

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

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Mars Hill School

Mars Hill, Madison County, MD0253, Listed 05/31/2018

Nomination by Heather M. Slane & Cheri Szcodronski, hmwPreservation

Photographs by Heather M. Slane, September 2017



North and west facades, exterior oblique, facing southeast



Classroom interior, facing northwest

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: Mars Hill School

Other names/site number: Anderson Elementary School

Name of related multiple property listing:
Rosenwald Schools in North Carolina

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

2. Location

Street & number: 225 Mount Olive Drive

City or town: Mars Hill State: NC County: Madison

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

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

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

 national statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A B C D

Signature of certifying official/Title:

Date

North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural 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

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

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

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(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 ☐

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	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.)

WORK IN PROGRESS

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

OTHER – two-teacher Rosenwald school, plan no. 20

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property:

FOUNDATION – brick, stucco

WALLS – wood – weatherboard

ROOF – 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.)

Narrative Description

Mars Hill School is located in a rural area in the southeast corner of Madison County near the Buncombe County line. It stands approximately one-and-a-half miles southeast of Mars Hill and eight miles east of Marshall, the county seat of Madison County. The school stands on the east side of Mount Olive Drive, a dead end road, approximately one-quarter of a mile south of the intersection with Long Ridge Road.

Located at the southwest corner of an irregularly shaped 0.77-acre parcel, the building is immediately adjacent to Mount Olive Drive, which is paved at the north end, but becomes a gravel road west and south of the school. This part of the county is heavily wooded with small tracts cleared for residences and churches, including along Mount Olive Drive with a residential property just north of the school. The school sited in the southwest corner of a heavily wooded lot and surrounded by mature trees. The site has been cleared of trees only in the area immediately surrounding the school and to create a small paved parking area north of the school. In addition to being wooded, the site slopes down significantly

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to the east, just beyond the school, reinforcing the physical isolation of the school. The change in graded also results in greater exposure of the foundation on the north and east elevations.

Mars Hill School was constructed as a two-room, frame Rosenwald school, built in 1928 following a local modification of Floor Plan No. 20 for a "Two Teacher Community School to Face East or West Only" from the Rosenwald Fund's *Community Schools Plans, Bulletin No. 3*. The school plan was rotated 180 degrees with the two classrooms arranged end-to-end to form the main block of the building on the west side, their windows facing the road, and the projecting cloakrooms built on the rear (east) elevation. The moveable partition between the classrooms was removed in the 1970s to create a single open space. In lieu of the standard industrial room flanked by entrance vestibules and cloakrooms prescribed by Floor Plan No 20, the north and south classrooms were accessed via doors on the north and west elevations respectively. On the east elevation, a single door from each classroom opened to what appears to have been an open porch flanked by cloakrooms, constructed soon after the school was built, all several steps below the floor level of the classrooms and sheltered by a continuous shed roof.

Exterior Description

The one-story, side-gabled building features a brick pier foundation with poured concrete curtain wall, which has been parged as part of the recent renovations. It has German-profile weatherboards, rectangular louvered wood vents in the gables, a c. 2010 metal roof (replacing the original 5V metal roof) with exposed rafter tails, and an interior brick chimney on the rear (east) elevation.

The façade (west elevation) features two groups of five nine-over-nine wood-sash windows, replacement windows with fixed interior and exterior muntin grids that replicate a traditional profile and flat, square-edged wood surrounds, both of which match the original windows and trim.¹ A replacement five-panel wood door on the south end of the façade matches the original exterior doors and has a concrete landing with a concrete accessibility ramp to the south and a short flight of wood steps to the north, both of which have wood railings. The north elevation has a replacement five-panel wood door on its west end with a shallow drip cap and a modern wood stair that replaced an earlier wood stair in that location and a single six-over-six wood-sash window near the center of the elevation. The south elevation has a single six-over-six wood-sash window near its west end.

On the east elevation, a shed-roofed frame wing, constructed c. 2010 replaced an earlier wing on the same footprint that had become significantly deteriorated. Photographs of the earlier wing show rooms on the north and south ends of the wing, each with weatherboards on three sides and the two connected by a third room in the center, all under a continuous shed-roof and several steps below the floor level of the classrooms. Alumni from the 1950s remember an enclosed room between the cloakrooms though the presence of siding on three sides of the cloakrooms indicates that there was likely originally an open porch between the rooms. The current reconstruction replicates the 1950s appearance of the wing. It has an exposed concrete block foundation, German-profile weatherboards, and a modern metal roof with exposed rafter tails. Paired windows on the north and south ends of the east elevation align

¹ Original doors and windows were removed when the building was converted to a tobacco barn. The design of replacement doors and windows is based on documentary evidence.

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with the former cloakrooms and there is a group of four windows in the center, where the enclosed porch was. The north and south elevations of the shed-roofed wing are without fenestration. All windows are six-over-six wood-sash windows with flatboard wood surrounds. Plywood doors access the crawlspace on the east elevations of the main building and the shed-roofed wing.

Interior Description

Many interior finishes were removed or deteriorated when the school was closed and subsequently converted to a community center in the 1970s and a tobacco barn by the 1980s. However, original wood floors in the two classrooms remain, except along the west one-fourth of the building and at the southeast end where the floor was significantly deteriorated when windows were removed and the roof began to leak. A moveable partition between the two classrooms folded back into the east and west walls, but was removed after the school closed to create a single open space. Original beaded board sheathing remains on the north wall, but all other wall and ceiling finishes have been removed, exposing the framing. Frame partition walls in the northeast corner of the building, constructed in the 1950s, created a principal's office and closet, but were removed in the 1970s. A brick chimney centered on the east wall served the two wood (and later coal) stoves in the building. A c. 1950 stage on the south end, as well as all original chalkboards and interior trim have been removed. Historically, door openings on the east wall opened to the shed-roofed wing, but the north opening has been enclosed.

The shed-roofed wing was modified after 1955 with the enclosure of the open porch to create an arts and crafts room and had partially collapsed after the closure of the school in 1965, but was reconstructed c. 2010.² The reconstructed wing, built on the same footprint as the original, is flush with the floor level of the classrooms. It has an open space in the center and is framed to include bathrooms in the former cloakroom spaces at the north and south ends of the wing. Currently unfinished, the space has plywood flooring and exposed modern framing throughout, with flush wood sheathing on the west wall, adjacent to the classrooms.

Coal Shed

Contributing Building

late-1950s

Located immediately south of the school is a small front-gabled, concrete block coal shed that is one-bay square. The building has a poured concrete foundation, an exposed concrete block exterior with flush wood boards in the gable, a modern metal roof with exposed rafter tails, and an entrance on the west elevation, but no door. The interior of the building has a dirt floor, exposed concrete block walls, and exposed roof framing. Alumni remember the building as a coal shed, present by the late 1950s.³

Integrity Statement

² Personal interview with alumni (Martha Koon Gardenlight, Sarah Roland Weston Hart, Omar McClain, Charity Ray, Fatimiah R. Shabazz, and Oralene Graves Simmons) by Heather Wagner Slane and Cheri LaFlamme Szcodronski, September 14, 2017, (hereafter referred to as Interview with alumni, 2017).

³ Interview with alumni, 2017.

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Mars Hill School retains integrity of location, setting, design, feeling, and association. Located on its original site, the two-acre site has been reduced to .77-acres, but retains its rural setting and context with wooded areas to the east, south, and west, and low-density residential development to its north.

Alterations to the Rosenwald school that post-date the period of significance include the installation of a metal roof, the replacement of the exterior steps at the north entrance, the installation of an accessible ramp and replacement steps at the west entrance, the in-kind replacement of missing windows and doors (removed after the school closed), and the reconstruction of the shed-roofed wing on the east elevation. Interior material alterations include the removal of the partition and wall between the classrooms, and the loss of door, window, and blackboard trim, as well as some of the original wall and ceiling beadboard. However, the overall massing and layout remains intact along with the original weatherboard-covered exterior. Despite material alterations, the school retains sufficient integrity of form and design to convey the property's historic feeling and association.

General Statement of Archaeological Potential

The school is closely related to the surrounding environment and landscape. Archaeological remains, such as trash deposits, privy features, and other structural remains which may be present, can provide information valuable to the understanding and interpretation of the Bladen County Training School. Information concerning institutional culture and African American identity, as well as the spatial organization of outdoor activities and the character of daily life at the school, can be obtained from the archaeological record. Therefore, archaeological remains may well be an important component of the significance of the school. At this time no investigation has been done to discover these remains, but it is likely that they exist, and this should be considered in any development of the property.

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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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION

ETHNIC HERITAGE – AFRICAN AMERICAN

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Period of Significance

1928-1965

Significant Dates

1928

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

African American

Architect/Builder

Roberson, S. M.⁴

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.)

Mars Hill School meets National Register Criterion A at the local level for Education and African American Ethnic Heritage. It is significant for its association with African American education in Madison County from 1928 until 1965. It was the only school in the county financed and constructed with the assistance of the Rosenwald Fund, and one of only two Rosenwald School known to be extant in the westernmost counties of North Carolina. Mars Hill

⁴ Alternate spellings include Robertson and Robinson.

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School served elementary school students in grades one through eight in Mars Hill, Marshall, and parts of Yancey County to the east. The period of significance extends from 1928, when the school was constructed, to 1965, when the school was closed due to desegregation and students were integrated to other schools in Madison County. It is a modified example of Floor Plan No. 20 from Samuel L. Smith's *Community School Plan, Bulletin No. 3*. Despite alterations and a loss of material integrity largely due to changed use and deterioration, the school retains distinctive characteristics of the two-teacher school plan and building form.

The historic and architectural context for the Mars Hill School is provided in the related Multiple Property Documentation Form "Rosenwald Schools in North Carolina," context pages E3-51, "The Rosenwald School Building Program in North Carolina, 1915-1932." The school building falls under property type Rosenwald School Subtype II, pages F52-55, and meets the registration requirements for the school subtype, pages F55-57. Specifically, the school was built between 1915 and 1932 utilizing funds provided by the Julius Rosenwald Fund and retains its original location in a rural setting. The school retains its distinctive architecture through its side gabled form, original frame construction and weatherboard cladding, and replacement nine-over-nine windows similar to the original windows.

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

History of Mars Hill School

Madison County was established in 1851 from Buncombe and Yancey counties and is named for President James Madison with Marshall incorporated as the county seat in 1863. It is a mountainous county located in western North Carolina, bounded by Tennessee to the north, Haywood County to the west, Buncombe County to the south, and Yancey County to the east with the French Broad River flowing northwest through the county. Although the county benefitted from railroads and a few manufacturing plants, its economy was primarily agricultural and produced beef cattle, lumber and wood products, tobacco, corn, wheat, rye, potatoes, hay, and garden vegetables in the early twentieth century. By 1927, the county had only three one-teacher schools for African American children, one of which was located in Mars Hill, a small community in the southeastern part of the county, approximately twenty miles north of Asheville.⁵

⁵ Homer Henry, "The Development of Public Education in Madison County," Master's thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1927, North Carolina Collection, Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, Chapel Hill, NC, ii, 1-15; Robert Blair Vocci, "Madison County," *Encyclopedia of North Carolina*, edited by William S. Powell, <http://www.ncpedia.org/geography/madison> (accessed September 2017). Note: the other two African American schools were located in Hot Springs and Marshall.

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The first school for African American children in Mars Hill was the one-room Long Ridge School, built in 1905.⁶ In 1925, the Madison County Board of Education directed Superintendent C.M. Blankenship to “write the director of the Rosenwald Fund for information etc. relative to securing aid for the building of a colored school at Mars Hill.”⁷ Two years later, they secured an additional acre from J.M. Rice to meet the two-acre requirement of the Rosenwald Fund.⁸ In 1928, Superintendent Blankenship requested plans and funding to add a second room to the existing building.⁹ William F. Credle, Supervisor of the Rosenwald Fund in North Carolina, sent Blankenship all three of the Fund’s two-teacher plans, and notified him that the Fund could only assist with additions on schools previously funded by a Rosenwald grant.¹⁰ Since the Long Branch School was not built with Rosenwald funds, the school board elected to demolish it and instead build a new school, in order to receive the funding.¹¹

Mars Hill School was completed in September 1928 at a total cost of \$2,093, of which the school board contributed \$1,143. The Rosenwald Fund contributed the usual \$500 for a two-room school, plus an additional \$250 because by this time, the Fund offered one-and-a-half times the usual grant amount to the first school requesting aid in each county. According to oral tradition, John Ferguson, a local African American gentleman, gave the \$200 required from the community to match the Rosenwald grant.¹²

The school board selected S.M. Roberson to serve as the builder and used a modified version of “Floor Plan No. 20, Two Teacher Community School, to face east or west only” from S.L. Smith’s *Community School Plans, Bulletin No. 3*. Initially, the school included only the two classrooms, with entrances on the north and west elevations, and without the cloakrooms or industrial room.¹³ However, two small rooms were added to the east elevation, likely within several months of the school’s completion, with interior and exterior finishes matching those of the classrooms. Cloakrooms were an important part of the Rosenwald plans; Rosenwald was

⁶ Interview with alumni, 2017; Madison County Board of Education Minutes, June 5, 1905, Volumes 1-4, 1883-1939 & 1939-1969, Microfilm Reels C.062.94001 and C.062-94002, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, NC.

⁷ Board of Education Minutes, November 2, 1925.

⁸ Board of Education Minutes, July 5, 1926, and July 5, 1927; “The New Long Ridge Rosenwald School Building,” *The Historic Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School*, <http://andersonrosenwaldschool.com> (accessed September 2017), 3.

⁹ Letter from C.M. Blankenship to W.F. Credle, February 22, 1928, Department of Public Instruction, Division of Negro Education, Correspondence of the Supervisor of the Rosenwald Fund, Box 4: July 1927-June 1928, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, NC.

¹⁰ Letter from W.F. Credle to C.M. Blankenship, February 25, 1928, Department of Public Instruction, Division of Negro Education, Correspondence of the Supervisor of the Rosenwald Fund, Box 4: July 1927-June 1928, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, NC.

¹¹ Letter from C.M. Blankenship to W.F. Credle, September 17, 1928, Department of Public Instruction, Division of Negro Education, Correspondence of the Supervisor of the Rosenwald Fund, Box 5: July 1928-June 1929, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, NC.

¹² “The New Long Ridge Rosenwald School Building,” 3.

¹³ Letter from Superintendent C.M. Blankenship to W.F. Credle, September 17, 1928, Department of Public Instruction, Division of Negro Education, Correspondence of the Supervisor of the Rosenwald Fund, Box 5: July 1928-June 1929, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, NC; “Mars Hill School,” Archives and History Photograph File, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, NC; Board of Education Minutes, July 9, 1928.

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adamant that cloakrooms removed clutter from the classrooms and thus, facilitated learning. This requirement of the Rosenwald funds, combined with the fact that the classrooms were completed in September 1928 but Rosenwald funds weren't approved until July 1929, indicates that the school board was required to add cloakrooms in order to receive grant funds.¹⁴ The cloakrooms were connected by a small open porch, which was enclosed sometime after 1955 for additional storage space as an arts and crafts room.¹⁵

The school served first through eighth grade, with grades one through four in the north classroom and grades five through eight in the south classroom. Each classroom was originally heated by a coal stove with coal stored under the building. Later, the coal stoves were replaced with wood stoves, and although cords of wood were delivered to the school, the students helped cut the wood into small enough pieces to fit their stoves. A neighbor came to the school each morning to light the stoves so the building would be warm when the children arrived and each afternoon the students helped to clean the ashes out.¹⁶

Improvements to the school included the installation of electricity by the 1950s and the construction of a stage, which alumni recall helping to build, on the south end of the south classroom around 1950. The school had two privies, one for girls and one for boys, built into the steep hill immediately behind (east of) the school.¹⁷ With no well initially, the students got water from a nearby spring. Sadly, due to the number of privies in the immediate area, the spring was contaminated and several students contracted typhoid fever and died. As a result, city water was provided via a pump faucet on the north side of the school in 1943.¹⁸

Most of the teachers lived in Asheville and commuted to Mars Hill School each day, although they would board in town during bad weather. Alumni recall that a boarding house for teachers was located not far from the school and operated by Miss Williams. Teachers at Mars Hill School included Elizabeth Conley, Edna Bell, Mrs. J.E. Coleman, Ida Long Sigmon, Addie J. Best, Mary H. Wilson, and Grace Owens. During the 1953-1954 school year, parents from the community petitioned the school board to remove the two instructors, Mary Wilson and Grace Owens, who were ultimately replaced with a single teacher, Lillie D. Love, indicating declining enrollment by the mid-1950s. By the 1960s, the school appears to have operated as a one-teacher

¹⁴ Photos provided by Friends of Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School, photos by Mars Hill College; Letter from Superintendent C.M. Blankenship to W.F. Credle, September 17, 1928, Department of Public Instruction, Division of Negro Education, Correspondence of the Supervisor of the Rosenwald Fund, Box 5: July 1928-June 1929, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, NC; N.C. Newbold to S.L. Smith, July 5, 1929, Department of Public Instruction, Office of the Superintendent, General Correspondence, Julius Rosenwald Fund, 1921-1923, Boxes 86-87, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, NC.

¹⁵ Interview with alumni, 2017; Photos provided by Friends of Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School, photos by Mars Hill College.

¹⁶ Interview with alumni, 2017.

¹⁷ Interview with alumni, 2017.

¹⁸ Interview with alumni, 2017; Board of Education Minutes, February 6, 1939, September 6, 1943, and October 4, 1943.

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school, serving only grades one through six.¹⁹ In 1957, Lillie Love resigned and Bernice E.S. Smith was hired, and she was the first teacher to be given the title of Principal in the Board of Education minutes.²⁰ She was followed by principal Dora Bass.²¹ Alumni recall that the teachers were strict and used corporeal punishment when students failed to complete homework or broke the rules.²²

When the school first opened, children either walked to school or were driven there by their parents.²³ In 1929, the county school board hired John Ferguson to transport children from Marshall to the school, so only the children who lived closest to the school walked there each day.²⁴ Alumni recalled that they had to be on time because if they missed the bus, they did not get to go to school that day.²⁵

Each day began with singing songs and reciting bible verses. Students studied writing, penmanship, arithmetic, reading, science, and music. Alumni recall that although their books were handed down from white schools and didn't necessarily include African American history, their teachers taught them a lot about African American history and culture. They also held art class and decorated the windows of the school each season with paper crafts and drawings. After the city water system was installed in 1943, students brought a metal cup from home to get water from the faucet outside. Alumni recall washing their hands in the faucet for lunchtime and how icy cold the water was during the winter months. Students who rode the bus to school brought their lunches, while students who lived nearby could go home for lunch. During recess, students played kickball, dodgeball, hide-and-seek, red rover, the Farmer in the Dell, or swung down the hill behind the school on grapevines. They took field trips to see places outside of their own community, celebrated May Day, and had annual year-end plays for the community, for which they made their own props and costumes.

After completing eighth grade, students attended Stephens-Lee High School or Allen High School for Girls in Asheville.²⁶ Education was viewed as a route to a better life, however, few opportunities existed for African Americans in the south.²⁷ In Mars Hill, African Americans worked in tobacco farming or sometimes ran their own stores or auto repair shops. Parents often encouraged children to get an education so they could leave Madison County for better opportunities. Although some alumni did stay in the area to attend college or work, others

¹⁹ Board of Education Minutes, January 4, 1954, and May 20, 1954; Board of Education Minutes, October 3, 1932; Online interview with alumni Thomas Henderson Briscoe, September 11, 2014, www.andersonrosenwaldschool.org. (accessed September 2017) (accessed September 2017).

²⁰ Board of Education Minutes, August 4, 1958.

²¹ Board of Education Minutes, June 1, 1960.

²² Interview with alumni, 2017.

²³ Interview with alumni, 2017.

²⁴ Board of Education Minutes, September 1929.

²⁵ Interview with alumni, 2017.

²⁶ Interview with alumni, 2017.

²⁷ Hanchett, "The Rosenwald Schools," 421.

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followed their parents' advice and left North Carolina to pursue college degrees, join the military, or seek jobs in other parts of the country.²⁸

In 1956, the Madison County Board of Education approved enrollment of children from Yancey County, which had no schools for African American students, however required Yancey County to bear expenses associated with the increased enrollment. It is unclear whether any students took advantage of this agreement.²⁹

In 1959, the county school board asked the local school committee to select a new name for the Mars Hill School, in order to "add prestige and dignity to the school."³⁰ The school was renamed Anderson Elementary School after Joseph Anderson, an African American man enslaved to J.W. Anderson, a founder and trustee at Mars Hill College. Joseph Anderson made the bricks for the first building at the college and was taken to jail as collateral for the college's unpaid debts in 1859.³¹

Anderson Elementary School was closed as a result of school desegregation in Madison County. The school board initially resisted desegregation, passing a resolution in 1956 supporting the Pearsall Plan, which provided two amendments to the state constitution that allowed parents to avoid sending their children to desegregated schools.³² The plan only delayed full desegregation of schools in North Carolina, however. A delegation from Asheville, including NAACP attorney Reuben Day, met with the Madison County Board of Education at their April 6, 1964, meeting to discuss integration. After hearing from the group, Manuel Briscoe, Chairman of the Colored School Committee, recommended that Vicki Louise Wilson, daughter of Mrs. Geraldine Griffin, be integrated into the white school in Mars Hill. The board adjourned for the day without making a decision, instead asking the delegation to return on the first Monday in June with their request.³³ They did so, resulting in five African American students from Anderson Elementary School being integrated into Mars Hill (white) School. Additional requests were made for African American students to attend the white school, however the board denied them "due to the inability of the parents to make an all out effort to integrate the Anderson Elementary School with the Mars Hill (white) School."³⁴

In 1965, the county school board considered consolidating the African American schools at Marshall and Mars Hill.³⁵ However, at their next meeting, the board discussed the Civil Rights Program (Title VI), and asked committee members for thoughts on integration in the county to

²⁸ Interview with Alumni, 2017.

²⁹ Interview with alumni, 2017; Board of Education Minutes, July 2, 1956.

³⁰ Board of Education Minutes, July 6, 1959.

³¹ "The Story of Joe Anderson," *The Historic Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School*, <http://andersonrosenwaldschool.org> (accessed September 2017).

³² Board of Education Minutes, August 6, 1956.

³³ Board of Education Minutes, April 6, 1964; Betty Jamerson Reed, *School Segregation in Western North Carolina: A History, 1860s-1970s* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2011), 58-59; Reuben Dailley is sometimes used as an alternate spelling of Reuben Day.

³⁴ Board of Education Minutes, June 1, 1964; Reed, *School Segregation*, 58-59.

³⁵ Board of Education Minutes, April 5, 1965.

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date. Plato Reese stated that the integration program “had worked very successful[ly] at the Mars Hill School,” and Mr. John Ray stated that “the children were doing fine in the integrated situation.” The board’s attorney, A.E. Leake, advised the board that there was “no other course to follow except to follow the law and integrate the schools.”³⁶ Therefore, rather than consolidating the schools or sending white children to the African American school, Anderson Elementary School was closed in 1965 and the children integrated with Mars Hill (white) School.³⁷

After its closure, Mars Hill (Anderson) School was used as a recreation center with an indoor basketball court during the 1970s and, although still owned by the Madison County Board of Education, it was used as a tobacco curing barn in the 1980s, resulting in the removal of windows and the deterioration of the interior.³⁸ By 2009, the school had fallen into significant disrepair. A developer who owned the land south of the school made a request to the school board to widen the dirt road leading beyond the school’s parking lot, requiring demolition of the school itself. However, the school board denied the request and instead made plans to restore the building.³⁹ With support from the Friends of Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School, the school board plans to use the building as a museum and meeting space when the rehabilitation is completed.⁴⁰

³⁶ Board of Education Minutes, April 27, 1965.

³⁷ Board of Education Minutes, April 27, 1965. Note: Not only did the Mars Hill School close with desegregation, but Stephens-Lee High School and Allen High School for Girls also closed. Many of the teachers from these schools retired from teaching rather than taking pay cuts to teach in integrated schools as second-class instructors to white teachers. Interview with Alumni, 2017; Appalachian State University, “African-Americans in Appalachia Documentation Project,” *Center for Appalachian Studies*, <https://appcenter.appstate.edu/research-and-publications/allen-high-school> (accessed September 2017); University of North Carolina Center for the Study of the American South, “Desegregation at Stephens-Lee High School,” *Southern Oral History Program*, <http://sohp.org/?s=stephens-lee+high+school> (accessed September 2017).

³⁸ Interview with alumni, 2017.

³⁹ Loretta Akins, “Support Sought for Historic Schoolhouse,” *The Hilltop Online*, <http://hilltop.mhc.edu/050707/LongridgeSchool/LongRidgeSchool.asp> (accessed November 2009), File MD0253, North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, Raleigh, NC.

⁴⁰ Interview with Alumni and Friends, 2017.

Mars Hill School

Name of Property

Madison County, North Carolina

County and State

9. Major Bibliographical References

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Mars Hill School

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Madison County, North Carolina

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Madison County Board of Education Minutes, Volumes 1-4, 1883-1939 & 1939-1969, Microfilm Reels C.062.94001 and C.062-94002, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, NC.

"Mars Hill School," Archives and History Photograph File, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, NC

Online interview with alumni Thomas Henderson Briscoe, September 11, 2014, www.andersonrosenwaldschool.org. (accessed September 2017)

Personal interview with alumni (Martha Koon Gardenlight, Sarah Roland Weston Hart, Omar McClain, Charity Ray, Fatimiah R. Shabazz, and Oralene Graves Simmons) by Heather Wagner Slane and Cheri LaFlamme Szcodronski, September 14, 2017.

Photos provided by Friends of Mars Hill Anderson Rosenwald School, photos by Mars Hill College.

Reed, Betty Jamerson. *School Segregation in Western North Carolina: A History, 1860s-1970s*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2011.

Smith, S.L. "Floor Plan No 6-A, Six Teacher Community School, to Face North or South Only." *Community School Plans, Bulletin No. 3*. The Julius Rosenwald Fund: Nashville, TN.

University of North Carolina Center for the Study of the American South. "Desegregation at Stephens-Lee High School." *Southern Oral History Program*. <http://sohp.org/?s=stephens-lee+high+school>.

Vocci, Robert Blair. "Madison County." *Encyclopedia of North Carolina*. Edited by William S. Powell. <http://www.ncpedia.org/geography/madison>.

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

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☐ Local government
☐ University
☐ Other
Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): MD0253

10. Geographical Data

Acres of Property 0.77 acres

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: 35.806518 Longitude: -82.541061

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 National Register boundary is shown by a black line on the accompanying map, drawn at a 1"=200' scale, and in alignment with the tax boundary (parcel #9756072179).

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Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The nominated boundary includes 0.77 acres, the current tax parcel and remaining portion of the original two-acre parcel associated with the school.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Heather Slane, Architectural Historian
name/title: Cheri Szcodronski, Architectural Historian
organization: hmwPreservation
street & number: P.O. Box 355
city or town: Durham state: NC zip code: 27701
e-mail: heather@hmwpreservation.com
telephone: 336-207-1502
date: August 2017

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

Property Name: Mars Hill School
County and State: Madison County, North Carolina
Photographer: Heather M. Slane
Date: September 2017
Location of Negatives: State Historic Preservation Office, Raleigh, North Carolina

1. Mars Hill School, north and west façades, exterior oblique facing southeast

Mars Hill School

Name of Property

Madison County, North Carolina

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2. Mars Hill School, north and west façades, exterior oblique
facing south
3. Mars Hill School, south and west façades, exterior oblique
facing northeast
4. Mars Hill School, south façade
facing west
5. Mars Hill School, east façade
facing southwest
6. Mars Hill School – classrooms
facing north
7. Mars Hill School – classrooms
facing northwest
8. Mars Hill School – classrooms
facing southeast
9. Mars Hill School – classrooms
facing south
10. Mars Hill School – former cloakrooms/porch
facing south
11. Mars Hill School – interior, rear (east) addition

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.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.



Image from NC-HPOweb

Mars Hill School
225 Mount Olive Drive
Mars Hill, Madison County, NC

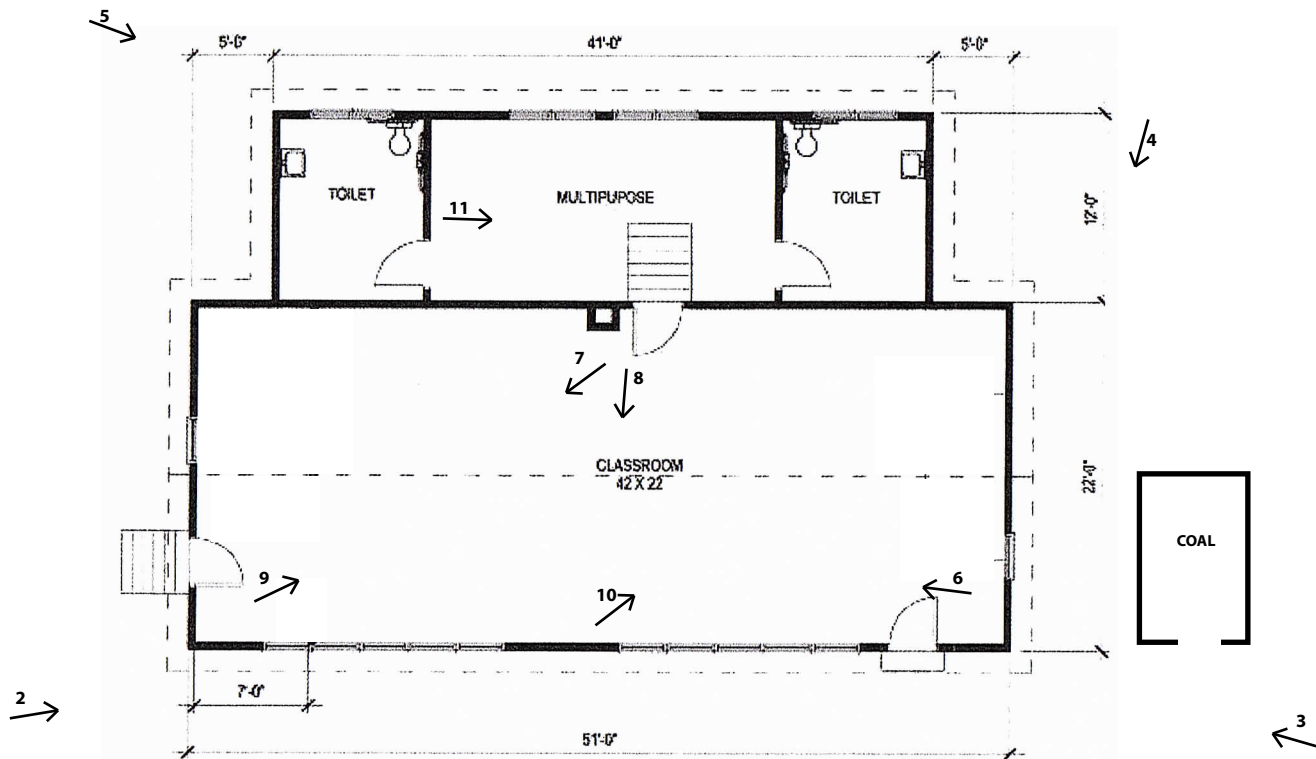
Coordinates:
35.806518, -82.541061

Site Map with National Register Boundary
— National Register Boundary
Boundary follows tax parcel #9756072179



Scale: 1" = 100'





Mars Hill School
 Mars Hill, Madison County, NC
 Floor Plan and Photo Key

