

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received AUG 5 1986
date entered SEP 4 1986

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

1. Name

historic Gamsjager-Wysong Farm
and/or common Old Gamsjager Place

2. Location

street & number County Route 66
Little Buck Run (Cove District) not for publication
city, town St. Clara vicinity of
state West Virginia code 54 county Doddridge code 017

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Mr and Mrs. William S. Wysong
street & number 7120 Merrimac Drive
city, town McLean vicinity of state Virginia 22101

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Doddridge County Courthouse

street & number
city, town West Union state West Virginia

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title N/A has this property been determined eligible? yes no
date federal state county local
depository for survey records
city, town state

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date N/A

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The appearance of the Gamsjager-Wysong house has changed little since its completion in 1906 by owner John Gamsjager and local carpenter Frank Hinter. This two-story, German-style farmhouse is rectangular in shape, with a two-story wing at the rear (original construction), set on a foundation of cut sandstone and covered with German siding. The steeply-pitched roof was originally covered with square and hexagonal slate shingles, replaced a decade or so ago with asphalt shingles. There is a central chimney, built of limestone blocks. The stones for the foundation were quarried from the hillside behind the house, and the indentation in the hill where the stone was removed can still be seen.

The three-bay facade is pierced by a double entrance on both floors which is flanked in turn by double one-over-one-light windows. The windows are set in molded surrounds with narrow cornice heads set with corner bulls' eye blocks and separated by a wide mullion which is also topped by a bulls' eye block. The doorways on both upper and lower floors each consist of two separate single doors divided by a wide mullion-style strip and surmounted by a continuous cornice head with projecting bulls' eye corner blocks. As in the window design, the door mullion is also topped by a bulls' eye block. The original panelled doors are still in place, as are the original screen doors.

The two-tier porch or portico consists of slender, lathe-turned wooden columns decorated with scroll-sawn brackets and connected by a wooden railing with scroll-sawn balusters on the upper story; the railing on the first story, now missing, originally matched that of the upper story. The floors of the porch are separated by a simple, unadorned frieze; a narrower frieze edged by rows of molding divides the second story from the tympanum, which is faced with the same German siding as the rest of the house. The gable roof of the portico is decorated with a plain frieze and wide, thrusting cornice and rakeboard, originally enhanced with a scroll-sawn barge-board (now missing) which the present owners plan to replace, using old photographs as a guide.

The roof is also edged with a wide, plain frieze below a thrusting cornice supported by scroll-sawn corner brackets. Below the gable ends on each side of the house is a small, square attic vent set with a circular wooden design cut out in a floral pattern.

At the center rear is a two-story wing, part of the original construction, which contains the kitchen on the first floor and a bedroom on the second floor. A two-story gallery or veranda runs along each side of the wing, similar in style to the front portico but constructed with plainer materials; i. e., solid rather than openwork brackets, simple square columns, a less elaborate railing, now partially missing. On the east side the veranda is partially enclosed on both stories at the rear.

The interior plan of the house is a simple two-over-two room arrangement around a central fireplace, with the above mentioned rear wing adding an extra room on each floor. Unlike the classic Pennsylvania "I" house, however, the hallway and staircase are located at the rear of the main section, with the stairway rising in a direction parallel to the front wall of the house, similar to the plan of a typical New England farmhouse.

The cellar house is located only a few steps from the back door of the kitchen. Built partly into the side of a hill, it is constructed of local stone (lower portion) and weatherboard over wood framing (upper portion). The roof is corrugated metal. The upper portion has been converted into temporary living space by the present owners, and will eventually become a guest house after the rehabilitation of the main house is completed.

The barn remains virtually unchanged from its original late 19th-century appearance. The large frame building is constructed on a one-story-high foundation of cut sandstone block, built partially into the side of a hill in what has come to be known as a typical German "bank" barn style. The main section of the barn is rectangular, two stories in height, with German siding over frame construction and a gable roof extending into a one-story shedlike section across the entire rear. It is believed to pre-date the construction of the house.

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Contributing/Noncontributing Resources

Contributing Buildings	3
Other Contributing Resources	0
Noncontributing Resources	0
Total Contributing Resources	<u>3</u>

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below					
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation		
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)		

Specific dates completed 1906 **Builder/Architect** John Gamsjager and Frank Hinter

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Gamsjager-Wysong farm, with its 19th-century barn and cellar house and early 20th century house, is perhaps the only remaining intact representation of St. Clara community in its heyday. St. Clara itself was unique in a number of ways, chief of which lay in its founding as one of the few deliberate attempts at colonization in Western Virginia, and its promotion by, as well as homeplace of, Joseph H. Diss Debar, the state's first Commissioner of Immigration. Debar, a Frenchman by birth, became active in the development of early state legislation, is recognized as the father of the movement to establish a geological survey - so important in a state with such an abundance of natural resources - and was the artist who designed the West Virginia State Seal. His colony of St. Clara was also remarkable as a German settlement which attracted both Catholics and Lutherans. This German heritage is still notable today, particularly in the family names and the style of architecture, the latter aptly demonstrated in the design of the Gamsjager-Wysong house, which exhibits the strong German influence so typical in the rural farmhouse found throughout the region of northcentral West Virginia, eastern Ohio, western Virginia, and Pennsylvania.

Explanatory Notes

The settlement that later became St. Clara community was established in the late 1840's by Joseph H. Diss Debar, a native of Strasbourg in French Alsace, the son of the estate manager for Cardinal Prince de Rohan. He was educated at schools in Strasbourg, Colmar, Muhlhausen, and Paris, and in 1842 arrived in Boston on board the Cunard steamer *Brittania*. His shipmate on the crossing was Charles Dickens, whose portrait Debar painted while en route to America.

In the 1840's and '50's much of what was to become West Virginia was owned and exploited by large land companies and syndicates - real estate was cheap, taxes were low, and landowners could realize substantial profits on their holdings. One major holding covering several counties in the north central part of the state was known as the Swan lands, acquired by James Swan of Boston before 1809 and comprising 1,079,724 acres of then-unappropriated lands purchased by Swan for 2¢ an acre. John Peter Dumas of Paris, named trustee for the estate upon Swan's death in 1831, hired Diss Debar in 1846 as agent for 10,000-acre tract on Cove Creek in newly-created Doddridge County, Virginia.

Armed with maps of the property and promotional circulars, Debar began by offering each family who settled on Cove Creek 40 acres of land at no charge, concentrating on the large numbers of German immigrants who were arriving daily at Castle Garden in the mid-1800's. Unfortunately, Debar's maps showed the Cove Creek area as easily accessible, indicating the Hughes River as navigable and a railroad running through the county when the nearest rail line was actually located at Parkersburg. The original settlers were forced to walk the remaining 50 miles to Cove Creek, and of the first group of German colonists to arrive in St. Clara, only three families chose to stay, primarily because they lacked the funds to relocate: The families of Jacob Ruppert, Heinrich Schmidt, and Heinrich Schafer.

As a result of this imbroglio, Debar tried a different approach, offering 150-acre tracts for \$1.50 per acre, eventually selling 19,209 acres to 111 purchasers and gaining another 55 families for his new colony of St. Clara, named for Debar's first wife, Clara Levassour, of Cincinnati, whose father owned 20,000 acres of the Swan lands. The second wave of immigrants consisted

9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE ATTACHED CONTINUATION SHEET

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property approx. 1.2 acres

Quadrangle name Vadis, W. Va.

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A

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

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification

SEE ATTACHED CONTINUATION SHEET; SEE SKETCH MAP AND RED LINE

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

state N/A code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Margo Stafford

organization Ralph Pedersen, A.I.A. Architect date January 10, 1986

street & number 351 Washington Avenue/P. O. Box 1885 telephone (304) 624-9298

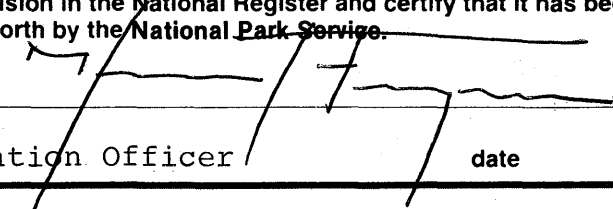
city or town Clarksburg state West Virginia 26301

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

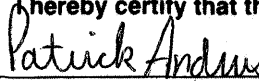
As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title State Historic Preservation Officer date

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


for Keeper of the National Register

date 9/4/86

Attest:

Chief of Registration

date

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8. Significance (cont.)

of Kreyenbuhls, Wineburgs, Vanberts, Dettermans, and Alberts, and arrived around 1850 from both Germany and other parts of the United States. A third wave in the 1860's added the names of Krenn, Rastle, Hinter, and Gamsjager to the colony. Unlike many land agents, Debar himself settled in his colony, building a house in 1852 at the mouth of Carder Camp Run on Cove Creek. By 1858 St. Clara had its own post office, located in Debar's home with Debar as the first postmaster. The house has since been demolished and the property is now known as the Joseph Hinter farm. An early sketch of Debar's St. Clara home, made by Debar himself, is in the possession of the State Archives at the Department of Culture and History in Charleston. Unfortunately, there is no longer any dwelling still standing in the state which was directly associated with Diss Debar; the house in Parkersburg where he resided briefly during his first marriage was demolished over a century ago to make way for the Judge John J. Jackson residence.

Joseph Diss Debar is best remembered as the designer of the West Virginia State Seal. One of the first settlers in St. Clara, in fact, and one of Debar's hunting companions, Heinrich Schmidt, served as a model for the seal, and can also be seen in Debar's sketch entitled "Going to Hunt on Tanner's Fork," now also part of the State Archives collection. In addition, Debar was Doddridge County's first representative to the newly created West Virginia Legislature, the only foreign-born delegate to serve in that body. In 1864 he was appointed as the state's first Commissioner of Immigration; during his tenure he produced the only handbook for immigrants to be published in West Virginia, printed in English, German, and Swedish. He was also one of the first advocates of the movement to establish a geological survey in the state, which eventually came to fruition, and in 1867 produced, with his own personal funds, West Virginia's entry in the Paris Exposition, which was awarded the bronze medal for "first-quality lubricating petroleum and West Virginia oils."

Debar was also responsible for the establishment of another colony in West Virginia, this time a settlement of Germans and Swiss at Helvetia in Randolph County. A third colony, founded entirely by German Catholics, was established independently in Marshall County soon after colonists began arriving in St. Clara, although Debar had no connection with the Marshall County settlement, known as St. Joseph. In the mid-19th century, emigration was actively encouraged by the governments of many of the German states, due in part to the famine which swept Europe in the 1840's and also in part to what is known as the Revolution of 1848. Both government and private agencies in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland provided funds to assist emigrants, and several German states and principalities undertook a systematic campaign to rid themselves of political offenders. Havre, one of the main European ports of embarkation, passed 30,000 Germans through its gates annually in the middle years of the 19th century, most of them bound for America.

While there were many German settlers and many German communities in Western Virginia before 1840 (particularly at Wheeling, which throughout much of the 19th century had the largest concentration of Germans in the state), St. Clara was the first deliberate effort to recruit German immigrants and to establish an exclusively German settlement in the area that was to become West Virginia. While other states made a concerted, well-financed attempt to attract specific ethnic groups, the Virginia and later West Virginia legislatures could never be interested in funding such efforts, or in joining with a land association or railroad company to do so, as happened in other states. With the exception of Joseph H. Diss Debar and, to an extent, Isaac Hogue, a Moundsville attorney who acted first as agent for the Cloud lands and later on his own behalf in attracting German settlers to St. Joseph Settlement in Marshall County, there was no active attempt to recruit immigrants, German or otherwise, to West Virginia colonies.

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B. Significance (cont.)

The Gamsjager family arrived in St. Clara from Bad Goisern, Austria, with the third wave of settlers in the mid-1860's, when Mathias Gamsjager, a wheelwright, immigrated to St. Clara Colony with little more to his name than the tools of his trade, including a cross-cut saw. In 1867 Gamsjager purchased from Debar and his wife a 132-acre tract known as the Ruckles farm where he erected a small log house. Later in the century his son John added to the original acreage and eventually acquired his father's farm on which he erected the present two-story farmhouse in 1903-06. In addition to running the family farm, John Gamsjager ran a general store in the community and owned a planing and grist mill, located a few hundred yards from the house and still partially standing, although in a severely deteriorated condition. The land first purchased by Mathias Gamsjager in 1867 and the house built by his son are still in the Gamsjager family, now owned by a great-granddaughter of Mathias and his wife Theresia Krenn.

St. Clara in its early days was a community whose residents existed primarily by subsistence farming, relying on familiar methods of small grain and row crop production not necessarily suited to the rugged terrain of Doddridge County. Eventually the settlers made the transition to pastureland and livestock farming, to which the boom in natural resource exploitation in the latter half of the 19th century brought added income and economic prosperity to the farmers of St. Clara. It was this turn-of-the-century prosperity that enabled John Gamsjager to expand his business interests and build his family a larger, more comfortable house. The lumber for the house, in fact, was cut from timber on the farm and sawn into board at the nearby sawmill. The stones for the native sandstone foundation were quarried from the hill behind the house, as were the foundation stones for the substantial barn and the cellar house. The barn is a classic example of a German "bank" barn, built into the side of a hill with entrances on two levels, and covered with German siding. Both barn and cellar house are believed to have been erected some years earlier than the house. The property outside the nominated acreage also contains an old log crib in dilapidated condition, the above-mentioned mill, also badly deteriorated, and a second barn some distance from the house/cellar house/frame barn core. The original Gamsjager log house, located directly west of the two-story frame house, has been demolished.

The house built by John Gamsjager is representative of a distinctive architectural style first developed in Pennsylvania and Virginia by German settlers, a tenaciously popular style throughout the region which changed little during its long tenure. The style was influenced in its development by the heritage of the German immigrants who favored it, adapting and combining European and American elements to create the distinctive regional design, a variation on the earlier Colonial "I" house. While many of the houses in St. Clara colony were built in this style, the Gamsjager house exhibits a variety of detail typically found only on later buildings utilizing the style, showing it at the height of its development before it began to be displaced in popular construction by the 20th century Bungalow style and, later, "housing development ranch" styles. The Gamsjager house is also one of the few original homes in the community which has not undergone radical exterior alteration: It has not suffered from the application of vinyl siding nor from the removal of its scroll-sawn woodwork and turned balusters.

The Gamsjager-Wysong house, then, is significant architecturally as an intact representation in the culminative form of a distinctive vernacular style developed in this country by German immigrants and spread throughout what is now Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia, and Ohio. This particular type of rural farmhouse enjoyed an extended period of popularity, appearing first in the 18th century and reaching its peak in the later years of the 19th century until it was edged out by the newer 20th century styles designed for the smaller nuclear families of a post-war

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8. Significance [cont.]

America rather than for the large extended families necessary in what had previously been a primarily agrarian society.

Historically, the Gamsjager-Wysong house is probably the most intact remaining example of St. Clara community at the height of its productivity and prosperity. The settlement itself is an important part of West Virginia's past, not only for its position as the first known German colony to be successfully established in Western Virginia by the efforts of a land agent, but for its direct association with that agent, Joseph H. Diss Debar, the designer of the West Virginia State Seal, and as the site of Debar's home throughout most of his period of residence in the state. The Gamsjager-Wysong house represents the enduring legacy of the German influence on West Virginia's cultural and physical heritage and the impact of a single Frenchman on the state's history through his work during its early, formative years.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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Earl, Jesse A., "The Life of Joseph H. Diss Debar and His Reminiscences of Doddridge County," West Virginia History, Volume 28, Number 3, April 1967.

Gamsjager Family Bible, Courtesy of Hazel Wysong.

Gamsjager, Mathias, Naturalization Papers, Courtesy of Hazel Wysong.

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Schuricht, Herrmann, History of the German Element in Virginia, Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc., Baltimore, 1977.

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Stutler, Boyd B., "Joseph H. Diss Debar, Prophet, Colonizer," West Virginia Review, Volume IX, December 1931, Charleston, West Virginia.

Letter from Hazel Wysong, April 25, 1985.

Interview with Hazel Wysong, April 20, 1985.

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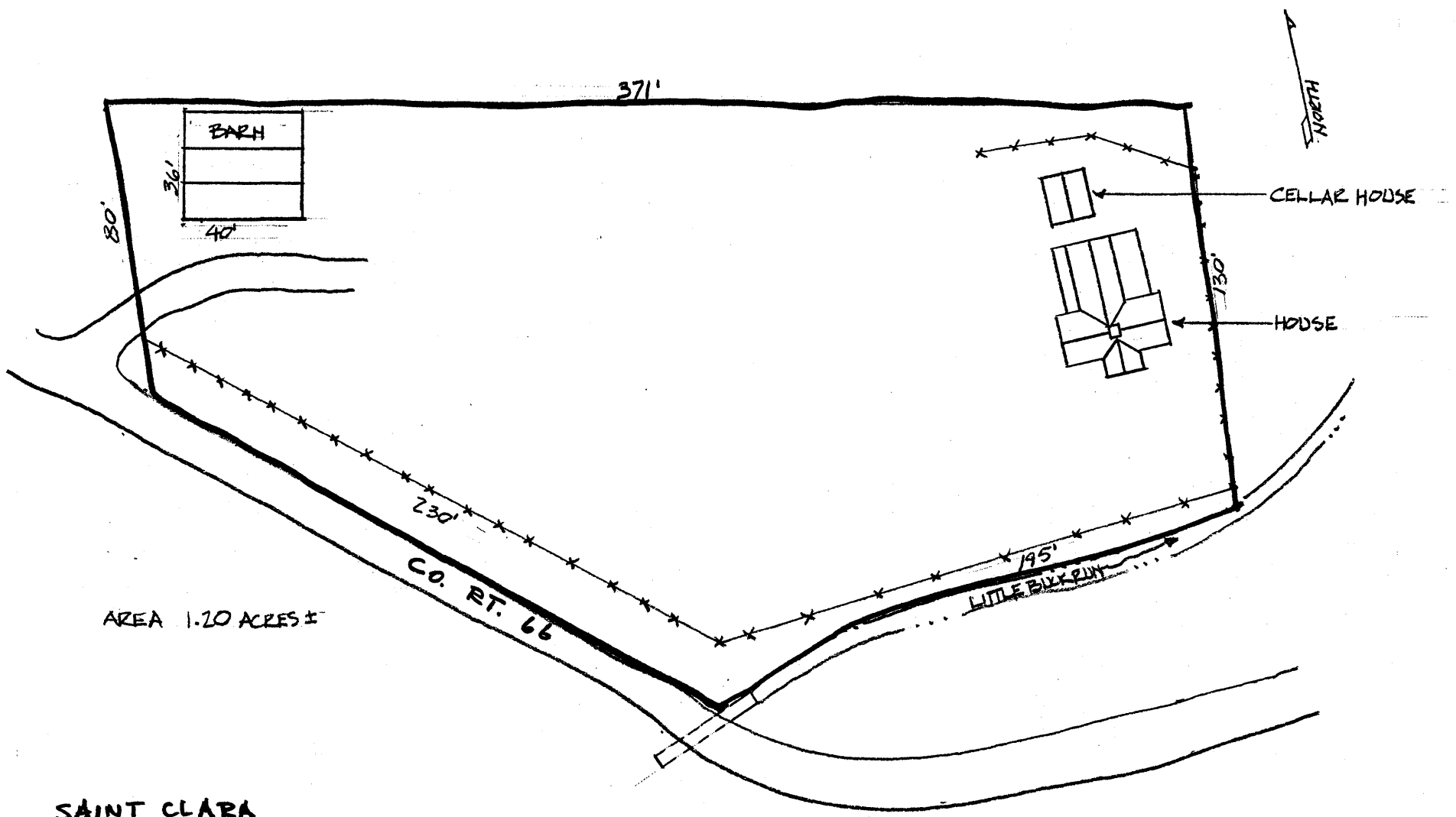
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10. Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description and Justification:

Beginning at the point of intersection of County Route 66 with Little Buck Run at the culvert/bridge approximately 600 ft. west of the intersection of Co. Rt. 66 and Co. Rt. 29, the boundary runs 195 ft. in an easterly direction along the north bank of Little Buck Run; thence northward in a straight line 130 ft.; thence westward 371 ft. in a straight line; thence southward 80 ft. in a straight line to a point of intersection with the north edge of Co. Rt. 66; thence southeast 230ft. along the north edge of Co. Rt. 66 to the bridge and point of beginning (see red line on sketch map).

The boundary was selected to enclose the farm complex whose components are linked by placement and setting, the focal point of which is the Gamsjager House.



SAINT CLARA
 W.VA.
 DODDRIDGE COUNTY

GAMSJAGER-WYSONG FARM

SKETCH MAP

Scale: One Inch Equals Fifty Feet



FRONT ELEVATION

GAMSJAGER-WYSONG HOUSE

LITTLE BUCK RUN

ST. CLARA COLONY

DODDRIDGE COUNTY

WEST VIRGINIA