

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC John Deere House
AND/OR COMMON John Deere House

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER Illinois and Clinton Streets
CITY, TOWN Grand Detour VICINITY OF 35th
STATE Illinois CODE 17 COUNTY Ogle CODE 141

3 CLASSIFICATION

| CATEGORY | OWNERSHIP | STATUS | PRESENT USE |
|---|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT | <input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED | <input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE | <input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK |
| <input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> BOTH | <input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS | <input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SITE | PUBLIC ACQUISITION | ACCESSIBLE | <input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS |
| <input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT | <input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED | <input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED | <input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED | <input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> NO | <input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER: |

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME John Deere Foundation
STREET & NUMBER John Deere Road
CITY, TOWN Moline VICINITY OF STATE Illinois

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Registrar of Deeds
STREET & NUMBER Ogle County Courthouse
CITY, TOWN Oregon STATE Illinois

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE none known
DATE
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS
CITY, TOWN STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

| CONDITION | | CHECK ONE | CHECK ONE |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT | <input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED | <input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> GOOD | <input type="checkbox"/> RUINS | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED | <input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> FAIR | <input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED | | |

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Grand Detour is still an unincorporated village of about 400 persons, a very quiet settlement located on an oxbow of the Rock River, in the center of a large farming region. In 1834 Leonard Andrus, a pioneer from Vermont came to the Rock River Valley, and, impressed by its fertility and potential for water power and water transportation, made claim on the land and laid out the village of Grand Detour, as the site had been named by early French explorers because of its beautiful setting.

In 1836 John Deere followed other Vermonters to the new town Andrus had organized and he set up a blacksmith shop there. By 1837 Deere had fashioned his famous plow in this shop and began to produce them in some volume. In March 1843 Deere entered into a partnership with Leonard Andrus and their business expanded into a new brick factory near the river (demolished). When they opened this factory in 1844, however, they abandoned use of the original blacksmith shop. The partnership dissolved in 1847 when, with increasing demand for his new plows, and importing special steel from England, Deere moved to Moline, Illinois, to take advantage of better transportation and water power provided by the Mississippi River.

The John Deere Foundation has restored, developed and maintained as an historic site of about 4 acres which includes (as seen on the enclosed sketch map,) the Deere House, the site of the original blacksmith shop and the structure which shelters the excavation, a reconstructed blacksmith shop, and a visitors' center in the neighboring Dana House (1843). The site has been restored under the direction of archeologist Richard Hagen, based on the appearance of the structures in a 1872 drawing of the Deere property when it was owned by Joseph Cunningham.

John Deere's association with Grand Detour began in the late summer of 1836, when he was 32 years old. It is believed that the original section of the house was built that year, very likely since he sent for his family soon after settling in the town. He probably built the original blacksmith shop very soon after arrival also. He made various additions and alterations to the house all during his occupancy, which lasted until 1847.

During Deere's association with this site, in 1843, a Mr. Dana constructed a house next door and northeast of the Deeres. This is presently used as the visitor's center. The Dana House was bought by Katherine Deere Butterworth, John Deere's granddaughter, with the rest of the present historic area in 1919 and she furnished it with mid-nineteenth century pieces and some objects associated with the Deere house during the 1920s. In 1953 she died, leaving the property as a memorial which became the John Deere Foundation, associated with the John Deere Company.

John Deere House - The house presently is an odd clapboarded frame structure painted white, of three definite sections. The front and oldest section of the house, very plain with a simple stepped gable device on the north and south facades, and the main entrance to the east, has two rooms downstairs and a story above. Probably constructed

8 SIGNIFICANCE

| PERIOD | AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW | | | | |
|---|---|--|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING | <input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC | <input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION | <input type="checkbox"/> LAW | <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS | <input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE | <input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699 | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION | <input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY | <input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799 | <input type="checkbox"/> ART | <input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING | <input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC | <input type="checkbox"/> THEATER | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899 | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY | <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1900- | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS | <input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY | <input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) | |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION | | | |

SPECIFIC DATES 1836 - 1847

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Just as irrigation tremendously benefited the cultivation of arid lands, so did John Deere's famous plow transform the farming of the seemingly endless, dark, rich land of the old Northwest. Deere's plow scoured the sticky prairie soil cleanly, unlike other plows which became clogged with the black soil. His farm implement thus made the intensive cultivation of the vast acres in Ohio, Indiana and Illinois possible, bringing benefit to the entire nation.

Born on February 7, 1804, in Rutland, Vermont, Deere was soon forced by poverty to become a blacksmith. He did attend Middleburg Academy briefly, but soon had to leave in order to earn money. Deere became an apprentice to a blacksmith, receiving in addition to his training \$300 a year and his board. A journeyman at the end of four years, he then undertook the trade for himself. Skilled as Vulcan, Deere travelled about Vermont for almost a decade, doing all kinds of ironwork. During this period he married Demarius Lamb, in 1827, by whom he had three daughters and a son. In 1836, Deere bade his family farewell and moved west, arriving in Chicago with only \$73. From there he travelled to Grand Detour, where he settled.

The immigrant quickly established a blacksmith business. His skill with iron won him a profitable trade, so much so that within two years after settling in Grand Detour he could bring his family west. Much of Deere's business involved broken plows, victims of the tough prairie soil. Thus Deere rapidly learned of the need for a plow that would make a clean furrow, instead of becoming burdened with the sticky soil.

The exact origin and nature of Deere's original steel plow is still not entirely clear. Apparently, the plow resulted from the thinking of both Deere and Leonard Andrus, the founder of Grand Detour. Moreover, the earliest Deere plows had a steel share and a brightly polished cast-iron moldboard, they were not in truth completely steel implements. As a recent technical study of the invention notes, the plow's success "depended on a steel share which held a sharp edge and a highly polished moldboard to which the sticky soils could not cling." It was the innovation of the highly effective steel share that caused Deere's product to be called a "steel plow." Only from 1852 on were the moldboards also made of steel.

Deere made his first plow in 1837. Production doubled in the next year, when he produced two plows, then ten in 1839, forty in 1840 and seventy-five in 1841. The capital for the undertaking evidently came from Andrus, with the company of Andrus and Deere manufacturing 400 plows in 1843. Word of the prairie-conquering plow quickly spread, aided by such advertisements as the following, which appeared in the Rock River Register, March 10, 1843:

700 710 720 730 740 750 760 770 780 790 800

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Bidwell, Percy W., and Falconer, John L., History of Agriculture in the Northern United States, 1620-1860 (Washington, D.C., 1925).
- Dies, Edward Jerome, Titans of the Soil (Chapel Hill, 1949).
- Kendall, Edward C., "John Deere's Steel Plow," in U.S. National Museum Bulletin 218, Contributions from the Museum of History and Technology (Washington, D.C., 1959).

(cont'd)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY approximately 4 acres

UTM REFERENCES

| | | | | | | | |
|---|------|---------|----------|---|------|---------|----------|
| A | 16 | 299580 | 464850 | B | | | |
| | ZONE | EASTING | NORTHING | | ZONE | EASTING | NORTHING |
| C | | | | D | | | |
| | | | | | | | |

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The national historic landmark boundary includes most of the northern half of the block bounded by Main, Illinois, Clinton and Canal Streets, which is presently maintained as an historic site. This encloses at least as much land as Deere probably owned, his house and the site of his blacksmith shop. Lacking more precise knowledge of his original property boundary, the landmark boundary includes the Dana House which he did not own but which contributes to the historic setting since at least part of it was constructed

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES (cont'd)

| STATE | CODE | COUNTY | CODE |
|-------|------|--------|------|
| STATE | CODE | COUNTY | CODE |

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Blanche Higgins Schroer, Landmark Review Project; S. Sydney Bradford 1964

ORGANIZATION

Historic Sites Survey, NPS

DATE

11/29/75

STREET & NUMBER

1100 L Street, NW

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Washington

STATE

D.C. 20240

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

Landmark
Designated: 7/19/64
date

Boundary Certified: 5/24/77
date

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I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Chief, Hist. & Arch. Surveys

Arch. Surveys

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION
ATTEST:

Boundary Affirmed:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Director, OAHIP date

(NATIONAL HISTORIC
LANDMARKS)

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CONTINUATION SHEET John Deere House ITEM NUMBER #7 PAGE #2

within a year afterwards, the kitchen section was added to the west, but was narrower than the front section. There is a bedroom for the apprentices in the unfinished attic above the kitchen, a covered patio protecting the south entrance and well, and a small covered porch with square columns on the north entrance.

A few years later Deere apparently enlarged the laundry room and shed just west of the kitchen to provide more pantry space, and about 1847 he built a larger shed which occupies most of the third section of the structure, which is connected to the house by a small porch covered and enclosed on three sides. Mrs. Butterworth "restored" the house in 1920 and at that time added a front porch, and a fireplace and chimney on one end which were removed in the recent restoration. The shed was reconstructed in 1968.

Original Blacksmith Shop Site - In 1962 archeologists first surveyed the property and under the direction of archeologist Elaine Blume of the University of Illinois, they located and excavated the site of the original Deere blacksmith shop which had been leveled by a subsequent owner. Located just west of the present Clinton Street, a white frame museum building was erected to shelter the excavation, which was left open, labeled, with some artifacts in place.

Reconstructed Blacksmith Shop - Located just southwest of the original blacksmith shop site is this one-room frame building with vertical weathered board siding and cedar shingled roof, which is filled with old tools, farm equipment, pioneer utensils and a working forge.

Dana House - This two-story house with a one-story rear section is also clapboarded and painted white. It was built in 1843 and owned by a neighbor, although apparently the structure had no more direct association with John Deere than being the house next door, and therefore, an element of the neighborhood during its historic period.

According to the 1872 drawing upon which the site restoration was based, there were perhaps one or two outbuildings associated with the Deere House. None of these have been reconstructed except for the blacksmith shop. The whole historic area is completely enclosed by a white fence and there is a small information booth at the entrance to the property on Clinton Street, and a parking lot across the street.

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CONTINUATION SHEET John Deere House ITEM NUMBER #8 PAGE #2

It [Deere's plow] will do more work in a day, and do it much better and with less labor, to both team and holder, than the ordinary ploughs that do not scour, and in consequence of the ground being better prepared, the agriculturalist obtains a much heavier crop.²

Convinced of his own claims, Deere looked to the future. In 1847 he arranged a friendly parting with Andrus and moved to Moline, which possessed better transportation facilities than Grand Detour. Deere's new plant soon registered a large increase in plow production, turning out 700 in its first year and 1,600 in 1850. Steady demand for the plow caused an expansion of the factory in 1852, as well as the addition of new models. A leading farming magazine, The Country Gentleman, reported in 1857 that Deere's plant was the largest of its kind in the country. During 1856 the factory had employed an average of sixty-five men and had averaged 268 plows a week, for a year's total of 13,400. Greatly impressed with the factory, the periodical also vented a nationalistic tone in commenting that Deere's British suppliers of steel had:

...recently ordered three of Mr. D's plows of different patterns, which have been forwarded to England, where we doubt not that they will attract great attention.³

Deere's success inspired a flock of imitators. But quality and the introduction of new models retained leadership for him and his plant. Deere also began manufacturing other implements and remained active in the company's designing and production. Deere and Company continued as leader in farm machinery field and is today the oldest major manufacturing business in Illinois and the largest producer of farm implements in the world.

¹Edward C. Kendall, "John Deere's Steel Plow," in U.S. National Museum Bulletin 218, Contributions from the Museum of History and Technology (Washington, 1959), 25.

²Quoted in Wayne D. Rasmussen (ed.) Readings in the History of American Agriculture (Urbana, 1960), 78-79.

³The Country Gentleman, X (July, 1857-Jan. 1851), 129.

***History from original report by S. Sydney Bradford, 1964

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CONTINUATION SHEET John Deere House ITEM NUMBER #9 PAGE #2

Rasmussen, Wayne D., (ed.), Readings in the History of American Agriculture (Urbana, 1960).
Rogin, Leo, The Introduction of Farm Machinery. . . in the Agriculture of the United
States During the Nineteenth Century, University of California, Publications in
Economics, IX (1931), 33-34.
The Country Gentleman, X (July, 1857-January, 1858), 129.

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CONTINUATION SHEET John Deere House ITEM NUMBER 10 PAGE 2

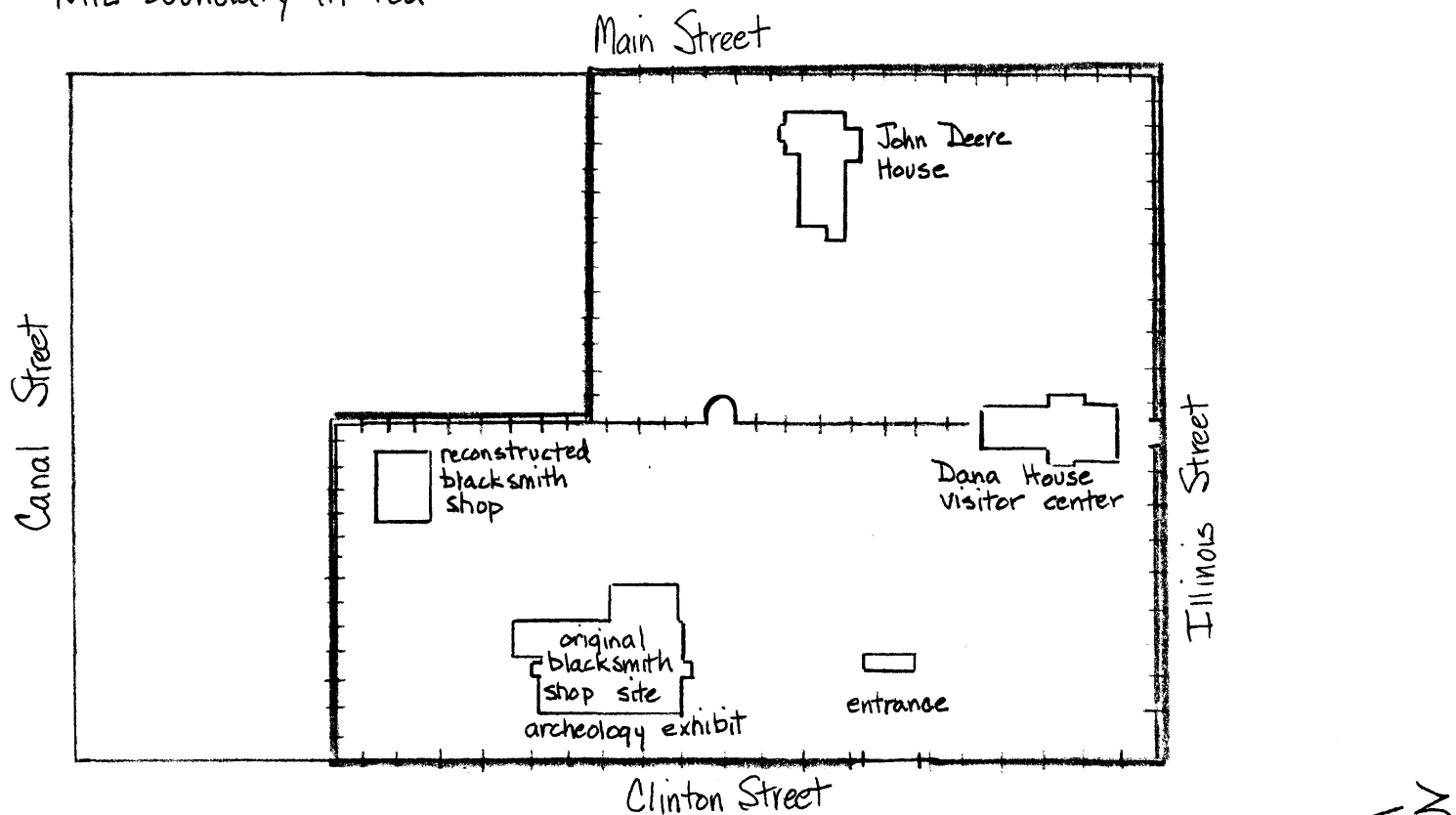
during his association with this site. However, the information booth, and the reconstructed shop, as well as the structure sheltering the archeology exhibit do not contribute to the national significance of the landmark.

Beginning at the southwest corner of the intersection of Illinois and Clinton Streets, the boundary follows the western curb of Clinton Street in a southerly direction to the point just south of the archeology exhibit and north of a cinder-block shop, where the white fence indicates the end of the historic area; then west along the fence to the point where the fence makes a right angle to the north, just behind the reconstructed blacksmith shop; then along the fence in a northerly direction; then following the fence as it makes a right angle to mark the southern boundary of the yard of the Deere House; then westerly to the curb of Main Street; then northerly along the eastern curb of Main Street to its intersection with Illinois Street; then easterly along the southern curb of Illinois Street to the beginning point.

Sketchmap of John Deere House and associated structures

Blanche Schroer, 1975

NHL boundary in red



Floor plan of restored John Deere House (not to scale)

