

2054

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received **SEP 26 1988**
date entered

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

1. Name

historic Voss, Alfred R., Farmstead

and/or common N/A

2. Location

street & number County Highway 14 N/A not for publication

city, town Rosendale Township X vicinity of St. James 56081

state Minnesota code 22 (MN) county Watonwan code 165

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Robert Voss

street & number Route 1

city, town St. James N/A vicinity of state Minnesota 56081

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Watonwan County Courthouse

street & number 7th St. and 2nd Ave. S.

city, town St. James state Minnesota 56081

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Minnesota Statewide Historic Sites Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1985-86 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date <u>N/A</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Alfred A. Voss Farmstead is located on a paved county road in Section 30 of Rosendale Township, 2 miles south of St. James, Minnesota. The farmstead consists of thirteen buildings arranged around an oval shaped drive with a central grass yard. The buildings, constructed between 1893 and circa 1940, include 11 contributing buildings and 2 contributing structures. Approximately 700 feet north of the farmstead is a circa 1960 house which has its own driveway and is isolated from the historic farmstead by trees. Because of its recent construction date and its physical separation from the original farmstead, it is not included in the nomination.

The following buildings are included in the nomination:

Stock Barn. Contributing. The Stock Barn at the southwest corner of the farmstead is a massive, 180' long x 60' deep x 56' tall, gable roofed structure which is one of the largest barns in Minnesota. The barn was constructed with expensive, long-lasting hardwoods which were first soaked in 2,000 gallons of linseed oil. It has black walnut beams, posts of Washington fir, Washington red cedar siding, and an original wood shingle roof. Built in 1893-96, the barn rests on a three foot thick concrete foundation which extends ten feet into the ground. Above the ground, the concrete first story is pierced by small segmental arched windows and doors. The second story flares out over the first story, with the ends of the supporting beams exposed. At the central bay of the north facade is a projecting gable with a rounded arched second story window and a wide segmental arched main entrance. The second story has paired rectangular 2/2 sash. The gabled roof has three square cupolas and ten small gabled dormers.

The interior of the Stock Barn is elaborate. It has stalls and boxes of polished white oak, floors of paving brick and concrete, and a sewage and waterworks system. The barn housed several hundred head of cattle and horses, and has a capacity for storing 1,000 tons of hay. The Stock Barn is virtually intact and in good condition. Behind it is a large fenced stock pen and a concrete alley leading to the fields.

Livestock and Machinery Building. Contributing. The Livestock and Machinery Building, although slightly smaller than the stock barn, is equally unusual in size and design. Built circa 1895, the one story structure measures approximately 150' long and 40' deep. It was constructed of soft brick which has been painted white, and has an unusual red ceramic tile low pitched hipped roof. Flanking the main (north) facade are two massive brick silos topped with corbelling and crenelation. At the center of the main facade is an intersecting curvilinear gable supported by pilasters with stone trim which enframe a large square main entrance. The building has rectangular double hung windows and square double door machinery entrances. The rear (south) facade has gables at the outer bays over wide rectangular entrances. Behind the building is a large fenced stock pen and a concrete alley leading to the fields. The building was apparently used for machinery storage and repair and as a livestock barn. It is basically intact and in fair condition.

Corn Crib. Contributing. A circa 1900 gable roofed woodframe corncrib located along the east side of a large fenced stock pen. It is in poor condition.

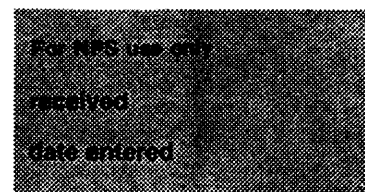
Livestock Building. Contributing. A circa 1920 livestock barn located at the southeast corner of the farmstead. It has a gabled roof and has a low, recent extension to the east. The building is in good condition.

Sheds. Two small woodframe sheds built circa 1920. Both have gabled roofs and both are intact. Contributing.

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Granary. Contributing. A circa 1920 two story woodframe granary with clapboard siding and a gabled roof. It is intact and in good condition.

Old Granary. Contributing. The old granary, built circa 1895, has a stone foundation and shiplap siding. It is intact and in fair condition.

Garage. Contributing. A long, low circa 1910 brick structure located east of the house which is now used as a garage. It is in good condition.

House. Non-contributing. A large, late Colonial Revival farmhouse built circa 1940 on the site of the original Voss farmhouse which was built in 1895 and burned in 1919. The present house is intact and in good condition and is now used as a farm manager's house.

Pump House. Contributing. A small, one story woodframe building with a hipped roof. The pumphouse was built circa 1900 and is in poor condition.

Mill House. Contributing. A two story, gable roofed woodframe building which was built circa 1900. It was apparently used for feed mill purposes and is intact and in fair condition.

Hired Hands' House. Contributing. A small two story house built circa 1900 as a residence for hired hands working on the farm. Covered with stucco, the house has a gabled roof with a gabled dormer on the main facade. The dormer, which is supported by an overhang above the main entrance, has a small open porch with a round opening and a wooden balustrade. The house is in fair condition.

Metal Wind Mill. Contributing. The metal base of the circa 1920 wind mill straddles the pump house. It is in poor condition.

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 checked="" 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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1893-1920 **Builder/Architect** Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Alfred R. Voss Farmstead in Watonwan County's Rosendale Township is architecturally significant as a farmstead complex whose buildings include one of the largest and most elaborate barns standing in Minnesota and a machinery and livestock building of rare design. The site is historically significant as the headquarters of one of the largest private farming operations in southern Minnesota in the late nineteenth century, and as the farmstead of Alfred R. Voss, one of St. James' most well known farmers and a figure important to the settlement of Watonwan County.

Alfred R. Voss (1860-1952), the son of German immigrant parents, was born in Illinois and attended law school at the University of Michigan. He practiced law in Elgin, Illinois, and Mandan, North Dakota, and then became a U.S. Land Surveyor. In the 1880's he began to invest in land by purchasing unbroken acres in southern Minnesota held by railroad companies. He became one of the most extensive land owners in Minnesota and at one time owned 80,000 acres. Through the purchase, breaking, and sale of land he became a key individual in the settlement of Watonwan County. In the 1880's he attracted and sold land to hundreds of farmers who moved to the county from Illinois and other areas.

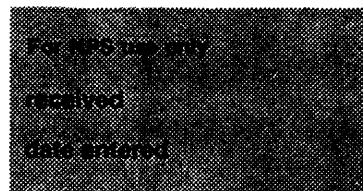
Voss established a home farm on Section 30 of Rosendale Township two miles south of St. James when he moved to the county circa 1884. In the late 1880's and early 1890's he placed 13,000 acres under cultivation which he farmed through managers and tenants, becoming one of the largest single farmers in the state. On his farmstead Voss erected a series of farm buildings which were unique because of their size and unusual design. The most important of these were the Stock Barn, a massive 180' by 60' structure constructed of hardwoods in 1893-96, and the Livestock and Machinery Building, a huge circa 1895 brick structure which measures approximately 150' by 40'. Architecturally, the Stock Barn is significant as one of the largest barns in Minnesota and as a structure which is exceptionally well constructed and still intact. The Livestock and Machinery Building, with its red tiled roof and massive brick silos, is a rare departure from the more usual utilitarian design of most Minnesota farm buildings. The farmstead also contains a house for hired help and a large collection of sheds, granaries, and livestock buildings. The structural features of the buildings and the site's physical arrangement make it an important example of late nineteenth and early twentieth century farmstead design.

In addition to settling new farmers in the county, Voss himself became one of southern Minnesota's most prominent farmers. His farm became widely known as one of the most extensive operations in the region. He became one of the state's leading stock farmers, experimenting and raising imported and domestic breeds of cattle. He experimented with new strains of grains and grasses on his farm and used modern planting and tilling techniques. He became one of the county's first land conservationists, planting an estimated one half million tree seedlings in the county during his life.

(See Continuation Sheet)

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Voss also became prominent in county affairs. Around 1910 he led a group which purchased the Park Hotel in St. James and established a local hospital. In 1942 he gave a 240 acre park to the village of Butterfield. In 1947 he established a \$15,000 trust fund for the support of 4-H Clubs in Watonwan County. He donated land for many of the county's rural schools, donated twenty acres for the South Branch Church and School, donated a ten acre county park at Kansas Lake, and was one of the founders of the St. James public library.

Voss and his family lived on the farmstead in a house which was built in 1895 and designed by Mankato architect H. C. Gerlach. When the house burned in 1919 the family moved into St. James. Several years later, in circa 1940, Voss's son Robert Voss built a new house at the farmstead on the site of the original house. This house is now used as a farm manager's house and Robert Voss now lives in a circa 1960 house built just north of the historic farmstead. The farm is still under the ownership and management of the Voss family.

The Alfred R. Voss Farmstead was included in a historic sites survey of Watonwan County conducted recently by the State Historic Preservation Office. The survey staff determined that the site is one of the most extensive farmsteads of its age standing in southern Minnesota. The stock barn and livestock and machinery building are extremely rare because of their size and design, and the entire farmstead is an important example of a complex of buildings designed to support farming on a scale which far surpassed most farms in the region. Fitting within the State Historic Preservation Office's Agricultural Development and Railroad Construction historic context, the farmstead is an important link to the extensive settlement of land and the establishment of large scale farming made possible by the construction of railroads in the county.

The Alfred R. Voss Farmstead is eligible under Criterion B for its historic association with Voss who is noted for his contributions to the agricultural settlement of portions of southern Minnesota and for his development of scientific methods of farming and cattle raising. It is also eligible under Criterion C as a farmstead whose buildings reflect an effort to incorporate design elements not usually found in the more utilitarian farm buildings of southern Minnesota.

9. Major Bibliographical References

"Funeral Services for County Pioneer Farmer, Land Owner." St. James Courier, Sept. 30, 1952. Memorial Record of the Counties of Faribault, Martin, Watonwan, and Jackson, Minnesota. Chicago: Lewis Publishing Co., 1895, pp. 529-530.
 St. James, Minnesota: A Souvenir. Minneapolis: Wall and Haines, 1901.
 "Voss Always Optimistic About the Country." St. James Plaindealer, June 11, 1970.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 8.26 acres

Quadrangle name St. James East Quad

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A

1	5	3	7	0	4	6	0	4	8	6	8	1	2	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

B

1	5	3	7	0	6	6	0	4	8	6	8	1	2	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

C

1	5	3	7	0	6	6	0	4	8	6	7	9	2	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

D

1	5	3	7	0	4	6	0	4	8	6	7	9	2	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

E

Zone			Easting				Northing							

F

Zone			Easting				Northing							

G

Zone			Easting				Northing							

H

Zone			Easting				Northing							

Verbal boundary description and justification

See Continuation Sheet

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

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/Contract Historian

State Historic Preservation Office

organization Minnesota Historical Society

date February 1986

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 Nina M. Archabal

Nina M. Archabal,

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date 9/16/88

For NPS use only

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

Entered in the
National Register

date 10/27/88

Alfred Byer
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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

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Alfred R. Voss Farmstead, Rosendale Twp (vicinity of St. James) Minnesota

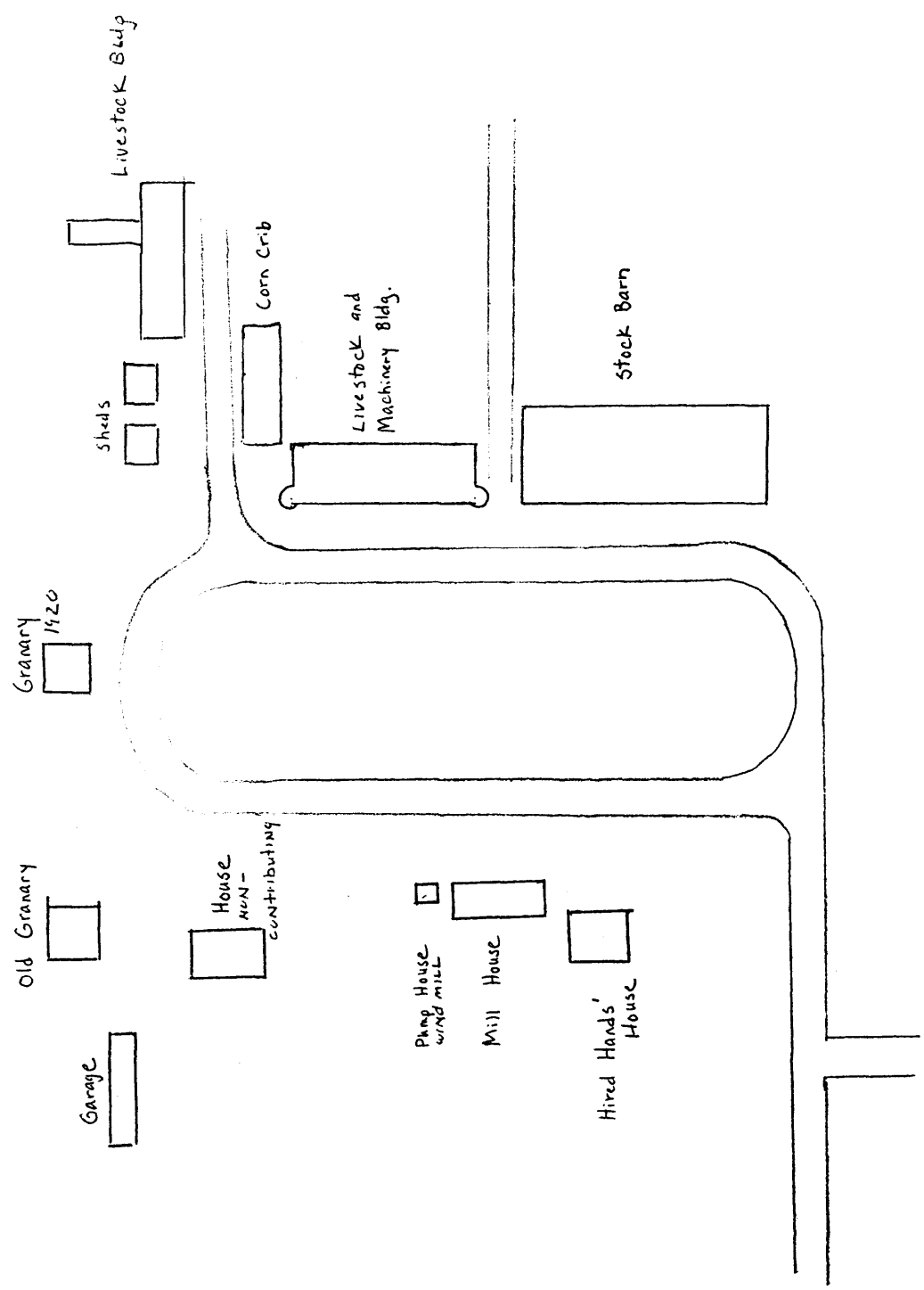
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The boundary of the nominated property is delineated by the square whose vertices are marked by the following UTM reference points:

- A 15 370460 4868120
- B 15 370660 4868120
- C 15 370660 4867920
- D 15 370460 4867920

The boundary includes the farm buildings that have historically been part of the Alfred R. Voss Farmstead and that maintain historic integrity.

Alfred R. Voss Farmsstead
 Rosendale Township, Minnesota
 Watonwan County, Minnesota
 Sketch Map.
 (This is not a boundary map)



↓ TO CO. HWY 14