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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

DIVISION OF  
NATIONAL REGISTER PROGRAMS  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Bruha, Josef, and Anna Beran, house  
other names/site number VY00-018

2. Location

street & number n/a not for publication  
city, town Burwell vicinity  
state Nebraska code NE county Valley code 175 zip code 68862

3. Classification

Ownership of Property:  private,  public-local,  public-State,  public-Federal  
Category of Property:  building(s),  district,  site,  structure,  object  
Number of Resources within Property: Contributing 1, Noncontributing buildings, sites, structures, objects, Total 1  
Name of related multiple property listing: na  
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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.  See continuation sheet.  
Signature of certifying official: James A. Johnson, Director, Nebraska State Historical Society  
Date: 02/20/90  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.  
Signature of commenting or other official  
Date  
State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:  
 entered in the National Register. 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.  
 other, (explain):  
Signature of the Keeper: Melissa Byers  
Date of Action: 4/5/90

## 6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic: Single Dwelling

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic: Secondary Structure

## 7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Other: Dvoutrakt dům

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick

walls brick

stucco

roof wood: Shingle

other wood: Enclosed Porch

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Josef and Anna Beran Bruha house is a single story with loft structure of brick masonry. Built in at least three distinct episodes, the rectangular plan encompasses six rooms in two tiers, arranged in a typical Czech fashion known generally as the dvoutrakt dům, or double-pile house. The exterior walls are plastered. The house features a steeply-pitched hipped roof covered with wood shingles, and with a dormered door into the loft on the east. Entrance is through a wood-frame mud porch. The property includes one contributing building. Integrity is good to excellent.

Situated on the first terrace above the North Branch of Turtle Creek, a branch of the North Loup River in Nebraska's rugged Loess Hills region, the Bruha house is the surviving historic resource on a farmstead which is now used as a remote cattle-raising operation. The character of the present farmstead as a whole reflects the period of the 1950's-- though a couple of minor buildings still retain historic integrity, others have been removed or rebuilt, necessitating the inclusion of only the historic farmhouse in this nomination. The nominated property includes the house yard and the associated lilac bushes.

Built near the center of a large Czech and Polish settlement in Valley, Garfield, and Custer counties, the community was an outgrowth of an earlier settlement to the south in Howard and Sherman counties. Settlement began in 1877, growing slowly until a surge of immigration in the 1880's (Rosický, 220-223). The community was originally known as Netolice, but later became known as Geranium. By 1890 the Valley County settlement had surpassed the Howard County one in size (Shaver, II:1-4). The

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally  statewide  locally

Applicable National Register Criteria  A  B  C  D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)  A  B  C  D  E  F  G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture  
Ethnic Settlement  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance

1885-c.1905  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates

1885  
c.1890  
c.1905

Cultural Affiliation

na  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person

na

Architect/Builder

Bruha, Josef

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Josef and Anna Beran Bruha house is locally significant under National Register Criterion A as the only known extant property in the community which represents the pioneer period of Czech settlement in Valley County. It is significant statewide under Criterion C as one of only two known examples in Nebraska of the traditional Czech house type known as dvoutrakt dům. Significance under Criterion D relates to information about the interior layout of the dwelling during the first and second construction periods which can only be answered by archeology which would be destructive to the integrity of the house. The period of significance is defined to encompass the three construction episodes.

The context for evaluation of this property is Czech-American Settlement in Nebraska, particularly settlement in the Loup Basin counties of Valley, Garfield, and Custer. Ethnic Czechs from Bohemia and Moravia comprise one of the prominent immigrant groups in the state; more Czechs settled in Nebraska than in all of the other Great Plains states combined (Luebke, 418). By 1920, over 140,000 Czechs had immigrated to the Plains accounting for more than 22 percent of the Czech-speaking population of the United States. Of these 40.3 percent lived in Nebraska (Garver, 151-52). Josef Bruha was one of these, having emigrated to Valley County in 1884 with his wife Anna Beran, and six children from Kamyk, Klatovy, Plzen in Bohemia (Bruha passport; Sobotka, 120). He came immediately to Valley County where members of the Beran family had already located and was part of the first boom period of settlement there. By 1885 he had built the first section of his house and had tilled 55 acres of farmland (State census).

See continuation sheet



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

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community continued to expand over a long period of time, eventually encompassing most of western Valley County. Extant Czech-American landmarks include the St. Wenceslaus Catholic Church, the National Hall (Řád Slavin Z.Č.B.J.), and the Bohemian Brethren Cemetery, while those no longer extant include the Jungmann Hall and the Komensky School.

The Bruha house was built during the first boom period of immigration in the 1880's. Rectangular and measuring 7.5 x 12 meters (29 1/2 x 39 feet), the structure is of brick masonry composed of three wythes of "jumbo" or Norman bricks measuring 15 x 30.5 x 6 cm each (6 x 12 x 2 1/4 inches), laid on a spread footing of four courses of brick. Hand-made and fired on site by Bruha, the bricks were laid in "butter-brick" fashion with diminutive joints. The entire wall received a coat of white-washed plaster. The hipped roof, which is steeply-pitched, is composed of a common rafter system bolted to anchor beams, with occasional collar beams.

In plan the current house is an example of the general Czech house type known as the dvoutrakt dům, consisting of a double-pile of rooms (Vařeka). The front is the south end, while entrance is gained through a wood-frame mud porch along the east side. Access from the porch leads to the large kitchen, which shares the east section of the house with a smaller sitting room. Ranked along the west side are the diminutive sleeping rooms, three in total, as well as a pantry and two small closets. The central chimney, with flue openings from the kitchen, sitting room, and one bedroom, rises from the conjunction of the kitchen-sitting room wall with the north-south wall which defines the west rank of rooms.

The house is typical of the dvoutrakt dům in the Czech lands, with the exception that a narrow central storage hall (síň) is not present. The plan, then, which dates from the first decade of the twentieth century, represents an American modernization of the more traditional plan.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 3

Three distinct construction episodes are evident, though particular descriptive details for each cannot be precisely determined without selective destruction of fabric. The first episode appears to be the front or south portion of the house which measured approximately 7.4 x 6 meters (24 x 19 1/2 feet). From available evidence, the house was originally a two-room dwelling consisting of a hall on the east and a smaller storeroom on the west (a dvojdílný dům). Existing fenestration in the south half of the house appears to be original. Entrance was gained to the hall through an east door which is still extant, but which use was supplemented by an additional east door after the second construction episode.

The first episode dates to 1885. The roof was apparently hipped on the south as now appears, but was gabled on the north in anticipation of the addition. Evidence exists in the roof for a temporary loft door in the north gable wall, which was sheathed with horizontal shiplap siding. An original collar beam (hambálek) and evidence of the original summer beam, located above the current north-south interior wall, still exist.

Masonry detailing distinguishes the first episode. Foremost is the existence of a decorative brick cornice supporting the false plate. Composed of three courses of brick, the lower course simply projects from the wall, while the top two courses angle outward, all providing a very slight overhang. Fenestration is also distinct, revealing decorative jambs "carved" from the fired brick, providing a reveal to the brickwork.

The second episode appears to have closely followed the original, being completed by about 1890. It consisted of a masonry addition to the north which doubled the size of the house. The anchor beam and common rafter hipped roof system was extended to the north, though here the summer was located above the anchor beams (similar to the summer at the Hladky house in rural Butler County, BU00-64). If the location of this summer beam is an accurate reflection of the plan, the house was a four room dwelling similar to the German Kreuzhaus. In this regard, the house would share characteristics with the Franz Zavadil house in rural Cedar County (NRHP CD00-9). Additional clues to

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 4

the plan of this episode are likely extant in the interior plaster of the exterior walls, which was applied directly to the brick. Other possibilities, suggested by the fenestration and on-site measurements include: a plan similar to that which is extant, one similar but with the addition of the traditional storage hall or gín, and another common central hall plan with combined vestibule and kitchen durchgänigenhaus.

The third construction episode, which is known to have been accomplished by the first decade of the twentieth century, amounted to a total rebuilding of the interior which nonetheless maintained traditional form. The rebuilding was accomplished by furring the exterior walls with 2x4 studs, set sideways, to accept modern lath and plaster. The ceiling was also raised (along with the loft floor), replacing the anchor and summer beams with standard wood joists. The windows, which had been set with wide exterior jambs and sills were inset further, and the spaces remaining were patched with brick and plaster to match the original. The two smaller north windows were probably added at this time. The plan arrangement installed is the current one described above.

Integrity remains very high, showing little contemporary intrusion in the fabric. The masonry walls and roof are in excellent condition, as is the interior, while windows are in good condition. The exterior plaster coat (including some later recoating) is approximately 50% extant. The most serious integrity problem is minor; that being the release of brick in one window head probably due to a lack of sufficient mass to sustain the segmental arch. Some window heads had been repaired earlier. Due to the method of roof construction, no structural damage has resulted from the window problem.

The property is being maintained by descendants of the original builder. The house is now used as a seasonal dwelling and summer kitchen associated with the ranching operation, and for domestic storage.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 2

The significance of the Bruha house under Criterion A derives principally from its being the only extant Czech-American dwelling in the rural ethnic community which dates from the pioneer era of Czech settlement. The first two construction episodes were completed in the 1880's, a decade when the first settlers arrived in large numbers (Rosický, 220-24; Shaver, II:1-5). The house reflects this settlement period through its distinctive Old World form, a characteristic especially of first generation Czech houses built by recent emigrants.

The property type for this nomination is the traditional Czech house type known as dvoutrakt dům. The type encompasses some variety, but common to all is a double-pile plan consisting of a living hall and chamber (svetnice, komora), behind which are a rank of smaller chambers. Most commonly a central vestibule and fire-room (gíň) divides the main hall from the front chamber (Vařeka).

The type is not common among Great Plains Czechs. Immigrants here, fleeing the homeland after 1848, were predominantly peasant farmers seeking economic freedom in a new land. The common house types built by these immigrants were typically only one room wide, and from one to three rooms long. The wider, larger dvoutrakt dům, however, was more commonly built by wealthier seventeenth and eighteenth century Protestant Czechs who immigrated to the Delaware Valley and southeastern Pennsylvania. There the typical double-pile house (which was also commonly two stories), was known in German as the Flurküchenhaus or Ernhaus (Chappell, 68-71).

In addition to its size, nineteenth century Czechs immigrants did not typically build the type in any numbers because of the additional technical skill required to shelter wider spans with the roof. The underframe roof which was used extensively in Pennsylvania was also common in the Czech lands for wide spans, but it required skilled carpenters to build. Bruha, who was also a noted local blacksmith, utilized a common rafter, anchor and collar beam system in a hipped roof to accomplish his task. Significance under Criterion C derives in part from the structural system of the roof. Rafters are bolted to the plates on

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 3

the hip slopes, as are the plates to the masonry wall, while on the side slopes the rafters are bolted to the anchor beams, with the plates once again bolted to the wall. The Bruha house represents a significant technical achievement in this regard, and is the only recorded example of this construction system in Nebraska.

The Josef and Anna Beran Bruha house is significant under Criterion C as a fine and rare product of the dvoutrakt dům in Nebraska. The only other recorded example is the Franz Zavidil house in rural Cedar County (CD00-7; NRHP), a gabled stone masonry dwelling of four rooms. Similar houses are known to have been built by Poles in Sherman County (see the Roschynialski and Smolinski-Waciejwski houses, SM00-29 and SM00-6). The Bruha house is also significant for its contribution to our understanding of Czech-American architectural tradition, cultural transference and folk construction.

Significance under National Register Criterion D derives from a lack of sustainable evidence concerning the plan of the house during its first two periods of occupancy. Again, because of the richness of Czech traditional architecture, at least four possibilities have been noted in Item #7: the first a near duplication of the current plan; the second, a plan similar to the current one but including a central hall (siň) in the front part of the house, much like the common trojdílný dům house type; third, the possibility of a full central space which combined vestibule and kitchen as in the German durchgängenhaus; and fourth, a simple four room plan similar to the German kreuzhaus (see the Zavidil house plan, CD00-7). All four plans are common in Czech tradition. Information on the original plan of the second construction episode would add significantly to our knowledge of Czech response and adaptation to New World conditions. Information concerning this is only extant in the house itself, but it cannot be made available without dismantling the interior walls. Evidence should be extant in the interior plaster of the masonry walls, in paint patterns on the wall, and/or in evidence from the original floor material. Information may also exist on the underside of summer and or anchor beams.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 4

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The Bruha house, then, exists today as a tangible reminder of early Czech settlement in Valley County, and as a significant architectural product of Czech culture in Nebraska. The research potential extant in evidence of earlier construction episode offers valuable information concerning ethnic cultural transference and transformation.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 2

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**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

# **National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet**

Section number   10   Page   2  

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41° 39' 49" Latitude

99° 9' 49" Longitude