



"Pages from the Marfa Storybook" public mural by Jesus "Cimi" Alvarado for The Blackwell School Alliance.

# Historic Structure Report

Presented to :

**The Blackwell School Alliance Board**



Prepared By:

**UTSA** College of Architecture,  
Construction and Planning



Date : 04.24.19

# Credits And Acknowledgements

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Our deepest thanks belong to the original Board of the Blackwell School Alliance, that 2007 Reunion group, who had the vision to save the school for the community and to engage former students to donate photographs, memorabilia, and money to conduct critical infrastructure repairs. In particular, Joe Cabezuela led a powerful effort to preserve this piece of history.

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**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**Credits And Acknowledgements ..... i**

**Executive Summary ..... 4**

**Preservation Philosophy ..... 5**

**Historical Background and Timeline..... 6**

**Historic Graphic Timeline..... 11**

**Architectural Description..... 12**

**Construction Observations ..... 17**

**Assessment of Current Conditions ..... 18**

**Review and Recommendations..... 41**

**Priorities and Next Steps..... 43**

**On-Site Field Notes..... 44**

**Bibliography..... 47**



# Executive Summary

The Blackwell School is an adobe building, a designated Texas Historic Landmark that provided segregated education to the Mexican-American population in Marfa, Texas, until its closure in 1965. This one-story structure is well built and in sound condition. The stone perimeter footing shows no sign of cracks or movement. The roof is misshapen and bows on the south slope but is not of structural concern at this time. While some interior modifications, wall finishes and fenestration require attention, the Blackwell School building should serve the community for years to come.

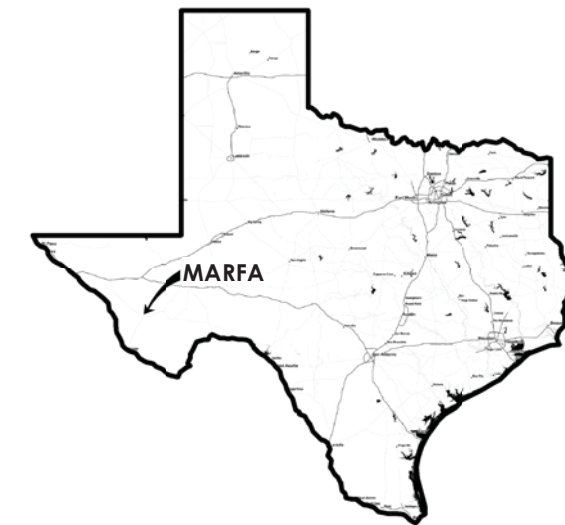
This Historic Structure Report (HSR) is one step in the Blackwell School Alliance Strategic Plan of April 2017. This HSR is intended be a comprehensive planning document to address immediate concerns as well as the long-term preservation of the Blackwell School.

This HSR is based on archival research and field investigation in accordance with National Park Service Preservation Brief No. 43: The Preparation and Use of Historic Structure Reports. This report outlines the historical background, a chronology of development and use, physical description and current condition, and recommended treatment for continued use.

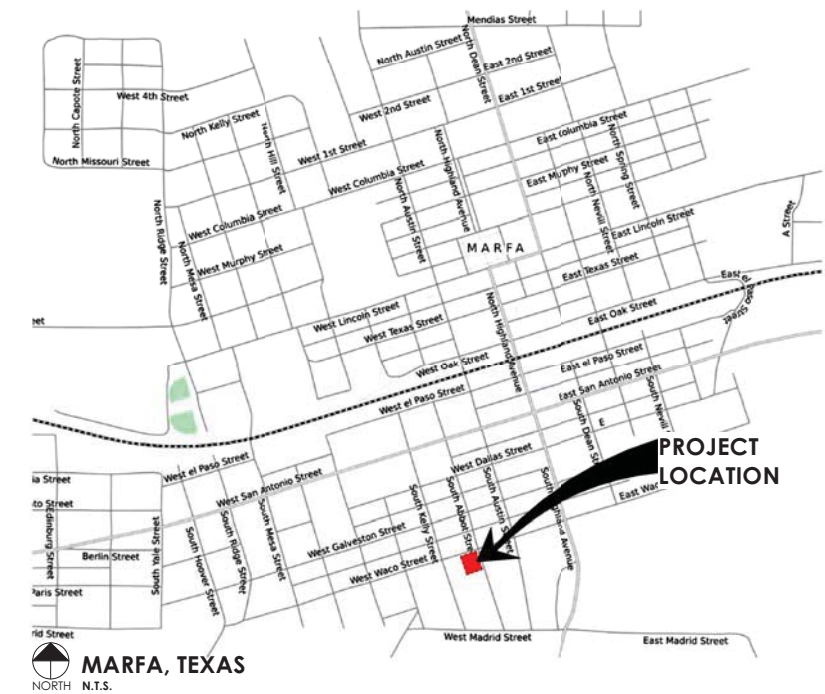
An initial reconnaissance visit was conducted in May 2018, followed by an in-depth investigation in July and subsequent site visit and briefing in August. This report is the result of additional archival research, visual investigation, probing and sounding of interior and exterior wall surfaces. Inaccessible areas were viewed with the use of a borescope at existing openings and a hole saw was used to bore into the wall at various locations to verify or disprove previous assumptions of construction and material. The crawl space under the floor and the attic space of the main building were visually inspected and conditions photographically recorded.

Key issues to address for the physical and aesthetic well being of the building are as follows:

- Immediate inspection of the electrical system
- Removal of cement stucco on all elevations, repair adobe and plaster with appropriate material
- Replace delaminated interior plaster
- Remove non-original windows and replace with appropriate wood frame windows
- Consider removal of existing metal roof and Installation of wood shingles as originally constructed
- Reconstruct the adobe wall on the west end of the building at the loading dock
- Reconstruct the adobe wall at the east end of the northern classroom and boys restroom
- Improve site drainage to ensure a positive slope away from the building
- Plan for physical accessibility into and within the buildings including restrooms
- Plan for improved plumbing, heating and air conditioning



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# Preservation Philosophy



## The Secretary of the Interior provides four distinct but interrelated approaches to the treatment of historic properties:

- **Preservation** focuses on the maintenance and repair of existing historic materials and retention of a property's form as it has evolved over time.
- **Rehabilitation** acknowledges the need to alter or add to a historic property to meet continuing or changing uses while retaining the property's historic character.
- **Restoration** is undertaken to depict a property at a particular period of time in its history, while removing evidence of other periods.
- **Reconstruction** re-creates vanished or non-surviving portions of a property for interpretive purposes.

Of the four distinct approaches to the treatment of historic properties, a combination of Preservation and Rehabilitation appears to be the appropriate choice. However, reconstruction of the chimneys and belfry are to be considered part of the preservation as they are a critical character defining feature of the building. This approach merges the goal to retain the school's historic character with the need to repair existing historic materials, reconstruct previously demolished walls, while retaining some of the changes that have recurred over time. In order to be a living, functioning building, modern amenities must be incorporated. Bringing the building up to current codes and standards will make it useable as intended for the community's current and future needs. This includes ADA compliant access to and within the building, as well as mechanical and electrical systems that provide the service needed.

The basic philosophy is to preserve the historic property while making the changes to meet the continuing use of the building. While there was discussion as to whether the "period of significance" should include the trade school occupancy, it has been determined that the focus should be on the building as it functioned as the Blackwell School, with a nod to the later period of the trade school.

# Historical Background and Timeline



**MARFA TEXAS c.1919, Blackwell School in the background - Photograph courtesy of the Presidio County Museum.**



**Enlarged image of the school house c.1919 - Photograph courtesy of the Presidio County Museum.**

The Blackwell School, built as the “Mexican school” in 1909 in Marfa, Texas, is one of many early twentieth-century segregated schools built across Texas for Mexican- American children. At the time segregation in Texas was not uncommon and was founded in a long history of negative sentiments held by the surge of Protestant-Anglo Americans that migrated to the state after it was annexed by the United States. This sentiment was further strengthened following the aftermath of the Mexican American War. Part of this prejudice concerning education was because, prior to becoming part of the United States, education in the region had generally been provided through schools set up in Spanish missions. During and after the war, the Republic of Mexico, severely limited financially, had to end most of its funding for schools. Unfortunately, this led newly relocated Anglo settlers to believe that the Mexican population simply did not care about the education of their children.<sup>1</sup>

In 1845, an even further widening of the divide between residents took place when a movement to assimilate “non-Americans” into the state’s newly acquired culture began. One of the main objectives of this campaign was to make the English language the dominant language in the state by requiring that it be the primary language used in public schools. In 1854, Texas passed the Common School Law which established a public-school system for the state. A few years later, in an amendment to the law, the phrase “no school shall be entitled to the [monetary] benefits of this act unless the English language is principally taught therein” was added to the legislation’s wording.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Victoria-Maria MacDonald, “American Latino Theme Study – Demanding Their Rights: The Latino Struggle for Educational Access and Equity,” The National Park Service (2013), [https://home1.nps.gov/heritageinitiatives/latino/latinothemestudy/education.htm#\\_ednref14](https://home1.nps.gov/heritageinitiatives/latino/latinothemestudy/education.htm#_ednref14).

Opposition from both Spanish, German, and Czech families eventually allowed for a somewhat softening of the law which resulted in a compromise that allowed languages other than English to be taught for up to two hours per school day instead of not at all.<sup>3</sup> This amnesty was short lived, and by 1879 the state mandated that the required exams for teachers be administered in English only. As the “English only” movement grew, many affluent bilingual families chose to either enroll their children in private schools or to create their own educational institutions.<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately, for most Mexican- American children this was not a viable option, especially in smaller towns where resources were limited. This economic divide, plus the underlying prejudice from Anglo families who did not want their children educated alongside “dirty and diseased Mexicans,” resulted in the spread of segregated Mexican-American schools throughout Texas in the early twentieth century.<sup>5</sup> The official rationale from Texas school boards was that it was because these children had “English language deficiencies,” when in most cases these children could speak both Spanish and English.<sup>6</sup>

Nationally, similar incidents of racial discourse were occurring between Anglo Americans and African Americans due to the escalation of “separate but equal” legislative rulings across the country as Anglo Americans tried to maintain their legal and social advantages after the Civil War. Many of these sentiments, first established during

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Carlos Kevin Blanton, *The Strange Career of Bilingual Education in Texas, 1836-1981* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2004).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> MacDonald, “Demanding Their Rights,” 4.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 4.





**"1908-1911 Mary Shannon's Class." - Photograph courtesy of the Blackwell School Alliance.**

the Reconstruction Era, were reinforced by a ruling issued in 1896 by the U.S. Supreme Court in the Plessy v Ferguson case. The case involved a man named Homer Plessy who was seven-eighths Anglo American and one-eighth African American. Plessy

was supported by a group of Creole professional businessmen called the Citizens' Committee to Test the Constitutionality of the Separate Car Law. Plessy and the committee decided to challenge the law, which was originally passed by the Louisiana State Legislature and called for "equal but separate accommodations" for railway ticket holders of different races. After purchasing a ticket and sitting in a "white only" passenger car, Plessy was arrested after refusing to move to a segregated section of the train.<sup>7</sup>

The case went all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court which ruled seven to one that the Separate Car Act did not violate the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment which abolished slavery or the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment which established equal rights to African Americans. The majority opinion stated that while Plessy's social rights may have been violated, his equal rights were not. There was no legislation that guaranteed African Americans social equality, only legal equality. The decision further justified and legalized "separate but equal" legislation and bolstered opinions across the United States, particularly in the South.<sup>8</sup>

John Marshall Harlan, Associate Justice and the only judge to vote against the ruling, wrote in his dissent, "our constitution is color blind" and "the present decision, it may well be apprehended, will not only stimulate aggressions, more or less brutal and irritating, upon the admitted rights of colored citizens, but will encourage the belief that

<sup>7</sup> Brian Duignan, "Plessy v Ferguson," Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d., <https://www.britannica.com/event/Plessy-v-Ferguson-1896>.

<sup>8</sup> Duignan, "Plessy v Ferguson,"

it is possible, by means of state enactments, to defeat the beneficent purposes which the people of the United States had in view when they adopted the recent amendments of the Constitution".<sup>9</sup> Although Mexican Americans were not specifically named

in this legislation, having been racially classified as white by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in

1848, the practice of de facto segregation was still prevalent across the United States, especially in Texas. This ruling only served to further reinforce the use of segregated schools for Mexican-American children across the state.<sup>10</sup> It was not until 1954 and the decisive Supreme Court ruling of the Brown vs Board of Education case that segregation finally came to an end and was deemed illegal.<sup>11</sup> Up until that time, most state- sponsored segregated Mexican schools in Texas remained segregated.<sup>12</sup>

Established in 1883, Marfa, Texas as with many West Texas towns was the product of the Galveston, Harrisburg and San Antonio Railway. The railway used Marfa for its freight headquarters and as a water source. The town quickly rose in prominence, and in 1885, became the county seat for Presidio County. By 1920, Marfa's population had increased from 900 in 1900 to 3,553 due to its great success in becoming a leading sheep and cattle epicenter in West Texas.<sup>13</sup> Although Mexican Americans played an enormous role in this success, the tension between them and Anglo Americans was

<sup>9</sup> "Legal Information Institute: Plessy v Ferguson," Cornell Law School, n.d., <https://www.law.cornell.edu/supremecourt/text/163/537>.

<sup>10</sup> MacDonald, "Demanding Their Rights,"

<sup>11</sup> "History – Brown v. Board of Education Re-enactment: The Plessy Decision," United States Courts, n.d., <http://www.uscourts.gov/educational-resources/educational-activities/history-brown-v-board-education-re-enactment>.

<sup>12</sup> Kathleen Schafer, Marfa: The Transformation of a West Texas Town (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2017).

<sup>13</sup> Lee Bennett, "Marfa, TX," Texas State Historical Association, last modified June 15, 2010, <https://tsha-online.org/handbook/online/articles/hjm04>.



**Early photo with band hall to the west - Photograph courtesy of the Blackwell School Alliance.**



**Blackwell Cavalry - Photograph courtesy of the Blackwell School Alliance.**

formidable especially after the immense influx of Mexican refugees that fled to Texas during the Mexican Revolution.<sup>14</sup> Many of those fleeing Mexico traveled the road from the Mexican border to Marfa. This road, lined with makeshift graves of fallen refugees, became known as “El Camino Dolores” or the Road of Sorrows.<sup>15</sup>

Marfa’s first official school began as an integrated school for all of the town’s children in 1885.<sup>16</sup> The school building, located on Galveston Street, was reported to be a one-room adobe structure with one teacher, Miss Kate Barnhart. In 1892, a new two-story, red brick building was built on the site of the current Marfa High School.<sup>17</sup> The Anglo-American children were moved to the new school leaving behind the Mexican-American children who, by the early 1900s, had several teachers assigned specifically to them in the “Mexican school”.<sup>18</sup>

In 1909, the District #1 school trustees purchased Lots 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 of Block 87 for the new school.<sup>19</sup> That same year, the school board decided to sell the old school on Galveston Street and began planning a new “up to date school house...as the present location is too small and the old house in a dilapidated condition”.<sup>20</sup> The school board hired contractor Cal Robinson to build the school, which was constructed of two-foot-

<sup>14</sup> Schafer, West Texas Town.

<sup>15</sup> Villanueva, Jr., Nicholas, No Place of Refuge: Mexicans, Anglos, and Violence in the Texas Borderland, 1900-1920 (Nashville: Vanderbilt University, 2013).

<sup>16</sup> John Ernest Gregg, “The History of Presidio County” (M.A. Thesis, University of Texas, 1933).

<sup>17</sup> Ellen Ruth Livingston, “Marfa School History,” The Big Bend Sentinel Special School Supplement, January 21, 1965.

<sup>18</sup> Ellen Ruth Livingston, “Blackwell School Memoirs,” The Marfa Independent, The Big Bend Sentinel, May 21, 1987.

<sup>19</sup> Lonn Taylor, “Report on the Land History of Lots 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, Block 87, Original Town of Marfa” (Marfa, 2017).

<sup>20</sup> “Notice,” The New Era, June 5, 1909.

<sup>21</sup> “School Board Meeting,” The New Era, May 29, 1909.



**East Elevation c. 2008 - Photograph courtesy of the Blackwell School Alliance.**

thick adobe walls with a floor of 1¼-inch wood planks, and by August it was nearly complete.

In a subtle acknowledgement of the ever-present negative impression of Mexican Americans by Anglo Americans, The New Era, a weekly newspaper, stated in 1909, “The patrons of the school should be proud of the building and take pains to assist the board in seeing that it is not destroyed.”<sup>22</sup>

In early September of 1909,<sup>23</sup> the new elementary school for Mexican-American children opened and was named the Ward School.<sup>24</sup> The Anglo-American children of Marfa had previously been granted a new high school in 1900,<sup>25</sup> but Mexican Americans in town were expected to be satisfied and appreciative with only one school because of the widely-held belief that their children would not continue their education past elementary grade levels.<sup>26</sup> Juan de la Cruz Machuca proved them wrong by graduating from Marfa High School in 1911. This trend continued through the years, and by 1960 most of the students from the Blackwell School continued their education and graduated from Marfa High School.<sup>27</sup>

The Ward School was designed in the style of a traditional one-room American schoolhouse with a front-gabled wood-shingled roof, symmetrically fenestrated windows, a belfry, and a short central flight of open stairs that led to the main entrance in the center of the front façade. The construction consisted of twenty-four-inch adobe

<sup>22</sup> “New Building,” The New Era, August 28, 1909.

<sup>23</sup> “School will commence...,” The New Era, September 28, 1909

<sup>24</sup> Livingston, “Marfa School History”.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Lonn Taylor, “The Rambling Boy: The Lost History of Blackwell School,” The Big Bend Sentinel, June 2, 2016.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.



walls with a stone foundation, wood-framed double-hung windows, and tongue, and, groove wood flooring.<sup>28</sup> In an early photograph of the building the adobe bricks are visible, but in photographs taken shortly thereafter, the building is shown coated in a lime plaster. The schoolhouse comprised three rooms with coal stoves and outdoor toilets.<sup>29</sup> A Sanborn map from 1933 shows that a second, smaller building had been built behind the original school house (both of which were still being referred to at the time as the “Mexican School”). The second building was most likely built in the mid- to late-twenties because in a 1948 speech given by J.E. Gregg, the Marfa ISD Superintendent at the time, he mentions that a second building had been added to the campus in 1927. As the number of children in attendance grew, more buildings were added to the campus in 1930, 1937, 1940, and 1948.<sup>30</sup>

In 1940, the Ward School was renamed the Blackwell Junior High School in honor of Jesse Blackwell, who served as the school’s principal and also teacher from 1922 to 1947.<sup>31</sup> Mr. Blackwell was a mathematics teacher from Ruck County, Texas, near the town of Old London.<sup>32</sup> When he began working at the school there were only 120 students,<sup>33</sup> which was a small number considering the population of Marfa in 1920 was 74% Mexican American.<sup>34</sup> By the time Blackwell retired the school had grown and had an

<sup>28</sup> A Conditions Assessment and Preservation (Mesilla, NM: Cornerstones Community Partnerships, 2008).

<sup>29</sup> Velma Valenziela, “Biography of Jesse Blackwell,” (c. 1969) in Marfa, Diversity in the Desert, (Marfa: Marfa Public Library to The Portal to Texas History).

<sup>30</sup> J.E. Gregg, “Blackwell School Memoirs.”

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Valenziela, “Jesse Blackwell.”

<sup>33</sup> Valenziela, “Jesse Blackwell.”

<sup>34</sup> Taylor, “The Rambling Boy.”



**Art Installation on east facade - Photograph courtesy of the Blackwell School Alliance.**

enrollment of over 600 students<sup>35</sup> along with infrastructure improvements like indoor toilets and steam heat.<sup>36</sup> After segregation was legally overturned in 1954 by the Brown vs Board of Education decision, Marfa ISD began its first attempt at desegregation by assimilating the Blackwell School ninth grade classes into the Marfa High School ninth grade classes.<sup>37</sup> The campus was officially closed in 1965 after all of the Blackwell School students had been consolidated into the Marfa Elementary School, the Marfa Junior High School, and the Marfa High School.<sup>38</sup>

In 1987, the Marfa Independent and the Bend Sentinel published a series of articles called “Blackwell School Memoirs” which showcased memories from former Blackwell School students and teachers. Many of the participants describe the original schoolhouse, which they lovingly referred to as the “cathedral,” as a white building with a belfry.<sup>39</sup> As the campus grew over the years and more buildings were added, the school allowed the students to name them after their teachers through a vote. The original building was named the Harper Building and the second building added to the campus was named the Wheat Band Hall.<sup>40</sup> The school also had a successful choir and band that would perform at various events in town and parades. In order to supply the band with uniforms, the children planned a fundraiser where tamales would be sold and a big dance was planned that would end with an election and coronation of a queen.

<sup>35</sup> Valenziela, “Jesse Blackwell.”

<sup>36</sup> J.E. Gregg, “Blackwell School Memoirs.”

<sup>37</sup> “Time Was...1935 1945 1954,” The Big Bend Sentinel, September 8, 1955.

<sup>38</sup> A Conditions Assessment and Preservation

<sup>39</sup> Jackie Bird Pickering, “Blackwell School Memoirs,” The Marfa Independent, The Big Bend Sentinel, May 14, 1987.

<sup>40</sup> Marco Giles, “Blackwell School Memoirs,” The Marfa Independent, The Big Bend Sentinel, May 14, 1987.

In order to vote for the queen, a vote had to be purchased. The dance, which was free but welcomed donations, drew a crowd of over 1,000 people. The crowd was so large that each attendee was given a colored ribbon that determined when they could be on the dance floor – only one color group at a time could fit!<sup>41</sup> These memoirs, published in the local newspaper from Blackwell School alumni, were in celebration of the first Blackwell School Reunion, which was held later that year and became an annual event.<sup>42</sup>

In October of 1969, Marfa ISD agreed to sell approximately five acres of the campus to the Marfa Housing Authority (MHA) to construct public housing units for families and the elderly. After HUD approved the loan to the MHA for the new development, Marfa ISD immediately began to raze all of the Blackwell School campus buildings leaving only the original schoolhouse and the band hall which remained part of the school district.<sup>43</sup> After the sale, the schoolhouse was used for various activities including housing the Marfa Neighborhood Center, an outreach program for the poor, in 1969<sup>44</sup> and as a vocational school from 1971 to 1996.<sup>45</sup> During the period of the vocational school, various changes were made over the years to the building including the replacement of many of the original wood windows with metal-framed windows and the addition of a metal roof in 1993.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Raymond Wheat, “Blackwell School Memoirs,” The Marfa Independent, The Big Bend Sentinel, May 27, 1987.

<sup>42</sup> “Blackwell Reunion July 14 – 16,” The Marfa Independent, The Big Bend Sentinel, June 29, 1989.

<sup>43</sup> “Marfa Low-Rent Housing Given Approval,” The Big Bend Sentinel, October 9, 1969.

<sup>44</sup> Pat Grannelli and Lina Alvarez, “The Ideal Becoming Reality”, The Big Bend Sentinel, February 27, 1969.

<sup>45</sup> Chawda, et.al, The Blackwell School: Chronology of Development & Use with Considerations for the Future, (San Antonio: UTSA, 2017).

<sup>46</sup> “Tuition,” The Big Bend Sentinel, April 15, 1993.



**Blackwell School - East Elevation 2018**

Part of the rear exterior adobe wall was also removed when a garage door was installed (and later removed) on the back the building. Additionally, at the rear of the schoolhouse, a concrete loading dock was added along with a wooden ADA ramp. And, at some point, the Harper Building and the Wheat Band Hall had many windows removed with the openings either boarded over or completely covered with plaster.

By the twenty-first century, the two remaining buildings were in poor condition from neglect and vandalism, and Marfa ISD was planning to sell or raze them. Concerned that the last physical evidence of their school would be demolished, the Blackwell School alumni formed the Blackwell School Alliance in 2006. In an agreement with Marfa ISD, the members of the alliance signed a 99-year lease costing one dollar per year to preserve the remaining buildings of their school. Since then, the Blackwell School Alliance has made efforts toward restoring the structures and turning the site into a museum to showcase the story of Mexican Americans in early Texas and the southwestern United States. The museum would address the struggle for equal educational opportunities faced by Mexican Americans against a backdrop of prejudice and de facto segregation.<sup>47</sup>

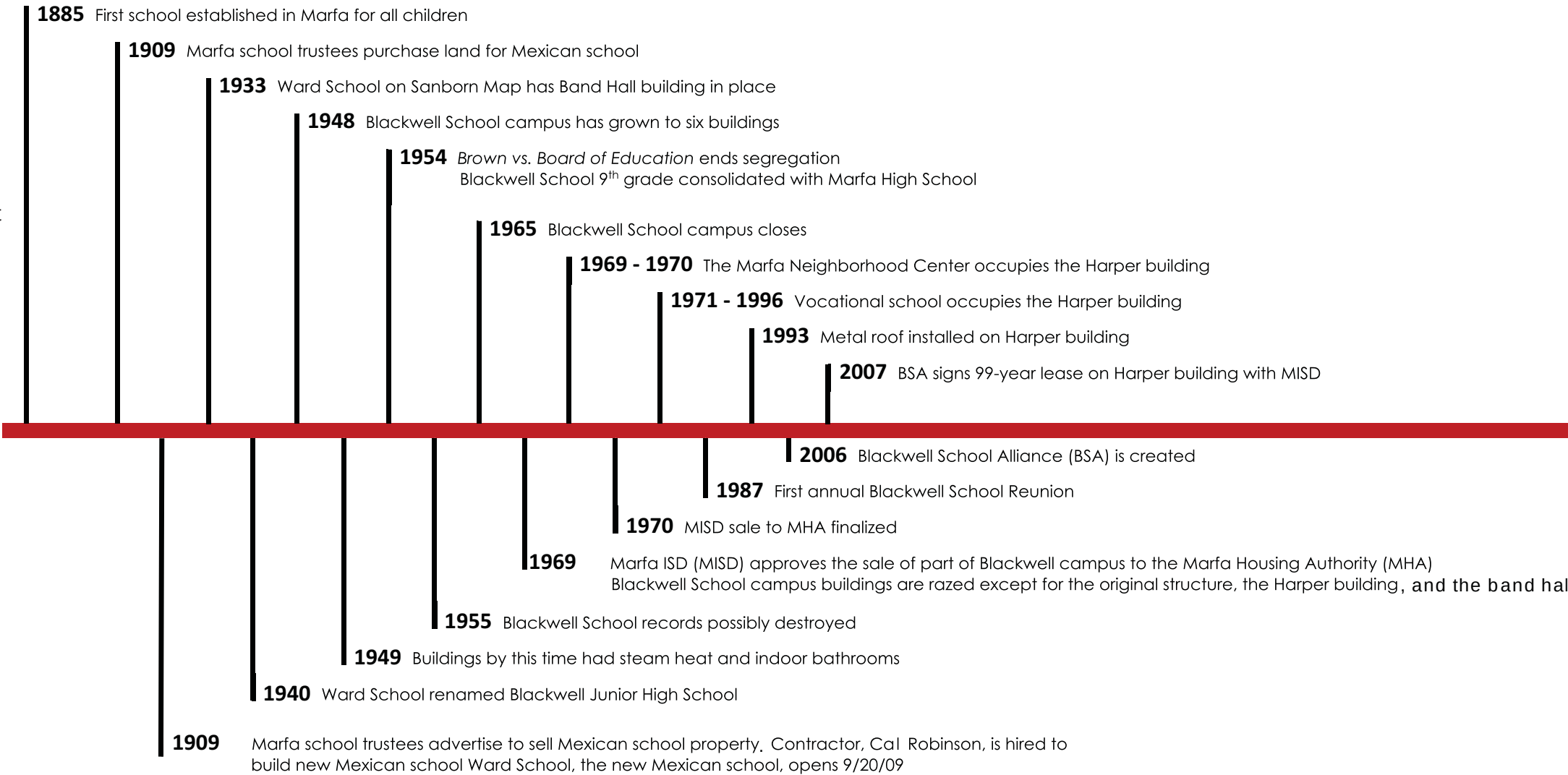
The significance of the Blackwell School lies in its architecture, cultural heritage, and national storyline. Architecturally, the school is unique in that it is an excellent and intact example of an early Mexican-American segregated school, which can also serve as a tangible archetype that can speak to and physically represent the experience of attending such a school. The structures, particularly the early Harper building, also represent fine examples of vernacular construction techniques and the use of local materials.

<sup>47</sup> Gretel Enck, “Determination of Eligibility,” Texas Historical Commission, last modified February 22, 2017, [http://www.thc.texas.gov/public/upload/preserve/national\\_register/Sample\\_Docs/Sample%20Request%20for%20DOE%20-%20Blackwell%20School.pdf](http://www.thc.texas.gov/public/upload/preserve/national_register/Sample_Docs/Sample%20Request%20for%20DOE%20-%20Blackwell%20School.pdf).

# Historic Graphic Timeline

The school's cultural heritage is depicted in the Blackwell School Alliance member's personal stories of growing up in a segregated Marfa and the lasting impact of this prejudice on the people and the town. Having been the main place of education for the town's Mexican American children for fifty-six years, its effect on so many generations of Marfans is truly a significant representation of their struggle against inequality in a segregated environment and their fight for an equal education.

And finally, the Blackwell School elevates the regional Mexican-American plight with segregation to a national level that can speak to the similar experiences that affected African Americans across the United States before desegregation. The potential future for the Blackwell School museum to preserve the history and culture of the Mexican-American experience in Marfa, and its potential to interpret this common but seldom discussed example of segregation at a local, regional, and national level is compelling.

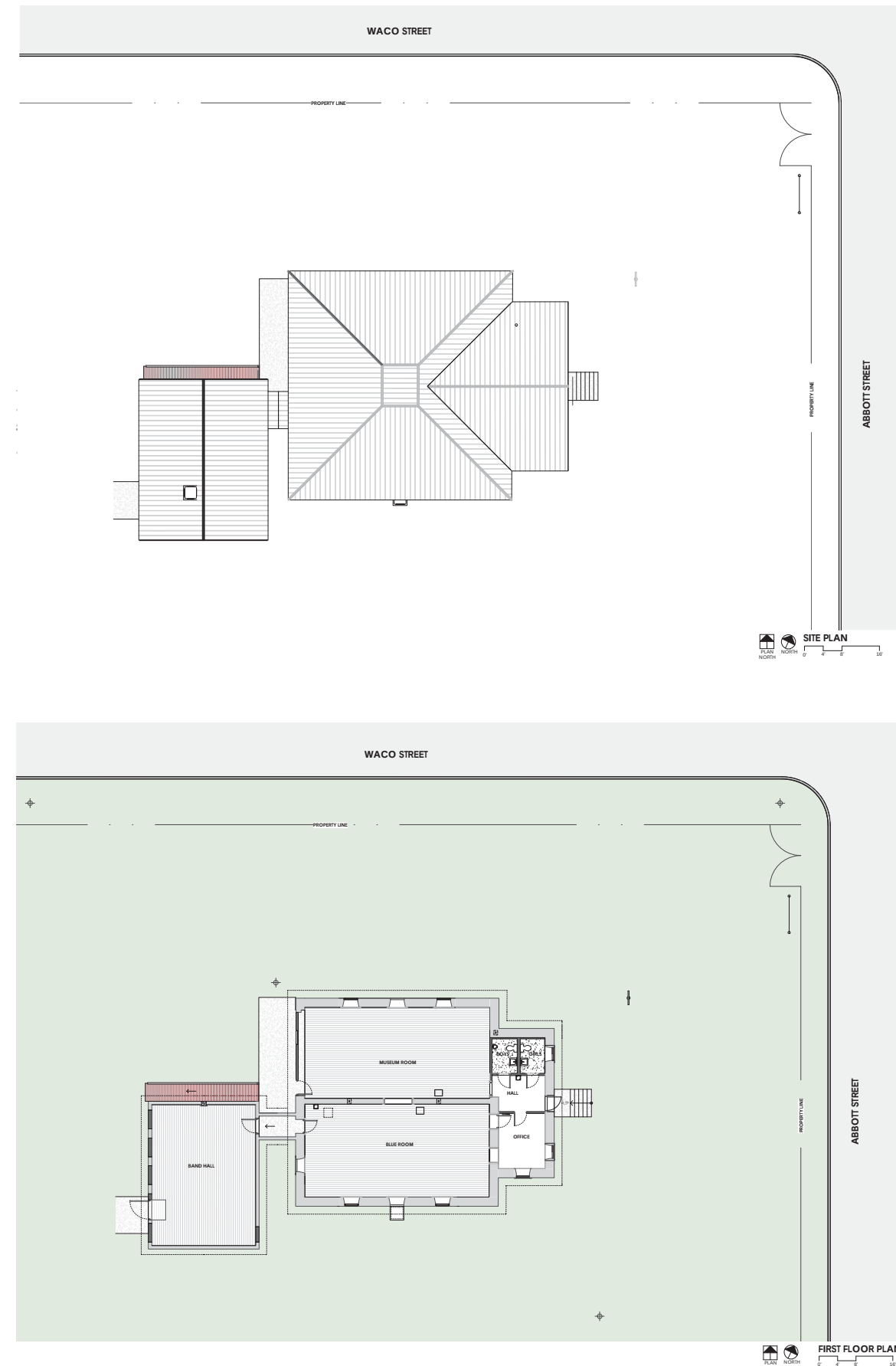




# Architectural Description

## Overview:

The Blackwell School is a single-story structure of a simple, nearly square form with an extended gable front in the east. Simple proportions and simple details have the architectural language of the Early American rural schoolhouse. Comprised of load-bearing adobe construction, the structure rests on a rough cut stone perimeter foundation wall with finished floor approximately 36" above grade. The perimeter foundation and adobe walls are approximately 24" in thickness and covered in stucco. The roof has a steep 6:12 pitch, with a gable roof at the east and a hipped roof with flat 'tray' over the main building. The roofing material is metal "r" panel, and there is a boxed soffit at the eave. A single, five panel entry door sits above concrete steps and is located on the east façade. There are two windows on the east façade and one on the south façade of the gabled portion of the building that are wood double hung 4/4 configuration windows with the weights & pulleys. While not original, they are sympathetic in style and material. The north and south facades are identical in original fenestration, with three spaced windows on each face. The center opening on the north façade has been covered over and the center window on the south elevation is partially covered over and accommodates a swamp cooler. A stud infill wall, with oriented strand board skin, closes in the west elevation which also has a single makeshift window and door at the northern half of the building above a concrete loading dock. The southern half of the west façade is partially enclosed by an enclosed ramp connection to the adjacent "band building." A window opening along that wall has been covered over with plywood. The interior of the building consists primarily of three areas, a vestibule and two classrooms. The ceiling in the vestibule is beaded board with planks running east to west throughout the space, including above the office and the space above the toilets which has been enclosed to the ceiling for storage. The floor material is concrete in the toilet rooms, tongue-and-groove wood planks inside the entry door, and vinyl over wood in the office.

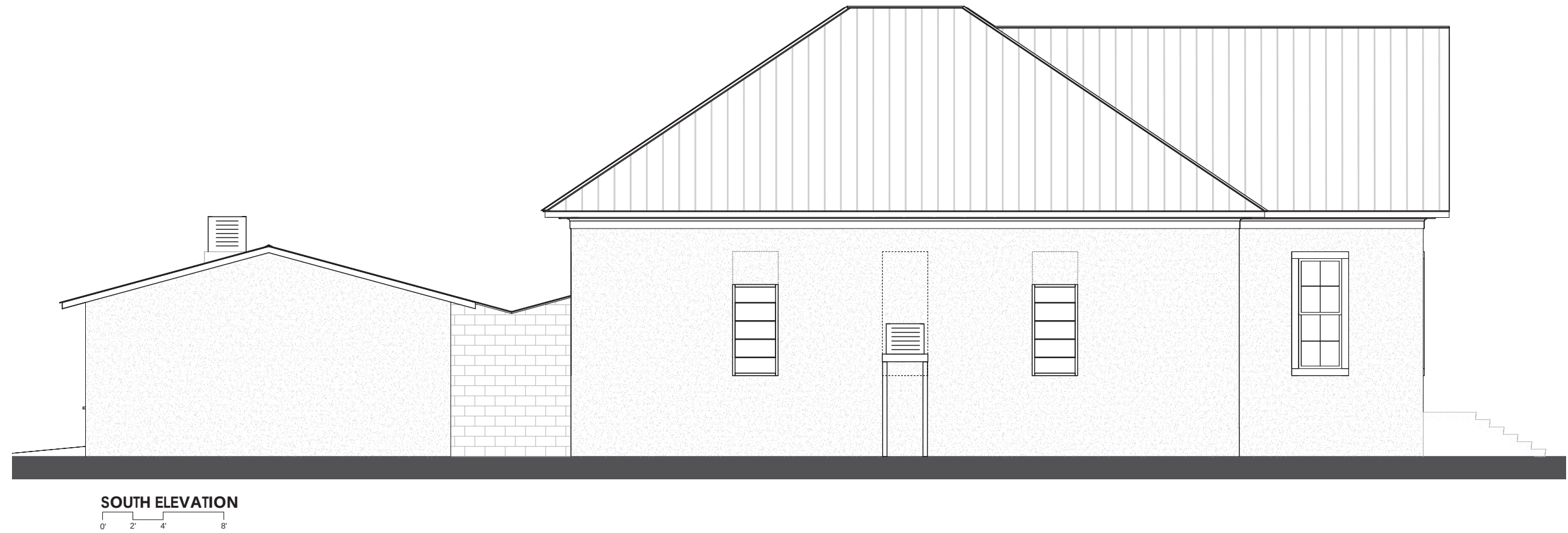




The main building is divided into two symmetrical rectangular rooms beyond the gabled vestibule. A 17" thick adobe wall divides the space into what is known as the "museum room" and the "blue room," these two classrooms are connected by a 6' wide by 7' high opening in the center of the wall. In general, the walls have a wainscot and cap at approximately 4' above the floor on most walls, and are plaster above the cap. The tongue-and-groove floor planks are of various lengths, some as much as 18-20', and run east to west. Beaded board tongue-and-groove ceiling planks run east to west through both rooms. A non-original door frame is located on the east wood frame wall of the museum room. The west end wall of the museum room is infill as previously described. The blue room has a door frame, doors, and transoms on both east and west end of the room. An additional door opening, without a transom, is located on the east wall. This opening is covered with oriented strand board. All window openings have a deep wood sill and jamb with an apron below the sill. There is wood casing at doors and windows.

#### Outbuilding (band room):

The band building sits south and west of the main building block and is approximately 6" above grade. It is constructed of structural clay tile over a concrete perimeter beam. The gable roof ridge runs north and south and is clad with metal "r" panel. Exposed rafter tails are present. The north and south elevations are void of fenestration. There is a blocked door opening on the east elevation and a doorway that enters the enclosed ramp connection. The west façade has the ghost of five previously enclosed windows. A single door with glass upper panel is installed near one of the modified window enclosures on the southern half of the west elevation. The interior walls are plastered. The ceiling is comprised of 4x8 plywood sheet with battens. The flooring is tongue-and-groove plank of varying lengths and runs north to south.







**BUILDING SECTION 1**

0' 2' 4' 8'



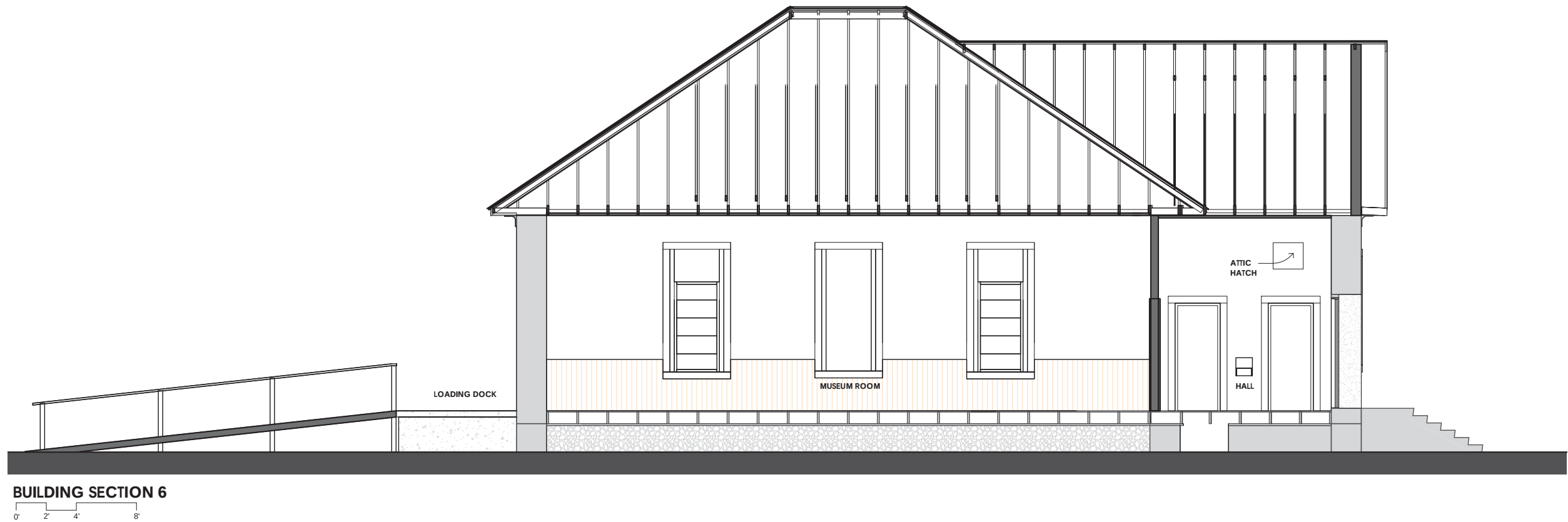
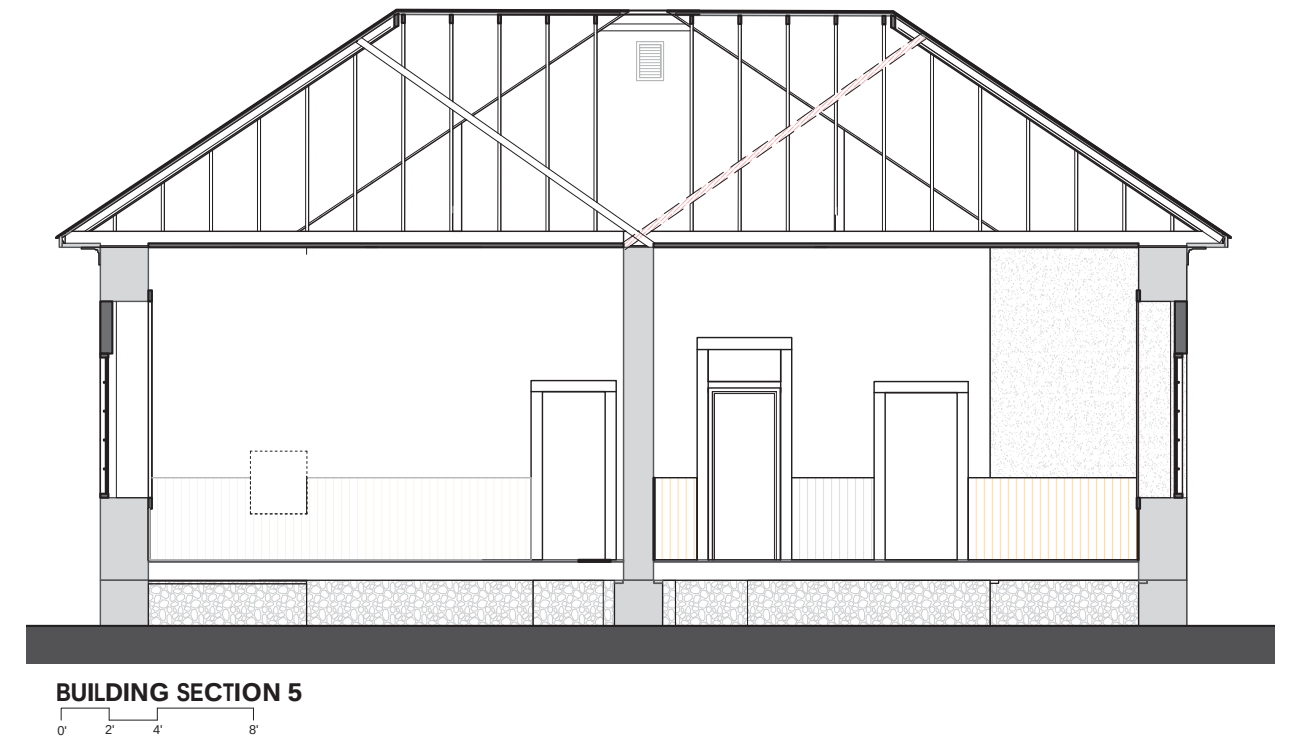
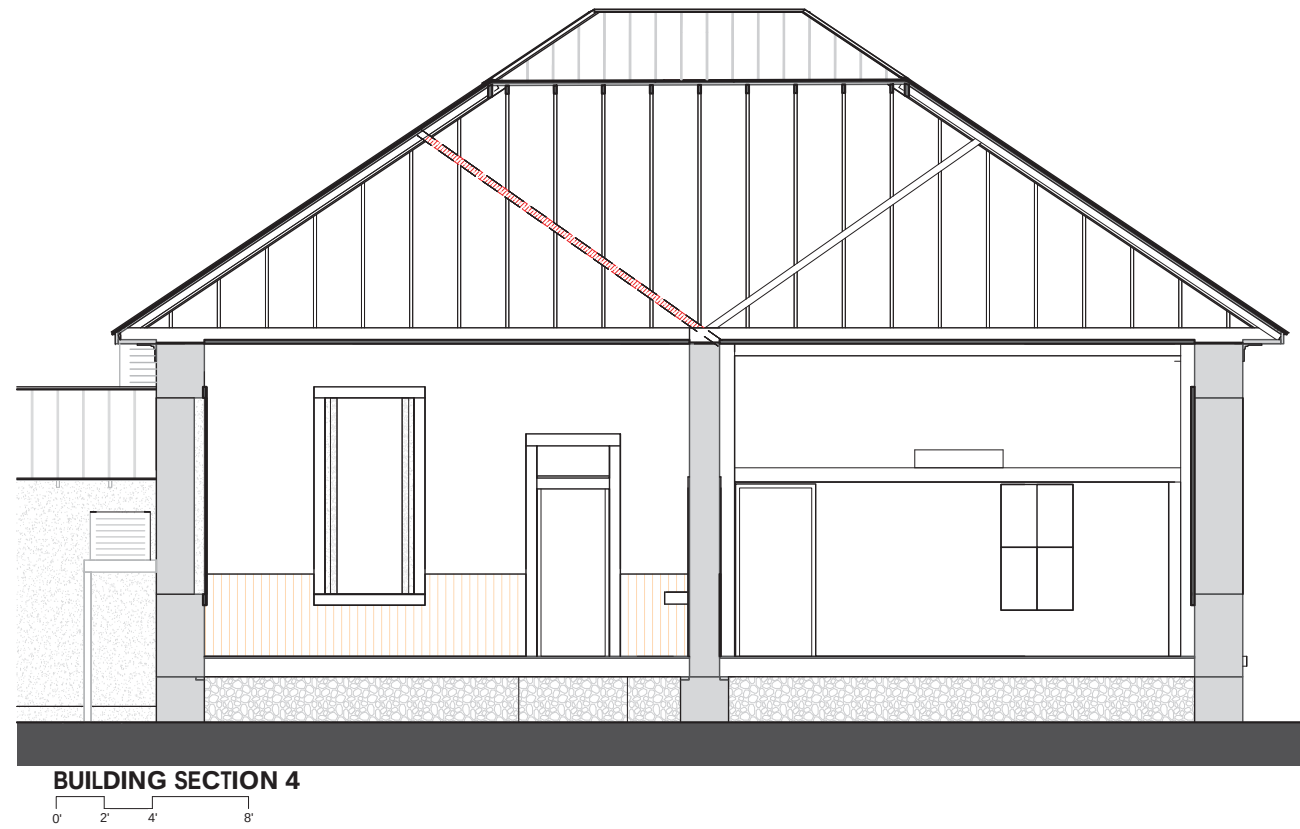
**BUILDING SECTION 2**

0' 2' 4' 8'



**BUILDING SECTION 3**

0' 2' 4' 8'



# Construction Observations

While the building retains the original plan and form, various and substantial structural modifications have been made over the course of time. These modifications directly impact the structural condition of the building and explain deterioration in some areas.

Photographs reveal multiple modifications to the entry wall at the east façade. An early photograph, with Mary Shannon’s class, reveals an exposed adobe wall with brick structure at the arched opening. The brick corbels out at the spring line of the arch. What appear to be the two classroom doors are visible in the background as the archway was open at the time of this photograph.

An aerial photo looking southwest from the center of town is labeled Duncan Photo with an unreadable date, perhaps 1919. This photograph clearly shows the arched entryway closed in with wood and a single door. The building appears to be plastered by this time, covering brick and adobe, and reaching the entire height of the gable end of the building. The belfry and all three chimneys, which no longer exist above the roof, are visible.

The archway seen in the photograph of the Blackwell Cavalry, the photograph of the front of the building looking northwest, and the aerial photo all show the archway with wood infill and single door.

The archway no longer exists as the east wall was reconstructed with a concrete lintel above the single doorway.

Stepping inside the building, the space has been modified with the insertion of stud walls for the restrooms and office. The beaded board ceiling runs the full width of the vestibule indicating that it was once one room. The office enclosure is a much later addition made of wood studs and gypsum wallboard. The current electrical panel is installed in the office wall. Neither enclosure poses any structural concern though the walls dwarf the size and feel of the original vestibule. The floor structure at the restrooms has been changed from wood to concrete.

The wall that separates the boys’ restroom and the “museum,” or north classroom is not original to the building. The adobe wall has been removed from the central east/west dividing wall north to where the gabled portion of the building meets the main building block. This non-original wall is constructed of wood studs with expanded metal lath and plaster. The area where the two wall systems and materials meet indicates movement and deterioration, which is not

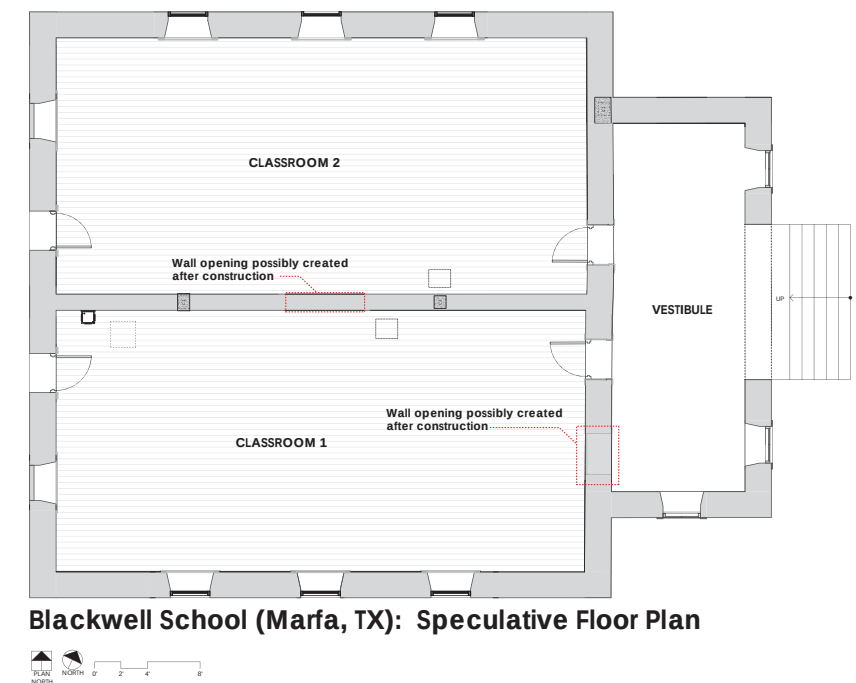
unexpected with two dissimilar wall systems. The removal of the adobe wall may also be the cause of the center wall appearing to be out of plane. The lateral support for the center wall has been compromised when the original adobe wall was removed.

The removal of the adobe wall at the west end of the building, to accommodate the overhead door utilized by the trade school, has altered the structural and visual integrity of the original form. A concrete column at the northwest and southwest corners of the room supports the load previously carried by the thick adobe wall. This leaves the north wall of the building somewhat “free standing” but the mass and thickness of the adobe construction augments the stability of the wall.

The addition of the loading dock does not appear to impose a structural threat to the building and does not show signs of movement or deterioration. It may prove to be useful for a landing for an accessible entrance at this location.

The enclosed passageway from the main building to the band building has outlived the integrity of materials of which it was constructed. The condition of the enclosure poses a structural issue to itself but also directs water into the band building.

Other possible structural alterations need additional investigation, which can be accomplished at the time the interior walls are re-plastered. The double doorway between the classrooms may not be original to initial build. While there is no direct visible movement in the wall, cracking of the plaster implies a structural weakness. It would be good to understand the construction of the lintel over this doorway. The smaller doorway between the southern classroom and the office does not appear to be original. Removal of a portion of the paneling from the office side of the wall revealed a concrete lintel and metal lath and plaster.

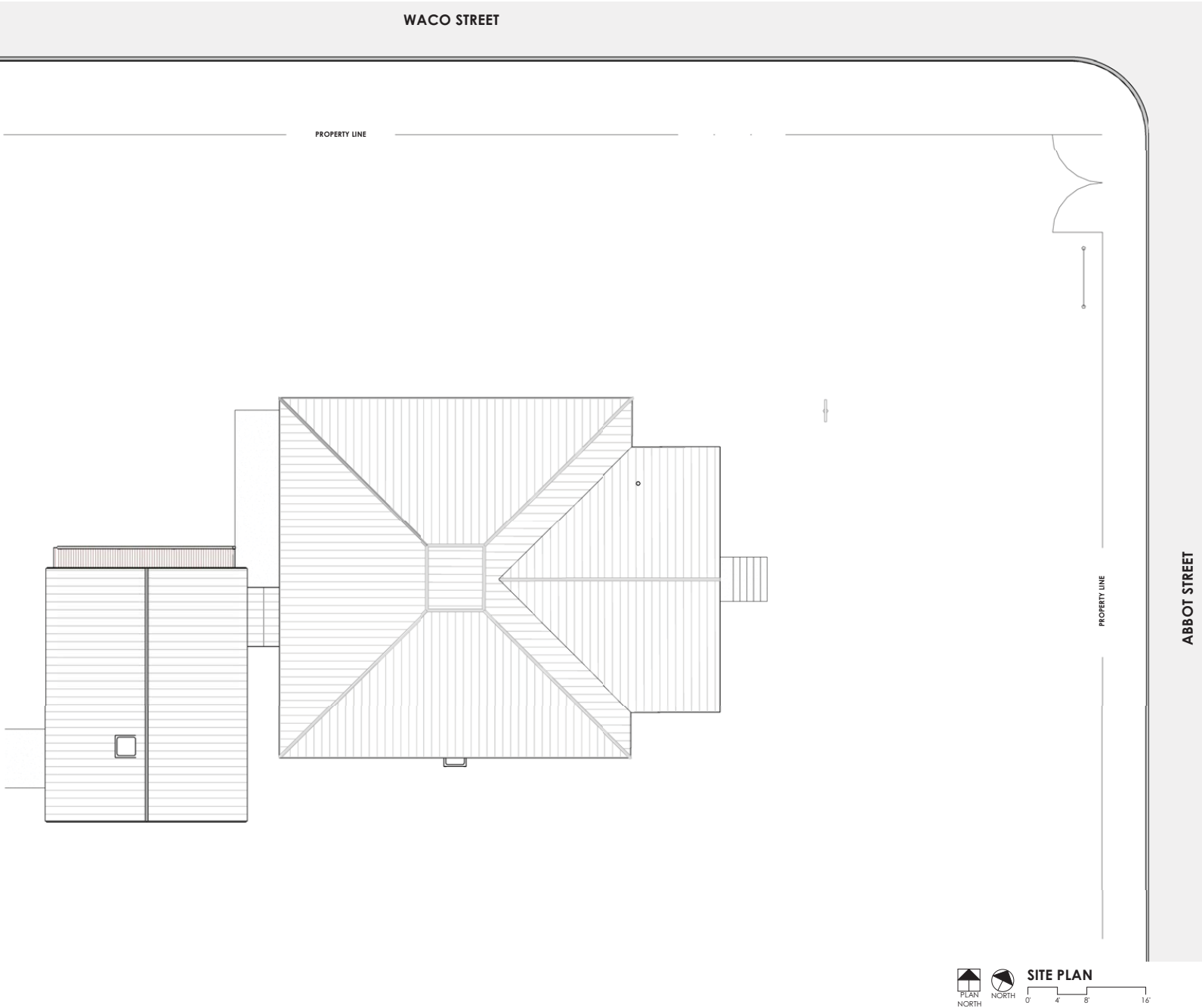


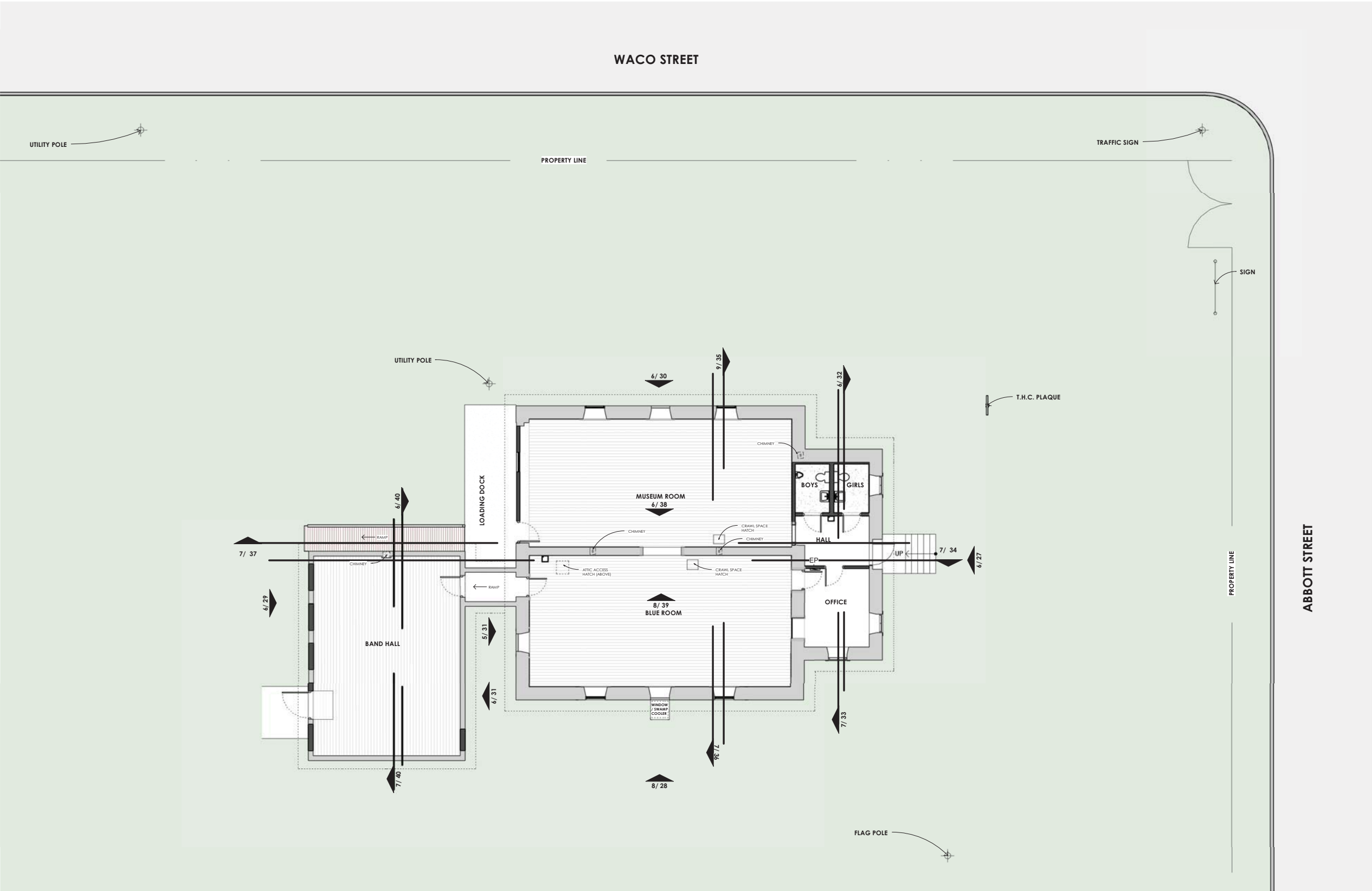


# Assessment of Current Conditions

The Blackwell School is in good to excellent condition. There are no apparent life-threatening issues and the building is stable. While there are obvious cracks and movement in the adobe walls, this is to be expected with the use of an earthen material and structural changes that have taken place. The electrical service is inadequate for current and future use as a museum to plan for lighting and exhibit requirements, a controlled environment and security. Accessibility into the building by way of the wood ramp on the west side of the building is adequate, but should be designed to meet the Texas Accessibility Standards in the future. The same is true for the restroom facilities. Toilet rooms have been inserted into the vestibule area but they do not comply with current code. The building lacks an adequate heating and cooling system for general use. A metal roof is installed where remnants of the wood shingle roof can be seen in the attic.

The three chimneys have been removed from the top of the structural walls and no longer project through the roof. The belfry no longer exists though the roof framing reveals its probable location. The fenestration has been changed, Original wood windows have been removed and aluminum windows have been installed at the classroom openings. A few of the window openings have been blocked. Wood windows, similar to the originals, have been installed in the vestibule portion of the building. Cement plaster, or “stucco,” has been applied to the exterior of the building. The west end adobe wall of the northern classroom no longer exists. Currently, a temporary wood stud wall fills the void. An enclosed passageway connects the schoolhouse to the band hall. It is badly deteriorated and is causing deterioration of both buildings. Modifications, alterations, and interventions have occurred over time. Changes in the electrical, mechanical, and plumbing service have damaged much of the original finishes and millwork. Holes have been cut, trim has been removed or “shaved” off and the foundation wall footing has been altered.





 **PLAN NORTH**  
 **NORTH**  
0' 4' 8' 16'  
**FIRST FLOOR PLAN**



**1** Rubble foundation wall with adobe blocking in-between support joists.



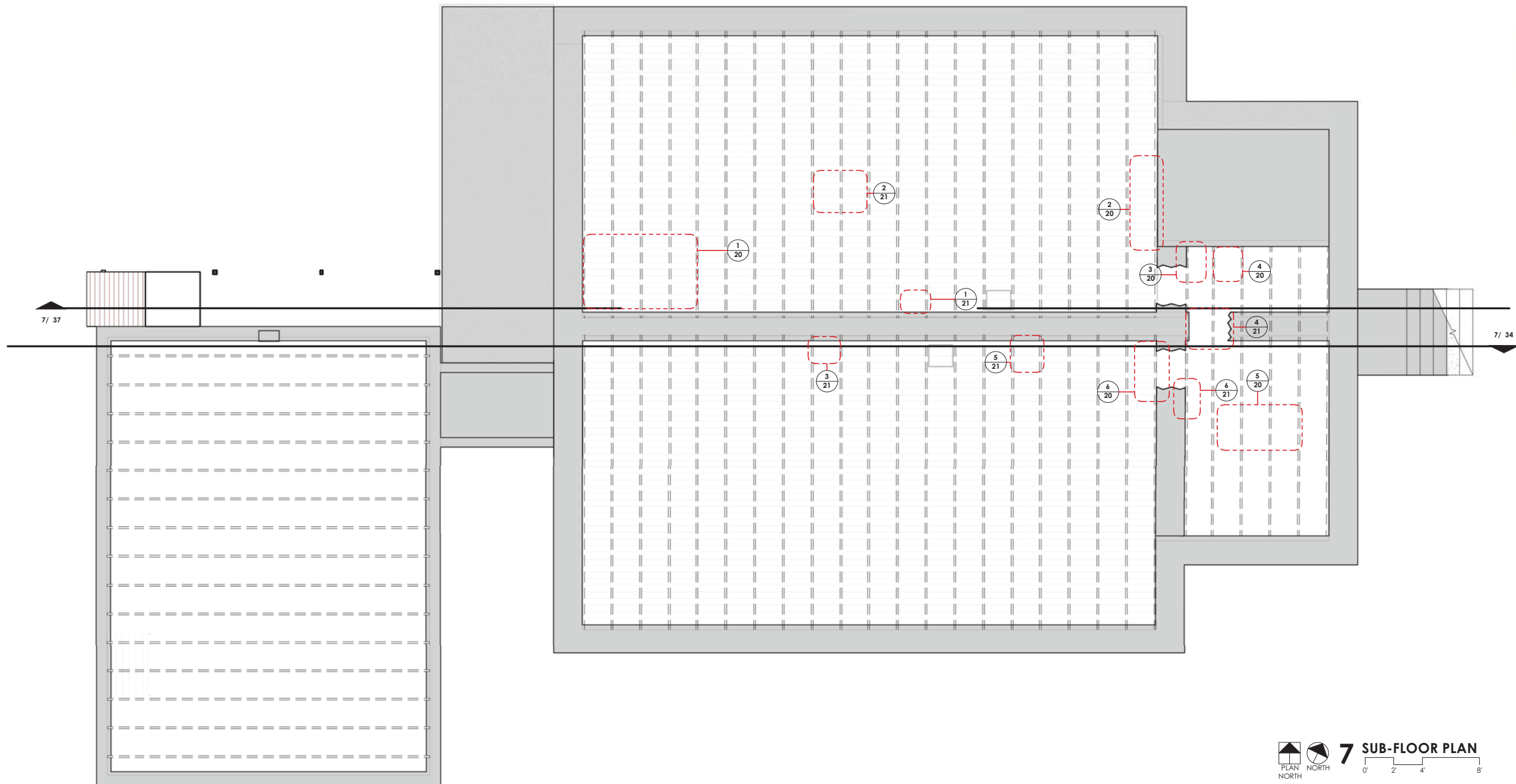
**2** Rubble wall foundation has been modified and partially removed in this location for installation of indoor restrooms.



**3** Random assortment of wood blocks support rotten floor above, floor joists in this area also deteriorated.



**4** A concrete slab has been poured on top of the demolished rubble foundation at restrooms.



**5** Secondary supports placed under the floor joists where the floor has been modified.



**6** Portion of the foundation wall has been removed for access between the classroom and vestibule area.





**1** Rubble fondation wall with a wooden ledger embeded below the floor joists.



**2** Secondary supports placed randomly under the floor joists.



**3** Adobe wall, wood ledger, and adobe brick units.



**4** The rubble foundation has been knocked out to provide access , plumbing and electrical lines. The wood ledger supporting the floor joist has been modified and is in a cantilever position which has caused some damage to the floor joist.



**5** Adobe wall assembly stops approximately 1'-0" below the finished floor above and is supported on stone wall footing.



**6** Secondary support has been placed under the floor joist which is positioned adjacent to the rubble foundation wall.



**1** Plywood transition at threshold between blue room and office.



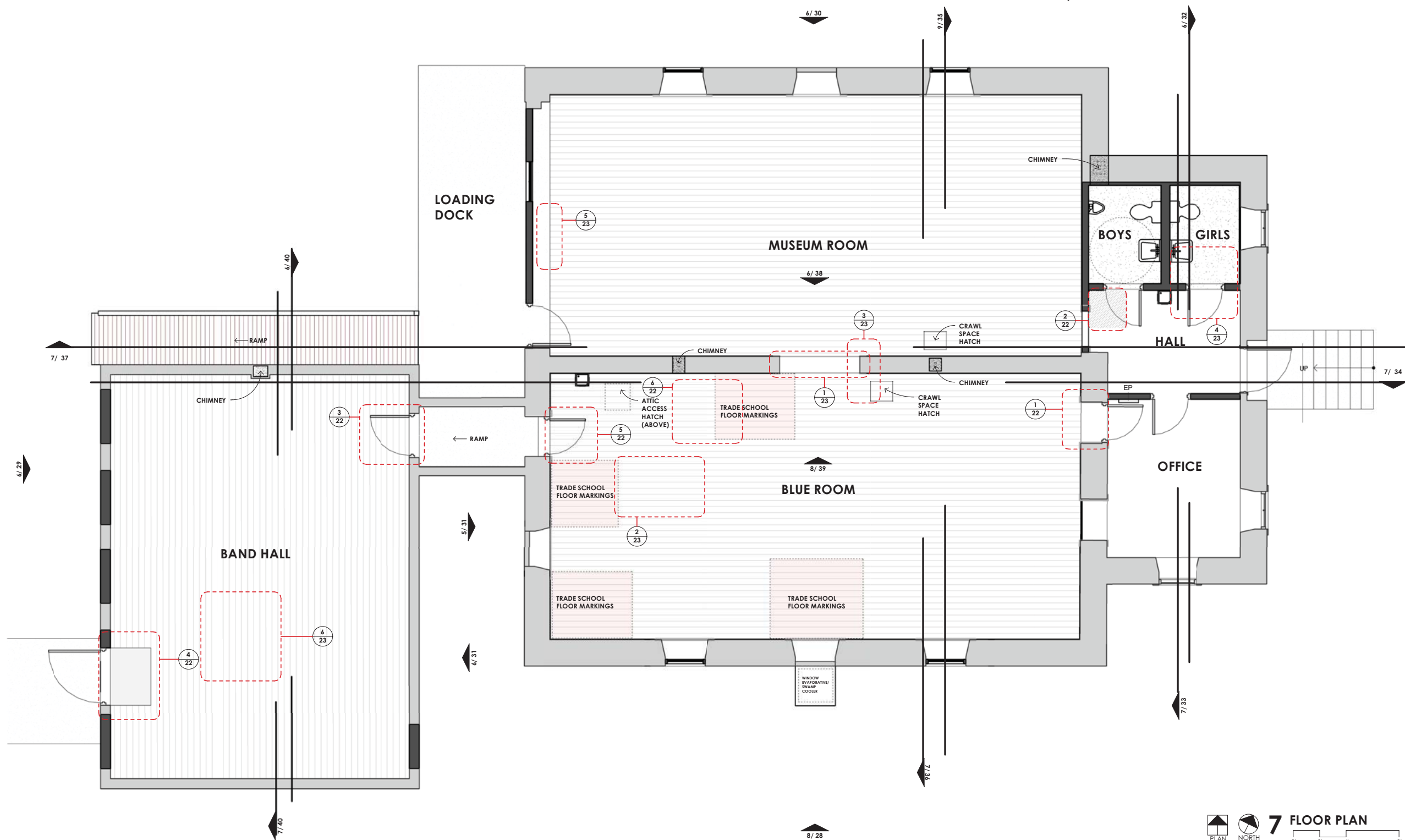
**2** Numerous layers of plywood have been installed where excessive water damage has occurred.



**3** A roof leak in the connecting hallway has caused deterioration and rotted wood where the concrete ramp connection slopes toward the band hall.



**4** Plywood partially covers deteriorated floor boards which appear to have been previously replaced.



**5** The original threshold has been removed and replaced with concrete as a transition to the concrete ramp to the band hall.



**6** Areas painted red on the floor appear to have indicated equipment locations when the building was used for trades training.





**1** There is a raised wood threshold at the opening between rooms.



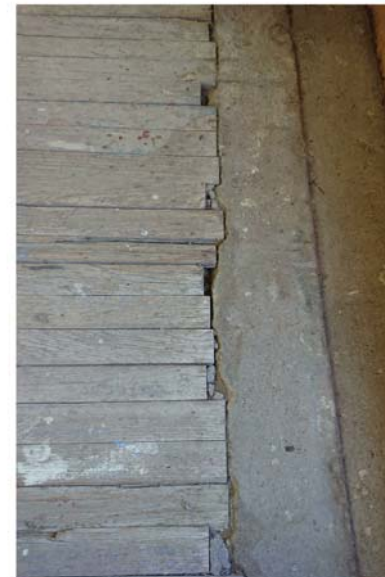
**2** Floor planks show signs of wear and some cupping but are in useable condition.



**3** crawl space access panels have been cut on both sides of the center adobe wall.



**4** The toilet room floors are concrete.



**5** Floor is cupped and buckled. Boards butt to concrete at loading dock where original adobe wall was removed.



**6** Floor planks in the band hall show some signs of wear and some cupping but are still in useable condition.





**1** Attic of the band hall is accessible through hatch. Ceiling is patched under abandoned swamp cooler.



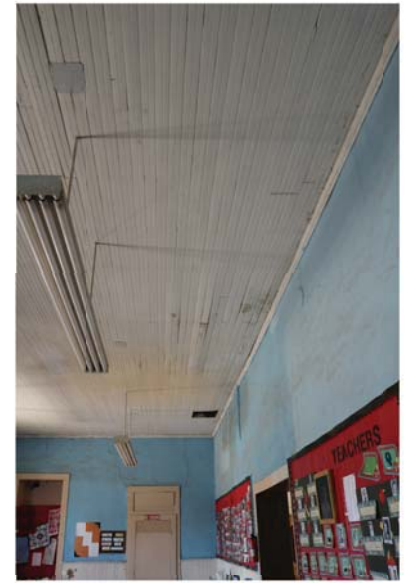
**2** The beaded board tongue-and-groove ceiling boards are in relatively good condition in this area.



**3** Various holes and patches appear in the ceiling. Retain all existing light fixtures in the museum room and blue room.



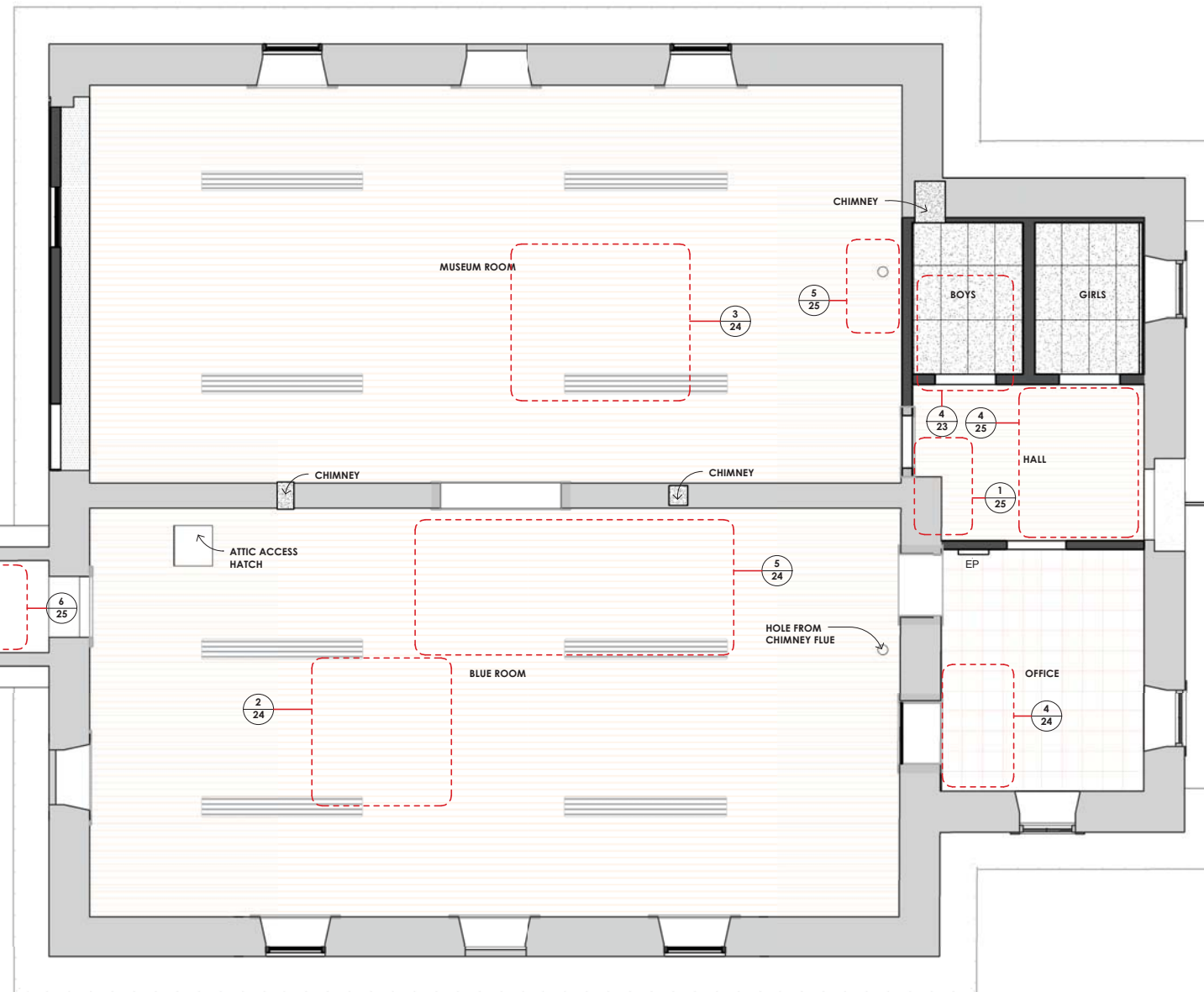
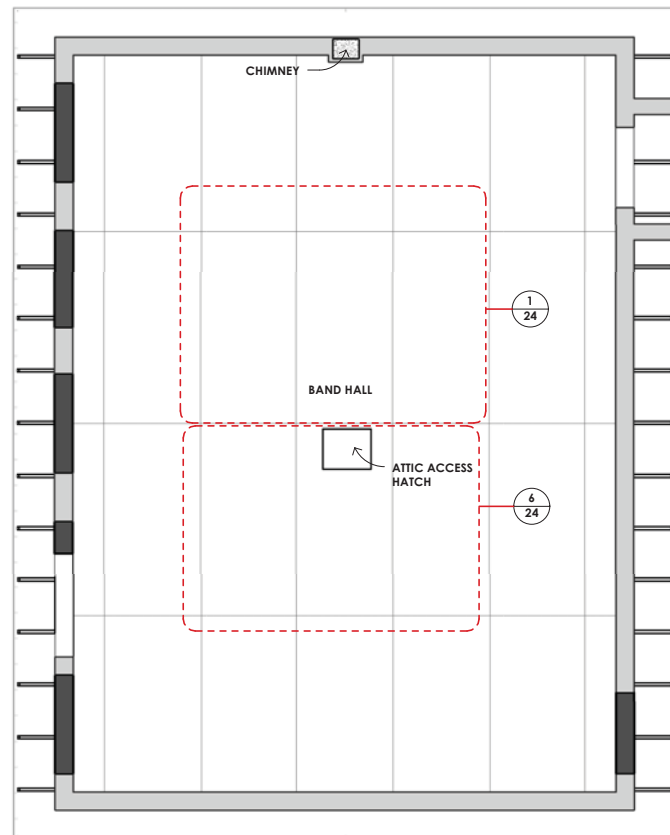
**4** Ceiling in office is non-original acoustical ceiling tiles.



**5** The beaded board tongue-and-groove ceiling boards are deteriorated, sagging, and appear to have detached from the structure. There is an attic access hatch near the center wall.



**6** Ghosts of previous room dividers appear at ceiling.





**1** The beaded board tongue-and-groove ceiling boards in the vestibule are patched in where abobe wall was removed.



**2** Ceiling In the band hall area has a series of 4' X 8' wood sheets with battens.



**3** Ceiling in the boys and girls restroom is non-original 16" x 32" acoustical tile panels.



**4** The beaded board tongue-and-groove ceiling boards in the vestibule area run East / West the full width of the interior space.



**5** Hole in the beaded board tongue-and-groove ceiling boards from a previously installed chimney flue.



**6** The wood ceiling in the hallway connection is deteriorated, shows signs of previous roof leaks, and appears to be dropping.





**1** Embedded into the top of the adobe wall is the remains of an old brick chimney that has been removed.



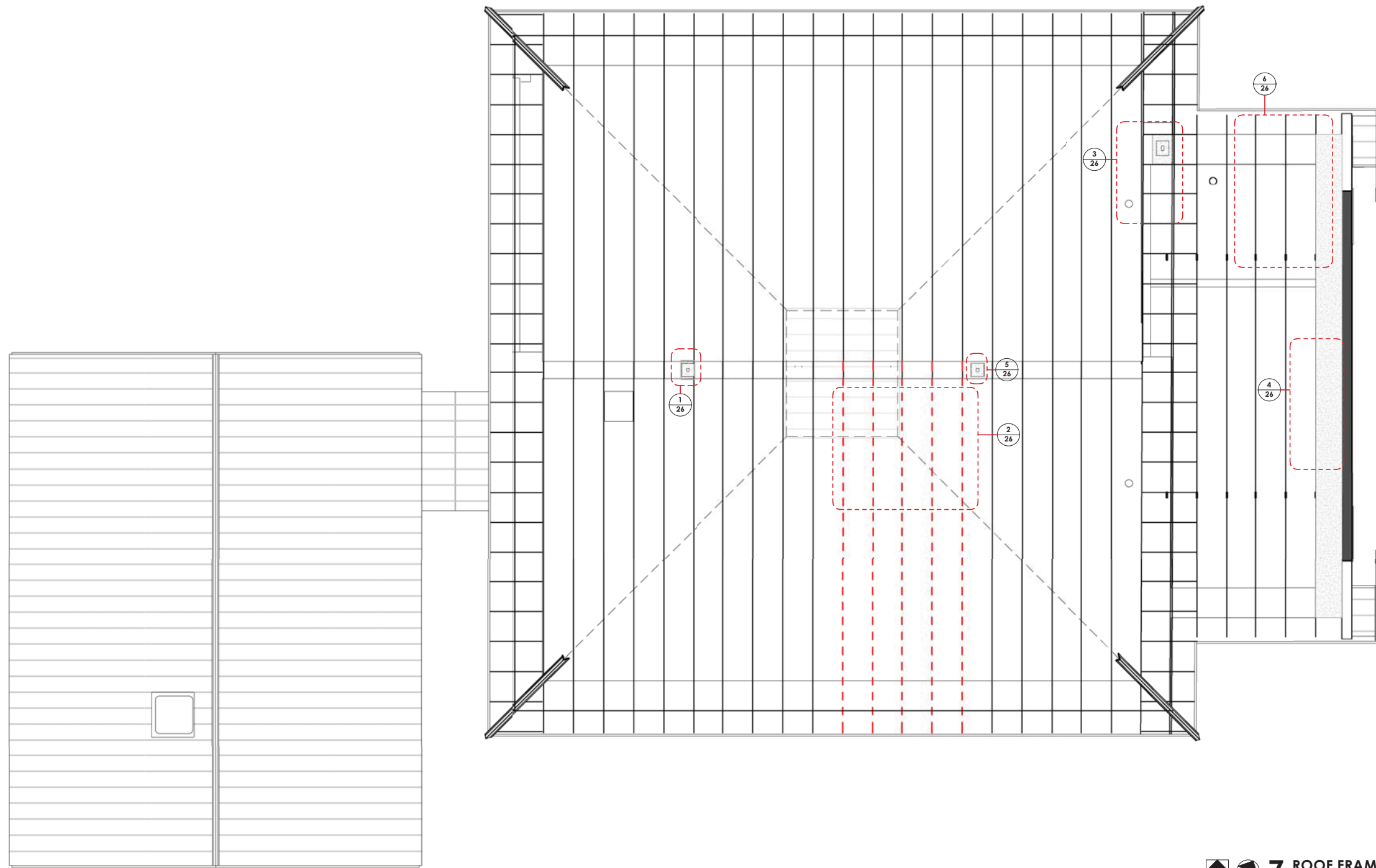
**2** The regular diagonal supports on the south side of the building are missing, lack of support has caused the roof deck to sag on portions of the roof.



**3** Remains of previously removed brick chimney are visible next to one of the roof attic access points.



**4** A reinforced concrete beam was installed along the top portion of the adobe wall on the east façade at the gable.



**5** Embedded into the top of the adobe wall is the remains of an old brick chimney that has been removed.



**6** Spaced sheathing used for wood shingles is covered with oriented strand board, presumably installed at time of metal roof.





**1** Closed soffit in relatively good condition though some pieces of trim are missing.



**2** Remnants of original wood shingles still exist at soffit returns



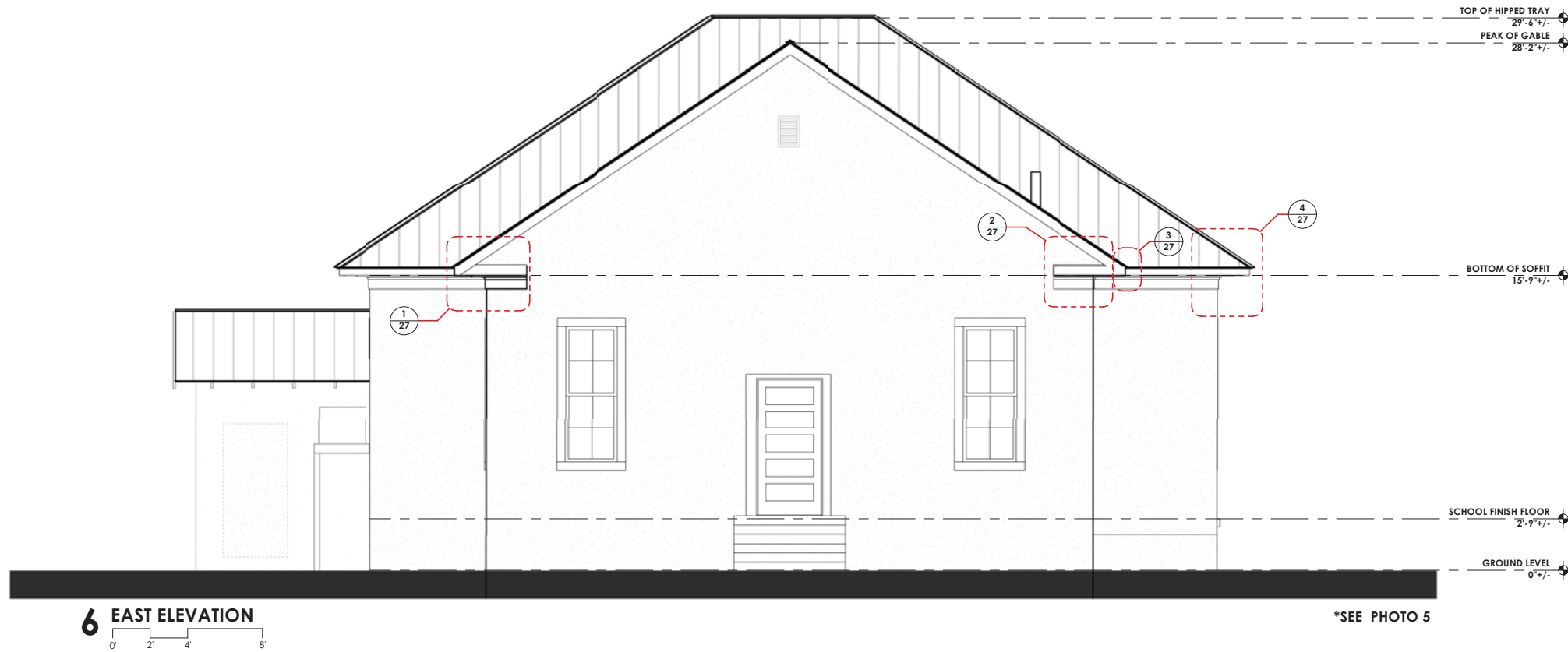
**3** Gap in fascia below valley flashing allows for bird and pest intrusion.



**4** Gap below ridge cap and deteriorated fascia allow for pest intrusion.



**5** East elevation has been modified from original arch entry.





**1** Ridge is out of true and sloped plane bows downward.



**2** Valley of hallway link is badly deteriorated and poorly constructed.



**3** Weathered fascia and soffit hole at roof line allows pest intrusion.



**4** Modifications to the original window openings are visible at the stucco patching.



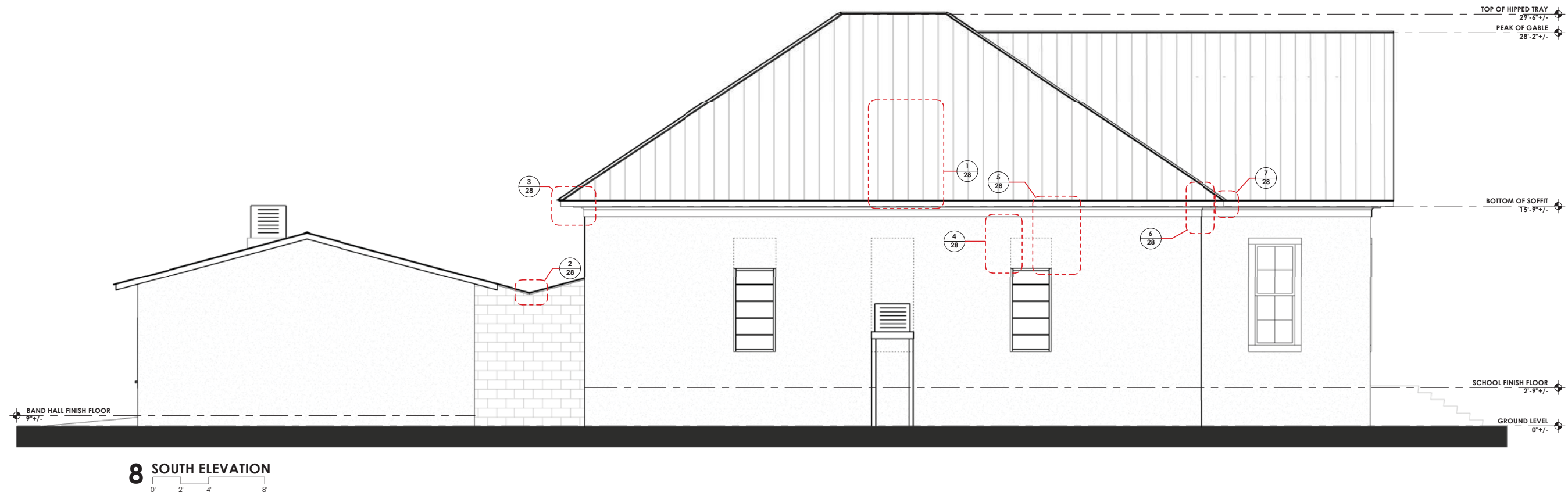
**5** Cracks extending upward from window are not unusual and not of major concern.



**6** Deteriorated wood fascia and trim.



**7** Gap below valley flashing allows for bird and pest intrusion.







**1** Deteriorated fascia and soffit, gap at drip edge.



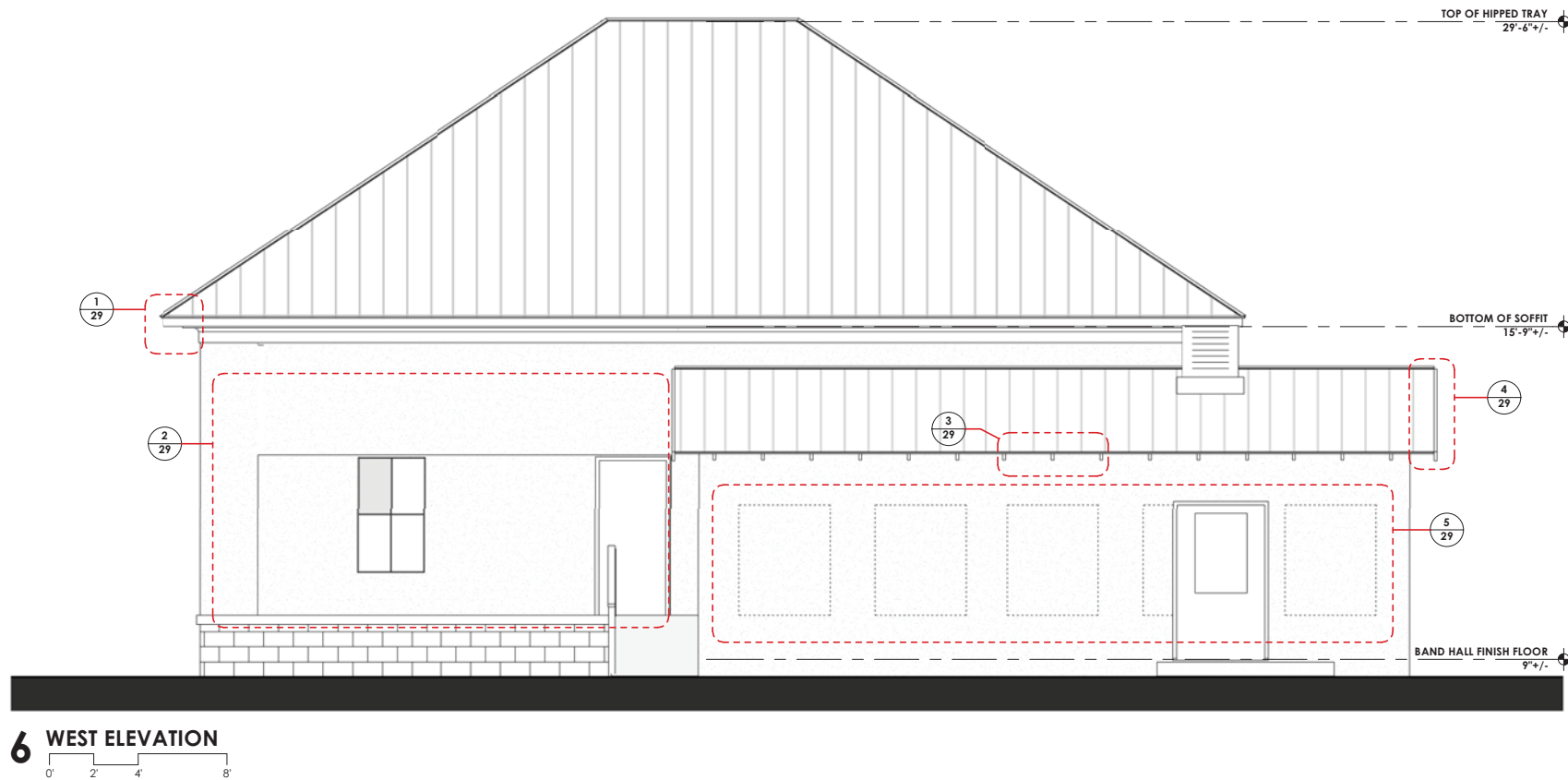
**2** Infill wall at loading dock shows many modifications.



**3** Rafter tails and roof deck are rotted.



**4** Soffit at rake of band hall is rotted.



**5** The "ghost" of five previously blocked windows is visible.





**1** Corner shows hard cement stucco edge and deteriorated fascia and trim.



**2** Fascia and soffit are deteriorated and detached from structure



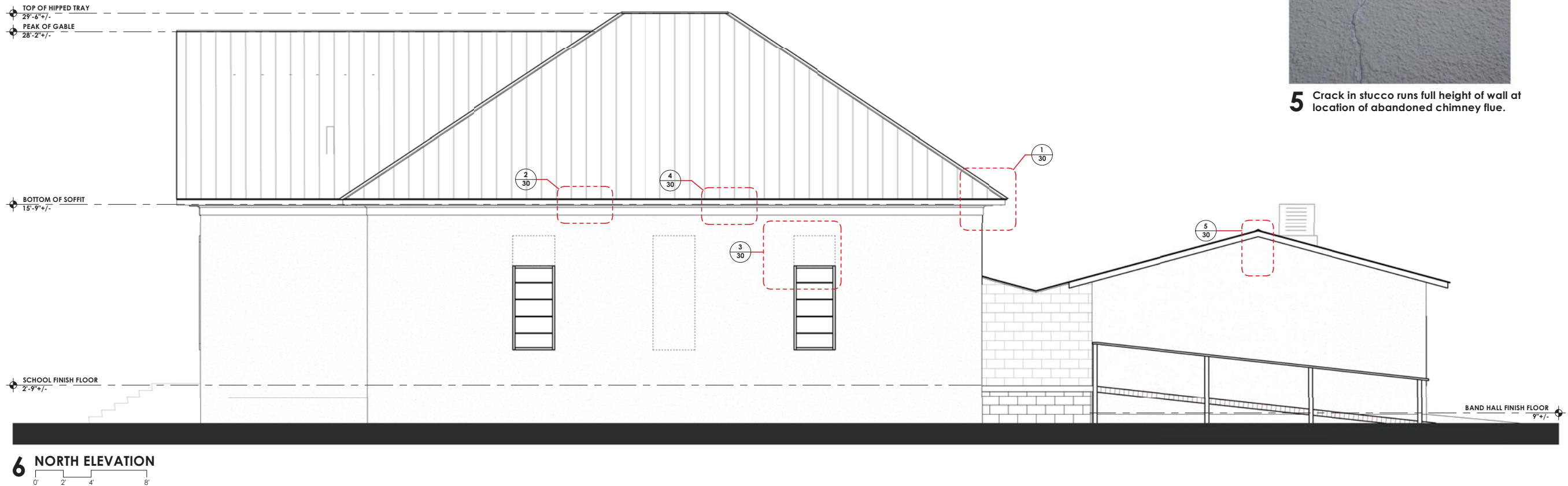
**3** Deteriorated wood, plaster cracks on surface and at modified windows.

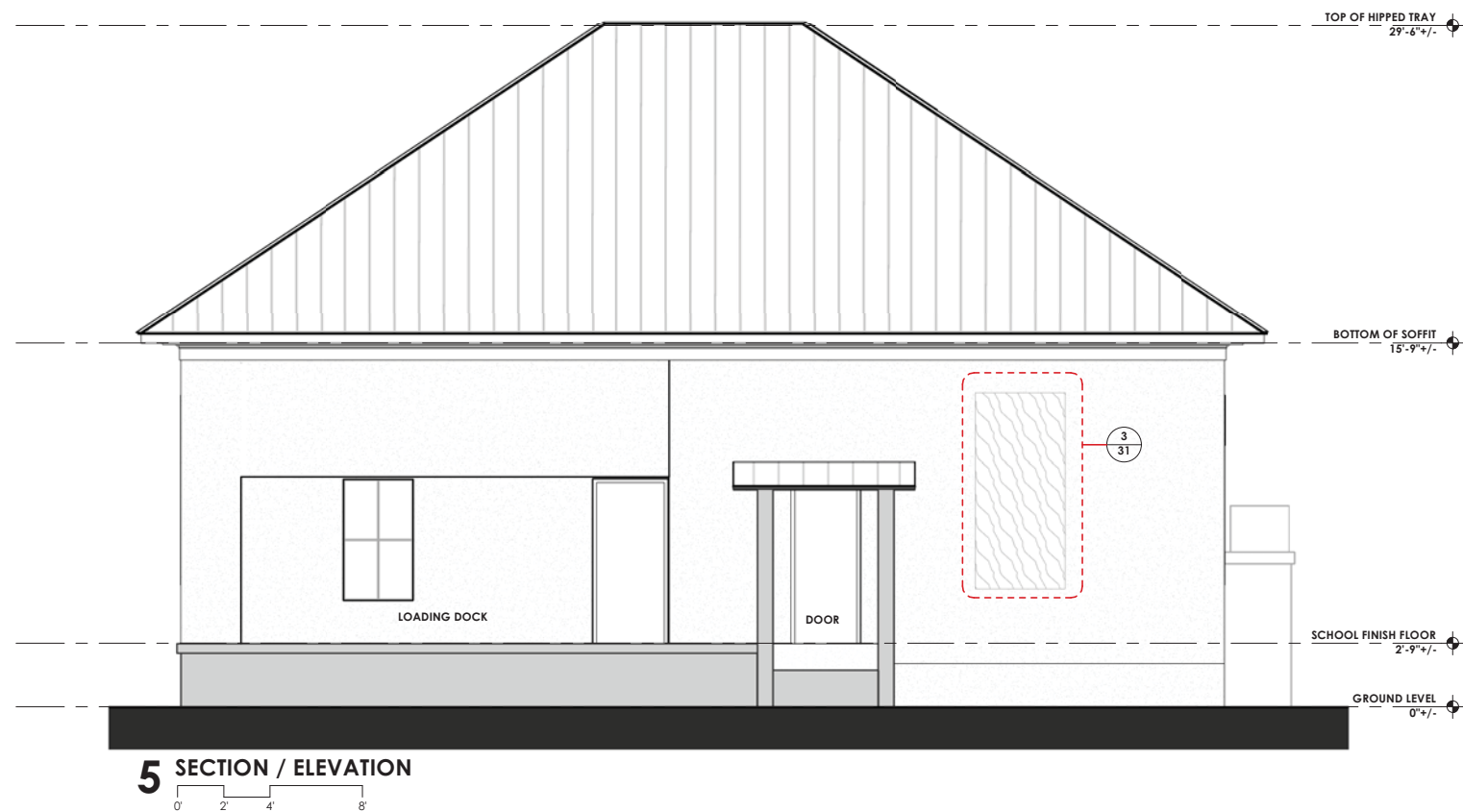


**4** Deteriorated wood at fascia, soffit, trim board and molding.



**5** Crack in stucco runs full height of wall at location of abandoned chimney flue.





**1** Rafter tails are deteriorated and exposed roof deck boards have been replaced.



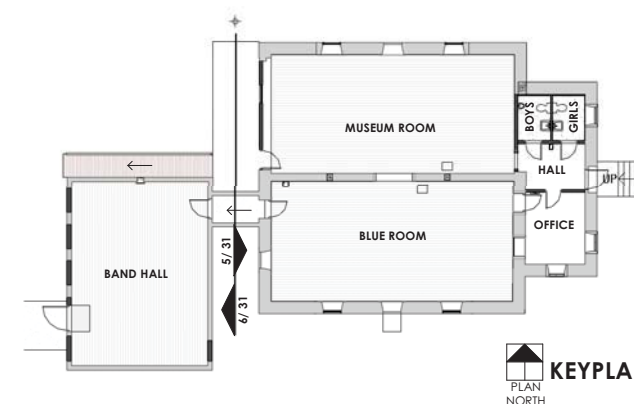
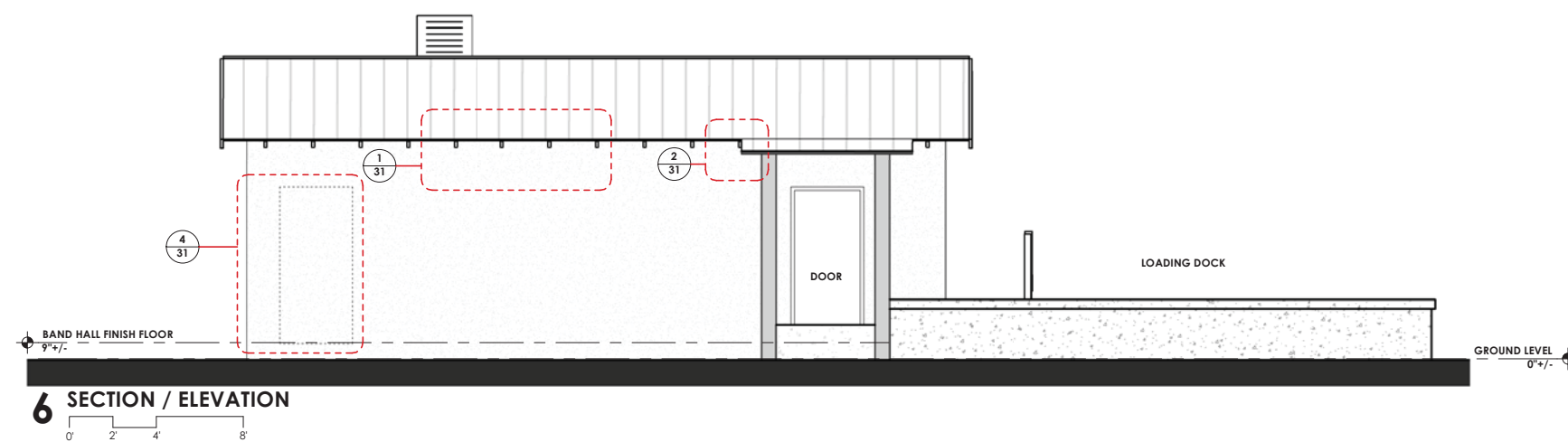
**2** Roof deck board in this area has been replaced.



**3** Plywood covers the window opening.



**4** Cracked Stucco reveals location of previously in-filled doorway.







**1** Vertical cracking at inside corner appears in structure along with numerous plaster repairs.



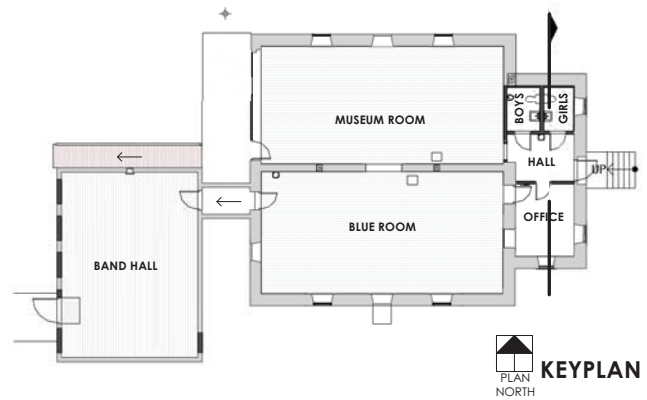
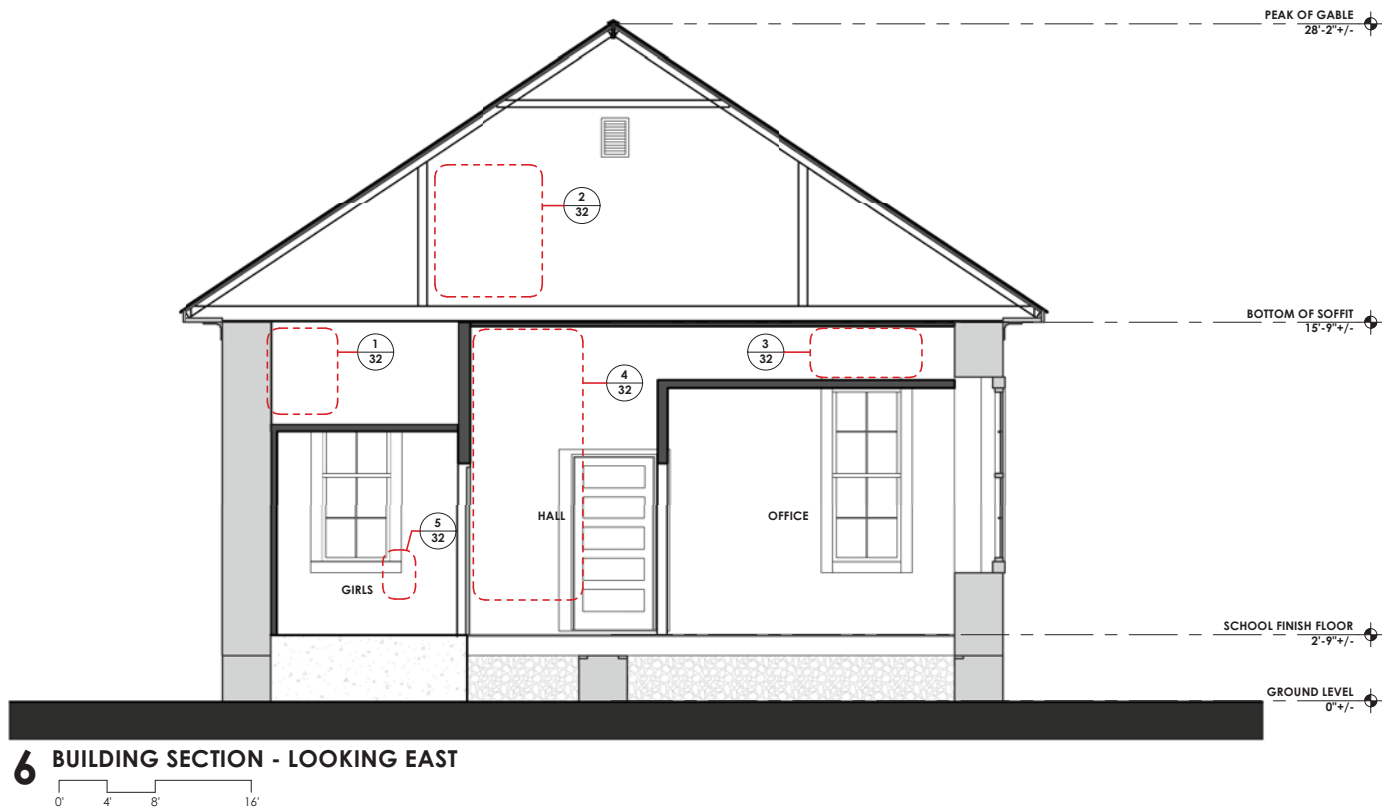
**2** Wood structure at interior face of gable.



**3** Numerous surface cracks at inside corner reveal delamination from wall and surface plaster is out of plane. Cracks are not visible below office ceiling due to installation of paneling on lower portion of wall.



**4** Vertical crack runs full height of wall and corresponds with location of previous reconstruction of adobe wall. Surface boring was conducted at two locations to locate and verify concrete lintel. Stucco on expanded metal lath and plaster was verified.



**5** Vertical crack below window shows break in cement plaster which is expected at an opening.





**1** Water leak has caused floor to rot as well as sole plate and studs. Metal lath is rusted.



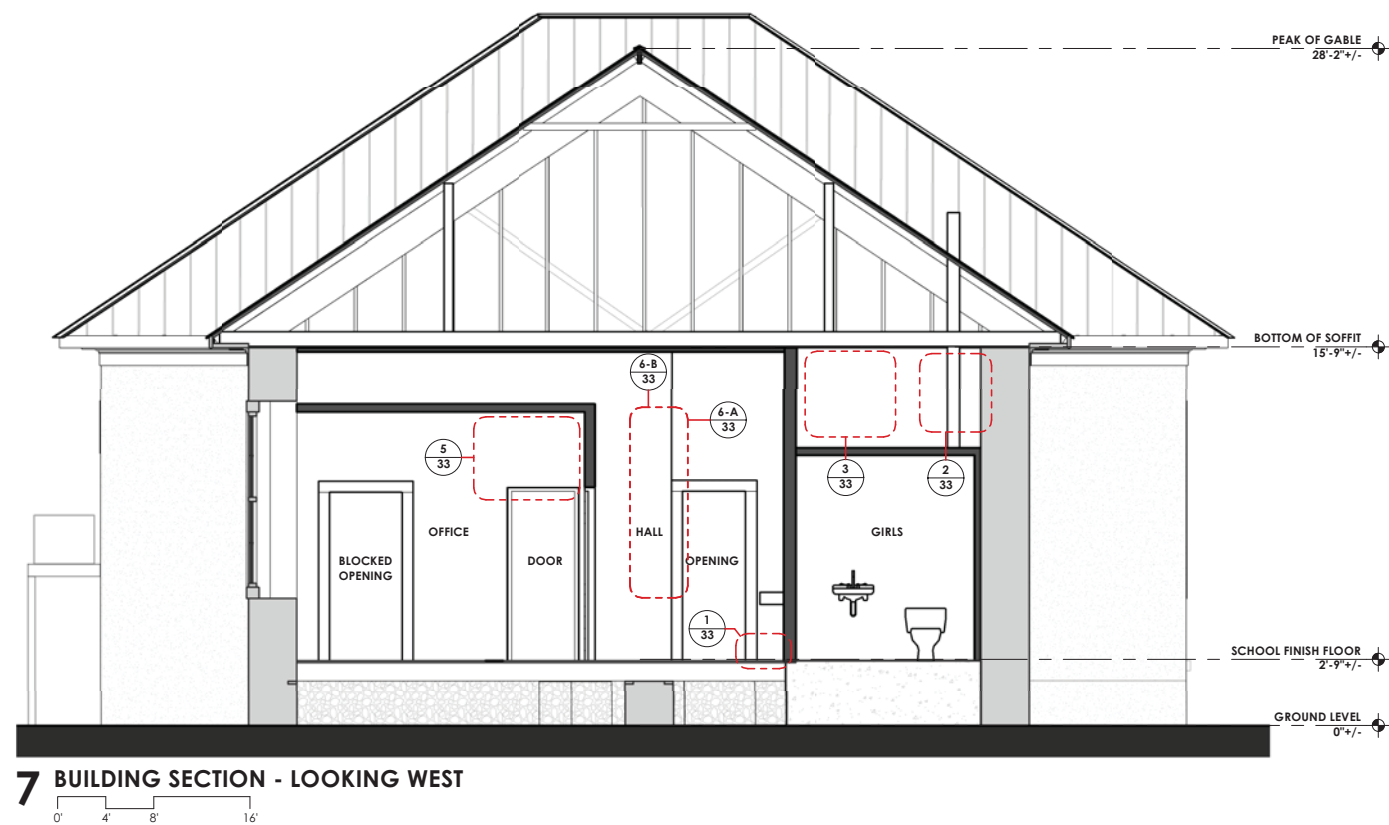
**2** Brick chimney for flu was constructed at top of adobe wall which was dismantled and replaced with stud wall. Chimney no longer penetrates roof.



**3** Non-original wood stud wall with expanded metal lath and cement plaster comprises the west wall of the boys restroom.



**4** concrete lintel above blocked opening between office / storage area and south classroom.



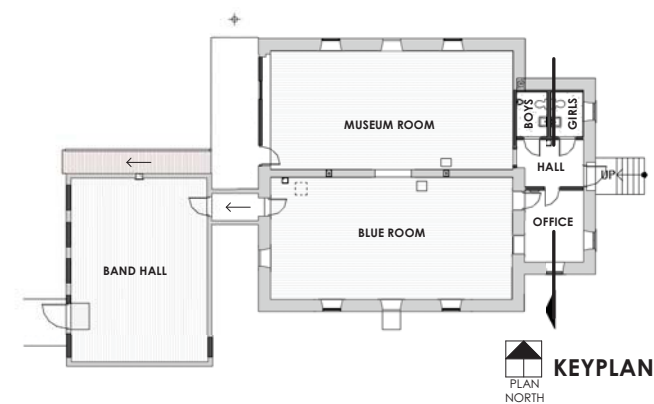
**5** Wood veneer paneling covers original transom which is still intact and can be seen from other side.



**6-A** This corner was created when the adobe wall was removed for the construction of the stud wall. Plaster was badly cracked and loose. Plaster was not installed on metal lath on this wall.



**6-B** Loose plaster was determined to be a safety concern and was taken down.





**1** South wall above dropped ceiling at office area. Wall shows numerous cracks not seen below the ceiling due to the installation of paneling on lower portion of wall.



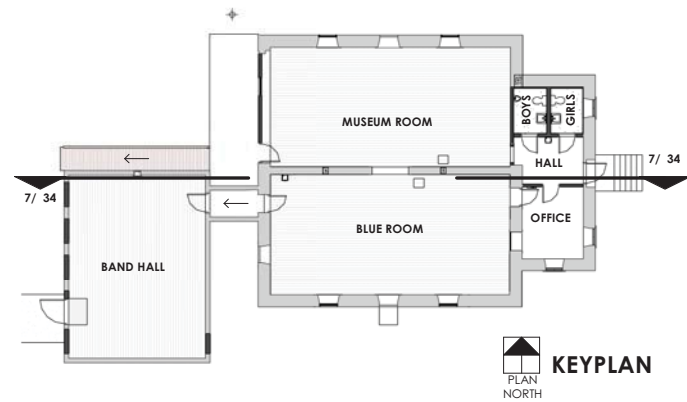
**2** Structural members were pulled apart where structure changes direction.



**3** Cracking above window at the corners is common where the window creates a natural weakness in the structure.



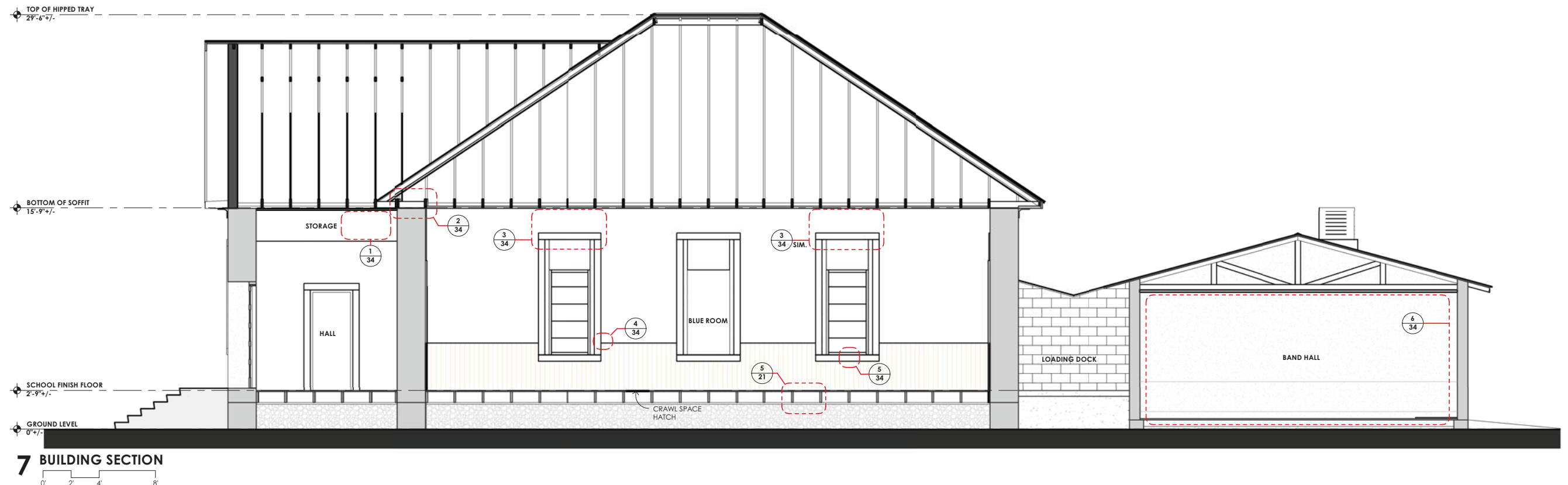
**4** The cap and molding of the beaded board wainscot wraps the casing and is still visible in some areas.



**5** The deep window sill, or stool, is rounded and sits above the window apron. The stool has been cut for an unknown reason.



**6** Another line indicated a wood base board was previously installed in the band hall.







**1** Overall view looking east in museum room shows the vertical crack where two structural systems intersect.



**2** overall view looking east in blue room. Door to the right may not be original.



**3** Previous attempt to tie stud wall to adobe wall where original north/south wall was removed. The wainscot along this wall has been removed and is indicated by a difference in paint color.



**4** Metal lath and cement plaster have failed to tie the stud wall to the adobe where original wall was removed. Wood trim at ceiling no longer exists along this wall.



**5** Portion of the foundation wall has been removed for access between the classroom and vestibule area.



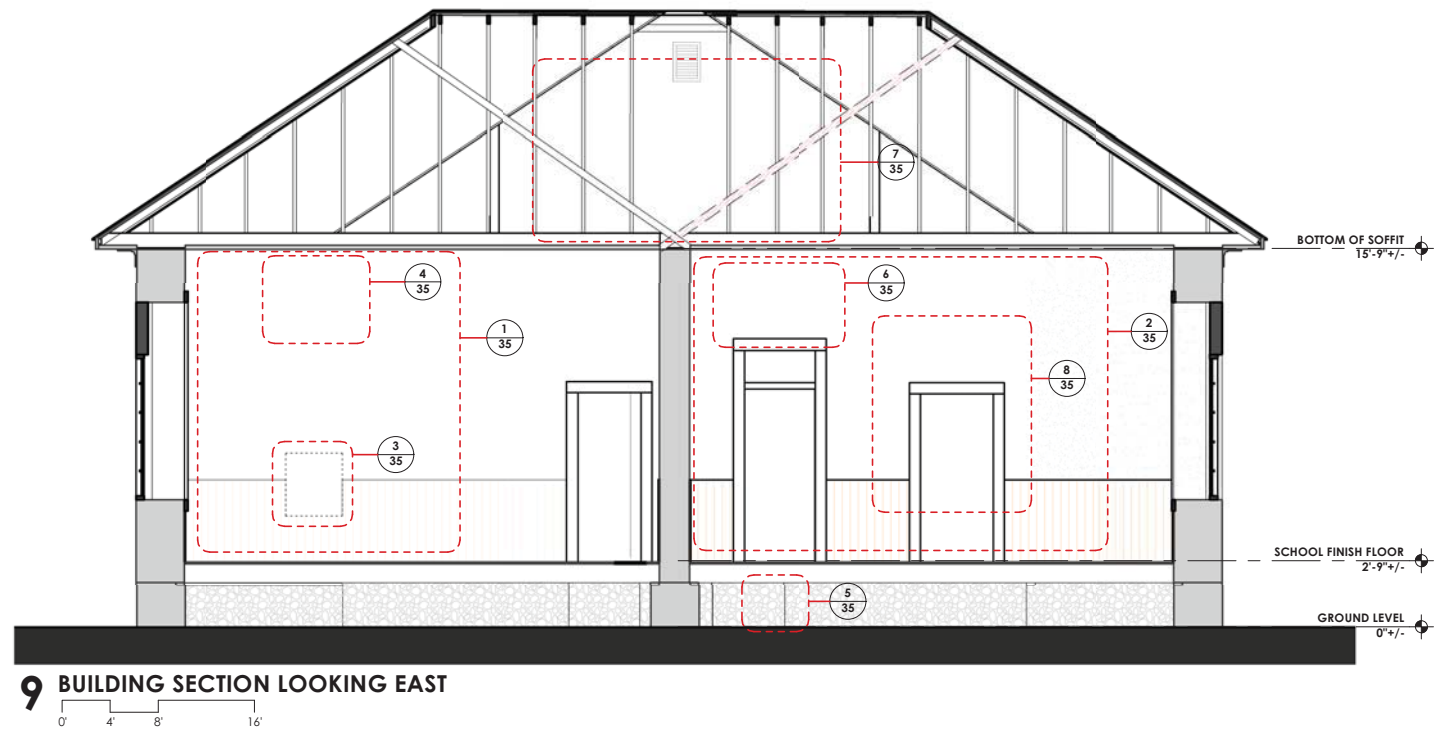
**6** Numerous cracks and patched plaster above the door indicates movement has taken place in this wall. The direction of the crack at the upper right corner of the door indicates the center wall may have moved north after the removal of the original wall at the boys restroom.



**7** Framing members in attic are missing. This area corresponds with the bow seen in the roof from the exterior.



**8** The wainscot cap remains intact to the left side of blocked doorway but has been crudely removed to the right side of the door.







**1** Overall view looking west. window opening is covered by plywood on the exterior and the transom at door is blocked.



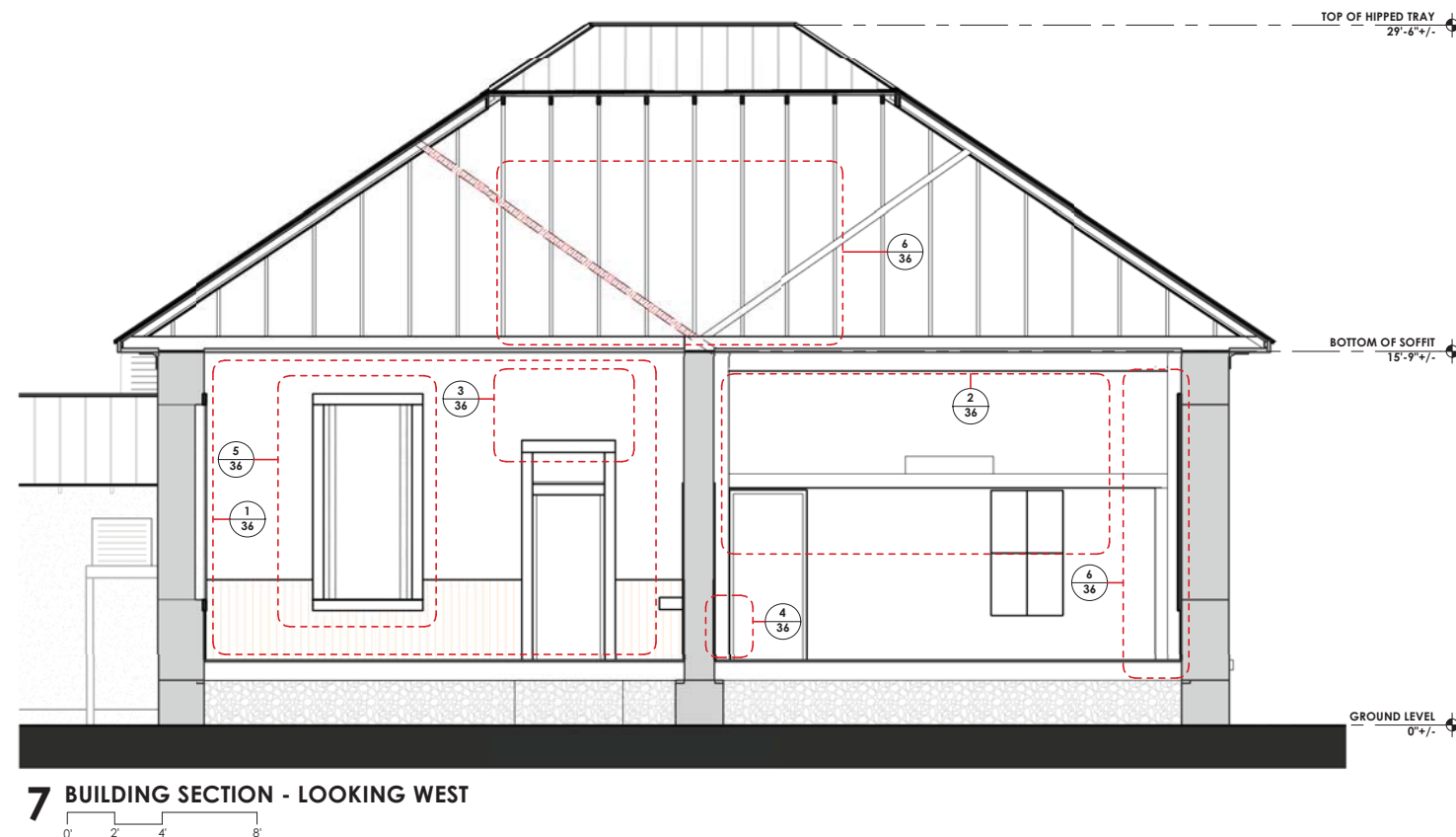
**2** Infill wall at loading dock where original adobe wall was removed and is in poor condition.



**3** Cracks appear on both sides of door assembly transom is blocked at connection to band hall beyond.



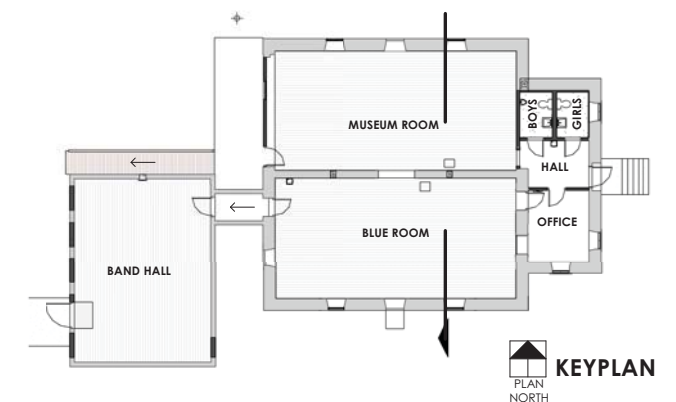
**4** Hose bib inside building is assumed to be part of trade school period. Wood has rotted due to the unusual location of the faucet.



**5** Window looks to band room and is blocked.



**6** Concrete columns support the roof structure above, but do not bond with the adobe construction.





**1** Wall above window shows signs of moisture and numerous plaster repairs. An opening has been cut in the ceiling and there is a ghost of a previously installed cross wall on the ceiling.



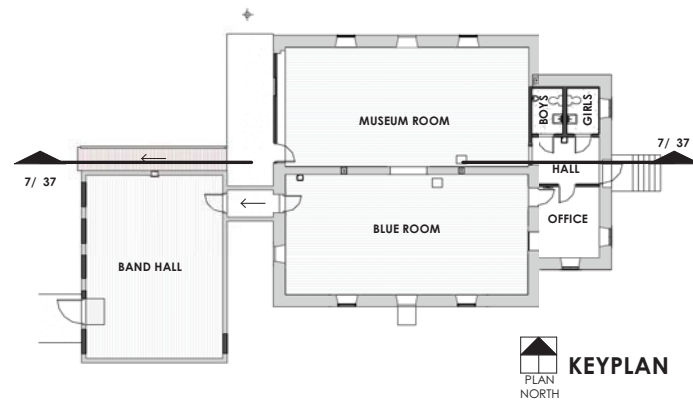
**2** Various layers of plaster have fallen off revealing the adobe beneath.



**3** Cracks appear where repairs with different material content are placed adjacent to each other; There is no bond.



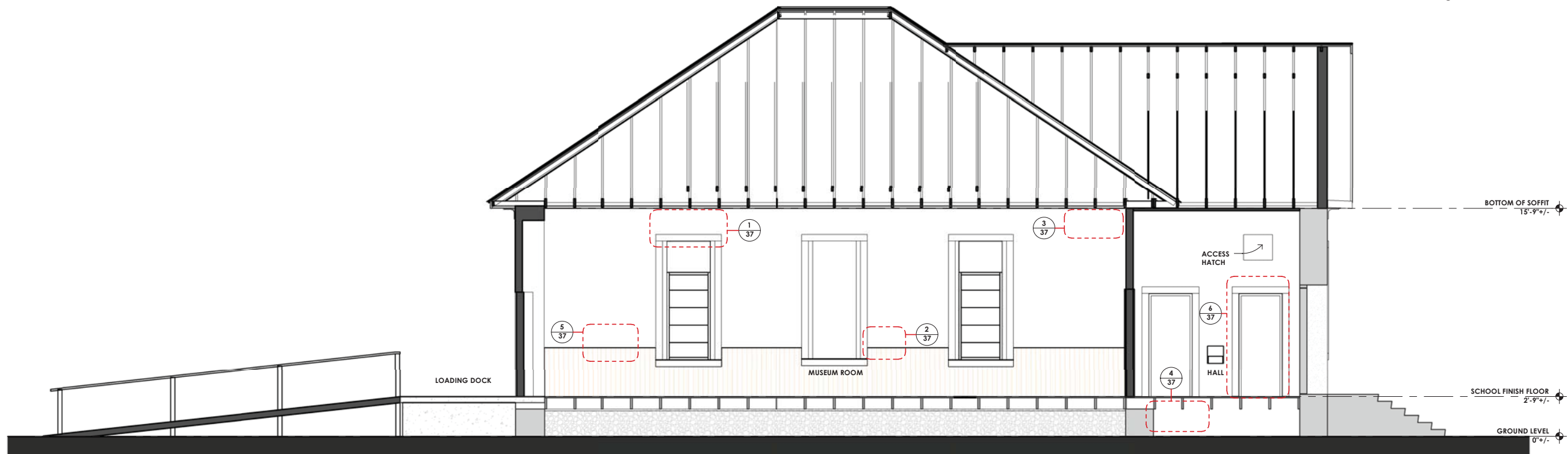
**4** Rubble foundation wall has been knocked away for plumbing access. Wood joists are not fully supported.



**5** Repairs are evident above the wainscot where the cap has been chiseled off. The missing electrical outlet reveals a previous layer of aqua paint.

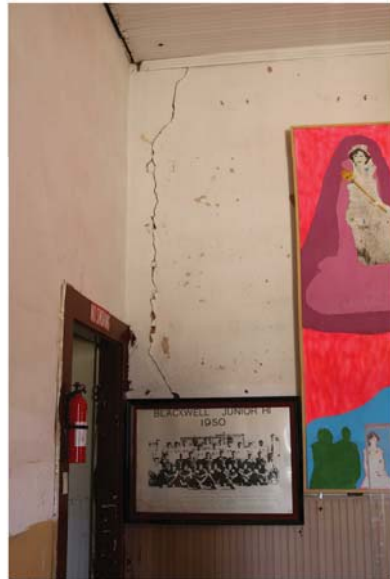


**6** the five-panel wood door has been cut along the bottom rail.



**7** BUILDING SECTION - LOOKING NORTH





**1** Vertical crack in plaster surface needs further investigation of structural movement. Plaster is delaminated and out of plane.



**2** Opening between classrooms shows evidence that hinges and doors were previously installed. Opening may not be original.



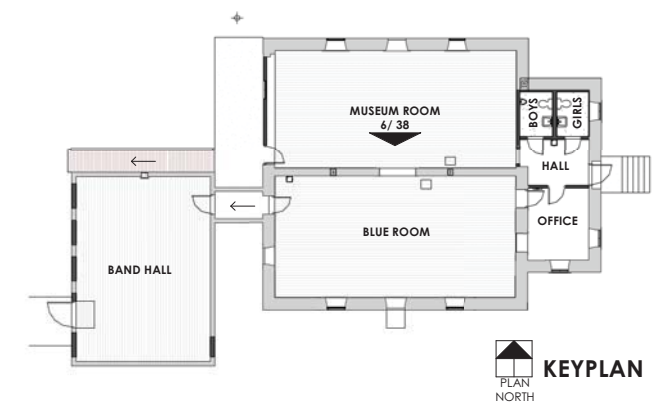
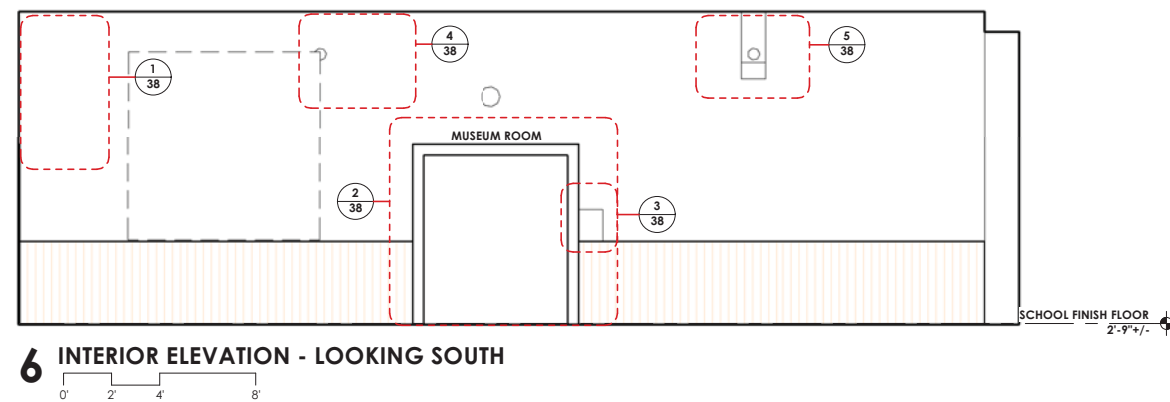
**3** A previous investigation by Cornerstones Community Partnerships, 2008, reveals layers of construction.



**4** Metal plate covers opening for flue pipe to chimney which has been dismantled.



**5** The bulge in the wall defines the location of the brick chimney constructed in the adobe wall and now dismantled at top of wall. Borings were done to verify location of brick to adobe construction.





**1** Water fountain appears to have been a source for visible moisture damage. Cap of wainscot has been chiseled off.



**2** Brick chimney bulges where it sits within the adobe wall. Flue is capped by metal plate.



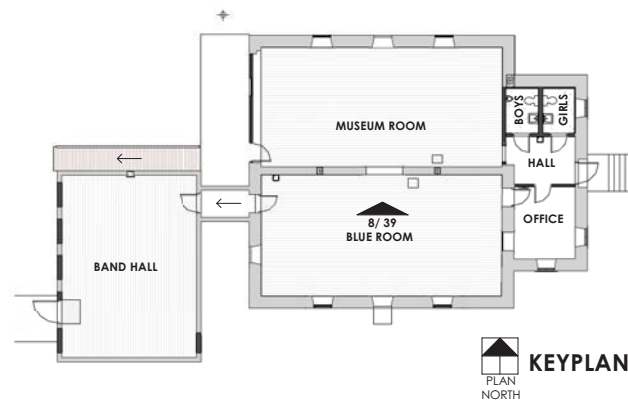
**3** Breaker box may date to period of trade school. Cap of wainscot has been chiseled off. Repair at upper left corner of doorway should be investigated.



**4** Crack at intersection of walls and plaster which is out of plane indicate movement in the structure.



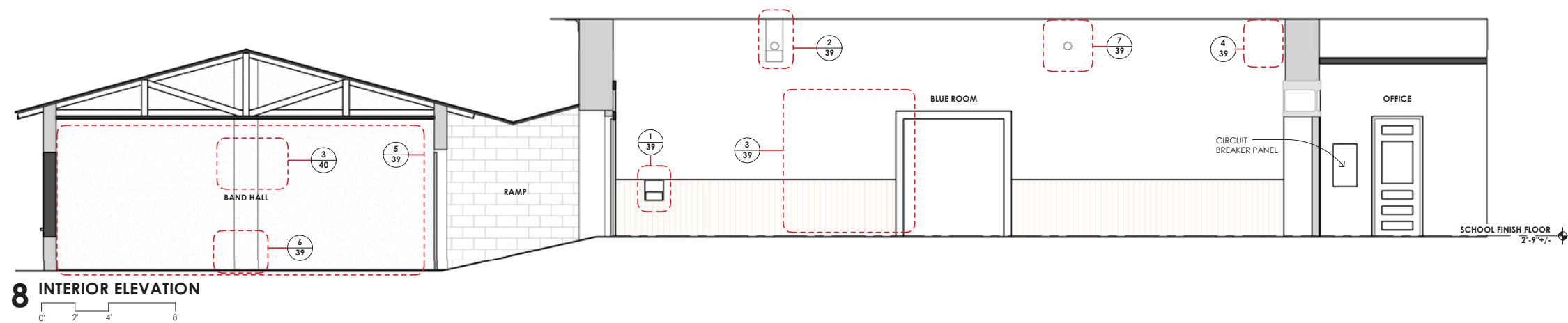
**5** band hall interior elevation looking north. A wood nailer is seen at 33" above the floor for a possible chair rail.



**6** Brick chimney abuts structural clay tile wall. a wood nailer indicated a wood baseboard was previously installed.



**7** Metal plate caps opening for flue.







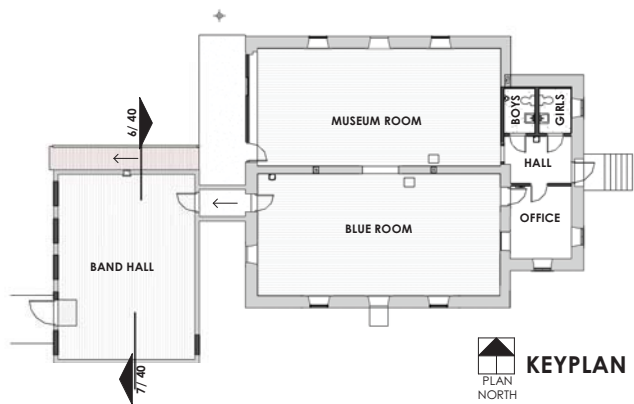
**1** Doorway at ramp to main building. A new mini-split HVAC system has been installed on this wall.



**2** View of the inside of the band hall looking east where there is no evidence of the opening that is visible from the outside.



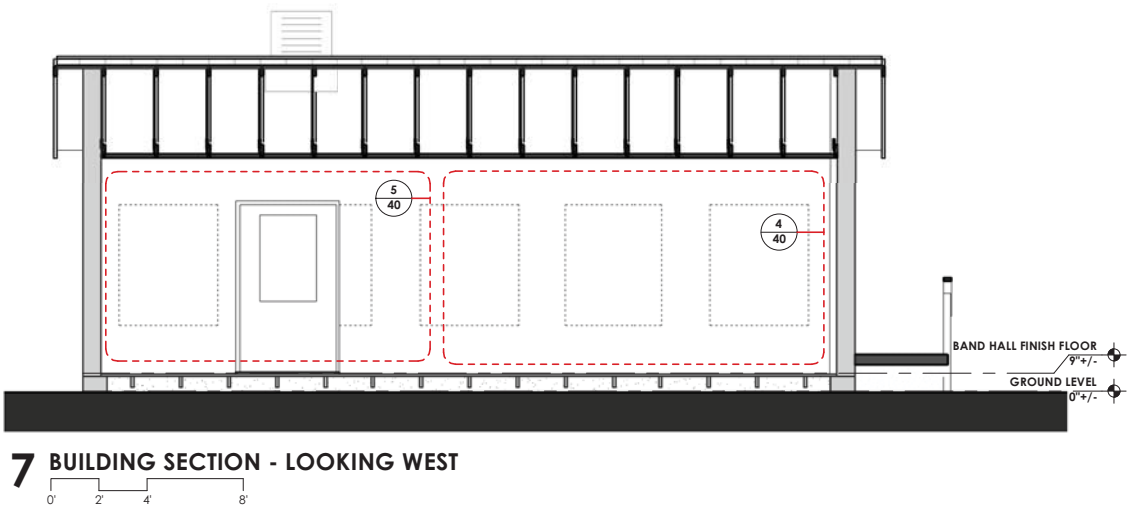
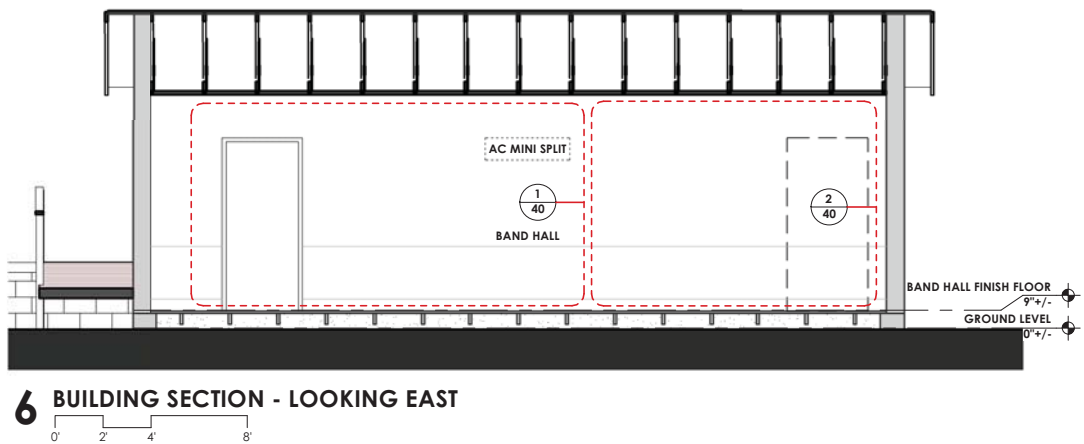
**3** A brick chimney projects from face of clay tile wall.



**4** Five windows were previously blocked. The ghost of the openings is visible.



**5** Non-original hollow metal door installed near the location of previous window.



# Review and Recommendations

The buildings are solid with good foundations. The only substantial water damage visible inside the building is related to modifications to the building over time. The floor is deteriorated directly outside the boy's restroom, at the entryways in the band room, and the connecting link between buildings. The structural members of the floor, ceiling and roof are in good condition except at water-damaged areas. Additional support should be installed in areas where structural members were previously removed, are deteriorated, or are no longer performing as intended.



**Relocate electrical panel.**

Evaluate the current electrical service and make necessary upgrades to include the need for the future use and new mechanical equipment. Relocate the electrical panel in order to remove the non-original wall and ceiling of the office. Consider engaging a structural engineer, well versed in adobe construction, to determine the stability of the “free standing” adobe walls where walls have been removed. The east and west end walls of the northern classroom should be reconstructed with adobe of the same size and wall thickness and should physically tie in with the adjacent walls of the building. Reconstructing the east wall will alter the restroom configuration. Since the preservation philosophy includes rehabilitation, consideration should be given to the continued operation of one restroom in the current location. However, there is only room to accommodate one single, unisex, ADA compliant restroom. Additional facilities should be constructed elsewhere on the site.

While “swamp coolers” are common to the climate in Marfa and surrounding areas, a new heating, ventilating and air conditioning system should be installed. A more uniform control of humidity and temperature will be necessary for a future museum collection and will improve the visitor experience.

It is highly likely that the early paint used on the wood surfaces of the building contains lead and it is possible that the ceiling tile in the restrooms and office contain

asbestos. Some of the flooring in the vestibule should also be tested for asbestos. All hazardous materials should be identified and addressed appropriately.

Removing the cement, based stucco from the exterior will be a large and important undertaking for the life of the building. Removal should also coincide with adobe repair and the installation of an appropriate mud and lime, based plaster and stone lath (flat stones set in mortar joints). Traditional earthen materials should be used in the adobe, mortar, and plaster. A chemical analysis may be necessary to determine the original content of the plaster and wash.

Windows are a character-defining feature. Installation of new wood windows in the main school building should be coordinated with the plasterwork to avoid damaging the plaster if windows are replaced at a later date. Window openings on the west wall in the band building, as well as the doorway on the east façade, should be reconstructed but not be used as a primary entrance. The door on the west elevation will serve as a primary entrance to the band hall building. The structure and placement pattern should be adjusted to accommodate the reinstallation of windows as well as a door in close proximity to the existing. It is unknown at this time if the windows in the band hall were wood or another material. Given the structural clay tile construction, steel windows may have been utilized.



**Remove existing swamp cooler, restore window opening.**



Further research should be completed to determine the original material if possible. All wood surfaces on the interior of the building are in relatively good condition though some wood trim has been damaged or removed entirely. Holes should be repaired, loose pieces should be reattached and deteriorated wood should be replaced. All wood surfaces should be prepped and repainted. Care should be taken not to over sand materials, especially floor and ceiling. Doing so may cause irreversible damage, The application of linseed oil will help to bring life back to the severely dry wood. Several layers and colors of paint are visible. Paint analysis, or at a minimum paint scraping, should be completed to determine the original color palatte.

All exterior wood shows signs of weathering and deterioration. Birds and possibly vermin have damaged many areas, especially at corners. Evaluation of each piece should be completed to determine what pieces can be repaired and what should be replaced if beyond repair. Reattach loose pieces as needed and install blocking if the substrate is not useable. Prepare all new and existing wood and repaint. Again, paint analysis will determine the appropriate color.

Long-range consideration should be given to removing the existing metal roofing followed by the installation of cut wood shingles per original construction. An appropriate low-slope roofing material should be installed on the flat plate portion of the roof. The original spaced sheathing used for wood shingles has been covered with a secondary OSB panel sheathing which could act at the nailing base for the new roofing material. Installation of wood shingles would return the building to its original appearance. It would be prudent to evaluate the roof structure and reinstall missing support to bring the roof to a plumb and true condition, if possible, prior to the installation of the new roofing material.

The chimneys are no longer functional or necessary but provide a better

interpretation and understanding of the time period in which the building was built. This is true of the belfry as well. While reconstruction of the chimneys and belfry are not required from a functional standpoint, they represent a significant memory of the Blackwell School. This is true of the archway at the east entrance. The arch no longer exists but the importance and memory of its existence is strong and worth



**Evaluate under floor crawlspace plumbing and electrical lines.**

reconstructing on the face.

Re-plastering all interior surfaces may prove necessary due to the number of cracks and amount of delamination from the adobe beneath. Numerous repairs are visible and have been only temporarily successful. The sample installation completed by Cornerstones Community Partnerships (2008) is a good example and starting point for an appropriate material application. Analysis of existing material should be completed in order to match the original plaster mix and finish.

It is unknown at this time the extent of the expanded metal lath and cement plaster over the adobe walls.



**Remove rooftop swamp cooler.**

The restrooms and at least part of the vestibule have expanded metal lath and cement plaster attached to the adobe walls. This incompatible finish system should be removed and an appropriate plaster mix should be installed. Construction of a separate, freestanding building could accommodate restroom facilities for the site and be designed to meet Texas Accessibility Standards. The structure could function as an outdoor classroom and serve other outdoor activities while being independent of the operating hours of the Blackwell School.

It has been determined that the loading dock should be retained, in part, as a way to tell the story of the trade school era. It has also been determined that the primary entrance to the building will be at this location at the west facade. As the primary entrance, a new code compliant access ramp will need to be constructed. The new design should incorporate new steps and railings as well to provide better and more efficient access in and out of the building. A “path of travel” from the parking to the ramp will need to be developed and maintained. Remove the enclosed hallway and ramp between the buildings. Design an open but covered connection and construct steps and walkway to transition the change in grade.

Site features and design will require careful consideration. It important that the site is not overly landscaped to avoid a false sense of history and possible negative impact to the site and building. While the site is relatively flat, positive drainage away from the buildings should be maintained at all times. All decisions should rely on the basic philosophy: preserve the historic property while making the changes to meet the continuing use of the building.

# Priorities And Next Steps

The first priority in moving this project forward is to determine what the interpretation should be, define the story to be told. What aspects of the building provide the clearest picture and history of the Blackwell School story and how can others understand the significance? The Strategic Plan is an excellent document and should continue to direct the progress of the project. This plan serves as a platform from which the Master Plan will be prepared. A Master Plan will identify the Scope of Work, phasing, and costs of each phase of the project and will chart the course of action to proceed with a successful, methodical rehabilitation of the buildings and grounds. Link the park and the building as a combined cultural asset.

The first step in the preservation of Blackwell School should address the physical wellbeing of the building and occupants as outlined in this HSR. Other more long-range plans will follow. Beyond physical improvements to the building, it may serve the Alliance well to address key aesthetic issues to provide a more visible impact on the building, therefore improving funding opportunities. For example, reconstruction of the chimneys and belfry, or reconstructing the profile of the arch on the front of the building are not necessary for the wellbeing of the building, however they will enhance the aesthetics of the building.

The construction of an independent building for restrooms and outdoor classroom will make the entire site more useable and accessible. The actual construction could serve as a training ground, offering workshops in the making of adobe and preparing appropriate mud/lime, based plaster. Training in the fabrication and installation would help locals understand and embrace the unique qualities of adobe along with proper maintenance and repair. Other workshops could include regional landscaping. Identify potential partners and garner support. Partners should be diverse, and support will come at various levels. Broad base or high-level partners are agencies such as the Texas Historical Commission, National Trust for Historic Preservation, Cornerstones, etc. On a regional level, partners might include the Texas Historical Foundation, Preservation Texas, etc. The San Antonio Area Foundation or similar agencies may be a resource for potential grants and possible donors.

Leverage relationships with local cottage industries, craft breweries, and artists to host events that raise awareness of the Blackwell School and the mission of preservation. Connect with Marfa Public School, City Parks and Recreation, and youth oriented programs, such as 4-H, FFA, Boy and Girl Scouts, and others to offer space and coordinate activities. Take advantage of the allure of Marfa, Texas. Consider hosting adobe and plaster workshops with earth constructions organizations such as Earth USA, Earthbuilders’ Guild, and the Association for Preservation Technology International, Texas Chapter. Continue to elevate the significance of the Blackwell School in Marfa while engaging with other communities with similar schools as a way of uplifting the important common cultural heritage. The Blackwell School is the leader.

## Project Priorities and Estimate of Probable Cost

It should be noted that it may be desirable to move Project 6 as a higher priority to promote more public activity on the site and raise awareness of the School.

|           |                                                |              |
|-----------|------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| Project 1 | Exterior Shell                                 |              |
|           | Adobe wall reconstruction                      |              |
|           | Stucco removal and plaster installation        |              |
|           | Windows and doors both buildings               | \$156,280.00 |
| Project 2 | Interior Repairs                               |              |
|           | Demolition, Plaster Ceilings and floor repairs | \$141,250.00 |
| Project 3 | Mechanical, Electrical, Plumbing               |              |
|           | One accessible restroom                        | \$109,300.00 |
| Project 4 | Roof Replacement                               |              |
|           | Reconstruction of belfry and chimneys          | \$125,000.00 |
| Project 5 | Site Work and Building Access                  |              |
|           | Allowance                                      | \$100,000.00 |
| Project 6 | New Outbuilding Accessible toilets/water       |              |
|           | fountains Outdoor classroom/shade              | \$117,000.00 |



# On-Site Field Notes (07.20.2018)

## FIELD OBSERVATIONS

Beginning at the east end of the building, visual observation was conducted to identify current conditions and previous modifications. Conditions of specific areas of interest or in question were further examined by boring into the wall to determine substrate.

### Interior Entry/Vestibule

- o The interior face of the east end wall is plaster over adobe. After sounding, many hollows were identified indicating delamination
- o The “infilled” area at the original arched entryway was verified. The current condition consists of a concrete lintel above the door. Samples taken from the west face of the east wall indicate plaster over adobe and no sign of the original brick arch.
- o Windows are wood double hung 4/4 configuration with weights & pulleys, are unpainted, and are not original
- o There is hardware cloth at new windows
- o Windows are 7’-1” high with a sill at 2’-6 ½ above finish floor with the exception of the south end of the office which is 2’-3 ½” above finish floor as there is no sill at that location
- o The ceiling of the vestibule is tongue-and-groove beaded board with boards running east to west across the entire vestibule, indicating that it was originally one space
- o There is a gas jet at inner adobe wall (between vestibule and museum room) wall where the original adobe wall was cut back and removed for the expansion on the boys’ toilet
- o Floor boards & floor joists are rotted near the boys toilet door and appears to be a low spot
- o Water fountain between the 2 toilet rooms
- o Sheet vinyl over plywood & paneled wood in office / Sheet vinyl painted at entry over tongue & groove wood planks

### Boys & Girls Toilets and Office

- o Both doors to toilet rooms have had swing reversed / both doors have been cut at bottom rail indicating that they may have been reused from another location.
- o Dates on Toilet sinks ( Girls – 1925 / SM Louisville) (Boys - 1937 / SR inscribed)
- o Both rooms appears to have concrete floors
- o The interior face of exterior walls are stucco over expanded metal lath over the adobe.
- o Samples were taken in girl’s toilet room.
- o Toilet walls are metal lath with cement plaster including the dividing wall, west wall of the boys’ room, and wall to vestibule
- o Wall, floor and framing are deteriorated outside the boys’ toilet at rotted floor. Metal lath is rusted and plaster is missing at door frame between boys’ toilet and northern classroom.
- o There is evidence of possible previous termites though no activity was detected
- o Toilet Room & South Office - Both rooms have dropped ceilings – Toilet room ceiling drop below window head
- o TR rooms have acoustical tile panels 16” X 32” & office ceiling is 12” X 12” acoustical tile
- o The storage area above the toilets appears to have been created at time of indoor plumbing and has a framed access door above the door to the girls’ room
- o This area has a walkable floor
- o The office enclosure is comprised of wood studs and gypsum wallboard and electrical

panel was installed on the north wall of the office

- o Storage area above office is not enclosed and does not have a walkable surface
- o Office “paneling” covers walls
- o Removed sections of paneling to reveal concrete lintel above short doorway to south classroom

### Blue Room (south classroom)

- o Cracks at main wall interior wall
- o Appearance of notch and patch on N & S walls west of doorway between room indicating previous dividing walls
- o No obvious indication of construction divider on floor
- o Wainscot exists on all 4 walls / cap is chiseled off on all of north wall
- o Cap at east wall only at both sides of door to office
- o Cap at south wall on west half of wall / from swamp cooler west
- o Cap at west wall in intact
- o There is a quarter round at base though some areas are missing. North wall –Yes, East Wall – Yes, South Wall – partial +/- ½, West Wall –Yes
- o Ceiling molding is intact on all walls – Patched as noted from previous divider walls
- o There are 4 – 8’ 4 bulb suspended fluorescent light fixtures that should be maintained
- o There are 2 –wall plates at chimney location on central wall
- o There is 1 hole in ceiling at centered on east wall for a flue pipe
- o Floor & structure do not show major signs of slope and appear relatively true
- o Wide threshold exists between north and south classroom – raised with beveled face
- o Hinge cuts indicate of a pair of doors that would swing into blue (south) room at the wide opening
- o Detailing at this opening is unlike other openings and question whether it was added after the building was in service. Further investigation is needed
- o Doorway to office has operable transom (no glass through blocked off from office by paneling and a hardware cloth screen
- o Original E / W end doorways with transoms are in place
- o There is hinge cut evidence of inswing doors and outswing doors, probably screens
- o East end door style & rail door with half glass panel exists
- o Top of door trim to floor – 9’-2” includes transom
- o The shorter “Mystery” door opening– heavy wood lintel visible on east side of wall
- o Removal of paneling indicated concrete lintel

### Museum Room

- o West wall of entry and north classroom - Adobe wall has been removed
- o Ceiling and floor have both been patched in
- o The wall breaks where adobe wall was removed and new stud wall with metal lath and plaster join

# On-Site Field Notes (07.20.2018)

- o Material is deteriorated and wall systems will never bond
- o Wainscot exists on north & south walls only
- o Wainscot is “painted on” at east end stud wall
- o Cap of wainscot is chiseled off most of south wall except +/- 4' at west end of south wall
- o Cap chiseled off between west & center window
- o Center wall is out of plane near entry wall (where the adobe wall was cut off)
- o The upper portion of wall leans out toward the north. Further investigation is needed to determine structural integrity or if only a plaster issue
- o There is quarter round at base at North & South Walls
- o 1x 6 base at east wall
- o Floor is relatively true
- o Similar cover plates exist at center wall chimneys and hole in ceiling centered on east wall are evidence of chimney flue in attic
- o This room was divided +/- 4' east of central doorway
- o Ceiling trim is patched on North & South Walls
- o +/- 6 feet of trim missing east of patch
- o East and west end of the room have been modified with no trim
- o The western chimney bulges at top of center wall where brick sits on top of adobe
- o Boring identified the transition from adobe to brick

## Attic Space

- o Rafter spacing varies 16” – 24” range
- o Size of members include 1-3/4” X 3-1/2”
- o There are ¾” X 5-1/2” misc. supports at rafters
- o Above “cut” adobe wall, the members are pulled away
- o Center end out of plumb
- o Rafter interior support missing on south portion of the building (refer to images in the report)
- o All chimneys in the attic have been toppled or removed / no longer penetrate roof
- o Central chimneys are D'Hanis brick
- o Remnants of wood shingles over spaced sheathing –
- o Evidence of water damage in the valley portions of the roof.
- o Evidence of belfry location

## Band Room

- o Constructed of structural clay tile on concrete perimeter beam
- o There is a 2 X 6 ledger with 2 X 6 floor joists at 24” O.C. (running east & west )
- o Joists are supported periodically with brick
- o Clay tile construction has previous nailer still in place at 5” above finished floor for (1x6) base

- o There is a nailer at 33” top of finish floor indicating a chair rail at N, S, E wall – no evidence on west wall
- o This room had been previously divided just north of center viewing E – W
- o Ceiling – 4 x 8 plywood w/ battens at joints
- o Skuttle in the center to attic
- o Tongue and groove pine flooring with various lengths (31/4” X 12’0) run N / S over wood joists
- o Viewing under the floor with a borescope revealed a number of “BIC” stick pens and yellow number 2 pencils
- o Roof structure – trusses, running east and west at 24 O.C. +/-
- o Ridge rafter ( ¾” X 3-1/2” )
- o Ceiling joist 1-3/4” X 5-1/2”
- o Top Chord 1-1/2” X 3-1/2”
- o Original door at south end of east wall was filled in
- o Evidence of patched windows on west wall but not obvious on east & sounding did not reveal any hollows/ openings. The same “ring” was observed on solid walls
- o New door installed on west wall is a 4’ wide hollow metal with metal frame and vision panel
- o Door is installed near location of previous window

## General observations

- o **Floors** - tongue and groove floor boards measure 3 ¼” exposed face and length varies, some 18 – 20 feet in length in main rooms – wood species PINE
- o Floors show signs of wear and wood is very dry
- o Floor slightly buckled in areas rough & weathered – not recommended for replacement
- o **Windows** - Main building – all windows have been replaced. Recommend replace aluminum windows with wood double hung of proper size
- o Window openings on west wall of band room can easily be located and some new window installed reconfiguring to incorporate current door location
- o **Roof Material** – The metal roof is not a part of original construction
- o **Metal roofing** - Structural note - is movement in wall and warping of roof due to added load
- o **Cement stucco** on exterior of building
- o **Interior plaster** is cracked, delaminated in areas, and shows many areas of previous patches
- o **Electrical** service is insufficient. Breaker tripped with very little load
- o There is exposed wiring, conduit, outlets, power cut-offs not original to the building
- o **Restrooms** are adequate but do not comply with current code
- o **Entry** to the building is from the west end at the loading dock
- o **East entry** serves as an emergency exit only



# On-Site Field Notes (07.20.2018)

**Joe Cabezuela stopped by** while we were there

- o Said he was in school in 1952 – 55/56    Graduated 1964
- o Stated the east wall was rebuilt where arch was due to failure – it was rebuilt without the arch
- o When it was rebuilt a concrete lintel was installed above door
- o He also said that the north window was filled in with adobe/ at the time when they built the boy & girls toilets (early photographs do not indicate a window at this location)
- o Southeast corner was rebuilt due to failure / erosion of wall due to environmental conditions
- o Stated that there were changes to the building after World War II
- o He also stated that the ramp area connecting the band hall to the blue room was originally steps that were covered over by concrete to form the ramp.
- o Joe stated that windows were installed on east and west walls of the band room but the team can only confirm evidence of windows on the west wall

**Following up on Joe Cabezuela information,** the team bored above the entry door on the east wall of the building and concrete was found. Two other bore locations found adobe.

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