

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: Taylor's Bridge School

Other names/site number: Delaware CRS # N06284

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: 121 Flemings Landing Road

City or town: Townsend State: DE County: New Castle County

Not For Publication:  Vicinity:

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

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

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

\_\_\_ national \_\_\_ statewide \_\_\_X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A \_\_\_ B X C \_\_\_ D

DE State Historic Preservation Officer	4/24/2019
Signature of certifying official/Title:	Date
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.	
Signature of commenting official:	Date
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:) \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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#### 5. Classification

##### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

##### Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object



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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> and 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY REVIVALS/Colonial Revival

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

Principal exterior materials of the property: Brick, Wood

### Narrative Description

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

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#### Summary Paragraph

Taylor's Bridge School is a one-room schoolhouse located on the east side of Route 9, at 121 Fleming's Landing Road, just south of the intersection with Cedar Swamp Road in New Castle County, Delaware. Built in 1925, the one-story, Flemish-bond brick schoolhouse, with a traditional open space rectangular floor plan, was built in the Colonial Revival style, and features a portico entrance with columns and a cupola at the roof. The school lot is grassy on three sides, and a gravel driveway circumnavigates the school for parking and maintenance convenience. A stand of catalpa trees north of the school once provided shade for outdoor activities, and still demarcates the boundary. Because this historic building has not been significantly altered since its construction in 1925, the Taylor's Bridge School retains integrity of setting, location, workmanship, materials, design, association and feeling.

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#### Narrative Description

Taylor's Bridge School is located at 121 Fleming's Landing Road in rural Taylor's Bridge vicinity, Blackbird Hundred, New Castle County, Delaware. The Taylor's Bridge School is a one-and-a-half story, five-bay, brick veneered, frame schoolhouse, with a side-gable roof. The exterior finish

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of the school is Flemish bond brick on all four elevations, though the northwest elevation is primarily clad in clapboards. The school sits on a matching brick foundation—demarcated by a brick water table. The roof, sheathed in wood shingles, features boxed cornices with narrow frieze boards and crown moldings. The cornices return partially on each gable end.

The building's overall shape is rectangular—the school only has a single period of construction, but has four roof sections. The largest, one-and-a-half-story, side-gable section housed the large, one-room classroom. A one-story shed roof abuts the main roofline on the front elevation, and slopes to southwest. This space contained the original girls and boys restrooms, as well as the coal storage room. Also on the front elevation is a one-story, front-gable portico, which provided a covered entry into the schoolhouse. Lastly, the main side-gabled roof is surmounted by a four-sided cupola at the northwest gable end. The cupola, which was restored in 2004, features a brightly colored red domed roof—the original weathervane is currently being restored and will likely be returned to the structure soon.

#### *Southwest Elevation (Front)*

The southwest (front) elevation consists of five-bays. The northwestern most bay features a pair of nine-light over single-panel wood doors, surmounted by a six-light wood transom. This entire bay is dominated by a gable-front portico that projects from the main rectangular block to the west. Three poured concrete steps lead to the wood portico that shades the west entrance elevation. The portico is capped by a flat roof set into a projecting cross gable. Small balustrades span the distance between two plain wood columns and the portico's rear pilasters. To the right of the portico are four evenly-spaced bays, each with a six-over-six double hung sash wood windows with molded wood surrounds.

#### *Northwest Elevation*

The most notable-feature on the northwest elevation is that it is clad in wood clapboard—and not brick. On either side of the frame wall are four brick courses (still laid in Flemish bond), which span the width of the return cornices. The frame wall is clad in wood weatherboards. This wall sits on the same brick water table found on all other elevations. There is only one opening on this elevation—a pair of nine-over-nine light wood austral windows. While these wood windows are not the original windows from 1925 they are exact replicas. Placed symmetrically above the pair of austral windows is a single fan-shaped wood slatted vent. To the north of windows is a metal stove pipe.

#### *Northeast Elevation (Rear)*

The northeast (rear) elevation is comprised of a single band of six nine-over-nine wood austral windows. The placement of these northeastern facing windows allowed a great deal of natural light to flood the one-room classroom.

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The southeast elevation contains two irregularly spaced bays and a large exterior brick chimney. The exterior brick chimney (also laid in Flemish bond) is centrally placed at the ridge of the gable. Flanked on either side by half-fan shaped louvered wooden vents at the attic story. The two bays (both windows) are both located on a gable-front projection to the south of the chimney. The windows are two different heights, but have brick jack arches that align at the same height. The window closest to the chimney is a six-over-six double hung sash wood window with molded surrounds. It provides light for the hallway and broom closet—and matches stylistically the windows on the front façade. The southernmost window is the shorter of the two windows—it is a one-over-one wood double hung sash window. Underneath the window are two-courses of patched brick—this opening has been reworked. The original opening had a wood-door that was hinged on the southern side of the opening. This allowed for coal to be deposited to the interior space. When this opening was converted from a door to a window (to allow natural light into the newly installed bathroom) the opening was enclosed slightly. At the northern corner of the elevation, just above the brick water table, is a boarded-up vent. This small opening also has a brick jack arch. Historic photos show this small opening once was a wood slatted vent.

### *Interior*

The interior of the Taylor's Bridge School is divided into five primary spaces—a vestibule, the large classroom, a mid-20<sup>th</sup> century kitchen (former bathrooms), a hallway with a closet, and a modern bathroom (former coal-storage room).

The double doors on the southwest elevation are the only entrance into the school building. These doors lead into a small vestibule. Directly opposite the entry doors, on the northeastern wall, are two doors hung at either end of the wall. Between the doors is a framed tack board. Both doors are wood six-light over three-horizontal panels. Both doors are hinged at their respective wall corners and open into the vestibule. Both doors provide entry into the large single room classroom. The northwestern wall has no openings—it is embellished with baseboards and a chair rail, which is located about two-thirds up the wall at roughly eye-level. The southeastern wall also has no openings—it too has baseboards and a chair rail at a matching height. This chair rail however has a row of coat hooks. An original glass lampshade lights the vestibule.

The classroom is the largest interior space. It is about 39 feet long by 23 feet wide. Along the northwest, frame gable end wall are the two wood frame austral windows. This wall, like the other three interior walls, features a high chair rail. Coat hooks are located in the western corner of this wall, between the windows and the partition wall into the entry vestibule. A small book cabinet sits at northeast corner of the room that was the library area—located along the northeast wall. The cabinet is attached to the wall and has two paneled doors with shelving inside. The dominate feature of the northeast elevation is the large bank of austral windows that flood the interior space with light. The southeast elevation features a two-thirds length blackboard. Also visible on this elevation is a now enclosed stove pipe hole, indicating the original location of the heat for the school. Next to the blackboard to the south is a five horizontal panel wood door that leads into the hallway for the closet and modern bathroom. The southwest elevation has undergone some reworking since the Taylor's Bridge School changed uses. On this wall there are now six

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openings—a pass-through window, a doorway, a pass-through window, a doorway, and the two doors to the vestibule. The pass-through windows are not original—they were installed when the boys and girls bathrooms were converted to the kitchen space for the community center. The door openings that led to the bathrooms are original. The doors themselves were removed. Physical evidence on the door frames indicates the original position and swings of these now removed doors. The last two doors that provide entry from the vestibule into the classroom space are original six-light over three horizontal wood panel doors.

Originally, the southwest wall also had a blackboard (since removed for the kitchen reconfiguration). The location of the blackboard was consistent with Betelle's plan for a second set of boards opposite the source of light. The chair rail in the western corner also features original coat hooks—they span from the frame gable end wall to the first door to the kitchen. The entire classroom has a drop ceiling of acoustic tile. Currently, there are four identical ceiling fans that provide light and air circulation in the space. The floor is covered in narrow wood strip hardwood floors. Visible on the floors are the bolt holes for the now removed rows of desks.

The kitchen space located to the southwest of the classroom originally contained boys and girls bathrooms and cloakrooms. This long narrow room now contains kitchen appliances, a sink, shelves, and workspace. Two openings were cut through the partition as pass-throughs for food service.

The final two interior spaces are a hall closet and coal room turned bathroom. The hall closet can be accessed from the classroom space via a five horizontal panel wood door along the southeastern wall. The closet is four feet wide and two feet deep. There are four interior shelves in the closet. Across from the closet is the coal room turned modern bathroom. The room is about seven feet long and six feet across. The room is clad in a mix of vertical wood board and horizontal bead board. In the northern corner is a trap door to the crawlspace.

### **Integrity**

The Taylor's Bridge School possesses a high level of integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

**Location:** The Taylor's Bridge School retains its original location on its original three-acre parcel of land.

**Design:** Taylor's Bridge School retains a high level of integrity of design. It follows the architectural plans of James Betelle, architect for Pierre S. du Pont's rural school building initiative. Since the school's construction in 1925, very few changes have occurred, and there have been no subsequent additions. The interior changes that have occurred retained the original interior layout. Only the use of the spaces changed (from schoolroom to meeting room, from coal room to bathroom, from coat rooms/restrooms to kitchen).



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**Setting:** The Taylor's Bridge School retains a high level of integrity of setting. The school possesses its original three-acre parcel without additional development or alteration. Additionally, the area adjacent to the school was never developed. The area retains its rural crossroads setting.

**Materials:** Since its construction in 1925, few material changes have occurred—and those that have been made replaced materials in kind.

**Workmanship:** Taylor's Bridge School has a high level of integrity of workmanship. The skill of the masons is still evident in the brickwork today.

**Feeling:** Taylor's Bridge School retains a high level of integrity of feeling. It still evokes the architecture and layout of a one-room rural schoolhouse.

**Association:** The level of integrity for association is high. Taylor's Bridge School still evokes the period setting of a one-room rural schoolhouse. Since the exterior has never been altered it is easily associated with the 1920s educational reform movement, the Delaware School Auxiliary Association's ideas for the construction and interior layout for school buildings.

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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

### Criteria Considerations

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

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

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**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Education  
Architecture  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1925-1948  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

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

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

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

**Cultural Affiliation**

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

**Architect/Builder**

James O. Betelle  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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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 Taylor's Bridge School (School No. 66) is a highly significant, scarce survival from an era of progressive educational reforms that occurred in Delaware, and the United States more broadly, during the early twentieth century. More specifically, it is an excellent example of the one-room schoolhouses (One-Teacher Schools) commissioned by Pierre S. DuPont and the Service Citizens of Delaware for rural white communities during the 1920s. Built in 1925 and used as a primary school until 1948, the Taylor's Bridge School is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A, for its connection to progressive educational reforms in Delaware that markedly improved the education of rural school children, and under Criterion C, for its forward-looking architecture and design, which embodied a new public awareness of the social importance of public education and the welfare of children.

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

### **Criterion A**

The first layer of significance for Taylor Bridge School derives from its moment of creation, between 1923 and 1925, since it was born of a highly specific historical movement that defines a key episode in Delaware's educational history. The fact that the previous Taylor's Bridge School blew down in a storm in 1923 symbolizes the very problem that Pierre du Pont, the Service Citizens of Delaware, and other reformers wished to address during the 1920s. Delaware's schools were, on the whole, in very poor condition, and the state was falling behind as many others moved forward with progressive rebuilding campaigns--employing new ideas in design, education, sanitation, and social improvement. While du Pont had single-handedly rebuilt nearly all the African American schools in Delaware by 1923, only a handful of white schools had been rebuilt. Thus, the destruction of the old school at Taylor's Bridge provided a perfect opportunity for du Pont and the Service Citizens to construct a modern school--a building that embodied the more enlightened sensibility that reformers hoped would help transform Delaware society. Taylor's Bridge School thus represents a part of du Pont's herculean effort to convince white communities across Delaware to rebuild their schools.

### **"At a Low Ebb": Delaware's Education System in the Early Twentieth Century**

The revolutionary changes in Delaware's education system during the early twentieth century were part of the much larger, nationwide era of education reform, influenced by the Progressive Movement, World War I, a flood of immigration to the U.S., and modernization in architectural design. The larger Progressive Movement--spanning from the early 1890s to the 1920s, stood for a broad agenda of social reforms. Many of its adherents looked to ease poverty, end political

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corruption, and transform people into patriotic, middle-class American citizens. Though ambitious in their desire to affect major changes in society, Progressive reformers did not see fit to change the existing political and capitalist structures, but instead sought change through legislation. The real transformative work of progressives, however, could be found in the daily activities of the settlement houses, churches, and school rooms in America.<sup>1</sup>

Making a free public school education mandatory and accessible for all was a major concern of many Progressive Era reformers. They believed the compulsory education of children would promote the middle-class values of hard work, achievement, and material success. The nation was moving from an agrarian to an industrial society, and a literate workforce was critically needed to man the new factories and offices. Further, as World War I raged on and immigrants from Eastern Europe poured into Delaware and the rest of the United States, many social leaders saw education as a national security issue, as well. As one historian points out, "there was a general belief in the country that immigrants possessed radical ideals that threatened the American way of life . . . [and] education was essential to stemming this threat."<sup>2</sup> A nationwide effort was mounted to consolidate schools and establish uniformity in the length of school terms, improve facilities, increase attendance, and upgrade teacher education.<sup>3</sup>

As a result of this educational work by reformers, during the first third of the twentieth century, the United States leapt ahead of the rest of the world in educating its children—called by one study a "spectacular educational transformation." While less than 10% of 18-year-olds possessed a high school diploma in 1910, just thirty years later, by 1940, that number had climbed to more than 50%.<sup>4</sup> Yet the implementation of school reform played out at different paces, and in different ways, from state to state. The fight to revolutionize Delaware's education system, and its school buildings, during the 1910s and 20s was a long and difficult battle. Yet the timing of Pierre du Pont's aggressive push to modernize Delaware's schools came just in time to guide the fate of the new Taylor's Bridge School.

### ***Local Control & Rural Resistance to Change***

Despite the national reform movement in education that had emerged by World War I, Delaware's educational system—and its school buildings—remained mostly neglected. This delay in modernization was mostly the result of rural citizens, especially in the more southern counties, aggressively protecting decentralized, local control of schools—and a widespread desire that schools be as unobtrusive (and often as inexpensive) as possible.<sup>5</sup> Any attempts to reduce local control and to centralize and upgrade Delaware's schools met with fierce opposition. As one

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<sup>1</sup> Michael McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent*, 2003, xiv-xv.

<sup>2</sup> Bradley Skelcher, *African American Education in Delaware: A History through Photographs, 1865-1930* (Wilmington, DE: Delaware Heritage Press, 1999), 63.

<sup>3</sup> James West Davidson, William E. Gien, et.al, *Nation of Nations: A Narrative History of the American Republic* Volume II: Since 1865, 1994, pp. 835-836.

<sup>4</sup> Claudia Goldin and Lawrence F. Katz, "Why the United States Led in Education: Lessons from Secondary School Expansion, 1910 to 1940," National Bureau of Economic Research, NBER Working Paper No. 6144 (August 1997), 1.

<sup>5</sup> Robert J. Taggart, *Private Philanthropy and Public Education: Pierre S. du Pont and the Delaware Schools, 1890-1940* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1988), 16.

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historian has pointed out, public schools in Delaware had been “tolerated” as “neighborhood extensions of the family,” but “rural residents demanded that public schools be operated on their terms.”<sup>6</sup> Local control of education was thus highly protected in some areas—especially the agricultural regions of the state. One Delaware school reformer remembered during the 1930s:

Progressively speaking, the larger part of the state was asleep. The people lived in a little pocket of their own; they repeated what their fathers had done; they worshipped their own traditions. Provincialism was rampant. The more advanced spots in the country rushed on—toward organized power, machine age production, the annihilation of distance and its accompanying liberalization of all outlooks upon life. There were, of course, isolated exceptions; but Delaware as a whole sustained the leisurely pace of a previous generation.<sup>7</sup>

The result of this culture, in the eyes of many Delaware leaders, was highly detrimental to the educational advancement of Delaware’s children—and Delaware’s future, more generally. The “system” of public schools—if it could be called that—was a hodge-podge of poorly funded local school districts within each county. In the 1910s, there were well over 400 school districts--including over 290 unincorporated and ungraded districts, forty-seven incorporated districts, and eighty-seven black districts. Many were “tiny schools without adequate financial support to retain a teacher more than five months,” and which “defied effective supervision or any semblance of equal opportunity.”<sup>8</sup> Run by local boards, which operated without strong oversight or financial support from the state government, Delaware’s schools commonly lacked credentialed teachers, proper equipment, or a standardized curriculum. In rural districts, school attendance was highly inconsistent, since the number of school days was typically determined around the needs of child labor on the farm.

In the face of these challenges, certain leaders in Delaware—bolstered by the Progressive Era’s confidence in rational advancement of social institutions—sought to institute a statewide system of public education. This step towards school modernization, like in other states, would allow a broad array of universal reforms that collectively would revolutionize the quality and consistency of education in Delaware. Nationwide, school reformers’ goals during the early twentieth century typically included state control, school consolidation, grading/classification of pupils, compulsory attendance, teacher and administrative professionalization, uniform standards, and more liberal public financing, the latter of which could support higher teacher salaries and the construction of new buildings.<sup>9</sup> This was generally the program of the Delaware reformers. However, widespread apathy in Delaware and powerful political forces protecting the status quo would ensure that a monumental effort would be required to effect substantial change.

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<sup>6</sup> Taggart, 25.

<sup>7</sup> Etta J. Wilson, *The Story of Delaware’s Effort to Awaken ALL of Her People* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware College of Education, 1968), 21.

<sup>8</sup> Taggart, 31.

<sup>9</sup> Taggart, 16.

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***Education Commission of 1917, The Flexner Report, and the School Code of 1919***

A major turning point for the future of Delaware's schools was the educational commission of 1917. The commission was instructed by the legislature to "harmonize, unify, and revise the school laws" and "develop an educational system suited to the conditions existing in the State, providing for an improved and efficient administration of all free school matters and the training of a competent teaching force."<sup>10</sup> In order to properly assess the education system, the commission initiated a statewide study, hiring two prominent (and progressive) experts in educational surveys, Abraham Flexner and Frank Bachman—whose work was supported by Rockefeller's General Education Board and Pierre du Pont.<sup>11</sup>

Flexner and Bachman assessment of Delaware's school system was grim. They concluded that, "On the whole . . . public education in Delaware is at a low ebb." The state organization was "ill-jointed and ineffective," professional standards were non-existent, and perhaps worst of all, "public opinion [was] unaroused" to do anything about it.<sup>12</sup> In their opinion, local control of education in Delaware was excessive, and this created a culture of apathy, low standards, and lack of coordination. Only a dramatic, comprehensive revision of the state code could remedy these problems, they suggested, by centralizing control and administration under state and county authority.<sup>13</sup> The Flexner report also emphasized that Delaware's school buildings, themselves, were highly outdated. Almost no new school buildings had been constructed in the state for two decades. Only two schools in the entire state were modern, consolidated buildings, and many of the 327 one-room schools in Delaware were fifty to one hundred years old.<sup>14</sup>

***Delaware's 1919 School Code***

With only minor changes, the Flexner study was adapted as the official report of the state's educational commission for the general assembly in 1919, and it would have a significant impact on the statewide revolution in education policy--resulting in the 1919 Delaware School Code.<sup>15</sup> The 1919 School Code brought the first measures of standardization to Delaware's schools. Under this system, county school boards, allied with state government, would hire teachers, collect taxes, supervise school's curricula, and set teachers' wages. All districts were to establish a secondary school, and mandatory school attendance was set at 180 days--a steep requirement in the eyes of many farming families.<sup>16</sup> Delaware's 1919 school code was called by one historian "a radical reconstruction of educational control" in Delaware, and many contemporaries also saw it that way, as well. In fact, it triggered such a backlash that significant portions were repealed or altered. Yet,

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<sup>10</sup> 1917 law quoted in Taggart, 74.

<sup>11</sup> Taggart, 74.

<sup>12</sup> Quoted in Taggart, 75.

<sup>13</sup> Taggart, 75.

<sup>14</sup> Taggart, 76.

<sup>15</sup> Taggart, 78.

<sup>16</sup> Cynthia Eastburn, One-Room Schools in Rural Delaware. Master's Thesis. Newark: University of Delaware, 1997, 51-52. The mandatory attendance policy met instant resistance, especially in the more rural counties of Kent and Sussex, based on their need for children's agricultural labor, and legislators forced a compromise in shifting the minimum from 180 days to 160 days.

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the groundwork had been laid for a new state system that would forever change educational administration in Delaware.<sup>17</sup>

### **Pierre S. du Pont & the Service Citizens of Delaware**

There can be little doubt that Taylor's Bridge School--and many small schools like it--would not have existed without the efforts of Pierre S. du Pont, who was the true champion of Delaware's educational reform movement. The millionaire-philanthropist--with his family fortune, political connections, and social bonds--both spearheaded and funded educational reform across Delaware. As a wealthy industrialist living in Wilmington, he and his family members had philanthropic interests throughout the state—which focused especially on promoting public access to culture and the arts. Du Pont was a member of an elite, nationwide brotherhood of socially-conscious millionaire philanthropists who, at the turn of the twentieth century, donated part of their fortunes toward the public good through progressive reform and charity.

Pierre du Pont had already donated substantial sums to a few educational institutions, so there were clear precedents for his leadership in a major public education reform effort in Delaware.<sup>18</sup> In 1916, du Pont donated \$570,000 to his alma mater, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). The same year, he contributed \$120,000 for a large addition at Alexis I. du Pont School, in Wilmington (DE), which was designed with “fireproof” concrete and hollow tile, featured large windows for improved lighting, and state-of-the-art heating and ventilation systems. Soon after, he contributed almost a million dollars towards the expansion and improvements at Delaware College (now University of Delaware), including the purchase of the 40 acres that now comprises the heart of the main campus, the construction of Wolf Hall, the renovation of Old College, and the purchase of Elliot House on Main Street.

Du Pont's main goals of educational reform in Delaware centered on school consolidation and the erection of new school buildings. According to one historian, du Pont felt that “modern buildings would produce all sorts of direct benefits” to the people of Delaware.<sup>19</sup> If the schools were comfortable, students would attend class more frequently, and behavior would improve among the pupils. Better work conditions would attract better quality teachers. The new schools would also increase community interest in education. According to one historian, du Pont and his colleagues in reform even hoped that “each community would be inspired in all its relations,” and that the new schoolhouses “would be a catalyst for awakening the American spirit of independence and rational progress.”<sup>20</sup> These ambitious, lofty ideals drove Pierre du Pont to form the Service Citizens group, an arm of which would help to fund the new Taylor's Bridge School.

### ***Formation of the Service Citizens***

In 1918, du Pont organized the Service Citizens of Delaware—called by one historian “one of the most influential agencies in the history of Delaware education.”<sup>21</sup> The Service Citizens of

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<sup>17</sup> Taggart, 74.

<sup>18</sup> Eastburn, 52-53.

<sup>19</sup> Taggart, 124.

<sup>20</sup> Taggart, 124.

<sup>21</sup> Eastburn, 52.



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Delaware was formed in response to the imminent loss of the State Council of Defense—a wartime organization that had identified “many conditions in Delaware susceptible of great improvement,” but which would be disbanded with the close of World War I. Pierre du Pont’s friend and associate John Raskob hoped that “intelligent and representative citizenship of the state would take charge of the ways and means of permanently bettering conditions” in Delaware, and he and du Pont invited eighty prominent Delawareans to a meeting at the DuPont Building on July 9, 1918, to organize a group to meet this need.<sup>22</sup> The new organization was dominated by wealthy men from the Wilmington area, many of whom were associated with the newly-expanded Du Pont Company.<sup>23</sup>

It is interesting to note that the Service Citizens group was composed mostly of members of the business community. Historians have suggested that Progressive-era reformers often saw school reform—and especially consolidation efforts—as a way to standardize and “systematize” schooling in a way that was akin to the scientific, rationalized business practices and corporate consolidation occurring nationwide during the early twentieth century. The leadership of Pierre du Pont, whose legacy includes the scientific modernization of the DuPont Company, fits this pattern well. By reducing inefficiencies and duplicate efforts, reformers could reduce waste and streamline bureaucracy—thus reducing costs while standardizing educational processes. This relationship between school reform and rationalized business practices was illustrated, quite literally, on the cover of the *School Board Journal* in March 1919, which depicted a business man unlocking a padlock (representing the “high cost of school necessities”) with a “golden key” (representing “scientific business methods”), allowing him to open the door to “progress in school work (Figure 17). The linkages between industrialization and educational reform were strong—especially since universal education was seen as a way to produce a well-trained and educated industrial workforce and capital profit.<sup>24</sup>

Due to the demographics of the Service Citizens of Delaware, there is little doubt that the group risked the appearance of northern, wealthy, urban elites dictating to everyone else in Delaware how they should live. Pierre du Pont, himself, saw the Service Citizens as “a body of active citizens whose thought and character will impress upon the people of Delaware the necessity of change,” and whose “special duty” was to “determine how people should be related and governed.”<sup>25</sup> Yet, as one historian put it, “Sussex Countians, especially, did not like to be told what was good for them by Northern industrialists.”<sup>26</sup> Aware of the political delicacies of such an approach, the Service Citizens selected vice presidents from each of the counties and included representatives from eighteen different towns. This helped establish the Service Citizens as a truly statewide organization and to help bridge the divide between the northern (urban) reformers and southern (rural) communities.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Taggart, 48.

<sup>23</sup> Taggart, 48-51.

<sup>24</sup> Bradley Skelcher, *African American Education in Delaware: A History through Photographs, 1865-1930* (Wilmington, DE: Delaware Heritage Press, 1999), 69.

<sup>25</sup> Quoted in Taggart, 48.

<sup>26</sup> Taggart 54.

<sup>27</sup> Taggart, 51-53.

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Though not its only goal, the biggest focus of the Service Citizens' agenda was the promotion of school reform--including namely consolidation and school rebuilding. Du Pont set up a \$1.5 million trust fund, which would yield \$90,000 a year for four years, to start their public works projects.<sup>28</sup> It is clear that du Pont believed that a public information campaign--and the distribution of research and facts--would be key to turning public opinion in favor of the school rebuilding effort. This approach was touted by national reformers at the time, who were sometimes a little too optimistic about the ease of converting hostile public sentiment. One architect wrote that, "As a general rule the people mean to be generous to their schools, and it requires only the diffusion among them of correct information on the subject to secure from them all that is necessary for the erection and suitable and creditable school edifices."<sup>29</sup> While du Pont knew a tougher fight was ahead, he established a bureau of the Service Citizens solely for the distribution of news, reports, and other information generated by the Service Citizens, themselves. Literature published by the Service Citizens in 1924 -- as plans were underway for Taylor's Bridge School-- asked, "Why should not our children have better schools?" It continued:

Our children are our most valuable possessions . . . Should they not have the best we can give them: schoolhouses that are healthy for their bodies and stimulating to their minds? Ought they not to have every advantage which science and skill can secure? In good schoolhouses they will have light, fresh air and the feeling that they must do their best. Besides these advantages they will have better teachers—really first-class teachers will not work in old and out-of-date buildings."<sup>30</sup>

Yet one the most powerful information campaigns of the Service Citizens centered around a study personally commissioned by Pierre du Pont--a wide-reaching documentation and evaluation of every school in the state of Delaware.

### **"Absolutely Intolerable": Delaware's School Buildings in 1919**

#### ***The 1919 Strayer Report***

In 1919, Pierre du Pont hired an educational consultant, George D. Strayer from Columbia University, to conduct a statewide survey of schools. Strayer created a point system for the evaluation of each school, with 1000 being a perfect score. He then examined every one of the state's one-room schools, and rated their attributes such as site, building construction, service systems, and classroom environment. Strayer's team reported that the one-room schools were mostly one-story, frame buildings with little ventilation, poor lighting, insufficient heating, and little upkeep. Often they were situated on small, awkward plots of land with no ground for safe outdoor play.<sup>31</sup> The team also reported the frequent absence of blackboards and twentieth-century

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<sup>28</sup> Taggart, 53.

<sup>29</sup> A.D.F. Hamlin, "Consideration in School House Design," *Modern School Houses* (New York: Swetland Pub. Co., 1910), 4.

<sup>30</sup> "What Do You Know About the Public Schools of Delaware?" Volume VI, Number 2 (Wilmington, DE: Service Citizens of Delaware, 1924), 6.

<sup>31</sup> Taggart, 126.

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maps. The schools were generally found to be “dark and depressing” places for learning. In addition to the point system, the written reports graphically described the daily grind of being a student at these schools. Children often sat two to a desk, and some schools contained fifty or sixty pupils crammed into a shack designed for twenty.<sup>32</sup> The team found desks facing windows and children looking into glare while sitting with their backs to the teacher. In winter, to keep warm, the students huddled together around a coal stove in the middle of the room. Many schools had a single outhouse and no fresh water for hygiene purposes. In a summary of one school, the report declared it “a crime against innocent children to enforce compulsory attendance laws where such accommodations are all that the community has to offer.”<sup>33</sup> Strayer’s team found that, outside of Wilmington, an astounding 392 schools out of a total of 400 scored below the 500 point mark—the standard for recommending demolition or abandonment of the structure.<sup>34</sup> Delaware’s schools had, according to Strayer, almost universally failed their examination.

Perhaps this was not surprising, considering that, of the small (non-consolidated) white schools outside of Wilmington, 121 (or 42.7%) were over 50 years old, and 207 (almost 75%) were 30 years old or more. Ninety-two percent (92%) scored less than 400 in Strayer’s assessment. The old Taylor’s Bridge School, just a few years before it collapsed in a storm, scored 321 out of the possible 1000.<sup>35</sup> With these unflattering conclusions in hand, du Pont and the Service Citizens worked in conjunction with the State Board of Education to begin a statewide school rebuilding effort.<sup>36</sup>

### ***Rebuilding Delaware’s Black Schools: Setting an Example***

Yet in the face of the harsh realities publicized by the Strayer Report, the Service Citizens still encountered angry opposition to almost any proposal for change--and especially suggestions that local monies should be spent to help build new schools. It was this resistance among white Delawareans that, at least in part, led to du Pont’s gigantic effort to fund the reconstruction of all African American schools. As one historian argues, “du Pont built the schools for blacks in order to stimulate whites to construct their own schools.”<sup>37</sup> His ultimate goal was to convince whites to at least match his gifts, with increased school taxes and bonding. When whites resisted, du Pont decided to, as he put it, “try another tack.” He rebuilt all black schools so that whites, “not wanting their children to attend poorer schools than the Negroes immediately became interested in education.”<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, by constructing all black schools himself, du Pont believed that he had stolen one of the most pervasive arguments that whites had against using public monies for schools: White money would be used for black children.”<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Taggart, 126.

<sup>33</sup> Eastburn, 66.

<sup>34</sup> Eastburn, pp. 54, 65-66.

<sup>35</sup> “What Do You Know About the Public Schools of Delaware?” Volume VI, Number 2 (Wilmington, DE: Service Citizens of Delaware, 1924), 12.

<sup>36</sup> Eastburn, 66.

<sup>37</sup> Taggart, 130-131.

<sup>38</sup> Taggart, 130-131.

<sup>39</sup> Taggart, 130-131.

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With a generous two million dollar trust fund from du Pont, the Service Citizens' building bureau--the Delaware School Auxiliary Association (DSAA)--initiated the school building campaign, starting with the African American schools. The campaign was largely one of complete rebuilding, using standardized building types, designed by Betelle, in already established African-American communities--although often at more better building sites, taking into account the recommendations made by the Strayer Association.<sup>40</sup> The DSAA were successful at rebuilding virtually the entire African American school system within four years.<sup>41</sup> Practically completed by early 1923, the DSAA had built eighty African American schools with 148 classrooms at a cost of \$1,025,000.<sup>42</sup>

### ***Rebuilding Delaware's White Schools: The Institutionalization of School Rebuilding***

While the Delaware School Auxiliary Association was successful at completely rebuilding the African American school system, with funding coming personally from Pierre du Pont, the rebuilding of the white schools would prove to be a much longer, more painful process, since du Pont was determined to involve white citizens—and their money—as much as possible. As it turned out, his organization constructed more black schools in its first three years than white schools in the first eight years.<sup>43</sup> While the politics at Taylor's Bridge are not known for certain, du Pont and the School Auxiliary Association's vision was met with much resistance in white communities--especially rural ones--and Pierre du Pont and the Service Citizens often fought district by district in hopes of convincing Delaware's white citizens to rebuild.

It was within this context that an unforeseen event hit the small village of Taylor's Bridge on April 5<sup>th</sup>, 1923. A terrible thunderstorm rolled through the Delaware Valley, wrecking much havoc in the region. On Delaware's roads, car roofs were blown off of vehicles, and in Philadelphia, roofs were torn from houses. A barn was struck by lightning and caught fire. And yet somehow, despite the ferocity of the storm, no lives were lost—though there were several close calls. When the storm hit Taylor's Bridge, a young teacher named Gladys McBooker had just wrapped up her Thursday afternoon lessons, and was preparing to depart the school with a few young students. She paused and huddled with the children in the school's rickety, beadboard vestibule, assessing the storm—when suddenly, the entire building shook and lurched. Startled, she quickly dashed with the children through the blustery storm, into a nearby field—to witness, just a minute later, the entire school building collapse and crash to the ground.<sup>44</sup>

This natural disaster forced the issue in Taylor's Bridge--and rebuilding had to be addressed. The State of Delaware earmarked \$5,000 towards the erection of a new school building, while the

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<sup>40</sup> Susan Brizzolara, National Register Nomination, "Iron Hill School Number 112C," February 3, 1995, Section 8, pages 12-13.

<sup>41</sup> Taggart, 131, and "What Do You Know About the Public Schools of Delaware?" Volume VI, Number 2 (Wilmington, DE: Service Citizens of Delaware, 1924), 21.

<sup>42</sup> Taggart, 133.

<sup>43</sup> Taggart, 140.

<sup>44</sup> "Storm Rips All County; Spares Life," *The Evening Journal*, April 6, 1923.

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Service Citizens contributed \$10,000.<sup>45</sup> In October of 1923, the Delaware School Auxiliary Association published an official notice to bidders for the construction of the new Taylor's Bridge School. The bid was for "the construction of a one-story brick school with a shingle roof and cupola, complete with mechanical equipment."<sup>46</sup> Within two years of the advertisement, the new school, matching the advertised specifications, had been constructed. The dedication of the new building took place on the evening of Memorial Day in 1925, after the community's annual picnic. A member of the State Board of Education, State Senator Harris D. McDowell, was present. In the words of a reporter, the state board member "complimented the people and their community spirit and untiring efforts to secure a building 'fit in which to educate their children.'" He urged other Delaware citizens to "support the building program so that other [white] children in the State might be benefited also."<sup>47</sup>

Between 1917 and 1926, Pierre du Pont had spent almost \$3,000,000 to construct new schools (or additions) for both races throughout Delaware. His expenditures in white communities were matched by local school districts, which had spent almost \$2,000,000. In all, about one-third of all school rooms in Delaware had been replaced through du Pont's and the DSAA's building activities.<sup>48</sup> Yet in the mid-1920s, there remained over 12,000 students in unsatisfactory school buildings all over the state. It was estimated that it would take another \$9,200,000 to construct adequate facilities for them.<sup>49</sup> Du Pont believed that this money should come from state and local governments, and not from him. Yet it was not until 1927—after du Pont had even served as state tax commissioner, and helped generate surplus monies for school construction—that the state began to regularly fund large portions of new schools, while still typically relying on some du Pont money, and the Service Citizens' architectural program, for executing the projects.<sup>50</sup>

By 1938, the school-building campaign was as successful as Pierre du Pont had hoped, albeit not in the manner in which he originally expected. Over the previous two decades, more than \$20,000,000 had been spent to construct public schools in Delaware. About half of the funds were provided by the state, another one-quarter from Pierre du Pont, with the remaining funds coming from a mix of sources including local, federal, and other private monies.<sup>51</sup> Pierre du Pont achieved most of the education reform in Delaware he wanted through his own philanthropy, despite the torturous route that he was forced to follow. Through his monumental efforts, du Pont and the

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<sup>45</sup> "What Do You Know About the Public Schools of Delaware?" Volume VI, Number 2 (Wilmington, DE: Service Citizens of Delaware, 1924), 19, and Delaware School Auxiliary Meeting Minutes May 14, 1923.

<sup>46</sup> "Taylor's Bridge School, Copy of Advertisement. Notice to Bidders." *The Evening Journal*, October 23, 1923.

<sup>47</sup> Undated newspaper article provided by Louise Daniels Evans, who attended the school. The school building program was occurring throughout the state in localities like Taylor's Bridge. Community acceptance of school taxes and support for public education was critical if the reforms were to take hold.

<sup>48</sup> Taggart, 149.

<sup>49</sup> Taggart, 149.

<sup>50</sup> Taggart, 157, and Taggart 150.

<sup>51</sup> Taggart, 164.

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Delaware School Auxiliary Association provided partial or complete funding for the rebuilding of 150 public schools in Delaware.<sup>52</sup> Taylor's Bridge School survives as an emblem of that movement.

### **Criterion C**

#### **Progressive School Architecture: Designing Modern, Healthier Spaces for Learning**

The architecture of Taylor's Bridge School clearly embodies distinct design ideas advanced by architects and school reformers during the first decades of the twentieth century. Nationwide, there was an abundance of prescriptive literature about modern school design—born of the rising class of college-trained architects and the widespread professional journals in the fields of architecture and education. School reform literature of the 1910s and 1920s was highly influenced by the Progressive Era tendencies toward standardization and scientific management—to the point that there was “almost a rigid uniformity of school layouts by the 1920s” as a result of standards espoused by leading national organizations.<sup>53</sup>

#### ***A National Architectural Movement***

It is important to note that these architectural trends that were incorporated into Taylor's Bridge School, and the Delaware school rebuilding movement generally, were part of a national trend of school reform and rebuilding. Betelle, himself, had noted in a 1920 article about the Delaware program that, “The United States Bureau of Education and the departments of education of the various states are now taking a great deal of interest in the improvement of our rural school buildings,” and that “pamphlets have been written, improved plans circulated, and great progress is being made in this important field of school construction.”<sup>54</sup> W.O. Thompson, writing the introduction to Wilbur Mills' book on school architecture, noted that legislators across the country who wished to improve education had “emphasized the physical plant as the basis of successful school practice.”<sup>55</sup> In other words, proper design of schools was seen as the transformative vehicle to better education. A school's design and construction, argued Mills, “unquestionably affects, for better or worse, the health, happiness and morals of the pupils, whatever may be the effect of the educational work carried on therein.”<sup>56</sup> To reformers, there was “no public problem more important to all the people than that surrounding the education of children,” as Mills argued, and designing suitable learning environments for them was “vital to their future citizenship.”<sup>57</sup> As such, school architecture, according to Thompson, had recently been “the earnest study of many of the leading architects in the country,” and they tackled “all the problems of safety, sanitation,

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<sup>52</sup> Taggart, 167.

<sup>53</sup> ICON Architecture, Inc., *An Honor and an Ornament: Public School Buildings in Michigan* (Lansing, Michigan: State Historic Preservation Office, Michigan Historical Center, Department of History, Arts and Libraries, September 2003), 6. For a period summary of this fact, see A.D.F. Hamlin, “Consideration in School House Design,” 3.

<sup>54</sup> Betelle, “Architectural Styles,” 27.

<sup>55</sup> W.O. Thompson, in the “Introduction” of Wilbur T. Mills, AAIA, *American School Building Standards* (Columbus, Ohio: Franklin Educational Publishing Company, 1915), 7.

<sup>56</sup> Mills 9.

<sup>57</sup> Mills, 7.

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heating, lighting, ventilation and others, having the physical well-being of the pupil in mind." All of this was made possible, he said, "by an enlightened public sentiment."<sup>58</sup> Indeed, improvements in school construction were seen as a marker of a community's civilized advancement, or lack thereof. A.D.F. Hamlin boldly declared that the "schoolhouses of any community are gauges of its enlightenment."<sup>59</sup>

### ***Building Taylor's Bridge School***

The previous Taylor's Bridge schoolhouse—a one-room, front-gable, frame building—stood on a lot north of the current school. Although the exact planning process—including how the site for the new school was selected—has not been identified, it likely resembled the Delaware School Auxiliary Association's process for their earlier construction projects. Typically, according to one historian, the auxiliary "sent an engineer to locate a suitable site; the engineer submitted the proposed site and topographical survey to the state board of education for its approval," and then the auxiliary would secure site options. At that point, the auxiliary's architect, James Betelle, drew up plans to be submitted to the state board and, once approved, the Du Pont Engineering Company or another firm handled construction. When the building was finished, title was given to the state board.<sup>60</sup>

Taylor's Bridge School, while featuring many design elements common among Delaware's 1920s school, is still somewhat unique in its appearance when compared to its contemporaries. Clearly, despite a systematized approach that worked from standardized plans and utilized a streamlined building process, Delaware's new schools of the 1920s and 1930s still exhibited significant variations in their design. du Pont had hired the New Jersey firm of Betelle and Guilbert, architects nationally known for their progressive designs and floor plans of schools, to draw up plans that incorporated the most efficient, and maintenance free, ventilation, lighting, and sanitary systems of the time, all housed within a solidly built, attractive building that could also be used as a community center.<sup>61</sup> Yet du Pont, the Auxiliary, and Betelle took an experimental approach to school design from the very beginning, and made adjustments to improve their work as it progressed. Betelle, in his June 1920 article in *The American Architect*, in which he outlined Delaware's planned program and revealed a collection of model drawings, revealed that construction was then underway for "three experimental One Teacher schools," differing in their plan and equipment, so that they could be "visited and criticized by everyone interested before starting in on a wholesale construction of the hundred or more small buildings needed throughout the State."<sup>62</sup> By experimenting with different options and being open to criticism, the leaders of Delaware's rebuilding effort could identify deficiencies and try to perfect the architectural program for Delaware.

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<sup>58</sup> W.O. Thompson, in the "Introduction" of Wilbur T. Mills, AAIA, *American School Building Standards* (Columbus, Ohio: Franklin Educational Publishing Company, 1915), 7.

<sup>59</sup> A.D.F. Hamlin, "Consideration in School House Design," 4.

<sup>60</sup> Taggart, 133.

<sup>61</sup> Walsh, 48.

<sup>62</sup> Betelle, 759.

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A distinct design program is clear in the drawings and explanations offered by James Betelle, the primary architect of the Delaware program, who outlined their approach in a pair of national articles around 1920. The du Pont-funded schools were typically constructed of brick or brick veneer, but were sometimes wood-framed with wood shingles or clapboarding.<sup>63</sup> Common architectural features shared among the du Pont schools include a roof topped by a cupola, large windows, decorative columns, and a portico at the main entrance. Each school included modern heating and ventilation systems, interior restroom facilities, uniform window design and placement, and other elements conducive to the Progressive era recommendations. The interior plans typically featured separate cloakrooms and bathrooms for boys and girls, a vestibule, and closets for school and janitorial supplies. The new schools also were required to have space for adequate recreation and playgrounds--which meant two-acre sites for one-room schoolhouses.<sup>64</sup>

### Style

The subtle Colonial Revival style of Taylor's Bridge School was typical for the Delaware one-teacher schools, and reflects the philosophies of James Betelle, who believed that architectural style could have a strong influence on a community. The architect wrote that "careful consideration should be given the style, so as to properly influence future buildings of the town and to make the school a model of good taste."<sup>65</sup> Good taste, in his estimation, could not be achieved through design that did not consider social and cultural context: "we should conform in dress and deportment with the habits of the community, and this applies to our buildings as well as to our general behavior."<sup>66</sup> For Delaware, the appropriate architectural style was almost predetermined. Betelle declared in an architectural journal that, "In a small town in New England, or in the South, where there are colonial traditions and where many homes and other buildings are built in the colonial style, the choice is already made," and "it would be distinctly bad taste to place a school of the Gothic or Mission style in such a town."<sup>67</sup> Taylor's Bridge School's architecture, like many other of the new schools in Delaware, reflected and embodied its status as the "First State" and symbolically boasted of its deep history.

The Colonial Revival architecture of Taylor's Bridge School did not mean it was necessarily much more expensive than a structure that was more utilitarian in appearance. Pierre du Pont had noted that schools should be fairly utilitarian in their construction, to serve as a "factory of learning free from useless and encumbering ornament."<sup>68</sup> Yet Betelle easily defended the need for stylistic unity in school design, pointing out that "to give a building architectural style does not necessarily mean to make it more expensive or to add unnecessary and excessive ornament." Style could be achieved through form, massing, and subtle design elements since "all of the different styles have a distinctive general outline in the mass of the building—the size, shape and spacing of window and door openings, etc., so that a building may be extremely simple, yet be a good expression of a

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<sup>63</sup> Eastburn, 82.

<sup>64</sup> Taggart, 125.

<sup>65</sup> James O. Betelle, "Architectural Styles as Applied to School Buildings, *American School Board Journal*, Vol LVII, No.4 (New York: Bruce Publishing Co, April 1919), 26.

<sup>66</sup> Betelle, "Architectural Styles," 26.

<sup>67</sup> Betelle, "Architectural Styles," 26.

<sup>68</sup> Taggart, 125.



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definite architectural style.”<sup>69</sup> As such, Taylor’s Bridge School--and many other Delaware schools built during the 1920s and 30s--achieved an attractive, Colonial Revival appearance through the incorporation of Flemish-bond brick veneer, pedimented porticos on porches (supported by Doric columns), balanced, regular spacing of windows and doors, and a pitched, side-gabled roof. This pitched roof--as well as the prominent cupola that tops Taylor’s Bridge School and helps define its aesthetic--were features that certainly added to the overall cost of the design, admitted Betelle, but it was well worth the expense. He suggested that for smaller buildings, like Taylor’s Bridge School, “visible roofs and cupolas are often used, to help give style and character to the structure,” and, “while this adds to the cost, it is not so great but that the added dignity and importance such elements produce, make it worth while.”<sup>70</sup> Clearly, there were some cost-saving design choices made in Taylor’s Bridge School’s design, especially on the interior, but an attractive exterior aesthetic was seen as worth some extra expense.

The exterior portico at Taylor’s Bridge School was more than just a stylistic flourish. It helped provide a safe entryway into the school during inclement weather. A.D.F. Hamlin had urged that “unsheltered steps should be avoided as far as possible, as being dangerous and troublesome in icy and inclement weather.” He also noted that “a very common mistake is the failure to provide at each entrance a suitable lobby, with inner doors, so as to interpose two sets of doors between the interior of the building and the outer air.”<sup>71</sup> With both a portico to cover the entry, and an enclosed foyer with a second set of double-doors, the Taylor’s Bridge School provided a safe entryway and better regulated the interior temperature in the classroom.

### Windows & Light

The bank of six large, contiguous windows on the back wall of Taylor’s Bridge School is a highly significant architectural feature--and is, in fact, a character-defining feature of most of the Delaware schools built during the reform era of the 1920s and 1930s. Lighting was seen as one of the most critical design elements that could improve the learning environment for America’s children, and Delaware’s new schools featured windows that embodied these ideals. A decade before Taylor’s Bridge School was built, one national expert, Wilbur T. Mills, declared that “it may be state emphatically that the school room cannot be too well lighted.”<sup>72</sup> Another school design expert, Warren Briggs, in his *Modern American School Buildings* (first published in 1899), could boast by 1909 that, “Probably more has been written concerning the amount of light required, and the way that it should be introduced into the schoolroom, than about any other feature of school construction.”<sup>73</sup> Wills espoused a common belief of the period when he pointed out that “medical

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<sup>69</sup> Betelle, “Architectural Styles,” 26. However, Betelle admitted that, “The Collegiate Gothic style is also slightly cheaper to build than the Colonial in Classic style, because it does not require the heavy cornices, balustrades, pediments, or high pitched roofs, which are so characteristic of the Colonial period,” in Betelle, “Architectural Styles,” 75.

<sup>70</sup> Betelle, “Architectural Styles,” 76.

<sup>71</sup> Hamlin, 6.

<sup>72</sup> Mills, 24.

<sup>73</sup> Warren Richard Briggs, *Modern American School Design* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1909), 119.

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authorities agree that the spread of many forms of disease can be arrested by an abundance of sunlight."<sup>74</sup>

That the interior of Taylor's Bridge School is so well-illuminated is no accident. Despite the other reasons that ample sunlight was desirable in school buildings, the number one priority was the illumination of reading and writing surfaces--that school children could see their work without straining their eyes. A lack of sufficient light, and even the introduction of light from the wrong directions, could have serious impacts on the ability of children to do schoolwork--and could even hurt their eyesight. To achieve a learning environment that was bright enough for successful educational activities, experts established formulas that would help architects and builders achieve acceptable and even optimal conditions. Mills reported the industry standard in 1915, suggesting that "the amount of transparent glass surface admitting light to school rooms should in no case be less than one-fifth of the floor space of the room," and "the laws of some states require one-fourth of the floor space in actual glass area."<sup>75</sup> This 20% or 25% rule referred not to the overall size of the window features, but the amount of transparent glass surface--thus excluding from the calculations the window frames and mullions, muntins, wooden sash frames, and other non-glass elements that did not allow sunlight to pass through.

The direction of the light also mattered tremendously, according to reformers, and this had a significant effect on the design of Delaware's school buildings and their window arrangement. A variety of designs would be necessary for one-teacher schools, said Betelle, "necessary on account of the different locations of the building sites and their exposure to different points of compass."<sup>76</sup> For the largest windows, direct southern exposure was best avoided, urged the experts. Yet, it was important that sunlight stream in from the *left* of the children. Wilbur Mills could confidently declare by 1915, "There is now practically no dissent from the opinion that the proper method of lighting a school room is from the left side of the pupils."<sup>77</sup> This, indeed, was echoed by other writers at the time, and so the design of Taylor's Bridge School, and probably most other new schools in Delaware at the time, incorporated this critical arrangement element. However, the classroom at Taylor's Bridge School featured windows on *two* sides--to the left and to the rear. According to Mills, this was still an acceptable arrangement, though it was clearly not ideal--on accord of the teacher's comfort and the possibility of glare for students. Mills explained:

. . . if it is necessary to admit light in any other side of the room it must be at the rear of the pupils. It is, of course, out of the question to admit light from in front of the pupils, as the light shining directly into their eyes would produce immediate and serious results. It is also very bad practice to admit light from the right of pupils because the great majority of children are right-handed and thus could not work at writing without casting a shadow thereon by the hand. When windows are placed in the rear of pupils, even though the pupils themselves may not be injured by such an arrangement, the teachers are compelled to face the light almost continually, thus entailing risk of serious injury to their eyes. Further,

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<sup>74</sup> Mills, 38.

<sup>75</sup> Mills, 27.

<sup>76</sup> Betelle, 759.

<sup>77</sup> Mills, 27.

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when light comes from more than one direction into a school room the conflicting lights are almost certain to cause shiny places to appear on the blackboards, and the corners of the room between the walls containing windows are too dark for use as blackboard spaces.<sup>78</sup>

Clearly, to Betelle, having the additional pair of windows to the rear of the pupils was worth the trade-off in order to introduce more light into the classroom--and the effect was certainly more balanced, well-illuminated building.

### *Placement on the Wall*

The windows in the classroom at Taylor's Bridge--including the pair of end windows and the bank of six windows--extends almost entirely to the ceiling, which was also a strategic design. The placement and arrangement on the wall was important. According to Mills, "Windows in school rooms should always extend as near the ceiling as possible," since "actual tests show that the upper one-fourth of windows furnish one-third of the effective light coming through the entire window." He added that it was "therefore obvious that windows with transoms at the top, and windows having arches and fancy tops seriously decrease the amount of light which is admitted to school rooms and should never be used in school buildings."<sup>79</sup> With this in mind, Betelle's plan for Taylor's Bridge School, and probably most other Delaware schools he designed, placed windows higher on the walls, extending to the ceiling--even beyond the crown molding that encircles the classroom.

### *Wall Spaces & Mullions*

The primary window feature--the rear wall's six contiguous windows that allowed light from the left of the pupils, feature no wall space between the windows. Only five mullions divide the windows from one another. This approach was advocated by designers of the era, in order to introduce less shadow onto the student's desks. Mills suggested windows in the classroom should "be set with the least possible space between them, large mullions being carefully avoided, as these cause deep shadows producing alternate zones of light and shadow, which are annoying and injurious to the eyes."<sup>80</sup> While the banked window feature at Taylor's Bridge does contain larger mullions than some designs of the era, the elimination of wall space between windows achieved the general goal of reform architects, who wished to eliminate large shadows stripes crossing sections of the room. One architect, Briggs, admitted that there could be a drawback to large window features: "large banks of windows can only be criticized because of the cold that might emanate from them in the winter months," but he pointed out that "this could be overcome either through using double-sash windows or through proper artificial heating."<sup>81</sup>

The ideal placement of windows--especially bunching them together--could be tricky when factoring in the dictates of architectural style. As already discussed, James Betelle, the primary school architect for the Delaware school rebuilding program, had pointed out that one device used

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<sup>78</sup> Mills, 27-29.

<sup>79</sup> Mills 29.

<sup>80</sup> Mills, 29.

<sup>81</sup> Briggs, 129-130.

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by architects to create a "style" was the "spacing of windows and door openings." Yet problems could arise when these needs for an exterior aesthetic clashed with the needs of interior illumination. This was exactly the case with the Colonial Revival style, as pointed out by Betelle. He pointed out that,

In the Classic or Colonial style, it is necessary, if the characteristics of the style are to be followed, to have the windows regularly spaced with large piers and wall spaces between. This makes it difficult to get the twenty or twenty-five per cent of glass area in the classrooms without the use of windows on two sides of the classroom, thus violating unilateral lighting which is one of the accepted principles of schoolhouse designing. In Classic buildings, the wide piers between the windows cast objectionable shadows on the pupil's desks, which everyone agrees should be avoided.<sup>82</sup>

Betelle solved this problem at Taylor's Bridge School, and likely others, with a strategic arrangement of the rooms. On the facade of the school, on the side of the public road, Betelle designed the fenestration to be regularly-spaced, achieving a classical look, while placing the coat rooms and restrooms behind those windows. The irregular lighting would be less of an issue in these utilitarian spaces. The classroom, and the larger, more modern window features, were placed in the rear portion of the building. For Taylor's Bridge School, this allowed for a fairly traditional and familiar architectural aesthetic, while still incorporating forward-looking lighting design elements.

Even the lack of trees on the Taylor's Bridge School lot may have been a lighting design element. Mills had pointed out in 1915 that, "While trees beautify the surroundings of the school building, care should be exercised not to have them close enough to the building to interfere with the perfect lighting of every room."<sup>83</sup> Historical photographs of the school show no trees immediately adjacent to the school, and this might have been an attempt to maximize sunlight inside Taylor's Bridge School.

### Air

The large bank of windows on the back wall of Taylor's Bridge School--and the windows at many other Delaware schools built in the 1920s--addressed another concern of Progressive reformers--clean air. The Taylor's Bridge windows feature a mechanism, manufactured by the Austral Window company in New York, that allows the upper and lower sashes to simultaneously swing open at an angle—creating a designed ventilation system for the school. A brochure produced by the company in 1925 (Figure 13)—the same year Taylor's Bridge School reopened—explains the hardware package and the functionality of the windows. It also included dozens of photos of schools that had already installed their hardware and, among them, there were nine Delaware schools—including Odessa, Dover, and Lewes. The images of these schools, upon close inspection, reveals the Austral windows in action--with the signature angled sashes in the open windows.

<sup>82</sup> Betelle, "Architectural Styles," 28, 75.

<sup>83</sup> Mills, 40.

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The angled sashes at Taylor's Bridge and other Delaware schools were not designed for novelty, but were instead intended to facilitate proper air circulation and ventilation—another significant design concern among school reformers in the 1910s and 1920s. “Foul air,” as they called it, was a major sanitation concern, and proper building ventilation received much press at the time. As A.D.F. Hamlin declared:

...[H]owever perfect the heating and ventilating plant, and however faultless its operation, let it be clearly understood and always remembered that no artificial heating and ventilation can ever take the place of fresh outdoor air and sunshine. Every room that is ever occupied for any length of time by human beings should, if possible, be so placed as to receive at some time in the day the direct rays of the sun and the fresh breezes of the outer world, and no matter how abundantly ventilated by artificial means, it should have its windows thrown wide open for a while every day, when not occupied, to allow free access to the outside air. . . . Air blown by [by furnaces] can, at best, only prevent the undue exhaustion of the oxygen in the room, and is often powerless to remove the odors and stuffiness produced by a crowd of human beings, though these odors will entirely disappear after all the windows have been opened for five or ten minutes.”<sup>84</sup>

As a diagram from a later (1938) Austral Window brochure shows (Figure 14), the windows were marketed as promoting strategic air circulation that would not cause problematic drafts for students working at their desks, as the air revolved around them in a non-linear fashion.

Despite its progressive design, Taylor's Bridge School clearly contains some pragmatic compromises when compared to reformers' ideals. Practical considerations were a requirement in such a large-scale, ambitious rebuilding effort like the one undertaken in Delaware—especially in isolated, rural areas.. Betelle characterized the program as one that tried to “make some advance in the design of the school buildings and at the same time keep down maintenance costs,” especially in one-teacher schools, where “the teacher is usually the janitor as well.”<sup>85</sup>

### Heating

For heat, it seems a coal-burning, “jacketed stove” was installed in the front, left corner of the classroom. These stoves burned less coal than furnaces, so they were less expensive to operate. But Betelle admitted that they did *not* produce the required 30 cubic feet of air per minute per pupil as recommended by experts. They were also problematic because “the attending noise, confusion and dust caused by the putting on of coal and the removal of ashes is very much a handicap to good instruction work.”<sup>86</sup> He noted that a furnace, in a separate room, which was a far superior option, would be installed in any community that was willing to provide the additional funds—but this was apparently not the case in Taylor's Bridge, and probably many other towns. Still, in 1919, an article in the *American School Board Journal* touted the exact heating arrangement at Taylor's Bridge School as an ideal upgrade from the old method of placing a standard coal stove in the middle of a school room: “The cost of a jacketed stove is but little more than that of an ordinary

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<sup>84</sup> Hamlin, 9.

<sup>85</sup> Betelle, *The American Architect*, 759.

<sup>86</sup> Betelle, 759.

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stove and certainly it would not be a whit more expensive to place it in the corner of the room than it would be to put it in the center.” He added that it was “only by means of a jacketed stove placed in the corner of a room that proper ventilation can be secured and the heat properly distributed.”<sup>87</sup> A former student remembers the jacketed stove as having a metal “tube” surrounding it, presumably for the safety of the students, as it created a barrier between the students and the hot surface of the stove.<sup>88</sup> A hole is still visible in the front wall where the stove exhaust pipe exited the classroom.

### Plumbing/Toilets

Another compromise at Taylor's Bridge School, which seems to have represented the standard approach in the Delaware schools, was that chemical toilets were installed in the boys and girls restrooms--rather than modern flush toilets (or “water closets”) with plumbing. It seems that this decision was not an easy one, as architect James Betelle noted that it was after “much consideration and investigation” that they decided to install “chemical toilet fixtures to be reached through the coat rooms inside the small buildings.”<sup>89</sup> It is interesting to note that, even though placing restrooms off of coat rooms seems to have been common practice, at least one leading writer on the subject objected to this arrangement. Among his list of critiques of this design, A.D.F. Hamlin warned that, while it kept “the use of the toilet wholly under the teacher's control,” it also “compels the use of the cloakroom as a thoroughfare, which is a serious objection” and “makes the use of the toilet unpleasantly public.”<sup>90</sup> An advertisement from a 1919 education journal (Figure 15) shows the type of system likely installed at Taylor's Bridge, based on recollections of a former student.<sup>91</sup> Betelle explained that it was not the initial cost of plumbing that was a problem, but the cost of ongoing maintenance could be high—especially since no heat would be maintained over holidays or weekends, would inevitably lead to pipes freezing and bursting. Still, even without modern plumbing, the new, indoor chemical toilets at Taylor's Bridge School were a huge advancement compared to making children walking through inclement weather to use outhouses. And the children were not without running water for drink and for hygiene--Betelle had decided that for most schools, they would “install a hand pump over a sink in the work room,” since the pump mechanism would be sufficiently below grade to prevent freezing.”<sup>92</sup> At Taylor's Bridge School, this pump—and a metal sink with a porcelain lip—was situated in the entry vestibule, on the left wall. There are still holes visible where the water pipes formerly cut through the floor there.<sup>93</sup>

### Exterior materials

The exterior brick cladding that gives Taylor's Bridge School its durable, Colonial appearance is actually a veneer, rather than actual brick construction. Reform architects, such as Mills,

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<sup>87</sup> Robert A. Cummins, “Small Items of Great Significance in the Building and Equipping of Schools,” *American School Board Journal* (February 1919), 37.

<sup>88</sup> Interview with James Reynolds, May 30, 2018.

<sup>89</sup> Betelle, 759.

<sup>90</sup> Hamlin, 10.

<sup>91</sup> James Reynolds, conversation with the author, December 2017.

<sup>92</sup> Betelle, 759.

<sup>93</sup> James Reynolds, conversation with the author, December 2017.

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recommended the most durable materials possible, since it “contributes to its safety, permanence and endurance,” but also because “the true character of the building” was best expressed through such materials. It was best, he suggested, if “not only the exterior but the interior walls should be made of masonry construction.”<sup>94</sup> Yet this is clearly one area where du Pont, the Auxiliary, and Betelle decided to make a cost-cutting decision, as Betelle established in 1920 that for Delaware’s new schools, “The materials to be used in these building will be clapboards, or brick veneer on a frame structure.”<sup>95</sup> It seems the pattern, though not definitive, was that white schools more often featured brick, while the “colored” schools more typically were of frame and clapboard. It is not currently known why the design for Taylor’s Bridge School’s features a single frame wall on northwest (left) side of the building, and whether this was a common design device. One explanation might be that it more easily allowed for expansion, should the school’s population grow.

### Grounds

A final pragmatic design choice at Taylor’s Bridge School is evident in the lack of any playground equipment or established recreation areas on the grounds. Installing recreational equipment outside of schools was a common recommendation by many experts and, of course, makers of playground equipment. One architect noted, “It is a common saying that Americans, as a people, take life too seriously, and the utmost care should be exercised to prevent this condition in school children by definite provisions for recreation.”<sup>96</sup> Betelle, himself, had suggested in 1920 that a “paved space” would be provided on the outside of each school, adjacent to the building, “so that the children will always have a dry place for outdoor play during all periods of the year.”<sup>97</sup> It does not appear that even a paved space was ever created at Taylor’s Bridge School. Still, its new school building was sited on a couple of acres of level, dry land with plenty of room for student recreation—a marked improvement from the cramped, soggy lots where many Delaware schools had formerly been relegated to—and a historical photograph of the school shows children hard at play outside (Figure 17). One former student recalls games of baseball and other inventive contests on the school grounds, made possible by a local farmer who would mow the sage grass on the grounds with a horse-drawn mower. This added to the excitement, recalls the former student, who remembers using the large grass clippings to create forts.<sup>98</sup>

### School Spaces for Facilitating Community

For the grounds around the school, it is worth noting that Betelle also suggested that some school districts might elect to dedicate space for a “school garden” for “instruction in practical agriculture.” Especially in agricultural communities like Taylor’s Bridge, such a feature would help facilitate a culture where “the community life would be enriched and the parents brought together for entertainments, educational meetings and civic gatherings, thus creating a school spirit

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<sup>94</sup> Mills, 34.

<sup>95</sup> Betelle, 759.

<sup>96</sup> Mills, 38.

<sup>97</sup> Betelle, 759.

<sup>98</sup> Phone interview with James Reynolds, May 30, 2018.

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and a neighborhood enthusiasm that can be probably in no other way so effectively produced.”<sup>99</sup>  
A garden was probably never planted at Taylor's Bridge,

This desire to facilitate community through architecture makes one design choice at Taylor's Bridge seem counterintuitive, and perhaps atypical. Since Betelle, and others, saw the new schools as a nexus for community and as a vehicle for social improvement, they wrote often about using schools as community centers. This meant that furniture in the schools needed to be flexible, in order to take advantage of the large space for different types of meetings and events. Betelle noted in 1920 that, in general, Delaware classrooms would “be fitted with moveable desks which can be placed around the walls and the center of the room thus left clear for community meetings or dances,” and additional chairs would be kept in storage closets to “be brought out and used for community lectures, entertainments, etc.”<sup>100</sup> However, all evidence points to Taylor's Bridge School having affixed seating for the students from the beginning. One former student remembers the desks being bolted to the floor, in 5 rows, 6 rows deep, with seats that could only be adjusted for height.<sup>101</sup> This, however, apparently did not prevent the use of the school for events such as plays. The building was reported used for “special presentations and community events,” during which “a small piano and portable stage were [sometimes] pressed into service.”<sup>102</sup> Even though Taylor's Bridge School deviated from the du Pont plan by bolting the seats to the wood floor, when the building became a community center during the 1950s, the affixed desks were removed, allowing it to accommodate many more functions.

That Taylor's Bridge School was eventually converted to a community center carries forward the initial vision of Pierre du Pont and other school reformers. These leaders expected that the new schools in Delaware would serve as a nexus for community and as a catalyst for communication and social improvement. From the beginning, while choosing sites for the schools and in planning their layouts, Betelle suggested that “the community use of these small schools [had] always been kept in mind,” and that in isolated communities, “the church is usually near the school, and it is contemplated that these two elements of public welfare work will very closely co-operate.”<sup>103</sup> At Taylor's Bridge, even during the school era, this community-building function was clearly successful. One researcher, after interviewing former students and residents of Taylor's Bridge, concluded that the school “was part of a lively web of social life in the community.” She adds that, “For the farm families, it was a public place to hold events, a place to meet others in a more formal setting than at home, and to celebrate local and national occasions together” and that it “naturally became a social gathering place for ice cream socials, plays, and PTA meetings.”<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Betelle, 764.

<sup>100</sup> Betelle, 759.

<sup>101</sup> Interview with James Reynolds, May 30, 2018.

<sup>102</sup> Walsh, 53. Based on recollections of community members.

<sup>103</sup> Betelle, 759.

<sup>104</sup> Constance S. Walsh, “Crossroads of Identity and Memory: Mapping the Cultural Landscape of Taylor's Bridge” (Master's thesis, University of Delaware, 2007), 50.



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**The Life of Taylor's Bridge School**

The new Taylor's Bridge School was used for the instruction of local students for only two and a half decades, after which changes in demographics and the continuing consolidations of area schools made the small, remote schoolhouse obsolete. Yet from 1925 to 1948—an era that included the difficult years of the Great Depression and World War II—the Taylor's Bridge School served Taylor's Bridge area families, as well as a few children who attended from nearby Deakyneville, a small town south of Taylor's Bridge, along Route 9. The new school building was located within a few steps of a general store, post office, and the Taylor's Bridge Range Light, all located at the community's crossroads.

During its use as a school, the day-to-day life inside likely resembled that of many rural one-teacher schools in Delaware. A single teacher taught primary grades one through six at the school.<sup>105</sup> For the twenty-three years the building was a primary school, three different teachers tended no more than eighteen children each school year, spread over six grades. Each day before class began, the teacher filled the potbellied stove with coal from school's bin. Children walked to school after early morning chores, often after helping with milking.<sup>106</sup> Class would begin with a short Bible reading and Pledge of Allegiance. For each grade, when it was time to attend its daily lessons, the students filed up front to the first row of chairs near the blackboard. Children not being taught were expected to work quietly at their desks or sit in the corner library area in the rear of the classroom where books and magazines were shelved.<sup>107</sup> As each grade finished its lesson, the children would return to their seats and the next grade would come forward. At that time, education was basic: reading, writing, arithmetic, and geography. One woman interviewed remembered one of her schoolbooks that introduced her to reading, entitled *Nip and Tuck*. Nip and Tuck were two black and white dogs that played with children.<sup>108</sup> At noon, the children ate lunch at their desks. Recess was outside for games and gave the older children a chance to visit the general store for penny candy. On especially cold days, a mother might bring a kettle of hot chocolate or soup to the children.<sup>109</sup>

While Taylor's Bridge was rural, school administrators brought the outside world to the school. A nurse visited to give the children basic health examinations. Teachers traveling around to each

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<sup>105</sup> To understand a typical day at the Taylor's Bridge School and how the space was used, 14 people agreed to be interviewed by Connie Walsh as part of the research for her master's thesis and a draft National Register nomination. The interviewees were students at the school and lived in Taylor's Bridge during the 1930s and 1940s. The executive board of the Taylor's Bridge Community Center, Inc. contacted former students who were interested in sharing with Walsh their memories as school children.

<sup>106</sup> Walsh's recorded conversation with Rodney Reynolds July 13, 2005. Reynolds attended the school.

<sup>107</sup> Walsh interview with Dukes, 2005.

<sup>108</sup> Walsh's recorded conversation with Doris Dukes Klaver July 1, 2005. Klaver attended the school.

<sup>109</sup> Walsh interview with Dukes, 2005.

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school would bring an afternoon of music or art. Christmas was celebrated with a play in the evening; children received candy or an orange as a gift.<sup>110</sup>

After World War II, however, total attendance at the school dropped to only three or four children, due to changes in farming as well as the migration of people to towns and cities. Because the returning veterans had less interest in returning to work on the farm, they moved to expanding urban centers where there were jobs paying more with none of the risks inherent to farming. Many of the former students interviewed finished high school and went to live in the neighboring communities of Smyrna, Middletown, and Townsend. For the few that stayed in Taylor's Bridge, farming after World War II was increasingly about using land exclusively for profitable crops sold to select markets. Advances in crop science and machinery meant fewer hands were needed to farm. The mutual dependence and cooperation that marked the relationships among farmers and families in the past was vanishing. With few children needed or interested in farming, and families moving away, in 1949, the school, with declining enrollment, served the last of the community's children. At the same time, the Smyrna school district consolidated their schools and closed the Taylor's Bridge School. Remaining children were taken by bus to an elementary school in Smyrna.

In its later life, the school fully realized its community function, as it was converted into a community center after it was abandoned as a school. In 1952, people in Taylor's Bridge, led by women in the community, organized the Taylor's Bridge Community Center, Incorporated. Because the building was part of the community's identity, maintaining it was a matter of civic pride in their place. The Smyrna School District, owner of the school, leased the schoolhouse to the group for one dollar a year with the proviso that the group maintain the building. With donations and volunteer time, they upgraded the heating system and replaced the coat rooms and restrooms with a galley kitchen. Rental income and membership dues helped with maintenance costs. Under this arrangement, the school building "found a new life," as the center "welcomed many Friendship Methodist Church chicken suppers," as well as "country western bands who were making the rounds in southern Delaware, and the local 4H Club that used the space for meetings."<sup>111</sup> The building continues to be used for meetings and community functions, and "is where residents and former residents return to collectively share a past," since it has "become a link to a now-vanished cultural landscape that is vivid in their hearts and minds."<sup>112</sup>

The 1980s and 1990s brought changes to the center and a new commitment from the community to preserve the school and formally recognize it as a part of their history. Because the demand to rent space in the school was declining, as was membership in local organizations that had used it for meetings, there were financial problems. In addition, community financial report declined as more people moved away. The executive board and board of directors began applying for state

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<sup>110</sup> Recorded conversation with Louise Daniels Evans June 22, 2005.

<sup>111</sup> Walsh, 54.

<sup>112</sup> Walsh, 55.

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grant money and matching funds. In 1997, the Taylor's Bridge School had a roadside historical marker installed as part of the state's public archives mandate.<sup>113</sup>

The twin aims of the Taylor's Bridge Community Center, Inc. are to restore the building as one of the few remaining one-room schoolhouses in Delaware and maintain it as a place for community meetings and social events. In May 2004, the roof was replaced with wood shakes and the cupola was restored. In 2006, interior-painting, improving the electrical system, redoing the plumbing, and upgrading the kitchen were all underway. A community of dedicated volunteers continues to maintain the school today. As Constance Walsh noted in her thesis about the Taylor's Bridge community, "As a repository of memories, the school's history holds a central place in understanding both the past and present cultural landscape of Taylor's Bridge and rural education in Delaware."<sup>114</sup>

### **Designation of Delaware's School Buildings**

There are twenty-four Delaware schools listed on the National Register of Historic Places, yet none of the "One-Teacher" schools built for white communities during the du Pont reform era have been listed. Of the twenty-four Delaware schools currently on the National Register, fifteen are rural, one- or two-room examples. Of those fifteen, five are du Pont-funded, Betelle-designed school buildings. The ten other small, rural schools were built during the nineteenth century, except for the Indian Mission School, which was built in 1948 to replace a previous schoolhouse that had burned.

Taylor's Bridge School would be the sole representative of a rural du Pont school built for white students. While there are five other rural du Pont schools listed, three originally served black students (Iron Hill School 112-C, Christiana School 111-C, and the ruined Ross Point School 215-C that will likely be removed from NRHP) and the other two served Nanticoke tribal students (Harmon School and Johnson School). Taylor's Bridge School would also be the only example built in this particular architectural design and of brick veneer construction.

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<sup>113</sup> State of Delaware, Department of State: Delaware Public Archives, Delaware's Historic Markers Program, and New Castle County Markers.

<http://www.state.de.us/sos/dpa/markers/markers-search.shtml>.

<sup>114</sup> Constance S. Walsh, "Crossroads of Identity and Memory: Mapping the Cultural Landscape of Taylor's Bridge" (Master's thesis, University of Delaware, 2007), 42.

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**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

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

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
  - Other State agency
  - Federal agency
  - Local government
  - University
  - Other
- Name of repository: Center for Historic Architecture and Design, University of Delaware

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** N06284

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### 10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of Property** 3.0

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

#### Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)

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

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- |                        |                       |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 39.405571 | Longitude: -75.588048 |
| 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: |

Taylor's Bridge School  
Name of Property

New Castle County, DE  
County and State

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

The boundaries of this property are the boundaries for New Castle County Tax Parcel #1500400007. It is a rectangular 3-acre tract of land that fronts onto Flemings Landing Road.

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

The boundaries coincide with the current tax parcel associated with Taylor's Bridge School, as well as the historic parcel for the school.

---

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Co-Authors: Catherine Morrissey (Assistant Director/Architectural Historian) and Michael J. Emmons Jr. (Architectural Historian)

organization: Center for Historic Architecture and Design, University of Delaware

street & number: 330 Alison Hall, University of Delaware

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e-mail [cmorriss@udel.edu](mailto:cmorriss@udel.edu), [mjej@udel.edu](mailto:mjej@udel.edu)

telephone: (302) 831-8097

date: April 2018

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**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

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



Taylor's Bridge School  
Name of Property

New Castle County, DE  
County and State

## **Delaware Cultural Resource Survey Information**

**Time Period:** 1880-1940+/ Urbanization and Early Suburbanization

**Geographic Zone:** Coastal

**Historic Period Themes(s):** Education, Settlement Patterns and Demographic Changes, Community Organizations, Architecture, Engineering and Decorative Arts

### **Correlation with State Historic Preservation Plan 2013-2017**

**Goal V:** Maintain and expand access to information about historic properties and preservation.

**Strategy 2.** Increase information of Delaware's historic properties and improve its quality.

**Actions:** Develop historic contexts and/or nominations. (The Taylor's Bridge Schoolhouse nomination contains a comprehensive overview of Delaware's educational issues and reform movement during the 1920s, information about early 1900 commission reports and changes made to the State's school code, as well as information about progressive school architecture and characteristics associated with the building of the Taylor's Bridge Schoolhouse.)

Taylor's Bridge School

Name of Property

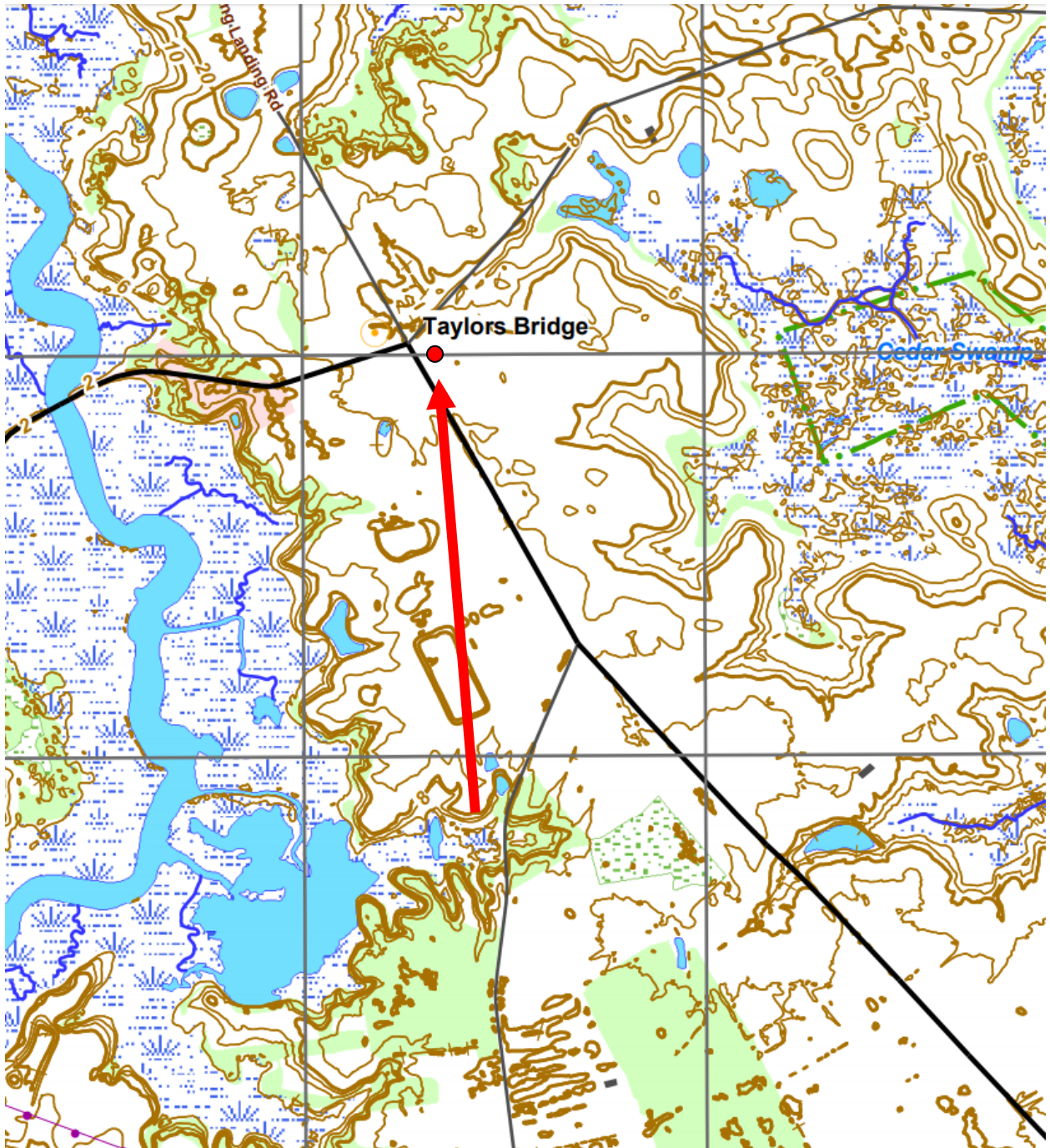
New Castle County, DE  
County and State



**Figure 1: Taylor's Bridge School Tax Parcel Map (Tax Parcel # 1500400007) outlined in red**

Taylor's Bridge School  
Name of Property

New Castle County, DE  
County and State

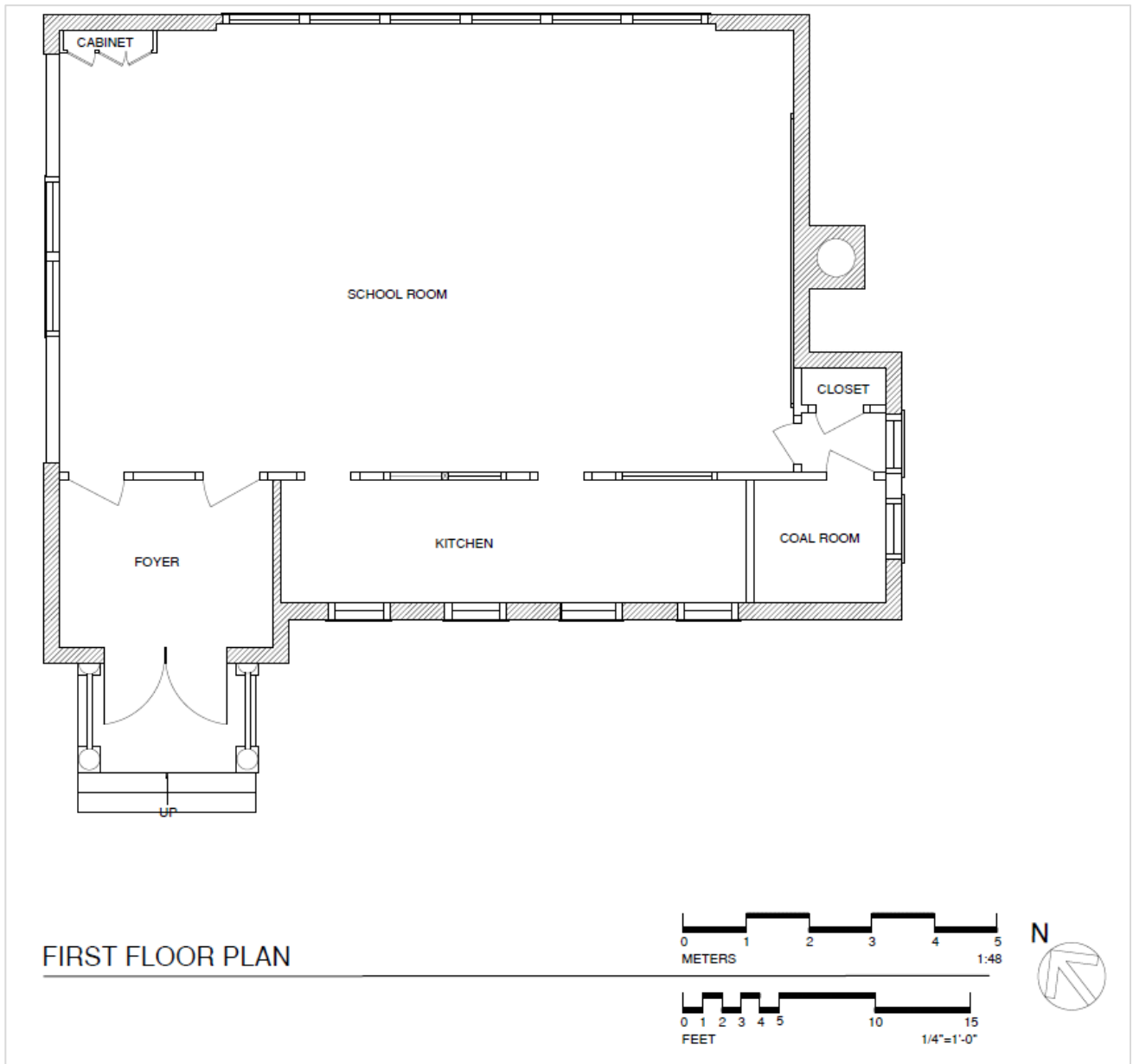


**Figure 2: USGS Quad Map, 7.5 Minute, Taylors Bridge, 2011  
(Coordinates Lat: 39.405571 Long: -75.588048)**

Taylor's Bridge School  
Name of Property

New Castle County, DE  
County and State

**Figure 3: Floor plan of the Taylor's Bridge School**

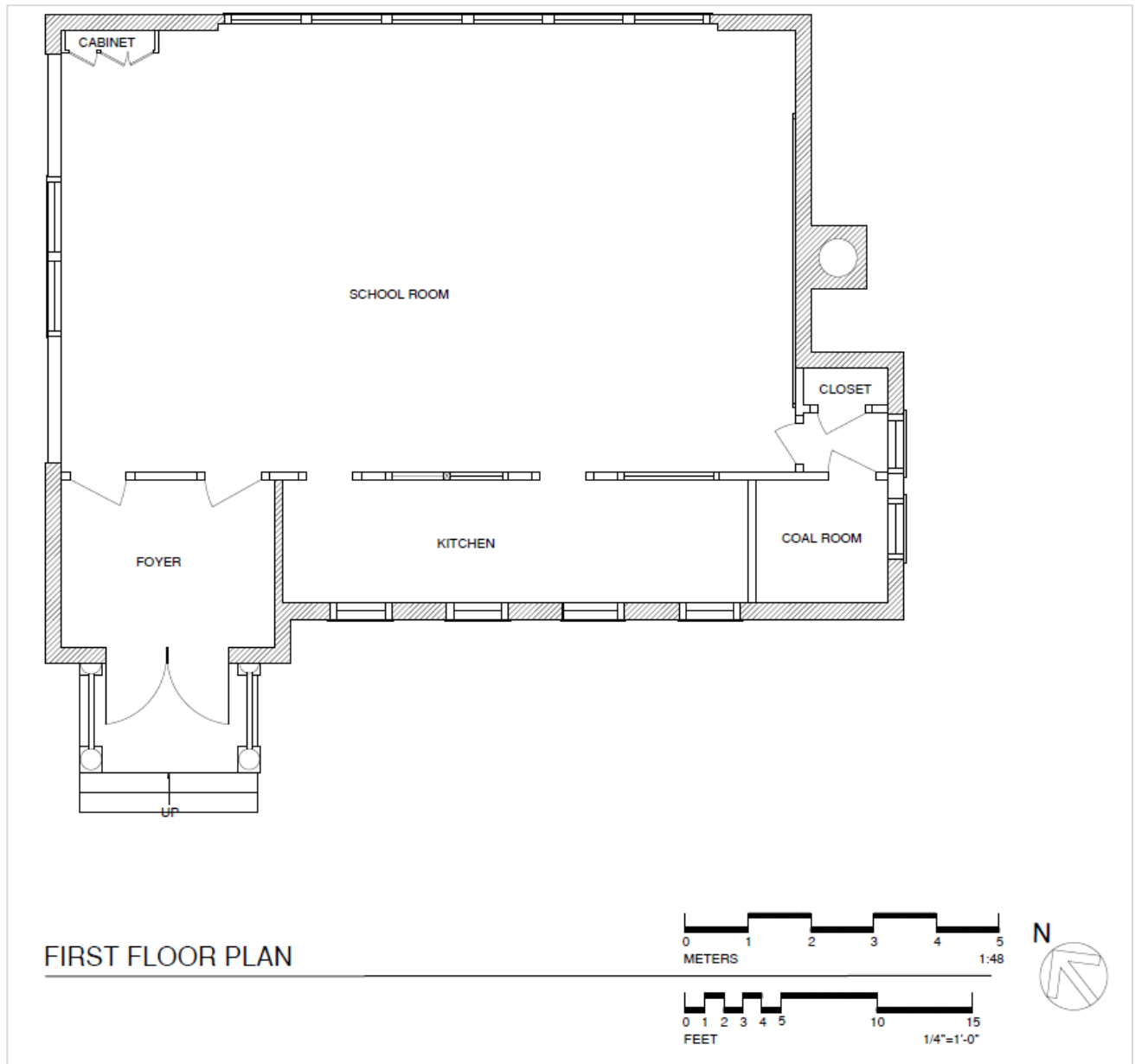


(Drawn by Kiersten Mounce)

Taylor's Bridge School  
Name of Property

New Castle County, DE  
County and State

**Figure 3: Floor plan of the Taylor's Bridge School**

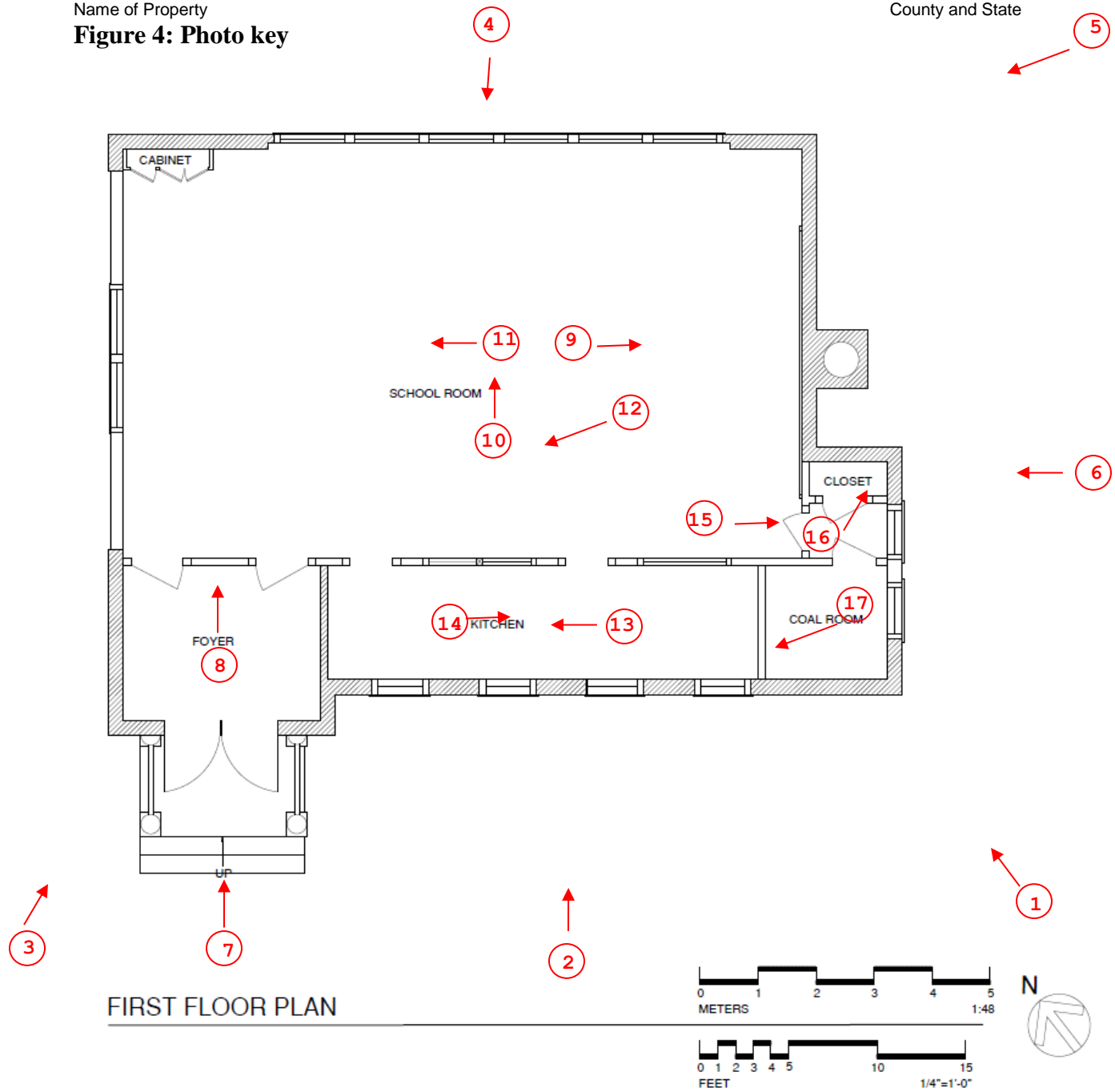


(Drawn by Kiersten Mounce)

Taylor's Bridge School  
Name of Property

New Castle County, DE  
County and State

**Figure 4: Photo key**



FIRST FLOOR PLAN

Taylor's Bridge School  
Name of Property

New Castle County, DE  
County and State



**Figure 5: The old Taylor's Bridge School, circa 1919. (Image courtesy of the Hagley Museum: Delaware School Auxiliary Association)**

Taylor's Bridge School  
Name of Property

New Castle County, DE  
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Taylor's Bridge

Dist. #66

	Score	Possible Score
Site	105	160
Building	67	200
Service Systems	51	250
Classrooms	95	225
Special Rooms	3	165
	<u>321</u>	<u>1000</u>

Site. This building is located on a small, 100 x 250, triangular plot of ground in the intersection of two highways, one of which is improved. The grounds are attractive but too small for school purposes.

Service Systems. The building is heated by a stove, has no artificial light and water is carried from neighboring houses.

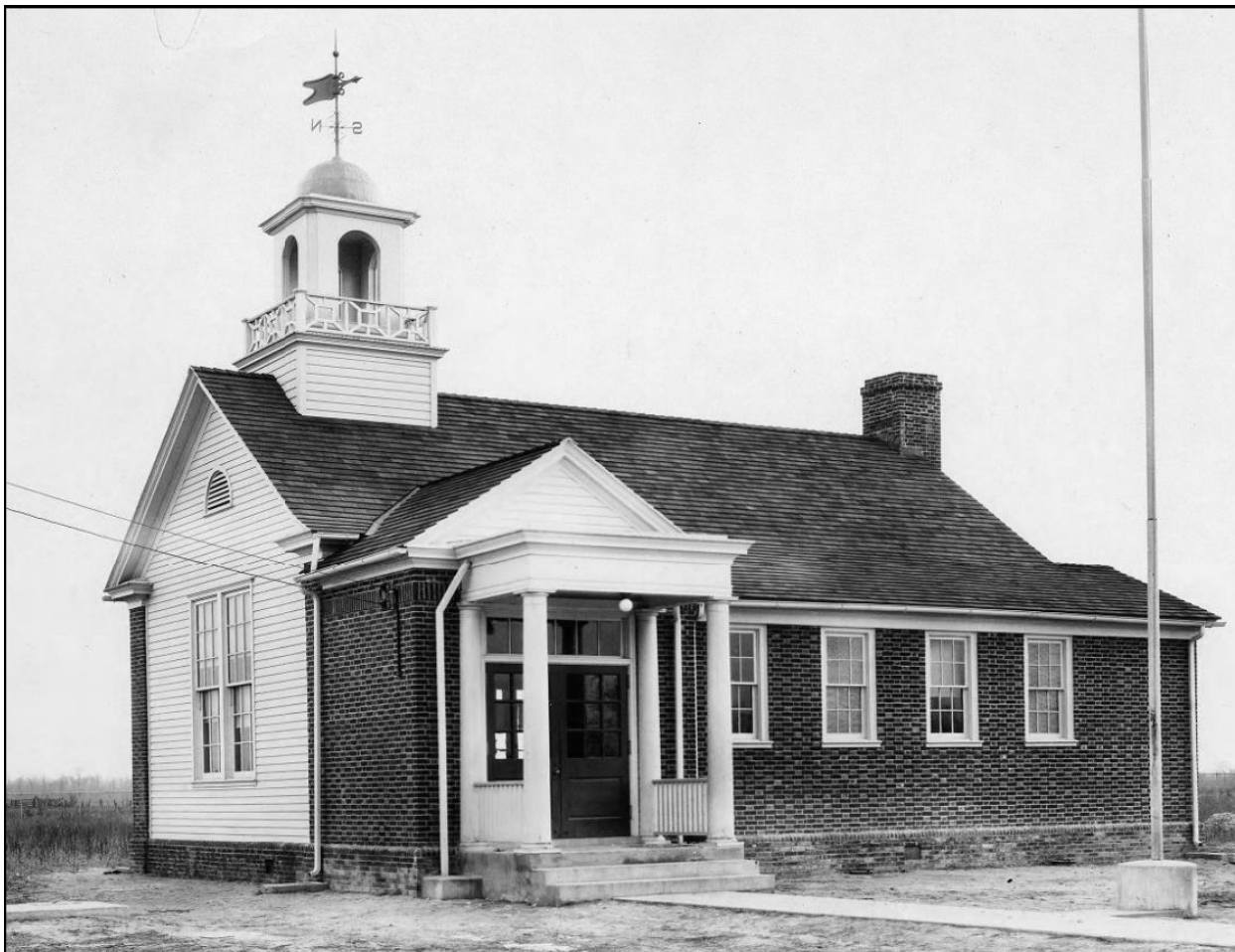
Classroom. As many as 45 pupils attend this school. They are seated in a room 18 x 22. On this basis, each child has a floor space of approximately 8 square feet; the standard space is 18 square feet per child. Should it be determined that this point is a logical center for a school, a new site should be selected and a new and adequate building erected.

Figure 6: Taylor's Bridge scorecard circa 1919, showing the low score of 321/1000. (Image courtesy of the Hagley Museum: Delaware School Auxiliary Association)



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**Figure 7: Taylor's Bridge School, circa 1925. (Image courtesy of the Hagley Museum: Delaware School Auxiliary Association)**

Taylor's Bridge School  
Name of Property

New Castle County, DE  
County and State



**Figure 8: Taylor's Bridge School, rear elevation, circa 1925. (Image courtesy of the Hagley Museum: Delaware School Auxiliary Association)**

Taylor's Bridge School  
Name of Property

New Castle County, DE  
County and State

# STORM RIPS ALL COUNTY; SPARES LIFE

Taylor's Bridge School  
Destroyed, Tops Torn  
From Autos on Roads

## FAIRVILLE BARN IS FIRE WRECKED

A thunderstorm, accompanied by a gale of almost cyclonic proportions, which swept the State late yesterday afternoon, wrecked houses, garages and motor cars and did other severe damage at several points.

Rain fell in torrents for a half hour. Here in Wilmington the official measure showed a precipitation of .62 of an inch.

Taylor's Bridge, a village in Blackbird and Liston's Point, suffered seriously from the wind. Miss Gladys McBooker, teacher of the Taylor's Bridge school, was about to leave the school building with three young pupils. She halted in the vestibule, fearing to venture into the storm. Then, feeling the building tremble, she fled with the children to a nearby field. A minute later the school was blown from its foundations and wrecked.

Dr. Joseph H. Odeil, president of  
(Continued on Page Seventeen.)

Figure 9: "Storm Rips all County; Spares Life," published in *The Evening Journal*, Wilmington, Delaware, April 6, 1923.

Taylor's Bridge School  
Name of Property

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**Proposals 80**

**TAYLOR'S BRIDGE SCHOOL  
COPY OF ADVERTISEMENT.  
NOTICE TO BIDDERS.**

Public notice is hereby given that the Delaware School Auxiliary Association will meet at its office, in the duPont Building, Wilmington, Delaware, October 15, 1923, at eleven (11) o'clock A. M., and then and there will receive and open sealed proposals to furnish labor and materials for erecting a school at Taylor's Bridge, Delaware.

The work consists generally of the construction of a one-story brick school with shingle roof and cupola, complete with mechanical equipment.

Bids will be received for the entire work under one contract.

No bid will be considered unless accompanied by a certified check to the order of the Delaware School Auxiliary Association, Wilmington, Delaware, in the amount of 5 per cent. of the amount of the bid or a bid bond in like amount, binding the bidder to execute the contract, if awarded to him. The terms of the proposal, with security required, are fixed by the specifications.

The owner reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids. All bids shall hold good for 30 days after formal opening of same.

Copies of the drawings and specifications will be on file at the office of the Delaware School Auxiliary Association, 4116 duPont Building, Wilmington, Delaware, for the purpose of estimating.

A limited number of copies of the plans and specifications will be loaned to prospective bidders on deposit of a certified check, to the order of the Delaware School Auxiliary Association, in the amount of \$10.00. If the plans and specifications are returned on or before the submission of estimates, the check will be returned, but should the plans and specifications be not returned, the deposit may become forfeited.

**DELAWARE SCHOOL AUXILIARY  
ASSOCIATION,  
4116 duPONT BUILDING,  
WILMINGTON, DELAWARE.  
JOSEPH H. ODELL President.  
sept26-28-oct3-5.**

Figure 10: "Proposal: Taylor's Bridge School Copy of Advertisement. Notice to Bidders," published in *The Evening Journal*, Wilmington, Delaware, October 3, 1923.

Taylor's Bridge School  
Name of Property

New Castle County, DE  
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**Figure 11: “School Repeats Perfect Eyesight Rating,” published in *The News Journal*, Wilmington, Delaware, February 26, 1938. While the article itself is not highly relevant the accompanying photo shows the interior configuration of the school room.**

Taylor's Bridge School  
Name of Property

New Castle County, DE  
County and State

**“AUSTRALIZE”**

**For Fresh Air Without Draft  
and Good Light Properly Directed**

Absolute Ease of Operation

Self-Balancing Reversible for Cleaning

Simplicity and Durability of Construction

No Cords to Break  
No Weights to Catch

Ventilation Without Draft

Eliminates All Window Trim and Trouble

Afford Complete Control of Light

First Cost Is the Only and Final Cost

**The Schoolroom Must Have Fresh Air Without Draft**  
The AUSTRAL WINDOW affords a perfect system of Ventilation without draft, with absolute control of light.  
The AUSTRAL WINDOW here shown has a horizontal opening between the two sash at the center, which admits fresh air without draft, even on the most blustering day.  
The features of the AUSTRAL WINDOW, designed especially to meet School room requirements, justify the serious consideration of School Boards, Building Committees or Superintendents, considering plans for new school buildings.  
AUSTRAL WINDOWS ARE:—Self-balancing, reversible for cleaning, they have no cords to break, are simple and durable of construction and cost no more than ordinary windows.

**A small cardboard model demonstrating the advantages of the AUSTRAL WINDOW will be mailed upon request.**

**AUSTRAL WINDOW COMPANY**  
101 Park Avenue New York City

Union High School, Grand Rapids, Mich.  
H. H. Palmer, Architect.

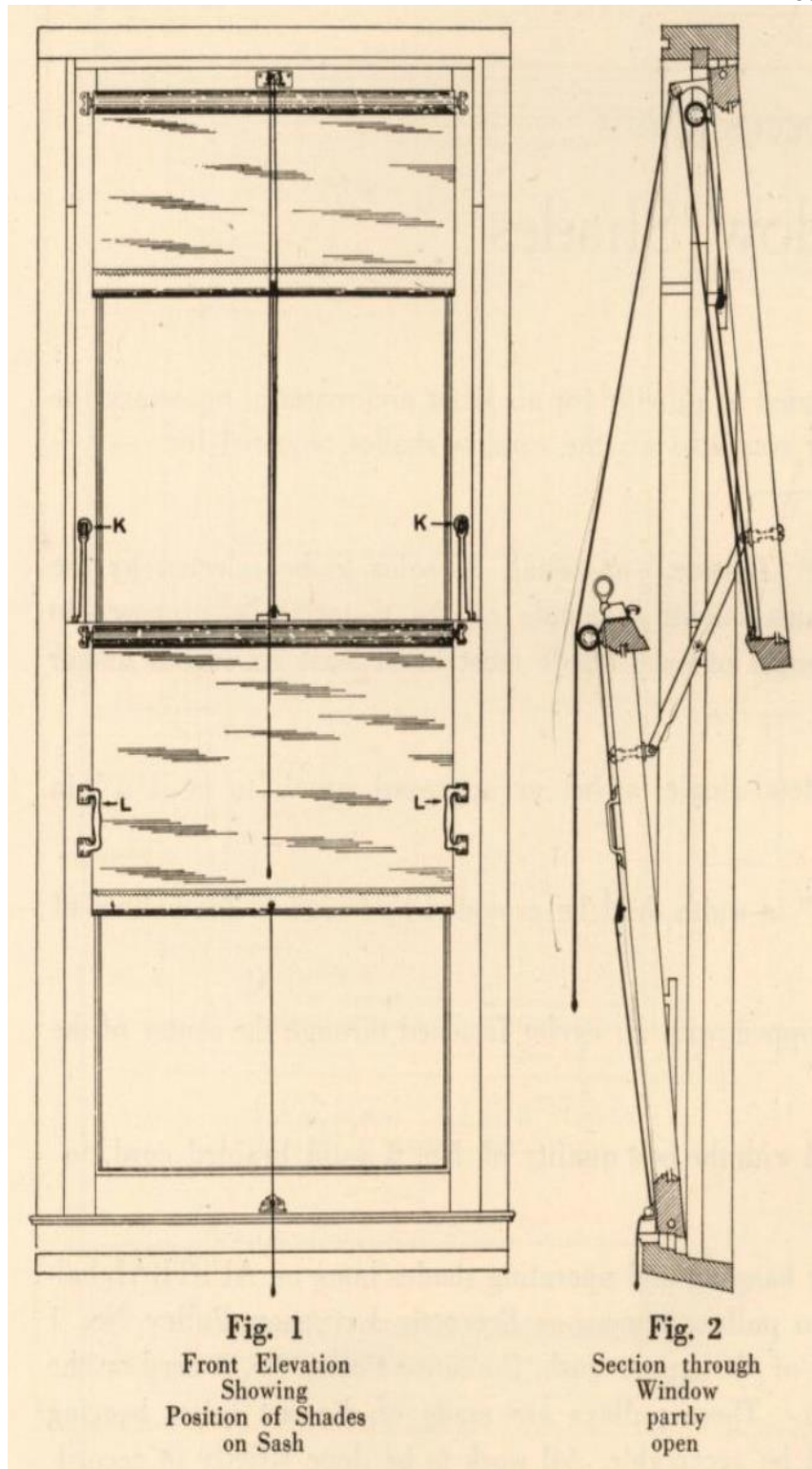
Dexter High School, Dexter, Ga.  
Edwards & Hayward, Architects.

Digitized by Google

Figure 12: Advertisement for “Austral Windows” by the Austral Window Company published in *The American School Board Journal*, Volume 65, July-December 1922. These windows were designed to meet schoolroom requirements.

Taylor's Bridge School  
Name of Property

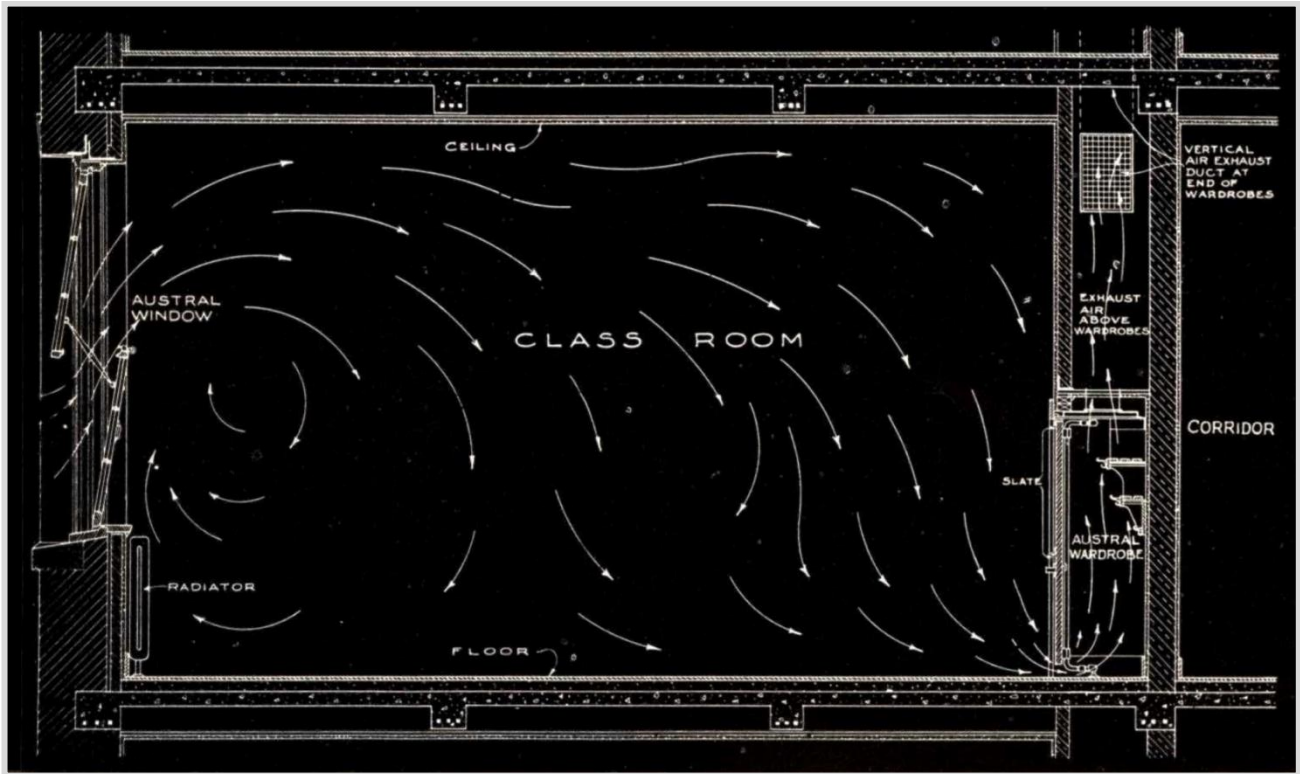
New Castle County, DE  
County and State



**Figure 13: Diagram showing the Austral Window hardware package and functionality, 1925. (Image from *Austral Hardware for Wood and Rolled Steel Construction*, published by the Austral Window Company)**

Taylor's Bridge School  
Name of Property

New Castle County, DE  
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**Figure 14: Austral Window brochure, showing ideal air circulation for school rooms provided by Austral Windows. (Image Courtesy of Austral Window Company, 1938).**

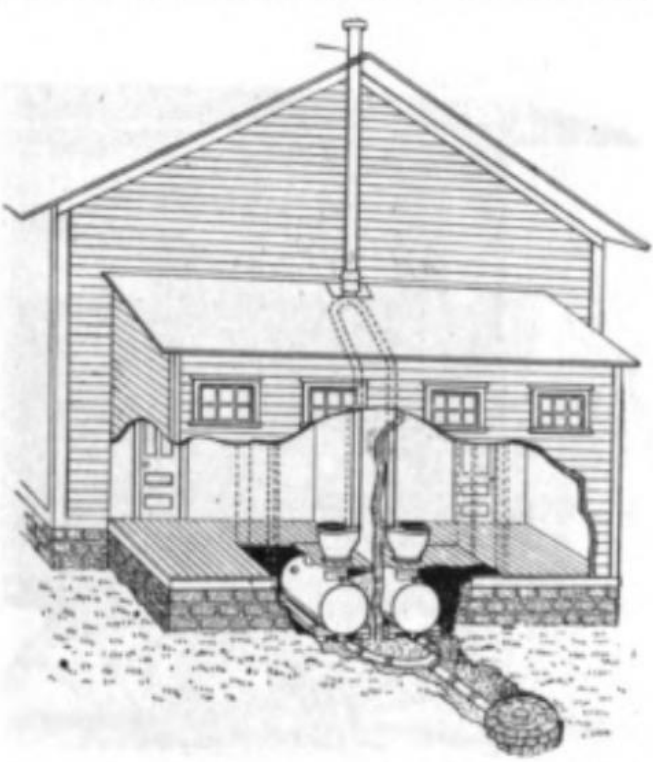


Taylor's Bridge School  
Name of Property

New Castle County, DE  
County and State

**THE**  
**WOLVERINE**  
**INDOOR**  
**CHEMICAL CLOSET**

**For Schools, Churches, Factories and Homes**



**WATERLESS, SANITARY, ODORLESS, CONVENIENT  
AND NECESSARY**

The moral and sanitary problems of schools are solved  
instantly by installing indoor closets.

*Guaranteed satisfactory. Recommended by boards of health and education  
Send for Catalog H*

**THE DAIL STEEL PRODUCTS CO.**  
MAIN STREET LANSING, MICHIGAN

Figure 15: Advertisement for *The Wolverine Indoor Chemical Closet*. This is a similar toilet system as was installed at the Taylor's Bridge School. (Image courtesy of *The American School Board*, June 1919)

Taylor's Bridge School  
Name of Property

New Castle County, DE  
County and State



**Figure 16: Children playing at the newly constructed Taylor's Bridge School, circa 1925. (Image courtesy of the Taylor's Bridge Community Center, Inc.)**

Taylor's Bridge School  
Name of Property

New Castle County, DE  
County and State



Figure 17: March 1919 edition of *The American School Board Journal*, showing “The Golden Key” (“Scientific Business Methods”) to unlocking the “high cost of school necessities” (and thus “progress in school work”).

# Weekly List 20190628

The Director of the National Park Service is pleased to send you the following announcements and actions on properties for the National Register of Historic Places. For further information contact Alexis Abernathy via voice (202) 354-2236, or E-mail: [nr\\_info@nps.gov](mailto:nr_info@nps.gov)

National Register of Historic Places  
Mail Stop 7228  
1849 C St, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20240

Please continue to use alternative carriers as all USPS mail to our location is irradiated  
Previous Weekly Lists are available here: <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/weekly-list.htm>  
Please visit our homepage: <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/index.htm>  
Check out what's Pending: <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/pending-list.htm>

## Prefix Codes:

SG - Single nomination  
MC - Multiple cover sheet  
MP - Multiple nomination (a nomination under a multiple cover sheet)  
FP - Federal DOE Project  
FD - Federal DOE property under the Federal DOE project  
NL - NHL  
BC - Boundary change (increase, decrease, or both)  
MV - Move request  
AD - Additional documentation  
OT - All other requests (appeal, removal, delisting, direct submission)

RS – Resubmission

WEEKLY LIST OF ACTIONS TAKEN ON PROPERTIES: 6/24/2019 THROUGH 6/27/2019

KEY: State, County, Property Name, Address/Boundary, City, Vicinity, Reference Number, NHL, Action, Date, Multiple Name

CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES COUNTY,  
Bay Street Beach Historic District,  
Roughly bounded by Pacific Ocean, Ocean Front Walk from Vicente Ter. to Crescent Bay Park, Bicknell Ave.  
extending into ocean.,  
Santa Monica, SG100004116,  
LISTED, 6/26/2019

CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES COUNTY,  
Commercial Exchange Building,  
416-436 W. 8th St.,  
Los Angeles, SG100004117,  
LISTED, 6/26/2019

CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES COUNTY,  
Hunt House,  
24514 Malibu Rd.,  
Malibu, SG100004118,  
LISTED, 6/26/2019

CONNECTICUT, MIDDLESEX COUNTY,  
Shore Line Electric Railway Powerhouse,  
2-20 Ferry Place,  
Old Saybrook, SG100004086,  
LISTED, 6/20/2019

DELAWARE, KENT COUNTY,  
Downtown Harrington Historic District,  
Various,  
Harrington, SG100004082,  
LISTED, 6/20/2019

DELAWARE, NEW CASTLE COUNTY,  
Taylor's Bridge School,  
121 Flemings Landing Rd.,  
Townsend vicinity, SG100004079,  
LISTED, 6/20/2019

DELAWARE, SUSSEX COUNTY,  
Allen, Richard, School,  
316 Railroad Ave.,  
Georgetown, SG100004083,  
LISTED, 6/20/2019

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA,  
Ethelhurst, The,  
1025 Fifteenth St., NW,  
Washington, MP100004123,  
LISTED, 6/26/2019  
(Apartment Buildings in Washington, DC, MPS)

ILLINOIS, LAKE COUNTY,