

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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. 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.

**VLR Listed: 12/13/2018**  
**NRHP Listed: 4/2/2019**

## 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Madison Heights Elementary School  
Other names/site number: Phelps Road School, Madison Heights High School, Seminole Elementary School; DHR ID 005-5045  
Name of related multiple property listing:  
N/A  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

## 2. Location

Street & number: 123 Phelps Road  
City or town: Madison Heights State: VA County: Amherst  
Not For Publication:  N/A Vicinity:  N/A

## 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  
Applicable National Register Criteria:  
X A \_\_\_ B X C \_\_\_ D

<hr/> <b>Signature of certifying official/Title:</b> <u>Virginia Department of Historic Resources</u> <b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b>	<b>Date</b>
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In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.	
<hr/> <b>Signature of commenting official:</b>	<b>Date</b>
<hr/> <b>Title :</b>	<b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b>

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#### 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:) \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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#### 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

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**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION/School

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> & 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY REVIVALS/ Colonial Revival/ Georgian Revival  
MODERN MOVEMENT/International Style

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**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: BRICK, CONCRETE; WOOD; METAL;  
GLASS, STONE, STUCCO

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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### Summary Paragraph

Madison Heights Elementary School, located in Amherst County, Virginia, was constructed ca. 1939, adjacent to an earlier high school constructed ca. 1925. Originally operating as the area's school for white students, the high school had a large central auditorium with classrooms surrounding it on three sides. Rear additions to the high school occurred in 1930, 1934, and 1937. In 1965, the ca. 1925 high school building was demolished to accommodate a Modern addition to the elementary school. Completed through use of Public Works Administration (PWA) funds, the ca. 1939 Georgian Revival style elementary school is a two-story building with Flemish-bond-variant exterior walls, and classically influenced features such as large double-hung windows, jack arches, and Doric engaged columns. Today, the ca. 1939 elementary school reads as the focal point of the building, with all of the high school additions and the 1966 elementary school addition extending from it. All of the sections of the school retain differentiating exterior design elements and interior architectural features that evidence their respective periods of construction. Although neglect, failed roofs, and water damage have resulted in deterioration in some areas of the building, overall the evolved school building retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association as a consolidated school that served a rural community through much of the twentieth century.

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## Narrative Description

### Site Description

The Madison Heights Elementary School is located in the unincorporated community of Madison Heights in Amherst County, Virginia, within a small twentieth century residential area just off the Lynchburg Expressway/US Route 29, a key corridor through Lynchburg and Amherst. Oriented along Phelps Road, the nearly three-acre property is roughly bounded by Phelps Road to the southwest, Center Street to the southeast, a large field to the northeast, and residential properties and the Madison Heights Water Office to the northwest. The school has a lawn in front, modestly elevated above Phelps Road, and a large asphalt parking lot is located behind the school to the northeast. Other site features include grass lawns, a few large trees, and multiple sidewalks connecting sections of the building via several access points.

The Madison Heights High School was originally constructed ca. 1925, with additions in 1930, 1934, and 1937. In 1939, the Madison Heights Elementary School was built adjacent to the 1925 high school. In 1966, the 1925 high school building was demolished to make way for a Modern addition to the elementary school. After construction of the ca. 1939 elementary school, it and the high school shared a cafeteria, indicating the interconnected relationship between the two educational facilities during the middle decades of the twentieth century. The following description begins with the ca. 1930 elementary school, which since the mid-1960s has been the focal point of the building. The sequence of construction is illustrated on the attached Sketch Map.

#### Ca. 1939 Elementary School

Located next to the original high school building on the northwest side of the property, the ca. 1939 Georgian Revival elementary school maintains much of its historic architectural integrity. Characterized by austere Georgian Revival symmetry, this two-story building is T-shaped with a five-bay, side gable central block and a two-bay, wing on each side of the central block, as well as a one-story wing off the central block's rear elevation. It has a brick foundation and Flemish-bond-variant brick exterior walls. The roof is covered with standing-seam metal, with a steeply-pitched side gable roof on the central block, a low-pitched gable roof on the rear wing, and steeply pitched flat-topped hipped roofs on the side wings. The central block has a parapet on each gabled roof end. The parapets each have a symmetrically placed pair of interior end brick chimneys, each with brick corbelling at the top. An additional interior chimney is located on the southwest end of the rear wing. The central block features a frieze and cornice with modillions. The southeast and northwest wings have a simple cornice and frieze, while the rear wing has a simple cornice.

The focal point of the main façade, or southwest elevation, is the ornate Georgian Revival door surround with paneled wall insets. The entry has an inset six-paneled double door with a seven-light transom window. Additionally, the door surround has a full entablature with dentils and two fluted Doric engaged columns flanking the entry. A concrete stoop with a metal railing connects

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to a front sidewalk leading to Phelps Road, which fronts the building. A twenty-four-light circular window with four keystones is located in the central bay of the façade just above the entrance. The first and second story each feature four bays of paired twelve-over-twelve double-hung wood sash windows on either side of the central entrance; the windows are accented with jack arches and keystones. Openings on the side and rear elevations of the southeast and northwest wings are minimal. Additional windows have fixed twenty-light steel window sash and a four-over-two with an awning in the upper sash. The rear, one-story wing is lined with windows on the southeast and northwest elevations, which primarily include paired double-hung twelve-over-twelve wood sash. Other windows feature four-over-two awning sash and twelve-light fixed metal windows. The ca. 1939 block's northeast wall borders the 1966 Modern addition.

The ca. 1939 school's interior retains its original T-shaped layout including original hallway and classroom layouts, with most historic architectural details and features intact as well. The hallways have tile wainscoting and plaster walls and ceiling finishes. Stairways also have tile wainscoting as well as original cast iron railings. Classrooms retain historic blackboards and several maintain their historic wood paneling. Entries to classrooms feature historic doors with a single wood panel topped by nine lights. Three-light transoms exist over many of the classroom doors. Closets and storage areas feature two-panel wooden doors. Within restrooms, the same type of wall tiles as used in the hallways are extended from floor to ceiling.

In addition to being widely popular styles for public buildings during the early twentieth century, the Colonial Revival and Georgian Revival styles of the ca. 1939 building are in keeping with the traditional architectural styles favored by New Deal construction programs such as the Public Works Administration. A defining characteristic of many New Deal public buildings was that styles referenced local vernacular traditions; thus, adobe buildings were built in New Mexico, while Virginia received red-brick buildings with white-painted embellishments such as columns and cornices.

#### 1966 Rear Addition to Elementary School Building

This one-story, rectangular rear wing was added onto the ca. 1939 elementary school building in 1966. Characterized by the severity and lack of ornamentation of the Modern Movement, it has a brick foundation, running bond brick exterior walls, a flat asphalt roof, and a simple cornice and frieze. This addition is lower in height than the 1939 building's original rear extension, and it extends a few feet past the northwest wall of the 1939 wing.

The 1966 addition's southeast and northwest elevations are lined with character-defining horizontal ribbon windows interspersed with three covered entrance doors on each elevation. These asymmetrically-placed entrances are reflective of interior uses. Each has a narrow brick stoop and a one-bay, flat-roofed, metal overhang supported by narrow metal posts. The northeast (rear) elevation has one central, recessed, double door entrance.

#### 1930 Addition to High School

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Prior to the demolition of the ca. 1925 high school building in 1965, the high school expanded by means of multiple additions throughout the mid-twentieth century. The first was a Colonial Revival, rectangular rear addition that was added onto the northeast end of the building in 1930. Situated perpendicular to the original high school building, this addition remains extant, and is fronted by Center Street, which defines the southeastern boundary of the school property.

The one-story, rectangular 1930 addition has a parged concrete foundation and water table, six-course common bond brick walls, and a front-gabled standing-seam metal roof. The addition has a wide, boxed eave overhang with a broken eave return on the northeast (side) elevation. The northeast elevation is a simple brick wall with no openings. The southeast (front) elevation has two sets of ribbon windows, each with five double-hung six-over-six windows. The southwest and northwest elevations are covered by later additions.

#### 1934 Addition to High School

The second addition to the demolished ca. 1925 high school was another rectangular rear addition that parallels the 1930 addition and was added onto the northwest corner of the high school in 1934. The one-story, rectangular addition's design and materials are almost a copy of the 1930 addition, with a concrete foundation, six-course common bond brick walls, and a front-gabled standing-seam metal roof. The 1934 wing has a wide, boxed eave overhang with a broken eave return on the northeast (rear) elevation. The northeast elevation is a blind brick wall. The northwest (side) elevation has two sets of ribbon windows, each with five double-hung six-over-six sash. The southwest and southeast elevations are covered by later additions.

#### 1937 Addition to High School

This two-room ca. 1937 addition was constructed perpendicular to, and within the space between, the 1930 and 1934 additions. It thus formed the fourth (northeast) side of a small courtyard area that was formed by the ca. 1925 original high school building to the southwest, the 1930 addition to the southeast, and the 1934 addition to the northwest. The northeast half of the addition extends beyond the northeast elevations of the 1930 and 1933 additions. While the 1937 wing's detailing is largely consistent with the Colonial Revival elements seen in the two earlier additions, changes in design are apparent within the roofline and brick detailing. This one-story, rectangular addition has a concrete foundation, six-course common bond brick walls, and a side-gabled standing-seam metal roof. It has a wide, boxed eave overhang with an eave return on the northwest and southeast elevations until they meet the previous additions. There are two brick, recessed entries articulated with a masonry arch located on each side of the main gable section and flush with the 1930 and 1934 additions. These entrances appear to relate to the corridors of the 1930 and 1934 additions. The northeast elevation has two sets of paired windows that are currently boarded up. The northwest and southeast elevations are only brick on the small exposed sections, while the majority of these elevations are covered by the neighboring additions. The southwest elevation borders the courtyard and is not visible from an exterior vantage point at this time.

#### 1966 Auditorium Addition (on site of demolished ca. 1925 high school building)

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In 1966, the original ca. 1925 high school building was demolished, and in its place, a new auditorium addition and connecting corridor were built. With the construction of this addition, the previous high school additions and new addition were completely interconnected to the 1939 elementary school building, creating a single large building. The 1966 addition accessed the two early 1930s additions via a rear corridor, and reached the southeast wing of the 1939 elementary school building via a central corridor.

The one-story, International Style addition consists of a large central auditorium, a connecting corridor on the northeast wall, and a wing on both the southeast and northwest sides of the auditorium. It has a brick foundation, running bond brick veneer walls, and a flat asphalt roof. Other than a simple cornice, the addition's decorative detailing is primarily limited to the two covered corner entrances where the auditorium connects to each wing on the southwest elevation. The lack of ornamentation is a hallmark of the International Style. The two covered entrances each have decorative concrete breezeblocks or screens on each side of the entry, a character-defining mid-twentieth century architectural design feature. The first entrance is set within the corner of the southwest elevation, with the auditorium entrance to the west featuring double-leaf metal doors with a large, square, single-light transoms and, to the east, the entrance to the wing, having a set of three metal doors, each topped with a large, square transom light. In the southeast corner entrance, the entrance to the auditorium has double-leaf metal doors with large, square transom lights, and, unlike the west covered entrance area, there is no adjacent entrance to the wing. Additional entrances include two receiving docks. One is located at the northwest (rear) corner of the building and the other is at the east corner of the auditorium's southeast wing and accessed via a side driveway that enters the property from Center Street.

The auditorium block has three large, steel-framed, multiple-light window sash on the southwest (front) elevation, and one on the southwest end of both the southeast (side) and northwest (rear) elevations. Additional narrow, horizontally-oriented two-over-two clerestory windows run along the southeast and northwest elevations of the auditorium block. Each wing has three window openings on the southwest (front) elevation, which are currently boarded up. The southeast (side) elevation of the southeast wing has three additional, horizontally oriented window openings that are currently boarded up as well.

The 1966 addition's interior has some areas with substantial water damage due to roof failure. Much of the ceiling and linoleum floor tiles have failed, and the auditorium is fully exposed to the elements in sections. Despite this, many original interior built-in furnishings, blackboards, and doors remain intact.

#### 1966 Library Addition

A new reading room for the library was added as part of the 1966 alterations. This addition is located in the southeast corner of the courtyard area, and is appended to the northwest elevation of the 1930 high school addition and southwest elevation of the 1937 high school addition. It was connected to the 1930 addition via a double-door entrance, and to the existing reading room in the 1937 addition through a single-leaf door along the northeast wall. The 1966 addition's



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northwest wall is open to the courtyard, while the southwest, southeast, and northeast walls are covered by neighboring additions. The interior of the reading room is inaccessible at this time.

### **Integrity Analysis**

The former Madison Heights Elementary School retains high levels of historic and architectural integrity despite considerable physical deterioration in some areas. Although the town of Madison Heights has become increasingly suburban due to growth associated with the neighboring City of Lynchburg, the school property maintains its historic setting and location within the early twentieth century neighborhood that it originally served. The school building's various expansions over time were designed to accommodate changing pedagogical techniques and growing student enrollments. The 1939 elementary school and its additions retain their original and distinct historic plans, form, space, structure, and architectural styles, as only the ca. 1925 high school building was demolished during the property's evolution. As a result, the building overall maintains integrity of design associated with the 1939-1966 period of significance, a time that encompassed immense cultural changes related to technological innovation, population growth, and economic expansion. Because the building is currently only in fair condition, with portions of roof failure, some of the historic materials, including some windows panes, have been lost. The majority of the historic building materials, however, are extant and retain their original placement, configuration, and spatial relationships. Both the interior and exterior of the building demonstrate integrity of workmanship that illustrates changes in architectural tastes and building materials (such as the transition from plaster wall and ceiling finishes to drywall and dropped ceilings with acoustic tiles). Retention of earlier woodwork, doors, transoms, wall tile, and wood window sash throughout the building are character-defining aspects of the various 1930s sections, while the 1960s sections have simpler metal-framed sash, painted concrete block walls, suspended fluorescent light fixtures that are typical of this era of construction. The property has high integrity of association due to its multiple-decade use as a consolidated public school serving the white children of Madison Heights from the 1930s through the mid-1960s. The building's physical evolution tells the story of its changing educational uses, thus confirming its integrity of feeling.

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## 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 grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION

ARCHITECTURE

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1930-1966

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1930

1934

1937

1939

1966

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Dixon, W. Irving (architect)

Vail, Charles Lee Jr. (architect)

W.B. English Lumber Co. (builder)

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Madison Heights Elementary School is locally significant under Criterion A in the area of Education as a good example of the early to mid-twentieth century process of rural school consolidation from numerous small schools dispersed among communities to large, centralized schools that accommodated multiple grades and modern educational amenities. It is also directly associated with the Jim Crow era of segregation as a whites-only school from its construction through the “freedom of choice” period of desegregation, as represented by its 1966 additions. School-age children of the Monacan Nation began to be admitted to the school in 1963, and a limited number of African American children followed in subsequent years (full desegregation of all County public schools was not achieved until 1970). The Madison Heights Elementary School is also locally significant under Criterion C in the area of Architecture as the ca. 1939 building is a fine example of the Georgian Revival style, while its multiple additions represent the functional evolution of school design from the 1930s to 1960s as well as the supplanting of revival styles with the much more austere International Style. Construction of the ca. 1939 school was partially funded by a Public Works Administration grant which, along with the Works Progress Administration and other New Deal programs, helped to pay for hundreds of public works projects in Virginia during the Great Depression. Also contributing to the building’s architectural significance are its association with two prominent Virginia architects. W. Irving Dixon, a leading architect with the State Department of Education for twenty years, designed the original Georgian Revival school. Well-known local architect Charlie Lee Vail, Jr. designed the 1966 International Style additions. The property’s period of significance extends from the construction of the earliest section in 1930 until 1966 when the final addition was completed during the early years of the school’s racial integration.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

**Madison Heights School Historical Overview**

The history of Madison Heights Elementary School property begins ca. 1924-1925, when the first high school building was constructed on the site. Beginning with the high school’s first graduating class in 1926, until Amherst High School was constructed in 1956, Madison Heights High School served as the primary high school for white children in the area (see Figure 1). Additions to the high school were constructed in 1930, 1934, and 1937. In 1939, the Madison Heights Elementary School, which also served white students residing in the area, was built on the site adjacent to the high school (see Figure 2). The two schools operated beside each other and shared a cafeteria until the last class graduated from the high school in 1962. Following the demolition of the original high school in 1966, a new wing of the elementary school was

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constructed in its place, and all of the previous 1930s additions were interconnected, forming one large building.<sup>1</sup>

Madison Heights Elementary School was constructed ca. 1939 as a replacement for the old Madison Elementary School, which had been destroyed by a fire. When it opened, the 1939 school building served grades one through six and eventually added kindergarten. After the ca. 1925 high school building was demolished, two additions to the elementary school were constructed in 1966 to include a new kitchen and cafeteria, as well as six new classrooms and a library (see Figure 3). At this point, the name of the school was changed to Seminole Elementary School, but was also often referred to as Phelps Road School. In 1970, the county moved the kindergarten through third grade classes to the Colony Road School. In 1991, a new Madison Heights Elementary School was constructed, and the Phelps Road School was closed and has been vacant since that time.<sup>2</sup>

The original Madison Heights Elementary School was designed by W. Irving Dixon, an architect for the State Department of Education, and the builder was W.B. English Lumber Co. (later the English Construction Company) of Altavista, Virginia. The earlier elementary school, built in 1912, had been located on the west side of Main Street between Seventh and Eighth Streets. The 1939 school was constructed with funds from a Public Works Administration (PWA) grant approved in August of 1938 at a cost of \$57,240, and the school was completed in 1939. During the mid-1960s, when the elementary school was slated for expansion, well-known local architect Charlie Lee Vail, Jr. was selected. Vail declared that the old main high school building was badly damaged by termites, and thus it was torn down. Vail then designed a two-part addition, with an extension at the back of the original elementary school, as well as a large addition at the location of the demolished high school, to link the main school building with the three retained high school additions. The bid for this new project was \$202,110 by J.E. Jamerson & Sons, Inc. from Appomattox, Virginia. This project was completed in 1966.<sup>3</sup>

### Criterion A: Education

The site of Madison Heights Elementary School was originally the location of Madison Heights High School, constructed ca. 1925. After the previous elementary school was destroyed by fire in 1938, Madison Heights Elementary School was constructed in 1939 next to the high school and attached via a shared cafeteria. The new elementary school had already been under construction as part of the statewide movement toward school consolidation along with the support of a PWA grant. Beginning after 1910, through World War II, most schools constructed in Virginia were larger consolidated schools that replaced rural, widely dispersed one-room schools; these multiple-room schools, in turn, would be replaced within just a couple of decades by even larger

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<sup>1</sup> The Amherst County Heritage Book Committee, *Amherst County Virginia*, Amherst, VA, 1999, p.40;

<sup>2</sup> The Amherst County Heritage Book Committee, *Amherst County Virginia, 1761-2004: Volume II*, Amherst, VA, 2004, p.85; Charles Stinson, *Hogtown: Memories of Madison Heights, Virginia*, Lynchburg, VA: 2008, p.47-57.

<sup>3</sup> Stinson, *Hogtown*, p.47-57. *Amherst County School Board Minutes*, Book No.2, August 6, 1938; Book No.2, February 28, 1939; Book No.5, March 2, 1964; No.5, November 2, 1964; No.5, May 12, 1965; No.6, September 7, 1965; No.6, July 5, 1966.

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consolidated schools. This movement occurred during the Jim Crow era of segregation, so schools for African American and white children operated separately. In localities such as Amherst that had substantial Virginia Indian population, a segregated school for Virginia Indian children also would be established. The trend toward fewer but larger schools of white schools continued until entire towns had just one consolidated school or, in some cases, a rural county might have just one elementary and one high school. Consolidation of schools for African American and Virginia Indian children occurred more haphazardly as most local governments devoted the lion's share of public funding to the whites-only schools. Also during the early twentieth century, school designs evolved from small one- and two-classroom builds to two-story, multiple-classroom buildings. These later schools also featured single-use rooms for laboratories, libraries, music rooms, and other instructional purposes common in modern schools. During the 1930s, standardized plans for larger schools were developed that included features such as interior halls, auditoriums and gymnasiums.<sup>4</sup> The evolution of the Madison Heights Elementary School illustrates the changing approaches to design and expansion of school sizes and on-site facilities. This culminated in 1966 with completion of new International Style additions that added several classrooms as well as a large multi-purpose auditorium with a stage and a new large cafeteria that replaced an older one.

Madison Heights Elementary School is also locally significant as a school built during the era of Jim Crow segregation and is representative of the system that separated Virginia Indian, African American, and white students until the 1960s/early 1970s throughout Virginia. Justification for segregated schools was based largely on the "separate but equal" doctrine established by the 1896 U.S. Supreme Court decision *Plessy v. Ferguson*. In actual practice, the "equal" part of the doctrine never was achieved as public facilities for non-whites received less funding, had fewer resources, and were often at least partially paid for by private funds raised within the minority community.

In Amherst County, the resolutions for filing bids and awarding the contract for construction of Madison Heights Elementary School in 1939 both refer specifically to the school as "white."<sup>5</sup> Although the Supreme Court decision of *Brown v. Board of Education* had found racial segregation of schools unconstitutional in 1954, the decision's clause that integration should occur with "all deliberate speed" provided ample room for impeding progress toward integration. In 1956 in Virginia, a set of legislative acts designed to resist integration efforts came to be known as Massive Resistance. Then-Governor Thomas B. Stanley also supported the resistance. The policy was soon challenged by various lawsuits filed in the eastern and western U.S. district courts in Virginia. In the western district in 1958, federal judge John Paul ordered that African American students be admitted to Warren County High School and to a high school and elementary school in Charlottesville. His counterpart in the eastern district, federal judge Walter E. Hoffman, issued a similar order to desegregate six schools. Stanley's successor, Governor J. Lindsay Almond Jr., took the extraordinary step of ordering the nine affected schools to be

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<sup>4</sup> John Kern, *Thematic Evaluation of County Public School Buildings in Southwest Virginia*, Virginia Department of Historic Resources, October 2000, p.2, 5, 8-9, 13-17.

<sup>5</sup> The County School Board of Amherst County, Virginia, *Resolution Ordering The Filing of Bids; Resolution Awarding Contract*, February 28, 1939.

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closed rather than integrated. In February 1959, following two more defeats in federal courts, Almond reversed his order and the General Assembly replaced the Massive Resistance laws with the “Perrow Plan” that introduced a “freedom of choice” system. The new system created Pupil Placement Boards empowered to decide which school each student attended. On the surface, the plan appeared to promote integration as it suggested students would be allowed to choose their own school. State officials, however, created the law with the hope that students would remain at their current schools. Dominated by whites, the boards themselves also applied unequal evaluation methods of student applications, with white students’ requested generally honored and African American students’ applications overwhelmingly denied. The reality confirmed their intentions, as Virginia schools, including Madison Heights, remained largely segregated until the May 27, 1968, Supreme Court Decision *Green v. County School Board of New Kent County* moved schools towards geographic zoning and away from freedom of choice. The Virginia localities that had thus far resisted integration submitted to the ruling, with the effect that almost all public schools, including Amherst County’s, had been desegregated by 1970.<sup>6</sup>

During the prolonged organized resistance to desegregation, however, larger cultural and economic trends pulled momentum toward integration. The expense of maintaining separate school systems for white, African American, and Virginia Indian children became prohibitive, especially as last-ditch attempts to equalize the separate facilities ran up costs but failed to offer convincing evidence of the fairness of segregated schools. The federal government also took on a larger role both in providing funding and setting policy for public school education across the county, a carrot-and-stick approach that brought many intransigent school systems into line. The passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act restored to many racial minorities voting and other civil rights that had been lost, or never granted, during the Jim Crow era. With the tide rapidly turning toward integration during the early 1960s, in 1963 Amherst County began to allow children of the Monacan Nation, a Virginia Indian tribe with deep ties to the area, to begin attending previously all-white schools. Interestingly, a county bond referendum to build a separate Indian school had been defeated that same year. The Monacan students’ applications to transfer to all-white schools were approved by the Virginia Board of Education in Richmond and the almost century-old Indian school at Bear Mountain finally closed.<sup>7</sup>

Integration of Virginia Indian schoolchildren, however, occurred more rapidly than for African American students. In 1964, Amherst County opened Central Elementary School along Route 60 as an African-American school. Similarly, when the large expansion of Madison Heights

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<sup>6</sup> Virginia Museum of History and Culture, “Civil Rights Movement in Virginia,” <https://www.virginiahistory.org/collections-and-resources/virginia-history-explorer/civil-rights-movement-virginia> (accessed 4 July 4, 2018); James H. Hershman Jr., “Massive Resistance,” Encyclopedia Virginia (June 2011), at [https://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/Massive\\_Resistance](https://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/Massive_Resistance).

<sup>7</sup> Virginia Indian Archive, “American Indian Education in Virginia – Boarding Schools and Segregation,” Virginia Foundation for the Humanities, <http://www.virginiaindianarchive.org/exhibits/show/american-indian-education-in-v/integration-and--->. The Bear Mountain Indian Mission School (DHR #005-0230) operated from ca. 1868 to 1964. The property was listed in the Virginia Landmarks Register in 1996 and the National Register of Historic Places in 1997. The nomination for the school includes detailed information about the Monacan tribe’s history and struggle for cultural autonomy, and is available online at <https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/005-0230/>. The Monacan Nation won federal recognition in 2018.

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Elementary School was completed in 1966, it represented a very late commitment to the system of segregation by the community of Madison Heights. Both of these schools, along with the rest of the county school system, finally fully desegregated as a result of a federal court order in 1970. From this point forward, the fight for desegregation was focused in Virginia's larger cities, particularly Richmond and Norfolk, with smaller districts usually desegregating a little earlier. Richmond, Henrico, and Chesterfield school systems were ordered by Judge Robert R. Mehri, Jr. to desegregate on January 10, 1972.<sup>8</sup>

Madison Heights Elementary School remained in use until the early 1990s. Amherst County built a new, modern elementary school for the students in 1991 on a new campus located along the community's western outskirts, about one mile from the original school's location. The Madison Heights Elementary School, meanwhile, has been vacant since 1991.

### **Criterion C: Architectural Significance and Statement of Integrity**

Madison Heights Elementary School was architect-designed and constructed as a consolidated elementary school for the unincorporated community of Madison Heights. Its design represents the continuation of the school consolidation movement towards larger, more broadly functional schools with much greater variation in classroom functions and overall school features. The consolidated schools built in Virginia from the post-World War I era through 1950 were often of brick construction and utilized one of the revival styles popular at the time. The schools often featured central halls with flanking classrooms. Eventually, later schools had separate balconied auditoriums and vocational instruction buildings, or these elements were added to existing schools.<sup>9</sup> The ca. 1939 Madison Heights Elementary School is illustrative of all these concepts, with its brick Georgian Revival façade and its intact floorplan, which included ten original classrooms, an activities room, a clinic, an office, and separate restrooms for boys and girls. The 1966 additions featured a multi-purpose auditorium, a library, a kitchen, as well as additional classrooms. These later aspects also demonstrate the functional, architectural, and stylistic trends in school design within Virginia during the mid-twentieth century.

The ca. 1939 Madison Heights Elementary School is a two-story T-shaped building with a five-bay central block and a two-bay wing on each side, and features a modified Flemish bond brick exterior. The roof is a steeply pitched side gable featuring a parapet on each gabled roof end with paired interior corbelled brick chimneys. It is a fine example of the Georgian Revival style, highlighted by its six-paneled double entry door set in an ornate door surround with paneled wall insets and a seven-light transom window. The door surround is topped by a full entablature with dentils and two fluted Doric engaged columns flanking the entry. A twenty-four-light circular window, with four keystones, is located in the central bay of the façade, just above the entrance. The remainder of the façade is filled with paired twelve-over-twelve double-hung wood sash with jack arches and keystones. The architectural integrity of the 1939 elementary school is strong, with the exterior retaining virtually all of its historic material, features, and decorative

<sup>8</sup> Adolph H. Grundman, *Public School Desegregation in Virginia from 1954 to the Present*, Wayne State University Dissertations, Paper 952, 1972, p.360-63, 395.

<sup>9</sup> Kern, *Thematic Evaluation of County Public School Buildings*, p.8-9.



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elements. The historic floorplan is intact, as are most of the interior historic finish materials. The historic setting is virtually unchanged, as the school sits on its original parcel and is surrounded by the residential neighborhood it served. The school's assorted additions, from 1930, 1934, 1937, and 1966, all have good exterior integrity with no alterations to their respective original forms, massing, and footprints. Interior finishes also are retained in each addition and are indicative of the period when they were built. The 1930s versus 1966 additions are also illustrative of the transition from revival styles to the eventual dominance of Modern-influenced styles for all types of public buildings, including schools, post offices, and government offices, such as those for the local water department next door to the school. The visual elements, the setting, and the historical association and feeling are all manifest and illustrate the evolution of early-to-mid twentieth century pedagogical theory and school design.

The *Thematic Evaluation of County Public School Buildings in Southwest Virginia*, an unpublished study by John Kern of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources in 2000, offers excellent guidance regarding the integrity of architecturally significant school buildings. Within the parameters of location, setting, and architectural design, Kern recommended schools should retain historic setting, access, and grounds. Original massing, floor plans, surface materials, ornamental detailing, and original fenestration are also important to a school's integrity ability to convey its historic associations.<sup>10</sup> Kern quoted Virginia architectural historian Jack Zehmer, who argued that schools retaining "reasonable architectural integrity should be considered eligible for historic designation" are further significant because of their locally prominent roles as community centers.<sup>11</sup> Kern concluded that county consolidated schools constructed between World War I and World War II which "survive today with reasonable integrity should receive strong consideration as valuable resources eligible for nomination."<sup>12</sup> The former Madison Heights Elementary School certainly meets these criteria due to its high level of integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

### **W. Irving Dixon**

W. Irving Dixon was based in Richmond and served as an architect for the State Department of Education for twenty years. Dixon was born in Portsmouth, Virginia, on November 15, 1899 (deceased 1985) and earned a B.S. in Architecture from the University of Virginia in 1923. His career at the department coincided with the era of school consolidation and standardization of school plans, making his work at the Madison Heights Elementary School a representative example of the State Department of Education's design principles during the 1930s. After his long career with the Department of Education, Dixon joined with Macon G. Norman in 1946 to form the firm of Dixon & Norman. Macon Norman was also a former Department of Education employee in the area of engineering.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Kern, *Thematic Evaluation of County Public School Buildings*, p. 13-14.

<sup>11</sup> Kern, *Thematic Evaluation of County Public School Buildings*, p.14.

<sup>12</sup> Kern, *Thematic Evaluation of County Public School Buildings*, p.16.

<sup>13</sup> John E. Wells and Robert E. Dalton, *The Virginia Architects, 1835-1955*, Richmond, 1997, p.121; AIA, *Architects' Roster Questionnaire: Dixon and Norman Partnership*, Richmond, VA: January 7, 1953.

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**Charles Lee Vail, Jr.**

Charles Lee “Charlie” Vail, Jr. (1924-2003) was in practice for over forty years. He organized his firm in 1960 and joined the American Institute of Architects in 1961. He initially served as a draftsman under several established Lynchburg architects, particularly Pendleton Clark and H. Trueheart Poston. Vail had his office in Madison Heights, Virginia, and a majority of his commissions came from that part of the state. Vail worked on a wide variety of projects including many churches, schools, businesses, and residences. He also designed the seal for Amherst County in 1964.<sup>14</sup> Additionally, he served for many years as a volunteer firefighter, and eventually chief, with the Madison Heights Volunteer Fire Department.<sup>15</sup> Jones Memorial Library in Amherst, Virginia, holds a large collection of more than one hundred of Vail’s original drawings.

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<sup>14</sup> According to the *Amherst New Era-Progress*, a small Confederate flag was removed from the County seal in 2004. See “Timeline: From Pre-History to the Present,” at [https://www.newsadvance.com/new\\_era\\_progress/news/local/timeline-from-pre-history-to-the-present/article\\_9fe3838f-da5c-5ed5-82aa-7798286802fd.html](https://www.newsadvance.com/new_era_progress/news/local/timeline-from-pre-history-to-the-present/article_9fe3838f-da5c-5ed5-82aa-7798286802fd.html).

<sup>15</sup> *American Institute of Architects Directory*, (1962, p.720) (1970, p.938).

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**Figures**



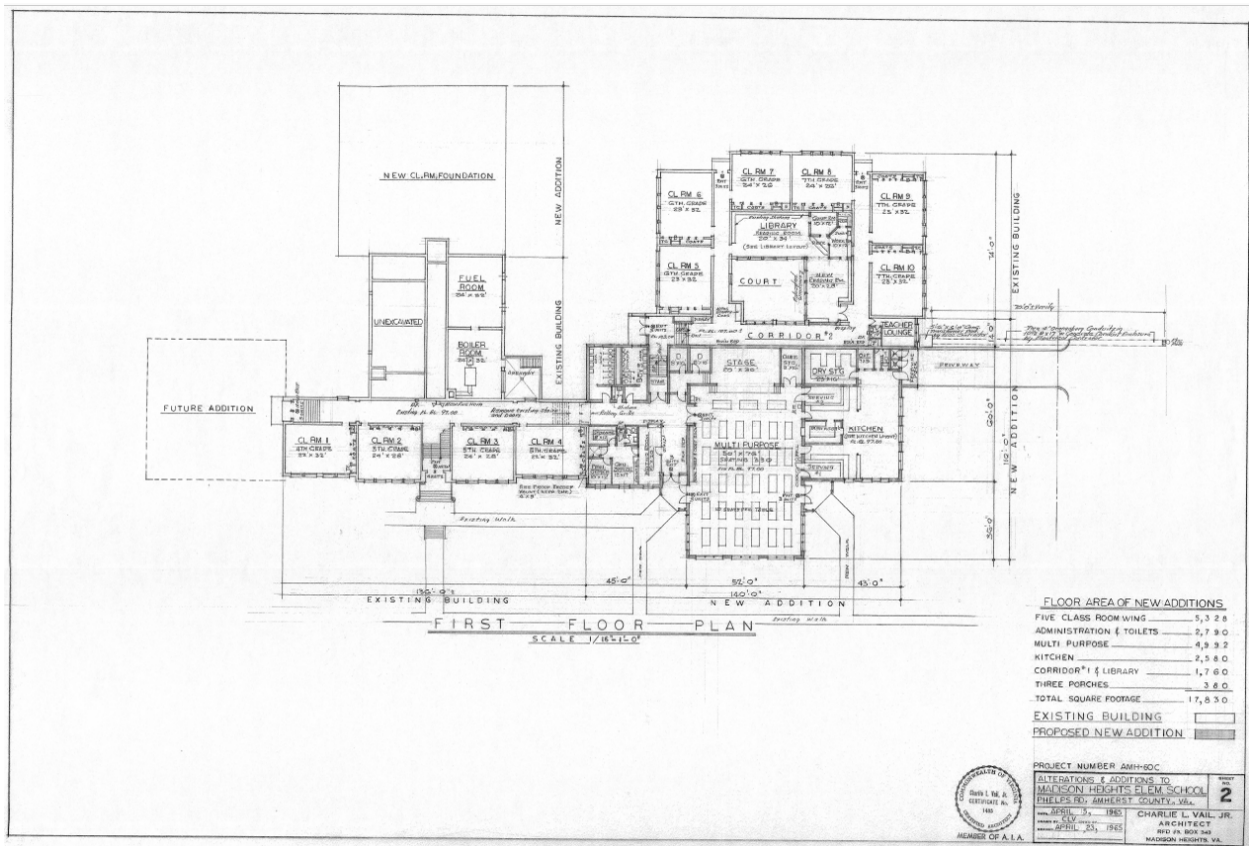
**Figure 1: Madison Heights High School, Photograph from 1941 Engineering Report prepared for the School Board of Amherst County by W. D. Campbell & Son, Inc. of Lynchburg, Virginia**



**Figure 2: Madison Heights Elementary School, Photograph from 1941 Engineering Report prepared for the School Board of Amherst County by W. D. Campbell & Son, Inc. of Lynchburg, Virginia**

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**Figure 3: First Floor Plan, Additions and Alterations to Madison Heights Elementary School, April 1965, Charlie L. Vail, Jr.**

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**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 # \_\_\_\_\_

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**Primary location of additional data:**

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository: Virginia Department of Historic Resources; Virginia Department of Education

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** VDHR ID #005-5045

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 3 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 37.431050 Longitude: -79.122090

2. Latitude: Longitude:

3. Latitude: Longitude:

4. Latitude: Longitude:

**Or**

**UTM References**

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or  NAD 1983

1. Zone: Easting: Northing:

2. Zone: Easting: Northing:

3. Zone: Easting: Northing:

4. Zone: Easting : Northing:

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**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Oriented along Phelps Road in Amherst County, Virginia, the property is roughly bounded by Phelps Road to the southwest, Center Street to the southeast, a large field to the northeast, and residential properties and the Madison Heights Water Office to the northwest. The Tax Parcel ID assigned to the property by Amherst County is 155DA44. The historic boundary is coterminous with the tax parcel's perimeter. The true and correct historic boundary is shown on the attached Location Map and Sketch Map.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The historic boundary includes all known historic resources, the property's historic setting, and encompasses the acreage historically associated with the Madison Heights Elementary School since the 1930s.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Kayla Halberg, Marcus Pollard, and Victoria Leonard  
organization: Commonwealth Preservation Group  
street & number: PO BOX 11053  
city or town: Norfolk state: VA zip code: 23517  
e-mail: kayla@commonwealthpreservationgroup.com  
telephone: 757-905-4380  
date: November 2018

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**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

**Photographs**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.



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**Photo Log**

Name of Property: Madison Heights School

City or Vicinity: Madison Heights

County: Amherst

State: VA

Photographer: Victoria Leonard and Bill Inge

Date Photographed: 3/16/2018

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 32: 1939 school building façade, facing north

2 of 32: 1939 school building façade, facing east

3 of 32: 1939 school building façade, facing west

4 of 32: 1939 school building façade and window detail, facing west

5 of 32: 1939 school building chimney detail

6 of 32: 1939 school building, entrance detail

7 of 32: 1966 auditorium addition hyphen, facing north

8 of 32: 1939 school building and 1966 auditorium addition façade, facing north

9 of 32: 1939 school building, 1966 auditorium addition, and 1930s addition to original high school, facing northwest

10 of 32: 1966 auditorium addition east elevation, facing northwest

11 of 32: 1966 auditorium addition, east wing elevation, facing northwest

12 of 32: 1930 addition to original high school, east elevation, facing west

13 of 32: 1930s additions to original high school, north elevations, facing south

14 of 32: Rear of school building and additions and rear parking lot, facing southwest

15 of 32: 1966 addition to elementary school, east elevation, facing northwest

16 of 32: Rear wing of 1939 school building, east elevation, facing west

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17 of 32: 1966 addition to elementary school, north elevation, facing south

18 of 32: 1966 addition to elementary school, west elevation, facing south

19 of 32: 1939 school building and addition, west elevation, facing north

20 of 32: 1933 addition to original high school, typical classroom

21 of 32: 1933 addition to original high school, typical classroom

22 of 32: 1939 school building, typical classroom

23 of 32: 1966 auditorium addition, auditorium and stage

24 of 32: 1966 auditorium addition, interior window detail

25 of 32: 1966 auditorium addition, stage detail

26 of 32: 1966 auditorium addition offices

27 of 32: 1933 addition to original high school, typical hallway

28 of 32: 1930 addition to original high school, typical hallway

29 of 32: 1939 school building, typical hallway

30 of 32: 1939 school building, example track door detail

31 of 32: 1939 school building, typical stair

32 of 32: 1939 school building, stair detail

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

## Legend

### LOCATION MAP

Madison Heights Elementary School

Amherst County, VA

DHR ID 005-5045

Location Coordinates

Latitude: 37.431050

Longitude: -79.122090



Feet

0 50 100 150 200

1:2,257 / 1"=188 Feet

**Title: Madison Heights Elementary School**

**Date: 7/10/2018**

*DISCLAIMER: Records of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR) have been gathered over many years from a variety of sources and the representation depicted is a cumulative view of field observations over time and may not reflect current ground conditions. The map is for general information purposes and is not intended for engineering, legal or other site-specific uses. Map may contain errors and is provided "as-is". More information is available in the DHR Archives located at DHR's Richmond office.*

*Notice if AE sites: Locations of archaeological sites may be sensitive the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), and the Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA) and Code of Virginia §2.2-3705.7 (10). Release of precise locations may threaten archaeological sites and historic resources.*



SKETCH MAP

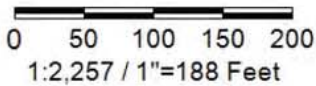
Madison Heights Elementary School  
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DHR ID 005-5045

School - 1 contributing building with multiple additions, as follows:

- A = 1939 Elementary School
- B = 1966 Addition to Elementary School
- C = 1930 Addition to High School
- D = 1933 Addition to High School
- E = 1937 Addition to High School
- F = 1966 Addition (site of c1925 High School)
- G = 1966 Library Reading Room Addition



Feet



**Title: Madison Heights Elementary School**

**Date: 7/10/2018**

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# Madison Heights Elementary School

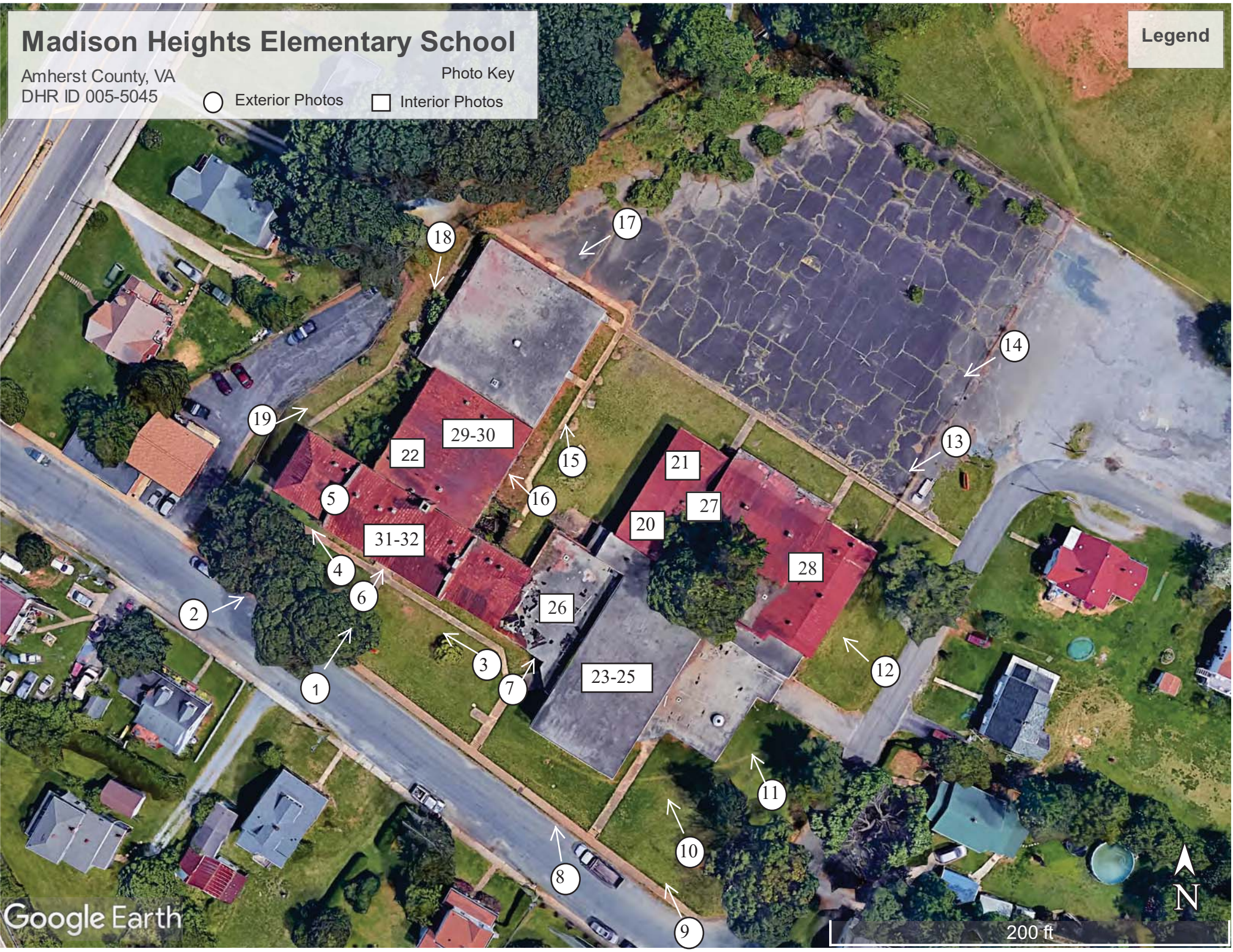
Amherst County, VA  
DHR ID 005-5045

Photo Key

○ Exterior Photos

□ Interior Photos

Legend



Google Earth

200 ft

