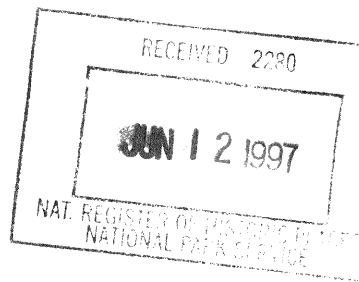


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form



771

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. 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. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Sandford Hall

other names/site number SF09-90

2. Location

street & number 130625 County Road E not for publication [ ]

city or town Mitchell vicinity [ ]

state Nebraska code NE county Scotts Bluff code 157 zip code 69357

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

*Janet Sommer*  
Signature of certifying official

6/3/97  
Date

Director, Nebraska State Historical Society  
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

- I, hereby certify that this property is:
  - entered in the National Register.
    - See continuation sheet.
  - determined eligible for the National Register.
    - See continuation sheet.
  - determined not eligible for the National Register.
  - removed from the National Register.
  - other, (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

*Edson H. Beall*

7/9/97

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

Sandford Hall  
Name of Property

Scotts Bluff County, Nebraska  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-state
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		Total

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

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Recreation & Culture: Music Facility

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instruction)

Recreation & Culture: Music Facility

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Other: Dance\Entertainment Hall

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete pilings  
walls Wood  
roof Tar  
other

**Narrative Description**

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

## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or a grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

### Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Entertainment/Recreation

Architecture

### Period of Significance

1934-1947

### Significant Dates

1934

### Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

### Cultural Affiliation

N/A

### Architect/Builder

Unknown

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

### Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

### Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

### Primary Location for Additional Data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Sandford Hall  
Name of Property

Scotts Bluff County, Nebraska  
County and State

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than 1 acre.

UTM References (place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet).

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1.	13	597700	4643600	3.			
2.				4.			

[] See continuation sheet.

### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Sharon James, Secretary  
organization Scotts Bluff County Agricultural Society date \_\_\_\_\_  
street & number Box 157 telephone 308-623-1828  
city or town Mitchell state NE zip code 69357

name/title Bill Callahan, Program Associate\National Register Coordinator  
organization Nebraska State Historic Preservation Office date April, 1997  
street & number 1500 R Street telephone 402-471-4788  
city or town Lincoln state NE zip code 68508

## Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

### Continuation Sheets

### Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

### Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

### Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

## Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name/title Scotts Bluff County Agricultural Society  
street & number Box 157 telephone 308-623-1828  
city or town Mitchell state NE zip code 69357

**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. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the 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 chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127, and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

## National Register of Historic Places

### Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 1

Sandford Hall

Name of Property

Scotts Bluff County, Nebraska

County and State

#### Description

Sandford Hall is located in Mitchell, Nebraska on the Scotts Bluff County Fairgrounds. Scotts Bluff county is in Nebraska's Panhandle. Mitchell is in the northwest corner of the county, approximately fifteen miles east of the Wyoming border, seventy-five miles south of South Dakota and sixty-five miles north of Colorado. The state capitol, Lincoln, is approximately four hundred miles to the east, and the county seat, Gering is about ten miles southeast. Mitchell is located in the North Platte river valley, north of the river. The area immediately around Mitchell is low-lying, irrigated agricultural land bordered on the north by vast, flat plains and on the south by the Wildcat Range, a rugged, low range of hills. Mitchell's population, according to the 1990 Census, is 1,743.

Sandford Hall is a one-story wood frame building constructed in 1934. The building is 148 feet long and 80 feet wide, on an east-west axis. The Fairgrounds track and stadium are located just south east of the building. The main Fairgrounds complex is directly east of Sandford Hall. One small Fairgrounds building is located immediately north of the building, and open land is to the west.

Sandford Hall has an arched roof, surrounded on all sides by low-pitched shed roof extensions. The arched roof covers an interior dance floor. The shed extensions enclose seating and stage areas. The arch-pitched roof combination creates a monitor effect. The east and west arch-ends have two unglazed drop windows (windows covered by wood shutters, hinged on the bottom) for light and ventilation. The drop windows on the arch-ends have vertical axes.

On the south, east and west facades, the walls below the pitched roof are punched through by unglazed drop windows, also for ventilation and light. The drop windows, on horizontal axes, skirt completely around the building on these three sides. These windows are located about shoulder height. The wood shutters remain closed in the winter, and when the Hall is not in use. Primary access to Sandford Hall is via centered wooden double doors on the east end and double doors off-set to the north on the west end. A single door opens into a beer garden on the south side.

A centered 60'x12' shed-roofed bay extends from the north side of the building. This bay is behind the stage area, and encloses the kitchen and storage spaces. The Hall's restrooms are located in a circa 1940 north side addition, east of the bay and flush with the east facade. The restroom addition has a steeply pitched gable roof. The north side of the building has one exterior door, just west of the restroom addition.

The interior of Sandford Hall is essentially a large open space, dominated by a 120'x50' hardwood dance floor. The dance floor ceiling extends up to the arched roof, about twenty feet, creating a feeling of extreme openness. Concrete wings, used mostly for seating, skirt the entire dance floor. The wings are twelve feet wide on the east and west ends, and are sixteen feet wide on the south side. The north concrete wing is fourteen feet wide, and includes a centrally located 27'x14' stage which rises 2.5' above the floor. The ceilings of the wings extend up to the pitched roof, approximately ten feet.

Wooden, full-beam structural roof posts are located at the edge of the dance floor, at the boundary of the concrete wings. The arched construction of the central roof, together with the relatively massive support posts result in a dance floor with no obstructions.

Sandford Hall is virtually unchanged from its original construction. In fact, the building retains a decorative illuminated dance ball and stage scenery, which exist from the period of significance, or shortly thereafter. The building was built for one purpose: to provide a large, functional community entertainment center. Although Sandford Hall was, obviously, meant to be primarily a dance hall, from the beginning it was also intended for County Fair activities, as well as other community uses. Sandford Hall, as it exists today, easily reflects those uses through its excellent physical integrity and simple but highly functional design.

## National Register of Historic Places

### Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 1

Sandford Hall

Name of Property

Scotts Bluff County, Nebraska

County and State

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### Statement of Significance

Sandford Hall is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places at the local level under criteria A and C. Under criterion A, Sandford Hall is eligible in the area of entertainment and recreation. The Hall has a significant, historic association with entertainment, diversion and recreation of various types. Sandford Hall has been known throughout much of the North Platte Valley area as a central location for social gatherings. The Hall was constructed to replace a similar structure which burned down, the Mitchell Dance Pavilion. The speed of the Pavilion's replacement attests to the significance the community placed on the need for this type of facility. Additionally, the nationally recognized quality of entertainment provided at Sandford Hall during its period of significance, as well as the number of people who attended events there reflects the significance of the structure to the community. Sandford Hall was constructed primarily as a public dance hall, however many community events have taken place in the building since its construction in 1934.

Sandford Hall is also eligible under Criterion C, as it embodies the distinct characteristics of a simple dance hall. Once numerous, these dance halls are very rare today, and Sandford Hall is the only known example of its type in the area. The building has outstanding integrity: very little has been altered since its construction. This integrity owes much to the fact that the Hall's relatively simple design is perfectly suited to the purpose for which it was constructed, and for which it still serves.

On January 18, 1934, the Mitchell Dance Pavilion, located on the Scotts Bluff County Fairgrounds, burned to the ground. The Pavilion was a well known gathering place and dance hall since its construction in 1925. The Pavilion provided an inexpensive and popular entertainment facility for citizens of the Mitchell area, and its loss was keenly felt. Earl Cherry Jr., a former County Fair Board member who remembers the incident, has said that the desire to rebuild amounted to "desperation." The popularity of the site and the desire to maintain a facility of this nature is reflected in the fact that, during the height of the Great Depression, a new dance hall was financed, constructed and opened less than three months after the Mitchell Dance Pavilion burned to the ground.

The ability of the community to replace the Pavilion depended upon a very scarce commodity in 1934: money. Luckily, a local banker was sufficiently interested in the welfare of the community and in the fate of the dance hall that he stepped forward immediately. J. L. Sandford settled in the Panhandle in the 1890's. By the turn of the century Sandford had, from scratch, built a prosperous cattle ranch near Mitchell. He was sufficiently successful that in the early 1930's (after the stock crash) Sandford was one of five men who bought and operated the First National Bank in Mitchell. When the Mitchell Pavilion burned on January 18, Sandford immediately extended a line of credit to the County Fair Board for a new facility. According to the Mitchell Index the new dance hall was complete and ready for business by March 22, 1934. It is doubtful that, given the times, construction could have taken place so rapidly had Sandford not stepped forward. Certainly the County Fair Board considered Sandford's role important, for they immediately named the building after him. Mr. Cherry indicates that many school boys (himself included) were allowed to assist in the construction of Sandford Hall, which speeded up the completion of the building. It is a testament to the significance the community attached to this facility that they were willing and able, with Sandford's assistance, to rebuild the dance hall in a little over two months.

Sandford Hall was complete March 22, 1934. The Grand Opening of the Hall, however, illustrates the huge interest the facility generated in the community. According to the Index, on Wednesday, March 28, the American Legion sponsored the first big event in the building. Herbie Kay and his orchestra, a nationally known band, played to a huge crowd. Kay and his band were joined by Dorothy Lamour as vocalist. Lamour was herself a screen and singing star, who was also Kay's wife at the time.

During the heyday of the Big Band era, a number of the biggest names in the country played at Sandford Hall. Post card advertisements and broadsheets produced during the Hall's period of significance, as well as oral history provide a nearly complete who's who of the Big Band scene: Stan Kenton, Ted Weems (with Perry Como), Tommy Dorsey, Lawrence Welk, Kay Kyser, Artie Shaw, Les Brown, Glen Miller, Harry James, Henry Busse, Art Kassel, Benny Goodman and Gene Krupa all played in Sandford Hall. The dances were sponsored by the Mitchell American Legion. According to local

## National Register of Historic Places

### Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 2

#### Sandford Hall

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Name of Property

Scotts Bluff County, Nebraska

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County and State

oral tradition, these nationally known bands would stop in Mitchell during the week on their way to Denver from Omaha or Chicago (or vice-versa) for weekend shows. It is known that virtually all of the big name bands played at Sandford Hall during the week. Lesser known regional bands and bands from other parts of the country were usually scheduled on the weekends. A review of period week-end advertisements in the Index reveals that lesser known bands from Nebraska, Kansas, Colorado and Wyoming, as well as bands from New York, California, and Illinois played frequently in Mitchell on Saturday nights.

To understand the significance of Sandford Hall to the community, it is important to note that these nationally known bands played there. Mitchell's population in 1930 was recorded as 2,058. The entire population of Scotts Bluff county, the most populous in the Panhandle, was only about 34,000 in 1940. Although no specific attendance records were kept, contemporary accounts indicate that over one-thousand people would attend a dance held by a big name band...during the week. Mitchell is nearly two hundred and fifty miles from Denver, over four hundred and fifty miles from Omaha, and nearly six hundred miles from Kansas City. That these bands would come to Mitchell, with the frequency that they did, and be able to draw large crowds, speaks to the popularity of Sandford Hall events during the '30's, 40's and early 50's.

The architecture of Sandford Hall, although modest, is significant in its own right. No historic building inventory specifically aimed at dance\entertainment halls has been completed in Nebraska. Anecdotal evidence is that dance halls were quite numerous throughout Sandford Hall's period of significance. However, most dance halls were owned and operated either by private clubs or fraternal organizations. Many organizations included ballrooms in larger, multi-purpose buildings. According to the Nebraska State Historic Preservation Office's 1995 historic buildings survey, Sandford Hall is the only extant public building of this type in Scotts Bluff county with such excellent historic integrity.

These buildings were generally characterized by large open spaces, high ceilings and large seating capacities. Most also had some facilities for concessions, and many were located in rural or edge-of-town locations. Anecdotal evidence indicates that, in the context of this type of structure, Sandford Hall was relatively modest. There is virtually no ornamentation, the seating arrangements were not designed with a great deal of comfort in mind, and there is no "lounge" area. However, in broad terms, the general configuration of the Hall, with its large central dance floor and surrounding seating arrangement is a typical arrangement.

Sandford Hall, located on and owned by the Scotts Bluff County Fairgrounds, was also used as an exhibition hall during the County Fair. The Hall's stage was used by local groups for a number of productions and uses. The Scotts Bluff County Fairgrounds have been substantially altered over the years. Many of the extant buildings (including a new, metal exhibition hall) have replaced many of the historic structures associated with the County Fair. However, Sandford Hall should not be considered a remnant of an historic complex, for it has a history and a significance separate from the fairgrounds.

Sandford Hall is a locally rare example of a public dance\entertainment hall. During the 1930's and '40's, Sandford Hall served a great community need, and was a well known center for social gatherings. The significance of the Hall is reflected by the rapidity of its construction, the popularity of the entertainment that took place there, and by the quality of the entertainment provided. Sandford Hall also represents a distinct type of construction through its architecture. Of simple design, the Hall nevertheless easily illustrates its function as a dance hall through that design. Sandford Hall has exceedingly high architectural integrity: the only significant change in the building since the end of its period of significance is new electrical wiring. The new wiring has replaced the old, allowing Sandford Hall to meet fire code and continue to serve the extended community of Mitchell.

National Register of Historic Places

Name of Property

Scotts Bluff County, Nebraska

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Continuation Sheet

Section 9 Page 1

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County and State

**Bibliography**

Earl Cherry Jr., Personal letter, 13 March, 1995. Copy on file at the Nebraska State Historic Preservation Office

Mitchell (Nebraska) Index 18 January, 1934

Mitchell Index 22 March, 1934

Nebraska State Historic Preservation Office Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey Reconnaissance Survey Final Report of  
Scotts Bluff County July, 1995. Lincoln, NE.

Interviews with:

Veta Boyd, Madeline Elder, Helen Gill, Helen Mathews, Mary Newton, and June Webb, as quoted  
in a personal letter by Earl Cherry Jr. , 13 March, 1995

Scotts Bluff County Agricultural Society meeting records.

A large number of post card advertisements as well as advertising broad sheets were used in the preparation of this  
nomination. These resources are in the possession of the Scotts Bluff County Agricultural Society.



## National Register of Historic Places

### Continuation Sheet

Section 10 Page 1

Sandford Hall

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Name of Property

Scotts Bluff County, Nebraska

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County and State

#### Verbal Boundary Description

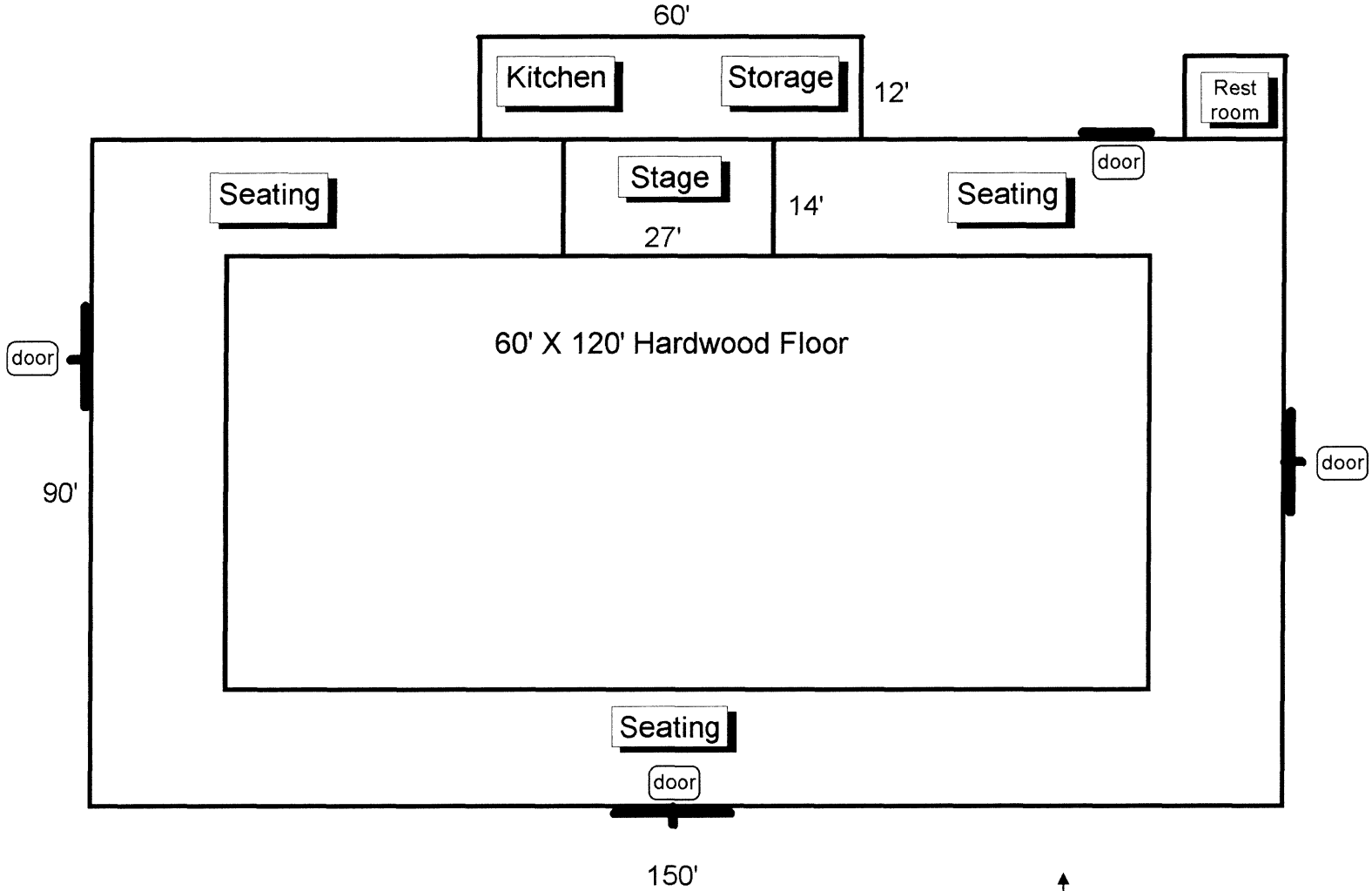
Part of the Northwest Quarter of the Northwest Quarter of the Northeast Quarter (NW $\frac{1}{4}$  NW $\frac{1}{4}$  NE $\frac{1}{4}$ ) of Section 28 Township 22 North, Range 56 West of the Sixth Principal Meridian, Scotts Bluff County, Nebraska, and more particularly described as follows:

Commencing at a point Three Hundred and Ninety-nine (399) feet East of the Northwest corner of said NW $\frac{1}{4}$ , NW $\frac{1}{4}$ , NE $\frac{1}{4}$ , and extending thence East Two Hundred Sixty-one (261) feet to the Northeast corner of said NW $\frac{1}{4}$ , NW $\frac{1}{4}$ , NE $\frac{1}{4}$ ; thence extending South Six Hundred Sixty (660) feet to the Southwest corner of said NW $\frac{1}{4}$ , NW $\frac{1}{4}$ , NE $\frac{1}{4}$ ; thence extending North Three Hundred Fifty-three and five tenths (353.5) feet; thence East Four Hundred and Six (406) feet; thence extending North Three Hundred Six and five tenths (306.5) feet to the point of beginning.

#### Boundary Justification

Boundary includes parcel of land historically associated with Sandford Hall.

# SANDFORD HALL



Sandford Hall, Mitchell, Scotts Bluff Co., Nebr.  
Floor Plan, not to scale. NeHBS #SF09-090.

