



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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

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Continuation sheet

Community Store

Item number

Site #13

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8. 1900; commerce; Finnish ethnic history

Dates: 1906; 1918

builder: unknown

The commercial history of the Martilla-Pettingel and Gorder store spans several phases of the economic history of Finnish-Americans. Its significance is derived from its role in this history.

The Martilla-Pettingel and Gorder Store was founded in 1906 and this building was erected to house the general merchandise, hardware and drug store business. August Martilla, the Finnish partner in the firm, had worked in commercial enterprises for some years. Born in Kalajoki, Finland, he came to Carlson, Wyoming with his brothers and other family members in 1884. Two years later, he moved to Dakota Territory, and 1888 he married Fredriika Raasakka, who had just arrived from her home parish of Kannus, Finland.

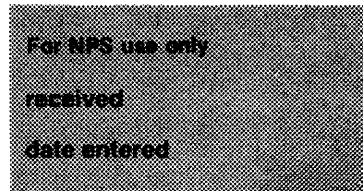
Due to the uncertainty of weather and economic fortunes, many early Dakota immigrants were highly mobile. Among the many Finns who left for periods of time to work in more prosperous communities were the Martillas. In 1889 they moved to Wyoming, where August worked first as a miner and later as a clerk. In 1900 they returned to Frederick and August opened a general store which was destroyed by fire. Problems continued to plague Martilla. In 1906 he formed a business with Paul Groder and E. G. Pettingel, which ended within a few years in bankruptcy. His partner, Paul Gorder, was born in Norway and had come to Frederick with his family in the early 1880s. After the failure of the store, Martilla abandoned merchandising and became an employee for the First National Bank, a position he held until his retirement in 1941.

Frequently, Finnish businessmen were members of the more wordly Suomi Synod Lutheran Church, as was Martilla. He also played in the Savo Band. In 1945 he moved to Hillsboro, Oregon.

In 1918 the building resumed its role in Brown County's Finnish history. With a \$50,000 capitalization, J.H. Sumption, Charles Rexinger, K.A. Hukari and H.N. Martilla formed the Co-operative Mercantile Store. Co-operative businesses were a very distinctive, though not exclusively Finnish, characteristic of immigrant life.

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The first Finnish co-operative ventures in Brown County were an outgrowth of the rural, agricultural work-sharing common throughout Finland. In Savo several farmers joined together in 1886 to form a co-operative threshing company. These businesses were given new impetus with the founding of Pellervo Society in Finland in 1899. Two years later a co-operative creamery was established at Savo. Yet the Finns were not the originators of this idea for the Danes had introduced the co-operative creamery into Grant County in the 1890s. The idea was very popular, however, and Finns went on to organize co-operative grain elevator companies and telephone exchanges.

The Russian Revolution of 1918 had a powerful effect on cooperatives. Many Finnish-American co-ops suffered internal strife over the split between radical and conservative politics. This conflict and the depression helped to undermine the co-op movement. Today, several of these businesses survive in Savo and the town has a distinctively co-op business character.

This store gains significance from not only its association with an original Finnish co-owner, but for its later role as a Finnish cooperative business.

10.    Acreage: less than one                      Scale: 1:24 000  
       Quad: Frederick

UTM:

Longitude: 98<sup>o</sup> 30' 17"  
Latitude: 45<sup>o</sup> 49' 57"

Verbal Boundary Description

The lot lines of the property form the boundaries of the site which is located in lots 8 & 9, Block 5 of the Town of Frederick.