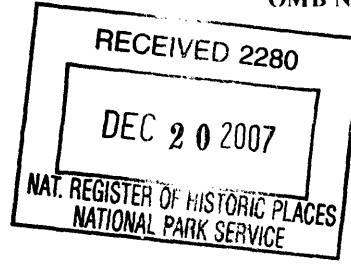


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM



1464

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

HISTORIC NAME: Curley School
OTHER NAME/SITE NUMBER: Ajo School, Curley High School; Curley Middle School

2. LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER: 201 Esperanza Avenue NOT FOR PUBLICATION: N/A
CITY OR TOWN: Ajo VICINITY: N/A
STATE: Arizona CODE: AZ COUNTY: Pima CODE: 019 ZIP CODE: 85321

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 _____ nationwide _____ statewide x locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

James W. Granvin
Signature of certifying official

Date 17 DECEMBER 2007

State Historic Preservation Officer
ARIZONA STATE PARKS
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

Edson H. Beall
Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action 1-31-08

5. CLASSIFICATION

OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY: Private

CATEGORY OF PROPERTY: Building

NUMBER OF RESOURCES WITHIN PROPERTY:	CONTRIBUTING	NONCONTRIBUTING
	6	BUILDINGS SITES STRUCTURES OBJECTS
	6	TOTAL

NUMBER OF CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES PREVIOUSLY LISTED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER: 3

NAME OF RELATED MULTIPLE PROPERTY LISTING: N/A

6. FUNCTION OR USE

HISTORIC FUNCTIONS: EDUCATION/school

CURRENT FUNCTIONS: WORK IN PROGRESS/DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling
RECREATION AND CULTURE/auditorium; sports facility (Gymnasium)

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS/
Mission/Spanish Colonial Revival

MATERIALS: FOUNDATION	CONCRETE
WALLS	STUCCO
ROOF	TERRA COTTA (barrel tiles)
OTHER	WOOD (windows); STEEL (windows); GLASS (windows); WROUGHT IRON (gates, lamps); COPPER (ornament)

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION (see continuation sheets 7-5 through 7-11)

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

APPLICABLE NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA

- 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 VALUE, 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: N/A

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: ARCHITECTURE, COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT, EDUCATION

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: 1918 (design)-1951 (completion of campus)

SIGNIFICANT DATES: 1919 (Building One), 1926-1928 (Additions to Building One; Manual Training), 1937-1940 (Building Two; Gymnasium/Boiler Room), 1949-1951 (Building Three; Addition to Manual Training; Cafeteria)

SIGNIFICANT PERSON: N/A

CULTURAL AFFILIATION: N/A

ARCHITECT/BUILDER: Lescher & Kibbey; Lescher & Mahoney; Leslie J. Mahoney, architects/
Edwards & Wildley, 1919 general contractor

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (see continuation sheets 8-12 through 8-22)

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

BIBLIOGRAPHY (see continuation sheet 9-23)

PREVIOUS DOCUMENTATION ON FILE (NPS): N/A

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register: *Ajo Townsite Historic District* (NRHP 2001)
- 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: Arizona Historical Society, Tempe
- Federal agency
- Local government: Pima County Tax Assessor
- University: Arizona State University, Tempe
- Other -- Specify Repository: Ajo Historical Society Museum

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF PROPERTY: 6.9 acres

UTM REFERENCES	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	12	324696.8	3583008	3	12	324459.8 3582868
2	12	324573.8	3582763	4	12	324421.4 3583003

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION (see continuation sheet 10-27)

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION (see continuation sheet 10-27)

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE: James W. Steely/Historian, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION: SWCA[®] Environmental Consultants **DATE:** 12 June 2007

STREET & NUMBER: 2120 North Central Avenue, Suite 130 **TELEPHONE:** 602-274-3831

CITY OR TOWN: Phoenix **STATE:** Arizona **ZIP CODE:** 85004

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

CONTINUATION SHEETS

MAPS (see continuation sheet Map-28)

PHOTOGRAPHS (see continuation sheet Photo-29)

ADDITIONAL ITEMS

PROPERTY OWNERS

NAME: Curley School Housing Partners

STREET & NUMBER: 201 Esperanza Avenue **TELEPHONE:** 520-387-6823

CITY OR TOWN: Ajo **STATE:** Arizona **ZIP CODE:** 85321

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Curley School
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Note: *This Registration Form nominates the six-unit Curley School complex as a “building” with multiple components planned and built in episodes between 1918 and 1951. Three components are listed in the National Register (2001) as Contributing resources in the Ajo Townsite Historic District (Parkhurst 2001): the main building (herein Building One), the classroom building (herein Building Two), and the Gymnasium/Boiler Room. Rehabilitation of the whole complex as housing and offices beginning in 2005 necessitated re-evaluation of all components, and development of an individual nomination for Curley School as an interconnected resource (Collins 2003).*

SECTION 7. DESCRIPTION

Summary

Curley School is a former educational campus in the planned community of Ajo, Pima County, Arizona, with buildings built through at least four stages between 1919 and 1951 in consistent Spanish Colonial Revival styling. Dominant materials and features are stuccoed walls and arcades, red-tile roofs and copper details, and prominent entry accents including domed towers. The 3-story main building (herein Building One) of 1919 is the most prominent single edifice in the town, dominating but not terminating a civic axis running southwest from the town plaza. Between 1926 and 1928 two sympathetic 3-story additions extended the two classroom wings of this building, and added a freestanding Manual Training building to the west. In 1937 a continuous 1-story “Intermediate” classroom building (herein Building Two) followed an arc, just east of the platted Juanita Street, drawn in tangents along virtual extensions of Telera and Pico Streets, apparently intended to “close” the west edge of the campus. By 1940 the Gymnasium/Boiler Room, planned with the 1937 improvements, joined the ensemble and prompted mechanical system upgrades in all campus buildings. Between 1949 and 1951 school trustees extended the Manual Training building and built the Cafeteria to serve the large campus. In that last expansion, trustees added a new 1-story “Primary” classroom group (completing current Building Three) farther west that defined its own inner court, accessed from the platted arc of Orilla Street. A west entry-passage tower on the Building Three group straddles the civic axis, which extends farther southwest toward ‘A’ Mountain.

Character-defining features within the complex present a catalog of the Spanish Colonial Revival Style as developed by American architects in the early 20th century, from Classical (auditorium stage façade) to Baroque (entry towers) and Mission (Gymnasium) to Rancho (1-story classroom wings). These features result from materials including fired clay and cast stone; wrought iron and tooled copper; sculpted wood and textured stucco; and wood- and steel-sash windows with liberal use of glass panes for maximum interior light. All four stages of campus buildings—1919, 1926-1928, 1937-1940, and 1949-1951—retain high degrees of integrity in the aspects of location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, setting and association.

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Curley School
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Geographical Setting

Ajo is on the southeastern slopes of the Little Ajo Mountains in southwestern Arizona, within the Sonoran Desert climate zone characterized by high temperatures and little rainfall. Elevation of the town is 1,798 feet above sea level, dramatically varying within short distances of Curley School from 2,900 feet at the peak of Little Ajo Mountain to 870 feet at the bottom of the New Cornelia open-pit mine. Local geology is characterized by four units: Cretaceous Concentrator volcanics, Tertiary Cornelia quartz monzonite, Tertiary Locomotive fanglomerate, and Tertiary Hospital porphyry. Copper and related mineralizations occur within the Tertiary Cornelia unit. No perennial or intermittent streams flow near the community, where general surface drainage is to the north (ASMI 2004). In 1914 mine developers discovered a substantial aquifer north of the development in the volcanic formations; this source of water remains a major asset for Ajo.

Community Context

Ajo townsite planners Kenyon and Maine in 1916 platted the town just north of the new mine, upon a sloping plain that begins at the railroad terminal and plaza as its lowest point, then rises gradually southwestward toward rugged Camelback, or 'A,' Mountain. Company administration, ore processing, and other non-residential functions segregated east and southeast of the rail terminal. For civic and residential areas, the designers drew a line southwesterly along the rise from the depot, about a mile to the base of Camelback Mountain, a roughly pyramidal butte now with a large superimposed letter **A** identifying Ajo. This civic axis divides the rectangular public plaza west of the depot, then carries Lomita Avenue southwesterly for another block, where the street forks symmetrically into Esperanza Avenue running west northwest and Vananda Avenue running southwest. Residential streets for "American Town"—originally homes available only to Anglo workers—anchor their two major north and south grid systems off Esperanza and Vananda Avenues. Between these housing areas is a large triangular, three-block-deep site bisected by the extended civic axis. The three-story Building One (1919 main building) of Curley School dominates the easternmost limit of this triangle, with its main pedestrian entry aligned with the civic axis and facing east to the plaza. The building's two classroom wings and their 1926-1928 extensions parallel Esperanza Avenue to the north and Vananda Avenue to the south, framing the school auditorium wing between. The auditorium originally featured a stage-width roll-up metal door, bricked in for decades but restored in 2007, on its west end that opens to reveal Camelback/'A' Mountain as the three-dimensional backdrop for stage events facing the interior seats. This device also allows outdoor audiences to gather in the courtyard (or cortile, or placita) and face east toward performances elevated on the same stage platform and framed by the Doric portico.

Subsequent additions to the Curley School campus extended facilities west to the curved Juanita Street alignment, then farther west to the curved Orilla Street alignment flanked by residential lots facing north to Esperanza and south to Vananda Avenues. School officials after 1951 acquired and improved additional practice-field lots still farther west (not within this nomination boundary), and added two temporary buildings

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on former residential lots along Vananda west of the Intermediate building and south of the Primary classrooms (also outside the nomination boundary). But the Curley School building group remained after 1951 within its Lomita Avenue-to-Orilla Street triangular plat, dominating the entire townsite by geographical elevation and rare irrigated vegetation.

Building Plans and Elevations

The Curley School campus building complex is herein classified for nomination and adaptive-use purposes—not strictly related to historic building episodes—into 6 components: Building One, Building Two, Building Three, Manual Training, Gymnasium and its attached Boiler Room, and Cafeteria.

Building One includes the 1919 three-story main building and its 1926-1928 extensions along the north and south classroom wings. Architects of record Lescher and Kibbey and the firm's young designer Leslie Mahoney designed a sophisticated model of Spanish Colonial Revival style for the signature campus building. They also presented the school trustees with a model all-American schoolhouse through efficient occupant circulation and healthful features for natural lighting and air movement. Interestingly, the subtle Classical/Spanish Colonial device of groups of *three*—entry frontispieces three bays wide and three levels high, bell towers with base/shaft/and cap, plus triangle and trident motifs—combine here with utilitarian combinations of three—three-story building, three main wings, and gabled roofs supported by triangular trusses.

The building is generally constructed of concrete foundation; hollow clay-tile bearing walls with textured, unpainted stucco on the exterior and painted plaster on the interior; wood windows (metal-sash in the 1928 north-wing addition) and interior trim; concrete floors and interior staircases; wood roof truss systems; and red terra cotta barrel-tile roofing. Although the original floor plans are labeled basement, first floor, and second floor, the public elevations (except the west) are treated as a three-story building with slightly subterranean ground level, and the second level (“first floor”) is treated—in Renaissance and Beaux-Arts Styles—as *piano noble*, or main floor.

The principal elevation of Building One—its central east façade facing, and seen prominently from, the civic plaza—is a three-story, three-pavilion composition. The center pavilion is the most detailed statement of the building, its features extending through landscaping east into formal beaux-arts stairways, planters, light fixtures and signage. From the intersection of Lomita, Esperanza, and Vananda Avenues, the building is entered through this landscape across an elaborate series of staircases rising through four terraces from the street, west to the final central entry steps into the building's second level. Inside the main doors, an interior public lobby leads to the former school principal's suite (south), the main corridor and auditorium entry (west) and the teacher's lounge (north). Outside, the double entry doors of wood (originally copper-clad, replaced c. 1951) are framed by a flat-arch cast-stone surround, part of a frontispiece that includes at the third level double doors in a round-arch surround of cast stone, opening onto a small balcony above the main entry. Flanking pavilions of the third-

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level composition are set back from the center pavilion's plane, creating an intimate library space inside. Outside, in vertical line with the centered double doors, above the roofline, is a Spanish Colonial bell tower, itself of three components: open belfry/decorated shaft/half-dome cap. The dome was originally topped by a star-burst sphere concoction, in later years nicknamed Sputnik, stuck at an unknown date by lightning and removed (in 2007 planned for restoration).

The south and north elevations that angle along Vananda and Esperanza Avenues, respectively, each reveal continuous former classroom spaces inside at all three levels. Clever use of stucco details appear to be cut stone on the south and north elevations. These details create horizontal rustication at the first level, and a continuous window-sill line at the third level, resulting in a building that appears larger, in the fashion of an Italian Renaissance urban palace. Banks of five windows for each classroom, each window a large wood-frame 12/12 double-sash unit (most repaired and some replaced in-kind in 2007), ensure ample natural light on the interior. Large interior access hallways to former classrooms are lit, in turn, by rows of bottom-hinged transom sashes. These hallways and classroom groups extended in the additions of 1926-1928 to offer a total, on each level, of five roughly 30'x23' classrooms in the central-to-south wing and four similar classrooms in the central-to-north wing. In one visible break from prior details, the north-wing extension is lit with metal-sash windows likely installed in 1928. The original first-level (basement) plan combined home economics (girls) in south-wing rooms, mechanical systems and service in the center wing, and manual training (boys) in the north wing.

Westerly elevations appear to be two-story, as the last progressive terrace from Lomita Avenue reaches a plain west of Building One consistent with all west-side second-level entries into the building. The complexity of the combined west sides of Building One also demonstrates the functional characteristics of the entire building: gable ends of the north and south wings flank the central-wing's auditorium headhouse and exterior stage opening, and the reentrant angles between auditorium and wings hold triangular-plan 1-story services (originally a large girls restroom in the south angle and a large boys restroom in the north angle). The composition is consistently linked by an open-air arcade that spans from the second-level ("first floor") classrooms across the restrooms into auditorium side entries. The auditorium, decorated inside with large exposed king trusses and subtle classical details, offers one of architect Leslie Mahoney's most clever tricks: a dual-face stage that orients east to an indoor audience and west through a rolling metal door to outdoor spectators. Outside, the stage's west face is framed by a deep-relief Doric-column temple front, with a compacted pediment beneath the auditorium's stepped parapet above.

Building Two originally enclosed eight 1937 one-story "Intermediate" classrooms immediately west of Building One, and is constructed of 2x6 wood-stud bearing walls supporting a wood-truss roof finished in red terra cotta barrel tiles. These classrooms occupied four connected gable-roofed tangents: three bordering the curved Juanita Street alignment and one turning northeast at Vananda Avenue, all to form an angular L partly enclosing a courtyard (or cortile, or placita) with Building One. Courtyard-side former classroom doors and windows face into the cortile under a continuous portál (masked in a failed apartment conversion from the 1990s through 2006

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by a stuccoed arcade, since removed) of wood posts, brackets and beams. South and west elevations of Building Two are primarily stuccoed, including partial infill of these elevations' banks of original large classroom windows, since partly replaced by similar units. An open breezeway separates Building Two from the Boiler Room of the Gymnasium, but connecting roofs overhead provide shade and shelter through the passage. A second breezeway breaks the west elevation—oddly just a few degrees off (south) of the civic axis—for pedestrian access from the cortile west onto the open Juanita Street alignment.

Building Three includes the connecting 1949-1951 "Primary" classroom ensemble, all of 2x6 wood bearing-wall construction with stuccoed walls, and gabled terra-cotta roofs with periodic copper-clad platforms for air handling units. Along with the adjacent Manual Training building, Building Three encloses a second major courtyard (west cortile or placita) and provides a formal west gate upon the civic axis for the whole campus. In 1949 the Primary classroom group extended 90 degrees from the Manual Training building, southwest for the length of two classrooms, then turned 90 degrees southeast. As this farthest-west Curley School building passed over the civic axis, its architects designed an integral three-part west-gate ensemble, whose central pavilion straddles the civic axis through an open breezeway, topped by a pyramidal roof of barrel tiles, then a copper-clad Mission Revival belfry and windvane. Four final classrooms constructed in 1951, two turning 90 degrees northeast then two more 90 degrees northwest, completed the loose enclosure. All Building Three former classrooms are connected inside the cortile with a continuous portal of wood piers, brackets and beams. Banks of five large steel-sash windows at each former classroom's outside elevation continued the schoolhouse theme and standards from the original Curley School configuration of 1919.

The *Manual Training* building of 1928, with its 1949 addition, is supported by walls of load-bearing brick masonry, topped by a wood-truss roof, finished with red terra cotta barrel tiles. The original Manual Training building enclosed a large cabinet shop, garage, and services, all presented in utilitarian elevations that sympathized with the Spanish Colonial neighbors with basic form and stuccoed walls. Improvements in 1949 extended this building south along its ridgeline axis to double its footprint; the original roof apparently received terra-cotta tiles at that time, causing a visible slump in rafters not originally designed for their extra weight.

The *Gymnasium* built by 1940, and connecting *Boiler Room* begun sometime after 1937, anchor the north boundary of Curley School's campus with the highest roof and smokestack beyond the bulk of Building One. The Gymnasium's walls are likely of heavy wood framing with exterior stucco. Its ceiling features an open series of segmental-arch wood-lattice trusses to create a lofty free-span interior space and generous segmental-arch façade facing north to Esperanza Avenue. This formal north entry is through a relief-detailed arch set within a small pavilion under barrel tiles, centered on a textured stucco wall broken only by a wrought-metal grill and porthole directly above the entry. The gym's open-ballcourt interior is clad with wood boards (originally stained; now painted) and flooring, with bleacher seating along the west wall, covering dressing rooms (now storage) below. A row of 10 metal-sash windows placed high on each of the east and west elevations lights the gymnasium. The attached Boiler Room housed the 1930s natural-gas-fired heating plant for the complex, connected by underground chases, and vented by a large rectangular smokestack. Utilitarian

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metal-sash windows light the Boiler Room from its east and west walls.

The *Cafeteria* of 1949 extended the campus upon one former residential lot northwest, facing onto Esperanza Avenue but primarily accessed by students and faculty through a covered east entry opposite the Gymnasium. The building is likely of hollow-tile wall construction supporting a wood bow-truss roof. The formal Esperanza entry is centered on a simple Mission Revival frontispiece, created through a paneled and arched double-door entry, centered below a segmental-arch parapet, flanked by decorative iron lamps and steel-sash window sets. The interior consists of a dining room on the north end, separated by food-tray pass-throughs to the kitchen, cold-storage, washing, and office facilities on the south end, partly under a flat-roofed south extension from an unknown date.

Summary of Character-Defining Features

Character-defining feature titles are in *italics* below, followed by their specific characteristics at Curley School. *Spatial relationships* between buildings at the campus—associated with Spanish Colonial influences as well as schoolyard planning—are emphasized to ensure their appreciation and preservation as the complex is adapted to new uses.

Spanish Colonial Revival features, including *Spatial Relationships* among buildings associated with the style, are found on both the exterior and interior of Building One, and primarily on the exteriors of other campus buildings.

- Stuccoed walls and arcades, unpainted or painted during the period of significance.
- Red terra cotta barrel-tile roofs, generally as complete gable-roof systems, sometimes as shed-roofs.
- Glazed terra cotta, plaster, or cast-stone accents and relief panels; see Building One east façade and tower, west stage façade, and third-level library interior.
- Colored glazed-tile accents; see Building One tower, flues and firewall parapets.
- Copper details; see Building Three tower and roof-platforms for air units (and the original Building One doors, currently on the Ajo Historical Society Museum).
- Wrought-iron and fabricated-metal accents; see historic photos of “Sputnik” topping Building One, Gymnasium façade, and the Building Three west gates and flanking light fixtures.
- Portales of wood piers, brackets and beams; see Building Two and Building Three portales.
- Compact exterior detail groups; see Building One frontispiece and tower, Gymnasium façade.
- Basilica-like auditorium interior with exposed and embellished roof trusses, classical stage embellishments inside and outside.
- Open spaces/courtyards/cortiles/placitas, reminiscent of protected Spanish Colonial cloisters.

Schoolhouse Standards, including *Spatial Relationships* among buildings, are presented through a number of familiar features to the universal schoolhouse building type.

- Exterior “furniture” of flagpole on axis, light poles, integral concrete furniture, and incised Roman-font

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signage such as “CVRLEY SCHOOL” (with Latin “U”) and “A D MDCCCCXIX” (1919).

- Large, operable wood-sash windows, particularly in banks at classrooms, with original glass panes.
- Wood-sash multi-pane windows as exterior accents generally prior to 1928; metal-sash windows generally used 1928 and thereafter.
- Major public entries with formal staircases; see Building One, Gymnasium, and Cafeteria.
- Central entry foyer with former public-access offices attached; see Building One.
- High-capacity interior staircases flanking entry foyer; see Building One.
- High-capacity main hallways with classroom entries of wood doors and transoms (all former classroom buildings), plus additional rows of transoms carrying outside light deep inside in Building One.
- Enclosed spaces of the courtyards/cortiles/placitas as a visual playground control device; see Buildings One, Two, and Three.

Landscape features are found around the campus for pedestrian control, soil conservation, and community beautification.

- Leveled terraces rising along the civic axis gradually above the public plaza to the east and residential areas to the north and south.
- Concrete sidewalks, stairways, furniture (such as the “CVRLEY SCHOOL” bench), and planters.
- Plantings within the period of significance, to be determined through further research.
- Courtyards/cortiles/placitas formed by adjacent building groups, creating intimate or controllable schoolyard open space.
- Open street alignments at Juanita and Orilla Streets, incorporated into campus pedestrian and limited-automobile circulation.
- Stone and concrete retaining walls along Vananda Avenue and drainage channels along Orilla Street, probably added during Depression-era relief programs (coincidentally directed by Phelps Dodge mine manager Michael Curley) of the 1930s.

Conclusion

Curley School is a historic and significant complex of professional design and durable construction, with few alterations—before 2007 adaptive-use conversion into apartments—postdating the period of significance, 1918-1951. These attributes, combined with a strong tradition here of maintenance and care, result in a school complex today—as a “building” of multiple component resources—exhibiting high degrees of integrity through location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. All six building units are nominated as Contributing elements to the Curley School nomination, as well as all natural and introduced landscape features within the historic boundary during the period of significance.

Thus the Curley School retains extremely high and broadly distributed integrity in all seven requisite aspects:

- Location: the 1951 boundary is quite evident and continues to function as originally intended; all

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buildings in the nomination boundaries occupy their original locations.

- **Design:** the original design theme of Spanish Colonial Revival remained constant through successive development during the period of significance, 1918-1951, providing a catalog of variations on the Spanish Colonial Revival Style of the early 20th century, from Classical (auditorium stage façade) to Baroque (entry towers) and Mission (Gymnasium) to Rancho (1-story classroom wings).
- **Setting:** Curley School contributes strongly to a physical environment planned as a model company town in the early 20th century, profoundly striking to residents and visitors alike who encounter its views from the Ajo town plaza and its civic axis, as well as from various surrounding elevations; the encompassing Ajo Townsite Historic District is listed in the National Register of Historic Places (2001) at the national level of significance.
- **Materials:** quality materials selected for original building construction—fired clay and cast stone, wrought iron and tooled copper, sculpted wood and textured stucco, wood- and steel-sash windows and liberal use of glass panes for maximum interior light—account for much of Curley School’s physical durability and stylistic appeal;
- **Workmanship:** highly textured Spanish Colonial details—in stucco, cast stone, glazed tile, terra cotta, wood, and metal—combined with construction during a period of relatively low labor costs, resulted in a notable and nationally recognized Spanish Colonial Revival complex and landscape;
- **Feeling:** Curley School’s interior building spaces and enclosed courtyards evoke its original atmosphere of an early 20th century American schoolhouse from virtually every position, angle and vista throughout the property;
- **Association:** the school’s buildings and landscapes maintain a direct personal link for former faculty, staff and students to its period of significance; certainly these former Curley School occupants would today readily recognize the complex in every sense.

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Curley School
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Note: This Registration Form nominates the six-unit Curley School complex with multiple components planned and built in episodes between 1918 and 1951. Three components are listed in the National Register (2001) as Contributing resources in the Ajo Townsite Historic District (Parkhurst 2001): the main building (herein Building One), the classroom building (herein Building Two), and the Gymnasium/Boiler Room. Rehabilitation of the whole complex as housing and offices beginning in 2005 necessitated re-evaluation of all components, and development of an individual nomination for Curley School as an interconnected resource (Collins 2003).

SECTION 8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Summary

Architects Lescher and Kibbey of Phoenix, with their recently hired master draftsman Leslie Mahoney, produced initial designs for Curley School in 1918 and 1919 as part of a celebrated team of planners and designers then developing the copper-mining company town of Ajo, Arizona. The main school building and eventually the entire educational complex through 1951 all respond faithfully to the civic axis that is a central pivot for the remarkable City Beautiful layout of Ajo. Mahoney brought his initial Spanish Colonial Revival details directly from California, during the height of that state's infatuation with the style at the 1915 Panama-California International Exhibition, and created a premier civic focal point with the school for Ajo. The style's wide range of subsets—including Classical, Baroque, Mission and Rancho—and the Phoenix firm's involvement in successive Curley School expansions, carried the stylistic theme through completion of the school campus in 1951. The complex is nominated as a multi-component "building" to the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under Criterion A in the area of Education—for its historic role as the flagship of Ajo schools and for its highly symbolic role in the Calumet & Arizona Copper (after 1931 Phelps Dodge) Company's promotion of the welfare of its employees and their children. The complex is also nominated under Criterion C in the areas of Architecture and Community Planning & Development—as the work of a master and Mahoney's outstanding representations of the Spanish Colonial Revival Style and archetypical presentation of American school-building design, and for its prominent contribution to Ajo's well-preserved fulfillment of the early 20th century's City Beautiful Movement. Significant dates reflect the episodes of campus expansion: 1919 (Building One), 1926-1928 (Additions to Building One; Manual Training), 1937-1940 (Building Two; Gymnasium/Boiler Room), and 1949-1951 (Building Three; addition to Manual Training; Cafeteria).

Historic Context

The history and significance of the Ajo townsite, its resources, and copper-mining associations are fully described in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) registration form "Ajo Townsite Historic District," listed in the NRHP in 2001 (Parkhurst 2001). That NRHP listing included Building One, Building Two, and the Gymnasium/Boiler Room as Contributing resources to the townsite historic district. Other properties evaluated for the 2001 nomination are denoted below with their (Inventory No. #) survey

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recognition. Nomination author Janet H. Parkhurst presented the historic context of Ajo, Arizona, as a model company town with a period of significance from 1914 to 1950, in the areas of significance of Community Planning & Development and Architecture, at the national level. She explained that the continual evolution in the United States of industrial-based company towns combined about 1900 with the City Beautiful Movement—inspired by the orderly planning and appearance of the Chicago world’s fair in 1893—to create a handful of Western communities such as Ajo, Arizona. By 1900 model company towns shared, she cited, “(1) planning and construction directed by a central authority; (2) a standard house type; and (3) community programs and facilities to educate while providing social diversion.” In a parallel context to company towns, the City Beautiful Movement, she wrote, “evolved from two basic concepts, civic improvement and urban park development, which merged into a form of civic idealism that swept the nation from 1899-1920” (Parkhurst 2001:8/7,15).

Further identifying a contextual role for Curley School itself, Parkhurst specifically set the stage at Ajo, as it adhered to the City Beautiful Movement, for a major commission (the school) in a romantic design (Spanish Colonial Revival) at a major location (the civic axis) designed by outside experts (Lescher and Kibbey, one of the leading and progressive architecture firms of Phoenix):

The City Beautiful movement combined a romantic aesthetic with the underlying comprehensive qualities of utilitarianism, social responsibility, and unity. During this era, the idea of involving outside experts or consultants, such as landscape architects, architects, civil and sanitary engineers, and sculptors, in the city planning process became widespread (Parkhurst 2001:8/15).

The three components of Curley School (Inventory No. 8) listed as Contributing resources in the NRHP historic district are examples of “philanthropic architecture” in a company town that utilized “public buildings [as] the most conspicuous evidence of paternalism” (Parkhurst 2001:8/13,37). Ajo, according to Parkhurst, “was atypical of the City Beautiful in the use of the Spanish Colonial Revival style instead of neoclassic architecture,” and the school is an obvious major example of Spanish/Mediterranean styling for the town. Otherwise, the Ajo Townsite nomination text does not describe Curley School in any physical or stylistic detail, and only the 1919/1926-1928 main building (Building One) and 1937-1940 group of Intermediate classrooms (Building Two), Gymnasium and Boiler Room are delineated (see MAP Continuation Sheets) as the three Contributing resources to the historic district. The 1926/1951 Manual Training building, and 1951 Primary classroom group (Building Three) and Cafeteria are delineated as Noncontributing resources to the historic district, presumably because they were not 50 years old at the time of historic-properties survey (Johns and Strittmatter 1995), or because their construction dates were not known at the time of NRHP nomination (Parkhurst 2001) since the historic district’s period of significance ends arbitrarily at 1950.

Therefore, the entire school complex is now nominated individually (Collins 2003) under the company-town and City Beautiful contexts noted above, and the operative historic context of Curley School as a symbol of

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corporate architecture and social welfare in Ajo, Arizona, through the period 1918-1951.

Ajo and its well-planned community and industrial components resulted from early 20th century experiences, with both mining and labor, of the Calumet & Arizona Mining Company, based in Warren (near Bisbee), Arizona. The C&A general manager John Campbell Greenway, characterized by Parkhurst as a “Progressive-Era thinker,” also played a major role in the planning and development of Ajo. Threats of global war, then the 1914 outbreak of World War I caused copper demand and prices to rise considerably. Greenway’s parent company acted on his recent proposals for open-pit mining in the remote desert mountains of southwestern Arizona, centered on the existing old mining village of Ajo. Greenway coupled his open-pit mining and copper extraction innovations for massive exploitation of low-grade ore with ideas for the necessary associated town. He proposed a “productive environment” for workers and their families (Parkhurst 2001:8/1), similar to his company’s 1907 planned community of Warren. Greenway soon found for Ajo the indispensable source of water, an aquifer tapped seven miles north of the town (still the city’s source of considerable water). His subsidiary New Cornelia Copper Company built its own 44-mile railway—the Tucson, Cornelia and Gila Bend Railroad—opened in 1916, from the Southern Pacific Railroad’s mainline at Gila Bend. Meanwhile Greenway, a former resident of Minnesota, in 1914 solicited the planning services of Minnesota architects William M. Kenyon and Maurice F. Maine to design the new community. These Midwestern mining-country designers brought their experience with company town and industrial design to Arizona (Parkhurst 2001:8/27; Gebhard 1986:36-37).

Kenyon and Maine encountered a challenging desert/mountain geographic condition at Greenway’s proposed townsite, so precariously close to the future open-pit mine. Their solution placed the town just north of the mine, upon a sloping plain that served the railroad terminal at its lowest point, then rose gradually southwestward toward rugged Camelback Mountain. Company administration, ore processing and other non-residential functions segregated east and southeast of the rail terminal. For the civic and residential areas, the designers drew a line along the rise from the depot, southwesterly about a mile to the peak of Camelback Mountain. Locals later named this roughly pyramidal butte ‘A’ Mountain for its large superimposed capital letter on the civic axis identifying Ajo (Gaetjens 1993:22). The axis divided a rectangular public plaza west of the depot, then carried Lomita Avenue southwesterly for another block, where the street forked into Esperanza Avenue running slightly west northwest, and Vananda Avenue running southwest. The resulting “fan” pattern of streets resembled the plat of Warren, where street tangents radiated from a hub (apparently the intended site of a never-built signature railroad depot for Warren). New residential streets in Ajo for “American Town”—the homes of Anglo workers—anchored two major grid systems off Esperanza and Vandana Avenues, leaving between these housing areas a large triangular, three-block-deep site bisected by the extended civic axis. Here Kenyon and Maine, perhaps encouraged by Greenway and his chosen New Cornelia Mine superintendent Michael J. Curley, reserved a place for a school campus.

Industrialists, Planners, and Designers

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The development of a model town and its landmark school building must have been a dramatic task for the planners of Ajo, while the mine executives simultaneously built their sprawling industrial complex. “Mike Curley shared John Greenway’s sense of social responsibility,” wrote Parkhurst, “especially with respect to education and social welfare” (Parkhurst 2001:8/27). While Curley oversaw erection of the huge ore processing plants and prepared the earthworks that would become an open-pit mine to supply raw material, he and Greenway recorded within their correspondence to Kenyon and Maine a sustained obsession with creating a model town that kept its workers materially satisfied and intellectually challenged. The New Cornelia Copper Company established a board of school trustees by 1918, including the company’s chief clerk and commissary manager. These officials “voted to spend \$135,000” (Parkhurst 2001:8/31) on their company/town’s new school building, an interesting gesture since the company firmly owned the triangular lot on Lomita Avenue and supplied the funds for all “public” buildings in the company town.

John C. Greenway (1872–1926) joined Theodore Roosevelt in 1898 as part of the future U.S. president’s Spanish-American War “Rough Riders.” The Alabama native and Yale engineering graduate moved West after distinguished service with Roosevelt, and served in a number of steel and mining company administrative positions, including experience in the iron range of Minnesota. Greenway moved to Arizona in 1910 to manage the Calumet & Arizona Copper Company based in Warren, a City Beautiful community founded by the company in 1907. Just as Greenway’s career peaked with the commitment to open-pit mining and town building at Ajo, he reentered the Army in 1917 with the rank of major and served with additional decoration during World War I in France. Returning to the Calumet & Arizona company after the war, Greenway maintained his ties to the military through attainment of the rank of general before his death in 1926. He willed \$100,000 to a miners trust fund and was buried in Ajo near his mansion southwest of Curley School. The family of his widow, 1930s Congresswoman Isabella Selmes Greenway (1886–1953), removed his remains from Camelback Mountain in 1995 and reinterred them with family members in Kentucky. John Greenway’s retirement in 1925 had resulted in the promotion of his protégé Michael Curley to executive manager of all “New Cornelia property” (Ajo Copper News 2004b).

Michael J. Curley (1874–1945) came to Arizona in 1913 at the invitation of Greenway, who had worked with Irish-born Curley in Minnesota mining. Curley’s professional assignments thereafter related to the development of Ajo through Greenway’s prescription of massive low-grade ore production by employees living in a remote but “beautiful” community. The naming at inception of Ajo’s landmark school for Curley revealed his esteem among pioneer mining families in the new town, and/or Greenway’s assurance that company executives would unquestionably dominate its institutions. School trustees for greater Bisbee had already named their company-built signature school in Warren for Greenway. During the Great Depression and cuts in Phelps Dodge employment, Curley directed government relief efforts in western Pima County, which might have produced stone-lined drainage improvements west of the school and perhaps stone and concrete retaining walls and sidewalks around the school as well. Curley retired at Ajo from the Phelps Dodge Corporation’s New Cornelia

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Branch in 1939 and moved to California where he died in 1945 (Ajo Copper News 2004a; Arizona Daily Star 1939). Michael Curley's professional stature in the community, and his public service to various Pima County causes, is well represented by the general superintendent's/manager's house (Inventory No. 18, NRHP 2001) that provides a significant physical representation of his many years at Ajo. Therefore Curley School is not nominated under NRHP Criterion B for its association to Curley.

Following his pattern of tapping expertise from previous relations in Minnesota, Greenway commissioned architects Kenyon and Maine from Minneapolis to design the master plan for Ajo, and to craft many of its individual commissions. Greenway no doubt drew inspiration from the City Beautiful plan and early modernist architecture of his company's headquarters town of Warren, founded in 1907. Warren, however, hosted mainly company managers while Ajo's vision included the complete workforce compacted into one (controlled) community. The size and immediacy of the comprehensive Ajo project, and perhaps Greenway's interest in diverse ideas and results, brought other architects to the Ajo team of planners and designers. Among many known and others unidentified, these included Santa Barbara/Montecito, California, architect George Washington Smith, who designed Greenway's 1924 house (Inventory No. 19) at Ajo and 1925 Immaculate Conception Church (No. 7) facing the town plaza (Parkhurst 2001; Gebhard 1986:38).

Other "outside experts" included architectural partners Royal W. Lescher and John R. Kibbey, who had established their practice in the state capital in 1912 and built a solid reputation in Phoenix and its outlying markets. Just as the partners received the Ajo School commission, however, Kibbey—as had Ajo founder Greenway—left his critical position in 1917 for service in the Army during World War I. Senior partner and business manager Lescher needed a designer quickly, so he sent word to Los Angeles ateliers, popular communal architectural studios, with a job offer. The first candidate worked a few months in Phoenix and returned to Los Angeles, telling his atelier colleague Leslie Mahoney, "it's too damn hot over there for me. That's a good place for you Les," recalled Mahoney during late-career interviews. (Ullmann 1975, Frankeberger 1988:5)

Leslie J. Mahoney (1892-1985) moved in 1906 from Missouri to California with his family and stonemason father to help rebuild San Francisco after the infamous earthquake. Mahoney also lived in Oregon before joining the Los Angeles atelier system, a primary source of architectural education before formal public programs. Ateliers followed the French beaux-arts system of architectural teaching, which allied scattered studios of teachers and students through assignments addressed systematically and, most commonly, with classically styled solutions. Mahoney and others in Los Angeles looked beyond classical styling and greatly admired the well-publicized Spanish-influenced designs for public buildings by Boston architect Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue (1869-1924). Goodhue developed the master plan and produced the main buildings for the 1915 Panama-California International Exhibition in San Diego, a City Beautiful atmosphere through a beaux-arts design approach. His works there are still considered the zenith of Spanish Colonial and Spanish Renaissance Revival architecture in the United States. Mahoney worked for the Los Angeles firm of Allison & Allison designing schools when Lescher issued the Arizona job offer (Frankeberger 1988:5).

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All right [Mahoney told his atelier colleague]. I've got a wife and a child, and I've got to earn some money. So if you go back [to Phoenix], tell that man that I'm available... (Frankeberger 1988:5). When I came here [to Phoenix to work on the Ajo commission], I introduced the Spanish style, because I had worked in Los Angeles and the Spanish [style], due to the [1915] San Diego fair, was developing into that form of architecture, so we started in developing, more or less, a type of architecture influenced by the Spanish (Ullman 1975).

Mahoney's later interviews unfortunately did not reveal the process through which Lescher and Kibbey had received the Ajo commission, but his knowledge of the project, and his initials on the original drawings, confirmed that he served as principal designer of Curley School. Mahoney did imply that this Ajo commission brought "\$50,000" to his firm plus subsequent work in Ajo and other designs for the mining industry. By 1922 the firm of Lescher, Kibbey & Mahoney (Kibbey left that year for California and a subsequent career in Hollywood movie-set design) produced, among many non-industrial commissions elsewhere, the Inspiration Consolidated Copper Company's headquarters at Inspiration, Arizona, and residences for the United Verde Extension Mining Company at Jerome, Arizona (Duell 1922:75). Despite young Mahoney's background and the Ajo commission, his firm otherwise excelled in Classical Revival Style public buildings over the next few years. Lescher and Mahoney then introduced Spanish Colonial styling to Phoenix in 1925 with St. Mary's Elementary School (Frankeberger 1988:7; demolished c. 2002). In 1927, the firm produced drawings for Mission Revival Style Federated Protestant [Methodist] Church at Ajo (Inventory No. 6), built facing the public plaza (Gebhard 1986:39).

Spanish Colonial Revival

Various late 19th and 20th century interpretations of romantic architecture were influenced by indigenous Mediterranean, Spanish, Mexican and Southwestern United States models, and now fall under a variety of styles in architectural history. The encompassing category for these styles, when they display certain details beyond common Mediterranean characteristics of stuccoed walls and red-tile roofs, is Spanish Renaissance Revival. The historic Renaissance artistic movement in Spain of roughly 1500 through 1800 profoundly influenced New World architecture in Spanish colonies. The resulting Spanish Colonial architecture in the Americas likewise encompassed many historic building types and interpretations, from high-style cathedrals to mission churches with simple bell towers, from urban barrios to haciendas with related ranch buildings. Modern interpretations during the last century of these historic models thus are known generally as Spanish Colonial Revival.

Historic Spanish Renaissance buildings, and by extension contemporaneous Spanish work in the colonies, are further classified by a developmental progression of ornament. The building façades are highlighted by elaborate carved stone or plasterwork applied around major openings, upon an otherwise flat masonry elevation, resulting in variations called Classical, Plateresque, Baroque, and Churrigueresque (see Whiffen 1969 for detailed

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explanations).

Another extremely popular subset of Spanish Colonial interpretation throughout the United States is the Mission Revival Style. This mode typically applies many details—symmetrical facades often with twin belfry towers or simply massive tower bases, arcaded porches or portales, courtyards or placitas—combined with a Mediterranean architectural vocabulary of stuccoed walls and barrel-tile gabled roofs or flat-roof systems. The flat-roof variation on Spanish Colonial Revival and Mission Revival can include Pueblo Revival, usually a reflection of the melding of Spanish/ Mediterranean building customs with those of Southwestern Pueblo communities encountered and conquered by the Spanish in present New Mexico, Arizona and Old Mexico.

“The Spanish Colonial Revival style,” summarized Janet Parkhurst in her NRHP nomination of the overall Ajo townsite so dependent on this community theme, “especially when combined with a Mexican or Spanish Colonial style plaza, was deemed very suitable for the Southwest” (Parkhurst 2001:8/22). Ajo was not the first City Beautiful town built on a Spanish Renaissance/Colonial theme, nor was it the only company town devoted to this romantic tangent. Bertram Goodhue materialized the 1915 San Diego exposition as a model town on the Spanish Colonial theme, with plazas, arcades, lavish landscaping, and signature buildings. “The *pièce de résistance* among the individual structures,” according to Marcus Whiffen, “was his California Building [now Museum of Man in Balboa Park], an ecclesiastical-looking edifice whose facades and [offset] tower offer connoisseurs a test of their dexterity in disentangling Churrigueresque motifs from Morelia, Mexico City, Tepotzotlán, and San Luis Potosi” (Whiffen 1969:225). At the same time Goodhue’s office prepared plans for the San Diego exposition, the architect designed a company town in 1914 for the Phelps Dodge Corporation in New Mexico, utilizing the consistent theme of Spanish interpretations. For Tyrone, New Mexico, Parkhurst wrote, Goodhue “designed a formal plan, his conception of an ideal Mexican village, with a 140-by-250-foot open plaza,” and an array of service buildings strikingly similar to the 1914 Kenyon and Maine arrangement at Ajo (Parkhurst 2001:21-22, Schwantes 2000:118–124)

Thus the Ajo project, as a City Beautiful copper company town, brought a newly realized regional “style” together with a young architect immersed in that design vocabulary, all directly influenced by Bertram Goodhue. In effect, Leslie Mahoney had been handed, in Whiffen’s words, the “*pièce de résistance* among the individual structures” for Ajo. His first-draft drawings (see page 8-20) for Curley School show the strong inspiration of Goodhue’s most elaborate works at San Diego. Mahoney’s main entry frontispiece represents the Spanish Renaissance “Ultra-Baroque” or Churrigueresque mode, calling for deep-relief and brightly colored terra cotta and concrete castings—labeled “California stucco” on the surviving linen drawings—depicting twisted or Solomonic columns, stylized vases, inverted tridents, volutes, cherubs and crockets (Gebhard 1986:42; Mahoney 1918). Mahoney would have known these details and production techniques from Goodhue’s California buildings as well as perusal of the master’s own publications on the San Diego exhibition and on Mexican architecture. Mahoney also would have known from his father’s craft as a stonemason how to translate drawings most effectively into three-dimensional “carvings.”

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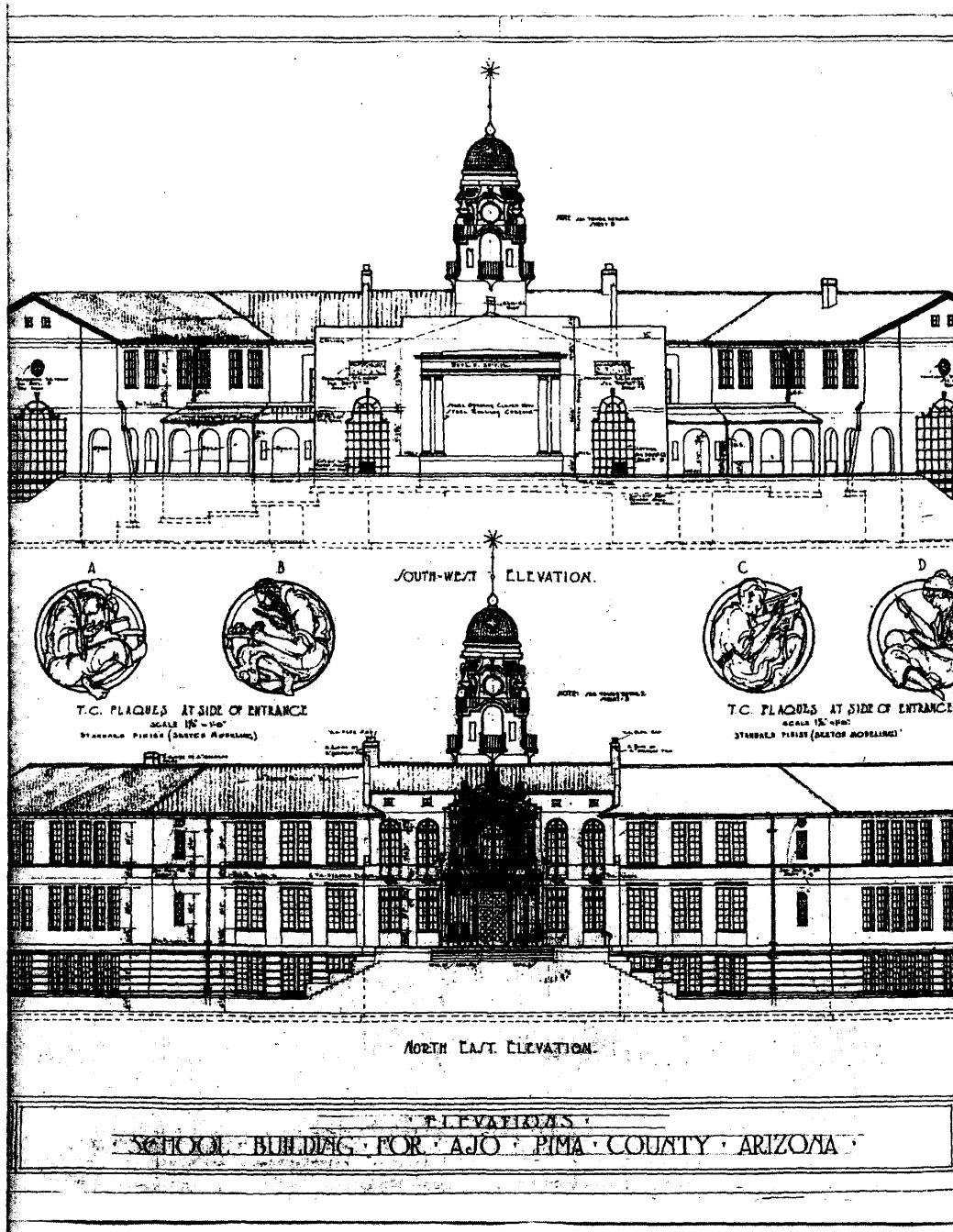
Unfortunately the frontispiece design and other fine details on Curley School were “rejected as too costly,” according to David Gebhard, yet the entry ensemble as-built revealed the architect’s equally impressive skill with less elaboration (Gebhard 1986:42). Interestingly, where other period architects reproducing Spanish Colonial works drifted towards the rustic Arts and Crafts/Craftsman genre in materials and finishes, Mahoney injected intimate but formal details from Beaux-Arts Classicism into Curley School, particularly evident in the main building’s third-floor library. In the end, Mahoney’s work at Curley School, in the architect’s own assessment, was simply “Spanish” and finally, from his later experience as a mid-20th century modernist, “a little bit old fashioned” (Ullmann 1975). Mahoney dismissed the importance of his early work too soon before his death in 1985, for his Curley School design is now a landmark in a preserved City Beautiful townsite of national significance. Further, Phelps Dodge demolished the entire community of Tyrone in 1966 to expand its open-pit copper mine there, leaving Ajo and Curley School all the more significant as rare industrial manifestations of the ideal company town, City Beautiful, and San Diego fair combined. (Parkhurst 2001:21).

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Detail from page of original drawings, showing unexecuted elaborate frontispiece (Mahoney 1918:6).

School Building Design

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The first-phase Curley School of 1919 (herein, part of Building One) resulted from the Spanish Colonial Revival company theme, the abilities of architect Leslie Mahoney in both style and schoolhouse design, and school-building standards set by predecessors of the National Council on Schoolhouse Construction (Moore 2000). Early 20th century national schoolhouse standards are conveyed at Ajo through the familiar characteristics of large classroom windows in continuous banks, grand exterior stairway to central entry, interior public atrium and connecting offices, transom-lit hallways, large-capacity interior circulation stairways, central auditorium, and many other devices including prominent exterior flagpole on the civic axis, integral landscape furniture, and incised-masonry signage.

Ajo school district records and newspaper reports reveal little administrative information on subsequent additions to Curley School. But a continuous unifying theme and occasional mention of Lescher and Mahoney through 1951 indicate that the original firm likely retained favor with trustees and mine officials throughout the campus evolution. The building's 1919 dedication plaque indicates that Edwards and Wildley served as general contractors and that D.S. Horrall installed the plumbing and heating system (Mahoney 1918). The first additions of 1926–1928 (also part of Building One) primarily extended the classroom wings, probably first at the south wing and then at the north wing. The architects simply repeated exterior and interior features of the 1919 building through these additions, differing only in number of rooms—on each of the main floors one roughly 30'x23' classroom and associated corridor in the north wing, and two similar classrooms and corridor in the south wing—and use of metal-sash windows on the north wing addition.

Also in the 1920s improvements, a “Manual Training building” appeared west of the main building and across the Juanita Street alignment, anticipating major expansion of the campus. The lofty Manual Training building featured simple but sympathetic exterior details of stucco under a gabled roof (Mahoney 1926).

After Ajo's New Cornelia company acquisition by Phelps Dodge Corporation in 1931, the town's new management brought improvements to the operation and community, welcome security for many residents during the worsening Great Depression. In August 1936 Phelps Dodge signed contracts with El Paso Natural Gas Company to extend its pipeline from Casa Grande to Ajo, a \$1 million investment by the gas supplier that saved Phelps Dodge “several hundred thousand dollars a year in fuel costs,” according to the pipeline company's history (Rickard 1998:11; Mangan 1977:84). Curley School benefited directly from this new fuel source, piped to the company's domestic properties as well as its industrial facilities, through an apparent change from original coal or fuel-oil furnaces in the 1919 building's ground floor.

This technical upgrade, plus a likely or anticipated increase in company employment and school enrollment, led to the next major phase of Curley School expansion beginning in 1937. New facilities west of the main building presented an ensemble of “Intermediate” grade classrooms (Building Two) plus the Boiler Room and attached Gymnasium. Anecdotal information describes construction of this phase that spanned from 1937 through 1940, with the Gymnasium completed last (Gonzales 2004). The Intermediate classrooms consisted of four connected

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one-story tangents: three bordering the curved Juanita Street alignment and one turning northeast at Vananda Avenue, all to form an L partly enclosing a courtyard (cortile or placita) with the main building. The architect's Spanish Colonial Revival styling extended here to a Rancho or hacienda appearance, with the classroom doors and courtyard-side windows facing into the cortile under a continuous portál or colonnade supported by a series of chamfered wood posts, brackets and beams. The result resembled the portáles of General Greenway's nearby hacienda (Inventory No. 19) designed by California's G.W. Smith in 1924 (Arizona Daily Star 1939).

The Gymnasium presented yet another variation on the Spanish Colonial Revival, playing upon its lofty open-span interior and large elevation facing north to Esperanza Avenue to achieve a subtle Mission Revival effect. Here (presumably) Mahoney designed a church-like façade sporting a relief-detailed arched entry within a small pavilion under barrel tiles. This entry surround floats within a textured stucco wall otherwise broken only by a wrought-metal grill and solar window directly above the entry. The attached Boiler Room, housing the new natural-gas-fired heating plant for the growing complex, roared inside a utilitarian wing under a large rectangular smokestack, but appears when viewed from the northeast as a transept extension of the "church" composition (Arizona Daily Star 1939).

The wartime and post-war success in the 1940s of Phelps Dodge at Ajo led in 1948-1950 to construction of an \$8 million copper smelter for the New Cornelia Branch operations. Following a now-familiar pattern, this translated to more employment, more than 40 new company houses, and growth in the school system for the industrial town (Parkhurst 2001:33,48). In March 1949 Ajo voters approved a \$170,000 school bonds issue, indicating a distinct move away from direct facility financing by the company. Soon Lescher and Mahoney designed the next and last Curley School building phase, to accommodate 280 additional students, accomplished in stages through 1951 (Ajo Copper News 1949). The new facilities clustered west of the Juanita Street alignment toward the Orilla Street alignment. But for the first time the campus extension did not occupy the entire arced landscape between Vananda and Esperanza Avenues, leaving residential lots and houses on the north and south flanks.

For the planned Primary classrooms (Building Three) cluster, Lescher and Mahoney offered a traditional one-story schoolhouse composition with 12 connected rooms under one barrel-tile gabled roof system that enveloped a second independent cortile. Besides a continuous post-and-beam portál unifying and shading circulation around this inner court, stylistic details relied primarily upon the roof massing and multiple banks each of five large steel-sash windows. The roof slopes are periodically broken by level platforms, clad with copper sheets, to support air-handling fans and filters. The grandest architectural statement appeared at the west center of the grouping as a formal pavilion resurrecting the extended civic axis through an arched entryway under a copper-domed belfry. This very formal effect of an open-archway entry, despite the undeniable Mediterranean details, is more Beaux-Arts Classical than Spanish Colonial. The gesture seemingly exposed this architectural firm's somewhat awkward confusion of historicism as it attempted in the post-World War II years to embrace Modernism in general. "As can be seen in the architect's drawing," the Ajo Copper News announced without naming the architect in this article, "the new [Primary classroom] building will have a tower and entrance in keeping with the main entrance of the large [1919] building" (Ajo Copper News 1949).

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“The cafeteria,” this article continued, “located next to the Gymnasium, will match that [gym] building.” “Matching” the Mission Revival detail of the 1940 Gymnasium in post-war budgets and emerging Modernism actually meant a rather plain symmetrical façade on Esperanza Avenue, with a round-arched central entry under a segmental-arch parapet of smaller scale than the Gymnasium’s parapet. The Cafeteria interior seated 150 and featured the latest technology in food preparation and utensil cleaning. Along with the Cafeteria in 1949, the school district constructed eight of the planned Primary classrooms (extending Building Three), doubled the Manual Training building (which then or later apparently housed Primary class administration), and carried out extensive interior upgrades to older Curley School buildings. Installation in 1949 of a new Gymnasium roof repaired storm damage from that summer (Ajo Copper News 1949). In the summer of 1951 the final four Primary classrooms (the south and east wings of Building Three) completed the west cortile, and the entire neatly planned Curley School complex (Ajo Copper News 1951).

Janet Parkhurst’s Ajo Townsite NRHP nomination notes that, in general for a model company town, “clustering such [institutional] buildings was efficient” (Parkhurst 2001:8/19). Mahoney more specifically explained the long-evolving Curley School campus while describing his firm’s pre- and post-World War II school-design business based on Arizona’s population booms. Beyond the details of a particular architectural style, their typical school “architecture wasn’t particularly of any stylistic trend. It was more of a practical form of architecture. Naturally, the administrators of the school districts wanted lots of classrooms, besides the other facilities that go along with the schools, [such] as cafeterias, lunch rooms, gymnasiums, shops and so forth...” (Ullmann 1975).

On a final note in the urban myth category, enterprising Curley School students—circa 8th grade after 1951—passed a secret from one class to the next, revealing that the architect’s real intention for the building plans and relationships could be seen in a site plan or aerial photo. Building One formed an **A**, Building Two a **J**, and Building Three an **O**; reading from east to west, Mahoney had spelled **AJO** (Gonzales 2004).

Preservation Efforts

Phelps Dodge through its New Cornelia Branch transferred most Curley School buildings and property (without mineral rights) to (Pima County) School District No. 15 in 1945, and conveyed a platted residential lot for the new cafeteria in 1948 (Pima County Records). Ajo continued to grow slightly in population and greatly in community services through the 1950s, and the school system trustees built a new high school complex at 111 North Well Road/State Highway 85 in 1956, east of the old campus and the civic plaza. The Curley School main building (Building One) then became the middle school facility with few apparent changes through the duration of its new assignment (*Treasure Chest* 1956).

After 66 years of fluctuating but continual copper production from the New Cornelia Branch deposits at Ajo, the Phelps Dodge Corporation in 1982 closed the mine, concentrator, and smelter. Some facilities resumed

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operation between 1983 and 1985, but a crippling workers strike limited production and soured the once-popular paternalistic relationship of company to employees. The town's population plummeted from some 6,000 to half that number within four years, as Phelps Dodge dropped Ajo employment from 1,146 in 1980 down to a caretaker unit in 1986 of 29 employees (Gebhard 1986:33, Parkhurst 2001:34-35). The company retained ownership of some 600 workers' homes and public facilities until 1984 when it began to sell its surplus properties throughout Ajo. (Parkhurst 2001:35, Gonzales 2004).

The Ajo Unified School District eventually built more new classroom facilities on Well Road, shifting all school functions to newer buildings. The district built a new pre-school facility in 1972 immediately west of the Curley School cafeteria on a Phelps Dodge-supplied lot facing Esperanza Avenue, and later placed two temporary classroom buildings southwest of Building Two along Vananda Avenue. The last eighth-grade classes occupied Curley School in the 1991-1992 school year, and school district trustees sold Buildings One and Two and the Gymnasium/Boiler Room of the campus in 1996 to SSI Properties, Inc., of California. SSI in turn sold these facilities in 1997 to investors of the American Loan Company of Washington state (Ajo Copper News 1992; Pima County Records). These investors attempted to adapt the 1937 Intermediate classrooms (Building Two) to apartments, resulting in a number of alterations including cladding the shaded portál's posts and beams with an arcaded wall (removed in 2006), and infilling the large classrooms windows on the west and south elevations (Gonzales 2004).

The International Sonoran Desert Alliance (ISDA) moved its offices into the administrative suite of Building One in 1997 and thereafter developed the current rehabilitation and adaptive-use project. Artspace Projects, Inc., of Minneapolis in 2003 became ISDA's first partner for redevelopment of the Curley School campus, but eventually withdrew from the investment pool. "The vision for this 114,000 square-foot complex," Artspace described in the retained concept, "includes affordable live/work space for artists and their families, community space to be shared by the artists and the residents of Ajo, commercial and office space for arts-related businesses, and space for nonprofit organizations, including project partner International Sonoran Desert Alliance" (Artspace 2004). Pima County Cultural Resources Manager Linda Mayro strongly supported the Curley School transformation through facilitation of the Ajo cultural resources survey, the 2001 NRHP nomination, grant funding to plan adaptive uses for the school buildings, and a successful bond item to supplement development funding and purchase a protective façade easement on Curley School buildings.

Conclusion

Since the 2001 Ajo Townsite Historic District did not classify all historic-age Curley School buildings as Contributing resources within the district, additional research and designation procedures joined the overall project for Curley School rehabilitation. Arizona Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer William Collins (2003) prescribed a separate nomination for Curley School, rather than an amendment to the historic district registration form, to encompass the entire campus planned and built between 1918 and 1951.

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Therefore, the 1918 (year of design)–1951 (completion of complex) Curley School is nominated as a multi-component “building” to the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance (since no study is available of equivalent properties in the state or nation). The complex is eligible under Criterion A in the area of Education—for its role as the historic flagship of Ajo schools and for its highly symbolic role in the owning copper company’s promotion of the welfare of its employees and their children. The complex is also eligible under Criterion C in the areas of Architecture and Community Planning & Development—for its outstanding representations of the Spanish Colonial Revival Style and archetypical presentation of American school-building design, and for its prominent contribution to Ajo’s well-preserved fulfillment of the early 20th century’s City Beautiful Movement. Curley School’s high quality of historic integrity in relation to its period of significance, and its prominent place in the landscape and history of Ajo, make it worthy of preservation for interpretive values and as a model subject of adaptive-use rehabilitation.

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SECTION 9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Notes on Sources: The Ajo Historical Society Museum (160 Mission St. P.O. Box 778, Ajo 85321) housed in the former St. Catherine's Indian Mission church of Ajo's original Indian Townsite subdivision contains much valuable information on Curley School and associated personalities. During research for this NRHP nomination in late 2003 and early 2004, volunteer museum hosts Gayle and Don Weyers diligently searched for and found many disparate references to Curley School buildings, and revealed that the museum's own copper-clad double doors into the former church nave are the original main entry doors from Curley School, probably replaced in the circa 1950 building upgrades. Particularly rich sources in the museum are high-quality historic photographs and topical scrapbooks, especially "Ajo Schools Vol. 2," assembled by regional historian Charles J. Gaetjens for his published series on Ajo heritage. A number of bound volumes of the Ajo Copper News at the museum allowed direct review of newspaper coverage of Curley School activities from its beginning in 1918. The International Sonoran Desert Alliance's then-Curley School Project Director Terry Gonzales and wife Claire Bistline helped tremendously with the search of museum holdings. Gonzales' successor Jim Wilcox provided additional on-site research for text revisions and building details throughout the project. Ajo files from the collection of Phoenix historian John Jacquemart, which he assembled in the 1980s in anticipation of an NRHP nomination for the school, provided an invaluable shortcut to many obscure clippings and article copies, as well as the Ullmann and Frankeberger oral-history interviews of Leslie Mahoney. Jacquemart also catalogued the Lescher and Mahoney architectural drawings collection when originally donated by Mahoney's family to the Arizona Historical Society, Tempe. Jacquemart ensured the availability of copies of Curley School drawings for both the current NRHP nomination and rehabilitation plans, developed initially by Thompson Pollari Studio of Phoenix, then The Architecture Company of Tucson, for the 2006+ ISDA/Curley School Housing Partners project.

Ajo Copper News

- 1918 "New Cornelia To Build Ajo School-house for 600 Pupils." 8 March 1918.
- 1939 Artist's conception illustration. 29 December 1939.
- 1949 "New School Program Underway Here; 8 Classrooms, Cafeteria to Open in Fall." n.d. Clipping at Ajo Historical Society Museum supplemented with complete Ajo Copper News issues containing news briefs on Curley School, 7 April 1949, 28 July 1949 and 25 August 1949.
- 1951 "School Extension To Be Constructed At Cost of \$66,400." 10 May 1951.
- 1954 "Ajo High School." 21 October 1954. Summary of school expansions for Centennial Edition commemorating Ajo's original founding in 1854.
- 1992 Photograph and caption. 27 May 1992, p. 15.

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SECTION 10, VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Legal Description: former owner *Scoleri, et al.*:
Ajo Townsite Block 13 and Block 20
Ajo Townsite El Tiro Street alignment

former owner *Ajo Unified School District*:
Ajo Townsite Block 27, Lots 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10
Ajo Townsite Block 28, Lots 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 10
Ajo Townsite Juanita Street alignment
Ajo Townsite Lomita Avenue alignment between Juanita and Orilla Streets

Beginning at the intersection of Lomita Avenue, Esperanza Avenue and Vananda Avenue: west northwest along the south sidewalk of Esperanza Avenue to the west side of Block 28 Lot 10, thence south southwest to the Block 28 alley, thence south across the alley to the north intersection of Block 28 Lots 1 and 2, thence west along the north side of Lots 2, 3, 4, and 5, thence south southeast in an arc along the east side of Orilla Street to the southwest corner of Block 27 Lot 6, thence northeast along the southeast sides of Lots 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10, and continuing the line to the east side of Juanita Street alignment, thence southeast to the north sidewalk of Vananda Avenue, thence northeast along the north sidewalk of Vananda Avenue to the point of beginning.

SECTION 10, BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

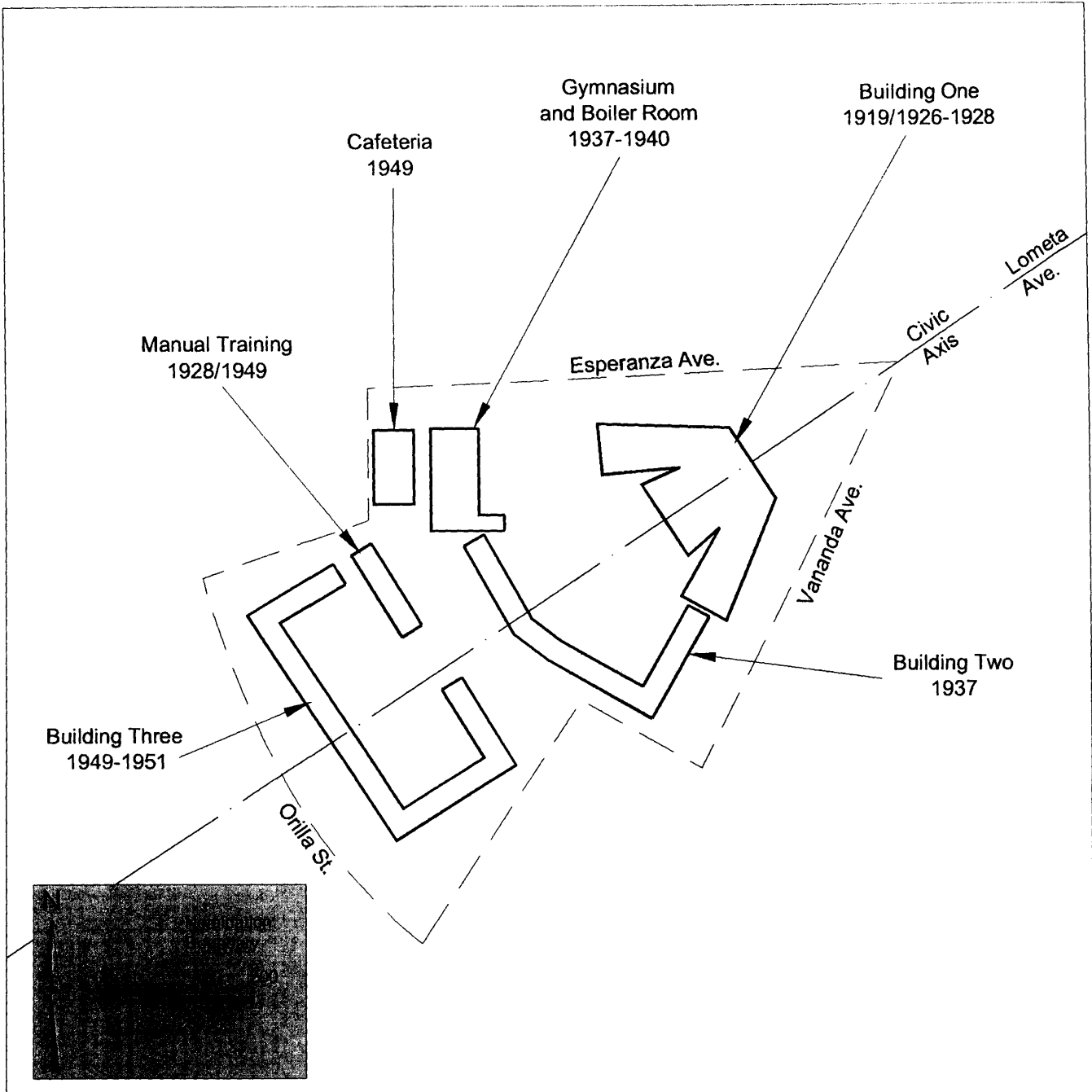
The boundary presented in the nomination for Curley School is the historic boundary of school property with classroom, administrative and service buildings through the end of the period of significance, 1951 (excluding practice fields west across the Orilla Street alignment).

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Ajo Townsite Historic District Map (Parkhurst 2001), Contributing and Noncontributing resources:

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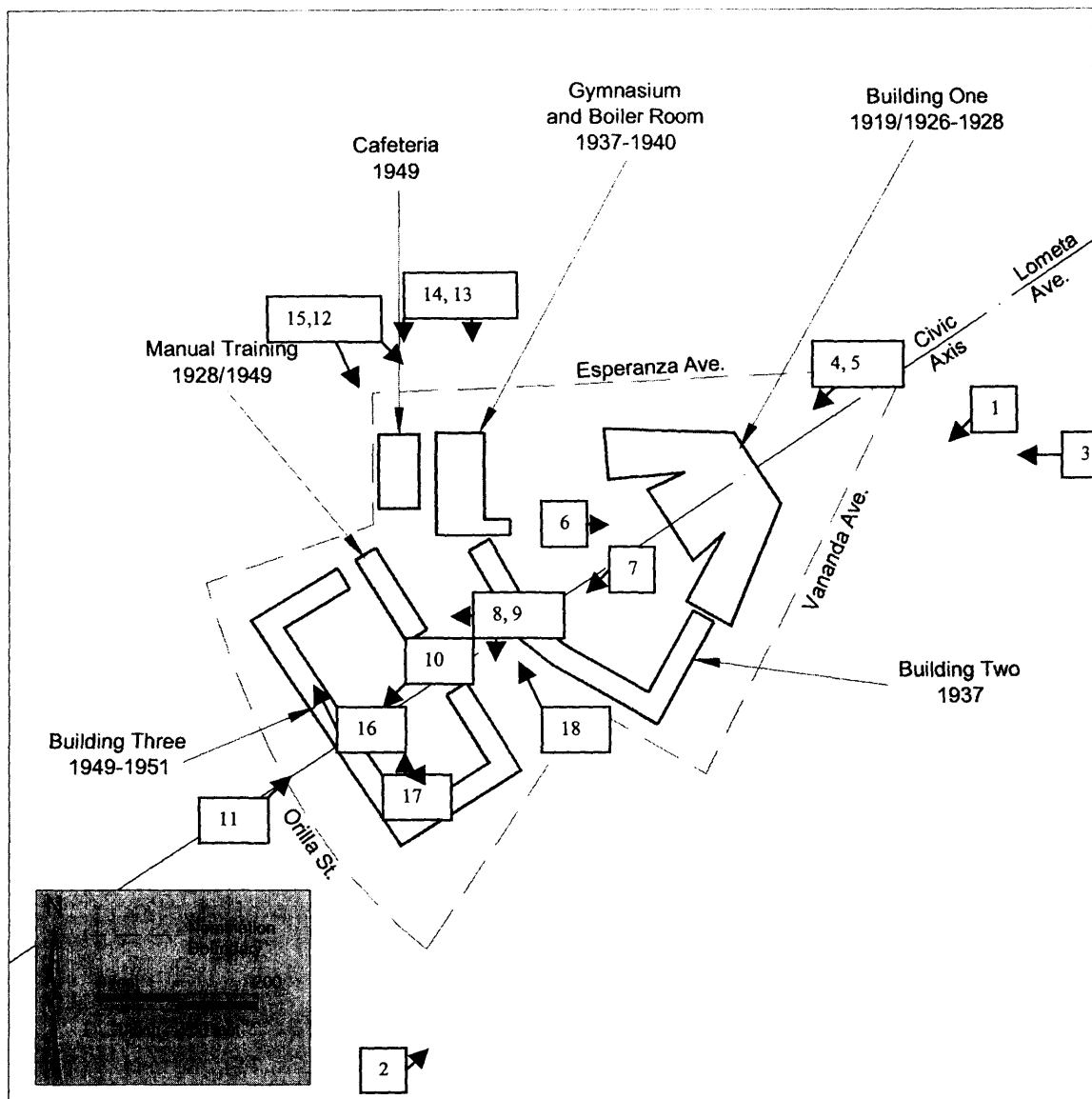
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PHOTOGRAPH KEY



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Curley School
Pima County, Arizona

PHOTOGRAPH LOG

Name of Property: Curley School
County and State: Pima County, Arizona

Photographs 1 through 4

Photographer: Historic Photos 1-4: unknown, Courtesy Ajo Historical Society Museum
Date of Photographs: historic archival, see additional caption information
Digital-scan images: SWCA Environmental Consultants, Phoenix

Description: Curley School, circa 1919, facing west northwest
Photograph Number: 1

Description: Ajo Townsite, Curley School at center, circa 1929, facing east northeast
Photograph Number: 2

Description: Ajo Townsite, Curley School at upper left, circa 1940, facing northwest
Photograph Number: 3

Description: Curley School, circa 1950 from high school yearbook, facing west, "sputnik" lightning rod on dome
Photograph Number: 4

Photographs 5 through 14

Photographer: Current-Condition Exterior Photos 5-14: James W. Steely
Date of Photographs: 19 February 2004
Negatives on File: SWCA Environmental Consultants, Phoenix

Description: Curley School Building One, facing west
Photograph Number: 5

Description: Curley School Building One, facing east, before 2006 construction
Photograph Number: 6 a (Panorama)

Description: Curley School Building One, facing east southeast, before 2006 construction
Photograph Number: 6 b (Panorama)

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Curley School
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Description: Curley School Building Two, facing southwest, before 2006 rehabilitation
Photograph Number: 7 a (Panorama)

Description: Curley School Building Two, facing west southwest, before 2006 rehabilitation
Photograph Number: 7 b (Panorama)

Description: Curley School Building Two, Boiler Room and Gymnasium, facing west
Photograph Number: 7 c (Panorama)

Description: Curley School, Manual Training Building, facing northwest
Photograph Number: 8

Description: Curley School Building Three, facing west southwest
Photograph Number: 9

Description: Curley School Building Three, facing southwest toward "A" Mountain
Photograph Number: 10

Description: Curley School Building Three, facing north northeast
Photograph Number: 11

Description: Curley School from Esperanza Avenue, facing east southeast
Photograph Number: 12

Description: Curley School Gymnasium, facing south
Photograph Number: 13

Description: Curley School Cafeteria, facing south
Photograph Number: 14

Photographs 15 through 18

Photographer: Current-Condition Exterior Photos 15-18, James W. Steely
Date of Photographs: 27 November 2006
Negatives on File: SWCA Environmental Consultants, Phoenix

Description: Curley School Cafeteria, facing southwest
Photograph Number: 15

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Curley School
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Description: Curley School Building Three porch, facing northeast
Photograph Number: 16

Description: Curley School Building Three and Manual Training Building, facing north
Photograph Number: 17

Description: Curley School Building Two, facing northeast, new windows during 2006 rehabilitation
Photograph Number: 18