

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

|                  |             |
|------------------|-------------|
| FOR NPS USE ONLY |             |
| RECEIVED         | JAN 18 1977 |
| DATE ENTERED     | SEP 13 1977 |

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC Peter Norbeck Summer House

AND/OR COMMON  
Valhalla

**LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER W of Custer rd  
Custer State Park

NOT FOR PUBLICATION  
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT  
No. 2

CITY, TOWN  
Custer

VICINITY OF

STATE  
South Dakota

CODE  
046

COUNTY  
Custer

CODE  
033

**CLASSIFICATION**

| CATEGORY  | OWNERSHIP                                  | STATUS   | PRESENT USE                                    |  |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT               | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC | <input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED                    | <input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE           | <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM            |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S) | <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE           | <input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED                  | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL            | <input type="checkbox"/> PARK              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE              | <input type="checkbox"/> BOTH              | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS | <input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL           | <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SITE                   | <b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>                  | <b>ACCESSIBLE</b>                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT         | <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT                 | <input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC        |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED  | <input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED           | <input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL            | <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION    |
|   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> NO                          | <input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY              | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:            |

**OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks

STREET & NUMBER  
Custer State Park

CITY, TOWN  
Custer

VICINITY OF

STATE  
South Dakota

**LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Custer County Courthouse/Register of Deeds

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN  
Custer

STATE  
South Dakota

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE  
South Dakota Historic Sites Survey

DATE  
March 1976

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS  
Historical Preservation Center

CITY, TOWN  
Vermillion

STATE  
South Dakota

# 7 DESCRIPTION

| CONDITION                                |                                       | CHECK ONE                                     | CHECK ONE   |
|--|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT       | <input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD | <input type="checkbox"/> RUINS        | <input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED              | <input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> FAIR            | <input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED    |   |   |

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Peter Norbeck Summer House, or as it is often called Valhalla, is a large one and one half story, three bay wide log structure. Norbeck located his home in Custer State Park, an area known for its natural beauty. It sets about half way up the side of a hill giving the occupants a better view of the surrounding area which includes craggy hill sides covered by pines and the Grace Coolidge Creek which flows nearby.

The structure has a rectangular floor plan with rounded log walls and saddle notched corners. Its left or east facade has a one story, hipped roof, vertical log addition done in the 1930's. Otherwise the building looks much as it did in 1927. Irregular stones serve as the foundation while a medium pitched straight gable roof with asphalt shingles covers the structure. Three gabled wall dormers also appear; the two on the front (north) facade are wood-shingled, separated by a ground to roof chimney of irregular stones, and the third is log and is located at the center of the rear (south) facade.

One of the front facade's most interesting features is its open porch which is constructed entirely of logs. The openings consist of the main entry offset near the northwest corner to the left while the windows are in two groups: three mullion windows to the left of the building's center and five to the right. All major windows are double hung with four lights over four. A group of four mullion windows appears in each dormer; these are also rectangular but not as large as the lower level ones.

The west or right facade has two pairs of double doors that lead to a patio area. While the second story fenestration consists of two groups of three mullion windows. Also, both gable ends have two mullion windows with two lights over two.

The rear facade's second level projects beyond the first and is supported by four log posts. The space below this projection is utilized as storage area for firewood. The only window on the first floor is offset to the right side while the dormer has five mullion separated windows.

The east or left facade has a slightly off-center chimney that penetrates the one story addition to above the roofline. It is of the single stack type. Four rectangular windows with mullion division flank each side of the chimney.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

| PERIOD                                    | AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW |   |   |  |
|---|--|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC      | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC  | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING     | <input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE         | <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499        | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC     | <input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION           | <input type="checkbox"/> LAW                            | <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599        | <input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE             | <input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS              | <input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE                     | <input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION              | <input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY                       | <input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799        | <input type="checkbox"/> ART                     | <input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING            | <input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC                          | <input type="checkbox"/> THEATER             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899        | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE                | <input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY                     | <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION      |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900- | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS          | <input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY               | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)     |
|   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION              |   |  |

SPECIFIC DATES 1927

BUILDER/ARCHITECT C.C. Gideon

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Peter Norbeck Summer House or Valhalla represents three areas of significance: architecture, government, and conservation. Of the three, architecture is the most obvious for it shows the degree of sophistication that log construction can reach. As for the latter two, the house symbolizes the man who was one of this state's foremost governmental leaders and an early leader in the area of conservation in South Dakota.

Norbeck was born on August 27, 1870 near Vermillion in what was then Dakota Territory. This was important for he would be the first native of the state to be elected governor. Both of his parents, George and Karen Larsen Norbeck were from Sweden and throughout his life, Peter was very proud of his Scandanavian ancestry. His regard for his heritage led him to name the log house he built in Custer State Park, Vahalla, which is the Norse word for heaven.

Most of Norbeck's early years were spent working on farms and attending the University of South Dakota intermittently. But in the 1890's he began slowly establishing a well digging business with Charles Nicholson. This company, based in Redfield, garnered not only wealth for Norbeck but also an impetus into politics. His business over the years put in over ten thousand wells and in the process, he became quite well known throughout the state.

Despite his wealth, Norbeck was more interested in the progressive movement in the Republican party rather than the stalwart element. His political stance which was becoming increasingly more potent along with his popularity made him a natural candidate for public office. So, in 1908 he decided to run for the state senate which he won.

Six years later, Norbeck made his most important political decision when he decided to run for lieutenant-governor. It was important because in South Dakota this was the beginning of what was termed "apostolic succession"—where the lieutenant-governor went on to become governor and then United States Senator. His candidacy for this 1914 election was so successful that he received many more votes than the elected Republican governor.

In 1916 Norbeck ran for governor unifying his party and putting this state firmly into the progressive political camp. He defeated his democratic opponent by over twenty thousand votes; the largest majority any governor had achieved. Two years later, the voters gave him another easy victory.

His two terms as governor show a remarkable influence on the legislators which led to the passage of a great deal of progressive legislation including state owned rural credit system and cement and coal plants. During the years, he became a leader in the

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Fite, Gilbert Courtland, PETER NORBECK: PRAIRIE STATESMAN, Vol. XXII, No. 2 of THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI STUDIES. Columbia: University of Missouri, 1948. 217 pp.
- Olson, Richard O., "The Public Career of Peter Norbeck, 1908-1921." Unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of South Dakota, 1941. 73 pp.

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY one

UTM REFERENCES

|   |      |              |          |     |       |      |         |          |  |
|---|------|--------------|----------|-----|-------|------|---------|----------|--|
| A | 1,3  | 624<br>6,2,0 | 4,8      | 5,0 | 8,2,0 | B    |         |          |  |
|   | ZONE | EASTING      | NORTHING |     |       | ZONE | EASTING | NORTHING |  |
| C |      |              |          |     |       | D    |         |          |  |
|   | ZONE | EASTING      | NORTHING |     |       | ZONE | EASTING | NORTHING |  |

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

| STATE | CODE | COUNTY | CODE |
|-------|------|--------|------|
| STATE | CODE | COUNTY | CODE |

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Scott Gerloff, Survey Coordinator

ORGANIZATION

Historical Preservation Center

DATE

December 1976

STREET & NUMBER

USD Alumni House

TELEPHONE

605/677-5314

CITY OR TOWN

Vermillion

STATE

South Dakota

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

*John J. Little*

TITLE

Director/Historical Preservation Center

DATE

*13 Jan 77*

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

*9/13/77*

ATTEST:

*Charles H. Brown*

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

*7-2-78*

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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conservation of unique native areas for the enjoyment of the populace. One of these places was Custer State Park located in the southern Black Hills.

Through his efforts as a state legislator and especially as governor, this state park became a reality. It was believed to be in 1919 one of the largest state operated parks in the nation if not the largest, and eventually reached a size of 127,000 acres. This love affair with the area began in 1905 when he took what is believed to be the first automobile trip from the Missouri River to the Black Hills.

This trip not only led him to work for the park at the political level, but he also helped plan the park's roads (including Needles Highway), fence the area in, get wild life for the area, and convinced President Calvin Coolidge to make the area his summer white house. It also led Norbeck to build in 1927 his log summer house, Vahalla.

It is fitting that this structure stands in Custer State Park for it symbolizes the achievements of one of the state's most important conservationists. Not only did Norbeck help establish this park, but also game reserves and the Badlands as a National Monument. He was also one of three or four most important men in getting Mount Rushmore finished and he is also given credit for getting Teddy Roosevelt included on the monument.

Originally, these projects had very little support in South Dakota; but through the foresight of men like Peter Norbeck they have turned out to be some of the state's most important recreation and tourist areas. Norbeck saw that people would be attracted to the state to see such wonders and he was proven right because tourism is second only to agriculture in the state's economy.

After his four years as governor, Norbeck successfully ran for the United States Senate in 1920; a post he maintained until his death on December 20, 1936. His congressional record shows that he was mostly concerned with domestic matters especially those concerning conservation and agriculture. He was chairman of the Banking and Currency Committee when they began examining the abuses of the New York Stock Exchange.

By the time of his second reelection to the Senate, Norbeck felt alienated from his own party which had abandoned the progressive ideals. He began to support more and more Franklin Roosevelt's policies. This shift climaxed in 1936 when Senator S.Y. Way and Norbeck endorsed Roosevelt over their own party's candidate Alfred London.

This is not only significant to the state politically, but it also points out that Norbeck could not abandon his progressive principles. The man who led the state's Republicans believed his party no longer represented the people and that an era of progressivism had given way to the New Deal