

FEB 26 1987

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

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SITE PE-3

NAME Donald Beckon Ranch

LOCATION Five-and-one-half miles southeast of Zeona, Perkins County (105), South Dakota (046)

OWNER Martin Anderson
Box 3
Zeona, South Dakota 57795

CLASSIFICATION Buildings, object, private, NA acquisition, occupied, restricted access private, residence, agriculture

DESCRIPTION Very good condition, unaltered, original site

The Donald Beckon Ranch is located about six miles southeast of Zeona along one of the tributaries of the South Fork of the Moreau River. The site consists of fourteen structures and are all contributing with the exception of two modern metal buildings.

Of particular interest is the sod house that was built by Donald Beckon in 1910. It is a rectangular pen with a projection on the east facade. The windows are all double-hung two-over-two light in the main house, and double-hung in the hipped-roof projection. The house has a hipped roof clad in composition shingles. Two doors are in the south facade. The exterior of the structure has been stuccoed and painted a pastel green.

On the west side of the driveway is the house and five other structures. This is a domestic spacial unit. A second, smaller bunk house is located off the southwest corner of the sod house. It is a rectangular pen with a gable roof covered in composition shingles. The entrance is through a small gable-roofed projection. All the windows are double-hung. Another structure is located within this fenced area, a small rectangular frame outbuilding covered with tar paper. It has a low pitched gable roof that is covered in tar paper.

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South of the fenced domestic unit is a small frame rectangular outbuilding. It is sided in shiplap that is painted red and the domed roof is covered with tar paper.

A frame outbuilding sided in milled lumber, with a shed roof of milled lumber is located directly south of the domed roof outbuilding.

To the east is a frame garage. It is sided in milled lumber that is painted red with white contrasting trim. It has a gable roof that is covered with corrugated metal.

Across the driveway is the agricultural unit. Nine structures are located within this area. Farthest to the south is a gable-roofed frame barn. The exterior is painted red with contrasting white trim. A one-story shed addition has been added to the south axial facade. A one story gabled-roof addition has been added to the rear (east) gabled facade of the barn. The roof of the barn is clad in wood shingles, while all other roof sections are covered in corrugated metal. A shed roof dormer rises from the rear addition, an unusual feature in an agricultural structure. All windows in this structure are double-hung two-over-two light.

North of the barn is a chicken coop. It is frame construction with a shed roof. The exterior walls have been stuccoed and are unpainted.

West of the chicken coop is a small modern metal shed (non-contributing).

Between the metal shed and the corrugated metal Butler building (non-contributing) is an old sheep herders wagon. It is a frame structure covered with tar paper and has a domed roof. The door is made of wood planking.

North of the ranch buildings are three maintenance structures. The first is a small rectangular storage building. It is frame construction covered with corrugated metal siding and the gabled-roof is covered with tar paper. North of the storage building is a small wood-frame pump house. This building has a shed roof and the exterior is painted white. Another frame storage building is located to the north of the pump house.

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This structure has a gable roof that is covered with tar paper. The exterior walls are covered with corrugated metal.

To the south of the storage building is a clothesline. This was put up by Mr. Beckon in 1910 and is unusual because it uses concrete posts and has hand forged hardware that he made at the site. The posts are connected by heavy guage metal wire. The clothesline is located east of the house across the driveway.

SIGNIFICANCE 1900-present, architecture, settlement

DATE: 1910

BUILDER: Donald Beckon

The Donald Beckon Ranch is architecturally significant to rural Perkins County and northwestern South Dakota because it is one of the few surviving early twentieth century homestead period sod houses in the region. The ranch has a complete arrangement of structures historically associated with Northern Great Plains turn-of-the-century ranches.

At the present time there are only three surviving soddies included in the National Register of Historic Places in South Dakota. They are the Prairie Homestead in Interior, the Anna Carr Homestead in Bison, and the Joseph Baker House in the Hereford vicinity.

Although sod houses were one of the most common buildings found on the Great Plains during the homestead era as evidenced by the writings of Dick and others, very few survived through the years due to the delicate nature of their construction. Therefore sod is pershaps presently, the rarest form of building material encountered in the state.

Another unusual feature, the sheep herders wagon was another common sight across the Plains landscape at the turn-of-the-century. The wagons were used much as modern day mobile homes or recreational vehicles, where the owner could move the wagon to follow the herd, or move from ranch to ranch during sheep shearing season for seasonal employment. No other such wagons were located during the survey, which further enhances the importance of the site.

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The ranch has a large chicken coop that is still used at the present time. Historically, most ranches had chicken coops. The chicken was a primary food source for the rural family. Chickens provided fresh eggs on a daily basis as well as an occasional chicken dinner.

The Donald Beckon Ranch is in very good condition and well maintained by the present owner.

QUADRANGLE NAME Zeona, SD UTM 13/665710/49998000

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24,000 ACREAGE About three acres

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The site is bounded in the west by an imaginary line that lies ten feet west of the outbuilding at the southwest corner of the site. The southern boundary is an imaginary line that lies ten feet from the south exterior wall of that structure, thence to an imaginary line that lies ten feet from the eastern exterior wall of the barn that moves in a northerly direction to meet the northern boundary that lies ten feet from the exterior north wall of the storage building. The ranch is located in the NW quarter of the SW quarter of Section 34 in Township 14 North, Range 10 East in Perkins County, South Dakota.

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