

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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

## 1. Name of Property

historic name Wetmore Post Office

other names/site number Siloam Telephone Company; 5CR.545

## 2. Location

street & number 682 County Road 395 [N/A] not for publication

city or town Wetmore [N/A] vicinity

state Colorado code CO county Custer code 027 zip code 81253

## 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.)

Andrew C. Hedrick State Historic Preservation Officer 7/23/08 Date

Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Colorado 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 certifying 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
  - See continuation sheet.
- other, explain
  - See continuation sheet.

for  
Edson H. Beall Signature of the Keeper 9.12.08 Date of Action

Wetmore Post Office  
Name of Property

Custer County, Colorado  
County/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 count previously listed resources.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	1	buildings
0	0	sites
3	1	structures
0	0	objects
4	2	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 Function**

(Enter categories from instructions)

- Domestic: Single Dwelling
- Government: Post Office
- Health Care: Clinic
- Commerce/Trade: Specialty Store
- Industry/Processing/Extraction: Communications

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

- Government: Post Office
- Social: Meeting Hall

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

- Late 19<sup>th</sup> and Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century
- American Movements: Commercial Style

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

- foundation: Stone, Concrete
- walls: Stucco, Stone
- roof: Metal
- other:

**Narrative Description**

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

Wetmore Post Office  
Name of Property

Custer County, Colorado  
County/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 listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

#### Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

#### 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):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey

# \_\_\_\_\_

- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

# \_\_\_\_\_

#### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Politics/Government

Communications

Architecture

#### Periods of Significance

1885

1896-1961

#### Significant Dates

1885

1910

1961

#### Significant Person(s)

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above).

N/A

#### Cultural Affiliation

N/A

#### Architect/Builder

Unknown

#### Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Colorado Historical Society

Wetmore Post Office  
Name of Property

Custer County, Colorado  
County/State

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property .73 acres

### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

- |    |      |         |          |         |
|----|------|---------|----------|---------|
| 1. | 13   | 492637  | 4231876  | (NAD27) |
|    | Zone | Easting | Northing |         |
| 2. |      |         |          |         |
|    | Zone | Easting | Northing |         |
| 3. |      |         |          |         |
|    | Zone | Easting | Northing |         |
| 4. |      |         |          |         |
|    | Zone | Easting | Northing |         |

The UTM was derived by the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation from heads up digitization on Digital Raster Graphic (DRG) maps provided to OAHF by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management.

See continuation sheet

### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title F. Jeannie Culpin  
organization Wetmore-Hardscrabble Genealogical & Historical Society date February 15, 2008  
street & number PO Box 214 telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
city or town Wetmore state CO zip code 81253-0214

### 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 FPO for any additional items)

### Property Owner

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

name F. Jeannie Culpin  
street & number 370 Adobe Creek Road telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
city or town Wetmore state CO zip code 81253

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to range from approximately 18 hours to 36 hours depending on several factors including, but not limited to, how much documentation may already exist on the type of property being nominated and whether the property is being nominated as part of a Multiple Property Documentation Form. In most cases, it is estimated to average 36 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form to meet minimum National Register documentation requirements. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, 1849 C St., NW, Washington, DC 20240.

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Wetmore Post Office

Custer County, Colorado

Section number 7 Page 1**DESCRIPTION**

The Wetmore Post Office consists of a multi-building complex fronting west onto County Road 395 in Wetmore. The road traverses south along the Hardscrabble Creek toward Greenwood in the Wet Mountains just north of the Sangre de Cristo mountain range. The .73 acre site forms part of a mixed residential-commercial area in the center of the rural community. In addition to the one-story stuccoed post office building, the site contains a fruit cellar, ice house, chicken house, breezeway/patio and garage/shop. The site is informally landscaped with assorted deciduous and evergreen bushes and trees. At the southwest corner of the post office building stands a large boulder bearing a bronze plaque commemorating the Siloam Telephone Company that operated in the building from 1910 to 1961. Sections of wire fence mark the property boundary.

**Post Office**

Built in ca. 1885, the 2,410 square-foot, L-plan, one-story false front building houses the United States Post Office in the front (west) section (645 square feet), with the remaining 1,765 square feet comprising the former residential/office portion. The exterior of the wood-frame building is stucco over clapboard and board-and-batten wood siding. The majority of the foundation is stone with later additions resting on concrete or concrete block. The intersecting gable roof and the shed-roofed extensions are all covered with corrugated metal panels over older wood shingles. Three brick chimneys remain.

The facade consists of a large central section and two flanking extensions. The central recessed storefront entry is flanked by pairs of one-over-one fixed sash. A narrow one-over-one sash side light to the north of the door is mirrored on the south by a wood panel. The glazed door is topped by a transom. Exterior metal bars protect the door and interior metal bars secure the south windows. The stucco below the windows is scored to form a faux ashlar stone pattern that runs the full length of the facade. The entry is accessed from a concrete porch with steps and metal tubular railings on each end. A steel flagpole rises beside the northern-most post. The triangular ends of the porch roof are filled with wood lattice. The central parapet rises above the peak of the front gable roof and terminates with a simple flared cornice.

The facade extension on the south contains a single four-over-four double-hung sash. The short parapet conceals the shed roof behind. The northern facade extension contains a nine-light two-panel wood door that opens at grade. The short parapet conceals the shed roof behind.

The north side of the post office section contains a double, four-light sash and a ventilator grill in the restroom extension and a single window opening filled by a large air conditioner. This wall intersects with the west wall of the residential portion of the building. A full-width screened porch with shed roof is accessed by a screen door. The west wall of the building inside the porch contains the original wood door and four-over-four wood frame sash with pedimented wood trim. To the north is a simple wood framed opening with a four-light sash with semicircular upper muntins. The original board-and-batten wood siding remains exposed as does the horizontal drop siding on the north wall of the post office section. The north wall of the residential section is unfenestrated.

The east (rear) wall contains two entries, each a glazed wood panel door and a screen door; one four-over-four, double-hung wood frame sash; and a large one-over-one wood sash. The north wall of the shed-roofed extension, visible at the south end of the east wall, contains a projecting pie cooler.

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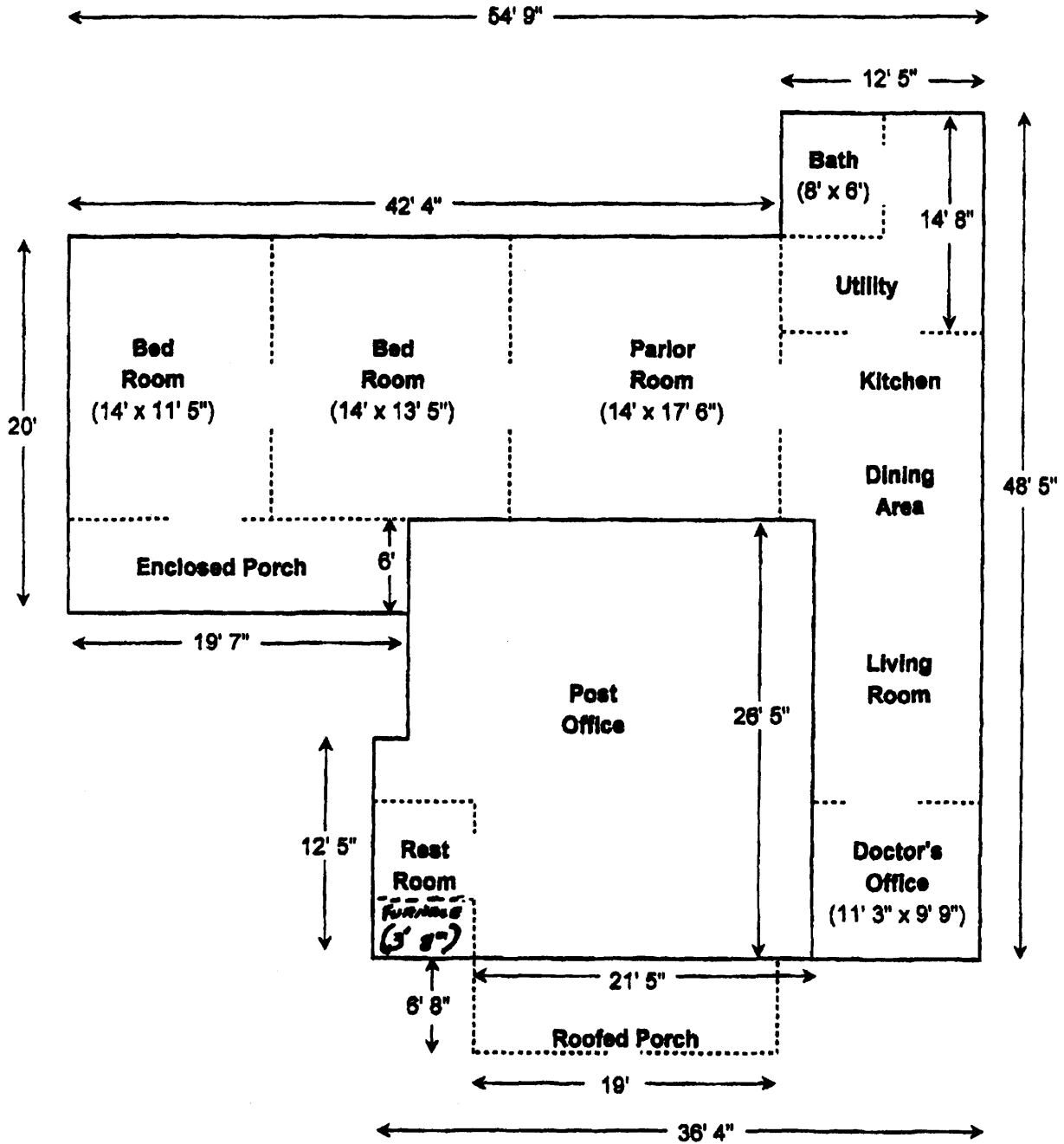
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Wetmore Post Office

Custer County, Colorado

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## Floor Plan (Not to scale)



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Wetmore Post Office

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The east wall of the shed-roofed extension contains a solid wood door and a four-over-four, double-hung wood frame sash.

From east to west, the south wall contains a four-light fixed sash; two sets of double four-over-four modern slider replacement windows; and one four-over-four wood frame sash.

**Interior**

Entrance to the residential part of the building is from the east through a utility room partitioned for a tiny bathroom with a toilet and shower. A sink with outdoor type faucets sits on the south side. Next to the sink is an electric water heater and next to it a pressure tank and pump for the well. An old brick chimney with a flue cover remains above the pump. On the opposite wall a very old cabinet with screen doors remains in a pantry-like space. A hardboard wall separates this space from the shower. As a result of utility upgrades accomplished some time after the introduction of plumbing and electricity, numerous exposed electric wires and cables run across the hardboard ceiling.

Tongue-and-groove knotty pine boards cover the walls of the long 23' x 12' kitchen-dining-living-area. The space contains a kitchen sink and a small gas stove. The floor is partially covered with 1920 era printed linoleum and the balance is pine wood flooring. A door at the west end opens into the 11'-3" x 9'-9" former doctor's office. The office has wood paneling and a linoleum floor.

The parlor looks very much like it did in an 1888 photograph of the Walters family. It has one layer of faded wallpaper on the plaster walls, 1920 era print linoleum on the floor and a decorative plate shelf high on one wall. A chimney with a metal flue cover remains on the wall. Next to the plate shelf projection is evidence of a now closed and sealed door opening that originally accessed the post office. The door molding, sheet rock and plaster patches remain visible. This is the room with the large window and a door on the east side. A door on the north wall leads to a bedroom.

The bedroom walls are plaster and linoleum covers the floor. A metal flue plate blocks the chimney opening. A north wall door opens into the last bedroom.

The north bedroom has wood panels on the walls and linoleum floor covering. A door on the east leads outside. On the west, a door and a window open to the front porch.

**Alterations**

The Wetmore Post Office building has undergone change during its more than 120 years of existence. Some changes are documented, others are more conjectural as to date and extent. An early historic photograph shows the main storefront, doctor's office extension and rear residential section. (See Photo H1.) The window and door style and trim in the doctor's office extension and residential section appear to match, suggesting simultaneous construction. However, the straight vertical break in the clapboard siding between the facade sections and the occasional unmatched board spacing in the two sections hints at a later construction date for the extension.

Two historic photographs reveal early storefront changes. (See Photos H1 and H2.) The view captured in about 1887 shows the older two-over-two sash replaced with wide bay windows. The older front porch roof has been replaced by a steeper version attached higher on the parapet.

The nearby Hardscrabble Creek flooded in 1929, washing out the entire main street and leaving a gully where the porch formerly stood. The flood destroyed the original board floor at the front entrance to the commercial section of the building. This necessitated the construction of the concrete porch leading

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Wetmore Post Office

Custer County, Colorado

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into the post office. The two large boulders at either side of the building washed down in the flood and were kept as reminders. One holds a plaque commemorating the Siloam Telephone Company. At this same time, the former bay storefront windows were changed to the current one-over-one display windows.

The building owners added the north bedroom sometime between 1915 and 1920. The west side porch was extended at the same time. The date of the porch enclosure is not known.

The arrival of rural electrification in Wetmore in 1940 resulted in some interior remodeling. Inside the main kitchen area the walls were paneled with tongue-and-groove knotty pine and the original small west side door entering the doctor's office was boarded up and concealed.

Recent research indicated that the exterior stucco was applied to the building in 1953. All exterior walls were covered except for the west and north walls inside the screened bedroom porch.

In 1962 the U.S. Post Office, which then leased the space from the building owner, modernized part of the office, removing the telephone board, the candy counter and all vending accessories. This area was completely closed off from the residential section and secured according to Post Office requirements. The door opening from the parlor was closed off and sealed.

The full-length north side office addition contains a restroom and furnace. It is not known when the addition occurred or if the extension occurred in sections over time.

The metal roofing is not original but appears to have been in place for many years, perhaps as far back as the later part of the period of significance. Historic wood shingles remain beneath the metal sheets.

The large 40"-wide window opening in the parlor was once a door where Dr. Walters brought in supplies for his little drug store. The date of the window conversion is unknown. The modern sliding windows on the south wall were added at an unknown date.

**Outbuildings****Fruit Cellar**

Behind the post office is a triangular metal entrance to the fruit cellar. Concrete steps lead down into a perfectly round cellar, 11' in diameter, with walls of smooth river rock. The ceiling is constructed of wood boards graduated in width from the perimeter to the center pole. Deterioration of some of the boards has occurred and a layer of concrete is visible above. The ceiling is 7' to 8' high. The mounded roof over the cellar is concrete covered by accumulated dirt. Tony Hopkins and Ray Breece built the structure in 1920, according to oral history. No other construction documentation has been found. A grove of Gambrel oak trees surrounds the mounded roof. (Contributing)

**Stone Ice House**

This structure was constructed about 1901. The rubble stone, rectangular plan, 11'-8" x 13'-7" structure has a metal gable roof. The current dirt floor was originally covered with sawdust when in use. An ice scraper, used to smooth the ice on the lake before cutting into blocks, remains here in a well-preserved condition. After electricity arrived in Wetmore in 1940, and with it the introduction of mechanical refrigeration, the building became a coal shed. (Contributing)



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**Chicken House**

The rectangular plan, 9' x 16'-6" structure, with low south-facing openings covered by chicken wire, has horizontal wood plank doors on the east and west sides and a metal covered shed roof. The exterior walls are stucco over empty wood ammunition boxes from the army's Pueblo Munitions Depot. Built in 1946, the boxes were stacked like adobe bricks and stuccoed on the outside. Recycling available materials was a common construction practice of the period due to the shortage of building materials during and immediately after World War II. The floor is dirt. (Contributing)

**Breezeway**

A covered patio breezeway stands just outside the east (back) side of the main building. The wood-frame structure supports fiberglass panels. The floor is concrete. The structure was built about 1973. (Noncontributing)

**Garage and Shop**

The rectangular plan, 26' x 34' wood-frame and stucco modern two-car garage is equipped as a shop. (Noncontributing)

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Wetmore Post Office

Custer County, Colorado

Section number 8 Page 6**SIGNIFICANCE**

The Wetmore Post Office is eligible for the National Register under Criterion A in the area of *politics/government* for its association with the federal government's role in establishing and maintaining local facilities for the delivery and shipment of mail. The post office often represented the most visible presence of the federal government in the day-to-day life of local communities. In the case of small non-federally owned buildings, the post office represented a partnership between the federal government and a local citizen to provide a link in the national mail network. The period of significance for *politics/government* starts in 1896, with the beginning of the post office's continual occupation of the building. As the historically significant activities associated with the Wetmore Post Office extend into a period less than fifty years before the nomination date, and because these recent activities are not considered to be exceptionally important, the period of significance ends in 1958, in keeping with National Register guidelines.

The Wetmore Post Office is eligible for the National Register under Criterion A in the area of *communications* for its association with the several important local communication venues. A post office and its mail services provided the primary means of communication between those living in distant communities throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, particularly for those in rural communities like Wetmore. A post office also became an informal location for casual conversations between patrons and a place for the posting of community notices and information. The establishment of a local phone company in 1910, with its switchboard in the Wetmore Post Office building, provided area residents with an additional means of communication, particularly within the company's subscriber network. Later connection to outside lines allowed residents to call others across the state and nation. The period of significance for *communications* starts in 1896, with the permanent establishment of the post office in the building, and ends in 1961, when the Siloam Telephone Company ceased operations. As the historically significant activities associated with the Siloam Telephone Company ended only three years into the period less than fifty years before the nomination date, and because the vast majority of its operations occurred before this period, the requirements of Criteria Consideration G do not apply.

The Wetmore Post Office is also eligible for the National Register under Criterion C in the area of *architecture* as a local example of the popular false front commercial building type of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century western towns. The period of significance is the year of construction—1885.

**Postal Service**

Throughout the nineteenth century, the postal system served as the principal, and for a long time, the only means of long distance communication. It provided both a physical and intellectual link between great distances. In the process of providing and increasing its services, the Post Office Department influenced the development of aspects of the nation's history other than communications, including transportation, publishing and commerce. Efforts to increase the speed and efficiency of mail delivery and competition for government contracts to carry mail encouraged the growth of roads, railroads, shipping lines and eventually airlines. Congressional franking, special newspaper rates, the acceptance of books for delivery, and free delivery for cities and eventually rural areas spurred a boom in the publishing business by offering inexpensive rates and wide distribution of newspapers, journals, magazines, catalogs and paperback books. Mail order businesses benefited from reduced rates for catalogs, rural free delivery and parcel post service.

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Wetmore Post Office

Custer County, Colorado

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Through the use of flat rates, stamps and envelopes, registered mail and money orders, and free delivery for larger cities, the basic form of modern postal service had taken shape by the Civil War. Important services instituted in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries included rural free delivery, parcel post and postal savings. Long advocated by farmers, rural free delivery, which began experimentally in 1896 and permanently a few years later, greatly reduced the isolation of rural areas. Between 1897 and 1908, local governments spent millions to improve roads in order to qualify for rural delivery service. This service resulted in a drastic reduction in the number of post offices in small communities, in which commercial establishments had sometimes been supported by necessary periodic visits of rural citizens to pick up mail. Parcel post, inaugurated in 1913, provided another great convenience to rural areas, which were often unprofitable for private express companies. The authorization of postal savings banks in 1910 encouraged thrift, increased the amount of money in circulation and provided security, especially for those without access to banks. They became particularly popular during the Great Depression of the 1930s, when the government inspired greater confidence than private financial institutions.

Communities applied to the U.S. postmaster general for the establishment of a local post office. Such requests were granted when the Post Office Department determined that a sufficient population existed to warrant establishing regular service. Colorado's first post office was established in late 1858 or early 1859. The official establishment of a post office literally put a community on the map, though it sometimes resulted in a name change. The Post Office Department would not establish a post office with a name that could be confused with other nearby locations. The establishment of a post office represented a commitment by the U.S. government to provide mail delivery and to appoint and pay for the services of a postmaster (or postmistress). Except in the largest of communities, the postmaster assumed responsibility for establishing the official post office facility. Colorado's first federally-constructed post office did not open until 1892 in Denver. Occasionally, early postmasters established the post office in their own residence, but most often the facility operated in a commercial building, usually a retail store. Retailers welcomed such post offices, as the need to pick up and send letters and parcels brought a steady stream of potential customers. Often the business owner or spouse held the position of postmaster. This was the case in early Wetmore shortly after the establishment of the post office in 1881 with Samuel H. Callen as the first postmaster.

The nucleus of the town of Wetmore (originally called Hammil) began with the arrival of a twenty-five member wagon train from Spring Garden, Illinois, in 1870, though ten to twelve early arrivals preceded them. A thriving community developed. Billy Wetmore, a government surveyor, among his many occupations, held 160 acres of patented land. He promised to grant land to anyone wishing to build a home so long as the new community took on the name "Wetmore." The new settlers complied.

Dr. J. W. Walters came west to Wetmore due to poor health. He had a building constructed in about 1885 as a combination business and residence. Dr. Walters saw patients in the office on the south side of the building while his wife, M.A. Walters, sold drugs and sundries in the store. The post office eventually occupied part of the retail area, though before 1896 the post office appears to have relocated several times.

The existence of the town of Wetmore was first noted in two state business directories in 1884. The 1884-85 *Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, Nevada, Wyoming and Arizona Gazetteer and Business Directory* provided a brief overview of the community:

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Wetmore Post Office

Custer County, Colorado

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A village on Hardscrabble Creek in Custer County, 144 miles southwest of Denver, 20 northwest of Rosita, the county seat, 12 southeast of Florence, the nearest railroad station, and 20 southeast of Canon City, the nearest banking point. Settled in 1880, it contains two flourishing mills operated by water, a Baptist Church and a district school. Wheat and corn are shipped. Stages daily to Florence. Population of vicinity, 200. Mail daily. W.G. Neeley, postmaster.

A listing of seven businesses included S.B. Neeley, grocer. It is likely that W.G. Neeley was the spouse of S.B. and that the post office operated out of the grocery store. Also among the seven businesses was J.W. Walters, druggist.

The 1884 *Colorado State Business Directory*, published by James R. Ives & Co., contained a similar listing of business owners, with S.B. Neeley as grocer, W.G. Neeley as postmaster and M.A. Walters as druggist. The 1885 edition of the Ives directory listed W.G. Neeley as both grocer and postmaster, and J.W. Walters as the druggist, to the exclusion of M.A. Walters.

From 1885 through 1900, the Ives-published *Colorado State Business Directory* revealed the shifting nature of Wetmore's store owners and postmasters. Figure 1 summarizes the directory listings for J.W. and M.A. Walters and the position of postmaster, when given.

**Figure 1: Colorado State Business Directory Listings in Wetmore – 1884 through 1900**

Year	J.W. Walters	M.A. Walters	Postmaster
1884		Druggist	W.G. Neeley
1885	Drugs		W.G. Neeley
1886		Drugs, tinware, queenware	
1887		Drugs, tinware, queenware	
1888		Drugs, tinware, queenware	
1889	Physician	Drugs, notions, postmaster	Mrs. M.A. Walters
1890	Physician	Drugs	F.W. Wright
1891	Physician	Drugs	F.W. Wright
1892	Physician	Drugs	
1893	Physician	Drugs	
1894	Physician	Drugs	
1895	Physician	Drugs	H.F. Hess
1896	Physician	Drugs and postmaster	M.A. Walters
1897	Physician	Drugs and postmaster	M.A. Walters
1898	Physician	Drugs and postmaster	M.A. Walters
1899	Physician	Drugs and postmaster	M.A. Walters
1900		Drugs and postmaster	M.A. Walters

The occupations of W.G. Neeley and H.F. Hess as grocers, and F.W. Wright as the proprietor of a general merchandise store, suggests that the post office likely occupied a location in their retail establishments when they served as postmaster. Similarly, when Mrs. Walters served as postmistress in 1889 and again from 1896 through the end of the nineteenth century, it is almost certain that the post office occupied a location in the Walters' drugstore. Dr. Walters died in 1899.

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Wetmore Post Office

Custer County, Colorado

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Mrs. Walters held the position of Wetmore postmistress for many years, followed by her son and daughter-in-law in later years. The Wetmore community did well growing vegetables and fruit, and selling them to the mining towns of Silver Cliff and Cripple Creek. The *Business Directory of Wetmore, Custer County*, listed seven commercial establishments in 1887, included M.A. Walters as druggist. A spirit of independence thrived in Wetmore, resulting in the town's lack of incorporation. Unfortunately, this lack of formal organization resulted in the generation of little official historical data on construction and other town activities.

While the establishment of a post office verified a community's claim to legitimacy, significant loss in population also led to the closure or transfer of the post office. Figure 2 shows all the post offices established in Custer County by date of establishment. Colfax took the honors for the county's first post office in 1870, followed the next year by Wulstenville and Ula. The boom and bust cycle of mining and early agricultural efforts resulted in the rapid growth and decline of associated communities. Volatile population shifts are reflected in the often short-lived existence of many Custer County post offices. Of the 27 post offices established, 11 survived less than 5 years, and of these, 3 operated less than a year. Of the 22 county post offices established before 1901, only 7, including Wetmore, continued to operate at the start of the twentieth century. In addition to reflecting local economic conditions, the decline in county post offices coincided with the establishment of rural free delivery service.

**Figure 2: Custer County Post Offices – By Date of Establishment**

Name	Established	Discontinued
Colfax	May 2, 1870	January 16, 1879
Wulstenville	July 21, 1871	December 4, 1871
Ula (first county seat in 1877)	December 1, 1871	May 4, 1891
Greenwood	February 16, 1872	June 29, 1918
Rosita (county seat 1878-1886)	July 8, 1874	December 2, 1966
Silver Cliff (county seat 1886-1928)	October 30, 1878	Remains open
Blumenau (from Colfax)	January 16, 1879 August 8, 1879	July 16, 1879 October 9, 1890
Dora (reestablished at Gove)	July 11, 1879	October 31, 1883
Silver Park	July 28, 1879	February 2, 1881
Clinton	August 4, 1879	October 13, 1881
Querida (Formerly named Bassickville)	January 12, 1880 April 29, 1891 August 27, 1897	November 29, 1887 May 21, 1895 May 14, 1906
<b>Wetmore</b>	April 17, 1881	Remains open
Camergo	April 19, 1881	November 30, 1881
Westcliffe (county seat since 1928)	July 14, 1881 January 22, 1886	November 21, 1882 Remains open
Blackburn	August 1, 1881	May 11, 1889
Fairview	October 24, 1882 October 15, 1907	August 31, 1893 August 15, 1913
Gove	December 6, 1883	October 9, 1888
Ilse	August 14, 1884 January 23, 1895 December 10, 1920	May 4, 1891 April 30, 1919 September 30, 1929

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Wetmore Post Office

Custer County, Colorado

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Name	Established	Discontinued
Cleveland	February 5, 1885	May 13, 1886
Neeley	February 16, 1888	December 12, 1888
Augusta	May 5, 1890	April 15, 1902
Millbrook	March 2, 1893	November 7, 1895
Forestdale	October 1, 1914	April 30, 1926
Keating	December 18, 1914	November 6, 1924
Bassick (near Querida)	May 19, 1917	December 31, 1920
Focus	May 5, 1921	October 30, 1926
San Isabel	July 18, 1936	December 31, 1938

Some communities lost their post office and then later succeeded in having it reestablished. This often happened when an initial mining boom faded and a later ore discovery brought a resurgence of activity and population. Sometimes a former failed mining community experienced rebirth as an agricultural center or recreation and tourist destination. In Custer County, Blumenau, Fairview and Westcliffe reestablished their previously closed post offices. Ilse and Querida went through three population and post office cycles.

Of the 27 post offices established in Custer County, only three remain in operation—at Silver Cliff, Westcliffe (the county seat) and Wetmore. Figure 3 is an alphabetical list of former and current Custer County post offices. In 2008, the Wetmore Post Office served approximately 229 households—115 receiving rural delivery and 114 maintaining post office boxes.

**Figure 3: Custer County Post Offices – Alphabetical Order**

Name	Established	Discontinued
Augusta	May 5, 1890	April 15, 1902
Bassick (near Querida)	May 19, 1917	December 31, 1920
Blackburn	August 1, 1881	May 11, 1889
Blumenau (from Colfax)	January 16, 1879 August 8, 1879	July 16, 1879 October 9, 1890
Camergo	April 19, 1881	November 30, 1881
Cleveland	February 5, 1885	May 13, 1886
Clinton	August 4, 1879	October 13, 1881
Colfax	May 2, 1870	January 16, 1879
Dora (reestablished at Gove)	July 11, 1879	October 31, 1883
Fairview	October 24, 1882 October 15, 1907	August 31, 1893 August 15, 1913
Focus	May 5, 1921	October 30, 1926
Forestdale	October 1, 1914	April 30, 1926
Gove	December 6, 1883	October 9, 1888
Greenwood	February 16, 1972	June 29, 1918
Ilse	August 14, 1884 January 23, 1895 December 10, 1920	May 4, 1891 April 30, 1919 September 30, 1929
Keating	December 18, 1914	November 6, 1924
Millbrook	March 2, 1893	November 7, 1895

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<b>Name</b>	<b>Established</b>	<b>Discontinued</b>
Neeley	February 16, 1888	December 12, 1888
Querida (Formerly named Bassickville)	January 12, 1880 April 29, 1891 August 27, 1897	November 29, 1887 May 21, 1895 May 14, 1906
Rosita	July 8, 1874	December 2, 1966
San Isabel	July 18, 1936	December 31, 1938
Silver Cliff	October 30, 1878	Remains open
Silver Park	July 28, 1879	February 2, 1881
Ula	December 1, 1871	May 4, 1891
Westcliffe	July 14, 1881 January 22, 1886	November 21, 1882 Remains open
<b>Wetmore</b>	April 17, 1881	Remains open
Wulstenville	July 21, 1871	December 4, 1871

**Telephone Service**

The telegraph arrived in Colorado in 1863, when a branch of the transcontinental line through Julesburg arrived in Denver, and in time other extensions connected Central City and Pueblo to the main telegraph circuit. Other Colorado communities began linking to the service with the spread of railroads in the state. Communities with a railroad connection often had telegraph service through the depot. For other communities, mail remained the only form of long distance communication until the arrival of the telephone.

Following the development of the telephone in 1876, telephone service began in isolated pockets around the nation, almost exclusively in urban areas where the number of potential customers offered the greatest opportunity for profitable operations. By 1879, Denver had two telephone companies with 200 subscribers. In 1879, the Edison Telephone Company advertised for subscribers in Central City. By 1884 it was possible for Denver residents to call Colorado Springs and in 1889 Leadville joined the system.

During the period 1910-61, the Wetmore Post Office housed the Siloam Telephone Company and its switchboard. Mrs. Lela Walters served as telephone operator along with her postmistress duties. The company strung its telephone lines along fence posts to reach its largely rural subscribers. The company served between 20 to 50 families in a five square-mile area. While providing faster communications within the community, the new service also lessened the importance of the post office as the hub of face-to-face communications. Phone calls began to supplement and replace conversations by community members during chance encounters at the post office. In 1961 the regional Mountain States Telephone and Telegraph Company absorbed the Siloam Telephone Company.

Whether as the formal mail facility, as the informal community forum or as the center of local telephone operations, the Wetmore Post Office served as the community's communication hub for over a century.

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**False Front Commercial Architecture**

The Wetmore Post Office displays the essential physical features characteristic of the false front commercial building type constructed in Colorado mountain mining towns and agricultural communities from the late nineteenth through the early years of the twentieth centuries. Commercial building owners of the period wanted to project an image of stability and success to prospective customers. Sound business economics led commercial building owners to budget their spending for substantial facades while relegating the secondary sides of buildings to a cheaper utilitarian treatment. The result was the ubiquitous false front commercial building. In simplest terms, a false front is a front wall that extends above the roof and the sides of a building to create a more impressive facade. The false front commercial building has four major defining design characteristics. First, the facade (main or street side) rises to form a parapet (upper wall) that hides most or nearly all of the roof. Second, the roof is almost always a front gable, though gambrel and bowed roofs are occasionally found. Third, a better grade of materials is often used on the facade than on the sides or rear of the building. And fourth, the facade exhibits greater ornamentation than do the other sides of the building. These buildings are nearly always constructed of wood, either log in the earliest examples or wood frame in latter types. Wood construction materials were plentiful in the Wet Mountains area around Wetmore. Facades are usually wood sided, though other surface treatments were used, including pressed metal, stucco and rolled asphalt siding. Occasional examples may be found of buildings with a brick or stone facade. The most traditional late nineteenth and early twentieth-century false front commercial building is wood frame, one to two stories in height, on a rectangular floor plan, with a front gabled roof.

The Wetmore Post Office, though altered in respect to additions, exterior materials and architectural details, retains the unmistakable characteristics of a late nineteenth century false front commercial building.



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Custer County, Colorado

Section number 9 Page 13**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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- Warranty Deed filed Dec. 31, 1880, William Hayes to Frances Wetmore. Custer County Recorded Book 2, page 334.
- Warranty Deed filed March 27, 1885, Custer County Recorded Book 26, Page 123. Frances Wetmore to M.A. Walters. M.A. Walters, wife of Dr. J. W. Walters, wrote on margin of Record "I hereby claim the within premises as my Homestead."
- Warranty Deed filed Feb. 14, 1967, Custer County Recorded Book 154, page 195, Lela Walters to Joseph J. DeGani.

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**GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

The nominated land consists of a tract of land described as follows:

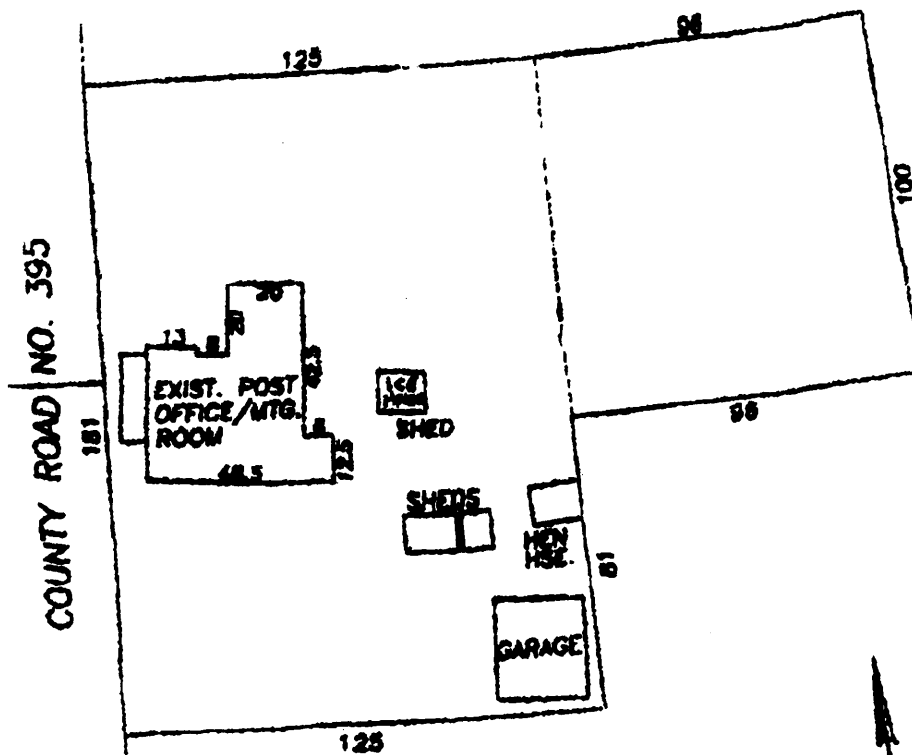
Commencing at a point 100 feet North of 76 East of the Southwest corner of NW ¼ of Section 11, Township 21 South, Range 69 West of the 6th P.M., from thence running North 181 feet; thence East 125 feet, thence South 181 feet; thence West 125 feet to the place of beginning.

Also, a tract of land described as follows: Commencing at the Northeast corner of M.A. Walters land in the Town of Wetmore, Custer County, Colorado; thence East 96 feet; thence South 100 feet; thence West 96 feet to intersect said M.A. Walters land; thence North along said land 100 feet to the place of beginning, all in the NW ¼ of Section 11, Township 21 South, Range 69 West of the 6<sup>th</sup> P.M., Custer County, Colorado.

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**

The boundary includes all the land historically associated with the Wetmore Post Office.

**SITE PLAN**



**NOTE:  
LOCATE ABSORPTION SYSTEM  
A MINIMUM OF 100' FROM  
PROPOSED OR EXISTING WELLS**

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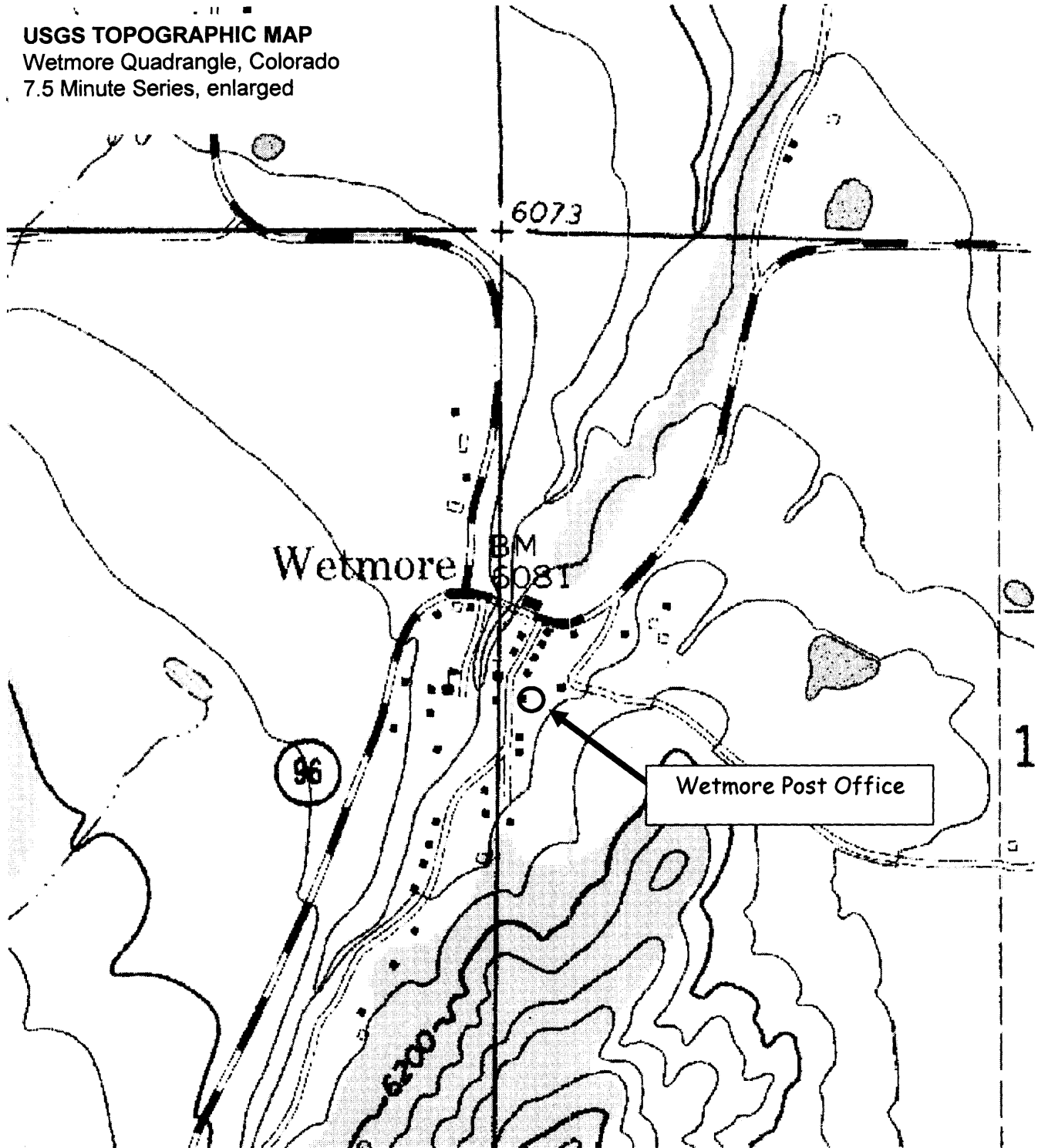
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**USGS TOPOGRAPHIC MAP**  
Wetmore Quadrangle, Colorado  
7.5 Minute Series, enlarged



topozone  
Copyright 1998-2009 Maps & More, Inc.

0 0.1 0.2 0.3 0.4 0.5 km  
0 0.09 0.18 0.27 0.36 0.45 mi

Wetmore, USGS Wetmore (CO) Quadrangle  
Projection is UTM Zone 13 NAD83 Datum



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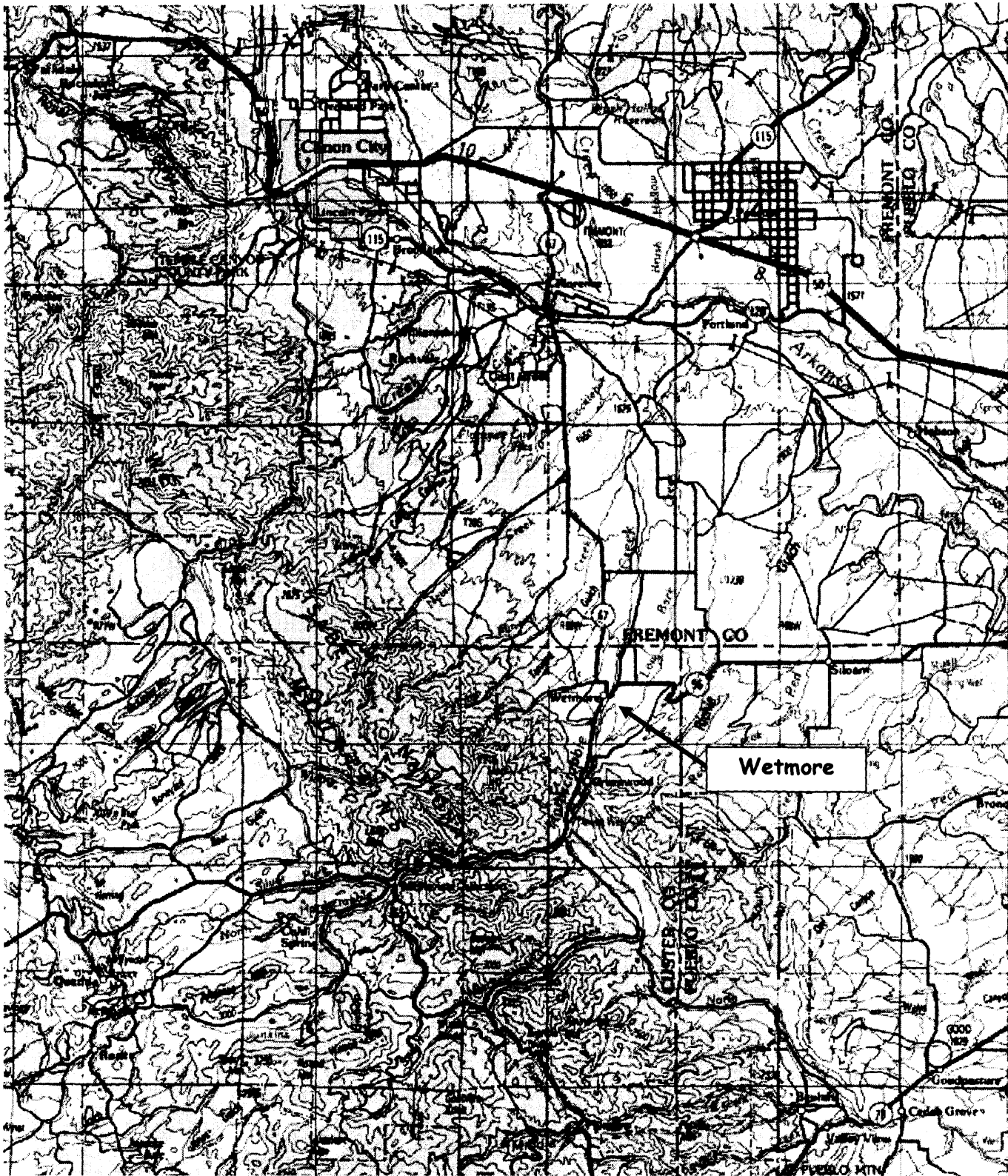
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## WETMORE AREA MAP

Source: USGS



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Wetmore Post Office

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Section number \_\_\_ Page 17**PHOTOGRAPH LOG – CURRENT**

The following information pertains to photograph numbers 1-11:

Photographer: Jeannie Culpin  
 Date of photograph: November 1, 2007  
 Location of negatives: Digital files submitted to National Register, Washington, D.C.

No.	Photographic Information	Digital File
1	Post office facade; view to the east.	CO_CusterCounty_Wetmore1.tif
2	North side of post office and west side of residence; view to the south.	CO_CusterCounty_Wetmore2.tif
3	West wall, south end; view to the southwest.	CO_CusterCounty_Wetmore3.tif
4	South wall, east end; view to the north.	CO_CusterCounty_Wetmore4.tif
5	Parlor, wallpaper and trim; view to the northwest.	CO_CusterCounty_Wetmore5.tif
6	Parlor; view to the northwest.	CO_CusterCounty_Wetmore6.tif
7	Kitchen; view to the southwest.	CO_CusterCounty_Wetmore7.tif
8	Fruit cellar, stair and interior wall	CO_CusterCounty_Wetmore8.tif
9	Fruit cellar, ceiling.	CO_CusterCounty_Wetmore9.tif
10	Ice house, north and west walls; view to the southeast.	CO_CusterCounty_Wetmore10.tif
11	Garage/shop, west side; view to the east.	CO_CusterCounty_Wetmore11.tif

**PHOTOGRAPH LOG – HISTORIC**

These photographs may not be included in Internet posted documents and other publishing venues due to copyright restrictions.

Photo No.	Photographic Information
H1	West (facade) and north side; view to the southeast. Photograph taken ca. 1885.
H2	Facade (west side); view to the east. Photograph taken ca. 1887.

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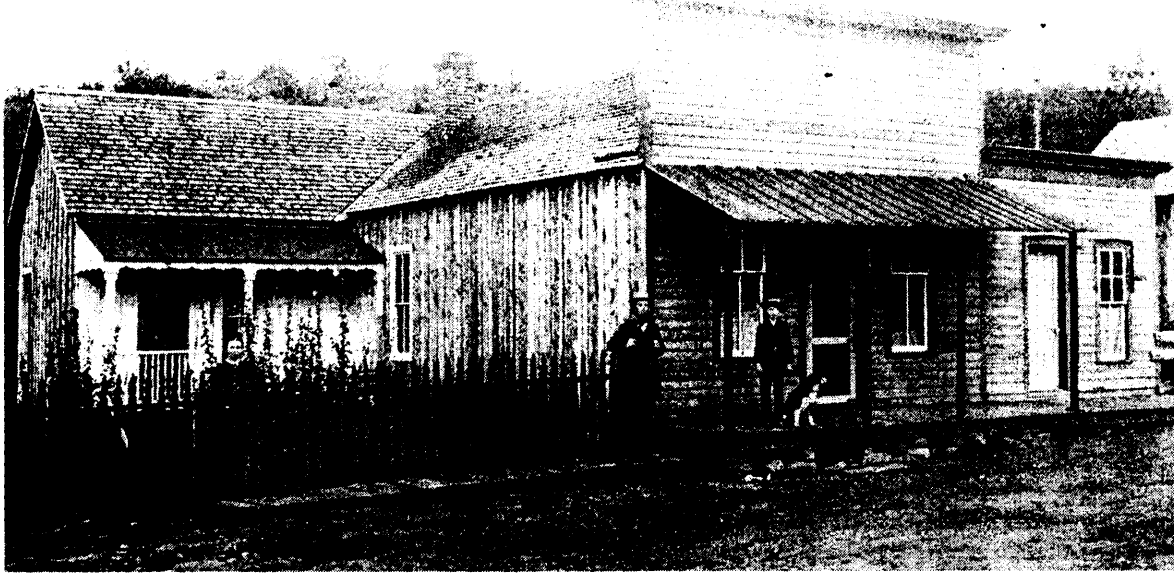
Section number \_\_\_ Page 18

Photo H1. West (facade) and north side of Post Office in about 1885.

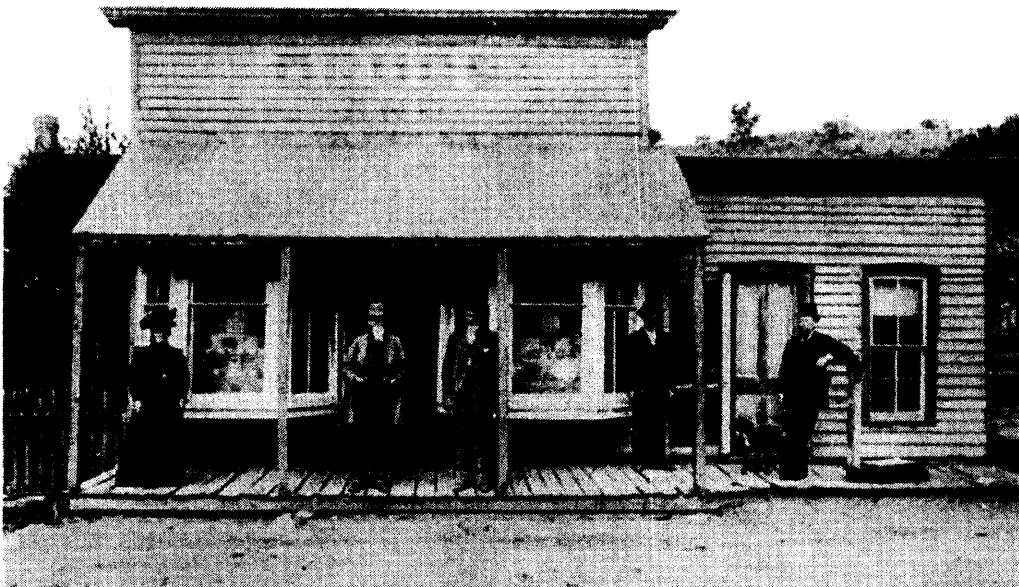


Photo H2. Facade (west side) of the Post Office in about 1887. Changes since Photo H1 include replacement bay display windows and a new porch roof. The ghost marks of a painted sign are visible above the porch roof; the roof obscures the lower portion of the former sign.