

# HISTORY COLORADO COLORADO STATE REGISTER OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES NOMINATION FORM

**SECTION I**

**Name of Property**

Historic Name Yellow Creek Schoolhouse

Other Names 5RB.3058/Yellow Creek School

**Address of Property**

[ ] address not for publication

Street Address Colorado State Highway 64

City vicinity of Meeker, CO County Rio Blanco Zip 81641 (Meeker)

**Present Owner of Property**

(for multiple ownership, list the names and addresses of each owner on one or more continuation sheets)

Name Bureau of Land Management, White River Field Office

Address 220 E. Market St Phone 970-878-3800

City Meeker State CO Zip 81641

**Owner Consent for Nomination**

(attach signed consent from each owner of property - see attached form)

**Preparer of Nomination**

Name Steven F. Mehls (for property owner) Date 4/26/2022

Organization Espinoza Consulting Services

Address P.O. Box 571 Phone 800-511-8685

City La Jara State CO Zip 81140

<p><b>FOR OFFICIAL USE:</b></p> <p><u>June 1, 2022</u> Nomination Received</p> <p><u>9/16/22</u> Review Board Recommendation  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Approval <input type="checkbox"/> Denial</p>	<p>Site Number <u>5RB.3058</u></p> <p><u>9/28/22</u> HC Board State Register Listing  <input type="checkbox"/> Approved <input type="checkbox"/> Denied</p> <p>Listing Criteria <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/> B <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> D <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> E</p>
<p> <u>Patricia A. Eidman, Deputy SHPO</u></p> <p>Certification of Listing: Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer HISTORY COLORADO</p>	
<p><u>October 12, 2022</u> Date</p>	

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**SECTION II**

**Local Historic Designation**

Has the property received local historic designation?

no

yes ---  individually designated  designated as part of a historic district

Date designated \_\_\_\_\_

Designated by \_\_\_\_\_ (Name of municipality or county)

**Use of Property**

Historic Education and Community Center followed by Agricultural Storage

Current Vacant

**Original Owner** George L. Lambert

Source of Information Bureau of Land Management, Original Cash Entry Patent, Glenwood Springs Land Office, 3 June 1903)

**Year of Construction** ca. 1902

Source of Information Herald Times newspaper quoted in Site Record Form for 5RB.3058

**Architect, Builder, Engineer, Artist or Designer** Unknown; likely George Lambert

Source of Information Herald Times newspaper quoted in Site Record Form for 5RB.3058

**Locational Status**

Original location of resource(s)

Resource(s) moved to current location

Date of move \_\_\_\_\_

**For Office Use Only**

Property Type:  building(s)  district  site  structure  object  area

Architectural Style/Engineering Type: One-Room Schoolhouse

Period of Significance: 1906-1943

Level of Significance:  Local  State  National

Multiple Property Submission: Rural School Buildings Multiple Property Documentation Form

Acreage 1.6

P.M. 6th Township 3N Range 98W Section 5 Quarter Sections NE ¼ SE ¼

UTM Reference: Zone 13N Easting 209743 Northing 4451950 NAD83

Site Elevation: 5540 feet

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## SECTION III

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### DESCRIPTION AND ALTERATIONS

The information and plates used in this section of the nomination are adapted from *Yellow Creek Schoolhouse State Highway 64 Meeker, Colorado, Historic Structure Assessment and Preservation Plan* completed in 2021 by Form + Works and Alpine Archaeological Consultants and from the site record form for the Yellow Creek School (5RB.3058) prepared by Michelle Slaughter of Alpine Archaeological Consultants unless otherwise noted.

### Setting Description

The Yellow Creek Schoolhouse is located in northern Rio Blanco County, approximately six-tenths of a mile south of the boundary between Rio Blanco and Moffat Counties. Colorado State Highway 64 and the White River both lie between the county boundary and the schoolhouse. The town of Rangely lies approximately four and one-half miles to the southwest of the schoolhouse and Meeker is 30 miles to the east-southeast via Colorado State Highway 64. The highway is approximately 200 feet north of the building and the White River is less than one-quarter mile north of the highway. Yellow Creek, the school's namesake, flows generally south to north approximately one-third mile east of the schoolhouse.

The Yellow Creek Schoolhouse's current setting includes the remains of a fence that once surrounded the school building and schoolyard. Today 14 deteriorated wood fence posts remain (Figure 1) with a possible gate location to the north currently indicated by two fence posts set closer together than elsewhere around the schoolhouse. Three depressions are near the schoolhouse that likely represent the locations of two single outhouses, one for each gender, and a larger privy, speculated to have had two rooms. Other features observed at the site include three lumber scatters interpreted to be the result of three trash disposal episodes rather than the remains of buildings. There is another, partially buried metal feature on the site that had an unknown function.

The schoolhouse sits on a flat terrace that is part of White River floodplain. The river is located approximately one-quarter mile north of the building. Low mesas and hills lie to the north and south of the terrace where the schoolhouse is. Vegetation around and on the site includes sagebrush, cactus, low grasses, cheat grass, greasewood, and occasional small willows that are found primarily north of the building. A lateral ditch from the Yellow Creek Ditch is situated north and west of the site. According to records from the State Engineer's Office the main ditch diverted from the White River to the north of the school site. The water was appropriated in 1905 (January 15) and adjudicated on September 5, 1911. Current information from the State Engineer indicates the ditch and the lateral near the school site are no longer active. The lateral is outside the boundary of the Yellow Creek Schoolhouse site.<sup>1</sup> Colorado State Highway 64 is situated north of the lateral.

### Building Description

The Yellow Creek School is a one-story gable roofed building with a rectangular footprint oriented north-northeast to south-southwest. The building measures 23 feet and 8 inches from north to south and 19 feet and 3 inches east to west and has a single interior room. The rustic vernacular building used construction methods and materials typical of the early twentieth century. It served as a one-room schoolhouse for nearly four decades.

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<sup>1</sup>Anonymous "GIS & Maps Division of Water Resources." n.d. [dwr.colorado.gov](https://dwr.colorado.gov). Accessed July 22, 2022. <https://dwr.colorado.gov/services/data-information/gis> and <https://dwr.state.co.us/Tools/Structures/4302232>.

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The building's foundation consists of apparently random stones at the corners and along the perimeter walls with the wood floor framing sitting on grade. The exterior walls are made of logs with square-notched corners. The logs vary in diameter. Construction materials are the same for all four walls.

In 1915, after the building was an active school, the exterior walls were covered with pressed tin siding textured to appear like roughly finished bricks. The northern façade is one of the two gable ends and is of the same construction as the other three walls. There is horizontal planking under the gable on top of the wall logs. Some of the tin sheets are loose on this and all the walls. The building's one door is centered in this facade. The entry door is a single five-panel stile and rail wood door. The threshold sits approximately 13 inches above grade and does not have any indication that a step was ever present. At one time there was a sign over the door that said "Yellow Creek School."<sup>2</sup>

The southern façade has no fenestration, but has the same design, methods used for construction and materials as the northern façade. The eastern and western facades each have two window openings with frames and surrounds, but no sashes remain. Historic images of the building indicate the windows were double hung sashes (four over four light) made of wood.

The building has a medium-pitch, gable roof. The sloping faces of the roof are on the east and west. The 1908 deed from George Lambert to the school district indicates that the roof was originally covered with dirt followed by wood shingles likely added at the time of the 1915 recladding of the walls.<sup>3</sup> In 1989 the building had wood shingles, but today only wood boards remain (Plates 1 and 2). One flue (stove pipe) protrudes from the north end of the east roof slope. Today the roof retains a rolled ridge cap, wood shingle remnants, and a sheet metal cover at the location of a previous flue pipe penetration.

The interior consists of one room without closets or any other interior divisions indicating its historic function as a one-room school. Extant interior materials include wood flooring, wall board on the walls, and a ceiling covered with pressed tin ceiling panels. Much of the interior remains intact.

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<sup>2</sup> Site Form 5RB.3058

<sup>3</sup> Staff Writers, *Yellow Creek Schoolhouse State Highway 64 Meeker, Colorado, Historic Structure Assessment and Preservation Plan*. Eastlake, CO: Form + Works, LLC and Alpine Archaeological Consultants, Inc., 2021, p. 13; hereafter cited: Staff Writers, op. cit.

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Plate 1. Oblique view of Yellow Creek Schoolhouse showing north and east facades and wood shingles on roof. Looking southwest. 1989 photo by Robert B. Watson on file at White River Field Office, Bureau of Land Management.

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Plate 2. Eastern façade showing roof without shingles in 2020. Looking west, Photo 12.

### Construction History

The architectural history of the Yellow Creek Schoolhouse is, like the overall history, incomplete at best. The known alterations include the addition of the current metal siding undertaken by the Shankland brothers (uncertain date between 1908 and 1915) and new roofing, also funded by the Shankland family thought to have been completed ca. 1915. At some time after the new siding was put on the building, but before 1937, a rear addition was added to the school and was removed at some time before 1989 (based on photographic evidence). Finally, a sign that said “Yellow Creek School” once hung over the door and it has since been removed. The alterations are consistent with a building that is in use and generally date to the historic period. They are not considered to denigrate the integrity of the building or the overall site.

### INTEGRITY

The school building is dilapidated but still standing with the roof intact. The building is in overall poor condition due primarily to natural factors, especially weathering. These impacts are exacerbated by a lack of maintenance in the absence of on-going use. Nonetheless, the resource retains sufficient fabric made up of historic and original materials to demonstrate the design, materials, and workmanship of the building as well as its function as a one room schoolhouse as explained in detail below.

The Yellow Creek Schoolhouse retains all seven elements of integrity at varying levels sufficient to demonstrate its associations with the three applicable Areas of Significance of Architecture, Education, and Social History. The building is in its original location. The setting remains much as it was during the historic period aside from

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some changes in the vegetation and the encroachment of natural vegetation into the interior of the fenced area that has been interpreted as the schoolyard. The one-room design of the building remains and it retains characteristics common to many rural schools such as number, placement and size of the windows, lack of interior partitioning, and a single entrance. The historic materials generally remain intact and represent the period of significance. The missing wood shingles do detract from the integrity of materials, but not to a large enough degree to severely detract from the overall building integrity. Workmanship integrity remains to a high degree giving testimony to the building techniques commonly in use for small, rural buildings during the early twentieth century. The physical presence of the schoolhouse readily indicates the character and aesthetics of an early twentieth century one-room school. The only modern infrastructure features in the setting are State Highway 64 and a Tri-State transmission line. Thus, the integrity of feeling remains intact. Finally, the building retains sufficient fabric to communicate the sense of its historic function as a rural schoolhouse. As a result, it retains good integrity of association.

**SECTION IV**

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**Significance of Property**

**Nomination Criteria**

- A** - property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to history
- B** - property is connected with persons significant in history
- C** - property has distinctive characteristics of a type, period, method of construction or artisan
- D** - property is of geographic importance
- E** - property contains the possibility of important discoveries related to prehistory or history

**Areas of Significance**

- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Economics                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape                 |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Education          | Architecture                                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Archaeology – prehistoric          | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Law                       |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Archaeology – historic  | <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment/ Recreation     | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                                | <input type="checkbox"/> Ethnic Heritage               | <input type="checkbox"/> Military                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Exploration/ Settlement       | <input type="checkbox"/> Performing Arts           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Geography/ Community Identity | <input type="checkbox"/> Politics/ Government      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community Planning and Development | <input type="checkbox"/> Health/Medicine               | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Science                   |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention                     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social History |
|   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation            |

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### SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENT

(Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, areas of significance, and justification for the period of significance.)

The Yellow Creek Schoolhouse merits inclusion in the Colorado State Register of Historic Properties as a representative of rural schools in Rio Blanco County during the first half of the twentieth century. The Yellow Creek Schoolhouse's areas of significance include Architecture, Archaeology (Historic), Education, and Social History. The building is significant at the local level for its role in the development of Rio Blanco County from the time of its first educational use in 1906 until the closure of the school in 1943 (its Criterion A Period of Significance). The schoolhouse possesses significance under Criterion A in the areas of Education and Social History for its associations with and role in the rural community of the White River region of Colorado. The building meets the registration requirements of the Schoolhouse Property Type as defined in the Multiple Property Documentation Form for Rural School Buildings in Colorado. The Yellow Creek Schoolhouse is also eligible under Criterion C in the area of significance of Architecture as it exhibits the characteristics of such a building as discussed in the Schoolhouse section of the aforementioned Multiple Property documentation form. Moreover, the schoolhouse is of log construction, making it somewhat unique in Colorado rural schools. The Yellow Creek Schoolhouse serves as a local representation of the once common one-room rural school building type once found across the county, region and much of Colorado. The architectural significance is linked to the building's original construction in 1906. That year is the period of significance for Criterion C. The site is considered significant under Criterion E for the information the privy pits may contain. The Period of Significance for Criterion E is the same as for Criterion A above. Each of these points will be explained in the following paragraphs. The figures and plates used in this section of the nomination are adapted from a report titled *Yellow Creek Schoolhouse State Highway 64 Meeker, Colorado, Historic Structure Assessment and Preservation Plan* completed in 2021 by Form + Works and Alpine Archaeological Consultants.

The Yellow Creek Schoolhouse is considered eligible for inclusion in the Colorado State Register of Historic Properties at the local level under Criterion A within the Area of Significance of Education. The building's Period of Significance for this Area of Significance lasts from 1906 when it opened as a school through 1943 and the school's closure. It served as the education center of school age children of the northern Rio Blanco County area for nearly forty years. Publications on local history and informants relate numerous memories about their school experiences in the rural schools of Rio Blanco County and the influences those days had on their lives (see History section below).<sup>4</sup> Thus, the building has clear associations with the area of significance of Education for Rio Blanco County. The school also shares an important characteristic with other rural Colorado schools as in that the majority of the teachers were women, a pattern also repeated across much of the nation. The Yellow Creek Schoolhouse shares many of the other characteristics identified in the Rural Schools in Colorado Multiple Property Documentation Form. Rural schools "were often the first, and sometimes the only school building in the area for many years, and are closely associated with all aspects of public education in rural Colorado".<sup>5</sup> The rural school also represented the American commitment to providing a basic education to all children in the nation while recognizing the isolation of many in parts of the country outside cities and towns.<sup>6</sup>

Similar to other rural schools, the Yellow Creek Schoolhouse building also served as a social center for local residents, likely including families with pupils as well as those without children. Thus, the Yellow Creek Schoolhouse is considered eligible for inclusion in the Colorado State Register of Historic Properties at the local level under Criterion A within the Area of Significance of Social History. The building's Period of Significance

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<sup>4</sup> This information was gleaned from Bury, op. cit. and Meeker History Book Committee, ed. *This is What I Remember: White River Colorado 100 Year Pioneer History 1889-1989*, Volume III (Meeker, CO: Rio Blanco County Historical Society, 1991).

<sup>5</sup> Doggett and Wilson op. cit., p. F29.

<sup>6</sup> Staff Writers op. cit., p. 40.

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under this Area of Significance lasts from 1906 when it opened as a school through 1943 and the school's closure. As with many other rural schools in Colorado and across rural America served similar roles over time. For example, the earliest local newspaper articles (March 1906) about Yellow Creek School mention an upcoming dance and then reported on its success.<sup>7</sup> The available information likewise indicates that events such as school Christmas programs were well-attended and often anticipated by the local community. The schoolhouse also hosted at least one wedding.<sup>8</sup> This information reflects the significance of the school as a social center for the community it served. As a result, the building has clear associations with the Social History area of significance.<sup>9</sup> The Yellow Creek Schoolhouse served as a focal point for local social activities as did rural schools across Colorado and the nation.<sup>10</sup>

The Yellow Creek Schoolhouse is considered significant under Criterion C and the Area of Significance of Architecture for the Period of Significance of 1906, its year of construction and opening as a school. The Colorado Rural Schools Thematic National Register nomination also provides a background for evaluation of the Yellow Creek Schoolhouse for inclusion in the Colorado State Register of Historic Properties. The design of many American rural schools from the Midwest to the Rocky Mountains can be traced to the utilitarian plans used by churches in the New England states. School designers and builders relied on function-based simplicity as their guiding principle.<sup>11</sup> The builders and designers relied on easily accessed building materials, either those that could be acquired locally or those that could be readily imported. This led to extensive use of wood, either as logs, or dimensioned lumber. In the case of this schoolhouse logs were used for the original walls, making it somewhat unique for rural schools in Colorado. Yellow Creek Schoolhouse demonstrates all these characteristics being a log and lumber building with imported metal siding and roofing applied at a later date (1915) as mentioned above.

Typically, the schoolhouse was only one story in height and had a rectangular footprint with a comparatively small area, frequently less than 1,200 square feet.<sup>12</sup> Reliance on natural light led builders to incorporate large windows that could be opened allowing both light and ventilation. Window placement used the long walls to provide the greatest light possible for the pupils and avoid backlighting the teacher by eliminating windows in the wall behind the instructor's desk. The teacher's desk commonly was opposite the door. The window and door arrangement and apparent interior layout of the Yellow Creek Schoolhouse indicate that it shared these common characteristics. It is likely, but unconfirmed, that the common practice of separating the seating for boys and girls onto the two sides of the main aisle down the center of the school room was also practiced at the Yellow Creek Schoolhouse. Wood or coal stoves typically heated the schoolhouses and two privies separated by gender provided the restroom facilities for these schools.<sup>13</sup> A stovepipe is visible protruding from the roof of the building that would indicate the school had a stove for heat. No standing privies were recorded at the school site; however, previous survey of the site did locate some depressions likely to be privy pits.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Staff Writers op. cit. p., 10.

<sup>8</sup> See information in Staff Writers op. cit. and Michelle Slaughter, Yellow Creek School 5RB.3058Site Record Form. Montrose, CO: Alpine Archaeological Consultants, Copy on file at History Colorado, Office of Archaeology and Historic Places, 2020, hereafter cited: Slaughter op. cit.

<sup>9</sup>Doggett and Wilson op. cit., pp. E2-12.

<sup>10</sup> Staff Writers op. cit., pp. 8-9.

<sup>11</sup> Doggett and Wilson op. cit., pp. E14 and E16 and see Wayne F. Fuller, *One-Room Schools of the Middle West* (Lawrence, KS.: University of Kansas Press, 1994); hereafter cited Fuller op. cit.

<sup>12</sup> Doggett and Wilson op. cit., p. E22

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., pp. E17, 22, 23, 26 and Fuller op. cit.

<sup>14</sup> Slaughter op. cit. see features descriptions.

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The site is considered significant under Criterion E and historic archaeology. Yellow Creek School retains the potential for contributing information important to local history under Criterion E of the Colorado State Register. Subsurface features and artifacts may be present at the site. Notably, Features 1–3 are possible outhouse depressions and are likely locations for buried artifact cultural deposits that could shed additional light on day-to-day life at the school.

Based on the foregoing discussion the school merits inclusion in the Colorado State Register of Historic Place and retains the necessary significance under Criterion A within the Areas of Significance of Education and Social History, Criterion C within the Area of Significance of Architecture, and Criterion E for its information potential in the realm of historic archaeology.

Despite its somewhat deteriorated condition the building also retains sufficient historic integrity to convey its relationships to the specified Criteria and Areas of Significance. With a Period of Significance spanning from 1906 into 1943, the building meets age requirements without need for an exception as well. Overall, the Yellow Creek Schoolhouse remains as an outstanding example of a one-room schoolhouse built and used in the early to mid-twentieth century in northwestern Colorado.

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### DEVELOPMENTAL HISTORY / ADDITIONAL HISTORIC CONTEXT INFORMATION (if appropriate)

#### Early Development of Rio Blanco County

The history of human occupation and use of modern Rio Blanco County dates back thousands of years. Among the most well-known prehistoric resources are those of the Fremont culture. The most famous of those is no doubt Cañon Pintado. The canyon contains numerous examples of prehistoric rock art that experts attribute to the Fremont who apparently inhabited the area from approximately AD 400 and 1100. Later, from the mid-sixteenth century to near the end of the nineteenth century, the Ute occupied the White River region. While three bands of Ute exploited resources of the area, the Yampa were the most frequent users and were known to have wintered in the White River valley. The Ute hunted, fished, and gathered native plants. The Spanish occupation of New Mexico led to a revolution in Ute lifeways. By the mid-seventeenth century they had acquired horses from the Spaniards that allowed the Ute to widen their hunting grounds, in the process taking advantage of the buffalo herds on the Great Plains east of their traditional homelands.<sup>15</sup>

European and Euro-American involvement in the Rio Blanco County area started with the exploration of Colorado's western slope by Spanish priests Francisco Dominguez and Silvestre Velez de Escalante. The explorers hoped to find an overland route from New Mexico to California and crossed modern Rio Blanco County during 1776. Their expedition did not lead to any immediate further Euro-American activity in the modern county.

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<sup>15</sup> The information for this paragraph was drawn from Frederic J. Athearn, *An Isolated Empire: A History of Northwestern Colorado* (Denver: Bureau of Land Management, 1982); Encyclopedia Staff, "Rio Blanco County," *Colorado Encyclopedia*, last modified May 11, 2020, <https://coloradoencyclopedia.org/article/rio-blanco-county>. Accessed April 18, 2022; and Alan D. Reed and Michael D. Metcalf, *Colorado Prehistory: A Context for the Northern Colorado River Basin*, (Eagle, CO: Colorado Council of Professional Archaeologists, 1999).

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After the United States achieved independence in the 1780s the founders expressed a concern for public education. Education and government support for it, both nationally and in Colorado, evolved as the nation grew and frontier areas were settled. This is especially important as these major changes to public policies happened before and during the active life of the Yellow Creek Schoolhouse. Thomas Jefferson and the Confederation Congress recognized the necessity of public education for the new nation and it passed the Land Ordinance of 1785. In addition to the land survey system of sections, ranges, and townships still in use today, another provision set aside Section 16 of each 36-section township to be used for the maintenance of public schools. As the nation grew farther west, Congress increased the school support by including Section 36 of each township as part of the educational support set aside.<sup>16</sup>

Fur trappers and traders then visited the area during the early nineteenth century. The fur trade ended during the 1840s due to depletion of the beaver population and fashion changes leading to beaver hats going out of style. As a result, most of western Colorado saw little Euro-American activity aside from an occasional traveler until after the Civil War. During 1868, John Wesley Powell and a party that included 20 students and his wife explored the lands around the future site of Meeker and wintered in the White River valley. At the same time a new treaty between the United States government and the Ute established a reservation that included most of western Colorado. During the next year, 1869, the government built the White River Agency fulfilling a stipulation of the treaty. The new facilities were located approximately nine miles east of the modern town of Meeker. During 1879 trouble between the Agent, Nathan Meeker, and the Ute at the White River Agency led to armed conflict and subsequent removal of the Native Americans. The removal in turn led to the opening of the area to Euro-American settlement. By the late 1880s enough settlers resided in the White River area to warrant establishment of a county government and in 1889 the Colorado legislature founded Rio Blanco County.<sup>17</sup>

The 1880s were also a time of change and development for public education in Colorado. In Colorado the state's 1889 Compulsory Education Act required all children from age eight and through fourteen to attend school for at least twelve weeks per school term. Before that school had been essentially optional at the discretion of the parents.<sup>18</sup> Often, early schools were located on land owned by one family that had a number of children and the land or land and building were deeded to the local school district with provisions for return of the deeded property to the owner should the school be moved or abandoned. Construction funding appears to have varied with some being built with public funds and under public management while there were also many rural schools built by one or more residents and then deeded to the local school district. Because of Colorado's early twentieth century population boom in rural areas, including Rio Blanco and neighboring Moffat Counties, there were nearly 400 new school districts established between 1901 and 1932. This period of rapid growth in the number of rural schools corresponds to much of the active life of the Yellow Creek Schoolhouse.<sup>19</sup>

The residents of the new county were primarily stock raisers, farmers, or those who supported agriculture, such as storekeepers. Meeker, the first incorporated town in Rio Blanco County, was founded in 1885, and after two years of work the land titles were cleared so lots could be sold. The delay took place due to the former military land reservation for an Army post built after the Meeker Massacre (1879). Among the first businesses there were

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<sup>16</sup> Walter S. Deffenbaugh and Ward W. Keesecker, *Compulsory School Attendance Laws and Their Administration*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1935) p. 68.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* and additional information taken from Michael B. Husband, *Colorado Plateau Historic Context* (Denver: History Colorado, Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, 1984, 2006).

<sup>18</sup> Walter S. Deffenbaugh and Ward W. Keesecker, *Compulsory School Attendance Laws and Their Administration*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1935) p. 68.

<sup>19</sup> Doggett and Wilson op. cit., pp. E2-3, E-20 and Staff Writers op. cit. pp. 8-9.

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the Hugus[sic] & Company Store and the Meeker Hotel. At approximately the same time settlers, such as the O.L. Dudley family and the James Bainbirch, Sr. family settled along Piceance Creek south of Meeker. These families farmed and raised livestock practicing subsistence farming to the extent they could. Family members remained at the location into the early twentieth century. Many of these early residents of the county depended on Rifle, to the south, as their point of contact with the state and nation as the Denver and Rio Grande Western railroad (now Union Pacific) served Rifle.<sup>20</sup> Before the end of the nineteenth century the new residents found themselves impacted by alterations in national attitudes and policies regarding the use and patenting of public lands. The County had only been established for two years when the federal government set aside the White River Plateau Timberland Reserve (October 1892). The government gained the authorization to make such reservations under the General Revision Act of 1891. The new law marked the beginning of a significant shift in Federal land policies. The Timber Reserves in Colorado and the West were expressions of the new American emphasis on natural resource conservation as a companion to the encouragement of settlement. This was followed by a series of new laws regarding minerals and homesteading with laws such as the Enlarged Homestead Act of 1909 and the Stock-Raising Homestead Act of 1916. Another new land law also important in the future of Rio Blanco County was the 1920 Mineral Leasing Act that provided for federal leasing of public lands for production of oil, gas, coal, other minerals. These early efforts at federally mandated conservation culminated in 1934 when Congress withdrew millions of acres from private settlement with establishment of the Grazing Service, a predecessor of the modern Bureau of Land Management.<sup>21</sup> It was into this mix of changing land laws that the Yellow Creek area was settled and the schoolhouse was built.

Along with this major shift in policy, new federal laws regarding mining and mineral usage on public lands had significant impacts on Rio Blanco County during the twentieth century. This was especially true for the county's fledgling energy industry that was busy developing oil and other energy resources in the region. Energy production became one of the mainstays of the local economy into the twenty-first century. The early twentieth century also witnessed a new wave of settlement as additional farmers and ranchers were convinced to try their luck in the White River region. They experienced some success and, along with the earlier agriculturalists, formed the core of local agriculture. By the early 1900s newspapers, especially in Denver, as well as railroads that served Colorado promoted settlement in the areas of the state noted previously heavily populated that included Rio Blanco neighboring Routt and Moffat Counties (Moffat County established 1911). Agriculture has remained one of the key lifeways for Rio Blanco County to the present day and it was local farmers and ranchers who supported the construction of the Yellow Creek Schoolhouse.<sup>22</sup>

In Colorado construction funding appears to have varied with some being built with public funds and under public management while there were also many rural schools built by one or more residents and then deeded to the local school district. Because of Colorado's early twentieth century population boom in rural areas, including Rio

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<sup>20</sup> Bury, op. cit.

<sup>21</sup>See: "About: History of BLM: National Timeline." 2016. [www.blm.gov](http://www.blm.gov). August 15, 2016.

<https://www.blm.gov/about/history/timeline>; and Roy M. Robbins, *Our Landed Heritage: The Public Domain, 1776-1970* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1976).

<sup>22</sup> The information for this paragraph was drawn from Frederic J. Athearn, *An Isolated Empire: A History of Northwestern Colorado* (Denver: Bureau of Land Management, 1982); Encyclopedia Staff, "Rio Blanco County," *Colorado Encyclopedia*, last modified May 11, 2020, <https://coloradoencyclopedia.org/article/rio-blanco-county>. Accessed April 18, 2022; Susan and John Bury. *This Is What I Remember, by and about the People of White River Country* (Marceline, MO: Donning Company, 1972) and Meeker History Book Committee, ed. *This is What I Remember: White River Colorado 100 Year Pioneer History 1889-1989*, Volume III (Meeker, CO: Rio Blanco County Historical Society, 1991).

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Blanco and neighboring Moffat Counties, there were nearly 400 new school districts established between 1901 and 1932. This period of rapid growth in the number of rural schools corresponds to much of the active life of the Yellow Creek Schoolhouse as explained in the following paragraphs.<sup>23</sup>

### Yellow Creek Schoolhouse's History and Its Resulting Significance, 1906-1943

Previous researchers determined that looking into the past of the Yellow Creek School (5RB3058) is a difficult undertaking. Form+Works Design Group and Alpine Archaeological Consultants, Inc. described their historic research process and findings as follows:

The history of the one-room Yellow Creek School is not well documented because records of the school have been lost over the years, and many former students have since moved or passed away. Janet Clark, retired teacher and active member of the Rio Blanco Historical Society, and a group of other retired teachers (the Rural Schools Research Committee) researched and created brochures about the historic schools in Rio Blanco County. Ms. Clark stated that they did considerable research at the local school district offices, poring through boxes and boxes of information. She said that there was little information for the Yellow Creek School between the years of 1920 and 1930 or 1940, and that those records had simply vanished (Janet Clark, personal communication 2020). An online search for information regarding Yellow Creek School during the current project (2020-21 Yellow Creek Schoolhouse State Highway 64 Meeker, Colorado; Historic Structure Assessment and Preservation Plan) encountered a similar information gap between 1916 and the 1930s (<https://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org/>). BLM White River Field Office (WRFO) Site Steward, Margaret Slaugh, found a Meeker Herald newspaper article dated January 7, 1922 that mentioned the occurrence of various Yellow Creek community holiday events of the season, but little has been found that post-dates that article. Ms. Clark said that digitizing the historical Meeker newspaper is an ongoing effort, hence the dearth of information after the mid-teens. The following is what could be gleaned from occasional and brief mentions in the Meeker Herald newspaper, personal correspondences and recollections attained by the BLM, and from the three-volume set *This is What I Remember*, a history of the Rio Blanco County area. Despite the passage of time and other limitations, the following history could not have been compiled without the dedicated efforts of the Rio Blanco Historical Society and the Rural Schools Research Committee.<sup>24</sup>

Understanding these limitations is important to understanding and appreciating the following historic background of the Yellow Creek Schoolhouse. Almost no records have been found by researchers regarding the 1920s and 1930s, aside from a nearly complete list of teachers and their years of service. The accepted date of construction and thus beginning point of the chronology for the school is 1906 when either George Lambert (most likely) or two bachelor brothers, the Shanklands, built the building. Some of the information implies that George Lambert built the building to serve as a shed, not a schoolhouse, but around 1906 was modified for that purpose. While the building's original purpose remains uncertain by the time Lambert sold the building to the school district in 1908 it was considered to be a schoolhouse. The deed described it as having log walls and soil roof (see Figure 2, deed copy). According to previous researchers, Lambert received a brief mention in a 1902 issue of the (Meeker) *Herald Times*. The paper stated that Lambert had a small, but valuable claim he was proving up near the confluence of Yellow Creek and the White River. Lambert told the readers that land in the area was increasing

<sup>23</sup>Doggett and Wilson op. cit., pp. E2-3, E-20 and Staff Writers op. cit. pp. 8-9.

<sup>24</sup> Staff Writers, op. cit., p. 10.

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in value, implying it was a good investment.<sup>25</sup> It could be assumed he either built or converted the building to a school to help encourage settlers to move to the Yellow Creek area of Rio Blanco County. Unfortunately, the information about the Shanklands is even more limited than is that for Lambert.

The first students attended school during the 1906-1907 school year and a community dance was held in the building in March of 1906 to celebrate the completion of its construction/conversion into a school (Fullest available list of teachers follow Figure 3).<sup>26</sup> A 1915 newspaper report indicates that new roofing was installed to replace the original dirt one, siding, and a ceiling were added to the school. Apparently, Silas Shankland, was the benefactor, based on shipping information on one of the metal siding panels illustrated in Plates 3 and 4. The school remained open and active throughout the 1910s, except for a possible closure due to the flu epidemic of 1918. The flu-related suspension of classes may have lasted into 1920. Pupils in other Rio Blanco County rural schools offer some recollections that offer insights into the daily life at one of these schools. For example, Harland Dudley remembered that at Rock School one of the favorite games was "Antey Over" and that each teacher was different in ways from personal habits to qualifications.<sup>27</sup> The winter of 1916-1917 proved to be a brutal one and some of the pupils who typically walked to school were homeschooled for much of the winter. For example, Dorothy, Robert, and Ionia Story who walked two miles each way to school were trapped in an October blizzard and their grandmother, Georgia Bassett, taught them at home for the rest of the winter. The next year they lived in Meeker and attended school there.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup>Bury and Bury, op. cit., p. 46.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., pp. 10-11, 16-17.

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544 287 225 221 1710 Yellow Crk  
QUIT CLAIM DEED—The One Best Printing and Stationery Co., Colorado Springs, Colo. Quit Claim

866.

This Deed, made this 18<sup>th</sup> day of March in the year of our Lord one thousand nine hundred and eight between George L. Lambert

of the County of Rio Blanco and State of Colorado, of the first part, and  
The Directors of School District Number Six of  
Rio Blanco County, Colo

of the County of \_\_\_\_\_ and State of Colorado, of the second part,

Witnesseth, That the said party of the first part, for and in consideration of the sum of Three Hundred DOLLARS, to the said party of the first part in hand paid by the said parties of the second part, the receipt whereof is hereby confessed and acknowledged, has remised, released, sold, conveyed and QUIT CLAIMED, and by these presents do remise, release, sell, convey and QUIT CLAIM unto the said parties of the second part, their successors forever, all the right, title, interest, claim and demand which the said party of the first part has in and to the following described property situate, lying and being in the County of Rio Blanco and State of Colorado, to-wit:

One log house six 30' x 24', with dirt roof situated on the NW<sup>1/4</sup> of S 6<sup>th</sup> of section 5 in Twp 2 North of Range 98 W 6<sup>th</sup> P.M., said land being Government Land.

This conveyance is made upon the following condition: that if the said Directors of said School District fail to use the above describe building for school purposes as it now stands, or if they should attempt to remove said building this conveyance shall be null and void and of no effect and shall revert back to the grantor herein.

To Have and to Hold the Same, Together with all and singular the appurtenances and privileges thereto belonging or in anywise thereto appertaining, and all the estate, right, title, interest and claim whatsoever of the said party of the first part, either in law or equity, to the only proper use, benefit and behoof of the said parties of the second part, their successors forever.

In Witness Whereof, The said party of the first part has hereunto set his hand and seal the day and year first above written.

SIGNED, SEALED AND DELIVERED IN PRESENCE OF

George L. Lambert

Figure 2. Deed from George L. Lambert to Rio Blanco County School District Number 6

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Plate 3. Western wall of Yellow Creek Schoolhouse. Circled area shows shipping information for "S.V. Shankland, Rifle, Colo." View looking east, photo 12.



Plate 4. Detail of the shipping information for "S.V. Shankland, Rifle, Colo." View looking southeast.

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The school of the 1920s and 1930s appears similar to many other rural schools in Colorado and the Midwest and West, with small numbers of pupils often ranging from first and second graders to those in eighth grade ready to graduate (Plates 4 and 5). At some time during this period, a small, shed addition was erected at the rear as depicted in a 1936-37 drawing (Figure 3). Another health-related closure due to smallpox occurred in October of 1927 that may have lasted into early 1928.<sup>29</sup> Unfortunately, additional details about the school, its pupils and teachers and the social activities held in the building are nearly non-existent for the decade.

The record of activities at the schoolhouse is noticeably more robust for the 1930s than the previous decades. For example, for Halloween of 1932 the students and their teacher Lila Beesley presented the local community with a Halloween program with a dance afterwards that served as a fundraiser for the school. Later in the year the students held a Christmas festival with supper, also as a fundraiser to buy a new organ for the school. The programs were very well attended. Unfortunately, information about 1933 is generally lacking. However, by 1934 information about school activities again became available that year and witnessed more programs and activities at the school and reports again flowed from the school. In 1934 the teacher and students undertook fundraisers, had festivals and conducted workdays to help with school improvements. 1935 also proved to be a busy year with Valentine's Day activities and a fundraiser in November. This was followed by a Christmas program and New Year's Eve dance in December. The dances had been popular activities at the school for many years and continued to be until at least 1939. That year marks the last documented dance, the Christmas Dance. There may have been dances into the early 1940s, but they were not reported in the local papers. By 1942 the school-age population in the area had dwindled to three by December of 1942 and the school closed the next year.<sup>30</sup>

When Hugh L. Caldwell Jr., a student at the Yellow Creek School into the 1930s, drew the illustration though, the school had only a few years remaining. In 1942-1943, it served only three pupils, and when it closed for the summer, it never reopened. Local residents made occasional calls for its reopening as late as the early 1950s as evidenced by discussions on the disposition of the building by the school district in 1953 but it was abandoned and subsequently used by local ranchers for storage in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

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<sup>29</sup>Staff Writers, op. cit., pp. 10-12, 16.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

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Plate 5. Yellow Creek School student body sometime after 1915.



Plate 6. Yellow Creek School students and teacher Grace Armitage, 1927–1928 school year, her only year at the school.

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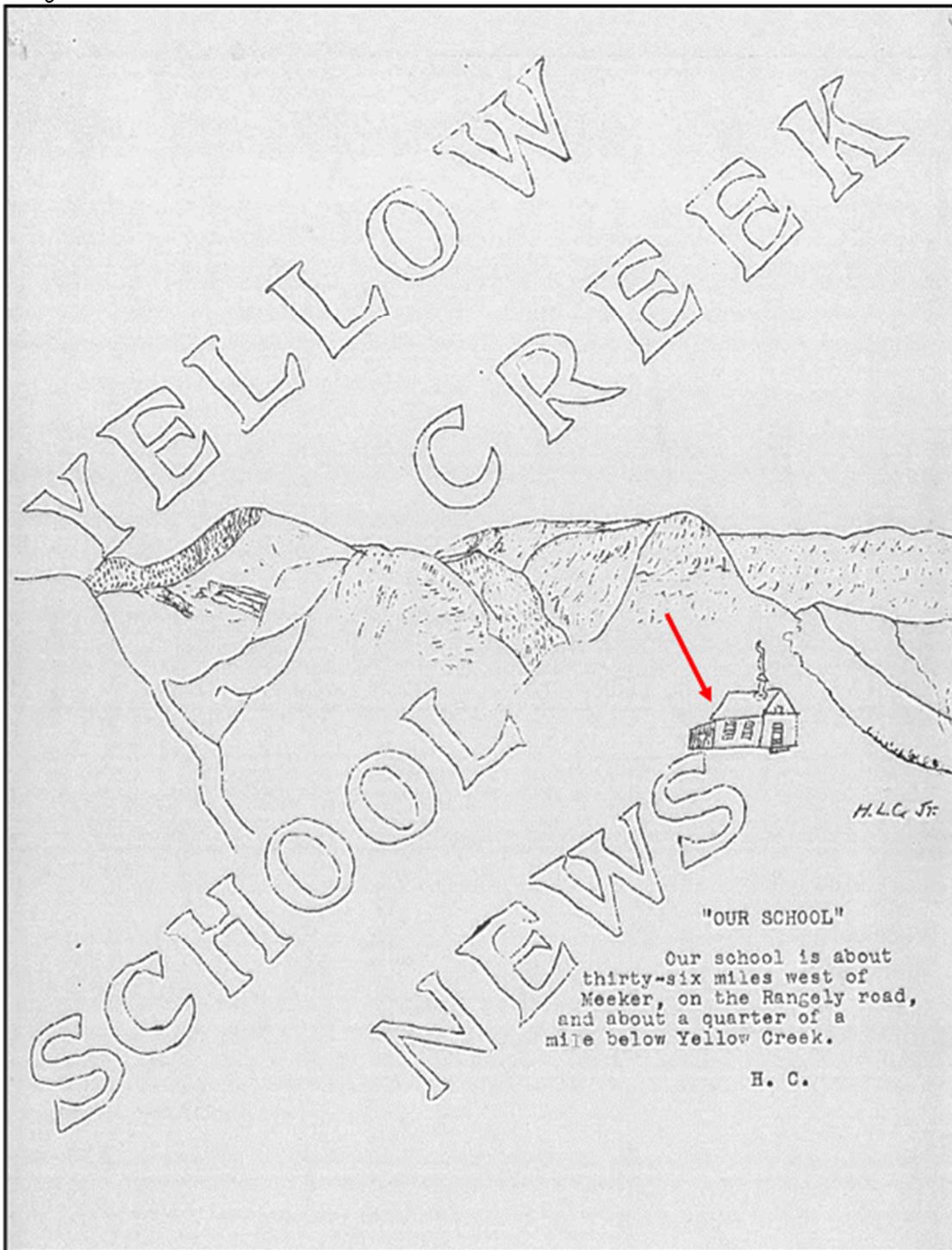


Figure 3. Cover illustration of the Yellow Creek School News, ca. 1936-37. Note the initials “H.L.G. Jr.” that stand for Hugh L. Caldwell Jr., a student at the school. Red arrow indicates the shed addition on the southern side of school.

**Yellow Creek School Teacher List**

School Year	Teacher's Name
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1907	Alice Anne Morris
1907–08	Madge Trainer / Lottie Mobley
1908–09	W.E. Williams
1909–10	Ida Barbour (or Barbuir) and/or Anna Carberry
1910–11	Katherine Bulger
1911–12	Probably Katherine Bulger
1912–13	Unknown
1913–14	Viola Miller
1914–15	Renora Ford
1915–16	Unknown, but presumably Renora Ford
1916–17	Renora Ford
1917–18	Roby Davis
Unknown years between 1918 and 1920	Ruby Winslett (The school may have closed at some point in 1918 during the flu epidemic and may have stayed closed for several years.)
1920–21	Unknown
1921–22	Anna Thomas and Frances Sweeney (A White River Review article suggested Anna left before the end of 1921 and Frances took over.)
1922–23	Frances Sweeney
1923–24	Mrs. L.E. White / Lillian Mobley
1924–25	Unknown
1925–26	Frances W. Durand and Essa Bailey (Frances left before the end of 1925. A December 1925 White River Review article stated Essa was the teacher.)
1926–27	Cleo Wilson
1927–28	Possibly Winifred Chapman (A smallpox outbreak closed the school October– December 1927, and possibly into 1928.)
1928–29	Grace Armitage
1929–30	Lois J.R. Johnson
1930–31	Velma Deaver
1931–32	Lois R. Johnson and/or Lila Beesley
1932–33	Lila Beesley (also referred to as Lilith Beezley)
1933–34	Mrs. Mabel White
1934–35	Mabel C. White
1935–36	Velma Deaver
1936–37	Velma Deaver
1937–38	Lois R. Slack
1938–39	Velma Deaver
1939–40	Myrtle B. Bratton
1940–41	Myrtle B. Bratton
1941–42	Myrtle B. Bratton
1942–43	Myrtle B. Bratton / Florence Jones

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Recent assessments of the Yellow Creek Schoolhouse's physical presence and characteristics also suggest the building retains a high degree of integrity, more than sufficient to demonstrate its associations with its heritage as a rural school in northwestern Colorado, including the architecture of a rural school. Although it is possible the building may not have been built to serve as a schoolhouse, its adopted use was shortly after construction and historic integrity as a school remains. Alterations made to the building when the school district took possession likewise made it visually consistent with the commonly accepted and previously described appearance of a rural school of the early twentieth century.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Slaughter op. cit.

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## SECTION V

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### GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

#### Verbal Boundary Description of Nominated Property

(describe the boundaries of the nominated property)

The following description is adapted from the Site Record Form for 5RB.3058 and encompasses the site as recorded, including the schoolhouse, associated school yard and archaeological features. The property is defined by the property fences to the north (approximately 250 feet) and east (approximately 275 feet). The southern boundary is a line perpendicular to the eastern fence running from the fence in a northwesterly direction 250 feet and parallel to the northern boundary fence. The western boundary is a line perpendicular to the northern fence, running southwesterly and parallel to the eastern fence and connecting with the southern boundary. The western boundary is approximately 250 feet long. These boundaries include the building, fences, features, identified by the site recorders and determined by them to be related to the schoolhouse.

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Yellow Creek Schoolhouse

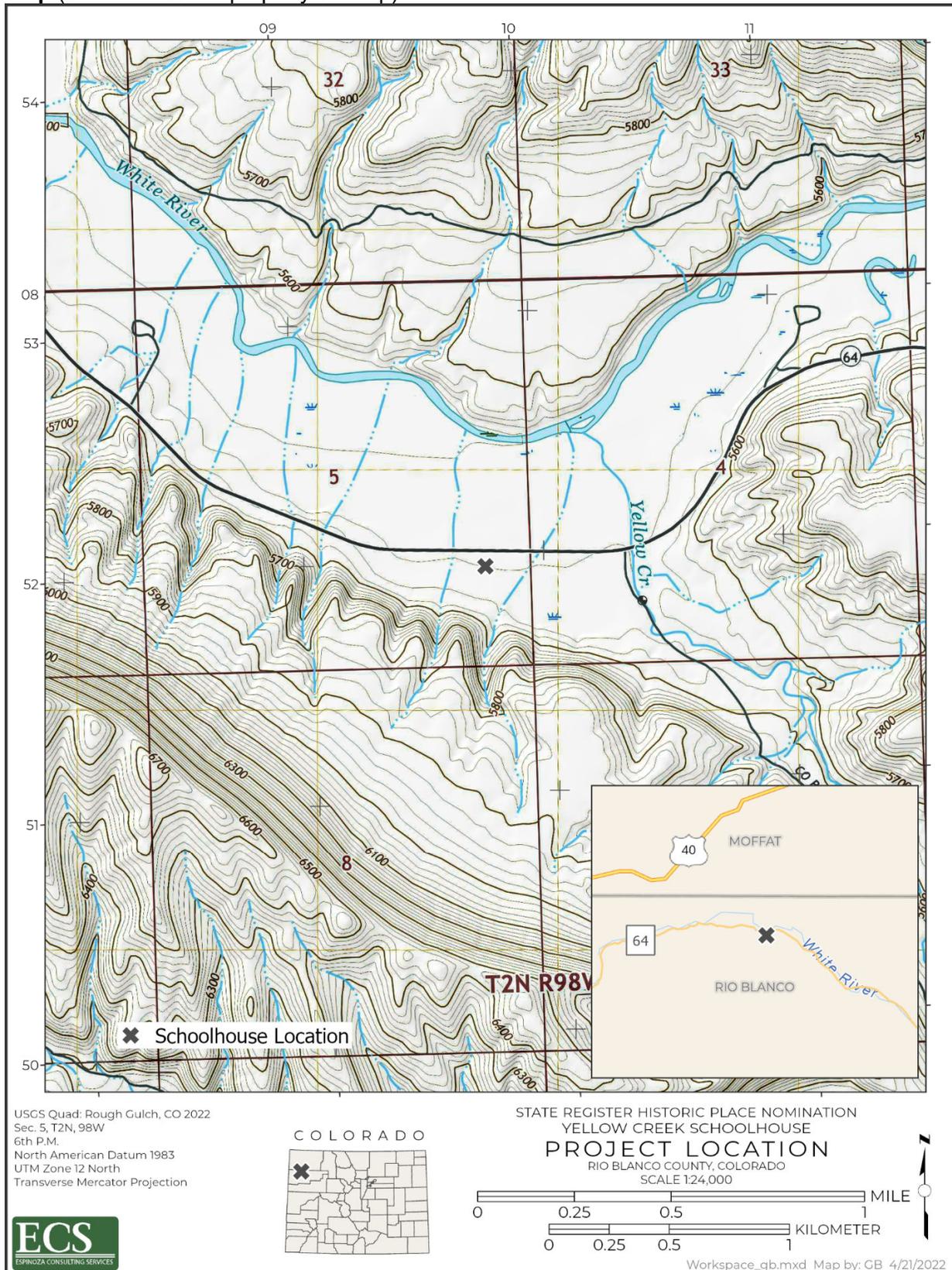
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**Official Map** (show location of property on map)

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## SECTION VI

### PHOTOGRAPH LOG

The following information pertains to photographs numbers 1-20, except as noted:

Name of Property: Yellow Creek Schoolhouse

Location: Meeker, Colorado

Photographer: Michelle Slaughter, Alpine Archaeological Consultants

Date of Photographs: October 19, 2020

Photo No.	Description of View and Direction of Camera
1	Overall view of the Yellow Creek Schoolhouse from the southwest.
2	Oblique view of the south and west sides of the schoolhouse.
3	Southern side of the Yellow Creek School, showing the log walls under the tin sheets (bottom left), and the shipping information to Silas V. Shankland (to the left of the upright board in the center). View is to the north.
4	Overall view of pressed tin panel siding at the west side. Note smaller siding panels along the lower section of the side.
5	Overall view of the site around the Yellow Creek Schoolhouse as seen from the northwest.
6	Oblique view of the north and east sides of the schoolhouse.
7	Oblique view of the south and east sides of the schoolhouse.
8	Overall view of floor surface typical in the schoolhouse.
9	Overall view of chalkboard location and chalk tray on the south wall of the schoolhouse.
10	Detail view of pressed tin ceiling panels and crown molding typical throughout schoolhouse.
11	Flue opening along the centerline of the roof as seen from the interior of the building.
12	Western side of Yellow Creek School, View is east.
13	Overall view of west side including west roof slope.
14	Roof sheathing typical on the east and west slopes of the roof.
15	Detail view of extant roofing materials along the ridge of the west slope. Note rolled ridge cap, wood shingles, sheet metal cover at previous flue penetration, and asphalt roll material visible in photo.
16	Detail view of typical pressed tin panel siding.
17	Silas Shankland marking on the exterior pressed tin siding.
18	Log corners at the exterior walls of the building
19	Overall view of pressed tin siding panels over logs on the south side.
20	Overall view of the Yellow Creek Schoolhouse from the northeast.

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### **HISTORIC PHOTOGRAPHS & FIGURES**

(Insert available digital images of historic photographs and figures illustrating the property over time. Include captions with source information.)

## **SECTION VII**

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### **ADDITIONAL MATERIALS TO ACCOMPANY NOMINATION**

**Sketch Map(s)**

**Digital Images (separate files)**

**PDF of Current photos (see attached)**

**Owner Consent Form (Section VIII)**

### **Use of Nomination Materials**

Upon submission to the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, all nomination forms and supporting materials become public records pursuant to CRS Title 24, and may be accessed, copied, and used for personal or commercial purposes in accordance with state law unless otherwise specifically exempted. History Colorado may reproduce, publish, display, perform, prepare derivative works or otherwise use the nomination materials for History Colorado and/or State Register purposes.

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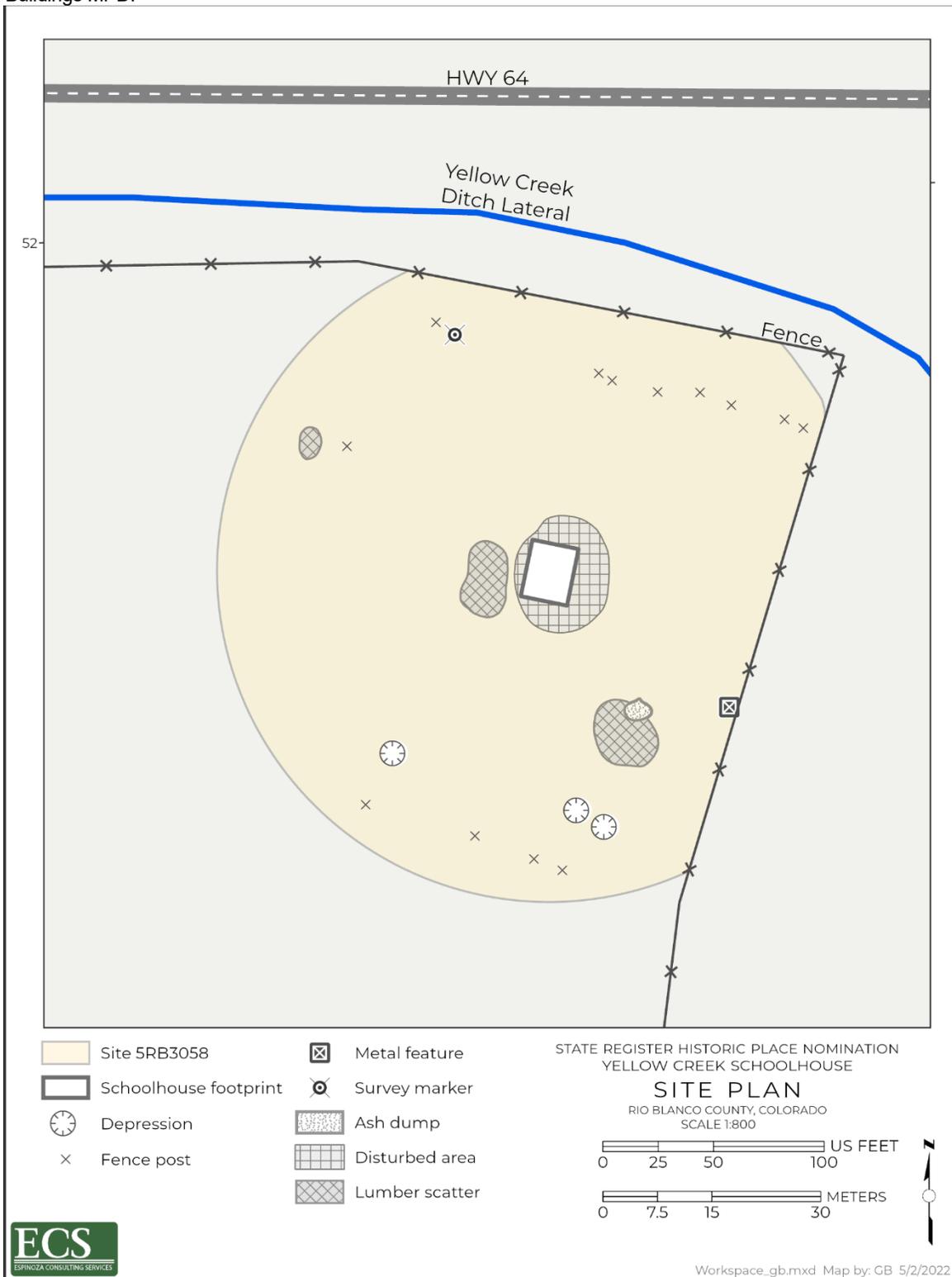


Figure 1. Site map of Yellow Creek School building and its setting. Map adapted from Site Record Form 5RB.3058 prepared by Alpine Archaeological Consultants.