



815

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

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

1. Name of Property

historic name Armour Creameries Poultry House

other names/site number Armour warehouse; Garst Company warehouse

2. Location

street & number 218 5th Avenue South not for publication N/A
city or town Coon Rapids vicinity _____
state Iowa code IA county Carroll code 027 zip code 50058

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide X locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Barbara Q. Mitchell/DSPD October 3, 2011
Signature of certifying official Date

STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this 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): _____

Edson H. Beall Signature of Keeper Date of Action 11-18-11

Armour Creameries Poultry House
Name of Property

Carroll County, Iowa
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
 public-local
 public-State
 public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
 district
 site
 structure
 object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing Noncontributing

- | | |
|-------------|------------------------|
| <u>1</u> | <u> </u> buildings |
| <u> </u> | <u> </u> sites |
| <u> </u> | <u> </u> structures |
| <u> </u> | <u> </u> objects |
| <u>1</u> | <u> </u> 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

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/processing
COMMERCE/TRADE/warehouse

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

NO STYLE

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

roof METAL/steel

walls METAL/steel

other

Narrative Description

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

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Armour Creameries Poultry House
name of property

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Carroll County, Iowa
county and state

Section 7 Page 1

7. Description

Summary Paragraph

The Armour Creameries Poultry House is located in south-central Coon Rapids, which is in the far southeastern corner of Carroll County, Iowa. The building is a wooden and concrete agricultural-industrial building that was built as a poultry processing and packing plant by Chicago-based Armour & Co. in 1928. It sits on level land adjacent to, and south of, the historic Milwaukee railroad tracks currently used by the Burlington Northern/Santa Fe. The railroad tracks cross through Coon Rapids diagonally from northwest to southeast and, while the town's historic commercial district and the bulk of the town's residential neighborhoods lie north of the tracks, there were a few dwellings near the poultry plant when it was built. Most of the plant's neighbors, however, remain industrial or commercial and were located here because of the neighborhood's proximity to the railroad. The poultry building's rectangular footprint is expanded along the east side by an entrance dock and along the north end by a wing that projects toward the tracks. No other buildings or structures are located on the property, which is lightly landscaped with a tree and small areas of grass. Vacant now, the building was used for offices and warehouse space by a later owner and is currently the subject of a redevelopment plan that seeks to adapt it to retail and office space for local artisans as well as an associated events center. Integrity is satisfactory but not without issues. The building's location, distinctive profile, and footprint are unchanged and unmistakable, but its walls and roof are now clad with metal siding. The original wood siding and much if not most of its window glass remain intact under the metal.

Description

The building's footprint is 80-by-144 feet, with its long axis oriented north and south. A narrow wing, about 23 feet wide by 42 feet long, projects from the north end wall of the building in an angle that aligns with the railroad siding beside the building. A small dock (10-by-32 feet) is attached to the north end of the long east side and the main entrance is reached via this dock. Part of the dock, including the door into the main building, is sheltered by a canopy. Nearby, a tall brick chimney stack pierces the building's east side roof close to the canopy. Each of these features is original to the building's 1928 construction and played a role in the operation of the plant.

The roof of the single-story building is rounded in a wide segmental arch that is broken at the peak by a prominent window monitor, a typical method for lighting and ventilating the interior of industrial buildings.¹ The building's exterior walls, roof, and the roof monitor are clad now with metal siding, applied after Armour sold the building around 1960.² Physical investigation of the building indicates the original windows and siding are extant under the applied metal siding. A historic photograph, circa 1958 (refer to Additional Documentation section), shows that the fenestration includes long bands of metal-sash industrial casement windows on the east and west sides. Currently, visible windows are found in the vicinity of the eastside loading dock, where the main double door is located. Additional doors are found centered on the long west side and at the northwest corner of the building. The foundation of the building is poured concrete. There is a basement under the north half of the building accessed by two sets of stairs and a freight elevator more or less centered in the north half of the building.

Interior:

Inside the ground floor and located in the northeast corner, something less than a quarter of the building's floor space serves as

¹ Betsy Hunter Bradley, *The Works: The Industrial Architecture of the United States*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 178.

² Current plans call for the removal of this siding and restoration of the exterior to the appearance it had when it operated as a poultry processing plant. The siding is presumably steel as a magnet sticks to it and steel was and is a common siding material.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Armour Creameries Poultry House
name of property

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Carroll County, Iowa
county and state

Section 7 Page 2

a finished office with surface treatments that appear to date to the 1960s. This office space is reached by the double entrance doors on the dock on the north end of the east side of the building. An elevator is located adjacent to the west wall of the office space and just to its north is a stairway to a small elevated platform or balcony. The rest of the ground level has a concrete floor and a clearspan interior of more or less unencumbered floor space. The roof is supported by eight bents of Warren trusses made of sawn wood planks that are bolted together.

The basement structure that holds up the ground floor slab above is extremely robust and composed of many short upright heavy timbers that support a system of floor joists running north and south. The clear goal of maximizing open floor space seen above on the ground floor was completely abandoned in the basement area, where the low ceiling, the many upright posts, and several concrete walls that subdivide the space leave the basement feeling low and close. The basement is divided into three spaces: an ice room in the northwest corner, a larger cold storage room in the southwest corner, and the poultry processing floor that occupies the east half of the basement.

Integrity

The seven aspects of integrity are sufficiently maintained despite the walls, roof, and monitor roof being clad with steel siding. The steel siding clearly covers up the original wood siding and roof structure, yet this building's principal, character-defining features are intact. The strength of its overall profile, its large rectangular footprint with loading docks, and its location adjacent to the railroad tracks are the essential features that permit any former worker in this building to immediately recognize it despite the steel siding.

- (1) location: the building is in its original location;
- (2) design: the footprint, form, plan, and spatial arrangement of both the structure and the spaces are intact;
- (3) setting: the character of the neighborhood surrounding the building is intact and essentially unchanged for the last half century;
- (4) materials: the key exterior features of the building are covered by metal siding resulting in diminished integrity of materials. The original siding is extant under the metal and most of the original window glazing appears to be present;
- (5) workmanship: the interior components of the building are intact and reflect notable workmanship, especially the Warren trusses and the heavy post-and-beam structural configuration in the basement, while exterior workmanship is obscured;
- (6) feeling: the building's overall shape and profile project an appearance that is historic and not frequently seen in current construction, leaving it with sufficient integrity of feeling;
- (7) association: the spatial relationship of the building to the railroad tracks and the interior spaces used by the poultry packing operation are intact and have excellent integrity.

Despite the metal cladding that currently covers the exterior, this building is identifiable to former workers and residents of the town. There is no question the steel siding that clads the walls and roof structure diminishes the building's overall integrity, but it is far from destroying it. The industrial nature of the building—it is so obviously neither residential nor commercial—is not destroyed by the steel siding. The uncommon monitor roof shape, the loading docks, and the building's siting adjacent to the railroad tracks are distinct visual markers for this building and these are intact. Current plans are to remove the siding as a part of the building conversion to a new use. The integrity of materials, exterior workmanship, feeling, and design will all be improved when that happens. Once the metal cladding has been removed, a re-examination of the exterior characteristics of the building may indicate additional significance under Criterion C.

Armour Creameries Poultry House
Name of Property

Carroll County, Iowa
County and State

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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

AGRICULTURE
INDUSTRY

Period of Significance

1928-circa 1958

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 a grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Significant Dates

1928

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Armour & Co.

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:

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Armour Creameries Poultry House
name of property

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Carroll County, Iowa
county and state

Section 8 Page 3

8. Narrative Statement of Significance

Summary Paragraph

The Armour Creameries Poultry House is located in west-central Iowa, in the far southeast corner of Carroll County, in the southern section of the community of Coon Rapids. The building occupies a central location in the industrial sector of the town, which is located along either side of the railroad line that bisects the community. Main Street, with its nineteenth and early-twentieth century shops, abuts the industrial neighborhood that grew alongside the tracks, reflecting both the small physical size of the town and the intimate association of the community's commercial and industrial interests in this agricultural region of the Midwest. The Armour Creameries Poultry House is locally significant under Criterion A as an excellent example of the ever-increasing economic and social ties that linked small Iowa hinterland towns to bigger urban centers such as Chicago, here reflected over the three decades from the eve of the Great Depression through the golden economic years that followed World War II—1928 to about 1958. The Coon Rapids Armour facility is not only a small chapter in the meatpacking giant's modern corporate history, it also reflects what happens at the local level when a large corporation comes to town and sets up shop. After buying an existing creamery business from a local businessman and town booster, Armour expanded the operation functionally, and brought new professional managers from remote cities to operate it, while attracting new families to town to work in it. The way the community absorbed and accepted these changes and the strangers in town is a classic tale repeated untold times throughout the state during the early twentieth century as the towns became less isolated and more connected to the greater markets and communities beyond them.³ This poultry facility has all the essential characteristics needed to reflect a particular period in Coon Rapids' history and this particular town's participation in the long modernization journey from isolated village to member of a global community. The building's location near the railroad tracks signals a direct connection to greater markets and more distant locations. Its ample ground floor space was state-of-the-art in structural design, ventilation, and lighting, and yet, the nitty-gritty aspects of the operation—the slaughtering of thousands of chickens daily as well as the cold storage space to preserve them—were relegated to low-ceiling basement rooms, where the temperature could be more easily regulated and the process of decay forestalled. Potential Criterion C significance exists for the facility as a model poultry processing plant built by Armour and this potential should be evaluated following removal of the applied steel siding. Additional research into Armour's Iowa network of small packing houses may develop the case for statewide significance for this facility.⁴

History of the Building

When local Coon Rapids entrepreneur Jens Jensen sold his successful regional creamery business to the nationwide meatpacking giant, Armour & Co., in June, 1928, he may have been unaware of Armour's plans to construct a new poultry processing plant in town too. With the fall season for chicken packing fast approaching, however, Armour did not waste any time implementing these plans. Though the Jensen creamery facility (nonextant) was situated north of Coon Rapids' main street business district, Armour officials understood the efficiencies of locating packing facilities near rail service and by August it was already erecting a new "poultry house" along the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul's tracks at the south edge of town. The Milwaukee had laid double tracks between Chicago and Omaha in 1913 to accommodate the "heavy traffic on the railway," which, to Coon Rapids' good fortune, passed directly through the town's southern edge.⁵ Much of this traffic was dedicated to shipping grain each season from small-town Iowa elevators along the line into Chicago. But grain was just one

³ Coon Rapids also was drawn into the greater world by its most remarkable native son, Roswell "Bob" Garst, promoter of hybrid seed corn and the man who famously invited Soviet Union leader Nikita Khrushchev to visit his Coon Rapids farm in 1959. See *Roswell and Elizabeth Garst Farmstead Historic District* (NRHP, 2009).

⁴ This research is planned for the future but dependent on funding. One similar Armour plant was recently identified in south-central Iowa in the town of Osceola. It was also constructed by Armour in 1928 suggesting a corporate program of capital investment in Iowa that was both significant and widespread.

⁵ *Coon Rapids Centennial: 100 Years Proud, 1863-1963* (Coon Rapids Centennial Committee, n.d. but 1963), n.p. but 12.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Armour Creameries Poultry House
name of property

Carroll County, Iowa
county and state

Section 8 Page 4

commodity that connected Coon Rapids and other Iowa towns to larger urban markets like Minneapolis, Omaha, and, especially, Chicago, and traffic on the rail lines moved in both directions. Based in Chicago, Armour as well as the other big packers had been relocating their processing facilities farther west to smaller cities for several decades, bringing their plants closer to the producers and their herds, but still generating massive quantities of processed meat products that were marketed to distant cities. Armour, for example, purchased an existing slaughterhouse in Sioux City in 1901 and Cudahy had operated in that same small western-Iowa city since 1892. Refrigerated rail cars enabled this decentralization of packing plants, and also permitted long-distance shipping of other perishable farm products like butter and cheese.⁶

Soon after purchasing Jensen's creamery business, Armour also purchased the undeveloped (or lightly developed) east half of an irregularly-shaped industrial outlot adjacent to the railroad tracks and along 5th and Walnut streets in order to erect its poultry processing facility. The west half of the outlot had been the site of Coon Rapids' grain elevator and feed mill since at least 1901 when it was owned by the "Neola Grain Company."⁷ In 1901, the Neola Grain Co. also used the east half of the outlot for raw supply storage, and had built long oat bins and corn cribs on it. Its small office and the wagon scales were on the east half as well, facing 5th Avenue. At the time, Neola's grain elevator, and the surrounding open yard, constituted the only development south of the tracks. Eight years later, the 1909 fire insurance map reveals this land had been platted as Block 2 of Brutsche & Garst's Addition to Coon Rapids and the Neola Grain Co. elevator was by then owned by H.W. Pollock & Co. The east half of the outlot apparently was uninsured and therefore had been dropped from the map. The elevator's small office was relocated from 5th Avenue to the west edge of the block, facing 6th Ave. These changes suggest the east half had been sold before or by the time of the H.W. Pollock & Co. took over the elevator and remained undeveloped land.

The 1909 fire map records little if any additional development south of the tracks, beyond the former Neola grain elevator, and this situation still existed when the Sanborn map makers drew the 1915 fire insurance maps. However, once again, the elevator had changed ownership and now was operated by Farmer's Grain Co., which seems to have drawn in and clustered its ancillary buildings closer to the back (non-track) side of the elevator. The south end of this west half of Block 2 was vacant land. Additionally, the newly platted Brutsche & Garst Addition to Coon Rapids appears little developed by 1915, though a few dwellings had been built to the west and south of the elevator. Clearly, this was still the "other side of the tracks" in terms of residential neighborhoods, but the smattering of dwellings suggests additional development was on the horizon.

In 1930, the next available date of a Sanborn map and two years *after* the acquisition of the east half of Block 2 by Armour and its construction of the extant poultry plant, the former Neola elevator had changed hands yet again. Now operated by E.W. Miller & Son, the business had expanded the size of its office space and erected a large coal bin along the tracks between itself and the new "Armour Creameries Poultry House."

According to the Sanborn insurance drawing of the Armour building in 1930 (see Additional Documentation section), most of the actual poultry packing activities took place in the basement, which was divided into spaces described as "Poultry Packing Plant in B[asement]"; "Ice Mach[ine] in B", and "Cold St'ge in B". This leaves the function of the open ground floor level unspecified, but certainly space was needed for sheltering the live chickens delivered to the building by truck and by rail. Shipping out live chicks may also have taken up some ground floor space. Finally, since poultry packing was seasonal work, the upper floor may have been used intermittently in the off-season as storage for other Armour Creameries products awaiting shipment on the railroad.

⁶ For a full discussion of the connections between Chicago and its "hinterland," see William Cronon's *Nature's Metropolis* (1991) especially chapter 3, "Pricing the Future: Grain," and chapter 5, "Annihilated Space: Meat."

⁷ Sanborn Map Company, fire insurance map, 1901.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Armour Creameries Poultry House
name of property

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Carroll County, Iowa
county and state

Section 8 Page 5

In any event, as the building walls were rising in 1928, there was excited discussion of its construction and Armour's intentions in the local newspaper, the *Coon Rapids Enterprise*. On August 3, 1928, the paper indicated the "chicken dressing plant" was rapidly "going up south of the railroad track. It will be 144 x 80 feet with a basement when completed, which will be in about four weeks, [and] will furnish labor during the chicken picking season for from 25 to 50 men and women who will dress and ship hundreds of tons of poultry during the season. These [chickens] will be picked up around Coon Rapids in part, but mostly shipped in from adjoining towns."⁸ Two weeks later, on August 17, the paper commented: "It is believed that next year the Armour Co. will build a new creamery building on the vacant ground near where the chicken dressing plant is going up...Such a building alongside the railroad would save a good deal of expense in draying [from the old Jensen creamery to the north]." In another week, the August 24 newspaper edition announced that the "Legion expects to give one of the biggest dances of the year in the new Armour poultry dressing building when it is completed and before it is filled with machinery. The dance will be sort of a dedicatory affair." Indeed, in the spirit of joining the Coon Rapids community, on September 20, 1928, Armour permitted the local American Legion to host a dance on the 80 by 144-foot "dance floor," which, the paper proclaimed, "could take care of the biggest crowd ever assembled on a dance floor in Coon Rapids."

Soon after, the annual four-county regional fair used the Armour building to host the poultry exhibits. The newspaper predicted, on September 21, that the building "will afford ample room for all the prize poultry in the four counties. It is more than likely that the poultry show this year will far surpass any exhibits heretofore made at our fairs because of the excellent housing facilities and the unusual interest shown in poultry by the Armour Company." The fair even honored Armour & Co. by proclaiming September 22 "Armour Day." In return, the Chicago packer opened the "big new building" to public inspection and welcomed experts who spoke on dairying and poultry raising. Armour handed out souvenirs to all attendees and late in the afternoon hosted "a free baseball game between Coon Rapids and Bagley." The Chicago-based vice president of Armour & Co. even traveled to Coon Rapids for Armour Day. "Mr. Johnson," the *Enterprise* wrote, "is in charge of all butter, poultry, egg, and cheese operations throughout the United States and [is] one of the most important men in the entire Armour organization."

The *Enterprise* also more fully described the nearly finished building in its September 21, 1928 edition stating: "The new poultry building is one of the most up to date and modern in the United States. [It embodies] every known modern device for the feeding, dressing, packing and storage of poultry. Feeding batteries and an office will occupy the entire main floor, which is a model of construction in so far as light and ventilation are concerned. Three large coolers, killing and packing rooms are in the basement. The building is 88 x 144 [sic] inside dimensions and was erected and equipped by the engineering department of Armour and Co. of Chicago. The erection was under the direct supervision of Mr. L.A. Evers Building, with Ralph Austin of Coon Rapids as carpenter foreman. All machinery was bought and installed by Mr. Davis of the engineering department. Mr. Al Gunstrom of Chicago has had personal supervision of the installing of machinery...This plant will employ approximately 75 people and will mean a greatly enlarged payroll for Coon Rapids."

In a bit of a burst-the-bubble type announcement, the *Enterprise* reported also in its September 21 edition that "In keeping with Armour policy, much of the cream business of the local [Jensen] plant was transferred to the Denison and Des Moines plants because of reduced transportation cost." Further, while "practically all of the help from the Jensen plant were retained by Armour and Company...the executive force was augmented by transfers from other Armour plants." The newly transferred executives, all men, included a remarkably mobile list of transplants from other parts of the Armour corporate structure, including the overall plant manager who had managed Armour facilities in Osborn, Kansas and Springfield, Missouri. The assistant manager was relocated to Coon Rapids from Creston, Iowa and the "territory supervisor" was from

⁸ Taken from Kerry McGrath research notes from *Coon Rapids Enterprise* archives, which notes may paraphrase the newspaper text. Rachel Garst Collection. See also www.coonrapidsiowa.info/html/early_days.html.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Armour Creameries Poultry House
name of property

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Carroll County, Iowa
county and state

Section 8 Page 6

Duluth, Minnesota. The cashier came from Creston also but the assistant cashier was transferred from Quincy, Illinois. The creamery plant foreman came from Denison, Iowa but the local Coon Rapids butter maker apparently survived the takeover.

The decision to buy the Jensen creamery system and build a new poultry facility, claimed Armour officials, was part of an overall response to "changed business conditions" that "prompted Armour to establish numerous units over the country thus getting close to the producer..." Armour had 500 "branch houses" in the east and needed "8,000 refrigerator cars" to make shipments to them from "western plants, such as at Coon Rapids." Further, Armour had been attracted to Coon Rapids by Jens Jensen's success at building a regional creamery business (Jensen was also president of the local Commercial Club) and by the town's "central point," presumably either its central location within the Midwest or within Armour's physical system of branch offices located outside Chicago. Indeed, Armour officials dangled the suggestion that even more capital might be invested locally. "If it seemed justified," the Armour man stated in a luncheon hosted by the Commercial Club, the company "might establish a cheese factory" in town too.⁹ Similar to the industrial shifts taking place in meat processing of swine and beef cattle generally, the poultry and egg business was quickly becoming less seasonal and more stable with year-round production and processing. Refrigeration and rapid transportation methods meant these products could be moved long distances in relatively short time periods, and increasing commercialization of Iowa's poultry business was one result. The traditional small flocks kept on Iowa farms (one of several Midwest states deemed the "largest poultry producing states" in the nation) were growing as farmers had more markets for their surplus. Writing in 1920, when the industrialization of the poultry and egg business was well underway, two U.S. Department of Agriculture poultrymen concluded that farmers were no longer limiting the size of their flocks and that there was notable growth in the number of "special commercial poultry farms, where the keeping of poultry for the production of market eggs is the main activity. Sometimes poultry farms have reached a point where from 1,000 to 20,000 or more head of fowls are kept."¹⁰

In Coon Rapids, Armour represented this growing commercialization of the poultry business nationwide and was a welcome addition to the town's economy. The *Enterprise* announced in its September 28, 1928 edition that "chicken dressing in the new Armour building began Tuesday morning [and] this will continue until spring. A number of men and women, *principally women*, are already employed, but the force will be increased in number materially as the season progresses" (emphasis added). Like the seasonally-operated canning factories in many small Iowa towns of the early twentieth-century, women (and many children) found employment on the line processing and packing the products of the harvest, transforming raw material into a consumer-ready products. If poultry packing followed the traditional labor divisions, and the *Enterprise* reporting suggests it did, men would continue to fill the supervisory positions in the new Coon Rapids Armour facilities and also would perform the jobs perceived as too heavy or too dangerous for women. The latter positions tended to be permanent jobs such as those held by the machinists who kept the equipment running. The seasonal work would be given to women to augment the family income.¹¹ By following the chicken flock into the slaughter house, rural and small-town women continued the long tradition of women minding the hens and collecting eggs as a part of their role in supporting the family. Women's employment in seasonal poultry houses not only maintained this traditional and acceptable gendered role, it resulted in even more income for the family, as well as a degree of personal control over some of the family's income, all without requiring the women workers to be employed outside of the home on a permanent basis.¹² Just as small flocks kept for strictly family consumption (with any surplus being sold locally) grew dramatically as the technology of transportation and refrigeration improved in the early twentieth century, eventually the advent of larger and larger commercial poultry houses, where laying hens and broiler chickens were raised year round due to scientific developments in breeding, brought an end to this seasonal income opportunity for both men and women.

⁹ *Coon Rapids Enterprise*, September 28, 1928.

¹⁰ Harry M. Lamon and Jos. Wm. Kinghorne, *Practical Poultry Production* (St. Paul, Minn.: Webb Publishing Co., 1920), 16.

¹¹ Gender divisions in seasonal canning factory work are discussed in Jan Olive Full, *Hinterland or Heartland: The Survival of Small-Town Lake Mills, Iowa, 1850-1950* (Ph.D. dissertation, Loyola University Chicago, 2006), 193-197.

¹² *Practical Poultry Production*, 14-16.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Armour Creameries Poultry House
name of property

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Carroll County, Iowa
county and state

Section 8 Page 7

During its first packing season, apparently the business at Armour's new poultry packing plant was so vigorous that by mid-October, 1928, facility in Coon Rapids facility was "dressing about 3,000 head of poultry a day and there [were] 108 persons on the payroll." This created a housing crisis because many of these workers had not been local residents. The *Enterprise* reported in its October 12 edition that "employees with families are arriving almost daily and tenement [rental] houses are at a premium. In fact, it seems impossible to house the new employees." Making lemonade from lemons, the *Enterprise* suggested that "It might pay some of the capitalists who are loaning money to put up a few tenement dwellings. The Armour business here is permanent and is certain to increase. Investment in dwellings would be profitable." Indeed, Armour had invested "about \$200,000" in Coon Rapids' industrial landscape, \$80,000 of it alone in the poultry packing plant and its equipment.¹³ The Jensen creamery business already was "by far the leading business enterprise of Coon Rapids" when Armour bought it in 1928. With the additional and immediate investment by Armour in the local poultry industry, the rising population, and the challenge for developers to meet the demand for rental housing, the community must have been supremely optimistic about the future of Coon Rapids.

Armour's significant and beneficial role in Coon Rapids' economic prospects during the first half of the twentieth century was repeated in small towns all over the nation, perhaps especially in the upper Midwest where so much of the raw material for Armour's success originated. Armour & Co. had its roots in the pork-packing business in Milwaukee immediately following the Civil War. Because the refrigerated rail car had yet to be developed, meat packing at that time was decentralized and served local markets, still the dominion of small-time pork packing houses that operated primarily during winter months and neighborhood butchers who deconstructed beef one animal at a time. By the 1870s, Philip Armour and his brothers had moved to Chicago, which because of its Union Stock Yard, then "stood at the center of the meatpacking industry." By the 1880s, Armour's Chicago operations seasonally employed up to 4,000 workers and slaughtered more than 1.5 million animals a year. The family-owned company continued its fantastic growth through the end of the century, and by 1901, when Philip Armour died, the company employed upwards of 7,000 Chicagoans and was the largest of the "Big Three" packers (Armour, Swift, and Morris).¹⁴ By 1910, the company had about 8,700 workers at its Union Stock Yards plant, but government action in response to public outcry about food safety, worker conditions, and "trust" building by the meatpackers would soon lead to increased regulation. Following a 1920 agreement with the federal government, the Big Three agreed to sell their holdings in stockyards, food-related companies, cold-storage facilities, and the retail meat business." Armour's decision to branch out beyond beef and pork packing into creameries and poultry packing, and to invest in more decentralized facilities located in smaller towns and cities west of Chicago may have been in response to this agreement to reduce the industry's vertical integration. This 1920 agreement, called the Packer Consent Decree, certainly must have contributed to the "changed business conditions" the Armour official referenced in his comments published by the *Coon Rapids Enterprise* in 1928 at the opening of the poultry plant. Another factor was surely the Armour family's sale of the company in 1925, during heady stock market days rife with leveraged speculation, to a banking syndicate which, in turn, offered the company's stock to the public.¹⁵ Thus, in the two or three years just before Jensen and Armour struck the deal to sell the Coon Rapids creamery business, Armour had moved out of the realm of family-owned giant companies and into the increasingly familiar world of large corporations with professional managers. The Coon Rapids creamery and its "poultry house" were, therefore, products of decisions made early in Armour's history as a modern corporation. Despite the Great Depression that soon followed, Armour continued to employ thousands of workers both in Chicago and its outlying branches, emerging from World War II as one of the nation's largest employers. Decline in Armour's fortunes, though, would soon become evident.¹⁶

A shift on the magnitude of an earthquake in processing methods and technologies in the meatpacking industry, underway since before World War II, accelerated during the 1950s and eventually destroyed the one-time meatpacking giants like

¹³ *Coon Rapids Enterprise*, July 8, 1932.

¹⁴ The meatpacking giants Armour, Cudahy, Swift and Wilson also are often referred to as the "Big Four" packers.

¹⁵ "Armour & Co." *Time Magazine*, February 23, 1925.

¹⁶ James R. Grossman, Ann Kurkin Keating, and Janice L. Reiff, *Encyclopedia of Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 516, 912.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Armour Creameries Poultry House
name of property

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Carroll County, Iowa
county and state

Section 8 Page 8

Armour during the 1960s. Since the Civil War, the relationship between producer, packer, and the transportation modes that connected them had created a dynamic triangle of interrelated and interdependent relationships. Change one agent in the relationship, and the ripple effects were quickly obvious on the other two. When grazing cow-calf herds moved west to Wyoming as Midwest land came under cultivation in the nineteenth century, the packers moved west out of Chicago too. When trucks overtook railroads in the middle of the twentieth century as the means of transporting animals to the slaughterhouse, smaller decentralized packing plants that could collect animals from multiple local producers began to make more sense. The old sprawling railroad stock yards were no longer needed and the compact vertical abattoirs of the big packing houses were aging and growing obsolete. The "new plants were sprawling one-story structures with power saws, mechanical knives, and the capacity to quick-freeze meat packaged in vacuum bags. Large refrigerator trucks carried the products over interstate highways to supermarkets." This shifting industrial landscape directly affected Armour, which struggled to adapt. Like the ripple affect, Armour's deteriorating condition also inevitably affected Coon Rapids and many other Iowa towns.

Armour continued to pack and ship chickens out on the railroad from Coon Rapids into the 1950s. Local resident Marvin Johnson remembers helping pack ice around the processed chickens to ready them for shipment.¹⁷ Coon Rapids mayor Keith Dorphinhaus recalls that Armour packed chickens and by the late 1950s also used the building in the egg business.¹⁸ Coon Rapids resident Erna Lund remembers her brother building egg crates for that part of Armour's Coon Rapids operation.¹⁹ Trying to stay afloat in the 1950s, however, Armour also began to consolidate and close some of its branch operations in Iowa, and certainly other states. Late in the decade, Armour shifted its Creston creamery and poultry business to the Coon Rapids facility, resulting in a "25 to 50% increase in butter production in the Coon Rapids creamery," good news for the local facility.²⁰ Citing both the cost of modernizing the old facility and a lack of local poultry and cream supplies, Armour then closed its Creston plant in 1957. The same shortcomings certainly were operating in Coon Rapids, however, and Armour's decision to close its Creston operation only briefly stayed the closure in Coon Rapids. By 1960, Armour's Coon Rapids poultry processing plant was under new ownership and the building was being adapted for new uses. Such consolidations and closures, however, could not stave off the overwhelming changes Armour faced within its industry. In 1959 Armour closed its Chicago slaughterhouse. By the end of the 1960s, the entire Union Stock Yards was shut down. Finally, in what might seem an odd diversification choice, Greyhound Corp., the bus company, bought what was left of Armour in 1970 and moved it to Arizona.²¹

Recent Developments and Future Plans

When Armour sold the building to a Garst company, the second and only other owner of the building, that firm added the office space to the ground floor and applied the metal cladding. The building is now owned by a closely-held company controlled by Mary Garst. A planning process is underway to redevelop the building for use as a historic and cultural asset for the broader community. Its space, significant history, and gateway location to the downtown area make it a good candidate for redevelopment. Its adaptive reuse potential has been studied recently by a preservation architect and the present nomination will not only recognize the historic role of the building but also open up more funding avenues. According to the "Creating Great Places" website (<http://www.creatinggreatplaces.org>), "the [Armour Creameries Poultry House] project's ultimate goal is to end up with a financially viable building that contributes significantly to historic preservation, entryway aesthetics, arts development, tourism potential and entrepreneurial development in Coon Rapids. Our objective is to convert this building into a retail/office and events center catering especially to artisans and green businesses, in order to add to Coon Rapids' tourism appeal and help foment local business development." The integrity of materials will be improved when the planned removal of the metal siding is accomplished.

¹⁷ Marvin Johnson, notes from telephone interview by Nancy Brutsche, August 8, 2008.

¹⁸ Keith Dorphinhaus, notes from interview by Rachel Garst, August 11, 2008.

¹⁹ Erna Lund, notes from interview by Nancy Brutsche, August 15, 2008.

²⁰ *Coon Rapids Enterprise*, June 21, 1957.

²¹ *Encyclopedia of Chicago*, 517, 912.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Armour Creameries Poultry House
name of property

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Carroll County, Iowa
county and state

Section 9 Page 9

9. Major Bibliographic References

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- Lund, Ema. Notes from interview by Nancy Brutsche, August 15, 2008. Rachel Garst Collection.
- McGrath, Kerry. Research notes taken primarily from the *Coon Rapids Enterprise*. Rachel Garst Collection.
- Wade, Louise Carroll. *Chicago's Pride: The Stockyards, Packingtown, and Environs in the Nineteenth Century*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987.

Armour Creameries Poultry House
Name of Property

Carroll County, Iowa _____
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than 1 acre

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

	Zone Easting	Northing	Zone Easting	Northing
1	15	360746	4636513	
2	_____	_____	_____	_____
3	_____	_____	_____	_____
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 Jan Olive Full / Historian

organization Tallgrass Historians L.C. date October 2010

street & number 2460 S. Riverside Drive telephone 319.354.6722

city or town Iowa City state IA zip code 52246

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

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

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

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

Property Owner

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

name Garst Company Limited, Partnership c/o Rachel Garst

street & number 401 5th Avenue South telephone 712-999-7031

city or town Coon Rapids state IA zip code 50058

=====
Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).
Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Armour Creameries Poultry House
name of property

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Carroll County, Iowa
county and state

Section 10 Page 10

10. Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

The nomination includes the land parcel on which the building sits, specifically, the East 150 feet of Block 2 in Brutsche & Garst's Addition to Coon Rapids. It is bordered on the north by the railroad tracks, on the east by 5th Avenue South, on the south by Walnut Street, and on the west by the presence of two other buildings. Their back (east) walls abut the property lot line of the nominated building indicating that the open land between Armour and these two buildings belongs to the Armour property lot and is a part of the nomination.

Boundary Justification

The boundary is the entire legal parcel historically associated with the Armour Creameries Poultry House.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

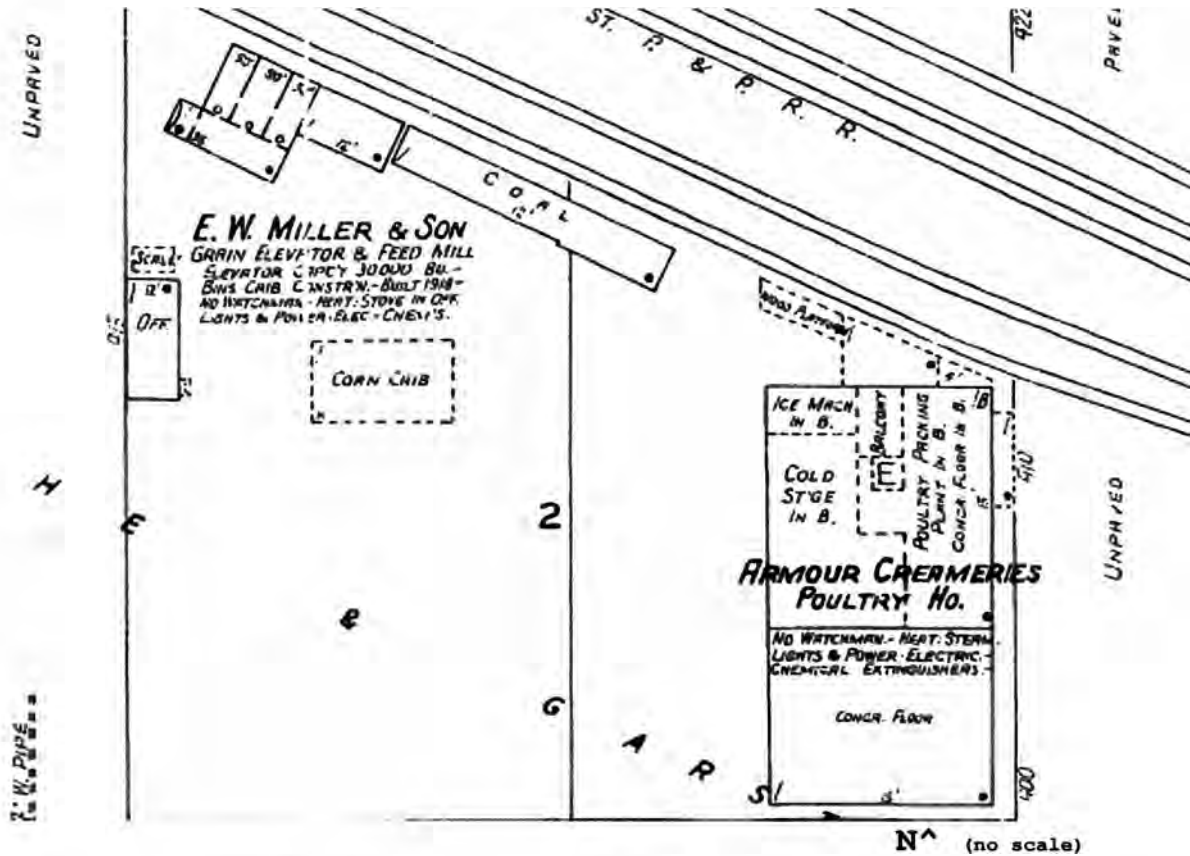
Armour Creameries Poultry House
name of property

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Carroll County, Iowa
county and state

Section Additional Documentation Page 11

10. Additional Documentation



Detail of 1930 Sanborn fire insurance map, sheet 2, showing block 2 of the Brutsche & Garst Addition to Coon Rapids.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Armour Creameries Poultry House
name of property

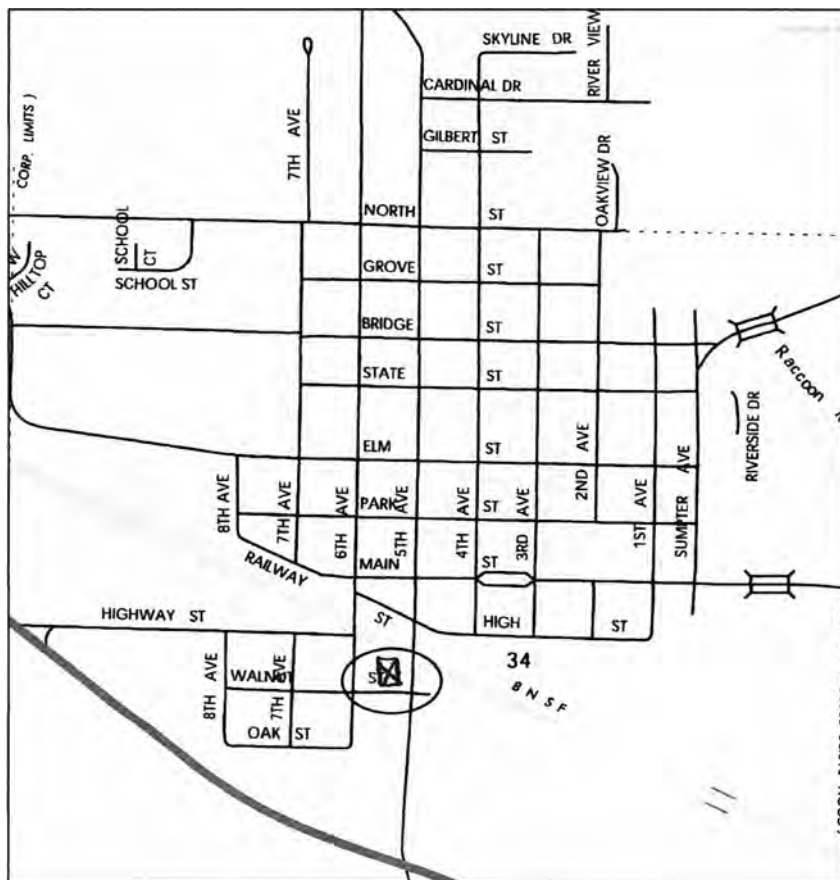
**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Carroll County, Iowa
county and state

Section Additional Documentation Page 12

Location of the Armour Creameries Poultry House in southern Coon Rapids.
Source: Whiterock Conservancy, no date, but circa 2008

No scale N^



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Armour Creameries Poultry House
name of property

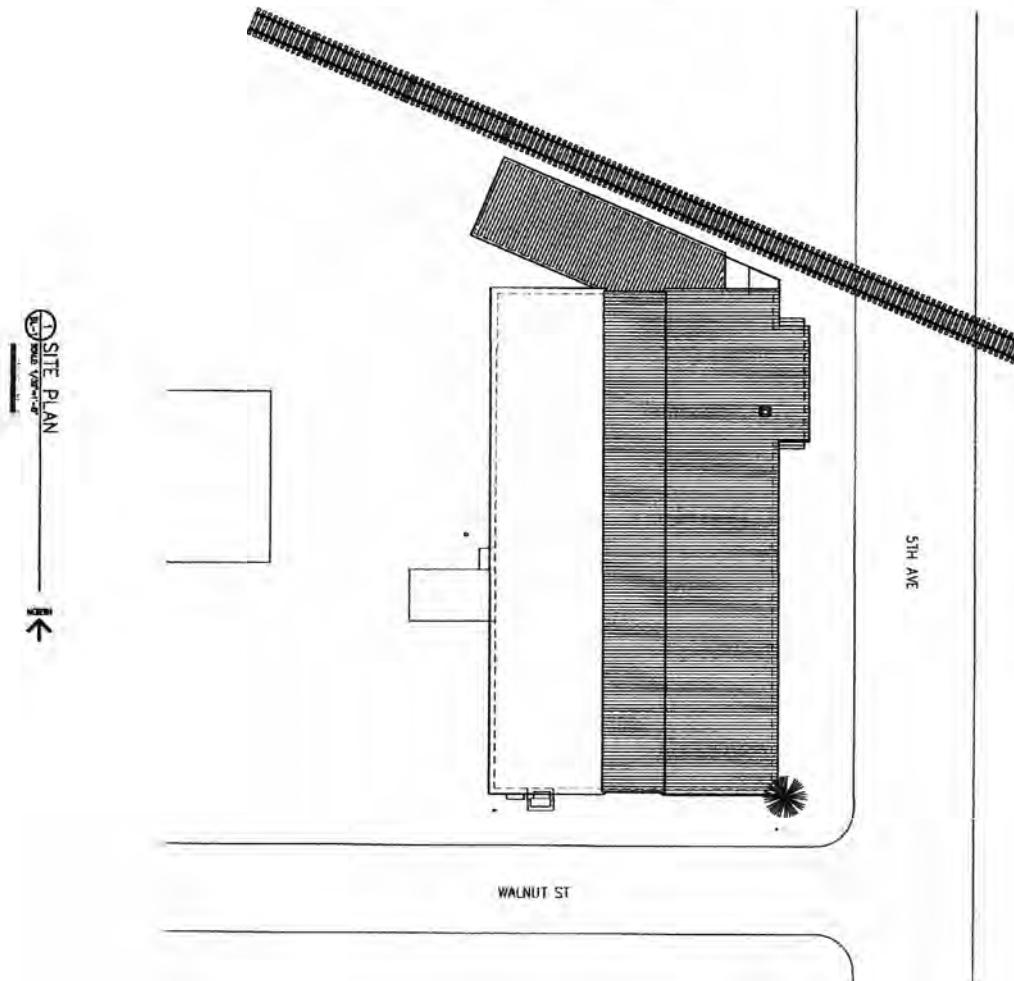
**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Carroll County, Iowa
county and state

Section Additional Documentation Page 13

Scaled Drawings that follow are all by Douglas J. Steinmetz, AIA, 2008

SITE PLAN
N^



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

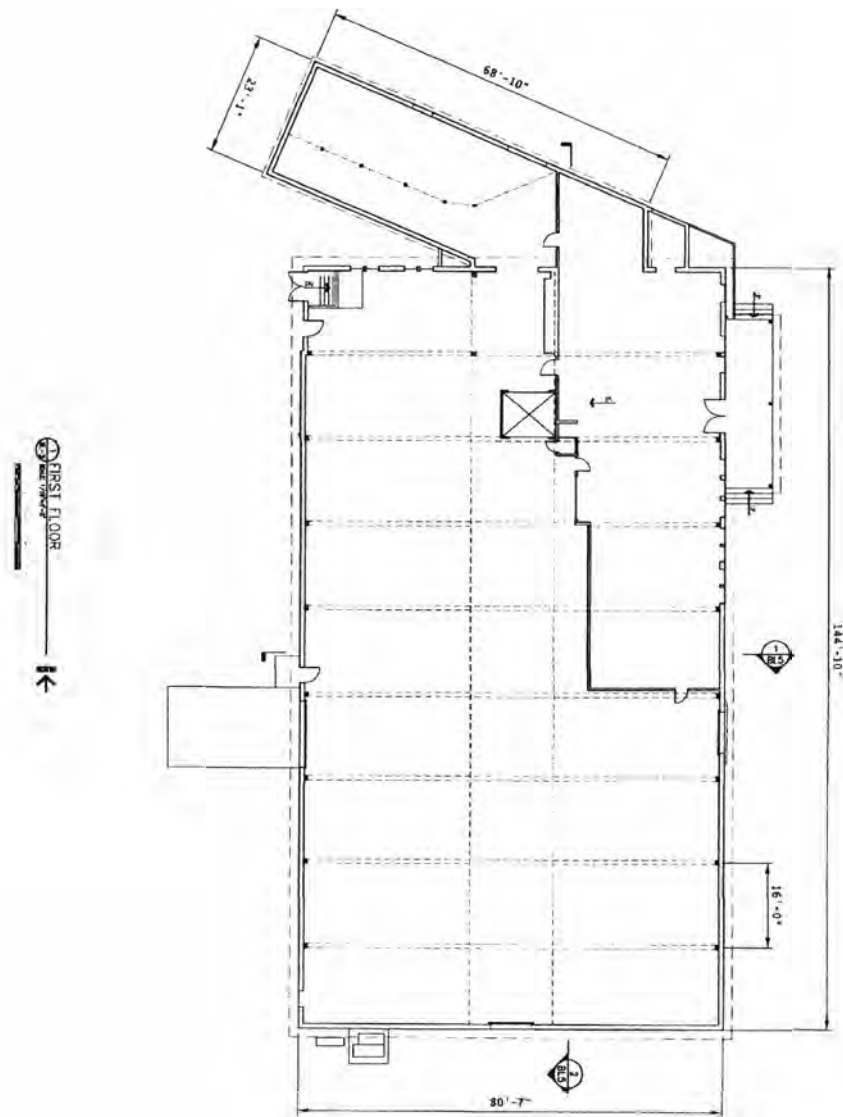
Armour Creameries Poultry House
name of property

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Carroll County, Iowa
county and state

Section Additional Documentation Page 14

GROUND FLOOR PLAN
N[^]



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National Park Service

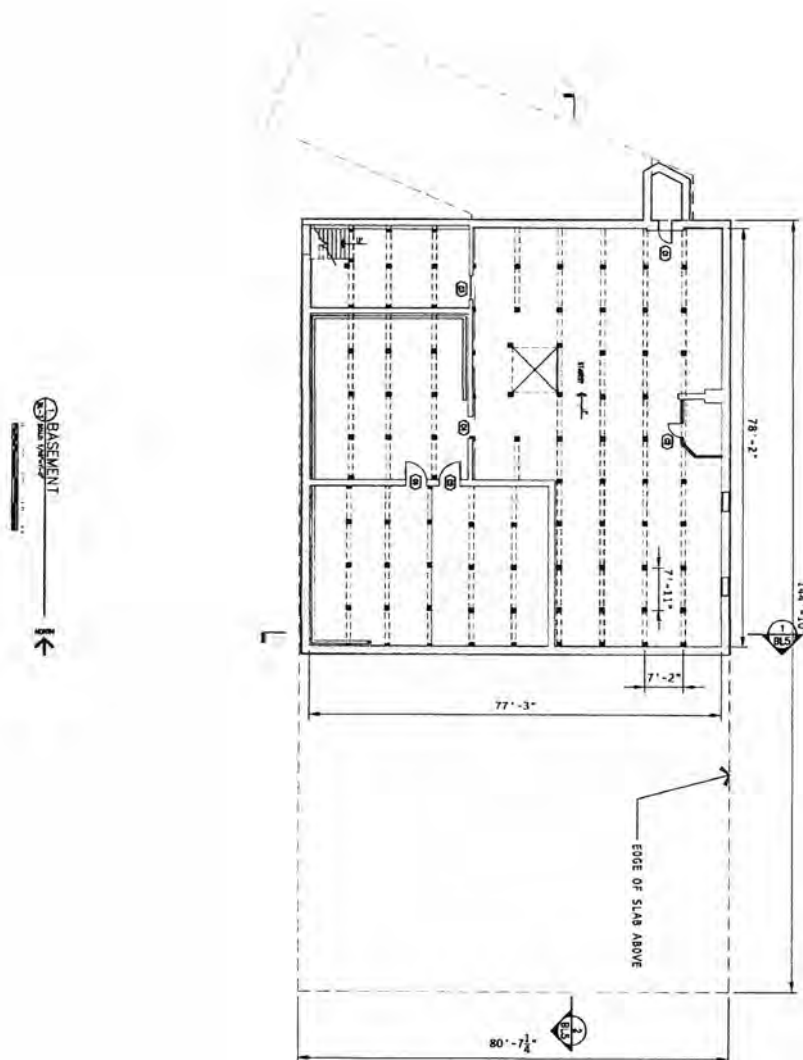
Armour Creameries Poultry House
name of property

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Carroll County, Iowa
county and state

Section Additional Documentation Page 15

BASEMENT PLAN
N[^]



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National Park Service

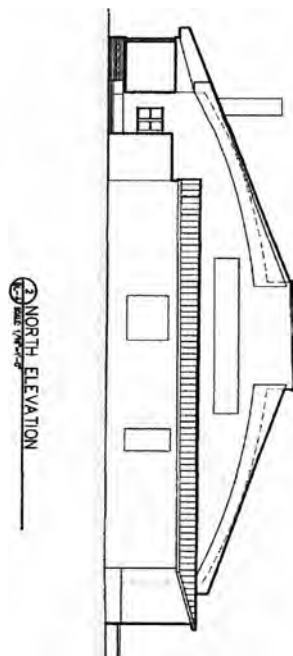
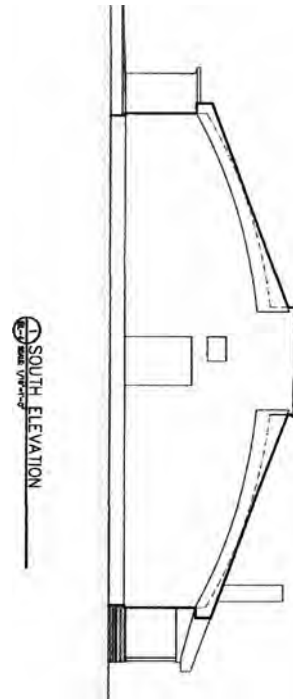
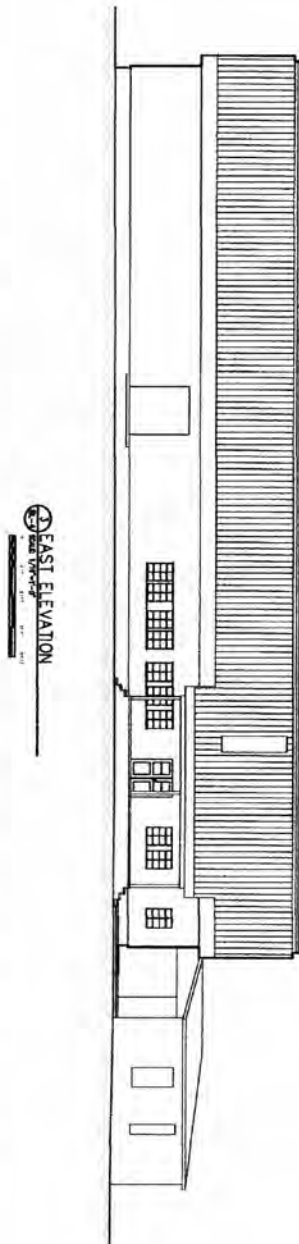
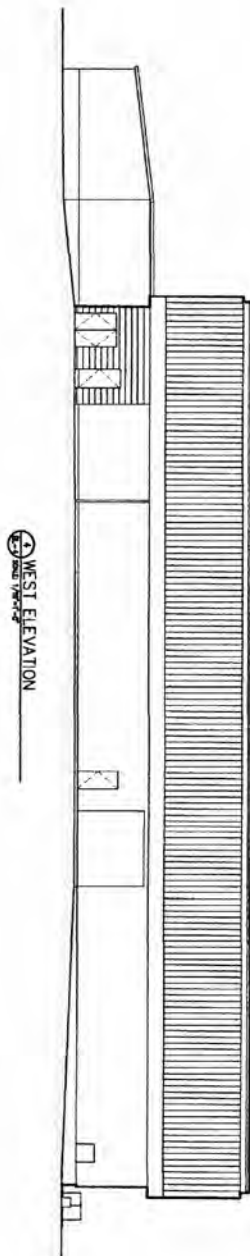
Armour Creameries Poultry House
name of property

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Carroll County, Iowa
county and state

Section Additional Documentation Page 16

ELEVATIONS



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

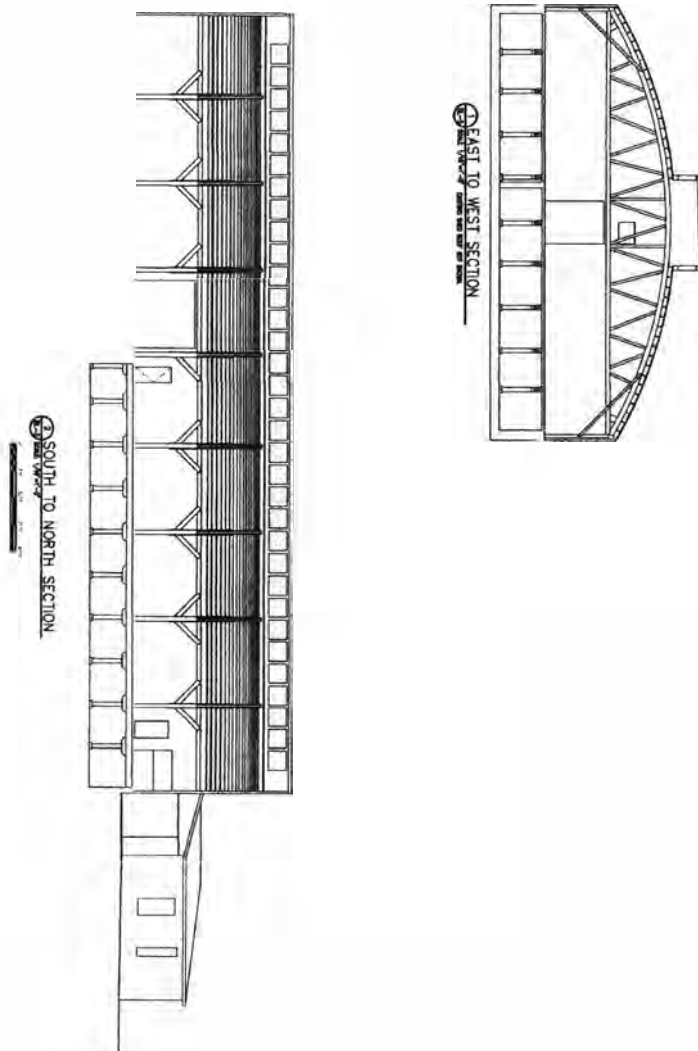
Armour Creameries Poultry House
name of property

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Carroll County, Iowa
county and state

Section Additional Documentation Page 17

SECTIONS



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National Park Service

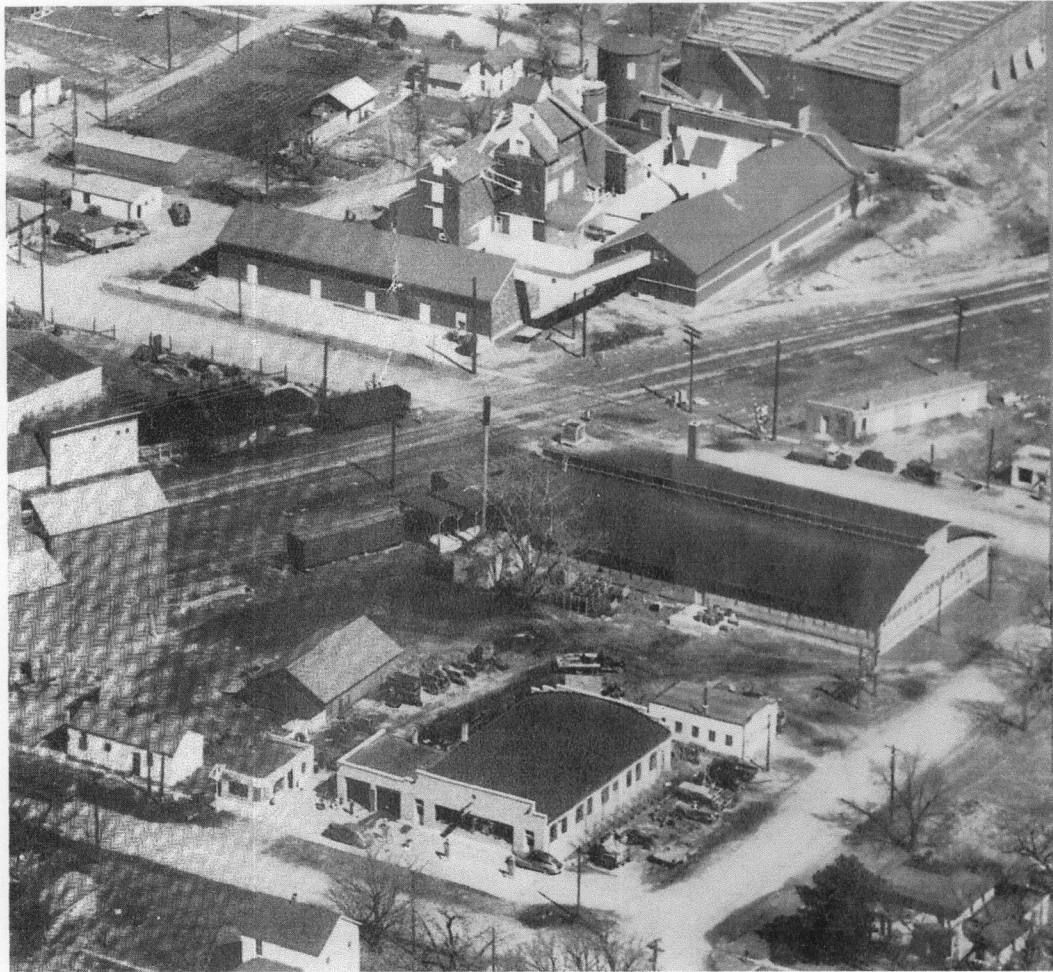
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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Carroll County, Iowa
county and state

Section Additional Documentation Page 18

ADDITIONAL PHOTOGRAPHS



Detail of a larger aerial photograph, looking ENE. The photo appeared in a 1952 calendar sponsored by Coon Rapids auto dealer, Powers Chevrolet. The Armour Creameries Poultry House is visible at center right, below (or south of) the railroad tracks. (Courtesy Charles Nixon, *Coon Rapids Enterprise*)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Armour Creameries Poultry House
name of property

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Carroll County, Iowa
county and state

Section Additional Documentation Page 19

Top is c. 1958 Bottom is: c. 2008 (Photos courtesy of Charles Nixon and Rachel Garst)



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Armour Creameries Poultry House
name of property

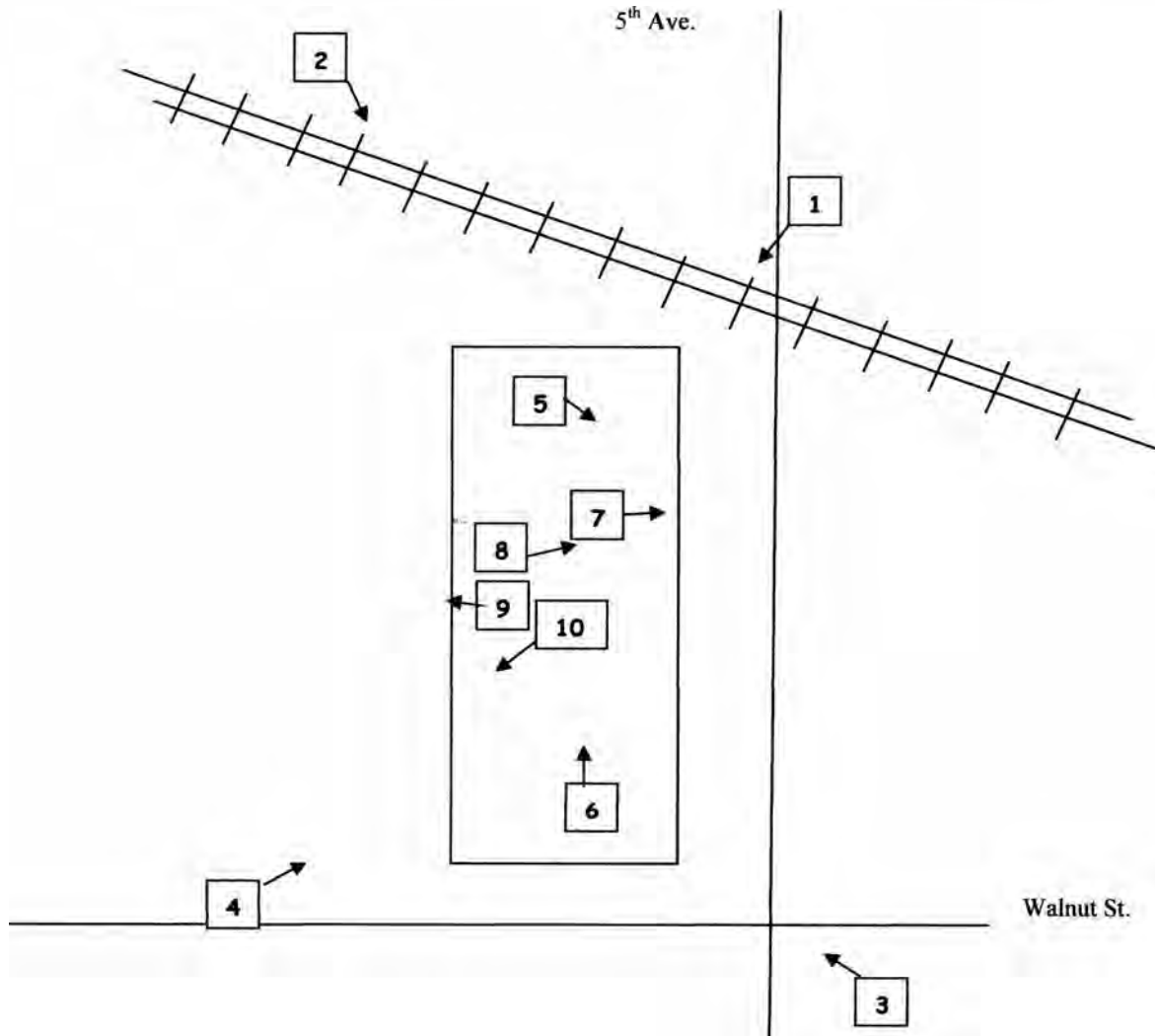
**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Carroll County, Iowa
county and state

Section Additional Documentation Page 20

PHOTOGRAPH LOCATIONS

(all information is written on the back of the photographs;
location of original digital files is in Coon Rapids with Doug Carpenter at his private home)



Interior Floor locations: 5,6,7,8,9 are from the ground floor; 10 denotes a basement location.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Armour Creameries Poultry House

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: IOWA, Carroll

DATE RECEIVED: 10/07/11 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 10/28/11
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 11/14/11 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 11/22/11
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 11000815

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 11-18-11 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

**Entered in
The National Register
of
Historic Places**

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



RAILROAD
CROSSING

CR. ROAD

3
TRACKS

USA
Coca-Cola

1. Armour Creameries Poultry House
2. Carroll County, Iowa
3. Doug Carpenter
4. Oct. 2010
5. ~~Wall~~
6. north end wall, east side wall looking SW
7. photo 1



1. Armour Creameries Poultry House
2. Carroll County, Iowa
3. Doug Carpenter
4. Oct. 2010
5. n/a
6. North end wall, west side wall, looking SE
7. photo 2



Crown Top

1. Armour Creameries Poultry House
2. Carroll County, Iowa
3. Doug Carpenter
4. Oct. 2010
5. n/a
6. South end wall, east side wall, looking NW
7. photo 3



1. Armour Creameries Poultry House
2. Carroll County, Iowa
3. Doug Carpenter
4. Oct. 2010
5. n/a
6. south end wall, west side wall, looking NE
7. photo 4



1. Armour Creameries Poultry House
2. Carroll County, Iowa
3. Doug Carpenter
4. Oct. 2010
5. n/a
6. interior detail of office, looking SE
7. photo 5



1. Armour Creameries Poultry House
2. Carroll County, Iowa
3. Doug Carpenter
4. Oct. 2010
5. N/A
6. Interior ground floor, looking SE
7. photo 6



1. Armour Creameries Poultry House
2. Carroll County, Iowa
3. Doug Carpenter
4. Oct. 2010
5. n/a
6. interior ground floor rafter + truss detail, looking E
7. photo 7



1. Armour Creameries Pantry House
2. Carroll County, Iowa
3. Doug Carpenter
4. Oct. 2010
5. n/a
6. roof truss and monitor detail, facing NE
7. photo 8



1. Armour Creameries Poultry House
2. Carroll County, Iowa
3. Doug Carpenter
4. Oct. 2010
5. n/a
6. roof truss detail, facing W
7. Photo 9



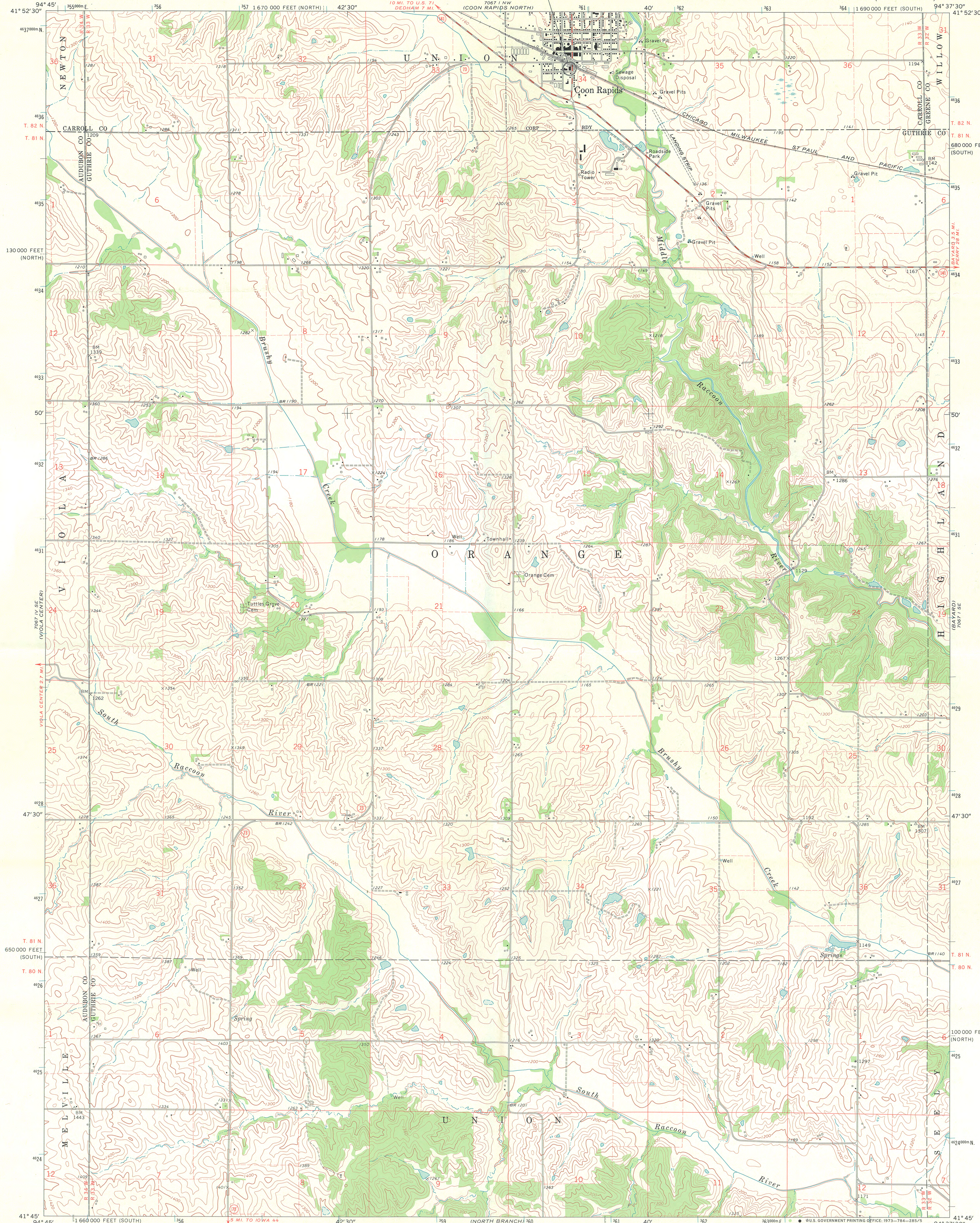
NO SMOKING

1. Armour Creameries Poultry House
2. Carroll County, Iowa
3. Doug Carpenter
4. Oct. 2010
5. n/a
6. Interior view of basement, facing SW
7. photo 10

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

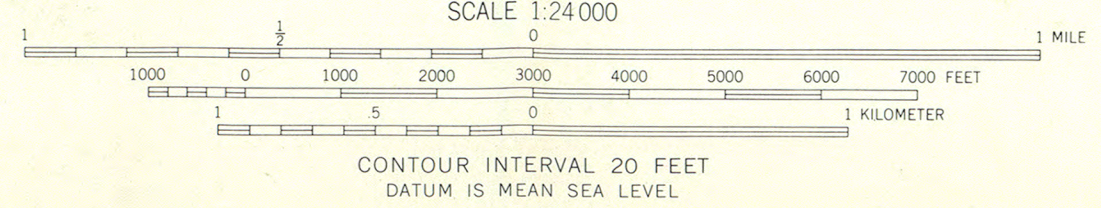
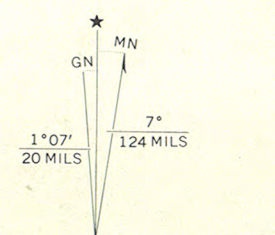
*Armour Creameries Poultry House
Coon Rapids, Carroll Co., IA
UTM Reference: 360 746 easting
4036 513 northing
Zone 15 (WGS72 datum)*

COON RAPIDS SOUTH QUADRANGLE
IOWA
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)



Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS and USC&GS

Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1966. Field checked 1971
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot based on Iowa coordinate system, south and north zones
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 15, shown in blue
Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence and field lines where generally visible on aerial photographs. This information is unchecked



ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Primary highway, hard surface	Light duty road, hard or improved surface
Secondary highway, hard surface	Unimproved road
Interstate Route	U. S. Route
	State Route



THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR WASHINGTON, D. C. 20242
AND BY THE IOWA GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, IOWA CITY, IOWA 52240
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

COON RAPIDS SOUTH, IOWA
N4145-W9437.5/7.5

1971

AMS 7067 I SW-SERIES V876

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF

CULTURAL AFFAIRS

MARY TIFFANY COWNIE, DIRECTOR

TERRY E. BRANSTAD, GOVERNOR
KIM REYNOLDS, LT. GOVERNOR



STATE
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY of
IOWA

JEROME THOMPSON
ADMINISTRATOR



MATTHEW HARRIS
ADMINISTRATOR

600 E. LOCUST
DES MOINES, IOWA
50319

T. (515) 281-5111
F. (515) 282-0502

CULTURALAFFAIRS.ORG

October 4, 2011

Carol Shull, Chief
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
1201 Eye Street, N.W.-- 8th Floor
Washington, D.C. 20005

Dear Ms. Shull:

The following National Register nomination(s) are enclosed for your review and listed if acceptable.

- Armour Creameries Poultry House, 218 5th Ave. South, Coon Rapids, Iowa
- Waterloo East Commercial Historic District, 128-329 E. 4th St.-612-616 Mulberry St. -501-632 Sycamore St., Waterloo, Iowa

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elizabeth Foster Hill".

Elizabeth Foster Hill, Manager
National Register and Tax Incentive Programs