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INVENTORY SHEET FOR GROUP NOMINATIONS: IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY, BOISE, IDAHO

NOMINATION: Kootenai County Rural Schools thematic group

SITE NAME: Prairie School II

SITE NUMBER: 13

LOCATION: South side of Prairie Avenue, about 1/2 mile east of Meyer Road

OWNER'S NAME AND ADDRESS: George L. Wood  
6700 East Prairie Avenue  
Post Falls, ID 83854

QUADRANGLE AND SCALE: Coeur d'Alene, 7.5'

ACREAGE: 1 acre

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION: The nomination includes the Prairie School and the property on which it stands, beginning at a point North 89°34'E, 588.6' from the North quarter corner of Section 29, T51N, R4W, B.M.; thence S0°26'W, 208'; thence N 89°34'E, 208'; thence N 0°26'E, 208'; thence S 89°34'W, 208' to point of beginning; all in NE 1/4, Section 29, T51N, R4W, B.M.

UTM(S): 11/510660/5287630

DATE OR PERIOD: ca. 1930

ARCHITECT OR BUILDER: unknown

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: architecture, exploration/settlement

EVALUATED LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE: local

CONDITION: fair, altered, original site

NUMBER OF CONTRIBUTORY BUILDINGS: 1

DESCRIPTION:

Prairie School II is among the small schoolhouses in the thematic group. It is a rectangular gable-roofed building, approximately 18 by 36 feet, with a gable-roofed entry wing extending from the center of the building toward the road. The original wood shingle roofing is now covered with metal sheeting, the only major alteration to the building.

With the exception of its lateral front and the entry wing, which was built perpendicular to the lateral dimension of the building rather than as an extension of it, the Prairie School conforms in many respects to the one-room schoolhouse plan typical in Kootenai County. It is of wood-frame construction with narrow clapboard siding. Viewed from the front of the building, the classroom chimney straddles the ridge but is offset to the right. The entry stoop is covered by a simple shed roof supported with figure-four brackets. The verges are projecting and supported by figure-four brackets similar in design to those bracing the front stoop shed roof. The eaves are open and the rafters are exposed; east and west gable ends are each decorated with a small semi-circular window.

As with other one-room schoolhouses, the floor plan consists of an entryway, with a cloakroom on either side, opening onto the main classroom. Several panels of double-hung windows are arrayed along the south facade of the building.

Prairie School II is an interesting variation on the one-room schoolhouse. Although similar to the standard form in terms of floor space, number of rooms, and wall construction, it is unique in drawing on bungalow-style exposed rafters and narrow shiplap siding. The perpendicular placing of the entry wing breaks the lateral monotony of the north facade, as does the array of windows on the south side of the building. The simple figure-four verge brackets, repeated on the three gable ends and front stoop roof, and the two diminutive lunettes appropriately positioned at the center of the east and west gables offer at once additional elements of variety and a greater overall sense of unity. The schoolhouse is in fair condition.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Prairie School II is significant for its association with early homestead development on the eastern end of Rathdrum Prairie and for its representation of a fairly refined example of utilitarian rural schoolhouse design. Together with the East Hayden Lake schoolhouse building, the Prairie School gains additional significance as an example of the range of refinement in the utilitarian mode of rural schoolhouse design.

Prairie School II, also known as Vesser School, is situated in the Central Prairie study unit. Of the ten schoolhouses that have been identified in this study unit, only five stand today; three of these--Ramsey, Shove, and Lower Twin Lakes--have been converted into residences and, in the process, altered beyond the point of eligibility for the National Register. As a result, Prairie School II and Upper Twin Lakes School are the only surviving unaltered rural schoolhouses in the Central Prairie study unit.

Prairie School II is situated toward the east end of the Rathdrum Prairie, about five miles northwest of Coeur d'Alene and five miles southeast of Rathdrum. The district in which it is located was traversed by the main Coeur d'Alene-Rathdrum wagon road in the early 1880's and consequently became one of the first areas in the county to be taken up by homestead settlers. The first Prairie School was built at about the turn of the century. In the first years of the 1900's, several thousand small irrigated farm tracts were developed within the immediate vicinity of the school, giving the community it served a decidedly agricultural orientation. Prairie School II was built in about 1930 after the original school burned.