

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received DEC - 9 1983
date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Melvin School
and/or common Melvin Schoolhouse Museum-Library

2. Location

street & number 4950 South Laredo Street n/a not for publication
city, town Aurora n/a vicinity of
state Colorado code 08 county Arapahoe code 005

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational <input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	n/a in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	n/a being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: community center

4. Owner of Property

name Cherry Creek School District No. 5
street & number 4700 South Yosemite Street
city, town Englewood n/a vicinity of state Colorado 80111

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Planning Office, Educational Services Center
street & number Cherry Creek School District No. 5, 4700 S. Yosemite Street
city, town Englewood state Colorado 80111

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Colorado Inventory of Historic Sites has this property been determined eligible? yes no
date Ongoing federal state county local
depository for survey records Colorado Historical Society
city, town Denver state Colorado 80203

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> original site	1950; 1976
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> moved	date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Melvin School is a frame one-room schoolhouse¹ with three bays on either side of a central projecting enclosed entryway. It was built in 1922 on the west side of Cherry Creek in the community of Melvin, Arapahoe County (see photo #1). It was the second of two schools serving this small farming community which was located twelve miles southeast of Denver. The school, erected on land donated by one of the farmers, was constructed in an open field immediately east of the old Sullivan Road at Belleview Avenue. Melvin School served approximately twenty-five families, many of whom had homesteaded their land. These farm families were within a radius of two to three miles from the school.

The schoolhouse--which also served as a community building--remained at its original site until 1950 when the land on which it was built was condemned for the construction of Cherry Creek Dam. When the dam was completed, nothing remained of Melvin. The school was sold at auction in 1950 to a private individual who moved it to the southwest corner of Quincy Avenue and Parker Road. At that time, the building was converted for use as a tavern. The changes made include blocking the original entrance and creating a kitchen in the northwest corner of the building (now used for storage). At some point the belfry was removed.

When the second site was zoned for commercial development in 1975 and the school slated for destruction, a movement was initiated to save the building. The Cherry Creek Valley Historical Society was formed and negotiations ensued with the school board to find a location for the structure. After the building was acquired by the Cherry Creek Valley Historical Society, it was placed on a truck, and moved to its present location. No damage to the building was incurred by the move. Since 1976, Melvin School has been on the Laredo Middle School-Smoky Hill High School campus of Cherry Creek School District. This is its permanent location--approximately three miles from its original site. The building has since undergone a meticulous restoration, with guidance provided by the Cherry Creek Valley Historical Society. The building now sits on a grassy knoll of approximately one-half acre, with a parking area separating the 1922 school from the high school and a grassed area between it and the Laredo Middle School. The site was selected to recreate, in some manner, the original isolated setting.

Melvin School is rectangular in shape (60' x 25') with a central projecting vestibule (10' x 17' anteroom). The one-story structure has nine bays, including a double-door entry, in the main facade; the rear elevation has six bays including five windows and an emergency door exit (originally a sixth window) to meet modern fire requirements; the remaining two facades have no bays. The cedar shingle roof is a high gable. The rafters project under the roof eaves.

The secondary features are very simple. They reflect the time, economy, location, and purpose of the building. The exterior walls are sheathed with narrow (3-3/8"), horizontal clapboard, painted white, and the wall framing is of diagonal plank. There are no design patterns on the exterior walls. Above the double-door entry of the main facade is a sign denoting the structure as "District No. 4, Melvin School" and above

(see continuation sheet)

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this on the roofline is a square belfry holding the school bell (see photos #1 and #3). (The belfry was recreated using photo documentation. The exact measurements of the original were determined and replicated.) All windows are similar in construction with flat heads, a narrow lintel, one over one and double hung with plain lugsill and molded side trim. The trim on the window screen is dark green. The original building had a basement. There are four risers on three sides of the 8' x 10' cement platform at the center of the main facade. The exterior of the building has been authentically restored based on photographs loaned by former students.

Most of the interior has also been authentically restored--walls, floors, ceiling, light fixtures, curtains, and room partition. The original floor has been uncovered. (Two layers of linoleum covered it while it served as a tavern.) The anteroom and one classroom demonstrate the architecture and furnishings of a 1920's rural schoolhouse (see photos #7 and #9). The second original classroom has been adaptively restored into a museum-library and office area (see photos #8 and #10). The decision to adaptively restore at least part of the former two-classroom schoolhouse arose from the need to have a local history repository and an actual historic setting for the interpretation of local history.

Many former students who lived in the Melvin community and attended Melvin School helped in the restoration process by supplying information, helping in the restoration, and donating items of historic value for the museum-library. Many high school students, service organizations, businesses, the Colorado Historical Society (grants), the Cherry Creek School District, and the Cherry Creek Valley Historical Society joined together in the common goal of restoring the Melvin School into the Melvin Schoolhouse Museum-Library as a showpiece of authentic and adaptive restoration techniques resulting in a building which would once again serve as a community and educational center. The theme for the restoration was "Restored By The Community--For The Community." The Melvin Schoolhouse Museum-Library was dedicated in September of 1982.

¹The building is larger than a typical one-room schoolhouse because it actually contains two rooms, separated today as it was originally by folding doors placed just to the side of the two classroom doors.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1922

Builder/Architect

Ren and Henry DeBoer

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Melvin School is significant for its role in rural education in the farming community of Melvin between 1922 and 1949 and for its use as a community center during those years. Because of its excellent state of preservation, it is also an important representative of the design of rural schoolhouses built in Colorado during the first quarter of the twentieth century.

The history of Melvin dates to the Colorado Gold Rush of 1859 when thousands of gold seekers and settlers traveled the Smoky Hill Trail to the Denver area. The community of Melvin developed as a result of this immigration. It was named after John G. Melvin of Connecticut who settled on 320 acres along Cherry Creek, twelve miles southeast of the young community of Denver. He and his wife enlarged their home and opened it to travelers in 1868 as the Twelve Mile House, the largest of the chain of mile houses on the Smoky Hill Trail in Colorado. (The mile house number denoted the distance from Denver.)

A one-room Cherry Creek School was built in 1874, but as the community grew and there became a need for a second, larger school and a larger community center, the two-room Melvin School was built. From an architectural perspective, the Melvin School reflects the vernacular style of rural schoolhouses of the early twentieth century--narrow clapboard, unadorned walls, gabled roof, and a belfry to house the school bell. The simple design and absence of decorative elements testify to the needs, attitudes, and economics that governed education in the area.

The Melvin School (Arapahoe County School District No. 4) served the northern and western sections of the Melvin community; the smaller Cherry Creek School served the less populated southern and eastern sections. After its construction, Melvin School became the more important of the two in terms of a community focal building, because it served as a community center as well as a school. (The Cherry Creek School was later sold and relocated on Cherry Creek High School campus.)

When the Melvin School doors opened in the fall of 1922, there were twenty-six students and two teachers, one for the primary class (grades 1-6) and one for the secondary class (grades 7-10). During classroom hours, the schoolhouse was effectively divided into two rooms by two large, accordion type folding doors. From 1922 through the 1929-30 school year, two teachers were employed to instruct an average of thirty students in grades one through twelve. After 1930, the older students were sent to Denver area high schools and the attendance at Melvin School dropped to an average of eighteen students in grades one through nine. During these years (1930-1949), only one teacher was employed and only one of the two classrooms was used for classroom purposes.

9. Major Bibliographical References

(see continuation sheet)

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 0.4 acres

Quadrangle name Fitzsimons, Colorado

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

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4	3	8	6	0	8	0
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Verbal boundary description and justification

See Map 2 for boundary delineation. Nominated is the building and the grassed lot on which the structure is located.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state None code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Clarice M. Crowle, Director, Melvin Schoolhouse Museum-Library

organization Cherry Creek Valley Historical Society, Inc Date June 13, 1983

street & number 4950 South Laredo Street telephone (303) 690-5005

city or town Aurora state Colorado 80015

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Barbara Sudley

title State Historic Preservation Officer date November 9, 1983

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

for Melissa Byers
Keeper of the National Register

Entered in the
National Register

date 1/5/84

Attest: _____ date _____

Chief of Registration

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As a result of the 1933 collapse of the Castlewood Dam south of Franktown on Cherry Creek, the federal government condemned land in the Melvin community for the building of the Kenwood Dam (1935). When this dam proved inadequate, a second condemnation of Melvin community land was made in 1949 for the building of the Cherry Creek Dam and Reservoir. This condemnation included the Melvin School, the Twelve Mile House, and several other homes and barns in the area. The Melvin School was sold and moved to the southwest corner of Parker Road and Airline Road (now Quincy Avenue) in Section 12, about 1½ miles northeast of its original site. A federal project, therefore, forced this first moving of the Melvin School.

The Melvin School stood on this relocated site for over twenty-five years, although it did not serve as a school or a community center during that time. It was rebuilt into a tavern and served in that capacity until 1970. Later it was vacated and allowed to deteriorate. In 1975, the leasee of the land on which the vacant building was located applied for rezoning with plans to build a gas station. He anticipated that the building on the site would be demolished. The Melvin School's second move was to save it from this fate.

Fortunately, five local citizens felt that this tangible symbol of the Melvin community should be preserved, and they incorporated as the Cherry Creek Valley Historical Society to save the schoolhouse. They convinced the leasee to donate the building to the Society in trade for their moving it off the site, leveling the site, and cleaning up the debris. The old Melvin School was moved to the Laredo Middle School--Smoky Hill High School campus of the Cherry Creek School District to become a classroom-museum-library for students of all ages to enjoy. The restoration was under the supervision of the Cherry Creek Valley Historical Society. The building was moved in December of 1976 and the restoration took place over the following six years. The restoration became a community effort as many organizations, businesses, and individuals became interested in the project and donated labor, materials, and/or money toward the completion of the building. As a result, a great deal of pride has been generated among community members.

The Cherry Creek School District played an exceedingly important role in the restoration of the Melvin School because it felt that it was an important educational tool for community use. The District not only paid for the foundation, after approving the relocation of the building onto school district property, but continued to help in the restoration. Because of this cooperation and the fact that the building was on school district property, the Cherry Creek Valley Historical Society donated the building to the school district with the understanding that the historical society would complete the restoration, would furnish the building with items of historic interest, and would maintain an interpretative program, the museum, and the library. The school district assumed the responsibility of maintaining the building and paying the utilities.

The Melvin School was dedicated as the Melvin Schoolhouse Museum-Library in September of 1982 as a tangible link with the history of the area. It is located between the fork of the Middle Smoky Hill Trail as it nears Cherry Creek.

(see continuation sheet)

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The community of Melvin structurally no longer exists, but its memory and the history of the entire Cherry Creek area will continue to live on due to the efforts of the Cherry Creek Valley Historical Society, the Cherry Creek School District, and interested members of the community who restored the Melvin School, the proud symbol of a community whose days have passed by but whose spirit lives on.

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APPENDIX A

MELVIN SCHOOL TEACHERS

1922 - 1949

School Year	Teachers	Grades Taught
1922 - 1923	Cecelia Fitzgerald Madelon Jacobucci	1 - 6 7 - 10
1923 - 1924	Kathleen Berryman Gladys Gidley	1 - 8 9 - 12
1924 - 1926	Minnie O. Davis Elbert Coates	1 - 8 9 - 12
1926 - 1927	Vada Hoover	1 - 8
1927 - 1929	Emile Fredrickson Fresno McKay	1 - 6 7 - 12
1929 - 1930	Emile Fredrickson Harold S. Williams	1 - 6 7 - 11
1930 - 1931	R. Mitchel McClure	1 - 8
1931 - 1933	R. Mitchel McClure	1 - 8
1933 - 1934	Anna Crain	1 - 8
1934 - 1935	Ruth Ryan	1 - 8
1935 - 1937	Helen M. Ellsworth	1 - 8
1937 - 1938	Arvil D. McClure	1 - 9
1938 - 1940	Hilda E. Carlson	1 - 9
1940 - 1942	Gladys Woodhouse	1 - 9
1942 - 1943	Lanora Rittenhouse	1 - 9
1943 - 1945	Rebecca Armstrong	1 - 8
1945 - 1946	Anna J. Myer	1 - 8

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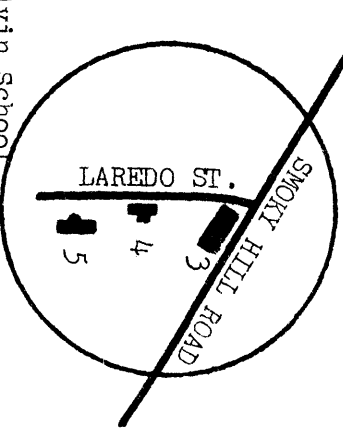
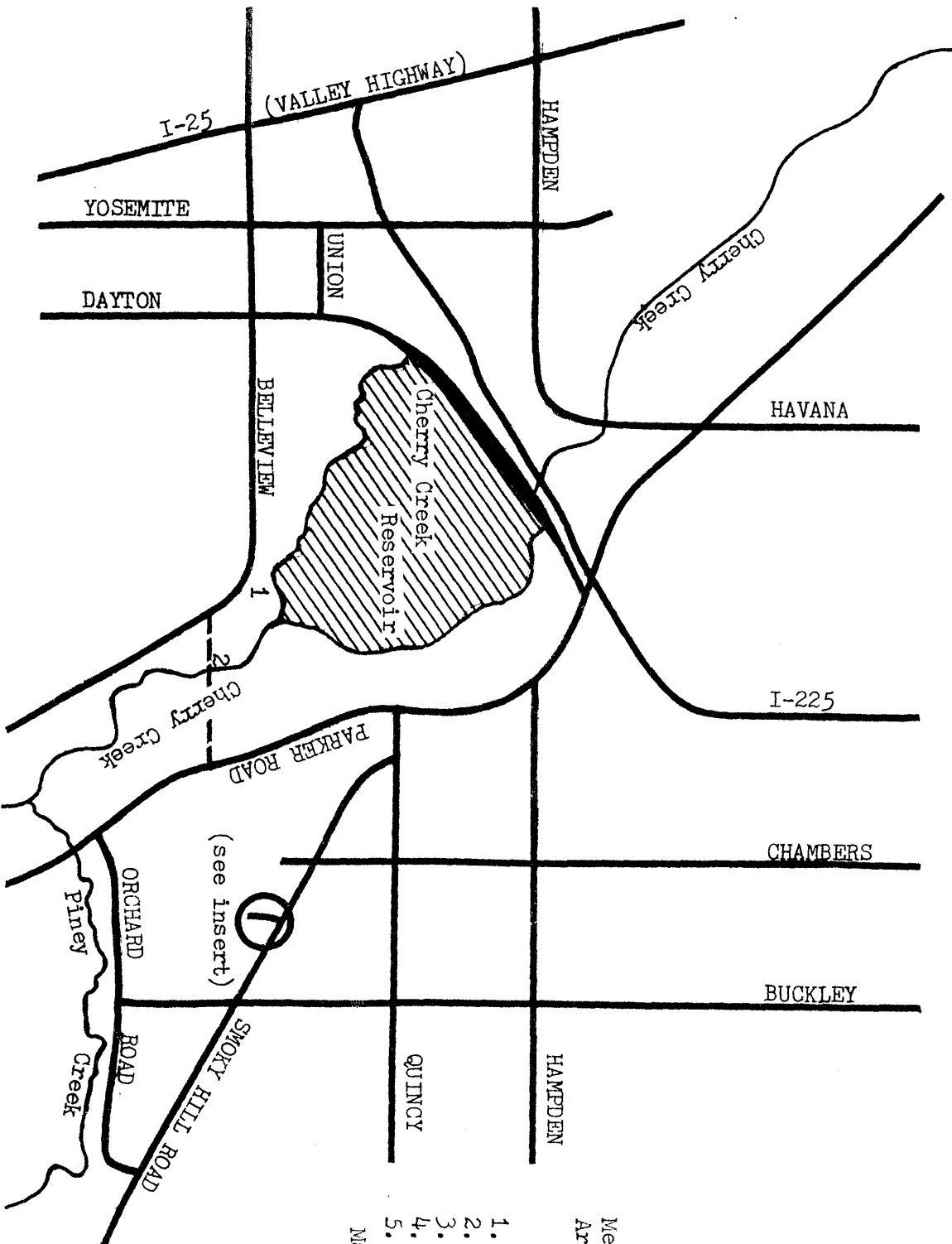
Goe, Donald K., and Crowle, Clarice M. The History of Cherry Creek School District Number Five, 1869-1981. Publisher: Cherry Creek School District, 1981, pp. 123-144.

Harvey, James. "The Twelve Mile House--Recollections of Mrs. Jane Melvin," Colorado Magazine, 12 (September 1935), pp. 175-178.

Long, Margaret, The Smoky Hill Trail, W. H. Kistler Stationery Co., publishers, 1953. Interviews with former students and teachers Hilda Carlson Anderson and Fred Dransfeldt.

MELVIN SCHOOLHOUSE MUSEUM—LIBRARY

4950 South Laredo Street, Aurora, Colorado 80015



LEGEND

- 1. Original site of Melvin School
- 2. Old Melvin Bridge (not in use)
- 3. Smoky Hill High School
- 4. MELVIN SCHOOLHOUSE MUSEUM-LIBRARY
- 5. LAREDO MIDDLE SCHOOL

Map 1

MAP 1

For information call Clarice Crowle at 690-5005.