

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Valdese Elementary School

and or common Rock School

2. Location

street & number 400 Main Street N/A not for publication

city, town Valdese 28690 N/A vicinity of

state North Carolina code 17 county Burke code 23

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational <input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input checked="" 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
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: Community Service

4. Owner of Property

name Town of Valdese

street & number 370 Faet Street

city, town Valdese N/A vicinity of state North Carolina 28690

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Register of Deeds

street & number Burke County Courthouse, 201 South Green Street

city, town Morganton state North Carolina

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Burke County Historic Sites Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1983-84 federal state county local

depository for survey records North Carolina Division of Archives and History

city, town 13 Veterans Drive, Asheville state North Carolina

7. Description

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

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Valdese Elementary School (1922-23) in Valdese, North Carolina, occupies an inclined site on the northern side of Main Street opposite Waldo Street. A circular drive is located in front of the school, which faces south, while a parking lot is adjacent to it on the east. The school gymnasium, a separate structure erected in 1933-34, is located to the west of the school, as is the present high school. Like the Waldensian Presbyterian Church to the southwest, the school was constructed largely by Waldensian settlers from Northern Italy, and embodies the masonry building traditions practiced in their homeland. With its four-square massing and loosely-derived classical detailing, the structure, which was erected from plans drawn by Hickory, North Carolina, architect Q. E. Herman, differs from the more overtly Colonial Revival prototypes used for North Carolina schools during the 1920s and 1930s. The building retains most of its original exterior and interior fabric, and is in generally fair condition.

The two-story, asphalt-shingle hipped-roof school building is constructed of randomly-coursed fieldstone and features a clerestory sided with pressed-tin shingles which rises to three stories at the central core. The T-shaped clerestory, which corresponds to the auditorium space on the interior, has a tin-shingle hipped-roof and twelve-light sash windows on all sides. A plain stone projecting stringcourse proceeds around the entire structure between the ground, or raised basement, and main floor levels. The main floor has triple nine-over-nine double-hung sash windows on all sides, while the ground floor has six-over-six double-hung sash windows. Insulating panels were installed over some of the windows in 1981.

The southern facade has a wide projecting central pavilion and narrower projecting pavilions at the eastern and western corners. These corner pavilions have incised stone rectangles at their centers on the main floor level. The central pavilion is distinguished by a curvilinear parapet gable with recessed rectangular stone panels reading "Valdese Elementary School" at its center and two recessed decorative stone circles on either side of the panels. The main entrance, which features double-leaf glass-paneled doors flanked by sidelights and topped by a transom, is surrounded by a wooden enframingent and recessed into the pavilion. Stone plaques commemorating the role of the school trustees and the Burke County Board of Education in erecting the building, are located on the eastern and western sides of the entrance. Triple-banded windows are located to either side of the recessed entry, while similar windows are located directly below those on the ground floor level.

The entrance is approached by a two-flight stone stairway with solid stone railings, the lower flight tapering in as it nears the building. Small lamps on metal posts are located at the end pier of each railing, while decorative concrete spheres mark the landing area between the two flights. Access to the ground floor is provided by single doors, not original to the structure, which are recessed into arched enframingents on the eastern and western sides of the central pavilion under the main stairs. The ground level on the facade itself is characterized by four sets of triple-banded windows placed in pairs on either side of the pavilion. The windows on the main level are identical in arrangement and placement. The clerestory portion has four sets of triple-banded windows across its southern face and one set of double windows at the eastern and western corners.

The eastern and western, or side, elevations are nine bays each and feature projecting two-story pavilions with arcaded balconies and curvilinear gabled parapets,

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each parapet with a recessed decorative circle at its center, similar to the motif used on the facade. These pavilions, located near the southern corners of the respective elevations, denote the location of side entrances behind arcaded openings on the ground floor level. Each entrance is characterized by double-leaf doors with six lights in its upper third. The balconies are accessible through a set of double-leaf doors with twenty lights each, topped by a fourteen-light transom. The main level windows, with their triple panel arrangement, are identical to those on the facade, as are the corresponding windows directly below them. The clerestory level has five sets of triple windows and one double window on the northernmost end of both the eastern and western sides.

The northern, or rear, elevation has six sets of triple-banded windows on the main floor level and doors leading to interior corridors near the eastern and western corners. Two staircases with solid stone railings anchored by piers with pyramidal caps lead to landings which span the space between the top step and the doors. The undersides of these landings are arched, forming a passageway on the ground floor level. Individual doors adjacent to the main floor level staircases on the east and west respectively provide access to interior hallways on the ground floor, while two sets of triple-banded windows are located toward the center of the rear elevation at this level. The clerestory has a "T" configuration on this side of the building, the projecting portion corresponding to the area above the stage.

On the main floor, the twelve interior classrooms are organized around the auditorium, which forms the center of the plan. This level features narrow wood plank floors throughout and beaded tongue-and-groove wainscoting with a three-part molded top edge on the east and west corridor walls adjacent to the auditorium, on the northern wall of the front foyer, and on the auditorium walls. Tongue-and-groove coved-edge wainscoting with a similar top edge is located on all other corridor and foyer walls. The walls above the wainscoting are plaster, as are all the classroom walls. Wide baseboards topped by a quirked molding proceed along all of these surfaces. All rooms on this floor have pressed-tin ceilings with cove moldings displaying acanthus leaf motifs. A band of rectilinear forms comprises the edge of each ceiling, which is characterized by individual square panels with plain raised moldings. All the classroom doors have two recessed vertical panels at their bases with six clear glass lights in their upper portions.

The front foyer, accessible through the double-leaf glass-paneled doors at its southern end, features paneled reveals enframing the entry. Two connected offices open off the foyer on the east, while a bathroom and storage space are located to the west. At the northern end of the foyer, two doors, each with five raised panels and transoms with five rectangular stippled glass lights, lead to the auditorium.

The auditorium has an inclined floor and original wooden chairs which seat 374 and are arranged in two sections with a wide center aisle and narrower side aisles. A curved proscenium, which projects out into the room, is located on the northern wall. Illumination is provided by twelve hanging lights with opaque glass globes. Two sets of doors in the southeastern and southwestern corners of the room provide access to the auditorium from flanking corridors. Additional exist doors are located on the side walls

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near the stage. The side walls are each articulated by four projecting piers with applied roll moldings at their centers. These piers rest on a raised platform with coved-edge tongue-and-groove facing. The platform becomes more pronounced with the slant of the floor. Acoustic tiles arranged in rectangular panels are located above the wainscoting between each pier, as well as on the southern wall. The three center bays on both side walls each contain twenty-light panels in their upper third, which are hinged at the middle and provide ventilation. Four clerestory windows on the southern wall and one at either end of the northern wall furnish additional ventilation.

The wood-floored stage area is set within a rectangular opening with paneled reveals on its underside, which is flanked by flat piers with roll moldings at their centers. A quirked molding proceeds around the upper edge of the opening. Two flights of stairs lead to the stage on its eastern and western sides. The curved front of the stage is faced with coved-edge tongue-and-groove paneling. Rectangular quirked moldings enframe plaster pedestals mounted on the northern wall to either side of the stage.

The classrooms, which open off L-shaped corridors on the eastern and western sides of the auditorium, retain most of their interior fabric, although some have been altered by current tenants of the building. Each room has a blackboard on one wall with bulletin board space above it. The triple windows have sills with rolled edges and lighting is provided by suspended metal fixtures with four fluorescent tubes each. The east-west axis of each classroom corridor contains double-leaf doors at its terminus opening onto the arcaded balcony. Staircases along these axes lead to the ground floor while staircases adjacent to the eastern and western auditorium walls lead to the clerestory space.

The ground floor has two corridors with concrete walls and floors. Lavatories, as well as additional classrooms, some of which have altered ceilings and floors, are located off these corridors. A third hallway on an east-west axis provides access to the physical plant and connects the classroom space on the eastern and western sides of the school.

Two connecting rooms at the northeast corner of the structure contained the library, but are now used for storage. The cafeteria, completely renovated in 1981, occupies the front section of the building between the two corridors. Entrances to this T-shaped room are located along the eastern and western walls. Kitchen space flanks the base of the T to the east and west.

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 1922-23 **Builder Architect** Quince Edward Herman

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Valdese Elementary School (1922-23), located on a hill along the main commercial street in Valdese, was the first substantial educational facility erected in that town. The four-square building, which varies in appearance from the Colonial Revival prototypes prevalent in North Carolina school design during the 1920s and 1930s, was constructed of native stone by members of the Waldensian community, who were largely responsible for initiating and financing the project. Completion of the building, designed by Hickory, North Carolina, architect Q. E. Herman, and known locally as the Rock School, was met with great enthusiasm by the Waldenses, who place a strong cultural emphasis on education.

Criteria Assessment

- A. Associated with the Waldensian community established in Valdese in 1893, the Valdese Elementary School was the first major educational institution constructed in the town. The building, which was erected with Waldensian labor, is considered a significant community landmark.
- With its native stone construction, four-square massing, and loosely-derived Colonial Revival detailing, the Valdese Elementary School differs in appearance from contemporary school buildings in North Carolina which were generally more overtly classical in design.

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The Valdese Elementary School (1922-23) was the first substantial educational building erected in Valdese, and remained in continuous use until 1977. With its four-square massing and stone construction, the structure varies from the generally accepted Colonial Revival models used for North Carolina schools during the 1920s and 1930s. The unique appearance of this building is in part attributable to its connection with the Waldensian community in Valdese responsible for its construction. Over the years, the building has been an integral part of the educational system in the community, attended by many descendants of the original Waldensian settlers.

The Waldenses, members of an anti-papal religious sect residing in the Cottian Alps of Northern Italy, first came to Valdese in the spring of 1893. The migration of some Waldenses to North Carolina was largely the result of an effort to alleviate overcrowded conditions in the Italian homeland.¹ The group's religious and cultural history is rooted in the twelfth century, at which time four independent reform movements seeking to preserve Apostolic church traditions were founded in France. Peter Waldo, a leader of one of these movements, settled in the Piedmont region of Italy with his followers during the 1190s, and is considered to be the individual for whom the sect was named. The group endured religious persecution for over 600 years as a result of its opposition to the consolidated power of the Catholic Church.²

The first migration to Valdese consisted of twenty-nine people. In November 1893, 178 more settlers arrived, firmly establishing the French-speaking enclave. The Waldenses endured a very difficult winter and spring in 1894, the result of infertile lands and their unfamiliarity with American business customs. By 1895, many of the initial problems relating to settlement and land development had been remedied, and the community began to address the need for a substantial church building. Completion of the Waldensian Presbyterian Church in 1899 facilitated religious worship in the community.³

The Waldenses, who had always placed a high priority on education, erected a frame structure at the northwest corner of Massel and Faet streets as early as 1893 to serve as a school, temporary church, and storeroom.⁴ A one-room schoolhouse about five miles south of Valdese was also used by the colony between 1895 and 1905.⁵ In 1903, the church began soliciting funds for a larger school to be located on a lot to the east of the chapel. While a total of \$444 was raised during this endeavor, the plans changed in 1905 when Burke County assumed responsibility for the school. In that year, the church conveyed the plat of land reserved for the school to the county, which erected a two-room frame schoolhouse partially financed with the funds previously collected by the Waldenses.⁶ Although two rooms were subsequently added to the building, it soon became evident that the facility could not meet the demands of the rapidly growing community.⁷

In 1917, the citizens of Valdese took it upon themselves to begin raising money for a new school, voluntarily voting for a building tax to be assessed at the rate of \$.30 per \$100. This money was then given to the county for a building fund. A bond issue of \$25,000 was passed in a special election during 1921, and under the leadership of a local school committee composed of Francis Garrou, Chairman, J. M. Brinkley, L. P. Guigou, and Antoine Grill, along with the guidance of the Burke County Board of Education, the project was ready to begin.⁸

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The heavily-wooded four-acre site chosen for the building was acquired by the Board of Education from Peter and Albert Tron through condemnation proceedings.⁹ Quince Edward Herman, a Hickory, North Carolina, architect, received the Valdese school commission. Mr. Herman obtained part of his training under Frank P. Milburn, the architect responsible for the remodeling of the Old Burke County Courthouse in 1901. Herman designed all the consolidated school buildings in Lincoln and Alexander counties up until 1933, and all but two of the schools in Catawba County until that year.¹⁰ The Waldenses' familiarity with the masonry building traditions of their homeland most likely influenced the selection of native stone for the structure. A tradition exists that L. P. Guigou, a member of the local school committee, suggested as a possible model a school he had seen while working in the West on an Indian Reservation.¹¹

Work on the building began in 1921, with John Garrou in charge of clearing and preparing the site. Much of the rock for the structure was obtained from John Barus' property and hauled to the site by members of the Waldensian community.¹² Antoine Grill supervised the construction, which was executed by local masons at the rate of \$.30 per hour. The carpenters were led by James Powell of West Valdese. The reduced wage was accepted by the workers because of the importance of the project to the residents of Valdese.¹³

The cornerstone was laid on July 4, 1922, during a ceremony attended by a large crowd. The celebration itself included a parade led by John Long, the mayor of Valdese, and a local marching band. The parade featured floats representing various businesses and organizations in the town. Local dignitaries delivered speeches commemorating the occasion and songs were performed by school children in French, Italian, and English. A luncheon on the grounds was planned but was rained out.¹⁴

The building, known locally as the Rock School, was completed in October 1923, the fall term beginning about thirty days late because the structure was not completed on time. The cost of the entire physical plant, including the land and furniture, was estimated at \$75,000.¹⁵ G. M. Mosier was the first principal of the school, followed by Carl C. Long, who came in the fall of 1924 and continued in that position until 1939. The local P.T.A., founded in 1921, was instrumental in raising money for items required for classroom instruction not appropriated by the county. This organization sponsored a number of social events in order to finance the purchase of maps, books, stage curtains, props, two pianos, and some playground and athletic equipment. A. M. Kistler, a prominent citizen of Morganton, donated a movie projector to the school.¹⁶

Although the school, which was used for all grade levels, was initially too large for the number of pupils in attendance, this situation changed when high school students from Icard, Rutherford College, and Connelly Springs were brought in.¹⁷ In 1931, the first landscaping of the grounds was undertaken and in 1933-34, a gymnasium to the west of the school was erected with W.P.A. labor at a cost of \$12,000.¹⁸ The continued increase in population in Valdese led to construction of the Francis Garrou High School in 1938.

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¹³News Herald (March 22, 1935), sec. 4, p. 1.

¹⁴"Jup Pluvius Reigned at Valdese Tuesday," News-Herald, July 6, 1922, pp. 1 and 4. This article contains a full account of the celebration connected with the laying of the cornerstone. A copy of the program for the ceremony is in the possession of Mrs. J. P. Rostan, Jr.

¹⁵News-Herald, March 22, 1935, sec. 4, p. 1.

¹⁶From notes on the history of the P.T.A. in the possession of Mrs. J. P. Rostan, Jr.

¹⁷News-Herald, March 22, 1935, sec. 4, p. 1.

¹⁸Notes on P.T.A. and school history in the possession of Mrs. J. P. Rostan, Jr.

¹⁹See Bob Boggs, "Grant May Revitalize Rock School," Hickory Daily Record, July 1, 1983, n.p., and Sarah Helton, "Renovation Plans for the Old Rock School Revealed," News-Herald, May 16, 1984, p. 2-A.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 1.91

Quadrangle name Valdese (North Carolina)

Quadrangle scale 1: 24,000

UTM References

A

1	7	4	4	8	7	4	0	3	9	5	5	5	9	5
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification

The nominated property includes the lot defined as Lot #5, Block 1, Map 74-56 in the Burke County Tax Supervisor's Office, a trapezoidal property approximately 260' x 330'.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	N/A	code	county	N/A	code
state		code	county		code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Dana E. Mintzer, Preservation Consultant

organization N.C. Division of Archives and History date July 12, 1984

street & number 13 Veterans Drive telephone 704/298-5024

city or town Asheville state North Carolina

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature William S. Price, Jr.

title State Historic Preservation Officer date July 12, 1984

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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32'30"

(DREXEL)

Valdese Elementary School
Burke County
Valdese (North Carolina)
1: 24,000
Zone: 17; 448740, 3955595

35'

Creek

Dub

SOUTHERN

BM 1143

Water

Valdese

BM 1203

BM 1178

1098
Double

Cem

Cem Bollingers Chapel

Cem

Abees Grove Ch

Branch

L O V E L A D Y

Flat Gap

Mineral Springs Mtn

Rector Knob

Alley

Cub

Burke County



