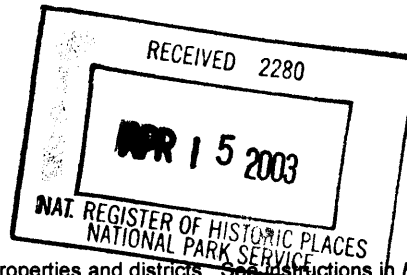


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form



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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 Grant Wood's "Fall Plowing" Rural Historic Landscape District

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 0.5 mi. n. of jct. Matsell Lane and Stone City Road N/A not for publication

city or town Viola vicinity

state Iowa code IA county Linn code 113 zip code 52214

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).

Donnell J. Sorke April 14, 2003
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

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.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain): _____

Edson H. Beall
Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
4	0	buildings
1	0	sites
		structures
		objects
5	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

AGRICULTURE/Subsistence/farmstead

AGRICULTURE/Subsistence/animal facility/barn

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

AGRICULTURE/agricultural field

LANDSCAPE/natural feature

TRANSPORTATION/road-related/road

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

AGRICULTURE/Subsistence/farmstead

AGRICULTURE/Subsistence/animal facility/barn

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

AGRICULTURE/agricultural field

LANDSCAPE/natural feature

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: gabled front and wing house

OTHER: heavy timber frame barn

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

walls WOOD/Weatherboard

roof ASPHALT

other

Narrative Description

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

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

Criteria Considerations

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

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.

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ART

Period of Significance

1931

Significant Dates

1931

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Wood, Grant

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 123 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	[1][5]	[6][3][3][6][6][4]	[4][6][6][3][8][8][2]	2	[1][5]	[6][3][3][6][6][4]	[4][6][6][3][5][4][7]
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
3	[1][5]	[6][3][3][5][9][8]	[4][6][6][3][3][2][8]	4	[1][5]	[6][3][2][7][9][0]	[4][6][6][3][3][2][8]

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 Leah D. Rogers and Jan Olive Nash, Consultants

organization Tallgrass Historians L.C. date March 24, 2003

street & number 2460 S. Riverside Drive telephone 319-354-6722

city or town Iowa City state IA zip code 52246

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the complete 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 see continuation sheet

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

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.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetGrant Wood's "Fall Plowing"
Rural Historic Landscape District
Linn County, IASection number 7 Page 1**Narrative Description**

In 1931 Grant Wood painted "Fall Plowing," an oil painting on canvas measuring 30 inches x 40 ¾ inches (Dennis 1975:175) (see page 14). It depicts a scenic fall landscape with a John Deere scouring plow prominent in the foreground and a farmstead in the background. In between is a rolling landscape typical of Grant Wood's landscape paintings and reflecting his knowledge of, and experience with, the rural landscapes in Linn, Jones, and Johnson counties in east-central Iowa. The original painting is owned by Deere and Company in Moline, Illinois. This particular painting is set in rural Linn County in an area just north of the town of Viola and in an area where Grant Wood was a frequent visitor in the 1920s-1930s. The setting for this painting is of the William C. Drumbarger farm, with the Drumbarger farmstead represented in the background of this painting. Grant Wood was a frequent visitor to the Drumbarger farm where he was seen by family members sketching landscape scenes at what would be the general vantage point, or artist's position, for the "Fall Plowing" scene (*Cedar Rapids Gazette* April 27, 2002; Ron Drumbarger Interview 11/21/02; Ric and Lynette Graves Interview 11/15/02).

The painting has been described as depicting a "shining new Deere-style plow" resting in the extreme foreground of the landscape, with the surrounding land depicted as "bountiful and graceful, a voluptuous cornucopia with perfect furrows and corn shocks, billowy trees and pastures, and a picturesque farmstead in the distance" (Kinsey 1996:127). Recognizing that the scene depicted in "Fall Plowing" is stylized and idealized and even that it harks back to a time before mechanization dominated farming (i.e., in the depiction of a horse-drawn plow), it is perhaps even more remarkable that the actual landscape from which it was painted is still very recognizable today despite the artistic idealism and the modern-day land-use of this property. It is also remarkable that the historic farmstead buildings have survived with no modern intrusions unlike many Iowa farmsteads of today.

As noted above, the particular landscape depicted in "Fall Plowing" is of the former William C. Drumbarger farmstead and the surrounding rural landscape in Sections 1 and 2 of Brown Township in Linn County, Iowa. This property is just north of the town of Viola and about equally distant west of the town of Stone City. According to oral testimony by descendants of the Drumbarger family, Grant Wood spent many days sketching in the hill portion of the Drumbarger farm (Ron Drumbarger Interview 11/21/02; Ric and Lynette Graves Interview 11/15/02). Bessie Drumbarger Hakes, daughter of Lee Drumbarger, who was brother to William Drumbarger, related stories to her grandson, Ric Graves, and other descendants about seeing Wood sketching in the hill portion of her parent's farm (i.e., the historic William C. Drumbarger farm) (*Cedar Rapids Gazette* April 27, 2002; Ric and Lynette Graves Interview 11/15/02). Ric Graves (ibid.) further noted that Bessie related that when she was a child she would go in the hills where this man (Wood) would be drawing pictures. She would sit down beside him and talk to him. "If he didn't like what he was drawing he would crumple it up and throw it down." She wished she had kept some of the sketches (Ric and Lynette Graves Interview 11/15/02). Ron Drumbarger (Interview 11/21/02) had also been told many times by his father, Bob Drumbarger (son of Lee Drumbarger and brother of Bessie Drumbarger) that when Bob was a young boy, Grant Wood came out many times to the Drumbarger farm and would do sketches, sometimes giving some of the discards to Bob and his siblings. Bob Drumbarger noted that they would play with the sketches and then throw them away (Ron Drumbarger Interview 11/21/02). Both Bessie and Bob Drumbarger have passed away in recent years.

Other living informants noted first-hand Grant Wood's presence in the Viola vicinity on numerous occasions in the 1920s-1930s (Norma Meredith Letter 2002; Norma Meredith Interview 11/14/02; Jim Wild Interview 11/13/02). Jim Wild (Interview 11/13/02) noted that Grant Wood was "just around kind of everywhere, on every intersection, road, every hill that overlooked a scenic thing, and just kind of underfoot everywhere." Norma Meredith further noted "many of Grant Wood's regional paintings are of sites still to be found here" (Meredith Letter 2002).

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Continuation SheetGrant Wood's "Fall Plowing"
Rural Historic Landscape District
Linn County, IASection number 7 Page 2

Wood was a major presence in the Stone City-Viola area in the 1920s-1930s and even established an artists' colony at Stone City that operated for two summers in 1932 and 1933 (Ferreter 1985; Graham et al. 1993; Haven 2002). He would often invite the local residents of the Viola area to the Sunday open houses at the Art Colony, with many attending (Norma Meredith Interview 11/14/02; Jim Wild Interview 11/13/02). There are at least two other Wood paintings that can be easily identified with specific scenes in this area. These include a landscape of "Stone City, Iowa" and another entitled "Death on Ridge Road" (see page 21). The latter is a road in the Stone City-Viola area, with the painting inspired by an automobile accident that was a close call for his dear friend Jay Sigmund, a well-known Linn County poet (Graham et al. 1993:129). Sigmund "wrote several poems about Grant and persuaded him to spend a summer at rural Waubeek [near Viola and Stone City] on the Wapsipinicon River" (ibid.). Sigmund also "constantly advised his friend to stay home and paint what he knew best, the Iowa scene" and "took Grant hiking along the Wapsi" and "rekindled Wood's interest in the rural folk" (Burns 1996:151). It is likely that other landscapes, such as "Fall Plowing," that were not labeled with specific place names depict actual landscapes and scenes in this same region and are yet to be identified.

James Dennis, Art History Professor Emeritus at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and author of two books on Grant Wood, did an initial comparison of "Fall Plowing" to a current photograph of the subject property in Linn County. The photograph was supplied to Dennis by the *Cedar Rapids Gazette* for a news article on the Linn County property. In the article, Dennis was quoted as follows:

I think there's something to the argument that this is the site....The painting is more site-specific than I would have guessed, something like [Grant Wood's] 'Stone City.'

Or, the land may have been a springboard or basis for the painting...[Wood] generalized. He abstracted nature, inventing trees or whatever.

Dennis mentioned Wood's famous 'American Gothic' as an example. The artist sketched a gabled house in Eldon but then, in the painting, 'manipulated the house,'...he narrowed the window to work into his compositional theme.

One exception to Wood's 'fantasy landscapes' is 'Stone City,' a view of the Jones County village near Anamosa that Wood painted in 1930, albeit a 'highly abstracted view' (*Cedar Rapids Gazette* April 27, 2002).

Contacts were made with other Grant Wood scholars, with several comparing photographs of the actual landscape to the painting (i.e., Henry Adams, Wanda Corn, and Brady Roberts), producing the following observations:

Henry Adams, Curator of American Art, Cleveland Museum of Art and Chair, Department of Art History, Case Western Reserve University

Summary of oral comments made on November 24, 2002:

There is no question that Grant Wood used specific sites in his paintings. Stone City is an example. There are other examples.

He very often made outdoor sketches that he reformulated into his paintings. He often went through a process of making small sketches of places then reassembling them in his studio. He is well known for using real pieces in his work, then moving things around for design purposes. Wood started as an outdoor impressionist, then did work that was much more designed.

Grant Wood really captured the feeling of Iowa in a unique way. You can tell by looking at his work that it's an Iowa landscape and not a Kansas or Missouri landscape.

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Continuation Sheet

Grant Wood's "Fall Plowing"
Rural Historic Landscape District
Linn County, IA

Section number 7 Page 3

Henry Adams, additional comments made after review of several color photographs of the actual landscape:
e-mail comments dated December 13, 2002

I'm delighted to write in support of your effort to have the landscape that inspired Grant Wood's "Fall Ploughing" listed in the Register of Historic Places. Preserving the landscape that Wood depicted provides fascinating insights into his creative process. As I know from other instances, and is evident here, Wood did not create completely literal and accurate renderings of the landscapes that he viewed. Rather, he seems to have made sketches on the site that he later rearranged in the studio, to instill them with a more powerful sense of order and design.

In "Fall Ploughing" it is clear that Wood took the basic elements of the actual scene and then transformed them quite significantly to produce a memorable composition.

Preserving the landscape that Wood recorded makes it possible for us to reexperience the process Wood went through in creating "Fall Ploughing." Of course, as I am an art historian, going through this exercise of comparing the painting and the motif is extremely exciting for me. In addition, however, I believe that preserving this landscape will provide a means for so-called "ordinary people" to investigate and enter into the creative process of a great artist in a deep and significant way.

What is remarkable is that while Wood's paintings are far from exact, they have a very specific sense of place and convey the feeling of the Iowa landscape more powerfully than the work of other, more literal painters. Anyone who has traveled through the Midwest can instantly recognize that Wood was painting Iowa, and not Kansas, or Missouri, or Illinois, or some other Midwestern State. Just how Wood did this is mysterious, and it becomes in some ways even more mysterious when we can see the actual landscape he worked from, and to see how significantly he changed what was before his eyes. Preserving the landscape that Wood worked from allows us to study the alchemy of this amazing process.

Wanda M. Corn, Robert and Ruth Halperin Professor in Art History at Stanford University
e-mail comments dated November 23, 2002

In several of his paintings Wood was site-specific. In some cases he itemized and abstracted from the particulars of an existing landscape. Stone City, Herbert Hoover's Birthplace, and the Overmantel Decoration that he made for the Stamats family were all based on looking at specific places from a specific vantage point. At other times, he took particular motifs from the landscape and from objects he had in his possession. The artist based the female sitter in *Victorian Survival* on a tintype of one of his relatives, for example, and he based the house and barn behind the couple in *American Gothic* on a specific farmhouse in Eldon, Iowa.

Given that his practice was to incorporate actual sites into some of his works, it seems highly possible that sharp eyes will find other sites the artist would have known and used in his paintings. Such seems to be the case with *Fall Plowing* where a particular view of billowing hills leading to a small farmscape has been identified as the artist's original inspiration.

Janet Farber, Joslyn Museum of Art, Omaha, Nebraska
Summary of oral comments made on November 8, 2002

Grant Wood used specific sites to try to make artwork that was general and immediate. His art was referential to rural life. Landscapes he painted are works as seen through Grant Wood's lens. When traveling through eastern Iowa it is almost impossible to travel through the country and not feel like you're in Grant Wood country. He used vistas to inspire his paintings.

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Grant Wood's "Fall Plowing"
Rural Historic Landscape District
Linn County, IA

Section number 7 Page 4

John Fitzpatrick, Fine Arts Facilitator, Cedar Rapids Community School District
e-mail comments dated November 11, 2002

Grant Wood often portrayed specific sites in his work, i.e. *Young Corn* is the countryside outside High Amana, *Spring in Town* is a house on the north side of Iowa City, *Crossroads* is a landscape now under the Coralville Reservoir. It is likely that Wood depicted a specific landscape in *Fall Plowing*.

John Fitzpatrick personally visited the Drumbarger property in January 2003 and made the following comments after his visit; e-mail comments dated January 9, 2003:

Thank you for the opportunity to visit the Grant Wood, *Fall Plowing* site. The experience created a feeling of *déjà vu* because the painting is so specific to the details of the site. I was impressed with how exact the painting is to the contours of the topography, the farm buildings, and the tree growth. The site is *Fall Plowing*.

I was transported into the painting itself—a transcending experience that helped me to feel the significance of that landscape in promulgating Grant Wood's message. Grant Wood found the ideal site to represent the rolling hills of Iowa and to address man's stewardship of the land.

Brady Roberts, Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art, Phoenix Art Museum (former Curator at Davenport Museum of Art) Summary of oral comments made on December 2, 2002

Grant Wood definitely painted landscapes from direct observation, then took poetic license and moved things around a bit. His art wasn't about exact representation. It was about capturing the feel of the Midwest.

Therefore, it is generally acknowledged by noted scholars of Wood's life and artwork that Grant Wood used actual scenes in the eastern Iowa countryside and villages as inspiration for his landscape paintings in the 1920s-1930s. There is also growing evidence that what was once viewed as "fantasy farmscapes" by Wood appear to be more grounded in actual landscapes and locations than in "fantasy."

There is highly credible evidence that Grant Wood was physically on the Drumbarger property during the period when "Fall Plowing" was undertaken and that Wood made sketches of the landscape while he was on the property. The artist's general vantage point for the "Fall Plowing" landscape was on a high upland divide due west of the former Drumbarger farmstead at the center of Section 2 based on the physical layout of the landscape as depicted in the painting (see pages 16-18). All of this, coupled with the actual physical evidence of the landscape itself, which has remarkable correspondence to the landscape features and components as depicted in "Fall Plowing," makes a very strong case that this landscape was the inspiration for the painting. The actual physical correspondence of the real landscape to that of the painting is too strong to be mere coincidence.

The integrity of the current landscape was evaluated according to the seven qualities of historic integrity as set forth for National Register evaluation (McClelland et al. 1999:22-23). These seven qualities are: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. For the "Fall Plowing" rural historic landscape district, the property still possesses integrity of location (this is the place where Grant Wood drew his inspiration for the "Fall Plowing" painting based on oral history and on the actual physical characteristics of the current landscape compared with the landscape depicted in the painting); design (the composition of natural and cultural elements depicted in the 1931 painting are still very recognizable in the current landscape even though some land-use has changed in more recent years); setting (the physical environment as depicted in the 1931 painting is still recognizable in the current landscape); materials (the barn and house of the pictured farmstead are still standing and a former roadway depicted in the painting are still in evidence and retain sufficient integrity);

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workmanship (the way people fashioned this environment as depicted in the painting is still to be seen in the fence lines, treerows, and fields even though the fields are no longer plowed); feeling (this landscape still evokes a sense of time and place of the 1931 painting); and association (there appears to be a strong linkage between the current landscape of this property and Grant Wood's painting based on oral history, Grant Wood's observed presence in the Stone City-Viola area and on this particular farm property in the 1920s-1930s, and on the physical characteristics of the current landscape compared to those depicted in the painting). There are a number of features depicted in the finished "Fall Plowing" painting, and its rough field sketch, which conform well to, or are good approximations of, present-day features at this site (see pages 14-15). These include the extant house and dairy barn and the windmill foundation on the former Drumbarger farmstead, fencerows, the aspect and location of the hill slopes, drainageways, treerows and the types of trees in the area, cow paths leading out from the dairy barn which were still visible until seven years ago when the property reverted to horse pasture (Cindy Burke, personal communication 2002), and an old road in front of the farmstead. Even a jog in the fenceline separating the boundary of two fields depicted in the painting is still part of the current landscape (see pages 19-22).

The National Park Service has noted in the guidelines for rural landscapes that landscapes naturally change through time, and that finding a property in its historic condition would be a rarity. A historic landscape should be viewed as one would expect it to appear today—"trees may be larger, ground cover may be different, buildings may have been moved, fences may be lost or in relic condition, and farming techniques may have changed" (McClelland et al. 1999:12). Given this, the current landscape of the "Fall Plowing" painting still retains remarkably good integrity despite the expected changes that come with the passage of time. These changes have included the loss of the superstructure of the windmill depicted in the 1931 painting, although the foundation and well for this windmill are still in evidence on the former Drumbarger farmstead; the elimination of row cropping in the fields represented in the painting (where at least three cultivated fields were depicted, with all now in grass and pasturage); the loss of trees in some locations and the growth of trees in others where trees had not been portrayed, although in comparing Grant Wood's field sketch for "Fall Plowing" versus the final painting, there were more trees shown in the field sketch than made it into the final rendition (see pages 14-15). Otherwise, the fencerows and treelines depicted in the 1931 painting are still in evidence in the current landscape along with the extant dairy barn and house on the former Drumbarger farmstead, the slope and aspect of the hills and drainageways in the painting, and the road extending through the former Drumbarger farmstead in the 1931 painting. The lack of modern intrusions such as metal machine sheds further demonstrates the good integrity of this farmstead and its ability to reflect the farm as it was in the 1930s.

Grant Wood, in his depiction of the former Drumbarger farmstead in the 1931 "Fall Plowing" painting, simplified and compacted its representation. The house and barn are the only major buildings depicted despite the likelihood that at least two other extant outbuildings were present in 1931. Additionally, the house is actually located a much farther distance, perspective-wise, from the barn than depicted in the 1931 painting. However, the relationship and position of the barn, being more in the foreground and to the north of the house, and the house, being more in the background and to the southeast of the barn in the painting, do reflect the real position and relationship of the extant house and barn on this farmstead. Such changes from the real landscape to the painted landscape (confirmed by Grant Wood scholars as a common Grant Wood practice; see scholars' comments on pages 2-4) can be expected when one considers artistic license and the desire to compose a symbolic landscape based on a real landscape rather than photographically reproduce the real landscape. Such changes may also have been based on decisions about compositional balance, like the narrowing of the window on the house in Eldon, Iowa, that was depicted in his "American Gothic" painting as noted above. Similar manipulations are noted in the "Stone City" painting where many features of the real landscape are depicted fairly close to reality but with some notable alterations, including the choice by Wood not to depict two prominent stone houses that are still extant within the viewshed of the painting and were certainly present in 1930 (see page 23).

Further comparison of the integrity of the "Fall Plowing" landscape to that represented in "Stone City," shows a much higher degree of integrity for the "Fall Plowing" landscape. Specifically, the actual landscape depicted in "Stone City" now exhibits several modern intrusions, including two modern houses and a modern bridge, which replaced the historic bridge in the painting, as well as some building loss from the time of the painting (see page 23).

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Rural Historic Landscape District
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An interesting aside concerning Wood's sketching techniques was noted in a study of an Amana regionalist artist, Carl Flick, who was mentored by Grant Wood in the 1920s-1930s. It was noted that Grant Wood "frequently set up his easel outside to paint quick, impressionistic, *plein air* oil sketches" and that he taught Flick "to turn his back on his subject and view it through a small hand-held mirror, in order to isolate the scene and notice the details" (Hoehnle 2001:3-4). This is not to say that the sketch or painting would be a mirror image of the landscape but rather that this was an interesting technique to help focus the painter on his subject. The mirror technique could possibly account for the tilting of the landscape towards the viewer, a feature often noted in Wood's paintings such as "Fall Plowing," although this particular feature may be more the result of the stylization and abstraction of the actual landscape as part of Wood's general design style. The "impressionistic, *plein air*" oil sketch technique certainly characterizes the sketch for "Fall Plowing" (see page 15). It was also noted in the study of Carl Flick that Wood directed Flick's attention "to his native surroundings" as the appropriate subject matter for his paintings (ibid.:5).

William C. Page, a Public Historian Consultant from Des Moines, Iowa, recently evaluated the extant dairy barn on the former Drumbarger Farmstead as part of a Technical Advisory Network project for the State Historical Society of Iowa. He concluded that the dairy barn is a contributing building to the "Fall Plowing" Rural Historic Landscape District (William C. Page, personal communication, August 22, 2002). Other contributing components of this district include the former Drumbarger house (contributing building) and the landscape (contributing site). In addition are two barns that were standing in 1931 but were not depicted in the final painting. These are also considered contributing buildings to the district because even though they were not represented in the final painting, Wood would have consciously omitted them and therefore are still part of the story of this historic landscape related to Grant Wood and "Fall Plowing." The landscape consists of the fields, slopes, drainageways, fencerows, treelines, and the old road that once extended through the Drumbarger farmstead and is now a prominent archaeological feature. All of these components were depicted in the "Fall Plowing" painting and all are still recognizable features of the current landscape. Also considered an important component of the landscape is the apparent position or vantage point of the artist. The artist's position is due west of the former Drumbarger farmstead and is included within the district boundary.

The former Drumbarger House, which is still extant and considered a contributing building to the historic landscape district, has been altered to some degree in more recent years. However, it still presents the look of the white gabled farmhouse depicted in the background of the 1931 painting and, as such, still strongly contributes to the sense of time and place of this district. This is especially true when viewed from the remote location of the artist's vantage point.

The road that once extended north-south through the Drumbarger farmstead was in place by 1930 (see page 18). The road still serves as the entry driveway into the current farmstead, now owned by Larry Netz, but is an archaeological feature as it extends to the south of the farmstead. The old roadbed is still well defined as a road cut with berms and ditches and can be followed well south of the farmstead. A stop sign associated with this old roadway is still extant in front of the farmhouse on the west side of the old roadway (see attached photograph #5). This road is depicted in the 1931 "Fall Plowing" painting as a cut just west and south of the farmhouse (see page 14).

The nomination of this property is being set forth by the property owners, with the support of the Matsell Area Preservation and Protection group (MAPP). It is hoped that this property can be preserved for future generations to enjoy and experience the creative artistic process of Grant Wood's paintings.

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National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetGrant Wood's "Fall Plowing"
Rural Historic Landscape District
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Statement of Significance

Grant Wood's "Fall Plowing" Rural Historic Landscape District is significant at the local and state levels under Criterion B for its association with the life and landscape paintings of Grant Wood, a nationally-renowned American Regionalist artist. It is also significant under Criterion B as the outdoor "studio"¹ of a significant artist because, in this case, the studio is the place where he first sketched "Fall Plowing." The final painting was based on a real landscape and yet was imbued with Wood's combination of realism and idealization of rural Iowa and agrarian life. The district includes the landscape, four standing buildings (the dairy barn and house of the former Drumbarger farmstead) that were depicted in this 1931 painting, and two barns that were standing in 1931 but were omitted from the final painting. The current landscape is still recognizable as Wood's "Fall Plowing" landscape despite modern land use and the inevitable changes that come with the passage of time, with a number of extant components and landscape features recognizable as depictions in the painting. The period of significance and the significant date for this district is 1931 when "Fall Plowing" was completed.

Grant Wood was born in Anamosa, Iowa, in 1891 and spent the first ten years of his life growing up on the family farm four miles east of town. After his father's untimely death in 1901 at the age of 46, his mother sold the farm and moved with her children to Cedar Rapids (Graham et al. 1993:1-8). "Even though life on the farm came to an end, the sights, smells, and sounds of his country childhood would be forever preserved in the faces and landscapes of his famous paintings" (*Midwest Today* 1996). He was trained in art schools in Minneapolis and Chicago and studied abroad in 1923-24, a trip that included study at the Academie Julien in Paris. While in Europe, Wood "experimented with Impressionism and Post-Impressionism," with his exposure to modern European art playing "a significant role in the development of his mature style" (ibid.). When Grant Wood returned to Iowa, his painting took a "distinctive turn:"

towards regionalism, towards American subjects, towards the nineteenth century, towards an affectionate and yet ironic vision of his country and its history. His American audience is borne back alongside him, in time as well as in space, to an idealized world of memory; it is a place that most have not seen but one that we, as Americans, remember as our own (Haven 2002).

At a time when the country was deep into the Great Depression, with images of the dustbowl and bankrupt farmers a common feature, Wood's paintings evoked an emotional response and offered up a "national vision of hope" during the darkest hours of the Depression (Haven 2002). Unlike his contemporary Regionalists, Thomas Hart Benton and John Steuart Curry, Wood's paintings more often offered up this vision of hope and rural idealism than the economic and political realities of the day. Many of his images, such as "American Gothic" became "iconic images of small-town plain folk and verdant Midwestern vistas" (Farber 2002).

One of Wood's regionalist tenets was that the artist should "paint out of the land and the people he knows best" (*Art Digest* 1936:18). This certainly is the case with "Fall Plowing" and other landscapes based on Linn and Jones county scenes. *Midwest Today* (1996) noted Wood's "subjects after 1929 were imbued with his personal response to the Iowa landscape and his Midwestern experience." That he used real landscapes and locations in Iowa for the basis of his paintings is undeniable. Some are highly recognizable such as the house in "American Gothic" (which was listed in the National Register of Historic Places for its association with Grant Wood and the "American Gothic" painting) but also include scenes such as the school in "Arbor Day," where it was noted that Wood and a friend had "combed the Iowa countryside one cold winter day, looking for just the right schoolhouse" for this painting (ibid.). Wood's sister, Nan Wood Graham, also cited several other examples such

¹ National Park Service 1997:14 gives as an example of properties associated with a significant person as "the studio of a significant artist." In this nomination, the term "studio" is being applied to the outdoor location where Wood sketched "Fall Plowing."

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as "Young Corn," which was of the Linnie Schloeman farm east of Cedar Rapids on Highway 30²; "Haying" and "New Road," which were scenes along the road between Solon and Iowa City; and "Spring in Town," which included a small north-side Iowa City home near Oaklawn Cemetery in its representation (Graham et al. 1993:91, 158, 173; Liffing-Zug 1977:61). Another source noted that "Quilts" and "April Morning in a Village" were scenes from Waubeek, Iowa (Ferretter 1985:22).

While one observer has stated that "surely these geometric and carefully constructed landscapes were not what Wood saw around him; more likely, they were what he wanted to see" (Haven 2002), the rolling, round hills and his "impossibly round trees" are recognizable real features to anyone who has experienced first-hand the rural landscape of the Wapsipinicon River valley around Stone City, Viola, Waubeek, and Anamosa, and the surrounding uplands where the hills really are rounded and rolling and the mature oak trees, in particular, are round and "fluffy" (see page 22). Therefore, while Wood's landscapes are undeniably stylized, idealized, and romanticized in their depiction of rural life in Iowa, they were based largely on real landscapes and places that were familiar to Wood, some of which are still recognizable today.

John Steuart Curry, one of the Regionalist artists and a friend of Grant Wood's, further noted:

I used to think Grant's landscapes were too neat, too well-ordered, until I saw his part of Iowa. That's the way Iowa is around Cedar Rapids, its uncrowded trees are perfectly moulded, its earth is clipped, well cared for, its hills roll just as gently, as peacefully as he painted them (as quoted in Liffing-Zug 1977:28).

What "Fall Plowing" was meant to symbolize has been commented on by many. Janet Haven has noted:

The foreground image in *Fall Plowing* presents the plow alone, still imbedded in the earth. Wood clearly means to set up a symbiotic relationship between the earth and hand-held tool, but the machine is pointedly excluded. He draws out the partnership between the farmer and the land itself; the farmer alone is the keeper and tamer of the land, but the land, far from being a tired, dry wasteland of the 1930's, is receptive and bounteous, responding to the farmer's cultivation with grateful rewards. Quite obviously, Wood's landscapes are not about America in the 1930's. Rather, they reflect an America of the 1880's or before; on one level, they are nostalgia for a constructed American past, one that existed no more in the nineteenth century than it did in the twentieth. Perhaps, also, they are a significant part of the constant search for a usable American history, one to learn from and replicate. Wood threw his hat into the ring, making his case for the America his countrymen could revere (Haven 2002).

Wood himself noted in a statement accompanying his final painting that "in making these paintings, as you may have guessed, I had in mind something which I hope to convey to a fairly wide audience in America—the picture of a country rich in the arts of peace; a homely lovable nation, infinitely worth any sacrifice necessary to its preservation" (Artyclopedia 2002). Nan Wood Graham further commented, in response to criticism of "Arbor Day" for showing horses rather than a truck and tractor, that:

In the era of *Arbor Day*, thousands of one-room rural schools existed, each with one teacher and eight grades. It was a time of draft horses and oat fields, of kerosene lamps and mud roads, and of Arbor Day ceremonies. In 1932, the only Iowa farms with electricity were those on the immediate edge of towns. Grant wisely gave *Arbor Day* the timelessness and soul that have made it of lasting significance (Graham et al. 1993:107-108).

One can imagine a similar response to the critique of "Fall Plowing" as well. When it was first presented to the public, the painting "won the sweepstakes award at the Iowa State Fair and was exhibited at the opening of the Springfield Museum of Art" (Graham et al. 1993:91).

² The location of the "Young Corn" landscape may be more correctly described as north of High Amana, with one source stating that Wood "did the initial sketches while standing in the Lenox Cemetery where [Linnie Schloeman] is buried" (Hoehnle 2001:18).

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The *New York World Telegram* called it one of the finest paintings ever done by an American. Purchased by Marshall Field of Chicago, it remained in his family for many years. Then Deere & Company bought *Fall Plowing* to exhibit in its headquarters building at Moline, Illinois. The preliminary sketch is owned by the Davenport Museum of Art (ibid.).

However, his stylized farmscapes, such as "Fall Plowing," were not admired by all of the art critics of the day, with some deeming them "make-believe," "unmitigatedly bad," and sanitized, romanticized, and unreal depictions rural life (Dennis 1998:34). But as James Dennis (ibid.:177) subsequently noted, Wood's "Stone City, Iowa":

was based on a direct study of a place with which he was thoroughly acquainted, he turned this village and its river valley site into a fantasy of curving contours, ornamental trees, and brightly patterned surfaces. Wood considered the 'decorative adventures' of his commonplace rural surroundings, their inherent elements of abstraction, as the true origin of the most lasting quality in his work.

The same can be said of his "fantasy farmscapes," such as "Fall Plowing" and "Young Corn."

Grant Wood died of cancer in 1942. Unfortunately he had lived long enough to see Regionalism begin to fall into disfavor. With the economic crisis of the Great Depression over and the rise of internationalism following in the wake of World War II, the basic tenets and subject matter of the American Regionalists were viewed as too isolationist, too nationalist, and too provincial (Hunter and Jacobus 1973:203). Fortunately for Wood, much of the harshest criticism and disfavor came after his death (Haven 2002). It was not until the 1970s that a renewed appreciation for his body of work led to a revival in interest in Grant Wood, with the artist finally achieving a lasting position among the twentieth century's significant artists. While "American Gothic" is Wood's best known work, all of his paintings from the late 1920s through the early 1940s are highly recognizable by his distinctive style and have achieved praise and importance in their own right including "Fall Plowing."

The landscape represented in the 1931 painting "Fall Plowing" is located in Sections 1 and 2 of Brown Township, Linn County, Iowa, and represents what was in 1931 the farm property and farmstead of the William C. Drumbarger family. This landscape retains remarkably good integrity and is still recognizable today as the inspiration and vantage point for this important painting by this very significant artist. The landscape served as the outdoor studio of the artist, with the artist's vantage point included within the boundary of the historic district. As such, this landscape is eligible under Criterion B for its association with Grant Wood and because it embodies and conveys the historic character of this association in the physical resource of the landscape.

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National Park Service

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Field inspection

May 30, 2002, by Leah D. Rogers and Jan Olive Nash, Tallgrass Historians L.C., Iowa City, Iowa.

Archival Collections researched:

Jay Sigmund Papers, University of Iowa Library, Special Collections, Iowa City, Iowa

Grant Wood Papers, University of Iowa Library, Special Collections, Iowa City, Iowa

Grant Wood Scholars and Curators contacted (oral and e-mailed comments included in nomination text except where indicated below):

Henry Adams, Curator of American Art, Cleveland Art Museum

Wanda Corn, Robert and Ruth Halperin Professor in Art History, Stanford University

James Dennis, Professor Emeritus in Art History, University of Wisconsin-Madison (did not respond to e-mail)

Vicki Eller, Corporate Archivist, Deere and Company, Moline, Illinois (checked company archives for provenance information concerning "Fall Plowing")

Janet Farber, Joslyn Museum of Art, Omaha, Nebraska

John Fitzpatrick, Fine Arts Facilitator, Cedar Rapids Community School District

Virginia Mecklenburg, Senior Curator, Smithsonian American Art Museum (contacted but declined to comment because she is a Federal employee, 12/4/02)

Jane Milosch, Curator, Cedar Rapids Museum of Art (did not respond because of time constraints)

Brady Roberts, Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art, Phoenix Art Museum, former Curator at the Davenport Museum of Art

Michelle Robinson, Curator, Davenport Museum of Art (did not respond to e-mail)

Lisa Spurgeon, Art Curator, Deere and Company, Moline, Illinois (checked curatorial archives for provenance information concerning "Fall Plowing")

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Grant Wood Scholar Contacts continued:

Lesley Wright, Grinnell College Art Museum, former Director of Cedar Rapids Museum of Art (declined to comment because of work schedule constraints)

Oral History Interviews (tapes on file State Historical Society of Iowa, Des Moines):

Ron Drumbarger (son of Bob Drumbarger and grandson of Lee Drumbarger) interviewed by Lisa Randolph on 11/22/02

Ric and Lynette Graves (Ric Graves is grandson of Bessie Drumbarger) interviewed by Lisa Randolph on 11/15/02

Norma Larsen Knight Meredith (life-long local resident of Viola area with first-hand knowledge of Grant Wood in this area), interviewed by Lisa Randolph on 11/14/02

Price Slate (toured with Wanda Corn and Nan Wood Graham for the Grant Wood traveling exhibit around 20 years ago), interviewed by Lisa Randolph on 11/21/02. Did not have any pertinent information about *Fall Plowing* or this landscape.

Virginia Sigmund Myers (daughter-in-law of Jay Sigmund), contacted but unable to interview because of health problems

Jim Wild (life-long local resident with first-hand knowledge of Grant Wood in this area) interviewed by Lisa Randolph on November 13, 2002

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Geographic Data

UTM References continued:

5	Zone 15	632,709 easting	4,663,531 northing
6	Zone 15	632,709 easting	4,663,882 northing

Verbal Boundary Description:

The boundary line of Grant Wood's "Fall Plowing" Rural Historic Landscape District is shown on the USGS Quadrangle Map (Springville, Iowa, Quad, 7.5' Series, 1973) accompanying this nomination and is marked by the following UTM reference points (NAD 27): (1) 15 633664 4663882, (2) 15 633664 4663547, (3) 15 633598 4663328, (4) 15 632790 4663328, (5) 15 632709 4663531, (6) 15 632709 4663882.

Boundary Justification:

The boundary includes the farmstead, the artist's position, and the rural landscape depicted in Grant Wood's 1931 painting entitled "Fall Plowing."

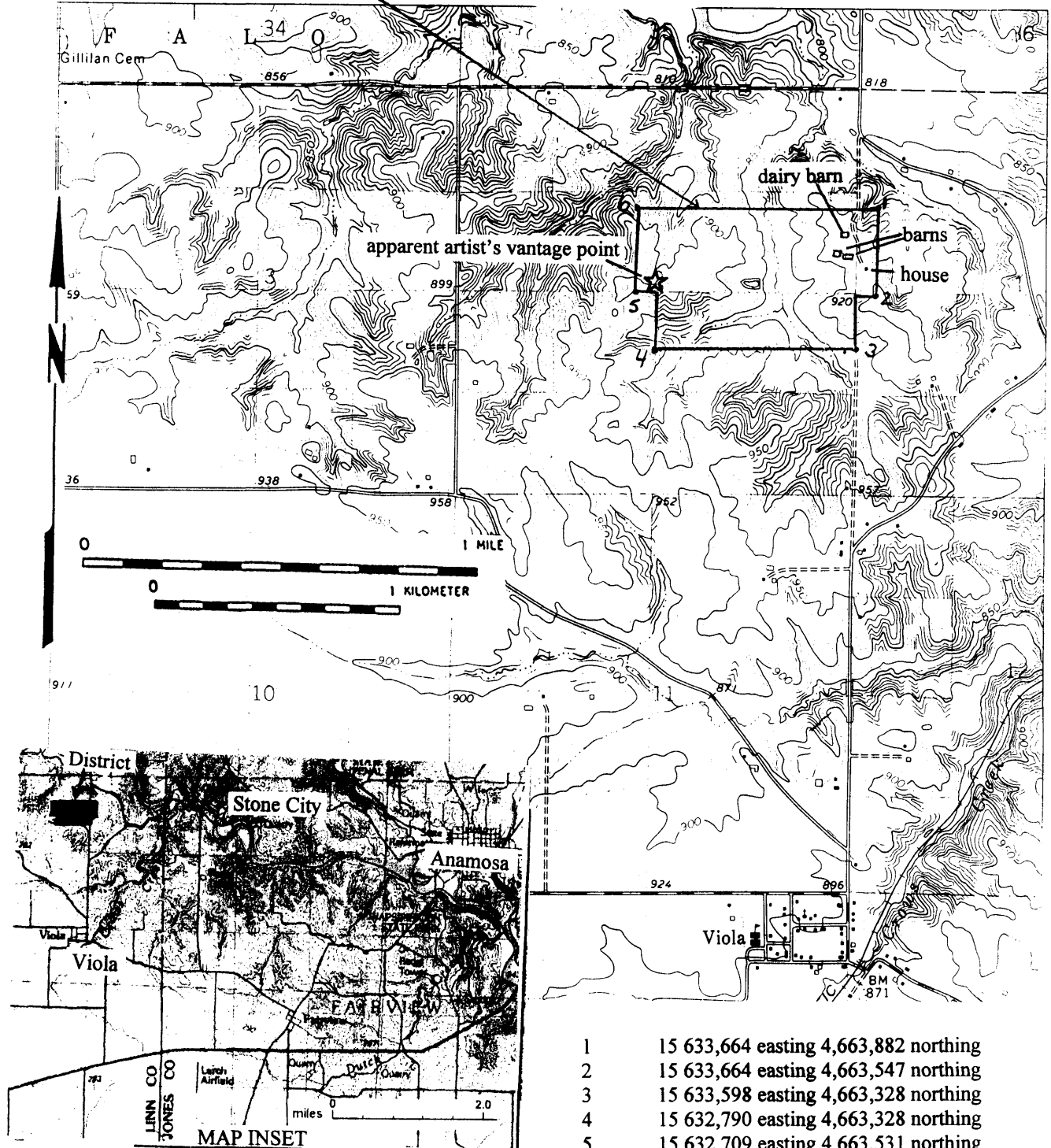
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Location of Grant Wood's "Fall Plowing" Rural Historic Landscape District



- 1 15 633,664 easting 4,663,882 northing
- 2 15 633,664 easting 4,663,547 northing
- 3 15 633,598 easting 4,663,328 northing
- 4 15 632,790 easting 4,663,328 northing
- 5 15 632,709 easting 4,663,531 northing
- 6 15 632,709 easting 4,663,882 northing

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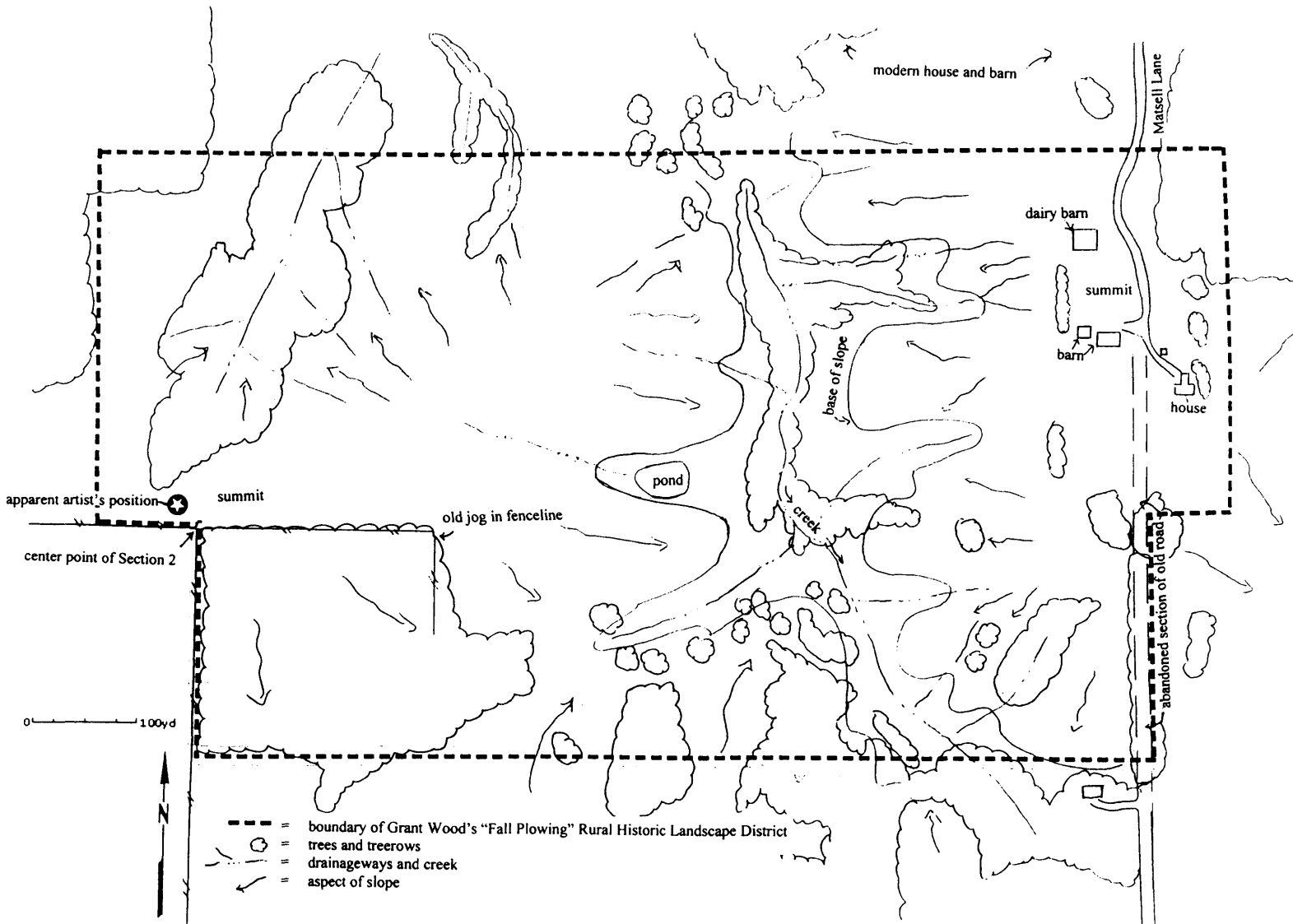
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Sketch Map of Grant Wood's "Fall Plowing" Rural Historic Landscape District



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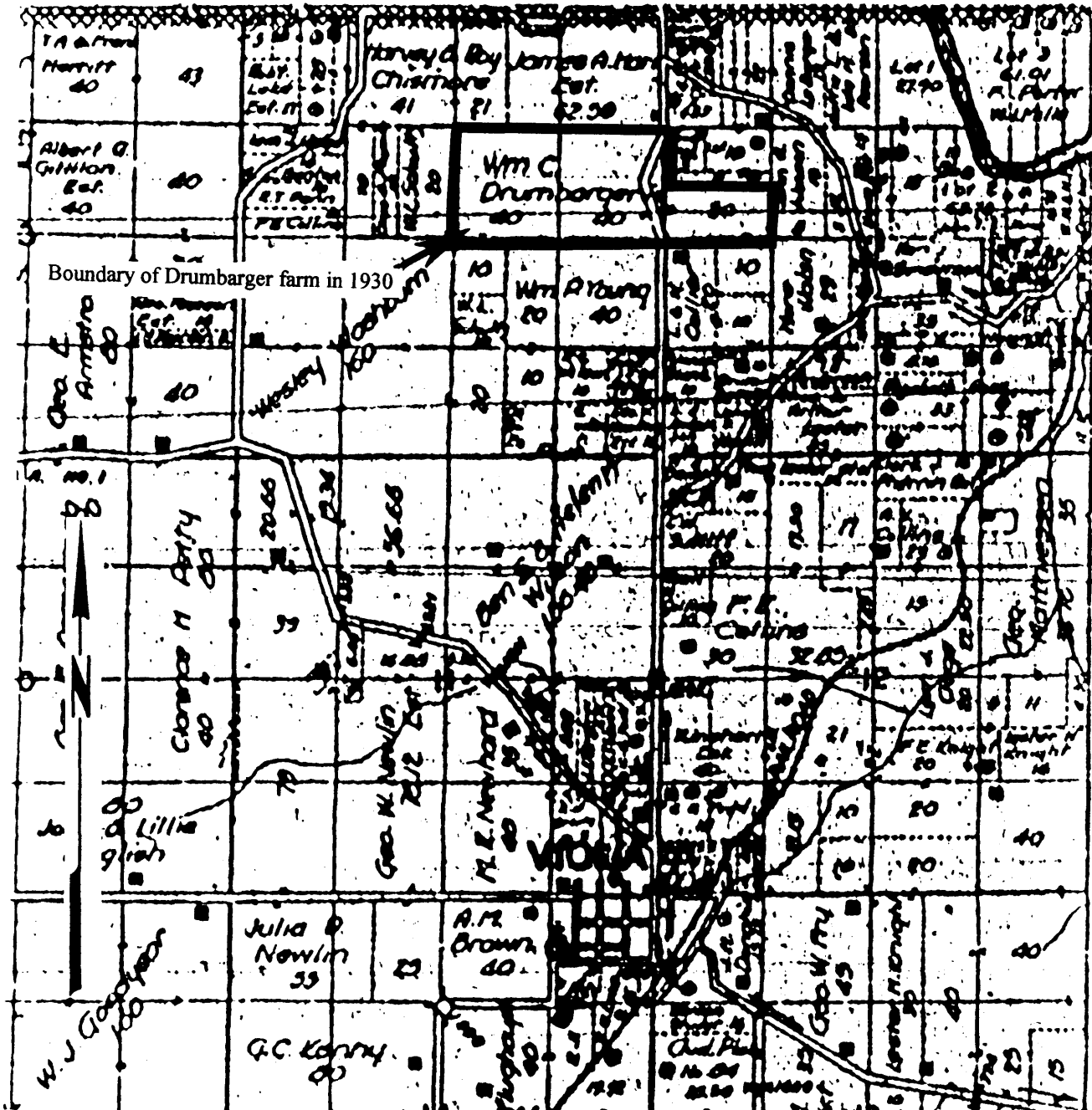
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1930 Plat Map of Brown Township Showing Drumbarger Property
Source: Kenyon 1930



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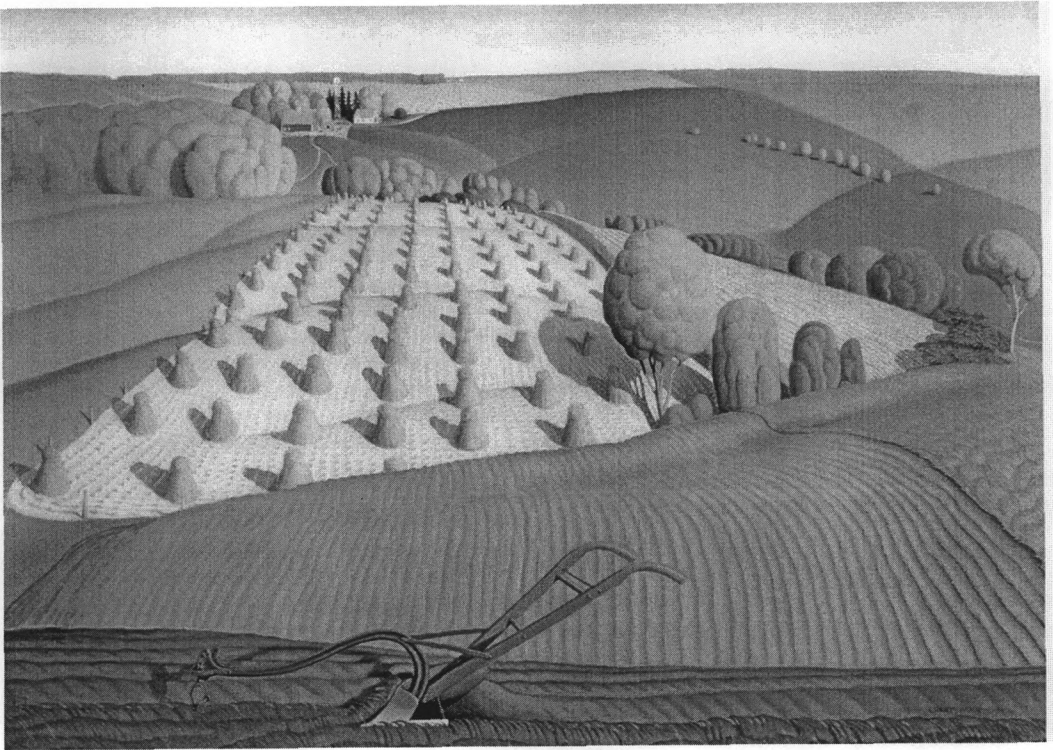
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"Fall Plowing" 1931 Original in the Collection of Deere & Company, Moline, Illinois
Source: Dennis 1975:174



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Artist's Sketch of "Fall Plowing," Original at Davenport Museum of Art.
Source: Dennis 1975:174



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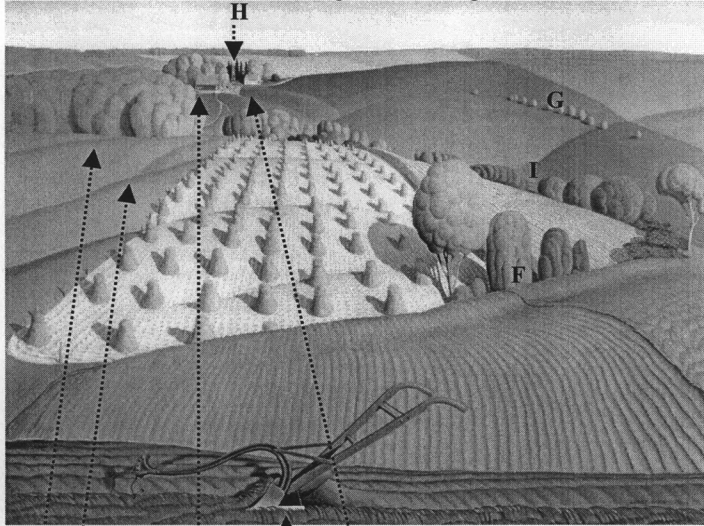
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Grant Wood's "Fall Plowing"
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Linn County, IA

"Fall Plowing" 1931 Painting



A = rolling hillslopes match

B = rolling hillslopes match

C = dairy barn

D = apparent position of plow
and artist's vantage point

E = house

F = jog in fence and fence line
are still extant in actual
landscape

G = tree row/fence line still
extant in actual landscape

H = foundation for windmill
still extant

I = fork in creek valley evident
in actual landscape



Grant Wood's "Fall Plowing" Rural Historic Landscape District,
View to the East from Near Apparent Artist's Position

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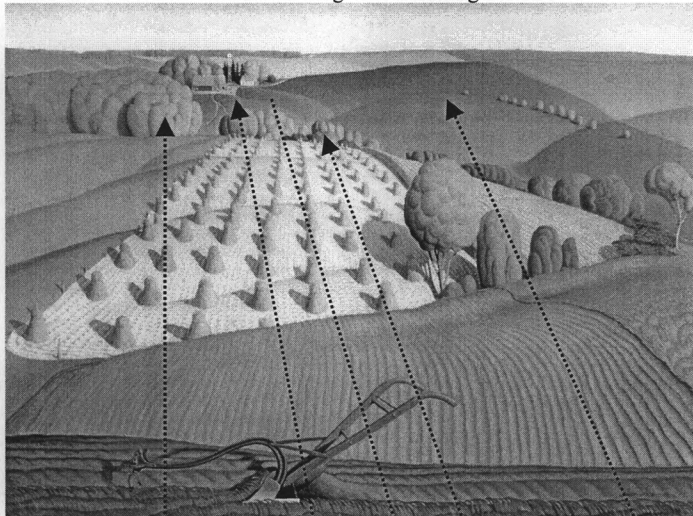
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Grant Wood's "Fall Plowing"
Rural Historic Landscape District
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"Fall Plowing" 1931 Painting



A B C D E

A = tree row in creek valley
still evident in actual
landscape

B = hillslope matches

C = road cut in front of
house still extant

D = trees in valley match

E = hillslope matches



Portion of Current "Fall Plowing" Rural Historic Landscape District, View to the East

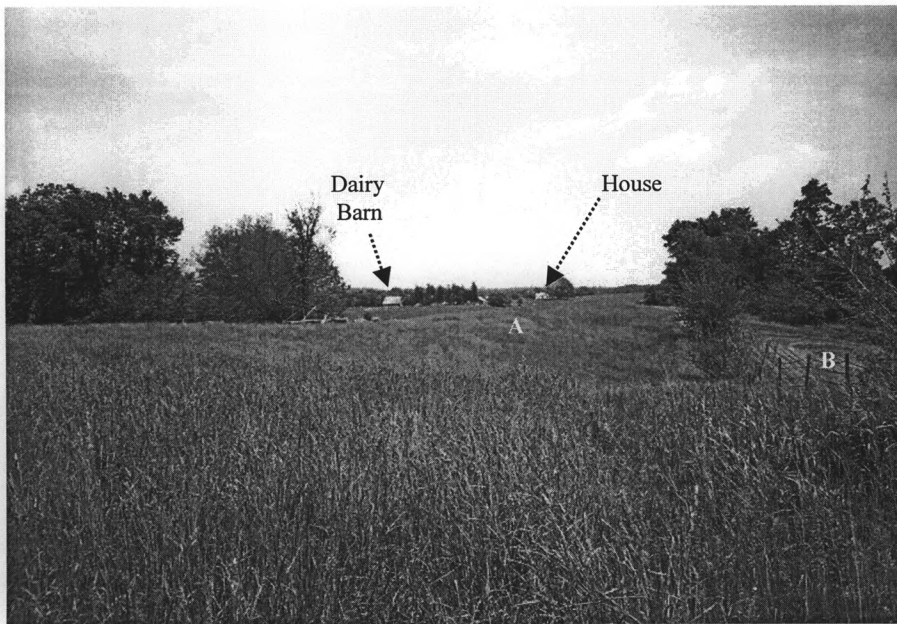
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Grant Wood's "Fall Plowing" Rural Historic Landscape District,
View to the East from Behind (West) of the Artist's Position

- A** = apparent artist's position for "Fall Plowing" painting
- B** = adjacent property forming part of boundary for the historic landscape district

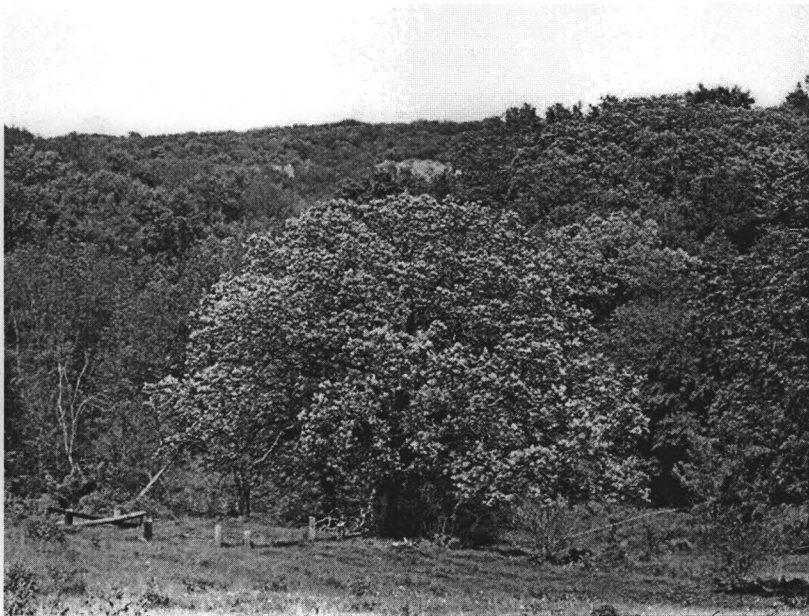
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Rural Historic Landscape District
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Typical oak tree in the "Fall Plowing" Rural Historic Landscape Area
This type of mature tree canopy, which comes from the ability of the oak trees to grow to full spread in a savannah-type setting, was likely the inspiration for Grant Wood's rounded, fluffy trees in his landscape paintings.

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"Death on Ridge Road" 1934 painting by Grant Wood
Source: Dennis 1975:186



"Stone City, Iowa" 1930 painting by Grant Wood
Source: Dennis 1975:103

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Photographs:

Name of Property: Grant Wood's "Fall Plowing" Rural Historic Landscape District
County and State: Linn County, IA
Name of Photographer: Jan Olive Nash, Tallgrass Historians L.C.
Date of Photographs: May 30, 2002
Location of Original Negatives: Tallgrass Historians L.C., 2460 S. Riverside Drive, Iowa City, IA 52246

- #1 General view of landscape district looking to the East from behind (west) of the artist's easel position for the "Fall Plowing" painting
- #2 General view of landscape district looking to the East from the artist's easel position for the painting
- #3 General view of landscape district looking to the East from just south of the artist's easel position for the painting
- #4 Detail view of former Drumbarger Farmstead looking to the East from in front (east) of the artist's easel position for the painting
- #5 Detail view of the former roadway in front of the Drumbarger (now Netz) Farmstead looking to the south along the road berm and also showing an old stop sign at the side of the road in front of the farmstead.
- #6 General view of landscape district looking to the West from the former Drumbarger Farmstead towards the artist's easel position on the upland summit in the distance.

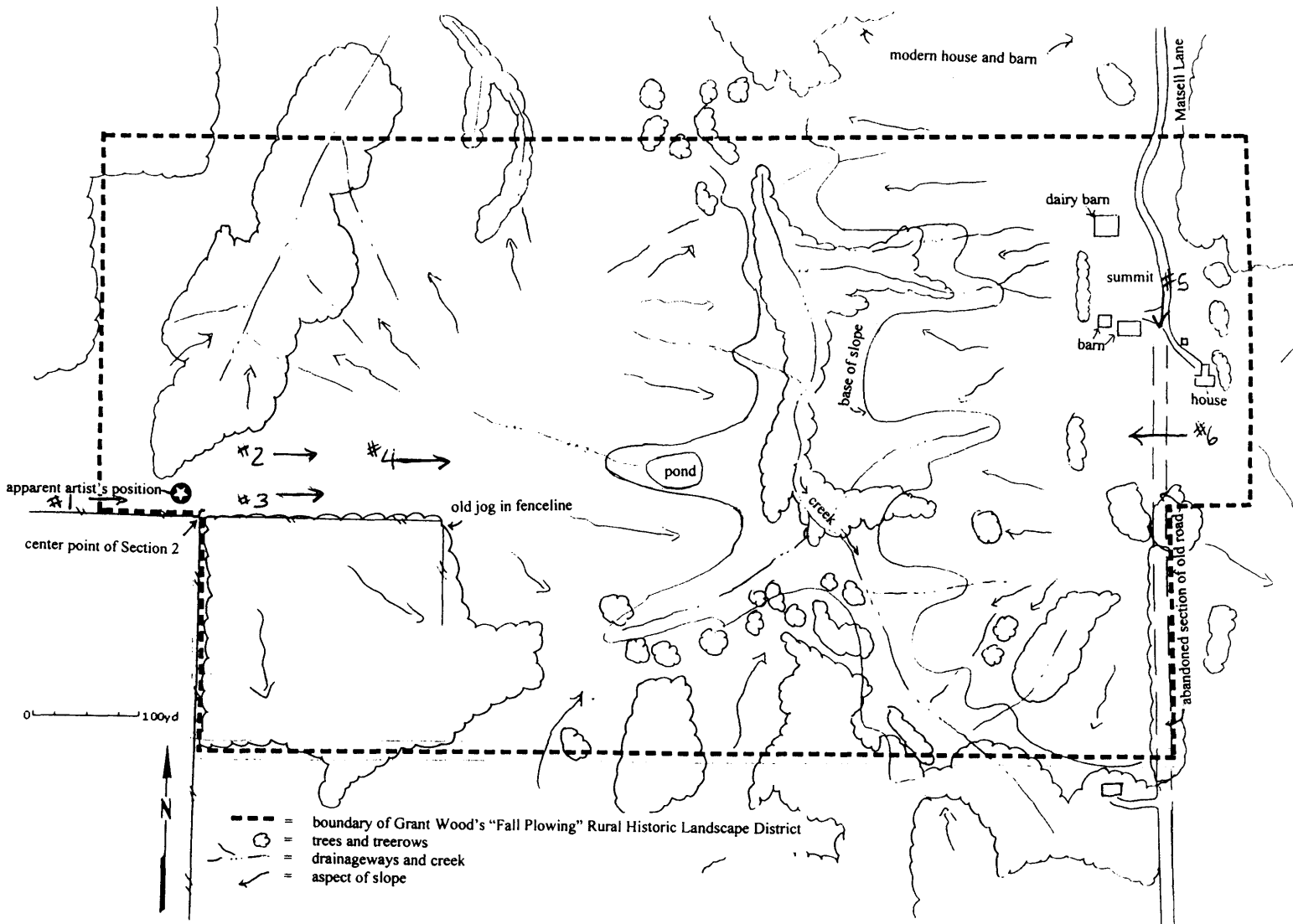
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Map Showing Photographic Views



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**Grant Wood's "Fall Plowing"
Rural Historic Landscape District
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Property Owners:

Kevin P. and Cindy L. Burke
3540 Weber Lane
Central City, IA 52214
319-854-7124

Horace (Hoddy) and Mary Ann Gates
3555 Shaw Road
Central City, IA 52214
319-854-7501

Larry Netz
3550 Weber Lane
Central City, IA 52214
319-310-6355

Edwin R. and Bonnie L. Bergman
3470 Matsell Lane
Central City, IA 52214
319-854-7557