

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED APR 17 1987

DATE ENTERED MAY 19 1987

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Thermopolis Main Post Office

AND/OR COMMON

Thermopolis Main Post Office

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

440 Arapahoe Street

NA NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Thermopolis

NA VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

NA

STATE

Wyoming 82443

CODE

056

COUNTY

Hot Springs

CODE

017

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Thematic Group	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
	<input type="checkbox"/> NA	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER

4 AGENCY

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: *(if applicable)*

United States Postal Service, Western Regional Headquarters

STREET & NUMBER

850 Cherry Avenue

CITY, TOWN

San Bruno

NA VICINITY OF

STATE

CA 94099

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Hot Springs County Assessor's Office

STREET & NUMBER

Court House

CITY, TOWN

Thermopolis

STATE

Wyoming 82443

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

None

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE <u>NA</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Thermopolis Main Post office is a one story brick and limestone structure on a raised basement. A second, attic story, rises from behind the balustraded parapet of the main floor. Neo-classical in design, the front facade is symmetrically arranged into seven bays. Essentially, the facade gives the appearance of a five-bay limestone building to which red brick wings have been added. Demarked by sandstone corner quoins, the wings each contain a single flat-arched window bay. The slightly projecting central section, resting atop raised limestone-faced platform, is articulated by six flat, fluted pilasters with Ionic capitals which flank and divide each of the five semicircular-arched bays. The centered entry bay is embellished by a broken pediment which is supported by scrolled brackets. An attic parapet of balustraded limestone over the central section and solid brick over the wings terminates the facade. A red quarry tile hipped roof with five dormers completes the building.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Thermopolis Post Office is a two-story limestone and brick building on a raised basement. The basement is constructed of reinforced concrete. Structural steel frames the main floor. Red brick and buff-colored limestone faces the exposed basement and main-floor walls. A low, truncated, hipped roof clad with red quarry tile tops the building. Built-up tar composition is used on the flat portion. Granite is used for the entry stairs.

The front facade (south) is flat and symmetrical in elevation. Seven bays divide the facade vertically. The five central bays are articulated within a richly detailed limestone salient which projects slightly from the red brick of the end wings. The corners of the end wings are defined by dressed limestone quoins. Dressed limestone faces the exposed basement wall and details the frieze, cornice, and balustraded parapet of the

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES	Site Acquisition 1931 Building Completed 1933	BUILDER/ARCHITECT	Federal Government/James A. Wetmore, OSA
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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Thermopolis Post Office is an outstanding example of early-1930s post office design in the Neo-Classical mode. Its symmetry, proportion, scale and degree of detailing have strong roots in the Beaux-Arts tradition that dominated federal architecture during the early years of the century. The building is distinguished by its richly embellished and crisply articulated limestone facade. Having the appearance of a scaled-down metropolitan post office, the visual appeal belies that fact that it was constructed in a community of only 2,100 people. Of particular note is the rhythm established by the arched bays, the quality portrayed by the finely crafted stone, and the richness created by the design execution. As the city's first federally constructed post office, the building symbolizes the federal presence and the interaction between the local citizens and their representatives in Washington.

ARCHITECTURE

The Thermopolis Post Office, a small combined post office and federal office building, is an outstanding example of the use Neo-Classical design in a public building. The facade of abundantly detailed limestone against a backdrop of red brick and tile is unique in the context of federal architecture in Wyoming. Explicit in its rendering of Classical detailing and rare in the extensive use of stone, the building has only one other equivalent in Wyoming--the massive 1908 Evanston Post Office and Courthouse which is considerably larger in scale. The Thermopolis facade is distinguished by five semicircular-arched bays framed in molded limestone, pronounced scrolled keystones, fluted pilasters topped with Ionic capitals, broken pediment frontispiece over the main entry, and balustraded parapet.

The design and quality of detailing of the building also mark the end of an era in federal design. While the building is clearly Beaux-Arts in origin, it foretells the modern in its superimposition of an ornate

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

1. Crush, T.R., "Downtown Thermopolis Historic District", August 23, 1983.
2. Duhig, Jessie L., "Federal, State and County Buildings in Southern Big Horn Basin, Wyoming", WPA MS#1309 (Cheyenne, Wyoming: State Archives, Museums and Historical Department).
3. Thermopolis Post Office-floor plans-1932.
4. Independent Record (Thermopolis) - various articles 1929-1937.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 0.44

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,2	7 25 0,8,0	4,8 3,6 2,9,0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Lots, 13,14,15,16, & 17 in Block 21, Original Town of Thermopolis

The site is rectangular with 150 feet of frontage along Arapahoe Street (southern boundary) and a depth of 140 feet with frontage along Fifth Street (western boundary).

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
NA	NA	NA	NA
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
NA	NA	NA	NA

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

H. J. "Jim" Kolva, Senior Associate

ORGANIZATION

Institute for Urban and Local Studies

DATE

April 1986

STREET & NUMBER

W. 705 1st Avenue

TELEPHONE

(509) 458-6219

CITY OR TOWN

Spokane

STATE

WA 99204

12 CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

YES _____ NO _____ NONE _____

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

In compliance with Executive Order 11593, I hereby nominate this property to the National Register, certifying that the State Historic Preservation Officer has been allowed 90 days in which to present the nomination to the State Review Board and to evaluate its significance. The evaluated level of significance is _____ National _____ State _____ Local.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

John B. ...

DATE

2-9-87

TITLE
Realty Acquisition Specialist, Principal

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I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

MAY 19 1987

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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central section. The solid brick parapet over the end wings is marked by limestone quoins on its corners and topped by a limestone coping course. Behind the parapet rests a low-rise hipped roof clad with red quarry tile shingles. Five dormers topped by segmentally-arched roofs project from the roof in alignment over the main floor bays of the central section. The sash is double-hung wood with 6-over-6 lights.

The centered entry is accessed by four granite steps which rise to a broad red quarry tile intermediate landing, then four narrower granite steps, which connect the granite approach landing. Square sandstone buttresses flank the lower and upper runs. Cast iron lamp standards with octagonal lanterns rest atop the buttresses of the approach landing. The entry consists of double steel-framed glass panel doors (10 lights each). Molded limestone surrounds frame the sides of the entry. Scrolled brackets support a broken pedimented frontispiece. A decorative urn is located within the pediment gap. Flat pilasters set outside of the surrounds and pediment support a semicircular molded arch with a pronounced scrolled keystone. Within the arch is a 9-light fan window (glass painted). Three sections are formed by thickened mullions: three lights enclosed in an interior semicircular arch and three sections each in the divided outer arch. Flat, fluted pilasters divide the entry bays from the flanking window bays. Six such pilasters divide the bays of the central section. Ionic capitals top the pilasters and support a molded entablature.

There are four window bays in the central section, two on either side of the entry bay. Except for the lack of the pedimented frontispiece, the window bays are framed identically to the entry bay. The double-hung wood sash is Palladian in motif with 9-over-9 lights in the center section and 3-over-3-light sidelights. Fanlights identical to those over the entry are located over each window. Molded limestone sills are set beneath the windows. Recessed limestone panels are located beneath the sills.

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As described, the end wings are faced with red brick with limestone corner quoins. The window bays are centered in the wings and are framed with brick surrounds, a flat gauged brick arch with molded limestone keystone, and flat limestone sills. As with the windows of the central bays, a flat limestone panel is located beneath the sills. The sash is double-hung wood with 12-over-12 lights. A recessed sandstone panel, rectangular in shape, is inset above the window bays.

The side facades are identical to each other. The wall treatment and detailing is treated similarly to the front facade. Limestone faces the exposed basement wall and details the corner quoins, plain frieze, cornice, and the coping course atop the solid brick parapet. Three dormers are located in the roof which rises from behind the parapet. The facade is divided into four window bays which are framed and configured identically to those of the end wings of the front facade.

The rear facade contains the rearward projecting loading vestibule and loading platform. The vestibule is enclosed by red brick with three double-doored loading bays providing access to the outside platform. The platform is concrete and covered by a flat metal roof with projecting marquee. Flanking each side of the loading vestibule are two window bays. With the exception of the limestone panels beneath the sills and above the arches, the windows are identical to those of the side facades. The exposed basement wall is faced with limestone and the main floor wall with red brick. Except for the limestone corner quoins, corner returns, and coping, the wall is plain. The roof contains paired flat roofed dormers in the center with triplet, flat roofed dormers flanking each side. The sash is double-hung wood with 6-over-6 lights.

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facade on an otherwise rectangular box. The design actually characterizes the late stages of the Beaux-Arts as opposed to the modern of the "Starved Classical". Two interesting comparisons which demonstrate the progression of 1930s federal design relative to the post office can be found in Thermopolis. They are the County Courthouse and the Thermopolis Public School which were both constructed in 1938 under the Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works. These buildings exhibit Classical symmetry, yet are stripped of the historical architectural detailing exhibited by the post office. They represent the "Starved Classicism" or the final stage of 1930s federal design. As an excellent and rare example of its design style and in representing the closing stage of a design tradition, the Thermopolis Post Office has statewide significance under Criterion C.

POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

The building is the city's first federally constructed post office and is symbolic of the federal presence and the effort of the government to assist small towns during a period of economic hardship. Although two other buildings were constructed in Thermopolis under federal public buildings programs (Public School and Courthouse), only the post office provides the visible link to the federal government. The post office represents the efforts of local citizens through their elected representatives in Washington to obtain a public building. Considerable effort was also expended in the attempt to break the Indiana limestone trust by gaining the use of locally quarried sandstone. Even though the attempt was unsuccessful it generated considerable local involvement in the attempt to control the outcome of "their post office". As such the building is locally significant under Criterion A.

LOCAL CONTEXT

Thermopolis, with a 1980 population of 4,211, is the county seat of Hot Springs County in northwestern Wyoming. Hot Springs State Park, constructed around

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the world's largest single mineral hot spring, is located adjacent to the city's northwest corner. As a result, tourism along with petroleum and agriculture is a major sector of the city's economy. Services, retail trade, and mining comprise the largest employment sectors.

The site of Thermopolis, until the fall of 1897, was located in the Wind River Indian Reservation. Through an effort of Congressman Frank Mondell, a 10-acre tract was purchased from the Shoshone Indians. In the purchase agreement the Shoshone chief, Washakie, demanded that a portion of the water from the hot springs be set aside for free use by all people. As a result, a portion of the site was dedicated for Wyoming's first state park. The town of Andersonville, which was located just outside of the reservation boundaries, then moved to the present site of Thermopolis in order to be near the springs.

The town grew rapidly and increased from a population of 299 in 1900 to 1,524 in 1910. Mineral development accounted for early building booms (1905-1908 and 1914-1917). Copper and magnesium contributed to the first boom. The Burlington Northern Railroad opened its railroad station in the city in 1911. Oil and sulphate of potassium contributed to the later boom. In 1920, the population reached 2,095. Although the 1930 census showed an increase in population to 2,129 and the population again increased in 1940 to 2,422, no expansion took place in the business district or town boundaries from mid-1925 to the early 1940s. The city showed positive growth to 1960, declined in 1970, and has shown modest growth since then.

The Thermopolis Post Office is located on the northeast corner of the Arapahoe/5th Street intersection, one block north of Broadway which is the main business street. An office building with residential structures to its north is located adjacent to the post office's north side. A modern office building is also located adjacent to the east of the post office. Across 5th Street to the west is a one-story business block (older

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buildings with wood siding). The modern 1st State Bank building is located across Arapahoe Street to the south of the post office. To its east is the new county jail (concrete) and further east is the Hot Springs County Courthouse (3-story brick and stone, Art Deco, constructed by Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works in 1938).

The downtown Thermopolis historic district is located one block south of the post office, along Broadway Street between 5th and 6th streets.

LOCAL PRESS COVERAGE OF THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE THERMOPOLIS POST OFFICE

The procurement and construction of the Thermopolis Post Office was reported locally in the Thermopolis Independent Record between 1929 and 1933. The January 25, 1929 issue of the Independent Record ran the headline "Thermopolis Is Designated for New Post Office". The article was based on a telegram received from Senator F.E. Warren who stated that the Wyoming congressional delegation had selected Thermopolis as one of two post office sites in Wyoming under the Elliott Act of 1926. Green River would receive the second allocation.

Another year lapsed before it was again reported that Thermopolis would get its new post office building. An article of January 31, 1930 stated that the building would be constructed shortly. Post office construction in Green River and Torrington was also mentioned. On April 4th an article announced that construction would not begin until 1931. According to the article: "The government architecture department is working overtime these days in preparation for the construction program being advanced by the administration." Good news was reported on April 25th when Senator Patrick Sullivan announced that \$90,000 instead of the previously discussed \$60,000 would be allocated for the city's federal building.

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An article of May 2nd reported a letter that had been received by the editor of the Independent Record from L.H. Fitzgerald of Denver. Fitzgerald urged use of local Wyoming sandstone for the post office. He relayed that Senator Sullivan was assisting the Colorado delegation in its bid to secure the use of Colorado marble for the new Denver building, in the attempt to "knock out the Bedford stone trust. ... We sincerely hope that Thermopolis will don her fighting clothes and prevent the Indiana stone trust from capturing your new post office. ... Should the trust succeed in capturing the job, your post office will be built per mail order route. ... and when finished it will be a monument to the Indiana product."

The 4th of July brought the news in the Independent Record that the Second Deficiency Bill had passed and included \$90,000 for a new post office. Bids for the post office site were called two weeks later. On December 5th, it was announced that the Fred W. Klink property had been selected for the post office site. The site was one of three offered and was purchased for \$8,000.

After condemnation proceedings to clear title on the site (reported April 24, 1931), workers began clearing the site on May 1st. The Mint Cafe, Golden Brothers Cleaning Works, the old stone front barn, and the Yellowstone Motor Company equipment yard were cleared prior to site preparation. On August 28th, the issue of using local sandstone was again brought forth. Considerable effort had been expended on the part of local organizations to secure the use of local stone.

Two articles concerning the post office were included in the December 1st issue of the Independent Record. One reported that work would begin in the next 60 days, and the other reported that a local firm had received the plumbing contract on the new building. An article of December 18th reported that the work would begin in the spring. Along with the good news that local labor would be used, was the final answer in the stone conflict. Bedford limestone would be used rather than

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local stone. "With Thermopolis men working on the project there will be little unemployment here in the spring and summer in the building lines."

In one last attempt to use local stone, the building contractor, James R. Parr of Chadron, Nebraska, made an appeal to the state board of commerce, to no avail, however (reported on January 22, 1932). Articles of June 10th and June 17th announced the upcoming cornerstone laying ceremony that would be held on the evening of June 17th. The "impressive ceremony" was reported on June 24th. Judge Percy W. Metz of Basin delivered the primary address, the Masons conducted the ceremony, and the high school band played several selections. A large crowd attended.

As reported in March 31, 1933, work on the post office came to a halt. F.E. Haynes, federal construction engineer, halted all work and took possession of the building. The Parr Company was unable to complete the work. Finally, work was completed in April. On April 28th, Postmaster Charles M. Hett was readying his staff to move into the building on the next Saturday. The building was described as "very beautiful and very conveniently arranged". The County Agent, USGS, and IRS would occupy the second floor offices.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
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date entered

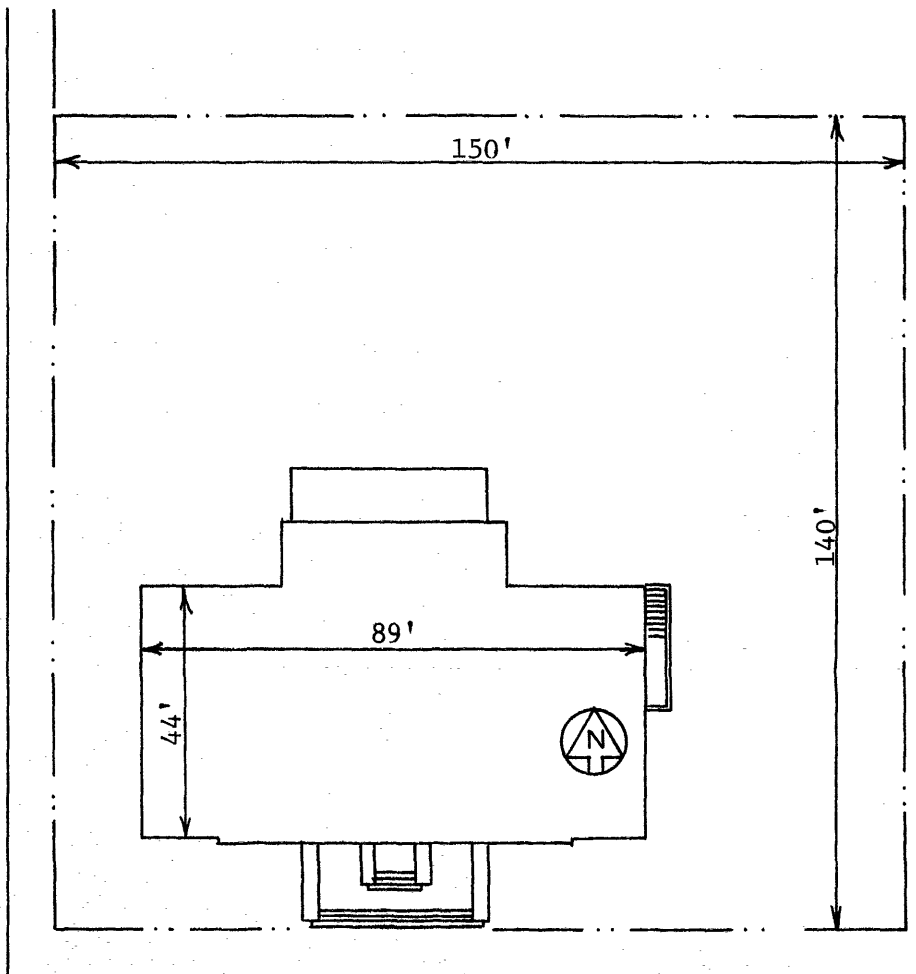
Continuation sheet

Thermopolis MPO

Item number 10

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Fifth Street



Arapahoe Street