

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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This form is for use in nominating or requesting determination for individual properties and districts. See instruction in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." **Architectural classification, materials and areas of significance.** Enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Star School District 61
other names/site number Keiser Property

2. Location

street & number 47446 305th Street [] not for publication
city or town Alcester [] vicinity
state South Dakota code SD county Union code 127 zip code 57001

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this 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 meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Jay D. Vogt State Historic Preservation Officer 12-18-2007
Signature of certifying official Title Date
South Dakota State Historic Preservation Office
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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.
- removed from the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
- other, explain
 See continuation sheet.

Edson R. Beal Signature of the Keeper 2-19-08 Date of Action

Star School District 61
Name of Property

Union County, South Dakota
County/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
(Do not count previously listed resources.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing.
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Schools in South Dakota MPL

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register.

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Function
(Enter categories from instructions)

Education- School

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Vacant

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Other

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Brick

roof Asphalt Shingles

other

Narrative Description

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

Star School District 61
Name of Property

Union County, South Dakota
County/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.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or 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.)

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture
Education

Periods of Significance
1930-1957

Significant Dates
1930

Significant Person(s)
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above).
N/A

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Architect/Builder
Unknown

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography
(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:

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National Park Service**

Star School District 61
Union County, South Dakota

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DESCRIPTION

The Star School Building is located in a rural area at 47446 305th Street in Union County. The country school is geographically between Beresford and Alcester South Dakota. The school is located on the southeast corner of a section of land. Tree groves are located on the west, north and east sides of the school building some sixty feet away. A playground exists on the south side of the school just north of the country road that runs by the school. Fields of corn and alfalfa along with cattle grazing occurs today near the school much the same as it did in the early days of the school.

The rural Star School is rather unique in that it is constructed of brick. Only a very small percentage of country schools in South Dakota have been made using brick. The vast majority of these schools were constructed of wood. The vernacular, rectangular building with a hipped roof, multi-paned windows, decorative brickwork and a large chimney centered on the north end of the roof was constructed in 1930. Striated brick is interspersed along each of the elevations.

On the façade, or the west elevation, exists a one story entryway that extends out some twelve feet and encompasses almost half of the façade near the center of the building. The entryway, like the main portion of the building, is comprised of brick. A saltbox roof with exposed rafters and wooden brackets covers the entrance and extends some six feet out from the entry door on the south side of the entrance providing a form of permanent canopy over the entrance. A brick column on the southwest corner of the entrance supports the roof over the open area in front of the entrance. From left to right on the façade, first floor, is a one-over-one double hung window, a four over one double hung window on the north side of the main entrance, a four-over-four double hung window on the west side of the entrance, the main entry door on the south side of the extended entry and a three-over-three double hung window on the façade south of the entry. The second floor has four four-over-four double hung windows, two on each side of the main entrance. The windows have brick sills and soldier brick lintels. A darker soldier brick belt course is also present along the façade above the lower windows and on the entryway above the windows and below the roofline (fascia board) on the south end.

The south elevation of the school features three spaced three-over-one double hung windows on the bottom floor with the soldier brick belt course above the windows. A marquis of sorts is centrally located on the second floor adorned with corbelled brick on the bottom and sides of the marquis and soldier brick forming a mild arch on top. The wood infill on the marquis has embossed wooden letters spelling out Star School District No. 61 with stars on the bottom corners.

The east elevation bottom floor from left to right has a pair of three-over-three smaller double hung windows, a set of three identical windows in the center and another pair of identical windows near the north end. A soldier brick belt course is located directly above these windows. On the top floor from left to right are three sets of three six-over-six double hung windows. Two of the windows on this elevation have temporary wood in fills to protect the interior from the elements.

The north elevation has no openings. However, attached right below the belt course and extending north some ten feet is a concrete coal bin with a flat roof four feet above the ground and beneath the ground at the same level as the bottom floor of the school.

The interior of the school retains the original floor plan with the main classroom, a cloak room and bathrooms located on the main floor. The bottom level contains a small stage and seating area, a small kitchen, a utility and furnace room and the entrance to the exterior, underground coal bin.

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Star School District 61
Union County, South Dakota

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Original plaster covers the wall and ceilings and maple wood floors and woodwork still exist.

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Union County, South DakotaSection number 8 Page 3

Significance**Introduction**

The Star School Building is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for the role that it played in the education of children as well as the role it assumed in the social and cultural development of the community. The school is also eligible under Criterion C as a good example of rural school house construction with its rectangular shape, large windows, big chimney and hipped roof.

Historical Background

The largest groups of American Indians present in South Dakota directly before white settlement were the Nakota, Dakota, and Lakota, known collectively as the Sioux. Anthropologists believe that the Sioux were pushed out of Minnesota onto the plains where they became the dominant group by the mid to late 1700's, although tribal creation stories tell of the Sioux inhabiting the area since time immemorial. The Dakota and Nakota lived primarily east of the Missouri River while the Lakota roamed the western half of the state. The Sioux were eventually forced onto reservations through a series of questionable treaties that opened up land for white settlement.

Union County was first created and organized as Cole County in honor of a territorial legislator, Austin Cole in 1862. January 7, 1864, the legislature rearranged the boundaries of Cole and Lincoln counties and the name Cole was changed to Union. This name was probably chosen because of the strong sentiment existing at the time of the Civil War.¹

Alcester, South Dakota is located in Union County in the very southeastern part of the state. The early settlers concentrated in the area around Elk Point and Sioux Point at the junction of the Big Sioux and Missouri Rivers. Gradually settlers moved northward and it was in the late 1860's and early 1870's that the homesteaders came into the vicinity of what became Alcester.²

¹Doane Robinson, *History of South Dakota*, Volume I, 1904, South Dakota State historical Society Archives.

² Alcester Centennial Committee, *Centennial, Alcester, South Dakota, 1979 p. 8*

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The public school buildings of the Plains represent an important cultural resource to historians and preservationists. As a frontier institution, the rural school represented the only semblance of a community center in the late nineteenth century across rural South Dakota.³ As a significant public building within the rural community, the school was used for church services, elections, and local governmental meetings. It existed as a symbol of communal identity, and as an object of material sacrifice in its formation.⁴

The placement of the school is particularly important in that it was part of South Dakota's placement of schools on certain uniform sections of the land throughout the state. The acreage in which the school lies was part of the original school sectioning, thus providing a historical trace of early land division for the use of educational activity in the State of South Dakota.⁵

As an enduring institution, the community supported school symbolized the faith placed in cooperative government to educate our children. The evolving public school would, in its increasing complexity and versatility, come to reflect innovations in curricula that characterized the early twentieth century progressive notions about society and sociability. The public school was assigned the task of educating pupils to be leaders and workers, as evidenced by a cast concrete plaque placed at the entrance to the Hurley Public School which Reads, "Enter to Learn, Leave to Serve."⁶

Importantly, the schools were also viewed as the ideal forum for acculturating the arriving immigrants and, in the process, encouraging within them identification with American society. Accordingly, the evolution of the school building from its earliest incarnations, in improvised quarters, to the monumental structures which celebrated the triumph of public education as a community value, reflected the increasingly important role of education within American society.

As a consequence of politics and prejudice, the allocation of resources for construction and maintenance of schools across the state would also reflect deep social divisions within society. Through the early decades, the Dakota Territory was populated by a variety of groups: farmers and miners seeking fortune on the Plains, European immigrants, religious pilgrims such as the Hutterites, and of course the American Indians that constituted the indigenous population. Thus, the Dakota Territory was comprised of disparate social elements accommodating themselves to the Northern Plains topography while establishing societies important for their cultural identity. The political and economic struggle over state assistance to education, school funding at the local district level, and administrative policy reforms throughout the last

³ Mark Elliot and Melissa Durr, *Schools in South Dakota: An Educational Development*, South Dakota State Historic Preservation Office, Pierre, South Dakota, 1998

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Kimberly Keiser, *Personal Correspondence*, October, 2007

⁶ Mark Elliot and Melissa Durr, *Schools in South Dakota: An Educational Development*, South Dakota State Historic Preservation Office, Pierre, South Dakota, 1998

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century exposed these divergent interests within society. The universal right to education prescribed by nineteenth century reformers was claimed by both rural and urban communities, the white and the American Indian, and the secular and the sectarian alike. Between the competing needs of these communities developed the history of education in South Dakota.⁷

The realization of the changes that have taken place in the rural South Dakota landscape is largely only present today through the memory of the aging populations that once occupied the plains. The physical evidence of the times past is growing ever scarcer as the values and economic realities of our time are different from those of the past. Many old country schools have been demolished while those that do exist are left to a fate of abandonment until they deteriorate beyond repair and fall into the earth. Buildings are perhaps one of the most outstanding features gracing the landscape built by human hand and they also provide a glimpse into how life was organized during a particular period because they house the actions of the people who used them. The Star School is an extension of the people of South Dakota that an important function throughout the time of its use. It represents a particular time in history and stands as a symbol of the culture in rural South Dakota life.⁸

Between 1920-45, 900 primary and secondary schools were constructed in South Dakota. Seventy-Five percent of them were small rural schools that cost less than \$8,000. Forty percent were designed by architects and many others were built using standard plans.⁹

The Star School served as an educational facility in all or parts of four decades commencing in the 1930's. Although the building has been vacant for many years, it still houses the memories of many local residents who will always cherish what the old schoolhouse meant during their early childhood development.

The Star School is a good example of what rural school houses looked like during the early twentieth century in South Dakota. Other than being constructed of brick, the school layout was similar to other rural schools with a hipped roof, big chimney, large windows and one large classroom. Vernacular in style, the building was constructed with functionality in mind rather than architectural finesse.

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Kimberly Keiser, *Personal Correspondence*, October, 2007

⁹ Mark Elliot and Melissa Durr, *Schools in South Dakota: An Educational Development*, South Dakota State historic Preservation Office, Pierre, South Dakota, 1998

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Property (or Building) History and Significance

The land that the Star School is located on was first obtained for the Emmett township in Union County on October 12, 1888. The land was purchased from Lewis T. Swezey. The Star School was built in 1930 and replaced the original school that had been constructed in the late 1800's. Through school consolidation efforts, the Star School District became a part of the Beresford School District in the 1970's then the property and school was sold to Richard Akins in August of 1970. Kimberly Keiser, the present owner purchased the property in 2007.

Like the majority of other rural school houses in the state, the Star school also served the network of people that occupied the area and used the school as a hub for not only the educational development of their children, but also for community gatherings and meetings. The Star School's provision of education in one classroom accurately depicts how children were taught in the rural parts of South Dakota, at least for the first eight years of schooling.

The Star School retains a great deal of historic integrity. It stands at the very location it was constructed, its basic design has been un-altered and the important architectural features still exist. All of the historic materials and workmanship, except for the wood shingles, remain a part of the building. The schoolhouse looks and feels like a rural schoolhouse with it's setting amongst fields of corn and alfalfa.

Conclusion

The Star School is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A as a prime example of what the rural school house meant to the community of people not only educationally, but socially, culturally and governmentally.

The Star School is also eligible under Criterion C as a good example of a one classroom rural schoolhouse that dotted the prairies of South Dakota in the early 1900's.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

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GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

The boundary of the Star School is an imaginary line encompassing only the school itself. The line starts at a point 20 feet northwest of the northwest corner of the school and runs east to a point 20 feet northeast of the northeast corner of the school. The line then runs south to a point 10 feet southeast of the southeast corner of the school then runs west to a point 20 feet southwest of the southwest corner of the school. The line then runs north to the original starting point.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary includes only the school and the attached coal bin. There are no other buildings on the property.

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Union County, South DakotaSection number 10 Page 9**PHOTOGRAPH LOG**

The following information pertains to photograph numbers 1-3__ except as noted:

Name of Property: Star School**County and State:** Union County, South Dakota**Photographer:** Mike Vogel**Date of Photographs:** July 25, 2007**Location of Originals:** South Dakota State Historic Preservation Office, Pierre, SD

Negatives:

Photo No.	Photographic Information
1	Southwest Star School (StarSchool_UnionCounty_SD1tiff)
2	Northwest Star School (StarSchool_UnionCounty_SD2tiff)
3	Northeast Star School (StarSchool_UnionCounty_SD3tiff)