Seebert Lane Colored School

Name of Property

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

1. Name of Property

historic name  Seebert Lane Colored School (Preferred)

other names/site number  Pleasant Green School, Hillsboro School

2. Location

street & number  Seebert Rd., SE of jct. U.S. 219

city or town  Seebert

state West Virginia code WV county Pocahontas code 075 zip code 24946

Not for publication

3 State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 at the following level(s) of significance:           national           statewide    x    local

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

Signature of certifying official       Title                                                                         Date

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property     _    meets     _   does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official                                                                         Date

Title                                                                                                  State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

_   entered in the National Register                                                _  determined eligible for the National Register

_   determined not eligible for the National Register                       _  removed from the National Register

_   other (explain):                                                                                                                                       _

Signature of the Keeper                                                                                                         Date of Action
Seebert Lane Colored School
Name of Property

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Click as many boxes as apply.)

- x private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

Category of Property
(Click only one box.)

- x building(s)

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contributing</th>
<th>Noncontributing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

- 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

- Education/school

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

- Social/civic

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

- Other/gable-front

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

- Foundation: Concrete
- Walls: Wood
- roof: Metal
- other: brick

Narrative Description
See 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.)

- [x] 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.)

Property is:

- [ ] A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- [ ] B removed from its original location.
- [ ] C a birthplace or grave.
- [ ] D a cemetery.
- [ ] E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- [ ] F a commemorotive property.
- [ ] G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**
(Enter categories from instructions.)

- Ethnic Heritage: Black
- Education

**Period of Significance**
ca. 1898 - 1954

**Significant Dates**
N/A

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

**Cultural Affiliation**
N/A

**Architect/Builder**
Jordan, Robert Samuel – builder

**Narrative Statement of Significance:**
See Continuation Sheets
9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

See 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 #
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey #

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository: __________________________

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property  Less than one acre

UTM References

Hillsboro, WVA Quadrangle. Datum 83.

Zone  17  Easting  570637  Northing  4222357

Verbal Boundary Description

The property is a rectangular lot that extends 210 feet along the north side of County Route 27/Seebert Road, and 86 feet along the west side of U.S. Route 219. Fence lines mark the other two legs of the property. The boundary encompasses the original lot deeded by William L. McNeel to the Board of Education as recorded in the Pocahontas County Courthouse Records; Deed Book 16, page 9. This deed is dated February 3, 1876.

Boundary Justification

The boundary follows the property line of the original plot of land deeded for use as a school for African American children. The three buildings and lawn area are all encompassed within the boundary.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title  Jean Boger/Susan Critchley
organization  Michael Gioulis Historic Preservation Consultant, Inc.  date  July 1, 2012
street & number  614 Main Street  telephone  304-765-5716
city or town  Sutton  state  WV  zip code  26601

Photographs:

See continuation sheets
Location and Setting

The Seebert Lane Colored School is located on a corner lot at the junction of U.S. Route 219 and County Route 27, also known as Seebert Road. The property is located on the north side of County Route 27 with the school situated toward the southeast end of the lot, facing southwest. The lot is four-tenths of an acre, 210 feet wide by 86 feet deep. The school sits slightly above the roadbed on a flat terrace. A large down-sloping lawn extends west toward U.S. Route 219. The lot is level to the rear. A short gravel entrance drive extends from County Route 27 to the front of the school. Some of the gravel extends to the east of the school for parking. Two outbuildings, a contributing fuel shed and a noncontributing privy, are situated to the rear of the school. The grounds are marked by a modern wood rail fence along the northeast elevation, a modern wire fence on the southeast side, County Route 27 on the southwest side, and US Route 219 on the northwest side. There are trees and shrubbery around the perimeter of the property. The school is in a rural area, surrounded by farms and dwellings. (Photo No. 1)

Description

Seebert Lane Colored School   ca.1898     contributing building

The Seebert Lane Colored School is a one-story, front gable school building measuring 24’ 4” x 40’ 4” with a centered porch and cupola and a symmetrical facade. The frame building is supported by concrete piers and is protected by clapboard siding and a modern, standing-seam metal roof.

The small porch has a modern wood deck and steps and is covered by a hipped roof (Photos 2 and 7). The roof is supported by two simple, rounded columns. The entrance door, a simple four-panel door, is recessed. To either side of the porch is a one-over-one, double-hung sash window with simple, flat hood. An arched, louvered vent with pediment is centered above the porch (Photo 5). A simple architectural feature of the building is the partial cornice return with curved edge and frieze boards (Photo 6). The cupola, centered on the roof ridge above the porch has a rectangular louvered vent on each side and a spire (Photos 2 and 4). A small, brick chimney rises from the roofline behind the cupola. Each side elevation has four equally-spaced, one-over-one, double-hung sash windows and a smaller similar window towards the front corner of the elevation (Photos 2 and 3). The rear of the building has no fenestration or architectural detail, with the exception of the cornice returns (Photo 4).

The school is entered directly into the classroom. Inside, the entry door is flanked by cloak rooms. These rooms, situated in the south and west corners, are entered through doorways with four-panel doors with natural finish. The main room has a slate blackboard with simple wood trim extending across most of the rear (northeast) wall. In the center of the room is a modern blower for an oil furnace with a metal flue pipe leading up to the exterior chimney. The stove and flue are in the original location of prior heating sources (Photo 8). The oak floors in the main room and the cloakrooms are tongue-and-groove (Photo 10). There is simple, natural-finish pine woodwork around the doors and windows (Photos 8 and 11). The ceiling and walls throughout are sawn lathe plaster (Photo 9). Wood wainscoting reaches to the bottom of the windowsills (Photo 9). The room is lighted by four porcelain fixtures mounted directly to the ceiling with bare bulbs without shades. There are several wood benches and original desks from various time periods. (Photo No. 8-11)

Fuel Shed   ca.1898     contributing building

The fuel shed (Photo 12), located behind the schoolhouse along the northeast lot line, was constructed at the same time of the school. It has a modern metal shed roof, exposed rafter tails, painted German siding, and pier foundation. The main elevation (southwest) includes a single door on hinges for wood delivery and an opening near the roof for coal delivery. The door is made from vertical narrow wood boards.
Name of Property: Seebert Lane Colored School
County and State: Pocahontas County, West Virginia

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service / National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Privy

ca.1933, relocated ca.1980

non-contributing building

The privy (Photo 12), located next to the fuel shed is a wooden building with shed roof relocated to the school grounds ca.1980 from the Little Levels United Methodist Church lot in Little Levels, West Virginia. It has a modern metal roof, painted vertical board siding, and pier foundation. It is considered non-contributing since it is not historically associated with the Seebert Lane Colored School.
Statement of Significance

The Seebert Lane Colored School is eligible for listing in the National Register at the local level under Criterion A: Ethnic Heritage as a significant relic symbolizing the African American history of Pocahontas County during segregation. It is also eligible under Criterion A: Education for the important role it played in the education of the county’s black youth. The school served the local African American community from the time it was constructed, ca. 1898, until desegregation in 1954 when the Brown vs. Board of Education ruling mandated integration. The period of significance reflects these dates.

General History

The first white settlers to the Pocahontas County area arrived in 1749. However, settlement was slow throughout the following decades due to the threat of attacks by Native Americans. By the turn of the century the population began to grow. In 1821 the Virginia General Assembly created Pocahontas County. By 1830 the US Census recorded 2,542 residents in the county, including 244 African Americans.

While most African Americans arrived in the region as slaves, a few were free and some were given their freedom, usually at the death of their owner and so stated in a will. The 1830 Census recorded 17 free blacks and the 1840 Census recorded 19. Documented cases include Benjamin Warwick, freed by Jacob Warwick's 1818 will for saving his life. 1 Elizabeth E. Rhodes, freed by the will of Martin Dilly in 1852, and John Wesley, freed by Adam Arbogast upon his death in 1852. Other free blacks prior to the Civil War included Abraham Freeman and John Lewis.

When the new state of West Virginia was formed in June 1863, Pocahontas County fell within its boundaries. Slavery, however, was not completely abolished in the new state until the ratification of the 13th Amendment in 1865 at the end of the Civil War. After this, several additional African American families moved into the county. Some included Henry Brown (ca. 1865), James Jackson (1867), Harry McDowell (1868), Joseph Wilson (1873), James Harris (1877), J. Madison Boggs (1882), and Henry Woodford (1885), as well as the Wheeler and Knight families.

As industries grew in the decades following the war, new opportunities arose. In West Virginia, coal mining became one of the primary industries with African Americans making up approximately twenty percent of the state’s miners. In Pocahontas County, however, timbering was the primary industry, spurred first by the completion of the Chesapeake & Ohio Railway to nearby Greenbrier County in 1869 and then its completion to Marlinton and Cass in Pocahontas County in 1900. Many of the first African Americans to arrive in large numbers came as part of the crews constructing the rail lines in the last decades of the nineteenth century. 2 Others arrived in Pocahontas County to work in the timber industry and tanneries. The West Virginia Tuberculosis Sanitarium at Denmar, and agriculture, to a lesser extent, also drew black residents to the county.

Segregation forced the newly arriving black population to establish their own churches and attend separate schools. Schools and churches exercised a strong influence on the communities. Schoolhouses were gathering spots and were often used for social activities in addition to their educational purposes. Sometimes they also served as the community’s church.

---

1 William T. Price, Historical Sketches of Pocahontas County West Virginia (Price Brothers, 1901; reprint, Bowie, Md.: Heritage Books, Inc., 1990), 608 (page references are to reprint edition).
Education

The system of public education in Pocahontas County was very basic, even for white children. Although there had been state legislative attempts to establish a public system in 1796, 1809, and 1818, none were particularly successful. In 1821, the year Pocahontas County was established, there was another attempt to set up a system of free schools. These legislative efforts were for white children only; African Americans were excluded in all instances. In reality, there was no organized public education prior to 1865 in Pocahontas County. Education was based primarily on the parents' interest in making arrangements for their children's educations. Schooling was done at home, through privately paid teachers, or in private schools. There was no free public education. That would change, however, with the formation of the new State of West Virginia in June 1863. The new state's constitution required a thorough and efficient system of free schools. To carry out this mandate of the constitution, the Legislature passed an Act (December 1863) providing for the establishment of a system of free schools. However, there is no evidence of public education activity in Pocahontas County during the Civil War. In fact, the county did not come under the control of West Virginia until after the end of the Civil War.

The 1863 state-wide legislature that established free schools in West Virginia made the various districts in a county the basic unit of administration and control. Each district had a Board of Education which was charged with establishing sufficient schools, employing teachers, setting salaries, determining subjects to be taught, being responsible for school funds, and making annual reports. The 1863 law also provided for the funding of these free schools from state revenue as well as empowering local school boards to levy property taxes. A school term of 6 months was originally required, but the term was reduced to four months due to insufficient monies.1

However, this legislation did not extend public education to African American children. It was not until 1866 that a law was passed which provided for the establishment of public schools for African Americans between the ages of six and twenty-one. An average attendance of sixteen students had to be maintained for a school to remain open. The number of students was amended to fifteen in 1867 and then to ten in 1899. Another source indicated that a school was required only when the number went over thirty in a district.2

After public schooling was mandated in 1863, school houses were built throughout the county. Many serving the small communities were one-room buildings that have largely disappeared. The new school houses were usually log or frame buildings, and often also served as a meeting place for a community's civic and social activities. In the past, schooling had been conducted in private homes, private schools, granaries, or some commercial building.

It is not clear how many schools there were for the African American communities in Pocahontas County. During the time period from 1866, when African American education was mandated, to 1954, when integration was mandated, eight schools serving grades one through eight have been mentioned, although they may not have all been open simultaneously or continuously. They included Seebert Lane, Brownsburg, Greenbrier Hill in Marlinton, Hillsboro, Cass, Frank, Denmar, and Watoga. From at least 1908 to 1910 there were two schools in Brownsburg. Discrepancies concerning the number of schools arise for several reasons. A school building may have been referred to by more than one name. A school’s name may have referred to two different schools or a school may have served two different groups of students during certain set months. Furthermore, a school may have been open only intermittently, records may have been lost, or the "colored" distinction may have been dropped from a school's name. Over the years, the Seebert Lane Colored School has also been known as the Hillsboro Colored School, Seebert Lane School, and Pleasant Green School.

The Annual Report of the State Superintendent of Schools provided figures on total school populations and actual enrollments by sex and race, attendance records, revenues allotted to teachers and building funds, and various expenses. The Pocahontas County report for school year 1865-66 indicates one school building owned by the county and 463 males and 425 females between the ages of 6 and 21 residing in Pocahontas County. Once mandated, school growth was rapid. The following school year there were ten schools with 153 white male and 127 white female students out of 1,239 school-age children living in the county. No black schools were listed for the reported 88 school-aged black children.

By the 1867-68 school year, there were 24 documented schools. There were 30 by the 1868-69 school year, one of which was the first mandated school for African American children in the county. It was located in the Union District. The 1869-70 school year records note 32 schools with 26 male teachers and 5 female teachers teaching an average of 3.4 months. Expenses were recorded at $3,022.40 which included $50 in salary and $6.34 in other expenses for the one African American school.

In 1872 the West Virginia Constitution established that "white and colored persons shall not be taught in the same school" and thus the system of educating black and white children in separate schools continued. During the 1874-75 school year there were 44 schools with 968 white and 18 black students enrolled even though population records indicate there were 1,360 white school-aged children and 71 black school-aged children living in the county. Attendance, which was not yet compulsory, averaged 667 white and 7 African American students. There were 38 male teachers, 4 of whom were African American, and 20 females. After 1875, additional schools were opened for African American children. These schools were in the Little Levels, Edray, and Huntersville Districts before 1900. The school system continued to grow. By 1890 there were 72 schools including three for black students.

In November 1896, the West Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals upheld the segregated system in its Martin v. Board of Education decision which involved Thomas Martin and the Morgan County Board of Education. The Plessy v. Ferguson decision by the U.S. Supreme Court in May 1896 further entrenched the notion of segregated public education through its separate but equal doctrine and the rights of states to impose racial segregation in public schools. "Equal" was never really achieved, but "separate" was and infiltrated all aspects of life. Black children continued to be educated at separate schools.

In the 1939-40 school year, the Board of Education report listed seven operating African American schools including Brownsburg, Cass, Denmar, Frank, Greenbrier Hill, Hillsboro, and Watoga. It was not until the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education decision by the U.S. Supreme Court that the 1896 decision was overturned. This led to the integration of public schools and the ensuing civil rights movement to eliminate segregation and discrimination. Following this decision, black schools were eventually abandoned as students relocated to the previously all-white schools. The only surviving African American school buildings are Brownsburg (c.1923), Greenbrier Hill (ca. 1917), and Seebert Lane (ca. 1898).

---

Seebert Lane Colored School

On February 3, 1876, William L. McNeel sold a small plot of land to the District 4 Board of Education for $50 to “erect a house to be used as a School house or house of worship for the colourd [sic] people of the neighborhood.” The deed further stated, “should it fail to be used for the purpose above stated then the title to said lot of land to revert to the said party of the first.” Robert Samuel Jordan built the Seebert Lane Colored School ca. 1898. It was the second African American school serving the area. The first (known variously as Pleasant Green, Seebert Lane, and Hillsboro Colored Schools) was constructed ca. 1868 and was demolished in 1888 to make way for the construction of the Pleasant Green Church. The first teacher at the new school was listed only as “Grant.” Those who followed included Ward Renick, “Taylor,” Otis Taylor, Arthur Seams, Ed Bolding, Rebecca Peck, J.E. Banks, W.A. Bolden, and Jessie Mitchell.6

There is no reliable date for when the building stopped operating as a school, though it likely coincided with desegregation in 1954. Though oral history indicates that it closed in 1955, it could have been as late as 1964 when, on March 24, a quitclaim deed transferred the land and buildings from the Board of Education of the County of Pocahontas (successor to the Board of Education of District No. 4) to Steptoe Washington, Robert Bolden, Lee Stewart, Willis Tibbs, and Louis Lee, Trustees of the Pleasant Green Methodist Episcopal Church of Seebert, West Virginia. The deed stated that since the Board of Education no longer needed the land and buildings for school purposes, and since “the colored people of the neighborhood are organized into a church named the Pleasant Green Methodist Episcopal Church,” the Board of Education unanimously approved at its regular meeting on May 19, 1964, to convey the “Hillsboro Colored School or Seebert Lane School and the land to the party of the second part herein by a quitclaim deed.” This transfer was in keeping with the original deed which stipulated use of the land for a school house or house of worship for the colored people of the neighborhood. The church is situated a short distance away.

Summary

Seebert Lane Colored School evokes the evolution of public education in rural and small town communities from the days of segregation to the 1954 desegregation mandated by federal law. It is significant for the role it played in educating the local black youth from the late nineteenth century until the mid-twentieth century. It is one of the few remaining representatives in Pocahontas County of the time when public schooling was successfully introduced to West Virginia. Many of these original school buildings are gone due to fire, deterioration, abandonment, or consolidation with other schools. The Seebert Lane Colored School is the oldest of the remaining three African American schools in Pocahontas County and the only gable-front type example. The other two extant schools have hip roofs and date to ca. 1920. The latter are in modified condition and have been vacant for a number of years.

In 1921, the children of Seebert Lane Colored School were photo documented by Lewis W. Hine as part of his with the National Child Labor Committee (NCLC). Though Hine was first commissioned to document child labor in American industry, he later turned his attention to rural agriculture and education.7 His collection includes three of Seebert Lane School including one of a group of students standing outside the building (Photo 13). The building has undergone minimal alterations since photo-documented at that time, during the period of significance. It retains all seven aspects of integrity including location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

---

6 The Black Community in Pocahontas County. Unpublished manuscript sponsored by a grant from the West Virginia Committee for the Humanities and Public Policy. Fall. 1976. Page
Bibliography: works cited/referenced


“The Black Community in Pocahontas County,” Community Discussion Meetings Summary Booklet, West Virginia Committee for the Humanities and Public Policy Grant, 1976.


McNeal, Moffett, President, Pocahontas County Historic Landmarks Commission. Interview by author, winter 2011/2012.


Pocahontas County Board of Education Records. 1939/1940/1941.

Pocahontas County Census Records. 1830. 1840. 1850. 1860.

Pocahontas County Deeds and Records.

Price, William T. *Historical Sketches of Pocahontas County West Virginia*. Price Brothers, 1901. Reprint, Bowie, Md.:

Puffenberger, Hubert and Garry. Interview by author, August 10, 2011.


Taylor, Ruth. Interview by author, winter 2011/2012.

Triplett, Jimmy. *An Introduction to West Virginia Ethnic Communities*. West Virginia Division of Culture and History. Unpublished manuscript.

*Internet Web Sites*


http://www.wvculture.org/history/africanamericans/woodsoncarter02.html.


Photographs

Name of Property:  Seebert Lane Colored School
City or Vicinity:  Seebert vicinity
County:  Pocahontas
State:  West Virginia
Photographer:  Mike Gioulis, Jean Boger, Susan Critchley
Date Photographed:  Winter 2011/2012
Description of Photograph(s) and number:

1 of 13  Front, south, and side, east, elevations looking northwest.  Showing lot.

2 of 13  Front, south, and side, east, elevations looking northwest.  Showing lot.

3 of 13  Front, south, and side, west, elevations looking northeast.

4 of 13  Side, east, and rear, north, elevations looking north.

5 of 13  Louver detail in gable end.

6 of 13  Primary cornice and corner board detail.

7 of 13  Front, south, elevation showing entrance, looking northeast.

8 of 13  Interior, classroom detail.

9 of 13  Cloakroom detail showing wainscoting, original desk and window trim.

10 of 13  Flooring detail.

11 of 13  Interior door detail.

12 of 13  Outbuildings looking northeast.

13 of 13  Lewis Hine photograph
Photo 1:
Front, south, and side, east, elevations looking northwest. Showing lot.

Photo 2:
Front, south, and side, east, elevations looking northwest. Showing lot.
Photo 3:
Front, south, and side, west, elevations looking northeast.

Photo 4:
Side, east, and rear, north, elevations looking north.
Photo 5:
Louver detail in gable end.

Photo 6:
Primary cornice and corner board detail.
Photo 7:
Front, south, elevation showing entrance, looking northeast.

Photo 8:
Interior, classroom detail.
Photo 9:
Cloakroom detail showing wainscoting, original desk and window trim.

Photo 10:
Flooring detail.
Photo 11:
Interior door detail.

Photo 12:
Outbuildings looking northeast.
Photo 13:
Lewis Hine photograph