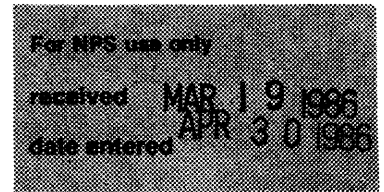


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SITE BU-44

NAME Butte-Lawrence County Fairgrounds

LOCATION One-half mile west and one-half mile south of Nisland, East Butte Unorganized Territory, Butte County (019), South Dakota (046)

OWNER Butte and Lawrence County Fair Board  
Nisland, South Dakota 57762

CLASSIFICATION Buildings, public, NA acquisition, occupied, restricted access, agricultural, recreational

DESCRIPTION Very good, unaltered, original site

The Butte-Lawrence County Fairgrounds is located on the floodplain of the Belle Fourche River about one mile southwest of the town of Nisland in Butte County. The site is surrounded by mature trees and an enclosed fence which contributes to the picturesque effect of the fairgrounds, a large complex of white wood-frame buildings as it is approached from Nisland. The fairgrounds consists of twenty-three structures all considered to be contributing with the exception of three buildings which house the modern restrooms and showers.

The building of primary importance at the site is the pavilion (contributing) which is an octagonal wood-frame structure. It is a two-and-one-half-story building with a row of six light windows below the eaves of the roof which is covered in wooden shingles. Cast iron stairs ascend to the second floor on the exterior of the west wall of the pavilion. Entry to the structure is gained through doors in the first floor of the structure on all sides with the exception of the east facade. The doors are flanked on either side by six-over-six light windows. The interior of the pavilion is a large open space with a balcony around the second floor. The structure has hardwood floors and is unpainted in the interior.

The grandstand (contributing) is the largest structure at the site. It is a wood-frame structure with open ends and an open front facade used for viewing activities on the track to the north. The shed roof of the structure is supported by a row of twelve square columns which span the front facade and one column on each of the end facades which are partially enclosed and have entry doors. A small shed roof extension is located on the southeast corner of the structure. It is used as a ticket stand. Entrance to the grandstand is gained

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through a set of double doors in the center of the south facade.

The groundkeepers house (contributing) is located at the easternmost edge of the site close to the entrance gate to the fairgrounds. The house is wood-frame with a gable roof and two gable roof entries on the east and west facades of the house. The roof is covered with wood shingles.

The 4-H building (contributing) is located to the southwest of the house. It is the only T-plan structure at the fairgrounds and is wood-frame with a moderately pitched gable roof. Each of the gable ends of the building has a door in the groundfloor with a set of three two-over-two light windows below the gable. The roof is covered with corrugated steel and the exterior of the building is covered with shiplap painted white.

Two wood-frame outhouses (contributing) with gable roofs are located south of the 4-H Building, and are two small shed roof (contributing) storage buildings.

Four wood-frame gable-roofed exhibition buildings (contributing) are located between the pavilion and the grandstand. All four of the structures are covered with shiplap which is painted white and low pitched gable roofs covered with corrugated steel. The Butte County Junior Leaders Association building has triangular brackets under the eaves with a row of fold-out wooden windows in all facades.

A picnic area is located to the south of the Junior Leaders Association Buildings and an enclosed concessions-picnic building (contributing) is situated there in a grove of mature elm trees. The structure is open on all sides.

Six livestock barns (contributing) complete the fairgrounds complex. Three barns are gable-roof structures with low shed roof sides. The central portion of the barns rise to half a story above the shed roof portions of the barns and are pierced by eight windows on the axial facades and a set of three windows in the gable ends of the barns. The Sheep Barn is the only structure which has a shed roof porch along the north axial side of the structure supported by eleven square posts. The remaining barn has a gable roof which is covered with corrugated steel. On the north side of the drive is a shed roof wood-frame calf barn.

The grounds are maintained by a full-time groundskeeper who lives at the site year round.

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SIGNIFICANCE 1900-present, agriculture, architecture, recreation

DATES 1921, 1970s

BUILDER Earl Wilson

The Butte-Lawrence County Fairgrounds, built in 1921, is the best example of a county fairgrounds in western South Dakota. The pavilion at the fairgrounds is at the present time, the only known octagonal public building in the western part of the state. The complex also represents an intact early 1920s educational and recreational facility, and resembles a state fairgrounds complex on a smaller scale, than a county fairgrounds. Throughout rural western South Dakota most of the fairgrounds are small, consisting of one or two buildings and a grandstand, thus the site is the largest and most architecturally complex of its type in the area.

The land deed for the fairgrounds is dated 1919. The site has been used as a fairgrounds since 1920 when the fair was moved from Belle Fourche approximately sixteen miles to the west of Nisland. The tradition of the Butte County Fair dates back to the early years of the twentieth century when the fair was held at Newell and Vale, two other prominent agricultural communities in the county. Nisland, located at the center of Belle Fourche Irrigation Project, was selected as the site for the fairgrounds because of its ideal location on the Belle Fourche River.

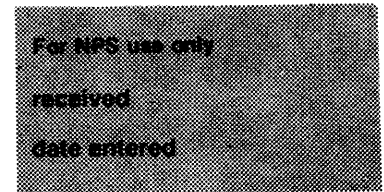
In the August 11, 1921 issue of the Valley Irrigator it was reported that Earl Wilson was given the contract to construct the buildings at the Butte county Fairgrounds and had poured the concrete foundations for the buildings. The fair was held at the end of September that year due to the construction of the fairground buildings.

Additional historical significance of the site is derived from a visit by President Calvin Coolidge and Mrs. Coolidge on September 1, 1927. The President and Mrs. Coolidge were guests at the Butte County Fair while they toured the Belle Fourche Irrigation Project which was the first Federal irrigation project visited by President Coolidge. Travelling with their official party, the President and Mrs. Coolidge arrived by train from the summer White House in the Black Hills and toured the Irrigation Project, the United States Experimental Farm outside of Newell and the Fair.

While at the fair the President viewed the stock parades, the agricultural exhibition buildings, and the home economic displays in the pavilion. The President was given a pair of lambs, by Charles M. Reid, a fair board member,

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and in his speech, the President referred to the generosity of the people of western South Dakota who had given him much farm equipment:

I am becoming very attached to the Black Hills...Since I have been here I have been presented with a fine saddle horse and all of the accouterments. This afternoon I was promised a 160-acre farm in this fertile valley if I would return to live here, and I have been presented with two sheep. I already possess a herd of cattle.

Due in large part to this Presidential visit in 1927, a typical day at a late 1920s rural South Dakota County Fair is extraordinarily well documented.

The fairgrounds are well maintained and used every September by the citizens of Butte and Lawrence Counties, South Dakota for their county fair which still serves as a forum for the exchange of information on agriculture and stock raising practices, as well as a social event for the rural populace.

QUADRANGLE NAME Nisland, South Dakota UTM REFERENCE: SE UTM: 14/613720/4946630  
SW UTM: 14/613340/4946630  
NE UTM: 14/613720/4946880  
NW UTM: 14/613340/4946880  
QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24000 ACREAGE Approximately 24 acres

PHOTO REFERENCE NUMBER

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The property is bounded on the north by an imaginary line which lies twenty feet from the northern most edge of the racetrack, and on the east by an imaginary line which lies ten feet from the eastern most exterior wall of the groundskeepers house. The southern boundary is an imaginary line which lies twenty feet from the southern exterior wall of the barn located in the southwest corner of the site. The western site boundary is formed by an imaginary line which lies twenty feet south of the west exterior wall of the western most barn. The lines intersect at the corners to form a rectangle around the structures located at the site. The property is located in Township 8 North Range 4 East of Section 12 in Butte County.

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