

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

NOV 21 1984

date entered

DEC 20 1984

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic

CHARLES ROBINSON HOUSE

and/or common

same

2. Location

street & number Center St., Old Wade House State Park

not for publication

city, town

Greenbush

vicinity of

state

Wisconsin

code

55

county

Sheboygan

code

117

3. Classification

Category

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

Ownership

- public
  - private
  - both
- Public Acquisition**
- in process
  - being considered
  - N.A.

Status

- occupied
  - unoccupied
  - work in progress
- Accessible**
- yes: restricted
  - yes: unrestricted
  - no

Present Use

- agriculture
  - commercial
  - educational
  - entertainment
  - government
  - industrial
  - military
- museum
  - park
  - private residence
  - religious
  - scientific
  - transportation
  - other:

4. Owner of Property

name

State Historical Society of Wisconsin

street & number

816 State Street

city, town

Madison

vicinity of

state

Wisconsin 53706

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc.

Sheboygan County Courthouse

street & number

615 N. 6th Street

city, town

Sheboygan

state

Wisconsin

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Wisconsin Inventory of Historic Places has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date

1972

federal

state

county

local

depository for survey records

Historic Preservation Division, State Historical Society of Wis.

city, town

Madison

state

Wisconsin

## 7. Description

### Condition

excellent  
 good  
 fair

deteriorated  
 ruins  
 unexposed

### Check one

unaltered  
 altered

### Check one

original site  
 moved date \_\_\_\_\_

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Charles Robinson House is located on the grounds of the Old Wade House State Park, a museum complex in Greenbush, Wisconsin, owned and operated by the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. Other than the Robinson House, the complex includes the Wade House (1851, NRHP: 1971), a stagecoach inn; the Robinson-Herrling Sawmill site (ruins); several historically reconstructed buildings; and several buildings constructed within the last 30 years. (See site map of the complex.) The grounds of the Robinson House are spacious, with large lawns and brick or gravel pathways between it and the other buildings in the park. Across the street, south of the Robinson House, is a small residential neighborhood.

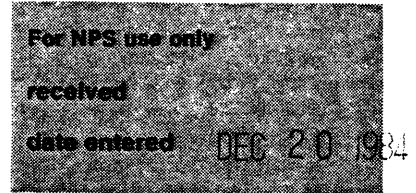
The Robinson House is a fine and unusual example of Greek Revival architecture. Although smaller than its neighbor to the east, the large Greek Revival Wade House, the Robinson House is more elaborately detailed. The Kohler Foundation restored the house in the early 1950s (along with the Wade House), and donated both buildings to the State Historical Society of Wisconsin as part of the Old Wade House State Park historical complex. The purpose of the complex is to portray a frontier Wisconsin stagecoach stop in the mid-nineteenth century. The Kohler Foundation constructed other buildings in the complex to fill out the museum's historical character.

Although no definite date of construction has been determined, Charles Robinson probably built the Robinson House around 1855, a few years after completion of the Wade House. It is a 1 and 1/2 story square, white frame building with a one-story rear wing. The cedar shingled hipped roof is topped with a low louvered-wood deck or "widow's walk" with wide pilasters and decorative iron cresting. Two corbelled chimneys rise from the east and west side of the house. The small house has a wide entablature with a projecting cornice and small "eyebrow" windows set in the frieze. The principal windows of the house are double-hung, six-pane sash type with projecting wood hoodmolds. All the windows have green, louvered shutters. There are pilasters at the four corners of the house and an L-shaped included veranda with thick square columns at the southeast corner. Unusual in itself, the porch is accessible by six doors closely spaced along the entire veranda. Three of these doors are four-paneled solid wood doors, while three of the doors are twelve-paned "French" doors. Like the windows, the glazed doors are framed with green louvered shutters, and all porch openings are framed by flat or corner pilasters. The cut-stone foundation is punctuated by small three-paned basement windows, and long wooden steps serving both the west and south sides of the veranda. Like the Wade House, the "kitchen wing" is more simply designed than the main block of the house.

The interior plan (see attached floor plan) of this house includes a large square living room along the veranda and dining and sitting rooms at the southeast and northwest corners of the house. The kitchen fills the far northwest corner (the current house interpretation substitutes a bedroom for the dining room, and a dining room for the kitchen). The kitchen wing included a summer kitchen, pantry, and wood storage areas; however, these areas are currently used as utility rooms for the director of the complex, who makes his home on the second floor. Actually close to a full story in height, the upper "half-story" was originally divided into four small bedrooms, three larger corner bedrooms, a closet, and a storeroom, but the plan and room uses have been slightly altered into kitchen, living room, and bedrooms for the director and his family.

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The museum rooms on the first floor are decorated with mid-nineteenth century reproduction wallpaper and furnishings. The interior woodwork is mostly butternut (the house is also known as the "Butternut House," given the extensive use of this wood in the interior) and in most rooms is very plain. However, in the living room and sitting rooms of the first floor, more elaborate articulated frames and moldings are evident. The first floor has ash floors over the original basswood flooring, and the second floor has oak flooring over the original pine flooring.

This house is an elegant and unusual example of the Greek Revival style in pioneer Wisconsin, reflecting Robinson's status as a leading citizen in a booming new community. It also stands as a landmark in a neighborhood of mostly simpler, plainer structures in Greenbush.

To the northwest of the Robinson House is a garage which was constructed post-1950 in a simple imitation of the Greek Revival style. The building sits inside the property boundary of the Robinson House, but because it is not architecturally nor historically significant, it is a non-contributing structure.

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Charles Robinson House, Greenbush, Sheboygan County, Wis.  
Continuation sheet

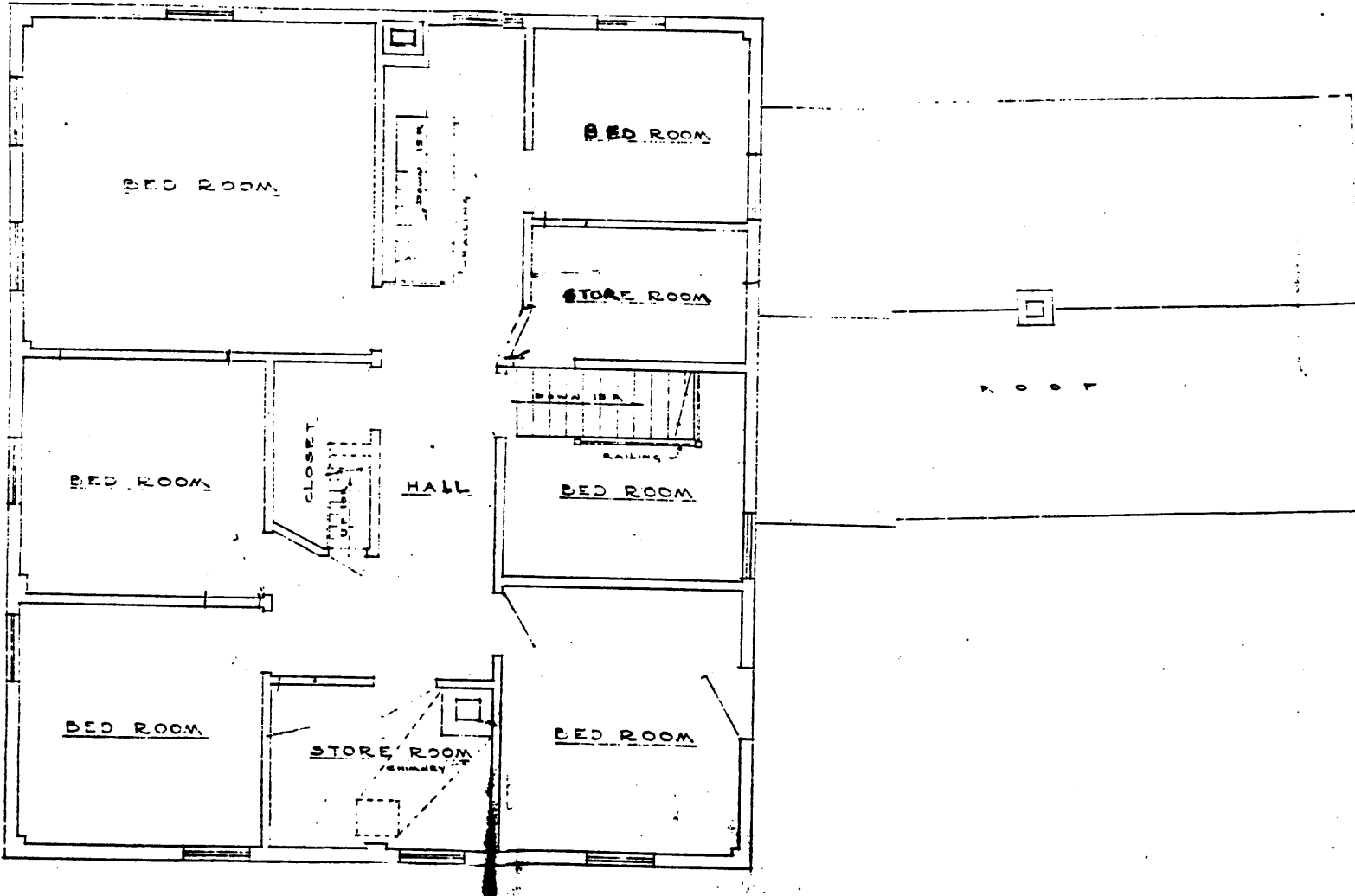
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ROBINSON HOUSE

HOUSE PLANS



Second Floor Plan

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Charles Robinson House, Greenbush, Sheboygan County, Wis.  
Continuation sheet

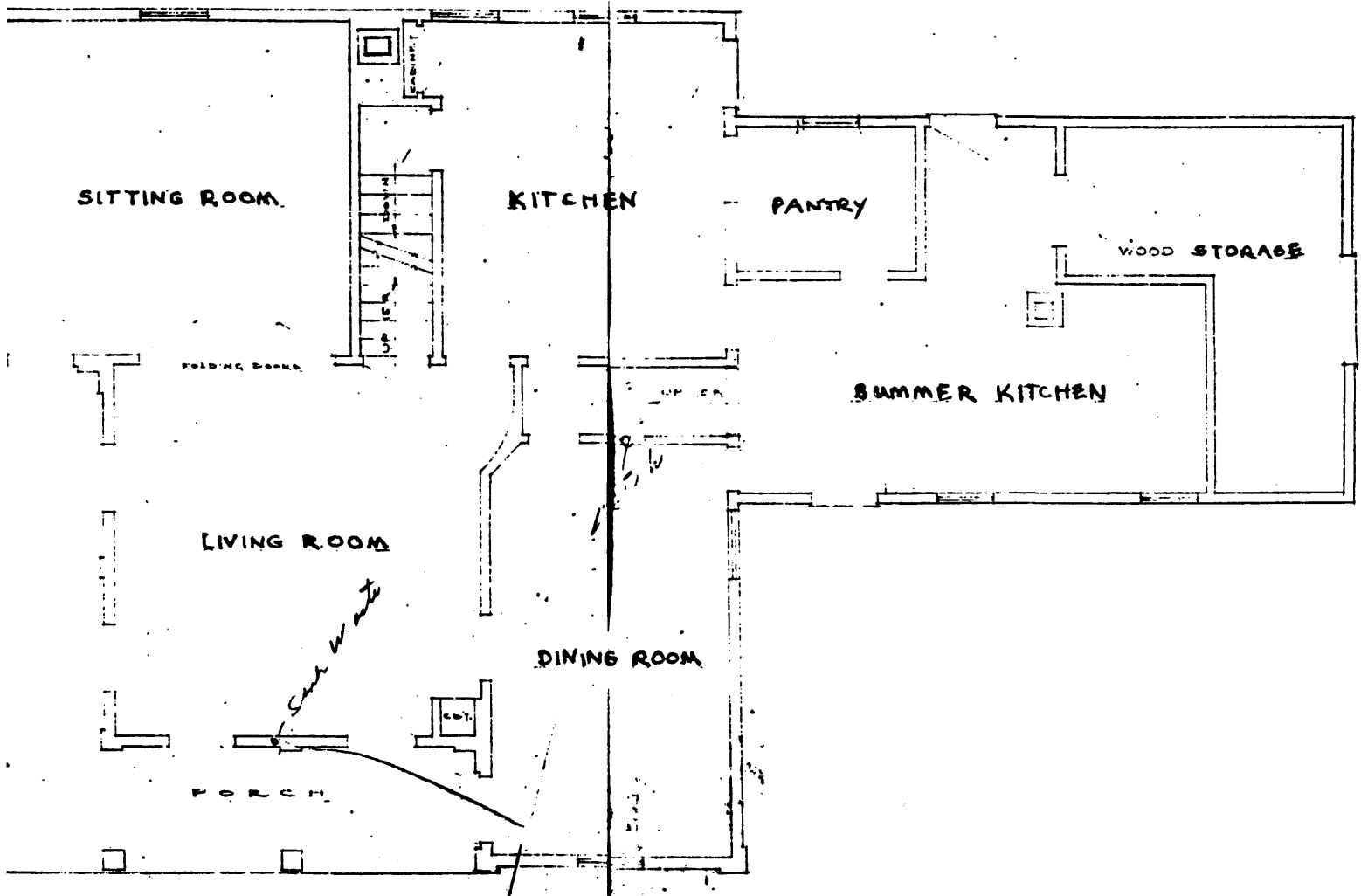
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ROBINSON HOUSE

HOUSE PLANS



First Floor Plan

# 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 type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** c.1855<sup>1</sup> **Builder/Architect** Charles Robinson<sup>2</sup>

## Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Charles Robinson House is a fine and unusual example of the Greek Revival style, therefore it is significant for architecture. It was also the home of Charles Robinson, an important early settler and developer of frontier Greenbush, therefore it is significant for exploration/settlement.

### Architecture

Many of the earliest frame houses built in Wisconsin were decorated with Greek Revival style details, or were full-fledged Greek Revival structures. The style remained popular in Wisconsin well past its peak of fashionability in the eastern United States, perhaps because many eastern settlers desired an appearance of "home" in their new communities or residences. In any case, the urban and rural areas of Wisconsin are dotted with examples, both simple and elaborate, of Greek Revival architecture.

The Robinson House is an interesting interpretation of the Greek Revival style. While the house has the typical Greek Revival entablature and pilasters, its square form and hipped roof with "widow's walk" are not often seen details in Greek Revival style houses in Wisconsin. It also has a wide entablature, which gives the second half-story the interior space of almost a full-story, while the outside appearance is that of an attic. The most interesting detail of this house, though, is the included porch, with the heavy square columns and six entrances, three of which are "French" doors. Truly an elegant home, it was most appropriate for its owner-builder, Charles Robinson, who was a successful carpenter/real estate speculator at the time of the house's construction.

The Robinson House has a high degree of integrity and preservation, as it is maintained as a museum house on the first floor and an apartment for the complex's director on the second floor. Because of the house's excellent condition and unusual details, it is significant as one of the finest examples of the Greek Revival style in the area.

### Exploration/Settlement

The early settlement and development of Greenbush in the 1840s, and its period of peak prosperity in the 1850s, was closely connected to two men: Sylvannus Wade, and Charles Robinson. Together, they were responsible for much of Greenbush's economic and commercial prosperity, and even for the appearance of the village in the nineteenth century. Wade established the Wade House, a stagecoach inn along the well-travelled Sheboygan-Fond du Lac Road (later, Plank Road). His enterprise stimulated growth in Greenbush, and Wade was active in exploiting this growth via real estate speculation and his involvement in local and state politics.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property less than one

Quadrangle name Elkhart Lake, Wis.

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

### UTM References

A	<u>1</u> <u>6</u>	<u>4</u> <u>1</u> <u>2</u> <u>5</u> <u>8</u> <u>4</u>	<u>4</u> <u>8</u> <u>4</u> <u>7</u> <u>3</u> <u>6</u> <u>0</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing

B			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

C			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

D			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

E			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

F			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

G			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

H			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

### Verbal boundary description and justification

Original Plat, Block 4, Lot 5. This legal description encompasses the property boundaries on which the Robinson House sits.

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code

state	code	county	code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Carol Lohry Cartwright

organization Historic Preservation Division

date August 21, 1984

street & number 816 State Street

telephone 608/262-1339

city or town Madison

state Wisconsin 53706

# 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.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title Director of Historic Preservation

date October 23, 1984

### For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Entered in the  
National Register

date

12-20-84

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

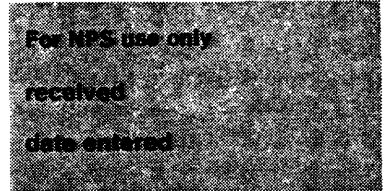
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Less well known than Wade, but perhaps equally as significant to the settlement and development of early Greenbush, was Charles Robinson. Robinson, a son-in-law to Wade, settled in Greenbush in 1845 and was responsible for the construction of Greenbush's significant industry--the sawmill--in 1847. Very likely the lumber used for many of Greenbush's homes and furniture came from this mill, as it specialized in finished wood, not rough lumber. While Robinson sold the mill in 1852, as a carpenter, he must have worked closely with the new owners to complete his local projects. The mill that Robinson founded continued to be a significant enterprise up to the late 1800s.<sup>3</sup>

Even more important than Robinson's mill, was his carpentry skills. He is thought to have designed and been the principal builder for both the substantial Wade House and his own elegant Greek Revival home. He is thought to have constructed other houses in the village, and the picturesque Greek Revival Greenbush Methodist Church. It is known that Robinson built many pieces of furniture for the Wade House, some of which are displayed there today.<sup>4</sup> Robinson also engaged in real estate speculation, purchasing property and selling it as town lots. Therefore, he must take credit with Wade for the development of the village, both physically and architecturally. It is clear that Robinson had many abilities--carpentry, building, architecture, and business. Had he not succumbed tragically to insanity in the 1860s, he may have succeeded Wade as principal Greenbush entrepreneur and leader.

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<sup>1</sup> David Donath, "Old Wade House Historical Synopsis: Research Narrative, Bibliography, and Recommendations," Unpublished Report, March 5, 1982, p. 31. On file, Historic Preservation Division, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, WI.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. 14; David P. Nord, "The Greenbush Mill Project," Report prepared for the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, December 27, 1978, pp. 80-82. On file, Old Wade House State Park, Greenbush, WI.

<sup>4</sup> Donath, pp. 31-32.



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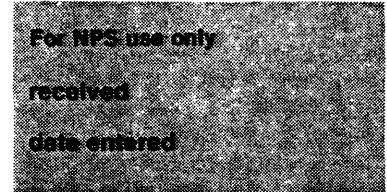
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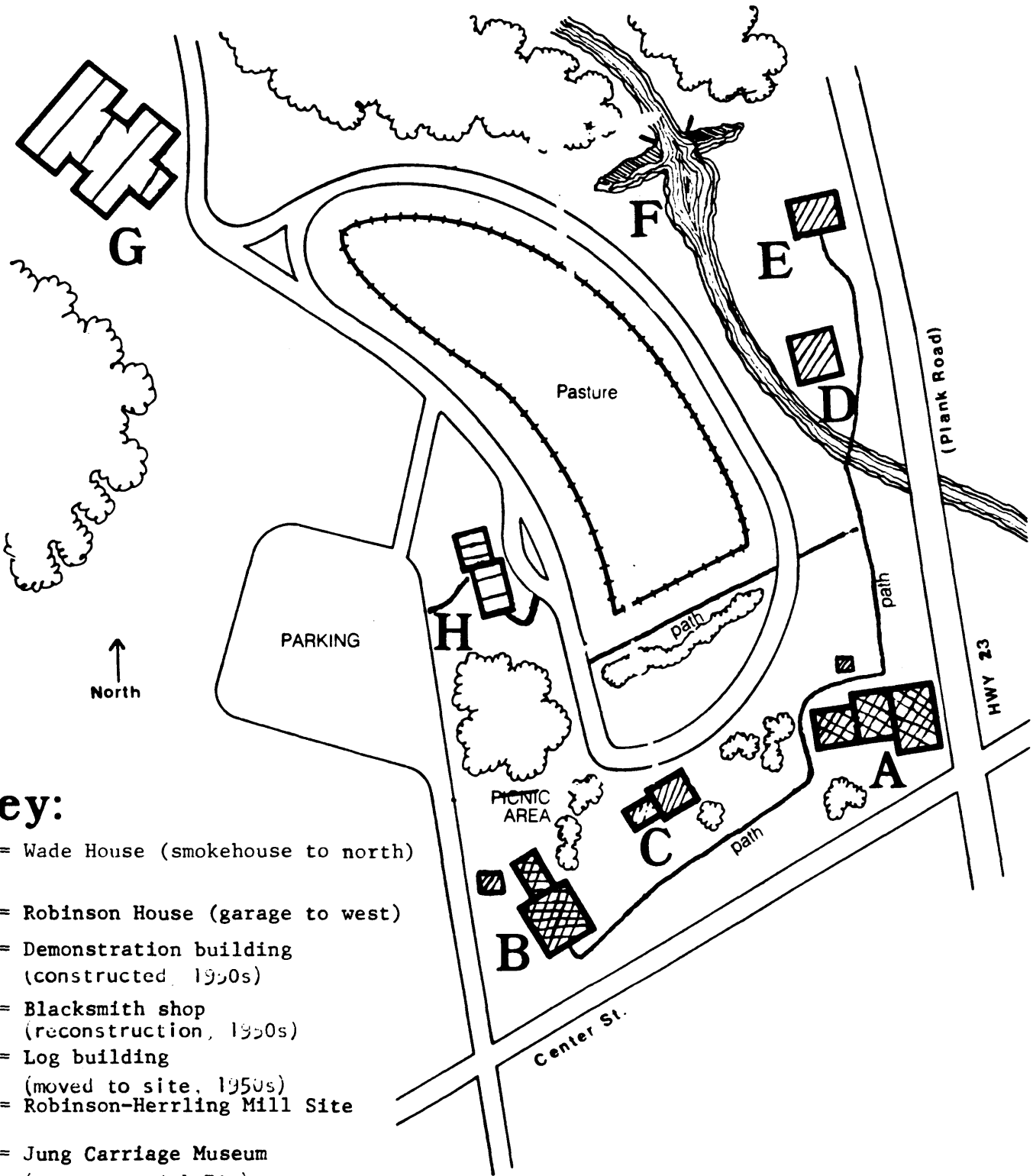
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Major Bibliographical References

- Donath, David. "Old Wade House Historical Synopsis: Research Narrative, Bibliography, and Recommendations." Unpublished report, March 5, 1982. On file, Historic Preservation Division, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, WI.
- Kohler Foundation. Old Wade House State Park Opening Press Kit, June 7, 1953. On file, Iconography department, Archives Division, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, WI.
- Nord, David P. "The Greenbush Mill Project." Report prepared for the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, December 27, 1978. On file, Old Wade House State Park, Greenbush, WI.
- A Guide to Old Wade House Historical Site. Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1978.



**Key:**

- A** = Wade House (smokehouse to north)
- B** = Robinson House (garage to west)
- C** = Demonstration building (constructed, 1950s)
- D** = Blacksmith shop (reconstruction, 1950s)
- E** = Log building (moved to site, 1950s)
- F** = Robinson-Herrling Mill Site
- G** = Jung Carriage Museum (constructed 1970s)
- H** = Visitor's Center (constructed 1970s)

OLD WADE HOUSE STATE PARK HISTORICAL COMPLEX

Map not to scale