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NATIONAL REGISTER

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 *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 McMillin School

other names/site number n/a

2. Location

street & number n/a

not for publication

city, town McMillin

vicinity

state Washington code 053 county Pierce code 053 zip code 98352

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

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>          </u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

Rural Public School Buildings in Washington State

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]

Signature of certifying official

State Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation

State or Federal agency and bureau

5-20-87

Date

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:)

[Signature]

Entered in the National Register

7-15-87

[Signature]  
Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Education: School  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Social: Meeting Hall  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)

Other: hipped roof vernacular  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete  
walls brick  
\_\_\_\_\_  
roof wood shingle  
other \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The McMillin School is a one story, two classroom schoolhouse constructed of brick with a hipped roof. The schoolhouse is located in the rural Puyallup Valley in central Pierce County, Washington, near a Puyallup River crossing and the community bearing the same name. Farmland surrounds the building except to the southeast where there is a small group of older housing, a store, and a church, all vernacular in architectural influence. This cluster of buildings constitutes the crossroads of the McMillin community. The school building is distinguished in this setting because of its brick construction and Neoclassical influence. With minor exceptions, the school building is unaltered.

The building is one story and generally rectangular in shape with a center rear (east) wing. It was constructed in 1922 of Clay City brick, a local product, and has a concrete foundation. The hipped roof has open eaves and exposed rafter tails and is covered with cedar shingles. A cupola on the center roof ridge houses the original school bell. On the hipped roof of the cupola is a wood flag pole. Three brick chimneys are placed on the north slope and east slope of the main roof.

Nine-over-nine double-hung sash windows light the building. The windows are banded in groups of four on the west, east, and north facades and spaced singly on the south facade. A group on the front (west) has been partially covered with plywood, but this is the only major alteration to the building. Windows in the rear (east) wing are wood frame one-over-one double-hung sash.

The window bands on the front facade flank the central entry. The entry is sheltered by a gable roofed porch supported by two pairs of wood Doric columns resting on a concrete floor. Both outer columns are connected to the building by a simple wood balustrade. Three steps lead to the porch floor. The wood paneled door has a single fixed glazed unit.

A rear entrance, located in the wing, is approached by four concrete steps. A hipped roof porch with exposed rafter tails is supported by two wood Doric columns. The wrought iron balustrade leading from the columns to the main building is not original. The wood panelled door has a single fixed window. On the south corner of the wing is a set of panelled double doors with single fixed windows which lead to a small, single story wood frame gable roof shed. The school building is showing some signs of deterioration due to decomposition of the mortar.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

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

Section number   7   Page   2  

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The building is presently used by the McMillin Grange as a meeting hall. The group has left the interior unchanged from the original. The interior plan consists of a central hall leading from the front to the back door with wood panelled doors leading to the two major classrooms and rear auxiliary rooms. With the exception of trees planted in the front lawn, a few shrubs near the building front, and a yard, the grounds are not formally landscaped.

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally     statewide     locally

Applicable National Register Criteria     A     B     C     D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)     A     B     C     D     E     F     G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Education  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance

1922 - 1936  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates

n/a  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation

n/a  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person

n/a  
\_\_\_\_\_

Architect/Builder

unknown  
\_\_\_\_\_

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The McMillin School is historically significant for its association with rural public education in the central Puyallup Valley of Pierce County, Washington. The well preserved brick schoolhouse was constructed in 1922 to replace a frame one-room schoolhouse threatened by flooding. The new school, incorporating fireproof materials and a two classroom interior plan, reflected the growth of the rural community and the development of the district's curriculum. It served area school children until 1960. Today, the school house is the only remaining structure significantly associated with the history of McMillin and one of only two rural public schools in central Pierce County. The structure maintains integrity of location, setting, form, and materials and strongly conveys the character of a rural public school of the early 20th century.

Historical Background: Like other counties in the Puget Sound region, Pierce County was settled in the mid and late 19th century by Americans from more eastern states and by European immigrants attracted by the area's vast forests, rich mineral deposits, fertile farmland, and saltwater harbors. Given these physical features, the economy was dominated by extractive industries--principally logging but also mining, fishing, and farming. Even as late as the 1930s, when other industries (notably manufacturing and commerce) dominated in urban areas, the county's rural economy was fueled by the products of its forests, fields, and the Sound.

This economic base led to the creation of widely scattered rural communities (usually unincorporated) close to natural resources but often accessible to urban areas only by difficult water or overland transportation. While Tacoma had a diversified economy--the node for trade, manufacturing, railroad, and government activities--the small rural centers were independent and isolated settlements and reflected the dominant economic mainstay.

Without exception, each of these small rural communities established a school district shortly after the first settlers arrived. As elsewhere in the state, the creation of a district and the construction of school buildings signalled the formation of a community and reflected a belief in both the importance of universal education and the permanence of the community itself. The school buildings were often the first and sometimes the only public structures in the area, and thus served as social and cultural centers as well as centers of education. The typical schoolhouse served all school age children in the area

See continuation sheet

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

Bonney, William Pierce, History of Pierce County, Chicago, 1927.  
Auditor's Annual Exhibit, Pierce County, Washington, Tacoma Bell Press, Tacoma, 1910.  
W.P.A. Writers Project Papers, Washington State Historical Society, Tacoma.  
Material provided by Lori Price, 8625 Woodland Avenue, Puyallup, Washington.

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 # \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

Pierce County Dept. of Planning & Development, Tacoma, Washington

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property less than one

UTM References

A 

1	0
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5	5	8	0	3	0
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5	2	2	0	9	3	0
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Zone      Easting                      Northing

B 

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Zone      Easting                      Northing

C 

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D 

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Quadrangle name: Sumner  
Quadrangle scale: 1:24,000

See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The McMillin School is located on the east side of Pioneer Way north of 128th Street East in Section 12, Township 19 North, Range 4 East, and is legally described as Parcel No. 04-19-12-4-042/043.

See continuation sheet

**Boundary Justification**

The boundary includes the entire parcel that has historically been associated with the property.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title <u>Caroline Gallacci, Preservation Planner</u>	(Edited by L. Garfield)
organization <u>Pierce County Planning Division</u>	date <u>December 20, 1986</u>
street & number <u>2401 S. 35th St.</u>	telephone <u>206/591-7172</u>
city or town <u>Tacoma</u>	state <u>WA</u> zip code <u>98409</u>

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 2

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and often doubled as a meeting place for their parents. Between 1853, when Washington became a territory, and the 1940s, when rural school consolidation resulted in the construction of larger schools serving several communities, the small community schoolhouses were the primary public structures on the rural landscape and today they often are the only surviving evidence of the once thriving rural communities that dotted the county.

Pierce County's rural schoolhouse construction reflects three general periods of development. Shortly after initial settlement, a one-room log or frame schoolhouse was constructed on land usually donated by an early homesteader. As the community grew, two- or four-room frame schoolhouses were constructed, indicating increased community stability, the growth of the school age population, and the expansion of the school curriculum. Schools built between statehood (1889) and World War I often reflect this second period of growth and expansion. A third phase of growth is reflected in buildings constructed after World War I, when many frame buildings were replaced by larger brick structures and ancillary structures--including gymnasiums and play shelters--were constructed adjacent to the schoolhouse. This period, which lasted through the 1930s, included structures built by the federal Works Progress Administration during the Great Depression. This third period ended by 1940 when the last WPA projects were constructed and the move toward rural school consolidation was well underway.

The significance of the Elhi, Alderton, and McMillin areas, which originally shared the same school district, lies in their proximity to the Naches Trail which passed through the central Puyallup Valley and crossed the river in this vicinity. The Naches Trail (later called the Fort Walla Walla-Fort Steilacoom Military Road) was the first major surface route in the Puget Sound region. Settlement began in the 1850s. Hop growing was an early agricultural pursuit and the Northern Pacific railroad spur from Tacoma to the Wilkeson coal fields, completed in 1877, provided the transportation needed to further develop the area and to exploit the lime deposits near McMillin.

Soon after construction of this railroad, a deposit of lime was discovered near Alderton. A tram road was constructed to a junction with the railroad and on May 17, 1889, the Roche Harbor Lime Company filed a plat for a town. It was named for John S. McMillin, president of the company. After the lime deposit was exhausted, settlers concentrated on small, diversified farming operations. By 1910, the community consisted of two stores, two churches, and a handful of housing, as well as a one-room school house.

Children in McMillin first attended the Alderton School located approximately three miles north of the town site. In 1888, Alderton School district No. 11 was divided, and McMillin established its own separate school. The building was constructed southeast of the present school site on the Puyallup flood plain. Right after World War I, high water almost destroyed the one-room frame structure and it was decided to construct a new building on five acres of land away from the river. The new school, completed in 1922, served McMillin area school children until 1960. It is now owned and used by the McMillin Grange.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number   8   Page   3  

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The McMillin community had unique origins through the Roche Harbor Lime Company headquartered on San Juan Island in northwestern Washington near the Canadian border. However, no properties associated with this firm's activities in Pierce County remain. The extant buildings of McMillin reflect development following the mining of lime and the transition to a diversified agricultural economy. That this later activity was significant can be seen in the remaining McMillin store, the community church, and vernacular housing warranting further evaluation for National Register eligibility. The school building, however, is the most architecturally substantial and unique of these buildings. The school is one of only two historic rural schoolhouses remaining in the Central Puyallup Valley; the other is the National Register eligible Alderton School. The Elhi school was demolished in 1910.

The project of surveying and documenting Pierce County's rural schools was conducted by James Widrig, architect of the Pierce County Landmarks Board, and Caroline Gallacci, Preservation Planner for Pierce County. The nominated schools were drawn from a list of 84 school buildings and associated sites included in the countywide historic sites survey. The project followed federal survey guidelines and the results are filed in the Washington State Inventory of Cultural Resources at the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation in Olympia. Each property was physically evaluated to determine its integrity. In addition, traditional research methods were used to place the building in its local historic context as well as to evaluate the property within the statewide context of rural public education.