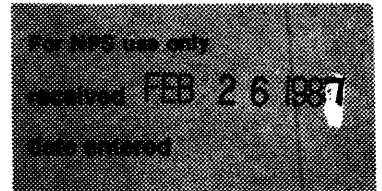


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SITE                    PE-1

NAME                    The Sorum Cooperative Store

LOCATION                 West side of the main street in Sorum,  
Perkins County (105), South Dakota (046)

OWNER                   Thurlow Cooper  
Box 53  
Buffalo, SD 57720

CLASSIFICATION         Building, private,            NA acquisition,  
occupied, restricted access, vacant

DESCRIPTION             Excellent, unaltered, original site

The Sorum Cooperative Store is located in the abandoned town of Sorum, South Dakota on the grassy flats of Rabbit Creek. The structure is a rectangular pen constructed of adobe which has been covered with stucco to protect the building from the elements.

A false front with molded decoration tops the front elevation which is symmetrical with a large two-over-two light window on either side of the door. All of the openings retain their screens. A low four step stoop leads to the front door. The south and north side elevations are identical with six windows on the first floor and three windows in the basement. Both walls are have two buttresses. Fenestration in the rear elevation includes, two small two-over-two light windows and two double-hung three-over- one light windows. A door is located to the left of center.

The store measures thirty-three feet in width by sixty feet in length. It has a low arched roof covered with composition shingles.

The interior of the store is divided into two spaces. The large open front of structure used for the store, and the rear service portion which has a large kitchen area. The store has a full basement.

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**SIGNIFICANCE**    1900-present, architecture, commerce

**DATE**    1936    **BUILDER**    Mr. Sandpoint

The Sorum Cooperative Store derives its significance from its architecture and its importance as one of the few cooperative stores to operate in northwestern South Dakota. The history of the store transcends the present structure, as the founder of Sorum, Chris Sorum opened the first post office on the site in 1910. The post office continued to be located in the store until recently when the store closed.

The Sorum vicinity was settled around 1900 when the large cattle outfits such as the Turkey Track and the L 7 ran their cattle in the area to graze. Several ranchers settled along Rabbit Creek and Gap Creek establishing their own ranches on the land instead of using it for grazing land.

In 1907 and 1908 a large influx of homesteaders moved into the area to stake claims on their 160 acres under the provisions established by the Homestead Act of 1862. Another large influx of homesteaders from the east moved into the Sorum vicinity in 1909.

During those early years Chris Sorum had a mailbox at his homestead that the neighboring homesteaders used to send their mail to Strool, where the nearest post office was located. Sorum petitioned to establish a post office in the community during the winter of 1909. On July 7, 1910 Chris Sorum became the postmaster in Sorum. On that same day three businessmen, Mr. Dunlap, Mr. Mayer, and Mr. Wightman decided to open a general store in Sorum.

Building materials for the new general store were hauled to Sorum by team and wagon from Hettinger, North Dakota, the closed rail terminus fifty-two miles to the north. Mr. Wightman retired shortly after the store was opened and it was incorporated as the Farmers Supply Company. The store was sold to the Reeder Cooperative in June 1916, by Mayer, the store manager.

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On April 1, 1920 Mr. and Mrs. Otto Jensen moved from Hutchinson, Minnesota to manage the Sorum Store which they named the Sorum Store Company. The store remained in that building until it was destroyed by fire from the stove used in the cream station which was located at the store in January 1936. The store reopened in one of the vacant buildings in town and in August that structure burned along with its entire contents.

After the second fire, Mr. Jensen decided that the new store should be built of adobe which would guaranty a fireproof building. He had read that building with adobe was a very inexpensive method of construction and was able to locate a craftsman in Newell, Mr. Sandpoint who studied how to make and build with adobe in New Mexico. Mr. Sandpoint and his crew moved to Sorum, where they lived in tents while they constructed the new store. The store was completed in the fall and opened for business shortly thereafter.

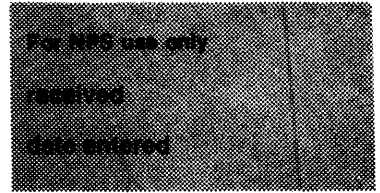
The store also served another community function. It had a full basement which was used, over the years, as a dining room by the Sorum High School for the students who were boarders there.

Mr. and Mrs. Jensen continued to operate the store until 1964 when they sold the store to Mr. Thurlow Cooper, the present owner, who also ran the Sorum Store and Post Office for several years. Although there were still several buildings left standing in Sorum, the population was two, Mr. and Mrs. Jensen, then Mr. and Mrs. Cooper, for many years. Although the town is abandoned now, it has an active fire department made up of local ranchers, and community dinners and dances are still held at the community hall.

Unique in its setting on the flats of Rabbit Creek, the store, with the hollyhocks blooming in hues of pink and burgundy against its pale green stucco exterior, evokes a picture more commonly found in the small towns of northern New Mexico than western South Dakota. It is valuable as one of the few examples of adobe architecture in western South Dakota, and at present the only known commerical structure of adobe construction. The Sorum Cooperative Store remains in Sorum as a symbol of the democratic pioneer values that created South Dakota.

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QUADRANGLE NAME Sorum, SD

UTM 13/ 661260/ 5085510

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24,000

ACREAGE Less than one

**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

The site boundaries are formed by a set of imaginary lines which extend ten feet in all directions from the exterior walls of the structure. The site is located in the NE quarter of the SE quarter of Section 7, Township 17 North, Range 10 East in Perkins County.

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