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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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REGISTER

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration 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 Westcliffe Jail

other names/site number Old Jail House

2. Location

street & number 116 Second Street N/A not for publication

city or town Westcliffe, N/A vicinity

state Colorado code CO county Custer code 027 zip code 81252

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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.)

[Signature] December 9, 1992  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State Historic Preservation Officer  
State of 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 the 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 of the Keeper

~~Entered in the~~  
**National Register**

Date of Action

[Signature]

2/3/93

Westcliffe Jail  
Name of Property

Custer, Colorado  
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>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</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.)

N/A

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

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

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

GOVERNMENT: correctional facility  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**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 Stone, concrete  
walls Stone, concrete  
\_\_\_\_\_  
roof Wood, Metal: tin  
other Iron, Wood, Brick  
\_\_\_\_\_

**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.)

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)

Politics/Government

Architecture

Period of Significance

1888=c. 1925

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Archie Scherer

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

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
- 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:

West Custer County Library  
209 Main Street  
Westcliffe, CO 81252



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Westcliffe Jail

*Coste, CO CO*

Description

The Westcliffe Jail is a small, one-story, detached stone building located on the northwest edge of Westcliffe, a ranching community in the Wet Mountain Valley of south central Colorado. The jail at 116 Second Street faces east and is set back approximately 60 feet from the lot line.

Built in 1888 by Archie Scherer, a local stonemason, the jail has a nearly square plan measuring 17 feet by 18.2 feet. Constructed of roughly squared local fieldstone with concrete mortar, the building has a nearly flat roof with less than 2% pitch added in 1985. This was installed to protect the interior and the remnants of the original roof which was constructed of two by tens set side by side on edge and secured with square nails. These boards extended approximately three feet beyond the eaves creating a porch roof in front of the jail. Remnants of the boards are visible at the open gable ends. The modern common rafter roof is set on pine wall plates and covered corrugated tin. At the same time the mortar joints were repointed. The only entrance, a single door of rough-sawn vertical boards, is located on the south side of the east elevation. Two horizontal windows are located immediately below the eaves on the north and south elevations. These windows and the door have frames and lintels of rough-sawn wood. However, the horizontal window frames are neatly joined. The west window on the south elevation retains only the lower half of its frame and the bars have been removed. The remaining windows have four original locally made iron bars which are vertically set in the wooden frame.

The 360 square foot interior retains its original one-room plan which is divided into two cells, although the iron bar cell doors were removed in 1988. Interior walls are unfinished fieldstone and the floor is dirt. The building was constructed without plumbing facilities, although it was originally heated by a wood burning stove vented by an interior brick chimney with corbelled cap covered with concrete. It is located at the west end of the roof ridge.

The jail's setting remains that of a distinctly rural town with the grid pattern and town lots still evident. There is no landscaping and native grasses surround the building; however, a paved parking area is now located in the center of the lot between the jail and feed store.

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National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 2

Westcliffe Jail

*Custer Colo*

Statement of Significance

The Westcliffe Jail is historically significant under Criterion A for its association with the broad pattern of events involving the extension of government on the frontier by providing a mechanism for law enforcement. Constructed in c. 1888, the jail served as an incarceration facility until the mid-1920's when the local government had matured and was able to construct a courthouse and sheriff's department building with jail. The fieldstone building meets criterion C for its method of construction and the work of master stonemason, Archie Scherer. Scherer's skill in using the local fieldstone which he assembled in roughly squared courses yet embellished with quoins was recognized locally by residents and county officials who commissioned him to build houses, the jail and a school during the town's frontier period.

Historical Background and Significance

Westcliffe is located in the Wet Mountain Valley, west of Pueblo, Colorado, and is the Custer County seat. The area was settled initially in 1870 by a colony of some 300 German farmers from the Chicago area. Although the venture failed due to poor leadership and financial mismanagement, many of the settlers remained in the valley and their descendants settled in Westcliffe. Silver mining in the vicinity of Rosita and Silver Cliff brought several thousand prospectors into the region at the end of the same decade and soon attracted the interest of railroad builders.

Westcliffe was founded as a town when the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad brought its narrow gauge line up Grape Creek from Canon City. Although General William Jackson Palmer, the owner of the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad, saw a need for a line in the Silver Cliff area, he bypassed Silver Cliff in 1881 in favor of one of his own self-made company towns approximately one mile to the west. The town which became Westcliffe, was the product of Palmer and his partner Dr. William Bell, who had purchased ranch land where the new terminal was to be located. He platted the town and sold lots in anticipation of Palmer's railroad. The developers named the new town Clifton, which Bell later changed to Westcliffe after his birthplace, Westcliffe-on-the-Sea, a resort town in England. The town was incorporated in 1887 and became the main hub for the farming and ranching community.

The town had its quota of commercial buildings, hotels, restaurants and saloons. The jail was constructed in 1888, a year after incorporation for \$330 to counter the effects of the adjacent Dutch Row, a now vacant block once lined with saloons frequented by cowboys from the nearby ranches. It served mainly as a "drunk tank"

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Section number 8, 9 Page 3

Westcliffe Jail

Custer Co Co

for those cowboys who over indulged until the mid-1920s when the town built a sheriff's department with a jail and county courthouse. During the same period, the county added another civilizing influence when it constructed a school in 1891.

The railroad ceased operations in 1938, but Westcliffe remains the trading and governmental center for the surrounding agricultural community. Since the mid-twentieth century, modern highways and recreational opportunities offered by the beauty of the surrounding Sangre de Cristo mountains, have added tourism as an important component of the local economy.

The primitive jail is a typical example of the work of Archie Scherer, a skilled local stonemason, whose work ranged from residential to institutional and included Westcliffe's unique cottage style school, which was listed on the National Register in 1989. Scherer's ability to use local materials to express a building's function is evident in the massive quality of the stone walls. Yet, he revealed his attention to detail by surpassing the functional to incorporate quoins in this simple structure, as he did later in the school. Scherer artfully assembled one section of the jail's walls without mortar in order to provide a means of escape. He made use of that section himself when he was jailed soon after he completed construction. He spent the daytime hours of his ten-day sentence in the jail and his nights in his own home.<sup>1</sup>

#### Bibliography

Athearn, Robert G. The Coloradans. Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1976.

Denver, CO. Colorado Historical Society. Library. Photographic Collection.

Denver, CO. Colorado Historical Society. Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation. Inventory Site Files, Custer County.

Erps, Marie, contributor. Reflections. Westcliffe, CO.: Westcliffe Federated Women's Club, n.d.

"Peaks of the Past: A Valley Retrospect." Wet Mountain Tribune, April 2, 1992.

Westcliffe, CO. Custer County Courthouse Records.

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<sup>1</sup>Marie Erps, Archie Scherer's niece and resident of Silver Cliff, verified this information.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 10 Page 4

Westcliffe Jail

*Custer CO*

**Verbal boundary description**

The boundary of the Westcliffe Jail is shown by the dashed line on the accompanying scale map. The boundary is 10 feet from the building on the north, east and west sides. On the south the boundary follows the alley line.

**Verbal boundary justification**

The boundary was drawn to include the jail and 10 feet of surrounding land historically associated with the property and to exclude the vast expanse of vacant property, the parking lot, the new commercial building and the Westcliffe Feed Mill.



North

125'

WOODEN FENCE

20'



200'  
ALLEY  
200'

MAP 1 of 2

