

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 *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" on the appropriate line or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name VERMEER, GARY J. AND MATILDA, FARMSTEAD  
other names/site number Founder's House

2. Location

street & number 1688 250th Avenue N/A not for publication  
city or town Pella N/A vicinity  
state Iowa code IA county Mahaska code 123 zip code 50219

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility) meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet) the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ( nationally  statewide  locally). ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)  
Signature of certifying official/Title [Signature] Date 7 Jun 2018  
State Historical Society of Iowa  
State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

In my opinion, the property ( meets  does not meet) the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)  
Signature of certifying official/Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is :  
 entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.  
 determined eligible for the National Register  
 See continuation sheet  
 determined not eligible for the National Register  
 removed from the National Register.  
 Other, (Explain) \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Keeper [Signature] Date of Action 7/23/2018

Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead  
Name of Property

Mahaska County, Iowa  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many lines as apply)

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

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one line)

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

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
4		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
4	0	Total

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

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/agricultural outbuilding

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**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/storage site

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**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

MODERN MOVEMENT/Ranch Style

NO STYLE

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**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

walls WOOD, STONE, METAL

roof ASPHALT, METAL

other

**Narrative Description**

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

Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead  
Name of Property

Mahaska County, Iowa  
County and State

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" on one or more lines 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" on all the lines that apply)

Property is:

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

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

AGRICULTURE  
INDUSTRY  
INVENTION

**Period of Significance**

1948-1972

**Significant Dates**

1953  
Circa 1963  
1972

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Vermeer, Gary J.

**Cultural Affiliation**

**Architect/Builder**

De Jong, Martin A. ("Bats")

**Narrative Statement of Significance** - (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

**9. Major Bibliography References**

**Bibliography**

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

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

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

**Primary location of additional data:**

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

Name of repository

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 3.6 acre +/-

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 | 15 | 5 | 078200 | 458400.0 |

Zone Easting Northing

2 |    |    |    |    |

Zone Easting Northing

3 |    |    |    |    |

Zone Easting Northing

4 |    |    |    |    |

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title William C. Page, Public Historian; Joanne R. Page

organization Vermeer Corporation date December 1, 2017

street & number 520 East Sheridan Avenue (Page) telephone 515-243-5740 (Page)

city or town Des Moines state Iowa zip code 50313-5017

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs** - Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

**Additional items** - (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

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

name Vermeer Manufacturing Company (Deed Holder)

street & number Post Office Box 200 telephone 614-629-1899

city or town Pella state Iowa zip code 50219

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 7 Page 1

CFN-259-1116

Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead, Mahaska County, IA.

**GENERAL DESCRIPTION**

The Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead stands on the west edge of the farmland historically associated with it and adjacent to 250th Avenue, a county road dividing Marion and Mahaska counties, Iowa. (See Figure 1.) The farmstead is located in Mahaska County, although now incorporated into the City of Pella, Iowa, which is located in Marion County. Pella is the market center always associated with the Vermeers and their farm. The farmstead includes 3.6 acres of land divided into the following land use areas: 1) home yard, 2) barnyard, and 3) farmstead frontage. The farmstead contains the four resources for this nomination. All contribute to this nomination and are classified as buildings.

**SITE**

The site of the Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead is located, as commonly known, in some of the richest farmland in the world. Its surroundings to the east and south remain agricultural cropland. Immediately to the north, Yellow Iron Academy, a recently built child daycare and learning center, provides services to the children of Vermeer Manufacturing Company employees. The academy is set back farther from 250th Avenue than the Vermeer Farmstead, so that it does not visually intrude on the north-south axis of the farmstead's linear layout. Vermeer Manufacturing Company's industrial campus stands directly west across 250th Avenue from the Vermeer Farmstead. This site includes factory and administration buildings and the Global Pavilion, a conference center for employees and the Pella community along with the Vermeer Corporation's museum. Although this industrial campus is heavily improved, none of its buildings is greater than several stories in height, preserving a sense of open space in harmony with the linear feeling of the level agricultural cropland surrounding it. Another industrial building also stands across the road from the Vermeer Farmstead. It too blends in with the surrounding farmland. All of these buildings post-date 1966.

**VERMEER FARM**

The Vermeer Farm today includes an assemblage of farmland acquired since 1941. Although this nomination excludes this farmland, both it and the farmstead are described below to provide context for this nomination. The exclusion of the farmland is justified because it does not directly relate to the significance of the resource.

Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer originally acquired 62.56 acres at this site in 1950 (Mahaska County Auditor, *Plat Book, Set No. 3*) as a gift from Jacob G. and Anna E. Vermeer, Gary's parents, who had purchased the land in 1941 as a wedding gift for the couple. (*Ibid., Plat Book 4*) Although the title to this farm was transferred legally to Gary and Matilda in 1950 (see Figure 4), the couple had lived on the site since their marriage in 1941. By 1981, Gary and Matilda had acquired additional land in the area, bringing the total to 158.89 acres. (See Figure 6.) The Vermeer Farm is situated on mostly level land.

Survey lines bound the Vermeer Farm on the east and north. A paved county road, known as 250th Avenue in the City of Pella, bounds the farm on the west and serves as the dividing line between Mahaska and Marion counties. (This road is also known as Adams Avenue in Mahaska County.) Another paved road borders the Vermeer Farm on the south. It is known in the City of Pella as Vermeer Road and in Mahaska County as County Road G5T (formerly Iowa Highway 102). In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, this road also served as Pella R.F.D. [Rural Free Delivery] No. 2.

Yellow Iron Academy stands on a parcel of land on the north side of the Vermeer Farm. This daycare and educational facility serves the children of Vermeer Corporation employees. The rest of the Vermeer Farm,

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 7

Page 2

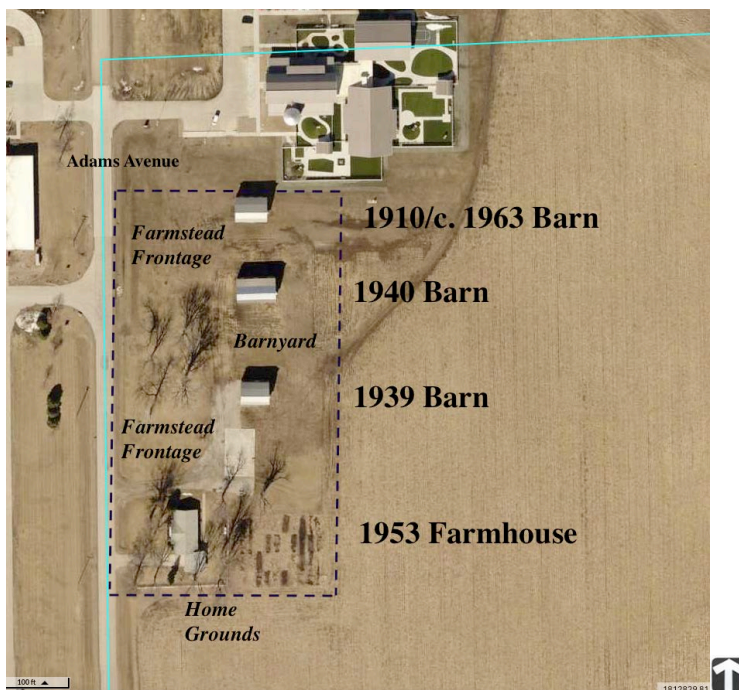
CFN-259-1116

Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead, Mahaska County, IA.

except for the Vermeer Farmstead, continues to be used today as cropland. The academy and adjacent cropland are excluded from this nomination as justified in Section 10.

**VERMEER FARMSTEAD**

The Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead is situated near the southwest corner of the Vermeer Farm. The farmstead parcel measures approximately 533 x 280 feet, frontage by depth. The Vermeer Farmstead features three land use areas as depicted in Figure 7 and inset below: 1) home yard, 2) barnyard, and 3) farmstead frontage.



The Vermeer Farmstead conveys a sense of order to the viewer. The barns share a common setback of about 170 feet from 250th Avenue, lending linear regularity to the farmstead. The gable-end roofs of these barns—each oriented to 250th Avenue—add a sense of rhythm to the composition. All of these factors bespeak an orderly planned site. The long and deep farmstead frontage separating the barns from the street provides a dramatic stage for their presentation to the viewer.

Home Yard

The home yard is located in the southwest portion of the farmstead and is bounded by 250th Avenue on the west, a wood fence on the south, a survey line on the east, and a gravel driveway that separates the home yard from the barn yard to the north. A drainage ditch is situated between 250th Avenue and the home yard. A paved concrete driveway leads from 250th Avenue to a garage that is attached to the farmhouse.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 7 Page 3

CFN-259-1116

Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead, Mahaska County, IA.

The Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmhouse is a 1-story, frame, single-family dwelling constructed in 1953. The farmhouse faces west and stands about 85 feet east of the public right-of-way centerline along 250th Avenue. The farmhouse is addressed as 1688 250th Avenue. A garden is situated to the east of the farmhouse.

Barn Yard

The barn yard is situated to the north of the home yard. A gravel drive running east from 250th Avenue provides access to the barn yard and leads to a graveled area north of the farmhouse. A concrete slab stands in its southeast corner. This slab originally served as the base of a steel utility building constructed in 1982. Several years ago, this building was removed, leaving the slab intact. At an earlier time, this area likely served as a feedlot for animals on the farm.

The barn yard features three barns: one built in 1939, one built in 1940, and one originally built in 1910 and relocated to its present site circa 1963. When the 1940 barn was built, its west elevation was set back from 250th Avenue to conform to the alignment of the barn built in 1939. When the 1910-circa 1963 barn was moved onto the site, its west elevation was also set back to align with the other two barns. This common setback stands about 170 feet from 250th Avenue, and the linear alignment of these barns lends an orderly appearance to the Vermeer Farmstead. This sense of order is further accented by the north-to-south arrangement of trees planted in rows in the farmstead frontage.

Sometime in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, the Vermeer Corporation converted the barn yard into a facility for company use, including the construction of the graveled parking lot described above. A driveway led north from this parking lot to access the 1940 and 1910 barns. (See Figures 9 and 10.) Historically, several other outbuildings stood in the barn yard. They included a hen house, hog house, granary, crib, machine shed, and several other small sheds. (See Figure 8.) None of these structures remains extant; and their sites, along with driveways, which articulated them, were removed and planted in turf early in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Farmstead Frontage

The farmstead frontage includes the swath of land between the barn yard, the home yard, and 250th Avenue. A deep drainage ditch is situated next to 250th Avenue and divides it from the farmstead frontage. The farmstead frontage is planted in turf with shade trees. Running north and south, this stand of trees is planted in two rows. The farmstead frontage historically featured a few nonextant farm outbuildings. (See Figure 8.) Today, the farmstead frontage features well-maintained turf and conveys a park-like feeling to the viewer.

**NOMINATED RESOURCES**

Gary J. & Matilda Vermeer Farmhouse (contributing)

The Gary J. & Matilda Vermeer Farmhouse is a 1-story single-family dwelling with an attached garage. Martin A. ("Bats") De Jong, a Pella contractor-builder, constructed this farmhouse in 1953. The Vermeer Farmhouse features a main block measuring 56 x 29-feet and a shallow projecting wing on the west elevation measuring about 28 x 2-feet, for a total of 1,708 square feet. (See Figure 13.) The house rests on masonry footings. It has no basement. The house features wood framing with exterior walls clad with brick veneer in

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 7 Page 4

CFN-259-1116

Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead, Mahaska County, IA.

colors of tawny yellow, creamy yellow, orangish red, and light purple randomly laid in a typical running bond pattern. Buff-colored stone veneer, simulating a random ashlar pattern, clads the projecting wing. A moderately pitched, side-gable roof covers the main block with a front-gable roof intersecting it at its ridge to cover the wing. Both these roofs are clad with light gray-colored asphalt shingles.

Fenestration features a wide, tri-partite picture window on the front facade. A fixed awning, perhaps from the 1980s, stands above this window and is a replacement of an earlier awning, whose calking remains visible above the present awning. Paired windows with 1/1 double-hung sash are employed on the west, south, east, and north elevations of the building along with several additional single double-hung windows on the east and north.

The front door is situated on the south elevation of the projecting wing. It features a small window centered in its upper third. During its period of significance, the house featured a wall-mounted air-conditioning unit set into the living room's north window. The air-conditioner is a significant character-defining feature of the Vermeer Family's sense of thrift. They easily could have afforded central air but economized instead.

The attached garage, set back from the front façade of the farmhouse, measures 24 x 25-feet and possesses 600 square feet. The garage is of frame construction and veneered with the same brick as the farmhouse. A moderately pitched side-gable roof clad with asphalt shingles covers the garage. The garage can accommodate two vehicles but possesses one over-head door with four window lights. A pedestrian entrance to the garage is situated adjacent to the farmhouse. The garage possesses two windows on the south elevation and two windows on the east elevation, each filled with 12 blocks of opaque glass. A brick interior chimney is situated in the northeast corner of the garage with a flue, now capped, for a wood-burning stove.

Originally, a concrete pedestrian walk led from the concrete driveway by the garage to the farmhouse. As Gary experienced mobility issues in later age, a wood ramp with metal railing was installed from the driveway to the front door. When the rear addition was completed in 2016, a new poured concrete pedestrian walk was laid to connect the farmhouse with the driveway to the north. Various plantings are situated around the house at its base.

On the interior, the farmhouse originally featured a living room, kitchen, hall, four bedrooms, bathroom, and utility room, standing stead for a basement. A few modifications have taken place. (See Figure 14.) In the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, the south bedroom was subdivided to enlarge the bathroom. When the rear addition was built in 2016, this bathroom was converted into a hallway to provide access to the addition, and the bedroom was returned to its original configuration. At the same time, the partition separating the living room and the kitchen was removed, and the partition separating the living room and the hall was foreshortened to increase the articulation of the space for gatherings.

The house floorplan is of particular interest. Although the house could comfortably accommodate two or even three bedrooms, it actually contains four, an unusually large number for a 1,708 square feet dwelling. A long hall centers the house, separates it into public spaces and private spaces, and articulates movement between them. The living room and kitchen are situated on the front and south sides of the house. The bedrooms and bathroom are situated at the rear and north sides of the house. This floorplan provided bedrooms, albeit small, for the parents and each of their three children. The boys' bedrooms are the smallest.

In 2016-2017, a 1-story, frame addition was added to the rear of the house to provide larger restroom facilities for it. A gable roof clad with asphalt shingles covers it. An enclosed hallway, covered with an intersecting gable roof clad with asphalt shingles, separates this addition from the main block.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 7 Page 5

CFN-259-1116

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Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead, Mahaska County, IA.

Other than these changes, the interior remains much as it appeared during Gary and Matilda's occupancy. Beige-colored wall-to-wall carpeting covers the living room floor. Kitchen cabinets remain as installed in 1953. Each of the four bedrooms remains as occupied by the Vermeer family with furniture and décor from the building's period of significance. These bedrooms include those for Gary and Matilda (northwest), Mary (northeast), Robert (middle), and Stanley (south). (See Figure 14.)

One Iowa State Nominations Review Committee members questioned what the Vermeers, without a basement, would use for a storm shelter? They trusted in God for protection. (Teri Vos)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 7 Page 6

CFN-259-1116

Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead, Mahaska County, IA.

1939 Barn (contributing)

Built in 1939 for J. B. Grandia, the previous owner of the property, this barn stands at the far south end of the barn yard. The name of its builder remains unknown. The footprint of this barn measures 26 x 38 feet, the lesser dimension facing 250th Avenue. It rests on a concrete slab surmounted by a wood plate and features structural members of heavy wood and dimensional lumber with exterior walls clad in metal siding. A gambrel roof clad with metal covers the barn. The barn remains in good condition. Today, it serves for storage.

The barn features four bays of post and beam construction attached by nails. Each bay features four posts. The perimeter posts are of solid wood, measure 4 x 8-inch, and rest on the barn's 4 x 5-inch wood plate. The interior posts are of solid wood dimensional lumber, measure 4 x 8-inch, and rest on 6-inch concrete bases. One of these posts is a tree trunk stripped of its bark. The beams supported by these posts are of solid wood dimensional lumber, measuring 2 x 10-inch, and are quintupled for strength. These beams run east to west. The haymow floor joists supported by these beams run north and south. The joists are of solid wood dimensional lumber, measure 2 x 8-inch, and are paired for strength. These joists run north to south.

The ground floor of the barn was used for pigs and cows. (Stanley J. Vermeer) The floor is of poured concrete. A guardrail, constructed of 2 x 6-inch boards, runs around the perimeter of the ground floor about 40-inches above grade to form a kind of wainscot. A few remnants of rusty iron hinges remain attached to some of the posts, suggesting that at some time gates divided the main floor into stalls. Today, the main floor features a completely open floor plan.

The upper level of the barn features a haymow with a heavy plank floor. The barn's framing scheme on the ground floor is repeated here, although the mow posts are placed a little closer to outside walls than those on the ground floor. The mow posts are of solid wood dimensional lumber, measuring 2 x 6-inch and doubled for strength. Diagonal wood braces straddle each of these posts and are attached to posts on the ground floor for further support. The mow posts, which are braced for strength, support purlins situated at points where the roof's gambrel planes intersect. These purlins run east to west and support wood rafters and roof sheathing.

A large door is situated in the east gable end to receive hay for storage from nearby fields to the east. A hayfork track remains suspended in place beneath the roof ridge. A platform, built of wood members, is suspended from the roof above the west window in the haymow.

The barn's structural members reveal the use of recycled materials. As previously mentioned, a tree trunk serves as one post. Other scraps and pieces used for framing also reveal previous usage. This fabrication indicates an eye to construction economy.

The exterior of the barn has undergone some changes. Its exterior walls originally were clad with board and battens. In the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, the battens were removed and the boards were covered with red metal siding shaped like board and battens. Although most of the doors and windows are replacements, two fixed, 4-pane windows remain intact in the west and east gable ends. An historic 1949 snapshot pictures the barn doors and windows painted white as they are today. (See Figure 11.) This same photograph pictures the barn roof covered with asphalt shingles. A standing-seam metal roof covers the barn today with the roof's original wood sheathing remaining intact beneath it.

A contemporary "barn quilt" centers the barn's west gable end. Barn quilts are popular amenities seen throughout the Iowa countryside. They depict quilt designs affixed to the exterior of farm buildings. This

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 7 Page 7

CFN-259-1116

Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead, Mahaska County, IA.

barn quilt reproduces the design of an actual quilt made by Matilda Vermeer and Minnie Blom van Gorp, her mother. (Lois Vermeer) It features a star design in white, orange, and red colors and was installed soon after the metal siding on the barn.

The construction of the 1939 barn predated Vermeer ownership. In 1921, J. B. Grandia had purchased this land, and credit for the construction of this barn is given to him. As the first barn built on what became the Vermeer Farmstead, this barn's setback of about 170 feet from 250th Avenue established a baseline to which the later two barns on the property conformed.

The geographical placement of these barns on the site reveals the chronology of their placement on the farmstead. The 1939 barn was situated closest to a nonextant farmhouse. (See Figure 11.) The 1940 barn was situated to the north of the 1939 building. The third barn, erected in 1910 and relocated to its present site circa 1963, was situated to the north of the 1940 building. As a result, this chronological placement of barns documents the evolution of the Vermeer Farmstead as a linear design.

1940 Barn (contributing)

Built in 1940 for J. B. Grandia, this barn stands between the 1939 barn and another barn to the north. The footprint of the 1940 barn measures 30 x 48 feet, the lesser dimension facing 250th Avenue. The name of its builder remains unknown. The 1940 barn is a near replica of the 1939 barn in framing and appearance, albeit a little larger in size.

With few exceptions, the physical description given above for the 1939 barn suffices for that of the 1940 barn, including the addition of metal siding and roof in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. The exceptions include the use in the 1940 barn of 6 x 6-inch solid wood posts with steel guards to protect their bases and a center drive floor plan with vehicular doors on the east and west.

A large door is situated in the east gable end to receive hay for storage from nearby fields to the east. A hayfork track remains suspended in place beneath the roof ridge.

The ground floor of the barn was used for animal shelter. Its upper level features a haymow with a large door in its east gable end to receive hay for storage from the nearby field to the east. The barn remains in good condition. A hayfork apparatus remains extant above the mow door to transfer hay from the ground to the mow. Today, this barn serves for storage.

The construction of this barn predated Vermeer ownership. As mentioned above, J. B. Grandia had purchased this land in 1921, and credit for the construction of this barn is given to him. As the second barn built on what became the Vermeer Farmstead, this barn's setback of about 170 feet from 250th Avenue reaffirmed that baseline, established by the earlier 1939 barn.

1910 Barn (contributing)

Built in 1910 for E. C. Kruseman, this barn now stands at the far north of the Vermeer farmstead. The barn originally stood on an 80-acre farm directly to the east of the Vermeer Farm. (See Figure 2.) E. C. Kruseman held the title to this property in 1914, and credit for this barn's construction is given to him. The name of its builder remains unknown.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 7 Page 8

CFN-259-1116

Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead, Mahaska County, IA.

In 1963, Gary Vermeer and Jacob J. Vermeer acquired Kruseman's farm and equally divided the land between them. Kruseman's barn stood on Gary's parcel. Sometime between 1963 and 1964, Gary moved this barn to its present location. Stanley J. Vermeer recalls that this barn was not there when he left for college in 1960 but was there when he returned home in 1964. (Stanley J. Vermeer) The relocation of this barn was likely a disassembly/reassembly operation rather than the relocation of the building in one piece.

The footprint of the 1910-circa 1963 barn measures 30 x 40 feet, the lesser dimension facing 250th Avenue. This barn is a near replica of the 1939 and 1940 barns in framing and appearance, albeit slightly smaller in size. It rests on a concrete slab and features wood structural members and board and batten siding, now clad with metal siding. A gambrel roof with wood shingles, now clad with metal, covers the barn. The ground floor of the barn was used for general farm purposes. Its upper level features a haymow with a large door in its east gable end to receive hay brought from nearby fields to the east. The description of the 1939 barn describes the structural system of this barn. The 1910 barn remains in good condition and serves today for storage. The date of this barn's relocation falls within the period of significance of this historic district.

#### INTEGRITY

The resources on the Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead possess good to excellent integrity in its seven qualities. It should be noted that, although a number of farm outbuildings are nonextant, many of them were sheds, and the farmstead's linear layout—its farmhouse and three barns—remains visually intact.

The property's integrity of *location* is excellent. All of its resources remain at their original locations with the exception of the 1910 barn, which was moved into the historic district within its period of significance.

The integrity of the Vermeer Farmhouse's *design* is very good. The elements of the building's exterior—its foundation, walls, and roof—remain as built. Although the building was enlarged in 2016, this addition is small, situated at the rear of the building, and not visible from the street. Because of this, the integrity of the farmhouse remains intact. On the interior, several wall partitions have been altered to increase the size of dwelling's communal spaces and its utility for gatherings, but the building's interior still conveys a sense of modest size, particularly the intact small bedrooms.

The *design* integrity of the barns is good. Their structural systems remain original and intact. Although their exteriors are now clad with metal cover-up siding, altering their appearance and impacting their integrity somewhat, this treatment is reversible with original cladding materials extant behind the siding.

The *setting* of the Vermeer Farmstead is good. It remains generally as it appeared during its period of significance in the mid-1950s, except for the removal of some outbuildings and driveways associated with the barnyard.

The integrity of the farmstead's *materials* is good. Except for the metal cover-up siding and roofing (which are reversible) on the three barns, original building materials and their finishes remain intact throughout the property. The exterior of the farmhouse retains its original materials, except for replacement asphalt shingles, which is expected. The rear addition of the building was built with compatible materials.

The *workmanship* evident in the Vermeer Farmhouse is very good and best seen in its exterior masonry and interior cabinetry. The workmanship in the barns is good, demonstrating knowledgeable building practices as executed in solid yet economical structural systems by rural builders. This workmanship is best evident in the barn's framing members and their fabrication using recycled building materials whenever possible.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 7 Page 9

CFN-259-1116

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Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead, Mahaska County, IA.

The Vermeer Farmstead as a property retains a good historic *feeling*. Although the removal of various outbuildings and the network of driveways articulating them have reduced the number of structures on the site and turf has replaced them, the overall feeling of this property continues to convey the sense of a mid-20<sup>th</sup> century farmstead. The logistics of farm chores remain discernable on the farmstead, as the barns used for more intensive labor—those associated with animals—are situated nearer the farmhouse, while those with less labor intensive purposes such as storage are situated farther away from it. The viewer also can discern how the haymow doors on the east elevation of each of the three barns, along with hayfork tracks above them, could readily receive mown hay from adjacent fields transferred to the haymows.

The Vermeer Farmstead possesses a fine quality of *association*. Visitors from its period of significance readily would recognize the farmstead as it stands today, although they would find the industrial complexes, which have emerged to the west, prairie marvels.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 8 Page 10

CFN-259-1116

Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead, Mahaska County, IA.

### SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead is significant, locally and under National Register Criterion B, because it calls attention to Gary J. Vermeer, an industrial leader in Iowa during the mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century. As founder of the Vermeer Manufacturing Company in 1948, he developed this privately held firm, doing business now as the Vermeer Corporation, into one of the nation's leading heavy equipment manufacturing operations, employing 3,000 people by the year 2000. The Vermeer Farmstead calls attention to Gary J. Vermeer's early life on this property as a farmer and how his ideas to mechanize farming emerged from this experience. From these beginnings, the firm expanded to include the design and manufacture of products for the construction, environmental, landscaping, excavation, and forage industries, successfully competing in international markets. Today, the firm's corporate headquarters remain in Pella, Iowa, along with a manufacturing facility totaling some 1.5 million square feet.

The Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmhouse is locally significant under National Register Criterion A, for social history. The building calls attention to the moral principle of "Plain Living and High Thinking," a lifestyle valued by Americans since the founding of the nation. Although Mr. and Mrs. Vermeer could have afforded any opulence or domestic comfort, they practiced thrift and economy while living in this modest house most of their adult lives, engaging at the same time in philanthropic generosity across the nation and around the world. While the principle of "Plain Living and High Thinking" is not unusual historically among Iowa farm families, Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer exemplify these traits of American character writ large.

The period of significance for the Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead is 1948-1972. The year 1948 marks the date when Gary established the Vermeer Manufacturing Company. The year 1972 dates a notable Vermeer innovation, the round hay baler, a machine, which appeared on the market that year and would firmly establish the Vermeer Manufacturing Company as an industrial might. Although 1972 falls beyond the National Register 50-year rule, the date is justified because it marks the fulfillment of an inventive process.

Significant dates include 1953, the year the Vermeer Farmhouse was erected; circa 1963, when one of the three barns on the farmstead was moved to the site; and 1972 for the reason stated above. The property possesses four resources, the farmhouse and the three barns. Each is counted as contributing and classified as a building.

### THUMBNAIL BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES

Gary J. Vermeer (1918-2009) was born in the family farmhouse two miles east of Pella, Iowa, on September 29, 1918, to Jacob and Anna Haven Ver Meer. The first of their four sons, he was named for his paternal grandfather.<sup>1</sup> Gary's parents were known locally as good farmers, and they taught their sons these traits. They cultivated corn and other crops, and raised cattle, hogs, and chickens, in addition to the usual farm animals such as dairy cows and pets. Jacob owned at least five farms when the Great Depression hit, and due to his good farming methods and head for business, he did not lose any land in those years when so many others lost everything. Jacob leased out most of his land, but farmed 200 acres himself. One of his farms was mined for coal, which brought income to the family for about 10 years during this time.

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<sup>1</sup> Vermeer was baptized Gerrit Jacob Ver Meer. He Anglicized his first name to "Gary" and simplified the orthography of his surname to Vermeer, demonstrating his preference for simplicity.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 8 Page 11

CFN-259-1116

Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead, Mahaska County, IA.

With his brothers Elmer (called "Dutch"), John, and Harry, Gary attended a one-room country school one-and-a-half miles from home, called Plain View School, for grades one through eight. He then attended Pella High School, graduating in 1935.

Even as a boy, Gary exhibited characteristics that would follow him into his future career. He loved the outdoors, so following his father into farming was a natural choice. He also excelled in school. During his senior year in high school, he attended half-days so he could help his father on the farm, but his grades were so good he continued to make the honor roll. At an early age he demonstrated his love of "tinkering" by putting common items together in ways to make pipes clang, to pull heavy objects to new places, to create go-carts, or to fashion pipes into "cannons" to shoot off dynamite. The future mechanical innovator had found a career in addition to farming.

About three miles from the Vermeer farm where Gary grew up, John M. and Minnie Blom Van Gorp were raising their five children on a farm of 120 acres. Their third child, Matilda, was born on February 14, 1920. (Matilda Vermeer obituary) With her older siblings, Gertrude and Edward, and younger siblings Evelena and John, she grew up on the farm. The Van Gorp family was poorer than the Vermeers and had to struggle more financially, but they were still known for their generosity to those who needed help. The Van Gorp children attended another nearby one-room school, Wheat Grow. Of the children, only Evelena graduated from high school.

Although they grew up only three miles apart, because they went to different schools, Gary and Matilda did not know each other well as children. They did, however, attend the same church, First Christian Reformed Church of Pella, and religion was important to both throughout their lives. As teen-agers, they became interested in each other. Gary began driving Matilda and her parents to and from evening church services in 1936. The two families knew and liked each other, and soon the couple was "courting." They became engaged at Christmas 1939, married on Matilda's birthday, Valentine's Day 1941, and moved to a farm Gary's parents had bought for them. The title to this property was transferred to them in 1950.

This 120-acre farm, the subject of this nomination, was located east of Pella. The property included an old farmhouse where they resided until 1953 when they relocated to their new home built to the side just to the south. The 1953 house is one of the contributing resources in this nomination and Gary and Matilda's home for the rest of their lives. Their first home was subsequently moved into Pella, where it stood until being demolished in 2005. The new home boasted four bedrooms and one bathroom, but no basement. It was designed and built for them by local carpenter Martin ("Bats") De Jong. (In the future, the second Vermeer son, Robert, would marry De Jong's daughter.)

In addition to the house and farm, Gary's parents gave the young couple \$2,000 for Gary's labor the last five years. With this money they bought a car, cattle, hogs, and farm equipment. The Van Gorp's gave them some chickens, two milk cows, furniture for the house, and kitchenware. With this good start, Gary and Matilda were able to live off their farm's income for the early years of their marriage.

On November 4, 1942, their first child, Stanley James, was born at home. Due to some complications during Stan's birth, their second child, Robert Lee was born in the Oskaloosa hospital on July 28, 1944. Five years later, their third child, Mary Ann, was born on November 22, 1949, also in the same hospital. All three of their children would grow up to spend at least part of their careers with the Vermeer Manufacturing Company, as would several of their grandchildren.

<sup>2</sup> The existing farmhouse on the property was moved to Jefferson Street in Pella and subsequently torn down about 2005. An historic photograph of the building shows it in transit during the move. (Klompenburg and Biddle: 118)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8 Page 12

CFN-259-1116

Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead, Mahaska County, IA.

In the 1940s Gary became involved in the first of his inventions, leading to the establishment of the Vermeer Manufacturing Company in 1948. From then on, the factory took more and more of his time, although he still remained active in the decisions regarding the farm. In the late 1940s he took flying instruction, and after obtaining his pilot license, often flew to business meetings. He also began flying to Canada for hunting and recreation. During the 1950s, he continued to buy more land for farming and hunting and as investments. In 1958, he joined with his brother Harry and cousin Ralph J. Vermeer in establishing the Vermeer Charitable Foundation, a family philanthropy to support educational, religious, and community projects. He also assumed more responsible positions in the church and community. Meanwhile, Matilda cared for the children, including a sick neighbor's daughter for an eleven month period following the birth. She also was a leader in the church, and she made sure the children attended Sunday School and learned about religious faith. As they became more comfortable financially, the couple engaged in more travel together. Gary's business and philanthropy took him all over the world, and often Matilda and the children would accompany him. Both engaged in many missionary projects in far away countries. (Gary & Matilda Vermeer obituaries)

Gary died at the age of ninety on February 2, 2009. In addition to the community funeral service for him, the company held its own remembrance service.

Matilda passed away at the age of ninety-four on July 24, 2014. She was respected for her humility and admired for her devotion to church, family, and husband. Mr. and Mrs. Vermeer continued to live in their 1953 home until shortly before their deaths. They are interred at Oakwood Cemetery in Pella, Iowa. (Van Klompburg and Biddle: 83-125; Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer obituaries)

### **VERMEER CORPORATION**

The Vermeer Corporation is a privately held company, owned and operated by the Vermeer family and its shareholders. Gary J. Vermeer founded the Vermeer Corporation in 1948 and served as its head for 41 years. Retiring in 1989 as the corporation's CEO, he remained Chairman Emeritus of the Board. Earlier in that decade, Robert (Bob) L. Vermeer, Gary's son, had joined the firm and later served as Chairman of the Board until 2009. Mary Vermeer Andringa, Gary's daughter, joined the firm in 1982 with an emphasis on marketing, later broadening the scope of her responsibilities and becoming CEO and President of Vermeer Corporation in 2009. Several of Gary's grandchildren recently have taken up the mantle of Vermeer management. From its original establishment to innovate and manufacture farm equipment locally, the firm has grown and now produces a diversified range of heavy equipment for international markets. In 2007, the company employed about 2,000 people with sales reaching more than \$600 million annually. (Van Klompburg and Biddle: 73-74)

### Industrial Innovation in Iowa

The Vermeer Manufacturing Company is significant within the historical continuum of innovative industries in the State of Iowa.

Iowa has a long history of innovation in the fields of manufacturing, bioscience and agriculture, technology, and, more recently, energy. The 1858 establishment of the Iowa Agricultural College and Model Farm (now Iowa State University) laid a cornerstone for development of scientific research and education in Iowa. To

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 8 Page 13

CFN-259-1116

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Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead, Mahaska County, IA.

the present day, this institution ranks among the state's leading recipients of utility patents granted by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office for mechanical and scientific innovation.

The later 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries witnessed a flowering of industrial activity in the Iowa. Much of it focused on agriculture, as Iowa emerged as an important manufacturing center for the development and production of agricultural-related machinery. This was the age when mechanization was transforming farming methods.

Individuals such as William Loudon (who grew up on a farm in Jefferson County, Iowa) used their inventive genius to create labor-saving devices to make farming easier. Teaming up with his family, the Loudons established the Loudon Machinery Company in 1867 in Fairfield to manufacture agricultural equipment for barns, animals, and farm fields. The family also established a malleable iron foundry in Fairfield specifically to manufacture castings necessary for the production of Loudon products. Seizing opportunities to broaden the scope of its products, the firm later introduced a line of material handling systems applicable for industries of all stripes. The firm remained locally controlled until 1956, when Mechanical Handling Systems, Inc., of Detroit, Michigan, acquired the firm.

Charles W. Hart and Charles H. Parr provide an example of innovation in manufacturing farm tractors. Hart was grown up in Charles City, Iowa, and Parr in Dodgeville, Wisconsin. Having developed a gasoline-powered engine while students in mechanical engineering at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, these two partners established the Hart-Parr Company in 1897 to manufacture farm tractors with internal combustion engines. In 1901, the partners relocated their operations in Charles City, Hart's hometown. The American Society of Mechanical Engineers credits the firm's Model 3 tractor, brought into production in 1907, as "the earliest known internal-combustion agricultural tractor in the United States." (American Society of Mechanical Engineers) Hart-Parr subsequently manufactured thousands of the Model 3 and other types of tractors from its factory in Charles City, establishing three offices in Europe for sales. During World War I the firm experienced serious financial difficulties in converting its operations to the war effort; and, although Hart-Parr continued to produce farm equipment following the war, it was weakened and merged in 1929 with the Oliver Farm Equipment Company.

Many early farm equipment firms like the above began as small, privately owned and operated enterprises owing their start-up to individuals, whose experience on the farm and innovative genius had prompted them to invent labor-saving equipment. Family members with complementing abilities—business acumen in particular—contributed to the success of these ventures.

The early 20<sup>th</sup> century was a period of rapid transformation from horse-drawn and steam-powered equipment to that of the internal combustion engine. Many agricultural manufacturing firms in Iowa like those mentioned above merged or were acquired by larger corporations capable of using the economies of scale, mass marketing, and professional engineering skills to manufacture more advanced and cheaper products. Many small firms failed to compete in the marketplace and vanished. The automobile industry experienced this same trend, General Motors emerging, for example, as a behemoth corporation over many divisions, as its name suggests.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 8 Page 14

CFN-259-1116

Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead, Mahaska County, IA.

In 1911, for example, John Deere & Co. had acquired the Dain Manufacturing Company of Ottumwa, Iowa, a manufacturer of hay-making equipment. In 1918, Deere also acquired the Waterloo Gasoline Engine Company of Waterloo, Iowa. This firm manufactured the “Waterloo Boy” tractor, a machine so successful that Deere had selected this Waterloo firm for acquisition after realizing that its own designs for tractors did not compete successfully in the booming tractor market. Deere, like many of the corporations, which acquired homegrown Iowa industrial firms like these, usually continued to operate existing factories to the benefit of their communities.

Other heavy equipment industries also emerged in Iowa during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Link-Belt Speeder Corporation of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, provides one example. Between 1939 and 1986, the company manufactured a wide range of heavy equipment, including cranes, power shovels, excavators, draglines, hoes and pile drives. (Barr: 2). Much of it was used for highway construction. This company boomed with the Federal Highway Act of 1956 and the construction of the nation’s interstate highway system. Earlier, during the rise of the Good Roads Movement in the 1910s and 1920s, Cedar Rapids had emerged as one of the nation’s three leading manufacturing centers for this type of equipment along with Peoria, Illinois, and Milwaukee, Wisconsin. (*Ibid.*: 3)

Within this continuum of innovative industries in Iowa, the Vermeer Manufacturing Company plays a leading role in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> and earlier 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. This claim is justified by the number of patents granted to the firm by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office during this period. According to that office:

PATENTING IN IOWA BY ORGANIZATION  
1969-2015

Assignee	Total Counts
Individually Owned	4,465
Deere + Company *	2,402
Pioneer Hi-Bred International, Inc.	1,208
Rockwell Collins, Inc.	1,089
Iowa State University Research Foundation, Inc.	939
Rockwell International Corporation	602
Stine Seed Farm, Inc.	542
University of Iowa Research Foundation	537
Maytag Corporation	430
Monsanto Technology, LLC.	414
Fisher Controls International, LLC.	379
Square D Company	260
Case Corporation *	251
Vermeer Manufacturing Company, Inc. *	225

\* = Heavy equipment manufacturers.

Source: U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.

This table includes only the top 15 entities in Iowa; the total number of entities granted patents during this period exceeds 350.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 8 Page 15

CFN-259-1116

Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead, Mahaska County, IA.

As this table indicates, industrial innovation in Iowa takes many forms. As largely an agricultural state, much of Iowa's industrial activity reflects this background. The fields of bioscience, technology, health, and manufacturing are represented. The big bioscience firms like Pioneer Hi-Bred International, Monsanto, and ISU's Research Foundation have emerged as leaders in plant and animal genetics. The long-established heavy equipment conglomerates—Deere and Case—continue to improve construction and agricultural equipment. The number of individually owned patents shown in the table vouchsafes Iowa's legacy of homegrown inventive creativity.

As to Vermeer, during the early years when Gary's inventive ideas formed the basis for new products, the U.S. Patent Office granted only a few utility patents to the firm. Indeed, patent protection remained a low priority for the firm. Between 1969 and 1978, Vermeer obtained no patents. As products and American business became more complex, Vermeer sought greater protection. Between 1979 and 2001, the firm received 58 patents. Then, from 2002 to 2015, the firm received 167 more. As the table above shows, by 2015 Vermeer stood among the top 15 entities in Iowa receiving utility patents from the U.S. Patent Office over a period of 46 years.

While innovation postulated from patent activity is only one method to compare the Vermeer Manufacturing Company with its industrial contemporaries in Iowa, innovation does provide a good yardstick to measure future potential. Within this context, the Vermeer Manufacturing Company ranks among the top three heavy equipment manufacturers in the State of Iowa, outranked only by the big conglomerates. Vermeer has demonstrated how a mid-century start-up family business can successfully compete and expand within the ever-increasingly competitive global economy by designing and manufacturing specialized products. Today, "Yellow Iron," the corporate color chosen by Vermeer, shows the flag in 53 countries around the world.

The Vermeer Firm

As a farmer and responding to his own needs, Gary J. Vermeer developed his first successful invention during World War II. He enjoyed tinkering in the barns on his farmstead, and a mechanical wagon hoist emerged from these efforts.

In the post-war era, the United States enjoyed great prosperity, now known as the Baby Boom. At the end of war in 1945, the population of the United States stood at 139,928,000. By 1950, it had grown to 151,683,000, an increase of 8%. By 1970, the nation's population stood at 205,050,000, an astonishing increase of 32% since 1945. (U.S. Census Bureau) The nation needed farmers to feed these people.

Reflecting on this era, Stanley J. Vermeer, Gary Vermeer's oldest child, noted:

If you were a farmer and could not make a good living right after the war, you should not be a farmer. Good times for farmers right after the war. Good years for farming.  
(Stanley J. Vermeer)

Good markets for farm equipment went hand-in-hand with these good times, an ideal time for Gary J. Vermeer to debut his mechanical wagon hoist to the public. The hoist could raise the bed of a farm wagon to lessen the labor in transferring picked corn to storage facilities. (See Figure 17.) Prior to this time, manual labor accomplished this backbreaking chore. Gary had devised this hoist "in search for a better way," a phrase, which has become a mantra for the Vermeer Manufacturing Company.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 8 Page 16

CFN-259-1116

Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead, Mahaska County, IA.

Word of mouth among local farmers praised his new invention, and Gary decided to produce it on a commercial basis. Patents to protect ideas such as this came only later. Van Gorp Welding, a firm based in Pella, Iowa, originally fabricated the hoists for him. By 1948, demand had increased so much that Vermeer built a factory on the west edge of Pella to manufacture wagon hoists. (See Figure 15.)

Competition in American industry never ceases. According to Gary J. Vermeer:

I made a little hoist and went out to a lot of dealers around Iowa to see if we could sell them. And we did. But you know, we started manufacturing, and it wasn't very long before it was out of date. John Deere and International came out with hydraulics on their tractors, and so wagon hoists were lifted with hydraulics instead of mechanically. And so that thing didn't do very good, although we did sell a few." (Van Klompenburg and Biddle: 29)

In November 1948, Gary and Ralph J. Vermeer (1913-1962), a second cousin, joined together to form the Vermeer Manufacturing Company, incorporated by the State of Iowa on January 3, 1949. Ralph was a local banker and complimented Gary's skill at innovation and production with his own ability at sales and human relations. Ralph served as corporate secretary for the firm. As early as 1953, Ralph established a Vermeer employee profit sharing plan, an unusual employee benefit at the time in the United States.<sup>3</sup> (*Ibid.*: 24-25)

In 1949, Vermeer introduced the Pow-R-Drive, a machine that could transfer power from a tractor to other kinds of machines, such as hammer mills and cornshellers. (Hammer mills reduce friable and fibrous materials, like plants, into finer products.) By 1950, the Vermeer firm included 16 employees. Various refinements of the Pow-R-Drive followed to broaden its utility for ditching equipment in 1951 and for other applications. The success of the ditching application broadened the firm's scope of operations from a focus on agriculture to other fields of endeavor, such as the environment.

In 1950, Harry Vermeer, Gary's brother, joined Gary and Ralph in the firm's management. Four years later, Harry became the firm's treasurer. The sudden death of Ralph J. Vermeer in 1962 came as a shock to everyone at Vermeer. Employees had regarded him highly as their advocate. At the time of his death, he also served as president of the Marion County State Bank in Pella. (*The Pella Chronicle*: August 7, 1962)

In 1951, Gary improved the design of a machine that Leonard Maasdam, a neighboring farmer, had devised to dig trenches to lay tile. Clay pipes, called tile and buried in the soil, drained wet spots in agricultural fields. Gary's innovation, the Vermeer Model 12-PTO, efficiently dug trenches to lay this tile and alleviate the need for manual labor. This machine subsequently found other applications beyond farming.

The 1960s were prosperous years for American business and industry and for Vermeer. New Vermeer products appeared, and markets expanded. Good sellers included trenchers, stump cutters, sprinklers, and tree spades. (Van Klompenburg and Biddle: 37) Dutch elm disease in the United States during the 1960s and 1970s increased demand for the stump cutters, as more than 77 million elm trees across the nation died. The tree spade became another popular product line. This machine, known as the TM-700, transplanted trees. The machine cut a heavy root ball, lifted the tree out of the ground, and tilted its trunk so that a tractor or

<sup>3</sup> Industry in the Netherlands had offered profit sharing to its employees much earlier than this. Further research might determine if and how this tradition might have migrated to Pella to influence Ralph J. Vermeer and the introduction of employee profit sharing at Vermeer.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 8 Page 17

CFN-259-1116

Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead, Mahaska County, IA.

truck could pull it to a new site. (See Figure 18.) As this list indicates, many of these products were unrelated directly to agriculture, a sign that Vermeer had broadened its horizon. Other signs of growth appeared. In 1960, the firm established its first Vermeer-exclusive dealership in Findley, Ohio, with others to follow. The number of the firm's employees reached 140 during this decade.

Ralph Vermeer provided early leadership in expanding Vermeer sales internationally through Vermeer Holland, a dealership established in the Netherlands in the 1950s. Vermeer also opened offices in France to expand its product lines in Europe. (*Ibid.*: 29-37, 48) Early on, Gary J. Vermeer recognized that trained dealers and service technicians would promote good relationships between customers and Vermeer products, and that this trust would benefit future domestic and international sales. In the mid-1960s, the Vermeer Corporation began service schools to this end. The number of Vermeer dealerships and their services has expanded over the years so that by 2008:

Vermeer Corporation offers sales, parts, and service through a worldwide industrial dealer network consisting of 115 North American industrial dealers and 63 international dealer locations. In addition to its more than 400 agricultural distributors, Vermeer has a global focus as it has industrial dealerships located in 51 countries and every continent except Antarctica. (*Ibid.*: 50)

After trial and error in 1971, Gary and Arnie Mathes, a local farmer and Vermeer employee, devised a machine to pack cut hay into big 6-foot wide and 7-foot diameter cheese-shaped bales. (See Figure 19.) Before this time, hay baler machines packed cut hay into rectangular-shaped bales. Because rain could penetrate and spoil these bales, farmers needed to shelter them immediately. The new machine, known as the Vermeer 706, shed water, alleviated this necessity, and eliminated other intensive manual labor. Gary advertised this new machine in *Wallaces Farmer* and conducted demonstrations of the machine in the fields across Iowa. Farmers flocked to the demonstrations to learn how this machine operated.

The company asked for a \$500 deposit on the machine, the balance to be paid upon delivery. They filled 300 orders that first year, all delivered by May 1972. "At one time, we had 2,000 orders and we ran the whole baler organization with that million dollars," Gary said. . .

They sold the first baler in Guthrie Center, Iowa, for \$3,950 plus freight costs. (Van Klompenburg and Biddle: 17)

This machine proved to be a turning point in the company's history.

The baler was the product that launched Vermeer as a truly world-class manufacturer. In just two years—by 1974—Vermeer Manufacturing Company nearly quadrupled in sales. (*Ibid.*: 29-37)

The model 706 subsequently was discontinued and replaced by a smaller machine known as the 605, producing bales 5 x 6-foot in size, a size more convenient for farmers.

Gary's older son maintains that his father's greatest ability during all these years was his foresight in gauging positive market reception of new products. This ability saved the firm substantial development, production, and marketing costs associated with innovations, which might have proved unpopular.<sup>4</sup> (Stanley J. Vermeer)

<sup>4</sup> The Vermeer Museum, situated in the Global Pavilion at the firm's headquarters in Pella, includes an exhibit entitled "White Elephants." This display features a few Vermeer designs that went into production but never performed as anticipated. The willingness of Vermeer to share with the public both its failures and its successes provides one measure

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 8 Page 18

CFN-259-1116

Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead, Mahaska County, IA.

Iowa farmers are demanding customers. They expect product performance, value for money, and a personable relationship with the dealers they patronize. Companies like Vermeer, which stress these characteristics as part of their corporate ethic, have an advantage. The “Vermeer 4Ps Philosophy”—People, Product, and Profit emanating from biblical Principles forms the basis. While many corporations subscribe to ethical statements, Vermeer’s honored pledge to contribute 10% or its profits to charitable pursuit distinguishes it from most others.

Public honor came to Gary J. Vermeer in the 1980s. He was named Iowa Inventor of the Year in 1984 and inducted into the Iowa Business Hall of Fame in 1986. Then in 1989 at the age of 71, Gary retired as CEO of the Vermeer Corporation to become its Chairman Emeritus of the Board. Before that time, Carl Boat had served as the firm’s president (1976-1982) and Stanley J. Vermeer as its president (1982 to 1986). When Gary retired, his other two children took the helm with Robert L. Vermeer and Mary Vermeer Andringa serving as co-CEOs—Bob serving as chairman of the board and Mary serving as president.

In the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, Vermeer achieved remarkable international expansion under the leadership of Robert L. Vermeer and Mary Vermeer Andringa. Through astute leadership and smart decisions, the firm forged new dealerships, acquisitions, and joint agreements with other companies, expanding its operations and market-share beyond North America and Europe to include the Middle East, Africa, China, Singapore, and Brazil. The firm has reorganized into four marketing divisions: underground installation, environment transformation, specialty extraction, and forage management, a telling signal of the firm’s diversification.

Vermeer’s corporate headquarters and manufacturing plant, totaling some 1.5 million square feet, remain today in Pella, Iowa. (See Figure 16.) The Global Pavilion, a company gathering place on the east end of the plant, flies the flags of 53 nations, each a country with Vermeer representation. The Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmhouse—the “Founder’s House,” as the property is locally known—remains right across the street.

### FARMHOUSE

The Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmhouse is significant under Criterion A for social history. Built in 1953, this 1-story single-family dwelling sits low to the ground without a basement. A dominant front gable centers the front facade flanked by wings covered with a side-gable roof. An attached garage is set back on the southeast corner of the house. The horizontal feeling of this composition—emphasized by its tripartite picture window on the front facade—shows the influence of Ranch Styling on its design. Martin (“Bats”) De Jong, a Pella contractor-builder, built this house for the Vermeers.

Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer exemplified the virtue of “Plain Living and High Thinking,” a principle valued by Americans since the founding of the nation. (Shi: 6) Gary lived in the Vermeer Farmhouse for 46 years of his adult life. As such, this modest-sized dwelling calls attention to this principle. Although the Vermeers could have afforded any opulence or personal comfort in their domestic life, they practiced strict thrift and economy instead. The Vermeers never installed central air-conditioning in this house, remaining satisfied with one window-mounted a/c unit in the living room. Their house has no basement because it was perceived

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of the firm’s confidence in its overall operations and the value of being up-front with customers. White elephants are the exceptions proving the rule that Vermeer products and performance hit the bull’s eye.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 8 Page 19

CFN-259-1116

Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead, Mahaska County, IA.

as nonessential. Other stories of domestic thrift abound. While it is true that Gary and Matilda were hardly alone in their practice of domestic economy, a virtue practiced by many Iowans since the settlement of the state, the Vermeers stand as a significant—not just representative—example of this virtue. The juxtaposition of the Vermeer Farmhouse directly across the street from the family’s 1.5 million square foot factory dramatically calls attention to the wealth that the Vermeers eschewed for domestic comfort, while at the same time engaging in philanthropic generosity across the nation and around the world.

In addition to managing the day-to-day upkeep of this house and the care of the Vermeer children, Matilda offered warm hospitality to friends and associates. Her enjoyment of people and making them feel at ease provided a counterpart to Gary. Gary could be quite reticent and that, coupled with the authority of his position in the business, sometimes made people feel uncomfortable. Together, the Vermeers frequently entertained members of their church in their home after Sunday services or in the evening. These and other social gatherings in the Vermeer farmhouse cast a softening light on the Vermeers as people.

Many stories recount with sincere affection Matilda’s spirit of loving nurture and unselfconscious frugality, both in her home and in her personal life. Matilda played a major role in the Vermeer story and its successful generational transition as a family business. No one should underestimate the influence of this woman and the spirit in which she raised her children, blessed with great privilege, to great responsibility. As Lois De Jong Vermeer has noted: “Gary kept the family business healthy, and Matilda kept the family itself healthy. Often, one or the other of these qualities in family businesses goes kaput.” (Lois Vermeer)

The attached garage provided an important amenity for the Vermeer home. “Gary really wanted a heated garage. The house is attached to it.” (Stanley J. Vermeer) This garage is larger than any of the rooms in the house. It calls attention to Gary’s affinity for machinery and delight in maintaining it—an automobile, in this case. Gary bought a new Chevrolet in 1956 and kept it running for many years, a point of pride in thrift and mechanical ability.

All the while, the Vermeer house felt the effects of the family business. Its clocks stood at “Vermeer time, 15 minutes ahead of the world. You were considered late if you were not on Vermeer time.” (Lois Vermeer)

Martin A. De Jong

Martin A(rie) (“Bats”) De Jong (1920-2003) constructed the Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmhouse in 1953. A contractor-builder and developer during the post-World War II era in Pella, De Jong was responsible for the construction of many homes in the community during this expansive period of growth.

De Jong was born in Marion County near Peoria, Iowa, and grew up on a nearby farm. He earned his nickname (which accompanied him the rest of his life) as the youngest among older boys in the neighborhood who played baseball and suffered him to serve as their batboy. Although De Jong completed only an eighth grade education (which was not unusual in rural Iowa at the time) and struggled with spelling all his life (Lois Vermeer), his career shows him to have possessed keen initiative and business acumen.

Following service in the U.S. Army during World War II, De Jong returned to Pella and apprenticed with an established carpenter to learn this trade. Having learned these skills, De Jong launched out on his own. This was the beginning of the Baby Boom, a propitious time for new home construction as G.I.s returning from the war married and started new families. De Jong concentrated much of his effort on the development of the Northland Lanes Addition to the City of Pella, an ambitious residential subdivision, which he and Minnie De Jong, his wife, platted on Pella’s north side in 1959. (See Figure 21.) According to one local newspaper:

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 8 Page 20

CFN-259-1116

Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead, Mahaska County, IA.

Choice building lots in Pella. Newest addition, Northland Lanes. Sewer and water available on every lot. Financing available. Come and look. De Jong Construction. (*Pella Chronicle*, December 26, 1963, p. 3)

De Jong's daughter, Lois De Jong Vermeer, recalls that the De Jong family "moved a lot when I was growing up—maybe 7-8 times. Sometimes Dad acquired an existing house and fixed it up, sometimes he built a spec house. His biggest jobs included participation in the construction of the Pella Christian Grade School and Calvary Christian Reformed Church in the 1960s." (Lois Vermeer) De Jong's residential designs typically featured simple Ranch Styling, often with attached garages. Although he sometimes used brick or Permastone for exterior cladding, the use of wood siding was more common. De Jong's houses typically included basements. "He would sketch up the plans for houses. This was cheaper than using an architect and kept costs down." (*Ibid.*)

The construction of the H. Stuart and Frances F. Kuyper House (nonextant) was De Jong's biggest residential commission. This house later served as the home for the president of Central College. "For Dad, this was a grand design." (*Ibid.*) The building was later demolished, and a new president's house built on the site.

De Jong and Gary Vermeer knew one another from Calvary Christian Reformed Church, where they were both charter members. Both men had an affinity for hunting. These contacts led to De Jong's commission for the Vermeer House. Erected early in De Jong's career as a building contractor, the Vermeer House helped solidify De Jong's stature in the community and his emerging career as a real estate developer.

#### FUTURE PLANS

As described in Section 7, the Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmhouse recently underwent rehabilitation so that the Vermeer Corporation can use the building as a gathering place for company events and as a museum to showcase the history of the Vermeer Family. Although the Secretary of the Interior's Standards were not employed as such, this rehabilitation is compatible in scale, building materials, and design with the original building and located at its rear. The bedrooms remain *in situ* as glimpses of family life. The garage will feature exhibits displaying Gary's interests in hunting and the environment. The window-mounted air-conditioner in the living room remains in place a significant character-defining feature of the Vermeer Family's sense of economy.

#### OTHER RESOURCES ASSOCIATED WITH GARY J. VERMEER

In addition to the Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead, a number of other resources associated with Gary J. Vermeer remain extant in Pella and environs. They include the campus of the Vermeer Corporation on Vermeer Road in Pella, known as the "Vermeer Mile." Other resources associated with Gary J. Vermeer include "The Camp," a rural retreat and hunting grounds north of Pella; a tract of farmland located in the South Skunk River valley near Reasoner, Iowa; and resources associated with Vermeer and his family corporation's extensive philanthropy.

As to the significance of these resources for Vermeer's life, the factory campus calls attention to his business career and entrepreneurship. The Camp with its simple 1-story frame dwelling Gary erected in the 1960s calls attention to his interest in wildlife, hunting, and recreation. The tract of farmland in the South Skunk River valley calls attention to his interest in land conservation and to the environment and its protection.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 8 Page 21

CFN-259-1116

Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead, Mahaska County, IA.

None of these resources is presently National Register-listed. The Vermeer campus has grown exponentially over the years and now includes about 100 acres. No original building on the site remains extant. The Camp functioned as a 3-season summer place, where Vermeer could relax with family and friends. Further survey and research might qualify this property as National Register-eligible as associated with this aspect of his life.

The identification of resources associated with Gary J. Vermeer's philanthropic efforts stands outside the scope of this nomination, requiring extensive additional investigation. His contributions to civic and humanitarian betterment are legion and range across the globe. The Pella Community Hospital (now Pella Regional Health Center) stands as one of his earliest philanthropic efforts. During a 1958 campaign to raise money for the construction of this hospital, Vermeer served as the campaign's co-chair along with H. Stuart "Stu" Kuyper. As a result of this successful campaign, the original hospital building was completed in 1960. Stan Vermeer, Gary's son, recounts many meetings held by the campaign committee at the kitchen table in the Vermeer Farmhouse. (Stanley J. Vermeer) In 1977, Gary led another successful (and flamboyant) campaign to raise funds to enlarge and update it and its facilities. (Van Klompenburg and Biddle: 62) In Pella, the Vermeer Science Building at Central College bears the family name, and the Pella Christian High School benefited mightily from Vermeer generosity. Founded in 1958, the Vermeer Charitable Foundation has administered the Vermeer Family's extensive philanthropic activities. According to Gary J. Vermeer's authorized biography:

A complete list of Foundation-supported projects over the years is too lengthy to include here, and to give a partial list would unfairly represent the extent of the Foundation's reach and the recipient organizations themselves. (*Ibid.*: 256)

In conclusion, it can be seen from this thumbnail sketch of Gary J. Vermeer's life, that his farmstead plays a key role in calling attention to his productive life as a farmer and entrepreneur.

### REPRESENTATION IN OTHER CULTURAL RESOURCES SURVEYS

Until now, the Gary J. and Matilda Farmstead lacked a cultural resource survey investigation. As a resource associated with contemporary history, this property has become the subject of historical interest with the passing of Gary in 2009 and Matilda in 2014.

### POTENTIAL FOR HISTORICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

The site's potential for archaeological significance is, as yet, unexplored. Given the fact that the site is located on the wide and open prairie, the likelihood that pre-historic material might be found is limited. Perhaps some trace of earlier historic structures on the site might be discovered, such as privies.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 8 Page 22

CFN-259-1116

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Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead, Mahaska County, IA.

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH, REGISTRATION, AND TREATMENT

Ralph J. Vermeer and Harry Vermeer played important roles in the success of the Vermeer Manufacturing Company during its historical period of significance. Properties associated with the lives of these men were not investigated during the preparation of this nomination but might possess National Register potential and, therefore, are worthy of survey and evaluation. As noted in a footnote above, further research might discover a link between profit-sharing plans in the Netherlands and the adoption of such an employee incentive plan at Vermeer through Ralph J. Vermeer's push.

The role of Martin A. ("Bats") De Jong in the story of Mid-Century Modern residential design in Pella deserves survey and evaluation. As a prolific contractor-builder in Pella during this time, De Jong's activities will cast light on this significant period in Pella's residential growth.

Many National Register nominations have evaluated individual properties in Pella; but, in spite of Pella's historical significance as a premier ethnic settlement in Iowa, the community still lacks a comprehensive survey of its historic and architectural resources. Such a survey should be undertaken to include as many property types as possible.

### SELECTION OF HISTORIC NAME

The selection of an historic name for this property reflects its direct association with Gary J. Vermeer, whose contributions to agriculture and industry qualify the property for National Register designation.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 9 Page 25

CFN-259-1116

Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead, Mahaska County, IA.

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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 9 Page 26

CFN-259-1116

Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead, Mahaska County, IA.

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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 9 Page 27

CFN-259-1116

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Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead, Mahaska County, IA.

**ORAL HISTORY**

Vermeer, Lois De Jong

2017 Oral informant interview with William C. Page, Public Historian, October 31, 2017. Vermeer is the daughter of "Bats" De Jong and wife of Robert L. Vermeer, son of Gary F. and Matilda Vermeer. She shared information about her father's contracting career and life with her husband's family.

Vermeer, Stanley J.

2016 Oral informant interview with William C. Page, Public Historian, November 4, 2016. Vermeer is the eldest child of Gary F. and Matilda Vermeer. He shared information about his family.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 10 Page 28

CFN-259-1116

Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead, Mahaska County, IA.

## VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Dashed line, as shown below, demarks the Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead.



Source: Mahaska County Assessor's Office. Beacon, Pictometry, 2017.



## BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

Contains all the land originally associated with the Vermeer Farm, excluding a recently built child day care and educational facility to the north and cropland to the east and south. The exclusion of the cropland is justified because it does not directly relate to the resource.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 10 Page 29

CFN-259-1116

Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead, Mahaska County, Iowa.

**LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS**

1. Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead  
1688 Adams Street  
Pella, IA 50219  
Home Grounds and Farmhouse looking northeast  
William C. Page, Photographer  
November 4, 2016
2. Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead  
1688 Adams Street  
Pella, IA 50219  
Farmhouse looking northeast  
William C. Page, Photographer  
November 4, 2016
3. Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead  
1688 Adams Street  
Pella, IA 50219  
Farmstead Frontage looking north northeast  
William C. Page, Photographer  
November 4, 2016
4. Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead  
1688 Adams Street  
Pella, IA 50219  
Farmstead Frontage looking north  
William C. Page, Photographer  
November 4, 2016
5. Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead  
1688 Adams Street  
Pella, IA 50219  
1939 Barn looking northeast  
William C. Page, Photographer  
November 4, 2016
6. Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead  
1688 Adams Street  
Pella, IA 50219  
1940 Barn looking southwest  
William C. Page, Photographer  
November 4, 2016

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 10 Page 30

CFN-259-1116

---

Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead, Mahaska County, Iowa.

7. Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead  
1688 Adams Street  
Pella, IA 50219  
1940 Barn looking north northeast  
William C. Page, Photographer  
November 4, 2016
8. Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead  
1688 Adams Street  
Pella, IA 50219  
1910/c. 1963 Barn looking northeast  
William C. Page, Photographer  
November 4, 2016
9. Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead  
1688 Adams Street  
Pella, IA 50219  
1910/c. 1963 Barn looking north northwest  
William C. Page, Photographer  
November 4, 2016
10. Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead  
1688 Adams Street  
Pella, IA 50219  
1910/c. 1963 Barn looking northeast  
William C. Page, Photographer  
November 4, 2016
11. Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead  
1688 Adams Street  
Pella, IA 50219  
Barnyard and 3 barns looking southeast  
William C. Page, Photographer  
November 4, 2016
12. Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead  
1688 Adams Street  
Pella, IA 50219  
Farmhouse interior looking S  
William C. Page, Photographer  
September 4, 2017

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

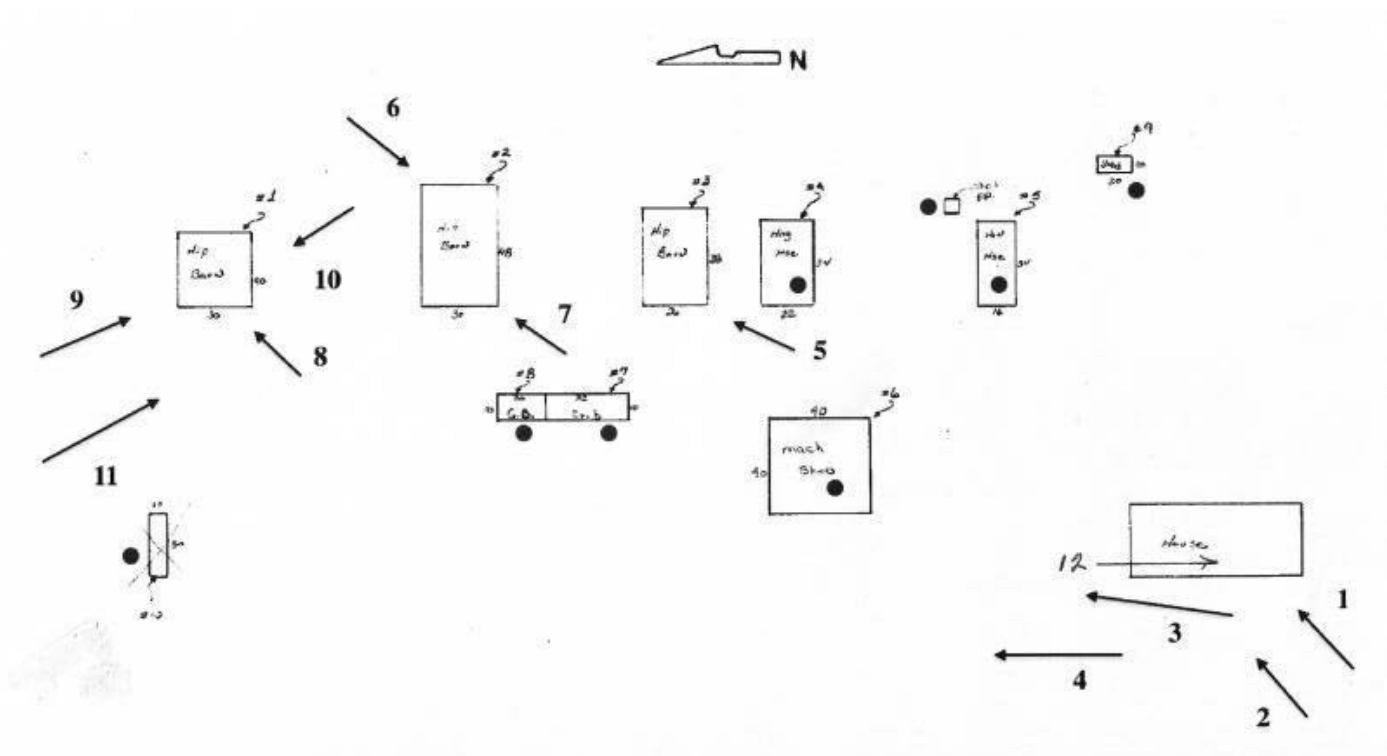
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 10 Page 31

CFN-259-1116

Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead, Mahaska County, Iowa.

PHOTO KEY



Buildings and structures with a black dot are nonextant.

Source: Mahaska County Assessor's Office, Property Record Card circa 1996.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number Embedded Images Page 32

Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead, Mahaska County, IA.

## Map

ARROW LOCATES FARMSTEAD SITE

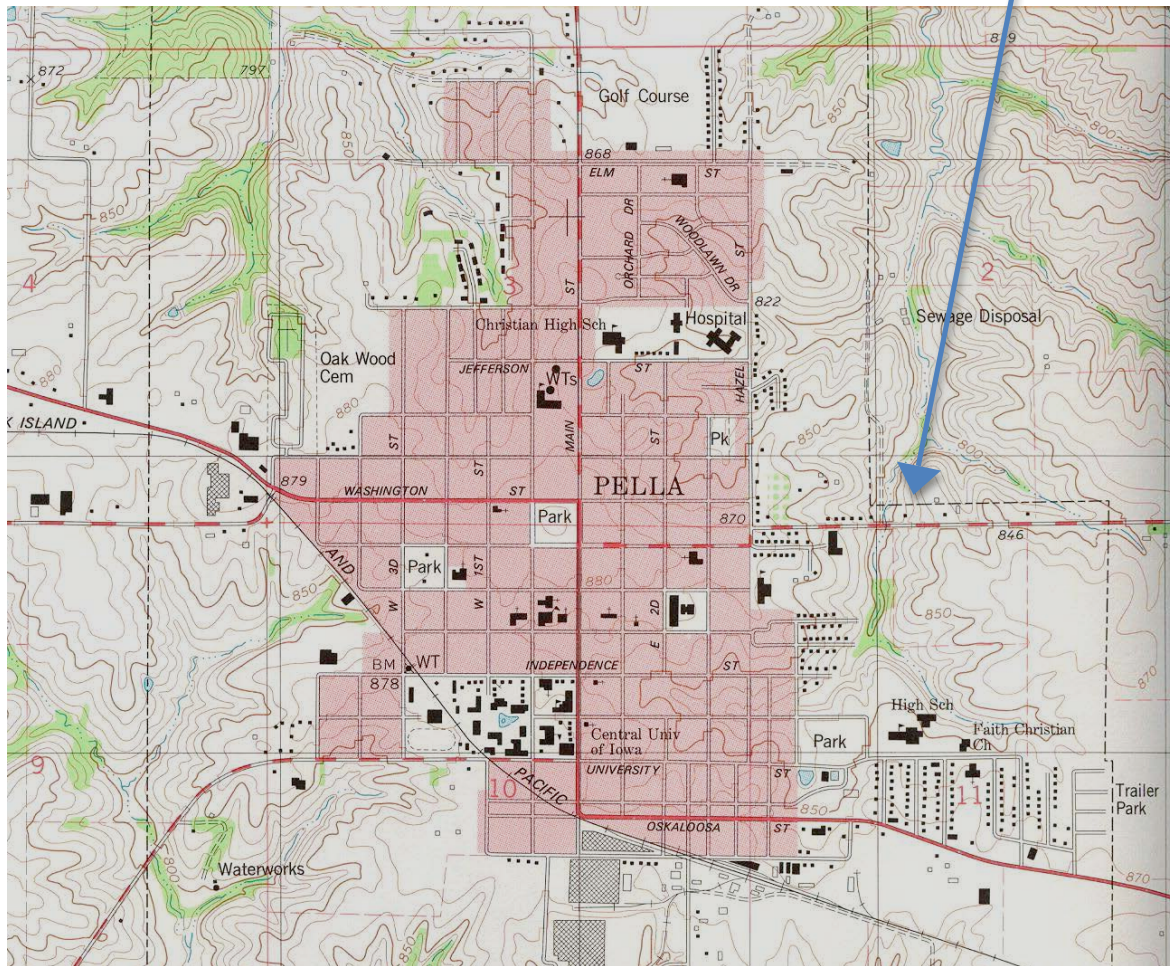


Figure 1

Adams Street, the road adjacent to the west of the Vermeer Farmstead, divides Marion County (on the west) from Mahaska County (on the east).

Source: U.S.G.S. Map (7.5 Minute Series), Pella, Iowa, Quadrangle, 1980.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number Embedded Images Page 33

Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead, Mahaska County, IA.

## Section 6 in 1914

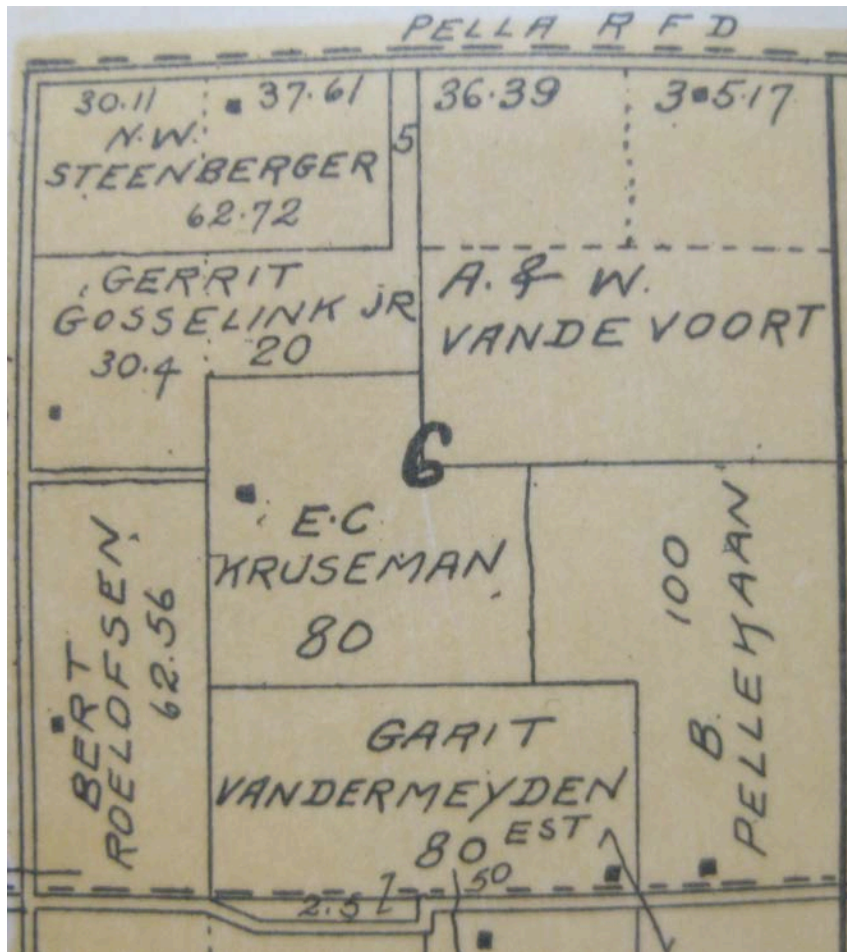


Figure 2

In 1914, Bert Roelofsen owned the 62.56-acre farm (center left) later owned by J. G. Ver Meer and Gary J. Vermeer. The black square shown on the site identifies the farmhouse where Gary and Matilda lived until 1953. In that year, this farmhouse was relocated to Jefferson Street in Pella and the present farmhouse constructed. The relocated building was torn down c. 2005.

Source: *Atlas of Mahaska County, Iowa*, 1914, p. 19.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number Embedded Images

Page 34

c

Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead, Mahaska County, IA.

## Section 6 in 1936

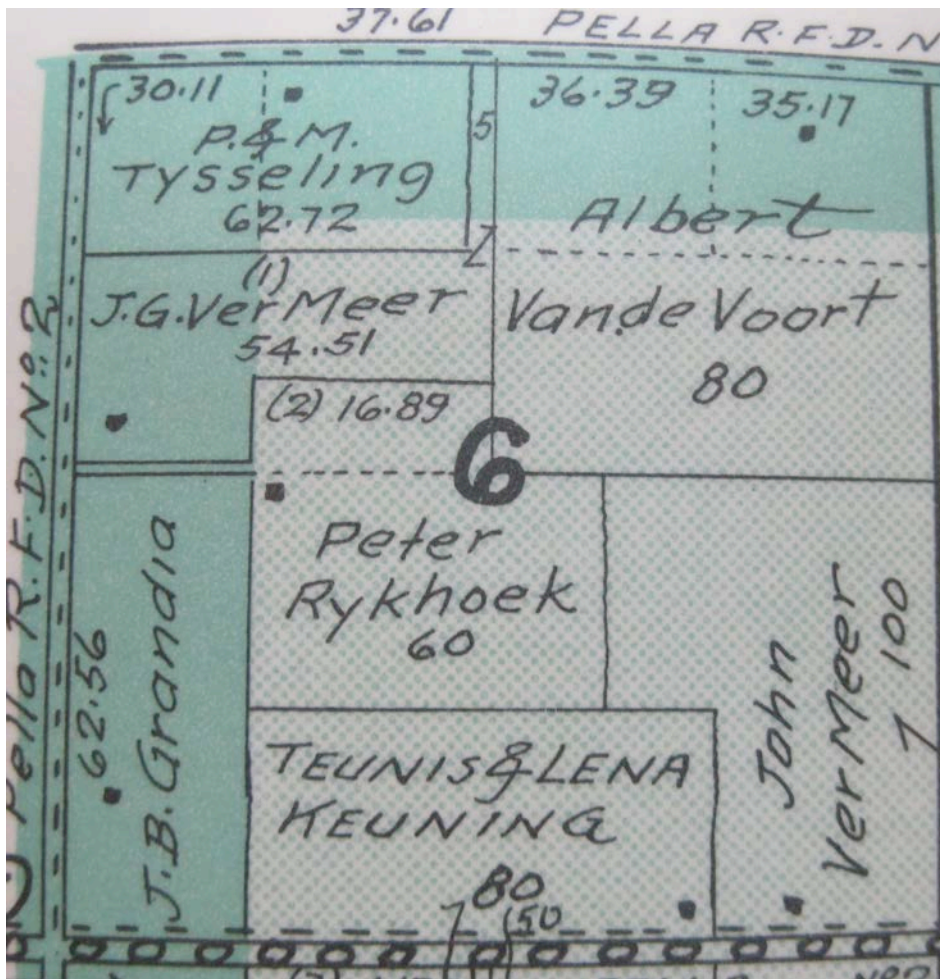


Figure 3



J. G. Ver Meer, Gary's father, owns 54.51 acres (upper left) in 1936.

J. B. Grandia now owns the 62.56 farm (lower left) that Bert Roelofsen previously had owned. J. G. Ver Meer would later deed both farms to Gary and Matilda.

Source: *Atlas of Mahaska County, Iowa*, 1936, p.19.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number Embedded Images Page 35

Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead, Mahaska County, IA.

## Section 6 in 1943

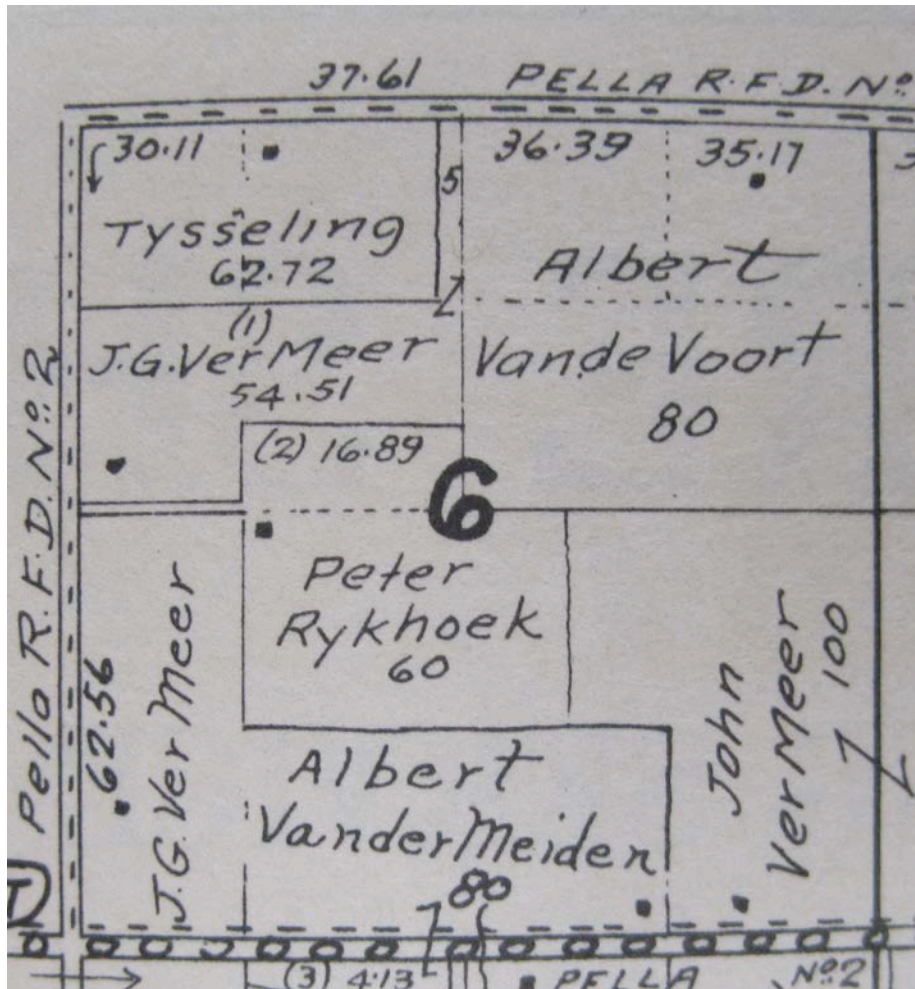


Figure 4

J. G. Ver Meer purchased in 1941 the 62.56 acres (lower left) previously owned by J. B. Grandia.

Source: Mahaska County, Iowa, Farm Plat Book, 1943.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number Embedded Images

Page 36

Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead, Mahaska County, IA.

## Section 6 in 1949



Figure 5

J. G. Ver Meer would deed the 62.56 acres (lower left) he bought from J. B. Grandia to Gary and Matilda, his son and daughter-in-law, in 1950. In 1963, Gary and Jacob J. Vermeer purchased and divided equally the farm (center) owned by A. S. Sels and B. A. Weidman. A lane, shown on this map to Pella R. F. D. No. 2, provided the access to this otherwise land-locked farm. Gary's parcel included the farmhouse shown as a black square on the map. As with the farmhouse on the Roelofsen farmstead (see Figure 2), this farmhouse was also moved to Pella subsequently.

Source: Mahaska County, Iowa, Farm Plat Book, 1949.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number Embedded Images Page 37

Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead, Mahaska County, IA.

## Section 6 in 1981

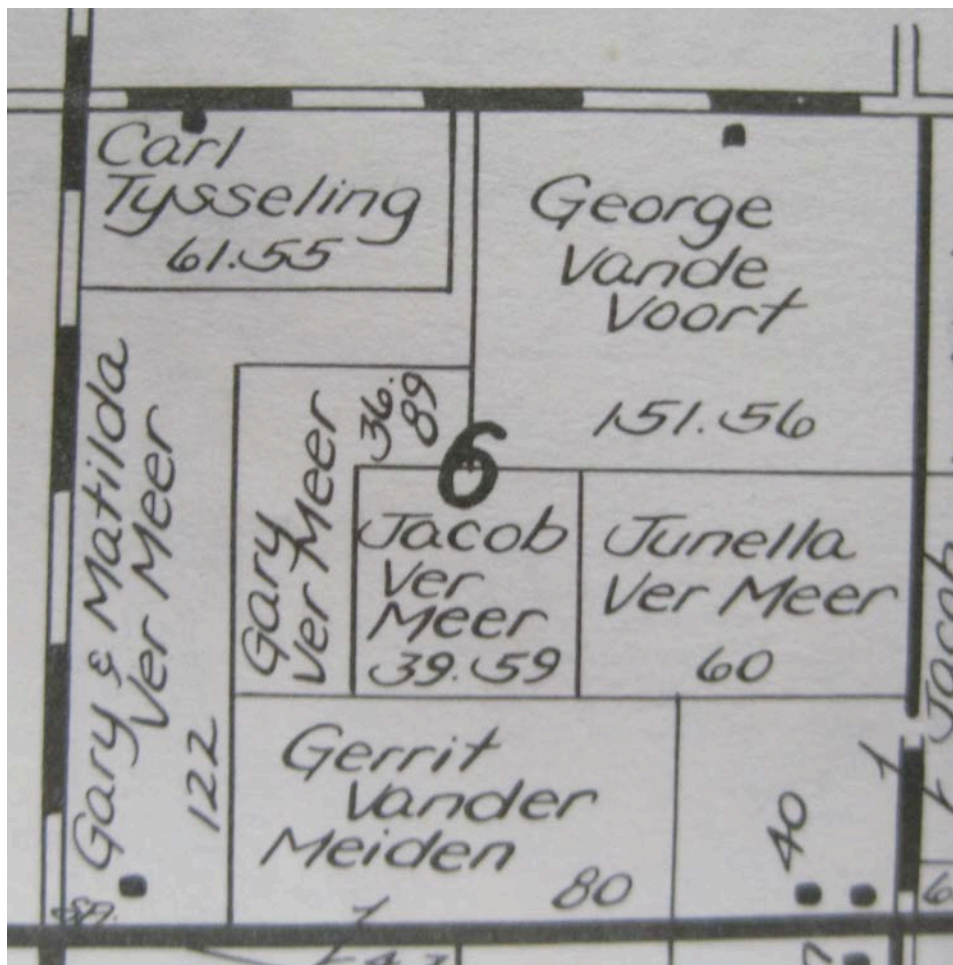


Figure 6

This map pictures the Vermeer Farm's 122 acres as deeded to Gary J. Vermeer by his father in 1950 (far left). The map also pictures 36.89 acres Gary purchased from Sels and Weidman (see Figure 5) after dividing it with Jacob Vermeer, Jacob's portion equaled 39.59 acres (center). Gary's portion included a farmhouse on the site.

Source: *Land Atlas and Plat Book*, 1981, p.16.





United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number Embedded Images

Page 38

c

Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead, Mahaska County, IA.

## National Register Boundary & Land Use

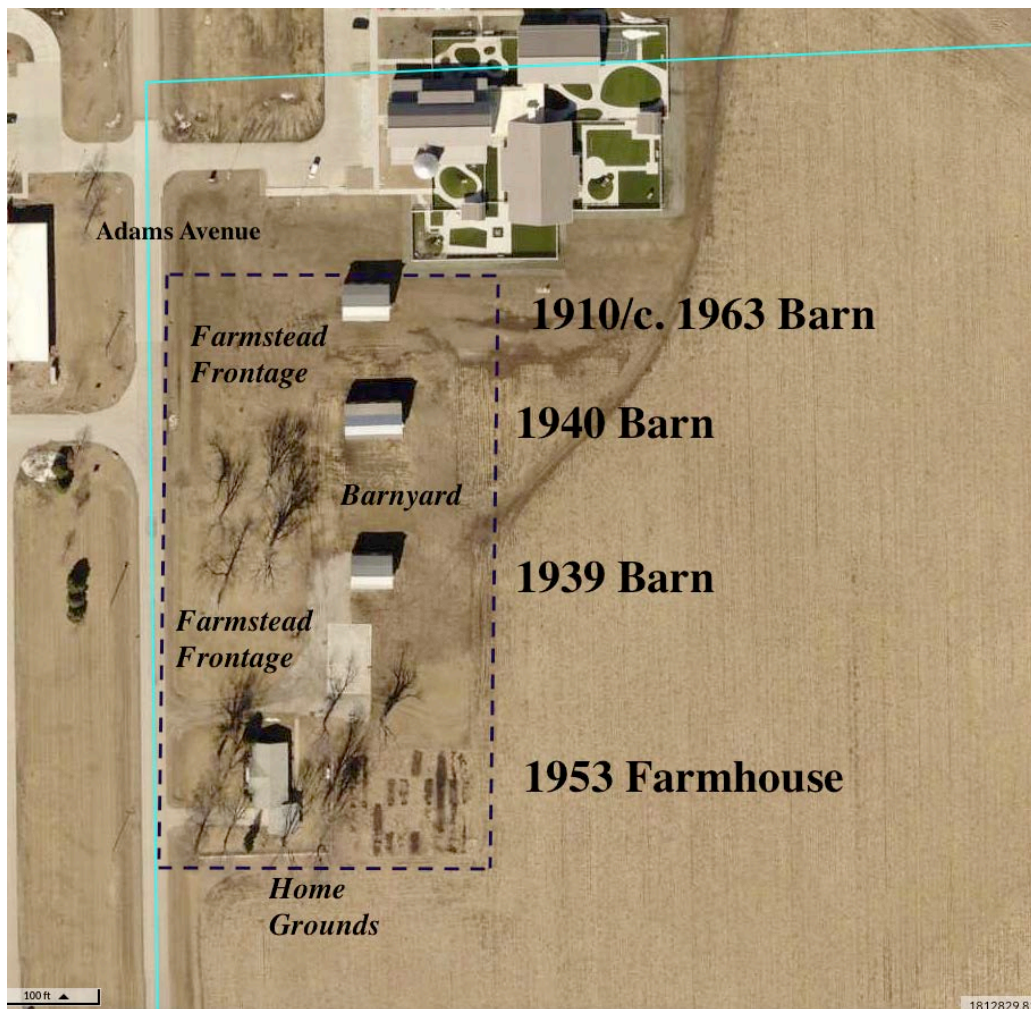


Figure 7

The dashed lines show the National Register boundary for the Gary J. and Matilda Farmstead. The boundary measures approximately 533 feet on the east and west and 280 feet on the north and south.

Source: Beacon Digital Image, Mahaska County Assessor's Office Website, viewed November 10, 2016.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number Embedded Images

Page 39

Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead, Mahaska County, IA.

## Vermeer Farmstead at Zenith

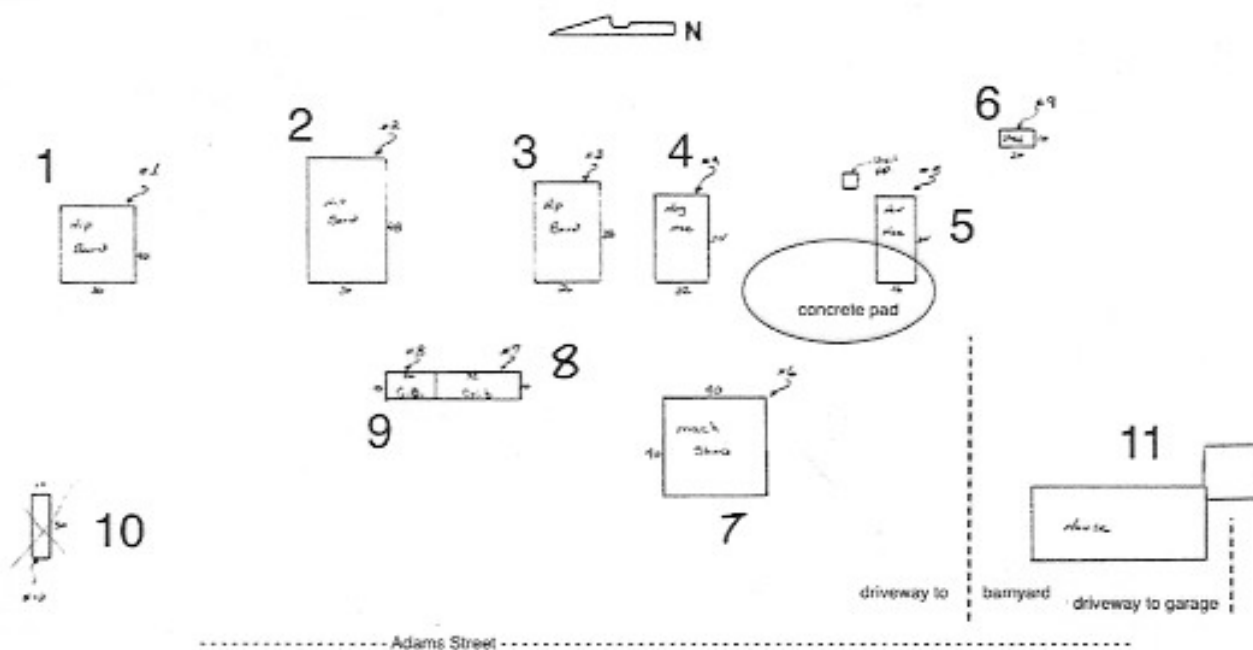


Figure 8

This site plan pictures the Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead at its zenith circa 1996. Resources include: 1) 1910 Barn, 2) 1940 Barn, 3) 1939 Barn, 4) Hog House, 5) Hen House, 6) Shed, 7) Machine Shed, 8) Crib, 9) Grain Bin, 10) Outbuilding, and 11) Farmhouse. A small shed also stood northeast of the Hen House. Although only the three barns and farmhouse remain extant, the farmstead's linear layout remains visually intact.

Source: Mahaska County Assessor's Office, Property Record Card circa 1996.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number Embedded Images Page 40

Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead, Mahaska County, IA.

## Farmstead in 2006



Figure 9

This aerial photograph pictures the Vermeer Farmstead and shows how a network of driveways articulated the site.

Source: Beacon Digital Image, Mahaska County Assessor's Office Website, viewed November 10, 2016.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number Embedded Images Page 41

c

Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead, Mahaska County, IA.

## Farmstead in 2012



Figure 10

The farmstead changed little between 2006, as shown in the figure above, and 2012.

Source: Beacon Digital Image, Mahaska County Assessor's Office Website, viewed November 10, 2016



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number Embedded Images Page 42

Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead, Mahaska County, IA.

## 1939 Barn



Figure 11

This circa 1949 snapshot pictures Gary holding Stan on a tractor with the 1939 barn in the background.  
The barn's board and batten siding are evident.

Source: Vermeer Corporation Historical Archives.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number Embedded Images Page 43

Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead, Mahaska County, IA.

## 1939 Barn



Figure 12

This photo clearly pictures the barn's board and batten siding.

Source: Vermeer Corporation Historical Archives.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number Embedded Images

Page 44

Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead, Mahaska County, IA.

## Farmhouse Footprint

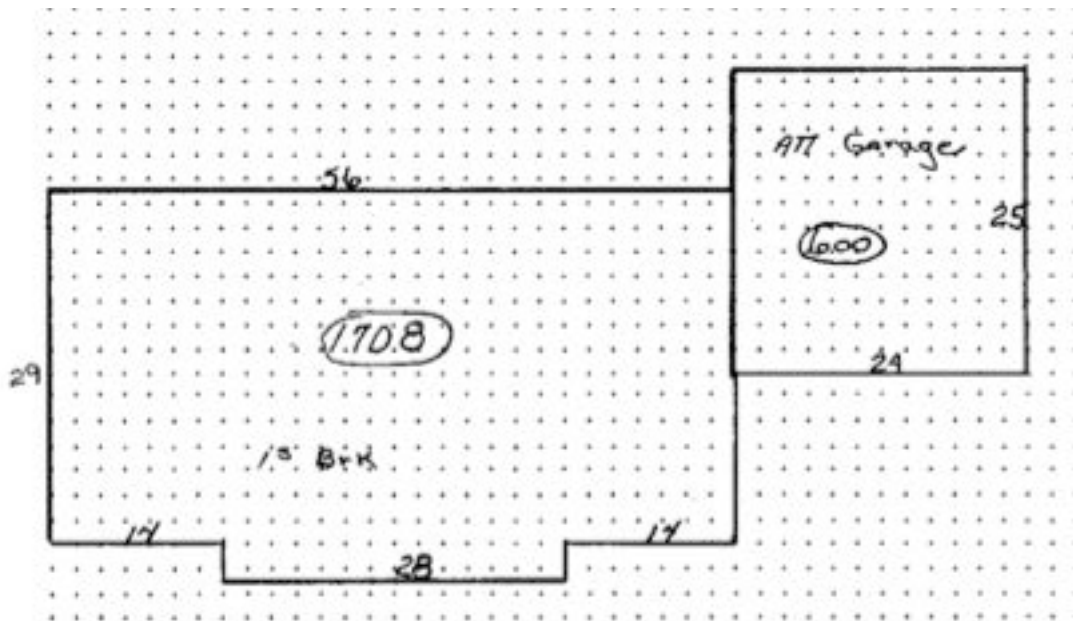


Figure 13

The modest size of this house is evident from its 1708 square footage. Gary J. Vermeer considered the attached garage a luxury.

Source: Mahaska County Assessor's Office, Property Record Card, circa 1996.



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# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number Embedded Images

Page 45

Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead, Mahaska County, IA.

## Farmhouse Floor Plan Today

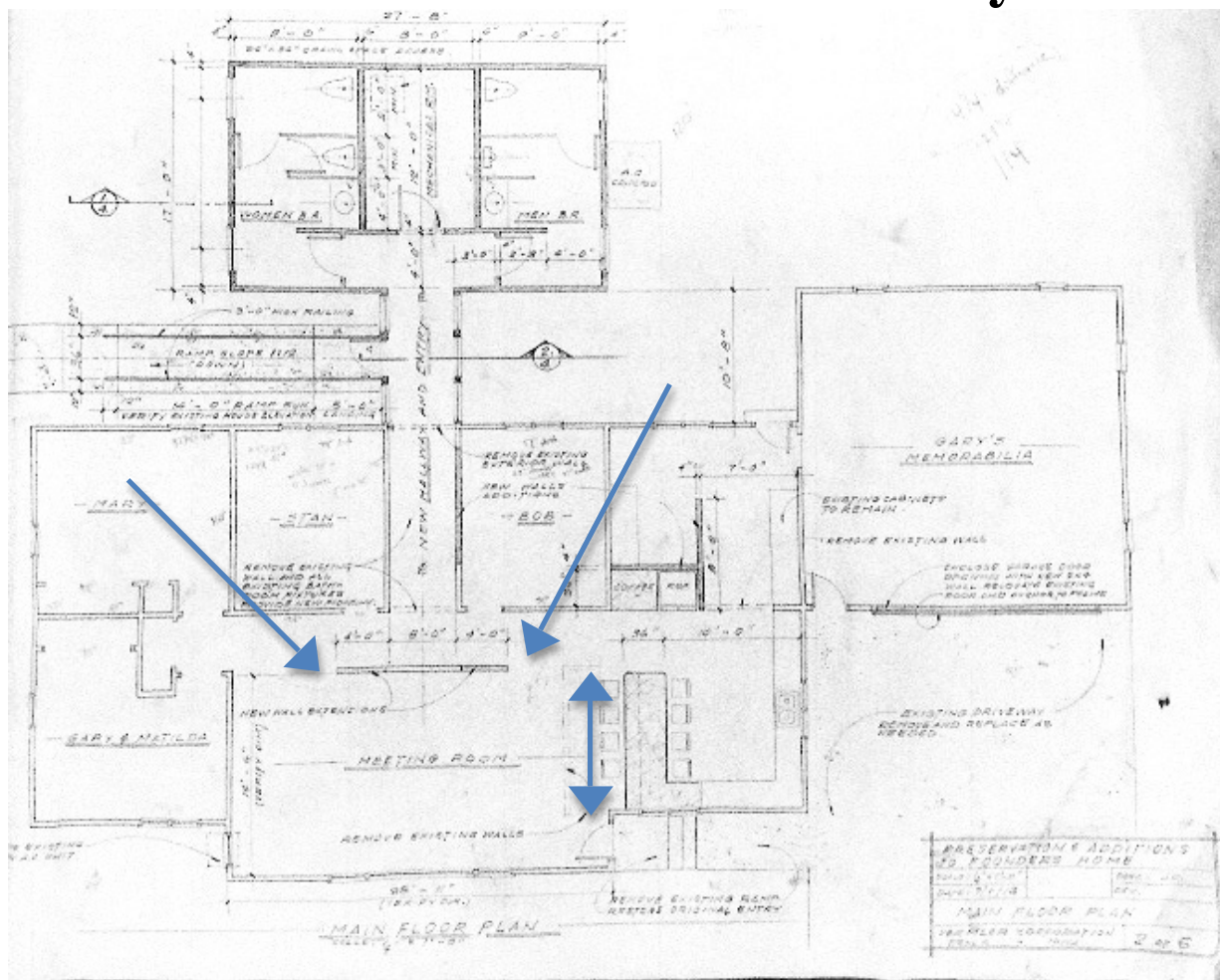


Figure 14

This drawing pictures the 2016 addition of restrooms and storage area at the rear of the farmhouse (top of drawing). Other change at this time foreshortened both ends of the hall in the middle of the house (arrows) and the removal of a wall between the living room and kitchen (double pointed arrow), thus opening up the public spaces for gatherings. The original bathroom was also converted into a hall to the addition.

This drawing incorrectly identifies the boys' bedrooms. Stan's was the southerly room, and Bob's was next to Mary's.

Source: Vermeer Corporation Historical Archives, 2016.



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# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number Embedded Images

Page 46

c

Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead, Mahaska County, IA.

## Original Vermeer Manufacturing Co. Site



Gary enjoyed tinkering in his farm shop, and in 1948 started a manufacturing company. He bought land west of Pella, laid the cement block walls for a 20 x 40 foot building, and Vermeer mfg. was on its way...

Figure 15

The first building constructed specifically for the Vermeer Manufacturing Co. (far left) was erected in 1948. This photo shows how factory expansion subsequently occurred. The firm relocated to its present site in 1968, expanding it vastly. (See Figure 16.)

Source: Vermeer Corporation Historical Archives.

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## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number Embedded Images Page 47

c

Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead, Mahaska County, IA.

### Vermeer Corporation Today



Figure 16

Looking to the northeast, this aerial photograph pictures the Vermeer Corporation at its new location. The plant's buildings total some 1.5 million square feet. The road fronting the complex on the south, known as Vermeer Road, is commonly called the "Vermeer Mile." The Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead is located just beyond the plant in the upper right of the photograph.

Source: Klompenburg and Biddle, p. 10.

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## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number Embedded Images Page 48

Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead, Mahaska County, IA.

### Vermeer Wagon Hoist



Figure 17

Created during World War II from scrap metal, this hoist machine elevated a farm wagon from its bed to facilitate the transfer of corn to storage units. The innovation eliminated backbreaking manual labor and became the first market success for the nascent Vermeer Manufacturing Company. In 1948, Gary J. Vermeer constructed a cement block factory on the east edge of Pella to manufacture these wagon hoists. According to him, "That is the way it started. That is the way the whole Vermeer Manufacturing Company started."

Source: Klompenburg and Biddle, p. 23.



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## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number Embedded Images Page 49

c

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Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead, Mahaska County, IA.

### Vermeer TM-700

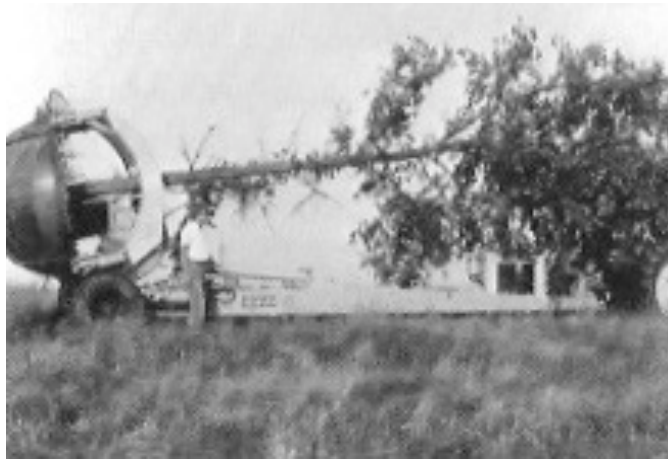


Figure 18

“Introduced in the early 1960s, the Vermeer TM-700, a mechanical tree mover, could dig a seven foot diameter root ball and transplant a tree from one site to another.”

Source: Klompenburg and Biddle, p. 36.

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## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number Embedded Images Page 50

Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead, Mahaska County, IA.

### Vermeer Round Hay Baler



Figure 19

This first Vermeer hay baler “formed a bale of hay six feet wide with a seven-foot diameter, and it weighed more than a ton.”  
An example of this machine is displayed today in the Vermeer Museum at the firm’s Global Pavilion in Pella, Iowa.

Source: Klompenburg and Biddle, p. 15-16.



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## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number Embedded Images Page 51

c

Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead, Mahaska County, IA.

### Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer



Figure 20

Studio portrait circa 1983.

Source: Vermeer Family Archives.

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National Park Service

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number Embedded Images Page 52

Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farnstead, Mahaska County, IA.

## Plat of Northland Lanes Addition to City of Pella

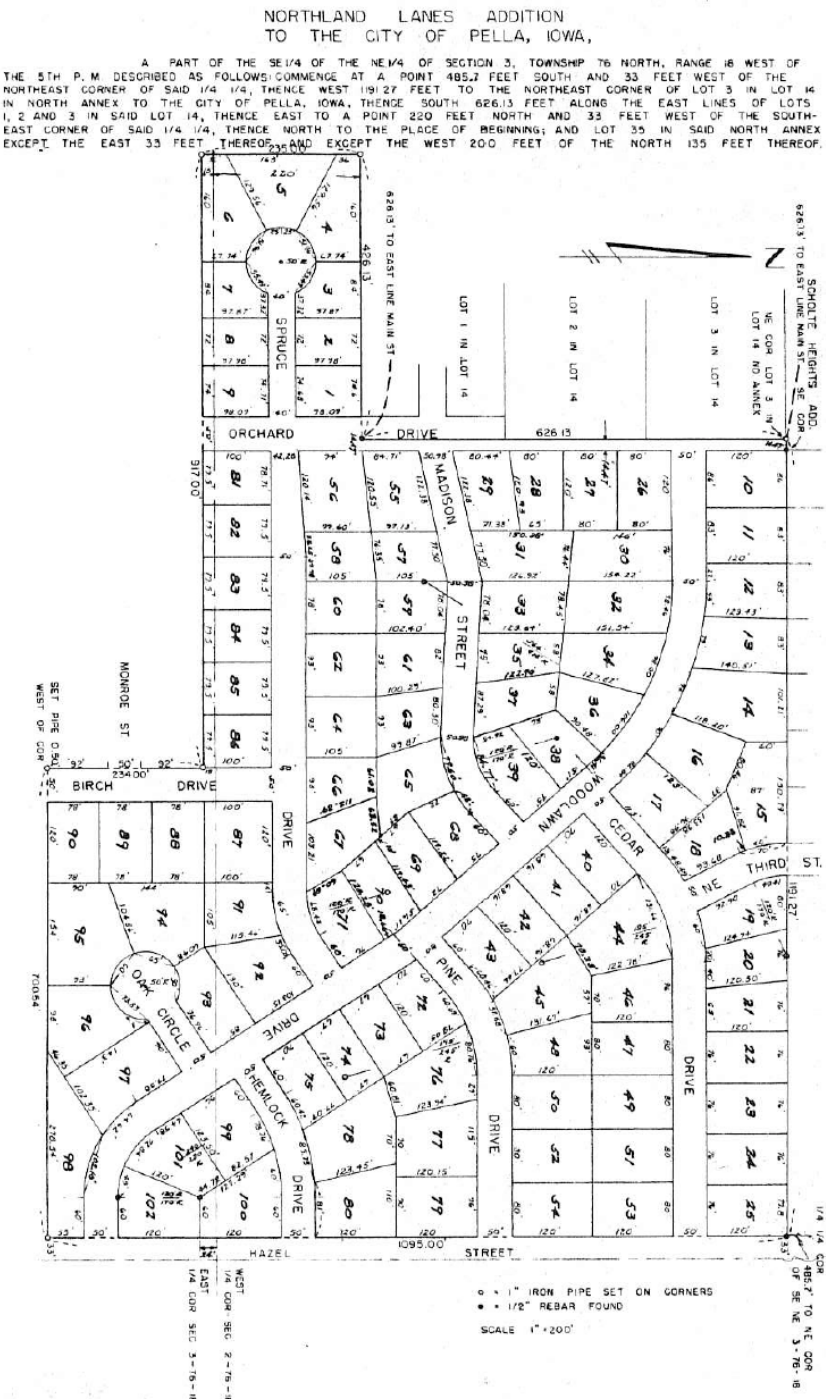


Figure 21



Northland Lanes was a large and ambitious residential subdivision laid out by Martin A. De Jong and Minnie De Jong in 1959. Its plat of streets and cul-de-sacs broke with the uniformity of Pella's traditional street grid, calling attention to the growing popularity of curvilinear layouts across the nation in the 1950s.

Source: Marion County Auditor's Office.



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# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number Embedded Images Page 53

Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead, Mahaska County, IA.

## Locational Data

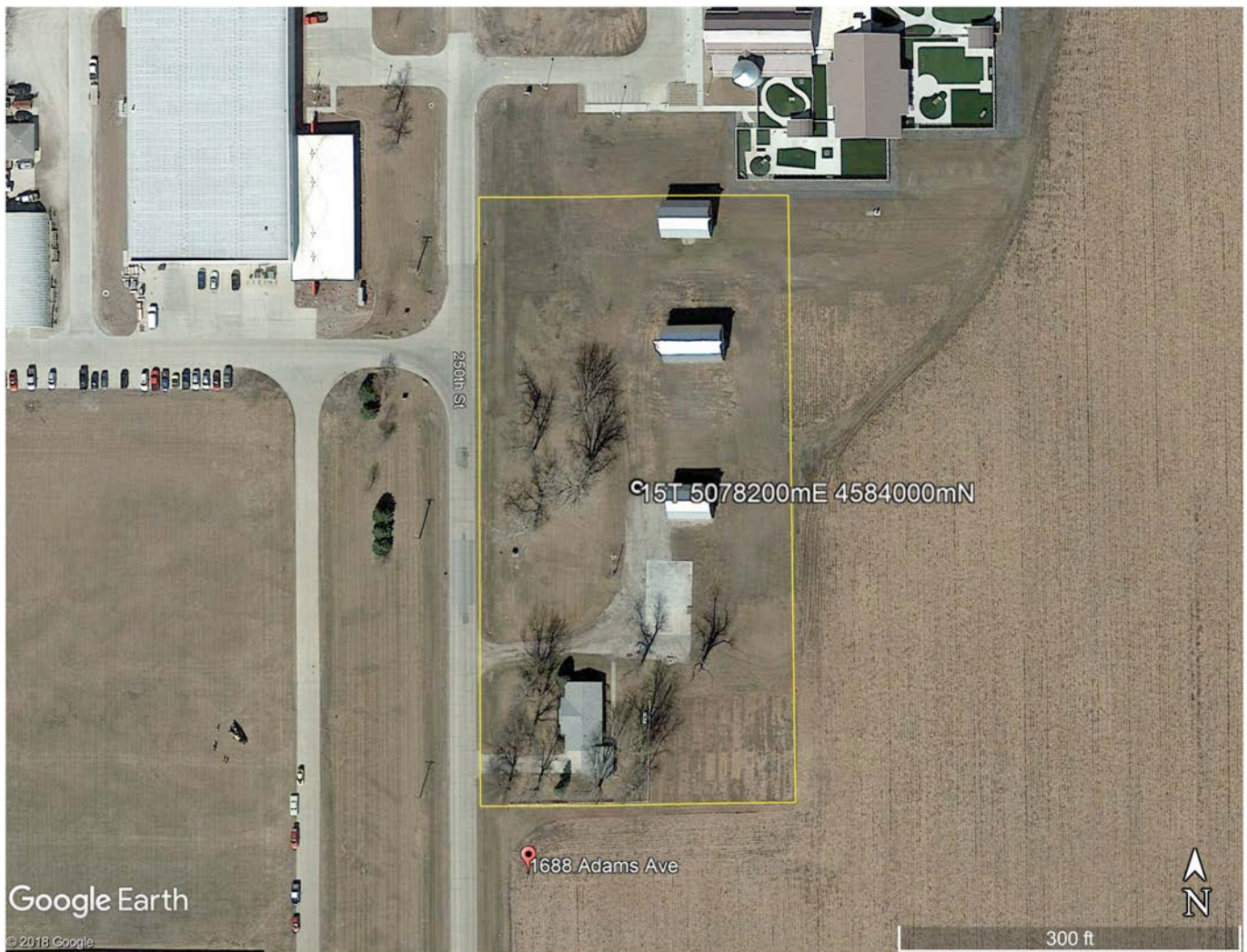


Figure 22

Source: Google Earth, viewed June 4, 2018.







**Gary J. & Matilda Vermeer Farmstead  
Mahaska County, IA  
Photo #1**





**Gary J. & Matilda Vermeer Farmstead**  
**Mahaska County, IA**  
**Photo #2**





**Gary J. & Matilda Vermeer Farmstead  
Mahaska County, IA  
Photo #3**





**Gary J. & Matilda Vermeer Farmstead**  
**Mahaska County, IA**  
**Photo #4**

**Gary J. & Matilda Vermeer Farmstead  
Mahaska County, IA  
Photo #5**





**Gary J. & Matilda Vermeer Farmstead  
Mahaska County, IA  
Photo #6**



**Gary J. & Matilda Vermeer Farmstead**  
**Mahaska County, IA**  
**Photo #7**



**Gary J. & Matilda Vermeer Farmstead**  
**Mahaska County, IA**  
**Photo #8**





**Gary J. & Matilda Vermeer Farmstead  
Mahaska County, IA  
Photo #9**



**Gary J. & Matilda Vermeer Farmstead**  
**Mahaska County, IA**  
**Photo #10**



**Gary J. & Matilda Vermeer Farmstead  
Mahaska County, IA  
Photo #11**





**Gary J. & Matilda Vermeer Farmstead  
Mahaska County, IA  
Photo #12**



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action: Nomination

Property Name: Vermeer, Gary J. and Matilda, Farmstead

Multiple Name:

State & County: IOWA, Mahaska

Date Received: 6/8/2018      Date of Pending List: 7/9/2018      Date of 16th Day: 7/24/2018      Date of 45th Day: 7/23/2018      Date of Weekly List:

Reference number: SG100002682

Nominator: State

Reason For Review:

X Accept       Return       Reject      7/23/2018 Date

Abstract/Summary Comments: The Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead is locally significant under National Register Criteria A and B in the areas of Agriculture, Industry, and Social History. The farmstead is associated with industrial entrepreneur, inventor and philanthropist Gary J. Vermeer, who in 1948 founded the Vermeer Manufacturing Company, producers of heavy equipment for construction, landscaping and agriculture. Vermeer's ideas for mechanized farming grew out of experiences as a local Iowa farmer. The farmstead would serve as his family home and base of early operations through his death in 2009. Despite the unfortunate loss of additional scattered (agricultural) outbuildings and the re-cladding of the barns in metal slip covers, the farmstead retains sufficient integrity to convey the historic lifestyle and associations of the extended Vermeer family.

Recommendation/ Criteria Accept NR Criteria A and B

Reviewer Paul Lusignan      Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2229      Date 07/23/2018

DOCUMENTATION:    see attached comments : No    see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.



**IOWA DEPARTMENT OF  
CULTURAL AFFAIRS**

CHRIS KRAMER, ACTING DIRECTOR

KIM REYNOLDS, GOVERNOR  
ADAM GREGG, LT. GOVERNOR



June 7, 2018

IOWA ARTS  
COUNCIL

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IOWA

STATE HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY OF IOWA

STATE HISTORICAL  
MUSEUM OF IOWA

STATE HISTORICAL  
LIBRARY & ARCHIVES

STATE HISTORIC SITES

STATE HISTORIC  
PRESERVATION  
OFFICE OF IOWA

IOWA HISTORICAL  
FOUNDATION

J. Paul Loether, Deputy Keeper and Chief  
National Park Service  
National Register of Historic Places  
1849 C Street, NW, Mail Stop 7228  
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Mr. Loether:

The following National Register nomination(s) from Iowa are enclosed for your review and listing if acceptable.

**Vermeer, Gary J. and Matilda, Farmstead**

The Gary J. and Matilda Vermeer Farmstead is significant, locally and under Criterion B, because it calls attention to Gary J. Vermeer, an industrial leader in Iowa during the mid to late 20th century. As founder of the Vermeer Manufacturing Company in 1948, he developed this privately held firm, doing business now as the Vermeer Corporation, into one of the nation's leading heavy equipment manufacturing operations, employing 3,000 people by the year 2000. The Vermeer Farmstead calls attention to Gary J. Vermeer's early life on this property as a farmer and how his ideas to mechanize farming emerged from this experience. It is also locally significant under Criterion A, for social history. The building calls attention to the moral principle of "Plain Living and High Thinking," a lifestyle valued by Americans since the founding of the nation. The period of significance for the farmstead is 1948-1972. The year 1948 marks the date when Gary established the Vermeer Manufacturing Company. The year 1972 dates a notable Vermeer innovation, the round hay baler, which appeared on the market that year and would firmly establish the Vermeer Manufacturing Company as an industrial might. Although 1972 falls beyond the National Register 50-year rule, the date is justified because it marks the fulfillment of an inventive process.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Laura Sadowsky  
State Historian and National Register Coordinator  
State Historical Society of Iowa

Enclosures.