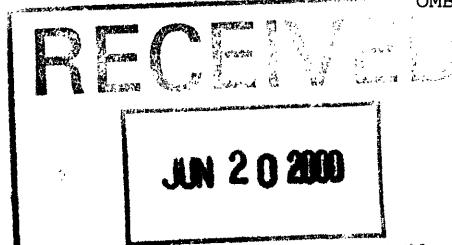


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual historic districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any 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: Lander County High School
other names/site number: Austin High School, Austin Elementary School

2. Location

street & number 130 Sixth Street not for publication N/A
city or town Austin, Nevada vicinity N/A
state Nevada code NV county Lander code 015 zip code 89310

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide X locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Ronald M. Jones, SHPO 6-6-00
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting 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 Edson H. Beall 7/20/00
 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):

[Signature]
Signature of Keeper Date of Action

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
<u>2</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> objects
<u>2</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

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

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: EDUCATION Sub: School

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: EDUCATION Sub: School
SOCIAL Civic/community center

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Renaissance Revival/Romano-Tuscan Mode (Palazzo Style)

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete
roof built up asphalt and asphalt rolled roofing
walls concrete and brick
other formed galvanized iron cornices and dentils
pre-cast concrete copings

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

- 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 a 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.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION/ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance 1926 - 1950

Significant Dates 1926, 1928

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above) _____

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder George A. Ferris & Son, George A. and Lehman A. "Monk" Ferris, Architects; Anderson and McShea, General Contractor, Winnemucca, NV.; Joseph Moss, Thomas Dron, Jr., and Herbert King, excavation and grading; Leroy Cassidy, sand and gravel

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets. See accompanying information.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

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

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 # _____

Primary location of additional data

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: University of Nevada, Reno Special Collections Library

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Approximately 3.86 acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	<u>11</u>	<u>493180</u>	<u>4371360</u>	3	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
2	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	4	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
	<u> </u>	<u>See continuation sheet.</u>				

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.) See Accompanying Sheets.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.) See accompanying sheets.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Timothy M. Sweeney, AIA
organization Sweeney-Rose Architects date November 20, 1999
street & number 3614 Lakeside Drive telephone 775/829-2207
city or town Reno state NV zip code 89509

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 the SHPO or FPO.)
name Lander County School District
street & number P.O. Box 1300 telephone 775/635-2886
city or town Battle Mountain state NV zip code 89820

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 average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 1

Lander County High School, Austin, Lander County, Nevada

7. Description

Main School Building

The school is comprised of two buildings, the main school building and the gymnasium building; both connected by a single covered corridor, and all within the Austin Historic District, a gold rush-era mining community. The school building was not yet 50 years old when the historic district was listed in the National Register in 1971, so it was not a contributing element at that time. The school building, built in 1926, is a two-story concrete and brick building set partially into the hillside, in effect a single story with a full daylight basement. The gymnasium building was built in 1928 parallel to and slightly uphill of the main school building, also depressed into the earth. Both buildings are generally similar in appearance, with some distinctive differences. Both have a symmetrical and ordered appearance drawn from an Italian Renaissance-Palazzo style, and both are constructed predominantly of a warm golden-buff or sandstone colored brick with shaped galvanized iron dentil detailed cornices running around the majority of the buildings' exteriors.

The main school building's front façade faces west, towards the valley and down the hillside, to present itself in the most visible and formal manner. The general adherence to the rules of Italian Renaissance-Palazzo architectural formality in the building's composition is all that more evident when one considers that the main entrances on the west side of the building are located on that portion of the site that is in fact the most remote from the primary circulation and approach points. That is, the formal entrances are located on the west side of the building, whereas the approach from the road is from the east side, leaving one to travel half way around the building from the arrival (back) side of the building to the entry (front) side.

The building's composition is entirely symmetrical, with the building presenting its central section as the more important, prominent, and dominant portion. The windows in the upper portion of the central section are oversized with half-round arching wood and glass transoms. The transoms are still of original construction and are divided into small lites with concentric and radial muntins. The brickwork around the central windows continues the simple yet classical lines, and visually creates the illusion of an enlargement of the windows for a more grand impression. Simple keystone-like ornamentation on the central windows gives elegance, dignity, and an understated, yet classical, formality to the building's central portion. All

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 2

Lander County High School, Austin, Lander County, Nevada

7. Description, continued

around the upper portion of the upper level a small concrete belt course delineates an entablature-like ordering below the cornice. The parapet walls at the roof are trimmed with pre-cast concrete caps that serve to simply and finally complete the Italian-styled ordering of the structure.

The school building's strongly ordered appearance is reminiscent of Palazzo Pitti in Florence, Italy. Palazzo Pitti, designed by the eminent Tuscan architect, Filippo Brunelleschi, in 1440, is an imposing Renaissance structure that was a testimony to the Pitti family's economical and political power that the merchant family had attained, and which later became the personal residence of the ruling Medici family. The architectural style of Palazzo Pitti is in the "di fondo" style, with a heavy looking base or basement level exposed to view, as is the Lander County High School building. Also similarly, both buildings rise out of a hill in an isolated and elevated position and are designed to be seen from a distance. The characteristics of both façades, nearly devoid of ornamentation, are simple and without unnecessary details in keeping with the design to be viewed from afar. The overall appearance is heavy, the abundant windows are lacking cornices, the repetitious and oversized arched windows are positioned to create a rhythm of alternating voids and solids, and the tops of both buildings are crowned with a restrained and simple cornice. When the compositions of both buildings are considered, both the Lander County High School and Palazzo Pitti create a strong, flat, and dominating appearance. Due to the strong resemblance of the two buildings, it is very conceivable that the Reno architects who designed the building either visited Palazzo Pitti at some time or knew of its existence from some source, although there has not yet been found any factual basis to support such a suggestion.

In the Austin school however, the windows into the basement level are not arched as they are at Palazzo Pitti, but instead are rectangular and simple openings that are understated to such a degree as if they were hoped to be unnoticed. Indeed, the entire lower basement level of the school is designed to be a monolithic and unassuming concrete base to the brick level above. The concrete walls of the lower level are without embellishment other than a simple concrete belt course that serves as a cap to the base of the building, just as a simple rowlock course of brick at the bottom portion of the upper level serves to create a simple, yet definite, base to the traditional ordering of the brick upper structure. The spare appearance of the lower level of the school could also be a result of cost saving efforts to avoid cost overruns such as were experienced on the Battle Mountain High School completed a few years earlier in the northern part of Lander County.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 3

Lander County High School, Austin, Lander County, Nevada

7. Description, continued

The two flanking portions on the west side of the building are slightly set back from the front façade, with a classically pediment-shaped ornamentation placed over rectangular column-framed door openings at the top of simple exterior concrete stairs that allude to a grander period. Whereas a single, central grand staircase and entry might be expected on the formal side of the building, the architects instead chose to allow the interior circulation and interior functions, combined with the Building Code required separation of exits, to dictate that two separate entries/exits be constructed. The appearance if not the actual occurrence of multiple entrances is also in keeping with orderings found in late-Renaissance buildings such as the Palazzo Pitti in Florence, Italy. Indeed, if the large arched windows were to have their bases situated along the belt course of the lower level and then the massing of the central section of the school would be similar to the Palazzo Pitti.

Both of the flanking portions of the building exhibit smaller, simpler, and less important-appearing rectangular windows without the radiused transoms. Perhaps so as to not detract from the effect of the central portion of the building or perhaps for structural or financial reasons, no windows appear on the south façade on the flanking portions of the building. Instead, the more simple windows of the upper lateral and rear portions of the building are present only on the east, north, and south sides. Again, as was begun on the west side, the north, east, and south lower portions of the building below the belt course consist of a plain concrete wall with simple rectangular window openings.

Currently the base of the main school structure is painted in an off-white color with a slightly pink tint, as are the wood window and doorframes. However, it is believed that the original colors were not as they are now. The actual original colors are still to be determined.

The Gymnasium Building

The gymnasium building, built in 1928, is an even sparer version of the main school building. Also depressed into the earth, the gym loses most of its slightly pink concrete base below grade. As a result, the impression

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 4

Lander County High School, Austin, Lander County, Nevada

7. Description, continued

is that of a smaller, less-noticeable, and more modern tan brick building with large rectangular window openings and a steeply sloping gray roof. Indeed, the gym relates to the school building primarily through its use of the same colored brick, the same concrete foundation/base, the same concrete belt course, the same concrete wall copings, and similar formed galvanized iron cornices.

Today, the glazing in the steel industrial windows, consisting of both fixed and venting sashes, has been painted out an off-white color. The gym has both a galvanized iron cornice and pre-cast concrete copings atop its parapets, both to be in keeping with the chosen style. Similarly, the gym too has a small belt course that creates a semblance of an entablature below its cornice.

The remainder of the site consists today of gravel-surfaced playgrounds to the immediate south, west, and north, asphalt parking lots and streets to the southeast, east, and northeast, and undeveloped or cleared portions of hillside and level sites below to the west and northwest.

Physical Condition of the Property

Since the time of the buildings' original construction, the school and gymnasium have seen continued use and generally good maintenance. Few changes have been made to the buildings that cannot be satisfactorily reversed, resulting in a high degree of integrity for the buildings. At some time, many of the original wood double-hung windows of the school building were replaced with aluminum casements that are now recognized as a poor substitute for historically correct replacements. Similarly, the entrance doors have been replaced with aluminum and glass assemblies. Both the door and window conditions are desired by the citizens to be corrected. The original steel windows on the gymnasium have fared better and are still in place and being maintained as intact as possible. The roof of the school building is generally not visible behind its parapets, and so the roofing repairs do not detract from its appearances. The gymnasium roof, however, is steeply pitched and exposed to view. The asphalt rolled roofing should be replaced with a more compatible material. A small addition to the north side of the gymnasium for a weight lifting and storage room, however, is not in keeping with the building's character and it is desired to correct this situation either by its removal or refinishing. Some portions of the building are beginning to require more serious attention. This includes the

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7, 8 Page 5

Lander County High School, Austin, Lander County, Nevada

7. Description, continued

formed galvanized iron cornices and dentils, and the precast concrete parapet caps that are beginning to fail from years of wind and ice exposure. The chief limitation to maintaining the buildings in better condition, however, is money.

Current And Future Threats

As of this writing, there are discussions in Lander County that cast a shadow over the future of the Austin school. The possibility of "moth balling" the school and moving the students to another location has been the subject of debate by school board members. Many residents of Austin believe that the only chance to save their school is to obtain the school's registration on the National Register of Historic Places in order to obtain the funding necessary to make up the monetary shortfall and to stabilize and even improve the condition of the school. It is feared that if the school is closed, it may never reopen and will eventually decay to a point where it cannot be rehabilitated. That fear has been proven by history to be real and accurate, as shown by the poor conditions of much of what remains of historic Austin, Nevada, now something of a collection of historic buildings in various states of disrepair. With the history of the past portending the pitfalls of the future, the Austin residents even more vigilantly are rallying behind the efforts to save their school, one of the last of the local landmarks still surviving.

8. Statement of Significance

The Lander County High School, later known as the Austin High School, and now the Austin Elementary School, is significant under Criterion A for its role in the local history of education, civic importance, and politics. It is also significant under criterion C for its Italian Renaissance-Palazzo style of architecture by a prominent team of Reno architects, George A. Ferris and his son, Lehman A. "Monk" Ferris, together George A. Ferris and Son. As such, the building represents the work of these local masters. Further, the school was the first new high school in the Lander County School District and was designed to incorporate design features to enhance the educational experience and to utilize the latest building technology.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 6

Lander County High School, Austin, Lander County, Nevada

8. Statement of Significance, continued

Criterion A

History of Austin, Nevada

Austin, a famous silver camp of 1862, is on U.S. 50, almost in the middle of the state. The *Mining and Scientific Press* of March 24, 1883, states that David Buel laid out the townsite and “named it for his partner, Alvah C. Austin;” whereas the *De Lamar Lode* of April 30, 1903, reports that John Austin is the pioneer so honored. The name is said also to commemorate Leander Kelse Austin, and uncle of George Austin, the developer of the Jumbo Mine in Humboldt County. Another version of the name story relates that David Buel, named the town for his native city, Austin, Texas (Carlson 1974:43).

The site originally had been named *Pony*, since it was in a steep Toiyabe canyon so denoted. Riders of the Pony Express had designated the canyon thus, because they often shortened their route by taking it instead of the usual pass. In May, 1862, William M. Talcott, a station agent for the Overland Stage in Jacobsville (eight miles southwest of what was to become Austin), stumbled over some rich silver float in Pony Canyon, and named the discovery the *Pony Ledge* (Carlson 1974:43).

The resulting Reese River excitement brought an estimated 10,000 people to the area in 1863, and Austin was created, with city lots selling for about \$8,000 in gold. In March 1863, John Frost built the first dwelling in Austin, a cabin of logs. He and his partners were instrumental in forming the Manhattan Company, named by New York capitalists who bought it. A territorial post office was established on November 20, 1863. The first settlement was around the camp and mine of two men named Marshall and Cole and was called *Clifton*. Later a site farther up the canyon was selected, and on February 17, 1864, Clifton, Austin, and Upper Austin were incorporated as the City of Austin. Austin was made the seat of Lander County (created December 19, 1862) comprising what are now Lander, Eureka, White Pine, and Elko counties, or roughly one-third of the state (Carlson 1974:43).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 7

Lander County High School, Austin, Lander County, Nevada

8. Statement of Significance, continued

The decline of Austin had begun by the time of the completion in 1880 of the Nevada Central Railroad (NCR), of which it was the southern terminus. *Austin Junction* designated the point of connection of the NCR and the Austin City Railroad (ACRR), which for a short time was operated by mule-power (Carlson 1974:43). Austin's railroads were abandoned in 1938 (Nevada Writers' project 1991:260). In addition to having been the center of one of the greatest mining areas of the state, an agency for Wells Fargo, a relay point on the transcontinental telegraph, Austin was the home of Emma Wixom, who as Emma Nevada was to become one of the great internationally-known operatic sopranos of her day (Nevada's Writer Project 1991:260).

Austin also has the distinction of being the home of the only newspaper in Nevada published continuously since May 16, 1863. The *Reese River Reveille* had fame nearly equal to that of the *Territorial Enterprise* of Virginia City. The Lander County seat served as a point of distribution and an educational center for isolated ranching and mining communities. Uranium ore was discovered in the Reese River Mining District in 1953. Austin lost county seat status to Battle Mountain in 1979.

The first school in Austin was in a brush tent set up in October 1863. By 1867, in addition to the public school, Austin offered several private schools teaching French, vocal and instrumental music, dancing, and calisthenics. In the twentieth century, Austin served as a distribution and educational center of isolated ranching and mining communities. At the time of the school's design and construction, Nevada and the United States were in an era marked by the enactment of Prohibition, the Chinese Revolution, and a diphtheria epidemic. Still Austin's focus was on its own events and culture. In 1925 and 1926, the local mining industry and the new school were the main topics in the *Reese River Reveille*. Austin was recognized for its historical significance rather early in the National Register program, being listed on November 23, 1971. The district includes numerous historic structures dating from 1863 to 1900 still standing in various conditions.

Today, Austin is known as a little, picturesque, sleepy, and even poor old mining town sitting along U.S. Highway 50, named the "Loneliest Road in America." This road is the modern version and extension of a

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 8

Lander County High School, Austin, Lander County, Nevada

8. Statement of Significance, continued

portion of the Pony Express Trail through the Pony Canyon, and the route of the Lincoln Highway from the 1920s. The road serves as Austin's main link to the larger communities of Eureka and Ely to the east and to Fallon, Reno, and Carson City to the west. Currently, business and government leaders along the route that traces its beginnings to covered wagons and horseback riders are campaigning for Congress to designate their road and its communities as a National Heritage Area. Ely, Eureka, and Austin, each with its own cultural history celebrations, such as Austin's "Gridley Days," are promoting their events in a jointly-coordinated program called the "Great Basin Celebrations."

History of the Lander County High School

The current Austin Elementary School began its history as the Lander County High School, a combined K-12 school, completed in 1926. This was made possible by the 1925 Nevada State Legislature and its approval of Senate Bill 61, authorizing the Board of the Lander County Commissioners to issue construction bonds in an amount not to exceed \$55,000. The school building immediately became the cultural and educational focus of the small historic mining community of Austin. While the local celebration of the new school building was soon extended and heightened by the construction in 1928 of a new adjoining gymnasium building, in Battle Mountain, Austin's neighbor to the north, the discussions of the school buildings often yielded the opposite reactions, sentiments of disdain and resentment. Then, now, and even prior to the school's construction being authorized, the Lander County High School and its gymnasium have been a true physical representation of and a prime issue in the continuing rivalry between the two Lander County towns of Austin and Battle Mountain. Indeed, the political contest between the two has not been limited to Lander County. As described in the March 6, 1926 edition of the *Reese River Reveille*, the funding of the school "was the cause of a bitter contest in the state legislature last winter . . ."

From the start of the school's history, this intracounty rivalry between Austin and Battle Mountain shaped the entire context of the school's existence. Whereas since the County's formation in 1862, and for many generations after up until 1979, when the growth rate of Battle Mountain outpaced Austin's and it wrested political control from Austin and became the new County seat, the small mining town of Austin held the reins

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 9

Lander County High School, Austin, Lander County, Nevada

8. Statement of Significance, continued

of government and was able to have the county's first high school erected in Austin, much to Battle Mountain's displeasure.

The history of the political battles to fund the School underscores the political divisions. Even after the school's final authorization by Senate Bill #61, residents of Battle Mountain presented a petition opposing the issuance of bonds for the construction of the school. The petition was deemed valid and forced Lander County to hold a special election on May 15, 1925, to authorize bonds for "the acquisition of a site and for the construction, equipment and furnishing of a high school building, in the town of Austin, Nevada." True to form, the election results reflected the political and social division between Battle Mountain and Austin. Whereas Austin citizens voted 273 "for" and 21 "against," Battle Mountain citizens voted to the contrary with 62 "for," and 215 "against." With the surrounding precincts making up the difference at 70 "for," and 21 "against." The final tally was 405 "for" and 257 "against," and the sale of bonds was authorized. The political division between the two towns was underscored in several editorials in the *Reese River Reveille*, one on April 18, 1925 that blasted the political ploys. The editor wrote, "Of all the most puertle (sic) twaddle that could be imagined by even the semblance of the brain-fagged pensioner of the taxpayers of Lander County none could be more far-fetched and void of foundation than the pre-election screed being circulated to confuse the minds of the votors (sic) and inflame the passions of a few partisans who believe in the rule or ruin policy."

Although the *Reese River Reveille*'s January 30, 1926 advertisement entitled "Request For Bids" stated that bids for construction of the school were to be received by the architects on March 31, 1926 at noon in the architects' office in Reno, Nevada, it is believed that the date was a typographic error. The actual bid date was probably either February 28, 1926 or early in the following month of March, since the same newspaper advertisement showed the last publication date of the advertisement to be February 28th, a date that would normally be in advance of the bid date. Moreover, a March 6, 1926 article in the *Reese River Reveille* reports that the bids were received prior to that article's date and that the low bidder, Anderson & McShea of Winnemucca, Nevada, was awarded the construction contract for \$39,895.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 10

Lander County High School, Austin, Lander County, Nevada

8. Statement of Significance, continued

Later, the October 9, 1926 *Reese River Reveille* newspaper reported that the fall school term began on September 7, and that the elementary teachers had to begin their sessions in the old school building because the new furnishings did not arrive until 10 days later. The same edition reported that the recently completed Lander County High School, in Austin was dedicated on October 6, 1926, "before a large and interested audience." The event was reported as follows:

Mr. J.M. Hiskey of the Lander County School Board reportedly presided and presented a brief resume of the school board's work in the construction of the high school, stating that the complete cost of the building was within the proceeds of the sale of the \$55,000 bond issue. Mr. E.L. Lemaire, member of the Lander County School Board, reportedly 'recalled from his experiences as a member of the board in connection with the Lander County high school at Battle Mountain and assured those present that the Austin school building is the best arranged and constructed building the money could erect.' The evening's events, reportedly 'improvised,' included additional public addresses by School Board members, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the Sheriff, musical presentations by the Instructor of Music, local Austin citizens, a Washington, D.C. visitor, a school yell by the pupils, a dance with music provided by an orchestra from Eureka, Nevada, and finally, the culmination of the evening was reported to be a midnight luncheon served in the basement of the building. The newspaper article noted how 'there were many distinguished out of town guests in attendance' and how 'Eureka came over twenty-five strong and Round Mountain was down in goodly number.' Interestingly, however, no guests from Battle Mountain, other than those associated with the school board, if any, were reported to be in attendance.

The schools' siting on the property is characteristic of the early mining towns in rural Nevada that began as random tent camps and "glory holes." The buildings sit at an odd angle, +/-19 degrees, with respect to the orthogonal grid of city street right-of-ways superimposed upon the town. Rather than conforming to this grid, the buildings are situated to conform to the contours of the site and its winding roadways. Like the built roads, the buildings in the town often are constructed so that they cross rights-of-way and property lines. The

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 11

Lander County High School, Austin, Lander County, Nevada

8. Statement of Significance, continued

two school buildings both straddle across the full width of the Reese Street right-of-way and cover several lots in two separate blocks. Although the school was built in 1926, the ownership of portions of the property can be traced back only as far as 1931. The property history as determined to date is as follows:

Criterion C

Architecture

The Lander County High School was built in the Italian Renaissance-Palazzo Style, also known as Italian Renaissance Revival, popular in the United States from approximately 1890 to 1930. The style emulates the Renaissance palazzi of Northern Italy, of which Palazzo Pitti, in Florence, Italy is one such example. Palazzo Pitti, designed by the eminent Tuscan architect, Filippo Brunelleschi, in 1440, is an imposing Renaissance structure that was a testimony to the Pitti family's economical and political power that the merchant family had attained. The building later became the personal residence of the ruling Medici family. It was Brunelleschi who invented the one-point perspective in architecture. Spiro Kostoff described Brunelleschi's motivations: "Brunelleschi wanted his buildings experienced as if they were projected on a perspective grid, as if the user were walking into a painted picture—and indeed the difference between architecture and painting in the Renaissance becomes one of artistic medium rather than kind." This was in contrast to the experience of classical architecture (Kostoff 1985:382).

Italian Renaissance architecture has experienced two revival periods, one between 1820 and 1860, and a later one between 1890 and 1930 (Harris). According to Marcus Whiffin (1969), the initial revival followed two modes, the Romano-Tuscan, which included examples following Florentine models, and the Northern Italian Mode. The latter, which occurred a bit later, was more highly ornamented than the former. Whiffin attributes the second Renaissance Revival to a shorter duration than Cyril Harris does, from 1890 to 1915. Regardless of its duration, it was during this revival period that the Lander County High School was conceived, for as a matter of course, architectural styles in Nevada tended to lag at least 10 years behind the East. The

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 12

Lander County High School, Austin, Lander County, Nevada

8. Statement of Significance, continued

motivation of the second revival was a desire for simplicity in response to the fussiness of the High Victorian period (Whiffin 1969:154-158).

American Renaissance Revival architecture reflects the following elements: a rectangular or square plan; Italian arched windows; façade symmetry; belt courses; elaborate or distinctive cornices; and a raised basement (Harris 1998:186). Elements clearly represented in the Lander County High School. The architectural firm of McKim, Mead, and White is credited with introducing the second revival to America in 1883. One of the most famous buildings of the second revival period is McKim, Mead, and White's Boston Public Library, built between 1888 and 1892. So closely does the Lander County High School follow the style of Palazzo Pitti; the inspiration for the school's style must have come from this original Renaissance example rather than any American revival. The exact inspiration for the Lander County High School is unknown, however. In fact, it is a rare design for Nevada schools of this period, which tended more toward Classical or Mission designs.

The Architects

Once funding was in place, the Lander County School District selected George A. Ferris and Son as the architectural firm to design and administer the construction of the school. George Ferris is known as one of Nevada's premier architects (Adkins et al. 1991, Appendix A). George Ferris' son, Lehman A. "Monk" Ferris is also recognized as an architect who was instrumental in designing many of Nevada's primary and secondary schools. Between these two architects, many schools and buildings were designed in Nevada that are listed in the National Register.

George Ferris designed the Neoclassical Governor's Mansion in Carson City between 1907 and 1909. The mansion was listed in the National Register in 1976. George Ferris also designed a number of school buildings in Reno, Nevada. Four of Ferris's commissions were undertaken between 1909 and 1915. These schools were known as the "four Spanish Sisters," or the "Spanish Quartet." Built in the Mission Revival style, the four schools represented the most modern and up-to-date of school designs and a design that was favored at the time by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. McKinley Park and Mount Rose schools

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 13

Lander County High School, Austin, Lander County, Nevada

8. Statement of Significance, continued

were listed in the National Register 1985, and 1977, respectively. The other two of the quartet, Mary S. Doten and Orvis Ring schools have been demolished.

Ferris owned and operated an architectural firm in Reno, and often worked closely with Frederick DeLongchamps, who is acknowledged as being Nevada's pre-eminent architect of the twentieth century.

George Ferris, like many Nevada architects, did not have formal architectural training, but opened an architectural firm in Reno shortly after arriving in Nevada in 1908. His son Lehman later joined Ferris, and the firm was renamed George A. Ferris and Son. The firm of Ferris and Son is attributed with a number of fine buildings in a variety of architectural styles. These include the Mayan Revival Las Vegas High School (1930-1931, listed in the National Register in 1986), the Reno Odd Fellows Building, (1929, listed in 1978), and the Art Deco El Cortez Hotel in Reno, built for Reno's divorce trade in 1931 and listed in the National Register in 1984.

Lehman (Monk) Ferris went on to become a very important Nevada architect in his own right. Lehman Ferris was born in San Jose, California in 1893 and came to Nevada with his parents in 1906. The Ferris family lived in a white two-story house at 801 Lake Street, Reno. Ferris began his studies in electrical engineering at the University of Nevada-Reno in 1911, studying under James Scrugham, who would later be State Engineer and Governor of Nevada. While at UNR, Ferris worked in Elko as an electrical engineer on the Lamoille Power Company project in 1913, and the next year at the McGill Copper Smelting Company plant, where he first began working for his father and Frederick DeLongchamps, writing specifications. In 1919, George Ferris sent Lehman to Elko to supervise the construction of a grammar school, and during the same period, the construction of DeLongchamp's Humboldt County Courthouse and the Humboldt Hotel in Winnemucca. It was in this period that Ferris truly began his career as an architect.

In 1932, during the Great Depression, Ferris and Son was dissolved because of financial difficulties, and the younger Ferris maintained the office as his own. In 1935, Ferris became the first Reno building inspector, and continued his architectural activities in the evening. While building inspector, Ferris became interested

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8, 9 Page 14

Lander County High School, Austin, Lander County, Nevada

8. Statement of Significance, continued

in the effort by the International Association of Building Officials to enact a uniform building code throughout the United States. Ferris was the president of the Nevada branch of this organization from 1939 to 1941. While president, Ferris was instrumental in getting the building code adopted in Reno. Ferris was also the first chairman of the Nevada State Board of Architecture, created in 1949. In 1945, Ferris once again became a full-time architect. In 1946, he entered into a partnership with Graham Erskine. As an architect, Ferris designed almost all of the elements of his early structures, such as plumbing, electrical, structural, and the overall design itself. In his later structures, which were larger and much more complex, specialists were required. Ferris, in the latter portion of his career, limited himself to structural and exterior design aspects of his projects.

During his career, Lehman Ferris remodeled and repaired many of the structures that his father had designed and built, such as the Mount Rose School, Orvis Ring School, Mary S. Doten School, and McKinley Park School. Ferris also remodeled the Rialto (Granada) Theater in Reno and the Governor's Mansion in Carson City. Some examples of Lehman Ferris' later structures are Reno High School, Wooster High School, the Nevada State Legislature building, and Harold's Club Casino.

The Lander County High School's mere existence was a bone of contention between the two major communities in Lander County. Nevertheless, the school has served the community of Austin for 74 years and is today a valued asset. In addition, the buildings are rare examples of the Italian Renaissance style of architecture in an otherwise predominantly Victorian town. For these reasons, the school significance is worthy of recognition by the National Register of Historic Places.

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8, 9 Page 15

Lander County High School, Austin, Lander County, Nevada

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 9, 10 Page 16

Lander County High School, Austin, Lander County, Nevada

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10. Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the Lander County High School encompasses Assessor's Parcel Number 01-115-01, a .34-acre parcel encompassing lots 1-6, 9-12 in Block 18, at 130 Sixth Street.

Verbal Boundary Justification

The nominated property includes the entire parcel historically associated with the Lander County High School.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section Photographs Page 17

Lander County High School, Austin, Lander County, Nevada

The following information pertains to photographs 1-4:

Name of property: Lander County High School
130 Sixth Street, Austin

County and state: Lander County, Nevada

Name of photographer: Mella Rothwell Harmon

Date of photograph: August 24, 1999

Location of negatives: State Historic Preservation Office
100 N. Stewart Street
Carson City, NV 89701

Photograph 1: Front façade of main school building, facing northeast

Photograph 2: Front façade of main school building showing architectural details of central portion, facing east

Photograph 3: South elevation of gymnasium, facing north

Photograph 4: East elevation of gymnasium showing windows and modern additions on the north side (gym floor is below grade by several feet), facing northwest