

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

1591

DEC - 1 2000

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 any 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 Bullion Plaza School

Other names / site number N/A

2. Location

Street & number 1000 Plaza Ave.

not for publication

City or town Miami

vicinity

State Arizona

Code AZ

County Gila

Code 007

Zip code 85539

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.)

James W. Gardner AZ STHP  
Signature of certifying official / Title

27 NOVEMBER 2000  
Date

ARIZONA STATE PARKS  
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 commenting or other official / Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this 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): \_\_\_\_\_

for  
Edson H. Beall  
Signature of the Keeper

1.4.01  
Date of action

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	
1	2	buildings
_____	_____	sites
_____	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
1	2	Total

Number of contributing resources

previously listed in the National Register 0

Name of related multiple property listing

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

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Education: school

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Vacant

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Neo-Classical Revival

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation reinforced concrete

walls reinforced concrete

roof asphalt

other \_\_\_\_\_

Narrative Description

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

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.)

- 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
Ethnic Heritage: Hispanic
Architecture

Period of Significance

1923 - c.1951

Significant Dates

1923, c.1951

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Trost & Trost, El Paso, Texas (architect)
R. A. Ramey Construction Co., El Paso, Texas (builder)

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:

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreeage of Property** 2

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	12S	511225	3694957	3			
2				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 Mark E. Pry  
 Organization Southwest Historical Services Date 26 October 2000  
 Street & number 315 E. Balboa Drive Telephone (480) 968-2339  
 City or town Tempe State Arizona Zip code 85282-3750

**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 the SHPO or FPO.)

Name Town of Miami  
 Street & number 500 Sullivan Street Telephone (520) 473-4403  
 City or town Miami State Arizona Zip code 85539

**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 the 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 Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Gila County, Arizona

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## Narrative Description

### *Summary*

The Bullion Plaza School is a two-story, reinforced concrete school building located on the west end of the town of Miami, a modest-size community (population 2,018 in 1990) located in the mountains of central Arizona that has been associated with copper mining since its founding in the early 1900s. Built in 1923, this Neo-Classical Revival building was designed by the El Paso, Texas, architectural firm of Trost & Trost. It was used continuously as a school from 1923 until the spring of 1994, when it was closed out of concern that possible structural problems made it unsafe for occupancy as a public building. Except for a brief period when the building was leased to a private school, it has remained vacant and unused since its closure in 1994.

### *Setting and Grounds*

The Bullion Plaza School is located in a mixed commercial and residential area on the west side of Miami. The main building, which is the sole contributing building on the property, faces almost directly east toward semi-circular Bullion Plaza. When the school was built, the plaza, which is adjacent to US Highway 60, was the site of a large circular dance hall; now the plaza is an open expanse planted with grass. The area to the west and north of the school grounds is residential, as are the blocks northeast of the plaza. The area south and southeast of the school grounds and plaza, which is adjacent to US 60, is mixed residential and commercial. When the school is viewed from the front (the east), the large mounds of overburden from the Inspiration Mine form a dramatic backdrop.

When the Bullion Plaza School was built in 1923, the Miami-Superior highway (just completed in 1922) ran adjacent to the south side of the plaza and the south end of the school grounds, so that motorists passing in and out of town had a good view of the building. In the mid-1950s, the highway was relocated. Now the road curves south away from the plaza and school grounds, so that motorists leaving Miami have a good view of the school but those entering the town from the west do not see the school unless they make a special effort to do so.

The school grounds are bounded by Bullion Plaza on the east, Live Oak Canyon Road and Laurel Avenue on the north, a canal (drainage ditch) on the west, and Turner Street on the south. The main building is set close to the curving street at its front, with only a broad concrete walk separating the street from the building. There is a small gravel side yard on the right (north) side of the main building, and a larger gravel area on the left (south) side of the building. All of the grounds behind the main building are paved, either with concrete (the basketball courts just behind the left wing of the building) or asphalt (the remainder of the grounds). There are two gated vehicle entrances to the rear grounds, both opening onto Laurel Avenue.

Two outbuildings, which are non-contributing, are located behind the main building. The newest is the multipurpose building, a one-story, flat-roofed, concrete-block building erected in 1981 and connected to the main building by a covered walkway. Containing a gymnasium, stage, and kitchen, it is in very good condition and is currently used by the Town of Miami for community events. The oldest outbuilding, commonly called the music building, is a one-story, stucco-over-frame structure with a very low-pitch gabled roof that has been extensively modified over the years. It sits immediately adjacent to Laurel Avenue, behind the multipurpose building, and is currently vacant. A third outbuilding, a modular building, was erected in the summer of 2000 in the gravel area on the south side of the building.

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*Exterior*

The plan of the Bullion Plaza School consists of a central section, or block, with two symmetrical wings extending at 25-degree angles to either side. The central block, which has a higher front parapet than the wings, a slightly projecting front wall, and a monumental portico, is the dominant feature of the facade; indeed, the viewer's eye is immediately drawn to this part of the building, for this is where almost all of the building's Neo-Classical Revival ornamentation is found. The roof parapet here features a cornice that was originally topped with cast concrete crests, and the pediment has raked cornices with dentils that also were topped with crests; now only a few of the crests remain on the parapet cornice, and none remain on the pediment cornice. The pediment's horizontal cornice continues around the front wall of the central block, ending at the central block's intersection with the wings. A single pediment over the main entry echoes the portico pediment—even including two relief crests identical to those on the parapet and pediment cornices. The portico is supported by four columns with scrolled Ionic capitals, and there are two pilasters on either side of the wall behind the portico with similar capitals. A short flight of stairs that extends the full width of the portico leads from the sidewalk to the porch.

The remainder of the ornamentation is comparatively simple. There are three cornices across the front wall of the central block: two above the first-floor windows and entryway, one just below the second-floor windows. A larger cornice, which can be seen just above the column capitals, runs all the way around the building, thus visually tying the wings to the central block. Only two other types of ornament appear on the wings: a vertical series of raised panels that can be seen on between the window bays on the facade and sides (but not the back), and circular relief emblems on the parapet above each bay of windows on the facade. All of the ornament on the building is made of cast concrete (specified on the original plans as "art stone") except for the central block's parapet and pediment cornices, which are concrete, metal, and wood.

The main entry is a double metal door with a single fixed transom—obviously a replacement for the original doors. There are single doors on each end of the wings, and three sets of double doors in the rear. All of the windows except two are divided-light windows with aluminum sash; the larger ones (which on the facade are arranged five to each window bay) have both fixed and operable awning-style lights. The two exceptions are the windows on either side of the main entry, which are 4/4 wood double-hung. As an older photograph of the building indicates (see "Additional Documentation"), all of the windows originally were wood double-hung, either 4/4 or 6/6 (the larger windows). The windows on the rear of the building are covered with metal security grates.

*Interior*

The interior of the Bullion Plaza School is not considered significant for this nomination, but it is worth noting its basic layout and features. The central block has offices and restrooms on the first floor, and a study hall (with a small stage) and classrooms on the second floor. There are three stairways in the building, one in the central block and one in each wing. Each wing has a central hall; on the first floor the halls extend two-thirds the length of the wings, while on the second floor they extend the full length of the wings. On the first floor, the left (south) wing has one classroom and three large rooms, while the right (north) wing has one large classroom, a lunchroom, and a home economics classroom that includes a set of rooms (living room, bedroom, bathroom, and laundry room) intended to replicate an apartment or small house. The second floor has six classrooms in each wing.

The floors are a mix of wood, carpet, and linoleum; the wood floors are found in the classrooms, and in many of these rooms, the floors flex noticeably. Some of the ceilings are lowered with recessed fluorescent lights, while others are the original height with hanging fluorescent fixtures and exposed electrical conduit. None of the original

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doors remain, but the door frames appear to be original (including the transoms, some of which are still operable). Fire doors have been added to the hallways on both floors.

*Construction History and Integrity*

The Bullion Plaza School was constructed in the fall of 1923 and opened for use in March 1924. The architects were Trost & Trost, of El Paso, Texas, and the contractor was R. A. Ramey Construction Co., also of El Paso, which successfully bid \$128,949 for the job.<sup>1</sup> The multipurpose building was built in 1980 (work began in the fall) and dedicated in May 1981; at the time, a covered walkway was built to connect the new building with the central rear entry of the main building.<sup>2</sup>

In late 1992, a structural engineer hired by the school district to examine the building noted an "unusual amount of cracking throughout the building both exterior and interior," and he recommended extensive testing to determine whether the cracks were structural. Two years later, in the spring of 1994, maintenance officials at the school observed that the cracks had grown in size, and they found dry rot in the second-floor joists. At the time, the district was considering closing Bullion Plaza School in response to declining enrollment and out of concern that maintenance costs were too high. When presented with new evidence of deterioration, the school board on 8 March 1994 voted to immediately close Bullion Plaza School on the grounds that it was no longer safe for occupancy as a public building.<sup>3</sup> The school never reopened and was sold to the Town of Miami in the spring of 1997. It has remained vacant since the sale, except for a brief period—August 1997 to December 1998—when it was occupied by a private charter school, Destiny School, which leased it from the town.

Since its construction, the building's exterior has seen several changes, most importantly the replacement of the original wood double-hung windows with metal windows, as well as the loss of most of the cresting on the parapet and pediment of the central block (see "Additional Documentation"). Both changes, while regrettable, have not materially affected the Neo-Classical character of the building, nor have they had any impact on other essential aspects such as massing and floorplan. The original stylistic character of the Bullion Plaza School is still plainly evident, and it retains sufficient integrity to qualify for the National Register.

The second floor has seen very few changes, and none to its floorplan. The first floor is where most of the interior modifications have been made: the first-floor bathrooms (in the central section on either side of the stairway) were once the library and nurse's room; the original first-floor bathrooms (one in each wing) have been removed and combined with the adjacent classrooms; and the kitchen attached to the lunchroom has been removed.

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<sup>1</sup> *Arizona Silver Belt*, 26 June 1923, 27 June 1923, 10 September 1923, and 10 March 1924.

<sup>2</sup> Minutes of the school board, 12 August 1980, 11 November 1980, and 12 May 1981.

<sup>3</sup> Douglas A. Snow, Douglas A. Snow and Associates Structural Engineers, to Rick Masterson, Miami Area Unified School District No. 40, 1 November 1992, in maintenance records on file at the school district's offices; minutes of the school board, 14 December 1993 and 8 March 1994.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance**

***Summary***

The Bullion Plaza School is being nominated to the National Register under Criterion A, for its association with the history of Mexican Americans and school segregation in Arizona, and Criterion C, as an example of late Neo-Classical Revival architecture in public buildings in Miami.

Segregation of Mexican-American students was a common practice in Arizona schools from the early decades of the 1900s until the early 1950s—precisely the period during which Bullion Plaza School served as a segregated school for Miami's Mexican-American children. The school also is representative of "Mexican schools" because of its configuration and operation as a vocational training center, which school administrators at the time thought was needed for Mexican-American students because of their supposed inability to perform well in traditional scholastic subjects. Unfortunately, the history of the segregation of Mexican-American students is not well known, and there are few properties in Arizona on the National Register commemorating this important aspect of the state's ethnic history.<sup>1</sup> This omission can be remedied by placing this building on the National Register. Given the rarity of other Mexican-American school buildings on the Register, the Bullion Plaza School is historically significant at the state level.

As an example of Neo-Classical Revival architecture, the Bullion Plaza School is significant at the local level. Only two of the existing buildings in Miami are in this style (the other is the Miami YMCA), and none is currently listed on the National Register. Architect-designed buildings were rare in Miami during the period when the Bullion Plaza School was constructed, and buildings that were executed in a recognized architectural style were even rarer. As a result, this Neo-Classical building has exerted a marked influence on the town's built environment that should be recognized through listing on the National Register.

***Segregation of Mexican Americans in Arizona Schools***

The segregation of Mexican-American children in Arizona's schools occurred for nominally different reasons, and was carried out by different mechanisms, than was segregation of African-American children. Segregation of African-American students was required by law after 1909, when the Arizona legislature mandated that black and white students be separated in elementary schools. (Segregation in high schools was legally permissible but not required.) The law's distinctions were based on definitions of race that did not specifically mention Mexican-American children, who at the time were legally considered to be white. That the law considered Mexican Americans to be white did not mean, however, that Anglos in the Southwest saw Mexican Americans as equals, or even that they saw them as white in the popularly understood sense of the term. Indeed, popular stereotypes of Mexican Americans during the early decades of the 20th century portrayed them as members of an ethnic and racial minority, as well as foreigners whose alien language and customs rendered them unsuitable for full integration into American society. It was this view of Mexican Americans as "foreigners" that provided the official rationale for segregating their children in Arizona's public schools.

When the segregation of Mexican-American children in Arizona schools began is difficult to establish, for it was never required by law; indeed, it appears that none of the states in the American Southwest ever passed laws either

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<sup>1</sup> A survey of National Register listings for Arizona found three school buildings that were deemed significant because of their association with the educational segregation of Mexican-American children: the Arizona Academy, a private school in Phoenix that was segregated for part of its existence (1920-1933); the Scottsdale Grammar School, in Scottsdale, which was segregated from 1928 until the 1950s; and the South Beaver School, in Flagstaff, which was used for both African-American and Mexican-American students beginning in the 1930s.



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requiring or allowing the educational segregation of Mexican Americans.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, the available evidence suggests that the practice of segregating Mexican-Americans was common in Arizona. It reached significant proportions in the 1920s, following more than a decade of increased immigration from Mexico as a result of the revolution that began there in 1910, and it continued to grow along with the numbers of Mexican Americans living in Arizona.<sup>3</sup> Often there was a correlation between the size of the Mexican-American student population and a district's segregation policy, so that some Arizona school districts were integrated for many years before administrators began separating Anglo and Mexican-American children. For example, in Tolleson, where a celebrated desegregation lawsuit was filed in 1950, Mexican Americans shared classrooms with Anglos in the 1920s but not in the 1940s.

The official reason for this segregation, not just in Arizona but everywhere in the Southwest, was that Mexican-American children had language "deficiencies" that rendered them unable to study at the same level, or even take the same subjects, as their Anglo classmates. In reality, this belief was grounded in racial prejudice that had produced a long tradition of discrimination against Mexican Americans in employment, wages, and residential patterns. It also was reinforced by educational theories and practices advanced by national experts. Chief among these was the concern that Mexican-American children (like other immigrant children during this period) had to be "Americanized" before they could be mixed with Anglo students or sent out into the job market. One educator, in a master's thesis written at the University of Chicago, summarized this view in 1926: "Better results in Americanization are secured in Mexican schools than in mixed schools. American ideals which should be taught to Mexican children are very familiar to American children. In a mixed school the teacher faces the problem that what the Mexican children need the American children do not need and what the American children need is beyond the grasp of Mexican children."<sup>4</sup>

Educators also pointed to high dropout rates for Mexican-American students as evidence of the need for segregated classes, and to the fact that Mexican-American students typically obtained lower scores on intelligence tests, which were growing in popularity during the 1920s and 1930s. According to C. Ralph Tupper, who was superintendent of Miami schools when Bullion Plaza School was built, classes made up predominantly of Mexican-American students "lagged consistently behind corresponding groups in the other schools."<sup>5</sup> While we would now recognize that these low scores measured language skills rather than intelligence, at the time educators preferred to conclude that Mexican-American students were simply unable to master traditional educational subjects. Thus Tupper, who claimed that he was acting in Mexican-American students' best interests, advocated a "specialized curriculum" that emphasized "industrial and home-making courses," thereby offering them a chance to succeed that had once been denied them. "When it is recalled that the children of the Mexican laborers in the mines of the district almost invariably drop out after the sixth year to take up unskilled labor or to set up homes of their own, it will be readily appreciated that the schools owe it to these children to provide them with definite training in this direction in place of condemning them to

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<sup>2</sup> Although never codified in law, the education segregation of Mexican Americans is often referred to by historians *as de jure* segregation. The term *de jure* can be used to describe not only legal segregation (that is, segregation by law) but also other forms of overt segregation that are administrative in character (such as Miami's school segregation policy).

<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately there is no statewide study for Arizona of school segregation as it involved Mexican Americans, so there are no statistical data readily available on the number of "Mexican schools," the years they were established, or their enrollments. One regional study done in the mid-1930s found that 85 percent of school districts in the Southwest segregated Mexican-American students in at least some of their grade levels (Gonzales, *Chicano Education*, 21-22).

<sup>4</sup> Reynolds, *Education of Spanish-Speaking Children*, 12

<sup>5</sup> Tupper, "Use of Intelligence Tests," 94

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failure, discouragement, and early elimination by confining their school training to the traditional course of study looking toward high school entrance and graduation.”<sup>6</sup> All across the Southwest, then, Mexican-American students were not only separated from their Anglo classmates but also tracked into vocational training courses aimed at preparing them for manual labor jobs.

The formal segregation of Mexican-American students in Arizona schools persisted until the early 1950s, when a series of court decisions here and elsewhere in the Southwest forced local school districts to abandon the practice. The drive to end Mexican-American segregation in the Southwest occurred at about the same time as the movement to end African-American segregation, but the two movements seem to have been largely separate. Both, though, had their origins in increasing complaints by minority parents that their children’s schools were not only separate but inferior, despite the claims of educators and school administrators that segregation was based on the theory of “separate but equal” educational facilities. As historians of the Mexican-American desegregation movement have demonstrated, “Mexican schools” generally had poorer physical facilities than Anglo schools, and teachers at those schools typically received less training and supervision. One 1933 study found that instructional materials for teaching Mexican-American children were “conspicuously absent,” as were training programs for teachers in segregated schools. Mexican-American parents also were increasingly upset with some of the administrative practices common in segregated schools—especially those of making Mexican-American children repeat early grades (on the grounds that doing so helped them learn English) and shifting them into vocational or special-education classes—and with the high dropout rates shown by their children.

One of the earliest challenges to Mexican-American school desegregation in Arizona was made in 1925, when parents in Tempe sued the local district in hopes of ending the practice of sending their children to a segregated school, the Eighth Street School, which was staffed by student teachers from Tempe Normal School. Upholding the principle of separate but equal facilities, the county court in *Romo v. Laird* found no fault with the district’s segregation policy but did require the district to place certified teachers in each segregated classroom. The next significant case did not come until the late 1940s, when a California lawsuit (*Mendez v. Westminster*) resulted in a 1947 court ruling that separate but equal facilities for Mexican-American children were unconstitutional because they created conditions of “social inequality.” This ruling, which was the first major legal blow struck anywhere in the country against the separate-but-equal doctrine, also found that the practice of segregating Mexican-American students not only failed to improve English language proficiency—its stated purpose—but actually undermined it.

The response of Arizona districts to the “Westminster Rule” that emerged from the California case is not documented, but at least one district (Gilbert) introduced a language test to bolster its segregation policy. Otherwise it appears to have had little impact. In 1949, according to one researcher, Mexican-American students were still segregated in many Arizona school districts, including Ajo, St. Johns, Douglas, Safford, Duncan, Miami, Glendale, Superior, Clifton, Gilbert, Tempe, Tolleson, Flagstaff, and Winslow.<sup>7</sup> The turning point came in 1951, when a lawsuit filed in Tolleson by a group of Mexican-American parents (with help from the Alianza Hispano-Americana and its general counsel, Ralph Estrada) brought a preliminary injunction in federal court that outlawed segregation in Arizona schools. Known as *Gonzales v. Sheely*, this decision was the first local test of the Westminster Rule and the first in Arizona to address any aspect of school segregation. Rejecting the district’s claims that Spanish-speaking students received a better education in separate classes, Judge David Ling found not only that the facilities for Mexican-

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<sup>6</sup> Tupper, “Use of Intelligence Tests,” 102

<sup>7</sup> Pérez, “Litigation Impacting Arizona’s Mexican Schools,” citing an unnamed report.

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American students were inferior to those for Anglo students, but also that no language tests were ever given to Mexican-American children and that no Anglo children with language problems were ever placed in the segregated building. After Ling's final decree was published in January 1952, the Tolleson school district declined to appeal, meaning that henceforth the segregation of Mexican-American children in Arizona schools was no longer allowed—at least on paper. Shortly thereafter, a similar Alianza-assisted lawsuit against Glendale's school board was dropped when administrators in that town agreed to desegregate voluntarily.

*Segregation at Bullion Plaza School*

The immediate motivation for building Bullion Plaza School was to eliminate overcrowding in the existing elementary schools in Miami. As then-superintendent C. Ralph Tupper argued in a letter to Miami residents published in the fall of 1922, conditions in Live Oak School District No. 26 (as the district was then known) were such that the main school on the west side of Miami, the Live Oak School, had more than one grade being taught in many of its classrooms, making it "practically a rural school." In the district's other facilities, Central School and Inspiration Addition School, double shifts of classes were being conducted in some of the classrooms and temporary offices had been set up in restrooms and hallways.<sup>8</sup>

However, as Tupper had indicated elsewhere (in his article on intelligence testing), an equally important reason for Bullion Plaza School's construction was that the town needed an improved "Mexican school." The district already had one school, the Live Oak School, that was effectively functioning as a segregated school; according to Tupper, Mexican-American students made up 90 percent of the enrollment there.<sup>9</sup> But neither Live Oak nor any other Miami-area elementary school had the vocational education facilities that "progressive" educators of this period believed were necessary for the proper education of Mexican-American children. Once the administration had determined that test scores were lower for Mexican-American students, Tupper wrote in 1923, that "formed the basis for the action of the school board in deciding to equip the new Mexican building with a view to emphasizing industrial and home-making courses for these children. . . . As a result a definite program looking to the inclusion of this work in the Mexican schools was adopted by the board and will be provided for in the equipment of the new \$125,000 Mexican building."<sup>10</sup>

There was no mention in the newspapers of this rationale for building Bullion Plaza School, despite the fact that in practically every other aspect of day-to-day affairs, segregation of and discrimination against Mexican Americans was openly acknowledged and discussed. Indeed, the documentary record of the Miami schools' segregation policy is meager, largely because few school board minutes from the segregation period survive. The only surviving official statement of the district's segregation policy dates from 1935, when the board approved a school boundary policy that identified Bullion Plaza as the district's Mexican-American school. However, this policy also used language that implied that segregation was voluntary: "any children from Spanish speaking homes living in [the Inspiration Addition]

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<sup>8</sup> *Arizona Silver Belt*, 3 October 1922. The district acquired its current name and number, Miami Unified School District No. 40, in 1949, when it merged with two other districts

<sup>9</sup> Tupper, "Uses of Intelligence Tests," 93-94. He did not specifically identify Live Oak as the town's "Mexican school," but all indications suggest it was the school to which he referred.

<sup>10</sup> Tupper, "Uses of Intelligence Tests," 97-98. The term "progressive educators" is used here as it was at the time, namely, to identify educators who advocated teaching and administrative practices based on then-current research and incorporating hitherto untried methods. Also, educators such as Tupper could be described as progressive on the subject of Mexican-American education because that they did not share the indifference or even hostility to educating Mexican-American children that some Anglos showed at the time.

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territory may attend the Bullion Plaza school if they prefer,” while “any children from English speaking homes living in [the Bullion Plaza] territory may attend Inspiration Addition school if they prefer.”<sup>11</sup> What this policy suggests is that segregation of Mexican-American students was not absolute, and oral tradition in present-day Miami seems to confirm this. According to older Miami residents, Mexican-American students could attend the Inspiration Addition School if they (or their parents) “looked white,” spoke English exceptionally well, or were persistent in asserting their rights to attend the same school as their Anglo neighbors.<sup>12</sup>

Exactly how and when desegregation was accomplished in Miami remains a mystery, not only because of missing school board records, but also because the local newspaper, the *Arizona Silver Belt*, did not acknowledge the segregation of Mexican-American students or report challenges to the practice.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, the only mention of school segregation in the *Silver Belt* during this period came in connection with a state law passed in 1951 that allowed local districts to end the segregation of black and white students. Responding to the law’s passage, the Miami school district decided in the spring of 1951 to close its school for African-American students, the Thomas Jefferson school. Although the *Silver Belt* covered this matter, it made no mention of the segregation of Mexican-American students, nor did it mention the *Gonzales v. Sheely* case even though a preliminary injunction had been issued at about the same time.

However, in May 1951 the paper did report a plan by the Miami district to reorganize its attendance boundaries. Under the new policy, which took effect in the fall of 1951, Inspiration Addition was converted into a primary school, for all students from kindergarten through third grade, and Bullion Plaza was reclassified as an “upper grade platoon school,” for all students from fourth through eighth grade. Also at the same time, the district proposed renaming Bullion Plaza School, a proposal that was abandoned when opponents presented the school board with a petition signed by more than six hundred residents, almost all of whom were Mexican American.<sup>14</sup>

Whether the realignment of attendance boundaries in 1951 marked the end of Mexican-American school segregation in Miami remains, for the time being, a matter of speculation; the *Silver Belt* offered several reasons for the change, but none had anything to do with segregation. The timing of the realignment, which followed the *Gonzales v. Sheely* preliminary injunction by only two months, suggests that it was the end of segregation in Miami. Other evidence suggests that it was not, and in 1952 the Alianza Hispano-Americana reported in its Arizona newsletter that schools in Miami were still segregated. However, while the exact timing of the desegregation of Bullion Plaza School is in question, the fact that it took place is not: at some time in 1951 or 1952, the Miami school district abandoned its policy of requiring Mexican-American elementary students to attend Bullion Plaza School.<sup>15</sup>

***Bullion Plaza School and Neo-Classical Revival Architecture in Miami***

The Neo-Classical style was most popular in the United States from the 1890s to the 1920s, when it was used especially for public and commercial buildings. Neo-Classicism was a revival style, which meant that it not only

<sup>11</sup> Minutes of the school board, 29 November 1935. This boundary policy statement was found as a loose document in miscellaneous district records. Miami residents at the time were accustomed to a certain amount of integration, for Miami High School was never segregated, remaining open not just to Mexican Americans but also to African Americans.

<sup>12</sup> No formal oral interviews were conducted for this nomination; this statement is based on casual conversations with several Miami residents who attended school during the segregation era.

<sup>13</sup> *Arizona Silver Belt* issues were examined from early 1951 through late 1953.

<sup>14</sup> *Arizona Silver Belt*, 17 May 1951, for the boundary policy change, and 24 May and 7 June for the petitions. Some of the petition pages were found in the district’s miscellaneous records; every signer had a Spanish surname.

<sup>15</sup> *Alianza*, March 1952; that segregation ended in Miami in 1951-52 is confirmed by local oral tradition.

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reflected fascination with ancient classical architectural models but also borrowed from 19th-century styles—Georgian, Classical Revival, and Greek Revival—that had been based on the classical orders. The Neo-Classical style was especially well suited to monumental buildings, which explains its prominence among public buildings. In Arizona, the Neo-Classical style is seen on many public buildings from the late territorial and early statehood period.

Neo-Classicism had its greatest impact in Miami by providing a set of features and details—cornices, pilasters, pediments, and lintels—that were used to decorate otherwise plain 1-part and 2-part commercial blocks. As for fully realized examples of the style, there are only two buildings still standing in Miami that were built in the Neo-Classical style: the Miami YMCA and the Bullion Plaza School. As earlier noted, neither is listed on the National Register.

Given that the Bullion Plaza School was erected in 1923, it is a late example of the style. It also is a modest example, for almost all of its Neo-Classical ornamentation is found on the central block, while the wings show little that is distinctively Neo-Classical. Still, the basic features of the style are evident in the central block: columns with elements from the Ionic order, cornices, pediments, a monumental portico with broad temple-like steps, and a corniced parapet with cresting reminiscent of classical statuary. Despite its stylistic modesty, the Bullion Plaza School has exerted a marked influence on the town's built environment. Architect-designed buildings in the established styles of the early 20th century are rare in Miami, and the school occupies a prominent location next to US Highway 60, one of two points of entry into the town.

Although the Bullion Plaza School was identified on blueprints as the work of a firm, Trost & Trost, it probably was designed by Henry C. Trost. (According to a study of his work, he was the principal designer of the buildings erected by the firm, which was a partnership between him and his brother, Gustavus Adolphus Trost.) Before moving to El Paso in 1903 to work with his brother, Henry Trost worked as a draftsman and architect in Denver, Pueblo, Dodge (Kansas), Chicago, Colorado Springs, and Tucson. He was responsible for the design of many noteworthy buildings in the Southwest, including the two Owls Club buildings in Tucson (1900 and 1903) and the Santa Cruz County Courthouse (1904), also in Tucson; the Luhrs Tower, in Phoenix; the Hotel Gadsden (1907), in Douglas; and many structures in El Paso, among them the Mills Building (1911), the Hotel Paso del Norte (1913), and the School of Mines (1917, now the University of Texas at El Paso).

The Bullion Plaza School may have been modeled after El Paso High School, a Neo-Classical Revival building designed by Henry Trost and erected in 1916.<sup>16</sup> The El Paso High School building also featured a pedimented central block with a monumental portico, cornices, Ionic columns, and cresting on the parapet. And its footprint—a central block with two wings extending at 45-degree angles—was similar to that of the Bullion Plaza School. The most important difference between the two buildings is the level of Neo-Classical detailing on the wings; while the El Paso High School wings have multiple cornices and an impressive array of pilasters, the Bullion Plaza School wings either lack these features (pilasters) or display them in a very muted form (cornices). Given the similarities, it is conceivable that the plan for Bullion Plaza School was a scaled-down and simplified version of the El Paso High School plan.

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<sup>16</sup> For a photograph of the school and description of its architectural features, see Lloyd D. and June-Marie F. Engelbrecht, *Henry C. Trost: Architect of the Southwest* (El Paso, Tex.: El Paso Public Library Association, 1981), 69-70. The end papers of the book show details of the front elevation of the school, in particular the pedimented central block.

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**Verbal Boundary Description**

The Bullion Plaza School property consists of four separate parcels of land. Their legal descriptions are:

*Parcel No. 1*

The surface and ground to a depth of 300 feet immediately beneath the surface of:

That certain tract, lot, piece and parcel of land situated in the County of Gila, State of Arizona, described as follows:

Lots 1, 2, 3 and 4, Block No. 3, and Tract C, Bullion Plaza Townsite, according to Map No. 43, records of Gila County, Arizona.

*Parcel No. 2*

The surface and ground to a depth of 300 feet immediately beneath the surface of:

That certain lot, piece or parcel of land, situated, lying, and being in the Town of Miami, County of Gila, State of Arizona, and described as follows:

Beginning at the Northeast corner of Lot 11, Block 2, Bullion Plaza Townsite, according to Map No. 43, records of Gila County, Arizona, which is also the point of intersection of the South property line of Sullivan Street of the said Townsite, with the East boundary line of said Townsite;

Thence South 20°41' West 24.43 feet to the point of intersection with the arc of a 29°23' curve to the left, the B.C. of said curve bears North 50°41' 56" East 20.58 feet from the said point of intersection, the radius of said curve bears South 36°18' East 195 feet from the said B.C. of said curve the central angle being 90°;

Thence Southwesterly along the arc of said curve to the point of intersection with the Northwest side line of the Sho Me Lode Mineral Survey No. 2540 which is identical with the East boundary line of Bullion Plaza Townsite;

Thence South 20°41' West, to Corner No. 2, Sho Me Lode Mineral Survey No. 2540;

Thence South 31°54' West 91.4 feet to Corner No. 4, Gray Copper Lode Mineral Survey No. 3038;

Thence South 33°23' West 51.12 feet;

Thence North 44°36' West 137.75 feet;

Thence North 5°55' West 66.86 feet to the South corner of Lot 1, Block 3;

Thence North along the East line of said Lot 40.46 feet to Oak Street in said Bullion Plaza Townsite;

Thence North 5°55' West across said Oak Street 65.02 feet to the North property line of said Oak Street;

Thence North 43°53' West along the said North line of Oak Street 12.15 feet to the point of intersection with the South side line of Laurel Avenue extended Northeasterly;

Thence North 46°07' East 106.30 feet to the South property line of Sullivan Street;

Thence North 84°05' East along said South property line of Sullivan Street 220.64 feet to the East boundary line of Bullion Plaza Townsite, the Place of Beginning.

*Parcel No. 3*

The surface and ground to a depth of 300 feet immediately beneath the surface of:

That certain lot, piece or parcel of land situated, lying and being in the County of Gila, State of Arizona, described as follows:



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Beginning at Corner No. 2, Sho Me Lode Mineral Survey No. 2540;  
Thence South  $31^{\circ}54'$  West 91.4 feet to Corner No. 4, Gray Copper Lode Mineral Survey No. 3038;  
Thence South  $33^{\circ}23'$  West 51.12 feet;  
Thence South  $44^{\circ}36'$  East 176.59 feet;  
Thence North  $7^{\circ}42'$  East 180.26 feet;  
Thence along the arc of a  $10^{\circ}14'$  curve to the left 41.81 feet to the R.R.C. of curve, the radius of said curve being 54.45 feet tangent 22 feet and the central angle  $44^{\circ}$ ;  
Thence Northerly on the arc of a  $29^{\circ}23'$  curve to the right, the radius of which curve bears from the P.R.C.N.  $53^{\circ}42'$  East 195 feet and the central angle being  $90^{\circ}$  to the point of intersection with the Northwest sideline of the Sho Me Lode Patented Mineral Survey No. 2540;  
Thence South  $20^{\circ}41'$  West along the Northwest side line of the Sho Me Lode to the Place of Beginning being portions of Sho Lode Mineral Survey No. 2540, Gray Copper Lode Mineral Survey No. 3038, Dora Fraction Lode Mineral Survey No. 3170, and the Chief Lode Mineral Survey No. 3009.

*Parcel No. 4*

The surface and ground to a depth of 40 feet immediately beneath the surface of the following described property:  
That part of the Sho Me Patented Mining Claim, Survey No. 2540, lying and being in the Southeast quarter of Section 25, Township 1 North, Range 14 East, of the Gila and Salt River Base and Meridian, Gila County, Arizona, and known as the Bullion Plaza according to the official Plat of West Live Oak Addition to the Original Townsite of Miami, according to Map No. 78, records of Gila County, Arizona, more particularly described as follows to wit:  
Beginning at a point on the Westerly side of Plaza Avenue, being the Northeast corner of said land from which the Northwest corner of Lot 17, Block 42, West Live Oak Addition to the Original Townsite of Miami, bears North  $53^{\circ}42'$  East, 30.00 feet;  
Thence South  $36^{\circ}18'$  East, 250.00 feet to the Northerly side of Live Oak Street;  
Thence South  $53^{\circ}42'$  West 93.00 feet;  
Thence Westerly along the arc of a circle whose radius is 115.00 feet, a distance of 180.64 feet;  
Thence Northerly along the arc of a circle whose radius is 135.00 feet, a distance of 212.06 feet;  
Thence North  $53^{\circ}42'$  East 73.00 feet to the Place of Beginning.

**Boundary Justification**

The four parcels described above encompass the school grounds and buildings as they have existed since the construction of the school in 1923.

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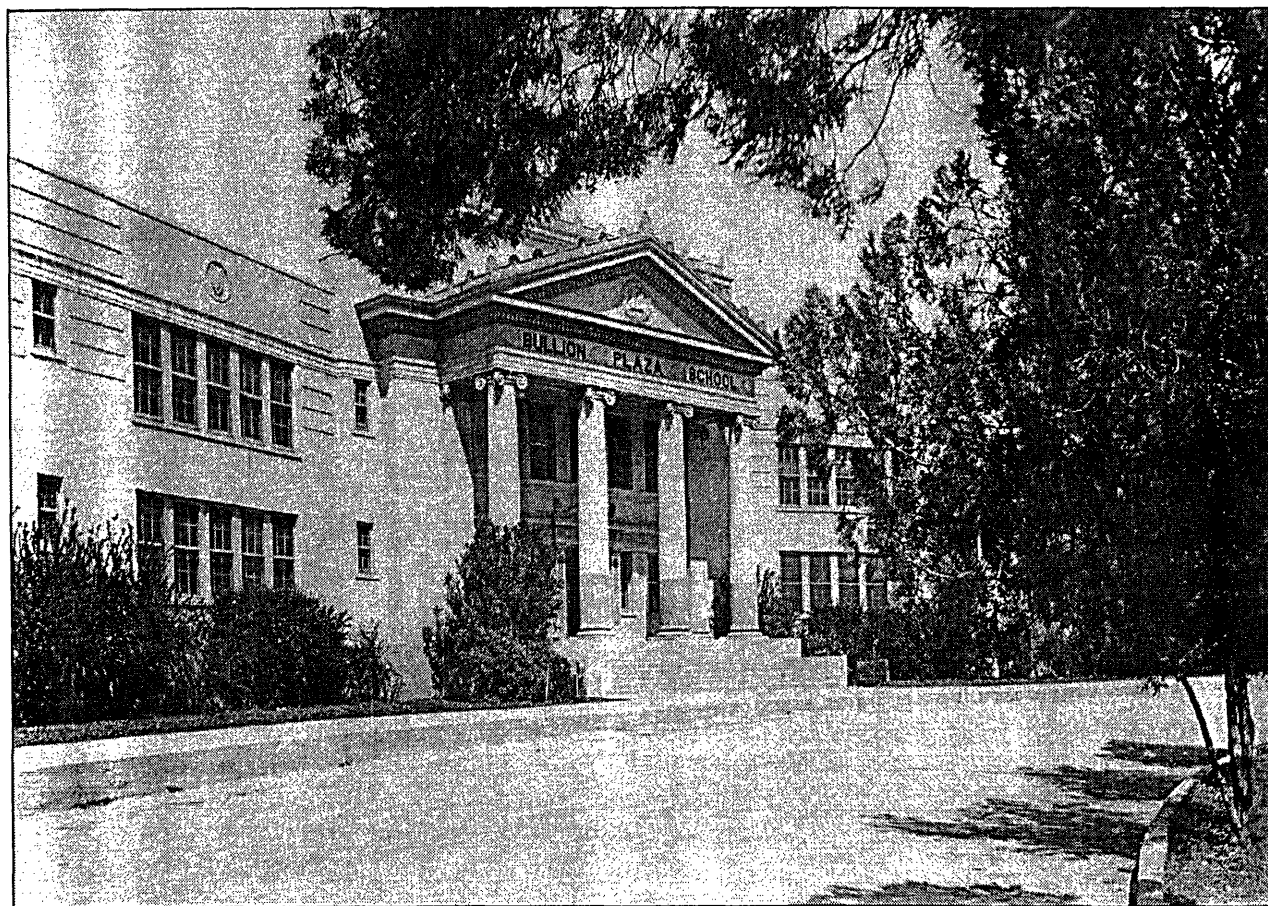
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**Historical Photograph**

Date unknown

This photograph shows the Bullion Plaza School with its original windows (wood double-hung) and ornamentation (note especially the roof and pediment cresting, and the relief emblem on the portico pediment).



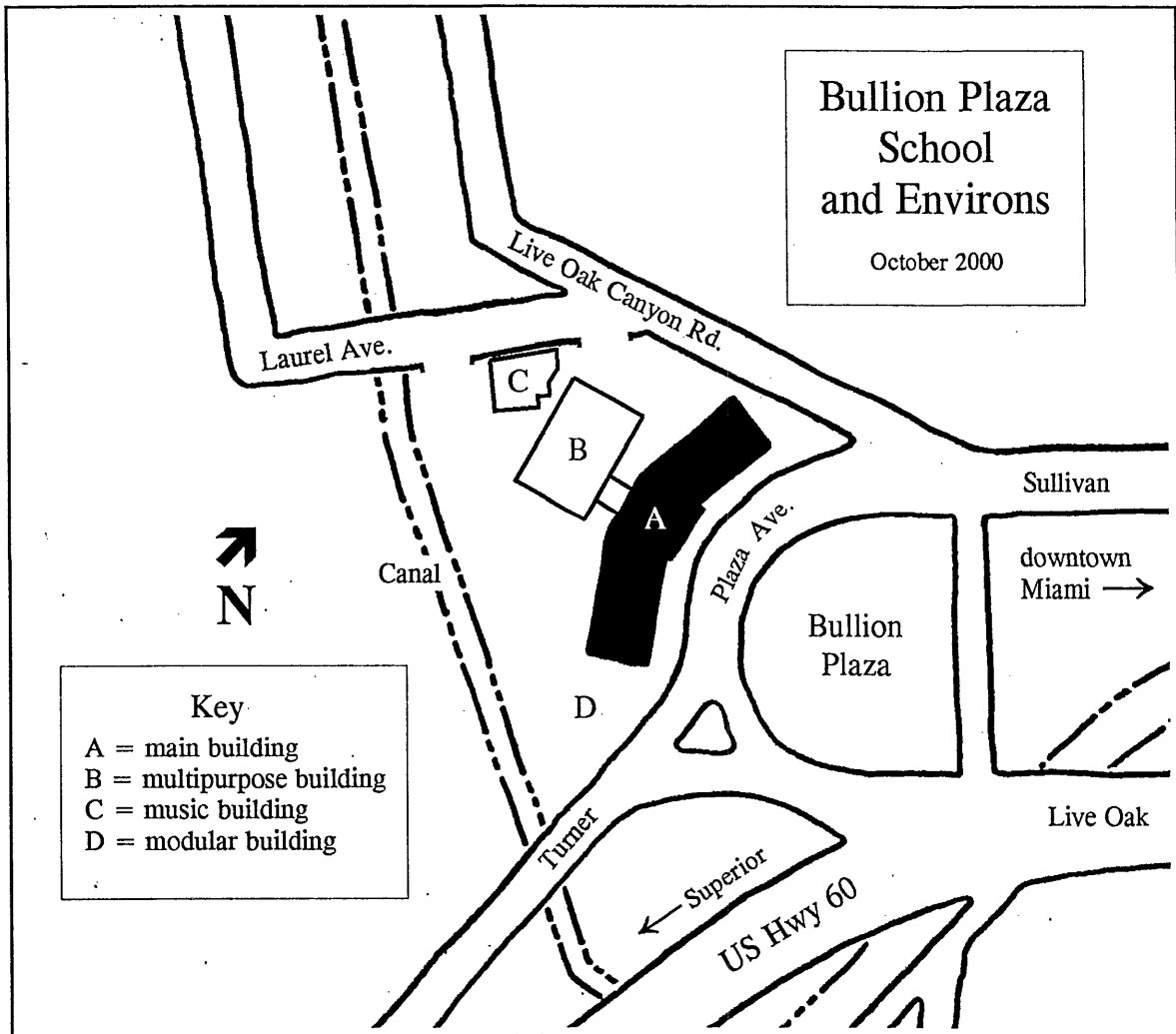
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Bullion Plaza School and Environs  
October 2000



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**List of Photographs**

*For all images*

Photographer:              Mark E. Pry  
Date taken:                October 1999  
Location of negatives:      Town of Miami, owner

1. East facade, looking west across Bullion Plaza
2. North wing, looking south
3. Central block of east facade, looking west
4. Detail: central block parapet and pediment, east facade, looking northwest
5. Detail: windows and ornamentation on east facade of south wing, looking northwest
6. Rear view of south wing, with multipurpose building (at left) and connecting walkway, looking north