

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 *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an 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. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Bigelow Rosenwald School

other names/site number Rosenwald Community Center, Site #PE0077

2. Location

street & number Southwest corner of Arkansas Highway 60 and Bethel AME Road not for publication

city or town Toad Suck vicinity

state Arkansas code AR county Perry code 105 zip code 72016

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this 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 for in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Cathy Nasser
Signature of certifying official/Title

3/11/04
Date

Arkansas Historic Preservation Program
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See Continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet

determined eligible for the National Register.
 See continuation sheet

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Bigelow Rosenwald School
Name of Property

Perry County, Arkansas
County and State

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

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		Total

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

Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION/school

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

SOCIAL/meeting hall

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER/Plain Traditional

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK / CONCRETE
walls WOOD
roof METAL
other _____

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

- Criteria A, B, C, D with checkboxes and descriptions of property significance.

Levels of Significance (local, state, national)

LOCAL

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION

ETHNIC HERITAGE/Black

Period of Significance

1926-1954

Significant Dates

1926

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked)

Cultural Affiliation (Complete if Criterion D is marked)

Architect/Builder

Samuel L. Smith, Architect

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

- Criteria A through G with checkboxes and descriptions of property characteristics.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- Documentation checkboxes: preliminary determination, previously listed, designated landmark, recorded by survey.

Primary location of additional data:

- Location checkboxes: State Historic Preservation Office, Other State Agency, Federal Agency, Local Government, University, Other.

Name of repository:

Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee

Bigelow Rosenwald School
Name of Property

Perry County, Arkansas
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Approximately 1 acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>15</u>	<u>539638</u>	<u>3881252</u>	3	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	4	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Ralph S. Wilcox, National Register & Survey Coordinator
organization Arkansas Historic Preservation Program date December 17, 2003
street & number 1500 Tower Building, 323 Center Street telephone (501) 324-9787
city or town Little Rock state AR zip code 72201

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location
- A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Harrison Jones
street & number 4300 Hwy. 60 East telephone
city or town Bigelow state AR zip code 72016

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listing. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P. O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20303.

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SUMMARY

The Bigelow Rosenwald School is a one-story, wood-framed school built in 1926 in the Community of Toad Suck, which is located approximately ten miles northeast of Bigelow, Arkansas. The building rests on a continuous foundation built mainly of brick, although part of it is constructed out of concrete block, and is sheathed in weatherboard. The roof, which is a combination of a gable and hipped roof, is covered in corrugated sheet metal.

ELABORATION

The Bigelow Rosenwald School is located in the community of Toad Suck, approximately ten miles northeast of Bigelow, Arkansas. The one-story, wood-framed structure was built in 1926 following Floor Plan 20-A from Samuel Smith's *Community School Plans* distributed by the Rosenwald Fund. It sits at the southwest corner of Arkansas Highway 60 and Bethel AME Road, and a baseball field is located to the west of the building.

The school sits on a brick foundation, although a portion of the rear foundation has been replaced with concrete block. The walls are sheathed in weatherboard and the roof, which is partially gabled and partially hipped, is covered in corrugated metal. Two brick chimneys, one which would have served the two classrooms and the other which would have served the industrial room, pierce the roof. The large original windows have been replaced with much smaller, residential-style windows. A porch at the northwest corner of the building covers one of the entrances to the building while the other entrance is located in a recessed alcove on the west side of the building.

North/Front Façade

The north façade of the building is dominated by the projecting gable-front portion, which is the north end of one of the classrooms. Although the pair of original windows have been removed, it is still possible to discern the outline of them. A rectangular, louvered attic vent is present in the peak of the gable. To the right of the gable-front portion is a recessed section, located under the main hipped-roof, which consists of the front porch of the building. The front porch is supported by a single wood post at the corner. The entrance on the north façade, which leads into the former industrial room, consists of a wood door with a transom panel above. A sign reading "Rosenwald Community Center" is located in the transom panel.

West/Side Façade

The northern end of the west side consists of the side of the front-facing gabled section followed by the front porch of the school. An entrance containing a wood door and transom panel above is located on the porch on the west façade, and it provides access to the front classroom. To the right of the porch there were four large windows that allowed light into the industrial room. Although the windows have been removed, their outline is still visible.

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Proceeding south along the façade, next is a recessed entrance, which provides access to the rear classroom. The entrance contains a wood door with three horizontal panels in the bottom half and a boarded-up window in the top half. A transom is located above the door. In addition, the north wall of the recessed entrance has a boarded-up entrance that provides access to the industrial room.

To the south of the recessed entrance, a metal-framed, double-hung, one-over-one window located high up on the wall provides light to the cloak room for the rear classroom. Just to the south of the window, the façade recesses to the plane of the west wall of the rear classroom. One metal-framed, double-hung, one-over-one window in the center of the wall provides light to the rear classroom.

South/Rear Façade

The left third of the rear façade consists of the south façade of the cloak room, and is part of the main hipped roof section of the school. This portion of the façade has no fenestration. The rest of the façade is gable-roofed and consists of the south façade of the rear classroom. The only fenestration on the wall is a rectangular louvered attic vent located in the gable peak.

East/Side Façade

The east façade of the building would have originally had two bands of six windows that would have provided light to the two classrooms. Like on the north and west façades, the original windows have been removed, but it is possible to see the outline of where the windows would have been located. The southern band of windows now consists of a metal-framed, double-hung, one-over-one window on the left side and two metal-framed, double-hung, one-over-one windows on the right side. The northern band of windows consists of two metal-framed, double-hung, one-over-one windows on the left side and two metal-framed, double-hung, one-over-one windows on the right side.

Integrity

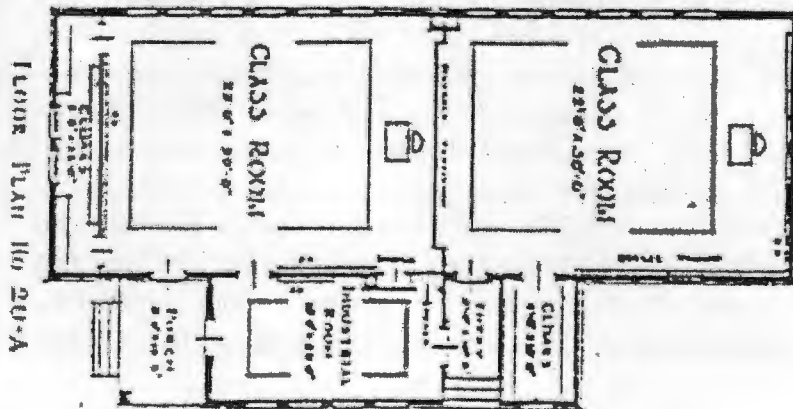
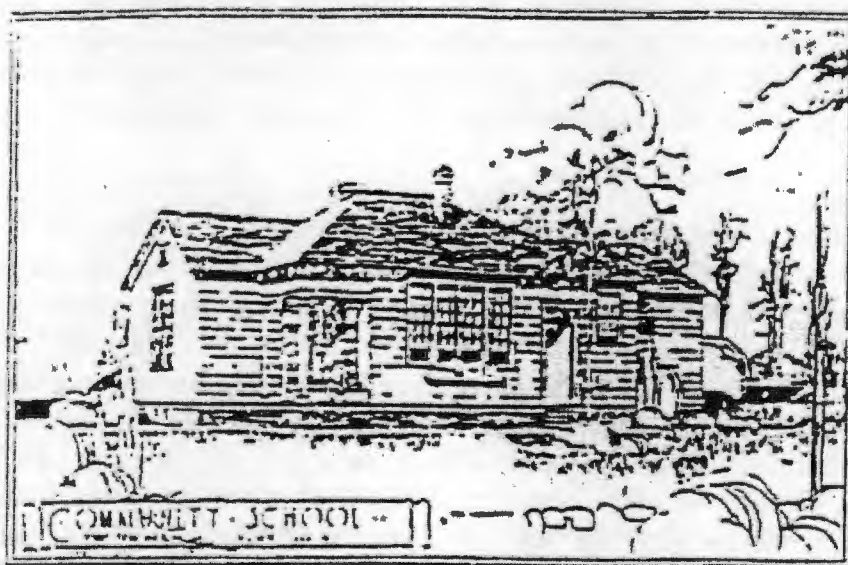
The biggest compromise to the Bigelow Rosenwald School's integrity is the loss of the original windows, which were very characteristic of school windows of the period. With the exception of the window replacement, the building has good integrity, and it is very easy to tell that the building follows Samuel Smith's original plan. The building appears to retain its original siding, and the roof may be original to the building as well. In addition, there have been no additions to the building that have obscured the two classroom and industrial room plan of the building. The fact that Toad Suck has always been in a rural part of Perry County, and remains so today, also allows the setting around the Bigelow Rosenwald School to reflect its period of significance.

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TWO TEACHER COMMUNITY SCHOOL

TO FACE NORTH OR SOUTH ONLY

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SUMMARY

The Bigelow Rosenwald School is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places with **local significance** under **Criterion A** for its association with education in the Bigelow/Toad Suck area and Perry County. Additionally, it is significant as a part of Julius Rosenwald's legacy as the foremost benefactor to Negro education in the South, and as the only surviving Rosenwald School in Perry County.

ELABORATION

Contrary to common belief, the education of many southern black Americans took place on southern plantations while many were slaves. Some masters allowed a few of their slaves to become skilled workers or artisans by permitting them to be apprentices or employees of craftsmen outside the plantation. In fact, it was quite profitable for the plantation to have a number of skilled slaves in order to avoid having to hire expensive mechanics, craftsmen, machinists, seamstresses, etc. Education was also taking place among the children, often without the master's knowledge. Many of the children of the masters thought it quite amusing to play "school" and teach the slave children how to read and do math. To the children it was a game, but in actuality it was part of the beginning of the black education movement in the South after the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863. In fact, many slaves were able to use their talents and skills to gain their manumission, or to do enough work outside the plantation to buy their way out of slavery.

After the Emancipation Proclamation and the flight of the blacks to northern cities, many religious organizations and education-oriented groups realized the need for education among the black refugees. Plantation life had left many blacks unable to cope with life in the city or with finding jobs. Benevolent societies sprang up in cities such as Boston, Chicago, New York, Cincinnati, and Philadelphia in 1862-1863. Together with church organizations, they provided food, clothing, religious leaders, money, and teachers for the newcomers. Church organizations were the leaders in the freedman's school system in its beginning stages. At the forefront of the religious groups was the American Missionary Association, organized in 1849 to operate Christian missions and educational institutions at home and abroad. Other religious groups included The Baptist Church, North (or Home Mission Society), the Freedman's Aid Society, and the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church; a great deal of the money and supplies these groups provided were dispensed through the Union Army. In March 1862, the New England Freedman's Society, along with General Edward L. Pierce and numerous other educators, initiated the Port Royal Experiment. The Experiment involved developing the economy, directing blacks to economic independence, and organizing schools.

In 1863 the Freedman's Inquiry Commission suggested the creation of a government agency to deal specifically with the care of the freedmen. In 1865 Congress passed an act creating the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, otherwise known as the Freedmen's Bureau. The Bureau was useful because it committed the United States to the task of caring for the freedmen, and because it made that care a part of the official structure by which the South was being controlled. Even though the Freedmen's Bureau

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was able to remedy many of the flaws of the relief programs for the freedmen, it was the strongly motivated individuals of the religious groups and benevolent organizations that were mainly responsible for the education of the blacks. These individuals were for the most part devout Christians and well-trained teachers from New England.

One of the zealous individuals that became one of the most significant figures in southern black education was Julius Rosenwald. Rosenwald was quite successful as a businessman, but his philanthropic work has always overshadowed his financial success. He entered the clothing business in New York in 1878. In 1895 he invested \$35,000 in the stock of Sears, Roebuck, and Company, and in less than thirty years it grew into \$150,000,000. He became president of the mail-order firm in 1910 and then chairman in 1925. During the years Rosenwald was most active as a philanthropist, Sears and Roebuck expanded into the retail chain-store business, and he was actually absent from the company from 1916 to 1919. As early as 1910, Rosenwald was a trustee of Tuskegee Institute in Alabama and made gifts on behalf of the rural school movement to the Institute, primarily through close contact with Booker T. Washington. His funds made possible the erection of sixteen YMCA buildings and one YMCA building for blacks. This stimulated gifts from others for similar projects in many cities in both the North and South, including the financial support for a large black housing project in Chicago. Rosenwald was active in a number of Jewish organizations and granted substantial financial support to the National Urban League. Also, he was appointed a member of the Council on National Defense and served as chairman of its committee on supplies.

In 1917 Rosenwald established the Julius Rosenwald Fund. This fund was destined to attract more money to the benefit of black education than any other philanthropic undertaking to this date. The fund's broad purpose was for the betterment of mankind irrespective of race, but it was aimed more specifically at creating more equitable opportunities for black Americans. Unlike many charity organizations, the Rosenwald Fund was to only help a school if the community, blacks and whites alike, had raised some of the money themselves; however, the black community usually provided the labor. Rosenwald and the directors of his trust first directed their attention toward building rural schools, later toward high schools and colleges, and finally toward the providing of grants and fellowships to enable outstanding blacks and whites to advance their careers. Not only did the Rosenwald Fund help to build rural schools, it was also responsible for a number of buildings and libraries on college campuses. The directors of the trust were also involved to a certain extent in the direction of the curriculum at all levels of education. Their emphasis was on the educational needs of country children. They maintained that some vocational skills were necessary, as were the ability to do some math, to read and write clearly, to have some understanding of biological processes and farming, and to understand the fundamentals of sanitation and health.

State records indicate that when the fund ceased activity in 1948, it had aided in the building of 389 school buildings (schools, shops, and teachers' homes) in 45 counties in Arkansas. The total amount contributed by the fund was \$1,952,441. The state or counties owned and maintained all of the schools, and the land was

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usually donated by a white landowner. In Arkansas, R. C. Childress of Little Rock was the Rosenwald Building Agent. Childress was the first degree graduate of Philander Smith College and was the second black person to work for the state Education Department. He dedicated his life to education and, consequently, the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff has named Childress Hall for him, and the high schools in Wynne and Nashville were named for him.

The Bigelow Rosenwald School was built in 1926 when the Rosenwald Fund reached its peak in Arkansas. A total of \$37,200 was allocated to Arkansas for the 1926-1927 budget year, which allowed the completion of 38 schools, five teachers' homes, and eleven additions comprising sixteen classrooms. It provided facilities for a total of 132 teachers and 5,940 students. Of the 38 schools completed during that period, 22 of them consisted of two rooms, including the Bigelow School.

The cost to construct the Bigelow School was \$4,000, and it was the most expensive two-room school constructed during the 1926-1927 budget cycle. (The average cost of construction for a two-room school during the 1926-1927 budget cycle was \$2,899.) Of the \$4,000 cost of construction, \$500 came from black contributions, \$2,800 came from public funding, and the Rosenwald Fund gave a grant of \$700.

The Bigelow School was built using Floor Plan No. 20-A for a "Two Teacher Community School" from Samuel Smith's *Community School Plans*. Smith was the General Field Agent for the Rosenwald Fund, and he developed a series of floorplans and specifications for a variety of schools that used the most up-to-date innovations in school design. The detailed blueprints and specifications could be obtained from the Rosenwald Fund through the state's education office. Smith felt that having a stock set of blueprints and specifications would allow any community to build a quality school without having to hire an architect, and the school plans turned out to be one of his greatest legacies.

Smith was very concerned with having the maximum amount of natural light get into the classrooms, especially since the rural areas where the buildings were built often did not have electricity. The Bigelow School, as specified in the plans, faces north in order to allow east-west sunlight into the rooms. East-west sunlight allowed a more comfortable light (as opposed to an all-day exposure to southern sunlight), and also allowed for better ventilation since shades would not be needed to cover the windows all day long.

The interior specifications for the buildings that Smith designed also helped to maximize the use of sunlight. Specifications required tan shades on the interior, instead of the more traditional green, and preferred that two shades be installed per window, in order to allow more regulation of light. The schools were also designed so that seating arrangements placed the windows on the children's left sides so that their writing arms, at least for right-handed students, would not cast shadows on their papers. Smith's plans were meant to be simple and efficient, omitting corridors wherever it was possible, and Floor Plan No. 20-A used in Bigelow reflects all of Smith's innovations.

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The design chosen for the Bigelow Rosenwald School, like the other school designs that Smith did for the Rosenwald Fund, also incorporates an industrial room. The inclusion of an industrial room reflected part of Booker T. Washington's Progressive-era educational philosophy. It allowed girls to be taught sewing and cooking, and boys to be taught farming and working with tools.

Smith also recognized that school buildings often served as community centers, and he incorporated that ideal into his designs. He once wrote that, "the best modern school is one which is designed to serve the entire community for twelve months in the year...whenever possible a good auditorium, large enough to seat the entire community, should be erected in connection with every community school. If there are not sufficient funds for an auditorium, two adjoining classrooms with movable partitions may be made to serve this purpose." As a result, all of Smith's school designs had an auditorium or movable partitions, as at the Bigelow School.

With respect to the exterior of frame buildings, Smith recommended that they be painted white and trimmed in gray or painted gray and trimmed in white. If the community wanted to use a wood preservative stain, he recommended using a nut-brown color and trimming it with white or cream. A photograph of the Bigelow Rosenwald School Class of 1930 indicates that the building was painted white with gray trim, as Smith recommended.

The siting of the building was also considered to be very important, and Smith provided recommendations on that regard. It was recommended that buildings be built on at least a two-acre site, and be located near a corner of the site. This allowed enough space for the school, two privies, a teacher's home, playgrounds for the students, a space for agricultural demonstrations, and proper landscaping. Although a baseball field is adjacent to the school, its history is unknown and it is not included in the nomination.

The Bigelow Rosenwald School remained in use as a school until 1964. A photograph of a class from the early 1960s shows that 48 students attended the school in its later years. The teachers at the time were Octavia Casey and Culer Keith. After the school closed, it became a community center for the area, and remains so today.

Schools, especially Rosenwald Schools, along with churches were often the centerpieces of a community, and it was no exception in Toad Suck. Located down the road from the Bethel AME Church, the Bigelow Rosenwald School was the center of life in this rural part of Perry County not only while it was a school, but several years after. Even today, it serves as the community center for the area, and as the only Rosenwald building built in Perry County, the Bigelow Rosenwald School is a rare and tangible reminder of the philanthropic legacy of Julius Rosenwald.

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Bigelow Rosenwald School is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places with **local significance** under **Criterion A** for its association with education in the Bigelow/Toad Suck area and Perry County. Additionally, it is significant as a part of Julius Rosenwald's legacy as the foremost benefactor to Negro education in the South, and as the only surviving Rosenwald School in Perry County.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Mansell, Jeff, and Trina Brinkley. "The Rosenwald School Building Fund and Associated Buildings (1913-1937)." National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form. From the files of the Alabama Historical Commission, 1997.

Porter, David. W. "A Brief History of the Julius Rosenwald Fund Building Program with Special Reference to Arkansas." Unpublished Master's thesis, Fisk University, Nashville, TN, 1951.

Bigelow Rosenwald School

Name of Property

Perry County, Arkansas

County and State

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

From the southwest corner of the Highway 60 and Bethel AME Church Road intersection, proceed westerly 145 feet, then proceed southerly 290 feet, then proceed easterly 145 feet, and then proceed northerly 290 feet to the point of beginning.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary contains the land that is historically associated with the Bigelow Rosenwald School.

