

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

NATIONAL
REGISTER

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This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name SYLVANUS JOHNSON HOUSE
other names/site number Pinehurst

2. Location

street & number 2155 Prairie du Chien Road not for publication
city, town Iowa City vicinity
state Iowa code TA county Johnson code 103 zip code 52240

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u> </u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u> </u>	<u> </u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u> </u>	<u> </u> objects
		<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

David L. ... 10/23/90
Signature of certifying official Date
State Historical Society of Iowa

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:)

Entered in the
National Register

Alvina Byers 12/6/90

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/single dwelling

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/single dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Second Empire/Mansard

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick
walls Brick/Wood Shingles
roof Wood/Shingles
other _____

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

"Built of brick from Johnson's kiln on the site, the house is two stories high and is square in shape with an added kitchen ell. The east facade is formally arranged with two windows flanking the central doorway on either side on the first floor. Across the entire front of the house and extending around onto the south or left side is a veranda which suggests the French galerie form. Seven slender square pillars support the porch roof, and each has two splayed brackets and a small pendant drop which combine to form its capital. The slanting mansard roof is composed of bands of alternating rectangular and fish-scale shingles. The three dormer windows on the facade have simple triangular pediments which project strongly from the roof, and each has a curved swelling at the top and bottom of the framing...The top of the roof is not flat as in other Iowa City houses of the Franco-American style...but rises in the center, giving the effect of a low flattened gable...The cornice between the first and second floor has a wide overhang under which are simple, closely spaced brackets. The mouldings are rounded. The cornice top of the mansard also projects and uses simple mouldings.

The entrance to the house from the veranda is set within a rectangular frame with three vertical lights on either side and three horizontal lights above the door. The framing is restrained and classical in inspiration.

The first-floor windows are simply framed and have sills of dressed stone but have no lintels. The sash windows have one large pane per sash. The windows are paired in the dormers and are divided by a vertical mullion. Each sash has four panes."¹

¹Nineteenth Century Home Architecture of Iowa City, Margaret N. Keyes. University of Iowa Press, C1966, Third printing, 1971, pp. 85-86.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1856-1857

Significant Dates

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Sylvanus Johnson

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Sylvanus Johnson House is important not only because it showcased the product of Iowa City's leading brick manufacturer, but because it was probably the first house in the Iowa City area constructed with a mansard roof and helped popularize locally what eventually came to be called, "THE SECOND EMPIRE STYLE". Although Johnson may have been influenced by the first stirrings of interest in a style which would not become truly popular until after the Civil War, the greatest impacts on his design decision were probably the 18th century double-hipped roof houses of his native Connecticut. In fact, the floor plan of this house is very similar to Connecticut houses of this period, and given the strong indications of regional conservatism, one might conclude that Johnson was most influenced by native Connecticut building forms and marginally influenced by high-style design trends.

Born in 1813 in Connecticut, Sylvanus Johnson worked in his father's brickyard where he learned the trade that later became his livelihood. Following his migration to Iowa in 1837 from New Haven, Connecticut, he developed a thriving business as the first brickmaker in Iowa City. In that capacity he provided bricks for many of the early structures of the vicinity, including the original Iowa Capitol. Sylvanus Johnson was hard working and dedicated in his efforts for his

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

Ahern, Elinor; Seventh Annual House Tour at Iowa City Today: Cedar Rapids Gazette; Sunday, May 22, 1966; p. 20C.
Aurner, Charles Ray; Leading Events in Johnson County, Iowa History; 1912; p. 38.
Bywater, Mrs. Ray and January, Mrs. Lewis; "67 Student Trip Benefits from Iowa City House Tour"; Iowa U.N.A. Forum; June-July 1966; p.8.
Harrison, Mrs. Bruce; "111-Year Old Home Has Original Stairway and Wood-work", Iowa City Press-Citizen, Friday, May 13, 1966. p. 5.
History of Johnson County, Iowa; Iowa City, Iowa; 1883; p. 853.
Keyes, Margaret N.; Nineteenth Century Home Architecture of Iowa City; p. 85.
Kent, James; "The House That Johnson Built"; SUI Staff Magazine; November, 1952; p. 2.
The Iowan, "The Lang House ; Description of House with Pictures"; Fall Issue, 1967; p. 35.
Webber, Irving; Iowa City Homes; 1976; pp. 198-199. See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of property Less than one

UTM References

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Zone Easting Northing

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Zone Easting Northing

C

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D

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

300' S or the NW corner of the SW 1/4 of the NE 1/4 of the SE 1/4 of Sec 34, Twp 80 R06, East Lucas Township

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

This nomination includes only the historic house.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title M. N. Viner, Librarian
organization Knoxville Public Library date 5-5-90
street & number 213 E. Montgomery St. telephone 515-842-5512
city or town Knoxville, state Iowa zip code 50138

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The Sylvanus Johnson House or Pinehurst is a two-story residence measuring approximately forty feet by forty feet with a full basement and attached summer kitchen. The ground floor is of brick masonry construction and the upper floor is enclosed within a mansard roof. The mansard is of unique construction, having a shallow gable top with ridge running east-west. An open piazza runs across the east elevation and along the east end of the south elevation. The house remains basically unaltered since its 1856-57 construction. Later alterations are noted in the following description.

Originally developed as a farmhouse, the house is now located north of the Iowa City limits at 2155 Prairie de Chien Road north of its intersection with Linder Road. Retaining much of its historic setting, the house is surrounded by meadows and woods. Encroaching residential development has approached to within sight from the north edge of the property. None of the original outbuildings associated with the house survive. A large barn constructed ca. 1915* is approximately one hundred feet northwest of the house. A dirt and gravel drive runs north of the house to the barn where it circles on itself. The yard retains much of its historic character, being planted to grass with numerous deciduous and coniferous trees. There are two venerable white pine trees east of the house said to have been planted from slips brought by Johnson from his native Connecticut. Given the fact that he migrated in 1839 and constructed the house in 1856, it is not likely that the pines were directly brought from Connecticut.

The east (front) elevation is quite symmetrical with the exception of an additional bay to the south for the piazza as it turns the corner. The High Victorian Italianate style piazza is composed of six bays flanked by sawn wooden posts with plinths and simple capitals. Rising above the capitals between the posts are semi-circular brackets supporting flat beams. Tall sawn brackets rise from the post capitals perpendicular to the piazza face to support molded eaves. The original wooden floor has been replaced with a poured concrete floor. The original wooden porch ceiling survives, however. The hipped piazza roof is covered with standing seam metal and rises to a level just below the fascia of the main roof cornice. The main roof cornice is supported by sawn wooden brackets evenly spaced on all sides. The molded cornice contains a built-in sheet metal gutter draining to downspouts at the rear (west) elevation. The mansard roof is covered with alternating bands of octagonal and square wooden shingles (probably installed ca. 1895) painted white, with flat corner boards. The upper roof rises in a low gable with an unusually deep molded cornice. The ground level brick walls, originally unpainted, bear evidence of their later coats of white paint, which were removed with a rotary grinder in 1968. Fortunately Mr. Johnson did not skimp on the quality of the brick, and it remains in surprisingly good condition despite its ill treatment. At the time the paint was ground away, the joints were repainted with

* this barn is not included within the boundaries of this nomination.

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gray Portland cement. Centered in the ground floor is the main doorway, consisting of a six-panel door with ornate cast brass (ca. 1895) door bell. Flanking the door are three-light sidelights above single wooden panels. Above the door and sidelights and door is a three-light transom. The glazing of the interior sash is stenciled with translucent white paint in an intricate pattern. On each side of the doorway are regularly spaced one-over-one double-hung (originally six-over-six double-hung windows. Their brick masonry openings contain cut limestone sills and lintels and are flanked by pairs of inoperable louvered shutters added after 1961 and painted black. At the second floor level three wide shallow-gabled dormers are regularly spaced. Each contains a pair of narrow four-over-four double-hung sash beneath the molded wooden dormer eaves. Centered in the shallow gable end above the central dormer is a small rectangular window opening now containing a louvered vent opening.

The south elevation is similar to the east elevation. The piazza, however, extends only three bays from the southeast corner before it terminates. A raw aluminum-framed glazed solarium added ca. 1961 is enclosed with the piazza. At each end of the ground level are single door openings. The east door has been removed to provide direct access from the house to the solarium. The west door has also been removed and infilled with clapboard siding and a small window. Between the doors are two window openings similar to those of the east elevation. The upper level contains three regularly-spaced dormers with low gable rooflets. Each dormer contains a six-over-six double-hung wooden sash. The construction of the mansard matches that of the east elevation with the exception of the upper cornice which is horizontal, rather than rising in a low gable. Consequently, there is no attic window opening above the dormers.

The north elevation is similar to the south elevation is construction, but without a piazza. The ground elevation contains two window openings near the west end. The western window opening has had its one-over-one double-hung sash replaced ca. 1961 with a short one-over-one double-hung sash in the upper portion above clapboard siding infill. The upper level has two dormers matching those of the south elevation, symmetrically placed near the center of the elevation.

The west elevation bears closest similarity to the east elevation. It has no piazza, however, and is partially obscured at its north end by the summer kitchen addition. Near the center of the elevation is a set of three windows with a wide one-over-one double-hung window sash flanked by a pair of narrower sash. The lower cornice lacks any brackets. The upper level contains a pair of narrow dormers similar to those of the north elevation.

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The upper roof is covered with standing seam sheet metal roofing. Near the west end of the ridge rises a massive brick chimney painted white. A modern television antenna is located in the center of the roof near a roof hatch. Lightning rods once located at each corner and at each end of the ridge have been removed.

The summer kitchen is a low, one-story structure attached to the north end of the west elevation. Covered with vertical board-and-batten siding painted white, it has single doorways at the east end of the south and north elevations. Small casement windows were added ca. 1961 near the west end of the south elevation and in the center of the west elevation. A large picture window is located near the west end of the north elevation. The hip roof slopes up to the underside of the main house eaves and is covered with standing seam metal roofing. A brick chimney once located at the center of the north elevation has since been removed.

The interior of the house retains much of its original appearance. The plan remains virtually unaltered. Rather than a standard center hall plan of the period, the plan is an older New England type with an entrance stair hall. Ceiling heights are particularly generous, being almost ten feet on the ground floor, nine feet on the upper floor, and eight feet in the basement. Typical interior finishes include plaster walls and ceilings without ornamental plaster-work. All doors have four panels each, with cast iron hinges and rim locks having porcelain knobs. Baseboards are high with molded tops. Door casings, although plain, have molded crowns. Window casings are similar to the door casings. All woodwork unless otherwise noted is grained with major sections imitating oak and moldings imitating black walnut.

The stair hall, reached from the front doorway of the piazza, contains an L-shaped, winding, open stair of native black walnut construction. The stair is enclosed below with a small closet having a typical four-panel door and casing. On each side of the stair hall single doorways open to the front parlor on the south and the dining room on the north. West of the stair hall is a typical doorway to the library.

The front parlor in the southeast corner of the ground floor has a pair of windows in its east wall and a window and doorway in its south wall. The doorway, now missing its door, opens to the solarium discussed with the south piazza above. To the west there is a typical doorway to the rear parlor in the southwest corner. Single doorways at each end of the west wall open into a small closet on the north and a small half bath (originally a small foyer) on the south. To the north a single doorway gives access to the library.

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The dining room, north of the stair hall, has a pair of windows on its east wall, no openings on its north wall, and single doorways at each end of its west wall opening into a large pantry. The pantry is finished with vertical double-beaded tongue- and-groove pine wainscot rising to approximately six feet where it meets a plate rail. On its north wall is a single window. On its south wall is a doorway to the library, and on its west wall is a doorway to the kitchen.

The library was modernized in 1961 and contains typical knotty pine woodwork and its fireplace entirely rebuilt in knotty pine. False beams were installed on the ceiling to complete the effect of rustic pioneer charm. Doorways from the stair hall, the rear parlor, and the pantry open from the east, south, and north respectively. The west wall contains the set of three windows described with the west elevation above.

The summer kitchen interior dates from 1961 when it was converted into a family dining room. Its walls and openings have been paneled in knotty pine as has the ceiling and the adjacent kitchen. The cabinets are knotty pine and there are modern appliances built in and an extra sink in the summer kitchen (west) end. An enclosed straight-run stair in the southeast corner of the summer kitchen leads to the basement.

The upper floor contains four bedrooms - one in the northeast, southeast, southwest corners and one located in the center of the west elevation. A bathroom was added in 1956 in the northwest corner. A second bathroom was also added in 1956 in the southwest bedroom. Typical woodwork is painted white, rather than grained. Flooring is wide knotty pine boards. A stair near the center of the north elevation leads up to a low, unfinished attic from which it continues up to a roof hatch described above. The basement is unfinished.

The heating system was upgraded from wood-burning stoves ca. 1910 to an oil-fired hot-water system. The hot-water system now has a natural gas-fired boiler. The house was rewired ca. 1956 and all switches and receptacles have plastic switch and cover plates typical of that period. There is no artificial cooling system.

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community, devoting himself to numerous causes. He served on the city council, was a justice of the peace, and was active in the Democratic Party, having served as vice-president of the Democratic National Convention at Louisville, Kentucky in 1872. An earnest advocate of education, he served on the school board and was a trustee of the Mechanics' Institute, the only one perhaps who attended the first and last meetings of the board. He was a liberal donor to the projected Iowa City Female Collegiate Institute and suffered large loss in its collapse. An enthusiastic advocate of railways, he contributed liberally to the construction of the proposed Davenport and Iowa City Railway and was one of its first trustees. He was a pillar of the Baptist Church in Iowa City. There was a broad liberality in his religious opinions, and it is said of him that he contributed generously to the erection of every church built in Iowa City, even after he had moved to his farm. He was said to have had an excellent voice, performed on the bass viol, and was a member of the orchestra at the laying of the corner stone of the Old Capitol on July 4, 1840.

The land on which the house was built, part of 80 acres of wild timber, was deeded by the United States Government in 1843 to William Corcoran. Corcoran sold it to Ferdinand and Mary Haberstroh in June of the same year, and they held it for twelve years until Sylvanus and Emily Johnson purchased it in 1854. In time he owned 600 acres of excellent farmland, which also provided timber for firing his brick kilns. Construction of the house commenced in 1856 and was completed in 1857. It is evident that he devoted a considerable amount of his own labor on the house as seen in the twelve-inch thick exterior brick walls.

The design of his house owes much to the Connecticut heritage of Mr. Johnson. The floor plans can be traced to early Colonial plan types of Connecticut with relatively small stair halls entered from the front door. Fashionable practice of the period had adopted the later Georgian center-hall plans, but Johnson maintained the earlier plan form either from innate conservatism or practicality or a combination thereof.

The roof form is quite striking for its period. Two wellsprings of influence can be traced in the use of a Mansard roof. The first was the survival of early Connecticut double-hipped roof houses of the eighteenth century which were favored for their efficient use of space beneath the roof. The second was the revival in France during the Second Empire, beginning in 1848, of the seventeenth century Mansard roof. The use of the French roof, as it was known, was not common prior to the War Between the States, but it became extremely popular in the two decades following the Civil War. In fact, the 1857 Harrison House in Keokuk, Iowa, also called New York Life Building,

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was the only other Iowa House known to have been built in this period with a Mansard roof. Given the strong indications of regional conservatism, it appears that Johnson was probably most influenced by native Connecticut building forms with a pragmatic base and marginally influenced by high-style design trends.

In either case, his use of a low gable roof atop the mansard roof is unique and without precedent either in New England or in the Second Empire Style. It appears he bore a strong concern, probably based on experience, with the problems associated with flat, or relatively flat, roofs. He chose the simple roof form to construct which would shed moisture quickly and efficiently. A hip roof would have worked equally well and looked better, but it would have been more difficult to construct. Hence, he used a clearly pragmatic solution to meet the need.

Following the Civil War, Johnson's daughter remodelled the house, adding the summer kitchen. She may have been responsible for the High Victorian Italianate style piazza as well. The cut shingles of the Mansard date to her occupancy, as well as the set of three windows in the library. She also installed hardwood flooring over the original pine board flooring of the library, front parlor, and dining room.

The house remained in the Johnson family until 1914, when it was sold to Charles M. and Edward H. Rittenmayer. They sold it in 1922 to Jessie L. Sponey, who held it until 1941 when it was purchased by Dr. Joseph H. and Sarah Bodine. Professor Bodine was responsible for the remodelling of the library in 1942. Sarah Bodine died in 1950, and on the death of Dr. Bodine in 1954, the house passed to Eunice Bodine, his second wife. She sold it in 1958 to James H. and Stella Clancy.

The house was purchased with fifteen acres of land in 1961 by Dr. Allen N. Lang, who remodelled the kitchen and summer kitchen. They retained ownership until 1985 when the house was sold to Dr. Thomas F. Viner, who currently resides in the house with his wife, Cherie, and their four children. Dr. Lang retained the meadow land south and north of the house, Viners own the two acres with the house and barn, and Linda Samuelson owns the large wooded ravine behind the house to the west and farmland adjoining it.

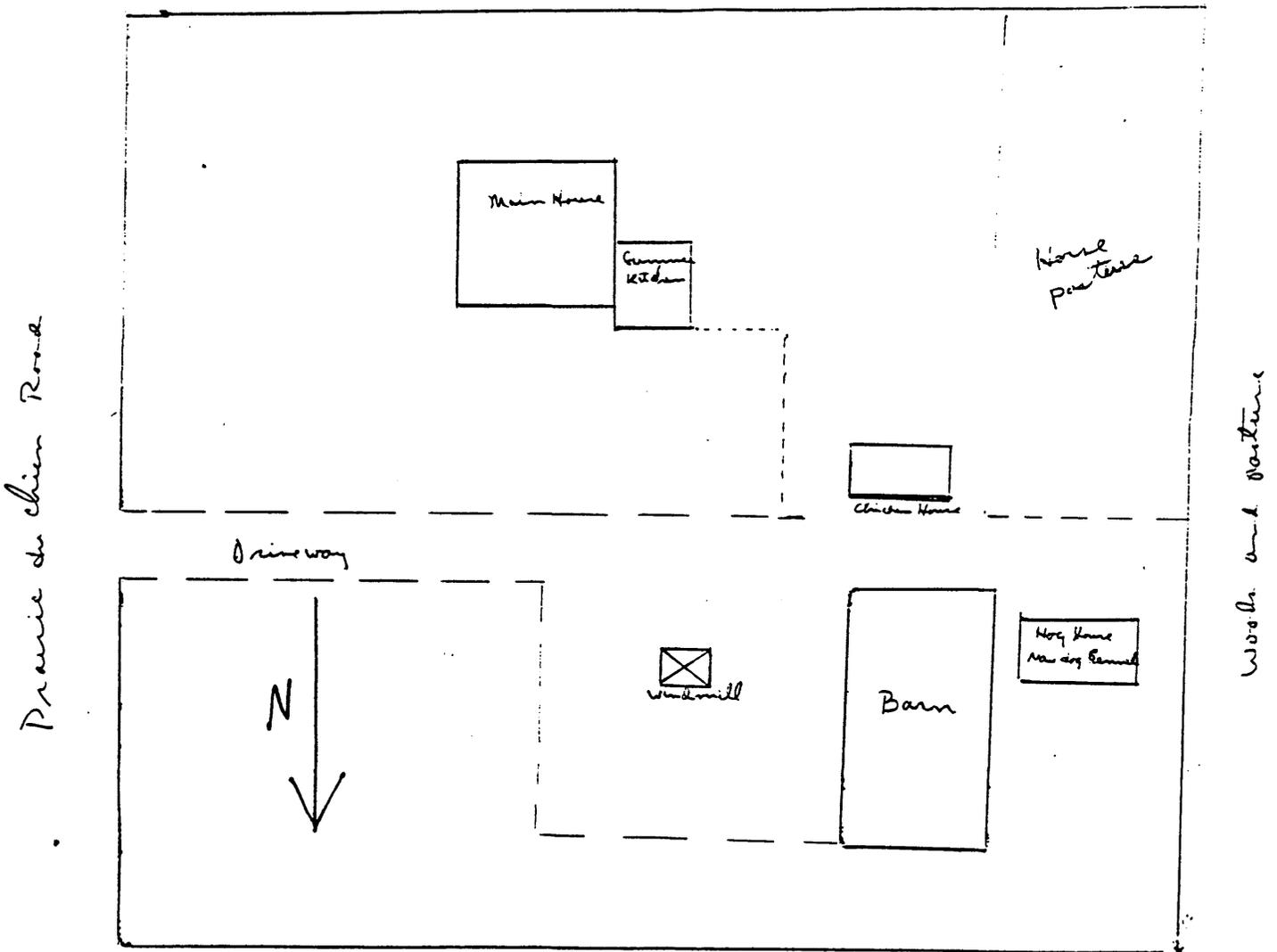
The brick kilns once used to make the brick for the house are no longer visible but must have been somewhere in the original 800 acres owned by Sylvanus Johnson.

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↑ 2 1/2 acre pasture owned by Dr. A. Lang



↓ Pasture owned by Dr. A. Lang