

COLORADO CULTURAL RESOURCE SURVEY

Architectural Inventory Form

Official Eligibility Determination (OAHF use only)

OAHF1403 Rev. 9/98

Date _____ Initials _____

- Determined Eligible – National Register
- Determined Not Eligible – National Register
- Determined Eligible – State Register
- Determine Not Eligible – State Register
- Need Data
- Contributes to eligible National Register District
- Noncontributing to eligible National Register District

I. IDENTIFICATION

- 1. Resource number: **5SM.1605**
- 2. Temporary resource number: **N/A**
- 3. County: **San Miguel**
- 4. City: **Telluride**
- 5. Historic Building Name: **San Miguel County Courthouse**
- 6. Current Building Name: **San Miguel County Courthouse**
- 7. Building Address: **305 W. Colorado Avenue**
- 8. Owner Name and Address: **San Miguel County
P. O. Box 1170
Telluride, CO 814351170**

Parcel number(s):

456536410904



THLD RATING:

Contributing to District

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II. GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

9. P.M.: **New Mexico** Township: **43N** Range: **9W**
SW ¼ of SW ¼ of SW ¼ of SE ¼ of Section 036
10. UTM reference (Datum: NAD27)
 Zone: **13** **252852 mE** **4202462 mN**
11. USGS quad name: **Telluride, Colorado**
 Year: **1955** Map scale: **7.5'**
12. Lot(s): **Lots 13, 15, 17, 19, Block 1**
 Addition: **Telluride Original Townsite** Year of addition: **1883**
13. Boundary description and justification:
This legally defined parcel encompasses, but does not exceed, the land historically associated with this property.
 Metes and bounds?: Describe:

III. ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

14. Building plan (footprint, shape): **Rectangular Plan**
15. Dimensions in feet: **Length: 118 feet x Width: 74 feet**
16. Number of stories: **2**
17. Primary external wall material(s): **Brick**
18. Roof configuration: **Hipped Roof**
19. Primary external roof material: **Metal Roof**
20. Special features: **Window/Segmental Arch**
Porch
Tower
Chimney
Balcony
21. General architectural description:
The San Miguel County Courthouse is an imposing two-story brick building, with a central three-story clock tower. The extant courthouse building consists of three components: the original 1887 two-story brick courthouse, with the three-story clock tower, which measures 70' N-S by 41' E-W; the historic stone jail (also built in 1887) which abuts the courthouse's west elevation, and measures 20' N-S by 24' E-W; and a 1976 brick addition to the original courthouse's north (rear) elevation, which measures 48' N-S by 49' E-W. The original courthouse is supported by an unpainted coursed sandstone foundation, and its walls are made of red brick laid in running bond. The roof is hipped, with metal roofing material, and with painted white, bracketed, eaves. The symmetrical façade is dominated by the three-story central clock tower, and fronts directly onto the wide concrete sidewalk which parallels Colorado Avenue on the south elevation. A set of paired, painted yellow, wood-paneled doors enter the first story of the clock tower from a concrete porch. The porch is approached by sets of nine concrete steps on its east and west sides, and is flanked by a black wrought iron railing. The entry doors are topped by a distinctive 33-light transom located directly below a small balcony projecting from the clock tower's second story. A set of paired wooden doors, topped by an 18-light transom, and within a segmental sandstone arch, opens onto the balcony from the second story. The façade elevation of the clock tower's third story is penetrated by a band of three 1/1 double-hung windows, with sandstone lugsills and rounded brick arches. Directly below these windows, the following text has been applied to the clock tower wall in raised block lettering:

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SAN MIGUEL COUNTY

COURTHOUSE

1887

Prominent octagon-shaped clocks adorn the tower's south, east, and west elevation, directly below the pyramidal roof, topped by a tall flag pole flying the American flag. Flanking the clock tower, the façade wall is penetrated by symmetrically-arranged, paired, double-hung sash windows. These windows feature painted cream white wood frames, painted green wood surrounds, sandstone lugsills, and segmental brick arches with sandstone keystones and springers.

The windows on the original courthouse's east and west (side) elevations also feature painted cream white wood frames, painted green wood surrounds, sandstone lugsills, and segmental brick arches with sandstone keystones and springers. The window placement on the original building's east and west sides is also identical, with each elevation penetrated by four 2/2 double-hung sash first story windows, and by six 2/2 double-hung sash second story windows. A painted white glass-in-wood-frame door enters the north end of the original courthouse's east elevation from a 5-step, 8' by 8' concrete porch. This porch features a painted cream white open wood railing, fluted square columns, and a flat roof.

The historic 20' by 24.5' San Miguel County jail which abuts the original courthouse's west elevation, features solid stone masonry walls, and a flat roof. Today, the jail building features an 8' by 24.5' open porch on its south elevation which opens onto the courtyard adjacent to the courthouse's west elevation. The jail's south elevation wall is penetrated by two fixed-pane windows, with heavy black steel security bars, which overlook the porch. A set of concrete steps descend to a steel basement-level entry door on the jail's south elevation.

The 1976 addition to the original courthouse's north elevation is supported by a low concrete foundation, and its exterior walls are made of red brick laid in running bond. The addition is penetrated by multiple 1/1 and 2/2 double-hung sash windows. Windows on its east elevation have segmental brick arches, while windows on its west elevation have flat arches. A rear entry door into the addition is located at the north end of the west elevation.

22. Architectural style: **Late Victorian/Italianate**

Building type:

23. Landscape or special setting features:

The San Miguel County Courthouse is located at the northwest corner of Colorado Avenue and Oak Street, near the west end of Telluride's downtown commercial district. Oak Street has been vacated to the east of the Courthouse to provide for a small park and pedestrian plaza. A nicely-landscaped courtyard is located to the west of the Courthouse, where the "Galloping Goose" a Rio Grande Southern railroad car with a modified truck engine front, is on display. The Courthouse was reportedly built on this site in 1887, because this is the highest point along Colorado Avenue, Telluride's main street.

24. Associated buildings, features or objects: **N/A**

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IV. ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY

25. Date of construction: Estimate:
- Actual: 1885 (original San Miguel County Courthouse; burned January 1887)
1887 (extant San Miguel County Courthouse and Jail)
1976 (addition to north elevation)
- Source of information: San Miguel County Commissioners' Record Book 8, pp. 116, 124, 181, 186, 194,195, 197, 202, 205, 208-210, 263 (April 3, 1885 - January 20, 1888)
26. Architect: Varian and Sterner (Ernest Phillip Varian and Frederick J. Sterner)
- Source of information: San Miguel County Commissioners' Record Book 8, pp. 195, 197 (March 11, 1887 and April 5, 1887)
27. Builder: Original 1885 Courthouse: T. T. Hines and Osborn and Roberts
Extant 1887 Courthouse: W. H. Nelson
- Source of information: San Miguel County Commissioners' Record Book 8, pp. 124 and 202 (July 29, 1885 and May 2, 1887)
28. Original owner: San Miguel County
- Source of information: San Miguel County Commissioners' Record Book 8, pp. 116, 124, 181, 186, 194,195, 197, 202, 205, 208-210, 263 (April 3, 1885 - January 20, 1888)
29. Construction history:
- The original San Miguel County Courthouse was built during the summer and fall of 1885 at the southeast corner of Colorado Avenue and Fir Street. According to minutes of the San Miguel County Board of County Commissioners, the plans and specifications for the original courthouse at that location were prepared by "Varian and Sterner, architects of Denver," and it was built by "T. T. Hines" and "Osborn and Roberts." The original courthouse stood for just over a year, until it was destroyed in a massive fire in January 1887 which consumed most of the block of buildings on the south side of Colorado Avenue between Fir and Pine Streets. Two months later, on March 10, 1887, San Miguel County's Board of Commissioners held a special meeting "...at 2:00 p.m. pursuant to the call of Chairman W.A. Taylor for [the] purposes of taking some action towards rebuilding the Court House and such other business as may properly come before it." The three Commissioners, A.A. Taylor, C.B. Lawsha and L.W. Galloway, and Charles F. Painter, the County Clerk, discussed the matter at length that day before adjourning the meeting at 6:00 p.m. The Board reconvened at 9:00 a.m. the following morning, and after exploring the possibility of building the new courthouse on land known as the Kibbe Estate (on the west side of Oak Street between Columbia and Galena Avenues), the Commissioners ultimately determined to rebuild the courthouse at its original location. A slight problem developed, however, when, as recorded in the Board's minutes: "...upon search it was discovered that the Plans and Detail Drawings, according to which the Court House was built in 1885, have been misplaced or lost and can not be found." As a result, the Board voted to: "communicate with Varian & Sterner of Denver, Colo, the architects who drew up the original plans and specifications, and ascertain whether the County can obtain Duplicate Plans and Detail Drawings, and if so at what price."**
- On April 5, 1887, the Board published the following notice in the two local newspapers, the *Telluride Journal* and the *San Miguel Examiner*:**

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Notice

Sealed proposals endorsed 'Proposals for Building Court House' will be received at the office of the County Clerk of San Miguel County, at Telluride, Colorado until 12 o'clock noon of Monday May 2nd, 1887, according to the Plans and Specifications for same."

On May 2nd, the following four bids were received:

Cowell & Reed \$11,800.00
 J. F. M. Dunlap and R.C. Cameron & Co. \$13,000.00
 J. C. Warner \$9750.00
 W. H. Nelson \$8990.00

W.H. Nelson, the low bidder, was awarded the contract to rebuild the courthouse on its original site, with the understanding that he would use part of the existing foundation and bricks salvaged from the fire. Three days later, however, the Board accepted a land swap proposal from T. A. Davis, and as a result, the new courthouse was instead constructed at the northwest corner of Colorado Avenue and Oak Street, as described in the Board's minutes:

T.A. Davis then appeared before the Board and made a verbal proposition for himself and others to convey or cause to be conveyed to the County of San Miguel Lots numbered fifteen (15), seventeen (17) and nineteen (19) in Block numbered 1 in the Town of Columbia, [of] said County for a Court House site...

Davis' proposition, which the Board accepted, also entailed moving the new county jail from Lots 40 and 42 of Block 6 (the Courthouse's original site) where it had been built subsequent to the fire by Cowell and Reed for the contract price of \$2000.00. The following day, the Board signed a contract with W. H. Nelson to construct the new courthouse on the land acquired from Mr. Davis, and it agreed to compensate Mr. Nelson an additional \$425.00 because he would no longer be readily able to use the "stone foundation and debris of the old Court House." Nelson appeared before the Board of County Commissioners routinely throughout the remainder of 1887, reporting on the progress of the construction, and accepting payment for work completed to date. Nelson's final such appearance before the Board "for final settlement of his contract for building [the] Court House" was on January 20, 1888. The Board's minutes from that day indicate that the building was complete except for a few minor details, and that Nelson's contract price had been modestly increased to compensate him for "extras to date."

The San Miguel County Courthouse at this location, with the county jail abutting its west elevation, stood as originally built until 1976 when a 48' by 49' two-story brick addition was built onto the north elevation.

30. Original location: Moved: _____ Date of move(s): _____

V. HISTORICAL ASSOCIATIONS

31. Original use(s): **Government/Courthouse**
 32. Intermediate use(s): **Government/Courthouse**
 33. Current use(s): **Government/Courthouse**
 34. Site type(s): **San Miguel County Courthouse**

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35. Historical background:

San Miguel County was created in February of 1883, out of lands that had previously been part of Ouray County. The mining town of Columbia (renamed Telluride in June 1887) became the county seat and local center of government. The first San Miguel County Courthouse, erected at the southeast corner of Colorado Avenue and Fir Street in 1885, burned in January 1887. The extant Courthouse building was then completed in January 1888, at the northwest corner of Colorado Avenue and Oak Streets. In addition to housing the county's government offices and courts, the building has also served as a key gathering place and social focal point of the community throughout its history.

Minutes of the Board of County Commissioners reveal that the courthouse was designed by the Denver architectural firm of "Varian and Sterner" and that it was built by W.H. Nelson in 1887. Born in Plainfield, New Jersey, in October of 1854, Ernest Phillip Varian worked as a contractor in New York before coming west to Denver in 1880. In 1885, he went into partnership with Frederick J. Sterner, forming the architectural firm of Varian and Sterner. The original San Miguel County Courthouse which they designed that same year was apparently among their firm's first commissions. In partnership until the early 1900s, Varian and Sterner were among Denver's most prominent architects of their day. In addition to numerous residences, the firm also designed the Romanesque Revival style Denver Club building at 17th Street and Glenarm Place, the Grace Methodist Episcopal Church at 13th and Bannock Streets, and the First Church of Christ Scientist at 1401 Logan Street, all in Denver. Previously, in 1882, Varian had also designed the Calvary Baptist Church at 27th and Stout Streets in north Denver. By 1910, the partnership had dissolved, and Varian had formed a new architectural firm with his son, Lester E. Varian. In this new enterprise, known as "Varian and Varian," he then continued to design numerous residences and other buildings, primarily in the Denver area, until shortly before his death in January 1927.

Frederick J. Sterner was born in England in 1862, and immigrated to America in 1878. By 1882, he had gained employment as a draftsman in the Denver architectural firm of Frank E. Edbrooke and Company, and in 1885, at just 23 years of age, he went into partnership with 31-year-old Ernest Phillip Varian. After their firm dissolved, after the turn of the twentieth century, Sterner went on to design the Daniels and Fisher Department Store building at 16th and Arapahoe Streets in downtown Denver, along with numerous residence and other buildings in Denver, Pueblo, Colorado Springs and elsewhere. A life-long bachelor, Sterner moved to New York in 1908, where he remained in private practice until his retirement in 1924. Sterner then moved to his native London to live with his sister. He passed away five years later in Rome, at the age of 69.

36. Sources of information:

Buys, Christian J. *Historic Telluride in Rare Photographs*. Ouray: Western Reflections, Inc., 1998.

Colorado's Historic Newspaper Collection. <http://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org>.

"State News." *Fairplay Flume*, August 6, 1885, p. 2.

"Some Facts Regarding the History of San Miguel County and Her Official Record." *Telluride Journal*, January 13, 1898, p. 1.

Denver Public Library, Western History and Genealogy, DPL Western History Photos database.

<http://www.photoswest.org>

Pera, Davine (comp.). *Conversations at 9,000 Feet A Collection of Oral Histories From Telluride, Colorado*. Ouray: Western Reflections Publishing Company, 2000.

San Miguel County Assessor records.

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San Miguel County Commissioners' Record Book 8, pp. 116, 124, 181, 186, 194,195, 197, 202, 205, 208-210, 263

(April 3, 1885 - January 20, 1888)

San Miguel County Property Appraisal Record.

Sanborn Insurance maps, August 1886, October 1890, February 1893, December 1899, July 1904, November 1908, October 1922.

Simmons, Laurie and Whitacre, Christine. Historic Building Inventory Record, May 1986.

"Sterner, Frederick J., Architects of Colorado Biographical Sketch." Colorado Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, <http://www.coloradohistory-oahp.org>.

"Trommer, Rosemerry Wahtola. Telluride's Victorian Vernacular: A Walking Tour. Telluride: Telluride Historical Museum, 2001.

"Varian, Ernest Phillip, Architects of Colorado Biographical Sketch." Colorado Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, <http://www.coloradohistory-oahp.org>.

VI. SIGNIFICANCE

37. Local landmark designation: Yes No Date of designation:

Designating authority:

38. Applicable National Register criteria:

- A. Associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad pattern of our history;
- B. Associated with the lives of persons significant in our past;
- C. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or represents the work of a master, or that possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguished entity whose components may lack individual distinction;
- D. Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in history or prehistory.
- Qualifies under Criteria Considerations A through G (see Manual).
- Does not meet any of the above National Register criteria.

Telluride Standards for Designation:

- 7-505.A.1. The structure is representative of a unique historical social activity of an era
- 7-505.A.2. The structure dominates the neighborhood by virtue of its mass, architecture or location
- 7-505.A.3. The structure was an historically or architecturally important public building
- 7-505.A.4. The structure has a unique historical significance beyond a local level
- 7-505.A.5. The parcel was the site of an important historic event or activity
- 7-505.A.6. The structure has a "contributing or qualified contributing" rating on the THAS

39. Area(s) of significance: **Architecture**
 Community Planning and Development
 Politics/Government
 Settlement

40. Period of significance: **1887; 1887-1957**

41. Level of significance: National: State: Local:

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42. Statement of significance:

The San Miguel County Courthouse is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A and C, and it rates as a "contributing" resource within the Telluride National Historic Landmark District. The building is historically significant, relative to Criterion A, because it has served continuously as San Miguel County's seat of government from the time of its construction in 1887. The building is also architecturally significant, under Criterion C, for its Italianate style influences, and because it was designed by the Denver-based architectural firm of Varian and Sterner.

43. Assessment of historic physical integrity related to significance:

The San Miguel County Courthouse displays an overall high standard of physical integrity, relative to the seven aspects of integrity as defined by the National Park Service and the Colorado Historical Society, Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation - setting, location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. The original courthouse's integrity is modestly diminished by a 1976 addition to the north (rear) elevation.

VII. NATIONAL REGISTER ELIGIBILITY ASSESSMENT

44. National Register eligibility field assessment: **Individually Eligible**

Local landmark eligibility field assessment: **Eligible / Contributing to District**

45. Is there National Register district potential? Yes No

Discuss: **This property is located within the Telluride National Historic Landmark District.**

If there is National Register district potential, is this building: Contributing Noncontributing N/A:

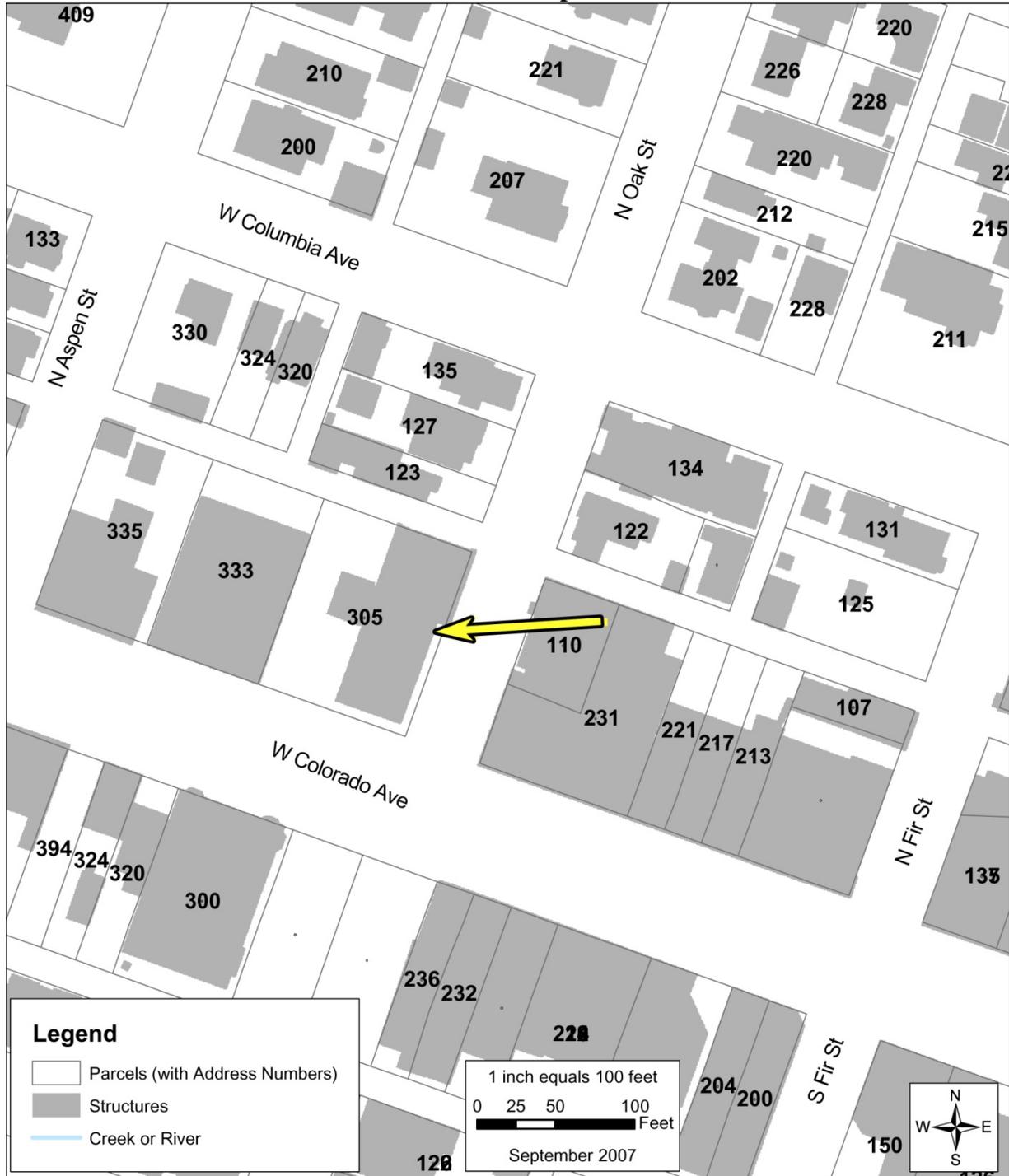
46. If the building is in existing National Register district, is it: Contributing Noncontributing N/A:

VIII. RECORDING INFORMATION

47. Photograph number(s):	CD #5, Images 276-285	CDs filed at:	Town of Telluride
48. Report title:	Town of Telluride Re-Survey of Historic Structures		Planning and Building Dept.
49. Date(s):	07/31/2007; revised 4/10/2012		113 West Columbia Avenue
50. Recorder(s):	Carl McWilliams		Telluride, CO 81435
	Karen McWilliams		
51. Organization:	Cultural Resource Historians		
52. Address:	Dogwood Court		
	Fort Collins, CO 80525		
53. Phone number(s):	(970) 493-5270		

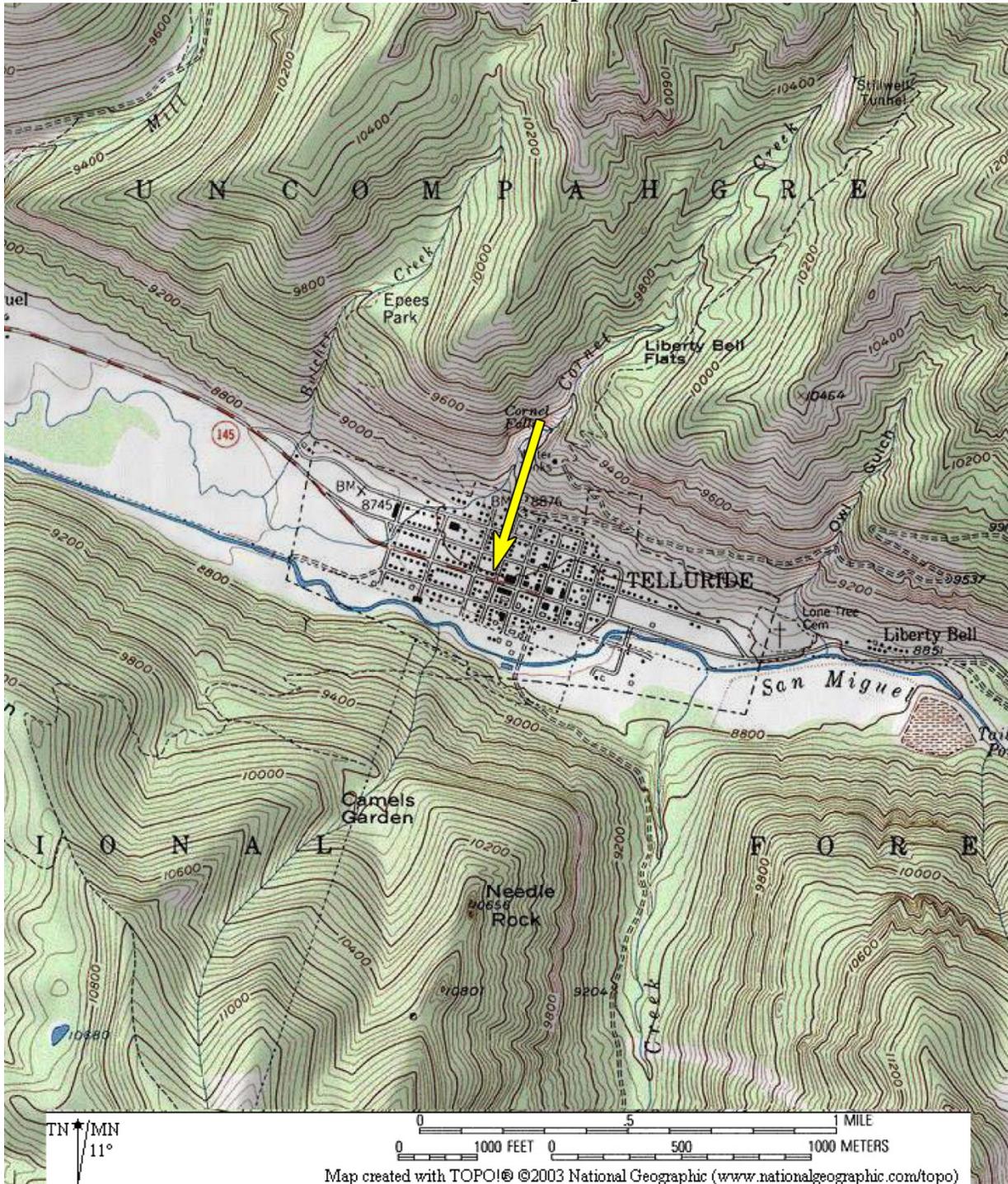
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Sketch Map



Architectural Inventory Form

Location Map



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