

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Eaton, Aaron James, House

other name/site number 5WL4884

2. Location

street & number 207 Elm Street N/A not for publication

city or town Eaton N/A vicinity

state Colorado code CO county Weld code 123 zip code 80615

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

State Historic Preservation Officer

Signature of certifying official/Title _____ Date _____

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

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register. <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other, (explain:) _____	_____	_____

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(check as many boxes as apply)

- public-local
- private
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

(check only one box)

- district
- building(s)
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	1	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	1	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Function

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

Current Function

(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION AND CULTURE/museum

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE VICTORIAN/Queen Anne

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE/sandstone

walls BRICK

roof ASPHALT

other STONE/sandstone

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Description

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Areas of Significance

(enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE AND TRADE

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1888-1922

Significant Date

1888

1922

Significant Persons

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Eaton, Aaron James

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other Name of repository:

Eaton Area Historical Society

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre

UTM References

(Place additional boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

1 13 524382 4486180
Zone Easting Northing

2 _____
Zone Easting Northing

3 _____
Zone Easting Northing

4 _____
Zone Easting Northing

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title (See continuation sheet)

organization _____ date _____

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs: Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items: (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

name/title Patricia L. Simonds

street & number 4902 W. 29th St. #12C telephone --

city or town Greeley state CO zip code 80634

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 18.1 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.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section No. 7 Page 1

Eaton, Aaron James, House, Weld County, Colorado

Narrative Description

The Aaron James Eaton House is located in the heart of the small agricultural community of Eaton in Weld County, Colorado, seven miles north of Greeley (Photograph 1). Originally occupying an entire town block (known locally as the "Eaton Block"), the property lies one block west of Eaton's historic commercial district, where A.J. Eaton erected the first store in 1882. Completed in 1888, the Queen Anne style dwelling was the first two-story brick residence in Eaton and is a visual landmark in early photographs of the community. The house is distinguished by its steeply-pitched hipped roof and projecting two-story bays, tall segmental arch double-hung sash windows with drip molding and sandstone sills, brick walls with decorative courses, and a full-width shed roof front porch. The property occupies a level site comprising slightly more than two lots and includes a frame garage at the rear. Today, the house is part of a neighborhood of late nineteenth and early twentieth century houses and newer nonresidential buildings and serves as the museum and offices of the Eaton Area Historical Society.

Façade (West)

The two-story painted brick house has a steeply-pitched hipped roof, clad with composition roofing shingles (Photographs 1 and 2). There are hipped roof projecting bays on the south and east, as well as a narrow cross gable on the north toward the rear and an off-center gabled pediment on the front above a shallow oriel window. The roof has slightly overhanging eaves sheltering a molded frieze along the top of the walls. There is a corbelled brick chimney on the roof and a full-height chimney on the north that has a missing top. The asymmetrical façade has an off-center, slightly projecting, pedimented oriel window on the second story that features mirror image asymmetrical arched windows with applied flowing horizontal ornament above the top sashes, scroll-sawn brackets flanking a wide frieze, and a tapered and corbelled base. There is a corbelled sill course on the second story of the house, and another narrow projecting band of brick below creates a continuous panel. The pediment surmounting the oriel window has incised vergeboards, imbricated octagonal shingles, and a small rectangular window with a pedimented surround. There is also a double-hung sash window with a gauged brick segmental arch and flat drip molding north of the oriel window on the second story.

The first story has a full-width, projecting, shed roof porch. The porch has chamfered square supports with decorative brackets, a stickwork balustrade, a concrete deck and stairs, and a concrete block base. The house has a wide entrance with an arched transom above paneled double wood doors towards the north end of the porch. There is a tooled stone threshold topped by ceramic tile. South of the entrance are two tall, segmental arch, double-hung sash windows with tooled stone sills. The windows have applied wreath ornaments above the upper sashes, as do most of the other first story windows of the house.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section No. 7 Page 2

Eaton, Aaron James, House, Weld County, Colorado

South

The south wall of the house has a double-hung sash window with gauged brick segmental arch surmounted by flat drip molding and with a tooled stone sill on the first story at the west end (Photographs 2 and 3). There is a central, two-story, projecting bay with hipped roof. Each story of the bay has three double-hung sash windows with gauged brick segmental arches, drip molding, and stone sills. East of the bay is a short window on the second story and paired windows on the first story (Photograph 4). There is a round metal vent east of the windows. The raised foundation is visible on the south wall and projects slightly outward below the brick walls. The foundation is composed of painted, coursed sandstone ashlar with raised mortar joints and has rectangular single-light basement windows with tooled stone sills.

East/Rear

At the south end of the rear wall is a one-story, enclosed, projecting, shed roof porch facing a wood deck (Photograph 5). The porch walls are clad with painted panels. The porch has paired sliding windows on the south wall. The east wall has a door flanked by horizontal sliding windows of different heights. There is a small segmental arch double-hung sash window with stone sill on the second story above the north end of the porch. A two-story hipped roof bay projects north of the porch. The bay has a single double-hung sash window with a gauged brick segmental arch, flat drip molding, and stone sill on each story.

North

At the east end of the north wall is a narrow cross gable, which is divided by a slightly projecting painted brick chimney that does not rise above the roof (as noted above). West of the cross gable there are two widely separated double-hung sash windows with segmental gauged brick arches, flat drip molding, and stone sills on the second story (Photograph 6). The remainder of the second story is blank. The first story has two double-hung sash windows, like those of the upper story, at the east end of the wall and a bricked-in window to their west. The remainder of the first story is blank.

Garage

Behind the house at the northeast corner of the property is a rectangular, one-story, frame garage with front gabled roof, composition roofing, and overhanging eaves with exposed rafters (Photograph 7). The garage was built in 1978, based on a date etched in the concrete floor. The garage is clad with drop siding and has an off-center, metal, overhead garage door on the west wall and an off-center paneled pedestrian door and a sliding window on the south wall. There is metal siding along the lower wall on the east.

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Eaton, Aaron James, House, Weld County, Colorado

Alterations

The front porch was replaced about 1990. The original porch was one-story, full-width, and had a shed roof like the current porch. The porch balustrade replicates the original. The original porch supports, scroll-sawn brackets, and decorative frieze were not duplicated. In the 1990s, some of the original windows were replaced with vinyl-clad wood windows that are similar to the originals in appearance. The original front door and a sidelight were replaced with double doors in the 1960s. The rear porch was replaced in the 1990s, and a basement entrance was removed then when a deck was built. The brick walls were painted, a window on the north wall was filled in, and the top of a chimney was removed during the late 1930s to 1940s. The interior of the house was substantially remodeled in the mid-1960s and currently does not reflect the era when the Eatons lived here. The landscape features are not historic.



Figure 1. Early, undated, photograph of the A.J. Eaton House (view northeast).
SOURCE: Eaton Area Historical Society, photographic collection.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Eaton, Aaron James, House, Weld County, Colorado

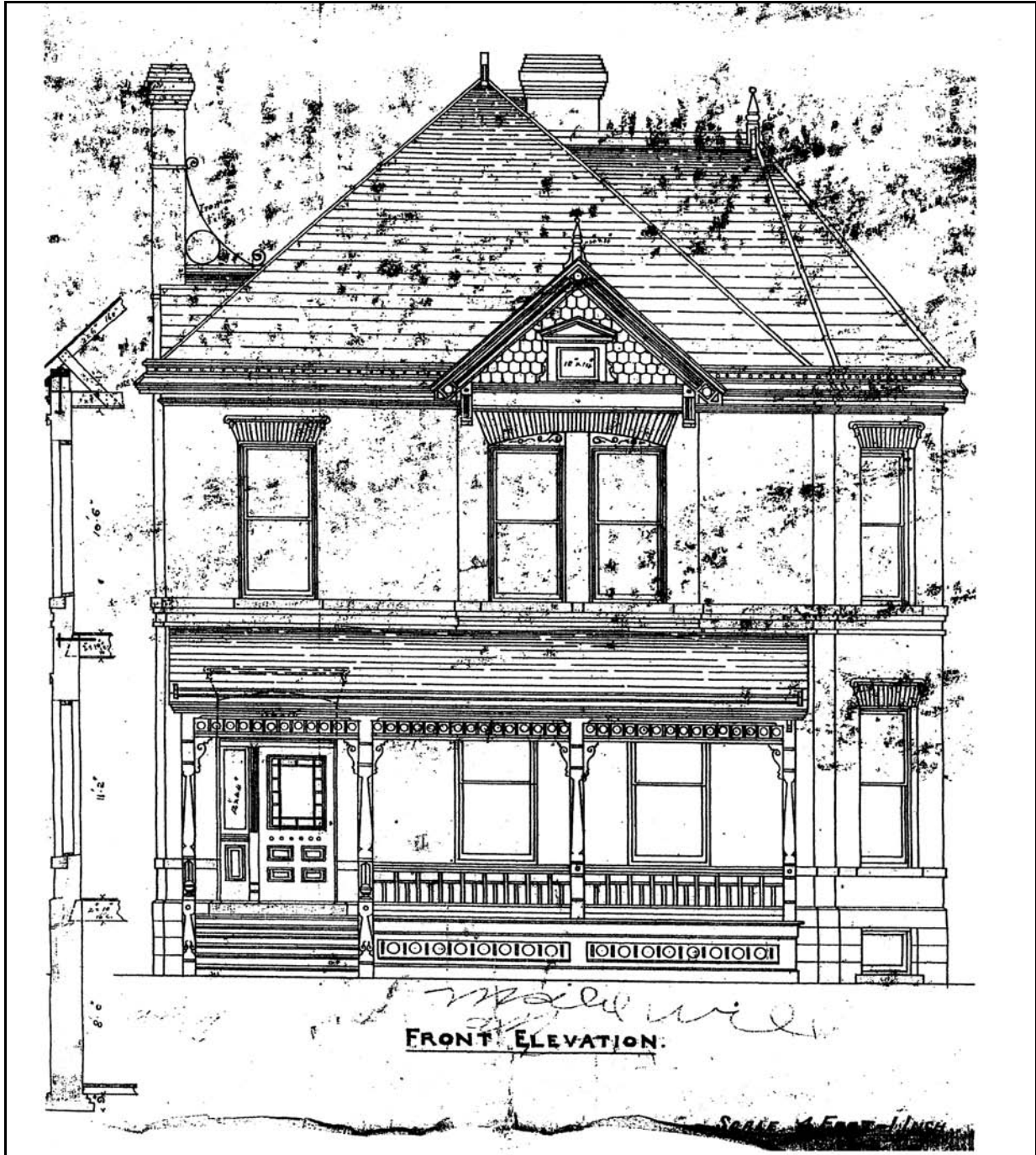


Figure 2. A.J. Eaton House, Front Elevation. SOURCE: Eaton Area Historical Society, A.J. Eaton House, plans and elevations, undated and unsigned.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Eaton, Aaron James, House, Weld County, Colorado



Figure 3. South Wall of the A.J. Eaton House. SOURCE: Eaton Area Historical Society, A.J. Eaton House, plans and elevations, undated and unsigned.

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Eaton, Aaron James, House, Weld County, Colorado

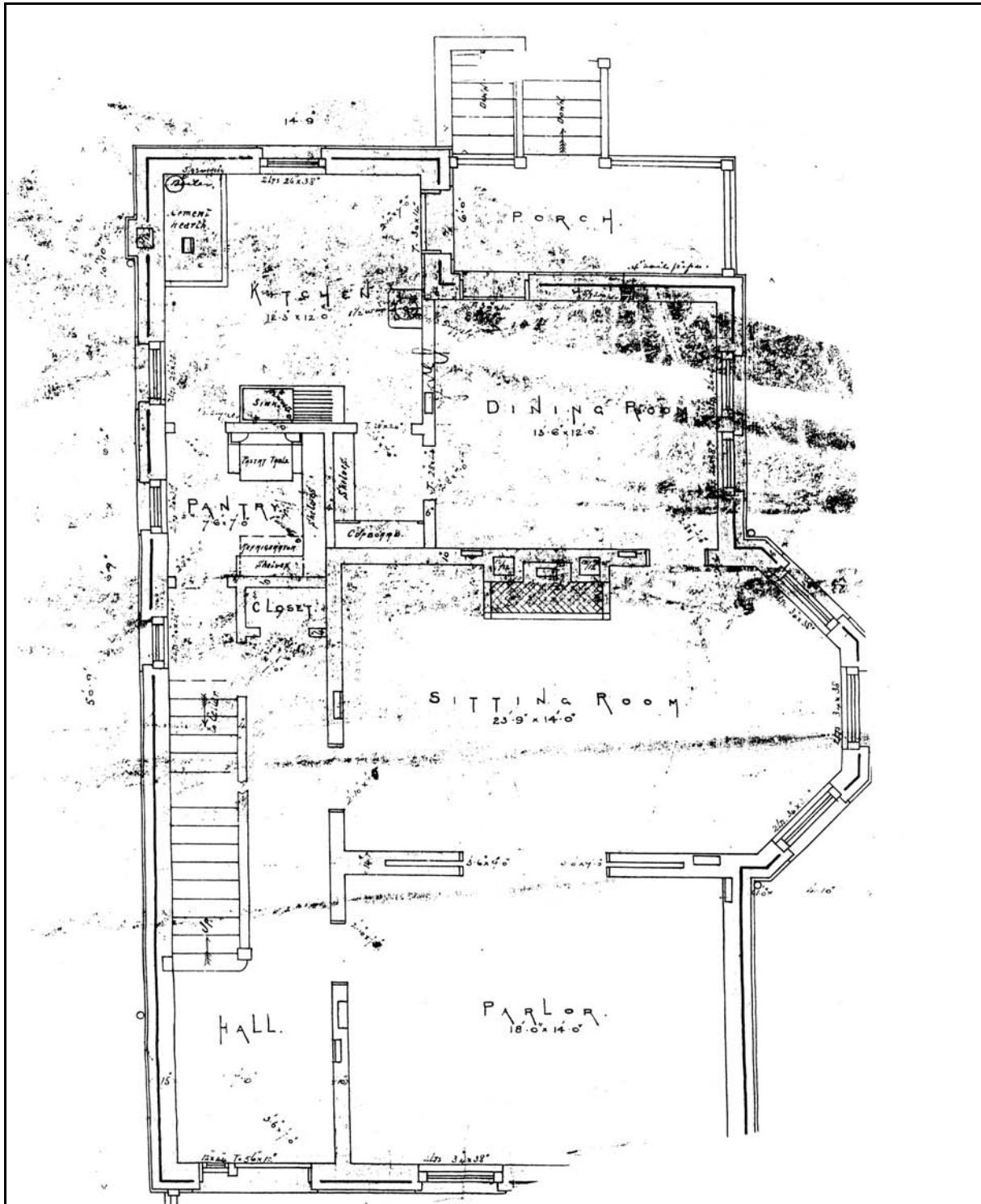


Figure 4. A.J. Eaton House First Story Plan. SOURCE: Eaton Area Historical Society, A.J. Eaton House, plans and elevations, undated and unsigned.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Eaton, Aaron James, House, Weld County, Colorado

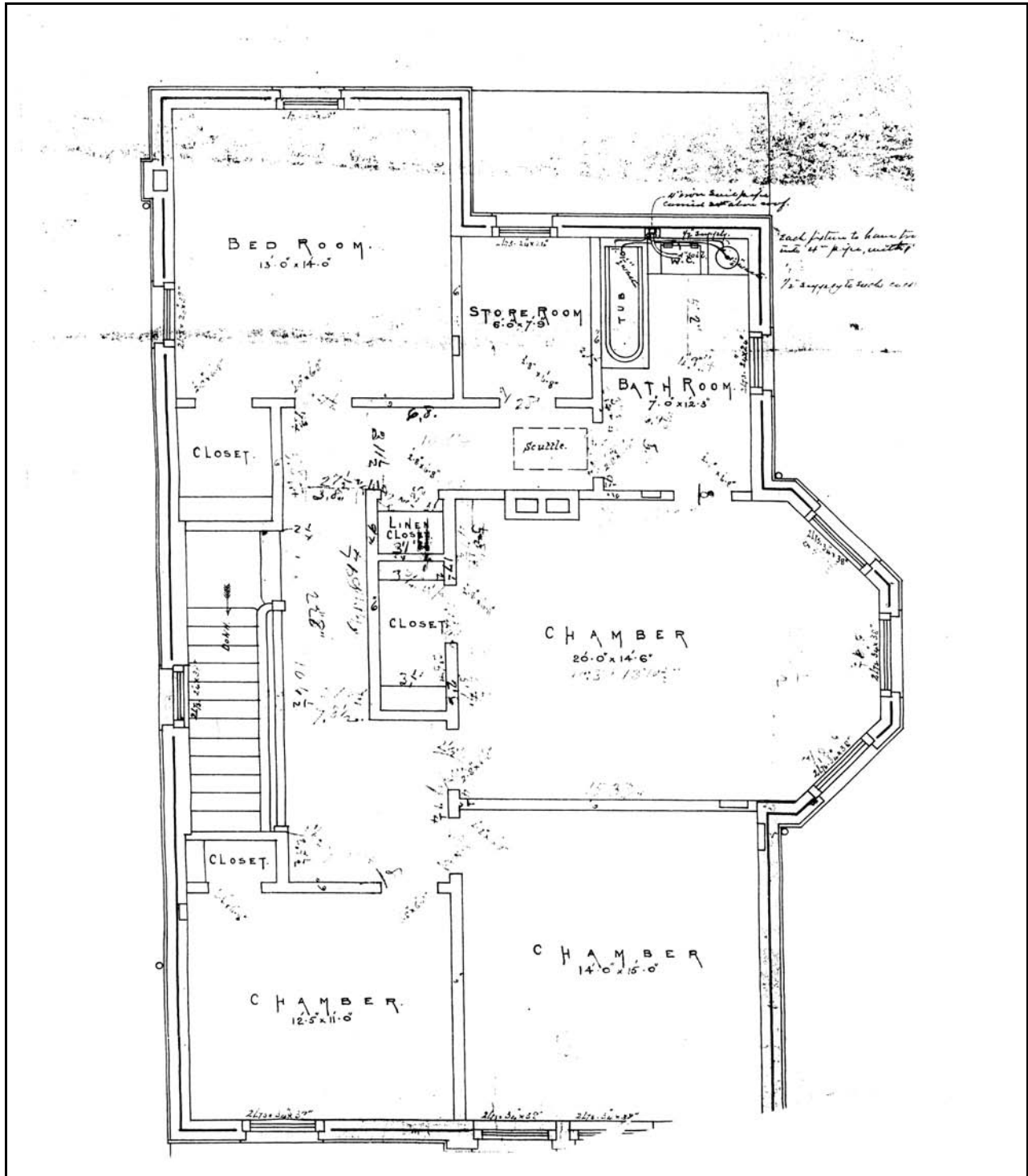


Figure 5. A.J. Eaton House Second Story Plan. SOURCE: Eaton Area Historical Society, A.J. Eaton House, plans and elevations, undated and unsigned.

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Eaton, Aaron James, House, Weld County, Colorado

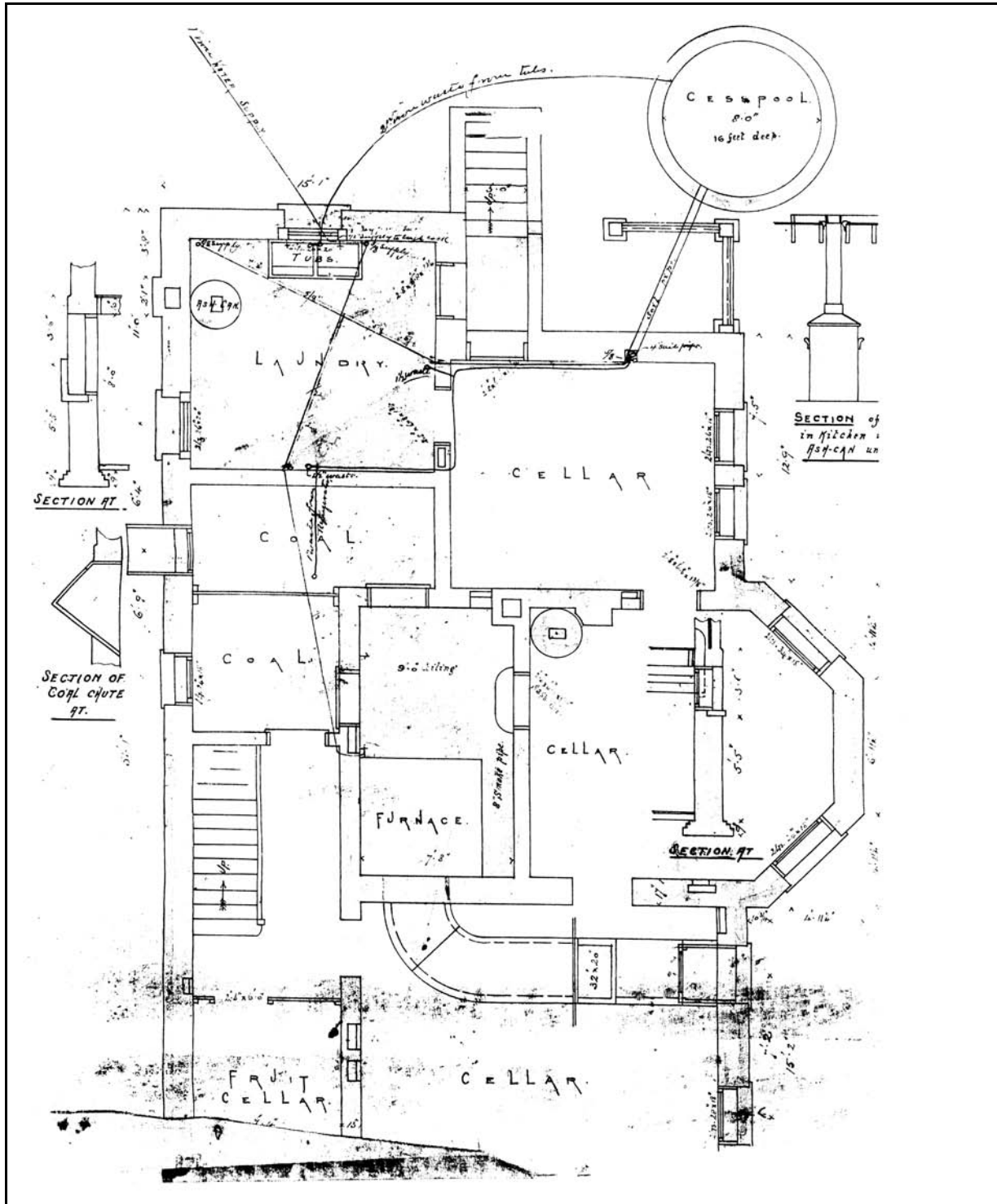


Figure 6. Basement of the A.J. Eaton House. SOURCE: Eaton Area Historical Society, A.J. Eaton House, plans and elevations, undated and unsigned.

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Eaton, Aaron James, House, Weld County, Colorado

Statement of Significance

The Aaron James Eaton House is being nominated to the National Register under Criterion B for its association with Aaron James Eaton, who is known as “the Father of Commerce” in Eaton. Aaron James (“A.J.”) Eaton, son of Colorado Governor Benjamin H. Eaton, was one of the town’s founders and was active and influential in many aspects of the community’s development, as well as that of the larger region. He established the first general merchandise store in Eaton and operated it successfully for thirteen years. He was an incorporator, director, and vice president of the First National Bank of Eaton; was an incorporator and director of the Eaton Building and Loan Association; and was instrumental in securing a sugar beet factory for the town. A.J. Eaton was also active in civic affairs, taking the lead in the organization of the local school district, holding the office of postmaster for eight years, supporting the incorporation of the town, and serving as one of the first town trustees. Historian Wilbur Fiske Stone’s 1918 *History of Colorado* included a biography of Eaton which observed: “His interests have been most extensive and important and the town of Eaton largely stands as a monument to his enterprise and progressiveness.”¹ As his father’s closest associate, A.J. Eaton also played an important role in the development of Weld County through his participation in such ventures as the Larimer and Weld Irrigation Company, one of the largest and longest systems in northern Colorado, and through his operation and ownership of a large number of farms in the county. Although a commercial building associated with A.J. Eaton still stands, it has been extensively altered, and his house is the best remaining building that conveys his importance.

The house is also eligible under Criterion C for its architecture, having been the first two-story brick residence erected in Eaton. The house is the town’s oldest, largest, and least altered example of the Queen Anne style, displaying such representative elements as: asymmetrical massing; a variety of construction materials, including brick, stone, and decorative shingles; and a steeply pitched roof. The period of significance for the house extends from 1888 (the date the residence was completed) to A.J. Eaton’s death in 1922.

Early Years

Aaron James Eaton was the only child of Colorado Governor Benjamin Harrison Eaton and Delilah Wolfe. Benjamin Eaton (1833-1904) farmed and taught school in Ohio and Iowa before moving to Colorado. Aaron James was born in West Bedford, Coshocton County, Ohio, on 3 April 1857. His mother died shortly after his birth, and A.J. spent his early childhood in Ohio in the care of his paternal grandmother, Hannah Eaton. The year his son was born, Benjamin Eaton acquired a fine farm in Louisa County, Iowa, which he worked for two years. In April 1859, he joined a Columbus City, Iowa, group seeking gold in the Pike’s Peak rush. The Hawkeye expedition was unsuccessful in its pursuit of the precious metal in central and southwest Colorado, and all returned home except Eaton. During the prospecting trip Eaton had met fellow Iowan James Hill, and the two headed south into northern New Mexico, engaging in tenant farming on the Maxwell Land Grant for two years and gaining experience in the construction and operation of irrigation ditches. Following brief service in

¹ Wilbur Fiske Stone, *History of Colorado*, vol. 2 (Chicago: S.J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1918), 473.

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Eaton, Aaron James, House, Weld County, Colorado

the New Mexico Volunteers during the Civil War, in 1863 Eaton and Hill returned to Colorado, where they staked claims on land along the Cache la Poudre River in Weld County.²

Benjamin Eaton traveled with Hill to the Midwest in late 1863, visiting his friend's family in Louisa County, Iowa. In March 1864, Eaton married Hill's sister, Rebecca Jane Hill. The couple and James Hill then returned across the plains to settle on the Cache la Poudre River, south of today's Windsor. Eaton engaged in cutting hay and selling it in the mountain mining camps, as well as raising cattle. Aaron Eaton came to live with his father and stepmother in 1868, attending a school near their home that his father had helped found two years earlier. During the early 1870s, Benjamin Eaton became involved with the Union Colony, which founded the city of Greeley and he contracted to build segments of Union Colony Canal No. 2. The Eatons moved to Greeley in about 1873 for business reasons and to permit A.J. to attend the local high school. However, A.J. left school before graduating to assist in his father's business affairs.³ Benjamin Eaton's biographers, Jane E. and Lee G. Norris, reflected on Aaron's decision:

From the time he joined the family, at the age of eleven, A.J. had, with singleness of purpose, involved himself in every activity which claimed his father's attention. School was a secondary concern; A.J.'s reckless energy was best employed in the many-faceted undertakings which involved Ben's days.⁴

Benjamin Eaton's political career in Colorado began in 1866, when he became a Justice of the Peace. His service on the Board of County Commissioners of Weld County began in 1868. He was elected to the Territorial Legislature in 1872 and the Territorial Senate in 1874. Benjamin and A.J. were particularly well known for their construction of irrigation systems that advanced agricultural development in northeastern Colorado. In 1873 the elder Eaton and John C. Abbott built the Larimer County Canal No. 2, which brought water to a large expanse of land in the Fort Collins area. In the fall of 1878, Benjamin Eaton began work on the Eaton Ditch and had lands under it surveyed. In 1879 the project became the first in the corporate era of canal construction in the area, incorporating as the Larimer and Weld Irrigation Company. A group of English capitalists organized to pursue investments in Colorado provided much of the funding for the project through their Colorado Mortgage and Investment Company (locally known as the "English Company"). Benjamin and A.J. were among the incorporators of the Larimer and Weld Irrigation Company and served on the first board of directors. Both Eatons were also deeply involved in the actual construction of the Larimer and Weld Canal, which became one of the largest and longest irrigating canals in the region. The Eatons also joined with the English Company in the construction of the High Line Canal above Denver during the early 1880s. Norris and Norris opined that A.J. "was fast proving himself as one of his father's most trustworthy lieutenants. At nineteen he was caught up in all of Ben Eaton's

² Jane E. Norris and Lee G. Norris, *Written in Water: The Life of Benjamin Harrison Eaton* (Athens, Ohio: Swallow Press, 1990), 10, 13, and 42.

³ Norris and Norris, *Written in Water*, 9, 72, and 85; Helen Cannon, "First Ladies of Colorado: Rebecca Hill Eaton," *Colorado Magazine* 42 (Winter 1965): 39-40; George S. Ball, *Go West Young Man* (Greeley, Colorado: Greeley Tribune, 1969), 86 and 149-50.

⁴ Norris and Norris, *Written in Water*, 130-31.

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Eaton, Aaron James, House, Weld County, Colorado

enterprises, exhibiting maturity and authority which served him well in supervising the crews of workmen.”⁵

A.J. Eaton’s Early Associations with the Town of Eaton

The Town of Eaton (originally “Eatonton”) was laid out in 1878 in the territory irrigated by the Larimer and Weld Canal. Benjamin Eaton, the town’s founder, referred to it optimistically as “The Hub of the Universe.” While Benjamin Eaton lived in Greeley, A.J. Eaton moved to the newly developing area in 1880, and the nascent town became his base of operations. He filed the first tree claim in the vicinity on 360 acres south of town in about 1881 and helped organize the first school district the same year. In 1882, A.J. and his uncle, James Hill, built the first store in Eaton; the 16-by-24-foot structure was the third building on the townsite. The town received a post office in September 1882, and Hill became the first postmaster. These developments were welcomed by nearby residents who previously had to travel to Greeley for groceries and mail.⁶

In 1883, Benjamin Eaton erected a wheat elevator and flour mill in Eaton and financed construction of a two-story brick building into which A.J. and Hill moved their store. The partners’ expanded business carried an extensive line of groceries, hardware, and some farm implements. The so-called “Big Store” became “the center of business life in Eaton.” A.J. bought out his uncle’s interest in the business in December 1884 and subsequently served as the town’s second postmaster, a position he held for eight years. Eaton’s personality was described as “gentle, kindly, courteous, modest and unostentious” [sic].⁷

Benjamin Eaton was elected governor of Colorado in 1884. “Honest Ben,” the first farmer to hold the office, served one two-year term (1885-87). In conjunction with his ditchbuilding activities, Eaton had acquired thousands of acres of irrigated lands which he leased to tenant farmers. Historian Ansel Watrous reported that Eaton owned ninety 160-acre farms in Weld County, most watered by irrigation



Figure 7. Minnie Lee Goodan and Aaron James Eaton were married 1 January 1885. SOURCE: Eaton Area Historical Society, photographic collection.

⁵ Pauline Allison, *The History of Eaton, Colorado* (Eaton, Colorado: n.p., 1997; orig. pub. 1942), 54; Colorado Mortgage and Investment Company of London, “Farm Lands in Colorado,” (Denver: Rocky Mountain News Printing Company, 1879); Ansel Watrous, *History of Larimer County, Colorado* (Fort Collins, Colo.: Courier Printing & Publishing Co.), 283; LeRoy R. Hafen, ed., *Colorado and Its People*, vol. II, (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., Inc., 1948), 123; Norris and Norris, 130-31.

⁶ Allison, 2, 8, 38-39, 47, 49, and 50; Stone, 472-73.

⁷ Allison, 2, 8, 38-39, 47, 49, and 50; Stone, 472-73; *Rocky Mountain News*, 25 December 1883, 12 and 6 December 1884, 4; *Eaton Herald*, 3 November 1922, 1.

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Eaton, Aaron James, House, Weld County, Colorado

systems he had constructed. Pauline Allison observed that the elder Eaton's involvement in politics "shifted some of the responsibility for his farms upon his son [A.J.], who assisted the Governor capably in that capacity."⁸

A.J. Eaton wed Minnie Lee Goodan on 1 January 1885. The *Greeley Tribune* hailed the marriage: "The Governor's son has shown himself worthy of his surroundings and may the star of prosperity ever shine above his door." Minnie Goodan was born near Decatur, Illinois, on 8 October 1867, the daughter of John A. and Mary Elizabeth (Logan) Goodan. Her family moved to Eaton in 1883, and her father was a pioneer school teacher in the community. Minnie, described as a "lovely Eaton belle," was one of the first brides in the community. Benjamin Eaton gave the newlyweds an entire block of the Eaton Townsite (Block 23) as a wedding gift.⁹ The couple spent a month-long honeymoon traveling to the World's Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition in New Orleans before returning to Eaton in early February. A.J.'s friends celebrated their arrival with an old fashioned charivari. The Eatons lived in the house in which they were married, described by local historian Pauline Allison as "their first home" in Eaton, while their new house on Elm Street was being built.¹⁰

In early March 1885, the *Greeley Tribune* reported that A.J. Eaton recently had received appointment as a notary public. His general merchandise business in Eaton continued to flourish. In September 1885, the *Tribune* observed that "A.J. Eaton and clerks are kept busy at the counter, from early dawn till late at night, neither do they sigh for a rest of business." In 1887 A.J. purchased the large brick store building from his father for \$8,000. His merchandizing extended beyond the local community: in 1888 A.J. sold five carloads of potatoes to an Illinois wholesale grocer. Eaton operated the business until selling the grocery and dry goods elements to separate parties in 1895. Historian Wilbur Fiske Stone reported that Eaton "did a business amounting to a million dollars during the time when engaged in general merchandising here."¹¹

Construction of the House

The wedding gift from his father and A.J.'s success in business led to the construction of a fine house in the southwest corner of Block 23 in Eaton. The two-story red brick house at the northeast corner of Second and Elm streets was built in 1887-88. In October 1887 the *Greeley Tribune* reported, "The brick masons who are at work on A.J. Eaton's new house, have got a little above the surface with the wall. The foundation reveals the fact that it will be, when finished, a fine house." The roof was being completed in January of the following year. By the end of February 1888 the paper recorded, "A.J.

⁸ Upon Governor Eaton's death in 1904, it was estimated that he owned approximately 22,000 acres of leased farms, usually fed five to ten thousand sheep every winter, and possessed a total wealth of about one million dollars. *Eaton Herald*, 4 November 1904, 1; Watrous, 283; Allison, 11.

⁹ At about this time, Aaron gave up his right of inheritance to his father's estate in exchange for a cash settlement from Benjamin Eaton. Carol Rein Shwayder, *Eaton People Places in Weld County, Colorado, 1863-1991*, Weld County Old and New, vol. XX (Greeley, Colorado: Carol Rein Shwayder, 1991), 2.

¹⁰ *Greeley Tribune*, 7 January 1885, 1, 4 February 1885, 1; Allison, 59; *Eaton Herald*, Minnie Goodan Eaton obituary, 24 March 1944, 1.

¹¹ *Greeley Tribune*, 30 September 1885, 1, 23 November 1887, 21 March 1888, 1; Allison, 75; Stone, 472.

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Eaton, Aaron James, House, Weld County, Colorado

Eaton has put up a large and handsome two-story brick dwelling, which is being lathed and will soon be ready for the plasterers." Work continued on the residence into July, when Eaton had five carpenters employed finishing the construction. In October the tower for the "water works" was being built." The *Tribune* noted, "A wind mill will be placed thereon, which will furnish sufficient water for his house, barn, and lawns...."¹²



Figure 8. This circa 1895 photograph (view northwest) shows Eaton's main commercial street in the foreground with the large A.J. Eaton house in the upper right. **SOURCE:** City of Greeley Museums, Hazel E. Johnson Collection, Photograph 91.42.1102 KK.

The two-story brick house with stone foundation featured a basement, a loft (attic), a full-width front porch, a two-story bay window on the south, and a rear porch. Based on the architectural drawings, the first story contained the entry hall, parlor, sitting room, dining room, kitchen (with a sink), and pantry (with a pastry table, storage shelves, and a "refrigerator"). The second story included a bedroom, a store room, a bathroom with a tub, sink, and water closet, and three additional "chambers." Located in the basement were the laundry (with two large laundry tubs), a fruit cellar, three cellar spaces, the furnace room, and two coal storage areas. The cesspool for the house, which was eight feet in diameter and sixteen feet deep, was situated in the rear, a short distance to the southeast. The 1895 Sanborn fire insurance map shows the house, which is labeled "A.J. Eaton's." Original drawings (See Section 7) exist for the house, but do not indicate the name of the

¹² Allison, 58; *Greeley Tribune*, 19 October 1887, 29 February 1888, 1, 18 July 1888, 1, and 17 October 1888, 4; Grace Norcross Allen, "Eaton Incorporated in '92, Named After Ex-Governor," *Our Pioneer Neighbors*, 28th in a Series, *Greeley Tribune*, 15 January 1948; Eaton Area Historical Society, A.J. Eaton House Drawings, unsigned and undated.

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architect, contractor, or date. Benjamin Eaton operated brickyards in Eaton and probably supplied the brick used in the construction of his son's house.¹³



Figure 9. Undated view of the A.J. Eaton House (view northeast). SOURCE: City of Greeley Museums, Hazel E. Johnson Collection, Photograph 91.42.1102 WW (number 142, stereograph by A.E. Dickerson, Coshocton, Ohio).

As the first two-story brick residence in town, the property immediately became a local landmark, with some referring to it as the Eaton "mansion." J.E. Snook recalled when he arrived in 1892, "Of dwelling houses there were but few. A.J. Eaton's residence loomed high above the block of tiny fruit and shade trees surrounding it." A.J. Eaton was one of the first residents of the town to landscape his grounds. In 1895, he planted trees and shrubs in his yard and a number of shade trees along Elm and 1st streets. Local historian Pauline Allison noted that "the orchard in his yard covered almost an entire block" and yielded an abundant harvest of fruit in 1896.¹⁴ In 1902 the *Eaton Herald* wrote,

Mr. Eaton has the handsomest home in the town. His large brick residence occupies a whole block. The grounds are filled with every kind of tree, shrub or flower that will grow

¹³ Gwendolyn Wright wrote that during the 1880s "modern flush toilets, porcelain sinks, and permanent zinc-lined bathtubs became more familiar fixtures in middle-class dwellings"; a basement furnace and room registers was still a "costly system" for the period. The Eaton house was well-equipped with mechanical systems for an 1888 dwelling in a rural Colorado town. Gwendolyn Wright, *Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), 102; Eaton Area Historical Society, A.J. Eaton House Drawings, plans and elevations, unsigned and undated.

¹⁴ Allison, 77 and 79.

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in this climate. The grounds are Mr. Eaton's pride and delight. Here he spends all the time he can spare from his business cares, experiments with new trees and flowers. His children are the envy of all youngsters in town. Think of what delightful nooks and corners there are in this whole block of play ground.¹⁵



Figure 10. Circa 1900 view of A.J. and Minnie Eaton and their children: Ralph (center, standing) and (left to right) Elizabeth, Ernest, and Harry. SOURCE Eaton Area Historical Society, photographic collection.

Later Business and Civic Affairs

A.J.'s civic and business affairs in Eaton broadened in the 1890s and early 1900s. He signed the petition for town incorporation in 1892 and was one of its first trustees, serving several terms between 1892 and 1904. In 1895, A.J. and his father gave the town five hundred shade trees that were planted along the principal streets. A.J. supported the building of a new school for the community in 1899-1900. Eaton was the first president of the Village Improvement Society (organized in 1900), which promoted the creation of a public library. Minnie Eaton was an organizer of the Eaton Woman's Club and an "influential" member of the Congregational Church.¹⁶

State Business Directories for the 1890s list A.J.'s business as real estate, but, as one profile of the entrepreneur noted, "probably no one but Mr. Eaton himself knows how many enterprises he is interested in." As late as 1918, he owned ten quarter sections of land adjacent to the Town of Eaton, as well as his half-acre tree claim to the south (a total of three square miles). In addition, Eaton was

¹⁵ Eaton Herald, *Eaton, Colorado*, 1902.

¹⁶ Allison, 77, 89, and 194; *Eaton Herald*, Minnie Goodan Eaton obituary, 24 March 1944, 1.

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associated with several financial institutions in town. He was one of the first directors of the State Bank of Eaton, which was established in 1893 and operated until 1897. In 1901, he became one of the incorporators of the First National Bank of Eaton. The following year the Eaton Building and Loan Association organized, with A.J. Eaton as one of the incorporators and first directors. After the Bank of Eaton and the First National Bank of Eaton merged in 1905, Eaton served as a director and vice president for many years. A.J. also continued to be associated with his father in business activities. He joined with Benjamin as one of the incorporators of the Windsor Reservoir and Canal Company in 1890. In 1901, to encourage the erection of a sugar beet factory in Eaton, Benjamin Eaton offered land for such an industry, and A.J., Benjamin, and Bruce (A.J.'s half-brother) Eaton pledged to put a set amount of land in beets for three years. The town received its sugar beet factory in 1902.¹⁷

Census returns for 1900 list the Eaton family with the only residence in Block 23. In that year, A.J.'s occupation was indicated as "farmer and landlord." The family included four children: Ralph J. (9), Ernest M. (7), Elizabeth E. (2), and Harrison G. (10 months). Benjamin Eaton died in October 1904, and bequeathed to his son 1.5 square miles of land and water rights in the Larimer and Weld Canal and the Windsor Reservoir. A.J. moved his family to California the same year his father died "on account of the health of his children." However, he maintained his extensive business ties to the Eaton area and visited his family in Los Angeles "as often as these interests permit." Eaton reportedly "spent winters in the California city and the summers in Colorado."¹⁸

The 1910 and 1920 U.S. Census manuscript returns listed the family in Los Angeles, California. The 1910 Census reported Eaton's occupation as "own income," and listed the couple and their four children. During 1911-12, A.J. took his entire family on a year-long, around-the-world "Grand Tour" cruise, which featured visits to Europe, the Middle East, India, China, Japan, and Hawaii. In 1918 a biography of Eaton in Wilbur F. Stone's *History of Colorado* described him as "one of the most prominent and successful of the business men of Colorado. . . ." The 1920 U.S. Census described Eaton as a banker with a national bank and showed only the youngest son (Harry G.) still living with his parents. Eaton's association with the First National Bank continued until January 1922.¹⁹

In August 1918, Aaron James Eaton suffered a stroke and became partially paralyzed. His death in Eaton on 28 October 1922 resulted from uremic poisoning and paralysis of the throat. As a sign of respect for the deceased, all of Eaton's business houses closed during his funeral. A.J. Eaton was buried in Linn Grove Cemetery, Greeley. In evaluating Eaton's impact on his community the *Greeley Tribune* described him as "a pioneer resident of the Eaton section." The *Eaton Herald* judged him "one of that band of hardy pioneers who made of the Eaton Country a garden spot from the

¹⁷ Stone, 472; Allison, 73, 118, 121, 136, and 194; Shwayder, *Eaton People Places*, 35; Eaton Herald, *Eaton, Colorado: A Ten-Year-Old City: Supplement to the Eaton Herald* (Eaton, Colo.: Eaton Herald, 1902).

¹⁸ The Eatons had seven children, four of whom lived to adulthood; John B. and Ethel died in early childhood, while Ernest died at the age of twenty-one, after the family moved from Colorado. In Los Angeles, the Eatons owned a house at 2419 S. Flower Street. Stone, 472; U.S. Census of Population, manuscript returns, Weld County, 1900; *Greeley Tribune*, Aaron J. Eaton obituary, 28 October 1922; In the Matter of the Estate of Benjamin H. Eaton, Weld County records, Probate Book 7, Pages 597-98, 9 April 1906.

¹⁹ U.S. Census of Population, manuscript returns, Los Angeles County, California, 1910 and 1920; *North Weld Herald*, 8 April 2004, 10; Stone, vol. II, 470.

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desert. . . . The last to go was Aaron J. Eaton, perhaps the most enterprising and best known of all.” The newspaper’s tribute continued, “His business character stands bright and unassailed, a character to be set forth for emulation, a pattern of business integrity and self-denial. His death is a loss to the entire community. . . .”²⁰



Figure 11. This view of the A.J. Eaton House appeared in a booster supplement to the *Eaton Herald* in 1907 (view northeast). SOURCE: “Souvenir Pictorial Review of Eaton, Colorado” published as a supplement to the *Eaton Herald* (Eaton, Colorado: Hogue and Snook, 3 May 1907).

Subsequent Residents and Uses

After A.J. Eaton’s death Minnie Eaton continued to own the house. She lived in California and Colorado and traveled frequently throughout the United States and Europe. Other Eaton family members also resided in the house. In 1930, Eaton’s son, Ralph J., his wife Beulah, four children, and two servants lived in the dwelling, which they rented for thirty dollars per month. Ralph Eaton, a graduate of the Southern California Preparatory School and Law School, was described as the director of a bank. He was also employed in the Inspection Service of the U.S. Department of

²⁰ *Greeley Tribune*, Aaron J. Eaton obituary, 28 October 1922; Allison, 11; *Eaton Herald*, A.J. Eaton obituary, 3 November 1922, 1.

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Agriculture for many years. Eaton residents recall that boarders lived in the house in the late 1930s to early 1940s. Minnie Goodan Eaton died in Denver, Colorado, in March 1944. Her obituary in the *Eaton Herald* noted that “her benefactions were many and graciously bestowed, and her entire life was a benediction to those about her.”²¹

The family sold the house after Minnie Eaton’s death. The Neff family was a subsequent owner and rented out the house. The interior of the house was transformed in the mid-1960s by owner F. Pat Maylott, an Eaton pharmacist. Maylott and his wife had visited Europe and apparently became enchanted with the architecture. They commissioned Ross Bartley to transform the interior in “the French Traditions of Louis XIV, Regence, Louis XV, and Louis XVI.” The drawings for the project, for example, noted that the coffered entry ceiling was “influenced by that of the main gallery of the Chateau de Maintenon near Paris, which in turn was influenced by the Versailles palace.” The remodeling obliterated the interior design and finishes of the A.J. Eaton era.

During the early 1980s, the Schmitts ran a catering business in the house. Curtis A. and Martha J. Lanpher owned the house prior to its sale to Patricia L. Simonds in 1989; the house was vacant for three or four years before it sold. In 2003, the Town of Eaton reached an agreement with Patricia Simonds to purchase the house. The property is now known as the A.J. Eaton House Museum. The museum, which has an emphasis on agriculture and irrigation, is operated by the Eaton Area Historical Society, whose mission is “to provide a secure locale that contains historically accurate items, which are preserved for the future.”²²

²¹ It is unclear how long Ralph Eaton and his family lived in the house; they reportedly lived for many years on a farm outside of Eaton. Patricia Simonds, the current owner of the house, reports that an older Eaton resident told her that Minnie Eaton rented out rooms in the house while living here herself in her later years. U.S. Census of Population, manuscript returns, Weld County, Colorado, 1930; Ralph J. Eaton obituary, *Greeley Tribune*, 6 November 1962; *Eaton Herald*, Minnie Goodan Eaton obituary, 24 March 1944, 1.

²² *North Weld Herald*, 4 March 2004, 21; Patricia L. Simonds, Eaton, Colorado, interview by Tom and Laurie Simmons, 8 August 2005.

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Greeley, City of, Museums. Hazel E. Johnson Collection. Photographs. 91.42.1102 KK (Eaton in 1895); 91.42.1102 WW (number 142, home of A.J. Eaton, Eaton, Colorado, exterior, stereograph by A.E. Dickerson, Coshocton, Ohio); 91.42.1102 XX (number 167, interior of home of A.J. Eaton, Eaton, Colorado, stereograph by A.E. Dickerson, Coshocton, Ohio).

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Greeley Tribune. 14 January 1885, 1, 4 February 1885, 2 March 1885, 4 March 1885, 11 March 1885, 30 September 1885, 14 October 1885, 19 October 1887, 23 November 1887, 11 January 1888, 1, 29 February 1888, 1, 21 March 1888, 1, 4 April 1888, 1, 25 April 1888, 1, 18 July 1888, 17 October 1888, 21 October 1908, 28 October 1922, 6 November 1962.

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10. Geographical Information

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated area consists of the north half of Lot 20 and all of Lots 21-22, inclusive, Block 23, Original Townsite, Town of Eaton, Weld County, Colorado.

Boundary Justification

The nominated area includes the house and the parcel on which it is located. The remainder of the original Eaton Block has been sold off and is in other ownership and uses, which are unrelated to the Aaron J. and Minnie L. Eaton era.

11. Form Preparation

Form Prepared By:

Name: R. Laurie Simmons and Thomas H. Simmons, Historians

Organization: Front Range Research Associates, Inc.

Address: 3635 W. 46th Avenue

City/State/ZIP: Denver, CO 80211

Telephone: (303) 477-7597 E-Mail: frraden@msn.com

Date: 2 January 2006 (revised)

Form Prepared For:

Name: Eaton Area Historical Society

Address: 207 Elm Street

City/State/ZIP: Eaton, CO 80615

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Common Photographic Label Information:

1. Name: Eaton House
2. Location: 207 Elm Street, Eaton, Colorado
3. Photographer: Thomas H. Simmons
4. Negatives on file at: Eaton Area Historical Society
207 Elm Street
Eaton, CO 80615
5. Date: August 2005

Information Different for Each View:

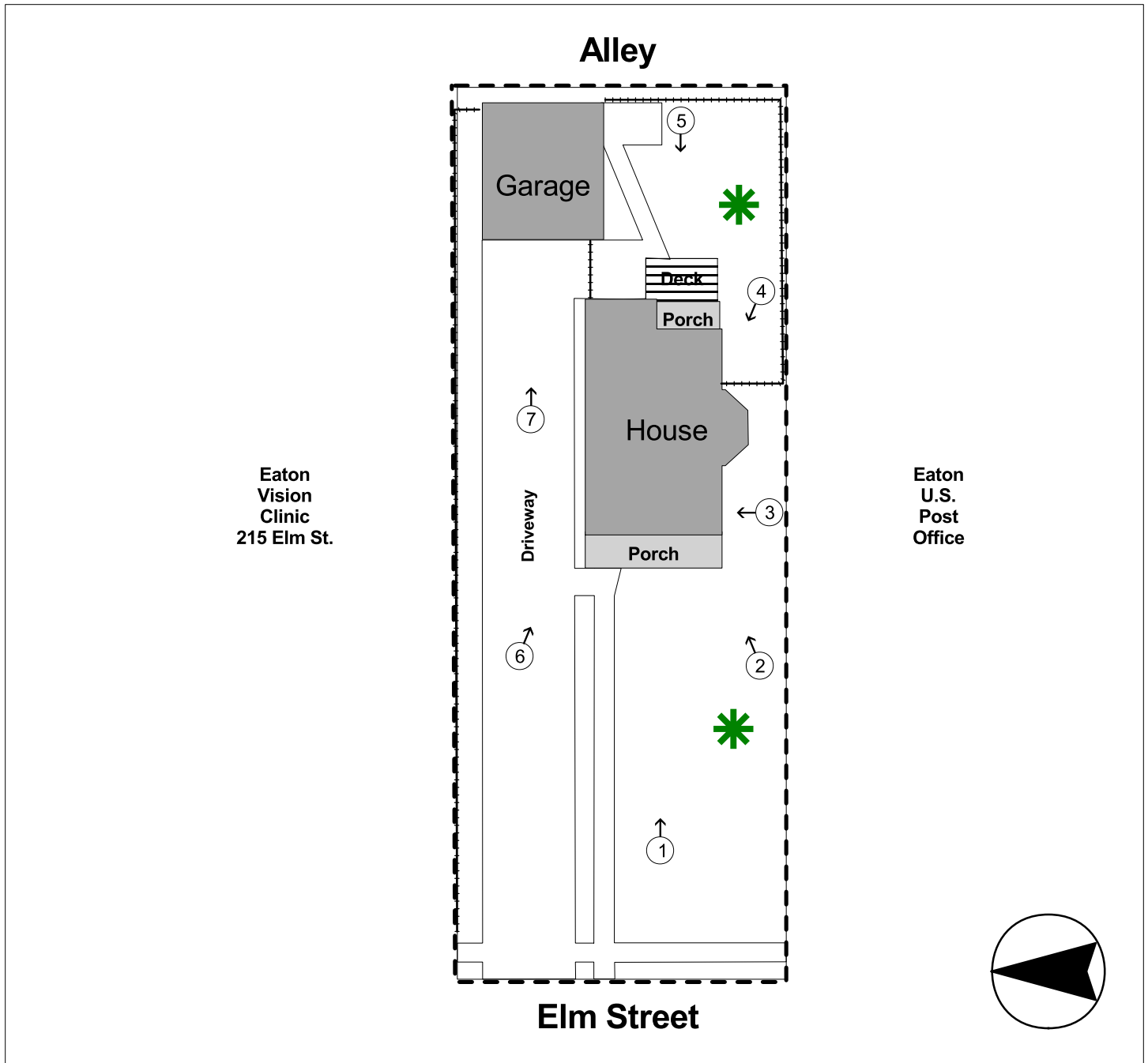
6. Photograph Number, Description of View, and Camera Direction

Photograph Number	Description of View and Date	Camera Direction
1	Front	E
2	Front and south wall	ENE
3	Window detail on south wall, first story toward west end.	N
4	South wall, showing two-story bay window to left.	WNW
5	Rear, with enclosed porch and deck to left and the detached garage to right.	W
6	Front and north wall, with garage in background to left.	ESE
7	Garage	E

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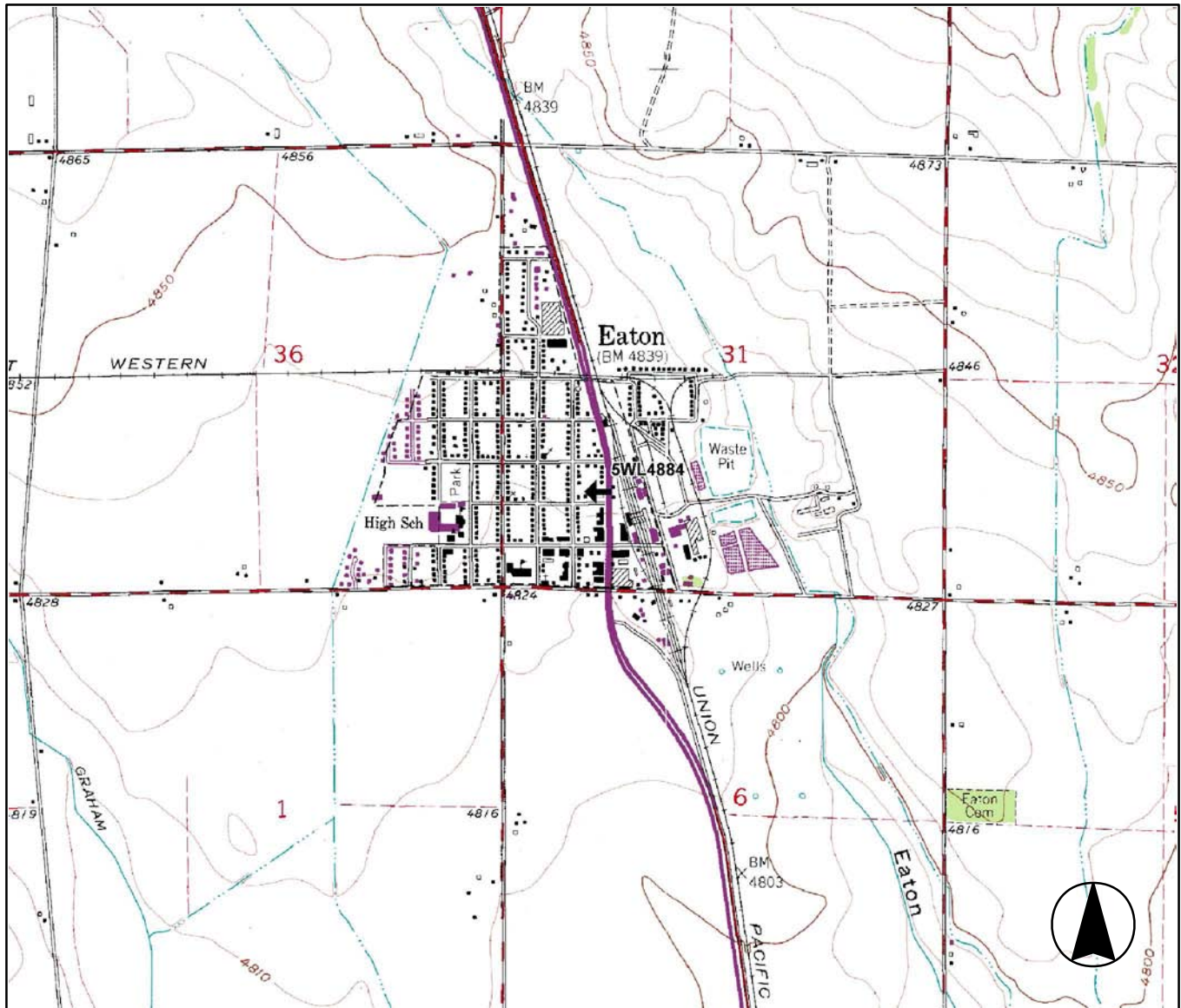
Sketch Map. Photograph locations and camera directions are indicated by the circled numbers with arrows. One inch equals approximately 25 feet. Dashed line denotes the boundary of the nominated area. Note that north is to the left.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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USGS Location Map. Arrow and state identification number indicates the location of the nominated resource. One inch equals approximately 2,000 feet. SOURCE: Extract of U.S. Geological Survey, "Eaton, Colo.," 7.5' quad map (Reston, Vir.: U.S. Geological Survey, 1960, PR 1971).