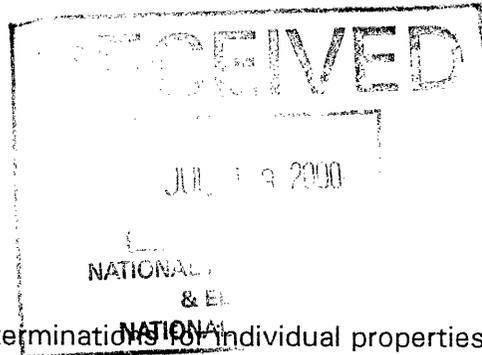


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

923



**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 Johnson, George, House

other names/site number Hoffman, Gary (owner)

**2. Location**

street & number 2566 190<sup>th</sup> Ave. not for publication  N/A   
city or town Calamus vicinity  N/A   
state Iowa code IA county Clinton code 045 zip code 52729

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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.)

Patricia Miller King DSHP 7-11-00  
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): \_\_\_\_\_

*Linda McClelland*

*8/15/00*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

**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>  5  </u>	buildings
<u>    </u>	<u>    </u>	sites
<u>    </u>	<u>  2  </u>	structures
<u>    </u>	<u>    </u>	objects
<u>  1  </u>	<u>  7  </u>	Total

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**   0  

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

The Norwegian Related Resources of Olive Township

**6. Function or Use**

---

**Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)**

Cat: DOMESTIC Sub: Single Dwelling

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

**Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)**

Cat: DOMESTIC Sub: Single Dwelling

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

---

**7. Description**

---

**Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)**

Cat: LATE VICTORIAN Sub: Second Empire

_____	_____
_____	_____

---

**Materials (Enter categories from instructions)**

foundation Limestone

roof Asphalt

walls Wood

other \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

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

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)**

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)**

- 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.

**Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)**

Ethnic Heritage/European

Social History

Architecture

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1878-1882

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1878

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)**

Johnson, George

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Halvorson, Cornelius

\_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)**

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

(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: Central Community Historical Society, DeWitt

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of Property 5.4

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

Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1 <u>15</u>	<u>689080</u>	<u>4630420</u>	3 _____	_____	_____
2 _____	_____	_____	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 David C. Anderson

organization \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

street & number 169 Lundy Bridge Drive telephone 319-382-3076city or town Waukon state Iowa zip code 52172

---

**Additional Documentation**

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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**

---

(This item must be completed.)

name Gary Hoffmanstreet & number 2566 190<sup>th</sup> Avenue telephone 319-246-2223city or town Calamus state Iowa zip code 52729

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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.

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 1

Johnson, George, House  
Clinton County, Iowa

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**DESCRIPTION**

The George Johnson house and farmstead occupy a 5.4 acre parcel in the SE¼ of Section 21 on 190<sup>th</sup> Avenue between the Kvindherred cemetery on the north and the church, about a quarter mile south. The farmstead is now part of an 80-acre farm minus the cemetery, which is located in the NE corner of the 80 acres. The Johnson House stands on higher ground than anything in the area, including the church. This is a fairly flat landscape with an average topographic variation of 10-40 feet within each section (a square mile).

The house is a 40 by 40 foot, 2½-story wood frame structure on a full basement with the front entrance facing the road, which lies about 90 feet to the east. There is a white wood fence along the north and east sides of the farmstead and a single row of spruce trees to the north. The farmstead includes five non-contributing outbuildings next to and behind the house. These are: a garage, two hog sheds, a corn crib, and a child's playhouse, all dating post-1950. In addition, there are two non-contributing silos from the 1950s. A concrete floor in the SW corner of the farmstead is all that remains of a 40 x 80 foot barn built in 1921 that was destroyed by wind in 1988.

The house stands on coursed limestone walls that rise three feet above grade to a water table. The stone blocks comprising these walls have a rough pointed surface and vary in longitudinal dimension, with some as long as four feet. There are two small basement windows on each of the four sides.

There is an enclosed porch (original) on the rear with a mansard roof, and the front porch, while not the original, also has a mansard roof with balustrades at entrance level and on the roof, which can be accessed by a door from the second floor. An historic photo of the house shows that the original front porch was a blocky, polychrome structure with staircase. The original doors on the front were paneled, single upstairs and double into the main floor. There is also an arched transom window above the second floor door.

The house is clad throughout in pine tongue-and-groove siding with horizontal and vertical 3/8 inch deep V-grooves that simulate ashlar masonry. This material is a full inch thick, 8 inches wide, and of variable lengths which meet with chamfered joints midway between the "blocks." The boards are joined the same way at the corners, and cut nails were used throughout. The window hoods and sills are of boxed wood (hollow) construction to look like solid stone.

There are eight double-hung windows on each side of the main body of the house and a pair of narrow sash over the back porch. Most of the original 2/2 sash has been replaced with 1/1 units. In the attic zone there are two gable dormers on each of three sides and three gable dormers on the east – two smaller units flanking a larger center dormer over the front porch. The dormer windows are the original 2/2 double-hung sash with segmental arch hoods, and they are framed with wood decorative surrounds in a geometric pattern. The dormers have wide cornice moldings with boxed and projecting eaves.

The mansard roof is concave in the lower portion and the upper part leads to a flat segment with widow's walk which originally included a metal balustrade. One of the original pair of chimneys north and south of this platform has been retained.

Below the moderately projecting lower roof edge there are pairs of wood brackets with pendants, and between these a row of dentils above a paneled frieze. The entire cornice zone is separated from the walls below by a rope mold

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7, 8 Page 2

Johnson, George, House  
Clinton County, Iowa

in wood. This and the window sills and hoods plus the basement walls and dormer window sash are painted dark red in contrast to the white elsewhere. The house originally had shutters on all the first and second floor windows.

Directly behind the house there is a well and cistern from which water is sent by gravity to the various outbuildings. An historic photo shows a windmill on a tower over the well. In addition, there was until recently a separate cistern underground for collecting rainwater from the house roof.

On the interior, the front entrance opens into a hall which opens in turn into two large rooms (originally parlor and smoking room) north and south. A staircase to the left leads to both upper floors, and behind this, two doors lead into a large kitchen/dining room, which is flanked north and south by rooms on each side.

There are five rooms and two baths on the second floor and three rooms on the third: a large ballroom on the west side which occupies more than half the total third floor space, and two bedrooms on the east side.

This interior has undergone some changes over the years including painting of the woodwork and the installation of paneling and carpeting. According to various sources, much of the woodwork is pine with faux graining which itself has been painted over.

The materials and workmanship in this house are first class. The original cedar roof shingles are said by Pershing Johnson, who lived in the house for more than 30 years, to have lasted nearly a century, and the visible joinery and materials are in excellent condition. It would appear that the house has been painted only once or twice since the first coat of paint was applied in 1878.

As noted, the only important change to the house on the exterior was the replacement of the front porch. Both the original and its replacement include balustrades at the entrance level and to contain a small balcony above. Unlike the original, the current front porch has a mansard roof, and it lacks the elaborate decorative features of the original (see p. 7). Other changes include the removal of one chimney and an iron balustrade on the roof summit and the removal of the shutters. When balanced against the many original features that remain intact on this property, these changes are minor and the building retains the level of historic integrity required for NRHP listing.

### **SIGNIFICANCE**

The Johnson house is significant for its association with George (Gjert) Johnson, one of the three Johnson brothers who were the first Norwegian settlers in Olive Township. George Johnson and his family occupied this house from when it was built in 1878 to 1882, when he and most of his family moved to Norman County, Minnesota. This is the only extant property which can be associated with any of the Johnson brothers who came here in 1853. It also relates to the Kvindherred church history since two of the Kvindherred pastors over time resided in the house. It is also significant under NRHP Criterion C as an example of a Second Empire style farmhouse and for its wood siding milled to look like ashlar masonry.

George Johnson and his wife Britta Christensdatter came to Olive Township in 1853, and in 1861 George made his first land purchase which includes the location of the 1878 house. He was arguably one of the most successful of the Norwegian immigrants. By 1865 he had added acreage to the initial holding, and by 1879 he owned over 600 acres, "upon which he built . . . one of the best farm houses in the county, costing over \$7000."<sup>1</sup> At this point he

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 3

Johnson, George, House  
Clinton County, Iowa

was one of the largest landowners in the township. The Johnsons' first house was located directly across the road (190<sup>th</sup> Ave.) from the 1878 edifice. This was built in the fall of 1853 and is no longer extant.<sup>2</sup>

George and his brothers all provided material and other assistance to the Kvindherred community during the early years of its existence. George was a charter member of the congregation and donated land for the cemetery and made his home available for church functions before the first public schools and the Kvindherred Church/School were built.<sup>3</sup>

From 1900 to 1913 Rev. J. J. Heie and his wife, a daughter of the Johnsons, lived in the house when he was Kvindherred's pastor between 1900 and 1913. Later, when Pastor Sheldahl lived there in the 1930s, confirmation classes were held in the building, according to Pershing Johnson.

When work began on the new house in 1876, George and his wife Britta had nine children, and four of them were married with children of their own. Within four years of its completion in 1878, George, Britta and all but one of their children and their families moved to Lee Township in Norman County, Minnesota, which borders North Dakota on the Red River. Johnson bought land on the Wild Rice River in 1881, and in 1884 he set up a water-power flour mill there ("Wild Rice Roller Mill"). The Johnsons did well, and the move was permanent. George and Britta died in 1904 and 1900 respectively and they are buried in the Bethannia Lutheran cemetery in Lee Township.

The move to northwest Minnesota where a large influx of Norwegians had begun scarcely 10 years before the Johnsons arrived would appear to be another example of the typical three-stage Norwegian-American migration pattern. One of the Johnson children remained at the house with her husband Rev. Heie until 1913, when it was sold with 78 acres to John Olson. Why nearly all of the George Johnsons moved to Minnesota is not clear, because they had ample land in Olive Township to set up the younger generation in farming. The house returned to the larger Johnson family in 1949 when three sons of George's brother Aaron (Arne) purchased it.

The Johnson house is an example of the Second Empire style, which is not commonly found on Iowa farmsteads. This was a popular mode between 1860 and 1880, especially in the Northeast and Midwest.<sup>4</sup> The most distinctive element of this style is the mansard roof, in this case made up of a concave surface with dormers below a hipped zone leading up to a flat "widow's walk." The dormers and their window surrounds are also typical, as is the cornice treatment.

Significant as well here is the use of wood siding to simulate ashlar masonry. There is only one other known example of this in Iowa, the Italianate house at 510 W. 6<sup>th</sup> St. in Davenport.<sup>5</sup> Since the millwork (doors, windows, decorative trim, and most likely the siding) is not included in the material purchased from C. Lamb and Sons in Clinton, its source is unknown.<sup>6</sup> However, an early and well-known example of a dwelling clad with wood made to look like stone is George Washington's Mount Vernon, in Fairfax County, Virginia, as remodeled in 1758. While this had been done earlier in New England, it is the earliest known example in Virginia.<sup>7</sup>

The large size of this building, on the highest ground in the area, was given additional monumental scale by the ornate stylistic elements described and the appearance of stone construction. These elements still draw one's attention to the building, even though some of the richness of the original color scheme is no longer present. It is no accident that the Johnson house stands in immediate proximity to the Kvindherred Church and cemetery, and all three properties are significant in representing the first Norwegian immigrants who settled here and their success in the new land.

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8, 9 Page 4

Johnson, George, House  
Clinton County, Iowa

This property well represents the activities of the Norwegians in Olive Township (successful farming), is directly associated with leading pioneer settlers, and is a good example of the Second Empire style, which is unusual in Midwestern farm dwellings. The few alterations made to this building since its construction are minor and sympathetic (front porch) to the original design.

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<sup>1</sup>Allen, p. 811. Opatz's figure is ca. \$3500. See p. 103.

<sup>2</sup>Huseth, Rev. H. F. "Norwegian Lutherans Celebrate Anniversary." *DeWitt Observer*. August 28, 1927. *The Clinton Herald*. August 25, 1927. "Norwegians in Church Service Olive Township."

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>McAlester, pp. 240-242.

<sup>5</sup>Illustrated in Plymat, p. 21.

<sup>6</sup>Opatz, *ibid.* Mr. Opatz has the original invoice from C. Lamb & Sons and he indicates in his book that much of the material in the house came from other, unspecified, sources. The builder was Cornelius Halvorson, who was at work on the Kvindherred church at the same time that the Johnson house was under construction. There is no evidence as to the source of the plans. Pershing Johnson reported that the siding is clear pine "from Wisconsin." See oral history interviews.

<sup>7</sup>Morrison, p. 357.

#### MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See also Section I of the MPDF which accompanies this nomination.

Hoffman, Gary. Interviewed by the author on October 23, 1999.

Johnson, Pershing. Interviews recorded and transcribed in 1994. These are available at the Central Community Historical Society, DeWitt.

McAlester, Virginia and Lee. *A Field Guide to American Houses*. New York, 1986.

Morrison, Hugh. *Early American Architecture*. New York, 1952.

Opatz, Thomas Dosland. *A Long Look Back*. Lake Oswego (Oregon), 1998.

Plymat, William P. Jr. *Victorian Architecture of Iowa*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Des Moines, 1997.

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section   10   Page   5  

Johnson, George, House  
Clinton County, Iowa

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**GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The nominated property is a 460 by 460 foot rectangle in the SE $\frac{1}{4}$  of Section 21, Olive Township. See the site plan that accompanies this nomination.

**Boundary Justification**

This is the parcel that has been consistently associated with the Johnson house. Other lands which were at one time or another associated with the house have changed hands since the house was built in 1878.

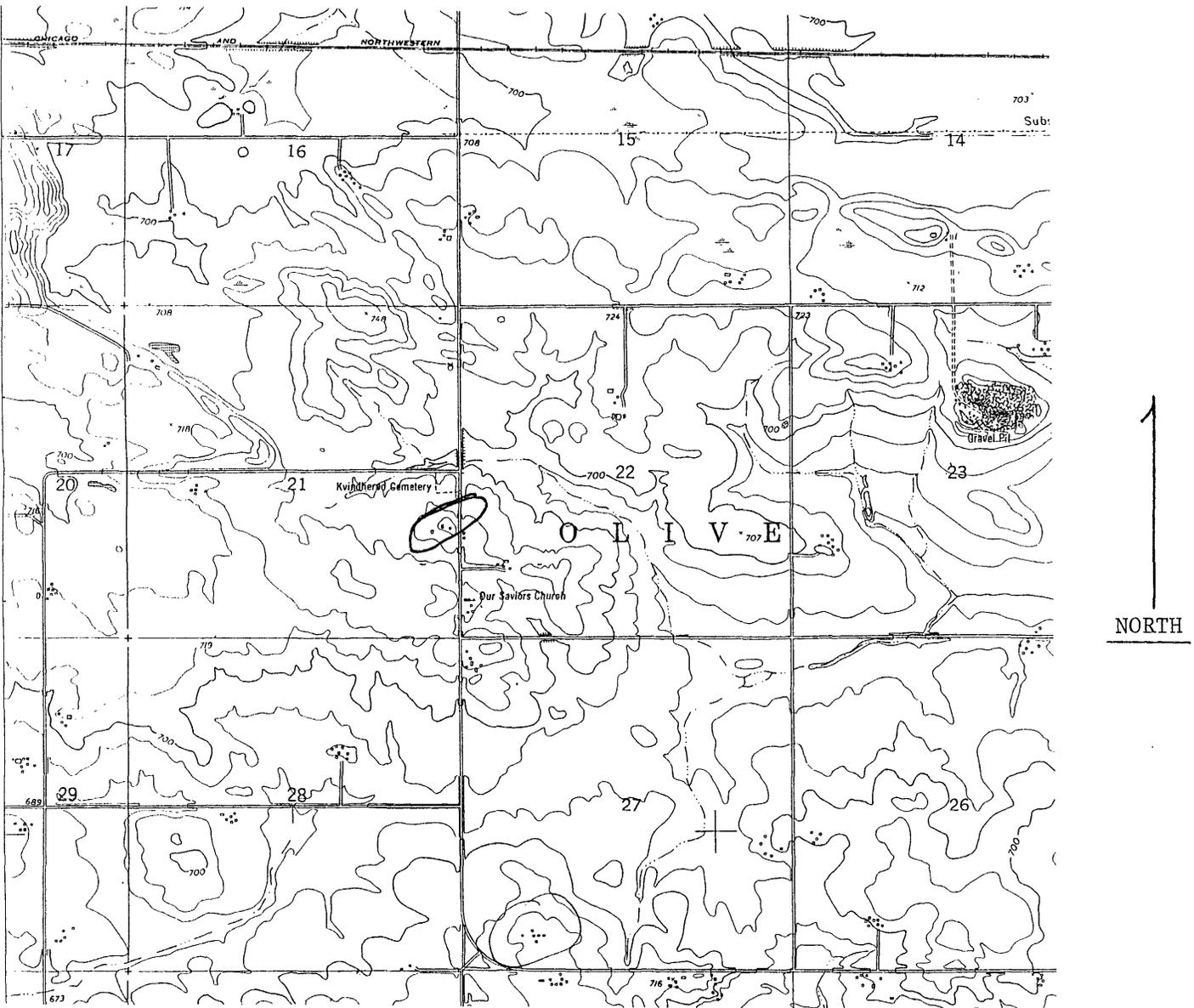
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National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section ADD'L Page 6

Johnson, George, House  
Clinton County, Iowa

Location Map  
Source: USGS 7.5 Min. Quadrangle (reduced 23%), 1953



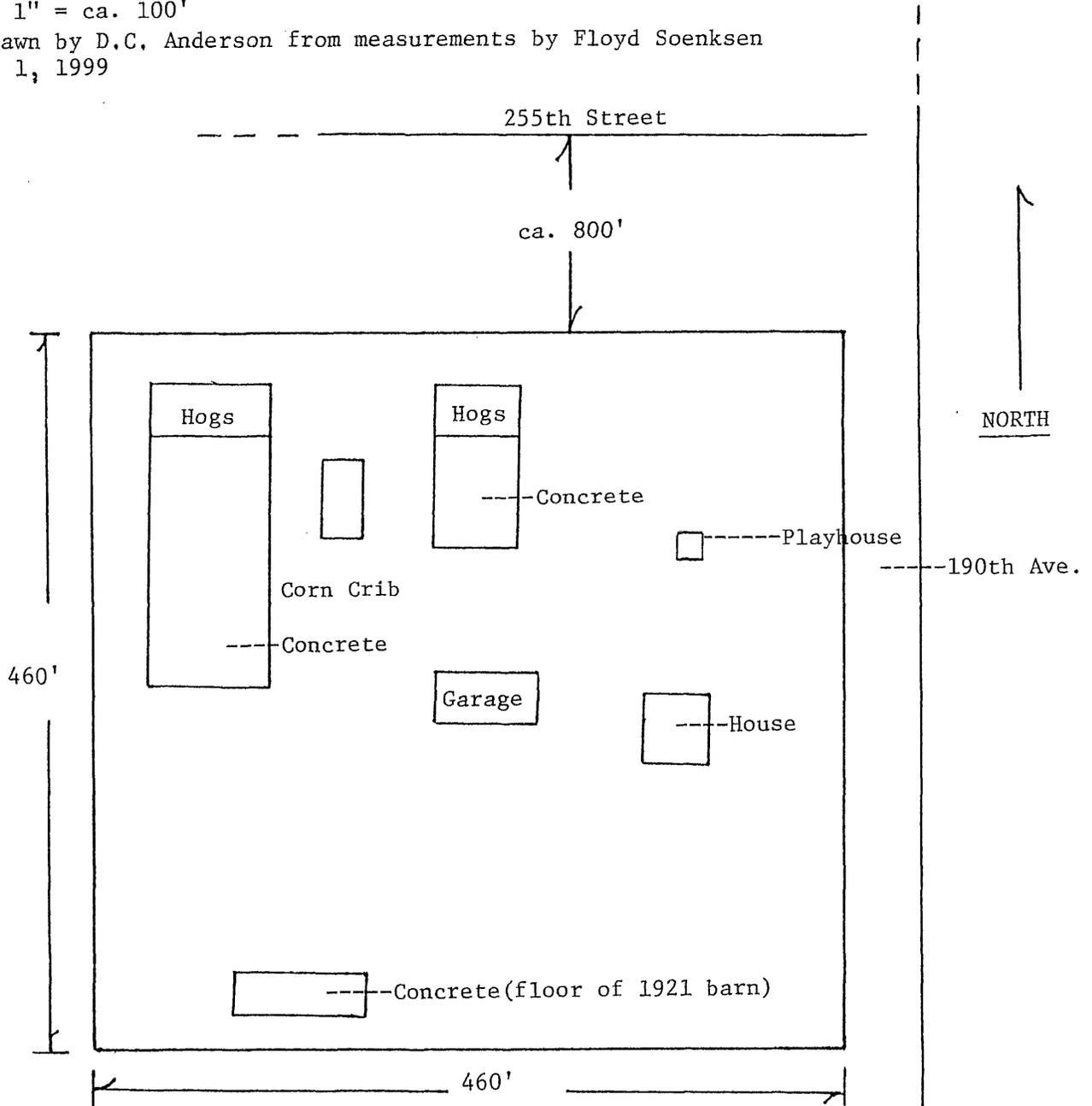
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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section ADD'L Page 7

Johnson, George, House  
Clinton County, Iowa

Farmstead Site Plan  
Scale: 1" = ca. 100'  
Plan Drawn by D.C. Anderson from measurements by Floyd Soenksen  
October 1, 1999



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CONTINUATION SHEET

Section ADD'L Page 8

Johnson, George, House  
Clinton County, Iowa

Historic Photo - Date Unknown - Camera Facing NW  
Central Community Historical Society Collection, DeWitt



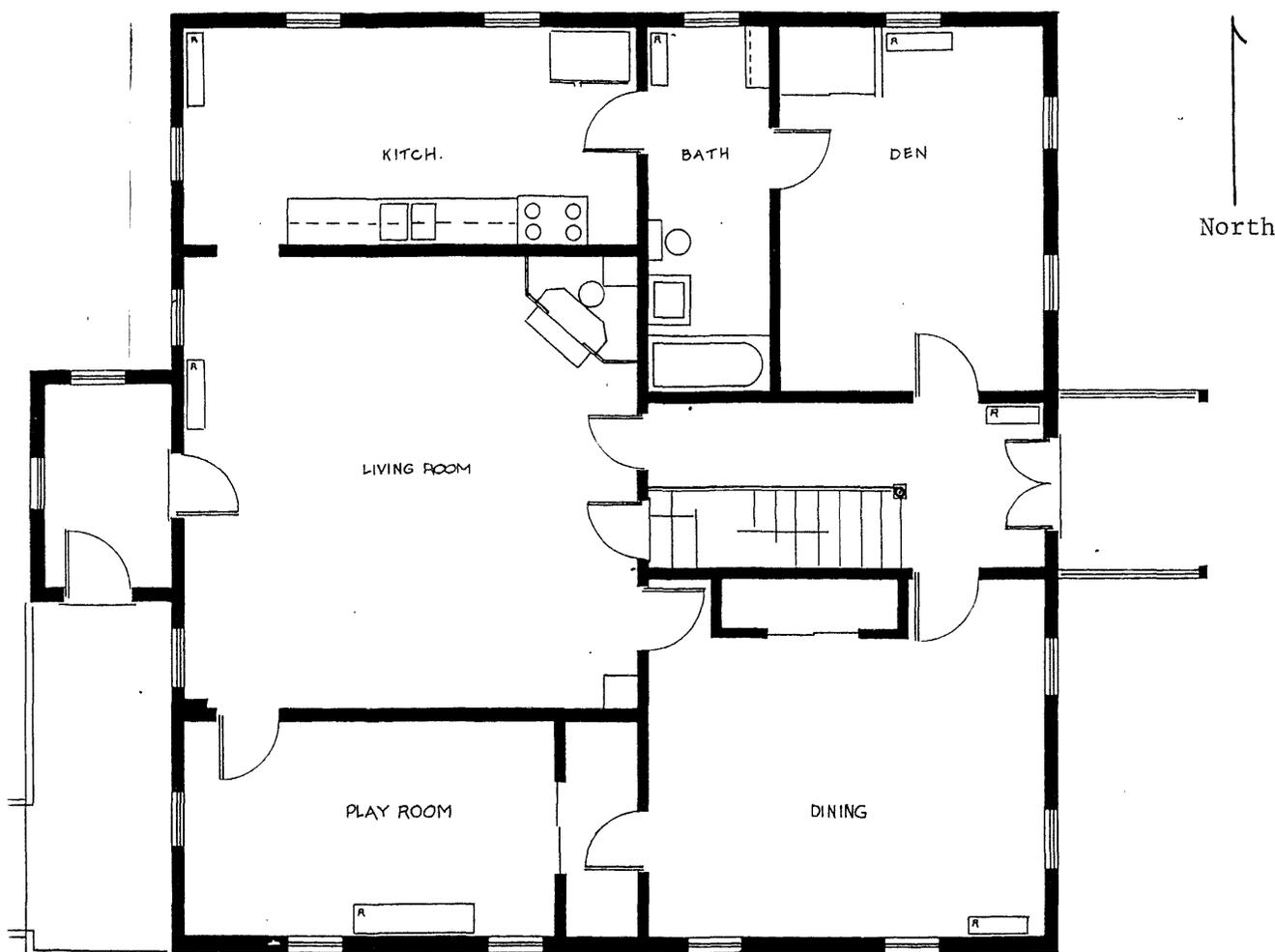
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CONTINUATION SHEET

Section ADD'L Page 9

Johnson, George, House  
Clinton County, Iowa

First Floor Plan  
Drawn by David Olson, 1981



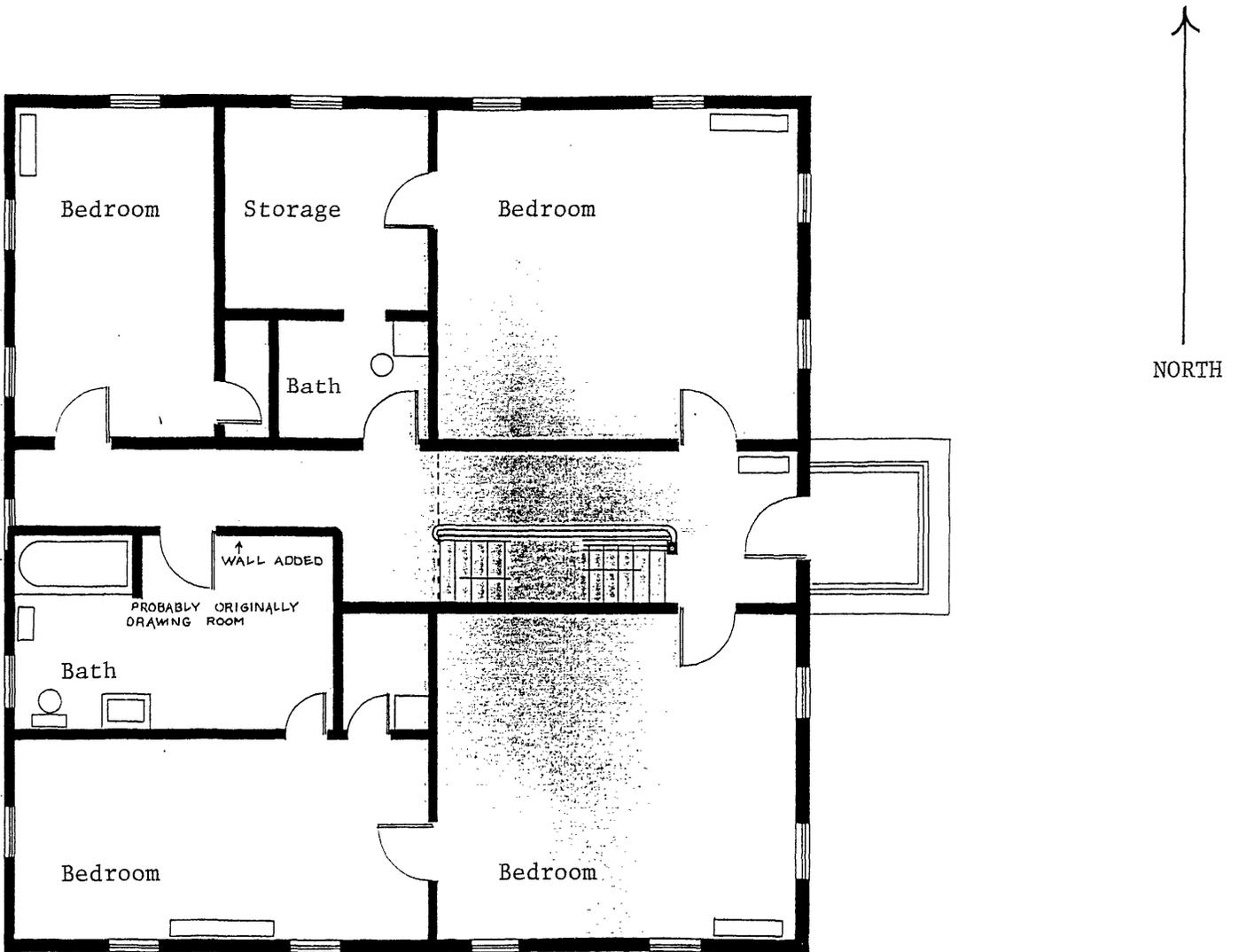
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CONTINUATION SHEET

Section ADD'L Page 10

Johnson, George, House  
Clinton County, Iowa

Second Floor Plan  
Drawn by David Olson, 1981  
Scale: 1" = 8'



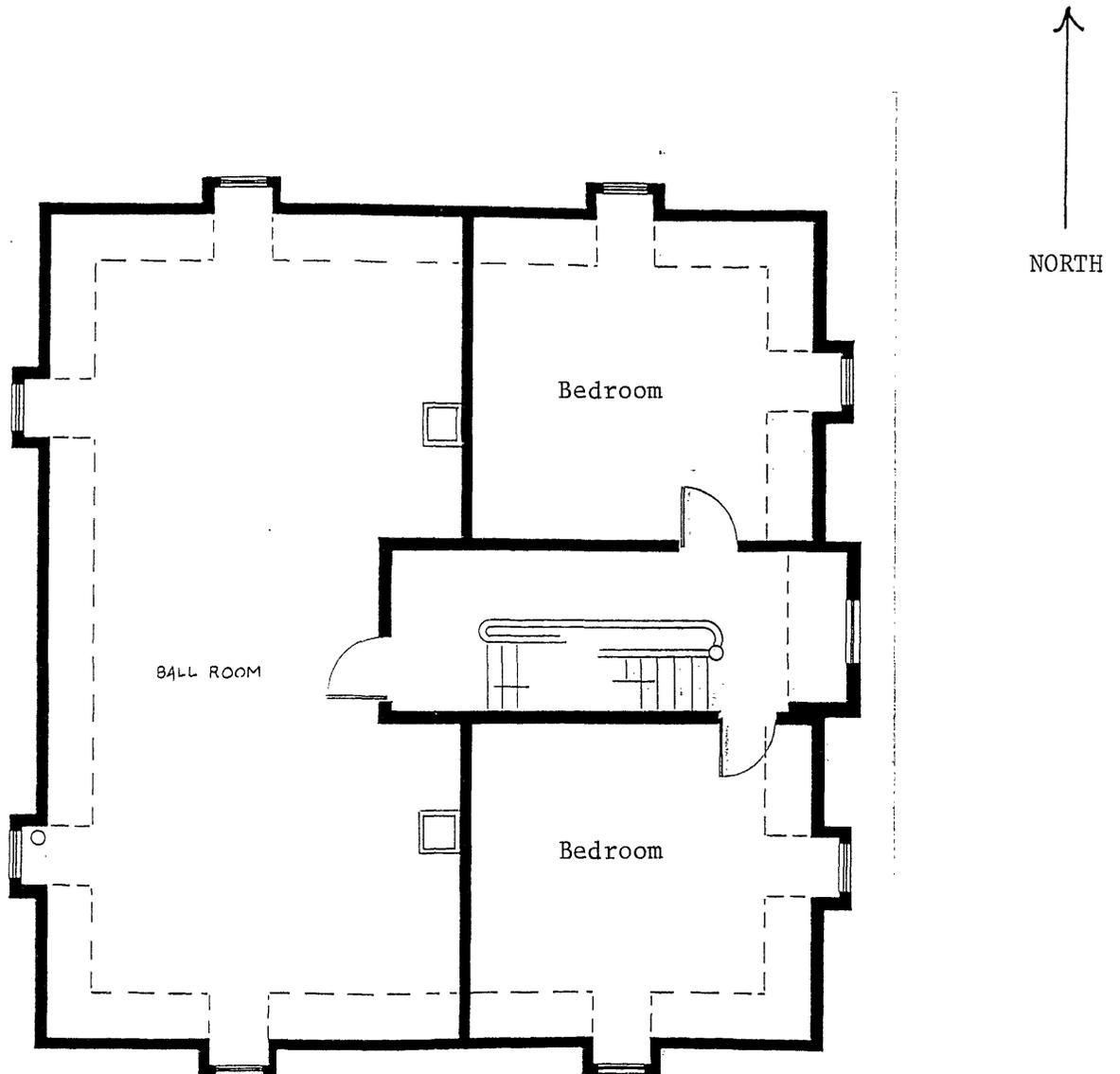
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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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Section ADD'L Page 11

Johnson, George, House  
Clinton County, Iowa

Third Floor Plan  
Drawn by David Olson, 1981  
Scale: 1" = 8'



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CONTINUATION SHEET

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Johnson, George, House  
Clinton County, Iowa

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PHOTOGRAPHS

Photographer: D.C. Anderson

DATE: October 23, 1999

All are "Camera Facing"

- No. 1 View of Farmstead--NW
- 2 Front of House--NW
- 3 Back of House--NE
- 4 Back of House--E
- 5 Detail of South Side of House--N
- 6 Detail of Siding on House--N