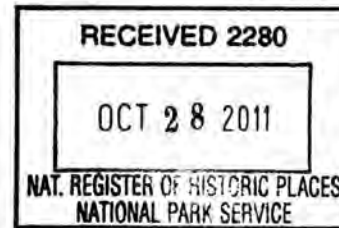


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form



886

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

1. Name of Property

historic name Menter Farmstead

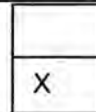
other names/site number DU00-062

2. Location

street & number 1270 North Fork Road

city or town Big Springs

state Nebraska code NE county Deuel code 049 zip code 69122



not for publication
vicinity

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this x 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 x meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national statewide x local

Michael J. ...
Signature of certifying official/Title

SHPS

25 Oct. 2011
Date

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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

Signature of commenting official

Date

Title

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

☒ entered in the National Register

determined eligible for the National Register

determined not eligible for the National Register

removed from the National Register

other (explain):

Edson H. Beall
Signature of the Keeper

12.7.11
Date of Action

Menter Farmstead
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5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Private
<input type="checkbox"/>	public – Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public – State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public – Federal

Category of Property
(Check only **one** box.)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
5	1	buildings
0	0	sites
3	0	structures
0	0	objects
8	1	Total

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

NA

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

AGRICULTURE: Storage
AGRICULTURE: Animal Facility
AGRICULTURE: Agricultural Outbuilding
DOMESTIC: Single Dwelling

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC: Single Dwelling
NOT IN USE
WORK IN PROGRESS

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

NO STYLE
OTHER: Midwest Three Portal Barn
OTHER: Hipped-Roofed Granary
OTHER: Concrete Block Silo

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Poured Concrete, Concrete
foundation: Footings
walls: Concrete Block, Frame

roof: Wood Shingle, Standing Seam Metal
other:

Menter Farmstead

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Narrative Description

Summary Paragraph

The Menter Farmstead was constructed between 1919 and 1928 by the John H. Menter family.ⁱ It is located approximately 1½ miles northwest of Big Springs, Nebraska (pop. 371) in southeastern Deuel County (pop. 1,941). Big Springs is approximately 395 miles west of Lincoln, the capital of Nebraska, and 25 miles east of Chappell, the seat of Deuel County. The Menter Farm, which once included all of Section 23-R13N-T42W, was situated on the edge of the South Platte River's northern table at an elevation of 3,590 feet. To the north is the relatively flat tableland between the South and North Platte Rivers, which meet approximately 70 miles to the east of Big Springs. The topography to the south, in contrast, quickly descends almost 200 feet on its way to the South Platte River two miles away. More generally, Deuel County is in the southern portion of the Nebraska Panhandle in an area considered part of the Western High Plains eco-region. Outside of streambeds, the naturally occurring vegetation is limited to prairie grasses and farmsteads, with their abundant trees, are easy to identify at a distance. Winter wheat is the most dominant crop throughout this portion of Nebraska.ⁱⁱ

The Menters built their 4.5 acre farmstead in the very southeastern corner of the northwest quarter section of the 640-acre farm. The farmstead is located along North Fork Road, an unpaved cut-off between US 30 to the north and US 138 to the west. Because it is located on a curve, two short unpaved roads (from the north and east) provide access to the farmstead's interior drive. This drive bisects the farmstead with the barn, silo, granary, pump house and cistern to the south and the farmhouse, machine shed, outhouse and storage shed to the north. Architecturally, the farmstead's most outstanding characteristic is the concrete block used in the construction of the barn, silo, machine shed, outhouse, storage shed and another building now in ruins. These concrete blocks were made onsite with sand from the nearby South Platte River with a Sears and Roebuck Co. "block making outfit." The granary, pump house and cistern, while not constructed with concrete block, still retain good historic integrity and contribute heavily to an understanding of the Menter Farmstead. This brings the total of contributing resources to eight (5 buildings and 3 structures). In addition, there are two landscape features that contribute to the overall integrity of the landscape: the aforementioned concrete block ruins and historic vegetation. Only the farmhouse, which has been altered significantly, is considered non-contributing.

Narrative Description

Barn

The barn is the Menter Farmstead's primary historic building. It is an approximately 100' x 100' building constructed in about 1919 with concrete block on its lower portion and dimensional lumber above. Exterior walls sit on a poured concrete foundation wall that extends about 1½ feet above grade. Because the mixture of river sand and Portland cement used was extremely soft, much of the original foundation wall has deteriorated. It is gradually being replaced by the current owners, and today only the west foundation wall is original. The floor of the barn is dirt except under a narrow central aisle, which is poured concrete. Interior structural posts sit on concrete footings. On all four sides, the lower walls of the barn are constructed with 8" x 8" x 16" hollow concrete blocks that are smooth on the interior and "rock-faced" on the exterior.ⁱⁱⁱ Corner blocks have rock-faced exterior ends. The upper walls of the barn are clad in horizontal simple drop siding. A complex roof shape with a gabled monitor that terminates in a "Dutch hip" completes the overall structural form of the barn. The roof has overhanging eaves with exposed rafter tails and is still covered in original wood shingles.

With its gable-end façade and entrance configuration, this barn is best classified as a variation of the Midwest Three Portal Barn.^{iv} The north-facing façade has two large wagon entrances with original sliding doors that hang from steel bars. Both doors are made with wide vertical boards backed by horizontal bracing. A much smaller walk-in entrance is located off-center to the east. Its sliding door, which is also made from flush vertical boards, hangs from the same bar as the east

ⁱIt is difficult to establish an exact construction date for any of the buildings on the Menter Farmstead. The current property owners claim the barn was built in 1923, but that seems rather late considering the Menter family was living there with numerous possessions in 1919. It seems likely the barn was constructed in 1919 (local sources say the family lived in the barn as the house was built) and the other buildings—except the granary—followed in quick succession. A large jump in the property's assessed value from \$1,280 in 1919 to \$14,450 in 1921 also indicates a significant amount of construction in 1919, 1920 and 1921.

ⁱⁱEcoregions of Nebraska and Kansas, 2001 (color poster with map); *Encyclopedia of the Great Plains*, 30.

ⁱⁱⁱThis particular rough stone finish is described as "rock face" in the 1917 Sears, Roebuck & Co. Catalog advertisement of the "Wizard Block Making Outfit." This machine, or a very similar model, was used at the Menter Farmstead. See Section 8 for further discussion.

^{iv}Noble, Allen G. and Richard K. Cleek. *The Old Barn Book*, 75.

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wagon door. This smaller entrance allows access to the narrow walking aisle that bisects the eastern half of the barn. All door openings are above grade, beginning at the top of the foundation wall, and were originally reached by short concrete ramps. Only the ramp to the eastern wagon entrance is still extant, but the others will be reconstructed after the foundation project is complete. Between the concrete block and the gable end of the monitor roof are two small square openings for pitching out hay and/or grains. The east opening is under the shed roof of the monitor and has a door with side hinges. The western opening is immediately above the concrete wall and under the gable portion of the façade. Its door is missing. A peaked hay hood protects the original hay hook and pulley system and the large hay door. The hay door, which is also clad in drop siding, falls down and out on five large hinges.

The east and west sides of the barn are very similar. Two rectangular window openings containing wood sashes with two horizontally-arranged lights are located in the lower concrete block walls. Two square, four-light barn windows are found above these in the "clearstory" of the monitor roof. On the west side of the barn, the clearstory windows have been removed and the openings are currently covered with paneling. Centered on the east wall is a single walk-in opening with its original vertical board door. The west wall contains no entrances.

The monitor roof terminates in a gable end about 30' feet from the back (south side) of the barn. From here the lower shed portions of the monitor transition into a hip-shaped roof that extends to the barn's rear wall. This configuration is sometimes referred to as a "Dutch hip" or "gabled." A single window opening with a missing sash is centered in the gable end. The south wall has the same entrance configuration as the façade. At the time of this nomination, however, the west side of the rear wall is dismantled so that the deteriorating poured concrete foundation wall can be replaced. Finally, there is a gable-roofed canopy and concrete walk connecting the aisle of the barn and the silo located about 10' to the south.

Interior

The barn contains two significant features: the massive hay loft and the central aisle on the ground level. The hayloft includes most of the space enclosed by the frame portion of the barn. Its wood floor and floor joists rest on the central aisle and a system of heavy posts and beams. Interior walls are found at the break in the roof, partitioning off the shed/hipped roof sections into separate storage spaces. The original hay hook and pulley system is still intact just inside the hay door. The concrete-paved central aisle runs between the north and south walk-in entrances, completely bisecting the ground level of the barn. A few wood stalls built upon concrete foundations still flank the aisle. Each has a wood gate that swings on hinges, and at least one retains its built-in feed trough. Particularly noteworthy are two historic Burma-Shave signboards that have been incorporated into the central aisle. A red and white sign was turned on its side and made into a stall door, while a yellow and blue sign was used in one the stall walls. **Contributing Building**

Silo

The silo was likely constructed along with the Menter Barn in about 1919 and was built with the same hollow, rock-faced concrete block. It is approximately 25' tall with a 12' foot diameter and sits on a poured concrete foundation. The unusual gambrel-conical roof is framed with timber and covered with historic metal sheeting. While the framing is still intact, the metal sheeting is deteriorating. Facing the barn are five square openings used to pitch out silage. A deteriorating wood chute protected these openings, guided silage downward and also served as a ladder. **Contributing Structure**

Granary

Built after the initial wave of concrete block construction at the Menter Farmstead, the c. 1928 granary is an approximately 80' x 46' frame structure. It was designed around an A. F. Meyer Manufacturing Co. interior cup elevator, which is still intact. The central portion of the granary has a gable-roofed elevator house centered atop a pyramidal-hipped roof, both of which are covered with their original wood shingles. The elevator house has widow openings on its north and south eave sides (one of which contains an original 4-over-4 light sash) and built-out conveyor housings on its gable ends. It is covered in older corrugated metal siding. Similar to the barn, the granary also has shed-roof extensions on each side that wrap around the back. These are covered with a combination of recent and historic standing seam metal. North and south walls sit on low concrete foundation walls and are clad in older corrugated metal siding. Side walls on the east and west are currently being reconstructed with new concrete footings, structural posts and plate beams.

The granary, like the barn, has a three portal arrangement on its north and south façades, except here all of the openings were designed for trucks and other large-scale machinery. On the north façade, only a portion of the original door system is extant, but it appears all the openings were once covered by vertical board sliding doors. Currently only the tracking above the central entrance and half of its door are in place. The rear (south) façade has two original doors: double siding

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doors clad in corrugated metal siding cover the east entrance and the central entrance has double swinging doors made with vertical boards backed by diagonal bracing. Only the west entrance has been significantly altered with the installment of a modern fiberglass overhead garage door. Short dirt and concrete ramps still lead up all entrances.

Interior

The concrete-paved central drive runs between two solidly-constructed lumber cribs used for grain storage, with a third crib above the drive. Side aisles and the rear of the granary are open and were probably used for the storage or farm machinery. The A. F. Meyer Manufacturing Co. "Cup Elevator" is centered in the granary. Double wood doors in the floor of the central drive open so that grain can be dumped from a truck. The weight of the grain activates the cup elevator, which transport grain up one side into a hopper and returns down the other side on a circuit. The hopper, which is stamped with "MFG BY MEYER MFG CO. MORTON, ILL. PATENTED 7-21-1908" on one side, can be adjusted to distribute grain into the desired crib. The elevator is powered by electricity and conveyed by a system of chains and pulleys. Small openings above the central drive allow for the easy loading of grain. **Contributing Structure**

Pump House

Strategically located in the middle of the Menter Farmstead, this approximately 4' x 6' frame building sits on a concrete pad foundation and has an asphalt-shingled gable roof with exposed rafter tails. It is clad in clapboard siding. The east-facing façade contains a single walk-in entrance with its original vertical board door. Each gable end (north and south side) contains a single, centered one light window with a wood sash. The interior of the pump house has a concrete floor and a rectangular poured concrete tank along its back wall. Two later appendages are attached to the pump house: a low, poured concrete tank on the south end and a small, gable-roofed addition—most of which is below grade—on the south side of the façade. The gable roof is covered with asphalt shingles and has an access hatch on its southern slope. The date of construction for the pump house is unknown, but the age of its materials and its essential function to farmstead operations indicate that it was built during the period of significance. **Contributing Building**

Cistern

This is a long, poured concrete structure used to store water at the Menter Farmstead. It is located immediately behind (or west of) the pump house. Most of the cistern is underground and only its convex concrete roof is visible. Centered on the roof is a square concrete access hatch. A pipe runs between the pump house and the cistern, indicating that ground water was pumped up and then stored for later use. No clear date of construction exists for the cistern, but its materials and design indicate it was constructed during the period of significance. **Contributing Structure**

Machine / Implement Shed

This is a 76' x 20' building constructed with the same rock-faced concrete block used for the barn, silo, outhouse and shed. Its longer section (approximately 52') has a frame gable roof covered with older corrugated metal siding. The roof has boxed eaves and the gable ends and soffit are clad in flush vertical siding. A square poured concrete chimney extends through the north slope of the roof near the building's west end. The chimney indicates that this area was a workshop where heat would have been welcome or that it contained a forge for blacksmith work. The east end of the building is taller, with a steeper pitched roof. Like the barn and granary, the roof shape used here is a gable that transitions into a hipped roof at its eastern end. This roof is also clad in older corrugated metal siding. Modern concrete has been used to patch the northeast corner of the building where the original rock-faced block had apparently deteriorated.

The south-facing façade of the machine shed has been altered over the years. The taller east end is nearest to the house and is currently used as a garage with two modern, metal overhead doors and a single entrance to the west. The low and long western section of the façade contains (from east to west): a modern overhead garage door, a ribbon of three mid-century raised windows, a walk-in entrance and two more overhead garage doors. Much of this area was open originally and in-filled after the period of significance. Concrete block posts, however, still frame the walk-in entrance. The rear (north) side of the building is largely solid concrete block except for a raised open area (now covered with vertical siding) that runs between the seam of the building sections and about 15' from the building's west end. A single boxed window opening, which is now currently covered with plywood, is located west of the open area. Two larger openings, also covered with plywood, are located on the west side.

The machine shed has lost historic integrity through alterations to its façade, but as one of several c. 1920 concrete block buildings, it still contributes heavily to the architectural and associational value of the farmstead. **Contributing Building**

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Outhouse

Located off the northwest corner of the Menter farmhouse, the outhouse is a 6' x 6' building constructed with rock-faced concrete block in about 1920. It has a minimal concrete foundation wall and a pyramidal hipped roof with overhanging eaves and exposed rafter tails. The roof has recently been covered with standing seam metal. The south façade contains the entrance, which retains its original vertical board door. Wide wood planks were used for the floor and for the three-hole boxed toilet seat that extends across the back of the building. **Contributing Building**

Storage Shed

This 5'x7' building is located immediately off the southwest corner of the Menter farmhouse and may have been used for food or milk storage. Like many of the buildings on the Menter farmstead, it was constructed with rock-faced concrete block in about 1920. Its hipped roof, which has recently been covered in standing seam metal, has overhanging eaves and exposed rafter tails. The only opening is a walk-in doorway with a vertical plank door on the east façade, which faces the farmhouse. The floor of the shed is poured concrete and a low, square poured concrete tank is located just off-center along the back wall.

Currently the storage shed is connected to the machine shed by a paved walk that is covered and framed with trellis. Its presence certainly impacts the farmstead's appearance, but as a temporary and completely ancillary appendage, it does not detract significantly from the integrity of either contributing building. **Contributing Building**

Farmhouse (Non-contributing)

The c. 1920 farmhouse is located in the extreme northeast corner of the farmstead among mature deciduous and conifer trees. It appears the house was originally designed as a Foursquare, but several additions and modifications have obscured its original design and materials. The main block of the house sits on a rock-faced concrete block foundation. It has a pyramidal hipped roof with a gable-roofed, two-story bay window on the east side of the south façade and a gable-roofed dormer centered on the roof of the east façade. One-story, gable-roofed additions are centered on the east and west façades. With its rock-faced concrete block foundation, the west addition appears to be original and was probably the kitchen wing. A smaller, one-story, gable-roofed addition covers the west half of the first-story bay window on the south façade. A porch with its original floor wraps around the southwest corner of the house. On the south façade, the porch is covered with a shed roof supported by simple wood porch supports.

Original main entrances are located at the end of the west kitchen wing and under the porch on the north façade. Many of the window and door surrounds appear to be original, but only the kitchen wing entrance contains a historic woodpanel door. All windows have been replaced with one-over-one, double-hung vinyl sashes that have a rectangular Neo-Craftsman design in the upper light. Decorative shutters flank most of the windows and porches have been added to the north and east sides of the house. All roof surfaces are covered with standing seam metal and the house is currently clad in a combination of non-historic shingle and horizontal siding. While the farmhouse still conveys its role as the farmstead's domestic space, it lacks sufficient integrity of design to be counted as a contributing resource. **Non-contributing Building**

Landscape Features

Two landscape features also contribute to the overall integrity of the Menter Farmstead. The most significant are the ruins of a sixth concrete block building or structure immediately west of the barn. All that remains is a long expanse of what would have been the building's west wall and a much shorter south wall. The west wall remnant is composed of rock-faced concrete block that sits on a poured concrete foundation wall, which is identical to the construction of the lower walls of the barn. The west wall remnant is approximately 6' feet tall and 50' long. A low rectangular opening, once covered by a side-hinged wood door, is located at the north end of the wall. The south wall is approximately 10' long and terminates in a perpendicular poured concrete wall with an arched top. Considering John H. Menter's interest in raising hogs, this may have been a hog barn, but the original function and design of the non-extant building is not currently known. While it cannot be counted as a contributing resource, the building ruins do add to an overall understanding of the farmstead.

A second contributing landscape feature at the Menter Farmstead is historic vegetation. The remnants of a historic windbreak run along the back (north side) of the farmstead and the curve around to the west. The windbreak includes one row of mature juniper bushes and an interior row of a deciduous bush species. While windbreaks usually include row(s) of trees, it is possible the windbreak protecting the Menter Farmstead never did. In addition, a mixture of mature conifer and

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deciduous trees are found behind and to the east of the farmhouse. These trees are the farmstead's only extant historic ornamental vegetation. A final landscape feature of note is a large dirt pile located just outside the western windbreak. Now overgrown with vegetation, this is a non-historic landscape modification created with excavated dirt when the current property owners dug a pit for burning refuse.

Integrity, Condition and Future Plans

Overall, the Menter Farmstead retains excellent integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. Only the house has been altered to the point where it can no longer be considered a contributing resource. Moreover, most of the buildings from the initial concrete block building phase at the Menter Farmstead are still largely intact, with the exception of what was probably a hog barn. A covered walkway connection the house, machine shed and small shed does detract from the historic feeling of the northern half of the farmstead, however, this structure is removable and did not alter any of the contributing features. Most of the buildings and structures are in good condition, with the possible exception of the barn. The soft concrete foundation wall of this building has eroded significantly; however, it is already in the process of being replaced.

The Menter Farmstead has been owned and occupied by Arlin and Sheila Mitchell since 2002. The Mitchells appreciated the historic character of the Menter Farmstead and the significance of the barn as a local landmark. They hope to rehabilitate the barn for use as community gathering space.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

SETTLEMENT

AGRICULTURE

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1919 – 1929

Significant Dates

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

NA

Cultural Affiliation

NA

Architect/Builder

John H. Menter

Carl A. Menter

Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance begins when John H. Menter purchased this farm in 1919 and ends in 1929 with the collapse of wheat prices and the onset of the Great Depression. The period of significance encompasses the settlement boom in Deuel County as well as the construction of all contributing resources on the Menter Farmstead.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary): NA

Menter Farmstead

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

The Menter Farmstead is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places at the local level under Criteria A and C. As winter wheat became a viable crop in the central high plains and wheat prices sky-rocked during WWI, the Nebraska Panhandle experienced a significant settlement boom. The John H. Menter family was among the nearly 1,500 settlers who flocked to Deuel County between 1910 and 1920 in search of greater agricultural prosperity. The Menter Farmstead is also representative of the increasing mechanization and standardization of agriculture during the early 20th century. Machine power, represented by the mechanized grain elevator at the Menter Farmstead, allowed farmers to farm more land with greater ease. Furthermore, instead of relying solely on traditional carpentry skills to build their "modern" farmstead, the Menter family—like countless other Americans—turned to Sears, Roebuck and Company for a cheap and easy alternative. The Menter Farmstead, with its collection of rock-faced concrete block buildings, is significant under Criterion C for its period of construction, methods of construction and building materials.

Narrative Statement of Significance

Criterion A: The Settlement Boom in Deuel County, 1910 – 1920

John H. Menter Buys (another) Nebraska Farm

In 1888, John H. Menter, age 20, set out from his parents' Wood County, Ohio home for eastern Nebraska, intent on securing a farm. Like countless others who came after the initial homestead boom, however, he soon discovered this dream was not so easily realized. He earned about \$14.00 a month as a farmhand in the southeastern portion of the state until 1896 when he married Mary Ulrich of Gage County, Nebraska. Like Menter himself, Mary was the child of German immigrants.⁵ Marriage and children put a premium on stability, but the Menters were still unable to purchase a farm of their own, so—along with about 37% of Nebraska's rural population in 1900—they rented.⁶ The young couple first rented a farm in Webster County, lived briefly in Adams County and then moved east again to Saline County.

All the while they were inching closer to their goal: a farm along the Big Blue River between DeWitt and Beatrice, Nebraska, where they would be close to Mary's family. Finally, the Menters were able to rent a farm in Gage County, where in 1910 they were living with their four sons (Carl, Alfred, Arthur and John) and daughter (Alice). One year later, and twenty-three years after first coming to Nebraska, John H. Menter purchased his first farm.⁷ The Menters set about making, "many excellent improvements of permanent order, including the erection of a barn and other farm buildings," and by 1918 had, "one of the best improved and efficiently operating," general farms in Grant Township.⁸

For a brief period the Menter family was settled, but during World War I they moved yet again—this time to the high plains of Deuel County, Nebraska. Considering the favorable location of the Menter's Gage County farm, along with the substantial effort involved in its purchase and subsequent improvement, it is difficult to fathom why they would leave it behind so quickly. Changing family dynamics and the promise of better profits, however, make the decision more understandable. Mary's mother had died years earlier, and the death of her father in 1913 freed her (and her siblings) from their familial ties to Gage County.⁹ Simultaneously, a combination of political, economic and scientific forces were aligning to make southwest Nebraska much more attractive and families like the Menters suddenly experienced a new emigration "pull." As historians James C. Olson and Ronald C. Naugle explain in *A History of Nebraska*:

The greatest increase in cultivated acreage during the first decades of the 20th century occurred in the western part of the state, where the number of cultivate acres doubled during the war. Most of this land was planted in wheat...accounted for by the its relatively high price, the discovery that the flatlands of the southwest and the high plains west of the Sand Hills were excellent wheat-producing areas, and the continued improvement of winter wheat strains adapted to western Nebraska. It was at this time that the southwestern counties of Cheyenne, Deuel, Kimball, and Perkins, and parts of Banner, Garden and Keith developed into specialized wheat-producing areas.¹⁰

⁵Dobbs, Hugh J. *A History of Gage County Nebraska*, 457-458.

⁶USDA. 1900 Agricultural Census.

⁷Dobbs, Hugh J. *A History of Gage County Nebraska*, 457-458.; US Census Bureau. 1900 and 1910 Federal Censuses.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid., 551.

¹⁰Olson, James C. and Ronald C. Naugle. *A History of Nebraska*, 286.

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World War I created a seemingly insatiable demand for basic foodstuffs and further accelerated the settlement boom. Wheat prices, which had held between \$0.50 and \$1.00 per bushel since 1903, skyrocketed to \$1.44 in 1916 before reaching a record high of \$2.07 three years later. Such prices would not be seen again until after World War II. Moreover, while land prices would climb at the end of WWI, they stayed relatively cheap through 1918.¹¹ The population of the seven counties listed above grew by 41% between 1910 and 1920 and the combined population of the Kimball, Deuel and Cheyenne counties nearly doubled from 8,279 to 16,185. In short, Nebraska's new wheat country was simply too good an opportunity to ignore for hundreds of families, including the Menters and Albert Ulrich, Mary's brother. In 1917, Menter and Ulrich each bought half of Section 21, T14N, R42W in Deuel County.¹² It would be another two years before either family left Gage County, but Menter did dispatch his eldest son, 20 year-old Carl, to manage the family's new property in western Nebraska.¹³

The Final Menter Farm

Menter was apparently not satisfied with his first 320 acres in Deuel County. Situated in the center of the flat tableland between the North and South Platte Rivers, the new Menter and Ulrich farms were perfect for wheat, but Menter had always been interested in livestock. On his Gage County farm, for instance, he gave, "special attention to diversified farming and stock-growing...making a specialty of raising graded swine."¹⁴ In 1919, Menter settled on Section 23, R13N, T42W, which he bought from Henry Zost and Walter Finch after selling his original Deuel County half-section to his brother-in-law.¹⁵ Straddling the bluffs above the town of Big Springs, this section was perfect for diversified farming. Menter could raise crops on the flat northern half of his farm and graze cattle on its southern slopes. Over the next decade he would develop a thriving general farm, while Albert Ulrich and his sons focused on wheat.¹⁶

With an acceptable farm in Deuel County finally secured, it was time for the Menters to move west. The family, which now included another son (Paul), was well-appointed in 1919, meaning they either brought numerous possessions with them or made a number of purchases upon arrival. According to tax records from that year, the Menters owned a piano, a sewing machine, a stationary engine, a tractor, \$100 in household effects (furniture, books), 2 automobiles, 3 carriages/wagons, a cream separator, 8 poultry, 3 hogs, 3 horses and 37 cattle.¹⁷ All told their personal property was worth about \$4,500 and their land another \$1,280. Clearly, the Menters were not starting from scratch. They had found some success in Gage County, and the sale of their 200 acre farm there would have brought about \$1.28 per acre in 1919.¹⁸ Even so, Menter was not able to buy his new farm outright; however, there was little reason to do so during WWI. Prosperous times opened the pockets of lenders and the 1916 Federal Farm Loan Act made farm mortgages even more readily available. The Menters were among the thousands of families that raised Nebraska's mortgage debt by 170% between 1910 and 1920.¹⁹

The fledgling rural credit system, however, was not the only trend in American society that shaped the Menter Farmstead. During the early 20th century new technologies and products were purportedly making life easier at increasing low costs, and American families with even a little disposable income (or a credit line) could participate in modernity through purchase. Particularly in rural areas, consumerism was aided by mail-order catalogs.²⁰ It is not surprising, then, that John H. Menter and his neighbors turned to mail-order giant, Sears, Roebuck and Co., in search of a new way to build their farmsteads during the prosperous WWI-era. Even less surprising is that Sears had what they were looking for: the "Wizard Block Making Outfit," with which a man could make up to 150 concrete blocks a day, sold for as little as \$57.50 in 1917.²¹

¹¹ Ibid, 287 and Appendix 4: Agricultural Statistics, 416-417.

¹² Deuel County Tax Lists, 1916 and 1917. Subgroup 1, Series1, RG268, Nebraska State Historical Society (NSHS) Archives.

¹³ Dobbs, Hugh J. *A History of Gage County Nebraska*, 457-458; Draft Card for Carl A. Menter, June 1918.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Deuel County Tax Lists, 1918 and 1919.

¹⁶ 1930 Census. Menter is listed as owning a general farm. Albert Ulrich is listed as owning a wheat farm and his sons Edward and Carl are both listed as renting adjacent wheat farms (possibly from their father).

¹⁷ Deuel County Personal Property Assessments for Big Springs Precinct, 1919. Subgroup 2, Series 1, RG268, NSHS Archives.

¹⁸ Olson, James C. and Ronald C. Naugle. *A History of Nebraska*, 287.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Chicago History Museum. "Mail Order," Encyclopedia of Chicago. Accessed online.

²¹ Pamela H. Simpson, "Cheap, Quick and Easy: The Early History of Rockfaced Concrete Block Building," in *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture III*, 113.

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Criterion C: Concrete Block Construction in Western Deuel County

Harmon S. Palmer patented the first "machine" for making hollow concrete block in 1900 and over the next three decades thousands of concrete block buildings would go up across the United States. As Pamela H. Simpson explains in her seminal study on rock-faced concrete block construction, during the early 20th century, "Concrete block was still made locally; only the technology could come by mail order, but it took only one machine to get a whole industry going in a community."²² This appears to be the case in western Deuel County where at least eight farmsteads, including the nominated property, contain concrete block buildings or structures (See Table 1). Currently, it is unclear who actually owned the concrete block machine, but John H. Menter is a likely candidate. The Menter Farmstead was constructed from scratch after 1918 and the earliest building (the barn) was built with concrete block. Moreover, the Menter Farmstead has the most complete collection of concrete block buildings in the area. Other Deuel County farmsteads include only one or two concrete block buildings, many of which are secondary structures. It seems unlikely that farmers would have invested in a concrete block machine only to build a garage, poultry house or small barn. More likely, they borrowed or rented a machine or bought precast concrete block from another farmer or local merchant.

Table 1: Selected Deuel County and Garden County Farmsteads

NeHSR #:	Concrete Block Resources	Concrete Block Type	Distance from Menter Farmstead (in miles)
DU00-014	Silo	Rock-faced	3
DU00-015	Garage, Outbuilding	Rock-faced	8
DU00-018	Garage	Unknown	12
DU00-025	Small Barn	Rock-faced	15
DU00-039	Round Barn	Smooth-faced	10
DU00-040	Garage, Poultry House	Rock-faced	5
DU00-041	Garage, round corn crib	Rock-faced	1
DU00-048	Small Barn	Tin Siding w/ Rock-face design	5
DU00-062 (Menter Farmstead)	Barn, Silo, Machine Shed, Storage Shed, House Foundation, Ruins, Outhouse	Rock-faced	NA
GD00-031	House	Rock-faced	21
GD00-038	House	Rock-faced	30

Source: Nebraska Historic Resources Survey and Inventory, Reconnaissance-level Survey of Deuel County, Nebraska, 1989.

The geographic distribution of concrete block construction in Deuel County seems to support the theory of one concrete block machine (See Supplementary Materials, Map 1). All of the farmsteads with concrete block construction are north of the South Platte River, and all but two are located between Walrath Draw and Trailer House Gulch. DU00-039, the only farmstead with a smooth concrete block building, is also the only farmstead not on the "north table." It is located in the South Platte Valley and is only 2 miles from Julesburg, Colorado (Supplementary Materials, Photo 1). Conversely, those farmsteads closest to the nominated property either contain two concrete block buildings (DU00-015, DU00-040, and DU00-041) or have a building that is strikingly similar in design to one found on the Menter Farmstead (Supplementary Materials, Photos 2-3). The latter (DU00-014) has a frame barn with the exact roof shape of the Menter barn along with a rock-faced concrete block silo (Supplementary Materials, Photo 4). The concentration of rock-faced concrete block construction on the tableland between the Platte Rivers dissipates until picking up again about nine miles to the north in Garden County (Supplementary Materials, Map 2). There, however, rock-faced concrete block was used almost exclusively for residential and commercial purposes and not for agricultural buildings (Supplementary Materials, Photo 5). It seems different ideas about how to use concrete block, and possibly different construction expertise, developed even within the 20 miles between Big Springs and Lewellen, Nebraska.

Also of great interest is one farmstead (DU00-048) that includes a small barn covered with tin siding pressed to look like rock-faced concrete block, which itself was designed to look like quarried stone (Supplementary Materials, Photo 6). This ability to imitate, as Simpson points out, was one of the reasons concrete block became so popular. Decorative concrete block was more than just "cheap, quick and easy," or supposedly sturdier than frame construction, it also made buildings look more expensive than wood.²³ Consumers who ordered a standard Sears "Wizard Block Making Outfit" would have

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid, 111 and 115.

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received molds to make both "plain" and "rock face" concrete blocks.²⁴ It is important to note that Menter and his neighbors had a choice and that, by and large, they chose the more decorative concrete block for their farmsteads. Deuel County farmers were not interested in "honesty" of building materials; they simply wanted something that looked nice. Some farmers, as evidenced by the barn with rock-faced concrete block tin siding, were equally interested in ensuring their farmstead fit in with the neighbors.

Criterion A and C: The Mechanization and Standardization of Agriculture

John H. Menter's decision to use "new" concrete block construction is not the only reason the Menter Farmstead can be considered modern. The Menters already owned almost as many automobiles as horses in 1919, and also had a tractor and a stationary engine. As a result, the Menter Farmstead was built with the machine in mind from the beginning. This is most readily seen in the long machine shed that provided storage for the family's automobiles, tractor and miscellaneous farm equipment, the latter of which was valued at \$470.00 in 1919.²⁵ Machine sheds were found on farms beginning in the late 19th century, but became increasingly prevalent as farmers began to adopt tractors in the 1920s. While the Menter Farmstead's machine shed is atypical in its building material—most built before WWII were frame buildings—its design fits the prototype proposed by Minnesota Historic Farms Study: "a long, narrow building from 20' to 36' wide and 40' to 90' feet long...located near the center of farm activities...quickly accessible to the fields, and in relative proximity to the farmhouse, barns, workshop and garage."²⁶ With the benefit of a fresh start, Menter was even able to integrate his workshop and garage into the machine shed.

The second contributing resource that reflects the mechanization and standardization of agriculture and the evolution of farm buildings on the Menter Farmstead is the large granary. Built in about 1928, the granary was designed around an interior mechanized cup elevator fabricated by the A. F. Meyer Manufacturing Co. of Morton, Illinois. Patented in 1908, Meyer elevators were on the market by 1915, with a modern design that had staying power. The Meyer Cup Elevator was, "extremely popular...thousands of them sold, with many still in use."²⁷ Of course, their popularity was not based solely on word of mouth. A. F. Meyer Manufacturing Co. advertised heavily in agricultural catalogs and magazines, including *Farm Implement News*, *The Farm Journal* and *Farm Mechanics*, and it was hard to argue with the company's logic:

A dependable elevator does in a few minutes the work that would be a half hours hard work and drudgery without it. Your health and strength are worth money to you—why waste them on work that is done better and more quickly by efficient machinery? ... The selection of the right Elevator is of the utmost importance to you. You can't afford to install an Elevator that isn't made from the best material, design and construction—one that will always be demanding the attention of a mechanic. You want a help not a trouble maker...Every Meyer Elevator is sold under a positive guarantee of satisfaction.²⁸

Interior elevators obviously saved work, but they also necessitated taller, and more complex, granaries. On the Menter Farmstead, the granary equals the barn in height and building around its elevator posed obvious design challenges. The Menter family was, however, able to meet the challenge, and today their elevator appears to be unique among those found on Deuel County farmsteads included in the Nebraska Historic Resources Inventory (NeRHSI). Finally, the granary also includes side bays with tall doors designed to accommodate large-scale machinery. With the speed of mechanization in agriculture, the Menter's long but low machine shed was already out-dated just a decade after its construction.

²⁴ Ibid, 115.

²⁵ Deuel County Personal Property Assessments for Big Springs Precinct, 1919. Subgroup 2, Series 1, RG268, NSHS Archives.

²⁶ Minnesota Farm Study, Part 6, 307-308.

²⁷ Wendel, C. H. *Encyclopedia of American Farm Implements and Antiques*, 127.

²⁸ A.F. Meyer Mfg. Co., Advertisement for Meyer Cup Elevator in *Farm Mechanics*, vol. 2, no. 5, March 1920, 103.

Menter Farmstead

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9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

A.F. Meyer Mfg. Co., Advertisement for Meyer Cup Elevator in *Farm Mechanics*, vol. 2, no. 5, March 1920, 103.

Chicago History Museum. "Mail Order," Encyclopedia of Chicago. <http://encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/779.html>

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Deuel County Personal Property Assessments for Big Springs Precinct, 1919.Subgroup 2, Series 1, RG268, NSHS Archives.

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Kay, John (Save America's Treasures). *Nebraska State Historic Buildings Survey, Reconnaissance Survey Final Report of Deuel County, Nebraska*. Prepared for the Nebraska SHPO, 1990.

Noble, Allen G. and Richard K. Cleek. *The Old Barn Book: A Field Guide to North American Barns & Other Farm Structures* [Second Paperback Edition], New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997.

Nebraska State Historic Preservation Office, Nebraska State Historic Resources Survey and Inventory (NeHRSI).

"Obituary for Carl A. Menter," in *Big Springs Enterprise*, 26 January 1972.

"Obituary for John H. Menter," in *Big Springs Enterprise*, 29 May 1952.

Olson, James C. and Ronald C. Naugle. *History of Nebraska* [Third Edition], Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1997.

Simpson, Pamela H. "Cheap, Quick, and Easy: The Early History of Rockfaced Concrete Block Building," in *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture III*, ed. Thomas Carter and Bernard L. Herman, Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1989.

US Army.WWI Draft Card for Carl A. Menter. Accessed online at www.ancestry.com.

US Census.United States Census, 1880, 1910, 1920 and 1930.Accessed online at www.ancestry.com.

USDA. 1900 Agricultural Census at http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/Historical_Publications/index.asp.

Wendel, C. H. *Encyclopedia of American Farm Implements and Antiques*[Second Edition], Iola, WI: Krause Publications, 2004.

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 # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

☒ State Historic Preservation Office
☐ Other State agency
☐ Federal agency
☐ Local government
☐ University
☒ Other
Name of repository: Nebraska State Historical Society

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): DU00-062

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 4.5 (approximately)
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 13N 0744056 4552087
Zone Easting Northing

3
Zone Easting Northing

2
Zone Easting Northing

4
Zone Easting Northing

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Starting at Point 1 (the northwest corner), the eastern boundary extends approximately 340' to the south along a section line to the southeast corner of the farmstead (Point 2). From here the southern boundary, which is immediately behind the silo, extends approximately 470' until reaching a plowed field at Point 3. The western boundary of the nominated property is irregular as it curves around the windbreak and manmade pile, but extends approximately 230' to northwest before reaching the southern extent of pile (Point 4). Here it curved back to the north east for approximately 160' before connecting once again with the windbreak at Point 5. From here it extends 135' feet to the northwest to a point even with the west side of the machine shed (Point 6), before turning west for another 350' and returning to Point 1.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The nominated property contains all of the historic resources that contribute to the Menter Farmstead. The boundary is based on a section line to the east, a visual boundary (the windbreak) to the north and changes in land use to the south and west. The southern and western boundaries mark the beginning of cultivated land.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jessie Nunn, National Register Coordinator
organization Nebraska State Historical Society date August 24, 2011
street & number 1500 "R" Street telephone 402-471-4775
city or town Lincoln state NE zip code 68501
e-mail jessie.nunn@nebraska.gov

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **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. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Menter Farmstead

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Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: Menter Farmstead

City or Vicinity: Big Springs (vicinity)

County: Deuel

State: Nebraska

Photographer: Jessie Nunn, Nebraska State Historical Society

Date Photographed: March 26, 2010

Photographs:

01 of 14. Granary, Barn and Silo, Aspect: SW

02 of 14. Granary Interior with dumping floor, grain storage cribs and belt, pulley and gear system, Aspect: NE

03 of 14. Granary Interior, view of elevator house with Meyer Manufacturing Co. hopper and cup elevator, Aspect: NE

04 of 14. Barn and Silo, Aspect: SW

05 of 14. Silo and back of Barn with Concrete Block Ruins in background, Aspect: NW

06 of 14. Detail of Rock-faced Concrete Block on Barn, Aspect: S

07 of 14. Barn Interior, Central Aisle, Aspect: S

08 of 14. Landscape Features: Concrete Block Ruins, Windbreak and Manmade Pile, Aspect: N

09 of 14. General View with Farmhouse, Machine Shed, Pump House and Shed, Aspect: NE

10 of 14. Pump House and Cistern, Aspect: N

11 of 14. Machine Shed, Aspect: SE

12 of 14. Shed, Aspect: SW

13 of 14. Outhouse, Aspect: S

14 of 14. Farmhouse and Pump House, Aspect: N

Property Owner: (Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Arlin and Sheila Mitchell

street & number 1270 North Fork Road

telephone _____

city or town Big Springs

state NE

zip code 69122

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.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS



Photo 1. DU00-039



Photo 2. DU00-040



Photo 3. DU00-041

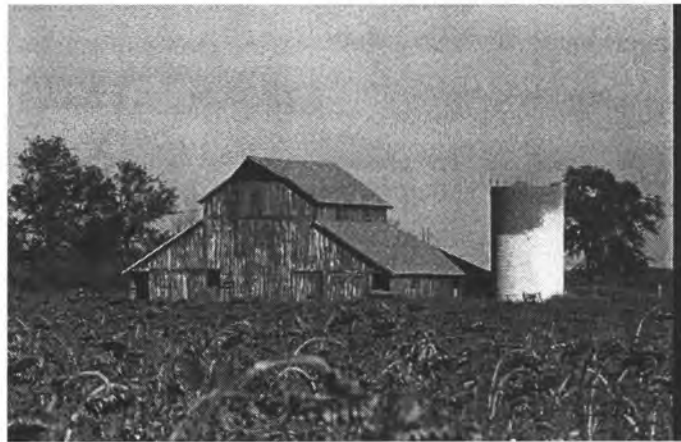


Photo 4. DU00-039



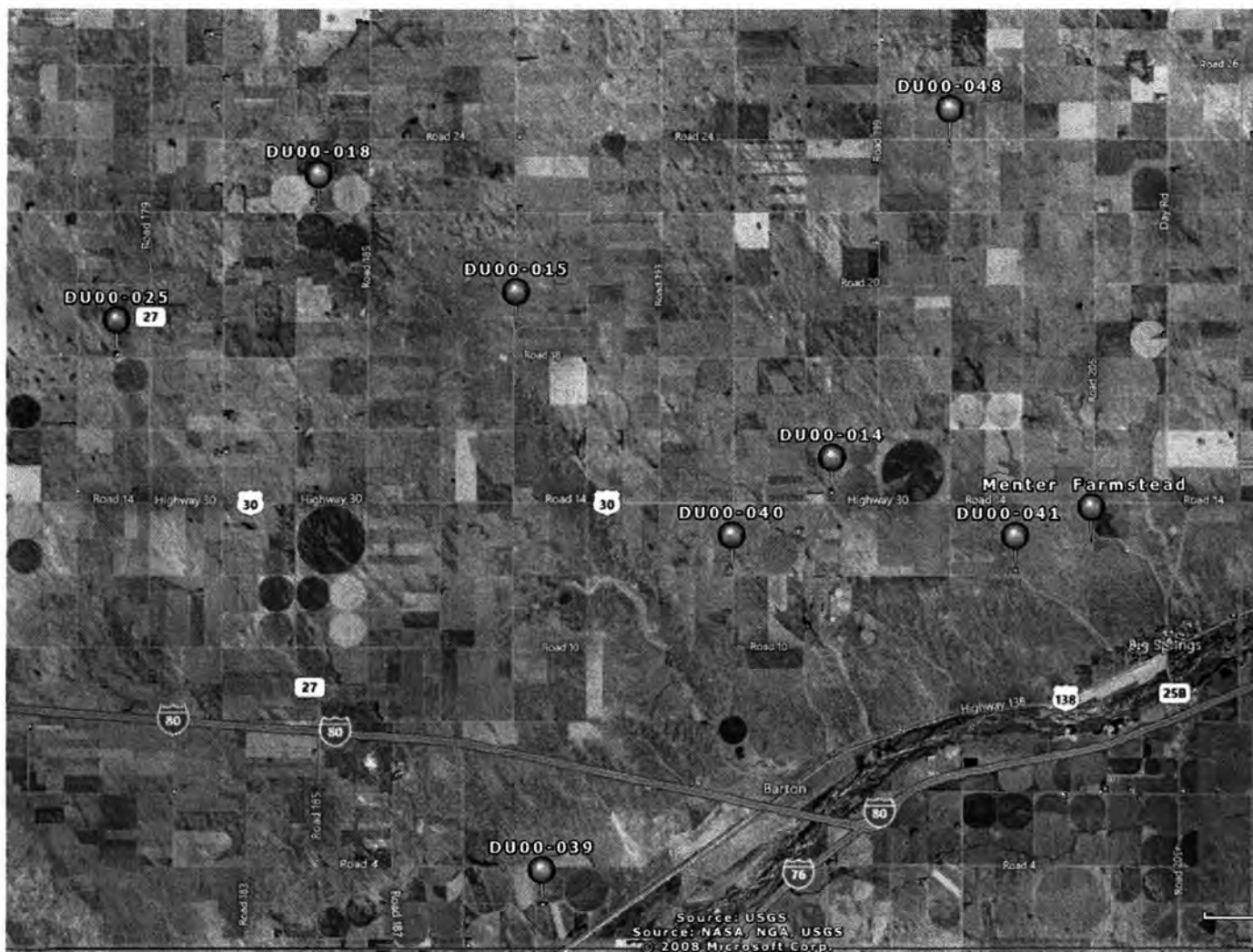
Photo 5. GD00-031



Photo 6. DU00-048

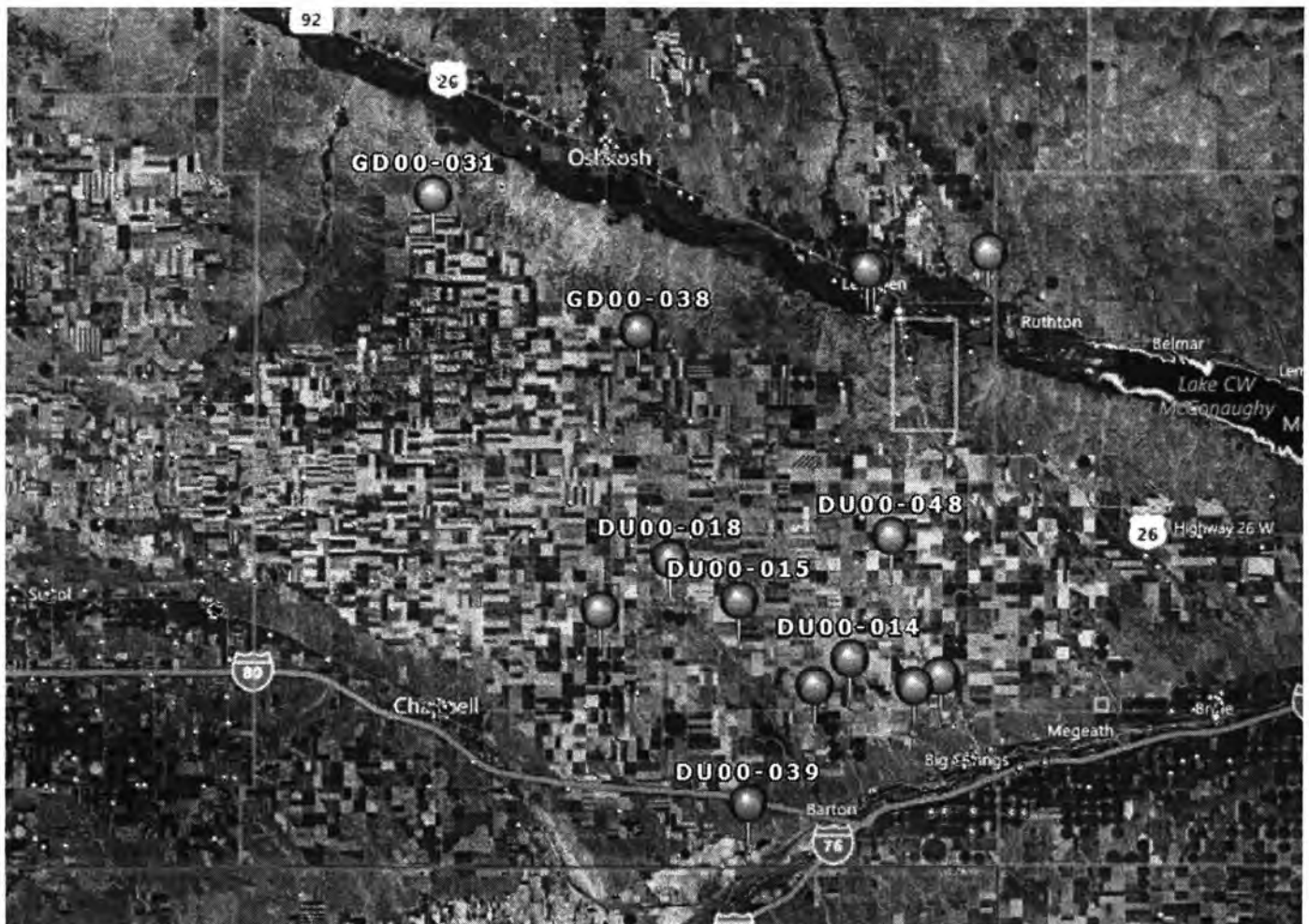
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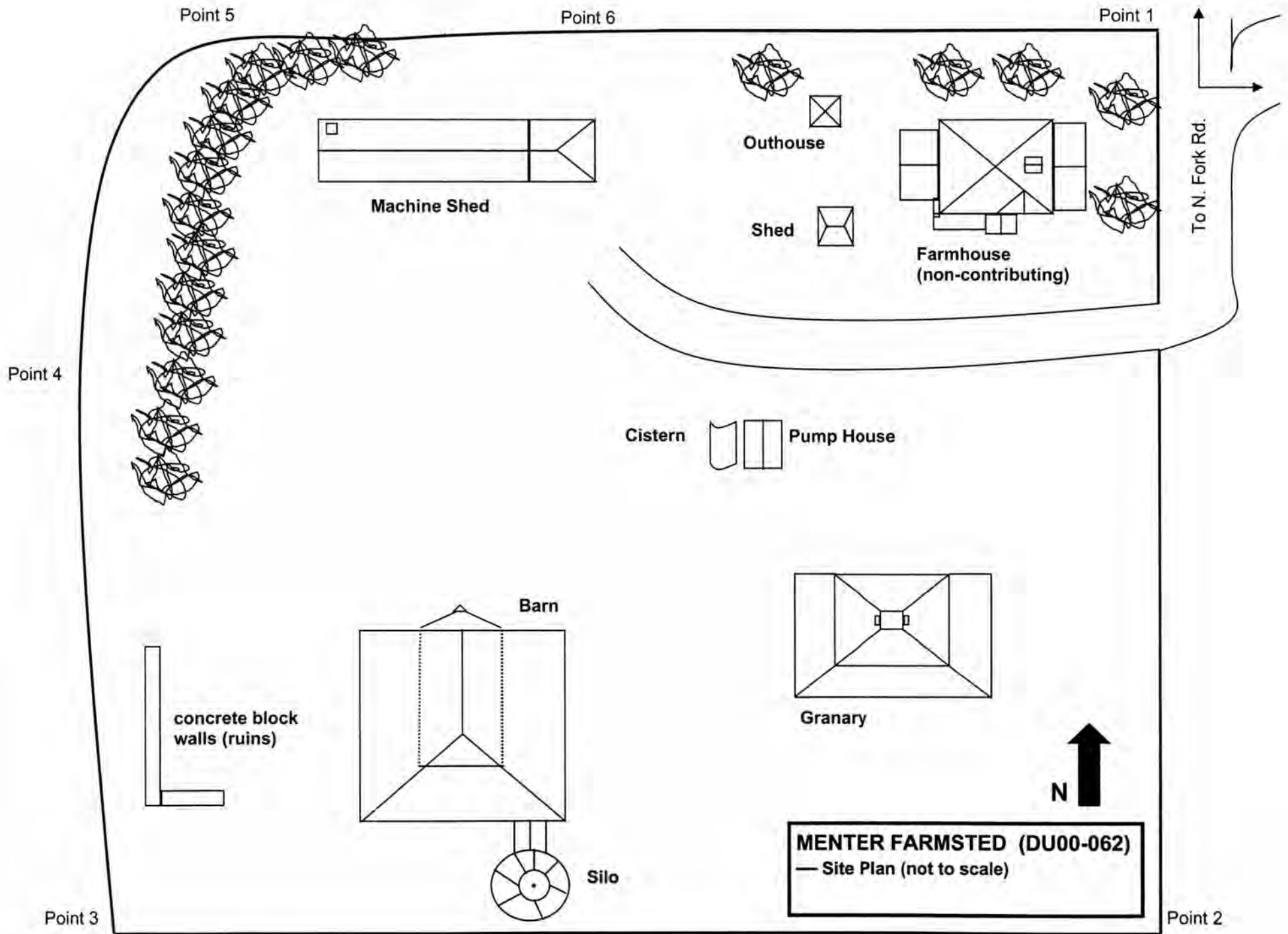


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Map 2. Farmsteads with Concrete Block Construction in Deuel and Southern Garden County.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Menter Farmstead
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: NEBRASKA, Deuel

DATE RECEIVED: 10/28/11 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 11/21/11
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 12/06/11 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 12/13/11
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 11000886

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

☒ ACCEPT ☐ RETURN ☐ REJECT 12-2-11 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in
The National Register
of
Historic Places

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

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

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



NE - Deuel County - Menter Farmstead - 0001



NE - Deuel County - Menter Farmstead - 0002



NE - Deuel County - Menter Farmstead - 0003.



NE - Deuel County - Mentor Farmstead - 0004



NE, Deuel County - Menter Farmstead - 0005



NE - Deuel County - Menter Farmstead - 0006



NE - Deuel County - Menter Farmstead - 0007



NE-Deuel County-Menter Farmstead-0008



NE - Deuel County - Menter Farmstead - 0009



NE - Deuel County - Mentor Farmstead - 0010



NE - Deuel County - Menter Farmstead - 0001



NE_Dewel County - Menter Farmstead - 0012



NE Deuel County - Menter Farmstead - 0013

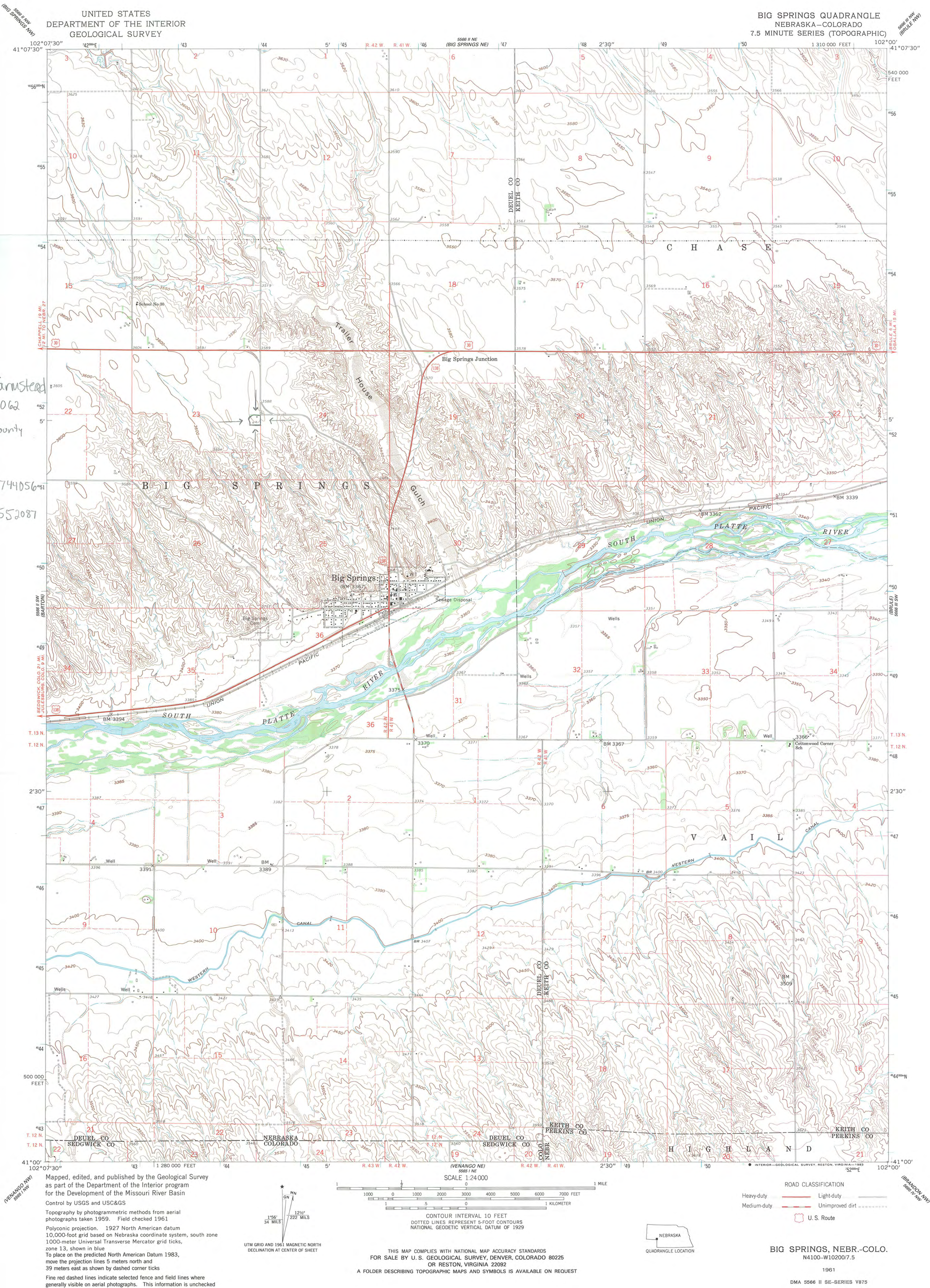


NE Deuel County - Menter Farmstead - 0014

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

BIG SPRINGS QUADRANGLE
NEBRASKA-COLORADO
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

Menter Farmstead
DU 00-062
Deuel County
Zone 13
Easting: 0744056
Northing: 4552087





October 19, 2011

J. Paul Loether
National Register—National Historic Landmarks Programs
National Park Service
1201 "I" Street NW, 8th Floor
Washington, DC 20005

RE: Menter Farmstead
Deuel County, Nebraska

Dear Mr. Loether:

Please find enclosed the National Register of Historic Places nomination form for the above resource. This form has met all notification and other requirements as established in 36 CFR 60.

If you have any questions concerning this nomination, please let me know.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "L. Robert Puschehdorf".

L. Robert Puschehdorf
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

Enclosure

1500 R Street
PO Box 82554
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f: (402) 471-3100
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