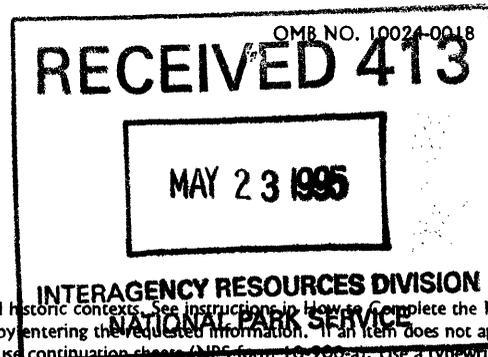


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**National Register of Historic Places
Multiple Property Documentation Form**



This form is for use in documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions to how to complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form (National Register Bulletin 16B). Complete each item by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For additional space, use continuation sheets (NPS form 10-900-a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

New Submission Amended Submission

A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

Town and Ranch: Rural Resources of Eastern Custer County, South Dakota

B. Associated Historic Contexts

(Name each associated historic context, identifying theme, geographical area, and chronological period for each.)

Economic Change in Eastern Custer County, South Dakota, 1880-1939

C. Form Prepared By

name/title: Linea Sundstrom, Ph.D.

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date: 12/30/94

street & number: 1320 E. Lake Bluff Blvd.

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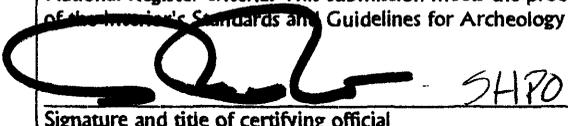
city or town: Shorewood

state: WI

zip code: 53211

D. Certification

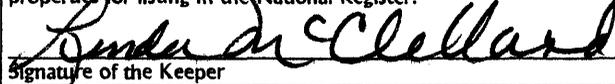
As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)


Signature and title of certifying official

5-16-95
Date

State or Federal agency or bureau

I hereby certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.


Signature of the Keeper

6/30/95
Date of Action

E. Statement of Historic Contexts

(See continuation sheet.)

F. Associated Property Types

(Provide description, significance, and registration requirements.)

Homestead-Era Commercial Buildings
Homestead-Era Community Buildings and Parks
Homestead-Era Ranch Buildings

(See continuation sheet.)

G. Geographical Data

Eastern Custer County, South Dakota
Town of Buffalo Gap, South Dakota
Town of Fairburn, South Dakota

H. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

(Discuss the methods used in developing the multiple property listing.)

(See continuation sheet.)

I. Major Bibliographical References

(List major written works and primary location of additional documentation: State Historic Preservation Office, other State agency, Federal agency, local government, university, or other, specifying repository.)

(See continuation sheet.)

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 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 Projects (1024-0018), Washington, D 20503.

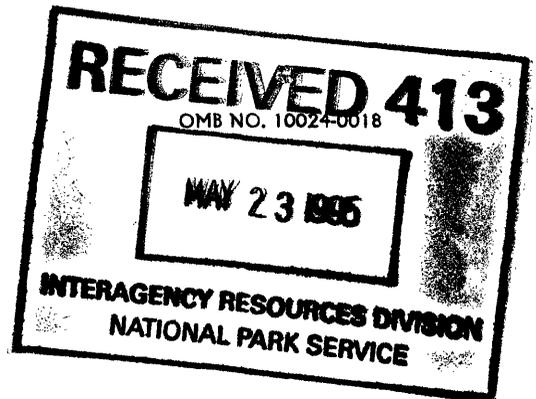
NPS Form 10-900-a
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**Rural Resources of Eastern Custer County
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Statement of Historic Context

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ECONOMIC CHANGE IN EASTERN CUSTER COUNTY, SOUTH DAKOTA, 1880-1939

Overview

Custer County lies on the southeastern side of the Black Hills, an isolated mountain chain in southwestern South Dakota and northeastern Wyoming. The western two-thirds of the county are mountainous, while the eastern third lies outside the uplift. Eastern Custer County comprises rolling upland prairie dissected by east-flowing streams draining the Black Hills. The dominant natural vegetation is shortgrass prairie, with stands of cottonwoods and willows along stream courses. While the western portion of the county is considered part of the Black Hills, the eastern portion belongs to that part of South Dakota known as the West River country--that is, the high plains west of the Missouri River.

The homestead-era history of eastern Custer County, South Dakota strongly reflects economic forces at play both regionally and nationally. Western South Dakota, including the project area, was one of the last areas of the U.S. to be opened to non-native settlement. Until the discovery of gold in the Black Hills in the mid-1870s, the area was Indian territory, first as the free range of the Lakota, Cheyenne, and Arapaho peoples, and after 1868 as part of the Great Sioux Reservation. Mineral prospecting was followed by another extractive industry: large cattle operations which exploited the superb grasslands of the area to fatten Texas cattle on their way to eastern markets. With much of the western portion of South Dakota officially opened to homesteading in 1890, individual land-holdings began to encroach on the open range. By this time the gold rush had played itself out. More stable, locally-based economic pursuits replaced prospecting and big cattle. The decades spanning the turn of the century witnessed an economic experiment--dry-land farming--that ultimately failed in the face of drought and economic recession. This was gradually replaced by family and corporate ranching, which remains the mainstay of the area today. Through a process of attrition and acquisition, the settlers who stayed built ranch holdings sufficient to turn a profit, at least when the weather and market cooperated. The landscape today is dotted with reminders of this process, in the form of abandoned homesteads, stage stations, and mining camps, and nearly abandoned former boom towns.

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Gold Rush Era Settlement

The handful of white explorers penetrating the Black Hills country prior to 1874 generated rumors of gold in the mountains of the vast Lakota (Sioux) reservation established by treaty in 1868. These rumors were confirmed by geologists accompanying a large government-sponsored exploratory expedition to the Black Hills in 1874, under the command of General George A. Custer. Within months of Custer's return to Fort Abraham Lincoln, gold seekers began to arrive in what is now Custer County. For a few months, military contingents attempted to stop the trespass onto reservation lands; however, the government forces abandoned their efforts as a full-fledged gold rush developed around the rich strikes at Custer City and Deadwood.

A gap in the high sandstone ridges surrounding the Black Hills known by the Lakotas as the Buffalo Gate formed a natural passageway from the eastern plains into the interior Black Hills. Trails to the gold strikes followed the old Indian and bison route through the gap. The settlement of Buffalo Gap, lying just east of the feature of the same name, grew rapidly as a stage stop and connection point on one of three stage and freight routes to the Black Hills, the Sidney (Nebraska)-Deadwood line. While the town of Buffalo Gap lay some 20 miles from the gold camps, it prospered as the local transportation hub and supply station. For many settlers, freight hauling proved more lucrative than prospecting. Freighters supplied dry goods and foodstuffs to the burgeoning mining communities. Ranches such as the Streeter Ranch were established along early freight trails from Buffalo Gap to Custer City.

Although nothing remains of the original Buffalo Gap settlement, it was the first real town in eastern Custer County. In contrast to the gold camps, Buffalo Gap had a relatively stable population base and was able to maintain its size and commercial success throughout the gold rush period.

The Beef Bonanza and the Rise of the Cow Towns

A combination of events ensured Buffalo Gap's prosperity for the next decade. The Sioux and Cheyenne war to drive the white interlopers out of the Black Hills and Powder River county climaxed in the battle of the Little Bighorn in the summer of 1876. While the battle was a

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resounding victory for the Indians, it spelled their eventual defeat. White prospectors and settlers continued to pour into the area, despite the ever-present danger of Indian attack. With the bison herds nearly decimated, the combined forces of hunger, cold, disease, and relentless harassment by U.S. military forces soon brought the Sioux and their northern Cheyenne allies to surrender. In 1876, a handful of reservation chiefs were coerced under threat of their people's starvation into signing over the Black Hills (Hyde 1937). Congress ratified this agreement and opened the area to white settlement the following year. With the Indian threat removed, the rich resources of the Black Hills country were there for the taking.

It was grass as much as gold that spelled prosperity for the newly opened territory. While the 1874 Custer expedition had reported pay dirt "from the grass roots down," Walter Jenney's scientific reconnaissance of the region the following year noted that, while there was gold from the grass roots down, there was more gold from the grass roots up, in the unsurpassed grazing of the area (Briggs 1928:423-424; Pulling 1940; Athearn 1965:179; Lee and Williams 1964). The first herd of Texas cattle was brought to the Black Hills in the spring of 1876, during the height of the gold rush, by Martin V. Boughton (Lee and Williams 1964:42-43). Boughton's pioneering effort would soon draw the attention of other cattlemen.

Texas cattle drovers soon discovered the rich grasslands of the northern plains (Brisbin 1882; Athearn 1965). As the southern ranges began to fill up with homesteaders, the large cattle outfits ventured into the vast open grasslands of Dakota, Wyoming, and Montana territories. Buffalo hunters were rapidly pushing the remnants of the great herds north into Canada, leaving the American ranges vacant. The Texas drovers discovered that whereas cattle had lost as much as 30% of their weight on the Kansas and Texas drives, they actually gained weight on the northern drives (Pulling 1940; Athearn 1965). Ranchers from the famous XIT Ranch in Texas found that steers gained an average of 200 pounds more on the northern ranges than on the southern ranges (Gibson 1967). An investment in keeping cattle on the northern range year-round could provide a four- or five-fold return for investors (Athearn 1965). Cattle were abundant and cheap in Texas in the decades following the Civil War.

The Union Pacific rail-lines following the Platte River in Nebraska and Wyoming and the Northern Pacific in North Dakota and

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Montana opened up accessible, if not proximate shipping points for the northern ranges. Later, cattle were trailed across the reservation to Pierre and Chamberlain for shipping. During the height of the "Beef Bonanza," Texas cattle purchased for four or five dollars a head could be sold for forty after a few months on the northern ranges (Athearn 1965). Herds increased rapidly on the northern grasslands, in part due to a series of unusually mild years. The first shipment of Texas cattle reached the Black Hills in 1876. By 1880 big cattle outfits occupied most of the area between the Black Hills and the Missouri River, including eastern Custer County (Schell 1975:156). By the spring of that year, the Black Hills Stock Association was organized (Athearn 1965; Lee and Williams 1964) to protect the interests of stockgrowers in the area.

The Black Hills gold rush and treaties with the Sioux and Cheyennes requiring beef rations provided new and lucrative markets for beef in addition to the Chicago and eastern markets (Athearn 1965). This period also corresponded to a land stampede in eastern Dakota, the first "Dakota Boom," that further increased demand for beef. Between 1860 and 1880, the non-Indian population of the territory swelled from 829 to slightly over 100,000, most in the southeastern counties (Schell 1975; Lee and Williams 1964). Dakota settlers filed 22,061 homestead entries in 1883. This represented 39% of the total entries for the entire nation and was a record for all the western territories (Fite 1973). Rapid population growth followed in the next two decades, as well (Schell 1975, 1982).

Besides providing a new beef market, the reservations were generally open for grazing through lease arrangements, but not for homesteading. This had the effect of delaying the closure of the open range in the area as compared with other areas of the plains (Lee and Williams 1964; Pulling 1940).

The coming of the railroad further increased the attractiveness of the area to large cattle operators. In December of 1885 a branch of the Chicago and North Western Railroad known as the Fremont, Elkhorn, and Missouri Valley line reached the freshly platted town site of Buffalo Gap, providing the first rail service to the Black Hills. Other towns, including Fairburn and Hermosa were also platted by the Western Town Lot Company as it followed the tracks slowly making their way north toward Rapid City; however, Buffalo Gap remained the principal shipping point and connecting point to the interior Black Hills until the Elkhorn line reached Rapid City seven months later. Rapid City would soon out-pace Buffalo Gap, but connecting lines were built from the latter town to Hot Springs, thus sustaining its importance as a local transportation hub.

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In its heyday in the mid-1880s, Buffalo Gap was one of the busiest cattle shipping points in the nation and was as wild a cow town as any in the Wild West (Parker and Lambert 1980; Casey 1949; ECCHS 1970; Schell 1975; Clifford 1965; Sundstrom 1977:196). According to one account, the town boasted four blacksmith shops, 23 saloons, 17 hotels and eating places, "two large sporting houses and a whole row of small ones," four general stores, two drug stores, four Chinese laundries, three livery barns, one big hardware store, a dry-goods store, and a furniture store (ECCHS 1970). Another accounts states that of 142 businesses, 32 were saloons and honky-tonks (Clifford 1965:11). Describing Buffalo Gap in the 1940s, one historian wrote,

It is the last place in this region a stranger might pick as an example of what made the Wild West wild. But that is because strangers don't realize how much tradition, romance, and, let us say, chivalry, may lie behind a couple of chain-store fronts... [Buffalo Gap] has had a roaring history, and if only for old times' sake it deserves something better than oblivion (Casey 1949:86).

One newcomer to Buffalo Gap in 1886, A.K. Thomas, described the appearance of the town.

To me it was the funniest looking village I had ever seen. The buildings, with one exception, were small, new, and unpainted. It was necessary to find a place to stay so I walked up the main street and came to a small hotel called the European. It looked attractive for the reason that the front was painted. I went in and while waiting for someone to show up I picked up their advertising card which stated it was the only plastered house in town (Fielder 1960:216).

Fairburn was also a stage stop turned cow town, but it never attained the size of Buffalo Gap nor its reputation for lawlessness. Its boom period came later, from 1917-1927.

Although the Black Hills had been officially opened to settlement in 1877, the Sioux Reservation occupied the entire strip of western South Dakota between the Black Hills and the Missouri River. Railroads had reached Pierre and Chamberlain on the river in 1880, but were halted there because they were unable to obtain rights-of-way across the

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reservation lands. Extension of the lines westward did not come until 1889, when nine million acres of the Sioux reservation were opened to settlement, including a strip of land between the eastern railheads and the Black Hills. By then, both Buffalo Gap and Fairburn were well established as major cattle shipping points and were not threatened by the competing shippers on the Chicago and North Western and Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul, and Pacific lines from Pierre and Chamberlain.

At the beginning of the 1880s, nearly all cattle raisers in western Dakota operated small, independent ranches; however, the modest operations of these pioneer cattlemen were soon overshadowed by the huge cattle corporations cashing in on the beef bonanza (Lee and Williams 1964). Between 1882 and 1884, some 800,000 Texas cattle were traileed north (Lee and Williams 1964), in spite of quarantine restrictions and the difficulties in getting stock to the railheads. The first shipment of cattle from the Black Hills was made from Buffalo Gap in 1886, consisting of "but a few thousand head," in the words of a 1904 promotional book about the Black Hills (Baldwin 1904). By the middle of the 1880s, nearly a million cattle were ranging in the Black Hills vicinity, with about 300,000 going to market each year. New cattle outfits continued to enter the area through the 1880s. The XIT brought 15,000 head of cattle to the Black Hills in 1889 (Gibson 1967).

The cattle boom coincided with a period of English, Scottish, and French financial expansion and with flush economic times on Wall Street. Eastern and foreign capital poured into the new cattle country (cf. Gressley 1959, 1966). British companies active in or near eastern Custer County included the Anglo-American Cattle Company, Western Ranches Ltd., the David H. Clark Company (Flying V Ranch), and the Matador Land and Cattle Company. The latter invested 2.5 million dollars in its northern operations. Banks were needed to handle the capital transactions and quickly sprang into being in the Black Hills cow towns. As Lee and Williams (1964:55) put it, "It isn't known for certain whether the first bankers [in the Black Hills] started the cattle boom or the cattlemen started the first banks." Among these early Black Hills bankers were Richard C. Lake and James Halley who started the first bank in eastern Custer County, Lake and Halley's Bank (also known as the Buffalo Gap State Bank) at Buffalo Gap (ECCHS 1970). Both invested heavily in the cattle industry, as well as banking, as did Abram C. Boland, another pioneer settler at Buffalo Gap (Lee and Williams 1964:55,61).

In the Buffalo Gap area foreign capital established horse-breeding as an important local industry. The French-owned Fleur de Lis Ranch at

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Buffalo Gap was famous both for its Pencheron and Arabian horses and for its racetrack, polo matches, and visits by French nobility (DeGrancey 1981; Sundstrom 1994:48-50). After the French owners of the Fleur de Lis sold out, smaller ranches in the Buffalo Gap area continued to raise polo horses and breeding stock until the open range was closed. These included the Martin Valley Ranch (the 777) and the Streeter Ranch.

The cattle boom was over as quickly as it had started (Athearn 1965). Northern herds were reduced by as much as 75% in the big "die out" in the winter of 1886-87, although the Black Hills herds fared better than most (Lee and Williams 1964:154-56). With the realization that another bad winter could come any time, many cattle companies pulled out, rather than start over (Pulling 1940; Lee and Williams 1964). At the same time, western Dakota experienced a flood of homesteaders. Encouraged by good crop yields during the first half of the 1880s, the "honyockers" arrived in large numbers and began fencing the open range. Conflicts over fencing laws and reservation leases had ended unfavorably for the large ranchers. Beginning in 1881, a series of laws were enacted that regulated brands, droving, and trespass onto private lands (Lee and Williams 1964:86-87). Although Custer County was exempted from most of these laws, it was clear that the free-reining days of the Texas drovers would not last forever. A world-wide economic turn-down had lessened both the demand for beef and the availability capital to finance new ventures. By 1890, the days of the big cattle operations were waning. The second Dakota boom, from 1902 to 1914, essentially closed the open range. Small crop farms and mid-sized family ranches had become the focus of the western Dakota economy by the turn of the century.

Homestead Era Settlement and Attempts at Dry-Land Farming

The first Dakota population boom, from 1878 to 1887, was concentrated in that portion of the territory east of the Missouri River and in the Black Hills (Brooks and Jacon 1994:14). The second boom, from 1902-1914, was concentrated in the former reservation lands and open range between the Black Hills and the Missouri (Brooks and Jacon 1994:14). The project area lies between the two and was affected by both. Custer County was organized in 1877, with most of its population in the western third of the county in the vicinity of Custer City and other gold rush towns.

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As with the corporate cattle industry, several factors led to the phenomenal number of claims filed in western South Dakota during the homestead era (Brooks and Jacon 1994). Congress passed a series of homestead laws in order to promote settlement of the unoccupied public domain (Brooks and Jacon 1994). The 1862 Homestead Act allowed any head of family to file on 160 acres of land either by buying at \$1.25 an acre or by living on and working the land for five years. The 1873 Timber Culture Act allowed settlers to take title to 160 acres provided 40 acres had been planted to trees and cared for for 10 years. In 1878, the required number of acres was reduced from 40 to 10. The Dakotas were one of several western territories covered by the Desert Land Act. This 1877 law allowed settlers to purchase 640 acres of land if it was irrigated within three years of filing for the claim. The Enlarged Homestead Act of 1909 and the Stock Raising Homestead Act of 1914 provided for larger holdings in drier areas of the West.

The opening of millions of acres of reservation land to settlement under various cession and allotment acts provided an abundance of land in the area just as immigration from northern Europe was at a high (Ostergren 1983). The promise of land ownership had an almost spiritual quality to both European immigrants and struggling American city dwellers (Fite 1985):

Land, of course, is usually not separated in people's thought from farming. The idea of men and women producing a living on their own land, working in harmony with God, is an idealized picture that has had a strong fascination for Americans. This concept is called the agrarian tradition or agrarian fundamentalism. But whatever name is used, the idea was, and is, that when man has a close relationship to the land, this relationship has special meaning for him and for society. Farmers, it has often been claimed, were better people because they lived on the land. Besides being morally superior, they were more independent, more wedded to liberty and democracy, more honorable, and possessed of a greater love of man and God than other people (Fite 1985:4).

The newly constructed rail-lines were heavily advertised both in the eastern states and provinces and in Europe. Railroads depended on both the immigrant fares and the growth of rural towns to recoup their

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sizable investment in the lines. A series of wet years in the early 1880s had produced impressive crop yields (Brooks and Jacon 1994) and favorable markets encouraged would-be farmers. These rainy years also convinced many people that "rain follows the plow." This was a popular theory that cultivated land somehow led to higher or more regular rainfall. The invention and mass production of farm equipment such as seeders, binders, threshers and combine harvesters also encouraged production of crops like wheat and corn. Some of these grains were used to feed the large numbers of cattle being shipped to eastern markets; however, the burgeoning cities and towns of the East and Midwest also provided ready markets for grain and other cash crops. The local press also promoted settlement. In July 1885, the *Black Hills Journal* asserted that stock raising would inevitably be replaced by crop farming:

Land that only a few years ago was considered unfit for agriculture has been tried and found to produce abundant crops, and the fact is evident that stockmen will have to yield to farmers. There is no doubt that the stock interests have been of benefit to the country, but they are to agriculture what the prospector is to mining...merely the pioneers (The *Black Hills Journal*, Rapid City, D.T., July 17, 1885, cited in Nelson 1986:4).

The first Dakota boom ended with the "great Dakota bust" of 1889-98. Crop failures and the economic panic of 1893 were the principal causes of the bust. Crop losses in the severe droughts of 1889 and 1894 were exacerbated by the newcomers' failure to plant drought-resistant species and varieties. Soils were clayey and rainfall scarce west of the Missouri (Nelson 1986:11); even in favorable years, the successful farming in the area required tillage techniques and crop varieties that most of the homesteaders were not familiar with. It gradually became clear that even the larger 640 acre homesteads were too small to support a family in the semi-arid West. The exodus included two groups of people: those committed to the idea of creating homes in the newly opened lands and those who had filed claims with the intention of selling out at a profit as soon as a good price could be gained. Neither the speculation of quick profits nor the promise of land-ownership was validated by the experience of the 1890s homesteader.

The second Dakota boom lasted from 1902-1914. West of the Missouri, the boom was more intense from 1905-1910, when the West River population more than doubled (Schell 1975:256; Brooks and Jacon

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1994:20). Most of the Great Sioux Reservation was opened to homesteading in 1890 under a lottery system (Nelson 1986:18). As economic conditions improved, a new wave of homesteaders moved into South Dakota to claim these lands. The dry farming movement was gaining force at this time and many would-be farmers thought they could overcome the perennial problems with drought by adopting the experimental methods promoted by the proponents of "Scientific Soil Culture" (Brooks and Jacon 1994:20; Hargreaves 1957).

Eastern Custer County shared in this boom only to a limited extent, as the area was no longer regarded as good farm land. On-going problems with droughts, the most severe occurring in 1910-11, limited the influx of farmers into the area. By this time, however, family ranching was emerging as the mainstay of the local economy. The homestead laws were used to acquire and expand the holdings of these family ranches.

Attempts to extend farming into the West River area of South Dakota led to wide-spread crop failure--and for some settlers threatened starvation--in 1910-1911 and subsequent years. A promotion for the 1910 Buffalo Gap Fair suggested wryly that area residents attend the fair and "see what can be produced under compulsory system of DRY farming" (ECCHS 1970). The problems inherent in trying to farm west of the Missouri were compounded by a change in the homestead system which used a lottery to allocate homesteads (Brooks and Jacon 1994:9). Although homesteaders still chose their claims, those whose lots were chosen later found that most of the good land was gone. This meant that farmers had even less control over the conditions under which they were trying to grow crops. The lack of drought-resistant crop varieties and the inadequate size of homesteads were still problems, as well.

After 1911, the search for solutions to the practical problems caused by drought, deprivation, and depopulation dominated West River life (Nelson 1986:156). Both the government and the railroads attempted to alleviate conditions for the western Dakota homesteaders. In 1912, legislation passed Congress that allowed settlers to defer payment on their claims. The railroads offered free passage for relief supplies; however, little actually materialized due to lack of an organized relief effort (Nelson 1986:141). The passage of relief legislation in the 1910s stood in contrast to efforts to appropriate aid for destitute homesteaders in the 1890s (Fite 1973:262). This reflected a shift in attitudes away from blaming the would-be farmers for their failures to admitting that the region had severe limitations as farm country.

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for food during World War I and with the passage of farmer-friendly legislation at the federal and state levels in the later 1910s. Although attempts to create state-owned elevators and mills failed, a rural credit law enacted in 1917 allowed state loans to farmers. The Federal Farm Loan Act and Federal Warehouse Act both passed in 1916 (Hoover 1991). A herd law passed in 1911 forced cattlemen to pay for damage caused by their livestock (Schell 1975:257). The South Dakota Agricultural Extension Service was created in 1915 to provide technical information to farmers. Local farmers' cooperatives were organized to market farm products and exchange technical information (Nelson 1986:158). Provisions for state-sponsored crop hail insurance passed the state legislature (Schell 1975). The South Dakota State Grange and other rural political organizations also gained strength during this period (Hoover 1983). Such organizations, together with the government-sponsored extension and 4-H clubs, were important social institutions in the area for several decades. The Buffalo Gap grange was one of only two South Dakota grange chapters still active in the 1980s (Hoover 1983).

In spite of these efforts, the next two decades were to be the worst yet for western Dakota farmers. The post-war drop in market demand caused a farm depression. In rural areas of the state, farm foreclosures, bank failure, hunger, and loss of population were the rule. By 1924, South Dakota had the highest per capita debt in the nation (Schell 1975:276). The new rural credit system failed (Fite 1985). Nation-wide economic depression, grasshopper infestations, drought, and severe winters made bad conditions worse in the early 1930s. By December of 1934, 39% of the state's residents were on public assistance, the highest percentage of any state at any time in U.S. history (Schell 1975:292). The state lost 7% of its population in the 1930s (Schell 1975:292). The western counties were especially hard hit (Schell 1975:282). Remarkably, the Buffalo Gap State Bank was one of the few banks that did not close during the bank "holiday" in 1934, despite the difficult times. According to one account, "W.H. Schneider brought money into the bank and said, *this bank will not close, and it didn't*" (ECCHS 1970).

Although government relief efforts would follow, western South Dakota would never again be considered farm country. The farming experiment bowed to the industry that had first proved so profitable in the area: cattle ranching. In 1935, the public domain was closed to homesteading.

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Town-Building

The homestead boom was a period of town-building in eastern Custer County. Towns that had started life as stage stations or railroad terminuses transformed into more stable and permanent communities. Buffalo Gap and Fairburn had been platted as classic railroad "T" towns with the tracks and main street of each forming a T around which a rectangular town was planned (Hammer 1969:230). The tents, shacks, and rapidly constructed storefronts of Buffalo Gap were quickly replaced by permanent housing and commercial buildings. Describing other Dakota Territory railroad towns, an observer wrote: "Language cannot describe the rapidity with which these communities are built up" (William Hare quoted in Hammer 1969:228). Churches, schools, fraternal lodges, and community centers were now housed in permanent structures. The community gained a more peaceful atmosphere as the cattle drives of the open range era gave way to family ranching and farming. Two other industries--quarrying the local "calico" sandstone and mining Fuller's earth--had developed at Buffalo Gap by the turn of the century, providing another source of jobs and outside revenue (Tallent 1974:307; Sundstrom 1977:196; Buffalo Gap *Republican* 1896 issues). By 1896, the following activities were available to Buffalo Gap residents: IOOF (sponsoring "masquerade balls"), Black Hills Improvement Association, Black Hills Irrigation Association, spelling bees, Sons of Rest, a performance by a "colored troupe," ladies aide (dinners and balls), Modern Woodmen of America (picnic and excursion), organized wolf hunts, "historical and current events society," GAR (cemetery decoration), croquet, chautauquas, baseball, ice-cream socials, Independence Day picnics, a school sociable, many dances, and several cattle round-ups (Buffalo Gap *Republican* 1896 issues).

In 1895, most of the commercial buildings constructed during Buffalo Gap's initial boom burned. While the town never recovered its previous size, by 1908 a substantial commercial district was in existence in Buffalo Gap. This contained the railroad depot, Alexander Hotel, Stabler's saloon, two churches, a drug store, Marty's grocery, Busted's dry goods store, Balou's newspaper and print shop (combined with the Post Office), a community building, two banks, a pool hall, several rooming houses, Wilson Hotel, a flour mill and feed store, Smith's grocery and butcher shop, a lumber and coal store, a fraternal lodge, and an auditorium. The public school was housed in a stone building constructed in 1897, replacing the former dance hall that was

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used for classes in the early 1890s. Stone buildings were constructed in 1910 for Citizens Bank and the Alexander Hotel annex.

The town auditorium and adjacent park were constructed in 1908 to house an annual fair. The fair ran for three days and featured livestock and crop exhibitions, horse races, band concerts, base-ball, wrestling matches, "high-class vaudeville," and a rodeo with a "teepee setting" race in addition to the more conventional events (ECCHS 1970). The tipi race involved women from the nearby Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. Two-woman teams would race their wagons around the track and then set up a tipi in front of the grandstand. First prize for this event was \$5.00. Special trains from Rapid City and Hot Springs boosted attendance at the fairs. Other entertainment available in the 1910s included the Buffalo Gap Dramatic Club, a brass band, and the Modern Woodmen of America lodge. In 1915, the Buffalo Gap Commercial Club, was in full swing, promoting "immigration, public improvements, and new enterprises," including a proposed 100,000 acre irrigation project (ECCHS 1970).

Buffalo Gap continued to prosper into the 1920s. A high school opened in 1923. The Nolan Elevator was built in 1926 to accommodate the shift toward grain farming. Cement side-walks were installed to replace the old board walks and a gas light was installed at the corner of Main and 2nd streets.

Fairburn boomed slightly later. During the late 1910s, the Warren Lamb Lumber Company made the town its shipping point for lumber cut in Custer State Park and destined for the burgeoning town of Rapid City, 30 miles to the north. During the decade from 1910-1920, Fairburn gained a high school, a hotel, three mercantiles, a creamery, a feed store, two pool halls, a bank, a church, an Odd Fellows hall, and a newspaper, as well as most of its commercial and residential buildings (ECCHS 1970; Sundstrom 1977:194-95). Nearly all of Fairburn's historic buildings date to this period. Among the organizations active during this period were the IOOF and Rebekah lodges, Fairburn Club Band (1908-1918), Men's German Band (1917), and Women's Basketball Team (1920).

Fairburn prospered through the next decade as well, with the addition of another church and a grange. In 1927, the Warren-Lamb lumber company ended its Custer State Park operations, and Fairburn began to shrivel. The town never recovered from the loss of Warren-Lamb's business and the farm depressions of the 1920s and 1930s. Although the town maintains a grade school and the IOOF lodge, no viable businesses exist there today.

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Family and Corporate Ranching

The first family ranches in the Black Hills were established soon after it was opened to non-native settlement (Lee and Williams 1964). Some of the earliest ranches in eastern Custer County were Tom Sweeney's Sweeney Cattle Company (1877), Abram Boland's ranch (1877), Lank Forbes and William Grimes WG ranch (1878), and Gus Craven's Oxen Buckle ranch (1879) (Lee and Williams 1964). Many of these early ranches began as homesteads or squatters' claims, gradually increasing in size through a process of buying out other homesteaders and having relatives file on adjacent claims. The Stock Raising Homestead Act passed in 1916 allowed the acquisition of 640 acre parcels for stock raising. While this did not constitute an economically viable "spread" in the dry west-river country, it made the process of expanding ranch holdings easier. The small ranchers also took advantage of open range to pasture their cattle and horses.

During the 1880s, the rise of the "cow capitalists" overshadowed the smaller family ranches in western Dakota. In less than a quarter century, however, the large operations had largely disappeared, leaving the smaller ranches to regain their place in the economy of the area. In fact, small ranch operations always outnumbered the big outfits and were not threatened economically by them, due to the high demand for beef and horses during the gold rush and early homestead eras.

Several trends characterize the history of ranching in the project area. The first was a process of consolidating homesteads into larger holdings. This process was facilitated by the failures of dry-land farming, speculators filing on land which they had no intention of farming, and the exit of many of the big cattle droving operations after the heavy losses of 1886-87. In general, ranchers fared better than farmers during droughts. After all, bison had thrived for thousands of years on the West River grasslands, while there is little evidence that farming had ever been a viable subsistence base in the area, even when it was colonized by farming tribes from the eastern river valleys (cf. Alex 1981).

A second trend was toward specialization in cattle and feed crops. Many of the ranches in eastern Custer County started as horse breeding operations or diversified livestock operations. For example, Streeters began in 1889 by raising cattle, horses, pigs, poultry, and grain crops. Later, they specialized in horses and then cattle. Three other ranches in the project area specialized in horses. Two Frenchmen started the

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famous Fleur de Lis ranch in 1885, specializing in Arabian and Percheron stallions (DeGrancey 1981; Sundstrom 1994:48-50). These horses became an important and highly desired breeding stock in the Black Hills area. The Streeter, Sanson, Martin Valley, and 7-11 ranches also started as homesteads, but their owners quickly took advantage of the abundance of open range to develop horse-breeding operations. (Norman Streeter had first come to the Black Hills in 1887 while delivering horses to the 7-11 ranch.) The eastern Custer County ranches were well-known for their fine polo ponies, trained by the young Streeters, Sansons, and Martins (ECCHS 1970). Polo equipment from the Streeter and Sanson ranches is on display at the Custer County Historical Museum in Custer. Other ranches in the area specialized in cattle.

The horse-breeders later turned to cattle for their economic mainstay. The greater forage requirements of horses made them less profitable when free range was no longer available. In addition, the availability of tractors and automobiles had greatly reduced the demand for horses. When the open range "fenced up" Streeters and other ranchers sold out their horse breeding businesses and ran only cattle. The flamboyant Frenchmen sold out altogether and left the area.

After the crop failures of the initial homestead era, the remaining ranchers and farmers turned increasingly to grain farming. Alfalfa was introduced in the area around the turn of the century and gradually gained importance as a cash and feed crop (Brooks and Jacon 1994:22). A 1911 photograph shows a wagon heaped with alfalfa seed, with the Buffalo Gap State Bank and land office in the background (ECCHS 1970). Nolan's grain elevator was built in 1926 to accommodate the trend toward grain farming. It remains in operation today as the only grain elevator in the county. Besides discouraging further attempts at farming, the 1910-1911 drought had made additional property available to the settlers who stayed. Anything left behind was appropriated, from buildings to crops to forage to furniture. Often, this allowed those who stayed to pay up the back taxes and get title to the abandoned land (Nelson 1986:132). In this way, sufficient holdings for viable ranching operations could be obtained.

The third trend was away from huge cattle operations to family and smaller corporate ranches. After 1886-87 ranching became a conservative, not a speculative, activity (Pulling 1940:504). With the closure of the open range, ranching became a more capital-intensive industry. Ranchers had to invest in land, reservation or government-land leases, and livestock feed. At the same time, the arrival of the railroads made the long cattle drives unnecessary. This made marketing of beef and

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livestock easier and produced a more desirable product, as well. The dry, stringy beef of earlier times went the way of the Texas longhorn and the cattle drive. The opening of much of the Great Sioux Reservation to settlement in 1890 also favored the small rancher. Huge tracts of reservation land were no longer available for the large herds; however, smaller ranges left after allotment and homesteading were more than adequate to the needs of the smaller ranches (Pulling 1940).

The family ranchers who stayed through the uncertain times of the cattle barons, the droughts and severe winters of the 1880s and 1910s, and the economic collapse of the 1930s form the nucleus of eastern Custer County today. The area seems to have found its economic niche in family ranching. Many of the ranches in the area have been in operation for over a century. These include the Streeter, Martin, Sanson, Edgerton, Downen, Smith, Lintz, Rasmussen, Gorsuch, and Callan ranches, among others.

Discussion and Conclusions

The economic changes experienced by the residents of eastern Custer County did not come painlessly. The discovery of gold in 1874 ended a way of life for the area's native inhabitants. The armed resistance of Lakotas and Cheyennes to white intrusion into the Black Hills country continued sporadically until the end of 1890 (cf. Sundstrom 1977:28-33; ECCHS 1970; Tarbell 1912). During the Ghost Dance disturbance of December 1890, Lakotas from the nearby reservations reportedly raided parts of eastern Custer County, taking horses and household goods and frightening settlers (Tarbell 1912:427; ECCHS 1970). Troops and arms were sent to the area to aid the settlers (Tarbell 1912); however, no real battles ensued. The Ghost Dance disturbance was the culmination of the Lakotas' bitter struggle for cultural survival in the aftermath of losing both their homeland and their means of subsistence (Mooney 1896).

Like other gold-rush areas of the West, the Black Hills experienced its share of lawlessness and disappointment. The promise of wealth was counterbalanced by the threat of Indian attack, highway robbery, disease, horse-thieves, violent disputes over mining claims, and hunger for those venturing into the "dreary Black Hills," as a popular song of the day described conditions (Hood and Hood 1977:302):

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The roadhouse at Cheyenne is filled every night
With loafers and bummers of most every plight.
On their backs is no clothes, in their pockets no bills,
Each day they keep starting for the dreary Black Hills.

I got to Cheyenne, no gold could I find.
I thought of the lunch route I'd left far behind.
Through rain, hail, and snow, frozen plumb to the gills,
They call me the orphan of the dreary Black Hills.

Kind friend to conclude, my advice I'll unfold,
Don't go to the Black Hills a-hunting for gold.
Railroad speculators their pockets you'll fill
By taking a trip to the those dreary Black Hills.

Don't go away, stay at home if you can,
Stay away from that city, they call it Cheyenne,
For old Sitting Bull or Comanche Bills
They will take off your scalp in the dreary Black Hills.

Those who discovered that the wealth of the area was as much in its grass as in its gold soon established thriving ranches. Long-distance shipment was difficult, but the growing population provided a steady demand for beef and horses. The drovers, too, experienced their share of frontier lawlessness. In 1876, Joel Collins gave his twin brother Joe 600 Texas cattle to trail to the Black Hills. There Joe slaughtered the cattle, used the proceeds to buy a gambling house and what was politely referred to as a dance-hall, and hooked up with the infamous Sam Bass to rob a Union Pacific train on their way back to Texas. Both men and their accomplices were shot to death by pursuing rangers (Lee and Williams 1964). The ballad of Sam Bass romanticizes Collins's adventures. "Sam left the Collins ranch in the merry month of May/With a herd of Texas cattle the Black Hills for to see/Sold out in Custer City and then got on a spree/A harder set of cowboys you seldom ever see" (Hood and Hood 1977:366-67).

The small ranches soon found themselves in competition with the Texas drovers for open range. Texas tick fever threatened their livestock even after quarantine laws were passed (Lee and Williams 1964:146-47). The real conflict, however, was between the cattlemen, large and small, and the "honyockers" (Lee and Williams 144). This

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conflict culminated in 1892 in the so-called Johnson County War, just west of the Wyoming Black Hills, in which federal troops were sent in to quell violence between cattlemen and homesteaders (Athearn 1965:181-82).

The homesteaders tended to settle along streams, thereby limiting the drovers and ranchers access to water, and to break up the open range into small parcels. In western South Dakota, this worked to the smaller ranchers' advantage, as the remaining tracts of public domain were sufficient to support the smaller herds. Local ranchers worked to improve their stock and gradually adjusted their methods to the unpredictable climate (Lee and Williams 1964). They also organized themselves for protection against cattle-theft and to lobby the newly-formed state legislature for favorable laws (Lee and Williams 1964).

The coming of the railroad opened new markets to the stock raisers, but also increased the influx of homesteaders. Barbed wire meant the end of the cattle empires, as well as the horse-breeding ranches; however, the small ranchers were able to turn the homesteading legislation to their advantage in acquiring the land they needed to build profitable cattle ranches.

A series of droughts and bad markets meant disaster for many of the homesteaders (Athearn 1965). Some were literally "starving to death on a government claim," in the words of the old song (Hood and Hood 1977:66). A new understanding of the Great Plains environment emerged from the homesteaders' experience: the climate was semi-arid at best and always unpredictable. All the plowing in the world would not make rain come. The land would never make suitable farmland, but an enterprising person could make a living raising cattle, sheep, or feed crops.

The role of towns changed with the changing local economies. The progress of the railroad could make or break a town (Hammer 1969:230). The arrival of the Elkhorn line at Buffalo Gap, spelled the end of the town of Minnesela in the northern Black Hills, a stop on the Medora-Deadwood stage route (Koller 1949:51). Buffalo Gap boomed for a few months until the line went on to Rapid City; then, many residents left to settle at the new terminus. In the 1880s Buffalo Gap went from frontier stage stop to booming cow town. It was merely a place to pass through on your way to or from somewhere else--the plains of Texas or the gold strikes of the Black Hills. The transient population made few attempts to establish order or respectability, if such were possible among drovers at the end of a three-month drive and gold-seekers convinced of quick riches ahead.

A more permanent population was gradually building, however, and taking over the reins of the community. Law and order came to town in

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the person of Marshall Arch Riordan, and children coming home from the new school were no longer endangered by the random bullets of cowboys on their bi-weekly spree (ECCHS 1970; Casey 1949). The town gradually gained an air of respectability. As the beef bonanza and the gold rush died down, Buffalo Gap shrank, but a more permanent community took shape. The stores, churches, community buildings, and lodge halls built during the transition to a localized farming and ranching economy would form the core of historic Buffalo Gap.

The closure of the open range did not end conflict between West River homesteaders and ranchers (Brooks and Jacon 1994:24). Some settlers worried that the growing emphasis on stock raising in the area would mean a return to a less civilized way of life. Those who believed farming to be the true work of the world opposed programs that encouraged livestock production (Nelson 1986:151). Nevertheless, the droughts and farm depressions of the 1920s and 1930s fueled the trends toward consolidation of farm holdings and toward stock-raising. At the same time, mechanization also forced out small farmers, whose production was inadequate to pay for necessary equipment. This trend has continued to the present with a steady decline in the number of farms and a steady rise in the size of farms and ranches.

As automobiles and highways replaced wagons and railroad tracks, the towns of eastern Custer County lost their remaining economic base. Like other western towns, Buffalo Gap and Fairburn were transformed from booming frontier hubs to virtual ghost towns by three factors the town builders could not have foreseen: the automobile, the mail-order house, and the replacement of labor by capital in agriculture (Nelson 1986:83). The homesteading boom west of the Missouri had created a landscape of railroad towns, small ranches, and reservations (Brooks and Jacon 1994). Now the railroad towns began to disappear. The dwindling population associated with each town found it easier and cheaper to shop in Rapid City or Hot Springs. While Buffalo Gap, Hermosa, and Fairburn still support grade-schools, meeting halls, and a tiny handful of retail businesses, none can be said to have a live commercial district at present. Hermosa is now home to commuters from nearby Rapid City. Whether Fairburn or Buffalo Gap will undergo a similar transition from ranch town to bedroom community is unknown. For now, the built environment of the two towns is a vivid reminder of their fast rise and fall as commercial centers.

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F. Associated Property Types

Name of property type: RESOURCES ASSOCIATED WITH HOMESTEAD-ERA
COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES

To qualify for listing, these resources must have been used as commercial buildings during the homestead era in western South Dakota, ca. 1880-1935, and must retain typical characteristics of commercial buildings of that era. This includes the main period of homestead activity, as well as events immediately preceding and following it. The property type includes retail shops (groceries, drug stores, dry goods stores, general stores, saddle shops, lumberyards, etc.), storage facilities, banks, grain elevators, stockyards, professional service offices (doctors', dentists', and lawyers' offices), saloons, hotels, restaurants, livery stables, freight offices, and the like. Together, these properties represent the full range of commercial activities around which frontier towns organized and expanded during the homestead era.

The distinctive appearance of western frontier towns resulted from attempts to respond quickly to settlers' need for access to a wide variety of goods and services in newly opened areas. Simple, utilitarian buildings were quickly erected in the new towns, usually of readily available materials such as wood and native stone. Builders employed the familiar construction techniques and plans used for other vernacular buildings. This use of vernacular building methods allowed entrepreneurs to set up businesses rapidly and cheaply in order to keep up in the frenzied competition that marked the establishment of western boom towns. Competition among the hundreds of American settlements founded in the late 19th century stimulated building that strove, within the limitations of the frontier, to emulate the eastern cities in scale and style (Longstreth 1980:15).

Architectural historian Vincent Scully describes the function of western frontier town architecture in this way:

...So out in little towns from the Dakotas to Oklahoma and the Panhandle of Texas, the crossing of two streets makes a place in the emptiness, the courthouse perhaps rising as the culmination of one of them, which may run endlessly into open desert on the reverse bearing. Along those Western streets the false fronts of the wooden buildings masked their gable ends to provide a true street facade, reaching

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for urban scale, for a shape in the vastness. The architectural instinct of their anonymous builders was a good and right one, as it was when they provided their streets with resonant boardwalks shaded over by the porches of buildings, supported on wooden posts (Scully 1988:79-80).

Within the project area, commercial buildings can be divided into four basic types: the false-front style retail store; the bank building, reflecting more formalized architectural ideals; the two-story hotel or hotel-restaurant combination; and the more strictly utilitarian commercial buildings.

False-front style commercial buildings are typical of the era. False fronts served to visually distinguish commercial buildings from the essentially similar domestic dwellings and to lend an air of size and prosperity to what often were small and economically shaky enterprises. The false front also provided space for a signboard and other simple ornamentation designed to draw potential customers to the business place, again in response to the highly competitive atmosphere of early frontier towns. The false-front style building in the project area typically consists of a single-story rectangular gable-roofed balloon-frame building with a front room for public business and back room for the storage of stock. The false-front itself may be stepped, pedimented, or plain. In retail shops the front room was fitted with built-in shelves along both long walls with counters and display cases arranged parallel to the long axis of the building. For other uses, buildings were fitted with desks, dentist chair, barber chair, or other appropriate furniture in the front room. Various wall treatments were used including beaded and tongue-and-groove paneling, wainscoting, etc. Elaborate light fixtures and pressed metal ceilings in the front rooms are typical. Double or single recessed doors inset between or beside multipane display windows are typical of this style. Exterior cladding is clapboard, stucco, brick-pattern asphalt or pressed metal. Many of the buildings had wood awnings extending over the side-walks in front of the building.

A variant of the false-front building constructed of native stone had a front parapet, with a flat or shed roof extending back from it. The other three sides of the building are usually also made of stone, but these are constructed in a random or uncoursed design, rather than in the coursed pattern used for the facade. Other buildings used brick or stucco over brick for the side and back walls. These buildings retain the concept of presenting a facade bigger than the building behind it,

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building.

While some banks started as simple false-front style buildings, those that remained past the earliest years of town-building usually were housed in more impressive and substantial structures. These tended to be made of brick or stone, to occupy prime street-corner locations, and to be finished in the interior with marble or hardwood trim. Architectural design incorporated classical elements such as pillars and pedimented windows and doorways. As visible symbols of a community's prosperity, banks tended to be the most elaborate and expensively furnished commercial buildings in frontier towns. Banks in the project area were one-story buildings with a large outer room divided lengthwise by a tellers' counter. Behind or to one side of the tellers' counter was a back room for storage, part of which was occupied by the vault.

The third type of commercial building in the project area is the hotel or hotel-restaurant combination. These structures were two-story square or rectangular structures, with flat or gabled roofs and made of wood. Architectural details such as open-work roof brackets and ornamental door fixtures enlivened the otherwise plain exteriors of these buildings. Windows and doors were arranged symmetrically along the front and sides of the buildings. Most of the gabled-roof hotels had false fronts on the side of the building facing the main street. Most of the hotels were painted on the exterior, with the name of the establishment painted either across the false front or between upper and lower banks of windows. A historic photograph of the Commercial Hotel in Buffalo Gap shows a small corner balcony above the main, inset doorway, pedimented upper story windows, and a bank of large display windows extending across the entire front of the building (ECCHS 1970); however, most of the homestead-era hotels were less elaborate. Sleeping rooms occupied the upper story of the hotel buildings, with the lower story given over to a combination of sleeping rooms, lobby, and/or dining room. Restaurants or saloons often occupied most of the lower stories of these buildings. Interiors were generally quite plain, with ornamentation limited to woodwork around doorways and windows. Some hotels had beaded or tongue-and-groove paneling and/or painted plaster walls, while others had more spartan interiors.

The last type of commercial building in the survey area comprises utilitarian storage, marketing, or production facilities. These include grain elevators, livery barns, storage sheds, creameries, and stockyard offices. The utilitarian, vernacular appearance of these buildings reflects their specific functions. These tend to be wood-frame buildings

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with or without false-fronts and generally lacking exterior ornamentation.

RESOURCES ASSOCIATED WITH HOMESTEAD-ERA COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

This category encompasses three types of properties in the project area: community buildings and associated parks; lodge halls; and churches. Community buildings include county- or community-owned properties such as auditoriums, parks, town halls, and fire halls. To qualify for listing, properties must have been used for community activities, such as fairs, sports events, church services, lodge meetings, public dinners, or town meetings. The resources must retain the typical characteristics of homestead-era properties, such as false-front style architecture, lack of elaborate landscaping, and open floor plans.

Town parks of this era typically utilized otherwise vacant land adjacent to community buildings. These parks often contained baseball diamonds, with or without backstops, and sometimes contained fixtures such as picnic tables, open wood-frame shelters over concrete pads, band shells, and play equipment. Landscaping is usually limited to rows of trees at the edge of the park or inside a picnic area. These parks reflect the basic need for an outdoor gathering place for community events, rather than serving as show pieces for the community.

Community buildings in this area generally echo the false-front architectural style associated with commercial buildings of the period. Most are gable-roofed, wood-frame buildings of simple, vernacular design and construction. (An exception would be the much more formal and substantial county courthouses typical of this era; however, none occur within the project area.) Such structures enclosed large, open rooms adaptable to a variety of uses, such as plays, basketball games, town meetings, and fair exhibits. A smaller ante-room and/or ticket kiosk might be placed near the main entrance to the building and a basement or mezzanine might be constructed to provide additional space for seating or activities. High ceilings, hardwood floors and basketball goals are typically found in auditoriums; however, permanent seats were not installed except in balconies or mezzanines. Most buildings lacked a permanent stage; however, some had a small stage at the end farthest from the main entrance. Restrooms might be present near the entrance or in the basement, or in separate outbuildings. Such buildings varied in size from small meeting houses to large auditoriums. Each was expected

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to serve a variety of functions and the interior space was largely left empty to accommodate different uses. Both exteriors and interiors were plain; however, some exterior details as flagpoles, bell-towers, and covered entry-ways may be present.

Lodge halls in this area are one- or two-story rectangular wood-frame buildings with gable roofs and false fronts. These are similar to the commercial buildings, but lack the recessed doorways and wood awnings of the storefront buildings. The one-story lodge contains a large front room extending the width and most of the length of the building, with a smaller room at the rear. The two-story lodge contains large, open rooms on each level, with the main meeting room on the second story. Lodge halls have little exterior or interior ornamentation. The rather stark appearance of these buildings reflects the limited resources of the groups constructing them. Apparently the special furnishings were considered more important than the lodge buildings themselves which were viewed largely as utilitarian meeting places.

Churches in this area serve both community and religious functions; thus, they are included in the general community resource property type. Homestead-era churches were simple one-story wood frame structures with gable-end entryways. Many had a protruding central steeple tower at the front entrance topped with a spire or belfry. Most had elevated porches leading to a double door protected by a hood or roof, either set into the steeple tower or directly in front of it. Other churches common to this period had a short steeple extending from one end of the gable roof or no steeple at all. Symmetrically placed gothic, segmented, or narrow rectangular windows are typical. Most churches had rectangular floor plans, with pews arranged to form one or two central aisles leading to a dais at the back of the room. A small ante room might be present near the door. Some churches had finished basements to provide additional space for meetings, Sunday school classes, public dinners, and the like.

RESOURCES ASSOCIATED WITH HOMESTEAD-ERA FAMILY RANCHES

Historic resources associated with ranching include houses, bunkhouses, barns, ice-houses, root cellars, storage sheds, corrals and chutes, granaries, corn cribs, horse barns, and riding arenas, as well as the actual pastures and fields (Brooks and Jacon 1994). These are typically of vernacular design and construction and may employ a variety

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of locally available materials including wood, logs, native stone, metal sheeting, and concrete. A qualifying resource will have been used historically for ranching activities or housing of ranch owners or workers, will retain its basic historic configuration and appearance, and will retain its physical association with the ranch property.

Both barns and houses are highly variable in style, building material, and floor plan. A typical ranch house would be a two-story wood frame building with two to four rooms on each level and a cellar beneath; however, there are many variations, ranging from one-room claim shanties to large houses with several rooms per floor. Barns may have been constructed from purchased plans or according to vernacular tradition. Gable, gambrel, and hipped roofs are all present in the area, as are a variety of window and door treatments.

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H. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

The multiple property listing of rural resources of eastern Custer County, South Dakota, is based on a 1991 historic sites survey sponsored by the Custer County Commission and the South Dakota State Historical Preservation Center. Mark Hufstetler and Lon Johnson of Renewable Technologies, Inc., conducted the survey (Hufstetler 1991). A master list of 150 historic properties was prepared by surveying all public roadways in the area, as well as the streets of the townsites of Hermosa, Fairburn, and Buffalo Gap. Of these, 90 properties were selected for more detailed recording, including residences, farmsteads, churches, schoolhouses, commercial structures, and civic buildings. Selection criteria included level of historic integrity, presence or lack of intrusive non-historic features, indications of threatened damage or destruction, and accessibility to survey personnel. The selected properties reflect a geographical and functional cross-section of the project area. The surveyers noted "excellent potential historic districts" in Buffalo Gap and Fairburn (Hufstetler 1991:13), as well as a wide variety of potentially significant rural resources.

The selected properties related to several historic contexts used by state historic preservation planning personnel in South Dakota (cf. Brooks and Jacon 1994). Most commercial structures, residences, town halls, schools, and churches in Buffalo Gap, Fairburn, Hermosa, and Folsom related were associated with the "Permanent Rural and Urban Pioneer Settlement: Urban Development" context. Other properties were associated with the "Depression and Rebuilding" context. These included several residences, the Buffalo Gap Fire Department, several social organization halls and community buildings, the Nolan Feed & Seed Company, and four farms with "pattern book" structures (Hufstetler 1991).

The selected properties were recorded by preparing sketch maps of each building group, including interior floor plans of many buildings. Each building was photographed, using both color transparency and black-and-white film. Written notes were used to describe sites and their cultural features. A site form was generated for each property using South Dakota Historic Preservation Center computerized forms. Sketch maps and floor plans were drawn on archival paper. In completing the site forms, field data were supplemented by information from the Custer County Register of Deeds and County Assessor's office records, unpublished historic documents from the Custer County Library, and various county history books (cf. Sundstrom 1976; Custer County

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Centennial Committee 1961; Hesnard 1986; Eastern Custer County Historical Society 1970).

Based on this information, South Dakota State Historical Preservation Center personnel decided to develop a multiple resource nomination including commercial and civic buildings in Buffalo Gap and Fairburn and one representative cattle ranch. Significant property types were based primarily on function (business and community buildings) and secondarily on time period (homestead era buildings). The ranch includes both domestic and business-related components. It fills in an important gap in understanding the forces of economic change in the study area during this period. Both Buffalo Gap and Fairburn contain central business districts with high levels of historic integrity. Besides providing striking visual examples of turn of the century western streetscapes, these districts closely reflect building booms related to homestead-era settlement and subsequent near abandonment as larger towns gained prominence in the area.

The Streeter Ranch was chosen for inclusion in the nomination for several reasons. With the exception of one hay barn, the entire original 1889 ranch is intact. The ranch house is a composite of several buildings brought in as individual homestead holdings were consolidated into larger ranches. The ranch is still owned by the Streeter family, who were able to provide information about its history. The ranch thus both illustrates historical trends and provides an intact example of an early homestead-era cattle operation.

Historic contexts were identified based on scholarly treatments of area history (e.g. Nelson 1986; Robbins 1962; Schell 1975) and state historic planning documents (e.g. Brooks and Jacon 1994). While houses and farm/ranch structures form a significant historic resource in eastern Custer County, it was felt that the commercial and community buildings best illustrated the complex economic history of the study area. What sets eastern Custer County apart from other areas of the American West is its rapidly shifting role in various economic spheres. Within the last quarter of the 19th century and the first quarter of the 20th, the economic focus of the area underwent four major shifts: first from Lakota Indian reservation and buffalo hunting ground to transportation and supply depot for the Black Hills gold rush, later from huge-scale open-range cattle operations to modest homesteads, and finally to its present focus on individual family ranches served by larger towns outside the project area.

The two historic towns and the ranch chosen for this nomination reflect and illustrate this aspect of eastern Custer County history.

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Requirements for integrity were derived from knowledge of the condition of existing properties, as recorded by the 1991 historic sites survey and as observed in the field in 1994. Buildings were considered to have integrity if they were constructed in response to one or more of the economic foci and if they retained their basic historic configuration and character.

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