

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

For NPS use only

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

received **MAY 14 1986**

date entered **JUN 13 1986**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Swede Prairie Progressive Farmers' Club

and/or common Roberg Hall

2. Location

street & number County Highway 9 N/A not for publication

city, town Swede Prairie Township vicinity of Clarkfield

state Minnesota code 22 county Yellow Medicine code 173

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Swede Prairie Township
c/o Charles F. Gaffney, Township Board Chairman

street & number R. R. I

city, town Minneota N/A vicinity of state Minnesota 56264

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Yellow Medicine County Courthouse

street & number 415 9th Avenue

city, town Granite Falls state Minnesota 56241

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Minnesota Statewide Historic Sites Survey

has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1984-85 federal state county local

depository for survey records State Historic Preservation Office, Fort Snelling History Center

city, town St. Paul state Minnesota 55111

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> moved date <u>Summer 1926</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Swede Prairie Progressive Farmers' Club, now known as Roberg Hall, is located in the Northwest Quarter of Section 27, Swede Prairie Township, central Yellow Medicine County. The hall is situated on a one acre site on the south side of a gravel section road about 1,600 feet east of paved County Road 9.

The hall is a one story woodframe building which measures approximately 21' x 48' and is covered with clapboard siding and a wood shingle roof. The building has four bay sidewalls with rectangular 1/1 sash. On the north facade is a gable roofed enclosed entrance, possibly added in 1926. A red hollow tile foundation with four pane fixed sash was installed under the hall in 1926. A wooden sign reading "Roberg Hall, Swede Prairie Township" is affixed above the main entrance. The building is in good condition and still in use as a township hall.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1915 **Builder/Architect** Swede Prairie Progressive Farmers Club

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Swede Prairie Progressive Farmers' Club (now known as Roberg Hall), built in 1915 in central Yellow Medicine County, is historically significant as a structure which served as the home of a grassroots level farmers' organization which arose from a climate of widespread agricultural discontent during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and which typifies the attempts of rural Minnesota farmers during this period to organize locally for increased economic and political control over agricultural production.

The Swede Prairie Progressive Farmers' Club was established in 1913 as part of a larger national trend which began shortly after the Civil War. Beginning in the 1860's, high shipping costs set by rail companies, tight credit, wild market price fluctuations highly dependent on political climate, and increasing costs of production produced several waves of discontent among farmers attempting to achieve fair profits for produce raised on family farms. Rapid increases in farm mechanization in the late nineteenth century brought product surpluses and further declines in prices. An increased political disenfranchisement felt by farmers as their numbers declined proportionally from 50% of the total U.S. working population in the 1870's to less than 25% in the 1920's led to attempts to organize for increased political impact. Frustrated over the perceived control over agricultural marketing by "big business" and the unresponsiveness of state and national government, farmers began to organize, first with the Grange, a national organization established in 1869. Other large farmers' organizations followed, including the Farmers' Alliance (est. 1880), the People's Party (est. 1892), the Farmers' Union (est. 1902), the American Society of Equity (est. 1902), and the Non-Partisan League (est. 1915). These organizations studied agricultural issues, formed cooperative grain elevators, cooperative grain marketing and livestock shipping associations, cooperative stores and buying clubs, and lobbied at various government levels for farm issues.

In addition to the formation of large farm organizations, the late nineteenth and early twentieth century brought the spontaneous formation of grassroots level organizations. A history of strong individualism among farmers and the difficulties of regional and crop-specific farm problems undermined the effectiveness of some national groups and led to a preference for locally-based action. Government support for agricultural education and experimentation through the Morrill Act of 1862, the Hatch Act of 1887, and the Smith-Lever Act of 1914 which supported the foundation of agricultural colleges, agricultural experiment stations, and a system of county agents encouraged the formation of local groups to study scientific agricultural practices, discuss farm issues, and cooperate locally to market produce. In Minnesota and other Middle Western states, the years 1902-1919 saw a ground swell of farmers' organizations, many in which county agents played a central role after 1914. The Swede Prairie Progressive Farmers' Club is a good example of these local organizations. Unlike many, however, the Club choose to construct its own headquarters and meeting hall, making it more visible than similar organizations in other parts of the state and leaving a building which has outlasted the club itself and exists as a rare physical representative of grassroots farmers' movements.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

9. Major Bibliographical References

Narvestad, Carl and Amy. History of Yellow Medicine County, Minnesota, 1872-1972.
Granite Falls: Yellow Medicine County Historical Society, 1972.
Saloutos, Theodore and John D. Hicks. Agricultural Discontent in the Middle West, 1900-1939. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1951. SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 1 acre
Quadrangle name Minneota NW, Minn. Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A	<u>15</u>	<u>2698110</u>	<u>4949002</u>	B			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C				D			
E				F			
G				H			

Verbal boundary description and justification

All that part of the NW $\frac{1}{2}$ of Sec. 27, T114, R42, Yellow Medicine County, Minnesota, described as follows, to-wit: Commencing at a point on the North line of Sec. 27, T114, R42, 1,590 feet East from the Northwest corner of the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Sec. 27, running thence South a distance

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries (continued)

state	N/A	code	N/A	county	N/A	code	N/A
state	N/A	code	N/A	county	N/A	code	N/A

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Susan Granger, Field Assistant
 organization Minnesota Historical Society date May 1985
 street & number Fort Snelling History Center telephone (612) 726-1171
 city or town St. Paul state Minnesota 55111

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 Russell W. Fridley date 5/8/86
 title State Historic Preservation Officer

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Allen Byers Keeper of the National Register date 6-13-86

Attest: _____ date _____
 Chief of Registration

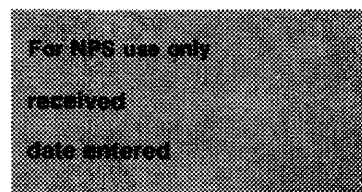
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**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

Yellow Medicine County, Minnesota

Continuation sheet Swede Prairie Farmers' Club Item number 8

Page 1



Item #8 (Significance) continued:

The Swede Prairie Progressive Farmers' Club was formed in 1913 by a group of local farmers who first met at the township's District 86 schoolhouse. The club held weekly meetings, charged annual dues of 25¢, and quickly attracted most of the farmers in the area into its membership. Like many similar farmers' organizations formed at the time, the club's purposes were varied, but its primary function related to agricultural production. Farmers joined the club in an attempt to reduce their production costs, improve their marketing ability, and learn about new agricultural techniques. During their meetings club members researched and discussed topics such as grain and livestock buying and selling, prevention of stock disease, crop rotation and conservation practices, and diversified farming theories. In an effort to reduce production costs the group investigated prices and collectively bought seed, fence posts, wire and twine, coal, potatoes, and oil and grease. Committees were formed to study markets and advise the group on selling. In 1914 the club formed a livestock shipping association in cooperation with a similar farmers' club in Lyon County. The association existed for several years under various managers, and many club members agreed to sell only through the association. Members also debated a number of political topics during club meetings including women's suffrage, U.S.-Mexican relations, public control of utilities, and morality issues. The club also served a vital social function for farm families in the area who, particularly during the busy growing season, were relatively isolated from friends, neighbors, and townspeople in the years before good roads and widespread auto transportation. Members of the club often sponsored parties, ice cream socials, and other social activities.

In 1915, after two years' of existence, club members erected the present building in the northwest corner of Section 26 for use as a headquarters and meeting hall. Each club member contributed two days' labor toward the project and the building was financed through the sale of \$5.00 shares to members. Beginning in the summer of 1915 all club meetings were held in the hall and most community social functions (except gambling and dancing which were specifically prohibited) were held there. In 1926 the building was moved from its lowlying site in Section 26 to higher ground across the road in Section 27. When the building was moved to this site, a basement was installed. It has stood on this site since that time.

It is unclear when the club officially disbanded, but by 1930 it had apparently evolved into a local unit of the Farmers' Union, a national organization which had been established in 1902. A May 31, 1931 issue of the local Clarkfield Advocate reported that the Swede Prairie unit of the Union was "perhaps the biggest unit in the county." Local residents continued their political activism through strong membership in the Non-Partisan League, the Farmers' Holiday Movement, and the Farmer-Labor Party. When the club disbanded circa 1930 the meeting hall was given to the Swede Prairie Township board for use as a town hall. From circa 1930 to the present it has continued to serve as a community social and political center. During the 1930's the hall was the headquarters and practice hall for the Swede Prairie Recreation Club, a group of sixty neighbors who met in the hall to box and wrestle. All voting, town meetings, business gatherings, and political functions were held in the hall. In 1967 the one acre site on which the hall stands was deeded to the Township by owners Arthur and Vida Roberg. The building was then named Roberg Hall in their honor.

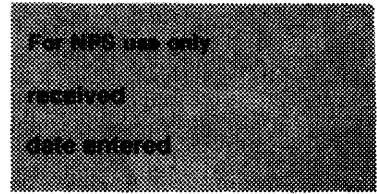
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Swede Prairie Progressive Farmers' Club

Swede Prairie Twp (vicinity of Clarkfield) Minnesota

Continuation sheet Resource Count Item number 8



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The Swede Prairie Progressive Farmers' Club nomination contains
1 contributing building.

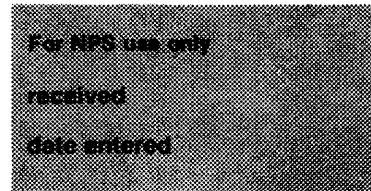
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Yellow Medicine County, Minnesota

Continuation sheet Swede Prairie Farmers' Club Item number 9, 10

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Item #9 (Bibliographical References) continued:

McConnell, Grant. The Decline of Agrarian Democracy. New York: Atheneum, 1969.

Item #10 (Verbal Boundary Description) continued:

of Ten (10) rods, thence East a distance of Sixteen (16) rods, thence North a distance of Ten (10) rods, thence West on the North line of said Section a distance of Sixteen (16) rods to the place of beginning.

United States Department of the Interior
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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page _____

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

for Keeper Melvin Lynn
11/19/89

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page _____

**Note: These changes apply to
Swede Prairie Progressive Farmers'
Club in Yellow Medicine County,
Minnesota.**

REFERENCE NUMBER: 86001331

STATE: MINNESOTA

COUNTY: Yellow Medicine

RESOURCE NAME (HISTORIC):

CITY:

VICINITY OF:

ADDRESS: Co. Hwy. 9

CERTIFICATION DATE:

REMOVED DATE:

COMMENTS:

Nina M. Archabal

Nina M. Archabal
State Historic Preservation Officer

JUN 17 1988

Date