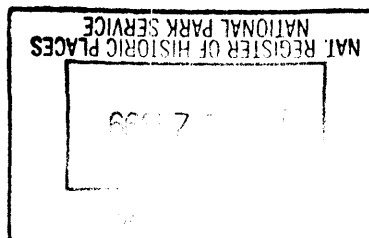


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name JESS VALLEY SCHOOLHOUSE

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number Co. Rd. #64 NA ☐ not for publication

city or town Likely ☒ vicinity

state California code CA county Modoc code 049 zip code 96116

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ 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 ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature]  
Signature of certifying official/Title

4-16-99  
Date

Acting, State Historic Preservation Officer  
State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

☒ ☐ entered in the National Register.  
☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ determined eligible for the  
National Register  
☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ determined not eligible for the  
National Register.

☐ removed from the National  
Register.

☐ other, (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

[Signature]  
Signature of the Keeper

5/20/99  
Date of Action

Jess Valley School House  
Name of Property

Modoc County, California  
County and State

### 5. Classification

#### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- ☒ private  
☐ public-local  
☐ public-State  
☐ public-Federal

#### Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- ☐ building(s)  
☐ district  
☐ site  
☐ structure  
☐ object

#### Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing
( 1 )	
_____	_____ buildings
_____	_____ sites
_____	_____ structures
_____	_____ objects
( 1 )	_____ Total

#### Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N / A

#### Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N / A

### 6. Function or Use

#### Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Education/School

#### Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Vacant

### 7. Description

#### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

No style

#### Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Piers sitting on rock  
walls weatherboard

roof Tin

other \_\_\_\_\_

#### Narrative Description

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

Jess Valley School House  
Name of Property

Modoc County, California  
County and State

## 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.)

- ☒ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☐ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B** removed from its original location.
- ☐ **C** a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ **D** a cemetery.
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ **F** a commemorative property.
- ☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Education

Social History

### Period of Significance

1900-1937

### Significant Dates

N/A

### Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

### Cultural Affiliation

N/A

### Architect/Builder

Unknown

## 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):

- ☐ 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
- ☐ Other

Name of repository:

County Assessor

County Superintendent of Schools

Jess Valley School House  
Name of Property

Modoc County, California  
County and State

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre

### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 10 725305 4571700  
Zone Easting Northing  
2         

3           
Zone Easting Northing  
4           
☐ See continuation sheet

### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Karol E. Woodward, Director  
Modoc County Historical Society  
organization    date     
street & number Co. Rd., #57, P.O. Box 1575 telephone (530) 233-3786  
city or town Alturas state CA zip code 96101

### 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 FPO for any additional items)

### Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Rodney Flournoy  
P.O. Box 7 (530) 233-4777  
street & number    telephone     
city or town Likely state CA zip code 96116

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Jess Valley Schoolhouse  
Modoc County, CA

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### SUMMARY

The Jess Valley Schoolhouse is located on a grassy slope near Soup Creek 12.2 miles east of Likely in Modoc County. The one-room schoolhouse was built in 1900 on a one-acre parcel donated by the Walter Brooks family. The school building measures 19 feet by 32 feet. It is wood frame and front gabled with gable returns and corner boards. The horizontal pine tongue and groove siding is painted white. The side and rear elevations each have two double hung, six over six windows. The south facing front elevation has two doors – one for boys and one for girls – and one centered double hung, six over six window. A badly deteriorated covered porch extends across the front elevation. The original shake roof has been replaced with tin. The schoolhouse, although dilapidated, looks basically like it did during the period of significance.

### DESCRIPTION

The school building was built by Orville and Gus Sweeney who probably also designed it. The design is typical of one-room schools built throughout the country in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

By the late 1870s and increasingly by the 1880s and 1890s, frame one-room schools began appearing all over the West, becoming more functional as they moved west with the frontier. These buildings usually had a front entrance that faced south, a brick chimney or stovepipe at the north end of the building and a bank of three windows on the east and west sides...Architectural plans were rarely used; a builder was simply given the required dimensions and asked to produce a school based on his practical knowledge of headers and stringers and gabled roofs. Such schools dotted the plains wherever homesteaders settled.

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**Jess Valley Schoolhouse  
Modoc County, CA**

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Although some of the district officers may have added a vestibule or cloakroom to act as a buffer against the frigid prairie winds, frame schools were virtually identical in appearance. (Gulliford, *American's Country Schools*)

Inside the Jess Valley Schoolhouse's two front doors are two cloakrooms – one for boys and one for girls. Between the two cloakrooms are a storage area and a library alcove. The large, single classroom is beyond the storage area and library. The floor is bare boards. A flat topped stove, used to cook and to heat the room, is off to one side at the rear of the room. There was a desk for the teacher and single and double desks for the students.

Interiors of one-room schools varied from district to district. The quality and quantity of furnishings depended on the district's parents and their financial commitment to education. Floors were generally hardwood, with the walls painted white or cream. Late 19<sup>th</sup>-century schools featured dark wainscoting approximately 4 ½ feet up from the floor or just beneath the windows. Windows consisted of simple sash without decorative millwork. The more elaborate hood molds were reserved for the building's exterior. Most schools had curtains, but few had window shades. Differences in climate were not reflected in schools' interiors except for the installation of much larger stoves in cold areas. Country schools had no insulation or only dead air space between the interior and the brick and clapboard walls. Like the buildings themselves, furnishings and interior appointments remained eclectic until the push for standardization and major rural school reforms. (Gulliford, *America's Country Schools*)

After the school closed in 1939, different people lived in the building. A cook stove was installed and cupboards put up, but no structural changes have been made. Electricity

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Jess Valley Schoolhouse  
Modoc County, CA

was brought to Jess Valley ranches and the school building in 1948. Before 1948, kerosene lamps and Coleman lanterns provided light. The doors and windows appear to be original. The only major change to the building is the tin roof, which replaced the original shake roof.

Outside the proposed National Register boundaries, among the Ponderosa pine trees, other buildings and structures existed near the schoolhouse. There was a shed 50 yards to the north of the school that was used to store wood and hay for the horses the children rode to school. The shed also provided shelter for the horses. The date of this shed is unknown. A fence went around the front of the schoolhouse to form a corral to keep the horses from wandering home during the school day. There were two "2 hole" outhouses near the back fence, one for boys and the other for girls. There was no well; drinking water came from Soup Creek, which runs about 40 yards to the east of the schoolhouse. It was the job of the students to keep the water bucket full for drinking and to perform the daily janitorial work. The valley ranchers did structural maintenance on a voluntary basis.

The teachers boarded with different families in Jess Valley until the one-room house was built near the schoolhouse for the teacher and his or her family.

Usually a teacher's pay included room and board; the teacher would shuttle from home to home, sharing a bed with one or more children. He or she stayed longest with the greatest number of children, and frequently, the least privacy and provisions. Sometimes the teacher would sleep alone, but seldom in much comfort or privacy.

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Jess Valley Schoolhouse  
Modoc County, CA

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In *Memoirs of South Dakota Retired Teachers* (1976), edited by Ruth Morgan,  
Julia Hall recalled:

My bedroom was an unfinished attic room with an outside stairway which  
at times was slick with ice and snow...the room was heated with a small  
wood and coal stove; we used a kerosene lamp. I kept my clothes under  
the covers so they would be warm in the morning; sometimes my bed  
was covered with snow. I would go downstairs to wash, eat breakfast  
and take my school bag and pail to start walking one and a half miles to  
school. (Gulliford, *America's Country Schools*)

In the late 1920s or early 1930s, Walter Cantrall built a one-room house about 30 yards  
northeast of the Jess Valley Schoolhouse as teacher housing. If not comfort, at least  
privacy was now provided.



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Jess Valley Schoolhouse  
Modoc County

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## SUMMARY

The Jess Valley Schoolhouse is significant at the local level under Criterion A in the area of education for the important role the school played as the only elementary school in rural Jess Valley during the years 1900 until 1939, when the school was closed. In 1939 the school closed due to lack of attendance and the Jess Valley School District was absorbed into the Likely South Fork School District. The school building is also locally significant under Criterion A in the area of social history for its role as an important community center.

## SIGNIFICANCE

Jess Valley is a remote valley roughly seven miles long and four miles wide. The wagon roads, which wandered around lava plateaus and hills, were very poor and in good weather it took at least half a day or more to get to the nearest town of Likely for supplies. Needless to say, the people of the valley didn't run to the store just for a loaf of bread. The South Fork of the Pit River runs out of Jess Valley through a canyon several hundred feet deep with huge rockslides from the top of the banks of South Fork. In 1919, a road was finally cut through all the rockslides and the trip from Jess Valley to Likely was cut to nine miles. The trip was now reduced to three or four hours.

At the turn of the century, there were between ten and 15 families living in the valley. All had large families of between six and 12 children. The Jess Valley Schoolhouse was constructed in 1900 to meet the educational needs of these children. The building was also used by local families as a social center for dances, potluck dinners, occasional church services, and public meetings.

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Jess Valley Schoolhouse  
Modoc County, CA

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Andrew Gulliford writes in *America's Country Schools*:

For almost 250 years the country school was the backbone of American education. As late as 1913, one-half of the schoolchildren in the United States were enrolled in the country's 212,000 one-room schools. Although only about 835 of these one-teacher, one-room schools, or .05 percent of all public school buildings, remain in use today, the country school continues to be a powerful cultural symbol to many Americans.

...In some country schools, discipline was lax and learning incidental, but other schools were orderly, efficient and staunchly supported by the community, offering children an opportunity for education that few of their parents had enjoyed. Adults, too, were served by the local school. They came together at the school to hold meetings, cast ballots and participate in fund raisers and celebrations: The school housed the activities that joined people into a community, and the identity of rural communities became inextricably linked with their schools.

The framers of California's first constitution in 1849 set the pattern for the state's role in the education of its citizens. Meeting in Monterey, they debated the theory of public education, finally deciding in its favor. The result was the constitutional creation of the post of Superintendent of Public Instruction, a job to be filled by statewide vote every three years. In 1851, the first free public school opened in San Francisco. In 1853, four years after the adoption of the Constitution, Governor John Bigler asked the Legislature to abolish the superintendency, arguing the clerk of the Supreme Court could handle school affairs in his spare time. The Legislature did not agree; thereafter, superintendents led the fight for better public schools. Each year the superintendent

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Modoc County, CA

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went before the Legislature asking for more tax support for public schools, longer school years, and high schools. In 1862, the first state normal school was funded to provide trained teachers. State responsibility for uniform textbook series and courses of study in 1866 led to compulsory school attendance in 1874 for children eight to 14 years old and guaranteed state aid for each school based on the number of children in each district. In 1911, local school districts received state aid only for children in school, instead of for all children living in the district. Textbooks became free in 1912. In 1921, the State Department of Education was established to perform the functions of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. In the same year, local school boards were given the task of setting their own budgets and taxes.

A comprehensive survey of California's one-room schoolhouses has not been undertaken, so it is not known how many were built and how many remain throughout the state today in 1998. It is known that:

During the school year 1934-35, California operated 1,360 one-room schools, and in 32 California counties one-room schools represented more than 50 percent of the school buildings; across the nation, however, one-room schools had been abandoned near urban areas and throughout the Midwest. The closing of one-room country schools forever changed the rural American landscape and diminished close community ties and a sense of social cohesion among rural Americans. (Gulliford, *American's Country School*)

In California eight one-room schools are currently listed on the National Register: Centerville Schoolhouse in Butte County, Grizzly Bluff School in Humboldt County, Dixie Schoolhouse in Marin County, Watson School in Sonoma County, Douglas Flat School in Calaveras County, Canon School in Yolo County, Old Weber School in San Joaquin

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County, and Brighton School in Sacramento County. More have been documented in local surveys.

The Common School Reports for Modoc County in 1900, the year the Jess Valley Schoolhouse was built, show there were thirty wood and two brick schoolhouses in the county at that time. The teacher for the Jess Valley Schoolhouse was Florence Smith who had a primary teacher's certificate, 23 months teaching experience, and was paid \$50 a month. The school was open 152 days (7.6 months) that year and Ms. Smith's total salary for the school year was \$380. The schoolroom had 16 seats. Enrollment included four boys and six girls. Nine were primary students; one was a grammar student. Average daily enrollment in 1900 was six students. The school used only the prescribed textbooks, which numbered 85 at the close of the school year.

The people of Jess Valley had a very strong interest in their children's education. They were hard working people going from early morning to late at night. They didn't have time to record everything that occurred. Also recording was considered a waste of paper. Paper was scarce and who would read it anyway, they would ask. The secretary of the board of trustees kept any records of meetings and this house burned to the ground. The attendance was eight to 15 children six to 14 years old. After eighth grade graduations, the children went to high school in Alturas. Some of the families moved to Likely for the school year, and the children took the bus to Alturas. Other families moved or boarded their children in Alturas for the winter.

The school year began in September and ended the end of May. The teachers taught history, English, penmanship, arithmetic, reading, and singing. School started at 9:00 a.m. and ended at 3:30 p.m. five days a week. Some of the books used were *Ethics for Young People* by C.C. Everett, 1891; *Primer of Hygiene* by John W. Ritchie and Joseph

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S. Caldwell, 1911; *California State Series, History of the United States*; and *California State Series, First Reader*.

James Addicott was an early teacher at the Jess Valley School. His wages were seven \$20 gold pieces for the fall term. Another teacher was Mrs. Blanche Payne, who lived 18 miles away on a ranch on Parker Creek with her husband. During the week she stayed near the school. On weekends she returned home on horseback over mountain trails. Friday she would let school out early so she could get started for home. She wore a leather riding skirt that was so heavy the small children couldn't lift it. Other teachers over the years were Mrs. Carter, Mrs. Payne, Mrs. Deuvell, Mrs. Harris, Mrs. Sweeney, and Mr. Lester Phillips.

Country schoolteachers had to reflect faithfully the values of the rural communities in which they taught. Yet, in their bearing and in their teaching they were expected to impart a sense of culture and knowledge. As a vital member of the community, the teacher functioned as the social pivot on which all activities turned. If a teacher became too authoritarian or seemed to consider herself or himself socially superior to the community fold, she or he was quickly dismissed. Teachers served as an example and inspiration to the young and a social equal for adults.

One-room schoolteachers simultaneously performed several exceedingly difficult roles. School boards expected much from them for a very small salary. That country school teachers of both sexes succeeded in providing children with the rudiments of an education and adults with social opportunities is proof of their pluck and perseverance on the frontier. (Gulliford, *America's Country Schools*)

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Marion Campbell, a student who attended Jess Valley Schoolhouse from first through eighth grades had some interesting tales to tell. It was the boys' job to keep the wood box full for the heating stove and the water bucket full for drinking water from the dipper. Each fall, the ranchers would haul wood to the school for winter's use. They also supplied hay for the horses the children rode to school. When it got real cold in winter, sometimes down to 40 degrees below zero, families would send a chunk of meat as well as go through their cellars for vegetables which the children would bring so the teacher could cook a stew on the flat top heating stove.

The school was the only public meeting place in Jess Valley. There is no written record of any specific event being held in the building, but students who are still living remember the great dances for the whole family, where the piano and fiddle supplied the music. Entertainment was an outlet for local residents after being cooped up all winter in their homes.

When 15 miles was a long way to travel in one day with a team of horses, the schoolhouse was the social center of the community. The more remote the area, the more important the school. All groups met there - the wheat growers association, 4-H clubs and homemakers, sewing and quilting clubs. County agents gave demonstrations of new farming products or techniques there. Ladies aid societies met there. After a wedding, friends would hold a shivaree for the newly married couple at the schoolhouse. Baseball games and field days drew people to the school for wheelbarrow races and potato-balancing contests. When rural people thought about gathering with friends and neighbors, airing complaints about crops and the weather, trading recipes and dress patterns and arguing about politics, they thought about the school.

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Jess Valley Schoolhouse  
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Although the trustees tried to hire teachers with two or three children to help keep the attendance up so they could keep the school open, in 1939, school instruction in the Jess Valley Schoolhouse ceased due to lack of enrollment. That same year, the American Association of School Administrators wrote:

Keep the schools and the government of the schools close to the people, so that the citizens generally, including the parents and taxpayers, may know what their schools are doing, and may have an effective voice in the school program....The relationship of the schools to the natural community and the closeness of the school to the people are of first-rate educational significance and are not to be sacrificed in the interest of "efficiency." If such a sacrifice is made to establish economical districts, we will find in a generation that something of deep significance which money cannot buy has been destroyed.

## CONCLUSION

Historian Wayne E. Fuller wrote in 1982:

In all America there was, perhaps, no better symbol of the shared community life people remembered than the one-room schoolhouse standing in the center of an independent school district...The people of the district had voted for its construction, picked the place where it would stand and controlled its use when it was completed...At one stage or another of this process, they had, in most cases, even fought over it as families fight; yet it belonged to all the district's families, and because it was their own, most people in the community were interested in what took place there. (Fuller, *The Old Country School*)

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Continuation Sheet**

Jess Valley School House  
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**Geographical Data**

Verbal Boundary Description

The South  $\frac{1}{2}$  acre of land, encompassing the schoolhouse located at the NW corner of the NE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Section 36, T40N, R14E, MDM, more particularly described as follows:

Beginning at the NW Corner of the NE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Section 36 said Township and Range;

Thence running in an Easterly direction, along the north line of said NE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Section 36, for a distance of 165 feet;

Thence running in a Southerly direction, parallel to the west line of said NE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Section 36, for a distance of 132 feet;

Thence running in a Westerly direction, parallel to the north line of said NE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Section 36, for a distance of 165 feet to a point on the west line of aforesaid NE  $\frac{1}{4}$ ;

Thence running in a Northerly direction, along said west line of the NW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Section 36, for a distance of 132 feet to the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification

This boundary was selected in order to encompass the school house and all its historic setting. The boundary does not include the noncontributing buildings that were built during a later period and no longer retain their integrity.

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Jess Valley School House  
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