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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Building faces directly west, in scenic Butte Creek Canyon, with lava bluffs both front and rear. Humbug Road passes directly in front, while a drive circles parking facilities on the south, a picnic area being developed on the north, and playground at the rear. Native oak, pine and maple trees with toyon berry, manzanita and other shrubbery provide a natural setting.

Originally the Centerville Schoolhouse erected in 1894, was a rectangular shaped,20 x 40 feet, one room building with a covered porch across the front. After several years porches were extended full length on both sides. In 1935 the north porch was removed and a small building erected on the south side, providing restrooms. In 1945 a kitchenette and cloak room were added, using a portion of the south porch area. No additional changes have been made since.

The building is constructed of shiplap lumber and originally had a shake roof. Recently it was recovered with composition shingles. Both roof and siding are a soft green color.

A large old-fashioned bell with a pull rope still hangs in the belfry located on the roof over the front door.

Since the building is located on a sloping hill site, the back rests only inches from the ground, while a dozen steps provide entrance to the front door. A rock wall of native stone provides a barrier between the grounds and the public highway.

A large flag pole stands at the edge of the porch on the right hand side of the door.

A few Juniper shrubs and Nandina bushes have recently been planted around the front area. Two large live oak trees shade the southern portion of the building, while many other native trees and shrubs provide a natural background.

The schoolhouse is the only public building of its period in the vicinity, and is the only public building in the area at this date (1971).

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The history of Centerville dates from the mid 19th century when gold discovery brought men flocking to the area in quest of fortunes. Butte Creek proved to be very rich in gold and soon had numerous settlements along its banks. Chief among these were Helltown on the north, Diamondville on the south, and Centerville, so-called because it was in the center. These are now all included in the area embraced by the Centerville Recreation and Historical Association, Inc., formed for the purpose of acquiring and preserving from demolition the historic, one room, Centerville Schoolhouse.

Like other early day mining communities the area has a rich and interesting historical background which we feel should be preserved. From Diamondville to Helltown the population shifted as new gold strikes were made. Stores, hotels, saloons and a post office soon followed.

A private school started in the 1860's and the first public school opened in December, 1871. That building was replaced in 1894 by the present schoolhouse. Classes were discontinued in 1966 due to unification.

Indians and whites jointly occupied the territory for a time. Later Chinese miners arrived in large numbers. Gradually miners were replaced by homesteaders with farming as their aim. In 1900 one of the state's first hydroelectric power plants was built on the banks of Butte Creek as part of the nucleus of the present day P. G. & E. Company. Today's "back to the country" trend is bringing many new families into the district.

Currently our association has two main projects. First is to build a museum, adjacent to the schoolhouse, for housing the antiques and artifacts of this locality. We feel the significance and value of these items would be greatly enhanced by locating them permanently where they could be viewed by the public in the area from which they originated.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

Continued on attached sheet

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Places of Historic Interest - Paradise Fact and Folklore, Inc., 1966

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Letter dated June 14, 1971, Lois H. Colman, President, Centerville Recreation and Historical Association, to Jules E. Gerhardt.

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Form 10-300a (July 1969)

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8. Significance

(Continuation Sheet)

(Number all entries)

The second project is to collect and publish a history of the area emphasizing the period between 1848-1900.

Preserved, the Centerville School will provide a focal point for interpreting the area's rich pioneer-historical heritage.

Centerville's public school district began functioning 100 years ago next month (July 1871) and since that date has been the hub upon which the community rotates.

Family social activities have always been centered there. These have included dinners, teas, dances, student programs, holiday entertainments, etc. Singing parties were always great favorites with musicals a close second. For these the school organ was pressed into service with residents bringing in their own violins, banjos or even harmonicas! Candy pulls were also popular.

Political rallies and parades have stemmed from, or been held in, the building with many campaigning polititions fairly making the rafters ring! Until very recently all elections were held within its doors.

As early as 1880 sports contests were held on the school grounds. Local young men formed a ball team which met alternately at Centerville, Paradise or other neighboring communities.

Since the formation of Centerville Recreation and Historical Association in 1968 we have held regular monthly meetings at which times programs presented have been equally divided between educational, cultural and recreational. Special picnics, playdays, workshops and other activities are scheduled as desired.

One of our most successful projects is our yearly Arts and Crafts Show held in May. Since our first one three years ago participation has increased yearly. Paintings, crafts and antiques are displayed. This year's attendance was over four hundred. The number of paintings displayed has grown from 39 the first year to 159 this year.

Briefly, the schoolhouse has always meant to the community a place to bring their problems for solving, to fill the need for companionship and relaxation, and to grow and develop mentally and spiritually. The wide response from former students when we announced our plan for acquiring alumni membership was evidence of their continuing interest.



