

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

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received **SEP 22 1986**

date entered

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

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

1. Name

historic Sandstone and Cobblestone Schools

and/or common Sandstone and Cobblestone Complex

2. Location

street & number Main St. N/A not for publication

city, town Absarokee N/A vicinity of

state Montana code 030 county Stillwater code 015 ⁰⁹⁶

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name School District #52-C

street & number P.O. Box 407

city, town Absarokee N/A vicinity of state Montana

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Stillwater County Courthouse

street & number

city, town Columbus state Montana

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title None has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date federal state county local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

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

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Built between 1910-1921, the Sandstone and Cobblestone School Complex is situated in the unincorporated town of Absarokee, located in south-central Montana about 25 miles northeast of the Beartooth Mountains Granite Range. The complex consists of two buildings built by a single school district, which employed popular school designs and used local building materials to create distinctive structures in a small community. Both historic buildings are located adjacent to one another on the southern edge of Absarokee. Although not linked physically, the two buildings are united in function and share similar massing. Dirt playgrounds surround three sides of the site, which is enclosed by a chain link fence.

#1 SANDSTONE PRIMARY SCHOOL, 1910

As originally constructed, the one story, hip roofed, rusticated coursed Sandstone School consisted of two classrooms flanking a 10' wide central hallway accessed by a west-facing recessed wooden door. Above the entrance was a semicircular arch capped by a hipped dormer with a pair of 1/1 double hung windows. Both the north and south walls were originally pierced by five 1/1 double hung windows, each with flat sandstone lintels and sills. In 1915, the building's dimensions were doubled by the addition of two classrooms to the east. Identical materials and design were duplicated in the addition so that the new north and south walls carried the same fenestration, while an arched, recessed entrance was centrally located in the new east wall. The only exterior alteration since occurred in the 1970s when the west entrance (which was originally like the east entrance) was replaced with a steel door and transom, and placed flush with the exterior wall. With the exception of a dropped ceiling, the interior of the school is intact. Original doors and hardware, light fixtures, wainscoting and wooden floors can still be found inside each of the four 25' wide classrooms.

#2 COBBLESTONE GRADE SCHOOL, 1921

Approximately 15' west of the Sandstone School is the Cobblestone School. Constructed with cobblestones in a variety of sizes from nearby Rosebud Creek, the rectangular-shaped, 70' x 79' building has one story on an elevated base. The 5' high raised cobblestone foundation is topped by a 1' high band of concrete. The facade of the symmetrically designed school has a slightly projecting central pavilion rising the full height of the structure. At its base are a pair of aluminum and glass doors with three-light fixed sidelights and a wide transom, surmounted by a flat brick lintel consisting of three rows of alternating headers and stretchers placed on their sides. Atop the pavilion is a band of concrete with the letters "HIGH SCHOOL" in relief framed by rowlock bricks. Several small clusters of bricks in diamond shapes are located just below the roof on each wall. A diminutive, low pitched gable covered with "T-111" siding caps the pavilion. The west side of the facade has five single pane fixed windows along the foundation, with five 1/1 double hung sashes aligned directly above. A cobblestone end pavilion has a small 1/1 double hung window at the foundation level, and another similar window on the first floor. Each wall of the building features end pavilions of the same dimension with identical windows. The east side of the facade has the same fenestration as the west, although the five upper

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windows were replaced with four panels of six-light fixed and hopper windows at an undetermined date. All windows have concrete sills; a concrete belt course encircles the building just above the upper windows serving as a lintel.

The rear (south) wall has one large opening in the center with four six-light fixed and hopper windows. Two small 1/1 double windows are located at the foundation level. Attached to the southeast corner is a one story, cobblestone shed addition with a shed roof covered by rolled asphalt. Centered in the west wall are a pair of aluminum and glass doors. South of the entrance are six 1/1 double hung windows, with the same number of fixed sashes at the foundation level. The east wall has five double hung windows on the first floor and three fixed below. Steps leading to a basement entrance near the northeast corner are covered by a lean-to roof supported by metal poles set in a concrete base. A flat roof originally covered the building, but it was replaced in 1975 with a low pitched gable. There is a twelve-inch overhang at the eaves.

The interior of the Cobblestone School is divided by a 10' wide central hallway that runs parallel with the roof ridge. The upper floor is divided into five classrooms, one office and three walk-in closets, while the lower level has an art room, lunch room, large kitchen, two bathrooms, three storage rooms, and a teachers lounge. Like the Sandstone School, the Cobblestone School has retained much of its original woodwork, hardware and light fixtures.

8. Significance

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

Specific dates 1910, 1915, 1921 **Builder/Architect** Dominick Rosner, architect, 1915 addition
W.R. Plew, architect, 1921 school

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Sandstone and Cobblestone Schools are significant for their role in the development of public education in Absarokee between 1910 and the early 1930s, and for their architecture as excellent examples of popular construction using local building materials. The Sandstone and Cobblestone Schools became permanent components of the county school system and have been used continuously for 76 and 65 years, respectively. The two schools formed a small educational complex, which served as the center for schooling in southern Stillwater County for all grades in comparatively larger, more generous facilities. Both buildings represent the early commitment to education in the sparsely populated county of ranches and small mining communities, centered on the town of Absarokee (1970 population 600).

EDUCATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Sandstone School was built as a grammar school in 1910 and served children living in Absarokee and the immediate vicinity attending grades 1 - 8. There were approximately 20 one- and two-room schools operating in School District #52 in Stillwater County at that time, and the Sandstone School in Absarokee is one of only three remaining grammar schools in this network. The Sandstone School building was enlarged in 1915 to accommodate the small number of high school students within the District.

When the need for a new high school in the southern portion of Stillwater County became pressing by 1920, School District #52 and adjacent District #21 combined forces and funding for the construction of the Cobblestone School. This building served as the high school for students within a 33 square mile area. The out-of-town students, some coming as far as the communities of Limestone and Nye approximately 45 miles away, often boarded in Absarokee with families during the winter months. Between 1920 and 1940, from 50 to 70 students attended high school each year at the Cobblestone School.

Absarokee was founded in 1893, shortly after the Crow Indian Reservation was opened for white settlement. School District #52 was created in 1903 and the first classes were held in a small log building. By 1905 another log school had been built, but within five years this structure had become too small for the community, resulting in the construction of the two-room Sandstone School. In 1912 one of the two local teachers undertook the addition of a first year high school program by partitioning off a "recitation" room in the school's hallway for seven freshmen students. In the fall of 1914, parents of school children were required to pay \$100 per pupil for the School District's treasury. Fifteen freshmen and two sophomores who bought their own books and used tables and chairs rather than desks began the year with one full time teacher, attending classes in a small cement building which formerly stood southwest of the site of the Cobblestone School. In 1915, local citizens realized the need for a permanent community high school by doubling the size of the Sandstone School and assuming responsibility for a tax supported, fully accredited, two year high school with

9. Major Bibliographical References

Annin, Him. They Gazed on the Beartooths. 3 Vols., no place of publication or publisher, 1964
 Plew, W.R. One and Two Room School Buildings. Bozeman, MT: University of Montana Bulletin, March, 1919.
 Interview with Edie Evans, Stillwater County Superintendent of Schools, by Patricia Bick, November 25, 1986.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property less than one
 Quadrangle name Absarokee Quadrangle scale 1:24000
 UTM References (Unavailable) Latitude: 45°30'37"; Longitude: 109°25'45"

| | | | | | | | |
|---|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|---|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| A | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | B | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
| | Zone | Easting | Northing | | Zone | Easting | Northing |
| C | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | D | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
| E | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | F | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
| G | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | H | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |

Verbal boundary description and justification

see continuation sheet

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

| | | | | |
|-------|-------------|------|--------|------|
| state | <u>none</u> | code | county | code |
| state | | code | county | code |

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Mike Koop, National Register Assistant

organization Montana SHPO date June 20, 1986

street & number 225 No. Roberts telephone (406)444-7715

city or town Helena state Montana

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *Marcella Skelton*

title SHPO date 11-28-86

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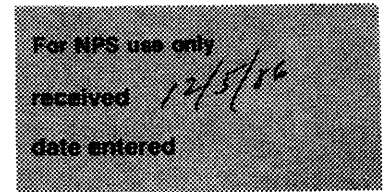
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

William B. Bushong date 1/15/87
 for Keeper of the National Register

Attest: _____ date _____
 Chief of Registration

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two part-time teachers. With a larger population and increasing demands for a four year high school, School District #52 was enlarged in 1920, and a \$20,000 bond issue was established for the construction of a new building. The Cobblestone School was finished and fully accredited in 1921 with three full time teachers, and five students comprised Absarokee's first graduating class in 1922.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

Both historic schools are architecturally significant because they exemplify simple and distinctive structures that utilized locally-available building materials. The area around south-central Montana, including Stillwater, Carbon and Sweetgrass Counties through which the Yellowstone River flows, has an abundance of exposed bluffs that for over a century have provided an abundance of sandstone for residential and commercial building construction in many areas of Montana. One large and active quarry was located just outside of Columbus (15 miles northeast of Absarokee), that supplied sandstone for the original State Capitol building, federal buildings in Butte and Helena, and numerous public and private buildings throughout Montana. While the source of the sandstone for the original 1910 Absarokee School and 1915 addition is not known, the site was likely in the vicinity of Columbus. Local craftsmen probably constructed the original two-room school, while Dominick Rosner was responsible for designing the matching addition in 1915. Rosner came to Montana in 1884 after taking a two year architecture course at a trade school in Connecticut. He reportedly worked on contracts in the nearby communities of Nye, Lennep, and Bozeman before establishing a carpentry shop in Columbus, where he did much of the finishing work on various commercial buildings. For unknown reasons, the architectural plans for the 1915 addition were slightly modified by the builder.

The Cobblestone School was constructed using cobblestones gathered from Rosebud Creek by Absarokee residents. Similar to indigenous sandstone, a large supply of cobblestone was easily located in the immediate area, as evidenced by the prevalence of residential and commercial cobblestone buildings in northern Stillwater County. While the use of cobblestone was widespread in western New York and some areas of the Midwest, it did not become popular in Montana except in selected locations where such building stones were readily available. The design for the structure is attributed to W.R. Plew, an engineer in the College of Agriculture and Mechanical Arts at Montana State University in Bozeman in the early 1900s. Plew had done extensive work in the design of one- and two- room rural school buildings, and in 1919 he published a bulletin on the subject for the State Departments of Health and Public Instruction. In order to promote appropriate school design, the State Health Department circulated examples of Plew's floor plans and architectural drawings to all rural Montana school districts. Plew also designed at least three buildings in Bozeman, including the Beall Park Community Center (1927), a cobblestone and fieldstone Craftsman style structure.

With the exception of the modern door on the Sandstone School and the replacement windows on the Cobblestone School, each building retains excellent architectural integrity. Together they reflect the importance of public schools and a commitment by local residents to provide a sound education for their children.

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Boundary Description and Justification:

The boundary for this nomination has been drawn to include an area surrounding only the Sandstone and Cobblestone school buildings and paved playground area, bounded on the northeast, northwest, and southwest by the right-of-ways of School St., Woodward St., and Willow St., respectively. The southeastern boundary is formed by a line drawn approximately 30' east of the Sandstone School running in a northeast-southwest direction across Block 43, thereby excluding from the nominated property the southeastern 40' of the block where the more modern school buildings stand. In short, the nominated property consists of the entire of Block 43 of the Original Townsite of Absarokee, minus a 40' wide strip along the southeastern edge of the block.

----- Outline of Block 43
----- Boundary for the nominated property

SANDSTONE AND COBBLESTONE SCHOOLS
ABSAROOKE, MONTANA

