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National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form

This form is used for documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* (National Register Bulletin 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.

X___ New Submission _____ Amended Submission

A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

Rural School Buildings in Colorado

B. Associated Historic Contexts

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

Public Education in Rural Colorado, from the Territorial Period to 1949

C. Form Prepared by

name/title Suzanne Doggett and Holly Wilson

organization Colorado Historical Society date 9 July 1996 / March 1999 (rev.)

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D. Certification

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

(See continuation sheet for additional comments [ ].)

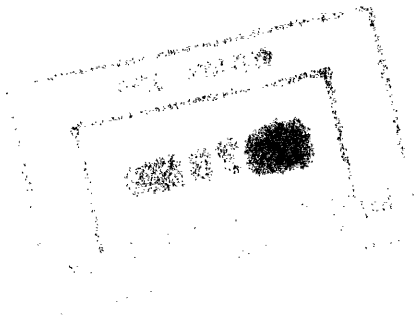
Georgianna Contiguglia State Historic Preservation Officer 2/23/99
Signature and title of certifying official Date

State Historic Preservation Office, Colorado Historical Society
State or Federal agency and bureau

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.

Edson H. Beall 4.29.99
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

for



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

		Page Numbers
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Primary location of additional data:

[X] State Historic Preservation Office
[ ] Other State Agency
[ ] Federal Agency
[ ] Local Government
[ ] University
[ ] Other

Name of repository:

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. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 120 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, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

E. STATEMENT OF HISTORIC CONTEXTS

PUBLIC EDUCATION IN RURAL COLORADO, FROM THE TERRITORIAL PERIOD TO 1949

Unique Characteristics of Rural Education

> Rural education is by nature massive, complex, and nebulous. A typical rural environment--sparsity of population, isolated farm living, and decentralization of school organization--demands that this be so. (Biennial Survey)

The *American Heritage Dictionary* defines rural as pertaining to the country as opposed to the city; rustic; relating to farming; agricultural. For purposes of this document, rural applies to sparsely settled areas of Colorado in which farming, ranching, logging or mining formed the base of the local economy. Some of these areas remain sparsely settled today. Others have experienced moderate population growth or have been absorbed into expanding metropolitan areas. An "index of ruralness" depends on such factors as the number of inhabitants per square mile; the percentage of people living on farms; the percentage of the labor force employed in farming or agricultural services; the percentage of land in farms; population centers of 1,000 or less; and, interestingly, the *number of local school districts*.

In 1910, fifty-four percent of the U. S. population lived in rural places with one-half to three-fifths of the school children enrolled in rural schools (Cubberley 1914:166). In Colorado, school children attending rural schools reflected some interesting numbers (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Rural School Enrollment in Colorado

Year	Total number enrolled in public schools	Number enrolled in rural schools	Percentage enrolled in rural schools
1891	73,391	27,153	37%
1895	90,562	31,751	35%
1900	117,555	33,435	28%
1910	168,798	41,013	24%

source: Biennial Report of [Colorado] Superintendent of Public Instruction

It was not until 1955 that the Office of Education included statistical information on rural schools in its Biennial Survey of Education in the United States. The study cited "the well-known lack of a clear definition" and the difficulties in gathering data as the major reasons for the long delay. Every state received reports from all of its public school districts, but definitions of what constituted rural varied greatly. Some states counted only the un-graded one-teacher schools as rural; others designated as rural certain two- and three-teacher schools. Variations in definition and record keeping meant that rural school data was reported differently.

A 1957 Census Bureau study noted that the overwhelming majority of all school districts (9 out of 10) fell outside municipalities and urbanized county-wide school systems. These school districts were considered to be serving mostly rural communities. Seventy-five percent of the Nation's schools were located in areas with less than 2,500 population. In 1954, these rural schools served nearly 45 percent of the children enrolled in the country's public schools.

Figure 2. School Districts in Colorado

Year	Number of Districts
1870	129
1875	329
1880	414
1885	645
1890	1,284
1895	1,434
1901	1,657

Source: Biennial Report of [Colorado] Superintendent of Public Instruction

Any discussion of rural education must include the large number of local school districts, a factor that stood out with "peculiar prominence." By 1932, there were 127,422 school districts in the continental U.S. with 2,041 of these in Colorado. The rapid increase in the number of school districts in Colorado is illustrated in Figure 2. Weld County illustrates the correlation between rural areas and the number of school districts. In 1870, there were 15 school districts in Weld County; in 1880, there were 32; and by 1895, there were 76 districts scattered across the county. The numbers continued to increase in 1910, 1920, and 1930 with 98, 108, and 136 school districts respectively.

The members of the school boards for these local school districts, while responsible to county and state school authorities, exercised varying degrees of control over their schools. The concept of local school district control originated in Massachusetts where the independent, small district system arose as part of the struggle to gain a measure of autonomy from the central town government. Schools were viewed as essentially local institutions to be administered by local governing boards. Communities which desired schools could establish and operate them to meet local needs. The simplicity and adaptability of the district system to local community interests, and to the conditions typically found in pioneer settlements, resulted in its rapid spread westward. Despite growing criticism of the district system, professional educators in 1914 acknowledged that:

> As a simple and democratic means for providing schools for the children of people under somewhat pioneer conditions, the district system has rendered... a useful service. Where population is sparse, communication difficult, educational ideas rather primitive, supervision lacking, and economic conditions somewhat uniform and undeveloped, the system is naturally of most importance (Cubberley 1914:184)

The county superintendent was responsible for the administration of the numerous schools within a county. In some states these administrative duties included devising exams that local teachers had to pass in order to become certified and providing the course of study and curriculum guidelines for each subject. County superintendents in Colorado were required to visit all the schools within his/her district at least twice a year. The establishment of so many small one-school districts diluted all centralized attempts to monitor schooling and made it difficult to even visit all the schools. The superintendent also had the difficult task of mediating differences between local school boards, who were resistant to change, and the state legislatures and state superintendent of schools, who demanded better teacher preparation and the improvement of school buildings.

One-teacher schools constituted a significant part of the American rural education experience (Figure 3). In 1956, approximately 27 percent--34,964 of the country's 130,473 schools--were still one-teacher schools. One-teacher schools also prevailed in Colorado. There were 43,802 children enrolled in one-teacher schools in 1920. One-teacher schools continued to be an important part of the public education system (Figure 4). The number dwindled to 259 in 1956, a figure that still represented approximately 22 percent of the state's total elementary and secondary schools. Of these 259 one-teacher schools, 204 served five or more grades.

Figure 3. Number of 1-room, 1-teacher public school buildings in U.S.

Year	All Buildings in Use	One-room, One-teacher Buildings	
		number	% of total
1909-10	265,474	212,448	80%
1919-20	271,319	187,948	69%
1929-30	248,117	148,712	59%
1939-40	226,762	113,600	50%

Source: Biennial Survey of Education

Figure 4. Number of One-Teacher Schools in Colorado

Year	Total Number of schools	One-teacher schools	
		Number	% of total
1931-32	---	1,800	---
1941-42	2,082	1,395	67%
1945-46	2,237	1,048	47%
1949-50	2,016	872	42%

Source: Biennial Survey of Education

In addition to providing children with a rudimentary education, the rural school teacher was expected to fulfill a specific community role by creating special programs, organizing social events, and exemplifying virtue, temperance and respectability. Teachers had to reflect the values of the rural communities in which they taught. In addition to moral responsibilities, teachers also did much of the janitorial work in their schools. Women dominated the education profession on the frontier. In Colorado, the stereotype of the single woman teacher prevailed (Figure 5). Between 1906-1913, 84 percent of the state's one-room schools had women teachers (Gulliford 1984:63). Most states required that teachers be at least 16 years old, and it was not uncommon for some students to be the same age as their teacher or even older. As soon as a woman passed the eighth-grade comprehensive tests, she was able to teach, often in the same school she attended.

Figure 5. Number of teachers in Colorado rural schools

Year	Male	Female
1880	221	291
1890	478	1,139
1900	370	1,118
1910	273	1,624
1915	330	2,122

Source: Biennial Report of Superintendent of Public Instruction

Because rural schools were isolated, better teachers often sought positions in town schools, where they received higher pay and were not under the thumb of the local school district. Consequently, many rural schools were forced to accept teachers with lesser credentials. Western states followed eastern examples and legislated minimal teacher requirements during the 1910s and 1920s. In 1920, of the

1,679 teachers in Colorado's one-teacher schools, only 64 had four years of college, 212 had two years of normal school, 94 had two years of college, while the majority (1,082) had four years of high school. Despite the fact that 965 of these teachers had more than nine months teaching experience, 227 had not even graduated from a four year high school. Even as late as the 1940s, few one-room teachers had completed a four-year college degree and Colorado did not require a college degree until 1961 (Gulliford 1984:71).

Despite the limited training, one-room school teachers were expected to teach all subjects in all grades. Juggling a variety of subjects among the various grades represented a formidable task as the "daily programme" suggested by the Colorado Superintendent of Public Instruction on the next page illustrates (Figure 7).

Although only one teacher was officially on the payroll, one-room schools typically had more than one instructor. Older students regularly helped younger students with their lessons, and students occasionally helped their immigrant parents who attended class to learn English.

Rural schools consistently had a shorter school year than their non-rural counterparts (Figure 7). When school opened and the length of the school year varied in rural areas, depending on the harvesting seasons and the weather. The school year accommodated students who needed to help on the family farms. Summer sessions were prevalent in high altitude areas, such as Pleasant Park* near Conifer. Foidel Canyon School was one of many schools in southern Routt County that opened in April and closed in December.

Figure 6. Average Number of School Days in Colorado

Year	Graded schools	Ungraded/Rural schools
1895	145.5	118
1900	160	124
1915	176	158

* The majority of the schoolhouses referred to in this document are listed in the National or Colorado Register. Site numbers for these listed schoolhouses are found on page 32. Schoolhouses that are not designated will have their site numbers included in the text.

SPECIMEN DAILY PROGRAMME.

TIME.	GRADE 5—STUDY.	GRADE 4—STUDY.	GRADE 3—STUDY.	GRADE 2—STUDY.	GRADE 1—STUDY.	RECITATIONS.
9:00— 9:05						Opening.
9:05— 9:20	Recite	Recite	Arithmetic	Reading	Reading	Physiology 4 and 5
9:20— 9:30	Arithmetic	Arithmetic	Arithmetic	Reading	Recite	Reading 1
9:30— 9:45	Arithmetic	Arithmetic	Arithmetic	Recite	Seat work	Reading 2
9:45—10:05	Arithmetic	Arithmetic	Recite	Seat work	Seat work	Arithmetic 3
10:05—10:25	Orthography	Recite	Seat work	Seat work	Numbers	Arithmetic 4
10:25—10:50	Recite	Orthography	Seat work	Numbers	Numbers	Arithmetic 5
10:50—11:00	Recess	Recess	Recess	Recess	Recess	Recess.
11:00—11:10	Reading	Reading	Reading	Numbers	Recite	Numbers 1
11:10—11:20	Reading	Reading	Reading	Recite	Seat work	Numbers 2
11:20—11:30	Recite	Recite	Reading	Seat work	Seat work	Orthography 4 and 5
11:30—11:45	Reading	Reading	Recite	Seat work	Reading	Reading 3
11:45—12:00	Reading	Recite	Geography	Reading	Reading	Reading and U.S. Hist. 4
12:00— 1:00	Intermission	Intermission	Intermission	Intermission	Intermission	Intermission.
1:00— 1:20	Recite	Geography	Geography	Reading	Reading	Sup. Reading 5
1:20— 1:35	Writing	Writing	Writing	Writing	Writing	Writing 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5
1:35— 1:45	U. S. History	Geography	Geography	Reading	Recite	Reading 1
1:45— 2:00	U. S. History	Geography	Geography	Recite	Seat work	Reading 2
2:00— 2:15	U. S. History	Grammar	Recite	Seat work	Review	Geography 3
2:15— 2:30	Grammar	Recite	Seat work	Review	Review	Geography 4
2:30— 2:40	Recess	Recess	Recess	Recess	Recess	Recess.
2:40— 2:45	Grammar	Grammar	Seat work	Review	Recite	Review 1
2:45— 3:05	Recite	Grammar	Language	Review	Seat work	U. S. History 5
3:05— 3:15	Grammar	Grammar	Language	Recite	Seat work	Review 2
3:15— 3:25	Physiology	Physiology	Recite	Seat work	Seat work	Language 3
3:25— 3:40	Physiology	Recite	Seat work	Seat work	Reading	Grammar 4
3:40— 4:00	Recite	Physiology	Seat work	Reading	Reading	Grammar 5

The above is merely suggestive. It is not expected to fit each school in every particular. If the school admits of fewer divisions, the length of recitations may be increased and the number of classes lessened. If a different programme is formulated, it should be inserted in the Register. A definite programme of some sort should be prepared and strictly followed, a copy of which should be kept posted in the school room, where all may see it.

Figure 7. "specimen daily programme"

Source: Colorado Teacher's Daily Register

Development of Public Education

Proper education for children was an early concern of the families that settled throughout the West. Territories created after the passage of the Land Ordinance of 1785 were required to set aside section sixteen of each township to support education. By 1848, Congress required territories to reserve a second section (section thirty six) for school purposes. However, it was left to the territorial legislatures to implement the actual school system. By the end of the 1840s, midwestern states also began passing legislation to insure that a free public education would be available to all children. With the flood of Irish and German immigrants that followed, the providing of education by the state was also viewed by many as vital to the protection of the government.

Although most of the original Euro-American arrivals to what would become Colorado were fortune-hunting males, it was not long before the families that came to settle recognized the need for schools. By October 1859, Denver boasted its first classroom, a private school run by O. J. Goldrick. Following this example, other schools began operating. The next year there were schools in Mt. Vernon, Golden, and Boulder. While most of these very early schools were private establishments, public schools quickly followed. Boulder County has the distinction of opening the first public school in the territory in 1860. Arapahoe and Gilpin Counties opened their first public schools in 1862, with Jefferson and Pueblo Counties following the next year. Larimer County saw its first public school in 1865, while Custer and Summit Counties opened their first public schools in 1870.

A comprehensive school law (similar to one in Illinois) was among the acts passed by Colorado's first Territorial Legislative Assembly in 1861. The law provided for the appointment of a "Territorial Superintendent of Common Schools" by the governor. Duties were similar to those required of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, now known as the Colorado Commissioner of Education. The law also provided for the biennial election of a County Superintendent in each county.

In 1862, The Second Territorial Legislature adopted an innovative approach to financing schools in order to reduce the tax burden on individual property owners by providing for the following supplement to school revenue:

> That hereafter when any new mineral lode, of either gold bearing quartz, silver or other valuable metal, shall be discovered in this Territory, one claim of one hundred feet in length on such lode shall be set apart and held in perpetuity for the use and benefit of schools in the Territory.

Unfortunately, while appearing to promise much for schools, the results were actually negligible due to a lack of enforcement.

At the 1875 Colorado constitutional convention, there was heated debate over the use of funds generated from the two sections of school land within each township. Even if the land was eventually sold for

a minimum price, a windfall would result. The delegation became divided on the apportionment of the money. The financing of public education would continue to be debated. In 1936, Colorado voters gave sanction to an amendment providing for the first state tax on individual and corporate income, with the proceeds of this tax designated as a public school fund. Prior to this, the only source of state aid for schools had been the income from the state school lands, with all other financing coming from local district levies. Consequently, little uniformity existed among the public schools. For example in 1932, the cost per student in public schools varied from $41.14 per student in Costilla County to $165.34 per student in Summit County. Once the state embarked on revenue-gathering through income taxes, debates over the concept of "equalization" of educational facilities began. During the Depression, many communities lost population, and assessments on real property fell dramatically. Many citizens believed it was wise to offer equal educational opportunities to all children, regardless of the financial condition of the town or county. However, it was not until 1943 that Colorado began such "equalization" through the allocation of school funds (Ubbelohde et al 1988:325-26).

Consolidation

Across the country, school consolidation was promoted as the way to equalize educational opportunities and to make rural schools as "efficient" as those in urban areas. While decreasing numbers of students or the need for a new building caused many rural school districts to consolidate on their own, legislation enacted over a long period of time, would eventually force the issue.

Maintaining equality of financial support and educational opportunities became a matter of growing concern. In 1869, worried about the state's declining rural population and the high cost of maintaining small rural schools, Massachusetts passed a law permitting small districts to use school funds to transport children to larger schools. However, it was not until 1890 that the consolidation of schools in Massachusetts began to make real headway. In 1892, Ohio adopted similar legislation, and shortly thereafter, its legislature passed a law permitting any township in the state to "close its schools and convey its children to a centralized school" (Fuller 1994:228). In November of 1896 a group of educators met in Chicago to put the "finishing touches on a study of the nation's rural schools." The Committee of Twelve, as it was called, "discovered what its members already believed and had been saying for more than 25 years: country schools were poor schools" (Fuller 194:101).

In 1914, P. P. Claxton, Commissioner of the Bureau of Education, wrote to the Secretary of the Interior stating his belief that "the evils and the inadequacy of the single-school district as the unit of administration are more and more apparent." He argued for "more effective rural school administration to the ends that there might be a more economic use of school funds and that all the children may have opportunities" (Monahan). The one-room school was criticized "as merely a meeting-place for hearing lessons in the old book subjects" (Cubberley 1914:209). Numerous state governments became more insistent "that the character of the school should be improved, and to that end demanded longer school terms, better schoolhouses and sanitary appliances, better trained and educated teachers, and higher taxation for schools" (Cubberley 1914:90). In addition to recommending the inclusion of libraries,

science rooms and well-equipped playgrounds, educators acknowledged that the new larger consolidated schools should still function as community centers.

By 1914, nearly all states had "some provision permitting the voluntary consolidation of districts" (Cubberley 1914:230). Many states adopted some form of district boundaries encompassing a larger area such as the township or the county. The township unit proved satisfactory in densely populated regions, especially in New England, where the township functioned as the primary unit of local government and taxation. It proved less workable in those states with "congressional townships" where straight township lines were independent of natural geographical conditions and the actual location of settlements.

Factors would come into play that would eventually have a dramatic effect on the rural landscape, and consequently, rural education. The wave of western homesteaders peaked in about 1915. The end of the western homestead era began with the stock market crash of 1929 and the depression that followed in the 1930s. The combined effects of the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl forced more than 5 million rural children to be driven from their farms by the early 1950s (Campbell 1996:26). The desolate and abandoned farmhouses that dotted the countryside confirmed this loss. After World War II, population continued to shift away from the rural areas, and "comfortable yellow buses, speeding along recently blacktopped country roads, were easily able to transport the few children left in the countryside to larger schools" (Fuller 1994:245).

The continuing decline in population, the often deteriorating school buildings, and the improved highways combined to accomplish what educators' arguments had not been able to do for so long. The rural community's resistance to consolidation was so weakened that state legislatures found the courage to pass laws providing for the massive reorganization of school districts that would in time virtually eliminate the small rural school. Midwestern state legislatures enacted laws establishing democratic procedures for consolidating the region's one-room schools. The laws were very similar from state to state. First, state boards were established to set standards and oversee the transformation from small to large districts. Then, a county commission of lay people would draw up the actual plans for redistricting. And finally, in deference to democratic procedures, there was a referendum to approve or reject the proposed reorganization.

In Colorado, efforts at centralization/consolidation began early, without benefit of legislation. Some school districts chose to consolidate as local populations shifted, or as deteriorating buildings needed to be replaced. For example, Second Central in Kit Carson County was constructed in 1915 as the result of consolidating four small schools, three of which were soddies continually in need of repair. Since consolidation was unpopular with many of the patrons, a centrally located site was chosen and much effort was expended in the design and selection of materials for the school. Colorado Statutes would eventually provide for the formation of new school districts through a petition of "the parents of at least ten children of school age residing within the limits of the proposed new district," as well as

"for the consolidation or abolishment of adjoining school districts ... and for the conveyance of pupils to a consolidated school."

In 1935, the Colorado Legislature passed House Bill #745 "to provide for an interim committee to study the problems concerning public education in the state." An eleven-member committee to be appointed by the Governor was to report its findings and recommendations to the general assembly on or before January 10, 1937. Similar legislation, passed as House Bill #683 in 1937, required the committee to file its report by January 10, 1939. World War II intervened, and over a decade would pass before the legislature enacted House Bill #900, Colorado's School District Reorganization Act of 1949.

The School District Reorganization Act of 1949 provided for "the general improvement of the public schools of the state by the reorganization of existing school districts into generally larger areas to equalized the benefits and burdens of education throughout Colorado." Appointed members of county committees were charged with developing a consolidation plan that was to be approved by the State Commissioner of Education before being submitted to a vote of the people. In the case of a no vote, the committees were to attempt "to prepare a revised plan that might be acceptable." The intent of the legislation was to have acceptable consolidation plans in place in all counties by July 1, 1952. House Bill #308, passed in 1951, extended the committee process until July 1, 1954. In 1957, Senate Bill #385 further extended the process until June 30, 1959. During this same year, the Legislature directed the Commissioner of Education to prepare a plan of recommended organization for each county which had not completed its reorganization plan as of November 1, 1959. The commissioner's plan was to be submitted to the General Assembly and the Governor by January 1, 1960.

During the 1950s and 1960s, a steadily increasing student enrollment statewide claimed a larger share of Colorado's budget. The state legislature wrestled with the financial problem while the school boards tried to find more money at the local level. Consolidation accelerated as the state imposed more sophisticated educational requirements and as transportation improved. Small district schoolhouses were usurped by larger buildings and facilities that accommodated more students and offered more diverse educational programs. Large school districts replaced the chaotic system of small districts. Local autonomy was sacrificed to gain greater efficiency and wider educational experiences.

Consolidation moved rapidly. This may have been due to the better roads that shortened the distances. It may have been due to the dwindling numbers of children in rural areas. Whatever, the reason, the decline in the number of school districts and one-room schools was dramatic.

As illustrated in Figure 8, the number of school districts showed a marked decline. Within 15 years more than half of the local school districts disappeared. This reduction occurred almost exclusively in rural communities through the establishment of centralized school districts. This centralization was accomplished through consolidation, redistricting, unions, jointures, community schools, county-units and special school districts of various types. An example of this rapid decline in the number of school

districts occurred in Gunnison County where 15 small districts were eliminated to form the Gunnison Watershed RE1J School District in 1962.

Figure 8. Number of School Districts

	1931-32	1943-44	1949-50	1951-52	1953-54	1955-56
U.S.	127,422	111,274	83,614	70,993	62,969	54,773
Colorado	2,041	1,920	1,533	1,333	1,028	972

Source: Biennial Survey of Education

Coinciding with the reduction in local districts was the decline in one-teacher schools, as illustrated in Figure 9. These numbers also show a marked decline, with more than two-thirds of one-teacher schools disappearing from the American scene in a little more than twenty years. The sharp drop in numbers was attributed to "the pattern of providing more complete instructional services to rural children through school district reorganization."

Figure 9. Number of One-Teacher Schools

	1931-32	1943-44	1949-50	1951-52	1953-54	1955-56
U.S.	143,391	96,302	59,652	50,742	42,865	34,964
Colorado	1,800	1,154	634	460	332	259

Source: Biennial Survey of Education

The wide variety of geographic conditions in Colorado resulted in consolidation occurring more rapidly in some areas than others. On the plains and in the valleys where transportation was easy, consolidation was more readily accomplished. However, in the mountain areas, one-teacher schools continued to be practical. It was not until 1959 that the Moffat County committee offered a plan to create two main districts with a second high school at Maybell. The plan was turned down by the state, and the 38 districts that existed in 1935 were consolidated into one. However, the Brown's Park School, by then comprised of several buildings moved from other locations, managed to survive into the 1990s because its students lived "beyond the range of bussing to town."

Consolidation forced the closure of many rural schools, ending a long reign for buildings that had served as the community's educational center. The Cherry Creek School, which began operations in 1874, closed its doors 77 years later in 1951. The Rockvale School, which operated from 1883 to 1969, served as the community school for 86 years!

Often consolidation came not because rural communities believed that larger schools were better, but because the district simply ran out of students. The Sanborn Park School, located in an isolated logging and ranching community in Montrose County, at an elevation of nearly 8,000 feet, was one of a few operating one-room schools in Colorado when it closed in June 1977 due to lack of students. (The

school had closed once before in 1952 because there were no longer any school age children living in the area, but a new generation of young children resulted in its reopening in 1963.)

Consolidation did not sound the immediate death knell for all rural schools. Some schools remained in operation for an extended period of time. The Curtis School continued until 1967 even though consolidation in Arapahoe County took place in 1948. An attempt in 1955 to close the school and bus students elsewhere was abandoned in the face of widespread opposition from parents. When the school finally closed in 1967, the district cited the building's water supply and heating system, the area traffic, and the lack of a gymnasium as factors in their decision.

Not all rural schools closed because of consolidation. Condemnation of land for the construction of Cherry Creek Dam and Reservoir, forced the closure of the Melvin School in 1949. Occasionally, replacement by a newer facility caused a school to close, such was the case with the Morrison School.

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, many small rural districts in Colorado succumbed to the demands for change and one-room schoolhouses were abandoned one by one. While the consolidation movement enjoyed considerable support, some argued that there was no real reason to believe that reorganization was the key to successful learning (Fuller 1994:245). Ironically, some of the same factors that were perceived as the problems of rural education also produced what are now considered by some to be certain unique and desirable advantages, such as smaller classrooms, students who help each other learn, and allowing pupils to progress at their own rate. It appears the cycle has gone full circle as these small, multi-graded classrooms with their low student/teacher ratio are once again being appreciated.

Consolidation was a controversial issue, a real tug for parents who desired a good education for their children, but were reluctant to have them sent away or to relinquish control over their education. At the same time, local residents were also reluctant to give up their school buildings. In many cases after the small rural schoolhouses ceased to function as schools, they continued to fulfill their role as community centers.

Rural Schools as Community Centers

Although the determined efforts of Colorado's early Euro-American settlers to provide a suitable education for their children served as the impetus for rural school construction, the buildings soon took on added importance as centers of community life in the sparsely settled plains and isolated mountain areas. The lack of a common ethnic or religious background among the majority of western settlers resulted in the construction of a school, and not a church, as a way of establishing a community's sense of identity and proving its stability.

Colorado's rural schools were often (and many still are) the only public building for miles. These schools not only educated the young, but also provided entertainment for the community with plays, Christmas programs, pageants, spelling bees, and graduation ceremonies. Arbor Day celebrations were

popular events, perhaps as a reaction to the treeless plains. Other entertainment included dances, box socials, pot lucks, fireman's balls, and lectures. The buildings were also used for religious services, Sunday schools, funerals, weddings, and shivarees.

Rural school buildings also hosted a variety of civic uses, including political rallies. Like the schools of today, they served as polling places. District court was held in the Springfield schoolhouse, and teachers in the county took their certification exams there as well. Once a year, an El Paso County representative administered driving tests at the Black Forest School. During World War II, local residents headed to Coates Creek School to register for ration stamps. Even when another civic building became available, the Pitkin School was still the building of choice for most activities during the winter as it was easier to heat than the larger town hall. Perhaps one of the most unusual civic uses for a schoolhouse occurred in 1900 when the Ward School survived a disastrous fire that destroyed 53 buildings because it was draped in wet blankets to serve as a fire line!

The schools also functioned as meeting places for 4-H, farmers, and ranchers. Often schoolhouses were used by the Grange until their own building was constructed. In some instances, such as Florissant School, the Grange continued to use the buildings after the school closed. Pleasant Park Grange #156 began using the Pleasant Park School when it became a member of the Colorado Grange in 1907 and continues to use the building today. The schools were also important as meeting places for women's groups which often took on the responsibility of raising money for the maintenance of the building during its years as a school and continued the activity long after it closed. Examples include: the Black Forest's Ladies Club; Doyleville's Pastime Club; the Busy Bees for the Pitkin School; and the Brown's Park Women's Club for the Old Ladore School.

Even after ceasing to function as schools, many of Colorado's rural school buildings continue to serve their communities. When new construction replaced the stone school in Springfield, the Masonic Lodge took up residence. The Willows Square Dance Club still uses the Willow School. The front door of the Crestone School was enlarged in 1970 to better accommodate the funerals held there. Some schoolhouses have become living history museums, such as Cherry Creek and Melvin, now operated cooperatively by the Cherry Creek School District and the Cherry Creek Valley Historical Society. Some buildings were converted to town offices. Curtis School was the Greenwood Village Town Hall from 1951-1963 and is now an art center. The Telluride School now serves as the town hall, while Ward School functions as the city hall, post office and library.

In many cases, even under private ownership, the school buildings remain available for public use. For example, the Chromo School is still used as a polling place and for religious services by a church based in Pagosa Springs. In 1972, when the Indian Park School was purchased from the school district, the deed stipulated that the property "shall never be used otherwise than for public purposes." The building continues to host picnics for May Day, July 4th, Colorado Day, Labor Day, and even Tupperware parties.

Unfortunately many rural schools were abandoned and remain vacant today. Others were moved and began new lives as houses or agricultural outbuildings. The Melvin School was moved to Parker Road where for many years it was a popular bar. Some suffered a worse fate. A school in Gunnison was cut in half; one-half became a store while the other half succumbed to fire.

Rural School Architecture

Fletcher Dresslar suggested in his 1911 *American Schoolhouses* that New England village churches with their long rectangular plan, windows on two sides, and the entrance at one end provided the inspiration for the rural schools constructed in the second half of the 19th century. Horace Hale, Colorado superintendent of public instruction, included an illustration in his 1873 annual report reproduced from the *American Journal of Education* with obvious church influences (Figure 10). Gulliford would later observe that "in their size, scale, materials and construction methods, country schools often resembled houses, especially on the frontier. The teacher and his or her charges were like a big family, further increasing the association of schools with houses."

Its origins notwithstanding, the characteristic form of schoolhouses was established with the 1832 publication of William A. Alcott's *Essay on the Construction of School-Houses*. Alcott stressed the importance of light, fresh air, and space in his designs. He prescribed large windows for light and ventilation placed above eye level to avoid distractions, desks with backs arranged in rows to allow teacher and student circulation, and space around the building for fresh air and play at recess.

Another educator, Henry Barnard, published *School Architecture* in 1838. In this classic handbook, Barnard sought to improve schools by not only giving them a standard external appearance (Gothic Revival was the preferred style), but also by addressing the interior space, placement of windows, ventilation, desk size, and sanitary facilities. Barnard advocated at least 150 cubic feet of air per student, requiring high ceilings that made the building difficult to heat.

Lighting was a perpetual problem in rural schools. While windows on the north side produced even, year-around light, they also made the classroom even colder in winter. By the 1890s education experts were arguing that light should come from only one source and that it should fall over the left shoulder of pupils. Apparently no allowances were made for left-handed students or overcast days when a minimal number of windows meant minimal light. Barnard recommended that windows be placed on only two sides of the room at least three and a half or four feet above the floor and not directly behind the teacher. In an another attempt to alleviate lighting problems, he suggested the use of skylights. The problem of half-lighting or cross-lighting was never effectively solved until the 1940s with the almost universal introduction of electricity.

Barnard became "a champion of education reform and the first of many plan-book writers who sought to improve learning by improving the school building. Barnard's *School Architecture* was reprinted as

recently as 1970, indicating its value as an important research and historical document in the history of American education" (Gulliford 1984:168).

Although published architectural plans for school buildings were available as early as 1832, early settlers struggling to erect a building with the limited resources at hand, had little inclination or ability to follow elaborate designs. Gulliford aptly commented that "the design of country schools has been, above all, an architecture based on limitations. Early builders were limited by materials on hand." Construction ability was limited and professional architectural assistance nonexistent. Communities had limited funds and produced structures that were almost purely functional; style was a seldom affordable extra.

According to Schroeder, the architecture of rural schools divides into two broad categories that are further divided into two subtypes:

Vernacular

Folk - Often exhibiting regional characteristics, these buildings make use of available local materials such as sod, logs, or adobe. Few survive as they were never meant to be anything but temporary and were abandoned as soon as a more respectable schoolhouse could be built. Most are likely to resemble an agricultural outbuilding or primitive dwelling.

Mass vernacular - These buildings exhibit traditional designs and make use of commercial machine-made materials (including standard bricks; dimensional lumber; concrete block; asphalt shingles; prefab millwork; and manufactured hardware and fittings, such as ventilating louvers). They often have some ornamental details or fairly sophisticated architectural additions, such as a portico, dormer or bell tower. They may also show local and ethnic traditions in footings/foundations, wall fabric and roof shape.

Architect Designed

Plan books - These buildings are based on standardized plans utilizing stock materials.

Commissioned - Buildings directly commissioned from architects are extremely rare.

Schroeder notes that "many of the rural schoolhouses that remain today can be viewed as eclectic, exhibiting their regional vernacular building traditions but often based on designs transmitted through architectural plan books or on a common cultural perception of what a country school should look like."

Rural school architecture is also categorized as being either "utilitarian" or "expressively designed." The "utilitarian" reflected an economy in design and construction. In general, the resulting building exhibited a concern for providing shelter efficiently, lacked stylistic details, utilized inexpensive and

readily available building materials, and did not require the skills and tools of a highly trained craftsman. However, it is important to note that good local craftsmanship often existed, and the finished product provided a further reflection of the community's pride in its school.

Occasionally the simple "utilitarian" form was supplemented with ornamentation or stylistic references. Interesting examples include: the Curtis School with its gable returns and triangular knee braces; the Lone Tree School with its porch roof of Craftsman-inspired trusswork; the Malta School (5LK886) where the ornamentation is confined to its pedimented porch with decorative bracketing; the Sunshine School with its porthole windows; and Second Central with its broadly flared eaves and unusual finials.

The "expressively designed" buildings exhibited a conscious effort at aesthetic expression and included elements characteristic of a formal architectural style. While not as common as the "utilitarian" version, these buildings can still be found. The Italianate Dumont School and the Queen Anne Paragon School (5GN1508) are two good examples. In the case of the stone Westcliff School with its darker stone quoins, fishscale shingles, and brick segmentally arched window openings, no particular style is discernible despite its abundant decorative elements. In all instances, style was subordinate to a simple, straight forward interior plan and ample windows.

Gulliford noted that "an important unifying element in the design and building of country schools was that they tended to follow a progression within each community of replacement by a sturdier and more pleasing specimen as resources would permit." The first schools built were usually log, sod, adobe or dugouts. The oldest extant school building is rarely the first one constructed. Colorado rural schools exhibited this same progression. For example, the lap-sided Rockvale School replaced an earlier log building that was "no longer able to meet the community and social goals of the town's major employer." In some instances the logs were merely covered with clapboard as was the case with the Medlen School. As the old buildings were replaced, their materials were often scavenged for new uses. The Pitkin community used the logs from an earlier schoolhouse to construct the gymnasium that sat behind the new frame school.

There were exceptions to this trend. Some first generation buildings were substantial, very permanent and still extant. The Morrison Stone, Lime and Town Company financed the construction of a two-room, two-story stone building in 1875 for $6,000. The Springfield community constructed their first school in 1889, a one story dressed native sandstone building with a raised basement. The fact that Springfield became the county seat of the newly organized Baca County that same year may have prompted the construction of this impressive stone building.

As a general rule, the building's generation, regardless of its construction date, determined the choice of materials and the extent of aesthetic expression. As a result of increased homesteading after 1900, Routt County saw its largest school expansion in the 1920s, and most of the new schools were of simple frame construction.

By the second decade of the 20th century, standardization was well established. "After a hiatus in the publishing of plan books during the Civil War, a new industry arose to promote progressive school design after the war through education journals and state publications." The passage of state laws aimed at unifying school conditions, and plan books and directives from state and federal education departments furthered the process. Standardization was designed "to ensure that each rural school pupil have the opportunity to attend school under hygienic conditions, have sufficient books and supplies and learn from a qualified teacher....Yet, if standardization eliminated the traditional variety in local school architecture, it also established a common legacy that was experienced by most rural school children over the next 30 years" (Gulliford 1984:193-4).

The Schoolhouse Interior

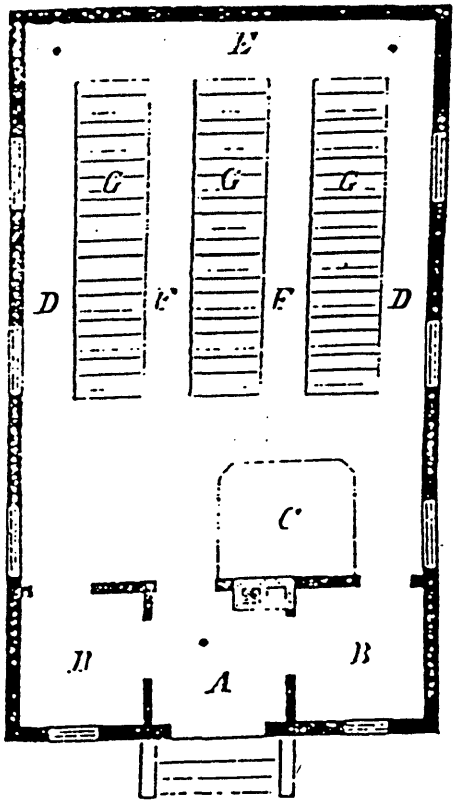
Seating in very early classrooms consisted of benches lining the walls. Interior changes propounded by late-19th century reformers included placing desks in rows in the middle of the room; providing more windows that allowed more light and air; and elevating windows above eye level, creating space below for pictures and educational materials. This prototype, as seen in Figure 10, was published in the *American Journal of Education* and suggested for use in Colorado schools by the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Horace M. Hale, in his 1873 report.

The teacher's desk sat on a platform six to eight inches above the floor until late in the 19th century, when this arrangement was deemed too authoritarian. The platform gave the teacher a few inches on the growing boys and provided a stage for plays and recitations.

The classroom contained desks of all sizes because the students ranged in age from five to eighteen. Girls sat on one side and boys on the other. Children who misbehaved would have to sit on the other side of the room and suffered the ridicule of their peers.

A stove, typically placed in the center of the room, produced an uneven heat. Students near the stove roasted, while those in the corners of the room often needed to wear coats and gloves. The builders of one schoolhouse took an innovative approach to maintaining a comfortable interior temperature. In an apparent attempt to provide insulation, soil filled the space between the inner and outer walls of the Crestone School.

Figure 10.
Floor plan propounded in 1873 by Horace Hale, the Colorado Superintendent of Public Instruction.



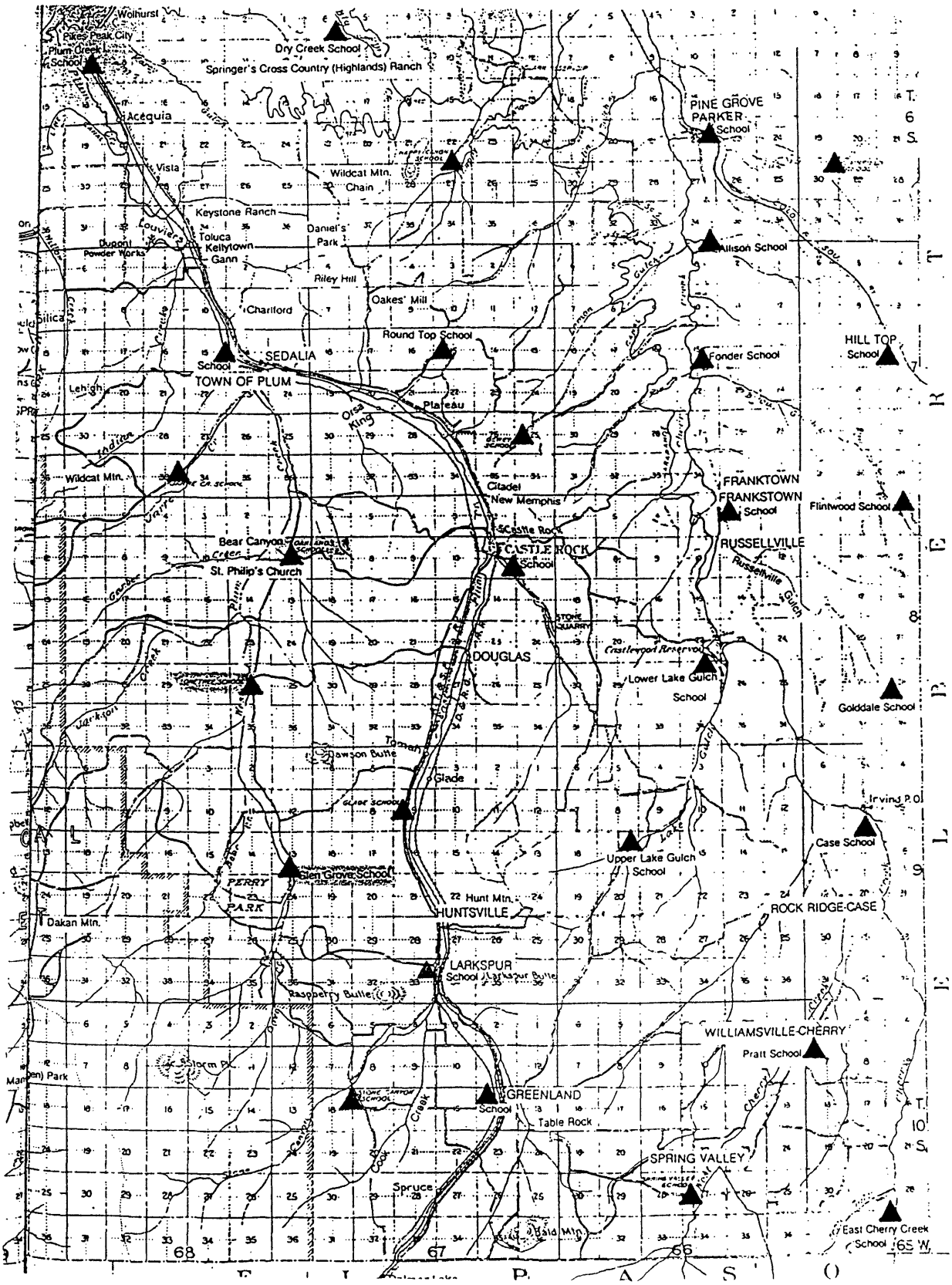
The Schoolhouse Site

The ground on which the school sat was acquired by various means. The federal government awarded the states or territories two school sections per township. It was intended that somewhere on these sections a schoolhouse would eventually be built, "but of more practical importance was that the school sections were meant to add to state ownership a potentially valuable piece of property which in future years could be sold or rented out" (Campbell 1996:18).

The potential value of the land was of less concern to settlers than the school's proximity to its students. Sites were chosen that were conveniently accessible to students, sometimes with no regard to state boundaries. The Coates Creek School was so near the Colorado-Utah boarder that several families from the adjacent state sent their children to this school. Schoolhouses were often no more than two or three miles apart, as graphically illustrated on the partial map of Douglas County (Figure 11). Parents did not want their children travelling too far or traversing dangerous terrain. For example, construction of the Melvin School was prompted by parents concerned about their children fording the "dangerous [Cherry] creek" to attend the Cherry Creek School.

Figure 11.

A portion of Douglas County; ▲=school houses



Colorado's 1889 Compulsory Education law may have also been responsible for the pattern of establishing schoolhouses every two miles. This law stipulated that children between the ages of eight and fourteen were required to attend school for at least 12 weeks. Failure to comply resulted in a misdemeanor. The law contained a provision relieving parents of children living more than two miles from a schoolhouse from this educational responsibility. Superintendent Helen Loring Grenfell in her 1900 report admonished parents failing to comply with the law with these harsh words:

> While most of our people are anxious for the education of their children and many of them make heroic sacrifices to this end, yet some avail themselves of the weakness of the law and permit their children to grow up in utter ignorance.

W. C. Lothrop in the First Biennial Report of the Territorial Superintendent (1871) advised that "great care should be taken in selecting a [schoolhouse] site. It should be capable of being irrigated in order that trees and shrubbery may adorn the grounds." Despite this advice, schools were often located on unproductive land at the intersection of section roads or highways, or located at small crossroad communities with a few neighboring structures. The schools were most often surrounded by acres of agricultural land or forests with only a small clearing next to the building for use as a playground. An unusual exception is the Indian Park School located in a wooded area adjacent to a cemetery.

Lothrop also recommended that the "country" school site "should embrace an area of not less than one acre." This advice was generally heeded as an acre of land was the usual allocation for a school. There were some exceptions to this one-acre rule, such as Crestone sitting on two and a half acres and Battlement Mesa occupying a four-acre parcel.

Typically, a schoolhouse was built on the land of a farmer or rancher with several school age children. Eventually the building and one acre would be deeded over to the school district. The transfer of title would often take place within a year or two of the building's construction. On occasion the process would take longer. The Pleasant Park School, built in 1894, was not deeded over to the district until 1918.

If the families moved or the children were no longer of school age, the schoolhouse could be relocated closer to the remaining residents with school-age children and the land reverted to the original donor if no longer used for school purposes. If the schoolhouse was abandoned, both building and acreage would revert back to the original donor. Many of the deeds included this provision. Such was the case for the deed of the Doyleville School which stipulated that if the location of the schoolhouse changed or the land was no longer used for school purposes, the land would revert back to the grantor (or his grantees).

Brick and stone schoolhouses remained where they were built, regardless of changes in the demographics of the school district. But frame and log schools constructed without foundations, plumbing or wiring, were often moved. The Coates Creek Schoolhouse, a 1919 log construction, was dismantled in 1926 and moved a mile and a half southwest in order to be closer to the main road. An addition, also of log that doubled the size of the school room, was constructed when the building was put back to together. In response to growing enrollment, the Hebron School, with a different roof pitch and window size, was moved several miles and attached to the north side of the Coalmont School.

F. ASSOCIATED PROPERTY TYPES

PROPERTY TYPE: Schoolhouse

DESCRIPTION

Regardless of when an area was first settled, the plan, materials and ornamentation of schoolhouses followed a similar evolution. The building's purpose was easily discernable by its form. Colorado's rural schoolhouses were remarkably uniform in scale, proportion, massing and materials.

Schoolhouses were small and comparable in size to the other structures within the rural community, such as the church and Grange hall. The size of the schoolhouse was limited by the range of the human voice. Classrooms had to be small enough to give the solitary teacher control over a disparate group of pupils and allow for recitations. Even before architects and educators quantified the optimum size for rural schools, vernacular builders were intuitively constructing them to the maximum feasible size of no more than 30 by 40 feet, the limit recommended by William Alcott in his 1832 proposal. By the mid-19th century other common sizes were 24 by 36, 20 by 30, and 18 by 32 feet. These sizes were ideal for the maximum 30 to 40 students attending most country schools (Gulliford 1984:172).

The rectangular plan predominated, although a few schoolhouses were square. Many schoolhouses had a small vestibule or cloakroom attached to the front of the building that helped to serve as a buffer from the elements. Some schoolhouses (those with two classrooms and a projecting vestibule, such as Doyleville and Pitkin) exhibited a modified T-shaped plan.

The vast majority of rural schoolhouses were one-room structures. A one-room school might have a small cloakroom that served as buffer against the winter weather, but instruction took place in one room. Two-room schoolhouses are not uncommon. Some included two separate classrooms, while many made use of a movable partition that divided a large room into two spaces. Occasionally, two one-room buildings were joined together to form a larger school, such was the case with the Coalmont School. Larger rural schools with a basement or additional rooms were usually built after the turn of the century and are few in number. A three-room schoolhouse was more unusual and often the result of later additions.

Most rural schoolhouses were one story. Two-story rural schools were extremely rare west of the Mississippi River. Two noticeable exceptions in Colorado are the 1875 stone Morrison school, and the 1906 brick Plummer School, both two-story, two-room structures. Generally rural schoolhouses with basements appear after the turn of the century and their numbers are relatively few.

Roofs were usually simple gabled forms, with hipped roofs being recommended in plan books of the early 1900s as "an expression of innovation" in rural school design. Some unusual variations were the bell-cast hipped roof on the 1915 Second Central School and the truncated gabled roof of the Westcliff

School. By the late 19th century, mass-produced wood shingles covered the roofs as they were readily available and widely used. This material was often later replaced with composition shingles or metal.

Typically two to four evenly spaced, double hung sash, multi-light windows were placed on one or both of the long sides of the building. These were most often on the east and/or west sides. Widely spaced windows usually indicate that the building was constructed prior to the 1920s, before adoption of suggestions by education reformers that more light and air were needed. Schoolhouses constructed later had windows that were often clustered together. Due to potential damage from hail and flying baseballs, windows were occasionally covered with screening. The Frisco Schoolhouse is a rare example that included stained glass.

Entrances were usually located on the short side of the building. A few Colorado examples have separate doors for boys and girls, such as Free Gold Hill School (5CF313), Gas Creek School (5CF314), and Coal Creek School (5RB3575). Often the entrance was sheltered by a portico or porch that ranged in style from simple to quite decorative. Doors usually faced south or east. Door and window frames were simple and executed in wood, as were cornices and cornerboards. A small number of schoolhouses exhibited pedimented window heads, and cornerboards.

Cupolas, belfries, and bell towers were viewed as status symbols. In some cases, schoolhouses built in the 1800s received a bell tower by 1910. In subsequent years, many belfries were eliminated as symbols of the past that did not represent 20th century efficiency, economy, and progress. While most were simple affairs, a few of the bellfries were topped with elaborate roofs. The Dumont School had a pyramidal roof covered with pressed tin, while the belfry of the Gold Hill Schoolhouse was capped with a very tall spire. The Frisco Schoolhouse sported a very ornate, bell-cast roof covered with tin and topped with a weather vane.

While schoolhouses exhibited a relative consistency in their size, plan, roof shape, and placement of windows and doors, the choice of wall materials created some variety. The earth itself provided a ready source of building material. Dugouts and buildings constructed of sod were well adapted to the treeless plains. These structures were usually first generation schools that were quickly replaced. A search of the inventory indicated that no extant examples have been identified. A reconstructed sod schoolhouse can be found at the Plains Conservation Center in Aurora. While adobe structures are prevalent in the southern portion of the state, few schoolhouses constructed of this material have been identified. The fact that abandoned adobe buildings deteriorate quite rapidly is probably one of the reasons.

Many of the first rural schoolhouses were log. It was an obvious choice of material in the timbered regions of the state. The Bunce School (despite the recent addition of an incompatible porch) is an early extant example, having been constructed in 1888. The Black Forest School, the community's first and only schoolhouse, was not constructed until 1921. Very few "first generation" log schools exist today as most were replaced with frame buildings. Or in the case of the 1886 Medlen School, the logs were

later covered with clapboard siding to "update" the building, a treatment also used with pioneer log homes.

By far the most prevalent building material for schoolhouses was wood. The balloon frame was typically built with dimensional lumber and covered with horizontal wood siding, such as weatherboard, shiplap, clapboard or beveled. Wood was the material of choice when replacing an earlier log, sod or dugout school. By 1890, there were 45 schoolhouses in Jefferson County and 28 were frame. An indication of the popularity of wood frame is readily apparent upon review of the entire state inventory. Approximately 67% of the recorded schoolhouses are described as wood frame. Of the 164 rural schoolhouses recorded, 110 were wood frame. In many cases the first, second, and third generation school buildings were wood frame. For example, a 1910 frame school in Douglas County was an identical replacement for a 1882 schoolhouse destroyed by fire, which was a slightly larger version of the original 1870 building also destroyed by fire.

Although the little red schoolhouse is an important part of American mythology, most rural schools were not red. If any one color was used most often it was white, with touches of green, red, blue or brown in the trim. According to Schroeder, schools erected before 1870 were seldom painted because paint was expensive. After 1870, the commercial production of linseed oil and manufactured pigments made cheap paint readily accessible. Schoolhouses were rarely painted red and when they were it was an iron oxide red like that used on barns.

Masonry structures make up approximately 25% of the total number of identified rural schoolhouses in Colorado. They were often "second" or "third" generation buildings, replacing earlier frame (and on rare occasions, log) structures. Brick schoolhouses were built in both the folk vernacular and mass vernacular tradition. That is, they were constructed from brick baked in local kilns, perhaps even on site; or they were constructed from standard-size, commercial-made bricks shipped to the site. The Dumont School, the town's only brick building and its most elegant, rose as a testament to the optimism of local residents and the continued belief in the importance of education. Those schoolhouses constructed of stone usually relied on local materials. Native limestone was used in the Morrison School; the Sunshine School was constructed of granite with sandstone trim; and the Westcliff School utilized fieldstone with brick accents.

Schoolhouses constructed of concrete during the period of significance are rare in Colorado despite the fact that poured forms of concrete were gaining popular and professional acceptance in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Heckendorn). The 1922 Chromo School is the only identified example of poured concrete construction. Ornamental concrete block buildings are widely, if unevenly, distributed across Colorado. A comprehensive statewide survey to identify them is underway. While residential properties form the largest single group of identified properties to date, one ornamental concrete block rural schoolhouse has emerged--the Maxwell Creek Schoolhouse (5CF733) south of Buena Vista.

Interiors were simple in both plan and finish. The earliest schools were a single, undivided space. Many schools included space for a cloakroom or anteroom with coat hooks, a shelf to hold lunch pails, and a wash basin. Lath and plaster walls were trimmed with wood. Baseboards, wainscotting, picture rails and the simple window and door surrounds were also wood. Blackboards lined the walls, often framed by the widely spaced windows. If the school district could not afford slate, black painted fiberboard (such as beaver board or masonite) would be used. After 1900, when interest in Americanization increased, a flag became a standard feature.

Indoor plumbing was almost nonexistent. This was an amazing fact considering many of the schools remained in operation until as late as the 1950s and 1960s, and quite a few continue to be used by their communities today. The Doyleville School was somewhat more fortunate, at least for a short while. Renovations in the 1940s or 1950s created two restrooms in the 1920 schoolhouse, but according to former students, these amenities operated only for a few years.

Although few rural schools were built by the WPA, many rural schools did benefit from the program through the excavation of basements (to provide more space) and the construction of privies and playgrounds. Structures associated with the WPA program reflect an important example of federal involvement in rural school design. Also, the surviving constructions can testify to the skills of out-of-work craftsman.

Schoolyard

Playgrounds began as a simple open space or "yard" adjacent to the schoolhouse. By the turn of the century playground equipment became more evident. Initially, it consisted of primitive play structures such as a teeter-totter and swings. Specific areas for field sports and play areas for younger children developed early in the 20th century. The school yard was most often fenced, a device intended to keep livestock out, rather than children in. A well or a hand pump was also a fixture within many schoolyards, although most functioned for only a short time. Another feature of the schoolyard was the ubiquitous flag pole.

Outbuildings

Although privies, sheds, barns/stables, and teacherages were almost always part of the school complex, most of these ancillary structures are either not extant, or have not been recorded in sufficient numbers to fully assess their physical and associative characteristics. A good collection of outbuildings can be found at Spring Valley, Spencer, and Willows School. For a list of identified schoolhouses with ancillary buildings by type, see Figure 12.

outhouse/privy - Located a discrete and sanitary distance from the schoolhouse, privies were utilitarian in design. They were essentially wood frame covered with horizontal or board and batten siding with a shed or gable roof. While typically built of wood, there were some unusual exceptions. The Dumont School has a matching brick privy and the outhouse at the Chromo School continued the concrete construction and the diamond-shaped window of its school building. Most rural schools included separate facilities for boys and girls, and occasionally a privacy screen shielded the door. The majority of outhouses were "one-seaters," although "two-seaters" were found, such as those at Pleasant Park School. Rarer "three-seaters" were located at Florissant School and Doyleville.

sheds - Sheds were almost always wood frame with horizontal or board and batten siding and a gable or shed roof. Occasionally some special construction was utilized, such as stacked lumber or framing exposed on the outside, perhaps to facilitate the storage of coal. The Willows School has a shed building constructed in this manner.

barn/stable - Small barns or stables were built to accommodate the horses of those students fortunate enough to ride to school. (The horses were not only methods of transportation; they often served as a recess diversion.) These structures were usually wood frame with horizontal or board and batten siding topped by a shed or gabled roof. Many of these structures were nothing more than loafing sheds--a shed roof supported by wooden posts or metal poles enclosed on three sides.

teacherage - In most rural areas, housing was limited. Before 1900, teachers often boarded with the families of their pupils. Eventually some local school districts attempted to solve the problem by adding living quarters to the schoolhouse or providing a separate building on the site. A small room within the Doyleville School was used as a teacherage (and for sleeping babies during community dances). A 1922 addition to the Second Central School included a teacherage. Buildings were often moved to the site, such as the log cabin that was relocated to the Spencer School to serve as teacher housing. While most of the teacherages identified are wood frame construction (such as those of Medlen, Tarryall, and Foidel Canyon), there was one notable exception. In keeping with the concrete construction of the 1922 Chromo School, a concrete teacherage was built in 1947.

Figure 12. Identified Schoolhouses with Extant Outbuildings

Name of Schoolhouse	Privy	Teacherage	Shed	Barn/ stable
Chromo (5AA1907)	X○	X○		
Coalmont (5JA310.1)	X			
Coates Creek (5ME6985)	X*			
Crestone (5SH1014)	X		X	
Doyleville (5GN1979)	X			
Dumont (5CC654)	X+			
Florissant (5TL305)	X		X	
Foidel Canyon (5RT192)		X	X	
Hahn's Peak (5RT72)	X			
Indian Park (5DA211)	X			
Maher (5MN4501)	X			
Malachite (5HF686)	X			X
Malta (5LK886)	X		X	
Medlen (5JF956)	X	X		
Pleasant Park (5JF972)	X			X
Spencer (5GN1764)	X	X*	X	
Spring Valley (5DA219)	X		X	X
Tarryall (5PA407)	X	X		
Westcliff (5CR29)	X			
Willows (5CR213)	X○		X	X

Except as noted, all buildings are wood frame construction.
* = log
+ = brick
○ = concrete

SIGNIFICANCE

> Schools, like churches, were built in a hurry in many places, intended to be erected quickly to help mark a civilized settlement.... In the East, the first structures raised by settlers were churches, but in the West, where ethnic backgrounds and religious beliefs were more varied, schools took priority. (Gulliford)

It is difficult to comprehend the importance of these simple little buildings--what they mean to their communities and the role they played in local history. Gulliford (1984:160) notes that "no single building type in American architecture more vividly represents the communal efforts of the settlers, who donated time, labor and materials to provide places of learning for their children." The construction of a school building signalled the formation of a community and reflected a belief in both the importance of universal education and the permanence of the community itself. Schoolhouses were often the first and sometimes the only public building for miles. They served not only the educational needs of the community, but were also social and cultural centers. Schoolhouses were the primary public building within the rural landscape and are often all that survives of a once thriving rural community. Schoolhouses shared a common history of construction, development, use, and importance to their respective communities. Schoolhouses also shared a number of physical characteristics. They were remarkably uniform in scale, size, proportion, massing, and placement of doors and windows. These schoolhouses have historical and/or architectural significance and are therefore eligible for listing under criterion A and/or C at a local level of significance.

Threats to rural schoolhouses come in a variety of forms. Consolidation, improved highways, and a decreasing rural population started a long term decline for independent rural school districts, which ultimately resulted in the abandonment of most rural schoolhouses. Once abandoned, weather, vandalism and fire are more likely to take a toll on these vulnerable buildings. Some schoolhouses were not abandoned and continue to serve as community centers, homes, and schools--almost inevitably with additions. To some extent, the ability to adapt schoolhouses to new uses has insured the survival of many of these buildings. Given the form of the building, conversion to a community center often inflicts less damage to the historic character than a conversion to a business or home. However, due to their house-like form, many of these school buildings were converted to houses. Such was the case with many schoolhouses in the Flagler area of western Kit Carson County. Although new owners have found new uses for these buildings, many schools have been saved solely because of the strong sentimental values attached to them. More than any other historic rural building, the schoolhouse represents the cultural heritage of the surrounding community.

Criterion A: Education

Schoolhouses reflect the widespread belief in the value of universal education and represent the growth and evolution that occurred within public education in rural Colorado. They provide the physical evidence of the spread and influence of formal education on the development of rural settlements.

Schoolhouses are significant for the information they provide about the conditions of rural education that prevailed in Colorado well into the mid-twentieth century: the predominance of a single, multi-graded classroom with little in the way of educational equipment or formal athletic grounds, and typically lacking in electricity, indoor plumbing, and thermostat climate control. As they were often the first, and sometimes the only, school building in the area for many years, they are closely associated with all aspects of public education in rural Colorado and are therefore eligible under criterion A.

Criterion A: Social History

Often described as the "glue that held the community together," schoolhouses were the most important and frequently visited building in the community. As it was often the first, and sometimes the only public building on the rural landscape, schoolhouses served as a focus of community life and hosted a wide variety of activities. They functioned as centers for education, recreation and entertainment, and were also used for religious services and civic activities. Because of its role as a community center, schoolhouses are eligible under criterion A for their association with the social history of the community, especially if they were the first or only building used as such.

Criterion A: Exploration/Settlement

A small number of schoolhouses are eligible under criterion A for their association with the early settlement of the community. However, use of this area of significance is rare and <u>only</u> applicable for first generation schoolhouses and not replacement school buildings or later constructions. The building must be closely associated with the initial settlement and early development of the community in which it served in order to apply this area of significance.

Criterion C: Architecture

Schoolhouses may also be eligible under criterion C for their architectural significance. They may embody the distinctive characteristics of a building type and/or possess high artistic values. Gulliford (1984:171-172) makes a convincing argument for the rural schoolhouse as a building type.

> While such schools may have been constructed of widely different materials, in widely varied terrains and climates, in a range of styles and colors, they nonetheless constitute a distinctive building type. The form of country schools followed their function, relying on small utilitarian designs built with inexpensive, generally unprepossessing materials to shelter isolated, small groups of children brought together to get an education. A distinguishing mark of a building type is that its function has come to be readily recognizable by its form. Although a few country schools might be mistaken for rural churches or farm buildings, most can be quickly identified for what they are or once were.

Many Colorado schoolhouses share a number of physical characteristics and are remarkably uniform in scale, proportion, massing, and window and door placement. Based upon analysis of the preservation office database, the most common schoolhouse built in the state during the late 19th and early 20th century was one-story, wood frame with a gable roof and a rectangular plan. It had a central entry in the gabled end; large, double hung sash windows evenly spaced on the side walls; a single undivided interior space; and often included a belfry. In many areas of the state this was the final school form until post-World War II consolidation.

Vestibules or porches were often added to this basic form and some bell towers or cupolas were quite elaborate. The basic form could also be executed in a material other than wood frame, such as log, brick, or stone. While the majority of the rural schoolhouses fit this basic form or "template," there were variations on the theme. Some schoolhouses did not display all the characteristics of the "template," but they did possess enough qualities (described in the previous description section) to be clearly identified as a rural schoolhouse. Such variations included hipped roofs, modified T-plans, and clustered windows. These deviations often reflected turn-of-the century "innovations" in rural school designs.

Just as the National Register recognizes properties that are representative and pivotal, it also recognizes those properties that can best be described as unusual. Colorado's few two-story schoolhouses qualify under this sub-category of architectural significance. Those small numbers of schoolhouses that possess enough elements to be categorized as a recognizable architectural style, contrary to the overwhelming vernacular tradition, would also qualify. Schoolhouses that exhibit "high artistic value" in terms of their craftsmanship (e.g., notable masonry work) would be included under this sub-category, as would those school buildings with an unusual construction method or material.

REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

The property must have been constructed as a public school facility within the period of significance and possess both significance and integrity. When evaluated within the context of the community's history, the property must possess historical significance. The property should strongly convey its historic character physically, that is, it must remain recognizable as a schoolhouse and subsequent alterations must not overwhelm the original design.

Given the simple yet distinctive form of the rural schoolhouse type, alterations must be carefully evaluated to determine the impact on the significant character of the structure. The building must retain integrity of massing, scale, roof shape, fenestration, and wall materials. However, it is important to keep in mind that additions or alterations to the schoolhouse completed during the period of significance reflect the evolution of local education and should be evaluated within that context.

Ideally, eligible schoolhouses also retain interior integrity. Character defining interior features include the original floor plan, flooring and wall materials, trim, and blackboards. Retention of those features is desirable in eligible properties, but alterations should be reviewed to assess the impact on the overall character of the building.

The property should ideally include the historic school grounds, i.e., the parcel of land historically associated with the schoolhouse. These historic school grounds should have sufficient integrity to reflect the period of development and the design intentions of the builders and the educators.

Privies, sheds, barns, and teacherages were integral features of the rural school landscape. Ideally, an eligible schoolhouse would contain well preserved examples of these buildings. Unfortunately, the survival rate of these sometimes crude and temporary structures is quite low. Therefore, a schoolhouse can be eligible even if these structures have been altered or lost. At this time, these ancillary buildings are not recorded in sufficient numbers to assess physical and associative characteristic in order to determine registration requirements. In the future, as more information is gathered, additional property subtypes may be included.

Moved Properties

Because significance is embodied in location and setting as well as in the property itself, the National Register limits the consideration of properties that have been moved. Moving a schoolhouse destroys the relationship between the building and its surroundings and destroys associations with historic events and people. Therefore, a building moved after it ceased to function as a school may be eligible if it is significant primarily for its architectural value (criterion C). In such cases, the moved schoolhouse must retain integrity of design, materials, workmanship, and feeling. Moved schoolhouses must have an orientation, setting, and general environment comparable to that of the historic location and compatible with the property's significance. In order to be eligible under criterion A, such buildings must be documented as the surviving property most importantly associated with a particular historic event or pattern in history. Moving schoolhouses to an artificial grouping of buildings is strongly discouraged as it destroys the integrity of location and setting and can create a false sense of historic development.*

It is important to note that moving buildings was very much a part of the western experience. Schoolhouses moved during their period of historical significance and/or during their use as a school may be considered for listing. Such moves were not uncommon as the relocation continued the building's use and reflected the community's changing needs. Those buildings moved after the period of significance or after the school closed are of much greater concern.

* The Colorado State Register program also strongly discourages artificial groupings of buildings. However, in rare circumstances a building has been listed on the State Register which would not be eligible for the National Register.

The following properties are listed in the National Register of Historic Places* and meet the registration requirements of the schoolhouse property type.

Name (site #)
Battlement Mesa School (5GF135)
Black Forest School (5EP1753)
Coates Creek Schoolhouse (5ME6985)
Crestone School (5SH1014)
Curtis School (5AH459)
Dumont School (5CC654)
Florissant School (5TL305)
Foidel Canyon School/Twentymile School (5RT192)
Frisco Schoolhouse (5ST258)
Hahn's Peak Schoolhouse (5RT72)
Indian Park School (5DA211)
Melvin School (5AH164)
Morrison School House (5JF194)
Old Ladore (Lodore) School (5MF1127)
Salina School (5BL2676)
Spring Valley School (5DA219)
Springfield School/Masonic Temple (5BA313)
Sunshine School (5BL2675)
Tarryall School (5PA407)
Ward School (5BL2673)
Westcliff School (5CR29)
Willows School (5CR213)

The following properties are located within National Register Historic Districts and meet the registration requirements of the schoolhouse property type:

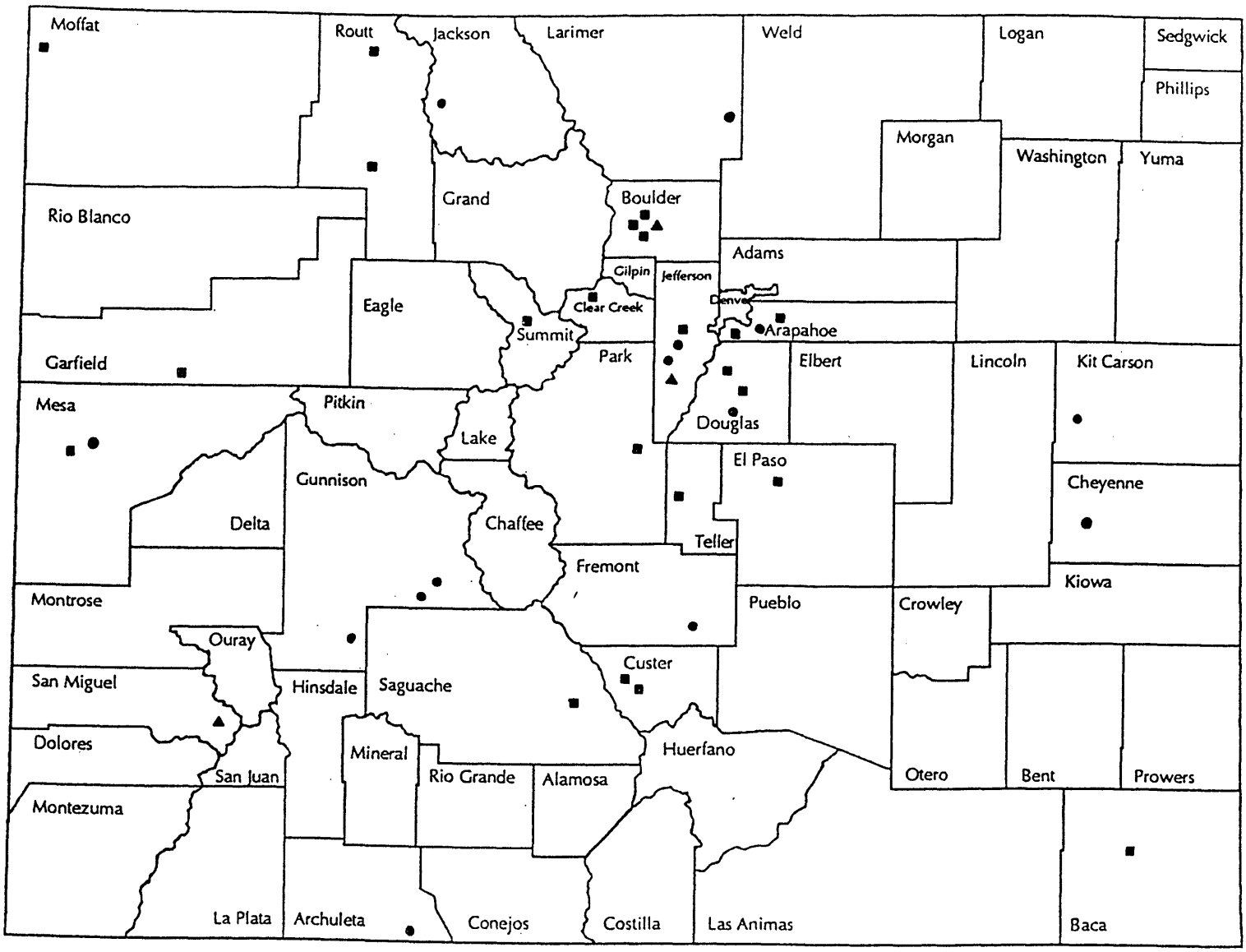
Name (site #)
Gold Hill School House (5BL769.1) within the Gold Hill Historic District
Pine Grove School (5JF189.3) within the North Fork Historic District
Telluride Town Hall/School (5SM1748) within the Telluride Historic District

* Properties listed in the National Register are automatically listed in the State Register.

The following properties are only listed in the State Register of Historic Properties and meet the registration requirements of the schoolhouse property type:

Name (site #)
Cherry Creek School (5AH168)
Chromo Schoolhouse (5AA1907)
Coalmont Schoolhouse (5JA310.1)
Doyleville Schoolhouse (5GN1979)
Lone Tree School (5DA344)
Medlen School (5JF956)
Pipe Line School (5ME7362)
Pitkin School (5GN2549)
Pleasant Park School/ Grange (5JF972)
Plummer School (5LR778)
Rockvale School (5FN1207)
Second Central School (5KC135)
Spencer School (5GN1764)
Wild Horse School (5CH122)

LISTED PROPERTIES THAT MEET THE REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS OF THE SCHOOLHOUSE PROPERTY TYPE (as of 3/99)



■ listed in the National Register*
▲ within a National Register Historic District
● listed in the State Register only

* Properties listed in the National Register are automatically listed in the State Register.

G. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

The context developed in this Multiple Property Documentation form related to the entire state of Colorado.

H. SUMMARY OF IDENTIFICATION AND EVALUATION METHODS

As a result of the increasing number of nominations for rural school properties to the State and National Registers, staff undertook a review of both previously listed schools and others included in the database of the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (OAHP) at the Colorado Historical Society. The primary objective of the review was to ascertain patterns that would facilitate the preparation and evaluation of future nominations.

After a preliminary screening of the nearly 500 database entries indicating original or present use as a school, 360 remained for further consideration. Subsequently, additional entries were eliminated based on their urban location, date of construction, and/or architectural description. The remaining pool of 164 was subjected to a thorough review and analysis. Inventory and nomination forms were examined to determine patterns associated with the development or rural education in Colorado. These patterns were then compared with those known to exist nationally as described in the relevant literature.

Of the 164 rural school buildings remaining under consideration, 23 are individually listed on the National Register, 3 are part of National Register Districts, and 14 are listed only on the State Register of Historic Properties.

The database provided enough information to denote patterns essential to creating the property type and determining significance. However, there were some limitations due to the incomplete and outdated nature of the database. Despite the numbers of schoolhouses that were documented and encoded into the database, research produced information that indicated many more schoolhouses have never been recorded. The schoolhouse documentation varied from county to county, with Boulder County having an unusually large number of recorded schoolhouses. In contrast, secondary sources (Babcock) indicated that at one time there were over 100 schoolhouses in Moffat County; the computer search only produced seven. Since many of the rural school buildings in the OAHP database were last surveyed in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the actual number and condition of extant rural school buildings remaining today is uncertain.

Because buildings associated with the development of rural education in Colorado are a diminishing resource, it is hoped that this document will stimulate the collection of additional information on these valuable historic resources. It is recommended that a systematic state-wide survey of rural schoolhouses be conducted to determine the remaining numbers and their physical condition.

Such a survey should take special care to include construction materials and methods beyond the basic form, such as adobe and ornamental concrete block. With the availability of the ornamental concrete block Multiple Property Documentation Form, a search for schoolhouses constructed of this material will augment the database for two property types. Adobe resources are recognized as endangered in this state. Unoccupied adobe melts quickly back into the earth from which it was made, creating a special urgency to document schoolhouses constructed of this material.

For this Multiple Property Documentation Form, the Statement of Historic Context is broadly written so that it may be applied throughout the state in the future evaluation of extant rural school buildings. Continuing data collection and further analyses may lead to the development of additional property types. Registration requirements were based on the National Register's criteria for evaluation. The period of significance encompasses the development of rural public education in Colorado from the Territorial Period through the adoption of Colorado's School District Reorganization Act of 1949. This act forced the consolidation of numerous small school districts into larger units and marked the end of an era in rural public education within the state of Colorado.

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