

**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 determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any 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.

### 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Buffalo Gap Historic District 2023 Amendment (Boundary Decrease)

Other names/site number: N/A

Name of related multiple property listing:

Rural Resources of Eastern Custer County

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

### 2. Location

Street & number: Portions of Main, Second, and Walnut Streets

City or town: Buffalo Gap State: SD County: Custer

Not For Publication:  Vicinity:

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this x 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 x meets     does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

    national     statewide   x   local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

  x   A     B   x   C     D

<p>_____  <b>Signature of certifying official/Title:</b></p>	<p>_____  <b>Date</b></p>
<p>_____  <b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b></p>	

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In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of commenting official:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Title :**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**State or Federal agency/bureau  
or Tribal Government**

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#### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- \_\_\_ entered in the National Register
- \_\_\_ determined eligible for the National Register
- \_\_\_ determined not eligible for the National Register
- \_\_\_ removed from the National Register
- \_\_\_ other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

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#### 5. Classification

##### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

Private:

Public – Local

Public – State

Public – Federal

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**Category of Property**

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>14</u>	<u>9</u>	buildings
<u>1</u>	<u>          </u>	sites
<u>          </u>	<u>5</u>	structures
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	objects
<u>15</u>	<u>14</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 17

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

- Commerce: restaurant
- Commerce: business
- Commerce: financial institution
- Commerce: specialty store
- Social: meeting hall
- Government: city hall
- Landscape: park
- Religion: religious facility
- Recreation and Culture: auditorium
- Recreation and Culture: sports facility
- Agriculture/Subsistence: storage

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**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Social: meeting hall

Government: city hall

Government: post office

Agriculture/Subsistence: storage

Landscape: park

Vacant/Not In Use

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Other: false-front vernacular

**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Foundation: concrete, sandstone; Walls: weatherboard, stucco, stone, metal; Roof: metal, asphalt

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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### Summary Paragraph

The Buffalo Gap Historic Commercial District was listed in 1995 (NRIS#95000774). This 2023 amendment updates Contributing/Noncontributing statuses and decreases the boundary in the southwest and northeast sections of the district. A portion of the southwest corner was removed due to integrity loss; portions of the east/northeast area were redrawn on the map to better reflect information given in Sections 7, 8, and 10 of the 1995 nomination. The new boundary line runs down the center of right-of-ways and along lot lines as closely as possible. The amendment fixes minor discrepancies in the 1995 nomination where verbal descriptions, UTM's, and maps slightly misaligned. For example, the Nolan Feed and Seed Complex's location was described as Block 11½. However, the boundary line on the map bisected this parcel and the complex, leaving the southern additions of the complex outside of the boundary. The 2023 boundary clarifies that the entire complex and parcel (Block 11½) are within the boundary. (see also boundary justification in Section 10)

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Since the district was surveyed 30 years ago, deterioration has impacted many buildings. Awnings, decorative cornice features, windowpanes, and other features have gone missing. Some properties have been razed. Others have been altered inappropriately. Some have been clad in metal roofs to save them structurally. Despite the changes, the false-front, stone, and stucco clad buildings still convey the significance of a western boomtown better than any other place in South Dakota.

The district contains two sets of buildings. The first is from Buffalo Gap's initial boom (c.1885-1895) associated with its position as the main railroad connection to the Black Hills. Another set of buildings dates from a later period of town-building associated with the end of the homestead era (c.1905-1932). Fire destroyed most of the central business district in 1895, and Buffalo Gap never completely rebuilt. With exceptions, the vacant lots that dot the commercial district today bear witness to the businesses that were destroyed in the 1895 fire. Setting has changed little in the district. Infill is minimal. Cement sidewalks front most of the buildings and trees are common, though several large cottonwoods have been removed. The 1995 nomination described the district's streets as "quiet, but not empty." That characterization remains intact today (2023).

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## Narrative Description

### Main Street

#### Nolan Feed and Seed Complex (aka Rancher Seed and Feed)

#### 101 E Main (described as Block 11½ in 1995 nomination)

c.1927

#### Contributing (Was Contributing in 1995) (Gabled Outbuilding, Contributing)

This agribusiness complex's outward appearance has changed remarkably little since the 1995 nomination. It is comprised of an interconnected grain elevator and retail space with functional additions. A small, detached structure sits on the northwest corner of the property. In the 1995 nomination, the entire complex was counted as one Contributing resource. Per National Register resource count guidelines, this structure is now counted separately.

All structures are wood framed and clad in corrugated metal. A singular exception is the retail volume, which has not been clad in metal (except the roof) and retains its original vertical board siding. All windows are wood; the majority are one-over-one or fixed-pane. The retail volume has five, 16-pane windows. Exposed rafter tails are present on the retail volume and under some roofs of the utilitarian additions.

Foundations are concrete and roof pitches are gabled and shed. Standard-sized doors are wood and wood with upper lights. Larger openings have track doors comprised of wood clad in metal. Various equipment, such as grain augers, are attached to portions of the complex. Newer additions (built outside the POS) comprise the southern half of the complex.

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**Quonset-Style Building**

**102 Main (described as Lots 32-33 in 1995 nomination)**

**c. post-1995**

**Noncontributing**

The Alexander Hotel and Café stood here in 1995. The original nomination stated that the hotel “has been vacant since the 1940s and is rapidly deteriorating.” Sometime after 1995, the two-story hotel was razed and an arched, Quonset-style building with a metal roof was constructed. Low concrete walls are visible below the eaves on the east and west elevations. The north and south elevations are clad in seam metal siding. The north elevation has a metal door and a fixed-pane rectangular window. This building is associated with the Last Chance Saloon, which is located in the sandstone building to its west.

**Alexander Hotel Annex (Last Chance Saloon as of 2022)**

**102 Main (described as Lot 31, Block 11 in 1995 nomination)**

**1907**

**Contributing (Was Contributing in 1995)**

The annex has a concrete foundation, sandstone walls, and a layer of concrete with a metal cap (added post-1907) over a flat roof. The south and west elevations have exposed sandstone; the north elevation is stuccoed. The east elevation was historically attached to the hotel; it is currently covered in what appears to be asphalt cladding. The façade (south elevation) is symmetrical. Paired one-over-one windows are centered; a door and one-over-one window flanks them. The window openings have sandstone sills and lintels. Above the paired windows is a carved stone that reads “1907”. The westernmost window is boarded. A concrete stoop accesses the westernmost door. This is the entrance to the business. The easternmost door is wood-and-glass with a wood screen door. It appears to be historic, is painted the color of the sandstone, and does not appear operable.

**Trailer House**

**Portions of Lots 31-33, Block 11**

**c.1970**

**Noncontributing**

This trailer house is located behind (north of) the Alexander Hotel Annex and Quonset hut that comprise the Last Chance Saloon. It straddles parcels of land taxed with these properties and does not have a street address.

**104 Main**

**Date Unknown**

**Noncontributing (Was Noncontributing in 1995 nomination)**

This wide, rectangular building has metal siding and a variety of window types. It was described as extensively modified in the 1995 nomination.

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**Marty Store**

**110 Main (described as Lot 16, Block 11 in 1995 nomination)**

**c.1900**

**Contributing (Was Contributing in 1995)**

This building has changed relatively little since the 1995 nomination. A shed-roofed, wood awning supported by four square posts has been removed. Additionally, a green, seam-metal roof has been applied and a small pediment decorating the center of the false-front cornice is missing. Otherwise, the building retains good integrity.

The wood-framed building is clad in metal siding that simulates rusticated stone. The façade (south elevation) retains its ornate pressed metal cornice. The storefront has a recessed entry with double doors. The wood doors have four panels below two lights. Large single-pane sidelights flank the entry. The storefront windows on either side of the entry have two large panes. Transoms cap all windows and the entry, and wood bulkheads support the windows. A concrete pad, which once supported the awning posts, remains.

**Isham Barber Shop**

**Main (No Street Number) (described as Lot 15, Block 11 in 1995 nomination)**

**1909**

**Contributing (Was Contributing in 1995 nomination)**

This building has changed relatively little since the 1995 nomination. The wooden brackets on the cornice are gone. Otherwise, the false-front building retains good integrity.

The building has a gabled roof with asphalt shingles. The wood cornice is deteriorating. Clapboard sheaths all elevations and the façade (south elevation) has a wood door with three vertical lights flanked by paired one-over-one wood windows. All fenestration has simple wooden pediments.

**Citizens Bank (Buffalo Gap Townhall)**

**200 Main**

**1910**

**Contributing (Was Contributing in 1995 nomination)**

This building has changed relatively little since the 1995 nomination. The red sandstone building has a shed roof hid by a stone parapet on the east and south elevations. The corner entrance is canted with a wood/glass door and a transom window. Quasi-crenelated stonework caps the entrance with the bank's name and date of construction carved below. The entrance and window openings have smooth stone lintels; the window openings also have smooth stone sills. Windows are metal with the top panel infilled. The north and west elevations are stuccoed.



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**Buffalo Gap Congregational Church**

**205 Main (described as Lots 4-7, Block 13 in 1995 nomination)**

**1889 (moved to current location in 1909)**

**Noncontributing (Was Contributing in 1995 nomination) (Noncontributing outbuildings, 2)**

This building has changed significantly since the 1995 nomination. New siding (vinyl or metal) has replaced wood clapboard, tall lancet windows have been replaced by smaller one-over-one windows on the main volume, and one-over-one windows have replaced lancet arch louvers in the belfry. The cumulative impacts of these changes make the church noncontributing.

The property also contains two noncontributing outbuildings. One is a gabled, wood-framed outbuilding with a shed roof addition. This structure appears to be old enough to predate 1995, but was not mentioned in the inventory. The other is a gabled, pre-fabricated garage-like structure clad in metal. It postdates 1995.

**Buffalo Gap Auditorium**

**209 Main (described as Lots 19-20, Block 13 in the 1995 nomination)**

**1908**

**Contributing (Was Contributing in 1995 nomination)**

Positive and negative material integrity changes have taken place since the 1995 nomination. Asbestos/cement shingles that clad the walls at the time of nomination were removed to expose the original clapboard on the east, west, and south elevations. Sometime after nomination, the façade (north elevation) was clad with non-historic board-and-batten on the upper level which covered a small window. Vertical wood siding was applied to the lower level. Waist high balusters were added to the porch and double metal doors replaced wood doors. A covered porch and egress were also added to the east elevation. However, the building retains enough integrity to remain Contributing.

The false-front building retains its stepped pediment and two-over-two double hung wood windows. It has a concrete foundation and roof clad with seam metal. The wood porch on the east elevation also has a seam metal roof. A small wood stoop on the west elevation accesses one of two doors found on this side.

**Second Street**

**Texaco Station and Café**

**101 N Second Street (described as Lot 14, Block 11 in the 1995 nomination)**

**1931-32**

**Contributing (Was Contributing in 1995)**

This building has changed some since the 1995 nomination. Most openings have been boarded over, a section of historic metal siding has been lost on the west elevation, and seam metal has been added to the bottom two feet of the south and west elevations. However, the building retains enough integrity to remain Contributing.

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False-fronts face both Main and Second Streets with a cutaway corner in between. The wood-framed building retains historic pressed metal siding on its primary elevations (south and west) with new seam metal cladding the north and east elevations. The roof is also clad in seam metal. Wood windows are original though most are covered. Standard doors are wood and garage doors are fiberglass.

The southwest facing cutaway section is the primary façade. It contains a centered wood door with three-lights above; the door is flanked by four-pane windows. A pediment crowns the parapet above the door. The south elevation contains a five-panel wood door and a one-over-one wood window. The west elevation has a one-over-one window and two garage doors. A pediment is centered on the parapet.

### **Telephone Shed and Relay Station (Golden West)**

**104 N Second (current legal is Lot 6, Block 10)**

**Date Unknown**

**Noncontributing (Was Noncontributing in 1995 nomination)**

This is a small, L-shaped building with metal siding and a flat roof.

### **Four-Stall Garage**

**No Street Address (not described in 1995 nomination; Lot 12-13, Block 11)**

**Date Unknown**

**Noncontributing**

This rectangular structure is clad in vertical boards on the north, south, and west elevations. The east elevation has four garage doors. The structure's shed roof is covered in metal. It is within the 1995 district boundary but was not mentioned in the inventory. A small portion of the structure is visible in a 1995 nomination photo; its cladding is undeterminable but appears different from the 2023 cladding. It is adjacent to, but set back from, the Dalbey General Store.

### **Dalbey General Store**

**107 N Second (described as Lots 12-13, Block 11 in 1995 nomination, but should be Lot 11, Block 11)**

**c.1912**

**Contributing (Was Contributing in 1995 nomination)**

This building has not changed since the 1995 nomination. It is constructed of native sandstone. The façade (west elevation) has a wood entry door with two lights above and transom; all are missing their glass and have been boarded. A pair of large wood doors on a track cover the storefront. According to the 1995 nomination, the original storefront is intact. Since the building appears unchanged, an assumption has been made that the storefront remains.

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**Metal Building**

**Lot 10, Block 11 (not described in 1995 nomination)**

**c.1970**

**Noncontributing**

This is a small, metal building with metal sliding doors. It is within the 1995 district boundary but was not mentioned in the inventory.

**People's Telephone and Telegraph Company Building**

**102 Second Street (described as N25' of Lots 7-8, Block 10 in 1995 nomination)**

**c.1910**

**Contributing (Was Contributing in 1995 nomination) (Garage, Noncontributing)**

This building has changed relatively little since the 1995 nomination. The wood door on the façade (east elevation) has been replaced by a metal/fiberglass door with a single light.

The narrow false-front building is wood-framed and covered with stucco. The façade (east elevation) has a plain wood cornice. Windows are one-over-one with plain wood surrounds. A metal door on the south elevation likely postdates the original nomination.

A noncontributing saltbox-roofed garage is located behind the building. It has modern board-and-batten siding. It was likely constructed after the 1995 nomination.

**Buffalo Gap Town Hall and Firehall**

**108 N Second (described as Lots 4-5, Block 10 in 1995 nomination)**

**c.1912**

**Contributing (Was Contributing in 1995 nomination)**

This building has changed some since the 1995 nomination. The entry door (original) was moved from the southeast corner to the northeast corner on the façade; this led to the removal of paired one-over-one windows. However, the building retains enough integrity to remain Contributing.

The false-front building has a stepped parapet and is wood-framed clad in stucco. The roof is a synthetic material. The façade (east elevation) features a large, wood-panel garage door and a standard-sized door. The other elevations contain primarily one-over-one wood windows (some of which are boarded) with simple wood surrounds.

**Firehall, Additional Building (metal building to the north)**

**108 N Second (described as Lots 4-5, Block 10 in 1995 nomination)**

**c.1980**

**Noncontributing (Was Noncontributing in 1995 nomination) (Outbuilding, Noncontributing)**

This building was less than fifty years old in 1995. It has been assigned a circa 1980 construction date. It's framing material is unknown. It is clad in metal siding. It has paired, hinged double wood doors.

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There is a noncontributing, rectangular, stucco outbuilding behind the firehall. It was not included in the 1995 inventory.

### **Stockman's Bar**

**110 N Second (current legal is Lot 1 & N15' Lot 2, Block 11)**

**c.1908**

**Noncontributing (Was Noncontributing in 1995 nomination)**

This false-front building was built circa 1908, altered in the 1930s, altered before the 1995 nomination, and altered again after the nomination. It is comprised of four volumes. The façade (east elevation) has horizontal wood siding with horizontal strips, possibly attempting to imitate board-and-batten. Other elevations, and the roof, are clad in metal. A shed-roofed addition is on the south elevation.

### **Buffalo Gap State Bank**

**200 N Second Street (described as Lot 16, Block 7 in the 1995 nomination; but should be S25' Lot 16, Block 7)**

**1890**

**Contributing (Was Contributing in 1995 nomination)**

This building has changed some since the 1995 nomination. The triple windows on the east elevation have their upper sashes infilled with clapboard. On the south elevation, a small wood awning has been added. However, the building retains enough integrity to remain Contributing.

Sitting on the corner of Walnut and Second Street, the building has two primary elevations (east and south). The roof is gabled and clad with metal. Clapboard siding is found on all elevations and windows are large, wood two-over-twos. The structure has a cutaway entrance at the southeast corner; it has a modern metal-and-glass door, transom window, decorative wood pediment, and false front. The east elevation continues the false-front and contains a set of two-over-two triple windows with their upper sashes infilled with clapboard. The south elevation has two-over-two windows and a metal door with a boarded transom. The building is currently used as a post office.

### **Trailer/Metal Building**

**204 N Second**

**Trailer 1977, Metal Building Unknown**

**Noncontributing (Was Noncontributing in 1995 nomination)**

This trailer house is covered by/incorporated into a metal building.

### **Clark Store**

**No Street Address (described as N25' Lot 16, Block 7 in the 1995 nomination)**

**1890**

**Contributing (Was Contributing in 1995 nomination)**

This building has not changed since the 1995 nomination. It is a wood-framed, false-front structure with a wood awning supported by square columns. The façade (east elevation) has clapboard on the false-front with brackets at the cornice. The storefront is comprised of a

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centered wood door flanked by canted sidelights. Large display windows flank the entrance. All fenestration on the façade has transom windows. Many openings have been boarded. Below the storefront windows are paneled, wood bulkheads.

The gabled roof is clad in metal. The north, south, and west elevations are clad in asphalt siding; windows on these elevations are primarily wood one-over one.

## Walnut

### Modern Woodmen of America Hall

**110 Walnut Street (described as Lot 10-11, Block 6 in the 1995 nomination)**

**c.1902**

**Contributing (Was Contributing in 1995 nomination)**

This building has not changed since the 1995 nomination.

The false-front building is wood-framed and clad in stucco. Its gabled roof is covered with metal. A wood-panel door is centered on the façade (south elevation) and flanked by large display windows topped with three-pane transoms. Wood brackets are found at the cornice. Window openings on the east, west, and north elevations are boarded. A shed-roofed addition on the north elevation has a wood door.

### Park

**Corner of Walnut and Second Streets (described as Lot 10, Block 6 in the 1995 nomination)**

**c.1902**

**Contributing (Was Contributing in 1995 nomination)**

This small park is located between the Modern Woodmen Hall and Second Street. It has a mix of old and new playground equipment. A stone monument with a bell is located at the southwest corner of the lot. Cottonwood and other trees line the park along the streets.

### Wilson Hotel

**107 Walnut Street (described as Lot 7, Block 11 in the 1995 nomination; current legal is Lots 6-7, Block 11)**

**1892**

**Noncontributing (Was Contributing in 1995 nomination)**

This building's façade has changed since the 1995 nomination. Changes in design, fenestration, and the addition of conjectural features make the building noncontributing.

## Demolished

### Alexander Hotel and Café

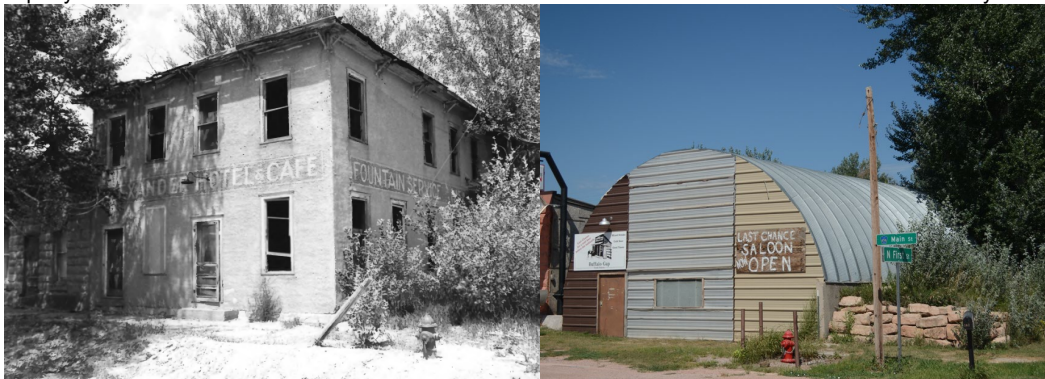
**102 Main (described as Lots 32-33, Block 11 in 1995 nomination)**

A Quonset building now occupies this space.

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The hotel in circa 1995 and the current building.

**Park**

**209 Main (described as Lots 11-18, Block 13 in the 1995 nomination)**

The 1995 nomination detailed a small park with a baseball diamond lying between the auditorium and Congregational church. This resource is no longer extant. All that remains on the site are five round poles near the north side of the property that likely comprised part of a baseball field backstop.



Void that once contained a baseball diamond.

**Removed From Boundary**

**Eugene Griffis Store**

**No Street Number (described as Lot 35-36, Block 13 in 1995 nomination)**

**1910**

This building has changed significantly since the 1995 nomination and can no longer contribute to the district. The storefront configuration has been altered/infilled, a flush addition was added to the south elevation, and non-historic board-and-batten siding has been applied to the façade and addition. A covered porch has also been added. The building no longer contributes to the district. As this was the only building south of Block 13's alley that was Contributing in 1995, the boundary has been adjusted to run east-west through the alley. (See Map)

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The store circa 1995 and 2003.

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## 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.)

- 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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years



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**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Exploration/Settlement

Economics

Agriculture

Social History

Architecture

**Period of Significance**

1885-1932

**Significant Dates**

1885, 1895

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

n/a

**Cultural Affiliation**

n/a

**Architect/Builder**

n/a

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Buffalo Gap Historic Commercial District is significant in the areas of **Agriculture, Exploration/Settlement, Economics, Social History, and Architecture** under **Criteria A and C**. Its period of significance (POS), 1885-1932, begins with the town's platting and concludes with the cessation of construction within the district. The original POS extended to 1939 but has been revised to better reflect the period in which the district achieved its significance. Its level of significance is best expressed as regional to the Black Hills and western South Dakota.

The district's collection of turn-of-the century buildings are core building types in both form and function from western South Dakota's settlement period. Wood false-fronts and small-scale sandstone buildings represent a typical frontier town that reflects a combination of high economic aspirations and limited capital. The businesses these buildings housed – general stores, land offices, banks, agricultural stores – are also characteristic of the homesteading/town building period. The district's agricultural and economic significance are intrinsically tied. As Buffalo Gap developed into a major cattle shipping center, agriculture dominated the economy with retail businesses, banks, and hotels catering to that industry almost to the point of exclusivity. The churches, lodges, and community buildings within the district also convey the initial viability of the town as residents established familiar societal institutions.

#### **Historical Background (from the 1995 nomination)**

Buffalo Gap was originally established as a stage stop on the Sydney-Deadwood stage trail in the mid-1870s. The town is located at the intersection of two historic trails, one running along the eastern side of the Black Hills and one providing access to the interior Black Hills through a nearby natural pass called Buffalo Gap or Buffalo Gate. The latter was a migration route for both bison and Native Americans prior to non-native contact. This historic trail was used by the first non-native explorers in the area, including Jedediah Smith in 1823. George and Abe Boland established the Buffalo Gap stage station in 1874 or 1875 with accommodations for travelers and livestock. The Buffalo Gap post office took the form of a pigeon-holed beer case. This was used to route all mail for the Black Hills. Little else is known of the appearance of the original Buffalo Gap.

The town is surrounded on three sides by the dry, grassy plains country of western South Dakota. To the west lie the Black Hills proper, accessible through the natural pass from which the town takes its name. The town of Buffalo Gap owes its existence to a series of events. These events facilitated various attempts to turn the natural resources of the area into profit. The story of Buffalo Gap is thus closely tied to local and national economic trends. The three events that most directly shaped Buffalo Gap were the discovery of gold in the Black Hills in 1874, the closing of the southern ranges to Texas cattle drovers in the 1880s, and the passage of various forms of homestead legislation in the late nineteenth century.

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Although the gold rush was beginning to cool in 1880, the influx of settlers into the Black Hills continued. The stage line and early settlement at Buffalo Gap continued to prosper for a full decade before the coming of the first railroad to the Black Hills. The establishment of rail service was delayed because the Sioux Reservation occupied virtually all of South Dakota west of the Missouri River, except for the Black Hills area, which was removed from the reservation in 1877. In 1885, the Fremont, Elkhorn and North Western reached the Black Hills by skirting the reservation to the south. This spelled the end for the stage lines, but ensured Buffalo Gap's continued prosperity. The tracks followed the old trail along the east side of the Black Hills. The town of Buffalo Gap was platted late in 1885 about half a mile south of Boland's stage station. The new town would continue in the role of way station for travelers and as a connection point for both the wagon roads to the central Black Hills and the Elkhorn's branch line to Hot Springs in the southern Hills. It would soon take on another role as one of the busiest cattle shipping points in the nation.

Although some citizens and businesses followed the railroad north to Rapid City in 1886, Buffalo Gap boomed in the late 1880s. By 1880, big cattle outfits had filled the Black Hills and West River country with Texas cattle. The lush open ranges of the northern plains, growing beef markets in Chicago and the eastern cities, the demands of the burgeoning Black Hills and East River populations, and government contracts for beef annuities on the northern American Indian reservations ensured astonishing profits for cattle drovers during this period. Buffalo Gap was the main shipping point for cattle from the Black Hills and Cheyenne River ranges. At the same time that Texas cattle were being shipped out, rail shipments of eastern cattle breeds were brought into the area to improve the local beef and dairy herds. Horse-breeding also developed as an important local industry during this period. Buffalo Gap was reported to have had 142 businesses during the 1880 boom, many of them hotels, saloons, and honky-tonks. Maintaining some semblance of law and order was a constant challenge for the town, filled as it was with range cowboys "on a spree" and persons who made their living off of them in various ways.

Things began to quiet down in the early 1890s. The big "die-out" in the winter of 1886-87 had reduced the northern cattle herds by as much as seventy-five percent and an influx of homesteaders threatened the continued existence of the open range. Cattle droving no longer represented easy money. The need for extensive capital investment in land, fences, and grazing leases put an end to the beef bonanza. Cattle raising became a localized industry. The big outfits abandoned the area to the mid-sized ranchers who had operated alongside them during the cattle boom period and to the homesteaders who would attempt to forge farms from the open range. Would-be farmers who had taken claims in the area as the cattlemen moved out encountered bad years between 1889 and 1894. Severe droughts in those two years, combined with the economic panic of 1893, led to extensive crop losses and eventual bankruptcy of many of the homesteaders. Defeated by drought, poor soil, and economic uncertainty, many of the early homesteaders abandoned their claims. Those who stayed began a process of diversifying into cattle raising and acquiring larger land holdings that could support viable ranching operations.

In 1895, fire destroyed much of the central business district of Buffalo Gap. Many of the businesses did not rebuild, and the streets of Buffalo Gap would contain vacant lots from that

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time on. The town underwent another period of growth, however, in the first decades of the twentieth century. At the turn of the century, western South Dakota was one of the last frontiers still open to homesteading. Between 1905 and 1915, Buffalo Gap was on the upswing again. Most of the buildings still standing in the historic commercial district date to this period. Town builders in this period were attempting to establish a stable, prosperous community that would promote the agrarian ideal of the renewed homestead movement. A dry-farming movement was promoted by universities, railroads, and government agencies. According to the proponents of "Scientific Soil Culture," would-be farmers could overcome the drought problem by adopting new methods and crops.

Severe drought in 1910 and 1911 dashed the hopes of the new farm movement. Eastern Custer County was hit hard by the drought, but was able to maintain its air of optimism. The cattle ranchers were able to not only survive the drought, but to benefit from it by acquiring title to the abandoned homesteads through payment of back taxes or outright purchase. This ensured the continued existence of Buffalo Gap, but as a cow town, not a farming village. The town auditorium, fairgrounds, community building, and fraternal lodge halls continued to be used for a wide range of community activities from fairs to dances to traveling shows. The pioneer ranchers of eastern Custer County had been in the area two, three, or four decades by then. They formed the nucleus of the town, providing most of its retail business and community leadership. Among the more prominent citizens were: Frank Stewart, a leading force in the South Dakota Stock Growers Association; Norman Streeter, rancher and two-term state representative; C.B. Jensen, horse-breeder and businessman; Leslie Jensen, president of Peoples Telephone and Telegraph and governor of South Dakota in 1937-38; and Joseph Brunschmid, proprietor of the Alexander Hotel.

Buffalo Gap continued to prosper through the 1920s. A high school opened in 1923. In 1926, the Nolan grain elevator was built in response to a shift toward grain farming. The town continued to serve as a major cattle depot. Although the town was no longer growing, efforts to improve the town – including better water service, concrete sidewalks, and gas streetlights – attest to its prosperity. The area economy continued to respond to outside trends. The rise of the automobile and tractor spelled the demise of most of the local horse-breeding industry, but cattle raising continued to be profitable. The Texaco station café was built after automobiles became popular. Rural population shrank as machinery replaced people on farms and ranches. Better transportation allowed people to shop and seek medical services in the larger towns of Rapid City and Hot Springs.

As transportation improved, Buffalo Gap dwindled. The construction of a state highway through Hot Springs and Custer State Park diverted traffic away from Buffalo Gap. When the road running along the east side of the Black Hills was finally improved from a nearly impassible strip of gravel to a paved highway, it went around, not through, the town. The North Western discontinued its spur line to Hot Springs in 1938 and stopped shipping cattle from Buffalo Gap about 1953. These events, along with the severe economic depression experienced throughout the state in the late 1920s and the 1930s, caused the rapid near-abandonment of Buffalo Gap's commercial district. By 1960 most of the town's businesses were closed for good.

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### Significance

The Buffalo Gap Commercial Historic District is significant under Criterion A in the area of exploration and settlement as a frontier town. Its layout and pre-1895 buildings illustrate the quick platting and development of western towns as railroads entered new areas. The removal of the original town to a site selected by the railroad and its T-shaped layout were typical of railroad towns. Developers worked with railroads to locate towns at regular intervals along the tracks. The T-town template could be applied quickly and easily. Since Buffalo Gap already existed as a transportation hub for early exploration and settlement, it was simply reshaped to fit the needs of the railroad. Like other railroad towns, Buffalo Gap was platted just in advance of the railroad and grew to a substantial size almost instantly. The old Buffalo Gap State Bank building constructed during the frenzy surrounding the arrival of the railroad began as a combination bank and land office. It exemplifies the need for financial and legal services on the developing western frontier. Other early buildings, including the Wilson Hotel and Clark's Store reflect the needs of emigrants arriving to settle the Black Hills and West River country. The 1898 Methodist Church evokes a different side of Buffalo Gap; the desire to establish community institutions to lend order, respect, and sociability to the growing town.

The district is also significant under Criterion A in the area of agriculture. The town was one of the largest cattle shipping depots in the nation during the big cattle era. It retained its importance as a cattle shipping point into the mid-twentieth century. Businesses such as the Alexander Hotel and Café, the mercantiles, banks, and grocery stores were frequented by cowboys and cattle ranchers on their visits to town. Later, these enterprises served the growing population of homesteaders entering the area.

The Buffalo Gap Auditorium bears witness to the introduction of a mixed farming and ranching economy in the area during the early twentieth century. The auditorium was built to house agricultural exhibits for the Buffalo Gap Fair. The fair included a rodeo and stock show, as well as crop exhibits. It served to showcase and promote area livestock and crops as well as to educate farmers and ranchers about innovative techniques and new strains of livestock and grain. The auditorium, churches, lodges, and other community buildings reflect the need to remedy the isolation of ranch and homestead life. Church, fairs, shows, and social organizations brought farmers and ranchers together on a regular basis and helped galvanize the scattered population into a discrete community.

The Nolan grain elevator is one of the more direct links to the agricultural past of Buffalo Gap. It represents the rise of grain farming in the region in the 1920s and remains an important stopping place for area ranchers today. The elevator and its associated buildings also provide a working example of several aspects of local agriculture: the sale and storage of grain crops; the search for new and better crop varieties; and the investment of capital in agricultural pursuits.

The Buffalo Gap Commercial Historic District is also significant under Criterion A in the area of economics. The present appearance of the district evokes a turn-of-the-century frontier boom town, with rows of simple storefronts closely spaced along the main streets of the district. A

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closer look reveals both vacant lots and abandoned buildings that signal the slow retreat of business and capital from the town. The two banks provided capital to the area, as well as serving as tangible symbols of its former prosperity and active business climate. The Alexandria Hotel was a stopping place for ranchers and businessmen engaged in exporting cattle, horses, and grain and importing breed stock and sundries. As long as the railroad stopped at Buffalo Gap, business deals were struck in the Alexander Café. The continued use of the community buildings and church contrasts with the closure of nearly all of the businesses in the district. This provides a striking visual illustration of the transformation of the community from a commercial center to a ranching center with primarily social, rather than economic, functions.

The district is significant under Criterion A in the area of social history, as well. Most of the standing buildings were constructed during the homestead era. Homesteading was a huge social experiment which attempted to transform the remaining American frontier into farming communities according to idealistic principles. The bustling, but orderly, rural town represented by the blocks of storefronts and banks in the district gives some notion of the homestead movement at its height. It was during the same time that the auditorium, town hall, and lodges were built and/or improved. These exemplified the ideal of community cooperation that farm life was supposed to promote. The failure of dryland farming in the 1920s and 1930s ended promotion of the area as farm country; however, the disintegration of community that the agricultural movement had feared did not take place with the return of cattle ranching as the principle economic pursuit of the area. The survival of churches, lodges, and community fair throughout this transition provides an important insight into the social history of western South Dakota.

Under Criterion C, in the area of architecture, the district provides excellent examples of late nineteenth and early twentieth century vernacular commercial styles. The western false-front style is especially well represented. The three adjacent buildings on Main are fine examples both of the false-front style and of the arrangement of commercial buildings in tightly packed rows. The Marty store and the Texaco station/café show the extensive use of elaborate pressed metal siding and cornices. Clarks store, the telegraph building, and the old town hall are other good examples of the western false-front style.

Another variant of the false-front style is provided by two stone buildings, the Alexander Hotel Annex and the Dalbey store. These buildings have carefully finished stone fronts supported by less decorative side and rear walls. While they do not exhibit the large false fronts typical of the wood frame commercial buildings, their fronts extend above the level of the shed or flat roofs, making the building appear larger than they really are. Woodman Hall provides another example of a simple, single-story rectangular church modified for use as a lodge hall. The stucco cladding, and two-room floor plan with a large room in front and small room behind are typical of non-residential buildings of the period.

The T-shaped street plan, long, narrow commercial lots, and regular street grid of Buffalo Gap are typical of early railroad towns in the American west. The lack of landscaping and the native

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trees regularly spaced along the streets also typify western frontier towns. The park echoes the pattern of no landscaping except for rows of native trees along the street side.

The streetscape produced by the closely-spaced false-front buildings reflects the unique circumstances of the western American frontier town. The western streetscape evoked the look of the eastern cities with streets enclosed by tall, rectangular facades. False-fronts were a means of recreating the eastern streetscape as well as could be achieved given the small volume requirements of the frontier buildings. The false-front lined streets lent an air of permanency and prosperity to the young towns springing up on the frontier. The use of architectural styles popular in eastern cities a decade or two earlier also strove to produce an image of urban civilization on the frontier. Brackets, sheet metal ceilings and cornice, pediments, window crowns, canted doorways, and ornamental door hardware all represent efforts to lend style and credibility to Buffalo Gap as a locus of future prosperity.

Although the archeological potential of the district has not been formally evaluated, the presence of vacant lots and old foundations strongly suggests the presence of intact archeological deposits relating to the early settlement of the town. Expected types of archeological remains within the district include privies, trash middens, and the remains of commercial buildings and community meeting places. Something may remain at the site of the old depot, as well, although the foundations were obliterated when the depot was razed.

Overall, the Buffalo Gap Historic Commercial District is a relatively undisturbed early twentieth century western streetscape. Both standing structures and vacant lots tell the story of the rise and fall of this frontier town, as it struggled to find a lasting economic niche.

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

### Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Casey, Robert J. *The Black Hills and Their Incredible Characters*. New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1949.

Clifford, Mike. "Long Dog's Wild Town." *Bits and Pieces*, Newcastle: WY, 1965.

de Mandat-Grancey, Baron E. *Buffalo Gap: A French Ranch in Dakota, 1887*. Translated by Phillis Gorum, reprint of 1890 original, Lame Johnny Press, 1981.

Eastern Custer County Historical Society. *Our Yesterdays, 1870-1970*. Maceline, MO: Pichel Yearbooks Inc., 1970.

Hufstetler, Mark. *Custer County Historic Sites Survey, Phase III Final Project Report*. Vermillion, SD: South Dakota State Historic Preservation Center, 1991.

Lee, Bob and Dick Williams. *Last Grass Frontier: The South Dakota Stock Grower Heritage*. Sturgis, SD: Black Hills Publishers, 1964.

Mills, Rick W. *Making the Grade: A Century of Black Hills Railroading*. Hermosa, SD: 1985.

Parker, Watson and Hugh K. Lambert. *Black Hills Ghost Towns, second edition*. Chicago: Swallow Press, 1980.

Streeter, Eben and Eva. Personal Communication, 1994.

Sundstrom, Jessie Y., ed. *Custer County History to 1976*. Rapid City, SD: Printing Inc., 1977.

### Newspapers

*Buffalo Gap Gazette*, 1890-1952. Files at the office of the  
*Custer County Chronicle*, Custer, SD.

*Buffalo Gap Republican*, 1890-1952. Files at the office of the  
*Custer County Chronicle*, Custer, SD.

*Custer County Chronicle*, 1890-1952. Files at the office of the  
*Custer County Chronicle*, Custer, SD.



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**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 # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** Naming conventions in the SD SHPO database begin with "CU002" for all buildings in the district. (each property has a five-digit identifier following "CU002").

**10. Geographical Data**

- Acreeage of Property** approximately 9 acres
- Acreeage Previously listed in the National Register** approximately 10 acres
- Acreeage of Boundary Decrease** approximately 1 acre removed

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- 1. Latitude: \_\_\_\_\_ Longitude: \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. Latitude: \_\_\_\_\_ Longitude: \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. Latitude: \_\_\_\_\_ Longitude: \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. Latitude: \_\_\_\_\_ Longitude: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Or**

**UTM References**

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or  NAD 1983

	Z	Easting	Northing
1.	14	151221.89	4824648.33
2.	14	151308.64	4824643.83
3.	14	151305.46	4824582.48
4.	14	151319.36	4824582.16
5.	14	151318.41	4824521.96
6.	14	151448.2	4824575.47
7.	14	151439.06	4824466.29
8.	14	151453.35	4824465.11
9.	14	151445.56	4824365.4
10.	14	151445.26	4824367.83
11.	14	151426.07	4824467.4
12.	14	151257.25	4824474.85
13.	14	151249.25	4824429.76
14.	14	151075.17	4824377.68
15.	14	151080.78	4824485.75
16.	14	151211.47	4824481.13

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

See attached map comprised of UTM points.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The 2023 boundary is similar to the original 1995 boundary. A small parcel containing no historic properties was removed from the southwest corner. This reduction does not impact the visual continuity of the district. Minor adjustments/clarifications to the boundary were also made on the east, southeast, and northeast sections of the district. In the southeast, the boundary was clarified to include the entire Nolan Feed and Seed Complex. The 1995 boundary line on the map cut the complex in half, while Section 7 referenced the entire lot

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the complex occupied. The 2023 amendment includes the entire lot and redraws the line on the map to reflect this. The eastern boundary line was also adjusted slightly to run down the right-of-way at Main and 1<sup>st</sup>. The northeast corner was also adjusted slightly through vacant lots to follow lot lines more closely. No resources were impacted by this adjustment. New UTMs were taken for all boundary points. The 2023 boundary reflects the same significance arguments made in the 1995 nomination. Adjustments in the 2023 nomination were made to best reflect the intent of the 1995 nomination and clarify minor inconsistency typical of the era's technology.

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### 11. Form Prepared By

name/title: CB Nelson, Linea Sundstrom (author of 1995 nomination)

organization: SD SHPO

street & number: 900 Governors Drive

city or town: Pierre state: SD zip code: 57501

e-mail chrisb.nelson@state.sd.us

telephone: N/A

date: 1 December 2023

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### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

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### Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

### Photo Log

Name of Property: Buffalo Gap Historic District Amendment

City or Vicinity: Buffalo Gap

County: Custer

State: SD

Photographer: Duncan Trau

Date Photographed: 1 September 2023

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 14.

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for nominations 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.460 et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

Tier 1 – 60-100 hours  
Tier 2 – 120 hours  
Tier 3 – 230 hours  
Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.

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SD\_CusterCounty\_BuffaloGapHistoricDistrictAmendment\_0001. Looking SW at 101 E. Main. Rancher Feed and Seed, historically Nolin Feed and Seed.



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SD\_CusterCounty\_BuffaloGapHistoricDistrictAmendment2023\_0002. Looking N at 102 Main.



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SD\_CusterCounty\_BuffaloGapHistoricDistrictAmendment2023\_0003. Looking N at (from right) Marty Store (110 Main), Isham Barbershop (no address), and 101 N Second (Texaco Station).





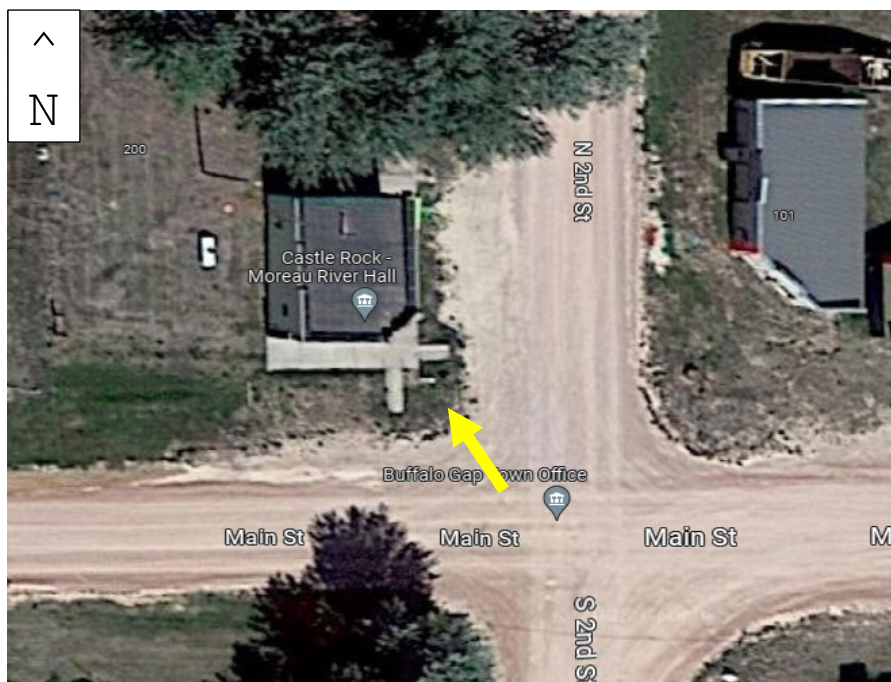
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SD\_CusterCounty\_BuffaloGapHistoricDistrictAmendment2023\_0004. Looking NW at 200 Main. Citizens Bank, now Buffalo Gap Townhall.



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SD\_CusterCounty\_BuffaloGapHistoricDistrictAmendment2023\_0005. Looking at NE corner of Main and N Second at 101 N Second (Texaco Station), Isham Barbershop (no address), and Marty Store (110 Main).



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SD\_CusterCounty\_BuffaloGapHistoricDistrictAmendment2023\_0006. Looking NE at 110 Walnut. This was the old Modern Woodman of America Hall.



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SD\_CusterCounty\_BuffaloGapHistoricDistrictAmendment2023\_0007. Looking SE at 209 Main. This is the Buffalo Gap Auditorium.



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SD\_CusterCounty\_BuffaloGapHistoricDistrictAmendment2023\_0008. Looking N down Second Street.



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SD\_CusterCounty\_BuffaloGapHistoricDistrictAmendment2023\_0009. Looking NE at the NE corner of N Second and Walnut Street. This is a park.



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SD\_CusterCounty\_BuffaloGapHistoricDistrictAmendment2023\_0010. Looking W at 102 N Second.



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SD\_CusterCounty\_BuffaloGapHistoricDistrictAmendment2023\_0011. Looking NW at 108 N Second. This is the old firehall, next to it is a newer metal building associated with it.





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SD\_CusterCounty\_BuffaloGapHistoricDistrictAmendment2023\_0012. Looking SE at 107 N Second. This is the Dalbey General Store.



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SD\_CusterCounty\_BuffaloGapHistoricDistrictAmendment2023\_0013. Looking SE at the Clark Store (no address) on Second Street.



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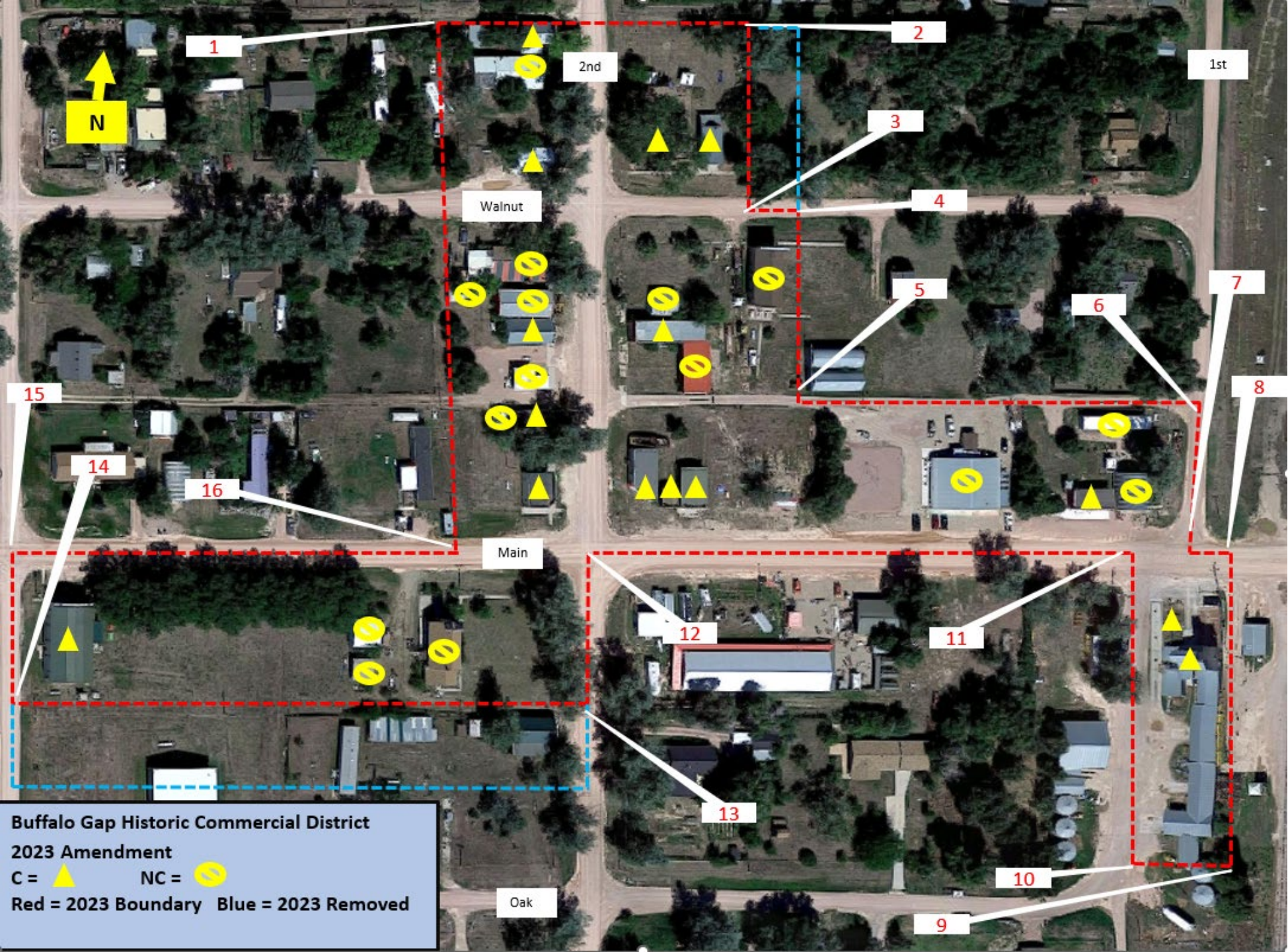


SD\_CusterCounty\_BuffaloGapHistoricDistrictAmendment2023\_0014. Looking NW at 200 N Second. This was the Buffalo Gap State Bank, currently the post office.



# Buffalo Gap Historic District Amendment (2023)



Removed Areas  
In Blue



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C = NC =   
Red = 2023 Boundary Blue = 2023 Removed

# Buffalo Gap Historic District Amendment (2023)



**Buffalo Gap Historic Commercial District  
2023 Amendment**  
C =     NC =   
Red = 2023 Boundary    Blue = 2023 Removed