

**United States Department of 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 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

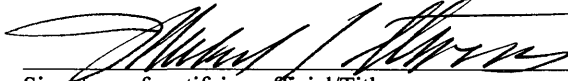
historic name Kriesel, Louis C. and Augusta, Farmstead
other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number	132 State Trunk Highway 35/64	N/A	not for publication
city or town	Town of St. Joseph	N/A	vicinity
state Wisconsin	code WI	county St. Croix	code 109 zip code 54082

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.)


Signature of certifying official/Title 12/23/08
Date

State Historic Preservation Officer - Wisconsin

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 official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

Kriesel, Louis C. and Augusta, Farmstead
Name of Property

St. Croix County
County and State

Wisconsin

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.
___ See continuation sheet.
___ removed from the National Register.
___ other, (explain:)

Edson H. Beall

2.12.09

[Signature]

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (check as many boxes as apply)	Category of Property (Check only one box)	Number of Resources within Property (Do not include previously listed resources in the count)	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	contributing	noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	8	1 buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> structure		sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> site	1	structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object		objects
		9	1 Total

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources
is previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/animal facility, storage,
processing

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Late Victorian

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation STONE

walls WEATHERBOARD

roof METAL

other WOOD

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 the 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)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1900-1910

Significant Dates

1900
1910

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

N/A

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

Kriesel, Louis C. and Augusta, Farmstead
Name of Property

St. Croix County
County and State

Wisconsin

9. Major Bibliographic References

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

Previous Documentation on File (National Park Service):

- 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:

- X State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 3.5 acres

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

1 15 517792 4989947
Zone Easting Northing

2 _____
Zone Easting Northing

3 _____
Zone Easting Northing

4 _____
Zone Easting Northing

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	Emily Pettis, John Lauber, and Shannon Dolan, Architectural Historians		
organization	Mead & Hunt, Inc.	date	September 2007
street & number	6501 Watts Road	telephone	608-273-6380
city or town	Madison	state	WI
		zip code	53719

Kriesel, Louis C. and Augusta, Farmstead
Name of Property

St. Croix County
County and State

Wisconsin

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps A US Geological Survey 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/title	Georgann Kilbane	date	September 2007
Organization		telephone	715-549-5876
street&number	1544 Twin Springs Road	zip code	54082
city or town	Houlton	state	WI

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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Section 7 Page 1

Kriesel, Louis C. and Augusta, Farmstead
Town of St. Joseph, St. Croix County, Wisconsin

Description

The Louis C. and Augusta Kriesel Farmstead consists of the main buildings associated with an early twentieth century diversified farm. The farmstead is situated on 3.5 acres within a larger 80 acres of farmland located in western Wisconsin, approximately 1.5 miles northeast of the unincorporated community of Houlton and approximately 25 miles east of Minneapolis/St. Paul. The farmstead is located on the north side of State Trunk Highway (STH) 35/64, at 132 STH 35/64, in the Town of St. Joseph, St. Croix County. It consists of a farmhouse and nine agricultural outbuildings and structures arranged around a central farmyard, located near the southeast corner of the historic boundary and set back from the highway approximately 830 feet. An agricultural field and groupings of deciduous trees and shrubs separate the farmstead from the highway and provide a visual screen. A gravel driveway extends north from the highway and terminates at a modern, three-car garage northwest of the farmhouse. Although the driveway connects the farmstead with the highway, two metal gates restrict public access to the property. The decorative metal gate closest to the house is flanked by concrete bollards. These are not included in the count because of their relatively small size and scale.

The farmhouse and outbuildings are arranged around a central open farmyard. A group of three fruit trees and a flower garden are located east of the house, outside the central farmyard. A grouping of deciduous trees and shrubs shield the buildings from the highway and serve as a shelterbelt. Decorative light posts are scattered throughout the property and urns have been added near the farmhouse.

Farmhouse

c.1900

Contributing

The one-and-one-half-story frame farmhouse was constructed c.1900, shortly after Louis C. Kriesel purchased the property. The vernacular form house displays an irregular plan with intersecting gable roof and rests on a stone foundation. The walls are clad in clapboard siding and the gable roof is covered with standing seam metal, which was added in the past decade. Although the exterior of the farmhouse displays minimal decorative details, it retains the original wood window surrounds, simple wood cornice and end boards, two shed roof porches with turned posts, and two interior brick chimneys. The majority of windows are original two-over-two, double-hung sash. The irregular footprint of the house, intersecting gable roofline, and minimal architectural detail are original to the farmhouse and evidenced in c.1920 photographs of the property.¹

The primary facade is oriented south, facing STH 35/64. Two concrete steps lead to a shed roof porch with a stone foundation. Turned posts and spandrel brackets embellish the porch. A one-story gable wing is located at the southeast corner. A two-over-two, double-hung sash window is centered on the south elevation of the wing and a small square fixed window is located on the west elevation. A wood panel door located west of the wing serves as the formal entrance and displays a single light. A two-over-two, double-hung sash window is located

¹ Historic Kriesel family photographs in the personal collection of Georgann Kilbane.

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west of the door. The second story features a gable wall dormer with two, two-over-two, double-hung sash windows and an interior brick chimney.

The east (side) elevation features a discontinuous roofline, asymmetrical fenestration, and an enclosed porch. With the exception of the enclosed porch, the elevation appears as it did in the c.1920 photograph. A large gable wall dormer with a two-over-two and a one-over-one, double-hung sash window with wood surrounds is situated directly above a small shed roof projection. A portion of the elevation, located at the southeast corner, protrudes slightly from the massing and has two, two-over-two, double-hung sash windows. These windows are likely replacements, as they appear to be six-over-six, double-hung sash in the c.1920 photograph. A one-story shed roof ell with a pair of two-over-two, double-hung sash windows is located at the northeast corner. A one-story shed roof porch is located on the northeast corner. Although the porch has been enclosed with clapboard and converted into a mudroom, it retains its original footprint. Prior to being enclosed, screens that extended from the floor to the roof were added to the porch in the summer and the screens were replaced in the winter with wood boards to create an entrance vestibule.² A modern metal door provides access to the porch.

The enclosed porch extends across a portion of the rear (north) elevation. Windows on this side of the porch include a pair of replacement multi-light casements and a single, one-over-one, double-hung sash, which is likely original. A small fixed-pane window has been added just above the roofline of the porch. A two-story gable, west of the porch, features paired one-over-one, double-hung sash windows on both stories.

Similar to the front facade, the (side) west elevation has a shed roof porch that spans the length of the ell, which is embellished with turned posts and spandrel brackets. A single-light wood panel door with a screen door and a single, two-over-two, double-hung sash window are located with the porch. A small, one-over-one, double-hung sash window is situated between the roofline of the porch and the cornice on the second story. Two, two-over-two, double-hung sash windows and one square fixed-pane window are located on the first story of the gable wing. A single two-over-two, double-hung sash window is centered in the gable end.

Interior

The interior of the Kriesel Farmhouse retains a high degree of integrity in terms of the floor plan and interior finishes. The wood floors, baseboards, and a majority of the windows and doors, including the wood surrounds, are original to the house. Embellishments are modest and limited to simple wood baseboards and rosettes located at the corners of the wood window and door surrounds, unless otherwise indicated. The majority of walls in the house are covered with wallpaper. The farmhouse is furnished with family heirlooms and antiques.

² Mead & Hunt, Inc., Interview with property owner, Georgann Kilbane, 12 June 2007.

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Rooms on the first floor were intended to receive guests or for utilitarian use while rooms on the second floor were private, consisting largely of bedrooms. The formal rooms include the parlor, sitting room, and dining room, located near the front of the house. The utilitarian rooms include the kitchen and pantry, located at the rear of the house.

The primary entrance is a single-light, wood panel door on the front (south) facade. The door opens into the living room, which also served as a bedroom for several years.³ The room currently reflects its original use and retains the original dark wood floor, base molding, and window and door surrounds. An entrance located at the northeast corner of the room opens to the parlor.

The parlor is located to the east of the living room. A large doorway allows easy movement between the rooms. Unlike other rooms in the house, the woodwork in this room has been painted white; however, the floor remains unpainted. The room features a wood-burning stove from the historic period in the southeast corner. Walls are covered in ivy-patterned wallpaper.

A small sitting room is located to the south of the parlor, in the gable wing on the front facade. The room is rectangular and has a fixed window on the west wall, one, two-over-two, double-hung sash window on the south wall, and a small closet on the east wall. The wood floor, baseboard, window, and door surrounds are original. The walls are covered in leaf-patterned wallpaper.

The formal dining room is located to the north of the parlor. It can also be accessed from the kitchen to the east and from the exterior to the west. A doorway located at the southwest corner accesses the staircase for the second story. A built-in, full-length, wood hutch is located in the northeast corner. The simple, yet elegant design reflects the formal atmosphere of the room. The hutch features an inset beveled mirror centered above a series of drawers and is flanked by Tuscan columns and cabinets with glass doors. Three square cabinets with glass doors are located above. Wainscoting, painted white, wraps around the bottom half of the room, while the top half is covered with pin-striped wallpaper. The wood floor has been covered with multi-colored linoleum.

The kitchen is located at the northeast corner of house. A wood panel door separates the kitchen from the dining room to the west. The small rectangular room features white wainscoting on the bottom half of the walls with floral wallpaper above. A cobalt blue enamel stove, from the historic period, is located in the southwest corner of the room. Wood cabinets and drawers are located east of the stove and paired two-over-two, double-

³ During the time it served as a bedroom, no alterations were made to the space. Mead & Hunt, Inc., Interview with property owner, Georgann Kilbane, 12 June 2007.

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Town of St. Joseph, St. Croix County, Wisconsin

hung sash windows are located on the east wall. A large wall sink is located in the northwest corner of the room near the doorway to the pantry.

A small pantry is located at the northwest corner of the kitchen. The rectangular room retains its original woodwork, including built-in cabinets, drawers, and countertops. Simple floral wallpaper and white wainscoting cover the exposed walls. A single, one-over-one, double-hung sash window is located on the north wall.

The porch located at the northeast corner of the kitchen has been converted into a mudroom. The walls of the rectangular room retain the original exterior clapboard and the wood floor has been painted. Two, multi-light replacement casement windows and one, one-over-one, double-hung sash window are located on the north wall. A modern door on the east wall provides access to the exterior.

The second story consists of three bedrooms and one bathroom. A narrow staircase situated at the southwest corner of the dining room provides access to the second story. A small landing at the bottom of the staircase features a fixed window on the south wall. A narrow hallway at the top of the staircase accesses the two bedrooms to the south, the bathroom to the east, and the bedroom to the north. The floors throughout this story are the original wood and retain the original decorative metal floor vents. The base molding and window and door surrounds are also the original wood; however, some have been painted.

A large bedroom with a sloped ceiling is located at the north end of the hallway. The rectangular room retains the original wood floor, base molding, and simple door and window surrounds. A wood panel door on the east wall leads to the attic. A pair of two-over-two, double-hung sash windows on the north wall and one, three-over-three, double-hung sash window on the west wall display simple wood surrounds.

A small bathroom is located south of the aforementioned bedroom. It maintains the original claw-foot bathtub, porcelain corner sink, and wood floor. The ceiling is sloped, the walls are covered with geometric-patterned wallpaper, and a small one-over-one, double-hung sash window is located above the sink on the east wall.

A smaller bedroom is located at the southeast corner of the second story. The room is accessed by a wood panel door with a single textured glass pane. The crown molding, base boards, and simple window surrounds have been painted white. The wood floor has been covered with a mustard yellow paint. The walls are covered with pin-striped wallpaper. Two, two-over-two, double-hung sash windows are located on the east and south walls.

Another bedroom is located at the southwest corner of the house. The walls of the rectangular room are covered with floral wallpaper and the wood floor is painted mustard yellow. The crown molding, base boards,

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and window and door surrounds are painted white. Windows on the south and west elevations are two-over-two, double-hung sash. A closet with a wood panel door is located at the northeast corner of the room.

Barn and silo (2 resources)

c.1910

Contributing

A c.1910 general purpose barn and Gurler silo are located north of the farmhouse.⁴ The south elevation of the barn fronts the farmyard that separates the house from the agricultural outbuildings and structures. The frame barn is of mortise and tenon construction, covered with horizontal drop siding, and rests on a concrete pad. Although the gambrel roof has been covered with modern standing seam metal and the bell centered on top of the barn has been enclosed, the hay hood on the east elevation remains intact.⁵ The interior of the barn maintains its original floor plan, with separate spaces for different animals and functions. Although the manure troughs have been covered with concrete, the animal stalls, feed troughs, and hayloft remain intact.

The main level of the south elevation displays three, four-over-four, double-hung sash windows, two Dutch-doors, and a gable hyphen, which attaches the c.1910 silo. The upper level features a single, small four-light window and a small vertical wood door. According to the property owner, the silo was covered with corrugated metal c.1917 and the cap was removed several years later. The main level of the east elevation features three hinged vertical wood doors and two, fixed four-pane windows. A large vertical wood door provides access to the hayloft on the upper level and is flanked by two small, four-pane windows. Although the north elevation has been altered by the addition of modern patio doors and replacement windows, it is obscured by foliage and faces away from the central farmyard. The west elevation features a hinged vertical wood door centered on the main level that is flanked by two modern large, fixed-pane doors and two, small four-light windows. Double glass doors have been added directly above the wood door. The door to the hayloft and a small four-light window are located above the glass doors in the gambrel end.

Machine shed

c.1910

Contributing

A c.1910 machine shed is located northwest of the farmhouse and the east elevation faces the farmyard. It is rectangular, clad in horizontal drop wood siding, and rests on a concrete pad. The side gable roof is covered with standing seam metal and features an interior brick chimney. The east elevation displays a pair of two,

⁴ The Gurler silo was invented by H.B. Gurler in 1897. It is a wood hoop with an interior system of horizontal wood key lath to which was applied a coat of cement plaster that prevented acids in the silage from damaging the wood walls. It was also equipped with a patented Harder door system that made it possible to erect the structure with a continuous, slot-like vertical door. K.J.T. Ekblaw, *Farm Structures* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1914), 149-151; George D. Harder, U.S. Patent No. 627,732, G.D. Harder Silo, 27 June 1899.

⁵ Mead & Hunt, Inc., Interview with property owner, Georgann Kilbane, 12 June 2007.

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Kriesel, Louis C. and Augusta, Farmstead
Town of St. Joseph, St. Croix County, Wisconsin

hinged vertical wood doors; two, four-over-four windows; and remnants of a concrete foundation from a c.1910 cow tank situated at the northeast corner. A small fixed window is located in the gable end of the north elevation. The west elevation has a pair of hinged vertical wood doors centered on the west elevation; one, four-over-four, double-hung sash window; and a rectangular concrete apron directly in front of the door. The south elevation displays two evenly spaced two-over-two, double-hung sash windows and a small vertical wood door and four-pane window in the gable end.

Granary **c.1910** **Contributing**
The granary, located northwest of the farmhouse, was constructed c.1910. The building rests on a concrete pad, the walls are clad in shiplap siding, and the roof is sheathed in standing seam metal. A pair of hinged vertical wood doors are centered on the north elevation and face the farmyard. A fixed six-light window is located in the gable of end on both the north and south elevations. A large modern gable awning supported by square posts has been added to the north elevation.

Hog house/chicken house/slaughter house **c.1910** **Contributing**
A c.1910 hog house/chicken house/slaughter house is located northeast of the farmhouse and the south elevation fronts the farmyard. The building consists of a central front gable with shed roof wings on each side. The building rests on a concrete pad, is clad in wood drop siding, and has a standing seam metal roof. The center portion of the south elevation of the building features a sliding vertical wood door flanked by four-over-four, double-hung sash windows. The wings each have hinged vertical wood doors and four-over-four, double-hung sash windows. The east elevation of the wing displays a small opening with a wood door.

Corncrib **c.1910** **Contributing**
A c.1910 corncrib located northeast of the farmhouse is clad in a combination of vertical and horizontal wood siding. The building rests on multiple raised concrete piers. The gable roof is covered with standing seam metal. The west elevation faces the farmyard and displays a hinged vertical wood door and a small four-light window. A single hinged wood window opening is located on the north and south elevations and two hinged wood window openings are located on the east elevation.

Smokehouse **c.1910** **Contributing**
A c.1910 frame smokehouse is located east of the farmhouse. The small rectangular building is clad in shiplap siding and features a standing seam metal roof. A vertical wood door is located on the south elevation and a modern one-over-one, double-hung sash window is located on the north elevation.

Creamery **c.1910** **Contributing**
A c.1910 L-shaped creamery building is located east of the farmhouse. Through the years, the building has also functioned as a woodshed and icehouse, and portions of the interior retain original details from these prior uses,

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Kriesel, Louis C. and Augusta, Farmstead
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including the separator room and the insulated ice room with a heavy cooler door. The building is of frame construction, clad in shiplap siding, and rests on a concrete pad. The gable roof is covered with standing seam metal. The north elevation faces the farmyard and has a horizontal wood door, Dutch door, and small, one-over-one, double-hung sash window. The east elevation features multi-light French doors with sidelights, and a large triangular fanlight, sliding vertical wood door, and sunlight. The south elevation displays two small fixed-pane windows; one four-pane window; a single one-over-one, double-hung sash window; and two entrance doors. The west elevation displays two, one-over-one, double-hung sash windows and a modern octagonal window in the gable end, a vertical wood door, Dutch door, and a fixed four-light window.

Garage

c.1990

Noncontributing

A modern, rectangular, side gable, metal pole building stands at the northwest corner of the farmstead. It functions as a garage. It is not visible from the central farmyard.

With the exception of the modern garage, the buildings represent a farmstead built over a relatively short period of time. The contributing buildings all retain a good level of integrity and while they have had minor alterations, they clearly display the features associated with the historic period.

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Kriesel, Louis C. and Augusta, Farmstead
Town of St. Joseph, St. Croix County, Wisconsin

Statement of Significance

The Louis C. and Augusta Kriesel Farmstead is locally significant under National Register *Criterion C: Architecture* as an intact collection of farm buildings and landscape features representing an early twentieth century diversified farm in western Wisconsin. The farmhouse and contributing outbuildings were constructed within a brief period of time, c.1900 to c.1910, which corresponds with the rise of diversified farming in St. Croix County and Wisconsin. The collection of outbuildings were typical for a diversified farm and allowed the family to maintain animals for motive power and consumption, store feed crops, and produce dairy products for consumption and profit. The Kriesel Farmstead retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and continues to convey diversified farming practices on a western Wisconsin farm from the early twentieth century.

Since its establishment, the farm has remained in the family, with the exception of a brief period when it was owned and operated by O.O. and Ella Owens. The period of significance for the Louis C. and Augusta Kriesel Farmstead extends from 1900, when the Kriesel family purchased the property and began constructing buildings, through 1910, when the house and majority of agricultural outbuildings on the farm were completed.

Early Development of Agriculture in St. Croix County and the Town of St. Joseph Township

Established by the Territorial Legislature of Wisconsin Territory in 1840, St. Croix County originally encompassed a large parcel of land flanking the St. Croix River from its confluence with the Mississippi River north to Lake Superior and the Canadian border. The county seat was established at Stillwater, a lumber town located on the west side of St. Croix County near the south end of the county. When Wisconsin became a state in 1848, Stillwater and the land west of the river became part of the newly formed Minnesota Territory. St. Croix County attained its current borders in 1852, when the Wisconsin Legislature subdivided the area into St. Croix, Polk, and Pierce counties. The city of Hudson became the St. Croix County seat.⁶

The earliest arrivals in the St. Croix Valley came to exploit the area's abundant timber resources. The first signs of development in the area were the large log booms that congested the river and sawmills that proliferated along its banks. Logging and lumbering remained the dominant industries in the valley into the 1850s. By 1855 a newspaper editor from nearby St. Anthony (Minneapolis) was urging newcomers to the valley to consider another way of earning a livelihood. "We must look to the soil ... support more than to pine

⁶ Rev. Edward D. Neill and J. Fletcher Williams, *History of Washington County and the St. Croix Valley Including the Explorers and Pioneers of Minnesota and Outlines of the History of Minnesota* (Minneapolis: North Star Publishing Co., 1881), 220.

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logs. Not that the pine region is exhausted ... but we can never be prosperous and independent until our luxuriant valleys, prairies and meadow lands are cultivated.”⁷ By the end of the decade the savannahs above the river were dotted with small farmsteads, and farming was emerging as another important industry in the St. Croix Valley.

In 1858, the St. Croix County Board of Commissioners voted to establish the Town of St. Joseph. Located on the east bank of the St. Croix River and bounded by the Towns of Somerset, Hudson, and Richmond, the newly formed Town of St. Joseph encompassed 20,904 acres. The topography was described as “undulating and hilly,” with numerous lakes in the eastern portion, and several tributaries that drained into the St. Croix River. The unincorporated community of Houlton developed on the Town’s western edge, connected to Stillwater, Minnesota, by a wagon bridge. The Town of St. Joseph’s development was largely the result of the area’s agricultural activities. A 1909 history of St. Croix County indicated that horses and cattle were the most numerous livestock animals, and oats, hay, and rye constituted the largest crops in total acreage in the Town.⁸

“Fields of Billowing Wheat”

The New England immigrants who settled western Wisconsin in the 1850s, were, according to agricultural historian Joseph Schafer, “by habit and tradition primarily wheat growers. They had a lively appreciation of the ease with which wealth in the form of wheat could be extracted from the ... soils of Wisconsin’s prairies.”⁹

As agriculture took root in Wisconsin during the mid-nineteenth century, wheat became the dominant crop. Wheat cultivation required little prior knowledge of farming, virtually no capital, and no specialized buildings, making it an ideal crop for pioneer farmers. An individual could break the soil and plant 25 to 50 acres during the first season and open a similar amount of additional land in subsequent years. Furthermore, wheat was in high demand. A season’s harvest could be hauled to a nearby mill, ground into flour, and exchanged for cash the pioneer farmer needed to purchase items that could not be grown or manufactured on the farm.¹⁰

⁷ James Taylor Dunn, *The St. Croix: Midwest Border River* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1971), 53.

⁸ Rev. Edward D. Neill, and J. Fletcher Williams, 224; Augustus B. Easton, *History of the St. Croix Valley, Vol. II* (Chicago: H.C. Cooper, Jr., & Co., 1909), 951.

⁹ Joseph Schafer, *A History of Agriculture in Wisconsin* (Madison, Wisc.: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1922), 84.

¹⁰ Barbara Wyatt, ed. *Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin, Vol. II* (Madison, Wisc.: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1986), 2-1; Joseph Schafer, 85.

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The advantages of wheat cultivation encouraged novice farmers to plant it season after season on the same ground. This repeated monocropping eventually depleted the soil, a problem that farmers solved by putting more land into production or moving to undisturbed land further west. As a result, the epicenter of wheat culture followed the frontier as the line of settlement in Wisconsin moved steadily from the southeast to the northwest. As more and more land was put into production, the state's output of the grain increased rapidly. By 1860 Wisconsin was the nation's second-largest producer of wheat and by 1870 St. Croix County was the largest wheat-producing county in Wisconsin.

Diversification

While wheat production in St. Croix County was on the rise during the 1870s, production in eastern Wisconsin had declined precipitously as years of sowing and reaping stripped vital nutrients from the soil. As the awareness of this situation grew during the latter third of the nineteenth century, the Wisconsin Agricultural Society, a group of scientific farmers from the recently established University of Wisconsin College of Agriculture, and the editors of state farm journals, such as *Wisconsin Farmer* and *Hoard's Dairyman*, began to promote diversification. They encouraged farmers to restore the fertility of their soil by planting a diverse array of crops in rotation; by husbanding an assortment of animals to provide milk, meat, eggs, wool, and motive power; and by using animal byproducts to restore nutrients to the soil. These practices required new specialized structures, including barns to shelter animals and store hay; silos to help maintain the production of dairy cattle throughout the year; milk houses to house newly developed cream separators; and corncribs and granaries to store feed crops. The new practices and equipment were intended to transform farms into self-sustaining enterprises.

As with the development of wheat culture, diversification in Wisconsin spread from east to west. In 1879, St. Croix County focused almost entirely on wheat production. By 1898 diversified agriculture was gaining acceptance in the county. "Intelligent farmers," observed one area agriculturalist, "were already aware of the fact that the continual cropping of lands with grain and hay to be sold and carried away instead of being consumed at home was rapidly depleting the soil . . . and a good many were turning to livestock . . . as a relief from the ruinous practices of the past."¹¹

This move to diversification led to the establishment of the first cheese factory in the Town of St. Joseph in 1880 as a number of area farmers expanded their operations to include dairying. By the early 1900s, diversified

¹¹ "A Brief Summary of St. Croix County from 1840 to 1898," *Hudson Star and Times*, 11 March 1898.

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farming was a well-established practice in the area. St. Croix County farmers were maintaining horses, cattle, sheep, hogs, and poultry and growing corn, oats, barley, and other small grains for feed rather than for sale as a cash crop.¹²

Golden Age of Agriculture

During the first two decades of the twentieth century, diversification, new scientific agricultural methods, and favorable economic conditions, helped farmers in Wisconsin, and the rest of the nation, achieve unprecedented prosperity. Improved farming techniques and equipment developed by University of Wisconsin agriculturalists and engineers increased crop and livestock yields just as the rising demand for agricultural products caused commodity prices to increase. As the amount of undeveloped agricultural land diminished, the value of established farms increased. World War I further improved conditions as European farmers were forced to cease production and American produce was needed to fill the gap. This era, following the struggles of pioneer farmers to carve out a living from unbroken soil and preceding the agricultural depression of the 1920s and 1930s, is widely regarded by agricultural historians as the "Golden Age of Agriculture." During this period, farmers achieved economic parity with the prices they received for their products in equilibrium with the prices they paid for manufactured items.¹³

As fortunes improved during this period, it was common for farmers to invest a portion of their profits in state-of-the-art facilities, incorporating improved farming technology and equipment developed and promulgated by agricultural engineers, Farmer's Institutes, and University of Wisconsin agricultural extension programs. By 1920 a typical Wisconsin farmstead included a comfortable farmhouse, a large multipurpose barn with a silo and milk house, facilities for hogs and poultry, and storage areas for corn and other small grains. Many of these facilities were built according to standard plans and contained equipment that was designed and mass-produced in industrial settings.

Like the rest of the state and nation, St. Croix County farmers experienced this "Golden Age of Agriculture." One chronicler from this period described the county as "one of the wealthiest agricultural counties of the

¹² "A Brief Summary of St. Croix County from 1840 to 1898;" *Cows, Creameries and Cheese Factories* (River Falls, Wisc.: St. Croix County Association for Home and Community Education, History Project Committee, 1995), 124-125; W.E. Webster, *St. Croix County Wisconsin: The Many Advantages Offered Farmers and Others Looking for Cheap Homes in a Desirable Locality* (Hudson, Wisc.: N.p., 1912), 5-6; Joseph Schafer, 100.

¹³ Susan Granger and Scott Kelly, *Historic Context Study of Minnesota Farmsteads, 1820-1960: Vol. I*, (Prepared for the Minnesota Department of Transportation, 30 June 2005), 3.34.

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northwest,” noting that “poverty within its borders is almost unknown.” Many St. Croix County farmers exhibited their confidence in the future of agriculture by making substantial investments in new buildings and equipment.¹⁴

The golden age came to an end during the 1920s and 1930s, when St. Croix County farmers were ravaged by economic depression and bad weather. Commodity prices plummeted and years of drought decimated the productivity of both fields and livestock. Like farmers across America, those in St. Croix County were forced to curtail capital investment in their facilities and rely on an increasing number of federal farm subsidies. After World War II, returning GIs left the family farm, spurred by a broadened view of the world and new programs, such as the GI bill, that allowed them to pursue non-farming careers. As the number of farmers decreased, farms were combined and consolidated. With manual labor in short supply, the remaining farmers relied increasingly on costly machinery. As farms became increasingly reliant on capital, it became difficult for farmers to practice diversified agriculture. St. Croix County farmers followed this national trend away from diversification toward more specialized production of commodities for cash.

Agriculture in St. Croix County has focused on dairying into the present. The county’s proximity to Minneapolis and St. Paul allows area farmers to supply dairy products to the Twin Cities metropolitan area. Milk continues to be an important source of income for farmers in the county.¹⁵

History of the Kriesel Farmstead

Louis C. and Augusta Kriesel were married in 1899 and purchased 80 acres of land in the northwest quarter of Section 23 in the Town of St. Joseph the following year. The property was initially homesteaded in 1862 and passed through a succession of owners over the next four decades. Tax records indicate that the Kriesel family engaged in an intense period of construction in the decade after their purchase of the property. The contributing agricultural buildings and structures appear to date from this short period (1900-1910) and historic photographs indicate that the farmstead was at its current configuration and buildings in 1918.

The assortment of buildings, structures, and landscape features clearly represent a well-developed diversified farm from the early twentieth century. In addition, the barn and silo incorporate features developed and promoted by agricultural engineers at the turn of the century. The multipurpose barn features a transitional

¹⁴ Augustus B. Easton, 698.

¹⁵ *Cows, Creameries and Cheese Factories*, 16; History of St. Croix County,” St. Croix County Government <www.co.saint-croix.wi.us/general_info.htm> accessed 10 September 2007.

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framing system, combining traditional timber frame techniques with more modern balloon framing. The gambrel roof is supported by a trussed hip purlin. The large hayloft contains a metal track for a hay carrier. The lower level contains spaces for a diverse array of livestock, including draft horses, dairy cattle, and sheep. Stalls are equipped with wood mangers and stanchions. The Gurler silo attached to the barn greatly simplified the processing of loading and unloading the silo.

In addition to the multipurpose barn and silo, the farm includes several outbuildings that allowed the Kriesel family to produce products for market and sustain the family. The combination poultry and hog house contained a central butchering area and the nearby smokehouse provided a means of preserving the meat. A corncrib, granary and machine shed completed the original set of buildings on the farmstead, providing storage for small grains, supplying water and electricity, and providing a place for the maintenance and repair of farm implements.

In addition, the creamery provided a sanitary space for separating cream, churning butter, and storing dairy products until they were taken to market. The Kriesels' investment in dairy facilities enabled them to take full advantage of the growing demand for dairy products in the area. This investment coincided with the emergence of dairy farming in St. Croix County. In their well-equipped creamery, the family produced 16 to 18 pounds of butter daily. Each pound was wrapped in the label of the "Pleasant View Dairy," and sold in Stillwater and other nearby markets.¹⁶

This diverse collection of agricultural outbuildings, constructed in a span of about ten years, enabled the Kriesel family to produce, store, and process a wide array of agricultural products, including feed grains for animals, meat, wool, milk, butter, fresh vegetables, and fruit. Many of these products provided food and other basic items to sustain the family and the livestock. Other products, such as wool, butter, and eggs, could be sold at market, providing cash to buy items that could not be produced on the farm.

¹⁶ W.E. Webster, 5; Rita Koelln, *Passing of the Milk House* (Unpublished manuscript, c.1991); *Atlas and Farmers Directory of St. Croix County, Wisconsin* (St. Paul, Minn.: Webb Publishing Co., 1914).

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As economic conditions for farmers began to worsen following World War I, the Kriesels sought unsuccessfully to get out of farming altogether. The family sold the property on contract to O.O. and Ella Owens. When the Owens defaulted on their mortgage five years later, the Kriesels reluctantly returned to the farm. The Kriesel family ceased actively farming the land in 1955, following the death of Augusta, and began leasing the land to neighboring farmers. Since 1955 the land has remained under cultivation. The property is currently owned by a granddaughter of Louis and Augusta Kriesel, who uses the property as a seasonal residence.¹⁷

Conclusion

Historic family photos of the Kriesel property dating from the early 1900s demonstrate that the farmstead retains an unusually high degree of physical integrity. The collection of early twentieth-century buildings remains, with no demolitions and with only one modern intrusion. The farmhouse is virtually unaltered, retaining its original building materials, floor plan, and both exterior and interior features, including many original furnishings and wall and floor coverings. Although several large windows have been added to the backside of the barn, from the farmyard it appears virtually unchanged from its 1918 appearance. It also retains original interior features, including stalls, stanchions, and a hay carrier. The creamery has been converted to a guest house, with French doors and a gable window added to one side, and new wood paneling added to the interior; however, these alterations are limited to the rear elevation and are not clearly visible from the central farmyard. In addition, the interior of the creamery retains original features, such as the separator room and the insulated ice room with a heavy cooler door. With the exception of a missing roof, the Gurler silo remains as originally constructed. An open shelter, essentially a pole frame with a simple metal roof, has been added to the north side of the granary, but the principal facade remains unaltered, and the secondary elevation beneath the shelter remains visible. Other buildings on the farmstead are unaltered. Landscape features, including the farmyard and the shelter belt of trees remain in place. The lone noncontributing structure, a modern garage, is located away from the farmyard and does not disrupt the historic arrangement of the farmstead.

The Louis C. and Augusta Kriesel Farmstead retains the original farmhouse and agricultural outbuildings from the early twentieth century. Although there have been some modifications to the barn and creamery, the buildings retain their original form. As a whole, the property retains its location, design, setting, materials,

¹⁷ St. Croix County Tax Assessment Records, 1875-1922.

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workmanship, feeling, and association. Therefore, the property maintains a high degree of integrity and continues to represent a fully diversified farm from the Golden Age of Agriculture in St. Croix County.

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Verbal Boundary Description

The historic boundary for the Louis C. and Augusta Kriesel Farmstead is a rectangle measuring approximately 375 feet by 405 feet. The long center axis is parallel to STH 35/64 and the southern boundary is set back approximately 830 feet from the road. Beginning at the southeast corner, approximately 160 feet east and 75 feet south of the farmhouse, the boundary proceeds west for approximately 405 feet. From here, the boundary turns and continues north for approximately 375 feet. At this point, the boundary turns and remains 75 feet north of the garage as it extends east for approximately 405 feet. The boundary then turns and proceeds south for approximately 375 feet, returning to the starting point.

Boundary Justification

The boundary was delineated to encompass the property historically associated with the farmhouse and agricultural outbuildings. A set distance of 75 feet was used to provide an appropriate setting. Agricultural land surrounding the farmhouse and outbuildings, including the field located between the farmhouse and STH 35/64, was excluded from the historic boundary because it has been leased since 1955 and is no longer associated with activities on the farmstead.

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Louis C. and Augusta Kriesel Farmstead
132 State Trunk Highway 35/64
Town of St. Joseph
St. Croix County, Wisconsin
Photographer: Mead & Hunt, Inc., June 2007
Negatives in the collection of the Wisconsin Historical Society

Photograph 1 of 10
Farmhouse, view facing northeast

Photograph 2 of 10
Farmhouse, view facing northwest

Photograph 3 of 10
Farmhouse, view facing south

Photograph 4 of 10
Farmhouse and creamery, view facing south

Photograph 5 of 10
Central farmyard and outbuildings (from left to right) – granary, machine shed, barn and silo, and combination hog house/chicken house/slaughter house, view facing northwest

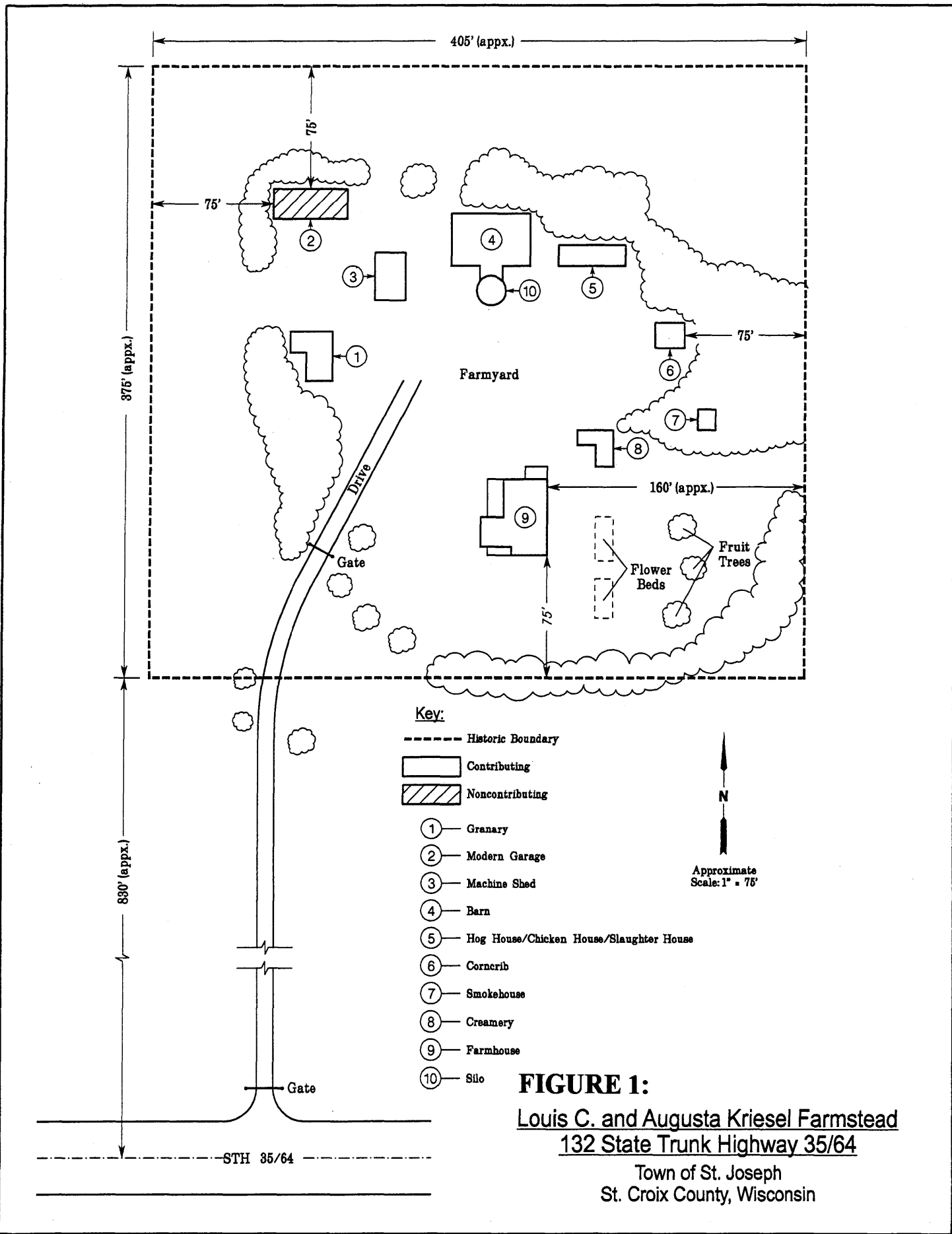
Photograph 6 of 10
Barn and silo, view facing north

Photograph 7 of 10
Creamery, view facing northeast

Photograph 8 of 10
Farmhouse interior, kitchen

Photograph 9 of 10
Farmhouse interior, dining room

Photograph 10 of 10
Farmhouse interior, bedroom



Key:

- Historic Boundary
- ▭ Contributing
- ▨ Noncontributing

- ① Granary
- ② Modern Garage
- ③ Machine Shed
- ④ Barn
- ⑤ Hog House/Chicken House/Slaughter House
- ⑥ Corncrib
- ⑦ Smokehouse
- ⑧ Creamery
- ⑨ Farmhouse
- ⑩ Silo



FIGURE 1:
Louis C. and Augusta Kriesel Farmstead
132 State Trunk Highway 35/64
 Town of St. Joseph
 St. Croix County, Wisconsin

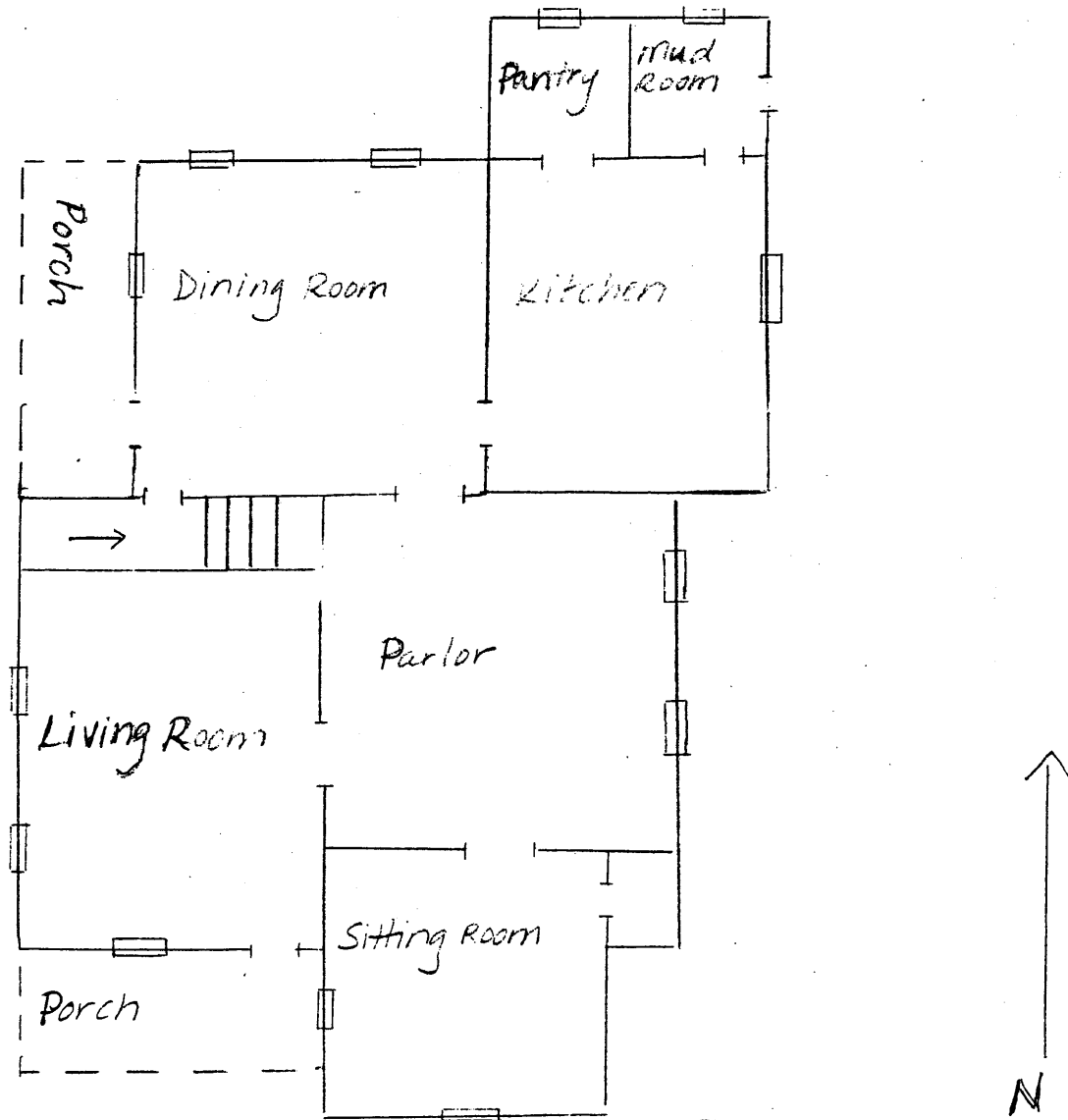


FIGURE 2:
 Louis C. and Augusta Kriesel Farmstead
 132 State Trunk Highway 35/64
 Town of St. Joseph
 St. Croix County, Wisconsin
FIRST STORY FLOOR PLAN

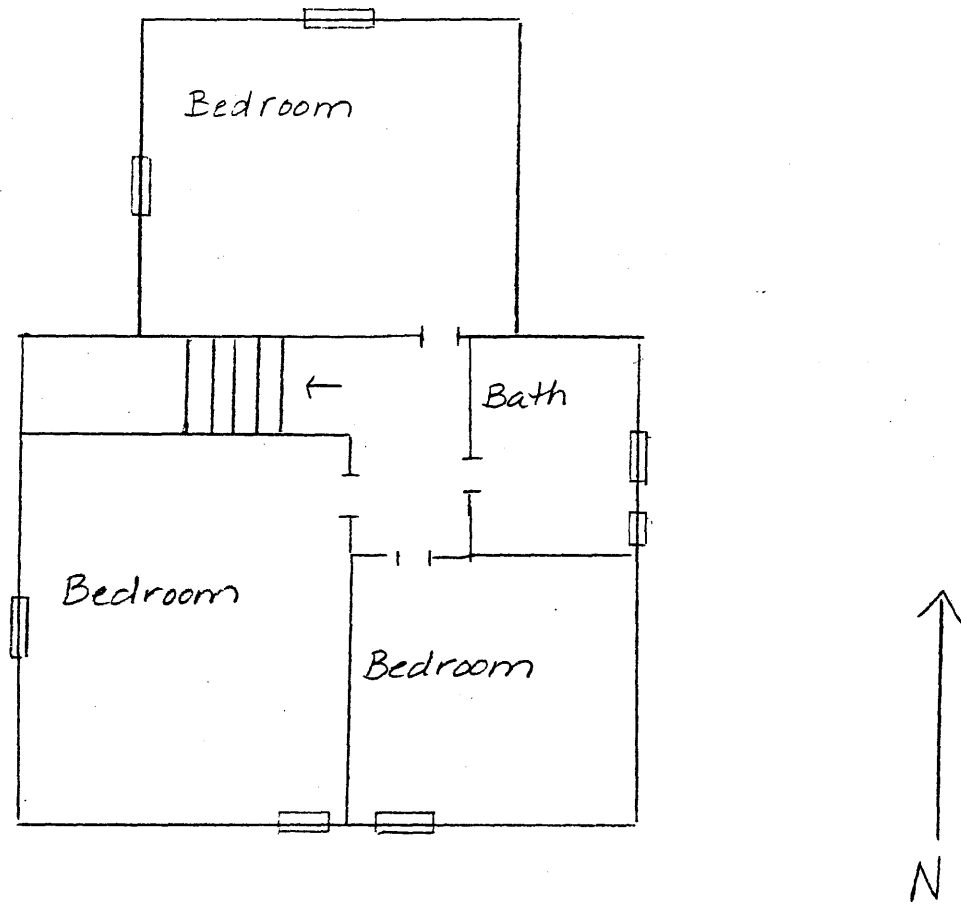


FIGURE 3:

Louis C. and Augusta Kriesel Farmstead
132 State Trunk Highway 35/64
Town of St. Joseph
St. Croix County, Wisconsin
SECOND STORY FLOOR PLAN