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FEB 28 1990
OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form**

DIVISION OF
NATIONAL REGISTER PROGRAMS
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Birch Coulee School
other names/site number Bishop Whipple School

2. Location

street & number Off Co. Hwy. 2 not for publication N/A
city, town Lower Sioux Indian Community Morton vicinity
state Minnesota code MN county Redwood code 127 zip code 56270

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u> </u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u> </u>	<u> </u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>1</u>	<u> </u> objects
			<u> </u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this 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 meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

George R. Farris
Signature of certifying official George R. Farris Date 2/22/90
Bureau of Indian Affairs, U.S. Department of the Interior
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Ian R. Stewart
Signature of commenting or other official Ian R. Stewart Date 1/22/90
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
State or Federal agency and bureau Minnesota Historical Society

5. 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.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:)

Beth Polana 4/12/90

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION/School

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

WORK IN PROGRESS

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)NO STYLE

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concretewalls Weatherboard

roof Cedar Shingleother

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Constructed in 1891, the Birch Coulee School is a "T"-shaped, wood frame building which stands one story in height on a rubble stone foundation covered with concrete. It is located in the center of the Lower Sioux Indian Community just above the Minnesota River in northeastern Redwood County, near the town of Morton.

Symmetrical in plan and rather austere in appearance, the clapboard-covered school has a central gable and three entrances along the east-facing facade. The main, center entry features a pair of five panel wooden doors and a simple gable porch supported by two square wooden posts and a pair of pilasters. The entrance is flanked by two 2/2 double hung windows. The balance of the facade has two single door entrances with similar gable porches, each of which is flanked by four 2/2 double hung sash. The north and south gable ends are unbroken. There are two stucco-covered gable end brick chimneys.

The west-facing lower part of the "T" has a row of five 2/2 double hung windows along the south wall. It is thought that the north elevation originally had at least two windows; they were removed at an unknown date. The only decorative elements throughout the building are beaded corner boards and exposed rafter tips.

As originally constructed, the school had a louvered belfry with flared spire atop the central gable. It was removed at an unknown date. The three entrance porches were rebuilt in 1987 based on historic photographs. At the same time the roof was covered with cedar shingles and the clapboards scraped and painted.

Interior spaces--dining room in the south, classrooms in the north and west--remain essentially the same as when the school was open. Exposed wooden floors, chalk boards, and beaded wainscoting are intact in each room.

The Birch Coulee School is in excellent condition and relatively unchanged from its period of active use during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Members of the Lower Sioux Community have recently rehabilitated the building, and plan to reconstruct the belfry in the near future.

See continuation sheet

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION

ETHNIC HERITAGE/Native American

Period of Significance

1891-1920

Significant Dates

1891

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Henton, Major R.B., architect

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Birch Coulee School is historically significant under the statewide context "Reservations and the Indian Community, 1830s-1930s" for its reflection of attempts by the United States government to assimilate and acculturate Indians through formal education policies. The building is a rare survivor from the period when members of the Mdewakanton Dakota (Sioux) returned to the Lower Sioux Community in the Minnesota River Valley, the area from which they retreated following the U.S.-Dakota Conflict of 1862.

As waves of land-hungry immigrants made their way into the country's interior, Indians came under increasing pressure to relinquish their holdings. Two treaties negotiated in 1851 had enormous impact on the development of Minnesota Territory. The agreements signed at Traverse des Sioux with the Sisseton and Wahpeton Upper Sioux bands, and at Mendota with the Wahpekute and Mdewakanton Lower Sioux bands provided nearly twenty-four million acres of land for white settlers. More importantly, for the Indians it meant moving to a reservation contained within a narrow ten mile-wide strip of land along both sides of the Minnesota River.

It was on the reservation that the United States government began its efforts to proselytize the Indians in the hope that they would become self-sufficient farmers. Two administrative centers were established around which the government agents planned the Dakota settlements. The Upper Sioux Agency, which was located near present-day Granite Falls, served the Sisseton and Wahpeton bands. About thirty miles to the southeast the Mdewakanton and Wahpekute bands were placed near the Lower Sioux Agency. Eventually these agencies became similar to small villages with nearly 100 homes for white and mixed-blood employees, trading posts, schools, mills, and blacksmith shops. By 1860 over 3,000 Dakota lived around the Lower Sioux Agency, with the community spreading for about one mile along the south side of the river. On 18 August 1862 a large group of Mdewakanton Dakota attacked the Lower Sioux Agency, triggering the U.S.-Dakota Conflict of 1862 that lasted nearly six weeks and destroyed virtually all buildings on the agencies. Most of the Dakota were

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

- Blegen, Theodore C. Minnesota: A History of the State. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1963.
- Hinman, Samuel Dutton and Family, Papers. Minnesota Historical Society.
- Meyer, Roy W. History of the Santee Sioux: United States Indian Policy on Trial. Lincoln, NE.: University of Nebraska Press, 1967 (reprinted 1980).
- Morton Enterprise. 26 June 1891.
- Prucha, Francis P. The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians. Lincoln, NE.: University of Nebraska Press, 1986.
- Sixtieth Annual Report of the Commissioner of U.S. Indian Affairs Office. Washington: 1891, Part I.
- Whipple, Henry Benjamin, Papers. Minnesota Historical Society.

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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 # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of property less than one

UTM References

A 1 5 3 4 1 3 5 0 4 9 3 2 8 4 0

Zone Easting Northing

C _____

B _____

Zone Easting Northing

D _____

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of Birch Coulee School is a nearly square parcel measuring 55 x 70 feet, whose northwest corner is 10 feet directly northwest of the northwest corner of the foundation of the school and whose southeast corner is 10 feet directly southeast of the southeast corner of the foundation of the school.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes just the school building because it is the only structure that has historically been associated with the property.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Michael Koop/Historic Preservation Consultant

organization N/A date February 1989

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city or town Minneapolis state MN zip code 55413

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Birch Coulee School, Redwood County, MN

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relocated outside of Minnesota after the war, but in the 1880s a few small groups returned to the sites of the Upper and Lower Sioux Agencies.

Attempts by the government as well as the Episcopal Church to "civilize" the Dakota continued during the late nineteenth century. Through the efforts of the influential Archbishop Henry B. Whipple in 1886 an Episcopal church was organized in the Lower Sioux Community, and in 1891 St. Cornelia's Church (NRHP) was constructed just east of the Birch Coulee School. Whipple was also instrumental in securing the school, although the federal government already had established policies promoting the education and assimilation of the Dakota. Thomas Morgan, Commissioner of Indian Affairs from 1889 to 1893, stated that "Education should seek the disintegration of the tribes, and not their segregation. They should be educated, not as Indians, but as Americans. In short, public schools should do for them what they are so successfully doing for all other races in this country--assimilate them" (Prucha, p.239). By the Fall of 1886 Bishop Whipple was in need of a teacher for "a large number of Sioux" and interested in hiring the Reverend Samuel D. Hinman, who was already well acquainted with the Lower Sioux Community. An enthusiastic supporter of Indian education, Hinman felt the Birch Coulee settlement could serve as a role model for other Indian communities. In late December 1886 Whipple began to employ Hinman as a teacher for up to 44 Sioux, using the house where Hinman lived (no longer extant) as the original school. One year later Hinman was urging Whipple to use his influence to have federal funds appropriated for a boarding school.

In 1888 \$20,000 was appropriated for the Mdewakanton band to purchase land, agricultural implements, and farm animals; \$1,000 of the appropriation was set aside to build a school. An additional \$1,000 for the "completion and furnishing of the school house" was approved on 2 March 1889. Original plans for the school called for a brick veneer building, but the Acting Commissioner of the Office of Indian Affairs felt that such a building could not be erected for less than \$3,000, and he was unable to authorize more than \$2,000 in funds for the community. Plans drawn by Major R.B. Henton apparently were then modified to the existing wood frame building, which was constructed and ready for use by 1891.

Although Bishop Whipple and Reverend Hinman seem to have hoped that the facility would be managed as a boarding school by the Episcopal Church, the Bureau of Indian Affairs maintained the building as a day school. In this regard, the Birch Coulee School is noteworthy, because most government and missionary schools required children to leave their homes on the reservation to attend classes. The first teacher at Birch Coulee was the Reverend Hinman's son, Robert, who initially earned \$60 a month and had charge of the school until about 1915.

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In 1920 the school closed and the pupils attended the local rural public school or the Indian boarding schools at Pipestone, Minnesota or Flandreau, South Dakota. In 1939 the building was opened again as a public school, but in 1969 it closed when the state legislature streamlined the public school system. From 1979 until the mid-1980s the school was used as a pottery shop. The Lower Sioux Community intends to convert the building into a library and community center within the next few years.

The Birch Coulee School is the earliest and best preserved building associated with Indian education in Minnesota. Saint Benedict's Mission (NRHP), a large stone building constructed in 1892 on the White Earth Reservation in Becker County, is the only other Indian school in Minnesota. It has stood vacant for a number of years and is in fair condition. Other buildings in the state which are related to Indian education are the Dormitory of the Morris Industrial School for Indians (1899, NRHP) in Stevens County (presently part of the University of Minnesota, Morris), and the Superintendent's House (1907) located on the former Pipestone Indian School in southwestern Minnesota (currently part of the Southwestern Vocational Technical Institute).