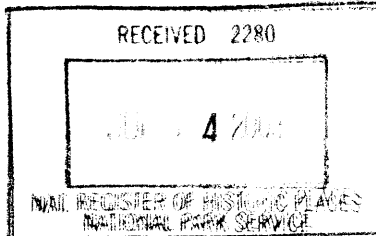


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



832

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 an 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 Dennis Melcher Pottery & Residence

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 22981 and 22982 Agency Road N/A not for publication

city or town Danville vicinity

state Iowa code IA county Des Moines/Henry code 057/087 zip code 52623

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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.)

Donell J. Sirke July 10, 2003
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA

State of 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 certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

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:)

~~Entered in the National Register~~ Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Edson Beal AUG 28 2003

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
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2	2	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
2	2	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed
in the National Register**

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

INDUSTRY/PROCESSING/EXTRACTION/Pottery
DOMESTIC/Single Dwelling

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT/NOT IN USE
DOMESTIC/Single Dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

NO STYLE
MID-19th CENTURY: Italianate

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE/Limestone
walls STONE/Limestone
METAL/Steel
roof ASPHALT
other METAL

Narrative Description
(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or 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)

TRANSPORTATION

INDUSTRY

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

c.1850-1879

Significant Dates

c.1850

c.1875

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(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:

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property Less than one acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	15	637319	4519618
Zone	Easting	Northing	
2			

3			
Zone	Easting	Northing	
4			

See continuation sheet

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.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Molly Myers Naumann, Consultant

organization Henry County HPC date March 2003

street & number 167 West Alta Vista telephone 641-682-2743

city or town Ottumwa state IA zip code 52501-1437

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 SHPO or FPO.)

name David Fridley

street & number 22981 Agency Road telephone 319-753-6275

city or town Danville state IA zip code 52623

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, DC 20503.

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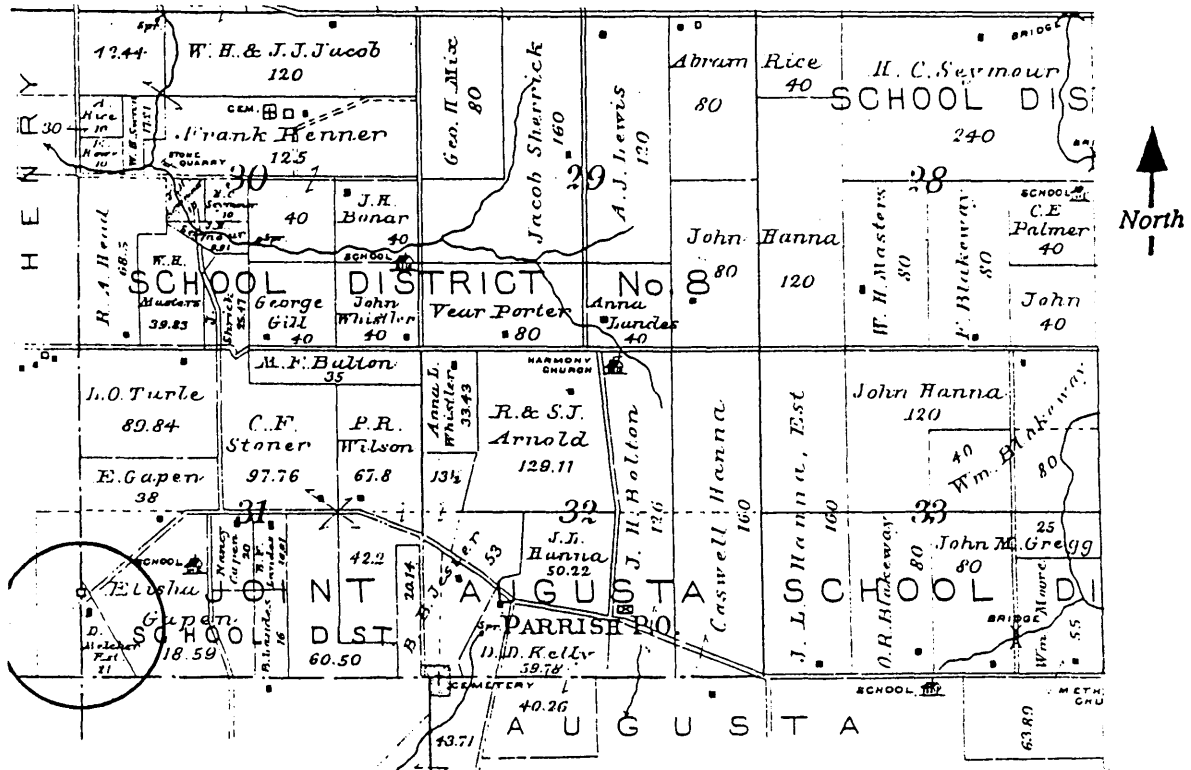
National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Dennis Melcher Pottery and Residence
Des Moines/Henry County, IA

Section number 7 Page 1

Narrative Description:

The Dennis Melcher Pottery (c.1850) and Residence (c.1875) are located on the far west edge of Des Moines County, in Section 31, Danville Township. The site contains two 19th century buildings (a vernacular limestone building and a frame Italianate style residence), a brick smoke house of undetermined date, and a modern garage. The Agency Road runs diagonally through this site from northeast to southwest, with the pottery on the north side of the road and the residence and two ancillary buildings on the south side. Maps show that the residence is in Des Moines County, but the pottery building rests directly on the Des Moines/Henry county line.



1897 Map of Danville Twp., Des Moines County, Iowa
Circle in SW corner Sec 31 shows location of Dennis Melcher property
(Plat Map of Des Moines County, Iowa, 1897)

Pottery:

The two story limestone pottery building is located very close to the roadway. It is rectangular in shape, measuring 32'4" x 45'2", with gable roof. Exterior walls are of coursed rubble, with larger stone being used on the façade and corners. Two tie rods with "S" shaped anchor irons are evident, one running east/west and one north/south. The use of rubble for the walls, and timber rather than stone for

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Dennis Melcher Pottery and Residence
Des Moines/Henry County, IA

Section number 7 Page 2

the lintels, seems to indicate that the stone was of local origin, possibly on this farm. The gables are of vertical board rather than stone, and there is a small square window centered in each gable. The roof is covered with asphalt shingles.

The primary entrance is on the south gable end. It has a three bay façade with the door off-set to the left. The second floor windows are located directly above the first floor openings. The west elevation has four windows symmetrically placed on both floors. The rear (north) elevation has a door at the west end of the first floor, and another opening that has been closed in, while there is only a door on the second floor. This door is reached by a exterior wooden staircase. The east elevation has a door located near the south end (presently covered by a shed roof vestibule) with a window immediately to the north on the first floor, and there are two windows plus one closed in opening on the second floor. The lack of windows along the east wall is due to the placement of the interior stairway. All four exterior doors are of recent installation. Doors and windows throughout have limestone sills and heavy timber lintels. Basement openings are half windows, while all others are double hung with six over six sash. The first floor windows are longer than those found on the second floor.

The interior appears to have lost its integrity over the years as it has been used for storage, and most recently as a restaurant. The first floor consists of two rooms, a large one to the front, and a small narrow one at the rear. The stairs to the second floor rise from the south end of the front room, while stairs to the basement are reached through the rear room. The second floor is one, undivided open space.

An 1870 lithograph shows this building was the center of a larger complex, with all of the other buildings being of frame construction. A gable roof frame building was attached to the east elevation. A shadow of the roofline can be seen today. No determination has been made as to when these were removed.

Residence:

The frame Italianate style residence is located on the south side of the road, facing the pottery. It features a low pitched hip roof with broad eaves supported by decorative scroll brackets. A frame balustrade is found on the roof deck. One brick chimney is located on the east side of the roof, and a second is located at the southwest corner. From the front the house appears to be rectangular in shape, but it is actually "L" shaped with a rear wing at the southwest corner. It measures 44' across the front and is 36'4" along the west wall. A symmetrical five bay façade on the north elevation features a central doorway with a transom and sidelights. The porch posts on the small covered entry porch are slender with the chamfered (clipped) corners common to the Italianate style. Windows on the front and both side elevations are flanked by shutters. Windows throughout the house have double hung sash. Those on the façade have vertical two over two sash, while those on the sides have six over six sash.

The interior of the house features a central hall plan with rooms opening off each side of the hallway. The location of the staircase is somewhat unusual, with the stairs located in the middle of the west half of the house. No significant interior features have been noted.

Viewing the house from the southeast it is apparent that a two story porch across the south side of the main block and along the east side of the "L" wing has been enclosed. No date has been

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Dennis Melcher Pottery and Residence
Des Moines/Henry County, IA

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determined for this, however, the roof line is consistent, covering this area as though it was always enclosed, and the brackets and their spacing is identical to the rest of the house.

The 1870 lithograph that shows the pottery also includes the residence. The house is shown in its present location, with a gable roof and side gable entrance with a rear gable wing and porch to the south. The present appearance of the house suggests that it was altered soon after 1870 by making the rear wing a full two stories, adding a wrap-around porch in the southeast corner, and giving the entire structure a low pitched hip roof. The pitch of the roof, design of the brackets, and the transom and sidelighted entrance are all indicative of a date c.1875. It appears that the main part of the house is the original dwelling, with just the elements noted above added. The location of the house in relation to the road and the pottery, and the two windows shown on each floor of the east elevation are consistent with the appearance of the house today.

The house has been altered on the exterior by the application of modern steel siding, but the width of the new siding is consistent with the original, and the brackets and front porch have been retained. The enclosed porch in the southeast corner has a stucco exterior. A new metal roof has also been installed. Both the siding and the metal roof are considered visually intrusive and create a serious loss of integrity. The house is historically, but not architecturally significant.

The 8'x 10' brick building at the rear has been identified as a smoke house, but without additional information it is considered non-contributing. The modern garage located just southwest of the house is non-contributing in both date and function. It is interesting to note that the 1870 lithograph showed a fence across the front and along the east side of the lawn. The white picket fence found on both the east and west sides of the residence today reflects this historic element.



*Residence, Pottery, and Tile Factory of DENNIS MELCHER Sec 36 Baltimore Tp.
Rurik P.O. Nashville Tp. Des Moines Co Iowa.*

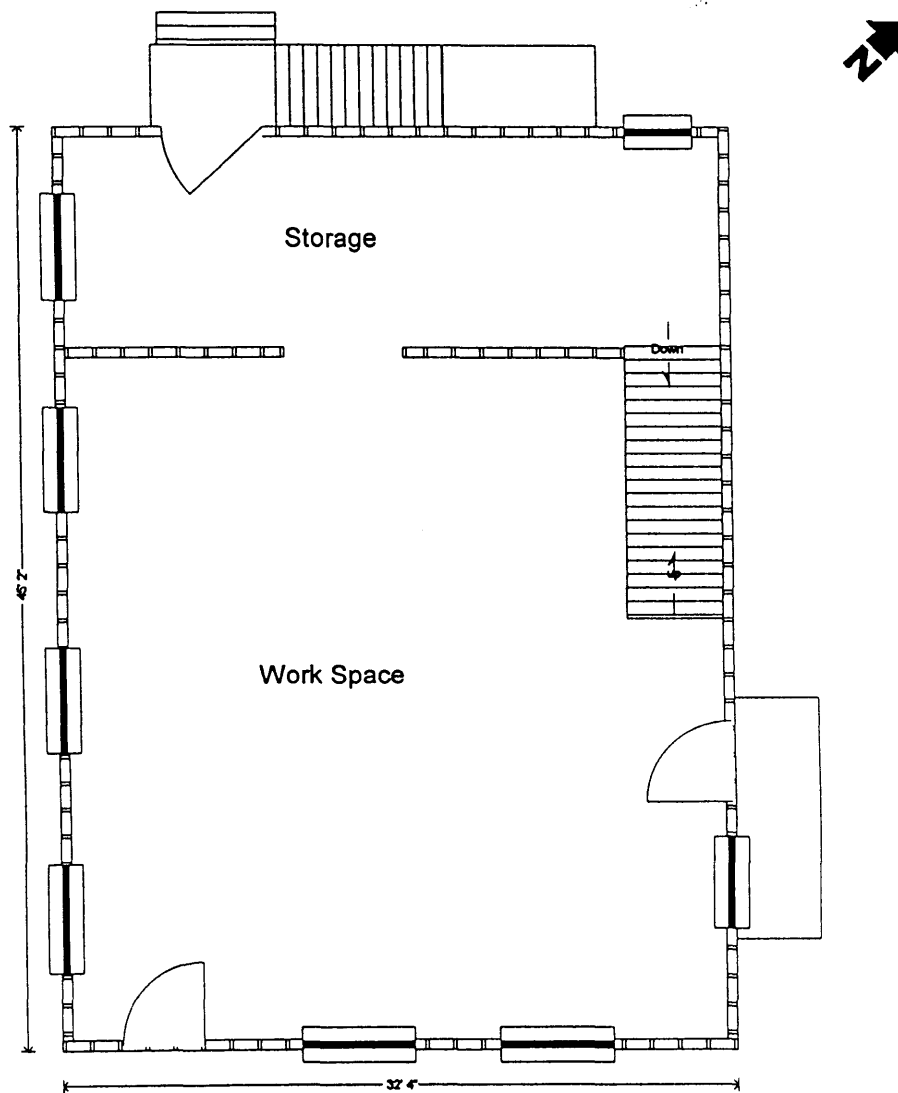
1870 lithograph showing the Dennis Melcher property, looking southwest
(Combination Atlas Map of Henry County, Iowa, 1870)

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Dennis Melcher Pottery and Residence
Des Moines/Henry County, IA

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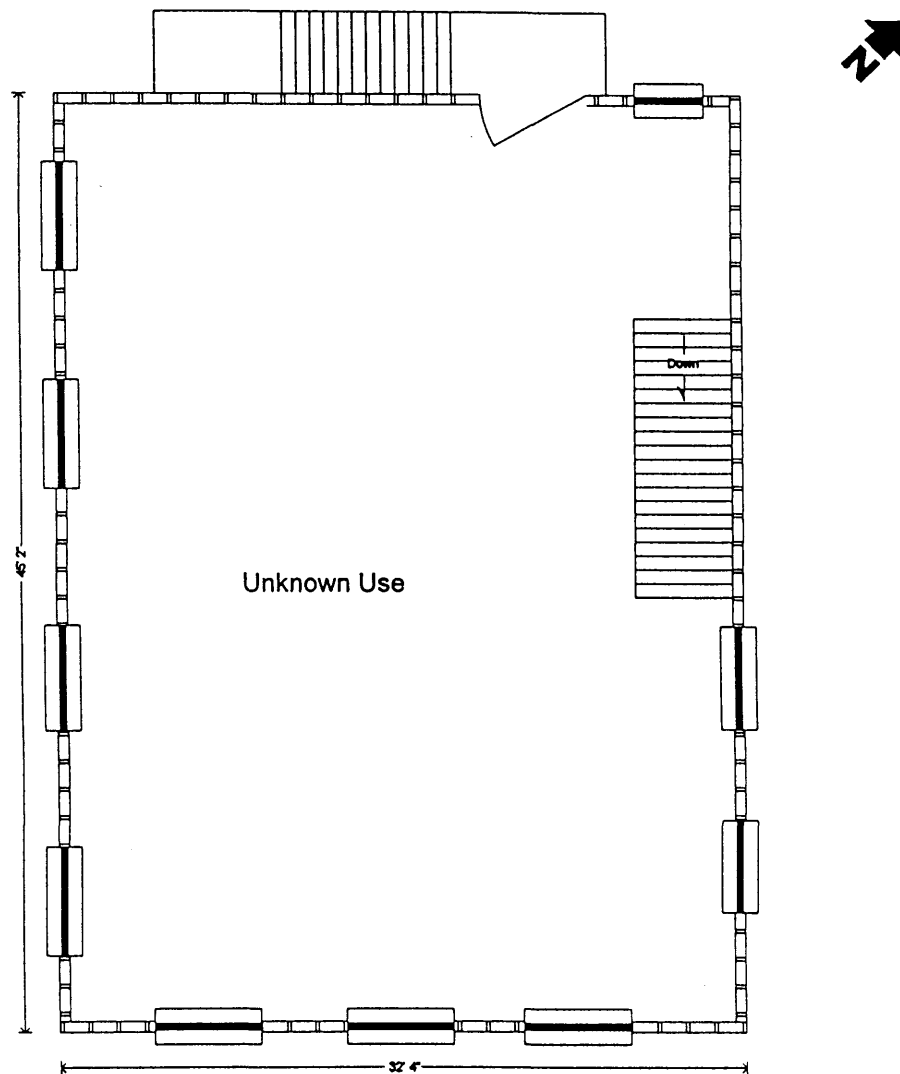
Pottery Building, plan of first floor
(Computerized plan based on drawings and measurements
provided by the Henry County Historic Preservation Commission, 2003)

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Continuation Sheet

Dennis Melcher Pottery and Residence
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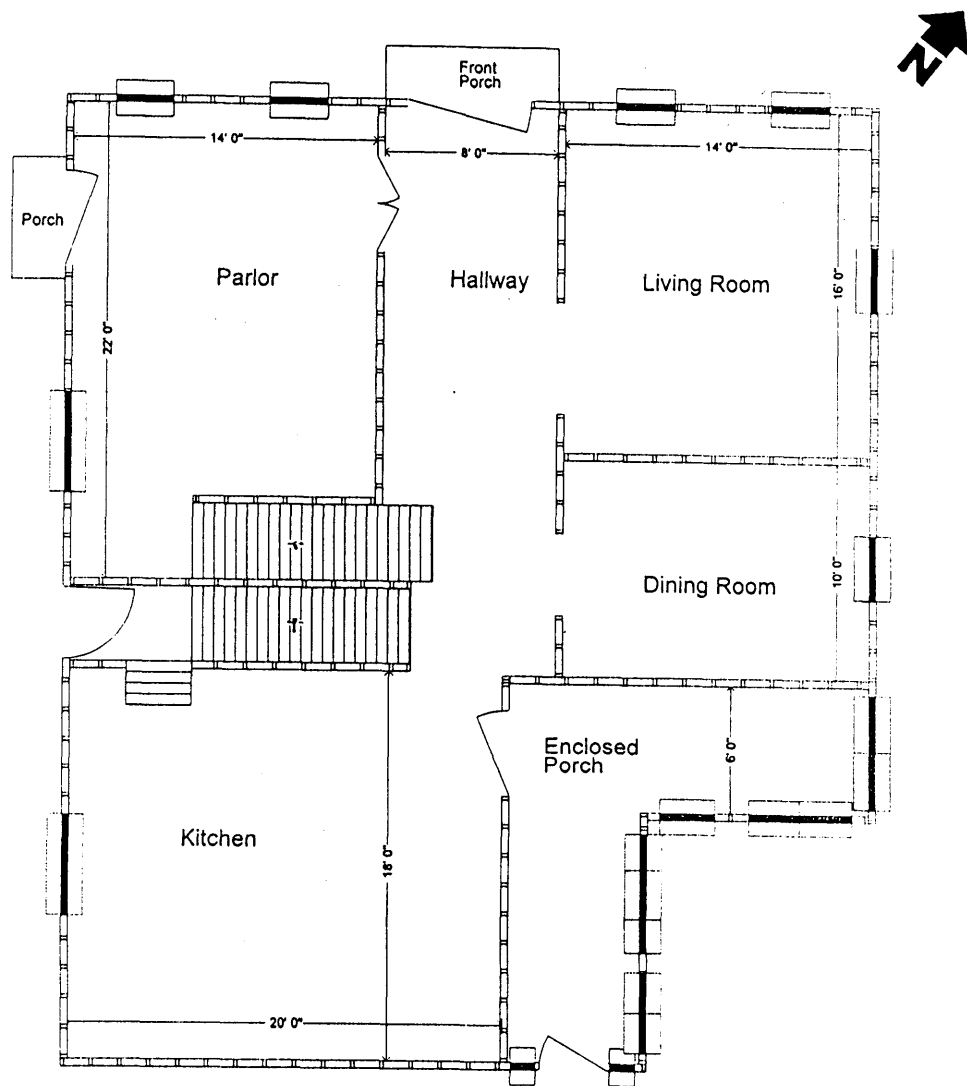
Pottery Building, plan of second floor
(Computerized plan based on drawings and measurements
provided by the Henry County Historic Preservation Commission, 2003)

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Continuation Sheet

Dennis Melcher Pottery and Residence
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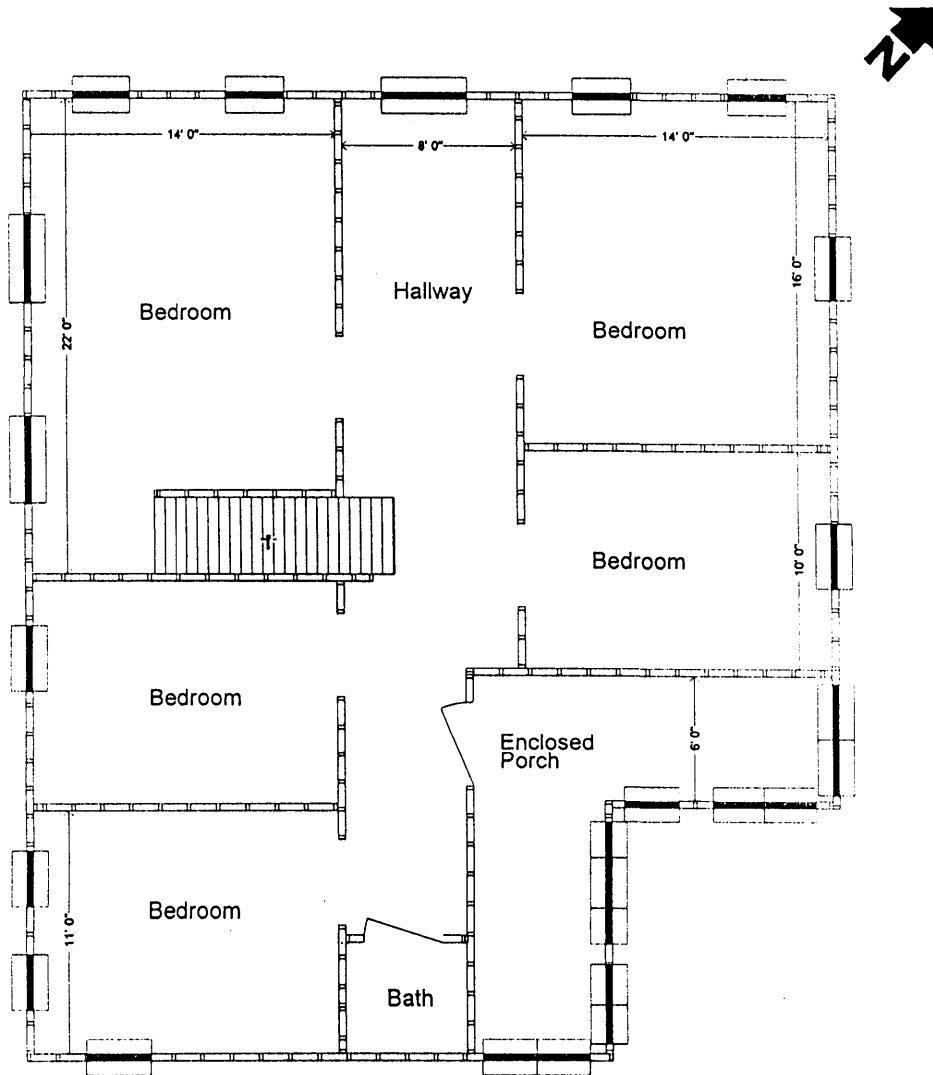
Residence, plan of first floor
(Computerized plan based on drawings and measurements
provided by the Henry County Historic Preservation Commission, 2003)

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Dennis Melcher Pottery and Residence
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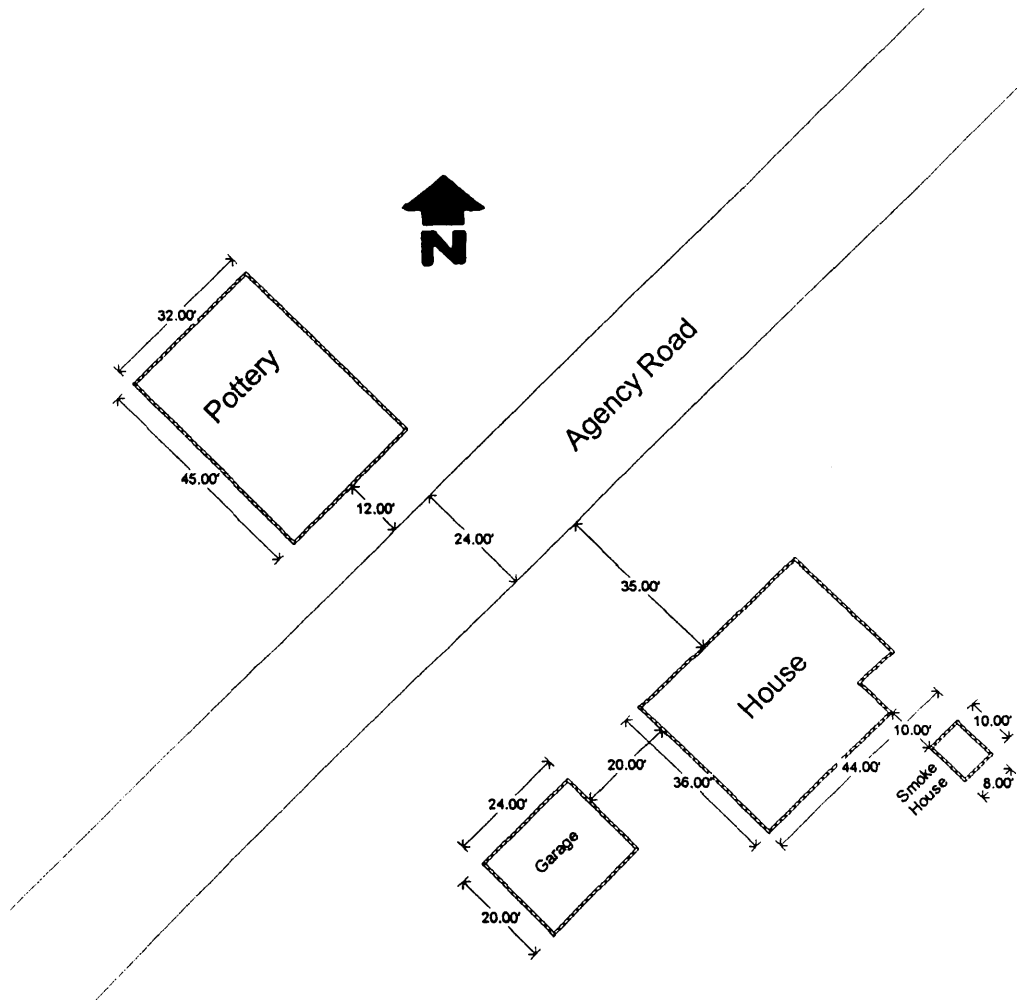
Residence, plan of second floor
(Computerized plan based on drawings and measurements
provided by Henry County Historic Preservation Commission, 2003)

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Dennis Melcher Pottery and Residence
Des Moines/Henry County, IA

Section number 7 Page 8



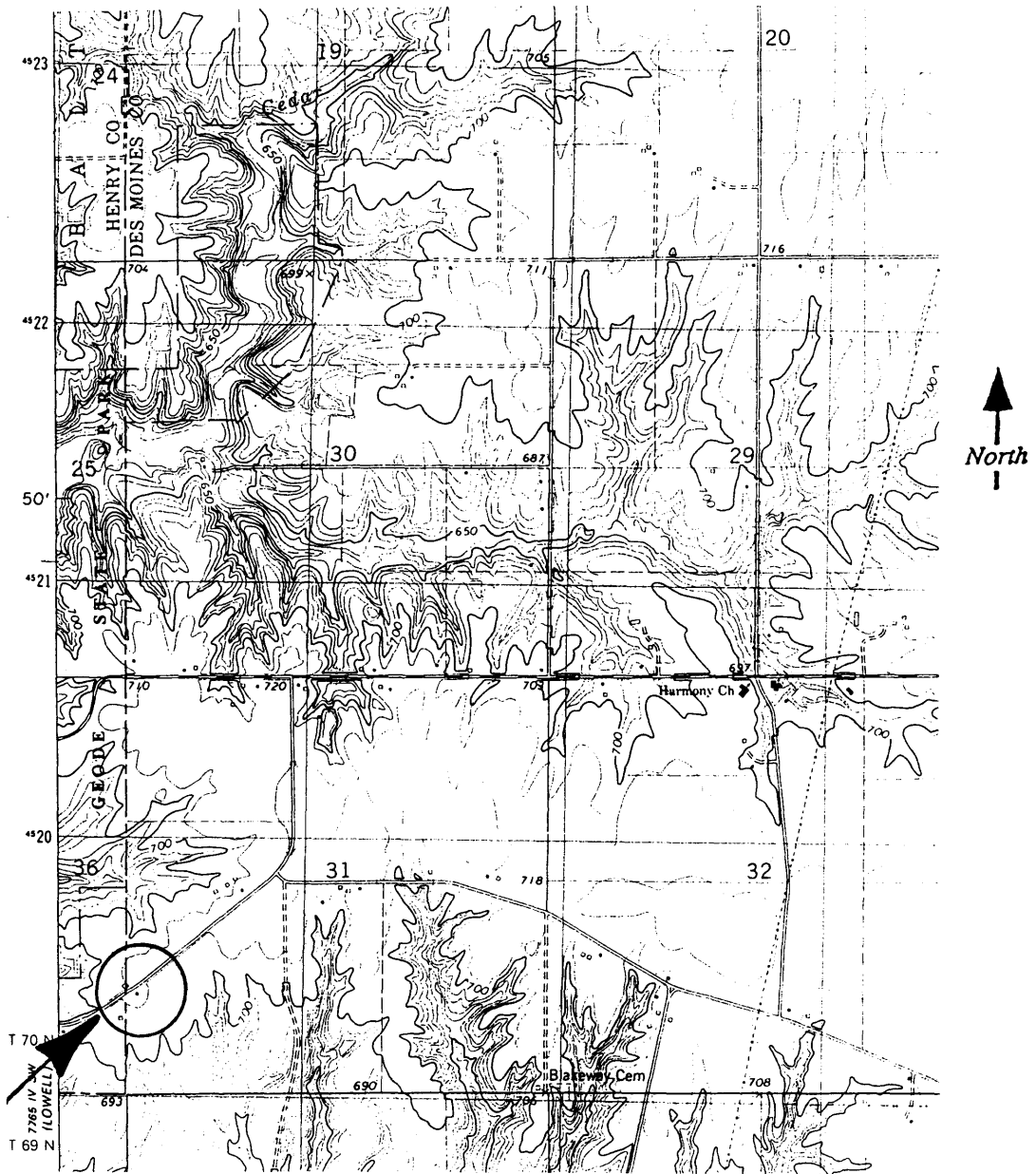
Sketch map of site
(Computerized map based on drawing and measurements
provided by the Henry County Historic Preservation Commission, 2003)

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Dennis Melcher Pottery and Residence
Des Moines/Henry County, IA

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U.S.G.S. Map of Danville Quad (1981)
Arrow indicates location of Melcher property in Sec 31, directly on the
Des Moines/Henry County line

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Dennis Melcher Pottery and Residence
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Statement of Significance:

The Dennis Melcher Pottery (c.1850) and Residence (c.1875) are significant under Criterion A as a rare example of a commercial/industrial facility along an early territorial/state road with a nearby owner's residence; and, under Criterion C, the pottery is an excellent and rare example of vernacular design of the period.

The area of southeast Iowa now known as Des Moines and Henry counties was part of the Black Hawk Purchase and was opened for settlement on June 1, 1833. In 1839 the U.S. Senate authorized the survey, location, and construction of several roads in the Iowa Territory. The first of these was a military road "from Burlington, through the counties of Des Moines, Henry, and Van Buren, towards the seat of the Indian agency on the Des Moines." The cost of this road was estimated to be \$6,407.50. The Territorial Legislature in Burlington approved construction of this road running west from Burlington, crossing the Skunk at Smith's Mills (present day Lowell), then on to Salem, Washington, Lick Creek, and finally the Indian agency in 1841. It was said that the road followed an established Indian trail. Senate documents stated,

This road may justly be regarded as of great importance to the section of country through which it passes, connecting a rapidly increasing and flourishing population in the interior with one of the principal towns on the river, and passing through a region entirely destitute of roads.

The construction of the military road made travel easier, and small settlements grew up along it. In Des Moines County there was a small settlement with a post office known as Parrish. (See map on page 7-1) At Smith's Mills (later called Lowell), the road crossed the Skunk River by ferry. Just west of the crossing was Boyleston, and farther west the travelers came to Salem. This road provided an alternative to some settlers, giving them a choice between the territorial road running out of Burlington to Danville, then northwest into Henry County and the towns of New London and Mount Pleasant, or using the Des Moines River as a road to the interior of the state, following the river from Keokuk northwest through Van Buren County and on Fort Des Moines at the fork of the Raccoon River. In 1841 a stage coach line began running on this highway between Burlington and Agency City.

Among the travelers on the Agency Road were two brothers, Dennis and Edward Melcher. Born in Baden, Germany they both eventually settled in Burlington in the 1840s. Their father had been a potter, and Dennis started a pottery in Burlington in 1844. Around 1848 the Melchers discovered a vein of clay running along the Des Moines/Henry County line near the Agency Road. The vein was about two miles long and a mile wide. It contained "blue" clay that burns white at 2200 degrees, and a little farther north a darker deposit was found.

In April 1849 Dennis Melcher bought 19.98 acres in Section 31, Danville Twp., part of it directly on the county line. On that land he built a limestone building to house his pottery, and a residence across the road to house his growing family. The pottery opened in 1851. (Andreas, Illustrated Historical Atlas of Des Moines County, Iowa, 1873) Two years later, the second Melcher brother, Edward, bought land immediately west of Dennis' in Sec 36, Baltimore Twp., Henry County. On this land Edward built his own pottery business on the Agency Road. The location of both these potteries on the Agency Road was a major asset to the businesses. The road provided ready access to the riverboats in Burlington, and

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Dennis Melcher Pottery and Residence
Des Moines/Henry County, IA

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later to the railroad in Burlington, and to the interior of the state. (Three other Melcher brothers, Richard, David, and Frank, are mentioned occasionally in writings about the potteries but they do not appear to have played a major role in either business.)

1851 Map of Southeast Iowa

Agency Road from Burlington to Salem is highlighted
Note road going west out of Burlington, curves northwest and then south near the county line,
Turning northwest through Lowell (Smith's Mills), crosses the river, and on to Salem.
(Henn, Williams & Co., Township Map of the State of Iowa, 1851)

It is said that the clay was dug in the fall, and piled in an open spot to weather over the winter. In the spring it was worked to remove impurities, and then run through the grinding process. Once it reached the consistency of flour it was watered down and allowed to settle. (*Mount Pleasant News*, "Potters of Parrish story told", 3 April 1976) The two Melcher Potteries produced crocks, churns, kitchen jugs, canning jars, bean pots, flower pots, and perhaps some dinnerware. One Melcher coffee mug has been located. (*ibid.*)

Extant examples include a marked, hard glazed white cream pitcher (the only piece of whiteware that has been authenticated as Melcher), several small "piggy banks," a brown casserole type dish, colanders, and some other unusual pieces that were evidently not made on a wide scale, including one Melcher coffee mug. A "brindle" churn of Dennis Melcher Ware is one of the few pieces that show any decoration, but the same blue is often found on unmarked jars. (Dunn and Virden, p 37)

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Dennis Melcher Pottery and Residence
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In 1873 the Des Moines County Atlas gave the following account of Dennis Melcher:

Mr. Melcher began life with no property; he had, however, a good knowledge of the pottery business which he began in Burlington, without any capital, in 1844. After seven years work in Burlington, he transferred his business to its present location in Danville Township; here he employs eight men, turning out annually pottery to the value of seven thousand dollars. He also manufactures drain tiles, having built the first factory in the state. Mr. Melcher has a large farm, a good home, a loving family, and lives in good circumstances, honored by all who know him.

Dennis Melcher retired from the pottery in 1876, with his son Dennis Jr. taking over the family business. The Beck brothers, Estacious and Antone, worked for Edward Melcher and took over his business after he retired. There were other potteries in the area besides the two Melcher operations. In 1870 Charles Turney purchased land about a half mile north of Dennis and established a pottery that became famous for its "Bristol" brown glaze. Due to the number of potteries in this area, it was given the nickname "Jug Town." None of these remain in operation today.

When Dennis Melcher died in November 1879, the *Burlington Daily Hawk Eye* noted his passing in articles on two different days. His obituary on November 14 noted that he had served as a member of the Des Moines County Board of Supervisors from 1876-1878. "In 1851 he removed to Danville township, where by industry, economy and careful attention to business he has built up for himself and his family one of the most beautiful homes in southern Iowa." The following day, November 15, the paper wrote that he had been "ruddy and strong and happy as ever" a few days before, but was stricken with a sudden illness on Tuesday and died within 47 hours. They alluded to his industriousness, and spoke of the esteem in which he was held by his neighbors. Again, the paper stressed that he had arrived from Germany with little, had started his pottery business in Burlington, become successful and moved to Danville Twp. where his success continued.

There appear to have been potteries scattered across most of Iowa (at least the eastern half) during the mid to late 19th century. Just as Dunn and Virden chronicled the development of the Melcher potteries and other potteries in the "Jug Town" neighborhood, others have written about some of the small potteries in other parts of Iowa (see articles by Barnard, Stoltz, and Taylor in the bibliography). The Henry/Des Moines County study was done in the 1970s and could be updated as more information may be available. No archaeological study was done as part of this survey and nomination project.

Pottery:

The limestone pottery building is an excellent example of vernacular design: a simple gable roof rectangular structure, of a size necessitated for the manufacture of pottery, using readily available material, limestone. It is a purely functional building with no attempt at style. This was typical of many buildings constructed in Iowa at this time. The gable roof rectangle provided adequate space for almost all functions: residential, commercial, industrial, religious, and even, educational. Often it was only the size that differentiated between building types.

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Continuation Sheet**

**Dennis Melcher Pottery and Residence
Des Moines/Henry County, IA**

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Residence:

The residence, is a good example of simplified Italianate design executed in frame. It has the massing and the details of the style, but done in a very simple form. To build a house such as this, the builder must have been familiar with Italianate style houses in Burlington, and/or, had access to various pattern books that were available. A "high style" house like the Melcher residence was fairly uncommon in rural areas in the 1870s. The remodeling of the house from its original gable roofed appearance into this Italianate form illustrates the success of the Melcher Pottery. Its location on a major transportation route, the Agency Road, may have influenced Dennis Melcher to build a "show place."

When considered together, the pottery building and the residence form an early Iowa commercial/industrial complex, significant under Criterion A. Individually, alterations to the residence keep it from being considered significant under Criterion C.

It has been noted that both Melcher brothers built potteries and residences within a mile of each other near the Des Moines/Henry County line. Only the Dennis Melcher property is being nominated because the Edward Melcher property suffers from a loss of integrity. Dennis Melcher would definitely recognize his residence and pottery, and probably would be astonished that it looks much like it did one hundred and fifty years ago.

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Continuation Sheet

Dennis Melcher Pottery and Residence
Des Moines/Henry County, IA

Section number 9 Page 14

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National Park Service

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Continuation Sheet

Dennis Melcher Pottery and Residence
Des Moines/Henry County, IA

Section number 9 Page 15

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

**Dennis Melcher Pottery and Residence
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GEOGRAPHIC DATA:

Verbal Boundary Description:

Less than one acre of land located in the SW ¼ SW1/4 Sec 31 T70N R4W beginning at a point 10' west of the southwest corner of the limestone pottery building, thence NW 55', thence NE 52', thence SE 116', thence NE 54', thence SE 76', thence SW 106', thence NW 137' to the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification:

This is the area historically associated with these resources.

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

**National Register of Historic Places
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**Dennis Melcher Pottery and Residence
Des Moines/Henry County, IA**

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The photographs submitted with this nomination were taken by the Henry County Historic Preservation Commission in November 2002 and March 2003. The negatives are in the files of the State Historical Society, Community Programs Bureau, Des Moines, IA.

1. Pottery, façade and east elevation looking west
2. Pottery, rear (north) and west elevations looking southeast
3. Pottery, façade and west elevation looking north
4. Residence, façade and east elevation looking south, note garage on right
5. Residence, façade and west elevation looking east
6. Residence, West elevation and garage looking east
7. Residence, rear and east elevation looking west, note smokehouse in left foreground
8. Smokehouse looking southeast
9. Detail: Front porch, entrance with transom and sidelights
10. Detail: Bracketed cornice

DENNIS MELCHER FOR THE
& RESIDENTS
22981 & 22982 AGENCY ROAD
DANVILLE VERMONT
ESSEX CO. VT.
637319 4519618

T 70 N
7765 IV SW
(LOWELL)
T 69 N

