

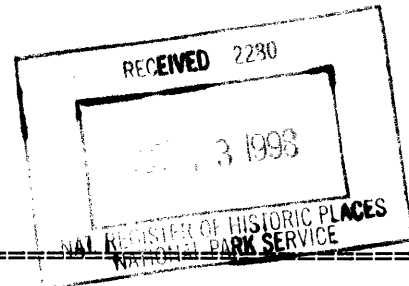
USDI/NPS Registration Form  
Sussex Community Hall  
Johnson County, Wyoming

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NPS Form 10-900  
1024-0018  
(Rev. 10-90)

OMB No.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

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**1. Name of Property**

=====

historic name Sussex Post Office and Store

other names/site number Sussex Community Hall

=====

**2. Location**

=====

street & number Sussex Road not for publication N/A  
city or town Kaycee vicinity N/A  
state Wyoming code WY county Johnson code 019 zip code 82639

=====

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

=====

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant \_\_\_ nationally \_\_\_ statewide  locally. ( \_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

John J. Keck  
Signature of certifying official

9/29/98  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

=====  
In my opinion, the property \_\_\_\_\_ meets \_\_\_\_\_ does not meet the  
National Register criteria. ( \_\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet for  
additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

=====  
**4. National Park Service Certification**  
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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): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Keeper

11.12.98  
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

=====  
Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>  1  </u>	_____ buildings
_____	_____ sites
_____	_____ structures
_____	_____ objects
<u>  1  </u>	_____ Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register   N/A  

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

=====  
**6. Function or Use**  
=====

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>Commerce/Trade</u>	Sub: <u>General Store</u>
<u>Social</u>	<u>Meeting Hall</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>Social</u>	Sub: <u>Meeting Hall</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

=====  
**7. Description**  
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Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

  N/A  

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation	<u>Concrete</u>
roof	<u>Asphalt Shingle (Metal)</u>
walls	<u>Wood</u>
other	_____
	_____

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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**8. Statement of Significance**

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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 a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Social History

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

=====  
Period of Significance 1914 - 1948  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates 1914 (date of construction)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)  
\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Architect/Builder N/A \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

=====  
**9. Major Bibliographical References**  
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(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

- 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

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

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**10. Geographical Data**

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Acreage of Property 4.8 acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	<u>13</u>	<u>395680</u>	<u>4838900</u>	3	<u>      </u>	<u>      </u>
2	<u>      </u>	<u>      </u>	<u>      </u>	4	<u>      </u>	<u>      </u>

       See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

=====

**11. Form Prepared By**

=====

name/title Harriet Garrett; Nancy Weidel, SHPO

organization

date August 19, 1998

street & number 105 Lower Sussex Road telephone (307) 738-2268

city or town Kaycee state WY zip code 82639

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**Additional Documentation**

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

=====  
**Property Owner**  
=====

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name \_\_\_\_\_

street & number \_\_\_\_\_

telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip

code \_\_\_\_\_

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Johnson County, Wyoming

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7. Description

The Sussex Community Hall is a one-story, wood-framed building that measures 86 feet long and 26 feet wide. It rests on a concrete foundation and has an unfinished basement. The original novelty siding remains, and corrugated sheet metal covers the asphalt- shingled roof. A stove pipe protrudes through the roof on the southeast slope, and one each on the northeast and southwest sides. The long rectangular building is unadorned except for simple knee braces and brackets under the wide overhanging eaves, corner boards, and plain window surrounds.

The original two sets of paired, 2-over-2 double-hung windows that flanked the door on the east facade, have been replaced by two sets of shorter, fixed-sash double windows. The double leaf front door was replaced by a single 6-light paneled door. The original window and door openings are still visible in the board siding that replaced the original siding when the alterations were made.

The west or back side of the building was also altered, with a fixed sash window replacing the one-over-one windows on either side of the original 5-paneled wood door which remains. Again, the original window configuration is visible by the replaced siding.

Single-door openings on the north and south sides have been sided over. Each long side also had three long wood awning-type openings for ventilation. One opening on each side was replaced with a double fixed-sash window; the other four were nailed shut in the 1950s.

Two "WPAs", or outhouses, were constructed on the northeast side of the building in the 1930s. A lean-to addition, also located on this side, from which after-dance dinners were served, collapsed sometime in the 1950s, at which time the two outhouses were converted to a single unit (for women only) and a storage area for wood and coal to heat the Majestic kitchen stove and basement furnace, with inside entry via a new vestibule. The



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"WPA", storage area, and vestibule occupy the two shed-roofed additions now remaining on the northeast side of the building. The building was originally constructed in 1914 as a combination grocery store/post office/dance hall housed in one large room. The store and post office were located at the east end of the building and the dance hall on the west end. In the late 1920s, the store and post office moved to a renovated garage east of the present building, and the entire room became devoted to a dance hall/community center.

The dance hall included a stage on the north wall and a small bandstand on the west wall. The stage was often used for school Christmas pageants and "home-talent" plays performed by community members. In the early 1950s, the lean-to on the north side where dinners were served collapsed and the floor needed replacing after many years of hard use by dancing hoofs. At the same time as new hard wood replaced the old floor, the stage was removed and a partially enclosed kitchen erected from which dinners could be both prepared and served. During this same renovation, the front door and all windows were altered and/or added. The WPA and vestibule received modifications, wood paneling was placed on the interior walls, and a drop ceiling installed. Although the building was also electrified around this time, it still lacks indoor plumbing today.

Although the building has been modified inside and out over the years, it still maintains its historical identity as a community hall. Both the interior with its large open space and the exterior massing and overhanging roof clearly reflect the historical period of its construction. Although windows and doors have received modifications, the original siding, brackets, braces and wood awning openings remain. The building still retains integrity of design, location, setting, feeling, and association.

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Section 8 Page 10 Sussex Community Hall  
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The Sussex Community Hall is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A. As the focal point of the small rural Sussex community for over 80 years, the Sussex Community Hall provides a tangible center to the far flung ranching community and a symbolic link to its past.

The Sussex Community Hall is located on the north bank of the Powder River in southeast Johnson County. Towering old cottonwood trees dwarf the modest building that is still considered the heart of this rural ranching community located twenty miles east of the more famous town of Kaycee, Wyoming which achieved notoriety for its role in the Johnson County War.

The Bozeman Trail crossed the Powder River in the Sussex area and Fort Reno and Cantonment Reno (McKinney) are nearby historic landmarks. Fort Reno, located eight miles from Sussex on the Powder River, was built in 1865 as one in a series of military posts to protect travelers on the Bozeman Trail. The fort was abandoned in 1868 and burned, reportedly by Indians. In 1876, General Crook established Cantonment Reno, five miles downstream from the future site of Sussex, as a supply depot for the Powder River Campaign of 1876 against the thousands of various tribal members who refused to come into the reservation. The name of the fort changed to Fort McKinney to avoid confusion with the earlier Fort Reno and another in Oklahoma.

In 1878, Fort McKinney moved to a more favorable location near present day Buffalo but a number of civilians remained just across the river from the former fort, now downgraded to Depot McKinney. This community of 49 people became known as Powder River Crossing and by 1880 included "a stage station, a hotel, a general merchandise store and other establishments and houses" and a post office.

Following the success of the military campaigns that forced all Native Americans into the reservation system, settlers began moving into Johnson County. Large cattle operations, run by English aristocrats like the Frewen brothers, located in "Powder River Country" as it is still referred to by locals. Others also

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migrated to the area; one of the most prominent was Henry Winter Davis, known as "Hard Winter" Davis, a native Delawarean and cousin of Wyoming Senator Joseph Carey, from whom he learned the cattle business. Davis established the Spectacle Ranch near the present site of Sussex in the early 1880s.

With the move of The Powder River Crossing post office to the Davis ranch in 1893 or 1894, the old community declined, due in part to yearly flooding of the river at that point. The active freighting route that connected the military outposts between Cheyenne and Buffalo developed into roads that supplied the burgeoning settlements, and Sussex became a stop along the way.

Two theories exist for the naming of Sussex. One is that the Frewen Brothers hailed from Sussex, England. The other more likely one is the wife of Hard Winter Davis named it for her native Sussex County, Delaware. In October, 1895, the Powder River Crossing Post Office at the Davis ranch changed its name to the Sussex Post Office.

The early success of the Sussex community is due in large part to Hard Winter Davis who developed the Sahara Ditch, an eighteen-mile-long irrigation system, in the early 1900s. While the ditch did not exactly turn the arid land into the green valley envisioned by early promoters, it did enable crops to grow and dairies to be established. Sussex area farms and ranches supplied hay to large cattle and freighting operators and food to new boom communities like the nearby Salt Creek oil fields during the teens and twenties.

Morris Leitner, known as the "Sage of Sussex" and another founder of the Sahara Irrigation Company, came to Sussex around 1900, built his home at the active river crossing where he became postmaster, and ran a store from his home. In addition to these activities, Leitner also taught school and served as justice of the peace, notary public, County Assessor, and was eventually appointed to the State Board of Equalization, which caused him to move to Cheyenne in 1938. A steel bridge was built over the Powder River at Sussex in 1914, most likely due to the planned routing through Sussex of the Black and Yellow Trail, an

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ambitious early highway project designed to connect the upper Midwest with Yellowstone Park in western Wyoming. (In 1921, the Black and Yellow Highway was re-routed to the north and bypassed Sussex). The bridge, no doubt, boosted Leitner's successful business operations which by that time included a hotel, dance hall, and gas station in addition to the store and post office. In 1914, the same year as the bridge was completed, Leitner erected a new building to house the post office, store, and dance hall. This building became known as the Sussex Community Hall. During this period, small homesteaders and dry farmers flocked to the area and a number of communities were established near Powder River including those known as Nine Mile and Five Mile Divide. Although population figures for these communities are difficult to determine due to the changing election districts and precincts by which they were enumerated, the 1910 census does show a total of 103 people living in what was referred to in that census recording as Sussex. Although the other communities did eventually build community centers, Sussex became the most active spot of local commerce and social activities for the far-flung Powder River communities.

A study conducted in 1925-28 by the Agricultural Experiment Station at Bozeman, Montana, describes the importance of rural community halls in maintaining an identifiable, cohesive community in sparsely populated areas. The report described the increased interest in establishing community centers in the teens "probably because more rural communities in the state were established during this period as a result of the rapid settlement of agricultural land and the increasing appreciation by rural people of the social satisfaction and economic benefits of community cooperation".

According to the report, a community hall, separate from a school or church building, provided a community "a home of its own". "While there might have been other places adequate for community meetings, it was felt that the number and variety of gatherings to be held and the increased community pride and consciousness awakened by a place that might be used exclusively for general community purposes more than warranted the erection of a community hall."

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The report went on to state that "Dancing, at present, is the leading social and recreational pastime of the rural people...Parents deemed it more desirable for their children to dance in a hall in the local community than to go elsewhere for their recreation". And dancing is what old-timers of the community remember best about the Sussex Community Hall. In a 1986 oral interview, long-time Sussex resident Helen Lohse described the dances held at the hall:"...We danced all night...we had real good dances and had a lot of fun." Others in the community recall the weekly Saturday night dances which families from as far away as forty miles attended. A midnight supper topped off the evening and dancing often continued until dawn.

The Sussex Community Hall was an active place for many years, hosting such varied activities as Halloween, Christmas and Thanksgiving suppers (a community Christmas supper is still held each year depending on weather and ranching conditions); Mother-Daughter banquets; "harvest suppers"; wedding receptions; picnics and barbeques; home-talent plays; school programs, and annual meetings of the Sussex Irrigation Company. It still serves as the polling center during local and general elections, although the County is threatening to close it due to lack of indoor plumbing, which has never bothered the locals.

The two decades following World War II brought many changes to the community of Sussex. In 1954 - 55, a new bridge was built over Powder River about one hundred yards west of Sussex, and the old steel bridge was moved to a ranch downstream. The Sussex Road was paved in 1956. The dilapidated Sussex Hotel burned down in 1962. A large flood of the Powder River in 1962 destroyed the Sussex store and post office (relocated to Kaycee in 1963) and contributed, along with other factors, to the decline of Sussex as a commercial/social center. Use of the old hall fell off with the advent of better roads, more cars, and television which helped create a different type of social interaction than that once provided by community centers. The Sussex Women's Club bought the building from Maude Leitner in the year of the flood, 1962, and continued to operate and maintain it until its sale to the Sussex Ditch Company in 1995.

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As the only remaining building on the banks of the once active river crossing at Sussex, the Sussex Community Hall is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A. Much has changed in this part of Johnson County in the past 40 or so years: large ranchers have consolidated much of the land once owned by the small homesteaders who went broke during the Depression, and the landscape is empty of the scattered rural communities that once existed, like Nine Mile. In a world of change, the Sussex Community Hall, the only remaining social hall in this part of the county, provides continuity to community members who still maintain and use the building, as their parents and grandparents did, for an occasional dinner and at election time. The Hall continues to be a touchstone for the local population, the symbolic center of their communal identity.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

Buffalo Bulletin: August 18, 1949; August 11, 1983, September 27, 1990.

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The Midwest Review, June 1925, Volume VI, "Old Fort Reno Revisited".

Murray, Robert A. Johnson County: 175 Years of History at the Foot of the Big Horn Mountains, Buffalo Chamber of Commerce, 1981.

Powder River Heritage Committee, Our Powder River Heritage, Frontier Printing, Cheyenne, 1982.

Thirteenth U.S. Census, 1910. Johnson County, Wyoming.

Transcripts of Oral Interviews by Patty Myers: Helen Lohse; Pearl T. Raitt, Wyoming State Archives, Cheyenne, 1986.

Urbanek, Mae Wyoming Place Names, Johnson Publishing Company, Boulder, Colorado, 1974.

Wall, J. Tom Crossing Old Trails to New in North Central Wyoming, Dorrance & Company, Philadelphia, 1973.

Personal Interviews by Nancy Weidel:  
    Louise Turk, Sussex, Wyoming  
    Don Meike, Sussex, Wyoming

Correspondence: Pete Turk, Kaycee, Wyoming

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Verbal Boundary Description

The Sussex is built on a tract of land situated in the SW 1/4 of the NE 1/4 of section 13, Township 43 N, Range 79 West.

Beginning at a point 300 feet south of the SW corner of NE 1/4, NW 1/4 of the NE 1/4 of section 13 in T43 N, Range 79W. Thence south 230 feet to a point thence west 730 feet to a point thence north 360 feet to a point of beginning approximately 4.8 acres.

Boundary Justification

The boundaries are determined by the highway to the west of the hall, and the Powder River to the south.

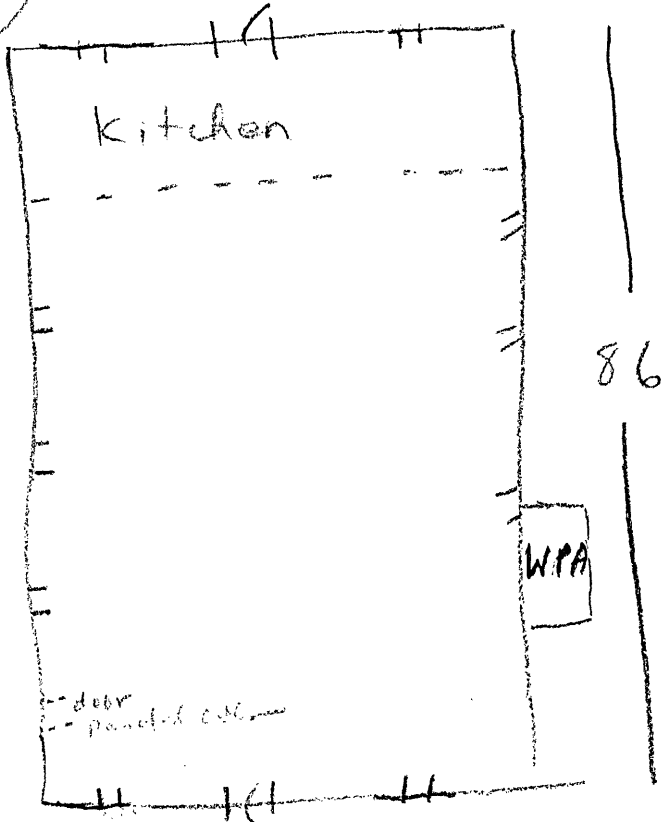


Sussex  
Bridge  
(new)  
1955

Highway



Powder River



1914  
Bridge  
(moved)  
1955

old road