NPS Form 10-900 OMB No. 1024-0018 (Expires 5/31/2012)

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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form.* If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

## 1. Name of Property

historic name Fossil Public School

other names/site number Fossil Grade School, Wheeler County Public School, Fossil High School

## 2. Location

street & number 404 Main Street ☐ not for publication

city or town Fossil ☐ vicinity

state Oregon code OR county Wheeler code 069 zip code 97830

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this _X_ nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property _X_ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ **national** ___ **statewide** _X_ **local**

Signature of certifying official/Title: Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer — Date 3·22·13

Oregon State Historic Preservation Office
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official — Date

Title — State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

## 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

✓ ___ entered in the National Register

___ determined eligible for the National Register

___ determined not eligible for the National Register

___ removed from the National Register

___ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper — Date of Action 5·22·13

Fossil Public School
Name of Property

Wheeler County, OR
County and State

## 5. Classification

**Ownership of Property**
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- [ ] private
- [X] public - Local
- [ ] public - State
- [ ] public - Federal

**Category of Property**
(Check only **one** box.)

- [X] building(s)
- [ ] district
- [ ] site
- [ ] structure
- [ ] object

**Number of Resources within Property**
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

| Contributing | Noncontributing | |
|---|---|---|
| 2 | | buildings |
| | | district |
| | | site |
| | | structure |
| | | object |
| 2 | 0 | **Total** |

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

N/A

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

0

## 6. Function or Use

**Historic Functions**
(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION: School

**Current Functions**
(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION: School

## 7. Description

**Architectural Classification**
(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS:
Classical Revival

**Materials**
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: CONCRETE
walls: STUCCO
STONE: Sandstone
roof: METAL: Steel
other: WOOD: Shingle

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with **a summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

**Summary Paragraph**

The Fossil Public School is located at 404 Main Street in downtown Fossil, Oregon, near the intersection of First and Jay streets. Fossil is located in north-central Oregon and is the county seat for Wheeler County. The two-story building was constructed in 1924 in the Classical Revival style to serve as a grade school and high school for the city of Fossil and surrounding rural areas.[1] The setting of the school today is very similar to how it would have looked historically, oriented toward the west on a large, double-city block overlooking downtown Fossil. The design of the school features typical elements of the Classical Revival style. The structure is in its original location, the historic site of a school in Fossil, and has not been moved. The fabric of the school building is largely original with only minor alterations to the overall building. There is one associated building on the site, on the northwest corner of the tax lot. The contributing building is a gymnasium that has served the school since its construction in 1936 with funding from the Works Progress Administration (WPA).[2] The Fossil Public School is a grade school today, housing kindergarten through eighth grade.

**Narrative Description**

## SETTING

The Fossil Public School is located in the small town of Fossil in Wheeler County, Oregon. The school is situated on a rectangular lot that is essentially two city blocks in size. The tax lot slopes slightly down toward the west and is tiered to create level areas. The 2.25-acre parcel is approximately 165 feet by 460 feet in size and is bordered by "A" Street on the north, Rutledge on the east, First Street on the south, and Main Street on the west.[3] The Fossil Public School is centrally located on the large lot; the front, west façade of the building is aligned with the termination of Jay Street. There is a gravel parking lot to the rear of the building accessed from the north via "A" Street. The eastern portion of the lot, behind the school, is slightly sloped and covered in grass. A large portion of the area has been graded, possibly to create a level area as a place for outdoor sporting events. The gymnasium is located in the western portion of the lot in front of the school, on the southwest corner, and is surrounded by an asphalt basketball court and playgrounds for children attending the school. A portion of the lot is enclosed by chain-link metal fencing, although the majority of the lot opens directly onto the surrounding asphalt streets. There are only a few small trees and minimal shrubbery on the site. None of the landscape features appear to be historic contributing elements to the Fossil Public School.

## GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL[4]

Built in 1924, the Fossil Public School building is a two-story school with architectural features typical of the Classical Revival style, including the form and ornamentation on the front entry. The building is approximately 16,000 square feet in size over two floors, with the overall basic dimensions of approximately 141 feet long by 57 feet wide. The footprint of the building is largely rectangular, with three shallow projecting bays on the west façade. It has a shallow-pitched hip roof with three gabled projections, at the north and south ends of the front facade and over the main entry. The peak of the main hip roof is capped with a octagonal cupola, or ventilator.

[1] Shaffer, Cistie. *Fossil School District 21J Records*, District Facilities Survey, Fossil, Wheeler County, Oregon.
[2] *Unknown*, "New Gymnasium Will Be Finished This Afternoon," *Fossil Journal*, August 14, 1936.
[3] Wheeler County Assessor, Wheeler County Court House, Fossil, Oregon.
[4] Site Visit to Fossil Public School by Kenneth Gunn, SHPO Staff, July 9, 2012.

## EXTERIOR DESCRIPTION

The Fossil Public School is supported by a stone foundation. The front face of the stone is rusticated to create a textured surface. This treatment extends to the bottom of the first floor to create a high water line on the building façades. The walls are likely brick, as evidenced in the historical research that mentions that some of the material from the previous school was re-used in this school. But this is not completely substantiated, as the wall material is not visible because all façades are finished in stucco. The corners of the building are emphasized by stone quoins. The school features a number of different window sizes and configurations that all appear to be non-historic aluminum windows. The primary entrance to the school is located on the west façade with secondary entrances on all other elevations. The building has a raised basement that is partially subterranean, allowing for some natural light, and creating an elevated main floor. It has a hip roof with a standing-seam metal roof. There are three projecting gabled bays on the west façade that mark the side bays and main entry. The eave line of the roof is very simple with no ornamentation and features a box gutter with downspouts near the corner of each façade. There is a classic wood octagonal ventilator centrally located on the ridgeline of the hip roof, with a conical roof covered in sheet-metal roofing. An external single red-brick chimney is centrally located on the east façade.

### West Façade

Overall, the west façade is organized into five separate bays. The center bay marks the entrance while on either side of the west façade shallow projecting bays feature a gabled extension with a closed pediment. The bay on the right side features three sliding aluminum windows on the lower level. The areas to the left and right of the main entrance bay display a bank of four aluminum windows separated by heavy mullions on the lower and upper level. It appears that one of the windows on the lower level to the right side of the main entrance has been converted to a door with a simple gable-roof covering in order to create an ADA entrance on the west façade.

The main entrance to the Fossil Public School is located on the west façade, the most ornate of all the façades, and faces Main Street and downtown Fossil. The entrance is centrally located and marked by a gabled bay with an open pediment with eave returns. The double-door entrance is elevated and recessed to create a covered porch accessed by concrete stairs that extend the width of this bay. The entrance is embellished with a deeply raked, broken wood cornice that is painted and supported by a pair of Ionic columns. The double-door is a standard metal door with windows in the upper portions, surmounted by a transom window. The doors are framed by a pair of pilasters and a decorative cornice. Above the cornice is a large window surmounted by a broken pediment and a decorative urn. The bottom portion of the window is covered by an ornamental iron grill to imply a small balcony above the cornice over the door.

### North Façade

The north façade faces "A" Street and features the same rusticated stone foundation and stucco walls seen on all other elevations. It also features the same type and configuration of aluminum windows seen on the west façade. Two sets of four windows are located on both the lower and upper level. The windows on the upper level are larger, with the upper portion of each window being fixed while the lower portion are sliding sash. The windows on the lower level are sliding-sash aluminum windows. A door in the lower right-hand corner of the façade is covered by a small gable roof that may have been an original feature or may have replaced an original window.[5] The door allows access to the lower level of the building.

[5] Site Visit to Fossil Public School by Kenneth Gunn, SHPO Staff, July 9, 2012.

### East Façade

Only the upper level of the east façade is visible due to the slope of the site, with the exception of several windows that have been in-filled on the lower level. There is a rear entry to the building on the north side of this façade that is covered by an oversized gable roof similar to that seen on the north façade. A brick chimney is centrally placed on this facade. The upper level features three banks of four aluminum-frame windows similar in appearance to those seen on the other façades. There is a modern electrical box (affixed to the building) and a pair of large water tanks (not attached to the building) associated with the east façade.

### South Façade

The south façade is the simplest of all the facades. It has no windows. The only opening is a single entry door opening directly into the upper level of the school. The door is accessed by a narrow paved pathway leading to a small concrete landing covered by a gable roof similar to those seen on each of the other facades.

## INTERIOR DESCRIPTION

The interior of the school building consists of two floors. Each floor is 140 by 56 feet in size, totaling approximately 8,000 square feet each. Both floors have been subdivided to create classrooms, offices, and the support spaces required of a school. The main west entrance opens onto a small landing with stairs leading to the upper floor that are flanked by stairs down to the lower level. The stairs feature original wood banisters and posts.

### Lower Floor

The lower floor of Fossil Public School has been subdivided to create restrooms for both boys and girls on the western side of the floor below the main entrance, a kitchen and lunch room on the eastern portion of the floor, storage in the southern portion, and classrooms/miscellaneous spaces to be used as needed in the northern portion of the floor. The flooring varies between exposed concrete and vinyl floor covering. The restrooms feature a mix of original fixtures and more contemporary replacements. Because the building has been continuously used as a school, the kitchen has been updated with modern appliances, although the cabinets and detailing appear to be original. There is a large opening off the kitchen into the lunchroom. The lighting and furniture in the lunchroom are newer; however detailing such as the square columns appears to be original to the space. One room on the lower floor serves as the boiler room, providing heat to the entire building. The southern portion of the lower floor has been reserved for general storage and features substantial exposed wood floor joists that appear to have been burned at some point, based on black marking on the wood. This portion of the interior also has a relatively new elevator, most likely added to meet modern building codes and to provide ADA access between the two floors.

### Upper Floor

The upper floor of the Fossil Public School is completely dedicated to classroom space, with the exception of a small health room and office space on both sides of the main staircase. One classroom has been converted into an office space and teachers' lounge for school faculty. The rooms on the upper floor are separated by a central corridor with a north-south axis. The corridor features an historic industrial drinking fountain that is a distinctive element of the space. The hallway and several classrooms retain the original ceiling heights, while other classrooms have been renovated with modern "drop" ceilings. The flooring in the hallway and classrooms is a relatively modern vinyl tile in a neutral color that is broken up with random color tiles. The interior walls of the upper floor hallway feature wainscoting of vertical boards capped by a horizontal chair rail. The upper portion of the walls is painted drywall or plaster. The wood paneled doors to each room are plainly framed in wood boards. The entire interior space of the upper and lower floors of Fossil Public School features

minimal ornamentation. Each classroom includes chalkboards and a set of built-in cabinets that extend across one entire wall of each room.

## ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS

The most notable alteration to the school building appears to be the removal of original six-over-one windows and their replacement with multi-paned aluminum windows in the 1960s or 1970s. A number of small renovations occurred to the Fossil Public School during the construction of the new high school in 1949, including the addition of a new concrete staircase on the west façade. However, none of the original openings were altered and the original mullions remain. Another exterior alteration involved replacing the original roofing material with a modern standing-seam metal roof within the last 20 years. The only obvious alterations to the interior of Fossil Public School are the flooring material and alterations to the built-in cabinetry located in each classroom, which occurred in the 1950s. The ceilings of various classrooms were also retrofitted with drop ceilings, most likely in the 1970s as a part of energy upgrades. None of the alterations to the Fossil Public School have significantly diminished the overall integrity of the resource; therefore it remains eligible for listing in the National Register.

## GYMNASIUM

There is only one additional building on the site of the Fossil Public School; however it is an exceptional addition that contributes to the overall eligibility of the site as a whole. This building was originally constructed in 1936 with funding from the Works Progress Administration to serve as a gymnasium for the school.[6] It continues to serve this purpose today. The building is approximately 8,300 square feet in size with the overall basic dimensions of approximately 148 feet long by 56 feet wide.

## EXTERIOR DESCRIPTION (GYMMASIUM)

The large, wood-frame gymnasium features a steeply pitched, jerkinhead roof on the main volume, a hip roof on the volume on the north end that houses the stage, and a gable roof over the smaller entry volume on the south side of the building. All roofs have narrow eaves. Along each side (east and west) of the main building are shorter volumes with shed roofs and stepped parapets on each end that contain the viewing benches. On the far north end of the building is a small one-story addition with a flat roof that houses showers and dressing rooms.

The gymnasium was originally clad in horizontal board siding; it has since been covered with asbestos shingles. Most of the exterior of the building features tall, regularly spaced, steel-frame industrial sash, much of which has now been covered with plywood. The roof is clad in composition shingles. The gymnasium features a post-and-pier foundation. The main entry on the west façade is elevated and accessed via seven enclosed steps clad in synthetic wood with a vertical wood balustrade. The landing is covered with an enclosed gable roof supported by simple wood posts.

## INTERIOR DESCRIPTION (GYMNASIUM)[7]

The main, west entrance of the gymnasium opens onto a small lobby that originally housed a ticket booth. The interior of the gymnasium features a basketball court that has recently been refinished and is in exceptional condition. The court is flanked on the north and south sides by a series of wood benches for spectators, and bordered to the east by an elevated stage for performances and other events that the school may produce. Modern light fixtures hang from the ceiling to illuminate the space. The entire interior features exposed maple and pine and painted-wood finishes.

[6] *Unknown*, "New Gymnasium Will Be Finished This Afternoon."
[7] *Unknown*, "New Gymnasium Will Be Finished This Afternoon."

Fossil Public School
Name of Property

Wheeler County, OR
County and State

## 8. Statement of Significance

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

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

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

Property is:

- [ ] A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- [ ] B removed from its original location.
- [ ] C a birthplace or grave.
- [ ] D a cemetery.
- [ ] E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- [ ] F a commemorative property.
- [ ] G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

### Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION

### Period of Significance

1924 – 1949

### Significant Dates

1924 – School's original construction date
1936 – Gymnasium constructed
1949 – School converted to grade school

### Significant Person
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

### Cultural Affiliation

N/A

### Architect/Builder

DeYoung & Roald Architects
Charles B. Miller (1949 Alterations)

### Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance begins with the original construction of the Fossil Public School in 1924, and ends in 1949 when it was renovated for a grade school.

### Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

N/A

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

The Fossil Public School is locally significant and eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for the important role it played in the educational development of the rural community from 1924 to the present. The building itself is largely unchanged since its last major renovation in 1949. The Fossil Public School is a part of School District 21 in Wheeler County. The site of the Fossil Public School has been the site of a public school in Fossil since 1882, when the first school was constructed in downtown Fossil. The building has been in continuous use as a school since its construction in 1924.

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

The Fossil Public School is locally significant, and is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for the significant role the school played in the educational development of the rural community since its construction in 1924. The Fossil Public School was also known as Wheeler County Public School throughout much of its history, as it housed both the grade school and high school. The school is located in downtown Fossil at 404 Main Street, near the intersection of First and Jay streets. The two-story Classical Revival-style school building is locally significant and eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for the important role it played in the educational development of this rural community since its construction. The Period of Significance of the Fossil Public School spans from its original construction date of 1924, based on the design by DeYoung and Roald Architects from Portland, Oregon, to 1949 when the Fossil High School was built and ninth through twelfth grades were transferred to the new location, which to a degree altered the way that the building was used. The gymnasium associated with the school is a contributing resource to the site, completed with aid from the Works Progress Administration in 1936, within the Period of Significance for the school. Both the school building and gymnasium retain a high degree of integrity through original design, workmanship, and material features with no alterations to the original location or function.

**Developmental history/additional historic context information** (if appropriate)

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF FOSSIL[9]

The Fossil Public School is centrally located in downtown Fossil, Oregon. Fossil was founded in 1876 by Thomas Benton Hoover, a United States Senator originally from Missouri.[10] Hoover (1839-1896) was born in Platt County, Missouri. At the age of five, he immigrated to Oregon via wagon train accompanying his father, Jacob Hoover, and step-mother. The elder Hoovers settled a donation land claim of 640 acres on the Tualatin River, in the vicinity of Hillsboro, in western Oregon. In 1864, young Hoover married Mary Jane Chambers, the daughter of a neighboring settler. Chambers' father, James Washington Chambers, traveled east of the Cascades to the unsettled interior of the Columbia Basin Plateau in 1869 to identify possible ranch land. Claims for four families, including his own and that of his daughter, Mary Jane, and son-in-law, Thomas, were established in the vicinity of a tributary of Thirty-Mile Creek in present-day Wheeler County, which would become known as Hoover Creek. Upon his arrival in 1870 to the area that is Fossil today, Hoover improved his claim on Hoover Creek with a cabin constructed of logs, whip-sawn boards, and hand-hewn slabs of local sandstone. The cabin remained standing until 1948.

In 1881, Thomas Benton Hoover and Thomas Watson went into partnership and opened the settlement's first store, following the establishment of a post office in 1876. According to family tradition, which is in turn supported by an entry in *Oregon Geographic Names*, Hoover himself named his station "Fossil" in 1876. While investigating a landslide on his ranch, Hoover discovered the fossilized remains of prehistoric mammals. His

[9] The section is largely taken directly from Robert E. Conner, "Thomas Benton Hoover House," nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. Salem: Oregon State Historic Preservation Office, 1978.
[10] H.S. Goddard M.D., "A History of Fossil," *Fossil Journal*, June - December, 1941.

find is said to have attracted the immediate interest of Thomas Condon, Oregon's foremost pioneer geologist and paleontologist, who had made the first important discoveries in the fossilized beds of the John Day Valley. Hoover was named Fossil's first mayor following an election that took place at Hoover and Watson Hall in 1891, following the incorporation of the town of Fossil in the state of Oregon in 1891.[11] Hoover was also a county commissioner and director of public schools.

## AMERICAN SCHOOLING[12]

From the eighteenth century until World War II, most communities, especially in rural areas, educated their own children in local schoolhouses. Standard texts in the mid- and late-nineteenth century were *McGuffy's Eclectic* readers and the standard teaching method was rote memorization and recitation. By the 1880s most states required that teachers be at least sixteen years of age and be certified, which involved taking a one-day test administered by the county superintendent. No other training was required, but some teachers had other credentials. Men were generally preferred over women because they were thought to be better able to handle the farm boys.

Administration of the schools was the responsibility of the school superintendent, often an elected official, who organized teacher education and testing, supervised teachers, and provided supplies. By the mid-nineteenth century several separate progressive efforts to standardize state-level education were underway, including teaching methods, teacher education, and building design. One aspect of these reforms was a push toward skills-based training. Another target of the reformers was the country school, which was thought to be backward. In 1908, then President Theodore Roosevelt pushed school consolidation as an answer to the "rural school problem" of poor teacher preparation and inadequate facilities. The debate continued through the next two decades with many educators, civic leaders, and state school superintendents proposing consolidation. Many state school superintendents provided architectural plans for the "model" rural school to support this reform. Encouraged by political pressure and a shift of the rural population to cities, consolidation began in earnest in the 1930s and continued through the early 1960s in Oregon and nationally.[13]

## EDUCATION IN THE STATE OF OREGON[14]

Schooling in the West was highly valued and seen as the path to the future, and Oregon's Territorial and State governments took an active role in creating and administering schools. Providing adequate schools was one of the first priorities of the Oregon Territorial Legislature. In 1849, a year after Congress granted the Northwest region territory status, Oregon's Territorial Legislature created its public school system. Oregon's public education system became enshrined in the state constitution, which assigned the legislature the responsibility of establishing such a system and provided for an elected state superintendent of instruction.[15] Seeing the need and advantage of an organized and uniform public education system, larger communities throughout the state began forming school districts in the 1850s. The size and boundaries of the individual districts took into consideration that students either walked or rode horses to school, often over crude roads and in all types of weather.[16]

Public education was mostly a local matter throughout the last years of the nineteenth century. Following national trends, this changed as the state began to require that county school superintendents submit annual

[11] F. Smith Fussner, *Glimpses of Wheeler County's Past: An Early History of North Central Oregon* (Portland: Binford & Mort, 1975), 128.

[12] The section is largely taken directly from Lois Eagleton, "English Settlement School," nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. Salem: Oregon State Historic Preservation Office, 2007.

[13] Andrew Gulliford, *America's Country Schools* (Washington DC: The Preservation Press, 1984), 36-45; Paul Rocheleau, *The One-Room Schoolhouse* (New York: Universe, 2003), 12-26.

[14] The section is largely taken directly from Lois Eagleton, "English Settlement School," nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. Salem: Oregon State Historic Preservation Office, 2007.

[15] Sarah K. Hahn, "Lowell Grange," nomination to the National Register of Historic Places (Salem, OR: Oregon State Historic Preservation Office, 2005), Section 8 page 2-3.

[16] Oakland School District, Records of the English Settlement School District, Number 26.

reports. Superintendents based their reports, in part, on written teacher's reports that were sent in by the instructor at each school.[17] The documents show that while larger communities such as Portland, Roseburg, Medford, and Baker City had large populations of school-age children, well-developed educations systems, and a number of multi-room school houses, the majority of the state's population attended small, one-room schoolhouses staffed by a single teacher through most of the early twentieth century. Teachers' education level and salary was higher in larger urban school districts, and often much lower in rural areas; thus reflecting the relative wealth of the communities the schools served.[18] Despite the wide-spread use of one-room schoolhouses, in 1914 the Oregon State Department of Education began pushing Progressive education reforms by encouraging standardization of teacher training, texts, and school design through various publications. By the 1930s school consolidation accelerated due to consistent pressure by the State and advances in transportation, such as the wide-spread use of automobiles and an improved road system, reducing the need for local community schools.[19]

## EDUCATION IN FOSSIL AND WHEELER COUNTY

The first school in Wheeler County was a log house built in 1872, one-half mile east of Mitchell. In the summer of 1875, a log school building was constructed by James W. Chambers two miles north of Fossil. According to *Days of Yore…& Then Some More*, "The school was taught by Ada Coburn who was the first graduate of Pacific University at Forest Grove and later one of America's greatest editors…she received $30 per month and room and board plus a horse. The 12 students rode to school on horseback and staked their horses out during school hours." The school district at the time was about 40 miles long and 30 miles wide. It is believed that students had readers, slates, and pencils and sat on benches donated by their parents.[20]

In 1882, construction began on a two-story, wood-frame building on the site of the present gymnasium at the corner of Main and "A" Streets.[21] Construction of the new school building was completed in 1887 for the commencement of school in October, with Benton Mires as the first teacher.[22] A large, second-story addition was added to the public school building shortly afterward, in 1889, providing for more space.[23] The Fossil Public School was the largest in what was then Gilliam County, until 1899, when Wheeler County was established, with 110 students enrolled at the school in 1895.[24]

On January 5, 1898, Maggie J. Brown and Jeddy Brown, her husband, deeded the additional land surrounding the original site of the school in Fossil to School District No. 21 to allow for a larger school building on the site.[25] At an election held at Fossil School in 1902, it was decided to issue a bond for School District No. 21 in the sum of $5,000.00 for the purpose of building a new brick school house on the site made possible by the deed from Maggie Brown. Construction began immediately following the decision and on February 2, 1903, the new brick public school was opened with an attendance of over 200 students and a final cost of $8,000.00.

Following complaints about the condition of the brick school house in the early 1920s, only twenty years after its construction, the school board asked the State Inspector of Factories to travel to Fossil to examine the building. The inspector declared that the school building was safe and that he could not condemn it at that time.[26] He believed that the building would be safe for at least a period of two additional years.[27] The

[17] Joni Nelson and Rosalind Keeney, Mary Gallagher, May Dasch, "Rock Hill School, nomination to the National Register of Historic Places (Salem, OR.: Oregon State Historic Preservation Office, 1992), Section 8, Page 18.

[18] Oregon State Department of Education, Annual Reports of the County Superintendents, 1910-1930; Statements based on a generalization developed by sampling records for the State of Oregon at five year intervals beginning in 1900.

[19] Nelson, Keeney, Gallagher, and Dasch, Section 8, page 3.

[20] Jack Steiwer, *Days of Yore…& Then Some More* (Fossil: Finding Fossil Publishing Bunch, 1991), 108.

[21] Kathleen T. Buhl, *Glimpses of Wheeler County's Past: An Early History of North Central Oregon* (Portland: Binford & Mort, 1975), 70.

[22] Steiwer, 10.

[23] Steiwer, 11.

[24] Buhl, 72.

[25] Deed of Sale from Maggie J. Brown to School District No. 21, January 5, 1898, Wheeler County, Oregon, Deed Book 6, Page 516 (Wheeler County City Hall, Fossil, Oregon).

[26] Steiwer, 50.

community of Fossil, however, still did not feel comfortable with the condition of the school building and demolished it to construct the new school in 1924.[28]

The early twenties was also a time when people in Wheeler County were pushing for consolidation of rural districts, made up of multiple one-room schools that were "inefficient," into one larger school. Teachers at rural schools believed that having only a few students in a school was a waste of time and money, and with the growing popularity and availability of the automobile it was easier for students to get to a central school. Teachers in rural schools also complained about attendance and claimed that attendance and participation would be higher in a larger classroom setting. The consolidation of schools in Wheeler County was approved by the superintendent in 1922. As a result, the new school in Fossil was larger than the previous building to accommodate both the grade school and high school under one roof.[29]

## THE FOSSIL PUBLIC SCHOOL[30]

The Fossil Public School was designed by DeYoung and Roald Architects, of Portland, Oregon. James W. DeYoung and Knud A. Roald were in partnership from 1920 to 1930 and were responsible for a number of important commissions in addition to the Fossil School, including the New Heathman Hotel and the Paramount Theater in Portland.[31] It is not known why they were chosen to design the Fossil School building or if they designed any other buildings in the Fossil area.

Plans provided for an eight-room building of one-and-a-half story, modern construction. The building was constructed of brick and stone in order to use as much of the material as possible from the demolished brick school, trimmed with stone, and the brick walls covered with stucco.[32] The exterior of the school featured architectural detailing in the Classical Revival style, along with a large ventilator centrally located on the roof. The interior of the school included spaces for classrooms, offices, a lunchroom, and many other functions that the previous smaller school building could not accommodate.[33] Enrollment at the school in the first year of operation was 153 students.[34]

The gym originally associated with the Fossil School was declared unsafe in 1935 and a bond was issued to build a new gym for the school. The new gym took seven months to build and was completed in 1936 with the aid of the United States government as a Works Progress Administration (WPA) project. The final cost of the project was $9,000.00, four-thousand of which was paid for by the federal government.[35] The wood-frame structure, which still stands today, could seat the entire population of Wheeler County at one time.[36] The Fossil Public School remained active as the number of enrolled students increased to a combined total of 164 in both the grade school and high school by 1940.[37]

In an attempt to conform to standards that grew out of the powers granted by the State Department of Education under basic school law in the late 1940s, occupancy of the Fossil Public School building by both the grade school and high school became impossible, in contrast to the educational beliefs of the early 1920s. In March 1949, building consultant J.M. Turnball was in Fossil and advised the Fossil school board about the building situation. The local judge appointed a committee to investigate and recommend possible building sites

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[27] *Unknown*, "Board Seeking Building Plans," *Fossil Journal*, March 23, 1923.
[28] Steiwer, 52.
[29] E.R. Curfman (Principal of Wheeler County High School), "Fossil School Head for Consolidation of Rural Districts," *Fossil Journal*, June 8, 1923.
[30] Personal Accounts of time spent at Fossil Public School were not found through research.
[31] Richard Ellison Ritz, *Architects of Oregon* (Portland: Lair Hill Publishing, 2002), 101.
[32] "New School To Be Ready," *Fossil Journal*, January 18, 1924.
[33] 1924 Architectural Drawings by DeYoung and Roald Architects, Fossil Public School Collection (Cistie Shaffer).
[34] Steiwer, 53.
[35] "New Gymnasium Will Be Finished This Afternoon," *Fossil Journal*, August 14, 1936.
[36] Steiwer, 65.
[37] Steiwer, 70.

for a new high school building. The result was the present location of the high school building north of the Fossil Public School on the hill overlooking downtown Fossil.[38]

Architect Charles B. Miller of Pendleton was hired by the committee in 1949 to design the new high school. Miller was also asked to design necessary updates to the 1924 Fossil Public School building along with an addition to the 1936 gymnasium. Minor interior alterations were made to the spaces on the upper floor of the Fossil Public School at this time, including the addition of a waiting room and a new principal's office. The original built-in coat closets in each room were enclosed to create cabinet space for storage, and the stage in the southeastern corner of the upper floor of the building was removed to create additional classroom space. The basement was also redesigned to include a new lunchroom and kitchen, enlarged bathrooms, and a large indoor "play space." The entire building was updated with new drinking fountains, lighting, electrical systems, and even chalkboards. A concrete-block addition was added to the east side of the gymnasium to serve as both boys and girls locker rooms that featured showers, toilets, and a dry room.[39]

## CONCLUSION

Since the construction of the Fossil High School building in 1949, the original 1924 Fossil Public School building has continued to function as the Fossil Grade School. The building has served the community of Fossil as an educational facility since its construction in 1924. Locally, the site and school building have played an essential role both in the lives of students that attended the school and in the community as a whole. The building is unique in Fossil for its incorporation of the Classical-Revival style on an imposing formal façade. It is also unique among school buildings in Wheeler County. The Fossil Public School building, designed by significant 1920s Oregon architecture firm DeYoung and Roald Architects, is the only known example of a building of this type and scale in this area of north-central Oregon. The style, age, integrity, and importance of the Fossil Public School support its eligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places as a significant example of an educational facility that has made vital contributions to this community for over 90 years.

[38] Janet and McLaren Stinchfield, *The History of Wheeler County Oregon* (Dallas: Taylor Publishing Company, 1983), 23.
[39] 1949 Architectural Drawings by Architect Charles B. Miller, Fossil Public School Collection (Cistie Shaffer).

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Conner, Robert E. "Thomas Benton Hoover House" nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. Salem, OR: Oregon State Historic Preservation Office, 1978.

Eagleton, Lois. "English Settlement School" nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. Salem, OR: Oregon State Historic Preservation Office, 2007.

*Fossil Journal,* Fossil, Wheeler County, Oregon.

Fussner, F. Smith. *Glimpses of Wheeler County's Past: An Early History of North Central Oregon.* Portland, OR: Binford & Mort, 1975.

Ritz, Richard Ellison. *Architects of Oregon.* Portland, OR: Lair Hill Publishing, 2002.

Shaffer, Cistie. Interview by author. Personal Interview. Fossil High School, July 11, 2012.

Steiwer, Jack. *Days of Yore… & Then Some More.* Fossil: Finding Fossil Publishing Bunch, 1991.

Stinchfield, Janet and McLaren. *The History of Wheeler County Oregon.* Dallas, OR: Taylor Publishing Company, 1983.

Wheeler County, Oregon Deeds and Records. Deed of Sale from Maggie J. Brown to School District No. 21, January 5, 1898, Wheeler County, Oregon, Deed Book 6, Page 516 (On File: Wheeler County City Hall, Fossil, Oregon).

1924 Architectural Drawings by DeYoung and Roald Architects, Fossil Public School Collection (Cistie Shaffer).

1949 Architectural Drawings by Architect Charles B. Miller, Fossil Public School Collection (Cistie Shaffer).

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

___preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
___previously listed in the National Register
___previously determined eligible by the National Register
___designated a National Historic Landmark
___recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #_____
___recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #_____
___recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey #_____

**Primary location of additional data:**

_X_ State Historic Preservation Office
___Other State agency
___Federal agency
___Local government
___University
_X_ Other
Name of repository: Fossil School District

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): N/A

Fossil Public School
Name of Property

Wheeler County, OR
County and State

## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of Property** 2.25 acres
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**
(Provide a digital location map on a continuation sheet in the appendixes)
(Place additional Latitude/Longitude coordinates on a continuation sheet.)

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 45.0003495 Latitude | 120.2113229 Longitude | 3 | Latitude | Longitude |
| 2 | Latitude | Longitude | 4 | Latitude | Longitude |

**UTM References**
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 10N Zone | 719699 Easting | 4986752 Northing | 3 | Zone | Easting | Northing |
| 2 | Zone | Easting | Northing | 4 | Zone | Easting | Northing |

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The Fossil Public School property is located in Section 33, Township 6 south, Range 21 east, Willamette Meridian, tax lot 4800. The taxlot boundary is defined by "A" Street to the north, Rutledge to the east, east First Street to the south, and Main Street to the west.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The nominated property includes the entire tax lot that is currently and historically associated with the Fossil Public School.

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kenneth Gunn
organization Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) date November 2012
street & number 725 Summer Street NE, Suite C telephone 503-986-0690
city or town Salem state OR zip code 97301
e-mail kenny.gunn@state.or.us

## Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

  A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.

- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

**Photographs:**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

**Name of Property:** Fossil Public School

**City or Vicinity:** Fossil

**County:** Wheeler **State:** Oregon

**Photographer:** Kenneth Gunn

**Date Photographed:** July 2012

**Description of Photograph(s) and number:**

**Photo 1 of 18.** (OR_WheelerCounty_FossilPublicSchool_0001.tiff)
Exterior View: Fossil Public School Front (west) Façade, looking east.

**Photo 2 of 18.** (OR_WheelerCounty_FossilPublicSchool_0002.tiff)
Exterior View: Fossil Public School north and west façades, looking southeast.

**Photo 3 of 18.** (OR_WheelerCounty_FossilPublicSchool_0003.tiff)
Exterior View: Fossil Public School north façade, looking south.

**Photo 4 of 18.** (OR_WheelerCounty_FossilPublicSchool_0004.tiff)
Exterior View: Fossil Public School east façade and setting, looking northwest.

**Photo 5 of 18.** (OR_WheelerCounty_FossilPublicSchool_0005.tiff)
Exterior View: Fossil Public School south façade, looking north.

**Photo 6 of 18.** (OR_WheelerCounty_FossilPublicSchool_0006.tiff)
Exterior View: Fossil Public School setting and east façade, looking southwest.

**Photo 7 of 18.** (OR_WheelerCounty_FossilPublicSchool_0007.tiff)
Exterior View (Detail): Fossil Public School ventilator detail, looking northeast.

**Photo 8 of 18.** (OR_WheelerCounty_FossilPublicSchool_0008.tiff)
Exterior View (Detail): Fossil Public School main west entry detail, looking east.

**Photo 9 of 18.** (OR_WheelerCounty_FossilPublicSchool_0009.tiff)
Interior View: Fossil Public School main west entry (Upper Level), looking west.

**Photo 10 of 18.** (OR_WheelerCounty_FossilPublicSchool_0010.tiff)
Interior View: Fossil Public School Library (Upper Level), looking southwest.

**Photo 11 of 18.** (OR_WheelerCounty_FossilPublicSchool_0011.tiff)
Interior View: Fossil Public School Classroom (Upper Level), looking south.

**Photo 12 of 18.** (OR_WheelerCounty_FossilPublicSchool_0012.tiff)
Interior View: Fossil Public School Lunchroom (Lower Level), looking southeast.

**Photo 13 of 18.** (OR_WheelerCounty_FossilPublicSchool_0013.tiff)
Exterior View: Fossil Public School Gymnasium setting and west and south façades, looking northeast.

**Photo 14 of 18.** (OR_WheelerCounty_FossilPublicSchool_0014.tiff)
Exterior View: Fossil Public School Gymnasium north and west façades, looking southeast.

**Photo 15 of 18.** (OR_WheelerCounty_FossilPublicSchool_0015.tiff)
Exterior View: Fossil Public School Gymnasium setting and south façade, looking north.

**Photo 16 of 18.** (OR_WheelerCounty_FossilPublicSchool_0016.tiff)
Exterior View: Fossil Public School Gymnasium setting and east façade, looking west.

**Photo 17 of 18.** (OR_WheelerCounty_FossilPublicSchool_0017.tiff)
Interior View: Fossil Public School Gymnasium, looking northeast.

**Photo 18 of 18.** (OR_WheelerCounty_FossilPublicSchool_0018.tiff)
Interior View: Fossil Public School Gymnasium, looking west.

**Property Owner:** (Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Fossil School District

street & number 404 Main Street telephone 541-763-4384

city or town Fossil state OR zip code 97830

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).
**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management. U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

## LIST OF FIGURES

1. Location Map of Fossil, Oregon showing location of the Fossil Public School Nominated Area (Courtesy of Google Maps).
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10. Last 3rd/4th grade class to meet in the old Fossil Public School, 1924 (*direction unknown*).
11. Historic photograph of the 1924 Fossil Public School, c.1950 (looking east).

Figure 1. Location Map of Fossil, Oregon showing location of the Fossil Public School Nominated Area (Courtesy of Google Maps).

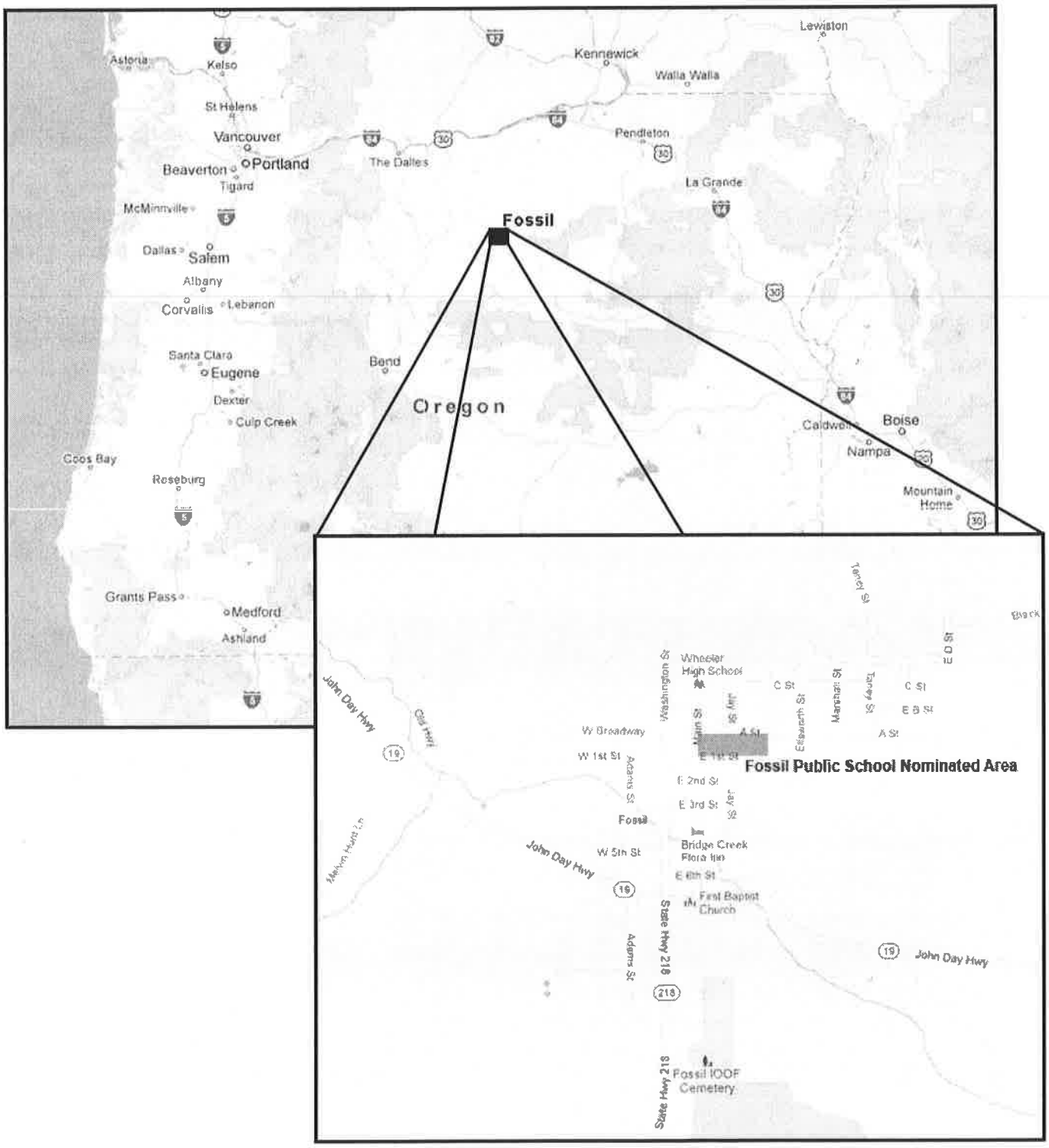


Figure 2. Current aerial photograph of the Fossil Public School (Courtesy of Google Maps)

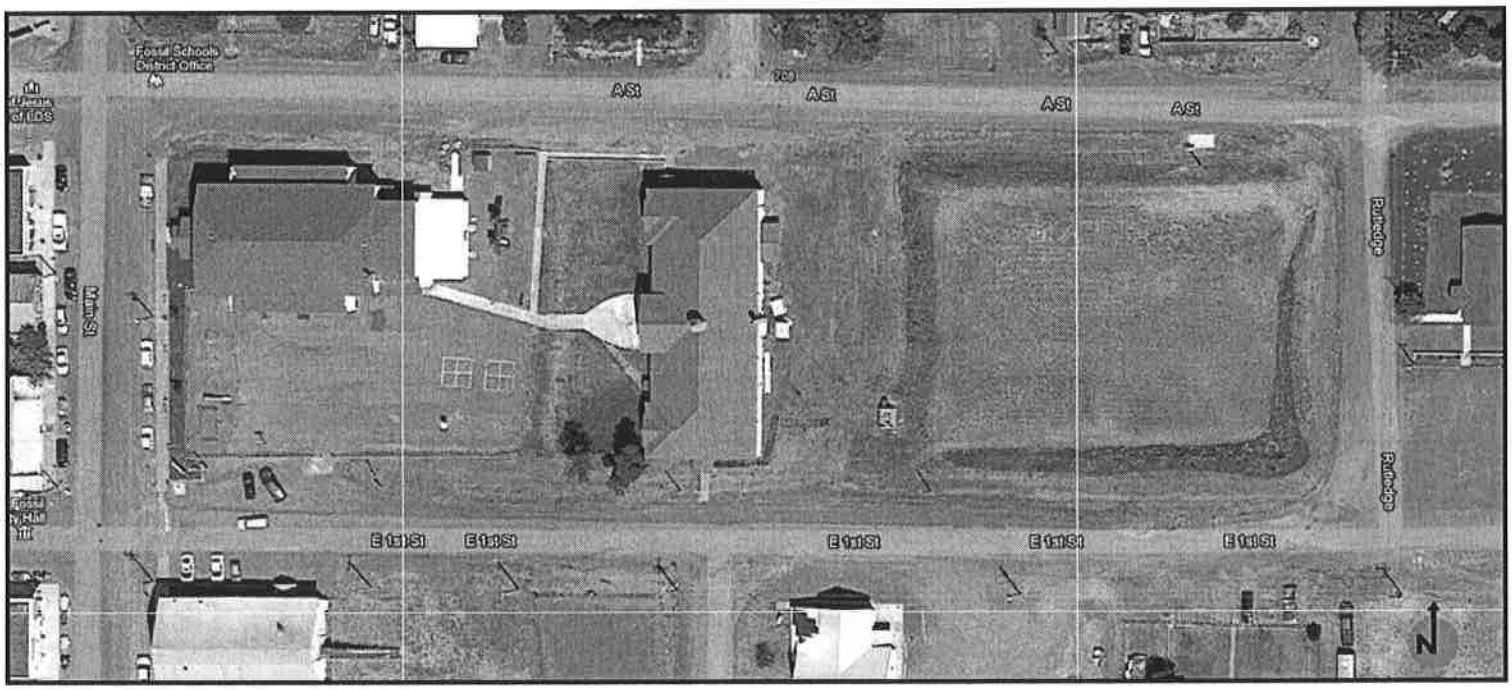



Figure 3. Current site plan of the Fossil Public School.

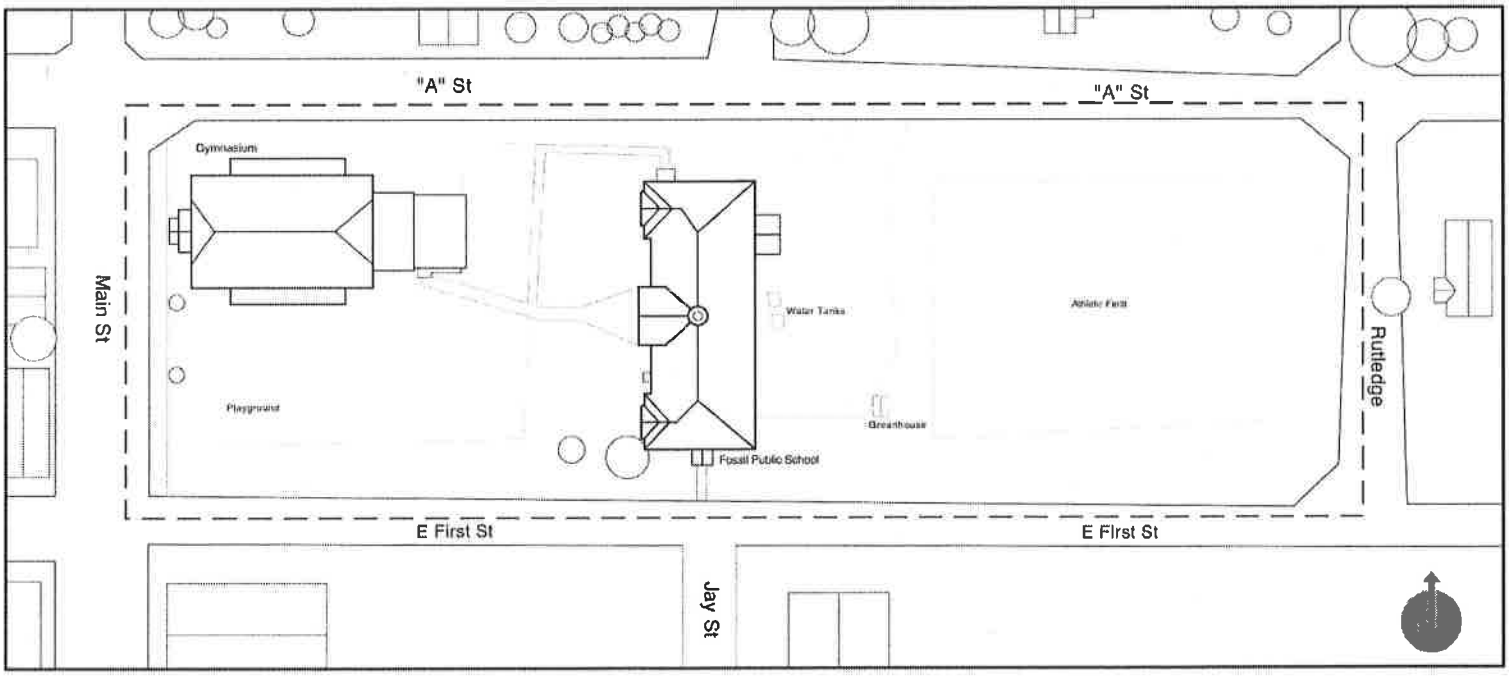


Figure 4. Upper floor plan of the Fossil Public School (1924).

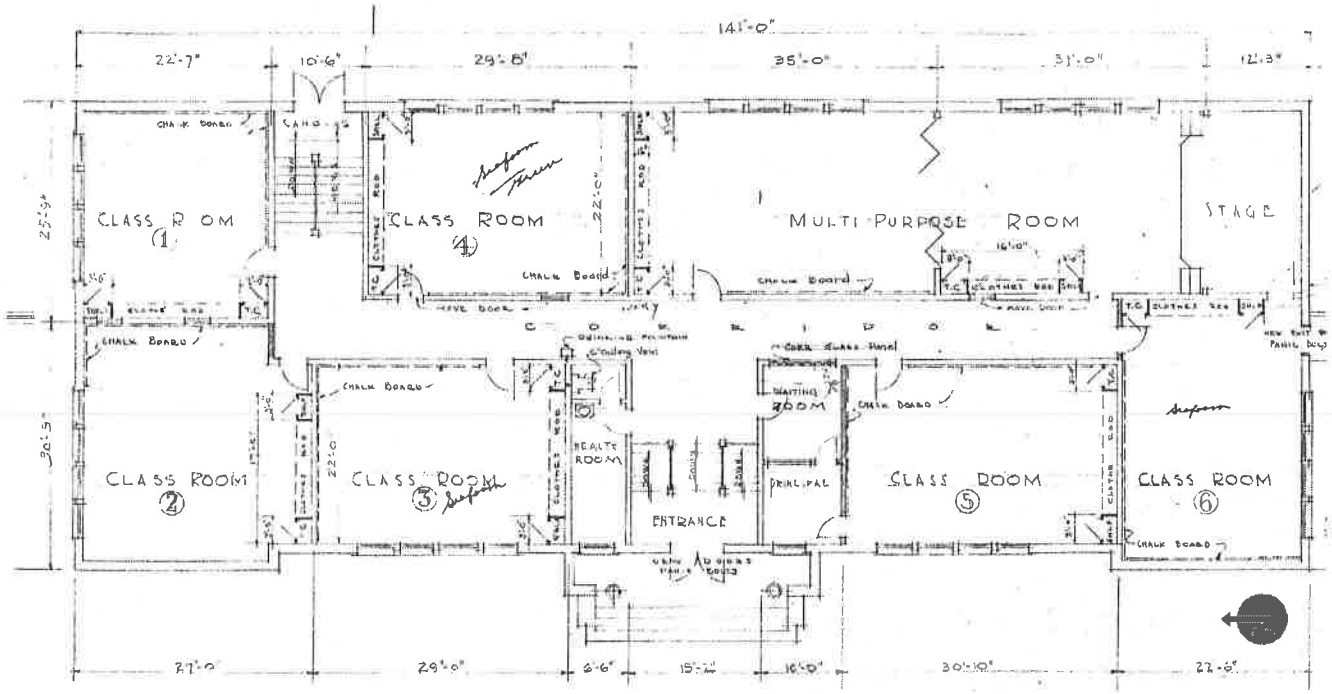



Figure 5. Lower floor plan of the Fossil Public School (1924).

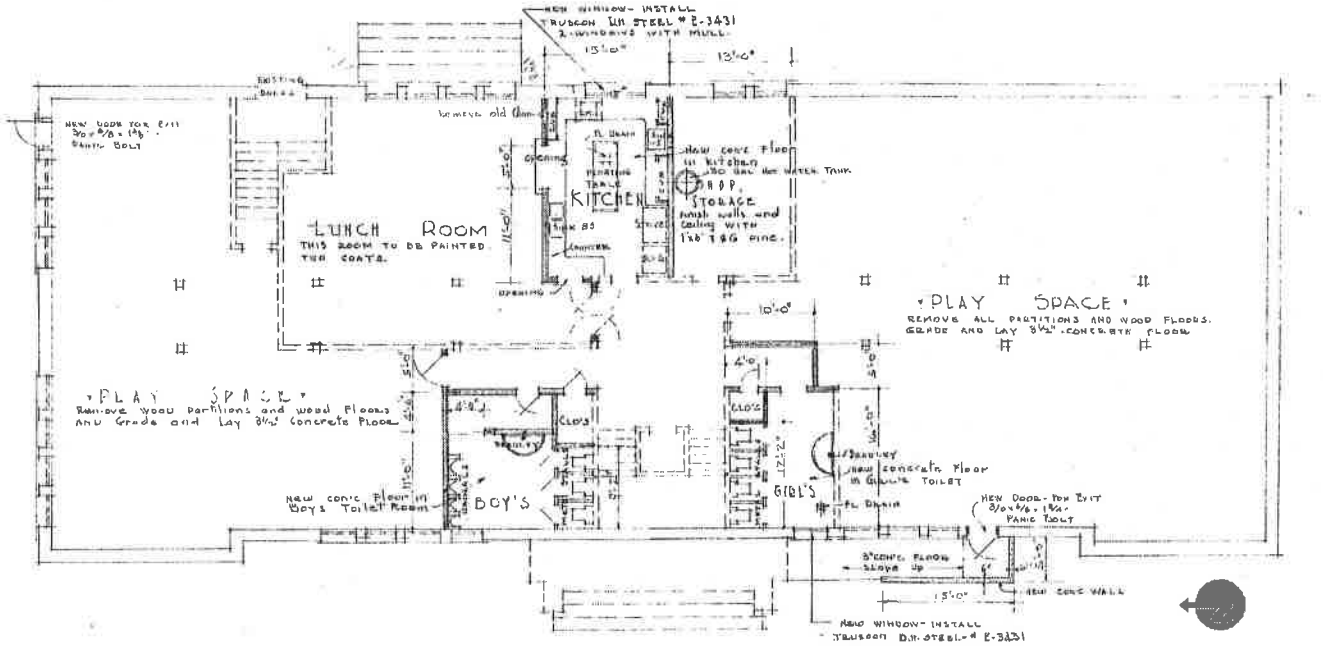


Figure 6. Floor plan of the Fossil Public School Gymnasium (1924).

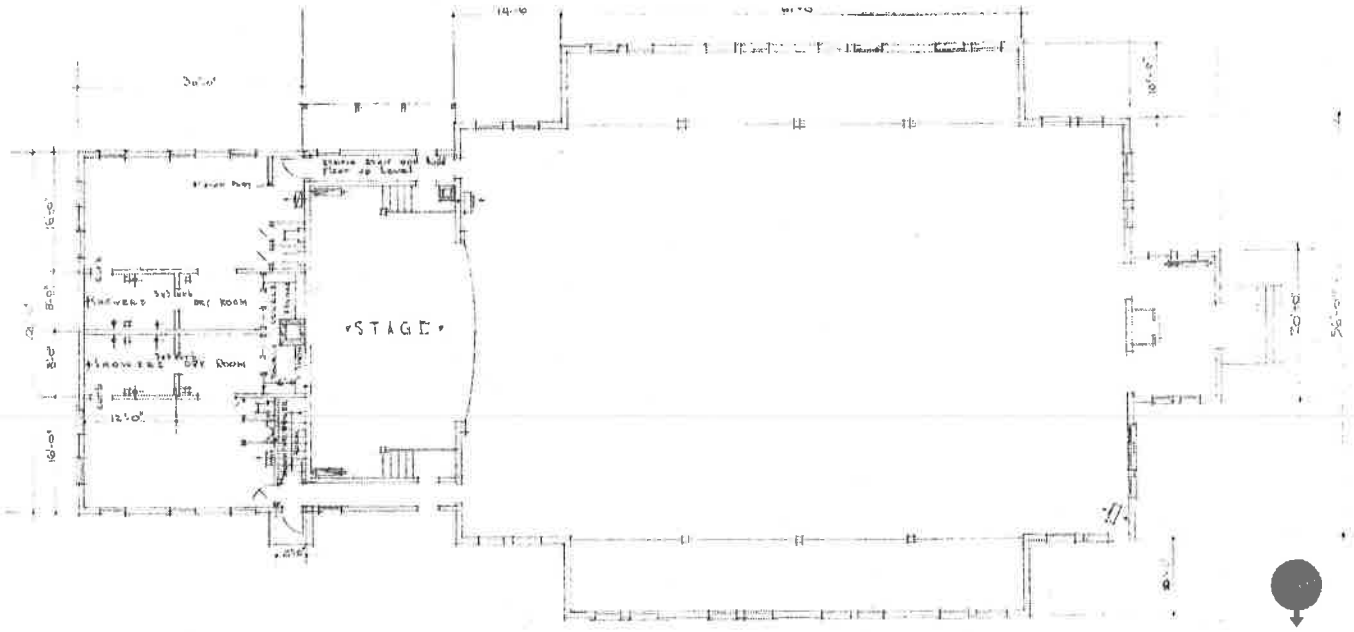



Figure 7. Partial Front (West) Elevation of the Fossil Public School (Courtesy of DeYoung & Roald Architects, 1924).

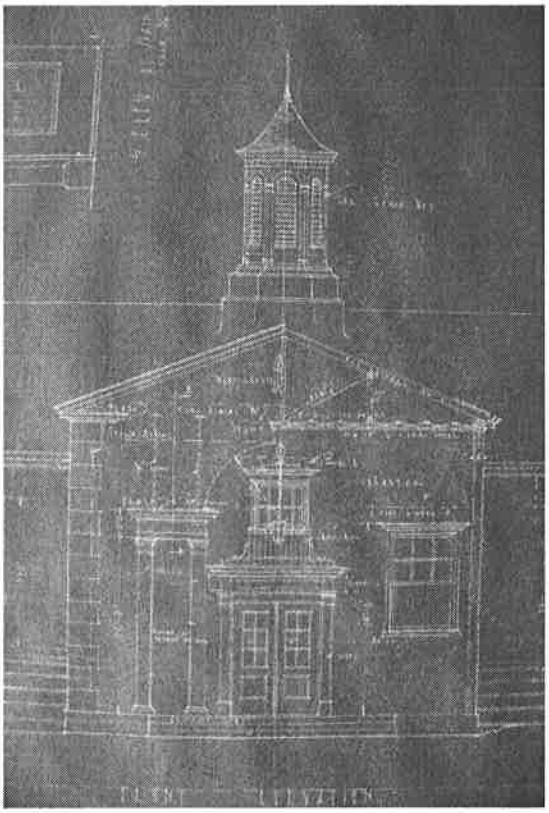


Figure 8. Historic photograph of the 1902 Fossil Public School, c.1915 (looking east).

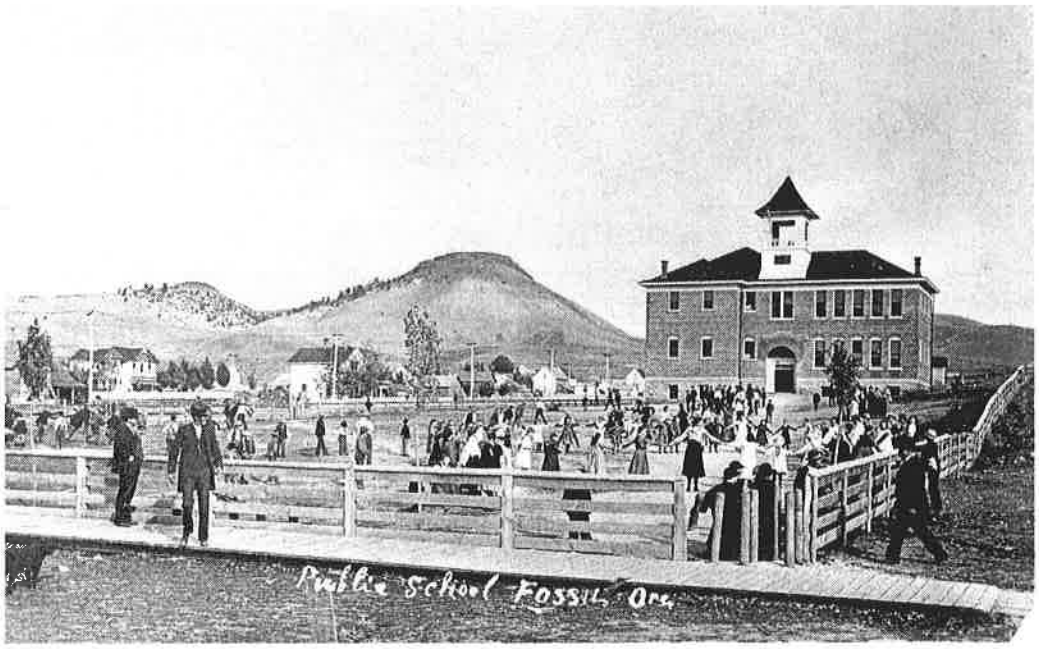



Figure 9. Historic photograph of the 1902 Fossil Public School and Gymnasium, c.1910 (looking east).

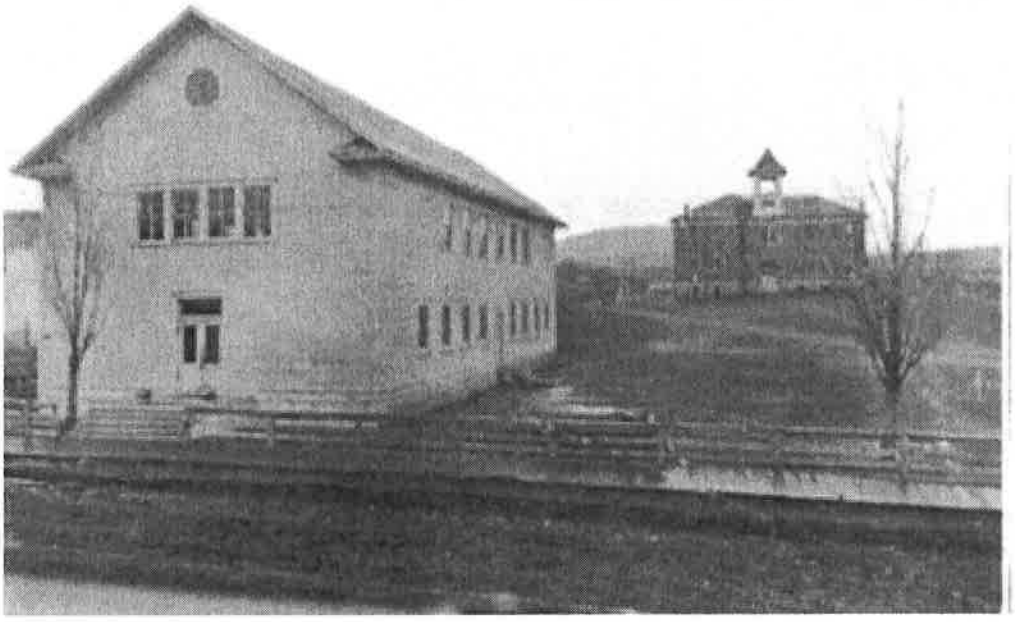
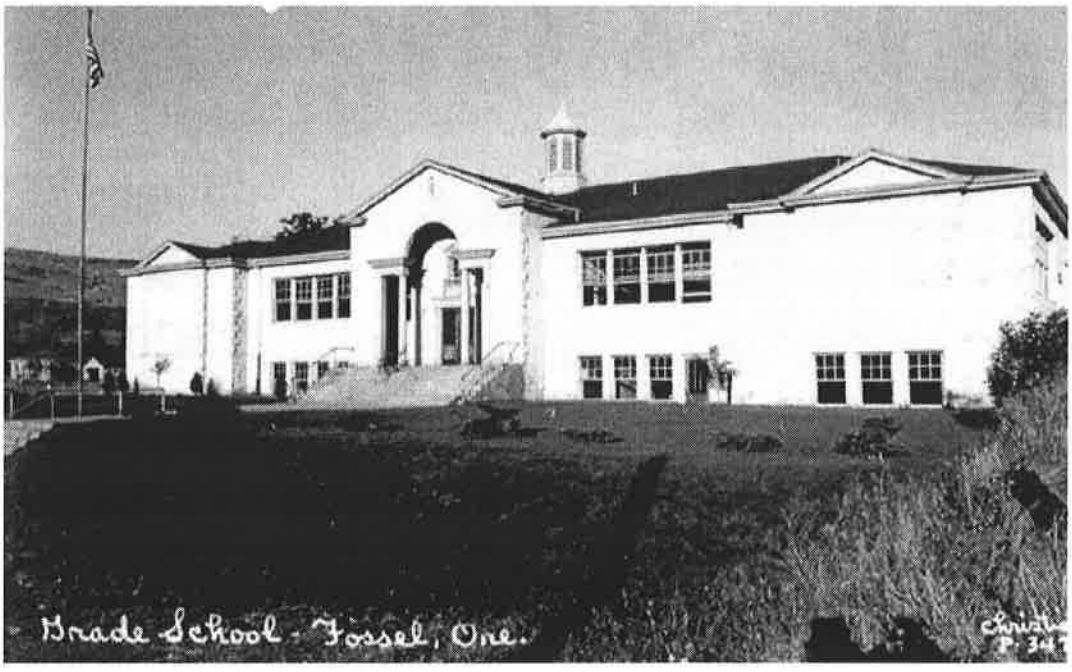


Figure 10. Last 3rd/4th grade class to meet in the old Fossil Public School, 1924 (*direction unknown*).

Figure 11. Historic photograph of the 1924 Fossil Public School, c.1950 (looking east)



UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

# FOSSIL NORTH QUADRANGLE
OREGON
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

1974 II NE (SCHOTT CANYON)

1974 II NE (MATNEY FLAT)

1974 II NW (CONDON)

ARLINGTON 48 MI.
CONDON 10 MI.

DYER STATE WAYSIDE

Fossil Public School
Fossil, Wheeler
County, Oregon

UTM References:
Zone 10N
E 719699
N 4986752

Lat/Long Coordinates:
Latitude
45.000185
Longitude
-120.212622

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey

Control by USGS and USC&GS

Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1969. Field checked 1970

Projection and 10,000-foot grid ticks: Oregon coordinate system, north zone (Lambert conformal conic)
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 10, shown in blue. 1927 North American datum

Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence lines

UTM GRID AND 1970 MAGNETIC NORTH DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET

SCALE 1:24 000

CONTOUR INTERVAL 20 FEET
DATUM IS MEAN SEA LEVEL

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Primary highway, hard surface
Secondary highway, hard surface
Light-duty road, hard or improved surface
Unimproved road
Interstate Route
U. S. Route
State Route

OREGON
QUADRANGLE LOCATION

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
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A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

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1970

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15
13

NORTH
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2011-2012 ACADEMIC YEAR

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