

Capsule Summary  
SM-486  
Great Mills Elementary School  
Great Mills  
Public

1936

Great Mills Elementary School is an example of a public building constructed by means of a partnership between the St. Mary's County local government and the federal WPA program. Few such buildings were constructed in St. Mary's County during the 1930s. The school building is well-preserved on both the interior and exterior and continues to be used for educational purposes.

In 1935 the Board of Education recognized the need for a larger Great Mills School building and decided to construct a new unit that would separate the elementary and high school pupils. The Board purchased a cleared six acre portion of the tract "Physic Hill" as the new school site. Benjamin M. Garner was employed as foreman on the construction project and R. H. Pembroke acted as the project supervisor. The grand opening of Great Mills Elementary School occurred on November 4, 1936 with an enrollment of 187 pupils and 5 teachers.

Between 1944 and 1948, Great Mills Elementary School closed following construction of the Frank Knox Elementary School, located next to the gate of the Patuxent Naval Air Station. Around 1948, following the increased growth in the local population, Great Mills reopened. Continued population growth required the construction of a one-story, brick wing on the northern end of Great Mills School in 1958. Originally used as a cafeteria and kitchen, this space was later converted for use as classrooms.

Great Mills Elementary School closed in 1980. In that same year, the school building was leased to Charles County Community College. In 1990, the Board of St. Mary's County Commissioners purchased the property from the St. Mary's County Board of Education. College classes are currently held in the building.

SM-486, Great Mills Elementary School  
St. Mary's County  
Maryland Comprehensive State Historic Preservation Plan Data

Historic Context

Geographic Organization: Western Shore

Chronological/Developmental Period: Modern Period, 1930 - present.

Historic Period Theme: Education

Resource Type

Category: Building

Historic Environment: Village

Historic Function and Use: School

Known Design Source: None

**Maryland Historical Trust  
State Historic Sites Inventory Form**

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF  
HISTORIC PROPERTIES

Survey No. SM-486

Magi No.

DOE   yes   no

**1. Name** (indicate preferred name)

historic

and/or common Great Mills Elementary School

**2. Location**

street & number Great Mills Road    not for publication

city, town Great Mills    vicinity of    congressional district 5

state Maryland county St. Mary's

**3. Classification**

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

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

name Board of County Commissioners of St. Mary's County

street & number    telephone no.: (301) 475-4461

city, town Leonardtown state and zip code Maryland 20650

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. St. Mary's County Courthouse liber MRB 550

street & number    folio 87

city, town Leonardtown state Maryland

**6. Representation in Existing** Historical Surveys

title   

date       federal    state    county    local

depository for survey records   

city, town    state

# 7. Description

Survey No. SM-486

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input checked="" 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

Great Mills Elementary School, now the St. Mary's County branch of Charles County Community College, is located on the west side of Great Mills Road (Route 246) in Great Mills, St. Mary's County, Maryland. A parking lot is located on the west side of the school. Two outbuildings and a series of modular classroom units are also located on the school property. The school building faces east with the principal gable oriented on a north/south axis.

Built in 1936, Great Mills School is a one-story, frame structure supported by a cement foundation. It is sheathed with wood shingles and roofed with pressed metal shingles. A one-story brick wing with a flat roof is attached to the north end of the building. This addition was built in 1958.

The east (main) elevation has a central, double-door entrance bay framed by a slightly projecting gable roof pediment. The four-light-over-three-panel doors have a four-light transom and are flanked by two nine-over-nine sash windows on either side. The roofline above this central bay is broken by a cross gable which further accentuates the school entrance door. An interior brick chimney pierces the east roof slope. On both sides of the entrance bay are banks of six nine-over-nine sash windows. Two three-light windows light the basement on the southern portion of the building. Extending from the north end of the school is a one-story, hipped roof wing, slightly shorter than the main block of the building. This wing serves as a restroom and is pierced by one six-over-six sash window. North of the wing is the one-story, brick addition that dates to 1958.

The north elevation of the school's main block is largely obscured by the one-story brick addition. This gable end is finished with cornice returns.

The west elevation is pierced by four banks of six nine-over-nine sash windows.

The south elevation is pierced by a one-light-over-two-panel door. To the east of the door is a one-story, hipped roof wing that serves as a restroom. This wing is pierced by a six-over-six sash window on both the east and south sides.

The interior of the school consists of an entrance vestibule with a second set of double doors and a four-light transom. Flanking the entrance hall are two small offices used by the school administration. There are nine classrooms, a main office, two restrooms, a custodian office, and faculty lounge in the 1935 school building. Wood floors and five-panel doors are in place throughout the school. The walls of the hall

# 8. Significance

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

Specific dates 1936 Builder/Architect Unknown

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.

Great Mills Elementary School is an example of a public building constructed by means of a partnership between the St. Mary's County local government and the federal WPA program. Few such buildings were constructed in St. Mary's County during the 1930s. The school building is well-preserved on both the interior and exterior and continues to be used for educational purposes.

The movement away from one and two-room schoolhouses towards consolidated schools began in St. Mary's County during the 1920s. The consolidation of local schools followed the establishment of parochial schools that attracted students away from the traditional local schoolhouse. The availability of buses that could transport students over previously unmanageable distances made consolidation possible.

Originally, Great Mills Elementary School and High School shared the same building. This structure was formerly located on the current site of Great Mills High School on Great Mills Road. In 1935 the Board of Education recognized the need for a larger Great Mills School building. In a meeting of July 23 of that year the Board minutes note that it was "deemed impractical to construct a superstructure on the present Great Mills building and that to add further wings to the present unit would mar the beauty of the building and would greatly limit playground opportunities..." The Board decided to construct a new unit and to separate the elementary and high school pupils. The desired building would consist of six class rooms, and two offices and lavatories on the main floor. The anticipated cost of this new building was \$22,500 which included the cost of purchasing a site. A portion of this money was expected to come from the Federal WPA program.

After consideration of two sites, the Board selected a cleared six acre portion of the tract "Physic Hill" owned by Ernest and Bertha Bohanan. In 1935, the Board purchased the site for \$1,000. In December, Mr. Benjamin M. Garner was employed as foreman on the project. Mr. R. H. Pembroke is identified in the minutes as the project supervisor. By March of 1936 the Federal government had pledged \$5176

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

Survey No. SM-486

Hammett, Regina Combs. Telephone Interview, March 1995

Abell, Louise. Telephone Interview, March 1995

Board of Education Minutes, Aughst 1928- February 1946

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property 3 Acres

Quadrangle name St. Mary's City

Quadrangle scale 1:24 000

UTM References do NOT complete UTM references

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Zone Easting Northing

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### Verbal boundary description and justification

Acreege immediately surrounding school building.

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

state	code	county	code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Elizabeth Hughes, Historic Sites Surveyor

organization St. Mary's County Planning & Zoning

date February 1995

street & number 328 Washington Street

telephone (301) 475-4662

city or town Leonardtwn

state Maryland

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory 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  
Shaw House  
21 State Circle  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
(301) 269-2438~~

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST  
DHCP/DHCD  
100 COMMUNITY PLACE  
CROWNSVILLE, MD 21032-2023  
514-7600

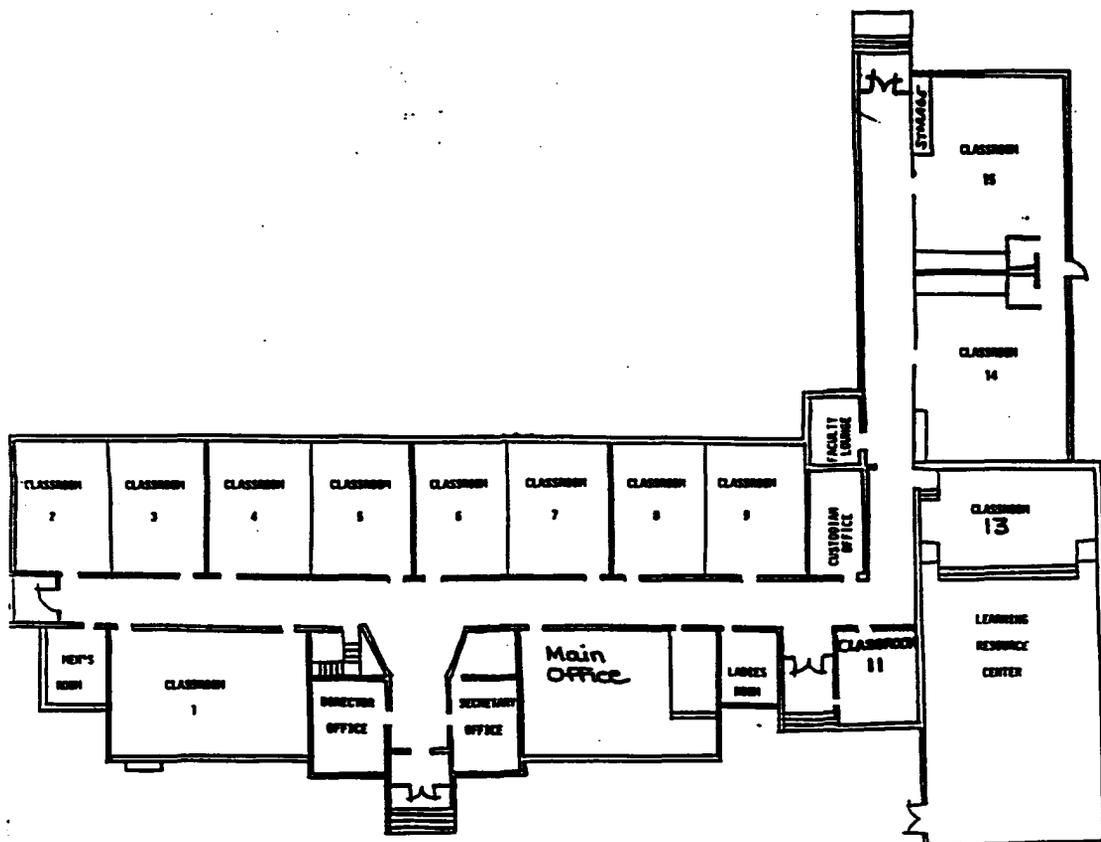
SM-486, Great Mills Elementary School  
St. Mary's County  
7.1 Description

and the classrooms are wainscoted up to a molded chair rail. The classrooms are fitted with wall-mounted blackboards and built-in supply closets.

There is only one original outbuilding located on the property. This shed roof structure is sheathed with wood shingles and roofed with corrugated metal.

SM-486, Great Mills Elementary School  
St. Mary's County  
7.2 Description

Floor plan of Great Mills Elementary School.  
Source: Main Office, St. Mary's Branch of the Charles County Community College.



SM-486, Great Mills Elementary School  
St. Mary's County  
8.2 Significance

towards the project for the purchase of materials and \$450 for the cost of an Artesian well. Participation in the program required that the school employ the bulk of the necessary skilled labor from the Relief Rolls.

The grand opening of Great Mills Elementary School occurred on November 4, 1936 with an enrollment of 187 pupils and 5 teachers. Unlike the series of articles that chronicled the opening ceremonies of the parochial St. Mary's Academy just one year earlier, no articles appear in the St. Mary's Beacon regarding the opening of Great Mills School. There is no mention of the architect for the school in either the local paper or the school board minutes.

Great Mills Elementary School closed briefly following construction of the Frank Knox Elementary School, located next to the gate of the Patuxent Naval Air Station, in 1944. Around 1948, following the increased growth in the local population, Great Mills reopened. Continued population growth required the construction of a one-story, brick wing on the northern end of Great Mills School in 1958. Originally used as a cafeteria and kitchen, this space was later converted for use as classrooms.

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SM-486, Great Mills Elementary School  
St. Mary's County  
8.1 Significance

Chain of Title

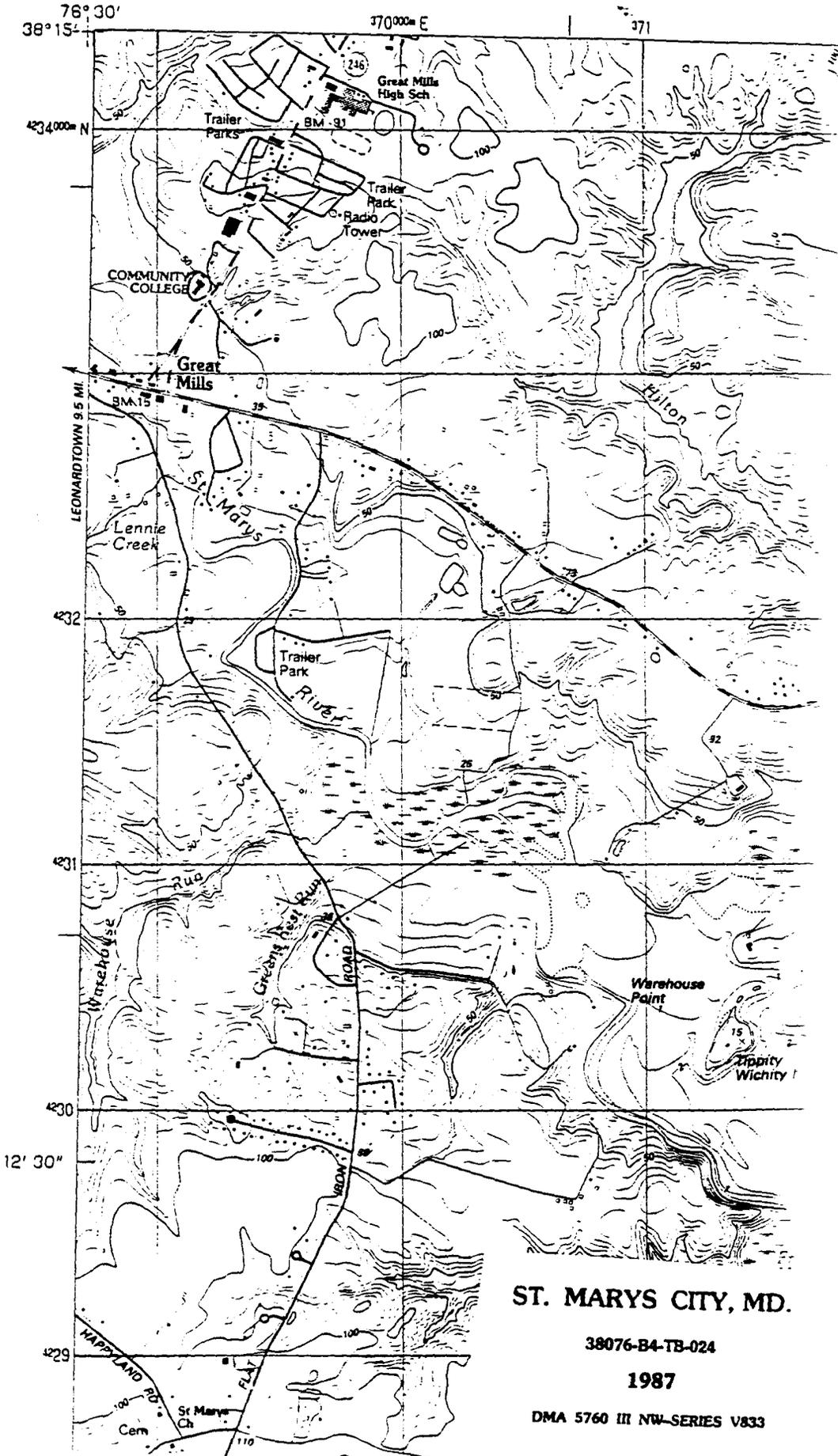
TO: Board of County Commissioners of St. Mary's County  
FROM: Board of Education of St. Mary's County  
RECORD: St. Mary's County Land Record, Liber MRB 550, folio 87.  
DATE: July 31, 1990.  
NOTES: Transfer of "Part of Physic Hill" being 5.97 acres.

TO: Board of Education of St. Mary's County  
FROM: Ernest Bohanan and Bertha F. Bohanan  
RECORD: St. Mary's County Land Record, Liber JMM 9, folio 356.  
DATE: December 2, 1935.  
NOTES: Transfer of "Part of Physic Hill" being 5.97 acres.

5880 1 SE  
(HOLLYWOOD)

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE IN  
GEOLOGICAL SURVE

SM-486  
Great Mills Elementary School  
Great Mills  
St. Mary's City Quad



ST. MARYS CITY, MD.

38076-B4-TB-024

1987

DMA 5760 III NW-SERIES V833



SM-486

Great Mills Elementary School

St. Mary's County

E. Hughes

March 1995

110 SHPO

1/4

SE Elevation



M-436

Great Mills Elementary School

St. Mary's County

E. Hughes

March 1995

112 430

1/2

SW 1/4 112