

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

**1. Name of Property**

historic name El Portal Old Schoolhouse

other names/site number El Portal Chapel, NPS Building No.8847

**2. Location**

street & number Chapel Lane  not for publication

city or town El Portal  vicinity

state California code CA county Mariposa code 043 zip code 95318

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this \_\_\_ nomination \_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant \_\_\_ nationally \_\_\_ statewide \_\_\_ locally.

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

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

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that the property is: Action	Signature of the Keeper	Date of
<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other (explain):	_____	_____

El Portal Old Schoolhouse  
Name of Property

Mariposa County, CA  
County and State

**5. Classification**

Ownership of Property  
(check as many as apply)

- private
- public - local
- public - state
- public - Federal

Category of Property  
(check only one box)

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

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
3		structures
		objects
4		Total

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

NA

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

NA

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions  
(enter categories from instructions)

Education -- School  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Current Functions  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Religion – Religious Facility  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19<sup>th</sup> and Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century  
American Movements:  
Other: Bungalow / Craftsman

Materials  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation: board formed concrete  
Walls: wooden, drop-edge clapboard siding  
Roof: composition shingles

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

See continuation sheets.

**8. Statement of Significance**

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

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

Areas of Significance  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Education  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

El Portal Old Schoolhouse  
Name of Property

Mariposa County, CA  
County and State

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.

Period of Significance  
1930-1938  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Significant Dates  
NA  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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

Property is:

A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes

Significant Person  
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)  
NA  
\_\_\_\_\_

B removed from its original location

Cultural Affiliation  
NA  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

C a birthplace or grave

D a cemetery

E a reconstructed building, object, or structure

F a commemorative property

G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance  
Within the past 50 years

Architect/Builder  
Architect unknown;  
According to personal interviews, local men  
George and David Dukes were associated  
with the construction  
\_\_\_\_\_

Narrative Statement of Significance  
(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets)  
See continuation sheets.

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):  
 preliminary determination of individual listing (36CFR67) has been requested  
 previously listed in the National Register  
 previously determined eligible by the National Register  
 designated a National Historic Landmark  
 recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey  
 recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

Primary location of additional data:  
 State Historic Preservation Office  
 Other State agency  
 Federal agency  
 Local government  
 University  
 Other  
Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

EI Portal Old Schoolhouse  
Name of Property

Mariposa County, CA  
County and State

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## 10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of Property less than one acre

### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1	<u>11</u>	<u>0254231</u>	<u>4173327</u>	3	_____	_____	_____
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	_____	_____	_____	4	_____	_____	_____

### Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary perimeter of the site is roughly square with a north fixed point of an electrical pole that forms the corner of the NW boundary line and NE boundary line. The boundary designation for the Old EI Portal School is shown as a hatched line on the accompanying map entitled "EI Portal Old Schoolhouse Site Plan"

NE boundary – from the electrical pole the boundary line runs SE to its terminus on the NW edge of the asphalt road "Chapel Lane"

SE boundary - follows the NW edge of asphalt road "Chapel Lane" abutting the terrain slope to the NW terminating approximately where the asphalt road takes a NW turn

SW boundary – follows the curvilinear NE edge of asphalt road "Chapel Lane" and continues on to the northern most point of the gravel driveway

NW boundary – from the northernmost point of the gravel driveway the boundary line runs NE to the electrical pole

### Boundary Justification

These boundaries contain all that is significant and contributing to the historic character of the property.

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## 11. Form Prepared By

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name/title Jennifer Self, Architectural Historian Intern; Holly Fetzter, Volunteer; Allison McLellan, Historical Architect Intern

organization Yosemite National Park, Division of Resources date March 17, 2009  
Management and Science, History, Architecture  
and Landscapes Branch

street & number PO Box 700 telephone 209-379-1222

city or town EI Portal state CA zip code 95318

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### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Location Map, Plat Map with Boundary Designation, Site Plan with Photograph Reference, Interior Plan with Photograph Reference, Current Photographs, Historic Photographs

El Portal Old Schoolhouse  
Name of Property

Mariposa County, CA  
County and State

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**Property Owner**

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name National Park Service -- Yosemite National Park

street & number 9039 Village Dr. telephone 209-372-0356

city or town Yosemite state CA zip code 95389

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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 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, PO Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.



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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet – Narrative Description

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## **SUMMARY:**

The El Portal Old Schoolhouse is located on a steep contoured terrain within the area of “Old El Portal”, a locally established place-name for the historic community center and residential area of the town of El Portal located in Mariposa County, California. The single-story, woodframe Craftsman/Bungalow building was constructed in 1930. The building was later expanded in 1938 with an east addition and has undergone interior modifications after being converted to a chapel in 1969. Most alterations, both on the interior and exterior, have been additive in nature and a great majority of the historic fabric remains. The building is rectangular in plan punctuated only on its south façade by two porches. A three-bay, cross-gable main porch is located on the original 1930’s portion of the building; while a secondary smaller porch, also with a cross-gable roof, is joined to the later east addition. The main porch has a prominent wooden staircase, which leads to the elevated entrance of the building. Exterior woodframe walls are supported by a board-formed concrete foundation and are finished with wood, round-edge drop, clapboard siding, which continues down all facades near grade. Architectural details and building materials used during the construction of the schoolhouse are in keeping with the local El Portal vernacular building style of the late 1920s and 1930s.

## **GENERAL DESCRIPTION:**

### **SETTING:** *(See Continuation Sheet for Site Maps and Photographs)*

The El Portal Old Schoolhouse is located on defined terraces along the steeply sloped terrain within the area of Old El Portal just north of a section of the Merced River and Highway 140 in close proximity to Yosemite National Park. Old El Portal is located within Township 3 South/Range 20 East, sections 16 and 17 Mount Diablo Meridian. The town of El Portal has long faced development challenges given the surrounding precipitous terrain and the limited amount of available land along the Merced River Canyon. The location of the schoolhouse was carefully conceived and serves as an example of how local citizens addressed those challenges by transforming the surrounding terrain to accommodate public institutional buildings.

The property, on which the Old Schoolhouse is located, can be accessed by Chapel Lane heading north and gaining in significant elevation from the town center. This setting affords vistas of the Merced River Canyon, which is dominated by essentially unaltered National Park Service and U.S. Forest Service land. Chapel Lane approaches from the base of the sloped site, and continues as the southeast perimeter boundary as it runs east to west. The road then turns north, continuing to gain in elevation, before terminating in a loop drive near the western corner of the site’s perimeter. The sloped terrain is dominated by four distinct terraces defined by stone retaining walls: the lower terrace, the school yard, the school terrace, and the upper school yard.

Three retaining walls located within the property boundary are considered to be significant contributing historic resources: the retaining wall of the lower terrace, the curvilinear retaining wall of the schoolyard, and the retaining wall located near the Northeast corner of the schoolhouse. These substantial and prominent structures provide broad leveled terraces and served to manipulate the landscape to make the site viable for use. In addition to their functional purpose these structures also possess strong historic associational ties to the schoolhouse and local community. *(See Section 8 for further description.)* The retaining wall of the lower terrace is comprised of varying sizes of rough granite from the surrounding area set into a recessed mortar bed. *(Photo 1&2)* This wall is abutted at its eastern end by a set of stairs that lead to the school yard above the lower terrace. These stairs are rough granite, as is the wall, and have been capped with concrete on the treads. To the east of the stairs, the retaining wall is significantly battered and dry laid. The grand curvilinear retaining wall is

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located within the school yard and serves a dual function of providing a bench within the surrounding landscape for the schoolhouse's foundation and to direct traffic flow towards the main entrances by way of a set of three sweeping stairs. (Photo 3) The wall is comprised of varied river cobble from the surrounding area with conspicuous mortar joints, making the wall a unique characteristic of the property. Near the Northeast corner of the schoolhouse, an additional L-shaped retaining wall was added to the steep grade when the later east addition was constructed. This wall was constructed in similar fashion to that of the lower terrace and also contains rough granite from the surrounding area as well. (Photo 4) Overall the historically significant retaining walls of the property are in good condition and maintain a high level of historic integrity. Other than the functional retaining walls, landscaping throughout the property is minimal and limited to a few planter beds with a variety of trees and shrubs. Much of the vegetation is overgrown as a result of deterred maintenance, however, the setting appears relatively unchanged from its historic appearance. The surrounding natural landscape outside the property boundary has not been developed and is mostly live oak forest and low-lying grassy brush.

### **EXTERIOR:** (See Continuation Sheet for Current Photographs and Historic Photographs)

The El Portal Old Schoolhouse is an elongated single-story, woodframe building with architectural details exhibiting fine examples of the Craftsman/Bungalow style. Characteristics of and building materials used in construction are in keeping with the local vernacular style present in the late 1920s and 1930s.

Character defining features include:

- a moderately pitched intersected gable roof,
- gable ends finished with a set of three knee braces, rake boards, and gable attic vents,
- wide over-hanging eaves,
- exposed rafter tails,
- round drop-edge clapboard siding,
- a prominent central porch,
- window groupings of three or five,
- wide trim around windows and doors, and
- symmetrical elevations.

A board-formed concrete foundation supports the wood framed structure and follows the angle of the terrain. The difference between the grade and primary story is the greatest in the south elevation and therefore a wide prominent staircase of fifteen risers is needed to access the main entrance. (Additionally, two smaller concrete steps are located at the base of the stairs.) The stairs currently have a simple wood fence rail; however, historically the stairs were framed by two tiered buttress walls complete with siding and trim. (Photo 6 & Historic Photo A) The elevated primary story has allowed ample space for a functional basement level. This space has been utilized for restrooms in the southwest corner of the building, along with an unfinished storage area beneath the main porch; both of which are accessed through the exterior. All facades of the building have painted white clapboard siding that drops down nearly to grade, with the concrete foundation being exposed in only a few places. Historically, the exterior trim of the building was painted a vibrant green which is still visible in some places where paint has delaminated. In general, the building seems to have very few paint layers and in many places the paint has deteriorated completely, exposing bare wood. Several patches in the siding, as well as paint lines, indicate that chimneys were once present against the north façade of the building. Along the south and west facades, sizable pony walls compensate for the elevation change of the site. The juncture

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet – Narrative Description

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between the pony walls and primary story is delineated by a wood trim water table. The building was originally constructed in 1930 as having two classrooms with auxiliary cloakrooms and was symmetrical in plan and elevation. In 1938, the building was expanded to the east to accommodate a third classroom. The east addition required a slight site modification, in the form of an added retaining wall on the northeast corner of the building. The original roofline had a center gable above the main entrance that became offset to the relation of the building once the addition was in place. Although the east addition is not original, it complements the main building in symmetry, craftsmanship, and materials. A roof shelter was added above the entrances to the basement restrooms sometime between 1938 and 1960. This shelter is an open-walled structure with a quarter-hip roof. *(Photo 10)* This roof addition is much simpler than the overall construction of the building; however, still attempts to blend with the Craftsman character by the use of exposed rafter tails. The building is structurally sound with no visible sloping or sagging. Most degradation to the historic fabric has been a result of animal infestation (primarily, acorn woodpeckers damaging clapboard siding), vegetation growth on the exterior of the building, and general inadvertent neglect.

The south elevation *(Photo 5)* is punctuated with two porches, one being the elevated main entrance to the building and the other smaller porch on the east addition serves as a secondary entrance. The main porch has a front-facing gable roof, which is centrally located on the original portion of the building. *(Photo 6)* The plan of the porch is T-shape and both projects from and recesses back into the main volume of the building. There are four entrance doors leading from the porch into the building: two panel doors with top-lights along the north wall leading directly into the classrooms and two solid five panel doors leading to the central and west cloakrooms. *(Photo 7)* The main porch is finished with painted tongue and groove flooring running north to south and wide wood trim around the openings. Porch fixtures include two wall-mounted “bubbler” water fountains and a pendant light with frosted glass shade mounted to the beadboard ceiling. The secondary inset porch on the east addition of the building is smaller in size but still retains the character of the main porch by use of a three-bay front façade and similar materials. *(Photo 8)* This complement effectively connects the two portions of the building together. The inset porch is rectangular in plan and is nearly symmetrical. It has two entrances leading into the building: a single panel door with a top light along the north wall leading to the east classroom and a solid five panel door on the east wall leading to the east cloakroom. The porches divide the south elevation into three wall segments, each with a set of three hopper windows and accompanying window screens mounted to the exterior trim. The only other window found along the south elevation is a large four light window near the southwest corner at basement level, in which the glass panes have been painted.

The west elevation is located on one of the gable ends of the building. *(Photo 9)* The slope of the site affords ample space for two restrooms to be located at the southwest corner of the building. The restrooms are only accessible through the outside of the building and partition walls have been installed atop a concrete slab-on-grade platform to serve as a privacy screen for each of the entry doors. *(Photo 10)* A quarter-hip roof, with open supports, was added sometime between 1938 and 1960 to provide shelter for the restroom entrances. A window opening within the exterior restroom wall is present but the panes have been removed and the opening boarded-up. A group of three windows is centered on the upper portion of the façade; the middle window has been replaced with stained glass and is flanked on either side by hopper windows.

The unbroken north elevation is dominated by evenly spaced groups of five one-over-one double hung windows. *(Photo 11)* These groupings provide visual reference to the location of the classrooms within the building. The windows have the same consistent wide trim as the smaller hopper windows on the rest of the building. Window

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screens were mounted onto the exterior trim for all of the double hung windows at one point in time; however, a number of screens are now missing and several are detached and resting on the ground. In two of the window groupings, a window has been altered to accommodate a short, but wide, emergency door while leaving the top window pane in-tact. (Photo 12) One window within the far west group of windows is boarded entirely to accommodate an air conditioning unit. A vertical seam in the siding presents a visual delineation of where the original building and the addition meet.

The east elevation of the building is the gable end of the later addition. (Photo 13) A group of hopper windows is centrally located along the façade. The center window has been removed to accommodate an air conditioner, which sits on a metal shelf attached to the façade with brackets and cables. The two flanking windows are intact; however, they have been covered with wire mesh screen.

The schoolhouse building features a moderately sloped gable roof with a long, unbroken ridgeline running east to west. The cladding is composition shingles, which are in very good shape. Exposed rafter tails and round vents in the eave are present in both the original building and its later addition.

### **INTERIOR:** (See *Continuation Sheet for Interior Plan and Photographs*)

Interior design elements of the El Portal Old Schoolhouse are in keeping with the architectural Craftsman style of the building. The original plan exhibits symmetry and is complimented by a later east addition classroom. The layout of three main classrooms with auxiliary cloakrooms and spaces are direct and functional as intended. The large classrooms, measuring roughly 23 feet by 31 ½ feet, can be accessed by doors leading directly from the porches, or through cloakrooms as the students would have done. The classrooms have high, twelve-foot, ceilings and are filled with an ample amount of natural light from expansive window groupings of five one-over-one double hung windows along their northern wall and additional groupings of hopper windows located along the exterior east and west walls of the building. The cloakrooms have lower, eight foot, ceilings and contain sets of three hopper windows along their southern walls. Architectural details of the historic interior include:

- wide baseboards and trim detailing,
- bead board wainscoting,
- chair and picture rails,
- crown molding over the doors and windows,
- fiber board ceiling panels with battens,
- fiber board and bead board wainscoting walls,
- solid wooden paneled and top-light paneled doors, and
- straight-grain Douglas Fir tongue-and-groove flooring, stained red.

The interior of the Old Schoolhouse also contains several unique historic features including a central tri-fold accordion divider wall between the west and center classroom, wide-trimmed built-in chalkboards, and a remnant of a wash station within the west cloakroom. Both the west classroom, with its adjoining cloakroom, and the central classroom, with its adjoining cloakroom, would have been mirror images of the other in size, architectural detailing, and configuration of doors and windows. The later east addition to the schoolhouse was built rapidly with the intended purpose of adding more space to accommodate a sudden influx of residents to El Portal. The interior of the east addition contains one classroom with adjoining cloakroom and mimics that of the original building in style and architectural details; however exhibits simpler, narrower trim detailing and the

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ceiling is comprised of painted plywood panels rather than fiber board paneling. The addition can be accessed through the original building by a wooden five-panel door or from the exterior inset porch.

Two basement restrooms, on an exposed concrete slab, can be accessed by separate doors through the exterior of the building on the southwest corner. The “Girl’s” restroom (*Photo 25*) includes a sink and two water closets while the “Boy’s” restroom contains a sink, urinal, and one water closet.

### *Interior Alterations*

The central divider wall once consisted of large tri-fold accordion doors that could be opened to unite the two classrooms into a large multi-use space. Since their initial construction, the tri-fold doors have been modified and reconfigured but can still be visually interpreted as folding doors and contain chalkboards within their upper panels. Additional modifications to the interior include modern false wood paneling along most wall space, addition of floor and wall registers for heating upgrades, installation of window-mounted air conditioning units, installation of squat emergency exit doors along the exterior north wall, unadhered carpeting, installation of an acoustic drop ceiling within the west classroom, modern lighting fixtures, an added pass-through service window between the east classroom and adjoining cloakroom, and the installation of semi-permanent partition walls within two of the classrooms. Although modern modifications hinder the initial interpretation of building interior’s historic aesthetic qualities, most are additive cosmetic techniques and have left the historic fabric in-tact for the most part behind the modern façade. Temporary furnishings, such as church pews, screens, a modest pulpit, and storage shelving units were added to the interior spaces when the building usage changed but could easily be removed.



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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet – Narrative Statement of Significance

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## **SUMMARY**

The El Portal Old Schoolhouse is significant under Criterion A at the local level as an educational institution that serves as an example of the socio-economic development of the town of El Portal, California. El Portal was founded in 1885 as entrepreneurs began to pursue potential mining and timber industries within the vicinity. Additional commerce to the area included the railroad and associated tourism. During this time, education for the worker's children was facilitated in a temporary building and, later on, a small "little red schoolhouse" which is no longer intact. In the 1920s, large mining companies infiltrated the community resulting in the largest population influx since the town's commencement. The need to accommodate a growing number of students prompted the construction of a larger, more adequate school house and thus serves to show the significant expansion of the town of El Portal. The school house was constructed in 1930 in the Craftsman/Bungalow style. Architectural characteristics and building materials associate the Old Schoolhouse with the local El Portal vernacular style during the 1920s and 30s; thus qualifying it for Criterion C. The schoolhouse was identified as a significant contributing resource to the El Portal community by Harlan D. Unrau in his 1998 study of historic structures and cultural resources within the El Portal area.<sup>1</sup> This report has gained concurrence from the State of California's Historic Preservation Office and deemed that the schoolhouse was significant under Criterion A and C as established by 36 CFR 60.4, as of February 1999. (See *Continuation Sheet VII*)

## **PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The period of significance for the school is 1930-1938. In 1930 the community determined the need for a new school, voted to construct the school, and completed construction, demonstrating an impressive pace of development. Between 1930 and 1938 the community continued to grow and invest in the school; in 1938 an addition was made to the school to accommodate the significant increase in population in the community. Thus the period from 1930 to 1938 both aligns with the architectural development, for criterion C, and illustrates the ongoing growth of the community, for criterion A.

## **HISTORICAL CONTEXT & SIGNIFICANCE**

### **Socio-economic development of El Portal**

The town of El Portal is nestled within the Merced River Canyon in close proximity to Yosemite National Park. The formation of the town began in 1885 on a tract of land encompassing 80 acres. Entrepreneurs such as Leonidas Green Whorton, A.H. Ward, and James A. Hennessey sought to capitalize on the mining potential of the area and commenced a trend of El Portal as being a "company town". The newly introduced industry to the area brought an influx of workers and subsequent infrastructure to support the population. The railway, constructed in 1906, running from Merced to El Portal, played a crucial role in the town's economic development. The railway contributed to the mining industry of the area and also brought the timber industry and tourism. Travelers to Yosemite were transported as far as El Portal by train then rode horse-drawn stages into the park. A large luxurious hotel was built in El Portal with subsequent facilities to accommodate the town's guests. In 1926, an "all-weather highway" (Highway 140) was constructed to the park which bypassed the town and greatly

<sup>1</sup> Unrau, Harlan D. *Evaluation of Historical Significance & Integrity of Cultural Resources, El Portal Administrative Site, Yosemite National Park, California: Determination of Eligibility for Listing in the National Register of Historic Places.* National Park Service, Denver Service Center: June 30, 1998.

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reduced the significance of El Portal as a tourist stopover. Once again, the economy returned to logging and mining as their primary industries.

### *National Lead Company & Barium Mine*

Small barium mining operations in El Portal began on established land claims in 1915. The main deposit of barium was located on the north side of the river at an area called Rancheria Flat, just a mile west of the town's center. Barium, which is a heavy metal, was used primarily by drillers to weight down drilling muds to prevent the oil drills from blowing out of their well casings. This was first, and for a long period of time the only, barite mined commercially in the state of California. The metal ore was shipped via the Yosemite Valley Railroad to Merced then onto oil fields. The deposit at Rancheria Flat also produced witherite, a type of carbonate, and was the only U.S. commercial location supplying shipments. Operations first began under the El Portal Mining Company; however, the site was also worked by Yosemite Barium Company, Western Rock Products Company of San Francisco, National Pigment Company, and then was taken over in 1928 by the National Lead Company. At this time, the National Lead Company increased production and its workforce; thus creating a significant population growth to the town of El Portal. The company built a house opposite the river from the mine for the manager of the site, now known as the Murchinson house, and additional residences near the base of the mine for its workers. After the Yosemite Valley Railroad disbanded in 1945, the mines were forced to ship material by truck down the canyon which proved to be too expensive. The El Portal Mining Company (a subsidiary of the National Lead Company) folded in 1951 and resulted in the demise of the mining industry in El Portal.

### *National Park Service*

In 1958, in order to "preserve the extraordinary natural qualities of Yosemite National Park"; public law authorized the secretary of the interior to acquire land in the El Portal area for use as an administrative site. To alleviate some of the crowding and housing pressures in Yosemite Valley, the National Park Service began building housing in 1961 within the Rancheria Flat area under the service-wide Mission 66 initiative.

### *Education in El Portal*

Development of the educational structures in El Portal can be linked directly to the town's growth as it experienced economic development throughout the years. Workers infiltrated the town of El Portal in pursuit of employment in the local mining and timber industries and brought their families with them. A sufficient number of families created the need for a proper school. In 1910, shortly after the railway was constructed to El Portal, the first school was established. The school facility, meant only to be temporary, was housed in a storage building owned by the Yosemite Valley Railroad. Two years later a one-room school house was constructed in El Portal and began servicing the educational needs of local children along with those as far as Emory, a community ten miles west of El Portal. In the late 1920s the town's population expanded significantly due to surrounding industry, most notably the barium mine. The one-room school house was no longer sufficient to support the growing number of students and it was determined by the citizens that a new school should be constructed on a new site.

### **The El Portal Old Schoolhouse**

The El Portal School District officially granted \$8,000, in the form of \$400 savings bonds, on August 4<sup>th</sup>, 1930. The funding was to go towards: lot purchase, construction of the school buildings, furnishings for the school,

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grounds improvements, and a minor community earmark of improvement to town buildings damaged by a recent fire. The property was selected north of the town's center on a hilltop overlooking the residential area and the mountainous landscape of the Merced River canyon. The architect or contractor responsible for the construction of the school is unknown; however, from information gathered in personal interviews, it is believed that local members of the community (those mentioned were George and David Dukes) assisted in the building of the school. The foundation for the building was laid in September 1930 and construction was completed in the following months. The school house opened its doors in November of the same year and served a 33 year tenure as El Portal's only educational facility. Not only did the school mark the expansion and progressive development of the town of El Portal, it also played a central and integral role in the community. Teachers were provided housing and consequently were neighbors to the children's families. The position of the school's bus driver was taken upon by local citizens in addition to their regularly paying jobs. Even the structure itself took on multiple roles as a community center, hosting dances, concerts and a weekly movie night for the town's people. The school house was originally constructed as a symmetrical Craftsman style building having two large classrooms each with an adjoining cloakroom that were mirror images of each other. The east classroom was occupied by the lower grades, first thru third, while the west classroom was used for the upper grades, fourth thru eighth. The classes were separated by a distinctly characteristic divider wall which consisted of large tri-fold accordion doors. As the accordion doors were pushed aside the two spaces united to form a large multi-purpose room. Numerous windows throughout the building provided natural light year-round and ventilation during the warmer months. During the colder months, the building would have been heated by wood burning stoves and eventually a gas fired heater. Distinctive schoolhouse features, such as a large brass bell and metal flag pole adorned the center gable above the main entrance. Most modern modifications to the Old Schoolhouse have been additive in nature and are simply covering the historic fabric, which is in-tact for the most part. This presents a unique opportunity for managing bodies to restore the interior and present a more accurate interpretation of the building.

When the school first opened, the surrounding setting lacked any formal landscaping. In 1936, masonry retaining walls were put into place to divide the property into defined terraces. The terraces provided broad level areas within the steep terrain which could be utilized as school yards. The upper grand curvilinear wall of river stone was laid by a local mason of Italian heritage, Dave Misseo, who also was a bus driver for the school. A local by the name of Bob Babcock who attended the school, recalls that the retaining wall of the lower terrace was built the same year by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). An L-shaped retaining wall at the Northeast corner of the building was constructed to provide space within the steep terrain for an addition onto the schoolhouse which was built in 1938. All retaining walls are substantial in size and scale, were constructed during the period of significance, possess a high level of historic integrity, utilize local material, and have historic associations to the surrounding community because of the men that built these structures. Aside from Hollyhocks and rose bushes, within the planters on either side of the main entrance, the grounds were left unembellished and consisted only of natural vegetation and loose gravel along the terraces. These clearings provided play areas for the school children and once included game courts and playground equipment. The property's vegetation has grown significantly from the period of the construction, hindering the initial visual interpretation of the property; however, the overall layout and main cleared areas are still present and possess historic integrity.

A later addition to the schoolhouse denotes yet another significant boom period in the town's development and expansion. In 1937, a severe flood washed out Highway 140, the only thoroughfare linking Merced directly to the upper Merced River area including Yosemite National Park and El Portal. Workers were brought in for road

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repairs thus increasing the town's population with their accompanying families. In 1938, an east addition was added onto the schoolhouse to supply additional classroom space. The addition consisted of one large classroom and adjoining cloakroom which echoed the character of the main building. As development pressures mounted within Yosemite Valley, park staff turned towards El Portal as an area to house a new administrative site. In 1956, the National Park Service purchased the town and all buildings therein. During the Mission 66 initiative, the Park constructed a large residential area at the location of Rancheria Flat. This was yet another significant influx of people to the town of El Portal and it was deemed a new, much larger, school was in order. After school functions were transferred to a new school building in 1963 the Old Schoolhouse was left vacant until 1969. During that time frame, the building almost met its demise when the Park Service considered burning it down, as its staff deemed it to be too far from the town's center of activity; however, the community stepped in and protested the treatment to a building that had such strong local ties. In 1969, a special use permit was issued for the building to be utilized as a preschool and chapel by three religious groups. Interior modifications, mostly additive in nature, were made during this time to rehabilitate the structure into the first, and only, non-historic use in its history. The use of the building as a chapel complimented its historic use as a community gathering place and served to preserve the structure by delaying deterioration from neglect. In recent years, church services at the location has declined and with that available funding and resources for proper maintenance and upkeep of the building and grounds.

### **ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE**

The El Portal Old Schoolhouse embodies architectural characteristics and materials associated with 1920s and 30s local vernacular Craftsman/Bungalow style for public and commercial buildings within the immediate El Portal area. Other buildings in the area resembling this vernacular style include residences built by the National Lead Mining Company in the late 1920s. (See Photo) Both exterior and interior elements of the Old Schoolhouse exhibit fine examples of the style. Exterior character defining features include:

- a moderately pitched intersected gable roof,
- gable ends finished with a set of three knee braces, bargeboards and a wooden louver attic vent,
- wide over-hanging eaves,
- exposed rafter tails,
- round drop-edge clapboard siding,
- a prominent central porch,
- window groupings of three or five,
- wide trim around windows and doors, and
- symmetrical elevations.

Keeping with the local vernacular Craftsman/Bungalow style, the interior floor plan of the schoolhouse was direct and functional. Entry doors opened directly into the main classrooms which were separated by a divider wall of large tri-fold accordion doors that could easily be opened to unite the two rooms. Interior detailing of wide trim, paneled doors, and window groupings are also consistent with the style.

The surrounding property also echoes the theme of the Craftsman/Bungalow style. Retaining walls comprised of local stone help define the natural slope of the terrain into distinct terraces and natural vegetation has been left

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as the primary landscaping. The building has been inspected by a member of Yosemite’s Heritage Preservation Crew who considers the building to be in “remarkably good condition” and structurally sound.

## **HISTORIC INTEGRITY**

The El Portal Old Schoolhouse retains all seven aspects of integrity as defined by the National Register’s standards: ***location, setting, feeling, design, materials, workmanship, and association.***

The property of the Old Schoolhouse is ***located*** in close proximity to the community’s center and is surrounded largely by residential structures just as it was historically. The modest town of El Portal and surrounding residential area provide historic contextual integrity. Funding for the school building included the purchase of the lot on which it still sits and the grounds for the schoolhouse have not been radically altered since the period of significance. The schoolhouse resides on a bench in the hillside above the town center and the ***setting*** is composed of sweeping mountainous views of the Merced River canyon. Because El Portal is in such close proximity to naturally protected areas such as Yosemite National Park and the Sierra National forest, view sheds from the property remain essentially untouched as they were from the initial construction of the school. The surrounding beauty of the setting in itself exudes a ***feeling*** of inspiration. The property is an important defining feature for the schoolhouse as it serves to provide a sense of importance of place. It is evident that the conception of the schoolhouse was a thought out endeavor and thus the overall design of the building along with its landscaping terraces and masonry walls enhance the surrounding environment. This association with the surrounding setting let school children know that “they were coming to an important place with an important function”, as noted by Yosemite’s Historical Architect, Sueann Brown. Early on, the building was adorned with letters above the main entrance spelling out “El Portal School 1930”, a large brass bell, and flag pole on the center gable. These have since been removed but nonetheless the overall feeling of the premise is unmistakable that the building once housed a local school and retains a high level of historic integrity.

The ***design*** exhibits characteristics associated with a 1930s-era public and commercial building type and is in keeping with the local vernacular building style. Historic ***materials***, such as the drop edge clapboard siding, on the schoolhouse are also in keeping with the time period. The schoolhouse retains a large percentage of its historic fabric in part to the quality of initial construction and ***workmanship***. A continued effort in construction quality is seen in the later east addition as well. Most of the degradation seen on the exterior has occurred due to neglect and pests since the building ceased to serve as a school. Despite the change of use in the 1960s to a chapel, the exterior of the building has not been modified significantly since the period of significance.

The El Portal Old Schoolhouse has had strong ***associational*** ties with the surrounding community throughout its history. Aside from the building’s primary functional use as an educational facility the Old Schoolhouse has always served the town of El Portal as a “community gathering place” and the town people have returned the favor by providing support for the school throughout the years. Just as the town of El Portal grew and developed the local schoolhouse did as well, serving as a socio-economic marker. The El Portal Old Schoolhouse was the third school building for the town and is contributing evidence of a major progressive period resulting from the infiltration of the mining companies and subsequent workforce. Mining and the railroad played such a quintessential role for the development of the Merced River Canyon and only small remnants remain intact today. At the original barium mine site, Rancheria Flat, three residences are still present from the time of the National Lead Company as well as the mine’s superintendent house and various openings to the mine itself. The mining houses, built in the late 1920s, and the Old Schoolhouse have strong associational and contextual ties as

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examples of the local vernacular style of that time period. All buildings utilize a single-story design, have drop edge clapboard siding (with the exception of the superintendent's house), and are adorned with similar Craftsman/Bungalow architectural details. Although the El Portal area was deemed ineligible as a historic district, the aforementioned mining residences as well as the Old Schoolhouse have all been identified for their historic significance and are said to be individually eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C by the California's State Historic Preservation Office. (See *Continuation Sheet VII*)

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### Books

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### Articles

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### Park Publications

Greene, Linda Wedel. *Historic Resource Study, Yosemite: The Park and Its Resources, A Brief History of the Discovery, Management, and Physical Development of Yosemite National Park, California*. Sept., 1987.

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Unrau, Harlan D. *Evaluation of Historical Significance & Integrity of Cultural Resources, El Portal Administrative Site, Yosemite National Park, California: Determination of Eligibility for Listing in the National Register of Historic Places*. National Park Service, Denver Service Center: June 30, 1998.

### Video Interviews

Yosemite National Park video interview with Sueann Brown, Historical Architect, El Portal Old Schoolhouse, Produced by Kristen Ramsey, April, 2008.

Yosemite National Park video interview with David T. Humphrey, Branch Chief of History, Architecture and Landscapes, El Portal Old Schoolhouse, Produced by Kristen Ramsey, April, 2008.

Yosemite National Park video interview with Rod Kennec, Exhibit Specialist, El Portal Old Schoolhouse, Produced by Kristen Ramsey, April, 2008.

### Personal Interviews

Personal interview with Karen Glenn, Yosemite National Park, January 30, 2008.

Personal interview with James (Duane) & Dayle Law and George & Diane Matlock, El Portal, CA, February 5, 2008.

Personal interview with Robert Babcock, Mariposa, CA, February 5, 2008.

Personal interview with Keith Clark, Yosemite National Park, February 7, 2008.

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Personal interview with James Caywood, Sonora, CA, February 7, 2008.

Personal interview with Tom Clark, Yosemite National Park, February 11, 2008.

Personal interview with Darcelle Warren, JerseyDale, CA, February 13, 2008.

### Telephone Interviews

Telephone interview with Cindy Baker, Yosemite National Park, January 30, 2008.

Telephone interview with Paul Pyle, Yosemite National Park Design/Engineer, February 28, 2008.

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Ballinger, Jill. "Unification Documents Show Not Much Has Changed for MCUSD". *Mariposa Gazette*: Mariposa, CA, February 8, 2008.

Bates, Craig D. and Karen P. Wells. *El Portal: A Brief Cultural History*. National Park Service, Yosemite National Park. 1981.

*Mariposa Gazette*: Mariposa, CA, January 31, February 7, March 7, July 11, October 3, November 21, 1930.

Mendershausen, Ralph. *Records of the Mariposa Historic Sites Survey: El Portal/Midpines E1-E29*. 1982  
Location: Mariposa County Planning Department, Mariposa, California.

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- I. Location Map, Created by Jennifer Self, Architectural Historian Intern, Yosemite National Park with TOPO! ® ©2003 National Geographic, approximate location of UTM Reference: 11/0254231/4173327.
- II. Plat Map of a Section of Old El Portal Showing the Boundary Designation for the El Portal Old Schoolhouse, Original map located within document “ Final Title I Report, Yosemite National Park, PMIS No. 49333, *Install El Portal Chapel Sewer Line*”, February 4, 2002, PSOMAS, Sacramento, CA. Map modified by George Jaramillo, Historical Architect, Yosemite National Park, 2009.
- III. Site Plan, Allison McLellan, Historical Architect Intern, Yosemite National Park, October 30, 2008. Modified to show photograph reference by Jennifer Self, Architectural Historian Intern, Yosemite National Park.
- IV. Interior Plan, Allison McLellan, Historical Architect Intern, Yosemite National Park, October 30, 2008. Modified to show photograph reference by Jennifer Self, Architectural Historian Intern, Yosemite National Park.
- V. Photo Log - Current Photographs of El Portal Old Schoolhouse, Mariposa County, California
- VI. Historic Photographs of El Portal Old Schoolhouse, Mariposa County, California
- VII. Current Photographs of El Portal 1930s-era Vernacular Architecture
- VIII. State of California Office of Historic Preservation concurrence approval correspondence in regards to “Determination of National Register Eligibility for the El Portal Administrative Site, Yosemite National Park, Mariposa County, California”, February 8, 1999. Copy of correspondence is located as an amendment to park publication: Unrau, Harlan D. *Evaluation of Historical Significance & Integrity of Cultural Resources, El Portal Administrative Site, Yosemite National Park, California: Determination of Eligibility for Listing in the National Register of Historic Places*. National Park Service, Denver Service Center: June 30, 1998.

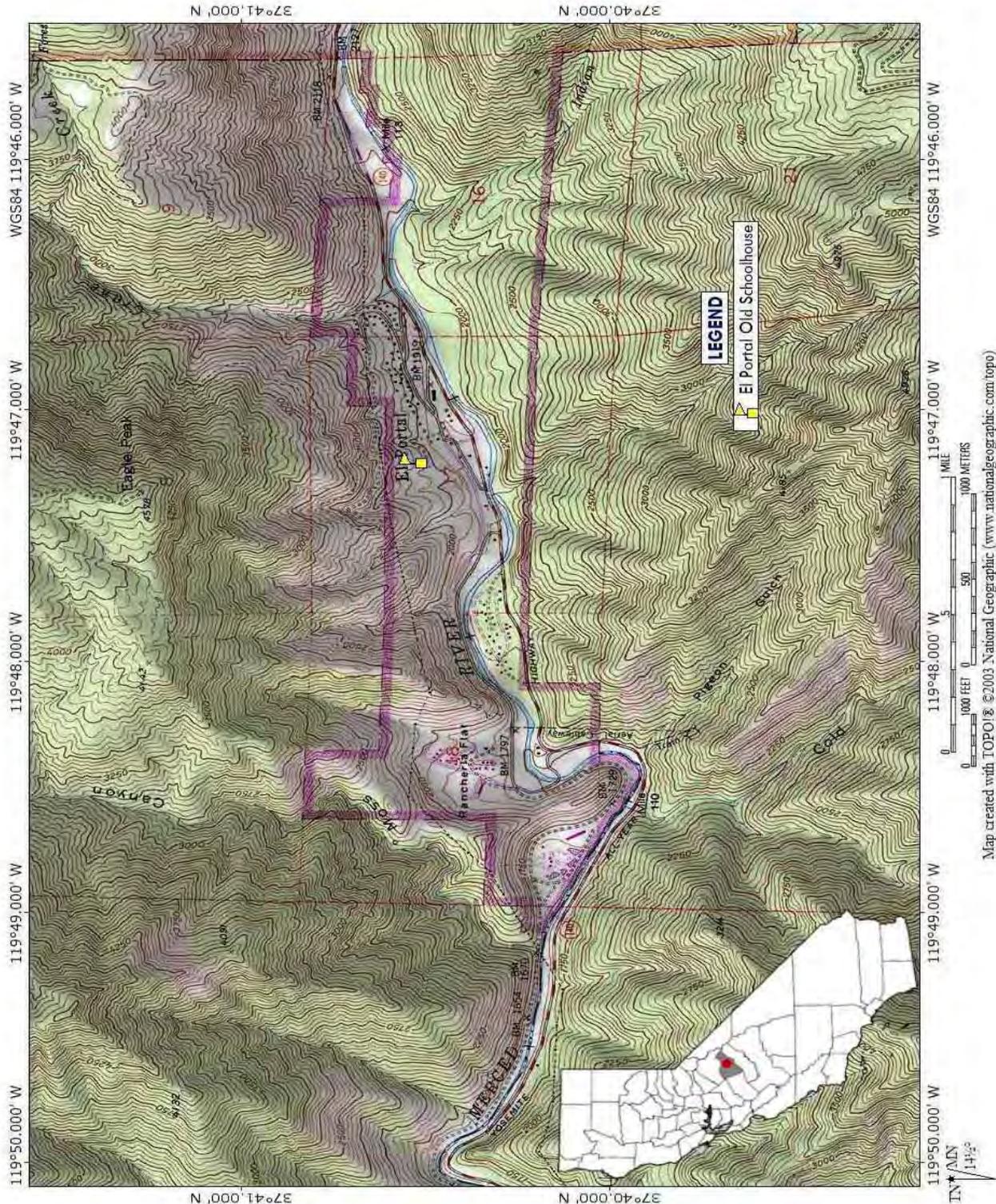
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I. Location Map, approximate location, UTM Reference: 11/0254231/4173327.



*This map has been adjusted to fit this page and is NOT to scale.*

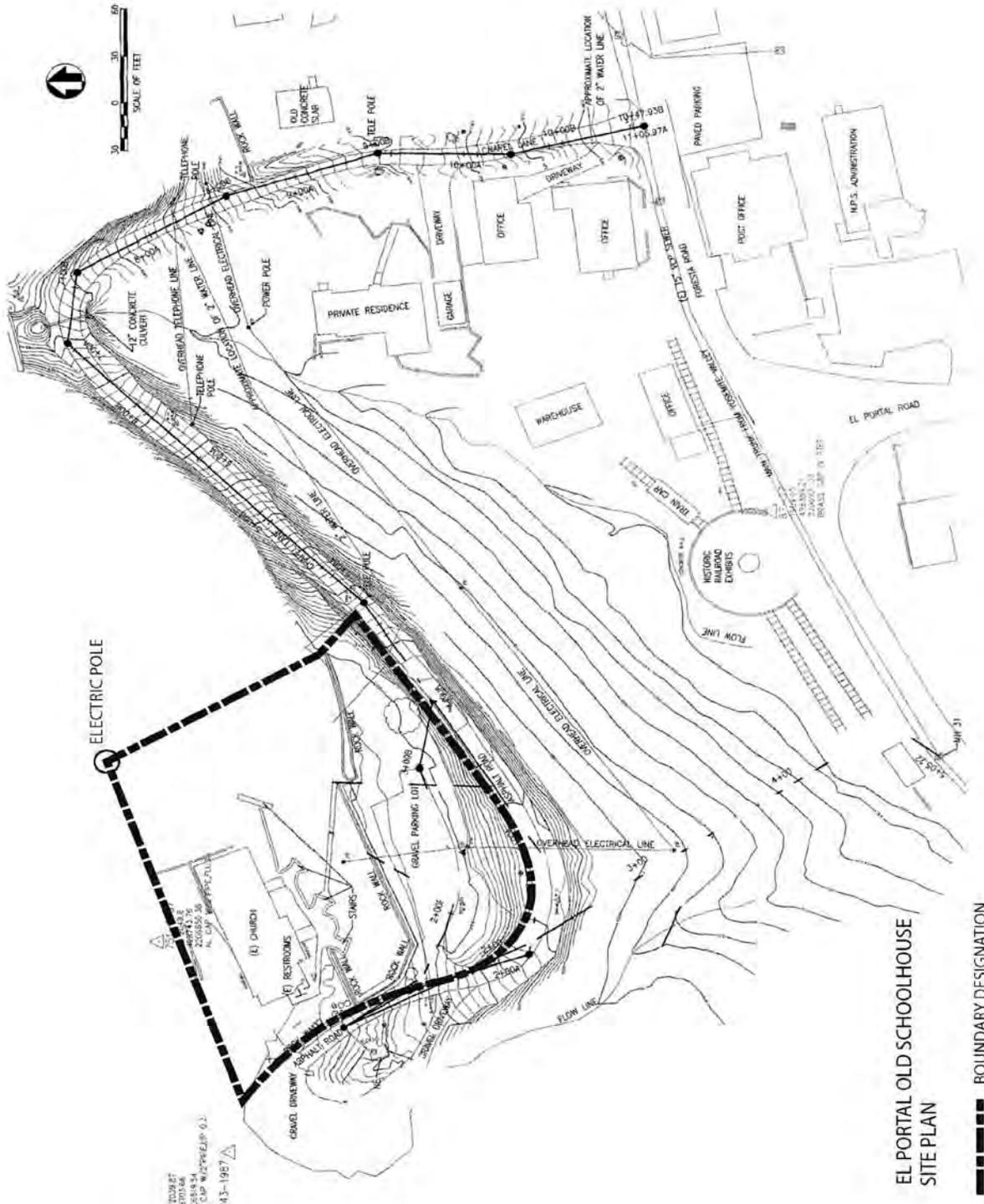
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II. Plat Map Showing the Boundary Designation for the El Portal Old Schoolhouse.



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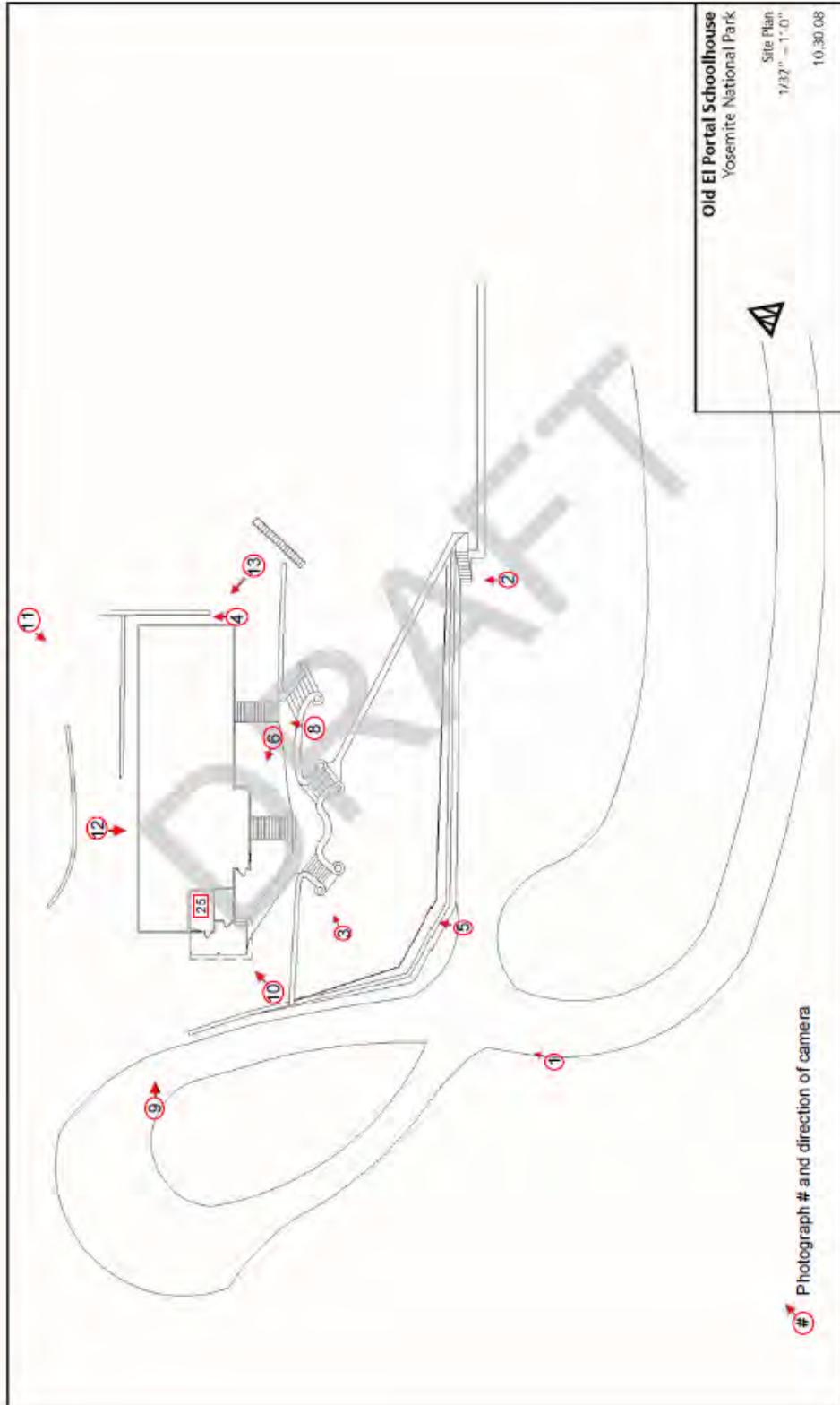
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III. Site Plan  
Not to scale



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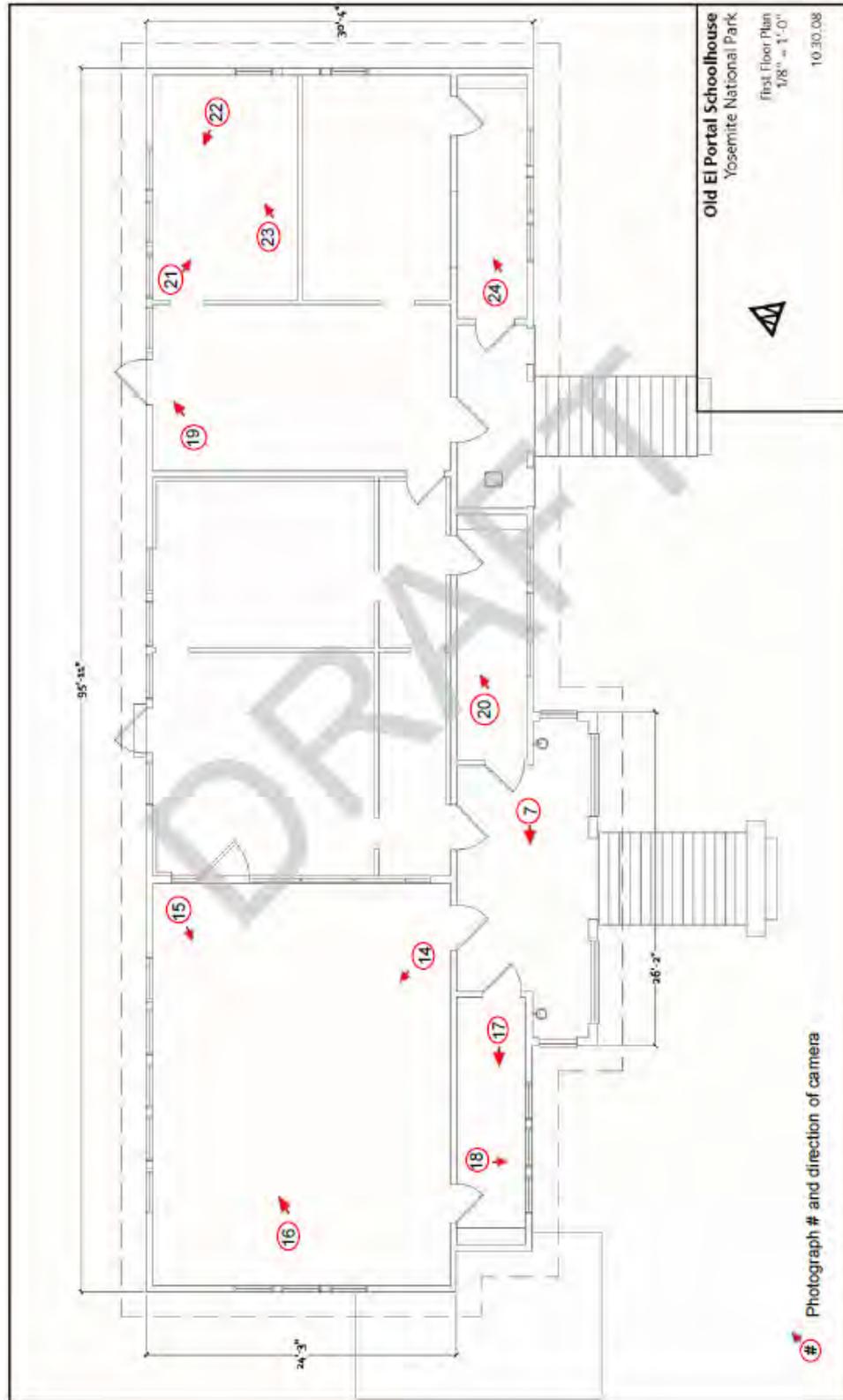
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IV. Interior Plan  
Not to scale



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**V. Photo Log** - Current Photographs of El Portal Old Schoolhouse, Mariposa County, California

Name of Property: El Portal Old Schoolhouse

City or Vicinity: El Portal

County: Mariposa

State: CA

Location of Original Digital Files: Yosemite National Park, Division of Resources Management &amp; Science, History, Architecture and Landscapes Branch.

Photo #1 (CA\_Mariposa County\_El Portal Old Schoolhouse\_0001) Photo: Jennifer Self, March 2009.  
South façade and building site, camera facing north.

Photo #2 (CA\_Mariposa County\_El Portal Old Schoolhouse\_0002) Photo: Allison McLellan, March 2008.  
Partial east façade and CCC retaining wall, camera facing north-west.

Photo #3 (CA\_Mariposa County\_El Portal Old Schoolhouse\_0003) Photo: Shawn Lingo, October 2009.  
South façade with main entry porch and stairs, camera facing north-east.

Photo #4 (CA\_Mariposa County\_El Portal Old Schoolhouse\_0004) Photo: A. McClellan, July 2008.  
East end of building with masonry retaining wall, camera facing north-west.

Photo #5 (CA\_Mariposa County\_El Portal Old Schoolhouse\_0005) Photo: S. Lingo, October 2009.  
South façade main entry porch and lower retaining wall, camera facing north.

Photo #6 (CA\_Mariposa County\_El Portal Old Schoolhouse\_0006) Photo: A. McClellan, March 2008.  
South façade, Main entry porch, camera facing west.

Photo #7 (CA\_Mariposa County\_El Portal Old Schoolhouse\_0007) Photo: A. McClellan, March 2008.  
West interior elevation, main entry porch, camera facing west.

Photo #8 (CA\_Mariposa County\_El Portal Old Schoolhouse\_0008) Photo: A. McClellan, March 2008.  
South façade, east entry porch, camera facing north.

Photo #9 (CA\_Mariposa County\_El Portal Old Schoolhouse\_0009) Photo: A. McClellan, March 2008.  
West façade, camera facing east.

Photo #10 (CA\_Mariposa County\_El Portal Old Schoolhouse\_0010) Photo: A. McClellan, March 2008.  
West façade (left) and south elevation (right), bathroom, camera facing north-east.

Photo #11 (CA\_Mariposa County\_El Portal Old Schoolhouse\_0011) Photo: J. Self, March 2009.  
North façade, camera facing south-west.

Photo #12 (CA\_Mariposa County\_El Portal Old Schoolhouse\_0012) Photo: A. McClellan, March 2008.  
North façade, door to west classroom, camera facing south.

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**V. Photo Log (Continued)**

Photo #13 (CA\_Mariposa County\_El Portal Old Schoolhouse\_0013) Photo: J. Self, April 2009.  
South façade (left) and east elevation (right), camera facing north-west.

Photo #14 (CA\_Mariposa County\_El Portal Old Schoolhouse\_0014) Photo: A. McClellan, March 2008.  
Interior, north wall of west classroom, camera facing north-west.

Photo #15 (CA\_Mariposa County\_El Portal Old Schoolhouse\_0015) Photo: A. McClellan, March 2008.  
Interior, west wall of west classroom, camera facing west.

Photo #16 (CA\_Mariposa County\_El Portal Old Schoolhouse\_0016) Photo: A. McClellan, March 2008.  
Interior, east end of west classroom showing folding partition wall, camera facing east.

Photo #17 (CA\_Mariposa County\_El Portal Old Schoolhouse\_0017) Photo: A. McClellan, March 2008.  
Interior, west wall of west cloakroom, camera facing west.

Photo #18 (CA\_Mariposa County\_El Portal Old Schoolhouse\_0018) Photo: J. Self, March 2009.  
Interior, south wall of west cloakroom, window and trim detail, camera facing south.

Photo #19 (CA\_Mariposa County\_El Portal Old Schoolhouse\_0019) Photo: J. Self, March 2009.  
Interior, north windows of middle classroom, camera facing north.

Photo #20 (CA\_Mariposa County\_El Portal Old Schoolhouse\_0020) Photo: J. Self, March 2009.  
Interior, middle cloakroom, east end, camera facing east.

Photo #21 (CA\_Mariposa County\_El Portal Old Schoolhouse\_0021) Photo: J. Self, March 2009.  
Interior, south wall of east classroom showing entry, camera facing south.

Photo #22 (CA\_Mariposa County\_El Portal Old Schoolhouse\_0022) Photo: J. Self, March 2009.  
Interior, east classroom, north windows, camera facing west.

Photo #23 (CA\_Mariposa County\_El Portal Old Schoolhouse\_0023) Photo: J. Self, March 2009.  
Interior, east classroom, east wall, camera facing east.

Photo #24 (CA\_Mariposa County\_El Portal Old Schoolhouse\_0024) Photo: J. Self, March 2009.  
Interior, east cloakroom, east wall, camera facing east.

Photo #25 (CA\_Mariposa County\_El Portal Old Schoolhouse\_0024) Photo: J. Self, March 2009.  
Interior, girls' bathroom, camera facing east.

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**VI. Historic Photographs**

Photograph: "A" Students in front of El Portal Old Schoolhouse

Photographer: unknown

Date: 1930-1963

Scanned Digital Copy, Digital Files, Yosemite National Park, Division of Resources Management & Science, History, Architecture and Landscapes Branch.

Scanned copy obtained from Bob Babcock, local citizen of El Portal.



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VI. Historic Photographs (Continued)

Photograph: "B" El Portal School before eastern addition.

Photographer: unknown

Date: c.1937

Scanned from book: Law, James. Memories of El Portal. Mariposa, CA: Mariposa Heritage Press, 1993.



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VII. Current Photographs of El Portal 1930s-era Vernacular Architecture



Example #1, Murchison House, El Portal, CA. Constructed by National Lead Company.  
Photographer: Jennifer Self, Architectural Historian Intern, Yosemite National Park  
Date: July 2009

Location of original digital file, Yosemite National Park, Division of Resources Management & Science, History, Architecture and Landscapes Branch.



Example #2, Worker's Cottage, El Portal, CA. Constructed by National Lead Company.  
Photographer: Jennifer Self, Architectural Historian Intern, Yosemite National Park  
Date: July 2009

Location of original digital file, Yosemite National Park, Division of Resources Management & Science, History, Architecture and Landscapes Branch.

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VIII. State of California Office of Historic Preservation concurrence approval correspondence in regards to "Determination of National Register Eligibility for the El Portal Administrative Site, Yosemite National Park, Mariposa County, California", February 8, 1999. Copy of correspondence is located as an amendment to park publication: Unrau, Harlan D. *Evaluation of Historical Significance & Integrity of Cultural Resources, El Portal Administrative Site, Yosemite National Park, California: Determination of Eligibility for Listing in the National Register of Historic Places*. National Park Service, Denver Service Center: June 30, 1998.

FEB. 18. 1999 10:09AM

STATE OF CALIFORNIA - THE RESOURCES AGENCY

GRAY DAVIS, Governor

OFFICE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION  
P.O. BOX 942898  
SACRAMENTO, CA 94226-0001  
(916) 853-8824 Fax (916) 853-8824  
cahrhpoc@mail2.quipnet.com



February 8, 1999

REPLY TO: NPS980810A

Raymond K. Todd, Project Manager  
National Park Service  
Denver Service Center  
12795 W. Alameda Parkway  
P.O. Box 25287  
DENVER CO 80225-0287

Re: Determination of National Register Eligibility for the El Portal Administrative Site,  
Yosemite National Park, Mariposa County, California.

Dear Mr. Todd:

Thank you for submitting to our office your December 29, 1998 letter and supporting documentation in response to questions raised in our letter of September 24, 1998 regarding the determination of National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) eligibility for structures located at the El Portal Administrative Site, Yosemite National Park, Mariposa County. The determination of eligibility evaluation is designed to provide the National Park Service (NPS) with historical documentation on the site, as well as a description of existing conditions and evaluation of the significance and integrity of the cultural resources located at the site.

As a result of our review of the supplemental documentation, we can now concur with the NPS that the following structures are eligible for inclusion on the NRHP at the level of local significance under criteria established by 36 CFR 60.4:

- The Murchison House - Criteria A, B, and C
- The Office in the Yosemite Research Center - Criteria A and C
- Three National Lead Company Residences (Buildings 703, 704, and 705) - Criteria A and C

All of these structures have strong associations with the development and operation of the National Lead Company, a barium mining company that at its peak in the 1940s produced 73% of all the barite in California. The barium mine was the first and, for a long period, the only mine of its kind in the state. The structures also appear to retain most of the architectural elements of design, materials, workmanship, and setting associated with their historical period of significance (1928-1947). In addition, the Murchison House is associated with Earl H. Murchison, the manager of the National Lead Company's mining operations and chairman of the Mariposa Mine Operators Association, an influential organization in the local mining industry during the historic period.

We also concur with the NPS that the following structures in the Village Center area are also eligible for inclusion on the NRHP at the level of local significance under criteria established by 36 CFR 60.4:

- The Store - Criteria A and C
- Two Yosemite Valley Railroad Residences (easternmost and westernmost structures) - Criteria A and C
- One Yosemite Valley Railroad Residence (middle structure) - Criterion A
- The School - Criteria A and C

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- The El Portal Market – Criteria A and C
- The El Portal Hotel – Criteria A and C

We agree with the NPS's assessment that all of these structures have strong associations with the development and growth of the railroad, timber, mining, and tourist industries in El Portal area as well as the town's socio-economic development and expansion. All of the structures (with the exception of the middle structure in Yosemite Railroad residence complex) also appear to have largely retained the integrity of design, materials, workmanship and setting associated with their historical period of significance.

We appreciate the efforts of the NPS to respond to our questions regarding the eligibility of these structures. We are also encouraged to note that the NPS is pursuing the development of National Register nomination for the aforementioned properties and that usage of OHP property evaluation forms by NPS will be forthcoming in future evaluations of properties under its jurisdiction.

Thank you again for seeking our comments on your project. If you have any questions, please contact staff historian Clarence Caesar at (916) 653-8902.

Sincerely,

Original Signed by

Daniel Abeyta, Acting  
State Historic Preservation Officer



CA\_Mariposa County\_El Portal Old Schoolhouse\_0001



CA\_Mariposa County\_El Portal Old Schoolhouse\_0002



CA\_Mariposa County\_El Portal Old Schoolhouse\_0003



CA\_Mariposa County\_El Portal Old Schoolhouse\_0004



CA\_Mariposa County\_El Portal Old Schoolhouse\_0005



CA\_Mariposa County\_El Portal Old Schoolhouse\_0006



CA\_Mariposa County\_El Portal Old Schoolhouse\_0007



CA\_Mariposa County\_El Portal Old Schoolhouse\_0008



CA\_Mariposa County\_El Portal Old Schoolhouse\_0009



CA\_Mariposa County\_El Portal Old Schoolhouse\_0010



CA\_Mariposa County\_El Portal Old Schoolhouse\_0011



CA\_Mariposa County\_El Portal Old Schoolhouse\_0012



CA\_Mariposa County\_El Portal Old Schoolhouse\_0013



CA\_Mariposa County\_El Portal Old Schoolhouse\_0014



CA\_Mariposa County\_El Portal Old Schoolhouse\_0015



CA\_Mariposa County\_El Portal Old Schoolhouse\_0016



CA\_Mariposa County\_El Portal Old Schoolhouse\_0017





CA\_Mariposa County\_El Portal Old Schoolhouse\_0019



CA\_Mariposa County\_EI Portal Old Schoolhouse\_0020



CA\_Mariposa County\_El Portal Old Schoolhouse\_0021



CA\_Mariposa County\_El Portal Old Schoolhouse\_0022





CA\_Mariposa County\_El Portal Old Schoolhouse\_0024

