

Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation
History Colorado
COLORADO CULTURAL RESOURCE SURVEY

Lexicon Tables for Use on Architectural Inventory Forms

Introduction

Thousands of terms are used to describe the cultural resources in the OAHF database. These terms not only provide valuable details concerning a specific resource, but they also serve as the framework for grouping the resources by particular attributes. This collection of terms, the lexicon, is arranged in a hierarchical structure. This system places a term between related terms that are more specific and those that are more general. The lexicon's hierarchy can be thought of as a tree like structure. The most general of all terms are the root of the tree, the next most general terms the trunk, with the more specific terms spreading out to form the branches.

The lexicon hierarchy includes a more general *parent* term or terms, and an even more general *grandparent* term or terms. Synonyms become *sisters* and more specific terms are *sons*. For example:

Grandparent (More General Term)	Parent (General Term)	Term	Sister (Synonyms)	Son (More Specific Term)
Historic Architecture	Architectural Features	Decorative Features	Ornamental Features	Gargoyle
Features	Environment Features	River	Rivers	Colorado River
Historic Architecture	Architect	Benedict		Jules J.B. Benedict Fritz Benedict Frederick Benedict Brother Benedict
Domestic	Secondary Structure	Outbuilding	Outbuildings Outbuilding? Out Building	Machine Shop Shed Stock Pen Smoke House

Any word or phrase can be a lexicon term. The important controlling factor is that a lexicon term should be a single, discrete unit of meaning. Examples include terms such as **Colorado**, **La Plata County**, **dwelling**, **chimney**, **irregular plan** or **ceramic tile roof**.

Terms need not be a single word. Distinct phrases are fine. However, lexicon terms should not include adjectives when they are purely descriptive modifiers. In the examples given above, **ceramic tile roof** is a distinct type of roof differentiated from other roofs by the use of ceramic tile in its construction.

The lexicon is very flexible. Terms need not be restricted to organization under only one general term. This enables the terms to be organized in a way that reflects a more natural structure. A term such as **orange**, a color and a specific type of fruit, may be organized under both of these more general terms.

Perhaps the most useful aspect of the lexicon is its ability to accommodate synonyms. This enables like terms to be lumped together, so that a search for a specific use, architectural feature or style, does not have to be done more than once. For example, synonyms for the term **outbuilding** might include **outbuildings**, **outbuilding?** or **out building**. In a search for sites with outbuildings, only one of the above variations would have to be searched to obtain sites which include any or all of the variations.

OAHP uses the lexicon in an attempt to standardize the voluminous variation of attributes employed to describe both historic and prehistoric sites. As a set vocabulary, searching the database for specific sites is relatively quick and easy.

The eight tables provided below contain the lexicon terms for use on the Architectural Inventory Form (OAHP Form 1403).