

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 **Liberia School**  
other names/site number **N/A**

2. Location

street & number **4.5 miles south of Warrenton, southwest side of NC 58** not for publication **N/A**  
vicinity **X** city or town **Warrenton** state **North Carolina** code **NC** county **Warren** code **185** zip code **27589**

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.)

Jeffrey Crow 3/24/05  
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): \_\_\_\_\_

*Edson Beall* 5/18/05

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	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	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**

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7. Description

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Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

**Other: Rosenwald School**

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation	<b>Brick</b>
roof	<b>Metal</b>
walls	<b>Wood</b>

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

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8. Statement of Significance

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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"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | A | Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.   |
|                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> | B | Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input 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. |
|                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> | 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.)

- |                          |   |  |
|--------------------------|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | A | owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | B | removed from its original location.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | C | a birthplace or a grave.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | D | a cemetery.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | E | a reconstructed building, object, or structure.                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | F | a commemorative property.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 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           **1922-early 1950s**

Significant Dates           **1922**

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.)

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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(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
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10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of Property **approx. 1 acre**

UTM References **Zone: 17**                      **Easting: 760125**                      **Northing: 4027780**

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.)

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11. Form Prepared By

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name/title	<b>Nancy Van Dolsen</b>	date	<b>January 6, 2005</b>
street & number	<b>1601 Highland Drive</b>	telephone	<b>252.243.7861</b>
city or town	<b>Wilson</b>	state	<b>NC</b>
		zip code	<b>27893</b>

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Property Owner

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

name **Hugh Morrison** street & number **250 Eastover Circle SE** City or town **Concord** state **NC**  
zip code **28025-3607**

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

**Narrative Description**

The Liberia School is a one-teacher frame school building, measuring approximately twenty by thirty-two feet, constructed with Rosenwald Funds in 1921-1922 in the small Warren County community of Liberia.<sup>1</sup> The school sits on the west side of NC 58, across from the Warren County Fire Tower (NR 1999). A stand of second-growth timber is located to the north and west of the school, and the road is approximately forty feet to the east. An open lawn to the south separates the school from the Warren County office of the Division of Forest Resources building.

The one-story hip-roof building faces south, and as suggested by the Rosenwald Foundation for buildings facing south and east, has only three small windows on the façade. A small gable-roof porch covers the two doors on the facade. The porch posts and floor have been replaced but decorative shingles still adorn the gable-front of the porch. The exterior of the building is sheathed in "German" or novelty siding. The building stands on brick piers, and has exposed rafter tails. The pressed metal roof, painted red, has impressions mimicking decorative shingles.

The rear (north) elevation has seven nine-over-nine sash windows, and the east elevation has three nine-over-nine sash windows; one window, now boarded up, is located on the west elevation.

The two doors on the façade lead to a small space that appears to have been used as a cloakroom (it has hooks for clothes). A door leading to a large open room that served as the main classroom for the building is located on the west wall of the cloakroom. Two steps on the east wall lead up to a second small room, which also has hooks and appears to have been a cloakroom. A door from this room opens onto a platform, approximately two feet above the main room. A three-part folding door constructed of vertical boards separates this second room from the main room. The second room most likely served as both a stage for performances and for community events, and as the "industrial" training room when school was in session. A brick chimney, with a hole for a flue, runs up the wall dividing the two rooms.

The walls and ceiling of the building are sheathed with beaded boards. The interior five-panel doors remain intact, as does the original flooring, windows, and window and door surrounds. The interior and the exterior of the building are now painted white, although the paint scars from where black boards have been removed indicate that the upper portion of the walls was once painted green.

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas W. Hanchett, "The Rosenwald Schools in North Carolina," *The North Carolina Historical Review*: vol. LXV, No. 4, October 1988, 443.

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

### Summary

The Liberia School meets National Register of Historic Places Criterion A under two areas of significance: education and ethnic heritage/black and under Criterion C for architecture. Built in 1921-1922 with funds from the Julius Rosenwald Fund, contributions from the local African American community, and support from the Warren County School Board, the Liberia School was one of twenty-five schools (one of fifteen one-teacher schools) constructed in Warren County with help from the Rosenwald Fund. These schools were built in Warren County between 1918 and 1929. From 1922 through the early 1950s, the school served as an educational and social center for the African American community, hosting plays, glee club performances, adult education classes, home demonstrations, and meetings between the county extension agent and farmers. Although built as a one-teacher school before the Rosenwald Fund had produced their booklet of suggested school plans, the Liberia School features architectural elements suggested by the fund, including multi-pane sash windows arranged in groups, a large open area that served as the classroom, auditorium and cafeteria, cloak rooms, and a space that could be used as the industrial classroom.

### 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.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup>

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 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*

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> Crow, 135.

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*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.<sup>3</sup>

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.<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup>

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.<sup>6</sup>

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 according to the principles of Booker T. Washington, students were also taught practical skills.<sup>7</sup>

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 months; and northern light in the winter would not provide enough light. The plans also

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

<sup>4</sup> Embree and Waxman, 37.

<sup>5</sup> Embree and Waxman, 38.

<sup>6</sup> Embree and Waxman, 39.

<sup>7</sup> Embree and Waxman, 40.

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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.<sup>8</sup>

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.<sup>9</sup>

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.<sup>10</sup> 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."<sup>11</sup>

The Liberia School is located just northeast of the crossroads community of Liberia where two major roads--NC 58 (a major road that runs from Wilson, NC ) and NC 43 (that travels from Rocky Mount, NC)—meet and form one road leading to Warrenton, the county seat. A much smaller road, NC 1606, also ends in Liberia. Liberia, a small African American community founded after the Civil War, consisted of a few farms, houses, two schools (one African American, one white), and a church. Most likely, the community was named in honor of the West African colony of Liberia, established by the U.S. government as a settlement for Africans rescued from transatlantic slave ships. After the Civil War, Liberia and Midwestern states vied as the place of migration for disaffected North Carolina freed men and women. Between 1825 and 1893, 2,030 blacks left the state to create a new life in Liberia.<sup>12</sup> Perhaps the Liberia community

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

<sup>9</sup> Hanchett, 401-405.

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

<sup>11</sup> Embree and Waxman, 57.

<sup>12</sup> Claude A. Clegg, III, *The Price of Liberty: African Americans and the Making of Liberia* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).



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Continuation Sheet

represented a chance for Warren County's African Americans freed by the Civil War to start their new life in their own county.

The Warren County School Board used Rosenwald funds to build 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."<sup>13</sup> 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—among these were nine one-teacher schools including the Liberia School.<sup>14</sup> As the new school building was being planned and constructed for the African American children of Liberia, the white school for the community was abandoned, and the children of white families bussed to Warrenton for school as part of the statewide program of school consolidation.<sup>15</sup>

Seven years after the Liberia School had been built, the small, one-teacher facility had 106 students enrolled, although only 55% attended daily. Less than half of the students at the school were promoted each year, and only 25% were placed in the grade appropriate for their age (meaning that most students repeated at least one grade before graduating from eighth grade). The Warren County School Board decried the results of their 1929 survey of their schools, especially the findings regarding the "colored schools." The board declared that "ten thousand dollars per year is wasted (emphasis in the original) in colored schools in teaching repeaters."<sup>16</sup>

For the 1931-1932 school year, the Liberia School was insured by the school board for \$1,200 and the "furnishings, etc." valued at \$100—valuations similar to the other one-teacher African American schools in the county. In September of the following year, the board heard "the petitions of several groups of colored people that the Board of Education provide sums of money to help them finance the construction of additional rooms at their school buildings" but concluded that "there were no funds in the budget that can be so used."<sup>17</sup>

By 1940, the small one-teacher school in Liberia actually housed two teachers, Mrs. Ogletree Stevens Carroll and Bettie Beatrice Jones. The school remained open until the early 1950s, when the students were bussed into Warrenton for their education.

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<sup>13</sup> Warren County Board of Education Minutes, Nov. 3 1919.

<sup>14</sup> Hanchett, 443.

<sup>15</sup> Warren County Board of Education Minutes, Sept. 6, 1920, Nov. 1, 1920, May 6, 1922.

<sup>16</sup> Warren County Board of Education Minutes, typed paper insert, headed 1929-1930.

<sup>17</sup> Warren County Board of Education Minutes, Sept. 4, 1933.

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In October 1962, the Board of Education sold the approximately one-acre parcel to the County Commissioners, who then sold the land and school to Hugh W. Holt, Thomas Holt and Helen M. Morrison in 1964.<sup>18</sup> The school is well maintained but is not in use.

### Architecture Context

As a building constructed in 1921-1922, the plan of the Liberia School is not found in the Rosenwald Fund's 1924 publication, *Community School Plans, Bulletin No. 3*, but it does follow most of its suggestions, including multi-pane sash windows arranged in groups, a large open area that served as the classroom, auditorium and cafeteria, cloak rooms, and a space that could be used as the industrial classroom. The plan also does not exactly follow the 1915 plan for a one-teacher school published by the Tuskegee Institute in their pamphlet, *The Negro Rural School and its Relation to the Community*. The 1915 plan featured a hip-roof building with one central door and many more windows than the Liberia School. The interior of the 1915 version does, however, include a dividing of the interior space into two rooms, proportionally similar to the Liberia School plan. The Liberia School also faces south, rather than east or west as suggested by the Rosenwald Fund.

The Liberia School is one of twenty-five schools that were constructed using Rosenwald funds in Warren County; fifteen of which were one-teacher schools built between 1918 and 1929. Seven one-teacher schools were constructed the same year as the Liberia School, one of these schools—the one at Inez—still stands and features the identical form as the Liberia School. The Liberia School is an excellent example of a one-teacher school constructed with help from the Rosenwald Foundation. The school retains almost all of its original exterior finishes (with the exception of the porch posts and floor) and all of its interior finishes. The building features multi-pane sash windows arranged in groups, a large open area that served as the classroom, auditorium and cafeteria, cloak rooms, and the industrial classroom, all proscribed by the Rosenwald Fund. The building does not include corridors, thus allowing for the greatest amount of usable space.

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<sup>18</sup> Warren County Deed Books 213:637; 224:453. The Board of Education had purchased the one-acre plot in 1905 from J.M. Gardner et als.; Deed Book 71:440.

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**Bibliography**

- Clegg, Claude A., III. *The Price of Liberty: African Americans and the Making of Liberia*. Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2004.
- Cross, Jerry L. "Julius Rosenwald: His Fund and His Schools, A Brief Historical Sketch of the Rosenwald Fund and Black Education in the South 1917-1948," March 19, 1980. Unpublished typescript, in the "Rosenwald School" file, Eastern Office of the Department of Archives and History, Greenville, North Carolina.
- Crow, Jeffrey J., 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.
- Embree, Edwin R. *Julius Rosenwald Fund: A Review to June 30, 1928*. Chicago: Julius Rosenwald Fund, 1928.
- Embree, Edwin R. and Julia Waxman. *Investment in People: The Story of the Julius Rosenwald Fund*. New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1949.
- Hanchett, Thomas H. "The Rosenwald Schools and Black Education in North Carolina." *The North Carolina Historical Review* Vol. LXV, No. 4, October 1988: 388-444.
- Julius Rosenwald Foundation, *Community School Plans, Bulletin No. 3*. Nashville, TN: Julius Rosenwald Foundation, 1924.
- Van Dolsen, Nancy. "Wake County's Rosenwald Schools," Addendum to the Multiple Property Documentation Form "Historic and Architectural Resources of Wake County, North Carolina (ca. 1770-1941)," 2001.
- Warren County Board of Education Minutes 1919-1951. North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, North Carolina. Microfilm.
- Warren County Deed Books. Warren County Court House, Warrenton, North Carolina.

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Section 10

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Liberia School, Warren County, NC

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**Verbal Boundary Description**

The boundary encompasses the school and its associated lot, the present tax parcel, E4G894.

**Boundary Justification**

The boundary includes the school building and its historically associated property.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

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Liberia School  
Warren County, North Carolina

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**PHOTOGRAPHS**

The following information for #1-5 applies to all nomination photographs:

- 1)     Liberia School
  - 2)     Warren County, North Carolina
  - 3)     Nancy Van Dolsen
  - 4)     January 2005
  - 5)     State Historic Preservation Office
  - 6-7)
- 1:     Façade, looking northwest
  - 2:     Façade and west elevation, looking north
  - 3:     North and east elevations, looking south
  - 4:     Interior, looking north
  - 5:     Interior, looking northwest