

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: Josef and Marie Kudrna Homestead and Ranch

Other names/site number: N/A

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

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

### 2. Location

Street & number: 18100 East SD 44

City or town: Scenic State: SD County: Pennington

Not For Publication:  Vicinity: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     x statewide     local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

x A     B     x C     D

<u>Gay D. Vogt</u>	<u>11-17-2014</u>
Signature of certifying official/Title:	Date
<u>SD SHPO</u>	
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

In my opinion, the property <u>   </u> meets <u>   </u> does not meet the National Register criteria.	
Signature of commenting official:	Date
Title :	State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

Kudrna Homestead and Ranch  
Name of Property

Pennington County: SD  
County and State

**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: \_\_\_\_\_)

*Don Edson H. Beall*  
Signature of the Keeper

*1-21-15*  
Date of Action

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

**Category of Property**

(Check only **one** box.)

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

Joseph and Marie Kudrna Homestead and  
Ranch  
Name of Property

Pennington County: SD  
County and State

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>20</u>	<u>1</u>	buildings
<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>4</u>	<u>1</u>	structures
<u>6</u>	<u>1</u>	objects
<u>33</u>	<u>3</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Domestic: Single Dwelling  
Agriculture/Subsistence: Animal Facility, Storage, Agricultural Field,  
Irrigation Facility, Agricultural Outbuilding  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Domestic: Single Dwelling  
Agriculture/Subsistence: Animal Facility, Storage, Agricultural Field,  
Irrigation Facility, Agricultural Outbuilding  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Joseph and Marie Kudrna Homestead and  
Ranch

Name of Property

Pennington County: SD

County and State

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Other: Sod House, Claim Shack

No Style

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

Principal exterior materials of the property: Foundation: WOOD, CONCRETE; Walls:  
WOOD; Roof: WOOD, METAL

### 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 Josef and Marie Kudrna Homestead and Ranch is situated within a jog along the southern boundary of Badlands National Park. This historic rural landscape is the product of more than one hundred years of continual ownership, management, and inhabitation by one family – the Kudrna family – and the cultural, political, and ecological contexts which enveloped their experience during this time. Several buildings – including the original homestead shack and numerous other buildings, structures, objects, and agricultural sites – contribute to the site's abundant historic value and living integrity. Collectively, the property demonstrates the everyday intricacies of homesteading in an arid region, as well as an ever-evolving relationship between settlers and the “sub-marginal” lands they claimed. The site contains few non-contributing resources, as most evidence of human intervention on the landscape directly ties to the narrative and heritage of the Kudrna Ranch. The 80 acres being nominated includes the buildings, structure, sites, objects, stockdams, and fields associated with immediate ranch occupation area. The physical land features of the Conata Basin dictated the construction and orientation of these features. Although the ranch is thousands of acres, this 80-acre parcel best

Joseph and Marie Kudrna Homestead and  
Ranch

Pennington County: SD

Name of Property

County and State

represents the development of the ranch and is able to convey homesteading and architectural significance.

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## **Narrative Description**

### **Physical description of nominated zone**

Located at the western limits of the Conata basin, the Kudrna homestead sits on the relatively flat basin bottom, about one and a quarter miles south of a natural feature referred to locally as "The Wall". A steep, eroding, cliff which rises more than 300' from the flatland, the Wall forms a visual boundary to the surrounding area. Although the terrain within the nominated zone is primarily characterized by moderate relief, it also encompasses some of these more dramatic Badlands formations which circumscribe it. The original homestead claim combined an abnormal (*i.e.* not square) arrangement of 4 quarter-quarter sections, 160 acres total. The nominated area covers 80 acres of the original claim, including the cluster of buildings and structures at the heart of the homestead and several of the surrounding fields, pasturelands, and stock-dams.

The Kudrna homestead exhibits relics of historic land use (in objects and vegetation) and clearly demonstrates regional models of spatial organization of buildings and fields, circulation, and boundaries. Its significance is enhanced by the integrity of the surrounding landscape, which places the homestead within a setting obviously associated with settlement and land use.

### **Materials Overview**

Although a number of buildings and structures comprise the district, there is not a great diversity of materials. Most properties have a tin metal roof, which is common for the region. Siding is almost exclusively wood. The residences, claim shacks, and some outbuildings have wood lapped or clapboard siding. The more utilitarian structures, like barns and sheds, have horizontal plank siding. Structures like corrals have a mixture of round logs, wood planks, and a variety of pieces of wood of various shapes and sizes used in an ad hoc basis. Foundations are earth, wood and concrete. Windows are simple wood windows that are either fixed or double hung.

### **Overview of District:**

All ranch buildings are clustered around the original claim. The clustered layout is common among ranches in the West River country of South Dakota and among farms and homesteads across the Plains. An ethic of practicality and resourcefulness underlying the site's development creates a sense of cohesion, in spite of the varying materials and long timespan during which construction occurred. The buildings and structures demonstrate this cohesive aesthetic through commonalities in form and, especially, through their collective organization and arrangement.

The homestead is surrounded by the evidence of the Kudrna's transition from a diversified farm to a ranch focused primarily in cattle production. Fields and stock dams surrounding the main complex evidence common improvements homesteaders made to stake their claim and ensure their life on the land. Circulation patterns can be seen or envisioned at a small scale, in the area immediately surrounding the claim shack, and at a larger scale, between fields and

Joseph and Marie Kudrna Homestead and  
Ranch

Pennington County: SD

Name of Property

County and State

radiating between water sources. Vegetative patterns indicate sites of historic plowing and historic crops, as well as other possible disturbance. The significance of the entire site is enhanced by vistas north into Badlands National Park, and east and west through the Conata Basin. This visually unimpeded valley links the homestead with the historic towns of Imlay, Conata, Interior, and Scenic and was once traversed by the Chicago, St. Paul, and Milwaukee Railroad. The ranch is located about 10 miles from Scenic.

## 1910-1920

### **BLDG-1) Sod shack: 1910, Contributing**

The one-story sod shack consists of a wood-frame, berm foundation, and walls of wood plank and tar-paper. Josef Kudrna built the residence in 1910 and it was occupied until 1952. It has since been used for storage. In its current condition, the shack shows significant deterioration to the interior walls, ceiling, and floor, as well as structural weakness. Even so, it remains an integral contribution to the district's integrity.

The main building sits at ground level but appears partially recessed due to its berm foundation. Soil piled directly against the walls forms an earthen mound. The mound slopes from the shack down to ground level on the east. On the west, it is cut short and held in place by creosote treated railroad ties stacked a few feet from the wall. This arrangement forms a kind of "planter" adjacent to the house. The wood plank roof of the main building is covered by corrugated sheet metal. It is set on a shallow-pitched, wood frame. Four sets of joists are supported near the peak by short horizontal planks. The ceiling is mostly protected from leakage, except for a partially-open, former stove vent high in the center of the room. Portions of the main room and bedroom ceiling have been painted. The floor of the main room is covered with unmatched sheets of linoleum.

A screen door (opening out) leads to an un-insulated storeroom. This is a shed-roof addition, approximately 12'x14'. Though connected to the main shack, the addition sits slightly off-center, forming a small recessed area at the entry, with a small bench set against the outside wall. The off-center positioning also allows for a window on the south wall of the main living quarter. In the store room, there is one four-pane window on the south wall. Foodstuffs, a cream separator, and coal were kept here, and a built-in coal box still stands along the northeast quarter of the room. A second door directly to the left of the entry point opens into the main living quarters. In addition to the four-pane window on the south wall, there is a small four-pane window on the west wall. Moving clockwise around the room, the walls were lined with a corner cupboard, a wood stove and wood box, two food prep tables, a Hoiser for storing dishes and other items, a large mirror (obtained from the foreclosure sale of a Jewish family), a bench and table, a kerosene lamp on the wall, and in the southeast corner, a large travel trunk. The third indoor space, east of the main room, is accessed from the main room through an open doorway. The third room has a low, leaning roof with one long, fixed pane window. It traditionally was lined be a bed, the chicken egg incubator, a second bed, the sewing machine, a fainting couch and, in the southwest corner, a chest of drawers.

The walls reveal several coats of crazed and peeling paint. Rot of floor boards and linoleum is significant throughout the shack. The base of the east and west exterior walls show some collapse due to the settling of the surrounding berm.

Joseph and Marie Kudrna Homestead and  
Ranch

Name of Property

Pennington County: SD

County and State

**BLDG-2) Attached root cellar: 1910**

**Building, Contributing**

The root cellar, an earthen cave with a sod roof, is accessed via a Z-braced door on the north wall of the sod shack. The roof of the cellar rises approximately five feet above ground level, creating a dome of grass on the north side of the shack. The dome is cut short and held in place by stacked railroad ties on the west and a concrete slab on the north. According to architectural historian Dena Sanford, "The rafters for the cellar's gabled frame roof rest on wood plates set directly on the soil. ...To support the additional weight, three large, square posts are equally spaced along the length of the room, with one at each gable end, and one at the center span."<sup>1</sup> Its interior walls are formed out of packed earth, cleanly revealing soil stratification. The floor is also packed earth, and is set approximately four feet below the floor of the shack. The space is roughly equivalent in size to the main room of the shack (10' x 14'). There are no windows, but a vent was placed in the center of the ceiling and is visible from the outside.

**BLDG-3) Converted Claim Shack - Granary/Bunkhouse/Residence: 1909, Contributing**

To the northwest of the shack, a one-story gabled building sits on an east-west axis. The building took its current form through a series of three constructed additions and/or conversions of use. The original portion of the building – a small, one-room homestead shack – was moved onto the site just north of its current position in 1912 from a neighbor's abandoned claim. It served as a granary until around 1927, when it was moved to its current location. At that time, an addition with a matching gable was constructed on the east side. The former exterior wall of the granary was moved farther west to enlarge the area of the addition. The wall separating the granary and the sleeping quarters was moved again in 1936, when the building was converted into a full time residence for Joseph Kudrna Jr. and his new wife. Subsequent changes included a front addition, the installation of a kitchen, and a final conversion of the remaining room of the homestead-shack-turned-granary into part of the residence. The building can now be described as a five-room house. It was permanently occupied from 1936 until 2012. The floors of the house are significantly warped, but no problems in the condition of the walls, ceiling, or frame are detectable. It is in fair-good condition. It has wood lapped siding, asphalt shingles and 1x1 double hung wood windows. Some windows have faux shutters. There is pediment over the entrance. The foundation is cement.

**BLDG-4) Converted Claim Shack – Bunkhouse, Contributing**

This building was constructed as the claim shack north of the Kudrna property. Clark Kelvie built it to homestead on the NE $\frac{1}{4}$  of section 28. Josef Kudrna purchased the building from the Interior Bank sometime after Kelvie's departure. Presently, it is located on the north side of the 1952 wood-frame house. It has lapped wood siding, wood shingle roof, and fixed four-pane wood windows. There is a simple, two-panel wood door with a wood screen door that leads outside to a small wood landing.

**OBJC-1) Wagon, Contributing**

A wagon, constructed by Josef Kudrna sits in the homestead yard, 30' west of the shack. Approximate dimensions of the wagon bed are 11'x3 $\frac{1}{2}$ '. Though the tongue has broken in two pieces near the middle, and the wood has rotted in several places, the wagon is in fair condition and successfully represents some materials and processes employed in the early years of the Kudrna farm. The wagon has a wood plank floor and sides. The wheels are wood and steel.

<sup>1</sup> Sanford, Dena. Trip Report, Kudrna Homestead, February 27, 2013. 1.A.2 H32 (MWR-DR/HNRP)

Joseph and Marie Kudrna Homestead and  
Ranch

Pennington County: SD

Name of Property

County and State

**OBJC-2) Pump Well and Cistern, Contributing**

A 16' well and cistern was dug just west of the homestead shack. The original well pump stands roughly four feet high and is set onto the concrete cover of the cistern. The duality of the object as both a source and, once dry, a cistern for water help articulate the family's water needs and dependence on unreliable sources. Both objects are in good condition.

**OBJC-3) Clothesline, Contributing**

40' to the south of the homestead, a clothesline runs southwest for approximately 45'. It has three lines spaced about 15" apart. Although the extant materials of the clothesline are of an unknown date, its presence and orientation reveal some character of life on the ranch and enrich the integrity of the landscape. It's a simple wood post structure.

**SITE-1) Barnyard, Circa 1910, Contributing**

The boundary of the barnyard is created by the side of the main barn complex, a series of pens along the east side, the corrals to the south, and solid fence along its west side. There is one hinged gate in the west fence, approximately 2.5' wide, situated between the south and north barns. On its east, a series of wooden fences bounds the barnyard proper, as well as several other animal pens and corridors leading to the corral on the south side of the barnyard. There are three barns around the barnyard – referred to as the East, West and South barn.

**BLDG-5) East Barn, circa 1910, Contributing**

The east barn was constructed first, probably in the late 1910s. Vertical board and metal batten siding cover all four walls. Red paint remains barely visible on the west wall. The barn is divided into three bays. The two west bays are separated by a feeder and several structural supports; however there is no wall between them. A sliding wood door opens onto the west bay and a Dutch door opens out from the middle bay. This part of the barn is at ground level and has a dirt floor. The east bay is divided from the rest of the barn by a solid wood wall. It has a wood floor made of 4.5" board, set about one foot above ground level. Several wires cross between the gable end and the interior wall, presumably used as part of a system for storing hay. A hay-door is situated high on the gable wall, in addition to a Dutch door which opens out from the south side. There is also a small window located in the southeast corner of the gable end, the only exterior window in the building. Corrugated metal has temporarily been used to cover the opening. The barn is in good condition, showing limited rot in its wood construction but with rusting hinges on doors. The barn has a gable roof clad in tin with metal gutters. Horizontal wood planking clads the interior.

**BLDG-6) West barn, Circa 1910 Contributing**

The west barn was presumably added shortly after the first was constructed. Siding is horizontal, beveled planks, of the style most common throughout the ranch. There is indication that the facade facing the ranch-yard was painted white (also matching the recurring style). One section of the south wall is made of unbeveled plank board, which appears to be older than the other walls. Four bents cross the interior, all without walls, but two stables are built into the southeast corner.<sup>2</sup> The large open door on the south side was apparently added after the building was constructed, (judging from historic photographs). Another door, 4' wide, once existed on the west wall, however it has been nailed closed. The only window in the barn, a

<sup>2</sup> Bent: a timber framing unit that consists of vertical posts, horizontal beams and often diagonal braces  
[http://easternbarns.com/barn\\_terms.html](http://easternbarns.com/barn_terms.html)



Joseph and Marie Kudrna Homestead and  
Ranch

Pennington County: SD

Name of Property

County and State

four-pane fixed, is on the gable wall and faces the homestead yard. The barn has a gable roof clad in tin with metal gutters.

### **BLDG-7) South Barn, circa 1910, Contributing**

Not connected to the other barns, this rectangular barn sits parallel to the other two buildings, approximately forty feet to the south. This situates it in within the barnyard. It was presumably constructed in the same period as the other two barn buildings. The barn has a gable roof with clad in tin. Horizontal plank siding clads the exterior.

### **BLDG-18) Horse Barn, circa 1910, Contributing**

Located west of the main drive and south of the front fence. A wood-frame structure with lapped wood siding and a wood shingled roof. There is a 3' wide wood-plank door on the south wall which opens into a single, earthen floor stable. The red painted building connects through the main entry to a small holding pen.

## **1920-1930**

### **BLDG-8) Hog houses (3), circa 1920, Contributing**

Three hog houses of similar style and material are scattered along the east side of the homestead cluster, in line with the barnyard. These houses sat in a variety of locations prior to their current position. The structures' ready-to-move construction allowed for the relocation of hog pens based on water availability. The hog houses all have a shed roof structure, with the front side standing approximately 3' and the back standing 2'. They are constructed of horizontal wood-plank siding and have tin roofs.

### **BLDG-9) Machine Shed, 1932, Contributing**

The machine shed, built also as a garage for the family's first vehicle, is a long, rectangular, side-gabled building. It sits to the northwest of the shack. In current circulation patterns, this places it just west of the end of the drive. There are no windows on the building. The machine shed holds a large collection of tools, collected materials, and supplies. The gable roof is clad in tin and the siding is horizontal wood-plank.

### **STRC-1) Corral, circa 1920, Contributing**

The corral is located approximately fifty yards south of the shack and borders the east side of the drive. The corral adjoins the south side of the barnyard, connected by several gates along the shared fence. It is constructed primarily of creosote wood beams and rough-hewn lumber. The design appears somewhat haphazard, given the lack of parallel fencing, imprecise angles, and irregular use of construction materials, however each holding area clearly correlated with a particular purpose. On the east side, a round jog in the fence accommodates a large tree and creates an area for storing feed. The chute on the south end protrudes from the main corral area, joining to it with a gate on both ends.

### **STRC-2) Stock Dam, circa 1920, Contributing**

This stock dam was constructed and maintained with horses and manual labor in the 1910s and 1920s. It is an earthen dam that impounds a small draw.

Joseph and Marie Kudrna Homestead and  
Ranch

Name of Property

Pennington County: SD

County and State

**OBJC-4) West Well (near stock dam), circa 1920, Contributing**

A concrete cistern marks the location of this well. Used by the Kudrnas intermittently during the early years of homesteading.

**SITE-2) Garden, circa 1920, Contributing**

The garden has undergone a series of vegetation changes, each significant. The site has been planted at times with produce and in other years with hedgerows. Remnants of many of these stages still appear in the form of fences, flowery shrubbery (lilacs), earthworks, and dead trees and tree stumps. One apple tree remains in the orchard planted by Josef in the first years after his arrival to the homestead (early 1910s). According to his son, apple trees, pear trees, strawberries, blackberries, red raspberries, and locust trees all grew successfully, producing fruit until sometime in the early 1920s, when a drought killed most of the trees in the orchard. A wire fence remains around the northwest section of the area, only a portion of the larger historic site and representing the latest area kept as a garden. A wire gate attaches to the fence at the southeast corner of the of the existing fence, roughly 100' north of BLDG-10, the North Granary. Farther north, on the site of the early potato fields, stand several lines of trees. The trees, now mostly dead or sucker-shoots, are vestiges of attempted windrow plantings.

## 1930-1940

**BLDG-10) White Granary, 1930, Contributing**

This granary is a 2x4 frame building sided with 5", white, wood clapboard. It has two wood doors— one on the front gable wall that opens into the ranch-yard and one at the back of the west side. The interior space is divided into two bins. The wall separating the bins is constructed of irregular board planks, 6"-15" wide, fitted horizontally. The 3" wide wood plank floor lays 14" above ground level. There are no windows. During a drought in the 1940s, it was used as a pool hall and the south bin still holds the Brunswick pool table, obtained from a saloon in Scenic.

**BLDG-11) Small Turkey House, circa 1930, Contributing**

The smaller of two houses, the south building, is about 6'8" high at the front, 4'6" high in the back. This 17'x6½' structure sits atop an earthen floor and no foundation is visible. It has two doors opening out. The exterior door is a Z-frame wooden door. The inside door has a simple wood frame, covered with a chicken-wire screen, and opens inward. The large, horizontal window, three clapboards cut vertically 4½' apart, are hinged along the bottom and flips down. The opening is covered by a meshed screen that is visible when the boards are flipped down. A second, double pane fixed window is placed horizontally in line with the screen/board opening. This building is in the poorer condition of the two, in several places the wood frame has rotted and there are holes between clapboards. It remains in fair condition. It has wood lapped siding and shed roof clad in tin.

**BLDG-12) Large Turkey House, circa 1930, Contributing**

The large turkey house sits approximately 10' back from the small house. Its roof – about 8' in the front and 5' in the back – is slightly higher than that of the small building, but the pitch of the roofs are visually equal. The large house also has a deeper footprint, measuring approximately 17'x10'. The interior and exterior doors match those of the smaller house. The horizontal window is made of two fixed six-pane windows with screens behind. The inside floor is made of wood planks set atop a concrete foundation. Due perhaps to its superior materials at

Joseph and Marie Kudrna Homestead and  
Ranch

Pennington County: SD

Name of Property

County and State

construction, subsequent care, or a later construction date, the building is in better condition the small house. It has wood lapped siding and shed roof clad in tin.

### **SITE-3) Fields, circa 1930 (date indicates connection to ranch history), Contributing**

Though seemingly barren of contributing resources, these sites offer a great deal of evidence regarding how the Kudrnas farmed and lived and the ways the geography of the region and historic contexts influenced their lives.<sup>3</sup> In several locations, plow lines can be discerned through differences in existing vegetation. For example, a line running north to south along the east shore of the stock dams reveals the boundary of a recently planted field (Field B). To the east of the line, weedy, early-successional vegetation dominates, including sunflower, bindweed, ragweed, musk thistle and Russian thistle; a mix of native forbs and grasses grows west of the plow line. In other cases, distinctions are less noticeable. Pastures and fence-lines were often rearranged within the property, a typical practice on ranches in response to changes in environmental changes. Fields roughly follow topography and vestiges of crested wheatgrass, alfalfa, and intermediate wheatgrass (all cultivated on the ranch at some time) may be seen. With this information, archeologists and naturalists may be able to investigate the areas further, determining details such as approximate field size, existence of fences, and primary vegetation both prior to plowing, during planted periods, and today.

- Field A Original plowed area
- Field B Fields north
- Field C (historic) By stock dam (N)
- Field D (historic) By stock dam

## **1940-1950**

### **BLDG-13) Outhouse, circa 1940, Contributing**

Based on its current condition and materials, this particular building was likely not the original outhouse built at the time of homesteading. The building was likely replaced several times throughout the period of significance. Nonetheless, the location and design of this building likely remained consistent, and for this reason, the building contributes to the overall integrity of the site. It has horizontal wood-plank siding.

### **BLDG-14) Hen House, circa 1940, Contributing**

The existing hen house replaced two older buildings; the original sod hen house, which burned sometime in the 1930's and a second, wooden building which was located just north of the current building. This white sided, front gabled structure is consistent with the ideal hen house design promoted by government farm agencies at the time of construction. An east side entry, consisting of both a wooden and a screened door, leads into the main room. An off-center gable makes the south wall taller than the north wall. The south wall contains four fixed six-pane wood windows, each window roughly 3'x3.5'. The floor of this building interestingly displays

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<sup>3</sup> Mary C. Beaudry, "Trying to Think Progressively About 19th-Century Farms," (*Northeast Historical Archaeology*, 30-31, 2001), 139.

"...It if the large areas away from the domestic compound that have the most to say about farming. To tell the story of farmer's lives, we must focus on farms and farm work. ...our notions of "core" and "periphery" may need to be reversed when it comes to farm sites: 'it may be that the peripheries of farmyards and farm fields hold the best clues to farming and farm life.'"

Joseph and Marie Kudrna Homestead and  
Ranch

Pennington County: SD

Name of Property

County and State

three techniques of construction. The north third of the floor is formed by poured concrete, the west half of the south portion is constructed out of creosote beams, and milled wood planks compose the east half of the south portion. It has a saltbox roof clad in tin and wood clapboard siding.

#### **BLDG-15) North Granary, circa 1940, Contributing**

Built with spare lumber in the fall of 1942, this building was constructed somewhat quickly and spontaneously for the purpose of storing oats with some protection, rather than piling them on the ground. This history is evident in its construction and unharmonious alignment within the rest of the homestead site. The building is a 16'x16' square box, with a subsequently constructed wood plank floor. It has horizontal wood-plank siding.

#### **BLDG-16) East Granary, circa 1940, Contributing**

This building includes an original granary shed as well as a newer addition. The original granary, approximately 20' on its high side, provided ample storage of grains with three interior bins. There are wood plank floors throughout, approximately 1' above ground level. The south wall (the high end) has a wooden entry door in the center and three 2'x2' wooden doors spaced high and evenly along. They open down and out, with the hinge on the bottom side. The attached shed, with its high side beginning at the lowest point of the granary roof, is much smaller and has a packed dirt floor. It has wood clapboard siding and corrugated, sliding metal doors on both sides.

#### **STRC-4) Outdoor Shower, 1946, Contributing**

This small structure consists of four wood plank walls and no roof or floor. Its four corners are stabilized by creosote railroad ties and a fifth tie is set as a beam across the two western posts. A rounded groove cut into this beam shows where the barrel once sat. A wooden barrel, possibly associated with the shower, also sits on the ground behind the shower. Although in poor condition, the integrity of the piece can be seen in the resourceful use of materials used for its construction and the creative purpose it serves.

### **1950-1960**

#### **BLDG-17) Wood frame house, 1952, Contributing**

This two-story, wood-frame house was built as the new family residence in 1952, the same time electricity was brought to the ranch. The exterior is covered in wood siding and the entire structure has been painted white. The front-facing gabled roof runs along the building's north-south axis, and aligns the house with the homestead shack which is located directly south along this axis. A small entry room extrudes from the main part of the building; this is covered by a first-story, gabled roof, parallel to the main gable. The entryway includes both screen and wood door, as does the rear-side entry on the west wall. The first story has one-over-one double hung wood windows on all walls, but the second story has only two windows, one on each end. Lilac bushes as well as other deciduous trees, mostly elm, have been planted on all sides of the building.

Joseph and Marie Kudrna Homestead and  
Ranch

Name of Property

**Circa 1960**

Pennington County: SD

County and State

**OBJC-5) Front Fence, circa 1960, Contributing**

The fence is 167 feet, painted white. It is the only fence constructed of smooth, cylindrical wood posts and rails. It has two rails, about 1.5' apart, nailed to the posts in an alternating, stacked pattern (a section with rails 1.5' and 3' high, followed by a section with rails set on top, followed by a section with rails set below, then repeated). This particular fence was probably built until sometime after 1960, based on evidence in historic photos. The boundary marked by the fence has presumably existed throughout the period of significance, setting apart the area used for keeping animals from the domestic area in front of the shack. For this reason, the extant fence is a contributing resource.

**OBJC-6) Wind Charger, circa 1960, Contributing**

Only metal support tower remains. Situated north and slightly east of homestead shack.

**1910-circa 1960**

**SITE-4), Raw material concentrations (junk piles) 1910-present, Contributing**

In the area northwest of the main group of buildings is a large raw materials concentration. It includes farm equipment, lumber, metal, fence posts, vehicles, tractors, parts, and other materials discarded as junk or saved for repurposing. Like materials are piled, stored, or parked together. This area was formed over the years when the Kudrnas had no place to dispose of unneeded materials and or were storing materials for a future use. There are also small artifact scatters around the ranch (such as a couple of tires here or a couple barrels there), but main concentration of materials is grouped in this area.

**Non-Contributing Features**

**Modern Water Well-house, circa 1980, Non-contributing**

Close to and north of homestead complex.

**Silo, circa 1980 , Non-Contributing**

North of BLDG-16, East Granary.

**Pole-Barn, circa 1990, Non-Contributing**

Southeast of STRC-1, the corrals.

Joseph and Marie Kudrna Homestead and  
Ranch

Name of Property

Pennington County: SD

County and State

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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

Joseph and Marie Kudrna Homestead and  
Ranch

Pennington County: SD

Name of Property

County and State

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

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Agriculture

Exploration/Settlement

Architecture

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1910-1964

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1910

1930 (switch to cattle operation)

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Joseph and Marie Kudrna Homestead and  
Ranch

Pennington County: SD

Name of Property

County and State

**Architect/Builder**

Josef and Marie Kudrna and Family: Builders

**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 Kudrna Homestead and Ranch is eligible for the National Register under Criteria A and C. It is eligible under Criterion A for **Exploration/Settlements** and **Agriculture**. It is eligible under Criterion C for **Architecture**. It is significant at the statewide level as a great example of a ranch that survived and prospered on the sub-marginal lands west of the Missouri River.

It is significant under **Exploration/Settlement** as a great example of the last phase of homesteading in South Dakota. Most homesteading after 1900 in South Dakota occurred west of the Missouri River. Two types of homesteaders participated in this final phase of settlement. The first were those who won land lotteries after land was removed from American Indian Reservations. The second were those who settled sub-marginal lands that had either never been settled or were settled and abandoned. The Kudrna Homestead and Ranch is a great example of a successful homestead that survived on sub-marginal lands.

It is also significant under **Agriculture**. It typifies a successful ranch that developed on the sub-marginal lands located west of the Missouri River. It demonstrates how subsistence homesteads grew into small farms growing crops and raising livestock under less than ideal conditions. It also demonstrates how operations matured West River starting in the 1930s to become focused on livestock production and less crop dependent. Livestock continues to be the main agricultural focus West River.

The ranch yard is also significant for its vernacular **Architecture**. The collection of buildings and structures, including a cellar, sod house, claim shacks, barns, wells, turkey houses, hog house, residence, and other outbuildings are a collection of resources that embody distinctive characteristics of types, periods, and methods of construction. On their own, most of the buildings and structures lack individual distinction. But collectively, they are able to convey an important era in South Dakota history.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

**Kudrna Family: Heritage in the White River Badlands**

The existence of the Kudrna Ranch in the White River Badlands can only be understood through the contextual lenses of homesteading and agricultural development in the twentieth century. Nonetheless, the actions and interactions between the Kudrna family



Joseph and Marie Kudrna Homestead and  
Ranch

Pennington County: SD

Name of Property

County and State

and the surrounding community and landscape also vitally shaped the story and the site as it exists today.

As members of the family engaged in quotidian activities such as washing clothes, herding cattle, feeding chickens, harvesting, and preserving produce, they learned more about the place around them. Simultaneously, they impacted its development. Many of the environmental elements which defined those experiences survive today as remnants of the site's past

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### Life before South Dakota 1903-1910

At the ages of 26 and 23, Josef Kudrna and Marie Loskota together immigrated to America. Though both had been raised as Catholics, Josef and Marie descended from different social classes and were prohibited from marrying in their native country.<sup>4</sup> To escape the restriction, the young couple joined six other Bohemian emigrants travelling to the United States in 1903.



Marie tending poultry.

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<sup>4</sup> Personal interview with Tony Kudrna, Sarah Brey. June 23, 2013, Scenic, SD.

Joseph and Marie Kudrna Homestead and  
Ranch

Pennington County: SD

Name of Property

County and State

For the first seven years following their arrival and marriage, the couple lived in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. There, Marie gave birth to three children. She managed the home while Josef worked as a carpenter for the Chicago, St. Paul, and Milwaukee Railroad and attended a school to learn English.<sup>5</sup>

In early 1910, possibly prompted by a free railroad ticket provided by his employer, Josef headed west.<sup>6</sup> He hoped to claim land somewhere in Western South Dakota - the "final frontier". By then, the couple had resided in the United States for seven years. The prolonged period between when the Kudrna's arrived in America and when they journeyed farther west to make their homestead claim reflects a broader trend. Unlike previous surges in settlement, most claims in the twentieth century were made by people who already resided in the United States.

### **Homesteading: From Pioneer Frontier to Family Farm 1910-1930**

Upon his arrival in South Dakota, Josef applied for land via the lottery process in two different locations – Timber Lake, to the north of his eventual claim, and Rosebud, to the south. Josef was unsuccessful in both lotteries. A friend who had accompanied him won the right to make a claim in Rosebud, but after seeing the land, his friend chose not to pursue the claim.

Josef, however, was undaunted by either his bad luck or the harsh landscape. Determined to make a claim, he bypassed the lottery process and filed on a relinquished homestead in the White River Badlands. The land was reissued for settlement in 1910, after the previous homesteader abandoned his claim. Information regarding the availability of this particular parcel may have reached Josef through a private advertisement. Allegedly, a neighboring homesteader by the name of Frank Olek placed an ad for the property in a Czech newspaper in Milwaukee.<sup>7</sup> Mr. Olek was proving up on a 1909 homestead claim on section 35 in the same township and may have had an interest in recruiting settlers to increase the local population.

Records indicate that Josef first applied for his claim through the Rapid City Land Office by mail on May 19<sup>th</sup>. The original application was denied because "no citizenship papers accompan[ied] the application".<sup>8</sup> He was given thirty days to furnish the documents. On June 13<sup>th</sup>, 1910, once he collected the necessary paperwork, Josef resubmitted his claim and was approved. This left Josef only twenty-five days before his wife and three children arrived from Wisconsin to construct a dwelling. Though it was probably constructed as a temporary dwelling – as were most claim shacks– the Kudrna family utilized the claim shack as their primary residence for four decades. The dwelling – created with little more than basic lumber supplies, earthen materials, and a layer of tar paper for insulation – reflected regional building practices and the limitations of time and resources. Eventually linoleum flooring was installed, though at the time of construction, a hardened layer of dirt likely served as the floor. Several small windows provided light and views of distant canyon walls and crumbling hillsides. Elaborate in comparison with many shacks, the Kudrnas' home had two rooms set partially into berms, and a third, less insulated room used to sleep in the warmer months and to store food and firewood.

<sup>5</sup> John Milner Associates, Inc.. *Discovery and Re-Discovery in the White River Badlands Historic Resource Study*. (Badlands National Park, SD: National Park Service, 2006), 193.

<sup>6</sup> Personal interview with Tony Kudrna, Sarah Brey. June 23, 2013, Scenic, SD

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Homestead Serial Patent No. 491449, Josef Kudrna, June 24, 1915, (Rapid City, South Dakota, land office; Records of the Bureau of Land Management, National Archives Building, Washington, DC).

Joseph and Marie Kudrna Homestead and  
Ranch

Name of Property

Pennington County: SD

County and State

During their first years on the claim, Marie and Josef followed the traditional course to establish tenure of their farm. The conventions of this course mimicked traditional Western European and Eastern American farming regimes, incorporating diverse, small-scale, and intense cultivation. However, much of the architecture of the farm shows regional adaptation. Unlike most Bohemian settlements in South Dakota, which utilize “timber-framed buildings [with] dove-tailed corners, and often clay or daub and straw chinking between logs or rough boards”<sup>9</sup>. The Kudrna homestead demonstrates a practical mix of board, dug-out, and sod construction techniques. Shortly after constructing the family dwelling, Josef purchased four Hereford cattle.<sup>10</sup> He also traveled south to the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation where he purchased a team of horses from Charlie White who had previously settled on the reservation.

Beside livestock, upturned fields were an invariable step toward establishing long-term residency. For Josef, the drought during the year of his arrival left the ground too hard to plow.<sup>11</sup> The following year, in 1911, Josef plowed and planted eight acres.<sup>12</sup> Though he did not plant any additional fields in 1912, by 1913 he was planting twice as much ground, and in 1914, he added another seven acres, putting a total of twenty-one acres into production. In the early years, Josef experimented with various crops, selling a portion of the harvested grains and vegetables and using the rest for seed, silage, grain feed, and domestic provisions. Josef began by planting corn, flax and potatoes, and he planted corn every year during the period of proving up. After his flax field was “destroyed by range stock” the first year, he switched flax for oats. A few years later, he added an alfalfa field. Although the area owned by the Kudrnas continued to expand long after the initial period of “proving up”, the planted fields were always kept contiguous with the original homestead.

During the prove-up period, Josef constructed a mere 80 rods (about 440 yards) of two wire fence. While fences contributed to the total value of improvements (as required by the Homestead Act), no particular length of fence, or any fence for that matter, was stipulated by the act. Fences were built by homesteaders for the obvious practicality of keeping free-range animals off of planted fields and to regulate one’s own livestock – in accordance with South Dakota’s 1911 Herd Law. Coincidental to the law, in 1911, Josef reported that a neighbor’s free range livestock destroyed one of his crops. A response to many such incidences, the 1911 Herd Law necessitated the construction of more fences across western South Dakota. Because Josef only had milk cows and hogs at the time it was passed, it can be assumed that most of the fence initially installed on the homestead was in the immediate vicinity of the homestead. The hog pen and garden were both located just to the southeast of the homestead shack. Free-ranging milk cows were easily rounded up in the evening and hog pens could be built compactly, as the animals did not require space to graze.

As the Kudrnas improved and expanded their farm, the development of the property demonstrated many patterns in arrangement and design. Buildings and work areas were

<sup>9</sup> SWCA Environmental Consultants, *The History of Agriculture in South Dakota: A Historic Context*, (Pierre, SD: South Dakota State Historic Preservation Office, 2014), 49.

<sup>10</sup> *Eastern Pennington County Memoirs*. (Wall, South Dakota: The American Legion Auxiliary, Carrol McDonald Unit), 200.

<sup>11</sup> Homestead Serial Patent No. 491449, Josef Kudrna, June 24, 1915.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* (Also, all future extrapolations regarding the official homesteading process.)

Joseph and Marie Kudrna Homestead and  
Ranch

Pennington County: SD

Name of Property

County and State

situated notably close to one another, usually facing a small area west of the shack. This created a partially enclosed, yard-like space in front of the shack. The set-up reflects the "ideal" progressive farms being promoted at the time.<sup>13</sup> Materials used in the construction of buildings varied, probably based on the logistical and economic feasibility in procuring materials at the time of construction. The resulting assemblage of improvements demonstrates an aesthetic and ethos of resourcefulness on the homestead.

The first buildings added to the complex were made of sod and included a horse barn and a chicken house. Both were located west of the shack and drive. Neither of these buildings survived beyond the middle of the century. Not long after the sod improvements, Josef began to utilize simple, wood plank construction techniques. The earliest buildings fit wood planks tightly together to form siding; most buildings utilized beveled wood for siding. Josef and his sons would apply this technique in the construction of almost every barn and outbuilding on the ranch.

In 1912, Josef purchased and moved a homestead shack from the vacated claim of John Vondra. The building was located on the southwest quarter of section 21, just north of the Kudrna homestead. This building represents a quintessential example of the Kudrnas' re-use development style, common to many farm sites.<sup>14</sup> The building was first placed north of the garden and utilized as a granary. In the 1920s, it was moved closer to the Kudrna shack, and an addition was built onto its east side. The addition served as a "bunkhouse" for the Kudrna sons and hired hands, while the original shack continued to store grain. Eventually, the old claim shack and the subsequently added wings (a second addition was built in the 1940s) became the home of Joseph Kudrna (son) and his family. The building never included a complete kitchen; all meals were shared at Marie's table.

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<sup>13</sup> Source on deal farm cited in SHPO farm context

<sup>14</sup> William Hampton Adams, "Landscape Archaeology, Landscape History, and the American Farmstead" (*Historical Archaeology* 24, 1990), 98.

Joseph and Marie Kudrna Homestead and  
Ranch

Pennington County: SD

Name of Property

County and State



Kudrna Homestead in 1922 looking east.

During the early period of settlement, several abandoned homestead shacks were similarly salvaged and relocated for various purposes. The bunkhouse, which currently sits north of the wood-frame house, was the second claim shack built by Joseph (Jr.) in the process of homesteading his claim. Tony moved the shack to its current site by skidding it with a tractor in 1935. (It was at this time that Joseph moved into the former bunkhouse). Additionally, at least two non-extant buildings were originally constructed by neighbors on surrounding claims and salvaged to be used as granaries.

For the Kudrna family, the Chicago, St. Paul, Milwaukee Railroad served as a fundamental tie to the world beyond the Conata Basin. Daily trains transported people, material, goods, and livestock. Directly and indirectly, access to the railroad greatly impacted the physical development of the ranch. Despite their dependency on the line, Tony lamented aspects of shipping livestock decades later.<sup>15</sup> The railroad also provided a source of material for physical

<sup>15</sup> In a personal interview on June 13, 2013, Tony Kudrna is quoted as he lamented the condition of cattle when they reached the sale barn in Sioux City. The shipping required the cattle to be on the train for a day and a half, without water or feed. "Them cattle are located here, around this country, and then you ship 'em down there, getting moved around and everything; and they get dirty, there's manure on some of 'em; he said you wouldn't recognize 'em. I heard Dad, he'd always watch that stuff in the corral, like I heard him say, - Cattle, even the horses, they've got sense too. - Just like people. You move 'em around, and I suppose they get kinda, well I don't know, kinda homesick, after being pushed around."

Joseph and Marie Kudrna Homestead and  
Ranch

Pennington County: SD

Name of Property

County and State

improvements around the ranch. Old creosote railroad ties provided lumber on the ranch for everything from corral posts to fuel for the wood stove.

### The Garden

The Kudrnas planted a wide variety of subsistence crops. This was considered part of the family's domestic harvest, and therefore not usually accounted into its farming and income activities. Nonetheless, the diversity of the produce and domestic animals sustained the family for many years. One of Marie's granddaughters, who grew up at the homestead, recalls that her grandmother's gardens would include watermelons, muskmelons, squash, sweet corn, cucumber, tomato, beets, cabbage, and pumpkins.<sup>16</sup> In addition to the garden produce, wild fruits also supplemented the Kudrna menu. Chokecherries could be gathered from a grove along the Badlands Wall north of the homestead. Josef transplanted some of these plants onto his homestead. Plums and buffalo berries were also gathered each summer.<sup>17</sup> The fruits were then preserved and stored for later seasons in the cellar attached to homestead shack. A one to two acre potato field was also planted north of the homestead. The potatoes, grown primarily as a cash crop, were sold to a store in Scenic as a source of produce for neighbors. The potatoes allowed the family to purchase groceries such as sugar, flour, and coffee.<sup>18</sup>

The produce garden was replanted every year, but its location was not fixed. It was located increasingly farther from the homestead shack, in response to moisture availability and spatial organization of the ranch. In each location, the garden was irrigated with water from the nearest stock dam.

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<sup>16</sup> Personal interview with Fran (daughter of Joseph Kudrna, Jr.), Sarah Brey. July 9, 2013, Scenic, SD.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> John Milner Associates, Inc., *Discovery and Re-Discovery in the White River Badlands Historic Resource Study*, (Badlands National Park, SD: National Park Service, 2006), 194.

Joseph and Marie Kudrna Homestead and  
Ranch

Pennington County: SD

Name of Property

County and State



Raising ducks on stockdam in 1923.

Marie planted the first garden just southeast of the homestead, utilizing part of the field which Josef plowed upon their arrival. In the early 1920s, the garden was moved north of the shack to make room for a larger pigpen and a corral. Originally, Josef used the site of the north garden to plant an orchard of apple, pear, and honey locust trees. For a short time, both the garden and orchard prospered on this site, with rows of trees interspersed with other garden plots. Eventually most of the fruit trees died. Only one apple tree remains of this orchard. The gnarled old tree evokes the hardship that took its toll on the rest of the orchard, an enduring reminder of Josef's first vision for the site. Sometime later, several rows of trees were planted as a windbreak north of the north garden. This area had previously been used as the potato field. It is possible that the newly planted trees appropriated water from the garden because it had to be relocated again for lack of moisture, this time near a stock dam west of the building cluster.<sup>19</sup>

Other small-scale agricultural operations on the ranch expanded until sometime mid-century and continued to evolve. Marie experimented with raising chickens, ducks, and turkeys. A kerosene incubator was kept on the north wall of the east room of the homestead shack for this purpose. Turkey houses were added during the 1930s. When Joseph Kudrna Jr. and his wife Elsie began their family at the homestead, Marie Kudrna advised her young daughter-in-law to

<sup>19</sup> Personal interview with Tony Kudrna, Sarah Brey. August 21, 2013, Scenic, SD.

Joseph and Marie Kudrna Homestead and  
Ranch

Pennington County: SD

Name of Property

County and State

keep turkeys. She believed turkeys would help protect the children when they played outside. She believed the commotion created by the turkeys if a snake was detected would alert the women to the potential hazard. The birds had to be dressed according to official standards, a meticulous process, but in doing so, Marie was able to ship them to Minneapolis, Minnesota, and receive four to five dollars a head.

### **Gaining Familiarity with the Landscape**

Homesteading families acquired an intimate geographic knowledge of the area around their home. Although settlers had little familial or cultural history on which to base this local knowledge, the nature of their work and daily lives in the Conata Basin (a large grassland area in western Pennington County) provided a steady stream of visual and haptic perceptions which eventually informed a broader cultural narrative. Brining in the dairy cows, herding livestock, passages to town, school, and the homes of neighbors, and fieldwork like making hay cutting grain, and fixing fence, all generated an intimate and personal geographic understanding of the Conata Basin for members of the Kudrna family.

Subtle landmarks which would be recognized by the family and surrounding community ground many of the family members' recollections. With so few trees in the surrounding countryside, one particular cottonwood tree came to be known by the Kudrnas as Lone Tree. The tree still stands in the Heck Table grazing allotment about one and a half miles southwest of the site, on land managed by the National Grasslands. Today, the tree is also is also remembered as the progenitor of one of the cottonwoods planted in a draw very near the homestead.

Not far from where the chokecherries were gathered, a stand of cedars provided the Kudrna Christmas tree each year. It had to be cut from the top of the Wall and dragged back to the homestead. Reaching into the land around them was common for the homesteaders of Pennington County, as is further evidenced by the memories recorded in *Pennington County Memoirs*.



Joseph and Marie Kudrna Homestead and  
Ranch

Name of Property

Pennington County: SD

County and State



Helen, Tony and Ann harvesting chokecherries c.1922

As further evidence of the familiarity residents acquired, much of Tony's functional geography of the region (how he describes a location or object) is related to personal events and associations. He still recalls the precise years when particular fields (plowed by his father or neighbors) or areas (like the sand hills south of the highway) "blew". Similarly, the daily responsibility to round up the Kudrna's milk cows and bring them back to the barn to be milked afforded Tony and his siblings ample opportunity to construct a regional geography out of their nuanced, haptic familiarity of the land around them.<sup>20</sup>

### Neighbors and Settlement

Throughout the periods of the open range and settlement, activity in the Conata Basin was spatially oriented around ephemeral hubs, primarily towns, farm/ranch headquarters, and water sources. Usually these hubs were linked by paths which radiated out from these points. Topography determined where these paths developed. Topographic organization influenced nearly every facet of life, from social networks and civic institutions to water gathering and range management.

Close connections with neighbors, both in terms of proximity and relation, eased the heavy demands of farm life. Some tasks necessitated rapid action. The procedures of harvest would

<sup>20</sup> Maire Eithne O'Neill, "Corporeal Experience: A haptic way of knowing," *Journal of Architectural Education* 55, no.1 (2001): 3-12.

Joseph and Marie Kudrna Homestead and  
Ranch

Pennington County: SD

Name of Property

County and State

need to be accomplished in a matter of days, all in the time periods dictated by nature. Thus, neighbors cooperated to complete the harvest on one family's field, then moved together to the next field. The families often shared equipment as well as exchanged labor. For example, soon after arrival, Josef built a wagon for harvest which he shared with their nearest neighbors, the Keester family. As sharing equipment was a common practice on the Kudrna homestead, this particular wagon is remembered today for the story associated with it rather than for its use by multiple families.<sup>21</sup> Ties between the Kudrnas and their neighbors continued and may have even strengthened when mechanized farming first came to the area. The Kudrnas and the Keesters jointly purchased a threshing machine in 1929 and continued to collaborate in many of their farming tasks.

A little beyond Keester Table, to the southeast, the Olek family homesteaded in 1909. Like with the neighborly bond between the Kudrnas and the Keesters, the Kudrnas and the Oleks pooled resources in farming tasks. In 1931, a farming accident took the life of Frank Olek Sr. Though trained as a butcher in Europe, he cut his leg while butchering a cow. His wife assumed management of the Olek place, hiring Joseph (Jr.) as her "administrator."<sup>22</sup> The two families jointly rented land east of Keester table. Joe Kudrna and the son of Frank Olek collaborated in the task of making hay; Joe Kudrna mowed and Frank Olek Jr. raked.

Socialization with these families also abounded. Sunday worship services followed by leisurely time together, dances, and community picnics, all occurred regularly. When the Kudrnas moved a pool table from the Scenic saloon into the front half of their granary in the 1940s, the granary on the northwest corner of homestead site became a place for local youth to enjoy.

Despite the benefits of community life they shared with the Kudrna family, both the Olek and Keester families left the area around the middle of the century. The entwining of fates between neighboring homesteaders is something of a paradox. Homesteaders came to rely upon their neighbors for operational and social support. Yet when resources became too limited to sustain the community and some settlers left, those who stayed found that crucial land and resources were freed for their own use. As this process shifted the density of settlement, community collaboration also became less essential to farm management. Mechanization allowed for a smaller labor-to-acre ratio.

To compensate for the thinning social network, homesteaders sought companionship farther afield. Social and farming networks continued to be based on physical proximity, but the networks became more dispersed. By the middle of the century, less than a half dozen additional families shared grazing areas with the Kudrnas and the Grazing Association to which the ranch belonged included ranches from across the entire basin.

## Water

The location and proximity of water sources near the homestead was pivotal to the Kudrnas' participation in the landscape. Because water in the region was scarce, it was a force of simultaneous coalescence and expansion. Prior to the deep wells drilled in the late twentieth century, water was utilized wherever it was found and frequently shared by neighbors. Unlike

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<sup>21</sup> The wagon was said to have held water at the first threshing because it was built so tight. Personal interview with Tony Kudrna, Sarah Brey. June 23, 2013, Scenic, SD.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

Joseph and Marie Kudrna Homestead and  
Ranch

Pennington County: SD

Name of Property

County and State

the exploitation of grass for livestock and soil for crops, where ownership of the land guaranteed sole proprietorship of the resource, water was treated as a communal resource. In this way, the fate of the Kudrna Homestead was often determined off of the Kudrna property.

During the early years, a well located very close to the west of the homestead shack supplied enough water for drinking, domestic activities, and a few animals. This well went dry in the early 1930s. After that, water for domestic purposes had to be hauled to the homestead from Sheep Ranch Spring, Andersen Spring, Bright Spring, and 6L Ranch. This water was then poured into the cistern by the house and could be used for drinking and domestic activities. This practice continued until the modern well was dug in the north yard of the complex. Today, the relic pump still sits above the old well and cistern.

Water was also required for cattle and other livestock. Stock dams were constructed to utilize the natural terrain; in places where rainwater was funneled, a hole would be deepened and sometimes widened, the excavate soil could then be piled at the lower end of the gully to hold water. In the 1920s, a well was dug in the pasture to the west of the homestead shack, right between the SW and SE quadrants of section 28. Once the first tractor was purchased, building stock dams became more efficient. Several more stock dams were constructed on the Kudrna property between 1930 and 1970.

Later, efforts made by the government to improve range management aided the Kudrna Ranch in securing water. A stock dam located near Imlay was included in an early inventory of 28 dams constructed by the WPA in Pennington County.<sup>23</sup>

Wetter years created a unique geography on the ranch based on water availability. Low places became effective resources, filling up with water that could be used to water livestock. For example, the draw that is situated between the homestead shack and the barn would occasionally fill up with water. At one time, an attempt was made to locate a well in this draw, but it only produced a small water hole. In 1915, precipitation was abundant enough to make the draw run like a creek. During a few particularly wet years, Josef dammed the draw and used it to water the hogs.

More often, layout and operations on the ranch were dictated by dry spells and the lack of water. Several water sources were located near the homestead, ranging from less than two to more than six miles distant. When no water was available on the Kudrna Ranch, cattle were daily "trailed" on horseback to one of the nearby stock dams. On the Kudrna ranch, this was commonly the responsibility of the children. In winter, a path had to be broken through the snow for the cattle to reach the dam. Although the first times cattle were trailed to a dam often required a significant amount of herding and prodding, once the cattle were familiar with the path and the destination, the daily trips with the cattle became easier to manage. There were also years that were so dry, none of the nearby stock dams held water. This was the case in 1929-1930, when Joseph Kudrna used the truck to haul water for the cattle from Bright Spring. Modern well digging technology was employed on the ranch beginning in 1952. The first attempt, which reached down 1300 feet, was unsuccessful. It reached water, but the water was

<sup>23</sup> South Dakota State Planning Board, *WPA Dams*, by C.W. Pugsley and T. Hillard Cox, (Brookings, SD: Works Progress Administration, 1937), 172 .

Joseph and Marie Kudrna Homestead and  
Ranch

Pennington County: SD

Name of Property

County and State

salty and the pipe also released gases. The Kudrnas continued to haul water to the ranch until a second deep well was dug in 1972. This well finally provided a dependable source of water on the Kudrna homestead.

### Mechanization of the Farm

For several decades, horsepower was the primary mechanism for heavy fieldwork on the ranch and the means for all transportation. Josef Kudrna even attempted to rear wild horses, raising between 15 and 20 horses a year during the late 1920s. The horses were hard on the infrastructure, often breaking down the corrals, and eventually Josef only kept the work and family horses. By the 1930s, horses became secondary, though their use was nonetheless intrinsic to life on the ranch. In 1924, the Kudrnas purchased their first truck, a Model T, which was used primarily for transporting water barrels to the homestead from nearby dams and springs. A year later, the family bought their first tractor. Josef Kudrna never drove it, claiming himself too old and slow in reflex. Thus, his son became responsible for all field work which required machine operation. The first year it was purchased, the tractor broke. Josef finished the field work with his team of horses and Joseph (Jr.) found work off the farm. Undiscouraged, they bought another tractor the following spring and permanently transformed work and life on the farm.



Tractors harvesting on the ranch in 1925.

Joseph and Marie Kudrna Homestead and  
Ranch

Pennington County: SD

Name of Property

County and State

With the purchase of tractors and trucks, more buildings and structures were added to the homestead. Josef built a machine shed in 1932, partially for the purpose of storing the newly acquired vehicles and machinery. With time, and in keeping with the resourceful ethic of the ranch, the machine shed became the storehouse of a massive collection of tools and materials deemed valuable and possibly reusable. A new bridge also had to be added between the main road and the homestead.

## Expansion of the Ranch: 1930-1952

### Land Acquisition

The complete land holdings of the Kudrna Ranch were acquired over multiple generations. After proving up on their 160 acre claim, Josef and Marie purchased land made available by departing settlers and filed for supplementary land as permitted by law. Additionally, adjacent homestead claims were commonly filed by the adult sons and daughters of homesteaders. In effect, this increased the total acreage of the family farm.<sup>24</sup> Joseph F. Kudrna, the eldest son of Josef Kudrna, homesteaded on a parcel adjacent with the previously expanded property of his parents. He proved up in 1935, at the age of 20. His success was concurrent with a period of substantial government buy-back of land in the area under the Bankhead Jones Act of 1937. Joseph sold his newly acquired land back to the government almost immediately after receiving title and the homestead shack he built with the assistance of his father and neighbor Ross Keester was moved onto the main ranch complex.

The steady turnover of ownership opened the door for the Kudrnas to acquire legal title to lands, some of which already functioned as part of their farm. Between 1915 and 1945, the Kudrna ranch expanded approximately ten times in total acreage. A list and graphics detailing the process of land acquisition is included at the end of this document.

### From diversified farm to livestock ranch

While the Kudrna's early agricultural projects demonstrate the diversified farming systems typical of early and late homesteads, the homestead's rapid transformation from diversified farm to cattle ranch demonstrates the mid-century evolution of homesteads toward a specific agricultural enterprise. As self-sufficiency of communities diminished, specialization allowed homesteaders to establish commercial viability in broader markets and provided a monetary income.

By the 1930s, the Kudrnas had acquired and plowed the total extent of land which they would ever plant. Despite ever increasing efficiency of machines, the farm began to shift away from row crops toward livestock. They continued to use the farm machinery and equipment in the work, but the crops they planted shifted primarily to crops which could be processed for grain feed and silage. Aerial photographs indicate that the fields directly north and northeast of the homestead were not planted in the 1940s (at least in some years), but harvested for hay. During this decade, the Kudrnas also experimented with "sealing" grain through the USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation – a federal organization which provided grain banking opportunities for farmers. The granary located north of the main perimeter of buildings evidences the Kudrna involvement in this program. The building was constructed quickly in

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<sup>24</sup> *Ranches of Southwest Custer County: Multiple Property Nomination*. (Pierre, South Dakota: South Dakota State Historic Preservation Office, 1990).

Joseph and Marie Kudrna Homestead and  
Ranch

Pennington County: SD

Name of Property

County and State

1942 by Joseph Jr. to store surplus barley or wheat which he had placed under contract until the following year. In later years, Joseph and Tony made improvements to the structure, putting in a floor, so that it could be utilized more effectively as a granary. It was used for many years after to store oats until it eventually became a storehouse of material and "junk".<sup>25</sup>

As evidence mounted against the reliability of grain, a refocus to livestock came naturally for Josef Kudrna. He was a well-rounded farmer with a range of skills and ventures. Tony recalled that his father "knew cattle and horses. He liked horses; he never went into a horse barn without talking to the horses." This personal affinity for animals may have eased the transformation of the Kudrna farm into a primarily ranching operation. The Kudrna Ranch registered its first brand in 1928, "J [bar] K". The J-K brand appears in the official 1937 South Dakota Brand Book, listed as a cattle and horse brand under Josef Kudrna. By 1943, the brand also included the name of his first son, Joseph, on the registration. To date, the brand has been renewed every year since its initial registration. Although the exact number of cattle kept on the Kudrna Ranch through the decades could not be verified, numbers based on Tony's recollections and, after the 1950s, National Forest Service grazing permits, estimate around 150 cattle from the late 1930s on.



Tony 1924 by granary.

<sup>25</sup> Personal interview with Tony Kudrna, Sarah Brey. August 21, 2013, Scenic, SD.

Joseph and Marie Kudrna Homestead and  
Ranch

Pennington County: SD

Name of Property

County and State

The ranch incurred both wet years and dry years during the national depression of the 1930s. Although the focus had shifted to cattle ranching, moisture levels still dictated the work load and prosperity of the season. With a large corn harvest in 1930, Josef found he was able to hire men to help with the work. Two men, Edmond Smith and Ross Keister, stayed on the ranch in 1931 and 1932. The men slept in the bunkhouse along with both Kudrna sons, and Josef paid them \$1 a day.<sup>26</sup> The year of 1936 brought a severe drought, and the task of hauling water became the family's priority, but rain came in 1938 and abundant yields again demanded intensive labor.

### **Modernization and Continuation of the Kudrna Ranch 1952-1963**

Propane came to the ranch in the summer of 1949 and powered a new stove and refrigerator. Although coal, previously used for heat in the winter, became obsolete, the family's traditional use of a wood stove persisted. Marie used her combination wood-propane stove for heating and cooking, respectively. Shortly thereafter, between 1952 and 1953, electrical power was brought to the area. That same year, Josef and his sons built a new house at the farmstead. Situated just north of the shack, Marie moved into the two-story home, where she lived until her death in 1973. By this time, the farm no longer included hogs and relied on cattle exclusively for market.

The family followed a pattern in the way land was divided and inherited which ensured its continuation as a family ranch. Deeded land was passed to children equally, regardless of gender. Upon his death, Josef willed all the land under his name (not including the areas in section 28 for which Marie held title) and farm machines to Marie and his four children in equal shares, including his two daughters who were married and living off the ranch in Texas and Rapid City, South Dakota. At that time, all children quit their share to their mother. Upon Marie's death, land was again divided equally among the four children; this time, only the daughters ceded their claim, passing their shares in equal proportion to their brothers, Joseph and Anthony. Joseph died in 1980, and his land was deeded to his wife and four children. In this case, the three daughters all quit their land to their mother and their brother Donald. Tony and his nephew Donald continued to run the ranch until 2012.

### **Land Acquisition Index**

The record of ownership of neighboring parcels enriches the historical narrative of the Kudrna Ranch by demonstrating the manner in which land was acquired. It also demonstrates the ephemeral quality which generally circumscribed land ownership in the Badlands in the twentieth century. This quality collates with the enduring presence of the Kudrna Ranch. Such a record is also promoted by land-use history experts and by reviewers of the Conata region in particular.<sup>27</sup>

The following index recounts the date and manner by which the Kudrnas acquired, sold, or exchanged land. Where possible, it accounts for previous owners and transactions. The chain of title for many sections was exceptionally difficult to interpret due to patterns investment and

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> John Milner Associates, Inc.. *Discovery and Re-Discovery in the White River Badlands Historic Resource Study*, (Badlands National Park, SD: National Park Service, 2006), 185.

Joseph and Marie Kudrna Homestead and  
Ranch

Pennington County: SD

Name of Property

County and State

speculation and the outside interests involved. This pattern was particularly notable in section 21 during the 1920s.

(April 1910) – Arrived in Pennington County and make claim on SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$  of section 27; NW $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$  of section 34; E $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$  of section 28.

1915 – Josef Kudrna

Received patent under authority of the 1862 Homestead Act to 160 acres original homestead claim.

1917 – Josef Kudrna

Purchased title for \$800.00 from state to 160 acres NE $\frac{1}{4}$  of section 28

*Previously, Clark N.W. Kelvie homesteaded and received patent via a commuted homestead cash-sale in 1913. The land was mortgaged in 1915 and lost to the state in 1916.*

1921 – Marie Kudrna

Received patent under authority of the 1877 Desert Land Act to 200 acres N $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ , SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ , NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ , NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$  of section 28

1923 – Josef Kudrna

Received patent under authority of the amended 1862 Homestead Act to 120 acres NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$  of section 27; SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$  of section 28; NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$  of section 33

1929 – Josef Kudrna

Purchased title for \$318.11 from Pennington County to 160 acres SE $\frac{1}{4}$  of section 21

*Previously, Phoebe Conklin homesteaded and received patent via a commuted homestead cash-sale in 1912. The land was reclaimed by the county in 1928 for back taxes from that year.*

**NOTE:**

*A series of quit-claims, first issued by F.E. and Laura P. Snyder to May E. Squires in 1928, and then by Squires to Northwestern Land Syndicate in 1930, are recorded on public record, however in 1936 Josef Kudrna received official title to the property by judgment of county court.*

1930 – Joseph F. Kudrna Jr.

Purchased title from Bank of Deadwood for 160 acres E $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ , NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$  of section 34 and NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$  of section 35

*Previously, Howard Macgill German homesteaded and received patent via a commuted homestead cash-sale in March 1914. It was transferred to Corbin Morse in 1913 and claimed by the First National Bank of Deadwood in July 1915.*

1935 – Joseph Kudrna

Received patent under authority of the 1862 Homestead Act to 240 acres N $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ , SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$  of section 22; NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ , W $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$  of section 27



Joseph and Marie Kudrna Homestead and  
Ranch

Pennington County: SD

Name of Property

County and State

1936 – Sold to federal government via the 1937 Bankhead Jones Land  
Acquisition

Josef Kudrna

Purchased title for \$500.00 from George W. Wadsworth

120 acres

SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$  of section 22; W $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ , SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$  of Section 27

*The Warranty Deed issued to Josef Kudrna noted that "Grantor [Wadsworth] covenants with grantee [Kudrna] that neither [Wadsworth], nor any member of his family now occupy said premises; that neither [Wadsworth] nor any member of his family have occupied said premises for many years and neither [Wadsworth] or any member of his family claims said premises as their homestead."*

1945 – Josef Kudrna

Purchased title for \$161.00 from Pennington County to

160 acres

SW $\frac{1}{4}$  of section 21

*Previously, John Vondra homesteaded and received patent via a commuted homestead cash-sale in 1912. The land had been mortgaged by Corbin Morse, who had acquired it from John Vondra on an unknown date; no public records could be found documenting this transaction. It was foreclosed and was reclaimed by the county for back taxes.*

1985 – Anthony J. Kudrna and Donald L. Kudrna

Purchased title for \$1, to assume \$85,000 of the balance due on a Farmers Home Administration loan, to

\_\_\_ acres

section \_\_\_, T14E, R4s

1992 – Anthony J. Kudrna and Donald L. Kudrna

Exchanged lands with U.S. Forest Service, United States Department of Agriculture Under authority of the Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act of 1937

655.47 acres received

W $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$  of section 22

NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$  and E $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$  of section 22 and NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$

*Previously, Joseph Kudrna Jr. homesteaded and received patent in 1935. He sold the land back to the government in 1936.*

W $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$  and E $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$  of section 27

*Previously, Kaliban homesteaded and received patent in 1914. The family arrived shortly before Josef. The family lost the claim in 1915. The land was purchased from Pennington County by G.W. Hoyt in 1916 and subsequently transferred to J.H. Chase. Chase sold the land to John and Emma Demel of Omaha, Nebraska in 1921. A quit-claim shows the land was transferred from John and Emma Demel to the US Government in 1937, for \$1 in kind.*

NW $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{2}$  and NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$  of section 34

*Previously, Edward and Anna Tomek homesteaded and received patent in 1912. It was sold to the US Government in 1935 for \$387.20*

W $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$  and S $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$  and NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$  of section 35

Noncontiguous: Also the Southwest Quarter of the Northwest Quarter and the West Half of the Southeast Quarter of section 14, and Lot 2 of Section 23, in Township 4, South, Range 14, East, B.H.M., in Pennington County, South Dakota, containing 162.96 acres, more or less.

Joseph and Marie Kudrna Homestead and  
Ranch

Name of Property

Pennington County: SD

County and State

## Homesteading (1910-1915)

Many policies and far-reaching circumstances coalesced in 1907 to create what became the second Dakota homesteading boom – a final push for agrarian settlement in the western Plains. Carried on this tide, thousands of migrants rapidly converged on mostly uninhabited landscapes. Despite the unifying circumstances which brought about their sudden arrival, subtle variances in year-to-year weather patterns, topography, soil composition, and settlers' own intentions, decisions, luck, and misfortunes ultimately determined the fate of each homestead claim. Many left soon after their arrival and most were gone by the middle of the century. By accounting for common circumstances and subsequent particularities of settlement, the persistence of the Kudrna Homestead and its existing landscape can be deciphered.

### Background

#### Appropriating land from Native Americans

The "settlement" of the Great Plains is mostly attributed to those who acquired land from the U.S. government, usually during the latter part of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Preceding this recent land transition, several distinct cultures continuously populated and utilized the area for tens of thousands of years. The Lakota Sioux most recently populated the area in the vicinity of the White River Badlands. The tribe descended from the Dakota tribe. The seasonal settlement and subsistence economic patterns of the Dakota led them to inhabit both prairies and woodlands east of the Missouri River. Due to several pressures, the Lakota Sioux progressively moved farther west onto the Plains. By the end of the eighteenth century, they had permanently converted their farm-subsistence lifestyle into one heavily reliant on bison.<sup>28</sup>

Conflicts between the Lakota and European Americans occurred in response to U.S. government actions within tribal lands and the uneasy relationship between early ranchers and native inhabitants.<sup>29</sup> The most severe conflicts preceded the final wave of homesteading in the twentieth century. Between 1858 and 1889, long before homesteaders flooded western South Dakota, the Sioux people ceded 81.7% of their land to federal officials.<sup>30</sup> At the same time, federal officials encouraged Indian agents to assimilate all native people to a fixed, farming lifestyle. Confrontation between the two sides peaked with a final push to relocate the Teton and Yanktonai tribes onto privately owned tracts of land. This sparked fear in white residents of a large-scale rebellion.<sup>31</sup> In 1890, the Massacre of Wounded Knee at Pine Ridge marked the end of the American Indian Wars.

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<sup>28</sup> Guy Gibbon, *The Sioux: The Dakota and Lakota Nations*, (Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons, Vol. 6, 2003), 54.

<sup>29</sup> Philip S. Hall, *To Have This Land: The nature of Indian/White Relations, South Dakota 1888-1891*.(Vermillion, South Dakota: South Dakota Press, 1993).

<sup>30</sup> Herbert T. Hoover, *The Sioux Agreement of 1889 and Its Aftermath*, (Pierre, South Dakota: South Dakota History, Vol. 19, 1989), 59.

This land was ceded in three transactions: The Treaty of Washington, D.C., in 1858; The Sioux Agreement, in 1877, and the Sioux Agreement of March 1889.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

Joseph and Marie Kudrna Homestead and  
Ranch

Pennington County: SD

Name of Property

County and State

Located adjacent to the Conata Basin, Pine Ridge Indian Reservation formed the southern boundary to the lands regionally available for homesteading. Despite its close proximity and a history of contested land policy, violence between whites and Indians had ceased by the time the agricultural frontier reached the White and Cheyenne Rivers. Friendly relationships, including trade and shared patronage of markets, saloons, and churches, were common.<sup>32</sup>

### Open Range Cattle Ranching

European-Americans arrived in the Conata Basin long before the official US Survey System. The Badlands and Conata Basin formed part of the historic “open range” and functioned as seasonal grazing pastures.<sup>33</sup> At one time, this expansive system of rangeland spanned from the Rio Grande to Canada. Ranches across the range were sparse, and cattle drives would cover hundreds of miles. Only a few ranches based their operations out of the Badlands. The headquarters of the 6L was situated at the mouth of Cain Creek on the White River.<sup>34</sup> At least two additional large cattle ranches may have been based in the area, the CK Ranch and the George E. Baley Ranch.<sup>35, 36</sup> However, apart from the 6L – which continued its operations in the area well into the twentieth century – most open range ranches roamed wide swaths of plains country, and held only loose ties with the actual settlement of the Badlands in particular.

Despite the transient work of the open range (see accounts of the lives of cowboys and ranch hands in *Reflections of the Badlands*)<sup>37</sup>, it was people associated with open-range cattle ranching that established the first permanent European American towns in the Badlands. Interior, the only present-day town within the Conata Basin, was founded as the unplatted hamlet of Black in 1890. On the western side of the basin, the Casey Springs general store, saloon, and post office, three miles south of the Kudrna homestead, and just north of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation – served ranchers and ranch-hands during the 1880s and early 1890s. In an area where businesses were few, it is likely that store patrons included people from the reservation and range workers.<sup>38</sup>

During the open range era, it was common for workers to move in and out of the area with a seasonal regularity that might be compared with the cyclical residency of earlier Plains dwellers. Cattle ranching at this time required cowboys to spend days and weeks at a time following the herd. While on the range, cattlemen either set up camp or slept out, neither of which left any lasting impressions on the landscape. When workers were brought together for communal events such as branding or round-up, cow hands stayed in bunk houses located at the ranch headquarters or camped nearby. Their ephemeral lifestyle was further articulated during seasons when cowboys were not occupied by ranch duties – hands might drift between towns and ranches, socializing or reveling, or they may leave the area altogether. As a result of the cowboy lifestyle, few individual dwellings were ever constructed away from the main ranch

<sup>32</sup> Hall, Philip S.. *Reflections of the Badlands*. (Sioux Falls: Pine Hill Press, 2008).

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Philip Hall, *Reflections of the Badlands*, (Vermillion, SD: University of South Dakota Press, 2008).

<sup>35</sup> Bob Lee and Dick Williams, *Last Grass Frontier: The South Dakota Stock Grower Heritage* (Sturgis, SD: Black Hills Publishers, 1964).

<sup>36</sup> Zach Holmes, *hand drawn map of southwestern South Dakota*, (Rapid City, South Dakota at Journey Museum, 1910).

<sup>37</sup> Hall, *Reflections*, (2008).

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. 2008:173

Joseph and Marie Kudrna Homestead and  
Ranch

Pennington County: SD

Name of Property

County and State

headquarters and the landscape remained unobstructed by private residences, even while harboring a distinct population and culture.

The beginning of the end of the open-range era in southwest South Dakota can be marked by the federal Public Land Survey of the area, a process that divided the country into geometrically identical parcels. In 1877, the Black Hills Meridian established one of the final tracts of land in the nation to be surveyed. These lands between the White and Cheyenne Rivers were finally documented in 1892. Noting the pervasive influence of survey systems on land tenure, one geographer commented, "In western societies the first step toward control of an environment usually is the assigning of tracts as grants of property – done by drawing lines on paper, although little may be known about the tract that is to be colonized."<sup>39</sup>

This certainly was true in the Badlands, where rugged topography long dictated its sparse settlement patterns. In contrast with practiced caution, the grid attempted to settle newcomers in dense, spatially consistent patterns. Newcomers then fenced the land based on the allotments they were issued according to the PLSS. Though the culture of the open range continued and even thrived until the turn of the century, the very opening of this land for settlement signaled "the defeat of the range cattle industry in its final stand."<sup>40</sup>

Historical accounts sometimes sever the narrative of inhabitation on the Badlands into distinct time periods, compartmentalizing residents into discrete groups. The narrative of shifting land tenure, moving from Native American to European American occupancy, and from ranch to farm operation, tends to recount confrontations between opposing forces. These narratives often celebrate ideas of "progressive settlement" or begrudge "the concomitant joys of civilization - - the ever higher costs of land ownership, taxes, interest and fencing."<sup>41</sup> The actual evolution of land use and residency in the West is far more complex. Cultural periods overlapped, and individuals within these groups tended to socialize, share traditions, adopt new practices, and altogether adapt. Thus, life on the Badlands formed a society both blended and born of the environment – a distinctly Plains culture comprised of unique values and long-evolving land use paradigms.

### **Policy and Circumstances Prefacing Twentieth-Century Settlement**

A series of federal actions formed the basis for twentieth-century land dispersal in South Dakota. Beginning in 1862, the government offered citizens 160 acres of free land if they were able to meet a set of basic requirements. The exact parameters varied with time, but the essential criteria for legally successful homesteading remained constant. Applicants were first obligated to register their claim; they then needed to live on the land for a designated period, and invest in its "improvement". This usually entailed plowing, planting, and constructing out buildings and a residence. In 1912, the required period of residency decreased from five to three years. In 1915, South Dakota adopted the 1909 Enlarged Homestead Act, allowing settlers to make claims up to 320 acres. Although legislators feared the stigma this provision might carry – that land was of poorer quality in South Dakota - larger farms were necessary for

<sup>39</sup> Hildegard Binder Johnson, *Order Upon the Land: The US rectangular land survey and the upper Mississippi country* (New York: The Andrew H. Clark Series in the Historical Geography of North America, 1976), 21.

<sup>40</sup> Hazel Adele Pulling, *History of the Range Cattle Industry of Dakota*, (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1940).

<sup>41</sup> *The Cattleman's Empire*, (National Park Service, US Department of Interior, 1958) 59.

Joseph and Marie Kudrna Homestead and  
Ranch

Pennington County: SD

Name of Property

County and State

success in the western part of the state. Further recognizing this need, in 1916, the Stockgrowers Homestead Act was passed in South Dakota, which allowed homestead claims of 640 acres. Surprisingly few homesteaders in Pennington County took advantage of the supplementary land acts. Just 375 claims were made under the authority of the Stockgrowers Homestead Act in Pennington County, despite the recognized need for large parcels. In contrast, over 2,000 people claimed the smaller 160-acre parcels in accordance with the Original Homestead Act.<sup>42</sup>

While the federal land survey bestowed an attractive sense of geometric order to the land and federal policies expanded the potential to privately acquire it, cultural notions and private business interests also contributed to an onslaught of settlers. By the twentieth century, the original Homestead Act of 1862 and the agrarian tradition that was idealistically wedded to it had been deeply woven into the national narrative.<sup>43</sup>

Many believed settled land should be tended – and this meant farmed. Among states, South Dakota in particular promoted individual land ownership and the family farm.<sup>44</sup> By this standard, neither the condition of the land as a Lakota reservation, nor its state under open range management, merited consideration as settlement. Southwestern South Dakota, which had been governed since European arrival by these influences, was considered one of “the last frontiers”. Until any area of land was granted through title into private ownership, it counted as public domain. This suggested that official government records composed the land’s only verifiable history. Homesteaders frequently showed little regard for previous uses or even the current state of the land upon their arrival. The act of homesteading required a renovation of the natural landscape – it should be tamed by culture and tended for the betterment of society. By the twentieth century, stories of successful new farms on previously ‘wild’ lands were pervasive in popular culture. For those who pursued it or dreamt of doing so, homesteading represented “the joy of the struggle, of knowing that they were doing good work, and that they were of tougher character than those who lived easier lives.”<sup>45</sup>

It is possible, that these beliefs may have skewed what potential homesteaders saw when they examined the land being touted as a “prime farming opportunity” within “the last, best West”.<sup>46</sup> In an early natural history of the region, one recorder noted, “Within little more than a stone's throw of where the early explorers spoke of the region as an inferno for heat and drought men have built homes for themselves and their families and are now raising good crops of vegetables, tame grasses and staple grains.”<sup>47</sup> Clearly, many failed to realize the extent of the differences between homesteading the prosperous farms east of the Missouri and homesteading on the arid, grass-dominated ecosystems of the nation’s western lands. In South

<sup>42</sup> Bureau of Land Management, “Land Patent Search,” digital images, General Land Office Records (<http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov/PatentSearch> : accessed 27 July 2013), (Pennington County, South Dakota).

<sup>43</sup> Gilbert C. Fite, *The Only Thing Worth Working For' Land and Its Meaning for Pioneer Dakotans*, (Pierre, South Dakota: South Dakota History 15, No. 1, 1985) 2-25.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. 19.

<sup>45</sup> Paula M. Nelson, *After the West was Won: Homesteaders and town builders in Western South Dakota, 1900-1917*, (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1986).

<sup>46</sup> Bormann, Ernest G., *Homesteading in the South Dakota Badlands – 1912*. (Stickney, SD: Argus Printers, 1971), 21.

<sup>47</sup> C.C. O'Hara, *The White River Badlands* (Rapid City, South Dakota: South Dakota School of Mines and Technology, 1920).

Joseph and Marie Kudrna Homestead and  
Ranch

Pennington County: SD

Name of Property

County and State

Dakota, these environmental discrepancies ultimately created the distinct regional identities of “East River” and “West River” settlement. According to geographic historian Paula M. Nelson, three primary factors define the West River landscape: the broken topography; the soil, which contains less humus, more clay, and is often covered with Pierre shale; and the extreme, unpredictable climate.<sup>48</sup>

## The Agricultural Frontier Reaches the Badlands

### Land Transference in Indian Lands

The Badlands, which had been part of Native American treaty land until 1889, was made available to homesteaders according to The General Allotment Act of 1887 following the federal survey in 1892. Although at first the area garnered little interest, the arrival of the railroad made the land more accessible, and the increase in settlement activity on nearby reservations significantly bolstered the desirability of the region. In the region’s final, large-scale reassignment of Native American lands to white claimants, the government utilized two methods of land distribution. Under authority of The General Allotment Act of 1887, “surplus” areas (lands which had not been allotted as private parcels within the reservation) could be sold by the federal government to augment tribal funds or offered through homesteading claims. It was believed that white settlers would provide an example of successful family farming to neighboring Indians.<sup>49</sup> Additionally, sections of un-allotted land on the nearby Rosebud reservation were sold to adjacent counties in 1904, 1907, and 1910. These lands were then distributed through a lottery system. Individuals whose names were randomly selected by the General Land Office were then able to purchase a tract of land for a minimal cost per acre. These lotteries received far more applications than there were parcels available. In testament to the enthusiasm this twentieth century homesteading opportunity generated, only about three percent of total registrants actually received the right to purchase a land parcel. Those who luck did not favor in the lottery could opt to file a traditional homestead on other, usually marginal, lands in the area.

### Influence of Railroads in Settlement Patterns

Transportation formed a critical factor in the regional trajectory and evolution of settlement, operating as both a hindrance and an opportunity. The allocation of land through railroad grants also affected the rate and manner by which the Conata Basin was settled. In 1907, the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad (Milwaukee Road) opened a line linking Rapid City with the east via its former terminal in Murdo. After heading west from Kadoka, the route navigated the rough topography of the Badlands by passing through the Conata Basin. As is true across much of the state, settlement in the region corresponded with the increased accessibility and promotion of the area.<sup>50</sup> In Pennington County and other counties in southwest South Dakota, settlement promotion by railroad companies peaked in the 1910s.<sup>51</sup> Later, the railroads also used their access to rural towns to promote new agricultural techniques. Though frequency and

<sup>48</sup> Nelson, *After the West was Won*, (1986), 11.

<sup>49</sup> Hoover, *The Sioux Agreement of 1889 and Its Aftermath* (1989), 71.

<sup>50</sup> Mark Hufstetler and Michael Bedeau, *South Dakota’s Railroads: A Historic Context*, (Pierre, SD: South Dakota State Historic Preservation Office, 1998).

<sup>51</sup> Robert C. Ostergren, *European Settlement and Ethnicity Patterns on the Agricultural Frontiers of South Dakota*, (Pierre, South Dakota: South Dakota History, Vol. 13, No. 1), 49-82.

Joseph and Marie Kudrna Homestead and  
Ranch

Pennington County: SD

Name of Property

County and State

number of services steadily decreased, the Milwaukee Road continued to operate this line until 1980, when it was transferred to the State of South Dakota and operation ceased.<sup>52</sup>

### Homesteading as Adventure or Speculation

In contrast with the homesteading population of the nineteenth century, the majority of settlers in Western South Dakota were born in the United States.<sup>53</sup> These homesteaders often belonged to a family who had first homesteaded further east. Yet their decision to file for a homestead did not necessarily equate with a commitment to stay in western lands. Motivation came in a wide array. As described by historian Paula Nelson, “each individual’s motives were his or her own. [While one homesteader] went because ‘homesteading was the spirit of the times – a big adventure,’ [another homesteader] explained that their decision was part of the pioneer tradition in their family, whose members were ‘always among those who pushed back the frontier.’ ... [Yet another homesteader] believed that the crowds of people ‘came to see the West while it was still unchanged, drawn for reasons of personal adventure, or because the romantic legends of the West attracted them. Still other people were drawn by the intangibles – the touch of the wind on their faces, a return to the simple elements of living.’”<sup>54</sup> Yet, the key attribute which was meant to distinguish homesteading settlers from the area’s earlier inhabitants - year-round, stationary residence on their claim – was not practiced by many, perhaps most, of those making claims.

For those who saw the land as a setting for adventure, a source of quick profit, or both, commutation was most often utilized to secure title. Commuted homesteaders rarely resided on the land for more than the fourteen months required. Generally, their contribution to the area’s development was minimal. In differentiating between the genuine homesteader and the commuter, one North Dakota lawyer wrote, “The real settler builds his shanty... gets out his breaking-plow and goes to work.....[the commuter] builds his shanty as cheaply as possible... he hires a man to come and break the ten acres required by law. He attends to his business, which, if it does not call him away from his claim, is to sit and watch the days go by.”<sup>55</sup>

### From Frontier to Settlement

#### Enclosure of Property

The introduction of barbed wire in 1874 revolutionized farming, particularly in places like the Plains which lacked traditional fencing materials. Because barbed wire enabled the construction of fences where people had adopted a lifestyle without need for fences, it also heightened conflict between new agrarian farmers and earlier residents.<sup>56</sup> In West River country, the opposing opinions were embodied on one side by traditional farmers, and on the other by old time ranchers accustomed to free range grazing and settlers who were transitioning to stock raising and dairying. Those with livestock felt it was everyone’s responsibility to care for their own land (and build their own fences). Traditional farmers believed that livestock owners should be responsible for any crop damage caused by free ranging livestock, in

<sup>52</sup> John Milner Associates, Inc., *Discovery and Re-Discovery in the White River Badlands Historic Resource Study*, (Badlands National Park, SD: National Park Service, 2006), 184.

<sup>53</sup> Robert C. Ostergren, *European Settlement and Ethnicity Patterns on the Agricultural Frontiers of South Dakota*, (Pierre, South Dakota: South Dakota History, Vol. 13 No. 1&2), 59.

<sup>54</sup> Nelson, *After the West Was Won*, (1986), 22.

<sup>55</sup> Hugh J. Hughes, *The Abuse of the Homestead Law*, (The American Lawyer, Vol. 14, 1906), 350-352.

<sup>56</sup> SWCA Environmental Consultants, *The History of Agriculture in South Dakota: A Historic Context*, (Pierre, SD: South Dakota State Historic Preservation Office, 2014), 18.

Joseph and Marie Kudrna Homestead and  
Ranch

Name of Property

Pennington County: SD

County and State

essence demanding ranchers only graze livestock on the resources to which they held legal title.

The outcome of this dispute can still be seen – fences checker the landscape – but the sides of the argument have been muddled. Fenced pastures do dictate grazing limits, as mandated by the 1911 herd law, but fences also became part of the grazers' strategy. These boundaries never limited grazing to privately owned pastures. In spite of the fences, a triumph belongs to the cattlemen and mixed-farmers, who secured the authority to graze cattle on lands they did not own.

### **Towns and Motor Vehicles**

The existence of a railroad shaped the settlement of the Conata Basin beyond its role importing people and goods and exporting harvests; it also platted and constructed a series of towns along its line. Imlay, essentially a cluster of buildings located a few miles east of the Kudrna homestead, was founded by the Milwaukee Road as one of these service stops. Founded in 1908, the hub subsisted primarily on its founding function as a railroad stop for about two decades. During this time, it also developed some basic services. At its zenith, Imlay entailed the depot, water supply (a rudimentary railroad dam), a school, a small general store, and postal services.

Today, the built remains of neighboring towns (Imlay, Scenic, and Conata) mark these lost centers of education, commerce, and social activity. Towns through the basin were platted ten or more miles apart, slightly farther apart than the towns built in other areas.<sup>57</sup> Nonetheless, later homesteaders often did business in several of the nearest shipping points. The ability to access distant towns became especially important as railroad services steadily diminished. Ultimately, none of the towns platted by the Milwaukee Road through the Conata Basin survived. Consolidation of school districts also attests to this enlarging and amalgamation of regional activity. Classes were conducted in a building in Imlay from 1914 until 1961, when the district merged with four districts, and children in the basin began attending school either in the newly created Scenic school or in Interior, about thirty miles distant. The remnants of these old towns, mostly visible along the deserted railway adjacent to present day SD Highway 44, provide a physical indication of the radius served by community centers during the homestead era and the contrasting expanse between centers today.

The introduction of motor vehicles, which occurred soon after the second Dakota homesteading boom, set apart the process of settlement in the Conata Basin from most earlier homesteading frontiers. Previous homesteaders were subjected to incredible isolation, even in areas much easier to travel than the Badlands. The proximity of the railroad and the automobile alleviated this challenge. For west river settlers, "the automobile gave residents hope, offering liberation from the inflexible schedules and routes of the railroads."<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, it provided the opportunity for homesteaders to broaden their social and economic circles far beyond immediate neighbors and rail lines.

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<sup>57</sup> John Milner Associates, Inc., *Discovery and Re-Discovery in the White River Badlands Historic Resource Study*, (2006), 174.

<sup>58</sup> Nelson, *The Prairie Wins Out Its Own: The West River Country of South Dakota in the Years of Depression and Dust*, (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press: 1996), 104



Joseph and Marie Kudrna Homestead and  
Ranch

Name of Property

Pennington County: SD

County and State

## Responding to the natural environment and to national policies (1910-1963)

After several years of favorable rainfall, 1910 generated a disappointingly small harvest in Western South Dakota. Occasional precipitation events that year did little to improve growing conditions. The moisture evaporated or disappeared into the ground before it could be utilized by plants and animals on the surface and vegetation withered while livestock starved and parched. Just north of the Conata Basin, at the Cottonwood Agricultural Experiment Station, rainfall totaled just 9.95 inches in 1910. Technically the sparse rainfall was well below “average”, but the extremity fairly represented the region’s erratic climate. In the White River Badlands, precipitation rates are significantly below average 40% of the time. For many new land claimants, most of whom had yet to invest significant time or resources in their homestead, the drought of 1910-1911 became the impetus to give up plans and move on. Others with more optimism – investors and new settlers who had not experienced the drought – claimed the land they left. In spite of the turnover in population, that drought also left a stock of settlers who believed success would take “a willingness to experiment, to sacrifice, and to do the hard duty,” and created a regional ethos which would be carried into the hard times to come.<sup>59</sup>

This ethos can be traced through the evolution of the regional economy of the Badlands. Settlers in the area typically began their homestead by planting several types of crops and purchasing several species of livestock. Diversity in food sources allowed families to procure much of their own sustenance and represented the beginning of a traditional homesteading enterprise. A collective willingness to experiment with farming methods may have helped buffer blows from the unpredictable climate. Additionally, the development of transportation systems, beginning with the railroad and later supplemented by personal vehicles, created the means to participate in a broader market. Throughout the twentieth century, Badlands homesteaders attempted to navigate their farms through the tumult of evolving technology, fluctuations in agricultural markets, and unpredictable climatic conditions. Eventually, and as a consequence of policy, environmental conditions, and the region’s amalgamated heritage, cattle ranching re-emerged as the region’s primary economic base.

### Homestead Farms

#### Two Models

Most farms in the years immediately following homesteaders’ arrival tended to follow a very typical model, expanding and growing the diversity of their products. This model prevailed in spite of differences in regional climates, soils, topography, and ethnic backgrounds. More than ninety percent of farms in South Dakota kept livestock or domestic animals of some kind in 1910.<sup>60</sup> Of all farms, ninety percent kept both horses and cattle (and/or dairy cows), eighty percent raised chickens and turkeys, and sixty percent raised swine. In addition to livestock and grain cultivation, the garden yielded an essential base for both commercial and domestic production.

<sup>59</sup> Paula M. Nelson, *After the West was Won: Homesteaders and town builders in Western South Dakota, 1900-1917*, (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1986), 154.

<sup>60</sup> U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, *Census of Agriculture: 1910*, (Washington, DC: National Archives and Records Administration, 1910).

Joseph and Marie Kudrna Homestead and  
Ranch

Pennington County: SD

Name of Property

County and State

In contrast, another model began to influence some homesteaders in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. According to *The History of Agriculture in South Dakota* published by the State Historic Preservation Office, the Progressive Farm typically:

- featured specialized farm equipment and farm buildings
- were built around a central courtyard for efficient access to buildings, and so that there was no crossing of fences and gates
- in addition to the built environment of outbuildings and structures, would also have strategically placed trees and shrubs, called a "shelter belt," as a weather break.<sup>61</sup>

Both types of farms existed in the Conata Basin. Those which succeeded in the long term generally blended the progressive model of specialization with diverse harvests for subsistence.

### Daily-life

Manual labor was the basis for all early, physical improvements around a homestead. As the demands to establish a sustainable farming operation were substantial, everyone was expected to contribute. Generally, in homesteads being claimed by families, men handled all the field work and construction projects around the farm, while women were responsible for all "household" activities. This meant women fed and cared for the barnyard livestock (for example chickens, turkeys, milk cows), as well as managed the housekeeping, cooking, and children.<sup>62</sup> Children, too, contributed to the production and maintenance tasks of the farm. The demands of keeping a diversified farm kept families busy through the year, though tasks varied with the seasons.

Additionally, collaboration in work extended outside the family, and neighbors frequently assisted one another in tasks which required specialized equipment or were time-sensitive. For example, threshing of grain needed to be accomplished quickly, and could be done most effectively with a machine designed specifically for the task. Hence, neighbors often shared the cost and operation of a threshing machine. In this way, farmers gained access to equipment for which they may not otherwise have held sufficient capital. In the process, social ties were often forged. Memoirs from across eastern Pennington County reflect the bond neighbors formed as they collaborated in their work.<sup>63</sup>

### The Farm and the Market

The trains that brought homesteaders into this place of difficult travel also provided access to larger markets. From homesteaders' own small-scale offerings to much needed building supplies, many agricultural resources were transported into and out from the Conata Basin via the railroad. Additionally, the use of the railroad shipping cars made it feasible for small farmers to ship cattle, even just a few, to slaughterhouses in the east. Because the trains needed to resupply water at every town, and sometimes at dams between, the geographic and temporal frequency of stops made this shipping source easily accessible while the trains still ran regularly.

<sup>61</sup> SWCA Environmental Consultants, *The History of Agriculture in South Dakota: A Historic Context*, (Pierre, SD: South Dakota State Historic Preservation Office, 2014), 38.

<sup>62</sup> Edith Eudora Kohl, *Land of the Burnt Thigh*, (Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1938).

<sup>63</sup> *Eastern Pennington County Memoirs*, (Wall, South Dakota: The American Legion Auxiliary, Carrol McDonald Unit.)

Joseph and Marie Kudrna Homestead and  
Ranch

Pennington County: SD

Name of Property

County and State

Farms in Pennington County prospered during the years following the First World War. For those who had survived the drought of 1910-1911, high commodity prices and relatively high yields spelled success for the latter part of the decade. However, total rainfall dropped steadily between 1920 and 1928. A second emigration out of the region ensued, less abrupt than the exodus from the region in 1910, but steady and pervasive. During the 1910s and 1920s, farms in Pennington County grew rapidly in size as the total number of farms decreased; in 1910 there were 1,877 farms, by 1925 that number had fallen to 1,188 farms averaging 655.3 acres.<sup>64</sup> During the decades that followed, those who stayed in Pennington County continued to increase their land holdings. Between 1930 and 1940, the average size of farms grew from 661.5 acres to 930 acres.<sup>65</sup>

As individual land holdings expanded, the Milwaukee Railroad continued to run through the basin but began to decrease the frequency of trains and increase the distance between stops. The diminished railroad service also reduced the practicality of shipping small quantities of goods out of the basin. With a steadily decreasing population in the surrounding community and an increasing difficulty in accessing markets, farmers began to feel the exigencies to specialize and intensify their production.

### Cattle Ranching

Even under the tenet of diversification, farming proved to be a precarious endeavor. In response to difficulties of crop-based agriculture, some farmers began to focus on dairy and cattle production. Yet even the largest amount of land that could be legally homesteaded – 640 acres under the authority of the Stock Raising Homestead Act – was arguably insufficient to support a viable ranch.<sup>66</sup> Because many homesteaders had retained their diverse production scheme during hard times, the transition into livestock often occurred gradually.

In the 1930s, the federal government took several measures to control the type and amount of agricultural production occurring on farms in an attempt to mitigate for inflation and over-production.<sup>67</sup> Simultaneously, Pennington County saw a decrease in total land classified as “under production”. Farmers in marginal areas began to favor those crops which could be used to feed cattle, such as silage and hay. Much of the marginal land which had not been plowed remained in grassland, instead utilized as pasture. As homestead farmers sought an adaptive existence better suited to the unpredictable climate, policies and circumstances aligned to provide farmers with more land to graze. In the 1930s and 1940s, cattle, the foundation of the region’s economy before the 1910 homesteading boom, reemerged as an economic cornerstone.

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<sup>64</sup> U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, *Census of Agriculture: 1925*, (Washington, DC: National Archives and Records Administration, 1925).

<sup>65</sup> U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, *Census of Agriculture: 1940*, (Washington, DC: National Archives and Records Administration, 1940).

<sup>66</sup> Allyson Brooks and Steph Jacon, *Homesteading and Agricultural Development Context*, (Pierre, SD: South Dakota State Historic Preservation Office, 1994).

<sup>67</sup> James Marten, “A ‘Golden Opportunity’: The South Dakota Agricultural Extension Service and the Agricultural Adjustment Administration, 1933-1935”, (*South Dakota History* 12, 1982).

Joseph and Marie Kudrna Homestead and  
Ranch

Pennington County: SD

Name of Property

County and State

### **Private Land Ownership and the “Checkerboard”**

By 1934, over half of South Dakotan farmers were on welfare relief; overall, South Dakota reported the highest percentage of the population on welfare in the nation.<sup>68</sup> Moreover, about twenty percent of land in Pennington County was tax delinquent, resulting in the foreclosure and abandonment of thousands of acres. Although some South Dakota counties reported even higher levels of tax delinquency, lands which remained under private ownership in the Badlands almost invariably adjoined tracts of land which were vacated.

By this time, it was ubiquitously possible for the minority of farmers with stable finances to expand the boundary of their operations. Forfeited parcels could be purchased by adjacent landowners and incorporated into expanded grazing regimes. In the meantime, ownership rights were either reclaimed by the government or purchased by outside speculators. Maps of legal ownership during this time depicted a matrix of farms and ranches scattered throughout large tracts of supposedly unutilized land.

The realities of an economy in which grass was a valuable resource warranted de facto land-use of greater spatial and temporal continuity. As a new model of land oversight took shape, a handful of local farmers and ranchers quickly filled gaps in resource management. Even the parcels taht adjacent landowners did not legally purchase were frequently incorporated into expanded grazing regimes. Neighbors – who came from increasing distances as the countryside emptied of people – turned out their livestock to graze on “free” grass. In addition to the communal quality of vacant land, rough topography also amplified the ambiguity of grazing boundaries. Some feared such conditions represented a return to the open range, but the framework and common laws of the open range had already been superseded. Scattered fences on surviving homesteads blocked expansive movements of herds and many once dependable tracts of native grasses had been plowed and deteriorated. Nevertheless, some decedents of the open-range ranchers found they could recreate grazing empires by fitting their ranch into the new quilt of public and private boundaries. Frank Wilson, who operated just south and west of the Badlands, and Doug Temple, whose operation spanned the northern reaches of the reservation and well into the White River Badlands, operated two of the largest ranches in the state in the 1950s.<sup>69</sup> At the same time, aspiring farmers realized that by grazing the extra land, they could intensify the role of cattle in their economic strategy. Cattle on farms, used as a source of subsistence meat and dairy with perhaps a handful of surplus animals, were increased in number to herds viable for commercial ranching. All of these approaches to utilize vacant land prompted the beginning of the small-scale, open range.

### **Legal Title and Communal Lands**

Because the inevitable consequence of the Public Land Survey System was that every portion of land must belong in title to either a governmental or private entity, this simple system of land reference inescapably structured the trajectory of homesteads. Land which was up for back taxes went through a general process to transfer title rights. First, it was advertised for public auction by the county. Anyone could bid on the land, paying the back taxes owed to the county and thereby acquiring the deed to the land. The sale of this “Treasurer’s Deed” or “Tax Deed” was commonly conducted on the front steps of the county courthouse. It was then up to the purchaser to take the slip of paper to be notarized and ensure any other claims to the land were

<sup>68</sup> Joanita Kant, *A History of South Dakota Century Farms*, (Dallas: Taylor Publishing Company, 1985), 41-47.

<sup>69</sup> Bernie Keating, *Buffalo Gap Frontier*, (Sioux Falls, SD: Pine Hill Press, 2008), 166-173.

Joseph and Marie Kudrna Homestead and  
Ranch

Pennington County: SD

Name of Property

County and State

“quieted”. By purchasing the land outright, farmers ensured their access to the resource when proprietorship of land gained firmer enforcement.

In the 1930s, when federal interests sought greater influence over the nation’s agricultural market and productive land management, the government also began to buy land from impoverished rural residents and to reclaim land that had gone back to the county. During this time, federal policies regarding settlement transitioned from the promotion of homesteading and land distribution to the reacquisition of “sub-marginal” lands (*i.e.* areas unsuited to be farmed according to the agrarian ideal) and toward public land management. The Taylor Grazing Act of 1934 closed all remaining federal lands to new homesteading claims.

The land purchase program was one piece of a national attempt to remedy the economic hardships confronting Americans in the 1930s. Beginning with the Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA) of 1934, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, aided by USDA undersecretary Rexford G. Tugwell and secretary of agriculture Henry A. Wallace, transformed the federal government’s involvement in rural economics.<sup>70</sup> The AAA created the basis for government action in four key areas delegated to the Resettlement Administration in 1935: suburban resettlement, rural rehabilitation, land utilization, and rural resettlement. Of the four, the Land Utilization Division was the smallest financial commitment. Its first responsibility was to identify areas of “sub-marginal” land, a classification intended to call attention to and mitigate the problems – ranging from poverty to erosion – caused by attempting to farm lands unfit for traditional farming. The classification scheme also focused intervention and conservation projects in particular geographic areas in conjunction with the Soil Conservation Service.

A bulletin published in 1929 by the Farm Economics Department of South Dakota in cooperation with the USDA described Area X, an area which encompassed the Conata Basin and most of southwestern South Dakota, as follows: “The sub-marginal agricultural area’ – As a whole, this is the poorest part of South Dakota as far as farming is concerned. The “Bad Lands”, located in this area, are very scenic but cannot even be termed good grazing land. The Pine Ridge Indian Reservation is comprised of Washabaugh, Washington and Shannon Counties. Very little agriculture is carried on here.”<sup>71</sup>

Additionally, the AAA gave the government the necessary jurisdiction and resources to mitigate communal mismanagement of lands. Through funds allocated by the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, the Resettlement Administration carried out the purchasing of thousands of acres in South Dakota, North Dakota, Montana, Wyoming, Nebraska, Colorado, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas. The 1937 Bankhead Jones Farm Tenancy Act formally designated these purchases as “Land Utilization Projects” (LUPs). In southwest South Dakota, approximately 26,000 acres surrounding present day Badlands National Park became the Badlands-Fall River Land Utilization Project. The lands acquired at that time passed through a long chain of management agencies, but eventually settled under the supervision of the U.S. Forest Service as the National Grasslands. In spite of drifting through various agencies, the common lands continually served as public grazing districts. Usually the bureaucratic changes only affected nominal changes on the land. In the Conata Basin, Heck Table was grazed

<sup>70</sup> Francis Moul, *The National Grasslands*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006).

<sup>71</sup> *Bulletin 238: Types of Farming in South Dakota*, (Farm Economics Department; Agricultural Experiment Station. Brookings; 1929).

Joseph and Marie Kudrna Homestead and  
Ranch

Pennington County: SD

Name of Property

County and State

without regulation in the 1930's, until ownership switched to the federal government. By the 1940s, a regulatory process required that all grazers be issued permits. When management of LUPs transferred to the National Forest Service in 1954, the area became known as the "Sheep Mountain Grazing Allotment". Ultimately, the earliest change of government policy to support public land management rather than continuation of private development enabled nearby ranchers to graze their cattle on non-private land indefinitely.

### Management of Communal Lands

The proximity of these public land purchases was pivotal to the re-emergence of large scale ranching in the area. Although "the LUP transformed access to resources more than land use itself" and "the primary consequence of the LUP was to bring federally managed *order* to private exploitation of common resources."<sup>72</sup> Federal management did involve some *material interventions* on the landscape. During the 1930's and the decades that followed, the Soil Conservation Service (and its predecessors) enacted several policies and projects to improve the quality of pastures for cattle grazing. For example, many federal agencies encouraged farmers to plant crested wheatgrass, an exotic species imported from Asia, under the assumption that it would be a more hardy and beneficial species. Connected to the management of land for improved pasture vegetation, the government also constructed and maintained stock dams and water lines. Although earlier homesteaders constructed many similar earthen dams, most of these fell into disrepair as the population density of the countryside dropped. The new amenities enlarged the area viable for use as grazing pastures.

### Grazing Associations

Measures of government involvement set the stage to create the contemporary ranching system seen in the Conata Basin today. In conjunction with the goal of sustainable land use, the Land Utilization Program shifted "control away from poor local ranchers to government experts" and "mirrored the conservation ideology applied by Gifford Pinchot's Forest Service..."<sup>73</sup> In order to ensure salience and legitimacy of the projects locally, the management scheme also established regional grazing associations. These associations functioned as a cooperative governing board, mediating between individuals – the private land managers – and the US Forest Service – the public land manager. The government intended to use the governing board of grazing associations to place successful, local ranchers in positions of influence with regard to the management of local lands. Moreover, "a checkerboard pattern of ownership... private property, federal property, and state, county, and railroad land intermingled. By requiring the grazing association to lease intermixed private land, and then to apply the same grazing program to all land it controlled, the government regulated land use on additional property without purchasing it."<sup>74</sup>

Four grazing associations operated within Buffalo Gap National Grassland District II (the name of Badlands-Fall River Land Utilization Project following the 1960 redistricting of the federally managed LUP into National Grasslands). The Cain Creek Cooperative Grazing Association (CCCGA) governed the entire Conata Basin and more, its jurisdiction spanning from the Pennington-Shannon County line on the east to the Cheyenne River on the west. Legally

<sup>72</sup> Geoff Cunfer, "The New Deal's Land Utilization Program in the Great Plains," (*Great Plains Quarterly* 21, No. 3, 2001).

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 203.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 208.

Joseph and Marie Kudrna Homestead and  
Ranch

Pennington County: SD

Name of Property

County and State

formed in 1941, the cooperative was inactive from 1963 to the middle of 1972 (Dunmire, Short, Tobias & Paulsen -Certified Public Accountants 1972). During this time of inactivity, all grazing permits were issued directly between individuals and the Forest Service. Records show 15 permittees representing 11 families in 1958.<sup>75</sup> During that year, the Kudrna Ranch received permission to run 10 cattle on LUP and National Forest lands for 7 months between May 1 and October 31. In total for that year, the Cain Creek Grazing District issued permits for 419 animals (recommended number) and 290 temporary animals (additional animals allowed beyond the preferred number for the allotment) for a total of 709 animals, 4424 animal use months. This number decreased significantly over the next five years, down to just 1599 animal use months by 1963. At the same time, the number of families seeking permits decreased.

### Architecture of the Kudrna Homestead and Ranch

The buildings and structures of the Kudrna Ranch do not represent any particular architectural styles. However, they embody distinctive characteristics of the early settlement period of West River South Dakota. Because the land was not as productive agriculturally as lands east of the Missouri River, it was harder to survive on the land. This economic handicap is evident in the built environment of the Kudrna Ranch where buildings are utilitarian, lacking style and ornamentation. Buildings and structures were built out of the materials available with functionality as the primary goal.

Gable, side-gable, and shed roof forms predominate in the ranch yard. Some roofs still have their historic wood shingles, though the most were covered with corrugated tin, a commonly added material in the region. More utilitarian buildings, such as barns and sheds, are clad with horizontal plank siding. Other buildings like residences and granaries have wood clapboard or wood lap siding. Simple fixed four-pane wood windows are common on several buildings.

These forms and materials are typical of the homestead area. The Conata Basin lacked building materials, except sod, which explains the construction of the sod house and root cellar. However, the railroad gave ranchers access to the milled lumber and tin found on most buildings.

Sod houses were the most expedient permanent shelters homesteaders could build on the plains.<sup>76</sup> They were constructed with materials mainly found on site and were well insulated from the harsh Dakota weather. They were often reinforced over time with metal or wood posts and improved with glass windows.

Sod houses were also enlarged with wood shack and root cellar/dug out additions. Root cellars were often reinforced with wood walls and supported by posts. Wood shacks were timber-framed structures often clad in boards or tarpaper. Ranchers often built better living

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<sup>75</sup> National Forest Service, *Cattle Permit Action Sheet Planned and Actual Use Record – Management Plan*, (Buffalo Gap National Grasslands at National Grasslands Regional Office at Wall, SD: 1958).

Note: 1958 is the earliest record for the Cain Creek Grazing District on file at National Grassland Wall Ranger District. The record also indicates one sheep rancher.

<sup>76</sup> James Steely, Thomas Witt, Kathleen Corbett, and Holly Norton. *The History of Agriculture in South Dakota: A Historic Context*. (Pierre: SD, State Historic Preservation Office, 2013), 28.

Joseph and Marie Kudrna Homestead and  
Ranch

Pennington County: SD

Name of Property

County and State

accommodations as the ranch was improved, as was the case at the Kudrna ranch with the converted claim shack/bunkhouse/residence and the 1952 house.

The barns on the Kudrna Ranch are typical one-story, plank-framed gable buildings with a general purpose.<sup>77</sup> Those built for cattle are often little more than sheds, often constructed with rough boards and siding.<sup>78</sup> The size of one-story barns was determined by the headroom and space needed for its intended purpose.

The other buildings and structures on the ranch – turkey houses, hog houses, granaries, claim shacks, outhouse – also represent the common forms and methods of construction used during the settlement and improvement period. The reuse of buildings for other purposes, such as the sod house as storage and claim shacks as granaries, also demonstrate the evolution of the ranch. Commonality of materials and construction techniques define the architectural signature of the ranch.

Time and modern agricultural practices have altered many ranch and farm sites. When considered as a class of resources, homestead and settlement sites on ranches and farms are increasingly rare resources. The Kudrna Ranch's buildings, structures, objects, and sites are great examples of vernacular architecture stretching from the homestead era up through the maturity of the ranch.

### **Kudrna Homestead and Ranch Integrity**

The Kudrna Ranch possesses great integrity as a homestead/ranch on the sub-marginal lands of West River South Dakota. While some buildings now have metal roofs and other buildings have deterioration issues, integrity of materials, design and workmanship are retained collectively.

Integrity of setting, feeling, and association is also high for the ranch. Sitting in the Conata Basin, this area has seen little to no development since it was homestead. The combination of the historic ranch buildings and the unchanged setting allows the Kudrna Ranch to convey its architectural, homesteading, and agricultural significance.

Little survey information exists for this area of western Pennington County as well as the surrounding counties of Haakon, Shannon, Jackson and western Meade. These counties are largely rural and surviving homesteads are often located off the main roads. The National Register listed Prairie Homestead is located in this vicinity near interior. It contains a sod house with attached claim shack, barn, and other outbuildings. It does not contain as many resources as the Kudrna Ranch, though. However, both sites retain good integrity and, based on the information available, do appear to be the best representatives of homestead ranches in the region.

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<sup>77</sup> Robert Vogel. *Common Farm Barns of South Dakota, 1857-1958*. (Pierre: SD, South Dakota State Historic Preservation Office, 2007), F-46.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*



Joseph and Marie Kudrna Homestead and  
Ranch  
Name of Property

Pennington County: SD  
County and State

Joseph and Marie Kudrna Homestead and  
Ranch

Name of Property

Pennington County: SD

County and State

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Joseph and Marie Kudrna Homestead and  
Ranch

Pennington County: SD

Name of Property

County and State

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Joseph and Marie Kudrna Homestead and  
Ranch

Name of Property

Pennington County: SD

County and State

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Joseph and Marie Kudrna Homestead and  
Ranch

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Property

Pennington County: SD

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County and State

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Joseph and Marie Kudrna Homestead and  
Ranch

Name of Property

Pennington County: SD

County and State

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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):** \_\_\_\_\_

---

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreeage of Property** 80

Joseph and Marie Kudrna Homestead and  
Ranch

Name of Property

Pennington County: SD

County and State

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: |

**Or**

**UTM References**

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or  NAD 1983

- |             |                 |                   |
|-------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. Zone: 13 | Easting: 705745 | Northing: 4847936 |
| 2. Zone: 13 | Easting: 706247 | Northing: 4847971 |
| 3. Zone: 13 | Easting: 706296 | Northing: 4847339 |
| 4. Zone: 13 | Easting: 705791 | Northing: 4847303 |

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

See Map referenced to UTM points. Located in the SE1/4, SE1/4, S28, T3S, R14E.

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

The 80 acres being nominated includes the buildings, structure, sites, objects, stockdams, and fields grouped historically around the homestead. The physical land features of the Conata

Joseph and Marie Kudrna Homestead and  
Ranch

Pennington County: SD

Name of Property

County and State

Basin dictated the construction and orientation of these features. Although the ranch is thousands of acres, this 80-acre parcel best represents the development of the ranch and is able to convey homesteading and architectural significance. The rectilinear boundary encompasses the built environment, agricultural improvements to the land, and parts of the natural landscape not improvable for agriculture, such as the rock formations of the Badlands, all of which coalesce around the homestead.

---

### 11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Sarah Brey  
organization: \_\_\_\_\_  
street & number: \_\_\_\_\_  
city or town: \_\_\_\_\_ state: \_\_\_\_\_ zip code: \_\_\_\_\_  
e-mail sarahbrey@gmail.com  
telephone: 402-429-2384  
date: 31 January 2014

---

### 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.)



Joseph and Marie Kudrna Homestead and  
Ranch

Name of Property

Pennington County: SD

County and State

### 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: Kudrna Homestead and Ranch

City or Vicinity: Scenic vicinity

County: Pennington

State: SD

Photographer: Paul Porter

Date Photographed: 6 June 2013

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

1 of 15.

SD_PenningtonCounty_JosefandMarieKudrnaHomesteadandRanch_0001	N
SD_PenningtonCounty_JosefandMarieKudrnaHomesteadandRanch_0002	W
SD_PenningtonCounty_JosefandMarieKudrnaHomesteadandRanch_0003	S
SD_PenningtonCounty_JosefandMarieKudrnaHomesteadandRanch_0004	W
SD_PenningtonCounty_JosefandMarieKudrnaHomesteadandRanch_0005	N
SD_PenningtonCounty_JosefandMarieKudrnaHomesteadandRanch_0006	N
SD_PenningtonCounty_JosefandMarieKudrnaHomesteadandRanch_0007	W
SD_PenningtonCounty_JosefandMarieKudrnaHomesteadandRanch_0008	S
SD_PenningtonCounty_JosefandMarieKudrnaHomesteadandRanch_0009	N

Joseph and Marie Kudrna Homestead and Ranch

Pennington County: SD

Name of Property	County and State
SD_PenningtonCounty_JosefandMarieKudrnaHomesteadandRanch_0010	E
SD_PenningtonCounty_JosefandMarieKudrnaHomesteadandRanch_0011	N
SD_PenningtonCounty_JosefandMarieKudrnaHomesteadandRanch_0012	NE
SD_PenningtonCounty_JosefandMarieKudrnaHomesteadandRanch_0013	E
SD_PenningtonCounty_JosefandMarieKudrnaHomesteadandRanch_0014	SW
SD_PenningtonCounty_JosefandMarieKudrnaHomesteadandRanch_0015	SE
SD_PenningtonCounty_JosefandMarieKudrnaHomesteadandRanch_0016	N
SD_PenningtonCounty_JosefandMarieKudrnaHomesteadandRanch_0017	N
SD_PenningtonCounty_JosefandMarieKudrnaHomesteadandRanch_0018	NE
SD_PenningtonCounty_JosefandMarieKudrnaHomesteadandRanch_0019	E
SD_PenningtonCounty_JosefandMarieKudrnaHomesteadandRanch_0020	E
SD_PenningtonCounty_JosefandMarieKudrnaHomesteadandRanch_0021	N
SD_PenningtonCounty_JosefandMarieKudrnaHomesteadandRanch_0022	W
SD_PenningtonCounty_JosefandMarieKudrnaHomesteadandRanch_0023	W
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SD_PenningtonCounty_JosefandMarieKudrnaHomesteadandRanch_0025	NW

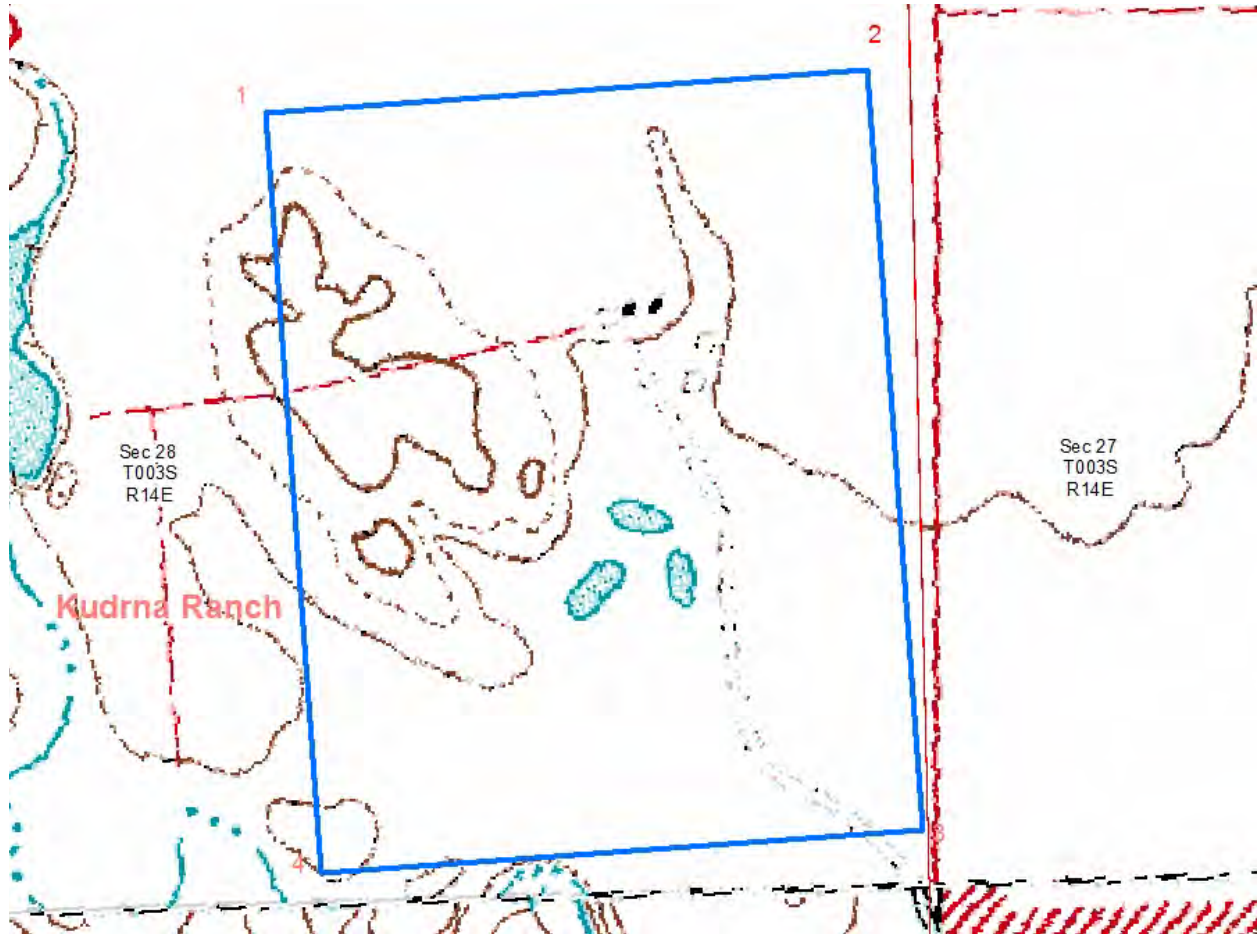
**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section number 10 Page 1

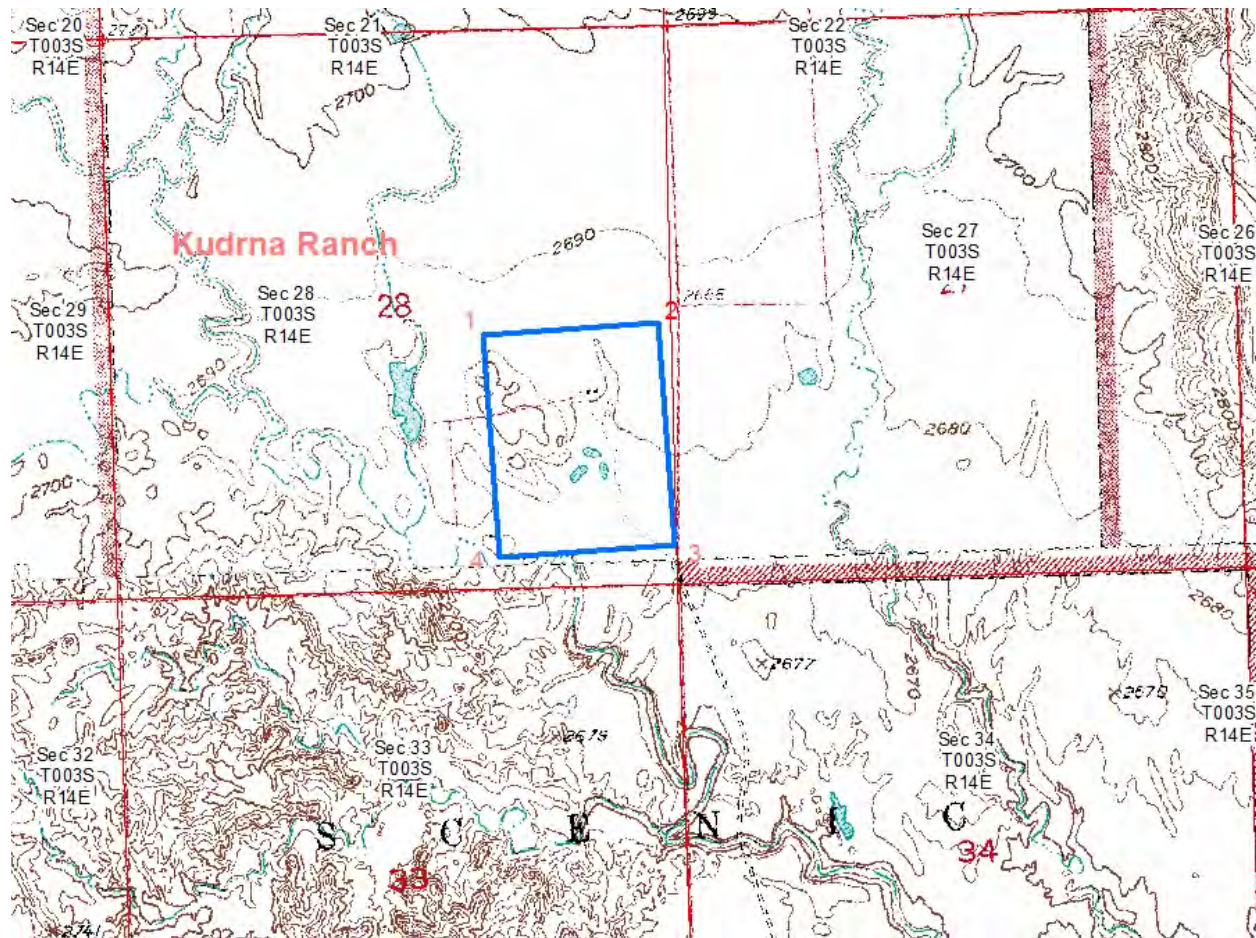


SD\_PenningtonCounty\_KudrnaHomesteadandRanch: SE¼, SE¼, S28, T103S, R14E; UTM 1. Z=13  
E=7015745 N=44847936 2. Z=13 E=706247 N=4847971 3. Z=13 E=706296 N=4847339 4. Z=13  
E=705791 N=4847303. 7.5 Minute Quadrangle Map, 1:24,000. Produced in ArcMap 15 December 2013

**United States Department of the Interior**  
**National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section number 10 Page 2



SD\_PenningtonCounty\_KudrnaHomesteadandRanch: SE<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>, SE<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>, S28, T103S, R14E; UTM 1. Z=13  
E=7015745 N=44847936 2. Z=13 E=706247 N=4847971 3. Z=13 E=706296 N=4847339 4. Z=13  
E=705791 N=4847303. 7.5 Minute Quadrangle Map, 1:24,000. Produced in ArcMap 15 December 2013

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section number 10 Page 3



SD\_PenningtonCounty\_KudrnaHomesteadandRanch: SE<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>, SE<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>, S28, T103S, R14E; UTM 1. Z=13  
E=7015745 N=44847936 2. Z=13 E=706247 N=4847971 3. Z=13 E=706296 N=4847339 4. Z=13  
E=705791 N=4847303. 7.5 Minute Quadrangle Map, 1:24,000. Produced in ArcMap 15 December 2013

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section number 10 Page 4



SD\_PenningtonCounty\_KudrnaHomesteadandRanch: SE¼, SE¼, S28, T103S, R14E; UTM 1. Z=13  
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E=705791 N=4847303. 7.5 Minute Quadrangle Map, 1:24,000. Produced in ArcMap 15 December 2013

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 10

Page 6

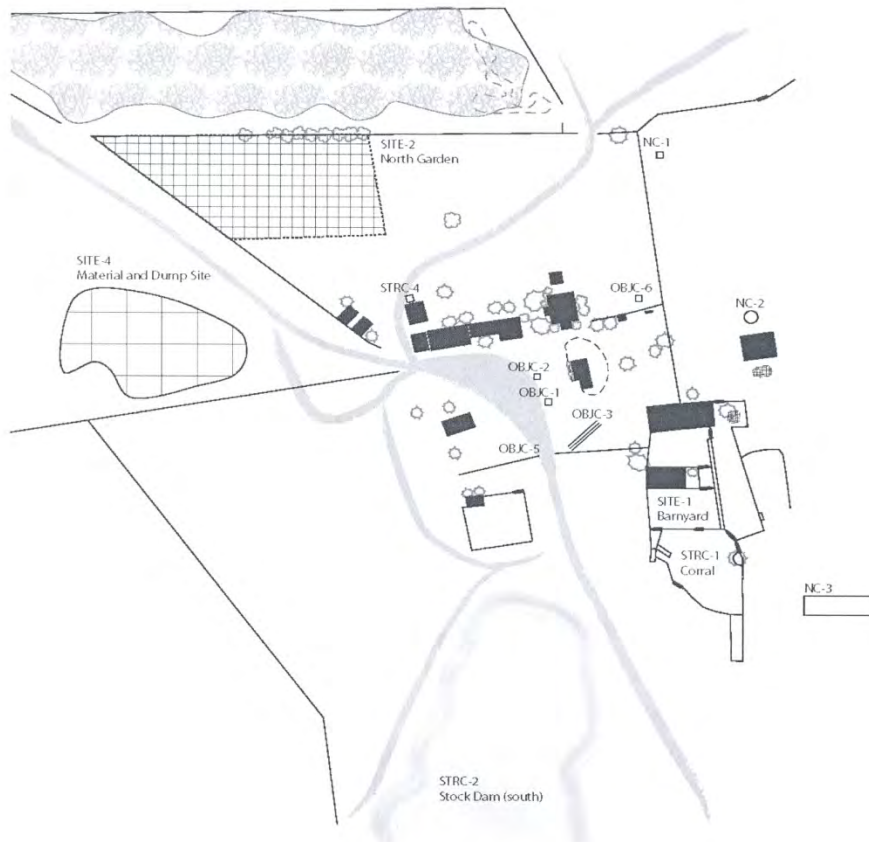
**Buildings Reference Map**



National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 7

Objects/Structures/Sites Reference Map

















































ATKINS  
Powder

Butter

Ginnard













UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Kudrna, Josef and Marie, Homestead and Ranch

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: SOUTH DAKOTA, Pennington

DATE RECEIVED: 12/05/14      DATE OF PENDING LIST: 1/05/15  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 1/20/15      DATE OF 45TH DAY: 1/21/15  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 14001185

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N    DATA PROBLEM: N    LANDSCAPE: N    LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N  
OTHER: N    PDIL: N    PERIOD: N    PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N  
REQUEST: N    SAMPLE: N    SLR DRAFT: N    NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT     RETURN     REJECT    1-21-15 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in  
the National Register  
of  
Historic Places

RECOM./CRITERIA \_\_\_\_\_

REVIEWER \_\_\_\_\_ DISCIPLINE \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

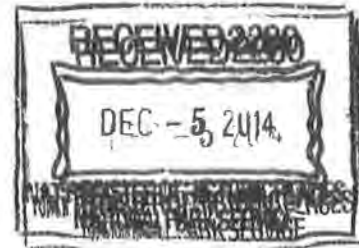
DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



28 December 2013

Keeper of the National Register  
National Register of Historic Places  
National Parks Service  
1201 Eye St NW  
8<sup>th</sup> Floor (MS 2280)  
Washington DC 20005



Dear Keeper of the National Register:

Enclosed are six new National Register nominations and one multiple property submission with nine submissions. The nominations are *Josef and Marie Kudrna Homestead and Ranch*, *Ole Quamman House*, *Murdo State Bank*, *Frank and Sarah Drake Claim House*, and *Norbeck-Nicholson Carriage House* and *Rasmus and Elemine Anderson Homestead Ranch*. The multiple property submission is *Concrete Interstate Tipis of South Dakota*. The submission under the mpl are *Chamberlain Rest Stop Tipi*, *Spearfish Rest Stop Tipi*, *Salem Rest Stop Tipi – Westbound*, *Salem Rest Stop Tipi – Eastbound*, *Wasta Rest Stop Tipi – Eastbound*, *Wasta Rest Stop Tipi – Westbound*, *Valley Springs Rest Stop Tipi*, *New Effington Rest Stop Tipi*, and *Junction City Rest Stop Tipi*.

If you have any questions regarding any of these submittals, please feel free to contact me at 605-773-3103 or at [chrisb.nelson@state.sd.us](mailto:chrisb.nelson@state.sd.us).

Sincerely,

Chris B. Nelson  
Historic Preservation Specialist