

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form

This form is used for documenting property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* (formerly 16B). Complete each item by entering the requested information. For additional space, use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items

New Submission Amended Submission

A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

Faith Cabin Libraries in South Carolina, 1932-ca. 1960

B. Associated Historic Contexts

(Name each associated historic context, identifying theme, geographical area, and chronological period for each.)

Faith Cabin Libraries in South Carolina, 1932-ca. 1960

C. Form Prepared by

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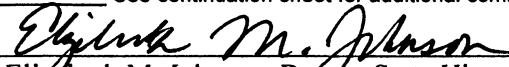
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D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation.

(____ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)



Elizabeth M. Johnson, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
Signature and title of certifying official

9/25/2012

Date

South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, S.C.

State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

I hereby certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

Signature of the Keeper

11/14/2012
Date of Action

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Provide the following information on continuation sheets. Cite the letter and title before each section of the narrative. Assign page numbers according to the instructions for continuation sheets in National Register Bulletin *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* (formerly 16B). Fill in page numbers for each section in the space below.

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E. Statement of Historic Contexts

(if more than one historic context is documented, present them in sequential order.)

Introduction

Prior to and after the American Civil War, African Americans faced a number of challenges to equality. The Supreme Court decision in *Dred Scott v. Sandford* (1856) did not recognize blacks, whether enslaved or free blacks as people within the eyes of the law. For this reason, African Americans encountered difficulties and limitations in economic, social, and legal avenues. After the immediate end of the American Civil War, African Americans secured political rights, such as the right to vote. Unfortunately, these liberties were short-lived after the end of Reconstruction. Southern states began to implement discriminatory laws known as Jim Crow laws. These laws segregated whites and blacks in public spaces. With the *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) ruling, the Supreme Court set a precedent upholding the principle of segregation as long as facilities were “separate but equal.” However, separate but equal did not inherently translate into adequate facilities or funding for African Americans in terms of education and, by extension, library services. This multiple property submission discusses the efforts of Willie Lee Buffington (1908-1988), a white mill worker who later became a minister and college professor, to establish rural libraries for African Americans.

Library Services in South Carolina

In the southern United States, library services to rural populations were either completely unavailable or ineffective at providing adequate services. For African Americans, access to libraries was tenuous. The cost of separate facilities for blacks and whites placed greater strain on state budgets and limited resources for library support.¹ South Carolina had three libraries that were considered “well-organized, adequately supported...giving systematic county-wide service.”² These three libraries were located in the cities of Greenville, Columbia, and Charleston. Only Columbia and Charleston provided access to African Americans. The efforts of Willie Lee Buffington and the Faith Cabin Library movement sought to fill this void. In the end, his movement provided library services to over one hundred communities in rural South Carolina and Georgia between 1932 and 1960. Of this total, Buffington established approximately thirty Faith Cabin Libraries in South Carolina between 1932 and 1943.

Willie Lee Buffington and the Faith Cabin Library Movement

Born in 1908, Willie Lee Buffington grew up in Saluda County, South Carolina. As a boy, he dreamed of being a preacher; however, as the son of a white tenant farmer, Buffington experienced the elusiveness of education. Seven months out of the year, he walked three miles to attend the whites-only rural school. The white and black schools of Saluda County were old dilapidated buildings, merely recycled shacks converted to school houses.³ As a boy, Buffington developed a friendship with Euriah W. Simpkins, a black school teacher. Their paths first crossed when Simpkins took a short cut across the Buffington property on his way to the black school.

¹ Dan R. Lee, “Faith Cabin Libraries: A Study of an Alternative Library Service in the Segregated South, 1932-1960.” *Libraries and Culture* 26 (Winter 1991), 171.

² Lee, 171.

³ Tamara Powell, “Willie Lee Buffington and Faith Cabin Libraries: Doing Practical Good in a Disordered World.” In Susan Schramm-Pate and Rhonda B. Jefferies., eds., *Grappling with Diversity: Readings on Civil Rights Pedagogy and Critical Multiculturalism* (Albany: State University Press of New York, 2008).

Over time, the two became lifelong friends, a friendship that transcended race. Buffington told Simpkins about his desire to get an education and become a preacher. Simpkins supported Buffington's dream and encouraged him to reach for it.

Buffington attended the rural school for seven years before the demands of the family farm, temporarily, sidetracked his education. In the 1920s, the boll weevil struck the Buffington farm and their cotton crop was destroyed. To help his family, Buffington and his father got jobs at a sawmill. For four years, Buffington worked in the mill. Eventually, he got a chance to return to school when his father enrolled him in the Martha Berry School in Rome, Georgia, where he could work for an education.⁴ While at the school, he held a variety of jobs from digging sewers, driving a garbage truck and eventually working in the school library.

Once again, the demands of the family took Buffington away from school when his family moved from Saluda to Ninety Six, in Greenwood County. To help support his father and five sisters, Buffington took a job at a textile mill in Edgefield, in nearby Edgefield County. He kept his dream of being a preacher alive by teaching Sunday school classes at a Methodist church.⁵

In 1931, at the age of twenty-three, Buffington married Clara Rushton of Saluda. At the same time, the textile mill reduced his pay and his hours; however, rather than seeing this as a problem, he used the opportunity to finish his education by enrolling in high school. That same year, Euriah Simpkins invited him to the dedication of a new black schoolhouse partially funded by the Julius Rosenwald Fund. Buffington, disturbed by the lack of books in the school and remembering his own struggle to obtain an education, decided to do something about it. From the Methodist church where he taught, he wrote to five ministers in different cities requesting donated books to fill the black school.

Out of the five ministers, Buffington only heard from one: Reverend L.H. King of Saint Mark's Methodist Church in New York. The congregation donated 1,000 books.⁶ Given the overwhelming number of books, Buffington gathered the black Saluda community to propose building a library to house the books. People from the community, black and white, donated lumber for the construction of a library. The log cabin measured eighteen by twenty two feet and had a rock chimney.⁷ When deciding what to name it, an elderly black woman suggested Faith Cabin Library because "we didn't have money, all we had was faith."⁸ The library was dedicated on December 31, 1932. The Faith Cabin Library movement was born.

The first library garnered publicity from newspapers and magazines. Shortly afterward, in 1933, Buffington helped build a second Faith Cabin Library, on the school grounds of the Ridge Hill Rosenwald School in Ridge Spring, Saluda County, South Carolina. The establishment of this school began Buffington's process of working with county school leaders to assess the needs for libraries and identify communities in need who could come together to build the facility.⁹

Each library was given a unit name. These names helped to distinguish the libraries from one another. For instance, the first Faith Cabin Library in Saluda, South Carolina was designated the Lizzie Koon Unit. Buffington named the unit in memory his mother who died in 1910. The second unit was called the Annie

⁴ Harry Edward Neal, "The Bookshelves Filled by Faith." *Sunday Digest: Selected Reading for the Christian Home*, April 12, 1959, 2.

⁵ Neal, 2.

⁶ John Monk, "White Man Struggled to Bring Books to Poor Blacks." *The State* (Columbia, S.C.), April 3, 2005.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Lee, 172.

⁹ Powell, p. 85.

Bodie Unit, named for Buffington's stepmother with whom he had a close relationship. In subsequent years, the units took on the names of institutions and organizations, such as schools and churches, individuals who donated the majority of the books to the library, famous individuals, and other important people in Buffington's life.

The Faith Cabin Library garnered local, state, and national publicity. In fact, the biggest factor in the movement's success was the press publicizing Buffington's activities and the continued need for books.¹⁰ Such publications as *Reader's Digest*, *Library Journal*, *Coronet*, and *American Magazine*, among mainstream periodicals, as well as various denominational and other Christian publications such as *Guideposts*, *Christian Herald*, *Religious Telescope*, *World Outlook*, *United Presbyterian*, *Baptist Leader*, wrote brief-to-extensive articles on Buffington and the Faith Cabin Library Movement from the 1930s to the 1950s. The publicity was not limited to print media. In 1938, Buffington was featured on the Hobby Lobby radio program in New York. Other radio programs began to report on this movement as well.

Even when Buffington moved his family to Greenville, South Carolina, so that he could attend Furman University, he continued to direct the movement. His system of working with school leaders made his efforts possible from such a long distance while pursuing his studies. Buffington went on to graduate from Furman University in 1938. In the 1940s, Buffington taught at Benedict College, an all-black school, in Columbia, South Carolina. Then, he taught at Paine College in Augusta, Georgia, another historically black college. After his move to Georgia, Buffington continued the Faith Cabin Library movement with the establishment of libraries in Georgia.

Buffington, in a 1955 appeal in *World Outlook*, the missionary-related publication of the Methodist Church, described "The Ministry of BOOKS" as "one of the forces for better living and better citizenship" in those communities where Faith Cabin Libraries were built and operated, going on to say that books donated to the Faith Cabin Library movement

will bear testimony to your concern for those who do not have good books, and your books will be the means of life-enrichment to hundreds, maybe thousands of youth and adults. 'Tell me, sir, aren't the books never going to stop coming?' was the question a freight deliveryman asked as he mopped his brow. My immediate reply was, "They mustn't stop, until the need is met. . . . Because someone believed, and enough friends of Christian education cared, there are seventy-four libraries serving youth and adults by the thousands. A generation of youngsters are growing up to be better citizens through the knowledge they gain through books."¹¹

Between 1932 and 1960, the movement sponsored thirty Faith Cabin Libraries in South Carolina and approximately seventy in Georgia. The Faith Cabin Libraries in South Carolina were built between 1932 and 1943.¹²

¹⁰ Lee, 175.

¹¹ W.L. Buffington, "The Ministry of BOOKS," *World Outlook*, January 1955.

¹² Powell, p. 83.

**Table 1: Faith Cabin Libraries Built in South Carolina 1932-1943,
 But No Longer Extant in 2012**

Unit Name	School Name	City	County	Established ¹³
1. Lizzie Koon	Plum Branch Rosenwald School	Saluda	Saluda	1932
2. Annie Bodie	Ridge Hill Rosenwald School	Ridge Spring	Saluda	1934
3. L.H. King	Drayton Street High School	Newberry	Newberry	1935
4. Bessie L. Drew	Chapman Grove Rosenwald School	TBD	Greenville	1936
5. Abraham Lincoln	Fountain Inn Negro High School	Fountain Inn	Greenville/Laurens	1937
6. Hanover-Dartmouth	Simpson Junior High School	Easley	Pickens	1938
7. B.E. Geer	Geer-Rosenwald School	Belton	Anderson	1938
8. A.H. Stamm	Inman Negro High School	Inman	Spartanburg	1938
9. Elyria	Edgefield Academy	Edgefield	Edgefield	1938
10. G.A. Brown	Edgefield County Training School	Johnston	Edgefield	1938
11. Decatur	Batesburg Negro High School	Batesburg	Lexington/Saluda	1939
12. Mt. Gretna	Saluda Rosenwald School	Saluda	Saluda	1940
13. Hobby Lobby	Lexington Rosenwald School	Lexington	Lexington	1940
14. Lucy Harris	Georgetown Negro High School	Georgetown	Georgetown	1940
15. Jamestown	Jamestown Negro School	Jamestown	Berkeley	1940
16. E.W. Simpkins	Boughknights' School	Johnston	Edgefield	1940
17. Queens Village	Marlboro County Training School	Bennettsville	Marlboro	1941
18. Rockford Unit	Aiken Negro School	Aiken	Aiken	1941
19. Harry A. Mackey	Sterling High School	Greenville	Greenville	1941
20. TBD	Elisha School and Community	TBD	Newberry	1941
21. TBD	Whitmire Negro School	Whitmire	Newberry	1941
22. B.B. Lietzey	Lightsey School	TBD	Newberry	1941
23. Doolittle-Howe	Mount Carmel Rosenwald School	Owings	Laurens	1942

¹³ Tamara Powell, "Communities in Collaboration: A Struggle to Increase Literacy in South Carolina," Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Education, University of South Carolina, 2004, pp. 184-190.

24. Swarthmore	Gray Court Negro School	Gray Court	Laurens	1942
25. TBD	Chesnee Negro School	Chesnee	Cherokee/Spartanburg	1942
26. TBD	Camp Liberty High School	Jenkinsville	Fairfield	1942
27. TBD	New Bethel High School	Woodruff	Spartanburg	1943

Table 2: Faith Cabin Libraries Built in South Carolina 1932-1943, Still Extant in 2012

Unit Name	School Name	City	County	Established ¹⁴
1. Iowa City	Bettis Academy *	Trenton	Edgefield	1938
2. Catherine Degen	Anderson County Training School	Pendleton	Anderson	1936
3. Oberlin	Seneca Junior College	Seneca	Oconee	1937

Tables compiled from information in the Willie Lee Buffington Papers, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, S.C.¹⁵

* NOTE: The Iowa City Unit at Bettis Academy, in the Trenton vicinity of Edgefield County, was placed in a 1938 molded-stone-block building built by student labor. Later renamed the Alexander Bettis Community Library, it is a contributing resource at Bettis Academy and Junior College, which was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on May 20, 1998.

¹⁴ Powell, "Communities in Collaboration," pp. 184-186.

¹⁵ Willie Lee Buffington Papers, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, S.C. Hereafter cited as Buffington Papers.

F. Associated Property Types

(Provide description, significance, and registration requirements.)

Faith Cabin Libraries

A. Property Types

Built in South Carolina from 1932-1943, Faith Cabin Libraries in South Carolina fall into two subtypes based on their physical and associative characteristics.

Subtype 1: Free-Standing Log Cabins

The first Faith Cabin Libraries were constructed as log cabins. The wood for construction was supplied by the local community. Therefore, no specific type of wood can be a determinant factor of whether or not a log building is a Faith Cabin Library. The traditional Faith Cabin Library is a one-room building with a stone chimney, culled from local supplies.

It is to be expected that modifications have occurred in the form of a stack room where additional books were housed as a rear addition. This is documented in the creation of the Faith Cabin Libraries at the Fountain Inn Negro School in Fountain Inn, Geer Rosenwald School in Belton, and Seneca Junior College in Seneca, for example.¹⁶

The measurements of free standing log cabin libraries vary in size. Known measurements of log cabins range from eighteen by twenty feet, eighteen by twenty four feet, eighteen by twenty eight feet, twenty by twenty eight feet, and twenty two by twenty eight feet. Rear additions also known as stack rooms tend to be equal length and width. Known measurements tend to be eleven by eleven feet or twelve by twelve feet.¹⁷

Subtype 2: A Room Within a School or Associated Building

Due to the economic constraints placed on a community to raise the money and lumber for a free-standing log cabin, Faith Cabin Libraries became integrated into pre-established schools. Many Faith Cabin Libraries were associated with Rosenwald Schools, constructed in South Carolina between 1917 and 1932 with assistance from the Julius Rosenwald Fund, and in other rural schools for African Americans.¹⁸ For this reason, there is no typical room size or material used for construction. Refer to table "Location of Faith Cabin Library Units" for lists of schools.

¹⁶ Willie Lee Buffington, "A General Survey of Faith Cabin Library with its 26 Separate Units (South Carolina)" [June and July 1940], Buffington Papers.

¹⁷ Buffington, "A General Survey of Faith Cabin Library."

¹⁸ Lindsey C.M. Weathers, "The Rosenwald School Building Program in South Carolina, 1917-1932," National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Submission, on file at the South Carolina State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, S.C., p. 68.

B. Significance

Faith Cabin Libraries are eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A (Education and Ethnic Heritage – Black) at the state level of significance, for their association with a program initiated in the 1930s but continuing to have a statewide scope and impact for more than thirty years, and in some cases beyond that period.

Criterion A – Education and Ethnic Heritage – Black

The Faith Cabin Library movement was an important force in improving access to library services for African Americans in South Carolina. From 1932 to 1943, the movement built thirty Faith Cabin Libraries, most of them near and associated with Rosenwald schools, throughout rural South Carolina. Prior to the establishment of Faith Cabin Libraries, African Americans within the state of South Carolina had access to only two libraries in the urban cities of Columbia and Charleston. Given the distance between these two cities and the vastness of rural South Carolina at the time, these urban libraries served a disproportionately small percentage of the African American population of South Carolina.

Faith Cabin Libraries not only served the schools nearby but also served the larger African American communities in their area as well. By building free-standing libraries, the Faith Cabin Library movement provided access to library services for the community completely independent of school hours. During the transition of certain schools to community centers, these libraries remained open to provide access.

C. Registration Requirements

Faith Cabin Libraries were modest wooden buildings constructed in the rural South to provide library services to black students. To be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under this Multiple Property Submission, a Faith Cabin Library must have been built between 1932 and 1943 using a combination of funds and construction material from local communities. Extant schools will usually meet registration requirements for their design and materials used. In general, to qualify for listing, the libraries should retain their original location in a rural or small town setting and the design and materials that evoke their period of construction and the conditions of the time.

G. Geographical Data

The boundaries of this multiple property submission are the geographic limits of the State of South Carolina.

H. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

(Discuss the methods used in developing the multiple property listing.)

The multiple property listing of Faith Cabin Libraries in South Carolina, 1932-ca. 1960, is based on archival research conducted by Ashley D. Stevens, under the auspices of Dr. Robert R. Weyeneth of the Public History Program at the University of South Carolina, in 2010-11.

A significant source of material, much of it unpublished, pertaining to the Faith Cabin Libraries can be found in the Willie Lee Buffington Papers at the South Caroliniana Library at the University of South Carolina. This extensive collection, 1933-1991, include a general survey of libraries written by Buffington, copies of Louise Carr's 1958 master's thesis on Buffington and Faith Cabin Libraries, a variety of contemporaneous newspaper and magazine articles spotlighting the program, and other papers generated by or collected by Buffington concerning the Faith Cabin Libraries.

The works of Tamara Powell provide an excellent source for recent unpublished and published material on Buffington and his libraries. Her writings and research—including a 2004 doctoral dissertation in the Department of Education at the University of South Carolina and a chapter in an anthology of essays on Civil Rights pedagogy—present a well-rounded historical treatment and analysis of these libraries.

Site visits to the libraries coupled with informal interviews, in particular with former students at the Anderson County Training School, helped give shape to the intangible—the impact of the libraries on individual African American lives.

I. Major Bibliographical References

(List major written works and primary location of additional documentation: State Historic Preservation Office, other State agency, Federal agency, local government, university, or other, specifying repository.)

Unpublished Materials

Manuscripts

South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, S.C.
Willie Lee Buffington Papers

Theses and Dissertations

Carr, Louise Douglass. "The Reverend Willie Lee Buffington's Life and Contributions to the Development of Rural Libraries in the South." Master's Thesis, Atlanta University, 1958.

Powell, Tamara. "Communities in Collaboration: A Struggle to Increase Literacy in South Carolina." Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Education, University of South Carolina, 2004.

Published Materials

Newspapers

Harris, Louis C. "Saluda Boy Who Learned at Negro's Knee Repays 'Debt'." *The News and Courier* (Charleston, S.C.), January 28, 1951.

Monk, John. "White Man Struggled to Bring Books to Poor Blacks." *The State* (Columbia, S.C.), April 3, 2005.

"School Boy Library Builder. Edgefield Cotton Mill Boy Establishes Libraries for Colored People of Section." *The Greenville News* (Greenville, S.C.), April 28, 1935.

Magazine and Journal Articles

Beard, Frederica. "A Mill Worker and His Dreams." *Religious Telescope*, August 26, 1933.

Brown, Reverend George A. "By Faith Willie Lee Buffington." *United Presbyterian* 95:52 (December 30, 1937).

Buffington, W.L. "The Ministry of BOOKS." *World Outlook*, January 1955.

Burleigh, Betty. "Libraries in Cabins." *World Outlook* New Series VI:7, Whole Series XXXVI:3 (March 1946).

Carter, Paul C., and Ruth H. Geil. "Faith Cabin Libraries." *Baptist Leader* (November 1943).

Fultz, Michael. "Black Public Libraries in the South in the Era of De Jure Segregation." *Libraries & The Cultural Record* 41 (Summer 2006), 337-339.

Jones, Karen Monrad. "The Proper Setting for a Miracle." *Advance*, May 1937.

Kuyper, George Adrian. "An Adventure in Faith." *The Southern Workman*, May 1933.

Lee, Dan R. "Faith Cabin Libraries: A Study of an Alternative Library Service in the Segregated South, 1932-1960." *Libraries and Culture* 26 (Winter 1991), 171-184.

Maynard, Edwin H. "New Hope from Old Books." *Kiwanis Magazine*, February 1950.

Neal, Harry Edward. "The Bookshelves Filled By Faith." *Sunday Digest: Selected Reading for the Christian Home*, April 12, 1959.

Peters, E.C. "Faith Cabin Libraries." *World Outlook* XXX:7 (July 1940).

Plumb, Beatrice. "The Brotherhood of Books." *Christian Herald* 61:7 (July 1938).

Sprinkle, Henry C., Jr. "The Miracle of the Books." *World Outlook*, September 1950.

Styler, Herman. "He Works Wonders—with Faith and a Dime!" *Coronet* 22:2 (June 1947).

Books and Essays in Collections

Powell, Tamara. "Willie Lee Buffington and Faith Cabin Libraries: Doing Practical Good in a Disordered World." In Susan Schramm-Pate and Rhonda B. Jefferies, eds., *Grappling with Diversity: Readings on Civil Rights Pedagogy and Critical Multiculturalism*. Albany: State of University of New York Press, 2008.

Woodward, C. Vann. *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1955. Reprint Edition, 2002.

Works Projects Administration. *South Carolina: The WPA Guide to the Palmetto State*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1941. Reprint Edition, Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1988.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, PO Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.