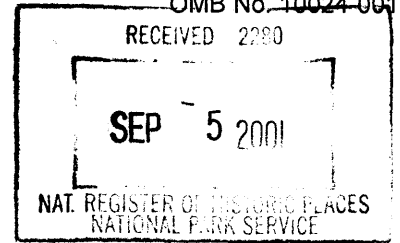


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1119



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determination for individual properties and districts. See instruction 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 Durango High School

other names/site number Durango 9-R Administration Building / 5LP3443

## 2. Location

street & number 201 East 12<sup>th</sup> Street [N/A] not for publication

city or town Durango [N/A] vicinity

state Colorado code CO county La Plata code 067 zip code 81301

## 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.)

Germania Cortegoso State Historic Preservation Officer August 29, 2001  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State Historic Preservation Office, Colorado Historical Society  
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of 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  See continuation sheet.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

**Entered in the  
National Register**

10-20-01

Durango High School  
Name of Property

La Plata County, Colorado  
County/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 count previously listed resources.)

Contributing                      Noncontributing

1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	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.**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Function**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Education/school

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Education/education-related

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19<sup>th</sup> And 20<sup>th</sup> Century Revivals/Classical Revival

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete  
walls Brick  
roof Asphalt  
other Terra Cotta

**Narrative Description**

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

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Durango High School  
La Plata County, CO

Section number 7 Page 1

---

**DESCRIPTION**

**General Site Description**

The Durango High School commands a prominent knoll within the original Durango, Colorado town site. The school is located between 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Streets and is centered exactly within the former East 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue right of way. The school faces downtown Durango (a National Register Historic District). A very steep grassy slope on the west side of the building terminates at a park located along Main Avenue. A boiler enclosure (once a two-story building that is now about a foot above grade) is located approximately 17 feet north of the high school. Paved parking lots are at the west side and rear of the building. To the east (and not part of the nomination) is a 1957 single-story building currently used by charter schools. The space between the high school and the charter school is paved. The former Emory E. Smiley Junior High School, which is now a community center, is to the northeast, across 13<sup>th</sup> Street. The steep approach from 12<sup>th</sup> Street up to the front of the building is terraced and planted with grass. The Durango Rose Club maintains a rose garden on one of the terraces. Three evergreens mark the front of the west and east wings.

**General Building Description**

The inverted T-shaped building is constructed in the Classical Revival style with monumental proportions and symmetrical composition. It is in a prominent location, raised above the street level. Most of the building is three stories tall with a basement, although the north wing steps down from three stories to one story. It is constructed of a smooth buff colored brick on a reinforced concrete foundation. The walls of the ground floor appear banded with a recessed course of alternating headers and stretchers separating five courses of stretchers. The upper walls (four courses of stretchers with one course of alternating headers and stretchers) are smooth. The flat roofs are decorated with roofline balustrades, terra cotta copings shaped to look like overlapping tile, and a centered curved parapet above the main entry. A single buttress rises to the bottom of the second floor level on each side of the building, while two buttresses are located on the rear. Terra cotta ornamentation and brickwork detailing decorate the building.

A plunge pool, which was located in the one-story north wing at the rear of the building, was replaced with a swimming pool in 1927. The original plunge pool wing was extended 26 feet to house a new swimming pool while maintaining the original symmetry of the design. The addition matches the original building in material and is complementary in its proportions, massing and details. The pool addition is an appropriate historic adjunct to the high school on a secondary façade, and it reflects the school's advance from use of a "plunge" pool to a swimming facility. (A historic photo attached as part of this nomination shows the original configuration prior to 1927.)

The windows are wood double hung with center mullions. Some of the ground floor window glass has been covered either with a board, a piece of sheet metal or via a process where plywood was placed over the original glass, and plaster applied to the plywood, leaving the original materials in place. The window openings at the pool addition have been filled in with cinderblocks.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

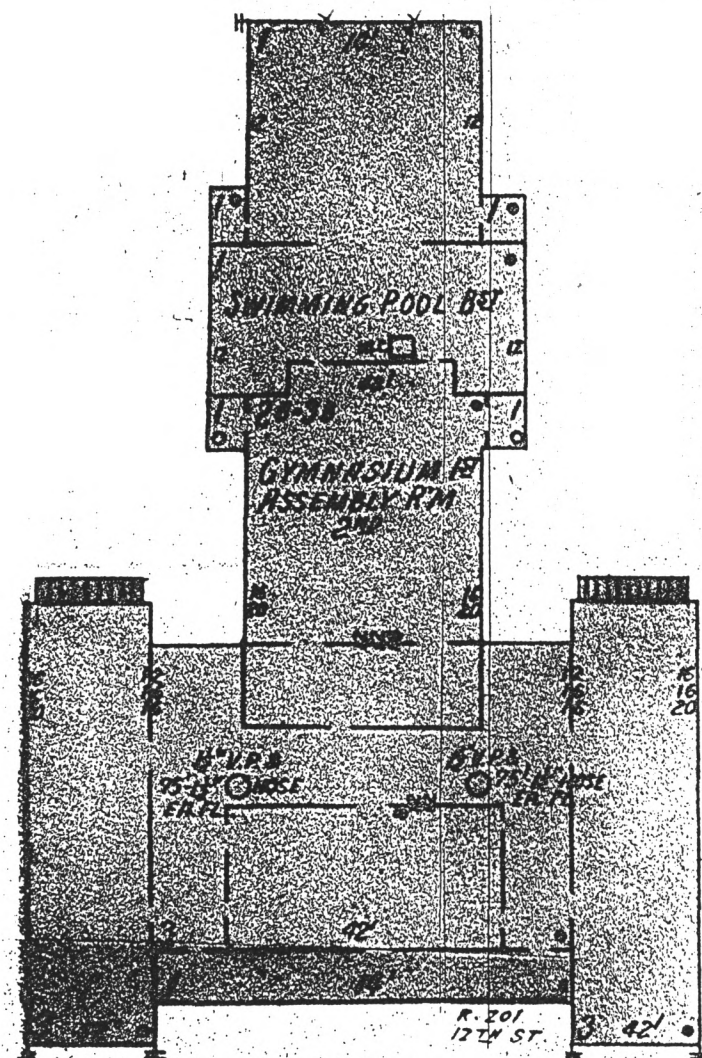
Durango High School  
La Plata County, CO

Section number 7 Page 2

Very few changes have occurred to the exterior of the Durango High School since its construction in 1917. The building retains its integrity and its tremendous influence on the character of East 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue.

*A series of elevations are included for reference while reading the following description. Please note that elevations do not illustrate features that are set behind another projecting façade. The only notable feature not visible in the elevations is the third arch over the window and fire escape exit on the east and west elevations.*

1948 SanbornMap



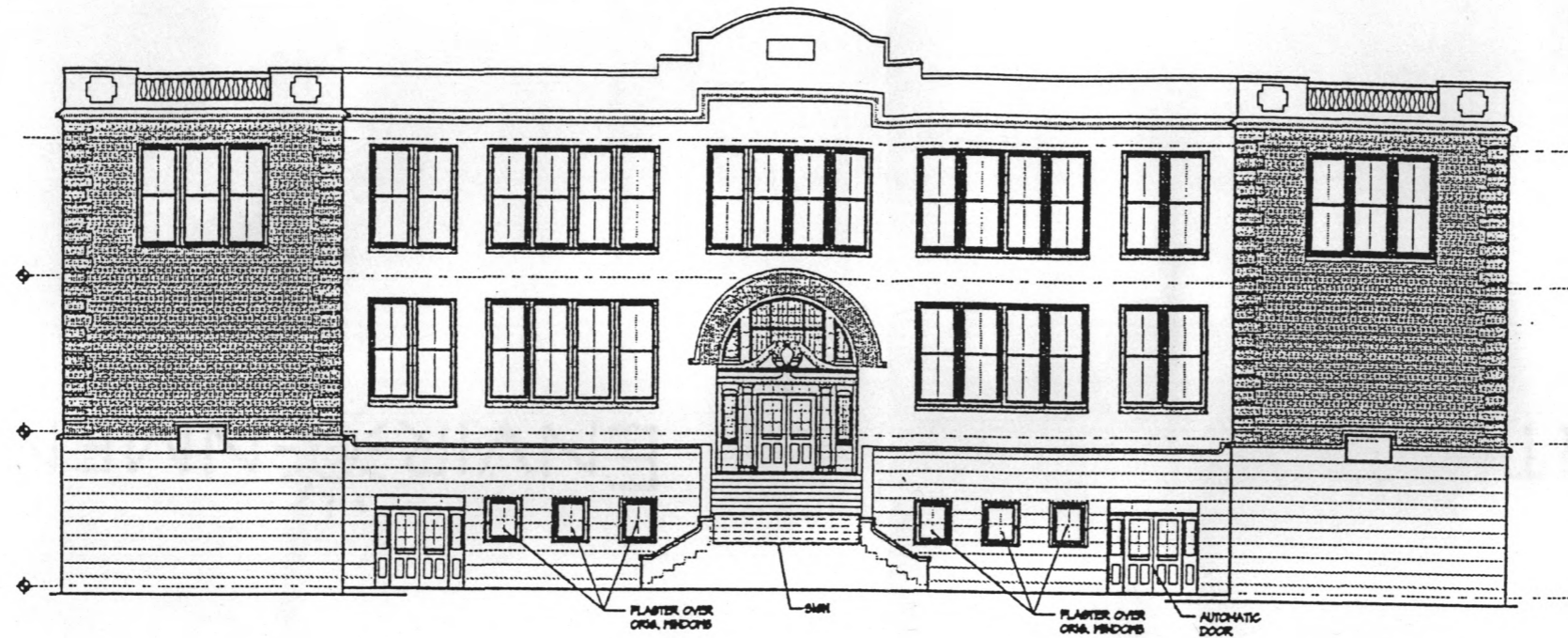
DURANGO HIGH SCHOOL

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

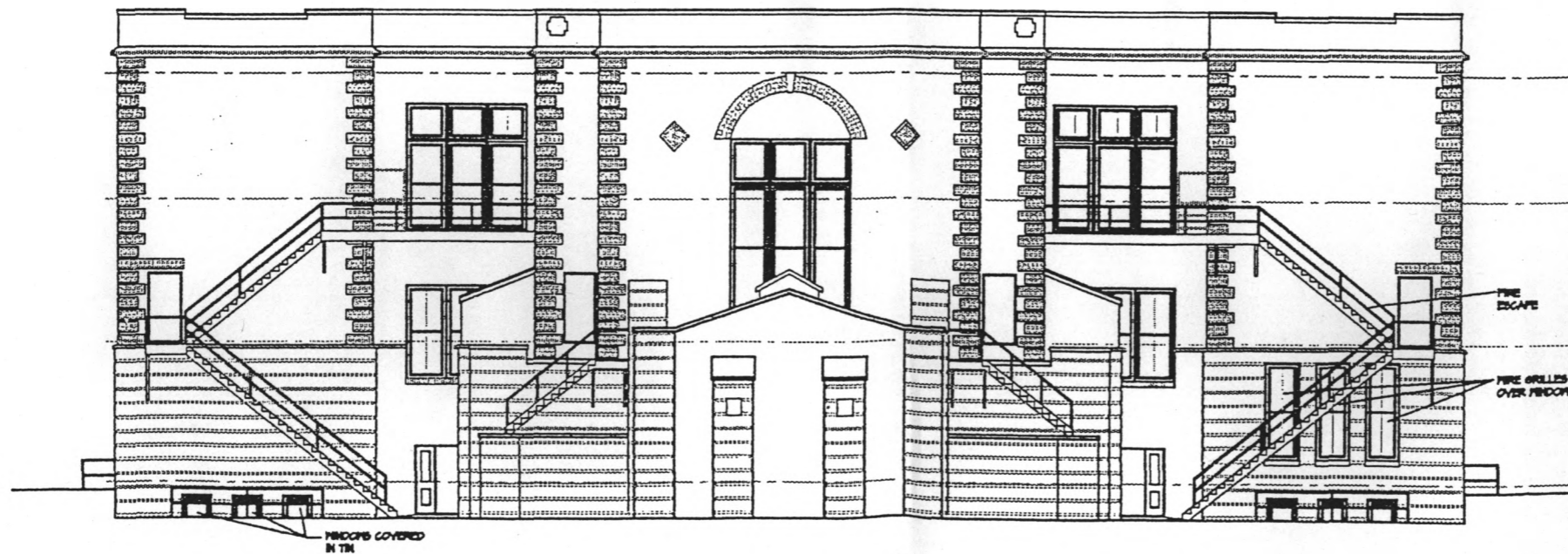
Section number 7 Page 3

Durango High School  
La Plata County, CO



SOUTH ELEVATION

SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"



NORTH ELEVATION

SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"



R.M. Bell  
& Associates, Inc.

Architecture  
•  
Engineering  
•  
Planning  
•  
Landscape  
Architecture

322 E. 2nd Avenue  
Durango, CO 81301  
970-259-1078  
fax 970-247-9559  
e-mail rmbell.com

© R. Michael Bell & Associates, Inc. expressly reserves the common law copyright and other property rights in these plans. These plans are not to be changed or copied in any form or manner without our written consent. Any third party who copies or reproduces these plans without our written consent and approval of R. Michael Bell & Associates, Inc.

Existing As-Built for:  
**SCHOOL DISTRICT 9-R  
ADMINISTRATION BUILDING**  
Durango, Colorado 81301

Issue Record:

Revisions:

Job No. 99167

Drawn: TNF

Checked: RMB

Date: 8/21/00

Sheet

**EX2.1**

EXTERIOR  
ELEVATIONS

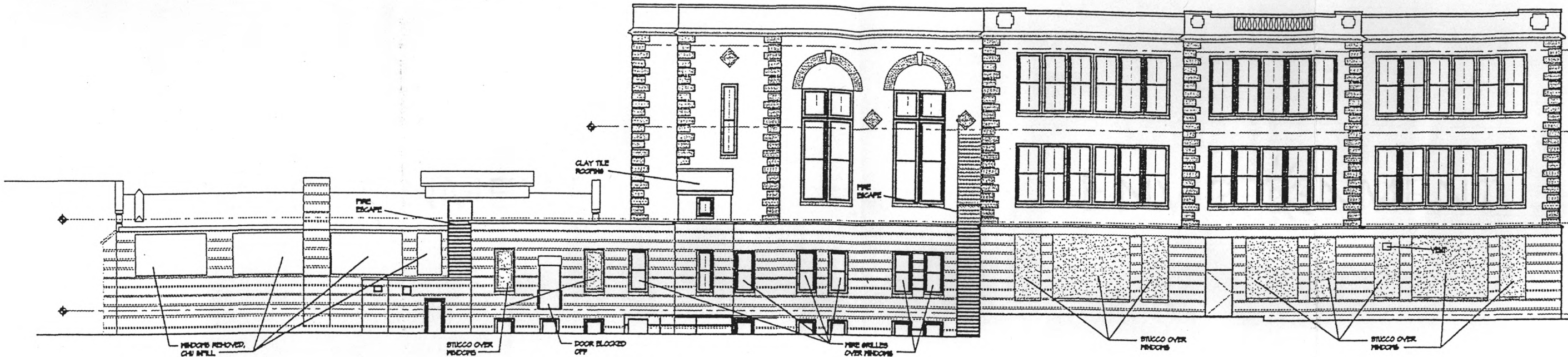


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

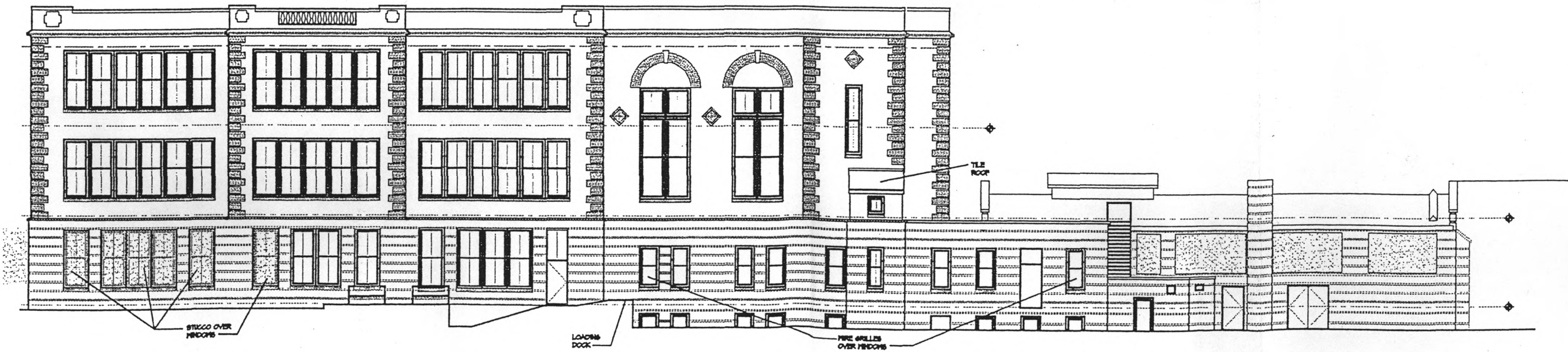
Section number 7 Page 4

Durango High School  
La Plata County, CO



WEST ELEVATION

SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"



EAST ELEVATION

SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"



R.M. Bell  
& Associates, Inc.

Architecture  
•  
Engineering  
•  
Planning  
•  
Landscape  
Architecture

222 E. 2nd Avenue  
Durango, CO 81301  
970-250-1078  
fax 970-247-9559  
e-mail rmbell.com

© R. Michael Bell & Associates, Inc. represents the architect for copyright and other property rights in these plans. These plans are not to be changed or copied in any form without the written consent of R. Michael Bell & Associates, Inc.

Existing As-Built for:  
**SCHOOL DISTRICT 9-R  
ADMINISTRATION BUILDING**  
Durango, Colorado 81301

Name Entered:

Revisions:

Job No. 99167  
Drawn: TWF  
Checked: RJE  
Date: 8/21/00

Sheet

**EX2.2**

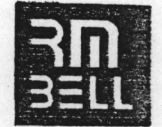
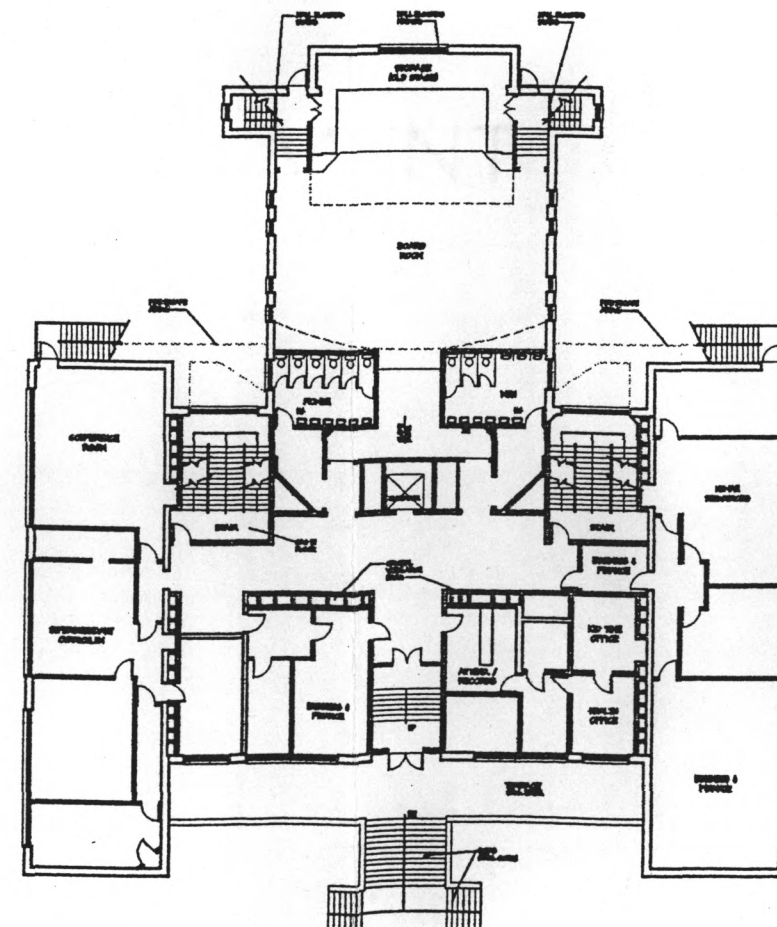
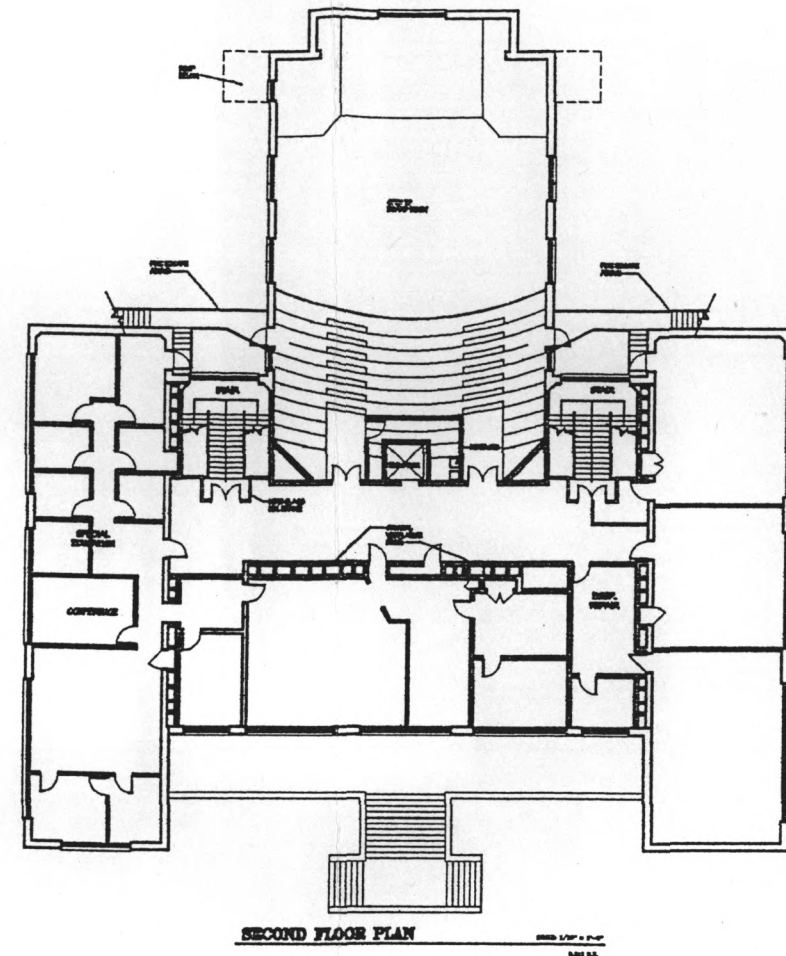
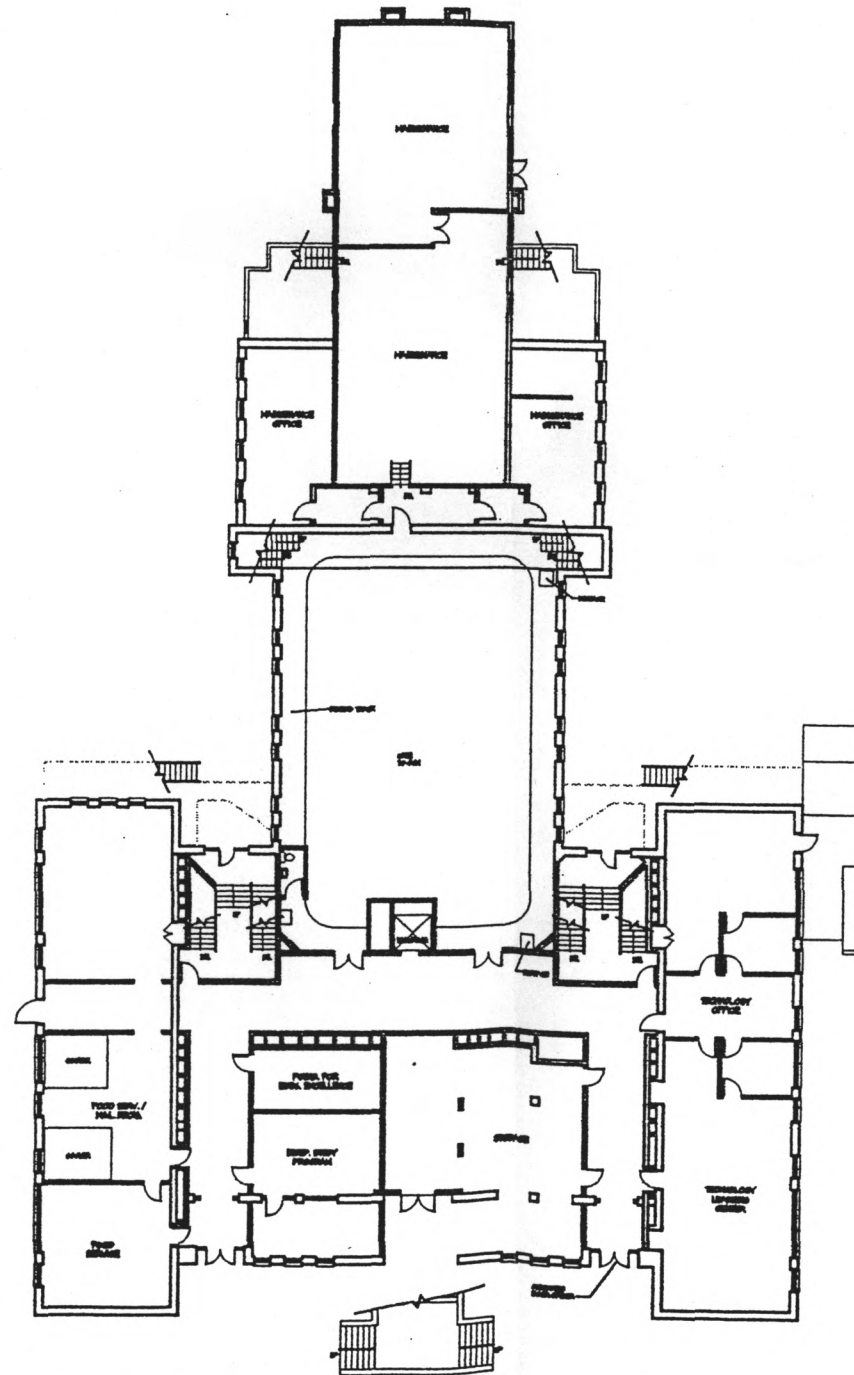
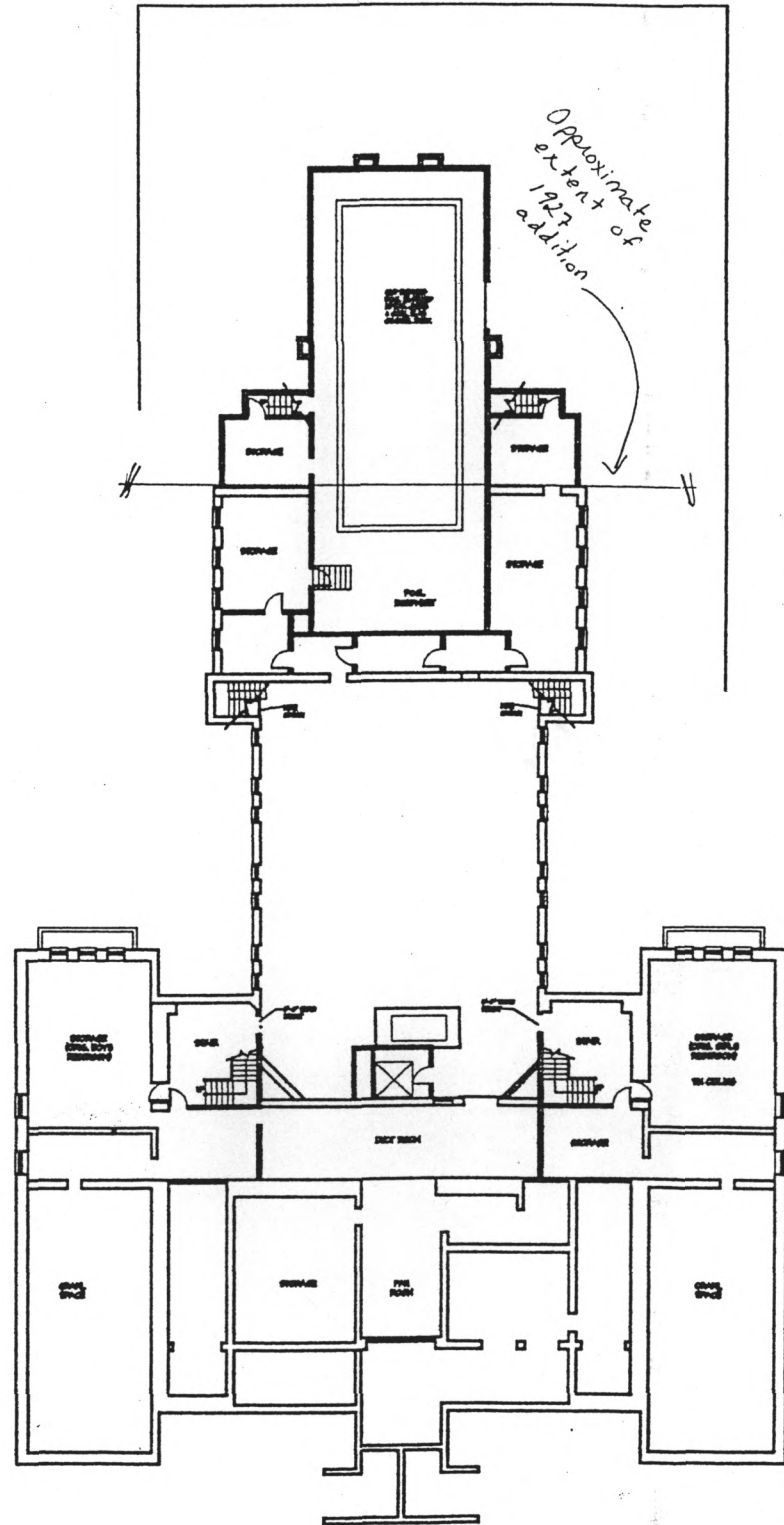
EXTERIOR  
ELEVATIONS

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 5

Durango High School  
La Plata County, CO



R.M. Bell  
& Associates, Inc.

Architecture  
•  
Engineering  
•  
Planning  
•  
Landscape  
Architecture

622 E. 2nd Avenue  
Durango, CO 81301  
970-259-1078  
fax 970-247-9559  
e-mail rmbell.com

© R. Michael Bell & Associates, Inc. reserves the common law copyright and other property rights in these plans. These plans are not to be changed or copied in any form or manner whatsoever nor are they to be assigned in any third party without the written permission and consent of R. Michael Bell & Associates, Inc.

Existing As-Built for:  
**SCHOOL DISTRICT 9-R  
ADMINISTRATION BUILDING**  
Durango, Colorado 81301

Issue Record:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Revisions:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Job No. 94167  
Drawn: TWF  
Checked: RMB  
Date: 6-6-00

Sheet  
**EX1.1**



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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Durango High School  
La Plata County, CO

Section number 7 Page 6

---

**South Side (Front) of the Building**

The High School has a grand front entrance accessed via a series of sidewalks leading to concrete steps that are lined by low brick walls capped with terra cotta. The first series of steps and walks accesses the ground level of the building at two secondary entrances, each consisting of two doors matching those at the main entrance. The doors are set within an entry with side lights and a fixed transom. The secondary entrances have not been altered, except for the replacement of door hardware and the installation of an automatic door opener on the east door for handicap access.

A second set of steps ascends to a landing, from which the final set of steps leads to a terrace in front of the main entrance. The terrace runs in front of the central portion of the building. It is enclosed by another terra cotta capped low brick wall on the south and by the walls of the projecting east and west wings.

The main entry is centered on the front of the building and is slightly recessed under a large round brick and terra cotta arch with drip mold. All of the original entry features remain, including the original paneled and glazed double doors flanked by engaged columns and a terra cotta broken pediment featuring an urn and a fleur-de-lys. Decorative glass containing a fleur-de-lys design surrounds the doors. Light globes flank the entrance.

Above the entry, near the top of the building an arched parapet bears a terra cotta plaque with "1916" located above a rectangular plaque reading "High School". Two other such plaques are centered on the face of the east and west wings of the building. These plaques read "DHS" and are situated at the juncture of the banded and smoothed brick treatments at the transition from the ground floor to the second floor.

The windows are grouped and symmetrically arranged across the façade. Of the 40 windows on this façade, 6 small ground floor windows were plastered over as described earlier.

**West and East Sides of the Building**

The west façade of the building's west wing is divided into three bays, separated by corner quoins, with the central bay slightly forward. The decorative terra cotta roof parapet continues around from the front to this side of the building, with a decorative balustrade flanked by medallions and centered over the central bay.

Windows are grouped (5 in center bay, 6 on flanking bays) with shared sills in each bay on the second and third floors. The ground floor has a similar set of grouped windows (2 in the middle bay and 3 on flanking bays) with a single window on either side. The ground floor windows have been plastered in, maintaining the outline of windows. A side door with a 9-light fixed transom was placed in-lieu of one of the windows. The original door has been replaced with a steel door.

The central part of the building is recessed back from the west wing's west wall. It is also divided by quoining. Arches with decorative brick work top two huge windows spanning the 2nd and 3rd floors of



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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Durango High School  
La Plata County, CO

Section number 7 Page 7

---

the building. A third, similar arch tops a doorway exiting onto the original iron fire escape. Two evenly spaced windows are located under each of the two-story windows at the ground floor level. Basement windows with window wells are aligned under the ground floor windows. A single narrow 2 over 2 light window is aligned next to the arched windows and is decorated with a diamond shaped brick detail. Under this window is a wall buttress with a red tile shed roof. A flat roofed, one story wing extends north from the central section of the building with three windows, a door and basement windows continuing the lines established by the central section of the building.

The 1927 swimming pool addition extends from the original one story wing. It is one-story and has matching brick and a shallow pitched asphalt shingle roof. The banded brick pattern is continued from the original building across the addition. The windows have been filled in with block as this structure is now used for storage and maintenance projects.

The east side of the building is a mirror image of the west side. Seven fewer ground floor windows are covered on the east side of the east bay. One window was remodeled into a doorway of the same width and height as the original windows. Two additional doors are located on the pool addition building on the east side of the building.

**North Side (Rear) of the Building**

This side of the building continues the formal symmetrical design with the centered 1927 addition, which has two buttresses on the north end. Above the pool, on the central part of the building, a large, centered, two-story tall window with an arch matching those on the east and west sides dominates the façade. Diamond-shaped brick details decorate either side of the window. Quoining delineates the corners.

Recessed walls between the central part of the building and the east and west wings contain windows on the second and third floors. These windows are grouped into threes. Doorways matching the secondary entrances on the front of the building are located at the ground floor under the grouped windows. The sidelights and transom are unaltered, but the double doors have been replaced with single, hollow core metal doors.

One grouping of three double hung windows on the ground floor of the north wall of the west wing provide the only variation from the symmetrical arrangement of openings on the building. The terra cotta parapet continues around the roofline. Two original iron fire escapes exiting from opposite sides of the building add to the symmetry.

**Interior**

Hailed as the most modern of schools for its time, the Durango High School had facilities for both physical and mental development. Classrooms, offices (including the District Superintendent's office), an auditorium, a gymnasium with a suspended running track above the gym floor and a "plunge" pool occupied the main building. "Manual training"(industrial arts-wood shop) and domestic arts were

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Durango High School  
La Plata County, CO

Section number 7 Page 8

---

located in the west wing. Study hall and classrooms were in the east wing. A new pool replaced the plunge pool in 1927.

Major interior remodeling in 1977-1978 turned the building into the administrative center for the school district. Major changes occurred in the auditorium and classrooms. Class and office spaces were remodeled by suspending dropped ceilings, installing new light fixtures/systems, and new partitions. In some areas, the original plaster finishes are still evident but the overall impression of the interior reflects the 1970's remodel.

The auditorium has been converted into a large meeting room for the school board and other entities. Most of the original sloped floor has been overbuilt with a level floor and seating was removed from the main floor. The balcony remains intact with original seating and wood flooring. Some original light fixtures and decorative features remain in the auditorium, including decorative medallions on the walls and the decorative ceiling beams.

The gym and elevated running track remain. The track is used for storage but appears to have its original deck. The swimming pool has been covered over and the building is used for storage and maintenance work.

Although the interior has undergone extensive changes, the exterior of the Durango High School exhibits a high degree of historic integrity. The only significant change to the building is a historic addition that was constructed in 1927 and placed on the rear of the structure. While some of the ground floor windows have been covered, the size, shape and symmetry of these openings remain clearly evident, contributing to the building's overall symmetrical design. The integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association remain intact since the building opened in 1917.

Durango High School

La Plata County, Colorado

Name of Property

County/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.)

- [ X ] 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.
[ X ] 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)

Education

Architecture

Periods of Significance

1917-1951

Significant Dates

1917

1927

Significant Person(s)

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Thomas, Charles

MacLaren Thomas

Groves, Eugene

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:

- [X] State Historic Preservation Office
[ ] Other State Agency
[ ] Federal Agency
[ ] Local Government
[ ] University
[X] Other

Name of repository:
Colorado Historical Society
Durango School District 9R

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Durango High School  
La Plata County, CO

Section number 8 Page 9

---

**SIGNIFICANCE**

The Durango High School meets Criterion A for its association with the history of education in Durango. The building served as the city's only high school from 1917 until a new building was completed in 1976. The building also meets Criterion C for its architectural significance. The high school represents the work of the Colorado Springs architectural firm of Thomas MacLaren and Charles Thomas. It is the only collaborative effort in the city by these two prominent architects, and one of the last products of the partnership which dissolved the same year the school was completed. The Durango High School characterizes the Classical Revival style in its monumental proportions, symmetrical composition, large arched central entrance with pediment and columns, flat roof with central arched pediment, balustrades and grand stairway entrance. High artistic values are embodied in the smooth brick walls with banded ground floor finish, corner quoins, and terra cotta trim. The high school is one of only two buildings in Durango with terra cotta ornamentation.

The period of significance ends in 1951 in order to comply with the National Register's fifty year rule. A small addition to the rear of the building (designed by Eugene Groves) to accommodate the change in 1927 from a plunge pool to a swimming pool is the only significant exterior alteration to the structure.

**Historical Background**

Located along the Animas River at the base of the mineral rich San Juan Mountains of southwest Colorado, the city of Durango owes its origin to the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad (D&RG). The emerging mineral wealth in southwest Colorado motivated the railroad company to expand its railroad network into the southern San Juan Mountains.

In 1880 the D&RG extended a line west from Alamosa, Colorado through Chama, New Mexico on its way towards the San Juans. Drawing on their past successes in creating towns along the route of the railroad, the D&RG set about developing a new community along the Animas River to be named Durango. William A. Bell of the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad arranged for several individuals to file land claims and subsequently sell the land to a real estate subsidiary of the railroad known as the Durango Trust. The Trust platted the town site in 1880 in a north-south oriented grid pattern. The railroad reached Durango in 1881 and Silverton in 1882.

Well before the concept of zoning made its way to Colorado, the Trust envisioned clustering of uses, placing the depot and the commercial/wholesale district along Main Avenue, which ran parallel to the railroad tracks and roughly parallel to the Animas River. Slightly upslope from Main Avenue, East Second Avenue was seen as the street for professional offices, government buildings and some commercial uses. The next street to the east was "The Boulevard", a wide street divided by a tree lined median and planned as the locale for the premiere homes of the more prosperous Durango residents. Additional residential streets were platted to the east.



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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Durango High School  
La Plata County, CO

Section number 8 Page 10

---

The grid system allowed the real estate speculators to cram the maximum number of 25-foot wide lots into a block and simplified the dedication of various blocks for civic amenities such as parks and government uses. The initial town plat included two blocks dedicated to parks and a block labeled "Courthouse" in an optimistic goal to lure the county seat away from Parrot City.

The city boomed from the start. The 1885 Colorado State Census counted 2,254 people. In 1890 the Rio Grande Southern Railroad arrived, providing a connection to the west and to the mines above Rico, Telluride and Ridgway. By 1892, Durango had two smelters, a streetcar line, electrical power, a water system, an ore sampling works, flour mills, foundries, lumber and brick yards, a brewery and a brand new county courthouse. Not only had Durango won the county seat, it had become the economic hub of southwest Colorado.

Such prosperity supported three architects (per an 1892 city register), numerous churches and the city's first high school building. The first high school was located along the prestigious Boulevard residential street. It was designed by Denver architect John J. Huddart and opened in 1893.

Durango's high school served all of the students in the city. It was also available (for a small tuition fee) to rural residents of La Plata County, many who boarded in town with friends or relatives during the week to attend school and returned home for the weekends.

By the spring of 1914, overcrowding at the high school prompted the school board to begin planning for a new facility. The property along East 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue between 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Streets was selected as a prime location on a knoll overlooking the city. Landowners were willing to sell to the school board, including the Christian Church who agreed to sell the land if they could be assisted in removing their church building to another location. The most important partner in the acquisitions turned out to be the City of Durango. In order to maximize the location of the new building, the school district needed to be able to place their building smack in the middle of the East Second Avenue right of way. The City Council supported the new school and abandoned the Avenue and an alley through the block between 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Streets to accommodate the new school.

In 1916 a bond election passed 238 to 199 for \$175,000 to fund construction. The Colorado Springs architectural firm of Thomas MacLaren and Charles Thomas was selected to design the new facility. M.J. Kenney of Denver was the building contractor.

Thomas MacLaren, a classically trained architect was born in Scotland in 1863. He practiced architecture from 1889 until his death in 1928. MacLaren moved to Colorado Springs in 1894. His partnership with Thomas extended from 1906-1917.

Charles Thomas was born in Columbus, Ohio in 1876, but moved to Denver with his family when he was five years old. Thomas worked for, and learned the architectural profession from, Colorado practitioners Dick Phillips, Frank E. Kidder and Robert Roeschlaub. The young architect then worked

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Durango High School  
La Plata County, CO

Section number 8 Page 11

---

under MacLaren, including a year of study in Boston and New York in 1904, and most of 1909 in Europe studying classical architecture.

Thomas served as the mayor of Colorado Springs beginning in 1917, and was a long time member of the Colorado Board of Architectural Examiners (1914, 1926-1946), including 6 years as president. Thomas lived until 1957.

Both architects are known for individual and collaborative designs. Some of the partnership's better-known buildings include Claremont/Trianon, a Colorado Springs residence (listed in the National Register) that is a scaled down version of the Trianon at Versailles, and numerous Carnegie libraries in Colorado such as the National Register listed Boulder and Salida public libraries.

Thomas is well-known throughout Colorado but is particularly associated with Colorado Springs where his individual projects included the Will Rogers Shrine (a.k.a. Shrine of the Sun) on Cheyenne Mountain.

Each architect returned to Durango after the partnership ended to design another building. Coincidentally, the two buildings are in clear view of the Durango High School. MacLaren designed the Durango Elks Lodge in 1925 (on the City of Durango historic register). Thomas created the plans for the Emory E. Smiley Junior High School in 1936.

The Durango High School was one of the last products of the partnership, which dissolved on April 4, 1917. Thomas remained with the project until its completion that summer. Drawing upon their classical training, the architects produced a Classical Revival style monument to education suitable for the community's veneration for education. With the guidance of Durango's progressive school superintendent, Emory E. Smiley, the architects composed a modern facility based on extensive research of high school facilities throughout the country. The local newspaper, the *Durango Evening Herald* noted in its January 13, 1916 edition, "Our little city will have the distinction of keeping pace with eastern educational centers and in some things leading them."

With a new school for high school students, the old school was used as a junior high until 1937 when it became an elementary school. Durango lost its former high school when it burned to the ground in 1950.

The new high school opened in September of 1917 with 304 students in attendance. The opening day celebration, held in the new auditorium, was a welcome diversion from the tensions of World War I. The anxieties of the war soon intruded on the new facility. In the summer of 1918 German language classes were struck from the curriculum and German texts and reference books were burned.

Durango High School was forced to close a little more than a year after its opening when on October 4 the first case of Spanish influenza was discovered in Durango. The High School closed on October 17,

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 12

Durango High School  
La Plata County, CO

---

1918 to prevent the spread of this disease, and remained closed until January 6, 1919.

In 1927, the plunge pool located at the rear of the building was replaced with a swimming pool. The enclosure for the plunge pool was extended approximately 26 feet in an addition designed by Eugene Groves of Denver. (Durango School District 9R has retained all of the original plans created by Groves, Thomas and MacLaren.)

According to the U.S. Census, Durango's population had grown from 4,686 in 1920 to 10,530 in 1970. Overcrowding called again for a change to the high school facilities. Built to accommodate up to 500 students, Durango High School could not meet the needs of the projected 700 students. In 1975 ground was broken on land north of downtown Durango for a new high school, and classes started in 1976. After serving for 59 years as Durango's only high school, the old Durango High was converted to administrative offices for the Durango 9-R School District. Local Durango architect George King oversaw the remodeling. All of the District's administrative functions take place in this building, including meetings of the school board. Although the interior was remodeled, no changes were made to the exterior. The building remains dedicated to public education.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Durango High School  
La Plata County, CO

Section number 9 Page 13

---

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

- Animas Museum photograph collection. Animas Museum. Durango, Colorado.
- Bell, R. Michael and Associates. "A Historic Structure Assessment of Durango High School Administrative Offices". R. Michael Bell and Associates. Durango, Colorado. 2001.
- Bensel Directory Company. *Durango City Directory*. Bensel Directory Company Trinidad, Colorado. 1892.
- Colorado Historical Society. "Colorado Architects Biographical Sketches for Thomas MacLaren and Charles Thomas". Denver, Colorado.
- Colorado State Census 1885 Census. Microfilm in the files of the Denver Public Library, Denver, Colorado.
- Durango Evening Herald* January 13, 1916. Durango Public Library. Durango, Colorado.
- Durango High School "The Toltec" yearbook. Durango, Colorado. 1958.
- Durango School District 9R architectural plans for the Durango High School. 1916, 1927, 1976. Durango School District. Durango, Colorado.
- Durango Semi-Weekly Herald* May 1, 1916. Durango Public Library. Durango, Colorado.
- Federico, James. Former Maintenance Supervisor for the Durango 9R School District. Telephone Interview May, 2001. Durango, Colorado.
- La Plata County Assessor property ownership cards. La Plata County Courthouse, Durango, Colorado.
- McKinley, Cecil M. A History of Public Schools in Durango, Colorado. M.A. Thesis. University of New Mexico. Albuquerque, New Mexico 1944.
- O'Rourke, Paul M. *Frontiers in Transition: A History of Southwestern Colorado*. Bureau of Land Management: Denver, Colorado 1982.
- Pearce, Sarah J. and Wilson, Merrill A. *A Guide to Colorado Architecture*. Colorado Historical Society, Denver, Colorado 1983.
- Sanborn Map Company "Durango, Colorado". Fire insurance maps. Pelham, New York: Sanborn Map Company. Located at the Durango Public Library. 1919, 1931, 1948.



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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section number 9 Page 14

Durango High School  
La Plata County, CO

---

Simmons, R. Laurie and Thomas H. "Historic Buildings Survey of Durango, Colorado 1996-1997". City of Durango, Colorado 1997.

Smith, Duane A. *Rocky Mountain Boomtown: A History of Durango Colorado*. Pruett Press. Boulder, Colorado 1986.

Spining, Bruce. "Clapboards, School Boards and Blackboards; A History of the Florida Area Rural Country Schools 1875-1959." Florida Schools Association. Durango, Colorado 1993.

*Today Newspaper*. October 1977.

Durango High School  
Name of Property

La Plata County, Colorado  
County/State

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** less than one

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1. 13 244860 4129260  
Zone Easting Northing

3. Zone Easting Northing

2. Zone Easting Northing

4. Zone Easting Northing

[ ] 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 Jill Seyfarth / Cultural Resource Planner

organization \_\_\_\_\_ date April 2001

street & number P. O. Box 295 telephone 970-247-5893

city or town Durango state Colorado zip code 81302

**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 Durango School District 9-R

street & number 201 East 12<sup>th</sup> Street telephone 970-247-5411

city or town Durango state Colorado zip code 81301

**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.)

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Durango High School  
La Plata County, CO

Section number 10 Page 15

---

**GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The boundary is indicated on the accompanying scaled site plan.

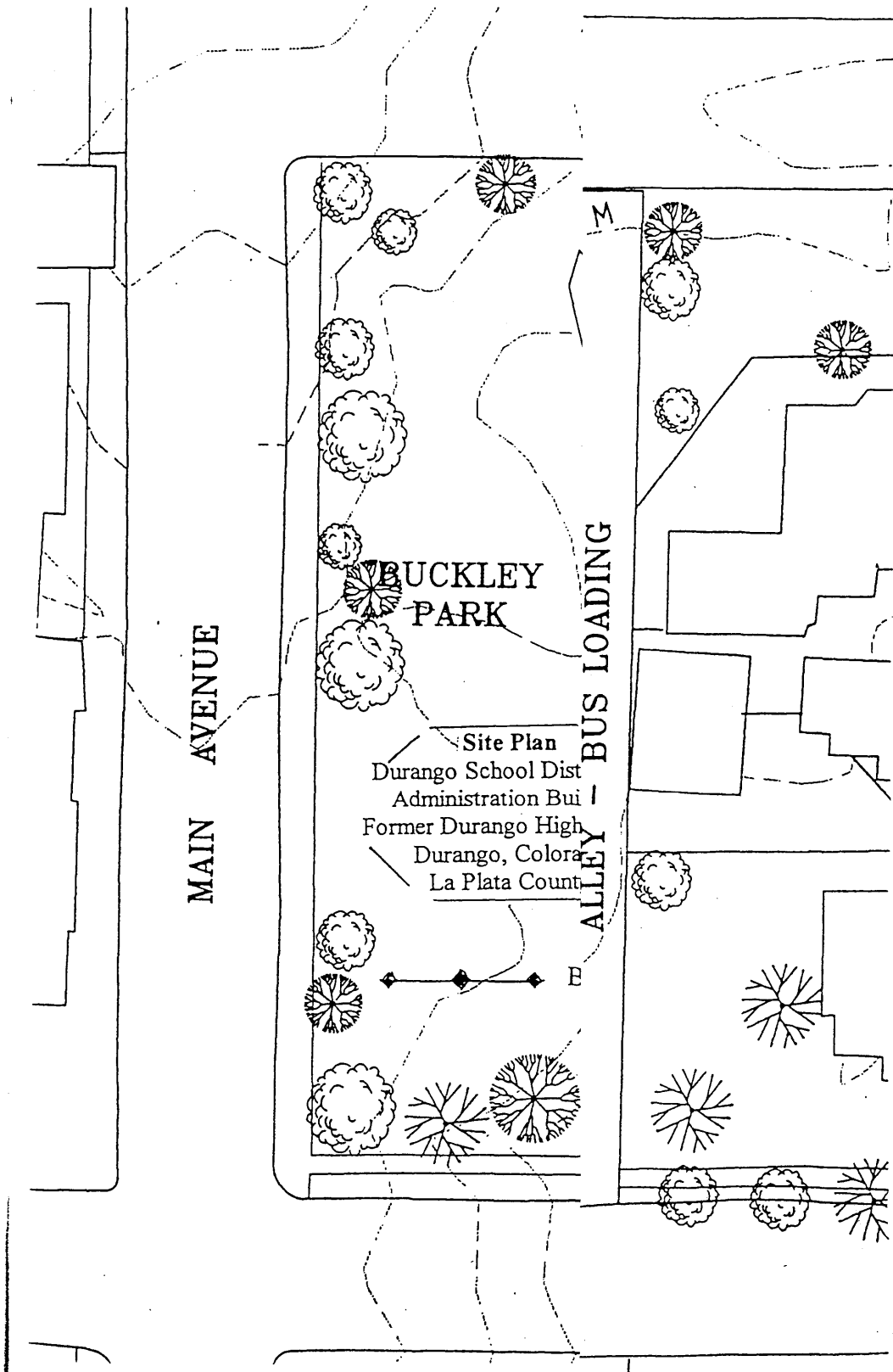
**Boundary Justification**

The boundary was drawn to incorporate the building and the significant landscaping features (including the terraced approach at the front of the school), and to exclude the more recently constructed school building, non-contributing structures, parking lots and auto maneuvering areas.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 16





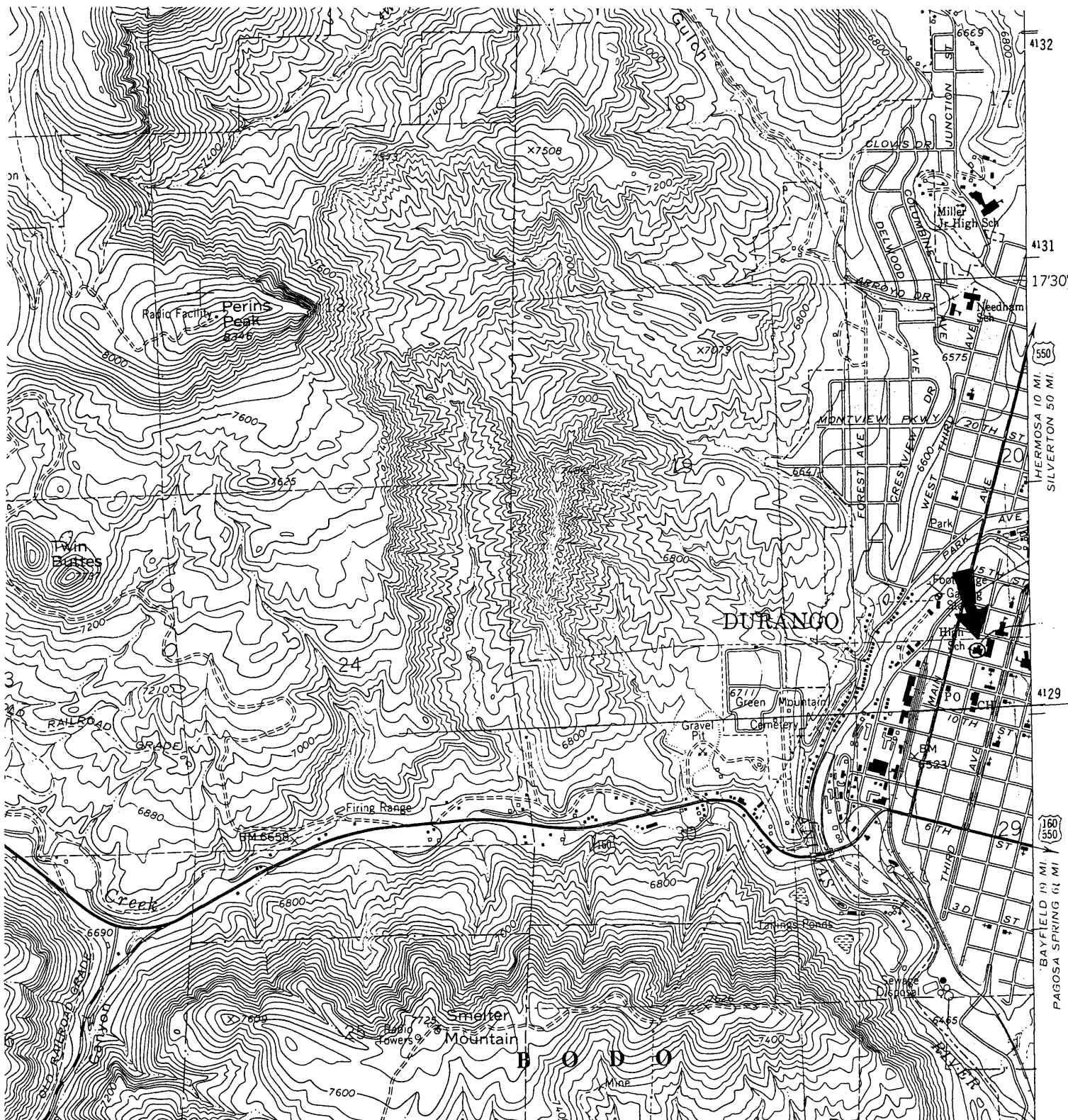
United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Durango High School  
La Plata County, CO

Section number 10 Page 17

U.S.G.S. MAP -- Durango West Quadrangle



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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section number \_\_\_ Page 18

Durango High School  
La Plata County, CO

PHOTOGRAPH LOG

The following information applies to all photographs submitted with this nomination form:

Name of Property: Durango High School  
City, county, state: Durango, La Plata, Colorado  
Photographer: Jill Seyfarth  
Date of Photograph: April 12, 2001  
Location of Negative: Jill Seyfarth, Cultural Resource Planning Consultant  
PO Box 295  
Durango, Colorado 81302

Photograph #	Photograph Information
1	View of south side of building with main entry; looking north from 12 <sup>th</sup> Street
2	Interior photo of main entry, looking south
3	West wing of the building; looking east-northeast
4	West side of the northern extension of the building. The three blocked in windows at the far left constitute the part of the building that was added in 1927 to accommodate a new swimming pool; looking east from the parking lot
5	The rear (north) side of the building. The low, flat-roofed structure in the foreground is not attached to the high school building. Looking south from 13 <sup>th</sup> Street
6	The north and east sides of the building as taken from the roof of a building (Smiley Community Center) located to the northeast of the school. Looking south-southwest.
7	The east wing of the building, looking south-southwest
8	Detail work located at the transition from banded brick to smooth brick on the front (north) side of the building. The tree trunk on the right side of the photograph is one of three large evergreens. Looking south
9	Gymnasium with elevated running track; looking north
10	Remodeled auditorium viewed from the balcony seating area; looking north

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Durango High School  
La Plata County, CO

Section number \_\_\_ Page 19

Photograph Locations

