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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an 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 Empire School

other names/site number N/A

### 2. Location

street & number 300 South 50 East N/A not for publication

city or town Rupert X vicinity

state Idaho code ID county Minidoka code 067 zip code 83350

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide X locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Kenneth C. Reid 3 May 01  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
KENNETH C. REID PH.D. Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

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 certifying 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:)

Edgar W. Ball 5/30/01  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Empire School  
Name of Property

Minidoka County, Idaho  
County, and State

**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
<u>1</u>	<u>          </u>
	buildings
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>
	sites
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>
	structures
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>
	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>
Total	

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

Public School Buildings in Idaho

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION/school

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

No Style

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

walls CONCRETE

WOOD/Weatherboard

roof WOOD/Shingle

other \_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

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

X See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 7

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" on one or more lines 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" on all that apply.)

Property is:

- 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

**Period of Significance**

1917- 1947

**Significant Dates**

1917

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Meuleman, Gus (builder)

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

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

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 8

**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  Other State agency
- 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
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 9

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property less than 1

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

A 1/2 2/8/1/9/3/0 4/7/1/6/9/4/0 B 1 1/1/1/1 1/1/1/1  
Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing  
C 1 1/1/1/1 1/1/1/1 D 1 1/1/1/1 1/1/1/1

Verbal Boundary Description  
(Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Beginning at the northwest corner of the north half of the northeast quarter of section 9 Township 10 South, Range 24 East, Boise Meridian, thence east along the north line of said half of northeast quarter a distance of 84 feet, thence south a distance of 100 feet, thence west a distance of 84 feet to the west boundary of the north half of the northeast quarter of Section 9, thence 100 feet north to the point of beginning.

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 10

Boundary Justification  
(Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundaries include the parcel of land historically associated with the Empire School.

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 10

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Tricia Canaday - Architectural Historian  
organization Idaho SHPO date February 23, 2001  
street & number 210 Main Street telephone (208) 334-3861  
city or town Boise state ID zip code 83702

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/or 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

name Shirley West  
street & number 238 West 100 North telephone  
city or town Rupert state ID zip code 83350

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 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

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# **National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet**

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Empire School  
Minidoka County, Idaho

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The Empire School sits on a lot on a rural road in Minidoka County, three miles south of the City of Rupert. It is surrounded by agricultural land, except for the lot directly to the east, on which now sits a manufactured home.

The 1917 school is a one-and-a-half story, measuring approximately 40 feet by 44 feet. The building is essentially vernacular in design, but does exhibit a few Craftsman details. It sits on a poured concrete foundation and has a first story of concrete blocks. The blocks are smooth faced, except for at the corners where rusticated blocks provide a quoining effect. The upper half-story is wood frame construction finished in clapboard.

The main elevation (facing north) has a small, centered, enclosed projecting entry porch inside which there is a pair of 5-panel doors. There are no windows on the first story of the north elevation, but there are four, paired double-hung sash windows on the second-story gable end. Three of the windows are four-over-four lites, and the fourth is two-over-two lites. Brackets support the shallow projecting eaves of the gabled roof.

The side elevations (east and west) are virtually identical with a row of six, one-over-one double-hung sash windows with concrete lintels and sills. These are slightly off-set toward the rear of the building. The only difference between the two facades is that on the east elevation, a small square window is located toward the front of the building, high up on the wall. This window lights the interior staircase to the second floor. Conversely, on the west elevation, a single, standard-sized window is located toward the front of the building. All the windows on the side elevations have been boarded over.

The rear elevation has two doors on the first floor, one providing egress from each of the classrooms. These wood panel doors have prominent concrete lintels above. The second story has a door providing egress from the congregation room on the second floor. It is off-set to the west and has a small balcony. There may have once been a ladder or staircase to the ground, but this is not extant. West of this door is a small, one-over-one, double-hung sash window under the eaves. Closer to the east side of the building on the second floor is a single six-over-six double-hung sash window, and next to it, a small window under the eaves, identical to that on the other side of the wall. The doors on the first floor originally provided students with access to the outhouses that once stood on the property. These outhouses are no longer extant.

The pitched roof is clad in wood shingles and has a brick chimney at the peak of the roof near the back of the school and a bell cupola located at the peak of the roof near the front. The bell is missing.

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Empire School  
Minidoka County, Idaho

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The Empire School in Rupert, Idaho, is eligible for the National Register at the local level under Criterion A for its significance to the history of education in the Rupert area. The property meets the registration requirements as set forth in the Multiple Property Documentation "Public School Buildings in Idaho." This school building was constructed in 1917 to replace an earlier school at this location which the community had outgrown.

Minidoka County is largely an agricultural area located on the Snake River Plain in south-central Idaho. The county population was slow to grow as the high desert environment was not very welcoming to early settlers. But in late 1904, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation drilled an isolated well four miles from the banks of the Snake River along the planned right-of-way of a spur line of the Oregon Short Line Railroad. The Bureau excavated the well to provide water for teams and men digging irrigation canals associated with the Minidoka Project. This well proved pivotal in the development of Rupert and the surrounding countryside. Settlers flooded onto the dry land around the well with the promise of irrigated farms, though between 1905 and 1907 their only local source of water was the Reclamation well.

## MINIDOKA PROJECT

(The following is context excerpted from the NRHP nomination for the Rupert Town Square Historic District, listed in the NRHP, January, 2001)

The general settlement and development of Rupert and the surrounding area owe their existence to the establishment of the Minidoka Project of the U.S. Reclamation Service. The Project consisted of a dam across the Snake River, a power plant, and an extensive irrigation system. Irrigation provided the ability to farm the desert lands of much of southern Idaho, and farmers rushed in to file claims on lands wherever work on new irrigation projects began.

The site for the Minidoka Dam (NRHP 1979) was first surveyed in 1881 by private individuals, but without funding, the project collapsed. In 1890, the Idaho State Reclamation Office surveyed the site. The surveyors were Fred Mills and D. W. Ross. Ross later became the head of the Federal Reclamation Service in Idaho. He is credited with attaching the name Minidoka to the project. However, once again, the project was unfunded and it stalled.

The Reclamation Act, signed into law by President Theodore Roosevelt on June 17, 1902, provided the legal mechanism for money flowing into the government from the sale of public lands to be directed into public reclamation projects, by which the land could be made productive. The Minidoka Project was the second project established under the Act. Work on the Minidoka Dam began in late 1903 with the project officially established by order of E. A. Hitchcock, Secretary of the Interior, on April 23, 1904. Desert land, which lay adjacent to the proposed irrigation canals, was opened for settlement in early 1904. Originally, families filed on 160-acre parcels, but these were later reduced to only 40 to 60 acres per person. Work on the diversion dam also began in 1904. Soon thereafter contracts were let for the construction of the main irrigation canals.

Farmers who filed for land on dry sagebrush tracts had no way of raising crops until the Minidoka

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Empire School  
Minidoka County, Idaho

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Project was completed; many of them temporarily hired on with the Reclamation Service, and along with their teams and equipment, helped excavate the extensive Minidoka canal and ditch system for the delivery of irrigation water. Much of the work was done far from the banks of the Snake River - the only local source of water in the area - so the Reclamation Service drilled a well along the planned right-of-way of the Oregon Short Line's Minidoka and Southwestern Branch to provide water for the construction crews. This well was at first known as Wetfirst or Wellfirst, and the small settlement around it became known by this name. When businesses sprang up around the well and a post office was established, the town was renamed Rupert.

The Reclamation Service platted three townsites in the area: Rupert, platted in 1905 by Bureau engineers; Rosston, a construction town named after project engineer D. W. Ross; and Riverton, later changed to Heyburn. While Rupert and Heyburn still exist, Rosston disappeared soon after the completion of Minidoka Dam.

The Minidoka Dam was constructed at a cost of \$675,000. The rock and earth structure rises 86 feet from the base of the streambed and is 4,475 feet long. The dam features a concrete spillway that is 2,400 feet long. The 16,000 kh power plant was completed in 1913 at a cost of \$472,000. The plant originally had five turbines, but a sixth turbine was added in 1927 and a seventh in 1940. The power plant was added to provide power to pump water into the Burley canal system. Excess power was made available to the public. The Rupert school system was reportedly the first school in America to be heated by electric power. This beneficial use of power was one example used by Nebraska Senator George Norris in his justification for the creation of the Rural Electric Administration (REA).

In October of 1906, engineers closed the gates of Minidoka Dam to fill the 120,000-acre foot capacity Lake Walcott for the first time. During the three days it took to fill the lake, local farmers scoured the muddy riverbed below the dam looking for mussels and river gold. Water was turned into the irrigation canals for the first time in 1907. Some homesteaders had been on their land for three years before they could bring in a crop.

### EMPIRE SCHOOL

After the Minidoka Dam was completed, and farmers increasingly began to settle the land, the need for a rural school became apparent. While there was a school in Rupert, the town was located three miles north and so it could not easily serve the rural community. The first school on the site, the Herman School (named after the homesteader who donated the land), was a simple clapboard schoolhouse, and served the area for about 10 years. The growing population of the area spurred the construction of a larger, more modern school, and the Herman School was moved off the site to accommodate the new Empire School.

The Empire School was built by Gus Meuleman in 1917. After his wood frame house had blown down in high winds, Mr. Meuleman ordered a block maker from Illinois, constructed his new

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# **National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet**

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Empire School  
Minidoka County, Idaho

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home of concrete block, and then took on the Empire School job. Gravel for the blocks was hauled by wagon from as much as three miles away. The cement was hand mixed and then hand tamped in the block maker to form 80 pound blocks. Working sun up to sun down, Meuleman and his crew produced 100-125 blocks a day, ultimately making over 2,000 blocks for the construction of the school. Iron bars were added in the middle of the hollow blocks for added reinforcement.<sup>1</sup>

The interior of the school had a simple two-room plan on the first floor, and a single large, open room on the second floor for assemblies, dances, plays, holiday parties, etc. The two first floor rooms were of equal size, though they were referred to as the "little room" and the "big room" because they housed grades 1-4 and 5-8 respectively.<sup>2</sup>

The Empire School served the rural Minidoka County community for 30 years, until 1947, when the state legislature revised the state school code. At the heart of these changes to the code was school consolidation, and many schools, including the Empire School, were closed as students were moved into other districts. The Empire School could not meet the new safety and equipment requirements and so the children were bused to Pershing School in the City of Rupert.<sup>3</sup>

## **SUMMARY:**

The Empire School is significant as a historic school in Idaho, as outlined in the Multiple Property Listing: Public School Buildings in Idaho. The school is representative of Idaho schools during the historic period prior to 1947 when the state school code changed, bringing them into the modern period. The Empire School is an excellent example of an independent, rural school serving an agricultural community in the first half of the twentieth century. It served the area south of Rupert in south-central Idaho, an area that saw little settlement prior to the Bureau of Reclamation Minidoka Dam project on the Snake River. After irrigation became available, the influx of farmers necessitated the construction of additional schools for the many new students. Although another school - Herman School - had served the area, it lasted for only about 10 years before a newer, larger, more modern school was felt necessary. The Empire School was built in 1917 at the same location as the Herman School, which was moved to a new site. This new school was larger and sturdier and served the surrounding community for 30 years before statewide consolidation of schools meant the small, rural school could no longer meet the newly imposed requirements.



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ENDNOTES:

1. "Mice Scurry Where Once the Golden Rule Sounded," Minidoka County News, 18 August 1977, Sec. 1, page 1.
2. "Empire School Still Stands," Minidoka County News, 10 July 1991, Sec.1, page 1.
3. Interview with Shirley West, Owner, Rupert, Idaho, February, 2001.

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Empire School  
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**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

“Empire School Still Stands,” Minidoka County News, 10 July 1991, Sec.1, page 1.

“Mice Scurry Where Once the Golden Rule Sounded,” Minidoka County News, 18 August 1977,  
Sec. 1, page 1.

West, Shirley. Property Owner, Rupert, Idaho. Interview, February, 2001.

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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Empire School  
Minidoka County, Idaho

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## PHOTOGRAPHIC DOCUMENTATION

Empire School

Minidoka County, Idaho

Photographs taken by Tricia Canaday, Architectural Historian - Idaho SHPO

Photographs taken, February, 2001

Original negatives on file at the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office

Photo #1 of 3: Empire School, view looking southwest

Photo #2 of 3: Empire School - rear elevation, view looking north

Photo #3 of 3: Empire School - corner detail, view looking northwest