

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

historic name: Mabel Fincher School

other names/site number: High School III; Triumph High School/48LA1337/48LA1020

2. Location

street & number: 2201 Morrie Avenue

city or town: Cheyenne

state: Wyoming

code: 56

county: Laramie

code: 021

not for publication: N/A

vicinity: N/A

zip code: 82001

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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.)

Claudia Risley _____ 5/1/05
Signature of certifying official Date

SHPO
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 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): _____

Linda McClelland 8/22/05
Signature of Keeper 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

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u> buildings
___	___ sites
___	___ structures
___	___ objects
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u> Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: N/A

Name of related multiple property listing: Public Schools in Cheyenne, Wyoming, from 1911 to 1954

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Education Sub: school

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Education Sub: school

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Modern Movement

Sub: Art Deco

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: concrete

roof : steel, built up tar and gravel

walls: cinder block faced with brick

other: terra cotta detailing

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 a 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)

Cat. Education
Cat. Architecture

Period of Significance: 1940-1954

Significant Dates: 1940 (building date)

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above): N/A

Architect/Builder: Frederick Hutchinson Porter, architect/Jacob Weber, builder

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

(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: City of Cheyenne Planning Office, Cheyenne, WY.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: 2.3 acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	<u>13</u>	<u>516212</u>	<u>4554418</u>

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

All of Block 193, Original City of Cheyenne

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

The boundary is the lots which the property occupies in Block 193 and includes structures, parking areas, playing fields/playgrounds, and landscaping.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Robert G. Rosenberg, Historian

organization: Rosenberg Historical Consultants

street & number: 739 Crow Creek Road

city or town: Cheyenne

state: WY

date: 8/31/2004; revised 12/31/2004

telephone: (307)-632-1144

zip code: 82009

Property Owner

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

name: Laramie County School District No. 1

street & number: 2801 House Avenue

city or town: Cheyenne

state: WY zip code: 82001

telephone: (307)771-2100

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MABEL FINCHER SCHOOL
LARAMIE COUNTY, WYOMING

7. Description

Mabel Fincher School is located in a residential area in the north central portion of the original City of Cheyenne, Wyoming. It is a one-story, flat-roofed, ell-shaped brick school building that occupies an entire city block including the school grounds and parking lots. The facade or west side fronts on Morrie Avenue with secondary entrances fronting on East 23rd Street to the north and East 22nd Street to the south. An open playground area occupies the east half of the block along with a detached modern gable-roofed metal building constructed in 2001. The building was constructed in 1940 as an elementary school and currently houses Triumph High School.

The long (N-S) component of the building facing Morrie Avenue measures about 220 feet north-south by about 57 feet east-west. The short (E-W) component facing East 23rd Street measures 135 feet east-west by 40 feet north-south. It rests on a concrete foundation and has a full basement that contains several classrooms. The walls are cinder block faced with brick. The roof is a steel deck on steel joists; it has a flat roof with brick chimneys. Partitions are cinder block. The facade features bands of glazed brick in varying colors and patterns. At the base is dark brown brick; the middle is tan brick with single rows of contrasting reddish brick; above is a narrow band of headers in tan, black, blue, and red laid in a chevron design; above that is a band of cream colored brick topped by fluted terra cotta coping. On the facade (west side), there is an extension of the facade that contains the inscription "MABEL FINCHER SCHOOL" along with the raised letters "AD 1940." Immediately south is the main entrance, which consists of 4-light double-leaf doors surmounted with vertical wood paneling inscribed with "Triumph High School." Above the sign area is an ornate terra cotta floral design that is one of the character-defining elements of the facade. Windows on this side are alternating large 8-light windows and glass block windows. There is a concrete stringer that encircles the building at the level of the base of the windows and also serves as window sills. The south side also contains an entrance, which is located in a flat-roofed brick extension that reaches the level of the header bricks. The entrance consists of 1-light double-leaf doors and is flanked by low brick walls capped with concrete. There are no windows on this side. The north side of the building contains an entrance similar to that on the west side; it is surmounted by a terra cotta floral design; brickwork and windows are also similar to the facade. In 2001, a gable-roofed metal "multipurpose building" was added to the southeast corner of the property. It is in line with the south line of the main building but is not attached to it.

The interior of the school has a central north-south hallway and a shorter east-west hallway in the north wing with classrooms located on both sides of the hallways. The lower two-thirds of the hallway walls are covered with beige tile with painted plaster walls above. The tile curves where it meets the floor. The ceilings are covered with original or early acoustic tile and fluorescent light fixtures. The hallways also feature twin water fountains located in arched, shallow alcoves. The classrooms have newer dropped acoustic tile

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ceilings. Most of the wooden interior doors and hardware appear to be original, but the glass transoms have been filled with solid partitions. Steam registers are evident throughout the building.

The physical integrity of this building is good to excellent; the main building does not exhibit any notable exterior modifications. The building retains good integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. A metal building was added to the property in 2001. It is located off the southeast corner of the historic building but is not attached. It does not match the historic building in size, scale, design, or materials, and is considered a minor noncontributing building.

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MABEL FINCHER SCHOOL
LARAMIE COUNTY, WYOMING

8. Significance

National Register criteria

Mabel Fincher School (currently Triumph High School) is eligible to the National Register of Historic Places Under Criteria A and C. It is eligible under Criterion A, because it reflects the primary importance the Cheyenne community attached to the education of its youth from its inception as a railroad town in 1867. Schools represented the widespread belief in the value of universal education. Education was one of the first critical issues dealt with by Cheyenne's first citizens and by the first Wyoming territorial legislature. The formation of school districts and the building of schools reflected how Cheyenne's citizens felt about the permanency of their community and their faith in its future. Mabel Fincher School, constructed in 1940, is a substantial brick masonry structure built with community pride and permanency in mind, and which incorporates the standard designs advocated by the early twentieth century educational reformers. This school was also used for public assemblies and civic celebrations, a place for the community to come together. It has continuously served as an educational facility for the children of Cheyenne to the present.

The building is also eligible under Criterion C, because it is the only historic school in Cheyenne that fully represents the Art Deco style of architecture popular in America in the 1930s and 1940s. Two other schools, Corlett (1940) and Deming Elementary (1945), represent a combination of styles with limited Art Deco elements. Of special note is the use of bands of glazed brick in a wide range of colors and patterns in the facade, and the ornate terra cotta floral design used above the entrance. These economical decorative devices consisting of low relief geometrical designs and polychromatic materials represent classic Art Deco ornamentation and lend this school its unique and distinctive appearance.

Historic background

Public education was a primary concern of Cheyenne's citizens from its beginnings in 1867-68 as a "track town" along the first transcontinental railroad, the Union Pacific. The Territory of Wyoming was created in 1868, and Cheyenne was designated the temporary territorial capital. Cheyenne had the largest population of any city in the territory, and once designated as the seat of government, this position was vehemently defended by its residents. From about 1875 to 1887, Cheyenne enjoyed a boom period based largely on cattle ranching. Spectacular profits were made during the 1880s, and by 1884, the population of Cheyenne had soared to 7,000. It had evolved from a rough-hewn railroad town to a modern city. Cheyenne became the state capital when Wyoming won statehood in 1890.

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As early as October 1867, the local paper encouraged the development of a school for the 120 to 125 school-age children residing in Cheyenne. The City Council appointed a committee to arrange for a school building, and the first public school in Wyoming was constructed in late 1867. School District No. 1 was organized in November 1868, and covered an area of 270 square miles and included six rural schools. By 1874, the Cheyenne school had an enrollment of 131. Teachers were paid about \$50 per month, and school terms lasted four to five months a year. A law was passed by the Wyoming Legislature in 1869 making school attendance compulsory, although it was difficult to enforce.

The post-World War I years saw the construction of some of Cheyenne's finest extant schools. Architect William Dubois designed several schools at this time, including the new Cheyenne High School and Gibson Clark School in about 1921. Frederick Hutchinson Porter designed the Park Addition School, which was constructed in northwest Cheyenne, also in 1921. Dubois designed the Johnson Public School on the South Side in 1923 and, in collaboration with Porter, the elegant Lulu McCormick Junior High School in 1929, located about four blocks south of the Capitol.

Cheyenne, like the rest of America, sank into the Great Depression in the late 1920s. A series of droughts in the 1930s affected the livestock industry and resulted in crop failures. The oil and coal industries also suffered, and the Union Pacific laid off workers. Many of Cheyenne's banks also failed. Only two schools were constructed during this era. The Corlett School, designed by William Dubois, was built in 1940 on the west side of Cheyenne, and the Mabel Fincher School, designed by Frederick Hutchinson Porter, was also built in 1940 in what was then the northeast part of town. Both were ready for students by the beginning of the school year on September 3, 1940.

Mabel Fincher School replaced the old Converse School (East 20th Street and Pebrican) constructed in 1892 and expanded in 1909. Once the new school was completed, the school district sold the old school and property, which has since been razed. Jacob Weber received the contract for construction of the new school on March 11, 1940, with a low bid of \$108,630; the final cost of the building totaled \$123,490. The school opened for classes in the fall of 1940, and it was named after Miss Mabel Fincher, who served as a principal in Cheyenne schools for fifty years. The building consisted of ten classrooms, a kindergarten room, and auxiliary rooms. The basement area was later converted into five additional classrooms, a small auditorium, and a lunchroom.

Frederick Hutchinson Porter, the architect, was born on July 9, 1890, in Salem, Massachusetts. Although his formal education did not continue past eighth grade, he did attend the Wentworth Institute, a technical institute in Boston. He also attended the Architectural Club Ateliers in Saint Louis and Boston. He practiced architecture from October 1906 to about 1965.

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In 1906, "Bunk" Porter began an apprenticeship in the Denver Architect's Office. He came to Cheyenne in 1911 as an inspector for the construction of the Boyd Building (at that time the Citizen's National Bank). He established the architectural firm of Baerresen and Porter in about 1920; within two years he had set up an independent practice. In 1944, he went into partnership with Walter Bradley, a collaboration that lasted until about 1954, when Bradley retired. In 1956, Porter went into partnership with his son, Fred Porter, Jr. and practiced as Porter and Porter. F.H. Porter retired in 1965.

For over forty years, Porter designed buildings that helped establish the tone of Cheyenne's architecture. His buildings included schools, churches, and public buildings. His first building in Cheyenne was the First Presbyterian Church (considered by him to be the "best job" he ever did), and the last was the O'Mahoney Federal Center. In between, he designed dozens of buildings throughout Wyoming and on the campus of the University of Wyoming in Laramie. He also designed several public schools around the state and in Cheyenne. Those included in this nomination (pre-dating 1954) were the Park Addition School and Deming Elementary School. In partnership with Bradley, he also designed Rossman and Hebard Elementary Schools, and the Storey Gymnasium. He collaborated with William Dubois in the design of McCormick Junior High (now the Emerson State Office Building).

Porter's evolution of architectural styles is evident in his design of schools through the years. His first in Cheyenne was the Park Addition School; his next school was a collaboration in 1929 with the established William Dubois in the design of McCormick Junior High School, a richly decorative and elaborate example of Collegiate Gothic. In the 1940s, Porter's designs evolved to keep up with the "Modern" movement. In 1940 and 1945, Porter designed the Mable Fincher and Deming Elementary Schools, both of which featured Art Deco and International elements, with clean sweeping lines and simple detailing. The facade of the Mabel Fincher School included bands of glazed brick in varying colors and patterns; above the top band of cream-colored brick is fluted terra cotta coping. The Deming School shares some similarities with this school with its simple plain lines, but embellishments are limited to fluted cast stone capping the parapet and a distinctive geometric brick band above the windows.

World War II and the resulting war buildup rescued the American economy from the Great Depression. Fort D.A. Russell (renamed Fort Francis E. Warren) was chosen as the location of a Quartermaster Replacement Center, which had a tremendous positive impact on Cheyenne's economy. Although school construction was suspended during the war years, building resumed in the mid-1940s.

The Hebard and Rossman Schools were designed by the partnership of Porter and Bradley in the mid-1940s and reflected Cheyenne's growth and the evolution of post-World War II architecture that abandoned traditional form and detail. The low clean lines, flat roofs, and banks of windows were somewhat reminiscent

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of elements of the earlier Streamline Moderne and International styles. Utility and cost were the two dominant factors in terms of design. As such, they are harbingers of school architecture that followed in the 1950s and 1960s. Porter and Bradley's most recent building in the nomination is the Storey Gymnasium, built in 1950. Although a much larger building than the above-mentioned schools, it also featured many similar Modern and International design elements.

Porter was a strong believer in historic preservation and fought to preserve some of Cheyenne's best historic buildings. He died in Cheyenne on July 7, 1976.

Mabel Fincher School continued to serve the Cheyenne community as an elementary school until 1985, when it was converted to High School Three, a facility housing an "alternative" high school. In 1996, a context was held to determine a more interesting name, and it became known as Triumph High School. A "multi-purpose building" was added to the property in 2001 at a cost of \$166,650.

In conclusion, Mabel Fincher School continues to serve as an educational facility for Cheyenne's youth, although its space has been adapted from an elementary school to a small high school. It retains good to excellent integrity of design, workmanship, materials, feeling, association, setting, and location. Because it functions as an "alternative" high school, it continues to be a focal point for community activity and pride with a high level of parental involvement.

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Section 9. Major Bibliographical References

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- Centennial Historical Committee. *The Magic City of the Plains: Cheyenne 1867-1967*. Published by the Centennial Historical Committee, 1967.
- Cheyenne City Directories, 1920-1950.
- Gulliford, Andrew. *America's Country Schools*. The Preservation Press, Washington, D.C., 1984.
- Haley, John Paul Jr. *A History of Laramie County School District No. 1, Cheyenne, Wyoming*. Master's Thesis for the Department of Education, University of South Dakota, 1956.
- Ittelson, Ellen. *Historic Building Inventory Record*. Westside Survey, Cheyenne, Wyoming, 1986.
- Laramie County School District No. 1. Planning and Construction Office Files. Laramie County School District No. 1 Administration Building, 2810 House Avenue, Cheyenne.
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- Sanborn Map Company. *Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps for the City of Cheyenne*. New York, New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1959.
- Starr, Eileen. *Architecture in the Cowboy State, 1849-1940*. Glendo, Wyoming: High Plains Press, 1992.