

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

received MAY 15 1985

date entered MAY 19 1985

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Edison School

and/or common Pueblo Unit School House

2. Location

street & number 900 West Mesa

n/a not for publication

city, town Pueblo

n/a vicinity of

state Colorado

code 08

county Pueblo

code 101

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>n/a</u> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<u>n/a</u> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: Vacant

4. Owner of Property

name School District No. 60

street & number 313 West 11th Street

city, town Pueblo

n/a vicinity of

state Colorado

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Pueblo County Courthouse

street & number Tenth and Main streets

city, town Pueblo

state Colorado

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Colorado Inventory of Historic Sites has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1980-81 federal state county local

depository for survey records Colorado Historical Society, OAHF

city, town Denver

state Colorado 80203

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Located in Pueblo, the present Edison School facility is composed of six buildings--three of which were built in 1909 and three in 1923. The complex includes a central building marked by a pair of square towers, one on either side of the central arched entrance, four cubical units with hipped roofs flanking the main building, and one structure located at the south end of the complex which is larger than the individual units and features an arched entrance matching that of the central building. All the structures are connected by open breezeways.

The design and layout of the school followed a concept called the "Pueblo Unit School House." The idea for the design originated with school board member Dr. R.W. Corwin. Architect for the first three buildings, which included the central building and the two "unit school houses" to the north of the central building was J.M. Gile. In 1923 two additional unit schoolhouses and a four-unit classroom building, modeled after the school concept, were constructed. Additions to both the northwest and southwest corners of the central building, the side entrance to the unit schoolhouse, and the open breezeways between the buildings were also constructed at this time for the purpose of facilitating access between the structures. The only other major addition occurred in 1952 when a stage and restroom facility was built in the space between the central building and the unit directly to the north.

Except for the central building, the unit blocks are devoid of ornamentation and do not reflect any architectural style other than a relationship to the central block. However, all the structures relate physically to one another by a common use of blonde brick as the construction material and a similar roof type (hipped). The style of the central structure can best be described as Italian Renaissance or Tuscan. The features of the building characterizes the style include a Palladian entranceway, widely overhanging eaves, the three-part arcade in the upper portion of the towers, and the semi-hexagonal dormer.

The important design elements of the central block includes a centrally located stairway leading to the classical arched front entryway with recessed front doors. The entrance is flanked by two windows with eared architrave surrounds. Framing the central mass are the two square towers which project slightly from the wall surface. They contain open belfrys with a pair of modified Doric columns set into the opening. The entire block rests on a raised stone foundation.

The original ground plan for the central building (see attached) does not appear to have included the towers. It was designed as a multi-purpose structure with movable interior walls that could either be used as two classrooms or opened up for school social functions for the pupils or for parents. The interior configuration has experienced change over the years and is now divided into spaces which serve as auditorium/gymnasium, library, administrative offices, cafeteria, and restroom facility.

The unit schoolhouses contain a single classroom and were designed and constructed by the school board for the purpose of demonstrating the feasibility of admitting light from three sides of the room and only through windows near the ceiling. In keeping with this concept, each structure is designed with a number of windows near the top of the structure directly under the eave. It was felt that this design would provide both universally diffused light, thus eliminating objectional reflections and improving ventilation. Even though these units have undergone a number of changes through time--including the blocking off of windows, the lowering of the ceiling, and the installation of additional windows lower on the walls--the design elements which make these structures unique remain.

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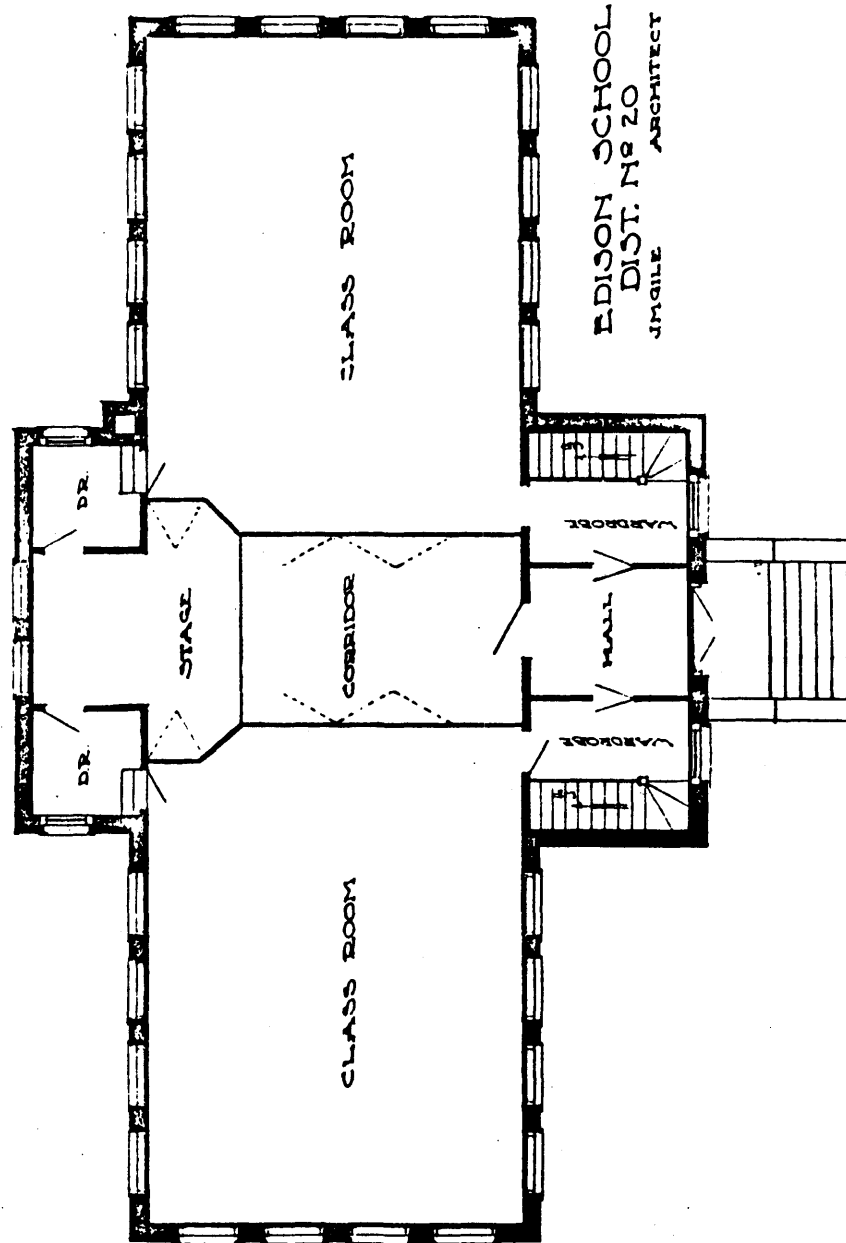
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GROUND PLAN, CENTRAL BUILDING.

Two class rooms, both lighted from three sides.
This building is used for school entertainments by the pupils and for social gatherings by the parents.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
___ prehistoric	___ archeology-prehistoric	___ community planning	___ landscape architecture	___ religion
___ 1400-1499	___ archeology-historic	___ conservation	___ law	___ science
___ 1500-1599	___ agriculture	___ economics	___ literature	___ sculpture
___ 1600-1699	<u>XX</u> architecture	<u>XX</u> education	___ military	___ social/
___ 1700-1799	___ art	___ engineering	___ music	___ humanitarian
___ 1800-1899	___ commerce	___ exploration/settlement	___ philosophy	___ theater
<u>XX</u> 1900-	___ communications	___ industry	___ politics/government	___ transportation
		___ invention		___ other (specify)

Specific dates 1909, 1923

Builder/Architect Designer: Dr. R. W. Corwin

Architect: J. M. Gile

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Edison School is significant for its unique and experimental architectural design; and for its association with Dr. R. W. Corwin, originator of the Pueblo Unit School House concept.

The first schoolbuilding serving the area was built in 1892 and occupied a site about two blocks south of the present site and directly east of the Colorado Coal and Iron (CC&I) Steel Mill. Due to its proximity to the Harlem Subdivision, it was commonly referred to as the Harlem School. The school district outgrew this facility by the early 1900s, at a period when CC & I was expanding eastward and desired to acquire the property. CC & I subsequently purchased the school in 1902, at which time the school board bought the present site.

Due in part to the crash of 1903, the school board decided not to build a permanent structure initially at the new location but chose instead to use portable cottages. Students attending Edison School received instruction in these cottages from 1903 to 1909 when construction of the first permanent buildings were completed.

The plan for Edison School exhibits the experimentation resulting from an increased social consciousness, which was characteristic of the design of many public buildings of the early 1900s. The thought that went into the design of this building is best exhibited in the following article written in 1913 by Dr. Corwin entitled "Further Suggestions Regarding the Pueblo Unit School House":

"This building was constructed by the Board of Education of District No. 20 for the purpose of demonstrating the feasibility of admitting light from three sides of the room, and only through windows near the ceiling.

"The object of universally diffused light in a school room is especially for the purpose of giving the left-handed child a chance equal to the right-handed child.

"The one-sided lighting of a room may be perfect for the right-handed child but how about the 3, 5 or 8 percent of children who are left-handed?

"Have we been slow in comprehending the needs of the minority, or indifferent to their necessities?

"This building has been tried and found satisfactory in every particular.

"No objectionable reflection or cross-lights exist.

"If the building be located so that there be objectionally strong light from the east or west at certain times of day, it can be easily overcome by frosting the windows through which the strong light enters.

9. Major Bibliographical References

(see continuation sheet)

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 1.7

Quadrangle name Southeast Pueblo, Colo.

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	3	5	3	4	8	6	0	4	2	3	3	0	6	0
Zone				Easting				Northing						

B

Zone				Easting				Northing						

C

Zone				Easting				Northing						

D

Zone				Easting				Northing						

E

Zone				Easting				Northing						

F

Zone				Easting				Northing						

G

Zone				Easting				Northing						

H

Zone				Easting				Northing						

Verbal boundary description and justification

Lots 1-2,8-11, and 19-24; Block 7; Liabach Third Filing

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state n/a code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title James F. Munch & Ed J. Simonich Edited: GM

organization City of Pueblo--Dept of Planning and Community Development date 1/21/85

street & number 350 South Elizabeth telephone (303) 543-6006

city or town Pueblo state Colorado

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Barbara Sudler

title State Historic Preservation Officer date 4-29-85

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

for Melvyn Byers **Entered in the National Register** date 6-19-85
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: _____ date _____

Chief of Registration

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"If the windows be hinged at the bottom and swung from the top into the room, ventilation is made most satisfactory and causes no drafts.

"As one of the teachers remarked, 'Fifty pupils scarcely vitiate the air in the least.'

High windows allow space for blackboard on all of which may be used at any time.

"In our little booklet on the Unit School House, twenty other reasons are given why the unit plan is superior to the many-room school building.

"Not only is the sanitation of the multiple-room building detrimental but often criminal.

"It is high time more thought and consideration be given to the construction of our school buildings.

"Do not say the unit plan is more expensive, for it is not. It is less expensive to build and maintain."

Dr. Richard Corwin, originator of the Pueblo Unit School House Concept, was a member of the School District 20 School Board for forty-four years. He was a graduate of Cornell University and received his Medical Degree from Michigan University Medical School. He served his internship at St. Luke's Hospital, Chicago, in 1879-80. In 1905 he was given a degree of Doctor of Laws by the University of Colorado, and the following year he received an honorary Master of Arts degree from Denver University.

Corwin came to Pueblo in 1881 for the purpose of organizing the Medical Department of the Colorado Coal & Iron Company (CC&I). He served as head of the Medical Department of CF&I, the successor of CC&I, and chief surgeon at Minnequa Hospital until his death on June 19, 1929. Through his worldwide studies in surgery and his achievements at Minnequa Hospital, Dr. Corwin became a surgeon of international repute. Minnequa Hospital, which he played a major role in designing, was regarded as one of the outstanding institutions of its kind in America. Many of the unique features found in the design of the hospital were incorporated in the design of other hospitals worldwide. Doctors and surgeons from all parts of the world visited the hospital to acquaint themselves with Dr. Corwin's methods. Many medical discoveries are also credited to him.

Along with his professional interests, Corwin also took an active interest in the community's civic and educational affairs. As well as being a member of the school board, Corwin helped establish the McClelland Public Library and served on its board of directors until his death. In eulogizing the life of Dr. Corwin, the Pueblo Chieftain wrote the following:

"A city mourns the passing of a scholar, a philosopher, a builder, a thinker, a servant of mercy. Above all else it is saddened because a friend has been taken whence he came. Richard Corwin, M.D., has been summoned to his reward.

"Life was rich in its bestowal of gifts upon this illustrious citizen, filling

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his cup to overflowing. And he drew the maximum of benefits from these rich gifts and gave them freely unto his fellow men. Pueblo, Colorado, and the world, owe a heavy debt to this genius--a debt they can never repay.

"Only in a humble way can we ever give recognition to the golden deeds of Dr. Corwin--one of the most beloved men who ever came our way."

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- 1) Camp & Plant, "News Items," Minnequa Works Pueblo; Lawrence Lewis, editor; published by the Sociological Department, Edison School; has entirely disappeared; January 17, 1903, p. 66.
- 2) "Edison School Reuse Project," James Munch, unpublished report for the Pueblo Regional Comprehensive Development Plan, October 13, 1983.
- 3) History of Pueblo, Stoddard, unpublished manuscript at the Pueblo Regional Library, Chapter 8, p. 14.
- 4) Pueblo City Directory, 1893/1894, Edison School near Philadelphia Smelter.
- 5) Pueblo City Directory, 1895/1896, Edison School near Philadelphia Smelter; Miss Emma Black, Principal, Residence, 210 Broadway.
- 6) Pueblo City Directory, 1899/1900, Edison School, East of Santa Fe near Philadelphia Smelter; Principal, Mayte Moses.
- 7) Pueblo City Directory, 1901/1902, East Northern Avenue, near Philadelphia Smelter; Principal, Mayte Moses.
- 8) Pueblo City Directory, 1903/1904, Corner of Mesa and Russ Avenue; Principal, Mary Moses.
- 9) Pueblo, Colorado Public Schools, "Pueblo Unit School House," source unknown, containing exterior and interior view of Edison School, ground plan, central building, and further suggestions regarding the Pueblo Unit School House by R. W. Corwin, September, 1913.
- 10) Pueblo Daily Chieftain, "Pueblo Building Boom," February 3, 1892, p. 8.
- 11) Pueblo Daily Chieftain, "South Side School," September 11, 1892.
- 12) Pueblo Daily Chieftain, "The Edison School," October 23, 1892, p. 3.
- 13) Pueblo Daily Chieftain, "Prepare for Many Pupils," August 17, 1902, p. 10.
- 14) Pueblo Daily Chieftain, "The Week in Real Estate," September 28, 1902, p. 11.
- 15) Pueblo Daily Chieftain, "Real Estate" and "Buildings Razed," December 14, 1902, p. 11.
- 16) Pueblo Daily Chieftain, a summary of buildings erected in 1902, January 1, 1903, p. 17.
- 17) Pueblo Daily Chieftain, schedule of the teachers, September 8, 1913.

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- 18) Pueblo Star Journal & Chieftain, "What's in a Name," reasons for names of Pueblo's public schools by Ross Thompson, date unknown.
- 19) Pueblo Star Journal & Chieftain, "Colorful Colorado" by Ralph Taylor, November 8, 1970, p. 2c.
- 20) Pueblo Star Journal & Chieftain, "Showtime," August 7, 1971, p. 7.
- 21) Pueblo Star Journal & Chieftain, "Council to Decide Fate of Abandoned Edison School," by Loretta Sword, September 14, 1983.
- 22) Pueblo Star Journal & Chieftain, "Edison School is Spared," by Milan Simonich, October 26, 1983.
- 23) Pueblo Chieftain, "School Board, Edison Closing This Summer," by Alexis Hacker, January 9, 1974, Section B, p. 1.
- 24) Sanborn Map, 1893, showing the location of Edison School, p. 64.