

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
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SITE HN-14

NAME The Vessey School

LOCATION Harding County Road 859, two-and-one-half miles south of the North Dakota state line, Harding County (063), South Dakota (046)

OWNER Harding County School District
Box 367
Buffalo, SD 57720

CLASSIFICATION Building, public, NA acquisition, unoccupied, restricted access, vacant

DESCRIPTION Very good, unaltered, original site

The Vessey School, a one-story, wood-frame rectangular pen, is located on Harding County Road 859 approximately three miles south of the town of Haley in North Dakota. The school is noteworthy because it exhibits greater scale and attention to detail than other structures of this type generally found in the region.

The hipped roof which is covered in wood shingles, with the main ridgeline oriented east-west, presents the illusion of a cube. The school is entered through a door centered in the front (south) elevation which is flanked by long narrow windows on either side. The entry has a hipped roof covered with wooden shingles, as is the roof of the projecting cloak room which is centered on the front elevation. The front elevation is symmetrical with pairs of double-hung four-over-four light windows on either side, and two two-over-two light double hung windows on either side of the projecting entry.

Both the east and west elevations are symmetrically pierced by five double-hung four-over-four light windows. There are no openings in the north elevation. The school has a full basement and a poured concrete foundation.

The interior of the school is one large classroom with built-in blackboards along the north wall. The room can be divided by a large floor to ceiling folding wooden screen. Built-in book-

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cases are located in the south elevation in the corners where the cloakroom adjoins the main structure. The full basement is divided into storage areas and the lavatories are located there.

Southeast of the school is another contributing structure, a house which was moved to the site to serve as housing for the teachers. The structure is a wood-frame rectangular pen with a gable roof covered with wood shingles. The south elevation has a door and two double-hung two-over-two light windows. The east and west elevations have windows in the first floor, and a double-hung window in the apex of the gable. Entry to the full basement is through a door on the east side of the structure which has a poured concrete foundation. A red brick chimney rises from the center of the ridgeline as do three lightening rods.

A playground is located south of the school on the east side of the driveway.

SIGNIFICANCE 1900-Present, Education, Architecture

DATE: ca. 1920

BUILDER: Not available

The Vessey School is significant in both the areas of architecture and education because of its unusual style and excellent state of preservation, and as the only school to serve the educational needs of the Vessey community. In addition, the school is architecturally, the most imposing structure in the area with its simple classic detailing it reaches a level of style not found in most rural schools.

The Vessey School, built around 1920, is an excellent example of the rural cube shaped school buildings that were popular in South Dakota from 1915 through 1930. The school appears as it did when it was constructed, with its frame siding, wood shingles, frame window surrounds, and interior window and door surrounds are all intact. Although the school has been vacant for several years it is still used as a polling place during elections by the residents of the Vessey community.

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QUADRANGLE NAME Bowman-Haley Dam, SD/ND UTM 13/645280/5085320

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24,000 ACREAGE Less than one

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The site boundaries are formed by a set of imaginary lines. The north line lies ten feet from the exterior north wall of the school and intersects the east line which lies ten feet from the exterior east wall of the teachers residence. The east line intersects the south line which lies forty-five feet from the south (front) wall of the school, to include the playground. The south line intersects the west line which lies ten feet from the west exterior wall of the school. The site is located in the SW quarter of the SW quarter of Section 34, Township 23 North, Range 8 East in Harding County, South Dakota.

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