

QMD NO. 1024-0018

EXP. 12/31/84

For NPS use only
received JUN 23 1983
date entered

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Douglas Avenue School

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 900 Douglas Avenue _____ not for publication

city, town Las Vegas N/A vicinity of _____ congressional district

state New Mexico code 35 county San Miguel code 047

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Las Vegas City Schools

street & number 901 Douglas Avenue

city, town Las Vegas N/A vicinity of _____ state New Mexico

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. San Miguel County Courthouse

street & number West National

city, town Las Vegas _____ state New Mexico

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title N.M. Historic Building Survey has this property been determined eligible? _____ yes no

date 1982 _____ federal state _____ county _____ local

depository for survey records N.M. State Historic Preservation Bureau

city, town Santa Fe _____ state New Mexico

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Douglas Avenue School is a two-story, Spanish Colonial Revival building constructed in 1928. Situated at the south edge of University Hill, the school has a T-shaped plan with two symmetrical facades organized around entrances facing Douglas and University Avenues. Materials include rusticated, light-brown sandstone, brick in varying buff shades, and tile in varying shades of red. Arcaded porches flanking a two-story entry define the main entrance facing Douglas Avenue. This and the secondary entrance facing University Avenue are embellished with cast-stone decorations in a generally Renaissance/Classical style. The twelve classrooms, three offices, crossing corridors and basement service area retain their original utilitarian fixtures and modest design.

Rusticated, random ashlar, light-brown sandstone forms a foundation which because of the site's sloping grade, varies from seven-and-a-half feet above ground level on the Douglas side to three feet on the University side. A cast-stone, continuous sill course caps the foundation. While bid specifications and plans show load-bearing, brick walls and called for "American Bond" (headers every seventh course), the exterior buff brick is unbonded. Decorative brick effects include projecting sills (second story), corbeling under the eaves and diagonal, herringbone brickwork in recessed, blind arches on the north facade. Red, French-style tile covers the Douglas arcade and tower as well as the low hipped roofs which front the building's flat roof. Each classroom has a bank of five, twelve-over-twelve, double-hung windows. Offices and corridors are lighted by a variety of wood casement windows.

The Douglas Avenue entrance has a handsome arcade consisting of ashlar sandstone piers capped by a cast-stone, molding "capital" which continues the line of the continuous sill/foundation cap. From this base spring brick arches in "Rowjock." A two-story composition in cast stone decorates the tower entrance. Quoins face the tower's first-floor passage; atop these, an entablature/base, flanked by projecting decorations, supports simple piers with a molding entablature, which in turn support a cartouche with volutes. Wrought-iron window grills over recessed panels with herringbone brick work flank the tower. The design is not specific or elaborate enough to be considered an archeological recreation of Spanish Colonial stonework, but rather has a general Mediterranean Renaissance flavor.

The secondary entrance facing University Avenue is surrounded by similar, though simpler, cast-stonework. This entrance's balcony railing is the only other wrought-iron decorating the building. A cartouche with volutes similar to the one capping the Douglas entrance was designed for this entrance. The Northwest Terra Cotta Company of Chicago and Denver, which supplied all of the cast-stone details for the building, executed a model of this element. Whether it was never produced or installed, or installed and later removed, is not known.

The basement is excavated behind the Douglas entrance, under forty per cent of the building, and houses lavatories, a boiler room and fuel room. The first and second floors each have six classrooms, approximately twenty by thirty feet, and a ten-foot-wide corridor running the length of the building east to west. Another corridor on the first floor, fifteen-feet wide, runs north to south from the University entrance down a flight of stairs to the Douglas entrance. Even the modest decorations originally contemplated for the interior were sacrificed to help keep construction costs down. Only a molding marking the wainscot and at the juncture of wall and ceiling mark the austere interior.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1928

Builder/Architect M.M. Sundt/ Meem & McCormick

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Built in 1928, the Douglas Avenue School is an early, important work by John Gaw Meem, who is generally recognized as having been New Mexico's leading architect from the late 1920's to the mid-1950's. The building stands on the site (and, in part, the foundation) of the first school building erected with public funds in the territory. Meem and McCormick (his partner at the time), working with a tight budget and a plan in part dictated by the earlier building, executed a nicely proportioned and detailed design with a pleasant mixture of materials. The pivotal structure of a group of early twentieth century educational and institutional buildings, the school is impressively sited at the edge of University Hill with New Mexico Highlands above it to the northwest (including the Ilfeld Auditorium, a National Register property) and the Old Post Office, Las Vegas Armory and Elks Club buildings (individual building nominations in preparation for the latter two) below it to the south.

The first permanent educational buildings in New Mexico were private, religious institutions: public education, where it existed, occurred in temporary quarters. In 1890, the newly-incorporated city of East Las Vegas sponsored the sale of \$5,000 in bonds for a school, this before a city hall was built. A two-and-a-half-story building with basement was erected in 1891. A provincial rendering of Richardsonian Romanesque, it employed local light-brown sandstone with red sandstone accents. This school was gutted by fire in 1927. While classes continued in local churches and schools, the effort to replace that building proceeded with dispatch: the architect was hired December 9th, and by September 15th, 1928 the building was completed.

Meem, who handled design for the firm, and Cassius McCormick, who oversaw business arrangements, worked primarily with F.H. Crail, M.D., head of the Board of Education, and with Walter McFarland, Superintendent of Schools, in formulating a plan. At first, the reconstruction of an eight-room school on the original foundation for about \$30,000 was contemplated. By the end of January, however, plans were expanded to include twelve classrooms at about \$50,000, a move which gave the architects more design flexibility. The original school had been almost square with entrances and a central hall on a north/south axis. The four new rooms of the 1928 building were added to the northeast and northwest corners of this original core and a new east/west corridor was established. The original building--two-and-a-half stories with steeply pitched roof, tall chimneys and a cupola--rose assertively above the hill. Meem and McCormick constructed a lower, more broadly-profiled building which spreads across the hill. The use of the foundation sandstone in a retaining wall at the foot of the hill further ties the building to its location. Seen from below, on Ninth Street (ill 1), the new wings, because they are set back, appear to step down from the central mass. Actually, they are on the same level. The entry composition (ill 3) similarly has a central element--the tower--and steps down and back to the arcades. This composition effectively focuses attention on the limited cast-stone decorations discussed in the previous section.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 1

Quadrangle name Las Vegas

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

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 Zone Easting Northing

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Verbal boundary description and justification

See continuation sheet.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	N/A	code	county	code

state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Chris Wilson, Directory, L.V. Historic Building Survey

organization Citizen's Committee for Historic Preservation date September 30, 1982

street & number Box 707 telephone 266-0931 (Albuquerque)

city or town Las Vegas state New Mexico

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date 6-14-83

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register of Historic Places.

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

Chief of Registration

date

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet

Item number 7,8

Page 1

7. Description continued:

Illustrations:

1. Historic Buildings in the Highlands University--Douglas Avenue Area, 1982.
2. Douglas Avenue School seen from below on Ninth Street, photographs by Chris Wilson, 1982.
3. Douglas Avenue facade and southwest side.
4. Douglas Avenue entrance.
5. University Avenue facade.

8. Significance continued:

The north facade (ill 4), while less impressive, is nevertheless enlivened by the projection of the new rooms beyond the building's main mass.

The formality and symmetry of the building plan and facade elevations stems from Meem's training in Beaux Arts design: he had participated in the training program of the Beaux-Arts Institute of Design (issued from New York), winning "First Mention" for one of his student designs in 1923. Since the Douglas School was only his fifth non-residential commission, Meem leaned heavily on this background--more heavily than he would in his later, largely Pueblo Style designs which are notably irregular in their plans and massing.

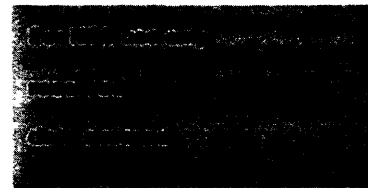
In order to save money, the original school's foundation was dismantled to the first-floor level. Additional stone was salvaged from the walls for the foundation of the new wings and for the arcade piers, providing a richer material than the School Board would otherwise have been able to afford. This stone was then matched with cast-stone details of a similar shade and complemented by varying shades of buff brick and red tile.

By March 24, 1928, Meem and McCormick had prepared seventy-two pages of specifications and ten sheets of working drawings on which bids for construction were made. The nine bids from New Mexico and Colorado contractors which were opened April 23rd ranged from \$65,000 to \$69,000. A number of possible changes in design and substitutions of less expensive materials had been included in this bidding. These changes would have lowered bids about seven thousand dollars, leaving the lowest bid still well above the board's working estimate. With the architect's advice, additional reductions were let for bidding a week later, with the result that M.M. Sundt of Las Vegas, who had placed third in the original bidding, received the contract for just over \$54,000. The reductions from the original plan involved cutting the new classrooms by two feet each way, lowering all ceilings to eleven feet, substituting less expensive hardware and materials, eliminating temperature control and so forth. The planned, glazed-terra-cotta details were changed to cast stone which (this observer feels) better complement the salvaged sandstone than the terra cotta would have. The reduction of the tile roof from thirteen-and-a-half feet (horizontal measurement) to eight feet seems to have been the sole detrimental change. In the architect's drawings, the tile roofs form a more substantial cap than the building now has.

The work progressed smoothly and seemingly finished on schedule September 15th, as the contractor was not assessed a late penalty. The building has been well maintained and continues to serve as a grade school.

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

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Continuation sheet

Item number 9,10

Page 1

9. Major Bibliographic References:

- Bohannon, Westman, Huston. Aerial photographs of Las Vegas, ca. 1972. City of Las Vegas.
- Bunting, Bainbridge. John Gaw Meem: Southwest Architect. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, in press 1982.
- Ivers, Louise Harris. "The Architecture of Las Vegas, New Mexico." Diss, University of New Mexico, 1975. Carnegie; Special Collections, Zimmerman Library, UNM (Zimmerman).
- Meem, John Gaw. Working drawings, correspondence and bid specifications for the Douglas Avenue School, 1927-28. Correspondence and Drawing Files #88, Meem Collection, Zimmerman.
- Perrigo, Lynn I Gateway to Glorieta: A History of Las Vegas, New Mexico. 700 page TS, ca. 1974. Donnelly, Carnegie, Zimmerman.
- "Douglas School." TS, ca. 1975. NMSHPB.
- Sanborn Map Company. "Sanborn Insurance Maps of Las Vegas, New Mexico." Unsigned plan; 1930. Map Room, Zimmerman.
- Whiffin, Marcus. American Architecture Since 1780. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1969.

10. Geographical Data continued

Starting at the N corner of the school property, which is a point on the SE curb of University Avenue, proceed 208' SE along the NE property line to the NE curb of Douglas Avenue; proceed 206'6" SW along this curb to the SW property line; proceed 147'2" NW along this property line to the W property line; proceed 64'5" N to the SE curb of University Avenue; proceed 180'7" along this curb to the starting point.

This represents the boundaries of the school property as surveyed in 1928 and recorded in the working drawings by Meem and McCormick.

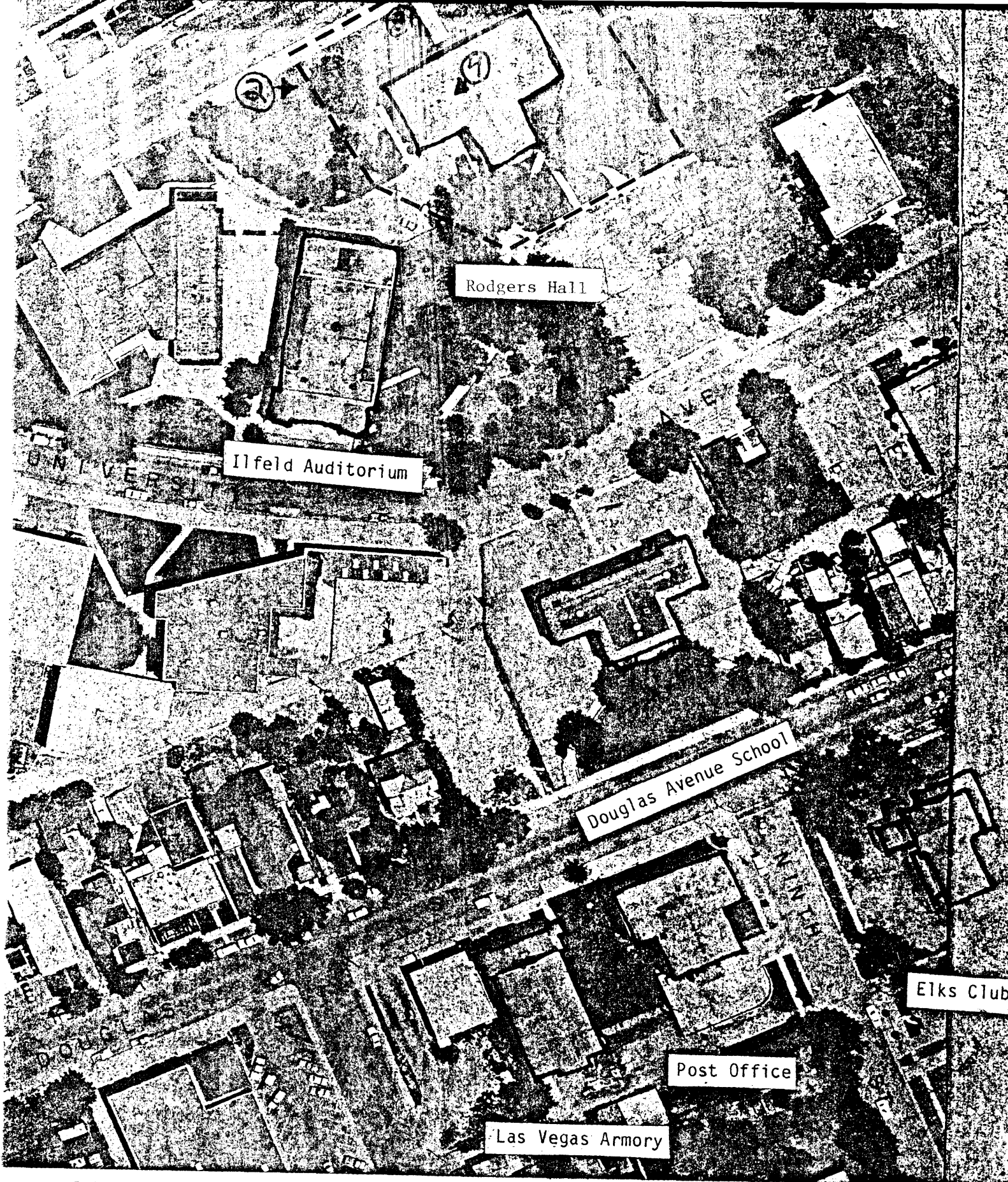


Illustration 1.
Historic Buildings in the Highland University--Douglas Avenue Area

Las Vegas, New Mexico 1982

North



Scale 1":ca.100'

Illustrations

