

INVENTORY SHEET FOR GROUP NOMINATIONS: IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY, BOISE, IDAHO

NOMINATION: (TOURTELLOTTE AND HUMMEL ARCHITECTURE ~~IN IDAHO~~ 72),

✓ SITE NAME: West Point Grade School

SITE NUMBER: 139

Wendell, Idaho

✓ LOCATION: ~~Vicinity of Wendell, Gooding County (047), Idaho~~

off 5-86

OWNER'S NAME AND ADDRESS:

West Point Grange
Rural Route # 1
Wendell, ID 83355

QUADRANGLE AND SCALE: Thousand Springs, 7.5 minute ACREAGE: less than one

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:

This nomination includes the West Point Grade School and the property on which it stands, SE 1/4, SE 1/4 SE 1/4, SE 1/4, Section 15, T8S, R14E, Boise Meridian. Legal description on file at Gooding County Courthouse, Gooding, Idaho.

UTM(S): 11/6,80,830/47,32,470

DATE OR PERIOD: 1941

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: Architecture

EVALUATED LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE: Local

CONDITION: excellent

unaltered

original site

DESCRIPTION:

The West Point Grade School (now Grange 208) is a 40-by-37-foot art deco style structure. It has concrete block walls on a cast concrete basement, a low-pitched roof hipped to a short lateral ridge, and a centered outset porch.

This very simple building, planned to enclose a classroom on either side, is designed in a distinctly classicizing spirit. The form of the roof is a classical reference, as is the impression symmetry--although the interjection of an additional window to light the small library alcove to the left of the vestibule in front and the placing of side doors into the classrooms in different positions at right and left make the symmetry more apparent than actual. The flat roof of the porch has a frieze-like molding supported on squared Tuscan posts and pilasters. The laying up of the small and smoothly finished block in Flemish bond is an additional formal element.

Windows are multi-light steel casements. The original doors with their six lights above waist level and deep six-light transoms are intact. The entrance is approached by a wide concrete stoop, wrought-iron railed; a stretch of carpet over the steps is the only apparent exterior alteration to the building. A pipe-railed basement entrance is at left and the concrete top of a coal bin and a brick exterior chimney at right.

SIGNIFICANCE:

The West Point Grade School, in the countryside south of Wendell, is of exceptional architectural significance as a final expression in the Thematic Group of the classical impulse which persisted in the work of the firm throughout its history. It is also the only example in the group of country schoolhouse architecture, although the firm designed a number of such buildings in addition to its larger commissions for Boise and other Idaho towns. And it is the sole, and therefore exceptionally important, institutional and architectural focus of this somewhat out-of-the-way farm community immediately north of the Snake River in south-central Idaho. That this rather remote agricultural landscape should contain a diminutive art deco style school designed by the firm which had designed the State Capitol, and which was just then completing over a quarter of a million dollars' worth of buildings for Boise Junior College, is not only a fact worthy of local pride but one which provides a balanced view of the work of an architectural firm in a regional setting.

The building, which stands at a crossroads in the open fields of the Snake River Plain some miles from any town, is the more deserving of attention because it was designed with some elegance, if with inexpensive materials, and in a dignified classical manner, if at tiny scale. It survives in pristine condition. It represents a series of country schoolhouse commissions undertaken by the firm over the years. In all, Tourtellotte and Company and Tourtellotte and Hummel undertook some fifty public-school commissions, excluding gymnasiums, heating plants, and the like. Fewer than a dozen of these were in Boise. A few more were schools in very nearby communities which are now part of Boise; most of the rest were in other small Idaho towns--were added to an existing built environment, however small. But a few were schools that stood in the countryside: at Five Mile Road west of Boise, on the Carey irrigation tract and in Elmore County in south-central Idaho, at Huston corners in the Caldwell vicinity, in the Big Bend area near the Oregon border, near Letha in Gem County, and here at West Point in the Wendell vicinity.

Only the last of these schools has been located and is the closest comparison that can be made in the group, but that building is at a much larger scale. Roswell school (site 106) also is not solely responsible for providing a physical center to its community, as is the West Point School, since the former shares its crossroads with a store and some houses. The value of the West Point School in this regard is confirmed by the fact that it has not been demolished or abandoned as have most country schools in the wake of consolidation, but has been given a new function as a Grange Hall.

This building cost approximately \$8,400 in 1941. Its inexpensiveness as well as its scale are final assertions in the Thematic Group of the fact that architectural firms do not deal in major monuments alone. R. C. Felt was the general contractor.

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES:

Boise, Idaho. Hummel Jones Miller Hunsucker P.A. File 132C. Certificate and collection book reference 1941-1942. Tracings signed Tourtellotte and Hummel.



Tourtellotte and Hummel Architecture in Idaho
West Point School, site #139
Vicinity of Wendell
Wendell, Gooding County, Idaho

Photographer:
Patricia Wright
1980

Negative on file at Idaho State Historical Society
Boise, Idaho

View from south-southwest

Photograph one of one