

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

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

**1. Name**

historic St. Onge School House

and/or common

**2. Location**

off SD 24

street & number

\_\_\_ not for publication

city, town St. Onge

\_\_\_ vicinity of

congressional district

second

state South Dakota

code 46

county Lawrence

code 081

**3. Classification**

**Category**

\_\_\_ district  
☒ building(s)  
\_\_\_ structure  
\_\_\_ site  
\_\_\_ object

**Ownership**

☒ public  
\_\_\_ private  
\_\_\_ both  
**Public Acquisition**  
\_\_\_ in process  
\_\_\_ being considered

**Status**

\_\_\_ occupied  
\_\_\_ unoccupied  
\_\_\_ work in progress  
**Accessible**  
\_\_\_ yes: restricted  
☒ yes: unrestricted  
\_\_\_ no

**Present Use**

\_\_\_ agriculture  
\_\_\_ commercial  
\_\_\_ educational  
☒ entertainment  
\_\_\_ government  
\_\_\_ industrial  
\_\_\_ military

\_\_\_ museum  
\_\_\_ park  
\_\_\_ private residence  
\_\_\_ religious  
\_\_\_ scientific  
\_\_\_ transportation

☒ other: Community Center

**4. Owner of Property**

name St. Onge Township

street & number % Art Crowley

city, town St. Onge

\_\_\_ vicinity of

state South Dakota 57779

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Courthouse - Lawrence County Register of Deeds Office

street & number

city, town Deadwood

state South Dakota 57732

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

South Dakota  
title Historical Sites Survey

has this property been determined eligible? \_\_\_ yes \_\_\_ no

date July, 1977

\_\_\_ federal ☒ state \_\_\_ county \_\_\_ local

depository for survey records Historical Preservation Center

city, town Vermillion

state South Dakota

## 7. Description

### Condition

☐ excellent  
☐ good  
☒ fair

☐ deteriorated  
☐ ruins  
☐ unexposed

### Check one

☐ unaltered  
☒ altered

### Check one

☐ original site  
☒ moved

date c. 1890

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

St. Onge School is the product of three separate periods of construction and design. Built in three sections, the first unit, c. 1886, was comprised of a rectangular, gable-end entrance school. Moved in c. 1890, this school house was joined to a second, forming a T-shape structure. During that same year, according to one source, the square gymnasium segment was added to the rear and side of the front block. The entire school appears to have been remodeled in the 1915-1930 era and the various units were combined into an interesting whole.

Stylistic features of the building reveal its evolutionary history. For example, the shouldered pediment caps over the windows of the gable-end unit, which is presently a rear ell, are characteristic of the late 19th century Gothic Revival. While along the present front facade, the brackets and decorative sunburst motif in the gable above the entrance distinguish the c. 1890 period of construction, when the Queen Anne and shingle styles were most popular.

Although no documentary evidence supports the visual evidence, the school appears to have been remodeled between 1915 and 1930. The windows of the front facade and gymnasium unit, as well as those punched into the rear of the original block, date from the first third of the 20th century.

The recessed entranceway and banded windows of the front facade are details, common to school houses erected after 1915, which were influenced by changing domestic architectural styles.

The hipped-roof, applied to all the more recent sections of the school complete the redesign of the building into a bungalow-influenced mode. Presently the building is sheathed with blue asbestos tile and trimmed in white.

## 8. Significance

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

**Specific dates** c. 1886, c. 1890 **Builder/Architect**

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The St. Onge School illustrates the manner in which architectural design is used to reflect changes in the self image of a social institution. The plan, decorative trim and massing of the building reveal an evolution toward an appropriate civic and secular design form for public schools.

In the late 19th century when public education was first authorized and funded by state governments, the design of the school building was most often modeled after the traditional small scale, nave-plan church. Indeed, schools were often held in churches, which in turn occasionally shared facilities with country stores and fraternal lodges. The gable-end entrance rectangular block building was the standard community structure of rural 19th century America.

Beginning in the late 1890's and continuing into the 20th century, public education was undergoing significant changes. Increasing emphasis was given to standardized textbooks, teaching techniques, and funding. The control of education shifted away from local communities and toward the state. As with many other semi-private, community supported institutions, such as fire brigades, teachers asserted their professionalism and independent standing. During the second decade of the 20th century, the state education programs hired architects and engineers to design new school houses. Promoted as healthful, efficient, modern, and scientifically correct, these buildings drew much of their design characteristics from the bungalow style domestic structures. The buildings were often re-oriented from gable-end to axial entrance, accompanied by a squaring up of the form. Great care was given to the placement of windows to allow proper interior lighting conditions. Windows were often placed close together forming a band across the facade. Hipped-roofs were commonly used to highlight the square massing and horizontality of the form. Another feature drawn from domestic architecture of the period was the recessed doorway, which pierced the stolid block of the front facade and de-emphasized the formality of the earlier nave-plan buildings.

St. Onge School, which clearly illustrates this building sequence is an unusual and therefore valuable site. Comprised of three classrooms, a kitchen and gymnasium, the school accommodated ten grades. Although the school closed in 1971, the building remains a focal point of social activities for the community.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Federal Writers' Project, Schools and Their Buildings, Mitchell, South Dakota: Works Progress Administration, 1939.  
Schell, Herbert S., History of the South Dakota, Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1968, pp. 102, 183.

## 10. Geographical Data

UTM NOT VERIFIED

Acreage of nominated property less than one acre

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

Quadrangle name Saint Onge

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A 13 601360 4933140  
Zone Easting Northing

B                    
Zone Easting Northing

C                  

D                  

E                  

F                  

G                  

H                  

Verbal boundary description and justification

The nominated property is 200 yards south of State Highway 34. False Bottom Creek runs 1000 feet to the east. The north is bounded by the Crowley Ranch read and the Crowley Farmstead lies to the east.

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

state code county code

state code county code

## 11. Form Prepared By

Technical Editing:

Carolyn Torma

name/title Art Crowley

organization St. Onge Township

date February, 1980

Historical Preservation Center

street & number

telephone 605/677/5314

city or town St. Onge

state South Dakota

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

   national    state X local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

*John J. Little*

title Director, Historical Preservation Center

date 3/11/80

For HCRS use only

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

Keeper of the National Register

date 5/7/80

Attest: William H. Brummett

date 5-6-80

Chief of Registration