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United States Department of the 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 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.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: A.A. Parsons Farmstead

Other names/site number: Parsons/Vapor Farmstead

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

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

2. Location

Street & number: 1739CR 625 East

City or town: Avon State: Indiana County: Hendricks

Not For Publication: ☐ Vicinity: X

Mitchell K. Zoll Deputy SHPO August 1, 2014

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

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A X B ___C ___D

A.A. Parsons Farmstead | Hendricks, Indiana

Name of Property | County and State

Signature of certifying official/Title: **Date**

Indiana DNR-Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology

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:) _____

A.A. Parsons Farmstead | Hendricks, Indiana

Name of Property | County and State

for Carson N. Boall 9.30.14

Signature of the Keeper | Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

Private:	X
Public – Local	
Public – State	
Public – Federal	

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

Building(s)	
District	X
Site	
Structure	
Object	

A.A. Parsons Farmstead — Name of Property

Hendricks, Indiana — County and State

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
8	2	buildings
		sites
4	0	structures
7	0	objects
19	2	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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6. Function or Use
Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)
DOMESTIC: single dwelling

AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE: agricultural outbuilding

__AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE: animal facility_

__AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE: agricultural field__

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

__DOMESTIC: single dwelling_

__AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE: agricultural field

__AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE: agricultural outbuilding

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

_No Style_____

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: _CONCRETE_____

walls: __WOOD: weatherboard___

_____

roof: _ASPHALT_____

other: _____

_____

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with **a summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The A. A. Parsons Farmstead contains a broad collection of agricultural buildings that visibly and functionally demonstrate the physical characteristics of a farmstead from the Golden Age of Indiana's agricultural heritage 1880 – 1920. The integrity of the farm buildings is exceptional. The size of the property, originally 80 acres and now 45 acres, is typical of the period of significance when farmers relied on horse power not combustion engine-powered equipment. The location next to an all-season creek was ideal; it provided water for a time and the gravel for continual improvements made to the buildings and structures. The field patterns and shadows of internal foot and equipment traffic, created by day-to-day farm business, remind the viewer that farming was at one time truly a way of life not merely a business enterprise. The one-of-a-kind combination building (hog barn/chicken house/corn cribs) clearly demonstrates a view to efficiency and economy prevalent in Adrian Parsons' undertakings. In an ever-changing landscape of encroachment by many forces, the A. A. Parsons Farmstead remains an example of Indiana's agrarian history that is disappearing at a quick pace.

Narrative Description

The A. A. Parsons Farmstead consists of ten buildings, four structures, and seven objects, all (with the exception of the garage and the pole barn) were present during the period of significance. With the exception of the house, the buildings on the property demonstrate the construction materials and techniques common to the period 1890-1910 not from an earlier period. The current house has been modernized over time but retains evidence of an earlier occupation of the property. Often typical of the times, the current house increased in size by the joining the old on-site house with a portion of another building. While the joining of two building seems unusual, folks of the times - especially farmers, were adverse to waste and why build new when modifying current assets would meet the need? Evidence of this joining is visible in the framing/construction of the floor joists which demonstrates the early construction of the original house and later joining of the two structures into one. The use of logs, large squared timbers, and dimension lumber places the age of the original structure in the 1870 time period with structural support added as needed over time. The main addition, a wing extending west along the north side of the original main block, possesses some evidence of timber-framing techniques in a portion of the more modern interior of the wing. Exterior wall material obscures the full extent of the early construction technique. (See photographs 1, 2, and 3)

The original acreage purchased by Adrian A. Parsons in 1884, approximately 82 acres, extended along the east bank of White Lick Creek in a rectangular shape with the long axis north and south; the house and outbuildings are located about mid-point between the north and south sections of the farmstead. A 1939 aerial photograph of the farmstead clearly shows the configuration and location of the existing buildings, some of the traffic network between buildings and around the property used by the family going about daily chores, and the location and size of the fields. White Lick Creek is clearly visible to the left (west) of the farmstead. When the original acreage was bought, a north-south public road, between Sections 15 and 16, Township 15N, provided access to the land; however, in the early 1900s, the public road (which is now CR625E) was repositioned approximately one-half mile east of the Parsons farmstead. Moving the road east required Parsons, in 1905, to purchase approximately one acre of land to create a lane from the public road westward to the farm property; that lane is also visible in the aerial photograph.[1]

The current physical appearance of the farmstead (2013) approximates the historical appearance minus a few buildings lost over time and a reduced number of acres within the boundary of the property. For example, a small chicken coop southwest of the house and several hog houses, located near the extant example, were lost through fair-wear-and-tear and not replaced. The 82 original acres have been reduced to approximately 45 acres through encroachment of modern housing developments north and south of the current boundary but visual evidence of the historic field and the internal traffic patterns remains. The fields north of the main house, between it and the tree line visible in the aerial photograph, were the

[1] Aerial Photograph, 1939, Hendricks County, BWH-2-73. Available at the Indiana State Commission on Public Records.

experimental soybean fields and the sources of the inoculating soils that Adrian Parsons shipped around the Midwest. Explanation of "inoculating soil" is located in Section 8.

Resource Descriptions

1) House Contributing – Photograph 4, 5, and 6
c. 1875

This one-and-one-half-story L-shaped house is a combination of the original 1870s one-story home of the previous owner and another timber-framed building that was attached to the north end which formed the current west wing. Circa 1930, a half story was added above the main block to bedrooms. Some of the timber-framing from the original add-on is visible in photograph 2. The half-story, created by extending a new/original roof line northward, also formed the north and south gable ends. The east and north elevations are defined by a one-story wrap porch with a concrete deck and a low railing with square balusters. A covered stairway to the basement is visible on the south elevation. As a result of the various changes, the interior is a minor maze of small rooms all leading off of the kitchen. North of the kitchen, in the wing, are the family living room in the east half and a study in the west half. Entrance to the kitchen is through the east door visible in photograph 5 directly below the dormer on the east side of the roof. Stairs to the half-story lead up from the kitchen. The window units throughout are modern, double-hung, and glazed six-over-six. The exterior wall surfaces have been modernized with vertical board siding. The west slope of the roof over the main block has two gable dormers overlooking a small concrete patio in the L formed by the main block and wing. The exterior surface of the wing, from the end of the porch and wrapping around to the patio, has a stone veneer.

2) Garage Non-Contributing – Photograph 7
c. 1985

Located north of the house, this simple one-story garage has two-bays, vertical board siding on the exterior walls, and a low-pitched roof sheathed with composite shingles. Roll-up doors on both bays provide access for vehicles to the framed interior. The doors are different widths and are constructed with four courses; one course across the top and two courses below a single course of lights that provide illumination to the interior. A side door in the west elevation is available for personnel to enter the garage. A small square window is located next to the personnel door.

3) Workshop Contributing – Photograph 8
c. 1890

West of the garage and north of the house, the workshop is and was the center of maintenance activities and storage of hand tools and implements for its entire life. Solidly fixed to a concrete foundation, the exterior walls of the one-and-one-half-story building are sheathed in simple drop siding with plain corner boards. The double-hung windows are original to the building and appear in all four elevations. The units are glazed one-over-one; flat surrounds define the outer limits of the openings. Two doors, in the north and south elevations provide access to the interior. The doors are simple items made of wood. The south door is protected by a modern storm door. The steeply-pitched roof is clad in standing seam metal roofing.

4) Milk Cooling House, Horse Tank, Water Pump, Windmill Contributing – Photograph 9

c. 1890/1910

The small collection of farmstead necessities is directly west of the workshop and relatively close to the house. The milk cooling house was a later addition than the horse tank and the pump. Originally, the pump was wind-powered (bought in 1892) with the iconic rural windmill conspicuous throughout the landscape of the pre-rural electrification projects that brought the convenience of electricity to farms. With the arrival of electricity, around 1938 for this locality, the old pump received modifications that converted the pump to electric power and the wind turbine was disconnected and removed. The well provided water to the dairy barn and the hog barn (etc.) through pipes laid by Parsons for that purpose. The milk cooling house dates from around 1910. The house contained cooling coils through which water from the nearby well circulated and cooled fresh milk awaiting pick-up from local milk and/or ice cream producers. The main house had a separate well to the immediate south, inside a spring house constructed below ground. The large horse tank likely dates from the late 1890s.[2]

The milk cooling house is a simple building constructed of concrete blocks and topped with a gabled roof sheathed with composite shingles. The south elevation contains a simple door constructed of vertical wooden boards. The other three elevations contain small square windows glazed with four fixed panes that allow for interior illumination.

The support structure for the windmill is all that remains of this once-vital element of the Hoosier farm.

5) Privy Contributing – Photograph 10

c. 1900

Small in size and no longer in use, the privy is sited near the southwest corner of the main house. Perched on a concrete foundation, the walls are constructed of wooden grooved car siding. The door to this two-hole convenience is fabricated from vertical wooden boards. A small fixed-sash window is located high in the east elevation. The roof is side-gabled and covered in composite shingles. Partially visible in the photograph is one of the remaining concrete fence posts that dot the property.

6) Bull Barn Contributing – Photograph 11

c. 1900

This building derives its name from its past history as the domicile of the farmstead's bull used in increasing the size of the Parson's dairy herd. The exterior walls, of vertically-installed car siding, rest on a concrete foundation. The interior framing of dimensioned lumber is typical of the period. The gabled roof is sheathed in ribbed metal material. Inside the northeast corner are the remains of a forge and other metal working tools used by Parsons to repair farm equipment or to fabricate metal items such as hinges or locking devices for some of the barn doors on the property. Entry to the interior is afforded through large double doors in the north elevation; next to the doors is a window with three separate lights.

7) Dairy Barn Contributing – Photograph 12

c. 1895

[2] Interview with Virginia Vapor, 27 February 2013. Mrs. Vapor, Adrian Parsons' granddaughter, lived at the farmstead as a child during Adrian's last years. She now owns the property which has been in the family for over 120 years.

Rectangular in shape and with a mixed foundation of concrete and rubble stone in the southwest corner, it is very likely that this building is a mixture of old and new (which is also old). The concrete portion of the foundation in the south elevation is reinforced with concrete buttresses designed to eliminate the potential for the raised foundation wall to buckle. The basic framing is with dimension lumber but there is some evidence in the interior that suggests the length of the building was increased and the roof was raised to increase the second floor dimension to store hay for winter feeding of stock. The siding on the south elevation exterior wall has two components, fourteen courses of flat, un-lapped, horizontal boards topped by seven courses of horizontally-installed car siding. The remainder of the exterior wall surfaces of the building is car-sided, horizontally-installed. A single course of small fixed-sash windows positioned in the lower half of the wall height and extending the full length of the wall allow natural light to penetrate the interior. Each window has four panes in the sash and the surrounds are simple flat boards.

The east elevation has a large vehicle/stock door with a smaller personnel entry door. Left and right of the smaller door are small fixed-sash windows similar to those already described. A small milk house, circa 1900, is attached to the north elevation and is visible along the right edge of the building in the photograph.

8) Hog Barn/Chicken House/Corn Cribs Contributing – Photograph 13
c. 1900/1910

This two-story multi-purpose building, on the right in the photograph, is located directly north of the dairy barn. The portion of the building that forms the long element of the 'T" is the hog barn on the first floor and chicken house in the second. The cross wings at the south end of the building are the corn cribs.

The exterior walls of the building are concrete in the first floor and car siding on the second floor. Windows along both the east and west elevations are a combination of fixed-sash unit with various glazing configurations ranging from two horizontal panes to three x two panes. A personnel door is situated in the south elevation accompanied by two small window units. The gabled roof is sheathed in standing seam metal material. The lower floor is subdivided into a number of small stalls used by Parsons during farrowing for his hogs and upper floor is vacant now but a large level floor could accommodate a large number of laying boxes.

The wings are the corn cribs constructed by Parsons and his boys over a period of time. In a response to a reader's question in *The Indiana Farmer* Parsons explained how he and his sons used "a side face block machine" he had purchased which produced a concrete block 8x10x20 at a rate of 100 per day with "two hands" working. Using cement and screened gravel from the nearby White Lick Creek, they were able to construct the cribs during off days when weather or seasons precluded other work. By not mortaring all joints he created openings between blocks for the free circulation of air but too small for critters to get inside. Roofing material and all the construction supplies including cement and lumber cost him only $35.00. [3]

9) Itinerant Worker House Contributing – Photograph 14
c. 1900

[3] "The Corn Crib Question," *The Indiana Farmer*, 15 January 1910, pages 15 and 16.

According to family history, this small unassuming building was used to house any itinerant worker for a short time like harvesting. Parsons likely didn't need much help later in the period of significance because of the number of sons that eventually lived on the farm. Obviously possessing the minimum of space and the luxuries of life the exterior walls are car siding, the entry door is typical of an exterior door of the period, and the single window is double-hung with one-over-one glazing. The roof is covered with composite shingle.

10) Hog House/Fence Posts Contributing – Photograph 15
c. 1905

The small concrete hog house is the only remaining example of the ten structures that at one time offered protection from the weather for Parsons' hogs. Simple in construction, an open elevation pointed south to allow stock to enter. The sloped roof shed rain and snow and deflected cold winds from the north.

The seven concrete fences posts (five visible in the photograph and two others scattered on the property) are remnants of fences that controlled the movements of his close-in livestock and kept them out of the house garden and the experimental plantings to the east. The design and materials of the fence posts would support an educated guess that Parsons', with his penchant for concrete, poured these on-site using his home grown labor force of five sons and four daughters.

11) Pole barn Non-Contributing – Photograph 16
c. 1957

This massive building constructed to protect modern farming equipment lacks any particular architectural details but serves the purpose to remind one of the evolutions in farming which called for major changes in the type, size, and costs of farming. The exterior walls of the building are vertical board siding and the sloping roof is sheathed with standing seam materials.

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.)

- [X] A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- [X] 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.)

- [ ] 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

A.A. Parsons Farmstead | Hendricks, Indiana

Name of Property | County and State

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions.)

AGRICULTURE

Period of Significance

1884 – 1929

Significant Dates

1888

1905

Significant Person (last name, first name)
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

A.A. Parsons Farmstead | Hendricks, Indiana

Name of Property | County and State

_ Parsons, Adrian Alkanah

Cultural Affiliation

__ Undefined_____

Architect/Builder (last name, first name)

Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance was selected to coincide with Adrian Parsons' purchase of the farmstead and the end of his life. Although some of the cultivated land and original house, circa 1870, (now subsumed in the more modern building) predate Parsons' ownership, they contribute to the district due to their association with him and his agricultural accomplishments.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

N/A

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The A. A. Parsons Farmstead is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with the development of the soybean industry in Hendricks County, Indiana; in particular, as the property where Adrian Parsons achieved his reputation as a "soybean pioneer." The existing buildings and their physical integrity demonstrate the level of efficiency and economy necessary to survive in the difficult agrarian arena. The farmstead is also eligible at a local level, under Criterion A, as an example of late 19th and early 20th Century family farms throughout the Midwest; particularly those progressive ventures that looked to the future of farming.

Under Criterion B at a local level, the A. A. Parsons Farmstead is also eligible for the National Register of Historic Places for its association with Adrian Parsons, Hendricks County, Indiana for his work in significant agricultural endeavors for the period 1884 to 1929. He introduced soybeans to Hendricks County, Indiana, in 1888, the first introduction of the soybean in the state.[4] He experimented with varieties of soybeans to enhance their "best" characteristics years before serious experimentation was conducted by a state university experimental station. He harvested and sold soybeans years before other farmers around the state. Although not acknowledged for his efforts on behalf of the soybean and its usefulness until after his death, Parsons, through sound applications of plant breeding techniques, developed two new varieties of soybeans (Mikado and Auburn). His experimentation with and advocacy of the soybean influenced the agricultural community to accept the bean as a staple for livestock feeding and as a nitrogen-fixing plant useful in renewal of depleted soil. Parsons became a soybean seed grower whose product was distributed by one of the popular seed companies of the period, Wing Seed Company of Mechanicsburg, Ohio. He shipped inoculated soil to Midwest and Southern soybean growers to improve their yields and quality of their harvests.

[4] Author's Comment: There may be conjecture on the date when soybeans were "introduced" into the landscape of Indiana agriculture but, absent documentable proof, Adrian A. Parsons was the first documented individual to conduct purposeful, sustained experimentation with and production of soybeans in Indiana. While other individuals may have tried to grow soybeans in Indiana at some date before Parsons' acknowledged beginning in 1888, their efforts were not recorded for history's purpose.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Parsons' did not dawdle in his desire to make his new farm a going concern. Entries in his farm journal mention immediate improvements to the few buildings on the property and expenditures for lumber, wire fencing, and other needed materials to organize his endeavor. By 1886, new equipment to plow the ground, sow seed, and cultivate his fields was on hand and in use. In addition to the new equipment Parsons began to purchase livestock for his hog and dairy operation. Parsons kept detailed records of his purchases, his breeding stock and their various productions of off-spring, and what he paid for each and what he received for their sale. His early crops were the staples for the time and the environment; corn, oats, wheat, etc. and he continued to grow them for years to come.[5]

Concurrent with his experiments and selection of new soybean varieties, Parsons found the time to establish (build) his farm as a model of the nearly self-sustaining farm operation. The farmstead today reveals the thought and effort invested in the physical layout of the farm and the construction of the buildings within its boundaries. The house has received some modifications to its original materials and outer appearance but the location and a portion of the original footprint remains. From a visual standpoint the majority of construction occurred circa 1895 and demonstrates the transition from timber-framed buildings to those of the late- nineteenth century when sawn dimension lumber became the material of choice. Parsons believed in applying that extra modicum of effort to achieve better results over time. His penchant for using concrete in many applications around the farm (barn floors, fence posts, hog houses, and building foundations) resulted in a collection of agricultural buildings that gave service during their active years and most remain functional today. Although his experimental work with various plants continued throughout his life time, the farm annually produced the more conventional crops of corn, wheat, or oats.

The concrete floors in the dairy barn and hog house maintained the livestock in the cleanest environment possible. The partitioned interior of the hog house allowed for safe farrowing of his sows. His dairy cows had individual stalls and, when not pastured, were fed within the barn. The milk house attached to the north elevation of the big barn made for expeditious and safe handling of the milk. The locations of the various buildings offer a present-day vision of the workings of the farm. The most odiferous of the buildings were placed well away from the house and downwind so to speak; north or south breezes carried any unsavory smells away from the house. The shop, well house, and the privy are located near the house for obvious reasons. Even as late as 1939, the pathways and interior roads used during the farm's daily business are visible in an aerial photograph. At one time, a small chicken coop (no longer extant) occupied a place southwest and closer to the house to provide eggs for the family's daily use. To the immediate west of the house, a family garden once provided vegetables. An aerial photograph from 1939 shows the proximity of the large fields that grew the soybeans and corn, north and south of the farm's buildings.

[5] A.A. Parsons' Farm Journal, 1884-1940. Note: Adrian's son Chester bought the farm, after Adrian's death, from his siblings and continued collecting information on the farm's operations.

While the day-to-day operation of the farm occupied the majority of his time, Parsons' penchant for experimenting with different species of plants began in earnest once he and the family moved to the new farm on White Lick Creek. Although he spent time and energy on his experiments, it can never be said that he was a gentlemen farmer and others did the work; his experiments particularly with soybeans all had a defined purpose and desired goal. On account of this involvement with the soybeans related that he recognized the need for a stable, nutritious fodder source for his stock and as he determined soon after, probably from reading agricultural publications, an added aspect of his search should also result in a crop choice that help to renew the soil; i.e., a legume. Legumes such as peas, beans, or clover are all plants that bear nodules on their roots that contain nitrogen-fixing bacteria and some of these bacteria remain in the soil after the crops are harvested. Initially, Parsons had some idea where he needed to go in his experimentation but was not sure which road to follow. [6]

Accounts vary but it is generally agreed among family and published articles, Parsons's direct association with the soybean began in the late 1880s when he purchased/received a shipment of soybean seeds from Japan. China and Japan were the normal sources for a plethora of soybean varieties used not only by Parsons but by numerous agricultural experiment stations around the country. These stations normally associated with government (state and federal) agencies like universities or the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). In his quest for the "right" plant, Parsons tried clover but later abandoned this for soybeans. By 1888, Parsons had successfully grown some soybean plants in his garden and the bean's introduction to Hendricks County in this year, the earliest in any Indiana county, is documented in William Latta's book *Outline History of Indiana Agriculture*. Latta, a force in the development of modern agricultural practices in the state, planned and supervised Purdue University's Indiana Farmer Institute Program. These institutes were learning sessions, conducted around the state, which introduced new farming practices, crops, and techniques to raise the efficiency and productiveness of the state's farmers. Parsons attended some of these and in his later years, after his championing of the soybean became recognized, he presented his experiences to his fellow farmers. [7]

Among the experiments Parsons undertook in his garden was an attempt to get his first soybeans to develop the characteristic nodules on their roots. He tried to use red clover bacteria as a medium for the inoculation process necessary to develop the nodules on the soybean plant roots. Without these nodules the nitrogen-fixing capability and, in fact, the plants themselves were destined to be substandard; substandard was not a level Parsons found acceptable. As mentioned earlier the ability of the soybean to utilize the nitrogen in the air was dependent on the bacteria living in the roots of the plant. Extensive experimentation by others, in the 1910s, on the issue of inoculation and its effect on soybeans proved what Parsons discovered through his work with inoculation in the 1890s. After failed attempts using inoculated soils from other legumes, Parsons contacted the Kansas State University Experiment Station and procured 100 pounds of soybean-inoculated soil and his own plants thrived. In a newspaper article he is quoted as saying about the addition of the inoculated soil that "grew the first nodules I ever saw, as large as peas." Other experimenters (1910s) actually found that soybeans required inoculation by a specific bacterium found in their root nodules. Out of studies of 18 legumes they found soybeans fell into

[6] Piper, Charles V. and William J. Morse, *The Soybean* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1923), pages 64-67.

[7] William C. Latta, *Outline History of Indiana Agriculture* (Lafayette, IN: Layette Printing Company, 1938), Table 2.

their own group bacteria-wise. Soybeans will grow in nitrogen-deprived soil, they will grow in rich soil even though the bacteria isn't present but nitrogen will be taken from the soil and not increased which obviously is not what a farmer is looking for in this crop. In 1901, Parsons included experimental activity with oats and vetch (an herbaceous, leguminous plant used as green manure or fodder) along with his soybean experimental plantings. [8]

During his continuing experimental trials, Parsons noticed an odd looking plant amongst his other plants of the Ito San and Mongol varieties of soybeans. This apparent mutation declared itself as a tall, bushier, and more pod-laden plant than its neighbors and it matured earlier than other varieties. Parsons suspected it to be a mutation or natural hybrid so he took the plant, placed it in his garden to see how it would finish, and liked the end result. Plant breeding, a selection process employed to improve inherent and the best characteristics of a plant variety and carry them forward to the next generations, really defined Parsons's search for that "right" crop. Parsons saved some of the seeds from this plant and sent them to the USDA for genetic evaluation. The traits mentioned were carried forward and in 1905, Parsons received credit for a new variety of soybean identified as Mikado, a name he chose. The Mikado's description included the words, "Plant stout, erect, bushy, maturing in about 120 days..." all good things for farmers looking for those qualities in their beans. Other comments about the variety noted that it did very well in rain-scarce environments. Later, he would propagate another variety known as Parsons' Auburn. [9]

Parsons' interest in and championing of soybeans, though earlier than anyone in Indiana, had other proponents of the bean in the early 1890s. Experimental agricultural stations in Kansas, Iowa, and Massachusetts were studying potential gains achieved through selective breeding and improving various varieties of soybeans. Parsons and the experimental stations were both attempting to employ the soybean as a means of increasing weight gain in pigs, cows, and sheep, judge the value of the bean as a soil improvement rotation with nitrogen-depleting crops, and maximize benefits while minimizing costs. Parsons' methods of conducting these evaluations may have been more trial and error than those of the stations but his results, his success, proved that he was a diligent applier of sound breeding techniques. His appetite for reading the agricultural literature of the day no doubt opened avenues of discovery uncommon to many farmers of the period. He discovered early on that pigs fed a combination of corn and soybeans achieved a weight gain in lean mass not just gross weight compared other feeding combinations. An article in a 1916 periodical, *The County Gentleman*, supported his early findings that feeding corn and soybeans was an economical method of achieving lean mass in hogs. He recognized early on that the soybean is an excellent hay plant. By 1900, Parsons entered the market selling soybeans. [10]

Adrian Parsons, Civil war veteran, educated farmer, and inquisitive breeder of plants, particularly soybeans, changed the agricultural face of Hendricks County, Indiana, forever. His introduction of soybeans into the county in the late 1880s initiated discoveries of the benefits of the soybean to livestock

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[8] "Indiana's Pioneer Soybeaner," *The Prairie Farmer*, 28 August 1928; Piper and Morse, *The Soybean*, pages 66 – 69; "Our Pioneer Soybean Grower," *The Prairie Farmer*, 11 January 1930; A.A. Parsons' Farm Journal, 1884-1940, page 172.

[9] "Soybeans in Hendricks County," *The Prairie Farmer*, 19 March 1927, page 5; Piper and Morse, *The Soybean*, page 168.

[10] Piper and Morse, *The Soybean*, passim; "Tells of First Soy-Bean Tests, *The Indiana Farmer's Guide*, 1 December 1931, page 18; "The Labor-Saving Soy," *The Country Gentleman*, 6 May 1916, page 8; A.A. Parsons' Farm Journal, 1884-1940, page 50.

feeding and eventually created a Midwest market that survives today. Indiana's agricultural community, except for Adrian Parsons, did not involve itself with the soybean to any great degree until the early 1900s. Parsons pioneered the bean's acceptance and its use in livestock finishing. He "spread the word" about soybeans to anyone that would listen and in spite of some level of derision from his peers, he persevered. He developed a working farm during Indiana's agricultural maturation, built functional buildings with an eye to efficiency and progress, and left an example of a farmstead of the period. The numbers tell the tale. In 1920, only 23,110 bushels of soybeans were harvested in Indiana; by 1930, a year after Parsons's death, Indiana farmers harvested nearly 1.4 million bushels.[11] The bean's popularity surely increased due jointly to the efforts of Indiana state agencies and other market forces but in Hendricks County, Indiana, it started with Adrian Parsons.

Developmental History/Additional historic context information

Adrian A. Parsons began life in 1846 in Guildford County, North Carolina. He came to Indiana in 1852, along with his parents and other Quaker migrants who eventually settled in Hendricks County, Indiana. His father took up farming in the vicinity of Avon, Indiana and Parsons spent his formative years on that farm. For some unknown reason, Parsons joined up with the Union Army in 1864 at the age of 17 years. Looking back, especially in the context of his Quaker upbringing, it is difficult to reason why he signed up but this contrarian frame of mind would resurface throughout his life and partially explain his internal drive to succeed in any endeavor that challenged him.[12]

During his assignment with Company I, 9th Indiana Cavalry Parsons campaigned in Tennessee and North Alabama. His unit participated in the defense of Nashville, against the troops of Confederate General John Bell Hood. In this battle in 1864, Parsons received a nearly mortal wound that plagued him for years to come. According to notes from Parsons's personal note book, "... in the line of duty a Minnie ball passed through my body" and he lay with other wounded and dying soldiers "in a long narrow cotton shed" for five days. Medical attention arrived on the fourth day and shortly after, Parsons and others found themselves moved into Nashville proper and according to his words they "were treated royally." [13]

Parsons summarized the years immediately after the end of the war thusly, "Well I pulled through that [his wounding], came home, and married the girl I left behind me...." What he didn't mention in his note book are the years he spent increasing his education at the Danville Academy in Danville, Indiana (a few miles west of the family farm) and the short time he spent at Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana. Somewhere in the early years of his life, Parsons developed a real love and appreciation for the written word. He was a regular recipient of various publications dealing with agricultural issues of the day and

[11] John D. Barnhart and Donald F. Carmony, *Indiana From Frontier to Industrial Commonwealth, Vol. II* (New York: Lewis Publishing Company, 1954), page 415.

[12] *History of Hendricks County, Indiana* (Chicago: Inter-State Publishing Company, 1885), page 532.

[13] Ibid; "A Copy of the Notebook of A.A. Parsons." From a typescript copy in the possession of the family, item 11. Adrian Parsons kept a note book about various subjects that ran the gamut from political commentary to the best way to plant soybeans to an account of his wounding in the Civil War. From the titling of some of the items in the notebook it appears Adrian used some of the written comments in articles he sent to agricultural publications like the *Indiana Farmer.*

later in life, after his developed interest in soybeans became notable, he provided articles to several of these publications on that subject and other farm-related questions/practices.[14]

Using his advanced education as the means to earn a living, Parsons obtained a teacher's license in 1870 and taught school during the winter months. To augment his small teacher's salary, he farmed during the growing season at a farm south of the present-day town of Avon, Indiana. His first crops were the traditional menu of corn, oats, wheat and husbandry of hogs, poultry and, of course, the primary power source of the day, horses. He began bee-keeping in 1876 and pursued a growing interest in horticulture in general and the necessity for crop rotation in the specific. It's obvious that his reading habits were introducing him to the rapidly growing bank of knowledge about the science of crops. [15]

In 1882, while farming for a living, Parsons ran on the Republican ticket as a candidate for the county recorder's position and won. After winning the elected position, he moved the family to Danville and served out his four-year term there. With an eye to the future and no doubt motivated by his interest in horticulture, Parsons purchased an 82- acre farm along the east bank of White Lick Creek in 1884. Situated in the southern portion of Washington Township, the farm became the focal point for not only a means to support his family but also became the site of his future work in the cultivation of soybeans. Known locally as Wa-Pa-Ka-Way Farm, a name Parsons gave the new purchase in recognition of the Native American identification of the creek that bounded the farm. [16]

After Parsons became firmly established in the world of soybean experimentation and propagation, he became active in growing soybean seed for sale and providing inoculated soil to other farmers around the Midwest. As the acreage sowed in soybeans increased over the early years of the twentieth century, Parsons established contact with Joseph E. Wing of Mechanicsburg, Ohio, the owner of the Wing Seed Company. Accurate records of the actual amounts sold to Wing Seed are not available but on account states, "He [Parsons] sold seed by the carload to the Wing Seed Company of Ohio." As an understanding for the need to use inoculated soil grew in the agricultural community 1910s, Parsons developed a business shipping inoculating soil to farmers in Iowa, Ohio, Kentucky, West Virginia, and Illinois. A little bit of Hendricks County, Indiana, went a long way to bring in a good crop of soybeans. [17]

Parsons' reputation as a soybean pioneer in the state of Indiana is a matter of record. His introduction of the plant in the late 1880s and subsequent propagation of interest in the plant set the stage for its acceptance by even his most vocal of critics. As one article from 1931 stated, "Soy beans were a joke in former years..." and he [Parsons] "practiced the theory of inoculation while most men scoffed at it." To say he was ahead of his time is an understatement. The experiment station of Purdue University began seriously studying soybeans in 1898, some years after Parsons began his homegrown breeding activities. His work with soybeans and hog fattening mirrored the work being done at the Kansas

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[14] "A Copy of the Notebook of A.A. Parsons," item 11; *History of Hendricks County, Indiana*, page 532; "The Corn Crib Question," *The Indiana Farmer*, 10 January 1910, pages 18 and 19.

[15] Hendricks County Historical Society Presentation, "Adrian A. Parsons and the Soybean," January, 2000. Note: The presentation given at this meeting of the Hendricks County Historical Society resulted from years of research and interviews with multi-generational family members.

[16] *The History of Hendricks County, Indiana*, page 532; 'Five Generations Have Lived on the Briner Farm Pictured Last Week," *The Plainfield Messenger*, 20 June 1957.

[17] A.A. Parsons' Farm Journal, 1884-1940, passim; "Tells of First Soy-Bean Tests," *The Indiana Farmer's Guide*, 1 December 1931, page 18.

Experiment Station where they found that "hogs fattened with soybean meal …" went to market four to five weeks earlier than those fed other fodder. [18]

Under Parsons's management soybeans and soil were not the only items for sale to other folks. His dairy operation provided butter and milk to the local community. He sold milk to a local manufacturer of ice cream (Ballard Ice Cream), bred and sold livestock, sold chickens and eggs, and, late in life, he took an interest in raising bees. Parsons made presentations to the Indiana State Horticultural Society on occasion. He kept records about almost everything on the farm, including a home recipe spray for aphids, the purchase of land for investment, what he paid for groceries in town, a sugar cure for pork, and a recipe for a corrosive liniment for treating all manners of ailments in horses. A note included with the recipe mentions its use on humans but the list of ingredients would scare most people.[19]

[18] "Tells of First Soy-Bean Tests," *The Indiana Farmer's Guide*, 1 December 1931, page 18; Indiana State Board of Agriculture, "Annual Report," pages 800-804.
[19] Ibid.

9. Major Bibliographical References

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

A.A. Parsons' Farm Journal, 1884-1940.

Parsons, A.A. Personal papers, 1864-1929.

Aerial Photograph, 1939, Hendricks County, BWH-2-73.

Barnhart, John D. and Donald F. Carmony. *Indiana from Frontier to Industrial Commonwealth, Vol. II.* New York: Lewis Publishing Company, 1954.

Hendricks County Historical Society Presentation, "Adrian A. Parsons and the Soybean," January, 2000.

History of Hendricks County, Indiana. Chicago: Inter-State Publishing Company, 1885.

Indiana State Board of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1899.

Latta, William C. *Outline History of Indiana Agriculture*. Lafayette, IN: Layette Printing Company, 1938.

Piper, Charles V. and William J. Morse. *The Soybean*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1923.

The Country Gentleman, 6 May 1916.

The Indiana Farmer, 10 January 1910; 15 January 1910.

The Indiana Farmer's Guide, 1 December 1931.

The Plainfield Messenger, 20 June 1957.

The Prairie Farmer, 19 March 1927; 28 August 1928; 11 January 1930.

A.A. Parsons Farmstead | Hendricks, Indiana

Name of Property | County and State

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: _____

A.A. Parsons Farmstead | Hendricks, Indiana

Name of Property | County and State

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): None

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property _ Approx. 45 acres

Use the UTM system

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map): Plainfield Quadrangle 1:24,000

☐ NAD 1927 or ☒ NAD 1983

1. Zone: 16	Easting: 549362	Northing: 4399178
2. Zone: 16	Easting: 550196	Northing: 4399188
3. Zone: 16	Easting: 550199	Northing: 4398735
4. Zone: 16	Easting : 549352	Northing: 4398774

A.A. Parsons Farmstead | Hendricks, Indiana

Name of Property | County and State

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

From the starting point at the intersection of the north limit of the driveway and the west edge of County Road 625E proceed in a westerly direction for 560 yards to the intersection of the north limit of the driveway and the east property line; turn north and proceed in a straight line along the east property line for 438 yards to the intersection of the east property line and the north property line; turn west and proceed in a straight line along the north property line for approximately 367 yards to the east bank of White Lick Creek; maintain a straight line and cross to the west bank of White Lick Creek; mount the bank, continuing in a straight line for approximately 100 yards to the intersection of the north property line and the west property line; turn south and proceed in a straight line along the west property line for approximately 470 yards to the west bank of White Lick Creek near the intersection of the west and south property lines; cross to the east bank of White Lick Creek and proceed south to the intersection of the west and south property lines; turn east and proceed east along the south property line to its intersection with the south limit of the driveway; continue east in a straight line along the south limit of the driveway to its intersection with the west edge of County Road 625E; turn north and cross the driveway to the starting point at the intersection of the north limit of the driveway and the west edge of County Road 625E.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary described is the surveyed property lines according to the latest county assessor records and coincides with the remaining historical property lines of the farmstead.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: John Warner

organization: _____

street & number: 5018 Broadway
Street

city or town: Indianapolis state: IN zip code: 46205

e-mail jp_warner@sbcglobal.net

telephone: 3172835450

date: 3 July 2014

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 3000x2000 at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: A. A. Parsons Farmstead

City or Vicinity: Avon

County: Hendricks State: Indiana

Photographer: John Warner

Date Photographed: 9 January 2013

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 16. View of the interior of the add-on portion of the house, the wing that extends to the west, showing the earlier framing of that building.

2. Looking up at the floor joist materials used in the oldest portion of the house and that section of the house on the original footprint. Note the successive use of logs, large hewn timbers, and more modern dimensioned lumber employed over time as needs arose to strengthen the floor of the old house.

3. Looking north at the west facade of the house as it looks at the time of the nomination. The oldest section of the house is to the right and the wing is to the left and extends out toward the west. A plastic-protected patio is between the wing and the photographer's position.

4. Looking southwest at the L formed by the older main block and the wing extending west.

5. Looking northwest at the east façade and wrap porch. The south entrance leads directly into the old kitchen and to a set of steps leading to the basement.

6. Looking southeast at numerous buildings. The wing of the house is visible in the right half of the picture. The north portion of the wrap porch is also visible.

7. Looking northeast at the three-car garage.

8. Looking northwest at the workshop where Parsons maintained and stored his hand tools and made repairs on small equipment used on the farmstead.

9. Looking west at the milk cooling house, water pump, windmill, and horse tank. The base of the original windmill used to power the first pump can be seen as it frames the pump in the picture. The junction box, installed when the pump converted to electrical power, is visible on one of the cross members of the windmill structural components. The well supplied water, through a pair of pipes, to the dairy barn and the combination building.

10. Looking southwest at the privy located to the rear and south of the house. A single fence post is visible near the right margin of the privy.

11. Looking east at the bull barn. As the name implies, this building obviously was the home of Adrian's bull used in his cattle breeding activities. Parsons also maintained a small forge in the northeast corner of this building which he used to fabricate hardware and repair metal items around the farmstead. Note the small concrete buttresses reinforcing the foundation of the building. Parsons used the same buttress technique on the south side of his large dairy barn and on the west side of the western corn crib.

12. Looking northwest at the dairy barn.

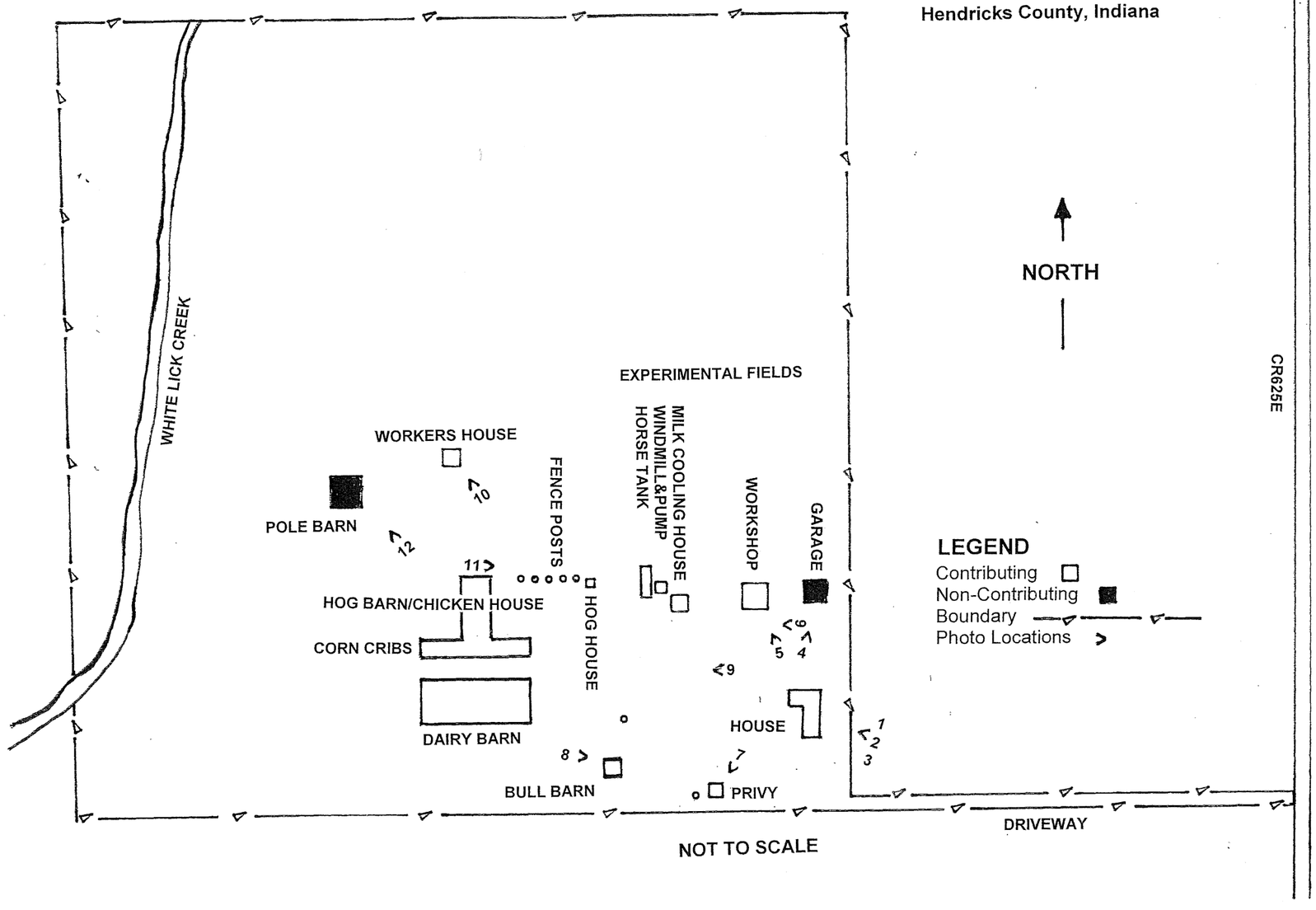
13. Looking west at the hog barn/chicken house/corn crib combination building. The farrowing stalls are located in the ground floor of the building and the chicken house occupied the upper floor. The corn cribs form the cross arms of the "T". The east end of the dairy barn is in the left of the photograph; the small extension on the right (north) of the building is the milk house.

14. Looking northwest at the building that housed the occasional migrant worker hired for labor on the property.

15. Looking east at the single remaining hog house of ten built in 1908. The concrete fence posts in the foreground once supported a wire fence used to keep livestock out of the family garden and Parsons' experimental plantings. There is one more fence post at the southwest corner of the privy and one between the house and the dairy barn.

16. Looking northwest at the modern, in respect to other buildings, pole barn that houses farm equipment.

A. A. Parsons Farmstead
Hendricks County, Indiana

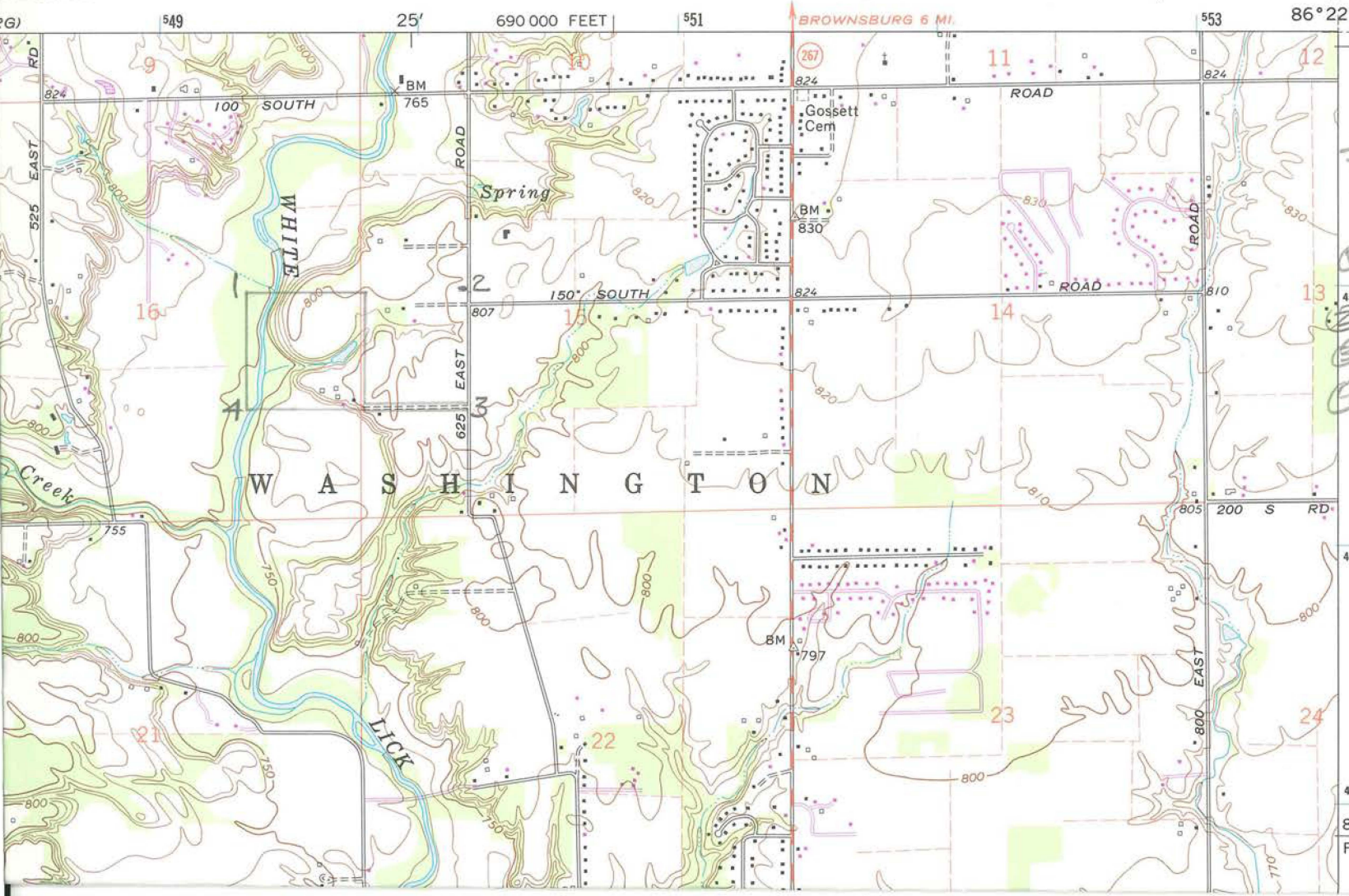


INDIANA – HENDRICKS COUNTY
PARSONS / VAPOR FARMSTEAD

DIANA
RAL RESOURCES
NDIANA

PLAINFIELD QUADRANGLE
INDIANA
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

3763 IV SE
(CLERMONT)



A. A. Parsons
Farmstead
Hendricks Co., IN
NAD 83 UTMs
① 16 549362 4399178
② 16 550196 4399188
③ 16 550199 4398735
④ 16 549352 4398774

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Parsons, A.A., Farmstead

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: INDIANA, Hendricks

DATE RECEIVED: 8/15/14 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 9/08/14
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 9/23/14 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 10/01/14
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 14000803

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 9.30.14 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.

Michael R. Pence, Governor
Cameron F. Clark, Director

DNR Indiana Department of Natural Resources

Division of Historic Preservation & Archaeology•402 W. Washington Street, W274•Indianapolis, IN 46204-2739
Phone 317-232-1646•Fax 317-232-0693•dhpa@dnr.IN.gov•www.IN.gov/dnr/historic

July 28, 2014

Carol D. Shull
Interim Keeper of the National Register
National Park Service 2280
National Register of Historic Places
1201 "I" (Eye) Street, N.W.
Washington D.C. 20005

Re: A.A. Parsons Farmstead, Avon vicinity, Hendricks County, Indiana

Dear Ms. Shull,

Enclosed is a National Register of Historic Places nomination for the A.A. Parsons Farmstead, Avon vicinity, Hendricks County, Indiana. The Indiana Historic Preservation Review Board reviewed the application and voted to recommend its approval to the National Register of Historic Places.

The enclosed disk contains the true and correct copy of the nomination for the A.A. Parsons Farmstead (Hendricks County, Indiana) to the National Register of Historic Places.

Please address any questions you or your staff may have about this nomination to my National Register staff members, Paul Diebold or Holly Tate.

Sincerely,

Cameron F. Clark
State Historic Preservation Officer

CFC:PCD:pcd

enclosure: nomination package