NPS Form 20-900	RECEIVED 2290 OMB_No. 1024-0018
(Oct. 1990)	50
United States Department of the Interior National Park Service	JAN - 5 IJAL
National Register of Historic Places Registration Form	NAT. REGISTER COMPACES
This forn is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complet the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being nominal classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or	ete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering ted, enter "N/A" for "not applicable". For functions, architectural lories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative
1. Name of Property	
Historic Name Rittenhouse Elementary School	
Other name/site number Queen Creek Elementary School	
2. Location	
Ellsworth Road, one mile north of Rittenhouse Road	
city/town: Queen Creek	<b>—</b>
state Arizona code: AZ county: Maricopa	
3. State/Federal Agency Certification	
As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for register and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFf meet the National Register criteria. I reommend that this property be consid continuation sheet for additional comments).	ring properties in the National Register of Historic Places R Part 60. In my opinion, the property <b>X</b> meets does not lered significant nationally statewide X locally. ( See
Much hugher, Neputy, SHPO	12/26/97
Signature of certifying official	Date
State or Federal agency and bureau	
meets does not meet ther National Register criteria. (See contin	uation 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:	the Keepter Date of Action
Mentered 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.	(1/ Beall 2/5/98_
territoria interritoria registeri	

Queen Creek Elementary School

5. Classification				
Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)	Category of Property (Check only one box)			thin Property sources in the count.)
private>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>	Contributing	Noncontrit	outing	
	site structure		Q	sites
			··· ··································	objects
			<u>0</u>	
Name of related mult (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a		Number of cor listed in the Na		sources previously ter
.N/A		N/A		
6. Function or Use				
Historic Functions		Current Fun	nctions	
(Enter categories from instructions)		(Enter categories fro	om instructions)	
School		School - vacant	t	
		·····		
7. Description				
Architectural Classification		Materials (Enter categories fro	om instructions)	
		foundation <u>C</u>	oncrete	
		walls <u>Red bri</u>	ck	
		roof Asphalt.s	hingles	
		other <u>N/A</u>		
		•••••	••••••	

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Queen Creek Elementary School

### 8. Statement of Significance

### **Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

		······································
× N	Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad	
□в	patterns of our history. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.	Period of Significance
 □ c	Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method	1925 - 1946
	of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artisti values, or	Significant Dates
represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.	N/A	
D		
		Significant Person
Criteria Considerations		(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)
	in all the boxes that apply.)	N/A
Property is	<b>e</b> '	
r ioperty i	ס.	

# **Cultural Affiliation**

Architect/Builder

.N/A.....

.....

N/A

.....

Areas of Signifcance

Education

(Enter categories from instructions)

owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes. removed from its original location. Пв a birthplace or a grave. סר a cemetery. a reconstructed building, object, or structure. С a commemorative property. F less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years. G

**Narrative Statement of Significance** 

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

### 9. Major Bibliographical References

#### **Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets).

Previous documentation on file (NPS):	Primary location of Additional Data:
preliminary determination of individual listing	State historic preservation office
(36 CFR 67) has been requested.	Other state agency
previously listed in the National Register.	Federal agency
previously determined eligible by the National Register.	Local government
designated a National Historic Landmark.	University
recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey.	Other
#	
recorded by Historic American Engineering Record.	Name of Repository:
#	

.

**Property Name** 

Queen Creek Elementary School

County, State

Maricopa County, Arizona

### 10. Geographical Data Acreage of Property 4.16 **UTM References** (Place additional UTM References on a continuation sheet) Northing Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting 3680430 С 12 440980 Α ..... ...... ....... D В ..... ..... ..... ..... ...... Verbanl Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.) See Continuation 10-1 **Bounday Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.) See Continuation Sheet 10-1 11. Form Prepared By name/title Don W. Ryden, AIA - Historical Architect; Doug Kupel, Ph.D. - Historian organization Don W. Ryden, AIA/Architects, Inc. date January 1997 902 W. McDowell Road telephone 602/253-5381 street & number Phoenix AZ 85007 city or town Additional Documentation Submit the following items with the completed form: **Continuation Sheets** Maps A USGS map(7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location. A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Photographs Representative Black and White photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FHPO for any additional items)

### **Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO)	
name	
street & number	telephone
city & town	state zip code

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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### NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

### SUMMARY

The Rittenhouse Elementary School (Queen Creek Elementary School) is a one-story school building reflecting the stylistic influences of the Spanish Colonial Revivalstyle. The school stands at the corner of Ellsworth and Queen Creek Roads in Queen Creek, Arizona. The building is located at the northwest corner of the modern Queen Creek District Offices and High School--Middle School complex. Although adjacent to these buildings, this building still retains its site integrity as a rural school surrounded by agricultural fields and low-density construction.

Constructed starting in 1924, the building was completed in 1925 and first held classes in 1926. With only three additions to the building, it maintains a high degree of integrity both on the exterior and interior. The Queen Creek Elementary School is significant to the Community Planning and Development of Queen Creek and surrounding rural areas.

### DESCRIPTION

The town of Queen Creek, a rural agricultural community and its sister town, Higley, are located in the southeast portion of the Phoenix metropolitan area, approximately 40 miles from downtown Phoenix. This rural area is landscaped with open fields and isolated structures and small pockets of developments at each town center. While many towns and cities in the Salt River Valley started out as agricultural communities, few have maintained that rural character like Queen Creek. Queen Creek Elementary School Queen Creek, Maricopa County, AZ

The property, covering a 1/2-acre, is located on the southeast corner of Ellsworth and Queen Creek. The building is bordered by modern middle and high school buildings, but is not a part of the working campus. It is bounded by a chainlink fence to distinguish it from the adjacent property. Although the school district owns the building, the San Tan Historical Society has been given an easement for its use as a museum/community center for the area.

Historically a barracks building was located north of the building but only the sidewalk remains today. This barracks building was used by many church organizations to hold services in until formal churches could be constructed. Today, the building is surrounded by a grassy lawn with such features as trees and a historic merri-go-round.

The original school building consisted of five rooms---two classrooms, an auditorium, boys and girls restroom. During the historic period, two more classrooms were added to the rear of the building creating a "U-shaped" plan. Historically a pump house building for the well was located within the open space between the two classroom wings. These additions matched the original building both in style and materials. During the modern era, post-1946, the open space between the classroom wings was infilled to create shower rooms accessed through the existing restrooms as well as the exterior of the building. This infill, although not historic, does not detract from the streetscape view of the building as it is not visible.

The original building is constructed on concrete foundations with a small crawlspace below the wood floor framing. Both the historic and modern additions are slabon-grade construction with concrete foundations. The

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windows throughout the building are wood double-hung six-over-six with operable transoms above. The multiple entrance doors are typically paired wood doors with single glass light in each door topped with a semi-circular fixed transom above. The doors in the modern addition are wood and hollow core metal doors. Brick pilasters at the corners of the building accentuate the eave returns above. With a raised floor level, the building entrances are accessed from simple concrete steps to the doorways. The roof is sheathed with modern asphalt shingles and rolled asphalt roofing at the modern infill addition. The building contains several brick chimneys with corbelling at the top.

The interior of the building contains a high degree of integrity with most of the original fabric intact. Characterdefining elements include a wood-trimmed alcove containing coat hooks, cubby holes, and a storage closet. The original black boards with chalk trays are also intact within each classroom. In the northeast classroom, the chalkboard still contains text from the last day of classes offered in the building in 1982. A unique feature within the auditorium space is the two overhead roll-up doors which remain intact. These doors allowed the central auditorium space to triple in size to include the adjacent classrooms. The historic wood stage platform no longer exists today. At the north end of this stage alcove space is a narrow door, approx. 16" x 48" in size, located approximately 24 inches off the floor which was used by the school children to access the stage from the hallway. The restroom fixtures within the boys restroom may be original while the fixtures within the girls restroom are not original to the building.

Interior finishes include plastered walls with painted wood trim. The floors in the original portion of the building are

Queen Creek Elementary School Queen Creek, Maricopa County, AZ

stained maple T & G while the floors in the historic classroom additions are integral-colored concrete with a 2' x 2' square score pattern. The original plaster ceilings shown the remnants of a modern 12" square acoustical tile ceiling which has been removed. All of the original doors are intact, but much of the historic hardware has been replaced over the years.

### CONTRIBUTING ELEMENTS

Queen Creek School Building

### NONCONTRIBUTING ELEMENTS

None

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### NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

### SUMMARY

The Queen Creek School, constructed as Rittenhouse Elementary School in 1925, is significant to the local Queen Creek community under National Register criterion "A" as an example of the trend of rural school centralization in Arizona. It is importantly associated with the development of centralized rural education in Arizona prior to World War Two. The building retains its historic appearance and setting, and is the only intact school building remaining from the historic period in Queen Creek.

### Early Development of Queen Creek

The area known today as Queen Creek got its start during World War One when high prices for cotton encouraged agricultural development in the Salt River Valley of central Arizona. The World War had disrupted cotton production in its traditional areas of supply, such as Egypt and the Sudan, because Britain had imposed an embargo on the product to ensure its supply during the War. Manufacturers in the United States faced a severe shortage of the fiber which was used for clothing and in the fabrication of tires. The discovery of a long-staple variety of Pima cotton in Arizona, combined with the long growing season and ample water supplies of the Salt River Valley, transformed Arizona into one of the world's largest producers of cotton. The settlement of Queen Creek takes its name from a desert wash that drains the Pinal Mountains. The Silver Queen Mine, located in the Pinal Mountains, gave its name to the wash.

### Queen Creek Elementary School Queen Creek, Maricopa County, AZ

The first communities in the area were associated with the Arizona Eastern Railroad. The railroad opened up the southeast Salt River Valley to settlement, as it allowed for crops to be delivered easily to markets and provided a transportation link along the tracks to Mesa, Tempe, and Phoenix. In 1910, S.W Higley established the town of Higley along the railroad tracks, eventually farming over 8,000 acres of land as demand for cotton increased later in the decade. Farmers such as Higley utilized pumps to tap into a shallow groundwater aquifer and quickly developed a prosperous farming district around Higley. The farmers in Higley were well-situated to take advantage of high prices during the war. Using individual pumping plants, the farmers placed additional lands in cultivation. Merchants also located in the area. In 1910, L.H. Sorey constructed a general store and opened the Higley Post Office.

Beyond the railroad and World War One, the development of Queen Creek depended on another outside factor that influenced growth in the area as a whole. The completion of Roosevelt Dam on the Salt River in 1911 reduced the danger of floods on the Salt River, and created a large reservoir to impound flood waters. The dam and reservoir were part of the Salt River Project, one of the first reclamation projects sponsored by the United States government. After the construction of Roosevelt Dam, the flood waters of the Salt River could be stored during periods of heavy rain and spring runoff, to be released slowly during the agricultural growing season. This construction project spurred agricultural development in the Salt River Valley, including Queen Creek.

The success of the community at Higley encouraged others in the southeast Salt River Valley to develop farms. In 1919, C.H. Rittenhouse formed the Queen Creek Farm

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Company to take advantage of the underground water flow in the vicinity of Queen Creek where it crossed beneath the tracks of the railroad. Rittenhouse planned to construct twenty pumping plants to tap the underground water table. By 1924, Rittenhouse formed the Queen Creek Irrigation District as a means to raise money for the project. A small community grew up along the railroad tracks, called Rittenhouse.

The skills of Charles Rittenhouse were in the area of land speculation and promotion. He arrived in Arizona from Deming, New Mexico, where he had completed a similar project of organizing a power plant for pumping before he sold out to farmers. G.R. Duncan accompanied Rittenhouse to Arizona, and it was Duncan who cleared the desert with mules so that it could be planted. In keeping with his skills, Charles Rittenhouse opened a store at the southeast corner of Ocotillo and Ellsworth Avenue. Rittenhouse also owned a farm, but the operation of it was delegated to R.R. Detweiler. A small community grew up around the store, named Rittenhouse after its founder.

The area surrounding the store soon attracted a large number of families who wished to take advantage of the pumping plants organized by the Queen Creek Irrigation District. These families included names such as Wigley, Adams, Weaver, Hunt, Mahoney, Spiller, Goraft, Mather, Fleming, Payton, Taylor, Germann, Tatum, Day, McEntire, Sossaman, Power, Kleinman, Raymond, Brandon, Ellsworth, and Soover. A small community soon developed around the store. In 1920, farmers in the Higley area organized the Auxiliary Eastern Canal Landowners Association to bring surface water to the area. They applied for a water right from the Salt and Verde Rivers and began to construct a canal south from the Salt River in order to augment the supply of groundwater. Despite these auspicious beginnings, farmers in the region area soon felt the effects of a post-war drop in agricultural prices. Following the war, a crash in cotton prices hit the Salt River Valley and Queen Creek farmers hard. Prices dropped, and many farmers lost money. It took several

years for the farmers to diversify their crops and slowly

bring prosperity back to the Queen Creek area.

In 1924, the directors of the Auxiliary Eastern Canal Landowners Association reached an agreement with the directors of the Salt River Project over water supplies in the area. The Auxiliary Eastern Directors agreed to place a concrete lining in the South, Eastern, and Consolidated canals of the Salt River Project in exchange for the water the lining would prevent from seeping into the ground through the bottom of the canals. The seepage had resulted in a tremendous waste of water, and the canal lining project would save this water for productive use in the Auxiliary Eastern district. This agreement allowed many new acres of land to be cultivated in the Higley, Mesa, Gilbert, and Chandler areas, and led to many new settlers moving into the region. Queen Creek, located near but outside the reclamation project, also experienced an influx of population. In 1925, the name of the project was changed from the Auxiliary Eastern Canal Landowners Association to the Roosevelt Water Conservation District.

Although these changes brought additional people into the area, times were still tough for farmers in Arizona during the twenties and thirties. Prices remained depressed. In 1928, the property of Charles Rittenhouse reverted back to the bank which had made the loan through foreclosure. Leo Ellsworth picked up the property by agreeing to make the payments. Ellsworth, along with brothers Laurence and Donald, formed the L-4 brand and named the

#### OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

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property the Ellsworth Ranch. Experienced at farming, the Ellsworths made the ranch a paying proposition.

Several community buildings were constructed in Queen Creek during the expansion of agriculture in the twenties. These included the Ellsworth Store and Service Station, a community church in 1921, and the Queen Creek School in 1925. In 1926, farmers formed the Queen Creek Electric Power Company to provide electricity for the water pumps which had been run on fuel oil. The power company also provided electricity to the town and farmhouses in the area.

The Great Depression in the United States, following the stock market crash of October, 1929, brought an end to expansion in the small agricultural community of Queen Creek. Prices dropped for all agricultural products. Farmworkers, many of whom were of Mexican descent, left the area because jobs were scarce. Economic conditions remained depressed throughout the decade of the thirties.

World War Two bought many changes to the Queen Creek area and to Arizona. During the war the United States government opened Williams Field just north and west of Queen Creek. This facility trained pilots for combat missions during World War Two. Agricultural prices increased during the war also, as shortages of food and fiber led to increased production of cotton and other crops in Arizona, including the Queen Creek area. Because of labor shortages during the war, Italian and German war prisoners were brought to Queen Creek to replace farm workers who were employed in defense plants. The end of World War Two in 1945 ushered in a new era of prosperity for Queen Creek. Discharged soldiers and war workers with accumulated savings arrived and began to construct homes. Arizona as a whole experienced a post-war population boom. Those who had worked in the state during the war decided to stay and made Arizona their new home. Between 1945 and 1960, the population of Arizona more than doubled. The post-war boom resulted in an increase in home construction in Queen Creek.

The increased population resulted in a building boom following the war. The Baptist Church and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints both constructed church buildings in Queen Creek, in 1946 and 1951 respectively. Church leader Ezra Taft Benson dedicated the LDS Church. In 1950, local farmers Jack Barnes and Leo Ellsworth donated 188 acres of land for the Arizona Boys Ranch, a home for troubled or orphaned boys. The facility opened in 1951. Williams Field continued to provide employment in the area following the war. Queen Creek was officially incorporated as a town on September 4, 1989.

# History of Queen Creek Unified School District #95, Maricopa County

The Queen Creek School District #95 in Maricopa County, Arizona, dates from 1947 when a portion of the Higley School District #60 was removed to form the new district. When the Queen Creek School was constructed in 1925, it was a project of the Higley School District and called Rittenhouse School. The history of the Queen Creek School District thus begins much earlier than 1947, with the creation of the Higley School District.

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On June 28, 1909, a group of parents in the Higley area delivered a petition to A.H. Fulton, the Maricopa County School Superintendent. The parents requested the formation of a school district for their children in the vicinity of Higley and including up to six miles of the surrounding agricultural area. On July 1, 1909, Fulton forwarded the petition to the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors with his recommendation that the Board grant the request. On July 19, 1909, the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors created Higley Elementary School District #60. By 1910, the school board had erected a small one-room wooden schoolhouse.

In 1915, the Board of the Higley School District authorized construction of a brick school building on the northeast corner of the Higley townsite, located one mile north and east of the original school. Constructed on a two-acre site, the building cost \$3,000. The Higley School was opened in the fall of 1915.

The development of a school in the Queen Creek area closely followed the influx of population that arrived after Charles Rittenhouse began to develop the area in 1919. From 1920 to 1922, the first classes in the Queen Creek area were held in a small board-and-batten building that had been used as a cook shack for muleskinners working to clear land for G.R. Duncan. Duncan allowed the use of the building and land for the school.

It soon became clear that the small building was unsatisfactory for the growing number of students in the community. Early in 1923, school officials acquired the use of the Presbyterian Home Mission Community Church building for a school. This wooden building, first constructed in 1921, was located on the south side of the tracks in the community of Rittenhouse. The Community Church building served as the community school for the next three years, until 1925. Later, after the completion of the Queen Creek School (Rittenhouse School) in 1925, the wooden Presbyterian Church was used as a school for children of Mexican descent. Faith Sossaman taught English to students there in order to prepare them to enter the main school.

With the growing agricultural development in the Queen Creek area, accompanied by an increase in population, school officials realized that a permanent school building was needed. In 1924, construction began on the new building located on Ellsworth Road one-half mile north of Rittenhouse Road. The new building, constructed of solid brick, was completed late in 1925. School officials continued to use the community church building for the remainder of the school year, until May 15, 1926, to allow for furnishing the new building. The first class was held in the new school, named Rittenhouse School, in the Fall of 1926.

The Rittenhouse (now called Queen Creek) elementary school served the children of the area well. It has survived with very few changes. In 1936-37, the school district took advantage of Federal public works funds to add two classrooms and hallways. Later, in about 1954 a combination shower / locker room was added to the back of the building. This later modification has had no effect on the historic appearance of the building.

Following World War Two, the Queen Creek area witnessed tremendous growth as many who had been stationed in Arizona during the war returned to live. In 1947, recognizing the changes that had taken place in the area, the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors revised the boundaries of Higley School District #60 to remove

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the Queen Creek area. The Board created a new school district, Queen Creek Elementary School District #95, to encompass the Queen Creek area. At the same time, the name of the school itself was changed from Rittenhouse School to Queen Creek School.

In 1948, Queen Creek School District officials realized that the added population of the area necessitated the construction of a new elementary school. In February of 1948, officials authorized a bond issue for the construction of a new elementary school. Completed in 1952, the new school did not replace the old Queen Creek school. Both were used simultaneously for classes. By 1982, with the addition of additional classroom space, the old Queen Creek School was closed to classroom use. It has been used for storage since 1982. In 1992, the building was turned over to the San Tan Historical Society which is making plans for its restoration under an easement granted by the school district.

### **HISTORIC CONTEXT**

### Rural School Centralization in Arizona, 1920-1940

The construction of the Queen Creek School in 1925 is associated with the historic context of rural school centralization which occurred in Arizona from 1920 to 1940. Education developed slowly in early Arizona, as the pioneers were more concerned with making a living than with looking to the future. By 1870, there were 1,923 school-age children in the territory but still no public schools. Governor Anson P.K. Safford, known as the "Father of Arizona Schools," remedied this situation during Queen Creek Elementary School Queen Creek, Maricopa County, AZ

his administration from 1869 to 1877. In 1871, the Territorial Legislature passed the firs tax bill to benefit schools, and expansion quickly followed.

Prior to statehood, the early schools of Arizona were widely scattered because of the vast geographical expanse of the territory and the difficulty of transportation. Students were few, and usually packed tightly in the tiny one or two teacher schools which dotted many small rural communities. Most of these schools were in private homes or on private lands. With statehood in 1912, the State Legislature mandated separate public school facilities, but progress was slow. After World War One, and the publication of a 1918 report titled Educational Conditions in Arizona, educators moved to improve the state's rural school system through consolidation. Between 1920 and 1940, widely scattered small rural schools were consolidated into larger schools at the centers of rural population.

The construction of the Queen Creek School is a particularly good example of this context. Education in Queen Creek was started in rudimentary facilities as outlyers of the Higley School District. As constructed in 1925, the Queen Creek School represented the desire to provide better school facilities as a magnet for students. Increased population, better transportation, and concentrated development all contributed to the centralization of rural Arizona schools.

The construction of the Queen Creek School in 1925 is a significant representation of this context. Rather than expand services to bring students to the Higley School, the Trustees of the district chose to concentrate their efforts at improving conditions closer to the center of population at a new school site. This organizational

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Queen Creek Elementary School Queen Creek, Maricopa County, AZ

emphasis on the efficient use of space was justified on the basis of economics. The central school at Queen Creek was more efficient than several smaller schools, and a better use of funds than sending more students to Higley School. Although the construction of the Queen Creek School is a local example of the centralization of rural schools, this is a pattern that was statewide in scope until 1940. Centralization of rural schools was also emphasized on a national level through the thirties, as evidenced by the 1935 report by the US Commissioner of Education which stressed the reorganization of school units.

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Queen Creek Elementary School Queen Creek, Maricopa County, AZ

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Section Number \_\_\_\_10\_\_\_\_ Page 11

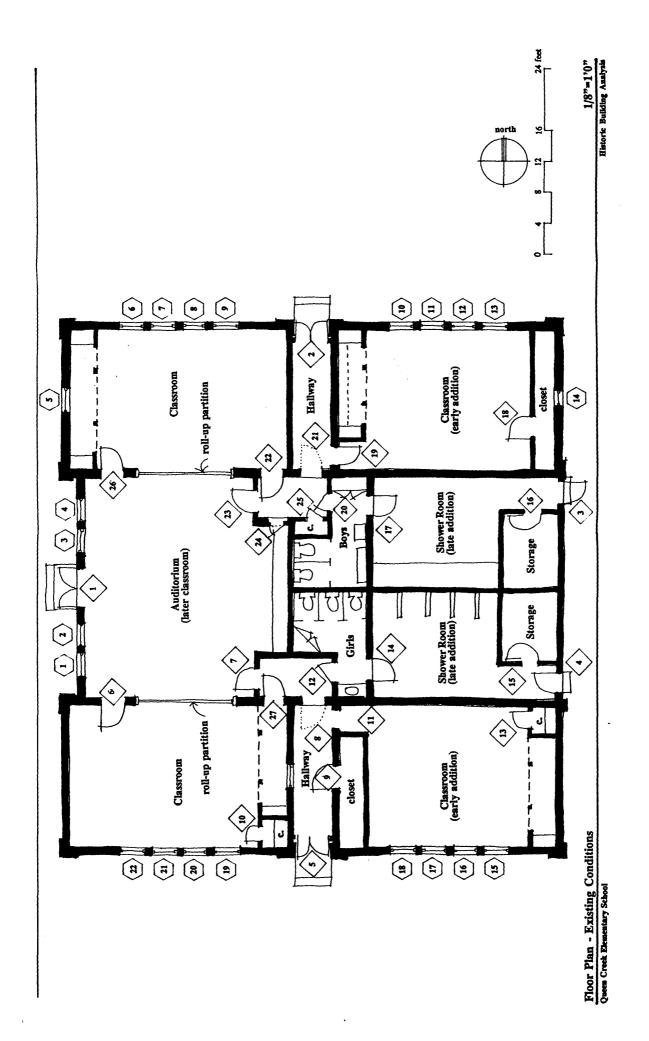
Queen Creek Elementary School Queen Creek, Maricopa County, AZ

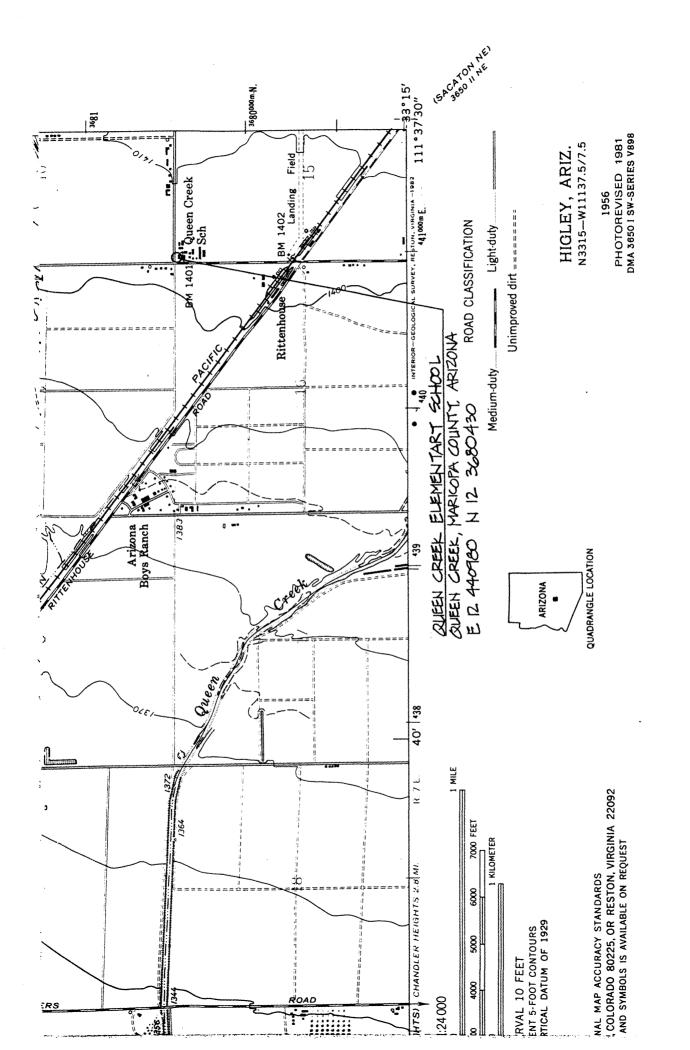
### **VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

(15 2S 7E) North 330 feet of west 660 feet of northwest quarter, except north 33 feetand west 50 feet of roads

### **BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**

The boundary includes the parcel historically associated with the function of the school.





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Photographer: Debora M. Parmiter, AIT Date: March 1996		
Location of Original Negatives:	Ryden Architects 902 W. McDowell Road Phoenix, Arizona 85007	
Photo #	View to	
1	View of existing building looking northeast	
2	View of west elevation looking east	
3	View of north elevation looking south	
4	View of existing building looking southwest	