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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Old Sutton High School

AND/OR COMMON

Sutton Grade School

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

North Hill Road

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Sutton

VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Third

STATE

West Virginia

CODE

54

COUNTY

Braxton

CODE

007

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

OWNERSHIP

STATUS

PRESENT USE

DISTRICT

PUBLIC

OCCUPIED

AGRICULTURE

MUSEUM

BUILDING(S)

PRIVATE

UNOCCUPIED

COMMERCIAL

PARK

STRUCTURE

BOTH

WORK IN PROGRESS

EDUCATIONAL

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

SITE

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

ACCESSIBLE

ENTERTAINMENT

RELIGIOUS

OBJECT

IN PROCESS

YES: RESTRICTED

GOVERNMENT

SCIENTIFIC

BEING CONSIDERED

YES: UNRESTRICTED

INDUSTRIAL

TRANSPORTATION

NO

MILITARY

OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Braxton County Board of Education

STREET & NUMBER

400 4th Street

CITY, TOWN

Sutton

VICINITY OF

STATE

West Virginia 26601

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Braxton County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

Main Street

CITY, TOWN

Sutton

STATE

West Virginia 26601

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

# 7 DESCRIPTION

## CONDITION

EXCELLENT       DETERIORATED  
 GOOD             RUINS  
 FAIR              UNEXPOSED

## CHECK ONE

UNALTERED  
 ALTERED

## CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE  
 MOVED      DATE \_\_\_\_\_

### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Old Sutton High School (Sutton Grade School) stands on a hillside on the east side of North Hill Road at Sutton, the county seat of Braxton, in central West Virginia. The Victorian genre style red brick building is a tall, symmetrically proportioned composition whose early twentieth century eclectic elements emphasize its vertical mass.

A sense of height in the structure is achieved, apart from a siting above the street, by expansive wall surfaces whose tall, narrow, paired openings are set between a rock-face sandstone raised basement and a truncated hip roof. The steeply pitched wall dormers of the roof, that lend the building its essential character, are pierced at the side elevations with narrow paneled chimneys. The tympana of these side dormers feature quarterlight windows and simulated shingles of pressed tin. The front and rear elevation dormers are almost wholly filled with semi-circular lights. An essential vertical element of the front elevation is the three-story, truncated entrance tower whose openings at all levels are round-headed.

The well preserved exterior detailing of the Old Sutton High School is evidence of the skill of local masons. Corbeling of the brickwork cornices beneath the deeply projecting eaves and corbeling of stonework at the second story level of the tower form essential ornamentation of the wall surfaces. A rock-face beltcourse and water table are other typical period decorative devices.

Interior spaces are divided among eight rooms, a full basement, and a third floor auditorium. The four upper and four lower classrooms open onto a central hallway leading to a rear stairhall, whose four-flight stair appointed with well-preserved Victorian millwork provides access to all levels of the building above the basement. High, pressed tin ceilings throughout the old school building retain the character and charm of the now rapidly disappearing early twentieth century American schoolhouse.

Most expansive of the spaces within the building is seen in the third floor auditorium that, while no longer in use, affords a glimpse of generally unaltered seating and entertainment arrangements.

The Old Sutton High School building, measuring 68 feet on the front and 64 feet along the sides, commands a promontory approachable from the immediate downtown area. Integrity of both structural and architectural features is excellent, due largely to maintenance performed over the years. The construction of a metal-encased two-story fire escape at the south elevation, and the renovation of the basement lunchroom and kitchen evince only minor but necessary alterations of the building. The concrete steps approaching the front elevation from North Hill Road were recently covered with a corrugated metal awning. An unobtrusive, single-story block storage and janitorial addition is attached to the building at its rear (east) elevation.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES      1906-07      BUILDER/ARCHITECT      Will F. Davis, Architect

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Old Sutton High School, now Sutton Grade School, stands on a hillside a short distance from downtown Sutton, the county seat of Braxton, at the geographical center of West Virginia. The building is significant as a reflection of Sutton's historical community development, including its educational progress, and as a locally significant and well preserved example of vernacular Victorian architecture.

Following the settlement of the area by John D. Sutton about 1810, the growth of the community was very slow. Impetus for growth was evidenced, however, by the sale of lots after Braxton County was formed in 1836. Sutton grew slowly as a small county seat and minor retail, agricultural, and milling center. Even by 1882, when a fine new brick courthouse was completed, Sutton was little more than a Main Street with a scattering of brick and frame buildings. It was not until the turn-of-the-century that railroads penetrated the region and extractive mineral and timber industries produced sufficient growth of population (of around 1,000) and wealth to support more sophisticated public services, including improved educational facilities.

From the statehood period to the turn-of-the-century Sutton supported a limited public "free" school system, in contrast to the system of the pre-Civil War period when groups of parents sponsored intermittent "subscription schools". The need for expansion and improvements in the schools was evident in 1905 when the Board of Education of the Independent School District of Sutton hired Mr. J. H. Patterson (a resident of Glen Roy, Ohio) as principal. Mr. Patterson, with assistance from Mr. H. O. Fast, became an effective advocate through his educational column in the Braxton Democrat for a badly needed high school at Sutton.

The passage of a school board sponsored levy of \$18,000.00 in February, 1906, permitted the Board of Education to publish a notice to contractors for the construction of a new high school. School commissioners Alfred Walker, W.S.P. Carper, and B. P. Hall hired Mr. C. C. Hawkins of Sutton and Mr. J. O. Chenoweth of Gassaway in Spring 1906, to begin work on the foundation and superstructure respectively. The plans of Sutton architect Will F. Davis, well known local builder, were adopted for the building. The new Sutton High School was completed by May, 1907, when principal Patterson, addressing the commencement of Sutton lower schools at the Opera House in an oration ripe with Victorian verbiage, stated:

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"There has been a need of room, of modern conveniences, but the board of education has acted for the people who have responded nobely to the call for a better building. On a hill stands a beautiful house soon to be dedicated to the cause of education. Its beauty should be an inspiration to a generation yet unborn. From it should go forth hundreds bettered and helped who will take up the battle against ignorance and sin, until the powers of darkness tremble."

Sutton High School graduated its first class in 1909. The twelve graduating members were addressed by an eminent professor of West Virginia University, Dr. Waitman Barbe, who delivered an oration entitled "Two Forces in the Development of West Virginia". In its first years Sutton High School flourished under a complement of seven teachers. In 1907 the principal was paid \$120.00 per month and the teachers or "assistants" received from \$50.00 to \$75.00 per month. With the construction of a new high school the Old Sutton High School became a grade school in the 1930s, and has served in this capacity until the present day (1979).

The security of the Old Sutton High School was taken for granted by the Sutton community until a 1978 proposal by the Braxton County Board of Education called for the building's demolition. A recent rescission of this order resulted from a community-wide recognition of the building's significance. The Old Sutton High School is one of the oldest in the state still in use as a school. Its early twentieth century eclectic design is a tangible local reference to the building fashion of a former time; it also recalls an important period of growth and maturity in the community of Sutton.

Sutton architect-builder, Will F. Davis, produced plans for a symmetrically detailed, nearly square, two-and-one-half story red brick building with a three-story entrance tower. Lending vertical emphasis to the design was a truncated hip roof pierced with gabled wall dormers whose openings were filled with semi-circular windows. The high ceilings of the first and second floor hallways and of the four upper and four lower classrooms were sheathed in pressed tin. The ensuing three quarters of a century of use did not compromise the architectural integrity of this building thus preserving for the present generation a unique glimpse of an early twentieth century American schoolhouse, the numbers of which are now rapidly disappearing from the streetscapes of small towns and cities.

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Sutton High School produced a number of prominent alumni. Susan Fisher, a 1922 graduate of S.H.S., attended the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music, Julliard, Berlin Hochschule, and the Opera Comique, Paris. Mrs. Fisher sang with the Metropolitan Opera from 1935 to 1943, making her Met debut in Madame Butterfly in 1935. Mrs. Fisher sang in Europe six years before joining the Metropolitan, including several performances in Berlin attended by Adolph Hitler. Charleston writer Skip Johnson reports that Mrs. Fisher "cultivated her high soprano voice by calling the cows on her family's farm." One of her recollections of the Sutton school is a high bank above the building. "We lived nearby," she said, "and I could slide down the bank and get to school before the bell stopped ringing." Another S.H.S. alumnus, Dewey Fleming, who graduated in 1916, won a Pulitzer Prize for national reporting when he worked for the Baltimore Sun.

The Old Sutton High School is a local landmark that has directly touched the lives of many residents of the community. Its continued use and preservation is a goal now shared by both the people of Sutton and the board of education.

## 9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Braxton Central. March 26, 1909; April 30, 1909.

Braxton Democrat. February 8, 15, 1908; March 6, 1906; April 12, 1906; May 9, 1907.

Byrne, J. Holt. Sutton. Elkins, West Virginia: Byrne Printing Company, 1960, pp. 14-15.

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1-1/2 acres

QUADRANGLE NAME Sutton, W.V.

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24,000

UTM REFERENCES

A 17 5254610 4279630  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B           
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C         

D         

E         

F         

G         

H         

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION The nominated property is located one quarter mile north of Main Street on the east side of North Hill Road, on a hillside approximately 150' above the street, and includes grounds in a radius of 50' from the building at its rear

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Rodney S. Collins, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION West Virginia Department of Culture & History  
Historic Preservation Unit

DATE  
April 11, 1979

STREET & NUMBER The Cultural Center  
Capitol Complex

TELEPHONE  
304 348-0244

CITY OR TOWN

Charleston

STATE  
West Virginia 25305

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL   

STATE   

LOCAL   x  

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

*Clarence Illoras*

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

ATTEST: KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

FHR-8-300A  
(11/78)

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Carney, Allen R., A.I.A., Adaptive Use Report, Sutton Grade School, Sutton, West Virginia. Historic Preservation Unit, West Virginia Department of Culture and History, January 7, 1979.

Johnson, Skip. "Sutton Losing Ancient School: The Charleston Gazette, November 20, 1978.

HR-8-300A  
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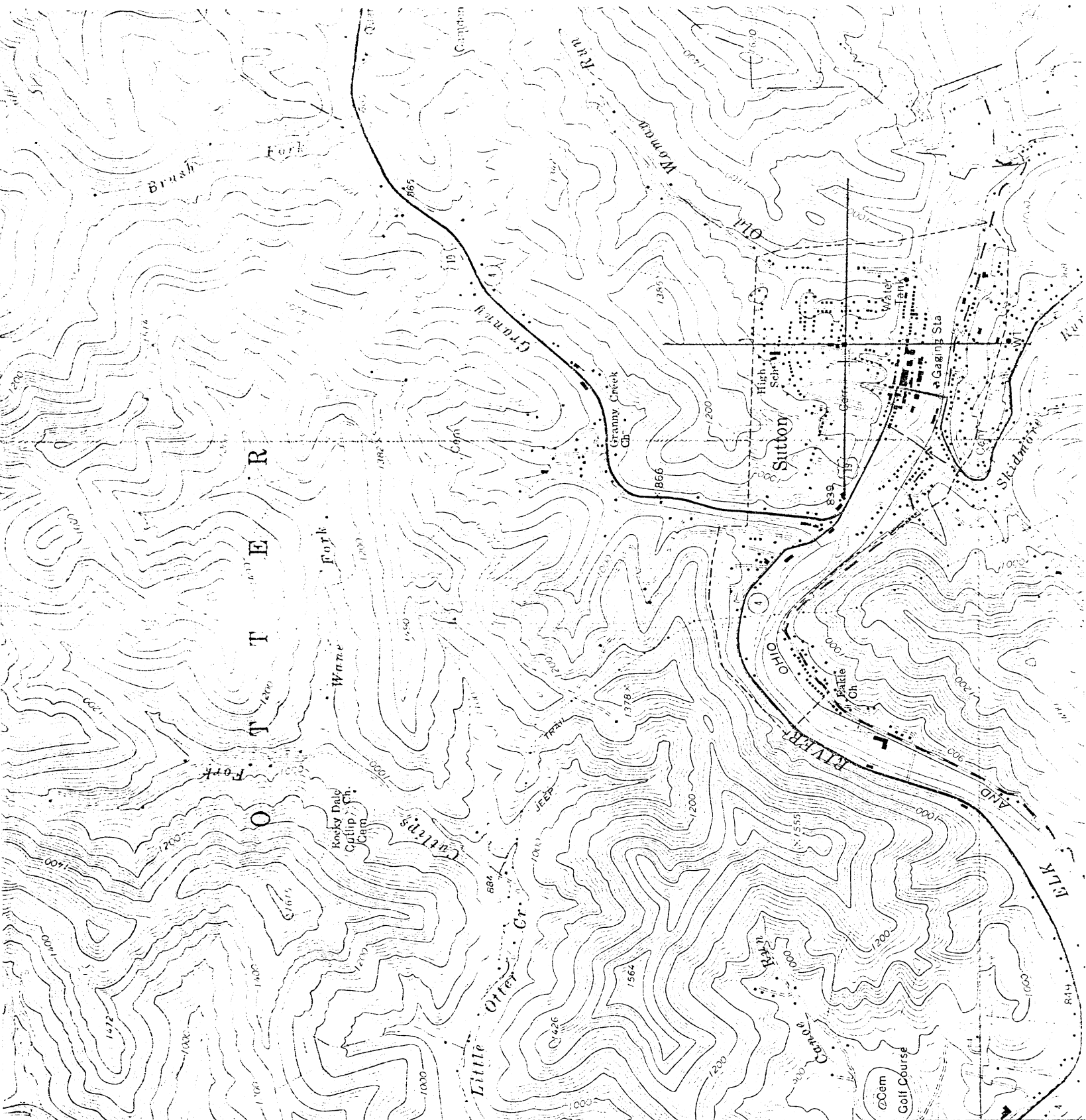
OLD SUTTON HIGH SCHOOL, SUTTON, BRAXTON COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA

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and side elevations. Land fronting upon the building and extending to North Hill Road is also included in the nomination.





4283

4661 III NE  
(GASSAWAY)

4281

4280

40

4279

Old Sutton High School  
North Hill Road  
Sutton, Buxton Co. 40  
West Virginia

UTM

17 525 460 / 4279 620

