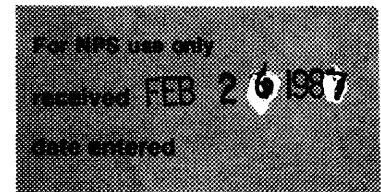


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Johnson Ranch

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SITE HN-1

NAME Axel Johnson Ranch

LOCATION About 9 miles south of Reva, and 3  
one half miles east of SD State  
Highway 79 on the Sorum Road,  
Harding County(063), South Dakota (046)

OWNER Howard and Rose Millett  
R.R. Box 33  
Sorum, South Dakota 57654

CLASSIFICATION Buildings, private, NA acquisition,  
occupied, restricted access,  
agricultural

DESCRIPTION Very good, altered, original site

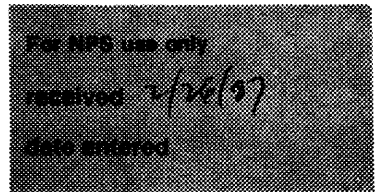
The Axel Johnson Ranch sits against a hillslope on the north side of Rabbit Creek, on the Sorum Road about five miles west of the abandoned town of Sorum. A winding one mile unpaved driveway leads to the ranch which consists of seven structures which date from the 1910s.

The ranch house (contributing) consists of four old homestead shacks which were pushed together in the late 1910s to form the present house. In its present form, the house is a one-and-one-half story rectangular pen with a one story gable roof addition on the north side of the house. A low pitched gable roof covers a one story addition on the south end of the house. The house sits on a stone and petrified wood foundation over a hand dug dirt cellar which is under the central section of the house.

Entry to the house is gained through the front door which leads to the kitchen through an entry hall. A door in the south side of the house leads to a pantry and laundry room which adjoins the kitchen. A formal dining room, living room, bedroom and staircase to the second floor are located in the central portion of the house. Two bedrooms are on the second floor. The north wing houses a bedroom and bathroom.

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The structure of primary interest at the site is the gable-on-hip barn (contributing). Constructed in 1923, the barn which is wooden peg construction, is built into a hillslope which forms the rear or north first floor wall. The barn is almost square and unusual because it is covered with verticle siding. It is painted red with white trim. The floor plan is divided into three aisles abutting one transverse bay. The center aisle has a gable roof while the side aisles and rear bay are hip roofed. A large decorative ventaltor is located in the center of the ridgeline of the central gable roof that is covered with corrugated metal. The side aisles and front bay contain stalls and grain storage areas, the center aisle is open and was used for hay storage.

The remaining outbuilings at the Johnson Ranch were built about the same time as the barn. The two exceptions are a modern pole calving shed (non-contributing) and a Quonset hut (non-contributing).

A wood-frame chicken coop (contributing) is located between the calving shed and Quonset hut. The coop is painted red and has white trim. A row of windows spans the front elevation where the door is located.

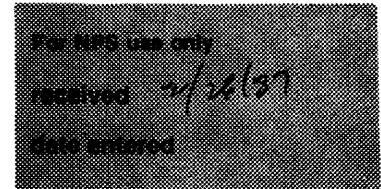
A wood-frame outhouse (contributing) is situated in the southeast corner where the chicken coop and Quonset hut meet.

Another wood-frame calf shed (contributing) completes the barnyard. It is also painted red with contrasting white trim. The calf shed is a large rectangular pen building with a gable roof that is covered with wood shingles, a portion of the roof is covered with metal. The building has doors in the gable ends.

The granary (contributing) is located south of the house. It is a rectangular pen of wood-frame construction with a gable roof which is covered with wood shingles.

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SIGNIFICANCE      1900-present, settlement, vernacular architecture

DATES:      1918/19, 1923      BUILDER:      Axel Johnson

The Axel Johnson Ranch is significant because it is one of the best examples of Norwegian vernacular architecture in north-western South Dakota. Axel Johnson immigrated from Norway with his family and homesteaded the site. The ranch remained in the family until recently when it was sold to its present owners.

The site is important to Harding County for several reasons. The house very unusual in that it is constructed of several homestead shacks which were moved to the site. Most homesteaders built a new house of new materials after they proved up. However, the ranch is about fifty miles from the nearest rail terminus which made transporting building materials a costly and time consuming task. In addition, the barn is one of the few traditional Norwegian barns to have survived in Harding County to the present time. The barn which is built into the hillside reflects the Scandinavian heritage of its original owner. The second story of the barn was built to hold the hay to keep it elevated and aerated. It is one of few known examples of a hand pegged barn in the area and the only example of a gable-on-hip barn located during the survey.

Noteworthy for its diversity of vernacular architectural styles, the Axel Johnson Ranch also exhibits a full complement of outbuildings which are traditionally associated with early twentieth century northern Great Plains ranches. The number of Scandinavians who emigrated to western South Dakota is large and the number of Norwegian emigrants was substantially larger than many other ethnic groups. Significantly, few Norwegian sites remain relatively intact in the region thus enhancing the importance of the Axel Johnson Ranch. The site is well maintained and in a very good state of preservation.

4/28/87

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Quadrangle Name: Flat Top Butte, SD.

UTM: 13/ 653760/ 5036020.

Quadrangle Scale: 1: 24,000.

Acreage: About 3 acres.

### Verbal Boundary Description:

The northern boundary of this property is formed by an imaginary line lying 10 meters from the northernmost wall of the barn and running parallel to that wall. The western boundary of the property is formed by an imaginary line lying 10 meters from the westernmost wall of the house and running parallel to that wall. The southern boundary of the property is the north bank of Rabbit Creek. The eastern boundary of the property is an imaginary line lying 10 meters from the easternmost wall of the barn and running parallel to that wall. The property is located in the Northwest Quarter of the Southwest Quarter of Section 4, Township 8 North, Range 9 East, in Harding County.

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