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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form

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This form is for use in documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Type all entries.

A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

Ranches of Southwestern Custer County, South Dakota.

B. Associated Historic Contexts

Ranching in Southwestern Custer County, South Dakota. (statewide contexts from the the South Dakota Historical Preservation Plan include: IV. Permanent Rural and Urban Pioneer Settlement, A. Claim Era; and IV. C. Farm and Ranch Development.

C. Geographical Data

The geographic location of the properties in this context is limited to the southwest corner of Custer County, South Dakota. Lying on the western foothills of the Black Hills, the area is south of U. S. Highway 16, west of Jewel Cave National Monument, north of the Fall River County line, and east of the Wyoming border.

☐ See continuation sheet

D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Planning and Evaluation.

Signature of certifying official — Date: 5/18/90

State or Federal agency and bureau

I, hereby, certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

Beth Boland

Signature of the Keeper of the National Register — Date: 7/5/90

E. Statement of Historic Contexts

Discuss each historic context listed in Section B.

[XX] See continuation sheet

STATEMENT OF HISTORIC CONTEXTS:

This multiple property nomination records a set of historic ranches chosen because of their similarity of function, property type, age, geography, and climate. The ranches also display considerable historical integrity when compared with other properties in the survey area. Topography in the area is broken by small rolling hills, sharp protruding hills, small creek beds, and large rock canyons. Although the earth is very fertile, topsoil is shallow, and a severe lack of water keeps most growth to a minimum. Much of the vegetation consists of thick meadows and scrubby sage brush. In the higher elevations, gnarled pine growth is common. To a newcomer, the land evokes a very "western" feeling, and seems more closely akin to Wyoming than to the rest of South Dakota.

Commonplace among the ranches in this region is the noticeable lack of irrigation in the midst of a semiarid environment. Yet, two of the nominated properties bear evidence of early, although unsuccessful, irrigation systems. Another prevalent theme is the leasing of thousands of acres of designated national forest preserves that lie in close proximity to the ranches. Great abundance of such public land made, and continues to make, cattle and sheep ranching feasible. Raising cattle in this thirsty environment requires as much as forty acres per animal. Despite the allotment of up to 640 acres on a "Stockgrowers Homestead," owners of the nominated ranches increased their working acreages by leasing public land.

The pattern of settlement in this area is different from elsewhere in South Dakota. Much of the emigration followed the movement of cattle herds. People came from the west, with Cheyenne, Wyoming, serving as the last supply base, and from the south, most immediately from Nebraska. Some also followed the longhorn trade from Texas. Direct European immigration to southwestern Custer County is not identifiable. Historically, the greatest industry in the survey area has been ranching, with emphasis on raising cattle, horses, and sheep. Lumbering and mining have also been influential, although more so in the north-central part of the county where timber and mineral resources are more abundant. The period of significance for this multiple property nomination has been determined by the dates of the individual ranches. The period of significance for this context extends from 1905 to 1940.

The Black Hills region was set aside as part of the Great Sioux Reservation by terms in the 1868 Laramie Treaty. For decades, however, the region was of considerable interest to whites who wanted to utilize its natural resources. It was the subject of several early explorations, and reports of the presence of gold in the region ran rampant. Finally in 1874, the U. S. Government sponsored a military expedition under the command of Lt. Col. George A. Custer

to investigate rumors about the region's potential. Cattle herds were introduced to the area at this time as a means of feeding the troops. Custer's men located gold along French Creek, near the present-day city of Custer, and later proclaimed that paying quantities of the precious metal existed there. A rush of fortune-seekers ensued, as people illegally entered the Hills to prospect for gold, despite threat of attack by hostile Sioux or expulsion by the U. S. Army. After much controversy, in 1877, the land was officially ceded from the Sioux and opened for settlement. Demand for fresh meat grew with the influx of miners and tradesmen.

In the late 19th Century, Custer County cattle growers were primarily large outfits with headquarters in Wyoming and Nebraska. There were local operations in the Black Hills and in "West River," South Dakota, in general, but near Custer they were mostly satellite operations of out-of-state outfits. The Sturgis and Goodell (S-and-G) cattle company, based in Cheyenne, Wyoming, was one of the biggest and earliest concerns in the area. In 1878, they established a camp about a half mile northwest of the present-day community of Dewey. It was the "S-and-G" that caused the community to grow. When the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad (now the Burlington Northern) reached the ranch in 1889 the company erected a permanent stop for stockyards. Like many other large cattle companies, the "S-and-G" was backed by millionaire money from the eastern United States. In their work entitled The Last Grass Frontier, Bob Lee and Dick Williams, assessed the situation this way: "Eastern capital, cowboy know-how, and the public domain was the combination that produced much of the nation's beef during the early stages of the cattle industry." (Lee and Williams, p. 100) Southwestern Custer County was no exception. Lee and Williams also point out that before 1900, with so much available public land, no one thought of buying or homesteading land for ranching. (p. 102)

The transition from open range ranching, especially using public land, to homesteading small claims, which removed much land from public domain, began in the 1880s when the land boom in the rest of South Dakota spread to Custer County. Many homesteaders attempted to farm in this area, without understanding the arid nature of the climate. The countryside is presently littered with homestead shacks that were probably abandoned shortly after construction. Farming was not feasible in this area without extensive irrigation, a prospect too costly for most settlers. Thus, some homesteaders attempted to ranch by acquiring more than the typical acreage for a farm. By means of regular homesteading, staking a timber claim, and using the preemption law, a person could acquire three quarter-sections (480 acres). Another practice was for adult sons or daughters to claim an available quarter-section near their parent's parcel, which when worked together provided additional acreage.

Although a few large companies like Sturgis and Goodell persisted, most of the ranches in this region until about 1915 were made up of a group of small claims. Then, in 1915, the Enlarged Homestead Act was amended to include South Dakota. Present residents in the Dewey/Elk Mountain area say that homesteading "was not legal until 1915, 1916." In fact, it was legal, it simply was not feasible. The original Homestead Act allowed a person to claim 160 acres, which was plenty in the humid areas of the eastern and mid-western United States. The Enlarged Homestead Act, passed in 1909, permitted homesteaders to claim up to 320 acres in areas that were considered to be semiarid. The politicians of South Dakota did not want their state to be given what they felt was a derogatory label, and the new legislation did not include South Dakota. But, by 1915, they recognized that the western part of the state was not supporting homesteading on 160 acres, and the Enlarged Homestead Act was amended to include South Dakota. The following year, the Stockgrowers Homestead Act was passed permitting ranch claims of 640 acres.

There was an interesting shift in demographics as the ranch economy moved from the open range to ranching on parcels claimed by individuals. During the open range years, the rancher did not live on the land. Lee and Williams state:

> His cattle occupied the range, but he rarely did himself. Rather, he most often lived in the Hills settlements and made only occasional trips to the grazing grounds to check on his herd's condition. (Lee and Williams, p. 126)

However, the Homestead Act brought the requirement of residency, forcing occupation for a percentage of the year. This movement aided the growth of small communities like Dewey, which could provide goods and services to rural inhabitants. With the revised homestead legislation in 1915 and 1916, homesteading boomed, providing merchants in Dewey with many new customers. During the early 1900s, Dewey and Newcastle, Wyoming, were the closest towns to the ranches included in this nomination. Custer City was too far away, and poor roads and the hills around Jewel Cave created additional barriers. Dewey remained an important livestock shipping center from its founding, in 1890, to the beginning of the Great Depression. By the 1940s, area sheep and cattle ranchers sold their stock in Newcastle or Chadron, Nebraska, while Dewey was losing population. (Kenneth Montgomery, phone conversation 12/4/88) Area residents now ally themselves with the cities of Edgemont, Custer, or Newcastle, Wyoming.

Three ranches included in this nomination represent distinct ways of acquiring land for ranching before the new legislation of 1915 and 1916: "squatting," the earliest method (Stearns) *; homesteading more than one claim (Young); homesteading and purchasing (Lampert). Two other ranches represent single-claim homesteads: before 1915/1916 (Mann); after 1915/1916 (Ward).

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* "Squatting" meant that no claim for the land had been filed. A settler could not officially file for a claim before the land was surveyed. But, some people lived on the land anyway and could then file for ownership of their parcel under preemption laws after the land survey was completed. Some settlers simply did not bother to file for the land. Both unofficial settlements were called "squatting".

F. Associated Property Types

I. Name of Property Type _____

II. Description

III. Significance

IV. Registration Requirements

[X] See continuation sheet

[ ] See continuation sheet for additional property types

G. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

Discuss the methods used in developing the multiple property listing.

[XX] See continuation sheet

H. Major Bibliographical References

[XX] See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional documentation:

- [XX] State historic preservation office
- [ ] Other State agency
- [ ] Federal agency
- [ ] Local government
- [ ] University
- [ ] Other

Specify repository: South Dakota Historical Preservation Center

I. Form Prepared By

name/title Rebecca Sample Bernstein, Preservation Consultant

organization Custer County Board of Commissioners date January 17, 1990

street & number 420 Mt. Rushmore Road telephone 605-673-4815

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ASSOCIATED PROPERTY TYPES:

I. **Name of Property Type:** Ranches of Southwestern Custer County, South Dakota.

II. **Description:** The single property type discussed in this nomination can be described in terms of time, location, and function. Similarity of function is more important than style, form, or material. The visual appearance of the ranches has largely been determined by the aridity of the natural environment. This property type is representative of a period of growth in homestead ranching in the early 20th Century after open range ranching of the previous century ceased in this part of Custer County.

All of the ranches have a main residence, a feature that greatly influenced the appearance of the property type. During open range ranching, the owner frequently lived in town. Requirements for homesteading mandated some term of on-site residence. Thus, most of the earlier open range ranches contained no residence for the owner or hands, while the later homestead ranches did. The houses conform to no one style or form except that they all feature kitchens, eating areas, common living areas, and bedrooms. Height of the buildings vary. Some are very regular in exterior appearance and interior plan, while others are distinctly irregular. Construction materials include but are not limited to wood, stone, log, stucco, and metal.

All of the sites have root cellars, which are generally simple dugouts. In one case, the cellar has four built-up stone walls. The cellars were used for food storage and employed some natural means of ventilation and temperature modulation.

All of the sites have barns and/or sheds used for livestock shelter. A great variety of materials, techniques, forms, and massing are found with these buildings. Nevertheless, rectangular pen, gable roof, wood frame buildings are most common.

Privies are also standard elements of the ranches. They are always of wood construction.

A building for the storage of transportation vehicles is also ubiquitous. Garages and carriage houses are found on all of the nominated ranches. Construction materials include wood and stucco. The most common and definitive element of these buildings is a door large enough to accommodate a vehicle.

Three of the ranches have a bunkhouse or other auxiliary building for human residence, usually for in-laws or hired help. These are all one story, rectangular pen buildings. Materials include wood, stucco, and metal.

Two of the ranches have cisterns. Drinking water was scarce, and cisterns provided a large storage facility for imported fresh water. The cisterns are dug into the ground and feature concrete and stone walls.

Two of the ranches have granaries. Both are squat, round, prefabricated metal structures. Both were used to keep grain off the ground.

While the relationship of the component buildings to one another in this property type is important, it is not prescribed. The presence of the house in close proximity to the agricultural outbuildings is of primary importance, but otherwise a variety of building arrangements can be expected.

III. **Significance:** Under Criterion A of the National Register criteria, the nominated ranches are significant in the area of Exploration/Settlement, because they represent the development of the legal homestead rancher in the southwestern corner of Custer County, South Dakota.

Four specific phases are recognizable: squatting, homesteading more than one claim before 1915, homesteading and purchasing land before 1915, and single claim homesteading immediately after 1915/1916. Homestead ranchers were the first generation of settlers to make good and to continue to live on a homestead claim in this semiarid part of Custer County. (See Historic Context, Section E.)

IV. **Registration Requirements:** Requirements for integrity are based on the National Register standards for assessing integrity, existing built environment at each ranch, and comparison with other ranches in the region. Registration requirements for this property type should consider location, integrity of buildings, composition of the entire ranch site, and feeling. Although this is a very localized study, and the requirements for registration apply to this specific area, the context may have relevance to other regions with similar climate, topography, and history (eastern Wyoming for example). The property type is integral to its historic context; therefore, for considerations of the important historic activities and association, the historic context narrative should be consulted. Nominated ranches must be representative of the early 20th Century patterns of ranch settlement in the region as described in the preceding significance and historic context narratives.

Necessary Physical Features:

Location: All of the ranches included in this nomination are in very rural areas. On all but one of the sites, it is impossible to see the next nearest neighbor. This remote character is essential.

Integrity: The buildings and structures at the nominated ranches must retain sufficient integrity so that observers can understand both the composition and the feeling of the district. The buildings do not need to be in excellent or unaltered condition, but the post-historic changes must not effect composition and feeling of the entire complex.

Composition of the Ranch Site: A crucial element for registration is the presence of the main house and root cellar, which define the ranch as a place of residence. Another necessary factor for registration of similar properties is the existence of barns or sheds for livestock shelter. Auxiliary features that merit special attention for a historic ranch but are not required for registration include privies, garages, bunkhouses, cisterns and granaries.

Feeling: Although some of the sites have experienced changes by way of demolition or addition of buildings and structures, the feeling of the ranches is very true to the period of significance. Only one of the nominated ranches has a recognizably modern building. Due to the late advent of electricity, plumbing, and telephone services to this area, it is necessary to consider the "feeling" of a place, and the existence of the components as listed above to be of primary importance. Most sites, even those with a great deal of integrity, have experienced recent 20th Century changes. Some of the changes would be considered historic in many parts of the state or country, but have come so late to this area that they well outside of the period of significance. For instance, electricity was not available in this area until the late 1950s. A telephone system was not available until 1977.

SUMMARY OF IDENTIFICATION AND EVALUATION METHODS

This multiple property nomination is based on a survey conducted during the summer of 1988 through a sub-grant from the State Historical Preservation Center to the Commissioners of Custer County. Field work was done according to standards set forth in the Field Guide To Historic Sites Survey, South Dakota (Vermillion, SD: State Historical Preservation Center, rev. 1987). The survey team consisted of Rebecca Sample Bernstein and Janice P. Olson. Resources with clear or potential historic character were documented with the permission and cooperation of property owners. Documentation included photography, site plans, house plans, and construction analysis. The present nomination document was prepared by team leader Bernstein under a separate contract.

The survey revealed that in this definable region of Custer County a set of ranches supported a single context of historic ranching unique within South Dakota. The historic context was determined by focusing large statewide contexts, "Permanent Rural and Urban Pioneer Settlement--Claim Era and --Farm and Ranch Development" on a smaller region with its own distinct history. Survey information, oral histories, published county histories, and the history of the Homestead Act were used to develop the context. The property type and the historic context were based on function (residence and livestock shelter for base ranching operations) and historic developmental forces (aridity of land and changing homesteading requirements). These aspects are held in common by all of the sites.

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Brown, Mabel. "Not Much Doing at Dewey." Bits and Pieces, Your Own Western History Magazine. Vol 3, no.10., 1967.

Kraenzel, Carl Frederick. The Great Plains in Transition. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1955.

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

Schell, Herbert Samuel. History of South Dakota. 3rd. ed., rev.: Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1975.

Sundstrom, Jessie Y., ed. Custer County History to 1976. Custer, South Dakota: Custer County Historical Society, (printed by Rapid City, South Dakota, Printing, Inc.), 1977.

Personal and Telephone Interviews by Rebecca Sample Bernstein, Summer/Fall, 1988:
Lois Bakewell, Palm Springs, California.
Mr. Lampert, Newcastle, Wyoming.
Irma Lampert, Newcastle, Wyoming.
Harry Mann, Newcastle, Wyoming.
Kenneth Montgomery, Sundance, Wyoming.
Hoyt Nicholas, Custer, South Dakota.
Mr. and Mrs. Vernon Simmons, Newcastle, Wyoming.
William Stearns, Newcastle, Wyoming.
Jessie Sundstrom, Custer South Dakota.
Harriet Ward, Custer, South Dakota.