

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM



1. Name of Property

historic name John and Fredricka (Roth) Stern Homestead

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 2 mi. E of Mott on ND Hwy 21 not for publication N/A

city or town Mott vicinity X

state North Dakota code ND county Hettinger code 041 zip code 58646

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 statewide X locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Merlan E. Paaverud, Jr.
Signature of certifying official

7-28-08
Date

Merlan E. Paaverud, Jr. SHPO

State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

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

Signature of commenting official/Title

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 Keeper

Andrea McClelland

Date of Action

9.19.08

John and Fredricka Stern Homestead
(Property Name)

Hettinger County, North Dakota
(County and State)

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>2</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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)

DOMESTIC: Single Dwelling

FUNERARY: graves/burials

AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE: animal facility

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Vacant/Not in Use

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

vernacular

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone

walls Stucco

roof Wood: Shingles

other

Narrative Description

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

See continuation sheet

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 1

John and Fredricka Stern Homestead; Hettinger County, North Dakota

John and Fredricka Stern Homestead
Hettinger County, North Dakota

7. Narrative Description

The John and Fredricka Stern Homestead is located in Hettinger County in southwestern North Dakota, just north of ND State Highway 21, two miles east of Mott on a gently sloped quarter section of land. No other neighboring buildings or farms are within sight of the Stern farmstead. The Stern site consists of a linear, connective house-barn that sheltered both the family and the animals; the home-forged steel tower frame of a wind charger (generator) standing about ten feet from the house; and the wooden outhouse, a "one-holer" (dry closet) covered in embossed tin sheets, located about 100-feet north of the home. Two wooden crosses 100-feet southeast of the house mark where stillborn twin sons and another infant son were buried in 1905 and 1906. There is a wire fence around the graves with a metal entrance gate. The abandoned Northern Pacific Railroad track bed runs east and west through a portion of the original family acreage and is still highly visible about 150-feet north of the house. This ethnically-influenced vernacular farmhouse was occupied by the Stern family from 1907 until it was vacated in the 1960s. The breeze-blown prairie fields form a setting similar to that of 102 years ago when John Stern chose this site as his family homestead.

The long, linear Stern home is a rectangular, mortared sandstone rock structure, approximately 78' x 30' with a later wood-framed addition measuring 18' x 10' on the east end. The family living spaces, grain storage space, and animal livestock shelter are all under one gabled roof in a distinctively traditional building form that is typical of German-Russian architectural design. The outer sandstone walls are an average of 22-inches thick. Three exterior doors and four windows all have southern exposure, with three smaller windows on the north side. A shallow, shed-roofed porch overhang is visible on the east gabled end elevation, extending from the kitchen dependency to the southeast corner of the house. The roof is covered with wooden (cedar) shingles. Two-by-eight joists and rafter framing lumber support a full loft, with access by a single open stairway through the middle storage area.

The connective house-barn building on the Stern homestead consists of three main functional areas. From east to west, the living area is first, then the storage area, with the animal shelter on the far west. The three separate areas have single south entrances. One enters the living spaces through a wood framed kitchen that was added onto the east end of the basic stone building. Additive elements of this type are another defining characteristic of German-Russian vernacular architecture. Prior to the addition of the kitchen, the main entrance into the family living spaces was from the south, entering directly into the living room. That entrance was sealed up and a corresponding interior doorway was remodeled into a small closet. Within the family living area, the dining room, living room and two small bedrooms are all located to the west of the kitchen entrance, contained within a total area of about 28' x 30'.

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John and Fredricka Stern Homestead; Hettinger County, North Dakota

Description (continued):

Exiting the living spaces through the kitchen entrance, one walks outside around the southeast corner of the farmhouse, past a door opening that has been closed up, to the second door, near the center of the south elevation, entering into the storage area. The open stairway inside this door gives immediate access to the wood-floored loft, which spans the whole length of the house - 78' x 30'. Upstairs on the right (east side) is an interior door that enters a sleeping room over the living area. The rest of the loft - about 50' in length - is a wide-open wood floored loft that was used for grain and hay storage. On the furthest west end is a gabled dormer opening. The main roof is gabled on the east end and over most of its length, while the west end (through which the dormer projects) is hipped. This combination of gabled roofs on one end and hipped roof on the other is found in other linear buildings in the German-Russian architectural tradition.

Returning by the staircase to the downstairs the ground floor level extending west from the living spaces consists of two rooms with dirt floors - one for grain storage and the room on the furthest west end to stable the animals. Both these rooms have wood ceilings and thick sandstone rock walls, partially covered with clay and straw mortar. A wall opening from the middle area allows feed to be transferred into the animal shelter. Each of these rooms has a single, south entrance with in-swinging doors.

Sandstone rocks used to construct the main building in 1905-1907 were mortared with clay and straw. Though the exterior is now mostly covered with stucco, the original straw and clay is still very apparent inside the storage and animal sections of the structure, demonstrating a construction method that was well-remembered by the German-Russian immigrants; an adaptation of building practices that were commonplace in the old country.

Interior living area:

The 18' x 10' kitchen addition (constructed of wood framing) offers a trap door with access to a wooden basement (sic) under it. The overall family living area, about 28' x 30', consists of a living room, two bedrooms and the dining room, which was the original kitchen until the wooden addition was constructed in the early 1920s.

The exterior-facing walls in the living area are sandstone rock covered with clay mortar, then covered with flowered wallpaper and/or painted wainscoting. The interior partitions are wood framed. There is a pantry and two small closets. The closet built in to the living room was the location of original main entry into the house before the east kitchen addition was built. All living area floors are wood subflooring covered with floral patterned linoleum. The chimney extends from the living area up through the loft for heat, and a gravity water tank in the loft supplied water down to the kitchen sink.

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Section 7 Page 3

John and Fredricka Stern Homestead; Hettinger County, North Dakota

Description (continued):

Work areas (storage and livestock):

The storage area and animal shelter are each approximately 25' x 30'. A dormer on the west end was used to pitch hay into and out of the storage loft. Along the outer north wall of the animal shelter are wooden remnants of another animal shed, a partial cement foundation, and the original bare rock wall. There is a large, visible crack on the southwest wall of the animal shelter. The rest of the structure is in good condition and shows remarkably good material integrity for its age. Historical photos from the 1950s show a separate, freestanding livestock barn that no longer exists toward the northeast from the house. This unusual building, referred to as a "clay barn" probably reflected another German-Russian construction method of puddled clay construction.

Architectural features of German-Russian ethnic tradition:

There are no other buildings of this distinctive type of German-Russian architecture still standing in the vicinity of Mott. In fact, comparable vernacular buildings from German-Russian ethnic heritage are rapidly disappearing from the northern Plains. The location of this farmstead, solitary on a sea of prairie, is adjacent to State Highway 21 and easily viewable. The ability to build a durable, comfortable, practical home on the severe northern Plains of the U.S., using readily-available indigenous materials, was a source of justifiable pride among German-Russian immigrants. The Stern Homestead of 1907 was well-built to stand the test of time on the North Dakota prairie. The Stern house tells a story of tenacious immigrant determination, savvy for environmental adaptation, and work ethic of the German-Russian immigrants. The ability of this immigrant group to establish and sustain agriculture on the North Dakota prairie lands is a major part of American immigrant settlement history and North Dakota cultural and economic history.

The architecture of the Stern Homestead stemmed from the immigrants' prior experience over a century of living on the Russian Steppe. Floor plans of their homes were simple, linear configurations with environmentally-appropriate southern dwelling entrances, using available indigenous materials. The architecture reflects the fundamental organization of family life and the importance of agriculture as an integrative aspect of the family unit, to an extent that is uncommon among other culture groups. As in the Russian Black Sea area, the livestock stable and storehouse were both attached to the building (or even contained within it). Sandstone rocks and homemade clay mortar gave strength and stability necessary to withstand the extreme climate so familiar in both Russia and on the Dakota Plains. (Sallet, 185-187)

John and Fredricka Stern Homestead
(Property Name)

Hettinger County, North Dakota
(County and State)

8. Statement of Significance

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.

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

See continuation sheets

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Exploration/Settlement

Ethnic History: Germans-from-Russia

Period of Significance

1905-1958

Significant Dates

1904, 1905-1910

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

John Stern

9. Major Bibliographical References

(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: German-Russian Heritage Center at North Dakota State University

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John and Fredricka Stern Homestead; Hettinger County, North Dakota

John and Fredricka Stern Homestead
Hettinger County, North Dakota

8. Statement of Significance

Summary Overview

The Stern Homestead in southwestern North Dakota stands as a powerful testament to the heritage, work ethic, and cultural practices of thousands of German-Russian people who populated and successfully established agricultural community in an area of western North Dakota referred to by scholars as the "German-Russian Triangle". (Sherman, *Plains Folk*, 137)¹ When they immigrated to America, these Germans from Russia brought with them building traditions and work habits from their lives on the Russian Steppe. Their traditional home design put the farm animals and feed close to the family living area, providing convenience, a source of heat and minimal contact with the fierce winter winds. Sandstone rocks that were a bane for many prairie farmers, proved to be valuable building material and the investment of back-breaking skill in erecting them has stood the test of time for the Stern family home. Throughout the Dakotas, hundreds of German-Russian style homes like Stern's were built according to the cultural tradition with which they were most familiar. (Koop, in *Roots*, p.130-135) Many of these noble, pragmatic structures have been removed or deteriorated over the century, but the Stern home stands in remarkably good condition, reflecting its magnificent simplicity and historic significance as a vestige of immigrant cultural experience.

Many diverse culture groups contribute to a region's settlement pattern, particularly when their "imprint" is as recent as the 20th-century. Geographers identify two main ways by which cultural inclinations are introduced and diffused to a new settlement region. (Noble, 101; Lewis, 2-10; and Kniffen, 9) When cultures spread by contact or contagion diffusion, there is conspicuous mixing of the features of culture, including foodways, music, religious and marital ceremonies, and architecture. By contrast, the Stern homestead (like the many other homesteads established by the distinct culture group of Germans from Russia) is an excellent example of relocation diffusion, in which the vernacular domestic architecture and other family traditions were imported directly from the "old country", essentially unchanged.

In characterizing the North Dakota landscape as a "Prairie Mosaic", regional author Father William Sherman acknowledges the extent to which cultural patterns and architectural expression remain distinct. The pragmatism of the Stern homestead evokes a style of vernacular architecture with distinctive cultural associations.

¹ Father Sherman, who genuinely spent the time to understand the immigrant settlement experience and German-Russian culture, in particular, goes on in this passage to observe with appropriate humor, that "more unscholarly types have referred to the same configuration as the "Great Sauerkraut Pyramid". Whether it is a triangle or a pyramid, demographers pinpoint this important area of German-Russian ethnic distinction as extending from Dickey County in the east, to Hettinger and Slope Counties in the west, narrowing to a point at Kramer in northern Bottineau County.

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John and Fredricka Stern Homestead; Hettinger County, North Dakota

Statement of Significance (continued):

German-Russian Heritage²

In the late 1700's many German farmers, including the Stern family, emigrated from Germany to the Russian Steppe with strong encouragement -- even enticement -- from Catherine the Great, who had become Empress of Russia and sought to exploit the proven agricultural abilities of Germanic farmers. (Height, *Memories*, 1-6; Rath, 1-2) Catherine herself had German heritage and admired her German countrymen for their thrift and perseverance. The Seven Years' War had just ended in Europe and conditions in Germany were bad, politically and economically. Much German farmland lay in ruins from the fighting. Catherine offered alluring inducement for foreigners to emigrate as colonists in Russia, particularly in the Black Sea region that is modern-day Ukraine. Her manifesto provided for religious freedom, exemption from military service, local self-government, relocation expenses for travel to Russia, free land, freedom to come and go, tax exemptions and interest-free loans. These rights and privileges were guaranteed to the incoming colonists and their descendants forever. Land was an all-important resource to the German farmers and so they took advantage of this wonderful offer.

When Tsar Alexander III took over the Russian throne in 1881 many promises made by Catherine were broken. The Black Sea Germans' rights as "privileged foreigners" were abrogated. Young German men were conscripted to serve in the Russian Army, all were being forced to speak Russian and forget their German heritage. (Sherman, et al.) From 1880 to the Stalinist *pogroms* of the 1930s, Germans from Russia seized the opportunity, when they were able, to relocate to the Great Plains of North America. They were encouraged and tempted by correspondence from prior émigrés and by strongly promotional literature from immigrant groups and from the railroads.

Germans from Russia are one of the predominant cultural groups that make up North Dakota's ethnic mosaic. (Sherman, *Prairie Mosaic*, 10-11, 17-18; Sherman et al., *Plains Folk*, 119-168) Their impact on North Dakota's agriculture, economy, culture and political life probably even exceed their numbers, which are as high as 70% in eastern Hettinger and surrounding counties. (Robinson, 284-289) As German-Russians have gradually become "Americanized", they remain a culturally-distinct ethnic group with justifiable pride in their traditions and a strong following by third- and fourth-generations through active German Russian Cultural Heritage societies centered in Nebraska and North Dakota. It seems doubtful that any other group could have adapted as readily to farming the arid northern Plains, while imposing their agricultural skill, hardiness, thrift, and sense of community on a challenging settlement landscape.

² In the recent past, the term "German-Russian" was used most often to characterize these colonists from the Black Sea and Volga regions. Present terminology tends to favor the phrasing "Germans from Russia", to emphasize that this group of immigrants German by ancestry and colonists by circumstance from their time in Russia. Nonetheless, they retained language and other folk customs from their Germanic origins, both in the Russian period and after their eventual relocation to America. While there remain many defining cultural traits of which this ethnic remains justifiably proud, over time they have also become conditioned by their American experience. Regrettably, the more politically-correct contemporary phrasing "Germans from Russia Americans" does not trip easily from the tongue.

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John and Fredricka Stern Homestead; Hettinger County, North Dakota

Statement of Significance (continued):

Among foreign-born immigrants in Hettinger County in 1910, Germans from Russia were the largest population group by a significant margin, numbering more than twice the number of Norwegians, the second largest population group. (Sherman et al., 427-8) This pattern is typical of most other locations in the German-Russian settlement pyramid.

Immigration and Family History

When the Black Sea German-Russians first immigrated to the United States in the 1880's they looked for large tracts of land then being offered for homestead settlement in Dakota Territory, Nebraska and Kansas. Unbroken prairie and open sky must have seemed like mythic "El Dorado" for these farmers, who clung to their Germanic cultural roots and readily transferred their experience with dryland grain farming from the Black Sea Region to the northern Plains. A hundred years of adaptation to the Russian prairies had given these immigrants the cultural tools to live and even flourish under new and difficult circumstances.

It can be said with certainty that of all the immigrant groups that came to the North American Great Plains, the Germans from Russia were the best equipped by their prior experience to survive and prosper in such a unique semi-arid region. History will show that their ethic of hard work, their tightly knit family system and their ability to garner their needs from meager resources enabled them to keep their land, improve its productivity, and maintain their numbers in an unparalleled degree during the initial homestead difficulties, subsequent years of isolation, periods of low agricultural income, and the dry and desperate days of the 1930's. (Sherman, 189-191)

The Stern family history book tells that John's Uncle Andreas Stern was the first in their family who immigrated to America from the Russian Black Sea area in 1892. Andreas homesteaded first in southeastern North Dakota, and many others followed. As in Russia, the majority of the Germans from Russia who homesteaded in North Dakota were farmers. By 1900 most of the farmland in South Dakota, Nebraska and Kansas was settled, so the next area of opportunity was central and western North Dakota. Germans from Russia immigrated to the Northern Great Plains in ever-increasing numbers, desirous of finding cheap farmland and jobs in areas where their German-speaking countrymen had already settled. They were uniquely prepared for life on the American prairies after having spent nearly a century as colonists in a strange land. In addition, their experience on the semiarid Russian steppes made them ideally suited for Great Plains life, both culturally and in terms of their agricultural practices. This advantage reinforced a feeling of ethnic distinctiveness. (Sherman et al., 133)

John Stern Homestead

John Stern was born May 2, 1882 in Bessarabia, Russia and came to America in March of 1902. In 1904 he filed for citizenship in Stark County, North Dakota. Other German-Russians had scouted these areas in advance. They preferred open plains to hilly and wooded areas, and wanted to settle among

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John and Fredricka Stern Homestead; Hettinger County, North Dakota

Statement of Significance (continued):

those who shared similar religious beliefs and cultural ties from Russia. (Sherman et al., 133) John Stern looked south and west of the town of Glen Ullin to the Mott area, where many others – particularly Germans from the Russian colony of Beresan -- were claiming homestead land. The population of Hettinger County grew from 360 to 6557 in the first decade of the 20th century; most of those were German-Russian homesteaders. (ND Legislative Manual, 1911)

Mr. Stern took advantage of the Homestead Act and filed a 320-acre land claim in 1905, receiving final documentation on May 14, 1910. (Ogle, 1917, 20) The acreage he chose, two miles east of Mott, was blessed with an artesian spring that still flows as of 2008. The first few months on his claim he slept under an overturned wagon box, until his 16' x 18' sod shack was built. He married Fredricka Roth in Glen Ullin, North Dakota on January 1, 1905. Construction on the new home began in the Spring of 1905 and the building was completed in 1907. It is the only home lived in by John and Fredricka Stern from that day on for the remainder of their lives.³

Stones were hauled with an improvised horse drawn "stone boat" from a hillside on the south part of the acreage. As in Russia, mortar was mixed from materials that were at hand-clay mixed with manure, straw and water. (Koop, 130) Lumber for the loft and inner walls of the house came by horse drawn wagons from Glen Ullin, approximately 50-miles to the northeast. Koop characterizes at least seven distinct variants on the mass-wall house construction methods of the Germans from Russia. (see Koop, Ludwig and Torma, *Folk Building of the South Dakota German-Russians*, videotape)

The German-Russian architectural precedent – recognizable by its form and configuration – was designed to use available materials, supplemented by skilled, itinerant labor. German-Russians were accustomed to the harsh environment and relatively flat, treeless Great Plains landscape, which topographically is similar to the steppes of western Russia. Using indigenous resources in a region notorious for inadequate building materials, these settlers erected sturdy clay and stone residences that were not unlike the *kolnistenhaus* (colonist's houses) they left behind. (Sherman, in Sallet, 195-195)⁴ American prairies were much like the Russian Steppes – barren land with few trees. (Koop, 130) On the Stern property there was an over-abundance of sandstone rock, so that became the main construction material. Removing rocks from the wheat fields was also of utmost importance. The south-facing entrances were the most desirable and practical for warmth. The Stern home has all south doors.

³ Fredricka (Roth) Stern's name is spelled various ways in historical documents. Throughout this narrative, the spelling is as it appears on her grave marker and in the published obituary, which may differ from phonetic spellings in the census record.

⁴ Also, see original source material on the *kolnistenhaus* and simpler *semeljanika* house form in (Height, *Paradise*, 120–125).

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John and Fredricka Stern Homestead; Hettinger County, North Dakota

Statement of Significance (continued):

Incorporating the storage and animal areas into the same building was energy efficient and practical for hard winters and high winds. That design was all-important to John Stern. His home signifies a prime example of ethnic architecture that had been used by his parents on the Russian Steppes. Both the Volga and Black Sea German-Russians introduced to the Great Plains similar yet distinct house forms that were common to their Russian homeland but likely had their roots in central Europe. Each house type was typically one story high with a loft. Black Sea houses were generally larger than those in Volga settlements and had a rectangular shape with a gabled roof. House-barn combinations, which provided living quarters for people and animals under a single roof were common in the old country, but are found only occasionally on the northern Plains as a vestige of German-Russian culture. (Koop, 131-132; see Sallet, fig.50-57 for comparison to other instances)

John's wife, Fredricka, lost her first three infants there on the prairie. The infant mortality rate was particularly high among immigrant families at the turn of the 20th-century. The closest town, Mott, was itself in infancy and had no cemetery, so John and Fredricka buried their babies in a small plot not far from the house. They marked the spot with modest wooden crosses. A cemetery was later established north of Mott and a third Stern child, Herbert, born and died in 1923, was buried in the Mott cemetery. There were three other surviving sons and two daughters who formed a family with John and Fredricka: Christian, Marie, Helen, Adolph and Reinhold.

The John Stern family raised wheat and small grains. All members of the family helped with various farm chores. John's youngest brother, Fred, also lived with the family through his youth until his marriage in 1924. As the home was about 300-feet south of the artesian spring, water was carried by hand. Eventually a water tank was placed in the loft above the living area of the house. Gravity fed the water down to the kitchen sink. One of the regular chores was transporting water from the spring up to the loft and filling the tank as needed.

In 1908 the Northern Pacific (NP) Railroad acquired land through the state of North Dakota. On October 10, 1910 the steam engine-driven train passed by through the Stern land on its first trip to Mott. (Mott had previously been served and was, in fact, laid out for the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railway.) The NP railroad arranged access to spring water on the Stern property, and a large tank was placed just north of the tracks. Each day the train stopped at the Stern place to take on water for its engines, and the children and grandchildren grew up with this excitement as a major part of their young lives.⁵ Stern family members also recount events from the era of the Great Depression, when transient hobos riding the rails were welcomed to the Stern home for a handout of food; a gesture of kindness and generosity from an immigrant family whose own resources must clearly have been stretched.

⁵ A remarkable historic photo of the Stern farmstead with steam locomotive and three attached railroad cars is reproduced on the continuation sheets of this nomination, from the family's private collection.

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John and Fredricka Stern Homestead; Hettinger County, North Dakota

Statement of Significance (continued):

John Stern talked openly about the early hard times in a 1957 *Mott Pioneer Press* interview. He said they could tell changes in the weather by the way the coyotes howled on the prairie. In one instance the family had to kill newborn calves because there wasn't enough feed for extra animals. John Stern used to go out and break horses to saddle and harness, and haul sheep wool for the neighbors as work outside his own farming during the depression. John also had a school bus route for the Mott school during the 20s and 30s.

The depression years were bad everywhere, but the circumstances of sustaining a life of subsistence agriculture on the northern Plains through the dustbowl years made the experience of these Germans from Russia especially difficult. On March 31, 1933, the U.S. Congress passed an act establishing the Civilian Conservation Corps to relieve unemployment among the youth and contributing to conservation the nation's natural resources. Reinhold left the farm in the late 30s and joined the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) for two years. He was stationed in Fargo with about 300 other young men. The CCC built fieldstone entrances, fireplaces and park shelters that still exist today at Fargo's Oak Grove and Lindenwood Parks. (Danbom, 87-88) Reinhold's main job, working nights, was to bank the fires in the barracks. His salary was \$30 per month, and all except \$5 was sent back home to his parents.

Reinhold, the youngest son, worked on the farm with his father and helped care for the animals. Each day they pitched hay and grain from the storage area or the loft into the animal shelter to feed the livestock. Reinhold married Elsie Schock in 1940, and for the first 18 months of their marriage, they lived with Reinhold's parents in the rock house that is the subject of this nomination. They slept in the loft over the living area of the homestead. The only access to the loft was through an outside door to the middle grain storage area. Reinhold remembered that it was "pretty chilly" going to bed during the winter.

The Sterns were active in their community. John was one of the first to help build the Christ Lutheran Church where he served as treasurer for six years. He was also a precinct committee officer for about twenty years. John Stern died in the homestead house in 1957. Fredricka lived in the home for ten more years, and since 1967 the home has been vacant. Criteria Consideration "C" applies to the small, family infant burial site integral to the homestead property. As a reflection of the difficult realities of home burial in rural agricultural settings, particularly among immigrant families, this defined grave location is incidental to the overall interpretation of the property.

Throughout the area and the whole state of North Dakota, one can see remnants of the traditional German-Russian architecture that once covered the prairie. Rock piles or partial walls are increasingly all that remain – but the Stern Homestead continues to stand strong and true to its origins. The house design of the Germans from Russia is distinctive, unique and unmistakable; yet like the quiet and humble people who built it. In America, this well-adapted building type and the cultural enclave it embodies have been overlooked, misunderstood, and too-often ignored (Sherman, 185).

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John and Fredricka Stern Homestead; Hettinger County, North Dakota

Statement of Significance (continued):

The Stern Home tells a story of German-Russian ethnic heritage and cultural adaptation. This historic property is a significant architectural legacy with many dimensions including the story of immigration, homesteading, making a life on the vast prairie of southwestern North Dakota, and bringing a distinctively-durable architectural tradition to America. All of these things are truly historically significant reflections of the importance of German-Russian culture in the formation of community in western North Dakota. The determination, skill, and hard work of the German-Russian farmers of past generations contain important lessons for future generations.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 9 Page 11

John and Fredricka Stern Homestead; Hettinger County, North Dakota

9. Bibliography

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 9 Page 12

John and Fredricka Stern Homestead; Hettinger County, North Dakota

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 9 Page 13

John and Fredricka Stern Homestead; Hettinger County, North Dakota

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John and Fredricka Stern Homestead
(Property Name)

Hettinger County, North Dakota
(County and State)

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 160-acres

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

13	709 780	5 138 770	Location of John and Fredricka Stern House
Zone	Easting	Northing	

Verbal Boundary Description

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

Boundary Justification

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

11. Form Prepared By

name/title:	Mrs. Geno Sloan and Bruce Colgrove	date:	28 May 2008 (Revised)
organization:	Mott Gallery of History and Art	street & number:	104 Montana Ave.
street & number:	104 Montana Ave.	telephone:	701/824-2861 (GS), 701/260-2738 (cell), 701/824-4266 (BC)
city or town:	Mott	state:	ND
		zip code:	58646

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

See 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.)

Jim Stern
8874 Hwy 21 E
Mott, ND 58636
701.824.2336

Curtis Stern
200 Third Street, PO Box 12
Lohrville, IA 51453

Gary Stern
22202 S. Central
Olathe, KS 66062

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127, and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 10 **Page** 14

John and Fredricka Stern Homestead; Hettinger County, North Dakota

10. Verbal Boundary Description:

The John Stern farmstead is situated on the southwest quarter section of Beery Township (Township 134N, Range 92W) in Hettinger County, North Dakota.

Verbal Boundary Justification:

This is the parcel associated with the Stern family's settlement and farming operations throughout the period of significance, and includes the associated railroad track bed.

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National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section Additional documentation Page 15

John and Fredricka Stern Homestead; Hettinger County, North Dakota

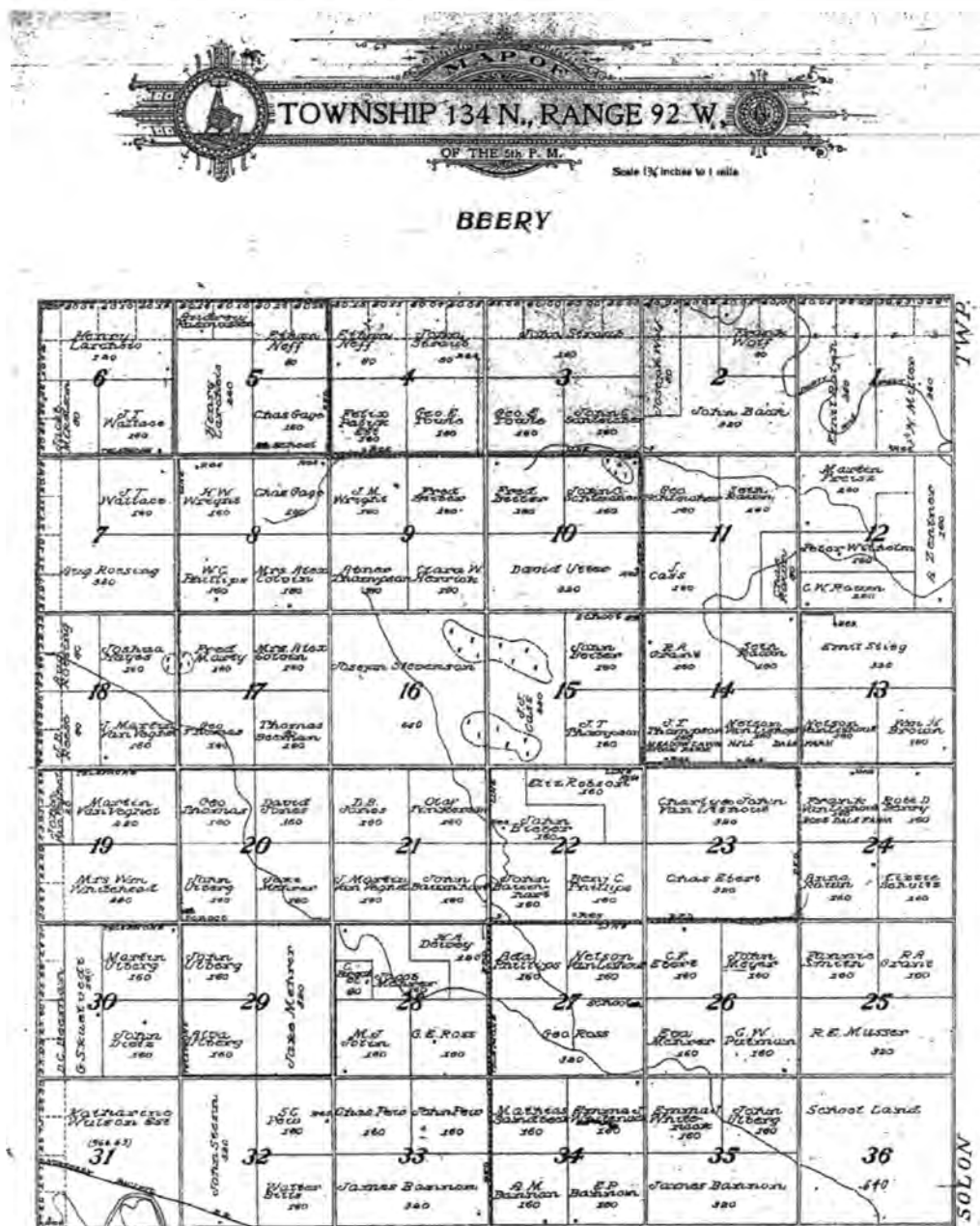


Fig. 1: Plat map of Beery township in 1917, showing Stern homestead in Section 32; Geo. A. Ogle Map Company

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National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section Additional documentation Page 16

John and Fredricka Stern Homestead; Hettinger County, North Dakota

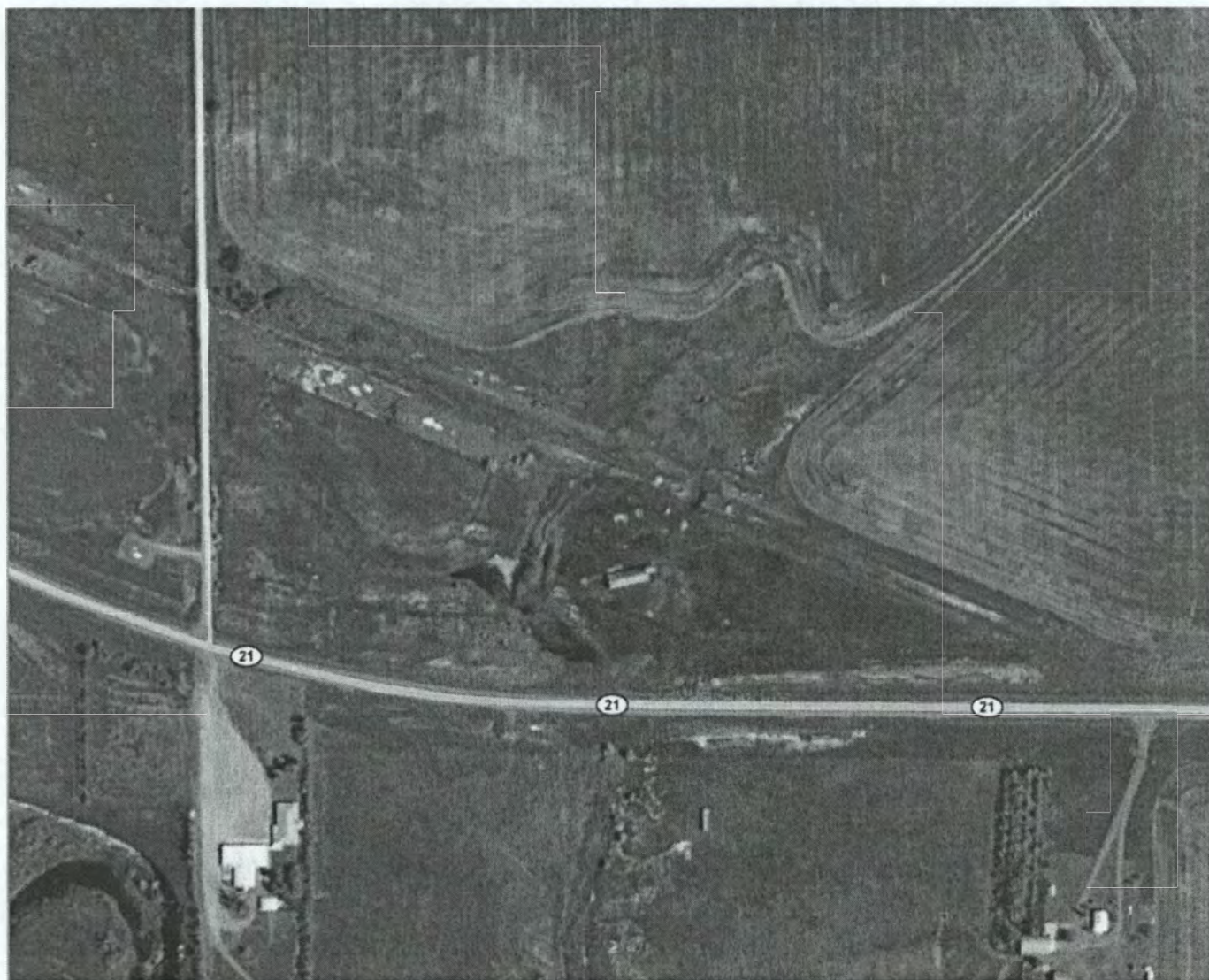


Fig. 2: GoogleEarth aerial photograph of Stern Homestead property (accessed 26 May 2008)

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National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section Additional documentation Page 17

John and Fredricka Stern Homestead; Hettinger County, North Dakota

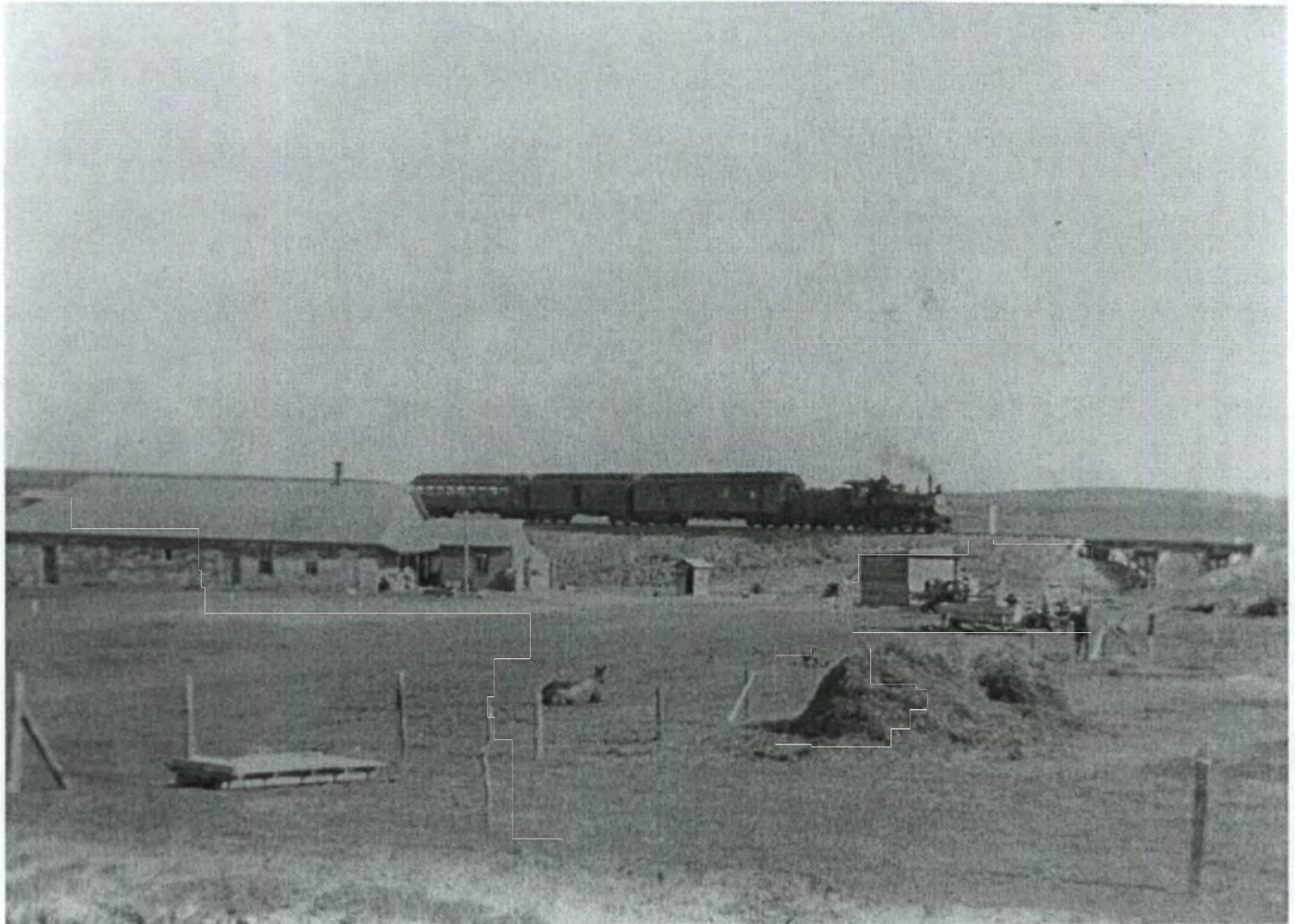


Fig. 3: Family photo of Stern homestead showing house-barn and adjacent railroad, ca. 1920
from the Stern Family's personal papers.

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National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section Additional documentation Page 18

John and Fredricka Stern Homestead; Hettinger County, North Dakota



Fig. 4: Later view of Stern homestead showing house-barn and detached livestock barn to the east.
from Enid Bern's *Our Hettinger County Heritage*, (1957), p. 43.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section Additional documentation Page 19

John and Fredricka Stern Homestead; Hettinger County, North Dakota

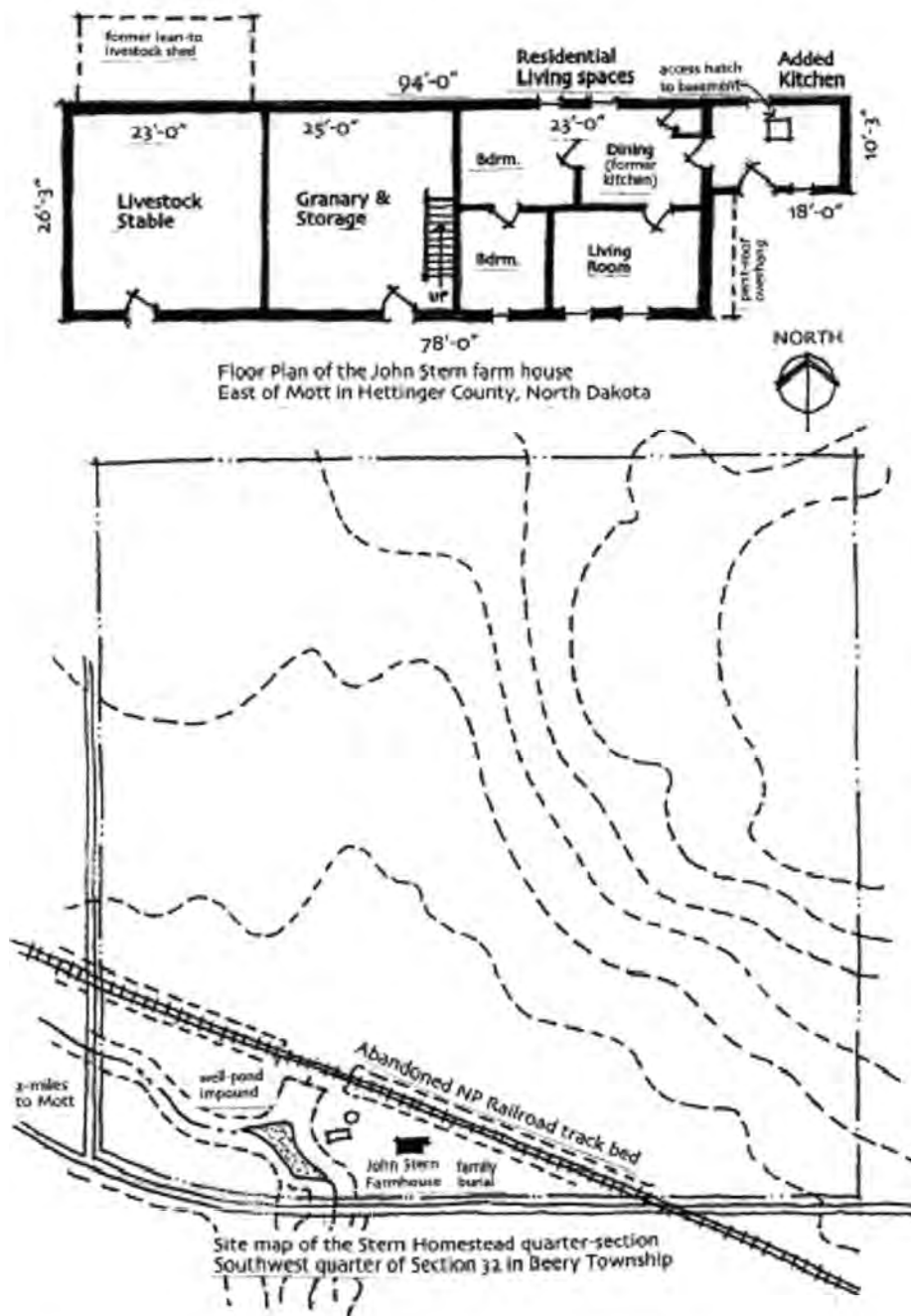


Fig. 5: Location map and sketch plan of Stern Homestead and farmhouse

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National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section Additional documentation Page 20

John and Fredricka Stern Homestead; Hettinger County, North Dakota

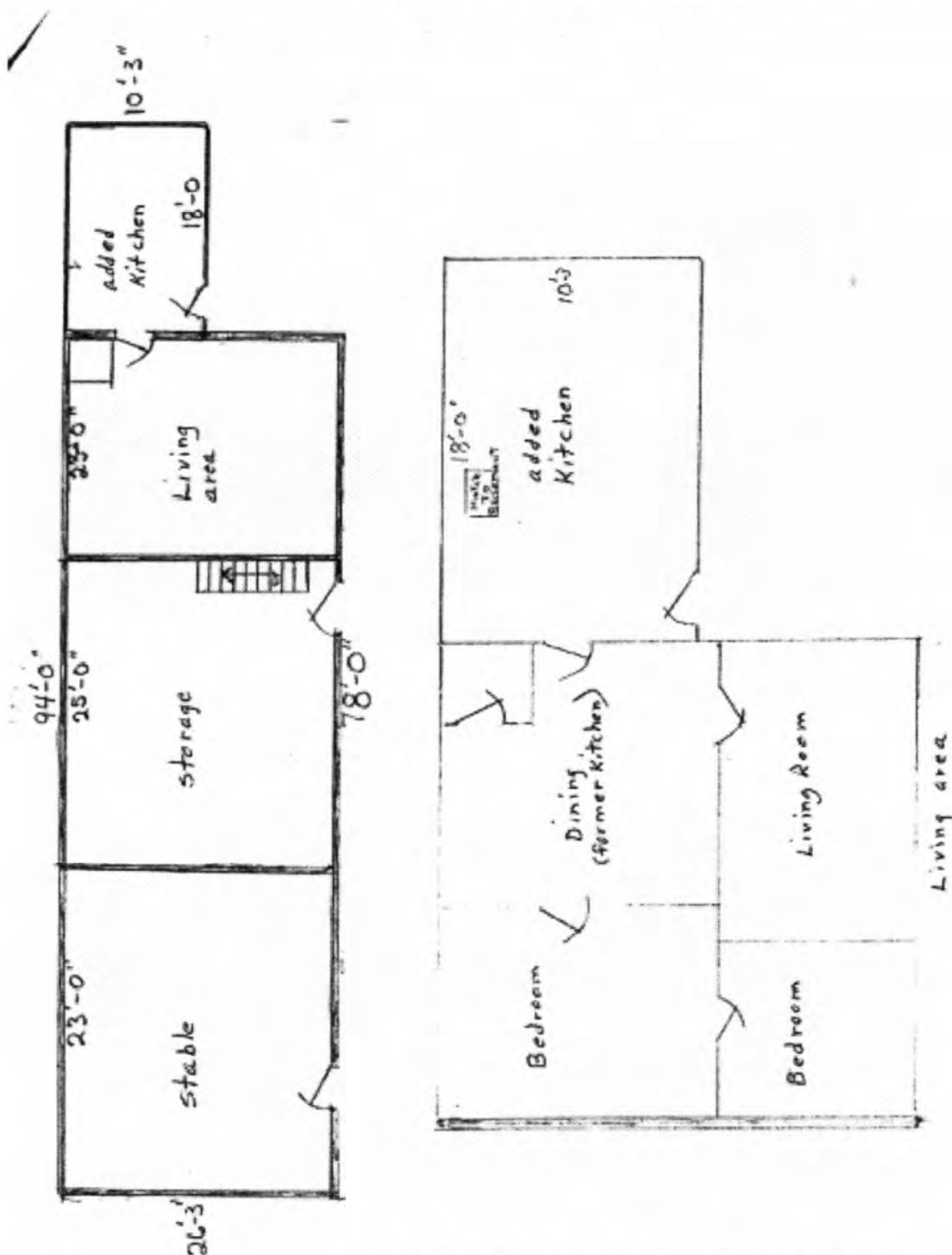


Fig. 6: Field annotated measurement sketch plan of John Stern house and connected spaces

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Name of Property _____

County and State _____

Section number _____ Page _____

Name of multiple property listing (if applicable) _____

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

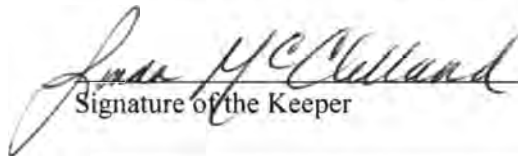
NRIS Reference Number: 08000902

Property Name: Stern, John and Fredricka (Roth), Homestead

County: Hettinger State: North Dakota

Multiple Name:

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.



Signature of the Keeper

September 19, 2008

Date of Action

Amended Items in Nomination:

Section 8. Significance

"1904" is, hereby, dropped from the Significant Dates because it predates the Stern family's association with the property. Architecture is, hereby, added as an Area of Significance to correspond to Criterion C. Criteria Consideration C is, hereby, dropped since the family cemetery is an integral part of the homestead and therefore does not have to meet the special considerations for cemeteries.

Section 10: Geographical Data

The following four UTM references are, hereby, entered into the record for the property :

NW 13/709331/5139689

NE 13/710131/5139707

SE 13/710173/5138895

SW 13/709357/5138878

The staff of the North Dakota State Historic Society was notified of this amendment.

DISTRIBUTION:

National Register property file

Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Stern, John and Fredricka (Roth), Homestead

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: NORTH DAKOTA, Hettinger

DATE RECEIVED: 8/06/08 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 8/25/08
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 9/09/08 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 9/19/08
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 08000902

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

___ACCEPT ___RETURN ___REJECT ___DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Well-researched and documented nomination
for 160-acre homestead dating from 1905.
Property is an interesting and highly intact
example of a "connective house/barn" associated with
German-Russian immigrants and reflecting
Russian Black Sea adaptations to the
Dakota Plains (particularly
the area known as
the German-Russian
Triangle).

RECOM./CRITERIA Accept in SLR A + C
REVIEWER L. McClelland DISCIPLINE
TELEPHONE _____ DATE 9/19/08

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR (Y/N)

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the
nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



- 1 Stern Homestead
- 2 Hettinger County ND
- 3 Family member
- 4 c 1950s
- 5 private family collection
- 6 camera position SW
- 7 0001

- 1 Stern Homestead
- 2 Hettinger County ND
- 3 unknown
- 4 c 1915
- 5 private family
- 6 camera position N
- 7 0003



- 1 Stern Homestead
- 2 Hettinger County ND
- 3 Leslie Sloan
- 4 Summer 2007
- 5 digital
- 6 camera position E
- 7 2746

- 1 Stern Homestead
- 2 Hettinger County ND
- 3 Leslie Sloan
- 4 Summer 2007
- 5 digital
- 6 camera position N
- 7 2750



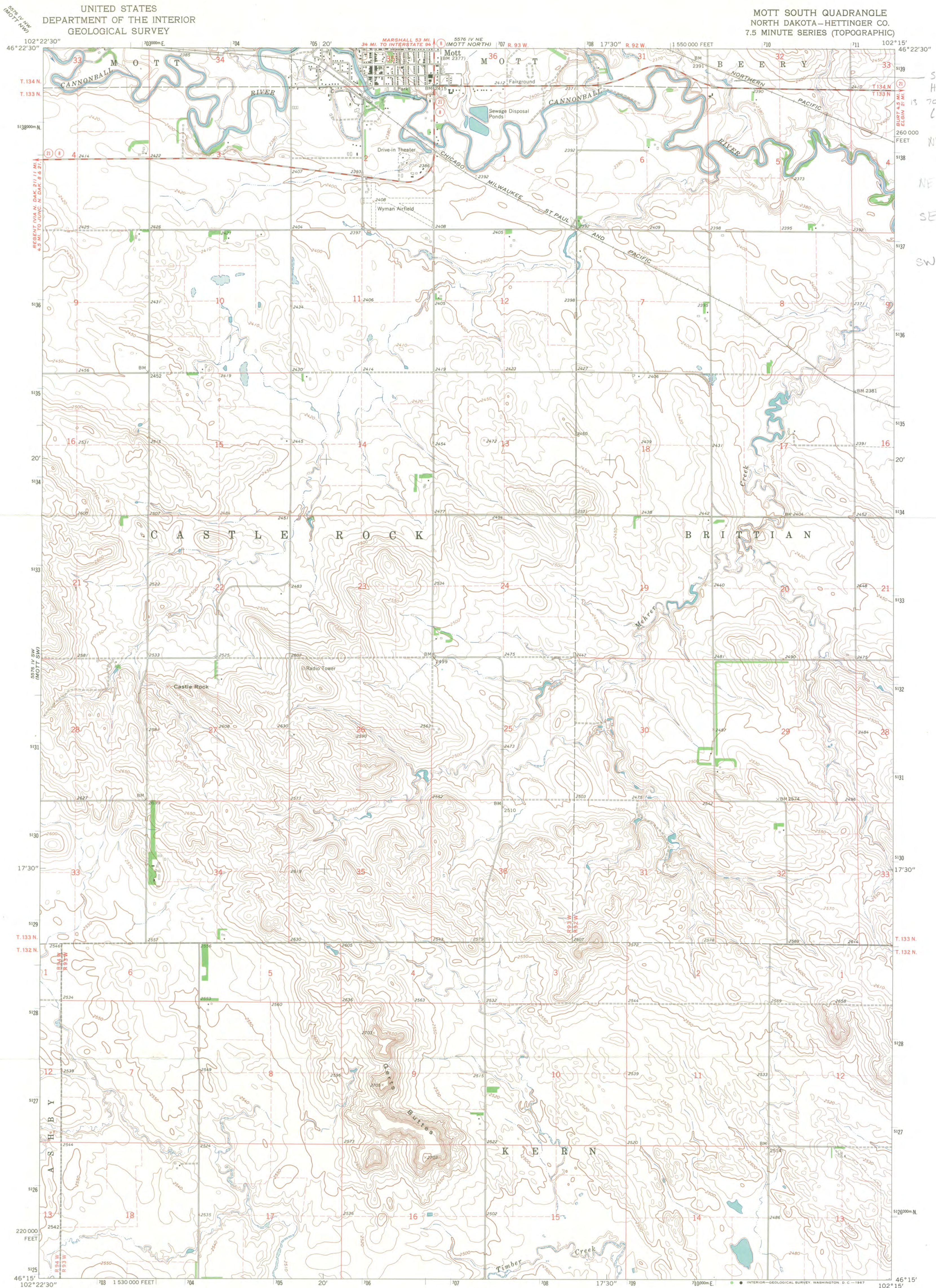
- 1 Stern Homestead
- 2 Hettinger County ND
- 3 Leslie Sloan
- 4 Summer 2007
- 5 digital
- 6 camera position E
- 7 2757

- 1 Stern Homestead
- 2 Hettinger County ND
- 3 Leslie Sloan
- 4 Summer 2007
- 5 digital
- 6 camera position E
- 7 2784



- 1 Stern Homestead
- 2 Hettinger County ND
- 3 Leslie Sloan
- 4 Summer 2007
- 5 digital
- 6 camera position S
- 7 2826

- 1 Stern Homestead
- 2 Hettinger County ND
- 3 Leslie Sloan
- 4 Summer 2007
- 5 digital
- 6 camera position W
- 7 2857



Stern Homestead
Hettinger County ND
13 709780 5138770
(center pt.)
NW 13 709331/
5139689
NE 13 710131/
5139707
SE 13 710173/
5138895
SW 13 709357/
5138878

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
as part of the Department of the Interior program
for the development of the Missouri River Basin
Control by USGS and USC&GS
Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial
photographs taken 1965. Field checked 1966
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on North Dakota coordinate system, south zone
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,
zone 13, shown in blue
Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence and field lines where
generally visible on aerial photographs. This information is unchecked

SCALE 1:24,000
1 1000 0 1000 2000 3000 4000 5000 6000 7000 FEET
1 0.5 1 KILOMETER
CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET
DATUM IS MEAN SEA LEVEL
THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR WASHINGTON, D. C. 20242
AND BY THE STATE WATER COMMISSION, BISMARCK, NORTH DAKOTA 58501
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

ROAD CLASSIFICATION
Medium-duty ——— Light-duty ———
Unimproved dirt ———
State Route ———



MOTT SOUTH, N. DAK.
N4615—W10215/7.5

1966
AMS 5576 IV SE—SERIES V871



TO: Keeper, National Register of Historic Places
FROM: Merlan E. Paaverud, Jr./Lorna Meidinger, Architectural Historian
DATE: August 6, 2008
SUBJECT: National Register Nomination



The following materials are submitted on August 6, 2008, for nomination of the John and Fredricka (Roth) Stern Homestead, Hettinger County, North Dakota to the National Register of Historic Places.

- 1 National Register of Historic Places nomination form on archival paper
- _____ Multiple Property Nomination form on archival paper
- 8 Photographs, black and white
- 1 Original USGS map(s)
- _____ Sketch map(s)/figure(s)/exhibit(s)
- _____ Piece of correspondence
- 1 Other: Photo CD

COMMENTS:

- _____ Please insure that this nomination is reviewed
- _____ This property has been certified under 36 CFR 67
- _____ The enclosed owner objections ____ do ____ do not constitute a majority of property owners
- Other:



"Meidinger, Lorna B."
<lmeidinger@nd.gov>
10/02/2008 03:39 PM
EST

To: <Linda_McClelland@nps.gov>
cc:
Subject: RE: Stern Homestead nomination

Sorry about that, they were my first unsupervised UTMs and somehow I changed the settings. I'll get the right ones to you next week when our GIS person is back in the office.

Lorna

-----Original Message-----

From: Linda_McClelland@nps.gov [mailto:Linda_McClelland@nps.gov]
Sent: Thursday, October 02, 2008 1:36 PM
To: Meidinger, Lorna B.
Subject: Re: Stern Homestead nomination

Lorna--Thank you for the information.

In plotting the new UTM's on the USGS map sent with the nomination, I've discovered a discrepancy in the numbers and am hoping you can resolve the problem. You will notice that the original UTM was 13 709780 5138770, which seems to have been plotted accurately on the USGS map. The new UTMs do not correspond to Zone 13 or indicate a location near Mott in Hettinger County. Can you please look into this and let me know what the references should be so I can make the SLR and mark the right points on the map.


As far as Section 8 goes, I'm adding Architecture as an area of significance to correspond with Criterion C, and dropping Criteria Consideration C since the family cemetery is an integral part of the homestead and doesn't need to be justified separately on the basis of being a cemetery. As for the Period of Significance, I think it's best to leave it "1905 to 1958," ending it at the 50-year mark since Fredricka continued to live there after John's death. We need to drop 1904 as a significant date because it predates the family's association with the property (and lies outside the Period of Significance).

Best wishes--

Linda Mc

Linda McClelland
Historian
National Register of Historic Places
202-354-2258
202-372-6447 (FAX)
linda_mcclelland@nps.gov

Linda McClelland
10/02/2008 02:35 PM
EDT

To: "Meidinger, Lorna B." <lbmeidinger@nd.gov>
cc:
Subject: Re: Stern Homestead nomination 

Lorna--Thank you for the information.

In plotting the new UTM's on the USGS map sent with the nomination, I've discovered a discrepancy in the numbers and am hoping you can resolve the problem. You will notice that the original UTM was 13 709780 5138770, which seems to have been plotted accurately on the USGS map. The new UTM's do not correspond to Zone 13 or indicate a location near Mott in Hettinger County. Can you please look into this and let me know what the references should be so I can make the SLR and mark the right points on the map.

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Best wishes--

Linda Mc

Linda McClelland
Historian
National Register of Historic Places
202-354-2258
202-372-6447 (FAX)
linda_mcclelland@nps.gov



"Meidinger, Lorna B."
<lmeidinger@nd.gov>
09/22/2008 10:35 AM
EST

To: <linda_mcclelland@nps.gov>
cc:
Subject: Stern Homestead nomination

Linda,

The UTM given in the nomination is the location of the house (not center of the property) so we may want to keep it on there to note where the buildings are on the property. The UTM's for the 160 acres are:

NW 14/248720/5141263
NE 14/247926/5141311
SE 14/249499/5140415
SW 14/247890/5140497

For the date change, were you thinking 1905-1957 (from when the Sterns claimed the site to Fredericka's death) for the period of significance and the significant dates as 1905-1910 when most of the initial improvements were made? I appreciate the contact on the changes as it helps me learn what you as the NPS are looking for and needs to be done.

Lorna Meidinger
Architectural Historian
National Register Coordinator

State Historical Society of North Dakota
612 East Boulevard Avenue
Bismarck, ND 58505

Phone: 701-328-2809
Fax: 701-328-3710