

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.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Union Street School
Other names/site number: Leesburg Training School; Loudoun County Training School; Leesburg Colored School; Leesburg Graded Colored School; Douglass Elementary; DHR #253-5117
Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

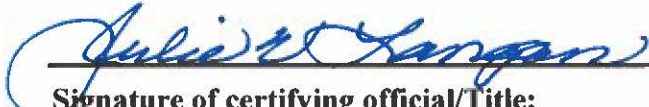
2. Location

Street & number: 20 Union Street
City or town: Leesburg State: VA County: Loudoun
Not For Publication: Vicinity:

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 x statewide x local
Applicable National Register Criteria:
x A B x C D

 Signature of certifying official/Title:	<u>1-5-23</u> Date
<u>Virginia Department of Historic Resources</u> State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	
In my opinion, the property <u> </u> meets <u> </u> does not meet the National Register criteria.	
Signature of commenting official:	Date
Title : State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

Union Street School
Name of Property

Loudoun County, Virginia
County and State

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

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

Union Street School
Name of Property

Loudoun County, Virginia
County and State

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>1</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>1</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use
Historic Functions

EDUCATION: School

Current Functions

VACANT/NOT IN USE

Union Street School
Name of Property

Loudoun County, Virginia
County and State

7. Description

Architectural Classification

LATE VICTORIAN: Folk Victorian

Materials:

Principal exterior materials of the property: STONE: Fieldstone; WOOD: Cove siding;
METAL: Tin

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.)

Summary Paragraph

Built in 1883, the **Union Street School** is located in Leesburg, an incorporated town in Loudoun County, Virginia. The school building is in the center of its 0.8-acre lot, the north half of which is now a grassy lawn that school alumni remember as a bare lot, the grass worn to dirt by so many children using the lot as their playground. The north edge of the lot was the former site for the privy, now only marked by undulating ground. The two-story, five-room, wood-frame Folk Victorian schoolhouse is sheathed in weatherboard siding and stands on a slight rise, maintaining a commanding presence above the residential street below. The building is largely devoid of ornament but for paired brackets along the eaves. Its notably large window openings are now boarded over with plywood but many of the historic wood 6/6 sash are extant. During a modest renovation about 1954, minimal electrical and plumbing systems were installed. The south half of the lot now has a large, asphalt parking lot and a low-slung, one-story, flat-roofed circa 1975 building that originally functioned as an elementary school and now houses the **Child Find Center**; this is the only non-contributing resource on the lot as it postdates the property's period of significance. A commercial-sized dumpster is located at the north edge of the asphalt parking lot.

Narrative Description

Setting

Situated outside the original 1759 boundaries and at the north edge of the 1878 limits of the Town of Leesburg, the Union Street School stands adjacent to the circa 1855 Union Street Cemetery. At the north and east sides, the former school is surrounded by the open parklike setting of the cemetery. At the east side, the school is bordered by historic late 19th century single-family dwellings and a tall wood privacy fence. On the south side, across Union Street,

Union Street School
Name of Property

Loudoun County, Virginia
County and State

the school faces historic mid-20th century bungalow dwellings. A low chain link fence delineates the east and north lot boundaries, allowing expansive views across the cemetery and Ida Lee Park beyond. Located at the terminus of Wirt Street and the single block of Union Street, the setting offers peace and tranquility juxtaposed against nearby King Street, a major north-south artery running through the center of Leesburg.

Union Street School, c. 1883, Contributing Building

Constructed in two phases, the Union Street School was originally built circa 1883 with a two-over-two, side gable, rectangular form. A one-room, side-gable, single-story wing was added to the west elevation c. 1930. The building is now vacant. The exterior walls of the frame building are clad with wood cove siding. All of the windows are boarded over, but historic 6/6 wood, double-hung sash are extant in many places. The side gable roof is covered with a modern, standing seam roof with K-style gutters. Brick flues historically rose above the roofline but were removed at an unknown date. The building is set on an uncoursed, rubblestone foundation with lime mortar now repointed in concrete. The continuous foundation is punctuated with square lightwells under the addition that light the basement. The interior of the schoolhouse reflects the minimal amenities provided for African American students during the Jim Crow era – coal stoves for heat, minimum levels of electric lighting, and rudimentary indoor plumbing facilities.

Exterior Description

The south façade is notable for its remarkably stark appearance due to its single-plane façade, boarded-over windows, and contractor's white paint color scheme. The original school building rises from a solid, locally sourced, fieldstone foundation. The building has a modest water table that marks the transition of the stone foundation to the cove siding. The south façade is five-bays with a centered entry flanked at either side by two window openings (the 6/6 wood sash are beneath the plywood boards). A single, modern-era, industrial style spotlight is located directly above the front door. The front entrance is accessed via a non-historic wood stoop of treated lumber and a board railing. The stoop sits on four 4" by 4" posts, which have partially rotted and have started to skew. The wood single-board stair treads with open risers also are warped.

The front entry has a single-leaf, board door that is without embellishment and features a metal pull handle and a metal hasp with padlock. Plywood above the door covers a rectangular 5-light transom. The front entry is flanked on the first story with two symmetrically placed six-over-six wood sash windows while the second story is pierced by five six-over-six wood sash windows, also symmetrically placed and aligned to match the first-story openings. Six pairs of bracketed corbels are along the eaves and are the building's only ornamentation. The side-gable roof is sheathed in modern-era, standing-seam, metal roofing. White, modern era K-style gutters are hung along the eaves with downspouts at both the east and west corners of the elevation.

The east (side) elevation of the Union Street School continues the same austere pattern of the façade. Four symmetrically placed, boarded-over windows – two at the first story and two at the second – punctuate the elevation. The plywood boarding the windows is inset, leaving original, painted-white shutter hinges exposed. Like the south façade, this elevation also has a rubble fieldstone foundation, capped by a simple water table. The fieldstone foundation is solid except

Union Street School
Name of Property

Loudoun County, Virginia
County and State

for a single 4" circular hole at the south side, possibly a primitive form of ventilation for the crawl space. White paint overspray stains the stone foundation. Two pair of bracketed corbels mark the returned eaves of the side-gable roof.

The north (rear) elevation is the only asymmetric elevation and is punctuated by 14 openings. At the east side of the north elevation are two windows on the first story aligned with two windows on the second story. The center line of the north elevation is punctuated by a window opening at the first story and a door opening at the second story. Plywood boarding over the doorway indicates a transom above the door. At the west side of this wall, the first and second stories have two paired windows flanked by single openings, a total of eight window openings. These openings also retain original shutter hinges.

The rear elevation's eaves and the side gable roof have the same appearance as the front elevation. Brick flues formerly rose above the roof, although the flues have been removed. The paired, bracketed corbels support the roof as on the front elevation, but for the loss of one bracket at the west end of the rear elevation. The bottom portion of one pair of brackets has been removed to accommodate a pair of windows, indicating that these may have been retroactively installed. Like the other two elevations the foundation is rubble-laid fieldstone with lime mortar repaired with modern concrete.

On the main block's west (side) elevation is the c. 1930 one-story, frame addition. Above the addition, the main block's west wall is devoid of fenestration, but the plain fascia board and returned eaves with paired brackets match the rest of the building. The addition's random course fieldstone foundation is the same as the main block's but is punctuated with rectangular openings (now boarded over) that light the basement. The c. 1930 addition, like the main block, is largely unadorned. The plain fascia and returned eaves on the addition match the main block's but there are no decorative brackets. The addition's cove siding is a close match to the main block's siding. The addition's south façade features only an entry with a single-leaf, raised four-panel door near the east corner. The addition's west (side) wall is dominated by five ganged windows that currently are boarded over with horizontal planking butted to one another to form a flat plane. The top lintel is trimmed in metal flashing, spray painted white. At the bottom of the south side of the west elevation is a redundant electrical cabinet, with the meter removed. Below the abandoned meter is a solid casement square door of narrow-gauge boards, which possibly served as the coal chute historically. The north (rear) wall of the addition is devoid of fenestration.

A 1938 photo of the building (Figure 1, below) shows the building's appearance after the c. 1930 addition was constructed. It shows that the main block's entry was accessed by a short flight of wood steps without railings and that the recessed door was surmounted by a 5-light transom. A set of wood steps also accessed the addition's sole entry, which is obscured in this image by a tree. A flag is mounted above the main block's entry. This image confirms that the addition did not have decorative brackets. The visible windows all have 6/6 sash.

Union Street School
Name of Property

Loudoun County, Virginia
County and State



Figure 1. Ca. 1938 Photo of Union Street School. The c. 1930 addition is at left.

Interior Description

Main Block, first floor

Although largely devoid of ornamentation, the circa 1883 main block at the Union Street School is characterized by elegant proportions, plentiful natural light, and original details. The front door leads to the entrance hall, which runs perpendicular to the front entrance. The exterior single-leaf front door is made of 5" boards and is likely not original. On the reverse is a contemporary 'Z' patterned structural support. The door is hung on modern stainless-steel heavy-duty 'Tee' hinges, spray painted white. The door jamb shows shadows of hinges indicating possibly a screen door, which opened outward. From the interior, the original 5-light transom is visible above the entrance door. The spacious entrance hall with 10'-10" ceilings measures 9'-5" across and is 29'-6" long. The walls have irregular width wainscoting with lathe and plaster above. The lathe is machine made. A single porcelain water fountain has been retroactively mounted to the center of the north wall. Electrical wall switches, retroactively installed (possibly as part of a modest renovation about 1954), are awkwardly placed high and to the right side of the classroom door – possibly located high above the reach of elementary school students. The narrow-gauge tongue and groove, flat-sawn pine flooring runs north to south, perpendicular to the orientation of the stair hall and is worn at the front door entrance. The flooring is blind nailed, except remedial face nailing at the entrance where it has worn from years of use.

The entrance hall is dominated by a dog-leg staircase, which rises from the left-hand (west) side of the south wall. Rather than placing a façade window to accommodate the stair, the exterior symmetry of fenestration was maintained by allowing the staircase to rise alongside one of the

Union Street School
Name of Property

Loudoun County, Virginia
County and State

large windows to a landing. A machine-turned newel post securely anchors the wood stair railing, which features slender turned balusters. Curiously, a cap on the top of the turned newel post has been removed, revealing the dowel that extends through the interior. Some of the turned balusters are lying on the stair treads. Adjacent to the staircase, two staircases down to the basement were added in 1954; one is beneath the staircase and the other is across the hall.

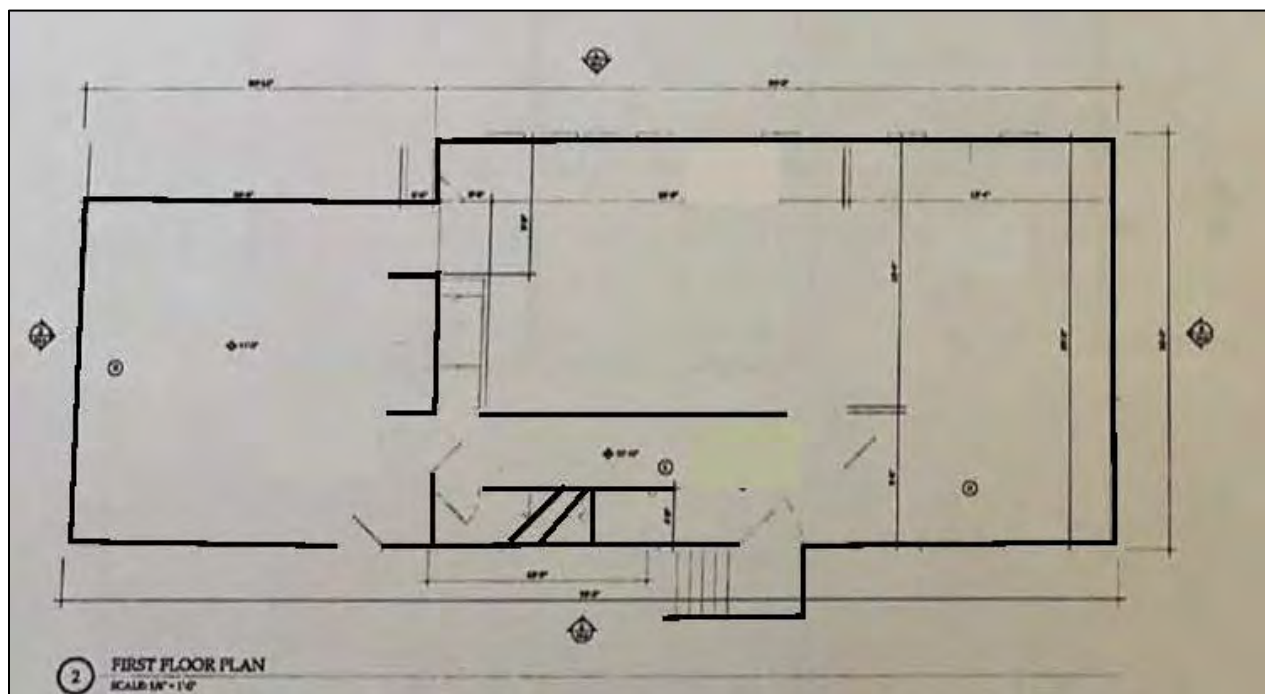


Figure 2. First floor plan of Union Street School, showing existing conditions (Plan by Karl Riedel Architecture, PC, 2018).

From the entrance hall to the right (east) is a doorway to one of the two original first-floor classrooms. Walking through this doorway, with a single-leaf, raised four-panel door, one enters **Classroom No. 1**, a rectangular room, measuring 19'-4" by 29'-2" and running perpendicular to the front entrance hall. Walls, with simple wainscoting of narrow-gauge boards, are plaster with a painted blackboard running the full length of the west wall. Some areas of plaster in the walls and ceiling are damaged, revealing two layers— a rough and smooth coat with hair binding atop machine-made lath, without insulation. The narrow-gauge wood flooring runs east-west, over subflooring running north-south. The room is open plan, marked in the center with a metal pole supporting a transverse structural beam, boxed in below the ceiling. It is possible the metal pole was installed retroactively. At the center of the north (rear) wall is a large brick flue with stove pipe opening near the top of the flue. Wainscoting of beadboard formerly wrapped the base of the flue, however, portions of the beadboard are badly damaged from continuous leaks; only two sides of wainscoting remain. Lining the floor in front of the flue is a period oil cloth with a checked pattern that measures approximately 8' x 10'. A single cloth-wrapped electrical wire, which formerly held a single light fixture with manual pull chain, dangles from the center of the

Union Street School
Name of Property

Loudoun County, Virginia
County and State

ceiling. Pairs of six-over-six double-hung wood window sash symmetrically pierce the north, east and south wall of Classroom Number 1. A single roll-up sash hangs at each window.

Opposite the main entry is **Classroom No 2**, a rectangular room oriented parallel with the stair hall and which measures 29'-6" x 19'-4". At the southwest corner of the room is a drywall-enclosed 1954 stairwell that leads down to the basement. The narrow-gauge, tongue-and-groove pine flooring runs continuously between the stair hall and Classroom No 2. Five window openings line the north (rear) wall, although window sashes, if they are still extant, are obscured behind plywood. A single brick flue is also located on the north wall and the surrounding ceiling, the wall, and flooring show significant damage from roof leaks at the flue penetration. Tin sheeting is nailed to the front of the flue possibly as a heat shield to protect the wood wainscoting from a hot stove. Near the flue is an entry with a two-panel, single-light door that leads to the adjacent Walker Room; this door originally would have led to the exterior of the building. The classroom's walls are finished with plaster and wainscoting throughout. A painted blackboard runs the full length of the south wall. The room has been used for storage of bookshelves and file cabinets.

C. 1930 Addition, first floor – Walker Room

Adjacent to the entrance hall's staircase is the entry to the c. 1930 addition's "Walker Room." The entry has a single-leaf four-panel door. The Walker Room is notable for its cavernous proportions; the room measures 28'9" x 23'-0" with interior ceilings measuring 11'-3" high. The Walker Room is paneled in simple beaded wainscoting with plaster walls. The room was formerly lit by a bank of five windows along the west (side) wall, although these openings are now boarded. Four bare-bulb, porcelain ceiling-mounted sockets light the room and possibly date to the modest 1954 renovation. A third brick flue, originally skimmed in plaster, stands at the north wall in the west corner. An old copper line penetrates the north wall near the base of the brick flue. It is possible that the heat source was retrofitted with gas to augment the coal stoves that were abandoned. The stove pipe opening has been boarded in plywood. The east wall of the Walker Room was altered with a coat room – a narrow, 2'-0" deep space built out with three openings without doors; on the east wall are shadows where hooks or nails were installed to create an ad-hoc coat closet. A door at the northeast corner leads into Classroom No. 2. The Walker Room has an exterior exit on the south façade with a single-leaf door with four raised-panels and which opens to the inside. Narrow gauge pine flooring runs east-to-west. The original electrical fuse box with four glass plug fuses remains in the southwest corner of the room and was still in use until the building ceased to function as a public school. The room currently houses a variety of wood shelving units.

Alongside the Walker Room's doorway to the entrance hall, there is missing plaster, revealing original diagonal bracing that supported the original 1883 exterior west wall.

Main Block, second floor

While moving up the dog-leg stair to the second-floor landing, one passes one of two windows on the south elevation that light the stair hall. A few of the turned spindles are missing but the

Union Street School
Name of Property

Loudoun County, Virginia
County and State

curved handrail remains structurally stable. Trim pieces are missing and reveal approximately 3” wide wood sub-flooring.

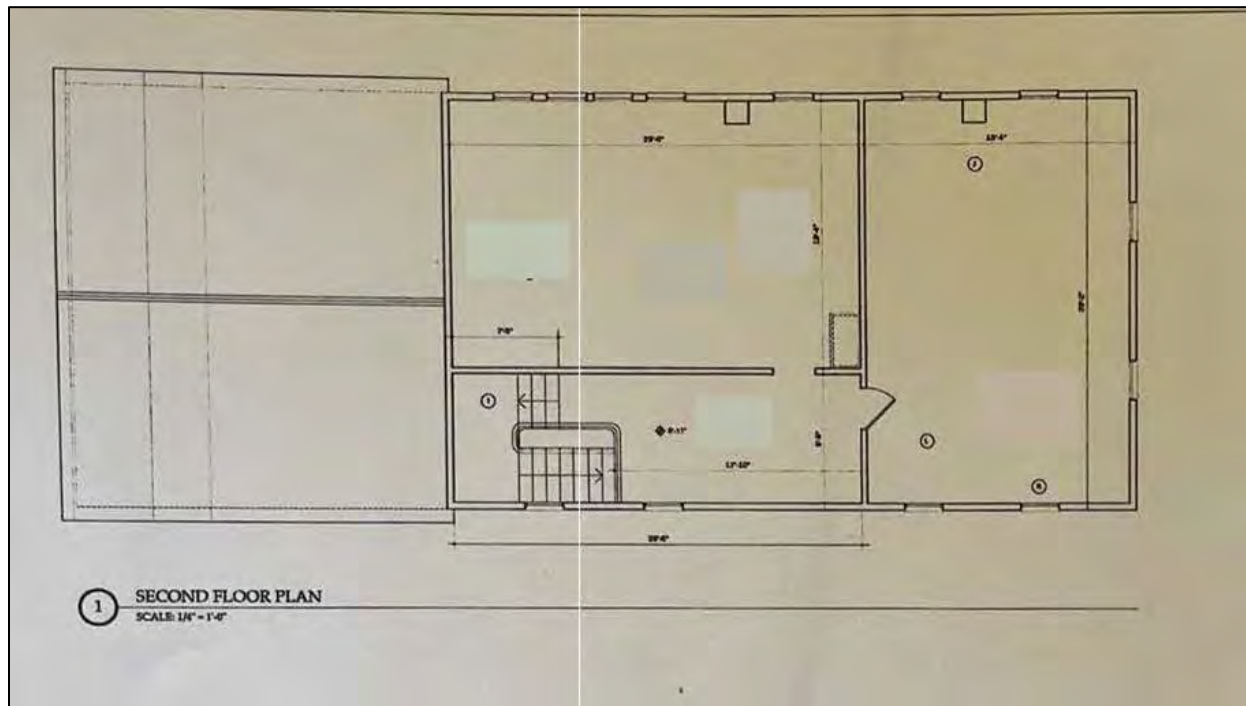


Figure 3. Second floor plan of Union Street School, showing existing conditions (Plan by Karl Riedel Architecture, PC, 2018).

Wall paint, typical of the entire building, is flaking from plaster walls revealing a neutral pallet. A galvanized pipe, presumably for a water fountain, is visible within the wall structure on the north wall but the fixture has been removed. As with the rest of the rooms on the second floor, there is no wainscoting. On the north wall, a simple 4” beaded nailer holds coat hooks at shoulder level – the right height for high school but too high for elementary-age children. A piece of square trim is secured above the beaded nailer, possibly another row to hang coats, possibly added to accommodate a growing student body.

Continuing straight (directly east) from the staircase, one enters **Classroom No 3** through a doorway with a single -leaf, two-panel door. Like Classroom No. 1 below, the narrow-gauge pine flooring runs north-to-south. The brick flue is located asymmetrically on the north wall, flanked by two large 6/6, wood, double-hung sash windows. A similar pair of 6/6 double-hung windows are on the east wall and south wall. A peg has come loose from the south window sash, giving insight into their construction. Two single-bulb fixtures hang from the plaster ceiling and likely date to the modest mid-20th century renovation.

A hole in the ceiling at the northeast corner tells of extensive previous leaks in the roof. Peering up through the hole in the ceiling plaster reveals modern framing used as skip sheathing under the tin roof, indicating some of the roof structure and all of the original roofing have been

Union Street School
Name of Property

Loudoun County, Virginia
County and State

replaced. Original ceiling tiles, still with shadows of lathe and plaster, appear to be in place. A hand-hewn top plate is visible.

A supplies closet is located in the southeast corner of the classroom. Walls of the supply closet are board and batten. A painted blackboard runs the full length of the west wall. Ceilings are lower than the first floor, measuring only 9'-11" high.

Returning to the stair hall and turning right (north), one enters **Classroom No. 4**. Paint shadows on the east wall indicate there once were three built-in cupboards here. Two have been removed, but the southernmost cupboard remains and reveals the simple construction used for the former storage cabinets; the door and walls are board-and-batten and and 5 wood shelves are within it. Directly opposite the entrance from the stair hall is the exit to the exterior fire escape, which has since been removed except for one remaining metal clasp.¹ A single-leaf door, partially boarded with plywood, bears graffiti that reads "one little shove will do it." A three-light transom remains above the fire escape door. The opening was originally a window and was modified as a door after 1940. To the left (west) of the fire escape door is the brick flue, which is badly damaged from a former roof leak. Skim plaster has deteriorated, revealing the salmon-colored brick of the flue. A large piece of modern plywood covers the floor, possibly a hole in front of the flue. West of the flue are a pair of windows flanked by single openings, each of which retains 6/6, wood, double-hung sash. On the south wall, the chalkboard has been removed, its former location evidenced by paint shadows. A small, early-20th-century, piece of metal near the center of the room is nailed to the floor as a patch and is a reminder of the makeshift means the community had at the time to make repairs to the building.

Main Block, basement

From the west end of the main floor entrance hall, the basement is accessed by two separate staircases, both added in 1954. On the north side, one can take a staircase down to access the **boys' bathrooms** and a **coal room**. Adjacent to the stairs, the boy's bathroom is stark, with concrete block walls and a poured concrete floor with circular metal floor drain. On the north wall, two paired, fixed windows pierce the 12" stone foundation wall to add natural light into the bathroom. Original toilets remain on the west wall with rudimentary wood seats but no partition walls for privacy. Two low urinals hang on the east wall. A small sink, with one faucet only for cold water, is mounted on the south wall. From the boys' bathroom, moving west, one can access the unfinished coal room, where some coal still remains, with stairs to a small opening on the west (side) elevation that presumably served as a coal chute. Looking up at the ceiling, the subflooring of Mr. Walker's Room is visible. The subflooring is cove siding installed on the diagonal.²

Union Street School
Name of Property

Loudoun County, Virginia
County and State

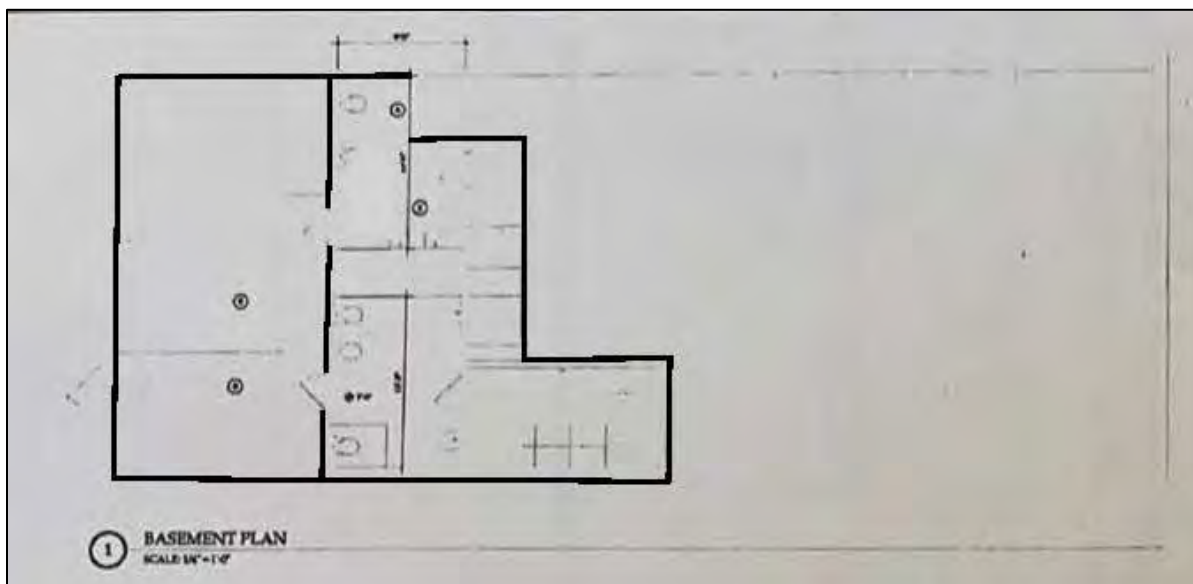


Figure 4. Basement floor plan of Union Street School, showing existing conditions (Plan by Karl Riedel Architecture, PC, 2018).

Directly under the first floor entrance hall's main staircase is a second set of stairs. These lead down to the **girls' bathroom**. Built as part of the 1954 renovation, stair treads and risers are poured concrete and are set within concrete block walls. Regularly spaced nails protrude along the right-hand side of the staircase, possibly serving as an ad-hoc coat closet. At the base of the stairs is an opening in the fieldstone foundation. This opening was beneath the stairs that once accessed the c. 1930 addition's south entrance. The opening includes a knee wall to support first-floor joists. Plumbing fixtures in the girls' bathroom would have been similar to the boys' bathroom.

Secondary Resources

Child Find Center (former elementary school), circa 1975, noncontributing building

Located at the southeast corner of the 0.84-acre lot and facing Union Street, is the brick Child Find Center, originally built as an elementary school. The one-story building is sheathed in brick laid in running bond without a header course, indicating the brick likely conceals concrete block walls. The south façade is marked with a cantilevered flat portico over a pair of glass double doors that open outward. A concrete walk serves pedestrian access from Union Street and a perpendicular concrete walk reaches the west side parking lot. Four paired, single-light, fixed windows punctuate the façade and window lintels are directly below the roof's shallow eave. A K-style gutter spans the façade. Two pairs of single-light, fixed windows punctuate the west elevation, facing the asphalt parking lot. The rear or north elevation is built into the hillside. HVAC equipment sitting on the flat roof is clearly visible from the rear of the building. The building has been converted to administrative offices. As it postdates the property's period of significance, it is noncontributing.

Union Street School
Name of Property

Loudoun County, Virginia
County and State

Statement of Integrity

Largely abandoned by 1959, the Union Street School retains a high degree of historic integrity as an example of a segregated school for Black students built during the Jim Crow era. The location and setting – particularly the north half of the site, with the encompassing vistas across the cemetery and public park and surrounding historic residential neighborhood – remains much as it did when the school was in use and retains a high degree of historic integrity. At the south side of the site, towards Union Street, the Child Find Center and associated asphalt parking lot detract from the historic setting. With its largely unaltered exterior façade, intact floor plan, raw-wood floors, painted blackboards, original plaster walls, and rudimentary plumbing, electrical, and heating, the Union Street School retains the physical integrity of design, materials and workmanship needed to convey its historical associations as a school built during the early 1880s and expanded and modestly renovated during the middle quarter of the twentieth century. Built without modern amenities and only minimally improved over time, the building retains a remarkably high degree of integrity of the feeling and association as a segregated high school for African American children during the Jim Crow era.

Union Street School
Name of Property

Loudoun County, Virginia
County and State

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

- 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

Union Street School
Name of Property

Loudoun County, Virginia
County and State

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

EDUCATION

ETHNIC HERITAGE/ Black

SOCIAL HISTORY/ Civil Rights

Period of Significance

1883 – 1959

Significant Dates

c. 1930 Walker Room constructed

1954 Rudimentary plumbing and electric lighting installed

Significant Person

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Union Street School
Name of Property

Loudoun County, Virginia
County and State

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 Union Street School, historically also known as the Leesburg Colored School, Leesburg Graded Colored School, Leesburg Training School, Loudoun County Training School, and Douglass Elementary School, is eligible under Criterion A with statewide significance in the areas of **Education, Social History: Civil Rights**, and **Ethnic Heritage: Black** and under Criterion C with local significance in the area of **Architecture**. Located in the center of Leesburg, Virginia, in fast-growing Loudoun County, the Union Street School is an intact example of an African American schoolhouse operated during the Jim Crow era of segregation. Sited in the center of a 0.8 acre lot at the north edge of historic Leesburg, the Union Street School stands as testimony to the fallacy of the “separate but equal” doctrine used to justify racial segregation in numerous aspects of Virginian life from the late 19th century through the late 1960s. Built in 1883, a little more than a decade after Virginia’s segregated fledgling public school system had been established, Union Street School originally was constructed as an elementary school. It replaced the varied assortment of grade schools established by the Freedmen’s Bureau and later supported by churches, benevolent societies, and local community groups to ensure African American children received access to public education. At the time of construction, the school was a testimony to the efforts of newly freed African Americans to achieve equal access to public education despite the lion’s share of tax dollars being directed to schools for White children. Continual lack of upgrades and equal access to public funds over the next half-century left the school overcrowded and without basic modern amenities or safe conditions. Even today, upon walking into the schoolhouse, the feeling of a Jim Crow era African American school is still viscerally apparent due to the building’s still little-altered condition since its closure in 1959. Having never received modern mechanical system upgrades such as heating, air conditioning, hot water, or electricity, the school stands as a witness to the conditions offered to the African American community before the end of segregation. The property’s period of significance spans from 1883, with the purchase of the lot by School District No 1 in Leesburg Magisterial District, and ends in 1959, when the school closed, and the building began to be used for storage. Significant dates include the c. 1930 construction of the Walker Room and 1954 when rudimentary indoor plumbing and electric lighting were installed.

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

History of Public Education in Loudoun County

In 1846, Virginia’s General Assembly passed an act permitting counties to appoint a local school board and to levy taxes to provide the necessary funding, allowing each county to vote to establish a free school system. In a public vote, Loudoun County’s citizens defeated the proposition. White residents who had the vote (women could not vote) viewed public education with suspicion, assuming that those who were educated would become spokesmen for a free and equal society, ultimately leading to a revolt to overthrow the existing order. Withholding the right to education was a means of racial suppression. This attitude foreshadowed the divide

Union Street School
Name of Property

Loudoun County, Virginia
County and State

in attitudes toward public education that would characterize the next century.

Although education for African Americans was made legal immediately following the Civil War, Virginia's first statewide public school system had not yet been established. Segregated education for White students was provided by private academies, which were financially unattainable for students of color (and, often, poor White children). Education for African Americans had to be organized by community leaders and institutions such as churches, with vital support provided by the Freedmen's Bureau, whose mission to aid the formerly enslaved included providing education and establishing schools. In existence for just 7 years, 1865-1872, the Freedmen's Bureau, perpetually short on federal funding, worked closely with mutual aid societies, benevolent individuals, and local churches, especially those of the Quaker community, for financial support. However, these schools charged a nominal fee, an additional burden to those who wanted an education.

The Freedmen's Bureau established two offices in Loudoun County; one in Middleburg, located at "Bureau Corner,"³ and one in Leesburg, located at **209 South King Street**. Operating for only four years and closing in 1869, the Leesburg Freedmen's Bureau office supported at least three⁴ schools in Leesburg and more throughout Loudoun.⁵ The first Freedmen's Bureau school in Leesburg was established in 1866 with financial support from Quakers (the Society of Friends) in Philadelphia. Classes were held at the **Parsonage of the Methodist Episcopal Church**, a one-room building, at the corner of Wirt and Cornwall. Caroline Thomas (1833-1896) served as the school's first teacher. According to Larry Roeder's Edwin Washington Project, Caroline Thomas was not widely employed in Leesburg but remained in Loudoun County. This Freedmen's Bureau school operated for only two years.⁶

A second school operated by the Freedmen's Bureau was **William O Robey's** (b. 1819),⁷ established in 1866-1867 and operating from his home. Early deeds indicate the house was located "at the extremity of Church Street."⁸ Robey charged a fee but the school also received financial support from the African American community. Later the school was supported by the Freedmen's Bureau. Free before Emancipation, Robey purchased his home in 1852,⁹ which was financed by John Smale, who would also lend financial support to R. H. Bailey's school.¹⁰

Established in 1869, this third school¹¹ operated by the Freedmen's Bureau, the **Bailey Institute**, stood at **211 South King Street** at the corner of King and Royal and adjacent to the Freedmen's Bureau building. It was financed by the Presbyterian Association of New York. In January 1868, Richard H. Bailey (1813-1900) deeded a lot of land to "*Thomas W. Waters, John B. Harris, and Joseph W. Valentine, Trustees of the Bailey School Society ... in trust for the colored people of Leesburg ... with the provisions that a good substantial building be erected thereon, which is to be used for school purpose and at the discretion of Trustees or successors, for Divine Worship.*" The land was a portion of a larger lot adjoining a stable.¹² The deed lends insight into the structure of the school, which appears to have been more formalized than the two that preceded it.

Union Street School
Name of Property

Loudoun County, Virginia
County and State

Public School after 1870

As a requirement for readmittance to the Union after the Civil War, the Federal government mandated that all seceding states first create a public education system for all children regardless of race. Virginia complied with this requirement in 1869 with ratification of a new state constitution that included a mandate to create the first statewide public school system. The newly created public schools were to be segregated by race, with facilities to be provided for White, Black, and Virginia Indian students. As would become evident over the coming decades, there was a large gap between a mandate and implementation – school sites needed to be purchased, schoolhouses constructed, teachers hired – and all within the context of a broken postwar economy.

Following this mandate, the Virginia General Assembly passed “An Act to Establish and Maintain a Uniform System of Free Public Schools,” providing a free education to anyone between the ages of five and twenty-one.¹³ Previously, Charles Fenton Mercer from Loudoun County had lobbied the General Assembly to establish a “Literary Fund,” which, starting in 1810, provided financial support for indigent White children’s public education; in 1870, this was expanded to fund education for African American students too.¹⁴ William Henry Ruffner, elected the State Superintendent of Public Instruction in 1870, supported education for all races but did not favor all children attending the same schools, which quickly led to disproportionate funding for White schools compared to those for Black and Virginia Indian children. The Literary Fund was designated as a principal source for funding new schools.

The General Assembly also allowed local school districts to levy taxes to supplement what each jurisdiction would receive from the Literary Fund. On May 4, 1872, Loudoun County’s Board of Supervisors authorized each of the County’s six townships to tax “property real and personal” for the purpose funding the new local public school system. Perpetually underestimating the cost of education, the Board of Supervisors soon raised the tax rate to accommodate a ballooning budget.¹⁵ This new system of taxation met resistance from wealthy property owners who viewed the public school system “as an organization to promote the interests and elevate the condition of the negroes and lower class [of] whites at the expense of property holders.” It took decades for the public school system to take hold and to be fully supported by white parents< although African American families fully embraced the opportunity early on.¹⁶

Following the Board of Supervisor’s directive, Loudoun’s School Superintendent, John W. Wildman, established 46 schools for white children but only 9 schools for African American children. It is possible that these nine public schools for African American students evolved from the county’s nine Freedmen’s Bureau schools, although more research is needed here.¹⁷ Leesburg’s first public school for Black students was located at 14 Liberty Street SW, co-located with the First Mt. Olive Baptist Church. By the early 1880s, a larger school was needed¹⁸ and in 1883 the “School District No 1 in Leesburg Magisterial District” purchased a 0.8-acre lot in the northeast corner of Leesburg, establishing the first purpose-built public school for African American students. The purchase price was \$400. The lot was sold by John R. Beuchler and his wife, Mary¹⁹ John Beuchler was a baker and a second-generation

Union Street School
Name of Property

Loudoun County, Virginia
County and State

immigrant from Germany. In the 1880 census, the Buechlers are lived at 279 King Street in Leesburg.²⁰ The local paper, the Loudoun Times Mirror, in its coverage of local Leesburg events, did not mention the new school for African American children.²¹ The Union Street School would have possibly been constructed the same year in 1883.²² By 1885, the “colored school” is mentioned in a deed, so it is assumed construction was completed well before this date.²³

Although the Leesburg School District purchased the lot, additional funding for school construction and operation likely came from other sources.²⁴ To support the construction of African American schools and education of African American students, numerous benefactors established funds over subsequent decades. Perhaps the best known of these is the Julius Rosenwald Fund, established in 1917, which contributed to the construction of 664 schools in Virginia alone.²⁵ Other philanthropic funds available in Virginia were the John F. Slater Fund and the Jeanes Fund. The Slater Fund, established in 1882, donated funds across the southern states. The Jeanes Fund operated from 1907 into the 1960s. The Union Street School has not yet been attributed to one of these funds or solely to County funds; further research is needed.

During the 1880s, the educational mandate only required public schooling through the seventh grade. The Union Street School was established as a grade school offering classes through the seventh grade.²⁶ Education at this time was decentralized and unsystematic; standardization of schoolhouses and curricula would come later. The two-story, four-room schoolhouse on Union Street was remarkable for its time, especially when understood in its context. From the 1880s until the mid-1900s, Loudoun County’s African American schoolhouses typically were rudimentary one- or two-room frame buildings.

During the late 19th century, especially in small towns and rural areas, school buildings were primitive at best. Electricity would not reach Leesburg until 1905-1906 and, accordingly, Union Street was built with large windows to maximize natural light and ventilation; minimal electric lighting was added to the school around 1954. Public water came to Leesburg in 1906, but indoor plumbing for the Union Street School was not installed until 1954. Heat was provided by four coal-burning stoves that were tended to by students; these were never replaced by modern heating and air conditioning technology. Despite the use of fire to augment natural lighting, Union Street School originally lacked a fire escape. Although it remained in use until the mid-twentieth century, the building never had a library, laboratory, cafeteria, auditorium, or gymnasium, all features that had been commonplace at schools for White students starting in the 1910s.

Operations funding from local governments for public education was never sufficient in Virginia from 1870 into the early years of the twentieth century, especially for schools serving African American and Virginia Indian children. Supplementary funding came through state funds as well as benevolent foundations. A Loudoun County account ledger from the period identified sources of external funding, including State Funds (\$470.40), Hoge Funds²⁷ (\$36.34), Dog Tax (\$18.67), and Grandstaff Funds, (\$1,765.56).²⁸

Union Street School

Name of Property

Loudoun County, Virginia

County and State

During the 1880s, teachers for African American schools in Loudoun County were in short supply. After the Civil War, emancipated African Americans and even those born free were poorly educated due to state laws that forbade teaching them to read and write. Many Black residents left Loudoun County for better-paying jobs in Northern and Midwestern states.²⁹ The County recruited some teachers from Pennsylvania,³⁰ where teaching all races had a foothold due to Quakers' egalitarian traditions. Other teachers received training at Storer College in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia.³¹ Some teachers started their careers as preachers and transitioned into teaching, likely in part because many public schools for Black children were supported by churches.³² There were a few, such as William H. Ash, who had attended a college or university.³³

Despite progress, high school remained locally unavailable for African American students into the twentieth century.³⁴ John C. Walker (c. 1871-1953),³⁵ who initially taught in Waterford, Virginia,³⁶ and later became the principal of the Union Street School, offered Loudoun County's African American students their first higher level classes by hosting 8th grade courses in his home; because these classes occurred outside the public school system, Walker was paid privately by parents. Later, Walker added ninth grade subjects.³⁷ The only somewhat local option available to African American students was the Manassas Industrial School for Colored Youth [NRHP 1994; DHR 155-0010], which opened in 1894 but as a private institution (Manassas was then part of Prince William County). Loudoun County parents who wanted their children to have a high school education had to pay tuition³⁸ and to provide transportation from Loudoun to Manassas. Two years later in 1896, the Supreme Court issued the *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision that entrenched segregation in public schools as well as other types of public accommodations on the basis of the deeply flawed "separate but equal" doctrine.

Establishment of Public High Schools in Virginia

In 1902, the Virginia General Assembly established high school as a requirement for local public school systems to provide. As public funding for education remained minimal at best, White families sent their children to private schools or raised funds to supplement the shortfall in public funding.³⁹ The African American community, with fewer resources, depended more on the public system, which was short sighted at best with what was considered "equal" opportunities to attend school, thus creating an educational system that was decidedly indifferent to Black students.⁴⁰ Although high school was mandated, this requirement was not fully implemented in Virginia until 1938.

The 1902 state constitution was far better known for the extensive restrictions placed on voting, which particularly impacted Black Virginians. Provisions that soon became notorious, including poll taxes, literacy tests, and an "understanding" test in which a would-be voter had to demonstrate a "reasonable" understanding of any section of the new constitution upon the demand of a voter registration board. Such requirements were enforced much more stringently toward Black people than toward Whites. A separate law in 1903 required residents to fill out a voter registration form without assistance. All Civil War veterans and their sons were exempted from these requirements. As expected, voting rates plummeted in Virginia, with 88,000 fewer

Union Street School

Name of Property

Loudoun County, Virginia

County and State

ballots cast in the 1905 gubernatorial election compared to the 1901 election. The 1902 constitution created new legal mechanisms for strict enforcement of segregation and furthered social enforcement as well. In addition to public schools, parks, rail and streetcar transportation, theaters of all types, restaurants, housing of all types (including travel lodging), stores, and other venues where people gathered became rigidly segregated.⁴¹

By 1909, Loudoun County had three accredited high schools⁴² and by 1916 had 12 total, all for White students. County school superintendent O. L. Emerick was dedicated to school consolidation, placing all students under one roof, and gradually eliminated smaller one-room schools that served White children, while ignoring the multiple one- and two-room schools for African Americans that remained in operation. By 1929, the County had nine four-year accredited high schools for Whites pupils,⁴³ while the Union Street School still only offered a limited number of high school-level classes.⁴⁴ The 1883 Union Street School building, although an improvement from the school on 14 Liberty Street that it had replaced, steadily became more inadequate. Between 1917 and 1929, the Union Street School only had a faculty of three teachers while average enrollment numbered 130 students.⁴⁵

1910s-1930s – Other Statewide Educational Efforts and Standardization of School Buildings

Elsewhere throughout the state, African Americans fought for equal educational opportunities; although improvements were made, they came at a slow pace. The 1917 incorporation of the private Julius Rosenwald Fund, a partnership between Tuskegee Institute and philanthropist Julius Rosenwald, became a critically important tool for improving Black students' educational facilities. The Slate and Jeanes funds both supported the program's goals as well. Across Virginia, particularly rural counties, the Rosenwald Fund (as it is commonly known) contributed to the construction of 664 schools between 1917-1932. The Rosenwald Fund required matching funds from local governments and/or community residents. Some localities, including Loudoun County, did not support these efforts. Many of the Rosenwald schools were first established as graded schools that, through unflagging community support and advocacy, eventually evolved into training schools, so named because they were intended to train male students in industrial and agricultural work and female students in domestic work. Traditional academic subjects at the high school level were slowly introduced as well, but the training schools rarely were accredited as full, four-year high schools. The Campbell County Training School [DHR 015-5200] opened as an elementary school in 1923 with the assistance of the Rosenwald Fund and began offering courses after the 6th grade during the 1930s. Similarly, Buckingham County's training school [NRHP 2015; DHR 208-5001] opened in 1925, Bedford Training School [NRHP 2021; DHR 141-5019] in 1929, and Stafford Training School [NRHP 2013; DHR 089-0247] in 1939. None of these schools offered an accredited four-year high school degree.

The Rosenwald Fund issued standardized school building plans in 1920, forty years after the construction of the Union Street School. Architect Samuel Smith, based in Nashville, Tennessee, was instrumental in standardizing the school designs used by the Rosenwald Fund. He argued for large windows, minimal interior detailing, frame construction with weatherboard siding, and a

Union Street School
Name of Property

Loudoun County, Virginia
County and State

slight Craftsman influence through small details such as bracket or exposed rafters under overhanging eaves.⁴⁶ Although the Union Street School predated these designs by almost forty years, its architectural characteristics are remarkably similar to the 1920 plans.

1930 – Graded School to Training School

According to Union Street School alumni Jim Roberts, the one-story addition was added in 1927 by the firm Dodd Brothers.⁴⁷ This addition was possibly completed by 1930. The community named the addition “Mr. Walker’s Room,” in honor of educator John C. Walker. With the additional room, grade school was taught on the school’s first floor and the first two years of high school were taught on the main block’s second floor.⁴⁸

In 1930, with still only three teachers at Union Street, parents sent a petition requesting an additional teacher but with high school accreditation: “*sincerely request that in appointing the fourth teacher in the Leesburg Colored public School, that your Board will kindly appoint a High School and Normal school graduate...*” The petition emphasized that the undersigned were “taxpayers of Leesburg School District.”⁴⁹ Thirty-three parents signed the petition. Some of these parents, having never received formal education themselves but understanding the critical importance of education, signed only with an “X.” In May 1930, School Superintendent Emerick responded to the parents’ petition stating that he had plans to hire a teacher with these credentials.⁵⁰ It was in this year that the school started officially offering high school grades and that assorted new names were used for the school.⁵¹ According to Douglass Alumni, from 1935-1941, the School Board issued diplomas to graduates variously using the name of Loudoun County Training School, Leesburg Training School, Loudoun County High School.⁵²

During this period, Miss Edythe Harris⁵³ (b. 1904) served as principal and Mr. Walker served as assistant principal. In 1931, Mr. Henderson was appointed principal and Miss Edythe Harris assistant principal. Mamie Waters (b. ?) taught elementary grades and Annie Harris (b. 1873) taught intermediate grades.⁵⁴ Reflecting the inequities inherent to a segregated school system, teachers made do with what they had; textbooks were often too few and outdated, and other educational offerings, such as libraries and lab equipment, were nonexistent. However, after school activities such as the choral program flourished. Classes were supplemented by night classes in Mrs. Harris’s home and summer school at Mr. Walker’s home. Certificates were awarded at the end of two years of high school and the first class graduated in 1935. This class included Lillian Coe Townsend, Nancy Cook Cotton, Edith Lee Simms, James C. Winston, and Everett Cook.⁵⁵ Both Edythe Harris and John C. Walker would later become advocated for school equality, such as by signing petitions for equal pay for teachers regardless of race.

Segregation was in full force and the latter half of the “separate but equal” doctrine was ignored by White officials. Even with additional attention to deficiencies of African American schools, the Loudoun County School Board refused to provide enough funds for textbooks and supplies. Private funds had to be raised by the community and families. As well, parents continued to be concerned about conditions at the Union Street School. There was no indoor plumbing, the doors to the exterior opened in (out-opening doors are life-safety features in case of a fire), and there

Union Street School

Name of Property

Loudoun County, Virginia

County and State

was no fire escape. In 1931, the parents asked for a new school building, but were denied by the School Board,⁵⁶ citing lack of funds with the excuse that typically African Americans paid less in property taxes than white families.

Even though the Loudoun County School Board had instituted public busing in the 1920s, this service was still not offered for students attending the Leesburg Training School (as Union Street School then was known). Many African American parents were so dedicated to educating their children, they provided transportation themselves. Parents organized carpools according to village and drivers included William Brown⁵⁷ of Purcellville, Towney Ferrell⁵⁸ and Arthur Jackson⁵⁹ of Waterford, C.P. Cook Sr.,⁶⁰ of Middleburg and Rob Ambers⁶¹ of Lucketts. Children from Ashburn took the train; others walked or took a horse and wagon.⁶² In addition to lack of public transportation, there were other shortfalls. Coal for the stoves often ran out and teachers had to solicit parents for contributions. School maintenance was the job of the students.

1940s - Fight for equality under the 14th Amendment

Conditions at the Union Street School remained hazardous in the face of minimal improvements. Blueprints show metal fire escapes were installed in several Loudoun County schools, including the Leesburg Training School. The exit to the fire escape was supposed to be made via an existing window opening. Specifications called for the lower sash to be removed and the remaining wall to be cut to the floor with a 1¾" thick door to be installed. However, proper access to the fire escape was never provided and complaints appeared later in the year about the accessibility of the fire escape at the training school.⁶³ Gertrude Alexander, the newly appointed Supervisor of Teachers, visited Leesburg Training School and noted:

*The present school building, which is a very hazardous structure so far as fire is concerned, should be abandoned at the earliest time possible ... I suggest that the first section of the new school serve all high school children and the elementary children will remain in the present school building.*⁶⁴

It was not only the physical conditions of the schoolhouse, but also the inferior quality of education offered to students at the Union Street school. Parents who wanted more for their children enrolled them in the Manassas Industrial School for Colored Youth, which was an accredited high school but which served five counties prior to the construction of Douglass High School and charged tuition for enrollment.⁶⁵ In 1940, at the urging of civil rights attorney Charles Houston Hamilton Houston to press his case of inequities, William McK. Jackson of Middleburg sent a bill to Mr. Emerick for reimbursement for school fees, stating "*sence [sic] my Child wants a college Education and loudoun County does not have a credited High School I had to send her to Manassas Ind School.*"⁶⁶ It is not clear if Mr. Jackson was ever reimbursed.

In 1938, parents, previously divided by village alliances, formed the County-Wide League, an association of teachers and parents throughout the county. Parents had many concerns in addition to the unaccredited Loudoun County Training School, such as the lack of transportation, poorly paid teachers, and the desperate condition of the school buildings for all African American students. The newly formed County-Wide League enlisted the help of attorney Charles Hamilton

Union Street School

Name of Property

Loudoun County, Virginia

County and State

Houston (1895-1950). Houston visited the Union Street School in 1939 and returned to Loudoun County in March 1940 to speak to the School Board on behalf of the County-Wide League. Houston pointed out that the “*County Board of Education are exposed to personal liability damage for many of the discriminations which they now inflict upon the Negro children.*” The article also inferred that a search for a new school site was underway.⁶⁷

Houston had built his legal career around dismantling the “separate but equal” doctrine in the public school system and grew to be a key ally for the Loudoun County parents. As with the entire African American community during the era of Jim Crow, Houston had first-hand experience with the inequities of “separate but equal” schools, railroad stations, public buses, and other public accommodations. A veteran of World War I, he had witnessed mistreatment of Black soldiers during his service as a lieutenant in the racially segregated U.S. Army. He resolved to go to law school after the war and spend his career “fighting for men who could not fight back.” While at Harvard Law School, Houston was the first Black student to be elected to the editorial board of the *Harvard Law Review*. After graduating, he joined his father, also an attorney, in Washington DC. He later served as dean of Howard University’s law school, during which time his students included future Supreme Court justice Thurgood Marshall. Houston later became the first general counsel for the NAACP. Through this work, Houston developed an ingenious strategy for fighting the “separate but equal” doctrine. Rather than fight the doctrine directly, Houston sought to erode its foundation with a case-by-case demonstration that distribution of public resources was not equal and that segregated facilities inherently were unequal.⁶⁸ Houston was particularly focused on the public school system as he believed the unequal educational opportunities offered to Black students and unequal pay for Black teachers best exemplified violations of the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. In 1934, Houston had embarked on a tour of public schools in the American south to get a broader view of the inequities of public education.

Houston accepted Loudoun’s County-Wide League and the condition of Loudoun’s public school system as another perfect violation of “separate but equal.” Houston was known for two clever tactics in his fight against school boards: 1) Houston emphasized that maintaining facilities to support “separate but equal” was more expensive for school systems and, 2) Houston held school administrators personally liable for the dangerous conditions of schools for Black children. Over the next two decades, Houston and his team built a case-by-case portfolio to overturn the “separate but equal” doctrine. Although Loudoun County’s desegregation cases never reached the courts, the unequal conditions that persisted in Loudoun were used to press Houston’s cases.

In November 1939, the County-Wide League purchased land for a new school, east of Leesburg. The purchase price was \$4,000 and, through community fundraisers, the County-Wide League raised funds to pay a deposit of \$1,400. This transaction was carried out under secrecy until the deed was finalized in an effort to prevent any individual from blocking the transfer. Willie Hall, a Middleburg business owner, underwrote the balance. The deed was prescriptive governing the future use of the site for the “...use and benefit of the Negro public school children of Loudoun County as an athletic field and as the location of a public Negro school and other

Union Street School
Name of Property

Loudoun County, Virginia
County and State

improvements...”⁶⁹ However, the Loudoun County School Board continued to obstruct progress of the African American community by rejecting the school site, arguing there was no funding available from the State Literary Fund to pay for a new school property.⁷⁰ At that time, Houston was working for the NAACP and encouraged Loudoun County residents to start a local chapter so that he could be hired to represent Loudoun parents. It would take another year of hard work before the land was deeded to the School Board for use as an African American high school.

Finally responding to parents’ demands, on March 12, 1940, the School Board voted to apply for Literary Fund loans totaling \$78,000, which included construction costs for a new high school for African American students including “... *an addition of four more rooms and auditorium on a new lot at Leesburg for a colored high-school in the amount of \$40,000.*” Funding was obviously conditional on loan approval; however, the month before, School Superintendent Emerick was advised that the Literary Fund was depleted and that new funding would not be available for another 12 to 18 months, which meant sustaining the dangerous conditions for the African American students at the Union Street School.⁷¹ Houston’s address to the School Board was closely covered by the local newspapers. On March 14, 1940, a headline ran “*Negros Press School Claims to Educators. Houston, Colored Attorney, Urges Educational Equality for Colored In Loudoun.*”⁷²

Responding to the school board’s vote not to seek the funding, on March 16 Houston expressed his disappointment, noting that the chances of approval from the State Literary Fund now were negligible. In a carefully worded five-page letter, Houston described the inadequacies of education offered to African Americans including the lack of accredited high schools, dangerous conditions at Union Street School, and lack of public transportation. Houston charged E. O. Emerick, the School Board and the Board of Supervisors with potential personal liability for the dangerous conditions of the school:

*I have advised them [African American parents] that after notice, which I herewith give you formally on their behalf by sending this letter ... you and the Board of Education are personally liable for any harm which may befall the children from continuing to force them to go to school in a death trap.*⁷³

Houston, aware that the Board was voting on a new budget, argued that either way, the County would have to spend more money on African American education: “... *that Loudoun County is going to have to spend more money on Negro education, either providing such education or fighting against providing it. You know, my hope is that the money will be spent on education directly, with all the benefits which will come back from a better educated citizenry.*”⁷⁴ The White community was alarmed enough at Houston’s five-page letter that on March 18, 1940, the letter was read before the Board of Supervisors.⁷⁵

The African American community was in a particularly difficult situation. Many African Americans fighting for educational equality earned their wages from White employers. There was little to no social and economic safety net and a lot was at risk. Many Black parents thus were pressured into ceasing their work advocating for equal rights. Therefore, not all were supportive of Houston’s strong stance. John Wanzer, who was a local blacksmith in Middleburg

Union Street School

Name of Property

Loudoun County, Virginia

County and State

and the head of the local chapter of the NAACP, expressed his concern: “*We have to live here with these people, work with them and face them every day, and some of them [Black workers] get our bread and meat from them [White employers]*”⁷⁶ In response to negative pressure from the White community, the County-Wide League withdrew their support from Houston and allowed time for the school board to respond. Houston wrote a letter to Emerick, informing him that the County-Wide League has asked for “no further action.” However, Houston indicated that he might alone pursue action against the School Board: “...If the fight comes, it will be because you [Emerick] and the Board of Education are violating the law and either fail or refuse to correct said violations,” hinting at a lawsuit independent of the County-Wide League.⁷⁷ Houston already had used other violations to establish his platform of dismantling Jim Crow.

Following Houston’s pressure, the County School Board gave a small token of acknowledgement by approving an additional \$4,500 to cover the costs of two high school teachers (\$1,500), partial reconditioning of the Union Street School (\$500), laboratory equipment (\$300), home economics equipment (\$300), furniture (\$400), and transportation (\$1,500). However, the School Board ignored previous citizen claims to be reimbursed for transportation of their children to school.⁷⁸ The School Board’s approval of the expenditures further was contingent on approval by the Board of Supervisors. The Board of Supervisors denied the additional \$4,500 during a May 14, 1940, meeting.⁷⁹

The year ended on a better note, however, as on December 16, 1940, after months of negotiations with the School Board, the land for the new Douglass High School was finally deeded in a sale of \$1 to the County School Board of Loudoun County.⁸⁰

1941

Douglass High School opened in September 1941.⁸¹ However, the Union Street school, even with its rudimentary conditions, continued to be occupied, serving elementary school students. The initial plan was that only the first floor would be used. However, with overcrowding a constant problem, the Loudoun County School Board finally authorized repairs to the fire escape and eventually the first and second grades were taught downstairs and third grade upstairs.

Jim Roberts, who attended Douglass Elementary (as the Union Street School now was named), shed insight into life at the school. Mr. Roberts was hired to be one of the “fire makers,” a paid position to keep the five stoves ready. Mr. Roberts would wake early, go to school early to light the stoves, then return home to change his clothes, the return to school. Mr. Roberts hung up his school uniform after classes because it had been emphasized to him that “appearance was important.” Mr. Roberts distinctly remembers the school’s wood floors – oil was applied to keep the dust down. The yard around the school was all dirt, which was tracked inside the school building. An outdoor spigot was at the outside gate to the school, which provided drinking water for the students, and outhouses stood along the north property line. Lunches were brought from home because the school had no cafeteria. Discipline was important. The teachers demanded respect and the students showed it to the teachers. Teachers expected completed homework and did not afford any slack to the students. In Mr. Roberts’s words, the teachers “knew what we

Union Street School
Name of Property

Loudoun County, Virginia
County and State

were up against.” Books were purchased by the families, as there were no textbooks provided by the public school system. Despite the difficult conditions, Mr. Roberts had warm memories of school, remembering fondly his friends, the school plays, operettas, and the softball team.⁸²

By the end of World War II, White officials realized that one of the tactics used to prevent the inevitable move towards integration was to improve Black students’ educational facilities in order to placate parents. By 1950, Virginia Governor John S. Battle, a fierce proponent of segregation, allocated \$75 million to improve African American schools statewide. In Loudoun County, the School Board opened Carver Elementary in Purcellville in 1947 opened Banneker in 1948 to replace the inadequate schools, including the Grant School (Middleburg), the Hamlin School (St Louis), Marble Quarry, Bull Run and Willisville.

1954-1959 Ending of Segregation and a New Struggle Begins

The Supreme Court’s 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision struck segregated education in public schools, setting off a decade of court cases attempting to both enforce and delay school integration. Particularly Virginia, led by successive governors⁸³ who fought to maintain segregation by inventing legal workarounds to evade the *Brown* ruling. One example was the Gray Commission of 1956, headed by state Senator Garland Gray. Supported by Governor Thomas B. Stanley, the Gray Commission proposed legislation to allow children to attend the public school of their choice, with the intention that no child be required to attend an integrated public school. The Gray Commission laid out the Pupil Placement Board, which provided the logistics needed for local school boards to evade integration through various means, including taxpayer dollars for White students to attend private schools and that no student could be required to attend an integrated school. Loudoun County eagerly followed the Governor’s lead; local headlines ran in the Loudoun Times Mirror affirming Gray Commission conclusions, such as “*Battle Says [Gray] Amendment Will Save Our Schools*” followed by various front page opinion pieces advocating for this approach.⁸⁴ These and other legislative efforts to avoid integration became known as Massive Resistance.

Conversations with Gertrude Evans, who attended Douglass Elementary between 1954 and 1957, roughly a decade after Mr. Roberts, shed light on daily student life at Union Street School. Ms. Evans also remembers the oiled floors, the potbellied stoves for heating, and the large, dirt playground. Over many years, children out during recess had worn away all the grass. Ms. Evans also remembers watching funerals in the adjacent cemetery. During the 1950s, Ms. Evans recalls that new indoor toilets were installed, a substantial improvement over outdoor privies. Ms. Evans fondly remembers one of her teachers, Ms. Mildred Gray,⁸⁵ a locally famous elementary school teacher in the public school system. By this time, Union Street School was so overcrowded and lacked sufficient space for fourth grade, so students attended school in the First Mt. Olive Church on Loudoun Street in Leesburg.⁸⁶

The Loudoun County School Board and Loudoun Board of Supervisors opted to improve Black students’ school facilities to create an impression of “equal” schools for White and Black children and floated a school bond to pay for the capital improvements. At a **January 1956** meeting, the

Union Street School

Name of Property

Loudoun County, Virginia

County and State

School Board approved a \$700,000 bond, which included improvements to Banneker Elementary and Douglass High School and a plan to replace Douglass Elementary (Union Street School). The Black community fought back, rejecting the bond and arguing for integration instead. While the School Board had justified their decision by claiming segregation was in the best interest of both races, the local chapter of the NAACP sent a resolution stating:

Whereas we know that the conclusion that segregated schools serve the best interest of Negroes is based solely upon ignorance and superstition; and further, we know from bitter experience, as well as from modern knowledge, that racially segregated schools handicap and limit the educational advancement of Negro youth...⁸⁷

Local news reporting followed the story. The newspaper's headline ran as "NAACP Rejects Continued Segregation in Loudoun." In February, 1956, the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors somewhat acknowledged the NAACP's demand, passing a resolution reading:

no steps be taken on a discussed \$700,000 bond issue [for improvements to Banneker and Douglass] until and unless reasonable assurance have been given by the parents of colored [sic] children of the county that they will conform to our considered opinion that their education be promoted better by continued school attendance on a segregated basis.⁸⁸

Loudoun County was not alone in resisting racially integrated schools. Statewide with few exceptions, White Virginians resisted integration. Led by a racist executive branch and supported by a similarly-minded General Assembly, many school authorities implemented Massive Resistance in a three-part plan to close schools, intimidate parents, and create additional legislation blocking integration. Tired of being ignored, by **March of 1956**, the NAACP countered, threatening a lawsuit against Loudoun County. Loudoun was one of several counties that would have an integration suit filed against it.⁸⁹

The Loudoun County School Board, feeling pressured, voted in May of 1956 to replace Douglass Elementary (Union Street School) while continuing to operate other inadequate one-room schoolhouses.⁹⁰ At that time, parents described Douglass Elementary as having "overcrowded and terrible conditions." The article continued the description:

the Leesburg Negro School ... compresses 200 students and seven grades into five classrooms. Rooms are inadequately heated by potbellied stoves, and school is closed on cold days. Basement toilets are unheated and there is no space in the school for a hot lunch program. The school was called "a firetrap which does not even have a fire extinguisher."⁹¹

In **June 1956**, the county's Board of Supervisors adopted a resolution to borrow \$225,000 from the State Literary Fund for construction of a "new brick building" and, to create parity with White students' schools, the new school would have a library, kitchen, and cafeteria. However, the resolution was adopted with the caveat that sufficient funds had to be available.⁹² At that time, Loudoun had a \$1.2 million debt to the State Literary Fund and it is not clear that this additional amount would have been approved. Since Literary Funds were not guaranteed even if approved, the soonest the funds would be released would be another 12 months. The plan was that the "new

Union Street School
Name of Property

Loudoun County, Virginia
County and State

Douglass Elementary” would serve Leesburg and also consolidate students from the villages of Ashburn, Bull Run and Waterford.⁹³

A provision of the loan application was that the project be “construction ready” and the first step was to find a new site. If a new school site could not be found, the Loudoun County School Board would have the right to condemn land for the purposes of building a new elementary school. As expected, this alarmed White residents in the Union Street neighborhood who feared an expansion of the existing school. A petition followed, stating that this would be an inappropriate option as the adjacent cemetery also would need land to expand and that the new elementary school should be located near “where the majority of the colored children live.” Fifty-two signatures followed from many who lived along King Street.⁹⁴

By July, a new site had been identified and the Board of Supervisors voted to appropriate \$25,750 for the “purchase of a tract of land adjoining Douglass High School as a future site of the new Douglass Elementary School, provided the negro [sic] organization approves of this site.” At this same meeting, the Board read a Memorandum from the Douglass Elementary PTA confirming their agreement.⁹⁵ At last, the Board was offering what the Douglass Elementary parents had been pleading for – a new elementary school – but only under the condition of continuing the “separate but equal” doctrine, a condition the NAACP had previously rejected in January of this same year. The Board was forcing the issue of segregation and attempting to divide the Black community. At the September Board of Supervisors meeting, the Supervisors dug in their heels with regard to school integration. The Supervisors voted unanimously to support “Governor Stanley’s program on the school integration problem,” re-affirming their commitment to supporting Massive Resistance⁹⁶ and continued segregation.

In 1956, the school board offered options for parents of the Union Street School and the school’s PTA adopted a resolution approving plans for a new school building to replace the Union Street School. Union Street School students were transferred to the school on Sycolin Road. Union Street School was no longer used as a school building by 1959.⁹⁷ It later was used to store school records and stands vacant today.

Modern Era

By the 1960s, Loudoun County had implemented token desegregation by instituting the Freedom of Choice Plan, another runaround instituted by the County School Board to give the appearance of integration while maintaining obstacles. With these new regulations, African Americans were allowed to apply through the Pupil Placement Board to schools originally built only for White students. Predictably, most Black students were rejected and, instead, bussed long distances to remain in segregated. These types of laws to avoid integration were struck down by the Supreme Court with their 1968 *Green v. County School Board of New Kent County [Virginia]* decision. Thirteen years after the initial ruling requiring desegregation, local and state governments no longer could drag their feet on integrating local schools. During the 1968-1969 school year, a decade after Union Street closed, Loudoun County schools finally integrated.

Union Street School
Name of Property

Loudoun County, Virginia
County and State

Justification for Criteria

Criterion A: Education

Union Street is locally significant under Criterion A with significance at the local level in the area of Education, as an illustration of the African American community's enormous efforts to provide a public education for its high school children. Constructed in 1883 as a public graded school, the Union Street School was ahead of its counterparts, including the Manassas Industrial School,⁹⁸ which was not established until a decade later and even then, not adopted into the public school system until 1938. As Virginia's fledgling public school system developed and became better funded, the inequities between Black students' and White students' educational facilities grew. By the time of Virginia's 1902 mandate for public high school education, the Union Street School remained a graded school, while facilities for White children were expanded and improved. Higher graded classes for African American students were only offered informally through community support and the generosity of teachers but were not accredited through the public school system. Loudoun County officials repeatedly imposed roadblocks to prevent African American students from having access to higher learning. Through selfless dedication from teachers, relentless determination from parents, and the singular focus of Charles Hamilton Houston, the Loudoun County School Board ultimately allowed some high school classes. Although an accredited high school education would not come until 1942 with the construction of Douglass High School, the Union Street School offered what education it could well ahead of its counterparts.

Criterion A: Ethnic Heritage: Black, and Social History: Civil Rights

The Union Street School carries statewide significant under Criterion A in the areas of **Ethnic Heritage: Black** and **Social History: Civil Rights**. Built as an elementary school during the late 19th century to replace a scattered grouping of community-supported grade schools, by the mid-20th century, the Union Street School had evolved into a symbol of inequality enabled by state laws legalizing racism. The fight for equality played out statewide and one of these sites was the Union Street School, the only Virginia school associated with civil rights attorney Charles Hamilton Houston. Union Street parents, seeking equal education, transportation, and facilities for their children, hired Houston, which also precipitated the establishment of a Loudoun County chapter of the NAACP. Houston had worked throughout the American South, exposing the inequalities of segregation as exemplified by unequal conditions in schools. Rather than attacking segregation directly, Houston created a series of precedent-setting cases, which eventually eroded Jim Crow laws. Although the case concerning Union Street School was settled before going to court, Houston identified the school as one of his possible test cases to illustrate the inequities between races. It was Houston's clear and convincing letters enumerating the inadequate educational opportunities and dangerous conditions of the Union Street School that described the fallacy of the "separate but equal" doctrine. Houston's threat of a lawsuit, presented to the Loudoun County School Superintendent and School Board, effected the construction of the 1941 Douglass High School [DHR 253-0070], which ultimately led to desegregation of Loudoun County schools in 1968.

Union Street School
Name of Property

Loudoun County, Virginia
County and State

Criterion C: Architecture

The Union Street School is eligible under Criterion C with significance at the local level in the area of Architecture. Following Virginia's 1870 mandate for a free public school system, segregated graded schools in Loudoun County began to be constructed. The typical rural schoolhouse in Loudoun during the 1870s and 1880s was a one-room, coal- or wood-heated, log or frame building – and without the design forethought of large windows for interior lighting and ventilation, high ceilings for air circulation, and separate classrooms to promote specialized learning for each grade. Built before the time when schoolhouse design was standardized by the State Board of Education's Division of School Buildings and even before Stuart Smith and the Rosenwald Fund's development of standardized school plans, the Union Street School was an early precursor for aspects of school design that would become standard within a few decades.

By the mid-20th century, the reverse was true and the Union Street School would be notable not for what it had but for what it lacked. In use until 1959 with only potbellied stoves for heat, without a gymnasium or cafeteria, and with outdoor toilets only installed in 1951, the Union Street School is a stark example of the gaping inequities in public education that existed under the "separate but equal" doctrine. By this time, far superior facilities were available to White students. The Union Street School counterpart was the high school at 102 North Street, a public school for White students which had a brick exterior, auditorium, gymnasium, laboratories, indoor plumbing, and steam heat. Abandoned as a school in 1959 and used as a storage facility thereafter, the Union Street School building never received modern upgrades and as a result, remains as an intact example demonstrating the fallacy of "separate but equal" ideas.

Union Street School
Name of Property

Loudoun County, Virginia
County and State

9. Major Bibliographical References

Acknowledgement

Jane Covington thanks the enormous effort and research of the Edwin Washington Project (<http://edwinwashingtonproject.org/>) an organization that saved many of the original records of the Union Street School. Without the EWP's discovery, archival preservation, and research, this work would not be possible. The author also thanks Phyllis Cook Taylor, Gertrude Evans, Jim Roberts, and John Tolbert, for their help in research, writing and accuracy.

Jane Covington would thanks the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors for their vision in the preservation of this significant historic property.

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Name of Property

Loudoun County, Virginia
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County and State

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County and State

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County and State

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John Tolbert, Winter 2022

Jim Roberts, Spring 2002

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, **Library of Virginia**

Federal agency, **Library of Congress**

Local government, **Loudoun County Clerk of the Court, Archives**

University, **University of Virginia**

Other

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): DHR No. 251-5117

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.84

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Latitude: 39.120390 Longitude: -77.563780

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

The historic boundary encompasses all of the 0.84 acre lot associated with tax parcel number 230185465000 as recorded by Loudoun County, Virginia. The true and correct historic boundary is shown on the attached Location Map and Tax Parcel Map.

Union Street School
Name of Property

Loudoun County, Virginia
County and State

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The historic boundary is coterminous with the perimeter lines of the original lot purchased in June 1883. Historic records describe the lot's boundary as 150 feet wide by 245 feet long, totaling roughly 0.84 acre. The property's historic setting and all known associated historic resources are encompassed by the historic boundary. Although the south half of the lot has a parking lot and 1975 former elementary school that postdate the property's period of significance, these resources are within the historic boundary because they are associated with later evolution of the property's use.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Jane Covington
organization: Jane Covington Restoration
street & number: PO 741
city or town: Middleburg state: VA zip code: 20118
e-mail: jane@janecovington.com
telephone: 434-960-4678
date: September 14, 2022

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.)

Photo Log

Name of Property: Union Street School

City or Vicinity: Leesburg, Virginia

County: Loudoun County

State: Virginia

Photographer: Jane Covington

Date Photographed: Winter 2022

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

Photo 1 of 18 South (front) elevation; camera facing north

Union Street School
Name of Property

Loudoun County, Virginia
County and State

- Photo 2 of 18** North (rear) elevation with c. 1930 addition at right side of photograph; camera facing southeast
- Photo 3 of 18** North and west elevations of c. 1930 addition; camera facing southeast
- Photo 4 of 18** North and east elevations; camera facing southwest
- Photo 5 of 18** South (front) elevation of former elementary school, now Loudoun County School Board Child Find Center; camera facing east
- Photo 6 of 18** North (rear) elevation of brick school; camera facing southeast
-
- Photo 7 of 18** Front entry stair hall, camera facing west
- Photo 8 of 18** Classroom No. 2, camera facing west into c. 1930 addition
- Photo 9 of 18** Walker Room (c. 1930 addition), camera facing northwest
- Photo 10 of 18** Second floor, Classroom No. 3; camera facing west
- Photo 11 of 18** Second floor stair hall; camera facing west
- Photo 12 of 18** Classroom No 4; camera facing north towards fire escape door. Graffiti reads "One Little Shove Will do It"
- Photo 13 of 18** Classroom No. 4; camera facing east
- Photo 14 of 18** Classroom No. 4; camera facing northwest
- Photo 15 of 18** Basement, Boys' bathroom; camera facing north
- Photo 16 of 18** Original oil can for oiling the floors
- Photo 17 of 18** Original light fixtures
- Photo 18 of 18** Original oil cloth

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for nominations 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.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

- Tier 1 – 60-100 hours
- Tier 2 – 120 hours
- Tier 3 – 230 hours
- Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.

Union Street School

Name of Property

Loudoun County, Virginia

County and State

ENDNOTES

¹ Based on newspaper reports, this doorway was originally a window.

² Mr. Walker's room was reportedly built from materials salvaged from the former Sycolin Colored School, dismantled in 1930. The sub-floor below Mr. Walker's room is weatherboard and one can speculate the sub-flooring is re-purposed from Sycolin.

³ Bureau Corner is the intersection of Jay and Madison Streets, in Middleburg, named for the Freedmen's Bureau which stood at 10 North Jay Street.

⁴ Three Freedmen's Bureau Schools in Leesburg are discussed in the body of this document. However, there were possibly other iterations of early schools in Leesburg for African American children co-located with churches. These included Mount Zion United Methodist Church located at **2 (12?) North Street, NE**, established in 1867 and where African Americans settled after the Methodist Episcopal Church (aka the Old Stone Church) split over the issue of slavery; William O. Robey was associated with this church. Providence Church, established in 1874, **located at 20 (205?) Church Street**, was originally a school supported by the Freemasons and associated with the Bailey Institute. Mt. Olive Church, located at **14 Liberty Street SW**, was supported by mutual aid societies.

⁵ In addition to Leesburg, the Freedmen's Bureau may have been associated with other schools throughout Loudoun including Waterford, 1866; Goose Creek (Lincoln), 1867; Hillsboro, 1867; Aldie, 1868; Harmony (Brownsville, Swampoodle) 1868; Willisville, 1868; Philomont (the Tate School) 1869; Middleburg 1868; Snickersville (Bluemont), 1870; Guilford Station, (Sterling), 1870. The Freedmen's Bureau did not build all of these schools but likely supported community efforts to educate African American children.

⁶ The Loudoun Museum and The Black History Committee of the Thomas Balch Library, "*African American Heritage Trail, Leesburg Virginia*," page 7-8. The school was located at 102 West Cornwall. Caroline Thomas (1833-1896) was likely a Quaker, likely a temporary boarder in Leesburg, not appearing in the 1860 or 1870 Census in Loudoun. Also See Edwin Washington Project and Larry Roeder's piece for a detailed discussion on Thomas: as seen at <https://edwinwashingtonproject.org/tag/civil-war-to-1892/> page 12. Also see Balch Library, Elizabeth Welbourn Seccombe Collection, 1906 – 2006 (M 089), "School at Methodist Parsonage," Box 6 Folder 10 - The Methodist Parsonage.

⁷ In the 1860 US Census, **William O. Robey** is a blacksmith living in Leesburg with two children, Mary and William; in 1870 William Ravey [sic, correct spelling Robey] is living in Waterford working as a schoolteacher and minister with his two grown children, 1880 census, William O. Roby [sic, correct spelling Robey] has returned to Leesburg on Lucy [correct spelling is King Street] Street and is a Minister with M. E. C. Colored Church.

⁸ The deed describes the location as "a house and lot beginning at the extremity of Church Street, where it intersects an alley ... running towards the **Foundry** ... Same property convey LCDB 4W:276 and that the said Robey shall have the privilege of using the pump or well on the lot of Ryon [possibly the correct spelling is Ryan], adjoining." Later maps show the location of the Foundry in the southeast quadrant near the railroad tracks. Other sources identify the location of Robey's house at the corner of **North and Church Street**. Both locations could be correct.

⁹ **LCDB 5F:366, 1852** William Forsyth and Louisa to William Robe [sic], John Smale finances the purchase (LCDB 5F:368) and the debt is repaid in 1874 (LCDB 6F:410.).

¹⁰ Also see: **First Freedmen's Bureau School**: Elizabeth Welbourn Seccombe Collection Box 6, Folder 10 at the Thomas Balch Library; **Bailey Institute**, Leesburg Architectural Survey DHR 253-0035-0212, in Balch Library; and also see **Ancestry.com**.

¹¹ It is not clear if Robey or Bailey's school opened before the other. The important point is several schools were opening to meet the demand to educate newly free African Americans.

¹² **LCDB 5X:189** January 1869, Bailey, R.H to Waters, T.W & Tees, Gift. Bailey initially purchased the property in December 1867 for \$140 on the "west side of King Street adjoining Stable lot of John Smale," **LCDB 5X:97**. In February 1868, the boundaries were adjusted through an exchange with John Smale, "and this said last lot being deemed more eligible and better adapted to the purposes uses and trust declared in said deed from said Bailey..." **LCDB 5X:280**.

¹³ The "Underwood Constitution" of 1869, as it was often known, mandated public education in Virginia. It was named after John C. Underwood, the federal judge who oversaw the constitutional convention. Ratification of the new constitution was required before Virginia could be readmitted to the United States.

Union Street School

Name of Property

Loudoun County, Virginia

County and State

¹⁴ Charles Fenton Mercer (1778-1858), a state senator from Loudoun County, was a proponent of free education. See Egerton, Douglass, "To the Tombs of the Capulets," Charles Fenton Mercer and Public Education in Virginia 1816-1817, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4248804>

¹⁵ Loudoun County Board of Supervisor Minutes, May 4, 1872 and December 1872 As seen : <https://lportal.loudoun.gov/LFPortalinternet/0/edoc/150721/001 - Minute Book 08-16-1870 thru 07-26-1882.pdf>
The six townships for administering the school budget were Leesburg, Jefferson, Mt. Gilead, Broad Run, Lovettsville, and Mercer.

¹⁶ Charles Poland, *From Frontier to Suburbia, Loudoun County, Virginia One of America's Fastest Growing Counties*, Heritage Books, 2005, page 252.

¹⁷ For example, the Willisville Elementary School, initially established as a Freedman's School, was transferred to the public school system in the early 1930s.

¹⁸ "Exploring Leesburg: A Guide to History and Architecture," number 114, page 120.

¹⁹ **LCDB 6T:498, 1883**, John R Beuchler and wife.

²⁰ In the 1880 census, Beuchler is spelled Benskler and the family is living on Lucy Street [King Street]. In the 1910 census, Beuchler is also spelled Benskler and the family is likely living in the same house on Ming [incorrect spelling of King] Street North. Beuchler purchased a 3-acre lot from Paxson in April 1883 (**LCDB 6T:449**) for \$1,100 at the corner of King and Union, continuing westward to the Union Cemetery. Beuchler further subdivided the lot by selling 0.8 acre to the Leesburg School District, 45/100 of an acre to a neighbor, and reserving the residual of the 3 acres for his own residence. In the 1920 census, the family has moved to Loudoun Street. It seems Beuchler did a bit of everything from baking to land speculation to animal husbandry. J R Beuchler also owned a Percheron stallion, Ramoz II, and claimed liens on three colts in 1905: LCDB 8B:2 and 8B:201. Also see chancery case **Poulton vs Beuchler**. John Robert Beuchler was born in 1839 in Washington D.C.. See:

https://www.ancestry.com/search/categories/cen_1880/?name=mary_beuchler&count=50&residence=leesburg-loudoun-virginia-usa_23616.

²¹ *The Mirror*, as seen on microfilm at Balch, Jan 1 1880 – December 27, 1883. Few activities for African Americans are covered. One headline, "A Lively Day Among the Colored Troops" mentions a fair at the M. E. Church. The purchase of land for a new school for African American children is not mentioned.

²² Loudoun County Tax Records from 1883 and 1884 do not show a value for a structure on the property, so the exact construction date is not clear.

²³ **LCDB 6X:275, 1885**. Beuchler further subdivides the 3-acre lot which he purchased from Paxson, selling off 45/100 of an acre for \$400 "adj to the colored school."

²⁴ It is not proven that additional funding was needed, except traditionally African American public schools had received inadequate public funding and relied on community support.

²⁵ Rosenwald Schools in Virginia, (DHR 012-5041) Virginia Department of Historic Resources, as seen: <https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/012-5041/>

²⁶ "Welcome Loudoun Douglass Alumni," a history included in the Collection M 073 OMB 012 "Research Materials Regarding Decision to Replace Frederick Douglass Elementary School, Leesburg 1938 -1971," Thomas Balch Library.

²⁷ **Lizzie Hoge Taylor** (1837-1871?) was the daughter of Isaac Hoge (1804-1867), a successful Loudoun County attorney and Rachel Hoge, both Quakers who married in Goose Creek. Lizzie married Oliver Taylor (xx – 1884?) but they never had children of their own. In Lizzie's will [LCDB 2W:74, 1871], she left her estate to her husband for his lifetime and then the remaining balance to the state of Virginia to establish the Hoge School Fund of Loudoun County for the education of the county's indigent children. Hoge Funds were apportioned to the different Loudoun school districts according to census counts but it is not mentioned if the funds went to White or Black or both types of schools. Also see Acts of the Assembly March 10, 1884:

https://books.google.com/books?id=ZOVJAQAAMAAJ&pg=PA489&lpg=PA489&dq=hoge+fund+loudoun+county&source=bl&ots=d1AeACRIQ-&sig=ACFu3U2GpxEGyHQpxXSIVmqrTJL_OK2Kaw&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwj2grjB5qX3AhXog3IEHRT6D-wQ6AF6BAglEAM-v=onepage&q=hoge+fund+loudoun+county&f=false.

²⁸ "State and County Funds for the Leesburg District," EWP District Accounts Census Returns 1882 to 1921, on file at the EWP Archives, Round Hill, Virginia, page 85. There were six districts in 1883 – Leesburg, Mt Gilead, Mercer, Lovettsville, Jefferson, and Broad Run. Leesburg later would be split into two districts – County and Town.

Union Street School

Name of Property

Loudoun County, Virginia

County and State

²⁹ For more discussion on the Great Migration, see [The Warmth of Other Suns](#) by Isabel Wilkerson and Charles Poland, [From Frontier to Suburbia: Loudoun County Virginia](#), pages 238-245.

³⁰ **Caroline Thomas** (b. 1833), an early teacher in the Freedmen's Bureau schools, was from Pennsylvania. **Oliver Grant** (b. 1847), listed in the 1892-1893 census of "colored" (sic) teachers, also was teaching in Middleburg. The 1900 U.S. Census identifies his birthplace as in Pennsylvania. **Edyth O Harris** (b. 1904), a long-time teacher at Union Street, was also from Pennsylvania.

³¹ Storer College, an important center for education, was established by the Freedmen's Bureau, the Freewill Baptists and Jon Storer.

³² Simon P. Fisher (b. 1859), listed in the 1892-1893 census of Black teachers for the Union Street School, is also listed in the 1900s census as a preacher.

³³ Edwin Washington Project, as seen: <https://edwinwashingtonproject.org/research/instructors/>. Wm. H. Ash is listed in the "Census of Colored Teachers" in Loudoun for the 1892-1893 school year. Wm. H. Ash was William Horace Ash (1859-1908), who was born into slavery in Loudoun, attended the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute, graduated in 1882, and went on to become a teacher, and, later in life, a politician. Ash was a teacher at the Union Street School.

³⁴ **LCDB 6F:332, 1873**, Henry Harrison to Trustees of Leesburg Academy located on Wirt and North streets, two acres, "being the lot commonly known as the old academy lot."

³⁵ John C. Walker is also listed on the "Census of Colored Teachers" with a present post office of Waterford. John C. Walker would later move to Leesburg and start a long-term relationship with the Union Street School. In the 1940 US census, John C. Walker is living on King Street and has completed 4th year of college. John C. Walker was married to Hattie B. Walker (1875- 1960) and they are buried together at Zion Cemetery in Leesburg. They had five children: Beatrice, b. 1908; Bina (son), b. 1910; Annie, b. 1913; Thomas, b. 1914; Chas, b. 1918. Edwin Washington project, <http://edwinwashingtonproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/1893coloreda.pdf>. John C. Walker is listed in the 1940 US Census with a birth year of 1875; his tombstone lists a birth date of 1871.

³⁶ Waterford, a village northwest of Leesburg, was established by Quakers who did not own enslaved people and were sympathetic to African Americans. The Waterford Second Street School, originally established by the Freedman's Bureau and the Quakers, was one of the earliest schools for African American children.

³⁷ "Welcome Loudoun Douglass Alumni," Thomas Balch Library files on Douglass Elementary. Walker would be part of the school for over 53 years

³⁸ Although a private institution, tuition was somewhat subsidized.

³⁹ In 1908, the Lincoln community raised \$14,500 to subsidize inadequate public funding to build the new high school. By 1909, high schools in Waterford, Lincoln, and Leesburg were classified as "First Grade" high schools by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. By 1914, the Aldie High School Committee had been formed to raise funds for the construction of a high school, which was completed the following year.

⁴⁰ In 1912, the Union Street School is identified on the Sanborn Maps as "public school (colored) Heat: stoves [meaning coal-fired pot belied stoves] Light: none." By 1912, the nearby public school for White children had converted from stoves to steam heat.

⁴¹ Susan Breitzer, "Constitutional Convention, Virginia (1901-1902)," *Encyclopedia Virginia*, <https://encyclopediavirginia.org/entries/constitutional-convention-virginia-1901-1902>.

⁴² Leesburg High School on Wirt Street, Waterford HS and Lincoln HS.

⁴³ Aldie, Ashburn, Leesburg, Lincoln, Lovettsville, Lucketts, Round Hill, Unison-Bloomfield. and Waterford.

⁴⁴ According to Gertie Evans, "The Annual Report of the Superintendent" reported that African Americans took "Higher Branch" course work in Leesburg from 1909-1917.

⁴⁵ Attendance records 1917-1943. Files of Artie Wright. Average attendance was much lower and more in the range of 93 students per day.

⁴⁶ For a more detailed description on Rosenwald schools and school design, see <https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/012-5041/>

⁴⁷ Grey Dodd is a carpenter living on Old Waterford Road in 1940. He was then 37 years old, so would have been in his mid-20s when adding the addition.

⁴⁸ "Welcome Home Douglass Alumni," p. 2.

⁴⁹ As African American families typically rented rather than owned property and therefore did not pay property taxes, Superintendent Emerick stated that there were not sufficient funds for "colored schools," thereby justifying the substandard conditions at schools for Black children.

Union Street School

Name of Property

Loudoun County, Virginia

County and State

⁵⁰ Petition titled "To the Superintendent and Public School Board of Leesburg School District," undated but assumed to be 1930 based on May 14, 1930, response from Emerick, from the files of DGS.

⁵¹ From the EWP archives, Student Count. In 1930-1931, the name of the school is "Leesburg," which is struck through and "Douglass" is hand-written above. The grades are listed "8-11" and the Race is "C."

⁵² Welcome Home Douglass Alumni, page 2. The diploma may have referred to the two-year program of high school classes.

⁵³ **Edyth O Harris** (b. 1904), a long-time teacher at Union Street, was from Penn.

⁵⁴ "Welcome Douglass Alumni." Annie E. B. Harris is buried at Mt. Zion Community Cemetery. Her marker's inscription reads "*school teacher, sister of Richard H L Harris.*" In the 1940 US census, Annie E. B. Harris is listed as a schoolteacher in public school, completed 3rd year college. Harris lived with her brother. Annie Harris was the daughter of Lewis T. Harris (1834 - ?), who lived on King Street and was an illiterate gardener, and Virginia B. Harris (1837 - ?), who was also illiterate (source: 1880 census)

⁵⁵ "Welcome Douglass Alumni," as seen at Thomas Balch Library. According to the 1940 US census, Ms. Harris is listed as a "Lodger" in house of Rachel Taylor, is 36 years old, and was born in Pennsylvania.

⁵⁶ EWP.

⁵⁷ 1930 Census, William H Brown (1862-), Purcellville Virginia, cement contractor; Hazel and Doris were high school age.

⁵⁸ 1940 Census. Towney Ferrell was the father of Mary Louise Ferrell Mallory (1920-1986), who attended the Union Street School. Towney Ferrell had a 5th grade education and worked as a carpenter in Waterford.

⁵⁹ 1930 US Census, Arthur G Jackson, (1888 -) literate, laborer; Walter, Mable, and Marie were of high school age.

⁶⁰ 1940 Census, Nancy Cook Cotton (b. 1921) and Everett Cook were from Middleburg, driven each day to Leesburg by her father C.P. Cook Sr. (b. 1888), a tinsmith with an elementary school education. Their mother, Bitha Cook (b. 1866), was a descendant of Henderson Willis, a free Black man who was one of the first to live in Willisville.

⁶¹ 1930 Census, Rob Ambers (1885 -) of Leesburg, Laborer; Waler was high school age.

⁶² "Welcome Douglass Alumni," as seen at Thomas Balch Library.

⁶³ No title, from the files of Larry Roeder, blueprints showing remedial fire escapes added to several Loudoun County schools, January 1938. In addition to Union Street, fire escapes were also added to Hillsboro, Lincoln Grade School, Lincoln Colored and Lucketts. In a 1940 letter, the County-Wide League wrote a letter documenting the "fire escape is inaccessible the window opening on the fire escape has no sash cords ..." County Wide League to Emerick, March 16, 1940, Collection M 073 OMB 012 "Research Materials Regarding Decision to Replace Frederick Douglass Elementary School, Leesburg 1938 -1971," Thomas Balch Library.

⁶⁴ Assistant Superintendent of Negro Education, State Board of Education to O. L. Emerick (Dec 15, 1939), Collection M 073 OMB 012 "Research Materials Regarding Decision to Replace Frederick Douglass Elementary School, Leesburg 1938 -1971," Thomas Balch Library.

⁶⁵ Manassas Industrial School was the only school for the five counties of Prince William, Fairfax, Arlington, Loudoun, and Fauquier for the years 1938-1958.

⁶⁶ William McK. Jackson to Emerick, March 18, 1940. Balch Library. It is possible that other children from Loudoun County also attended Manassas Industrial School. A 1927 roster from Manassas lists students including Roberta Josephine Waters, who might have been Roberta J. Waters, born in Willisville in 1908 and the niece of the long-time teacher Anna Gaskins, who taught in the Willisville one-room school, and granddaughter of Willisville's matriarch, Rose Gaskins. Manassas Industrial School also offered residential facilities, so it would have been possible to attend from remote Willisville.

⁶⁷ "Negros Press Claims to Educators," LTM, March 14, 1940. Houston spoke on February 18, 1940, for Negro History Week in Middleburg, likely in the Shiloh Church or the Asbury Church. In this article, it is noted that the School Board and community were in search of a lot for the "new school" (i.e. what would become Douglass High School). The event was organized by the County Wide League.

⁶⁸ "Charles Hamilton Houston," <https://naacp.org/find-resources/history-explained/civil-rights-leaders/charles-hamilton-houston>. Howard University School of Law named its main building Charles Hamilton Houston Hall in 1958. Harvard Law School named a professorship after him and, in 2005, opened the Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race and Justice.

⁶⁹ **LCDB 11F:227, November 1939.** W.S. Gibbons to John Wanzer, Howard Clark, Fred Lewis, Robert Ambers, John Washington, Eva Sanford, and Elizabeth Queensberry, Trustees.

Union Street School

Name of Property

Loudoun County, Virginia

County and State

⁷⁰ Board of Supervisors, December 1939.

⁷¹ "School Board Adopts Budget of \$207,135," Loudoun Times Mirror Loudoun Times Mirror, March 14, 1940. Also See BOS minute book March 12, 1940. The School Board requested \$40,000, although the Board of Supervisors only approved an expenditure of \$30,000.

⁷² "Negros Press School Claims to Educators, Houston, Colored Attorney, Urges Education Equality for Colored in Loudoun," Loudoun Times Mirror, March 14, 1940.

⁷³ Houston to Emerick, March 16, 1940, Collection M 073 OMB 012, "Research Materials Regarding Decision to Replace Frederick Douglass Elementary School, Leesburg 1938 -1971," Thomas Balch Library.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ BOS Minute Book 01-25-1937 to 12-28-1944, page 149. Also See "Negros Implore Support of Educational Benefits, Loudoun Times Mirror, March 21, 1940.

⁷⁶ **Wanzer to Quisenberry, March 19, 1940**; Box 163-303, Folder 10, Houston Papers.

⁷⁷ Houston to Emerick, March 21, 1940, Collection M 073 OMB 012, "Research Materials Regarding Decision to Replace Frederick Douglass Elementary School, Leesburg 1938 -1971," Thomas Balch Library.

⁷⁸ "School Board Votes Approval of Additional Funds to Equip Colored High School," Loudoun Times Mirror, April 11, 1940, front page. Some of the citizens who requested reimbursement but who were denied were Daisy Allen Aldie (Oakham Farm) transportation \$45; Annie Wyatt of Sterling for transportation for daughter Ruth Williams for two years totaling \$85.35; and William McK. Jackson of Middleburg for tuition and board totaling \$210. (See Balch files Collection M 073 OMB 012 "Research Materials Regarding Decision to Replace Frederick Douglass Elementary School, Leesburg 1938 -1971," Thomas Balch Library.)

⁷⁹ "Houston's Letter Pressing Issue Colored Education Is read to School Board." Loudoun Times Mirror, May 1940.

⁸⁰ **LCDB 11K:81, 1940**, Wanzer and Trustees to School Board of Loudoun County.

⁸¹ Blueprints from the Division of School Buildings, State Department of Education in Richmond, title the Douglass School as "Leesburg Training School." Douglass High School initially opened as a training school until it was accredited the following year.

⁸² Conversations with Mr. Jim Roberts, Spring 2022.

⁸³ Governor John S. Battle (served as governor 1950 – 1954) and Governor Thomas B. Stanley (1954 – 1958) were both ardent segregationists.

⁸⁴ Loudoun Times Mirror, Thursday, January 25, 1956. Battle was the previous governor of Virginia. State Senator Gray supported segregation.

⁸⁵ Ms. Gray had taught in many different places in the County, including the two-room schoolhouse in the village of Willisville, then moving to Waterford, and ending her career in Leesburg.

⁸⁶ Conversations with Gertrude Evans, Winter 2002.

⁸⁷ Wanzer's letter was read aloud to the Board of Supervisors in January. See Loudoun County Minute Book 010; 03-02-1953 to 06-30-1959, January 1956, page 180, <https://www.loudoun.gov/3438/Minute-Books>.

⁸⁸ "NAACP Rejects Continued Segregation in Loudoun," Loudoun Times Mirror, February 9, 1956. Letter sent to LCSB signed by John Wanzer, President of the County-Wide League; Geneva Steward, President of Bull Run PTA, and William McK. Jackson, President of the Loudoun County branch of NAACP. The NAACP's resolution carried weight and the Loudoun Times Mirror published the text of the resolution in full.

⁸⁹ "Test Case in Loudoun is Possible, NAACP Told," Loudoun Times Mirror, Thursday, March 22, 1956, front page.

⁹⁰ Ashburn, Bull Run, and Waterford schools were closed in 1957-1958. Willisville was closed in 1958-1959.

⁹¹ "Board Hears Bid for New Negro School," Loudoun Times Mirror, Volume 157, No 2 [May 1956] front page headline. Mrs. Rachel Jackson was spokesman for the Douglass Elementary group. A related article of the same day, titled "Board Votes for Improvements for Schools," lists additional expenses allocated to improve African American schools including Chalkboards (\$150), outside lights (\$150), and gravel for a parking lots at Douglass High School (\$250), Ashburn Colored School (\$100), Banneker (\$200), Douglass Elementary (\$300), Douglass High School Mountain Gap (\$100), and Waterford Colored School (\$100).

⁹² Loudoun County Minute Book 010; 03-02-1953 to 06-30-1959, July 1956, page 208, as seen:

<https://www.loudoun.gov/3438/Minute-Books>.

⁹³ "Board Hears Bid for New Negro School," Loudoun Times Mirror, Volume 157, No 2 [May 1956]. In the end, the School Board did rent space at the Leesburg Baptist Church on Loudoun Street for the 1957-1958 school year. In 1958, the elementary school children entered the newly built Douglass Elementary School. Despite the obsolete

Union Street School

Name of Property

Loudoun County, Virginia

County and State

condition of Ashburn, Waterford and Bull Run elementary schools, the School Board resisted closing these one-room schoolhouses and instead made minor improvements

⁹⁴ From the files of Artie Right, Department of General Services, "Historic Letter (LPS-Superintendent [sic]) Union St_loudouncntytrnycenter.pdf," two pages. At this time, many Black families lived in what was colloquially known as "Black Bottom" in Leesburg's southwest quadrant along Loudoun Street. Although there is no date on the letter, it is possible the letter was written in 1956 in response to this newspaper article and the current search for a new site for a new Douglas Elementary. It is also possible but not as likely, judging from where the petitioners lived, that the document was signed in response to the 1938 search for a new site for Douglas High School. In either event, it is clear White residents did not want an expansion of Union Street School in their neighborhood.

⁹⁵ Loudoun County Minute Book 010; 03-02-1953 to 06-30-1959, July 1956, page 223; also read the BOS's re-affirmation to 'separate but equal' in vote on page 230. As seen: <https://www.loudoun.gov/3438/Minute-Books>

⁹⁶ Minute Book 010: page 230.

⁹⁷ Edwin Washington Project Douglass Elementary, as seen

<http://edwinwashingtonproject.org/research/schools/colored-schools/douglas-elementary-school-colored-leesburg/>.

⁹⁸ The Manassas Industrial School was established by Loudoun County native Jennie Dean.

Legend

 County Boundaries

TOPOGRAPHIC MAP

**Union Street School
Town of Leesburg
Loudoun County, VA
DHR No. 251-5117**



 Historic Boundary



Feet

0 600 1200 1800 2400

1:36,112 / 1"=3,009 Feet

Title:

Date: 10/4/2022

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 to 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.



Legend

County Boundaries

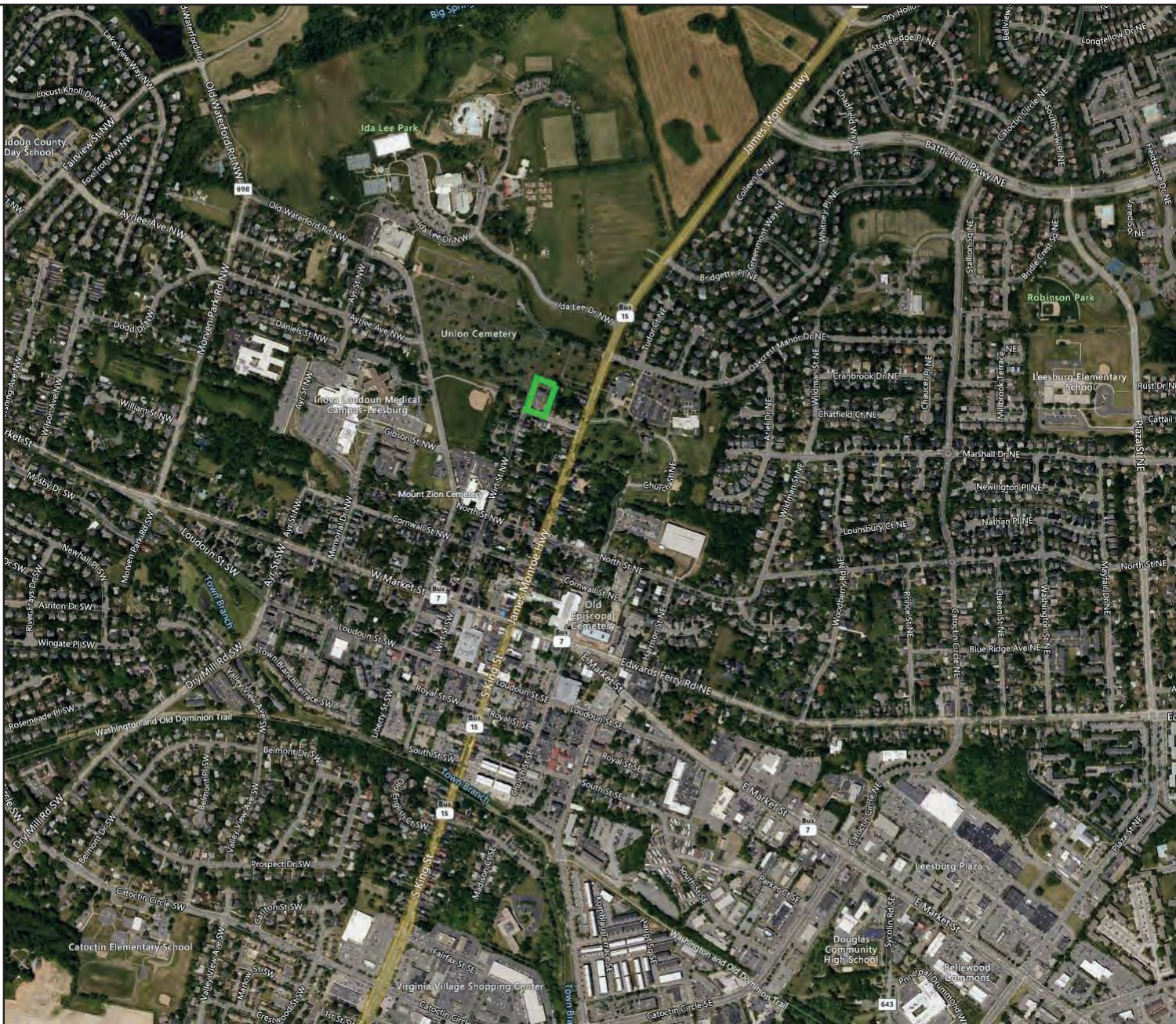
AERIAL VIEW - VICINITY
Union Street School
Town of Leesburg
Loudoun County, VA
DHR No. 251-5117

Historic Boundary



Feet

0 500 1000 1500 2000
1:18,056 / 1"=1,505 Feet



Title:

Date: 10/4/2022

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.

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Legend

County Boundaries

LOCATION MAP

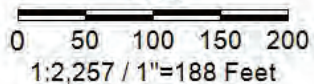
**Union Street School
Town of Leesburg,
Loudoun County, VA
DHR No. 25305117**

Latitude: 39.120390
Longitude: -77.563780

Historic Boundary



Feet



Title:

Date: 9/30/2022

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.

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Legend

County Boundaries

SKETCH MAP

**Union Street School
Town of Leesburg,
Loudoun County, VA
DHR No. 253-5117**

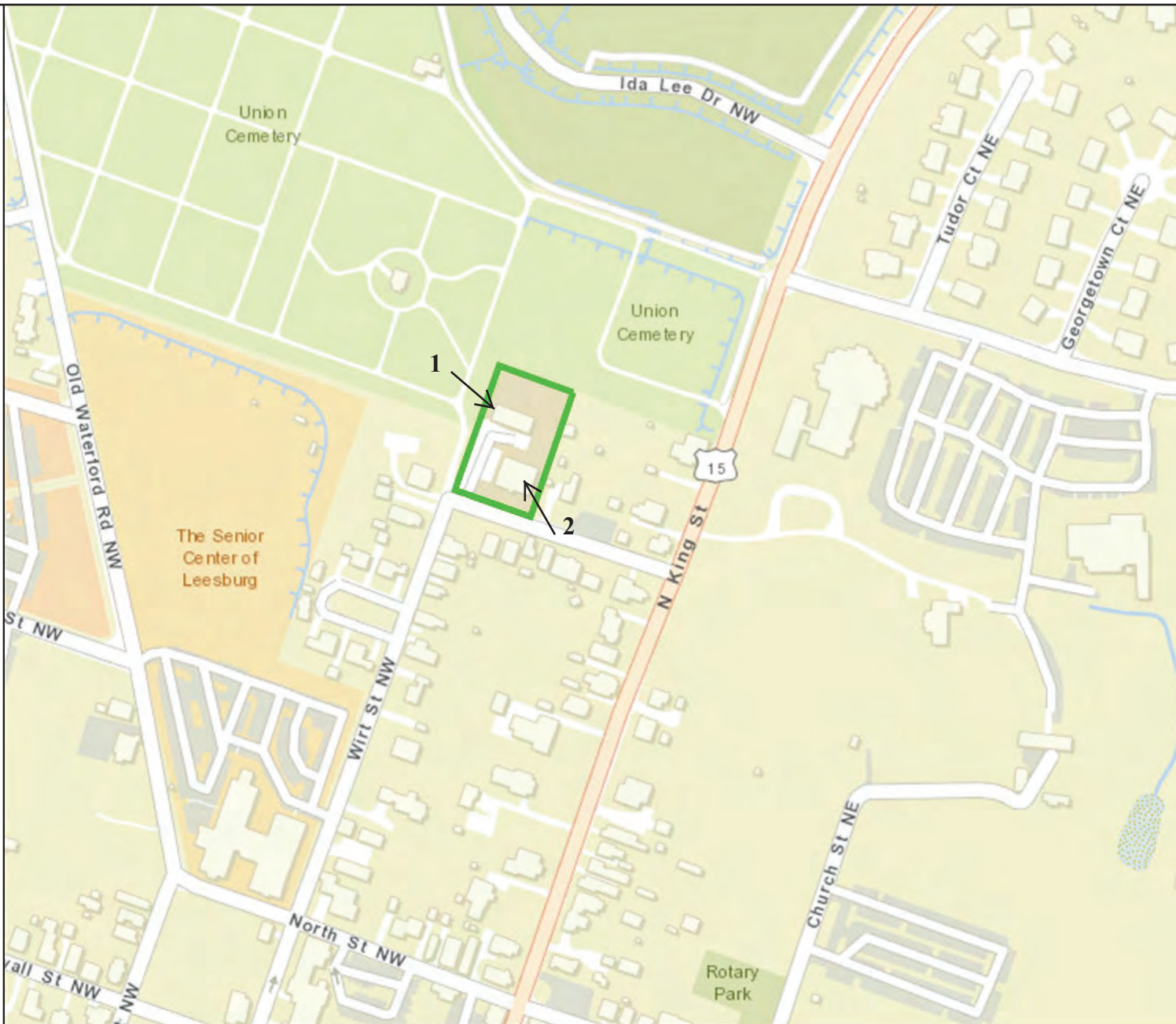
- 1. Union Street School
(contributing)**
- 2. Child Find Center
(noncontributing)**

Historic Boundary



Feet

0 100 200 300 400
1:4,514 / 1"=376 Feet



Title:

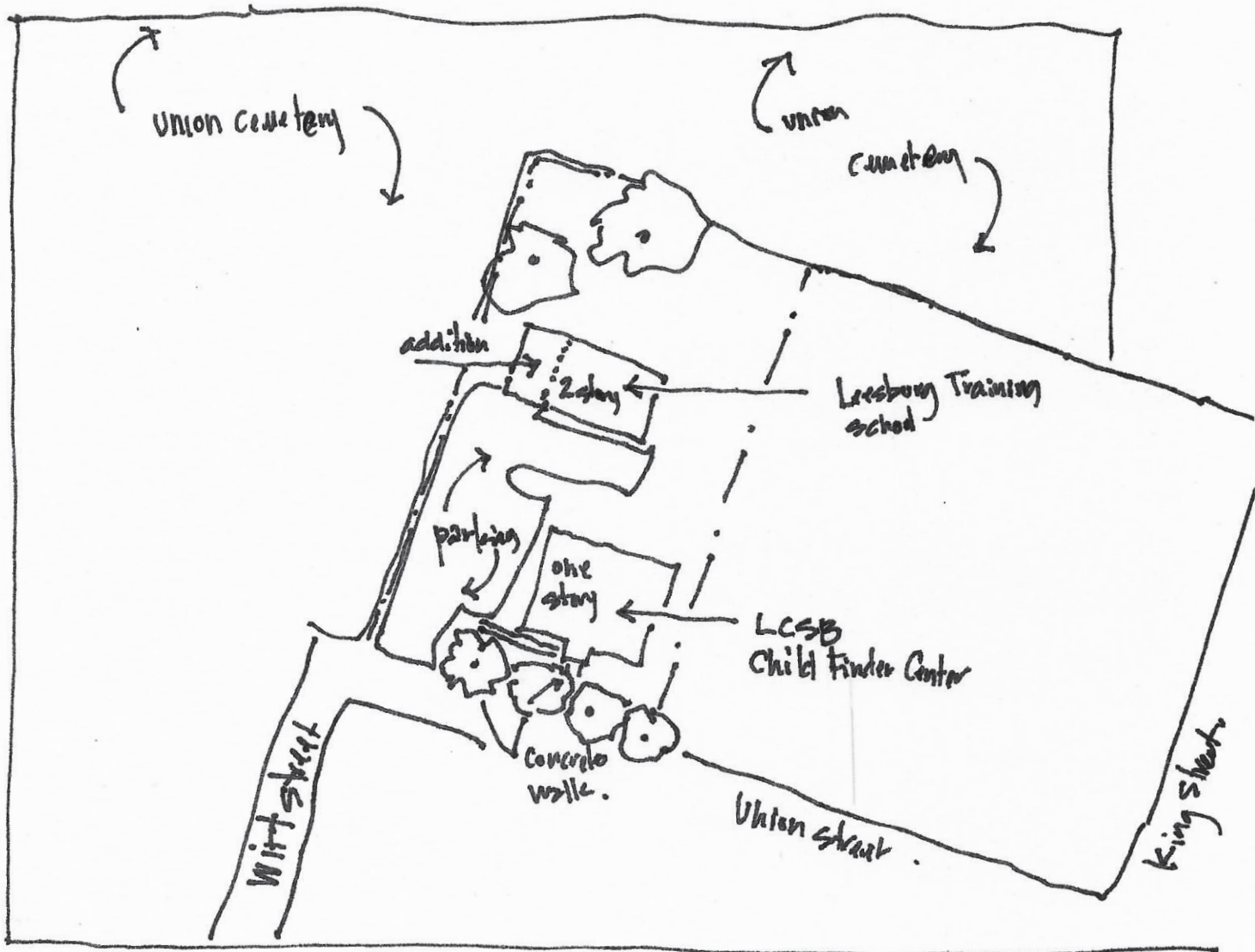
Date: 10/4/2022

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.

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SITE MAP

Union Street School
Town of Leesburg
Loudoun County, VA
DHR No. 253-5117

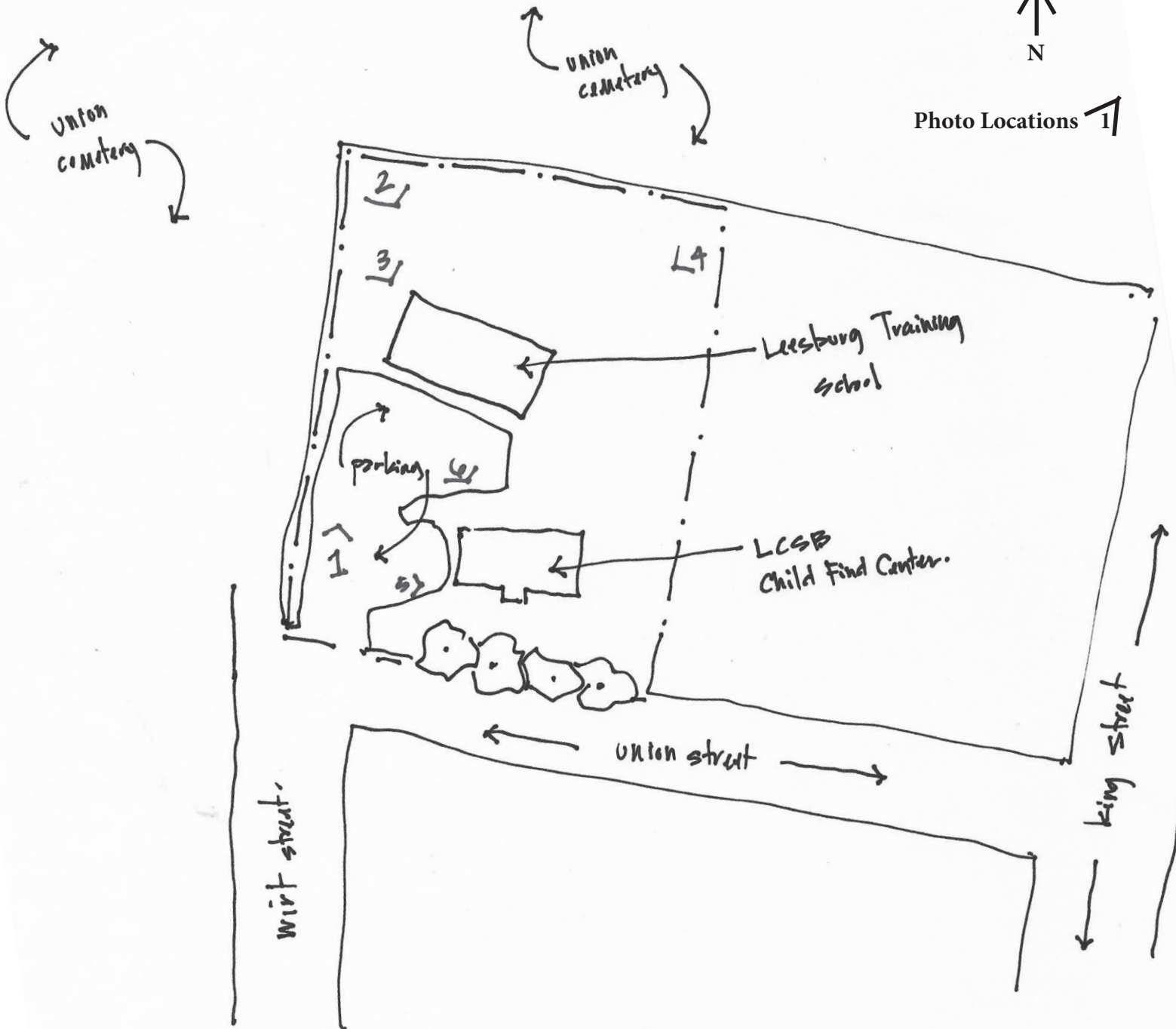


□ Boundary for 20 Union Street lot.

site Map

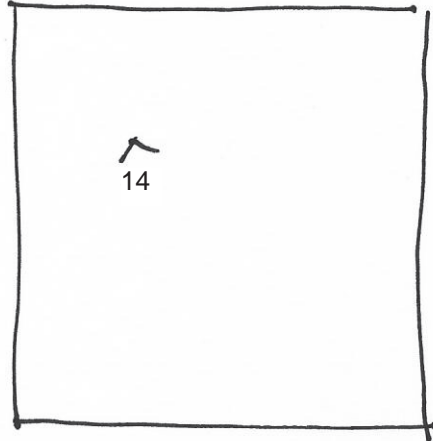
20 Union Street.

PHOTO KEY (1 of 2)
Union Street School
Town of Leesburg
Loudoun County, VA
DHR No. 253-5117

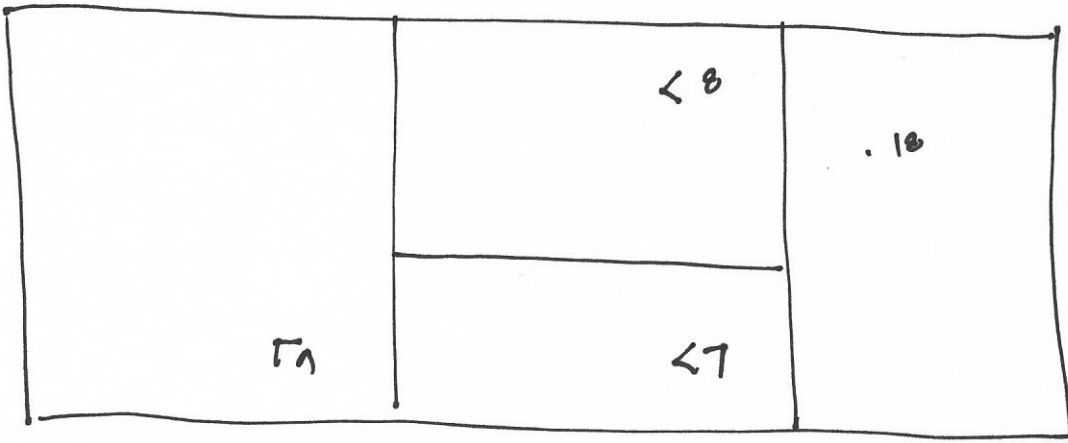


20 Union Street
Photo key Plan
Site.

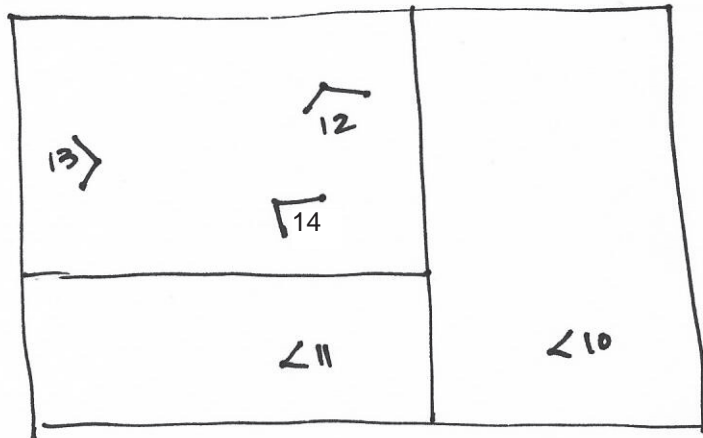
PHOTO KEY (2 of 2)
Union Street School
Town of Leesburg
Loudoun County, VA
DHR No. 253-5117



① Basement



② First floor



③ Second floor

20 Union Street
photo key plan.




Loudoun County, Virginia

www.loudoun.gov

(map not to scale)



Tax Parcel Map
 Union Street School
 Loudoun County, VA
 DHR #253-5117

 Historic Boundary

