

(Oct. 1990)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

1692-2691

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

NOV 26 2002

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

HISTORIC NAME: Goodson Memorial School  
OTHER NAME/SITE NUMBER: Goodson School

2. LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER: North side of SR 456, app. 4 miles west of intersection with SR 406  
CITY OR TOWN: N/A  
STATE: New Mexico CODE: NM COUNTY: Union CODE: 059 ZIP CODE: 88437  
VICINITY: Seneca  
NOT FOR PUBLICATION: N/A

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.)

Jan O'Beille  
Signature of certifying official Date 11/18/02  
State Historic Preservation Officer

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  
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): \_\_\_\_\_

Walter A. Beall  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action 1-8-03

**5. CLASSIFICATION**

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**OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY:** Public-state

**CATEGORY OF PROPERTY:** Building (and associated resources)

<b>NUMBER OF RESOURCES WITHIN PROPERTY:</b>	<b>CONTRIBUTING</b>	<b>NONCONTRIBUTING</b>
	1	0 BUILDINGS
	1	0 SITES
	3	0 STRUCTURES
	0	0 OBJECTS
	5	0 TOTAL

**NUMBER OF CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES PREVIOUSLY LISTED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER:** 0

**NAME OF RELATED MULTIPLE PROPERTY LISTING:** Historic and Architectural Resources of the New Deal in New Mexico

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**6. FUNCTION OR USE**

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**HISTORIC FUNCTIONS:** EDUCATION: school

**CURRENT FUNCTIONS:** VACANT/NOT IN USE

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**7. DESCRIPTION**

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**ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION:** OTHER

**MATERIALS:** FOUNDATION STONE  
WALLS STONE  
ROOF WOOD  
OTHER STEEL

**NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION** (see continuation sheets 7-5 through 7-8).

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**8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

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**APPLICABLE NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA**

- 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 VALUE, 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:** N/A

**AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE:** Education; Social History

**PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE:** 1936-1952

**SIGNIFICANT DATES:** 1936

**SIGNIFICANT PERSON:** N/A

**CULTURAL AFFILIATION:** N/A

**ARCHITECT/BUILDER:** Works Progress Administration

**NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE** (see continuation sheets 8-9 through 8-13).

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**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES**

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**BIBLIOGRAPHY** (see continuation sheets 9-14 through 9-15).

**PREVIOUS DOCUMENTATION ON FILE (NPS):** N/A

- 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 (*Historic Preservation Division, Office of Cultural Affairs*)
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository:

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

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**ACREAGE OF PROPERTY:** approximately two acres

UTM REFERENCES	Zone	Easting	Northing
	13. A.	670088	4087388
	B.	670088	4087277
	C.	670001	4087297
	D.	669981	4087363

**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION** The boundary of the nominated property is delineated by the polygon whose vertices are marked by the following UTM reference points: A. 670088, 4087388; B. 670088, 4087277; C. 670001, 4087297; D. 669981, 4087363 (see USGS quad map).

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION** The site boundaries include all the resources historically associated with the school.

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**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

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**NAME/TITLE:** Kendyl K. Monroe, with assistance from Historic Preservation Division staff

**ORGANIZATION:** N/A

**DATE:** December 12, 2001

**STREET & NUMBER:** 189 Sayre Road

**TELEPHONE:** 505-451-7454

**CITY OR TOWN:** Seneca

**STATE:** NM

**ZIP CODE:** 88415

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**ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION**

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**CONTINUATION SHEETS**

**MAPS** Goodson School, New Mexico U.S.G.S. 7.5-minute series map indicating the property's location (see attached).

**PHOTOGRAPHS** (see continuation sheet Photo-16)

**ADDITIONAL ITEMS** N/A

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**PROPERTY OWNER**

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**NAME:** State of New Mexico, State Land Office

**STREET & NUMBER:** 310 Old Santa Fe Trail

**TELEPHONE:** 505-827-5760

**CITY OR TOWN:** Santa Fe     **STATE:** NM

**ZIP CODE:** 87504

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 5

Goodson Memorial School  
vic. of Seneca, Union County, New Mexico

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### Description:

Located in a remote corner of Union County, New Mexico, Goodson Memorial School is a small native stone building that served as the main schoolhouse for a number of small ranching communities in the Dry Cimarron Valley between the 1930s and early 1960s. Constructed in 1936, the square-plan building reveals a compact floor plan providing space for six classrooms and indoor restrooms. Despite deterioration to some windows and sections of the roof and floor, the school and its associated resources, retain sufficient integrity of design, workmanship, setting, feeling and location, to convey their historical significance.

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Goodson Memorial School is located on the north side of State Road 456, approximately 200 yards from the highway. The former gravel access road from the highway is currently fenced off and the school is now accessed through a gate to the east. Approximately 243' south of the school building is a low masonry wall (contributing structure) measuring nearly 29" in height. The school sits on level terrain covered with short grasses and *cholla* cactus; a few Siberian elms have emerged around the perimeter of the school building (see Photo 1). To north and south are low mesa-like hills giving contrast to the relatively flat landscape. The surrounding area is sparsely populated with only a few inhabited dwellings within a several mile radius. Though once used for farming, the land is now given over to large ranching operations.

The school is a one-story and basement, hipped-roof building composed of native stone. The building is square in plan and measures roughly 53' x 63'. The locally quarried sandstone has been carefully worked into uniform blocks and arranged in regular courses mortared together with thick joints. The moderately pitched hipped roof is covered with an overlay of wood shingles, mostly in a state of decomposition. Narrow rafters extend beyond the roofline, creating a moderately wide projecting eave. A brick chimney appears near the center of roof.

The front façade or south elevation features a centered recessed door surmounted by an eight-light transom (see Photo 2). Above the door is a concrete lintel inscribed with the words: "Goodson Memorial School, Dist. No. 18. W.P.A. 1936." The entry is approached by four concrete steps. Two modern steel doors have been placed in front of the original wood frame and glass light doors. Aside from this opening, there are no other windows or doors along this elevation.

The east and west elevations display a symmetrical fenestration of 12 double hung windows arranged in four groups of three (see Photo 3). The windows are for the most part a four-over-four glazing pattern with cast concrete sills. The majority of windows are intact, while others have lost their muntins and show deterioration. The rear or north elevation has a centered entry surmounted by a 12-light transom. Like the front entry, modern steel doors have been placed outside the original wood and glass units. On either side of the entry is a small window providing light into the former boys' and girls' restrooms.

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Goodson Memorial School  
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The interior of the school is organized by a central corridor approximately 8' wide and flanked on each side by four rooms and a restroom (see Figure 7-1). Classrooms 1-3 and a room that served as a lunchroom are nearly symmetrical in size and finished with plaster walls. Each classroom has narrow wood board floors and a remnant of a green or blue slate chalkboard and entered through a five-panel wood door.

Classroom 1, at the southwest corner of the building contains the remnants of a 16' wide platform of a former stage. The lunchroom, just north of this classroom, is similar in dimension to the other spaces and includes sinks and cabinets from its original use. Midway down the corridor is a door to the east giving access to the basement, which once housed a coal-fired furnace. The corridor is terminated at the north by two closets, and on each side a restroom containing three stalls. Much of the interior reveals water damage to large areas of exposed lathe and sections of deteriorated ceiling and floor members.

Northwest of the school are the remains of the former teacherage (contributing site) and a well house and windmill (contributing structure) (see Figure 7-2). The Teacherage consists of a rectangular plan building composed of concrete and stone (see Photo 4). The building has long lost its roof and a portion of its south elevation, but contains sufficient architectural information to convey its use and significance. To the east of the teacherage are a small well house and the remains of a wooden windmill (see Photo 5). The well house, square in plan, is entered through a single door on the south and composed of similar stone masonry as the school and teacherage. Just to the east of this structure is the wooden windmill, now missing its wheel and tail assembly and many of the cross braces of the tower. Together, the well house and windmill are considered one contributing structure. Located southeast of the school are the remains of a playground (contributing structure). These include the steel frame of a swing set and a balancing bar (see Photo 6). Though many components of the playground are missing, the existence of the remaining features are important for understanding the spatial plan of the school grounds and what forms of recreational play were part of the school's curriculum.

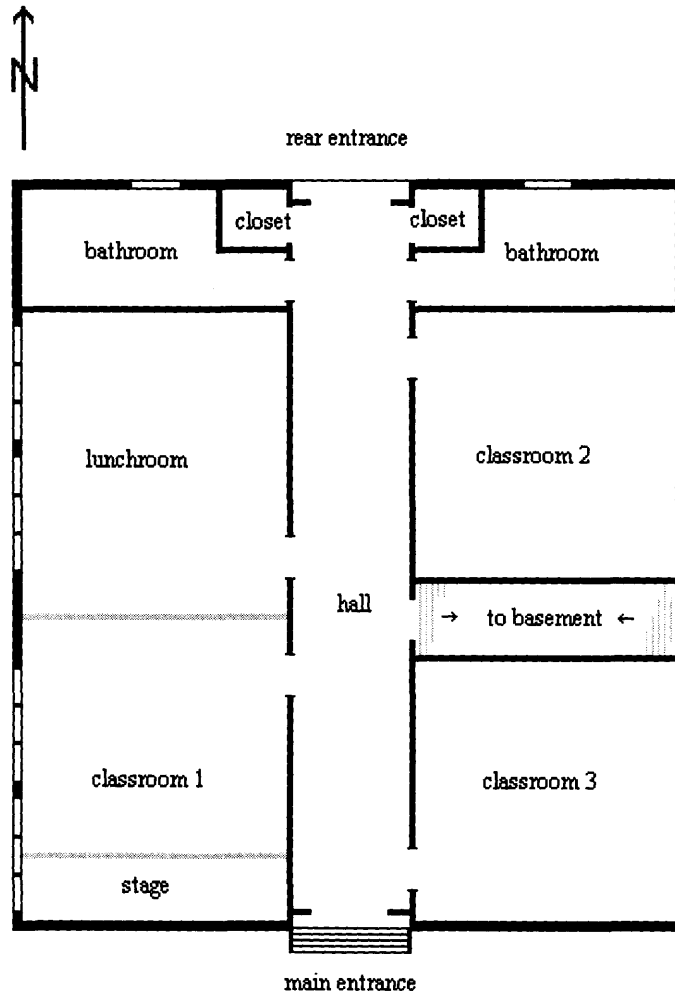
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Goodson Memorial School  
vic. of Seneca, Union County, New Mexico

Figure 7-1 Rough sketch of Floor Plan (not drawn to scale)



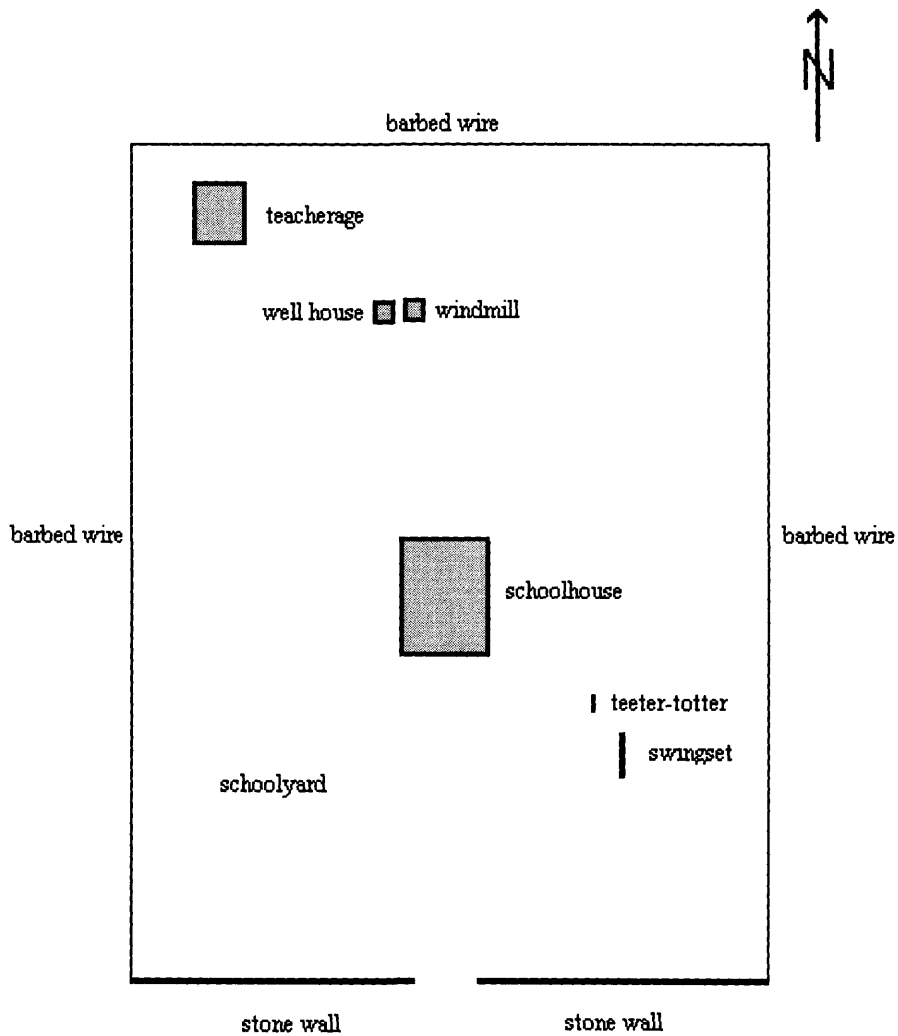
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Goodson Memorial School  
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Figure 7-1 Site Sketch Plan (not drawn to scale)





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Goodson Memorial School  
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**Significance:**

Constructed in 1936, with Works Progress Administration (WPA) labor, the Goodson Memorial School consolidated students from former homesteading and ranching community schoolhouses into a modern, four-room building heated with steam. Built of native worked stone, the school's construction reflects the labor-intensive methods of construction employed during the New Deal and blends harmoniously with its setting. For nearly 30 years, the schoolhouse provided shelter and education for children of the dispersed ranches of the Dry Cimarron Valley. Although the school would weather years of neglect after its final use in 1962, the building and grounds still communicate their significance and serve as an important historical landmark for the Valley. Goodson Memorial School meets Criterion A at the local level of significance in the area of Education, for its role as the sole public elementary school for this remote region of the state, and under Criterion A, in the area of Social History, for its association with the WPA's efforts to improve and build schools in Clayton County during the Great Depression.

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**Settlement of the Dry Cimarron Valley**

The settlement of the Dry Cimarron River Valley initially proceeded from west to east.<sup>1</sup> Madison Emery, who led several families from the Cimarron-Maxwell area to the mouth of Toll Gate Canyon, approximately 44 miles west of the future site of Goodson Memorial School, established the earliest settlement in 1865. There Emery developed an eastern and less difficult alternative to the Raton Pass and thereby opened trade and settlement of the region. His settlement became known as Madison, and by 1874 supported a post office. The settlement prospered until the Denver, Texas & Fort Worth Railroad (D.T.& F.W) bypassed the community in 1888 and established a stop in Folsom, eight miles away.

In 1871, the Hall brothers, James, Nathan, and William, drove 2,500 longhorn cattle from Richard Springs, in south Texas, to the Cross L Ranch, which they established approximately 31 miles west of the school. There they began acquiring vast acreage along the river, which they sold in 1881 to the Prairie Cattle Company, Limited, an Edinburgh-based cattle company that amassed several million acres of open range in New Mexico, Colorado, and the panhandles of Oklahoma and Texas. Other large ranches in the western Oklahoma Panhandle, then known as the Cimarron Territory or No Man's Land, influenced commerce and population of the Dry Cimarron River Valley. Kenton, Oklahoma, settled in 1866 and located seven miles east of the Goodson Memorial School site, became the banking point and agricultural market center for the region.

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<sup>1</sup> The Dry Cimarron Valley denotes the area paralleling the Dry Cimarron River in Colfax and Union counties, beginning at the east base of Johnson Mesa and flowing east across the north portion of Union County into Oklahoma and then into Kansas to eventually join the Arkansas River near Tulsa, Oklahoma. The term Dry Cimarron Valley is applied only in New Mexico to distinguish it from the Cimarron River, which joins the Canadian River east of Springer. Robert Julian. *The Place Names of New Mexico*. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996) 114.

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The survey of the area of northeast Union County in 1875, then part of Colfax County, opened the area to an influx of homesteaders. One of the first communities to serve the homesteader and rancher was Valley, about 17 miles west of the school. Settled in 1879, a post office operated under the name of Exeter or Exter from 1890-1903, and then Valley from 1903-1926. A school, perhaps the first in the region, eventually opened about a mile from the post office.

The vast cattle region of the Dry Cimarron Valley had few settlements of any size and consisted mostly of remote ranches and open range. Schools were typically located on ranches and were primitive one-room shelters with few amenities. One of these, the Wagner School, was located on Wagner Ranch approximately 1.5 miles east of Goodson Memorial School. Started by Robert Winfield Scott and Eleas Robinson Wagner in ca. 1906, Wagner School provided education for children from this ranch and those in the surrounding region. The New Mexico School, located about four miles east of the present-day school, was another remote ranch school of the era.<sup>2</sup>

By 1920 the area surrounding the future site of Goodson Memorial School claimed a population of 93 families working 24 farm/ranches. According to the 1920 census, Anglo-Americans of southern origin predominated, although large concentrations of families with Spanish surnames and a few of German or English ancestry operated ranches or worked in the agricultural trades.<sup>3</sup> Although irrigated farming developed and flourished for a period, the availability of water from the river proved unreliable. The principal crops for either ranch use or sale were alfalfa and hay for livestock, as they are today. As such, ranching and stock-raising became the main occupation of homesteaders in the region.

The small 160-, 320-, or 640-acre homestead claims proved to be too meager and led eventually to the consolidation of the claims into large ranches of many thousands of acres. The population of the area, most likely like that of Union County, peaked after the 1920 census and declined rapidly in succeeding waves after the 1929 stock market crash, the early 1930s drought, and the 1933-1935 dust storms. Most of the small ranchers did not survive the drought and sold out to large, privately owned ranch operations, or in some cases to the U.S. government, which purchased sub-marginal land that couldn't otherwise be sold, which are now part of the U.S. Grasslands management area. With this came the exodus of small farmers and homesteaders, taking with them many children of school age.

**New Schools and the New Deal**

Goodson Memorial School represents one of many federal relief efforts to lift devastated areas of Union County out of the effects of the Dust Bowl and Depression. Located in the northeast corner of New Mexico, Union County was situated near the heart of the Dust Bowl of the southern High Plains, with its small ranching

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<sup>2</sup> No published information about the settlement or development of the area around the New Mexico School is known to exist.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Commerce- Bureau of Census. Fourteenth Census of the United States: 1920- Population, Union County, Enumeration District No. 234, Precinct 2 (Cimarron).

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and farming and homestead communities, devastated by successive waves of drought years. Along with federal aid given locally to farmers and ranchers to keep them out of foreclosure, the Works Progress Administration worked actively to build infrastructure in small communities throughout Union County by constructing public buildings, roads, and drainage improvements.

A critical need of the county during the Depression was that of the repair and improvement of its rural public schools. Between 1935 and 1940, the WPA worked on approximately 60 new construction, repair or school improvement projects in Union County.<sup>4</sup> School projects became a major focus of Governor Tingley's effort to bring federal funds into the state during the Depression. For not only did the projects provide relief to unemployment, but also as Tingley described in a letter to President Roosevelt, addressed the "deplorable conditions...of the rural schools of this state."<sup>5</sup>

On September 13, 1935, then superintendent of county schools, Marion Thomason, wrote Governor Clyde Tingley a letter requesting the approval of 13 projects to build or repair public schools in Union County. In the letter Thomason describes the projects as "badly needed" to "provide better housing for children" and "to give employment to people living in districts" that had suffered crop failure for several years.<sup>6</sup> Approved on September 25, 1935, the unnamed school cost an estimated \$6,000 to construct and was described in a newspaper article as a four-room building and auditorium with steam heat and its own water and sewer systems.<sup>7</sup> Many of the new schools, such as Goodson, worked to consolidate the remaining students from far-flung former homestead and ranching communities that had been affected by the economic downturn. Accordingly Goodson School consolidated the pupils of the earlier New Mexico, Wagner, and Valley schools under its roof.

## Goodson Memorial School

The new school was named in memorial to Felix Emmett Goodson, a local rancher and politician, by whose efforts as county commissioner, the school was constructed. Born in 1892 in Anniston, Alabama, Goodson married Stella Ellis of Yell County, Arkansas in 1919, and settled on a homestead in southeastern Colorado. In 1925 Goodson and his family moved to Roberts Ranch, just northeast of the school site, to become its manager. Stella Goodson and another area resident taught at the Wagner and the New Mexico schools, as enrollment shifted from one school to the other. Felix served as a Union County Commissioner in 1933, and in 1936 was elected Chairman of the Commissioners. In the spring of 1935, the Goodson family moved to a new house they built on a ranch purchased just south of the school site. Felix died unexpectedly on

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<sup>4</sup> David Kammer "The Historic and Architectural Resources of the New Deal in New Mexico." (Prepared for the New Mexico State Historic Preservation Division, 1994): B-82-B-84.

<sup>5</sup> Clyde K Tingley. Letter to Honorable Franklin D. Roosevelt. 29 Jan. 1936. Governor Clyde K. Tingley Papers, 1935-1938. Box 11, Folder 335-337, Works Progress Administration, Correspondence. 1936.

<sup>6</sup> Marion Thomason. Letter to Honorable Clyde Tingley. 13 Sept. 1935. Governor Clyde K. Tingley Papers, 1935-1938. Box 11, Folder 335-337, Works Progress Administration, Correspondence. 1935. New Mexico State Archives.

<sup>7</sup> There is no surface evidence of the auditorium.

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April 17, 1936, at the age of 44, and the new school, adjacent to his ranch, was named in his honor. The school opened seven months later in November and described by a local newspaper account as “the last word in rural schools in the county.”<sup>8</sup>

After its completion in 1936, the community surrounding the school became known as Goodson, as the school became the center of activity for the area, including the site of community dances, political gatherings, box suppers, and Christmas programs. The school supported a small population of students derived from the scattered ranches in the region until the feasibility of busing students to Clayton resulted in closing the school in the early 1960s. Barbara Monroe, a student who attended the school between 1947 and 1951, recalled that the school sustained a population of 50 to 60 students who were educated from first to tenth grade. The students at that time were predominantly Anglo and commuted to school from nearby ranches. Classes were taught by two married couples who lived in the Teacherage and entertained themselves in the off hours with board games and outdoor activities. Some pupils pursued after school activities and played baseball against another school team from Kenton. The building was last used as a polling place in 1962, and has not been used since then. Despite the it current appearance, the building is revered by the residents of the Valley as a landmark and a potential site of interest to visitors seeking to understand the history of the region.



Figure 12-1 Goodson Memorial School 1937 (courtesy The Clayton News)

<sup>8</sup> “Goodson Memorial School Built in Cimarron Valley With WPA Material, Labor.” *The Clayton News*. 28 April 1937: 6.

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In 1986 Goodson Memorial School was surveyed and determined eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.<sup>9</sup> In the survey it was identified as one of a few extant rural WPA schools in the northeast section of the state. A subsequent 2001 county-initiated project to map schools in Union County came to the same conclusion. The school's significance for providing shelter and education to the children of the Dry Cimarron Valley and its role in local efforts to bring the New Deal to Union County warrants listing the Goodson Memorial School to the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance.

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<sup>9</sup> Boyd C. Pratt with Jerry L. Williams. *Gone But Not Forgotten, Volume 11: History of Northeastern New Mexico*. Prepared For the New Mexico Historic Preservation Division, 1986: pp. 221-222.

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**Bibliography**

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- Tingley, Clyde K. Letter to Honorable Franklin D. Roosevelt. 29 Jan. 1936. Governor Clyde K. Tingley Papers, 1935-1938. Box 11, Folder 335-337, Works Progress Administration, Correspondence. 1936.
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- Union County Leader*. 23 April 1936, pp. 1 (notice of death) and 5 (obituary).

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Section Photo Page 16 Goodson Memorial School  
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**Photo Log**

Goodson Memorial School  
Vicinity of Seneca, Union County, New Mexico  
Kendyl K. Monroe; all photographs with the exception of Photo 1 taken by James Hares  
New Mexico Historic Preservation Division  
December 2001 (Photos 2-6); September 2002 (Photo1)

Photo 1 of 6  
Setting  
Camera facing northeast

Photo 2 of 6  
Front or south elevation  
Camera facing north

Photo 3 of 6  
East elevation  
Camera facing west

Photo 4 of 6  
Teacherage  
Camera facing north

Photo 5 of 6  
Well house and windmill  
Camera facing north

Photo 6 of 6  
Playground area  
Camera facing northeast