

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 of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Webster Rock School
other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number Main Street not for publication
city, town Webster, vicinity
state North Carolina code NC county Jackson code 099 zip code 28788

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	_____ buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____	_____ objects
		<u>1</u>	_____ Total

Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

William S. Price, Jr. 12/4/89
Signature of certifying official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. 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 the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)
Education: school

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)
Other: sheltered workshop & day care

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

Other: WPA style

foundation stone
walls stone

roof asphalt
other wood

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Webster "Rock School" is located on the west side of Main Street on the top of a small ridge between the Tuckaseegee River and the ravine which borders the town of Webster to the east. The school is on the site of an earlier community school and is surrounded on the south and west by woods with tall trees. Adjacent to the north is the Webster Methodist Church. The school building faces east overlooking a grassy, tree-dotted lawn to Main Street (also NC Highway 116) and beyond. It is possible to detect some of the original plantings. Trees, now very large, were added in the summer of 1938 on the front lawn between building and highway. A steel fence surrounds the school on the street boundary to protect a play yard located between school and street. To the rear of the building Webster Enterprises, Inc., has added a metal shipping facility and dock.

The "Rock School" is a utilitarian, WPA building, built from 1936 to 1938. It is one story with hip roof, constructed of native "river rock" in colors of tan and brown. The plan of the building is E-shaped, the legs of the "E" extending to the rear toward the west. All windows are in threes, with six-over-six sash in plain wood frames. The front facade, facing Main Street, has thirteen bays, the central bay containing the entrance door, and six bays of triple windows ranged on each side of the main entrance. Upper halves of all windows have been covered with plywood, painted white, for insulation. The entrance bay, also of river rock, is a projecting, gable-parapeted pavilion with a modern double leaf door and transom set under a segmented arch of rock. Shallow buttresses with coping enframe the entrance. The foundation of the building is rock also.

Each of the two outer legs of the "E" has a side entrance in a shallow gable-parapeted pavilion similar to but smaller than the main facade's central bay. The side elevations also have two sets of triple windows set on the west side of each doorway. Triple windows are set around the legs of the "E".

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A tall stone chimney stack rises at the center edge of the central leg. A series of metal ventilators project symmetrically from the roof of the main east elevation.

The interior of the "Rock School" contained originally an auditorium, cafeteria, kitchen and eight classrooms (see enclosed 1938 plan). Classroom doors, with nine small panes of frosted glass, open to a long central hall, bisected by a hall running from main entrance to auditorium door in the central leg of the "E". A hallway extends down each north and south leg with classroom doors opening from it. Walls are plastered and ceilings have acoustical tile. The original wood floors are visible under a heavy coat of sealer. Short stairs from the three entrance doors to the main central hall remain but at the north entrance have been covered with a ramp.

The auditorium area is presently used by Webster Enterprises, Inc., as an assembly area, and the cafeteria along the front of the building as a large, open day care room. Day care offices are in the old kitchen area, and other classrooms are used by the day care facility and, especially those to the rear of the building, by Webster Enterprises.

Only the middle leg of the "E" has received much exterior change. Here, on the south side, Webster Enterprises, Inc., a sheltered workshop, has added a one-story shipping wing of metal with a truck entrance.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Education
Social History
Architecture

Period of Significance

1936-38

Significant Dates

1936-38

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

unknown

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Webster "Rock School" building is eligible for the National Register under Criteria A and C because it is Jackson County's only known school building constructed under the WPA program and because it was constructed of indigenous materials. In an effort to improve education in western counties and also to provide labor for a depressed economy, the federal government financed the construction of the one-story, "river rock" school in 1936-38. It was constructed according to prevailing philosophy in rural school design, and contains eight classrooms, an auditorium and a cafeteria. The building is E-shape in design, of tan rock with hip roof. The main entrance is set into a gable of stone and is surmounted with a segmental arch and radiating voussoirs of stone. The building, which originally housed a grade school and high school, was closed by the county in 1972. It now houses a sheltered workshop and day care center. An office and shipping room for the sheltered workshop have been added to the rear of the building. The interior is little changed since 1938.

Education and Social History Contexts: The Webster Rock School is Jackson County's only known school building constructed by the federal Works Progress Administration. It replaced a frame building constructed in 1905 and owned by the Jackson County Board of Education, but erected by public subscription. (1) Although Webster had maintained a respected four-month public school since the 1860s, public education in Jackson County, as

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elsewhere, was generally erratic until after the turn of the century. Then, under the encouragement of Governor Charles B. Aycock, 1901-1905, the state legislature turned its attention to local taxation and longer school terms, consolidation of school districts, better buildings and better pay for teachers. (2) The public school at Webster was a graded school with a high school department. Parents paid the salary of a teacher in the early years to continue teaching beyond the few months provided by the state and county. During the 1920s a county-wide system of education was established for Jackson County and seven new school buildings were constructed between 1921 and 1927, but the educational process continued in the old two-story, frame building built in Webster in 1905. (3)

The Depression of the 1930s hit especially hard in western North Carolina and in no place more than in Jackson County. Farm prices dropped, citizens could not pay their taxes, and county, municipal and state governments tottered on the brink of disaster. With the establishment of federal agencies to provide work and relief, "... Jackson County (began) to feel the mitigating balm of federal payrolls." (4) A program for illiterate adults in Jackson County was financed by the WPA, providing educational opportunities to the more than 1,000 illiterate adults in the county, and work for unemployed teachers. Twelve WPA lunchrooms were opened by 1937 and librarians for county schools were hired. To provide income for the county and to improve schools, a building program was initiated under the WPA and Civil Works Administration, and the Webster School was constructed during the 1936-38 period. Records indicate that it was the only school building in Jackson County financed by the WPA program, although federal funds financed part of a building program at Western Carolina University in Cullowhee. (5) The state of North Carolina received a very small portion of the funds allotted by the WPA during its existence, and relatively few buildings were constructed by that program in the state. (6)

Architectural context: The "Rock School" at Webster was designed according to the most up-to-date philosophy in rural school architecture. It was patterned after the work of Fletcher B. Dresslar, a professor at the George Peabody College for teachers in Nashville, Tennessee, in the early years of this century. Dresslar, "... one of America's major theoreticians on school architecture..." utilized groups of tall, double-hung sash windows orientated to catch the east-west sunshine. Dresslar's plans were designed to maximize the use of natural light, since

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electricity was unavailable in many rural areas. Dresslar argued that "... on dark days a northern light will not command sufficient light for children to do their work safely." (7) Dresslar specified two shades per window for more accurate regulation of light, and floor plans show seating arrangements with the windows at the children's left side, so that the writing arms would not cast shadows on their desk tops. The layout was planned to be "simple and efficient", using as few corridors as possible. (8)

Dresslar's designs were adapted by Samuel L. Smith for schools constructed by the Julius Rosenwald Fund. Incorporated in 1917, the Rosenwald Fund provided funding for the construction of schools for blacks from 1918 to 1930. Samuel Smith, a Tennessee rural school program administrator with an interest in country schoolhouse design, was director of the Rosenwald "southern office" in Nashville. Smith produced pamphlets with school designs and made them available for white and black schools, thus enabling well-designed rural schools to be built without the expense of architects. Smith's pamphlets were in such demand, that a booklet Community School Plans was published in 1924, and became the foremost guide in the building of rural schools. (9)

The federal government seemed to draw upon some of the Dresslar/Smith designs when the "rock school" at Webster was built. The Webster school plan is almost identical to the plan for "Community School No. 7," by Samuel Smith, and contains eight classrooms and an auditorium as does "Community School No. 7." In the Webster school building, two classrooms were joined to provide cafeteria space. (10)

The use of native materials in construction, for example, the use of local "river rock" in the construction of the Webster school, was typical of WPA construction in the 1930s. (11) Certainly the Webster "Rock School" was one of the most up-to-date schools in Jackson County.

Historical Background: The citizens of the town of Webster indicated their interest in quality education as early as 1869 when a building was constructed for the use of the Webster Academy, a private school which shared its facilities with the congregations of the Webster Baptist, Methodist and Presbyterian churches. Public education was very erratic in the county after the Civil War and taxation for public schools was unpopular. (12) The Webster Academy received some aid from the George Peabody Foundation in 1874-75, but although it was a "public" school, it continued to operate on a "subscription" basis, with parents

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paying for the services of a teacher beyond the three-month period provided by the county. (13)

The Webster Academy burned in 1895, and in August, 1899, the Tuckaseige[sic] Democrat reported that "...the people, in and around Webster, are a little enthusiastic over the prospect of having a good, permanent school start up at the place soon. They are making some steps in the direction of having a larger school building and one better adapted to the wants of school purposes. (14) Later that year a special subscription bill was passed to employ a teacher and to start a public school in Webster. By 1905 a local subscription had raised money to build the new school building, and a two-story frame building was erected. The building had four large rooms on the first floor connected by halls, and a large front porch. On the second floor was a spacious auditorium with an elevated stage. There was no central heat or toilet facilities, although there was a pump for fresh water. The students had individual desks, an improvement over the long benches they had previously used. Lunch was eaten in the classroom or on porch or lawn. Each teacher taught more than one grade, often with 35 to 40 students in each room, and the average teacher's salary was \$45.00 per month. (15)

A high school curriculum was added to the Webster school in 1909 and until 1924 older students from outside Webster boarded with local residents, working around the house or farm to pay for board. (16) After 1923 school buses ran from Webster to surrounding communities to pick up and deliver students. (17)

The new "Rock School" constructed by the Works Progress Administration at Webster and opened in 1938 provided classrooms, an auditorium and a cafeteria. The site also allowed space for basketball courts and playing fields and drew students from surrounding communities. After World War II, Jackson County began a major expansion to provide more consolidated schools, and after 1955 high school students were moved to the new Sylva-Webster High School in Sylva. The "Rock School" remained an elementary school until 1972, when it was closed by the county and its students bussed to the Fairview School on Highway 107 in Sylva. (18)

The "Rock School" building was acquired from the Jackson County Board of Education in 1974 by Webster Enterprises, Inc., a sheltered workshop. (19) The building now houses a day care center and there is a shipping operation in a recent metal addition. Efforts are underway by the Town of Webster to regain control of the property and reserve it for civic purposes.

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FOOTNOTES

1. Webster Historical Society, Historic Webster, Vol. II, No. 3, Summer 1975.
2. Williams, Max R., ed., The History of Jackson County, p.295.
3. Ibid., pp. 299-300.
4. Ibid., p. 303.
5. Ibid.
6. Works Progress Administration, Report on Progress of the WPA Program, 1942, page 67. All 48 states and the District of Columbia received funds for WPA projects, but most funding went to states of the northeast and middle west. In 1936, the combined projects of the 22 states receiving the smallest amount of funding, which included North Carolina, totaled only 11% of the WPA budget for the year. That same year, New York alone received 20% of the total budget and Pennsylvania received 10%.
7. Hanchett, "The Rosenwald Schools and Black Education in North Carolina," The North Carolina Historical Review, p. 401.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid., p. 401.
10. Ibid., pp. 396-397.
11. Jolley, Dr. Harley, telephone conversation, November 30, 1988.
12. Williams, op. cit., p. 283.
13. Ibid., p. 285.
14. Ibid., p. 284.
15. Webster Historical Society, Historic Webster, Vol. II, no. 3, Summer 1975. Also: North Carolina Education Association, Jackson County Public Schools, 1853-2954, p. 12.
16. Webster Historical Society, Historic Webster, Vol. II, no. 3, Summer 1975.

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17. Ibid.
18. Williams, Max R., ed., op. cit., p. 314.
19. Jackson County Register of Deeds, Book 485, page 85.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Hanchett, Thomas W., "The Rosenwald Schools and Black Education in North Carolina," The North Carolina Historical Review, Vol. LXV, No. 4, October 1988.

Jackson County Register of Deeds, Jackson County Courthouse, Sylva.

Jolley, Dr. Harley, telephone conversation, November 30, 1988.

North Carolina Division of School Planning, Raleigh, telephone conversation, October 15, 1988.

North Carolina Education Association, Jackson County Public Schools: 1853-1954, Raleigh, 1954.

Webster Historical Society, Historic Webster, Vol. II, No. 3, Summer 1975.

See continuation sheet

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

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 9.0 acres

UTM References

A

17	297165	3913960
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Zone Easting Northing

B

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Zone Easting Northing

C

--	--	--

D

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The Webster Rock School property consists of parcel #9636 owned by Webster Enterprises, Inc., and parcel #5439 owned by Webster Schools/Jackson County, shown on the orthophoto map of real property in Jackson County, North Carolina, 1980.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The nominated property includes all of the property historically associated with the Webster Rock School.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Carolyn A. Humphries for the Webster Historical Society
organization _____ date December 1, 1988
street & number Rt. 2, Box 175 telephone 704-526-9462
city or town Highlands, state North Carolina zip code 28741

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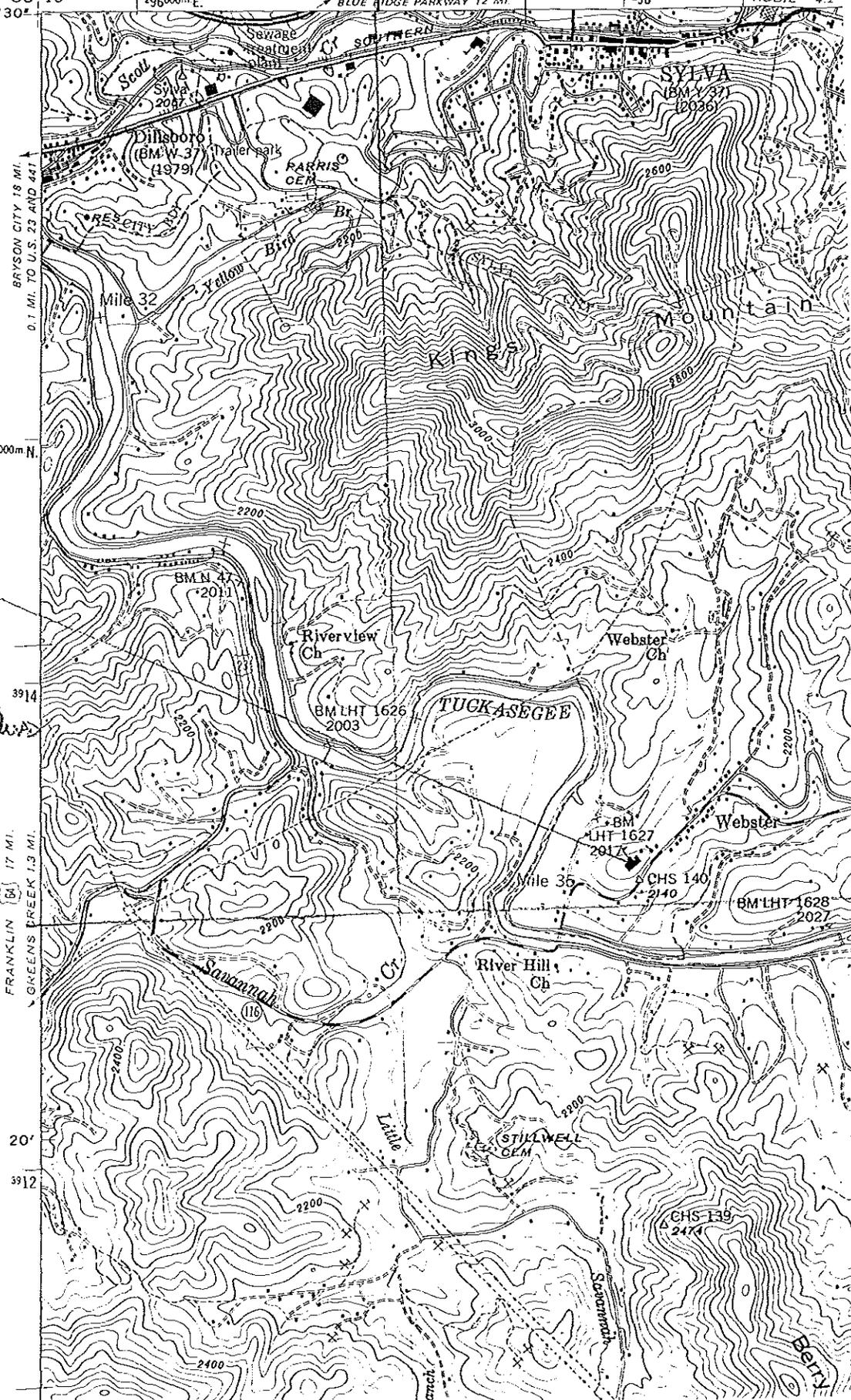
Williams, Max R., ed., The History of Jackson County, Jackson County
Historical Association, The Delmar Company, Sylva, 1987.

Works Projects Administration, Report on Progress of the WPA Program,
Federal Works Agency, Washington, 1942.

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UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

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