

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determination for individual properties and districts. See instruction in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Chamber of Commerce Building

other names/site number Butterfly Building; 5RT.2616

2. Location

street & number 1201 Lincoln Avenue [N/A] not for publication

city or town Steamboat Springs [N/A] vicinity

state Colorado code CO county Routt code 107 zip code 80477

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer Date _____

Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Colorado Historical Society
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.
(See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
- other, explain
 See continuation sheet.

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Chamber of Commerce Building
Name of Property

Routt County, Colorado
County/State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not count previously listed resources.)

| Contributing | Noncontributing | |
|--------------|-----------------|------------|
| <u>1</u> | <u>0</u> | buildings |
| <u>0</u> | <u>0</u> | sites |
| <u>0</u> | <u>0</u> | structures |
| <u>0</u> | <u>0</u> | objects |
| <u>1</u> | <u>0</u> | Total |

Name of related multiple property listing.
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register.

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Function

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE: organizational

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

MODERN MOVEMENT
Other: Usonian

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE
walls STONE
WOOD
roof ASPHALT
other _____

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Chamber of Commerce Building
Name of Property

Routt County, Colorado
County/State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations
(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance
(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Periods of Significance

1960

Significant Dates

1960

Significant Person(s)

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Sternberg, Eugene D.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey

- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Colorado Historical Society

Chamber of Commerce Building
Name of Property

Routt County, Colorado
County/State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than 1

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

- | | | | | |
|----|------|---------|----------|---------|
| 1. | 13 | 344144 | 4483417 | (NAD27) |
| | Zone | Easting | Northing | |
| 2. | | | | |
| | Zone | Easting | Northing | |
| 3. | | | | |
| | Zone | Easting | Northing | |
| 4. | | | | |
| | Zone | Easting | Northing | |

The UTM reference point was derived by the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation from heads up digitization on Digital Raster Graphic maps provided to OAHP by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management.

[] See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Laureen Schaffer/ Historic Preservation Coordinator
organization City of Steamboat Springs date November 17, 2009
street & number PO Box 775088 telephone (970) 879-2060
city or town Steamboat Springs state CO zip code 80477

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional Items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name City of Steamboat Springs
street & number PO Box 775088 telephone (970) 879-2060
city or town Steamboat Springs state CO zip code 80477

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to range from approximately 18 hours to 36 hours depending on several factors including, but not limited to, how much documentation may already exist on the type of property being nominated and whether the property is being nominated as part of a Multiple Property Documentation Form. In most cases, it is estimated to average 36 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form to meet minimum National Register documentation requirements. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, 1849 C St., NW, Washington, DC 20240.

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet****United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**Chamber of Commerce Building
Routt County, ColoradoSection number 7 Page 1**DESCRIPTION**

The 1960 Chamber of Commerce Building is a one-story, 23' x 34' rectangular plan, inverted gable-roofed building sited slightly askew at its corner location at 12th Street and Lincoln Avenue (US Highway 40) at the western end of the downtown commercial core in Steamboat Springs. The building stands in a turf covered, irregularly-shaped corner lot known as Little Toots Park extending back from Lincoln Avenue toward the Yampa River. Mature landscaping is present with the park featuring a playground, gazebo and log building (formerly a community center, now used as storage). Soda Creek flows to the northwest of the Chamber of Commerce Building and meets the Yampa River at the western edge of the park. The Bud Werner Memorial Library stands to the northwest of the park parcel and completes the block.

This modest-sized, but distinctive building is located at the western corner of Lincoln Avenue and 12th Street. The building is sited at a slight angle to the two streets. Instead of a front Lincoln Avenue entry, the building's façade (northwest side) is oriented toward Soda Creek as it begins its flow through Little Toots Park as it passes the northwest side. A notable architectural feature is the building's nearly flat inverted gable roof, which, in essence, appears as two shed roofs placed back to back. With some imagination, the roof gives the visual impression of a butterfly in flight, so that locally, the building is known affectionately as the "Butterfly Building."

The roof is broadly pitched with an extensive overhang on all four sides. The building is also sited on a slope, with a walkout basement level on the southwest side. The basement area originally served as restrooms for the park until closed to the public at an unknown date. A poured concrete foundation supports the walls that are clad with a variety of materials, including stone, half-round log siding, and both horizontal and vertical wood siding. The stone veneer, with flagstone capping, covers the lower portions of the southeast and northeast side, ranging in height from approximately 4' above grade to approximately 6.5' above grade. A band of three single-light fixed windows, topped by three painted beige wood panels, penetrates the northeast (Lincoln Avenue) side. The southeast side features a band of four single-light fixed-pane windows (topped by painted beige wood panels), two horizontal sliding windows, and a single light fixed-pane window, all with painted brown wood surrounds. Above the stone veneer, the southeast sidewall is clad with painted beige vertical wood siding. An exposed high poured concrete foundation appears on the southwest (rear) side. A doorway, which is covered with plywood and no longer in use, penetrates the northwest end of the foundation wall. Another similar door, also filled with plywood, penetrates the foundation wall near the southwest end of the northwest side. A horizontal sliding window exists on the foundation wall.

The northwest side faces Soda Creek. Here, a full light door with a wood frame provides access to the building from a large concrete porch, which is covered by the extended roof overhang at the northeast end of the façade. A wood railing flanks the porch, while two steel poles support the roof overhang. As originally designed by the architect, the porch was built around two narrow-leaf cottonwood trees that now extend through two holes in the porch roof. The entry door is flanked on its northeast side by a single, narrow, fixed-pane window, and on its southwest side by two single-light fixed-pane windows, all with painted beige wood surrounds. To the southwest of the porch, the lower façade wall is clad with a 3'-wide section of half-round log siding, while the upper wall is clad with painted beige vertical wood siding (McWilliams 2007).

The building retains its historic integrity in terms of setting, location, design, materials, workmanship, association and feeling. There have been virtually no exterior alterations to the original Chamber of Commerce Building and the 1960 photograph from the building's grand opening reveals the building looking much the same today as when designed and constructed.

**National Register of Historic Places
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Routt County, ColoradoSection number 8 Page 2**SIGNIFICANCE**

The 1960 Chamber of Commerce Building in Steamboat Springs is eligible to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C in the area of *architecture* as a superior local example of the Modern Movement's Usonian design philosophy. Integrated into the surrounding landscape and oriented toward the nearby Soda Creek and Little Toots Park, the building embodies many of the defining characteristics of the design philosophy, including the use of natural materials, which help blend the building into the site, dominant horizontal lines, integrated windows, and an inverted gabled roof with wide overhanging eaves. Notable are two cottonwood trees extending through the porch floor and roof and incorporated into the overall design. Architect Eugene Sternberg designed the Chamber of Commerce Building as one of several commissions he received in the Steamboat Springs area. The building's small-scale is unusual within the architect's broad body of work but typifies his interest in economical construction through its utilization of donated materials and volunteer labor. The period of significance is 1960, the year of construction.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Born in Czechoslovakia on January 15, 1915, Eugene D. Sternberg earned a degree in architectural engineering in Prague. While pursuing graduate work in architecture at Cambridge University in England, World War II began. He remained in London during the war, teaching part time at Cambridge. He then joined the firm of Sir Abercrombie, where he was involved in rebuilding many of the homes and buildings destroyed by German bombing. While in England, he met and married his wife, Barbara. In 1945, the couple immigrated to the United States, where Sternberg accepted an offer to teach at Cornell University. Shortly after, he became the first faculty member at the University of Denver's new School of Architecture. In 1949, Sternberg joined developer Edward Hawkins in the creation of the Arapahoe Acres development in Englewood, Colorado (5AH.1434 National Register Historic District listed 11/3/1998 NRIS. #98001249). The project appealed to Sternberg because of his interest in the creation of "socially conscious modern housing, combining quality architectural design and economical construction." He is best known for the many civic, educational and commercial buildings he designed. His list of accomplishments includes Arapahoe Community College, Heritage High School, the Bemis Public Library, the Arapahoe County Courthouse Building and the Law Center, all in Littleton, and the major medical building at Denver General Hospital. Altogether, Sternberg is responsible for over 400 buildings in Colorado, Wyoming and Nebraska.¹

At the end of 1957, the Steamboat Springs Town Board minutes detail the hiring of Eugene Sternberg to serve as planning consultant and architect to the newly formed Planning Commission. By early 1958, Sternberg began examining the town's fringe areas to determine the suitability of subdivisions and a junior college. Sternberg guided the efforts of the "Beautification Project" and worked directly with the Kiwanis and Lion's clubs on park projects. Projects in Steamboat Springs documented to have Sternberg direction at the time include the 1959 Methodist Church at 718 Oak Street, the 1956 Yampa Valley Electric Association, the 1958 Steamboat Apartments, the 1956 Soda Creek Elementary addition (demolished 2007), and the never executed Bristol Hotel and Howelsen Hill redesigns.

¹ Carl McWilliams, "Architectural Inventory Form for Chamber of Commerce Building, Steamboat Springs, Routt County, Colorado, 5RT.2616," recorded in 2007.; "Sternberg, Eugene D." *Architects of Colorado* biographical sketch, Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Colorado Historical Society, 2001.

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Established in 1907 as the Commercial Club of Steamboat Springs, with an organizational mission to support the businesses of Steamboat Springs and other nearby communities in the Yampa Valley, the group fostered economic vitality within the region. In 1941, the Commercial Club changed its name to the Chamber of Commerce of Steamboat Springs. Over time, the Chamber organization played an important role as the local economy evolved from one based primarily on agriculture to one based on tourism and in particular, skiing. As a result, the Chamber of Commerce is now known as the Steamboat Springs Area Chamber Resort Association.²

The Chamber of Commerce existed at a number of locations in the years prior to 1960. In 1956, it was located at 507 Lincoln Avenue, but by 1959, it had moved to 703 Lincoln Avenue (the no longer extant Harbor Hotel), and then 926 Lincoln Avenue where it existed for a short time before moving into its new Sternberg-designed building in 1960.³

In 1959, the Town directed Sternberg to develop plans for a permanent home for the Chamber of Commerce. An announcement for the new building appeared in the March 26, 1959, *Steamboat Pilot*:

At the annual Chamber of Commerce meeting and banquet March 19, it was disclosed that a new home for the Chamber will be built in the front part of the city park. By using volunteer labor and obtaining material at cost, George Fick, chairman of the planning commission, said the new building could be constructed for \$1,500. The building would include a work room, office, basement and storage room.

A subsequent article described the building and notably the setting with the creek flowing "past the site where settlers once built the town's first homes and where their children played under the willows and cottonwoods. Two of the latter trees figure prominently in Architect Eugene Sternberg's plans."

Newspaper coverage of the groundbreaking for the new building on June 11, 1959, detailed the expenses and volunteer effort. The project budget was \$2,500, low even for Sternberg standards (Sternberg strived for affordable, cost-effective construction on his projects). Completed within one year, the grand opening celebration for the Usonian-inspired Chamber of Commerce Building occurred on June 18, 1960.

Typically associated with modern residential architecture of the 1940s through the 1960s, Usonian as a concept actually goes back to the turn of the twentieth century. Conceived by Frank Lloyd Wright around 1900, the Usonian design philosophy evolved over many years, coming to fruition in the 1930s. As his commissions for large, grand houses dropped off with the onset of the Great Depression, Wright looked for a way to address the need for affordable middle-class housing while employing a simple design. The result was an architectural style he termed "Usonian," which focused on the residents of a utopian culturally reformed United States of North America. The Usonian houses were smaller than his sprawling Prairie style residences, contained little ornamentation and lacked basements or attics. His designs arranged these houses in zones, typically with three areas: living space, small bedrooms, and a kitchen-dining area. Built-in components and furniture allowed homeowners to appreciate the simpler, integrated space Wright intended.

Usonian constitutes more than just an idea for designing smaller houses and other buildings. It encompassed planning, nature and simple design on a human scale. Wright's concept for Usonian came about due to his increasing focus on community, planning and serving human needs. He

² McWilliams.

³ McWilliams; *Steamboat Pilot*, April 2, 1959.

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advocated decentralized communities with commercial, residential, educational, industrial, cultural and recreational facilities. While his early concepts of these communities remained just that, many of the components applied in a handful of places across the country, though not on the scale that he originally envisioned. As Wright did with the Prairie style of his earlier fame, he also incorporated the smaller Usonian house with the site. Wright integrated the house with the landscape and nature in an attempt to get away from box-like structures. Walls extended beyond the interior to the outside, intermingling the two. Large windows appeared to bring the outside to the interior space. Natural materials blended the building with the site and warm colors on the interior further contributed to the feeling of bringing the outdoors inside. Usonian houses were quite unlike the boxy, stark International Style houses that appeared to be dropped onto, rather than a part of, their location.

Also called Wrightian, numerous architects across the country adopted and adapted the Usonian style. Bruce Goff of Oklahoma, Alden Dow of Michigan, and John Lautner of southern California are well known for contributing to the style. Colorado architects influenced by the style included Edward Hawkins, engineer and developer of Arapahoe Acres subdivision and Joseph E. Dion who was an architect and Hawkins' assistant. They designed, among other buildings, many houses in Arapahoe Acres after Sternberg ended his Arapahoe Acres association and business relationship with Hawkins. Sternberg was the original architect of the site plan for the subdivision designing over 20 houses there. General characteristics of associated buildings include: dominant horizontal lines; flat roofs with large overhangs; integrated windows; organic siting (a private side and an open side, usually facing south); concrete slab floors with integral gravity heating; built-in components; and inside-outside walls.⁴ The Chamber of Commerce Building exhibits many of these elements.

Located within a park with the nearby flowing Soda Creek, Sternberg integrated the Chamber of Commerce Building into the landscape. The two cottonwood trees figure prominently in the design, and while the building was constructed around the existing landscape feature, the building's design is respectful of the trees and does not attempt to become the dominant feature. The two components, natural and man-made, complement and serve each other. The building's form is an organic and integrated whole. Dominant horizontal lines, including the band of windows and overhanging eaves, further serve to incorporate the building into the site. Natural materials and warm colors and textures bring together and complete the entire design.

Sternberg's simple design eschews traditional detail, yet results in a building integrated with the landscape. At the same time, the Chamber of Commerce Building's design presents a human scale. The smaller building fits the site, is incorporated into the setting through form and materials, and focuses on the community. The building is uniquely Steamboat Springs and defines the local architecture of the period.

The Chamber of Commerce continued operating in this building until the mid-1980s when it relocated to 625 S. Lincoln Avenue. In recent years, the Yampa Valley Land Trust has leased and occupied the building. It is a non-profit organization focusing on facilitating the conservation of agricultural properties and other natural open space lands.

⁴ "Usonian Style," *Guide to Colorado's Historic Architecture and Engineering*, Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Colorado Historical Society, <http://www.coloradohistory-oahp.org/guides/architecture/usonian.htm>, accessed May 2, 2008. Whiffen, Marcus, *American Architecture Since 1780*. Cambridge, MA: The M.I.T. Press, 1969, third printing 1976, p. 276.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

Evans-Hall, Sandy, Executive Director, Steamboat Springs Area Chamber Resort Association.
Telephone interview, November 15, 2007.

McAlester, Virginia and Lee. *A Field Guide to American Houses*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997.

McWilliams, Carl, "Architectural Inventory Form for Chamber of Commerce Building, Steamboat Springs, Routt County, Colorado, 5RT.1044," recorded in 2007.

Routt County Assessor's Office. Ownership deeds. Steamboat Springs, CO.

The Steamboat Pilot, various 1959-60.

Steamboat Springs' City Clerk, Town Council Minutes, 1957-60.

Sternberg, Eugene, Architectural Records, Denver Public Library, Western History Collection.

"Sternberg, Eugene D." *Architects of Colorado* biographical sketch, Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Colorado Historical Society, 2001.

"Usonian Style," *Guide to Colorado's Historic Architecture and Engineering*, Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Colorado Historical Society, <http://www.coloradohistory-oahp.org/guides/architecture/usonian.htm>, accessed May 2, 2008.

Whiffen, Marcus, *American Architecture Since 1780*. Cambridge, MA: The M.I.T. Press, 1969, third printing 1976.

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

The Chamber of Commerce Building is located in Block 1 of the Springs Addition to Steamboat Springs, Section 17, Township 6 North, Range 84 West, known as 1201 Lincoln Avenue. The boundary includes the building and the property extending fifteen feet in each direction to form a rectangle from the footprint of the building.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary includes the land historically associated with the Chamber of Commerce Building.

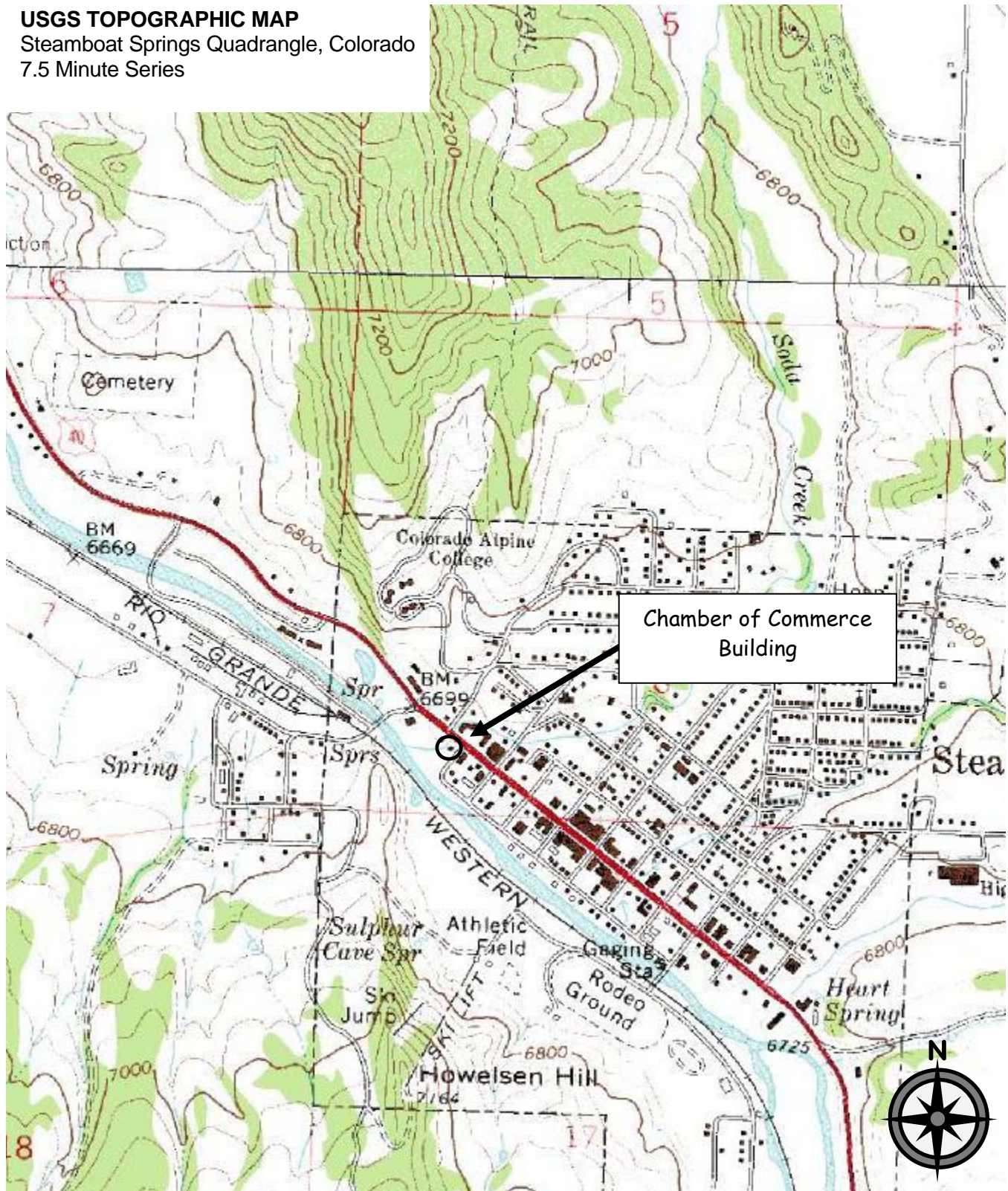
National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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USGS TOPOGRAPHIC MAP
Steamboat Springs Quadrangle, Colorado
7.5 Minute Series



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PHOTOGRAPH LOG

The following information pertains to photograph numbers 1-6:

Photographer: Ginger Scott
Date of Photographs: May 15, 2008
Negatives: Digital files submitted to the National Register

| Photo No. | Photographic Information | Digital Files |
|-----------|---|-----------------------------|
| 1 | Northeast & southeast sides, camera facing west | CO_RouttCounty_Chamber1.tif |
| 2 | Southeast side, camera facing northwest | CO_RouttCounty_Chamber2.tif |
| 3 | Southwest side, camera facing north | CO_RouttCounty_Chamber3.tif |
| 4 | Southwest & northwest sides, camera facing east | CO_RouttCounty_Chamber4.tif |
| 5 | Northwest side, camera facing southeast | CO_RouttCounty_Chamber5.tif |
| 6 | Northeast side, camera facing southwest | CO_RouttCounty_Chamber6.tif |

Photo numbers, locations and views

