

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

### NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

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#### 1. Name of Property

historic name: Johnson Public School

other names/site number: Johnson Junior High School; First Assembly of God Church/48LA2799

#### 2. Location

street & number: 711 Warren 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not for publication: N/A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 Wisely*  
Signature of certifying official

5/1/05  
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): \_\_\_\_\_

*Amelia 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>	<input type="checkbox"/> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> structures
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> objects
<u>1</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> 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: education-related  
religious facility

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Revivals  
Sub: Late Gothic Revival (Collegiate Gothic)

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: concrete  
roof : concrete supported by steel joists; built up tar and gravel  
walls: 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: 1923-1954

Significant Dates: 1923 (building date)

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

Architect/Builder: William Dubois/Adams and McCann

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: 5.6 acres

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

	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	<u>13</u>	<u>515175</u>	<u>4554635</u>

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

All of Block 596, 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 596 and includes the main structure, landscaping, playing fields/playgrounds, and any parking areas.

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Robert G. Rosenberg, Historian  
organization: Rosenberg Historical Consultants date: 8/31/2004; revised 12/31/2004  
street & number: 739 Crow Creek Road telephone: (307)-632-1144  
city or town: Cheyenne state: WY zip code: 82009

**Property Owner**

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

name: First Assembly of God Church  
street & number: 711 Warren Avenue  
city or town: Cheyenne  
state: WY zip code: 82001  
telephone: (307)634-4567

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JOHNSON PUBLIC SCHOOL  
LARAMIE COUNTY, WYOMING

### 7. Description

Johnson Public School (Johnson Junior High, now Assembly of God Church) is located at 2810 House Avenue in a residential neighborhood in the south side of the City of Cheyenne, Wyoming. The building occupies the entire block, and is bounded by Warren Avenue on the west and East Seventh and Eighth Streets on the south and north respectively. The facade or east side fronts on Lincoln Park, which includes a public swimming pool. House Avenue formerly was located east of the school, but it was closed off at an early date, and the area is now used for parking. The building was constructed in 1923 and has received several 1950s-era additions.

This is a two and one-half story red brick building resting on a concrete foundation with a garden level basement. The overall dimensions of the building including additions are approx. 280 feet north-south by 250 feet east-west. The building is a downscaled example of the Collegiate Gothic architectural style popular at the time. The original 1923 building component faces east and was designed in a T-shaped plan; the north-south component measured approximately 185 feet by 60 feet east-west, and the west component measured approximately 67 feet east-west by 45 feet north-south.

The building has a flat roof and brick parapet capped with terra cotta. The parapet on the facade or east side bears repetitive vertical indentations that suggest a balustrade. "Johnson School" is incised in a rectangular terra cotta signboard centered in a raised portion of the parapet above the entrance. The cornice consists of a narrow protruding band of terra cotta. The main entrance is centered in the facade. It consists of a full height advanced brick portion accented by brick quoins. The entrance has a flat decorative lintel bearing the construction date of 1923, and intricately molded terra cotta side trim that contrasts with the dark brick. The original entrance has been altered, and the architrave has been filled in with wood panels. It now consists of a single pedestrian door, and an interior east-west concrete block wall built with a single set of stairs. The windows consist of evenly-spaced triple sets of double-hung units with transoms and are vertically aligned on the first and second stories. They have terra cotta lintels, sills, and surrounds. There are double sets of windows in the advanced entrance on either side of the doorway and on the second story. The water table is delineated by a horizontal band of terra cotta extending the width of the facade. The facade is the best remaining elevation of the original 1923 portion of the building.

The original T-shaped component had a gymnasium and auditorium in the west wing. In 1953-54, a large addition to the west side contained a new gymnasium and auditorium. Both are two-story red brick with flat roofs and feature brick parapets capped with terra cotta and terra cotta string courses delineating the cornice, raised window sills and water table. The exterior walls are divided by evenly spaced brick pilasters

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capped with terra cotta. Brick diapering is used between the pilasters on the west side of the auditorium. No window bays are evident on this portion of the building. The gymnasium and the intervening building component have regularly-spaced glass block panels set high in the walls. These windows continue on all sides of the tall gymnasium component. A string of small windows in the first story with a common terra cotta string course serves as a common sill. On the north end of the west side, there is an entrance covered by a flat awning that consists of a twin-leaf glass and aluminum door with sidelights and transom. The walls of the gymnasium also feature the brick diapering pattern repeated between pilasters. During the 1953-54 building program, three classrooms, a cafeteria, facilities for instrumental music, and auxiliary rooms were also added. The interior of the original portion was also renovated at that time; it then contained nineteen classrooms, an art room, facilities for girls' home economics, facilities for boys' industrial arts, vocal music rooms, a library, and auxiliary rooms.

In 1955-56, two-story brick flat-roofed wings were added to the north and south sides of the original 1923 building component for additional classroom space. Their roof lines are considerably lower than the original component, and they advance slightly beyond or east of the original facade. These additions loosely follow the architectural motif of the original building with terra cotta capped brick parapets, terra cotta cornices, terra cotta string courses that delineate the water table, and brick quoins on the east side. Windows consist of combination of upper glass block panels with narrow lights below with steel frames. The windows are also aligned vertically on the first and second stories. The north addition has a triple door entrance in the north side, and the south addition has a similar entrance in the south side. An intervening one-story flat-roofed brick component located on the north side of the building joins the gymnasium to the north wing; it contains an overhead garage door and steel pedestrian door.

Remaining original or early interior features include black and white terrazzo tile on the floor inside the main entrance, high acoustic tile ceilings, linoleum tile-covered floors (probably 1950s), and green-colored tile on the lower walls of the wings on the first floor. The stairways leading to the second floor (south end) are original with curved wood banister and wood railings. The second floor retains some original classrooms with hardwood floors, original wood window surrounds, sash, and sills, and blackboards with wood trim.

The original building component retains fair physical integrity with the principal exterior changes including closing off the main entrance and some window modification, as well as the large 1950s additions. These building additions in 1953-54 and 1955-56 used similar colored brick as well as some architectural embellishments. However, the overall scale and proportions of these additions serve to dwarf the original T-shaped portion. Overall, the building retains integrity of location and setting, but integrity of design, materials, and workmanship have been somewhat compromised, also affecting integrity of feeling and



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association. However, the original facade, the most important aspect of the building, remains largely intact, and attempts were made to design the additions to be compatible with the original component.

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JOHNSON PUBLIC SCHOOL  
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### 8. Significance

Johnson Public School (Johnson Junior High School, First Assembly of God Church), built in 1923, is eligible under National Register Criterion A for its direct association with growth of education in Cheyenne. The Johnson School, its conception, and its expansion are closely intertwined with the economic growth of Cheyenne's South Side working class neighborhood in the early twentieth century and incorporates the standard designs advocated by the educational reformers of the time. The substantial brick masonry structure was built with community pride and permanency in mind, and it was also used for public assemblies and civic celebrations, places for the South Side neighborhood to come together. It is also eligible under National Register Criterion C in the area of architecture as a fine example of the Collegiate Gothic style. This architectural style became popular for educational buildings in the United States during the 1920s. It is one of only three remaining educational structures in Cheyenne to represent this style (the others being the former McCormick Junior High School, now the Emerson Office Building, and Cheyenne High School, now the Laramie County School District No. 1 Administration Building). It is also a lasting legacy to William Dubois, Cheyenne's most prominent architect in the early twentieth century, who designed many of the city's most important public and commercial buildings.

#### 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.

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.

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The present Johnson Junior High building (currently First Assembly of God Church) was preceded on the South Side by the impressive brick Johnson School, constructed in 1883 and expanded in 1911. That school occupied the entire block between East Eleventh and Twelfth Streets and House and Evans Avenues. It was named after Edward Payson Johnson, an attorney who first came to Cheyenne in the summer of 1867 and later served as Attorney General of Wyoming Territory and whose duties included public education. He was instrumental in the formation of the first school board and Central School. However, a large portion of the South Side neighborhood, including the original Johnson School, was demolished by the Union Pacific as a result of the expansion of its freight yards in the early 1920s.

Cheyenne's South Side was a cohesive working class neighborhood that first developed in the late nineteenth century as an area of modest wood frame homes where Union Pacific railroad workers resided. The neighborhood was physically separated from downtown Cheyenne and the other residential neighborhoods by the Union Pacific tracks and freight yards. This physical isolation from the remainder of the city had its inconveniences, but it also served to give the South Side a distinct flavor, cohesiveness and independence that remains to the present. The South Side began to expand rapidly after the Union Pacific Division machine shops were constructed in Cheyenne in 1890. Then, in January, 1923, the Union Pacific established a major freight terminal as a distribution point for Wyoming and adjoining states. As a result, the existing yards were expanded and a new freight terminal was built, and a new steel and concrete viaduct was built over the complex of tracks connecting the South Side to downtown Cheyenne. Construction of new housing followed for the increased work force. Although the north part of the South Side neighborhood that bordered the freight yards was demolished to make room for the new facilities, over three hundred new dwellings were constructed as the neighborhood expanded to the south and east. The South Side population consisted of a rich mix of ethnic backgrounds including a Russian-German enclave, Italians, Greeks, and Slavic nationalities. Therefore, the South Side required a new and larger neighborhood school.

The "new" Johnson School was constructed as an elementary school in 1923. The voters of Cheyenne approved a bond issue of \$115,000 on April 26, 1923, and the school district hired prominent Cheyenne architect William A. Dubois, who was paid \$8637.50 for his plans for the Collegiate Gothic Style building. Adams and McCann, general contractors, were paid \$172,750.

The student population of Johnson School expanded during and after World War II due in part to the establishment of the Frontier Oil Refinery on the South Side in 1940. The size of the refinery expanded in 1943, when it was chosen as the site for a government-built plant for producing aviation fuel. An 825-man work force was needed to construct and operate the plant and necessitated the building of low-cost workers' housing adjacent to the refinery.

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Johnson School was gradually transformed into a junior high school as new elementary schools were constructed on the South Side. In the mid-to-late 1940s, Hebard, Rossman, and Cole Elementary Schools were built in South Cheyenne. A seventh grade was added to Johnson School in 1947, an eighth grade in 1948, and a ninth grade in 1949.

The first large addition in 1954 was designed by architects Porter and Bradley, who were paid \$30,281, and constructed by Olson, the general contractor, who was paid \$504,694. The north and south additions, added in 1955-56, were also designed by Porter and Bradley at a cost of \$6,672, and constructed by Jacob Weber, general contractor, at a cost of \$111,200. However, the 1950s additions still could not keep up with the growing enrollment of nearly 700. A new Johnson Junior High School was constructed in 1983, and the old school was abandoned. It stood empty for a number of years before being purchased by the First Assembly of God Church, the current owner. A portion of the old school is also used for a Head Start program.

The architect of the original portion of Johnson School was William R. Dubois, who studied at the Chicago School of Architecture in the late 1800s and received his architectural training at a firm in Albuquerque, New Mexico. In about 1900, his firm sent him to Cheyenne as the supervising architect for the construction of the Carnegie Library. Dubois soon established his own practice in Cheyenne.

During a career in Cheyenne that spanned forty years, Dubois designed a wide range of residential, commercial, industrial, and public buildings in Cheyenne and across Wyoming. His buildings exhibited varied architectural styles and influences, such as Beaux Arts Classicism and Romanesque Revival. He proved his ability to master evolving styles through the decades; by the early 1940s, his buildings reflected the very latest in styles, such as Streamline Moderne. It is impossible to understate the impact of this architect on Cheyenne and Wyoming. His massive commercial buildings in the Cheyenne downtown historic district lent the young town its character of permanence and reliability, and as the decades passed, his ability to adapt to changes in architectural styles gave Cheyenne the appearance of modernity.

Almost every Cheyenne student in the early and middle years of the twentieth century passed through one of the many Dubois-designed public schools. His schools, as well as his other public and commercial buildings, reflect the evolving range of Dubois' architectural styles. The oldest remaining public school in Cheyenne is the Churchill School, designed by Dubois in 1911, a tall simplified building utilizing elements of the Foursquare style. In 1921, Dubois designed the Cheyenne High School (later called Central High School), using the more detailed and elegant Collegiate Gothic style. Dubois also designed the nearby Gibson Clark School in 1922, using a simple and clean version of Collegiate Gothic. He used a similar style

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in 1923 for Johnson Junior High School on the South Side. The premier example of the Collegiate Gothic style in Cheyenne is Lulu McCormick Junior High School (now the Emerson State Office Building), on which he collaborated with Frederick Hutchinson Porter in 1928-1929. In 1940, Dubois designed his last public school, Corlett Elementary. By then, he was using elements of the Art (Streamline) Moderne architectural style, which he also applied to the Eagles' Building and the Greyhound Bus Depot in ca. 1940.

In conclusion, Johnson School stands as a South Side neighborhood landmark of Cheyenne's early commitment to public education. Although its function has changed in recent years, it is a good example of adaptive reuse and therefore preservation of an important historic building. The school received additions and interior renovations as the student population grew and after its function changed, but the building still retains good integrity of location and setting, and, to a lesser extent, integrity of design, workmanship, materials, and therefore feeling and association. The facade or east side with its Collegiate Gothic architectural detailing remains largely intact as built in 1923.

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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.
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- Gulliford, Andrew. *America's Country Schools*. Washington, D.C.: The Preservation Press, 1984.
- Haley, John Paul Jr. *A History of Laramie County School District No. 1, Cheyenne, Wyoming*. Master's Thesis Prepared for the Department of Education, University of South Dakota, 1956.
- Jones, Gladys Powelson. *Cheyenne, Cheyenne....Our Blue Collar Heritage*. Published by author, 1983.
- Laramie County School District No. 1. Planning and Construction Office Files. Laramie County School District No. 1 Administration Building, 2810 House Avenue, Cheyenne.
- Rosenberg, Robert G. *Report of Historic Intensive Survey for the Norris Viaduct Cheyenne, Wyoming*. Report prepared for and on file at the Cheyenne Area Transportation Planning Process (ChATPP), Cheyenne, Wyoming.
- Sanborn Map Company. *Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps for the City of Cheyenne*, 1883, 1886, 1890, 1894, 1907, 1912, 1923, 1931, 1959. New York, New York: Sanborn Map Company.
- Starr, Eileen. *Architecture in the Cowboy State, 1849-1940*. Glendo, Wyoming: High Plains Press, 1992.