
7. Description

Inventory No. PG: 87A-057

Condition

excellent deteriorated
 good ruins
 fair altered

Prepare both a one paragraph summary and a comprehensive description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

SUMMARY

The former Black Swamp School, 19011 Croom Road, Brandywine, was constructed in 1899 and largely retains its original form, materials, workmanship, location, and setting. Converted to a dwelling after nearly four decades as a school house, the building sits close to Croom Road and faces south. Prominent features of the property include a large beech tree southwest and a large oak northwest of the building. The school sits above the road as the land slopes downward toward the building from the road on the south and falls away on the east.

DESCRIPTION

The building is of wood frame construction, clad in horizontal wood siding with corner boards, and consists of two sections: the 1899 schoolhouse and a later addition. The 1899 section to the south is composed of a low, one-story vestibule with a front-gable roof and a one-story block containing the classroom, also with a front-gable roof. The wood siding is painted green on the east elevation; the south elevation of the vestibule is whitewashed. The sills of the vestibule and classroom block sit on brick piers. The south elevation of the vestibule contains a paneled wood entry door; the east and west elevations of the vestibule contain single, four-over-four, wood-sash windows with tacked screens. The east elevation of the classroom block has three bays, with single, six-over-six, wood sashes in the center and right bays, and a half-light wood entry door in the left bay. This door replaced an original window. On the west elevation there are three bays: in the right bay there is a single, six-over-six, wood-sash that matches those on the east elevation; in the center bay there is a two-over-two, horizontal wood sash; the opening in the left bay is boarded over. On the east elevation, openings in the wood siding indicate that there was a full-length porch here, during the 70 years that the building was used as a residence, and recently removed by the current owner.

On the north elevation there is a one-and-one-half story addition. Although the precise date of construction is unknown, the addition is believed to have been constructed after Daniel Skinner acquired the property in 1936 and converted the school house into a dwelling. The addition's front-gable joins that of the school house, but the ridge of the addition is east of the school's ridgeline. The addition does not extend across the full width of the school house. A brick chimney pierces the western slope of the addition's roof. Like the school house, the addition is clad in horizontal wood siding, with short lengths used on the west or rear elevation. The wood siding on the east elevation is painted green on the first floor. The north elevation of the addition above the first floor is clad in asbestos shingles, which the current owner is in the process of removing. Remnants of the asbestos shingles are evident on the east elevation. The sill of the addition sits on poured concrete piers. There is a single bay on the east elevation of the addition. On the right side of this bay, first story, there is a singular four-over-four, wood-sash; on the left is a glazed, paneled wood door with four fixed lights. Centered on the half-story of the east elevation of the addition is a six-light wood casement window with tacked screen. In the center of the north elevation of the addition there is paneled wood entry door. On the west elevation of the addition there is a six-light wood casement centered in the half-story.

There is a well located at the northwest corner of the addition in a small frame shed. The shed sits on a poured concrete base. The elevations are clad with siding paper and the shed roof is covered with asphalt sheathing. There is a small door located in the center of the south elevation of the shed. The shed is believed to have been constructed after the Skinner purchase.

The current owner has removed several interior walls that divided the one-room schoolhouse into several living areas. A chair rail runs around the perimeter of the large room. Below the rail, the wall is covered with vertical board wainscoting; above, the wall has been opened by the present owner to reveal wood lathe. The floor boards are yellow pine. Window and door frames are trimmed with matching wood moulding. The vestibule walls match those of the schoolroom. Both the exterior door and the interior door leading from the vestibule are wood paneled. The exterior door has five panels; the interior door has four panels and may date from original construction. There is an opening in the floor and in the roof above at the south end of the building to the right of the door to the

Maryland Historical Trust Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. PG: 87A-057

Name Black Swamp School
Continuation Sheet

Number 7 Page 1

vestibule. This may have been the location of a stove. At the north end of the room there is a section of brick built into the wall containing a stove flue. This arrangement appears to date from when the schoolhouse was used as a dwelling. The brick partially covers moulding that may have framed one of the two chalkboards found in the building by the present owner

The Black Swamp School retains a high integrity of location, setting, design, workmanship, materials, feeling, and association. A later addition from building's use as dwelling does not diminish overall integrity as it is not visible from the public-right-of-way and built with in-kind materials.

8. Significance

Inventory No. PG: 87A-057

Period	Areas of Significance	Check and justify below		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> health/medicine	<input type="checkbox"/> performing arts
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> invention	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-1999	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment/ recreation	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 2000-	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ethnic heritage	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/ settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social history
	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning		<input type="checkbox"/> maritime history	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation		<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other: _____

Specific dates	1878-1935	Architect/Builder	Unknown
Construction dates	1899		

Evaluation for:

National Register Maryland Register not evaluated

Prepare a one-paragraph summary statement of significance addressing applicable criteria, followed by a narrative discussion of the history of the resource and its context. (For compliance projects, complete evaluation on a DOE Form – see manual.)

SUMMARY

Schools have historically played an important role in African-American communities, fostering cooperation and cohesiveness among African-Americans in a highly segregated society. This was especially true in Prince George's County, Maryland, where education and religion were the twin pillars upon which new African-American communities were built in the late nineteenth century. Constructed in 1899 and largely retaining its original form, materials, and setting, Black Swamp School is a testimony to the perseverance of a rural African-American community and its belief in the value of education.

Following the Civil War, education was viewed by many as the principal means for social and economic advancement for a formerly enslaved population. In Maryland and other states sympathetic to the Southern cause, however, there was significant resistance to providing public education for African-Americans. While the state School Act of 1868 required Maryland counties to provide public education for African-American children, the earliest schools were founded and supported by local communities with the aid of philanthropic organizations and the Freedmen's Bureau, established by the federal government in 1865 to aid emancipated slaves.¹ In its 1869 annual report, the Maryland State Board of Education reported that there were seven "colored" public schools in Prince George's County serving 234 pupils.² These schools appear to have received no public support, as evidenced by the table that reveals Prince George's County had zero dollars in expenditures for colored schools that year.³ It was not until 1872 when the Freedmen's Bureau disbanded that the county took over operation of the colored schools.

The original Black Swamp School was constructed in 1878 on one acre that the Prince George's County Board of School Commissioners purchased from J. Allen Hawkins and his wife, Charity, in 1877. The property was a portion of the 5 ½ acres that Hawkins, a former slave, had purchased in 1868 from Dr. Mathias Latimer.⁴ The land was part of Latimer's plantation, Cole Brooke. Hawkins had been actively involved in the education of African-Americans in the area since at least 1872 when he was named by the

¹ Sherman E. Flanagan, "Development of Public Education in Prince George's County," Master's thesis, University of Maryland, 1924, 51. Flanagan notes that funds for the establishment of colored schools came from the "Citizens of Baltimore. (A society.)," presumably the Baltimore Association for the Moral and Educational Improvement of Colored People; "Associations in other states; "Friends," i.e., Quakers in England and Ireland; "Colored people in the state;" and "Loans from various sources." He does not mention support from the Freedmen's Bureau.

² Table F in Maryland State Board of Education Report for year ending September 30, 1869, reproduced in Eleanor Fay and A. Mildred Hoyle, *A Brief History of Early Times and an account of the Educational Progress in Prince George's County, Maryland*, 1965, Bethesda: Mental Health Study Center, National Institute of Mental Health, 61

³ Table E in Maryland State Board of Education report for the year ending September 30, 1870 reproduced in Fay, "A Brief History," 163.

⁴ Maryland-National Capital Parks and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC), Black History Program Files, Untitled report, 51

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. PG:87A-057

Name Black Swamp School
Continuation Sheet

Number 8 Page 1

Board of School Commissioners as one of three trustees for the former Freedmen's Bureau school in the district.⁵ The school, known as St. Thomas, had been constructed in Horsehead, part of the Aquasco district, in 1868.⁶ The school gained its name from the congregation that held services in the school building, St. Thomas Methodist Episcopal Church.⁷

Officially "Colored School No. 2, District 8," Black Swamp School served as a replacement for the Freedmen's School in Horsehead. The new school gained its colorful appellation from its proximity to Black Swamp Creek.⁸ The 1879 State Board of Education report lists five colored schools built or enlarged during the year ending September 30, however, none of these schools is located in District 8 according to the document. Black Swamp School's first trustees were Wallis Fowler, Richard Ford, and J. Allen Hawkins.

The 1878 school house was destroyed by fire in 1898 and the Board of School Commissioners authorized the construction of a new building in early 1899.⁹ By the end of July, a new school house measuring 30-by-24-by-11 feet had been completed at a cost of \$426.05, with an additional \$79.00 for furnishings.¹⁰ Expenses for Black Swamp School during the 1888-89 school year included \$25.81 for rent, which may indicate that classes were held in a rented space during construction. Although the building was destroyed, text books appear to have been saved with 55 new books issued by the county during the year bringing the total number of text books allotted the school to 175. The annual report also reveals that enrollment in the one-room school reached a high of 34 during the spring session, but average attendance ranged between 11 and 18 for the four school semesters.

In 1923-24, a committee of the Colored Public School Trustees Association conducted a survey of the 42 "Colored Public Schools" in Prince George's County. The association was formed in May 1921 with the object of promoting better educational conditions for African-American students, with an emphasis on aiding schools in financial need.¹¹ Isaiah Gray, a trustee of Black Swamp School, served on the committee. The objectives of the committee in publishing the report were explicitly stated: Committee members sought "to encourage and inspire patrons to take greater personal interest in improving their school plants, to bring about a greater sympathy and interest on the part of white officials and employers, and to inform 'outsiders' as to educational conditions in our county."¹² The committee visited Black Swamp School, on January 6, 1924. They reported "The school building is not so old, but was poorly built." They urge the community to "organize and gradually work out plans for improved conditions." If everyone in the community participates and raises money through different activities, the Committee states, "you will not only soon have a new building, but you will have a new spirit in your community that will not stop at school house improvements."¹³

After the Colored Public School Trustees Association Report, classes continued to be held in the one-room Black Swamp School for more than a decade. In February 1935, the community petitioned the Board of Education for a new school building.¹⁴ In 1936, the Board acquired two acres a short distance away, on the opposite side of Croom Road, for construction of a new school that opened the

⁵ Ibid. The other trustees were Frank Wills and Wallis Fowler

⁶ M-NCPPC Black History Program Files, Untitled report, 48

⁷ Ibid., 53

⁸ Ibid., 52

⁹ M-NCPPC Black History Program Files, Untitled report, 52

¹⁰ Maryland State Board of Education, 33rd *Report of the Public Schools of Maryland*, 1899, 283. According to the document, four school houses were built during the year, with two for African-Americans and two for white students. Both colored school houses replaced buildings destroyed by fire.

¹¹ Thomas J. Calloway, George D. Brown, Ignatius Mitchell, Isaiah Gray, *A Survey of Colored Public Schools of Prince George's County, Maryland*, Seat Pleasant, MD: The Trustees' Association, 1924, 22

¹² Calloway, *A Survey of Colored Public Schools*, 23

¹³ Ibid., 16-17. Note: Most of the individual school reports exhort members of the community to greater effort on behalf of their school.

¹⁴ Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form, PG: 87A-12

Maryland Historical Trust Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. PG:87A-057

Name Black Swamp School
Continuation Sheet

Number 8 Page 2

same year.¹⁵ The land was purchased from Ann R. Latimer, the daughter of Dr. Mathias Latimer who, nearly 70 years earlier, had sold the 5 ½ acres to freedman Hawkins. The Black Swamp School property was purchased for \$100 by Daniel Skinner in October 1936.¹⁶ Skinner modified the school house for use as a dwelling, and the property remained in the family for 70 years.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Black Swamp School is significant for its character, interest, and value as a part of the development, heritage, and cultural characteristics of the region, and as an example of the cultural, economic, social, and historic heritage of the County and its communities. The Black Swamp School is also significant under National Register of Historic Places criterion A for being associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

¹⁵ M-NCPPC Black History Program files, Untitled report, 52. The new school opened under the name Poplar Hill School. The name Black Swamp School was historically interchanged with the Old Poplar Hill School as the school house was located in the Poplar Hill community.

¹⁶ Prince George's County Land Records, Liber 722, Folio 129

Maryland Historical Trust Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. PG:87A-057

Name Black Swamp School
Continuation Sheet

Number 8 Page 3

Chain of Title

Tax Map 174, Parcel 27

Deed HB 1: 517 October 13, 1868	M.R. Latimer and R. Latimer to Allen Hawkins (5 ½ acres, \$150.00)
Deed HB 12: 476 August 10, 1877	John Allen Hawkins and Charity Ann Hawkins to Board of County Commissioners of Prince George's County (1 acre, \$75.00)
Deed 722: 129 October 17, 1936	Board of Education of Prince George's County to Daniel Skinner (1 acre, \$100.00, "Old Poplar Hill Colored School Property")
Deed 4535: 105 September 26, 1975	Marie Skinner Howard, personal representative of the estate of Louise Skinner per Orphans Court Administration No. 23,945, subject to terms, uses and conditions contained in the will of Louise Skinner, to Daniel Skinner, Henry Skinner, William Lee Skinner, Helen Yorkshire, Elizabeth Skinner, Marie Howard, Mary E. Holland, James E. Skinner, and Sterling Skinner (1 acre, \$10)
Deed 27066: 450 January 31, 2007	Prince George's County, Maryland to Fringe Benefit Investments LLC [Tax sale of 1-acre school lot and improvements (assessed at \$51,900) for \$33,335.37]
Deed 28276: 671 July 6, 2007	Fringe Benefits Investments LLC to 19011 Croom Road, LLC (1 acre, \$64,100)
Deed 29121: 267 December 6, 2007	19011 Croom Road, LLC to Joanne Flynn (1 acre, \$47,250)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Inventory No. PG: 87A-057

Annual Reports, Maryland State Board of Education, located in Maryland State Archives, Annapolis.
Fay, Eleanor and A. Mildred Hoyle. *A Brief History of Early Times and an Account of the Educational Progress in Prince George's County, Maryland*, 1965. Bethesda: Mental Health Study Center, National Institute of Mental Health.
Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, Black History Program files, Untitled report.
Pearl, Susan G. *African American Heritage Survey*, 1996. Upper Marlboro: Maryland-National Capital Parks and Planning Commission.
Prince George's County Land Records.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of surveyed property	<u>1.0</u>	
Acreage of historical setting	<u>1.0</u>	
Quadrangle name	<u>Lower Marlboro</u>	Quadrangle scale: <u>1:2000</u>

Verbal boundary description and justification

Black Swamp School is sited on a one-acre lot of Tax Map 174, Parcel 27. The parcel comprises the land originally deeded to Prince George's County Board of School Commissioners in 1878. The triangular shaped property is bounded on the south by Croom Road, Parcel 80 to the east and Parcel 13 to the west and north.

11. Form Prepared by

name/title	Rosemary Faya Prola, Architectural Historian		
organization	The Ottery Group for M-NCPPC Planning Department	date	March 23, 2009
street & number	3420 Morningwood Drive, Suite 100	telephone	301.562.1975
city or town	Olney	state	Maryland 20832

The Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust
Maryland Department of Planning
100 Community Place
Crownsville, MD 21032-2023
410-514-7600