

413

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

APR 1 1993

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and 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 an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Willows School  
other names/site number 5CR 213

### 2. Location

street & number on Willows Lane (County Road 141) between Muddy Lane  not for publication  
(County Road 155) and Schoolfield Road (County Road 328)  
city or town Westcliffe  vicinity  
state Colorado code CO county Custer code 027 zip code 81252

### 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.)

[Signature] March 30, 1993  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
State Historic Preservation Office  
State of Federal agency and bureau

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register  
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Entered in the  
Signature of the Keeper National Register Date of Action  
[Signature] 5/14/93

Willows School  
Name of Property

Custer County, CO  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
3	2	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
3	2	Total

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

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION/school

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION AND CULTURE

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: wood frame, front gable

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE  
walls WOOD: weatherboard  
roof METAL  
other \_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

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

Name of Property

County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

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

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

SOCIAL HISTORY

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1889-1942

Significant Dates

1889

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

E. F. Kokowsky

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository:

Willows School  
Name of Property

Custer County, CO  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of Property One Acre

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 | 1 | 3 | | 4 | 5 | 2 | 8 | 9 | 0 | | 4 | 2 | 1 | 8 | 0 | 3 | 0 |  
Zone Easting Northing  
2 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

3 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |  
Zone Easting Northing  
4 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

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

**Boundary Justification**

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

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title George Colgate edited by Holly L. Wilson 10/92  
organization Willows Square Dance Club date September 10, 1992  
street & number Box 52 telephone (719) 942-4415  
city or town Hillside state CO zip code 81232

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

**Additional Items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

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

name Willows Square Dance Club - Eva Colgate, Representative  
street & number Box 52 telephone (719) 942-4415  
city or town Hillside state CO zip code 81232

**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 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 Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Willows School  
Custer County, CO

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DESCRIPTION

The Willows School sits on an acre of ground approximately five miles southwest of the town of Westcliffe along Willows Lane (County Road 141). Surrounded by the ranch lands of the Wet Mountain Valley, the only landscaping around the school is prairie grass, miscellaneous brush and various colors of iris, planted by students, that bloom in the spring. This gabled, wood frame, single story, 20 x 40 foot building typifies rural school architecture. The building is relatively unaltered and in good condition, although in need of paint.

The white with brown trim schoolhouse sits on a rubble and concrete foundation. Following the contour of the land, the foundation varies in height from 30 inches in front to 14 inches in the rear. The building is sheathed with six inch lap siding of fir over lightweight tar paper, solid wood sheathing and wood studs. Native lumber cut by early settlers in saw mills of the area was used for construction. The siding was fastened with square nails. The front gabled roof with slightly projecting eaves was originally covered with wood shingles which remain under its current corrugated metal roofing.

Fronting the county road, Willows School faces east. The expanse of lap siding is broken up only by a centrally located entrance that opens out onto a concrete platform with a metal pipe railing and four wooden steps. The four panel wooden door with transom is topped with a decorative crown. A small rectangular sign in the apex of the gable states "Willows 1889 School."

The north and south facades of the schoolhouse (the long sides) each have three evenly spaced tall rectangular windows. The wood frame windows are double hung sash with four over four lights and like the door, they are also topped with a decorative crown. In the past these windows were covered with heavy screen to keep children from breaking them when playing ball in the schoolyard. There is a brick chimney with a stone cap on the west side.

The interior of the schoolhouse has flooring of three inch tongue and groove fir. The side walls and ten foot high ceiling are of tongue and groove three inch siding. Four black boards remain in place on the walls. Five light bulbs in porcelain sockets hang from the ceiling.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 & 8 Page 2

Willows School  
Custer County, CO

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**DESCRIPTION (continued)**

The schoolhouse has undergone very few alterations during its over 100 year history. The concrete stoop replaced the original wood steps leading up to the front entrance in 1937. This construction enclosed a well and a standpipe for the pump is still visible. The partial removal of a cloak room partition and stage are the only changes to the interior of the building.

There are four other buildings that share the ground on which the schoolhouse sits. To the rear of the property is what remains of a horse stable built approximately the same time as the school (1889). Constructed of vertical board, the building's shed roof is partially collapsed. The stable included an open space for three to four horses and a room for hay storage. Originally a wood frame two hole outhouse was built at each end of the stable, girls on the north side of the building and boys on the south. In 1950 two concrete block, shed roof, two-hole outhouses replaced the wood frame versions and these are situated along the south fence of the property, girls to the east and boy to the west.

Closer to the schoolhouse sits the fourth outbuilding--a wood frame, shed roof building constructed in the early 1920s for storing coal and wood. With framing members exposed on the exterior and horizontal boards inside the framing, the building has two partitions that provide separate storage areas for the wood and coal. This shed and the horse stable are considered contributing, while the two more recently constructed concrete block outhouses are noncontributing.

**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

Willows School meets criterion A in the area of social significance for its role as a focus of community life and use as a community center. While the building operated as a school until 1948, the period of significance ends in 1942 to comply with the National Register 50 year rule. Willows School also meets criterion C for it embodies the distinctive characteristics of this country's rural school architecture.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 3

Willows School  
Custer County, CO

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Historical Background and Significance

The settling of the Wet Mountain Valley began in 1870 when a colony of Germans came from Chicago to begin a new life of farming in the south end of the valley. Around the same time a group of English people inhabited the north side of the valley; some came to taste the excitement of western living and others came for health reasons. The search for minerals in Querida, Rosita, and Silver Cliff brought thousands of prospectors into the area. The nearest town, called Clifton, was founded and platted in 1880. General Palmer brought his narrow gauge Denver & Rio Grande Railroad into the area in 1881. That same year Clifton was re-named Westcliffe and the town was incorporated in 1887. While mining declined, the area developed into a ranching and farming community with Westcliffe becoming the trading center for Custer county.

Gulliford notes that no single building type in American architecture more vividly represents communal effort than the schoolhouse. Settlers donated time, labor and materials to provide places of learning for their children. Beginning in 1880, entries in a cash expenditures book for School District #15 showed donations of nails, doors, sashes, lumber and shingles. Entries from the ledger also noted that a small structure called the Willow Schoolhouse (there is no "s" with this spelling) was built in 1880. Starting this same year, money was paid out for teacher wages. No mention is made of the fate of this building. But in 1889, a voucher in the amount of \$422.75 was issued to E. F. Kokowsky to build a new schoolhouse. This became the current Willows School.

From 1880 through 1948 the number of students varied; attendance averaged between 10 to 12 students and often not all eight grades were represented. Electric bills were paid until 1947, after which the Sangre De Cristo Electric Association has waived payments. This is the only schoolhouse in the county where this service is provided free. The trend toward consolidating rural school districts forced the closure of the school in 1948. At that time students of District #15 were sent to schools in Silver Cliff and Westcliffe in preparation for consolidation. In 1956 the property was deeded to the Willows Square Dance Club.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 4

Willows School  
Custer County, CO

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (continued)

As schools in rural areas were often the only public building within miles, they took on an additional use as a community center and they became the focus of community life. Willows School followed this typical pattern of use. In addition to the various school program activities, many of the town residents reminisce about the dances, parties, box socials, lectures, pot-luck dinners, and sewing bees that took place there. Political rallies, as far back as World War I, were held at the school and it became the meeting place for 4-H and other agriculture groups.

Architectural Significance

The Willows School is significant architecturally because it is a textbook example of a building type -- the country school. The form of country schools was shaped by their function. However, Gulliford notes that "a distinguishing mark of a building type is that its function has come to be readily recognizable by its form." Such is the case with country schools. The Willows School embodies the distinctive characteristics of a country school, which are described in the following paragraph.

By the late 1890s, frame one room schoolhouses were appearing all over the west. As rural communities were limited in the amount of money allocated for a school, they created strictly functional buildings. In scale, size, materials and construction methods, these country schools resembled houses. In a one room setting, the teacher and students seemed like a big family, thereby enhancing that association of schools with houses. Usually rectangular in plan, the size of the schoolhouse was dictated by the limits of the human voice. The maximum feasible dimensions were determined to be 20 by 40 feet. The buildings were of horizontal wood siding (such as weatherboard, shiplap, clapboard or beveled siding) and usually were simple gabled forms with shingled roofs. One of the short sides had the front door, which faced south or east, and the other had the brick chimney. There was a bank of three multi-light double sash windows on both of the long sides of the building. For those parents concerned that light from two directions would harm their children's eyes, windows were often placed on the north side of the building. (This alleviated the problem by producing even, year-round light, but made the classroom colder in winter.) If any one paint color was most often used, it was white with green, brown, red or blue as trim options. A quick review of the previous narrative for section 7 illustrates how closely the Willows School parallels this format in plan, size, materials, color, orientation, and the placement of doors and windows.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 & 9 Page 5

Willows School  
Custer County, CO

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**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (continued)**

Schools, like churches, were built in a hurry in order to quickly mark a civilized settlement. Although quite functional in design, country schools were community schools and the community took pride in its construction and maintenance. Although this school closed in 1948, interested individuals in the community have provided for the upkeep of the facility.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Gulliford, Andrew. America's Country Schools. Washington, D.C.: The Preservation Press, 1984.

Willows School, District #15. Treasurers Expenditures Book, 1880-1948.

Interviews (former students)

Adam, Alpha Jean (Coleman). Westcliffe, Colorado. Interview, 15 September 1992.

Colgate, Eva. Westcliffe, Colorado. Interview, 15 September 1992.

Kastendick, Chester. Westcliffe, Colorado. Interview, 15 September 1992.

Rankin, Marvin. Westcliffe, Colorado. Interview, 15 September 1992.

Vickerman, Milla Lou. Westcliffe, Colorado. Interview, 15 September 1992.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 6

Willows School  
Custer County, CO

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### VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

One acre of land at the NE corner of the NW 1/4 of the SW 1/4 of section 27 Township 22 South, Range 37 West, 6th P.M. Commencing at the NE corner NW 1/4 SW 1/4 section 27, T 22 S, R 37 W, 6th P.M. along the line of demarcation east and west in a westerly course 208.71 feet, thence south parallel with the line of the public road 208.71 feet, thence East parallel to the east/west demarcation line 208.71 feet. Thence North along the line of the public road 208.71 feet to the place of beginning.

### BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The nominated property includes the entire parcel historically associated with the Willows School.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page 7

Willows School  
Custer County, CO

## PHOTOGRAPHS

Willows School  
vicinity of Westcliffe, Custer County, Colorado

The following information applies to photographs #1 through #8:

photographer: George Colgate  
date of photograph: February 19, 1993  
location of negative: George Colgate, Hillside, CO

<u>Photo No.</u>	<u>Camera Direction</u>
#1	southeast
#2	west
#3	northwest
#4	southeast
#5	west
#6	southwest
#7	southeast
#8	southwest

Information for photograph #9:

photographer: Jim Little, Wet Mountain Tribune  
date of photograph: September 1992  
location of negative: Wet Mountain Tribune, Westcliffe, CO  
camera direction: west

WILLOWS SCHOOL  
CUSTER COUNTY, COLORADO

