

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

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Taos County, Red River
Red River Multiple Resource Area

1. Name: Red River Schoolhouse (Red River Multiple Resource Area) (SR #909)
2. Location: High Street just northwest of Golden Treasure Trail
4. Owner: Board of Education of the Questa Independent School District
P.O. Box 440
Questa, New Mexico 87556
7. Description: The Red River Schoolhouse is a rectangular, one-story structure with a raised basement, hipped roof and projecting entrance surmounted by a belfry. The walls are frame sided with pressed-metal in rusticated stone pattern, and the roof is covered with wooden shingles. The raised concrete basement was added in 1939. The interior of the main floor contains one large classroom and an entrance vestibule. The basement contains an apartment for the teacher, a furnace and storage area. At the rear of the schoolhouse are three small vertical board-and-batten structures: two privies and a coal/wood shed.

The schoolhouse is situated on the north edge of the town, overlooking the town on lots that abut the mountainside. The nominated property consists of all 13 lots in this block which served as a school yard, and includes the three shed-roofed vertical-board-and-batten structures at the rear of the schoolhouse (boys' privy, girls' privy, and coal shed). These service structures are said to date from the time of construction of the schoolhouse.

The windows of the schoolhouse are double-hung with single-pane wooden sashes. There are three windows in each of the east and west facades and none in the north (rear) facade. (The interior of the north wall is occupied by a blackboard.) The vestibule has one window in the east and west sides. The front facade contains a paired window on either side of the entrance vestibule. The entrance contains a double, panelled door. The vestibule served as a cloak room and is separated from the classroom by a door. The frame belfry has a square louvered opening on each side and a hipped, shingled roof. It is surmounted by a flag pole.

The concrete basement is raised about five feet above the ground and contains double-hung windows with wooden sashes having 2/2 lights. A small, concrete projection with a shingled gabled roof on the east side of the building covers the stairway into the basement from the exterior. Another stairway leads to the basement from the west side of the interior of the entrance vestibule. These stairs were added when the raised basement was added. Also probably added at that time was the concrete stair at the front entrance. To the east of this stairway is a metal historical plaque set in a cemented rock base.

The classroom measures 30 feet by 24 feet on the interior and the vestibule has an interior measurement of 11 feet square. The interior walls and ceiling are covered with corrugated metal except for the portion of the walls below the windows which is covered with wainscoting of beaded boards. A long blackboard stretches across the north wall.

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The pressed metal siding is presently painted red and the wood trim is painted white. Old photographs show that the building was originally painted white.

The building is no longer in use but is maintained in good condition.

8. Significance: The Red River Schoolhouse is significant both architecturally and historically. It is significant as an example of a public building reflecting, with its decorative pressed-metal siding, the short-lived period of mining prosperity in Red River. It is a good example of a one-room rural schoolhouse of the period of New Mexico's early statehood.

The first schoolhouse in Red River was a log structure erected soon after "Red River City" was platted in 1895. It was located on the same site as the present school and was destroyed by fire. The present schoolhouse was erected by School District #25 (Red River) following the issuance on July 1, 1914 of \$3,000 in bonds for construction.

The carpenter was a man named Ed Wheatcroft who had come to Red River from Manassa, Colorado. He is said to have been a colorful character with a long white beard who "looked like the billboard advertisements of Buffalo Bill." By various accounts, Wheatcroft also made a living as a miner, rancher and bootlegger. He played an important role in the construction of the Forest Service's Red River Pass Road in 1915-16. With a team of four huge horses and a wingplow, he had applied for the job of making the first cut in the steep mountainside for each slope of the switchback road. He was said by the superintending engineer to have put on an "astonishing performance" as he controlled the careful movements of his team by shouting a "picturesque vocabulary of swear words" that echoed across the valley.

According to local tradition, a number of the miner-citizens of Red River helped to build the schoolhouse, such as the Mallette brothers and Edward Westoby. Long-time Red River residents believe that the land for the school, as well as some labor and materials, were donated by citizens of the village.

The design of the building strongly resembles one in Designs and Specifications for New Mexico Public School Buildings, issued by the Territorial Department of Education and prepared by Johnston Brothers, School Architects, of Alma, Nebraska, under the direction of the New Mexico Territorial Superintendent of Public Instruction, November 1909. The plans and specifications of "Design No. 2 for a One-Room Frame Building" are similar to the Red River Schoolhouse. However, if this design was used as a guide, a number of modifications were made.

The chief similarity is the general exterior appearance: a hipped roof building with hipped roof projecting entrance, three double-hung windows evenly spaced on the sides, windows grouped on the front, and one window on each side of the entrance projection. A significant similarity is that the size of the classroom, 24 feet by 30 feet, is the classroom dimension recommended by the book. Such specifications were explained

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in a list of the "Advantages of Buildings Suggested in This Book," quoted in part below. The descriptions partially apply to the Red River Schoolhouse.

The SIZE of all rooms is the same--24 ft. x 30 ft. Such a room will easily seat 40 pupils. A teacher having charge of more than this number can not do satisfactory work--especially in a rural school. A room should be no wider than 24 ft., for the lighting would then be poor for pupils sitting at the farther side of the room.

A VESTIBULE is found in each building. This has its advantages at all times, and in a windy country especially is almost indispensable. Otherwise the wind would get a full sweep down the halls, whenever the outside door was opened.

Ample CLOAKROOMS are too often wanting in our school buildings. The offensive odors given off from cold damp wraps while drying are often very disagreeable and should never be brought into the study room. Coal rooms which are shut off from the main school room, as well as protected from the outside cold, should be found in every building

The LIGHTING is in batteries, and is uni-lateral, except in a few instances where it is necessary to add half windows for decoration only. The light is always from the left of the pupil. In case half windows are placed at the rear of the room, they should be of ground or stained glass, well shaded, so that the teacher need not face a strong light.

The TEACHER'S DESK is in front and on the lighter side of the room. In this position she does not obstruct the pupils' view of the front blackboard, and can see all of the pupils seated without looking directly toward the full light of the windows.

The window arrangement of the Red River Schoolhouse does not follow the recommendations of the book. The classroom is lit by windows on three walls, rather than by uni-lateral lighting.

The pressed-metal siding of the exterior walls is in the form of rectangular, rusticated stone blocks. This same siding was used on the Red River Miners' Hospital (see separate continuation sheet). Such textural emphasis reflects influence from the Queen Anne Style. With their decorative metal siding, these two public buildings are expressions of Red River's phase of permanent settlement towards the end of the mining boom.

The Red River Schoolhouse served as a church on Sundays, since the community had no church. Traveling preachers of various denominations gave sermons in the building. In summer, square dances were held in the schoolhouse every week to the tunes of fiddles, banjos, mandolins and guitars.

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In 1939, the Works Progress Administration funded the installation of a concrete raised basement under the building in order to provide space for a furnace and living quarters for the teacher. The supervisor of this construction work was L. S. Lewis of the Lewis Ranch (see separate continuation sheet for Orin Mallette Cabin).

The Red River Schoolhouse ceased to be used as a school in 1942. The building has been maintained by the Red River Women's Club.

10. Geographical Data: The nominated property consists of lots 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13 in Block 8 of the Red River Townsite.

Quadrangle name: Red River

Quadrangle scale: 7.5 minute

UTM References:

Zone 13 Easting 464270 Northing 4062160