

Spokane Register of Historic Places Nomination

Spokane City/County Historic Preservation Office, City Hall, Sixth Floor
808 W. Spokane Falls Boulevard, Spokane, WA 99201

1. Name of Property

Historic Name **FIVE MILE PRAIRIE SCHOOL**

2. Location

Street & Number 8621 N. Five Mile Road
City, State, Zip Code Spokane, WA 99202
Parcel Number 26234.9036

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agricultural	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> residential
	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes, restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes, unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other

4. Owner of Property

Name Mead School District #354
Street & Number 12828 N. Newport Highway
City, State, Zip Code Mead, WA 99021
Telephone Number/E-mail 465-6014 and email: senoch@mead.k12.wa.us
Steven W. Enoch, District Superintendent

5. Location of Legal Description

Courthouse, Registry of Deeds Spokane County Courthouse
Street Number 1116 West Broadway
City, State, Zip Code Spokane, WA 99260
County Spokane

6. Representation of Existing Surveys

Title
Date Federal____ State____ County____ Local____
Location of Survey Records

First rough draft 31 March 2004

7. Description

Architectural Classification (see nomination, section 8)	Condition __excellent <u>X</u> _good __fair __deteriorated __ruins __unexposed	Check One __unaltered <u>X</u> _altered Check One <u>X</u> _original site __moved & date_____
--	---	--

8. Spokane Register Categories and Statement of Significance

Applicable Spokane Register of Historic Places Categories: Mark "x" on one or more for the categories that qualify the property for the Spokane Register listing:

- X A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of Spokane history.
- __B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- X C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method or 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 history.

Narrative statement of significance is found on one or more continuation sheets.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography is found on one or more continuation sheets.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property	Less than one acre.
Verbal Boundary Description	Section 23, Township 26 North, Range 42 East of Willamette Meridian: North 208 feet of east 208 feet in NE corner of NE quarter of SE quarter of Section 23.
Verbal Boundary Justification	Nominated property includes entire parcel and rural legal description.

11. Form Prepared By

Name and Title	Linda Yeomans, Consultant
Organization	Historic Preservation Planning
Street, City, State, Zip Code	501 West 27 th Avenue, Spokane, WA 99203
Telephone Number	509-456-3828
Email Address	lkyeomans1@aol.com
Date Final Nomination Heard	April 21, 2004

12. Additional Documentation

Map	City/County of Spokane current plat map.
Photographs and Slides	16 B&W prints, 8 color slides.

13. Signature of Owner(s)

Name _____

Name _____

14. For Official Use Only

Date Received _____ Attest _____

Date Heard _____ City Clerk _____

Commission Decision _____ Approved as to Form
Assistant City Attorney _____

Council/Board Action _____

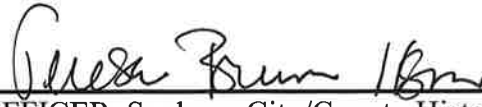
Date _____

We hereby certify that this property has been listed in the Spokane Register of Historic Places.

CITY ADMINISTRATOR, City of Spokane
or

CHAIR, Spokane County Commissioners

CHAIR, Spokane City/County Historic Landmarks Commission



OFFICER, Spokane City/County Historic Preservation Officer
Spokane City/County Historic Preservation Office
Sixth Floor, City Hall, W. 808 Spokane Falls Boulevard, Spokane, WA 99201

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

Built in 1939, the Five Mile Prairie School is located in the southwest corner of the intersection of North Five Mile and West Strong Roads on Five Mile Prairie, Spokane County, Washington. The schoolhouse is surrounded by rural residential and agricultural settlement, including paved and gravel roads, open fields, farm land and pasture, and homes, barns, churches and a grange hall that were all built between the late 1890s and 2004. Highly visible, the Five Mile Prairie School is located in the center of Five Mile Prairie and is regarded as a community focal point. The schoolhouse is a single-story brick masonry building built on a raised foundation. The school follows a T-shaped footprint, which along with an office, lavatories, multi-purpose/lunch room and storage/mechanical areas, comprises two classrooms and a gymnasium with a stage. Revealing its original design and materials, the building is embellished with multi-colored "tapestry" face brick, multi-paned wood sash windows, a Classic architrave, symmetrical fenestration patterns, and a prominent front-facing lower cross gable that forms a formal center front entrance to the building. With few alterations, the school retains good to excellent integrity in its original location, design, materials, workmanship, and association as an historic rural schoolhouse built on Five Mile Prairie.

CURRENT APPEARANCE & CONDITION*Site*

Identified in Spokane County as parcel number 26234.9036, the Five Mile Prairie School is built in the extreme northeast corner of the northeast quarter of the southeast quarter of Section 23, Township 26 North, Range 42 East of the Willamette Meridian, and is owned by Mead School District #354. The parcel of land on which the schoolhouse is built slopes slightly toward Strong and Five Mile Roads and measures 208 feet wide and 208 feet deep, for a total of 43,264 square feet (a little less than one acre). The school is sited in the center of Five Mile Prairie, a flat rural area which is located on top of a high plateau, five miles north of Spokane, Washington. The property is bordered by Strong Road on the north, a single-family residence to the south, Five Mile Road to the east, and a vacant field to the west. The schoolhouse faces east along Five Mile Road and is surrounded by a grass lawn, eight 60-year-old Chinese Elm trees, and a gravel driveway that curves around the south elevation and the west, rear elevation of the building. The driveway accesses Strong Road along the property's north border, and Five Mile Road at the east border. A flat graded, gravel parking lot is sited adjacent north of the school between the building and Strong Road. A concrete slab tennis court (12 feet by 25 feet) and a small well house are located in the northeast corner of the school yard. The well house is a small structure made of formed concrete blocks and is clad with unfinished weathered wood boards in the gable peaks. A small wood door opens on the building's south façade, and the gable-end roof is covered with corrugated metal. Currently in poor condition, the well house was built in the 1930s to protect a freshwater well, which was filled in and capped off in the 1970s.

The vacant field, which is located adjacent west of the schoolhouse site, is recorded as Spokane County parcel number 36234.9037, and is also owned by Mead School District #354. The field contains 2.32 acres of undeveloped land, which is covered with wild grasses and brush. When the school was in operation, the undeveloped vacant land was used as a school playfield.

Schoolhouse Exterior

The school forms an irregular T-shaped footprint: On the first floor, the arm of the “T” comprises the classrooms and hall, and measures 78 feet wide and 34 feet deep. A small lower cross gable, which forms an enclosed front entrance, projects eight feet from the façade. The leg of the “T” forms a west wing, which is built on the rear elevation of the school, and houses the school’s gymnasium. The attached wing measures 32 feet wide and 62 feet deep. The schoolhouse is a brick masonry building, which has exterior walls made of brick that measure about 18 inches thick. A dominant feature of the schoolhouse is multi-colored face brickwork, which is made of variegated orange, red and brown-hued bricks that are sometimes called “tapestry” bricks. The face bricks are laid in common bond and are striated (wire cut). The schoolhouse is built on a raised concrete and basalt rock foundation. The west wing of the building has an exposed concrete foundation wall that measures four feet high. The main building (the arm of the “T”) is clad in face brick that extends down to grade, almost completely covering a foundation wall made of poured concrete and basalt stone rubblemix; a molded concrete dripstone course separates the face bricks from a small exposed portion of the foundation wall. The schoolhouse has a low-pitched clipped hip roof that is covered with composition shingles and is accentuated with a modillioned frieze band. Symmetrical fenestration patterns help identify the building as a schoolhouse and include a center front entrance, and a combination of multi-paned fixed and multi-paned, double-hung, wood-sash windows.

Exterior Façade

Facing east, the façade of the schoolhouse is distinguished by a symmetrical design and a center projecting lower cross gable. The front-facing cross gable forms the front entrance to the building and has a gable front roof. The gable peak is accentuated with Classic details, including a frieze band, modillion course, and cornice returns, which are all made of wood and painted white. Identified by a slightly protruding course of dark red bricks, a brick arch surrounds the front entrance of the building and is embellished with face bricks laid in a basket weave pattern over the front door. A keystone highlights the arch and is made of lighter-colored blonde bricks. The front entrance of the school has a single front door with glazing on the upper half, and is distinguished with multi-paned side lights and a multi-paned transom light. Two fixed, 4/4 multi-paned, wood-sash windows flank the front entrance of the school and are capped with dark red brick flat arches. A row of five 12/1 multi-paned, double-hung, wood-sash windows are located north of the front entrance. Three 8/1 multi-paned, double-hung, wood-sash windows are centered below the five first-floor windows, illuminating the lower-level interior of the school. Each window is capped with a darker colored red brick flat arch and a dark red

brick lug sill. This fenestration pattern, which is located north of the front entrance, is repeated again on the facade south of the front entrance, producing a symmetrical balance.

North, South, and West Elevations

The north elevation of the schoolhouse is adjacent to a gravel parking lot and is dominated by the building's symmetrical fenestration patterns and tapestry brickwork. A small side entrance is located in the ell formed by the building's T-shaped footprint. The north side entrance features a paneled wood door with glazing in the upper half, multi-paned sidelights, a small covered porch, and a wooden staircase that descends to grade at the parking lot. Covered with a shed roof, the porch is supported by square wood posts and has a plain wood balustrade. Located adjacent west of the porch, a small wooden storage unit is attached to the concrete foundation wall. A small loading dock is located on the northwest corner of the north elevation of the schoolhouse. It is covered with a small shed roof.

Like the north elevation, the south elevation of the building features symmetrical fenestration patterns, multi-colored face bricks, and a south side entrance located in the ell. The side entrance is covered with a shed roof, which is clad in aluminum sheeting, and is supported by two square wood posts. Poured concrete stairs lead down to a door at the basement level, which is below grade.

The west elevation of the main building and the west elevation of the attached wing are located at the rear of the schoolhouse. The west elevation of the wing is devoid of windows and is distinguished with decorative brickwork that features a horizontal rectangular brick panel design. The panel is outlined in a soldier course of multi-hued dark red bricks. This decorative feature is repeated on the west elevation of the main building above the north and south side entrances, which are located in the ells.

Schoolhouse Interior

As noted on floor plans of the schoolhouse, the first floor of the building has 3,212 square feet of interior space, and the lower level contains 4,373 square feet.¹ The first floor of the building features a vestibule, two classrooms, two hallways, the principal's office, a private bathroom, a "health room," and an interior staircase. The front door of the school opens to a flight of stairs that lead to a center hall. The center hall is a focal point of the school interior and is embellished with round archways that open east to the front entrance, west to the rear hallway, and north and south to the classrooms and cloakrooms. The hall is flanked by two classrooms: one is located in the northeast corner of the building and the other is located in the southeast corner of the building. Each classroom is flooded by natural light that shines through rows of tall windows. The walls of the classrooms, central hall and the rest of the school are constructed of lathe and sand-textured plaster. First-floor ceilings are 12.8 feet high in the main building and are covered in acoustical Celotex, which was installed when the schoolhouse was built. The

floors are made of vertical grain fir, and the woodwork is varnished fir. The classrooms retain chalkboards with chalk rails. Cloakrooms with coat hooks are located behind the west wall of the classrooms. Transom lights are located above wood doors that open to each classroom.

The central hall of the schoolhouse leads west to the rear of the building where a ramp slopes down to a mid-level hall. The south wall of the mid-level hall has a stairwell with a divided staircase. The west half of the staircase rises to the principal's office (which includes a health room and private bathroom). The east half of the staircase descends to the lower level of the building.

The lower level of the schoolhouse contains a multi-purpose/lunchroom, mechanical/storage rooms, and separate restrooms for boys and girls. The lunchroom is located in the northeast corner of the building, the mechanical/storage rooms and the kitchen are located in the southeast corner, and the restrooms are located on the west wall of the lower level.

A gymnasium wing, constructed at the same time the school was built, is attached to the west elevation of the main school building. It contains a wood stage and a small closet for equipment storage on the east wall. The ceiling in the gym measures more than 15 feet high, the floor is made of poured concrete, and the walls and ceilings are made of lathe and plaster construction. Symmetrical rows of windows located along the south and north walls of the gym illuminate the room with natural light.

ORIGINAL APPEARANCE & MODIFICATIONS

The original design of the Five Mile Prairie School is pictured in a photograph taken just after construction of the building was completed in November 1939. The photograph indicates that the exterior design of the school has not changed significantly since it was built.² One change which is pictured in the photograph involves the side entrance on the north elevation. The entrance was originally located on the northwest corner of the building where a loading dock is currently sited. The entrance was moved to the ell of the building on the north elevation sometime before the 1970s, and the loading dock was built in its place. About this same time, the original front door of the school was replaced with a wooden door.

In the mid-1970s a temporary wood stairway and wood platform were built over the school's original concrete steps, which are located at the front entrance of the building. At this time the schoolhouse was closed to the public and was used as a storage facility for Mead School District #354. Except for four windows in the gymnasium, all of the windows and the front door of the school were covered with plywood boards as a protection against the damaging effects of weather and vandalism. A south side entrance porch with a metal shed roof was attached to the building in the ell on the south elevation. The original roof of the schoolhouse was covered with wood shakes when it was built in

1939. In the 1960s-1970s, the roof was recovered with composition shingles. In 2000 the roof layers were removed and a new roof of composition shingles was installed.

In summary, the Five Mile Prairie School is in good to excellent condition and has had only minor exterior and interior changes, which have not affected the architectural integrity or architectural significance of the building. Currently the building remains in use as a storage facility for Mead School District #354.

Areas of Significance	Education, Architecture
Period of Significance	1939 to 1954
Significant Dates	1939
Architect	Charles Wood
Builders	Works Progress Administration (WPA)

SUMMARY STATEMENT

Strategically centered in the heart of Five Mile Prairie, the Five Mile Prairie School was built in 1939 and is one of the oldest and best preserved two-room schoolhouses in north Spokane County, Washington. From 1939 until its closure in 1970, the Five Mile Prairie School served the residents of the area as the community's public elementary school. It not only provided a public education to children on Five Mile Prairie but also served as a community meeting place for political, religious, benevolent, athletic, and other civic and social gatherings in the area. The schoolhouse symbolizes the citizen's long-standing commitment to education and community development, and is a beloved public landmark. Associated with the evolution of public education in Spokane County and Washington State, the Five Mile Prairie School reflects early 20th-century construction practices advocated for statewide public schools, including fire-resistant building materials and preferred school design for classrooms. The schoolhouse is a product of accomplished Spokane architect Charles R. Wood, and illustrates the Federal Government's presence, which was demonstrated through the Works Progress Administration (WPA), the labor force that was responsible for the construction of the building. In Spokane County, the Five Mile Prairie School is one of the best and last surviving examples of the historic building types, "rural brick schoolhouse" and "school gymnasium," and meets the registration requirements described in the National Register Multiple Property Documentation (MPD), *Rural Public Schools in Washington from Early Settlement to 1945*. Historically and architecturally significant in the areas of "education" and "architecture" during its period of significance from 1939 to 1954, the Five Mile Prairie School is eligible for listing on the Spokane Register of Historic Places under Categories A and C.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Rural Public Schools in Washington State

Permanent American settlement began in Washington State as early as the 1850s and stretched east to the Spokane area by the 1870s. After railroads were built throughout the region in the 1880s, settlement increased and people began thinking about educating their children.

Authored by Washington State historians Leonard Garfield and Greg Griffith, the MPD, *Rural Public Schools in Washington from Early Settlement to 1945*, chronicles the progression of early rural schoolhouses and public education in Washington State, and

reports that “more than any other historic rural building type, the historic schoolhouse represents the cultural heritage of the surrounding community” (p. F-3). Garfield and Griffith explain that:

Often the first, sometimes the only, and probably the most important public building on the rural landscape, the schoolhouse served at once as a local reflection of the evolving common school system and a center of community life. [School] districts were established shortly after initial settlement, and construction of the first and succeeding schools were important milestones in community history. In addition to its role as a center of education, the schoolhouse was frequently the site of public assemblies, civic celebrations, church services, and other important events. But most importantly, the schoolhouse reflected the widespread belief in the value of universal education (p. F-1).

According to the MPD, in 1877 and 1878 a territorial board of education was established along with a format for the first graded schools. A recommended course of study was outlined with division of grades into primary (grades 1 and 2), intermediate (grades 3, 4, 5), grammar (grades 6 and 7), and high school (grades 8 and 9). The system established the graded progression of academic studies, which characterizes public education today (p. E-4)

The MPD states that even with legislation and the systematic organization of school district and graded school formats, most rural schools remained un-graded in the 1870s and 1880s. However, by the time Washington was granted statehood in 1889, the condition and organization of rural schools had improved dramatically. Graded school formats with established curricula were widely implemented, and early primitively constructed schools were gradually replaced by frame construction and, increasingly in the 20th century, by brick construction to meet demands for fire retardant building materials (p. E-4).

Consolidation and *union schools* were two mechanisms that were created and provided by the State for the development of schools in less populated districts. The colloquial term “union schools” was used collectively to define graded schools (usually at the high school level) which were built to accommodate students from a cluster of small rural communities that served two or more districts.

Consolidation was used, especially in the 1930s, on a wider scale where many districts combined resources and became one large school district. The MPD explains that:

As the State imposed more sophisticated educational requirements, and as transportation improved, consolidation accelerated. Many small district schools were usurped by larger facilities that accommodated

more students and offered more diverse programs. But, during the Great Depression, as some school districts curtailed construction of consolidated facilities, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) assisted in building a last group of distinctive rural public schools. These late rural schoolhouses are a significant harbinger of the role of the federal government in local education after mid-century (p. F-4).

Five Mile Prairie

As indicated by its name, Five Mile Prairie is flat prairie land sited atop a large plateau, which is located five miles north of downtown Spokane, Washington. Scientific theory suggests that the plateau was formed as the result of ancient cataclysmic events, including large lava flows that erupted from giant fissures in the earth, and great floods that washed through Eastern Washington. The scoured topography was left with a deep river gorge, which continues to be slowly eroded by the Spokane River, and with rugged basalt rock cliffs that are located north and south of the river. The north cliffs mark the northernmost environs of Spokane and rise sharply to a level 400 feet above their base. The crest of the cliffs forms the southern boundary of Five Mile Prairie, which is located on top of the steep rocky bluff.¹

As is characteristically common of prairie landscapes, Five Mile Prairie was flat, dry, and windswept in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. However, hidden beneath the abundant patches of scrubbrush and bunchgrass was rich, black soil. Deposited in layers over time by geologic processes, including wind and water, the soil on Five Mile Prairie retained a nutrient-rich chemical make-up which was similar to the fertile “loess” of the world-renowned Palouse farming country, located south of Spokane.²

According to an account written by prairie historian Cindy Johnson in the May 3, 1973 edition of the *Tri-County Tribune*, Five Mile Prairie was first home to rattlesnakes, prairie dogs, and coyotes who survived on the prairie’s flora and fauna before humans settled in the area. Eventually the prairie was inhabited by Indian tribes, who named the prairie “Billymeechum” Mesa. Johnson explained the Indian name to mean “home of tall grass.”

In 1864 an Act of Congress of the United States of America entitled, “An Act Granting Lands to Aid in the Construction of a Railroad and Telegraph Line from Lake Superior to Puget Sound on the Pacific Coast,” was enacted.³ The federal government opened up lands in the Western United States to homesteaders and by the 1870s, pioneers were arriving in the Spokane region. J. J. Strong, a man from Illinois, climbed up to Five Mile Prairie in 1879 and embraced the area as his new-found home with exhilaration and hope. He exclaimed, “Beautiful land! Glorious in prospect! Grand in environment! Salubrious in climate! Rich in soil! Where is thy equal?”⁴ He stayed and settled on the prairie, and today Strong Road is named after him.

Other pioneers associated with Strong also settled on Five Mile Prairie. They included J.R. Depew, J. Dozier, C. Wilson, G. White, and H. Tonnet. In 1880 T. Tompkins, E. Daily, W. Stratton, and Joseph and Hiram Allen arrived to join them. The homesteaders' tasks were great: harness the land and make it produce. By 1883 the landscape on Five Mile Prairie had begun to change:

...beautiful orchards were scattered atop the once barren, snake-infested bunch grass prairie. The snakes were destroyed and the coyote retreated to the hinterland. Nearly every known variety of deciduous fruit tree was planted, grew successfully, and produced "Grade A" fruit. Vegetables of excellent quality were harvested. Berries of all kinds yielded profitable crops. Wheat, barley and oats were the principal grains grown. Enormous pride was evidenced in the [homesteaders'] displays of fruit, vegetables, berries and grains...at the Spokane Interstate Fair. Pictures remain to show they labeled their exhibits to read, "Grown Without Irrigation on Five Mile Prairie, Agricultural Gem of Spokane." That was their tribute to the bountiful harvest from their fertile land.⁵

The orchard business on Five Mile Prairie was successful until the destructive forces of Nature quelled most orchard pursuits with the advent of a punishing deep-freeze in 1927. The freeze was devastating, killing most of the fruit trees on Five Mile Prairie. Some farmers re-planted their orchards but many others dug out their trees. In addition to threatening freezes, competition for the best fruit grown in the Spokane region intensified. Unavailable on Five Mile Prairie but readily available in the Spokane Valley, irrigation was offered, which resulted in faster-growing trees, mass production, and lower fruit prices for farmers living in the Spokane Valley than for those on Five Mile Prairie. Undaunted by their run of bad luck, Five Mile Prairie farmers turned to greenhouse horticulture, dry-land truck farming, and grain production. They sowed their fields in flowers, nursery stock, and wheat, barley, oats and other grains which all grew well in the rain-blessed, loess-rich soil. Their endeavors were successful and today Five Mile Prairie still retains some of the region's finest agricultural land.

The development of Five Mile Prairie grew as settlement increased. Roads were paved, churches were built, the Five Mile Prairie Grange was constructed, the community's first schoolhouse was erected, and by 1908 there were 87 families living on the prairie.⁶ Farmhouses, barns, and outbuildings were scattered across the prairie landscape and were intersected by grain fields and pasture land. Spurred by increased population, prairie life began to change in the 1970s and 1980s. Farms were sold and residential subdivisions with *cul-de-sacs* and newly paved streets were built on the fertile soil. Both large and small homes were constructed and erected in small residential clusters or along the crest of the prairie's high bluffs. In 1970 there were 160 landowners on the prairie, and by 1994, the figure had grown to 500 landowners.⁷ Even with the increase in population,

the prairie is relatively sparsely populated when compared to dense urban settings, and is regarded today as a coveted rural residential “bedroom community” of Spokane.

Five Mile School District #50

Spokane County recorded a deed conveyance in 1881 when Five Mile Prairie pioneer Joseph S. Allen purchased the east half of Section 23 in Township 26 North, Range 42 East, for \$832 (warranty deed B-74). Ten years later on November 5, 1891, Joseph Allen and his wife Mary warranted “one acre of ground in a square form” to “the Trustees of School District No. 50” in “consideration of the sum of \$2,000” (warranty deed 44-113). The square parcel of land was located on the southwest corner of the intersection at North Five Mile Road and West Strong Road. The plat measured 208 feet wide and 208 feet deep, and for the community and their children, was advantageously situated in the very center of Five Mile Prairie.

School District #50 was commonly known as the Five Mile School District. Sequential numbers were given to school districts as they were chronologically established in Spokane County. As districts reorganized, the numbers changed. By 1941, Spokane County school districts were identified with numbers that ranged from one to 411.⁸

In 1942 school districts in Spokane County consolidated under State mandate. Five Mile School District #50, Mead School District #305, and other smaller surrounding districts, which included Whitworth, Peone, Green Bluff, Buckeye, Montford, and Colbert, were consolidated into one large district. The new larger district was called Mead School District #354. A report prepared in 1969 by the League of Women Voters of the Greater Spokane Area stated that in 1968 there was a total enrollment of 3,769 students in Mead School District #354 for grades K-12 out of a total district population of about 15,000. Because the population exceeded 10,000, Mead School District #354 was rated by the State as a “First Class District.”⁹ Today Mead School District #354 is responsible for the public education of 8,709 students.¹⁰

Five Mile Prairie Schools Built in 1901 and 1912

The first schoolhouse erected on Five Mile Prairie was a one-room wood frame building with a gable-end roof. It was built in 1901 on the aforementioned land purchased by the Trustees for Five Mile School District #50. Sited in the middle of the flat prairie, the school was easily accessible to parents and school children. A photograph taken in 1901 pictures the schoolhouse, teacher, and at least 14 students of varying ages.

The wood frame schoolhouse was replaced in 1912 with a three-story white brick building. Built of brick masonry construction and accommodating graded classrooms from the first through the tenth grades, the 1912 brick schoolhouse design reflected the State’s commitment to fire prevention and a graded school format. In 1938-1939, men employed by the federal Works Progress Administration (WPA) demolished the brick

schoolhouse, which was deemed unsafe, and prepared the site for the erection of a new building.¹¹

Five Mile Prairie School Built in 1939

With fanfare and press coverage, the new Five Mile Prairie School was enthusiastically heralded by the Five Mile Prairie community. In anticipation of the new public schoolhouse, an article printed in the *Spokane Daily Chronicle* on July 23, 1938 made the following announcement:

FIVE MILE PRAIRIE TO HAVE NEW SCHOOL

A fine new \$30,000 school will rise this fall on Five Mile Prairie to replace the outmoded brick building which has housed prairie pupils for 27 years, it was announced today by James A. Burke, county superintendent of schools.

Mr. Burke received a telegram from Senator Lewis Schwellenbach, announcing [that] President Roosevelt has approved a \$19,788 WPA project for construction of a modern, two-room school. Residents of the prosperous [Five Mile Prairie] farming community voted a \$10,000 bond issue two months ago as the first step in the project, Mr. Burke said.

The new building, modern in every respect, will be erected near the present structure, which will be used during the fall term... All new equipment will be used in furnishing the new school.

While the new school was being built, students received instruction in the old schoolhouse until it was demolished. The students then occupied a temporary classroom which was located in the Five Mile Prairie Grange, across Strong Road from the school property. As construction of the new school neared completion patient pupils, parents and prairie residents read a November 9, 1939 newspaper article that was featured in the *Spokane Daily Chronicle*. The newspaper printed a photograph of the schoolhouse and a view of the stage, which was located in the gymnasium. A caption under the photograph stated that the school would officially open on November 15, 1939 and was designed with two classrooms, an auditorium that measured 30 feet wide and 60 feet deep, and a formal dining room, which was “among its modern arrangements.”

The new school opened, and the following August saw the structure formally dedicated by Washington State Governor Clarence D. Martin. An August 28, 1940 *Spokane Daily Chronicle* article applauded the Five Mile Prairie School as “one of the best in Spokane County” and pictured school children “preparing invitations for mailing” to dignitaries who were invited to the dedication ceremonies. The ceremonies were to be held in the school’s gymnasium/auditorium three days hence.

The dedication ceremony was highlighted in a *Spokesman-Review* article which was dated August 31, 1940:

“MARTIN HEARD AT DEDICATION”

“Governor in Favorite Role Opening Five Mile Prairie Schoolhouse”

The newspaper reported that nearly 300 people attended the festivities and witnessed “Governor Clarence D. Martin...in his favorite role as the champion of education” when “he dedicated the new grade school on Five Mile Prairie.”

Built with two classrooms that were designed to accommodate the prairie’s small elementary student population, the Five Mile Prairie School initially served grades one through eight. First, second, third and fourth grade students were housed in the “little kid’s room” in the southeast corner of the building. Fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students were taught in the “big kid’s room” which was located in the northeast corner of the schoolhouse. In 1941, the seventh and eighth grades were discontinued at the school, which then served grades one through six.

The Five Mile Prairie School was a popular focal point and community center for Five Mile Prairie, and represented the community’s strong commitment to public education. A December 7, 1969 *Spokesman-Review* newspaper article written by popular columnist Dorothy Powers described the school and some of its special advantages and challenges:

At the Five Mile Elementary School on Five Mile Prairie the kids get “made-from-scratch” maple bars from the school kitchen... There are 44 pupils...26 pupils in one classroom which houses fourth, fifth, and sixth graders... Eighteen second and third graders...occupy the other classroom.

There’s a “family feeling” to the little school, whose motherly cook lives only two dwellings away from school, lets the girls help her in the kitchen and occasionally slips a cookie to ravenous boys who pass the fragrant kitchen. Mrs. Owen Click, now in her seventh year as school cook, also is adviser to the 4-H Club girls’ horse club, the Five Mile Prairie Petticoat Ponies.

But the fun and charm of the tiny school...do not diminish its academic advantages. Head Teacher Wittwer says seriously: “The pupils learn a great deal from each other. Even when a pupil is a fourth grader, for instance, he’s hearing the work being recited in the fifth and sixth grades right in the same room. If we have fourth graders who read at a high level, we can let them read with

the sixth graders, all in the same room. It can work the other way.

If a sixth grader needs a brush up in some arithmetic on the fifth-grade level, he can do some work there, too. It's much more of a teaching challenge to work with three grades in one room," believes Wittwer, [but] "when you've had a boy or girl in a room three years, you get to understand that pupil really well and know his or her capabilities much more thoroughly."

The school year 1969-1970 was the last year for public classroom instruction at the Five Mile Prairie School. A bond levy for Mead School District #354 failed in 1970, and the school was closed. In 1972 a neighborhood group, which called themselves "People for the Preservation of the Five Mile Elementary School," organized and leased the school building and grounds for use as a community center. The schoolhouse was home to community classes and activities such as Bible studies, sewing circles, cooking demonstrations, homemaker's clubs, community meetings, athletic events, Grange activities, and Saturday night dances. "Ranger Rick," a nature club for young people, the Five Mile Boxing Club, and basketball games were also held at the school.¹²

In 1973 the schoolhouse was called the Five Mile Community Recreation Center. The Spokane County Parks & Recreation Department sponsored various classes and lessons, including dance, ballet, tap, karate, judo and horse management, music lessons, arts & crafts classes, baton lessons, chess games, senior card parties, and a basketball clinic. The classes and community activities were popular but increased maintenance costs forced closure of the building as a community center.¹³ On April 5, 1976, a photograph of the schoolhouse in the *Tri-County Tribune* pictured the windows and doors covered with plywood boards. Secured against vandalism and the deleterious effects of weather, the building was secured and used as a storage facility by Mead School District #354.

Mead School District #354 records indicate that from 1985 to 2000 the school district discussed the idea of selling the Five Mile Prairie School. Five Mile Prairie residents wanted the building to function as a community center and asked district officials for a stay in selling the property. The school district obliged the community and even installed a new roof on the schoolhouse in 2000. Today the community regards the Five Mile Prairie School as one of their strongest assets, a symbol and testament of their history, heritage, and commitment to public education on Five Mile Prairie.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

From its period of significance from 1939 to 1954, the Five Mile Prairie School has served as a tangible demonstration of determination and widespread belief in the value of public education that was prized by the people of Five Mile Prairie. In addition to its role as a center for academic and athletic education, the schoolhouse and its attached gymnasium are significant as a community hub for assemblies, civic celebrations, recreational and instructive classes, and other important events. The schoolhouse reflects

the evolution of public education and school system formats that were adopted by Five Mile Prairie and Mead School District #354 during the school's period of significance.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

As an example of the historic building types, "rural brick schoolhouse" and "school gymnasium," the Five Mile Prairie School depicts early 20th-century architectural design philosophy and recommendations made by educators throughout the State. Alluding to its brick masonry construction, two classrooms, indoor plumbing, kitchen and assembly/lunchroom, and its attached gymnasium and stage, the Five Mile Prairie School was described as "one of the best in Spokane County" (*Spokane Daily Chronicle*, 28 Aug 1940). It was designed by noted Spokane architect Charles Wood, and was built by the Federal Works Progress Administration (WPA).

Charles R. Wood, Architect

In celebration of the official opening of the Five Mile Prairie School, a *Spokane Daily Chronicle* newspaper article, dated August 31, 1940, cited various dignitaries who attended the dedication of the building. Among those were "Charles Wood, school architect" (p. 8:6).

Charles R. Wood is first listed in Spokane city directories in the late 1890s as a carpenter. The *1904 Spokane City Directory* reported his employment as a draftsman for prominent Spokane architect Albert Held, and in 1907 as a draftsman for Cutter & Malmgren, one of the city's most celebrated architectural firms. As early as 1905, Wood listed himself in the alphabetized name and the classified business sections of city directories as an "architect." In an article printed in the *Spokesman-Review* on June 17, 1909, Wood was noted as an independent architect with offices located in downtown Spokane:

This gentleman has been identified with the building interests of Spokane for the past 15 years. For a number of years he served in the office of another firm in this city, during which time he designed and prepared the plans for some of the best buildings in the city. Two years ago Mr. Wood went into business for himself, since which time his clientage has steadily grown until he has been compelled to double his office force and move into more spacious quarters. Mr. Wood is now located at [suites] 715 and 716 [in the] Peyton Building. Among the buildings he has designed and superintended are the F. M. Gardner apartment house on Third Avenue, Maloney & Davenport's store and apartment house on Second Avenue, and the St. Charles store building on North Monroe. Mr. Wood has also built a large number of the better class residences of this city, all of which are modern and up-to-date in every particular. Mr. Wood is a strictly western man, and has acquired a ripe experience in the west which admirably equips him in meeting the ideas of his patrons.

In 1938 Charles Wood advertised himself in city directories as a professional “Architect, Experienced Home Designer, Builder of the Ambassador Club and Logan School [remodel]” with offices in the Lindelle Building, 8 N. Washington Street (p. 846). In addition to the above-cited references, documentation to date indicates that Charles Wood was also responsible for the design of the Witherspoon House (S. 2124 Rockwood Boulevard, built 1912), the E. A. Smith House (1414 N. Summit, built in 1912), the Albert Apartments remodel (152-162 S. Pine Street, remodeled in 1931), and the Five Mile Prairie School, built in 1939. Wood’s efforts in Spokane included some outstanding designs and spanned a total of 50 years until his death in 1944.

Federal Works Progress Administration, Builder

The Five Mile Prairie School is significant for its association with the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the Federal government’s role in the erection of public buildings during the 1930s. The MPD states that during this time “the Public Works Administration assisted in building a last group of distinctive rural public schools. These late rural schoolhouses are a significant harbinger of the role of the federal government in local education after mid-century” (Garfield, p. F-4).

A July 23, 1938 article in the *Spokane Daily Chronicle* reported that “President Roosevelt...approved a \$19,788 WPA project for construction of a modern, two-room school” on Five Mile Prairie. One year later a photograph of the newly completed school included a caption that stated, “The new...Five Mile Prairie School...was erected by WPA labor...” (*Spokane Daily Chronicle*, 9 Nov 1939).

Funded and constructed by money and labor provided by the WPA, the Five Mile Prairie School is a tangible expression of the United States Government’s commitment to reverse widespread unemployment and economic crisis caused by the Great Depression in the 1930s. The WPA was the brainchild of United States President Herbert Hoover and his successor, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who expanded the federal agency under his economic recovery program which he called the “New Deal.” The WPA provided jobs for needy persons through government-subsidized public works projects which were undertaken throughout the country. Under the WPA, thousands of miles of roads were built, many public buildings erected, and hundreds of parks and airports were constructed or improved. The agency completed more than 34,000 public building projects, which employed hundreds of thousands of professional and working-class men and women from 1935 until World War II.¹⁴

MPD Registration Requirements

The National Register MPD, *Rural Public Schools in Washington from Early Settlement to 1945*, lists registration requirements for the historic building types “rural brick schoolhouse” and “school gymnasium.” The MPD states that “a rural schoolhouse must strongly convey its historic character in both physical and associative ways, and must

have documented historical significance when evaluated within the context of rural community history” (p. F:1):

Given the simple yet distinctive form of the schoolhouse type, eligible schools must retain integrity of scale, massing, roof shape, exterior cladding and trim, and fenestration in order to convey their historic character... Additions or alterations to the schoolhouse completed during the period of significance may reflect the evolution of local education and should be evaluated within that context... Ideally, eligible schoolhouses retain interior integrity, too. Character-defining features include original floor plan, flooring and wall materials, trim, and blackboards... (p. F:1).

Generally, gymnasiums and shelters are significant only when they are contributing elements of larger schoolhouse complexes. As such, the eligible gymnasium will be located on a property that includes a schoolhouse, school yard, and ancillary structures... Eligible gymnasiums and shelters will retain the utilitarian physical characteristics which define the type: simple massing; original roof shape, unornamented exterior of wood, stone, or brick; multi-paned windows; and an open interior with high ceiling (p. F:7).

The Five Mile Prairie School meets the MPD requirements for the property types “rural brick schoolhouse” and “school gymnasium.” Built in 1939, the schoolhouse was erected during the time period designated by the MPD (1870s to 1945). The schoolhouse is well-preserved and retains a high degree of integrity of massing, roof shape, exterior cladding and trim, and fenestration that convey the building’s historic character. The schoolhouse also possesses interior integrity found in character-defining features stated in the MPD:

The interiors of rural schools were simple in both plan and finish. Plaster-and-lathe walls were trimmed with wood baseboards, wainscoting, chair rails, picture rails, and window and door surrounds. Blackboards were mounted to the classroom walls. Indoor facilities sometimes included a cloakroom, storage space, and indoor plumbing... In the largest schools, second floors or basements provided extra space (p. F:3).

The interior of the Five Mile Prairie School retains character-defining features that include the original floor plan, lathe-and-plaster walls, fir floors, finished-fir woodwork, wall-mounted blackboards, first-floor classrooms with cloakrooms, a principal’s office, a “health room,” indoor lavatories, lunchroom and kitchen, and an attached gymnasium with a stage.

ENDNOTES**Section 7**

¹ Steven Meek Architects. Elevations and floor plans of Five Mile Prairie School, 2003. Drawings rendered by architect, Gary Lauerman.

² “Modern School Opens Wednesday on Five Mile Prairie.” *Spokane Daily Chronicle*, 9 Nov 1939, p. 3:3.

Section 8

¹ Johnson, Cindy. “Greening of Five Mile Prairie.” *Tri-County Tribune*, 3 May 1973.

² *ibid.*

³ Spokane County warranty deed: 4 Oct 1881, #B-74.

⁴ Johnson, Cindy. “Greening of Five Mile Prairie.” *Tri-County Tribune*, 3 May 1973.

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ “School Starts Second Life.” *Spokesman-Review*, 16 July 1972.

⁷ “School Officials Struggle with Growth.” *Spokesman-Review*, 22 May 1997.

⁸ Spokane County School Districts, Map & Index. 19 Nov 1941.

⁹ League of Women Voters. “A Study of the Mead School District #354.” January 1969.

¹⁰ Mead School District #354, records, 2004.

¹¹ “The Raw Deal.” *The Inlander*, 15 May 2003, p. 53.

¹² “Five Mile Recreation Slate Told” (no date) and “Five Mile’s Recreation Program Set.” *Spokesman-Review*, 5 Jan 1973.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Field Enterprises, Inc. *The World Book Encyclopedia*. W. F. Quarrie & Company, 1957 (reference: New Deal).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Field Enterprises, Inc. *The World Book Encyclopedia*. W. F. Quarrie & Company, 1957.

Garfield, Leonard and Greg Griffith. *Rural Public Schools in Washington from Early Settlement to 1945*. National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation & Listing, Washington State Office of Archaeology & Historic Preservation, May 1987.

League of Women Voters. “A Study of the Mead School District #354.” January 1969.

Mead School District #354 records, 2004.

Polk, R. L. *Spokane City Directories*. 1894 to 2004.

Spokane County School Districts, Map and Index. 19 Nov 1941.

Spokane County Tax Assessor records, warranty deeds, building permits.

Newspaper Articles

“Charles Wood, Architect.” *Spokesman-Review*, 17 June 1909, p.II:2:42.

“Comprehensive Plan for Five Mile Held up by Commissioners: Mead to Hold School Sale.” *Tri-County Tribune*, 5 April 1976.

“Deadline Nears for Five Mile School.” *Spokesman-Review*, 25 July 2003.

“Dedicate New Five Mile School Friday.” *Spokane Daily Chronicle*, 28 Aug. 1940, p. 5:3.

“FMP School House Gets a New Roof.” *The Prairie Press*, Nov 2000.

“Five Mile Prairie to Have New School.” *Spokane Daily Chronicle*, 23 July 1938, p. 1:8.

“Five Mile Receives Grants for Schoolhouse Preservation.” *Spokesman-Review*, 17 Jan 2002.

“Five Mile Recreation Slate Told.” *Spokesman-Review*, no date.

“Five Mile’s Recreation Program Set.” *Spokesman-Review*, 5 Jan 1973.

“Five Mile Residents Respond to Schoolhouse Survey.” *Spokesman-Review*, 6 Sept 2001.

“Fun Run to Fund Old Five Mile Schoolhouse.” *Spokesman-Review*, 15 May 2003.

“Imaginations Soar Over Five Mile Schoolhouse.” *Spokesman-Review*, 29 May 2002.

Johnson, Cindy. “Greening of Five Mile Prairie.” *Tri-County Tribune*, 3 May 1973.

“Little Schoolhouse on the Prairie.” *Spokesman-Review*, no date.

“Martin Heard at Dedication.” *Spokane Daily Chronicle*, 31 Aug 1940, p.8:6.

“Mead Agrees to Lease Field at Five Mile.” *Spokane Daily Chronicle*, 12 May 1976.

“Mead Ponders Sale of Closed Schools.” *Spokesman-Review*, 4 Dec 1985.

“Mead Directors Let Coal Contract.” *Spokesman-Review*, no date.

“Modern School Opens Wednesday on Five Mile Prairie.” *Spokane Daily Chronicle*, 9 Nov 1939, p. 3:3.

“Neighbors Seek Ways to Save Schoolhouse Full of Memories.” *Spokesman-Review*, 23 May 2002.

“Parks Officials Support Plan for Old Five Mile Schoolhouse.” *Spokesman-Review*, 19, Sept 2002.

“Preservation Group Buys Five Mile Schoolhouse.” *Spokesman-Review*, 1 Jan 2004.

“Project Go-Ahead.” *Spokesman-Review*, 27 Oct 2002.

“School Officials Struggle with Growth.” *Spokesman-Review*, 22 May 1997.

“School Starts Second Life.” *Spokesman-Review*, 16 July 1972.

“Small School Has Charm.” *Spokesman-Review*, 7 Dec 1969.

“Spokane 60 Years Ago: From *Spokane Daily Chronicle*, July 22, 1912.” *Spokane Daily Chronicle*, 22 July 1972.

“Survey Being Conducted on Five Mile Residents’ Needs for Old Schoolhouse.” *Spokesman-Review*, 2 Aug 2001.

“The Raw Deal.” *The Inlander*, 15 May 2003.

“The Two Judys.” *Spokesman-Review*, 12 Mar 1998.

“Time Extension OK’d for Five Mile Schoolhouse.” *Spokesman-Review*, no date.

Spokane City/County Register of Historic Places Nomination Continuation Sheet
FIVE MILE PRAIRIE SCHOOL Section 9

Photos 1 and 2 East façade of schoolhouse; front entrance detail, 2004 photos.



Spokane City/County Register of Historic Places Nomination Continuation Sheet
FIVE MILE PRAIRIE SCHOOL **Section 9**

Photos 3 and 4 Northeast corner of schoolhouse, detail of north elevation window.



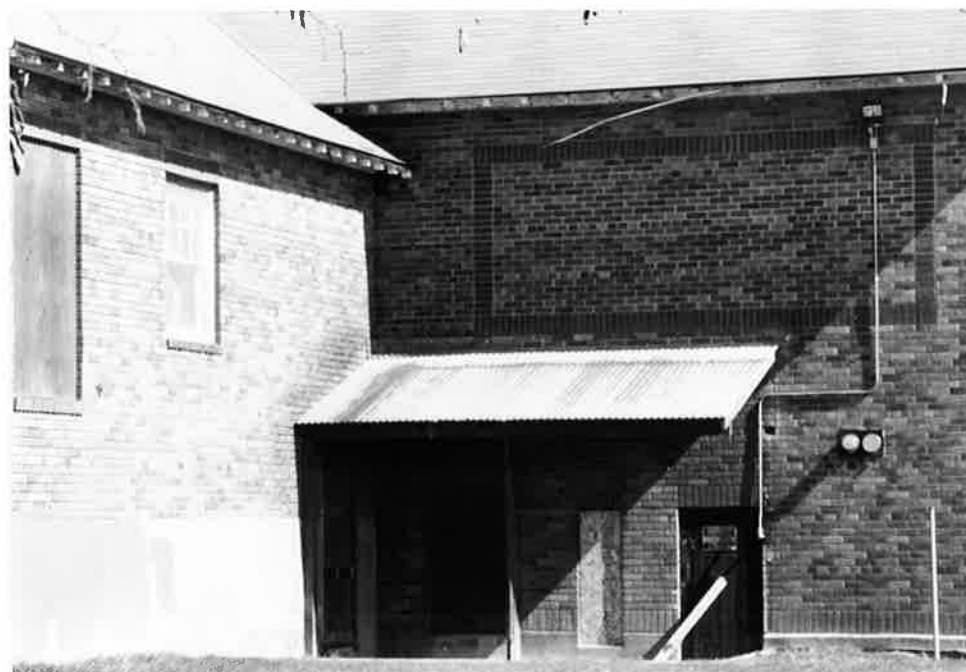
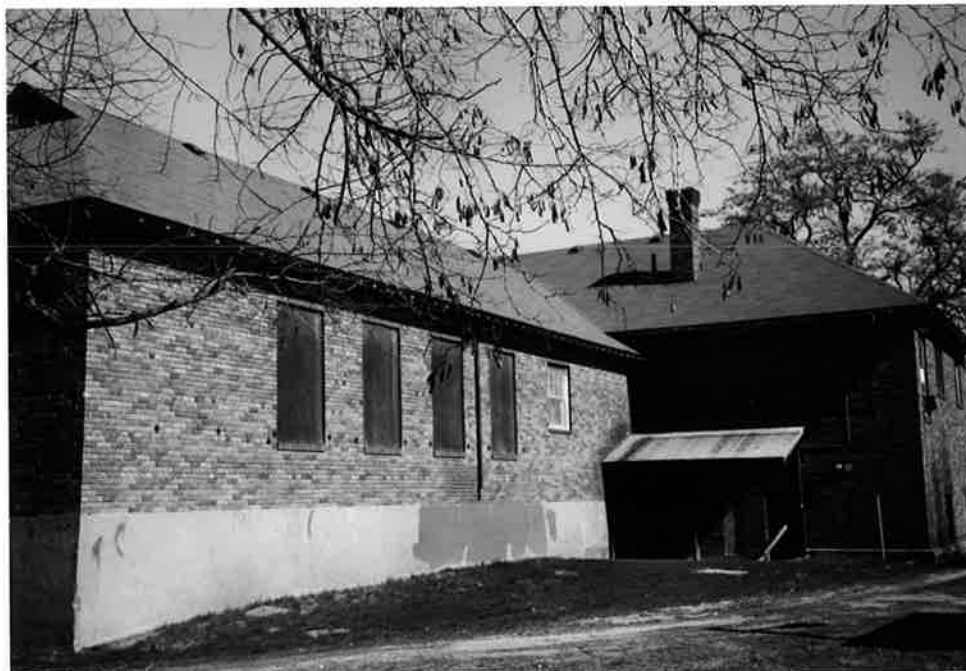
Spokane City/County Register of Historic Places Nomination Continuation Sheet
FIVE MILE PRAIRIE SCHOOL **Section 9**

Photos 5 and 6 North elevation of schoolhouse, north entrance detail.



Spokane City/County Register of Historic Places Nomination Continuation Sheet
FIVE MILE PRAIRIE SCHOOL **Section 9**

Photo 7 and 8 South elevation, south entrance, 2004 photos.



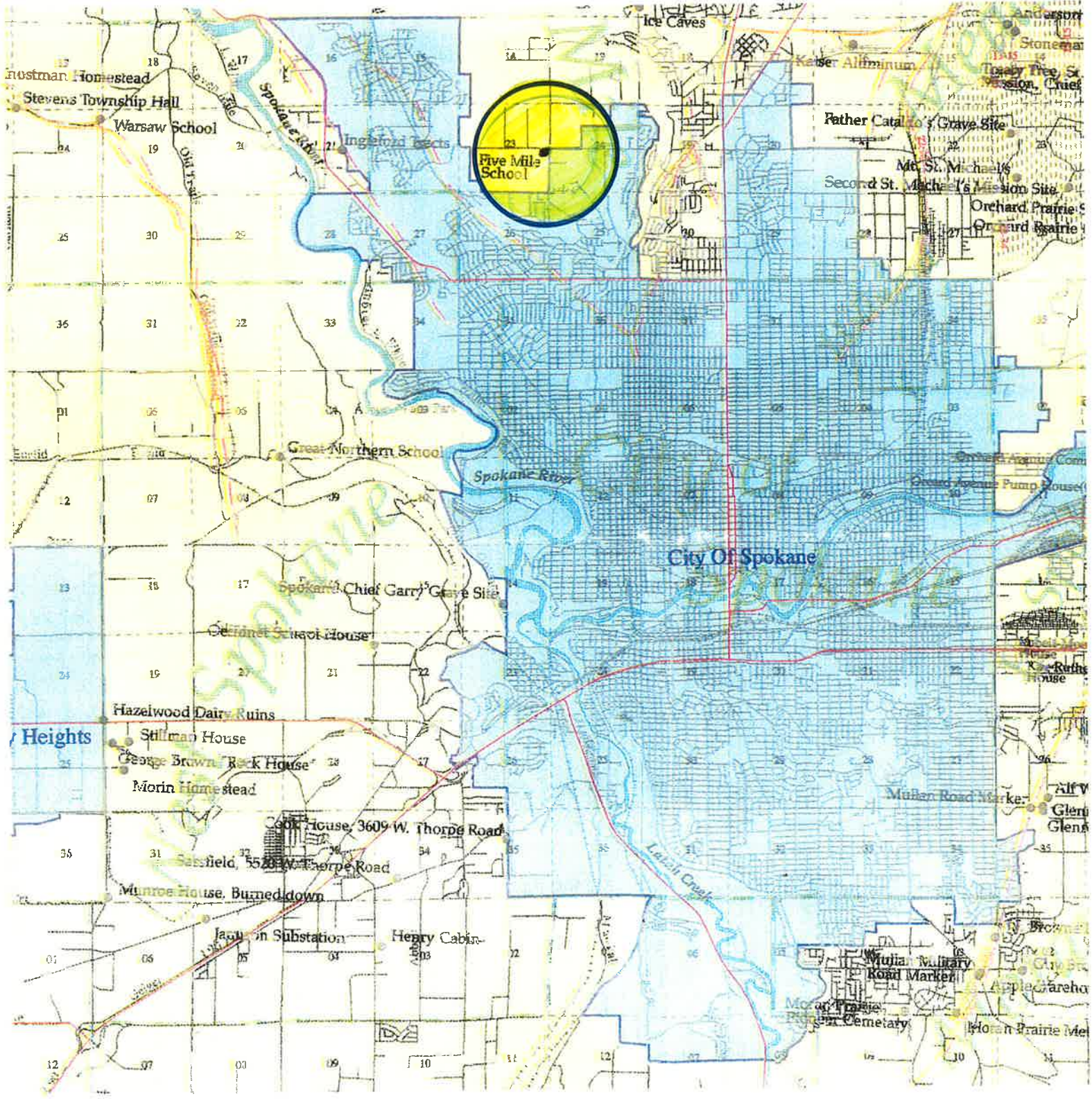
Spokane City/County Register of Historic Places Nomination Continuation Sheet
FIVE MILE PRAIRIE SCHOOL **Section 9**

Photos 9 and 10 Rear, west elevation; 2004 photos.



Spokane City/County Register of Historic Places Nomination Continuation Sheet
FIVE MILE PRAIRIE SCHOOL
Section 9

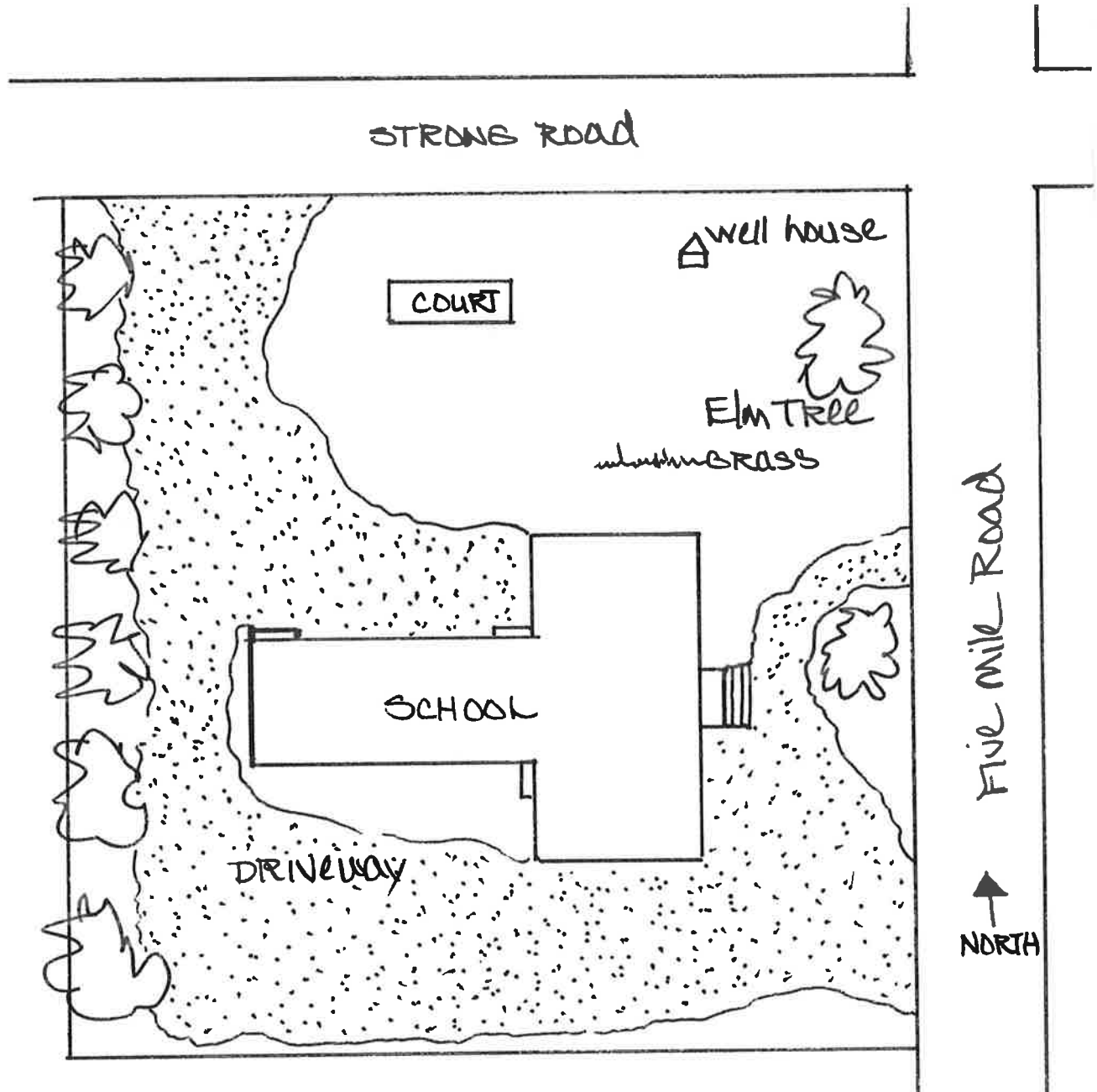
Map Source: Spokane County Cultural Resources & Historic Sites, 1998.



Spokane City/County Register of Historic Places Nomination Continuation Sheet
FIVE MILE PRAIRIE SCHOOL Section 9

Site Plan

Source: Spokane County Assessor's Records, 2004.



Spokane City/County Register of Historic Places Nomination Continuation Sheet
FIVE MILE PRAIRIE SCHOOL **Section 9**

Photos 11 and 12 Well-house on northeast corner of property; looking northeast.
Looking south along driveway; trees on west side of driveway.



Spokane City/County Register of Historic Places Nomination Continuation Sheet
FIVE MILE PRAIRIE SCHOOL **Section 9**

Photos 13 and 14 Interior front door, looking east.
Interior front hall, looking west opposite front door.



Spokane City/County Register of Historic Places Nomination Continuation Sheet
FIVE MILE PRAIRIE SCHOOL **Section 9**

Photos 15 and 16 First-floor northeast corner classroom chalkboard.
Basement northeast corner lunchroom, northeast corner.

