

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations 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 Sexauer Seed Company Historic District

other names/site number N/A

**2. Location**

street & number Roughly bound by the Main Ave on the west, DM & E railroad tracks on the north, the east and south the property lines. not for publication N/A

city or town Brookings Vicinity N/A

state South Dakota Code SD county Brookings code 011 zip code 57006

**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.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official

\_\_\_\_\_  
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

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet
- determined eligible for the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register.
- other,

(explain:) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property** (Check as many boxes as apply)

- Private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property** (Check only one box)

- building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

**Number of Resources within Property**

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	Buildings
<u>5</u>	<u>2</u>	Sites
<u>7</u>	<u>3</u>	Structures
		Objects
		Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

Name of related multiple property listing N/A



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## 8. Statement of Significance

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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)

Agriculture  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1888-1951  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Sexauer Seed Company Historic District  
Name of Property

Brookings County, South Dakota  
County and State

**Significant Dates**    1888, 1920  
                              1929, 1940  
                              1950, 1951

**Significant Person**    N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**    N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**    Unknown  
\_\_\_\_\_

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

See Continuation Sheets

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## **9. Major Bibliographical References**

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(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: South Dakota State Historic Preservation Office,  
Pierre, SD

## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of Property** 5 Acres

### UTM References

(place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>14</u>	<u>675614</u>	<u>4908053</u>	3	<u>14</u>	<u>675750</u>	<u>4907960</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u>14</u>	<u>675756</u>	<u>4908019</u>	4	<u>14</u>	<u>675618</u>	<u>4907955</u>

See continuation sheet

Map: Brookings

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.) See Continuation Sheet

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.) See Continuation Sheet

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Michelle C. Saxman, Historic  
Preservation Specialist

Organization South Dakota SHPO Date June 2001  
street & number 900 Governors Dr Telephone 605-773-6296  
city or town Pierre state SD zip code 57501

## 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)

Sexauer Seed Company Historic District  
Name of Property

Brookings County, South Dakota  
County and State

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**Property Owner**

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

Name Janice Fergen and Spence Hawley  
Street & number \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
City or town \_\_\_\_\_ state SD zip code \_\_\_\_\_

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**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 the 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 Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page # 1

The Sexauer Seed Company complex is located next to the railroad lines and across the street from the historic Chicago & Northwestern depot. The location played a role in the success of the Seed Company. Most Elevator Complexes contain a multi-story elevator, an office, a scale office, and bins. Sexauer's has all of these, plus additional buildings for seed cleaning and storage.

1. Atlas Elevator and Store  
Construction date 1920  
Alteration date c. 1951  
Contributing

A multi-unit building makes the Atlas elevator and store. The building was built in 1920, with wood siding. In 1950 and 1951, the Sexauer Seed Company covered most of their buildings with metal to create a new look for the time. This metal still remains on the building today. The store unit is a one-story, flat roofed section. The west elevation has the main entrance and two medium size display windows. This area served as the retail center for the business. The remaining building has two elevator sections. Off the store to the north is the large elevator section. It is a tall shaft with a small gable roof and two shed roofs about 30 feet below the main roof. The last section (west) is an other elevator-type section. This section intersects the main building below the west shed roof. The last unit has a gable roof and a shed roof on either side of the main gable. Despite the alteration to the siding, the building retains sufficient amount of integrity to convey the significance of being an elevator and seed store.

2. Steel Tank  
Construction Date c. 1980  
Non-contributing

The steel tank is a two to three story round metal building with a conical roof.

3. Butler Tank  
Construction Date c. 1980  
Non-contributing

The butler tank is two stories round metal building that features a conical roof.



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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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### 4. Office

Construction date c. 1900  
Alteration date c. 1951  
Contributing

A one-story flat roof, brick office building was constructed in circa 1900. This building served as the headquarters for the Sexauer Seed Company. It originally had an arched entrance and decorative brickwork. During the 1950-1951 renovation to the complex, this building also experienced changes. The Sexauers placed a new front façade on the building to give it a more modern look. The renovations give the building an International Style. A row of fixed windows and the pent roof express a straight-line feature common in 1950 Commercial architecture. The building retains integrity, expressing how businesses change with the times.

### 5. Seed Warehouse

Construction date c. 1888  
Alteration date 1951  
Contributing

The seed warehouse is a four-story side gable building. A one-story shed projection is located on the north elevation. The projection has an angle on both ends, to give the area a rounded appearance. Wood clapboard siding originally covered the building, however in 1950 and 1951 the building was covered with metal. The wood remains under the metal siding. This alteration occurred during the Sexauer's expansion. The building retains its original fenestration and appearance despite the exterior siding change.

### 6. Warehouse

Construction date 1941  
Contributing

This building represents the most substantial building located on the Sexauer Seed property. The builders used a brown brick on the exterior and a flat roof. The brick is also used in the interior, along with hollow clay tile bricks. The four-story building has eight-light louver windows. Windows are spaced evenly across each elevation, with the exception of the west elevation. The west elevation is attached to the seed plant by a very small breezeway. Each floor is one large room, with metal pole supports and beams.

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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### 7. Seed Plant and elevator

Construction date 1929 –elevator  
Construction date 1940 –seed plant  
Alteration date 1951  
Contributing

The seed plant and elevator were built in several stages. An elevator was constructed in 1929 for increased production at the Brookings site. The elevator has a side gable roof with a front facing dormer. The elevator received an addition in 1940 for a seed cleaning plant. This addition was attached to the east elevator. The cleaning plant enabled the production of better quality seed. "Its operations start when seed as it comes from the farm is elevated by one of the 12 legs to bins at the top of the building. From the bins, the seed moves through spouts and legs from one cleaning machine to another until finally it emerges on the sacking floor, where it is bagged and is ready for planting."<sup>1</sup> The cleaning plant is approximately 100 feet tall. The building has a side gable roof and a smaller shed roof section on the east elevation. Fenestration on the building are small six-over-six double hung windows. The second level of the plant has transom windows over four windows on the south elevation. Both the elevator and the seed plant received updating in 1950. The buildings received new metal siding over the original clapboard siding. Despite this alteration, the buildings retain integrity.

### 8. Shop

Construction date 1968  
Non-contributing

A front gable metal building. The building was constructed outside the period of significance.

### 9. General Storage

Construction date 1940  
Contributing

The shed roof building is covered with metal and has two sliding doors on the north elevation.

<sup>1</sup> Sexauer's Monthly Review Brookings, South Dakota (December 1940) Vol. 10 no. 12.

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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10. Quonset Warehouse  
Construction date 1950  
Contributing

The Quonset hut style warehouse is covered in metal. A round roof is present, however it does not project to the ground. A large warehouse door is located on the west elevation.

### Statement of Significance

The Sexauer Seed Company Historic District is significant in the area of agriculture. A distinguished early Brookings resident George P. Sexauer, who established an extensive grain milling company in Brookings County, South Dakota, established the Sexauer Seed Company. Sexauer expanded his holdings in 1897 and purchased the Brookings Mill Company. The complex in Brookings has a strong presence in the Brookings community. The complex is a compilation of types of milling resources and an example of a successful business. The Seed Company also owes its success to the establishment of the State Agriculture College, now called South Dakota State University, in Brookings.

### Historic background

A group of settlers purchased the land for Brookings from H. S. Aaby and Lewis Limesand and then donated Section 26, Township 110, Range 50 to the Chicago and NW Railway in 1879. Judge Wilmot W. Brookings, an early pioneer of Dakota Territory, served as the namesake for the newly platted town. Though Judge Brookings never lived in the city of Brookings, he is renowned as a governor of the Dakota Territory, organizer of the Dakota Southern Railroad and a member of the State Constitutional Convention. On May 2, 1881, the village of Brookings received incorporation and a city charter the following year.

From 1870 to 1920, the population of the county increased from 163 to 16,119.<sup>2</sup> The county did not experience a declining population during the depression. The county grew slightly due to drastic reduction of farms in the area. Prosperity came again for the county in the late 1940s and early 1950s. This growth has a direct link to the growth of the South Dakota State College, now known as South Dakota State University, and incoming industries. The location of the college in Brookings was the driving force for many businesses and people.

<sup>2</sup> Brookings County History Book. Brookings County History Book Committee, Brookings, South Dakota, 1989, page 126.

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page # 5

George P. Sexauer came to Brookings because of the college. He was born in Illinois, lived in Wisconsin, married and moved to Minnesota where he opened a flour mill. George Sexauer started in the grain business in 1891 with a flour mill at Chatfield, Minnesota. Inadequate wheat supplies there prompted him to turn to the wheat fields of South Dakota, and swap the Minnesota mill for the Volga Roller Flour Mill, distinguished for its "Volga Fancy Patent Flour." He traded his interest in the flour mill for a roller mill in Volga, South Dakota. The roller mill prospered, and he was able to purchase the Brookings Roller Mill in 1897. Brookings appeared promising because it was the location of the county seat, and the location of a state college. George turned an operation that had only opened its doors nine months earlier into a growing business. The company in only a short time had two crews working around the clock. Sexauer expanded his operation in Brookings, and in the territory. In 1911, the Sexauer Seed Company began cleaning seed for use by local farmers. Sexauer's did not just sell seed and flour. They also sold coal, oats, barley, and corn.

The expansion of cleaning seed brought Elmer H. Sexauer into the new family business. However, in a few short years, it became evident that the milling was not a successful venture. The company focused on its elevators and seed business. Elmer incorporated the latest techniques to allow the company to stay at the top of their field. The Sexauer's interest in technology led to the construction of a seed plant in 1939. Construction of the seed plant finished in 1940. The plant conditioned the seed, which allowed for better quality seeds. The plant's seed sales contributed to the success of the Sexauer Seed business. Sexauer seed used the name "Perfection" as the label for their seed. The company sold seed all over the world. Citizens of Brookings realized the importance of the Sexauer Seed to the community when the building remained open during the Depression. Farmers were able to purchase seed and bring their grain to market throughout the Depression.

After World War II, Sexauer Seed experienced further growth. This growth was tied to the third generation of Sexauers, when Robert S. Sexauer entered the family business. Several new storage units were added to the complex, enabling the company to store more grain.<sup>3</sup> The complex also received a face-lift. All of the wood clapboard-sided buildings were covered with metal. The brick office building also received a modern appearance.

The farming industry has experienced several advancements in the past 100 years. If an agricultural business were to survive, the owners had to be able to adapt to the changes. The Sexauer Seed owners saw the focus of their operation change from milling to seed cleaning and sale. The retail business of selling seed to local farmers had a definite impact on the Brookings Community. Farmers from the surrounding area would travel to Brookings to purchase seed and other items. The

<sup>3</sup> "Serving Brookings County Agriculture Since 1893."Diamond Jubilee Edition Brookings Register, August 15, 1954.

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Sexauer Seed Company stood as a company that thrived because of change. Sexauer's company policy was "The Company's growth is attributed to a policy of handling quality merchandise in a manner which gives the most possible service to the customer."<sup>4</sup>

Robert S. Sexauer sold the Sexauer Seed Company in 1998. The Seed Company buildings continued service in the Brookings area until 1999. The new owners decided to sell their interest in the complex because of high property taxes. Janice Fergan purchased most of the property. Spence Hawley purchased the office building for office space. Ms Fergan continues to use the complex for a variety of uses. The storage buildings and bins still store equipment and grain. The brick warehouse building is being converted into a manufacturing facility. Despite the alterations to the exterior of the buildings, they retain the necessary integrity to continue to tell the story of the Sexauer Seed Company. The city of Brookings approved a metal recycling facility for one of the buildings.

The Sexauer Seed Company is eligible for the National Register under Criterion A. Most large grain elevators were on a major rail hub. Despite the lack of the rail hub, the Sexauer Company was considered one of the largest grain elevator operators.<sup>5</sup> The elevator complex is located next to the railroad tracks, with a multi-story elevator, scale house, office, and bins. Additional buildings are located across the street. These buildings served the use of the seed cleaning plant.

### Bibliography

"Serving Brooking County Agriculture Since 1893." Diamond Jubilee Edition, Brookings Register, Brookings, South Dakota August 15, 1954.

"Geo. P. Sexauer Looks Back on Fifty Years of Experiences in Milling, Seed, Elevator Fields; Began Operating September 1, 1891: First Mill Opened at Chaffield, Minn.; Still Active at Work." *Brookings Register, Brookings, South Dakota*, September 4, 1941.

"Local Business Man Completes 40 Years Very Active Career." *Brookings Register, Brookings, South Dakota*, August 27, 1931.

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<sup>4</sup> Brookings County History Book. Brookings County History Book Committee, Brookings, South Dakota, 1989, page 764.

<sup>5</sup> Brooks, Allyson & Steph Jacon. Homesteading and Agricultural Development Context, Vermillion: South Dakota State Preservation Center, page80.

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9, 10 Page # 7

Brookings County History Book. Brookings County History Book Committee, Brookings, South Dakota, 1989.

Sexauer's Monthly Review Brookings, South Dakota (December 1940) Vol. 10 no. 12.

Brooks, Allyson & Steph Jacon. *Homesteading and Agricultural Development Context*, Vermillion: South Dakota State Preservation Center, 1994.

### Verbal Boundary Description

The solid black line shows the boundary of the Sexauer Seed Company Historic District on the accompanying map entitled "Sexauer Seed Company Historic District."

### Boundary Justification

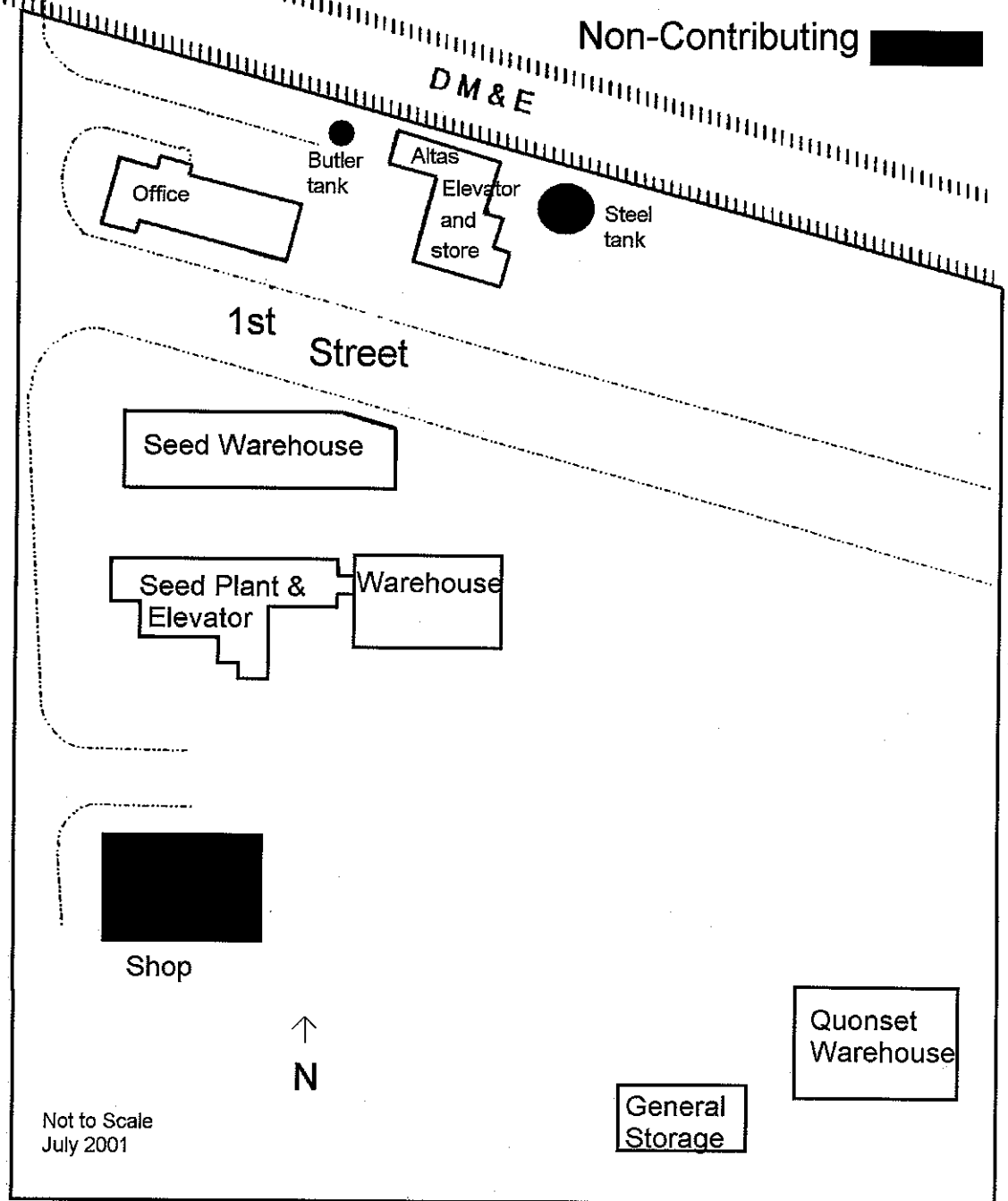
The nominated property includes the buildings and structures in the Sexauer Seed Complex. The boundaries include the building and structures used by Sexauer Seed Company.

# Sexauer Seed Company Historic District

Brookings, Brookings Co., SD

Contributing 

Non-Contributing 



Main Ave.

1st Street

DM&E

Office

Butler tank

Atlas

Elevator and store

Steel tank

Seed Warehouse

Seed Plant & Elevator

Warehouse

Shop

↑  
N

General Storage

Quonset Warehouse

Not to Scale  
July 2001