

Official Eligibility Determination

(OAHP use only)

Date _____ Initials _____

____ Determined Eligible - NR

____ Determined Not Eligible - NR

____ Determined Eligible - SR

____ Determined Not Eligible - SR

____ Need Data

____ Contributes to eligible NR District

____ Noncontributing to eligible NR District

Colorado Cultural Resource Survey Architectural Inventory Form

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I. Identification

1. Resource Number: **5PT1382**
2. Temporary Resource Number: **Not Applicable**
3. County: **Pitkin**
4. City: **Aspen**
5. Historic Building Name: **Aspen Elementary School**
6. Current Building Name: **Yellow Brick School**
7. Building Address: **215 N. Garmisch St.
Aspen, CO 81611**
8. Owner Name & Address: **City of Aspen
130 S. Galena St.
Aspen, CO 81611**

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II. Geographic Information9. P.M. **6th** Township **10 South** Range **85 West****SE** 1/4 of the **SE** 1/4 of the **NE** 1/4 of the **SE** 1/4 of Section **12**10. UTM Reference Zone: **13** Easting: **342571** Northing: **4339773**11. USGS Quad Name: **Aspen, Colorado**Year: **1960 (photorevised 1987)** Map scale: **7.5'**12. Lot(s): **N/A** Block: **57**Addition: **Aspen Original Townsite** Year of Addition: **1880**13. Boundary Description and Justification: **This parcel (2735-124-36-850), defined by a lot and block description, includes all of the land and built resources that are historically associated with this property and remain in place there today.**

III. Architectural Description14. Building Plan: **Rectangular Plan**15. Dimensions in Feet: **95' x 260' (appx.)**16. Number of Stories: **1**17. Primary External Wall Material(s): **Brick**18. Roof Configuration: **Flat Roof**19. Primary External Roof Material: **Synthetic Roof**20. Special Features: **Chimney, Fence**21. General Architectural Description: **Facing toward the east onto Garmisch Street, this expansive one-story school building is half a block wide and a block long. It rests upon a raised concrete foundation and has a rectangular plan of approximately 95' x 260'. Oriented lengthwise on an east-west axis, the eastern area is occupied by the main lobby, front office, restrooms, and the tall multi-purpose room (this space was designed to be used as a gymnasium, lunchroom and for larger gatherings and activities beyond the single classrooms). Below much of this area is a basement with offices, along with storage and utility rooms. The remainder of the building toward the west consists of multiple classrooms that are arranged on either side of a double-loaded central hallway.**

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The exterior walls are constructed of the pressed yellow bricks that provide the building with its current name, laid in running bond coursing. In a number of select locations, the ends of these walls project outward and are angled and faced with painted caps. These provide the building with minimalist but character-defining ornamentation. The flat roof has deep boxed eaves that are finished along the face with a stained wood trim band and metal flashing. A tall rectangular brick chimney with a concrete cap rises from the east-central roof next to the multi-purpose room's northeast corner.

East (front): The front of the building holds the main entry, which is located at the top of a wide concrete stoop that rises six steps above the sidewalk. Flanking the stoop are low yellow brick walls with metal handrails and painted caps matching the angled walls on the building. Three identical metal commercial doors, each with a single light in the upper and lower half, are found in the entrance. Transom lights are present above the doors, which are also flanked by two-light fixed windows. The doors enter a vestibule, inside of which is another set of doors that provide access to the lobby, offices, and the rest of the interior.

The front wall of the building on either side of the entry contains long bands of windows that provide ample light to the offices, restrooms and former classroom that occupy this area. Each band consists of both large fixed vertical windows and two-light windows with fixed upper lights and lower awnings. Although they alternate between the two different types of windows, the pattern is irregular. All of the windows are set in wide metal frames.

South (side): This side of the building consists of three sections, each with its own distinctive features. The small front area toward the southeast corner holds two entries, one of which has a metal slab door and the other containing a pair of metal doors with two lights. This pair of doors provides access to a short interior hallway. A single transom light is located above the doors, with a two-light window to the west. West of this entrance is the much taller area containing the multi-purpose room, which has two entries that each contain a metal slab door. A stairway drops below grade outside the wall to provide basement access. Projecting from the wall above and running the full length of the multi-purpose room is a metal awning that supports a solar panel array. There are no windows along this length of the building.

West of the multi-purpose room, the building returns to its shorter one-story height. This area is about 178' in length from east to west and holds six classrooms. Recessed double entries into the classrooms are found at regular intervals. These contain metal slab doors with transom lights above. Between the entries are long bands of windows identical to those found on the eastern façade. This length of the building is adjacent to a fenced playground.

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West (rear): The rear of the building is dominated by a secondary entrance that is regularly used. At this location, the building sits higher than the street, and its centered entry is reached by a concrete stoop. Rising from the sidewalk are two sets of concrete stairs with metal handrails. These meet at a landing before another single set of stairs rises to the entrance. The entry is occupied by a pair of metal doors with two lights as on the front. Above these are transom lights and two fixed windows are to the side. The entrance provides access directly into the central hallway. The boxed eaves extend along about two-thirds of the roofline and wrap around its northwest corner.

North (side): This area of the building also sits high above the street. As on the south, it contains several recessed double entries at regular intervals. Each entrance holds a metal slab door with a transom above, and provides access into a classroom. The entries are accessed by way of two-flight concrete stoops with metal handrails. The area at the building's northeast corner holds a loading dock with two additional entries into the office area. Between the entries along this entire side of the building are long bands of windows identical to those found on the eastern façade.

22. Architectural Style / Building Type: **Modern Movement / International Style**
23. Landscaping or Special Setting Features: **This property is located in a historic residential neighborhood and is surrounded by single-family homes. The exception to this is another historic school, now known as the Red Brick Center for the Arts (5PT965), located across the intersection to the northeast.**

The Yellow Brick School occupies the entire north half of Block 57 and is surrounded by landscaping. To the north, east and west are bands of landscaping that are important to the building's setting. A small front yard to the east contains two areas of grass that are separated from one another by a wide central walkway that runs from the curb along Garmisch Street to the building's front entrance. Several shrubs and deciduous trees are planted in the sloped lawn areas. A sidewalk runs along the length of Garmisch Street, separated from the curb by tree lawn.

Extending the length of the school's north side along Hallam Street are short concrete retaining walls that run parallel to the raised building. These are mostly planted with evergreen shrubs. Between the walls and the curb are tree lawns that hold young deciduous trees. Short concrete sidewalks run from the curb to the several concrete stoops that rise to the classroom entries.

The concrete retaining walls wrap around the northwest corner of the school and extend along the west side of the building. There they are also planted with evergreen bushes and are broken into two segments separated by the wide central entry stoop. A small lawn extends to the curb along North First Street near the intersection. South of this is a wide concrete sidewalk.

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Much of the area south of the building is occupied by a fenced playground of recent origin. This is situated outside of the south classrooms and extends a short distance into the south half of Block 57. The playground is only open to children and teachers involved in the childcare program based at the school.

24. Associated Buildings, Features or Objects: **Except for the fenced childcare playground, the south half of Block 57 is predominantly occupied by Yellow Brick Park, which is owned and managed by the City of Aspen. The eastern half of the park was historically the site of the 1882 Lincoln School. Long gone, its location is now occupied by modern features. These include a sunken basketball court, a picnic shelter with log tables, and a small playground area. West of these, the central area of the park is grassed and open. The southwestern area is occupied by a playground.**

Bordering the park are concrete sidewalks, tree lawns, and rows of mature deciduous trees. Additional internal sidewalks divide the space into its different play areas. A low boulder at the southeast corner has a bronze plaque mounted to its face. Placed there by the Aspen Historical Society, this provides information about the historic Lincoln School that once stood there.

IV. Architectural History

25. Date of Construction: Estimate: Actual: **1960**
- Source of Information: **"School to Open Monday – Despite Problems," 18 November 1960, p. 3.**
26. Architect: **Wheeler & Lewis Architects (Denver, CO)**
- Source of Information: **Building Plans Prepared by Wheeler & Lewis Architects, 31 August 1959; "Denver Architects Selected in July by School Board," 15 August 1957, p. 13.**
27. Builder/Contractor: **R. W. Mier Construction Company (Denver, CO)**
- Source of Information: **"Denver Firm Selected to Construct New School," *Aspen Times*, 17 September 1959, p. 13.**
28. Original Owner: **Aspen School District No. 1**
- Source of Information: **"Denver Architects Selected in July by School Board," 15 August 1957, p. 13.**

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29. **Construction History:** The school building was constructed in 1960. Although occupied in November of that year, additional work addressing final punch list items continued at a glacial pace through the first half of 1961. In 1970, an exterior stairway was installed to provide basement access on the south side of the multi-purpose room. The original metal-framed windows were replaced in 1999 with wood-framed windows with aluminum caps on the exteriors. These replicated the pattern and functionality of the original windows, with slightly wider framing. Tempered glass was also installed in the fixed windows to prevent injuries. Also that same year, the metal awning on the south exterior wall of the multi-purpose room was installed. Since then, this has supported a band of photovoltaic panels that were upgraded in 2012 to employ newer technology. The original exterior doors were replaced in 2000, although the new ones seem to retain a historically appropriate appearance. Finally, the roof was last replaced in 2010, along with the metal flashing that is visible along the perimeter. Yellow Brick Park was developed in 2001 after the south half of the block had served for four decades as a paved school playground.

30. **Original Location:** **Yes**

V. Historical Associations

31. **Original Use(s):** **Education: School**

32. **Intermediate Use(s):** **Not Applicable**

33. **Current Use(s):** **Education: School**

34. **Site Type(s):** **Elementary School / Early Childhood Education Center**

35. **Historical background:** Throughout the late 1800s and into the early 1900s, the site under study was located in a residential neighborhood of single-family homes. The north half of Block 57 contained several one- to two-story houses along with associated yards and sheds. An east-west alleyway ran through the middle of the block. The southeast quarter of Block 57 was occupied by the Central School, with houses stretching from there westward to First Street.

Erected in 1882 for around \$16,000 (including furnishings), the two-story wood frame building with a prominent vestibule and bell tower on the front faced south and originally sat on Lots Q and R. This was expanded in 1885 with a large rear classroom addition. The building was then able to accommodate around 250 students in eight classrooms. In 1889, the Aspen School District took the owners of the adjacent residential lots to court and through condemnation proceedings secured the entire south half of the block. The houses were cleared and the grounds left vacant for the students to use as a playground. The condemnation suit was settled a year later when the district paid the owners \$3,465 for the properties.

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By the late 1880s, Aspen's growing population had caused the Central School to become overcrowded. In 1889, the building was renamed the Lincoln School to match the town's two other schools named Garfield (built in 1885) and Washington (built in 1889). The building was expanded again in 1891 with a two-story classroom wing that extended toward the west into Lot P. This brought the school's capacity up to 326 students. While the number of students was expected to increase, this was not to be the case.

Aspen fell into decline following the 1893 Silver Crash, resulting in closure of the mines and the town's depopulation. The community entered what became known as the "Quiet Years," which lasted well into the following century. In 1900, the high school students moved out of the Lincoln School and into the mansion across the intersection to the northeast. Donated to the school district, the building was the former home of prominent Aspen pioneer, mine investor and utilities developer David R. C. Brown. Over the next several decades, as Aspen's population continued to be depressed, the existing school buildings adequately served the community's needs.

By 1927, the Lincoln School was forty-five years old and in deteriorating condition. In June of that year, Aspen was visited by a state factory inspector who was also authorized to inspect school buildings. He found the Lincoln School to be in such poor condition and so rife with safety issues that he ordered it abandoned if extensive repairs were not completed before the start of the new school year. Due to the unanticipated costs, the school district shuttered the building and sent the students to the sturdier Washington School. In 1930, the school (but not the land or furnishings) was placed on the market and sold. It was dismantled that winter. Cleared of all its buildings, the south half of Block 57 then sat vacant for the next sixteen years.

In 1941, the building known today as the Red Brick School was completed and the Washington School demolished. All of Aspen's students, from elementary through senior high, transferred to the new building. Following World War II, the town began to emerge from its long slumber as the ski mountain was developed and recreationists, tourists and other visitors began to arrive in the still small but once-again growing community. Outdoor sports and the healthy, scenic environment drew many new residents to Aspen. Others came to participate in events organized by the Aspen Music Festival and School, founded in 1949, and the Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies, founded in 1950. As the number of residents increased, so did the number of children enrolled in the town's single school.

In August 1946, the school board approved a plan to utilize the empty lots once occupied by the Lincoln School and its playground. The ground was leveled to create two baseball diamonds along with a volleyball court. Three years later, in 1949, a group of Aspen residents took it upon themselves to install a skating

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rink on the open ground where the school building previously stood. A warming shack was also placed at the east end of the rink. The following year, it was improved with lights and a sound system for night skating. The free facility remained a popular attraction through the 1950s.

Concerned about increasing crowding in the Red Brick School and the fact that it housed students of all ages, in 1952 the board of education of Aspen School District No. 1 prepared a study of the town's requirements, growing student population, and the need for modernization. Spurring this concern was the fact that the number of students had increased by one-third in the previous two years alone and the existing building lacked adequate space to accommodate the various activities that took place there. Meeting in January 1953 to discuss the results of the study, the board determined that either the Red Brick School would need to be enlarged or new facilities would have to be constructed in the near future. Between 1941 and 1952, the Red Brick School had already undergone two expansions. The choice now was between enlarging the building again or constructing a new school at another location.

The community discussion that ensued led to the 1953 expansion of the Red Brick School, which bought some time before the issue of crowding reemerged. By the spring of 1956, the school board was again dealing with ongoing growth in the student population and the continued inadequacy of the Red Brick School. Appealing to the city council for land to construct a new facility, the board initially requested that City Park be turned over for such use. Instead, the council recommended that the school district acquire the north half of Block 57, clear the lots, and lay plans for a new building at that location. With that approach, the entire block could be put to educational use. However, the suggestion failed to take root and for the time being the school board remained unsure about what it would do.

Over a year later, in July 1957, the board heard presentations made by five architectural firms that were interested in designing a new school for Aspen. From these, the Denver firm of Wheeler & Lewis was selected to move forward with the project. Founded in 1950 by architects Selby M. Wheeler and Carol Byron Lewis, the firm lasted for three decades and became known for its extensive work on churches and schools. The schools alone included designs for 144 new buildings, 136 additions, and 40 remodeling projects.

Founded just as the baby boomers were causing schools across the nation to burst at the seams, the firm is celebrated today for its functional, Modernist designs. Their buildings accommodated each district's budget constraints, local interests and concerns, current educational philosophies, and included ample space for classrooms, gymnasiums, libraries and science labs. Multi-purpose rooms were commonly employed to allow for flexible uses that served the needs of the school and community. Many of the buildings were designed

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to allow for future expansion. With the Cold War impacting international relations and Americans fearing the possibility of attack, below-grade nuclear fallout shelters were also provided in many of the firm's school buildings dating from the late 1950s and early 1960s.

Although the architecture firm had been selected, by September 1957 a site had still not been chosen and no determination had been made regarding which grades would move into the new building. These questions had to be answered before the architects could proceed with their plans. Several properties were considered, most of them west of town outside the city limits. In December, the school board voted to construct a new high school that would house grades nine through twelve, leaving kindergarten through eight in the Red Brick School. The next step would be for Wheeler & Lewis to present cost estimates. In February 1958, the board reversed course and expressed its preference that the new building be an elementary school. This change resulted from the architects' initial cost estimate of \$375,000, which would be greater if the board were to move forward with a high school building.

Months then passed as planning for the new building moved forward. In November 1958, the school board approved a financing and construction plan, deciding that the facility should be centrally located within the city limits. The preferred site was the south half of Block 57, on land owned by the district where the Lincoln School had once stood. Although the board expressed interest in purchasing the north half of the block as well, the two owners of the lots rejected offers that were made. Initial concepts for the building were presented by Wheeler & Lewis. The one tentatively selected by the board was a two-story building with fifteen classrooms, anchored on one end by a multi-purpose room. This would run parallel to Bleeker Street between Center Street (now Garmisch) and First Street, eliminating the skating rink there.

Responding to the board's building preference, on 13 November 1958 (p. 4) the editor of the *Aspen Times* published the following comments:

"The size of the structure and the limited amount of property precludes a playground. The only excess space is located in front of the school and could serve only as a lawn. A requisite of any school, especially an elementary school, is a playground. It is a mistake to design a new school without one.

There is a solution, which we feel certain the School Board will find. On the 9 lots comprising the other half of block 57 there is one house and one two-unit apartment complex. The board has negotiated to purchase this land in the past without success. But it has the power of acquiring the land needed for school use by court action.

To assure the voters that the new school will not be compressed onto a site too small for optimum use, the school board should guarantee the electorate that it will acquire the adjacent land by any means legally open to it, and that it will

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construct the school so as to make use of all the land. In addition, the board should ask the architects to redesign the building and show the plans to the public before the election.”

This editorial struck a chord, pushing the board to focus upon an approach that would best serve the community. In the end, it changed the location and design of the new facility.

The financing question was to be posed to the voters in mid-December, when they would be asked to approve a \$381,000 bond issue. Throwing its weight behind the effort, on November 27 and December 11, the *Aspen Times* devoted a large amount of column space to the issue. Included among its pages were articles, editorials, and sizable front-page cartoons. One of these depicted the new school as a casket being carried to its grave by rumor mongers, stay-at-home voters, indifferent parents and penny pinchers. Another showed a forlorn little child, holding an ABC book and bundled up against the winter cold, with the caption “Please.....I need a new school.”

The rumor mongers depicted in the graveyard cartoon were related to another issue that raised its head in the fall of 1958 and complicated matters. This revolved around the question of school district reorganization, an issue being discussed at the time by the state legislature and Colorado Department of Education. The threat of reorganization, in which students from throughout a larger district and not just Aspen would utilize the new facility, led some voters to fear the financial burden it might place upon the community.

In the meantime, the school board moved forward with the goal of acquiring the north half of Block 57. Negotiations avoided a condemnation suit when it was found that the owners were more amenable to selling than they had been previously. Preliminary plans for the building appeared in the December 11 issue of the *Aspen Times* (page 4). Prepared by Wheeler & Lewis, these showed a long, low, one-story International Style building with a taller multi-purpose room. In essence, the basic elements of its architecture and layout were similar to what was ultimately constructed on the site. The primary difference lay in the building’s eastern end, where the main entrance would face south and the multi-purpose room would be located on the north side of the building. The site and floor plan also showed the building in the north half of Block 57, with the alley closed and the south half of the block a dedicated “playfield.”

The election took place on December 17, with a single polling place in the gymnasium at the Red Brick School. The following day, the *Aspen Times* reported on its front page that “Stunning nearly everyone, the much-discussed school bond issue election passed yesterday by a margin of 39 votes. 169 voters approved the issuance of bonds and 130 opposed it in a surprisingly light turn-out.” With the question settled, the school district proceeded to acquire the north half of Block 57 from its owners.

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In early 1959, the debate over district reorganization heated up again. Discussion revolved around the possible formation of an enlarged district that would include Aspen, Basalt, Carbondale and Glenwood Springs, along with all points between. In Aspen, sentiment ran against consolidation with the other districts. The lingering issue delayed the commencement of construction of the new Aspen Elementary School since the board had already determined to hold off on issuing the approved bonds if the question of consolidation remained unresolved by the beginning of March. In late February, the district announced that it was delaying the start of construction for six months.

A special election took place on March 20, at which voters were asked to decide whether the district reorganization plan could move forward. Aspen citizens voted heavily against the plan. With the issue settled, the school board announced that it would proceed with construction. Wheeler & Lewis were instructed to complete the working drawings and arrangements began for the bond sale. The board hoped to break ground around the first of June and have the building ready for use by September 1960.

In May 1959, the school board appealed to the City of Aspen for a variance that would allow the building to be constructed with its north exterior wall on the property line, with roof overhangs of four feet. This, they claimed, would permit it to be pushed as far north as possible so the playground to the south could be enlarged. At the time, they were expecting that the playground would be located north of the alleyway rather than in the south half of the block. Vacation of the alley was not yet approved, so it was to remain open to traffic. During the summer of 1959, two small apartment buildings and a single-family home in the north half of Block 57 were removed to make way for construction.

Despite the expectation that ground would be broken mid-summer, it wasn't until the middle of August that the architectural plans were approved. Modified from the conceptual plan of December 1958, the new design showed the building occupying most of the north half of the block, with its main entrance on the east and multi-purpose room on the south. Fourteen classrooms would extend to the west, with a remedial reading room in the southeast corner. The variance was approved and its exterior walls would run along the north, east and west property lines. In September 1959, the new school year began with the Red Brick School bursting at the seams with a record 396 students.

A request for bids was advertised at the beginning of September based upon plans and specifications prepared by Wheeler & Lewis. When the board opened the five sealed proposals on the 16th, the low bidder was the R. W. Mier Construction Company of Denver. The firm's bid was \$411,222, with alternatives that could reduce the price to \$368,279. Mier declared that he would have the project done within four hundred days. Because the bid was somewhat higher than the available funds, the architects and contractor were instructed to sit down and make the project fit within the existing budget.

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On September 22, the school board gathered to discuss the cost of the project and ended up reducing the budget by more than \$56,000. In part, this was achieved by changing the exterior materials from glazed bricks and stone to standard pressed bricks. Cost-saving changes were also made to the mechanical and electrical systems. Work commenced in October with the stockpiling of materials on the site, along with leveling and excavation of the ground. A large blue spruce was removed, causing the editor of the *Aspen Times* to lash out at the architects for not saving it in their plans. Contractor Mier promised to leave space for the skating rink to operate through the winter as it had for many years.

All that existed of the school by late December was a hole in the ground that would eventually become the basement. Although preparation of the foundation had begun, the onset of winter caused the project to be delayed until spring. In the meantime, the board met regularly to consider furnishings and other details requiring decisions to be made. Salesmen representing school supply manufacturers presented their products to the board in early 1960. Expected to house between 300 and 325 students its first year, with a planned capacity of 450, the school would require an extensive amount of furniture and supplies. In April, the board deliberated trim colors for the building, accepting the architects' recommendation that the entry doors be painted white with orange trim. Redwood trim would be installed along the roofline (essentially the face of the boxed eaves) and the sills beneath the windows were to be olive green.

Construction commenced again in April 1960, with an expected completion date at the end of December. As they started work on the site, the crew prepared the concrete foundation and footings under the direction of subcontractor George Smith of Glenwood Springs. This involved the use of a truck-mounted drill rig that bored holes over two feet wide for the concrete piles. The sight and sound of the tall rig drew the attention of neighborhood children, who enjoyed watching it being operated. With the building designed to sit several feet above grade, raised foundation walls also had to be prepared. The plans called for the partial basement to contain the school cafeteria and kitchen.

As work progressed into June, controversy arose about the fact that the building encroached onto city property. Wheeler & Lewis had not planned for sidewalks along the north, east and west sides of the school and designed the building to run all the way to the property lines in violation of zoning regulations. One year earlier, the city council had approved the plans, evidently not understanding the problem this would eventually create with dirt banks extending outside the raised foundation into areas reserved for public sidewalks. When the issue emerged again in June 1960, school board members assured the council that a remedy for the situation would be found.

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Initially the council considered narrowing Center Street, Hallam Street and First Street to accommodate the installation of sidewalks. However, that idea was soon shelved and the city demanded that retaining walls be installed to shorten the embankments. Mier submitted an estimate of \$14,000 to build the walls, along with a stairway for the west end of the building. This impacted the roof drainage, which had to be redesigned because the planned dry wells were eliminated to install the retaining walls. In addition, the plans and specifications neglected to include a water meter and its associated costs. The school district had little choice but to find a way to cover the additional expense of these items. Controversy surrounding these issues continued into November, with Wheeler & Lewis taking the lion's share of the blame. In the end, the city and school district came to an agreement by which they would share the costs of the water meter and installing new dry wells.

When school started in September, the number of students enrolled in the Red Brick School swelled again. To relieve overcrowding, the kindergarten classes were moved to the basement of the Aspen Community Church, where they remained through the end of the semester. That same month, Mier assured the school board that work was progressing rapidly and the new school would be ready by the first of December.

By the beginning of November 1960, the school board was coordinating with the teachers and PTA to plan for moving desks, books and other supplies into the building. New furniture, including teacher's desks, was being delivered by truck from a manufacturing plant in Texas, and was expected there any day. The rest of the materials had to be carried across the intersection from the Red Brick School. The public was asked for its assistance with the move, including bringing trucks to help with the heavier items.

Delay of the furniture delivery pushed the opening date to November 21, when the elementary age students began their classes in the new building. District superintendent Earl Kelly and architect Selby Wheeler inspected the school and put together a final punch list of the last items to be taken care of before the building could be declared complete and turned over to the district. The most substantial items that needed to be finished were the retaining walls and exterior stairways on the north and west. Contractor Mier assured the board that this work would be completed shortly. Due to the temporary lack of safe egress from the north classrooms, the students would move into the south classrooms for the time being.

On November 29, the public was invited to an open house sponsored by the PTA. Tours were provided, with all of the rooms open for inspection and teachers present to speak with the visitors. Entertainment was provided by the school chorus, which performed in the multi-purpose room. Surprisingly, after all the attention it had given to the issue of constructing the new school over the previous several years, the *Aspen Times* failed to report on the event.

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In early January 1961, the school board questioned Selby Wheeler regarding why the final punch list items still needed to be addressed. Wheeler informed them that about one-fourth of the items were finished, but Mier had withdrawn his workforce from the site because the board had failed to pay his most recent invoice. At its January 4 meeting, the board approved payment of Mier's \$14,140 bill and accepted his \$800 bid for the installation of two dry wells that would handle runoff from the roof. This left just \$2,000 of work remaining to complete the punch list items. Wheeler assured the board that he would contact Mier and get the crew back to the school shortly to finish these tasks.

Although it appeared that all of the work would be completed within weeks, another problem suddenly arose. By early February, cracks were forming in the cement hallway and classroom floors. Because of this, the board decided to withhold Mier's final payment of ten percent of the contract until the defect was addressed. Mier assured them that the specifications were closely followed, but reduced his contract price by \$1,000 to mollify the board. The cracks were patched, but not to the satisfaction of the board. Rather than replace the floors in a school that was already in use, they were simply covered.

Superintendent Earl Kelly reported to the board in March that the building fund was in good shape with the school pretty much finished. Construction of the building cost \$351,401, not including the extra \$11,000 to \$14,000 expended to erect the retaining walls. Although the final settlement with the R. W. Mier Construction Company was scheduled to take place toward the end of April, it wasn't until January 1962 that the firm was paid.

With the plumbing complete and equipment installed, the basement cafeteria began serving hot lunches in early February 1961. Grading and seeding of the narrow areas of ground around the school, along with placement of a flagpole, were put off until the semester ended. Completion of the north retaining wall and the planting of grass and shrubs there were also delayed until the school year was over.

In February 1962, a survey was made in Aspen of buildings that might be acceptable for use as nuclear fallout shelters. Among the small number of buildings determined to be adequate was the new Aspen Elementary School, specifically due to its basement. That May, the school board authorized the superintendent to secure bids for paving of the playground in the south half of Block 57. The entire area was to be fenced and the board sought to have tennis courts installed in its western area. These would also serve as basketball courts. In July, the Merrill Construction Company of Carbondale was awarded the contract for paving of the tennis/basketball courts. The fencing was installed by Elcar Fence Company of Denver.

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Within a few years after the Aspen Elementary School was finished, the student population had increased to the point that the building was already reaching its capacity. On 27 September 1963, the editor of the *Aspen Times* wrote:

“A phenomenon which never ceases to amaze old-time Aspenites is the constant increase in the school population. A decade ago less than 200 pupils attended one small school [the Red Brick School]. Today 670 students are beginning to crowd two large buildings. Almost before the new school was completed...it was apparent that more room would be needed within six or seven years. Unless the pattern of growth suddenly changes there will be too may pupils within two years for efficient use of existing buildings. What then?”

Despite perennial crowding, the Aspen Elementary School remained in use as a school district facility for the next three decades.

In 1966 and 1973, new high school and middle school buildings were constructed on the Maroon Creek campus west of town, freeing up space in the Red Brick School. When the middle school students moved out, the school district split the elementary grades between the two adjacent buildings, with K-2 in the Aspen Elementary School and 3-4 in the Red Brick School. In 1991, the district constructed a new elementary school on the Maroon Creek campus. As the students, faculty and staff moved into the new facility, the two older schools in town were vacated.

The district began to consider what to do with the Aspen Elementary School, and the possibility arose that the property would be sold and redeveloped. Eager to see it remain a vital part of the community, the citizens of Aspen voted to approve a sales tax that allowed the City to purchase the building and support the early childhood education program that had emerged there. In 1995, the City of Aspen acquired all of Block 57 from the district, complete with the Aspen Elementary School and its former playground to the south.

Since that time, the building has been known as the Yellow Brick School. The facility has housed city offices and an early childhood education center through the present time. Finally, in 2001 the City converted the playground, essentially just a fenced, paved lot, into Yellow Brick Park, complete with playground equipment, a basketball court, a picnic pavilion, and an open grassed area for recreational activities.

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"Lincoln School Building Practically Condemned by State Factory Inspector," 17 June 1927, p. 1.

"Lincoln School Building Sold," 7 November 1930, p. 1.

"School Staff for Year Nearly Complete," 29 August 1946, p. 1.

"New Ice Skating Rink Under Construction," 8 December 1949, p. 4.

"Night Skiing and Skating in Aspen," 19 January 1950, p. 1.

"Board Favors School Improvement Program," 22 January 1953, p. 6.

"Aspen Needs Additional School Space," 29 January 1953, p. 8.

"Aspen City Council Hears School Board Request," 10 May 1956, p. 1.

"Denver Architects Selected in July by School Board," 15 August 1957, p. 13.

"School Board Discusses New Building Plans," 19 September 1957, p. 5.

"New School Issue," 26 September 1957, p. 8.

"School Board Discusses More Land Possibilities," 3 October 1957, p. 13.

"Our School and its Growth," 28 November 1957, p. 4.

"Board Chooses Hi School," 19 December 1957, p. 1.

"School Board Signs Contract with Denver Architects," 6 February 1958, p. 1.

"School Bond Vote Slated," 13 November 1958, p. 1.

"Assurance from the Board is Needed," 13 November 1958, p. 4.

"Citizen's Council Supports School Bond Issue," 13 November 1958, p. 15.

"Important PTA Meeting is Scheduled Next Tues.," 20 November 1958, p. 15.

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"School Board Negotiates for Additional Land," 27 November 1958, p. 3.

"No Confusion Necessary," 27 November 1958, p. 4.

"Council Answers School Bond Issue Questions," 27 November 1958, p. 15.

"Please.....I Need a New School," (cartoon) 11 December 1958, p. 1.

"Aspen Needs a New School," 11 December 1958, p. 4.

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- "Rough Architect's Sketches of the Proposed New School," 11 December 1958, p. 4.**
- "School Bond Election Slated for Wednesday," 11 December 1958, p. 13.**
- "School Bond Issue Passes," 18 December 1958, p. 1.**
- "New School Plan Studied," 29 January 1959, p. 1.**
- "Reorganization Action Delays School 6 Months," 26 February 1959, p. 15.**
- "Reorganization Rejected at Special Election," 26 March 1959, p. 3.**
- "Board to Build School," 2 April 1959, p. 1.**
- "Four New School Rooms May be Ready by Fall," 21 May 1959, p. 3.**
- "New School Plans Approved at Board Meeting August 19," 20 August 1959, p. 5.**
- "396 Students Enroll Here," 3 September 1959, p. 1.**
- "School Bids Now Being Advertised," 3 September 1959, p. 6.**
- "Next week on September 16 bids will be opened...", (photo caption) 10 September 1959, p. 1.**
- "Legal Notice," 10 September 1959, p. 6.**
- "Denver Firm Selected to Construct New School," 17 September 1959, p. 13.**
- "What Happened?," 24 September 1959, p. 2.**
- "Board Cuts \$56,552 from New School Costs," 24 September 1959, p. 5.**
- "School Contractor to Provide Space for Skating Rink," 8 October 1959, p. 1.**
- "Architects and Trees," 15 October 1959, p. 4.**
- "Work Starts on School Building," 22 October 1959, p. 1.**
- "Furniture for New Elementary School to be Considered," 25 December 1959, p. 2.**
- "Construction in City Hits Record High in 1959," 8 January 1960, p. 7.**
- "Board of Education to Act on Furniture at Mon. Meeting," 19 February 1960, p. 12.**
- "Problem of Overcrowding at School Discussed Wed.," 8 April 1960, p. 8.**
- "Colors for School Selected by Board," 15 April 1960, p. 2.**
- "A School is Built," 29 April 1960, p. 6.**
- "School Ready at Christmas, Contractor Informs Board," 29 April 1960, p. 8.**
- "One of the interesting machines at work...", (photo caption) 6 May 1960, p. 3.**
- "School Ready in November, Board Hears," 3 June 1960, p. 1.**
- "Council Discusses Buildings on City Property," 10 June 1960, p. 5.**
- "City OK's Use of Streets for Walks at School," 22 July 1960, p. 13.**
- "School to be Ready About First of Year," 5 August 1960 p. 15.**
- "Talk of the Times: A Local Issue," 19 August 1960, p. 8.**
- "Contract Dates Should Be Met," 26 August 1960, p. 4.**
- "Record Enrollment Seen," 2 September 1960, p. 1.**
- "Aspen Welcomes Students and Teachers," 2 September 1960, p. 8.**
- "New Look for Aspen," 16 September 1960, p. 6.**
- "School Ready by Dec. 1: Contractor," 23 September 1960, p. 1.**
- "Retaining Wall at School to Cost \$14,000," 23 September 1960, p. 5.**
- "Board of Education Explains School's Steep Embankment," 21 October 1960, p. 2.**

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- "Let's End School-City Bickering," 28 October 1960, p. 4.**
- "School Board Stands Firm in Clash with City," 28 October 1960, p. 17.**
- "Elementary School to Open Nov. 14," 4 November 1960, p. 12.**
- "School Move Postponed Until Nov. 19," 11 November 1960, p. 1.**
- "New School Opening Postponed Until Nov. 21," 11 November 1960, p. 3.**
- "Workmen are putting the finishing touches..." (photo caption) 18 November 1960, p. 1.**
- "School to Open Monday – Despite Problems," 18 November 1960, p. 3.**
- "Architects' Mistakes Are Costly," 18 November 1960, p. 4.**
- "School Accepts Plan for Meter, Dry Wells," 18 November 1960, Insert A.**
- "Moving Day at School is Saturday," 18 November 1960, Insert A.**
- "Local Residents to Have Chance to See New School," 25 November 1960, p. 7.**
- "School Working on Close Budget, Kelly Says," 18 November 1960, p. 11.**
- "Men to be Thanked," 16 December 1960, p. 4.**
- "School Construction Lagging, Architect Told," 6 January 1961, p. 15.**
- "\$1000 Donation, Hot Lunches Among School Board Items," 20 January 1961, p. 12.**
- "Floor Cracks to Curriculum Considered by School Board," 3 February 1961, p. 6.**
- "Grade School Cost Under Original Bid Earl Kelly States," 3 March 1961, p. 14.**
- "Final Settlement on New School Approved," 7 April 1961, p. 5.**
- "Notice of Contractor's Settlement," 12 January 1962, p. 9.**
- "Eight Buildings 'Favorable' for CD Shelters," 23 February 1962, p. 15.**
- "Rec Program Wanted, School Survey Reveals," 4 May 1962, p. 1.**
- "Two New Teachers Offered Jobs by Ed Board," 18 May 1962, p. 5.**
- "1962-63 School Dates Similar to This Year's," 27 July 1962, p. 5.**
- "Needed Soon: A New School," 27 September 1963, p. 4.**
- "Open House Set for Aspen's Yellow Brick Park," 18 March 2009.**

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Pitkin County Assessor, Real Estate Appraisal Records, 215 N. Garmisch St. (All of Block 57), Aspen, Colorado (parcel #273512436850).

Rocky Mountain Sun (Aspen, CO)
"Our Schools," 17 October 1885, p. 2.

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Smith, Margaret Supplee. *Aspen's Twentieth-Century Architecture: Modernism 1945-1975*. Prepared for the City of Aspen, September 2010.

Wentworth, Frank L. *Aspen on the Roaring Fork*. Denver, CO: Sundance Publications, 1976.

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VI. Significance37. Local landmark designation: **None**

38. Applicable National Register Criteria:

- ☒ A. Associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad pattern of our history
- B. Associated with the lives of persons significant in our past
- ☒ C. 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 may lack individual distinction
- D. Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in history or prehistory

Qualifies under Criteria Considerations A through G

Does not meet any of the above National Register criteria

39. Area(s) of significance: **Education / Architecture**40. Period of significance: **1960-1967 (Education) / 1960 (Architecture)**41. Level of significance: National **No** State **No** Local **Yes**

42. Statement of significance: **The Aspen Elementary School, now known as the Yellow Brick School, has been in almost continuous use as a public school and then an early childhood education center since it was constructed fifty-six years ago. In addition to serving this important role in the community, the building was designed by one of Colorado's leading architectural firms of the era. Today it represents not only their work, but is an excellent example of the International Style of architecture that characterized the post-war era.**

Criterion A: As Aspen emerged from decades of slumber, lasting from the 1893 Silver Crash that effectively ended the mining boom to the end of World War II, the town began to attract visitors and new residents. Its revitalization in the post-war era was due to the development of skiing on Aspen Mountain, combined with the emergence of the town as a center of recreation, culture and the arts. During the late 1940s and 1950s, Aspen's population increased for the first time in many years. Overcrowding in the community's single school building, which housed all of the grades from kindergarten through high school, worsened with each passing year.

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Throughout the 1950s, the school board grappled with how they were going to remedy the situation. During the course of numerous board meetings and through much public debate, every bit of which was reported in the local newspaper, it became apparent that the only solution was to build a new elementary school. Plans were prepared by the prominent Denver architectural firm of Wheeler & Lewis, which became known for its extensive work on school projects throughout Colorado. An election was held to approve financing for the project and bonds were issued to raise the necessary funds. The R. W. Mier Construction Company of Denver won the contract to erect the building.

Construction commenced in October 1959 and was largely finished in November 1960. The school was occupied at that time despite the fact that punch list items remained to be completed during the first half of 1961. From 1960 through 1991, the building remained in use as an elementary school. The entire block, including the school and playground, was then purchased by the City of Aspen in 1995 and renamed the Yellow Brick School. Since then, the facility has housed an early childhood education center along with city offices.

Due to its long history of use, the Aspen Elementary School / Yellow Brick School is NRHP eligible under Criterion A on the local level for its association with Education in Aspen during the second half of the twentieth century. However, its period of significance is limited to 1960-1967, the fifty-year mark, despite the fact that it continued to be used as an elementary school and then an early childhood education center. Because of the changes made to the playground in 2001 that resulted in the creation of Yellow Brick Park, it is unlikely that the south half of the block would be considered NRHP eligible.

Criterion C: The building erected on this property in 1960 was designed in the modernist International Style of architecture that emerged in Europe in the 1920s and 1930s, and then spread across the United States through the 1970s. Although often associated with skyscrapers, the style was also employed on numerous commercial and institutional buildings of lower height, including offices, churches and schools. The International Style is sometimes referred to as Miesian, after Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, the prominent German-American architect who was among its greatest proponents and designers. Mies and colleagues such as Walter Gropius, Le Corbusier, Richard Neutra and Philip Johnson were responsible for the development of a new style of architecture that reflected modern building materials and techniques, along with the technological, utilitarian and rational spirit of the era.

Characteristics of the style that appear on the Aspen Elementary School include its long, low, horizontal profile, bands of windows set flush with the exterior walls, unornamented surfaces, flat roof, and asymmetrical composition. The building also features recessed twinned entrances from the exterior directly into the classrooms (on the south, these provided direct access to the playground). On the interior, it was designed with administrative spaces adjacent to the main

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entrance and lobby, multiple classrooms flanking a central hallway, a tall multi-purpose room that served both school and community activities, a separate remedial reading room, modern restrooms, and a basement kitchen and cafeteria (this large space also served as a nuclear fallout shelter, a function that resulted from Cold War concerns of the era).

Because of their design elements and overall appearance, International Style educational buildings such as the Aspen Elementary School reflected the single-story ranch house aesthetic that was also characteristic of the period, providing students with a learning environment that felt something like home. Despite working with a tight budget, the school board and its prominent architects Wheeler & Lewis created a new educational facility that served the community's needs for many years and has endured to the present time. Although some changes have taken place, the building has not experienced substantial alterations such as demolitions or additions that might have diminished its integrity and ability to convey its style.

For these reasons, this property is NRHP eligible under Criterion C on the local level in the area of Architecture for embodying the distinctive characteristics of the twentieth century International Style of architecture. Its period of significance is limited to 1960, the year the building was completed and occupied. The school also fulfills the registration requirements that are presented in the NRHP Multiple Property Documentation Form (October 2016) titled *Colorado's Mid-Century Schools, 1945-1970*. The Aspen Elementary School is listed in the document, which also discusses how it fits within the prevailing historical and architectural themes of the era and is tied to Colorado's most prolific school design firm, Wheeler & Lewis.

City of Aspen Significance: The Aspen Elementary School clearly retains a reasonably high degree of integrity and meets the City of Aspen's guidelines for the character-defining features of what it terms the Bauhaus/International Style of architecture. These include all of the same design features that are described above in relation to NRHP eligibility.

According to architectural historian Margaret Supplee Smith's 2010 context titled *Aspen's Twentieth-Century Architecture: Modernism 1945-1975*, the building may not have been designed by one of the city's resident architects, but exhibits a preponderance of the style's characteristic features. It also meets the criteria established by the City of Aspen in terms of time period, methods and materials of construction, and architectural detailing. The context provides excellent discussion of history and architecture in Aspen during the post-WWII era, providing strong support for the Aspen Elementary School's local landmark eligibility.

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Today the school building contributes to Aspen's historic built environment and remains an important feature that is characteristic of its mid-twentieth century period of renewal and rapid growth. For all of these reasons, the property is eligible for local landmark designation under criterion A and C.

Applicable City of Aspen Criteria (Section 26.415.030.C.1, Aspen Municipal Code):

- ☒ A. The property is related to an event, pattern, or trend that has made a contribution to local, state, regional or national history that is deemed important, and the specific event, pattern or trend is identified and documented in an adopted context paper
- ☐ B. The property is related to people who have made a contribution to local, state, regional or national history that is deemed important, and the specific people are identified and documented in an adopted context paper
- ☒ C. The property represents a physical design that embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction, or represents the technical or aesthetic achievements of a recognized designer, craftsman, or design philosophy that is deemed important and the specific physical design, designer, or philosophy is documented in an adopted context paper
- ☐ D. The property possesses such singular significance to the City, as documented by the opinions of persons educated or experienced in the fields of history, architecture, landscape architecture, archaeology or a related field, that the property's potential demolition or major alteration would substantially diminish the character and sense of place in the city as perceived by members of the community
- ☒ E. The property or district possesses an appropriate degree of integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship and association, given its age.

Does not meet any of the above City of Aspen criteria

43. Assessment of historic physical integrity related to significance: **This property was redeveloped in 1960 with the public school and city park that remain there today. Except for a few changes, the long, low one-story building is largely intact from its period of construction. Alterations have included the installation of an exterior basement stairway in 1970 on the south side of the multi-purpose room, with a metal awning and solar panels mounted in 1999 to the wall above. Although one document suggested that the building was remodeled in the mid-1960s, there is no supporting evidence of this in the Aspen newspaper or the city's building permits file. No additions have been made to the building.**

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The original metal-framed windows throughout the school were replaced in 1999 with wood-framed windows with aluminum caps on the exteriors. These retained the historic window bands and replicated the pattern and functionality of the original windows, with slightly wider framing being the only visual impact. The original exterior doors, most likely wood, were replaced in 2000. However, the new ones seem to retain a historically appropriate appearance and did not result in any negative visual impact to the building.

Yellow Brick Park was developed in 2001 after the south half of the block had served for five decades as a public skating rink and then an unremarkable and mostly empty paved school playground. It is still used today by the early childhood education center that is based in the school building. Although the park is not historic, the land there serves the same essential purpose as it did in the past, which was to provide recreation for students and residents of the community. Today it offers modern playground equipment, verdant landscaping, a basketball court, a picnic pavilion, and a much more enjoyable and useful environment for the public than it ever had in previous years.

The school building exhibits an excellent level of architectural integrity in relation to the aspects of location, design, workmanship, feeling and association. While the setting has changed with the development of Yellow Brick Park to the south, the building continues to be surrounded by early residences and the historic Red Brick School. It retains a preponderance of its original materials, with the primary change being the non-historic replacement of its doors and windows. However, this is mitigated by the fact that the windows replicated the originals in pattern and functionality, and the doors do not detract in any way from the building's architectural style.

Despite the changes that have taken place there, the Aspen Elementary School / Yellow Brick School continues to convey its 1960 origin and long use by the community as an important venue for primary education.

VII. National Register Eligibility Assessment

44. National Register eligibility field assessment: **Eligible**

45. Is there National Register district potential? **Yes**

Discuss: This property is located within a neighborhood of historically and architecturally significant resources from the same era (this appears to be the mining era of the late 1800s) that are contiguous or close to one another and might allow for the creation of a National Register, State Register, or local landmark district.

If there is National Register district potential, is this building contributing? **No**

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46. If the building is in an existing National Register district, is it contributing? **N/A**

VIII. Recording Information

47. Photograph numbers: **215 North Garmisch Street, #1535-1576 and #1619-1654 and #1741-1742**

Negatives filed at: **Tatanka Historical Associates, Inc.
P.O. Box 1909, Fort Collins, CO 80522**

48. Report title: **Intensive-Level Survey of Five City-Owned Historic Properties in Aspen, Colorado**

49. Date(s): **15 February 2017**

50. Recorder(s): **Ron Sladek, President**

51. Organization: **Tatanka Historical Associates, Inc.**

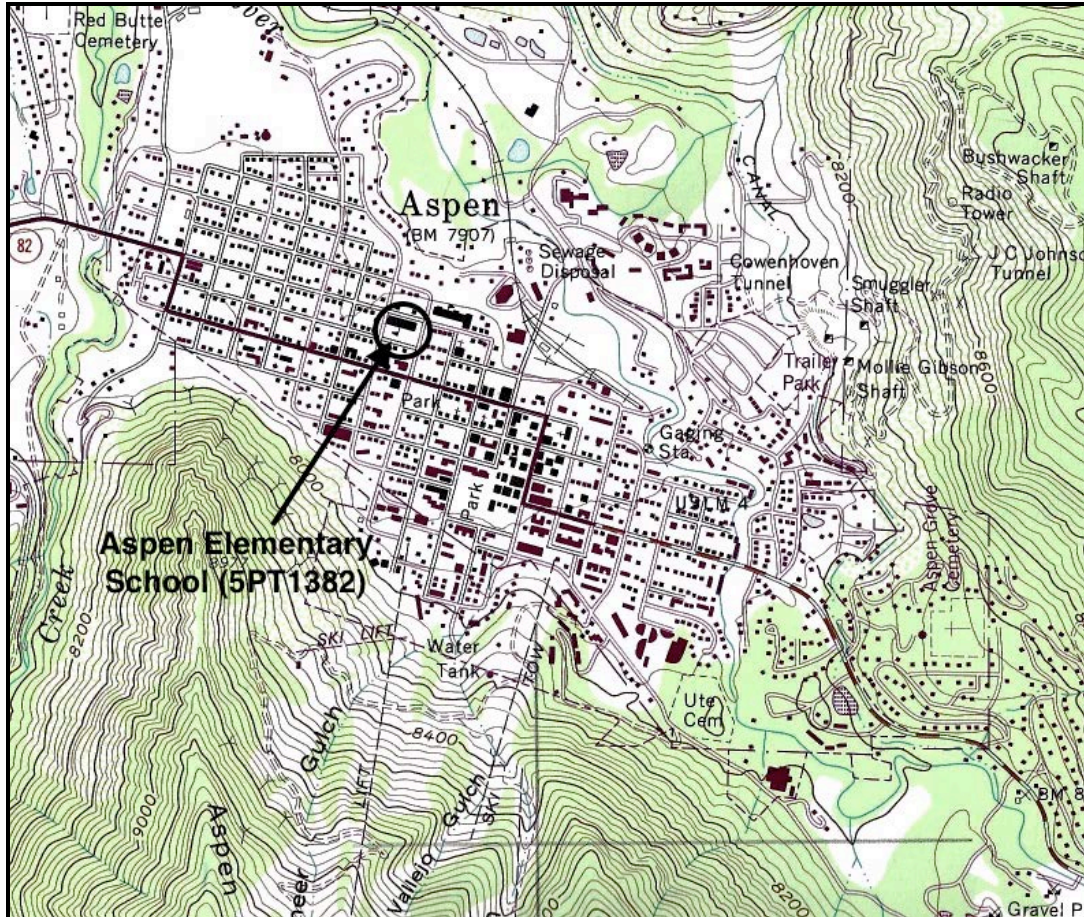
52. Address: **P.O. Box 1909, Fort Collins, CO 80522**

53. Phone number(s): **970/221-1095**

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Site Location Map



USGS Aspen 7.5' Topographic Quadrangle Map
1960 (revised 1987)

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Aerial Map



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Current Photographs



**View of the School from Across Garmisch St. and Hallam St.
View to the Southwest**



**The Front of the School from the Southeast
View to the North**

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Current Photographs



**Front Entrance to the Building
View to the West**



**The Building's Southeast Corner, Including the Tall Multi-Purpose Room
View to the North**

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Current Photographs



**The South Classrooms
View to the Northwest**



**West End of the Building Along First Street
View to the East**

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Current Photographs



**The North Classrooms
View to the East**



**The North Classrooms Along Hallam Street
View to the Northwest**