

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form**

1323
00 2000

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and 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 nominated, 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 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

Historic Name Irving School
Other name/site number NONE

2. Location

155 North Center Street not for publication
city/town: Mesa vicinity
state Arizona code: AZ county: Maricopa code: 013 zip code: 85201

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).

James W. Gorman AZSHPO 3 October 2000
Signature of certifying official Date

ARIZONA STATE PARKS
State or Federal agency and bureau

meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments).

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this 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): _____

Don 11-8-00
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action
Don H. Beall

Property Name
Irving School

County, State
Maricopa, Arizona

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..... | 0..... | 0..... | 0..... | buildings |
| 0..... | 0..... | 0..... | 0..... | sites |
| 0..... | 1..... | 0..... | 0..... | structures |
| 0..... | 0..... | 0..... | 0..... | objects |
| 1..... | 1..... | 0..... | 0..... | 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

None.....
.....

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION: School.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION: Arts School.....
RECREATION AND CULTURE: Theatre/Auditorium, Art gallery.....
.....
.....
.....

7. Description

Architectural Classification

Modern Movement - Moderne.....
.....
.....

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete.....
walls Masonry, stucco.....
roof Wood, asphalt.....
other

Narrative Description

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

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

- Criteria A, B, C, D with descriptions of property significance.

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

- Criteria A-G for property status (religious, removed, birthplace, etc.)

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

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):

- Documentation checkboxes: preliminary determination, listed in National Register, etc.

Primary location of Additional Data:

- Location checkboxes: State historic preservation office, Local government, etc.

Name of Repository:

City of Mesa

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture
Community Planning and Development

Period of Significance

1935-1949

Significant Dates

1936

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Lescher and Mahoney - Architect
William Peper Construction Co. - Builder

Property Name

County, State

Irving School

Maricopa, Arizona

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property 2.7.....

UTM References

(Place additional UTM References on a continuation sheet)

| | Zone | Easting | Northing | Zone | Easting | Northing |
|---|---------|-------------|--------------|------|---------|----------|
| A | 12..... | 422800..... | 3697840..... | C | | |
| B | | | | D | | |

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.) See Continuation 10-1

Bounday Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.) See Continuation Sheet 10-1

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Don W. Ryden, AIA - Historical Architect/ Douglas Kupel, Ph.D. - Historian.....

organization Ryden Architects..... date 7/15/99.....

street & number 902 W. McDowell Rd..... telephone 602/253-5381.....

city or town Phoenix, AZ 85007.....

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A **USGS map**(7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A **sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **Black and White photographs** of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FHPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO)

name

street & number telephone

city & town state zip code

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Section Number 7 Page 1

Irving School
Mesa, Maricopa County, AZ

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

DESCRIPTION

The Irving School is remarkable for its unique blend of the institutional Federal Moderne Style with the residential Ranch Style, both popular yet divergent architectural expressions of the late 1930s. This public building was constructed prominently on the site of the earlier elementary school on Block 7 of the original Mesa townsite on a broad arterial street, Center Street at Second Street, amid a residential neighborhood. While the original setting across the street west of the school has changed little since its construction in 1936, the properties beside and behind it have been radically altered in the past 30 years. The residential neighborhood which surrounded Irving School was demolished for new public buildings, namely the US Post Office immediately to the south of the school, and the Mesa Rendezvous Hall and Centennial Hall to the north and east.

The view from the front steps of Irving School has changed very little since before World War II. Today the school looks out to the east boundary of the West Second Street Historic District (listed on the National Register in July, 1999) where the Queen Anne Style Sistine House and several Craftsman Style bungalows front upon Center Street. The dense foliage of the irrigated median of Second Street across from the school is also an important feature of the historic streetscape. The mature trees, shrubs and lawns of the broad frontage of the Irving School yard serve to unify it with the densely landscaped historic district across the wide street.

The Irving School sits towards the front of a rectangular site which is about 2.7 acres in size. Originally its playground, now a parking lot, occupied the rear half of the site. The school property is essentially flat, as is all the townsite which is perched on a bluff or *mesa* (Spanish for "table") south of the Salt River. The school yard is watered by the flood irrigation system which made Mesa and other Salt River Valley communities viable agricultural centers in the early twentieth century. The setting of the Irving School property is decidedly suburban amid properties of mature landscaping set along wide arterial streets with concrete curbs, gutters, and sidewalks. The Irving School itself is a rambling one-story, symmetrical building with an overall length of 168 feet and overall width of 240 feet. Its floor plan is shaped like a capital E, the central auditorium wing being original and the two outer wings being historic era additions. The low-pitched gable roofs of the front mass of the building and the outer wings give the school a residential scale and massing which blends the sprawling structure with the surrounding houses.

Architects Lescher and Mahoney succeeded here in combining the traditional formality of school architecture with the informality of popular residential architecture. Their design simultaneously demonstrates the best of both styles, presenting to the community an image of scholarly propriety through Federal Moderne symmetry and details while giving the children and teachers a feeling of domestic familiarity through Ranch Style massing and scale. Its amalgamation of styles integrated the public building gracefully into its residential neighborhood. While the Irving Elementary

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School has a symmetrical front facade and architectural ornamentation which are undeniably Federal Moderne in style, it also possesses a rambling floor plan and gabled roofs which are characteristic of the Ranch style. As a product of the New Deal era of economic recovery in the late 1930s, this building not only demonstrates the influences of federally funded public architecture but also the popular Ranch Style developed by California architects responding to the need for affordable yet stylish homes.

Exterior Features

The building is constructed of cast-in-place concrete exterior bearing walls upon concrete foundations. The roof is framed with a wood truss system having low-pitched gables at the classroom wings and bowstring arches spanning the auditorium. The roofs are sheathed with asphalt shingles and built-up roofing. The sloped roofs have shallow overhangs finished with wood moldings at eaves and gables.

The exterior walls are sheathed with smooth, painted stucco. Original exterior windows are 15-light, steel-framed with upper awning and lower hopper sashes. Typical of the Federal Moderne style of architecture, the windows are grouped together atop a belt course which also serves as a window sill.

The main entrance to the building is on the west side through a central recessed porch. The original entrance doors have been replaced with modern aluminum and glass doors, but the original wood transom remains intact

above the doors. Secondary entrances can be found at the sides and rear of the building through pairs of modern hollow metal, flush doors.

Exterior ornament on the building characteristic of the Federal Moderne style includes geometric and stylized floral motifs on the lintels above ribbon windows as well as on fluted cast-in-place concrete pilasters. Stylized voluted brackets found at the main entrance porch are elements common to both the Moderne and Ranch styles. The wall stucco within the entry porch is scored with wavy vertical lines. Ornamental features typical of the Federal Moderne style found on the building include large circular ventilators at the roof gables and a 12-inch-high plinth upon which the building rests.

Interior Features

An innovative feature found inside the building is the concrete floors with their integral coved baseboards. Found along the walls of the main corridors, this detail was innovative for its ease of maintenance and cleanliness. This feature was also part of a structural strategy of providing concrete slab-on-grade floors in corridors which addressed the building code requirements to support the heavy live loads of densely packed students traveling between the classrooms.

The hardwood floors within the classrooms and auditorium addressed the lighter live loading requirement for less density of students and furnishings in these spaces.

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The interior walls are painted plaster on lath. There are various arched niches in the corridors which once housed drinking porcelain fountains. The original fixtures have been replaced with modern electric drinking fountains.

The ceilings were originally smooth-plastered, but have subsequently been covered over by 12-inch-square acoustical tiles glued directly to the plaster surface. This is a typical alteration found in buildings of this type. A few of the classrooms have retained their original plaster ceilings. The plaster ceiling in the auditorium retains its decorative applied moldings which form rectangular patterns.

Stile-and-rail doors to the classrooms from the interior corridors are constructed of wood with a glass light above a recessed lower panel. Wood panel doors can be found at the restrooms, offices, and storage rooms. Remarkably, most of the original hardware (lockset and hinges) is still intact, although modern cylinder locks have been installed in addition.

Virtually all of the interior trim is intact within the classrooms and corridors. Running trim in the classrooms includes a chair rail, baseboard, picture molding used as crown molding, and door and window casings. Casework in the building includes closets with multiple wooden doors across the rear wall of classrooms and wood-framed blackboards and bulletin boards. These features are intact in many of the classrooms today.

A fireplace with plaster hood has survived unaltered in the former teachers' lounge (currently a multi-purpose room).

Original fluorescent pendant light fixtures still are found to work in many classrooms. In the auditorium, most of the seating remains although some seats were removed as part of a remodel project. The original radiators used for heating the building all have been removed, but some of the pipes and connections remain.

Site Features

The building is surrounded by a flood-irrigated lawn with large trees on the north and west, shrubbery at the foundations, asphalt driveway on the south, and asphalt parking on the east. The asphalt driveway and parking lot covering the original playground were installed when the building was rehabilitated as the Mesa Arts Center.

Additions and Alterations

The Irving School has undergone several exterior additions and many minor interior alterations which have not adversely effected the integrity of the building. Physical evidence on site indicates that at some time early in the life of Irving School classroom wings were added to the east side of the building at the original north and south ends. These additions are almost identical to the original design.

Some original windows have been removed and in-filled with slightly recessed masonry and stucco to match the walls in a manner which still expresses the outline of the

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window opening. A few window openings have been partially in-filled to receive smaller modern aluminum sliding windows. The glass in a few of the windows has been painted over. The north secondary entrance doors have been replaced with aluminum storefront doors, but the original wood transom is still intact. Several concrete ramps have been constructed at secondary entrances to accommodate handicapped accessibility. These ramps have not adversely affected the entrances. The south half of the courtyard on the east side (rear) of the building has been converted to an outdoor pottery shop with kiln and ceramics storage. It is enclosed by a chainlink fence and corrugated steel siding. The interiors of several classrooms have been rehabilitated for adaptive use as dance studio, lapidary workshop, ceramics shop, and photography studio/darkroom. The auditorium has been changed to create a much more practical public performance space with dressing rooms and other support facilities. The interior of the auditorium has been changed but in a manner which is reminiscent of the Moderne style. The playground east of the school has been converted to a paved parking area.

The Irving School is in remarkably good condition for a building of its age and continual heavy public use. It is a credit to the architects and builders of the structure that it was designed and built to last. Furthermore, the caretakers of the building through the years (that is, the school district, the City of Mesa, and the Mesa Arts Center) have been good stewards of the community resource in terms of maintenance, repairs, and sensitive modification and rehabilitation. The building's excellent

condition and high architectural integrity today reflect the pride of the community in the school and the care which has been afforded it.

Threats

During the modern era, the residential neighborhood surrounding the Irving School to the north and east was leveled to make room for a large-scale municipal development of public performing arts facilities, Centennial Hall, and community meeting and activities center, Rendezvous Hall.

In spite of the successful rehabilitation of Irving School as a community arts learning center and the continuing pride of Mesa's citizens in the historic campus, the property has as recently as 1998 been threatened by demolition by the Mesa City government to make way for a new and larger arts center. At the time of the preparation of this nomination however, the City has demonstrated a change of heart and has, in fact, encouraged the listing of the Irving School, Mesa's oldest surviving school building, on the National Register of Historic Places.

CONTRIBUTING ELEMENTS

- 1 School building in its landscaped setting and the open space of its former playground now converted for parking

NONCONTRIBUTING ELEMENTS

- 1 Modern-era pottery shop, kilns, shed, slab, and fence

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NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

SUMMARY

The Irving School in Mesa, Arizona, constructed as a Public Works Administration (PWA) project in 1936, is significant under National Register criterion "A" as a local example of Federal depression era public works construction programs. The Irving School is also importantly associated under criterion "A" with the maturation of urban education in Arizona prior to World War Two. In addition, the Irving School is significant under National Register criterion "C" as a representative example of the architectural work of Lescher & Mahoney, a prominent Phoenix architectural firm that specialized in the design of school buildings. The Irving School retains its historic appearance and setting from its period of significance, 1936-1949.

The Irving School in Mesa was constructed in 1936 by the trustees of Maricopa County School District No. 4. It is named for the American writer Washington Irving (1783-1859). The Phoenix architectural firm of Lescher and Mahoney designed the building. The William Peper Construction Company built the facility. Funding for the project came from a Public Works Administration (PWA) grant and a school district bond issue. The property was purchased by the City of Mesa from the school district in 1975. In 1976, the building was converted into a performing arts center under the direction of local architect Charles Hickman. The auditorium portion of the building was remodeled again by the City of Mesa in

1989. The building received its distinctive blue-painted exterior in 1993.

Historical Development of Mesa

The development of Mesa has generally been divided into five periods of growth. The first period encompasses the beginnings of Mormon settlement in the Salt River Valley in 1877 and the establishment of the Mesa City town plat in 1883. The second period corresponds to Mesa's first boom years from 1890 to 1898. Three periods of rapid growth characterize Mesa in the first half of the twentieth century: from 1906 to 1921, from 1927 to 1931, and from 1935 to 1940. The periods of rapid growth were interspersed with periods of static growth and depression. A drought at the turn of the century curtailed growth, as did an economic slump following World War One. The Great Depression also limited new construction in Mesa, as did restrictions brought on by shortages during World War Two. Mesa grew tremendously in the years following World War Two, making the second half of the twentieth century starting after 1945 separate and distinct from its first five decades.

A complete history of Mesa is available in several other recent National Register nominations, including nominations of the Wilbur Street Historic District, the West Second Street Historic District, the Evergreen Historic District, and the Temple Historic District. Because the historical development of Mesa has been described recently in these other National Register

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nominations it will not be repeated here. For additional information on the history of Mesa these recent nominations should be consulted.

History of Maricopa County School District #4 and the Irving School

The Mesa elementary school district was one of the earliest founded in Maricopa County. Phoenix was selected as the county seat in 1871 and its elementary school district was designated as Maricopa County District No. 1. In 1878, Mesa was first settled and its school district was designated as Maricopa County School District No. 4.

The first school class was held in a rough cottonwood shed. Later, classes were held in a private home and then in an abandoned building that had been given to the town. The first building constructed for the specific purpose of housing a school was erected in 1882 at the northwest corner of Center Street at Second Avenue. This building was known simply as "the school."

Steady population growth resulted in the gradual expansion of Mesa's school system. Several schools were constructed over the years as the number of students increased. These included the replacement of the original adobe school with a large brick structure at the same site in 1890. Known as "South School" after the construction of North School in 1899, the 1890 building was later called Lincoln School. North School was built in 1899 on North Center Street. This school was

replaced in 1936 by Irving School, the subject of this National Register nomination.

From 1878 to 1910 all children in Mesa could attend any available school, without regard for the student's race or ethnic background. The construction of Webster School in 1910 ushered in an era of segregation for Mesa students. Webster School was constructed specifically for students of Mexican origin. Segregation continued to be practiced in Mesa elementary schools until 1954. High school students were never segregated and segregation of junior high students ended in 1952 with the construction of Mesa Junior High School.

The next school constructed was Franklin School on East Main Street. This large building was completed in 1914. In 1920, Booker T. Washington School was erected to serve the needs of Mesa's African-American students. The old Webster School was destroyed by fire in 1948, and replaced in 1949. The Franklin School building, built in 1914, was sold to the City of Mesa in 1975 and later demolished.

By 1935 the original 1899 North School was in a dilapidated condition. School officials requested that the district take advantage of Federal public works funds and begin to make plans to replace the old school. In October of 1935 school district officials announced that a bond election would be held on November 4, 1935, on the question of issuing \$57,000 in bonds for building a new school. These local funds would be subsidized by a Public Works Administration (PWA) grant in the

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amount of \$42,544. On November 4, property owners in the school district approved the bond issue; 241 voted yes and 105 voted in opposition to the proposal. On November 22, 1935, the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors authorized the sale of the bonds.

District officials selected the name of Irving School to honor American writer Washington Irving (1783-1859). Irving's earliest works lampooned pretentious society in both the Old World and in his native Hudson River Valley in New York state. Irving was one of the first Americans to win international recognition as an author. Among the best known of his short stories are "Rip Van Winkle" and the "Legend of Sleepy Hollow." Both of these stories were published in his Sketch-Book in 1819-20. In his later years, Irving worked on his five-volume biography titled The Life of George Washington. He is remembered today as America's first successful professional man of letters.

The November bond election enabled the architectural firm of Lescher and Mahoney to finalize the construction drawings. It had received the commission shortly after the election and designated the job as the firm's project No. 688. Associate architect L.S. Alexander was responsible for most of the design features. The initial plans were completed on November 27, 1935.

On November 29, 1935, district school superintendent O.P. Greer issued a call for bids on the project. The district accepted the PWA funds on December 6, 1935, under PWA docket No. Ariz. 1007. The Federal public

works program funded 45 per cent of the total project cost.

School officials opened the bids on December 13, 1935. The William Peper Construction Company was low bidder with an estimate of \$86,328. With the construction cost set, Lescher and Mahoney made some final adjustments to the plans. The final drawings were completed on December 31, 1935.

Construction began on January 31, 1936. The new school opened in time for class in September of 1936. It consisted of sixteen rooms and an auditorium. The school could accommodate 720 pupils. Students in the second through the fifth grades attended the school in 1936, drawn from Franklin and Lincoln schools to alleviate overcrowded conditions.

Irving School served the students of Mesa well. By 1973, district officials realized that the old school was in need of extensive renovations. Rather than remodel the school, officials determined that it would be better to build a new school in a different location. In 1975 a new Irving School opened at 3320 E. Pueblo in Mesa. That same year, the school district sold the property containing the old school building to the City of Mesa for \$275,000.

The City of Mesa was more interested in the land upon which the school was built, rather than the building itself. The City planned to demolish the buildings. However, theater and arts groups quickly found alternative uses for

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the old building. In 1976, volunteers renovated the auditorium under the direction of local architect Charles Hickman into a replica of an old gaslight theater for the use by the Mesa Children's Theater. The theater was renovated again in 1989, this time with an Art Deco theme that was more appropriate to the Federal Moderne style of the Irving School. The name of the facility was changed after the 1976 renovation to the Mesa Arts Center. In 1993 a distinctive shade of blue paint was applied to the building. Amid the earth-colored buildings typical of the Southwest, the blue-painted school attracted attention and critics. However, the paint choice does not have an effect on the integrity of the building.

SIGNIFICANCE

The Irving School is significantly associated with several important historical contexts in Arizona. First and foremost, it is a significant representative of the maturation of educational institutions in Arizona. Second, it is an excellent example of the architectural expertise of the Lescher and Mahoney firm. Lescher and Mahoney are considered the preeminent architects of school buildings in Arizona. Finally, the Irving School is a representative example of the significant impact Federal public works programs had on local communities in Arizona.

The Irving School in Mesa, Arizona, is significant under National Register criterion "A" as an important example of the broad trend of maturation of urban education in Arizona prior to World War Two. The Irving School is

also importantly associated under criterion "A" as a local example of the wide-ranging effect of Federal depression era public works construction programs. . In addition, the Irving School is significant under National Register criterion "C" as a representative example of the architectural work of Lescher & Mahoney, a prominent Phoenix architectural firm that specialized in the design of school buildings. The significance of the Irving School is described in three historic contexts: "Maturation of Urban Schools in Arizona, 1910-1940," "The Architectural Firm of Lescher & Mahoney, School Specialists in Arizona, 1912-1941," and "Public Works Administration Construction in Arizona, 1933-1939."

HISTORIC CONTEXTS

Maturation of Urban Schools in Arizona, 1910-1940

The construction of the Irving School in 1936 is associated with the historic context of urban school maturation which occurred in Arizona from 1910 to 1940. Education developed slowly in early Arizona, as the pioneers were more concerned with making a living than with looking to the future. By 1870, there were 1,923 school-age children in the territory but still no public schools. Governor Anson P.K. Safford, known as the "Father of Arizona Schools," remedied this situation during his administration from 1869 to 1877. In 1871, the Territorial Legislature passed the first tax bill to benefit schools, and expansion quickly followed.

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Prior to statehood, the early schools of Arizona were widely scattered because of the vast geographical expanse of the territory and the difficulty of transportation. Students were few, and usually packed tightly in the tiny one- or two-teacher schools which dotted many small urban communities. Most of these schools were in private homes or on private lands. With statehood in 1912, the State Legislature mandated separate public school facilities, but progress was slow. After World War One, and the publication of a 1918 report titled Educational Conditions in Arizona, educators moved to improve the state's school system through consolidation. Between 1910 and 1940, a new series of schools was constructed in Arizona's towns to replace earlier structures designed and built during the territorial era.

The construction of the Irving School is a particularly good example of this context. Education in Mesa was started in rudimentary facilities. The construction of "South School" in 1890 and "North School" in 1899 represented the first expansion from these early facilities. As constructed in 1936, the Irving School expressed the desire of Mesa residents to provide better school facilities for a growing urban population. Increased numbers of students, better transportation, and concentrated development all contributed to the maturation of Arizona's urban schools.

The construction of the Irving School in 1936 is a significant representation of this context. Maturation of urban schools was emphasized on a national level

through the thirties, as evidenced by the 1935 report by the US Commissioner of Education which stressed the reorganization of school units. Buildings such as the Irving School were a physical response to changing theories of education in the early twentieth century. Educators began to understand the effect of architecture on the health and scholastic performance of students. Places such as Arizona, which epitomized the climatic benefits of the Sunbelt region of the nation, offered leadership to other urban school districts when it came to the benefits of mild climate, sunshine, and fresh air.

California and Arizona educators and architects were leaders in developing new designs for campuses and school buildings which took advantage of the favorable climate. These new designs replaced the dark, imposing, multi-story school designs of an earlier era. The maturation of urban education in Arizona resulted in the creation of a more home-like, nurturing atmosphere for elementary grade students. This trend toward a mature urban school used massing, scale, and detailing from then currently popular residential architecture to create a more relaxed, comfortable environment.

The Irving School in Mesa is a good example of the maturation of the urban school environment in Arizona. Its elongated, one-story plan bridges the evolution of school building design from the cube-like, fortress-style, three-story school buildings of the 1910s to the multiple detached, one-story and open campus plans of the 1940s and 1950s. In addition to the Irving School, other Federal Moderne style school buildings can be found at

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Madison Elementary School in Phoenix, Phoenix Union High School, North Phoenix High School, Phoenix College, and Arizona State University. As an example of the context of urban school maturation in Arizona, the Irving School holds a very important place in the maturation in planning and style of urban educational facilities.

The Architectural Firm of Lescher & Mahoney, School Specialists in Arizona, 1912-1941

The firm of Lescher and Mahoney, initially Lescher and Kibby, was established in Phoenix in 1912 and grew rapidly into statewide prominence. The vast majority of their early work centered on public buildings, including schools, courthouses, and other civic facilities. After 1930, their major projects shifted to commercial commissions, primarily in Phoenix. Their growing commercial success was based on a strong foundation of civic commissions throughout the state.

The firm worked in numerous styles, primarily conforming to the trends of the time. Major buildings in the early years were predominantly Neo-Classic in style. This period is represented by such work as the Mohave County Courthouse in Kingman (1912), the Graham County Courthouse in Safford (1916), and the Florence High School in Pinal County (1916).

By the mid-twenties the firm's work shifted toward Spanish Colonial Revival and Mission Revival forms, often retaining the formality and symmetry associated

with the preceding Neo-Classic and Renaissance Revival forms. It was also in this period that they became more active in commercial buildings. Their departure from the Neo-Classic style is indicated by the Spanish Colonial Revival Orpheum Theater in Phoenix (1928). This was a major commission which can be viewed as their first entry into an increasingly competitive market for office buildings in Phoenix. Their stylistic shift continued with the Moderne style Title and Trust Building (1931) and was essentially complete with the International Style Hanny's Building (1947).

Despite this shift to Phoenix commercial commissions, Lescher and Mahoney continued to be extremely active with civic designs around the state. Between 1912 and 1941, the firm completed eighty elementary school buildings in urban and rural communities throughout Arizona. The number of elementary school buildings completed per decade is shown in the chart below:

| Decade | Elementary Schools |
|---------|--------------------|
| 1912-20 | 34 |
| 1921-30 | 30 |
| 1931-41 | 16 |

During the 1930s, their work on elementary schools declined, but they designed numerous high schools. The Irving School was built towards the end of the firms' major period of designing elementary school buildings in

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Arizona. In total, the firm designed 132 major school buildings in Arizona prior to the start of World War Two. The type of school building designed is summarized below:

| Number | Type |
|--------|-------------|
| 80 | Elementary |
| 31 | High School |
| 16 | College |
| 5 | Stadium |

Lescher and Mahoney was the primary architectural firm for public school buildings in Arizona in the period from 1920 to 1941. Stylistically, the elementary schools designed by Lescher and Mahoney are modest buildings, combining Neo-Classic, Mission, and Spanish Colonial motifs. Most of the schools are based on a central hall plan with a parapet entry, as is the Irving School.

Within the portfolio of Lescher and Mahoney school buildings, the Irving School is a rare surviving example of the Federal Moderne style. As a Federal public works funded projects, the architects selected the Federal Moderne as an appropriate expression for the Irving School. Only one other elementary school, the Madison School in Phoenix, was executed in the Federal Moderne style. Significantly, Madison School was also a PWA project.

The Irving School is an excellent example of the Federal Moderne style. In addition, its gabled roofs reflect the influence of the Ranch Style which began to sweep across the Southwest during the late 1930s through the 1960s. The massing of the building with its rambling layout and its low-pitched roofs soften the often monumental forms of the Federal Moderne style.

Lescher and Mahoney's artful combination of the Moderne and Ranch styles endows the Irving School with the dignity of a community institution while emoting the comfort of a home and residential neighborhood. It is the only elementary school in Arizona which is designed in the characteristic styles associated with the economic recovery program of the New Deal as well as currently popular residential architecture. The masterful combination of its two styles, one institutional and the other residential, makes the Irving School an excellent example of the architectural skill of Lescher and Mahoney.

Public Works Administration Construction in Arizona, 1933-1939

The Irving School is significantly associated with Public Works Administration (PWA) construction in Arizona from 1933 to 1939. Created by President Franklin D. Roosevelt and authorized by Congress, the PWA was an important New Deal work relief agency. It was created as part of Title II of the National Industrial Recovery Act. Passed on June 16, 1933, the act established the Public Works Administration and appropriated \$3.3 billion for

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hiring the unemployed to build roads, sewage and water systems, public buildings, ships, naval aircraft, and a host of other projects. The main purpose of the PWA was to prime the economic pump to spur recovery.

The general consensus among Arizona historians is that the Great Depression which began with the stock market crash in October of 1929 left the Salt River Valley relatively unscathed. This judgment is drawn primarily from the work of Jay Niebur who studied the effects of the depression in Phoenix. Niebur concluded that the diversified economy of the Salt River Valley, based on agriculture with a strong underpinning of transportation and commercial activities, enabled residents of the Salt River Valley to avoid the worst effects of the depression.

While this conclusion seems to be supported by the case of Mesa, the depression curtailed residential home construction in the city. Previous to the economic downturn, many property owners had constructed residences on speculation with the hope that the house could be rented or easily sold when completed. With many out of work during the depression, the market for speculative housing diminished. Property owners were content to let lots sit vacant. Families that needed additional room because of the arrival of extended families added on to existing structures for additional space rather than construct new buildings.

A lack of confidence in the leadership of President Herbert Hoover contributed to the severity of the problem. As Hoover's leadership faltered, the negative

effects spared no area of the country. Soon Mesa was hit hard by the depression. In 1932 and 1933 not a single subdivision was platted in Mesa. The growth of the community was curtailed completely.

The inauguration of President Franklin D. Roosevelt in March of 1933 brought a new sense of confidence to the country. Warning Americans that they had nothing to fear except fear itself, Roosevelt guided the Federal government through a series of actions to alleviate unemployment conditions and stimulate the economy. Much of Roosevelt's program was by "trial and error," but he kept experimenting until he hit upon a successful combination of programs.

By 1935, government-sponsored public works programs began to have an effect in many parts of the nation, including Mesa. The projects increased the amount of money in local circulation by providing work to residents and markets to merchants. In Mesa, the year 1935 was one of renewed construction.

Mesa received its fair share of Federal public works projects. As a means to combat the depression, the Federal government, under the direction of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, created a number of public works projects designed to get people back to work and increase the amount of money circulating in local economies. One of these programs, the Work Progress Administration (WPA), concentrated on the construction of public buildings and facilities. From July 1, 1935 to December, 1939, the WPA constructed more than

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Mesa, Maricopa County, AZ

23,000 public buildings nation-wide. By giving the unemployed jobs on these types of public projects, the program also kept these individuals off the relief rolls and allowed them to obtain skills which would assist them in finding private employment. After 1939, the agency changed its name to the Work Projects Administration. The WPA program continued until 1941, but ceased with the entry of the United States in World War II.

A second government program that benefitted Mesa was the Public Works Administration. The Public Works Administration (PWA) differed from the WPA in that it had a greater emphasis on actual construction. Public Works Administration funds allowed Mesa residents to construct a new auditorium for the Lehi School building. However, the most significant PWA project in Mesa was the construction of the Irving School.

New Deal programs such as the PWA had an important impact on states in the West, including Arizona. Up to the depression decade of the 1930s, the economy of Arizona was based on the extraction of resources. The profits made from these industries most often made their way into the hands of eastern investors. The New Deal changed the economic equation, and for the first time revenues flowed west back to Arizona and began to replenish the local economy. This change was most evident in the construction of public buildings, including the Irving School.

Beyond the economic and scholastic benefits provided by school construction, PWA projects emphasized

community betterment. Project focused on educational, recreational, and government buildings which could be used to uplift the social and educational status of residents. In addition to its building programs, PWA programs stressed educational and vocational skills, thus giving residents a means to combat unemployment through personal growth.

The construction of the Irving School is evidence of the multifaceted impact of PWA programs on urban communities such as Mesa. Its construction provided jobs for local residents and brought money into the community. The choice of a school and auditorium as a project is representative of the PWA emphasis on community buildings that would have a social and educational benefit for the community. The Irving School is a significant example of the impact Federal public works programs has in small urban communities in Arizona.

The school represents the connection between federal support of local economy and the encouragement of the community's progressive approaches to elementary education. The use of Work Program Administration funds from the New Deal were important in two ways for Mesa 1) the creation of jobs for designers, builders, equipment suppliers, and teachers, and 2) the improvement of the educational facilities for the town's children.

It reflects Mesa's value of quality education and the community's commitment to the goal of literacy and

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good citizenship of its children. The progressive design of the school for its era also demonstrates the community's concern for providing the best in environment to enhance scholastic performance. The schools of a town are an important barometer for judging the development of the community.

arts center, the school retains its original atmosphere and character.

INTEGRITY

Design, Workmanship, and Materials

The high quality of design and choice of material indicates that the Irving School was designed by a master architect who was experienced in school design. The craftsmanship of the construction has helped to ensure the building's long life.

Location

The building and the features of the property are each in their original locations.

Setting

The school grounds themselves have not changed appreciably over time. The residential neighborhood west of the school remains much the same as it did in the historic period, but the modern community center east of the school grounds has removed much of the neighborhood once served by the school.

Feeling

Walking through the halls of the Irving School is like stepping back through time. Although rehabilitated as an

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

See attached boundary map

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The National Register nomination boundary of the Irving School coincides with its current property lines. This approximately 2.7-acre site encompasses the school building itself, its landscaped west and north yards, the driveways on the north and south sides, and the parking lot (formerly the playground) on the east side.

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Irving School
Mesa, Maricopa County, AZ

Photographer: Don W. Ryden
Date: July 9, 1999
Location of Original Negatives: Ryden Architects
902 W. McDowell Rd.
Phoenix, Arizona 85007

| Photo # | View to |
|---------|--|
| 1 | Overall view of north wing of building looking southwest. |
| 2 | View of modern replacement doors with original transom above at north entrance (view towards southwest) |
| 3 | Overall view of building looking southeast. |
| 4 | Overall view of building looking southeast (shows main entrance on west facade). |
| 5 | Detailed view of main entrance on west facade. Original doors have been replaced, but original transom remains intact (view towards east). |
| 6 | Detailed view of detailing on concrete beam and corbels supporting beam. (View towards southeast). |
| 7 | Overall view of building looking northeast. |
| 8 | Overall view of south wing of building looking northeast. |
| 9 | View of southwest entrance of original teacher's lounge. This teacher's lounge contained a fireplace as evidenced by the chimney in this photo (view towards northeast). |
| 10 | Typical window layout (view towards north). |
| 11 | View of interior porch at courtyard of school (view towards west). This porch was part of an early addition to the original building. |
| 12 | View of storage buildings added to the interior courtyard created by the building wings (view towards southwest). |
| 13 | View of interior courtyard (north) created by original building and the north wing addition (view towards southwest). |
| 14 | View of modern handicap ramps installed to create accessible building (view towards north). |
| 15 | View of northeast entrance and wing addition (view towards west). |
| 16 | Typical corridor inside the school (view towards north). |
| 17 | Typical classroom with original blackboards intact (view toward northwest) |
| 18 | Original built-in storage units typically found in the classrooms (view towards southeast). |

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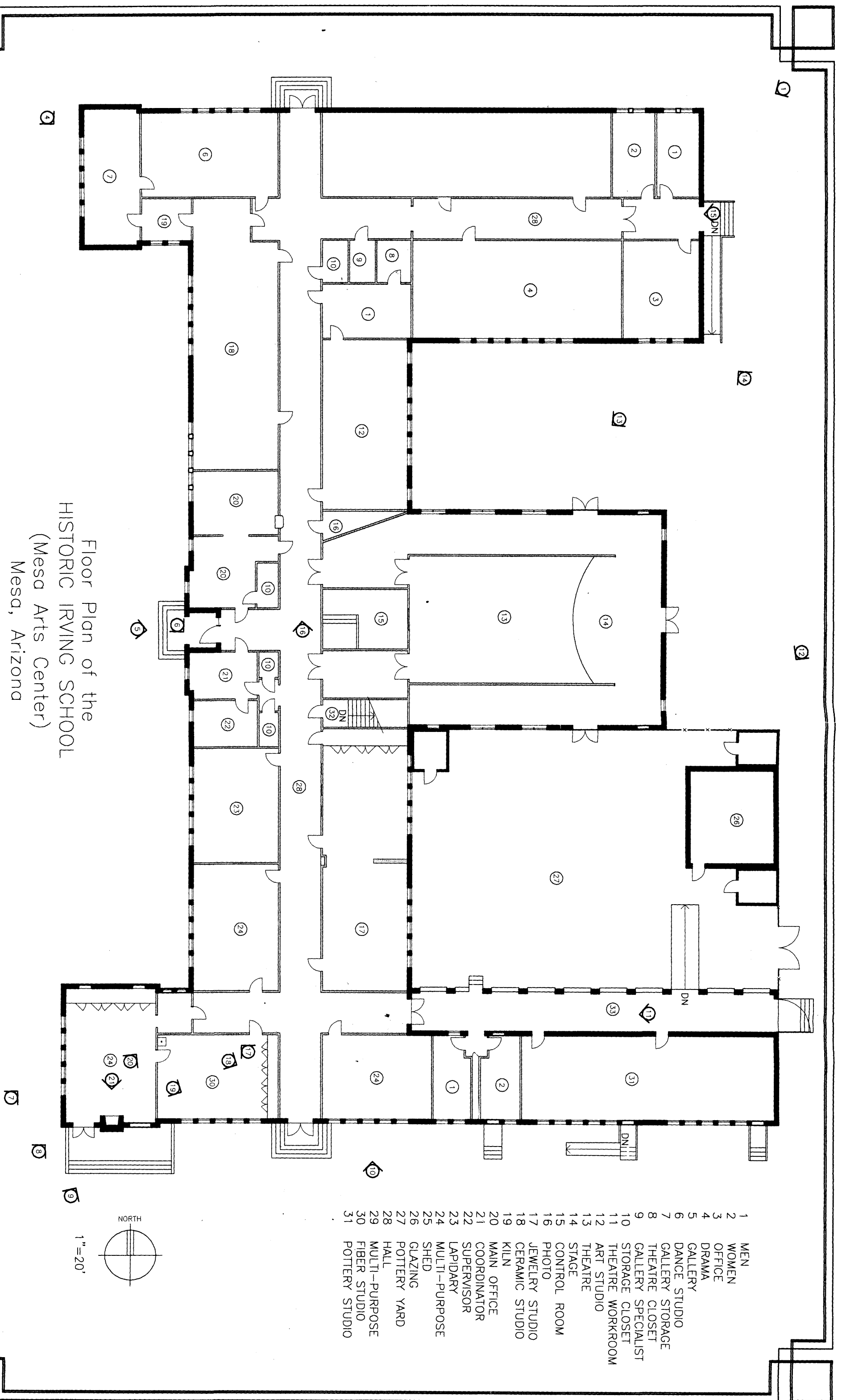
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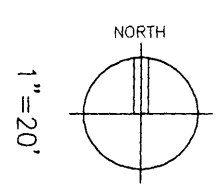
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Irving School
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- 19 Interior view of typical window (view towards south)
- 20 Original blackboard and closet doors found within the Teacher's Lounge (view towards northeast).
- 21 Fireplace located within the Teacher's Lounge (view towards south).



- 1 MEN
- 2 WOMEN
- 3 OFFICE
- 4 DRAMA
- 5 GALLERY
- 6 DANCE STUDIO
- 7 GALLERY STORAGE
- 8 THEATRE CLOSET
- 9 GALLERY SPECIALIST STORAGE CLOSET
- 10 THEATRE WORKROOM
- 11 ART STUDIO
- 12 THEATRE
- 13 STAGE
- 14 CONTROL ROOM
- 15 PHOTO
- 16 JEWELRY STUDIO
- 17 CERAMIC STUDIO
- 18 KILN
- 19 MAIN OFFICE
- 20 COORDINATOR
- 21 SUPERVISOR
- 22 LAPIDARY
- 23 MULTI-PURPOSE SHED
- 24 GLAZING
- 25 POTTERY YARD
- 26 HALL
- 27 MULTI-PURPOSE FIBER STUDIO
- 28 POTTERY STUDIO
- 29
- 30
- 31



Floor Plan of the
 HISTORIC IRVING SCHOOL
 (Mesa Arts Center)
 Mesa, Arizona

Architects
DON · W · RYDEN · AIA / ARCHITECTS · INC.
 Planning
 Historic Preservation