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United States Department of Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

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

1. Name of Property

historic name Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farm
other names/site number

2. Location

| | | | |
|-----------------|----------------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| street & number | 436 County Highway F | N/A | not for publication |
| city or town | Town of Hamburg | N/A | vicinity |
| state Wisconsin | code WI | county Marathon | code 073 |
| | | | zip code 54411 |

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

8/20/13

Date

State Historic Preservation Officer - Wisconsin

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

Name of Property

County and State

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register.
- See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register.
- See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- See continuation sheet.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:)

Barbara Opat

11-6-13

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

| Ownership of Property (check as many boxes as as apply) | Category of Property (Check only one box) | Number of Resources within Property (Do not include previously listed resources in the count) | |
|---|--|---|-----------------|
| | | contributing | noncontributing |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private | <input type="checkbox"/> building(s) | 22 | 4 buildings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-local | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district | 1 | sites |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-State | <input type="checkbox"/> structure | 8 | structures |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal | <input type="checkbox"/> site | | objects |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> object | 31 | 4 total |

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources
previously listed in the National Register

2

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling
 AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/animal facility
 AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/agriculture field/storage
 SOCIAL/clubhouse

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling
 DOMESTIC/hotel
 RECREATION AND CULTURE/museum

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals
 Other: Rustic Style
 Late 19th and Early 20th Century American Movements

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone, concrete
 walls Weatherboard, log, brick
 roof Asphalt, metal, clay tile
 other

Narrative Description

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

Name of Property

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

 Agriculture

 Commerce

 Architecture

Period of Significance

 1904-1964

Significant Dates

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

 Fromm, Walter; Fromm, Edward; Fromm, John;
 Fromm, Henry

Cultural Affiliation

 N/A

Architect/Builder

 Kohl, Theodore

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographic References

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

Previous Documentation on File (National Park Service):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 380.1 acres

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

| | | | | | | | |
|---|-----------|------------------|-------------------|---|-----------|------------------|-------------------|
| 1 | <u>16</u> | <u>274555.56</u> | <u>4997017.53</u> | 3 | <u>16</u> | <u>272977.49</u> | <u>4997886.69</u> |
| | Zone | Easting | Northing | | Zone | Easting | Northing |
| 2 | <u>16</u> | <u>272953.30</u> | <u>4997079.06</u> | 4 | <u>16</u> | <u>273388.93</u> | <u>4998279.09</u> |
| | Zone | Easting | Northing | | Zone | Easting | Northing |

See Continuation Sheet

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet)

11. Form Prepared By

| | | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------|---------------|
| name/title | Patricia Lacey | date | July 11, 2012 |
| organization | | telephone | 715-743-4799 |
| street & number | W5055 US HWY 10 | zip code | 54456 |
| city or town | Neillsville | state | WI |

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Section 7 Page 1

Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farm
Town of Hamburg, Marathon County, Wisconsin

DESCRIPTION

The Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farm is located in the gently rolling agricultural land and pine and hardwood wood lots of northwest Marathon County. It is approximately 20 miles northwest of Wausau, Wisconsin. The nominated district is located within Section 11 of Hamburg Township (30 North Range 5E). Along the public roads, the district is generally bordered on the south by County Road F, on the west by 5th Lane and on the east by 3rd Lane. On the north, the boundary is along current property lines. Along the roadway, the property is marked by remaining sections of eight foot high wire fences which have a two-foot wire guard that slants inward. This measure kept the animals in and intruders out. The areas that are in close proximity to the buildings are fairly open and grass covered. The balance of the property is wooded. The wooded areas were used for fox furring ranges. A gravel driveway enters the compound from County Road F. It is flanked on each side by two large fieldstone pillars that were constructed in 2007. The gravel driveway winds throughout the property.

The property nomination is comprised of a total of twenty four buildings, eight structures and one site, which are contributing, and four buildings that are non-contributing. All resources retain a high degree of integrity both structurally and historically. Because of the innovations made in the areas of ginseng farming, and fur production and marketing, the farmstead is nationally significant under Criterion A for its association with agriculture and commerce. The Fromm brothers contributed many technological advancements and innovations to both industries. As a result, the property is also significant under criterion B for its association with the brothers who lived on and worked in the business at this location. The property is further significant at a local level for architecture for the fine example of rustic architecture displayed in the clubhouse. The 1928 Walter and Mabel Fromm House, located within the boundaries of the district, was listed in 1982 in the area of architecture as a fine local example of Period Revival design and is included in the count of contributing buildings.

The houses, clubhouse, warehouse, barn and other buildings and structures provide an intact collection representing a period in history where four Wisconsin farm boys made a tremendous impact on world markets in the area of specialty furs and in the production of ginseng, a specialty export crop. The period of significance extends from 1904 when the first ginseng was planted to 1964 when a lawsuit divided the company and its holdings. During this period (1904 – 1964), the ginseng and fur farm operations saw its largest expansion. It was during this period that the contributions that the Fromm brothers made to both industries were achieved.

The abandoned 1868 Joachim and Dorothea Nieman house is the earliest dated building contained within the boundaries. (It achieves significance through its association with the fur and ginseng farm.) The last buildings constructed were the 1948 Chinchilla shed and the Alice and Edward Fromm House. The 1928 Walter and Mabel Fromm house is a highly intact example of Period Revival design with an elaborately decorated interior. The 1934 Rustic Style clubhouse is the only other building

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which is a true representative of an architectural style. The two other houses are similar to other domestic architecture of the period, but lack the high style design of the Walter and Mabel Fromm House; however, they are of high quality construction with specialty details. The remaining buildings are of frame construction and vernacular in form and design. Several of the smaller buildings are representative of the side gable and front gable forms.¹ The majority of the farm's buildings were constructed during the 1920s and 1930s as the Fromm business was expanding. The Fromms continued to add to and expand these structures as the need for additional space arose.

The following inventory of resources describes each individual component of the farm district beginning at the County Road F entrance.

Edward and Alice Fromm House² (Building, #1 map) 1948 Contributing

Edward and Alice Fromm built their home on the former site of the Alwina and Frederick Fromm house. Edward had a sentimental attachment to this location, as the entire family, including wives and children, lived in the family home until 1925 when the financial success of the farm facilitated the building of separate houses. Edward and Alice remodeled the homestead and remained living in the house until it burned in 1943. Five years later they constructed this two-story house.

Although not exhibiting a duplication of a specific architectural style, it combines the elements from Prairie and the Craftsman styles. The strong horizontal emphasis is reminiscent of the Prairie style. The house is two stories in height with a hipped roof. The south main façade has a two-story wing which projects from the east one-half of the main body of the house.

An additional roof located at the top of the first floor wraps around the entire house and the projecting wing. The roof shields the first floor windows under a deep overhang. Large triangular knee braces commonly used in the gable ends of Craftsman houses support the roof.

The second floor of the projecting wing has a porch accessed by a door on the south façade of the second floor. Large triangular knee braces support the overhanging roof eave of the porch. The south first floor elevation of the two-story projecting wing has a large picture window with a formal entry door located directly east of the window.

¹ Barbara Wyatt, Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin: Volume 2 A Manual for Historic Properties (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1986), page 3-1.

² The structures were dated through the use of Fromm depreciation records, receipts or dates recorded in the book Bright with Silver. Kathrene Pinkerton, (New York: William Sloane Assoc. Inc., 1947).

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A large red brick chimney is tucked in the rear northwest corner of the west elevation of the two-story projecting wing. The roof is covered with red asphalt shingles. The house is painted a cream color with white trim.

Garage/Gas Station (Building, #2 map)

c1940

Contributing

The first building encountered upon entering the farm from County Highway F is the circa 1940 garage. At one time this was the gas station for the farm. In addition, it sold gas to the surrounding residents. The square building rests on a poured concrete foundation which has footings located four feet below grade to six inches above grade. A concrete floor extends between the side walls of the foundation. The building is faced with utility brick laid in a running bond pattern. The garage has a flat roof with parapets on three sides. The front of the building faces northwest. This elevation contains two unmatched overhead garage doors. The southwest elevation has a door located at the west edge of the elevation. Two double hung windows are placed to the east of the door. Three windows are evenly spaced on the southeast elevation and two windows appear on the northeast elevation. Each window sash is divided into six lights.

Barn and Silo (Building and structure, map #3)

1923

Contributing

After passing the garage, the driveway splits and travels on both the east and west sides of the 118' x 36' barn. The foundation of the 1923 barn is brown brick which has been laid in a running bond pattern. The barn has an arched roof with flared overhangs. The arched roof, also referred to as a rainbow or Gothic roof, is commonly found in the upper Midwest, particularly in Wisconsin. The arched roof allows for the maximization of hay and straw storage space in the upper barn.³ The barn roof is clad with brown asphalt shingles. Three evenly spaced ventilation cupolas rest on the ridge of the roof. The face of the south roof elevation has three evenly spaced arched roof dormers with fish scale shingled tympanums. The roof of each dormer resembles the larger arched barn roof. Each dormer contains two side-by-side square windows, each divided into four lights. The exposed rafter ends support a slight flare at the lower edge of the barn roof. This flare creates a narrow eave.

Four identical sliding wooden doors are placed on both the north and south elevations. Each door has a small centered six light window at the top of the door. Three trim boards divide the lower two-thirds of each door into four triangular areas. The south elevation has three sets of square windows (four, three and three), divided into either four or nine lights. Two doors enter the south first level of the barn and one door enters the south wall of the one story silage room. A small window is placed at the east end of the first level; it is formed by twenty glass blocks.

³ Jerry Apps, Barns of Wisconsin (Madison: Wisconsin Historical Press, 2010), pages 65, 66.

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The east elevation of the barn is connected to the round silo. The silo and the feed chute are constructed of glazed brown tile. The roof of the silo is multi-sided and covered with the same asphalt shingles as the main barn roof. One roof dormer is placed on both the east and west side of the silo roof, similar in design to the main barn roof dormers, but only having one light. A small roof ventilator, similar to the barn cupolas, is placed at the peak point of the silo roof.

A single square window appears in the barn peak of the east gable. Two additional square windows are placed beneath the centered peak window. Each pane is divided into nine lights. A Dutch door is centered on the lower portion of the east elevation of the barn. A single square window is placed to the south of the Dutch door and two square windows are north of the Dutch door.

The north elevation connects to a one-story milk house. The milk house wing projects from the north side of the barn at a 90 degree angle. The north end of the milk house is a fourteen feet in diameter round room. The milk house wing has three double hung windows and an entry door. The roof of the milk house has a gable end. The roof is covered with brown asphalt shingles. Both the barn and milk house wing are painted yellow with white trim.

Truck Scale and Booth (Structure and Building, Map #4) **c1930** **Contributing**

The 4'x 6' wood frame booth has three sides and a shed roof. The south side of the building is open. Two small windows divided into three lights face the truck scale. The roof is asphalt. The small booth provided shelter for the person who weighed the trucks. The booth faces the truck scale itself. Thick boards cover the scale on to which a truck was driven for weighing. All of the mechanisms of the scale remain under the boards.

Boarding House (Building, Map #5) **1922, 1928, 1936** **Contributing**

The Boarding House is an "L" shaped building, originally constructed in 1922 as a cube form, expanded in 1928 with a rear ell, and in 1936 altered by adding a kitchen addition to the rear of the house. These additions were necessary to meet the additional housing demands precipitated by the Fromms' expanding workforce. The house is two and a half stories high, of frame construction with wood clapboard walls and having a foundation that is partially stone and partially poured concrete. The massing of the "L" shaped roof is cross-hipped; the roof dormers are also hipped. The roofing material throughout is black asphalt shingles. There is one interior chimney visible, and roughly centered, on the ridge of the rear ell roof. The roof also features a large number of lightning rods. The front façade faces south.

The main block, which projects slightly from the ell, is the original portion of the house (figures #1, #2). The façade is symmetrical with doors centered on the wall at both the first and second stories.

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Paired nine-over-one windows are located to each side of the first floor entrance and identical paired windows are stacked above. The main entrance to this block is located at a projecting pavilion having double doors at ground level. The doors consist of a wood panel topped by a single light pane. A ten light transom appears above the double doors. The projecting pavilion has a deck roof: hipped with a flat top. There is a balustrade around the flat part of the roof creating a small, open porch. The second floor door accesses this porch.

The primary entrance to the Boarding House is located in the ell. It is accessed by five steps to the double entry doors of an enclosed L-shaped porch. The doors consist of a wood panel topped by a large glass panel divided into nine lights; a narrow band of side lights is located at each side of the door openings. The porch roof is supported by five brick piers topped with Craftsman influenced flared posts. They are wider at the bottom and decrease in width as they rise to the overhanging eave. The porch's southeast casement windows are divided into twelve lights. The remaining casement porch windows are divided into eight lights. The porch has a deck roof: hipped with a flat top. Three evenly spaced six-over-six windows are located on the second floor of the ell.

The south facade has a hipped roof dormer on the roof of the main body of the house as well as an identical hipped roof dormer on the roof of the projecting wing. Two additional hip dormers are placed on the roof of the east facade. Each dormer has a pair of double hung windows. Each sash is divided into six lights.

A brick wall of the same height as the stone foundation is located at the southeast corner of the projecting wing. The brick wall and its wood trellis connect the house to a small octagonal well house. An open archway in the trellis and brick foundation provides a pass-through. The well house has a steeply pitched pyramidal roof which has a weathervane finial mounted on the peak. A door enters the well house on the west facade. A window is present on each side of the well house door.

The east facade of the building has five sets of paired windows evenly spaced on the second floor. The first floor fenestration consists of four sets of paired windows and two single windows. All windows are nine-over-one. Paired doors to the basement are covered by a gabled roof supported by large brackets. A pair of nine-over-one windows appears at each side of the door.

The north facade has a two-story kitchen addition which projects from the main body of the house. The kitchen addition was added in 1936 and includes a large kitchen on the first floor and three additional rooms on the second floor. It measures 20' wide by 34' long and rests on a stone foundation. The kitchen addition has a flat roof with a stepped parapet on the east and west ends. An exterior chimney is centered on the north wall. The chimney pierces the overhanging eave. The second floor has a narrow six-over-one window at each side of the chimney. A pair of nine-over-one windows appears to the east of the east narrow window and a single nine-over-one window appears to

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the west of the west narrow window. The first floor of the kitchen addition has three square windows divided into six lights. A one-story enclosed flat roofed porch with wide eaves projects from the east wall of the kitchen addition. Eight steps rise to a porch door which is divided into nine lights. Brick piers topped with flared posts support the porch roof. The porch windows are divided into eight lights.

The building's exterior walls are clad in four inch clapboard painted a soft yellow. Portions of the windows and doors are painted hunter green. The flared posts, eaves, corner boards, and window and door surrounds are painted white. The entire building is fitted with a sprinkler system. A small hipped roof structure appears at the northwest end of the kitchen addition. This structure houses a fire hydrant and hose.

Interior

The interior spaces of the boarding house consist of dining and food preparation on the first floor. The open dining and common area have large ceiling beams. Each beam has an undulating wave-like pattern which extends three inches down from the ceiling. A large, men's sleeping dormitory is on the second floor (this was the room used for the first Fromm fur auction). Several small bedrooms surround the dormitory. The 1928 ell includes several small single bedrooms on both floors and three bathrooms.

The floor of the front entry porch is 3 ¼" tongue and groove pine. Three interior doors at the entry porch provide access to the dining room. A stairway, at the southeast corner of the porch, accesses the men's lavatory located in the basement. In the main block of the house, inside the one story entry pavilion, there is also a stairway to the basement lavatory. The lavatory has hexagonal gray ceramic tile floors which are inset with a geometric snowflake pattern. The bathroom has a wall of sinks and several toilet stalls. The second floor houses a similar women's lavatory. The women's lavatory has a hexagonal gray ceramic tile floor inset with a stylized snowflake pattern.

Two Story Bunkhouse (Building, Map #6)

1917

Contributing

A 28' x 28' vernacular form two story cube was built for multiple purposes in 1917. The second floor was used for drying ginseng. The first floor was used for equipment and feed storage. The basement held a heating unit which piped drying heat to the ginseng on the second floor. A meat grinder for the preparation of fox meals was located in the basement. After the large warehouse was built, the building was converted into sleeping quarters for the men.

The building rests on a stone foundation. The main entrance is located on the east façade. It is accessed by a small raised porch with a shed roof. Two evenly spaced one-over-one windows appear on each floor of the north facade. A one-story addition has been added to the west façade. The south

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facade has two evenly spaced windows on the first and second floor. The first floor has had the addition of a sliding glass door.

The pyramidal roof is covered with green asphalt shingles. The exterior walls are clad with clapboard painted a soft yellow. The trim is painted white and the windows are accented with hunter green paint.

Long Garage (Building, Map #7)

c1930

Contributing

The one story garage rests on a concrete slab foundation and is located southwest of the two-story bunk house. The ridge line of the hipped roof runs north to south. The structure contains seven garage stalls accessed by garage doors of different periods and designs. The south facade has a single garage door. The roof is covered in cement shingles. The walls are clad in clapboard. The north two-thirds of the garage is on the main farm property. The south one-third belongs to the current owners of the Edward and Alice Fromm house. Fencing divides the garage.

One Story Bunkhouse (Building, Map #8)

1924

Contributing

The 1924 one-story cube bunkhouse is similar to the two-story bunk house. The building rests on a concrete slab foundation. The fenestration on the east, south and north facades of the bunkhouse is uniform in design. Three evenly spaced double hung windows are located on each facade. The east facade has a single door located between two of the windows. The west facade has two windows and an exterior chimney. The panes of each window are divided into six lights.

The pyramidal roof has a hipped dormer located on the north and south facades. Each dormer contains a six-over-six window. The walls are sheathed in clapboard and the roof is clad in green asphalt shingles.

Fred's Workshop/Playhouse (Building, Map#9)

c1900

Contributing

The 18' x 20' one-story side gabled building rests on a concrete slab. The main facade faces south. The building is accessed through a simple porch which has a shed roof supported by three porch posts. There is one one-over-one window located on each facade. A brick chimney pierces the ridge of the green asphalt shingled roof. The building is clad in clapboard painted a soft yellow. The trim is painted white.

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This building was removed from the Frederick and Alwina house property (which is the same site as the extant Edward Fromm house) during a 1921 remodeling. Frederick used the building as a workshop until his death in 1934, when it became a playhouse.⁴

Cottage/Laboratory (Building, Map #10) **c1930** **Contributing**

The small, one-story L-shaped cottage is located between the boarding house and the warehouse. The cottage rests on a concrete foundation and has a cross gable roof. Three large brackets support each gable end and a vent is centered within the peak of the gable. Two six-over-six windows are centered on the body of the north gable end. Another window pair appears on the east side of the cross gable. A single window appears on the main body of the house.

The north and south entries are topped with small projecting gables. The sash in the upper one-half of the entry doors is divided into six lights. The south façade has a single window on the main body of the house west of the entry door. Two small windows appear on the south cross gable. The west elevation has one double hung window and one small single light window. The roof is covered with green asphalt shingles. The structure is clad with cedar shingles painted brown. The door and window trim is painted white.

Dr. Robert G. Green used the cottage as a laboratory during 1934 and 1935 as he worked to find a cure for fox encephalitis and distemper. His research was moved to Grafton, Wisconsin in late 1935.⁵ The building was expanded and was used as the quarters of Jose de Figueriredo, known as Smalley.⁶ The Fromms always exported their ginseng through the de Figueriredo family.

Pump House/Garage (Building, Map #11) **c1938** **Contributing**

The two story frame building measures 42' x 42' and has a side gabled roof. Large single brackets support the overhang at the gabled ends. The first floor of the south elevation has a single door located at the southwest corner. Two six-over-six windows are located to the east of the entry door. The second floor south fenestration consists of three evenly spaced six-over-six windows. There are two gabled dormers on the roof of the south elevation. Each dormer contains a single window.

The east elevation has two single garage doors on the first floor. The second floor has a single window centered above each garage door. The west elevation is bisected by a centered brick chimney.

⁴ This and other information is drawn from an earlier nomination for the property prepared by Mary Jane Hettinga in 1994.

⁵ Fromm Laboratories Inc. v. Commissioner, 19 T.C.M. 1059 (1960) United States Tax Court, Filed September 29, 1960, http://www.legale.com/xmlResult.aspx?page=3&xmldoc=1960107819gqvm1059_1880

⁶ Mary Jane Hettinga, National Register of Historic Places form, 1994, page 14.

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North of the chimney on the first floor is a boarded window opening. The second floor fenestration consists of a single window to the south and to the north of the chimney.

The north elevation has a door at the northwest corner of the first floor. The second floor has a centered loading door. A single window appears to the west of the loading door. One centered gabled roof dormer is placed on the north roof. The dormer contains two side-by-side windows.

The window panes are divided into six lights. The building is clad in clapboard painted yellow. The door and window trim is painted white. The roof is covered with asphalt shingles.

Clubhouse (Building, Map #12)

1934, 1944

Contributing

The original portion of the log clubhouse was constructed after a tornado felled many hardwood trees on one of the Fromms' wooded properties.⁷ Theodore Kohl, a local builder, designed the Rustic style building. This style is characterized by its use of natural buildings materials, such as stone and logs, was popular in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and was used for park and ranger buildings, including those found in the National Parks system. Various Depression era public works agencies also utilized this style for state and municipal park structures; numerous other examples are found in Wisconsin. Several of the northern Wisconsin's hunting and fishing resorts and family compounds built during the 1920s also exhibit the Rustic Style.

The 1934 one-story structure had a T-shaped plan; one cross gable faced south and housed the entrance, the other cross gable wing faced north and housed the Brunswick-Balke-Collender Company bowling alley. The bowling alleys were installed in 1935 at a cost of \$4,000. (Figure #3) Modifications were made to the structure in 1944. (Figure #4) These included the addition of two one-story wings at the east end of the building. One of the one-story gable wings faces south and houses an entrance. The other one-story cross gable wing faces north and houses the lavatories. Another large stone fireplace was added at this time. (Figure #5)

The building rests on a poured concrete foundation and is constructed with full horizontal hardwood logs. The principal structural support is derived from the saddle notched corners. In addition to the four major cross gables, the windows of the bowling alley on both the east and west elevations, and the two south facing entrances are housed in small projecting gabled bays. Each bowling alley window bay contains a single window which has been divided into nine lights. The other windows are of varying heights and widths and are generally found in pairs. These windows exhibit either the light division of eight over eight lights or eight over one light.

⁷ "Business: Furs from Fromm," Time Magazine, February 1936.

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The entrance bays of the south façade are similar. Each storm door has a glass insert divided into twelve lights. A tall narrow side light is present on each side of the doors. A stylized wood keystone design is centered above each door. A similarly designed corner block is located at the top corners of each door surround. A lantern is mounted at each side of the doors. The windows and doors of the clubhouse have simple wood surrounds that are painted white.

The exposed rafter ends are visible under the wide eaves. The gable ends are clad with vertical flat logs. Each stacked saddle corner has a large log at the bottom of the stack with each log decreasing in diameter as the stack rises toward the overhanging eave. The ends of the logs are painted brown. The roof is clad with reddish brown asphalt shingles. The three exposed chimneys are clad with brick and topped with a limestone cap. One other entrance is a single door on the east elevation.

The log construction is also visible on the interior. The interior logs retain their natural bark, which in some cases have been nailed to the log. The ceilings of the clubhouse are coved. The ceiling arch rises in barrel form from the top of the log walls. The ceiling then becomes flat and extends across the space to the barrel rise from the other log wall. Large square beams with arched wall gussets support the ceilings. The floor is comprised of two inch wide maple flooring.

The interior of the clubhouse is divided into separate spaces devoted to specific activities. The dominant interior feature is the four lane bowling alley. Overlooking the bowling lanes are bark backed bleachers for spectator seating. To the west of the bowling alleys is an alcove which contains seating that faces a large rustic fireplace. The fireplace is constructed of fieldstone and is topped with a massive log mantel. The mantel face remains barked. The mantel measures 10'-4" long, 16" deep and 10" high.

To the south of the bowling alleys is a bar area. Vertical barked logs were used to construct the bar and back bar. Tables are located across from the bar for socializing or for games of cards, dice or mahjong.

The bar area connects the bowling alley with the lounge/office area. The north wall of the lounge/office area has a massive stone fireplace. The fireplace surround is comprised of large, randomly stacked field stones. The surround lacks a defined mantle; the field stones simply terminate at the top of the surround. The hearth is comprised of square red tile. Large wrought iron lanterns hang from branches at either side of the fireplace. Doors, located at either side of the fireplace, access the lavatory wing. Each lavatory contains three stalls and three sinks.

The Clubhouse was used for socializing by visiting buyers during the Fromm auctions which took place from 1936 to 1939. The remainder of the time it was used for the Company office. Fromm

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employees also used this building for recreation. The employees competed against one another on organized bowling teams and generally socialized in this building.

Paint Shed (Building, Map #13)

c1940

Contributing

The one story building measures 22' long by 18' in width. It rests on a poured concrete foundation having footings located four feet below grade to six inches above grade. A concrete floor extends between the side walls of the foundation. The east and west elevations have gabled ends. The south elevation fenestration consists of seven six-over-six windows. The east elevation has a single entry door. The north elevation is windowless.

A brick chimney is located on the roof ridge at the east gabled end. A single louvered cupola is centered on the roof. Two lightning rods appear on the ridge at the gabled ends. The structure is clad in clapboard.

The Fromms were always concerned about fire. Paint and paint cleaners were stored in this building away from the other major buildings. The placement of two lightning rods on this small building demonstrates the extra precautions that were always taken.

Chinchilla Shed (Building Map #14)

1948

Contributing

The one story frame building measures 113' long by 24' in width and rests on a concrete slab. The east and west elevations have gabled ends. The south elevation fenestration consists of 38 six-over-six windows. The north elevation has nine paneled over-head garage doors. The three middle garage doors have six lights. Four four-light garage doors flank the center doors on the east and on the west. A six-over-six window appears at the either side of the garage doors. The east and west facades have a single door and two six-over-six windows.

A brick chimney is located on the roof ridge at each gabled end. Two louvered cupolas also rest on the ridge. The structure is clad in clapboard which is painted white.

The Fromm brothers only raised chinchillas for a short period of time. They were expensive to purchase and their fur prices did not compensate for the cost of the breeding stock. They also damaged their pelts by chewing on themselves. After disposing of the chinchillas the building was converted to a machine shed.

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Sugar Shack (Building, Map #15) c1987 Non-Contributing

The Fromm grandchildren constructed this building for the processing of maple sap. The one story square building has a shed roof. It is completely enclosed with weathered plywood.

Open Pole Building (Building, Map #16) c1985 Non-Contributing

The Fromm grandchildren constructed this building. The large metal pole building rests on wood posts. The building is clad in aluminum siding half-way down from the edge of the roof line on both the south and the north facades. The remainder of the south and north facade is open to ground level. The gabled ends of the east and west elevations are clad in aluminum siding. The building is open from the bottom of the finished gable end to the ground.

Warehouse/Slaughterhouse/Auction Gallery (Building, Map #17) 1924, 1936 Contributing

The Fromm warehouse is irregularly shaped and was expanded several times over a period of seventeen years. (Figure #6) The wood framed structure rests on poured concrete walls which extend from footings located four feet below grade and extend to six inches above grade. A concrete floor extends between the side walls of the foundation. Notable construction and expansions began in 1924. The original 69' x 125' portion of the warehouse can be identified on current photos as the central two-story portion with the south facing shed roof. The loft gable end has two six-over-six windows in the peak. A band of three six-over-six windows and two individual six-over-six windows appear under the asphalt shingled shed roof. A single door entry with a flat roof enters the structure on the first floor.

Additional expansions included refrigeration rooms to store frozen meat, feed rooms where fox and mink meals were prepared, a food processing room which housed the meat grinder, a slaughtering area with overhead tracks to transport the meat quarters, and fur and ginseng storage. These expansions went in two directions. One of the additions is three and one half stories in height and has a gabled roof. It measures 73' x 73' and extends to the west of the original portion. The south façade has a band of three six-over-six windows in the gabled end. The second and third floors have a centered large service door. A pair of six-over-six windows appears at each side of the service doors. The first floor has two evenly spaced hinged doors similar to refrigerator doors.

The second addition is three stories in height and has a flat roof. It extends to the east of the original portion. The south facing second and third floors have a six-over-six window at the east and west end of each floor. The first floor has an overhead garage entry door which has a span of two rows of six lights. A tall windowless entry door appears to the east of the garage door.

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A major expansion to the warehouse occurred during the spring and summer of 1936. The first fur auction was held at the farm in February of 1936. It was conducted in the boarding house under somewhat cramped conditions. With the success of the first auction, as well as the success of silver fox sales, the brothers decided to expand the warehouse into their auction facility. A 160' x 40' three-story low pitched gabled roof addition was added directly east of the existing building. The expansion project cost \$75,000, a significant undertaking during the Great Depression.

The addition allowed for a large first floor pelting area. The pelting area housed long pelting tables and had pegged wall space for hanging pelts. A 75 horsepower grinder was installed which could grind 50 horse carcasses in two hours, bones and all. With the exception of the area used for John Fromm's living quarters, the second floor was devoted to pelt viewing. The entire length of the floor was open, interrupted only by structural columns. The third floor was devoted to auction space and again was open the entire length of the floor, the space interrupted only by structural columns. (Figure #7)

The south elevation of the three story auction house addition has a garage door entry on the first floor. To the east of the garage door and projecting from the side of the building is a one-story flat roofed entrance. To the south of the entrance is a hipped roofed fire hydrant shed. The second floor fenestration consists of four six-over-six windows and five pairs of six-over-six windows. The third floor fenestration has ten evenly spaced six-over-six windows.

The north elevation has a continuous band of windows on both the second and third floor viewing and auction areas. Natural north light eliminates any casting on the surface of the fur. Furs could be examined without any tinting confusing the valuation. The third floor also had an overhead skylight which ran the length of the building. Louvered slats could be adjusted with ropes from below to prevent the direct rays of the sun from creating shadows. The skylight has been roofed over.

Two additions, a single story and a two story structure, both with shed roofs, are attached to the rear of the 1924 building. The remnant of a cooling system rests on concrete blocks west of the 1924 building. The wood frame structure is clad with various widths of clapboard and metal siding. Some of the roof is covered with metal, others portions are shingled. The south facing windows are divided into six lights. The north facing windows are not divided to avoid shadowing. Part of the warehouse is painted yellow. Other portions are weathered clapboard.

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120' Water Tower and Pump House (Structure, Building, Map #18, 19),
104' Water Tower and Pump House (Structure, Building, Map #20, 21),
Four Hydrant and Hose Houses (Structure, Map #22, #23, #24, #25) all: **c1930 Contributing**

Two water towers provided the water pressure needed to operate the farm, and a complex firefighting system. The tallest water tower is 120' in height and has a tank that is 26' in diameter and 24' in height. When operational, the tank had a holding capacity of 75,000 gallons of water. It now is used as a communications tower. The second water tower is 104' in height and has a tank that was able to hold 50,000 gallons of water. Both water tower tanks are constructed of wood. They are attached to steel support legs that rest on a concrete slab. Each water tower has a small square one-story pump house located below. The pump houses are topped with pyramidal roofs and each has a single door.

The firefighting system consisted of underground piping to four hydrant and hose houses; one is located next to the warehouse, one is near the laboratory, one is attached to the west side of the boarding house, and one is located just north of the barn. Three of the hydrant and hose houses have five sides. The hydrant and hose house next to the warehouse is rectangular. Additional underground piping provides water to the fire hoses located inside the clubhouse on the first floor and in the basement and to the sprinkler systems within the boarding house and the warehouse.

When the farm was operational, the Hamburg volunteer fire department would fill its water tanker at the warehouse hydrant and hose house.

Work Shed (Building, Map #26) **c1930** **Contributing**

Three of these utilitarian work sheds are scattered throughout the property. This front gabled one and one-half story work shed is of wood frame construction. A window is placed in the gable end of the front façade. A large door accesses the shed on ground level on the front façade. A square window divided into nine lights is placed on one side of the building. The sides of the building are clad in six inch weathered boards. Asphalt shingles cover the roof. The 20' x 16' building was used for tool and equipment storage.

Greenhouse (Building, Map #27) **c1985** **Non-Contributing**

The asymmetrical wood frame building was constructed by the Fromm grandchildren to raise organic vegetables. The building rests on a poured concrete foundation having footings located four feet below grade to six inches above grade. A concrete floor extends between the side walls of the foundation. The steeply pitched south side of the building is comprised of glass panels. The north facing ½ of the gabled roof is low pitched. The building is covered with weathered wood planks. A door is located on the east side. A vent appears above the door.

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Henry and Mamie Fromm House (Building, Map #28) 1925 Contributing

The house is of wood frame construction and is one and a half stories in height. The building rests on a stone foundation and has clapboard sheathing. The house has a rambling footprint due to Henry's continuous additions during and after the initial construction. Architectural details drawing from the Tudor Revival, Craftsman and Prairie School styles appear on the house.

The south façade's glass solarium covers almost the entire first floor elevation. The glass panels of the solarium rest on top of a fieldstone wall. The entrance to the solarium is accentuated by a Tudor arch entry pavilion. The pavilion contains two glass entry doors, each divided into ten lights. Directly above the solarium doors on the second story hipped roof is a hipped roof dormer. The dormer contains two side-by-side one-over-one windows.

The main entrance and a flat roofed porte-cochere are to the west of the solarium. The entrance is accessed by five stone steps which are bordered with a wrought iron balustrade. The main entrance door has a rounded top. A vaulted hood mimicking the segmental arch of the door projects forward, sheltering the entrance. The hood rests on a pair of brackets located at each side of the door. Above the vaulted entry is another roof which juts out from under the windows of the west gable of the main body of the house. Two side-by side windows appear above the roof on the main body of the second floor. The flat-roofed porte-cochere rests on shingle covered posts. Paired brackets appear under the eaves of the porte-cochere. An entrance, located under the porte-cochere, accesses the first floor.

A single car garage is attached to the east side of the house. The roof of the garage is hipped and has bracketed eaves. The paneled garage door faces south and has a row of three lights. An entrance to the house is to the west of the garage.

The west elevation has three large picture windows which appear to the north of the porte-cochere. An entrance is inset fourteen feet back from the picture window wall. It has an arched door which has a small square leaded glass window. The inset roof is supported by large Prairie Style brackets. The second floor fenestration is within the gabled end. A door is centered in the gable end. Paired one-over-one windows appear at each side of the door.

The rear or north elevation has six paired double hung windows evenly spaced across the entire elevation. The upper light of each window is divided into six lights. A single door is centered on the first floor elevation. The low pitched roof supports a hipped roof dormer. The dormer contains two pairs of one-over-one windows. A chimney is located to the west of the dormer. The roof is covered with asphalt shingles and has an additional chimney centered on the ridge of the house.

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Joachim and Dorothea Nieman Homestead (Building, Map #32) **1868** **Contributing**

The rectangular side-gabled 30'6" x 20'6" pioneer home of Joachim and Dorothea Nieman is one and one-half stories in height. The house is constructed with square logs which are chinked and clad in narrow clapboard. The materials for the Nieman home were undoubtedly harvested from the 160 acre property.

The shake shingle roof has been covered with a corrugated metal roof which has stabilized the structure. The living area was located on the first floor and the sleeping areas were located on the second floor. The interior floors are of wood.

Walter and Mabel Fromm House and Garage (Building, Map #33A and B) **1928** **Contributing**

The Walter and Mabel Fromm house and garage were built in 1928. The main house is two-stories in height, rectangular in form and has a one story solarium wing which projects from the west elevation. The low pitched hipped roof is clad with half-barrel red clay tiles. The house is a blend of various historic influences, including the Spanish Colonial Revival and the Mediterranean style. The garage, built at the same time as the house, mimics the home's features.

It was built by Theodore Kohl and finished by Curtis and Yale, Wausau, Wisconsin. The interior decorative treatments were done by German master painter Friederich Estenfelder.

The house was listed in the National Register of Historic Places, #82000682, on June 17, 1982. More information about the home is contained in the individual nomination.⁸

Site (Resource #34)

Contributing

The nominated site consist of the roadway systems, the remaining fencing, the land used as furring ranges, and the remaining areas of fox pens, as well as the distribution of built resources within the boundaries of the property. All of the nominated acreage is located within Section 11 of the Town of Hamburg. The boundary encloses approximately 380 acres of diversified lands crucial to the historic interpretation of the Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farm. The collection of buildings and dedicated spaces as well as their spatial arrangement presents a comprehensive picture of the farm and of the Fromm Brothers farming practices throughout the entire history of the farm. The acreage is predominately wooded with a mixture of soft and hardwood trees. The additional composition of lands is diversified and includes pasture, manicured building locations and former fox pen areas that

⁸ An aerial photo of the area shows several small outbuildings on the property. Access was not granted to the house or grounds so their location or presence could not be verified. These outbuildings were not discussed or counted in the original nomination.

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have succumbed to natural over growth. The east fox pen area has been dismantled but the grid marks left by the pens are still visible.

Much of the distinguishing eight foot high fox fences bordering the property remain. A gravel road system that winds throughout the entire property connects all the discussed resources, with the exception of the Edward and Alice Fromm house and the Walter and Mable Fromm house. The road system is accessed from 436 County Road F.

As you enter the property you are traveling north. A small garage, once used as a gas station, appears east of the road system. Directly ahead of you is the large 118' long barn, which runs east to west. At a point in front of the barn, the road splits and travels both on the east and west side of the barn. Another connecting road is present north or behind the barn connecting the east and west fork of the main road system. The hydrant and hose house, which protected the barn, resides just south of this connecting road.

If you take the west fork of the road and continue to the north, the two and one half story boarding house comes into view. A hydrant and hose house resides at the northwest corner of the boarding house. Frederick's workshop/playhouse is visible in the large grassy area behind the boarding house. The two-story bunkhouse is directly west of the boarding house on the opposite side of the road. As you travel a short distance further the one-story bunk house appears west of the road. The west fork of the road system terminates in the parking lot of the Rustic Style log clubhouse. All of the structures accessed by the west fork of the road system are surrounded by large groomed grassy areas dotted with mature trees and landscaped with beds of flowering bushes and perennials.

Returning to the point of entry and taking the east fork of the road system the first resource encountered is the truck scale which appears to the east of the road. A short distance further is a five acre fenced pasture to the east of the road.

At the northwest corner of the pasture area is a smaller road which leaves the main road and travels to the west. This smaller road accesses the pump house/garage, one of the hydrant and hose houses and the cottage/laboratory.

Upon returning to the main road and continuing to the north, the large warehouse/ slaughterhouse/ auction building is visible directly ahead. In front of the building is another hydrant and hose house. The two water towers and pump houses become visible. The 120' water tower and pump house is located at the northwest corner of the pasture area and the 104' water tower and pump house is located to the west of the warehouse/slaughterhouse/auction building.

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At a point in front of the warehouse/slaughterhouse/auction building, the road system divides into three separate sections or forks. One section travels to the west, one to the north and one to the east. Since all of the fox meals were prepared at the warehouse and driven to the fox pen areas either by horses or by truck it was crucial that the building be centrally located. The three-way road access enabled the workers to deliver fox meals to the 30 acre west fox pen area, the 40 acre east fox pen area, as well as to the over 270 acres of wooded furring ranges located north and east of the warehouse.

The road which travels west also accesses the Chinchilla shed and paint shed. The road which travels north into the wooded furring ranges also accesses one of the work sheds.

The road which travels to the east first passes a small spring fed pond on the south side of the road. The road then splits. Each split culminates at the Henry and Mamie Fromm house as part of a circle driveway. Henry, "the fox man," chose to live among his foxes within the fox furring ranges. The foxes, having access to the house, created some issues that had to be overcome. Foxes, like squirrels, raccoons and several species of birds, like to pick up items and haul them away. Henry found that he could not lay down a hammer or a piece of clothing without it disappearing. To solve the problem, a fieldstone wall topped with upright decorative metal rods that curve outward (similar to the boundary line wire fences) were constructed on the perimeter of the yard area. Gates were installed at both road entrances. The security wall solved the problem of the fox thievery. The east fork of the split road continues east to a work shed which contained the 40 acre east fox pen area.

Both Walter and Edward Fromm built their homes in close proximity to County Road F. Edward's home is located west of the main entrance to the compound and Walter's home is located east of the main entrance to the compound.

Integrity

All of the buildings and structures that relate to the operation of the Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farm, including the three houses that the brothers constructed, remain. They are in excellent condition with high integrity. Very few resources have been lost over time. The property and its related resources continue to convey the setting during the period of fox farming and ginseng processing.

The 30 acre area of fox pens located in the southwest corner of the nominated property remains, but is severely overgrown. The 40 acre area of fox pens located at the southeast corner of the property has been torn up but the grid created by the pens is still visible on aerial view photographs. The original house of Frederick and Alwina Fromm burned in 1943, but this location became the site of the contributing Edward and Alice Fromm house.

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SIGNIFICANCE

The Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farm is located in Hamburg Township, Marathon County, Wisconsin, approximately 20 miles northwest of the county seat and the region's largest city, Wausau. It is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places at the national level of significance under criteria A and B for the significant contributions that the Fromm brothers: Edward, John, Henry and Walter, made in the areas of agriculture and commerce. These contributions were achieved in two different fields of agriculture.

This farm is, as its name suggests, one enterprise having two areas of agricultural specialization. Specialization included the cultivation of ginseng and fox farming for the production of pelts for the garment industry. These two areas of specialization, while wildly different from each other, were pursued simultaneously. The successes in one area of cultivation provided the capital to support and expand the second area of cultivation. The farm began with the cultivation of ginseng which provided the capital to invest in pairs of foxes. Thereafter, and throughout the duration of the farm, ginseng production and fox farming were interdependent enterprises.

The Fromm Brothers Farm is significant for its contributions to the growing of ginseng, as pertaining to germination, growth, disease prevention, harvesting, mechanization, storage and marketing. The Fromm Brothers became the largest producers of ginseng in the United States in 1919. They retained that title through the 1970s. The earliest growing of the ginseng took place within the boundaries of the nominated property and later spread to surrounding farmland. The storage and processing of the ginseng took place in the buildings included in the nomination. Secondly, the farm and the brothers are significant for the contributions made to animal husbandry in the breeding of mutation foxes as it pertains to the harvesting of their pelts for the use in fur garments. These contributions were made in the areas of: breeding, genetics, nutrition, finishing young foxes for maximum fur potential, and providing for the laboratory study of the fox diseases encephalitis and distemper. The ensuing vaccine development not only decreased the mortality rate of the fox, mink and related animal types and thereby increased the pelt yield, but eventually translated to a canine distemper vaccine. The property is further significant in the area of commerce for the marketing strategies employed by the Fromms in selling their furs as branded products. The property is significant at the local level in the area of architecture. The Walter and Mabel Fromm House was previously listed as a fine local example Period Revival design. Further, the Clubhouse is a notable example of the Rustic Style. The period of significance extends from 1904 when the first ginseng was planted to 1964 when a lawsuit resulted in the division of the property.

The Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farm was identified in a 1970 architectural survey of Marathon County and again in Marathon County's Comprehensive Plan Conditions and Issue Report completed

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in January of 2006. Both reports confirmed the property's eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places.⁹ The reports stressed the importance of the property to both ginseng and fox production, as well as the farm's contribution to the financial stability in the Hamburg area during the years of operation.

The farm headquarters, or compound, together with the contributing site achieves significance as a cohesive unit. It remains a comprehensive and fascinating record of past techniques used for the raising of foxes for fur products and the growing of ginseng. The compound contains agriculture related buildings, buildings utilized for worker habitation, garages, the brothers' residences, and a recreational building. In addition, the compound contains a water system for both farm use and firefighting. All built contributing resources retain a high degree of integrity; the site itself retains good integrity. While certain areas are now overgrown, the land use patterns are still visible and the site retains its road and fence systems.

HISTORY

Marathon County was formed by a detachment from Portage County in 1850. The county was covered with hardwoods and majestic white pine forests along the Wisconsin River. The county seat was placed at Wausau and the election of county officials was held on April 2, 1850. In 1849, the population of the county was fewer than 350 people, all of whom lived and worked near fourteen sawmills in the vicinity of Wausau. It is said that the hardwood and pine forests of the county were so dense that sunlight could not penetrate the canopy and the winter's snow fall lasted well into April. Sawmills floated their log harvests down the Wisconsin River in spring when the river was at its highest levels. The Wisconsin River's sand bottom was constantly on the move making it a difficult river to navigate. These navigation hazards contributed to the county's slow development as supplies were costly and difficult to bring up-river. There were no roads in the county. As a result, after the county was organized, road construction became a high priority.

No attempt had been made to farm the land by 1850, as many thought the soil to be unproductive and the climate too severe to grow crops. Soon they discovered quite the opposite. After the timber was removed from the land and the stumps were cleared, the remaining fertile soil produced excellent, healthy crops.

An influx of German immigrants began in 1850, leaving the political turmoil in Germany. These settlers soon discovered that millions of acres of land were for sale by the United States government. These parcels varied in size from forty acres to entire sections (640 acres) at the price of \$1.25 per

⁹ Marathon County Comprehensive Plan Condition and Issue Report, January 2006, www.co.marathon.wi, page 115

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acre. In 1857, six families arrived in the area of Hamburg, all were German immigrants from Pomerania. They began to clear the land, build homes and barns, and began to farm.¹⁰

Johann (1815-1892) and Johanna (1817-1901) Fromm were shepherds from Goldenbow near Schwerin, Germany. They arrived in the United States in the 1840s with their four children. Their daughter Caroline died aboard ship on the way to the United States. The Fromms arrived in New York and traveled by way of the Erie Canal and the Great Lakes to Detroit. From there, they continued on to Barton Township, West Bend, Wisconsin. Four additional children were born in the United States, including their son Frederick Fromm.

Johann Nieman(n) was a widower and worked as a forester on an estate near Spornitz in Mecklenburg-Schwerein, Germany. Nieman had been involved as a political activist in the Socialist Democratic Party in Germany. His allegiances had not been on the winning side of the German political turmoil, so in 1852 he left Germany and immigrated to the United States. He came with his only surviving son Joachim (1818-1899), Joachim's wife Dorothea Marie (1822-1908), and their five children. They traveled first to Milwaukee and then traveled by ox cart to Germantown, Wisconsin to search for a homestead. A fine farm was established near Cedarburg, Wisconsin. Daughter Alwina was born in Cedarburg in 1861. After Johann passed away, Joachim and his wife left the farm to their first son and the remainder of the family moved on to Hamburg, Wisconsin. At the ages of 47 and 43, Joachim and Marie wanted to pioneer additional homesteads for each of their children.¹¹ Over the ensuing years Joachim purchased a total of 640 acres of land in Wisconsin. Eventually, each of their children received 160 acres of land (a 1/4 section) as a wedding gift.¹²

Frederick Fromm (1855-1934) and Alwina Nieman (1861-1928) were married in 1883 in the home of Alwina's parents.¹³ Alwina was given 160 acres directly west of her parents' home in Section 11 in the Town of Hamburg as part of her dowry. Frederick and Alwina lived with Alwina's parents through the birth of their first two children: Arthur (1884-1945) and Herbert (1885-1963). In 1886, Fred and Alwina built a house on their own property. This house would become the residence for many of their children, and their children's wives and children until the year 1928 when the profits from the Company's ginseng and fox enterprises would facilitate a separate house for everyone. Fred and Alwina raised a total of nine children, losing two infants. Their daughters were Nora, Erna, and

¹⁰ Louis Marchetti, History of Marathon County Wisconsin and Representative Citizens, (Chicago: Richmond - Arnold Publishing, 1913), pages 67-77, 99-121.

¹¹ Harold W. Pfohl, A Wisconsin Chronicle, A Country Tale of German-America from the 1850's to the 1930's, 2008, <http://www.home.surewest.net/fhaseley/Cedarburg.htm>.

¹² A Happy Anniversary to Us a Century in Hamburg 1876-1976, published by Centennial Committee, 1976, pages 22-29

¹³ Additional marriages took place between the Fromm and Nieman families; Fred Fromm's sister Sophia married Alwina Nieman's brother Johann Nieman II. Fred Fromm's sister Erna married their cousin Edwin Nieman. The Nieman families were located in Thiensville, Wisconsin.

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Clara.¹⁴ Their additional sons who would come to comprise "The Company", the largest producers of ginseng, silver fox and eventually mink in the United States were: Walter (1888-1975), Edward (1890-1986), John (1892-1970), and Henry (1893-1978).

An Enterprise is Conceived

The brothers' primary dream was to raise foxes to supply fur to the garment industry. To this end Edward, Walter, Henry and John formed a pact in 1901 to do whatever was needed to raise silver foxes. They called themselves "The Company" and ultimately these four brothers became the sole owners of the Fromm Brothers Inc. holdings.¹⁵ Arthur did return to the business in the 1920s becoming the manager of both the ginseng and foxes in Thiensville.¹⁶ He also performed experiments in the 1930s on the seeds of the ginseng to try to eliminate ginseng blight. Herbert returned after his retirement from teaching to work at the Hamburg farm. Herbert owned an equal share of the company as a silent partner until 1930 when he withdrew from the organization. Arthur did not own stock in the company.¹⁷

Within the Company, the four brothers took different positions of responsibility. Henry and John were in charge of animal husbandry for both the fox and the mink. Walter oversaw the ginseng production with some botanical advice from Arthur. Edward was the general manager and oversaw the workings and finances of all operations.

Ginseng (Panax Quinquifolius Linne)

Ginseng is a perennial plant belonging to the Araliaceae family of herbs which also includes parsnip, celery and carrots. The flesh of the ginseng is yellow to white gray and is reported to contain vitamins and hormones. The root of the ginseng is dried and can be used whole, chopped, powdered or as an extract in food, beverages and for medicinal purposes.

Wisconsin trappers knew the value of ginseng and collected the plants while they were in the woods working their trap lines. Ginseng could be found growing wild on the eastern half of the North American continent from Montreal to eastern Texas. There was a major ginseng boom in Canada during the early 1700s, but due to incompetent processing the reputation of North American ginseng in China was destroyed. The Native Americans used it medicinally long before the arrival of white

¹⁴ A Happy Anniversary to Us a Century in Hamburg 1876-1976, published by Centennial Committee, 1976, pages 22-29.

¹⁵ Kathrene Pinkerton, Bright with Silver, (William Sloane Assoc. Inc., New York, 1947) pages 1-364

¹⁶ Liberty Magazine, May 5, 1945, "Fur Farmers" by Dorothy Roe Lewis, pages 31, 81

¹⁷ The Saturday Evening Post, February 13, 1937, "Ten-Million Dollar Fox Tale" by Melvin N. Taylor, pages 18,19, 66, 68

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settlers. In the 1840s, Native Americans would gather wild ginseng and sell or trade the root to the white traders. The traders in turn sold it to the Chinese.¹⁸

In 1904, the four younger Fromm brothers ranged in age from eleven to sixteen. They spent a great deal of time with their neighbor, Reinhold Dietsch. Dietsch would take the boys into the woods and teach them how to find the wild ginseng plant in the shade of trees. He explained to them the value of ginseng and how the Chinese coveted the ginseng root believing that it had many medicinal purposes including increasing virility. Dietsch explained that the ginseng root was very difficult to cultivate. Scavenging in the woods for the plant did not produce a large quantity. Because of the scarcity of the root the Chinese paid handsomely for it. He also described to them, that it takes five years for the ginseng root to grow to maturity; it needs just the right amount of shade and sunlight and just the proper soil and moisture, but even then it seems to get all kinds of diseases, and in his opinion was far too troublesome a plant for most folks to bother with.

Yet the boys saw that *he* was starting a garden plot from the roots that he had gathered in the woods. In 1904, the Fromm brothers soon had a small patch in their mother's garden from plants that they had gathered from the woods. Many of their plants were old and withered and died. They just found more ginseng plants and replanted.

Dietsch showed them how to build lath arbors over the ginseng, creating the same filtered sunlight that ginseng enjoyed in the woods. The boys ran home to build the same arbors over their ginseng bed, but their father Fred, who felt the whole concept was worthless, denied them access to his wood for their arbor building. German stubbornness was not just the father's trait, the boys had plenty too. The boys bought their posts and wood from a neighbor. When the boys asked their father for more land to expand their ginseng plantings, he said they could have the land under a huge stone pile. Not to be defeated or deterred, the boys moved every rock and created a new ginseng bed. At that point Fred began to reconsider his feelings about ginseng. His wife had been telling him that Reinhold Dietsch claimed that there was money in the crop.¹⁹

Cultivation of Ginseng

Realizing that it was impractical to continue to use the woodland ginseng, as it was becoming scarcer, they wanted to figure out a way to use the seeds. The seeds mystified the boys as they did not seem to want to sprout when planted. They did some investigation and discovered that it took eighteen months for ginseng seeds to germinate. Eastern growers were stratifying seeds in layers of sand in boxes

¹⁸ Michael Kronenwetter, Wisconsin Heartland The Story of Wausau & Marathon Counties, (Pendell Publishing, Midland, Michigan, 1977), pages 130-133

¹⁹ The American Magazine, "The Fromm Boys are the Biggest Fox Raisers in the World Because of Their Staying Qualities" by Charles Lane Callen, March 1929, pages 14, 15, 126-129.

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buried in the ground for a year and then planting the seed in the soil. The Fromms adopted the stratification process and for the next five years they planted more and more ginseng. It was hard work. Humus had to be scraped and gathered from the woods of the farm to provide the soft deep soil the plants needed. The brothers' beds were raised in the middle to allow the rain to run off. After the seedlings germinated they had to be moved and replanted by hand. Germinating the wild plants close together caused blight. If the blight was left untreated the spores traveled down the stem and caused root rot the next season. Spraying the ginseng, using an orchard sprayer filled with a mixture of slaked lime and blue vitriol, was begun. As their ginseng gardens grew in size, a gasoline powered sprayer was purchased.

The brothers harvested their first ginseng crop grown from seeds in 1912. As the size of the harvests grew they needed to solve the problem of washing the roots. They hooked up the motor of the car to the well to pump water for washing the roots. Once washed, the roots needed to be spread out and dried. Ginseng loses two-thirds of its weight during the drying process. The drying process was done in the attic of the family house. The ginseng harvest and washing process took place in late October and early November.

By 1914, the brothers began to hire teenagers in the fall to help with the soil scraping, planting and harvesting. Both men and women were hired. Teams were created, where the men did the heavier job of moving the soil and the women did the lighter work of planting the seeds. (Figure 8) During harvesting, the men dug the roots and the women picked them up.²⁰

Their first large ginseng crop was harvested in 1915. The one-half acre was harvested by a crew of ten men and ten women. That was the same year that the brothers convinced their mother to mortgage the farm so that they could purchase a pair of established silver fox breeders. (The history of the fox breeding part of the enterprise will be described in the next section.) Their 1915 ginseng crop sold for \$3,564.09 and that money was applied to the bank loan. Even though ginseng prices began to slide from seven dollars a pound to five dollars a pound, the boys kept planting. By this time the Fromm brothers had planted a total of three acres of ginseng. These three acres consisted of 144 beds, each 143 feet in length, all under lath arbors.

More forest loam was needed for ginseng planting. The Fromms began to purchase loam from their neighbors; however, this was expensive. Walter began to try to produce loam and planted a field of peas. Instead of harvesting the peas he plowed them under. Further experimentation led the brothers to settle on planting oats and then plowing them under. The brothers began to run out of land for ginseng planting and in 1918 they attempted to use a former ginseng plot that was several seasons old.

²⁰ Kathrene Pinkerton, Bright with Silver, (William Sloane Assoc. Inc., New York, 1947) pages 1-364.

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The seeds would sprout but the plants would quickly become deformed. To this day the cause of the "once and done" properties of ginseng growing is unknown.

In 1918, their father Fred loaned the brothers \$1,500 to construct a two-story drying building.²¹ The basement contained a heating system. The basement was also used for the grinding and the preparation of fox food. The first floor was used for equipment and feed storage. The upper floor was filled with stacks of ginseng drying racks. Unfortunately, the first year that they used the new building, the ginseng harvest was so large that the drying roots were over crowded. Excessive moisture was appearing on surfaces everywhere. Black spots began to appear on the crop and one-half of the harvest was lost.

The next year, fans were installed in the drying building and the ginseng harvest was conducted in two parts. When the first half of the crop had dried the second half was harvested and there was no resulting mildew.²² The Fromm Brothers' ginseng harvest sold for \$40,000.²³ The brothers had achieved the status as the nation's leading producer of ginseng.²⁴ In 1919, they bought the neighboring Roehl farm (the farm of their grandfather Joachim Nieman) for \$18,500. Now they had the land to plant more plots of ginseng.²⁵

1920s through the 1940s

The Fromm brothers responded to the desires of the Chinese ginseng market. They discovered that the Chinese liked a darker root, so they did not wash their ginseng crop as thoroughly as they were doing. Throughout the 1920s, the Fromm Brothers were producing huge crops of ginseng. Their acre plots were yielding an unheard of amount of two thousand pounds of 1st grade ginseng root. The brothers were earning \$45,000 to \$115,000 for their annual ginseng harvests during the 1920s. These annual substantial ginseng profits were all invested in fox cages, fox feed, and fox disease research.²⁶

Ginseng spraying methods were modified by Walter in 1921. The size and scope of their fields made it necessary to use a horse drawn cart fitted with a hose that unrolled from its reel. A man would walk down the one side of a ginseng bed, spraying as he went. At the end of the bed he would come back toward the cart spraying the bed on the opposite side. A man on the cart would roll up the hose.

²¹ The exact location of this building is unknown. The drying building may be within the core of the large warehouse; it may also be the building that became the two story bunkhouse.

²² Kathrene Pinkerton, Bright with Silver, (William Sloane Assoc. Inc., New York, 1947).

²³ The American Magazine, "The Fromm Brothers are the Biggest Fox Raisers in the World Because of their Staying Qualities", by Charles Lane Callen, March 1929, pages 14, 15, 126-129.

²⁴ Michael Kronenwetter, Wisconsin Heartland The Story of Wausau & Marathon Counties, (Pendell Publishing, Midland, Michigan, 1977), pages 130-133, 339-340.

²⁵ Kathrene Pinkerton, Bright with Silver, (William Sloane Assoc. Inc., New York, 1947) pages 1-364.

²⁶ American Fur Breeder, "Where are Foxes on the Comeback Trail?", December 1966, pages 8-12.

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As noted earlier, another labor problem was solved when the brothers found that planting oats and then plowing them under gave them the loam-like soil that they needed to plant ginseng seed. In addition, every fall they would gather leaves from the forest to use as mulch for the ginseng. They felt the acid from the leaves was essential to the wellbeing of the ginseng. After some experimentation with straw, they discovered when straw was used it produced no adverse side effects to the ginseng.²⁷ A drive through the hills and valleys of Marathon County today will show the continued use of straw cover on the wintering beds of ginseng.

In 1923, the entire ginseng seed harvest rotted. The brothers needed to reexamine the method of seed stratification that they were practicing. The next year's seed harvest was also ruined. Looking for answers, they tried adding black forest loam to the sand in the stratification process. They aerated the containers and tried using barrels instead of boxes. Nothing seemed to work and after losing four years of ginseng seed, the brothers went back to the old method of stratification which then worked perfectly.²⁸

In 1925, the Company purchased an eighty acre farm across the road. The addition of the Krentz farm was needed as the limits of the Roehl farm had been reached for ginseng planting.²⁹

It had become impossible to continue to plant the growing acreage of ginseng by hand. Walter and Herbert Kleinschmidt, the ginseng straw boss, went into the blacksmith shop and constructed a unit that would plant thirteen rows at a time. It needed six men to operate the machine and two attendants to feed seed into the hopper. With this new unit they could seed three acres in one day.³⁰

With the onset of the Great Depression and the upheavals taking place in China, the ginseng market was disappearing. The struggles with blight and root rot had driven many ginseng growers out of business. These same infirmities become a real threat to the Fromms' ginseng as well. It was decided to have Edward travel to China to assess whether the Company should continue to grow ginseng. In 1930, Edward went to China and studied the Chinese interest in ginseng. His trip convinced him that there would *always* be a market for ginseng in China. Adhering to his advice, the brothers continued to grow ginseng.³¹ When the price of ginseng dropped to one dollar a pound, the Company began to store their ginseng. The brothers continued to manage their ginseng operation as they had done for the last 26 years. This included the planting of new acreage each year. Each year the harvest was stored,

²⁷ Kathrene Pinkerton, Bright with Silver, (William Sloane Assoc. Inc., New York, 1947) pages 1-364.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Kathrene Pinkerton, Bright with Silver, (William Sloane Assoc. Inc., New York, 1947) pages 1-364.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ American Fur Breeder, "Where are Foxes on the Comeback Trail?", December 1966, pages 8-12.

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not sold.³² As the Depression continued and with a looming World War, most ginseng growers in the United States gave up on the crop. The brothers only planted ten acres of ginseng during the years that the Chinese markets were inaccessible. Each year the ginseng harvest was dried and then stored in barrels. (Figure 10)

In 1942, twenty-two acres of ginseng was ready for harvest. The wartime manpower shortage meant that grandfathers and young girls had to be hired to do the work. Walter and Herbert took an obsolete double potato digger, added a center plow and a vibrating apron. One tractor pulled the digger and the other provided the power to operate the vibrating apron. The unit worked perfectly on the raised ginseng beds. It dug up the roots, shook off the majority of the dirt and dropped the roots on the ground behind the tractor for easy pick up.³³

Finally in 1946, the fourteen years worth of ginseng that was packed in barrels could be sold and shipped overseas. At the close of the war, the Fromm brothers sold their stored ginseng for one million dollars.³⁴ The ginseng profits would once again feed the foxes. With the prospects for a continuing ginseng market, the brothers immediately expanded the ginseng. They planted 1,200 new beds on 25 acres of land. By 1951, the ginseng acreage had been expanded to 81 acres.

The Fromms were always searching for the best way to execute any job on the farm. They explored modifications, mechanization and modernization of current farm techniques and practices. Their hope always was to complete a farm process with less manpower and thereby reduce costs.

Washing the roots of the ginseng was a slow, tedious and unpopular job. The process had been moved to the stream some years before. A large metal basket was dunked in the stream. Using this system, only 5000 pounds were washed per day and the upcoming harvest was expected to be 100, 000 pounds. Walter Fromm and Herbert Kleinschmidt again headed into the blacksmiths shop and built a belt driven washing machine that was placed into the stream. Now three men could wash 6000 pounds of root in one hour, thus greatly improving the dreaded annual ginseng washing.

Kleinschmidt recognized that the washing method for the ginseng, although modified, was still very unpleasant. The metal washing drum had to be re-assembled each year in the river. He saw no reason why water could not be brought to the washer. Kleinschmidt dug a pit and lined the pit with planks. He set the washer in the pit and brought water for washing to the pit. It worked well and the workers

³² Kristin Johannsen, Ginseng Dreams, The Secret World of Americas Most Valuable Plant, (University of Kentucky Press, 2006), pages 79-85.

³³ Kathrene Pinkerton, Bright with Silver, (William Sloane Assoc. Inc., New York, 1947) pages 1-364

³⁴ D. F. Curran, "A Well Kept Secret: Ginseng Farming---100 years of American Ginseng Prices", <http://dfcurran.com/Ginseng/Growing.html>, pages 1-4

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appreciated the better method. The next year Kleinschmidt built a shelter over the pit which was now lined with concrete. The washing drum was enlarged and an electric motor was added. These improvements allowed three men to wash ten tons of ginseng in one day.

When commercial posthole diggers came on to the market, the Fromms hoped to reduce the 25 man crew required each year to dig the post holes for the new ginseng bed arbors. However, the newly purchased posthole diggers were not powerful enough to handle the granite in the sub-soil. Herbert Kleinschmidt took the diggers into the shop and added the gears from a rear end of a Studebaker. He also installed a hydraulic lift for the auger and heavier springs. Now four men with these two modified posthole diggers could dig 4,500 holes in two weeks.

The grading of the ginseng was another very tedious job which required many workers. Every year the ginseng was sorted by hand into two grades (first grade and second grade) and the tiny rootlets or fibers known as prongs were removed. The prongs had a lesser value than the root, but they were popular in China for brewing tea. There was no machine or mechanism available to perform the three tasks. Kleinschmidt developed a de-fibering and sorting machine which stretched through two rooms of the warehouse. At one end a large revolving cylinder tumbled the ginseng. The tumbling wore off the small root fibers and the prongs fell through the machine into boxes located below. The root was then taken to a long table which had a moving canvas mounted on rollers. The rollers moved the root twenty feet in one minute from one end of the table to the other. This was a sufficient amount of time for a ten girl work crew to remove the second grade root by hand leaving the first grade root to continue on the table until it reached the end and dropped off the table into boxes. With this new machine, a ton of dried root could be processed in one day.

The Fromms' innovations were not limited to mechanical aspects of their farming enterprise. Plant health was critically important to their ability to propagate new plants and expand their ginseng acreage. To ensure robust plant stock the Fromms conducted research related to plant diseases which affect ginseng.

The Fromms believed that the disease spores for ginseng blight and root rot was carried by the seed itself. These spores needed to be destroyed without destroying the seed. Arthur was a trained botanist and horticulturalist and was the only Fromm qualified to conduct experiments on the ginseng seed. He set up a laboratory in Hamburg. Arthur was experimenting with a formaldehyde solution. It had to be strong enough to kill the spores on the outside of the seed hull but not so strong as to kill the seed itself. A large plot was planted in 1935 with the treated ginseng seeds. Arthur could not be sure that his experiment was successful until after the seeds and seedlings had been in the ground for a total of three years. In 1938, Arthur's treated ginseng seed experiments came to fruition. His experiments were successful and ginseng blight appeared to be a thing of the past.

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John Fromm perfected a weed killing spray that killed the weeds but not the ginseng. When conducted together, dusting and spraying was very effective against blight. Dusting would begin in mid-May and continued until the middle of August. Over 75,000 pounds of chemicals were used in the fight against blight. However, a new problem developed. Walter noticed that dusting was retarding the formation of seed heads. The Fromms needed 2,000 pounds of ginseng seed a year for new bed plantings. The Company realized some of the ginseng could not be dusted. It had to be set aside to produce seed even if the blight returned. As a result, not all ginseng plants were allowed to go to seed. In the fall, workers removed the seed heads from all but the plants needed for seed production to promote root development. These examples illustrate the brothers' dedication to mastering all aspects of the cultivation of ginseng.

1950s through the 1980s

The brothers realized that they needed more acreage for ginseng and purchased ten more adjoining farms, each a quarter section in size. Each of these parcels had only 60 to 80 acres of non-alkaline soil with a granite sub-soil that was suitable for growing ginseng.

Unfortunately, the post war excitement over new prospects in the ginseng markets was quickly dashed when exports to China were forbidden by the United States government. The ginseng embargo lasted until October of 1950 and the Company once again had to store their harvest. At this time, only 100 acres of ginseng were in production in the United States of which 80 acres were operated by the Fromm Brothers.³⁵

During the 1950s the value of ginseng returned to the prices of the peak years of the 1920s. The Fromms continued a yearly planting of 20 to 30 acres of seeded ginseng. In 1957, the Company had 85 acres of ginseng under roof.³⁶

In 1963, a battle over assets broke out between the brothers, their children, in-laws and grandchildren. (This will be more completely discussed in the section on fox breeding). Ultimately, Edward and Walter controlled all of the Hamburg area assets including ginseng and foxes.

Edward correctly predicted that when world conflicts stabilized, so would the price of ginseng. Fromm ginseng, sold through the Fromm Auction House in Hong Kong in 1966, brought \$35 per pound or \$40,000 per ton. The Fromms were producing several tons annually.³⁷ Ginseng growers in the Marathon County area, including the Fromms, marketed their ginseng through ginseng broker Jose de Figueiredo. De Figueiredo's father auctioned ginseng through the Orient's Ginseng Guild. Known

³⁵ Kathrene Pinkerton, Bright with Silver, (William Sloane Assoc, Inc., New York, 1947) pages 1-364.

³⁶ Foto News Lincoln County Review, "Frommland is Amazing Place", July 18, 1957.

³⁷ American Fur Breeder "Where are Foxes on the Comeback Trail?", December 1966, pages 8-12.

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as "Smalley," he encouraged the producers to space their shipments of ginseng to a bi-monthly basis to avoid glutting the market. This practice helped to stabilize prices. The main marketing periods for ginseng were from December to April. Edward and Walter planted a 30 acre plot of ginseng in 1966, a record even for them.³⁸

In 1970, 98% of ginseng collected or grown in America was exported to Hong Kong. In an interview for the Nevada Daily Mail, Edward Fromm shared his 70 year expertise in growing ginseng: "We have had to buy up twenty farms in the area to grow new beds. After we have grown and harvested the ginseng from the land, we rent the land back to the farmers. It is good for growing other crops but not ginseng. No fertilizer or lime is used on the beds and the ginseng is never irrigated. When the ginseng is dried the starting drying temperatures are 60 -70 degrees. Later in the process the temperature is increased to 90 degrees."³⁹

In 1972, Walter and Edward began to fund pharmacological research targeting two compounds found in ginseng for cancer treatment. Ginseng prices were continuing to hold at \$30 per pound.⁴⁰

Walter passed away in June of 1975. Edward purchased Walter's company stock and Fromm Brothers Inc. solely survived in the family of Edward Fromm.⁴¹ Edward continued both fox and ginseng production until he died in June of 1986. The last crop of Fromm ginseng was harvested in 1988.⁴²

Raising Silver Fox

As discussed earlier in this section, Ginseng production facilitated the Fromm Brothers' fox empire. Edward, Walter, John and Henry Fromm built their fur enterprise slowly and methodically with a united desire to produce the very best silver fox pelt. At all times, any and all profits were utilized for more breeder stock, more equipment or more feed. The four brothers constantly demonstrated amazing confidence, faith and patience in their enterprise and in each other. They believed the most beautiful shade of fox pelt was very light silver. The 1920s market did not agree with their vision. The Fromms never wavered, but continued to breed for the color that they eventually patented on January 29, 1936 as "bright-with-silver."⁴³

³⁸ Wausau Daily Herald, October 15, 1966, "Fromm Brothers Plant Record Ginseng Acreage" page 10.

³⁹ Nevada Daily Mail, "Ed and Walter Fromm Largest Growers of Ginseng in the United States" by Wally E. Schulz, September 27, 1970.

⁴⁰ Wausau Daily Herald, "Ginseng: Crop Grown for Export" by Ben Luedtke, November 3, 1972.

⁴¹ A Happy Anniversary to Us a Century in Hamburg 1876-1976, published by Centennial Committee, 1976, pages 22-29.

⁴² Foto News, August 8, 1990 .

⁴³ Catalog of Copyright Entries, Part 1 (B) Group 2, Pedigreed bright-with-silver, January 29, 1936 AA 1961 38.

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With the expansion of settlement and of land in agricultural use, the wild fox habitat dwindled. By the latter part of the 1800s, fox pelts were becoming scarce and the auction prices for these furs had tripled. The most coveted and rarest of all fox was the silver fox. The silver fox pup is called a "sport"; it is black, not red as the other pups in the litter. As the fox matures, a veiling of white fur (guard hairs) develops. An adult red fox female may have only one such pup in her lifetime, or she may never have any.

A few trappers had experimented with capturing young fox pups in the spring and raising them in captivity until they developed their prime thick winter coats. In 1887, on Prince Edward Island in Canada, Robert T. Oulton and Charles Dalton were experimenting with captive foxes.⁴⁴ One winter, instead of disposing of all of their foxes, they held back the best specimens. They believed that it would be possible to breed fox in captivity; their goal was to produce enough of the rare silver foxes from their red foxes so that they could concentrate on just producing silvers. Their breeding program was kept secret. They placed their fox experiment deep in the woods. After many disappointments, the men brought rare lustrous silver fox pelts to the London markets where these pelts were fetching high prices. The men's secret was exposed when one of their animals escaped. The fox's scent was picked up by a hunter's fox hounds and the fox led the hounds and the hunter right back to its home. Shortly after the exposure of the breeding program, a single silver black fox sold for \$2,700 in London. By 1909, others established fox breeding farms on Prince Edward Island and a new agricultural industry was born.⁴⁵

In 1901, thirteen year old Walter Fromm read aloud to his brothers from a copy of Hunter Trapper magazine. The article was about a silver fox pelt which sold in London for what many Wisconsin farms were worth.⁴⁶ The brothers made a pact to do whatever it would take to raise silver foxes. Calling themselves "The Company" they began the process of becoming fox breeders.⁴⁷ They saw an ad for Funsten Brothers animal bait in a trapper magazine. Funsten Brothers were offering a one hundred dollar prize for the best photograph of a group of fox pelts from foxes caught by using Funsten bait. Already accomplished trappers and possessing knowledge of the woodland environment, the Fromm brothers won the money. That prize money was used to purchase fencing for one of the first fox farms in the United States.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Albert M. Ahen, Fur Facts, (1922), page 117.

⁴⁵ The American Magazine, "The Fromm Boys are the Biggest Fox Raisers in the World Because of Their Staying Qualities", by Charles Lane Callen, March 1928, pages 14, 15, 126-129.

⁴⁶ Kathrene Pinkerton, Bright with Silver, (William Sloane Assoc. Inc., New York, 1947).

⁴⁷ The American Magazine, "The Fromm Boys are the Biggest Fox Raisers in the World Because of Their Staying Qualities", by Charles Lane Callen, March 1928, pages 14, 15, 126-129.

⁴⁸ Albert M. Ahern, Fur Facts, (1922), page 118.

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In 1909, they heard that John Wittkope had a pair of red foxes for sale at his farm in Athens, Wisconsin. Wittkope was asking \$40 for the pair and could not be negotiated down in price despite the brothers' efforts. Finally, Wittkope agreed to sell the pair for \$5 down (which the boys had) and an additional \$5 a month for seven months.⁴⁹ The red fox female died. That meant that the brothers had to live trap a replacement. John was the best trapper and tracked a female red fox to its den. The boys set up camp close by and agreed to stay there as long as it took to capture the young pups. John placed leg traps that he had padded with material, as to not injure the pups, around the entrance to the den and one by one they captured five red fox pups.⁵⁰ The same year the boys managed to capture three additional pairs of red foxes by hunting an area 20 miles in radius. They also trapped a variety of other animals whose furs provided a small income.⁵¹

The brothers placed the captured red foxes in pairs into private enclosures. They had done a great deal of studying of the fox in their natural habitat. They were convinced that foxes were much happier living in pairs.⁵² But when spring came, their hopes were quickly dashed as not one fox pup was produced. The captive foxes refused to breed. The brothers remained committed and that patience helped to change their luck. The following year twelve red fox pups were produced. Unfortunately, most of the pups quickly died. Walter returned to the woods and captured another litter of seven red fox pups. Two years passed and The Company had not produced one silver fox pup. A red fox pelt only fetched a price of \$20. The boys knew only the production of silver fox would be the key to financial security and they were eager to get one.

By now breeder pairs of silver fox were commanding prices of up to \$35,000.⁵³ Henry developed a correspondence relationship with silver fox breeder James Kane. Kane became a mentor to the brothers. The Fromms could not afford to buy pure silver breeding stock. Hoping to help his young friends, Kane sold The Company a double-crossed black male and an outcast female (red out of silver) for \$550 in 1911. Three pups were produced in spring of 1912 but all of them were reds.⁵⁴

Herbert and Henry succeeded in capturing a black fox near Cameron that winter, but again, their red foxes only produced red pups.⁵⁵ Once again their mentor James Kane stepped forward offering them a

⁴⁹ The American Magazine, "The Fromm Boys are the Biggest Fox Raisers in the World Because of Their Staying Qualities", by Charles Lane Callen, March 1928, pages 14, 15, 126-129.

⁵⁰ Kathrene Pinkerton, Bright with Silver, (William Sloane Assoc. Inc., New York, 1947).

⁵¹ The American Magazine, "The Fromm Boys are the Biggest Fox Raisers in the World Because of Their Staying Qualities", by Charles Lane Callen, 1928, pages 14, 15, 126-129.

⁵² Kathrene Pinkerton, Bright with Silver, (William Sloane Assoc. Inc., New York, 1947).

⁵³ The American Magazine, "The Fromm Boys are the Biggest Fox Raisers in the World Because of Their Staying Qualities" by Charles Lane Callen, March 1929, pages 14, 15, 126-129.

⁵⁴ Kathrene Pinkerton, Bright with Silver, (William Sloane Assoc. Inc., New York, 1947).

⁵⁵ Kathrene Pinkerton, Bright with Silver, (William Sloane Assoc. Inc., New York, 1947).

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black male and a female outcast for \$450 and once again the brothers took a chance. However, when the shipment arrived the only thing that remained of the female fox was her tail as the male had eaten her during the trip. Kane quickly replaced her with another female for \$150. Kane told the boys to sprinkle them both with alcohol to make them smell alike and of course keep them well fed. The boys were rewarded in the spring with the birth of the pups. The first four pups down the ramp were red. Then a little dark pup came strolling down the ramp. The Company had its first silver fox.⁵⁶

In 1913, John and Henry Fromm climbed to the highest point of Rib Mountain outside of Wausau. With a hammer and chisel brought along for this very purpose they carved "John and Henry Fromm Pioneer Breeders of Silver Foxes 1913".⁵⁷

The brothers realized that success could only be achieved through the breeding of silver foxes to silver foxes. It had taken 13 years to produce one silver pup from cheaper cast off breeding stock. The Company held a conference and made the decision to pursue the purchase of pure silver breeding stock. James Kane found the brothers three silver foxes for a price of \$6,500. In 1915, when their father left for a trip to Iowa, the boys pleaded with their mother to help them get enough money that they could purchase these silver foxes. Since their farm had been her dowry, it was in her name and she mortgaged it for \$6500.

Several days later, the Fromm brothers bought one silver male and two silver female foxes from James Kane. They were from a reliable New York State strain. Edward Fromm reminisced about what happened upon the return of his father to the news of the mortgaged farm: "He said there was not much that he could do about it, what's done is done." One month later, war was declared in Europe and the bottom dropped out of the silver fox market. The trio of recently purchased silver foxes had dropped in value to \$1,000. The ginseng root that was selling for \$12 a pound dropped to \$4 a pound. Their red foxes were not worth the cost of their keep. And, in eleven months they had to raise \$6,500 or lose the farm.

One would have thought the boys would have adopted a very conservative attitude. All over the county silver fox breeders were going out of business. The Fromm brothers took advantage of this downtrend by adding several animals to their breeding program in 1915. Because of the low demand for silver fox breeders, they were able to purchase them at very low prices. One less than outstanding silver fox female that they purchased for almost nothing was the key to their success. The next year she produced six silver fox pups. The rest of their new herd produced an additional eleven silver fox pups. As a result of hard work and a good ginseng crop, the bank notes were paid in advance. The boys also earned the respect of their father who would no longer stand in the way of their enterprise. In

⁵⁶ Kathrene Pinkerton, Bright with Silver, (William Sloane Assoc. Inc, New York, 1947).

⁵⁷ Kathrene Pinkerton, Bright with Silver, (William Sloane Assoc. Inc., New York, 1947).

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1916, the Fromm brothers produced 25 silver fox pups. Their number of breeding pairs of silver fox grew to 20 in 1917. At the end of World War I, the silver fox market was making an amazing comeback. Many former breeders had dropped out of the market; breeding pairs of silver foxes were bringing prices of \$2,000 to \$3,000 a pair. In 1919, good quality silver pelts were selling for \$250 in New York.

Security for the Fromm brothers became an issue after an attempted break in. They had guarded their growing ginseng plots and now the Fromm brothers began to guard their silver foxes with loaded rifles from their newly constructed watch tower.⁵⁸ This concern for security became a high priority for many years to come.

The boys had studied the foxes' habits and temperament for almost fifteen years. Albert M. Ahern went to the Fromm Brothers farm in 1922 to study their facility and write about the techniques the brothers used to raise foxes for his new book Fur Facts. He was fascinated by the style of house provided for each fox pair. He described how the fox kennels were raised off the damp ground. A barrel den was created by cutting an eight inch diameter hole in the end of a barrel. The barrel was hinged at the top and placed in a wooden structure that was two feet wider and two feet longer than the barrel. An "L" shape tunnel was built out of wood which connected the door of the wood structure to the entry into the barrel. This afforded the fox complete darkness. The roof of the house was also hinged for easy access to the barrel. The space between the sides of the house and the barrel were filled with shavings and saw dust. This provided soundproofing for the fox that are especially shy during the breeding season and need a quiet environment. The shavings and saw dust also provided excellent insulation. The Fromm Brothers understood that the mother fox often liked to move her pups, so two of these barrel dens were placed in each enclosed kennel.

Foxes mate in February or March and the gestation period is 51 days. The size of a fox litter can range from one to nine pups with four pups being the normal amount. Each male remains faithful and is a splendid father. The female remains productive for up to ten years.

In 1915, an outbreak of rickets occurred within the fox population on the farm. Henry soon came to the realization that in the wild the foxes consumed the bones of the small animals that they were eating. The fox diet at the farm consisted overwhelmingly of horse meat and they were de-boning the horse meat before feeding. The Company purchased a large bone grinder and rickets was never seen again.

⁵⁸ The American Magazine, "The Fromm Boys are the Biggest Fox Raisers in the World Because of Their Staying Qualities". By Charles Lane Callen, March 1929, pages 14, 15, 126-129. The watch tower is no longer extant.

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In 1922, the fox diet consisted of beef, horse, mutton, veal, woodchuck, rabbit, liver, fish, eggs, milk, bread, mashed potatoes, crackers, dog biscuits, boiled turnips, carrots, and fresh fruit. Fox do not need to eat meat every day. The pups were not allowed to eat meat until they were four months old. The meal in the morning usually consisted of meat. The evening meal was milk mixed with bread or cooked mush. The brothers stressed sanitation and insisted that the dishes be kept clean. If they had gotten meat that may be old and slightly tainted it was boiled before using. The skin of the rabbits was removed as it did not digest well. The rabbit entrails were removed as it often contained parasites. If large fish were used the backbone and entrails were removed.⁵⁹ As the size of the herd grew, the feedings were reduced to once a day.

From the very beginning, the Fromm brothers preferred a more silvery pelt and continued to breed for a lighter and lighter colored pelt. They also increased the size of the fox. John had an eye for color and detail and he made all of the mating selections. Their preference for a lighter shade and a larger fox was in direct contrast to what the current fox market was promoting.

In 1916, the brothers sent pelts to St. Louis for auction. One very dark pelt that they did not care for sold for \$450. The balance of their pelts were lighter in color and more silvery. These sold for the lesser amount of \$160 each. One would have thought that the brothers would have made sweeping changes in their preferences after the auction. They did not and continued on the path to lighter silver foxes.

In June of 1919, Edward married Alice Fredericks. That summer Herbert left the farm and in fall Henry married Mary Jacobs. The family was growing in size but everyone still lived with Fred and Alwina in their house. The brothers never thought of comforts for themselves, only about reinvesting everything that they earned back into the ginseng and silver fox enterprises.⁶⁰

In 1920, John and Edwin Nieman joined the Fromm brothers in partnership. John Nieman was the son of Fred's sister Sophia and Alwina's brother Johann. Twenty-four pairs of silver foxes were moved to the Nieman farm in Thiensville, Wisconsin.⁶¹ Also, that same year, Erna Fromm married John's son Edwin Nieman. Erna was given ten pairs of silver foxes as her dowry. All the foxes were to reside in the Thiensville home of the Niemans. The firm Nieman and Sons infused new cash into The Company by purchasing additional breeding stock from the Fromms. The Hamburg and Thiensville enterprises worked together in raising foxes for the next ten years.⁶²

⁵⁹ Albert M. Ahern, Fur Facts, (1922), pages 116-124.

⁶⁰ Kathrene Pinkerton, Bright with Silver, (William Sloane Assoc. Inc., New York, 1947), pages 1-364.

⁶¹ Readers Digest, July 1937, "Ten-Million Dollar Fox Tale", by Melvin N. Taylor, pages 39-43.

⁶² Kathrene Pinkerton, Bright with Silver, (William Sloane Assoc. Inc., New York, 1947), pages 1-364.

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In a fairly short time it was discovered that the environment in Thiensville, with a more southern location, enhanced the production of offspring. Hundreds of silver fox pups grew to thousands and four additional farms in the Thiensville area were fitted for fox production. The brothers made the decision to move all of the breeding foxes to the Thiensville area farms. However, if the fox pups were left through the late summer in the warmer area, the fur of their winter coat tended to be harsh and coarse. That is when two divisions were created for the production of silver fox; one at Thiensville for the breeding and early rearing, and one at Hamburg where the cold autumn and early winter coupled with placing the foxes on a wooded free-range area developed thick and luxurious coats. The young fox were transferred each fall from Thiensville to Hamburg by truck. (Figure #12) After three months of enduring the snow, wind and cold weather, the foxes were ready for pelting.⁶³

A tattoo program was begun with the placing of a serial number, year of birth and a number to distinguish one pup from the other in the right ear. The pen number was tattooed in the left ear. The Fromms kept meticulous records. When the brothers wanted to distinguish their superior pelts from those of other producers, they marked each pelt with a metal medallion, clearly marking the pelt origin for the consumer. When the customers returned the medallions to Fromm Brothers they received a certificate of pedigree tracing the breeding of that fox back four generations.

Due to the growth of both operations, feeding methods were modified to ease labor costs. Roads were created between the pen compounds and horses pulled a feeding box containing the mixed rations and a scale to control proper portions. The daily ration was one pound of feed per fox, of which two thirds were meat and the rest other cereals and other nutrients. The foxes were so skittish that the same horses and the same men dressed in the same clothes were used in a particular pen compound each day.⁶⁴

One day Edward had an idea that would save labor and he hoped improve the pelts. No matter how hard they tried and how careful they were, boredom tended to have the foxes injure their pelts in some way in their kennels. He suggested that they try putting large numbers of young foxes into a 45 acre free range compound in wooded areas similar to their natural environment. (Figure #13) To fence such an area would be costly, but when one brother had an idea the other brothers always shared his enthusiasm. Roads were cut through the furring ranges so that the horses could deliver food to the foxes. Metal feeding dishes were placed in racks off the ground. The foxes were well fed to prevent cannibalism. At the end of the first furring season they were amazed at the difference in the fox pelts. The pelts were deeper furred and had a denser undercoat. The guard hairs grew longer and the color was preserved better. The Company was the only fur breeder in North America to practice free ranging.

⁶³ Readers Digest, July 1937, "Ten-Million Dollar Fox Tales", by Melvin N. Taylor, pages 39-43.

⁶⁴ Kathrene Pinkerton, Bright with Silver, (William Sloane Assoc. Inc., New York, 1947) pages 1-364.

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Because the foxes were loose in the furring range, a fox round-up had to occur when it was time for pelting. Men and women called drivers would herd the animals through a series of enclosures, while fencing off the foxes' ability to retreat. Finally in the narrowing space they were driven into a series of long wooden tunnels. Hinged doors on the top of the tunnels were opened and the foxes were individually removed and euthanized.

After euthanization the fox carcasses were not allowed to touch one another while they cooled down to room temperature. They were brought into the pelting room and hung on pegs until the skinning process could begin. The pelting process was done in an assembly fashion with each man performing one task and then passing the fox to the next man until the carcass was completely skinned. The matings that were tattooed into each ear were recorded. The pelt was then fitted on a stretcher board and allowed to dry. After drying, the pelts were examined, graded, appraised and put in lots or bundles. Each lot was made up of pelts of equal color and fur quality.

Finally, the preference in the color of silver fox was swinging more in the direction of what the Fromm brothers were raising. The next ten years saw tremendous expansion at both Hamburg and Thiensville. Up to now, all of the monies that the brothers were making on ginseng were being used for the expansion of the foxes. The Company was building a staggering number of fox pens as the herd increased in size. (Figure #14) They also purchased additional forested land for a fifth furring range. Service roads were built through the new furring ranges and the new ranges were fenced.

The growth of both the ginseng operation and fox production demanded a larger work force. In 1922, the boarding house was constructed. In 1924, the one story bunk house was constructed. The Fromms were the largest employer in the area. However, workers were also hired from outside of the area. In 1923, a large barn was built in Hamburg for their dairy herd, as well as for hay and feed storage. Dairy products were used to feed the workers.

Additional equipment was purchased for the preparation of meals for the foxes. A warehouse with refrigeration and feeding plant was built in 1924. Each winter, enough horse meat could be ground and frozen for an entire year. The Fromms were sticklers for cleanliness. Every corner of the feed room would be hosed and every fox feeding pan was sterilized.⁶⁵

Up to now, all of the Fromms lived together in one house. Finally, the accumulating profits enabled the brothers to seek separate housing. Henry and his wife Mamie built a house far into the center of the property. Walter and his wife Mable built a house to the east of the main entrance to the farm. An apartment was created for John on the second floor of the warehouse. Edward and his wife Alice

⁶⁵ Kathrene Pinkerton, Bright with Silver, (William Sloane Assoc. Inc., New York, 1947).

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modernized the current farm house and continued to live there with Edward's father Fred and mother Alwina. Alwina passed away in 1928. The homestead burned in 1943 and five years later Edward and Alice built a house to the west of the main driveway on the same site as the old homestead.⁶⁶

Between 1922 and 1928, the Fromm Brothers Nieman Company fox numbers increased to over 16,000. Fur revenues for 1926 exceeded \$500,000 and in 1927 they went beyond \$700,000. At this time the partnership discontinued the selling of live foxes for breeding and decided to solely raise fox for pelts. During this period, several Prince Edward Island silver foxes were introduced. Their size and quality greatly improved the Fromm line.⁶⁷ In 1928, Fromm Brothers Nieman Company received a check from the New York Auction Company Inc. in the amount of \$1,021,071.24 after auctioning their pelts. The largest single check ever issued from an auction gallery for a single shipment of silver fox pelts was issued in 1929. That check was written to the Fromm Brothers Nieman Company by the New York Auction Company Inc. in the amount of \$1,331,679.35.⁶⁸

In 1924, an epidemic broke out in the furring range. The foxes seem disorientated and many staggered about dropping dead. Edward suspected food poisoning and sent one of the fox carcasses to the University of Wisconsin for an autopsy. The posting came back negative for food poisoning and by November the epidemic had abated. Losses were significant with the deaths of 250 foxes valued at over \$50,000. Despite these problems, the Company sold 3,700 pelts in 1924 doubling the previous year's output. There were now five furring ranges varying in size from 35 to 50 acres. Each range was enclosed by double fence. The next year, after combining the young foxes from Hamburg and Thiensville on the furring ranges, the epidemic came back with more intensity than the year before. This time 555 foxes were lost.

Suspecting distemper, the Fromms contacted Dr. Robert G. Green. Edward had read his distemper articles in American Fox & Fur Farming magazine. Dr. Green was the head of the department of bacteriology and immunology at the University of Minnesota. They told Dr. Green that they would provide funding of \$20,000 per year if he would study distemper in foxes. Dr. Green agreed. The following year the funding was increased to \$25,000. Most of Green's work was conducted at Millard Hall on the campus of the University of Minnesota. The Fromms supplied the foxes for the study and they were housed in pens on property owned by Green in Hager City, Wisconsin. Later, in 1934, the Hager City operation was moved to a building on the Fromm property at Hamburg. In late 1935, the use of these facilities was discontinued and Dr. Green's research was relocated to property in Grafton, Wisconsin.

⁶⁶ Kathrene Pinkerton, Bright with Silver, (William Sloane Assoc. Inc., New York, 1947).

⁶⁷ The American Magazine, "The Fromm Boys are the Biggest Fox Raisers in the World Because of Their Staying Qualities", by Charles Lane Callen, March 1929, pages 14,15, 126-129.

⁶⁸ Readers Digest, July 1937, "Ten-Million Dollar Fox Tale", by Melvin N. Taylor, pages 39-43.

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Dr. Green discovered that the Fromm foxes were suffering from encephalitis. He created a vaccine from the antibodies of foxes who had survived being injected with the disease. Large amounts of this serum were used on the Fromm foxes from 1929 to 1939 to inoculate fox pups. During this same time period, Dr. Green also concluded that another disease was present in the Fromm fox herd. That disease was distemper. Using the same techniques he had used for encephalitis, Dr. Green developed a distemper serum which was used to inoculate the Fromm fox herd.

In 1933, Dr. Green anticipated that his work on these two fox diseases would culminate in the development of patents and that these discoveries would have pertinence in the private sector. He had concerns about protecting his private interest in his research and approached Edward Fromm with his concerns. On July 29, 1933, Fromm-Green Research Inc. was organized and The Company purchased a bankrupt farm near Thiensville.⁶⁹ Dr. Green applied for a patent from the United States Patent Office on March 9, 1937. (Currently, the Cornell Research Foundation, Diamond Scientific Company and Clinical Reference Laboratory hold the patents to his discoveries.⁷⁰) In 1939, the name was changed from Fromm-Green Research to Fromm Laboratories Inc. Dr. Robert G. Green went on to research how cancer cells spread in the human body.

The above synopsis does not convey the heavy losses, the suffering of the foxes and the frustration felt by the Fromms, Dr. Green and the Fromm Farm workers. The creation of the vaccine for encephalitis took the passing of antibodies through 27 generations of red foxes before a three-dose fox pup vaccine was created. The process of creating the distemper vaccine was even more tedious. This time ferrets were used as the hosts. The serum was not perfected until it had passed through 50 generations of ferrets. It was only administered in panic, in 1938, when distemper struck on a farm that was located three miles from the main farm at Hamburg. Here, in desperation, they had placed all of their very best breeders hoping to protect them from the disease until the vaccine was perfected. It was not enough distance. A distemper epidemic broke out and killed 80% of the pups and 40% of their very best breeders. Then it suddenly appeared in two areas of the Hamburg farm. The current strain of Dr. Green's vaccine was administered and it stopped the outbreak. As additional improvements were made to Dr. Green's distemper vaccine, it would become a lifesaving tool for dogs as well. In all, over \$1 million was provided by the Fromm Brothers for Dr. Green's research into encephalitis and distemper.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Fromm Laboratories Inc. v Commissioner, 19 T.C.M. 1059 (1960) United States Tax Court. Filed September 29, 1960, http://www.leagle.com/xmlResult.aspx?page=3&xmlDoc=1960107819gqvm1059_1880.

⁷⁰ United States Patent Office, Dr Robert G. Green MD, application for patent Distemper Vaccine, applied March 9, 1931, Serial Number 129,955, <http://www.google.com/patents/US2136131>, accessed April 2012.

⁷¹ Kathrene Pinkerton, Bright with Silver, (William Sloane Assoc. Inc. New York, 1947) pages 1-364.

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The Fromms wanted to educate the public about the superiority of their furs and promote the elegance of the lighter silver color. The cost of this advertising campaign was not supported by the Niemans. In 1929, the business partnership with their cousin Edwin J. Nieman was separately incorporated. Two corporations were formed: Fromm Brothers Inc., where all outstanding shares of stock were owned by the four Fromm brothers; and Fromm Bros. Nieman & Co. whereby the Fromm brothers equally held 596 shares of the outstanding stock of the corporation and Edwin Nieman held 599 shares and his wife held one share. Two other corporations were created for the business of raising fur bearing animals: Federal Silver Fox Farms Inc. and Fromm Bros. Silvercross Fox Farm Inc. Edward Fromm was at all times the president of all four corporations.⁷²

The split resulted in fewer marketable pelts for the Company in the fall of 1929. Edward knew they needed to reserve every breeder that they could to rebuild the herd. In anticipation of this growth, hundreds of more pens were added. The good times were rolling in America and extravagant purchases, such as fox furs were being made by stock market millionaires. The Fromm brothers wanted to launch an even larger advertising campaign, so the Company went to the bank and borrowed heavily.

Two years into the Great Depression, the general public could no longer afford the Fromm furs. Fox had always been sold in the form of a two-pelt scarf which could retail for hundreds of dollars. Ed Fromm trekked to Paris, France and convinced designers and couturiers to add luxury to simple coats, dresses, suits, and gowns by cutting the silver fox pelts and using the fur as trim. He said doing so would add a mark of distinction to simple garments. Edward's concept was accepted and soon garments were adorned with silver fox trim. Ed Fromm left Paris and went home to Hamburg, Wisconsin having revived his fur business.⁷³

The Fromms believed that the dark sport fox pelt with the silver overcast would slowly become old fashioned and would fall out of favor with the public. They felt that the more overall light silvery fox was more youthful and they continued to breed a more overall light silvery fox. In addition, they bred for uniformity of shade and increased the size of the fox. The Fromms believed that only through controlled breeding, generation after generation, could a true silver type gain the ability to reproduce itself and truly establish a permanent strain. The fox markets kept saying that these furs were too garish and too flashy but the Fromms staunchly continued toward their goal.

At the 1933-1934 Century of Progress Chicago World's Fair, the Fromm brothers launched an exhibit of their new lighter silver fox fur. Henry was placed in charge of the exhibit. The exhibit featured a

⁷² Fromm Laboratories Inc v Commissioner, 19 T.C.M. 1059 (1960), United States Tax Court. Filed September 29, 1960, http://www.legale.com/xmlResult.aspx?page=3&xmldoc=1960107819gqtm1059_1880

⁷³ *The Saturday Evening Post*, "Ten Million Dollar Fox Tale", by Melvin Taylor, February 13, 1937, pages 18, 19, 66-68.

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large raised revolving platform which was divided into two sections. An elaborate winter scene with mounted silver foxes was placed on one half of the platform. On the other half of the platform striking female models wore silver fox fur coats, muffs, capes, wraps, and scarves. The platform made a complete revolution every two and one half minutes. The models went into the dressing room and changed their garments often. Henry wanted the outdoor scene to be realistic, so a truck came from Hamburg weekly with fresh balsam, moss and shrubbery.

Overhead were seven foot high photo murals depicting the life of the silver fox. (Figure #16) A movie was shown on how the Fromm silver fox was developed, how foxes were raised, and how, after harvesting the fox, the grading of pelts was done. Although costing \$100,000 to produce, this exhibit succeeded in putting new life into an industry that thought it had reached the end of the road. The Fromm brothers succeeded in stimulating styling and thus made the public desire garments made from their silver foxes.⁷⁴

A tornado tore through one of their wooded areas in 1934, downing many elm and maple trees. The Fromms salvaged the trees and built a large log structure which became known as the Clubhouse. A four-lane Brunswick bowling alley was installed and the workers began a bowling league. When the Fromm brothers decided to host their own silver fox auctions at the farm, the Clubhouse provided the perfect environment to entertain the fur buyers.⁷⁵

In 1934, 12,000 silver fox pelts went to auction that year despite the losses from disease. They brought a price of \$819,000 and represented 10% of the total United States production of silver fox.⁷⁶

On January 29, 1936, Fromm Brothers Inc. copyrighted the pedigree of "bright-with-silver" foxes.⁷⁷ The brothers were managing 36,000 foxes with the assistance of 150 men. Since 1917, pelt sales had exceeded \$16,500,000. Overhead was continuing to rise. The cost of feeding foxes had escalated to \$300,000 a year. The fox diet consisted mostly of horse meat with the addition of oatmeal, eggs, fruit, vegetables and vitamins.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Kathrene Pinkerton, Bright with Silver, (William Sloane Assoc. Inc., New York, 1947) pages 1-364.

⁷⁵ American Fur Breeder, "Where are Foxes on the Comeback Trail?", December 1966, pages 8-12.

⁷⁶ Time Magazine, "Business: Furs from Fromm" February 1936.

⁷⁷ Catalog of Copyright Entries, Part 1 (B) Group 2 Fromm Brothers Inc., Hamburg, WI, pedigreed bright-with-silver foxes @January 29, 1936, AA 1961 38.

⁷⁸ The Saturday Evening Post, "Ten Million Dollar Fox Tale", by Melvin N. Taylor, February 13, 1947, pages 18, 19, 66-68.

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Fromm Auctions and Manufacturing

The Fromm Brothers suddenly shocked the fur industry in January of 1936 when they announced that they would not participate in the commonly held New York fur auction. An invitation was extended to come to Hamburg, Wisconsin because they were intending to auction their own furs at their headquarters. This was a daring gamble. It would either make fur trade history or cost the Fromms' prestige in the fur industry. When the date arrived, scores of furriers arrived from New York on a special train comprised of four Pullman cars.⁷⁹ The entourage arrived in Wausau, Wisconsin on February 3rd. Hotel accommodations for the fur buyers had already been arranged.

Two days before the sale, the worst storm of the season struck, dropping 15 inches of snow and plunging temperatures to 35 degrees below zero. Four large Greyhound buses and a fleet of private cars followed snowplows the 22 miles to the farm.⁸⁰ A badge was provided to the buyers (the Fromms were always concerned about security) which entitled the visitors to all the food and adult beverages that they wished. (Figure #17) Venison was served from the brothers' herd of 300 deer. Kosher food was provided for all of the Jewish buyers. Card tables were set up and the bowling alley and music provided entertainment. The girls' dormitory in the boarding house was converted into an auction room.⁸¹

During the three day inspection process, everyone was provided a white coat to wear as to not get hairs on their wool clothing. The pelts were heaped on tables and hung on racks. (Figure #18) A staff of 150 men carried lots, or bundles of pelts, back and forth for the buyers to scrutinize.⁸²

Ed Fromm was the auctioneer. The first skin, an exceptionally nice one, sold for \$200. Those proceeds were donated by the Fromms to the New York Matzoth Fund.⁸³ The first fur on the second day was sold for \$350 with the proceeds being donated to the New York Fur Post of the American Legion.⁸⁴ The remaining 7,499 pelts sold for \$540,000. The furs were sold in lots of 10 matched furs. The top single skin price was \$555. The Fromm Brothers held a second auction in 1936 selling an additional 5,500 pelts. The receipts from the two auctions exceeded \$1 million.⁸⁵

⁷⁹ The Saturday Evening Post, "Ten Million Dollar Fox Tale", by Melvin N. Taylor, February 13, 1947, pages 18, 19, 66-68.

⁸⁰ American Fur Breeder, "Fromm Brothers Stage Spectacular Sale", March 1926, pages 9, 10.

⁸¹ The Saturday Evening Post, "Ten Million Dollar Fox Tale", by Melvin N. Taylor, February 13, 1947, pages 18, 19, 66-68.

⁸² Kathrene Pinkerton, Bright with Silver, (William Sloan Assoc. Inc., New York, 1947).

⁸³ The Saturday Evening Post, "Ten Million Dollar Fox Tale", by Melvin N. Taylor, February 13, 1947, pages 18, 19, 66-68.

⁸⁴ The American Fur Breeder, "Fromm Brothers Stage Spectacular Sale", March 1936, pages 9, 10.

⁸⁵ The Saturday Evening Post, "Ten Million Dollar Fox Tale" by Melvin N. Taylor, February 13, 1947, pages 18, 19, 66-68.

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The auction facilities needed to be expanded to accommodate the growing popularity of the Fromms' auctions. During the summer of 1936, a \$75,000 addition was made to the warehouse. (Figure #19) A two-hundred foot wing, three stories in height was added. Display and auction rooms were placed on the top floor. (Figure #20) The north wall of the second and third floor display and auction areas were bathed with filtered north light entering through a solid band of windows. (Figure #21) A sky light traversed the length of the viewing room providing additional natural light. Great care was taken to not allow light to enter that would cast undesired shading to the pelts. The first floor held a large pelting room. In addition, separate rooms were created for the on-going ginseng storage. Improvements were also made to the meat and feed rooms. The refrigeration area was enlarged and updated. A 75 horsepower grinder which could grind frozen quarters of horsemeat, bones and all, was added.⁸⁶

Prior to the 1937 sale, Fromm attorney Charles F. Smith discovered an 1858 Wisconsin state law that imposed a tax on the gross sales of any auction held outside a city which sold anything other than a farmer's personal property. The tax was 20% of the gross receipts. The Fromms' State Senator Roland Kanneberg quickly introduced a bill to suspend this practice. The American National Fur Breeders Association prepared to oppose this bill, feeling somehow their authority was being trod upon by the Fromm auction. They presented a weak opposition and Kanneberg's bill passed 69-12. It was quickly signed by Governor LaFollette before the auction was to take place.⁸⁷

The buyers were happy that this matter was settled and they could come once again to the farm to buy fur. In 1937, during an auction exclusively featuring Fromm pelts, the "talk of the auction" centered around one pelt, #2989. It was admired and spoken of as the perfect pelt during the three-day pre-auction inspection. It appeared on the auction block on the second day. Bidding started at \$300 and when the bidding ended Marshall Field & Company had purchased the pelt for \$2,100. The buyer put the pelt on display in a glass case in their store. The final gross sale for the Fromm's entire silver fox collection was \$1.5 million.⁸⁸

A Federal School for Fur Breeders was held at a joint auction at the Fromm headquarters in 1937. Speakers included Dr. Robert G. Green of the University of Minnesota, the man who perfected fox distemper vaccine; Dr. W. A. Young from the Fromm staff; Frank C. Gothier, President of the Mink Breeders Association; and Dr. E.R. Darling, Chief Chappel Brother's chemist who discussed nutrition. Helen Cornelius from Harper's Bazaar commended the Fromm Brothers on their consumer advertising campaign. She credited the campaign for the prominence of furs at the recent Paris openings. A total

⁸⁶ The Saturday Evening Post, "Ten Million Dollar Fox Tale" by Melvin N. Taylor, February 13, 1947, pages 18, 19, 66-68.

⁸⁷ Kathrene Pinkerton, Bright with Silver. (William Sloan Assoc. Inc., New York, 1947).

⁸⁸ Kathrene Pinkerton, Bright with Silver. (William Sloan Assoc. Inc., New York, 1947).

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of 8,000 Fromm silver fox pelts were offered at the auction; however, these pelts tended to be of a lesser quality than those sold in the Fromm only auction. About 85% of the collection was sold.

Edward Fromm addressed the gathering and in his opening remarks he pointed out that the retail value of all fur in the United States totaled in excess of \$500 million. Edward expressed disappointment that Washington and the Department of Agriculture refused to recognize fur farming as an agricultural industry. He felt that if the government recognized the fur industry as a legitimate agricultural industry, many government benefits would come to the fur industry. He spoke about the progress that had been made thus far toward the production of a distemper vaccine. He also reminded the gathering that The Company had given over \$500,000 toward Dr. Green's research. He urged all that were in attendance to expand the amount of their national advertising monies to the 10% of sales used by the Fromm Brothers to advertise their product.

Then he told the group that the Fromm Brothers had decided to open their facilities for other fur breeders to sell their furs. He touted how fine their auction and display rooms were and that the selling commission would be 3 ½%. That was much less than the 6% that was charged in New York. All breeders pelts would be kept separate from the Fromm Brothers and each would be tagged with a metal ear tag which carried the federal trade-mark and a pelt number. Edward said that all of the commission monies would be used for national silver fox advertising, independent of what the Fromm Brothers spent on their advertising. A two-page Fromm advertisement explaining this proposal was placed in the *American Fur Breeders* magazine.⁸⁹ The Fromm Brothers continued to hold three sales annually from 1936 to November of 1939; autumn, mid- winter, and spring. Over the period of time that these sales were held at the farm well known people such as Albert Einstein, Frank Lloyd Wright and New York Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia attended an auction.⁹⁰

In 1938, the Company placed 40,000 silver fox pelts up for bids at their January auction. The brothers felt that their furs sold for less than they expected. After a family conference it was decided that they would no longer sell their furs to the manufacturers. It was time for the Fromms to manufacture garments and thus be able to control that aspect of the cycle.⁹¹ The brothers also were shocked to discover that some fur manufacturers were switching labels fraudulently, presenting inferior pelted garments as a product of Fromm farms. In November of 1939, Fromm Brothers Inc. became the first fur farmer to manufacture their own pelts into garments. They established the largest fur factory in

⁸⁹ *American Fur Breeders*, "The Fromm Sale and Federal School for Fur Breeders", "Looking Ahead in Fur Farming", by Edward Fromm, November 1937, pages 16-18, 22-25.

⁹⁰ Fromm Bros. Historical Preservation Society, <http://www.frommhistory.org/museum.html>, page 1, accessed April 2012.

⁹¹ Kathrene Pinkerton, *Bright with Silver*, (William Sloane Assoc. Inc., New York, 1947).

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America on Seventh Avenue in New York.⁹² Edward went to New York to oversee the manufacturing company. The Fromms' New York factory completed 1,000 silver fox jackets in 1944.

The Fromms continued to think about manufacturing their fur products locally in Wisconsin. The main stumbling block to doing so was: who would do the fur splitting? It was perceived that someone who could split a pelt and then sew the multiple seams required to create a garment was born not made. Johnnie Fromm, Arthur's son, had replaced Edward as the overseer in the New York factory. One day Johnnie told the foremen that he was going on a two week vacation. Unknown to them, Johnnie took a sewing machine, a pattern and a bundle of fur with him. In that two week time period, Johnnie completed a fox jacket which he took with him to Hamburg to show to Edward. After Edward inspected the jacket, Johnnie told him that he had made it. The hunt began for a local factory.

A two story, 86' x 72' factory was found in Merrill, Wisconsin, eighteen miles from the farm. Needle Trades Inc. was purchased from the City of Merrill by Fromm Brothers Inc. The 125 employees were retained by Fromm Brothers Inc.⁹³ The Company did not expect large production until the workers were trained in the application of fur to garments. When the New York factory learned about the Merrill factory they went on strike demanding that the Merrill factory be closed. The Fromms felt squeezed because they had only planned to make fox garments at Merrill. They still had twelve to fifteen thousand mink to pelt and they would have to find someone on the East Coast with the skill to manufacture mink garments. The timing of the strike was on the side of the Fromms as it happened during the summer, which is the slowest sales season of the year. Work began slowly on garment production at the Merrill factory. The local workers were quick studies and soon 130 workers were producing 30 garments a day. Those numbers were somewhat less than the 36 garments a day produced in New York.

Another problem caused by the strike in New York was the unions refused to allow workers to dress the pelts. The skins had to be fleshed then pickled and dried. They were drummed with maple sawdust, oiled and then stretched. The employees at the Merrill plant mastered this process also. The New York strike lasted 22 months. When negotiations reopened, the Union retreated from its position on closing the Merrill factory.

The Merrill factory proved to be very useful in the Fromms' continuing promotion of silver fox. As the desire by the consumer for long haired fur waned, other fur manufacturers had switched completely to mink. The Fromms were able to keep fox in the marketplace by continuing to manufacture their own silver fox garments. For the next two years, the Fromms singlehandedly held the price of fox from falling further. (Figure #22)

⁹² Liberty Magazine, "Fur Farmers", by Dorothy Roe Lewis, May 5, 1945, pages 31, 81.

⁹³ The Milwaukee Journal, March 16, 1946, "Fromm's Purchase Needle Trades in Merrill".

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In 1945, the Fromm brothers' farm in Hamburg employed 500 workers, many of them from the Hamburg vicinity. The post office was relocated from Hamburg to the farm.⁹⁴ The farm employed a permanent force of 150 workers. This number would go much higher during the pelting, ginseng planting and harvesting seasons. Many of the workers had been with the Fromms for 35 years. The workers were paid well and received full health coverage and workmen's compensation.⁹⁵

In 1945, the brothers pelted 30,000 silver fox, 2,000 blue fox and 15,000 mink. Some of the mink pelts were in three new colors. The rarest mutation in Fromm's mink breeding program was a pearl-platinum mink.⁹⁶ A Milwaukee Journal article published December 12, 1947, stated that Fromms' Hamburg and Thiensville land holdings exceeded 17,000 acres. In 1947, they produced 30,000 silver fox pelts and 24,000 mink pelts.⁹⁷

The market for silver fox was disappearing and even mink prices were dropping in 1947. The Fromms' answer to adversity was to enlarge the Merrill factory and raise the wages. A four-skin fox jacket had to be sold for \$140, less than the price of a single skin in the 1920s. The brothers did not cut fox production. Instead they spent monies on an ad campaign and worked with designers trying to convince them to use fox fur in their fall fashions.

Food costs were rising and the price of meat had tripled. The fox diet required at least two-thirds of it to be meat. Their mill, Federal Foods in Thiensville, was already preparing a cereal formula that was blended with the ground meat to create a balanced diet. Dr. Willard Roberts, a specialist in nutrition, conducted experiments over a two year period to see if other proteins and vitamins might be supplemented for the real meat products. A fortified cereal was created whereby only an additional 35% of meat worked for the foxes and even increased fertility. The mink fortified cereal required an addition of 68% meat. These adjustments saved a great deal of money.

Antibiotics were also added in small quantities. They were credited with staving off disease, stimulating growth and heightening the quality of the fur. In 1949, the Thiensville Mill was enlarged and the Fromms formed a partnership with Dr. Roberts and Loyal Wells in Federal Foods Inc. They employed 60 workers and manufactured cereals for the Fromm enterprises and for 25% of the mink farmed in the United States. Their products contained the slogan "Fifty Thousand Foxes Can't Be Wrong". They also branched into commercial dog food producing \$2 million in annual sales.

⁹⁴ The Honker, "Famous Fromm Fur Farming Family Have Heavenly Haven at Hamburg", November 1945, pages 95-111.

⁹⁵ Foto News Lincoln County Review, July 18, 1957, "Frommland is Amazing Place."

⁹⁶ Liberty Magazine, "Fur Farmers" by Dorothy roe Lewis, May 5, 1945, pages 31, 81.

⁹⁷ Milwaukee Journal, December 12, 1947.

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By 1949, the market for fox had dropped to \$15 a pelt. It cost \$40 to raise a fox from pup to pelt. The Fromms could not hold out any longer and they closed both the Merrill and New York factories. When they pelted that year they pelted heavy, leaving only 1,250 breeders. The retained breeders only filled 625 of the 9,000 fox pens. A nucleus of the very best would be saved for when long haired fur returned to popularity.

The lowest population of breeder foxes occurred in 1954. Only 200 foxes remained. Even much of the spring crop of pups was destroyed as they could not afford to feed them. A pair of foxes was only bringing a price of six dollars. Then, in 1956, the fur pendulum began to swing back to fox. Women began to ask for fox garments instead of mink. To accommodate the resurgence, the 1,000 acre farm in Thiensville doubled fox production.⁹⁸ At the Fromm fur auction held in Hamburg in the fall of 1959, Fromm's Golden Amber fox pelts sold for \$40 to \$70. Even the price for silver fox rose from to \$30 to \$45 a pelt.⁹⁹

In 1960, the Fromm brothers spent \$250,000 promoting fox in what they perceived to be an awakening market.¹⁰⁰ Edward Fromm insisted that Fromm Brothers Inc. continue to breed and harvest foxes through these lean years. Art Buchwald pointed out in his August 5, 1960 column that Edward Fromm was going to have the last laugh with the new resurgence in fox garments. He heralded Edward for creating the mutation "Golden Fox" 23 years ago. Now this color was cornering the fox market.¹⁰¹

A combined crop of Ambers and Silvers were expected to produce 20,000 fox pelts in 1962. The mink harvest was expected to be 60,000.¹⁰² During the early 1960s, Fromm Foods was earning \$2.5 million a year and Fromm Laboratories was earning \$1 million a year.¹⁰³

Raising Mink and Chinchillas

In addition to ginseng and fox farming, the Fromm brothers experimented with raising and breeding other animals for their pelts. In 1933, John Fromm bought several trios of mink. Most fox men looked down on mink as similar to raising rabbits. John found them to be easier to handle and he liked that they were friendly and would become tame. At first, the other brothers were not particularly interested in John's new hobby, but they soon realized that mink fur was much more durable than fox. Once again, the Fromm brothers anticipated the future of the fur industry and began to breed mink. All of

⁹⁸ Sheboygan Press, January 6, 1961, "Giant Fur Industry Being Revived".

⁹⁹ Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune, December 9, 1959, "First Successful Fox Auction in Years at Hamburg".

¹⁰⁰ American Fur Breeders, "Where are Foxes on the Comeback Trail?", December 1966, pages 8-12.

¹⁰¹ Evening Times, Cumberland, MD, August 5, 1960, "Humor", by Art Buchwald.

¹⁰² The Saturday Evening Post, March 10, 1962, "How home-grown ideas outfox the foxes" by Edward Fromm, page 48.

¹⁰³ Sheboygan Press, January 6, 1961, "Giant Fur Industry Being Revived".

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the brothers, now excited with the prospect of a fresh adventure, threw themselves into breeding the best mink in the country. In 1938, the brothers purchased \$70,000 of additional mutation mink breeding stock, expanding their mink herd to 15,000. The mink required a different type of housing than the foxes. Due to rough play, as well as fighting, the mink needed to be housed separately so that they did not scar their pelts.

The brothers used the knowledge they had gained in the select breeding of foxes for color and size and applied that knowledge to mink breeding. As with the first silver fox, the mink being bred at this time were dark in color. The brothers suspected that women would want a lighter more youthful fur. Through generations of mink breeding they produced several light shaded mutations of mink. Other breeders were creating new mutations of mink in platinum and pastel colors. The Fromms spent an additional \$30,000 acquiring mink breeding stock in these colors.¹⁰⁴

In 1942, enough platinum colored mink had not been produced by a single breeder to facilitate the production of a full length mink coat. As a mink promotion, fur judge Herbert Mezger went from mink farm to mink farm gathering the sixty pelts of matched fur needed to make the first Platinum (Silverblu) mink coat. The coat was displayed in Fromms' showroom in New York. Edward Fromm was honored and selected to be the coat's auctioneer at the Waldorf Astoria on News Eve, 1943. The opening bid came from actress Myrna Loy. When the bidding closed, the coat brought a price of \$17,000 and launched the mutation mink market into the world of fashion. Unfortunately, the sale also hastened the demise of the long haired silver fox industry.¹⁰⁵

In 1945, the brothers pelted 15,000 mink. Some of the mink pelts were in three new colors never seen before. The rarest mutation in Fromm's mink breeding program was a pearl-platinum mink.¹⁰⁶ In seven years, the Fromms had built the largest mink herd in the world, mostly consisting of mutation breeding. Tens of thousands of mink pens were constructed on the farm in such a way as to provide the maximum welfare for the mink, but requiring the least amount of labor by the worker. The foxes were fed once a day, but the mink had to be fed twice a day. Mink are sloppy housekeepers and the pens required weekly cleanings. Dogs were housed in the mink pen area and trained to capture live any mink escapee.¹⁰⁷ In 1947, the Fromms produced 24,000 mink pelts.¹⁰⁸

Food costs were rising and the price of meat had tripled. Their mill, Federal Foods in Thiensville, prepared a cereal formula which was blended with ground meat to create a balanced diet. Dr. Willard

¹⁰⁴ Kathrene Pinkerton, Bright with Silver, (William Sloane Assoc. Inc., New York, 1947) pages 1-364.

¹⁰⁵ American Fur Breeders, "Where are Foxes on the Comeback Trail?", December 1966 page 8-12.

¹⁰⁶ Liberty Magazine, "Fur Farmers" by Dorothy roe Lewis, May 5, 1945, pages 31, 81.

¹⁰⁷ Kathrene Pinkerton, Bright with Silver, (William Sloane Assoc. Inc., New York, 1947) pages 1-364.

¹⁰⁸ Milwaukee Journal, December 12, 1947.

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Roberts, a specialist in nutrition, fortified the mink cereal formula with an addition of 68% meat. The mink need for meat was actually greater than that of the fox. Antibiotics were also added in small quantities. These blended diets were credited with staving off disease, stimulating growth and heightening the fur quality. In 1949, the Thiensville Mill was manufacturing mink cereals for Fromm enterprises and for 25% of the mink farmed in the United States.

Mink prices slumped but then quickly recovered in 1948. The Fromms began to breed a mink mutation known as Sapphires. As their name suggests the fur had a bluish tint. The breed was very rare and breeding stock was very hard to find. They purchased what breeding stock was available throughout the country for \$60,000. The Sapphire variety was not very hardy and many times only one kit would survive from a litter.

In 1950, the Fromms pelted 33,000 mink. Because of the declining desire for longhaired fur, they cut the remaining fox breeders down to 500 pairs.¹⁰⁹ The Fromms began mink auctions in the Hamburg auction gallery. These auctions were held several times a year until 1960.¹¹⁰ At the 1957 auction, over 45,000 mink pelts were offered to 400 buyers. These mink were produced by ranches in Wisconsin, Michigan, Minnesota, and Illinois.¹¹¹ The Fromm brothers' mink operation was producing 50,000 mink kits annually.

In 1962, the Fromm mink harvest was expected to exceed 60,000 mink pelts. However, the public was slowly tiring of mink and in the later part of the 1960s the fur pendulum began to swing back to garments made from fox. Unfortunately, the Fromm Empire broke apart in 1963. Edward and Walter remained together as partners in the ginseng and fur operations. Since their hearts always remained in fox production, the mink were disposed of in 1970.

The Fromms briefly entered into raising Chinchillas in 1945. A pair of Chinchillas was commanding a price of \$1,500 to \$5,000. However, their pelts only brought a price of \$50 per pelt. The Fromms' herd never numbered more than 200. The Chinchillas were found to chew on their own fur and in that process damaged their pelts. A Chinchilla shed was built in 1948, but the animals were not kept much past that date.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ Kathrene Pinkerton, Bright with Silver, (William Sloane Assoc. Inc., New York, 1947), page 1-364

¹¹⁰ American Fur Breeder Magazine, December 1966, "Where are Foxes on the Comeback Trail?", pages 8-12.

¹¹¹ Foto News Lincoln County Review, December 12, 1957 "They Spend Thousands of Dollars in Silence".

¹¹² The Honker, November 1945, "Famous Fromm Fur Farming Family Have Heavenly Haven at Hamburg", pages 95-111.

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End of the Fromm Brothers Farm

In July of 1963, Henry Fromm Sr., John W. Fromm, John A. Fromm (Arthur's son) and Mark Koenig (Henry Fromm Sr.'s son-in-law) sought to remove Edward Fromm from his position as president of all operations and subsidiaries. They alleged that Edward Fromm was operating all companies in an arbitrary, dictatorial, domineering, fraudulent and unlawful manner without regard to the articles of the corporation.¹¹³ Edward was stunned and filed a countersuit on behalf of himself and Walter Fromm for \$2 million in damages. Edward charged his two brothers and his nephews with conspiracy to obtain control of the company and thereby jeopardizing the farm, Fromm Laboratories and Federal Foods.¹¹⁴ In his countersuit, Edward forgave his brothers Henry and John stating that they were "unwittingly engaged" in the conspiracy.¹¹⁵ An out of court settlement was reached in 1964 whereby Edward and Walter would purchase all of the lands and buildings in Hamburg, the ginseng operation and the fox and mink operation with their share of the property dispersal. The Hamburg farm would continue under the name Fromm Brothers Inc.

Henry Fromm had been very interested in re-forestation of the land that had been harvested by loggers and had conducted a yearly planting of one-half million trees. He said "We'll never live to see the trees mature and maybe not our children, but our grandchildren will have at least 12,000 acres of forest." Little did he realize what role the Fromm forest land would play in the dispersal of property in 1964. These vast timber holdings were sold, Fromm Laboratories (sold to Salisbury Laboratories in Charles City, IA), Federal Foods and other lands in Ozaukee County were liquidated and the assets were divided among the remaining stock holders.¹¹⁶

After the settlement in 1964, Edward, now 74, and Walter, now 76, continued to fulfill the dream that was started so many years ago. In an interview in the December 1966 American Fur Breeder, Edward conceded that the firm did lose a considerable amount of money during the years that there was no market for either ginseng or fox. Having both markets in decline had never happened before. The brothers had always adopted a policy of stockpiling in the lean times. Edward quickly stopped talking about the past and turned the conversation to what was happening on the farm. Edward and Walter pelted 30,000 mink, 6,500 silver, amber and pearl foxes in 1966. The foxes were expected to bring \$65 per pelt. In addition, they had 100 acres of ginseng in various stages of growth.

In 1966, the famed Paris fashion designer St. Laurent featured a coat in his fall collection made from Fromm Mauve Amber fox. Edward was proud to point out that these furs were the product of 50

¹¹³ The Milwaukee Sentinel, July 18, 1963.

¹¹⁴ The Milwaukee Sentinel, July 22, 1963, "Is the Fromm Brothers fur, drug, feed and ginseng empire about to collapse?"

¹¹⁵ Wausau Daily Herald, February 5, 1964, "Fromm Suits Settled; Mink Farm to Keep Operating".

¹¹⁶ Merrill Daily Herald, February 5, 1964, "Ten Lawsuits settled out of Court".

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generations of selective breeding. Additional designers: Gruskin & Feldman, Ben Kahn and the Christie Brothers were also featuring Fromm fox coats in their fall collections. Edward and Walter had 30,000 fox pelts in storage ready for this surge in fox popularity.¹¹⁷

In 1970, Edward, now 80, and Walter, now 82, disposed of their mink. Even at this time in their lives they continued the process of raising foxes and ginseng they started so many years ago. Edward and Walter never lost sight of their original mission to breed the perfect fox pelt. They anticipated a harvest of 4,000 silver and amber foxes in 1971.¹¹⁸

Walter passed away in June of 1975 and Edward purchased his assets in the company, thereby becoming the sole owner of Fromm Brothers Inc.¹¹⁹

Edward continued his fox breeding until the very end. Ned Tead, grandson of Edward, became the president of Fromm Brothers Inc. in 1985 and took over the responsibilities of the corporation. Edward passed away June 19, 1986 at the age of 96 leaving Tead as the sole owner. Edward was buried in the small Fromm family burial plot in a cemetery located near the southeast corner of the headquarters property. He is buried next to his wife Alice and his mother and father. According to Tead, Edward left \$2 million worth of debt to satisfy. Tead sold the remaining assets including the headquarters farm. The last of Edward's foxes were sold in 1986 and the last plot of ginseng was dug in 1988.¹²⁰

Gary and Sue Mason purchased the Fromm Brothers farm headquarters, which now comprises 266 contiguous acres, in 1998. The Masons live in the one remaining home that is part of the original property, the Henry and Mamie Fromm house. They have formed the Fromm Bros. Historical Preservation Society Inc. and with other interested volunteers have opened the Clubhouse to the public as a museum. Their mission is to preserve and educate the public about the fascinating story of brothers Edward, Henry, John and Walter Fromm and the contributions that they made to the fur and ginseng industries as well as the impact the Fromm Brothers farm had on Hamburg and the surrounding community.

AGRICULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

When attempting to compare the size of the Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farm to other fur ranches in the United States or for that matter the ranches of Prince Edward Island one needs to

¹¹⁷ American Fur Breeder, December 1966, pages 8-12.

¹¹⁸ Wausau Daily Herald, December 3, 1971, "Harvesting foxes for finery" by Ben Luedtke.

¹¹⁹ A Happy Anniversary to Us a Century in Hamburg 1876-1976, published by Centennial Committee, 1976, pages 22-29.

¹²⁰ Foto News, August 8, 1990, "Rags to riches, riches to rags."

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comprehend the true scope of both the Fromm's fox and mink breeding capabilities. From the 1920s to the 1970s, Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farm drove the industry.

After the success of Charles Dalton of Prince Edward Island in 1909, the silver fox raising fever swept westward through Canada and down into the northern American states. Prominent American silver fox breeder, James A Kane, whose ranch was located East Northport, N. Y. befriended the Fromm brothers and became their mentor.¹²¹ Kane supplied the Fromms with their first "outcast" breeding foxes.¹²²

The first fox boom lasted until the onset of World War I in 1914, when the price of silver fox pelts dropped to almost nothing. James A. Kane went bankrupt. The Fromm brothers were able to weather this slump as they were just beginning. In fact they were able to benefit from misfortune of others by buying excellent breeders for next to nothing.

As the Fromm brothers' silver fox production double and tripled in size so did the prices of silver fox pelts. Canada's 727 small independent fur ranches were producing millions of dollars' worth of pelts. The largest Canadian breeder was the Morrison & Milligan Ranch. They sold \$769,500 of *live* foxes for breeders in 1925.¹²³

In America, the Fromms organized a 400 member association known as "Federal Silver Fox". Members were able to bring their furs to the Fromm farm auctions. The commission for the privilege of participating in a Fromm auction was 3 ½% which the Fromms then used to launch advertising campaigns for *all* of the silver fox breeders. The Fromm brothers had become the largest fox fur breeder in the world but they never tried to eliminate their fellow fox breeders. When times were good, there was room enough for everyone.

The second boom ended with the crash of 1929 and the onset of the Depression. Again, most fox breeders went bankrupt. Many factors contributed to the Fromm brothers being able to withstand the ups and downs of the fur markets. One factor of course was the ginseng. The other would have to be the guidance of Edward Fromm. During the Depression he encouraged designers to split the fox pelts for use on economic garments. The assets of the brothers were always kept together. The entire Fromm family subsisted on the farm during these hard times and fox production would be cut back. However, they never suspended their breeding programs. They still produced a yearly generation thus never losing the genetic progress that had been made.

¹²¹ Hunter Trapper Magazine, Vol. 30, April 1915, page 138

¹²² Katherene Pinkerton, Bright with Silver, (William Sloane Assoc. Inc., New York, 1947) page 58

¹²³ Mark Bourrie, "Prince Edward Island's Silver Fox Bubble", November 21, 2012, fullcomment.nationalpost/2012/10/21/mark-bourrie-prince-edward-islands-silver-fox-bubble/

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After the end of World War II in 1945, the Fromms expanded both ginseng and the fox and mink production. They never lost their status of world's largest fox producer and world's largest mink producer until the brothers began to grow old and the clash of two brothers against two brothers caused the assets of the Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farm to be divided.

COMMERCE

The Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farm is associated with a significant continuum of agricultural contributions to the commercial growing of ginseng and the husbandry of fox and mink. Commercially, both of these products were marketed and sold through Fromm Brothers Inc. The Fromm brothers launched ambitious advertising campaigns to promote their fur products. Fromm Brothers Inc. employed many skilled workers at their factories in New York and in Merrill, Wisconsin. The farm in Hamburg was the largest employer in the area and contributed to the prosperity of the surrounding community.

Edward Fromm's position within the enterprise known as the Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farm was one of administrator. His true marketing genius became apparent to everyone as he solely guided the worldwide fur markets. No other outside entity ever threatened or exercised any control over the destiny of the Fromm brothers' fur enterprises. Much of this domination was possible because of the size, scope and quality of Fromm fox and mink products. Through years of genetic application, the Fromm brothers had created the finest quality, largest and most luxurious furs being produced in the world and dominated both the fox and mink industries.

When very few could afford a Fromm fur during the Great Depression, Edward traveled to Paris and convinced the designers and couturiers to split the fox pelts and use these split pelts to add luxury fox trim to simple garments. Edward's concept was embraced and soon a variety of garments were trimmed with Fromm fur. Edward's ingenious and inventive marketing allowed the Fromm fur farm to produce fur even during the Depression.

Edward shocked the fur world in January of 1936 when he informed the buyers that they would have to come to the farm in central Wisconsin if they wanted to purchase Fromm silver fox furs. This was a daring gamble, but it worked and the New York fur buyers trekked to the Fromm farm in the middle of winter. Much to their delight, they were pampered, fed and entertained by the entire Fromm family. When the auction was over, they left with fox pelts of tremendous quality. Edward even promoted the saga of the perfect fox pelt. He labeled silver fox pelt #2989 as "the perfect pelt" at the 1937 Fromm auction. The excitement over this one pelt created tremendous exposure for Fromm Furs. A bidding war ensued whereby Marshall Field and Company purchased the fur for \$2,100 and placed in it a display case in their store.

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Edward proposed, in 1938, to take further control of the destiny of their fur products. The decision was made to no longer rely on the fur buyers to purchase their furs. Fur auctions would cease to be held at the farm. The Fromm Brothers were going to transform their pelts into garments at their newly purchased fur garment factory on Seventh Avenue in New York. They would sell the completed garments from their fur gallery located at the front of the factory.

The fur advertising campaigns that were launched by the Fromm brothers were always accompanied by an indication that any fur that they produced was quality guaranteed. They began to attach a medal medallion to each pelt or product which could be returned to Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farm for a certificate of pedigree tracing the breed of that fox back four generations.

One such fur advertising campaign culminated with the Fromms launching an exhibit of their new lighter silver fox fur at the 1933-1934 Century of Progress Chicago World's Fair. Models wore sumptuous soft, shimmering silver fox fur coats, muffs, capes, wraps and scarves on a revolving platform. The exhibit became one of the most popular at the fair and stimulated the public's desire for Fromm furs.

In the September 1945 Harper's Bazaar Magazine, the one page "Fromm" advertisement utilized such adjectives as breathless beauty, sophisticated elegance and superb – soigné to describe the knee length silver fox fur coat with large bell sleeves worn by a stylish model. Thanks to the marketing imperiousness of Edward, Fromm furs took on an air of sophistication.

The ad also related that all Fromm furs are bred on the Fromm ranches in Wisconsin, styled in Fromm studios, and sold in finer stores everywhere. Their familiar quality statement was once again inserted "this fur is identified by the Fromm blue-ribbon pedigree medallion". Edward certainly demonstrated that he was not intimidated by any other fur producer.

Edward wanted to bring their fur garment manufacturing closer to home and in 1945 opened a fur manufacturing company in Merrill, Wisconsin. The Merrill factory proved very useful in keeping Fromm fox garments in the market place as the consumer's desire for long haired fur waned. During the years 1947 and 1948, Edward singlehandedly held the price of fox from falling further than it had already.

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ARCHITECTURE

As noted above, the Walter and Mabel Fromm House was individually listed in 1982 the area of architecture. While most of the buildings on the farm are primarily utilitarian in form and appearance, the Clubhouse (1934, 1944) is a fine local example of the Rustic Style. With its log construction from local timber and large fireplaces, it recalls the popularity of the style for retreats and lodges.

The style began with simple structures being built in the wilderness using readily available indigenous material, which made the structures less expensive than if material had to be shipped. Considered a unique vernacular architectural style, the construction form depended entirely upon the length of the available logs. The various ethnic groups settling in the state also brought their distinctive construction and framing methods.

Rustic architecture emerged from a tradition of domestic and resort architecture in rugged and scenic places such as the coast of Maine, the Adirondacks of New York, the San Francisco Bay Area, and the Sierra Madre of California, and was characterized by the use of natural, local materials and handcrafted finishes. As the idea of developing nature and wilderness for personal pleasure extended throughout America, an increasing number of public parks, at the local, state, and national levels, adopted the rustic style of architecture for numerous park structures.¹²⁴ The style became the accepted architecture for vacation homes around the country as examples received national attention through publications in architectural journals and popular magazines.¹²⁵ The wealthy people who were building these large structures had the means to build with other materials; however, the logs fitted the romantic notion of the simple life in the unspoiled wilderness. Even though it was not really the simple life, they wanted to make it appear as though they were "roughing it." In Wisconsin, the style was also very popular in the northern part of the state for family retreats, vacation homes and resorts.

Built as the result of tornado treefall on the property, the Clubhouse fits into the notion of "roughing it" that the Fromms wished to portray to their visiting buyers. While entertained with food and drink, visitors were provided with the "North Woods ambiance" that helped promote the furs they were purchasing.

¹²⁴ Linda F. McClelland, "Historic Park Landscapes in National and State Parks" (National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, August 1995), E: 27.

¹²⁵ Old-House Journal, January/February, 1983, "The Adirondack Rustic Style" by Harvey Kaiser, p. 29.

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BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

While significance under criterion B applies only to the four brothers (Walter, Edward, John, and Henry) who started the enterprise, who lived on the farm and oversaw the daily operations in Hamburg, the biographical information for all of the brothers who played a role in the business is included below.

Arthur Fromm (b. July 4, 1884, d. 1945)

Arthur Fromm was the first born child of Frederick and Alwina Fromm. Five more brothers and three sisters (Clara born 1895, Erna born 1901, and Nora born 1904) would follow. Frederick, a farmer, had high expectations for his sons. He wanted all of his sons, upon graduation from their area school, to continue their education at a normal school in Wausau. Here they would obtain a teaching certificate and enter the teaching profession. Arthur was the first son to fulfill his father's dream. However, after teaching for only a short period of time, Arthur left teaching and enrolled in the University of Wisconsin earning a degree in botany and science. Again he became a teacher and taught botany at the university level for five years. Arthur quit the teaching profession once again and with his wife Delia and their son John he became the manager of a citrus orchard in Florida.

Although Arthur never became an official partner in The Company, the brothers encouraged him to return to Wisconsin. Arthur took up residence in Thiensville, becoming the superintendent for the Thiensville fox and ginseng operations.

Arthur's greatest contribution to the family enterprise came in the 1930s. Early on, the Fromms developed a seeding process for their ginseng. Large ginseng seedling losses were occurring due to root rot. Arthur had a theory that the seeds carried the rot spores to the new beds. Utilizing his experience in botany, he performed experiments treating the seeds with various strengths of a formaldehyde solution. Because of the slow germination of ginseng seeds it took three years to truly realize if his experiments were successful. The seed treatment process was a great success. The process Arthur perfected is still being performed today by ginseng growers to control root rot.

Arthur died in 1945.

Herbert Fromm (b. November 14, 1885, d. 1963)

Herbert Fromm followed in his brother Arthur's footsteps and became a teacher. It was a profession that he would continue until his retirement. At the time of his retirement, he did return to the Hamburg area with his wife Alma and sons Herbert Jr. and William and worked on the Fromm farm.

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Herbert was not an original member of The Company. He did help the brothers with their struggling company in 1911 with an influx of cash that he had saved from teaching. However, in 1919 he cashed out his share.

Walter Fromm (b. May 4, 1888, d. 1975)

Walter and his three younger brothers loved to spend time roaming the woods. They trapped skunk, weasels, raccoon, mink, and red fox and used the monies earned from selling their pelts to purchase guns, ammuniton, camping gear and bicycles.

Walter always monitored the fur market reports in Hunter Trapper Trader magazine. As the boys' dream of being silver fox farmers began to take shape, Walter embraced Henry's idea of catching the young red fox pups in the woods and raising them to maturity and then selling their pelts in the early winter.

Walter followed his father's wishes and became a teacher. He taught school for one year before quitting and returning to the farm. The demands of the ginseng and fox enterprises were just too great and his brothers needed his help. Walter became the manager of the ginseng operation. He studied the ginseng seeds, discovering the lengthy time period for germination. He developed a process of stored germination before the actual planting of the ginseng seeds.

Walter solved the problem of gathering humus from the woods, discovering that straw could successfully be used to mulch the plants without any adverse effects. The use of straw mulch by ginseng growers is still used today. Preparation of new ginseng beds was done by gathering loam. As the operation grew this process became unmanageable. Walter solved this problem by planting a crop of oats and instead of harvesting the oats he plowed them under.

Because ginseng had never before been grown on a large scale, no mechanical equipment existed to facilitate various processes. Walter invented a horse drawn spraying system with a hose that unrolled from a reel in order to fight the battle against ginseng blight. Washing the ginseng in the fall had become a dreaded task so Walter created a belt driven ginseng washing machine to remove the dirt from the roots after harvest. Seeding by hand became tedious and time consuming so Walter invented a thirteen row ginseng seed planter which ideally fit the size of the ginseng beds. A converted a double potato digger was re-configured to a ginseng digger by adding a center plow and a vibrating apron. The ginseng growers of today still utilize this type of harvester.

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Walter and his wife Mabel built a brick house in the Period Revival style adjacent to County Road F, the southern boundary of the property. In 1963, when the breakup of the Company occurred, Walter remained with Edward on the Hamburg property and continued to manage the ginseng crop. In 1966, Walter planted a record thirty acres of ginseng. In 1972, Walter and Edward began to provide funding for pharmacological research targeting two compounds found in ginseng for cancer treatment. Walter died in 1975 and his last crop of ginseng was harvested in 1988.

Edward Fromm (b. March 6, 1890, d. June 19, 1986)

Edward's role in The Company was the administrative head of the firm. The Company was formed in 1901 as a partnership between himself and his brothers Henry, John and Walter. Edward managed both the ginseng and fur businesses practices of the farm. Although the brothers always sought each other's opinion over new ideas or changes in practices, Edward truly shaped the retail aspect of their fur venture. For over 40 years he would create advertising campaigns which promoted Fromm fur. He molded public fur opinions on color and how fur was used, either as an entire garment or just for trim on a cloth garment. Edward was instrumental in instituting new fur manufacturing techniques.

Edward had tremendous forethought and patience. When the ginseng markets shut down because of unrest in China in the early 1930s, Edward traveled to China and studied Chinese interest in ginseng. He discovered that there would always be a market for American ginseng in China. He convinced the brothers to store their ginseng from 1931 to 1946. The warehouse was filled with each year's crop of dried ginseng. After the end of World War II, when the Chinese markets finally re-opened, the Fromms sold their stored ginseng for over \$1 million.

One of Edward's most productive ideas was to combine all of the young foxes, after they were separated from their parents, on wooded ranges. This process produced the finest fox pelts that the brothers had ever seen.

Two years into the Depression the general public could no longer afford Fromm fur, Edward traveled to Paris. Fox had always been used in a two-pelt scarf which could retail for hundreds of dollars. Edward convinced the Paris designers to split the fox pelts and use the fur as trim detailing on simple garments. After the Depression, Edward pioneered the assembly of multiple pelt garments. The five pelt fox jacket became a fashionable necessity.

Edward always liked to be in control of the destiny of the firm. He introduced auctions which were held at the farm in Hamburg thereby making the fur buyers of New York come to Hamburg. In order to shape fashion, The Company opened a fur garment factory in New York making their own designs and marketing them from their showroom. In 1933, Edward launched the Fromm lighter brighter

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Silver Fox furs at the 1933-1934 Century of Progress Chicago World's Fair. The public loved the exhibit and the new "Bright with Silver" color of fox fur skyrocketed.

Edward always dreamed of producing fur garments near, or at, the farm. In 1945, The Company opened a fur garment factory in Merrill, Wisconsin much to the dismay of the New York unions. Edward refused to concede to the union's position that the Merrill be closed. Both factories continued to produce fur products until 1949 when the price of fur drastically dropped.

After reading his articles on distemper in American Fox & Fur Farming magazine, Edward engaged Dr. Robert G. Green of the University of Minnesota to find a cure for encephalitis and distemper in foxes. These discoveries, funded by the Fromm Brothers, would lead to worldwide use of distemper vaccine in dogs.

After the Fromm Empire broke apart in 1963, Edward and wife Alice remained in their house on the Fromm farm and Edward continued to raise foxes until his death in 1986.

John Fromm (b. April 12, 1892, d. November 24, 1970)

John never married and lived in his apartment on the second floor of the warehouse. He was shy and remote, but as a boy he was an exceptional trapper earning twice as much off his trapping skills as his two older brothers.

John was not required by his father to go to school and become a teacher. As Frederick got older he recognized that his two strongest sons, John and Henry, would be an asset to him on the farm. Both John and Henry only received a seventh grade education.

John's role in The Company was shared with his brother Henry. They were responsible for the management of the fur producing animals. This responsibility included diet, disease prevention, housing and mating. John had an eye for color and contrast and he was responsible for putting together all of the yearly fox matings. John also had sensitivity for what the foxes required to feel relaxed, happy and comfortable. He understood that the fox parents should not be separated after mating but allowed to remain together and share in the parenting process. He also knew from his hours spent in the woods that the fox mothers often moved their pups when they felt threatened. John provided two houses per pen so that each fox mother could move from house to house whenever they so desired.

In 1933, John introduced mink to the farm much to the dismay of the brothers. However, the brothers soon realized the desirability of the mink fur and became excited with the new venture. By 1945, the Fromm Brothers became the largest mink producers in the world.

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Henry Fromm (b. July 31, 1893, d. July 1978)

Henry Fromm also had an early interest in the creatures of the forest, especially the fox. He often roamed the woods with his older brother John. Henry was the first to come up with the idea of capturing young red fox pups in the woods, bringing them home and raising them until their fur was maximized in early winter and then selling their pelts. Like Edward, John and Walter, his dream was to raise the silver fox. Henry only had a seventh grade education.

Henry was dubbed "the fox man" and along with John managed the fur producing aspect of The Company. Henry formulated the fox feeding program procuring local horses whose meat was ground for feed. Cereal, eggs, fruits and vegetables were added when available. When the foxes came down with rickets, Henry realized that in the wild the fox ate the whole animal, including the bones. He immediately began to grind and add the horse bones to the feeding program.

Henry with his wife Mary Jacob (Mamie) built a home in the center of the fox ranges. There they raised a son and a daughter.

Henry reforested much of the area in and around Hamburg by planting 500,000 trees annually on Fromm properties. When the partnership dissolved in 1963, the 12,000 acres of forest played a major role in the dispersal of monies.

CONCLUSION

The Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farm is significant for its contributions to the domestication and proliferation of ginseng farming as well as for its contribution to the commercial animal husbandry of fox and mink. Both of these products were marketed from the farm. The overall high concentration of extant historic structures remaining on the farm conveys a sense of time and place and still portrays the accomplishments associated with this property. The farm, as a collection of buildings and structures, acts as a reminder that throughout its existence it was an integral part of the Hamburg community, providing for both employment and social interaction. Former Fromm workers have reminisced of their time at the farm and it continues as an oral history passed from one generation to another. The period of significance extends from 1904 when the brothers planted their first ginseng beds to 1964 when family turmoil resulted in a lawsuit that mandated the disposal of the corporation's assets. During this sixty-year time period, the Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farm saw their largest expansion and the contributions that the Fromms made to both industries were achieved.

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The acreage of the Fromm empire was expanded from the 160 acre dowry of Alwina Nieman to over 17,000 acres. The expanded acreage included thousands of acres of re-planted forest and several additional farms that were purchased for the purpose of ginseng planting. These additional acres are not directly related to the headquarters property. The nucleus of the farm was always on the acreage being nominated. All of the fox processing, ginseng processing and auctions were conducted within the boundaries of the farm compound described in this nomination. The farm takes on added scientific and agricultural significance as the location of the many "firsts" made in ginseng, fox and mink farming.

The Fromm brothers influenced the ginseng industry by adapting and influencing the way that ginseng was produced. They were the first to successfully cultivate ginseng on a large scale in a farm plot setting. Although their neighbor Reinhold Dietsch introduced them to wild ginseng and was said to be growing his gathered plants in a garden setting, the Fromms expanded his process to a grand scale. At first, all of the ginseng processes: seeding, spraying, digging and sorting were done by hand, as no machinery had been invented to execute these various tasks. The Fromm brothers willingness to experiment with new farming methods and to explore the invention of new machinery helped to reduce the number of men needed to complete any given task and thereby reduced costs.

The Fromms mastered the process of seed stratification and changed ginseng growing from a gathering process to a controlled propagation process. The Fromms practiced yearly planting of three to thirty acres of seeded ginseng from 1907 to the early 1980s.

Instead of gathering humus from the forests, oats were planted and then plowed under. They also determined that the use of straw did not harm the plants and reduced the manpower needed to collecting leaves for mulching. If you drive through Marathon County, Wisconsin in the fall you will see today's ginseng growers still mulching their ginseng with straw.

The Fromm brothers were very in tune with the forest environment, due to the amount of time that they spent in the woods hunting ginseng and trapping fox. They understood that ginseng grew under the filtered sun light of the forest canopy. They designed arbors to mimic the restricted forest light. The slats of the arbors were laid from north to south allowing for only 66% of sunlight to filter through. This configuration produced alternating sun and shade. The use of arbors to filter sunlight for the ginseng is still utilized today.

At first the ginseng plots were excavated by hand. As the size and scope of Fromms' ginseng operation expanded, mechanization was essential. Because of their skill in ginseng cultivation their plots were producing two thousand pounds of ginseng per acre. Harvests of this magnitude had never been seen before. When the Second World War had the local young men going to war, Walter Fromm

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and Herbert Kleinschmidt modified a used potato digger. The machine dug the ginseng out of the ground and carried it up on the vibrating apron. After shaking off the excess dirt, the machine dropped the ginseng roots behind the unit where they could easily be gathered. The ginseng growers of today still utilize this process.¹²⁶

As with all ginseng grown commercially (in close proximity to one another), blight is a constant concern. Over the years they developed blight sprays and dusts in their laboratory in Grafton, Wisconsin. Arthur Fromm was a trained botanist and he conducted experiments on the seeds of the ginseng. The Fromms believed that the seeds were transporting the blight spores to the ginseng beds. He soaked the seeds in a formaldehyde solution. His experiments proved fruitful and the ginseng producers of today still decontaminate their seeds before planting.¹²⁷

Another labor intensive and despised job was washing and sorting ginseng. At first, the washing process was done by dipping the ginseng in the creek. As the tonnage of the harvest grew to astronomical proportions, Herbert Kleinschmidt created a tumbling drum which was set into a sunken pit. The drum was operated by an electric motor. Kleinschmidt went on to build a sorting drum and table which assisted in separating and sorting the different grades of ginseng. These processes are still used today.¹²⁸

The Fromms discovered that drying ginseng was an art. They were the first to design a structure which was equipped with forced air heat and fans to expedite the drying of the ginseng. It was important to properly dry ginseng so that it would not mold. Because of their drying methods, they could respond to the changing ginseng markets. They would store their ginseng in bins and barrels for an indefinite period of time waiting for ginseng prices to rise.

Ginseng production was the facilitator for the fox farming enterprise. The early years of trying to find the mythical silver fox and then hoping that one would be produced by their red foxes is a tale that makes a great story line for a movie. The real success that was achieved by the Fromm brothers was through their genetics program and their meticulous record keeping. Once silver fox breeders were purchased, everything was recorded. Pen numbers and matings were tattooed into the ears of the pups and also recorded on paper. Pelt quality was compared to breeding records. If inferior animals occurred, parents, grandparents and great grandparents could be removed from their breeding program. Only the very best were kept for breeding purposes.

¹²⁶ Modified Potato Digger, clark.wsu.edu/horticulture/ginseng/chpt05/plant.html, accessed April 2012.

¹²⁷ Treating Ginseng Seeds, trappersfreedom.proboards.com/index.cgi?board=mushroom, accessed April 2012.

¹²⁸ Glen Moberg, "Wisconsin Ginseng Commands Premium Price", 2010 for Public Radio, www.npr.org/News/Business, accessed April 2012.

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Because of the brothers' concern for the safety and comfort of their fox, they went to great lengths to provide for their needs. They designed pens that responded to the foxes' natural inclinations. And, the Fromms were the only fox breeder using furring ranges in the United States. These ranges provided an environment very similar to their natural woodland habitat. The foxes flourished as did their pelts.

The Fromms took great advantage of a huge drop in the silver fox market prices in 1915 and 1916 and were able to purchase many quality breeders. They took a huge gamble, believing that a lighter, brighter, more youthful looking silver fox fur would ultimately sweep American women's desire for garments made from *their* foxes. When trends moved in their direction they influenced the fur world by making the buyers come to them and hosted large fur auctions at the farm. They controlled the fur market even further by producing their own garments both in New York and in Merrill, Wisconsin.

Growing a fox pelt for market required good nutrition, safety, and cold weather. The foxes' diet was studied and improved upon over many years. Animal bones were ground and added to the foxes diet to eliminate rickets. Vitamins were added to ward off disease and fend off deficiencies. Finally, when the cost of meat became a strain on operations, a nutritionist was hired to formulate a high protein cereal. This is how Federal Foods was established in 1948 (now known as Fromm Family Foods). They created balanced diets for the animals of the Fromm farm and then began to produce commercial feeds for fox and mink farmers. Currently, the company produces organic food for dogs and cats.

During the pinnacle of the Fromm brothers' fox production (1926 to 1947) they dwarfed any fox farming operation by pelting 12,000 to 40,000 foxes a year. When the desire for long haired fur waned and short haired mink became the fur of choice of discerning women, the Fromm brothers became the largest mink breeder in the United States in 1947.

The Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farm is also associated with the development of a vaccine for distemper, although the laboratory was located elsewhere. The farm in Hamburg was where the first distemper vaccine was administered.

The remaining acreage and associated buildings and structures continue to represent the contributions of the Fromm brothers to the growing of ginseng and the raising of specialty foxes and the marketing of their pelts. While the Fromms purchased many more farms in the vicinity to aid in these endeavors, and used family property in Thiensville for the breeding of foxes, most of the experimentation and management took place at the Hamburg farm. As such, the nominated farm is the property most closely associated with the four Fromm brothers who formed "The Company" and their national contributions to ginseng and fox farming and to the marketing of specialty furs. In addition, the Clubhouse is eligible at the local level in the area of architecture as a fine and highly intact example of the Rustic style.

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http://www.leagle.com/xml/Result.aspx?page=3&xmlidoc=1960107819gqtv1059_1880

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"Treating Ginseng Seeds", trapperfreedom.proboards.com/index.cgi?board=mushroom, accessed April 2012.

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blog.lib.umn.edu/moore144/aharchives/medical_school, accessed April 2012.

United States Patent Office, Dr. Robert G. Green MD, applied March 9, 1937, application for patent Distemper Vaccine Serial Number 129,955, <http://www.google.com/patents/US2136131>, accessed April 2012.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 10 Page 1

Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farm
Town of Hamburg, Marathon County, Wisconsin

Acree of Property 380.1 acres

UTM References:

1 16 274555.56 4997017.53
Zone Easting Northing

2 16 272953.30 4997079.06
Zone Easting Northing

3 16 272977.49 4997886.69
Zone Easting Northing

4 16 273388.93 4998279.09
Zone Easting Northing

5 16 273790.39 4998261.84
Zone Easting Northing

6 16 274585.62 4998014.10
Zone Easting Northing

Verbal Boundary Description:

The boundary line of the site being nominated as the Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farm begins on the north edge of the pavement of County Road F at the southwest corner of the ½ acre cemetery which is located in the southeast corner of Section 11 of Hamburg Township at the intersection of 3rd Lane and County Road F. The boundary line proceeds west alongside County Road F past the Walter Fromm residence 362 County Road F (Stanley Pophal property), the entrance to the Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farm 436 County Road F (Gary and Sue Mason property) and the Edward Fromm house 442 County Road F (Rebecca Jakubowski Pospyhalla property) ending at the southwest corner of the Pospyhalla property. The boundary line then turns 90 degrees to the north and proceeds along the east boundary of the parcel, and then turns 90 degrees to the west and proceeds along the north boundary line of the St. Johns Church property ending at 5th Lane. The boundary line then turns 90 degrees to the north and proceeds north paralleling 5th Lane along the west edge of the Mason property ending at the midpoint of Section 11. The boundary line then turns 90 degrees to the east and proceeds approximately 1282 feet, then turning 90 degrees to the north and proceeding approximately 1,320 feet, then turning 90 degrees to the east and proceeding approximately 1,307 feet, then turning 90 degrees to the south and proceeding approximately 663 feet, then turning 90 degrees to the east and proceeding approximately 2,612 feet culminating at 3rd Lane. The boundary line then turns 90 degrees to the south along 3rd Lane and proceeds approximately south along the east edge of the Mason property. It continues along 3rd Lane south along the east edge of the Pophal property ending at the northeast corner of the cemetery. The boundary of the nominated property then follows the north and west boundary of the cemetery, terminating at the point where the boundary description began: County Road F and the southwest corner of the ½ acre cemetery. The boundaries of the site appear on the Boundary Map enclosed with the nomination.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 10 Page 2

Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farm
Town of Hamburg, Marathon County, Wisconsin

The boundary line shown on the Boundary Map encompasses the Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farm. All of the land included in the Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farm site is where the ginseng, fox and mink were produced and processed as has been discussed in the text of this nomination. It includes the following:

265.64 acres of land owned by the Gary and Sue Mason 436 County Road F, Athens, Wisconsin 54411, SEC 11-30-05 PT OF SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ - LOT 1 CSM VOL 24 PG 124 (#6509) (DOC #951066), one acre. SEC 11-30-05 PT OF S $\frac{1}{2}$ & S $\frac{1}{2}$ N $\frac{1}{2}$ LOT 1 CSM VOL 43 PG 52 (#10420) (DOC#114865), 265.635 acres,

70.02 acres of land owned by Jonnathan P. King 7608 Red Fox Run, Rhinelander, WI 54501, SEC 11-30-05 PT OF SE $\frac{1}{4}$ THAT PT OF LOT 2 CSM VOL 43 PG 52 (#10420) (DOC # 1148465) DESD AS COM AT SE COR SD SEC 11 N ALG E LN 33' W 24.75' N 643.16' TO POB N 1962.48' W 1825.08' S 1317.40' E 813.93' S 642.62 FT E 1006.93 TO POB.

38.45 acres of land owned by Fromm Brothers Incorporated 362 County Road F, Athens, Wisconsin 54411, SEC 11-30-05 PT OF SE $\frac{1}{4}$ LOT 2 CSM VOL 43 PG 52 (#10420) (DOC #1148465 EX THAT PR DESD AS COM AT SE COR SD SEC N 33' W 24.75' N 643.16' TO POB CONT N 1962.48' W 1825.08' S 1317.40' E 813.93' S 642.62 E 1006.93 FT TO POB.

Note: the Walter and Mable Fromm house residing on this parcel was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in June of 1982.

5 acres of land owned by Rebecca Jakubowski Pospyhalla 442 County Road F, Athens, Wisconsin 54411 SEC 11-30-05 PT OF S $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ LOT 3 CSM VOL 20 PG 249 (#5656) (DOC #915729). Note; Edward and Alice Fromm house resides on this parcel.

The 9.5 acres owned by St. Johns Church and the approximately two acre privately owned parcel located at the southwest corner of Section 11, and the .7 acre cemetery located at the southeast corner of Section 11, were excluded from the nominated site boundaries as they are outside the scope of the nomination. These parcels do not contain any resources related to the history of the Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farm.

Boundary Justification:

Historically, the entire South 1/2 of Section 11 was owned by Alwina (Nieman) Fromm's father Joachim Nieman. When Alwina married Frederick Fromm, her father gave her the SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 11 as her dowry. This $\frac{1}{4}$ section is where the farm was established. When additional land was needed for planting ginseng, the brothers made their first land purchase: the Roehl farm (SE 1/4 of Section 11,

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 10 Page 3

Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farm
Town of Hamburg, Marathon County, Wisconsin

the former Nieman farm) in 1919. This purchased solidified the South ½ of Section 11 as the nucleus of the Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farm. All of the fox processing, ginseng processing and auctions were conducted within the boundaries of the South ½ of Section 11. Edward Fromm, Henry Fromm and Walter Fromms' houses were all constructed within the S ½ of Section 11. Additional furring ranges however were purchased and established in the north half of Section 11; however, these lands are now owned by others.

Therefore, the boundaries of this site as described encompass the extant historic resources relating to the Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farm. All of the invention of mechanical devices; innovations in ginseng, fox and mink production and marketing, as well as much of the medical research into the development of distemper vaccine occurred within these boundaries.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section photos Page 1

Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farm
Town of Hamburg, Marathon County, Wisconsin

| | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Name of Property: | Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farm |
| City or Vicinity: | Town of Hamburg |
| County: | Marathon |
| State: | WI |
| Name of Photographer: | Patricia Lacey |
| Date of Photographs: | April 2012 |
| Location of Original Digital Files: | W5055 US HWY 10, Neillsville, WI 54456 |
| Number of Photographs: | 37 |

Photo #1 / Building #1
Edward and Alice Fromm House, south elevation, camera facing north.

The information for the following photographs is the same as the above except as noted:

Photo #2 / Building #2
Garage/Gas Station, camera facing east.

Photo #3 / Building # 3
Barn, south elevation, camera facing north.

Photo #4 / Building # 3
Barn, north elevation, camera facing southeast

Photo #5 / Building # 4
Truck Scale, camera facing east.

Photo #6 / Building # 5
Boarding House, primary (south) elevation, camera facing north.

Photo #7 / Building # 5
Boarding House, north elevation, camera facing south.

Photo #8 / Building # 5
Boarding House, east elevation, camera facing west.

Photo #9 / Building # 5
Boarding House, dining room, common room, camera facing west.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section photos Page 2

Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farm
Town of Hamburg, Marathon County, Wisconsin

Photo #10 / Building # 5
Boarding House, women's lavatory, camera facing northwest.

Photo #11 / Building # 6
Two-story Bunk house, camera facing southwest.

Photo #12 / Building # 7
Long Garage, camera facing southwest.

Photo #13 / Building # 8
One-story Bunk house, camera facing northwest.

Photo #14 / Building # 9
Fredericks Workshop/Playhouse, camera facing north.

Photo #15 / Building # 10
Cottage/Laboratory, camera facing south.

Photo #16 / Building # 11
Pump House/Garage, camera facing northeast.

Photo #17 / Building # 12
Clubhouse, south elevation, camera facing north.

Photo #18 / Building # 12
Clubhouse, east elevation, camera facing west

Photo #19 / Building # 12
Clubhouse, fireplace, camera facing northwest.

Photo #20 / Building # 12
Clubhouse, fireplace, camera facing north.

Photo #21 / Building # 13
Paint Shed, camera facing north.

Photo #22 / Building # 14
Chinchilla Shed, camera facing southeast.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section photos Page 3

Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farm
Town of Hamburg, Marathon County, Wisconsin

Photo #23 / Building #15
Sugar Shack, camera facing west.

Photo #24 / Building # 16
Pole Building, camera facing west.

Photo #25 / Building # 17
Warehouse/Slaughterhouse/Auction, south elevation, camera facing north.

Photo #26 / Building # 17
Warehouse/Slaughterhouse/Auction, north elevation, camera facing southeast.

Photo #27 / Building # 17
Warehouse/Slaughterhouse/Auction, auction gallery, camera facing west.

Photo #28 / Structure # 18, Building # 19
120' Water Tower and Pump House, camera facing southeast.

Photo #29 / Structure # 20, Building # 21
104' Water Tower and Pump House, camera facing northwest.

Photo #30 / Structure #s 22, 23, 24, 25 (typical)
Hydrant and Hose House, camera facing east.

Photo #31 / Building # 26
One of three similar work sheds, camera facing east.

Photo #32 / Building # 27
Greenhouse, camera facing northwest.

Photo #33 / Building # 28
Henry and Mamie Fromm House, south elevation, camera facing northeast.

Photo #34 / Building # 28
Henry and Mamie Fromm House, north elevation, camera facing southeast.

Photo #35 / Building # 31
Two-story Garage, camera facing northwest.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Continuation Sheet

Section photos Page 4

Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farm
Town of Hamburg, Marathon County, Wisconsin

Photo #36 / Building # 32
Nieman Homestead, camera facing west.

Photo #37 / Building # 33
Walter and Mabel Fromm House, camera facing northeast.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section figures Page 1

Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farm
Town of Hamburg, Marathon County, Wisconsin

Figure #1: Boarding House, 1922



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section figures Page 2

Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farm
Town of Hamburg, Marathon County, Wisconsin

Figure #2: Boarding House, 1922



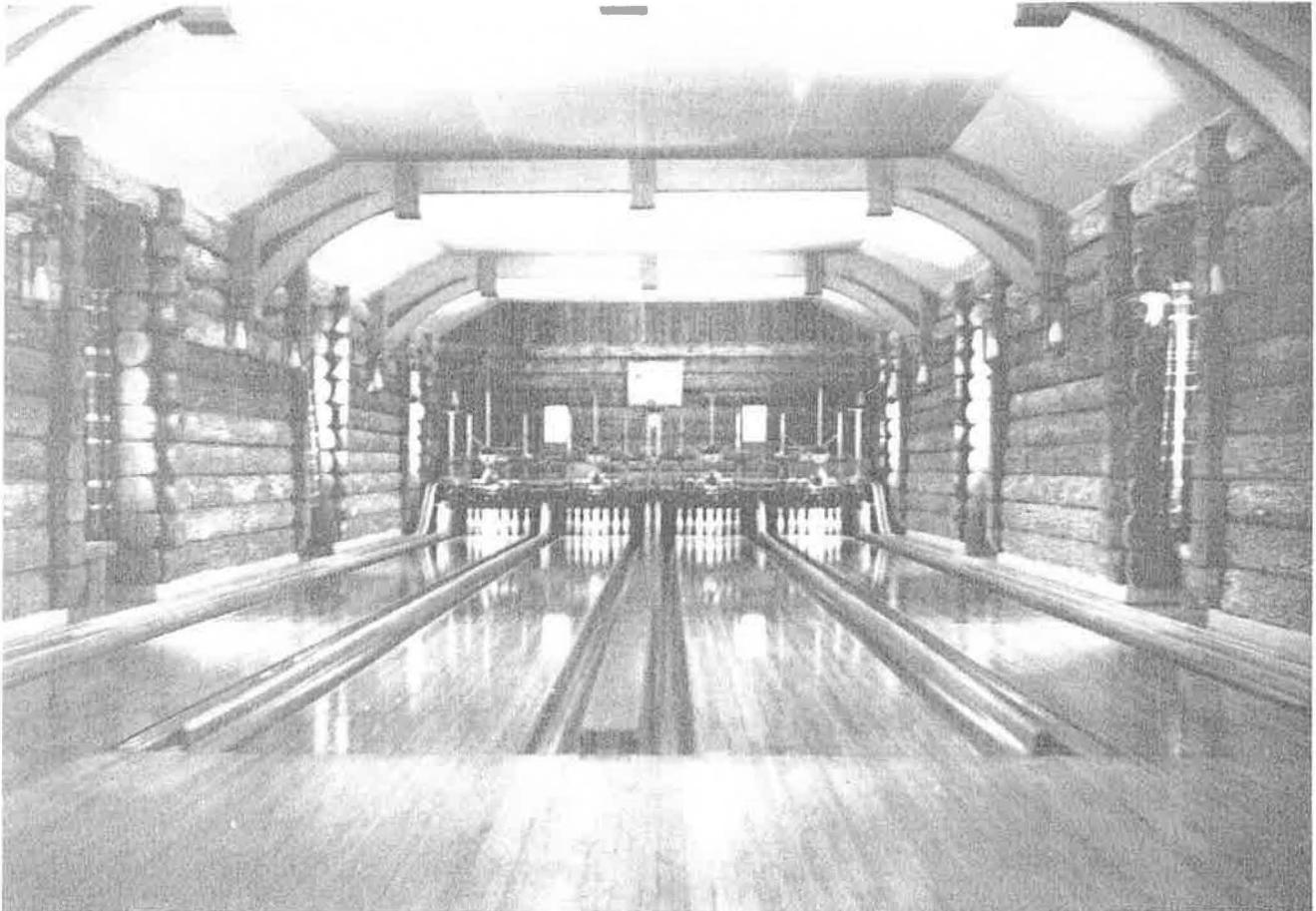
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section figures Page 3

Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farm
Town of Hamburg, Marathon County, Wisconsin

Figure #3, Interior view of Clubhouse showing bowling alley, c1934



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section figures Page 4

Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farm
Town of Hamburg, Marathon County, Wisconsin

Figure #4, Warehouse/Auction House. Viewing the pelts; buyers in white lab coats, runners in shirt sleeves, 1936.



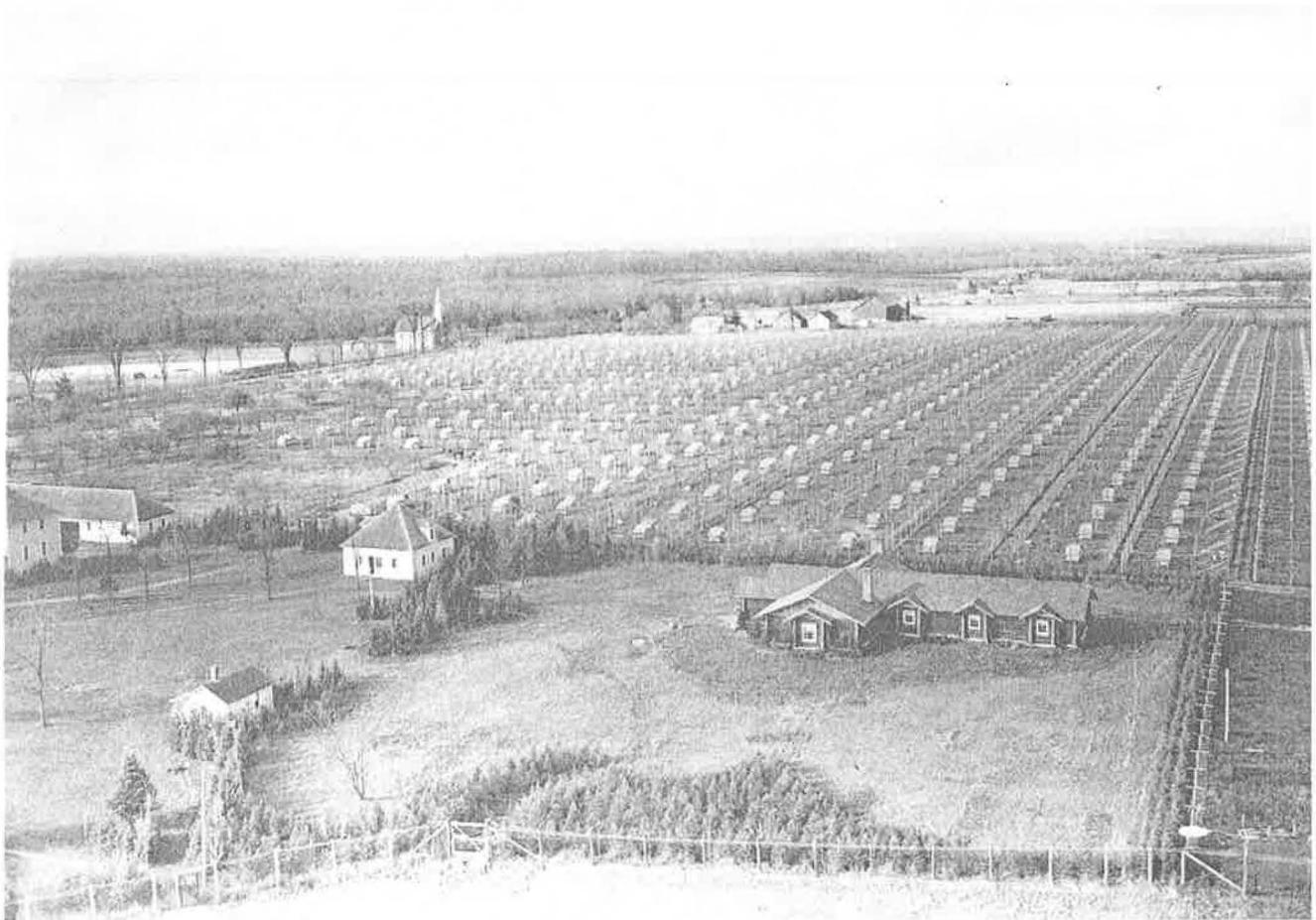
**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section figures Page 5

Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farm
Town of Hamburg, Marathon County, Wisconsin

Figure #5, View looking southwest with expanse of fox pens in the background; with buildings, including the Clubhouse, in the foreground, c1934.



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National Park Service

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Continuation Sheet

Section figures Page 6

Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farm
Town of Hamburg, Marathon County, Wisconsin

Figure #6, View of farm with Warehouse/Auction House building located center right, c1938.



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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section figures Page 7

Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farm
Town of Hamburg, Marathon County, Wisconsin

Figure #7, View of fox pens and large plot of ginseng under arbor at upper left (appears like the foundation of a large building), c1920.



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Continuation Sheet

Section figures Page 8

Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farm
Town of Hamburg, Marathon County, Wisconsin

Figure #8, Young foxes returning from Thiensville, c1920.



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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section figures Page 9

Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farm
Town of Hamburg, Marathon County, Wisconsin

Figure #9, Edward and Walter Fromm trapping red fox pups, c1908.



Figure #10, Edward Fromm visiting the foxes in the furring range, c1960.



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section attachments Page 1

Attachment #1: Site Plan

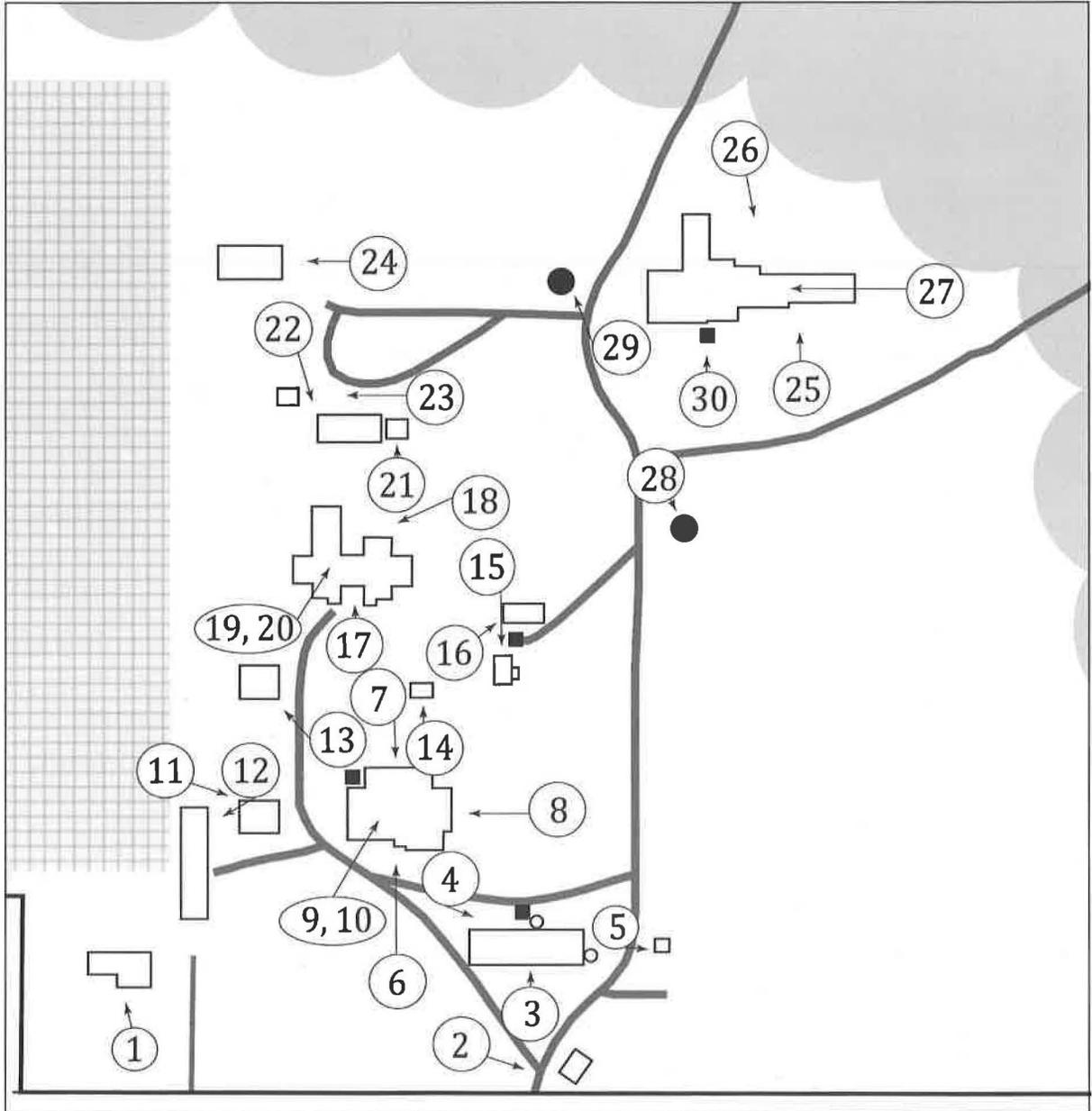
Attachment #2: Photo Key

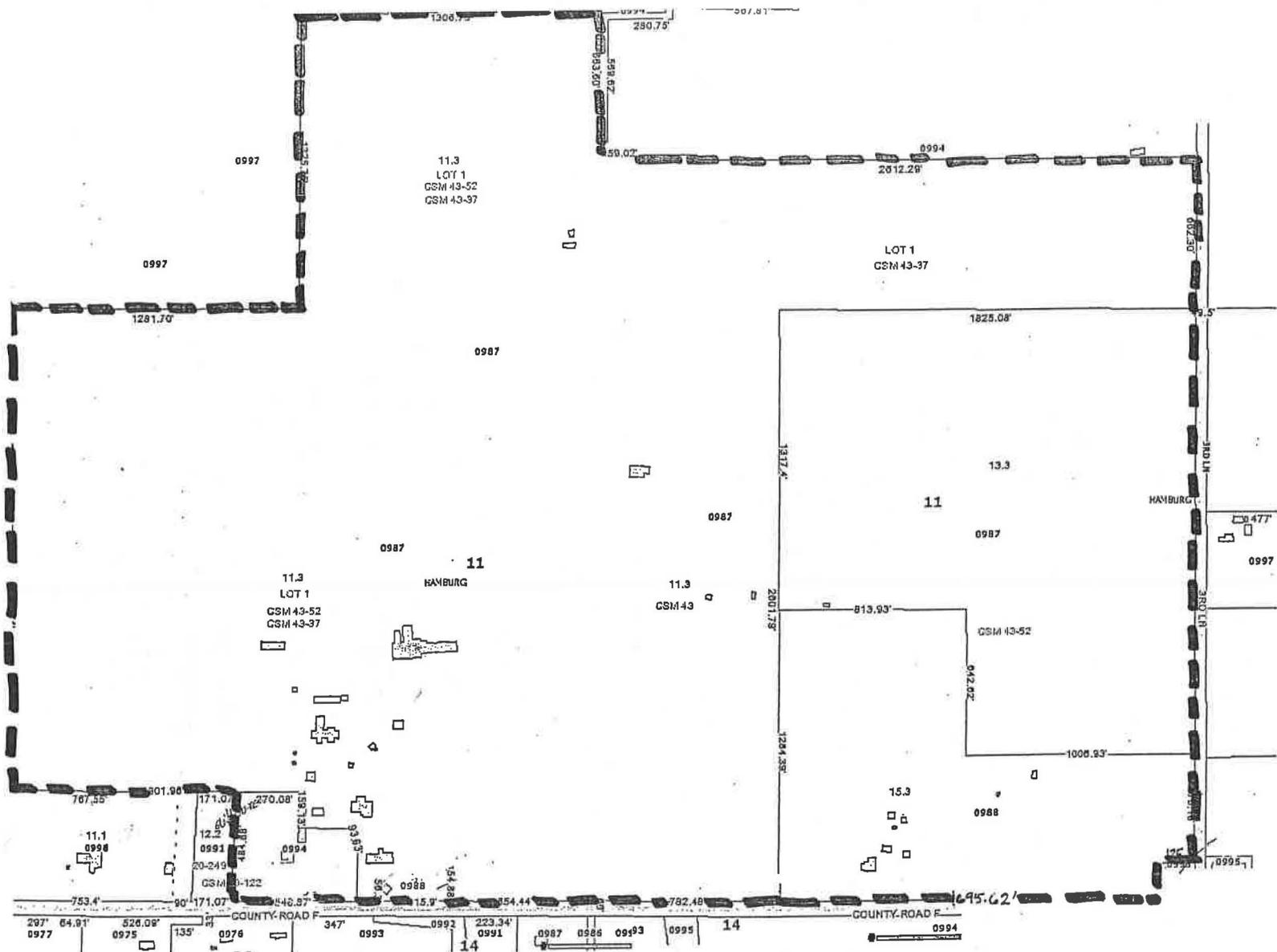
Attachment #3: Photo Key, detail page

Attachment #4: Boundary Map

Photo Key Detail

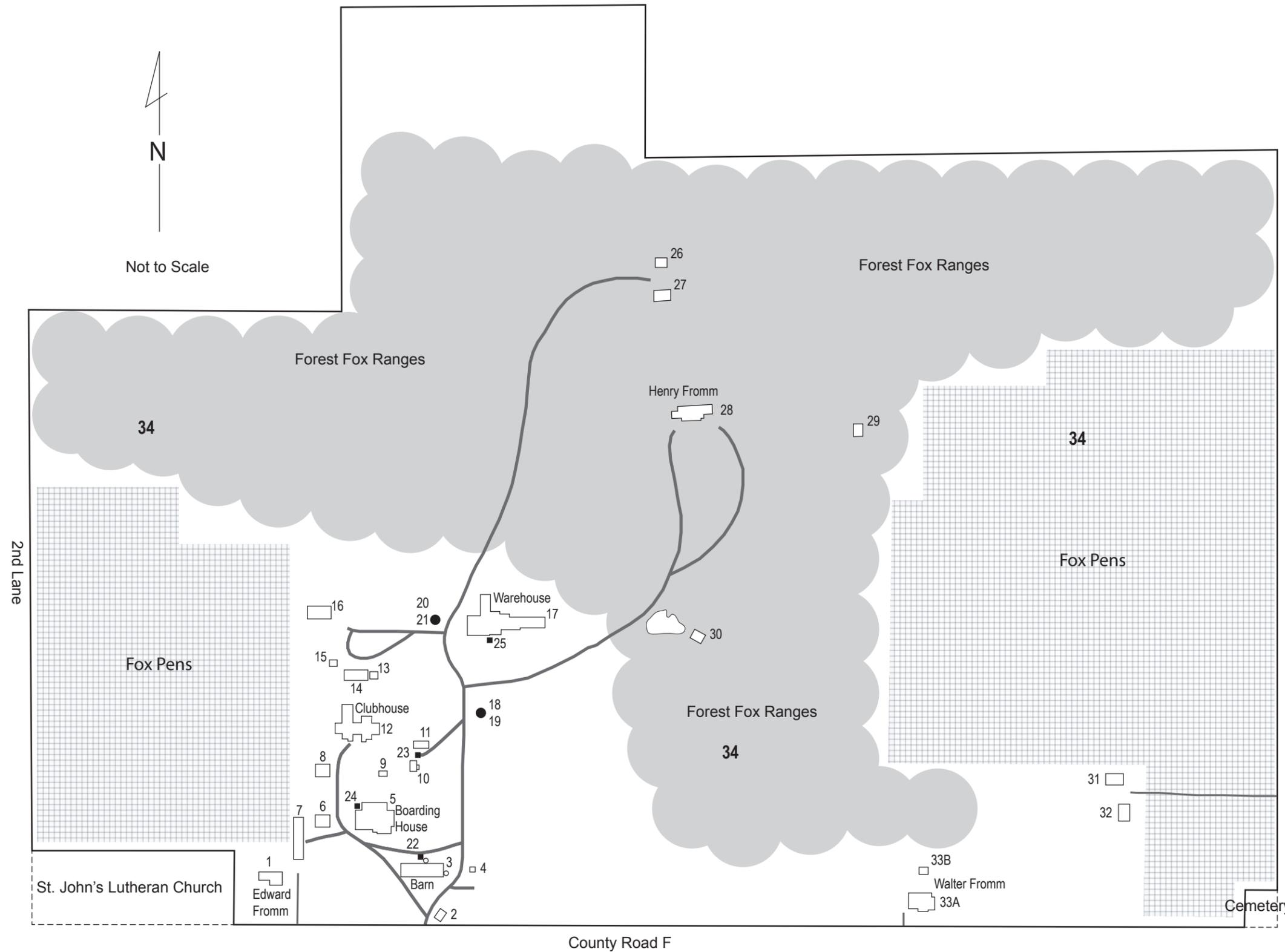
Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farm
Town of Hamburg, Marathon County, WI





Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farm
 Town of Hamburg, Marathon County, WI
 - - - - - nominated boundary

Site Plan



KEY

Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farm
Town of Hamburg, Marathon County, WI

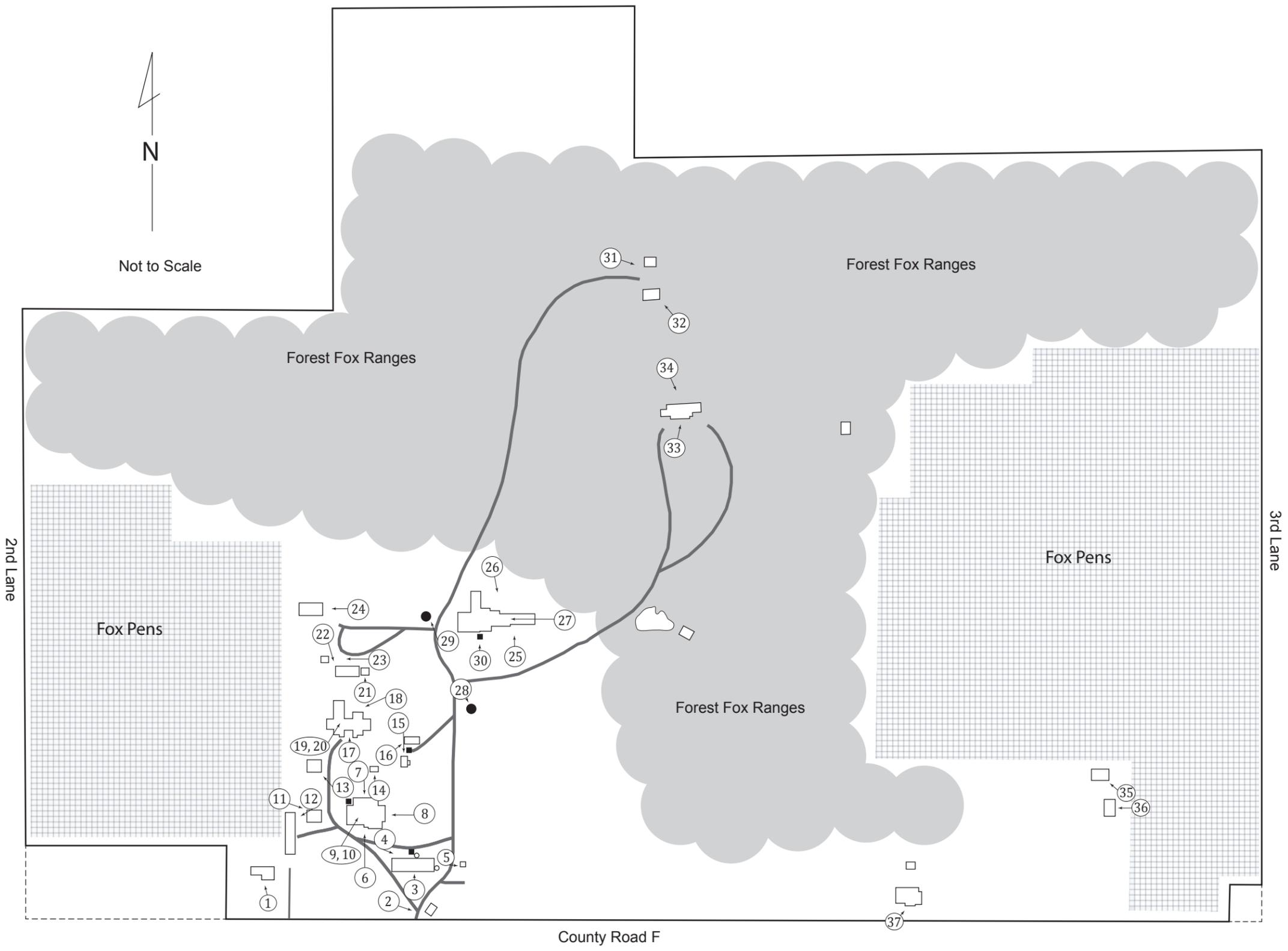
1. Edward and Alice Fromm House
2. Garage/Gas Station
3. Barn
4. Truck Scale
5. Boarding House
6. Two-Story Bunkhouse
7. Long Garge
8. One-Story Bunkhouse
9. Frederick's Workshop/Playhouse
10. Cottage/Laboratory
11. Pump House/Garage
12. Clubhouse
13. Paint Shed
14. Chinchilla Shed
15. Sugar Shack – Non-Contributing
16. Pole Building – Non-Contributing
17. Warehouse/Slaughterhouse/Auction
18. Water Tower
19. Pump House
20. Water Tower
21. Pump House
22. Hydrant and Hose House
23. Hydrant and Hose House
24. Hydrant and Hose House
25. Hydrant and Hose House
26. Work Shed
27. Greenhouse – Non-Contributing
28. Henry and Mamie Fromm House
29. Work Shed
30. Work Shed
31. Two-Story Garage – Non-Contributing
32. Nieman Homestead
33. Walter and Mable Fromm House
34. Site

Photo Key



Not to Scale

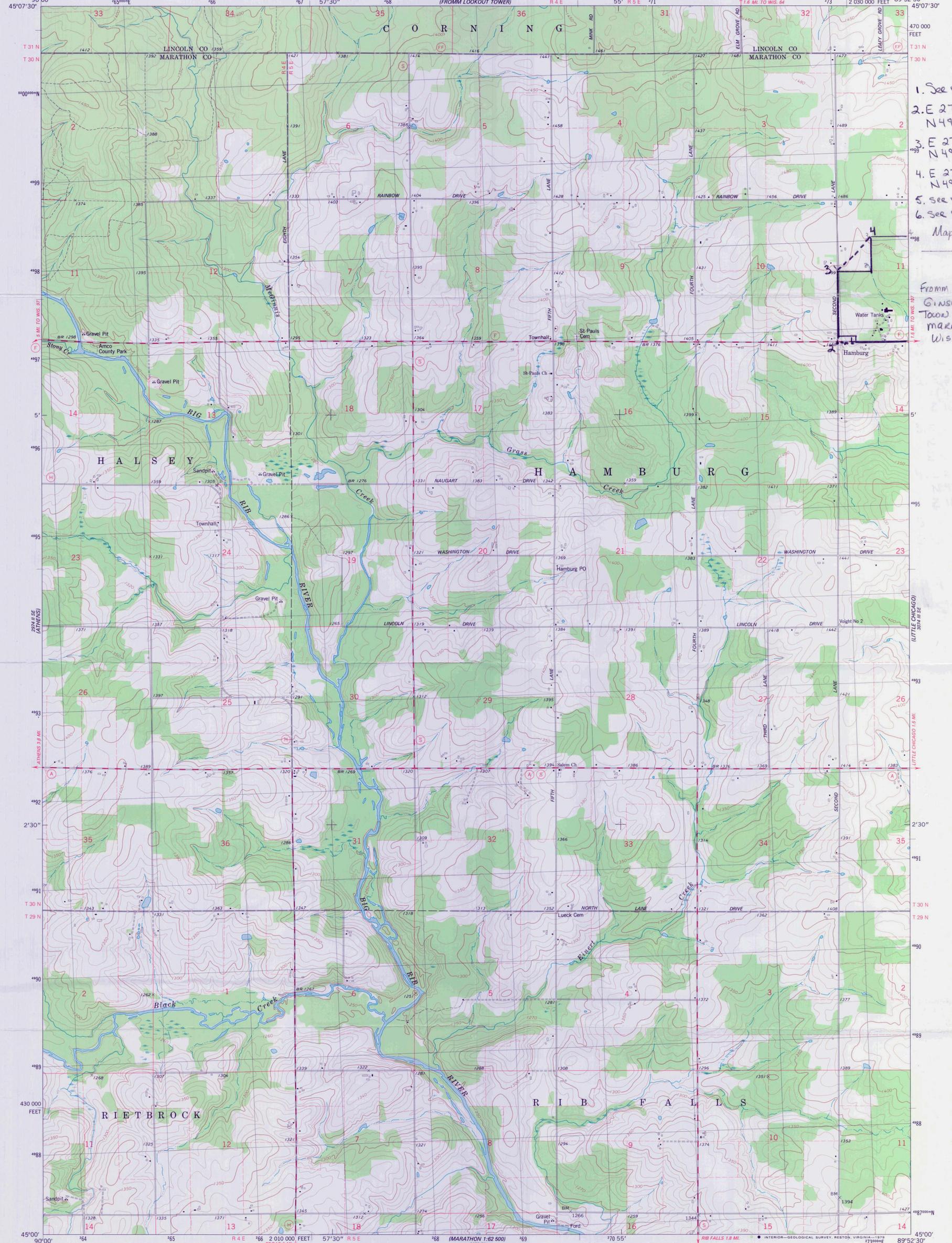
Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farm
Town of Hamburg, Marathon County, WI



2nd Lane

3rd Lane

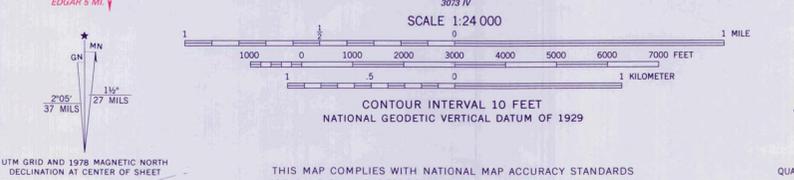
County Road F



1. See map # 2
 2. E 272953.30
N 4997079.06
 3. E 272977.49
N 4997886.69
 4. E 273388.93
N 4998279.09
 5. See map # 2
 6. See map # 2
- Map #1 of 2

From Brothers Fur and
 Gensen Farm,
 Town of Hamburg,
 Marathon County,
 Wisconsin

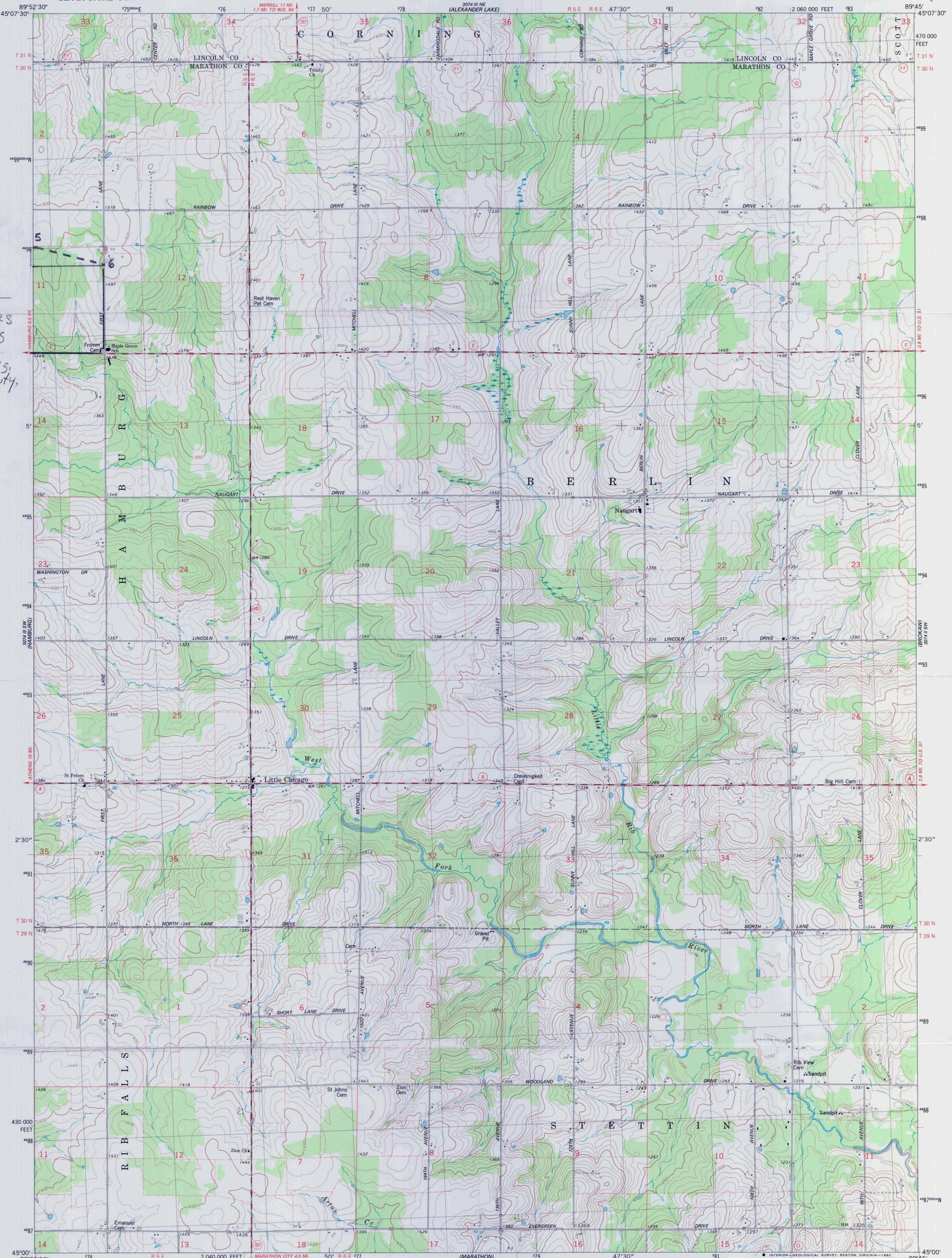
Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
 Control by USGS and NOS/NOAA
 Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs
 taken 1974. Field checked 1975. Map edited 1978
 Projection and 10,000-foot grid ticks: Wisconsin coordinate
 system, central zone (Lambert conformal conic)
 1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid, zone 16
 1927 North American datum
 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
 Secondary highway, hard surface
 Light-duty road, hard or improved surface
 Unimproved road
 Interstate Route
 U. S. Route
 State Route

HAMBURG, WIS.
 SW/4 HAMBURG 15' QUADRANGLE
 N4500-W8952.5/7.5
 1978
 AMS 3074 III SW—SERIES V861

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
 FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
 AND WISCONSIN GEOLOGICAL AND NATURAL HISTORY SURVEY, MADISON, WISCONSIN 53706
 A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

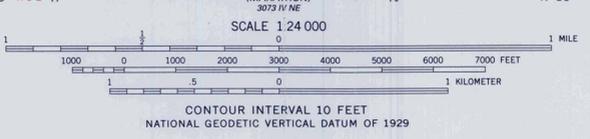
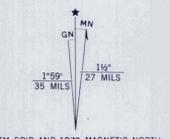


Z: 16
1. E: 274555.56
N: 4997017.53
2: See map #1
3: See map #1
4: See map #1
5: E 273790.39
N 4998261.84
6: E 274585.62
N 4998014.10
Map #2 of 2

←
FROM M Brothers
Fur and Ginseng
Farm
Town of Hamburg,
MARATHON County,
Wisconsin

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey

Control by USGS and NOS/NOAA
Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1974. Field checked 1975. Map edited 1978
Projection and 10,000-foot grid ticks: Wisconsin coordinate system, central zone (Lambert conformal conic)
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid, zone 16 1927 North American datum
Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence and field lines where generally visible on aerial photographs. This information is unchecked
The difference between 1927 North American Datum and North American Datum of 1983 (NAD 83) for 7.5-minute intersections is given in USGS Bulletin 1875. The NAD 83 is shown by dashed corner ticks



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 RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
AND WISCONSIN GEOLOGICAL AND NATURAL HISTORY SURVEY, MADISON, WISCONSIN 53706
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

LITTLE CHICAGO, WIS.
SE/4 HAMBURG 15' QUADRANGLE
45089-A7-TF-024
1978
PHOTOINSPECTED 1981
DMA 3074 III SE-SERIES V961























































X695

















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National Register of Historic Places
Memo to File

Correspondence

The Correspondence consists of communications from (and possibly to) the nominating authority, notes from the staff of the National Register of Historic Places, and/or other material the National Register of Historic Places received associated with the property.

Correspondence may also include information from other sources, drafts of the nomination, letters of support or objection, memorandums, and ephemera which document the efforts to recognize the property.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: RESUBMISSION

PROPERTY NAME: Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farm Complex

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: WISCONSIN, Marathon

DATE RECEIVED: 9/20/13 DATE OF PENDING LIST:
DATE OF 16TH DAY: DATE OF 45TH DAY: 11/06/13
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 96001581

NOMINATOR: STATE

DETAILED EVALUATION:

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 11-6-13 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

RECOM. / CRITERIA

REVIEWER *Tambus Lopez* DISCIPLINE *Historian*

TELEPHONE 202-354-2252 DATE 11-6-13

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



WISCONSIN
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY



TO: Keeper
National Register of Historic Places

FROM: Daina Penkiunas

SUBJECT: National Register Nomination

The following materials are submitted on this 10th day of September 2013, for the nomination of the Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farm to the National Register of Historic Places:

- 1 Original National Register of Historic Places nomination form
- Multiple Property Documentation Form
- 37 Photograph(s)
- 1 CD with electronic images
- 2 Original USGS map(s)
- 14 Sketch map(s)/figure(s)/exhibit(s)
- 1 Piece(s) of correspondence
- 1 Other: CD with electronic copy of the Site Map and Photo Key

COMMENTS:

 Please insure that this nomination is reviewed
 This property has been certified under 36 CFR 67
 The enclosed owner objection(s) do do not
constitute a majority of property owners.
 Other:

RECEIVED

FEB 01 2013

DIV HIST PRES

**OBJECTION TO LISTING IN
THE
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**

OWNER IN A HISTORIC DISTRICT

FROM M BROTHERS FUR and GINSENG FARM (HAMBURG)

Historic District Name: _____

Address of Property in District: REBECCA POSPYHALLA

442 Cty. Road F

NOW City: ATHENS, WI 54411 County: MARATHON

In accordance with Section 101 of the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, and Title 36, Part 60.6, of the Code of Federal Regulations, I hereby certify that I am the sole/part (circle one) owner of the property listed above and do hereby object to its listing in the National Register of Historic Places. In accordance with said law and regulations, I understand that this historic district will not be listed in the National Register if a majority of persons owning property in the district sign and have notarized these statements, and that they submit them to the Wisconsin State Historic Preservation Officer prior to the meeting of the State Historic Preservation Review Board during which the nomination of the district will be considered.

Signed: Rebecca Pospyhalla Date: Jan 29th, 2013

Print or Type Name: REBECCA POSPYHALLA

Mailing Address: 442 Cty. Road F.

City: ATHENS State: WI. Zip: 54411

Remove my property from nomination and register.

NOTARY

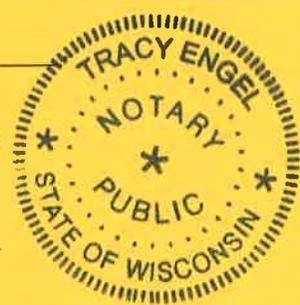
State of Wisconsin, County of Marathon

The above statement was subscribed and sworn before me this 29 day of

January, 20 13

Tracy Engel
Notary Public Signature

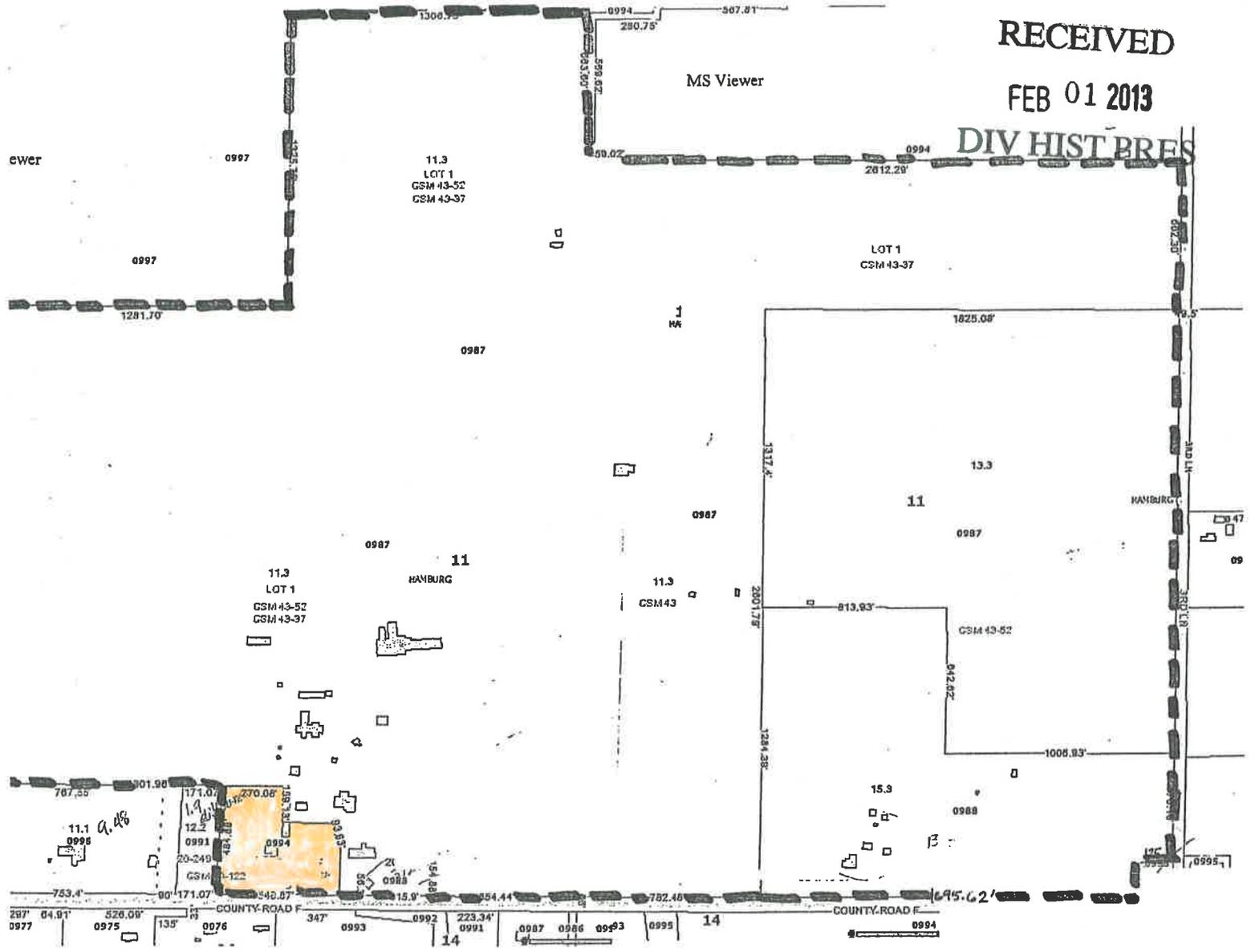
My commission Expires: 9-8-2013



RECEIVED

FEB 01 2013

DIV HIST BRES



Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farm
 Town of Hamburg, Marathon County, WI
 --- nominated boundary

Remove my
 property
 from
 Register, and Nomination.

Rebecca Pospyskalla
 442 Cty. Road F
 Athens, Wisconsin 54411

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farm Complex

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: WISCONSIN, Marathon

DATE RECEIVED: 12/12/96 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 12/24/96
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 1/09/97 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 1/26/97
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 96001581

NOMINATOR: STATE

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: Y NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

___ACCEPT ___RETURN ___REJECT _____DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

RECOM./CRITERIA Return

REVIEWER Baland

DISCIPLINE Historian

TELEPHONE _____

DATE 1/23/97

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

Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farm Complex
Marathon Co., WI

National Register Comments:

The nomination makes an excellent case for the significance of the Fromm brothers fur and ginseng industry to the agricultural history of this area of the state. However, the documentation raises a number of questions concerning exactly how much and what portions of the evolving Fromm enterprise is represented in the current nomination, especially whether all significant resources have been included.

Boundaries should define the limits of the eligible resource. The Fromm brothers farm complex is nominated under Criterion A in the area of Agriculture "because of the rich history of the Fromm brothers' fur and ginseng operations in the town of Hamburg and because of the importance of the four Fromm brothers to the development of both the fox and ginseng industries." (Section 8, p. 1). Yet the Edward Fromm House, an important building in the operation of the business, is not included in the nominated district. The Edward and Alice Fromm House was the headquarters of the business until 1943 and the home of the brother who was the acknowledged leader and spokesman for the company (Section 8, p. 12). Edward was the brother who conducted the auctions, represented the company to New York businesses and international markets, lobbied for favorable state legislation, and whose "leadership authority was never questioned by the other three brothers." Unless the house has integrity problems, it should be included in the district. Modern ownership should not be the deciding factor in selecting boundaries for historic properties. Does the Edward/Alice Fromm property include other historic buildings that contributed to the operation of the Fromm brothers' ginseng, fox, or mink enterprises?

It's unclear whether or not other buildings or sites discussed are included or not. For example, is Alwina's 160-acre dowry included, in part or in its entirety, within the nominated acreage? Is the Alwina and Frederick Fromm house, built in 1886 and located near the Edward/Alice Fromm House, still extant? Is it included in the nominated district? Where did the various activities of the four brothers between 1901 and 1913, described on pp.4-6 (Section 8), take place? Are there any surviving resources from this period? Why aren't the farm's entrance gates, Fromm Cemetery, and Fromm School included? If the cemetery and school are to be excluded, why does the district include so much acreage to the east of the 1868 pioneer farmhouse?

Section 7 and Section 10 both give the acreage of the district as 173. As drawn on the USGS map, however, the area appears to encompass close to 300 acres.

The Fromm brother's fur operations began in 1904. Aside from the 1868 home of the Fromm brothers' grandparents, the earliest surviving building associated with their business appears to date from 1922 (although the truck scale dates from 1920). Although the brothers kept the 1868 house, which is not associated with their business, as a reminder of their roots, there might be a more appropriate way to recognize it's contribution to the district in the period and areas of significance than extending the period for almost forty years prior to the start of the Fromm brothers' business. Since John and Dorthea Nieman were among the first immigrants in Hamburg,

you might consider adding Exploration/Settlement to the areas of significance and changing the period of significance to 1868; 19 ? (04? 20?) - 1948. Why did 1948 mark "the end of the historic era of the Fromm Farm" (Section 8, p. 1)? Because it marked the last major adaptation to the "market" (changing from fox to mink)? When was "the Company" dissolved?

The description states that the Clubhouse was designed in the Rustic Style of architecture, and the building appears to be a successful and intact example. Was the building evaluated under National Register Criterion C as a significant example of Rustic architecture in the area or the state? In any case, it would be appropriate to add Criterion C and Architecture because of the previously-recognized significance of the Walter Fromm House.

There are also some technical aspects of the documentation that should be corrected or clarified as the nomination is prepared for resubmission:

Section 5 categorizes the nominated property as "buildings" when it is actually a district.

Section 5 lists 14 buildings and 2 structures for a total of 16 resources (plus 1 previously listed building). The description raises some questions about the count. It is not clear whether No. 2 is the truck scale house (Section 7, p. 4) or the scale itself (Section 7, p. 9). Because the count lists only 2 structures (the water towers), No. 2 apparently refers to the building, but it is not clear why the scale itself should not be considered contributing as well, adding another structure. The description of the water towers (Section 7, p. 14) mentions two water tower sheds, a pumphouse, and three fire hose houses. Were they omitted from the count because they are too small in scale (the truck scale house is only 4'x6')? Should any of these have been counted?

The list in Section 7, p.19 refers to No. 10 and 11 each as 2 water towers, when each is one water tower.

I apologize for the delay in returning this and will expedite review upon its return.

Beth Boland, Historian
National Register of Historic Places
202-343-9545

Data Collector Recommendation: SLR Clarification/Return

Lower Action: SLR Final Return
 None

DOCUMENTATION ISSUES--DISCUSSION SHEET

State Name WI County Name Marathon Resource Name Fromm Bros. Trce + Gulseng Farm Complex
Reference No. 96-1581 Multiple Name _____
Listed Date _____

Section of Nomination:
 Classification Description Geographical Data
 State/Agency Certification Significance Accompanying Documentation
 Function Bibliographical References Other

See Page _____ Paragraph _____

Solution:
This is a nifty property, but the nomination has problems. The Ed. Fromm House is not just non-contributing - it appears to be outside the nominated acreage. It is unclear whether other extant related resources have been excluded. Also there is a discrepancy in the acreage and some other technical issues.

NR Staff: Polard Date: _____

Data Collector's Explanation of Problem:
Number of Contr. Properties: This is a really interesting nomination! Couple of questions - why is the Edward + Alice Fromm House non-contributing? According to information, this house served as the Company HQ until 1942. There are no photos of the house + no real explanation as to why it's non-contributing.

See Sec 8, p. 18 →

Data Collector: Sarah Dillard Date: 11/8/98

Resolution in Data Base: _____

D.B. Corrected: _____ Date: _____

PROPERTY NAME: Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farm Complex

OTHER NAME/ SITE No.: Fromm Brothers; See Also: Fromm, Walter and Mabel, House

MULTIPLE NAME: NOT APPLICABLE

ADDRESS/ BOUNDARY: 436 Co. Hwy. F

CITY: Hamburg

COUNTY: Marathon

STATE: WISCONSIN

Restricted Location Information: Owner: PRIVATE Resource Type: BUILDING

| | Contributing | Noncontributing |
|------------|--------------|-----------------|
| Buildings | 14 | 0 |
| Sites | 0 | 0 |
| Structures | 2 | 0 |
| Objects | 0 | 0 |

Nomination/Determination Type: SINGLE RESOURCE

Nominator: STATE GOVERNMENT

Nominator Name:
NOT APPLICABLE

Federal Agency: NOT APPLICABLE

NPS Park Name: NOT APPLICABLE

Certification: DATE RECEIVED/PENDING NOMINATION

Date: 12/12/96

Other Certification: NOT APPLICABLE

Historic Functions: AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE
DOMESTIC

Historic Subfunctions: ANIMAL FACILITY
PROCESSING
SINGLE DWELLING
SECONDARY STRUCTURE

Current Functions: VACANT/NOT IN USE
DOMESTIC

Current Subfunctions: SINGLE DWELLING
SECONDARY STRUCTURE

Level of Significance: STATE Applicable Criteria: EVENT

Significant Person's Name: NOT APPLICABLE

Criteria Considerations: NOT APPLICABLE

Area of Significance: AGRICULTURE

Periods of: 1850-1874 1875-1899 Circa: Specific Sig. Years:

Significance: 1900-1924

1925-1949

NOT APPLICABLE

Architect/Builder/Engineer/
Designer:

Cultural Affiliation:

NOT APPLICABLE

Kohl, Theodore

Other Documentation:

NOT APPLICABLE

HABS No. N/A

HAER No. N/A

Architectural OTHER
Styles:

Describe Other Style: Rustic

Foundation Materials: STONE
Wall Materials: WEATHERBOARD LOG
Roof Materials: ASPHALT
Other Materials: NONE LISTED

Acreage: 173.0

| UTM | Zone | Easting | Northing | Zone | Easting | Northing |
|----------------|------|---------|----------|------|---------|----------|
| NOT APPLICABLE | | | | | | |

1581

United States Department of Interior
National Park Service



National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

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

1. Name of Property

historic name Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farm Complex
other names/site number Fromm Farms

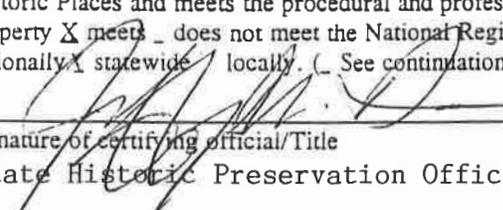
2. Location

street & number 436 County Highway F N/A not for publication
city or town Town of Hamburg N/A vicinity
state Wisconsin code WI county Marathon code 073 zip code 54411

Returned

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

 Date 12/3/96
Signature of certifying official/Title
State Historic Preservation Officer-WI

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farm
Name of Property

Marathon
County and State

Wisconsin

8. Statement of Significance

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

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

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

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions)

Agriculture

Period of Significance

c. 1868-1948

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person
(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Kohl, Theodore

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farm
Name of Property

Marathon
County and State

Wisconsin

9. Major Bibliographic References

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

Previous Documentation on File (National Park Service):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #_____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #_____

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property 173 Acres

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

| | | | | | | | |
|---|------------|--------------------|----------------------|------|--------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| 1 | <u>1/6</u> | <u>2/7/3/0/0/0</u> | <u>4/9/9/7/6/6/0</u> | 1/6 | <u>2/7/4/5/4/0</u> | <u>4/9/9/6/8/0/0</u> | |
| | Zone | Easting | Northing | Zone | Easting | Northing | |
| 2 | <u>1/6</u> | <u>2/7/4/5/8/0</u> | <u>4/9/9/7/6/2/0</u> | 4 | <u>1/6</u> | <u>2/2/9/8/0</u> | <u>4/9/9/7/0/1/0</u> |
| | Zone | Easting | Northing | | Zone | Easting | Northing |

See Continuation Sheet

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet)

11. Form Prepared By

| | | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------|--------------|
| name/title | Mary Jane Hettinga/Librarian | date | 11/28/94 |
| organization | Marathon County Historical Society | telephone | 715-848-6143 |
| street & number | 403 McIndoe St. | zip code | 54403 |
| city or town | Wausau | state | Wisconsin |

Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farm
Name of Property

Marathon
County and State

Wisconsin

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 SHPO or FPO.)

| | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|--------------|
| name/title | Duane and Sara Vetter | date | 11/28/94 |
| organization | | telephone | 715-635-4479 |
| street&number | 326 County Road F | zip code | 54411 |
| city or town | Athens | state | Wisconsin |

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects, (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

NPS Form 10-900-a
(Rev. 8-86)
Wisconsin Word Processing Format
(Approved 1/92)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section: 7 Page 1

Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farms
Township of Hamburg, Marathon County, Wisconsin

The Fromm Fur and Ginseng Farms Complex is located in the township of Hamburg in Marathon County, on County Highway F, approximately 18 miles northwest of Wausau, the county seat and also geographically the center of Marathon County. The township of Hamburg is in section eleven, Township 30 North and Range 5E. The town of Hamburg was set off from the town of Berlin in 1876 and settled at the same time as Berlin and Maine. The Fromm District is apparent because it is surrounded by eight-foot-high wire fences. These fences are unusual because of the two-foot guard that slants inward, a remnant from the fox farming days. The district covers 173 acres of land. It is land that has been historically associated with the Fromms in their fur and ginseng operations since their beginnings. At their zenith the Fromms owned 12,000 acres of land in this area and 5,000 acres in other locations. The Hamburg land is populated throughout with mature pine and hardwood trees. The surrounding area consists of rolling hills and picturesque farms. The entrance gates to the district are on the south side of the district. From that vantage point there is a panoramic view to the south overlooking a valley. To the east of the property is Third Lane and the Maple Grove School; to the west is the St. John's Church and then Fifth Lane. Both of these structures played important roles in the lives of the Fromm family.

The district consists of 17 resources all of which are contributing. The most outstanding architectural design of all of these buildings is the Walter and Mabel Fromm house, built in 1928 and placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1982. The earliest building in the district is the pioneer log farmhouse built circa 1868 by John and Dorthea Nieman. Frederick and Alwina Nieman Fromm were married in 1883 and lived here until they built their own house in 1886. It was located near the present Edward Fromm house (not nominated). This is the house where the children were raised and where the ginseng and fox farming business began. Most all of the other buildings in the district are vernacular in style, of frame construction; modest buildings that are straightforward without a great deal of ornamentation. Most were constructed during the 1920s and 1930s. The Fromms constructed buildings and added to them when the need arose. These buildings reflect their conservative and frugal ways - no unnecessary

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section: 7 Page 2

Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farms
Township of Hamburg, Marathon County, Wisconsin

ornamentation. The exception to this is the clubhouse/office built in 1935. The clubhouse/office is different because it was built in the Rustic Style, a popular architectural style for the northwoods setting. This building also reflects their success at this time in their career when they could afford to be more extravagant. The last building to be built was the chinchilla shed, built in 1948 when the Fromms started raising chinchilla. The nominated property excludes the Edward and Alice Fromm house, a seven stall garage, and another small garage which are under separate ownership and lie southwest of the nominated property

The complex's vernacular architecture reflects the continuing need for basic economical shelter without concern for fashionable stylistic design or detailing.(1) Many of the characteristics of these buildings cross over into a wider spectrum of building and include terms as broad as the front gable and side gable categories which span several decades.(2) The Fromms constructed buildings and added to them when the need arose.

The large barn and silo built in 1922 are directly opposite the entry gates. There are gravel roads throughout the property for easy access to all of the buildings. The barn and silo are encircled by a gravel road; the road on the east side passes the truck weighing station and goes north leading directly to the slaughterhouse/warehouse. Off of this road to the west is John's garage and the cottage. The road on the west side of the barn leads to the boardinghouse and bunk-houses. It continues to circle around to the clubhouse/office. Behind the clubhouse are the paint shed and the chinchilla shed. The road from these buildings leads to the slaughterhouse/warehouse. The playhouse is behind the boarding house in a grassy area. The Henry Fromm house is north and east of the complex and is not accessible from the highway, but has gravel roads leading to it. The pioneer homestead is only accessible by an overgrown road, no longer used.

Within the 173 acres of the district there are four separate parcels; the main buildings are all located on 50 acres; Henry Fromm's house has 76 acres in the parcel; the pioneer log house has 40 acres and the Walter Fromm house has seven acres.

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section: 7 Page 3

Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farms
Township of Hamburg, Marathon County, Wisconsin

All of the buildings are in good condition, with the exception of the abandoned pioneer log house. They are the buildings that have historically been associated with the Fromms and also with their fur and ginseng business. The historic character and architectural integrity of the district is well preserved. The present owners, Duane and Sara Vetter, are rehabilitating the buildings. They are leaving everything as it was and even repainting most of the buildings yellow, the favorite color of the Fromms. This property is extremely important to the history of North Central Wisconsin and especially Marathon County. The history is rich and unique; the impact made on people's lives in this county is immeasurable. Not only did the Fromms raise the standards of living of their employees, most of whom were their neighbors, many also learned trades from the Fromms and went on to start their own businesses in fox and ginseng.

The following inventory lists all of the resources within the complex and describes them in detail. Each of the headings include the map number, the type of building or structure, and the dates of construction:

Map No. 1 Barn and silo Contributing 1922

The 118 foot by 36 foot frame vernacular barn is the main structure visible from the highway and the entrance gates. The Fromms always had a working farm with cows and horses. The horses were always needed for pulling the food wagons or sleighs to the fox pens. When the work force increased, they naturally increased all of their productions. The roof is an inverted U shape, of brown asphalt shingles, with three metal ventilator fans spaced evenly across the ridge of the roof. The foundation is of brown brick and the vertical siding is painted yellow with white trim. The window frames and muntins are painted green. The south elevation has three arched dormers which mimic the barn roof. Within each dormer are two square, four light windows; above the windows are fish scale shingles.

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section: 7 Page 4

Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farms
Township of Hamburg, Marathon County, Wisconsin

Identical sets of sliding wooden doors are found on both the north and south elevations. These doors are on a track and have decorative wood trim, painted white. At the top of each section is a small window - four on each elevation.

The west elevation has three small windows in the loft area; the east elevation has the same three windows plus a centered wooden door and three windows on the ground level. The main fenestration is found above the foundation on the north and south elevation. There are ten windows on each elevation with nine lights in each; the south elevation also has another small window on the east end of glass block with 20 lights; there are also three wooden entrance doors at ground level on the south elevation.

The milk house is attached to the north elevation. This one-story yellow clapboard wing has a gabled roof clad with brown asphalt shingles. The circular end of this wing is fourteen feet in diameter. There are three double hung windows and a door. The milk house was a multi-purpose dairy building used to wash cans and equipment and temporarily store milk.(3)

The silo is attached to the barn on the east elevation. It is made of smooth variegated brown tile with a bellcast-shaped roof of brown asphalt shingles. At the very top is a weather vane in the shape of a cow. Interrupting the roofline are two small dormers on the east and west sides. They mimic the larger dormers found on the barn. The silo is connected to the barn by a one-story building that serves as the entrance to the silo and to the ladder which is enclosed in a chimney-like structure, also constructed of glazed tile.

Map No. 2 Truck scale house Contributing c1920

This small four-foot by six-foot structure sheltered the person who weighed in the trucks loaded with horses. The structure is three-sided - the south elevation is open. The shed roof is clad in black asphalt; two matching oblong windows with three lights, painted green, are on the west elevation. This wooden structure is painted yellow and is situated in front of the huge truck scale covered over with thick boards. The trucks were driven onto these boards so the horses could be weighed.

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section: 7 Page 5

Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farms
Township of Hamburg, Marathon County, Wisconsin

Map No. 3 Boardinghouse

Contributing c1926, 1928, 1929

The vernacular boarding house is 2 1/2 stories, of irregular configuration and has multi-hipped roofs of variegated green asphalt shingles. The frame building faces south and is built on a stone foundation with four inch clapboard siding painted yellow. The trim colors are white and green. There are four-hipped dormers; two on the south elevation and two on the east. Each dormer has a pair of double hung windows, six-over-six, and painted green. There are two chimneys - one interior, centered on the ridge, and one exterior on the north elevation. There are nine lightning rods on the roof.

The main entrance is through an ell-shaped inset enclosed porch. Five steps lead to the double doors of nine lights with four narrow sidelights on either side and a transom above the doors. The porch has a stone foundation, a flat roof, and is decked in green variegated asphalt shingles. The porch may have been added to connect the additions together. There are brick posts at each corner and on either side of the entrance. On top of these brick posts are wooden piers painted white. Each of the casement windows on the southeast porch section have twelve lights. All others have eight lights. The flooring on the porch is 3 1/4" tongue-in-groove pine and the rest of the building is 2 1/4" maple with some ash mixed in. Three doors lead from the enclosed porch into the dining room. In the southeast corner of the enclosed porch is a double stairway to the men's lavatory in the basement.

The south elevation has another entrance at ground level on the 1929 addition. It is a projecting pavilion with flat roof and asphalt shingle decking that repeats the main porch decking. A balustraded balcony is overhead and the paired main doors have paneled bottoms with the upper section in glass. A ten-light transom is over the doors. This entrance has a tiled foyer and another set of doors. A stairway leads to the men's lavatory. Beautiful decorative ceramic tile in a geometric pattern is found in the floor of the men's lavatory. There are three stairways leading to this lavatory - one from the outside; one from the enclosed porch and one from the interior first floor.

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**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section: 7 Page 6

Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farms
Township of Hamburg, Marathon County, Wisconsin

The fenestration is symmetrical on the south elevation of the 1929 addition. A pair of double hung six-over-six windows is placed on either side of the entrance on both floors. There is a single window over the balustraded balcony.

Attached to the east corner of the south elevation is an arched trellis composed of wooden lattice slats on the top half and brick on the bottom half. The top of the brick is even with the top of the foundation. On the other side of the trellis is an octagon structure with a steep pyramid roof made of tin-plated steel. It is soldered at the seams and has a finial. There is a window in each side and a four-paneled door with glass top. This eight-sided structure houses the pump and well.

The irregular configuration of the building is probably due to the additions. Originally the boardinghouse, built in 1926, was one large room - a dining room. Today it has 8,000 square feet. There are no definitive records on the additions, but it looks as though the first building was 32' X 44'. The kitchen addition was added in 1928 to the north elevation and measures 20 X 34. This addition is two stories and has a flat roof with a stepped parapet on the east and west elevation. The one-story enclosed porch is on the east elevation; it has a flat roof with wide eaves. The brick posts and wooden piers are similar to the main porch. There is an eight step stairway leading to the glass nine-light door. The casement windows each have eight lights. South of this entrance is a ground level double door entrance - each with six lights, leading to the basement.

The north elevation has a centered exterior chimney with a narrow window on either side. There is a pair of double hung windows to the east and a single double hung window to the west - both six-over-one on the second story. The first story has three six-light square windows.

The 1928 addition has a stone foundation like the original building. Attached to the west elevation is a small shelter for the fire hose. The west elevation has two double hung windows six-over-one on the second story and five square, six-light-windows on the first story.

**United States Department of the Interior
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**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section: 7 Page 7

Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farms
Township of Hamburg, Marathon County, Wisconsin

The third addition, 1929, is the largest one, measuring 31 X 62 feet. It is different from the other two because it has a poured concrete foundation. The east elevation has two hipped dormers matching the south elevation dormers. The fenestration in this elevation is irregular. The second floor has five paired double hung six-over-six windows. The first floor has four pairs and two single windows, all six-over-six.

The interior plan of the boarding house is quite simple. One large room for dining on the first floor and a large sleeping room on the second floor with smaller private sleeping rooms off of the hall. The second floor also contains the women's lavatory. The first floor has the kitchen in the 1928 addition; in the 1929 addition is a billiards room and four small offices.

Map No. 4 Two-story Bunkhouse Contributing 1922

This two-story, square, 28 X 28 foot building is vernacular in style with a pyramidal hipped roof covered in green asphalt shingles. The yellow clapboard building has white and green trim and has a stone foundation. Facing south, the main entrance has two paneled wooden doors; one swings in and one swings out. The fenestration is symmetrical on the north and west elevations. The first floor windows are triple hung six-over-six. The second floor windows are double hung six-over-six.

There is a one-story gabled outside entrance vestibule that leads to the basement on the east elevation.

Map No. 5 One-story Bunkhouse Contributing 1922

The other vernacular bunkhouse, built at the same time as the two-story version, is on a concrete slab and has a pyramidal hip roof of green asphalt shingles. A tall exterior brick chimney is on the west elevation. A hipped dormer is found on both the north and south elevations. Each dormer has a double hung, six-over-six window. Like the other bunkhouse, it is yellow clapboard with white and green trim. The fenestration is uniform on all four elevations - three double hung windows on all elevations. There is a door on the east elevation.

**United States Department of the Interior
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National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section: 7 Page 8

Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farms
Township of Hamburg, Marathon County, Wisconsin

Map No. 6 Clubhouse/Office

Contributing 1935

The one-story 1935 irregular-shaped clubhouse/office is of full horizontal log construction with round saddle-notches and is painted brown. The roof is multi-gabled and covered with reddish brown asphalt shingles.

Under the gabled roof are exposed rafters; the half-log siding in the gable field is vertical. The foundation is of poured concrete and the exterior is painted green - just a few inches being visible above the ground. Three tall chimneys are prominent details. The west exterior double chimney is of red brick with stones placed randomly throughout. The other two brick chimneys are interior; one twin flue is at the roof ridge in the office section, and a small square brick chimney is in the clubhouse section, on the north elevation. It was for a wood burning stove, no longer there.

There are several gabled projecting bays. The entrance vestibules, the two most dominant bays, are on the main elevation facing south. The two entrances are almost identical. Each door has three vertical lights with side lights. The storm, or outer door, is painted white as is all the trim. Each storm door has twelve lights. There is one other entrance, an flush, white-painted door on the east elevation. Over the entrances there is some decorative trim of white-painted vertical wooden pieces. There are lanterns on either side of each entryway. There are three matching gabled projecting bays on both the east and west elevations of the bowling alley wing. The fenestration in each bay is rectangular with nine lights.

There is no symmetry in the other fenestration, however most are paired double hung windows either eight-over-eight, or eight-over-one lights.

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The interior of the building is divided into two distinct sections - the west section is the clubhouse; the east section is the office. The two sections are connected by a single door. The exposed full logs on the interior are covered with bark that has been nailed to the logs. The logs are saddle-notched and the ends are stained or painted. There are vertical logs in the gables. The ceilings have arched wooden beams with fiber board between and several fluorescent lights. The wooden floor is two inch-wide maple.

The massive fieldstone fireplace in the office section is the focal point of the room. It has no traditional mantel but rather jagged rocks (some of the rocks are petrified wood.) Many of these rocks were collected by the Fromm's in their travels. The hearth is of square red quarry tile. On either side of the fireplace are large wrought iron lanterns hung from wooden branches, made to look like tree branches. There are ten lanterns throughout the office.

Bathrooms are found on either side of the fireplace. One for men and one for women - three stalls and three sinks in each.

In the clubhouse section, the dominant feature is the beautiful four-lane bowling alley constructed by the Brunswick-Balke-Collender Company. A letter from Edward Fromm to the Brunswick Company dated July 17, 1935 states, "We are at the present time building a clubhouse wherein we wish to place our new bowling alley together with the necessary equipment." Records show that the alleys cost \$4,000.

Arched beams are found in this section also. The massive stone fireplace is similar to the one in the office, however it has a massive mantel, simulating a single log. It measures 10'4" long, by 16" deep, and 10" thick. There is bark on the outer rim. Vertical barked logs were used to construct the bar and also the tiered section of benches for the bowlers and spectators.

The clubhouse is a visual image that symbolizes the relationship that the Fromms had with their employees. It was created with much care and expense. The employees were entertained here often and even had their own bowling teams.

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The 1935 clubhouse/office is the only building associated with the Fromm Brothers Company that was designed in a particular architectural style. A local contractor, Theodore Kohl, designed the Rustic Style building. He had previously done Walter and Mabel Fromm's 1928 house.

The Rustic Style of architecture was popular between 1900 and 1940. In Wisconsin, the Rustic Style was popular for the northwoods retreats of the wealthy at the turn of the century. The style had begun in the Adirondack region of northern New York State in the 1870s. The style called for the use of indigenous materials. The style was shown early in the 20th century in journals and the popular press and it quickly became accepted as appropriate architectural imagery for backwoods vacation homes, roadhouses, resorts and camps. Throughout Wisconsin, especially in the northern resort areas, these buildings were being built. The Milwaukee Road Depot in Woodruff, Wisconsin is an excellent example of this round saddle-notched log construction.(4)

Perhaps the Fromms in their travels north saw this depot and other similar structures in this area and decided to choose this style for their new building. A decision to build such a building was a real departure for the Fromms. All of their other buildings for "the Company" were done in the vernacular style with no regard for architectural styling. The clubhouse/office was built at the zenith of their business - it is a visual image of their success. It was their business office and also where they entertained the buyers who came for their auctions. It was a building that they could be proud of and one that fit perfectly into the woods of Wisconsin.

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Map No. 7 Chinchilla Shed

Contributing 1948

This one-story frame vernacular, nine stall garage is on a concrete slab and measures 113' X 24'. The green asphalt shingled roof is gabled and has two louvered cupolas at the ridge. On the south elevation there is a continuous band of windows - 38 double hung, six over six windows. The yellow clapboard structure has an interior brick chimney at the end of the roofline on both east and west elevations. The three largest paneled garage doors are in the center of the building and each has six lights; three smaller paneled garage doors with four lights are on either side. One double hung six-over-six window is on either side of the bank of garage doors. The east and west elevations both have a paneled door and two windows.

The chinchilla shed was not used long for the chinchilla. The Fromms tried raising chinchilla for a short time but it was more like a hobby than a business. After they gave up raising chinchillas they turned the building into a machine shed.

Map No. 8 Paint Shed

Contributing c1940

The one-story vernacular paint shed is a miniature of the chinchilla shed. It measures 22' X 18' and has seven double hung banded windows, six-over-six. There is one cupola centered on the roof ridge. There is an interior brick chimney on the east end of the building. The building is frame with horizontal drop siding. The only door is on the east elevation. Because of all the clapboard buildings it was necessary to have a separate building for storing and mixing paint.

Map No. 9 Warehouse/Slaughterhouse Contributing 1923, 1935

This vernacular, irregular-plan building is made up of several additions. It faces south and is set on a concrete base. The first building was constructed in 1923 and probably others were added as needed throughout the late 1920s. This section measures 125 feet by 69 feet with a 73' X 73' wing extending to the north. The west end of the south elevation has a gabled roof, with black asphalt shingles and is 3-1/2 stories. The fenestration is symmetrical on the three stories. There are two loading doors, one on the second floor and one on the third. There is a band of three windows in the gable, above the loading door. Two small metal doors are on the first floor.

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The center portion of the south elevation is 2 1/2 stories and has a shed roof in front with black asphalt shingles. Above this shed roof is a front gabled roof with two small windows. There are three double hung windows, six over six, and two smaller double hung windows in the second story. A covered entrance is found on the first floor.

The third section is three stories and has a flat roof with parapets on the west and east elevations. The fenestration is symmetrical on the second and third floors.

The first story has a paneled garage door with two rows of six lights near the top, one wooden door and a double hung window. This building has been covered with vertical aluminum siding.

In 1935, with plans made for their first auction they added a large structure, 160 feet by 40 feet, three stories, low gabled roof and clapboard siding. This spacious structure was built to facilitate the showing of large quantities of pelts to their best advantage. There is a wall of windows in the north elevation on both the second and third floors. The north windows faced the forest so there were no reflections to interfere without distorting the colors. There are also windows in the roof - sky lights the length of the room. A shield of louvered slats in the roof prevented the direct rays of the sun from reaching the glass and insured shadow-less light beneath. The shades could be manipulated with ropes from below.

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The first floor has a meat grinder with a 75 horsepower motor that could grind 50 horse carcasses in two hours. It crushed bones easily; 113,000 pounds of meat were produced every day. An electrically operated track carried the horse to the grinder. Extensive meat and feed rooms were rebuilt to meet demands of a large fox herd. Refrigerated rooms were added to handle the increased quantities of frozen meat. There is also a large pelting room with sturdy tables and racks and wall space for pegs to hang the pelts of foxes.

The second floor has a large workroom with equipment for fixing fox homes and other equipment. There are large refrigerated rooms where fox were kept after they were skinned. Ginseng was also dried in the warehouse.

The main elevation on the 1935 addition has a flat-roofed, covered entrance. Next to this is a small wooden structure where inspectors checked the trucks when they were unloaded - also people were checked in for the auction. Guards were hired for the auctions because of the costly merchandise. There is a garage door west of the main entry painted yellow with white trim and a small square window in each corner. The clapboard siding is wider on the first floor and painted yellow. The second and third floors have narrower clapboard siding and are painted brown. There are ten six over six windows double hung on the third floor of the main facade. The second floor has four six over six double hung windows, then five pairs of six over six windows, double hung, on the third floor.

The east end of the main facade has a garage door on each floor. The upper two floors have overhead doors. The first floor door is on a metal track.

A rectangular structure at the rear of the north elevation has a cooling system on legs set on concrete blocks. There are two attached structures in the rear; a two story clapboard building and one single story building. Both are in clapboard siding with shed roofs.

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Map Nos. 10 and 11 Water Towers

Contributing c1930

The two water towers are visible from a great distance. The largest tower is 120 feet high and the tank is 26 feet in diameter and 24 feet in height. The tank holds 75,000 gallons of water. The other tower is 104 feet high and the tank is 24 feet in diameter and 24 feet in height. This tank holds 50,000 gallons of water. Both wooden tanks are on steel supports that rest on concrete slabs. There are two water tower sheds and a pump house. On the grounds are three fire hose houses; one near the warehouse, one near the barn and one attached to the west side of the boardinghouse.

Map No. 12 John's Garage

Contributing 1938

This vernacular clapboard 2 1/2 story, 42 X 42 foot garage is of frame construction set on poured concrete. The front-gabled building faces east and has green asphalt shingles on the roof with brackets under the eaves. There are gabled dormers with a pair of windows with six lights on both the north and south elevations. The two car garage has wooden paneled garage doors with twelve lights in each door. A red brick exterior chimney is on the west elevation and it interrupts the west gable. The clapboard building is painted yellow and the trim is painted white.

The north elevation has double paneled wooden doors on the second floor. The Fromms had a ramp they would put up to this door which enabled them to carry empty fur containers to the second floor for storage.

Each elevation has two double hung windows, six over six, on the second story. A five-paneled wooden door is found on the west end of both the north and south elevations.

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Map No. 13 Cottage

Contributing c1930

The one story ell-shaped building, called the cottage, measures 32' X 34' overall and is sided in cedar shingles. The cross-gabled roof is done in green asphalt shingles. Small gables appear over the projecting entrances on the north and south elevations. There are three brackets under the gable ends on both the north and south elevations. The foundation is poured concrete. The fenestration is either square six light windows or double hung, six over six.

This structure was originally smaller than it is today. It began as a small laboratory for Dr. William A. Young, who set up the experimental station for animal research there in the late 1930s. The building was expanded to provide quarters for "Smalley" De Figuerido, who was from Hong Kong and represented his family in the ginseng business. The Fromms always exported their ginseng to the De Figueridos.

Map No. 14 Playhouse

Contributing c1900

The 18 foot by 20 foot yellow clapboard structure is on a concrete slab and has a side-gabled roof with green asphalt shingles. The vernacular-styled building faces south and has a three small-columned open porch with a shed roof. The interior red brick chimney is at the roof ridge. There is one window in each elevation.

This building had been a part of the Frederick and Alwina Fromm house. It had been the kitchen section but was removed in the 1921 remodeling. Frederick used the building for a workshop probably until his death in 1934 or perhaps until he could no longer do the woodworking. At that time it became a playhouse for the Fromm children.

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Map No. 15 Henry/Mamie Fromm House Contributing c1927

This frame rectangular one and a half story house has a side-gabled roof over the second floor, a flat roof on the north elevation, a hipped roof over the garage and over the dormers. The roofs are all covered with black asphalt shingles. The foundation of the house is stone. There are two brick chimneys - one on the north elevation and one on the roof ridge.

The dominant feature of the house is a glass greenhouse/solarium which covers almost the entire front facade which faces south. There is a set of double doors with ten lights in each door centered in the greenhouse. Directly above the doors, on the second story, is a hipped roof dormer with a pair of double hung windows. The main entrance is on the west end of the south elevation. This entrance has Prairie School elements, a flat roof with double brackets over the entrance and a segmental or tripartite arch with double brackets over the door. On the west elevation is a flat roofed porte-cochere with double brackets at each corner. The columns of the porte-cochere are covered with cedar shingles. Next to the porte-cochere on the first floor of the west elevation are three large picture windows.

There are two entrances on the west elevation - one under the porte-cochere and the other one is stepped back 14 feet on the north end of the west elevation. This round, arched door is of oak with a leaded glass inset window. (The leaded glass window is found again in the second story paired windows under the west gable.) The north entrance and the leaded glass windows are from the Tudor Style which was popular during the Period-era. This northwest entrance leads to the rathskeller in the lower level. Here again the arched oak door is repeated behind the oak bar. The flooring is slate and has fieldstone walls and oak beams. There are four stained-glass windows in the rathskeller.

The north elevation has a large hipped dormer with two pairs of double hung windows. The roof on this elevation has a flat roof with a tall, red brick square chimney. There are five paired double hung windows, six over one, on the first floor.

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The single car garage is attached on the east side of the house. It has a hipped roof with brackets under the eaves. The paneled wooden garage door has three lights. The fenestration in the garage is two windows on the east elevation and three on the north. All are double hung with six over one. A side entrance to the house is next to the garage on the south elevation. There are two double hung windows, six over six, on the east elevation of the house.

The interior plan is very irregular due to the many additions and alterations. The interior of the glass greenhouse is done in beautifully colored tile. In the center of the room is an eight sided, tiled fountain, complete with statue.

Two sets of tiled steps lead from the glassed greenhouse - one leads into the house through sliding glass doors. The other steps lead to a long, narrow swimming pool.

The Henry and Mamie Fromm house began as a log cabin and grew gradually with each new addition. The couple moved into the house in 1928. They had been living with Henry Fromm's parents up until this time. The style today is eclectic. It has Tudor details and also Prairie School styling.

Map No. 16 Walter/Mabel Fromm House Contributing 1928 NRHP 6/17/82

The Walter and Mabel Fromm house is a two story rectangular brick house with a 1/2 barrel clay tiled roof with decorated brackets under the eaves. A one story solarium extends to the west and an enclosed porch is on the north elevation.

The Period-era styled house was designed by the Curtis and Yale Company of Wausau, with Theodore Kohl as contractor. The interior decorative work is elaborate and was done by Friedrich Estenfelder.

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The house was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1982, so it will not be discussed further in this district nomination.

Map No. 17 John and Dorthea Nieman Contributing 1868

The vernacular Nieman pioneer home is a 1 1/2 stories, rectangular plan, 30.6 feet by 20.6 feet with a side-gabled roof. The old roof is cedar shingles with new corrugated metal over it to stabilize the structure. The house is constructed of square logs with chinking between and covered over with wooden clapboards. The interior consists of a living room, dining room, kitchen, cellar and a second floor for sleeping. The kitchen section has been removed. The floors are constructed of wood. The house has three exterior doors - two to the east and one to the west. The east elevation is free of fenestration; the west elevation has a window on either side of the door. All windows are double hung, six-over-six. The south elevation has two windows on both floors; the north elevation has two windows on the first floor and one on the second floor. The house is in disrepair - it has been abandoned for many years and is open to the seasonal elements.

John Christian and Dorthea Kogerup Nieman settled on a quarter section of land that John had purchased from a soldier of a New York militia unit in 1859. The 160 acres of land in section 11, town of Hamburg, is still historically connected with the Fromm Fur and Ginseng Farms Complex. The house is considered to be contributing, because although the house had no direct ties to the operation of the farm, the Fromms purposefully retained the building as a symbolic reflection of their roots. It therefore contributes to a richer understanding of the development of the Fromm's enterprises.

Log buildings were exactly what Wisconsin pioneers needed. They were houses that could be built of material taken from the land as it was cleared and put together with the same tools as those used in felling trees. The early log houses were homemade, and the settler, being carpenter, joiner, plasterer and smith, erected his own homestead and everything belonging to it.(5)

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BUILDING INVENTORY

| | | | |
|------------|--------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Map No. 1 | Barn and silo | contributing | 1922 |
| Map No. 2 | Truck scale | contributing | 1920 ca |
| Map No. 3 | Boarding house | contributing | 1926 ca, 1928, 1929 |
| Map No. 4 | Two story bunkhouse | contributing | 1922 |
| Map No. 5 | One story bunkhouse | contributing | 1922 |
| Map No. 6 | Clubhouse/office | contributing | 1935 |
| Map No. 7 | Chinchilla shed | contributing | 1948 |
| Map No. 8 | Paint shed | contributing | 1940 ca |
| Map No. 9 | Warehouse/slaughterhouse | contributing | 1923, 1935 |
| Map No. 10 | Two water towers | contributing | 1930 ca |
| Map No. 11 | Two water towers | contributing | 1930 ca |
| Map No. 12 | John's garage | contributing | 1938 |
| Map No. 13 | Cottage | contributing | 1930 ca |
| Map No. 14 | Playhouse | contributing | 1900 ca |
| Map No. 15 | Henry/Mamie Fromm house | contributing | 1927 ca |
| Map No. 16 | Walter/Mabel Fromm house | previously listed | 1928 |
| Map No. 17 | Pioneer log Nieman house | contributing | 1868 ca |

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Significance

The Fromm Fur and Ginseng Farm Complex is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under criterion A at the state level of significance. It is being nominated because of the rich history created by the Fromm brothers' fur and ginseng operations in the town of Hamburg and because of the importance of the four Fromm brothers to the development of both the fox and ginseng industries. Their operations revolutionized both the fox and ginseng farming industries through their innovative methods, their inventions, and their marketing genius. Because of the Fromm brothers, Hamburg, Wisconsin became known as "The fox farming capitol of the world."⁽⁶⁾ The period of significance extends from c. 1868 the date of the first extant building to 1948 which represents the end of the historic era of the Fromm enterprise.

When the Fromm brother formed their company in 1904, both fox and ginseng farming were in their infancy in the United States. Fur, perhaps one of the oldest items of commerce, had been used for ages as protection against the weather and also as decorative covering. Scientific fur farming did not begin until the 1880s when farmers on Prince Edward Island, Canada, undertook the breeding of the uniquely colored silver fox. Because the European demand outstripped the trappers' supply it was necessary to raise the foxes in captivity. By 1915, fox farms, including that of the Fromm family in Hamburg, had been well established in Wisconsin.⁽⁷⁾

Indigenous to the woods of Marathon County, wild ginseng had been used for medicinal purposes by Native Americans long before the white man domesticated it. By 1900, experimentation in growing domestic ginseng was begun by John H. Koehler. He was the first person known to own a ginseng garden in Hamburg. Born in Hamburg in 1866, Koehler became known as the "father of ginseng" by writing the bible on ginseng cultivation, The Ginseng and Golden Seal Growers Handbook, in 1912. The idea of domesticating wild ginseng was not original to the Fromms, but what they did to improve the crop and its production was revolutionary. Their keen observation of nature helped them to mimic the conditions of wild ginseng.

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The meager beginnings of the Fromm brothers, their perseverance and hard work makes this history an unusual one. Their fur and ginseng operation became the largest in the world (as did their mink ranch at a later date.) Hamburg, Wisconsin became known because of the Fromms. Their enterprises affected all of Northern Wisconsin; the impact on the residents of this area will probably never truly be known. Many farm families in the area learned the ginseng and fox farming business from the Fromms and improved their lives.

Today all of the buildings in the complex (except the pioneer house) are being rehabilitated by Duane and Sara Vetter, the new owners. The historic character and architectural integrity of the farm is well preserved. The buildings are being repainted yellow, a favorite color of the Fromms. Most of these are vernacular in form and very utilitarian except for the Rustic Style clubhouse/office and the Fromm residences. Perhaps this is symbolic of the conservatism and cost-effective ways of the Fromms. The clubhouse represents an era when they had become established and could be a little freer with their money. The buildings are closely related to the growth of the business and most were constructed during the 1920s including both bunkhouses. Originally, the workers were fed in the kitchen of the Fromms, but in 1926 the large boarding house was constructed and meals were moved to that facility. (The Fromm wives felt that this was the greatest achievement of the growing silver fox and ginseng industries - separating home and industry.) The barn, built in 1922, was constructed out of necessity; they needed a working farm to help feed the employees. They had always had a dairy herd, but they needed to increase the operation in order to feed as many as 200 employees in the summer. Horses were also used to pull food on wagons or sleighs to the foxes. The warehouse, built in 1923 had a large \$75,000 addition in 1936. Both Henry and Walter Fromm built their homes in 1928. The dates of the buildings range from 1868, the pioneer log home, to 1948, the date the chinchilla shed was constructed.

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HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

Driving west on Highway F near the town of Hamburg in rural Marathon County, the Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farm is evidenced by the unusual wire fences that surround the property. Behind these fences is a fascinating history of American entrepreneurship. Following a favorite American theme of "rags to riches," it is a tale of how four farm boys in Northern Wisconsin made a dream come true. Their pioneering spirit and hard work greatly affected and changed two industries as well as the lives of many people.

The town of Hamburg is approximately 18 miles northwest of Wausau. Set off from the town of Berlin in 1876, it was settled by German immigrants at the same time as the town of Berlin and Maine in Marathon County. Huge, mature white pines stood throughout the hardwood forests of this area and produced giant logs that kept local sawmills busy for many years. At the end of the logging era the settlers remained in this area and turned to alternate ways to make their livelihood.

The parents of the Fromm brothers, Alwina and Frederick Fromm, were such settlers. Alwina's parents, Dorothy and John Christian Nieman, had come to America from Germany in 1848 and were among the first immigrants in the town of Hamburg. Frederick's parents, Johan and Johanna Fromm, also German immigrants, had arrived in Milwaukee at about the same time and settled in West Bend, Wisconsin. Alwina was visiting relatives in the Milwaukee area when she and Frederick met. The children of these two early families were married in Hamburg in 1883. At the time of the marriage Alwina received 160 acres of land for her dowry; this land would later play an important role in the birth of the fox farming empire. Six sons were born to this marriage: Arthur and Herbert were the two oldest and after several years the four younger boys, Walter, Edward, John, and Henry were born. There were also three girls born to the couple - Clara, Erna, and Nora. This history is concerned with the four younger boys known as the Fromm brothers.

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Even at young ages in 1901, the Fromm brothers - Walter, 13; Edward, 11; John 9; and Henry, 7 - were expert trappers and loved poring over the magazine *Hunter-Trader-Trapper*. Reading about the valuable silver fox, they learned that silvers could be born to red foxes. They hoped to find such a prize in the woods near their town of Hamburg home.

John and Henry searched diligently for the prized silver fox, but to no avail. They even bought a pair of red foxes from their neighbor, hoping to be lucky enough to breed a silver. Frustrated by their failure they decided the only way they could start on the road to their dream was to purchase a pair of silver foxes. They had no idea how they could ever earn the money for this bold purchase. However, shortly after their decision the way was made clear by a remark from their father, Frederick. On a routine inspection of their walnut crop, he pointed out a ginseng plant. He told the boys how Reinhold Dietsch, a neighbor, was becoming rich from raising ginseng. The boys stayed in the woods and examined the plant more closely. Perhaps they had found a way to make their purchase of a pair of foxes.

When the Fromm brothers realized that they might be able to accomplish their dream by growing ginseng, they planted a five foot by sixteen foot ginseng bed. Their first garden held 150 plants, gathered from the nearby woods; from the berry pulp of these plants they extracted 300 seeds for their second garden. This meager start was the beginning of the world's largest ginseng farm of over 500 acres. When they started planting seed, rather than the root, their patience and perseverance paid off. By trial and error they found that the seed had to be kept wet. It was hosed daily and also turned over. During this stage, the seed was kept inside. Eventually it was bathed in a disinfectant and re-packed with sand in big bins with screen bottoms. The sand now needed to be kept wet and at the right temperature. It was kept covered, but checked on a daily basis. It had to freeze in order to germinate. By July the Fromms knew how much seed would be available. The seed was planted in 150 foot rows that required two to two and one-fourth pounds of seed. In the fall the seedlings were covered with straw. The Fromms found that clean straw rather than leaves kept the plants disease free. Harvest time for the mature crop was always October and November for the Fromms.(8)

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The most important part of ginseng, a plant with broad leaves and red berries, is the wrinkled, stubby root. It takes from five to seven years for a plant to mature after it is sown, and once the root is dug up new land must be sought. Only virgin soil is used for ginseng. It is the dried root of the plant that is exported to the Orient. A prized part of their health care, its prolonged use is said to be a total tonic for any ailment. Ginseng cultivated on Wisconsin farms was nearly unrivaled for its quality, color, maturity, size, and form. Ginseng was harvested between September and October and the Wisconsin ginseng provided the best breeding stock available in the United States.(9)

In the early 1900s the four Fromm boys, Walter, Edward, John and Henry called themselves "the wolves." They chose that name because they ran in a pack in the woods and thought they were invincible. In 1904, the brothers formed their business, which forever after, they would refer to as "the Company." This name was significant because it marked the solidarity of their dream.(10) In this same year they earned enough money from their ginseng to buy a litter of red foxes from their neighbor. As soon as they had their foxes they felt that it was time to elect officers for "the Company." For as long as the brothers were in business they kept the following officers: Edward, President; Henry, Vice President and in charge of foxes; Walter, Treasurer and in charge of ginseng; John, Secretary. "The Company" was always a fusion of them all and not the reflection of any single one of them. Their passion, and the reason for forming their company, was a singular one - to raise silver foxes. It is said that the Fromms never owned "the Company"; "the Company" owned them, and its rights were greater than those of its builders.(11)

For a long time, Frederick Fromm was more than disgusted with his boys' obsession with silver fox. When the boys asked for land for their second ginseng crop, he said they could use the land where all the rocks were piled. Even this did not deter the brothers - they unpiled the rocks. After his sons became successful, Frederick never took any credit for their success, he gave them

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all the credit. From the beginning, Alwina, their mother, felt otherwise; she believed in their dream. In 1913, while Frederick was away from the farm, the four brothers persuaded their mother to mortgage the farm for them. Because the land was hers from her dowry, she was able to act alone. She gave the boys \$6,800 so that they could purchase silver foxes from Prince Edward Island. They were able to purchase three full silvers, two vixen and one male fox. These silver fox were not the bright silver fox that the Fromms would later produce through their experiments. Four years later, in 1917, they culled the red foxes and had fifty pairs of valuable silvers. They were on their way to becoming the largest and most notable silver fox breeders in the world. The fur crop sold for \$489,967 in 1925; in 1926 the fur crop brought in \$785,153; and in 1929 a check for over 1.3 million dollars was drawn to the order of the four Fromm brothers for one shipment of silver fox pelts. Ginseng was becoming just as profitable; in 1923 their ginseng sold for \$45,000 and in 1924 \$115,000.(12)

During the Depression, the Fromms continued to expand. At the 1934 Chicago World's Fair they exhibited their furs at the Century of Progress Expo. It was their first public appearance in the consumer retail world and it succeeded in bringing their name to the public and in identifying them with the bright silver fox. Henry created a unique exhibit: models paraded in their furs, photo murals dramatized the history of the silver fox, and Henry told stories about the hardships of their early beginnings. This was a major breakthrough in public relations and advertising.

In both the fur and ginseng industry their ingenuity in marketing was what made them so successful. An outstanding marketing achievement in their ginseng operation was when Edward went to Hong Kong in the early 1930s and established a direct marketing outlet. When in China he worked out a contract with the De Figueridos, a Portuguese family, in the import business. From this time forward the Fromms always sold their ginseng to the same establishment. It was a wise move as the Fromms were never at the mercy of the ginseng buyers. "Smalley," the son of the De Figuerido family, lived at the Fromm complex for about 30 years. He was nick-named "Smalley" because of his diminutive size, and was treated like one of the Fromm family.(13)

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One of the boldest moves that "the Company" made was to hold fur auctions in rural Hamburg rather than in New York City. The first auction was held in February, 1936. A special train from New York brought buyers to Wausau and a wing at the Hotel Wausau was reserved by the Chamber of Commerce for these out-of-town buyers. They were transported to Hamburg by chartered buses. Two days before the first auction, a major snow storm created 15-foot snowdrifts and the temperature plummeted to 38 degrees below zero. "The Company" was worried that the inclement weather would ruin their auction, but to the surprise of everyone, the guests loved it - it was what they expected in Northern Wisconsin. Not only did the buyers love the weather, they also loved the homey atmosphere and the hearty meals served to them. The buyers looked forward to the auctions held three times a year. In the summer they had picnics, went swimming, and played baseball. In the winter they sat around the large fireplace visiting or they bowled in the newly built clubhouse. It was no wonder that the farm was nicknamed "Fromm's Resort."

An unexpected obstacle almost halted their first auction. Approximately one month before the auction was to take place, State Senator Charles F. Smith of Wausau discovered an 1858 state law that imposed a 20% tax on gross sales of any auction held outside the city. Ed Fromm, as spokesman for "the Company," requested that an amendment be passed rescinding this outdated law. The American National Fox and Fur Breeders Association did not want it passed since they were against the Fromms' auction. This new competition threatened their power. A special legislative session was held. The State Senate passed the amendment by a vote of 22 to 6 and the assembly passed it by 69 to 12. Governor Robert LaFollette signed the bill on February 5th, 1936, ten days before the auction was to be held.(14)

In spite of all the obstacles, the first auction in 1936 was an overwhelming success. The silver foxes sold for 15% higher than they had three months earlier in New York City. It was the first

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100% sale in the history of the silver fox industry; all 7,500 skins were sold. This was a brilliant coup d'etat for the Fromm brothers. It was another innovative marketing achievement.

The highlight of their February, 1937 auction was heralded across the country. Fox number 2989 was a perfect specimen - silky, deep fur, a bright silver with a distinctive black cross on the shoulders. The bidding was competitive and reached new heights early in the bidding. The only two buyers left after the bidding reached \$1,500 were Trencher Furs of New York and Marshall Fields and Company of Chicago. Marshall Fields won the pelt with a \$2,100 bid, the highest price paid in the U.S. thus far for a single pelt. The record sale had been recorded in London for \$2,600. Fox #2989 was the most talked of pelt in America. Henry's nonchalant comment was "We've always known that we were going to raise good silver foxes."

Even after "the Company" prospered, the Fromm brothers still put most of their proceeds back into the business. Up until 1937, the most each brother took for himself each year was \$5,000. They were not really interested in the material wealth that money could buy; rather, their goal was to establish the Fromm name with the best silver fox and the best ginseng in the business. They strived for perfection and they got it by their hard work.

Scientific research was a large part of their fox farming operation. Every fox was assessed a \$3.00 fee that automatically went into research. All told, they contributed over one million dollars in research. Dr. Robert G. Green, an associate professor of bacteriology from the University of Minnesota, contacted the Fromms because of his interest in studying distemper and was subsequently hired by the Fromms to do their research. The Fromms' fox offered a large ready-made laboratory for studying bacteriology. Green was successful in establishing an encephalitis vaccine in 1927 and a distemper vaccine in 1938, which was later adapted for canine shots at the Fromm Laboratory in Grafton, Wisconsin. Both of these vaccines changed the fur breeding industry. Dr. Green spent thirty years working for the Fromms. Because of his successes and their financial aid and support, the Fromms were able to establish a laboratory in Grafton, Wisconsin which sold over \$75 million worth of animal biologicals.

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The Fromms were also pioneers in the field of animal genetics. Development of the "bright silver," a color that never existed before, was the innovative accomplishment of selective breeding that earned the Fromms much notoriety. When they added mink to their farm, they were also leaders in the development of new colors for the mink.

Animal nutrition was another large part of their research operations. By changing the diet of the foxes, they were able to produce larger animals. Rather than needing six pelts for a jacket, they only needed four. The food for the foxes became an industry in itself. In the beginning, horse meat was the only food served; fifty horses per day was the average use. The Fromms bought wild western horses and had them shipped by rail to Marathon City. From there the horses would be herded down highway 107 to the Fromm farm. The horses were then shot and put onto a gaff hook that moved the horse into a grinding machine capable of grinding a quarter of a horse at once. An animal food business known as Federal Foods was established in Thiensville, WI and their older brother, Arthur, was hired as superintendent. At this plant Fromm Dog Food was produced and sold to mink ranchers as well as dog owners, netting \$2 million in sales. It is still thriving today.

In addition to the research and improvements made to the fox farming industry, the Fromms began pelting by assembly line. Edward was influenced by Henry Ford's methods and adapted them to the fox business. In one day they could pelt 2,000 foxes, a vast improvement over the old method of one man pelting one fox. As the fox pelt came to its last stop each number was recorded from tattooed marks found in the ear. When it was sold, the price would be recorded so that each fox had a complete history. This detailed history led to advertising pedigreed foxes from Fromm Brothers. They placed a medallion in the nose of each fox pelt so that women who purchased the pelt could write for the history of that particular fox. Their ads read "The Fromm medallion is sealed to the nose of every genuine Fromm Pedigreed Fox and remains until the

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pelt is sold to the wearer, where upon it is replaced with an authentic pedigree certificate bearing the scientifically bred ancestry of the fox."(15)

Following their goal of having complete control over their product, the Fromms began manufacturing fur garments, first in New York City and then later in Merrill, WI. In the fall of 1940 their factory in New York was functioning. It was on the fourteenth floor of a skyscraper at #275 Seventh Avenue. Oman Klan was hired as their designer. He was the chief costume designer for the United Artists, movie producers; his actual employer was Samuel Goldwyn.(16) The factory was run by remote control as none of the Fromms wanted to live in New York. For awhile, Arthur's son, Johnnie, moved to New York City and became manager; Edward's daughter, Lenore, was also employed there. While there John learned to sew the fur garments. When he returned home, the Fromms looked for quarters to house a factory near Hamburg. They found what they wanted in Merrill, WI and proved that fur garments could be manufactured outside of a large national center. The Merrill plant was in full operation in 1946. With the manufacturing in New York City, the second generation of Fromms became active in the fur industry and they now had complete control over their product from beginning to end. No middleman was involved now. They shipped their finished garments directly to 75 selected stores in cities of not less than 100,000.(17)

While fox farming was their main focus, ginseng was also important to the Fromms. Yet, the two businesses were complementary to each other. It seemed that whenever ginseng was down in price, silver fox was up and vice versa. There was only one year when both companies were down at the same time. The changes that the Fromms made in the ginseng industry were as important as those they accomplished in the silver fox industry. Walter, the oldest brother, was in charge of ginseng. His hobby had always been gardening so he was the ideal person to be in charge of the ginseng. Ginseng is a unique and highly specialized crop and no equipment existed specifically for it, making it a very challenging crop to work. The Fromms' inventions in labor-saving devices for

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ginseng farming would revolutionize the industry. Walter and Edward worked with Herbert Kleinschmidt, the ginseng straw boss, and also with LeRoy Becker, who was in charge of the machine shop, in inventing the root washing machine. It was a large wire-mesh cylinder that was belt driven and could wash roots by the splash method. Shelves were built along the full length of the cylinder and as the cylinder revolved, the root moved from the shelf to the water below and then was carried to a different shelf for another splash. The building of this machine required two weeks but it ended the greatest bottleneck in ginseng cultivation, enabling them to wash 6,000 pounds of root in an hour. The two men also invented a root digger by using the potato digger as a model. Another invention was a posthole digger hooked to a motor; four men and two machines could dig 4,500 postholes in two weeks. Using the idea of a cement mixer, Walter also created a portable revolving screen operated by a gas motor which could sieve or screen the seed crop from the soil or strain fine black dirt from the forest debris. All of these innovations led to increased productivity with less manpower. Moreover, they formed the basic design models for present day ginseng machinery.

The four Fromm brothers were an interesting mix of personalities, but they all had one trait in common; perfectionism. They also were highly individualistic and independent; all were very creative, energetic, and hardworking. Henry and John became known as "the foxmen." Their responsibility was watching and caring for the foxes. They perfected a standard fox kennel design by elevating them and adding a 50-gallon oak barrel with a six-inch round hole cut in it. Straw was used to insulate the outer walls of the barrel-kennel. The tops could be lifted off for cleaning. Two identical kennels were placed in each forty-by-forty foot enclosure. Edward was also involved with the pioneering idea of allowing the foxes that were to be pelted to roam freely on 80 to 100 acres of land. This is called "range finishing" and it perfected the fur. As the August 1, 1936 issue of *Vogue* states, "Only in the cold forest does the guard-fur become long and dense and silken, a bright blazing silver glory, dipped in black at the end of each silver hair; and the dark slate-coloured under-fur becomes deep and dense and soft; and the night-black brush becomes long and heavy, with a snow-white tip."

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John, like Henry, had only an eighth grade education but because of hunting the fox they were very knowledgeable about foxes. They were the ideal ones to study the foxes' diet and nutrition. By experimentation they found the diet which produced the best coat; this brought about the changeover from a strict horse meat diet to one which incorporated vegetables, grains, and oils. John loved beautiful things and was responsible for the aesthetics of the fox herd. He was the overseer of the fox yards and the straw bosses. Lawrence Schultz, the straw boss for many years, learned under John's tutelage. The only brother who never married, he lived in the warehouse in an apartment next to the auction room. Socially shy, John was more introverted than the other three. The only thing John did with his money that was visible was to buy a flashy convertible. The two stall garage where he kept his convertible is still known as "John's garage."

Edward, like Walter, had taught school in rural Marathon County. Unlike Walter, Edward had four years of training, he graduated from the Normal School in Stevens Point, WI. Without question, Edward was always the leader and spokesman for "the Company." Edward could talk to Manhattan businessmen as well as to the farmers in Hamburg, WI. Whenever "the Company" needed a spokesman, it was Edward who would leave the farm and represent them. In 1919 he traveled to St. Louis to a winter auction with his pelts of bright silver foxes. When the fur trade capitol moved from St. Louis to New York, it was Edward that took the company's first real shipment of pelts there. The only year that ginseng and silver fox prices were in decline at the same time was 1931. That year Edward Fromm took the silver fox to Paris. He visited every couturier in the fashion salons of Paris, arguing that silver fox should be used for coats, jackets and trim, rather than just as a whole-pelt scarf. Edward demonstrated a process known as "letting out" leather that created a more cloth-like fur that could be constructed into more creative styling. This bold move proved to be successful.

The Fromm Brothers, Inc. headquarters was always at Edward's house until it was moved to the log building in 1943. Edward's leadership authority was never questioned by the other three brothers. When they began having the auctions in Hamburg it was Edward who conducted them. Edward represented "the Company" in other endeavors as well.

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He was named "Man of the Year" by the fox industry in 1960. He was active in the State Historical Society, the Wausau Public Library, the Marathon County Historical Society, and Trees for Tomorrow in Eagle River, WI, and was president of the Merrill area public schools. Edward was always community-minded; he was an articulate speaker with a keen sense of humor. Because of all of his many talents he was a real asset to any organization. He took these posts willingly and with a strong sense of responsibility.

The brothers' business finesse was seemingly uncanny. In 1936, when the first auction was such a tremendous success, Henry and John decided that they would like to start raising mink. Henry had started raising mink in the Boulder Junction, WI area. This business also became incorporated into Fromm Brothers, Inc. Henry never lived in Hamburg again; John took over the Hamburg operation. This interest in mink came at a good time because long-haired fur became unpopular about this time. When in 1946 the last fling of the silver foxes occurred, the Fromms were ready with the mink. It was a sad day for the Fromms when the fox was no longer wanted; ironically, their business was at its zenith. The color that the Fromm brothers had worked to achieve all of their lives had finally been perfected. But by 1946, there was nothing left of the silver fox industry. Once again, they began exploring and experimenting with new mutations and colors - this time with the mink. By 1947, thanks to Henry, they were ready with the mink. That year, "the Company" produced 24,000 mink and owned 115,000 breeders. Henry's hobby had given the Fromms the world's largest mink farm.

While mink was eclipsing fox in the fur industry, all of the mink breeders joined forces to make the first platinum mink coat in the world. The skins were hand picked from every breeder until they had enough skins. The Fromm brothers introduced and promoted an auction at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York City at which time the platinum mink was introduced to the world. Edward Fromm was the auctioneer at the white tie and tails affair. Proceeds from the auction were donated to the Stage Door Canteen as the U.S. was in the midst of World War II. The

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platinum mink brought \$18,000. The Fromms' mink ranch eventually became the largest mink ranch in the world. The only endeavor that they did not succeed in was their chinchilla operation. This was never a serious business with the Fromms, it was more like a hobby. They eventually turned their chinchilla shed into a machine shed.

The actual impact that the Fromms had on North Central Wisconsin will probably never be fully known. They raised 750,000 foxes and 250,000 mink; harvested 9,000,000 million pounds of ginseng; spent \$2 million in fox housing, \$500,000 in mink housing, and \$4.5 million in farm implements. They paid out more than \$10 million in wages in 20 years. They owned 17,000 acres of land and had the largest fox farm, the largest ginseng farm, and the largest mink farm in the world.(18)

Everyone in the area benefited from their enterprises. As a half-page ad in *The Daily Record-Herald* related on September 1, 1936, "Wausau is particularly grateful to have the opportunity of being identified with the extensive Fromm enterprises now pioneering and bringing fox and fur auctions to Wausau and this together with other co-operative marketing groups in the city makes Wausau the fur center of America." It was signed by the merchants of the Retail Council and the Wausau Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber of Commerce even honored all of the buyers at a banquet at the Hotel Wausau to show their appreciation.

The four brothers from Hamburg were successful in accomplishing their dream and much more. They established Hamburg as the fox fur capital of the world. Less known among their accomplishments are the improvements made in the local mail delivery system. The Fromm farm became a star route; local youth were guaranteed summer employment, which enabled many to seek higher education. When Walter and Mabel Fromm sold their stock and liquidated their ownership in the Fromm Brothers, Inc. - the money was used to establish a \$500,000 scholarship fund. Proceeds from the interest earnings of this fund are given annually to graduates of Merrill High School, if they had attended the Maple Grove School.

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The Fromm Fur Farm is an exception to criterion consideration G. Although the chinchilla shed was built in 1948 (two years past the 50 year rule), it contributes to the overall significance of the complex because of its importance in representing the innovative nature of the Fromm's business practice. The majority of resources in the complex are more than 50 years old.

(If there was funding left, it would be extended to other students.) This school is still at the east end of the Fromm property and was extremely important to the Fromms - they believed strongly in education. They even sent hot lunches to the students and teachers from the boarding house. Most of the students were children of their employees. Because most of the employees were neighbors, they were also friends. During the busy seasons many employees received room and board at the Fromms' ranch. Recreation was another thing provided for the employees. The clubhouse, built in 1935, included a Brunswick bowling alley which cost \$4,000. This was built mainly for the employees; it was an added advantage when they had the auctions. There were bowling teams, baseball teams and large celebrations after the harvests were completed.(19)

The passion of the four young boys for silver foxes led them to perfecting a fox bright with silver. In 1947 Katherine Pinkerton wrote a biography on the Fromms; her appropriate title was *Bright with Silver*.

The fantastic success story of these four boys is an inspiration to many. The history deserves to be preserved as it is proof that it is possible for dreams to come true. As Pinkerton says in her biography of them, "The real essence of the endeavor cannot be expressed in foxes or in mink or in ginseng, for the Fromms' dream was set in terms of living. Four boys were not content with their lives. They knew life could be better. And they made it so."

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Verbal Boundary Description

Located in the town of Hamburg, Marathon County, the boundary is described in the Marathon County Register of Deeds office as Section 11, Township 30 North, Range 06 East, as described in CSM 1339 vol. 6, p. 20; CSM 4731, vol. 17, p. 203 and CSM 6298, vol 23, p. 126. SE Y4 of SE of 1/4.

Boundary Justification

The boundary was selected to include the core of the Fromm brothers holdings now under the ownership of the Vetter family. It does not include property owned by other individuals. The family holdings once encompassed thousands of acres. The nominated property constitutes the core of Fromm operations with an acreage sufficient to illustrate the agricultural setting of their ginseng and fox fur operations. All nominated lands were directly associated with the operations during the period of significance.

Archeological Potential

No known archeological site exists nearby the Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farm Complex and its archeological potential is unknown.

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Map No. 1 - Barn/Silo (C.)
Town of Hamburg, Marathon County, WI
Photos by M.J. Hettinga, Oct. 1994
Neg. at WI State Historical Society
Camera facing North

Photo 2 of 25
Map No. 1 - Barn/Silo (C.)
Town of Hamburg, Marathon County, WI
Photos by M.J. Hettinga, Oct. 1994
Neg. at WI State Historical Society
Camera facing West

Photo 3 of 25
Map No. 2 - Truck Scale (C.)
Town of Hamburg, Marathon County, WI
Photos by M.J. Hettinga, Oct. 1994
Neg. at WI State Historical Society
Camera facing East

Photo 4 of 25
Map No. 3 - Boardinghouse (C.)
Town of Hamburg, Marathon County, WI
Photos by M.J. Hettinga, May, 1994
Neg. at WI State Historical Society
Camera facing North

Photo 5 of 25
Map No. 3 - Boardinghouse (C.)
Town of Hamburg, Marathon County, WI

Photos by M.J. Hettinga, Oct. 1994
Neg. at WI State Historical Society
Camera facing Northeast

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Map No. 3 - Boardinghouse (C.)
Town of Hamburg, Marathon County, WI
Photos by M.J. Hettinga, Oct. 1994
Neg. at WI State Historical Society
Camera facing South

Photo 7 of 25
Map No. 4 - Two Story Bunkhouse (C.)
Town of Hamburg, Marathon County, WI
Photos by M.J. Hettinga, May, 1994
Neg. at WI State Historical Society
Camera facing Southwest

Photo 8 of 25
Map No. 5 - One Story Bunkhouse (C.)
Town of Hamburg, Marathon County, WI
Photos by M.J. Hettinga, Oct. 1994
Neg. at WI State Historical Society
Camera facing North

Photo 9 of 25
Map No. 6 - Clubhouse/Office (C.)
Town of Hamburg, Marathon County, WI
Photos by M.J. Hettinga, May, 1994
Neg. at WI State Historical Society
Camera facing North

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(Rev. 8-86)
Wisconsin Word Processing Format
(Approved 1/92)

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

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section: Photographs Page 2

Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farms
Township of Hamburg, Marathon County, Wisconsin

Photo 10 of 25
Map No. 6 - Clubhouse/Office (C.)
Town of Hamburg, Marathon County, WI
Photos by M.J. Hettinga, Oct. 1994
Neg. at WI State Historical Society
Camera facing West

Photo 11 of 25
Map No. 7 - Chinchilla Shed (C.)
Town of Hamburg, Marathon County, WI
Photos by M.J. Hettinga, Oct. 1994
Neg. at WI State Historical Society
Camera facing North

Photo 12 of 25
Map No. 8 - Paint Shed (C.)
Town of Hamburg, Marathon County, WI
Photos by M.J. Hettinga, Oct. 1994
Neg. at WI State Historical Society
Camera facing North

Photo 13 of 25
Map No. 9 -
Warehouse/Slaughterhouse (C.)
Town of Hamburg, Marathon County, WI
Photos by M.J. Hettinga, Feb. 1994
Neg. at WI State Historical Society
Camera facing North

Photo 14 of 25
Map No. 9 -
Warehouse/Slaughterhouse (C.)
Town of Hamburg, Marathon County, WI
Photos by M.J. Hettinga, May, 1994
Neg. at WI State Historical Society
Camera facing North

Photo 15 of 25
Map No. 9 -
Warehouse/Slaughterhouse (C.)
Town of Hamburg, Marathon County, WI
Photos by M.J. Hettinga, May, 1994
Neg. at WI State Historical Society
Camera facing West

Photo 16 of 25
Map No. 10 - Water Tower (C.)
Town of Hamburg, Marathon County, WI
Photos by M.J. Hettinga, May, 1994
Neg. at WI State Historical Society
Camera facing West

Photo 17 of 25
Map No. 12 - John's Garage (C.)
Town of Hamburg, Marathon County, WI
Photos by M.J. Hettinga, May, 1994
Neg. at WI State Historical Society
Camera facing West

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

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section: Photographs Page 3

Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng Farms
Township of Hamburg, Marathon County, Wisconsin

Photo 18 of 25
Map No. 13 - Cottage (C.)
Town of Hamburg, Marathon County, WI
Photos by M.J. Hettinga, Oct. 1994
Neg. at WI State Historical Society
Camera facing Northeast

Photo 19 of 25
Map No. 14 - Playhouse (C.)
Town of Hamburg, Marathon County, WI
Photos by M.J. Hettinga, May, 1994
Neg. at WI State Historical Society
Camera facing North

Photo 20 of 25
Map No. 15 -
Henry/Mamie Fromm Home (C.)
Town of Hamburg, Marathon County, WI
Photos by M.J. Hettinga, May, 1994
Neg. at WI State Historical Society
Camera facing North

Photo 21 of 25
Map No. 15 -
Henry/Mamie Fromm Home (C.)
Town of Hamburg, Marathon County, WI
Photos by M.J. Hettinga, May, 1994
Neg. at WI State Historical Society
Camera facing Northeast

Photo 22 of 25
Map No. 15 -
Henry/Mamie Fromm Home (C.)
Town of Hamburg, Marathon County, WI
Photos by M.J. Hettinga, May, 1994
Neg. at WI State Historical Society
Camera facing East

Photo 23 of 25
Map No. 16 -
Walter/Mabel Fromm Home (C.)
Town of Hamburg, Marathon County, WI
Photos by M.J. Hettinga, May, 1994
Neg. at WI State Historical Society
Camera facing Northeast

Photo 24 of 25
Map No. 17 -
Pioneer log Nieman House (C.)
Town of Hamburg, Marathon County, WI
Photos by M.J. Hettinga, May, 1994
Neg. at WI State Historical Society
Camera facing East

Photo 25 of 25
Aerial Photo
date and photographer unknown
Neg. at WI State Historical Society

Returned



State Historical Society of Wisconsin

Division of Historic Preservation

816 State Street • Madison, Wisconsin 53706-1488
☎ (608) 264-6500 • FAX (608) 264-6404

TO: Carol Shull, Keeper
National Register of Historic Places

FROM: Jim Draeger

SUBJECT: National Register Nomination



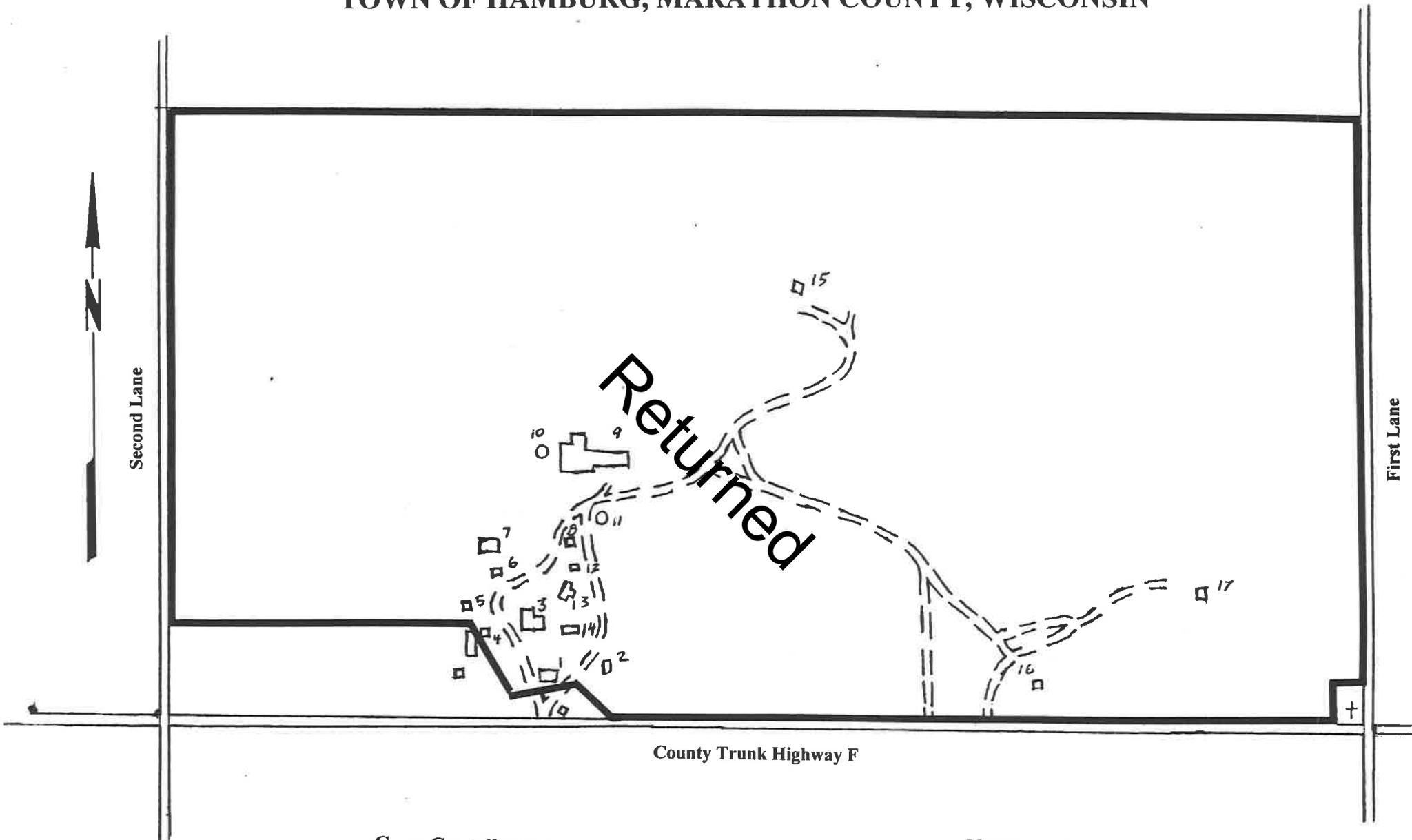
The following materials are submitted on this 4th day of December, 1996,
for the amendment to the nomination of the Fromm Brothers Fur and Ginseng
Farm Complex to the National Register of Historic Places:

- 1 Original National Register of Historic Places nomination form
- Multiple Property Nomination form
- 25 Photographs
- 2 Original USGS maps
- 1 Sketch map(s)/figure(s)
- Pieces of correspondence
- Other: _____

COMMENTS:

- Please insure that this nomination is reviewed
- This property has been certified under 36 CFR 67
- The enclosed owner objections do do not constitute a majority of property owners.
- Other: _____

FROMM BROTHERS FUR AND GINSENG FARM COMPLEX TOWN OF HAMBURG, MARATHON COUNTY, WISCONSIN



C = Contributing
NC = Noncontributing

Not to scale

—+— Boundary

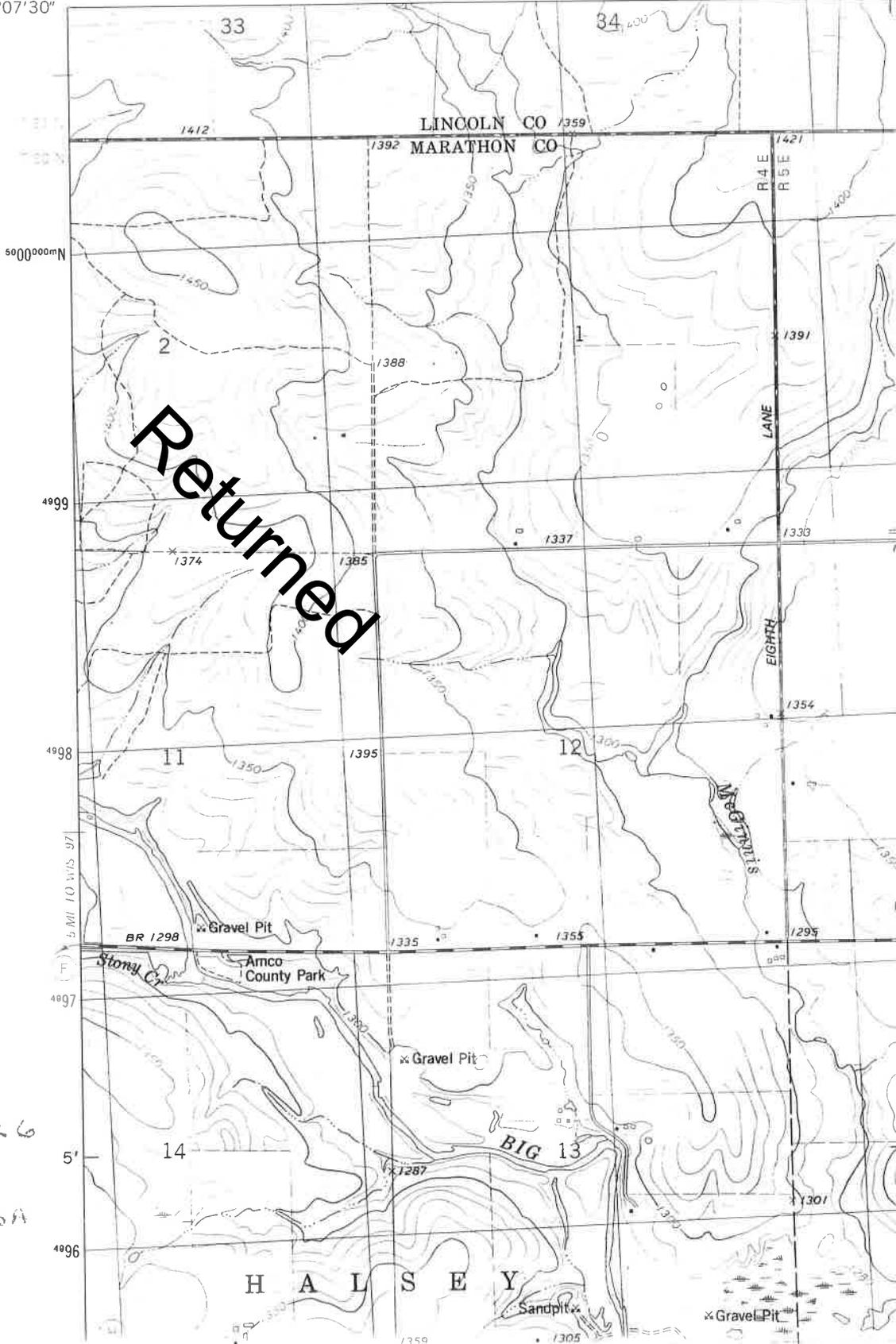
2974 (NE)
(GOODRICH)

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY



90°00' 2650000mE 266 267 57'3

45°07'30"

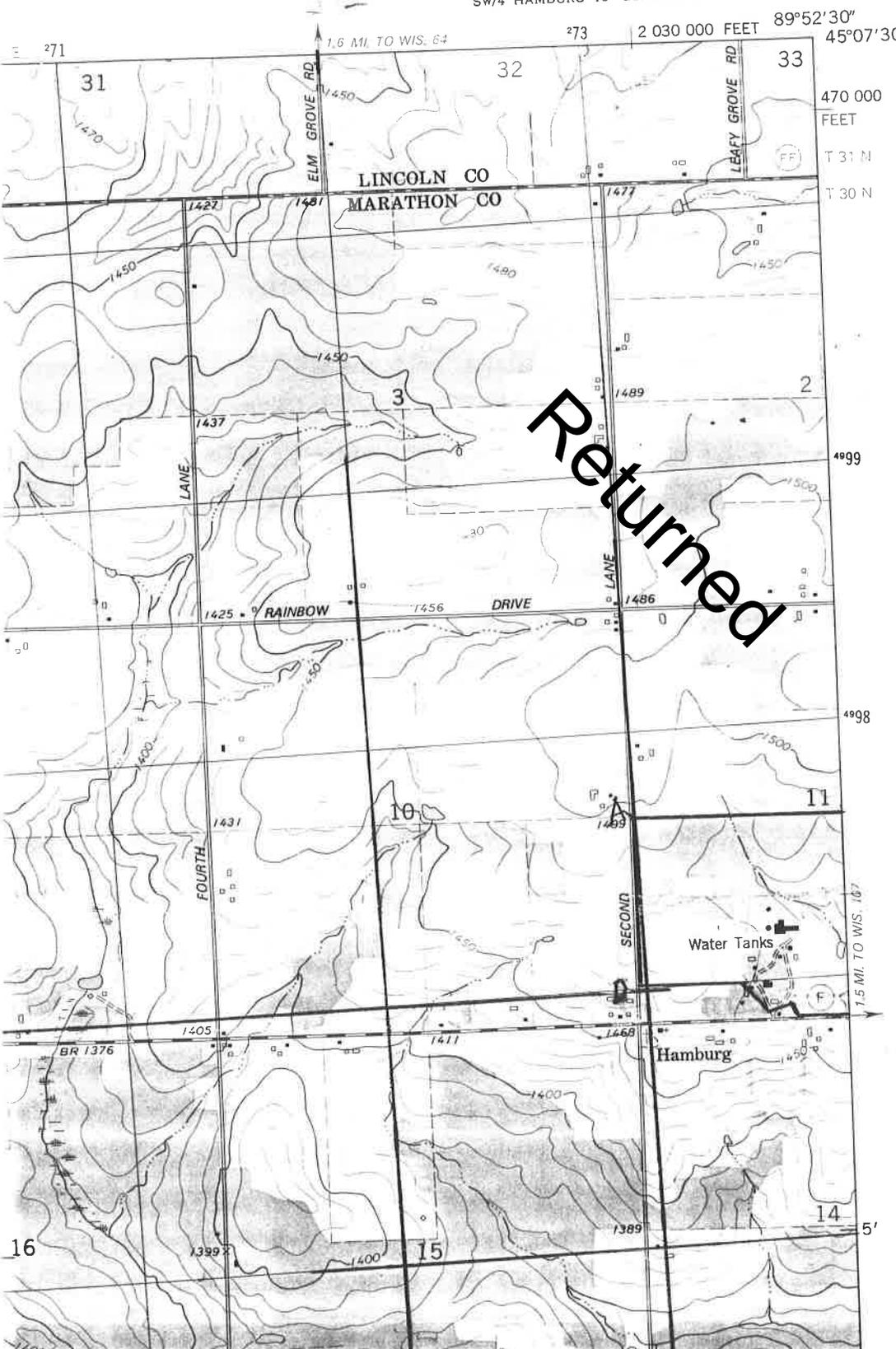


Returned

FROMM Brothers Fur and
Ginseng farm
Township of HAWLSBURG
MARATHON, WI
MARY JANE HATTINGA

HAMBURG QUADRANGLE
 WISCONSIN
 7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)
 SW/4 HAMBURG 15' QUADRANGLE

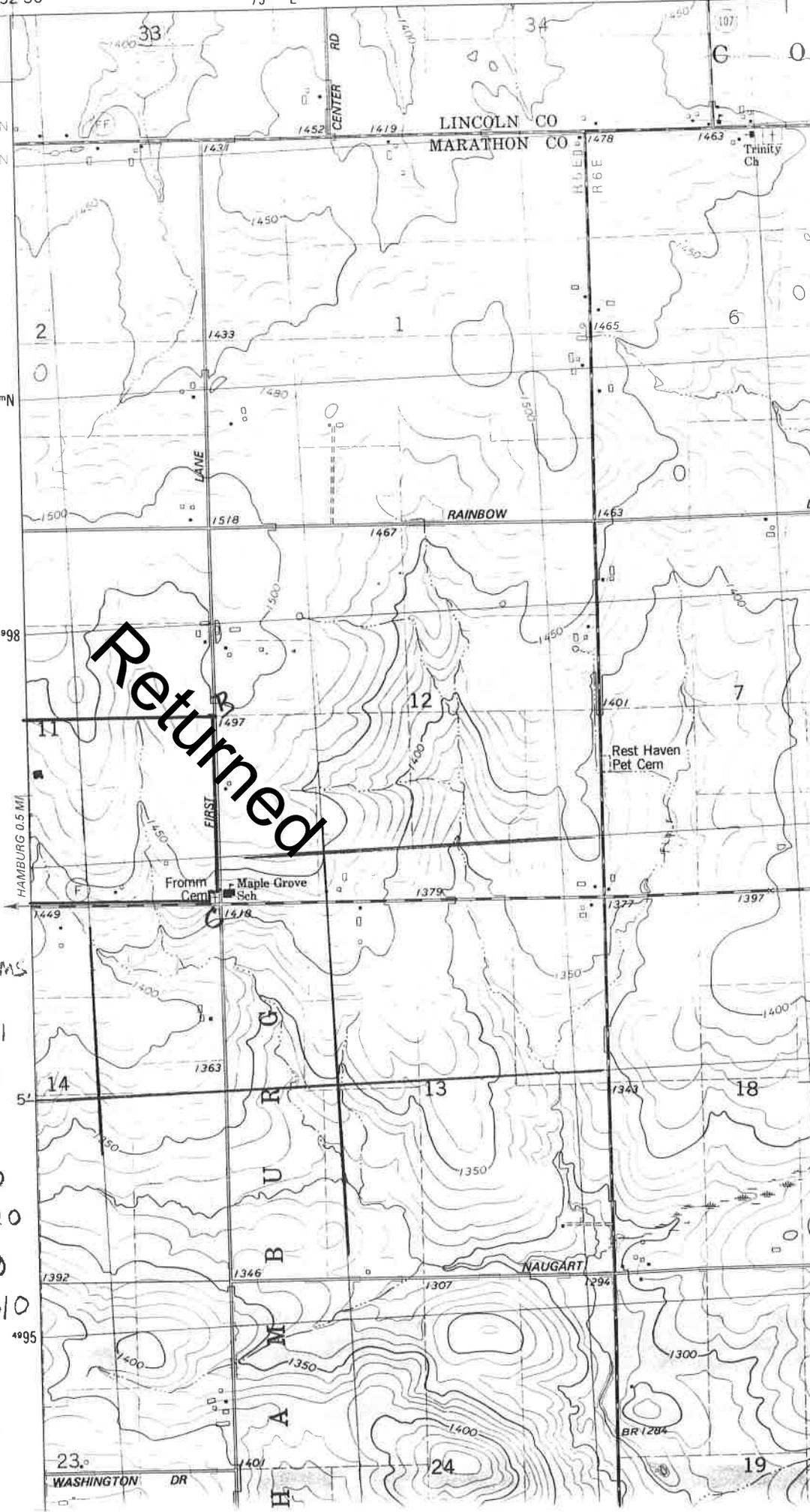
3074 III NE
 (ALEXANDER LAKE)



Returned

FROMM Brothers Fur
 and Mensing Farms
 Township of Hamburg
 Marathon Co., WI

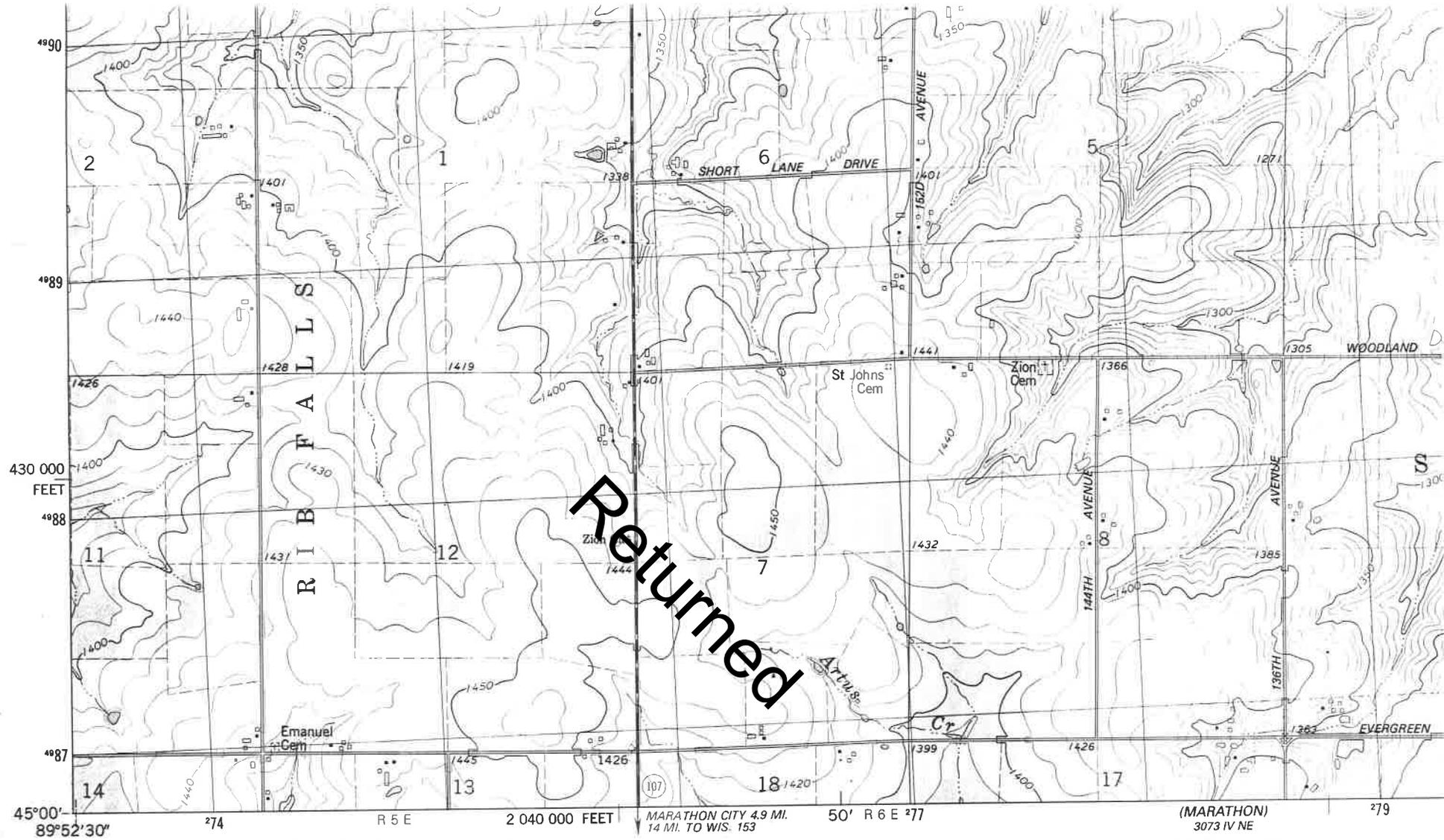
| | Z | E | N |
|------|--------|---------|---|
| A 16 | 273000 | 4997660 | |
| B 16 | 274580 | 4997020 | |
| C 16 | 274540 | 4996200 | |
| D 16 | 272980 | 4997010 | |



Returned

FROMM BROTHERS
 FUR and GINSENG FARMS
 (TOWNSHIP 08)
 HAMBURG, MARATHON, WI
 Mary Jane Hettinger

| Z | E | N |
|------|--------|---------|
| A 16 | 273000 | 4997660 |
| B 16 | 274580 | 4997620 |
| C 16 | 274540 | 4996800 |
| D 16 | 272980 | 4997010 |



Returned

(EDGAR)
3073 IV NW

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey

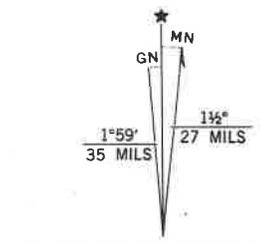
Control by USGS and NOS/NOAA

Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1974. Field checked 1975. Map edited 1978

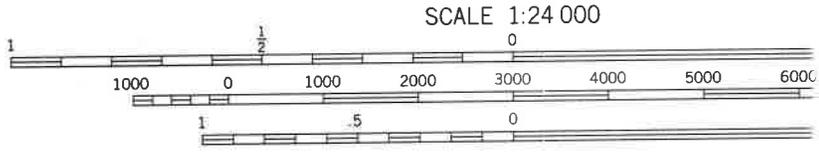
Projection and 10,000-foot grid ticks: Wisconsin coordinate system, central zone (Lambert conformal conic)
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid, zone 16
1927 North American datum

Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence and field lines where generally visible on aerial photographs. This information is unchecked

The difference between 1927 North American Datum and North American Datum of 1983 (NAD 83) for 7.5-minute intersections is given in USGS Bulletin 1875. The NAD 83 is shown by dashed corner ticks



UTM GRID AND 1978 MAGNETIC NORTH DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET

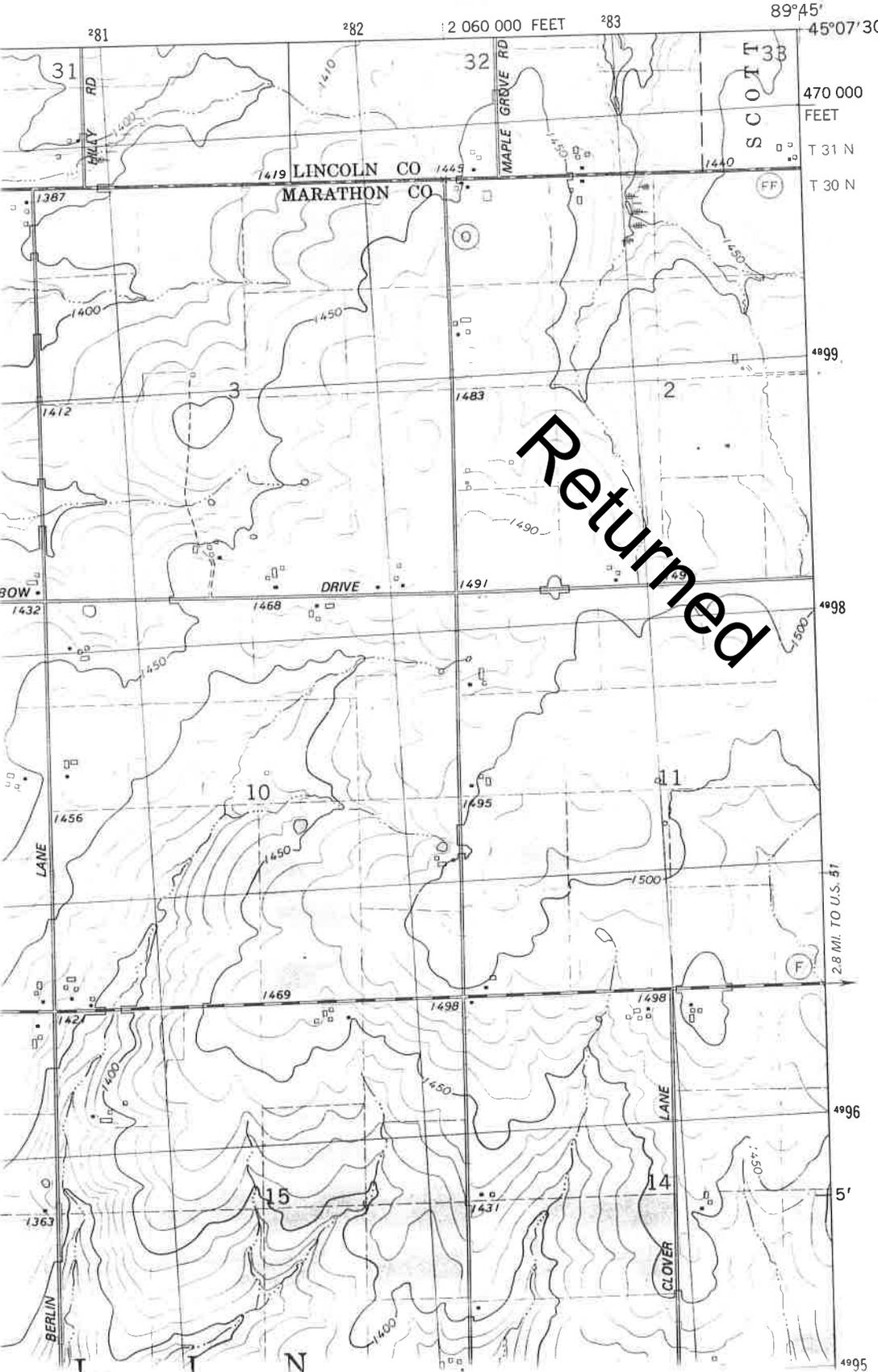


SCALE 1:24 000
CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RES
AND WISCONSIN GEOLOGICAL AND NATURAL HISTORY SURVEY, MADISON
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE (

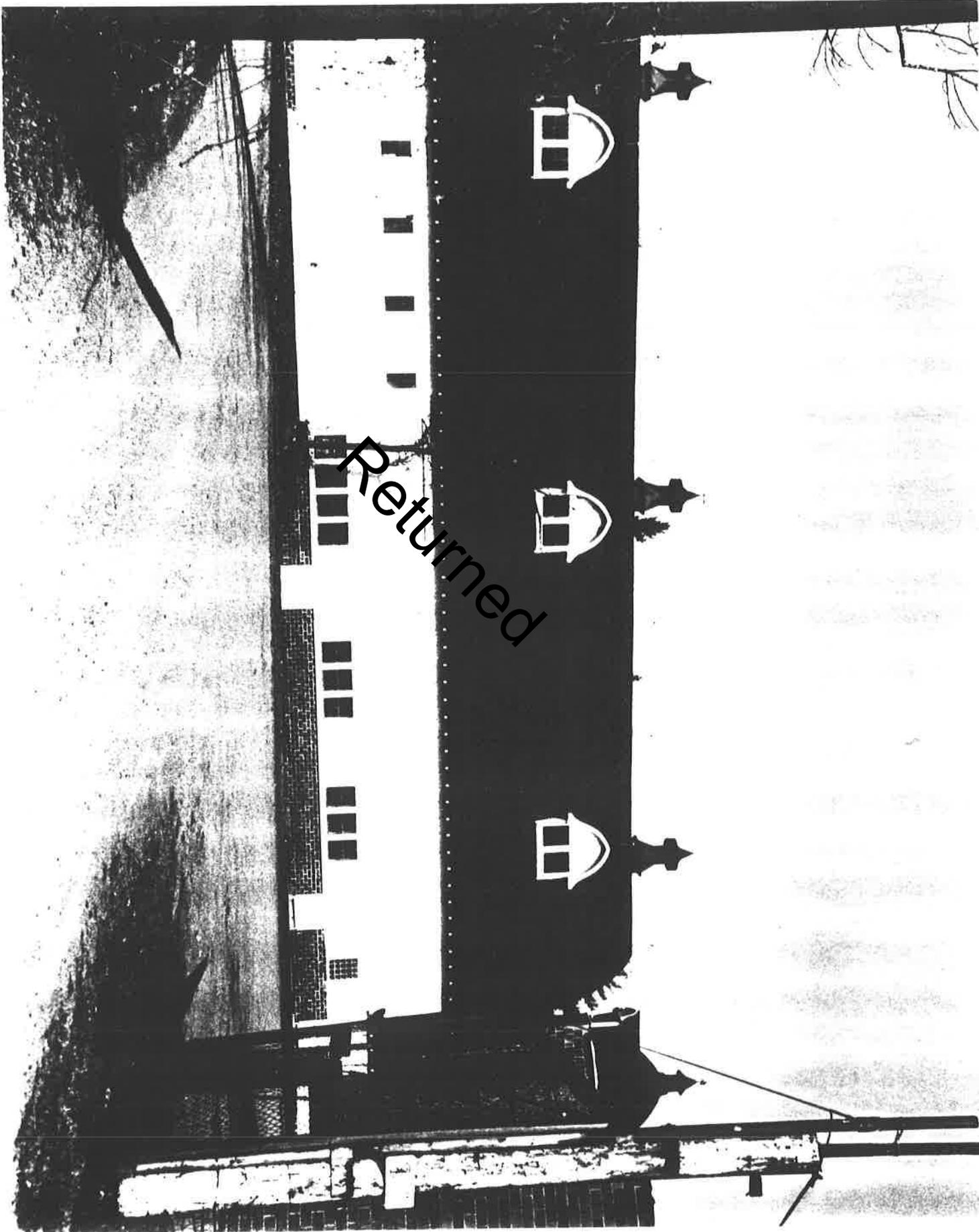
LITTLE CHICAGO QUADRANGLE
WISCONSIN
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)
SE/4 HAMBURG 15' QUADRANGLE

3074 II NW
(MERRILL)



Returned

2.8 MI. TO U.S. #1



Returned

Plate 1 of 25

Rain/side c

From Fir and Ginseng, from Hoshone 1951

Hamburg, Matrimonial, 1951

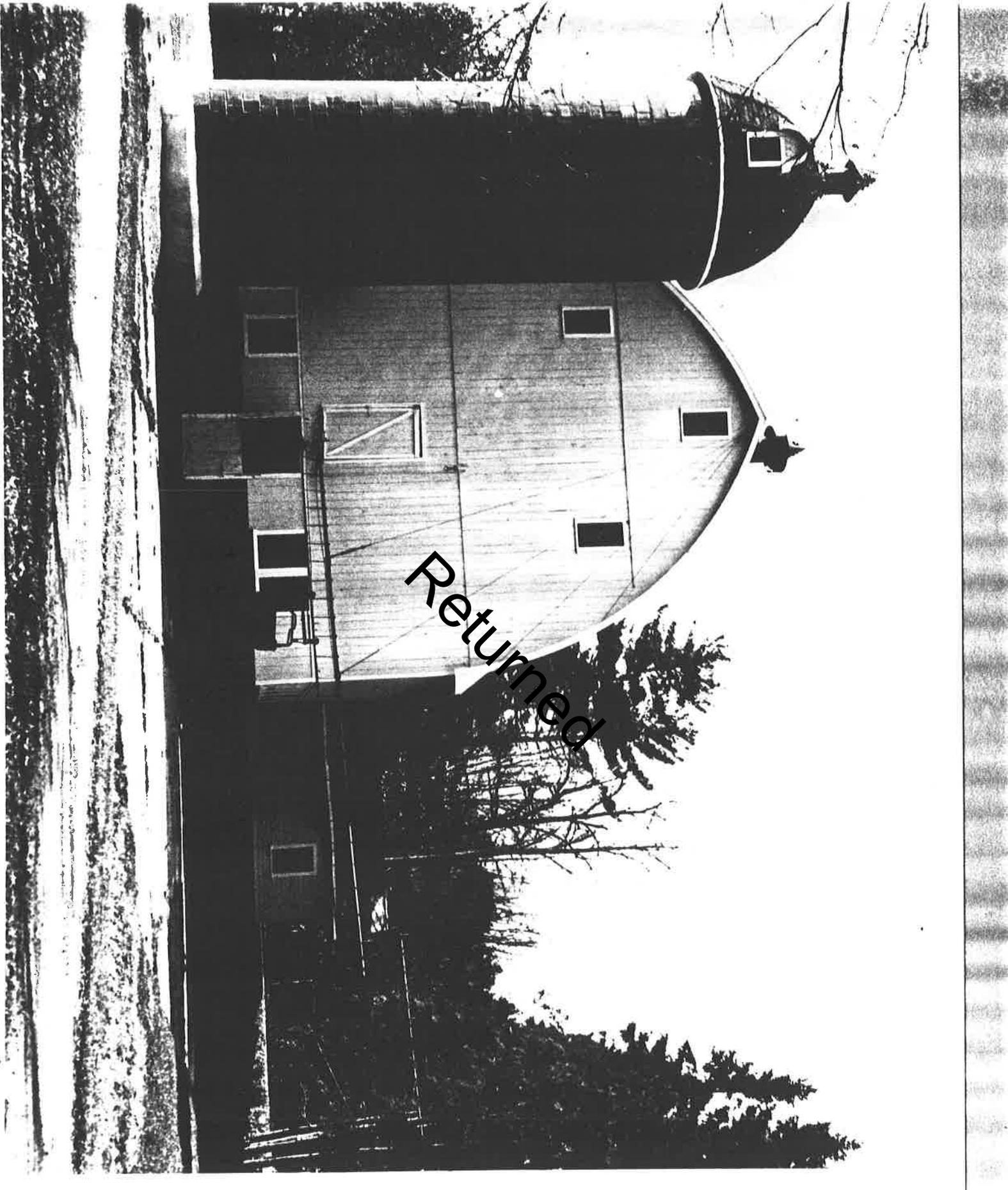
1. very low the things

(ed, 1951)

Tags all out - late 1950s early

(at meadows & marsh)

Returned



Returned

Photo 2 of 25

Room/silo c

Froom, Fun and Gwery Farm Historic District

111 King, Madison County, 2011

Handmade Hettange

Nov. 1994

Regs at WI State Historical Society
Inmate facing east

Returned

MAP # 2/1



Returned

Photo 25 of 25
Revised Photo

From Finance Building Former Historic
District
Hamburg, Meridian County, GA
Neg at US State Historical Society

Returned