

COLORADO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

COLORADO STATE REGISTER OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES NOMINATION FORM

SECTION I

Name of Property

Historic Name Drennan School

Other Names Drennan Community Building

Address of Property

address not for publication

Street Address 20500 Drennan Road

City Colorado Springs [Ellicott vicinity] County El Paso Zip 80928

Present Owner of Property

(for multiple ownership, list the names and addresses of each owner on one or more continuation sheets)

Name Drennan Community School Building, Inc.

Address 20500 Drennan Road Phone _____

City Colorado Springs State Colorado Zip 80928

Owner Consent for Nomination

(attach signed consent from each owner of property - see attached form)

Preparer of Nomination

Name Bonnie Larscheid (Melanie Short of Slaterpaul Architects & OAHP staff Date May 2007
supplied additional material)

Organization Drennan Community School Building, Inc.

Address 3260 Arena Road Phone _____

City Colorado Springs State Colorado Zip 80921

FOR OFFICIAL USE:		Site Number <u>5EP.4967</u>
_____ Nomination Received	Senate # _____	House # _____
<u>8/10/2007</u> Review Board Recommendation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Approval <input type="checkbox"/> Denial	<u>8/30/2007</u> CHS Board State Register Listing <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Approved <input type="checkbox"/> Denied	
	Listing Criteria <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/> B <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> D <input type="checkbox"/> E	
Certification of Listing: President, Colorado Historical Society		Date _____

COLORADO STATE REGISTER OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES

Property Name Drennan School

SECTION II

Local Historic Designation

Has the property received local historic designation?

no

yes --- individually designated designated as part of a historic district

Date designated _____

Designated by _____ (Name of municipality or county)

Use of Property

Historic Education/school; Social/meeting hall; Industry/communications facility

Current Social/meeting hall

Original Owner Widefield School District No. 3, El Paso County

Source of Information warranty deed filed 17 May 1917

Year of Construction ca. 1917

Source of Information community member accounts; surmised from warranty deed and other materials

Architect, Builder, Engineer, Artist or Designer Unknown

Source of Information _____

Locational Status

Original location of structure(s)

Structure(s) moved to current location

Date of move _____

SECTION III

Description and Alterations

(describe the current and original appearance of the property and any alterations on one or more continuation sheets)

COLORADO STATE REGISTER OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES

Property Name Drennan School

SECTION IV

Significance of Property

Nomination Criteria

- A** - property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to history
- B** - property is connected with persons significant in history
- C** - property has distinctive characteristics of a type, period, method of construction or artisan
- D** - property is of geographic importance
- E** - property contains the possibility of important discoveries related to prehistory or history

Areas of Significance

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Economics | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Archaeology – prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Law |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Archaeology – historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment/ Recreation | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Ethnic Heritage | <input type="checkbox"/> Military |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Exploration/ Settlement | <input type="checkbox"/> Performing Arts |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Geography/ Community Identity | <input type="checkbox"/> Politics/ Government |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Community Planning and Development | <input type="checkbox"/> Health/Medicine | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input type="checkbox"/> Science |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social History |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation |

Significance Statement

(explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

Bibliography

(cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets)

SECTION V

Locational Information

Lot(s) NA Block _____ Addition _____

USGS Topographic Quad Map Ellicott

Verbal Boundary Description of Nominated Property

(describe the boundaries of the nominated property on a continuation sheet)

COLORADO STATE REGISTER OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES

Property Name Drennan School

SECTION VI

Photograph Log for Black and White Photographs

(prepare a photograph log on one or more continuation sheets)

SECTION VII

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS TO ACCOMPANY NOMINATION

Owner Consent Form

Black and White Photographs

Color Prints or Digital Images

Sketch Map(s)

Photocopy of USGS Map Section

Optional Materials

Use of Nomination Materials

Upon submission to the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, all nomination forms and supporting materials become public records pursuant to CRS Title 24, and may be accessed, copied, and used for personal or commercial purposes in accordance with state law unless otherwise specifically exempted. The Colorado Historical Society may reproduce, publish, display, perform, prepare derivative works or otherwise use the nomination materials for Society and/or State Register purposes.

For Office Use Only

Property Type: building(s) district site structure object area

Architectural Style/Engineering Type: [Late 19th & Early 20th Century American Movements] Rural Schoolhouse

Period of Significance: ca. 1917 to 1955

Level of Significance: Local State National

Multiple Property Submission: Rural School Buildings in Colorado

Acreage: 2.65 Site Elevation: 5835 feet

P.M. 6th Township 15 S Range 63 W Section 9 Quarter Sections S SW SW SE

UTM Reference: Zone 13 Easting 547900 Northing 4289219 NAD27

The UTMS were derived from heads up digitization on Digital Raster Graphic (DRG) maps provided to OAHP by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management.

Property Name Drennan School

DESCRIPTION and ALTERATIONS

Drennan School (also known as the Drennan Community Building) and its collection of outbuildings are located east of Colorado Springs near the town of Ellicott.* The area is comprised of large tracts of land used for grazing. Ranch properties surround the approximately 2.65 acre site, which is generally flat with a notable view to the west. Woven wire fencing and barbed wire fencing define the perimeter of the nominated parcel.

Two gates along the southern fence line open onto Drennan Road, a dirt east-west thoroughfare. Across the road are more open fields. A semi-circular gravel drive and loosely defined parking area are located near the south side façade. There are several mature cottonwood trees along the north and south lot lines and a few lone trees are scattered around the schoolyard. One mature cottonwood is close to the southeast corner of the school foundation, another is near the north stairs, and perennial flowers are along the south side of the building. Two rows of trees, one deciduous and the other evergreen, form a windbreak to the west of the cluster of buildings. Beyond the windbreak is an open grassy area that once served as gravel basketball courts. Native grasses cover the school grounds.

This fenced parcel includes several buildings and structures. Besides the schoolhouse, there are two outhouses, a coal shed, and a cistern. Foundations of a garage and an earlier outhouse are also visible. A modern propane tank, partially enclosed by a chain link fence, is positioned near the north side (rear) of the school. A piece of playground equipment, a merry-go-round, is east of the schoolhouse.

Schoolhouse

Drennan School, measures 58' x 32' (approximately) and is a single story detached building with a raised basement. Centered on the south façade is a gabled roof projecting entrance bay. Three small shed roof projections on the south, east and north elevations provide access to the garden level basement. These four projections modify the rectangular plan of the main hipped roof portion of the building. Square-cut, wood shingles sheath the walls. The shingle walls are painted a bright bluish-green and the wood trim is white. The raised foundation is cast in place concrete painted white. A standing seam metal roof covers the low pitched hipped roof with its broadly overhanging eaves and exposed rafter tails. A square red brick chimney with a concrete cap pierces the north roof slope. The three small shed roof projections that shelter basement entrances have wood shingled side walls and low pitched metal roofs with overhanging eaves and exposed rafters. The north and east projections have a standing seam metal roof, while the south has a corrugated metal roof.

The windows throughout the building are original, wood-frame single-hung with exterior wood frame screens. Window sizes vary—the main floor windows are tall and narrow, the windows illuminating the covered basement entrys are slightly smaller rectangles, while all the basement windows are short and square. The number and configuration of the panes in the windows varies, except for the basement windows, which are all 3-over-1 light. There are two entrances to the main classroom level (on the north and south elevation) and three entrances (south, east and north elevation) to the basement. All

* The Historic Structure Assessment completed by Melanie Short under the direction of Gerhard Petri, both of SLATERPAULL ARCHITECTS, provided the graphics and much of the information for this section.

Property Name Drennan School

these exterior paneled doors have a 4-light window, with the exception of the 6-light double doors on the south façade.

The schoolhouse faces **south**. A gabled roof projection centered on the south façade marks the main entrance to the school. A series of eight concrete steps with pipe railings lead to the double leaf entry. The glazed and paneled double doors are surmounted by a 12-light transom. Two windows with a 4-over-1 light configuration flank the entrance. A framed sign board with "Drennan School" is positioned above the entrance on the wall. There is only one window on the east wall of the main portion of the building, a small basement window. On the west wall is a small shed roof projection with two windows. A recently constructed wooden stoop with handrail leads to the door on the west end of the enclosure.

The **west** side of the school has a series of four evenly spaced windows, each 1-over-1 with a 3-light transom. Directly below each of these windows is a basement window.

A series of wooden steps lead to the centered entry on the **north** (rear) of the school. This central glazed and paneled door with transom is immediately flanked by two 6-over-6 windows. No other windows punctuate the shingled walls, although two windows pierce the concrete basement level. Adjacent the wood staircase is another small shed-roof covered entrance to the basement. There are three windows on the north wall and a door on the east end of this projection.

The main floor of the **east** side mimics the west side with a series of four evenly spaced windows, each 1-over-1 with a 3-light transom. Centered on this elevation below these windows is another small projection covering a basement entrance. There are two windows evenly spaced on the wood shingled wall of the projection and a door on its south end. Two basement windows flank the basement entry.

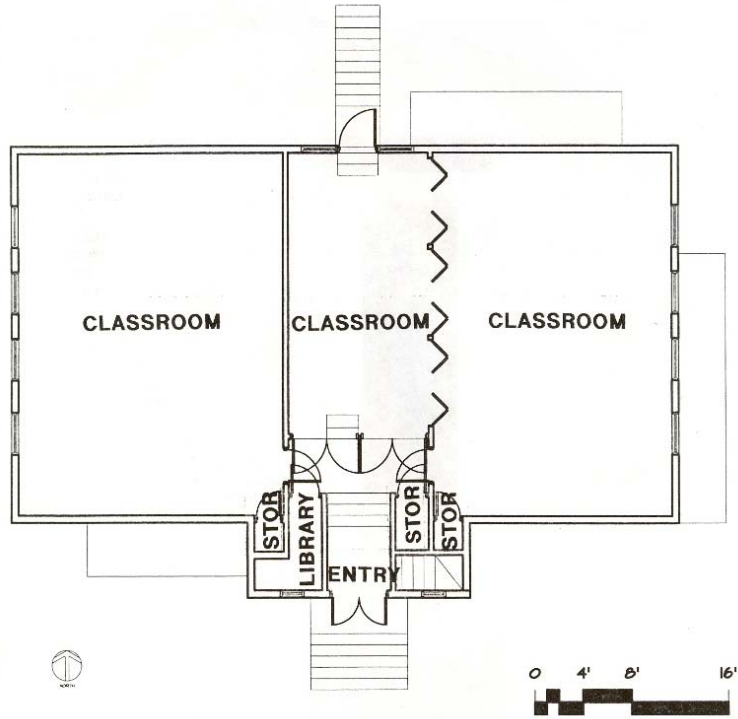
Interior

The interior still possess much original historic fabric, including the wood trim of dark stained oak, tongue and groove fir flooring, plaster walls, slate chalkboards in wood frames, and picture rails. The first floor contains three classrooms, one of which doubled as a stage for the secondary (east) classroom. Folding accordion wood panels separate the stage area from the east classroom. There are two stage curtains; both contain a painted mountain scene surrounded by various advertisements. (Many of these advertisers were listed in the 1948 business directory.) The primary classroom is to the west. Flanking the stairs are two closet-like rooms, one served as the library, the other was used for storage. In addition the primary and secondary classrooms each had its own storage closet.

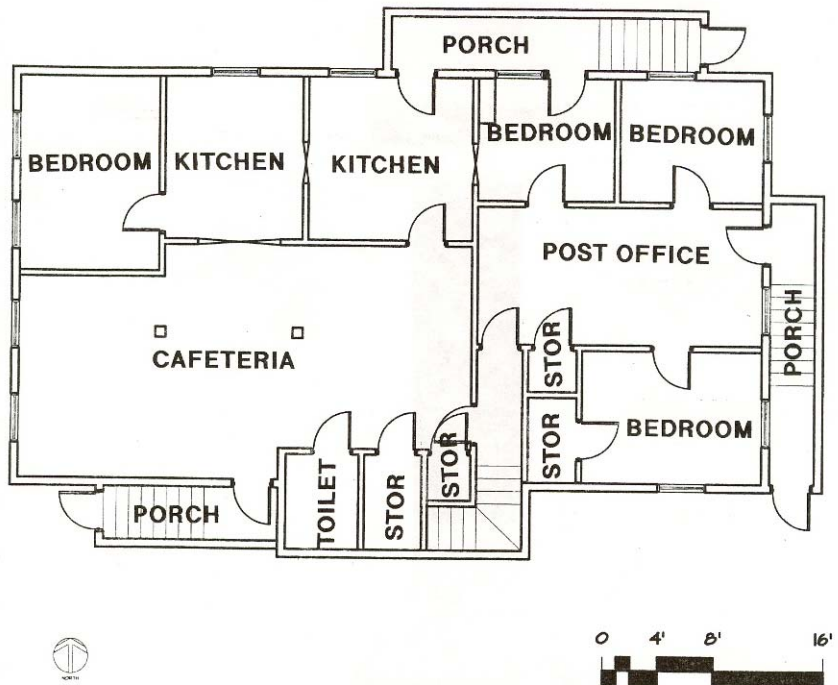
The basement contains several bedrooms. The four teachers who taught in the school and a caretaker all resided in the building. The garden level basement also contained the cafeteria, kitchen, a toilet room, and a central room which contained a telephone switchboard. There is a large pass-through between the cafeteria and the kitchen. One of the rooms now denoted as a kitchen was originally a bedroom.

Property Name Drennan School

FIRST FLOOR PLAN



BASEMENT FLOOR PLAN



Property Name Drennan School

Coal Shed

Behind the school to the north sits the coal shed. The WPA purportedly constructed this simple, wood frame building. It has a rectangular plan, a gable roof, and a concrete foundation. Corrugated metal sheeting covers the front gable roof with its overhanging eaves and exposed rafters. Hardboard or masonite siding covers the walls. It is not known what original material may be underneath the siding, if any. The Historic Structure Assessment concluded that the building was likely re-roofed and re-sided at the same time the schoolhouse received its new roof (ca. 1965). There are two doors on the south side. These vertical board doors have strap hinges and simple wide board surrounds.

Boys Privy

Northwest of the schoolhouse along the north fence line is the boys' outhouse. Purportedly the WPA constructed this small building in the 1930s. A dog-eared wood fence privacy fence extends south and west. Approximately 9' x 5', the wood frame building has a shed roof, wood shingled walls and a concrete foundation. Corrugated metal is laid over the original wood shingle roof, which slopes down to the rear (north). The wood shingled walls are painted to match the schoolhouse. A plywood board covers the one window located on the west side. The interior has a concrete floor and three concrete toilet boxes with wooden seats. The walls and ceiling are finished with beadboard that is painted or stained a medium brown.

Girls Privy

Located near the northeast corner of the property is the girls' privy. Purportedly the WPA constructed this building in the 1930s to replace an earlier outhouse. The girls' privy is built with the same framing and materials as the boys--a rectangular plan, a north-sloping shed roof, walls of square cut wood shingles and a concrete foundation. The exception is the roof, which is covered in asphalt roll roofing. A door is centered on the south face and a hopper window with three vertical lights is on the east wall. The horizontal bead board interior of this "three-seater" is painted grey-green. A privacy fence extends south and east. This privy also is painted to match the schoolhouse. Both outhouses are still used during good weather.

Privy Foundation

The concrete foundation of the early outhouse is still visible immediately to the east of the girls' privy. This original outhouse was the only one that serviced the schoolhouse until construction of the two replacement "3-holers." The dirt from the new privy was supposedly used to fill this earlier one.

Garage Foundations

Located along the north fence line directly north of the windbreak are the foundations of a garage, which is seen in historic images. All that remains is an approximately 8" wide concrete foundation with a 4" x 4" wood sill plate still attached. The south side of the foundation includes a small concrete ramp which would have facilitated driving vehicles into the garage.

Schoolyard Features

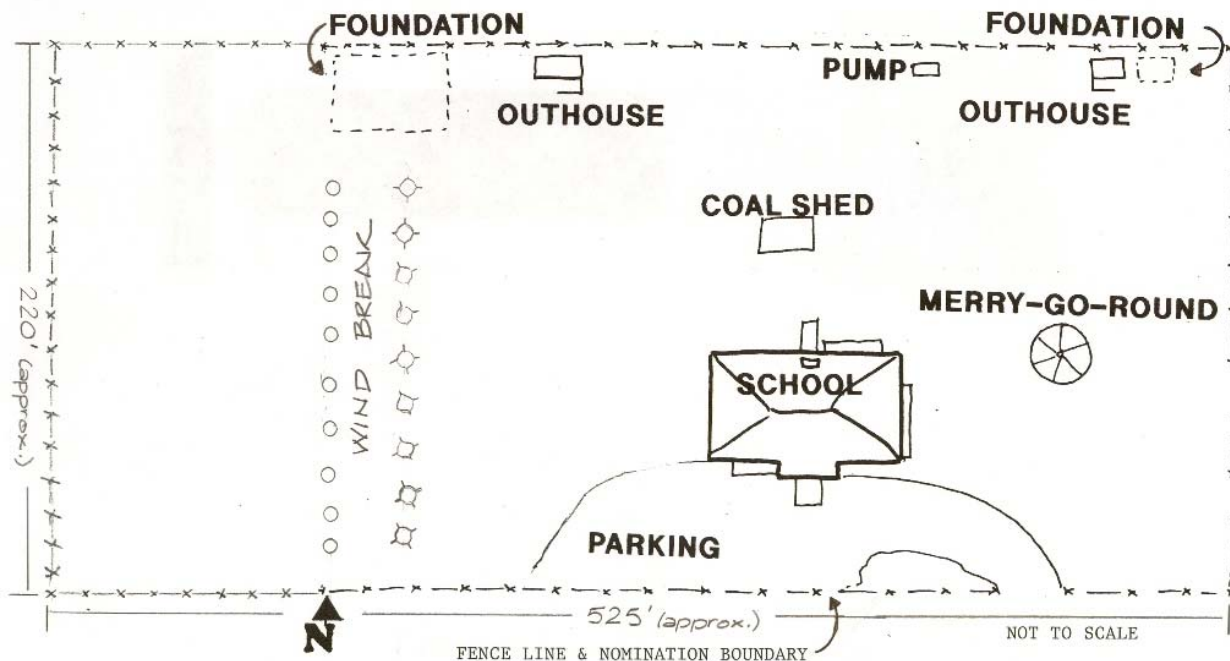
The schoolhouse grounds include two playground features. An intact merry-go-round with metal framing and wood seats (not original) is located east of the school building. This eight-sided merry-go-

Property Name Drennan School

round is approximately 12' in diameter. The Historic Structure Assessment (HSA) noted it is a Kaymor Playground Apparatus, Model S, from Pueblo. On the south side under a cottonwood tree is the remains of a teeter-totter. The wood portion is missing and only the metal pipe base (painted white) remains.

A small wood frame sheathed in corrugated metal sheeting covers the cistern/well. Several gravel basketball courts were west of the cluster of buildings. Scrub brush and native grasses obscure evidence of these courts.

A windmill was one of the distinctive features of the site. No longer extant, it was roughly centered on the north boundary line. The 8' diameter, wooden windmill was mentioned on the 1976 site form. At that time the recorder noted, "this one is in poor shape, but it still stands and the name 'Drennan' and the year 1917 are clearly visible on the windmill's tail" (Gulliford 1976). The windmill was sold in the 1960s and its exact location is uncertain.

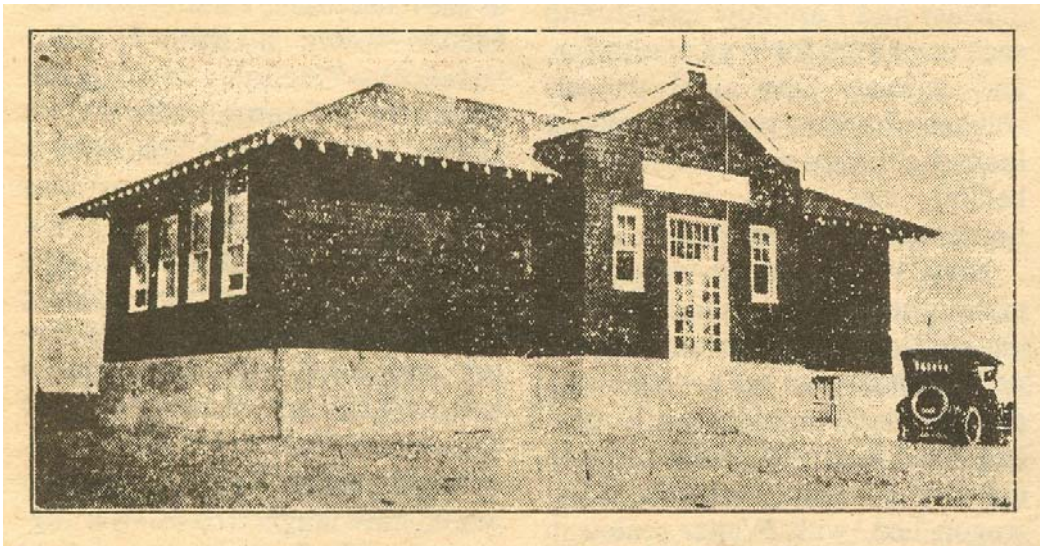


To the east of the nominated property beyond the fence line sits a residence and several dilapidated outbuildings. While the house originally served as a teacher's residence, no information has been found about its construction date, when it was moved to the site, or when the outbuildings were constructed. (These buildings were not part of the historic structure assessment or the preservation plan.) Due to the lack of information about these resources they were excluded from the nominated parcel. If documentation is found at a later date, the nomination could be amended to include these resources, if appropriate.

Property Name Drennan School

Alterations

A photograph taken shortly after construction shows only one small window piercing the concrete foundation of the building. This window near the southeast corner would indicate the existence of a partial basement. Sources seem to agree the basement expansion that resulted in numerous near-grade windows and three additional entrances was completed in approximately 1920, although how this was accomplished is still subject to debate.



ca. 1917

The Historic Structure Assessment (HSA) noted the additional following changes to the school building (SLATERPAULL ARCHITECTS 2006:5). The stage which functioned as a third classroom was built in 1930. The building was originally heated with coal or wood fired stoves, water was brought in from the on-site well, and there was no electricity until 1948. Some interior plumbing was installed prior to 1949 and included two drinking fountains and the kitchen sink. The pump room was converted into a toilet room sometime between 1955 and 1960. [This document later indicates that “the toilet room and drinking fountain were added when running water was brought into the building ca. 1950-55.”] The school’s metal roof was installed in 1965 over the original wood shingles. It is believed that the coal shed received its metal roof and masonite siding about the same time.

Photographic evidence illustrates the building has undergone very few exterior changes over the years. Photographs dated 1927 and 1929 show an open entrance with handrail to the basement on the south facade where the covered entry is now. HSA architects concluded that these covered entries were added sometime in the 1930s. They speculated that the WPA might have created these additions when on site for other construction work as they contain similar materials, including horizontal bead board interior walls.

Another notable exterior change is the fluctuating wall color. The building was often seen in old photographs (many undated) with dark shingled walls and white trim or with light colored walls and dark trim. One undated newspaper article that included a photo of the school shortly after it closed described it as a “white schoolhouse with red trim.” A 1993 newspaper article noted that the building

Property Name Drennan School

glistened "under a fresh coat of green and white paint." A stoop and a wide board handrail were added to the basement entry at the southwest corner in 2004.

The schoolyard has changed over time. Purportedly the WPA constructed several of the outbuildings in the 1930s, notably the two privies and the coal shed, although confirmation of this and the exact dates of construction remain elusive. It is not known when the garage that occupied the northwest corner was removed. The windmill was sold off and nature reclaimed the area of the gravel basketball courts. Floyd Brewer planted the two rows of tree that serve as a windbreak after the school closed.

Property Name Drennan School

SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENT

Built ca. 1917 to serve homesteaders in eastern El Paso County, Drennan School meets the registration requirements of the schoolhouse property type as defined in the Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) *Rural School Buildings in Colorado*. This schoolhouse is associated with the influence of formal education on the development of rural settlements. The school and its ancillary buildings provide physical evidence about the conditions of rural education that prevailed in Colorado well into the mid-twentieth century. It is therefore eligible under Criterion A for historical significance in the area of *Education*. Drennan School contained a primary classroom and a secondary classroom with a stage in which four teachers taught grades one through twelve until the building was forced to close in 1955 due to dwindling enrollment and consolidation pressures.

As noted in the MPDF, rural school buildings are also eligible under Criterion A for their association with the *Social History* of the area. Drennan School not only was the center for education, it also served as a focus of community life by hosting a wide variety of activities, including ice cream socials, dances, church services and Sunday school, weddings, funerals, and club meetings.

The school is eligible under Criterion A in the area of *Communications*. The building is associated with the first area-wide telephone system in eastern El Paso County. It housed the El Paso Telephone Company's switchboard from 1918 to 1955.

The building was instrumental in creating infrastructure for this rural community made up largely of scattered farms and ranches. The basement of Drennan School contained a post office that served a 100-mile loop mail route from 1920 to 1951. Shortly after its construction, a newspaper article touted the building as the headquarters for a new departure in social service work and "the first community social center to be established in El Paso County." In addition to housing this social services co-operative, farmers brought their crops to be sold at the school in an open market. The building was also the logical choice when the local telephone company relocated its switchboard. Like most rural schools, it also served as a polling place. Because the school represents a conscious effort by the community to create an infrastructure, it is eligible under Criterion A for *Community Planning and Development*.

Drennan School embodies the distinctive characteristics of the building type noted in the MPDF and is therefore eligible under Criterion C for significance in *Architecture*. The building's purpose is easily discernable by its form. In its size, scale, window placement, and interior configuration, the building epitomizes the schoolhouse property type. The building's clustered classroom windows and hipped roof reflect turn-of-the-century "innovations" in rural school design.

Drennan School is a relatively large (58' x 32') rural schoolhouse with spacious classrooms upstairs and numerous rooms in its garden level basement. The building's size no doubt reflects an increase in population that forced an early consolidation of two one-room schools. Its size also reflects the growing trend in rural communities to educate students beyond the eighth grade. The construction of the basement not only created space for a cafeteria and kitchen, but also bedrooms for four teachers, a telephone office, a post office, and living quarters for a caretaker.

Drennan School is architecturally significant for its extant collection of buildings that aptly illustrates the conditions of rural school education. Although playground equipment, privies, sheds, and other outbuildings were customarily located on rural school grounds, most of these ancillary resources often never survive to the present. Although Drennan School has lost its garage and its windmill—a very

Property Name Drennan School

unusual feature for a rural schoolhouse, the merry-go-round, coal shed and two privies remain to convey the rural school experience.

Historical Background

The community and this school building were named after William O. Drennan, one of the early homesteaders who donated money and land for the first schoolhouse in the area, a one-room log building.

The area that is today known as the Drennan community was originally used for sheep grazing before it was opened to settlement in 1906. The area developed relatively late due to its distance from a railroad. Education for their children was very important to these homesteaders. Old timers remembered the first school to serve the area was a one-room log building on the Ubank homestead. As the area grew there were three schools—O'Connor School for those on the west side, the Drennan School in the central part, and the Williams School on the east side.

Despite its distance from a railroad the area grew and to accommodate the increasing number of school age children, a larger school was needed. The original designated school section was across Drennan Road to the south. This location would have created a school building with a north facing entrance. SLATERPAULL ARCHITECTS (2005) theorized that the harsh climate of the plains may have caused the district to contemplate a different location for the school. According to a 17 May 1917 deed, Mary Green Nye of Montreal, Canada, conveyed an approximately three acre parcel on the north side of the road to School District No. 3 for forty five dollars. This piece of land allowed for the construction of a building that would face south onto Drennan Road.

While the exact year of construction remains undetermined, some sources claim that students were in attendance at this school by December 1917. This larger school replaced the one-room log building and represents an early consolidation of the first Drennan and Williams one-room schoolhouses. The plan for Drennan School is the same as the nearby Truckton School, indicating that both were built utilizing a specific plan. These two schools (Drennan and Truckton), along with one in Widefield comprised Widefield School District No. 3, formed in 1874.

A *Colorado Springs News* article headlined "New Drennan Centralized School To Be Community Social Center" was an early indicator of the building's important contributions to the community. It reported that

The headquarters for a new departure in social service work which will be participated in by both city and county residents to bring them into closer relationship will be one of the uses of the new Drennan school, and this is the first community social center to be established in El Paso county. The welfare work will be carried on by the congregation of the First Christian church of this city [Colorado Springs] and the residents of the Drennan school district who will co-operate in an effort to bring the people of their respective communities into a closer acquaintance and better understanding of each other.

The article also reported on the school's dedication ceremony where it was noted that the school was named after W.O. Drennan, who gave the site for the first school of the district. The article characterized the event as "a very enjoyable affair.... a day that marked the beginning of a new era in the social and educational welfare of the community."

This article was reproduced in a 1986 local newspaper special edition with a "ca. 1917" date. The

Property Name Drennan School

article continued with a brief history of the school building, which because of the "ca.1917" date only continues the obfuscation of the building's date of construction:

The construction of the new building was begun last autumn and it has been in use since shortly before Christmas. It is a modern two-room building and the school which was formed by combining the Drennan and Williams schools now has an attendance of about 50 students. In addition to the regular grade work, the course of instruction includes junior high school work corresponding to the first year's work in the Colorado Springs High school. Next year the second high school work also will be added. Miss Harriet Farrell and Miss Grace Bancroft were the teachers for the year just closed.

According to Vada Enoch Finney, students moved into the new building in December 1917 and the first graduating class [presumably in the spring of 1918] was an eighth grade class of 13 pupils. (The first *high school* students would not graduate until 1922, a fact that has also lead to some confusion about when the building was constructed.)

This "ca. 1917" newspaper article also included a photograph of the school and shows a large expanse below the shingled walls without any window openings. The garden level basement was created to house the kitchen and several bedrooms for the teachers. While all the sources agree that this addition was completed by 1920, there are several versions of the basement's creation. Some sources claim the school was raised and the basement constructed beneath it. Other sources state that members of the community worked beneath the building using slips, teams of horses and hand labor to create what has been called a "split level basement addition." SLATERPAULL ARCHITECTS provided the following analysis.

There are two possibilities for the basement creation, one that the original foundation walls were approximately 6 feet high, and the basement was created by pouring an additional 3 feet on top of them. However, the photographs pre-basement appear to have the same height of parging as post-basement, so the other option is that the basement was dug out within the existing foundation walls.

Soon they were teaching all 12 grades in the school. At one time there were as many as 75 pupils. Sarah Jane (Wilkow) Devor recalled that there were four teachers employed at Drennan, four at Truckton, and two at Widefield.

Four teachers and a cook staffed the school. The teachers taught first through twelfth grade. Three bus routes brought the children of ranching and farming families to the school. The WPA purportedly constructed the two privies and the coal shed. The building did not get running water inside until the late 1940s. Other sources claim this did not occur until the 1950s. About the same time, the building was wired for electricity.

Irene Brewer, who graduated from the school in 1948, described it as "a happy place to be. There were usually about 25-30 kids in various grades, it was fun and we all enjoyed going to school." She recalled that "We had basketball games out on the old gravel courts" and "We just thought it was great when we got to play at another school where we got to play on an inside floor." In 1940, both the girls and boys basketball teams brought home district championships. That same year, the boy's basketball team took the El Paso County Championship. The girl's basketball team took the 1946 state championship. The school had its own paper. The October 1940 issue of the school paper was called *The Drennan High Notes*; the 16 May 1941 issue had a masthead with the name *Drennan Pirate*. In the 1950s, the

Property Name Drennan School

paper was called *The Prairie Pronghorn*.

According to the back page of *Drennan Highlights*, a Drennan Community Memorial Edition (10 August 1986), the school saw its first high school graduates in 1922, Eleanor and Lucile Corrin. The last high school student to graduate was Drusilla Dixon in 1955. The number of graduating seniors varied every year, usually averaging between two and five students, although 1939 was a banner year with a class of nine.

The Drennan community had one of the highest percentages in Colorado of its youth and citizens serving in the U.S. Armed Forces. Drennan School had graduates in both World Wars. After World War II, agriculture began to decline and so did the rural population. A major drought in the early 1950s forced many farmers and ranchers to move away. In 1954 with declining enrollment, Drennan residents were asking to become part of Ellicott School District No. 22. County Superintendent C. E. Martin ordered the transfer 14 February 1955. This consolidation forced the closure of Drennan School, sending its remaining students to Ellicott. But the loose-knit rural community refused to abandon the building.

Although the school closed in 1955, the citizens of Drennan were determined the building would be preserved. At a 7 May 1956 meeting, the electors of School District No. 22 directed that the district should sell the property to the local community. In 1957, Charles Brewer, Elvin Henderson, and Howard Wilson became the trustees of the building with a view to the community incorporating at some future time. School District No. 22 sold the property for \$350 to these three individuals in a warranty deed dated 17 January 1957. The Drennan Community School Building, Inc. became a reality with bylaws adopted in February 2000. The three trustees sold the building to the Drennan Community School Building, Inc. (a non profit corporation) two months later.

Drennan School was described as “a comforting refuge from the sometime desolate prairie life for El Paso County homesteaders in the 1920s.” The building was Drennan’s social and community center. Indeed a ca. 1917 newspaper headline touted the building as a “community social center.” Vada Enoch Finney recalled that “for many years our entertainment centered in the school and the church, which was held in the school building.”

Life on the prairie had its hardships, but also had its pleasures. There were ice cream socials, school programs and dances (usually held in nearby halls or in the larger private homes.) Such pleasures were not for everyone.

A strong religious force existed in the community and a Sunday School and Christian Endeavor Society were organized early. Formal church services were held once or twice a month from World War I to the 1950s. Sunday school met each week. Some school board members wanted to allow dancing in the school basement, but others did not. Consequently (so the story goes) the basement was built in such a way that a piano could not be taken down there. But residents managed to hold dances upstairs. The building hosted countless weddings and funerals, but after the school closed residents had to attend church in Ellicott or Colorado Springs.

The local people, determined to retain this focal point of their community, assumed the responsibility for the maintenance of the building. Graduates and community members have volunteered to maintain the school since 1957. A surveyor noted in 1976 that the building was currently used by the grange and the “Needle and Thread” club. The club met twice a month to make quilts that were raffled off with the proceeds going towards the maintenance of the building (Gulliford 1976).

Property Name Drennan School

A 1993 newspaper article noted that the school was still the site of quilting bees, reunions, potlucks, weddings and funerals and that it was all that remained of a rural community made up largely of scattered farms and ranches.

The community continues to utilize the building for various community gatherings throughout the year. An ice cream social is still held on the last Saturday in July. There is a homecoming/reunion potluck held the second Sunday in August, and every second Saturday in October there is a white elephant sale and supper to raise funds for the upkeep of the building. The building is also available for private events for community members, such as anniversary parties and bereavement dinners.

Post Office

In its expanding capacity as the community's prominent public building, the school's basement housed a post office for a 100-mile loop mail route. According to *Colorado Post Offices 1859-1989* (Bauer et al 1990: 47, 71), the Hibbard Post Office served the community between 1920 and 1922 and the name changed to Drennan in 1922. Classified as a rural station, the Drennan Post Office was considered a branch of Colorado Springs and service was discontinued 5 October 1951. (Other sources claim the post office closed in 1954.)

El Paso County Telephone Company

One of the building's more unusual functions was to house a switchboard for a local telephone company. Telephone service was not available in the Drennan area in the early 1900s as it was so sparsely populated. However, there were a few people in the area wanting telephone service and consequently decided to form their own company in 1915 and the school building would play an important role. F. Ward Edwards wrote a brief history of the telephone company from which the following was taken.

Harvey Huffman, a local sheep man, called the neighbors together at his home for the purpose of organizing a telephone company. The seventeen people present created the El Paso County Telephone Company and elected five directors. They decided to sell \$20,000 of common stock at \$57 per share to those wishing service. A few businesses in Colorado Springs bought stock to help promote service in the area. A switch board was installed in the Huffman home.

Huffman sold his ranch to the Bishop family and daughters Roxie and Zella were the first operators for the new company. They operated the switchboard until 1918; then the switching equipment moved to the basement of the new Drennan School. [This 1918 date could be problematic as other sources indicate that the basement addition was not complete until 1920. Is it possible that the switchboard was in the partial basement near the southeast corner?]

Roxie and Zella moved to Colorado Springs to work for the Mountain States Telephone Company soon after. Roy (brother of the two sisters) and Julia Bishop became the operators in 1920. Duties entailed not just operating the switchboard, but also billing customers, bookkeeping, and outside plant maintenance. The company was serving approximately 100 people with ten to twelve lines running in different directions with a limit of eight subscribers per party line. These lines were a single 12-gauge wire, fastened to an 8-foot 2x4 attached to the posts of the barbed wire fence line along the county road

Property Name Drennan School

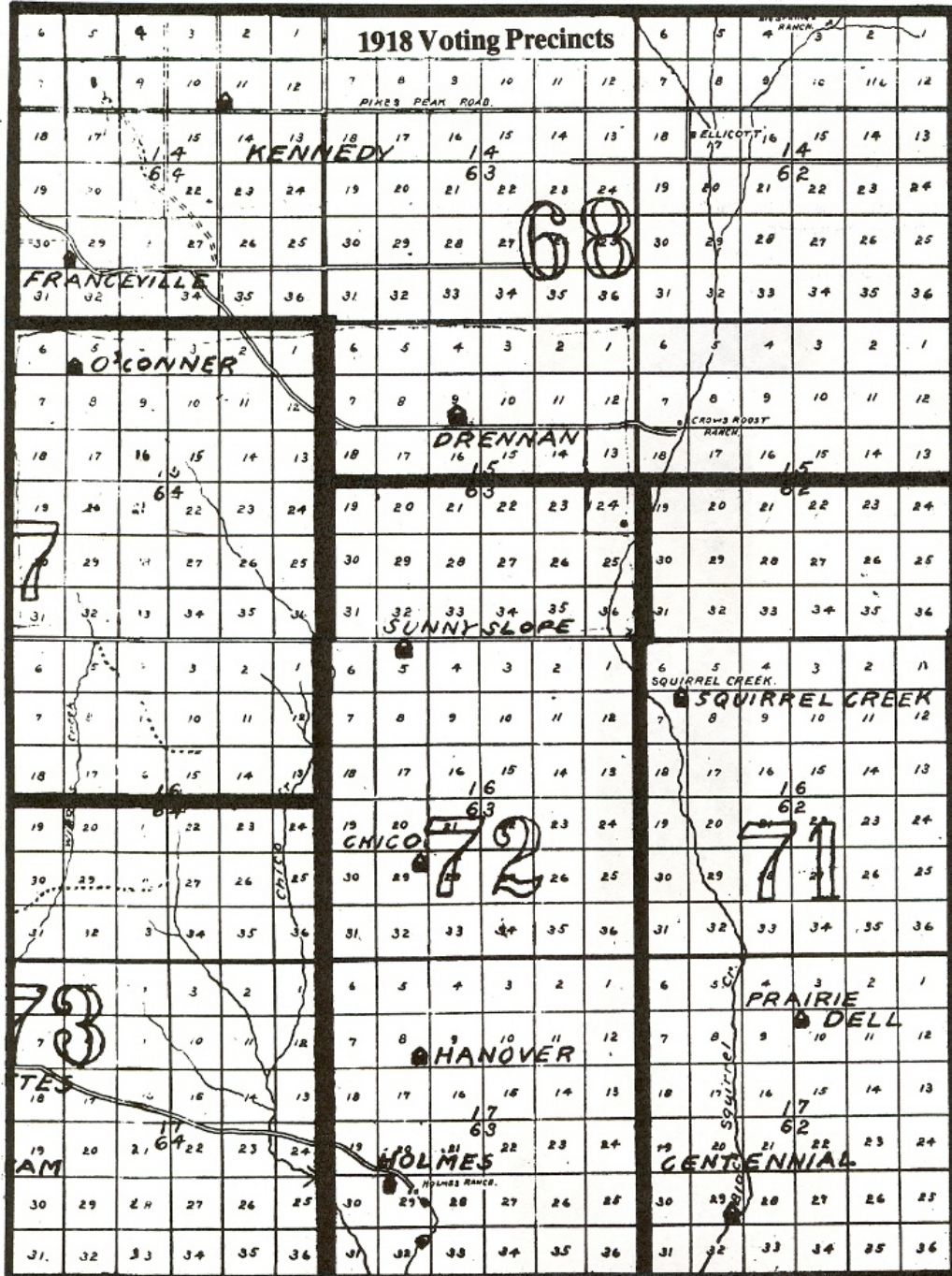
right of ways. Telephone poles were only at crossings for traffic clearance. The party lines conveniently allowed the operator to plug in on the lines and announce school programs, fires, funerals, and even the time. The Bishops retired after 30 years of service.

All was going well until the REA came to the area in the early 1950s. The energized REA lines created such a noise on the telephone line that no one was able to talk. The 35 years of good service using the single wire ground system came to end. A two wire line and pole system replaced it. Although still a party line, the REA interference was eliminated.

The company "upgraded" the system in 1955. There was need for additional lines as there were more telephones on each line than was allowed and the poles were deteriorating. They decided to put the entire system on underground cable. But it wasn't long before trouble began. Lines began to get ground shorts from the gophers eating the insulation. The cable system was abandoned and they returned to the open wire and poles. During this time the switchboard was moved from the Drennan School to a location on Highway 94 and Peyton Highway. The move may have been precipitated by the closing of the school and the building's unknown future. At its new location, the company built a house for the operators and installed the switchboard in the home. The USGS topographical Ellicott Quadrangle map includes a building identified as "El Paso Telephone Exchange" approximately six miles north of the Drennan school location.

Substantial upgrades in 1970 to 1972 made the telephone company one of the most modern in the country. It also made it attractive to other companies. Mountain Bell eventually submitted a bid of \$15,100 per share and the stockholders agreed to sell. The transaction ended the era of individual stockholders, which had lasted from 1915 to 1984.

Property Name Drennan School



Most rural schoolhouses also took on the role of polling places. This map illustrates the pattern of rural school education—numerous small schoolhouses no more than a few miles apart from each other. Parents did not want their children traveling too far to reach school.
(Source: Drennan Highlights, Drennan Community Memorial Edition. Eastern Colorado Plainsman, 10 August 1986.)

Property Name Drennan School



Ca. 1986

Property Name Drennan School

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bauer, William H.; Ozment, James L.; and Willard, John H. *Colorado Post Offices 1859-1989*. Golden: The Colorado Railroad Museum, 1990.

Devor, Sarah Jane (Wilkow). "Drennan Community History." On file in the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Colorado Historical Society. (Undated, typewritten pages).

Doggett, Suzanne and Wilson, Holly. *Rural School Buildings in Colorado* National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, 1999. On file in the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Colorado Historical Society, Denver, Colorado.

Drennan Highlights, Drennan Community Memorial Edition. Eastern Colorado Plainsman, 10 August 1986.

Colorado Springs, Colorado. El Paso County Assessor. Various deeds and records.

Finney, Vada Enoch. "A Trip to Colorado in a Covered Wagon." On file in the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Colorado Historical Society. (Undated photocopied, handwritten pages).

Edwards, F. Ward. "History of El Paso County Telephone Co." On file in the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Colorado Historical Society. (Undated, photocopied typewritten pages).

Gulliford, Andrew. [Draft] State Inventory Form for Drennan School, 1976. Copy on file in the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Colorado Historical Society.

"New Drennan Centralized School To Be Community Social Center," *Colorado Springs News*, circa 1917 in *Drennan Highlights, Drennan Community Memorial Edition*, 10 August 1986, p. 9.

Oldemeyer, Shirley. "Drennan: Preserving Community," *Ranchland News*, 24 March 1983, p. 14.

SLATERPAULL ARCHITECTS. "Drennan School Historic Structure Assessment and Preservation Plan," 2005. On file in the office of the State Historical Fund, Colorado Historical Society, Denver, Colorado [SHF #05-HA-009].

Wilson. Dru. "That Old School Spirit," [Colorado Springs] *Gazette Telegraph*, 2 August 1993, p. B1.

Property Name Drennan School

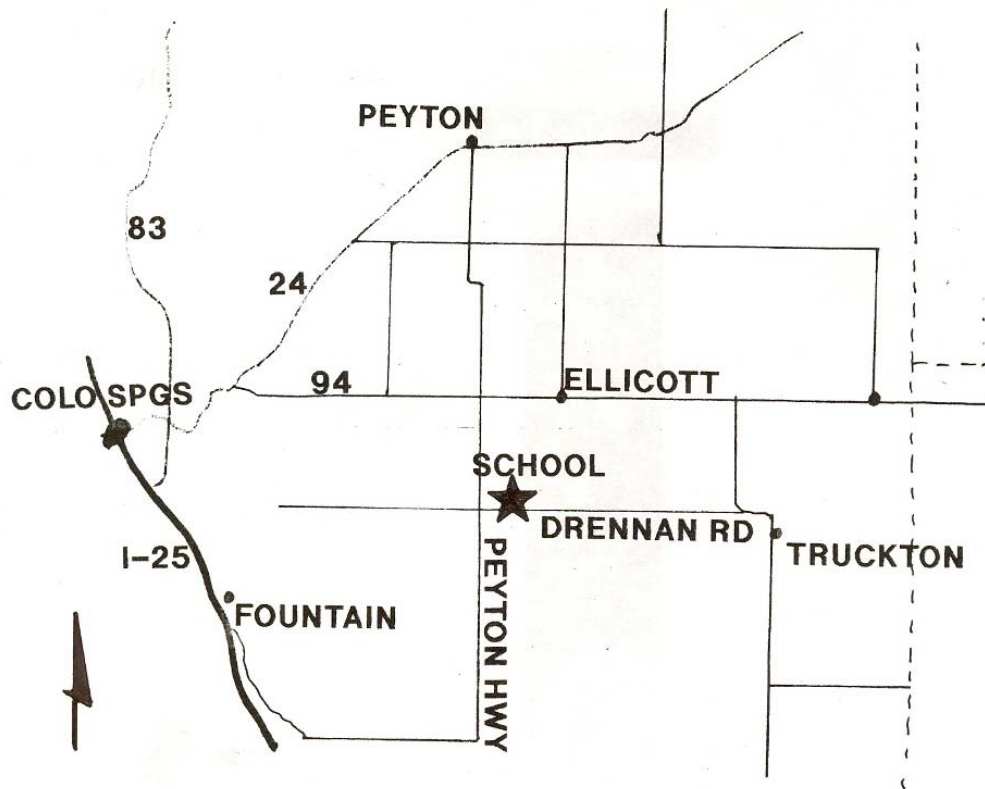
GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

A fence delineates the approximately 525' x 220' nominated property located in the South ½, of the Southwest ¼, of the Southwest ¼ of the Southeast ¼ of Section 9, Township 15 South, Range 63 West, 6th P.M. The approximately 2.65-acre nominated property is the western portion of a 3-acre parcel of land identified as El Paso County Assessor's schedule number 3500000010.

Property Name Drennan School

VICINITY MAP



(Source: SLATERPAULL ARCHITECTS, "Drennan School Historic Structure Assessment and Preservation Plan," 2005.)

Property Name Drennan School

PHOTOGRAPH LOG

The following information pertains to all photographs, except as noted:

Name of Property: Drennan School
Location: Ellicott vicinity, El Paso County, Colorado
Photographer: Bonnie Larscheid
Date of Photographs: 26 February 2007
Negatives: Digital

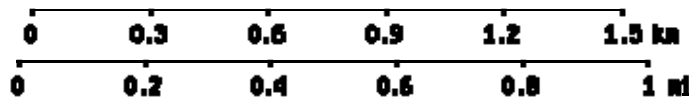
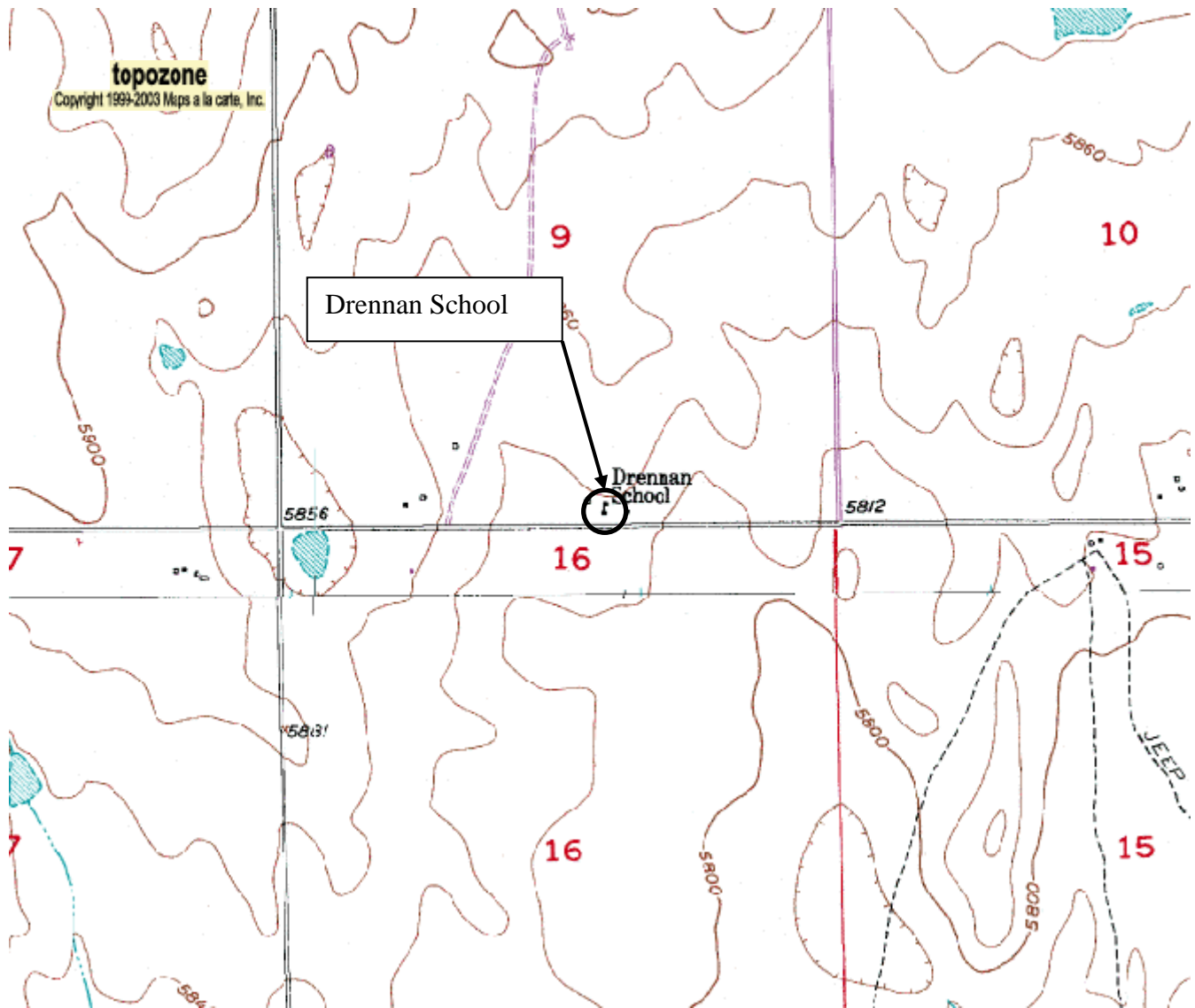
Photo No. Photographic Information

- 1 South façade of schoolhouse; camera facing N
- 2 West side of schoolhouse; camera facing E
- 3 North (rear) side of schoolhouse; camera facing SE
- 4 East side of schoolhouse; camera facing W
- 5 Girls' privy; camera facing N
- 6 Coal shed; camera facing N
- 7 Interior of lower level—primary/dinning area
- 8 Interior of lower level—post office/telephone exchange office
- 9 Interior of upper level—high school with stage
- 10 Interior of upper level—high school with stage
- 11 Interior of upper level—stage area and curtain with advertisements
- 12 Close-up of stage curtain showing advertisement.
- 13 Girls' privy; camera facing NW; 25 February 2007
- 14 Boys' privy; camera facing NE; 25 February 2007

Property Name Drennan School

USGS TOPOGRAPHIC MAP

Ellicott Quadrangle, Colorado
7.5 Minute Series



Drennan School, USGS Ellicott (CO) Quadrangle
Projection is UTM Zone 13 NAD83 Datum

