

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 Oak Grove Rosenwald School

other names/site number Site #SV0089

### 2. Location

street & number Oak Grove Road

not for publication

city or town Oak Grove

vicinity

state Arkansas code AR county Sevier code 133 zip code 71823

### 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.)

*Cathie Macclus*

3/11/04

Signature of certifying official/Title

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:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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):

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property (Check only one box)

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

- private, public-local, public-State, public-Federal

- building(s), district, site, structure, object

Table with columns: Contributing, Noncontributing, buildings, sites, structures, objects, Total. Values: 1, 1

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)

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION/School

VACANT/NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER/Plain Traditional

foundation 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.)

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

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C birthplace or grave of a historical figure of outstanding importance.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

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

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):

- 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 # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

\_\_\_\_\_

Oak Grove Rosenwald School  
Name of Property

Sevier County, Arkansas  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreeage of Property Approximately 1 acre.

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>15</u>	<u>395200</u>	<u>3749932</u>	3	_____	_____	_____
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	_____	_____	_____	4	_____	_____	_____

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 18, 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 Leon Geiger  
street & number PO Box 15073 telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
city or town Fort Worth state TX zip code 76119

**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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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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### SUMMARY

The Oak Grove Rosenwald School is located on Oak Grove Road in the small rural settlement of Oak Grove in the southeastern part of Sevier County. The one-story frame building rests on a continuous cast-concrete foundation, and the gable on hip roof is covered in corrugated metal sheets. Banks of windows are located on the rear of the building, and provide light to the two classrooms inside. The building was built in 1926 with assistance from the Rosenwald Fund.

### ELABORATION

The Oak Grove Rosenwald School is a T-shaped building on Oak Grove Road in Oak Grove, Sevier County, Arkansas. It was built in 1926 with assistance from the Rosenwald Fund. The building is one-story tall and rests on a continuous cast-concrete foundation. The roof on the building is covered in corrugated metal sheets, and has a gable on hip roof. Large banks of windows, which are typical for schools of the period, are located on the rear elevation of the building, and provide light to the building's classrooms.

The building is strongly based on Floor Plan No. 20 for a "Two Teacher Community School" from Samuel Smith's *Community School Plans*. It has two classrooms and an industrial room, as well as a cafeteria and pantry, according to a former student.

### Front/West Façade

The front façade is oriented around a projecting central section with a front facing gable roof. The façade of the projecting portion has two pair of two-over-two metal framed windows towards either end of the section. Five wood knee braces support the eaves of the front facing gable, and two rectangular wood louvered attic vents are present in the gable peak.

The projecting portion of the front façade is flanked on each side by the main plane of the façade. Each section has an entrance with a pair of wood doors with fifteen panes of glass in them. Each entrance is also crowned by a twelve-paned transom window. The north entrance also retains the original gable front stoop supported by a large knee brace. Seven concrete steps lead up to each entrance.

Proceeding towards each end of the building from the entrances, both the north and south sections have a pair of wood-framed, nine-over-nine, double-hung windows.

### Side/North Façade

There is no fenestration on the north side of the building or on the north side of the front projection. A triangular wooden attic vent is present in the gable end.

### Rear/East Façade

Due to extensive vegetation, it was not possible to view the rear façade of the building. However, based on a conversation with the building owner and Floor Plan No. 20 for a "Two Teacher Community School" from

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Samuel Smith's *Community School Plans* some description of the façade is possible. Towards each end of the façade are a bank of six wood-framed, double-hung, nine-over-nine windows that provide light to each of the two classrooms. It appears that at least some of the original windows are still there. Also, according to the building owner, an entrance into the building is also present on the rear façade, but it is unknown where on the façade it is located.

### Side/South Façade

There is no fenestration on the south side of the building or on the south side of the front projection. A triangular wooden attic vent is present in the gable end.

### Integrity

The Oak Grove Rosenwald School has reasonably good integrity. The major change to the exterior of the building since it was constructed is the replacement of the windows in the front projection with windows that do not match the original size. However, it is still possible to see the size of the original windows. Even though the windows have been replaced, it is still easy to recognize the building as a school. In addition, there have been no additions to the building that have obscured the two classroom plan of the building. The fact that the Oak Grove Rosenwald School has always been in the small town of Oak Grove, and remains so today, also allows the setting around the school to reflect its period of significance.

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### SUMMARY

The Oak Grove 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 Oak Grove area and in Sevier County. Additionally, it is significant as a part of Julius Rosenwald's legacy as the foremost benefactor to Negro education in the South.

### 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 Oak Grove 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 Oak Grove School.

The cost to construct the Oak Grove School was \$2,800, which was just below the average cost for a 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 \$2,800 cost of construction, \$700 came from black contributions, \$1,400 came from public funding, and the Rosenwald Fund gave a grant of \$700.

The Oak Grove Rosenwald School did not use a standard Rosenwald plan, but was heavily based on Floor Plan No. 20 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 Oak Grove School, as specified in the plans, faces west 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

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to be simple and efficient, omitting corridors wherever it was possible, and Floor Plan No. 20, which was the basis for the Oak Grove School, reflects all of Smith's innovations.

The design chosen as the basis for the Oak Grove 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. Although a former student indicates that the Oak Grove School had a stage at one end for presenting plays and giving speeches, they do not remember a movable partition in the center allowing the two classrooms to be combined.

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. Although it is unknown what colors the Oak Grove School was painted originally, it is currently painted white with dark brown trim.

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. According to the Sevier County Assessor's office, the building is currently on a two-acre site, although it was originally a three-acre site. A former student indicates that two privies were located to the rear of the building, and a well and basketball court were present in front of the building. However, no evidence of these features remains today.

The Oak Grove School educated students in the 1<sup>st</sup> through 10<sup>th</sup> grades with the younger children occupying the south classroom and the older children occupying the north classroom. Many of the students at the school were related to each other, and came from the immediate Oak Grove area. Once students complete their studies at Oak Grove, they would complete high school in Lockesburg, approximately six miles to the northwest. Although it is unknown how long the school was used, it is likely that it was used up through the 1950s until integration and consolidation occurred across the state. Currently, the building is vacant.

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Schools, especially Rosenwald Schools, along with churches were often the centerpieces of a community, and it was no exception in Oak Grove. Located down the road from a Missionary Baptist Church, the Oak Grove Rosenwald School was the center of life in this rural part of Sevier County while it was a school. Even today in its current condition, as the only remaining Rosenwald building built in Sevier County, the Oak Grove Rosenwald School is a rare and tangible reminder of the philanthropic legacy of Julius Rosenwald.

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Oak Grove 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 Oak Grove area and Sevier County. Additionally, it is significant as a part of Julius Rosenwald's legacy as the foremost benefactor to Negro education in the South.

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### BIBLIOGRAPHY


Albright, Angela K. "Rosenwald School, Delight, Pike County, Arkansas." National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. From the files of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, 1990.

Geiger, Leon (Owner and former student). Telephone conversation with the author. 12 December 2003.

Hoffschwelle, Mary. Address. National Trust for Historic Preservation National Conference. Cleveland, OH, October 9, 2002.

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.

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Section number 10 Page 1

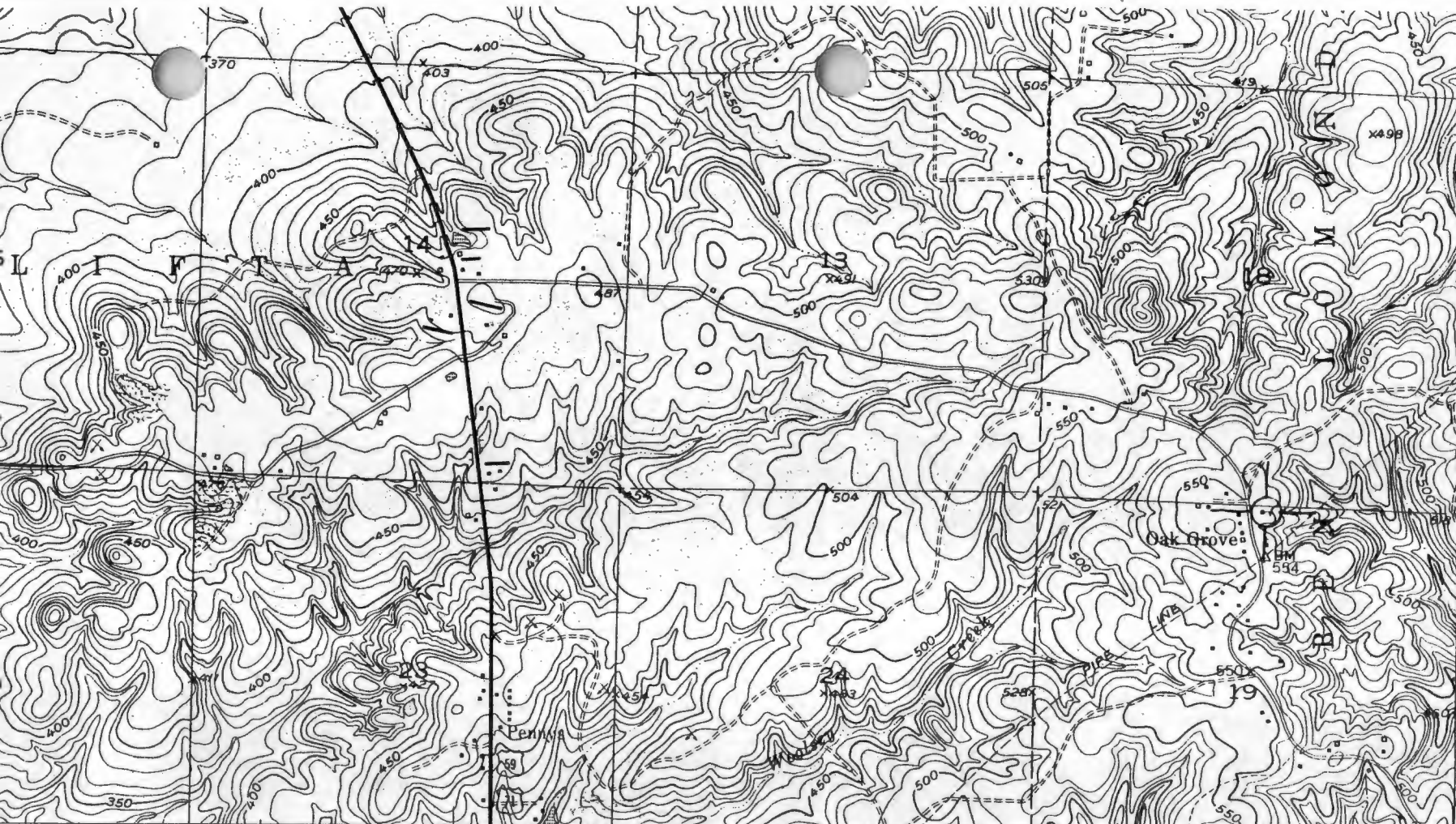
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## VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

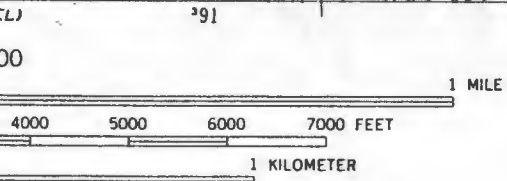
From a point on the east side of Oak Grove Road 430 feet southeast of the southeast corner of the Oak Grove Road and County Road 318 intersection, proceed easterly 225 feet, then proceed southerly 225 feet, then proceed westerly 225 feet, then proceed northerly 225 feet to the point of beginning.

## BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

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



3751  
 3750  
 OAK GROVE ROSENWAL  
 SCHOOL  
 OAK GROVE, SEVIER  
 COUNTY  
 UTM:  
 15/395200/3749932  
 3749000mN  
 33°52'30"  
 94°07'30"



FALLS CHAPEL 1.2 MI. 93  
 ASHDOWN 15 MI. R. 30 W. ● INTERIOR—GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, RESTON, VIRGINIA—1978  
 3950000mE R. 29 W.

ROAD CLASSIFICATION  
 Heavy-duty \_\_\_\_\_ 4 LANE | 6 LANE Light-duty \_\_\_\_\_  
 Medium-duty \_\_\_\_\_ 4 LANE | 6 LANE Unimproved dirt \_\_\_\_\_  
 □ U. S. Route ○ State Route



(BEN LOMOND)  
 7151 SE

MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS  
 DRADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092  
 LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS 72204  
 SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

LOCKESBURG, ARK.  
 N3352.5—W9407.5/7.5

1951  
 PHOTOREVISED 1978  
 AMS 7151 | NW-SERIES V884

LOCKESBURG QUADRANGLE  
ARKANSAS-SEVIER CO.  
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

7152 II SE  
(DIERS)

7152 II SW  
(GENEVA)

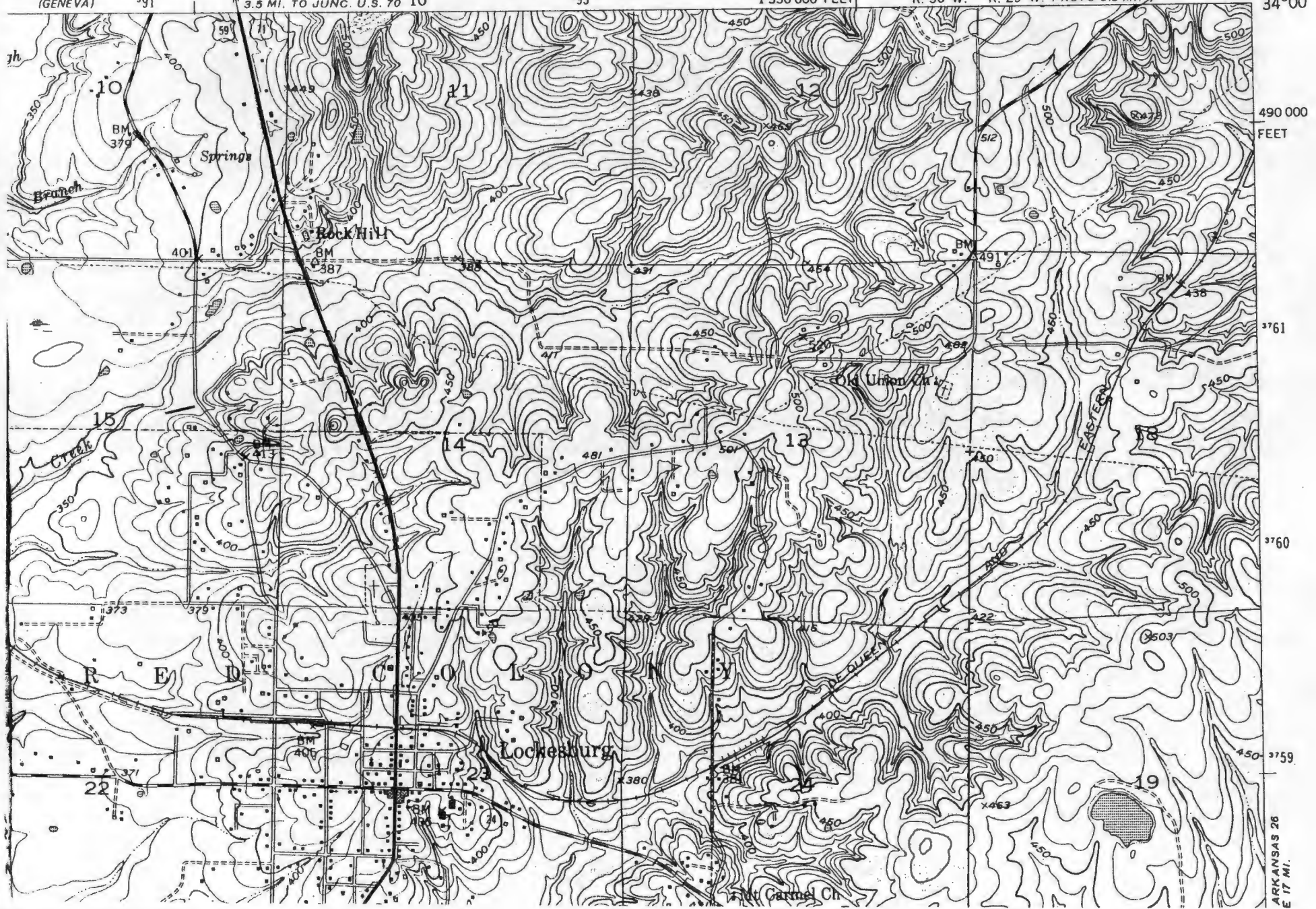
DE QUEEN 12 MI.  
3.5 MI. TO JUNG. U.S. 70 10'

193

1 350 000 FEET

R. 30 W. R. 29 W. PROVO 3.2 MI.

94°07'30"  
34°00'



490 000  
FEET

3761

3760

3759

ARKANSAS 26  
E 17 MI.





