

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

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Continuation sheet Savo Hall Item number Page 1

Site #3

1. Savo Hall (Finnish National Society Hall)
2. Savo Township  
Vicinity of Frederick  
South Dakota 46 Brown 13
3. building; private; NA acquisition; occupied; entertainment
4. Savo Community Hall Association  
c/o John Geranen, P.O. Box 663  
Frederick, South Dakota 57441
5. Register of Deeds  
Brown County Courthouse  
Aberdeen, South Dakota 57401
7. excellent; unaltered; original site

Sited on the northeast corner of the intersection of county section roads, Savo Hall is located to the north of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church and Savo Monument. To the north and east is a wind-break of trees. The building faces south.

The hall is a frame L-shaped, one-story structure built in 1899. Resting on a concrete foundation which was rebuilt in 1939, the building is surmounted by wood-shingle gable roofs which intersect in a cross-gable. In 1917 the kitchen area on the east side of the building was added. All details including windows, board and molding were carefully matched. A chimney rises above the kitchen. A small, gable-roofed vestibule covers the front entrance and a sheet roof covers the exterior, sitting and serving area. The windows are double-hung sash, two-over-two.

On the interior the entranceway leads into a large open hall with a raised stage on the north end. Painted sets cover the windows in the stage area. The convex ceiling and wall are covered in narrow tongue-and-groove board. A door on the east wall near the stage leads to the two rooms which comprise the kitchen and work area. A basketball hoop is located above the main door.

To the north and east end of the hall are two wood frame outhouses. These are noncontributing structures.

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8. 1800-1899; architecture; settlement; theatre; Finnish ethnic history.

dates: 1898-1939

builders: Jacob Erkillla, Alex Kriksman,  
Sam Samuelson

The Savo Hall is the only remaining example of a Finnish immigrant hall in South Dakota. As the site of temperance, musical, athletic and theatrical activities in the Finnish settlement, it was a non-denominational and more expansive symbol of community life than the other major Finnish-American institution, the church. The architecture of the building is in the American vernacular tradition of the rural hall and this building remains an extremely well-preserved example of the type. It is significant in the areas of architecture, settlement history, theatre and Finnish ethnic history.

In 1898, sixteen years after the initial settlement of Savo, the Finnish National Society of Savo or Savo Hall Association was founded to build a community hall. Membership was limited to people of Finnish nationality, living in the community, although members were drawn largely from the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church, which was the more out-going and wordly of the two sects of Finnish Lutheranism in the community. The hall was to be "used for any progressive or cultural purpose" and over the years housed theatrical productions, temperance society meetings, athletic events and musical entertainments and religious celebrations.

The first board of directors consisted of John Forsty, Herman Hukari, F.F. Martilla, K.A. Hukari, M.A. Martilla, Henry Thompson and Paul Geranen. Built during the month of June by Jacob Erkkila, Alex Kriksman and Sam Samuelson, the hall was dedicated with a traditional Finnish Johannus or Midsummer celebration on June 24, 1899.

Hall life was an extremely important part of Finnish-American life, as virtually all non-religious social life centered on these institutions. Four halls were built in South Dakota and only Savo remains.

In later years, c. 1920-1940, the Savo Hall Association became the victim of partison strife. The importance of the hall was further weakened by the changing life styles of a younger generation. Although the hall is still used for special occasions, its importance has clearly waned.

The building has been well maintained and is in excellent condition.



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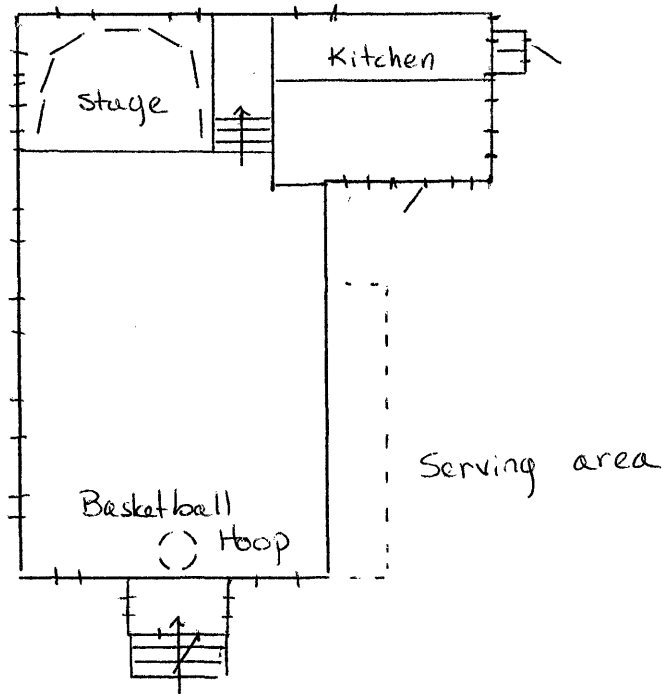
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Section Road