

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If 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 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 District #119 North School

Other names/site number SH04-005

**2. Location**

Street & number South Side of Sandy Avenue (Lot 4, Block 3)

Not for publication

City or town Ellsworth

Vicinity

State Nebraska Code NE County Sheridan Code 161 Zip code 69340

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

/s/ Michael J. Smith

July 14, 2010

Signature of certifying official

Date

Director, Nebraska State Historical Society

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.

see continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register.

see continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- Private
- Public-local
- Public-state
- Public-federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

Number of Resources within Property

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	Buildings
0	0	Sites
0	0	Structures
0	0	Objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

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

Historic and Architectural School Buildings in NE

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION/school

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

NO STYLE

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Foundation Steel skids

Walls Wood frame

Roof Asphalt shingle

Other

Narrative Description

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

- 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.
X 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.
X B Removed from its original location.
C A birthplace or a 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.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

EDUCATION

Period of Significance

1951 - 1961

Significant Dates

1951

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Torville Erickson, carpenter

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- Preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
Previously listed in the National Register
Previously determined eligible by the National Register
Designated a National Historic Landmark
Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location for additional data:

- X State Historic Preservation Office
Other State agency
Federal agency
Local Government
University
Other
Name of repository:

**District 119 North School**

Name of Property

**Sheridan County, Nebraska**

County and State

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10. Geographical Data

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**Acreage of property** Less than one

UTM References (place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet).

	<b>Zone</b>	<b>Easting</b>	<b>Northing</b>		<b>Zone</b>	<b>Easting</b>	<b>Northing</b>
1.	13	725303	4659810	3.			
2.				4.			

[ X ] See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

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

**Boundary Justification**

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

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11. Form Prepared By

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name/title Jill E. Dolberg/Review and Compliance Coordinator  
organization Nebraska State Historical Society date March 3, 2010  
street & number 1420 P Street, Suite 300 telephone (402) 471-4773  
city or town Lincoln state Nebraska zip code 68508

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Additional Documentation

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

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

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

**Additional items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

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Property Owner

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

name/title Bruce and Stephanie Graham  
street & number PO Box 4 telephone 308-762-2949  
city or town Ellsworth state Nebraska zip code 69340

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determined 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, (15 USC 470 et seq.).

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

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**District 119 North School**

Name of Property

**Sheridan County, Nebraska**

County and State

**Section 7 Page 1**

The District 119 North School is currently located in Ellsworth, Sheridan County, Nebraska. Ellsworth is an unincorporated community in the southern Sand Hills ranching area of the county. School District 119 was centered in Ellsworth where their main 1932 frame school building (School District 119 South) remains extant, but has been covered with vinyl siding. In 1951, the school district added another school, District 119 North School, to better serve the families of ranches too far from Ellsworth to comfortably travel every day for classes. Having once been situated in the ranch yards of the families it served, at present, the District 119 North School is located in Ellsworth.

The District 119 North School is a rectangular-shaped, one story wood frame structure with an asphalt shingle gabled roof. The school measures ten feet by sixteen feet, creating 160 square feet of space. It has no foundation, but rests on two steel skids to allow for the school to be moved where the children were living. The skids look much like skis and extend just beyond the exterior walls of the school. The south façade contains an off center wood paneled door and one two-over-two double hung window under the end gable. A non-historic wooden deck with steps and a ramp has been placed in front of the door. The east elevation of the school has a set of four ribbon windows, all two-over-two double hung windows matching the window on the front façade. The north and west elevations are unbroken wood frame walls.

Entering the interior of the school, a doorless closet is located just to the right of the entrance. The closet had hooks for coats and a shelf near the top. The single room has a hardwood floor with broad baseboards and door and window trim. The desks were located in the middle of the room, with the windows at the pupils' right side, providing excellent morning light. A small blackboard is located on the north wall, with a teacher's desk at the front of the room. Lacking indoor plumbing, water would be carried into the school and stored in a crock. Restrooms consisted of privies located nearby.

The District 119 North School retains a high degree of historic integrity. The interior has not been changed significantly, and the only exterior alteration to the building was the addition of a wooden porch which provided steps and a ramp up to the front door. It merely abuts the front façade of the small building, and could be removed without causing damage to the school itself.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

District 119 North School

Name of Property

Sheridan County, Nebraska

County and State

Section 8 Page 2

The District 119 North School is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with rural education in Nebraska and under Criterion C for its architectural significance. The school retains a high degree of historic integrity. The school served its small community for ten years, from the date of its construction in 1951 to 1961, when the number of students exceeded the building's capacity. According to the guidelines of the multiple property document *Historic and Architectural School Buildings of Nebraska*, it meets all requirements for the National Register of Historic Places for criteria A and C.

*History of the District 119 North School*

Ellsworth is an unincorporated community in the southern Sand Hills ranching area of the county. It was established on the CB&Q Railroad as an early cattle shipping post for the Spade Ranch in the 1880s. In 1887 there was only a depot, a section house, and the District 119 School, eventually called the District 119 South School, in Ellsworth. In 1898, the owners of the Spade Ranch, Bartlett Richards and William Comstock, headquartered their Nebraska Land and Feeding Company in town, which brought a small increase in population. Nevertheless, the population of Ellsworth peaked in 1910 with a total of thirty inhabitants.<sup>1</sup> Their school served the small number of students in the town, but also area ranch families.

In the summer of 1951, the District 119 North School was built by an elderly carpenter, Torville Erickson, at the Melvin (Bus) Wilson Ranch. The school was constructed from the wood from another school house that had sat approximately two miles away from the Wilson Ranch, and which Bus Wilson had attended with his sisters Arline and Cheryl, Jesse Sandoz and Erma and Ruby Colerick. The small number of children in the north part of the district made finding a permanent location for the school a challenge. Children grow up, and families only have so many children. Bus Wilson decided that the school should be built on skids so that it could be moved near the families it would serve.<sup>2</sup> The building appears to have been placed in the yard of the family with the most children at the time.

The school had no telephone and no electricity. The east facing windows supplied them with light, which could be supplemented with kerosene lanterns. Teachers would board with a family nearby. The teachers would either travel to the school on horseback or later via automobile. In bad weather, one of the parents would take her halfway to the school in the feed tractor, letting her hike the rest of the way. If weather would prevent the teacher from arriving altogether, the students would merely look out the window to see if she had made it or not, having no telephone.

When the school was located on the Munger Ranch, it was situated with the door facing south. There were two outhouses located north of the building, one for each gender. A short flagpole was located south of the school, a small barn for the teacher's horse at the northwest, and a barbed wire fence surrounding the yard. The fence had a "kid gate" at the southeast corner that consisted of two fence posts about a foot apart which allowed the kids to walk through instead of climbing through or over the barbed wire. There was no playground equipment in the school yard. The children played games like Pum Pum Pull Away, Steal Sticks and Fox and Goose. An old wagon or large electrical spool left over from the REA's electrification projects provided things to play on.<sup>3</sup>

The six Munger children and the three Wilson children filled the school to capacity until 1961, when two more children were ready for Kindergarten. Not having enough room for ten children and a teacher, a larger school was purchased and

<sup>1</sup> Elton A. Perkey, *Perkey's Nebraska Place Names* (Lincoln, Nebraska: Nebraska State Historical Society, 1982), 179.

<sup>2</sup> Jane Wilson, undated reminiscences.

<sup>3</sup> Linda Munger, undated reminiscences.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

**District 119 North School**

Name of Property

**Sheridan County, Nebraska**

County and State

Section 8 Page 3

moved to a foundation near the original school. After the bigger school was obtained, the small school was used for a study room, an art room and a place to play when the weather was bad. A few years later, Melvin Wilson had difficulty hiring an accredited teacher, and the families chose to drive their children to Ellsworth to attend school there.<sup>4</sup>

Children who had attended the District 119 North School included: Jerry Munger, Jack Munger, Sharon Munger, Larry Munger, Jim Munger, Linda Munger, LuAnn Munger, Blaine Wilson, Janet Wilson, Janice Wilson, and two Nye sisters, for a total of one dozen students over ten years of operation.<sup>5</sup>

*Historical Significance*

The District 119 North School is historically significant at the local level under Criterion A. It is an excellent representative example of a pattern of rural education that has persisted through the twentieth century despite many changes in educational policy and reform. Visually, the District 119 North School with its rectangular form, gable roof, and rural setting, immediately conveys the architectural elements of a one-room schoolhouse, regardless of its diminutive size.

Although the building was built in 1951, this school reflects the architecture of much earlier rural schools more than it does schools of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. The District 119 North School is a very good representative of rural school architecture dating from the 1910s to 1930s because, like most rural schools of this era, it was constructed by local residents with available materials. Typical of the "one-room" school, the school was constructed of a size that could accommodate the needs the local students. The school's window placement is like other one-room schools where windows were located on the long side of the building to use the optimum amount of sunlight for better vision and ventilation, while leaving the narrow wall of the building free for the use of chalkboards. The school also features a main entrance centrally located on the south façade. The school's interior design has remained basically the same since one-room schools began appearing on the Nebraska landscape in the nineteenth century.

Under Criterion A, this school best reflects the human geography of the Sandhills rather than the chronological development of school policy in Nebraska. Even with the advent of better roads and school consolidation by the 1950s, the spatial arrangement of Sheridan County's population centers still necessitated schools like District 119 North. Approximately 50 miles separates the Chicago & NorthWestern / U.S. Highway 20 population corridor in northern Sheridan County from the Burlington Northern / State Highway 2 corridor to the south where Ellsworth is located. While a USGS map of Nebraska compiled in 1920-1921 depicts a handful of towns between these two corridors, by 1934 none of these had active post offices.<sup>6</sup> With no nearby communities to serve their needs, elementary students living between the two corridors would have had to travel what were still considered unacceptable distances to attend school in Ellsworth to the south or Gordon to the north. During the 1950s, the District 119 North served as a pragmatic solution to this problem.

Its mobility was a feature that is unique to Sheridan County, and perhaps to the rest of Nebraska.<sup>7</sup> In the sparsely populated Sand Hills, one might build a school on one corner of a section and find that there were no school age children in the area a few mere years later. Building the school on skids would ensure that the building could be moved to a location that would best serve its patrons.

<sup>4</sup> Jane Wilson, undated reminiscences.

<sup>5</sup> Jane Wilson, undated reminiscences.

<sup>6</sup> USGS, "State of Nebraska," compiled 1920-1921, 1939; *Perkey's Nebraska Place Names*, 180-183.

<sup>7</sup> No similar schools have been recorded in the Nebraska SHPO's Nebraska Historic Resources Inventory. However, according to local citizens two similar schools did exist in Box Butte County and Scotts Bluff County in Nebraska, but neither is extant.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

**District 119 North School**

Name of Property

**Sheridan County, Nebraska**

County and State

Section 8 Page 4

*Architectural Significance*

According to the Multiple Property Document (MPD) *Historic and Architectural School Buildings of Nebraska*, the building is relatively typical in shape, if not size, relative to the numerous rural school buildings that were built in Nebraska during that era. "Most one-room country schools were constructed with a rectangular plan... Size was often determined by the practical visual and audible distance from the teacher. A series of three or four windows was commonly found on one or both of the long sides of the building. One door was most common, often facing south or east and located on the short side of the building... Simple gable roofs and later hipped roofs were often recommended by plan books."<sup>8</sup>

*Criterion Consideration B*

Although moved buildings are not generally considered eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, moved properties may qualify if they are significant primarily for architectural value, or it is the surviving structure most importantly associated with a historic person or event. While the District 119 North School is architecturally significant as for being a type of construction, architecture is not its primary significance. It could be argued that the building's historical significance is in fact enhanced by the fact that it has been moved, as the building was designed to be mobile as evidenced by its size and skids. Without acknowledging the school's ability to be relocated easily, the school is merely an extremely small rural school, and its ability to adequately serve its sparse population in the Sand Hills would be ignored.

**Conclusion**

The District 119 North School is a good candidate for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its significant historical association with education in Nebraska, and specifically in the Sandhills region. It is a small, yet representative example of a rural school, of which Nebraska at one time had over 7,000. It is further significant under Criterion C for its architectural significance. While the rectangular form of the building, with its south-facing door and series of windows under the gable end is the most common form for a rural school, the diminutive size and mobility set this building apart from the majority of rural schools in Nebraska.

<sup>8</sup> *Historic and Architectural School Buildings in Nebraska*, National Register Multiple Property Submission, Prepared by Mead & Hunt Inc., August, 2000.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Bibliography

**District 119 North School**

Name of Property

**Sheridan County, Nebraska**

County and State

Section 9 Page 5

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Beiber, Sharon Munger. Undated reminiscences.

Glassgow, Gail Hamilton. Undated reminiscences.

"*Historic and Architectural School Buildings in Nebraska.*" National Register Multiple Property Submission prepared by Mead & Hunt Inc., August 2000. Accepted by the National Register, winter 2000.

Mead and Hunt, Inc. *Sheridan County Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey.* Lincoln, Nebraska: Nebraska State Historical Society, 1998.

Munger, Linda. Undated reminiscences.

Perkey, Elton A. *Perkey's Nebraska Place Names.* Lincoln, Nebraska: Nebraska State Historical Society, 1982.

USGS, "State of Nebraska," compiled 1920-1921, Washington, D.C.: USGS, 1939

Wilson, Jane. Undated reminiscences.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**Geographical Data**

**Section 10 Page 6**

**District 119 North School**

Name of Property

**Sheridan County, Nebraska**

County and State

**Boundary Description**

The nominated property includes only the building (including the stairs and ramp) and the building's footprint. It is located within Lot 4 of Block 3 in Ellsworth, an unincorporated community in Sheridan County, Nebraska.

**Boundary Justification**

The boundaries reflect the mobile nature of this property. District 119 North School was associated with more than one location within the surrounding landscape during its period of significance. Its current location is not historically associated with the school; however, this property does meet the requirements for National Register Criterion Consideration B. In fact, its mobility is a factor contributing to its significance.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**Photographs**

**Section 10 Page 7**

**District 119 North School**

Name of Property

**Sheridan County, Nebraska**

County and State

**Photo 1 of 5.** West Façade, Aspect: E

**Photo 2 of 5.** South and East Elevations, Aspect: NW

**Photo 3 of 5.** Detail of Steel Skid, Aspect: NW

**Photo 4 of 5.** Interior View, Aspect: W

**Photo 5 of 5.** Interior View, Aspect: E

All Photographs by Jessie Nunn, Nebraska State Historical Society, 02-26-2009.



Photo 1 of 5



Photo 2 of 5



Photo 3 of 5



Photo 4 of 5



Photo 5 of 5