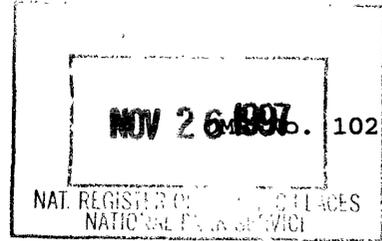


1601

NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. 10-90)



1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

Page #1

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name SLOVENSKI DOM
other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 513 Bridger Avenue not for publication
city or town Rock Springs vicinity
state Wyoming code 56 county Sweetwater code 37
zip code 82901

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

John J. Keck

Signature of certifying official

11/17/97
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

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=====
8. Statement of Significance
=====

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

ethnic heritage / European
entertainment/recreation
social history

Period of Significance 1913 - 1947

Significant Dates N/A

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder architect unknown
Thomas Alma James, builder

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

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9. Major Bibliographical References

=====

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: Sweetwater County Historical Museum, Green River, Wyoming

=====

10. Geographical Data

=====

Acreeage of Property less than one acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting Northing
1 12 648 300 4605 720

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

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=====
11. Form Prepared By
=====

name/title Barbara Allen Bogart
organization Historical Consultant date March 7, 1997
street & number P. O. Box 1674 telephone 307-789-4968
city or town Evanston state WY zip code 82931

=====
Additional Documentation
=====

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage
or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

=====
Property Owner
=====

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Slovenski Dom, Inc., c/o Frank Yugovich, President
street & number 1025 Lee Street telephone 307/362-2127
city or town Rock Springs state WY zip code 82901

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 4

The original wooden columns, brackets and cornice are all now covered with white aluminum siding, installed at the same time as the siding and the storm window coverings in the early 1980s. There are two small exterior doors at either side at the north end of the building, reached via concrete steps and wooden landings.

Throughout the first and second floors of the interior are hardwood floors, plaster walls, dark varnished woodwork, and many original electrical light fixtures and switches (including both push button and knob switches). Nickel plate steam radiators of varying sizes stand in every room and hallway. Steam heat for the building is supplied by a furnace and boiler, originally fueled by coal and later converted to natural gas.

Inside the front entrance is a foyer with a small suite of rooms leading off to the left and right. The rooms on the left (west), including a storage closet and a bathroom, were refurbished in the spring of 1996 to serve as an office for the business that has leased the building. The largest room in the suite was originally used as a meeting room by the Slovenski Dom organization, various Slovenian lodges, and United Mine Workers local. It also served as the ladies' dressing room for plays and festivals. The closet has a small ticket window used when tickets were being sold for special events in the Dom. The bathroom was originally a ladies' room. Behind the closet is a storage space underneath the second-floor stairway.

The suite of rooms on the right (east) served similar purposes. A small alcove with a ticket window opening onto the foyer was used during dances and other events where tickets were sold. The largest room in the suite was used as a meeting room, a men's dressing room, and a coat room during events. The suite also includes a men's bathroom.

From the right side of the foyer beyond the front rooms, a flight of stairs leads to the basement. From the left side beyond that suite are stairs to the second floor mezzanine. The main hall of the Dom is separated from the foyer by two steps and a pair of wide wooden pocket doors with inset brass handles.

The main hall measures 54 feet, 6 inches long by 41 feet wide. Lighting is provided by eight original chandeliers. Extending around three sides of the room is a dark wood chair rail consisting of three 1 x 3 boards. Metal rails were added on the east and west walls in the 1980s when the Dom was rented out for ballet classes. A large mirror, broken now, is mounted on the west wall.

At the north end of the main hall, opposite the entrance, is a stage, measuring 19 feet wide by 20 feet deep and hung with red velvet curtains. A large screen is mounted on a roller above the front of the stage. It bears a hand-painted scene of a Slovenian castle on an island. The scene was painted in the early 1950s by a local sign painter; it replaced an earlier screen featuring advertisements for local businesses. Doors at either side of the main hall lead up four or five steps to the stage. At the back of the stage is a large opening (now boarded up), accessible by a truck from an exterior loading ramp, used for bringing large items into the hall. The windows in the back and sides of the stage area are now covered with plywood. In both wings are large storage cupboards made of varnished tongue-in-groove boards.

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Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 5

A staircase off the west side of the foyer leads to a series of rooms on the second floor in the front of the building. At this level is a small balcony with a wooden railing overlooking the main hall. The balcony was reportedly a favorite vantage point for older women who wished to watch festivities in the hall.

A large room (41 feet wide by 18 feet, 3 inches long) stretches the length of the building's front. Its ceiling is arched and the room is lighted by brass chandeliers. The floor in this room is linoleum over wood. The room was (and still is) used as a meeting and banquet room. It is furnished with a slat bench, a small oak roll-top desk, a few wooden chairs and tables, and an upright piano.

Along the interior wall are five tall glass-front bookcases containing a collection of literature published in Slovenia and distributed by Slovenian cultural organizations to Slovenian National Homes throughout the United States in the 1920s and 1930s. (Among the books is a copy of The Adventures of Tom Sawyer in Slovenian.) Also stored in the bookcases are recent and back issues of Slovenian language newspapers. Adjoining the room on the northeast is a small kitchen with a trap door leading to the attic.

From the east side of the foyer, a flight of stairs leads down to the basement. At the foot of the stairs is a short hallway with a women's bathroom at the west end and a men's bathroom at the east end. Each bathroom contains two stalls of dark wood and a lavatory. The fixtures may not be original, but they are not new. A small room in the short hallway is used for storage.

The hallway from the stairs opens into the main room of the basement, which measures 41 feet at its widest point and is 69 feet long. Running lengthwise down the center of the basement, and dividing it into public space and back room/kitchen space, is a 25-foot-long carved wooden and mirrored bar. The bar counter, measuring 34 feet, 9 inches, is also of wood, without decoration, but with an iron foot railing.

Behind the bar is a suite of rooms. From the south (front) of the building to the north (back) they include a kitchen, used for preparing foods sold at the dances and other special events, a store room for bar supplies, a smaller store room containing a cupboard and an old wooden icebox, and the boiler/furnace room. A small boarded-up door leading to the outside from the store room immediately behind the bar was used at one time for liquor deliveries. The furnace room contains a natural gas furnace and boiler, and a hot water heater. The furnace was originally fueled by coal; there is a boarded-up coal chute into the furnace room. At one time the furnace was fitted with an automatic stoker which is still buried in the floor of the furnace room. At the back of the basement is a tiny washroom containing a toilet and washbasin.

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The concrete floor of the basement is covered with dark linoleum tile. A series of steel posts provides support to the floor above. The lower half of the interior basement walls and the posts are decorated with green, yellow and red enamel paint in a random abstract design, probably applied by stenciling. This original decoration has been covered up along part of the interior and western walls with plywood to disguise damage caused by mine subsidence; the broken and cracked tiles in the floor also reveal damage from subsidence.

Only a few original furnishings are left in the building. In the upstairs meeting room and the basement are a dozen or so six-foot-long green wooden slat benches used to provide seating during events in the main hall. Originally each of the lodges that used the Slovenski Dom had its own desk. Now just two remain in the Dom, one in the upstairs room, the other in the stage area. In the main hall are two wooden, formica-topped tables that were built by local carpenters for use in the Slovenski Dom, especially for food sales. An oil painting of a Slovenian town hangs beside the bar downstairs. In the smaller storeroom behind the bar are rolls of tickets used for dance admissions and tambullahs. The original cash register purchased by the Slovenski Dom is also located in this room. (On the bottom of the cash drawer is a label giving the name of the purchaser -- an original member of the Slovenski Dom board -- and the date of the purchase in 1913.) In the early years of the Dom, a spinning wheel and a large hand-made table stood on the stage. The spinning wheel is now in the collection of the Sweetwater County Historical Museum; the table now belongs to the grandson of the man who built it.

The building throughout looks worn and scuffed but, aside from subsidence damage, is in reasonably good condition. Few renovations, except for the addition of siding and storm windows on the exterior, have altered the appearance of the building over the years. Standing in the main hall of the Slovenski Dom, it is quite easy to imagine the bustle and excitement of the crowds at the annual Grape Festival, the New Year's Eve dance, the lodge meetings, and other events taking place there.

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Slovenski Dom is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places because of its association with events and experiences that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of American history. For more than 80 years, the Dom has served as the social and cultural heart of Rock Springs' Slovenian community, one of the largest ethnic groups in this town that was built on the labor of immigrant coal miners. The Slovenski Dom is also a symbol of the ethnic diversity that is the hallmark of Rock Springs' civic identity.

But the historical context in which the Rock Springs Slovenski Dom was conceived, built and used is national as well as local and regional in scope. That context extends into the last third of the 19th century, as the post-bellum United States was beginning to stretch its industrial legs, and coal mining, steel making, and railroad building dominated the American economy. It encompasses as well the regional forces that built the Rocky Mountain region economically and socially.

The industrial boom of the 19th century created a demand for labor that brought millions of European immigrants to this country. By the 1880s and 1890s, many of those immigrants were pouring out of southern and eastern Europe -- Italians, Slavs, and Greeks joining the older waves of British, Irish, German, and Scandinavian immigrants who had arrived in the first half of the century. The story of those immigrants and their descendants during the past one hundred years is a familiar one. And the version played out in Rock Springs, Wyoming, follows the national script closely.

Remote southwestern Wyoming, in 1868 still part of Dakota Territory, had its role to play in the national industrial scene, as the first transcontinental railroad pushed through its high desert plateaus. The route of the Union Pacific through southern Wyoming was chosen in part because of the rich coal reserves that lay beneath the surface -- coal that could not only be used to power the railroad's steam locomotives but could also be shipped and sold to consumers in the East.

Rock Springs had its origins as a coal mining town. In 1868, the Union Pacific began opening mines in and around Rock Springs and began importing labor to work them. At first most of the miners were native-born Americans from other mining areas of the country. But the Union Pacific also recruited large numbers of workers from Europe, particularly from the British Isles. So the work force in the Rock Springs coal mines during the first decade of their operations consisted primarily of English, Scotch, and Welsh, along with a substantial number of Finns. In 1875, following labor unrest, the company hired several hundred Chinese miners. But a mob of white miners, angered at the Chinese presence, led a violent attack against them in 1885, killing 28 Chinese miners and driving the rest out of Rock Springs. The company decided to look to Europe again for its labor force.

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In the late 1880s and 1890s, southern and eastern European immigrants began to arrive at the Rock Springs coal mines in large numbers. Their impact on Sweetwater County's population can easily be read in the national and state censuses from 1900 through 1925.

By December 1896, 1,089 men were working in the Union Pacific Coal Company mines in Rock Springs. Of that number, only 60 were identified as "Americans," while workers representing 21 other nationalities were listed. Eastern and southern Europeans, including Austrians, Hungarians, Italians, Polanders, Slavonians, and Russians, comprised nearly 25% of the work force. By 1906, when 830 of the 1699 workers in the Rock Springs mines were southern or eastern Europeans, that percentage had risen to nearly 50%. By 1917, 56% of Rock Springs miners were from this part of the world.

In this ethnic mix, people of south Slavic descent -- including those who identified themselves as Austrians, Carniolians (Slovenians), Croatians, Dalmatians, Montenegrins, Serbians, Slavs and Slavonians -- made up a goodly proportion -- 551 or 32% of the work force in 1906, and 477 or 37% in 1917. By 1920, nearly one-sixth of Rock Springs' population was Slovenian. In fact, a Slovenian, John Kosir, was elected in 1915 from Rock Springs to serve in the state legislature.

As the Union Pacific opened up one mine after another in Rock Springs, the neighborhoods that sprang up around them were known by the number of the mine. For instance, the area just south of the railroad tracks was called "No. 1 Hill," while the area along Bitter Creek north of the tracks was known as "No. 4." The Union Pacific deliberately mixed ethnic groups both in the mines and the mining camps and neighborhoods in which the miners and their families lived. Workers were assigned to company housing within the neighborhoods in which their mine was located. This policy had the effect of discouraging the formation of ethnic enclaves within neighborhoods, which was in keeping with the company's determination to mix nationalities, and languages, at the work place and in the camps to prevent miners from working together against the company -- e.g., to form unions.

Nevertheless, immigrants in Rock Springs -- as everywhere else in the nation -- were able to develop and maintain a sense of ethnic identity in a wide range of ways. One reason they were able to do so was the result of stream migration, in which immigrants from a particular village or province in the old country followed relatives or acquaintances to a location in the new one. A second reason was the strong emphasis in most ethnic groups on marrying within the group. A third reason was that in the new country the old divisions between villages and provinces gradually gave way to a new sense of identity with a nation of Slovenia or Poland or Finland.

Ethnic identity was maintained in cultural forms such as foodways, religion, language, music, and customs. The practice -- widespread nationally -- of boarding one's newly arrived countrymen especially helped promote the continuation of language and foodways. New institutions were also established in the immigrants' new homes that provided a base for ethnic identity. These included church congregations and fraternal lodges, both of which were adaptations of familiar institutions from the old country.

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Most immigrant fraternal organizations served both economic and social purposes. Some of the national lodges were affiliated with the Roman Catholic church, while others were more political in orientation, specifically pro-union and socialistic. One of the primary functions was to provide hospital and death benefits to members -- especially in the early years of American industrial development when medical and life insurance were not routinely provided by companies and the social security system was not yet in place. In addition, the lodges provided a social base for immigrants and their children, a place to meet friends and engage in social activities. Local chapters of the national lodges sent delegates to the annual conventions.

In Rock Springs, the Slovenian immigrants, along with other ethnic groups, including the Finns, Croatians, and Tyroleans, formed local chapters of national fraternal lodges or benevolent societies. The Slovenian organizations included two chapters of the South Slavonic Catholic Union (one chartered in May 1904 and the other in 1908) (later consolidated as the American Fraternal Union); the Grand Carniolian Slovenian Catholic Union (KSKJ), chartered in 1925; and the Slovenian Progressive Benefit Society (SNPJ), chartered in 1910.

In 1912, representatives of the Slovenian lodges in Rock Springs met to form a corporation, Slovenski Dom, Inc., for the purpose of constructing a building for lodge meetings and other public events. (This organizational meeting was held in the Finn Hall.) The establishment of such buildings, known as "Slovenian National Homes," which accommodated the activities of the lodges and helped maintain a sense of cultural identity, was widespread in Slovenian communities throughout the United States. Rock Springs' Slovenski Dom, in fact, was one of the earliest such buildings. A unique feature of the organization's by-laws is the stipulation that the Dom was always to be known by its Slovenian name -- Slovenski Dom -- rather than the English translation of Slovenian National Home.

Although there were other Slovenski Doms in the Rocky Mountain region, including the Slovenian National Home in Spring Glen, Utah, which is listed on the NRHP, the Rock Springs' Slovenski Dom is the only one in Wyoming. What makes it of particular historic value is that it is still owned by the original organization and remains pretty much in its original condition.

The Slovenski Dom, Inc. purchased three lots on Bridger Avenue from the Union Pacific Coal Company, on June 24, 1913 for \$783.75. The contract for construction of the Dom was signed between the Slovenski Dom, Inc. and Superior Lumber Company of Rock Springs, on September 18, 1913. It stipulated that the building be completed by December 25, 1913 at a cost of \$9,440. Thomas A. James, owner of the Superior Lumber Company of Rock Springs, signed the contract. The contract states that the plans were supplied to Superior Lumber for bidding purposes; it is not known who designed the building or who drew up the plans and specifications. Construction was financed through the sale of building bonds in the total amount of \$7,000. The building was completed in time for a New Year's Eve dance on December 31, 1913.

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Once built, the Slovenski Dom was the site of ethnic lodge meetings -- Slovenian, Croatian and Italian lodges -- as well as for the local chapters of the United Mine Workers. It was also used for dances, including the annual Grape Festival (sometimes called the Wine Festival or the Wine Arbor). During the 1930s and 1940s, dances were held twice a month, on the miners' paydays. Often the dances were preceded by humorous skits in Slovenian. During the dances, women lodge members staged raffles of donated items. These "tambullahs," as they were called, involved selling tickets with numbers on them; the ticket you purchased entitled you to the item with the corresponding number.

The Grape Festival was instituted in 1922 and was held annually through the mid-1970s, sponsored by each lodge in turn. The last Grape Festival was held in 1988. The Festival involved decorating the hall with fruit and leaves; a volunteer troupe of young people performed an elaborate skit before the general dancing began. Many adult residents of Rock Springs still fondly recall attending the Grape Festival as children.

Music for the dances was provided by local musicians playing button accordions, tubas, clarinets, pianos, and drums. The Willie Yugovich Orchestra was the regular band for the Slovenski Dom dances and the Grape Festival through the 1930s and 1940s. In the 1950s, Elsie Frolic, who had played the button accordion with the Yugovich band, organized her own band to provide music at the Dom in the 1950s and 1960s. The Slovenski Dom provided an important venue for the preservation and promotion of Slovenian and other ethnic musical traditions that eventually coalesced into the contemporary, national genre known as polka. Sweetwater County's annual Polka Festival, established in 1984 by a local accordionist, is now a regular stop on the national polka circuit for musicians and polka-lovers alike.

Other events at the Slovenski Dom included fund-raisers and benefits for various causes. Food and drink were regularly served at all Slovenski Dom affairs. These included ethnic foods such as kronskis (garlic sausage) and patica (a nut bread). Liquor was served at the bar downstairs. Whether or not there was something going on at the Dom, the bar downstairs operated as a private club on weekends for lodge members.

In addition to lodge- and Dom-sponsored events, the Dom was often rented out for private affairs, including weddings and parties. In the 1970s and 1980s, the Dom was rented to a newly formed congregation for its services, and was also used by ballet and karate classes.

In the 1980s, as the immigrant generation passed away and their children aged, involvement in the lodges and the Dom organization itself has dwindled. The lodges now function almost exclusively as small insurance policy administrators; the Dom organization finds itself struggling to maintain the building and meet utility bills. In 1996, the building was leased to a realty and auction business for a year. The future of the building is uncertain. But generations of Rock Springs residents remember the Slovenski Dom with great fondness as the "Sloppy Dom," where they learned to polka (or ballet or karate), where they met their spouses, and where they socialized with members of a broad spectrum of ethnic groups.

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The death of the immigrant generation, intermarriage among their descendants, and the closing of the coal mines in the 1950s put an end to the golden age of ethnic life in Rock Springs. But ethnic identity and a consciousness of the cultural diversity that shaped the community persists as a strong element in civic consciousness. In the 1920s, that awareness was promulgated through an annual event known as International Night that featured representatives of the many nationality groups dressed in "native costume" and performing ethnic songs, music, and dance. The spirit of International Night was revived in the mid-1980s by an international festival sponsored by the Rock Springs YWCA, as part of a growing national interest in ethnic heritage and cultural diversity. Today, a sign greeting visitors at the western entrance to Rock Springs from Interstate 80 proclaims "Welcome to Rock Springs -Home of 56 Nationalities."

Rock Springs is one of the few coal mining towns in Wyoming that retains any of its mining heritage and the ethnic legacy associated with it. Other Wyoming coal camps and towns, such as Cambria in Weston County, Monarch in Sheridan County, and Cumberland in Lincoln County, have vanished from the visible landscape. Of the coal mining camps in Sweetwater County, only Reliance and Superior retain any original architecture, and none of the extant structures are related to ethnic groups per se. The Slovenski Dom thus reflects a significant component of both the state's and the community's economic, social and cultural history and is a powerful symbol for insiders and outsiders alike of the ethnic heritage that built the place and still contributes to its identity.

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Matjaz Klemencic, "American Slovenes and the Leftist Movements in the United States in the First Half of the Twentieth Century," Journal of American Ethnic History 15 (1996): 22- 43.

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"Ethnic Music in Sweetwater County" (oral history interviews). Collection #96-20, Sweetwater County Historical Museum, Green River, Wyoming.

"Ellis Island in Wyoming" (oral history interviews). American Studies Program, University of Wyoming.

[add Slovenski Dom collection from SCHM]

Interviews with Rudy Pivik and Frank Yugovich, Rock Springs.

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 10 Page 15

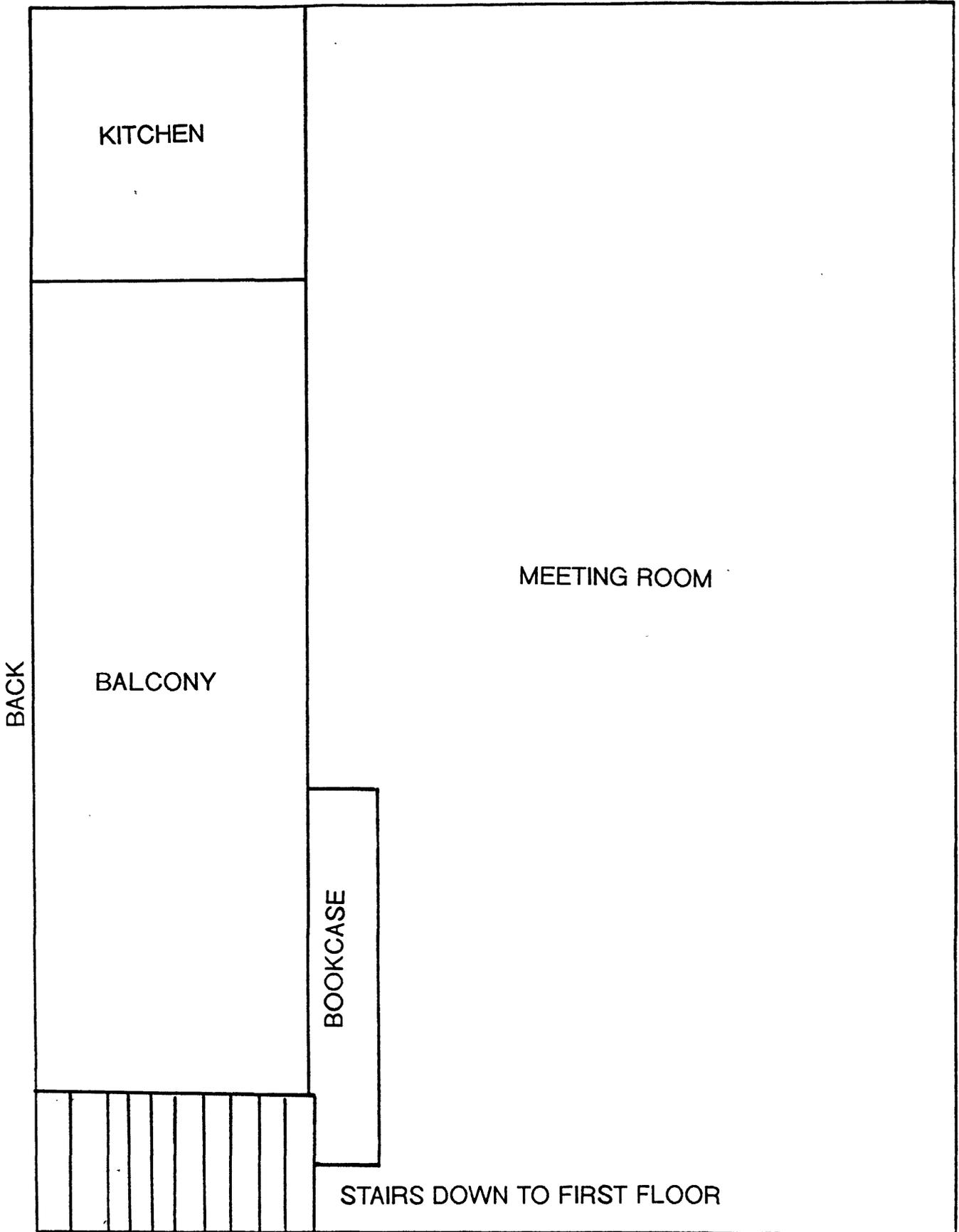
BOUNDARIES

Verbal Boundary Description:

Lots 9, 10 and 11, Block 2 of Pilot Butte Addition, Rock Springs, Wyoming.

Boundary Justification:

These are the original boundaries of the lots purchased by the Slovenski Dom organization for the building.



KITCHEN

MEETING ROOM

BALCONY

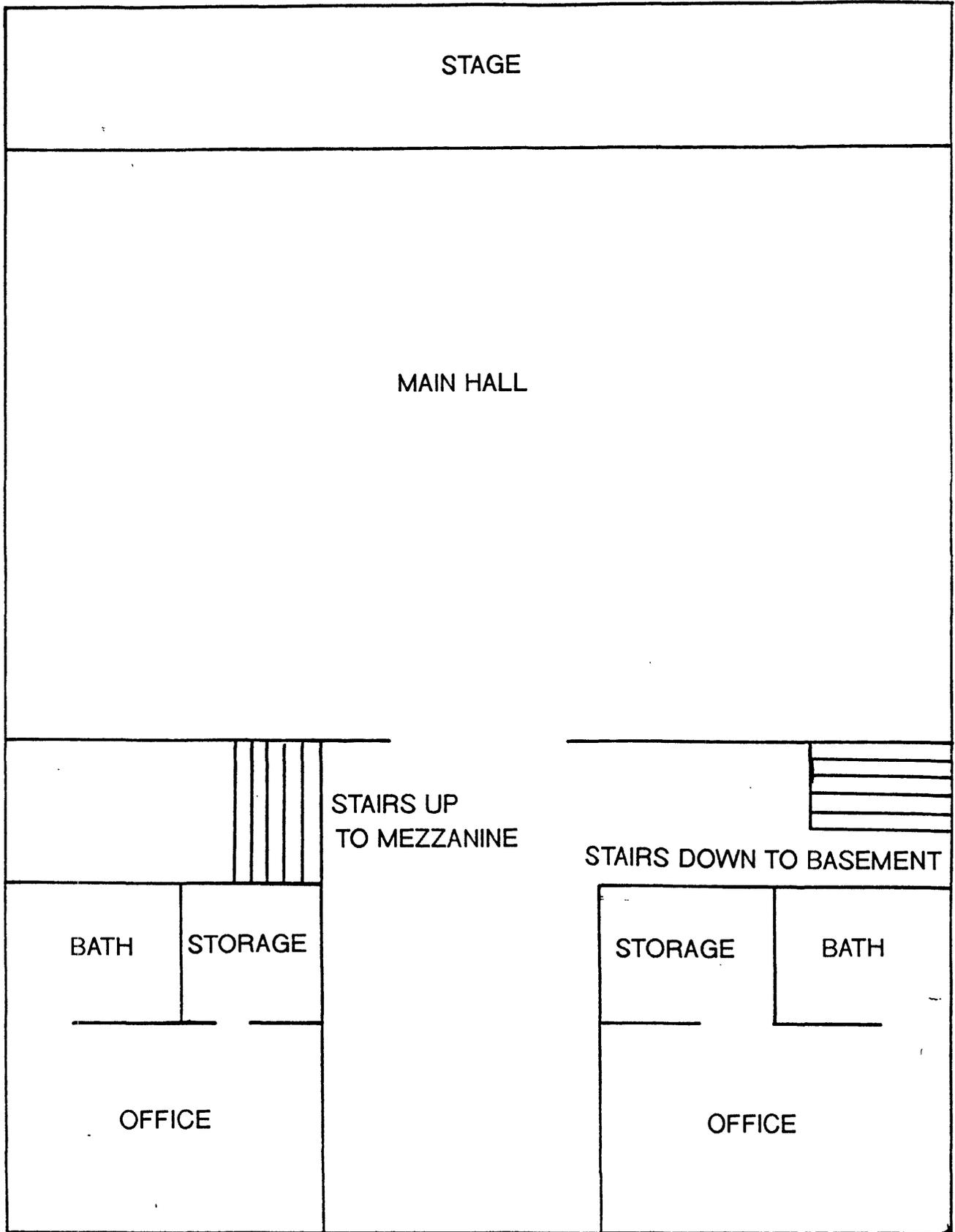
BOOKCASE

STAIRS DOWN TO FIRST FLOOR

BACK

FRONT

SLOVENSKI DOM
FIRST FLOOR
REAR



FRONT
BRIDGER AVE.