

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

NATIONAL  
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Reliance School and Gymnasium  
other names/site number Same

2. Location

street & number 1321 Main Street  not for publication  
city, town Reliance  NA vicinity  
state Wyoming code 056 county Sweetwater code 037 zip code 82943

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>2</u>	<u>          </u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>2</u>	<u>          </u> objects
			<u>          </u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: NA

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. 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.  See continuation sheet.

*[Signature]* April 11, 1988  
Signature of certifying official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

5. 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:)

*Patrick Andrews* 5/13/88  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION: School  
 RECREATION & CULTURE: Sports Facility/  
 Theatre/ Auditorium  
 SOCIAL: Meeting Hall/Clubhouse/Civic

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION: School  
 RECREATION & CULTURE: Sports Facility/  
 Theatre/ Auditorium  
 SOCIAL: Clubhouse/Civic

**7. Description**Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)

Collegiate Gothic  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete  
 walls Brick  
 Stone  
 roof Asphalt  
 other NA

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Reliance School and Gymnasium are located in Reliance, Wyoming. The town of Reliance is seven miles north of Rock Springs, in Sweetwater County, in the southwest portion of Wyoming. With the entry of the Union Pacific Railroad in 1868, Rock Springs, the largest city and commercial center in Sweetwater County, was developed as a coal mining camp and railroad terminal. As the location of a central terminal for cattle shipments and burgeoning coal industry, Rock Springs grew rapidly. Homesteaders and laborers flooded the area to work the coal mines. As a result, over 50 nationalities settled in the isolated and dry areas in and around Rock Springs. At the present time trona mining (from which soda ash is extracted), strip coal mining, and natural gas production are the major industries in Sweetwater County. The town-site was founded by Union Pacific Coal Developers circa 1906. The small town of Reliance, with a population of approximately 300, has one paved street, called Main Street. Main Street is approximately one mile long and extends from the east end of Reliance to the west end. The meandering dirt roads and scattered houses are the result of the town's development around the mines and the lack of any planning.

The Reliance School and Gymnasium are the most impressive buildings in Reliance and both retain a high degree of architectural integrity. The lot that the school and gymnasium occupy is fenced along the side of Main Street. Although another school (constructed in the 1950s) and playground facilities are located on an adjacent lot, they are not included within the boundaries. During the early coal boom years (1912 to 1930) the isolation of Reliance was not a major inconvenience for the miners. Numerous businesses, stores, banks, and other establishments were present. Unlike those days, the citizens are now dependent upon Rock Springs for gas, groceries, and various supplies. Many of the citizens commute to Rock Springs for work. The Reliance area is sparsely vegetated, except for sagebrush and a few cottonwood trees, and the climate is dry.

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

See Continuation Sheet

See continuation sheet

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

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property Less than one acre

UTM References

A 

1	2
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6	5	0	5	6	0
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4	6	1	3	5	4	3
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

  
Zone Easting Northing

C 

1	2
---	---

6	5	0	5	2	0
---	---	---	---	---	---

4	6	1	3	4	0	0
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

B 

1	2
---	---

6	5	0	5	8	1
---	---	---	---	---	---

4	6	1	3	4	1	9
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

  
Zone Easting Northing

D 

1	2
---	---

6	5	0	5	1	0
---	---	---	---	---	---

4	6	1	3	4	1	0
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Tracy Williams, Preservation Secretary  
organization Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office date August 18, 1987  
street & number 2301 Central, Barrett Building telephone 307-777-6311  
city or town Cheyenne state Wyoming zip code 82002

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Plans for the Reliance School were drawn in the early part of 1923 by James L. Libby, a Union Pacific Railroad employee. Construction was completed in 1927. The structure is one story in elevation with a high basement. The building has a flat roof and is rectangular in shape. The depth is 108 feet and the frontage is 56 feet. The building is not elaborate in design, but an attempt was made to incorporate distinctive ornamentation such as the battlement motifs which accentuate both entries and the roof line. Elements of Collegiate Gothic style architecture are evident on the exterior.

The facade is located on the south side of the building which faces Main Street. The high rise basement consists of cast-in-place concrete walls, with double hung aluminum windows grouped in sets of two and six. The upper sash of all windows is covered with metal-clad insulated sandwich panels. (Storm windows were added in 1985 when a grant for \$29,028 was awarded to the school and gymnasium from the Department of Energy's Institutional Conservation Program.) Eight pre-cast concrete steps lead to the entry which is located on the west end of the facade. The entry has large fanlights of original wood frame and insulated panels, a tudor arch hollow metal door, and metal frames, with sidelights. One of the hallmarks of the Collegiate-Gothic style architecture is symmetry. However the entry to this building is located on the west corner of the facade. Pre-cast concrete surrounding the door consists of battlement in the middle and piers that flank either side and is slightly projected from the facade giving the entry an eye catching affect. A small window located directly above the door and a decorative string course helps to focus the eye towards the battlement, which is carried out on all elevations, except for the east. The exterior walls of the upper story are of colored brick layed with dark mortar. The windows are grouped exactly the same as the lower story, double hung in sets of two and six. The entrances, grouping of windows, brick panels, and light colored grey granite cast stone trimmings, give the exterior a decorative effect. The structure (except for the east) has parapet walls with crenellations and a string course.

The west elevation has diaper patterned brickwork on both the upper and lower stories. This reveals the special consideration and skill used in the bricklaying process. The flank windows are grouped in bands of three, six, three on both stories.

In many ways the north elevation mirrors the south facade. It has eleven pre-cast concrete stairs leading to a tudor arch hollow metal door with large fanlights and sidelights. The entry is located on the west corner of the facade. There is some diaper patterned brickwork located directly above the entrance. The windows are double hung sash in groups of two and six on both stories. A single stack tall exterior brick chimney is located in the middle of this elevation. An addition exists on the east side and has stone walls, built-up asphalt roof and a wooden door. It is primarily used as a utility shed.

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The roof drains into the iron gutter and downspout system on the east elevation. Therefore, this elevation lacks decorative detail. The windows are double hung and grouped in two pairs of six. A steel stairway with riveted connections is used as a fire escape and is located on this side of the building.

The interior arrangement of entrances at both ends of the building, accompanying stairways, and spacious, well lighted halls, makes all rooms, including the assembly hall, library, and teacher's office easily accessible. The building has a central hallway on both floors, with classrooms flanking both sides of the hallway. Pedestal fountains are located at each end of both hallways. The balusters, handrails, and doorframes are original woodwork.

The Gymnasium was also designed by James L. Libby in 1931. The structure is two stories in height at the front, but due to the rising ground, the rear it has only a single story exposed. It has a front of 68 feet with a side of 82 feet. Brick walls (including the inside walls of the auditorium) are glazed steel sash with semi-obscure wire glass. Steel roof trusses support the gable roof. The exterior consists of varying tones of red rough textured brick laid in white mortar, with white pre-cast stone copings, ornaments, and a broad expanse of roof covered with tan interlocking asphaltic shingles.

The south elevation and faces the school. The lower story has pre-cast concrete walls. The main entry has seven pre-cast concrete steps which lead to the enclosed wood entry with a single door. The windows are steel sash, top hinged, awning type windows which are located approximately two feet below the eaves. The window sills are brick rowlock design. Three pilasters divide the south facade into four equal segments. Two small wooden frame additions are located on the facade west of the main entry. The westernmost addition is used as an outside entry to the basement, while the other addition is used for storage.

Another entrance is located on the west elevation and faces south. It has eleven pre-cast concrete steps leading to an enclosed brick entry with a shed roof covering and double doors. Windows which are double hung in two groups of five and three, are located on the lower story. Pilaster caps of pre-cast concrete reveal that an attempt was made to use some Collegiate Gothic style ornamentation.

The east elevation is much like the west elevation except that it has a small brick addition with a shed roof and two wooden single doors. The fire truck used to be housed in this addition. Pre-cast stone coping along the roofline and two pilasters with caps are located on this elevation. Double hung windows are located in the center below the eaves.

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The interior auditorium walls are finished the same as the exterior with rough textured face brick laid in white mortar, with the exception of the pilaster caps which are decorated. The ceiling is covered with a pressed wood fiber board that has a high absorption of sound, thus tending to eliminate reverberation and provide better acoustics. The ceiling material has a decorative pattern of diamonds and squares. The floor of the gymnasium measures 66 feet by 61 feet. It is made of maple and laid log-cabin style (see attached copy). The gymnasium, which is also used as a theatre, has a stage located on the east elevation. The stage has a sliding velour curtain, scenery, stage settings, border and foot lights. The proscenium opening is 47 feet wide. Thus, when bleachers are used on the stage the spectators have a clear view of the basketball playing floor.

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The Union Pacific Railroad first reached Wyoming in 1867. The amount of business that the railroad might generate from Wyoming was not as important as the connection of the east and west coasts. Steam locomotives burned massive amounts of coal, unlike our present day diesel-electric locomotives. Sweetwater County produced the greatest amount of coal in Wyoming, and the town of Rock Springs, the largest city in Sweetwater County, was considered the center of the coal mining industry. The massive coal desposits discovered in the Rock Springs area contributed greatly to the development and settlement of the town of Reliance. The environment of Sweetwater County is harsh and were it not for the natural resources so abundant under its sand and sage few people would be willing to stay. Much of the county's history has been characterized by a transitory population, from the migratory bands of Paleo-Indians to the "birds of passage" construction workers. (SHPO Hist. Sites Inventory, August, 1980.)

The town site of Reliance was chosen by Union Pacific Coal Company developers who hoped to find the favorable working conditions that characterized the nearby Rock Springs mines; and in this the Union Pacific Coal Company was not disappointed.

Reliance was first called White City after the tents that served as the earliest shelters. Because of its reliable coal, the town was renamed Reliance circa 1910 by Union Pacific Coal Company Officials. Because of the relative isolation of Reliance, a great effort was made by the Union Pacific Coal Company and the citizens of Reliance to retain independence of the other communities. During the coal boom years the town of Reliance boasted an opera house, post office, a store, a bank, bowling alley, and a small schoolhouse, just to name a few. The first schoolhouse no longer exists, but was located on an adjacent lot near the present day Reliance School and Gymnasium. These public buildings were owned and operated by the Union Pacific Coal Company. Now all that remains of that era is the Reliance School and Gymnasium, and a mining tipple which was constructed in 1936.

By 1912 a railspur had been constructed northward from Rock Springs to the new Reliance camp. This spurline construction from 1906 to 1912 opened up significant additional areas for coal mining. The most significant aspect of this increased output was the development of small towns to service these mines. Between 1900 and 1912 three communities were established: Reliance, Gunn, and Superior. These three towns and others to follow (Winton, Dines, East Plane, Stansbury, and Quealy) were also established by the Union Pacific Coal Company. All of these small communities were isolated in the midst of rolling hills with two to ten miles between one town and the next. It is

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interesting to note that in the town of Superior, (approximately ten miles east of Reliance) a school and gymnasium were constructed around the same time, circa 1927, as the Reliance School and Gymnasium. The architect for all four buildings was James L. Libby, an employee of the Union Pacific Railroad. The schools and gymnasiums were almost identical in design, however, the school and gymnasium in Superior have since been demolished.

Construction of facilities at Reliance was at an advanced stage in 1912. By that year a tramline, tipple, warehouse, scales, hay barn, lumber yard, and granary had been constructed. The town of Reliance was known among western miners as one of the most "peaceful and sociable" mining towns in the country. As one miner of long experience expressed it, "Working conditions are good, the men make good money, so they are satisfied and get along with each other and the Company better than at any place that I know." (Omaha: The Colonial Press, 1940)

While the mines were being opened by the Union Pacific Coal Company, the Company carried on a house-building program. In 1911, the State Mine Inspector's report notes, "Seventy-five comfortable and commodious houses have been built and others are being added." The houses were of various sizes, ranging from three to six rooms. At first it was necessary to haul water to the homes, where it was stored in barrels. However water wells were drilled and water pipe was laid to all the houses as quickly as possible, and preparations were made to install electric lighting. (Employes Magazine, 1923)

A horse-drawn stagecoach transported mail and passengers between Reliance and Rock Springs. The first automobiles in the town were bought by William Reid and John Pintus, brothers-in-law, who operated a motorized stage for several months. As other residents of the town began to buy automobiles, the use of the stages decreased until only the mail stage serving Reliance, Dines, and Winton was left.

A town band was organized shortly after Reliance was established, and a local dance orchestra was also formed. The communities of Dines, Winton, Reliance and Superior frequently held garden contests, horseshoe pitching tournaments, teas, plays, fishing contests, wedding showers, receptions, safety meetings (for the mine workers), concerts and dances. The Roman Catholic Church maintained services at Reliance for a number of years, and the Mormon Church and a Union Sunday School were quite active. Other denominations drove to Rock Springs for Sunday school and church services. Additionally, bowling leagues, painting clubs, women's clubs, home decoration classes and Girl and Boy Scout troupes were formed. These activities were usually held at neighboring



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homes or in the "bungalow" which was located across the street from the first schoolhouse and is now demolished. With construction of the new Reliance School in 1927 and the Reliance Gymnasium in 1931, these activities then took place in these two new buildings, along with other social events such as graduation ceremonies, proms, basketball games, plays, operettas, banquets, and club meetings. A volunteer fire department was established. Many home-talent entertainments were given by the many nationalities represented in the town. While English-speaking peoples were in the majority, the population included numerous Slavs, Serbians, Croatians, Italians, Finns, Swedes, Germans, Japanese, and Koreans.

As was the case with all towns established by the Union Pacific Coal Company, preparations for the education of the resident children were begun at once. The Union Pacific Coal Company built a small schoolhouse on a location adjacent to the present day Reliance School and Gymnasium. The first school board for Reliance was then established. One of the first teachers was the wife of James L. Libby, architect of the present day Reliance School and Gymnasium. Around 1920 Reliance and the surrounding small communities of Dines and Winton decided to centralize the high school grades of all three small mining communities at Reliance. Reliance was selected because it was on a direct route for school bus service to and from the other towns. Additionally, the site at Reliance had sufficient grounds for play activities and a pleasing view. The population of Reliance during this time was approximately 900 people.

The designs for the gymnasium in Reliance were made with a dual purpose in mind, namely that the main room serve as both a gymnasium and an auditorium. The designs included a stage which makes it possible to have physical training, basketball, indoor sports, general assembly, social gatherings, and theatricals on the upper, or main floor. The lower floor was used for wood working classes. The local residents were very proud of their new school and gym. One person wrote in the Sept. 1930 issue of the Employes Magazine: "Our GYM is rapidly nearing completion. All of Reliance, big and little, are proud of this splendid building. It would be an ornament to any community and will be a source of wonderful training for the students." (Employes Magazine, 1930)

The first class graduated from the Reliance High School in 1931. The school retained a full high school course with seven teachers and remained the Reliance High School until 1959 when the mines in the area were shut down. The mines closed because the need for coal decreased with the new diesel-electric locomotives. When the mines in the area shut down, the towns of

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Reliance and Superior dramatically decreased in population, while the surrounding communities of Dines, East Plane, Gunn, Winton and Quealy died. These towns were literally moved away by the removal of houses and other buildings, and when that was done, neglect and vandalism finished off what remained. The barren plains now found there no longer show signs of these once thriving communities. When the towns died and population decreased, the pupils of Reliance were bused to the Rock Springs High School.

After the closing of the Reliance High School, Western Wyoming Community College began operations and occupied the building in late 1959. At that time sixty-three students enrolled on the two-building campus which served as a two year community college affiliated with the University of Wyoming.

In 1969, a new community college was built five miles north of Rock Springs and the Reliance school was boarded up and shut down. The Jim Bridger Power Plant located approximately 20 miles northeast of Rock Springs was opened in 1970 and by 1973 the population of Reliance had increased enough to warrant reopening of the Reliance school to accomodate the large number of grade school children in the area. The boom, based on the construction of new coal and trona mines, brought yet another group of transients to Sweetwater County, many of whom located with their families in Reliance. Since 1973, Reliance has stayed much the same and the Reliance School still occupies grade school children of Reliance.

Although the period of significance extends to the present, nothing occurred within the last 50 years to qualify the property as exceptionally significant; therefore, 1938 has been chosen as the terminating date of significance.

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BOOKS

The Colonial Press, History of the Union Pacific Coal Mines 1868-1940.  
Omaha, 1940.

Gage, Jack R., Geography of Wyoming, pp. 32 and 71.

Larson, T.A. History of Wyoming. University of Nebraska Press, 1978.

Urbaneck, Mae, Ghost Trail of Wyoming. pp. 81 and 82, 1978.

ARTICLES AND MANUSCRIPTS

Gardner, A.D. and D.E. Johnson, "Historic Inventory of the Reliance Tipple."  
Draft Manuscript on file Archeological Services, Western Wyoming College,  
Rock Springs, Wyoming. (1987).

Legault, Cherylynn, "Hisotry of Wyoming", April 15, 1980. Historic Sites  
Survey on file at the Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office.

Libby, J.L. "Reliance Schools", Employes' Magazine: The Union Pacific Coal  
Company. March, 1926, pp. 93 and 99.

Libby, J.L. "Reliance and Superior Gymnasium Buildings", Employes' Magazine:  
The Union Pacific Coal Company. January 1931, p. 28.

"History of Reliance", Employes' Magazine: The Union Pacific Coal Company.  
March, 1923. (no author mentioned).

"Reliance Gymnasium", Employes Magazine: The Union Pacific Coal Company.  
September, 1930. (no author mentioned)

INTERVIEWS

Chadey, Henry, former principal of Reliance School. Curator of the Sweetwater  
County Museum, Green River, Wyoming. April 5, 1987.

Shazzets, Carolyn, former resident of Winton, present resident of Reliance,  
April 6, 1987.

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Verbal Boundary Description

These boundaries are based on the legal description of the property map provided by the Sweetwater County Engineering Department.

Beginning on Main Street (See attached map), on the southeast corner of parcel 19 (Point C), extending along the parcel line northwest for 200 feet to a point at the southwest corner of parcel 19 (Point B). Then extending in a straight line to the northeast for 300 feet to the northwest corner of parcel 19 (Point A), proceed in a straight line southeast for 200 feet to the northeast corner of parcel 19 (Point F), then angling 100 feet to the southeast following the parcel line of 19 (Point E), and in a straight line southwest 200 feet to Main Street (Point D), then angling 50 feet to the southwest, back to the point of beginning. (Section 31, parcel 19, Sweetwater County School District 1, parcel 2, BK. 714.)

Boundary Justification

This boundary encompasses the Reliance School and Gymnasium, and non-intrusive, non-contributing elements, such as playground equipment and a small parking lot. The elements are in their original setting and defines the original site. Because there are no other natural or man-made landmarks to use as boundary points, and no need to exclude these non-intrusive elements, the boundary is best defined by the existing property map on file with the Sweetwater County Engineering Department.

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Geographical Data

E. 1 2	6 5 0 4 6 9	4 6 1 3 4 8 2
Zone	Easting	Northing
F. 1 2	6 5 0 5 0 0	4 6 1 3 5 1 0
Zone	Easting	Northing