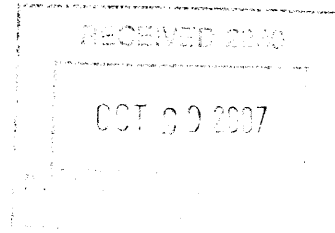


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**United States Department of Interior
National Park Service**

**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 Zirbel-Hildebrandt Farmstead
other names/site number

2. Location

street & number	W1328-1330 Highway 33	N/A	not for publication
city or town	Town of Herman	x	vicinity
state Wisconsin	code WI	county Dodge	code 027
			zip code 53050

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  Date 10/25/07

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

Zirbel-Hildebrandt Farmstead

Dodge County

Wisconsin

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:)

Edson H. Beall

12.11.07

[Signature]

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (check as many boxes as apply)	Category of Property (Check only one box)	Number of Resources within Property (Do not include previously listed resources in the count)	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	contributing	noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	9	0 buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> structure		sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> site	4	1 structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object		objects
		13	1 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
is previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/animal facility

AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/storage

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/animal facility

AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/storage

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE VICTORIAN

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation stone

walls brick

wood

roof asphalt

other shingle

Narrative Description

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

Zirbel-Hildebrandt Farmstead
Name of Property

Dodge County
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)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1868-1929

Significant Dates

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

Name of Property

County and State

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

Acreage of Property 3 acres

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

1	16	381659	4809868
	Zone	Easting	Northing

3	16	381659	4809732
	Zone	Easting	Northing

2	16	381756	4809868
	Zone	Easting	Northing

4	16	381756	4809732
	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	Carol Lohry Cartwright, Consultant	date	December 6, 2006
organization	Prepared for the owner	telephone	262-473-6820
street & number	W7646 Hackett Rd.	zip code	53190
city or town	Whitewater	state	WI

Zirbel-Hildebrandt Farmstead
Name of Property

Dodge County
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	Earl and Eugenie Hildebrandt	date	December 6, 2006
organization		telephone	414-332-6439
street&number	640 E. Carlisle Ave.	zip code	53217
city or town	Whitefish Bay	state	WI

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.

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Section 7 Page 1

Zirbel-Hildebrandt Farmstead
Town of Herman, Dodge County, Wisconsin

DESCRIPTION

Site

The Zirbel-Hildebrandt Farmstead sits on the north and south sides of State Highway 33, a heavily used main thoroughfare running generally east-west through south-central Wisconsin, connecting LaCrosse on the western boundary of the state to Port Washington on the Lake Michigan shore. In the Town of Herman in Dodge County, where the farmstead is located, the highway runs through a rural landscape filled with farmland, woodlots, and farmsteads, most of which are not attached to a currently active farm. The Town of Herman is completely rural, with no incorporated communities, and the farmstead is close to the center of the town. The closest small communities are Horicon, about seven miles to the west, and Mayville, about seven miles to the northwest.

The topography of the area around the Zirbel-Hildebrandt Farmstead is gently rolling, and the site of the farmstead's buildings is also gently irregular. This is because eastern Dodge County has an abundance of glacial formations, especially drumlins, which are long, relatively narrow, and rounded hills. Road-builders cut into these drumlins to make east-west roads, while the north-south roads are sited either between or on top of these hills. Steep drumlins were generally maintained as woodlots, while agricultural fields were located on the lower pitched hillsides or flat areas in between.¹

The Zirbel-Hildebrandt Farmstead buildings are located on one of the flatter and gentler sloped hills in the area. The farmhouses and residential outbuildings sit on the north side of Highway 33, across from the agricultural outbuildings on the south side of the highway. The sites of both the residential buildings and the agricultural buildings have topographical features that mirror each other. Each building group sits on or near the top of the hill. Parts of the site are also slightly raised from the highway, which was probably lowered over the years for safety.

On the north side of the highway, there are two farmhouses and four outbuildings surrounded by large lawn spaces punctuated by several mature trees and shrubs. The site has a high point at the location of the older farmhouse, then gently slopes down on both sides, sloping a bit more dramatically east of the old farmhouse. The newer farmhouse, smokehouse, summer kitchen, and privy lie east of the old farmhouse and are lower in elevation. West of the farmhouse, but only slightly lower in elevation, is another summer kitchen. The older farmhouse has a generous setback from the highway, while the newer farmhouse sits close to the road, probably closer today than historically, due to road widening

¹ Alan C. Pape, "Preliminary Architectural Review - Zirbel/Hildebrandt Farm Herman Township Dodge County, Wisconsin," unpublished report prepared for Mr. & Mrs. Earl Hildebrandt, June 23, 1994, p. 1.

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Zirbel-Hildebrandt Farmstead
Town of Herman, Dodge County, Wisconsin

over the years.

The site of the residential buildings is framed by farm fields and other landscape features. Just inside the west boundary is a tree line that was probably planted as a wind screen. A less delineated tree line sits inside the east boundary. The north boundary of the farmhouse is also the line between the back yard and an agricultural field. It is both the northern boundary of the residential site as well as the northern boundary of the farmstead.

The agricultural outbuildings on the south side of Highway 33 include the main barn, two silos, a large shed, a pig/poultry building, two corn cribs, and a windmill structure. This site has a central high point where the main barn is banked into the rise, then slopes down on both the east and west elevations. On the east, the land slopes more dramatically, exposing the east side foundation of the barn. A bit lower in elevation is the small animal building and the older corn crib. To the west of the barn are the modern corn crib and the large shed, which sits where the high point of the rise begins to gently slope downward. Around these buildings are some grassy spaces, an animal yard, and a stone wall.

The stone wall, along with a tree line, helps define the eastern boundary of the agricultural buildings' site and forms a line that connects to the eastern boundary of the residential buildings' site. A field line west of the machine shed is the western boundary of the agricultural buildings' site. It roughly connects with the field line that makes up the western boundary of the residential buildings' site. A line behind the main barn connects the east and west boundary lines and makes up the southern boundary for the agricultural outbuildings' site, as well as the southern boundary of the farmstead. A similar line just north of the rear elevation of the older farmhouse connects the east and west boundaries and makes up the northern boundary of the residential buildings' site as well as the northern boundary of the farmstead.

Because the farmstead is divided by the highway, there is one entrance into each side. On the north side of the highway, a short, grassy, driveway runs along a fieldstone retaining wall that was constructed along part of the east elevation of the older farmhouse. The entrance into the driveway has a gravel surface. On the south side of the highway, a gravel driveway runs between the west elevation of the main barn and the east elevation of the large shed, where there is a parking area and garage entrances into the building.

The entire farmstead is neat and tidy, with well maintained houses, outbuildings, and agricultural outbuildings. The farmstead is attached to a 170-acre working farm, 50 acres located south of Highway 33 and 120 acres located north of Highway 33. Currently, the farm is divided into 75 acres of woodlot, 75 tillable acres rented to another farmer, three acres of buildings, and 17 acres used as an organic farm operated by a sixth-generation member of the Hildebrandt family, Dirk Hildebrandt, who

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Zirbel-Hildebrandt Farmstead
Town of Herman, Dodge County, Wisconsin

is a descendant of John and Wilhelmine Zirbel, the original owners. Anita Hildebrandt, a spry woman in her 90s, and a fourth-generation member of the family, resided in the old Zirbel Farmhouse until the fall of 2006. Fifth generation family members and current owners, Earl and Eugenie Hildebrandt, are currently renovating the newer farmhouse on the property.

John & Wilhelmine Zirbel House, W1330 State Highway 33
Italianate influenced, c.1868, c.1878

Exterior

The Zirbel house sits on the west half of the residential buildings' site. It is built into a rise so that on the east elevation, the basement is raised to almost a full story. Flanking the raised basement on the east elevation are fieldstone retaining walls. The rear retaining wall extends beyond the north elevation of the house until the land levels off. On the south elevation of the house, the retaining wall extends to the end of the property. A set of concrete steps is cut into the retaining wall at the southeast corner of the house. The old driveway runs along this part of the retaining wall, as well. Large lawn spaces surround the house and there are some mature shrubs along the foundation. Right behind the rear of the house is the old underground cistern located under a slightly raised mound.

A long concrete sidewalk, with a stamped date of 1929, runs from the main entrance on the south elevation of the Zirbel house and ends at a set of concrete steps that run down a steep slope between the level of the house and the level of the highway. A small "terrace" separates the curb and gutter of the highway and a low concrete retaining wall that runs both east and west from the steps.

The house, itself, is a one and one-half to two story building with an unusual cross plan. A large two-story central block sitting parallel to the highway is intersected by almost identical north and south ells. On the west elevation, the central block projects beyond the north and south ells and hereafter will be referred to as the west ell. The east part of the central section is very shallow and will be described with the rest of the east elevation.

The entire house sits on a fieldstone foundation that is low in most places under the house, but on the east elevation, it is almost as tall as a full story. The entire house is constructed of cream bricks laid up in a double wall and features Italianate-influenced details. The walls are punctuated with both segmentally-arched openings on the first story and rectangular and segmentally-arched "eyebrow" type openings on the second story. The roof is covered with asphalt shingles except over the north ell, which has a covering of standing-seam metal. Under the roof eaves around the entire house is a narrow wooden frieze. Each elevation will be discussed in detail below.

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Zirbel-Hildebrandt Farmstead
Town of Herman, Dodge County, Wisconsin

Main (South) Elevation. This elevation consists of the south wall of the south ell and the south wall of the west ell. The south wall of the south ell is covered with a low-pitched gable roof. The wall is vertically intersected by a light and dark red brick chimney that replaced an original interior chimney in the early twentieth century. The lower half of this chimney reflects this initial construction. When the chimney was repaired in the 1950s, a lighter color of red brick was used and is still extant in the upper half of the chimney.

The chimney covers a stone plaque that reads (in German), "The Lord blessed us on (date)." This plaque probably had the original date of construction of the house, which family history attributes to 1868, but the chimney currently obscures it. A plaque on the north wall of the north ell reads (in German), "The Lord punished me. Aug 8, 1878," which family history attributes to the year a fire burned part of the house. According to family history, the house was immediately rebuilt and enlarged, resulting in the second date of construction.

Flanking the chimney on the south wall are two sets of openings. On the first story, the openings are rectangular and filled with two-over-two-light, double-hung sashes. They are topped with segmental brick arches in which cast-iron lintels have been placed. The lintels have a scrolled top edge and are decorated with lyres, one used as a "keystone" and the other two used as "brackets" under each end of the lintel. These lintels appear on other elevations and will hereafter be referred to as the "cast iron lintels."

Above each of the first story windows in the south wall of the south ell are two smaller "eyebrow" style openings in the upper half story. The narrow rectangular openings are topped with segmental brick arches decorated by a raised cornice. The openings are filled with three vertically-divided lights.

The plain south wall of the west ell makes up part of the south elevation of the house, and attached to this ell, as well as to the west wall of the south ell, is a frame-constructed, one-story, enclosed porch that covers the main entrance into the house. The porch has a form that is similar to an ell porch and was originally an open porch. Currently, it has a low-pitched hip roof, clapboard-clad walls, and on the south elevation, it has an entry door and an opening filled with a single-light, double-hung, sash.

West Elevation. The west elevation of the house is dominated by the tall, two-story west ell. Attached to the south ell, though is the porch described partially above. The porch's west elevation is enclosed with a banks of single-light, double-hung, sashes that flank another entrance. Above the porch, the west wall of the south ell is exposed and is punctuated with two segmentally-arched "eyebrow" type openings.

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The west wall of the west ell is topped with a steeply-pitched gable roof and is punctuated by symmetrical fenestration consisting of four openings, two on the first story and two on the second story. These openings are filled with single-light, double-hung, sashes on the first story and six-over-six-light, double-hung sashes on the second story. Each opening is topped with a segmental brick arch and the cast-iron lintels.

Attached to the west wall of the north elevation is a shed-roofed addition. Its west wall is short due to slope of the shed roof. The wall is punctuated with a set of three openings that are filled with early to mid-twentieth century single-light, double-hung sashes.

North Elevation. The north elevation is the north wall of the north ell. This wall's details are identical to the south wall of the south ell, including a low-pitched gable roof, first story sashes decorated with segmental brick arches and cast iron lintels, and upper rectangular segmentally-arched "eyebrow" type openings. One of the first story openings is filled with a six-over-six-light, double-hung sash, while the other has a four-light sash. The north wall of the addition to the north ell is not decorated and does not include any openings.

East Elevation. The east elevation of the Zirbel house is the most complicated and has both similarities and differences to the other elevations. This elevation has almost three stories in the central section; a raised fieldstone basement story, a first floor, and a second floor. The flanking ells have one and one-half stories that sit on the raised basement. The two-story shallow ell at the center of the elevation is topped with a gable roof that connects to the two-story west ell. Each flanking ell is slightly recessed back from the central section of the elevation.

A wooden frieze decorates the gable roof of the central section, and the gable peak has been recently reconstructed. It tops a two-story inset porch that is enclosed on the first story. The second story section of the porch has two turned posts and a plain post balustrade in front of an entrance flanked by two openings filled with six-over-six-light, double-hung sashes. The entrance is enclosed with a twelve-light, early-twentieth-century "storm" door.

The first story section of the porch is enclosed with six, six-light, double-hung sashes and a clapboard wall. Under the first story porch is the entry into the basement, a mid-twentieth century glass and wood panel door. Flanking this door on each end of this section of the basement are two openings filled with period sashes.

The east walls of the north and south ells flank the central section of the east elevation. They have

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identical details that include symmetrical fenestration of two “eyebrow” style windows in the second half stories, two larger segmentally-arched openings in the first stories, and two openings in the raised basement wall. The “eyebrow” style windows are all filled with three-light vertically divided windows. The first story windows are filled with, from north to south, a single-light sash, a six-light sash, a single-light sash, and a four-light sash. All openings on this level are topped with a double segmental brick arches with double raised cornices. The openings in the basement are all filled with six-light sashes and are topped with brick jack arches.

Interior, First Floor

The main entrance into the house is through the enclosed porch. The porch covers two of the house’s brick walls and the exterior porch wall is covered with wainscoting, as is the porch ceiling. The floor is covered with wood tongue-in groove flooring. Two entrances lead into the house. The entrance in the south wall of the west ell is enclosed with an Italianate style wood paneled entry door with two vertical round-arched upper panels and a period grained finish. A plain four panel wood door with a period grained finish leads into the kitchen, which takes up the south ell.

The kitchen is a large L-shaped space that has an overall mid-twentieth century appearance. An exception is original wood wainscoting along the lower third of the walls. The remaining wall space and ceiling is covered with plaster. The floor is covered with mid-twentieth century linoleum laid over a narrow board wood floor. A bank of metal cabinets with a built-in sink sits along the west wall. Above the cabinets are two mirrored bathroom style cabinets and a fluorescent light fixture. Along the north wall is a built-in oak china cabinet. Built in 1936, the cabinet has drawers below a counter and glass front cabinets above. It has an Arts and Crafts appearance. The remainder of the kitchen has late twentieth century appliances and a large cast-iron period radiator similar to cast-iron period radiators found throughout the interior.

It is in this first interior room that the double brick wall construction of the house can be seen via the deep window wells. The windows are decorated with flat moldings with a period grained finish. Along the wall that leads into the current living room there are two doors, one leading into a pantry and the other covering an enclosed staircase to the second floor. Each door has four panels, a period grained finish, period hardware, and flat trim that also has a grained finish.

Behind the kitchen is a large room used as a living room, which is located in the large central section of the exterior east elevation. It may have been an original dining room due to its location near the kitchen and the existence of the old parlor in the north end of the house. The decoration of this room is similar to the kitchen. Its walls and ceiling are covered with plaster and has a fine narrow board maple

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Zirbel-Hildebrandt Farmstead
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floor laid in a pattern where the boards are squared-off at the corners. Like the kitchen, the living room has four panel wood doors with period grained finishes and period hardware, windows with deep wells, and trim with period grained finishes. In this room, though, the trim has an additional raised molding.

The openings in the living room lead into other areas of the house. To the east is an entrance into the enclosed porch, part of the large central section of the exterior east elevation. According to family history, the porch has been enclosed since the early twentieth century. Its interior finishes include plaster walls with period wood wainscoting, a medium-width wood board floor, and a tin ceiling. The exterior porch windows have very deep wells.

Across from the porch are two openings covered with mid-twentieth century accordion style sliding doors. Each opening leads into a small storage room flanking a large closet that is not accessible from the living room. This area of the house takes up the space in the west ell that projects from the west elevation of the house. The storage room on the south end was originally a foyer that sat behind the Italianate style door that was the house's original main, or formal, entrance. The north storage room has a door leading into the rear of the house and, at one time, was part of small separate living quarters. The storage rooms are simply decorated with plaster walls and ceilings, mid-twentieth century linoleum floors, cast-iron radiators, and grained finish doors and trim.

Behind another four panel wood door in the north wall of the living room is the old parlor that takes up the north ell of the house. Like the other rooms of the first floor, this room is trimmed with a plaster ceiling and plaster walls, four panel doors with period hardware and a period grained finish, both flat and molded trim around doors and windows with a period grained finish, and deep window wells. The floor is covered with medium-sized maple boards. Doors in this room lead into a closet at the southeast corner, a staircase to the basement at the southwest corner, and into another room along the west wall.

On the west side of the old parlor is a room that takes up the shed-roofed addition to the north ell. This room was originally a wood shed but was remodeled in 1936 into a kitchen. Today, the room is used for storage, but after the 1936 remodeling, the kitchen and the old parlor were used for a time as separate living quarters. Today, this room, like the old parlor, is used for storage.

The back kitchen still retains its 1930s-era decoration. The cabinets have an Arts and Crafts appearance and the linoleum is colorful. Like the other rooms of the house, the walls and ceiling are covered with plaster and the trim around doors and windows has a period grained finish. The room also has a pantry behind a glass and wood door.

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The west wall of the shed-roofed addition extends slightly beyond the west ell. An entrance, facing south, was probably originally used for a separate entry into the wood shed. After the space was remodeled, it became a separate entrance into the rear living quarters of the house that includes a small enclosed porch and a storage area.

Interior, Second Floor

The enclosed staircase in the first floor kitchen leads to the second floor, which has an unusual floor plan that somewhat mirrors the first floor. The staircase is very narrow and the steps are covered with vintage linoleum. The walls are covered with another vintage material, masonite-like panels attached to each other with narrow metal strips. The staircase ends in the south ell of the house, right over the kitchen. A plain balustrade made up of vertical and horizontal boards, encloses the staircase at the top.

This area of the second floor has an L-shaped hallway that runs in front of two small bedrooms and a bathroom, all decorated with vintage mid-twentieth century details, including masonite-like paneling, linoleum flooring, and narrow "ranch" style moldings around doors and windows. The doors to the bedrooms are similar to the four panel wood doors of the first floor, except that these doors are painted white, as is the plain trim. A newer two panel door covers the bathroom. The two small bedrooms have steeply-pitched ceilings and are lighted by the "eyebrow" windows of the south wall. The bathroom is small with fixtures that appear to date to the later 1940s.

North of the small bedroom area described above is a four panel wood door, also painted white that leads into a large bedroom that sits over the living room on the first floor. This room has plaster walls and ceilings, another vintage linoleum floor, and four panel wood doors painted white with period hardware. Trim around doors and windows is simple, flat, and painted white. The baseboards are wide and also painted white.

On the east wall of the bedroom there are two windows flanking a four panel door that leads to the second story porch on the east elevation of the house. Along the west wall are two similar doors that lead into closets. Along the north wall is another four panel door that leads into the "attic" or storage area that sits over the north ell. The "attic" ceiling and walls are entirely covered with wood panels held together by wide wood strips. The floor is covered with wide board flooring and trim around the floor and windows is a simple ranch style molding.

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Zirbel-Hildebrandt Farmstead
Town of Herman, Dodge County, Wisconsin

Interior, Basement

The exterior entrance into the basement is through the door on the east elevation of the house. It leads into a hall that runs across the front of the basement. There are doors off of the hall that lead into three basement rooms. The three rooms of the basement sit under the three house sections above; the south room is under the kitchen, the north room is under the old parlor, and the central room is under the living room. There is no basement under the shed-roofed addition to the north ell. Staircases in the north and south rooms of the basement lead to the kitchen and the old parlor.

The basement has exposed stone walls and each space has a different type of flooring. The floor of the south room is poured concrete. It is used for storage and the physical plant. It was the location of an old cistern that was relocated behind the north ell. The central room has a floor covered with medium-sized pavers and the north room has a floor covered with large pavers.

Zirbel Summer Kitchen

Astylistic Vernacular, c. 1870

Probably built near the time of the construction of the Zirbel house, this summer kitchen is a one-story building sitting on a fieldstone rubble foundation. The building has a rectangular form with a moderately-pitched gable roof covered with corrugated metal roofing. The summer kitchen chimney is no longer extant. The walls are clad with wide shiplap siding attached at the corner with plain corner boards. There are three window openings that have been enclosed.

William and Johanna Hildebrandt House, W1328 State Highway 33

American Foursquare, 1902

Exterior

This house is an early and simple example of the American Foursquare form, a popular early twentieth century house form for working class families in urban areas and for farm families in rural areas. The house has a two-story main block with a hip roof covered with asphalt shingles and wide overhanging eaves. Enclosed one-story porches run across both the main or south and rear or north elevations. They also have hip roofs covered with asphalt shingles.

The house sits on a fieldstone foundation, except for the porches, which have concrete foundations. The walls were originally clad with narrow clapboards that are still extant. Some time in the mid-twentieth century, the clapboards were covered with asphalt sheathing in a brown brick pattern. The

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house is currently (late 2006) being covered with aluminum siding that has a width matching the original clapboards.

The openings on all elevations are symmetrical and were originally filled with single-light, double-hung sashes. Modern single-light sashes have replaced the old windows and they have been trimmed to appear much like they did in the original clapboard walls.

The front porch is enclosed (1934) with a bank of single-light, double-hung sashes and vinyl clad walls. The rear porch (enclosed in 1948) has a central entrance in its north wall. The wood and glass entry door, covered with a modern metal storm door, is flanked by two single-light, double-hung sashes. Like the other windows of the house, the porch windows are replacements for the originals. A set of plain wooden steps leads up to a small deck in front of the rear porch entrance. A set of cement steps leads up to a small deck in front of the front porch entrance.

Interior, First Floor

The Hildebrandt house is currently (late 2006) in the process of being renovated. The front porch leads to the main entrance. Its south wall retains the original exterior clapboards, and the ceiling is covered with wainscoting. The floor is covered with linoleum. The main entrance is a three panel wood "Craftsman" style door with a glazed upper panel.

Unlike typical American Foursquare houses, the front door does not lead into a foyer or living room. Rather, it leads into the kitchen, which is in its original location. The kitchen, like the other rooms on the first floor, has a ceiling and walls covered with modern drywall and the trim around doors and windows has been temporarily removed. The floor of the kitchen has its original narrow maple board covering.

An original built-in china cabinet sits in the east wall of the kitchen. This oak cabinet has eight lower drawers and two long and narrow glass doors above. The cabinets all have original turn-of-the-twentieth century hardware. This cabinet was used as a model for the design of the modern kitchen cabinets that sit along the north and west walls. The modern cabinets have been placed in the kitchen in a manner that reflects the plan of an old farmhouse kitchen, where the cabinets are not always connected and there is space at the center of the room for a table.

Behind a four panel wood door that is painted white, there is a pantry that sits in the southeast corner behind the basement stairs. This narrow room has a lower cabinet that is original to the house. It features wainscot doors and period hardware. A mid-twentieth century counter sits on top of the

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cabinet. The current owners plan on retaining this feature. Next to the built-in cabinet, another painted four panel wood door covers a narrow enclosed staircase to the second floor.

Entrances on each side of the north wall of the kitchen lead into the dining room on the east and the living room on the west. A large, modern opening between these rooms was cut out in the mid-twentieth century. Both the dining room and living room walls and ceilings are covered with modern drywall and there is a temporary absence of trim around all openings. The floors in each room are covered with narrow maple boards that are original.

Behind the living and dining rooms is the enclosed rear porch. It was enclosed in 1948 and was made into a large room. Between 2004 and 2006, the east end of the porch was converted into a bathroom with modern fixtures and finishes. The rest of the porch features modern drywall and there is no trim around doors and windows.

Interior, Second Floor

Like the first floor, the second floor is undergoing renovation. Walls and ceilings are covered with modern drywall, but the floor coverings vary from room to room. At the top of the enclosed staircase, there is a small landing, off which is a bedroom that takes up the southwest corner of the second floor. A long hallway runs along the east wall of the second floor. Originally, it was "L" shaped and ended at the entrance to the northwest bedroom. The north end of the hall ended at the northeast bedroom. The "foot" of the "L" in the old hallway has been enclosed for a bathroom, and the north bedrooms can now be used as a two-room suite.

The hallway floor is covered with vintage linoleum and there is a balustrade that runs along the west side of the hall, running along the open part of the staircase. The balustrade consists of turned posts under a plain baluster anchored at one end by a turned newel post with a knob finial. The entire balustrade is painted white.

The southwest bedroom features a five-panel wood door with a horizontal center panel and period hardware. This door style is featured throughout the second floor and all doors are painted white. The floor of the bedroom is covered with medium sized wood boards. There is a closet at the northwest corner of the room.

The two north bedrooms are reached through a five-panel door at the end of the hall. Today, they form a two-room suite with glazed "French" style doors separating the two rooms. These doors were originally located on the first floor, between the dining and living rooms, but were moved into a new,

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wide, entryway between the two bedrooms. Both of the bedrooms have floors still covered with vintage linoleum. At the south end of the old northwest corner bedroom is a closet and an entrance into the modern bathroom, both behind five-panel painted doors.

The bathroom renovation has just been completed. Its ceiling and walls are covered with modern drywall and modern wood wainscoting sits along the lower third of the walls. There are modern fixtures and a modern tile floor in the room. There is another five-panel door that leads back into the hallway.

Hildebrandt Summer Kitchen

Astylistic Utilitarian, c. 1902

The Hildebrandt Summer Kitchen is a one-story shed-like building with a rectangular form. It has a moderately-pitched gable roof covered with asphalt shingles. The walls are clad with shiplap siding attached at the corner with plain cornerboards. The building sits, in part, on a rubble stone foundation and has an interior floor of brick pavers. The window openings in the side walls have been enclosed with siding, and the front entrance in the south elevation is covered with a door made up of horizontal wood boards.

Originally this building sat in front of the home closer to Highway 33. When the highway was improved in the 1930s, the building was moved to its present location. It is currently used for storage.

Privy

Astylistic Utilitarian, c. 1900

The privy sits behind the Hildebrandt Summer Kitchen. This small rectangular building has a gable roof covered with wood shingles. Its walls are covered with clapboards and wood panels surround the old foundation. The building's entrance is located in the east wall. It consists of a door made up of vertical boards. Part of the wall surfaces flanking this door are clad with plain wood paneling.

Smokehouse

Astylistic Utilitarian, c. 1870

The smokehouse sits just east of the Zirbel Farmhouse. It is a one-story, almost square building constructed of fieldstone. The low-pitched gable roof is covered with corrugated metal roofing. The fieldstone walls are laid up in a heavy layer of mortar. The mortar on the front or west elevation of the building is very thick, almost obscuring the fieldstones. The walls are joined at the corners with cream brick quoins.

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The entrance into the smokehouse is covered by a door made up of vertical boards in a rough wood frame. Over the entrance there is a brick segmental arch and the arch, itself, is filled in with bricks. At the foundation of the east elevation of the building there is a small arched opening that was used to tend the smokehouse fire from the outside. This arched opening is decorated with a segmental brick arch and a tabbed brick surround. The opening has been enclosed with bricks. Punctuating the north, south, and west walls of the smokehouse are small rectangular openings that were used as vents when smoking was taking place.

Threshing/Dairy Barn

Bank Barns, Astylistic Utilitarian, c.1868, c.1890

The largest barn attached to this farmstead is the threshing/dairy barn, which is part of the agricultural building group on the south side of Highway 33. The raised site was ideal for naturally banking both the original threshing barn and its large dairy addition. All along the west elevation, both barns are banked into a natural rise so that access into the upper levels of both barns was easily made via gravel drives. Because of their complexity, each barn will be discussed separately, with connections described where appropriate.

Threshing Barn

The oldest part of the building is the threshing barn, built during the height of Wisconsin's wheat growing era. The barn has a rectangular shape with a low-pitched gable roof covered with asphalt shingles. The walls of the barn are made up of vertical wood boards and a separate layer of vertical boards accent the exposed north elevation gable peak, adding a decorative effect. The barn sits on a raised fieldstone foundation that is almost completely covered by the bank on the west elevation. Near the top of the north foundation wall, there are two small two-light openings, and two larger entrances covered with wooden doors sit in the east foundation wall. On the west elevation, a large sliding door made of vertical wood cover the entrance into the upper part of the threshing barn.

The threshing barn measures 30'-2" x 50'-6" and most of the structural timbers are original. The barn has a post-and-beam structure that was pegged together by the original builders. The structural members include three feet high and 30 feet long threshing floor beams and long diagonal timbers at the four corners and threshing floor entrances. The rafters are hewn, squared, and pegged at lapped peaks. The upright posts have additional beam bracing with side diagonal braces and collar tie beams.

The builders used an ethnic German construction technique in putting the posts and beams together. The oak beams were marked with tics and tacks and the rafters were marked with Roman numerals.

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These marks were used as guides to properly join the structural elements together. Since only a few beams have been replaced (with period replacements), this marking system is still evident on original beams and rafters.

The upper level of the threshing barn is divided into three sections. The north section was originally used for grain storage, the center section was used for the actual threshing work, and the south section was used for straw storage. The flooring of the north and south sections consists of inch-thick wide oak boards. The center (threshing) section floor consists of three inch thick oak boards, is secured with square nails, and is fitted with grain baffles.

The raised foundation of the threshing barn is supported by oak and elm beams still covered in bark. The interior has two sections that are separated by thick fieldstone walls. The sections were probably used for animals, possibly for cows and horses. In the north section, along the north wall, there are concrete troughs that have deep sections for hay and shallow sections for grain. It is possible that this part of the barn may have housed oxen and/or horses. Today, the south section is the home for the oxen used on the farm.

Dairy Barn Addition

The 36'-4" x 113' dairy barn was added when the Hildebrandts were making the transition from grain and livestock production to dairying. Also built on a fieldstone foundation, the dairy barn is banked into the rise on the west elevation.

On the east elevation, the original fieldstone foundation lined up with the foundation of the threshing barn and a large forebay extended five to eight feet beyond the foundation wall. Some time in the early twentieth century, a rusticated concrete block foundation was built to enclose much of the forebay. In the mid-twentieth century, a concrete-block addition further enclosed the forebay, so that today, only a small portion of the original fieldstone foundation can be seen on the east elevation. Numerous individual and paired sash windows punctuate the concrete block foundations. There is a large wood door that covers an entrance in the part of the original fieldstone foundation that is still extant.

The upper portion of the dairy barn is enclosed with vertical wood siding and the south elevation gable is trimmed like that of the threshing barn's north elevation. Along the west elevation, there are two sets of large sliding doors made up of vertical boards that allow access into the upper level of the barn. On the east elevation, there are several large openings covered with vertical board doors and three small ventilation and light openings. The gable roof is clad with wood shingles.

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The interior of the upper level of the barn shows the barn's oak frame structure of 9" x 9" posts and 5" x 5" horizontal braces. Four inch square-hewn rafters and some 2 x 4 rafters and adzed 21 foot long posts rest on 7" x 7" purlins with diagonal support posts below. The structure incorporates mortise and tenon joints and wooden peg/pin connections. Ceiling joists are flattened logs resting on a 12" x 12" beam on 30" centers. One of the interesting features of the upper level of the dairy barn is the restored original rope-pulled hay-moving system.

The raised basement under the dairy barn is a 100' long, largely open, space with a mid-twentieth century dairying layout. Metal stanchions run down the center of the space where the milking took place. Troughs for food and waste run along the concrete floor. The original east elevation fieldstone wall was almost entirely removed when the forebay was enclosed with the concrete blocks. This made a space in the interior where concrete and pipe constructed pens were added to house cattle not being milked. Ossabaw Island Hogs, a historic breed, are raised in this part of the barn today. Four horse stalls are located at the northeast corner of the barn.

Silo 1

Astylistic Utilitarian, 1927

The oldest silo is attached to the south elevation of the dairy barn. It rises slightly over the top of the barn roof and is a round, poured concrete structure banded by thin metal cables. At the top is a conical concrete roof with a "dormer" ventilation opening projecting from the west elevation of the roof. The silo has a concrete shaft connected to the barn.

Silo 2

Astylistic Utilitarian, 1929

The 1929-built silo is attached to the west elevation of the dairy barn and sits between the two large entrances to the upper level. It is slightly taller and thinner than the older silo and rises well over the top of the barn roof. It is also a round, poured concrete structure banded by thin metal cables. At the top is a conical concrete roof with a "dormer" ventilation opening projecting from the north elevation of the roof. The silo has a concrete shaft connected to the barn.

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Small Animal Building

Astylistic Utilitarian, c.1900, c.1910

A large cow yard is located east of the threshing/dairy barn's east elevation. Built close to the southeast corner of the dairy barn and running along the southern boundary of the cow yard is the small animal building. Divided into two sections, this long, one-story, rectangular building was used as a pig barn and poultry building. The west third was the first section constructed. It has a gable roof covered with wood shingles, shiplap siding and a tall concrete foundation that may have replaced a fieldstone foundation or may have raised the building some time after it was constructed.

There are three openings along the south wall of the pig barn that are covered with wooden boards. An opening in the northwest corner of the north elevation provides access into this area of the building. The interior has plaster walls and a concrete floor.

Attached to the pig barn is a large poultry building addition. It has a matching gable roof covered with standing seam metal roofing. The walls of the addition are covered with shiplap siding and sit on a low concrete foundation. The north elevation has a small entry door and two small ventilation openings near the roof eaves. Along the east wall is an opening in the gable peak covered with a door made up of horizontal boards. Shiplap siding has enclosed a large opening on this elevation, but a small ventilation opening is extant. The south elevation has two pairs of six-over-six-light double-hung sashes lighting the poultry barn. This part of the building is still used to house several varieties of free-range chickens.

Corncrib 1

Astylistic Utilitarian, c.1900

The older of two corncribs on this farmstead is located just northeast of the threshing/dairy barn in a grassy area close to the highway. It is a one-story building with a low-pitched gable roof covered with asphalt shingles. Under the gable peaks, the walls are filled in with vertical boards. Two large sliding doors on the north and south elevations can be opened to provide a drive-through to load the corn in the flanking bins that are of wood-slat construction.

Windmill Structure

Astylistic Utilitarian, c.1890

Sitting just west of the older corncrib is the farm's old windmill structure that sits over an abandoned well. Only the metal, pyramid-shaped, tower structure is extant. The top portion with the rotating blades is not extant.

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Corncrib 2

Astylistic Utilitarian, c. 1970

This non-contributing structure is a tall, narrow wood framed corn crib that sits near the southwest corner of the dairy barn. It has a shed roof covered with corrugated metal roofing. The wood structure is enclosed with woven wire and is currently used for wood storage.

Machine Shed/Garage

Astylistic Utilitarian, c.1900, c. 1920

This building sits west of the large threshing/dairy barn and across the driveway. It has three sections, the largest being the central section of the building. This section is a 24' x 60'-5" structure constructed out of recycled timbers. It has a steeply-pitched gable roof covered with wood shingles. The walls of the building are covered with vertical wood boards. Since the building's site slopes down a bit on the west elevation, the rubble stone foundation can only be seen on the west elevation. However, a second row of vertical wood boards covers the lower third of the west elevation wall and may obscure more of the foundation. Along the east elevation wall there is a long metal track with attached wood board sliding doors that allow the entire wall to open up for machinery storage. There is no rubble stone foundation on the east elevation.

Attached to the south wall of the central section is the south section of the building that probably pre-dated the central section. This section is a 20'-2" x 40' rectangle of timber frame construction. It may have been the original machine shed for the farm that was later enlarged with the construction of the central section. In any event, it also has a steeply-pitched gable roof and wood vertical board siding. The roof, though, is covered with corrugated metal roofing material and a taller fieldstone foundation can be seen on the west elevation of the section, as well as on a south east portion of the section. The south elevation has no foundation or a foundation that has collapsed.

Along the north half of the east elevation of the south section, there is a large opening that has been converted into two garage bays covered with modern garage doors. This section houses a workshop and garage.

Along the north elevation of the central section is a one-story, 10 x 24 foot, shed-roofed garage bay, probably added when automobiles came to the farm. It is of 2 x 4 construction with walls covered with shiplap siding and a roof clad with standing seam metal roofing.

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BUILDING INVENTORY

<i>Site Map</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Style</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Status</i>
1	John & Wilhelmine Zirbel House	Italianate-influenced	c.1868,c.1878 ²	C
2	Zirbel Summer Kitchen	Astylistic Utilitarian	c.1870 ³	C
3	William & Johanna Hildebrandt House	American Foursquare	1902 ⁴	C
4	Hildebrandt Summer Kitchen	Astylistic Utilitarian	c.1902 ⁵	C
5	Privy	Astylistic Utilitarian	c.1900 ⁶	C
6	Smokehouse	Astylistic Utilitarian	c.1870 ⁷	C
7	Threshing/Dairy Barn	Astylistic Utilitarian	c.1868,c.1890 ⁸	C
8	Silo 1	Astylistic Utilitarian	1927 ⁹	C
9	Silo 2	Astylistic Utilitarian	1929 ¹⁰	C
10	Small Animal Building	Astylistic Utilitarian	c.1900,c.1910 ¹¹	C

² Hildebrandt family history supplied by Earl Hildebrandt, plaque on north elevation of the house.

³ Field observation, family history.

⁴ Family History.

⁵ Field observation, family history.

⁶ Field observation.

⁷ Field observation, family history.

⁸ Information from current owner.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Family history.

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11	Corncrib 1	Astylistic Utilitarian	c.1900 ¹²	C
12	Windmill Structure	Astylistic Utilitarian	c.1890 ¹³	C
13	Corncrib 2	Astylistic Utilitarian	c.1970 ¹⁴	NC
14	Machine Shed/Garage	Astylistic Utilitarian	c.1900,c.1920 ¹⁵	C

¹² Field observation.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

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SIGNIFICANCE¹⁶

The Zirbel-Hildebrandt Farmstead is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under criterion C, for its local architectural significance as an important example of an intact historic farmstead that, through its buildings, charts the growth and development of Wisconsin agriculture from the mid-nineteenth century to the early twentieth century. The farmhouses, residential outbuildings, and agricultural outbuildings represent the lifeways and agricultural practices of the Zirbel-Hildebrandt family through several generations. From wheat growing in the mid-nineteenth century to dairying in the twentieth century, to modern-day organic farming, this farmstead is an artifact of Wisconsin rural life during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The significance of the farmstead is enhanced by the fact that for almost 140 years, the farm has been maintained and worked by one family, the Zirbels and the related Hildebrandts, an ethnic German family who created a personal success story while adding to the overall economic success of Wisconsin agriculture.

Historical Background

Dodge County and the Town of Herman

Dodge County was first settled by Native Americans at the end of the last Ice Age. It became home to the Fox, Pottawatomie and Ho-Chunk (formerly Winnebago). The earliest white settlers were lured to Dodge and Jefferson counties by its timber lands, its iron ore, and its agricultural potential. Most of these early settlers came in the late 1830s and were “Yankees” from New York and New England. The first settler to the county established a cabin in the far northwest corner, at Fox Lake, in 1838. Other settlements followed at Watertown (1838), Waupun (1839), Juneau (1844), and Horicon and Mayville (1845). Dodge County government was officially organized in 1840.¹⁷

Although the Yankee settlers established the earliest communities in Dodge County, German immigrant settlers began pouring into the area beginning in the mid-1840s. This wave of immigrants continued in the 1850s, driven by religious conflicts and by the reactionary government established after the German revolution of 1848 was crushed. German immigrants known as “48ers,” who came to

¹⁶ This footnote refers to the period of significance stated in Section 8 of the nomination form. The period of significance encompasses the dates of construction for the contributing buildings and structures of the farmstead. Although some outbuildings are not used currently, agricultural activities continue today.

¹⁷ Homer Bishop Hubbell, *The History of Dodge County, Wisconsin, Past and Present, Vol. 1*, Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1913, p. 120; “Dodge County History,” Dodge County Web Site, <http://www.co.dodge.wi.us/about.html>.

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the United States primarily because of their support of the German revolution, had a significant impact on many communities in Wisconsin, in particular, nearby Watertown. But, all German immigrants tended to initially settle in groups related to their place of origin in Germany. For example, in the Town of Herman and nearby Town of Theresa, Germans from Pomerania dominated the population.¹⁸

The impact of German immigration to the Town of Herman was significant. By 1870, 90 percent of families in the town were ethnic Germans (312 out of 345). These mostly German immigrants cleared and improved the land in the town, and like the earlier Yankee immigrants, they largely grew wheat until the later nineteenth century. In 1870, the average farm in the Town of Herman included 53 acres and the majority of farmers grew wheat. Other grains raised in this era were corn, oats, barley, and rye, but nowhere near the numbers planted to wheat.¹⁹

German farmers in southeastern Wisconsin had an important impact on agricultural practices. Like Yankees, they initially relied on wheat as a cash crop. But, the Germans--who were familiar with farming "old" land in Europe and who were inclined to stay on their Wisconsin farms, unlike many Yankees, who worked the land until it was not as productive, then moved on—practiced more diversified agriculture, with crop rotation, fertilization, and animal raising, than the Yankees. Later in the century, Yankee farmers started commercial dairying, but Germans had a long history of making cheese on the farm and selling it locally.²⁰

The railroad came to the Town of Herman in 1855, when the LaCrosse & Milwaukee Railroad, later a part of the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railroad (Milwaukee Road), was built through the town's southwest corner. The line ran from Milwaukee to Horicon, then to Portage and LaCrosse. The railroad link had a significant impact on the iron ore industry, fostering the development of Iron Ridge, and on Horicon, where it provided a transportation link in that community. In the Town of Herman, tiny Woodland Station linked farmers to markets outside of the area.²¹

A transportation link that would have a much greater impact on the Zirbel-Hildebrandt Farmstead was State Highway 33, which was developed as an important automobile route through Dodge County and the Town of Herman in the twentieth century. State Highway 33 began as a local rural road known as

¹⁸ Barbara Wyatt, ed., *Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin, Vol. 1*, Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1986, Settlement, pp. 2-1—2-6.

¹⁹ John N. Vogel and William P. O'Brien, Determination of Eligibility for the John Zirbel Farmstead, May, 1993; on file in the Historic Preservation Division of the Wisconsin Historical Society.

²⁰ Wyatt, p. 2-5.

²¹ August Derleth, *The Milwaukee Road, Its First Hundred Years*, Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2002.

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Dekora Road. When the Zirbel-Hildebrandt farmstead was established, this road was merely a widened trail. During the early twentieth century, farmers and motorists called for state funding to improve rural roads, but Dekora Road was not immediately chosen for the initial state highway system.²²

Between 1919 and 1923, over 5,000 miles of rural roads were added to the state highway system, but, Dekora Road remained rural. Finally, around 1925, this road was designated State Highway 68 and, in 1931, the road was renamed State Highway 33 and was widened and improved with a hard surface. The widening was significant, and the state acquired land from the Hildebrandts, who also had to relocate the Hildebrandt summer kitchen. Further Highway 33 improvements brought the road closer to the buildings of the Zirbel-Hildebrandt Farmstead. The latest major improvement in the 1990s added a curb and gutter on both sides of the highway to help compensate for the proximity of the highway to the farmstead's buildings.²³

Before the Highway 33 improvement, farmers in Dodge County shifted from grain agriculture to dairying. During the transition era, many farmers turned to stock raising, including pigs, sheep, and cattle. These animals required feed crops, like corn, oats, and hay, and Dodge County farmers dropped wheat acreage in favor of feed crops. Dodge County was a leader in commercial dairying and during the late nineteenth century, creameries and cheese factories were established in most areas. By the 1920s, dairying and commercial cheese production dominated agriculture in the county, and the road improvements, including Highway 33, eased the transport of milk to factory.²⁴

The farmers in the Town of Herman, even with its heavy ethnic German population that was slower to embrace commercial dairying, that is, producing milk and selling it to factories rather than making and selling butter and cheese directly from the farm, switched to heavy dairy production. At one point, the town had Dodge County's largest cheese factory that contributed to the county becoming one of the largest cheese producers in the state during the mid-twentieth century.²⁵

In 1940, most dairy farms in Wisconsin were modest-sized and family-owned-and-operated. Most farmsteads were attached to working farms, and most farmers participated in the dairy industry, selling milk to local creameries and cheese factories for regional distribution. But, by 1970, the number of dairy farms had declined by half. Changing land values, technology, and economic and social

²² Vogel and O'Brien.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

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conditions resulted in farm consolidation. This consolidation did not amount to less milk production, though, as modern dairy practices improved milk yields from fewer cows. Development of better corn varieties raised the yield per acre dramatically, but the modern equipment needed to efficiently harvest crops became more expensive.²⁶

These trends have only increased during the late twentieth century and into the twenty-first century. Most farms, today, are large operations either raising crops, operating large animal raising facilities, or dairying in very large milking parlors with hundreds of cows. Most farmsteads are not attached to working farms, but have been parceled off and sold to non-farmers. This type of industrial farming can be controversial in its environment impacts. But, some farmers have embraced “organic” farming, reducing harmful pesticide, herbicide, and manufactured fertilizer use. Some large farms have been “certified organic,” but many other organic farms are small operations that are profitable due to the higher prices received for organic products. Dirk Hildebrandt, the great-great-great grandson of John Zirbel, operates a small organic farm on some of the Zirbel-Hildebrandt land. In this operation, he is a link from the present back to the land-saving techniques of his German ancestors.

The Zirbel Family

Johann (John) Zirbel was born on March 21, 1822 in Writzlow in the German province of Pomerania. He left his home in Morgow, District Kammin, Province Pommern in 1839, and arrived in Wisconsin in 1841. In this respect, Zirbel was ahead of the wave of German immigration that began in the mid-1840s. His earlier arrival was due to the immigration of Germans known as “Old Lutherans.” In 1817, King Frederick William II of Prussia united the Prussian Reformed and Lutheran churches. Some conservative Lutherans who opposed the union requested permission from the civil authorities to leave. Many Old Lutherans came from Pomerania, and emigrated primarily between 1839 to 1846.²⁷

One of the most notable communities of Old Lutherans was founded in Freistadt, now within the Village of Mequon in Ozaukee County. But other groups ended up in Washington and Dodge counties. Another large group of Old Lutherans came to the United States between 1854 and 1860, joining in the wave of German immigrants to Wisconsin during this period.²⁸

John Zirbel settled in Watertown in 1841 and there is little known about his life there except that in

²⁶ William F. Thompson, *The History of Wisconsin, Vol. VI, Continuity and Change, 1940-1965*, Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1988, pp. 103-143.

²⁷ Wyatt, Settlement, pp. 2-2—2-3.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 2-3.

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1846 he married Wilhelmine Degner, who was also a native of Pomerania. John and Wilhelmine remained in Watertown until 1847, when the couple moved to the Town of Herman, but not to this farm. Zirbel, who came to Watertown at the age of 19, must have worked hard and been able to save money, because when he came to the Town of Herman, he embarked on a land acquisition program that would result in his ownership of 600 acres in the town by 1853. His land was held in seven parcels: a 360-acre parcel, an 80-acre parcel, and four 40-acre parcels. The Zirbels lived on the 80-acre parcel next to his father Gottlieb's 80-acre parcel.²⁹

According to land office records (deeds for Dodge County are not available for years prior to 1877 due to a fire at the courthouse), by 1873, all of the above-acquired land was sold to others, but Zirbel had also acquired a consolidated 615-acre parcel surrounding this farmstead. The plat map for the Town of Herman in the 1873 Dodge County Plat Book indicates that this farmstead was the largest in the town. The 1870 census reveals that the Zirbels now had nine children, eight of whom were between the ages of 3 and 19 and were living on the farm. The oldest child had left home, three children had died shortly after birth, and the youngest child in the Zirbel family was not born until 1871.³⁰

Due to John Zirbel's success as a farmer and land speculator, he soon became one of the most prominent men in the Town of Herman. He was one of the founders of the nearby Emmanuel Lutheran Church in 1861, served as the town treasurer, and was the president of the Herman Mutual Insurance Company. These companies were popular in many ethnic communities and provided insurance-type services to their members.³¹

Grandchildren of John Zirbel told the family that their grandfather was known locally as the "Pomeranian Prince;" and another relative stated that he was also known as the "Pomeranian King." Certainly, with the largest farm in the town, he carried great prestige in the area. His holdings also indicate that he was a wealthy man. In 1870, his land was valued at \$33,960 and personal property at \$2,376.³²

Although the Zirbels could probably have afforded a large Italianate style house in 1868, they actually built a smaller version of the house that sits on the farmstead today. According to family history, there was a fire in 1878, alluded to in the unusual plaque on the rear elevation as described in Section 7 (Der

²⁹ Earl Hildebrandt, "John Zirbel Farmstead," unpublished genealogical and land history manuscript, April 1993, in possession of the author.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

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Herr hat mir gezuchtet Aug. 8 1878; translated by the family as "The Lord punished me. Aug. 8 1878"). According to the family, this matches a plaque on the front of the house, now covered by a chimney that states "The Lord blessed me," with an 1868 date. The Zirbels could have probably built a large and extravagant house after the 1878 fire, but they chose to only enlarge the existing house. Added during the Zirbel tenure was the threshing barn, as the farm was producing wheat. The Zirbel summer kitchen and the smokehouse were also probably added by the Zirbels because they were typical of German farmsteads in the mid-nineteenth century.

Wilhelmine Zirbel died in July of 1893, but John Zirbel lived on until 1899, passing on at the age of 77. In an 1891 article in the *Dodge County Pioneer*, it was announced that John Zirbel was celebrating the 50th anniversary of his arrival in Wisconsin. He was cited in the article as "one of the wealthiest and most respected farmers in Town Herman . . . [who] came completely destitute from Germany and in the course of years came to prosperity through untiring diligence and stubborn perseverance. His farms in Town Herman include an entire section and are well cultivated."³³

The Hildebrandt Family

Prior to John Zirbel's death, he parceled out land from his large holdings for two of his sons, Robert and Albert. The homestead farm, now 180 acres, was transferred to the youngest son, Frank, and his wife, Emma, in 1892. Emma Zirbel's father was William Hildebrandt, and in 1893, William and Johanna Hildebrandt purchased this farmstead and 180 acres from Frank and Emma Zirbel. At the same time, the Zirbels purchased the Hildebrandt farm from William and Johanna. Thus, the Hildebrandt family, related to the Zirbels through Emma Hildebrandt Zirbel, began their long ownership of the farm and this farmstead.³⁴

The connection to the Zirbel family was made a second time in 1903, when William and Johanna Hildebrandt sold this 180-acre farm to their son, August, and his wife, Melida, who was John Zirbel's granddaughter. Prior to this sale, though, William and Johanna Hildebrandt had the American Foursquare type house built as their "retirement" home. The deed specified that William and Johanna Hildebrandt "retain and keep for their use during their life time, ½ acre of land upon which their Dwelling House is situated."³⁵

It is unclear whether John Zirbel built the large dairy barn addition to the threshing barn. According to

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

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family history, it was built around 1890, so it could have been added by John Zirbel, his son, Frank, or the new owners, William and Johanna Hildebrandt. The Hildebrandt Summer Kitchen and privy were, no doubt, added for the new Hildebrandt house around 1902. Most of the remaining agricultural outbuildings were constructed during the ownership of the Hildebrandts, both William and Johanna and their son, August, and his wife, Melida.

It is clear that modern dairying was underway during August and Melida Hildebrandt's tenure, as they were the owners of the farm when the two silos were built in the late 1920s. It is likely that they enlarged the machine shed and added the garage addition to this building. They sold the farm to their two sons and their wives, Adolph and Marcella and Lester and Anita in 1943. Lester and Anita occupied the old brick farmhouse and it is Anita who lived there from 1936 until September of 2006.³⁶

Adolph and Marcella Hildebrandt lived in the Foursquare house and their son, Earl, with his wife, Eugenie, purchased the farm in 1992. Earl and Eugenie are the current owners and it is their son, Dirk, who operates the small organic farm on the property; the remainder of the land is rented. The farm is a source of pride and family history to the Hildebrandts, one of the few farm families that have owned a single farm since its founding almost 140 years ago.³⁷

Area of Significance—Architecture

The Zirbel-Hildebrandt Farmstead is architecturally significant at the local level because it is an intact farmstead with historic buildings and structures that represent the growth and development of resources built to meet the changing nature of Wisconsin agriculture in this area. Individually significant is the Zirbel Farmhouse, a fine example of local brick construction with interesting Italianate details. Of the agricultural outbuildings, the threshing/dairy barn is the most important agricultural building, representing two important eras of agricultural production in the area. The other domestic and agricultural outbuildings and structures add to the significance of the overall farmstead because their construction materials, methods, and type of construction reflect specific important agricultural activities on this farm. The collection further represents the multi-generational growth and occupation of the farmstead.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

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Residential Buildings

The Zirbel Farmhouse is probably the most noticeable of the architecturally significant elements of this farmstead. It has an unusual cross gable form, possibly as a result of the reconstruction after the fire in 1878. The final appearance achieved on the home's east elevation recalls the form and massing of the Palladian influenced houses of the Early Classical Revival of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. These examples are most prevalent in the Southern states, primarily Virginia and the Carolinas. The source of the inspiration more likely was the Palladian design manor homes of Zirbel's homeland, which drew from the same architectural precedents as the American examples. The Zirbel home's two story, front gabled central section with its porch accentuates the similarities between this house and the Early Classical examples. The direct source of Zirbel's inspiration is unknown and the resulting house is an unusual example in Wisconsin.

The building's construction date is evident in its interesting Italianate-influenced details. According to Wisconsin's *Cultural Resource Management Plan*, the Italianate style was widely popular in Wisconsin between 1850 and the early 1880s. Since many Wisconsin communities went through an economic "boom" during this era, Italianate houses are common in the state. Italianate houses are generally square or rectangular two-story buildings with hip roofs, wide, overhanging eaves with brackets, arched openings, and picturesque porches with beveled posts and brackets. The long period of popularity of the style resulted in the use of Italianate features on many houses with vernacular forms. In many communities and in the countryside, vernacular houses were commonly built with Italianate details such as bracketing, arched openings, and the picturesque massing and proportions of the style.³⁸

The Zirbel Farmhouse is a good example of a house built with a picturesque form and massing and abbreviated Italianate style details. According to the family history, the house's original form was lower and was raised after the 1878 fire. This would have given the original house a picturesque "brick cottage" appearance that was one interpretation of the style. Even after the building was raised, this picturesque quality remained. It can be seen primarily in the north and south ells, which retain their cottage-like visual quality.

The most important Italianate influenced details of the house are the segmentally-arched window openings. The segmental arch is often used for windows on Italianate style buildings and the additional use of a decorative brick arch, like in this building, is common in brick-constructed buildings. What is

³⁸ Barbara Wyatt, ed., *Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin, Vol. 2*, Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1986, Architecture, p. 2-6.

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distinctive about the arched openings of this house is the unusual cast-iron lintels. Decorative lintels were often used in Italianate-influenced buildings, even with brick construction. They were more common on frame-constructed buildings. Usually, they are not seen along with segmental arches in brick buildings. These lintels, with their scroll form and unusual lyre-shaped keystones and brackets, are unusual in that they are set into the segmental brick arches on the north, south, and west elevations. Their unusual placement suggests they may have been added in the 1878 remodeling.

The use of the lyre decoration may be a classical reference that is used here in a picturesque manner. Or, it may be a reference to German immigrants' love of music. For example, in nearby Watertown, where John and Wilhelmine Zirbel lived in the 1840s, German immigrants formed many musical societies. The first formal musical society in Watertown, "Die Liedertafel," was formed in 1847, the same year the Zirbels left the community. But, it is likely that informal societies or groups were active prior to this time. In the early 1860s, the Concordia Society formed in Watertown and became so notable among ethnic Germans, it was also known as the official Watertown *Sangerverein*, or singing society. It is not clear that the lyre decoration is associated with a musical interest in the Zirbel family, but it could be an explanation for this unusual detail.³⁹

The brick construction of the house is an architectural element that gives the house a distinctive appearance, even in this area of large concentrations of brick houses. Despite the frequency of the resource type, the Zirbel Farmhouse is a good and intact example of this common building material and method of construction, having a high level of integrity that sets it apart in comparison with neighboring brick farmhouses.

Wisconsin's *Cultural Resource Management Plan* indicates that brickmaking in Wisconsin began in small-scale, locally-based operations throughout the state. Early bricks had various hues due to the chemical characteristics of clay deposits in Wisconsin. In general, much of the eastern half of the state contains predominantly light clays that resulted in the ubiquitous "cream brick" most commonly associated with the Milwaukee area. Scattered clay deposits in the eastern part of the state also produced vermilion or orange-red bricks. More uniform red bricks were produced largely in the western part of the state, but again, some local clays turned out other hues.⁴⁰

Dozens of local brickmaking operations arose in Dodge and Jefferson counties, most producing a cream colored brick. In nearby Watertown, where there is an abundance of cream brick houses, six

³⁹ Carol Lohry Cartwright and Joan Rausch, *City of Watertown, Wisconsin Architectural and Historical Intensive Survey Report 1986-1987*, Watertown: Architectural Researches, Inc., 1987, pp. 196-197.

⁴⁰ Wyatt, Vol. 2, Architecture, p. 4-10.

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brickyards were operating by the mid-1850s. Watertown brick was promoted as being as good as the “famous” Milwaukee “Cream City” brick, and as the city and area expanded, more brickyards took advantage of the abundant clay supplies of the area. During the later nineteenth century, at least nine more brickyards were established in Watertown, but eventually the “abundant” clay supply played out, and by 1900, Watertown’s brick industry had diminished to two yards. During the early twentieth century, changing tastes demanded more hard-fired bricks of different hues that local yards could not produce and the industry concentrated in a few places in the state.⁴¹

The Zirbel Farmhouse was, no doubt, constructed of locally-fired brick, probably from nearby Horicon or Mayville. Zirbel’s relationship with Watertown might have caused him to get the bricks from that city, as well. They are a cream brick of consistent color and quality, making attractive walls that enhance the house. The walls are of double-brick construction, resulting in sturdy wall structures and deep window wells. This type of construction was heavier than a brick veneer and is part of the reason that the house has a strong structural quality today.

The Zirbel Farmhouse has a high level of integrity, with most of its historic details intact. There have been very few changes to the exterior. The openings are intact in size and shape, and most of the windows and doors are either original or historic period replacements. The interior of the house has also retained many of its historic features. In particular, the grained finishes on the first floor doors and all the wood trim are an outstanding decorative feature. Other interesting features date from the mid-twentieth century and include vintage linoleum and Masonite-like wall surfaces. The alteration of the rear of the house into separate living quarters was done with little disruption to the interior plan, and this vintage remodeling, dating to around 1936, includes intact details from that era.

The other farmhouse on the property is the Hildebrandt Farmhouse, built in 1902. The house reflects the multi-generation aspect of the farmstead. The house has an American Foursquare form on the exterior and the interior has details that reflect the turn of the twentieth century. It is not individually distinctive for any architectural style or form, but contributes to the overall architectural variety of the farmstead. The two-story American Foursquare or two story cube house was a popular choice for farmhouses in the early twentieth century. House plan books often referred to this type of house as a “farmhouse” design.

What is particularly interesting about this house is its interior layout. The second floor is typical, with

⁴¹ Cartwright and Rausch, pp. 20-26.

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three bedrooms and a later-added bath made up from part of the hallway. But, the first floor is unusual in that the main entrance leads directly into the kitchen. Most houses of this type have entrances leading into a foyer or directly into a living room. This unusual configuration may be an adaptation that reflects the location of the agricultural buildings across the street, rather than in back of the residences. Most farmhouses have kitchens in the rear with easy access from barns and outbuildings so that dirt and grime from the outbuildings are not “tracked through the house.” In the case of this house, the kitchen faces the agricultural outbuildings, making it a shorter walk to get from the “barn” to the most important room of a farmhouse, the kitchen. It is also of interest that the kitchen of the Zirbel Farmhouse is also located at the front of the house, although there was also a separate entrance into a foyer that led into the other part of the first floor.

The most significant alteration to the Hildebrandt Farmhouse during the historic period was the enclosure of the front and back porches. Today, the house is undergoing a remodeling effort that has had an impact on the building’s historic integrity. The most important element has been the application of vinyl siding and the replacement of windows. However, the new siding replicates the size of the original clapboards and the new windows are identical in size, shape, and the number of lights as the original windows. Also, the owner has taken care to “frame” out the windows so that their profile in the walls is similar to the original profile.

The interior is also undergoing some updating with new drywall being the most significant change. But, the floor plan is intact and many features have been retained, such as original doors and wood floors. The kitchen has new cabinets based on an original built-in cabinet and the owner has retained the “farmhouse” kitchen style.

Although these changes have lowered the building’s historic integrity somewhat, its overall form and massing and many original details remain intact. Modern materials replicate the original materials of the house and have been installed in a high-quality manner. Because of this, the building remains a contributing resource of the farmstead.

Wisconsin’s *Cultural Resource Management Plan* has identified common farmstead outbuildings of the state. Because of the diversity of crops grown in Wisconsin and the variety of ethnic immigrants to the state, these outbuildings are numerous. Specific outbuildings were constructed for specific types of agricultural production, and as this production changed over the years, so did the outbuildings. Many immigrants also brought building types with them from their homelands, resulting in a variety of outbuildings related to a number of ethnic groups. The Zirbel-Hildebrandt Farmstead has both common

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and uncommon outbuildings related to both agricultural practices and to their German ethnic heritage. The residential outbuildings will be discussed first.

Both houses have summer kitchens. Summer kitchens are common in certain parts of the state and often relate to specific ethnic groups. Summer kitchens are usually small, shed-like buildings close to the house. They usually have chimneys and may contain a bake oven. They were commonly built of many different materials and are particularly seen on German ethnic farmsteads.⁴²

The summer kitchens on this farmstead have many of the above-listed features. They are small, shed-like buildings close to the houses they served. The chimneys are no longer extant and they do not have bake ovens, but in other respects they have a high level of integrity, including original siding materials, doors, and windows. These utilitarian buildings add to the overall architectural significance of the farmstead because they represent an important nineteenth century building type particularly seen on German farmsteads. They are in relatively good condition and the owner plans to preserve them.

Like the summer kitchens, the smokehouse on the Zirbel-Hildebrandt Farmstead is a building typical of German ethnic farmsteads. These buildings are generally small and include chimneys and vents in the walls. They were used to smoke meat and fish and masonry construction was common due to its "fireproof" nature.⁴³

The Zirbel smokehouse is an excellent example of this type of outbuilding. It has a substantial size, larger than many extant examples, and its fieldstone construction is both decorative and sturdy. The vents in the walls are still extant, as is the original entry door. The oven structure can be seen on the end wall, and although it has been bricked-up, its original configuration is apparent. The Zirbel smokehouse's high integrity and high level of preservation adds to its significance.

The smokehouse also features a distinctive construction material and method, that is, its highly decorative fieldstone walls. Fieldstones were commonly used for constructing buildings on Wisconsin's farms. The glaciers left a high concentration of boulder deposits in the state that were used to build fences, buildings, barns, silos, churches, and even commercial buildings. Early fieldstone construction involved taking the large stones and laying them up with an ample amount of lime mortar. Sometimes, boulders were split and mortared with thin joints, creating a decorative look that was especially popular in late nineteenth century residential construction. The most common use of

⁴² Wyatt, Vol. 2, Architecture, p. 5-6.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

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fieldstone construction was for foundations, particularly rural building foundations. Raised fieldstone basements sit under many barns in the state.⁴⁴

The high quality of local fieldstone construction is evident not only in the Zirbel smokehouse, but in the many fieldstone foundations of the farmstead. The fieldstones used in this farmstead were faced, a technique of cutting stone that produces a flat wall surface. This technique resulted in foundations with a much higher decorative quality than typical foundations of rough-finished fieldstone construction. The use of this technique on all of the building foundations gives the farmstead an architectural uniformity.

The smokehouse is the only building completely constructed of fieldstones and illustrates the high quality of building materials and methods used in the masonry throughout the farmstead. The front or west wall is heavily mortared, but the other elevations expose much of the decorative boulders. The cream brick corner quoins add a decorative, almost delicate element to the building.

The Zirbel farmhouse also features a fine fieldstone foundation that is raised on the east elevation. It is slightly different from the smokehouse in that the stones are more irregular in size, and in general, are much larger than the stones used for the smokehouse. One decorative element of this foundation are corner quoins of faced fieldstones.

The fieldstone retaining wall alongside of the Zirbel farmhouse is also an interesting example of fieldstone construction. Like the foundations and the smokehouse, this wall also uses faced fieldstones, but the wall was not laid up in mortar. The fact that this wall has been extant and is still in good condition for well over 100 years speaks to the high quality of its construction. (The wall and other landscaping features are not included in the resource count.)

Fieldstones were also used to construct the foundation of the Hildebrandt Farmhouse, illustrating the versatility of this common building material over many decades. This foundation, which can be seen a bit more clearly on the east elevation of the house, adds to the continuity of architectural details of the farmstead, tying it to the older farmhouse, the smokehouse, and other outbuildings.

The final residential outbuilding of the farmstead is the privy located in back of the Hildebrandt Summer Kitchen. Privies or outhouses, as they were commonly known, were usually built of wood.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 4-6.

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The usually very small buildings most often had gable roofs, small windows placed high on side walls, and roof vents. Located close to the house for convenience, privies were often moved to different locations over the years they were in use.⁴⁵

The Hildebrandt house's privy is typical of farm privies or outhouses in its size and construction materials. The frame construction with clapboard walls, utilitarian board door, and gable roof are all typical features of privies. That this privy is still extant is significant because after most farmhouses had added modern plumbing and bathrooms by the 1950s, old privies were lost due to lack of maintenance or lack of structural integrity. In fact, a privy that collapsed behind the Zirbel Farmhouse is currently located behind the barn, waiting for a later reconstruction effort.

Agricultural Outbuildings

The agricultural outbuildings of the Zirbel-Hildebrandt Farmstead are building and structure types that directly relate to agricultural practices on the farm during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These agricultural practices are typical of agricultural practices in Dodge County during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century.

In the mid-nineteenth century, most farmers in Dodge County were growing wheat as a cash crop. During the late nineteenth century, diversified farming was important and farmers began to make a transition to dairying. German farmers were known to practice more diversified agriculture, but they were also initially dependent on wheat as a cash crop. Some statistics illustrate how farmers in Dodge County made the transition from wheat growing to dairying.

One of the first efforts in the diversified farming era was a rise in livestock production. In 1850, about 13,000 hogs were reported in the agricultural census by Dodge County farmers, but by 1890, that number had climbed to 43,000. This number doubled by 1910, then declined as the twentieth century progressed. Sheep were a popular choice for livestock raising and sheep populations grew tenfold in the county between 1850 and 1870. Cattle, which included milk cows, grew as farmers began to switch to dairying. Early dairying often involved using the milk to make dairy products on the farm, then sell them locally. Cash or commercial dairying was the result of the growth of creameries and cheese factories, where farmers sold fluid milk directly to a factory, rather than produce products on the farm.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 5-6.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

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In 1850, farmers in Dodge County reported almost 8,000 head of cattle, but by 1870, that number had exploded to almost 30,000. In 1890, cattle numbers in Dodge County more than doubled to 63,000 head and then grew to over 100,000 in 1910, when the dairying transition for most farmers was complete. These cattle (and other livestock) needed feed crops like corn, oats and hay, and wheat fields were gradually replaced with feed crops. Corn and hay, important crops for dairying showed dramatic increases in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In 1850, only 3,648 acres were planted to corn in Dodge County. By 1890, corn acreage had grown to 32,542 and was up to 70,532 by 1930. Hay production in Dodge County started at about 17,000 acres in 1850, rose to almost 82,000 acres in 1890, then over 95,000 acres in 1930.⁴⁷

Available statistics for John Zirbel's farm in 1870 and 1880 show that his operation was typical of Dodge County farmers, although his acreage was much greater than the "typical" farm of just over 50 acres. The agricultural censuses of 1870 and 1880 show that John Zirbel was growing wheat in large amounts. In 1870, he grew 1,565 bushels of wheat and in 1880, at the end of the wheat era in southern Wisconsin, he grew 2,443 bushels of wheat. Unfortunately, the 1890 individual census reports no longer exist, so we do not know specifically what Zirbel grew in that year, but general information from this era indicates that wheat acreage in Dodge County declined by half between 1870 and 1890.

As described above, Zirbel grew wheat extensively, both in 1870 and 1880, but he also grew corn and oats in both years. His sheep population in 1870 was 13, indicating he was raising sheep when it was popular. German farms almost always had pigs for household use, but between 1870 and 1880, the Zirbel farm reported an increase from five to 10 pigs, perhaps because they were raising some for sale. The Zirbel farm in 1870 reported 13 milk cows, while in 1880, there were only 10. This indicates a small but steady milk production over these years that may have been turned into butter and cheese on the farm, then sold locally. It is known that Zirbel was still a large wheat farmer as late as 1880, so the transition to dairying was a bit slower than it may have been on other farms.⁴⁸

For the best information on the Zirbel-Hildebrandt farm operation, we can look to the buildings, which give major clues to what the family was producing and when. For example, the threshing/dairy barn began as just a threshing barn, a building that represents the wheat-growing years of John Zirbel.

The threshing barn is an early barn type in Wisconsin, built for the flourishing wheat production in the

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

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mid-nineteenth century. The wheat was threshed in the central part of the medium-sized building. A central wagon-way brought the wheat into the threshing section. Threshing barns could be roughly-constructed log or timber-framed buildings, or could be secured by a masonry foundation.⁴⁹

The threshing barn on this farmstead is a fine example of this type of resource related to the early wheat boom in Wisconsin. As described in Section 7, this building has most of its original features, including its original plan and details, such as baffles in the central threshing section. The timber frame construction is in good condition, with only a few period replacement parts. The fieldstone foundation gives the building structural stability and its interior shows the type of animal space built for the early years of this farm's operation. The most interesting features of the barn are the markings that showed the original builders how the timber framing was to be constructed. This German ethnic marking system is important because it illustrates an ethnic building technique of the mid-nineteenth century.

The c.1890 dairy barn addition to the threshing barn is indicative of the family's transition to dairying. Although no specific figures from 1890 are available to see this change, the size of the dairy barn addition is a clear indication that the family was making a commitment to a dairy operation. The addition more than doubled the size of the original threshing barn and its spacious basement story was ideal for setting up a milking parlor.

The dairy barn addition is constructed like a bank barn, that is a barn with two levels, the upper level used for hay, feed, and vehicle or implement storage; the lower level used for animals, often dairy cows. The lower level of a bank barn is constructed or "banked" into a rise or hillside and is of masonry construction. The upper level is often clad with vertical board siding. There are often small windows or vents in the upper level of the barn and the lower level usually has one or more entrances and small windows in the exposed foundation wall. Often there is a forebay that provides shelter for animals. The interior of the upper level was usually outfitted for hay storage with a track for pulleys that operated a hayfork. Lower level interiors were often divided into various spaces for animals. In a dairy operation, these spaces would include a milking area, a space for non-milking cows or bulls, feed troughs, and waste channels.⁵⁰

The dairy barn addition on this farmstead has most of the above-mentioned bank barn details. It is banked into a natural rise and the lower level is outfitted for a milking parlor, with a feeding trough,

⁴⁹ Wyatt, Architecture, p. 5-3.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 5-2.

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waste channel, and spaces for non-milking cows. The architectural details, such as the wood covering, fieldstone masonry foundation, and former forebay are typical of this barn type. To gain more interior space, the forebay was almost entirely enclosed in the early twentieth century.

The integrity of the dairy bank barn addition is very high. Like the threshing barn section, this section has been well maintained and all of the original construction techniques and materials are evident. In particular, the pulley system for the hayfork is intact and functional. The lower level is also intact and still has all its features as they were when the dairy operation on the farm ended in 1976. The milking parlor and its equipment is primarily from the mid-twentieth century and the divisions in the lower level are extant, some probably dating to the original construction of the barn.

The combination threshing barn/dairy barn is the most important agricultural building on this farmstead. It represents the two building types related to two important agricultural practices on this farm: wheat growing and dairying. Other types of agricultural production occurred on the farm, as well, but this building housed the most significant. Both sections of the building have high-quality fieldstone foundations constructed in a manner similar to those of the residential buildings discussed earlier. These foundations add to the continuity of the overall appearance of the farmstead. The wood walls are also in good condition and the upper stories of both barn sections have intact historic structures and details. This barn is truly an artifact that can be studied to gain information about both of these important building types in Wisconsin.

Representing the dairy expansion era in Wisconsin, an era that is also known as the beginning of industrial dairying, are the two silos built in the late 1920s. Silos are generally tall, narrow structures used to store grain or silage. Early silos were square and often made of wood. The round silo structure emerged as the most efficient; round silos were built from wood, stone, poured concrete, concrete blocks and staves, glazed brick and tile, and, in the mid-twentieth century, steel. Usually silos were attached to barns via long shafts, allowing the silage to be conveniently transferred to animal feeding stations. Wood and stone silos are generally older than other types, with poured concrete or concrete stave construction being the most common.⁵¹

The University of Wisconsin School of Agriculture and Extension Service was an important promoter of the use of silage for dairy cows to provide them with good nutrition year-around, making milking a year-round activity as well. Prior to the late nineteenth century, milking cows was often a seasonal

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 5-6.

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activity due to the absence of good feed in the winter. The UW printed bulletins promoting silage as a way to feed cows in winter and also illustrated good silo design and construction. This tended to standardize silo construction by the 1920s, standardization that can be seen on this farmstead. The two silos, both of poured concrete construction and with almost identical features, are typical of many silos from this era. What is striking about these examples is their integrity. Silos, due to lack of use and maintenance, often lose their caps and ventilation dormers, but they are intact on both of these examples. More importantly, these silos are significant in that they represent the Hildebrandt family heeding advice to build improved silos to store an adequate food supply for their dairy cows. The fact that there are two silos, built within only a few years of each other, suggests that the Hildebrandts had a substantial number of milk cows in this era and were participating fully in increasing milk production in the industrial dairying era.

Dairying was not the only agricultural activity on the Hildebrandt farm in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. They also raised animals and there is one important building type related to that activity on the farmstead. The small animal building, also known as a pig barn/poultry barn was probably erected in two sections, with the pig barn being the earlier structure, although both were erected prior to the 1920s.

Small animal buildings on Wisconsin farms housed a variety of small animals, most commonly pigs and chickens. They are typically small to medium sized buildings with one low story. They are usually rectangular with a shed or gable roof and many have windows along the south elevation to provide light and warmth. Poultry buildings often have a full bank or wall of windows for this purpose.⁵²

The small animal building on this farmstead is a good example of two building types combined to form a single structure for two different animals. The older pig barn is utilitarian, with rough openings and a very low profile. The attached poultry building is a bit taller, mainly because it slopes down with the landscape in this location. It is of slightly more formal construction and has paired windows on the south elevation for light and warmth typical of poultry barns. It is still in use today, and it adds to the significance of the farmstead by illustrating the broad range of agricultural building types related to the variety of activities that took place on this farm. Its integrity is a bit less than the neighboring barn, due to some maintenance issues, but the current owner plans on maintaining and repairing all the outbuildings as needed in the future.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 5-3.

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Crop production has always been of importance on this farm, from wheat growing in the nineteenth century, to feed crops in the twentieth century. Specialized storage structures on this farmstead represent important building types for these agricultural activities. Already mentioned are the silos that housed crops for feeding dairy cows. Another important storage facility is the old corn crib, a large, “drive-through” structure that dried and stored ears of corn to feed farm animals.

Historic corn cribs are generally rectangular shaped buildings or structures with horizontally laid lath or slat walls for ventilation. Usually these buildings or structures had no foundations, just blocks or pilings to prevent rodent infestation from below. There are wide varieties of corn cribs, from small and narrow with shed roofs, to large drive-through types with large gable or gambrel roofs.⁵³

The corn crib on the Zirbel-Hildebrandt Farmstead is medium-sized building with a short rectangular square form. A low-pitched gable roof covers both the central drive-through and the two side bins, which have slat construction. Like many other small, agricultural outbuildings, corn cribs are vanishing due to their light-weight construction that breaks down easily, especially if they are not used. This corn crib has a very high level of integrity, although it is not currently used. It is in good repair and is being well-maintained. It adds to the significance of the farmstead because it represents another specialty building type related to the varied agricultural activities of the farm. In this case, it is used specifically for corn storage used as animal feed.

There is a much later-constructed corn crib on the farmstead, probably erected about 1970. This utilitarian structure is typical of later twentieth century corn cribs in that it is basically a wood frame covered with wire, topped with a metal shed roof. Because of its age outside of the period of significance and the lack of architectural distinctiveness, it is a non-contributing resource of the farmstead.

Machine sheds were primarily utilitarian buildings constructed to store farm equipment. A “good” Wisconsin farmer always kept his equipment in sheds, away from the elements, when not in use. Machine sheds were usually long, low buildings with shed or gable roofs and board covered walls. A typical feature of machine sheds are their large entrances covered with sliding doors that provided easy access to equipment.⁵⁴

The three-part machine shed on this farmstead is a fine example of this utilitarian type of building and

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 5-5.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

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its construction suggests the growth and importance of farm equipment over the years. The southernmost section of the building was probably constructed earliest, perhaps around 1900 for equipment storage. As farms mechanized in the 1910s and 1920s, and more types of equipment were needed, large machine sheds were necessary. In this case, the Hildebrandts built a large addition to the original building. What is particularly interesting about this shed is that almost the entire east elevation is an entrance. Large sliding doors are attached to long tracks on both the original building and the addition.

The garage addition on the north elevation is telling, as well. It represents the era when the automobile came to the farm. Early automobile garages were often added to the outbuildings of the farm, not necessarily in close proximity to the farmhouse. In this case, the garage is attached to the machine shed, perhaps the most useful spot for this type of building in this case. However, it is interesting that the garage addition is placed here, as another machine of the farm operation.

The machine shed adds significance to the farmstead as an outbuilding that illustrates the importance of equipment and machinery to the farm. A smaller building was necessary around the turn of the twentieth century, but as mechanization swept through farms and equipment became more sophisticated, large machine sheds became necessary, and in this case, a large addition to the original shed was necessary. The automobile shed addition is also an important element of the building because it represents the coming of the automobile to the farm, a major change in rural transportation.

The windmill structure completes the farm layout. Although it has lost its rotating blades, the structure is an important component of the historic farmstead. It was built to provide a power source for drawing water to be used for both the agricultural buildings and the houses. The structure is in good condition and contributes to the full array of typical farmstead buildings and structures that exist on the Zirbel-Hildebrandt Farmstead.

Conclusion

The Zirbel-Hildebrandt Farmstead is architecturally significant at the local level because its buildings and structures exist as an architectural artifact of the historic agricultural and rural life of the area. From wheat growing to dairying and all activities in-between, the resources of this farmstead illustrate the wide variety of agricultural and family activities that took place from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century. Individual buildings, such as the Italianate-influenced Zirbel Farmhouse, the decorative fieldstone-constructed smokehouse, and the highly intact threshing/dairy barn, stand out for their architectural distinctiveness. But, it is the overall collection of this multi-generational farm's buildings and structures that makes this farmstead significant. Thirteen of the 14 resources were

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constructed between 1868 and 1929 showing the evolution of the farm from wheat to dairy farming and from a single family to an established multi-generational farmstead. Each contributing building has a high level of integrity and preservation. The current owner, a descendant of John and Wilhelmine Zirbel, along with his son, is maintaining the historic nature of the property in a way that the Zirbels would still recognize their farmhouse, the summer kitchen, the smokehouse, and the large barn. Previous generations of the Hildebrandts would be comfortable stepping into the farmstead and continuing their activities as they did so in the past. It is for this reason, that this intact farmstead is an architecturally significant landmark in rural Dodge County.

CRITERIA CONSIDERATION B

One building in this complex was moved from its original site, the Hildebrandt Summer Kitchen. It was moved from its location closer to the road to the back of the Hildebrandt Farmhouse when Highway 33 was improved in the 1930s. Because the building was moved to preserve it, and because it was moved within the farmstead, it retains its contributing status as a resource that helps us understand the components and workings of the historic farmstead.

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BOUNDARY

Beginning at a line running 40 feet south from the rear or south elevation of the threshing/dairy barn and a line running 10 feet west from the west elevation of the machine shed; then north along the line running 10 feet west from the west elevation of the machine shed, crossing Highway 33 and continuing north 56 feet west of the westernmost point of the Zirbel Farmhouse, then continuing north to the intersection of a line running 100 feet north of the north elevation of the Zirbel Farmhouse; then east along the line running 100 feet north of the north elevation of the Zirbel Farmhouse to the intersection of a line running 22 feet from the east elevation of the Hildebrandt Farmhouse; then south along the line running 22 feet from the east elevation of the Hildebrandt Farmhouse, across Highway 33 and continuing south along this line, which follows a tree line and stone wall along the east side of the farm outbuildings to the intersection with the line running 40 feet south of the threshing/dairy barn; then west along the line running 40 feet south of the threshing/dairy barn to the point of beginning.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

This boundary was drawn to follow natural boundaries of the farmstead as closely as possible and to draw straight lines that connect both the north part and the south part of the farmstead. It is meant to encompass the historic site of the farmstead while drawing out fields and pasture land that sits next to the farmstead. Specifically, the northern boundary was drawn to include a rough line of fruit trees in back of the farmhouses and to exclude the land further north that is not maintained as a lawn space. The eastern boundary was drawn to include and follow, as closely as possible, the tree line and stone fence on the south side of Highway 33, while moving north in a straight line to include the Hildebrandt Farmhouse and draw out a farm field that sits east of the farmhouses. The eastern boundary was drawn to include a deliberately planted tree line along the west side of the residences and to draw out the farm fields that sit west of this tree line and west of the machine shed south of Highway 33. The southern boundary was drawn to exclude a modern animal structure behind the threshing/dairy barn, yet include enough of the historic site around the barn.

Historically, the site of the farmstead is around three acres and the boundary encompasses this acreage.

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Zirbel-Hildebrandt Farmstead, Town of Herman, Dodge County, Wisconsin.

Photos by Carol Cartwright, November 2006.

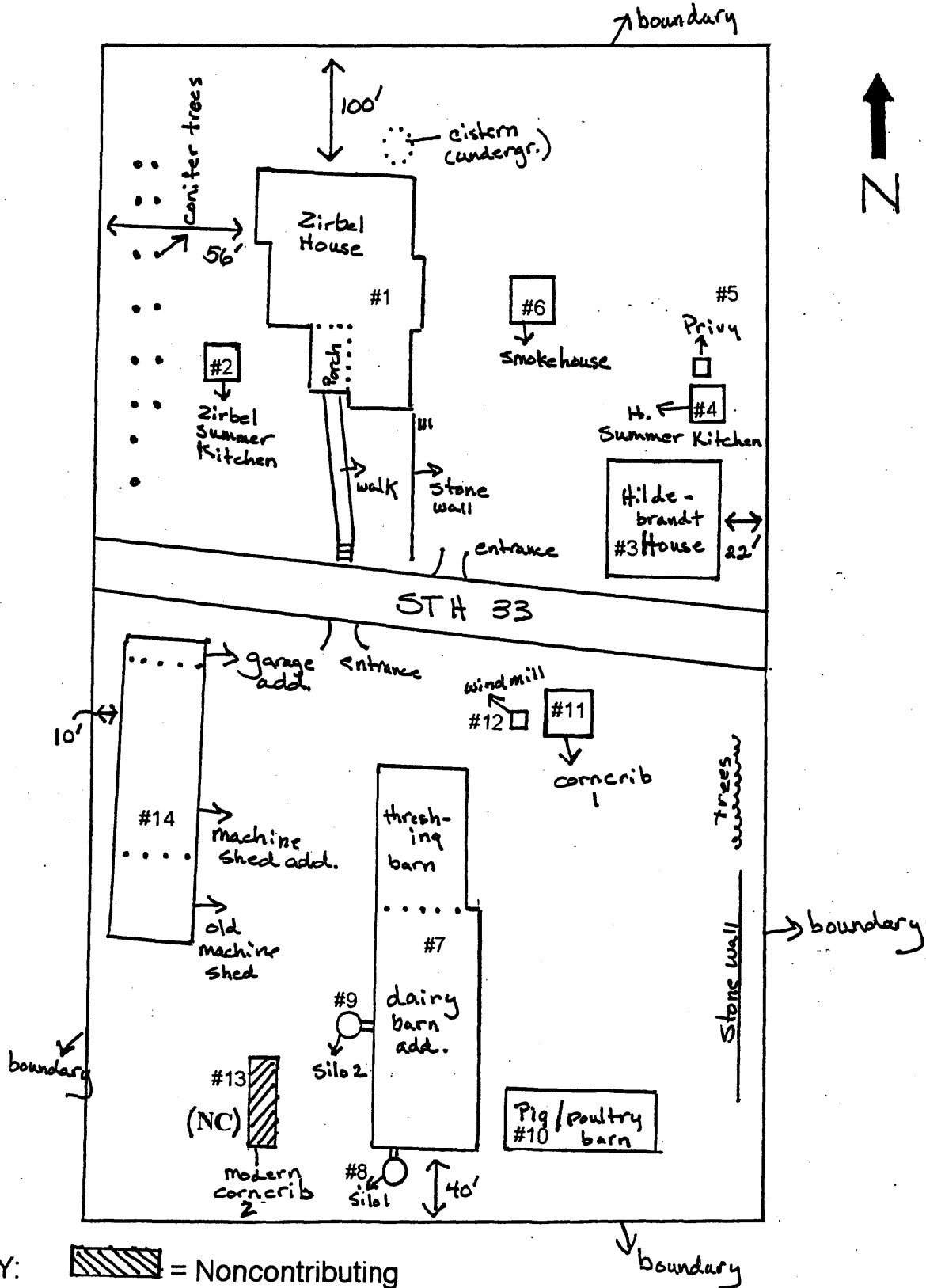
Negatives on file in the Historic Preservation Division of the Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin.

Views:

- 1 of 24: View of farmhouses from the southeast.
- 2 of 24: Zirbel house, south elevation, view from the south.
- 3 of 24: Zirbel house, west elevation, view from the southwest.
- 4 of 24: Zirbel house, east elevation, view from the northeast.
- 5 of 24: Zirbel house, north elevation, view from the north.
- 6 of 24: Zirbel house, interior, first floor, kitchen, view of built-in cabinet.
- 7 of 24: Zirbel house, interior, first floor, living room looking at entrances to back rooms.
- 8 of 24: Zirbel house, interior, first floor, view from parlor through living room to kitchen.
- 9 of 24: Zirbel house, interior, second floor, view of south ell bedrooms.
- 10 of 24: Zirbel house, interior, second floor, view from large bedroom toward south ell bedrooms.
- 11 of 24: Zirbel house, interior, second floor, view from large bedroom toward north ell storage room.
- 12 of 24: Zirbel Summer Kitchen, south and west elevations, view from the southwest.
- 13 of 24: Smokehouse, west and south elevations, view from the southwest.
- 14 of 24: Hildebrandt house, view of west and south elevations from the west.
- 15 of 24: Hildebrandt house, interior, first floor, built-in cabinet in kitchen.
- 16 of 24: Hildebrandt house, interior, first floor, staircase to second floor.
- 17 of 24: Hildebrandt house, interior, first floor, dining room.
- 18 of 24: Hildebrandt house, interior, second floor, southwest bedroom.
- 19 of 24: Hildebrandt house, interior, second floor, from northwest bedroom looking into northeast Bedroom.
- 20 of 24: Hildebrandt Summer Kitchen and Privy, from the southwest.
- 21 of 24: Site view of threshing/dairy barn, windmill, corn crib 1 and pig/poultry barn, view from the Northeast.
- 22 of 24: North and west elevations of threshing/dairy barn and silos, view from the northwest.
- 23 of 24: South elevation of pig/poultry barn (small animal building), view from the south.
- 24 of 24: East and north elevations of machine shed, view from the northeast.

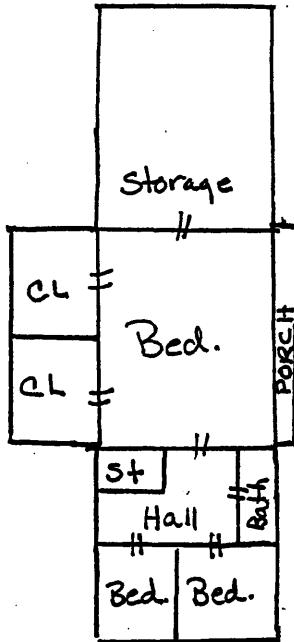
SITE MAP
ZIRBEL-HILDEBRANDT FARMSTEAD
 Town of Herman, Dodge County, Wisconsin

NOT TO SCALE



FLOOR PLANS
ZIRBEL-HILDEBRANDT FARMSTEAD
 Town of Herman, Dodge County, Wisconsin

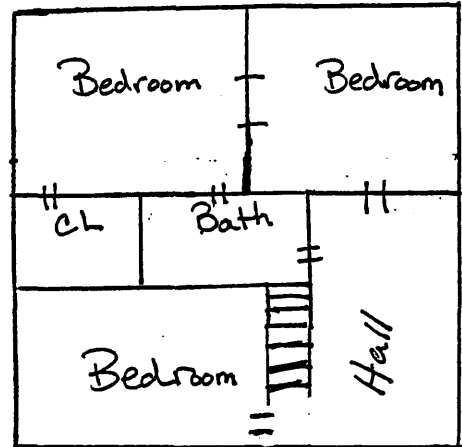
Zirbel House



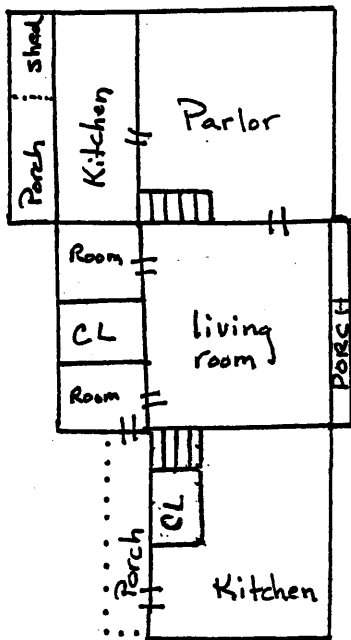
Second Floor

NOT TO SCALE

Hildebrandt House

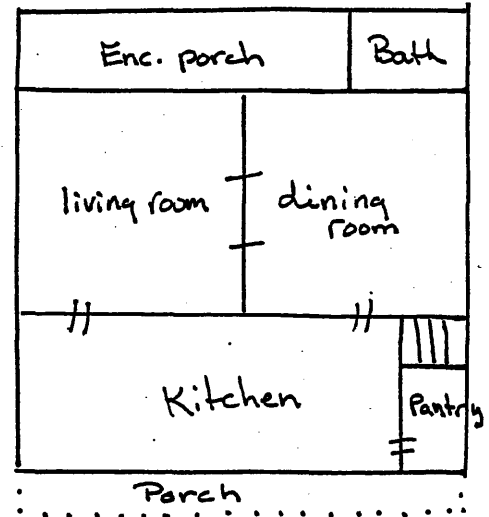


Second Floor



First Floor

North Ell



First Floor

South Ell