

SIGNIFICANCE:

The West Point Grade School, in the countryside south of Wendell, is of exceptional architectural significance as a final expression in the Thematic Group of the classical impulse which persisted in the work of the firm throughout its history. It is also the only example in the group of country schoolhouse architecture, although the firm designed a number of such buildings in addition to its larger commissions for Boise and other Idaho towns. And it is the sole, and therefore exceptionally important, institutional and architectural focus of this somewhat out-of-the-way farm community immediately north of the Snake River in south-central Idaho. That this rather remote agricultural landscape should contain a diminutive art deco style school designed by the firm which had designed the State Capitol, and which was just then completing over a quarter of a million dollars' worth of buildings for Boise Junior College, is not only a fact worthy of local pride but one which provides a balanced view of the work of an architectural firm in a regional setting.

The building, which stands at a crossroads in the open fields of the Snake River Plain some miles from any town, is the more deserving of attention because it was designed with some elegance, if with inexpensive materials, and in a dignified classical manner, if at tiny scale. It survives in pristine condition. It represents a series of country schoolhouse commissions undertaken by the firm over the years. In all, Tourtellotte and Company and Tourtellotte and Hummel undertook some fifty public-school commissions, excluding gymnasiums, heating plants, and the like. Fewer than a dozen of these were in Boise. A few more were schools in very nearby communities which are now part of Boise; most of the rest were in other small Idaho towns--were added to an existing built environment, however small. But a few were schools that stood in the countryside: at Five Mile Road west of Boise, on the Carey irrigation tract and in Elmore County in south-central Idaho, at Huston corners in the Caldwell vicinity, in the Big Bend area near the Oregon border, near Letha in Gem County, and here at West Point in the Wendell vicinity.

Only the last of these schools has been located and is the closest comparison that can be made in the group, but that building is at a much larger scale. Roswell school (site 106) also is not solely responsible for providing a physical center to its community, as is the West Point School, since the former shares its crossroads with a store and some houses. The value of the West Point School in this regard is confirmed by the fact that it has not been demolished or abandoned as have most country schools in the wake of consolidation, but has been given a new function as a Grange Hall.

This building cost approximately \$8,400 in 1941. Its inexpensiveness as well as its scale are final assertions in the Thematic Group of the fact that architectural firms do not deal in major monuments alone. R. C. Fait was the general contractor.

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES:

Boise, Idaho. Hummel Jones Miller Hunsucker P.A. File 132C. Certificate and collection book reference 1941-1942. Tracings signed Tourtellotte and Hummel.