

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 of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Roosevelt School
other names/site number North Casper School

2. Location

street & number 140 E. "K" Street
city, town Casper
state Wyoming code county Natrona code zip code 82601

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: private, public-local (checked), public-State, public-Federal
Category of Property: building(s) (checked), district, site, structure, object
Number of Resources within Property: Contributing 1, Noncontributing buildings, sites, structures, objects, Total

Name of related multiple property listing:
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination (checked) 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 (checked) does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.
Signature of certifying official: John J. Keck
Date: 11/13/96
State or Federal agency and bureau: State Historic Preservation Office

In my opinion, the property meets ( ) does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.
Signature of commenting or other official
Date
State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:
(checked) 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:)
Signature of the Keeper: Linda M. Clelland
Date of Action: 1/30/97

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

EducationSenior High School**7. Description**

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

CommercialCentral Block with Wingsfoundation Poured Concretewalls Red face brickroof Tar and gravel

other \_\_\_\_\_

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Roosevelt School, originally named North Casper School, is an impressive, though not imposing, structure especially in contrast to the modest neighborhood in which it is located. Designed by the state-renowned firm of Garbutt, Weidner, and Sweeney of Casper in 1921, the school building brings together elements of state-of-the-art architecture and social change to form a unique time piece in Casper's history. Smaller and stylistically overshadowed by the daunting Natrona County High School, which was designed by the same firm and constructed within a few years of Roosevelt School, this building was produced by the same forces of economic growth and community service, and stylistically it prefigures the high school construction. The school is essentially rectangular, follows a commercial pattern of design that suggests a central block with wings, and uses red brick to contrast with limestone ornamentation. Built to serve an economically hard-pressed part of town, the building has often been viewed as retaining its integrity because subsequent resources for improvement went to schools in more privileged neighborhoods. Two significant alterations to the school came much later with the addition of a gymnasium / auditorium at the north end of the school, proposed in 1948-1949 and constructed in 1959, and the remodeling and expansion to add administrative offices in 1995. The gymnasium / auditorium bears a different pattern of construction in its edifices, maintaining primarily continuity in color of brick. The recent addition demonstrates a careful attempt to preserve the general integrity of structure and design in brick pattern and ornamentation and used original window surrounds and sills although windows were replaced with modern materials and designs. The building thus retains its original appearance and feeling.

While not cramped by comparison with schools in dense urban areas, the school lacks the spaciousness associated with expansive playgrounds and landscaping of other schools in the city; indeed shortly after its construction two adjacent lots were purchased to provide additional space, a fact which underscores the limited space available originally. In 1948, with a total area of .86 acre, Roosevelt School tied with one other as the having the smallest grounds in Casper. Mature, but modest, landscaping is

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**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally     statewide     locally

Applicable National Register Criteria     A     B     C     D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)     A     B     C     D     E     F     G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Period of Significance

Significant Dates

Education

1922-1946

1922, 1924

Architecture

Cultural Affiliation

Significant Person

Architect/Builder

Garbutt, Arthur; Weidner, James;  
Sweeney, William

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

Roosevelt School, built in 1922 and added to in 1924, represents a style of architecture dominant in the construction of the modern public school system of Casper, Wyoming, having been designed by the premier architects of schools in central Wyoming and incorporating design elements common to other schools in the area. The school had its origins in the dramatic expansion of the population of Casper during the petroleum boom of the immediate post-World War I period in which the student population increased by 700%. In particular, it served as the neighborhood center of a part of town that suffered neglect and privation and that was characterized by constant turnover and a transient population. Roosevelt School, initially and briefly known as North Casper School, is eligible for the National Register under Criterion A because of its direct association with the growth of education in Casper.

Casper, Wyoming, is situated on the banks of the North Platte River in the interior of the state, approximately midway north and south and a little closer to the eastern border of the state than to the western, although far from either boundary. The location on the river derives from the importance of that river historically as a geographic force, as a path-marking feature for Indians and the earliest white settlers. In the effort to locate a path to the west coast, the Platte River proved the key as its tributary, the Sweetwater River, west of Casper, emanated from the area around the South Pass, a broad area through the Continental Divide where wagons could pass with ease. As mountain men explored that route and in 1832 took wagons through the pass, that route would become the path of more than a third of a million emigrants bound for Utah, California, and Oregon in the 1840s and 1850s.

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evident on the east side, at least on the southern half of that side, as firs and junipers break the rectangular lines of the edifice. Placement of the school building was constrained by space available in an already established area rather than in a developing part of town where the school could shape the physical direction of growth.

Roosevelt School. Contributing.

The wide main entrance to this rectangular building opens in the middle of the east elevation with stairs rising to the entry so that one enters the building between the first and second levels of the building. A similar entrance is situated on the south elevation; with the removal of the flagpole from the east to the area adjacent to that south entrance the school can have the appearance of facing the south. Indeed, the south elevation was briefly the original main entrance until the 1924 construction added the east entrance. Now the gymnasium / auditorium addition obscures the entire original north elevation at the ground level. The original building measures 135 feet, 5 inches along its east and west elevations and 70 feet, 8 inches along the north and south elevations.

The basic style of the building, common for institutional structures of its time, is that of central block with wings. On its east elevation, the front of the building, the center section projects from the main elevation in a manner to resemble a portico. At the entrance, poured concrete steps and a porch covered by a canopy with hipped tile roof enhance the effect. Double doors without panels and with single lites are flanked by sidelites and brick pilasters. Above the canopy two matched energy saving windows, installed in 1995, contain two lites, the smaller, lower lite usable for ventilation; the larger portion above is stationary. Each window rests on a limestone slip sill. The words "ROOSEVELT SCHOOL" are spelled out in block letters in a limestone piece that spans the width of the two windows, separated from them by a flat arch. The elevation continues up to form a parapet wall, capped to represent a plain pediment. A frieze, that courses around the entire building, is based on a single protruding header course of bricks laid on edge, with three courses of brick headers laid flat above it. Two more courses of headers with bricks laid flat begin a slight corbeling for the main element of the frieze, a pattern with bricks on end, then header bricks laid flat, with bricks on end again, separated by plaster diamond ornamentations, the whole then capped with protruding header bricks on edge. The

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original plane of the wall is then resumed with a common bond of brick masonry, capped by protruding header bricks on edge, themselves capped with limestone coping. The original specifications for the building called for the coping and the school name panel to be terra cotta, but this was changed to limestone in the bidding process. In addition, a large terra cotta shield medallion bearing the date of construction was planned for the area above the frieze and beneath the triangular gable, but was never actually realized.

The central portion of the east elevation contains most elements of architecture found elsewhere in the structure. The central part extends both out from and above the wings on either side which are much wider and generally symmetrical, though with significant differences in the details. Both wings contain two groups of windows on each of the two levels. On the south wing, the groups include three windows while on the north, each set contains four separate windows. This difference is explained by and points out the two stages of building construction, the south wing being completed in 1922 and the center and north wing being added in 1924. All windows are modern, energy-efficient materials and contain, on the south wing a large central lite surrounded by eight smaller panels and on the north wing a narrower vertical lite in the center flanked by nearly equal size. The windows in the north wing are narrower and each window in the second story rests on a limestone slip sill; those in the upper story of the south wing rest on slip sills made of header bricks laid on edge. A poured concrete footing provides the base of both wings and serves as a continuous sill for windows on the lower story. In the south wing a door and a window provide access to the heating unit room instead of windows directly adjacent to the center block of the façade.

The south elevation reflects the design of the façade so much that the south entrance is sometimes referred to, and used, as the front. It might even be proper to say that the east elevation reflects the south (instead of the south reflecting and being secondary to the east), since the south entrance was the main (and only) entrance for the first two years, except that the original plans and the main construction clearly indicate that the east elevation is the main entrance and the front of the building. Like the east elevation, the south elevation is a central block with wings type design. The central part is virtually identical to the central part of the east elevation even to the point of bearing the school name above the canopy and the flag pole has been moved from

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the east entrance to the south. The stone bearing the name "ROOSEVELT SCHOOL" is the same except that the south entrance begins and ends the words with a fleurette or asterisk symbol. The only windows in the south elevation are those above the canopy, and a smaller window in the east side of the central part as it projects from the plane of the elevation. The wings are each approximately twice the size of the central part and ornamental masonry provides relief to the wall instead of windows serving that purpose. That ornamental brick-work is recessed from the plane of the wall one-half inch and rests on a course of header bricks laid on edge. The same red brick used in the rest of the elevation is used only within the recessed area to form diagonals one brick length wide throughout the area separating diamond-shaped (and consequently, at the sides and top and bottom, triangular) clusters of darker red brick. These two recessed areas flank the central part. The frieze and cornice and concrete footing remain the same as on the façade.

The west elevation has undergone extensive renovation in the last two years with the addition of administrative and counseling offices and an elevator. At the same time, however, careful effort has been made to avoid compromising the integrity of the building. A rectangular addition now projects from the original building separating the south and north portions. Previously the south portion of this elevation was a mirror-image of the south portion of the east elevation. The elevation retains its original appearance with the group of three windows at the extreme south of the elevation. Where previously had been another group of three windows, however, the new addition projects westward from the plane of the wall two stories high at the wall and then drops to a single story both to the west and to the north. The brickwork resembles that in the rest of the building except that the corbeling is less accented and the plaster diamonds are now square and the intervening bricks are two columns of three headers laid flat flanked by a single brick on end; the ornamental band now is repeated around the small second story room addition and around the first floor addition as well. Because the addition does not rise to the entire height of the wall of the original structure, the ornamental band does not join with the frieze of the older wall. The south elevation of the addition has a single window on the first floor that resembles the windows in the rest of the building but has six lites; that window rests on a slip sill of header bricks laid on edge and a flat arch of bricks laid on end. The entrance to the addition is on the south elevation and is covered

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with an opaque glass canopy. A single window with two lites is above and east of the canopy. The west elevation of the addition rises only to a single story, continues the same brick pattern and contains three windows with six lites like that on the south side. The north elevation of the addition continues the same brick pattern and contains two windows, the eastern window containing two lites. Perhaps most noticeable in the addition is the absence of the concrete footing integral to the original building.

The remainder of the west elevation retains most of its original configuration. This was originally the rear of the building and had three service entrances at the ground level with no steps. One of these has been incorporated in the addition. The other two remain with metal doors, one projecting from the building with a completely enclosed small brick shelter, the door opening on the north of the shelter. The other door opens to a classroom (now the Commons Room); it is also metal with no lites. The windows on the second story of the north portion of the west elevation mirror those on the east elevation. They are arranged in groups of four with a limestone slip sill and a flat arch of bricks on end. The placement of entrances on the ground floor, however, forces an arrangement of those windows such that some are no longer immediately below their second story counterparts. The two entrances lie directly below windows. In addition, one other window, immediately south of the north door, is situated beneath the brick work that separates the two groups of windows above. Moreover, an extension, providing another door, of yet a different (1959) addition to the building for a boiler room and kitchen, replaces the northern-most window on the ground floor. Between the two additions, the poured concrete footing serves as a continuous sill along the elevation.

Gymnasium / auditorium. Non-contributing. The north elevation has been compromised by the addition in 1959 of a gymnasium / auditorium that is non-contributing. Much of this is a visual impact only since the original elevation is still visible above the first story. A single story foyer connects the new building with the old. The frieze continues around the north elevation and a single window is evident in the center of the second story. The gymnasium / auditorium is a rectangular building constructed of a similar red brick, although it shows no effort to retain the bond, the ornamentation, or the lines of the original structure.

Storage shed. Non-contributing. A small portable storage shed is

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located adjacent to the boiler room / kitchen addition and also to the gymnasium / auditorium.

Three additional modular classrooms west of the original building. Non-contributing. Three modular units are situated across the alley from the school and bear no architectural relationship to the original structure.



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As those emigrants eked their way across the continent, they unleashed a set of forces that would alter the West and as one of their products generate the circumstances responsible for the emergence of the city of Casper. Along their routes commercial developments punctuated the midpassage. Emigrants in need of fresh livestock, food, and other provisions and services constituted a substantial market for suppliers wishing to turn a profit. In the area of modern Casper, the Mormons in 1847 erected a commercial ferry to get emigrants across the river, a venture that lasted until 1851. In that year a toll bridge was erected by John Baptiste Richard to the east of the modern city (in modern Evansville, a suburb of Casper) which prospered mightily. And in 1859-1860 a competitor, Louis Guinard, built a longer, sturdier bridge seven miles upstream that would ultimately prevail. That bridge, a magnificent accomplishment, generated more traffic and more commercial activity so that the Platte Bridge, as it was known, became a distinct mark on the Oregon-California Trail. Indeed shortly after its construction a stage line began to use the bridge; the Pony Express crossed the river at that point; and the telegraph, which replaced the Pony Express, was held aloft by poles attached to the bridge piers.

As if to underline the importance this site held, the military proceeded to station troops nearby. This was because of another force unleashed by the massive migration: the tension with the native inhabitants of the region. Initially welcomed with ample signs of cooperation, the emigrants proved to bring more ominous developments unanticipated by the Sioux, Cheyenne, Arapaho who showed them the way, who cut grass for the emigrants, and who helped them ford rivers. With the destruction of the grass and the killing of game, with the spread of disease that proved especially fatal among the Indians, with the removal of bison to other areas away from the trafficked corridor, and with the increasingly frequent opportunity for minor disputes and disagreements to escalate into hostility, the location of troops only exacerbated the tensions. An actual permanent military station, named Platte Bridge Station, had come into being by 1864. Subsequent conflicts included one in which Lieutenant Caspar Collins was killed and the post was renamed Fort Caspar (official orders misspelled the name Casper). By the time this post was suddenly abandoned in 1867, the telegraph to be moved south and the post to the east, the area around modern Casper, between the two bridges on the Oregon-California Trail, had achieved significant development.

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Although the area was officially abandoned by the military, and although the bridge was burned by the Indians immediately, it was only a short period before white settlers began to pick up where the previous development had left off. The primary force in this was that of ranching. In the 1860s and 1870s and 1880s large cattle ranches spread from the Sun Ranch on the Sweetwater to the Goose Egg Ranch of the Seebright Brothers at Bessemer Bend to the Carey Ranch near the old Platte Bridge to the Brooks Ranch east of modern Casper. While these and other ranches began to emerge in the valley of the Platte, an actual settlement did not appear until 1888. In that year the Fremont, Elkhorn and Missouri Valley Railroad (later the Chicago & North Western) arrived in the vicinity of modern Casper in a westward course following yet again the trail of the emigrants and mountain men heading west along the Platte River. And a small settlement emerged with the town filing for incorporation the next year, appropriately, under the name of Casper, Wyoming Territory.

The town that began to emerge grew slowly and for two decades was but one of a number of small villages dotting the plains serving local cattle operations. Few stores existed in the first years. These included four saloons and restaurants, three livery stables, one grocery store, and two general stores. A small newspaper, a bank, and a few other assorted businesses also held forth. By the turn of the century the only stores in town were the general store / dry goods dealers, a bank, the gunsmith, a theater, a few saloons and hotels, and a small number of other establishments that appeared and disappeared with the regularity of the wind. Most buildings were frame. Fewer than a thousand people lived in the town at the turn of the century. In 1900 the city downtown area received a limited amount of electrical lighting with a system that proved to be as flickering and faltering as the light it produced. While the railroad had initially made possible the town of Casper, service on that line was discontinued in 1892; after that the only service was special and occasional until 1903 when the original line resumed its service. Early photographs show a sleepy town with seldom any excitement, with few visitors, with minimal business interaction, and with sagebrush growing in the streets. A fire department existed, but that department was voluntary with only quarters for privately-owned equipment comprising the fire department. The growth of the community in the first decade of the twentieth century was unspectacular, although Casper was clearly coming into a new stage of development with a greater population, permanent business community, and regular transportation.

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The development that changed that pattern was the discovery of oil, or, more properly, the active commercial development of the production and refining of oil in the area. Indeed, oil had been discovered in the area some time earlier by emigrants and had been explored and pumped in the 1890s. The only refinery in the state was placed in Casper in 1895, short-lived though it was. Through a series of reorganizations and take-overs, the refining business in Casper (and Wyoming) proved unsuccessful until the second decade of the century. In 1910 the Franco-Wyoming Oil Company was created and started construction of its own refinery the following year. The same year the Midwest Oil Company was organized and began construction of another refinery in Casper. Those two companies merged in 1914 with a recapitalization. In 1913 and 1914 Standard Oil also moved into the community, purchased land and began construction of a refinery. The oil activity increased dramatically, and the early (1923) historian of the community expressed it so: "During the latter part of 1916 and for nine months in 1917 Casper experienced a wonderful oil boom." That observation, however, lacked the perspective of time. In fact, the boom had begun probably in 1913 and 1914 and continued into the next decade. What that early historian observed was a bubble within the boom.

During the decade and a half that the boom could be said to have existed, Casper was transformed. People poured into the town. Within a period of around a year, in 1913 and 1914, the population went from under three thousand to four thousand. In 1913 the Post Office reported a population increase of a third. Then, according to one estimate, "the population doubled, assessed valuation doubled and redoubled, and there was still no end in sight. . . . Between 1918 and 1921 population doubled again (and woolgrowing fell off 60% and kept on falling)." The same source continues: "The population rose 50% by 1922, rose again 25% by 1924. Some claimed 35,000 for the city in 1925. . . . There were 200,000 sheep in the county. Two railroads serviced the local economy (one individual claims that "During World War I the Northwestern shipped a trainload of gasoline for the war effort every hour from the Midwest and Standard refineries, the largest in the world at that time"). Money in amounts undreamed before circulated. Construction of buildings and expansion of the community seemed endless. New values and habits and technologies infused the community and gave it a new orientation. Casper roared.

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Along with that boom came new pressures on the public service infrastructure, especially new demands placed on the school system. The school census, a register of the number of students of school age actually enrolled in school, reflected this growth and these pressures. In 1911 the city of Casper had a total of 473 enrolled students. During the school year of 1914-1915, the city had 958 young people who fit into that population; the next year, 1915-16, 1090 students counted among the city's population, an increase of 14% over the previous year, healthy and stressful, but not overwhelming, but double what it had been a few years earlier. The following year, however, 1916-1917, that student population increased by another 31% to 1428. Within a single year, this amount of population increase amongst the clientele of the public schools could only force an expansion of service of unprecedented proportions. The following year, 1917-18, however, saw the student population climb to 2414 young people, an increase of 69% over the previous year. Each year the student population increase was literally doubling the rate it had been the year before. After that, the rate slowed as the school-age population increased by only 29% the following year, 1918-1919, to 3125. The trend continued, though. Different statistics, that use a snapshot of enrollment on a specific date each year to avoid the fluctuations in enrollment generated by a mobile population, show an enrollment in Casper on the last date of each calendar year of 1623 students in 1918, 2158 in 1919, 2627 in 1920, 3458 in 1921, 3833 in 1922, 4768 in 1923, and 4541 in 1924. Whether viewed over the decade or incrementally, these numbers suggest that the superintendent of schools, A. A. Slade, accurately diagnosed the problem of the school system in Casper each year when he reported that "Increased enrollment continues to be the major problem in the administration of the schools." Nor was it just hyperbole that caused Slade, in 1924, to say, "It is doubtful whether any other city or school district in the United States is confronted with a problem similar to that which faces this Board of Education each year." The schools simply could not accommodate the pressures of new students placed on them every year. Partly this was a matter of physical space and teacher availability, and partly it was the simple shift to new schools. As Slade pointed out in 1923: "Because so large a percent of our school population is new, one of our greatest problems is that of a lack of uniformity in preparation. It is not unusual to find rooms where practically all pupils are new in Casper this year and have had their preparation for the present grade in as many schools as there are pupils represented." The pressures for expanding the system of public schools in Casper, at

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the very least, were overwhelming.

The actual number of students did not always attend class, however, and, in a way, the system counted on that constant of truancy or illness or dropping out. The schools themselves could not physically accommodate all students. Part of the forces at work involved the transient nature of the population that converged on this boom town. Also, high wages offered school-age young people in the oil fields attracted many. The 1919 annual report of School District No. 2 singled out the attractions of wage-labor along with influenza as the greatest causes for truancy which it regretted, but which it lacked the resources to accommodate if all eligible showed up for school.

In response to this boom in population and demand for services, the Natrona School District No. 2 launched a building campaign which multiplied the city's school capacity, but still the system could not keep up with educational needs. In the period following World War I, the city built and remodeled schools throughout town, including in North Casper. In North Casper, an area separated by railroad tracks from the rest of the community, the needs were especially acute. The primary school was referred to as the Burlington School because of its location on Burlington Avenue. It was small, dingy, crowded, and depressing and its weaknesses and limitations became increasingly obvious with each surge in population growth. In 1919 the school board determined that "The three unfinished rooms in the basement of the North Casper School should be made ready for use." So they were. But the population of North Casper grew probably faster than other parts of town because of low property values, available short-term housing, and the limited incomes of those who followed the labor market in the petroleum industry. That meant that the North Casper School would continue to be outpaced by demand and would also serve needs well beyond instruction in the basic curriculum. In 1921, before the new school was constructed, Vivian Dwyer, the principal at North Casper School described the neighborhood in plain terms: She said, "The conditions in this district are so different from those of the other districts, that it should be treated as a community in itself." Nor was there any mistake about what made that community different: "For the most part, this is a district of small homes, meager means, and large families. In very many cases the children come from most undesirable surroundings." And the children kept coming. During the year for which she reported, 1920-1921, the school's enrollment increased by more than 50%. That year a dental

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project meant that dentists came to the school for a period of four weeks and conducted a free clinic, providing cleanings, fillings, and extractions for at least 125 children. Said Dwyer: "That work was especially worth while, as a large percentage of the children in this district either would not or could not have been cared for through the efforts of their parents." In the new building to be constructed she sought also a feature perhaps unexpected and unappreciated in other parts of town: "I could not recommend too strongly the installation of shower baths." The school also took responsibility that year for distributing clothing to needy children and to widows in the area served.

In 1921 Ms. Dwyer anticipated a significant remodeling of the Burlington School. Classes were already being held in the basement, which, despite the remodeling, was most unsatisfactory: those rooms, she said, "are dark, poorly ventilated, and because of the way in which this building is constructed, the sounds from the rooms above are magnified in place of deadened. They are very poor class rooms and could be used more satisfactorily for the gymnasium and shower bath room already recommended." Even as she wrote those lines, the limitations were obvious; the school was running half-day sessions to try to accommodate all the students it could.

In 1921 the school board planned a substantial enlargement of the Burlington School to meet the needs required of it. By the time the board issued the specifications for the new building and then solicited bids, in the fall of 1921, however, the plan had changed. It had been decided to build an entirely new structure on the site. So reported the school board the next year: "Instead of enlarging the Burlington School it was found necessary to reerect in that location a new fourteen room building which is now almost ready for occupancy." Actually, this proved to be an overstatement; part of the building approached readiness for use and the other part was far from ready. The plans for the building, prepared by the esteemed firm of Garbutt, Weidner, and Sweeney, included the fourteen described rooms. For reasons still unclear, the project shifted to include only half the building. In the fall of 1922, the school opened only the area that is now the southern wing of the building. One reason for the alteration in plans involved a labor strike in the community. Indeed, shortly after A.A. Slade prepared his annual report optimistically looking forward to the opening of the new school in the fall, he received a letter from A. M. Garbutt that indicated a change in plans: "You are also advised that there is a strike of building trades workmen now on, dating to

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April 1. Since that time the contractor has been unable to get first class mechanics." Garbutt went on to tell Slade that:

There is some work that is very unsatisfactory and the contractor was so notified some four or five weeks ago. In some of the rooms in the northeast portion of the basement the woodwork was erected by laborers. In a number of other rooms the woodwork was put up too soon after the plastering and has swollen very badly. A great deal of this work will have to be replaced, and the contractor has been so advised.

Garbutt also told Slade that he did not want to pressure the contractors to the point that they would have to agree to union demands, so some of the requirements of the contract were delayed until they could be completed later "when skilled mechanics will once more be available and the building will have then thoroughly dried out, to allow the contractor to complete his work in the manner required." It may well have been this work stoppage by skilled workmen that caused the school to open with only half the building completed.

The new school, now known as Roosevelt School, after President Theodore Roosevelt, attempted to meet the same needs as its predecessor. When the new school opened in the fall of 1922, it had around 400 students on its rolls, but continued to grow. After December, 1922, the smallest number of students at school was never lower than 479--more than the total number of students in the entire town of Casper a dozen years earlier. Eleanor McLaughlin reported that the school continued to serve the same broad needs of the North Casper community:

We have taken special care of the children's health, have made home visits and distributed clothing with the help of the Welfare Club and Red Cross. One hundred and sixty-eight children vaccinated, more than at any other school. The new school with showers for the children and a kitchenette and rest room for the teachers will usher in a new era for North Casper. If it were possible to acquire more land for playground it would be a fine thing.

It truly was "a new era for North Casper." She anticipated enrollment the following fall at between 600 and 650 students. She also anticipated another development that would herald the new era: "With a new building we will find teachers will want to return to

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North Casper, parents and children proud of their school, . . ." The school as community center would be more than a school; it would be the first step in revitalization of the community. In fact, at the time it was opened, other organizations, like the North Casper Community Club, petitioned the school board for the opportunity to use the school as a meeting hall. It appeared that the revitalization was underway and was achieving exactly the results planned for it.

Unfortunately for that neighborhood, this revitalization came at a time when Casper turned its direction of growth officially the opposite direction; in 1922 and 1923 the direction in which city streets were numbered was reversed. Where the streets had been numbered, beginning with First Street (subsequently Third Street) moving northward, Second Street remained the same, but Third Street became First Street and First Street became Third moving southward. The city almost literally turned its back on North Casper.

The new era ended less abruptly than it began, but the decline was evident by the middle of the twenties. The boom had come to an end. Production of oil had increased dramatically and that accounted for part of the boom. Moreover, prices went higher too, and especially in the years immediately following World War I, when price controls were lifted, crude oil prices increased by more than fifty per cent, from \$2 a barrel in 1918 to more than \$3 a barrel in 1920. At that point, however, the unusual combination of greater production for increasing prices reached its limit and the price for crude began a sudden drop. By 1923 the price of crude was less than a dollar and half a barrel. Despite a gesture in the direction of recovery in 1925 and 1926, the spiral downward between 1927 and 1929 gutted the petroleum business. Part of the problem was the increase in the ability to extract higher quality fuels from crude, making the increased production of crude that much more redundant; part of the problem was the change in petroleum consumption making gasoline of greater demand than fuel oil; and part of the problem was the decline of competition in the petroleum business as the giants took control. All three parts can be seen locally with the ascendancy of the automobile, the sophistication of the refineries, and the consolidation of power. In 1921 Standard Oil, indeed the Ohio central core of the Rockefeller dynasty, took control of the Midwest Company. One refinery alone operated in Casper.

This was the trend in the nation and this was the trend in Casper.



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With an economy that had never been diversified, the dependence had shifted from agriculture to petroleum. With the decline of petroleum, the agriculture was no longer there to shore up the economy. During the 1920s the agricultural depression afflicting the nation worsened steadily after 1923 to be joined by the rest of the nation's economy in 1929, not to experience any recovery until World War II. Banks began to close, to be swallowed up by other, bigger institutions. Even the electrical power industry locally suffered the same fate. In 1913 the Casper Industrial Club, an organization of commercial boosters, proudly announced that "Owing to the presence of two electric light and power companies in Casper, each with a plant capable of supplying larger cities than Casper, both light and power are to be had at rates greatly below the average." In 1918 those two companies, the Wyoming Electric Company and the Casper Electric Company, merged becoming the Natrona Electric Company. In 1924, that organization was taken over by the Mountain States Electric Company. The process of centralization was abroad as fewer businesses operated in Casper. The boom was coming to an end, with the death knell for certain coming in 1929 with the stock market crash and the subsequent depression. The boom had been furious and powerful and seemingly endless, and before it faded from sight, that boom had permanently transformed Casper, Wyoming, including its school system.

North Casper continued to grow although not at the previous rates. By a perverse law of social planning, the building program of the school district proved adequate only about the time that the boom started to fade. In 1924 the Roosevelt School building was finally completed when the center and the north wing were added. That fall the school opened with a student population of 290 and increased only to 328 by the end of the academic year. Even so, a hundred fifty parents attended a dedication of the building on Theodore Roosevelt's birthday at which they inspected the new structure. And the school continued its broader social mission. The next year Ms. McLaughlin reported that:

During the year 1925-1926 the teachers of Roosevelt have tried to bring a closer relation between school and parents. This campaign began with the special visiting day and tea given for mothers during Educational Week. Every teacher has visited in the home of her pupils at least once. When the work of the pupil demanded it, frequent visits have been made and the pupil's progress discussed. Parents have been urged to visit and observe the class work to try to understand and help the

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teacher diagnose the case.

The years of greatest activity at the Roosevelt School were the early years. Almost as soon as the building was completed, with the addition of the north wing, the school population began to decline. In 1926 ten teachers served at the school, but by 1929 Roosevelt had one sixth grade class, one fifth and fourth grades combined, one third and second combined, and one first grade and one kindergarten; six teachers now fulfilled their duty in the school. The depression in the oil fields was accompanied by a series of worsening years for the agriculture sector, and, as both shriveled, the local economy that depended on that activity also waned and the population that had come to Casper on winds of hope trickled and then fled away in gusts of despair. By 1936 Roosevelt School had no sixth grade. In 1938 only five teachers tended the fires of enlightenment at the school.

The coming of World War II intensified the trend already underway. Five months after Pearl Harbor twelve citizens of North Casper, including the three who had sought permission twenty years earlier for the North Casper Community Club to use the school for its meetings, petitioned the school board "to arrange for the closing of the Washington and Roosevelt Schools before the opening of the 1942-1943 terms of schools." This they saw as an economy measure. The school virtually did close. In 1943 it had only three teachers. In 1944 and 1945 the classes at Roosevelt and Lincoln were combined and then in 1946, following the war, when Roosevelt was again open separately to educate the children of the area, it had only three teachers again.

As with the rest of the community and state, the prospects of Roosevelt School brightened with the end of the war and the period of economic growth that stretched into the 1950s. By 1951 the school again had a dozen teachers, turning the corner in a substantial way when it went from seven teachers in 1948 to ten in 1949. It was at exactly that moment that the school district conducted an assessment of building needs for the coming years. At that time only seven of the eleven classrooms at Roosevelt were being used. The distinction of the school was its cafeteria, the only elementary school in the district with such a feature. Two other classrooms were being used for assembly purposes. Roosevelt and Washington Schools were tied in last place with the smallest site (.86 acre). The total score assigned to the building and site and facilities was "fair". The consultants concluded their

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discussion of the school thus: "It is recommended that the Roosevelt building be continued as an elementary school center housing pupils in kindergarten through grade six; that a combination auditorium-gymnasium be added to the building; and that the site be enlarged." A decade later a gymnasium / auditorium was, in fact, added to the building but the site was not enlarged sufficiently to address the exterior space problem that had plagued it from the beginning, although the school did acquire the adjacent lots to the west of the school, across the alley where now modular school rooms and a parking lot reside. In the middle 1970s the building ceased to be an elementary school and was used instead as an alternate high school, a function which it continues to the present.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 9 Page 1

Roosevelt School  
name of property

Natrona County, Wyoming  
county and State

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**9. Major Bibliographical References**

Casper Industrial Club, Casper, Wyoming (Casper, n.d. [1922]). A copy of this booklet surveying the economy of Casper at the beginning of the 1920s is located in the Wyoming Department of Commerce, State Archives and Historical Research Collections, Cheyenne.

"Casper School Population Increases More than 700 per cent in Period of 10 Years," Casper Daily Tribune and Wyoming Weekly Review, Special Industrial Edition, January 22, 1922, pp.4,16.

Casper Zonta Club, Casper Chronicles, Casper, 1964.

(See Continuation Sheet)

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 10 Page 1

Roosevelt School  
name of property

Natrona County, Wyoming  
county and State

---

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreeage of Property** less than one acre

**UTM References**

|   | Zone Easting | Northing | Zone Easting | Northing |
|---|--------------|----------|--------------|----------|
| A | 13           | 391870   | 474606       |          |

**Verbal Boundary Description**

This building, 135'5" by 70'8", is located on lots 8, 9 and 10 of block 22, Nelson addition. The building dominates the described lots almost entirely. The boundary extends out from the exterior walls of the building approximately 50' on the east, west and south elevations. It extends approximately 25' on the north.

**Boundary Justification**

The boundary conforms to the historic location of the building.

---

**11. Form Prepared By**

**name/title:** Michael Cassity

**organization:** High Country Historians **date:** 7/30/96

**street & number:** 1714 Mill Street **telephone:** 307-742-8272

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National Park Service

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Cassity, Michael, A Survey of Historic Buildings in Downtown Casper, Wyoming: Final Survey Report, (Laramie, 1988).

Garbutt, Irving, "Boom Overshadowed Gloom in '25" Casper Star-Tribune, n.d., clipping in "Casper History, 1870-1949," file, Casper College Vertical File, Wyoming Room, Casper College.

Natrona County School District No. 2 Records, Wyoming Department of Commerce, State Archives and Historical Research Collections, Cheyenne. These extensive collections include:

Annual Reports, Superintendent of Schools

Teachers Directory

Public School Census, 1924, 1926

General Correspondence

Annual Report, School District #2, 1917-1932

Safety checklist for older multi-storied buildings

Report of School District Clerk, Districts 2-19, 1889-1951

Report of District Clerk, 1892-1925

Petitions, Notices, Boundary Board and Maps

School District Boundary Maps

Term Reports, 1894-1951

Inventory Books, 1936-1944, Roosevelt School

Administrative Records

Contract Records

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"New Buildings Bring School Relief," Casper Daily Tribune,  
February 15, 1925, pp. 1, 10.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Company Maps for Casper, Wyoming,  
1918, 1921, 1925, copies located in Coe Library, University of  
Wyoming, Laramie.

Sessions, E.B., A Study of Public School Building Needs in  
Independent School District No. 2 and Natrona County High School  
district, Casper, Wyoming (Columbus, Ohio: The Bureau of  
Educational Research, The College of Education, The Ohio State  
University, 1948). Copy is located in Natrona County School  
District No. 2 records, Wyoming Department of Commerce, State  
Archives and Historical Research Collections, Cheyenne.

Webb, Frances Seely, Collection, Casper College, Goodstein  
Library. This substantial collection includes specific files on  
Casper's school system and schools.

Wilking, Jan, Collection, Wyoming Department of Commerce,  
State Archives and Historical Research Collections, Cheyenne.  
This collection includes original drawings and specifications for  
Roosevelt School prepared by Garbutt, Weidner, and Sweeney.

Works Progress Administration Collections, Wyoming  
Department of Commerce, State Archives and Historical Research  
Collections, Cheyenne. These files include reports prepared in  
the 1930s on Wyoming history and social institutions. For this  
study the relevant reports are those of Edson Sellers, on  
architecture, and Nancy Stebbins, on Casper's school system.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Casper Industrial Club, Casper, Wyoming (Casper, n.d. [1922]). A copy of this booklet surveying the economy of Casper at the beginning of the 1920s is located in the Wyoming Department of Commerce, State Archives and Historical Research Collections, Cheyenne.

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Casper Zonta Club, Casper Chronicles, Casper, 1964.

(See Continuation Sheet)

## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of Property less than one acre** \_\_\_\_\_

### UTM References

|   | Zone Easting | Northing | Zone Easting | Northing |
|---|--------------|----------|--------------|----------|
| A | 13           | 391870   |              | 474606   |

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## 11. Form Prepared By

**name/title:** Michael Cassity  
**organization:** High Country Historians      **date:** 7/30/96  
**street & number:** 1714 Mill Street      **telephone:** 307-742-8272  
**city or town:** Laramie      **state:** WY      **zip:** 82070



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**SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD**

NRIS Reference Number: 96001633

Date Listed: 01/30/97

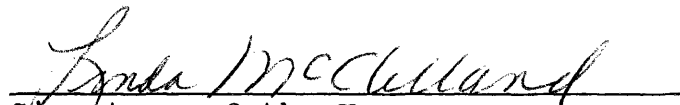
Property Name: Roosevelt School

County: Natrona

State: Wyoming

Buildings Designed by Garbutt, Weidner, and Sweeney in Casper MPS  
Multiple Name

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This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

  
Signature of the Keeper

January 30, 1997  
Date of Action

=====  
Amended Items in Nomination:

Sect. 5: "Buildings Designed by Garbutt, Weidner, and Sweeney in Casper MPS" is, hereby, entered for Name of Related Multiple Property Listing.

Sect. 8, Significance: Criterion C is, hereby, added as a qualifying criterion to indicate significance in architecture as the work of Garbutt, Weidner, and Sweeney. "Locally" is, hereby, checked as the level at which significance has been evaluated.

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Sheila Bricker-Wade, National Register coordinator, of the Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office was notified of this amendment on January 29, 1997.

**DISTRIBUTION:**

- National Register property file
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)