

# Maryland Historical Trust Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. 23-113-2

## 1. Name of Property (indicate preferred name)

historic Norbeck Rosenwald School/Mount Pleasant Colored School

other Norbeck Recreation Building (preferred)

## 2. Location

street and number Norbeck-Muncaster Mill Neighborhood Park, 4101 Muncaster Mill Road  not for publication

city, town Rockville  vicinity

county Montgomery County

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

name Montgomery County

street and number EOB 101 Monroe St. telephone 240-777-0311

city, town Rockville state MD zip code 20850

## 4. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Montgomery County Land Records liber 29914 folio 259

city, town Rockville tax map HS42 tax parcel P923 tax ID number 00702071

## 5. Primary Location of Additional Data

- Contributing Resource in National Register District  
 Contributing Resource in Local Historic District  
 Determined Eligible for the National Register/Maryland Register  
 Determined Ineligible for the National Register/Maryland Register  
 Recorded by HABS/HAER  
 Historic Structure Report or Research Report at MHT  
 Other: M-NCPPC

## 6. Classification

| Category  | Ownership                                  | Current Function                               |  | Resource Count   |                                     |
|---|--|--|--|--|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> district               | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture           | <input type="checkbox"/> landscape                     | Contributing   | Noncontributing                     |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s) | <input type="checkbox"/> private           | <input type="checkbox"/> commerce/trade        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> recreation/culture | <u>1</u>   | <input type="checkbox"/> buildings  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> structure              | <input type="checkbox"/> both              | <input type="checkbox"/> defense               | <input type="checkbox"/> religion                      | <input type="checkbox"/>   | <input type="checkbox"/> sites      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> site                   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> domestic              | <input type="checkbox"/> social                        | <input type="checkbox"/>   | <input type="checkbox"/> structures |
| <input type="checkbox"/> object                 |  | <input type="checkbox"/> education             | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation                | <input type="checkbox"/>   | <input type="checkbox"/> objects    |
|   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> funerary              | <input type="checkbox"/> work in progress              | <input type="checkbox"/>   | <input type="checkbox"/> Total      |
|   |  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government | <input type="checkbox"/> unknown                       | <b>Number of Contributing Resources<br/>previously listed in the Inventory</b> |                                     |
|   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> health care           | <input type="checkbox"/> vacant/not in use             | <u>                    </u>  |                                     |
|   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> industry              | <input type="checkbox"/> other:                        |  |                                     |

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## 7. Description

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### Condition

excellent       deteriorated  
 good             ruins  
 fair               altered

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

### SUMMARY

Since 1937, Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) has adaptively reused acquired structures to accommodate recreation functions. After the integration of schools in Montgomery County, the old Norbeck Rosenwald School was identified as a prime candidate for reutilization as a community center to be maintained and operated by M-NCPPC. The c1927 one-story frame building remains in its original location with a new park – Norbeck-Muncaster Mill Neighborhood Park – developed around it as early as 1957. With replacement doors and windows, this resource has diminished integrity, yet it is a relatively rare resource. Recent research on the importance of Rosenwald Schools to the understanding of African American history makes this building worthy of historic designation. During historic site evaluation for the Inter-County Connector project, the Norbeck School was found eligible for the National Register specifically for its historic association. The resource maintains high usage by local citizens and is a valued community asset.

### SITE

The Norbeck Recreation Center is located at 4101 Muncaster Mill Road (Route 115) just west of the intersection of Norbeck Road (Route 28) in the Rockville vicinity. Situated on 21,780 square feet of land in the Norbeck-Muncaster Mill Park, the building is adjacent to the c1890s chapel of the Mount Pleasant United Methodist Church (today called Waves of Glory Church), a Master Plan site (23/113-1), and its associated cemetery.<sup>1</sup> The Montgomery County-owned Norbeck School site consists of the recreation center and a parking lot.

### EXTERIOR

The recreation center is an east-facing, one-story, frame, rectangular structure resting on a concrete foundation. The building is sheathed in horizontal wood siding. The side-gable roof has a rolled asphalt covering and is punctuated by a single brick chimney near the center of the east elevation.

The principal (east) elevation consists of two entrances: one near the southern end of the building and one just north of the center of the façade. The original paneled and glazed doors have been replaced by solid doors that are accessed from a three-step stoop or by a frame handicap ramp that stretches parallel to the building. Each door is protected by a pedimented portico. The original doors had no such protection, but historic photos indicate that shed-roof awnings were in place by 1962.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on this church, see the MIHP form for the Norbeck Historic District at [http://www.mdihp.net/dsp\\_county.cfm?search=county&criteria1=N&criteria2=MO&criteria3=&id=17447&viewer=true](http://www.mdihp.net/dsp_county.cfm?search=county&criteria1=N&criteria2=MO&criteria3=&id=17447&viewer=true).

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Natural light is provided to the interior by a series of eight one-over-one, double-hung windows. They are set in groups of three, two, and three, respectively and correspond to the location of the original bank of windows that have been remodeled at least twice since 1927.

The back side of the building features two, double-hung, one-over-one windows near the center of the elevation.

Each elevation has a pair of centered double-hung, one-over-one windows. A vent is located beneath the gable. The original north elevation did not have any fenestration. The south side sported a wide bank of windows that stretched almost the entire width of the building.

Security grills have been placed over all the windows.

### **INTERIOR**

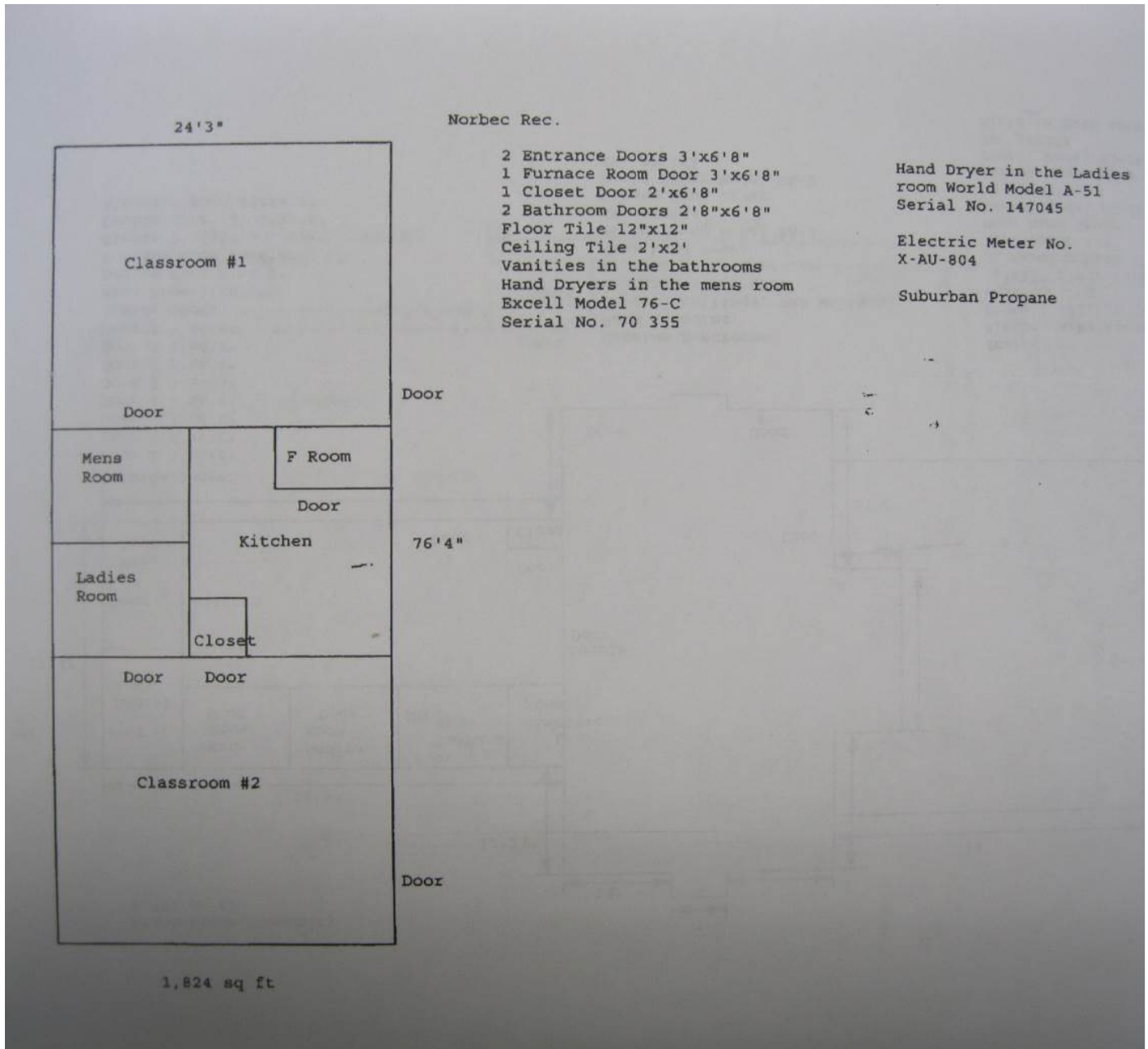
The original 2,107-square-foot, two-room interior was reconfigured into three parts: large classrooms at either end of the building flank a central core. The core contains two restrooms, a kitchen, and closets. The classrooms are unadorned except for a chair rail. Modern, drop, acoustic tile ceilings are interrupted by recessed fluorescent lights. Heating and cooling is provided through wall-mounted vents.

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Facilities Management Plan of Norbeck, 2002.  
Courtesy: M-NCPPC

## 8. Significance

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| Period  | Areas of Significance                            | Check and justify below  |   |  |
|---|--|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699            | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture             | <input type="checkbox"/> economics                               | <input type="checkbox"/> health/medicine        | <input type="checkbox"/> performing arts     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799            | <input type="checkbox"/> archeology              | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> education                    | <input type="checkbox"/> industry               | <input type="checkbox"/> philosophy          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> engineering                             | <input type="checkbox"/> invention              | <input type="checkbox"/> politics/government |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-1999 | <input type="checkbox"/> art                     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> entertainment/<br>recreation | <input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> religion            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2000-                | <input type="checkbox"/> commerce                | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ethnic heritage              | <input type="checkbox"/> law                    | <input type="checkbox"/> science             |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> exploration/<br>settlement              | <input type="checkbox"/> literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> social history      |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> community planning      |  | <input type="checkbox"/> maritime history       | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation      |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> conservation            |  | <input type="checkbox"/> military               | <input type="checkbox"/> other: _____        |

|                       |      |                          |                       |
|-----------------------|------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Specific dates</b> | 1927 | <b>Architect/Builder</b> | Julius Rosenwald Fund |
|-----------------------|------|--------------------------|-----------------------|

|                           |           |
|---------------------------|-----------|
| <b>Construction dates</b> | 1927/1977 |
|---------------------------|-----------|

Evaluation for:

National Register                       Maryland Register                       not evaluated

Prepare a one-paragraph summary statement of significance addressing applicable criteria, followed by a narrative discussion of the history of the resource and its context. (For compliance projects, complete evaluation on a DOE Form – see manual.)

### SUMMARY

Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) was founded in 1927 as a stream-valley park system protecting the headwaters of the Anacostia and Potomac Rivers. In addition, the Commission's charge was to oversee subdivision review and the creation and maintenance of a recreational park system. Along the stream valleys and, later, in the neighborhood and regional parks, the Commission augmented the natural landscape with the construction of buildings to house indoor recreation activities, such as parties, club meetings, scouts, daycare, and summer camps.

As M-NCPPC approaches its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary and out of a mission to provide cultural resource stewardship, the Montgomery County Department of Parks has identified park recreation buildings worthy of preservation. Currently, there are 30 buildings that serve or have operated as recreation buildings (now termed park activity buildings) throughout the 35,000 acre park system.<sup>2</sup> Originally, there were at least 41 of these community facilities. Some of these structures were "purpose-built," while others were converted to recreational use. In order to show a history of the evolution of park activity buildings over the lifetime of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (1927 to present), the Department of Parks' Cultural Resources Stewardship Section proposes to preserve at least one building from each of the five respective park community/recreation building eras.<sup>3</sup>

**\*Era I: The Origins of the M-NCPPC Park System: 1927-1940**

**\*Era II: The World War II-Era Buildings: 1941-1946**

**\*Era III: Conversion of World War II Federal Surplus Buildings: 1953-1956**

<sup>2</sup> 2007 M-NCPPC *Catalog of Recreation and Ancillary Buildings* defines recreation buildings as "operated for the benefit of the general public, rented by the hour with Fees set by the Park Commission, reserved through Park Permits, and maintained by the Department of Parks Central Maintenance Divisions."

<sup>3</sup> In addition to recognizing the recreation buildings still standing, it is worth identifying the (at least) eleven structures that have since been demolished or transferred to the Montgomery County Recreation Department: Cabin John Recreation Center (off MacArthur Blvd.), Garrett Park Estates Community Building, Jesup-Blair Cabin, Kensington Park Community Building (off Frederick Ave.), Long Branch Recreation Center, Randolph Hills Recreation Center, Rosemary Hills Recreation Center, Scotland Community Building, Sligo Avenue Recreation Center, Sligo Cabin, and Wheaton Woods Recreation Center.

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**\*Era IV: Purpose-Built Community Recreation Centers during Cold War Suburbanization: 1950-1990**  
**\*Era V: Repurposing Structures to Become Activity Buildings, 1937-1968**

Five recreation buildings are being nominated to the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*. Each is the best representative of each of the different eras. Norbeck was selected to represent Era V.<sup>4</sup>

The Norbeck Recreation Building was built in 1927 as a Rosenwald School, a segregated school for local African American children in the African American community known as Mount Pleasant. Despite alterations, this structure still embodies the defining characteristics of a typical Rosenwald school found throughout the American South. It remains the only Rosenwald School in Montgomery County that maintains public access. Nearby land remains undeveloped, while another fixture of the African American community – the Mount Pleasant United Methodist Church – is located immediately to the east. This resource was on the Locational Atlas as a contributing resource in the Norbeck Historic District. The district was evaluated and removed from the Atlas. The resource is now being considered as an individual site and is recommended for designation based on recent research on Rosenwald Schools.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, the Norbeck Recreation Building meets the following criteria of the Montgomery County Historic Preservation Ordinance, Section 24A-3:

1(a) has character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage, or cultural characteristics of the County, State, or Nation;

1(d) exemplifies the cultural, economic, social, political, or historic heritage of the County and its communities

2(a) embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction.

### **NARRATIVE HISTORY**

Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) recycled structures to accommodate recreation functions as early as 1937. These acquired buildings had a variety of original uses: a domestic residence (Camp Seneca), a horse stable (Wheaton-Claridge), an African-American school (Norbeck), and a government facility for agricultural experimentation (Norwood). Unlike the White Oak World War II- era prefabricated structures (at Hillandale and Ken-Gar) that were moved to various M-NCPPC parks sites in 1956,

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<sup>4</sup> For further information on the various design periods, see MIHP nomination forms for Meadowbrook, Pinecrest, Ken-Gar, and Veirs Mill.

<sup>5</sup>The resource was previously included on the Locational Atlas as part of the Norbeck Historic District, which was subsequently evaluated and removed from the Locational Atlas. An evaluator “determined in 1978 that the area is too altered to constitute a historic district, but the significance of individual buildings, including the Mt. Pleasant School, should be considered.” Norbeck School/Mt. Pleasant School (M:23-113-2) was reviewed by National Register eligibility in 2002, as part of the Intercounty Connector Project. The Maryland Historical Trust found the site eligible under Criterion A (historic association). Evaluators considered the building not only significant, but also the site itself which ties to one of the earliest African American schools in Montgomery County (1872).

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these four buildings remain in their original location with new parks that were subsequently developed around them.

### **Era V: Repurposing Structures to Become Activity Buildings, 1937-1968**

*Representative Buildings: "Adaptive Use"*

- Norwood Bureau of Animal Industry Building (1906-1936/1937)  
Address: Norwood Local Park, 4700 Norwood Drive, Bethesda
- Norbeck Rosenwald School (1927/1964)  
Address: Norbeck-Muncaster Mill Neighborhood Park, 4104 Muncaster Mill Road, Norbeck
- Camp Seneca (c1966/1968)  
Address: Camp Seneca Special Park, 14500 Clopper Road, Boyds
- Wheaton-Claridge (1942-1950/altered 1961)  
Address: Wheaton-Claridge Local Park, 11901 Claridge Road, Wheaton

*Candidate(s) for Preservation:*

- Norbeck Rosenwald School: Eligible for the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*
- Norwood Bureau of Land Industry Building: designated on the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*<sup>6</sup>

Norbeck warrants particular attention as one of the few remaining of the original 15 Rosenwald Schools in Montgomery County. When Norbeck operated as a learning institution, it was one of 156 Rosenwald Schools in the state. Today, there are only 53 of these structures still standing in Maryland.<sup>7</sup> In addition to Norbeck, Rosenwald schools in the Ken Gar neighborhood (on Plyers Mills Road), Poolesville, Sandy Spring, Smithville,<sup>8</sup> and Takoma Park still stand with varying degrees of integrity. Norbeck, however, which is

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<sup>6</sup> For further information on this structure, reference the inventory form for the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation* at [http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/viewer.shtm#http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/historic/documents/4-BureauAnimalIndustryMIHP\\_000.pdf](http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/viewer.shtm#http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/historic/documents/4-BureauAnimalIndustryMIHP_000.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> Norbeck was included in an exhaustive study entitled "Rosenwald Schools of Maryland" by historian Susan G. Pearl. Her multi-listing eligibility form for the National Register (2010) is available through the Maryland Historical Trust. According to Pearl, the percentage of surviving buildings in Maryland, at roughly a one-third of the original total of Rosenwald Schools, is applicable through the South.

<sup>8</sup> According to Susan Pearl, "A school that resembles a Rosenwald-plan school survives and has been restored at Smithville in Montgomery County. There is, however, no indication in the Rosenwald Archives of Rosenwald support to the building of the Smithville School, and no record of disbursement of funds. But Clarke and Brown in 1978 referred to a December 1928 *Education Report of the Board of Education* in which the Superintendent of Schools stated that the construction of the Smithville School (and of 14 other schools) had been supported by the Rosenwald Fund. This report has not been preserved in the files of the Montgomery County Board of Education, so the discrepancy has not been resolved. See Clarke and Brown, *History of the Black Public Schools of Montgomery County, Maryland 1872-1961*, p. 44 ff." See Pearl Report, p. 17-18, fn 36.

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maintained by M-NCPPC, is the only example of the Rosenwald form of a segregated establishment that is accessible on public land in Montgomery County.

Though Norbeck School has been altered, the structure has been in continuous public use. The resource harkens back to its days when it served a segregated community. Mt. Pleasant was a community established by freed slaves after the Civil War, and this settlement centered on their school. Built in 1872, the original Mt. Pleasant School was one of the first six schoolhouses established in Montgomery County for African American children. That facility was replaced by the Norbeck Rosenwald School, which sits on the same piece of land the Montgomery County Board of School Commissioners purchased in 1872.

This particular two-teacher, two-room school was constructed in 1927-1928 and it was one of nine such facilities built in Montgomery County during that same time-span. The two-teacher, two-room school architectural plan was the most common one in Maryland in the 14 year period (1918-1932) in which such schools were built using the Julius Rosenwald Fund.<sup>9</sup> At Norbeck, one room was a classroom for grades 1-6 (at one time accommodating as many as 85 students), while the other room served as a coat closet and storeroom for wood.

It cost a total of \$5,300 to build Norbeck School. To cover the cost of construction, the local black community supplied \$500, which was matched by the Rosenwald Fund, leaving the remaining cost to be provided by public taxes.<sup>10</sup>

For many years, the two-room school had only one teacher. The conditions within the school were described by a former student who recalled: "There were no inside facilities, water, or central heat. We had free books but never any new ones. These books were dirty, ragged, marked in, and often had pages missing. I don't think the teacher had anything to do with ordering supplies. As I remember, they used whatever was sent. In the new school there were two teachers. Grades began with first and continued through seventh."<sup>11</sup> Clearly, the theory that such a facility was "separate but equal" did not apply here.

The school operated until August 1951. Just a few years later, after the State of Maryland enforced integration as a result of the Federal Supreme Court ruling in the 1954 case *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, the property was transferred back to the Montgomery County School Commissioners/Board of

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<sup>9</sup> There were 68 two-teacher, two-room Rosenwald schoolhouses in Maryland and six of them were in Montgomery County (Burnt Mills, Laytonsville, *Norbeck*, *Poolesville*, Spencerville and Washington Grove). Those schools italicized are the only structures still standing. This Rosenwald plan typically was one story, usually side-gabled, with two batteries of four, five, or six windows lighting the front or rear wall.

<sup>10</sup> [http://rosenwald.fisk.edu/index.php?module=search.details&set\\_v=aWQ9MTU5Mw==&school\\_state=MD&button=Search&o=90](http://rosenwald.fisk.edu/index.php?module=search.details&set_v=aWQ9MTU5Mw==&school_state=MD&button=Search&o=90)

<sup>11</sup> Clarke and Brown, 166.



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Education who owned it until 2005 when the county acquired the site through a “no consideration deed.”<sup>12</sup> The Commission developed building renovation plans for the former Norbeck School to become a community center in 1957 and the building was operational as such by 1964. However, based on a historic photograph, the renovation plan was not fully implemented until after 1977. M-NCPPC continues to manage this site for the county through a 1972 MOU agreement.

Nearby is the Mt. Pleasant Methodist Episcopal Church, a c1890s modest frame structure with subsequent stucco treatment in the 1930s.<sup>13</sup> Its cemetery, identified in the Montgomery County Cemetery Inventory as No. 111, which contains at least 33 burials dating from 1893 to 1961. It is considered part of the Waves of Glory Church domain.

Local citizens continue to often use the Norbeck Recreation Center, which is a valued community asset.

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<sup>12</sup>Montgomery County Land Records 29914/259 (2005), Maryland State Archives.

<sup>13</sup>Master Plan site 23-113-1. For more information, see Clare Lise Kelly, *Places from the Past: The Tradition of Gardez Bien in Montgomery County, Maryland* (Silver Spring: M-NCPPC, 2001), 126.

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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Clarke, Nina H. and Lillian B. Brown. *History of the Black Public Schools of Montgomery County, Maryland, 1872-1961*.

M-NCPPC Archives, Saddlebrook. Collection includes M-NCPPC *Annual Reports*.

M-NCPPC Papers (Minutes/Proceedings), Maryland State Archives

Norbeck File, Parkside.

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## 10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of surveyed property 21,780 sq. ft.

Acreage of historical setting 21,780 sq. ft.

Quadrangle name Kensington,

Quadrangle scale: 1:24000

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### Verbal boundary description and justification

The historic environmental setting includes that part of the parcel associated with the recreation building and its functions in the parcel owned by Montgomery County. The additional 12.066 acres owned by M-NCPPC that forms the Norbeck-Muncaster Mill Neighborhood Park does not function in association with the recreation building, and are therefore not part of the setting. It will also exclude the Mt. Pleasant Methodist Church Cemetery that is associated with the Waves of Glory Church located nearby; the latter is privately owned. Neither the church nor the cemetery is part of the Norbeck-Muncaster Mill Neighborhood Park.

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## 11. Form Prepared by

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|                 |  |           |                |
|-----------------|--|-----------|----------------|
| name/title      | Jamie F. Kuhns, Senior Historian, Cultural Resources Stewardship Section |           |                |
| organization    | M-NCPPC, Montgomery Parks  | date      | 15 August 2013 |
| street & number | 9500 Brunett Avenue  | telephone | 301-450-4362   |
| city or town    | Silver Spring  | state     | MD             |

The Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust  
Maryland Department of Planning  
100 Community Place  
Crownsville, MD 21032-2023  
410-514-7600

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Figure 1. USGS Kensington Quad.  
Courtesy: M-NCPPC.

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Figure 2. Tax Map: Property P923.  
Courtesy: M-NCPPC.

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Figure 3. Aerial view of Norbeck Recreation Building at the Norbeck-Muncaster Mill Neighborhood Park, 2008.

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Courtesy: M-NCPPC.



Figure 4. Black and white photograph of the Norbeck Rosenwald School, c1927.  
Courtesy: Fisk University.

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Figure 5. Norbeck Rosenwald School, c1940s. Courtesy: Montgomery County Historical Society.

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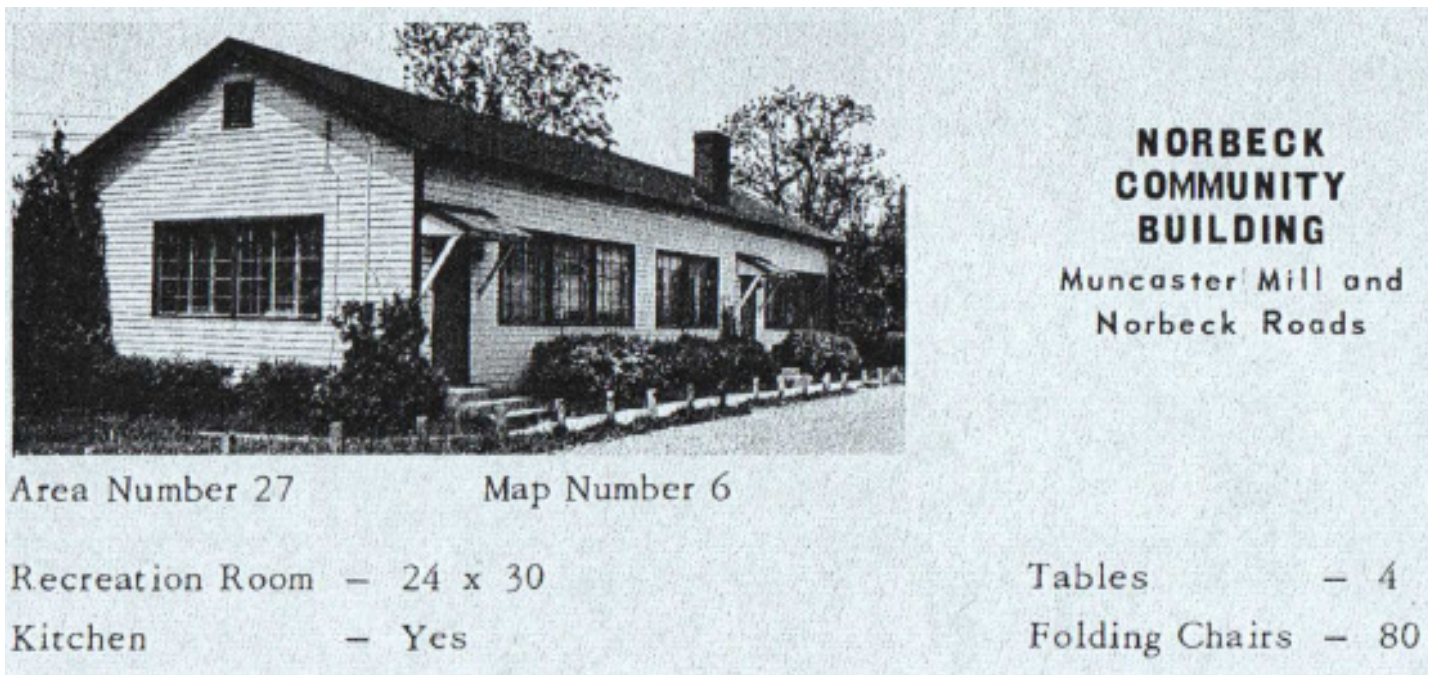


Figure 6. Norbeck Community Building in the M-NCPPC *Guide to M-NCPPC Recreation Centers* (1962). Courtesy: M-NCPPC.



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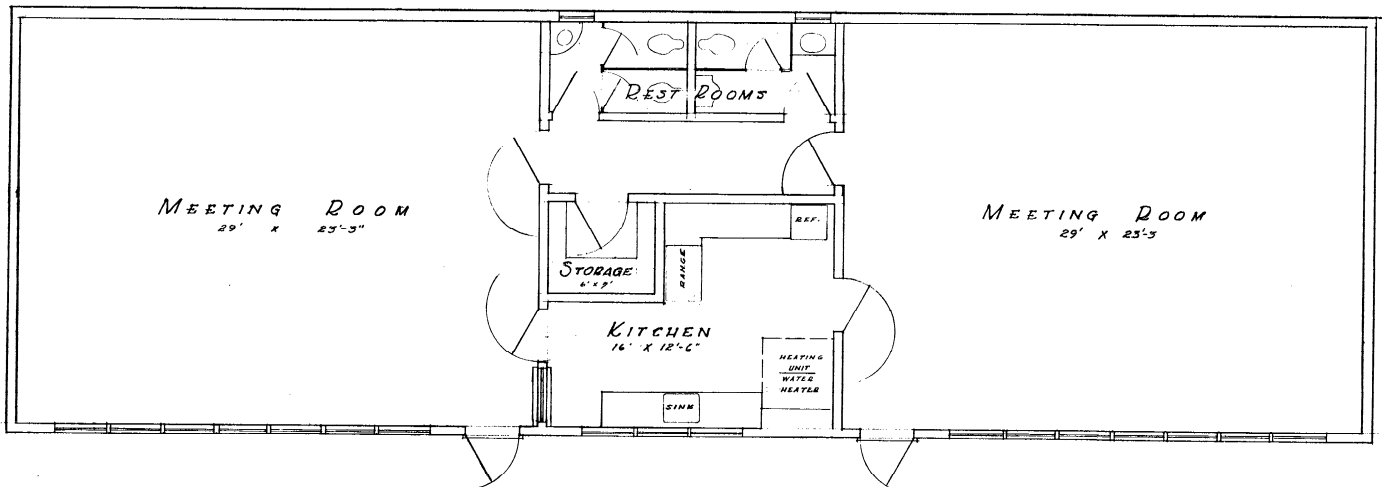
Figure 7. Norbeck Recreation Building (left) and Mt. Pleasant Methodist Church in 1977.

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**NORBECK MUNCASTER MILL**  
SCALE - 1/4" = 1'-0"

|  |                     |
|--|---------------------|
| MD. NAT. CAP. PARK & PLANNING COMMISSION<br>8500 COLESVILLE RD. - SILVER SPRING, MD. |                     |
| PROJECT  | BUILDING RENOVATION |
| LOCATION   | NORBECK REC. CENTER |
| FILE NO.   | BUILDING FLOOR PLAN |
| DATE   | 8/23                |
| DATE   | JULY 1957           |
| APPROVED BY  | DATE                |
| REVISED:   | DATE                |

Figure 8. Building Renovation, Norbeck Recreation Center, 1957. Courtesy: M-NCPPC.

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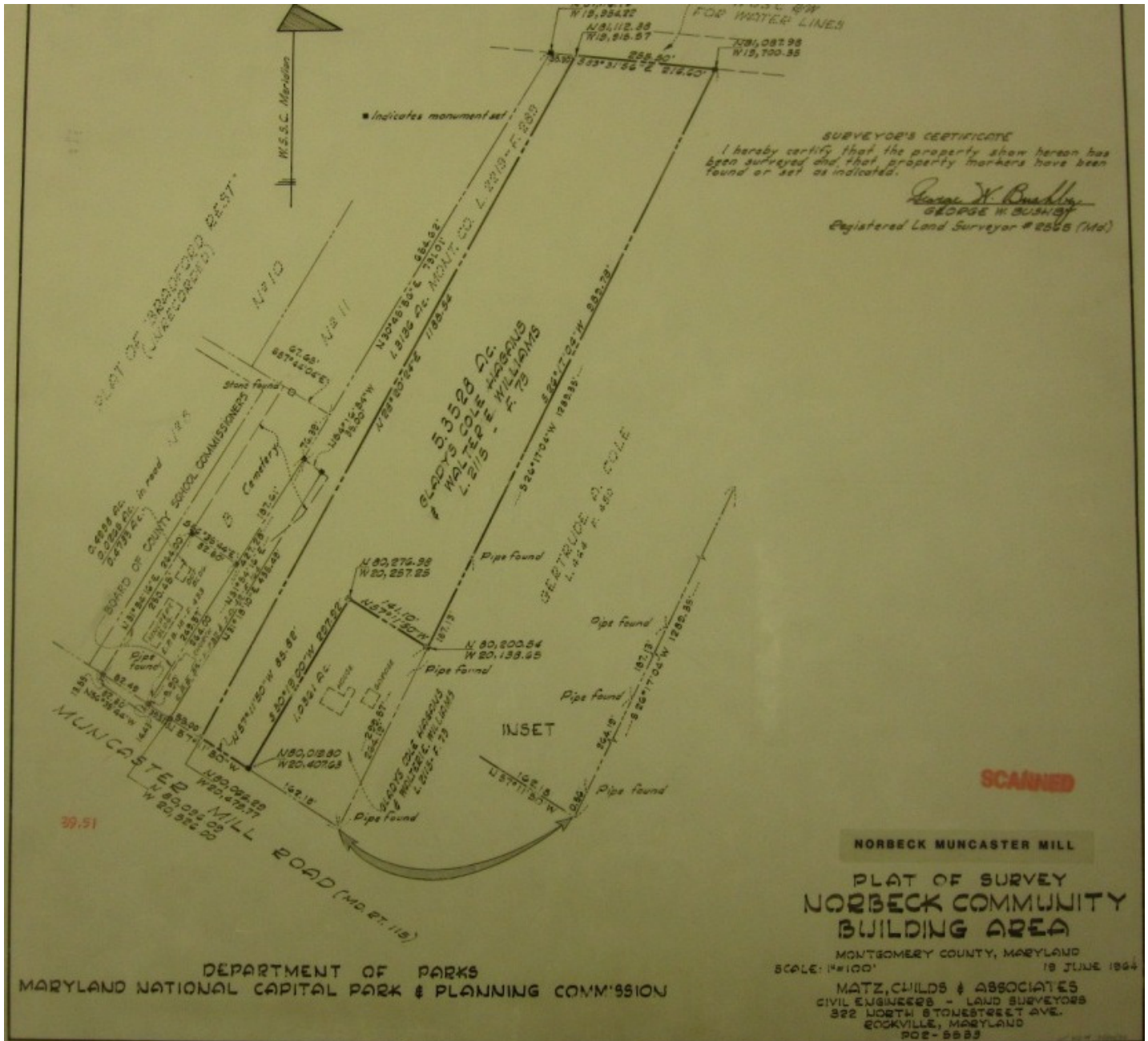


Figure 9. Plat of Survey for the Norbeck Community Building Area, 1964.  
Courtesy: M-NCPPC.

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Figure 10. View of Norbeck Recreation Building, east elevation/front façade.

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Figure 11. View of Norbeck Recreation Building, northeast corner.

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Figure 12. View of Norbeck Recreation Center, north elevation.

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Figure 13. View of Norbeck Recreation Building, northwest corner.

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Figure 14. View of Norbeck Recreation Building, west elevation.



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Figure 15. View of Norbeck Recreation Building, southwest elevation, and Mount Pleasant Church (Waves of Glory Worship Center).

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Figure 16. View of Norbeck Recreation Building, south elevation.

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Figure 17. Interior detail of open space, Norbeck Recreation Building.