

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

415

OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

MAR 23 2001

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 Riley Hill School

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number N side SR2320, 0.2 mi E. of SR2318 not for publication N/A  
city or town Wendell vicinity X  
state North Carolina code NC county Wake code 183 zip code 27591

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 J. Cross SHPO

3/6/01

Signature of certifying official

Date

North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources

State or Federal agency and bureau



=====  
6. Function or Use  
=====

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: EDUCATION Sub: School  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: EDUCATION Sub: School  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

=====  
7. Description  
=====

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> & 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY REVIVALS: Colonial Revival  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK  
roof ASPHALT  
walls BRICK  
other \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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)

- 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 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)

EDUCATION  
ETHNIC HERITAGE: Black  
SOCIAL HISTORY  
ARCHITECTURE  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance 1928-1951  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates 1928  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation   N/A    
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Architect/Builder   Strickland Brothers, Builders    
\_\_\_\_\_

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

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

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10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of Property   4.03 acres  

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	<u>17</u>	<u>733290</u>	<u>3971260</u>	3	_____	_____
2	_____	_____	_____	4	_____	_____
	<u>  See continuation sheet.  </u>					

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

=====

name/title Nancy Van Dolsen

organization \_\_\_\_\_ date 30 September 2000

street & number 1601 Highland Drive telephone 252.243.7861

city or town Wilson state NC zip code 27893

=====  
Additional Documentation  
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Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

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

name Riley Hill Baptist Church c/o Dr. Pennie Perry

street & number 6308 Riley Hill Road telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town Wendell state NC zip code 27591  
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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**  
**CONTINUATION SHEET**

Riley Hill School  
Wake County, North Carolina

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**DESCRIPTION**

The Riley Hill School sits facing south toward Riley Hill Road. A circular drive fronts the property. The area immediately surrounding the school is grass, but the remaining property is wooded. A brick gymnasium stands west of the original school building, and a cafeteria and classroom building is located to the north. The area around the school is experiencing modern development and former farm fields are being replaced by housing subdivisions.

Riley Hill School is a one-story, brick building with an "H"-shaped plan. Two gable-front wings are adjoined to a recessed gable-roof central section. All of the gable roofs feature exposed rafter ends. Louvered vents are located at the peak of the gable end walls. The wings each have a one-room addition built onto the north gable end, as indicated on the exterior by a brick parapet wall. These two additions may date to ca. 1952 when the other improvements were made to the school's campus.

A one-story porch with simple Doric-style columns runs across the central section, protecting the entry. The five-bay central section features a double-door entry topped by a six-light transom. Direct access to each wing is through a single door at each end of the front porch. As in all Rosenwald schools as originally built, the windows are large and are placed in multiple groupings. At the Riley Hill School the windows are in multiples of four, five, and six, on the west, north, and south elevations. In the gable-front classroom wings and in the central section, the windows are single or in pairs. The windows on the west and east elevations have had their nine-over-nine light sash replaced with two-over-two sash. Original window sash and five-panel doors remain intact in the rear courtyard created by the two wings and central section. A door was added to the middle of both the east and west elevations.

Inside, the school originally featured three classrooms in each gable wing and an office, "industrial" room, and an auditorium in the central section. The three classrooms in the west wing have been made into one large space. The three classrooms in the east wing remain intact, complete with original doors, walls, floors, and windows. The corridors retain their original floors and beaded wainscoting. The stage has been removed in the auditorium.

The addition to the rear of the classroom wings includes a girls' bathroom and classroom in the west wing and a boys' bathroom and classroom in the east wing. A basement for the boiler and furnace was dug beneath the addition to the east wing. A one-story porch with square pillars runs the depth of each of the wings on the courtyard elevation.

In 1952 a cafeteria and classroom building was constructed immediately to the east of the original school. The one-story brick building is long and low with the cafeteria wing on the east elevation. The doors to the classrooms face south toward the original school building. The cafeteria wing has very large windows that occupy most of the wall surface on the south and east elevations. The cafeteria retains original light fixtures and a large sink for the students to wash their hands before eating. The kitchen occupies the north end of the wing and has its original terracotta tile floor and wainscoting for easy cleaning.

Built in 1952, the brick gymnasium/auditorium building stands west of the original school, and also faces south toward Riley Hill Road. The tall one-story building features a shallow gable roof and a shorter one-story brick, flat-roofed, brick-enclosed porch protecting the double-door entrance. The windows are located along the top of the eave walls in a continuous band. Inside, the building retains its hardwood floors, wainscoting, and stage at the north end.

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## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

### Summary

The Riley Hill School is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for significance in the areas of education, ethnic heritage: black, and social history and under Criterion C as a relatively intact example of a Rosenwald school. Built in 1928 with funds from the Julius Rosenwald Foundation, contributions from the local African American community, and support from the Wake County School Board, Riley Hill School is one of only five remaining Rosenwald schools in Wake County; twenty-one were constructed between 1919 and 1928. During the late 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s, the school served as an educational and social center for the African American community, hosting plays, glee club performances, adult education classes, vaccination clinics, home demonstrations, and meetings between the county extension agent and farmers. Riley Hill School exemplifies the Rosenwald Foundation's design for a six-teacher school with a brick exterior. Two additional buildings, a cafeteria and a combination gymnasium and auditorium, were constructed on the property in 1952, accommodating the increased number of students attending the school and changing how the original building was used by making the auditorium in the original building obsolete. Due to the change in function of the original school building with the new construction, the period of significance for Riley Hill School ends in 1951. The school closed its doors in 1970, but was purchased in 1991 by the Riley Hill Baptist Church. The building is presently vacant. The Riley Hill School is discussed in the Multiple Property Documentation Form, "Historic and Architectural Resources of Wake County, North Carolina (ca. 1770-1941)" under Property Type 4: Institutional Buildings, Post World War I Consolidated Schools and in Context 4: Boom, Bust, and Recovery Between the World Wars (1919-1941), Rural School Consolidation and High Schools Offer Greater Advantage. An addendum to the Wake County Multiple Property Documentation Form, "Wake County's Rosenwald Schools," discusses the social history, education, ethnic heritage, and architect contexts for Riley Hill School and the county's other Rosenwald-funded schools. The School also meets Criterion Consideration A for religious properties because during its period of significance it was not owned by a religious institution, and it derives its primary importance from its historical associations and distinctive architecture.

### Historical Narrative

The Riley Hill community centers around the Riley Hill Baptist Church, founded in 1872 by freed slaves, and the Riley Hill School, constructed in 1928. Riley Hill was one of the largest rural black communities in Wake County.<sup>1</sup> The wealth and size of the community is reflected in its large brick school, the fourth largest Rosenwald School in the county after Berry O'Kelly, Wake Forest, and Zebulon.<sup>2</sup>

In September 1921, the Wake County Board of Education authorized the payment of \$100 per acre for two acres of land from two prominent African American residents of Riley Hill, C.F. Marriott and Josh Perry. The two acres were "to be used as an addition to the present site, consisting of one acre, of the Riley Hill School, Little River No. 2, colored."<sup>3</sup> On October 3, 1927 the Board of Education selected Strickland Brothers of Zebulon to build the brick-veneer school for \$10,000. Due to the large size of the school, the Board voted one month later to take out a loan of

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<sup>1</sup> Kelly Lally, *Historic Architecture of Wake County* (Raleigh: County of Wake, 1995) 202.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas H. Hanchett, "The Rosenwald Schools and Black Education in North Carolina," *The North Carolina Historical Review* Vol. LXV, No. 4, October 1988: 442.

<sup>3</sup> Wake County Board of Education, Minutes, 21 September 1927. North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, N.C. Microfilm.

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\$3,000 for the "construction and equipment of new Rosenwald School Building for the colored race . . . Little River Township, No. 2."<sup>4</sup>

In Wake County, the Rosenwald Fund helped to build 21 schools, contributing \$23,000, while the school board gave \$143,805 (the second highest in the state), the white community donated \$605, and the African American community raised \$35,756 (the largest in the state).<sup>5</sup> Residents of Riley Hill solicited part of the \$35,756 that had been raised for Rosenwald Schools by the Wake County African American community.

The plan for the school was provided by the Rosenwald Foundation, and was designed as a six-teacher school. The brick school featured an "H" shaped plan. Two gable-front wings project forward, each containing three classrooms. The central section of the building had an auditorium, office, and "industrial" room for teaching practical knowledge to the students. According to a history of Wake County schools, Julius Rosenwald visited Riley Hill School in 1928 and "stated that the Riley Hill Negro School was the first brick Negro school he had seen built with his help."<sup>6</sup>

The school year during the 1930s was six months long. The year started later for African American students than for white students; for example, in 1932 white pupils began their school year on September 5, and black children did not start until two weeks later.<sup>7</sup> Six teachers worked at Riley Hill School, one for each classroom, and one for each grade.<sup>8</sup> During the 1940s, grades seven and eight would also have been taught at the school.

In 1951, the Wake County Board of Education awarded a bid for the construction of an "auditorium, addition, and septic tank" for a cost of \$79,500 to John W. Seymour of Raleigh.<sup>9</sup> The buildings were complete by September 1952.<sup>10</sup> When finally constructed, the buildings included a combination gymnasium and auditorium, a building that contained classrooms and the cafeteria, and most likely, the addition of bathrooms and two more classrooms to the original building. The new buildings altered the use of the original school, in which the auditorium was converted to a library and one of the rear classrooms was made into an office for the school administration.

The school closed in 1970, although it continued to operate as an educational center for Wake County, housing the area's Head Start program. In 1991 the Riley Hill Baptist Church purchased the school, which is now vacant.

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<sup>4</sup> Wake County Board of Education, Minutes, 15 November 1927.

<sup>5</sup> Jerry L. Cross, "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; unpub. typescript in the "Rosenwald Schools" file, Eastern Office, Division of Archives and History, Greenville, NC; 7. The Johnston County school district contributed \$156,500 toward the cost of constructing African-American rural schools. The greatest number of school buildings was constructed in Mecklenburg County, a total of 26.

<sup>6</sup> Graydon Wright Jordan, "A History of the Wake County Schools," M.A. Thesis, University of North Carolina, 1943: 102. Although this may have been the first brick Rosenwald school that Mr. Rosenwald toured, many others had been built earlier, including the Zebulon Rosenwald School constructed in 1924.

<sup>7</sup> Wake County Board of Education, Minutes, 2 May 1932.

<sup>8</sup> Wake County Board of Education, Minutes, 3 June 1932.

<sup>9</sup> Wake County Board of Education, Minutes, 12 December 1951.

<sup>10</sup> Wake County Board of Education, Minutes, 2 September 1952.

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- 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.
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- 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.
- Thomas, Beth P. National Register of Historic Places Nomination for the W.E.B. Dubois School, Wake County, North Carolina. March 31, 1993.
- Wake County Board of Education Minutes 1925-1959. North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, North Carolina. Microfilm.

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**Verbal Boundary Description**

The boundary corresponds to the present tax parcel number, Little River Township, PIN 1065.

**Boundary Justification**

The proposed boundary includes the original tract of land associated with the school, and the school itself.



playground

REQUIRED SKETCH MAP OF PROPERTY. Indicate any roadways by name and show other major topographic features.

