

NPS FORM 10-900 (Rev. 8-86) OMB No. 1024-0018 [SD-SHPO # ECA-OH-597-1/89]
[use paper with at least 25% cotton rag content, use NLQ or LQ printer]

United States Department of the Interior -- National Park Service
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES -- REGISTRATION FORM

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 "NA" 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: Southeast Merton School No. 19
other name/ site number: Merton Township Hall

2. Location

street & number: 8 miles north of Willow Lake /NA/ not for publication
city, town: Willow Lake /XX/ vicinity
state: SOUTH DAKOTA code: SD county: Clark code: SD 025 zip code: 57278

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: Category of Property Number of Resources within Property:
Contributing Noncontributing
/ / private /XX/ building(s) 2 buildings
/XX/ pubic-local / / district sites
/ / public-state / / site structures
/ / public-federal / / structure objects
/ / object 2 0 Total
Name of related multiple property listing: Number of contributing resources
previously listed in the National
NA Register: 0

11. Form Prepared by

name/title: Ramona M. Kirkeby, Clerk; w/technical assistance by John Rau, SHPO staff
organization: Merton Township Board of Supervisors date: October 11, 1989
street & number: RR 1, Box 89 Telephone: 605-532-3362
city or town: Vienna state: SOUTH DAKOTA zip code: 57271



page 3: Southeast Merton School No. 19  
property name

, Clark  
county

, SOUTH DAKOTA  
state

6. Function or Use (enter categories from instructions)

Historic functions:  
EDUCATION/School  
GOVERNMENT/City Hall

Current Functions:  
GOVERNMENT/City Hall

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7. Description

Architectural Classification:  
(enter categories from instructions)  
OTHER: Rectangular Pen Schoolhouse

Materials:  
(enter categories from instructions)  
foundation Concrete  
walls Wood  
Asphalt  
roof Wood Shingle  
other NA

Describe present and historic physical appearance: /XX/ see continuation sheet

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8. Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in  
relation to other properties: / / / / /XX/  
nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria /XX/ A / /B / /C / /D

Criteria Considerations / /A / /B / /C / /D / /E / /F / /G

Areas of Significance (enter from instructions)  
Education

Period of Significance  
1886-1939

Significant Dates  
NA

Significant Person  
NA

Cultural Affiliation  
NA

Architect/Builder  
Unknown

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations,  
and periods of significance noted above /XX/ see continuation sheet

page 4: Southeast Merton School No. 19  
property name

, Clark  
county

, SOUTH DAKOTA  
state

9. Major Bibliographical References /XX/ see continuation sheet

Previous documentation by 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 of additional data:

- /XX/ State historic preservation office
- / / Other State agency
- / / Federal agency
- / / Local government
- / / University
- / / Other

Specify repository:

South Dakota Historical Preservation Center

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property: one acre

UTM References:

A = /14/	/607-320/	/4955-490/	B = / /	/ /	/ /
C = / /	/ /	/ /	D = / /	/ /	/ /
ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

Quad: Willow Lake

Scale: 1:24000

/ / see continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description:

The boundaries of the nominated property are contained within the legal description as recorded in the Clark County Register of Deeds Office: "Commencing at the center of the east-west road at the southeast corner of the southwest quarter of section 23 (Township 115 North, Range 57 West), thence running north 12-2/3 rods, thence running west 12-2/3 rods, thence running south 12-2/3 rods, thence returning to place of beginning."  
Recorded March 29, 1886.

/ / see continuation sheet

Boundary Justification:

The nominated property is bounded by the legally recorded lot lines of the parcel historically associated with the property.

/ / see continuation sheet

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 1

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Situated along a well traveled township road in southern Clark County, the Southeast Merton School No. 19 is a small rectangular pen wood frame building. Rising from a poured concrete foundation, the schoolhouse is clad with historic clapboard siding, except for the bottom three feet of the north, east, and west walls, which are clad with strips of more recent (yet pre-1976) asphalt sheeting. The building is capped by a gable roof covered with wood shingles. A vestibule with a hipped roof projects from the south (front) gable end. The entry door of this vestibule faces east. A brick chimney rises above the south gable end. Three historic two-over-two double hung windows pierce each axial facade. A cistern is located just off the southwest corner of the building.

The vestibule is divided into an entry area and a "coal room," which is now used for storage. The main block of the building consists of a single schoolroom, which has undergone some redecoration in recent years. However, original features include a sand table, a teacher's desk, attached blackboards, a few recitation benches, short wainscoting, and the teacher's platform. In 1977, the interior was decorated in an American patriotic red, white, and blue motif. A freestanding voting booth is located in the northeast corner of the room. The room is heated by an oil-fired space heater.

A wood frame privy (contributing) is located several yards northeast of the schoolhouse. It is capped by a shed roof with a wide overhang and fascia boards, characteristic of prefabricated privies built by the Works Progress Administration and installed on farm yards and public grounds throughout the state during the last half of the 1930s.

The school yard is enclosed by a barbed wire fence on the west, north, and east sides.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**Section number 8 Page 1

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Under Criterion A of the National Register Criteria, the Southeast Merton School No. 19 is significant in the area of education, because for over 70 years it served the local rural community as the chief educational facility and as one of the primary social institutions. It is one of the state's oldest examples of the now rare single-room wood frame rectangular pen schoolhouse. Except for interior redecoration in 1977, the building is relatively unaltered. Under the South Dakota Historical Preservation Plan, the property relates to the historic context labeled: IV.E. Permanent Rural and Urban Pioneer Settlement/Government and Education-Related Activities.

Clark County was organized in 1881 during the early years of the Great Dakota Boom. Thousands of homesteaders of various ethnic and social backgrounds filed on claims throughout the county. Merton Township, in the southern half of Clark County, was organized in October of 1885 and named for Merton L. Yeamans who was an early county commissioner and prominent resident of the new township. The ethnic make-up of the community was particularly diverse but consisted of a noticeable number of Italians, Austrians, and Norwegians.

These early settlers intended to work hard to cultivate this land and to form a comfortable, amenable place to raise their families. To that end, public education was one of the first institutions established in the region. From 1885 to 1888, three early schools were built in the township. A fourth school was constructed in 1923. Of the three 19th Century school buildings, the Southeast Merton School was the second to be built and is the only one to remain on its original location. The others have been moved to local farmsteads and substantially renovated for other uses.

Until passage of legislation to standardize school buildings in the 1920s, most of the state's rural schools were simple one-room rectangular pen buildings. All of them were small in scale but exhibited a variety of dimensions. Excluding the earliest log school buildings, the pioneer school buildings invariably included a gable end entrance covered by some kind of vestibule. They were also generally capped by gable roofs and lighted on both axial facades. With standardization came scientifically designed cube-shaped buildings that featured indoor plumbing, as well as improved lighting, heating, and ventilation. From 1920 to the early 1950s, most of the 19th Century pioneer facilities were replaced by these pattern book schools. Upon mass consolidation of districts in the early 1970s, most rural schools were closed and a great number of the buildings were sold and moved. Consequently, few of these once prevalent symbols of rural community life remain substantially unaltered on their original locations. Particularly rare are the 19th Century pioneer school buildings, such as the Southeast Merton School.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**Section number 8 Page 2

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Constructed in late 1886, the Southeast Merton School opened its doors that same year for a short session running until early March of the next year. It continued to operate until the end of the school term in May of 1962, when the two remaining rural districts of the township reorganized and consolidated with the Clark and Willow Lake independent districts. The first teacher, M. E. Bell, reported to the county superintendent of schools that the average daily attendance was 16 out of 21 registered pupils. According to Bell, the original furniture consisted of 15 double folding Victor lock desks, a teacher's desk and chair, one hanging lamp, and one stove. Subjects included physiology and hygiene, reading, writing, spelling, arithmetic, geography, grammar, and history. In the last report from the Southeast Merton School, teacher Julia Hoey stated that the average daily attendance was 6 out of 7 registered pupils.

Over the years, the school bestowed a sense of community on the district. Besides providing basic education for area children, numerous school programs and other community social events, including the annual school picnic, took place there. After the school closed, the township has continued to use the building as a meeting hall. It also served as a county polling place until 1980, when the precincts of Clark County were reorganized and combined. In 1977, the township membership voted to stabilize the aging building, at which time the interior was redecorated. In 1988 and 1989, further repair and maintenance of the exterior was authorized by the township membership. The township board is seeking registration of this property as its "lasting legacy" contribution to the South Dakota Centennial of 1989. At a township picnic held on the school grounds in June 1989, twenty-five individuals signed a resolution in support of "perpetual restoration" of the property. Although some cosmetic refurbishment remains to be done, the building is in sound structural condition.

Just to the northeast of the schoolhouse is a wood frame privy that remains an integral part of the school yard. This building was placed on the property in the late 1930s by the Work Progress Administration. It is a typical example of the scores of such facilities installed by the W.P.A. on farm yards and public grounds during the Great Depression.

The period of significance of the nominated property extends from the date of construction of the schoolhouse in 1886 to 1939, the 50-year cut-off date for the National Register.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number   9   Page   1  

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A History of Southern Clark County and Spirit Lake. N.p. 1976. pp. 11-22.

Clark County Superintendent of Schools Records. Clark County Courthouse.  
Clark, South Dakota.

Merton Township Clerk's Records. Merton Township, Clark County, South Dakota.

Molumby, Joseph A. "A Study of Place Names in Clark County, South Dakota."  
Unpublished M.A. Thesis. University of South Dakota. 1939. p. 38.

"Resolution for Perpetual Restoration, June 11, 1989." signed by citizens of  
Merton Township in support of the decision of the Merton Township Board  
of Supervisors to continue restoration of the Southeast Merton School.

"Restoration Plans for SE Merton." Clark County Courier. June 21, 1989.

Steen, Thelma Pederson (teacher at Southeast Merton School from 1931-1933 and  
1957-1958) Personal Interview by Ramona M. Kirkeby. July 1989.

White, Alice Lindland (student at Southeast Merton School from 1903-1913).  
Telephone Interview by Ramona M. Kirkeby. June 1989.

\_\_\_\_\_. Personal Interview by Ramona M. Kirkeby. July 18, 1989.



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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number photos Page 1

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PHOTO DOCUMENTATION

1.  
Southeast Merton School No. 19  
Willow Lake Vicinity, Clark County, South Dakota  
by Ramona M. Kirkeby  
June 1989  
Neg.: South Dakota Historical Preservation Center  
East and south facades, camera facing west-northwest  
Photo No. 1

2.  
Southeast Merton School No. 19  
Willow Lake Vicinity, Clark County, South Dakota  
by Ramona M. Kirkeby  
June 1989  
Neg.: South Dakota Historical Preservation Center  
West and north facades, camera facing southeast  
Photo No. 2

3.  
Southeast Merton School No. 19  
Willow Lake Vicinity, Clark County, South Dakota  
by Ramona M. Kirkeby  
June 1989  
Neg.: South Dakota Historical Preservation Center  
Interior: camera facing north  
Photo No. 3

4.  
Southeast Merton School No. 19  
Willow Lake Vicinity, Clark County, South Dakota  
by Ramona M. Kirkeby  
June 1989  
Neg.: South Dakota Historical Preservation Center  
Interior: camera facing south  
Photo No. 4