

# Fruitdale Grade School

*National Register of Historic Places*

*by Rosemary Lewis*

The Fruitdale School at 10801 W. 44<sup>th</sup> Ave. has been the object of years of great effort on the part of the Wheat Ridge Historical Society to save this 1927 Temple Hoyne Buell-designed structure. The present Fruitdale School is the third such school. The first was a log building (1884-1901), and the second was a two-room brick building. Buell designed this building to reuse portions of the foundation of the second Fruitdale School, which burned in 1926.

Temple Hoyne Buell (1895-1990) was in the early years of his illustrious career when he designed the Fruitdale School. It is a two-story, Art Deco, flat-roofed building that features front entrances on the southwest and southeast corners. Dark red zigzag decorative brickwork above the doors and along the cornice provides character and dimension against the lighter red brick walls. Large windows punctuate the front facade on the first and second floors.

When the school was built in 1927, Fruitdale was one of many crossroads communities scattered throughout eastern Jefferson County. Fruitdale consisted of some residential and commercial buildings that supported the surrounding truck farms. The school building provided not only an educational center, but also a social center for local residents and organizations. As truck farms gave way to suburbia, especially after World War II, enrollment increased dramatically.

The original two-story red-brick building of eight classrooms plus offices was insufficient,

so additions to the east and west side were constructed beginning in 1954. Elementary education ended at Fruitdale in 1978. Thereafter it was used for adult education until 1991, and then as a preschool language development center until 2006. It is currently vacant.

The school was constructed on donated land that was entailed with a deed restriction that required the return of the land to the donator families should it no longer be used for educational purposes. This has presented a challenge, and often an impediment, in preserving the school and identifying a new use. The school has been threatened with demolition on more than one occasion. In April 2011, the Wheat Ridge Housing Authority purchased the property from the Jefferson County School District for \$1 plus clean-up costs.

The Fruitdale School was added to the National Register of Historic Places on March 20, 2013.📍

**Source:**

*National Register of Historic Places nomination form for the Fruitdale School, prepared by Colorado Preservation, Inc.*

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