The Modern School
Postwar School Architecture in Rapid City

Executive Summary

Like swelling municipalities across the United States, Rapid City struggled to scale up its infrastructure after World War II. The rapid arrival of the Baby Boomer generation, compounded by the expansion of Ellsworth Air Force Base, created intense demand for housing, utilities, healthcare, and more. Schools were a major priority, since successive waves of pupils would enter elementary then middle and high schools within a few short years. To meet this need, Rapid City undertook a major school construction program. Between 1949 and 1969, the city added more than a dozen public schools and undertook repeated additions—sometimes to brand-new buildings—while churches and nearby suburbs expanded their own educational facilities.

These new, postwar schools reflected emerging trends in local and regional history. Their architecture combined the iconic red brick of schoolhouses everywhere with the clean, glassy lines of midcentury design. The layout and amenities within the schools represented the evolution of American educational practice. The schools’ placement in growing Rapid City neighborhoods, meanwhile, offered anchor points for understanding the patterns of growth that shaped Rapid City during this period.

These postwar neighborhood schools were integral parts of the Rapid City community. Over several generations, many thousands of students studied, played, competed, gathered, and celebrated inside these schools. Families walked to school playgrounds on weekends, and during the summers the city parks department used these campuses for camps and youth activities. School facilities have been home to a variety of community meetings and activities, from voting to soccer tournaments. As neighborhood centers, the schools played a central role in shaping the character of the Rapid City community and fostering a sense of cohesion and civic pride among residents.

To help the RCHPC document and preserve the history of postwar schools in Rapid City, this essay explores the processes and challenges that shaped the school construction boom between the end of War II and 1972, the year of the Black Hills flood. It focuses on the public schools within the city limits of Rapid City but outlines opportunities for further research into private parochial schools as well as public schools in suburbs like Rapid Valley and Black Hawk.

Historical Research & Narrative

In March 1958, the Rapid City Journal proclaimed that “Schools Are Rapid City’s Biggest Business.” This was not hyperbole. The schools “have the biggest payroll, the largest capital outlay, purchase thousands of dollars worth of supplies annually and take the biggest share of Rapid City’s tax dollars.” To educate the over 8,000 students in the community, the schools had an operating budget of $2.5 million, and taxpayers had committed $7.6 million for new school construction over the

1 NOTE: This is a working draft of a research essay developed for the Rapid City Historic Preservation Committee. Please do not cite without checking with Vantage Point Historical Services. Images included are for reference only and should not be published or reused without permission of the copyright holder.
previous decade. “The end isn’t in sight” when it came to construction, the paper declared, “so long as the ‘baby boom’ continues.”

The postwar population boom affected the United States in myriad ways. Since the late 19th century, the birthrate in the United States had been on a slow decline. It spiked unexpectedly after World War II, and some 72 million American “Baby Boomers” were born between 1946 and 1964. Many Americans, no doubt, viewed the boom as a positive development. Weary from nearly two long decades of depression and war, millions of Americans experienced the joys of parenthood in a rapidly expanding, consumer-driven economy. Many viewed the nuclear family as a valuable social and cultural asset in the Cold War rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union.

But the boom was also a “birth quake,” as the economist Diane Macunovich, has written. It was a sudden, transformative event that rattled American life that continues to shape our politics, society, and economy today. Among the many immediate aftershocks was a sudden, surging demand for new infrastructure in communities where the most intense growth was concentrated.

Rapid City felt the quake. Fueled by the baby boom, the establishment and expansion of Ellsworth Air Force Base, and migration from the rural hinterland to the urban center, the city’s population nearly doubled between 1940 (13,844) and 1950 (25,179). It continued a steep rise to about 42,000 by 1960. The boom subsided in the mid-1960s, and Rapid City’s population would continue a slow increase for about 20 years.

Across the United States, civic leaders and education advocates were clear-eyed about the challenges that lay ahead. In the spring of 1950, the Washington Post reported on the growing need for a nationwide school construction program. Quoting the US Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, the story noted that as many as a quarter of American schoolchildren were attending classes in “obsolete, unsafe, or inadequate buildings,” and that the nation would need to build around 450,000 new classrooms to accommodate its projected growth by 1960. The next year, the New York Times described a report by a citizen advisory organization that urged the Eisenhower administration to push a 10-year, $14 billion plan to build a half million schools. Yet another piece exclaimed that about half of all college graduates would need to go directly into teaching to meet the pressing demand for teachers. And, in 1955, a report in the Architectural Forum complained that “every 15 minutes enough babies are born to fill another classroom and we are already 250,000 classrooms behind.”

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10 “Thinking Ahead on Schools,” The New Repubulc, July 9, 1956, 5.
Despite these calls, politicians and policymakers remained apprehensive about the federal government’s role in education, which had, to that point, generally been considered a state and local issue. It was not until 1958—a year after the Soviet Union launched its Sputnik satellites, sparking fears that the Americans were losing the technology and innovation race—that Congress passed the National Defense Education Act (NDEA). Although much smaller than the $14 million called for in the Times several years earlier, the NDEA was a historic federal education bill that framed the need for quality schools and education as a Cold War imperative. It appropriated $1 billion over several years to education in the United States, with an emphasis on science and mathematics at colleges and universities. Meanwhile, the number of enrolled students in US public schools continued to balloon from about 25 million in 1949 to 46 million in 1971. The NDEA helped, but local school taxpayers would ultimately cover the bulk of the costs for new or expanded schools.\(^\text{12}\)

In Rapid City, the squeeze on educational facilities was already underway. In March 1949, Superintendent E.B. Bergquist informed the school board that the community could expect an increase of 224 students by the fall. A new elementary school called Canyon Lake Elementary, one of the first schools built in Rapid City since the 1930s, would absorb 175 of them.\(^\text{13}\) Overcrowding at the Rapid City High School was also beginning to cause problems by 1950, and the school was working on a plan to update the cafeteria to accommodate almost twice as many students by the next academic year.\(^\text{14}\) For the moment, growth in the district seemed significant but manageable.

Excepting Canyon Lake Elementary and General Beadle Elementary, which were established in 1949, the educational facilities in Rapid City at that time included several small elementary schools spread across town. The capstone was the Rapid City High School complex, which included a manicured campus on Columbus Street that had famously hosted President Calvin Coolidge during the summer of 1927. On the south side, up a short incline on the hillside, sat Washington Elementary School. Another building that had been used by the 30th president during his visit housed Coolidge Junior High.\(^\text{15}\)

Completed in 1936, the high school building was an imposing, four-story structure that epitomized the consolidated school movement of the early 20th century. In the early 20th century, schools transitioned from being single-room, and often rural, structures into large, centralized facilities that “tended to feature stately neoclassical facades and standardized, utilitarian classrooms with multiple rows of desks.” At schools like Rapid City High School, many students could socialize, learn from different teachers, and utilize amenities like auditoriums and gymnasiums inside massive buildings.\(^\text{16}\)

The trickle of students Superintendent Bergquist had described in 1949 soon became a flood. In late 1951, Rapid City’s public schools enrolled a total of 4,955 students. A report anticipated that some 2,000 more students would arrive within five years.\(^\text{17}\) That estimate, it turned out, was woefully conservative. By 1952, the school board had updated its projections, noting that at least 3,000 students would arrive by 1954—and that number merely accounted for the “normal


\(^{13}\) “School Survey Indicates Local Elementary Enrollment will increase by 224 pupils,” Rapid City Journal, March 15, 1949.


growth” of families already living in Rapid City. The school district had no way of knowing how many families would move to Rapid City, much less where they would settle.\(^{18}\) By 1960, total enrollment in Rapid City’s public schools reached 10,585 students.\(^{19}\)

Communities across South Dakota were also facing increased enrollments. As Michelle Dennis writes, across the state, “dozens of new education-related buildings were constructed between 1945 and 1960.” These included expansions to public school facilities as well as additions to the campuses of colleges and universities. Many added student housing, libraries, laboratories, and other research facilities. Federal laws like the NDEA and the GI Bill, which made affordable college education available to veterans, inspired the spike in college enrollments. Many of these veteran students lived in on-campus family housing units that had been built to accommodate them.\(^{20}\)

To keep up with this growth, Rapid City undertook an aggressive construction and school expansion program, building over a dozen new schools between 1949 and 1969. First were Canyon Lake and General Beadle in 1949. Next, in 1950, came Annie Tallent Elementary (renamed South Park Elementary in the 1990s) and Lincoln Elementary. In 1952, E.B. Bergquist Elementary—named for the longtime superintendent—Horace Mann Elementary, and South Canyon Elementary were all founded, followed by Robbinsdale Elementary in 1953 and West Middle School in 1955. Later that year, voters passed a $3.1 million bond issue. It included funds to make additions to many of the schools built just a few years earlier, which were already nearing capacity. The bond also helped spur new school construction over the next several years: Meadowbrook Elementary opened in 1957, followed by Pinedale Elementary in 1958, and South Middle School and North Middle School in 1959. In 1961 and 1963 came Grandview Elementary and Knollwood Heights Elementary, respectively. The last of Rapid City's postwar schools, Stevens High School, was built in 1969.

Meanwhile, by the late 1950s and early 1960s, new or expanded schools sponsored by faith communities popped up in Rapid City, as did public school facilities in suburbs like Rapid Valley. The Catholic Diocese, for example, planned a 1,000-student school to be built adjacent to the Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, which was completed in 1962. Congregations of Seventh Day Adventists and a Lutheran denomination also had small elementary schools in Rapid City.\(^{21}\) Meanwhile, an addition to the Rapid Valley School was completed in 1960, and Valley schools would become part of the Rapid City school district in 1969.\(^{22}\)

Many of Rapid City’s postwar schools became the centerpieces of new, postwar neighborhoods that were sprawling outward from the downtown core. As crews broke ground on Robbinsdale Elementary in 1952, for example, real estate developer Private Homes, Inc. was finishing work on 170 mostly ranch-style homes on the new streets that surrounded the school. The company was also planning a shopping center and drugstore just blocks from the school to serve the hundreds of new families moving into the area.\(^{23}\) (See essay on Postwar Residential Growth.)

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\(^{19}\) “First Week Enrollment is 10,585,” *Rapid City Journal*, September 10, 1960. According to the US Census, the city’s population in 1960 was 42,399. Nearly three quarters of these residents lived east of the hogback that divided the city, including 12,043 under the age of 18. On the west side of town, there were 9,246 residents, including 4,554 under the age of 18. “High School Location is Questioned,” *Rapid City Journal*, December 19, 1961, 13.


The schools were anchors for daily life and commerce. They also shaped the development of the character of Rapid City’s new neighborhoods. Families played on the school swing sets on the weekends and in the summer. Little league, softball, and junior football teams practiced on the athletic fields. Boys Scout and Girl Scout troops held meetings and events in school buildings. Grandparents and parents attended holiday programs and band and orchestra concerts in school gyms and auditoriums. Adults voted and attended PTA meetings in school facilities. In these ways, neighborhood schools were a cornerstone for civic and social life.

The schools had been designed with these multiple, flexible uses in mind. According to author Bryn Nelson, postwar schools marked a departure from their large, costly predecessors. They “featured more standardized and cost-conscious designs” due to budget constraints and surging enrollment.24 Architects also accounted for pedagogical innovations. As another pair of scholars observed in 1962, “Americans are aware that the curriculum content and the process of teaching and learning are in the throes of vigorous investigation and exploration.” Early schoolhouses, they wrote, had “followed a prosaic pattern” with a “single-minded purpose… to shelter the students from the elements.” A school could live in basically any “good sturdy structure that provided space for a few desks and some blackboard area.” But changing modes of thinking required a new spatial approach, and “the box-like school structure, comprised of a series of rectangles, row on row and layer on layer” they wrote, “is becoming a thing of the past.”25

Cutting edge research at Stanford University’s School Construction Systems Development Project had outlined four key principles to guide school designers in the postwar era. First, schools should be flexible, with interior spaces utilizing movable walls and multiple configurations. Second, different-sized spaces should be included and adaptable for different sizes of student groups. Third, schools should be able to accommodate emerging technologies like televisions and overhead projectors. Finally, permanent spaces like auditoriums should be able to be reconfigured to meet a variety of uses.26

An American Institute of Architects demonstration in 1958 showcased some of these plans. The cutting-edge schools in the exhibit, wrote the Washington Post, were “characterized by an open planning of component units, central courts and student assembly places surrounded by classrooms, overhead lighting and an improved use of landscaping to make the adjoining paces esthetically pleasing.” Tile and playground sculptures of animals, meanwhile “add[ed] a new dimension to formerly severe surroundings” while “imaginative use of new building materials has also added a sense of lightness and warmth to the architecture itself.”27

These elements were practical as well as cultural. Concerns about the state of the world shaped the vision for what schools could be. In a study of postwar school design in England, which mirrored many of the new trends in the United States, one architectural historian argued that “the postwar school stands out as a monument for a time when the prospects of imagining a more humane future were channeled into children and their education.”28 Another scholar points out that the “modern American elementary school, as a cultural and architectural form, emerged from a

complex interaction of technical concerns, educational theory, and the larger historical forces of postwar expansion and Cold War anxiety.”

New schools being implemented in California provided a popular model for postwar schools all over the country. There, many architects adhered to the “modern, one-story, flat-roof design aesthetic” of the era. Large windows helped illuminate classrooms with natural light. Many California schools were designed to take advantage of the state’s sunny days and temperate climate, and classrooms were often connected by covered walkways to provide easy access to the outdoors. This integration of interior and exterior spaces became a signature element of postwar residential architecture, exemplified by the popularity of ranch house designs. But it was also an important cultural component of the postwar era as Americans adjusted to more urban or suburban patterns of life after generations of living in more rural communities.

An indoor, adapted version of the California plan was utilized in northern states like South Dakota. A Christian Science Monitor article from the period described a model school in Barrington, Illinois, which had been developed as part of the Stanford project. “The building,” it reads, “consists of four wings of classroom space which shoot off from a central core. In the middle is a 7,000-square foot informal ‘learning center,’ complete with film strips, tape recordings, and newspapers, as well as books, and another huge room which doubles as a study hall and cafeteria.”

Rapid City’s postwar schools incorporated many of these trends. According to historian Michelle Dennis, a Belle Fourche school designed by the architect Harold Spitznagel in 1949 was a model utilized by school districts across the state. His work was influenced by the broader evolution underway in the design and architecture world and informed the design of Rapid City’s schools.

During the postwar era, Rapid City engaged a variety of design and construction firms to complete new construction and additions to existing facilities. But its initial building program was overseen by Ewing & Forette, a local business affiliated with the Chicago-based firm Perkins & Will. Their work helps explain the general uniformity of schools like Lincoln, South Park, Robbinsdale, and Canyon Lake, all of which conformed to a modern vernacular that featured low, horizontal lines and brick facades with an occasional slight peak like the one at Pinedale. Built two years apart, Grandview and Knollwood Heights deviated slightly from this look. Each, for example, features a taller, glassy peak above its main entrance. The schools resemble one another because the school board had utilized another Rapid City firm, Auckerman & Mazour, to draw Grandview. Their design was well-liked and the school board asked the firm to adapt that plan for the new, north side school at Knollwood Heights.

Descriptions of Rapid City’s postwar schools illuminated a sense of civic pride in the new facilities. Each of the new schools, read one account, was “an attractive brick building” situated on five acres of land so children would have plenty of room to play and exercise during recess. Lincoln Elementary was “ultra-modernistic in design,” while Pinedale was divided into “seven levels and units, consisting of two classrooms each,” which were “staggered’ up and down a gentle slope”

33 Dennis, “Post-War Architecture in South Dakota,” 35.
in the hill. A news reporter marveled at how “an auditorium-office at [the] apex of the angle” joined the “two classroom wings” at Pinedale. Like the other new Rapid City schools, “it featured ample expanses of glass.”

When North Middle School and South Middle School opened in 1959, these larger schools incorporated even more of the open-air concepts of the time. North could hold 700 students, while South had capacity for 1,000. Each was comprised of “four connecting wings enclosing an open court.” Long hallways separated these main wings from the gymnasium and arts and vocational wings in order to enhance the classroom learning environment by isolating noise and bustle.

Rapid City’s schools followed national trends and also helped set them. In 1963, Perkins & Will teamed up with Auckerman & Mazourek to integrate a new, state-of-the-art learning center at Grandview Elementary. Roughly the size of two classrooms, it was a 1,600 square-foot space that could accommodate 120 students in a classroom configuration or 200 when set up like an auditorium. The space could be used for “lecture-demonstration, film projection, panel and discussion groups, radio tape recording, educational television, live music and drama.” The design was so innovative that it earned a two-page spread in the February 1963 issue of the American School Board Journal.

As Rapid City sought to integrate these amenities into its postwar schools, it also faced financial and infrastructural challenges characteristic of the era. In the mid-1950s, the Museum of Modern Art in New York published a pictorial review of midcentury architectural trends. Describing the nationwide boom in school construction, the work’s editor reminded readers that “booms are not always conducive to good building.” Recalling a smaller, troublesome wave of construction from the 1920s, he pushed readers to cast a “wary eye [on] such construction as it prepared and executed under conditions of manic haste and rising costs.”

His warnings were prescient. In 1954, for example, the Rapid City Journal reported on the deteriorating educational facilities across town. Although many of the worst maintenance issues were occurring at the old, pre-war schools, several of the brand-new facilities like Horace Mann, Canyon Lake, and South Canyon were already cracking and chipping due to the expansion of steel framing beams. Just months after Pinedale Elementary opened, parents complained about heating issues and poor acoustics that were making it difficult for their children to learn.

Problems like these, along with cost overruns and change orders, pushed the Journal to criticize the school board in 1958. After doing some math, the Journal calculated that Rapid City should have been able to afford an entire, additional elementary school from the 1955 bond initiative. The paper argued that “it could have been done, too, if the [school] board had done one thing: stayed within the financial bounds approved by Rapid City voters three years ago.”

By the time the baby boom subsided, taxpayers had grown tired of bonds, rising construction costs, and other issues. In 1971, Educational Facilities Laboratories reported that “half of all school bond issues” in the country were “going down to thumping defeat.” In this climate,

38 “Open House at Junior Highs First Event in Education Week Here,” Rapid City Journal, November 8, 1959.
41 Schools Still Inadequate, Need Repair, Board Finds,” Rapid City Journal, April 14, 1954.
43 Niciejewski, “Savings Could Mean and Additional School.”
many school districts across the United States would look for cost savings in the 1970s, 1980s, and early 1990s. Rather than building new schools, many would opt for lower-cost annexes built from prefabricated materials over full renovations or additions to compensate for growing enrollment.44 This trend is evident across Rapid City, where many of the public schools have two-classroom annexes situated near the main school buildings.45

Rapid City’s population had leveled off by the mid-1960s. In 1970, projections suggested that the city’s population would begin to decline by the end of the decade. A pair of evaluators from the University of Minnesota recommended phasing out several of Rapid City’s schools, planning to build a new, 1,700-student high school on the east side of town, and preparing for new construction in the southwest and north sides of town, where the neighborhoods continued to grow.46 Although the city’s population did not decline, growth slowed from the mid-1960s to the mid-1980s.47 48

More than 70 years have passed since Canyon Lake and General Beadle Elementary—the community’s first postwar schools—opened. Many of the postwar schools are aging and face high costs for maintenance and expansion. Those factors, combined with low enrollments, have already led to the closure of the prewar Cleghorn Elementary School in 1993, as well as the closure of Lincoln Elementary and the demolition of E.B. Bergquist Elementary in the early 2000s. General Beadle Elementary, meanwhile, was rebuilt with new amenities and higher student capacity in 2007. Since the early 2000s, the school district has discussed plans to decommission or rebuild several other postwar neighborhood schools. As these decisions are made, the school board, the city, and the Rapid City Historic Preservation Commission will need to think about how these structures contribute to neighborhood identity and how and whether they can or should be adapted for reuse in ways that will support a sense of continuity and history in the community.

45 “Cheaper Ways to Build Schools,” 2.
48 The only new Rapid City schools built after 1972 were Central High School, which was built just off Rapid Creek in the years after the 1972 flood, and Kibben Kuster Elementary, which was located on the Canyon Lake campus and served elementary and special needs students at different times over several decades. New schools in Black Hawk and Rapid Valley—which although outside city limits are part of the Rapid City school district—were built in 1984 and 1987. Rapid City, meanwhile, added Southwest Middle School and Corral Drive Elementary in 1994. Andrea J. Cook, “School to Celebrate Move,” Rapid City Journal, May 27, 2015.
Bibliography/References


Preliminary Documentation

Table: Rapid City’s Postwar Schools (1945 to 1972)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Founded</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tr>
<td>E.B. Bergquist Elementary School</td>
<td>1952</td>
<td>725 E. Philadelphia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Demolished 2006</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canyon Lake Elementary School</td>
<td>1949</td>
<td>1500 Evergreen Drive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Beadle Elementary School</td>
<td>1949</td>
<td>10 Van Buren Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Renovated/rebuilt 2007</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Grandview Elementary School</td>
<td>1961</td>
<td>3301 Grandview Drive</td>
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<tr>
<td>Horace Mann Elementary School</td>
<td>1952</td>
<td>902 Anamosa Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knollwood Elementary School</td>
<td>1963</td>
<td>1701 Downing Street</td>
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<td>Lincoln Elementary School</td>
<td>1951</td>
<td>1325 Quincy Street</td>
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<td>Meadowbrook Elementary School</td>
<td>1957</td>
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<td>Pinedale Elementary School</td>
<td>1958</td>
<td>4901 W. Chicago Street</td>
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<td>Robbinsdale Elementary School</td>
<td>1953</td>
<td>424 E. Indiana Street</td>
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<td>South Canyon Elementary School</td>
<td>1952</td>
<td>219 Nordbye Lane</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Park Elementary School *Previously Annie Tallent Elementary</td>
<td>1951</td>
<td>207 Flormann Street</td>
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<tr>
<td>North Middle School</td>
<td>1959</td>
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<td>1959</td>
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<td>West Middle School</td>
<td>1955</td>
<td>1003 Sioux San Drive</td>
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<td>Stevens High School</td>
<td>1969</td>
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Community Health Center now at former site of E.B. Bergquist Elementary
25 E. Philadelphia
Canyon Lake Elementary
General Beadle Elementary
*Remodeled 2008

Grandview Elementary
Horace Mann Elementary
Kibben Kuster Elementary School

Knollwood Heights Elementary School
Lincoln Elementary School

Meadowbrook Elementary School
North Middle School
Pinedale Elementary
Robbinsdale Elementary School
South Middle School
South Canyon Elementary School

South Park Elementary School
West Middle School
Maps/Historic Photographs

Maps TBD

“Looking east on St. Joe at 9th, Old Lincoln School on Right”
Minnilusa Historical Association

“First Rapid City High School, cost $12,000, south side of Columbus between 6th and 7th”
Minnilusa Historical Association

“Rapid City High School where President Coolidge had Offices,”
Minnilusa Historical Association

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Students in front of Coolidge High School
Minnilusa Historical Association

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Washington Grade School in foreground
Minnilusa Historical Association
“Halley Airport, present site of North Middle School”
Minnilusa Historical Association

Expansion of Rapid City schools
Rapid City Journal, November 18, 1951

Rapid City Journal, November 1952
Rapid City Journal, April 14, 1954

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Dedication of West Middle School
Rapid City Journal, November 7, 1955

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Rapid City Journal, December 27, 1956
Rapid City Journal, March 11, 1958

Open house at North and South Junior High
Rapid City Journal, November 8, 1959

Rapid City Journal, September 10, 1960
“Cleghorn School in 1996, before it was torn down”
Minnilusa Historical Association

Drawings and poems about Cleghorn School closure
Rapid City Journal, April 18, 1993
Bergquist Demolition
*Rapid City Journal*, June 14, 2006

West Middle School Aging
*Rapid City Journal*, May 30, 2019
Canyon Lake
Rapid City Journal, September 4, 2019
Expansion of postwar neighborhoods
*Rapid City Journal*, November 9, 1960
School construction business booming  
*Rapid City Journal*, March 11, 1958

### Potential Projects

The RCHPC could lead or partner in the following community history and historic preservation projects related to the history of the postwar schools in Rapid City:

**Detailed Survey of Postwar Schools in Rapid City**  
As the Rapid City Area Schools and the Rapid City community prepare for growth in the 2020s, planning is underway to close and replace (and potentially demolish) several schools in Rapid City. To document the postwar schools, the RCHPC could prioritize a project to create detailed surveys and historic contexts of each historic school in the community.

**Investigation into Parochial and Suburban Schools**  
Over the course of its history, Rapid City Area Schools district has grown to encompass educational facilities in and around Rapid City. Meanwhile, several religious institutions—including the Catholic, Lutheran, and Seventh-Day Adventist Churches—have established school systems in and around the Rapid City community. As a complement to the investigation above and a starting point for
understanding the role of these schools in the Rapid City and surrounding community’s history, the RCHPC could sponsor an investigation into private religious schools and educational facilities in Black Hawk, Rapid Valley, and other locations outside the city limits of Rapid City.

Workshop on Adaptive Reuse
Across the United States, former school facilities have been converted into storefronts, coworking spaces, apartments, and more. In Rapid City, “The Garfield”—a residential complex in what used to be the James A. Garfield Elementary School—is an excellent example. Working with contractors, architects, and historic preservationists, the RCHPC could sponsor a series of workshops on strategies for renovation, additions, retrofitting, and the overall adaptive reuse of historic schools.

Develop Rapid City School History Interpretive Website
The RCHPC could work with schools to add photographs, blueprints, and storytelling to its website to begin the process of documenting and interpreting the history of Rapid City’s schools. This could serve as a starting point for a community history and memory project and could be conducted in partnership with individual schools or the local school board. This initiative could include components like a study of school mascots, administrative histories, or an oral history project.

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National Register Eligibility
The original Rapid City High School, now the Performing Arts Center, at 615 Columbus is the only school in Rapid City currently on the National Register. All of the postwar schools in Rapid City are now more than 50 years old and therefore eligible for evaluation for placement on the National Register. Each school would require a detailed nomination to this end.

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Resources
The following is a list of existing public and private community groups, organizations, and institutions who would make strong partners on any RCHPC initiative focused on exploring and understanding the history of Rapid City’s postwar schools.

Rapid City Area Schools
Rapid City Public Library
Rapid City Public Schools Foundation
Journey Museum and Learning Center
Dahl Fine Arts Center