



SG-1400

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Port and Helen McWhorter House

Other names/site number: Helen McWhorter Hall; McWhorter House Museum

Name of related multiple property listing:

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

2. Location

Street & number: 426 N Broadway

City or town: Miller State: South Dakota County: Hand County

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A X B X C ___ D

<u>Jay D. Vogt</u> Signature of certifying official/Title: <u>SD SHPO</u>	<u>05-24-2017</u> Date
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.	
Signature of commenting official:	Date
Title :	State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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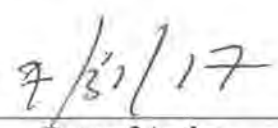
4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:)



Signature of the Keeper



Date of Action

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

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

HEALTH CARE/clinic

EDUCATION/education-related

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RECREATION AND CULTURE/museum

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Late Victorian: Queen Anne (free classic)

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property:

foundation: stone

walls: wood

roof: asphalt

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The McWhorter House is a two-story wood-frame Queen Anne (free classic) house that stands on the southeast corner of the intersection of N. Broadway (the town's main street) and 5th Street. It has a cross-gabled roof with a half-hipped front porch, a half-hipped single-story rear component, and a small rear porch. Its footprint is roughly rectangular, modified by the hipped components, which project slightly. It is built over a stone basement that has been parged with concrete. Three-tab asphalt composition shingles cover roof surfaces, and roof features include a brick chimney (in the ridge of the front gable component), deep eaves, and shingled eave returns. Exterior walls are clad in narrow clapboard siding, and feature vertical corner boards, horizontal wood trim between the first and second floor, and trim at the cornice and basement levels. Gables feature square-cut wood shingles, a rake board, and flared bases. Windows in the house are wood frame, paired with wood frame storms, and unless otherwise noted are two-over-two double-hung sash. Basement windows are three-light fixed sash. The asymmetrical façade faces west to N. Broadway, and has a partial front porch on the south end. The porch roof is supported by smooth round (Tuscan-style) wood columns, and the porch railing features simple square

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balusters. The convex railing stanchions have decorative turned globe caps, and original decorative skirting encloses the base of the porch.

The house has not been significantly modified since its original construction. It retains integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. In 1988, the original garage was removed and an historic railroad depot was placed to the rear of the house, somewhat compromising its integrity of setting, but the property nonetheless continues to convey its historic and architectural associations. The interior retains much of its original detailing. Its original wood floors are present throughout, as is its unpainted wood trim. Original interior doors remain. The original pressed-tin ceiling in the kitchen is intact. The original fireplace, with heavy wood mantel and an iron coal-burning insert with terracotta tile hearth and surround (all apparently original), is extant. Original fluted wood ionic columns remain standing between the living room and adjoining fireplace area. The original built-in pantry cupboard, replete with ice box and drinking water basin and spout, is *in situ*. The foyer features an original built-in wood bench, beneath the ox-eye window, and the house's only original light fixture, of leaded glass.

Narrative Description

Exterior—Façade (West Wall)

The front entrance is located under the porch on the south wall. It is filled with a replacement glazed-and-paneled wood door paired with a wood screen door. There are two windows beneath the front porch, one cottage window with a large beveled pane beneath a leaded glass pane, the other an ox-eye window with a patterned pane and keystone trim. North of the porch, the main wall of the façade contains a centered cottage window with a larger pane beneath a leaded glass pane. Second floor façade fenestration includes a small square one-light fixed window above the porch and two typical one-over-one wood windows on the gabled portion. Above, within the gable end, is a fixed arched window with two square panes capped by a fanlight. The window trim features a pilaster and keystone motif.

Exterior—South Wall

The side-gable component of the south wall contains typical centered basement, first, and second floor windows. The window in the south gable is square, wood frame with multiple lights (a central square light lined by a row of smaller square lights on each side). The south wall of the one-story rear component contains two typical windows, one in the basement and one on the main floor. The south wall of the rear gabled component contains two doors. One is the rear entry to the house, which opens into the kitchen and is located beneath the rear porch roof. On the second floor, there is a small fire escape door that was added during the building's school district years. It opens onto the rear porch roof.

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Exterior—East Wall

The east wall of the building contains three windows on both the first and second stories. On each story, two of these are in the front-gable component and one is in the side-gable component. Beneath the porch roof, the east wall contains a door (original) that accesses the extant built-in icebox in the pantry. There is also a basement access that extends off the east wall. It has sloping poured-concrete sides and a pair of side-hinged steel doors.

Exterior—North Wall

The north wall has two basement windows. The main floor of the north wall contains three evenly-spaced windows. Above them, on the second floor, is a bumped-out window bay, supported by milled wood brackets, that contains two windows. There is a wood-frame window in the gable: it is the same size and shape as that on the south gable but is only a single-pane louvered vent (that replaced the original multi-light window).

Interior—Plan

The main floor of the McWhorter house is functionally divided by a central hallway/stairwell that runs east-west. South of the hallway are the kitchen, pantry and dining areas, while the living room and study/office areas lie generally north. The front door opens into a small foyer, with a built-in bench beneath the ox-eye window. The foyer opens east into the dining room and north into the living room. The living room extends to the north wall and its north half is separated from an adjoining room, featuring an original coal-burning fireplace with heavy wood mantle, by two fluted wood Ionic columns. Two small offices are located to the rear of this space, and a small bathroom is located at the back of the hallway. The kitchen and pantry occupy the southeast corner of the first floor, and adjoin the dining room. On the upper level, three bedrooms and a small bathroom are arranged around the central stairwell/hallway.

Interior—Detail

The interior of the McWhorter house retains much of its original detailing. Its original wood floors are present throughout, as is its unpainted wood trim. Original interior doors remain, including five-panel hinged and pocket doors and wide surrounds with egg-and-dart trim. The original pressed-tin ceiling in the kitchen is intact. The original fireplace, with heavy wood mantel and an iron coal-burning insert with terracotta tile hearth and surround (all apparently original), is extant. Original fluted wood ionic columns remain standing between the living room and adjoining fireplace area. The original built-in pantry cupboard, replete with ice box and drinking water basin and spout, is *in situ*. The foyer features an original built-in wood bench, beneath the ox-eye window, and the house's only original light fixture, of leaded glass.

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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.)

- 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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Health/Medicine

Education

Architecture

Period of Significance

1906-1966

Significant Dates

1906

1938

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Dr. Port McWhorter

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

N/A

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The McWhorter House was built in 1906 for prominent Miller residents Dr. Port and Helen (Waters) McWhorter. The McWhorter House is locally significant and is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under three Criteria.

It is eligible for the National Register under Criterion B, for its association with Dr. Port McWhorter who was a significant figure in Miller's medical/health history. Dr. McWhorter was a locally prominent physician who began practicing medicine in Miller in 1904 and was instrumental in establishing the community's first hospital. The McWhorter home is associated with Dr. Port McWhorter's productive period in the Miller medical field. Oral history and physical evidence document McWhorter's use of the home as a medical office. Though he also practiced medicine in other facilities in town, the home is the last remaining structure closely and long associated with McWhorter in Miller. Dr. and Mrs. McWhorter lived in the home from 1907 to 1926.

The McWhorter House is also eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with local education history. The McWhorters donated their house and lots to the Miller Independent School District in 1938, as Helen McWhorter Hall, under the express condition that the premises be used as a dormitory or for other purposes for the pupils attending the high school (located across the street to the north). The house subsequently served as a girls' dorm, followed by teacher housing and a hot lunch room until the early 1970s.

Finally, the McWhorter House is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C for architecture. It exhibits the distinctive characteristics of the Queen Anne style and is a well preserved prominent example of the cross gable shape subtype combined with free classic decorative detailing.

The home retains historic integrity to convey its significance. The period of significance is 1906-1966 representing the years during the historic period in which it was associated with Miller's medical, educational and architectural history, beginning with the date of its construction.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Criterion B

The McWhorter House was built in 1906 for prominent Miller residents Dr. Port McWhorter and his wife Helen (née Waters). The McWhorter House is locally significant and is eligible for the

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National Register of Historic Places under Criterion B, for its association with Dr. McWhorter who was a significant figure in Miller's medical/health history. Dr. McWhorter was a locally prominent physician who began practicing medicine in Miller in 1904 and was instrumental in establishing the community's first hospital.

Early Health/Medical History in Miller

Miller was first settled in 1879, prior to statehood, with the first railroad, C&NW, arriving in 1882. Doctors were scarce as settlers first arrived in Miller and in surrounding Hand County. Neighbors assisted each other as best they could in the event of illness or death. The earliest people to care for the sick were not professionally trained physicians. In these burgeoning Dakota communities, sometimes professionals were expected to be jacks of many trades. Dr. Port McWhorter recalled that one of the early individuals who provided medical attention to people in Miller was not a doctor, but a "druggist hotel keeper," who "did what he could for the sick."¹ It was also reported that each community also usually had an "outstanding practical nurse" who was "always willing to come at any time."² Soon, trained physicians arrived in Dakota Territory. Some doctors lived in rural areas and traveled the countryside, or had patients brought to their home. In town, doctors often set up offices in shared commercial space: above a hotel, in a drugstore, splitting the upper level of a new brick mercantile with the local fraternal organizations, etc. Some also saw patients out of their home. A complete medical history of Miller has never been compiled. But information on early physicians and the evolution of the local medical field can be pieced together through local histories.

The "druggist hotel keeper" recalled by McWhorter was a Mr. Rowland.³ The Rowland and the McWhorter families "came in the same immigrant train in February 1881."⁴ The head of the Rowland family was a druggist by 1882, and apparently he served a dual role not only as a physician, but also a dentist.⁵ Rowland lost his own son, Freddie, to diphtheria while residing in Miller. Freddie's brother, William Rowland, recalled the entire family being quarantined inside their home, unable to bury their loved one, obtain food, or get outside to feed their stock.⁶

There were several other druggists operating in Miller, Dakota Territory in the early 1880s, some of whom also served as physician. The Palace Drug Store opened in Miller in June 1882 with J.D. Fitzgerald as proprietor. J.C. Williams constructed the 20x40 foot building for \$1200.⁷ Fitzgerald started out as a clerk for another drug store owner in Miller. When that drug store

¹ Cotton, 51.

² Sessions, 18.

³ Cotton, 51. (Rowland's first name was not recorded).

⁴ Ibid., 9.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid., 11.

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owner passed away, and no family laid claim to his property, locals worked out a deal to turn the drugstore business over to Fitzgerald as proprietor.⁸

Another druggist working in Miller prior to statehood was J.P. Cutting. In a directory of “Leading Firms of Miller” published by Dakota Territory photographer J.N. Templeman, J.P. Cutting is listed as proprietor of “drugs and wall paper” having been in business for five years, from 1882 to 1887.⁹

Though not a formally educated physician, Dr. Levis Pyle long-served Miller residents as a pharmacist and “homeopathic doctor.”¹⁰ Levis and Mary Dean Pyle came to Hand County in 1882. By 1883, Pyle constructed a two-story building for \$1,700 from which he operated the New Departure Drug Store. His store offered a wide selection of additional goods at affordable prices. As advertised in 1883, Dr. Pyle’s “first class” drugstore carried “a fine stock of groceries, stationery, dry goods, etc. which he sells dirt cheap.”¹¹ In the aforementioned c.1887 directory of leading firms in Miller, Dr. Pyle is listed as the proprietor of the Artesian Drug Store, as well as “manufacturer and proprietor of Pyle’s specifics: Dealer in paints, oils, varnishes, etc.”¹² Though his additional services as a physician were likely appreciated in an isolated town on the prairie, his granddaughter Gladys Pyle later reported that “even the family was somewhat suspect of his [medical] expertise.”¹³ Levis and Mary Dean Pyle were “substantial community builders” in Miller. Mary died in 1889 after battling consumption. Dr. Pyle passed away in Miller in 1896.¹⁴

In addition to Dr. Pyle, a special addition of the *Hand County Press* in 1883 also listed among “those who administer to our sick – which are imported,” Dr. O.B. Thompson and Dr. S.E. Morse.¹⁵ Little is known about Dr. Thompson. Dr. S.E. Morse assisted the community in multiple ways. In 1883, Dr. Morse also “conducted the city schools” above the Loew & Groman store downtown.¹⁶ Serving simultaneously as physician and teacher, Morse reportedly, “gave the children first hand lessons in medicine as he attended his patients,” including an occurrence where he “pulled a tooth for a woman while the students looked on.”¹⁷

A Dr. Wood was working in Miller in the late 1880s. In an account given of the blizzard of 1888, it is mentioned that Michael Holtz of Alden Township tried to seek help for his seriously ill wife from Dr. R.W. Smith of Riverside Township, and when Smith refused to get out in the storm,

⁸ Ibid., 11, 52.

⁹ Ibid. 138.

¹⁰ Ibid. 51; Heidepriem, 500.

¹¹ Cotton, 11, 20.

¹² Ibid. 137.

¹³ Heidepriem, 500.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Cotton, 22.

¹⁶ Ibid., 32.

¹⁷ Ibid.

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Holtz tried to venture to Miller for Dr. Wood. Holtz did not survive the journey. He had not known that “a neighbor woman with some medical training was at his wife’s bedside, having arrived just as he left. She had heard of her neighbor’s illness and braved the conditions to the Holtz house.”¹⁸

Among those pictured in a 1901 compilation of Miller’s “business and professional men,” were individuals related to health and medicine in Miller including: “L.D. Sweetland, physician”; “S.R. Wallis, physician & surgeon”; J.D. Fitzgerald druggist”; “O.H. Collins, druggist”; and “E.H. Wilson, dentist”.¹⁹

Dr. Lorenzo D. Sweetland (the above-mentioned “L. D.” Sweetland) practiced for many years in Miller. Sweetland was born in Ohio on August 12, 1844. He enlisted in the army when he was 17 years old and served in the Civil War. He returned from the war with an honorable discharge after the loss of his leg.²⁰ He reportedly began “reading medicine” in 1866.²¹ This seems to indicate an informal medical education, at least initially. He came to Hand County with his family in 1883, along with a colony from Ohio. Sweetland also served as editor of the *Miller Gazette* “later turning it over to William Healey.”²² Sometime prior to his death in Redfield, August 22, 1931, he had received his medical license. It is unclear whether this was before he arrived in Dakota Territory or later. A local account states, “Although he was a licensed physician” poor health caused him to give up the medical profession.²³ Of his life, the Hand County history reported: “A soldier, teacher, editor, farmer, doctor, and politician, made him one of the outstanding pioneers of Hand County.”²⁴

Dr. Wallis was reported to have a special make of car that assisted him in making his rounds out on country “trails.”²⁵ Dr. Wallis was still practicing in 1904 when two masked men with guns burglarized the Collins drugstore in Miller. The clerk, Wilbur Quirk, who slept in the back of the store, was drugged with laudanum and ether and bound by intruders. “Collins found [Quirk] the next morning more dead than alive and Dr. Wallis revived him.”²⁶ Drugstore proprietor Ote Collins moved west with his family from Storm Lake, IA in 1883. Collins (“O.H. Collins,

¹⁸ Heidepriem, 55.

¹⁹ Cotton 24, Heidepriem 654-655.

²⁰ Heidepriem, 577.

²¹ Cotton, 30.

²² Heidepriem, 578.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Cotton, 58.

²⁶ Cotton 130.

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druggist”) appears in the 1901 Miller business photo.²⁷ At some point, he also partnered with Albert Shaw under the business name “Collins and Shaw.”²⁸

Other early Miller doctors recalled by local community members include Dr. Hill, Dr. Howell, Dr. Lane, Dr. Janye, and Dr. Hewling.²⁹

Formally Educated Physicians and Arrival of Dr. Port McWhorter

Dr. Port McWhorter entered the Miller medical scene fresh out of school in 1904, under the tutelage of the first generation of formally trained (M.D.) physicians in the community. McWhorter began his practice with Dr. W.H. Lane and reported that Lane was the first educated physician in Miller.³⁰ Dr. W. H. Lane, came to Miller in the 1880s. He served as “physician, surgeon, and early-day general practitioner all over Hand County.”³¹ He was known as “an exceptional man” who “drove trails in any weather.”³² He was “strictly professional, rough, [and] outspoken, but beloved by hundreds of Hand County families.”³³ Doctor and Mrs. Lane were both “in the forefront of cultural and educational efforts” in Miller.³⁴ In the c.1887 directory to Leading Firms of Miller published by photographer J.N. Templeman, Dr. W.H. Lane’s (M.D.) office was listed as being located “first door west of Hand County Bank.”³⁵

Port McWhorter first came to the Miller area with his family in 1882, when he was four years old. He started school at Drake University in the fall of 1900 and graduated from the University of Illinois, Chicago, with his medical degree in 1904.³⁶ Shortly after graduation McWhorter ordered supplies from Chicago to outfit his new medical office to be located in Miller.³⁷ McWhorter joined the medical practice of Dr. W.H. Lane. A 1905 town directory listed the office of Drs. Lane and McWhorter on the second floor of Miller’s Masonic building.³⁸ In 1907, Dr. McWhorter’s office moved from the Masonic building to “quarters over O.H. Collins Drug Store,” and the following year McWhorter deepened his investment in Miller’s medical sector

²⁷ Ibid. 24.

²⁸ Ibid., 50.

²⁹ Ibid. 51, 54.

³⁰ Cotton, 51.

³¹ Heidepriem, 646.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Cotton, 138.; The first Hand County Bank was a wood frame building on southwest corner of Broadway and Second, built in 1884. This was replaced in 1904 with a new brick bank building constructed by the local Masonic organization. The upper level housed Dr. Wilson, a dentist, for many years. (*Visions of Our Past: Pictorial History of Hand County*, 1; Cotton 19).

³⁶ “Retrospect: From the Files of the Miller Press,” *Miller Press*, n.d.

³⁷ *The Plexus*, volume 10, Issue 6 (1904), p. 178.

³⁸ “McWhorter Family Timeline”; “Notecards with notes from Miller Press,” n.d., Hand County Historical Society.

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and bought the drug store.³⁹ According to the Hand County Historical Society, local oral history holds that Dr. McWhorter also attended to patients in a room on the first floor of the McWhorter House. They also assert this is supported by physical evidence of the use of lesser value wood in one room (exam room) on the first floor of the house. It is unclear if the in-home practice was run simultaneous to the ones in the commercial section of town, or if they were staggered.

In the first several years after graduating, McWhorter built the foundation of what would become one of Miller's most enduring medical practices. For twenty-two years, Dr. McWhorter served the town. Community members would later dedicate a local history book to him, remembering him as "our family Doctor for many years . . . who loved 'kids' and who gave unstintingly that they might be helped to health."⁴⁰ One local history author fondly recalled "'Doc' when 'we kids' . . . used to gather in his office over Collins' Drug Store and he'd show us the appendices and tonsils preserved in alcohol. He took us swimming at the Plunge and as a ten year old I sat on his wide shoulders while he swam across the pool. The gimmick that plagued us most was 'When can I take *your* tonsils out?'"⁴¹

Dr. McWhorter served as Hand County Coroner from 1905-1906.⁴² He was a member of the Huron District (4) Medical Society, for which he served as Vice-President in 1907.⁴³

In 1911, the local paper reported that Dr. McWhorter was in New York City for post-graduate study. He was back the following year, when his purchase of "a new Ford runabout car . . . for use in his practice" made the news.⁴⁴ By 1914, McWhorter's conveyance, so critical to the dispersed community he served, again made the paper, which reported him "driving a new Overland Auto purchased from Chas. Williams of St. Lawrence."⁴⁵

Changes in McWhorter's medical practice in this period weren't limited to his oft-noted automobiles. In June of 1917, with the establishment of the Hand County Draft Board, McWhorter began screening local young men for military service during WWI as the official examining physician. The Draft Board "worked continuously until the Armistice was signed" in November of that year, and "Dr. McWhorter resigned to accept a commission with the military as a captain in Texas," where he served in the Army Medical Corps at San Antonio's Kelly

³⁹ "Notecards with notes from Miller Press."

⁴⁰ Cotton, dedication page.

⁴¹ Dedication to Cotton, *They Pioneered -- for Us*.

⁴² South Dakota Legislative Manual. 1905, Ninth Session of Legislature. Compiled by L.M. Simons, Secretary of State, and H.C. Dunham, Chief Clerk of the House of Representatives. State Publishing Company, Typographical Union Label, Pierre SD, p. 284.

⁴³ *The Journal of the MN State Medical Assoc. and the Northwestern Lancet*. (semimonthly). Editor, W.A. Jones. Vol. XXVII. Minneapolis, W.L. Klein, 1907.

⁴⁴ "McWhorter Family Timeline." "Notecards with notes from Miller Press."

⁴⁵ "Notecards with notes from Miller Press."

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Field.⁴⁶ He served at Kelley Field and Base Hospital 1 for nine months in 1918, and then returned that year to Miller.⁴⁷ Not one to rest on his laurels, McWhorter soon returned to New York for more post graduate study. While he was away, Dr. Wheelock covered his practice.⁴⁸

Early Hospitals in Miller

Significant to Miller, and Hand County, Dr. Port McWhorter, “Put into action the first steps toward a hospital to serve the people and the county.”⁴⁹ In 1920, McWhorter and his medical practice partner Dr. Wheelock started Hand County’s first hospital. This was a six-room hospital located on the second floor of the Commercial Club building.⁵⁰ In July of 1921, McWhorter and Wheelock moved their hospital over the post office.⁵¹ It was reportedly “the best care provided in the county.”⁵² An old army ambulance was used to transport people to the hospital. In the early 1920s, locals were “familiar with the sight of [the ambulance] rushing up the street and stopping in front of the then post office.”⁵³

In 1925 the hospital was moved to “the upper floors of the Opera House” (Bohning building) with “Dr. Port McWhorter as head.”⁵⁴ This was a two or two-and-one-half story wood frame false front commercial building on Miller’s main street (Broadway and Third).⁵⁵ Banker and owner of the local skating rink, J. Linn Roll, began construction on the building in the fall of 1886. It was a “large building, 20 feet high” with a plan of 50 X 70 feet. The stage at the east end measured 25 X 40 feet. The seating capacity on the main level was 300 people, while the balcony seated 200. The interior woodwork was cherry and walnut.⁵⁶ While in use as an opera house, here they held balls, political rallies, and special programs.⁵⁷ After Mr. Roll, the next owner was William Waters, Port McWhorter’s father-in-law, and Glen Waters (son of William). Waters later sold it to Al and Ed Bohning.⁵⁸ While the opera house was on the second level of the Bohning building, the first floor storefronts were reserved for commercial purposes. The lower part housed a grocery store for many years. Store owners in the lower part included “Clint and Charles Crabtree [...] later the Bohnings, Tom Haugen, and the Melhoff’s [Melhoff’s Super

⁴⁶ Heidepriem, *Bring on the Pioneers!*, 167, 430.

⁴⁷ *The Alumni Record of the University of Illinois, Chicago -departments: colleges of medicine and dentistry/school of pharmacy*, 1921, page 114. See class of 1904.

⁴⁸ “McWhorter Family Timeline”; Heidepriem, *Bring on the Pioneers!*, 430.

⁴⁹ Heidepriem, 430.

⁵⁰ “McWhorter Family Timeline”; Heidepriem, 430.

⁵¹ Notecards with notes from *Miller Press*.

⁵² Cotton 132.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Cotton, 143, 132.

⁵⁵ *Pictorial History of Hand County*, 1; Cotton, 141.

⁵⁶ *Pictorial History* 1; Cotton 141-142.

⁵⁷ Cotton, 142.

⁵⁸ Cotton, 143.

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Market].”⁵⁹ By the early 1920s there were concerns that the wood frame opera house was not fireproof. A new city auditorium was built and dedicated December 13, 1923. This replaced the opera house space for most functions, which opened its availability to McWhorter for a hospital with more space for beds and equipment. McWhorter ended his association there when he and Helen left Miller in 1926. The hospital remained in the opera house until 1948, when the space was converted to apartments.⁶⁰ In the 1950s, the Bohning Building was sold to Garth Zeigler and it was torn down c.1954.⁶¹

McWhorter left for California in 1926, having already wintered in Los Angeles with his wife and mother in 1923. McWhorter went into practice with a Dr. Fleming in L.A. before ultimately starting a private Ear, Nose, and Throat Practice in Beverly Hills. McWhorter’s departure brought to an end his long and well-remembered tenure of caring for the health of Miller residents during the town’s heyday (1904-1926).⁶²

The post-WWII economic and demographic trends impacted Miller in visible ways, not least in the realm of medicine. The town welcomed a modern new medical facility, its first free-standing hospital, when the Hand County Memorial Hospital was dedicated February 13, 1948.⁶³

Criterion A

The McWhorter House is also eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with local education history. The McWhorters donated their house and lots to the Miller Independent School District in 1938 as Helen McWhorter Hall under the express condition that the premises be used as a dormitory or for other purposes for the pupils attending the high school (located across the street to the north). The house subsequently served as a girls’ dorm, followed by teacher housing and a hot lunch room until the early 1970s.

Brief Miller Educational History

School organization took place before county organization and the first schools were private schools with parents paying \$2.00 per student for tuition. The first school opened in Hand County on December 4, 1881. The five-teacher staff, including C.N. Van Hosen, A.M. Chubbick, Miss Standard, C.G. Hartley and Mr. DeMorse, educated both the “common” and

⁵⁹ Cotton 143.

⁶⁰ Cotton, 143.

⁶¹ *Pictorial History*, 1; Cotton, 141.

⁶² “McWhorter Family Timeline”; Heidepriem, 430.

⁶³ Cotton, 143.

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“higher branches.”⁶⁴ The first public school in the county opened June 25, 1882 with 20 pupils. It was reportedly the “first public school between Huron and Pierre.”⁶⁵

When school began in Miller, it was first held in various commercial buildings including “the second story of the Loew and Gromann [commercial] building” and in the Metropolitan Hall.⁶⁶ It was also held for a couple of years in “the former J.W. Johnson building in the middle of block 1.”⁶⁷ The January 3 1883 issue of the Hand County press advertised that “Dr. S.E. Morse is conducting the city schools at present over Loew and Groman’s double store. There is an attendance at present of 60 pupils. Arrangements have been made for erecting a commodious school building, early in the spring, the Town Company having already set aside lots for that purpose.”⁶⁸ The January 3, 1883 *Hand County Press* issue touted, “The new town and colony of Miller is likely to prove one of the marvels of S.D. Two blocks have been reserved for public purpose. One for county buildings and the other for a public schoolhouse and they are on a gentle rise in the center of the town plot.”⁶⁹

Excitement abounded in Miller when “the new school building”, the first grade school, was completed in 1885.⁷⁰ It was a two-story building with four rooms, two classes to each of the four rooms. Though it was primarily for grade school students, it also included “7th and 8th grades and several high school students.”⁷¹ Interestingly, the 1909 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map for Miller shows a narrow rectangular building just west of the public school labeled “high school.” By 1890, the school served a substantial town population of 536 people.⁷²

The first teachers’ meeting in Miller was held Saturday, January 24, 1885 with G.L. Pinkham serving as the first president of the Hand County teachers’ association.⁷³

“The township district school system was organized in Hand County on June 8, 1883.”⁷⁴ Townships formed at different times and their educational development varied.⁷⁵ By the 1886-87 school year, the County Superintendent reported all but one of the forty township districts (Harrison) were holding classes. This amounted to 108 one-room schools and three multi-room

⁶⁴ Heidepriem, 67.

⁶⁵ Ibid., Sessions 34.

⁶⁶ Cotton, 55; Heidepriem, 67.

⁶⁷ Cotton 55.

⁶⁸ Cotton, 51.

⁶⁹ Cotton 5.

⁷⁰ Cotton 55.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Sessions, 34.

⁷³ Sessions, 34.

⁷⁴ Heidepriem, 69.

⁷⁵ Ibid. 69-70.

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schools, and 1,968 students educated by 148 teachers.⁷⁶ The County Superintendent of Schools in 1887-88 reported subjects of “reading, arithmetic, spelling, geography, grammar, history, hygiene, civil government, algebra, physical geography, philosophy, and bookkeeping” being offered in the common schools.⁷⁷

When South Dakota became a state in 1889, “the school board of the common school districts” had the power to “levy a tax upon property within the township” to benefit local schools.⁷⁸ As Elmer Dietrich noted in his study of education in Hand County, South Dakota’s public schools were primarily maintained by local taxation from statehood through WWI. There was no provision for a state or county school property tax. “The only support given by the state to the public elementary and secondary schools was the apportionment of the income from the permanent school fund. The only county aid to the school was a per capita adult tax of one dollar and the proceeds for all fines for violation of state law. However, much of this aid was not realized because of open violation of the constitutional provisions by county authorities.”⁷⁹

The graduation exercises for those who had completed the first full high school course in Miller was held in the Opera House on June 3, 1904. School director F.E. Saltmarsh presented diplomas to four local young women: Bessie and Floy Woodruff, Alice Carroll, and Anna Bushfield. At that time G.H. Grace served as school principal.⁸⁰

As Miller grew, the first school building couldn’t accommodate all of the school children. It is reported that many children attended school in churches, community halls, etc. But a second school building was finished in 1910.⁸¹ May Rudd and Maude McVey were among the early teachers associated with the school.⁸²

During the Second Dakota Boom, education in the area was transformed. With the regional influx, schools proliferated, until Hand County had 142 schools in 1912.⁸³ In 1906, about forty students attended high school in Miller, of which two-thirds were girls. Girls attending school to be a teacher would be able to draw a salary of \$45 to \$50 a month. Since the boys who farmed were not going to teach school, many people did not consider it necessary for them to attend school beyond the 8th grade.

⁷⁶ Ibid. 69.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Heidepriem quoting Dietrich, p.70.

⁸⁰ Cotton 130.

⁸¹ Cotton 55.

⁸² Cotton, preface.

⁸³ Heidepriem, *Bring on the Pioneers!*, 189.

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As they had since settlement, the state of South Dakota's schools served as an indicator of larger demographic trends. In the 1950s, the "generally favorable economic conditions" were accompanied by the "rapidly rising cost of governmental operations."⁸⁴ In 1951, noting that "the problem of providing adequate school facilities has been a matter of vital concern since early territorial days," lawmakers sought to address the "closely related" "problem[s] of school finance [and] the need for reorganizing school districts in the interest of greater efficiency and economy." They enacted legislation that "provided for a survey of school conditions and the formulation of plans for reorganization." The Legislature passed a general reorganization measure in 1966.⁸⁵

The demographic decline of much of the twentieth century devastated Hand County schools: "perhaps the advent of modern transportation was nowhere greater felt than in education, where, after reaching 142 separate schools in 1912, the number had dwindled greatly just [fifty] years later." By 1962, "St. Lawrence ceased operation as an independent and reverted to a common school district, discontinuing its high school. Ree Heights followed the next year. By 1969, both Ree Heights and St. Lawrence joined the newly reorganized Miller Independent School District."⁸⁶ Miller schools adapted accordingly.

Helen McWhorter Hall

Although they moved to Los Angeles in 1926, Dr. Port and Helen McWhorter owned the Queen Anne house they built on the corner of 5th and Broadway for another six years. On August 19, 1938, they donated the west 127 Feet of Lots 19-21, Block 24, in W. H. Miller's Addition to the town of Miller to the Miller Independent School District. The deed document specified that the "grant and conveyance [was] made expressly upon the following conditions . . . That the premises be used as a dormitory or other purposes for pupils attending the high school maintained by the grantee in the city of Miller. . . that the grantee within six months . . . cause needed repairs to be made upon the residence . . . that the building on said premises shall be called the "Helen McWhorter Hall," and that a permanent plate be attached and kept upon the front door of said dormitory designating the name as the "Helen McWhorter Hall."⁸⁷ Relatives of the McWhorters likely made a similar donation at some point, for Helen's nearby childhood home—the Waters house—was used as a dormitory at the same time.⁸⁸ Both buildings became boarding house[s] for rural students because there were no buses in that day. The McWhorter

⁸⁴ Crisler, "There Was (a Little) Gold," 312.

⁸⁵ Crisler, "There Was (a Little) Gold," 309-310.

⁸⁶ Heidepriem, *Bring on the Pioneers!*, 189; Hand County deed records indicate that the school district reorganized its assets, including the McWhorter house, at this time. See Deed record No. 102 between Miller Independent School District No. 1 and Miller Independent School District No. 4, dated 10/10/1969.

⁸⁷ Hand County deed records.

⁸⁸ Heidepriem, caption under Waters home states that it was later used as a school dormitory.

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house served as the girls' dormitory and the Waters house as the boys'. The students ate together in the McWhorter house, where the "girls ate on the ground level and the boys ate in the stone basement."⁸⁹

In 1949, when Helen McWhorter died, the McWhorter house was still being used "as the Girl's Dormitory."⁹⁰ But transportation improvements and bus service soon thereafter made boarding in town unnecessary for the district's dispersed students and the district discontinued the girls' dormitory. The "upstairs level of the McWhorter house was remodeled into a teacherage for the school, while the ground floor level was transformed into the school's lunchroom."⁹¹ This transition was completed by the time Dr. McWhorter died in 1957, and coverage of his death noted that his house was "being used for the hot lunch program."⁹² The school district altered the McWhorter house to fit its new uses: "the main interior stairway was enclosed" and a fire escape was added for the upstairs apartment. On the first floor there was "a large opening cut in wall between kitchen and dining room for school food service . . . An exterior door was installed at back of house to allow students to exit from hot lunch."⁹³

Shortly after the end of the historic period, in 1972, Miller's school district completed a new lunchroom.⁹⁴ The McWhorter House fell into disuse, and in the mid-1980s the school district leased it to the Hand County Historical Museum. The "local historical society raised more than \$65,000 to renovate the home to its original condition in the late 1980s," with the local paper continuing to report on the fortunes of the prominent home that had stood on Miller's main street since 1906. The Miller community helped guide as well as fund the restoration process. Historical society members reported that "a lot of people grew up when it was still a home and they told us how it looked."⁹⁵ Miller's school district continued to own the building, and viewed its new role as consistent with the McWhorter commitment to children and education. Speaking in 1994, the school superintendent said that the Museum was "an educational thing for the students. The kids get to participate and see some of the various eras that we've gone through and that are now exhibited at the museum. All our kids know where the McWhorter Museum is."⁹⁶ The Historical Society has managed the McWhorter House Museum since, and continues its ongoing efforts to preserve the building.⁹⁷

⁸⁹ Crystal Pugsley, "A Museum for Everyone," *Plainsman* (Huron, SD), December 11, 1994.

⁹⁰ "Retrospect: From the Files of the Miller Press."

⁹¹ Pugsley, "A Museum for Everyone."

⁹² "Retrospect: From the Files of the Miller Press."

⁹³ NRHP Preliminary Property Assessment Form for McWhorter House, SD SHPO files.

⁹⁴ Pugsley, "A Museum for Everyone."

⁹⁵ Pugsley, "A Museum for Everyone." In 1988 the town's newspaper featured a photo of the house with scaffolding in front. See "McWhorter House," *Miller Press*, September 7, 1988.

⁹⁶ Pugsley, "A Museum for Everyone."

⁹⁷ Connie Schroeder to Jennifer R. Brosz, email "McWhorter House," August 7, 2012.

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Criterion C

The McWhorter House is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C for architecture. It exhibits the distinctive characteristics of the Queen Anne style and is a well preserved prominent example of the cross gable shape subtype combined with free classic decorative detailing.

Queen Anne Architecture in South Dakota

Stylistically, the McWhorter's free classic Queen Anne home reflected period architectural trends. Varieties of the Queen Anne style were popular in South Dakota from the 1880s until about 1910. Most Queen Anne houses in the state were built of wood rather than brick or stone. The picturesque style was popularized in the U.S. through architectural pattern books. The growing railroad network in South Dakota gave local builders access to precut lumber and architectural details. The style avoided smooth wall surfaces and characteristics of the style included "a layering of surface patterns and materials, asymmetrical massing, patterned masonry chimneys, irregular shaped roofs, turrets, gable ornamentation, decorative shingles, bay windows, and porch spindle work."⁹⁸ Modest interpretations of the style limited decorative detailing to the porches and gables.

The McWhorter home was completed near the end of the Queen Anne style's popular period, when peoples' preferences were shifting away from the asymmetrical, picturesque or romantic Victorian styles to the more formal, symmetrical, classical architecture of Colonial Revival. "By the turn of the century, the emergent Period Revival era had influenced designers who were building Queen Anne houses with classical ornamentation, including tripartite Palladian windows and classical-order columns."⁹⁹

The McWhorter House is a prominent local example of a cross gable, free classic, Queen Anne home and it retains an unusually high degree of historic integrity. The home retains narrow wood siding and wood windows, including cottage windows. The irregular plan of the Queen Anne style is evident in the cross gable form with the half hipped porch in the el. Wall surfaces are visually differentiated by the square wood shingles in the gable ends, shingled eave returns, horizontal wood trim between the first and second floor, trim at the cornice and basement level. Free Classic detailing is shown, primarily, with the use of Tuscan porch columns, but also in the use of keystones around the prominent ox-eye window by the front entry and atop the arched window in the front-facing gable end. The intact interior of this Queen Anne home makes it an

⁹⁸ Erpestad and Wood, 49.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 51.

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exceptional local example of the style. It retains original wood floors, wood trim, and wood doors. There is an original tin ceiling in the kitchen as well as built-in pantry cabinet. The home features an original built-in wood bench in the entry foyer beneath the ox-eye window. There are prominent fluted ionic wood columns separating the living room from the room that features an original fireplace.

In sum, the McWhorter House is eligible under Criterion B for its association with Port McWhorter, the prominent local physician who started the first hospital in Miller and saw patients out of his home office and downtown office between 1904 and 1926. The McWhorter House is eligible under Criterion A for its association with Miller's educational history. After it was donated to the local school district in 1938 the house served as the high school girls' dorm, enabling rural students to attend high school in the town of Miller. It later housed teachers and provided a facility for the students to receive a hot lunch. The McWhorter House is eligible under Criterion C for architecture as an excellent, well preserved example of a cross gable, free classic Queen Anne house in Miller, SD.

ADDITIONAL HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Port and Helen McWhorter House

In 1882, A.L. McWhorter arrived in the area with his family, including his four-year-old son Port (who later built the house that is the subject of this nomination). One Sunday, A.L. McWhorter opened the first church service when he "asked the builders to lay down their saws and hammers while he introduced Rev. Pomeroy, a Presbyterian minister from Huron. Rev. Pomeroy conducted Christian services in the partly constructed Miller school building."¹⁰⁰ A.L. McWhorter himself contributed to and exemplified the bustle of the young railroad town. After homesteading on the northeast end of Miller, he platted an eponymous addition to the town and formed a business partnership, McWhorter & Smith, which dealt in real estate, loans, and insurance. An energetic town-builder, Mr. McWhorter would go on to prominence in Miller's politics, serving as secretary of the county Union Labor Party organization in 1888.¹⁰¹ During the post-boom recession, in an effort to diversify the family income, the McWhorters moved to the countryside in 1894, where A.L. McWhorter began raising trotting horses. From his farm, McWhorter continued to be active in county affairs, representing Hand County in the State House of Representatives from 1897 to 1899.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Sessions, *Early History of Hand County*, 29.

¹⁰¹ "McWhorter Family Timeline," n.d., Hand County Historical Society; Sessions, *Early History of Hand County*, 13.

¹⁰² Sessions, *Early History of Hand County*, 38; "McWhorter Family Timeline."

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In the fall of 1900, young Port McWhorter headed to Des Moines to attend school at Drake University.¹⁰³ Four years later, in Chicago, he graduated with his medical degree from the University of Illinois. After graduating, Port returned to his hometown and joined the local medical practice, as previously discussed, in 1904.

Like earlier Miller doctors, McWhorter played a critical role in the Miller community, and the town newspaper regularly reported on his affairs. It made the news when, in 1906, not long after his triumphant return from medical school, McWhorter married Helen A. Waters, daughter of another of Miller's prominent men, banker William H. Waters who came to Miller in 1883. Mr. Waters owned the town's opera house and the Citizens State Bank, and he hosted his only daughter's wedding at the family home on the northwest corner of W. 5th St. and W. 1st Ave. Soon "workers [were] pushing fast on Dr. McWhorter's house" located just one block east of the Waters home, at the intersection of W. 5th St. and Broadway, on a southeast corner lot McWhorter acquired in late December 1906.¹⁰⁴ According to J.R. Crowell, who was employed to finish the interior of the McWhorter House in early 1907, the home was commissioned by William Waters and gifted to his newly married daughter, Helen and her husband Port.¹⁰⁵

Dr. and Mrs. Port McWhorter moved into the "fine two-story house" in January of 1907.¹⁰⁶ Their new home reflected their own good fortune as well as the broader regional "turn-of-the-century prosperity [which] could be seen in residential building."¹⁰⁷ Situated just north of the business district on a corner lot on the town's main street, the McWhorters' Queen Anne became one of the town's prominent residences. This was true not only because of the prominence of its occupants, but also because the first floor of the house reportedly served as Dr. McWhorter's clinic.

There was a period after the McWhorters left town, and they still owned the house, that the house was used for residential rental purposes. The September 22, 1927, edition of the *Miller Press* contained an ad for an auction of the McWhorter household goods and a list of furniture to be sold. Around the same time, the Frank Scofield family began renting the home, living there until 1932.¹⁰⁸ That year, Mr. and Mrs. L.M. Henry moved into the home. During this period, the McWhorters occasionally returned to town. The newspaper noted a visit in 1929, when they tended to "business, real estate matters etc." They were in Miller again in 1932, when they stayed for a time in the house they had built on the town's main street. That year, on November

¹⁰³ "Retrospect: From the Files of the Miller Press," *Miller Press*, n.d.

¹⁰⁴ Heidepriem, *Bring on the Pioneers!*, 169. "Notecards with notes from Miller Press.;" "McWhorter Family Timeline."

¹⁰⁵ Cotton, 57.

¹⁰⁶ "McWhorter Family Timeline."

¹⁰⁷ Brookings County History Book Committee, *Brookings County History Book* (Freeman: Pine Hills press, 1989), 182.

¹⁰⁸ Kendrick L. Scofield to Hand County Library, "McWhorter House," April 21, 2007.

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3, Port's mother Mrs. A.L. McWhorter died "at the home of her son, Dr. Port McWhorter in Beverly Hills."¹⁰⁹

The donation of the McWhorter home to the local school district in 1938 reflected the commitment to children and education that had long been a McWhorter hallmark. Years later, the Miller newspaper remembered Port and Helen as "especially interested in children," and "their generosity in the kids and education realm extended beyond the dormitory donation." They "sponsored the original playground for children located on the Miller school property, and a room in the children's ward of Hand County's Memorial Hospital was a gift in memory of her [Helen's] father, the late Wm. H. Waters."¹¹⁰

In the late 1940s, the long-prominent McWhorter family faded further from the Miller community. In 1948, Port and Helen sold all of the buildings on their farm south of town, and in January, 1949 Helen A. Waters McWhorter died in Los Angeles.¹¹¹ In a testament to his historical importance in the town, a local history book published around 1956 opened with a statement that "to Dr. Port McWhorter . . . our family Doctor for many years, this book is lovingly dedicated. . . . To 'Doc' who loved 'kids' and who gave unstintingly that they might be helped to health. To 'Doc' who with his wife gave the house where the Hot Lunch is located and playground equipment for the School. To 'Doc' whose dream of a county hospital came true."¹¹² In June of 1957, Dr. Port McWhorter died in Los Angeles, and his body was brought to Miller for burial.¹¹³

The Great Dakota Boom, 1878-1887

Coupled with ongoing railroad construction, military occupation of the northern Great Plains enabled wholesale settler colonization. The ten years between 1878 and 1887 witnessed unprecedented migration into the region, a phenomenon since known as the Great Dakota Boom. Pulled by the "liberal land policies of the federal government" and by "the moist condition of the prairie in the early 1880s," and pushed by "severe depression in the east," people poured into Dakota Territory.¹¹⁴ Before 1878, "agricultural settlement was still generally confined to the region south and east of a line running from the Yankton Reservation and the western part of

¹⁰⁹ "Notecards with notes from Miller Press." In 1913, Helen's father deeded her a farm in Holden Township. "Mrs. Helen McWhorter now owns the farm occupied by J.E. Fisher in Holden Twp. Deeded to her by her father, W.H. Waters." In 1914, Dr. McWhorter requested a barn moved from his place in town to his farm south of Miller.

¹¹⁰ "Retrospect: From the Files of the Miller Press."

¹¹¹ "Notecards with notes from Miller Press." "Retrospect: From the Files of the Miller Press."

¹¹² Dedication to Cotton, *They Pioneered -- for Us*.

¹¹³ Dedication to Cotton, *They Pioneered -- for Us*.

¹¹⁴ Scott Heidepriem, *Bring on the Pioneers! History of Hand County* (Miller, S.D.: Heidepriem, 1978), 13.

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Hutchinson County to the Minnesota border east of Brookings . . . [However,] by the middle of the 1880's settlers' shacks and little towns and villages had sprouted up throughout the entire region."¹¹⁵ In southeastern South Dakota, the 1870 non-Indian population of about 10,000 mushroomed to 81,781 by 1880, and to 248,569 five years later.¹¹⁶

The Great Dakota Boom reflected and reinforced the spread of railroads throughout the region. Railroads needed crops and customers for profit, and railway companies zealously promoted Dakota as their tracks pushed over the Plains. Track-building and town-building went hand-in-hand. By 1889, the new state of South Dakota boasted 2,500 miles of railroad.¹¹⁷

Railroads shaped not only the pace but the geography of non-Indian settlement in eastern Dakota. In some cases, the arrival of the railroad led to the wholesale re-orientation of settlements. Several pioneer communities ceased to exist when they were passed over by the railroad and their settlers rushed to the nearest newly established railway town. As the railroads influenced the layout of eastern South Dakota it was clear that it was now "the rails rather than the resources deciding where towns would go."¹¹⁸

The railways also sprouted brand new towns at regular intervals along their trunks. Track-laying between Huron and Pierre produced towns at each siding, "including Wolsey at Siding No. 1, Wessington a Siding No. 2, and St. Lawrence, Miller, Ree Heights, and Highmore at the next four sidings."¹¹⁹ These trackside settlements served not only townspeople but also the droves who determined to establish farms on the surrounding prairies. As tracks crisscrossed the country, "land seekers rapidly occupied the area within ten or twelve miles of the railway," resulting in a burgeoning rural population.¹²⁰ Hand County, for instance, counted only 154 non-Indian residents in 1880. By 1885, the county's population topped 7,000.¹²¹

This influx fed the town economic hubs that sprang up beside the tracks, and settlements soon offered almost every conceivable service and amenity. Main streets sprouted hotels and livery stables, general stores and drug stores, blacksmiths and harness-makers, implement dealers and lumber yards and gristmills. Newspapers went to press, doctors and dentists set up shop, and attorneys and real estate offices proliferated, keeping busy with abundant land deals in the booming towns and the countryside around. A thriving cultural life attended the abundant economic activity. Early residents sent their children to fledgling schools and affiliated with various churches and political groups. They rapidly augmented these institutions with

¹¹⁵ Herbert S. Schell, *History of South Dakota* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1975), 3d ed rev., 159.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 159, 161.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 160.

¹¹⁸ Frank Crisler, "Oakwood Town Founded in 1877 by Veterans of Civil War," *Arlington Sun*, July 9, 2015.

¹¹⁹ Schell, 163.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 166.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 165.

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agricultural societies, fraternal and social organizations, improvement societies, civic organizations, temperance unions, and reading circles.¹²² Town residences, some quite substantial, radiated out from main street commercial cores.

History of Miller and Hand County

Miller epitomized the railroad trackside town trajectory. First settled in 1879, a full-fledged town awaited the approaching Chicago and Northwestern railroad tracks in 1881. The town was platted on a forty-acre parcel that developer E.J. Miller obtained from, or with the assistance of, a Sioux metis man named Alex Dumeree (or Dumerce).¹²³ Workers erected “the Vanderbilt Hotel near the railroad tracks ... followed in rapid succession by Thom’s Grocery Store, George Hetzel’s two-story Hardware Store, and J.R. Munger’s Hotel, which was completed in only three-week’s time.”¹²⁴ In 1882, the tracks reached town and the Miller Depot was established, and the townsite itself expanded with the platting, surveying, and staking of Miller’s addition that May.¹²⁵ By August 1882, two newspapers—the *Hand County Press* and the *Dakota State Journal*—served the town.¹²⁶

But even while the boom began, economic and environmental challenges arose. As plowed fields multiplied, farmers confronted “a declining price level, induced in part by increased production, [that] not only narrowed the margin of profit for the Dakota wheat farmers, but also made it difficult for them to meet the heavy financial obligations assumed so lightly during the boom.”¹²⁷ The market conditions were accompanied by major storms and flooding, grasshopper infestations, prairie fires, and drought in the 1880s and 90s.

The Miller area suffered alongside the region’s other settlements. Beginning in 1883, “crops failed consistently for the next 7 years.”¹²⁸ Between 1890 and 1895, the Hand County population “dropped . . . from 6546 to 4657.”¹²⁹ Many people moved away in search of greener pastures. Others stayed in the area but shifted economic strategies.

But if these trials slowed growth in South Dakota, they did not stop it. A variety of strategies sustained many of the state’s residents through the turn of the century, when the Plains boomed again. State and national agencies stepped in to help people through hard times, and in some

¹²² Ibid., 184, 224.

¹²³ Anna Mary Van Brunt Sessions, “Early History of Hand County, South Dakota” (Master’s thesis [not submitted], for University of South Dakota, 1940), 11; Scott Heidepriem, *Bring on the Pioneers! History of Hand County* (Pierre, SD: The State Publishing Company, 1978), 11.

¹²⁴ Heidepriem, 11.

¹²⁵ “Assistance Needed in Renovation of Hand County Museum,” *Miller Press*, n.d.; Hand County plat records.

¹²⁶ Sessions, 35.

¹²⁷ Schell, 224.

¹²⁸ Heidepriem, 53.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 57.

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areas of the countryside, like the James River valley and Missouri Hills region, farmers began to diversify their products. The combination of drought and low prices encouraged “readjustments in the farm economy. Farmers placed less reliance on wheat as a cash crop. Stock-raising became important. The number of cattle in Hand, Hyde, Hughes and Sully counties increased from 34,500 to 110,000 between 1890 and 1900, while wheat acreage showed a decline.”¹³⁰

The dawn of the twentieth century brought renewed immigration to the Plains. Like the boom of the early 1880s, this second boom occurred under favorable conditions. Homesteading intensified in the east-river region and spread rapidly west of the Missouri River.¹³¹ The advent of the Great War, which we now know as World War One, created a global demand for farm products, and stimulated expanding agricultural acreage in South Dakota.¹³² The good weather of the era, combined with strong demand, translated into “excellent returns from the land.”¹³³ These developments, in turn, drove soaring land prices. Between 1900 and 1920, South Dakota “farm lands rose in value from \$9.90 . . . to \$64.43 per acre.”¹³⁴

This period of renewal brought visible changes to the Miller area. By 1898, the worst of the late nineteenth-century depression was behind Hand County, and its population began to rebound. By 1900, the population of the county stood at 4,525, and it “would increase steadily until the Great Depression.”¹³⁵ The next ten years brought a net gain of more than 3,000 people, bringing the Hand County population to 7,870. By 1920, that number reached 8,778, and by 1930 it totaled 9,485.¹³⁶ The population of the town of Miller climbed apace. The 544 townspeople in 1900 numbered 1,202 by 1910 and 1,478 by 1920.¹³⁷ Locals recall that “these citizens all found gainful employment and soon settled securely as the period up to World War I was marked by steady growth.”¹³⁸ In the Miller area, “the times were prosperous after the turn of the century, with prices on the rise.”¹³⁹ Modern improvements, like the installation of electric lights in 1904, attended this period of prosperity.¹⁴⁰

The flush times of the early twentieth century, which historians have dubbed the golden age of American agriculture, would not last. Even during the war, surging global demand was a double-edged sword that brought not only farm profits but “soaring living costs and highly inflated

¹³⁰ Schell, 345.

¹³¹ Ibid., 346, 349.

¹³² Ibid., 350.

¹³³ Ibid., 350–51.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 350-351.

¹³⁵ Heidepriem, 58.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 63. Sessions, Appendix A.

¹³⁷ Sessions, Appendix A.

¹³⁸ Heidepriem, 63.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Heidepriem, 156.

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prices.”¹⁴¹ Then, suddenly, the agricultural bubble burst, the world market contracted, and farm prices dropped sharply. The price of wheat, oats, corn, and hogs plummeted and property values fell apace. Between 1920 and 1930, the value of farm land decreased fifty-eight percent.¹⁴² As deflation decimated Dakota farm incomes, farmers who had borrowed freely during the flush years found themselves unable to make their tax and debt payments. A flood of foreclosures inundated the state. Farm foreclosures hit a high in 1924 and 1925. By 1932, almost one-fifth of total farm acreage had been affected by foreclosures. The collapse in the farm economy propelled a “bank closing tempest”: the first bank failed in 1921, followed by nine more in 1922, and 36 in 1923. By the following year, “175 state banks had closed their doors.”¹⁴³ Ten years later, “71 per cent of all state banks had failed, with an estimated loss of about \$39,000,000 to depositors.”¹⁴⁴ During the Great Depression, drought, other environmental concerns, the financial crisis, and increasing mechanization had drastic impacts on the agricultural industry in South Dakota. All of these developments pushed people from the Plains. In 1930, South Dakota’s population peaked at 692,849 inhabitants. Fifteen years later, the state census counted 589,920 people.

The difficulties of the 1920s and ‘30s affected the Miller area much as they did the rest of South Dakota. In 1925, the population of Hand County stood at 10,000. Five years later that number “had dropped by almost 500.”¹⁴⁵ Population in the town of Miller slowly began to decline at the same time. In 1920, Miller counted 1,478 residents. By 1930, some 1,447 remained.¹⁴⁶ Following the Depression, continuing population decreases reflected a declining number of farms in Hand County even as acres in production increased. In the fifteen years from 1930 to 1945, the number of farms in Hand County fell from 1,690 to 1,220 (roughly the same number as in 1890). Meanwhile, from 1925 to 1945, farmed acreage in production actually increased by over 140,000 acres.¹⁴⁷

As the dirty ‘30s drew to a close, South Dakota’s agricultural condition improved rapidly, a trend that continued during the forties and fifties. Production reached a record level for the state in 1948. Mechanization drove much of the growth in the agricultural sector, and it proved to be a double-edged sword in the state’s rural communities. Mechanization allowed a single owner to farm a larger acreage. This resulted in a trend towards larger and fewer farms across the countryside. This trend, combined with a lack of employment opportunity, led to rural population

¹⁴¹ Schell, 269.

¹⁴² Ibid., 283.

¹⁴³ Schell, *History of South Dakota*, 277; “Arlington: Town with Three Names,” *Sioux City Journal*, April 9, 1944, Vertical File: Arlington, SD, South Dakota Historical Society State Archives.

¹⁴⁴ Schell, 283–84.

¹⁴⁵ Heidepriem, 181.

¹⁴⁶ Sessions, *Early History of Hand County*, Appendix A.

¹⁴⁷ Heidepriem, 182.

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decline. With the loss of population from their trade areas, hamlets and small villages also declined. Of 377 hamlets in existence in 1911, only 148 remained forty years later. The population exodus from rural trade centers accelerated after World War II with transportation improvements being an influential factor. By the end of mid-century, "South Dakota was still essentially an agricultural state. Nine out of every ten acres of land were in farms. The federal census of 1970 listed 368,879 persons, or approximately 55 per cent of the total population of 665,507, as rural; of this number, 315,723 lived on farms or in small communities closely identified with the farming economy."¹⁴⁸ Thus, at the end of the historic period, South Dakota retained its basic agricultural character, but its rural areas struggled to sustain the trackside service communities that had arrived with the railroad.

9. Major Bibliographical References

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¹⁴⁸ Schell, 356.

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Sessions, Anna Mary Van Brunt. "Early History of Hand County, South Dakota." (Master's thesis [not submitted] for University of South Dakota, 1940.) Accessed at South Dakota State Archives, Cultural Heritage Center, Pierre, SD.

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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 # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State agency
 - Federal agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository: SDSHS Archives

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): HD00000162

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

1. Zone: 14 Easting: 500928.0000 Northing: 4929681.0000

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

That portion of the west 2/3 of Lots 20 and 21, Block 24, Original Plat of Town of Miller, that contains the resource and its front yard (see attached site map).

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Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary encompasses the entire resource, but excludes the rear yard historically associated with the resource because it contains a railroad depot that was moved to the site in recent decades.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Delia Hagen, Ph.D., WGM Group, Inc. and Jennifer Brosz, SDSHS

organization: SD SHPO of the SD State Historical Society

street & number: 900 Governors Drive

city or town: Pierre state: South Dakota zip code: 57501

e-mail: shpo@state.sd.us

telephone: (605) 773-2906

date: April 2017

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: McWhorter House

City or Vicinity: Miller

County: Hand County

State: South Dakota

Photographer: Delia Hagen

Date Photographed: August 2015

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SD_Hand County_McWhorter House_0001: View to South East.



SD_Hand County_McWhorter House_0002: View to South East.



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SD_Hand County_McWhorter House_0003: View to North East.



SD_Hand County_McWhorter House_0004: Front porch, view to North East.



SD_Hand County_McWhorter House_0005: View to North West.

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SD_Hand County_McWhorter House_0006: View to South West.



SD_Hand County_McWhorter House_0007: Rear porch, view to North West.

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SD_Hand County_McWhorter House_0008: Interior, LR, etc., view to South East.



SD_Hand County_McWhorter House_0009: Interior, LR, view to North from foyer.

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SD_Hand County_McWhorter House_00010: Interior, LR etc., view to East.



SD_Hand County_McWhorter House_00011: Interior, fireplace, view to South West.

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SD_Hand County_McWhorter House_00012: Interior, kitchen and back door, view to South East.



SD_Hand County_McWhorter House_00013: Interior, pantry built-in, view to East.

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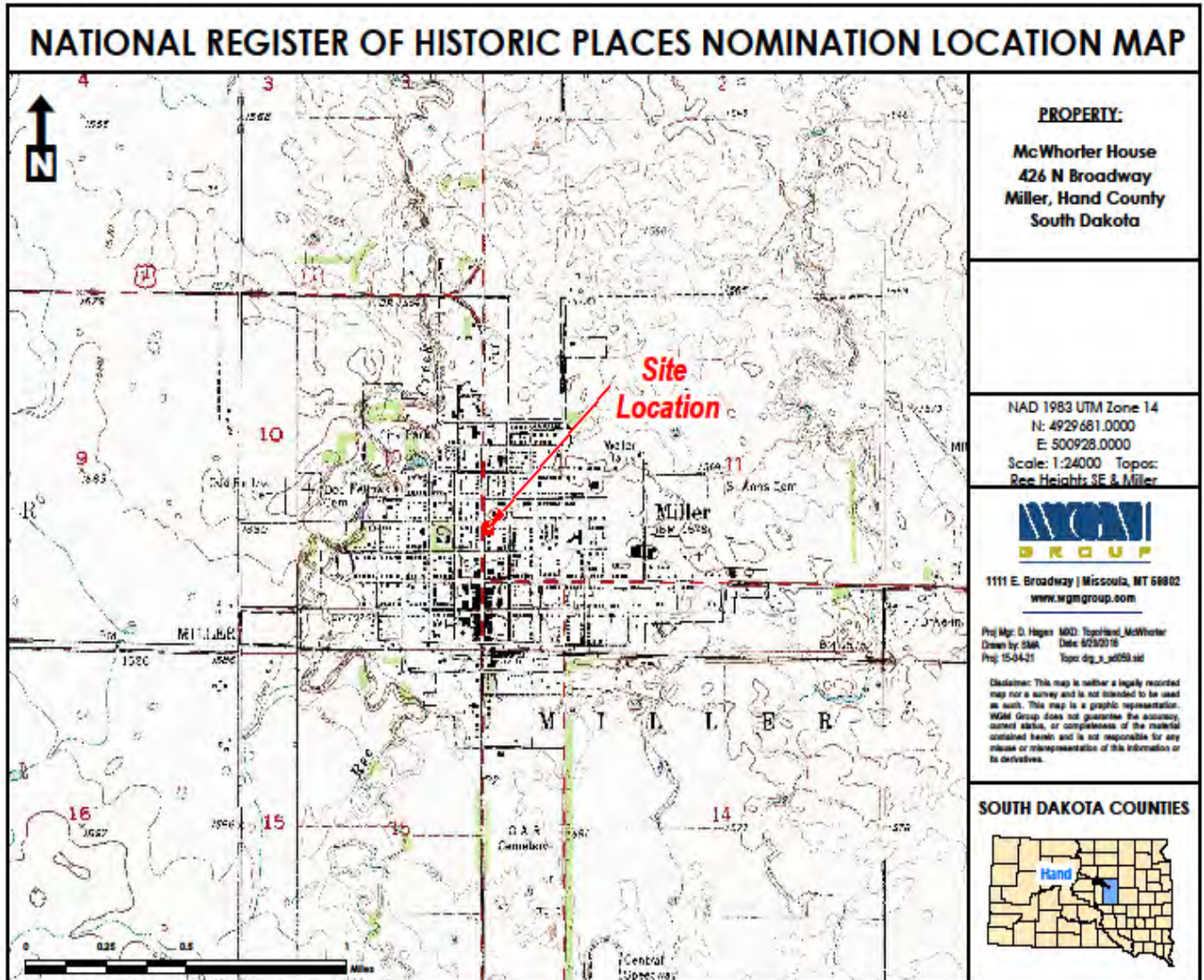


Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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County and State





WIND COUNTY
HISTORIC SOCIETY
MEMORIAL
#1234



HAND COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
W. W. WORTER
MUSEUM





















EXIT

Snack pack



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action:

Property Name:

Multiple Name:

State & County:

Date Received: 6/16/2017 Date of Pending List: 7/18/2017 Date of 16th Day: 8/2/2017 Date of 45th Day: 7/31/2017 Date of Weekly List: 8/3/2017

Reference number:

Nominator:

Reason For Review:

Accept Return Reject 7/31/2017 Date

Abstract/Summary Comments:

Recommendation/ Criteria

Reviewer Alexis Abernathy Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2236 Date _____

DOCUMENTATION: see attached comments : No see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.

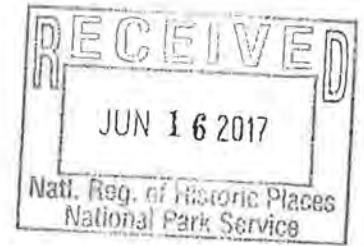



south dakota
STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



12 June 2017

Keeper of National Register
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
1849 C Street, NW, Mail Stop 7228
Washington DC 20240



Dear Keeper:

Please find enclosed seven National Register of Historic Places nominations including: *Stadum-Green House, First Presbyterian Church, Arthur and Ellen Colgan House, American Legion Community Hall, Mortimer Cabin, Port and Helen McWhorter House, and C.W. Parker Carousel No.825.*

Please email chrisb.nelson@state.sd.us with any questions.

Sincerely,

Chris B. Nelson
Historic Preservation Specialist