirements established therein.

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

**Criterion A: Ethnic Heritage: Black**

The current Cuckoo School was built on the site of at least two previous schools (pre-1875 and c. 1880) with at least the c. 1880 school also being called the Cuckoo School, representing a longstanding community commitment to the school and the site. The previous c. 1880 school was a log building, with the current, two-room frame school being a significant improvement for the students. The land for the current and previous schools was donated by the Pendleton family from land which was formerly part of their plantation, establishing a direct link between the former enslavers and the descendants of the formerly enslaved. The Pendletons also donated the land for the Philippi Church (located next door to the Cuckoo School) specifically for the Black community. Oral histories, given by former students, describe a school that is largely unchanged from the current building and a school and life experience which was indicative of most rural Black residents in Virginia in the early-to-mid twentieth century. The school was too small for the number of students, and the features and equipment were often inadequate, but the former students uniformly remember the school fondly. Two stoves heated the building (one in each classroom) connected to the single, central chimney. Wood privies were located behind the school, and seven grades were taught in two rooms. Two fifteen-minute recesses allowed students to play numerous traditional games including jumping rope, kickball, dodgeball, hopscotch, jacks, marbles, among others. The community also attended school events at Cuckoo



Cuckoo Elementary School  
Name of Property

Louisa County, Virginia  
County and State

School, including plays, recitals, and concerts. Cuckoo School was an excellent example of the vital role of a longstanding local school for a rural Black community in Virginia before the establishment of the modern, post-segregation public school system.

Additional historic context regarding the association of schools with the experiences of African American life in Virginia during the segregation era is available in the Multiple Property Documentation Form, African American Schools in Virginia.<sup>4</sup>

### **Criterion A: Education**

Formal education for African Americans, both enslaved and free, was rare in Virginia until after the Civil War. The education of enslaved persons was made illegal in Virginia during the antebellum period, particularly after the 1831 Nat Turner Rebellion in Southampton County. As of 1860 it is estimated that only five percent of the enslaved population in the United States was literate.<sup>5</sup> Following the Civil War, Virginia's constitutional convention resulted in the post-Reconstruction 1868 Underwood Constitution, which included a requirement that Virginia establish a public school system and begin construction of public schools to be open for the 1870-71 school year. Additionally, the new system would provide for schools within walking distance of every student. Unsurprisingly, the Underwood Constitution did not prohibit school segregation, and separate Black and White schools were established across Virginia.<sup>6</sup> The result for many areas, and most rural communities, was the construction of one-room, log construction schools, as was built at Cuckoo c. 1880. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, rural schools increased in size to two-and-three room frame schools due to growing enrollments, but with lower investment in Black schools versus White schools. Purpose-built two-room schools (as opposed to additions to one-room schools) often featured a central partition dividing a large interior space into two classrooms, as seen at the Cuckoo School. These "graded schools" split seven grades between the two classrooms.<sup>7</sup> If not for the 1955 fire closing Cuckoo School, it would likely have closed within a few years as a result of pressures related to the equalization era and Civil Rights Movement.

<sup>4</sup> Lena McDonald, Ashlen Stump, Marcus Pollard, "African American Schools in Virginia," Multiple Property Documentation Form (Richmond: Virginia Department of Historic Resources, 2025).

<sup>5</sup> Heather Andrea Williams, *Self-Taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom* (Chapel Hill, NC: North Carolina Press, 2007), 9; Wilma King, *Stolen Childhood: Slave Youth in Nineteenth-Century America* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2011), 97.

<sup>6</sup> W.A. Link, *A Hard Country and a Lonely Place: Schooling, Society, and Reform in Rural Virginia, 1870-1920* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 8; Virginia Constitutional Convention, *Journal of the Constitutional Convention of the State of Virginia: Convened in the City of Richmond, December 3, 1867, by an Order of General Schofield, Dated November 2, 1867, in Pursuance of the Act of Congress of March 23, 1867* (CIS State Constitutional Conventions, Office of the New Nation, 1867), 35.

<sup>7</sup> John Kern, *Thematic Evaluation of County Public School Buildings in Southwest Virginia*, (Virginia Department of Historic Resources: 2000), 5-6.

Cuckoo Elementary School

Name of Property

Louisa County, Virginia

County and State

Additional historic context regarding the history of education and rural schools in Virginia during the segregation era is available in the Multiple Property Documentation Form, *African American Schools in Virginia*.<sup>8</sup>

### **The Pendleton Family**

The Pendleton family was already an established wealthy White farming family when Colonel Henry Pendleton constructed the prominent c. 1819 Cuckoo House, immediately after purchasing the land in 1818. With the establishment of this plantation, the Pendleton family began a multi-generational relationship with the local Black population, which was larger than the local White population before the Civil War. Initially the Pendleton family were typical of the rural landowning wealthy White elites of the antebellum period; Henry Pendleton left an estate of 226 acres and eighteen enslaved persons upon his death in 1822. However, the children and later descendants of Henry Pendleton often chose professions outside farming, particularly medicine: eventually at least eleven members of the family became doctors, with most practicing at Cuckoo, or in Louisa County.<sup>9</sup>

Edmund Pendleton inherited the Cuckoo estate from his father, Henry Pendleton, continuing as a successful plantation owner and greatly expanding the family holdings by the time of his death in 1828. However, two of his brothers began the family tradition of professional careers as doctors: William J. Pendleton and Joseph W. Pendleton, who served the Cuckoo community. Multiple children of Edmund's also pursued professional careers, including Dr. Philip Barbour Pendleton. Philip Pendleton inherited Cuckoo in 1830 and lived in the house until 1907, where he ran a store and served as the local physician, as well as running the plantation. Dr. Eugene Pendleton acquired the ownership of Cuckoo from his siblings in 1910 and served as a community doctor from the estate for the next fifty-two years. Members of the Pendleton family owned the Cuckoo estate through the entire Period of Significance of the Cuckoo School (ca 1925-1955) and through the twentieth century.<sup>10</sup> The Pendleton family gifted the land and a log schoolhouse, located thereon, to the county school board so that it would be a public school and thus committing the county to maintaining and staffing the school.

### **Disciples of Christ, Gilboa Christian Church, Philippi Christian Church**

The Disciples of Christ denomination expanded to Louisa County in the early nineteenth century and was formalized with the organization of the Gilboa Christian Church congregation in 1834. In 1835, Col. Edmund Pendleton, son of Henry Pendleton, the builder of the Cuckoo house, donated an acre of land for a church to be built, just down the road from the current Cuckoo School. This first frame church building served the congregation until a more formal brick Greek Revival Church was constructed in 1857. The bricks were locally made and the mason was Jim

<sup>8</sup> Lena McDonald, Ashlen Stump, Marcus Pollard, "African American Schools in Virginia," Multiple Property Document Form (Richmond: Virginia Department of Historic Resources, 2025).

<sup>9</sup> Ashley M Neville, *Cuckoo National Register Nomination*.

<sup>10</sup> Ashley M Neville, *Cuckoo National Register Nomination*.



Cuckoo Elementary School

Name of Property

Louisa County, Virginia

County and State

Veeney, a Black brick mason.<sup>11</sup> Black members appear to have also attended the church, but were required to stand at the back of the church during services. Eventually, Dr. Philip Barbour Pendleton granted the Black members of the Gilboa Church one-and-a-half acres for the construction of their own church in October of 1861. The church was called Philippi Christian Church (named for Phillip Pendleton) and is located directly east of the current Cuckoo School building.<sup>12</sup> A later deed places the transfer of land to 1887, after the construction of the first Cuckoo School.<sup>13</sup>

### **Cuckoo School**

The first mention of a school for Black students at Cuckoo was in a letter to the Gordonsville Gazette in 1875 by E. Lee B., in which he states that "the negro school seems to be pretty well attended."<sup>14</sup> In 1880, Dr. Philip Barbour Pendleton gifted two acres of land to the Board of School Trustees of Cuckoo District for the purpose of building a public school. The deed states that a schoolhouse was already present on the property, very likely the school mentioned in 1875.<sup>15</sup> While direct mentions of the Cuckoo School are relatively rare in early newspapers, an announcement in 1911 states that "Misses Mary Donnally and Jane Garth have accepted position(s) as assistant teachers at the Cuckoo School..."<sup>16</sup> This was certainly the predecessor to the current school building. A survey of Black education in Louisa County, completed in 1949, lists the current Cuckoo School as being built in 1925 on one acre, and featuring two rooms, serving fifty-six students and owned by the county.<sup>17</sup> Later, the Cuckoo School property, having ended up in private ownership, was deeded from Daisy Brice Cosby to the Trustees of the Cuckoo Colored School in 1936 for twenty-five dollars.<sup>18</sup> Separately, a different "Louisa colored school," supported by the Rosenwald Fund, was announced in 1926 with a total budget of \$5,100.<sup>19</sup>

The Louisa County School Board minutes (beginning in 1938, when they first are available, until 1957, after the fire and closure of the school) provide additional detail to the specific history of the Cuckoo School building itself. The Cuckoo School always had two teachers; in 1938 these were B.D. Ellis and Lillie Anderson.<sup>20</sup> The school board meetings regularly included representatives from Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) linked to many different schools for Black and White students, but there is no record of a PTA for the Cuckoo School during this twenty-year period. Another regular occurrence at school board meetings was an accounting of

<sup>11</sup> Lisa Barker, "Gilboa Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)," *Louisa County Historical Society Magazine*, vol.10, p 66-67.

<sup>12</sup> Sadie Johnson, interview, December 2022; Philippi Christian Church history, 1975.

<sup>13</sup> Louisa County Deed Book 8, p.478, January 5, 1887.

<sup>14</sup> E. Lee B., *Gordonsville Gazette*, vol.2, no. 23, February 4, 1875, p 2.

<sup>15</sup> Louisa County Deed Book 5, p.321-22 August 25, 1880.

<sup>16</sup> *Richmond Virginian*, vol.2, no.194, September 14, 1911, p 3.

<sup>17</sup> Paul Everett Behrens, *A Survey of Negro Education in Louisa County* (Master's Thesis: University of Virginia), June 1949, p 63.

<sup>18</sup> Louisa County Deed Book 53, p.476, August 28, 1936.

<sup>19</sup> "Our Colored Folks," *Greene County Record*, vol.16, no.23, July 29, 1926, p 3.

<sup>20</sup> Lillie Anderson was the mother of Edna Anderson Hockney, one of the alumni interviewed for the oral history.

Cuckoo Elementary School

Name of Property

Louisa County, Virginia

County and State

billings, and the Cuckoo School is listed periodically for firewood, and a few additional entries, including repairs to the well pump, delivery of benches and other non-specific repairs.<sup>21</sup> In December of 1950 there is a fifty-dollar payment for “wiring of Cuckoo Negro School;”<sup>22</sup> after this, payments for electric service appear in the billings. In June of 1954, there was a list of estimated repair costs for schools; the highest was for two hundred and sixty dollars for the Cuckoo School, though it does not specify the repair type.<sup>23</sup> The April 1955 minutes address the fire at the Cuckoo School and a repair estimate of \$1,500-\$2,500. The board declined to repair the school, and the students were bussed to the Z.C. Morton School (formerly the Louisa Training School).<sup>24</sup> The 1950-1955 events occurred during the equalization era in Virginia, when many localities invested substantial sums in schools for Black students in an effort to demonstrate the viability of “separate but equal” school systems.

### **Oral History<sup>25</sup>**

Before the current Cuckoo School was constructed, a previous log building was on the site, next to the Philippi Church, as recalled by Alice Coleman, who was born in 1910 and attended the predecessor to the current Cuckoo School. Coleman recalled that “the land for the church and school was donated to the blacks by Dr. Pendleton and his family.” Alice Coleman graduated seventh grade from the log Cuckoo School and lived her entire life in Louisa County. She was a rare person who bridged multiple generations and periods of time: as a young child she remembers hearing stories of her enslaved grandfather, Alexander Haynes, arriving from Africa, and yet lived to age 102 when she passed in 2013.<sup>26</sup>

The Cuckoo School today looks much as it did when it was active in the early 1950s. Alumni from the late 1940s and early 1950s<sup>27</sup> remember the exterior being largely the same, except for the currently boarded windows and one window being removed in the middle of each side wall, leaving two. The interior had a sliding door partition on one side of the central chimney which divided the space into two classrooms. The partition was originally a solid wall, but was changed c. 1949. The two small rooms abutting the vestibule were used as cloak rooms, one for the boys, one for the girls.

---

<sup>21</sup> Jody Lahendro, “Cuckoo Colored School,” Preliminary Information Form (Richmond: Department of Historic Resources, 2023); Jody Lahendro provided substantial research and analytical support for this nomination.

<sup>22</sup> Louisa County School Board minutes, December 7, 1950.

<sup>23</sup> Louisa County School Board minutes, June 3, 1954.

<sup>24</sup> Louisa County School Board minutes, April 21, 1955.

<sup>25</sup> The best source of information for the Cuckoo School is the collection of oral history interviews completed with alumni of the school. Five of the alumni were born between 1939 and 1947 and attended Cuckoo in the last decade it was open. Alice Coleman was born in 1910 and remembers attending the log building which predated the Cuckoo School. The five alumni of the current Cuckoo School building provided their oral history as a group and their answers were largely delivered together.

<sup>26</sup> “Woman’s History Month & Black History Month: JABA celebrates the life of Alice Coleman,” *Jefferson Area Board for Aging, Inc., JABA E-Newsletter*, March 3, 2021.

<sup>27</sup> Cuckoo School alumni interview, June 28, 2022, completed by Jody Lahendro. Alumni included Jacob Anderson, Doris Tomes, Louise Langhorne, Mary Johnson, Margaret Anderson, Edna Anderson Hackney.



Cuckoo Elementary School  
Name of Property

Louisa County, Virginia  
County and State

The rear interior wall in both classrooms had a large blackboard along the entire wall, with teachers' desks in front; the students faced the blackboard, and the teacher faced the students. The desks were typical single-seat school desks with cast iron feet and sides, a wood seat and wood desktop. They had inkwells (which were not used) and hinged tops with storage below. The "library" was a tall bookcase in the upper grades classroom on the south wall, in the corner. The books were mostly hand-me-downs from White schools. The alumni interviewed did not remember any specific pictures or other wall decorations.

The grades taught at the Cuckoo School were 1<sup>st</sup> through 7<sup>th</sup>, with grades 4<sup>th</sup> through 7<sup>th</sup> in the west classroom and 1<sup>st</sup> through 3<sup>rd</sup> in the east classroom. Older boys started the fire each day, and had some janitorial tasks, including cleaning the erasers and pumping water from the well. The well was located where there is currently a concrete cap. One student remembered a bucket and rope was used before the pump was installed. Water was pumped into a container and brought into the school and kids brought or made their own cups. Wood for the fire consisted of slabs stored under the school along with wood gathered from the woods behind the school. The privies were enclosed wood frame buildings located at the edge of the woods behind the school. Girls used a "snake stick" to bang on the privy to scare away snakes before entering.

Recess was outside for fifteen minutes during the morning and afternoon sessions; there was also a fifteen-minute break for lunch. Students brought bagged lunches, while a few students who lived close by went home for lunch. Games at recess included Hide & Go Seek, jumping rope, baseball, kickball, dodgeball, hopscotch, jacks, marbles and volleyball. When the students played against another school their rivals would yell in a high, taunting voice, "cuckoooo, cuckoooo, cuckoooo." Teachers used a handbell to signal the students to come in from recess. The land around the school looked much as it does now, with no formal plantings, and the woods behind. The ground was more dirt and less grass as a result of all the playing; the only equipment was the volleyball net.

The teachers during this period were Lillie Anderson for the lower grades, and Rev. B.D. Ellis for the upper grades; later Queen Michie Jackson taught the upper grades. Mrs. Alberta Guy was a Black woman, who served as the superintendent of Black schools for Louisa County. When the students misbehaved, discipline included standing in the corner, a hand being paddled, collecting firewood from the woods, writing many times "I will not...", and notes home to parents. Alumni uniformly remember the Cuckoo School fondly with no bad memories. Particularly good memories included May Day, recitals in class, hearing the bell ring for recess and homemade bean and biscuit lunches from home. By the 1950s, most students rode the bus to school. There were also separate school events at Cuckoo including Christmas plays, recitals and concerts. Alumni felt blessed to attend Cuckoo and wished every child could have their formative years in a school and community like Cuckoo.

Cuckoo Elementary School  
Name of Property

Louisa County, Virginia  
County and State

## Black Education in Louisa County

### *Early History*

Records for early Black education in Louisa County are limited, particularly for pre-twentieth century history, and school records date to 1930. The 1949 survey of Black education in Louisa County used a combination of oral history and reports from Alice M. Fountaine (retired Black teacher) and Selda G. Morton (retired county supervisor) to offer a limited picture of this early period. There were few schools for Black children, and these consisted largely of log buildings, churches and private homes. Equipment and seating were limited or nonexistent. Teachers were generally White, since education (and required training) was so limited for Black residents. Some Black students had to walk distances as long as eight to ten miles to the nearest school, and many younger children were unable to complete the distance. Potentially the first Black school in Louisa County, located in the Louisa Court House District, before the public school system was established, was taught by Julia Shaw, who was described as being from the "New England States."<sup>28</sup> A document titled "Proposed African American schools" from the Letters of the Freeman's Bureau at Louisa Court offers further documentation of at least one school for Black students prior to 1870. The document lists eight proposed schools in eight different districts of Louisa County. The Louisa County Court House School is the only one documented as having operated.<sup>29</sup> For this school, the Black residents had to provide the teaching facility and the fuel for the fire, and boarding was provided for the teacher in local homes.<sup>30</sup> Such arrangements were common during the 1860s-1870s.

In response to the 1870 Virginia constitution's new requirement that counties establish public school systems, Louisa County began to slowly provide support for Black education, on a very limited basis. The first documented county-funded school for Black students was a two-room frame school built at Louisa Court House in 1883. Even by 1916, of the forty-eight schools in the county, only ten were owned by the County School Board.<sup>31</sup>

A February 28, 1885 monthly report by William Jackson Walton, Superintendent for Louisa County Schools, listed several details including the number of schools (broken down by race and district), the total number of pupils for each district and the number and race of teachers. At this time there were four districts: 1. Green Spring, 2. Court House, 3. Cuckoo, 4. Jackson. For all four districts there were 41 White schools and 39 Black schools. However, the White schools served 1,458 students, while the Black schools served 2,641 students, representing a much worse ratio of students to classroom space. Additionally, there were only sixty teachers listed on the report, resulting in an abysmal ration of 68 students per teacher. This was mitigated by the fact that schools had much lower average daily attendance than the total number of students. There

<sup>28</sup> *A Survey of Negro Education in Louisa County*, 1949, p 12-13.

<sup>29</sup> "Proposed African American Schools," *Piedmont Virginia Digital History: The Land Between the Rivers*, accessed April 30, 2025, <https://www.piedmontvahistory.org/archives14/items/show/225>.

<sup>30</sup> *A Survey of Negro Education in Louisa County*, 1949, p 12-13.

<sup>31</sup> *A Survey of Negro Education in Louisa County*, 1949, p 13-16.



Cuckoo Elementary School  
Name of Property

Louisa County, Virginia  
County and State

were more female teachers than male teachers, and only 10% of the teachers were Black.<sup>32</sup> With only 48 schools listed in the county in 1916, it is likely that there was substantial consolidation in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth century timeframe. Additionally, so many schools for Black students existing in 1885 implies that, while documenting and managing these schools, the county was not funding them.

Often Black residents were forced to fund and establish their own schools, even in the twentieth century. The Mt. Garland community raised funds from its members, purchased half an acre and built a private two-room secondary school in 1904, which was the first in the county to offer secondary courses: Rhetoric, Algebra, Civil Government, Astronomy and General History. The Mt. Garland School was a "pay school" costing one dollar per month per student. Unlike county-provided schools, Mt. Garland had blackboards, maps, desks and a clock.<sup>33</sup> Public secondary education was established in the county school system in 1921, but only in a "Negro free school" with three teachers, six subjects at the high school level, and, initially, five students. With consolidation for the county ramping up in 1933, the school board finally offered partial funding for a single bus and driver for student transportation.<sup>34</sup>

#### *Status of Black Louisa County Schools in the Mid-Twentieth Century*

The status of general school funding in Louisa County, and the comparative state of Black versus White schools around the time of the closing of the Cuckoo School, particularly as it related to effort towards equalization, was a regular issue at school board meetings during the 1950s. The closing of the Cuckoo School occurred at a pivotal transition point for Louisa County, and the Commonwealth of Virginia in general, as school boards were faced with mandates for equalizing Black schools. A legal notice calling for proposals for a new "...central high school for Negroes of Louisa County..." was posted in November of 1950.<sup>35</sup> However, two years later, a new White elementary school was being constructed (Apple Grove) to replace a condemned frame building, while all Black elementary students were still being educated in one-to-two room frame buildings well past the need for replacement. At the same time, the frame buildings of the former Louisa Training School were being used to allow the county to "close two of the 16 small Negro elementary school units now in operation." These sixteen small school units served 1,178 Black elementary students at the time, while the 1,106 White elementary students were served by five brick or masonry schools.<sup>36</sup> The discrepancies between the educational opportunities of Black and White students were a long-term reality that the Louisa County School Board would not address in many cases. In 1956, the school board transferred a fourth-grade teacher from Mineral to Louisa Elementary Schools to address overcrowding, but when informed of overcrowding at

<sup>32</sup> William Jackson Walton, "Louisa County Schools 1884," *Piedmont Virginia Digital History: The Land Between the Rivers*, accessed April 30, 2025, <https://www.piedmontvahistory.org/archives14/items/show/229>.

<sup>33</sup> *A Survey of Negro Education in Louisa County*, 1949, p 13-16.

<sup>34</sup> *A Survey of Negro Education in Louisa County*, 1949, p 17-18.

<sup>35</sup> "Legal Notices: Notice to Contractors," *The Roanoke Times*, November 1, 1950, p 22.

<sup>36</sup> Larry Gould, "Louisa County in Midst of \$500,000 Building Program," *Richmond News Leader*, December 11, 1952, p 30.



Cuckoo Elementary School

Name of Property

Louisa County, Virginia

County and State

the Black Louisa and Z.C. Morton Elementary Schools, and low enrollment at other Black schools, no action was taken.<sup>37</sup>

The 1949 survey of Black education in Louisa County revealed a good deal about the condition and features of Black schools at that time. There were twenty-five school buildings serving Black students: four of them formed the Louisa Training School at Louisa Court House; of the remaining twenty-one, there were two three-room schools, five two-room schools and fourteen one-room schools, all of frame construction. Of these, nine were built before 1930, including Cuckoo School. Two-room buildings, such as Cuckoo, could have one or two classrooms; the second room was sometimes used as a lunch or activity room. A majority of the White schools had indoor plumbing and electricity, versus none of the Black schools having indoor plumbing, and less than half with electricity. All of the Black schools at that time were listed as overcapacity, with enrollment often exceeding thirty-five students per classroom, and most of the actual physical seating in poor condition. None of the Black schools had auditoriums, though some had sliding doors which could be opened between two classrooms to create an assembly room (this was apparently a retrofit at the Cuckoo School). In the Black community in particular, school buildings often served additional uses, including for Sunday School, lodge meeting hall, or other community meetings. Another stark difference between Black and White schools was janitorial service: none of the Black schools had this service, while all but one White school did. And, more broadly, the overall funding for Black schools, the number of teachers, and all other metrics trailed those of White schools in Louisa County.<sup>38</sup>

#### *Extant Early Black schools in Louisa County*

There are only a few surviving former Black schools documented in Louisa County. Located on the west side of Route 700, two miles northeast of the intersection with Route 618, is the former Louisa County Elementary School, also known as the Old School House (VDHR # 054-0413). Oral history relates that this frame-built school opened in 1916 and operated until the 1940s. Survey would be needed to confirm that it is still extant.

Two other documented early Black schools are both Rosenwald schools, unlike the Cuckoo School. The first is the Shady Grove School (VDHR # 054-0099; 012-5041) located at 2940 Three Chopt Road and constructed c. 1925. Listed on the National Register under the Rosenwald Schools in Virginia MPD, this school is a frame construction, "one-teacher type" schoolhouse with a single classroom and in good condition. The second Rosenwald school, was known as the Louisa Training School (VDHR # 254-5008; 012-5041), constructed c. 1926 and located at 121 West Street. This frame construction school, now an apartment building, was a single-story, four-teacher school and remains in good condition.

*The African American Schools of Louisa County* is a story map created to trace the extant and lost Black schools in the county. The site identifies 26 African American schools that existed at some point. Besides the Cuckoo School (and the three documented schools above), there are at

<sup>37</sup> "Louisa Board Acts To Relieve Crowded Conditions at Schools," *The Daily Progress*, September 21, 1956, p 2.

<sup>38</sup> *A Survey of Negro Education in Louisa County*, 1949, p 52-53, 62-63, 67-69, 76-77, 79.



Cuckoo Elementary School  
Name of Property

Louisa County, Virginia  
County and State

least four additional extant historic Black Schools: Spreaded Oak School, Shannon Hill School, Rising Sun School (now a community center), Mt. Garland School (now a church).<sup>39</sup>

### Registration Requirements

The Cuckoo Elementary School meets the registration requirements of Property Type 2: Privately-/Publicly-Built Schools, c. 1902-c. 1931 as developed in the African American Schools in Virginia Multiple Property Document (MPD). Within this category, the purpose-built Cuckoo School is classified as Subtype A, as the building's design did not follow a standardized plan. As with many schools in this group, Cuckoo is a rural school featuring a modest two-room layout and frame construction. Ubiquitous with nearly all of these schools were large windows for light, a chimney for a heating stove and a prominent main entry. This school formerly had sets of three windows, which were altered to their current configuration during the Period of Significance. Electricity in rural Black schools during this period was rare, and the Cuckoo School only received electrical service in 1950, towards the end of its time as a school. Another common element of the daily experience at these schools, and at Cuckoo as well, was the use of privies and the lack of indoor plumbing. A "projecting central bay" or an "entry vestibule" began to be more common in schools starting in this period, and the Cuckoo School is a prominent example of this trend. The second classroom is also more common in this period than in the late-nineteenth century, as is the presence of cloak rooms. Common interior finishes were tongue-and-groove flooring, double-hung wood sash windows and beadboard wall coverings, all seen in the Cuckoo School. The hipped roof with overhanging eaves and standing seam metal cladding were also typical features.

The Cuckoo Elementary School retains most of the elements which identify it so clearly as a Privately-/Publicly-Built Black School, c. 1902-c. 1931. The school retains strong architectural integrity of design, workmanship, materials and floor plan, with only the ceiling and the dividing wall being the areas of notable change. The school is in its original location and the rural highway setting next door to the Philippi Church is unchanged. The distinctive entry, with paired coat closets, is virtually unchanged. The classrooms retain their historic wood floors and double beadboard wall finishes, along with many original windows. The ceiling is a mixture of historic wood paneling and plaster board, as a result of the 1955 fire. The wall dividing the two classrooms is in the same location as the original moveable room divider, but is clad in modern plaster board. With its intact representative features, the Cuckoo Elementary School meets the registration requirements of the MPD under Criterion A in the areas of Ethnic Heritage: African American as well as Education.

---

<sup>39</sup> Katelyn Coughlan, <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/45485b4829234e41baea8108372f1a20>

Cuckoo Elementary School  
Name of Property

Louisa County, Virginia  
County and State

---

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

*A Survey of Negro Education in Louisa County*, 1949.

Anderson, Jacob; Doris Tomes; Louise Langhorne; Mary Johnson; Margaret Anderson; Edna Anderson Hackney, interview, June 28, 2022. Interview conducted by Jody Lahendro.

Ashley M Neville, *Cuckoo National Register Nomination*.

Anderson, Jacob, Doris Tomes, Louise Langhorne, Mary Johnson, Margaret Anderson, and Edna Hackney. Alumni Group Responses to Interview Questions. Interview by Jody Lahendro, June 28, 2022.

B., E. Lee. *Gordonsville Gazette* 2, no. 2 (February 4, 1875): 2.

Barker, Lisa. "Gilboa Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)." *Louisa County Historical Society Magazine*, n.d.

Behrens, Paul Everett. "A Survey of Negro Education in Louisa County." Master's Thesis, University of Virginia, 1949.

Coughlan, Katelyn, <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/45485b4829234e41baea8108372f1a20>

"Cuckoo School, DHR ID # 054-5479, V-CRIS Architectural Survey Form." Virginia Department of Historic Resources, 2023.

Gould, Larry. "Louisa County in Midst of \$500,000 Building Program." *Richmond News Leader*, December 11, 1952.

Jackson, William Walton, "Louisa County Schools 1884," *Piedmont Virginia Digital History: The Land Between the Rivers*, accessed April 30, 2025, <https://www.piedmontvahistory.org/archives14/items/show/229>.

Johnson, Sadie, interview, December 2022. Interview conducted by Sylvia Anderson.

Kern, John. "Thematic Evaluation of County Public School Buildings in Southwest Virginia." *Virginia Department of Historic Resources*, October 2000, 20.

King, Wilma. *Stolen Childhood: Slave Youth in Nineteenth-Century America*. 2nd ed. Blacks in the Diaspora. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2011.



Cuckoo Elementary School  
Name of Property

Louisa County, Virginia  
County and State

Lahendro, Jody. "Cuckoo Colored School: Preliminary Information Form." Richmond: Department of Historic Resources, 2023.

Link, William A. *A Hard Country and a Lonely Place: Schooling, Society, and Reform in Rural Virginia, 1870-1920*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1986.

Louisa County Deed Book 5, p.321-22 August 25, 1880.

Louisa County Deed Book 8, p.478, January 5, 1887.

Louisa County Deed Book 53, p.476, August 28, 1936.

Louisa County School Board minutes, 1938-1957.

McDonald, Lena, Ashlen Stump, and Marcus Pollard. "'African American Schools in Virginia', Multiple Property Document." Richmond: Department of Historic Resources, 2025.

"Our Colored Folks." *Greene County Record* 16, no. 23 (July 29, 1926): 3.

"Philippi Christian Church History," 1975.

"Proposed African American Schools," *Piedmont Virginia Digital History: The Land Between the Rivers*, accessed April 30, 2025,  
<https://www.piedmontvahistory.org/archives14/items/show/225>.

*Richmond Virginian* 2, no. 194 (September 14, 1911): 3.

*The Daily Progress*. "Louisa Board Acts to Relieve Crowded Conditions at Schools." September 21, 1956.

*The Roanoke Times*. "Legal Notices: Notice to Contractors." November 1, 1950.

Virginia Constitutional Convention, *Journal of the Constitutional Convention of the State of Virginia: Convened in the City of Richmond, December 3, 1867, by an Order of General Schofield, Dated November 2, 1867, in Pursuance of the Act of Congress of March 23, 1867* (CIS State Constitutional Conventions, Office of the New Nation, 1867), 35.

Williams, Heather A. *Self-Taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom*. The John Hope Franklin Series in African American History and Culture. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007.

Cuckoo Elementary School

Name of Property

Louisa County, Virginia

County and State

"Woman's History Month & Black History Month: JABA celebrates the life of Alice Coleman," Jefferson Area Board for Aging, Inc., JABA E-Newsletter. (2021, March 3).

**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  
☐ University  
☐ Other

Name of repository: Virginia Department of Historic Resources

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** DHR # 054-5479

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 1.33

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: 37.946472 Longitude: -77.891019

2. Latitude: Longitude:

3. Latitude: Longitude:

4. Latitude: Longitude:



Cuckoo Elementary School  
Name of Property

Louisa County, Virginia  
County and State

**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:
4. Zone:	Easting :	Northing:

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

The site of the Cuckoo School is located on a rectangular parcel which faces Jefferson Highway (Route 33) to the south. The 1.33-acre site is bound by Jefferson Highway to the south, a residence to the west, woods to the north and the Philippi Christian Church (which owns the school building) to the east. The Cuckoo School parcel does not have an address; the parcel number is #72 66. The Philippi Christian Church next door owns the Cuckoo School and the church address is also used for the Cuckoo School. The true and correct historic boundary is delineated on the attached Sketch Map.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The Cuckoo School boundary includes all of the property historically associated with the school, which has occupied the site since 1925. The boundary includes the single parcel associated with the school and is clearly defined by Jefferson Highway (Route 33) to the south, woods to the north, and two separate properties to the west and east. The property's setting and the only known associated extant resource are included within the boundary.

Cuckoo Elementary School  
Name of Property

Louisa County, Virginia  
County and State

### 11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Marcus Pollard; Victoria Leonard  
organization: Commonwealth Preservation Group  
street & number: 536 W 35<sup>th</sup> St  
city or town: Norfolk state: VA zip code: 23508  
e-mail: marcus@commonwealthpreservationgroup.com  
telephone: 757-923-1900  
date: \_\_\_\_\_

### 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.)

### 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: Cuckoo School

City or Vicinity: Mineral

County: Louisa County

State: Virginia

Photographer: Marcus Pollard

Date Photographed: September 10, 2024



Cuckoo Elementary School  
Name of Property

Louisa County, Virginia  
County and State

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

Photo Number of 20	Description	Camera Direction	Date	Photographer
1	Façade/southwest elevation	NE	9/10/24	MP
2	Southeast oblique, corner of façade and southeast elevation	N	9/10/24	MP
3	Northeast oblique, corner of southeast elevation and rear elevation	W	9/10/24	MP
4	Northwest elevation	SE	9/10/24	MP
5	Stone pier foundation detail at the front/west corner	E	9/10/24	MP
6	West oblique, view towards the façade and northwest elevation	E	9/10/24	MP
7	View of the front door/interior from the front steps	NE	9/10/24	MP
8	Interior, entry vestibule, view into front storage closet/coatroom (northwest side)	W	9/10/24	MP
9	Interior, overall view of the northwesternmost classroom, view toward the rear	N	9/10/24	MP
10	Interior, overall view of the northwesternmost classroom, view toward the front	SW	9/10/24	MP
11	Interior, overall view of the northwesternmost classroom, view toward the classroom entrance, stove, and dividing wall between the classrooms	SE	9/10/24	MP
12	Interior, northwesternmost classroom, beadboard wall and chalk tray detail	N	9/10/24	MP
13	Interior, northwesternmost classroom, beadboard ceiling detail	SE	9/10/24	MP
14	Interior, overall view of the southeasternmost classroom, view toward the rear	NE	9/10/24	MP
15	Interior, overall view of the southeasternmost classroom, view toward the front	S	9/10/24	MP
16	Interior, southeasternmost classroom, beadboard ceiling detail	SE	9/10/24	MP

Cuckoo Elementary School  
Name of Property

Louisa County, Virginia  
County and State

17	Interior, entry vestibule, view into front storage closet/coatroom (southeast side)	E	9/10/24	MP
18	Interior, attic	SE	9/10/24	MP
19	Overall view of the site	SE	9/10/24	MP
20	Overall view of the site	NW	9/10/24	MP

### Embedded Images Log

Figure No.	Caption

### Historic Images Log

Figure No.	Caption
1	Figure 2: Historic Photos of the Cuckoo School Showing Three Windows in Each Window Unit, Image Courtesy of Alumni Edna Hackney.

**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.