

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: Pilot School

Other names/site number: VA DHR ID: 060-0008; Pilot Community Center

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: 4449 Brush Creek Road /Route 617

City or town: Pilot State: VA County: Montgomery

Not For Publication: N/A Vicinity: N/A

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,


I hereby certify that this x nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property x meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

 national statewide x local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

 x A B x C D

	<u>1-8-2024</u>
Signature of certifying official/Title:	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.	
 <hr/>	 <hr/>
Signature of commenting official:	Date
 <hr/>	 <hr/>
Title :	State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) _____

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

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>1</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

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION/school

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RECREATION AND CULTURE/community center

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

NO STYLE

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: WOOD, CONCRETE, METAL

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

The resource known historically as the Pilot School was constructed c. 1921 and is located at 4449 Brush Creek Road/Route 617 in the unincorporated community of Pilot, in Montgomery County, Virginia. The school occupies its original location on a site that includes two parcels forming a level area on the north side of Brush Creek Road/Route 617. The site includes two buildings: the two-story wood-frame school and a one-story wood frame picnic pavilion behind the school. The two-story school building has rectangular massing accentuated by its height and measures 50 feet by 28 feet with a covered entry porch of 20 feet by 8 feet. The building is constructed on a continuous concrete foundation and has a hip roof and aluminum siding. Prior to installation of the aluminum siding, several window sash were removed and the openings boarded over, which impacted the overall fenestration. The extant porch columns replaced turned wood columns at an unknown date. The 1970s aluminum siding and interior paneling cover historic materials that appear to be intact based on field investigation. Although these alterations have cumulatively eroded the building's integrity of design, materials, and workmanship, sufficient historic fabric is retained and the building's integrity of location, setting, association, and feeling are present to convey the property's significant historic associations. A one-story wood frame pavilion constructed circa 1970 is a noncontributing structure because its function is not related to the school's historic educational purpose.

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Setting and Location

The Pilot School is located at 4449 Brush Creek Road/Route 617 in the unincorporated community of Pilot, in Montgomery County, Virginia. Pilot is 5.9 miles (9.5 km) south-southeast of the county seat of Christiansburg and south of Pilot Mountain. The site includes two tax parcels that form a flat, level area on the west side of Brush Creek Road. The school stands on a rectangular parcel (# 070737) and the property includes a second parcel (# 071005) which extends west and south of the first parcel.

The school occupies its original location, and the site includes two buildings, a two-story wood frame school constructed circa 1921 and a one-story wood frame pavilion constructed circa 1970, as well as a gravel drive and welded-wire fence with wood posts along the roadway. An early flagpole with a brass globe stands in the front yard. A second set of six concrete stairs at the street connects to a patch leading to the front entry porch. The original outhouse is no longer extant.

Architectural Description

The school is a rectangular, two-story building which measures 50 feet by 28 feet, with a covered front entry porch of 20 feet by 8 feet, and a pump house addition on the south elevation of 7 feet by 7 feet.

The school is wood-frame construction on a continuous concrete foundation with a crawl space. A hipped roof, with open eaves and exposed rafter ends, is covered in new (c. 2020) standing-seam metal and topped by a belfry. The five-bay façade has a central entry reached by a set of concrete stairs. The three-bay front entry porch has a poured concrete pad and stairs with metal railing. A hipped roof covered in standing seam metal is supported by metal poles. The building's exterior is clad in aluminum siding, beneath which is some asphalt siding. Weatherboards with a five-inch reveal appear to be intact under the later layers. The exterior wall under the porch is clad in wide weatherboards. One interior brick chimney is located near the rear center of the building. A coal chute is visible on the south/west foundation wall. A frame, one-story, rear ell on the building was demolished at an unknown date.

The school has rectangular massing accentuated by the building's height. The massing is further accentuated by the building's proximity to the hill near the north and west elevations. Few exterior decorative details are present, except for exposed beveled rafter ends in the open eaves and a louvered belfry with alternating scalloped and straight siding. Early photographs show turned wood columns on the entry porch, which have since been replaced by metal poles. The framing of doors and windows is simple trim and jamb, with no decorative elements. Flanking the double-leaf entry doors are windows with wood sash with four-over-four lights. The other extant windows have wood double-hung sash with six-over-six lights. Installation of the aluminum siding preceded removal of a number of window sash and boarding over of the openings, thus altering the historic fenestration.

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Interior:

The building has a two-room plan with a front transverse passage that originally held two identical staircase landings at each side of the front entrance. The eastern staircase was removed in the 1960s, when the building was converted from a school to a community center, to accommodate a first-floor kitchen in the east corner of the building. There is no center passage, only a center partition between the two large former rooms on each floor. The upper level has an arched opening that allows the two rooms to function as one and includes an original partition which can be lowered to separate the two rooms. Each room has a two-panel wood door connecting to the front transverse passage. The upper north/east room may have been used as a teacher's office.

The interior walls, in all rooms and the front passage, retain the original vertical matchboard wainscoting below plaster-on-lath upper walls, now covered with 1970s particle-board paneling. The ceilings are also plastered. The extant staircase in the southwest portion of the building retains its original treads and risers, turned balustrade railings, and square newel posts typical of the 1920s and 1930s. Original doors have been retained throughout the building, most of which have two large, recessed panels, also typical of the period. The hardwood floors remain in good condition overall.

Original materials on the first floor include wood flooring (currently covered with vinyl tiles), plaster walls, wood wainscoting and beadboard, chalkboards, a wood stove, and a staircase with turned wood balusters and box newel posts. Original interior materials on the second floor include beadboard, doors and jambs, windows and frames, plaster ceilings, belfry access door, wood flooring, light fixtures, a cast iron wood burning stove in each room, and western staircase and balustrade.

Alterations:

Exterior alterations include the 1970s installation of aluminum siding over the original wood siding/weatherboard and some later asphalt shingle siding. The back of the original wood siding is visible in a closet space under the interior west staircase and was confirmed by informant and caretaker Ted Veggeberg during a site visit in November 2022. Mr. Veggeberg also confirmed the removal of a window at the west corner of the front elevation when a restroom was created circa 1965, as well as the removal of multiple original window sash on the rear wall of each of the four primary rooms. To save on energy costs, the sash were removed, the window frames were left in place and the openings filled with insulation. The wood columns supporting the front porch have been replaced with metal poles and the wood porch deck with a concrete pad. A pump room was added at the south/west corner with a poured concrete foundation and a shed roof. Pressed-tin roofing shingles are covered/replaced with standing-seam metal, installed c. 2020.

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Interior alterations include the removal of the eastern staircase in the mid-1960s to accommodate a first-floor kitchen in the east corner of the main floor, the covering of wood flooring on the main floor with vinyl tile, enclosing of the remaining staircase, the covering of original plaster walls with vinyl wall covering, dropped ceilings on the main floor, and two modern bathrooms in the south/west corner.

Assessment of Integrity

The removal of window sashes and the covering of window frames, alteration of the porch columns, and the addition of aluminum siding are reversible alterations. Although some of the historic materials and craftsmanship are currently obscured by 1970s aluminum siding and interior paneling, historic photos provide visual evidence of the school's exterior historic materials and fenestration. Additionally, portions of the wood siding are still visible beneath the entry porch and from within an interior closet beneath the extant staircase. The school's original form and massing are present. In the building's interior, character-defining features of the school's historic function are retained, including most of the floor plan (but for removal of one staircase), chalkboards and wood stoves in the former classrooms, the movable partition between the two upstairs rooms, wainscot and plaster finishes, and doors and trim.

Secondary Resource (non-contributing)

The site also contains a pavilion structure, located approximately 27 feet behind the southwest corner of the school building. Constructed circa 1970, the pavilion is a rectangular, one-story, wood-frame, open-air building on a concrete pad which measures 20 feet by 36 feet. It has an open front facing the school, a slab-on-grade foundation, a brick chimney at the (north)east end, a side-gable roof supported by round wooden poles, a shed extension along the north(west) rear elevation, and gable ends clad with T1-11 siding.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

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

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

EDUCATION

Period of Significance

ca.1921–1962

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

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

The Pilot School, currently known as the Pilot Community Center, is significant at the local level under Criterion A in the area of Education and Criterion C in the area of Architecture. The Pilot School is significant under Criterion A for Education as one of the last surviving early 20th century schools built for White students in Montgomery County during the segregation era. A 1985 survey of Montgomery County noted that Pilot School was one of the few two-story schools to survive from this period in the region. Located in a rural, historically remote mountainous area of Virginia, the Pilot School is directly associated with rural public education. It remained in use as a public school for decades, with the Montgomery County School Board selling it in the mid-1960s. Since that time, it has remained in use as a community center. The Pilot School is significant under Criterion C for Architecture as a rare surviving local example of a two-story, two-room-per-floor school plan with a front transverse passage. The school is vernacular and utilitarian in design, with rectangular massing accentuated by the building's height and few exterior decorative details. Interior materials, some of which is obscured by later paneling, are typical of early 20th century schools and include beadboard and matchboard wainscot, plaster wall and ceiling finishes, a staircase with a decorative turned balustrade, two-panel wood doors, chalkboards, woodstoves, wood flooring (some obscured beneath vinyl tiles), and plain wood door and window trim with butt joints. The period of significance for the Pilot School is circa 1921-1962, encompassing the building's construction through the end date of its use as a public school.

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

Historical Background:

The area which is now Montgomery County was settled by German immigrants from Pennsylvania in the 1740s and by settlers of Scottish ancestry from Northern Ireland in the 1750s. Settlement was intermittent until the Revolutionary War period when settlers of Scotch-Irish and German origin traveled from the north and some families of English descent arrived from the Tidewater and Piedmont regions of Virginia. Benjamin Martins surveyed and acquired patents to 20,000 acres in the area in 1795 and transferred 7,000 acres to Major Guerrant in 1825. Guerrant also owned mineral rights on Pilot Mountain, and a grain and sawmill that formerly stood south of the junction of Route 615 and 617.¹

The Little River area is mostly rolling farmland punctuated by small hills. A line of hills including Calfee's Knob and Pilot Mountain occupy its southern half and separate the more elevated Brush Creek drainage from the Meadow Creek and upper Elliott Creek drainages. The area seems to have been settled somewhat later and more sparsely than the Toms Creek and Crab Creek units, perhaps because it was more heavily wooded in the eighteenth century. Even in

¹ Gibson Worsham, Guerrant House National Register Nomination Form, 1989.

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1864 the level area around Riner was still forested. Today this area is one of the most intensively cultivated in the county and is in large part made up of agricultural districts.

The five communities in the area did not appear until the 1850s, in the case of Graysontown and Childress, and the 1860s or later in the case of Riner, Rogers, and Pilot. Graysontown became an industrial center and featured the county's largest mid-nineteenth century milling operation. Childress also developed as a mill seat. Riner, situated on the early Pine Spur Road, functioned as a regional center until the 1930s, with (at various times) a mill, hotel, tobacco factory, cooperative cannery, and bank. The tiny community of Rogers had its start as Union Mills and as the site of a toll house on the Jacksonville and Christiansburg Turnpike. Lead and zinc mining was carried out at Calfee's Knob in the 1870s and 1880s and some sort of mining occurred at the county poor house site near Christiansburg. A small gold rush took place at Brush Creek in 1880. Later, Brush Creek was the site of flue-cured tobacco production, a period from which several tobacco barns survive. Pilot also developed along this turnpike and was briefly the site of a large stave mill in 1900.²

Vernacular architecture was the norm in Montgomery County until the 1940s, with most buildings designed and constructed by established local contractors and by carpenters and masons. The flexible nature of light wood frame construction in the early twentieth century also encouraged a simplification of form that could be easily adapted to different building types.³

Criterion A: Education

In the early nineteenth century, children in Montgomery County were educated at home, with wealthy families hiring private tutors. In 1810, a Literacy Fund was established to extend opportunities for education to children from less wealthy families. Christiansburg and Blacksburg, both in Montgomery County, began operating affordable schools for local children beginning in the 1820s and 1830s. Several regional academies were established during the mid-1800s, including Blacksburg Female Academy (1842-1869) and the Montgomery Male Academy (1850-1907) and Female Academy (1848-1908) in Christiansburg.⁴

Before the Civil War, schooling for Black Virginians, whether enslaved or free, was prohibited and banned as unlawful assembly. The first school for African American students in Montgomery County, known as Christiansburg No. 1, opened shortly after the Civil War in 1867, welcoming 200 students in the first year. Within the next three years, schools for African American students opened in five other county locations, including Blacksburg, Alleghany Springs, Brush Creek, Wake Forest, and Lovely Mount. These early schools were supported by the Friends Freedmen's Association, the AME Church, and local citizens. After adoption of Virginia's 1870 constitution, which included established of the first statewide public school

² Worsham, Gibson and Dan Pezzoni. *Montgomery County Reconnaissance Level Survey, Volume 1*, 1986.

³ Worsham, Gibson and Dan Pezzoni. *Montgomery County Reconnaissance Level Survey, Volume 1*, 1986.

⁴ Montgomery County Museum, *Going to School: a Montgomery County History* exhibit.

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system, these schools were incorporated into the new local public school district, except for Christiansburg No. 1, later known as the Christiansburg Institute, which continued as a public-private partnership, allowing local African Americans to retain control of the school.⁵

Efforts to provide free public education for White students also began during the Reconstruction Era, and the legislation passed by the Virginia General Assembly codified the requirement for separate schools for White, Black, and Virginia Indian students. Initial efforts to establish public schools for White students met with opposition, as free education historically had been associated with accepting charity for the poor. The first public school for White students opened in 1870 under superintendent William C. Hagen. Within four years, the county had 47 public schools with 1,927 White students and 11 schools with 537 Black students. Attendance was not compulsory and there were no standards for teachers' training or certification, no required curriculum, and no uniform length of term.⁶

Public schools during the 1870s and 1880s were primarily supported by the local communities, which often organized and funded the construction or purchase of buildings for school use. Teacher salaries were usually paid by the county, which was sometimes the only public funding used to support the school. The Montgomery County community of Riner's earliest school was a one-room log building acquired in 1873, which was replaced in the 1880s by a two-room building built by the community with donations of money and materials. School building use remained fluid during this time, with schools moving locations, changing buildings, closing, and then reopening as community need and means allowed.

For all public schools, attendance was voluntary, but by 1899, 57% of Black and White children were enrolled in school, learning the basic subject matter of spelling, reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar, and geography (information about Virginia Indians students in Montgomery County was not found). Rev. Floyd D. Surface, who served as Montgomery County school superintendent for many years, described the school system in 1885 by noting that less than half of the teachers were of "fair literary attainments," while the rest had an "imperfect knowledge of the branches taught." Rev. Surface also noted that the school buildings were very basic, heated by a fireplace with a writing shelf under a single window serving as a student workspace. At that time, 15 of the 92 schools in the county were of log construction. Most were one room with only 8 being larger, graded schools.⁷

Education reforms associated with the Progressive Movement at the turn of the twentieth century encouraged the consolidation of public schools into larger buildings, standardization of curricula, and certification of teachers. By 1903-1904, local conditions had improved and Montgomery County had four graded schools, although schools remained segregated and unequal. The first modern high schools in the county were established in 1906 at Blacksburg and

⁵ Worsham, Gibson and Dan Pezzoni. *Montgomery County Reconnaissance Level Survey, Volume 1*, 1986.

⁶ Montgomery County Museum, *Going to School: a Montgomery County History* exhibit.

⁷ Worsham, Gibson and Dan Pezzoni. *Montgomery County Reconnaissance Level Survey, Volume 1*, 1986.

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Christiansburg. Another was established in Riner in 1917. Rural students wishing to attend high school had to be relocated to larger communities. The School Board began supporting transportation to school for White students in the 1910s and, by 1949, the County employed 28 bus drivers.

In 1907 there were 3,768 students enrolled in Montgomery County's public schools and by 1929, there was a total enrollment of 4,154 students, including elementary and high school students. There were 56 elementary schools in Montgomery County in 1929, with an elementary school enrollment of 3,222 and a teaching staff of 123. There were nine schools for Black students in Montgomery County in 1929 with a total enrollment of 520 and a teaching staff of 28. Surviving early-twentieth century schools identified in the 1986 Montgomery County survey include the Pilot School, Poff School, the one-room Elliston School (for Black students), and the two-room Otey School.⁸

Of the four remaining twentieth-century schools in the county noted in the 1986 survey of Montgomery County, only the Elliston School and the Pilot School remain. The Poff School, located west of Pilot one mile northeast of the junction of Routes 616 and 601, on the south side of Route 601, was a one-room wood-frame schoolhouse constructed circa 1900. An earlier school was noted near this location on an 1864 Confederate Engineer's map of Montgomery County.⁹ The Elliston Grade School (DHR 012-5041) is located at 548 Brake Road/Route 631 and was a two-teacher African American school constructed in the rural community of Elliston in 1928 with support from the Rosenwald Fund. The Pilot School is the only remaining early-twentieth century school for White students in the county.

School buildings continued to be very simple in terms of design and materials through the 1930s and the teachers bore much of the responsibility for the schools' operation well into the twentieth century, as shown in this letter from the County Superintendent in 1929: "You are expected to meet your children at the school house. . . clean the building and grounds, make an inventory of all school property, list all repairs, supplies and equipment needed, make a physical inspection of all your children, and ascertain the number of new textbooks needed. . ." Most rural schoolhouses had outhouses rather than indoor toilet facilities and drinking water was provided by springs or wells. The Montgomery County School Board, during an October 5, 1929, meeting considered a request to add water coolers to the county's schools. This was denied; instead, members stated that "a bucket and dipper will be furnished."¹⁰

Students in rural areas of the county often traveled several miles on foot or aboard a horse to the nearest schoolhouse. The 1932 USGS topographical map of the region around Pilot shows the proximity of schools during this period with schools located every few miles. Gradually, between 1900 and 1950, one-room schools for White students were replaced with two-, three-, or

⁸ Worsham, Gibson and Dan Pezzoni. *Montgomery County Reconnaissance Level Survey, Volume 1*, 1986.

⁹ Worsham, Gibson and Dan Pezzoni. *Montgomery County Reconnaissance Level Survey, Volume 1*, 1986.

¹⁰ Montgomery County Museum, *Going to School: a Montgomery County History* exhibit.

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four-room schools. As roads and automobiles improved during the 1920-1950 period, the pace and scale of this school consolidation increased. During the 1950s and 1960s, many of the small rural schools for White students closed; consolidation and improvement of schools for Black schools lagged due to the failed “separate but equal” doctrine used to justify racial segregation. The Pilot School illustrates this trend, as a three-classroom school that opened in 1921 and closed in 1962. The four-room design of the building reflected a leap forward in education because it enabled children to be separated into grades and receive instruction appropriate to their age and abilities.

Like White schools, school attendance for Black children originally was not required. By 1899, 57% of Black students were enrolled in school, the same percentage as White children. The subject matter taught in all of the schools was basic. All students studied spelling, reading, handwriting, and arithmetic, while more advanced students also studied grammar, and geography.¹¹

Pilot School was constructed in 1921 and it first served the region academically and more recently as a community center. The school first appears on the USGS topographical map for Blacksburg, VA 1932 (1957 ed.) 1:62,500. Several schools are visible within an approximately four-mile radius including Union Valley School, Poff School, Laurel Fork School, Riner School, High Rock School, Middle Ridge School, Altoona School, and Fisher’s View School. On the 1965 Pilot, VA 1:24000 topographical map, the Pilot School building is present, but no longer designated as a school, nor are the other schools from the 1932 map designated.

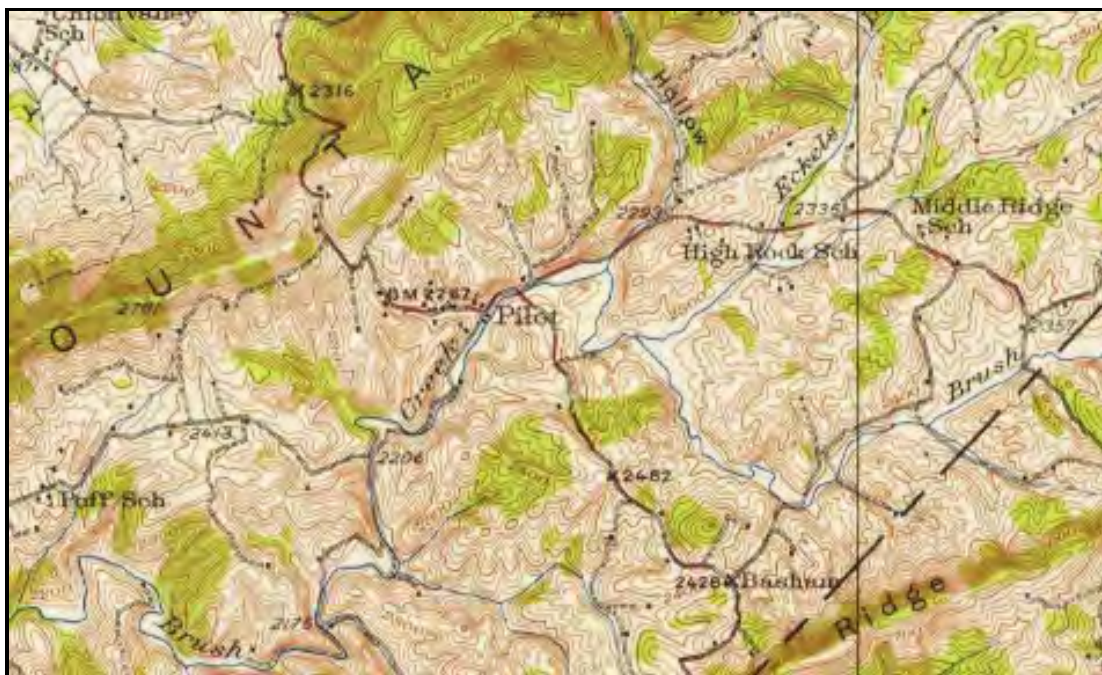


Figure 1: Blacksburg, VA topo 1932 (1957, ed.) 1:62500. Note Union Valley School, Poff School, High Rock School and Middle Ridge School

¹¹ Montgomery County Museum, *Going to School: a Montgomery County History* exhibit.

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The school parcel was acquired by the School Board of Christiansburg District No. 4 from E.L. and Loula I. Conner on July 21, 1921, for \$200 cash.¹² The property is described as "Lying just off of the Floyd Pike on the northwest side of Brush Creek Road in Christiansburg Magisterial District" and is more particularly described as follows: *Beginning at a large locust post on the northwest side of the Brush Creek Road, a corner to George Miller; thence with said Miller N61o 00" W 137.0 feet to a large locust post in a bottom; thence 33o 45" E 323.5 feet to a locust post on the hillside; thence S 61o 00" E 137.0 feet to a point on the northwest side of the Brush Creek Road; thence along the northwest side of said road S 33o 45: W 323.5 feet to the beginning and containing 1 acre of land.*" The deed makes note of "Condemnation Proceeding: Common Law Order Book (1916) p 550," suggesting that the parcel, level and easily accessed from Brush Creek Road and near Floyd Pike, may not have been voluntarily sold to the School Board.

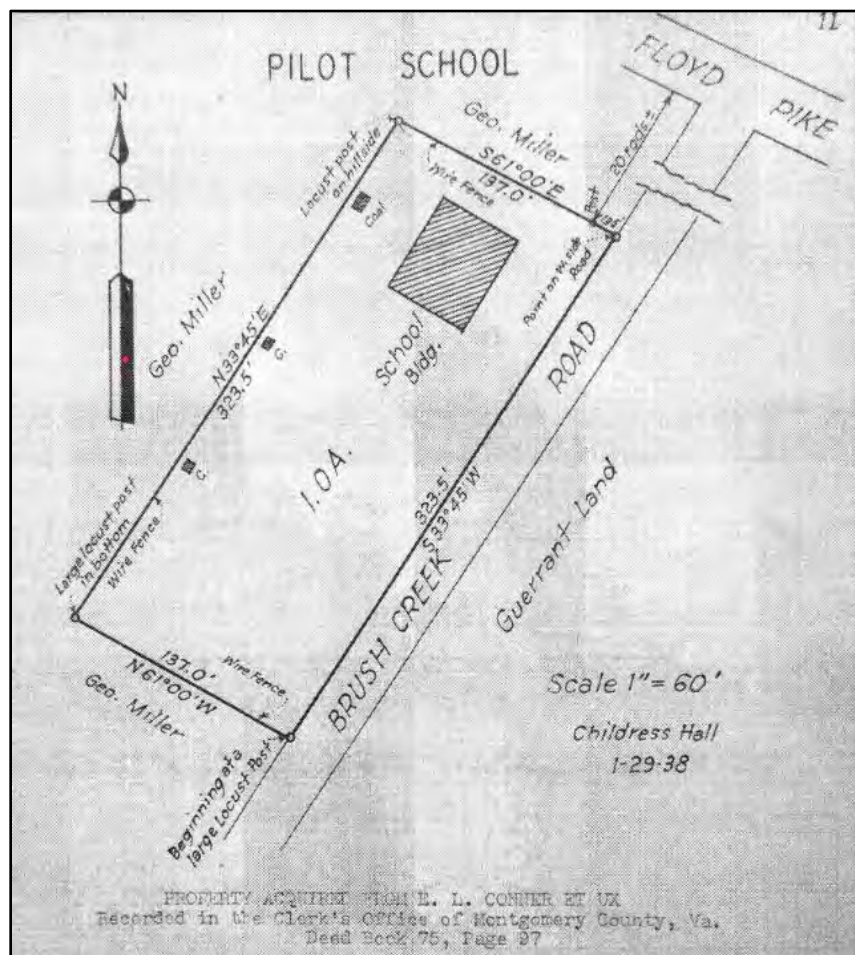


Figure 2: 1938 drawing of the original plot of land with the school, a coal pile, and two outhouses. Montgomery County Deed Book 109, page 484.

¹² Montgomery County Deed Book 75, p. 97.

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Pilot School was one of six schools constructed in the Little River region of Montgomery County in the early 20th century. The four-room school supported three teachers and served students in kindergarten through 9th grade. The earliest known photograph is dated 1924-1925 and shows approximately 34 students and 2 teachers arranged on the front porch. The construction of the Pilot School made public education available to local students from 1921 to 1963.



Figure 3: Pilot School, 1924-25. Courtesy of Pilot Community Center Facebook page.

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Figure 4: Pilot School, circa 1950s. Courtesy of Pilot Community Center Facebook page.

The last class was held at Pilot School in 1962 and, in 1963, a new regional elementary school was constructed by Montgomery County at Riner. On August 3, 1963, an acre of land with the building, referred to as Pilot School Property, was sold at public auction by the County School Board of Montgomery County to Lewin M. Poff.¹³ In January of 1964, L.M. and Agnus Poff deeded the land with the school building to the Pilot Community Center, Incorporated for \$10.00.¹⁴ An adjacent parcel of three-quarters of an acre was deeded to the Pilot Community Center by Lewin Poff's brother and sister-in-law Rex S. and Edith M. Poff in October 1976, providing space for the addition of a ball field for use by the community.

Community Center:

After the school closed and the building was sold to the Pilot Community Center, the Pilot Ruritans used the building as their headquarters, local families rented the building for family reunions, Little League baseball teams played games in the adjacent ball field, and the Pilot community gathered for chicken fries, turkey shoots, and to make apple butter.¹⁵ The Ruritans disbanded in the 2000s and the building and grounds were used less often, until a renaissance of the Pilot Community Center in 2019, when residents came together and dedicated themselves to saving the school building and reviving the spirit of the Pilot Community. An arts

¹³ Montgomery County Deed Book 246, p.106.

¹⁴ Montgomery County Deed Book 247, p.457.

¹⁵ Pilot Community Center record.

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outreach organization, WVarts, is currently using the school to serve and educate the communities of Pilot and others in Floyd and Montgomery counties. The facility hosts social functions, music, art, poetry, and tutoring events, as well as the Montgomery-Floyd Regional Library Little Libraries outreach program involving book sharing and literacy.

Criterion C: Architecture:

General architectural context of the area.

In the 1986 Montgomery County reconnaissance architectural survey prepared by Worsham and Pezzoni, the authors noted that institutional buildings such as schools followed the forms and patterns of domestic architecture. Many houses built in the rural farming and mining areas of Montgomery County were built as part of vernacular patterns of housing on a national scale. Most of these fit within types recognized by architectural historians as the three- or four-bay double-cell dwelling. Usually a single story in height, the double-cell house is a small frame dwelling frequently divided into two equal-sized rooms. The houses were built in the period between 1880 and about 1940. Roofs are usually gabled, although examples of hipped roofs have been found in the region. These houses are invariably framed and weatherboarded in this period, and frequently feature a two-story gabled or pedimented porch in the center bay. Additional rooms were built, as in previous periods, in an ell to the rear. These types of houses were built well into the 20th century.¹⁶

Stylistic differentiation was achieved using pattern book ornament applied to the porch or gabled ends in the form of spindle friezes, sawn brackets, and decorative wood shingles in fish scale or other patterns. The survey notes that more than five hundred center-passage one- and two-story houses of light frame construction were in the county between 1880 and about 1940. Almost all were of three-bay fenestration, while a minority were of only one-story or double-pile depth. Institutional buildings followed a similar form from the early period through the mid-nineteenth century when the influence of pattern books and architects began to be felt in the imposition of Greek Revival ornament on what were still generally traditional buildings.

The Guerrant House (DHR No. 060-0007), a notable local building, is one of the most prominent late-19th century houses in Montgomery County and was constructed circa 1870. It is a two-story frame double-pile center-passage house located on Route 610, approximately 0.25 mile northeast of the Pilot School, on Pilot Road/ Route 615. The solid massing, symmetrical façade, hipped roof, columned porch, and classical details reflect the influence of the Colonial Revival style, which would come to dominate the architecture of the region for several decades.

¹⁶ Worsham, Gibson and Dan Pezzoni. *Montgomery County Reconnaissance Level Survey, Volume 1*, 1986.

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Figure 5: Guerrant House (DHR No. 060-0007)

Such vernacular architecture in Montgomery County was the norm until the 1940s, with most buildings designed and constructed by established local contractors, carpenters, and masons. Regional vernacular forms were influenced by German and Scots-Irish immigrants, including the Continental plan as a traditional German/Continental European house form and the hall and parlor house as traditional Scots-Irish/English house form, as well as the success of the Palladian or “Georgian” form in the colonies, and the emergence of the double-cell and hipped roof in the early 19th century because of the increased flexibility allowed by light wood framing.

From the beginning in Montgomery County, it was part of the vernacular tradition to allow extension of space by multiplications, both horizontally and vertically. The flexible nature of light wood frame construction in the early twentieth century also encouraged a simplification of form that could be easily adapted to different building types.¹⁷

Character-defining features and comparative analysis

The Pilot School is a variation in form of a two-story, single-pile, double-cell house/or central-passage house/I house with a hipped roof and a transverse passage. The lack of ornamentation emphasizes the mass and form, which is informed by the Georgian/Early Classical Revival, which focused on solidity and a sense of permanence. General stylistic influences include the entry porch dominating the front façade, supported by simple columns, double leaf, stacked panel front doors, usually centered, and windows aligned horizontally and vertically in symmetrical rows.

¹⁷ Worsham, Gibson and Dan Pezzoni. *Montgomery County Reconnaissance Level Survey, Volume 1*, 1986.

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The 1986 county survey identified only three other surviving examples of early twentieth century elementary schools in all of Montgomery County, including the Poff School near Pilot, the one-room Elliston School, and the two-room Otey School.¹⁸ The Poff School is no longer extant. Of the six schools constructed in the Little River area of Montgomery County in the early 20th century, the Pilot School is the only remaining example of its kind: an early twentieth century, rural, public school for White students in Montgomery County.

The Prices Fork School, located approximately 12.5 miles northwest of Pilot and constructed circa 1920s, was a two-story, wood-frame building similar in size and massing to the Pilot School, but with more ornamentation. Similarities to the Pilot School include size, massing, structure, roof shape, cupola, fenestration pattern, interior chimneys, central entry porch, and six-over-six windows. However, the Prices Fork school is more ornate, including three louvered inset dormers, as well as a grouping of three windows above the central entry porch, which is supported by Doric columns, visible in a circa 1920s photo. By 1945 the inset dormers had been removed.



Figure 6: Prices Fork School, 1920s. Pilot Community Center Facebook page.

¹⁸ Worsham, Gibson and Dan Pezzoni. *Montgomery County Reconnaissance Level Survey, Volume 1*, 1986.

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Name of Property

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Figure 7: Prices Fork School, 1945. Pilot Community Center Facebook page.

The Ellett School, located approximately 10 miles north of Pilot, was constructed circa 1920 and is like the Pilot School in size, massing, method of construction, although the roof is side gable and the fenestration pattern is different, particularly on the side elevations. The front entry porch has a gable roof and is supported by pairs of Doric columns under an arched architrave. A 1937 photo also shows a one-story, gable-roof rear ell.

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Figure 8: Ellett School, November 1937. Library of Virginia, School Buildings Service Photographs Collection.

One of six schools constructed in the Little River area of Montgomery County in the early 20th century, the Pilot School is the only remaining example of its kind. The 1986 county survey identified only three other surviving examples of early twentieth century elementary schools in all of Montgomery County, including the Poff School near Pilot, the one-room Elliston School, and the two-room Otey School.¹⁹ The Poff School is no longer extant. The Pilot School is the last remaining example of an early twentieth century, rural, public school for White students in Montgomery County.

¹⁹ Worsham, Gibson and Dan Pezzoni. *Montgomery County Reconnaissance Level Survey, Volume 1*, 1986.

Pilot School
Name of Property

Montgomery County, VA
County and State

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Heatwole, Cornelius J. *History of Education in Virginia*. New York: McMillan Company, 1916.

Montgomery County Museum, *Going to School: a Montgomery County History* exhibit. Special thanks to Curator Sherry Wyatt for sharing her research notes.

Montgomery County Virginia, *Deed Books*.

School Building Service Photograph Collection, Library of Virginia.

Worsham, Gibson. *Prehistoric and Historic Resources of Montgomery, County, Virginia*. 1989 National Register of Historic Places, Multiple Property Documentation Form.

Worsham, Gibson and Dan Pezzoni. *Montgomery County Reconnaissance Level Survey, Volume I*, 1986.

United States Geological Survey. *Blacksburg, Virginia. 162500 1932* (1957, ed.) Reston, Va: U.S. Department of the Interior.

Virginia Education Commission. *Virginia Public Schools: A Survey of a Southern State Public School System*. 1920. Internet Archive.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

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

Pilot School
Name of Property

Montgomery County, VA
County and State

Name of repository: Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): DHR No. 060-0008

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property 1.75

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 37.050235 | Longitude: -80.362790 |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

- | | | |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

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

The nominated boundary is coterminous with the parcel recorded as tax map number 131-A-74, including parcel ID: 070737 and 071005, by Montgomery County, Virginia, and accessed from Montgomery County GIS (October 2022). The true and correct historic boundary is shown on the attached Aerial View, which has a scale of 1"=94', and on the Location Map.

Pilot School
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Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary was drawn to encompass the parcel associated with the Pilot School during its period of significance. The property's historic setting and all known historic resources have been included within the historic boundary.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Melissa Schmidt
organization: Hurt & Proffitt
street & number: 757B Sandusky Drive
city or town: Lynchburg state: VA zip code: 24502
e-mail: mschmidt@handp.com
telephone: (434) 439-8839
date: October 2023

Additional Documentation

Index of Figures

1. USGS topo Blacksburg, VA topo 1932 (1957, ed.) 1:62500.
2. 1938 drawing of the original plot of land with the school, a coal pile, and two outhouses. Montgomery County Deed Book 109, page 484.
3. Pilot School, 1924-25. Courtesy of Pilot Community Center Facebook page.
4. Pilot School, circa 1950s. Courtesy of Pilot Community Center Facebook page.
5. DHR, VCRIS, Guerrant House (DHR No. 060-0007).
6. Prices Fork School, circa 1920s. Pilot Community Center Facebook page.
7. Prices Fork School, 1945. Pilot Community Center Facebook page.
8. Ellett School, November 1937. Library of Virginia, School Buildings Service Photographs Collection.

Submit the following items with the completed form:

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

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered, and that number must correspond to

Pilot School
Name of Property

Montgomery County, VA
County and State

the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Pilot School

City or Vicinity: Pilot

County: Montgomery State: VA

Photographer: Melissa Schmidt

Date Photographed: November 21, 2022

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

1. VA_MontgomeryCounty_PilotSchool_0001, east façade of school.
2. VA_MontgomeryCounty_PilotSchool_0002, oblique view of east and north facades.
3. VA_MontgomeryCounty_PilotSchool_0003, oblique view of east and south facades.
4. VA_MontgomeryCounty_PilotSchool_0004, oblique view of west and south facades.
5. VA_MontgomeryCounty_PilotSchool_0005, oblique view of school and pavilion, camera facing northwest.
6. VA_MontgomeryCounty_PilotSchool_0006, detail of front porch, camera facing west.
7. VA_MontgomeryCounty_PilotSchool_0007, detail of front doors, camera facing west.
8. VA_MontgomeryCounty_PilotSchool_0008, pavilion oblique, camera facing northwest.
9. VA_MontgomeryCounty_PilotSchool_0009, pavilion oblique, camera facing southwest.
10. VA_MontgomeryCounty_PilotSchool_0010, first floor south classroom, camera facing southeast.
11. VA_MontgomeryCounty_PilotSchool_0011, first floor north classroom, camera facing southeast.
12. VA_MontgomeryCounty_PilotSchool_0012, south staircase, camera facing south.
13. VA_MontgomeryCounty_PilotSchool_0013, second floor hallway, camera facing north.
14. VA_MontgomeryCounty_PilotSchool_0014, second floor south classroom, camera facing southwest.
15. VA_MontgomeryCounty_PilotSchool_0015, second floor north classroom, camera facing south.

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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.



Legend

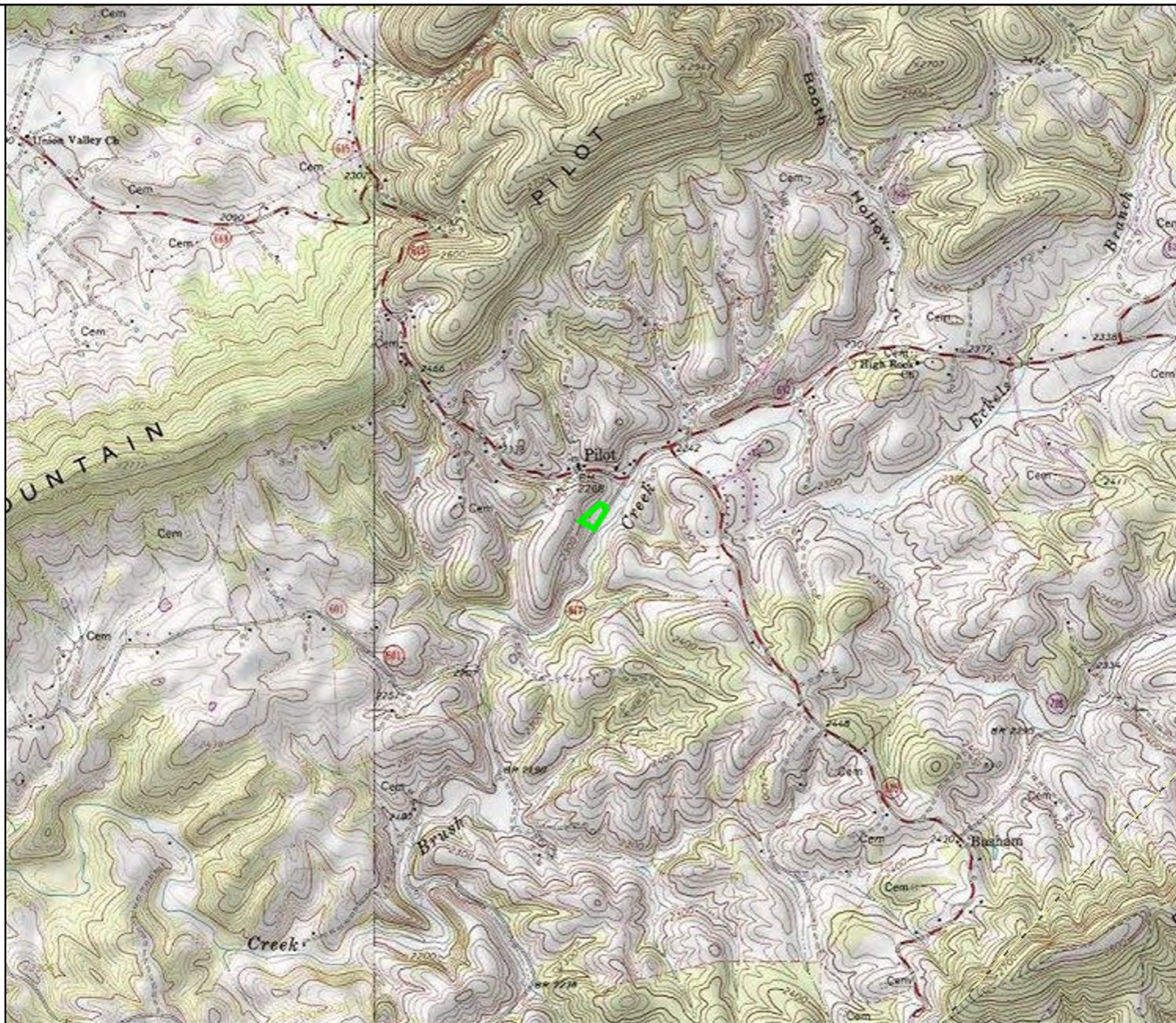
County Boundaries

TOPOGRAPHIC MAP

Pilot School

Montgomery County, VA

DHR No. 060-0008



Nominated Boundary



Feet



0 600 1200 1800 2400
1:36,112 / 1"=3,009 Feet

Title:

Date: 10/30/2023

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

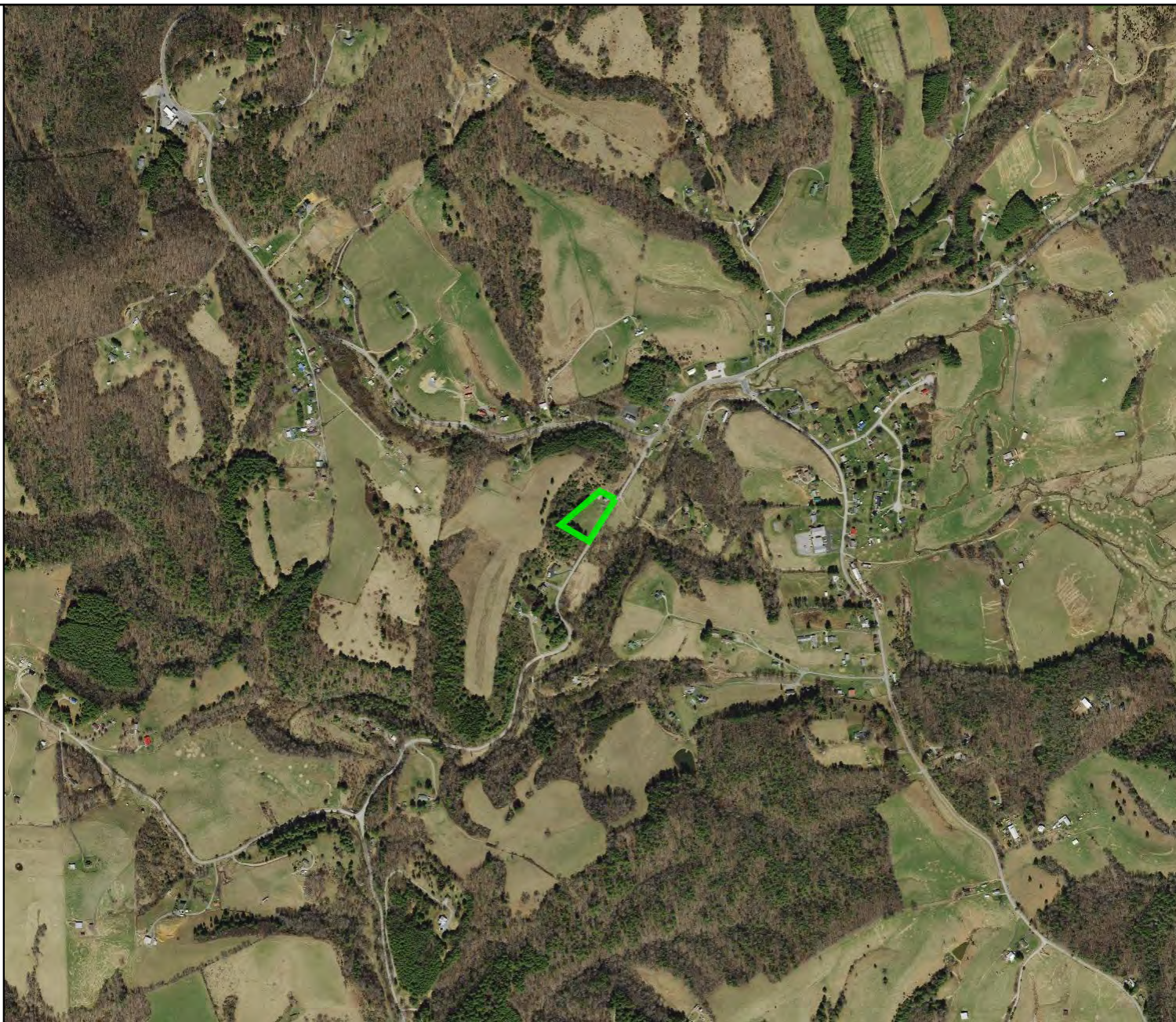
 County Boundaries

AERIAL VIEW - VICINITY

Pilot School

Montgomery County, VA

DHR No. 060-0008



 Nominated Boundary



Feet

0 500 1000 1500 2000

1:18,056 / 1"=1,505 Feet

Title:

Date: 10/30/2023

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Legend

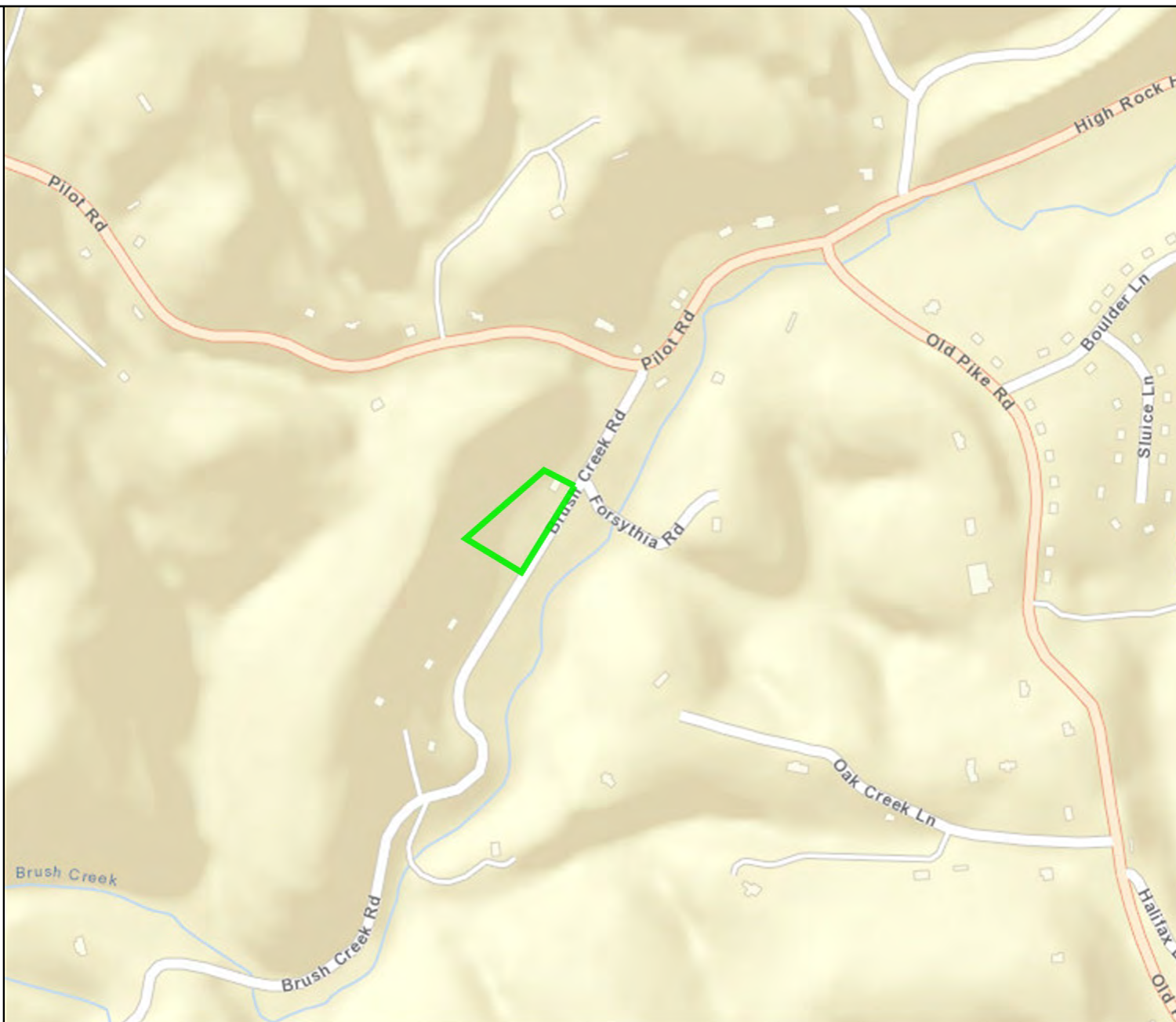
 County Boundaries

ROAD MAP

Pilot School

Montgomery County, VA

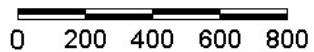
DHR No 060-0008



 **Nominated Boundary**



Feet



1:9,028 / 1"=752 Feet

Title:






Date: 10/30/2023

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Legend

-  Architecture Resources
- Architecture Labels
-  Individual Historic District Properties
-  Archaeological Resources
- Archaeology Labels
-  DHR Easements
-  County Boundaries

LOCATION MAP

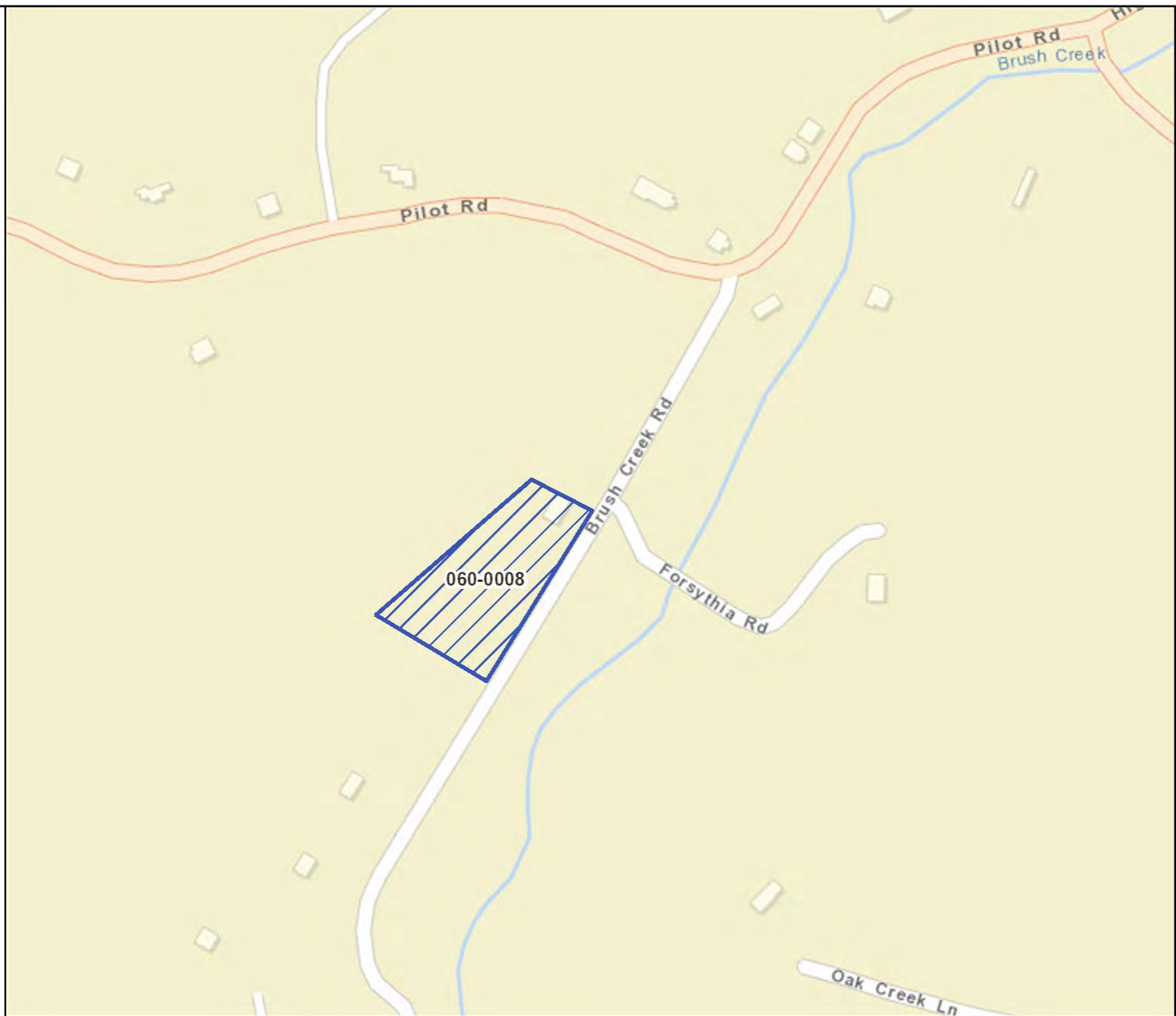
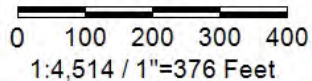
Pilot School
Montgomery County, VA
DHR No. 060-0008

Latitude: 37.050520
Longitude: -80.362460

 Nominated boundary



Feet



Title: Pilot School, Pilot, Montgomery County, VA 24138

Date: 5/5/2023

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

AERIAL VIEW

Pilot School

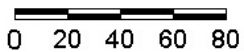
Montgomery County, VA

DHR No. 060-0008

 **Nominated Boundary**



Feet



1:1,128 / 1"=94 Feet



Title:

Date: 10/30/2023

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SKETCH MAP/ PHOTO KEY

Pilot School, Pilot, Montgomery County, VA. DHR No. 060-0008

**Sketch Map/
PhotoKey**



-  Corporate Line
-  Private
-  All Other Roads

A - School (contributing building)

B Pavilion (noncontributing location)

Photo Locations

1

VITA, Esri, HERE, Garmin, INCREMENT P, USGS, EPA, USDA

Map by Montgomery County VA web map viewer 5/5/2023

*For reference purposes only. Not to be used as an official legal document.

Scale: 1:564

