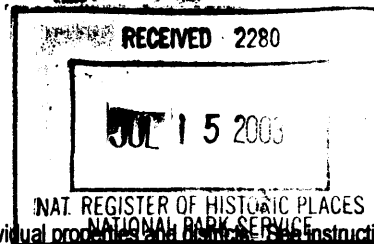


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



### National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and historic districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A) Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-9000a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

#### 1. Name of Property

Historic name Ruleton School  
Other name/site number 181-2110-0018

#### 2. Location

Street & number 6450 Ruleton Avenue  not for publication  
City or town Goodland  vicinity  
State Kansas Code KS County Sherman Code 181 Zip code 67735

#### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

Richard D. Pinkney DSHPO July 10, 2003  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
Kansas State Historical Society

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting official /Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

#### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is

- entered in the National Register.  See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register  See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other, (explain:)

Edson L. Beall  
Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action  
8/28/03

Ruleton School  
Name of property

Sherman County, Kansas  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

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

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

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

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		total

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

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**  
0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter Categories from instructions)

Education: school

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**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Vacant/ Not in Use

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**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Modern Movement

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**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick

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walls Brick

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~~Walls Brick with limestone trim~~

---

roof Asphalt

---

other

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

Name of Property

County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

- Criteria A, B, C, D with checkboxes and descriptions.

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

- Criteria A through G with checkboxes and descriptions.

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Education

Period of Significance

1928- 1953

Significant Dates

1928, 1941

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Jensen, Tom

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS): Primary location of additional data:

- Documentation checkboxes: preliminary determination, previously listed, designated landmark, recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey, recorded by Historic American Engineering.

- Repository checkboxes: State Historic Preservation Office, Other State agency, Federal agency, Local government, University, Other.

Name of repository:

Kansas State Historical Society



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The Ruleton School (c.1928, 1941) is located in Lincoln Township, in Sherman County at 6450 Ruleton Avenue (Road 10) in Ruleton, Kansas. Ruleton is geographically located in Lincoln Township, Sherman County on the High Plains in far northwest Kansas. The county's western boundary is the Colorado-Kansas state line. The school is visible from Interstate 70 and Highway 24.

The school stands on private property. The streets and roads around the school have been vacated because a home was built on a part of the road. The house stands where the softball diamond was. The playground still has the old-fashioned equipment: swings, merry-go-round, two large slippery slides, monkey bars, and chains hanging from a pole, used to run around and swing from.

The one-story, red brick building stands on a concrete foundation and maintains an eastern facade orientation. The rectangular, central bay is flanked by one-story wings. The structural walls are clay tile, covered with a red brick veneer. A parapetted, bow-string roof spans the gymnasium, flat roofs cover the north and to the south wings. There is a partial unfinished basement that was used as the boiler room.

Four brick pilasters divide the facade, containing the three entry doors. These doors are wooden, with three long panes of glass in each door. Over each door is a transom window with four panes. Five, three-over-three double-hung windows surmount the doors and two large six-over-three windows fenestrate the outer edges of the doors.

Other at-grade door openings are located in the back of the school, on the western elevation. Two door openings pierce the western wall, providing entry into the gymnasium. The doors are missing and the openings have been boarded up.

The building was designed with many six-over-three windows. Every room is flooded with light. The wood sashes and frames are showing some wear since little paint remains. The windows are repairable. The gymnasium has five windows on the north and five on the south. These are six pane metal sash frames. The glass needs to be replaced in most of the windows.

The roofing material on the bow-string roof over the gymnasium and the platform roof over the classrooms is in very poor condition. Gutters, downspouts, and roof flashings all need to be replaced.

The east doors open into the gymnasium-auditorium. A suspended ceiling hangs above the gymnasium/auditorium's, containing incandescent light bulbs. The gymnasium/auditorium floor has the basketball lines painted on it. The flooring in the large open gym space is in relatively good condition. The stage is wooden with lights that fold up from around the bottom. The stage is in good condition. There is an old stage curtain. There were cast iron radiators and coat hooks along the wall of the auditorium. These features have been removed.

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On the north side of the gymnasium/auditorium are doors into the north rooms. These rooms are the same as on the south side. The kitchen-cafeteria was on the north. Towards the back across from the stage on the north was a girls and boys locker room.

To the left (south) of the gymnasium/auditorium are three doors. These doors are wooden with transoms over the top. These rooms were the classrooms. Their south outside walls have many six-over-three windows. The inside walls had chalkboards on two walls. The walls are plaster. The wood floors and floor structure in the classrooms and restrooms on the north and south have been removed due to deterioration.

In 1941 a tornado hit the school. The center of the school (auditorium-gymnasium) was extensively damaged. It was rebuilt in the same style with one exception, which was the addition of the five, three-over-three double hung windows in the front of the school.

After the school was consolidated and closed, the building was used for storage. During this time an overhead door has been installed on the south side of the building. The opening is rough, exposing the jagged ends of the cut brick and clay tile.

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The Ruleton School (c. 1928, 1941) is being nominated to the National Register under criterion A for its historical association with education and as a community center in Ruleton, Sherman County, Kansas.

The residents of Ruleton incorporated the concept of school building as community center into their community, using a frame schoolhouse as school and church from 1888 to 1928. In 1928 Goodland contractor Tom Jensen and his son built the brick schoolhouse. (GNR, May 24, 1928) The school was rebuilt after being hit by a tornado on June 8, 1941. The center of the school (auditorium-gymnasium) was extensively damaged. It was rebuilt in the same style with one exception, which was the addition of the five, three-over-three double hung windows in the front of the school.

The Ruleton School building is important to the history of Lincoln Township and Sherman County because going to school to acquire an education has been and continues to be the most dominant activity in the emotional, intellectual, and physical development of children. The physical location where that education happens often assumes great importance in the minds and memories of children, and remains so for a lifetime. The number of Ruleton School alumni who return to the site so their children and grandchildren can see the building where they went to school demonstrates this phenomenon.

The rural community of Ruleton was located along the Rock Island Railroad line. There were sod houses, livery barns, a general store, a post office, and a blacksmith's shop. Sherman County residents were apparently most emphatic when it came to the education of their children. From information handed down through the generations, children were raised with as much pride as the wheat, vegetable and fruit gardens.

The history of the Ruleton School building began with a debate concerning rural school consolidation, which has always been a controversial issue in rural Kansas, and whether or not a new school should be built. Letters of opinion began appearing in March 1928, in the Goodland News-Republic, expressing pros and cons of a \$22,500 bond issue at 5 per cent interest. Otis E. Doane, principal at the old frame Ruleton school, wrote: "If people want their children to have nine months of grade school work each year and their children who go to high school at home at night, they will consolidate, if not they will not. The only question is: Are these things worth the cost?" (GNR, March 15, 1928)

Apparently, they were. The bond issue of \$22,500 for a new school house in Ruleton was carried by a vote of 44 for and 26 against. The election was held March 17. (GNR, March 22, 1928) Ruleton Consolidated District called for sealed bids for the creation of a new school building. However, the contract for the new building was not let; the board decided to hire a local foreman, Tom Jensen of Goodland, and give the work to home men. (GNR, May 17, 1928) This was no doubt a community-minded decision to boost the local economy, which also added to the community's value of the building since local men provided the labor.

The frame school closed in May 1928. The community was looking ahead with anticipation to the new school house, with hopes that classes could be held there in the fall. Throughout the summer of 1928 work proceeded. The

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concrete foundation was poured. Two carloads of brick, one of tile, one of cement and 80 barrels of lime, arrived. The foundation was completed and brick work began around the first of July. The work was being pushed as rapidly as possible. A carload of steel arrived in mid-July. The local newspaper stated, in its August 23, 1928, edition: "The new school building ..... is nearing completion and will be ready for school to open September 3. Plastering of the class rooms was finished this week and work on the auditorium is being rushed. With the completion of this building the Ruleton district will have a fine, brick school house consisting of six class rooms and auditorium, with modern lighting and plumbing fixtures throughout." (GNR, August 23, 1928)

In addition to a school, the building was used as a community center. Ruleton residents were already used to using the old frame school as the community church building, and in October, the Methodist church moved its equipment into the new school house, holding its first services on Sunday, October 18. The patrons of the community soon met to organize Parent-Teacher conference and "quite a number attended the social concert and program given by the Ruleton orchestra and 4-H club at the new school house." (GNR, October 11, 1928)

The school building quickly became the center of activity for the community. The following items (from the Goodland News Republic, November 28 to January 1931) are representative of the activities held (and memories made) for many years in the Ruleton School and show how intertwined were the lives of the people with the school building and each other:

"An interesting program was given by the grade school scholars. After the program, the patrons of the school sold lunches from which about \$25.00 were realized, which will be used for equipment about the school. Music was furnished by the Ruleton band."

"There will be a box social at the school house Friday evening. Come and have a good time. A well-prepared program will furnish the amusement for the evening."

"A Parent-Teacher meeting was held at the Ruleton School House."

"While playing volleyball last Thursday afternoon at the school building, Randall Gallion broke both bones in his right forearm."

"The Ruleton Epworth league gave a three-act drama entitled "Ruth in a Rush" in the school auditorium."

"The Goodland basketball team defeated the Ruleton team with a score of 10 to 3."

"Don't forget the senior play, "Beads on a String," to be given next week. Everybody come."



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The first class graduated from Ruleton High School in 1929 and the last class graduated in 1943. The grade school remained open until 1965. Ruleton alumni, when interviewed, remembered that sports were an important activity. The school mascot was the Bulldog. There were many all-school plays, and even the kindergarten children had their lines to memorize. Card parties, box suppers and square dances were reportedly enjoyed at the school building, which continued to be used for the Methodist church meetings and activities. Economically, the school was an important employer for the community, employing teachers as well as several local people as bus drivers, custodians and cooks.

Life in Ruleton continued in much the same manner until 1941, when a terrible disaster in the form of a tornado struck the community. According to newspaper accounts and interviews, a tornado ripped through Ruleton about 4:30 Sunday afternoon, June 8, "leaving a path of destruction such as only one of those windstorms can create in a moment of time. The big school building was left a complete wreck.....The biggest loss to the community was the school buildings. The new building cost \$30,000, and had not been completely paid for, about \$6,000 of bonded indebtedness remaining." (Goodland Daily News, June 9, 1941)

Seth Duell, lifetime Ruleton resident, recalled the impact of the storm in a 1975 interview: "We lived just a half mile from the school house. There was a terrible rain storm and the sky was dark and a terrific wind came from the southwest and then a calm. Just not hardly a breath of air. All of a sudden the wind turned from the northeast and blew just as hard again and a terrible downpour of rain with it. There was several homes torn down, including the parsonage. . . But the new brick school house, funny thing about that, it tore the center out of the school house, the auditorium, and unroofed the classrooms on the sides. It did a lot of freak things."

Ruleton was faced not only with the loss of their educational facility, but also their religious and community activity center. It was quickly decided to rebuild as soon as possible. In the meantime, the men of the community worked together to make classrooms in the basement of the Duell home, where school and Sunday School were held from June until Thanksgiving. Music class and church were in the living room, where the piano was.

A celebration was held, according to the November 19, 1941, issue of the Goodland News-Republic, upon the completion of the school. "The Ruleton community held a celebration Sunday as it moved into the new school building, rebuilt finer and better after being almost completely destroyed by the tornado last summer." Most, if not all, of the community took part in the festivities, which opened with regular Sunday School followed by a basket dinner at noon. The afternoon program symbolized the true melding of the educational, religious and civic aspects of the community. It featured two congregational hymns; a prayer and benediction by Reverend Hall; a sermon by District Superintendent Freeman; solos, duets, readings and scriptures by individuals students and community members; a baritone solo by Ruth Duell; an address by John Rule, founder of Ruleton; and an address by Rev. Basil Johnson.

The school continued to serve the community until 1965, when the grade school finally closed. In 1942-43, 17 students were enrolled at Ruleton High School, eleven boys and six girls, and the grade school had 24 pupils. Two

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girls had graduated the previous spring, one going to a commercial school and one at home. Sixteen units were required for graduation. The grade required for passing was 75%. The school year began on September 17, 1942 and ended May 21, 1943. A total of 180 school days were in the term. At this time, the population of the city was 33, there were 39 square miles in the district and the valuation for the district was \$319,111. There were two grade teachers and three high school teachers. The major problem confronting the district was how to maintain the school under the tax limitations with the increased costs of teachers, maintenance, and materials. This was the last year a class graduated from Ruleton High School.(Principal's Organization Report, 1942-1943 term)

In comparison, in 1949, seven years later, there were 64 elementary students (35 males and 29 females) and four teachers ( 1 males and 3 females). (Principal's Term report to the District Clerk and County Superintendent, 1949) Two males and three females graduated from the eighth grade. The length of term was one hundred sixty-six days. There were seven hundred ninety six volumes in the library. The average bus route was twenty-three miles, taking one hour and fifteen minutes to drive. Three bus drivers transported 58 students and were paid \$90.00 a month.

In 1963, there were 38 students enrolled, an obvious decline. Ruleton School continued to be a local employer until its closing. Three teachers were employed in 1963, as were 3 bus drivers, a cook, a cook's helper, and a custodian. In 1963-1964 the teacher salary for grade one and two was \$4800.00. The salary for third and fourth was \$4600.00. The salary for fifth, sixth, and seventh was \$4600.00. In grades one and two there were ten pupils. The third and fourth grade had fourteen enrolled and there were fourteen in the fifth, sixth and seventh grades. There were three bus driver employed for \$810.00. The cook's salary was \$1620.00 and the custodian received \$1080.00. The cook's helper received \$1.00 per hour. The custodian was paid \$1.15 for pre school cleanup and summer painting jobs. The 1964 summary of federal payment report showed the total payments to be \$18,591.64. The school closed in 1965.

The rise and decline of the Ruleton School building is also the story of the rise and decline of a western Kansas community. The story of Ruleton is historically important to the people of Sherman County, but is also important as an example of what happened between 1925 and 1965 in many communities across the state of Kansas. Proud, self-sufficient groups of people built communities, attracted population and businesses, only to lose them to disasters or out-migration to growing cities. Often all that is left of the life-style of these communities is a central community building, often a school, as in Ruleton. The Ruleton School building should be preserved as a reminder of the community that once thrived there, for the memories of those Kansans who attended school and community activities there, and for the benefit of their children and grandchildren.

After the school was closed, the school district sold it to private owners. The building was used for storage for some years and is now being gradually rehabilitated by its new owners. The new owners have owned the property since the late 1990s. They intend to develop a multi-use facility that includes a lodging establishment and community use space.

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**Sources**

Goodland News-Republic:

- "Ruleton Route 2," March 1, 1928.
- "Rural District Consolidation," March 8, 1928.
- "Some More Facts Concerning Consolidated Schools and Others," March 15, 1928.
- "Ruleton Route 2," March 22, 1928.
- "School Calls for Bids," May 3, 1928.
- "Ruleton Route 2," May 17, 1928.
- "Ruleton Route 2," May 24, 1928.
- "Ruleton Route 2," May 31, 1928.
- "Ruleton Route 2," June 7, 1928.
- "Goodland R. 2," June 14, 1928.
- "Ruleton Route 2," July 5, 1928.
- "Ruleton Route 2," July 12, 1928.
- "Ruleton Route 2," August 9, 1928.
- "Complete Building Soon, August 23, 1928.
- "Back to School," August 30, 1928.
- "Dahlberg and Cotter are Bus Drivers," September 13, 1928.
- "The church organization moved its equipment," October 11, 1928.
- "The patrons of the school met Friday," October 11, 1928.
- "Quite a number attended the social," October 11, 1928.
- "Quite an interesting program was given," November 22, 1928.
- "The Parent - Teacher meeting will be held," December 28, 1928.
- "School began last Monday," September 10, 1930.
- "Ruleton Notes," October 22, 1930.
- "Ruleton League gives drama," December 10, 1930.
- "Ruleton School Notes," January 28, 1931.
- "Ruleton News," August 27, 1941.
- "Rapid Progress Made," September 10, 1941.
- "In New Building - Ruleton Celebrates Completion of School House Damaged by Tornado," November 19, 1941.

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Goodland Daily News:

“Tornado Rips Through Ruleton Sunday Leaving School House and Homes Wrecked,” June 9, 1941.

“Only Miracle Seems to Have Prevented Loss of Life,” June 9, 1941.

Scenes of Wreckage left After Tornado Hit Ruleton (four photos), June 16, 1941:

1. Methodist parsonage, home of Mr. and Mrs. T.G. Kaufman
2. Home of Mr. and Mrs. Martin Nelson
  
3. Ruleton school building, roof gone, auditorium fallen in
4. Ford roadster in which Frank tubs and Jack Light were riding

Principal's Organization Report, 1942-43.

Principal's Term Report to the district clerk and county Superintendent, 1949.

“Ruleton Church History,” Mrs. Seth (Martha) Duell. (n.d.)

Interview with Seth Duell by Carroll Mogge, October 19, 1975.

Visit with Nelson Woolverton, November 5, 2002.

Information from Dale Light, to cousin Lucille (Ingram) Smith of Goodland, November 5, 2002.

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**Verbal Boundary Description**

The nominated property stands on the SE4, NW4, NW4, SW4, S22, T8S, R41W in Lincoln, Township, Sherman County, Kansas. The property is in a rural location and stands within a tract of larger acreage.

**Boundary Justification**

The nominated property stands on a parcel of land that is contained within a larger tract. The school stands on private property. The streets and roads around the school have been vacated because a home was built on a part of the road.

**Photographs**

Cynthia Kickler  
January 2003  
KSHS

1 / 2: East facade, south elevation, northwest view

2 / 2: East facade entry doors, west view