

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM**

**1. Name of Property**

historic name: Evaro School

other name/site number: Evaro Schoolhouse and Community Center/24MO0316

**2. Location**

street & number: 6688 Grooms Road

not for publication: n/a

city/town: Evaro

vicinity: n/a

state: Montana code: MT county: Missoula code: 063 zip code: 59808

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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   nationally X statewide X locally. (   See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

 Signature of certifying official>Title

Date

Montana State Historic Preservation Office  
State or Federal agency or bureau

In my opinion, the property   meets   does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting or other official

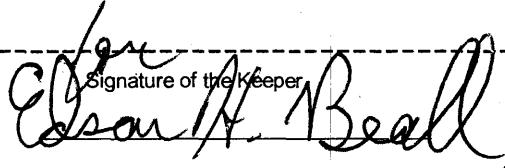
Date

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  
        see continuation sheet  
 removed from the National Register  
      see continuation sheet  
 other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

 Signature of the keeper

Date of Action

5/1/03

Evaro School  
Name of Property

Missoula County, MT  
County and State

## 5. Classification

Ownership of Property: Private

Number of Resources within Property  
Contributing Noncontributing

Category of Property: Building

1	0 building(s)
0	0 sites
0	0 structures
0	0 objects
1	0 TOTAL

Number of contributing resources previously  
listed in the National Register: 0

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

## 6. Function or Use

Historic Functions: EDUCATION/school  
SOCIAL/meeting hall

Current Functions: SOCIAL/meeting hall

## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification:

Late 19<sup>th</sup> and Early 20<sup>th</sup> century American Movements/Craftsman

### Materials:

foundation:	CONCRETE
walls:	Wood/clapboard
roof:	WOOD/shake; ASPHALT/shingle
other:	CONCRETE

### Narrative Description

The Evaro School is located at 6688 Grooms Road, immediately west of Highway 93 in Evaro, Montana. The building is located on a grassy lot at the top of Evaro Hill. Dense coniferous forest covers the mountains that rise steeply to the west, and the southern end of the Mission Range is visible across the narrow valley to the east. The one-story, frame school has a side-gable roof and historic, shed roof additions on the north and south elevations. Cedar shingles cover the roof, and the rafter ends are exposed. A belfry, now empty, straddles the ridgeline at the east end of the building. The exterior walls are clad with narrow horizontal clapboard siding. Rough textured stucco covers the concrete foundation walls, except on the west side of the south elevation and the north elevation, where the stucco veneer has been covered with six-inch clapboards. Fenestration includes nine-over-nine, six-over-six, and one-over-one double-hung, wood frame windows.

The facade of the building (south elevation) contains six, large nine-over-nine double-hung windows in a ribbon pattern. Originally, a shed overhang extended from the east side main slope of the gable roof to provide shelter over the entrance. Within the historic period, the entry was enclosed. Within the enclosure, concrete steps lead to a vintage twelve-light wood door with a four-light transom. The lower six lights have been infilled with wood. The original wood columns that flanked the doorway are still visible within the structure. The enclosure, clad with lapped siding, features a centered, wood-trimmed entrance to the south. An original, shallow, hipped overhang also extends from the main roof slope at the extreme east end of the façade. The hip roof covers a small protrusion that was part of the original entrance and contains a single, one-over-one, double-hung, wood-framed window.

The east elevation contains four bays. The southernmost bay is defined by the entrance enclosure attached to the façade. A smaller, slightly recessed bay immediately to the north is part of the original entrance. Neither bay contains fenestration. The central bay, defined by the gable end of the main roof, contains a pair of six-over-six light, double-hung, wood-frame windows centered at the main level, and a small louvered vent high in the gable end. The northernmost bay, part of the shed-roofed teacherage addition, contains a pair of centered, one-over-one light wood-frame, double hung windows.

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The north elevation of the school contains two historic additions. The larger, east addition is the shed-roofed teacherage, which was constructed sometime between 1926 and 1943. This addition contains a single, one-over-one light double-hung window, and is clad in the same narrow clapboard as the rest of the building. A smaller shed is attached to the north elevation of the school at the west end. The shed is accessed by a vertical plank door on its north side, and sided with horizontal planks. Both additions feature asphalt shingle roofing.

The west elevation of the teacherage features a concrete ramp leading to a one-light, three panel pedestrian door on the south side. A wooden, post and rail railing is located on either side of the ramp. The ramp ends at wood plank stoop. Fenestration on the west elevation of the main building is limited to a small, six-light, fixed window on the north side of the entrance enclosure.

The interior of the building has undergone some modification since it was used as a school. The interior wall that separated a cloakroom from the main room has been removed. The teacherage was converted to a kitchen. A modern heating system was installed during the 1980s. Still, many architectural features such as the original wood-framed chalkboards, hardwood floors, multi-paneled interior doors with vintage hardware, and built-in cabinets, remain intact.

### Integrity

The Evaro School retains a high degree of integrity. Additions to the footprint of the original building were constructed during the historic period. The building stands at its original location at the top of Evaro Hill, and its setting, feeling, and association remain unchanged. The design, workmanship, and materials are evocative of the period of significance.

## **8. Statement of Significance**

Applicable National Register Criteria: A, C  
Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): N/A  
Significant Person(s): N/A  
Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Areas of Significance: EDUCATION  
SOCIAL HISTORY  
ARCHITECTURE  
Period(s) of Significance: 1920-1953  
Significant Dates: 1920, 1944  
Architect/Builder: Unknown

### **Narrative Statement of Significance**

The Evaro School has represented the center of the community in this small western Montana town for eight decades. The school is historically significant at the local level, representing the growing interest and advances in public education that occurred during the beginning of the 20th century. In addition, Evaro School is significant for the role it played as the center of political and social activity in the community of Evaro, Montana, for these associations the school gains National Register significance according to Criterion A.

The Evaro School is equally significant at the local and statewide level for its architectural values. It is a well-preserved example of early 20th century school design and eclectic Craftsman style. The building is representative of a modified “Plan C1” design described and recommended by W. R. Plew for the Montana State Departments of Health and Public Instruction. For these associations, the Evaro School is eligible for the listing in the National Register of Historic Places according to Criterion C.

### **Historic Context**

There are few buildings associated with the settlement of the American west more poignant than the one-room schoolhouse. Between 1870 and 1950, the establishment of a community schoolhouse spoke to the permanence of settlement, the importance placed in securing the future of the next generation, and the homogenization of multiple cultures. Indeed, the “process of Americanization took place in country schools.”<sup>1</sup> The history of country schools is nearly as old as non-Indian settlement of the New World, dating to 1647 colonial New England, when the first statute providing for the establishment of a school system was enacted in America. These formal institutions were called “petty schools” and provided the model for public grammar schools. Typical of New England culture at that time, the emphasis in these early schools was reading, religion, and law. By and large, however, colonial schooling took the form of “subscription schools,” which were funded by tuitions and home schooling. Formal education was reserved, for the most part, for children from white upper or middle class families.<sup>2</sup>

Thomas Jefferson was one of the most vocal advocates for public education in the United States, and understood that “the people are the safest depositories of government” and thought “free education imperative for a strong democracy.”<sup>3</sup> His strong advocacy on the topic lead to the establishment of the “school section” within each township surveyed in the Northwest Territories, and eventually the American West. Though battles over funding, credentials, and control of public education’s future continued through the first half of the nineteenth century, by 1860, it was clear that the country school was vital to the economic and social fabric of the young country.<sup>4</sup>

In the wake of the Civil War, the increase in immigration and the settlement of Indian territories, the American population looked toward public schools to educate children not only in the basics of arithmetic and reading, but also in identification and recognition of American culture. Curriculums began to be standardized, and a new emphasis was placed on the English language and history of the United States. For many immigrant and Native American students, the result was disassociation from their own heritage in favor of a homogenous Americanized culture. Certainly this was the intent of many mission and Indian boarding schools established throughout the country at the end of the nineteenth century. The goal for many of these institutions was to indoctrinate students into “civilized” American society.

<sup>1</sup> Andrew Gulliford, “Country School Legacy,” *Utah Preservation/Restoration*, vol. II, 1981, p. 44.

<sup>2</sup> Andrew Gulliford, *America’s Country Schools* (Washington, D.C.: The Preservation Press, 1984), pp. 36-38.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 38.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 38-40.

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Since its establishment in the mid-nineteenth century, the agents at the Flathead Indian Reservation in Western Montana placed a high priority on school programs for the Kootenai, Salish, and Pend'Orielle tribal members living there. At the center of the education program on the reservation was the St. Ignatius Mission. Established in 1854 by Jesuit missionaries it was the home of the first Jesuit theologate and industrial arts school in the Northwest, the first Catholic Sisters and Catholic school in Montana, and the first hospital, sawmill, flour mill, printing press, carpenter shop and blacksmith shop in the Mission Valley.<sup>5</sup>

At the mission school, "traditional religious and cultural practices were strongly discouraged while instruction in the Christian doctrines took place utilizing pictures, statues, hymns, prayers and storytelling."<sup>6</sup> As was common on reservations, the mission school received federal support. In 1892, a report to the Supervisors of Education stated:

The only school upon this reservation is the Catholic contract school, St. Ignatius Mission. This is probably the best reservation boarding school in the service...The kindergarten is a great success. The children are healthy and happy. They learn English quickly and in some cases have forgotten their native tongue...The buildings are capacious, comfortable, and pleasant.<sup>7</sup>

Despite this endorsement, federal policy regarding subsidizing religious institutions was being challenged. In 1891, national debates regarding the separation of church and state culminated in a shift in policy voiced by the Commissioner of Indian Affairs:

The policy of aiding church schools is one that has grown up as a matter of administration, having only a semblance of legislative authority. But the rapid development of the public-school system has brought the Government schools into a position where it is entirely feasible for them at an early day to assume the whole charge of Indian education...it is...utterly repugnant to our American institutions and to our American history to take from public monies funds for the support of sectarian institutions.<sup>8</sup>

The Commissioner's first action was to cut off any new monies appropriated to the mission schools. At the same time, contracts to ecclesiastical schools were reduced repeatedly over the next few years. In 1895, the Appropriations Bill formally stated: "It is hereby declared to be settled policy of the Government to hereafter make no appropriation whatever to education in any sectarian school."<sup>9</sup>

On the Flathead Reservation, the impact of these decisions was sorely felt. The mission school reduced the number of students in their care, at the same time that the Indian population within the reservation boundary was rising. Chief Charlo's Band of Bitterroot Salish were forcibly removed to the reservation in 1891, compounding the need for more school space. Chief Charlo's traditional band opposed the policy of sending their children away to boarding school, and the agent requested the mission to set up a satellite school at the agency, closer to the band's new home at the southern end of the reservation. This agency school was run by the

<sup>5</sup> Today, there remains only the Mission church, built in 1891 and now a National Historic Site, and two small cabins, the original homes of the Jesuit Fathers and the Providence Sisters. Though the physical remains may be few, there is a lasting heritage which has continued and will continue through the years. St Ignatius Mission was placed in the National Register of Historic Places on June 19, 1973, NR reference number: 73001053, on file at the Montana State Historic Preservation Office, Helena, MT.

<sup>6</sup> Carlyn Marr, "Assimilation Through Education: Indian Boarding Schools in the Pacific Northwest," *Modern American Poetry: An Online Journal and Multimedia Companion to Anthology of Modern American Poetry* edited by Cary Nelson, (Oxford University Press, 2000), [http://www.english.uiuc.edu/maps/poets/a\\_f/erdrich/boarding/marr.htm](http://www.english.uiuc.edu/maps/poets/a_f/erdrich/boarding/marr.htm).

<sup>7</sup> O.H. Parker, "Reports to the Supervisors of Education," Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Washington, D.C., 1892, p. 626.

<sup>8</sup> Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1891, pp.68-69. For more information regarding the Church-State conflict see Frederic Mitchell, "Church-State Conflict: A Little-Known Part of Continuing Church-State Conflict Found in Early Indian Education," *Journal of American Indian Education*, vol.2, no. 3, (October 1962).

<sup>9</sup> 29 Stat 345.

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mission, but its facilities were much more modest. Agent Joseph T. Carter relayed the importance of the mission school to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1897, noting: "the completeness and good work of this industrial school is not perhaps appreciated by the Department, but certainly is by the agent and the Indians themselves." Three years later, Agent W.H. Smead reported: "The appropriation for maintaining the contract school at the St. Ignatius Mission having been discontinued leaves the reservation entirely without school facilities, with the exception of a small day school at the agency and a limited number of children which the Jesuit fathers still continue to provide care for. Considering the large number of children here of school age, the necessity for immediate provision by the Government is apparent, and I sincerely trust that action will soon be taken to this end." By 1904, Agent Samuel Bellew complained "the buildings [at the agency school] are rented from the Catholic fathers. They are entirely too small, inconvenient, out of repair and poorly located." Seeking an alternative to education programs offered by the agency, a number of Indian families choose to transfer their children to non-reservation schools.<sup>10</sup> At the southern tip of the Flathead Reservation, the community of Evaro organized a public school district in 1902 that catered to both Indian and non-Indian students. Though the practice of educating Indian and non-Indian children together was not widespread, it was appropriate to a community that straddled the reservation boundary line.

### Evaro Community History

The community of Evaro, Montana is located along Montana Highway 93, a travel road extending north from the Five Valleys that come together at the present-day city of Missoula. Evaro is situated at the top of Evaro Hill, where the highway rises from the valley floor, and unfolds into the Mission Valley. This road was long a native travel route between the valleys, used by the Salish who traditionally were centered in the Bitterroot Valley, the Pend d'Oreille and Kootenai who lived in the upper Flathead Valley, the Blackfeet, and others traversing the area. Historically the area has had a number of names, including Camas Prairie. W.A. Ferris recorded passing through "a narrow defile that led us out into a very small plain on the mountain, or rather in it, called Little Camass Prairie." There they spent the night on Nov 29, 1833, and continued the next day into "a fine valley called Camass Prairie, watered by a beautiful, well timbered stream flowing northward."<sup>11</sup> A second route from the Missoula Valley up to Evaro traced the course of Finley Creek, and was used by the Salish as an alternative path to the prairies where they dug camas and collected berries during the summer months.

During the 1840s, Hudson's Bay Company traders commonly traveled through the area. During that era, a fur brigade traveling up Evaro canyon was ambushed by the Blackfeet at Marent Gulch. The Evaro route became known as Conacan's Defile, for the Hawaiian natives killed in the encounter. "This is a defile in the mountains separating the Jocko river from the Hell Gate: it is so named from the fact that three Kanakas, bearing this name, were killed here some years ago by the Blackfeet. We found the road very rough and rocky, with much fallen timber along the trail."<sup>12</sup> During the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, the area attracted increasing numbers of white trappers, surveyors, miners and explorers, and temporary log cabins were scattered along the route. Under orders to "ascertain the most practicable and economic route for a railroad" to the Pacific Coast, Washington Territory's Governor Isaac I. Stevens and party traveled through western Montana in 1855, and negotiated with the native tribes of the region.

<sup>10</sup> By 1906, new administrators took over the mission school at St. Ignatius, which began to rebuild its Indian education program without federal aid. Two new reservation day schools were constructed to the north at Ronan and Polson, easing some of the pressures at the Jocko agency school, though the need for improved facilities was still apparent. Jesse E. Tyler, Superintendent, "Report of the Superintendent of Flathead School," *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs*, 1906, pp. 257-8.

<sup>11</sup> Ferris, W.A. *Life in the Rocky Mountains*. 1833, p. 234. This should not be confused with the Camas Prairie, which lies further west along the Clark's Fork drainage.

<sup>12</sup> Report of Lieutenant John Mullan, U.S.A., of his Examination of the Country from the Bitter Root Valley to the Flathead Lake and Kootenay River, Cantonment Stevens, Bitterroot Valley, Washington Territory, May 8, 1854. Published in Isaac Stevens' *Reports of Explorations and Journeys to Ascertain the Most Practicable and Economic Route for a Railroad*, Vol. 1, Washington DC, 1855, pp. 516-517.

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Under the resulting Hell Gate Treaty of 1855, the federal government established boundaries for the Flathead Indian Reservation, setting the southern reservation boundary along the divide between the Clark Fork and Jocko Rivers. Non-Indian settlement in the area continued through the late nineteenth century. In 1860, "Baron" Cornelius O'Keefe established a ranch in the "Coriacan Defile," and the nearby creek became his namesake. O'Keefe's house and barn attracted a few nearby homesteaders, and the impending railroad construction boosted the population.<sup>13</sup> During the construction era, Joe Marent's public house and Adams' Boardinghouse served railroaders posted there. There were 7 saloons in the area (licensed to Miles and Peters, Baron O'Keefe, Clark and McClintock, Harris Fayett, Kibble & Marshal, Charette and St Thomas, O'Connell & Waymack) of Evaro and Marent, and in Marent Gulch, card games and dance girls were also on call. When the Northern Pacific Railroad completed its transcontinental rail line through Montana Territory in 1883, the route traversed the Coriacan Defile, by way of the world's highest trestle across Marent Gulch. And according to the local *Missoulian* newspaper, "General Anderson did not like the name Coriacan and has therefore fastened the name of Evaro upon the station halfway between Arlee and Missoula."<sup>14</sup>

In 1883, a railroad depot and section house and water tower were built at Evaro. That same year, Louis Blanchard bought Marent Canyon House from Joe Marent, renaming it Blanchard House. A post office named for Blanchard, the first postmaster, was opened at this location in 1897. The name was changed to Evaro in 1905, like the rail stop.<sup>15</sup> By 1900, logging and timber milling for the Big Blackfoot Milling Company was an important industry in the area. Changes in federal Indian lands policy also encouraged the settlement of the Evaro area. In 1887, Congress passed the Dawes Act, allotting each tribal member acreage within the reservation, and setting the stage for large portions of the reservation to pass out of tribal control and ownership. In 1910, lands that the federal government deemed "surplus lands" were put up for sale and the Flathead Reservation was thrown open for settlement to non-Indians that year.

### Evaro School District #41

The Evaro community was first included in the Jocko Valley Township and its school district in 1889. In 1894, Lawrence Johnson moved into the area where he opened a store and post office. The first local school classes were held in one of his buildings. Evaro School District #40 (which later became district #41) was created April 28, 1902, and for almost two decades, classes for grades 1-8 were held in various homes and barns around the community. The school census for 1908 lists 22 students in the district. The Evaro School building is located on property homesteaded by Samuel Burnell, who filed his homestead patent on December 31, 1904.<sup>16</sup> William and Mary Johnson later acquired the property, then in 1927 deeded the parcel for the school to District #41 for \$50.00.<sup>17</sup> In August 1920, bids "for the building of a one-room schoolhouse for District No. 41, according to plans and specifications on file in the office of the county superintendent of schools, and clerk of the district, at Evaro, Mont." were solicited.<sup>18</sup>

According to local sources, Bill Mercer and area sawmills donated the lumber used to construct the building. When finished, the Evaro School became one of 47 schools in Missoula County located beyond the city limits of Missoula. The population of the town of Evaro hovered in the low to mid 20s during the 1920s, although the school pulled students from the outlying rural area, including tribal members living near the southern tip of the reservation.

<sup>13</sup> In 1882 the number of voters in the O'Keefe Precinct was 116.

<sup>14</sup> *Missoulian*, August 3, 1883.

<sup>15</sup> Roberta Carkeek Cheney, *Names on the Face of Montana*, (Missoula, MT: Mountain Press Publishing, 1983), pp. 27, 85.

<sup>16</sup> Homestead Patent No 1215.

<sup>17</sup> Missoula County Clerk and Recorder, Book 106 Deeds, p. 314.

<sup>18</sup> *The Daily Missoulian*, August 22, 1920.

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Miss Dale Johnson was the first teacher to conduct classes. Fresh out of high school herself, Miss Johnson began instruction of 27 enrolled students, most between the ages of eight and thirteen. Of the 27 students, sixteen were girls and eleven were boys, and the average daily attendance was 18 students.<sup>19</sup> By 1926, Josephine Wright had taken over the classroom. Miss Wright had "about four years" of high school education, held a professional Montana certificate, and had fourteen years of teaching experience. She reported that, despite the lack of a teacherage and playground equipment, the condition of the school was "otherwise good" and held 15 volumes in the library. Miss Wright reported in 1926 that the school had seats for 33 pupils, and 24 students were enrolled. Their instruction included reading, arithmetic, language (English), history and geography, spelling, as well as art.<sup>20</sup> Several others taught at the school during the 25 years it served the families of the community, including Eliza Farmer, Retta Armstrong, Mrs. A.B. Warwood, Margaret Hayes, Edith Nesbit, Kay Rosenbaum, Florence Thaden, and Leland Taylor. During that time the teacherage was added to the north side of the building and a merry-go-round and slide were placed in the playground.

Enrollment at the school remained around twenty through the early 1940s, and included the children from several families, among them several members of the Bitterroot band of Salish removed to the reservation in 1891. The grandchildren of Chief Charlo attended the school through the 1930s and 1940s. Louis Charlo, who left Evaro School at the age of seventeen to join the Marines in the war effort in the Pacific, was one of the four men who raised the American flag at Iwo Jima. He was killed a few days later. Other, non-Indian families were well represented in the rolls, and included the Boggess, Mackie, Armstrong, and Mercer families. Though enrollment remained steady during this time, national trends in public education toward consolidation spelled the end to numerous one-room schoolhouses across the country, including Evaro School.

On June 14, 1944, the Evaro School Board met with the Frenchtown School Board and arranged to send the Evaro students to Frenchtown for school. This arrangement continued for three years, and in 1947, the community of Evaro petitioned Frenchtown School District #40 to annex Evaro School District #41. In 1947, the school board agreed to allow use of the schoolhouse as a community center. As it had since its construction, the small school continued to serve to community as a meeting place for the Boy Scouts, 4-H Clubs, as well as receptions, weddings, Bible classes, dances, community dinners, and as a polling place. Longtime resident Sandy Mercer Lee recalls:

Many parties and treasure hunts were held. Dances at the school were for all ages in the '50s, 60s, and 70s. We would use corn meal on the hardwood floors and dance in our stocking feet. Some of the music for dances was provided by records, some live music played by Pat Craft and his band in the 70s. I celebrated my 21<sup>st</sup> birthday with a party at the school complete with bales of hay, saddles, and a big cake.

A cast iron wood stove was used to heat the building. You had to start the fire early in the day for any events held in the evening. Sometimes the belly of the stove would turn red with heat, but it wasn't always really warm in the corners. Different families would donate wood for each community use. The school house has been used as a polling place for our area for many years. My dad and mom were Democratic committee man and woman for this precinct. They taught us that voting was a privilege and a duty, so going with them to the school to vote was a special treat. When we entered the building we were to sit on the long, white benches lining the wall while dad and mom took the paper ballots to the voting booth. It was so exciting to watch people coming and going. After voting these neighbors would visit about ration books, crops, the price of livestock, the weather, fighting in WWII, Korea, Vietnam and how our boys were doing over there. Then we would have some cookies, candy, and Kool-aid that the election ladies had set out for treats. With paper ballots, the ladies sometimes counted all night. The next day the results were posted on the wall of the porch. I could hardly wait until I was 21 so I could register to vote

<sup>19</sup> Dale Johnson, "Teachers Report to County Superintendent and District Clerk, May, 1920."

<sup>20</sup> Josephine Wright, "Teachers Report to County Superintendent and District Clerk," May, 1926.

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and become a part of that tradition at the school. My Mom served as an election judge in the 60s and 70s. Now as I take my turn as an election judge, the community center still serves as a polling place and a meeting place for neighbors.<sup>21</sup>

When the Evaro School District was annexed by Frenchtown School District, ownership of the building transferred as well. Resident Marion Ryan remembers this story about the rivalry between the two communities, and the close ties the community of Evaro continued to have with the old school:

The Frenchtown School Board decided that the old bell that had hung in the belfry for years and years was in danger of being stolen so they took it down and took it to Frenchtown. No one in Evaro was notified. I don't remember how we found out where it was, but when we did all hell broke loose. An irate group of Evaro citizens took on the school board and demanded the bell back. I wrote a letter to the *Missoulian* calling attention to the underhandedness of the board. The bell was finally returned and Vern Groom and Clarence Rottering chained it, welded it, and nailed it back in place in the old belfry. No one was going to steal it this time! But steal it they did. We went back to the board thinking they did it -- they hadn't. They made sure to tell us they knew this was going to happen. Our comment? Better the thief than the Frenchtown School Board.<sup>22</sup>

In 1987, when the Frenchtown School Board proposed selling and moving the building, the community of Evaro protested. Instead, a non-profit group was formed to assume ownership of the schoolhouse and maintain it for public use. Today, the Evaro Community Center is maintained and managed by this group on behalf of the community. Each year, they sponsor the Evaro Mountain Challenge, 5K and 10K runs and walks, and put the proceeds toward maintaining the schoolhouse building. Now in its fifteenth year, the race has grown to be one of the most widely anticipated and respected racing events in the area.<sup>23</sup>

The small schoolhouse at the top of Evaro Hill has served as the center for education and social activity in the rural community of Evaro for 82 years. As the years have passed some of the activities there have changed, but the Evaro School continues to serve its purpose as a gathering and meeting place. Also unchanged is the dedication the residents of this community have to the maintenance and continued use of the building. Throughout its history, the Evaro School has both entertained and educated the people of this community with everything from formal classroom instruction to polling activities to anniversary parties. Sandy Mercer Lee expressed the feelings of nearly every Evaro resident when she said:

I have lived in Evaro all of my life. Many things have changed over the years, but the Evaro Community Center continues to be a place for residents of Evaro, old-timers and new-comers to gather together. Because of its presence the people living in our rural area have a continuing sense of community.

<sup>21</sup> Sandy Mercer Lee, personal recollections, May 10, 2000.

<sup>22</sup> Marion Ryan, personal recollections, May, 2000.

<sup>23</sup> During the 1840s, trader Francis Armitage organized a foot race among the Salish women in the area, from which it drew the name "course de femmes".

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### Architectural Significance

The first public school districts in Montana Territory were established in 1866. The early schoolhouses were rough buildings, often of log construction, poorly lit and heated, with no running water. Compulsory attendance legislation was passed in 1887 although it was impractical and often impossible to enforce in rural areas. Records in 1901 indicate there were 182 rural schools in Montana, but that the average attending stood at less than 8 children per school. Beginning in 1902, the Superintendent of Public Instruction requested legislative assistance for transporting rural students and consolidating single room schools into larger, more inclusive programs. By 1906, standardized courses of study for Montana elementary and secondary schools were adopted widely. A movement to replace early log school buildings with frame, brick or stone gained momentum through the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Under state school law, the secretary of the State Board of Health was mandated to issue "suggestive plans for rural school buildings", and in 1919, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction May Trumper wrote

With the rapid increase of population in Montana and the correspondingly large number of new school buildings being erected each year, it has become imperative that increased attention should be given to the furnishing of plans and specifications particularly for our smaller types of school buildings.<sup>24</sup>

Superintendent Trumper introduced the work of architect W.R. Plew, Professor of Architectural and Civil Engineering at the State College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts at Bozeman, who had compiled over two years a series of one and two room school building plans with "up to date suggestions regarding the best types of buildings and detail directions for their constructions."<sup>25</sup> Designed between 1917-1919, the building plans exemplify detailing of the Craftsman Style, then in vogue, and incorporate such recommendations as site selection, natural fitness, size of grounds, sanitation, layout, and site beautification. On the interior, optimal lighting, blackboard placement, heating, desk arrangements, etc. are all discussed.

The Evaro School is a fine representative of the philosophy and design recommendations of the State Departments of Health and Public Instruction, and architect W.R. Plew. A modified Plan C1 school building, the Evaro School demonstrates the guidance offered to rural school districts during this era. Plew noted that though the "C1" plan's exterior "is simple and plain it has not been prepared in a haphazard manner. The proportions are carefully considered and to obtain the desired result the plans should be faithfully followed." The basic design called for an entrance at the gable end flanked by single double-hung windows, and a bank of windows on one side-gable elevation. On the interior, small cloakrooms were located on either side of the entrance, while a large single classroom filled the rest of the space. The Evaro school floorplan does deviate from the standardized plan in that the entrance is located at the end of the side gable elevation, and the pair of double-hung windows centered in the gable end illuminated a single cloakroom.

With its banked south-facing windows, the Evaro School planners ensured it would "be possible to flood the school room at some time during the day with bright sunlight."<sup>26</sup> The instructions laid out by Plew were followed nearly to the letter, especially in the classroom design, which had the desks arranged "so that the pupils [had] the class room windows on the left; [and the] windows [were not] separated by any appreciable distance." As insisted upon in the bulletin, the windows were within one foot of the ceiling, and placed on one side of the room.<sup>27</sup> Other interior features recommended by Plew present in the Evaro School are the plain picture mold, "placed 18 inches below the ceiling," the 48-inch blackboard, and library shelves "provided with draws below and bookshelves above."

<sup>24</sup> Plew, W.R. "One and Two Room Rural School Buildings," University of Montanan Bulletin, State College Series No. 11, Bozeman, Montana, 1919, introduction.

<sup>25</sup> Plew, p. 7.

<sup>26</sup> Plew, p. 13.

<sup>27</sup> Plew, p. 13.

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In addition, although simple in design and modest in scale, the school reflects modest Craftsman styling, with its gently pitched gable roof, exposed rafter tails, multi-pane windows, and narrow-gauge lap siding. These design elements were popular in residential building during the early part of the twentieth century. While the Evaro School was not used regularly for religious services, the bell tower cupola that straddles its ridgeline does conjure the image of a church. Architectural Historian Kingston Heath comments on these domestic and religious architectural influences in school buildings:

the transition from a child's home to an elementary school was softened by a home-like ambiance...Some of the earliest schools actually served combined functions of school house and church or meeting house. Because access to these small, isolated Montana schools generally required a long cold journey by horse or by foot, builders and users of the structures attempted to make the environment as inviting and familiar as possible by visually aligning them with domestic and religious structures.<sup>28</sup>

Very little has changed in the design of the Evaro School since its construction and use during the historic period. In both form and function, the school stands as a testament to the history of the Evaro community, as well as the standardized plans for public schools advocated across the state of Montana during the late 1910s and early 1920s. Clearly, the Evaro School is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places for its associations with the social and educational history of the rural community of Evaro. It also gains significance at the statewide level as an excellent example of a modified "Plan C1" school, as recommended by the Montana State Board of Health and the Office of Public Instruction.

<sup>28</sup> Kingston Heath, "A Dying Heritage: One-Room Schools of Gallatin County, Montana," *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, Camille Wells, ed. (Annapolis, MD: Vernacular Architecture Forum, 1982), p. 207.

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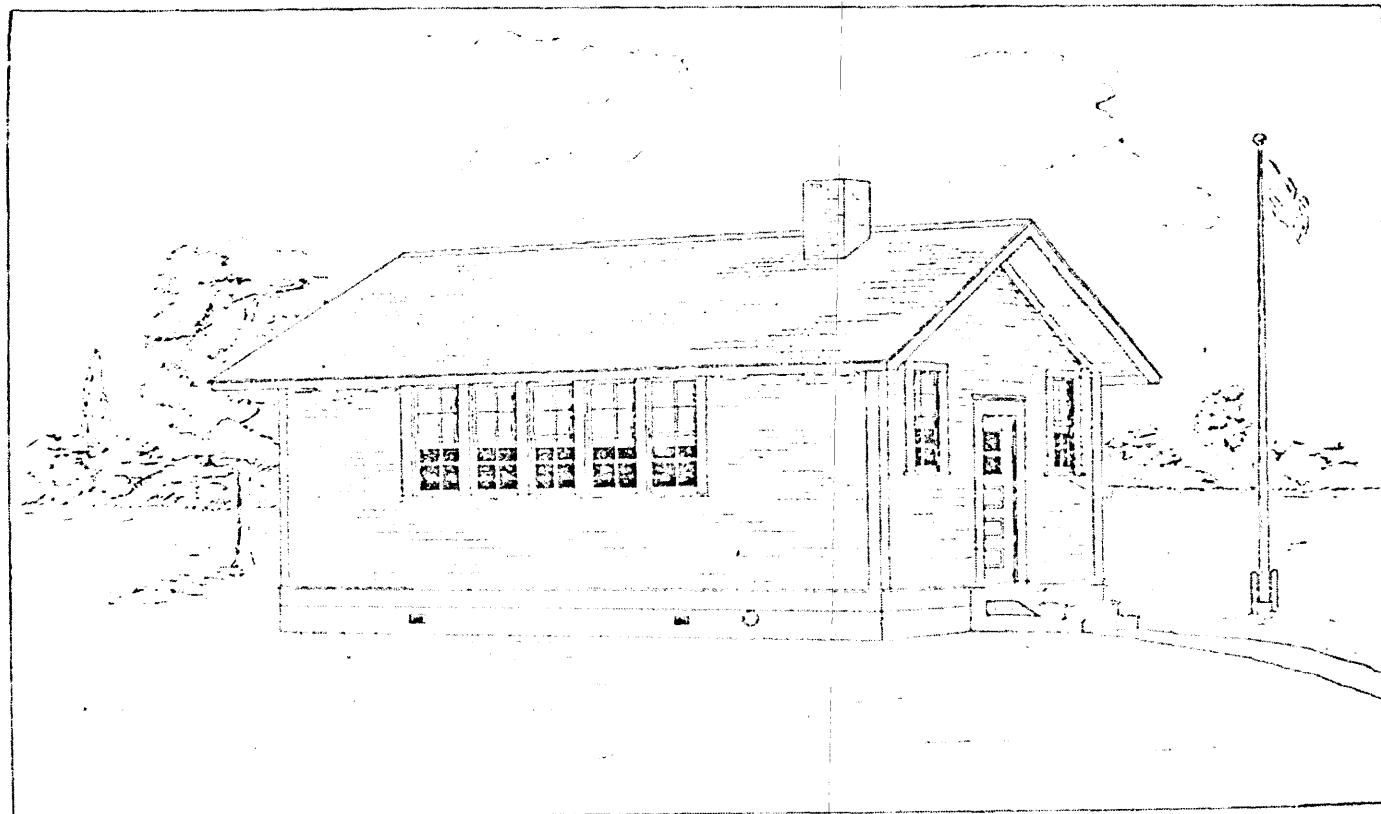
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Plan C1 Exterior Design  
From Plew, p. 25



PLAN C1 - FIG. 4.

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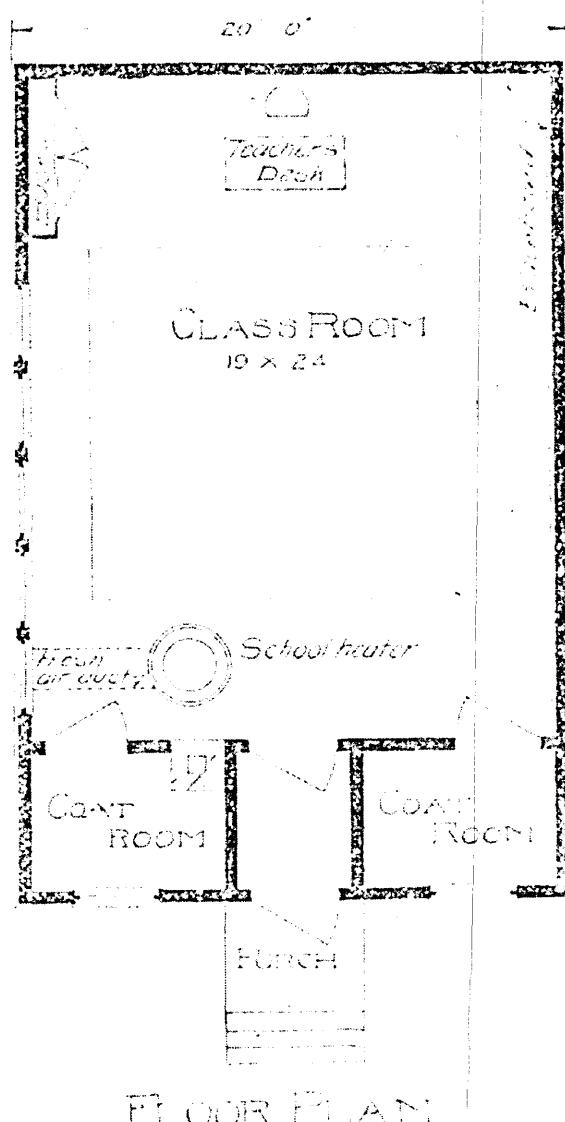
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Plan C1 Exterior Design  
From Plew, p. 23



FLOOR PLAN

PLAN C1—FIG. 3.

Evaro School  
Name of Property

Missoula County, Montana  
County and State

## **9. Major Bibliographic References**

See continuation sheet

**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  
 X Other -- Specify Repository:

## **10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property:** 2 acres

**UTM References** Zone: 11      **Easting:** 721116      **Northing:** 5212842

**Legal Location (Township, Range & Section(s)):** Lot 2, Section 26, Township 15 N, Range 20 West M.P.M.

**Verbal Boundary Description**

Beginning at a point that is north 74 41' west 944.0 ft from the southeast corner of lot 2 section 26, T15N, R20W thence south 52 37' west a distance of 154.2 ft, thence north 52 02' west a distance of 382.0 ft, thence north along the west line of lot 2, above - mentioned section, T15N, R20W a distance of 212.0 ft, thence south 52 27' west a distance of 550.0 ft more or less to the point of beginning.

**Boundary Justification**

The boundary is drawn according to legally recorded boundary lines that have been associated with the Evaro School since its construction.

## **11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Kate Hampton

organization: Montana Historic Preservation Office Staff

street & number: PO Box 201202

city or town: Helena                          state: MT

date: August 2001

telephone: 406-444-7715

zip code: 59620

name/title: Jeannie Boggess

organization: Evaro Community Center

street & number: Boggess Lane

city or town: Missoula                          state: MT

date: April 2000

telephone: 406-726-3509

zip code: 59808

**Property Owner**

name/title: Evaro Community Center, Inc.

street & number: 6700 Grooms Rd

telephone: 406-726-3509

city or town: Evaro                                  state: MT

zip code: 59808

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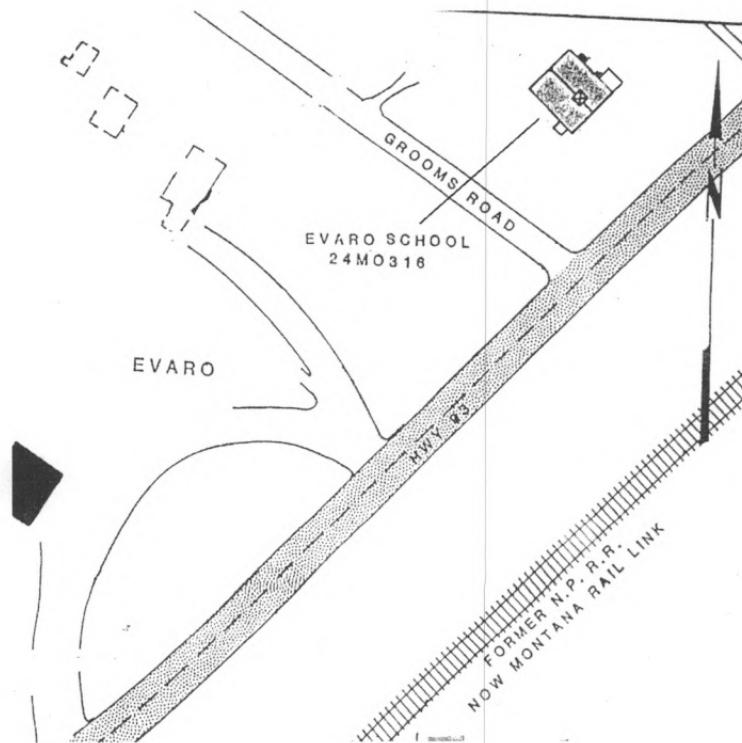
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Sketch Map



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Evaro Orthophotquad Detail



EVARO SCHOOL  
MISSOULA COUNTY, MT  
LOCATED IN:  
SW<sup>1/4</sup> NW<sup>1/4</sup> NE<sup>1/2</sup>  
SECTION 26 T15N R20W  
UTM: ZONE 11  
721116 E  
5212842 N

