

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received MAR 2 1983  
date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Severin Sorensen House (SF01-104)

and/or common NA

2. Location

street & number 2345 17th Street NA not for publication

city, town Gering NA vicinity of

state Nebraska code 031 county Scotts Bluff code 157

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	NA in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Dayle A. Williams

street & number 2355 17th Street

city, town Gering NA vicinity of state Nebraska

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Scotts Bluff County Courthouse, Register of Deeds

street & number 10th & "Q" Streets

city, town Gering state Nebraska

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date On-going  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Nebraska State Historical Society

city, town Lincoln state Nebraska

# 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved    date <u>NA</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

**Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

The Severin Sorensen house is located in Gering (1981 population: 7,511), Nebraska, the county seat of Scotts Bluff County. The Sorensen house is situated in a newer housing development in the northwest part of town. In its historic setting, the house and the family business, the Gering Brick Company, were located approximately one mile outside the original town of Gering. The one-story with raised basement brick house is a vernacular product of the Renaissance Revival style of architecture. The Severin Sorensen house was built ca. 1910, c. 1914-16, by Severin Sorensen, a native of Denmark. Structural and historical integrity has been preserved.

The Severin Sorensen house is a one-story brick, vernacular Renaissance Revival dwelling, square shaped in plan, with a raised basement and flat roof with parapet wall. Projecting porches with raised entries are found on the east and west facades. The massive cornice serves as a crowning feature and shows an abundant use of brick corbelling forming classic lines of dentils. The pronounced belt course divides the house into two distinct horizontal divisions, giving the appearance of the piano nobile (second level) and a top floor (attic story) found in the design of Renaissance palaces (Alexander, 1976, p. 224). The slightly projecting lower level is articulated in Flemish bond with the headers accented in a darker brick material. The bay window (south facade) runs the entire height of the house and displays brick corbelling and quoining. The raised front entry porch, also constructed of brick, is enclosed and has a hipped roof supported by brick columns. The use of brick is incorporated into the design and construction of the front steps, railing walls and entry columns (see photo # 8 ). Fenestration throughout the house consists of segmentally arched window openings with brick stilted, segmentally arched window hoods and brick lugsills. Fenestration in the front entry consists of double hung windows with six over six pane arrangement. Glass blocks have been installed in the porch walls on the north and east facades. The rear entry extension has a flat roof and rectangular shaped window openings. Extensions with shed roofs flank the raised front entry, with the north extension providing access to the lower level. The house roofline is penetrated by one exterior and two interior chimneys.

The interior floor plan includes a living room, dining room, kitchen, bath and bedroom. The lower level features additional living space and bedrooms. Distinctive interior features include two parlor stoves, a built in china closet, leaded windows with diamond-shaped motifs, and numerous built in storage units. The large living room (lower level) displays flooring with a checkerboard pattern, and a later random ashlar masonry wainscot (see photo #10 ). The large brick parlor stove is located in the southeast corner of the room and features decorative brickwork and a large round-arched niche (see photo # 11). Brick floors, layed out in a herringbone pattern, are found in the lower level of the front entry. The front entry porch has window seats with storage space below. Built in floor-to-ceiling cabinets are found in the back entry.

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The property includes a concrete patio which adjoins the house on the south facade. The surface is incised with patterns of irregular geometric shapes. The massive outdoor fireplace, which is directly southwest of the house, was built in the 1940's. Constructed primarily of brick "clinkers", the curving walls feature built in seats, decorative niches, and an unusual jagged wall coping. A brick patio, layed out in a herringbone pattern, encircles the front of the fireplace (see photo #7).

The original house was built by Severin Sorensen c. 1910 as a basement house. The first story was added c. 1914-16. The house has served as a private residence throughout the years, and remains in family ownership.

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** c. 1910, c. 1914–16 **Builder/Architect** Severin Sorensen

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Architecturally significant, the Severin Sorensen house exemplifies a unique vernacular product of the Renaissance Revival style, which was popular in the United States in the mid-late 19th century. In Nebraska, the style gained prominence shortly after the turn of the century. As a locally prominent businessman, Mr. Sorensen played a significant role in the industrial interests of the town of Gering, heading the firm of S. Sorensen & Sons, operators of the Gering Brick Company and general building contractors. The Gering brick factory prospered for nearly 30 years and provided the building material for the construction of numerous residential and commercial structures in the North Platte Valley. The Sorensen house is historically significant to Scotts Bluff County through its associations with a Danish immigrant family, demonstrating their endeavor for residential comfort and style, carrying on a tradition of the family craft of brickmaking.

The Severin Sorensen house represents a unique vernacular product of the Renaissance Revival style of architecture, which gained prominence in the United States during the 1840's-1890's. The style was popular in Nebraska during the early years of the 20th century. Characteristics of the Renaissance Revival style include formalism in plan, floor plans consisting of cubic blocks with modestly projecting entrance porches or balconies, belt or stringcourses, heavy cornices, and raised entries (Panek, 1976, p. 16-1). Italian Renaissance interiors featured floors in major rooms made of tile, brick or marble. Brick floors were often laid out in a herringbone pattern, while marble floors were done in a checkerboard pattern in highly contrasting colors and values (Alexander, 1976, p. 205-206). These design elements are found in the Sorensen house, specifically the checkerboard tile floor in the lower level of the house, and the brick floors laid out in a herringbone pattern in the lower level entry and the immediate area surrounding the outside fireplace.

The Severin Sorensen house, as compared to other known Renaissance Revival structures in Nebraska, is modest in size and design. The William H. Ferguson house in Lincoln, Lancaster County (see NRHP, entered November 29, 1972) was built in 1909-1911. The floor plan is expansive and grandiose with exterior detailing being much heavier and more elaborate. Commercial buildings, such as the First National Bank Building in Omaha, Douglas County (NRHP entered June 25, 1982) and the U.S. Post Office and Courthouse in Norfolk, Madison County (NRHP, entered October 9, 1974) are built on a much larger scale with monumental ornamentation. The geographical location of the Sorensen house probably accounts for its later construction date and more modest design. As research continues, it appears later settlement patterns in western Nebraska produced many vernacular or "simplified" styles of residential architecture, unlike that of eastern Nebraska where the high styles (Queen Anne, Italianate) dominated the architectural scene. These smaller, less pretentious houses play an important part in the development of western Nebraska's residential architecture.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Scottsbluff South, Nebr.

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A 

1	3	6	1	0	4	3	5	4	6	3	1	7	8	0
Zone			Easting					Northing						

B 

Zone			Easting					Northing						

C 

Zone			Easting					Northing						

D 

Zone			Easting					Northing						

E 

Zone			Easting					Northing						

F 

Zone			Easting					Northing						

G 

Zone			Easting					Northing						

H 

Zone			Easting					Northing						

Verbal boundary description and justification

The property is located on lot 2, block 1, Sorensen Addition, to the City of Gering, Scotts Bluff County, Nebraska, and includes that historically related land which immediately surrounds the Sorensen brick house and remains in contiguous ownership.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state NA code county code

state NA code county code

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Joni Gilkerson, Preservation Associate

organization Nebraska State Historical Society date January, 1983

street & number 1500 "R" Street telephone (402) 471-3850

city or town Lincoln state Nebraska

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Moran W. Kretsch 2/21/83

title SHPO date

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Entered in the  
National Register

date 3/31/83

J. Delores Byer  
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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Several factors may have influenced Severin Sorensen in the construction of his house. As a native of Denmark, Mr. Sorensen may have drawn upon his ancestral customs in the design layout of the dwelling. Brick houses were common in Denmark in the late 1800's to the early 1900's (Betsinger, 1970, p. 176). The Danish people were fond of neat and modern habitations (Ebbesen, 1924, June 18) with other Danish characteristics including arched windows, wainscotting, built in china cupboards and bay windows (Betsinger, 1970, pp. 117, 159, 164). Around the turn of the century, the Dane houses tended to be small in plan. This insufficient amount of space by today's standards did not seem to be considered an inconvenience (Betsinger, 1970, p. 163). One can see this to be the case in the Sorensen family where there were two adults and up to twelve children living in the basement house, which had only four rooms. As the owner of the Gering Brick Company, Mr. Sorensen utilized the readily available brick from the family owned business in the building of his home. Economic conditions of the time probably allowed for only the construction of a basement house for the Sorensen family. A few years later, no doubt as business improved, Mr. Sorensen enlarged the dwelling by adding the first story.

Severin Sorensen was born in Denmark in the year 1855, coming to the United States with his parents in 1869. Numerous immigrants came from the Scandinavian countries during the 19th century including a large number from Denmark. From 1820 to 1870 a total of 22,614 Danes arrived in America. In the years 1871-1919 an additional 276,704 Danes set shore. These immigrants played an important role in the settlement of the middlewest (Betzinger, 1970, p. 3). Severin's father, Jens Sorensen, settled in Harlan, Iowa and established a brick factory, passing on the family craft to his son. Severin was married to Miss Anna Markusen in August, 1881. They had twelve children, eight sons and four daughters. Mr. Severin supported his large family as a brick contractor, traveling around Nebraska and Colorado following available work. In 1908, Mr. Sorensen and his family moved to rural Gering, where he formed a partnership with his two oldest sons, Carl and Herman, and opened a brick factory. In 1910, Severin moved his business to a rural site one mile northwest of Gering. The Gering Brick Company was established with S. Sorensen & Sons as proprietors.

Masonry contracting was also an important part of the brickmaking business. During the months of May through August, bricks were manufactured, with contracting assuming greater importance during the fall and winter months. The Sorensen children were expected to help in the work of running the brick factory. The boys worked in the yard and assisted in contracting jobs, with the girls helping Mrs. Sorensen prepare meals for the family and laborers who lived at the yard. The Gering Brick Company was responsible for supplying the brick for many houses and buildings in the North Platte Valley. The factory remained in business until the early 1930's. James "Pete" Sorensen, a son of Severin reopened the brickyard in 1937 and continued to make bricks until 1941 when high labor costs forced him to close the brick factory permanently.

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Historically significant, the Sorensen house remains as a unique building style in the Gering community, representing the endeavors of an immigrant family striving for residential comfort. Although modest in size, Mr. Sorensen incorporated design elements into his house both exterior and interior to make it a more "fashionable" dwelling place for his family. As a native of Denmark, Mr. Sorensen brought with him to Nebraska the tradition of brickmaking, a family craft and occupation passed on to him by his father, and which he in turn handed down to his sons.

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Alexander, Harold H. Design, Criteria for Decisions, Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., New York, 1976.

Betsinger, Signe Tronborg, Danish Design Influences in Housing and Home Furnishings in a Selected Community in Southwest Iowa., Thesis, University of Minnesota, Copyright by Signe Tronborg Betsinger, 1970.

Ebbesen, Peter. "Historical Sketch of the Danish Colonies and Pioneers of Howard County," St. Paul Phonograph, St. Paul, Howard Co., Nebr. June 18, 1924: p. 1, c. 5; p. 2, c. 1-6; p. 6, c. 4-6; p. 11, c. 1-5; July 2, 1924: p. 6, c. 3-5; p. 7, c. 1-5.

Panek, R. T. American Architectural Styles 1600-1940. Architectural Styles, Dover, MA., 1976.

"Respected Head of Gering Family called by Death", Gering Courier, October 6, 1933, p. 1, c. 4.

"Severin Sorensen dies at home in Gering on Friday," Scottsbluff Republican, October 2, 1933, p. 1 c. 5, p. 2, c. 4.

"The Gering Brick Factory" Nebraska on the March, Nebraska Department of Economic Development, Lincoln, Nebr., Spring, 1977, Vol. XXVIII, No. 2. Inside cover (Nebraskana Flashback).