

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

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Warren County Training School

Wise, Warren County, WR0313, Listed 4/19/2006

Nomination by Nancy Van Dolsen

Photographs by Nancy Van Dolsen, July 2005

See photo at the end of the nomination

NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. 10-90)

OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If 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. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name **Warren County Training School**
other names/site number **N/A**

2. Location

street & number **East Side of SR 1300, .8 mile north of SR 1372** not for publication **N/A**
vicinity **X** city or town **Wise** state **North Carolina** code **NC** county **Warren** code **185** zip code **27563**

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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 nationally statewide X locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official

Date

North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register _____

See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register _____

See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register _____

removed from the National Register _____

other (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

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

Category of Property (Check only one box)

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

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
4	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
4	0	Total

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

Name of related multiple property listing **N/A**

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: **Education**

Sub: **school**

Present Functions

Cat: **Vacant/Not in use**

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Other: Rosenwald School

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation	Brick
roof	Asphalt Shingle
walls	Wood

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

8. Statement of Significance

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

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | 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. |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | 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 a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Education

Ethnic Heritage: Black

Period of Significance **1925-1956**

Significant Dates **1925, 1931, ca. 1955**

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above) **N/A**

Cultural Affiliation **N/A**

Architect/Builder **Unknown**

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

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

Primary Location of Additional Data

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

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property **6.46 acres**

UTM References **Zone: 17**

Easting: 753740

Northing: 4044660

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

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

11. Form Prepared By

name/title	Nancy Van Dolsen	date	January 6, 2006
street & number	1601 Highland Drive	telephone	252.243.7861
city or town	Wilson	state	NC
		zip code	27893

Property Owner

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

name **WCTS-NWHS & Friends Alumni Association, Inc.** street & number **P.O. Box 549**

City or town **Norlina** state **NC** zip code **27563**

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Narrative Description

The Warren County Training School occupies a 6.46-acre parcel northwest of the small town of Wise in Warren County, North Carolina. The large, one-story, nine classroom brick school, constructed in 1931, faces west, toward Paschall Station Road (SR 1300). The main block measures approximately 222 feet by fifty-eight feet, and the rear wing is forty-two feet by fifty-nine feet. The lot is mowed lawn and a dirt drive runs from the road, behind the school, and then down to the cafeteria building. A one-story brick cafeteria building, a one-story brick agricultural building, and a frame principal's residence also occupy the site. No other buildings, playing fields, or playgrounds are on the tax parcel, although a 1952 brick elementary school stands on the adjoining property to the east. The elementary school is not part of this property and the present owner is not interested in having the building listed on the National Register.

Warren County Training School, 1931, Contributing Building

The Warren County Training School is a large, side-gable with central rear wing (containing the auditorium), brick building. The building has an all-stretcher bond exterior, with an all header slightly projecting water table above a common bond brick foundation, and a soldier course or flat arch above all openings. All window sills are brick. It has an asphalt shingle gable roof with boxed return cornice above a plain fascia board. All windows are covered with plywood but the original multi-light sashes are intact. Two cross gables project approximately one foot from the plane of the façade and contain two bays (each a grouping of three windows); a lunette window is located at each gable peak. Four small front-gable dormer windows are located on the façade and contain paired louvered shutters for ventilation.

The primary entrance is centered on the façade and is a double-leaf door with transom, covered by a simple portico with pediment and paired Doric-style columns. The portico floor and steps are poured concrete. Paired exterior doors are also located in the gable end walls of the main block, but are recessed approximately three feet; these doors lead into the central corridor that runs the length of the building. Single doors are located on the north and south sides of the rear wing and open into the auditorium. The doors into the auditorium are capped with a projecting molded cornice held up by curved wood brackets. All of the steps are poured concrete.

As in all Rosenwald schools as originally built, the windows are large and are placed in multiple groupings. At the Warren County Training School the windows are in multiples of three and contain nine-over-nine sash.

Interior

The school contains seven general classrooms, a home economics classroom (created in 1952-1953 when home economics was moved into the main building from a separate building), a science classroom, entry vestibule, library, principal's office, large auditorium, and two

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restrooms. The plan of the building has a double-loaded corridor divided by a central passage; the classrooms, library, restrooms and offices are found along the corridor. The rear wing is accessed through the central passage and contains the auditorium. The central passage terminates in an octagon shape, one side of which leads to the auditorium. One side of the octagon retains an original trophy case; another has a bulletin board.

All floors within the building are narrow board floors; the walls are manufactured beaded board wainscoting with plaster above; all ceilings are plaster. Each classroom still retains its chalkboard, bulletin board, and a combination cloak and storage room along an interior wall.

The building exhibits historic integrity, retaining all windows, the stage in the auditorium, all interior doors, all original narrow board wood flooring, and all of the manufactured beaded-board wainscoting and woodwork in the auditorium and all classrooms.

Teacherage (Principal's Residence), 1925, Contributing building

The teacherage (principal's residence) was constructed in 1925 and faces the road. The frame building is identical to that shown as "Floor Plan No. 301, Teachers' Home for Community Schools" in the Julius Rosenwald Fund's *Community School Plans, Bulletin No. 3* printed in 1924. The house is a one-story, gable-front, frame building with an inset porch on the southwest corner and a gable-roof dormer on the south elevation. Windows, except on the rear elevation, are paired six-over-six sash (on the rear elevation the windows are single). The house contains a kitchen, combination dining room/living room with fireplace, three bedrooms, and a small bath. A small, one-story shed room was added to the north elevation in approximately 1940. The house retains its original windows and exterior weatherboard siding.

Cafeteria Building, ca. 1955, Contributing building

The brick cafeteria building is a one-story, flat roof brick building of modernist design with metal four-light sash windows that are recessed in the wall. A covered walkway is located on the north elevation. The floor plan includes a large open area for dining, with the kitchen and restrooms located in the southern one-third of the building.

Agriculture Building, ca. 1955, Contributing building

The brick agricultural building is a one-story building with a bowstring truss roof. The building is banked with the lower level of the north and east elevations exposed. The brick-veneered building is five bays deep. Windows are four light, metal windows with the lower sash hinged at the bottom. A small canopy supported by metal posts covers the metal door on the south opening. The building was constructed with help from the industrial arts students. The upper floor housed the agricultural classrooms; the lower level was used for teaching industrial arts.

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Summary

The Warren County Training School meets National Register of Historic Places Criterion A under two areas of significance: education and ethnic heritage/black, and Criterion C for architecture. Built in 1931 with funds from the Julius Rosenwald Fund, contributions from the local African American community, and support from the Warren County School Board, the Warren County Training School was one of twenty-five schools constructed in Warren County with help from the Rosenwald Fund. These schools were built in Warren County between 1918 and 1931. The Warren County Training School is an exceptionally large school, containing nine classrooms, a library, principal's office, and auditorium. The Warren County Training School property includes a rare surviving building type, a principal's residence dating to 1925 (also constructed with funding from the Rosenwald Fund), and a cafeteria and agriculture building constructed ca. 1955. From 1931 through the 1960s, the school served as an educational and social center for the Locust Grove community, hosting plays, glee club performances, adult education classes, home demonstrations, and meetings between the county extension agent and farmers. Although the buildings continued to operate as a school until 1970, the period from 1957 through 1970 is not of exceptional significance, thus the period of significance is 1925 through 1956.

Historical Narrative, Education and Ethnic Heritage/Black Context

At the opening of the twentieth century, the educational system for African Americans in North Carolina, and throughout the South, was rudimentary at best. The public school system had officially segregated the races in 1875, declaring that there should be separate but equal educational facilities for white and black children. Not until 1910, however, did public elementary schools for blacks begin receiving state funds. In 1913, further recognizing the need to improve schools for black students, North Carolina established the office of supervisor of rural elementary schools to promote the education of African American children. In 1921, a separate agency, the Division of Negro Education, was created to further advance public education for black students.¹ A survey in the early 1930s conducted by the Division of Negro Education found that some black classrooms had sixty to one-hundred students, that only half of the schools stayed in session for the full school year, and that only seven percent of black students attended high school.²

Simultaneously, as North Carolina was working toward bettering education for its African American children, Julius Rosenwald, a Chicago philanthropist, started a fund for building new and modern school facilities for black students. Rosenwald (1862-1932), who made a fortune through his part ownership of Sears, Roebuck, and Company, became interested in aiding the

¹ Jeffrey J. Crow, Paul D. Escott, Flora H. Hatley, *A History of African Americans in North Carolina* (Raleigh: Division of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1992) 154, 155.

² Crow, 135.

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African American community after reading two books, a biography of William H. Baldwin, a Northern white man who devoted his life to promoting black education in the South, and *Up From Slavery*, the story of Booker T. Washington's life. In early 1911 he met with Booker T. Washington in Chicago, and later that year, toured Washington's Tuskegee Institute, which impressed him greatly. In 1912, he was made a trustee of Tuskegee.³

Rosenwald created his fund for Southern education in 1917 with four funding priorities: the building of schoolhouses for rural African American children, the establishment of libraries, the education of teachers, and the development of centers for higher education for the black population.⁴ When Rosenwald established his fund, in the entire South there was not a single standard eight-grade rural black public school and no black public high school approved for even two years of high school work. Where there were African American schools, they were open an average of four months a year, and the teacher usually had only attended school through eighth grade.⁵

For a community to qualify for support to build a school they needed to meet certain criteria. According to a publication printed by the Rosenwald Fund,

A school had to represent common effort by the state and county authorities and the local colored and white citizens. The state and county had to contribute to the building and agree to maintain it as a regular part of the public-school system. White citizens had to take an interest and contribute part of the money, since it was felt that white leadership was essential to the success of such a program in the South.... And the Negroes themselves had to show their desire for education by making gifts of money or labor, usually both.⁶

The buildings were to be constructed according to simple plans that were provided by the fund. The curriculum was to include formal and theoretical education and, as suggested by Booker T. Washington, students were also taught practical skills.⁷

The plans provided by the fund featured the most up-to-date pedagogical thought regarding the best spaces to help children to learn. Since the majority of schools were in rural areas with no electricity, maximizing natural light was a major concern. For this reason, the Rosenwald plans all featured groupings of tall, double-hung sash, classroom windows along the east and west walls. A southern exposure would be too warm during the late spring, summer, or early fall

³ Edwin R. Embree and Julia Waxman, *Investment in People: The Story of the Julius Rosenwald Fund* (Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1949) 5, 25-26.

⁴ Embree and Waxman, 37.

⁵ Embree and Waxman, 38.

⁶ Embree and Waxman, 39.

⁷ Embree and Waxman, 40.

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months; and northern light in the winter would not provide enough light. The plans also specified that each window should have two tan shades, to better regulate the amount and intensity of light. Windows were always to the children's left, so that a shadow would not be created as they wrote (except for left-handers). The interiors were to be painted either a cream ceiling with buff walls and walnut-stained wainscot, or ivory cream ceiling with light gray walls and a walnut-stained wainscot. Interior corridors were to be minimized so that usable space was maximized.⁸

Each Rosenwald school also included an "industrial room," smaller than the standard-size classroom, for girls to be taught home economics and boys farm work and how to use simple tools. In addition, the school was to be used as much as possible by the public, and to that end, an auditorium that could seat the entire community should be built as part of the school. If there were not sufficient funds for an auditorium, a moving partition should be erected between two classrooms to create enough space for a large public meeting.⁹

Alabama was the first state to take advantage of the fund's support, and Tennessee, North Carolina, and Georgia soon followed. When the Fund closed its building program in 1932, North Carolina had received the greatest support and had constructed 813 buildings for 114,210 students at a cost of \$5,167,042.¹⁰ The fund had decided to end its building program not because it felt that its work was finished but they "felt that this particular demonstration had served its purpose of stimulating interest and must be discontinued in order that the southern states should not rely too heavily on outside aid and thus be delayed in assuming full responsibility for the schools...as an integral part of public provisions for the education of all people."¹¹

The first use of Rosenwald Funds by the Warren County School Board was to construct a one-teacher school in 1918-1919, the Axtell School. Due to great interest within the African American community in building new schools, the board had agreed on Nov. 3, 1919 that "the colored people asking for Rosenwald schools, on account of the high cost of building materials, must raise approximately one-third of this cost."¹² The necessity of raising one-third of the cost for the buildings did not deter the African American community. In 1921-1922, the school board authorized construction of twelve schools using Rosenwald funds; one of these was the first Rosenwald-funded school at Wise. This Rosenwald School was built beside the existing frame school, which was then used as the principal's residence, as a boarding house for "ten or more students from a distance," and also as the "Home Economics, Kitchen, and carpentry shop."

⁸ Thomas H. Hanchett, "The Rosenwald Schools and Black Education in North Carolina," *The North Carolina Historical Review* Vol. LXV, No. 4, October 1988: 401.

⁹ Hanchett, 401-405.

¹⁰ Embree and Waxman, 51. In addition to schools, these buildings included teacherages, training schools for teachers, and shops; Hanchett, 444.

¹¹ Embree and Waxman, 57.

¹² Warren County Board of Education Minutes, Nov. 3 1919.

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Bids for the Rosenwald-funded Wise School were put out on April 3, 1922 with plans and specifications made by M.S. Davis, an architect. Three bids were received by May 1, 1922. Apparently the Rosenwald Fund felt that the Warren County Board of Education was dragging its feet in building the new high school, and threatened the Board with “a substantial in the reduction in the amount of aid to be expected from them” if the building was not completed by June 30, 1922. On May 20th, the Board awarded the construction contract to R.L. Hays for \$8,500.

The original building at Wise (not the Rosenwald-funded building) burned in February 1925, and Principal Gillis Cheek stated to the Board of Education the he “would guarantee to build a teacherage in accordance with stipulated plans and specifications if the Board would permit \$350 to be set aside for that purpose; the community and the Rosenwald Fund being called upon to provide the remainder”—which was estimated to be \$1,750. The Board of Education only paid approximately one-fifth of the cost. The building, known as the Principal’s House, was built in 1925 and still stands.

In 1929, the superintendent of Schools for Warren County wrote a letter to the Board of Education stating that “The inevitable has happened. This morning I had a visit from a representative of a group of colored citizens” who “wanted a school bus to carry their high school children to school.” The group had realized that the Warren County School Board was not about to pay for a bus for their children (although they did for the white children) so they asked for a grant from the Rosenwald fund for \$500 and raised the remaining \$500 themselves for the bus—but wanted to know if the school district would raise any objections. The superintendent noted in his letter that the Board could bill the State \$8 per pupil riding the bus and could therefore receive \$150 from the State for not a single penny of outlay themselves. He then recommended that they should probably approve the bus but need to be sure that it looked different from that “which we have now for white children; and that the lettering ‘Warren County Schools’ be left off, of course.”

On January 5, 1931 tragedy occurred at the school. A tornado swept through northern Warren County at 4:45 PM, killing six people, including one female student, Edna Harris, from New York who was studying at the training school. According to records kept by the Rosenwald Fund, the following were destroyed by that tornado at the school: farm shed, machine shop, car house, three brooder houses, large laying house, small laying house, poultry yards and runways, pump house, barn, toilet facilities, the garden fence, farm shop tools, machine shop tools, hens, pigs, playground equipment, the entrance gate, the dormitories, the principal’s house, the high school building, and the main building; the damage done was estimated at \$17,001.00. The teacherage (now known as the Principal’s Residence) was not damaged.

The Rosenwald Fund authorized monies to construct a new building—the existing brick building that stands today—a school with nine classrooms and a large auditorium. As before, the Board

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dragged its feet in getting the new building constructed, and a suit was filed by the Rosenwald Fund to get the building constructed quickly. Once built, however, the Rosenwald Fund stated that the new building “is the best, if not the very best strictly rural county training school in North Carolina.”¹³

The school year ran from September through May, and school began at 8:30 AM and ended at 3:00 PM. Farmers from the community donated food, and the students and the home economics teachers would make lunches. The children of the farmers who had donated produce and meat would receive a credit for their lunch fees. Many students brought their lunches from home.

The curriculum during the 1930s through the 1960s included the typical school subjects of English, math, geography, history, and science, as well as typing, shorthand, business math, trades such as brick laying, auto mechanics and carpentry, and agriculture.

To raise money for the library or for teachers with expertise in particular areas, the school would hold community events such as plays, dinners, or musicals. Since Gillis Emmanuel Cheek, the principal of the school from 1922 to 1944, was a Baptist minister, dances were not held at the school. Under the leadership of Gillis Cheek, the school provided educational programs for adults as well, including agriculture class to help farmers acquire a better understanding of crops, soil, and fertilizers.

Many of the teachers worked at the school for many years, including Mr. Walker Green, the music teacher during the 1930s and 1940s, Mrs. Mary Watson Wynn, the Home Economics teacher, and Mr. John Bolton, the agriculture teacher. The second principal of the school, Mr. George Washington, arrived at the school in 1940 as a teacher, became principal in 1944 and stayed until the high school closed in 1969.

After graduation, the many students that went onto college usually attended North Carolina schools. From the early 1930s through the 1960s, more than half of the graduates left the area to find jobs elsewhere, since the local economy did not provide many opportunities.

In 1940, the school had twenty-two teachers and 700 students. The school added a twelfth grade in the mid 1940s. Under the leadership of Principal George Washington, the cafeteria (ca. 1955), frame gymnasium (which no longer stands) and the agriculture building (ca. 1955) were constructed. An elementary school (on a separate parcel and still used as a school) was built in 1952 and the original building became a high school. By 1969, thirty-nine teachers worked at the school, and enrollment was 1200 students.

¹³ “Wise School Suit, 1931-1934,” Julius Rosenwald Fund Archives. Special Collections, John Hope and Aurelia Franklin Library, Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee.

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The school ceased being a high school in 1969, and became a “comprehensive school,” housing fourth, fifth, and sixth grades; the comprehensive school closed in 1970. Since 1970 the main school building has been vacant. In 1998, an alumni association purchased the buildings (except for the elementary school), and rented the principal’s house. The cafeteria has been renovated and now serves as the location of community events

Architecture Context

The Warren County Training School is a well-preserved example of a large Rosenwald-funded school, and was considered by the Rosenwald Fund as one of the finest rural training schools in North Carolina. Less than fifteen percent of the 767 schools built with Rosenwald funds in North Carolina had six or more classrooms. The plan and appearance of the building follows almost exactly that of “Floor Plan No. 7, Seven Teacher Community School To Face East or West Only” in the Julius Rosenwald Fund’s *Community School Plans, Bulletin No. 3* printed in 1924, with a few changes; the most significant change being the addition of two large classrooms on each gable end. Also, the Warren County School features four dormers rather than two on the façade, brick veneer rather than weatherboard, and the octagonal vestibule rather than the rectangular one shown in the proposed plan.

The Warren County Training School is larger than the Greene County Training School in Snow Hill (NR 2003), a six-teacher school built with aid from the Rosenwald Fund in 1926. As at the Warren County Training School, cafeteria buildings were constructed in the early 1950s at two other brick Rosenwald-funded schools, the Princeton Graded School (Johnston County, NR 2005) and the Riley Hill School (Wake County, NR 1999).

The largest Rosenwald-funded school in Warren County, the Warren County Training School is also one of only three known extant schools (no comprehensive survey of Warren County has been completed so others may still stand); the other two are small, one-room buildings, Liberia School (NR 2005) and Inez School.

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Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary encompasses the school and its 6.46-acre associated lot, the present tax parcel.

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the school building, cafeteria, agriculture building, and principal's house, and their historically associated property during the period of significance, 1925-1956.

