

F-7-25
Comstock School
Dickerson vicinity
Private

Ca. 1910

The Comstock School is a one-story frame rural school built about 1910 with an elaborate Classical Revival door surround with a half dome and flanking columns. The school has been recently restored and has a replaced wood shingle roof with a central bell cupola and shiplap wood siding similar to German siding. The windows are 6/6 with louvred shutters. The school was built by Gordon Strong for the black children in the vicinity of his Sugarloaf Mountain estate, Stronghold. Up to the construction of the Comstock School, black students had previously been sharing space in the 1870's log building of Bell's Chapel nearby. The architect of Strong's mansion, Percy Ashe of Philadelphia, designed the door surround, a unique feature in rural schools in Frederick County. The school building was owned and maintained by Strong, while the furnishings, books, and a teacher's salary were provided by the County School Commissioners, although some sources indicate that Strong also paid some teachers' salaries. The school was active until the early 1940's, when wartime jobs in the towns drew the families of the students away from the Sugarloaf Mountain area.

SEE FREDERICK COUNTY BLACK SITES SURVEY F-7-1-1 FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION.

F-7-25
Comstock School
Dickerson
Frederick County

HISTORIC CONTEXT:

MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN DATA

Geographic Organization: Piedmont
(Harford, Baltimore, Carroll, Frederick, Howard, Montgomery
Counties, and Baltimore City)

Chronological/Development Period:
Industrial/Urban Dominance, A.D. 1870-1930

Prehistoric/Historic Period Themes:
Architecture, Landscape Architecture and Community Planning
Social, Educational, Cultural

Resource Type:

Category: Building

Historic Environment: Rural

Historic Function & Use:
Education/School/Schoolhouse

Known Design Source: None

Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES

Magi No.

DOE yes no

SEE FREDERICK COUNTY BLACK SITES SURVEY F-7-1-1 FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic Comstock School

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 824 Mt. Ephraim Road ___ not for publication

city, town Dickerson vicinity of congressional district 6th

state Maryland county Frederick

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: Multiple purpose

4. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name Stronghold, Inc.

street & number 7901 Comus Road telephone no.:

city, town Dickerson state and zip code Md. 20842

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Frederick County Courthouse liber 1712

street & number 100 W. Patrick Street folio 459

city, town Frederick state MD. 21701

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title

date federal state county local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Survey No. F-7-25

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date of move _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

CONTRIBUTING RESOURCE COUNT: 1

The Comstock School is a one-story frame schoolhouse built about 1910 on the west side of Mt. Ephraim Road about one mile north of the Frederick-Montgomery County boundary on the western slope of Sugarloaf Mountain in Frederick County, Maryland. The nearest town is Dickerson in Montgomery County about 1-1/2 miles south of the school building. The school has been restored in recent years with a new wood shingle roof and a repainted exterior of wood siding. A distinctive Classical Revival doorway hood distinguishes the school, which also has a belfry centered on the ridge of the gable roof. A non-contributing frame privy is located west of the schoolhouse. The schoolhouse is currently used as a community meeting hall for the Mt. Ephraim-Banner Road vicinity and is owned by Stronghold, Inc., a non-profit conservation organization which operates a public park on Sugarloaf Mountain. The date of the building is based on information from Mr. Paul Wilson, a former student at the school, and Mr. Benjamin Smart, superintendent of Stronghold, Inc.

The school has a gable facade facing east toward Mt. Ephraim Road with three bays. The center entry has a projecting half-domed hood with console brackets. Engaged Tuscan columns flank the door, which has a rectangular transom with tracery muntins. The door itself has two irregular raised panels with filigreed hardware. Concrete steps rise from the ground to the doorway. The flanking windows are 6/6 behind louvred shutters which were closed at the time of survey. Above the doorway is an oculus window with 9 lights. The exterior is covered with a type of shiplap siding similar to German siding with approximately 5-inch boards with a shallow drop at the top of each board. The exterior is currently painted yellow. The north and south elevations each have three bays with 6/6 sash and louvred shutters. The stone foundation is exposed on the side and west elevations, with vents covered with cast iron lattice panels. An exterior brick chimney is located on the west gable end. The replaced wood shingle roof has a central bell cupola with a hipped roof. The bell cupola and the bell are painted yellow.

The interior was inaccessible for this survey, but Mr. Smart, superintendent of Stronghold, Inc., described the interior as having been little altered, with the original wood floor, diagonal tongue-and-groove paneling, and blackboards. The school furniture was removed by the County when the school closed in the early 1940's.

8. Significance

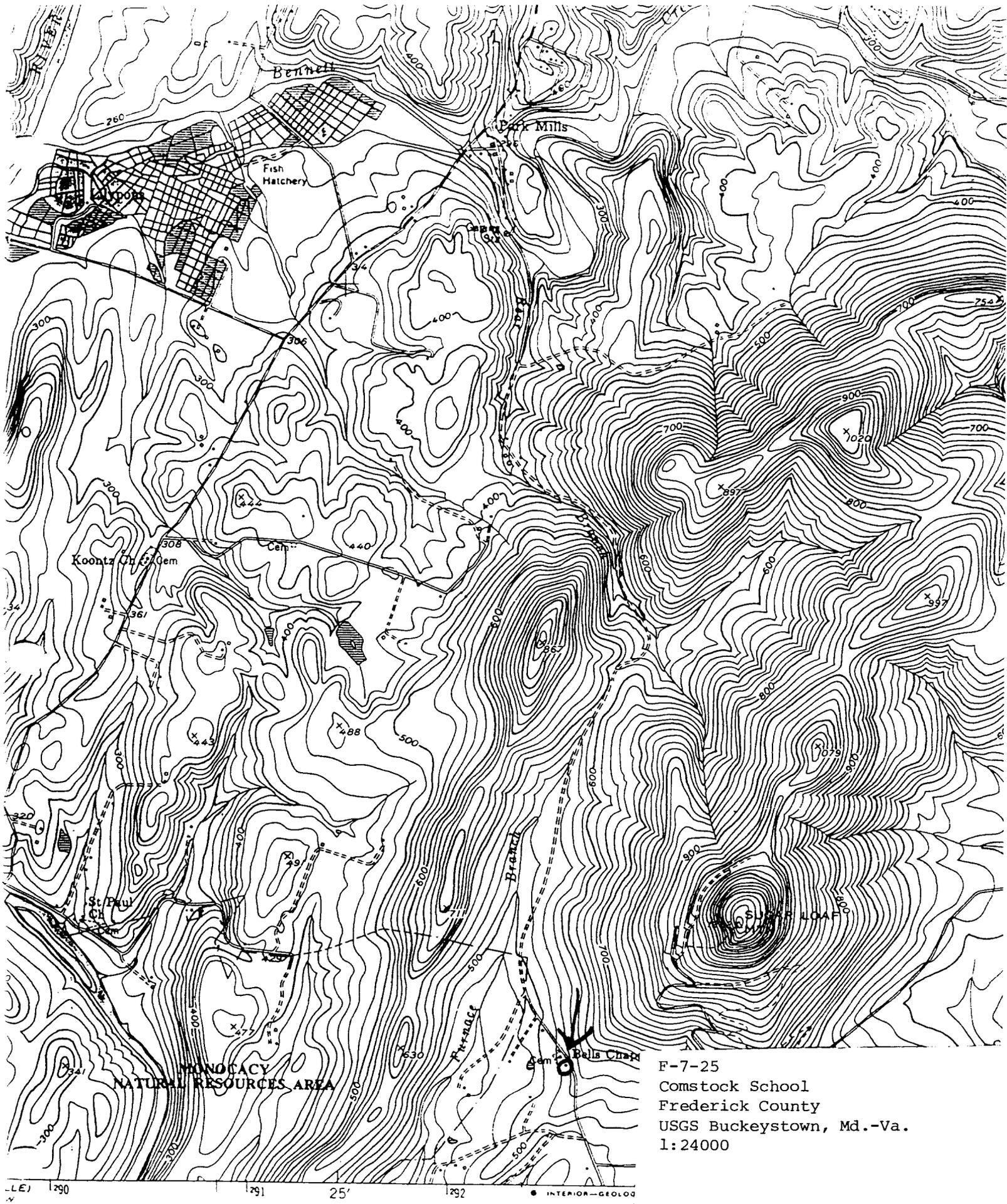
Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
___ prehistoric	___ archeology-prehistoric	___ community planning	___ landscape architecture	___ religion
___ 1400-1499	___ archeology-historic	___ conservation	___ law	___ science
___ 1500-1599	___ agriculture	___ economics	___ literature	___ sculpture
___ 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> education	___ military	___ social/
___ 1700-1799	___ art	___ engineering	___ music	___ humanitarian
___ 1800-1899	___ commerce	___ exploration/settlement	___ philosophy	___ theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	___ communications	___ industry	___ politics/government	___ transportation
		___ invention		___ other (specify)

Specific dates C. 1910 **Builder/Architect**

check: Applicable Criteria: A B C D
 and/or
 Applicable Exception: A B C D E F G
 Level of Significance: national state local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

The Comstock School is significant in architecture and education as a unique example of rural schoolhouse design in the early 20th century and as a privately built school for black children in the vicinity of Stronghold, the private conservation enclave established in the early 20th century on Sugarloaf Mountain by Gordon Strong. According to Mr. Paul Wilson, a former student at the Comstock School, Mr. Wilson's grandmother, Barbara Hallman, a long-time employee of the Strong family, asked Mr. Strong to build a new school for black children in the neighborhood. During the first decade of the 20th century, Strong was building educational buildings for a vocational school for underprivileged boys on Sugarloaf, as well as a school for local children in the neighborhood of his estate, Stronghold, on Sugarloaf. Black children of the vicinity had been using space for school in the old Bell's Chapel, a log building erected in 1874. Mrs. Hallman's request resulted in Strong's building of the Comstock School, named for Mr. Strong's mother-in-law's maiden name. The elaborate doorway hood in the Classical Revival style, a unique feature in Frederick County's rural schools, was the work of the Philadelphia architect, Percy Ashe, who also designed the three-part Georgian mansion planned for Stronghold, but which was only partially built. The agreement worked out between Strong and the Frederick County Board of School Commissioners, according to Mr. Wilson, was that Strong would own and maintain the Comstock School building and the County would provide furnishings, books, and a teacher. Other sources researched by Mr. Smart, superintendent of Stronghold, indicate that Strong paid or contributed to the teacher's salary. The school included grades 1 through 7 and was active until about the early 1940's. Mr. Wilson believes that attendance declined as families moved to larger towns and cities to take war-related jobs, making the continuance of the school impossible.



F-7-25
 Comstock School
 Frederick County
 USGS Buckeystown, Md.-Va.
 1:24000

