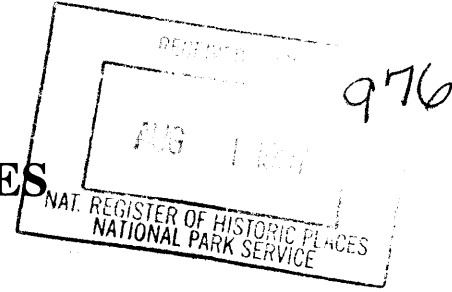


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM



1. Name of Property

historic name: Sanders Gymnasium and Community Hall

other name/site number: Sanders Gym

2. Location

street & number: Old Highway 10

not for publication: n/a
vicinity: n/a

city/town: Sanders

state: Montana code: MT county: Treasure code: 089 zip code: 59076

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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 nationally X statewide X locally.


Signature of certifying official/ title

7-23-97

Date

Montana State Historic Preservation Office

State or Federal agency or bureau

(See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

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

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

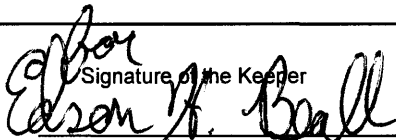
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
 see continuation sheet
- determined eligible for the National Register
 see continuation sheet
- determined not eligible for the National Register
 see continuation sheet
- removed from the National Register
 see continuation sheet
- other (explain): _____

Signature of the Keeper



Date of Action

8/29/97

5. Classification

Ownership of Property: Private

Category of Property: Building

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: n/a

Name of related multiple property listing: n/a

Number of Resources within Property	
Contributing	Noncontributing

<u>2</u>	___ building(s)
<u> </u>	___ sites
<u>1</u>	___ structures
<u> </u>	___ objects
<u>3</u>	___ TOTAL

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions:

RECREATION & CULTURE: Sports facility
SOCIAL: Meeting Hall

Current Functions:

RECREATION & CULTURE: Sports facility
SOCIAL: Meeting Hall

7. Description

Architectural Classification:

Other: Rustic

Materials:

foundation: concrete
walls: log
roof: wood shingle, asphalt shingle
other: n/a

Narrative Description

The Sanders Gymnasium and Community Hall is a log, one-story building. It is located in the townsite of Sanders, a small community near the Yellowstone River. The Hall stood next to the historic teacherage and, originally, the Sanders School. The first Sanders community hall was built on this site in 1910. It too was a log building, constructed of cottonwood logs from the nearby river bottom. Over the years, the building settled and floors sagged badly. Older residents remember needing to step over a hump to enter the old building. The original hall was cleared away to make room for this gym and community hall built in 1940.

The adjacent school was moved following its closure in 1948 to Hysham, where it was used as a school for a few years before being purchased by a church group as a place of worship. Along with the gym, the property today is marked by a historic gate to the school grounds. Two outbuildings remain on the site and contribute to the historic character of the property: a privy which served the school, and a coal shed which stands west of the former schoolhouse location.

Sanders Gymnasium and Community Hall (contributing)

In 1940, work began on the Sanders Gymnasium and Community Hall. The local newspaper reported at the time that "The new gymnasium will be 50 feet by 70 feet in size. This includes a floor of 30' by 60' with two rows of seats on each side of the playing floor. In the south end is to be a stage approximately 10 x 30 with a small kitchen at one side and a smoker's room on the opposite side.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places

Continuation Sheet

Section number 7

Sanders Gymnasium and Community Hall
Treasure County, Montana

Page 1

Construction of the building will be made from eight-inch logs, sawed on three sides and left rustic on the outside, which will be varnished. The roof will be supported by arched supports and will have a clearance of 22 feet and sealed with regular ceiling material. This will afford adequate clearance for basket ball or any other indoor sport.”¹

The building has eight rectangular windows, four placed high on each side of the playing floor. The front (north side) of the building has a transom window above the double door entry and a smaller window adjacent to the door. A round window is centered in the front gable. Iron rods protect the rectangular windows on the inside of the building.

The interior features an arched ceiling with 22 feet of clearance. It is formed of fir plywood and supported by arched beams concealed in the attic area. Six light fixtures are recessed into the ceiling.

Outhouse (contributing building)

A two stall outhouse stands behind the gymnasium to the south. Square in massing with a shed roof, the building is of frame construction. Two doors are located on the front (north) wall. The walls are simply finished with wide tongue-and-groove siding and the roof is covered with asphalt shingles. The doors, which formerly hung on metal hinges, are no longer extant.

Coal Shed (contributing structure)

A coal shed stands east of the former school location, and once held heating coal for the buildings. It is a rectangular, wood-frame structure, with a shed roof. The walls are finished with narrow-gauge horizontal boards, and finished with corner boards. A doorway is placed in the west wall, along with two high, square window openings, and a third opening which is boarded over near the north end of the front elevation.

Integrity

The Sanders Gymnasium and Community Hall retains an extremely high level of historic integrity. Along with the associated coal shed and outhouse, it reflects its history and associations with the Sanders community and school district. It is currently in need of repair and stabilization, however, no additions have been made to the building. The only improvements include support posts placed as close to the outside walls as possible, but because the foundation extends at least a foot beyond the logs, the posts did little to support the log walls. The logs were sealed once (approximately 20 years ago) with a commercial sealant. Asphalt shingles were placed on the east side of the roof. The west side of the roof has the original wood shingles.

On the interior, the floor was sanded and re-marked at approximately the same time as the logs were sealed. Nothing else has been done to the interior. The only furniture of note in the hall is a piano which was donated to the school district in 1948, recently refurbished, and which remains in the building today.

¹Midland Empire Farmer, March 28, 1940.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria: A, C

Areas of Significance: RECREATION, SOCIAL
HISTORY, ARCHITECTURE

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): n/a

Period(s) of Significance: 1940 - 1947

Significant Person(s): n/a

Significant Dates: 1940

Cultural Affiliation: n/a

Architect/Builder: John G. Link, architect
Steve Mercer and sons, builders

Narrative Statement of Significance

The Sanders Gymnasium and Community Hall is an important civic building which helps to anchor the historic homestead community of Sanders, Montana. Constructed when the town was growing, the building is important on a local level, reflecting efforts by area residents to build community among the members of this rural farming area. It has served as the gathering place for one and all, housing important athletic and community events since its completion in 1940. A most interesting application of rustic log architecture, this sports facility and meeting hall also holds importance on a statewide level for its architectural values. The Hall was designed by prominent Montana architect John G. Link, reflecting the range of his work and involvement of his practice in design for small, rural communities on Montana's homestead frontiers. For these reasons, the property is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places according to Criteria A and C.

History of Sanders

Sanders is a townsite located on a ceded strip of the Crow Reservation which was opened to homesteading in 1905. According to the Fort Laramie treaty, signed in 1851, the lands in the middle and upper Yellowstone Valley were reserved to the Crow people. However, the gold strikes of the 1860s drew miners and settlers to the Montana territory by the thousands. The Crow lands stretched across the most direct travel routes for these sojourners from the east, as they made their way to the gold fields of western Montana. During the next three decades, the encroachment of the Bozeman Trail through Crow Territory, plans to complete a transcontinental rail route through the region, and pressure from cattlemen for rangelands in the Yellowstone Valley led to negotiations with the Crow that resulted in a series of land cessions beginning in 1868.

The last area to be ceded was a strip just south of the Yellowstone River, in 1904. By the turn of the 20th century, railroad expansion and promotion of dryland farming set the scene for the boom of western homesteading. In Montana, as homestead fervor picked up, politicians, business leaders and the farming community pushed for the opening of what they considered to be under used Indian lands, particularly on the Flathead and Crow reservations.

The 1904 Crow ceded strip was immediately opened to homestead settlement, and homestead towns sprang up along the 75 mile swath of land that paralleled both the Yellowstone River and the route of the Northern Pacific Railroad. Homesteaders laid claims to the plains along the Yellowstone, and many of their descendants remain in the area to this day. Those whose families still reside in the Sanders vicinity include Dan Deveny, George Feeley, Teen Patterson, D.E. Cole, Roy Ward, and John W. Mackley.

The townsite of Sanders was established, and a post office opened in 1904, with Ollie Smith as first postmaster. The town was reportedly named after Wilbur F. Sanders, a member of the Board of Directors of the Northern Pacific Railroad, and prominent Montana pioneer. The town of Sanders was established as a pumping station for Northern Pacific steam engines to take on water, and by 1910, its population numbered 281.

Growth of Sanders and founding of the Sanders Community Hall

In 1910, "the neighbors around Sanders gathered together and decided that what they needed most was a club house which could be used for all kinds of gatherings. They counted noses and found that if each neighbor kicked in \$15, the resulting amount would put up the building. Some volunteered to do so many days work in the amount of \$15, others would pay in cash, as they would have to buy the material for the floors, windows, and roof. This was to be a log building, and the people were so enthused about it that

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places

Continuation Sheet

Section number 8

Sanders Gymnasium and Community Hall
Treasure County, Montana

Page 1

they flew at it and in a very short time the house was completed."² Title to the small plot was given to "a society known as the Sanders Club" by Joseph and Nellie O'Grady on December 10, 1910.³ The original structure was "a rather crude affair," but it answered the purpose for nearly 30 years.

The generous Mr. O'Grady, who donated the land for the club house, was also responsible for the stagnation of the Sanders community's growth. Sanders was intended by the Northern Pacific to be the location of a railroad roundhouse, but O'Grady refused permission for the facility to be constructed on his Sanders lot, even though it had been earmarked for this purpose. Weary of dealing with O'Grady, Northern Pacific officials moved the location of the roundhouse to Forsyth, 20 miles to the east. Sanders remained only as a pumping station. Although three shifts of telegraph operators were once employed in Sanders, along with eight families whose breadwinners were employed by the Northern Pacific, Forsyth became the hub of NP activities in Rosebud/Treasure counties.⁴

When the nation was recovering from the Great Depression, Sanders township still served as an active train stop and pumping station. During this time, sugar beets became the principle money crop in the Yellowstone Valley. Population dwindled slowly as larger farming operations bought out farmers with less acreage, consolidating many of the original homesteads. A sugar beet dump was built at Sanders, adding to the activity at the town's one general store, which housed the post office. An active, close-knit community, Sanders residents soon felt the need for a new "club house".

Talk began that a new community hall was needed and that the hall should have a basketball court. The discussion coincided with Sanders High School consolidation with Hysham High School in 1924. However, roll was still being called at Sanders Elementary School in 1938, and since the Sanders School District wanted the building to serve as a physical education/basketball court for the school, the School District posted a bond issue.

The new Sanders Gymnasium and Community Hall was built on the same site as the original log hall, which had served as a local gathering place from 1910 to 1939. Plans and blueprints for the Sanders Gymnasium and Community Hall were drawn by John G. Link, a prominent 20th-century Montana architect with offices in 5 Montana towns including nearby Billings. In the fall of 1939, school trustees awarded Steve Mercer of Billings the contract on his bid of \$3,575 to construct the log building. Construction began in early March 1940, with work being done by Steve Mercer, assisted by his sons, Floyd and Carl Mercer. The official opening of the building was June 29, 1940 when the community planned a dance.

Between 50 and 100 students attended Sanders Elementary School during the 1920s and 1930s, however, enrollment declined during the 1940s. Diesel engines replaced the steam engines on the Northern Pacific route and most of the railroad employees left Sanders. By 1948 everyone in the valley owned a reliable car and a truck, and a trip to Hysham was no longer a day's outing. Hysham School District ran several school buses and a mere eight years after completion of the new gymnasium and community hall, Sanders School District -- in a close vote which nearly split the community -- consolidated with Hysham School District and students were bused to Hysham Elementary School, located 10 miles to the west.

However, steady use of the Sanders Community Hall continued throughout the next decade. New Years Eve dances, community meetings, family reunions and wedding dances were held in the Hall, which was rented for the price of filling the propane tank (or

² Criswell, George O. Treasure County Booster, as quoted by George V. Feeley in Tales of Treasure County.

³ George Feeley, *ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8

Sanders Gymnasium and Community Hall
Treasure County, Montana

Page 2

\$20-25 in the summer months). Hysham School District transferred the deed for the building to Sanders Community Hall, Inc., a group of community members most of whom were descendants of the original homesteaders, in 1950.

The piano donated to the hall when the school consolidated with the Hysham School District remains in the building. A gift by community member Mrs. Agnes Fisk, the piano was built by Chicago Piano Company shortly after the turn-of-the-century. According to George V. Feeley, "Piano players took the front and top off of pianos to get better volume. Maynard Bills of Colstrip frequently dismantled the piano at the Hall."⁵ Sanders Community Hall, Inc. has recently had the piano restored, using funds contributed in memory of former coach and teacher, Harold Miller.

Architectural Significance

John Gustavus Link was born in 1879 in Hattnau, Bavaria. He studied at the Royal Academy in Landau for six years. In 1887, a year after graduating, he came to the United States, and was based in Denver, Colorado where he worked for architectural firms from 1887-1893. In 1893, after winning first prize in the competition to design the Minnesota State Capitol, he moved to St. Louis and opened his own practice. He moved to Butte, Montana where he became partners with W.E. Donovan for 4 years. He was contracted to oversee construction of a number of state institutional buildings during the early period of Montana statehood.

In January 1906, Link joined Charles S. Haire in a partnership which became the most prolific in the state. Jointly they ran offices in Helena, Billings, Missoula, Butte and Lewistown, designing hundreds of civic, residential, commercial and institutional buildings across the state. They also designed major buildings in neighboring states, including Wyoming, Idaho, Washington, Oregon, North Dakota, Missouri, and Kansas.

The Sanders Gymnasium and Community Hall is important as a representative work by this prominent designer. Unlike many other more stylish and substantial buildings, Link's design for the Sanders gym employs functional rustic log construction, in a direct and utilitarian manner. The rugged log exterior does not belie the more finished interior gymnasium, its arched fir pressboard ceiling formed to fit under the gable roof. From the exterior, the building fits with the body of log architecture that was common to frontier settlements, with its square notched logs, plain rectangular massing, basic gable rooflines, shingled gable ends, and lack of adornment. By contrast, the carefully designed interior, with its formed wood ceiling arch, highly polished hardwood floor, built-in seating, raised stage and electrical lighting reflects the modern design ideals and technologies of the early 20th century.

These days, the Hall is currently rented nearly half a dozen times a year for such events as birthday, graduation and retirement parties, wedding receptions, school reunions, local theater and community potlucks. However, use has declined because of the building's deterioration, and lack of indoor bathroom facilities. Grant assistance has been obtained to stabilize the walls, reroof and refurbish the building.

⁵Personal interview with Judy Cole, 10/96.

9. Major Bibliographic References

See continuation sheet

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 # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property: less than one

UTM References: **Zone** **Easting** **Northing**
 13 338120 5128240

Legal Location (Township, Range & Section(s)): SE ¼, NE ¼, NW ¼ in Section 9, T6N, R37E.

Verbal Boundary Description

Beginning at a point 116 feet West of the North and South center line of Section 9, in township 6 North, Range 37 East, M.P.M. and 394.4 feet South of the center line of the main track of the Northern Pacific Railway; thence West a distance of 108 feet; thence South, at right angles, a distance of 69 feet; thence West at right angles, a distance of 95 feet; thence south, at right angles, to the South boundary line of the NE¼ NW¼ of said Section 9; thence East, at right angles, along and upon said last mentioned line, a distance of 203 feet; and thence North, at right angles, to the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification

The boundaries encompass the historic school grounds which have been the setting for buildings erected by the local Sanders School district since its formation. Today, the Sanders Gymnasium and Community Hall, and two historic outbuildings are what remain on the property.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Judy Cole
organization: Sanders Community Hall, Inc. date: May 1997
street & number: HC 84 Box 3068 telephone: (406) 342-5384
city or town: Forsyth state: MT zip code: 59327

Property Owner

name/title: Sanders Community Hall, Inc.,c/o Mack Cole, president
street & number: same as above

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9

Sanders Gymnasium and Community Hall
Treasure County, Montana

Page 1

Bibliography

Carkeek Cheney, Roberta Names on the Face of Montana Mountain Press Publishing, Missoula, MT.

Hysham Echo "Renovation planned for historic Sanders Gym", March 1996

Independent-Enterprise "Facelift for Gym", April 1996.

Midland Empire Farmer March 28, 1940; April 4, 1940; July 11, 1940; September 4, 1941; October 2, 1941; date unknown, fall 1940

Sanders Community Hall Foundation Newletters Vol I, No. 1, Summer 1996.

Treasure County Clerk & Recorder Deed Records for Sanders Gymnasium and Community Hall property