1 NAME

HISTORIC
Colorado Ute Power Plant

AND/OR COMMON
Colorado Ute Power Plant

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
14th Street and Animas River

CITY, TOWN
Durango

STATE
Colorado

VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
3

COUNTY CODE
La Plata

067

CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

X BUILDING(S)

PUBLIC

PRIVATE

X BOTH

X STRUCTURE

X OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

PUBLIC

PRIVATE

X BOTH

X IN PROCESS

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

X IN PROCESS

X BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

X OCCUPIED

X UNOCCUPIED

X WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

X YES: RESTRICTED

X YES: UNRESTRICTED

X NO

PRESENT USE

X AGRICULTURE

X COMMERCIAL

X EDUCATIONAL

X ENTERTAINMENT

X GOVERNMENT

X INDUSTRIAL

X MILITARY

X RELIGIOUS

X SCIENTIFIC

X TRANSPORTATION

X OTHER

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
Colorado Ute Electric Association

STREET & NUMBER
P.O. Box 1149

CITY, TOWN
Montrose

STATE
Colorado

VICEINITY OF
81402

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.
La Plata County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER
1060 2nd Avenue

CITY, TOWN
Durango

STATE
Colorado

REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
Colorado Inventory of Historic Sites

DATE
Ongoing

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS
Colorado Historical Society, 1300 Broadway

CITY, TOWN
Denver

STATE
Colorado

80203
The Colorado Ute Power Plant is a large two story Mission Style structure. Although primarily one space, the structure appears much higher due to its stepped gable to the north flanked by a bell tower rising to the height of the main roof ridge line and a smaller non-functional representation of a bell tower. These two elements, the stepped parapet and towers, strongly distinguish the north facade. The other sides are simple masonry with a stucco finish and many rectilinear windows. Pilasters occur at regular intervals on each side of the building.

The main bell tower at the northeast corner of the structure has a pyramidal roof with a finial. A series of three arched windows occur on each side of the shingled tower. The large open eaves are supported by simple brackets.

Adjacent to the building to the south west is a tall galvanized metal structure of an industrial character representing a strong contrast in style.

The oldest place of equipment the building contains is a generator manufactured in 1910. There are also General Electric Turbine sets which were added to the plant in 1916. A 3500 kilowatt generator which was put into service in 1946 when the plant was changed to a combination of coal and gas also still remains. Two or three stacks were removed from the exterior of the building when the plant converted entirely to gas in the late 1940's.
The Colorado Ute Power Plant is significant for its association with the development of power for the San Juan mining district and the city of Durango in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It is also significant as the earliest example of mission architecture in the State and as a rare example of mission found on an industrial building.

The first electric plant in Durango was a small steam plant on 7th Street which later became part of the Ball Foundry. The plant put out 500 volts, D.C. in series lighting service. The capacity was soon doubled. In 1889 ground was broken at the foot of M Street (now 14th Street) for an iron and brick fireproof structure, 70 by 150 feet, with all new machinery planned. It was noted by the newspapers of the time that it would be "one of the finest and best arranged plants in the state." Improvements included six miles of new line to the Dwyer addition and Animas City to the north, and to the Standard Smelter at the south, with the capacity to supply twice the number of lights than before. Improvements made in 1892, included a change from D.C. to A.C., servicing of an electric streetcar and construction of a new steam plant.

In 1893, the present building was completed and the move was made from the 7th Street location to the new steam plant. Expansion and improvements continued until 1906 when daytime service was inaugurated for the first time. In 1909 a transmission line from Tacoma was constructed to the Durango plant, furnishing hydro-electric service. In the same year lines were extended to Silverton and the mining areas above Durango.

Major modification and enlargements took place in 1916 and 1917 when the General Electric Turbine sets which are still in the building were added. In 1946-47, the old boilers were converted to gas. Construction of the metal parts of the building on the west side of the existing plant and the addition of new equipment was made in the years from 1947 to 1949. The west wall of the old building was retained as the common wall of the two sections.

The heyday of the plant came in the 1960's when its bigger user was the Vandium Corporation of America mill south of Durango. But when the uranium mill closed down, it forced a major cutback, and by 1972, the plant was deemed impractical to keep in operation. Local citizen groups are now interested in converting the building to other uses.

According to Marcus Whiffen, A. Page Brown's California Building, designed for the 1893 Columbian Exposition, was the earliest building designed in the mission style. Although a long way from Chicago in both distance and sophistication, Durango appears to be the location of Colorado's earliest mission building, the Colorado Ute Power Plant.
10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than 1

QUADRANGLE NAME Durango, CO

UTM REFERENCES

A | 1, 3
B | 4, 4, 6, 8, 0
C | 1, 2, 9
D | 5, 0, 0

ZONE EASTING NORTING

E
F
G
H

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24,000

ZONE EASTING NORTING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION A building with dimensions of 132 feet long by 108 feet wide bounded on the north by 14th Street, on the east by Camino Del Rio, on the west by the Animas River, and on the south by the La Plata Electric Association Building.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

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11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE
Marjorie J. Wells, Director

ORGANIZATION
Durango Centennial Commission

STREET & NUMBER
P.O. Box 2428

CITY OR TOWN
Durango

STATE Colorado

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL ✓ STATE NA LOCAL NA

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

DATE 4.27.82

13 FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 6.25.82

ATTEST:

DATE

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION
According to records of the Colorado Ute Electric Association and city archives showing a 1904 photograph of the building, the mission appearance of the structure dates at least to 1904 if not to the original 1893 construction date. Alterations made in 1916 and 1917 included only additions of a turbine generator and boilers to increase the plant's generating capacity.

The use of mission for industrial purposes is equally significant. Whereas mission became a very popular form of domestic and public architecture in Colorado during its heyday, it is rarely found on industrial buildings.
"Electric Light" - Durango Public Library

Colorado Historical Society files

"A Romance of Electricity on the Western Slope" - Western Colorado Power Co., publishers, Center of Southwest Studies, Fort Lewis College, Durango

Records at the Montrose office of Colorado Ute Electric Company - Courtesy of Mr. Carley McKnight

Interviews with former employees of W.C.P. Co. - Ed Ward and Arthur "Bud" Curtis
COLORADO UTE POWER PLANT
DURANGO, COLORADO
UTM REFERENCE:
13/244680/4129500