

## Appendices



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## Appendix A: Surveyed Site Plan



Aerial Image of Site

Site Plan

Enlarged Site Plan













# Appendix B: 2014 Poor Farm and Asylum Historic District Nomination





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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Nomination 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" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional 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 Johnson County Poor Farm and Asylum Historic District  
other names/site number Johnson County Home

**2. Location**

street & number S. side Melrose Ave. 0.16 mi E. of jct. Melrose Ave. and Slothtower Ave. not for publication N/A  
city or town Iowa City vicinity N/A  
state Iowa code IA county Johnson code 103 zip code 52246

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination \_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant \_\_\_ nationally \_\_\_ statewide X locally. ( \_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official Date

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 commenting or other official Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I, hereby certify that this property is:	Signature of Keeper	Date of Action
<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other (explain): _____	_____	_____



**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

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

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

**Criteria Considerations**

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

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or a 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)

- HEALTH/MEDICINE
- SOCIAL HISTORY
- ARCHITECTURE
- AGRICULTURE
- ARCHAEOLOGY: Historic-Non-Aboriginal

**Period of Significance**

1855-1964

**Significant Dates**

1861  
1903  
1912

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

Euro-American

**Architect/Builder**

unknown

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographical 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)**

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

**Primary Location of Additional Data:**

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

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_



Johnson County Poor Farm and Asylum Historic District  
Name of Property

Johnson County, IA  
County and State

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## 10. Geographical Data

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**Acreage of Property** 110 acres

### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	<u>15</u>	<u>615850</u>	<u>4612630</u>	3	<u>15</u>	<u>615970</u>	<u>4612384</u>
2	<u>15</u>	<u>615850</u>	<u>4612384</u>	4	<u>15</u>	<u>615970</u>	<u>4611965</u>

X See continuation sheet.

### 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.)

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## 11. Form Prepared By

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name/title Leah D. Rogers/Principal Investigator

organization Tallgrass Historians L.C. date July 8, 2014

street & number 2460 S. Riverside Drive telephone 319-354-6722

city or town Iowa City state IA zip code 52246

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## Additional Documentation

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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)

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## Property Owner

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

name Johnson County c/o Board of Supervisors, Terrence Neuzil, Chair

street & number 913 South Dubuque Street telephone 319-356-6000

city or town Iowa City state IA zip code 52240

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**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 the 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 Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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**7. Description**

**Materials continued:**

Foundation: CONCRETE

Roof: WOOD/shingle

**Narrative Description**

The Johnson County Poor Farm and Asylum Historic District is located on the south side of Melrose Avenue just west of the interchange with IA Highway 27 (a.k.a. the Avenue of the Saints) (Figure 1). The property is located due west of the City of Iowa City near the center of Johnson County. When first established the Poor Farm and Asylum were in the rural environs of Iowa City, with the current setting becoming more suburban residential and commercial as the city expands in the modern era. There is a residential housing development just to the south of the district, with potential for further expansion to the southwest of the historic district. To the east of the district is the 1964 Chatham Oaks building that was the successor to the late 1880s Johnson County Home building (non-extant). To the east and south of Chatham Oaks are modern developments associated with the assisted living wing of Chatham Oaks and the Iowa City Emergency Management building. The interchange for Highway 218 and Melrose Avenue is due east of Chatham Oaks. The area due north of the historic district on the north side of Melrose Avenue was historically part of the Poor Farm property but has been developed in the modern era with buildings used by the Johnson County Secondary Roads Department and the National Guard Armory.

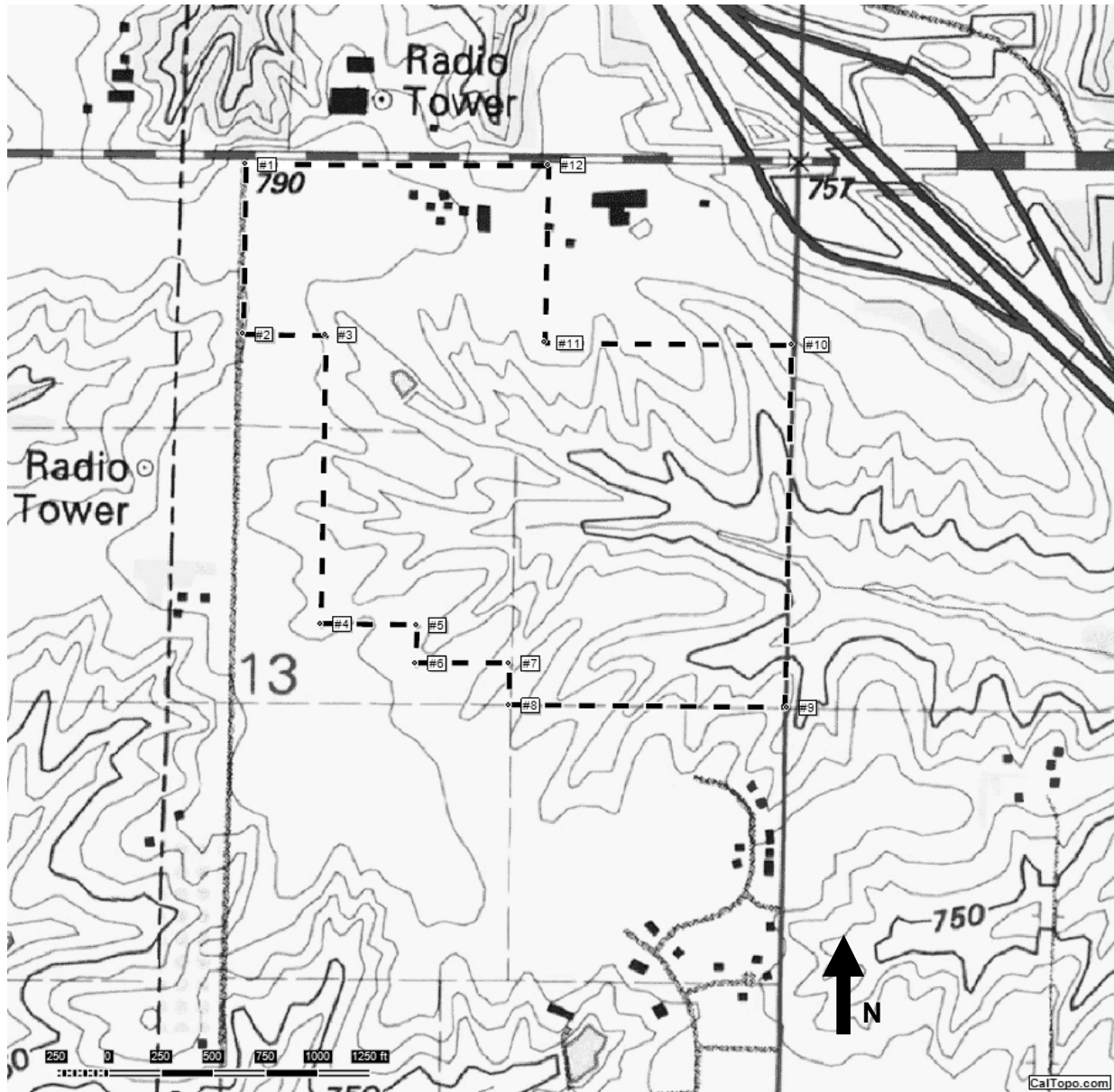
The nominated property includes: that portion of the historic poor farm where the original asylum building was sited and is extant; the farm buildings associated with the poor farm operation, some of which are extant and others are archaeological remains; the Poor Farm's cemetery site; and a portion of the original farm ground historically associated with the Poor Farm and still being used for agricultural production (Figures 1-3). The historic building that originally housed the Pauper Department is no longer extant but may be part of the archaeological remains within the nominated property. The County Home building constructed in the late 1880s to house both the Pauper and Insane departments is no longer extant, and its former location is not within the district boundary because the Chatham Oaks building was built over that site in 1964. Chatham Oaks is not included within the district boundary because of its private operation and the modern developments to the east and south of the 1964 building. The historic asylum building was individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) in 1978 and has been recently restored to its historic look. This building now serves as an interpretive exhibit of the evolution of mental health care in the county and is managed by the Johnson County Historical Society.

The four contributing buildings on the Johnson County Poor Farm and Asylum Historic District include: a monitor-roofed stock barn, a gabled-roofed stock barn, a gambrel-roofed dairy barn, and the front-gabled asylum building (already individually listed in the NRHP). The four contributing structures include: the side-gabled granary with the foundation of the scales still visible on its east side, two shed-roofed corn cribs, and the concrete stave silo next to and originally attached to the dairy barn. The two non-contributing buildings are modern machine sheds added by the county to the property in its later years. One is now used by Johnson County as a road-maintenance shed, while the other is currently unused.

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**Figure 1. Topographic Map Location of Johnson County Poor Farm and Asylum Historic District Showing Boundary as Dashed Outline.**

[Also shows UTM Coordinate Points #1-12.]

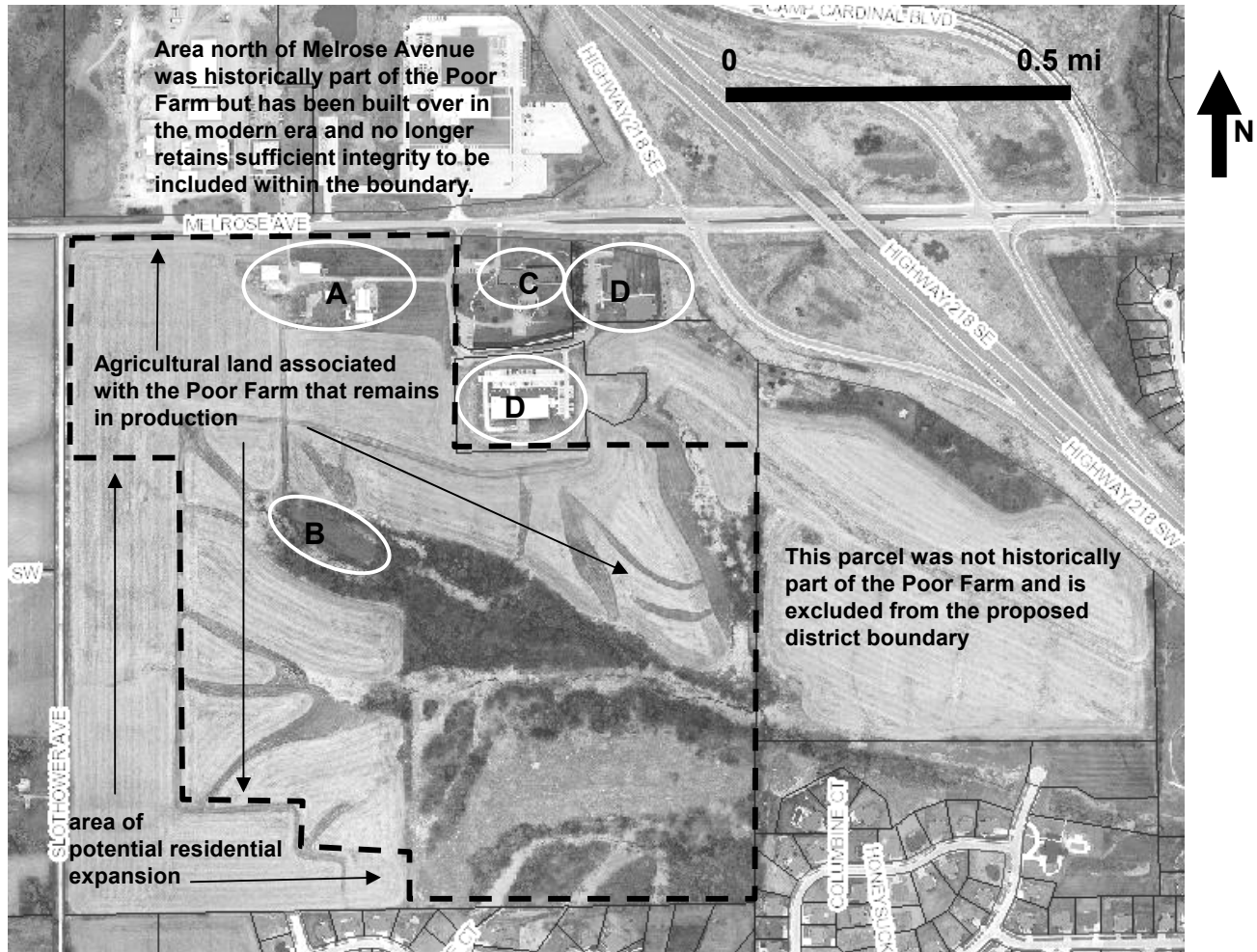
Source: USGS Iowa City West Quadrangle 1994, obtained from ExpertGPS mapping software, 2013.



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- A = Buildings associated with historic poor farm including the original asylum building, which is individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places
- B = Reported location of poor farm cemetery; Ground Penetrating Radar survey area
- C = Chatham Oaks Building, historically associated with the later evolution of the Johnson County Poor Farm but excluded from district boundary because of its private operation and modern development east and south of the 1964 building
- D = Modern buildings and parking lots
- [Dashed Outline] = Historic district boundary; that portion of the historic poor farm property that retains good integrity and proposed by the County as a preservation area targeted for continued agriculture and recreational trails. The area excluded in the southwest corner of the property had been previously surveyed with no significance historic properties identified (Rogers 2004). This area is part of future planning for the residential development expanding from the south.

Figure 2. Aerial Photograph Location of Johnson County Poor Farm and Asylum Historic District Showing Boundary as Dashed Outline. Source: Johnson County, Iowa, GIS Mapping, 2013

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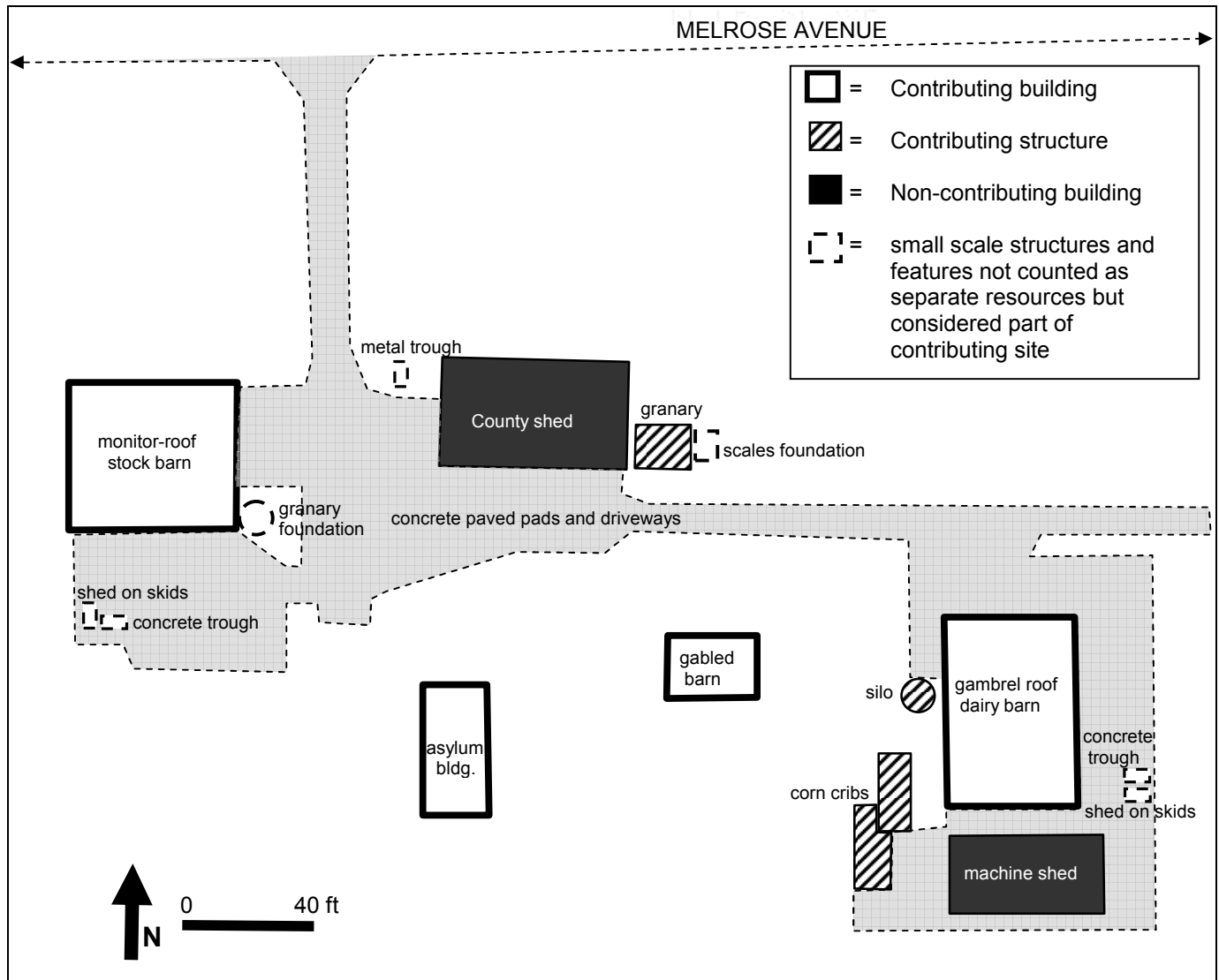


Figure 3. Current plan map of Johnson County Poor Farm buildings and structures within the Historic District.  
Source for base map from which sketch map was drawn was the 2013 aerial photograph  
obtained from Johnson County, Iowa, GIS Mapping, 2013

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Another gabled barn is located north of Melrose Avenue and was historically associated with the Poor Farm but is excluded from the current nomination because of the extent of modern construction around that barn. Likewise, three small outbuildings located behind the 1964 Chatham Oaks building are excluded from the district boundary, along with the Chatham Oaks building. These buildings are excluded because of the private operation of Chatham Oaks and because of the modern construction south and east of Chatham Oaks that includes large parking lots and modern buildings.

One of the two contributing sites consists of the cemetery site associated with the operation of the Poor Farm and Asylum through the years. The second contributing site consists of the farm land and agricultural landscape surrounding the cemetery; the fields between the cemetery and the historic buildings; and the now grass-covered area surrounding the buildings, an area which includes archaeological remains of former buildings and structures. The site also includes: the areas used for garden plots, barn yards, and driveways that were part of the farming operation. Within the barn yard area, two small sheds, two concrete watering troughs, one metal watering trough, and the concrete foundations for the former scales and a granary are considered part of the contributing site (Figure 3).<sup>1</sup> The total acreage of the historic district is 110 acres.

Monitor-Roofed Stock Barn

The monitor-roofed stock barn is located on the west side of the cluster of farm buildings and is parallel to Melrose Avenue. The barn faces east. It appears that the center gable-roofed section of this barn was built in 1903 on top of a stone foundation from an older barn that burned earlier in 1903 or late in 1902. By 1916, however, the north, west, and south sides of that barn were opened and shed-roofed additions were built that wrapped around the barn in a U-shape. These additions/modifications made the barn almost fully open on the interior and maximized livestock feeding, specifically for the Poor Farm's cattle herd. There are four horse stalls that were framed within the south side shed, but otherwise, the rest of the barn was open loafing aisles and hay stacking areas (see Additional Documentation, page 72).

The standing building has vertical wooden plank exterior siding (no battens), four-pane fixed windows except for one 4/4 double-hung sash window under the west hay hood, and a metal roof. The metal roofing is installed over wooden shingles that were likely the original roofing material type if not the original wooden shingles. There are four lightning rods and a metal roof ventilator on the ridge of the gable portion of the roof. On the east end, below the hay hood is a drop down door. A newer concrete drive leads up to the hinged wooden doors (modern replacements), with an older concrete drive leading up to the sliding doors. The south side has large sliding doors, with a concrete pad and older fence remnants off that side of the barn.

There is a remnant fenced yard area on the north side but no doors on the barn. According to Melvin Dvorsky, a former resident of the County Home and a farm worker in the mid- to late twentieth century, there used to be a garden off the north side of this barn maintained by the home's residents (Personal communication with Leah Rogers, September 4,

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<sup>1</sup> The two sheds and three troughs are not counted as individual structures because they are small in size and are minor resources. Therefore, they are considered part of the contributing site that includes the barn yard area of the Poor Farm rather than counted individually as resources.

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2013).<sup>2</sup> This would explain the lack of doors accessing the interior of the barn from this fenced area.

The interior of the monitor-roofed barn shows heavy timber sills resting on the limestone foundation under the central part of the barn, which is open to the rafters of the gabled section of the roofline (see Additional Documentation, page 72). The rest of the framing is a mix of heavy timber and composite planks. Many of the heavy timbers show evidence of former mortise and tenon joinery, reflecting the removal of some of the crossbeams and posts to open up the center of the barn. Wooden stalls painted white line the south bay. Inscribed in the concrete at the southwest corner of the barn interior is “H. ELLIS 1916, Sep 24,” with “Earl Anderson” inscribed in the concrete floor at the southeast corner of the barn interior. H. Ellis stands for Homer Ellis, who was the superintendent of the Poor Farm in 1916. The date inscribed in the concrete appears most likely to be the date that the sheds were added to the 1903 barn rather than the date of the barn as a whole.

A recent historic structural evaluation of this barn indicated that “significant portions of the barn’s structural system appear to have been removed, eliminating the haymow loft area of the barn completely” (Steinmetz 2013). The removal of some of the interior structural supports (including some cross beams) has resulted in the shifting of the building to the north where bowing is visible along the north wall. The 2013 study recommends that the haymow be reconstructed and the building shifted back into proper alignment as much as possible (ibid.).

Melvin Dvorsky identified the function of this barn as having been the cattle barn during his residency (Personal communication with Leah Rogers, September 4, 2013). He noted that during this time, what was then called the Johnson County Home maintained a small herd of beef cattle of around 20-25 head. The circa 1937 plat plan map of the Johnson County Home labeled this barn simply as a “stock barn” (Figure 4). The map also showed a watering trough off the south side and a granary off the southeast corner. The concrete circular foundation of the granary is still present on the ground surface. The concrete watering trough, concrete pad, and a small wooden frame shed on skids are still extant and define what would have been the main livestock loafing yard associated with this barn. Reportedly, there is an in-ground brick cistern inside the barn that is tied into a “unique water delivery system” that fed water to the trough and buildings outside, although the exact location of this cistern was not pinpointed and is not readily identifiable on the interior (Notes in Johnson County Historical Society Vertical Files, Coralville, Iowa). The stock barn is also commonly referred to as the horse and hay barn, with the stalls along the south wall having been for the work horses used in the farming operation (ibid.). In an earlier interview with Dvorsky, he noted that the horse/hay barn was also used to shelter the milk cows in the wintertime (Notes from interview with Melvin Dvorsky dated 6/13/2001, Johnson County Historical Society Vertical Files, Coralville, Iowa). It is also possible that mules were housed here because the steward, who took over in 1926 (Paul Leuz) noted that the farming was then being done with mules (*Iowa City Press-Citizen*, September 14, 1977).

The monitor-roofed stock barn is considered a contributing building to the historic district, while the circular granary foundation, concrete watering trough, small shed, brick cistern, and fenced yard and garden area are considered part of the contributing site.

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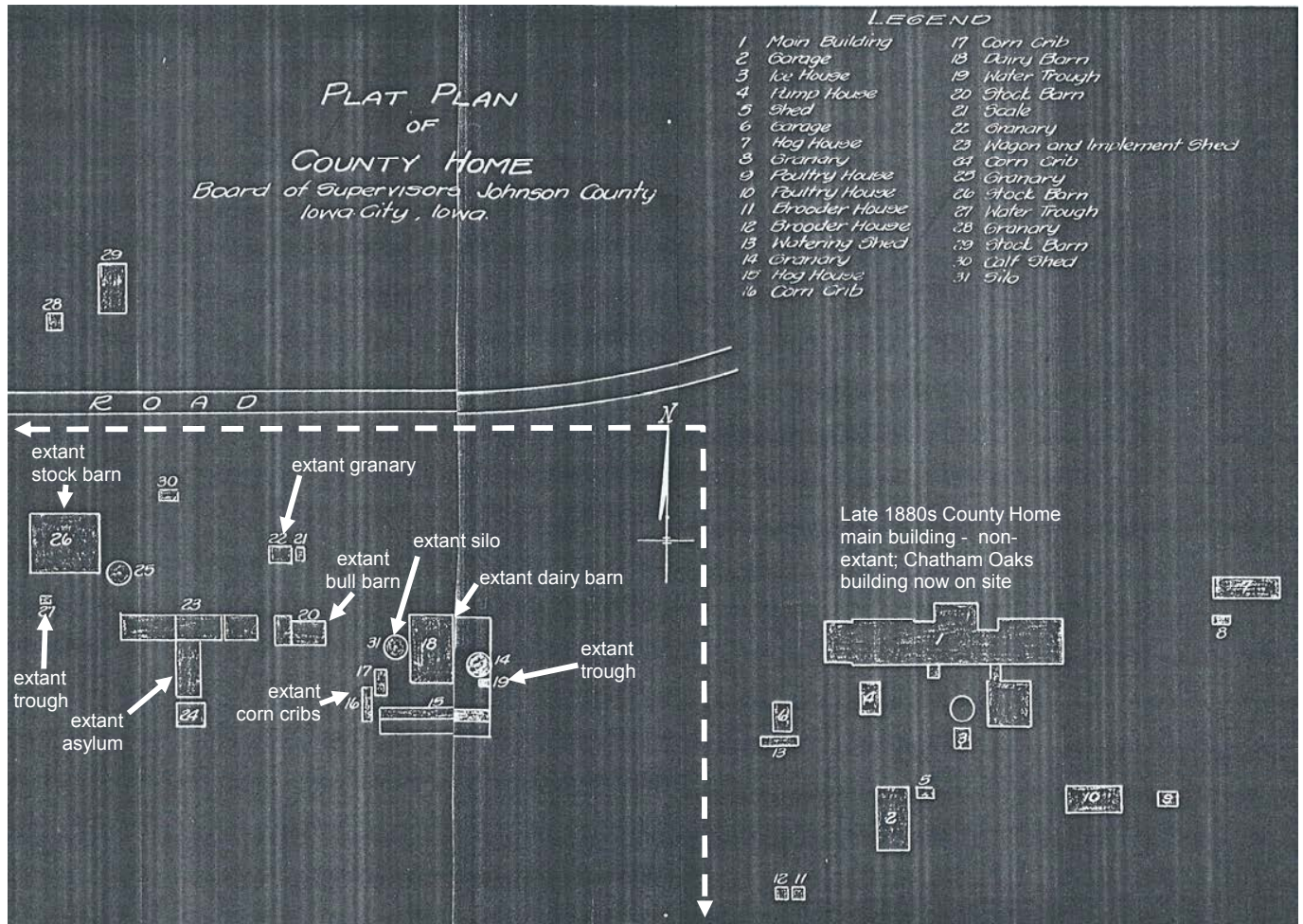
<sup>2</sup> Melvin Dvorsky was born in 1943 and came to live at the Johnson County Home in 1962 and lived there for 26 years. He specifically worked in the dairy barn on a daily basis and came to supervise a group of three other residents in the dairy barn.

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**Figure 4. Circa 1937 Plat Plan of the Johnson County Home buildings.**

Dashed line is approximate district boundary in this area of the district.

Source: Johnson County Board of Supervisors, Iowa City

Gable-Roofed Stock Barn

This small gabled-roofed barn may have been built in 1900. The gabled roof is a fairly low pitch and covered with metal sheeting, although the original roofing material was probably wooden shingles. The walls of the barn are clad with vertical wooden board and batten siding. The foundation is poured concrete. The interior framing is heavy timber frame. There is a hay loft above a largely open ground level; although there is a wooden manger and pen in the southeast corner (see Additional Documentation, page 70). The gabled barn is considered a contributing building to the historic district.

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The barn is in poor condition but has been evaluated as “not beyond repair and rehabilitation” (Steinmetz 2013). The current major issue with the building’s structural integrity is the fact that it does not sit properly on its foundation and has been racked by the wind to the point that the building is somewhat twisted. The foundation and concrete floor are also in poor condition and will need to be replaced. It has been recommended that the building be “braced and lifted vertically several feet above the current foundation,” with the walls then moved back into alignment and the foundation replaced (ibid.). Then the building can be set back down and secured to the new foundation. Additional interior structural corrections will be needed to eliminate current structural deficiencies (ibid.).

Melvin Dvorsky identified the function of this barn as having been the “bull barn” in the mid- to late twentieth century (Personal communication with Leah Rogers, September 4, 2013). It was also used for sow confinement as needed (Notes from interview with Melvin Dvorsky dated 6/13/2001, Johnson County Historical Society Vertical Files, Coralville, Iowa). It is known from Poor Farm inventories dating from the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries that the farm operation typically had one bull, which would have been segregated from the cow population at times, thus necessitating either a separate small barn, such as this building, or a separate pen in a larger barn. The current interior division shows one animal pen on the ground level supporting the reported use for housing a bull. The circa 1937 plat plan map of the Johnson County Home labeled this building simply as a “stock barn” (see Figure 4).

Gambrel-Roofed Dairy Barn and Silo

The gambrel-roofed barn was probably built in 1912. On the north end, the concrete foundation has the appearance of a trench method of forming (i.e., dirt walls with concrete poured in). The east side foundation shows clear wooden plank, concrete mold type of forming. The exterior of the barn is clad with vertical wooden board and batten siding fixed with round, wire nails. There is evidence of red paint under the later layers of white paint. The roof is covered with metal sheeting, and the metal bases of two former ventilators are still present on the roof ridge.<sup>3</sup> The original roof was covered with wooden shingles, which appear to be extant underneath the metal roofing.

On the south and north ends and the west wall, the windows are four-pane fixed sash except for one on the north end that is three sashes wide. One window opening has been filled with a vent hood. Along the east wall, the windows are six-pane fixed sash. A canopy runs the length of the east side exterior and wraps around the south end. The rafter ends and side boards of the canopy have decorative scalloped ends. The canopy is also clad with metal roofing.

A concrete stave silo sits on a concrete pad on the west side of the barn and was probably original to the barn’s construction, i.e. 1912. The staves are bound by iron rods that are bolted. The silo has a conical metal top and a wire ladder on the west side. There is an entry door to the barn across from the silo. There is evidence that the space between the barn and the silo was covered at one time on the top and sides. Since the silo is not currently connected to the barn it is counted as a separate, contributing structure, while the dairy barn is a contributing building.

The interior space of the barn is divided by a north-south center aisle. On the east side are seventeen rolled pipe milking

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<sup>3</sup> The County recently replaced the missing ventilators with fabricated reproduction ventilators that are appropriate to the type of metal ventilators available at the time this barn was built.



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stanchions that are impressed with “Louden” maker’s marks. Each stanchion is separated by a divider. The manger is concrete. West of the center aisle are six horse stalls. It appears that the far north end stall was later converted to store grain and tack. There is an interior hay track with pulley extending to the drop down loft door in the north end. There are chutes that were used for conveying hay to the ground floor from the loft (see Additional Documentation, page 71).

The south end wall shows a heavy timber framing system with mortise and tenon joinery using large round wooden pegs. The timbers are all sawn. The big plate beam across the south end wall is not a single beam but rather three beams that are spliced with lap joints.

The roof framing exhibits heavy timber vertical side posts, plank braced rafters, and 8x8 inch timber bracing at the side walls (see Additional Documentation, page 71). The timber bracing is joined to the side walls with mortise and tenon joinery along with bolted iron straps added at the wall and loft floor for additional strength. The angled bracing at the rafters in the loft ceiling consists of 4x4 inch planks. In general, the framing of the loft area is similar to Wing’s<sup>4</sup> joist frame, which was a braced-rafter, self-supporting roof system that allowed for more open loft space than a traditional heavy timber post-and-beam design. “By the second decade of the twentieth century, Wing’s joist-frame or ‘open-center’ barn of cantilever design had fallen into disfavor, partly for the greater amount of lumber required, but mainly owing to the unwelcome diagonal bracing and ties which ran from the wall to the longer, vertical, interior purlin posts” (Soike 1995:155). This would support a date of construction in the 1910s rather than the 1920s.

Melvin Dvorsky identified the function of this barn as the dairy barn (Personal communication with Leah Rogers, September 4, 2013). During his residency, he worked in this barn beginning each day at 4:30 a.m. He was in charge of three other residents, who worked under him in the milking of the County Home’s thirty-two Holstein cows. During his residency (i.e., 1960s-1980s), they milked with machinery and not by hand. He noted that the County Home had its own cream separator and pasteurizer and processed about 30 gallons of milk for the Home’s use, with the rest of the Grade A milk picked up by the Twin County Dairy out of Kalona (ibid).

The circa 1937 plat plan map of the County Home also labeled this as the “dairy barn” indicating that this was a specialized use barn in its original design (see Figure 4). The fact that the 1912 County Home reports on the new barn being built at the Poor Farm noted that barn plans had been purchased, with no similar notation on prior barns reported on the property, strongly suggests that the barn built in 1912 was a much more elaborate and state-of-the-art barn than the stock barn built in 1903 or the bull barn built in 1900 (*Iowa City Daily Press*, March 30, 1912).

The yard areas on the north, east, and south sides of the dairy barn have concrete pads extending well out from the barn and canopy overhang. Also on the east side is a concrete trough and small wooden frame shed on skids, both of which are minor structures considered part of the contributing site. It is assumed that an underground watering system, perhaps using a cistern may be present underneath the concrete pad and feeding the concrete trough.

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<sup>4</sup> “Wing” refers to Joseph E. Wing, whose promotion of this type of joist framing in barns resulted in his identification with the frame type (Soike 1995:148). Hence, the “Wing” in this description is capitalized for that reason.

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Granary Structure and Scales Foundation

This small, rectangular side-gabled wooden structure was probably built in the late nineteenth century. The roof is clad with wooden shingles. The foundation is made of stone (probably limestone that has been painted white). This is not a solid foundation but rather single rocks used for footings underneath heavy timber sills. The walls are clad with vertical wooden board and batten wooden siding. There is some graffiti etched into planks at the southeast corner reading "JL" and "JW." The siding has been painted white but appears to have been painted red in the past. The siding is fastened with cut nails. There is a small fixed four-pane single sash window in the east gable end and a single hinged wooden plank door centered on the south wall that is raised above ground level and reached by two concrete steps. There is also a wider sliding door centered on the north wall that is also set high on the wall, with a second small door set high on the east side of the north wall. Both doors would have been used for loading and unloading the granary. The door on the south wall would have been used for human access to the interior.

The interior of the granary shows solid wooden floors and walls. There is a central aisle into which both the north and south doors enter. There is one storage room on the west side and two divided storage rooms on the east side, each with its own access door opening (see Additional Documentation, page 70).

There is a concrete foundation for scales adjacent to the east end of the granary. This foundation would have been added in the early to mid-twentieth century but may have replaced an older scales structure at this same location. The scales were shown at this location next to the granary on the circa 1937 plat plan map of the Johnson County Home (see Figure 4). The granary is considered a contributing structure, while the scales foundation is considered part of the contributing site.

Corn Cribs

There are two corn cribs located off the southwest corner of the dairy barn. These were both built in the 1900s-1910s. Both are long, rectangular structures with shed roofs clad with corrugated metal sheeting that if not original, was likely the original type of roofing on these structures. The cribs sit on poured concrete foundations and have horizontal wooden siding spaced apart to allow for air flow through the structures and beveled on one edge to shed water to the exterior. Instead of being build end-to-end and having their shed roofs oriented in the same direction, the two structures are offset, with one behind and just off the southwest corner of the other. The rooflines angle towards one another meaning that the drainage of one flows down onto the roof of the adjacent building. This has created a concentrated runoff area that has caused damage through the years. It is unknown why these structures would have been built in this configuration. The door into one of the cribs has been replaced with a sheet of plywood, while a door into the second crib is completely missing. A metal basin is built into the east side of one of the cribs. Both cribs were shown in this configuration on the 1937 plat plan map of the Johnson County Home (see Figure 4). Both cribs are considered contributing structures to the historic district.

Asylum Building

This one story front-gabled building is located to the west of both the gabled and gambrel barns and just southeast of the



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monitor-roofed barn. This is the oldest extant building on the property having been built circa 1861. The extant building represents a wing that was added to the original 1855 asylum building, which was a four-room building that had become too small and crowded soon after its occupation in 1856. Around 1861, the north half of the extant building was built to enlarge the space for housing the insane. This wing was subsequently enlarged on the south end to provide additional space. The extant building consists of both the 1861 north wing and the 1860s-70s south addition to that wing (see Additional Documentation, page 70).

The building housed the insane until 1886 when a new two-story masonry building was constructed to house the Insane and Pauper departments as well as the superintendent's quarters and other domestic support functions for the Poor Farm and Asylum operation (Figure 5). The two-story building was torn down in 1964 to make way for the current Chatham Oaks facility. After the frame asylum building ceased to be used for housing the insane, it was converted for use as a hog house (Figures 6-7) (Flansburg 1981; Melvin Dvorsky, Personal communication with Leah Rogers, September 4, 2013). The circa 1937 plat plan map of the County Home did not label this building with a specific function; rather, it was then part of a T-shaped complex of buildings (the old asylum building being the base of the "T") that were labeled as "wagon and implement shed" (see Figure 4). The buildings perpendicular to the asylum building were removed by the late twentieth century. It seems likely in later years that the entire T-shaped complex housed hogs, perhaps subdivided into farrowing and other specialized hog raising needs.



**Figure 5. Circa 1905 photograph of Johnson County Home residential facility looking South.**

Source: Digitized photo provided by Johnson County Historical Society, Coralville, Iowa

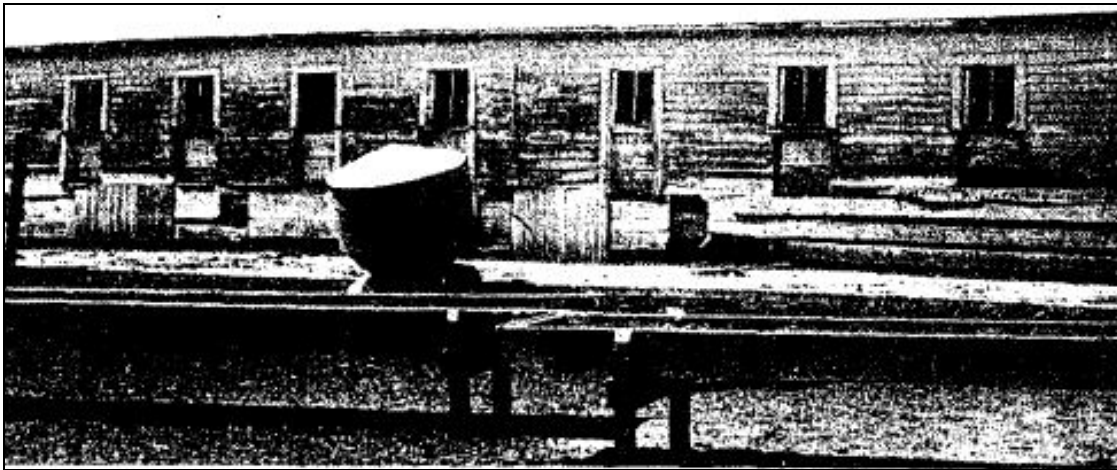
[This photograph shows the complex of three brick buildings that then comprised the Johnson County Home residential facility. The farm buildings were located to the right (west) of these buildings. The location of these brick buildings is now largely occupied by the Chatham Oaks facility built in 1964. Some remnant outbuildings from this earlier complex are still standing and were located behind the buildings in the photo above. The water tower shown in the photo above is non-extant. ]

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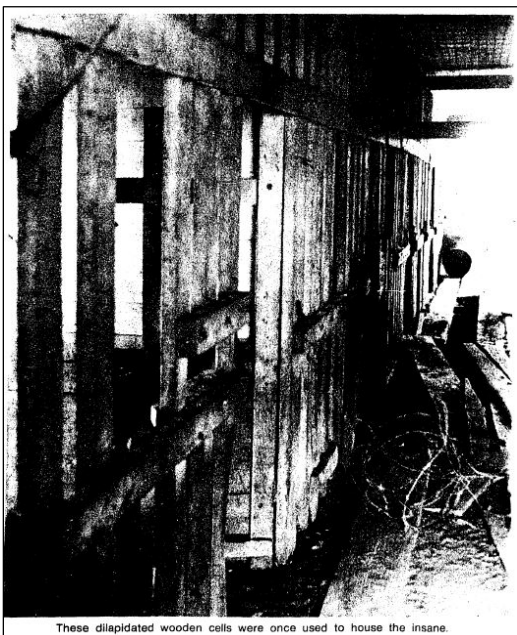
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**Figure 6. The extant Asylum building when it was being used for a hog house.**

Direction of photo is uncertain. This shows one side of the building where holes were cut in the walls to allow entry and exit for the hogs. These areas have since been repaired. Source: Flansburg 1981



These dilapidated wooden cells were once used to house the insane.

**Figure 7. Interior of the Asylum building when it was being used as a hog house. Source: Flansburg 1981**

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The asylum building was individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1978 (Miltner and Miltner 1976).<sup>5</sup> As such, the asylum building is considered a building of primary significance and is contributing to the historic district. In recent years, the building has been restored to the look of its original use as the Johnson County Asylum. It is the centerpiece of interpretive tours of the property. An interesting feature of the building's interior is the graffiti etched into the wooden boards of some of the cells. Reportedly, the dates of "1864" and "1868" have been identified among the etchings as well as one board that has a handwritten statement on it that seemingly makes no sense. These etchings and writings certainly warrant further study and documentation (Johnson County Historical Society Vertical Files, Notes from Chatham Oaks, on file Johnson County Historical Society Museum, Coralville, Iowa).

It should be noted that the late 1970s listing was done in the early years of the National Register of Historic Places when less documentation was required for listing properties. In that nomination, the reported date of construction for the extant building was 1859; however, subsequent research has shown that the extant asylum building was more likely built around 1861, most certainly in that year or shortly after. Research has further shown that the building was moved in 1888 to its current location where it and the other early Pauper and Insane buildings were converted into farm buildings. The building should still be considered National Register eligible despite the move because it was not moved far from its original location (see Section 8 for more details on the construction of this building and its later move).

Machine Shed

This metal-sided, side-gabled pole building is located to the south of, behind and perpendicular to, the dairy barn. It is, however, a stand-alone building. This building sits on the site of a former hog house that was still standing in the 1937-1970 aerial photographs of this property (see Additional Documentation, pages 75-77). According to aerial photographs, this machine shed replaced the hog house sometime between the time of the 1970 aerial when the long hog house was still present and the 1983 aerial photograph when this machine shed was in place (see Additional Documentation, pages 77-78). In an interview with Melvin Dvorsky in 2001, he recalled that this "pole building" was built in 1973, which may be the actual construction date of this building (Notes from interview with Melvin Dvorsky dated 6/13/2001, Johnson County Historical Society Vertical Files, Coralville, Iowa). Because of the modern construction of this building and its addition to the County Home property near the end of the farming operation, the building is considered non-contributing to the historic district.

County Shed

This metal-sided, side-gabled pole building was added to the property between the time of the 1970 aerial photograph when it was not present and the 1983 aerial photograph when it was clearly in place (see Additional Documentation, pages 77-78). The shed is used for storage by the county. It is located just west of the granary, east of the monitor-roofed barn, and south of Melrose Avenue. The shed is open on the south side and has a metal roof and metal siding. The interior shows pole frame construction, with the floor covered with gravel. Because of the modern construction of this

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<sup>5</sup> The nomination written by Mr. and Mrs. Joe Miltner was completed in 1976 and approved at the state level in 1977; however, the building was not officially listed in the National Register of Historic Places until August 31, 1978 (National Register of Historic Places database accessed at <http://nrhp.focus.nps.gov/>, July 2014).

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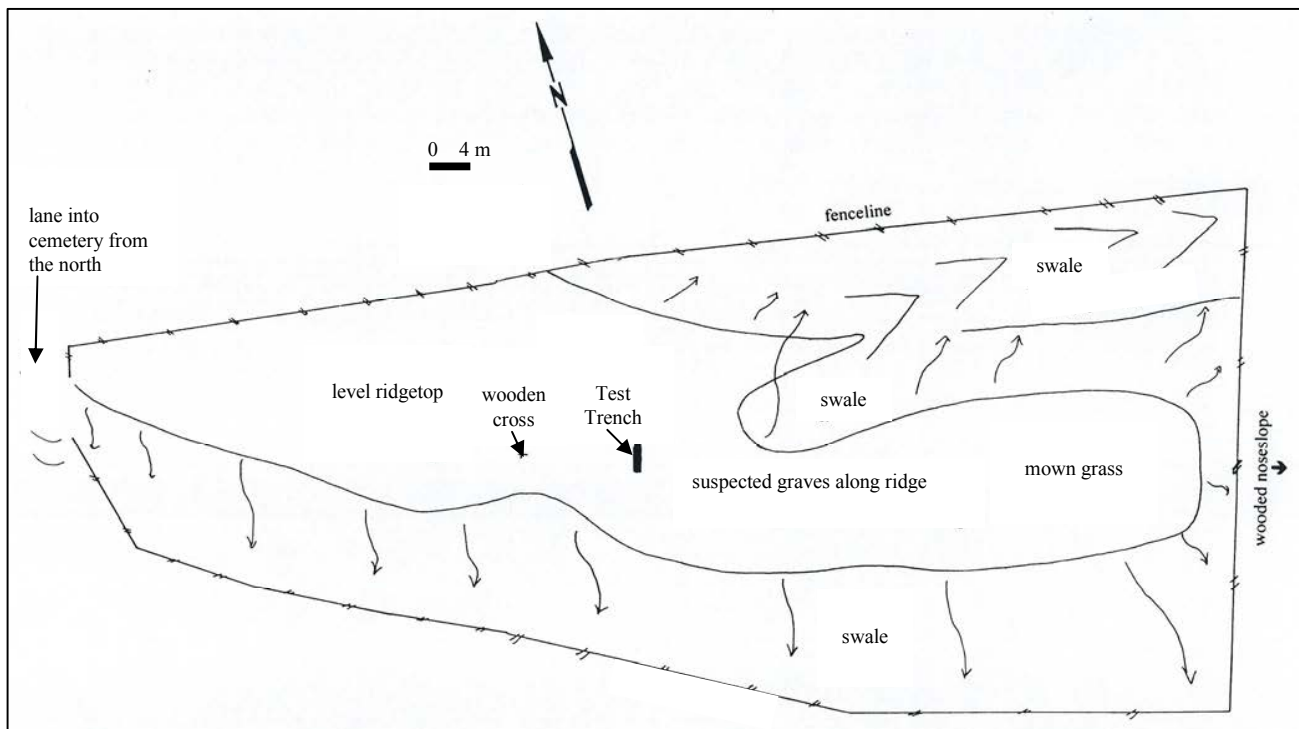
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building and its addition to the County Home property near the end of the farm operation, the building is considered non-contributing to the historic district.

Johnson County Poor Farm Cemetery Site (13JH1149)

The cemetery site (13JH1149) appears to have some validity as an archaeological resource and appears to contain burial features related to the Poor Farm occupation. There are no marked burial sites, although several surface depressions suggest gravesite locations. It is known from available historic records that there are at least 20 burials, although a much higher number has always been suspected. In 2002-04, an archaeological study of the cemetery site included the excavation of a narrow test trench excavation at one of the surface depressions (Rogers 2004) (Figures 8 and 9). This excavation involved the removal of sod and the A horizon exposing the lighter subsoil in the process. A cultural feature was revealed that appeared to be historic in origin based on the amount of organics still in the soil of the fill and the straight edges of the feature stain. This feature has the characteristics one would expect from a grave pit excavation and lends some credence to this location as a gravesite.



**Figure 8. Sketch map of the Johnson County Poor Farm and Asylum Cemetery Site from 2002 investigation.**  
Map drawn by Tallgrass Historians L.C., Iowa City; Rogers 2004

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two dark stains flank  
linear light stain



Figure 9. Photographs of Test Trench excavation at Poor Farm Cemetery site (13JH1149) conducted in 2002 showing linear stains of possible grave feature. Top photo: test trench excavation in progress looking SE; Bottom photo: plan view photo of exposed stains at 30 cm below surface in test trench. Source: Rogers 2004

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Oral testimony about the discovery of human remains when bulldozing the noselope of this ridge for a pond in the 1960s, also lends further support to this location as a cemetery. Reportedly, when a pond was being dug in this area, human remains were uncovered and the pond project stopped (Notes from meeting with Mary Donovan, Executive Director Chatham Oaks, Johnson County Historical Society Vertical Files, Coralville, Iowa). This location was at the southeast end of the ridge in the brushy wooded area beyond the current fenced enclosure of the suspected cemetery location. The fence enclosure and a wooden cross at the cemetery site are modern additions to this site. The 1937 aerial photograph of the poor farm property further suggests this area was being maintained apart from agricultural cultivation and had an obvious access road down into the suspected cemetery area following the route of the current access road. Although some of the aerials suggest this area was being used as pasture in the mid- to late twentieth century (see Additional Documentation, pages 75-78).

As part of the nomination of this property, a ground-penetrating radar (GPR) study was undertaken by Dr. Glenn Storey of the University of Iowa with computer analysis of the data by Dr. Storey and Jason Thompson of Grinnell, Iowa. Storey had previously conducted one GPR grid in 2009 at the southeast end of the ridgetop at the suspected cemetery site (Figure 10). The 2013 survey examined two additional grids to the northwest of the 2009 Grid 1. The results from the 2009 and 2013 GPR studies are summarized in Storey and Thompson (2014). It was concluded that “the 2013 GPR grids were very successful showing perhaps 350 grave features or more” (ibid). Dr. Storey noted that “these results are some of the clearest seen for Iowa historical cemeteries, because the main burial trenches appear to have been maintained just east and west of the current standing cross marker” (i.e., a modern marker placed here in recent years). The 2013 Grids 1 and 2 “appear to have the main deposition location for the cemetery and its numbers are consistent with the history of a facility in operation for well over 50 years” (ibid.). Grid 1, which is located west of the cross marker, “shows a definite pattern of internments in about 8-10 rows running N-S,” with the orientation of the internments appearing to be mostly east-west (ibid.). It is concluded that there are “likely between 120-210 graves lying in 8-10 rows” in this area representing the main internment space in the cemetery (ibid.). Several metal caskets may also be indicated by the GPR results in both Grids 1 and 2 (Figure 11). The 2013 GPR results for Grid 2 show “two distinct lines of grave trenches and several pits” (Storey and Thompson 2014) (Figure 12). Grid 2 is located east of the modern cross marker and “shows upwards of 130 graves in 8-10 rows” (ibid.). However, similar high amplitude signals were lacking in the 2009 Grid 1 and showed “uniformly low-amplitude,” suggesting that the eastern end of the ridgetop was the not main locus for internments (ibid.).

As a result of the past and present archaeological and geophysical studies of this site and oral testimony regarding the discovery of human remains while digging a pond at the east end of this ridge, site 13JH1149 is considered to be the location of the poor farm’s cemetery and is considered a contributing site to the historic district.

Examination of the annual reports on the operation of the Poor Farm and Asylum to the County Board of Supervisors revealed that nearly every year there were deaths at the facility. The annual report for 1892 indicated that six persons had died that year and there were expenditures listed for coffins and digging graves. Unfortunately, subsequent reports, while almost always noting expenditures for coffins, digging graves, and funeral services, failed to list total number of deaths. Therefore, it is difficult to fully reconstruct the total number of deaths at the Poor Farm through the years from these reports. It is likely that the death rate was much higher prior to the construction of the masonry County Home building because of the less healthy conditions in the original wooden frame asylum and pauper buildings. However, by

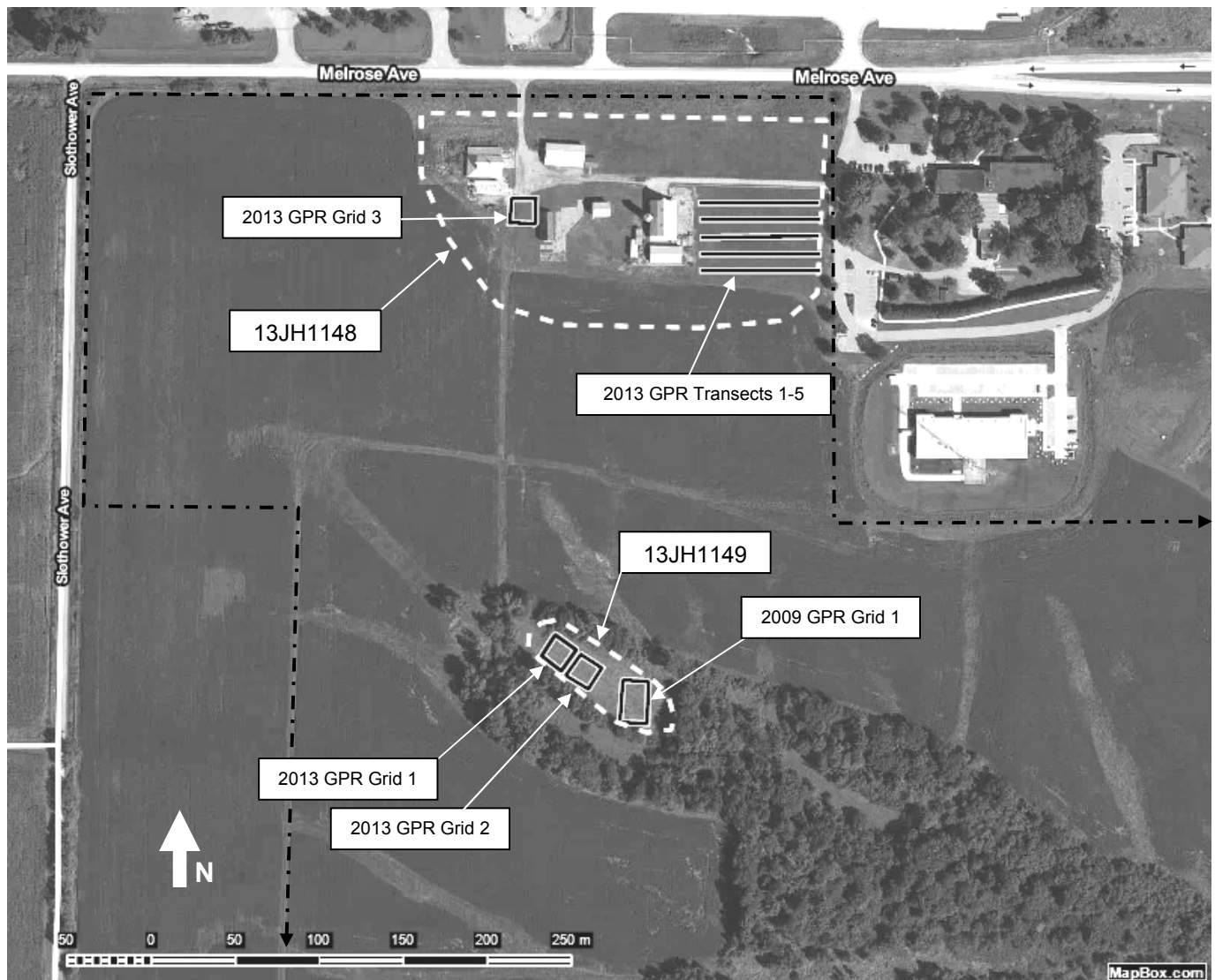
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**THIS MAP CONTAINS CONFIDENTIAL SITE LOCATION DATA AND IS NOT FOR PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION**

This map will need to be redacted in any reproductions for the general public.



**Figure 10. Aerial map showing location of Sites 13JH1148 and 13JH1149 (white dashed outlines) and of the 2009-2013 GPR grids and transects (black lines) conducted at the Johnson County Poor Farm and Asylum Historic District (black dashed outline).**

Source for base map: 2013 aerial photograph obtained from ExpertGPS mapping software, 2014

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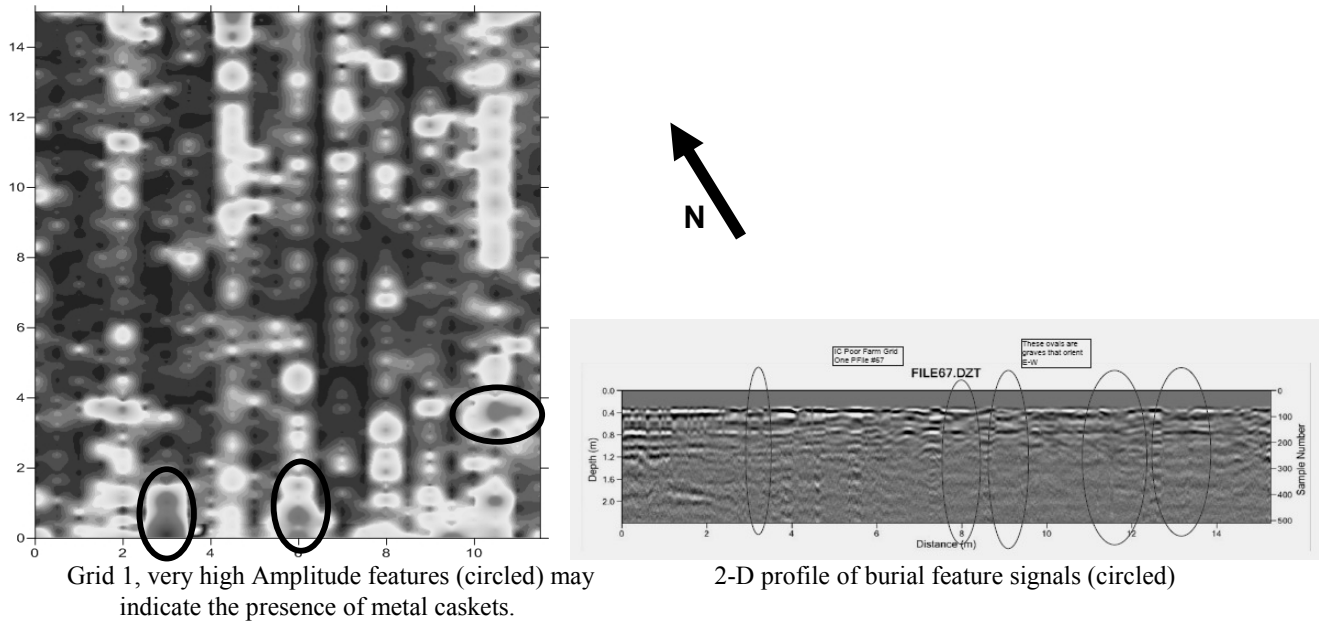


Figure 11. 2013 GPR Grid 1 Showing Suspected Burial Features at Poor Farm Cemetery Site 13JH1149. Source: Storey and Thompson 2014

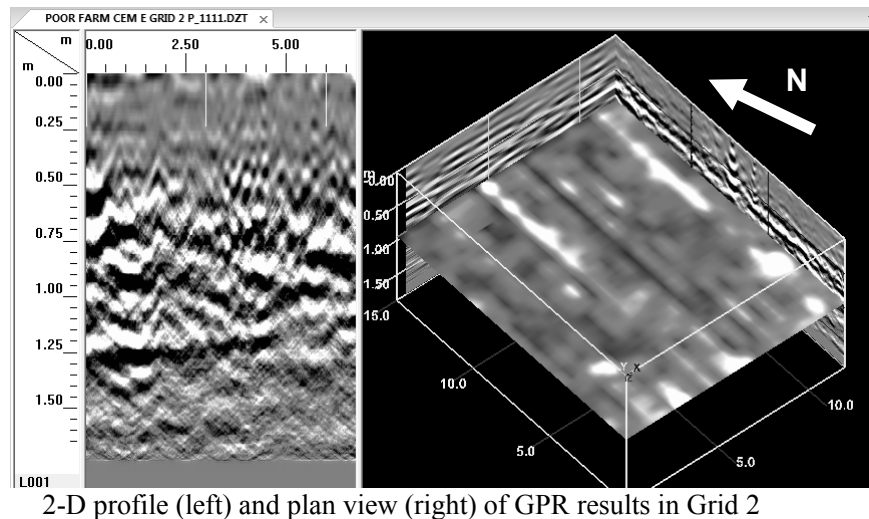


Figure 12. 2013 GPR Grid 2 Showing Two Distinct Lines of Suspected Burial Features at Poor Farm Cemetery Site 13JH1149. Source: Storey and Thompson 2014



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the early twentieth century, it was also apparent that some of the dead were being buried in cemeteries located in Iowa City and not necessarily at the Poor Farm location. Other notations in the burial records that have survived indicate that some burials were later removed for reburial in other Iowa City cemeteries (Handwritten notes from Poor Farm burial records research, Johnson County Vertical Files, Coralville, Iowa). It is noteworthy that there is at least one person living who recalls digging graves at the Poor Farm site; therefore, burials may have continued into the mid-twentieth century, perhaps only on a sporadic basis (Personal communication with Jennifer Price, October 2013). However, by the mid- to late twentieth century, the cemetery site was also being used to pasture cows (Notes from interview with Keith Pirkel of Tiffin, Iowa, Johnson County Historical Society Vertical Files, Coralville, Iowa).

Johnson County Poor Farm Site (13JH1148)

The area surrounding the extant buildings has been demonstrated in two past studies to contain archaeological remains of former buildings and artifacts dating from the nineteenth century occupation and use of this property.

In 1996, the University of Iowa conducted an archaeological investigation around the extant asylum building under the direction of Dr. Thomas Charlton and Dr. James Enloe, professors of anthropology. Their team conducted preliminary soil coring followed by a three-week summer course for University students (Kirsch 1996; Lee 1996). A series of student papers summarizing the finds resulted from the study. In general, the results suggested good potential for artifacts and features associated with the early use of this area; however, the location of the study was premised on the idea that the asylum building had not been moved and was on its original site. However, as noted above, in 1888, the building was moved from its original site to this location where it was converted into a farm building. It was likely not moved far; however, the suspected original site is outside of the 1996 study area.

In 2002-04, a second archaeological investigation was undertaken in the area around the historic asylum building and evidence of stone foundations and artifacts dating from the Poor Farm occupation period were encountered to the north of the building (Rogers 2004) (Figures 13 and 14). It would appear that the foundation remains would have been associated with the moving of the Asylum and Pauper buildings in 1888 to this location, although the foundations could also have been associated with earlier farm buildings, such as barns or other outbuildings at this location prior to 1888.

In 2013, the ground-penetrating radar study also included a grid located on the west side of the asylum building and transects in the large grassy lawn area to the east of the dairy barn. Faint evidence suggested the presence of a foundation off the northwest corner of the asylum building (Figure 15). This foundation was probably associated with the T-shaped building that was formed when the old asylum and pauper buildings were moved in 1888 to this location and converted into farm outbuildings forming a "T" shape. Of these moved buildings, only the asylum building remains standing. The GPR survey indicated little in the way of structural evidence in the lawn area east of the dairy barn. Based on aerial photographs from 1937 to 1970, it appears there were garden plots in this area (see Additional Documentation, pages 75-78).

Since the Poor Farm was first established in 1855, and the extant asylum building was not constructed until circa 1861, there was a building prior to this one that housed the poor and the insane. This building was reportedly a frame four-room building that also housed the superintendent and his family. The extant building was constructed as an addition to

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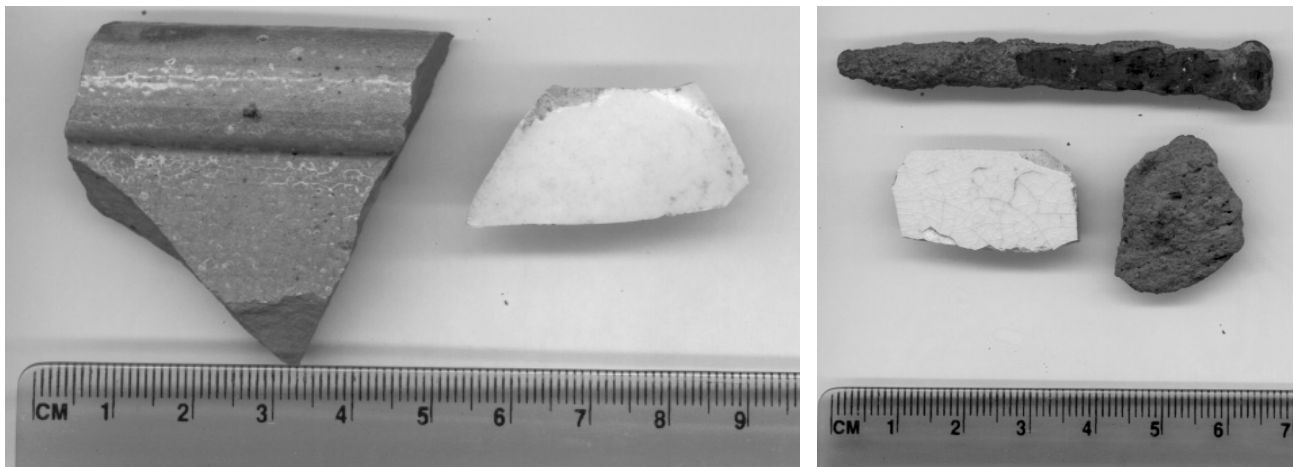
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**Figure 13. Photograph of intact limestone foundation wall uncovered in 2002 just north of the NW corner of the extant asylum building, Site 13JH1148 (Rogers 2004).**  
Left photo: view is to the East; Right photo: view is to the North.

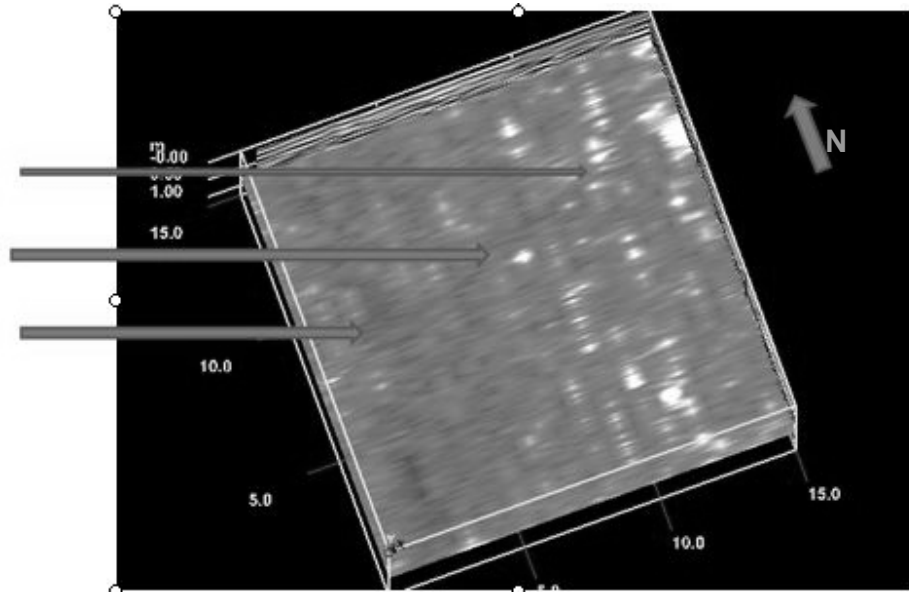


**Figure 14. Photographs of artifacts recovered from 2002 archaeological survey of Site 13JH1148 (Rogers 2004).**  
Left photo: salt glazed stoneware rimsherd and ironstone body sherd;  
Right photo: machine cut nail (top), whiteware base sherd and brick fragment (bottom)

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**Figure 15. GPR Grid 3 results from 2013 study showing faint line of foundation northwest of extant asylum building.** Arrows pointing to faint angling line. Source: Storey and Thompson 2014

the original building and specifically housed the insane. There was a second wing addition that is no longer extant that housed the poor. It would be expected that there could be archaeological evidence of the very first buildings in the form of stone foundations and chimney bases. Additionally, according to the Poor Farm inventory reported annually to the County Board of Supervisors, there were “barns, cribs, and sheds,” not otherwise enumerated and non-extant. The 1955 aerial photograph of the County Home property also shows what appears to be a gothic-arched corn crib located just northeast of the asylum building and just west of the gabled bull barn (see Additional Documentation, page 76). This crib was reportedly built in 1945 and was still standing in the late 1970s but was subsequently torn down (Johnson County Historical Society Vertical Files, Coralville, Iowa). There is probably some archaeological evidence of this former crib at this location.

This site in general appears to have a good potential to yield information of importance concerning the history of the poor farm and is considered a contributing site to the overall historic district. The contributing site also includes the farm fields to the west and south of the farm buildings and to the east and south of cemetery. These fields are still being cultivated by renters and will hopefully continue to be cultivated in the future. These fields are part of the historic setting of the poor farm and provide the context which supports the farm buildings as evidence of the poor farm operation through the years. These fields do not encompass the entirety of the historic acreage for the property but do represent the most intact portion of that former acreage and serve to tie the cemetery to the extant poor farm and asylum buildings.

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Seven Aspects of Integrity

- **Location** – The historic district is the location where Johnson County operated its poor farm and asylum from 1855 into the late twentieth century. The circa 1861-1886 asylum building is still standing and while it was moved in 1888 to its current location, it was not moved far from its original site; a location which appears to be within the boundary of the historic district. The post-1886 building which housed the poor and insane was located outside of the nomination boundaries. There are number of extant historic farm buildings and structures in the area around the old asylum building that reflect the varied aspects of the farming operation at its peak including the dairy barn, the stock barn, the bull barn, a hog house, two corn cribs, and a granary. There is also within the boundaries of the historic district, some of the field areas that were part of the poor farm operation and the cemetery where a number of inmates from the poor farm and asylum were buried.
- **Design** – The extant buildings retain a high degree of integrity of design having been little changed in the modern era. The dairy barn contains the historic milking stanchions, watering system, stalls, and other subdivisions that it had at the height of the dairy operation. The hay loft is also intact, although the large stack of hay is recommended to be removed to eliminate potential deterioration from rodents and moisture. The asylum building has been restored, and the restoration has been done with appropriate materials, including the installation of wooden shingles on the roof. The interior cells are largely intact from the days when it functioned as the asylum, with its later use as a hog house having had a comparatively low impact on the building. The large stock barn has lost some interior supports but otherwise retains its historic configuration when it was used to house cattle and hay. The granary and small gabled barn have also been little changed, although the barn is in dire need of stabilization. The corn cribs also retain good integrity of design having been little changed since first built.
- **Setting** – The setting of the historic district currently retains sufficient integrity to convey the history and context of the property in its historic function as an operating farm to sustain the poor and insane. The retention of at least some of the farm fields in the area south and west of the main cluster of farm buildings is significant and helps convey the history of this property and maintains the connection between the buildings and the cemetery to the south. The setting has been impacted to some degree by the loss of historic buildings, such as the original pauper buildings, and some of the barns and sheds inventoried in the late nineteenth century that are no longer extant. However, the collection of intact buildings range in age from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries and still conveys the farming operation of the poor farm. Beyond the borders of the historic district there are modern constructions that have impacted the wider view shed to the east and north of the district. There is also encroachment beginning from the south by a modern housing development. Thus, all of the views from the district are not what they were historically; however, the retention of open farm fields that continue to be cultivated around the buildings and cemetery help to serve as a buffer from those visual intrusions.
- **Materials** – The materials in each of the extant buildings are largely historic in age if not the original materials used in the foundations, siding, framing, and roofing of each building and structure. Therefore, very good integrity of materials remains.
- **Workmanship** – The district buildings and structures retain a high degree of workmanship because the buildings have been little changed since they were first built. As a result, one can see how the cells in the asylum were built and configured along with graffiti scratched and written on the walls from former occupants and workers on the property. The workmanship that went into the design and construction of each of the three extant barns is also still

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largely intact and evident. The dairy barn, in particular, was designed and built as something of a state-of-the-art dairy barn for the time (i.e., 1910s). The retention of the original construction components, including a hand-hold ladder built into the south wall to provide access to the hay loft, conveys that workmanship.

- **Feeling** – One can still visit the historic district and get a sense of what the poor farm and asylum were like when in operation, although it no longer operates as a working farm. Driving down the dirt lane from the buildings south to the cemetery gives a strong sense of time and place particularly when the fields are planted. The cemetery is undeveloped and once again becoming overgrown. Thus, the integrity of feeling is fairly high.
- **Association** – Except for the County maintenance shed, all of the extant buildings and structures, the sites, and the farm fields within the district were all associated with the Johnson County Poor Farm and Asylum operation from 1855 until the late twentieth century. As such, integrity of association is very high.

List of contributing/non-contributing buildings, structures and sites (see also Figures 3 and 10)

Monitor-roofed stock barn	contributing building
Gabled-roofed stock (bull) barn	contributing building
Gambrel-roofed dairy barn	contributing building
Front-gabled asylum building	building listed individually in the NRHP
Side-gabled granary	contributing structure
Shed-roofed corn cribs	2 contributing structures
Concrete stave silo	contributing structure
Machine shed	non-contributing building
County shed	non-contributing building
Cemetery Site (13JH1149)	contributing site
Poor Farm Site (13JH1148)	contributing site

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**8. Narrative Statement of Significance**

The Johnson County Poor Farm and Asylum Historic District is locally significant under Criteria A, C, and D, and meets Criteria Consideration D for the cemetery site. The district is significant under Criterion A for the historical significance of this property as a comparatively well preserved example of a mid-nineteenth to late twentieth century county poor farm and insane asylum. As such, it represents the evolution of poor relief and social reform in the county and the state of Iowa from one of inadequate housing and treatment to a place where the poor and the insane could find a decent place to live and receive assistance in daily living to achieve better mental health. The district best exemplifies the working farm aspect of the county poor farm system where inmates worked according to their abilities to sustain themselves and their fellow inmates.

The district is also significant under Criterion C for the architectural significance of the extant historic buildings including the circa 1861 asylum building, which appears to be a rare survival of an early building of this type in Iowa, and several barns and outbuildings dating from the late nineteenth to mid-twentieth century farming operation. In addition to the circa 1861 asylum building, which is individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places (added in 1978), other buildings of note include: the nineteenth century granary, the 1900 gabled bull barn, the 1903-16 monitor-roofed stock barn, and the 1912 dairy barn.

The district is considered significant under Criterion D for the ability of the archaeological components of the property, including the cemetery site (13JH1149) and the site area surrounding the asylum and farm buildings (13JH1148), to yield information of importance to the history of the district. While it is certainly not recommended to excavate the cemetery site, its presence in an archaeological context adds to the overall significance of the district because it represents the mortality aspect of the poor farm and asylum operation, particularly in its early days. The site surrounding the extant buildings has also been shown through archaeological testing and ground-penetrating radar studies to contain intact stone foundations from former buildings and structures and artifacts dating from the occupation and use of the poor farm property.

The district meets Criteria Consideration D because the cemetery derives its primary significance from its association with the operation of the poor farm and asylum in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The cemetery is part of the historical setting, association, and overall feeling of the historic district. Ground-penetrating radar studies have confirmed that multiple burial features appear to be present on this site, perhaps upwards of several hundred burials.

The period of significance for the district extends from 1855, when the poor farm and asylum were first established, to 1964 when the operation began to be replaced by one that focused primarily on mental health. In the process, the farming aspect was gradually shut down until the only farming done was by outside renters. The building that now houses Chatham Oaks was built in 1964 to replace the County Home, with Chatham Oaks eventually privatized in 1988.

Significant dates include circa 1861 when the extant asylum building was constructed; 1903 when the original section of the monitor-roofed stock barn was built on the foundation of an older barn that had just burned down; and 1912 when the large dairy barn was added to the farming operation.

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Poor Relief and Social Reform

Midwestern county poor farms in the mid-nineteenth century grew out of a larger social movement of the day striving to provide more dignified and humane treatment for the poor and insane. Prior to the nineteenth century, the indigent, mentally disabled, and mentally ill had been historically treated more like criminals than persons who could be assisted to achieve a better level in life or to at least to live a life with some dignity. Prisons were often used to house both the poor and insane, with monasteries sometimes taking on their care. Treatment of the mentally ill often involved tortuous procedures that evolved through the centuries culminating by the twentieth century in “hydrotherapy tubs, wet sheet packs, insulin shock, electroconvulsive therapy, lobotomies, lobectomies and other forms of treatment [which] seemed to produce good results with some patients while frightening, dulling or driving others into worlds of chronic illness and hopelessness” (Glore 1985). The social reform movement of the nineteenth century extended to the treatment of the poor and the insane, with an emphasis on improving the treatment of “dependents” and resulted in many social experiments, including the poorhouse and the poor farm.

The concept of the poorhouse grew out of English law dating from the Tudor period (Evans 1926). Poorhouses were tax-supported institutions established to care for dependent persons, who could be defined as paupers, the infirm, vagrants, the insane, and orphans. The image of the nineteenth century poorhouse is often confused with that of the Victorian workhouse (another attempt to remedy poverty), which were often places of “gross inhumanity, enforced deprivation, and unspeakable insensitivity” (Spencer 2003); however, the “ambiguous image of the poorhouse, or ‘The House’ as it was frequently called (or the more ironic ‘The House of Industry’), reflects the ambiguous position of the poor, especially in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century” (ibid.).

At the time, much of the prosperous English populace viewed the poor as social and moral outcasts. These popular sentiments were supported by Malthusian philosophy, which dictated that money spent on the poor was money permanently removed from the wage pool, and Pauline doctrine, which stressed that the problem of poverty was omnipresent. More enlightened Victorians, however, tried to alleviate conditions for the poor through education and moral guidance. The one principle virtually everyone agreed upon was the need for reform (Spencer 2003).

As the nineteenth century progressed, abuses in the poorhouses were widespread and well documented, with regulations frequently revised to improve the situation. Diet was often poor and daily work often grueling and sometimes dangerous.

As the twentieth century approached, the poorhouse became a more humane place. Most of the harsh measures suffered by inmates before 1850 had been remedied. The problem of charity and how to best meet the needs of the poor remained, however, because poverty had not been eradicated as the Poor Law Commission had planned. Victorian sentiment remained mixed about how to address the problem (Spencer 2003).

The failed policies of England’s New Poor Law of 1834, which had been “poorly conceived and wretchedly implemented” (Spencer 2003), resulted in a Commission that neglected to study the actual causes of poverty and in policies that reflected “an almost-obsessive focus on morality while ignoring economic and social factors causing poverty” (ibid.).

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Historically, care for dependents “revolved around two different types of care: indoor relief and outdoor relief” (Page 1990:1-5). Indoor relief consisted of assistance to dependents in an institutional setting such as a poorhouse or a poor farm, while outdoor relief referred to financial assistance provided to dependents in their own homes or in private homes. Unfortunately, the broad definition of who qualifies as a “dependent” resulted in “people with varying problems” being “inappropriately housed together” (ibid.). As the reform movement progressed, the benefit of separate institutions for different types of dependency was more fully realized.

Outdoor relief included tax-funded provision of food, fuel, clothing and even medical treatment to those persons whose family, friends, and churches could not support. It also included auctioning off the poor to the lowest bidder, who would then agree to provide room and board for a specific period in exchange for the labor of the pauper. This was actually a form of indentured servitude and created a system rife for abuse and akin to slavery. A third form of outdoor relief involved contracting with someone in the community to care for the poor, a system also prone to abuse (Katz 1996).

The concept of the poorhouse was transplanted to America during the Colonial period. In the second quarter of the nineteenth century, as the industrial revolution and the resulting factory system began to impact the United States, the poorhouse system was also adopted because this “seemed to be an inherent component” of the factory system. However, these poorhouses, unlike their earlier predecessors, “were built with great optimism” (Crannell 2013):

They promised to be a much more efficient and cheaper way to provide relief to *paupers*. And there was a fervent popular belief that housing such people in institutions would provide the opportunity to reform them and cure them of the bad habits and character defects that were assumed to be the cause of their poverty (ibid.).

However, by the outbreak of the Civil War, people were beginning to question the wisdom and success of the poorhouse system. Poorhouses had proven to be much more expensive to run than anticipated. They had had no visible impact on reducing the numbers of the poor. They had not eliminated the need for outdoor relief, and there were still problems with living conditions in the poorhouses. With the interruption of the Civil War, the poorhouse system continued unreformed. While the war created large numbers of dependents in the form of widows, orphans, elderly persons that had lost their supporting sons and grandsons, and disabled veterans, the poorhouses saw few of these dependents thrust into that system. Instead, special laws were passed that required any needed assistance to veterans and their families to be provided as outdoor relief, with the Civil War Pension plan later providing further assistance to veterans and their families (Crannell 2013). In Iowa, a Soldiers’ Home was built in Marshalltown to further serve veterans’ needs.

By 1875, the regulation of poorhouses in most states had become the responsibility of the State Board of Charities. Laws had been passed that prohibited children from residing in poorhouses and removed mentally ill patients to more appropriate facilities. “The poorhouse population was even more narrowly defined during the twentieth century when social welfare legislation (Workman’s Compensation, Unemployment benefits, and Social Security) began to provide a rudimentary ‘safety net’ for people who had previously been pauperized by such circumstances” (Crannell 2013). Eventually, poorhouses evolved into nursing homes for the elderly, orphanages, general hospitals, and mental hospitals—“for which they provided the prototype” (ibid.).



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In Iowa, “care for the poor has been seen as a basic responsibility of county government from the earliest period of Iowa’s statehood” (Page 1990:1-5). Prior to the Civil War, county judges administered programs for the care of dependents overseeing the “care of the poor, establishment of poor houses, purchase of land, building’s erection, and institutional operation” (ibid.). If the expenses of these operations were beyond the county’s ordinary tax revenues, then the county judge would have to submit the expense to public vote.

During this early period, the contractor system was widespread in the Midwest and in Iowa. If a county had no poor house, independent private contractors often times provided services to dependents at county expense (Page 1990:1-5).

By state law, Iowa counties could fund poorhouses through regular taxation monies, or they could levy a poor tax if approved by public vote. In addition, the General Assembly sometimes approved the sale of government land to fund poorhouse construction, such as in Jones County, and “sometimes swamp land money was also given over to poor house construction” (Page 1990:1-5). There were also instances where the General Assembly passed special legislation to fund poorhouse construction. In 1860, the county judge system of poorhouse administration ended when the General Assembly authorized county boards of supervisors to oversee matters of the poor and other dependents—a system that continues to the present day (ibid.).

In Iowa, county poorhouses were most often operated as farms to help provide for the sustenance of the dependents and assist in their rehabilitation but also in the hope that profits could help support the institution. Thus, county poorhouses were most often built in rural areas and included the construction of barns and other outbuildings in addition to the poorhouse itself. In their early operations, many of these poor farms also included asylums for the mentally ill under the general thought of the day that this was the most efficient way to provide care for all types of dependents.

In 1873, a change in state law “required the administrator of a poor house (sometimes called a superintendent, sometimes a steward) to use proceeds from the poor farm cash profit to help fund expenses of the poor house” (Page 1990:1-6). In effect, this law “changed the direction of the administrator’s energies from concern for the inmates to making the farm profitable” (ibid.; see also Gillin 1914:168-169).

The various state poor laws in Iowa by 1904 provided for the following:

The board of supervisors of each county has authority to establish a poorhouse, to prescribe regulations for its management, and to appoint the steward of the same, who may be removed by the board at pleasure. No person shall be admitted to the poorhouse except upon the written order of a township trustee. When an inmate becomes able to support himself the board must order his discharge. The poorhouse must be inspected at least once a month by one of the county supervisors. The supervisors have authority to let out the support of the poor with the use and occupancy of the poorhouse and farm for a period not exceeding three years. Liability for support of relatives extends to parents, grandparents, children, and grandchildren. A legal settlement is gained by residing one year in the state; but the authorities may prevent a person from obtaining a settlement by “warning to depart” if he is county charge or likely to become such. The general relief of the poor is in charge of the township trustees, subject to the regulations of the board of supervisors. For cities the board may appoint an overseer of the poor (Bureau of the Census 1904).

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In 1909, state law allowed for higher tax levies to support county poorhouses and, in that same year, the state officially changed the terminology from poorhouses and poor farms to “county homes,” although the operation of the homes remained largely unchanged. Between 1897 and 1907, social reforms were a mixed bag, with social legislation increasing, but attention to the care of the poor actually decreasing (Gillin 1914:110; Page 1990:1-6).

The poor house/poor farm/county home system was very widespread in Iowa. In 1911, for example, all but four of Iowa’s 99 counties maintained county homes or poor houses/poor farms [Gillin 1914:41]. The sane inmate population at these facilities totaled 1,137 individuals. Many facilities housed both the sane and the insane. One county in Iowa at this time maintained a contractor system to provide independent care. State monitoring of these institutions was incomplete. Only those facilities, which provided care for the insane, were inspected and evaluated by state officials. The other facilities were under local control where county officials had many duties and little expertise in the sociology and science of dependent care. The likelihood for mistreatment and ill care was greater at facilities without state control. Many instances of resident mistreatment apparently were overlooked (Page 1990:1-6).

The four counties in Iowa in the early 1900s that did not maintain county homes or poorhouses were Crawford, Emmet, Ida, and Osceola (Gillin 1914:319). However, some of these, such as Crawford County had built a county home by the 1920s, probably in response to the increasing numbers of impoverished during the Great Depression, which in Iowa began in the 1920s with the farm depression.

By the early 1900s, there were some separate facilities for the care of certain classes of dependents. The State Institution for Feeble-Minded Children at Glenwood was an institution where a person below the age of 46 years could be committed if they had been pronounced so by the proper authorities; however, an insane person of the same age could also have been sent into the county poorhouse system if they had not been adjudged insane by the county commissioners of insanity (Gillin 1914:322-323). Other state hospitals for the insane included one established at Mt. Pleasant in 1861, one in Independence in 1873, one in Clarinda in 1888, and one in Cherokee in 1902 (WPA 1986). If there was no separate asylum facility at the county poor farm, then the insane person could be kept in the poorhouse with the other dependents, sometimes in a separate ward. Blind persons could be admitted to the College for the Blind in Vinton, while deaf persons could be sent to the Iowa School for the Deaf at Council Bluffs at the expense of the state. Orphans might be cared for at the Soldiers’ Orphans’ Home at Davenport but could be kept at a county poorhouse as well. Disabled veterans could be housed at the Soldiers’ Home at Marshalltown (ibid.). There was also a state hospital for epileptics and a school for the feeble-minded in Woodward, Iowa (ibid.). However, many county homes continued to co-mingle the different types of dependents, often with less-than-desirable results.

While there was much discussion about reforming the county poor farm/county home system in the early twentieth century, World War I pushed issues related to the poor into the background. As a result, the onset of the Great Depression and the resulting rise in the number of poor needing assistance, taxed the county home system to its limits. County home buildings that had once seemed so large quickly became overcrowded. However, there was relief from the federal public assistance programs that had the immediate impact of lessening the need for county poor farms (Page 1990:1-6). As the twentieth century progressed in Iowa, as elsewhere in the Midwest and the nation as a whole, the county poor farm system evolved into nursing homes for the elderly and specialized hospitals and institutions for the mentally ill and the disabled. As a result, the poor farm system was becoming obsolete by the late twentieth century.

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Just prior to the passage of the national Social Security Act in 1935, Iowa had already enacted an Old Age Pension law for which a census was conducted between January and April 1935 to identify beneficiaries. Iowa was among only a handful of states that had enacted old age pension legislation prior to Social Security. The other states included California, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Washington, and Wisconsin, states that all enacted early old-age assistance programs, with Colorado, Florida, Iowa, and Mississippi all enacting legislation in the 1930s just prior to the national legislation (Lansdale 2003). One writer concluded that old age assistance had been earlier in the western states primarily out of concern for the pioneer.

In the East, down to the Great Depression, economic success was generally attributed to individual acumen, and failure to personal inadequacies. In the Far West, it appeared to me that there was greater tolerance for the old person who had not “struck it rich,” attributable perhaps to the fact that those who had, knew that good luck rather than superior virtue accounted for their success (Lansdale 2003).

However, residents of county homes were not eligible for Social Security payments according to the new national law and, as a result there was “a massive exit of residents and wholesale shutdown of the homes” across the country (Engel 1979). By the time that the eligibility rules were reversed in 1950, “most of the nation’s county homes were closed” (ibid.).

But in Iowa, support for the county home system never wavered – partly out of respect for county authority, but primarily because it was cheaper for counties to care for their poor and disabled at home than to send them to state institutions. (Unlike most other states, Iowa counties are required to pay most of the costs related to their residents’ use of state institutions).

Not until 1958, when several residents were killed in a Council Bluffs nursing home fire, was the county’s autonomy over its care facilities cracked.

The Legislature, in session at the time of the fire, gave the state Health Department and fire marshal board powers to regulate all homes caring for the aged.

But neither that legislation, nor a law passed in 1965 requiring licensing of county homes, had much effect. It was not until 1971 that state regulation of care facilities began to mean something (ibid.).

Another reason for the continued support for the county home system in Iowa was the fact that farmers were not eligible for Social Security until the mid-1950s. It is likely that many of the continuing population of Iowa’s county homes between the 1930s and the 1950s were farmers ineligible for Social Security and in need of assistance.

In 1979, the *Des Moines Register* ran an investigative article that exposed a number of county homes that had become little more than a dumping ground for the mentally ill, mentally disabled, and senile elders but also for alcoholics and drug addicts (Engel 1979). Conditions in some homes were found to be substandard despite the enforcement of state health laws at county homes starting in 1971. Some county farms were still in operation in the 1970s, though few could be operated at a profit (ibid.).

It was noted ironically in the 1979 article that many of the same defects in the state’s county home system in the late

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1970s were the same as those cited in a 1904 study, which noted that “the county homes are notoriously ill-adapted; there are no facilities for the segregation of the various classes of dependents and defectives; the treatment of inmates, to say the least, is unscientific; it is rare, indeed, that much attention is paid to comfort and happiness; stewards as a rule, are untrained; poor management and inefficient seem to prevail everywhere” (quoted from “Social Legislation in Iowa, 1904, Iowa State Historical Society” in Engel 1979).

Since 1979, the county home system has changed radically and is much more regulated today than in 1979. Facilities for the different types of dependents have also been better segregated. A number of county homes, such as the Johnson County Home, were privatized. None of county poor farm operations have survived, although some county farm buildings remain standing as vacant buildings, historical exhibits, or adapted to other uses.

Johnson County Poor and Insane Facilities

Johnson County had hardly been settled before county officials began to make plans on how to deal with the impoverished and the insane dependents, who would be their responsibility (Fore 1965:5). Prior to 1855, the county contracted out to an agent to care for the county’s indigents, but none of the agents “stayed long on the job” (Eckhardt 1992:1). One of the first agents was Alexander Abel, who was contracted in July 1841 to care for the paupers of the county (Aurner 1912:632-633). Often these agents were local physicians. For example, Dr. Jesse Bowen succeeded Abel in the job in October 1841, with Dr. Henry Murray awarded the contract in 1842 for the low bid of \$6 for the year (ibid.). Sometimes individuals were hired to care for the insane specifically, such as in 1843 when Elisha Pearson was hired to care for an “insane pauper” for \$150 for the year (Johnson County Historical Society 1993, 2000). One case in Johnson County actually involved the “binding out” of two girls, which meant that the children were basically indentured to someone, in this case Peter Ewing, who cared for them and was allowed a sum for their keep (Aurner 1912:635).

Assistance for the poor and those unable to care for themselves was a large portion of the County budget. Many requests for reimbursement of fees and expenses for caring for the indigent by different claimants are registered in the minutes of the County Supervisors. It was a difficult system to manage (Eckhardt 1992:2).

Because of the unwieldy nature of the independent contractor system, the county decided to construct a county facility, with a public vote held in April 1855 to determine if a poor house should be built and land to be purchased for a poor farm. The result of the vote was 987 for and only 146 against (Original document recorded for the record on April 14, 1855, by the County Judge, with a copy on file at the Johnson County Historical Society, Coralville, Iowa).

As a result of this election, the Johnson County Poor Farm and Asylum was built that same year (1855) in order to provide “systematic care with economy” for the county’s impoverished and mentally ill (Eckhardt 1992:1). The idea of a single facility for both the poor and mentally ill was that “every type of dependent person would receive care at this one facility, and it was hoped that the farm would be in some measure self supporting” (ibid.). The Johnson County Poor Farm appears to have been in operation by January 1856 when a steward was hired. The first steward, or “stuart” as it appeared on the legal document, was John W. O’Brien, whose appointment began January 1, 1856 (Original document concerning the “Stuart of Poor House” dated December 17, 1855, copy on file at the Johnson County

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Historical Society, Coralville, Iowa).

The original facility was a four-room frame or log building that is no longer standing. This one building housed both the poor and insane as well as the steward and his family. The four rooms specifically housed the kitchen in one room; the living quarters of the steward and his family in another room; poor and insane women in the third room; and poor and insane men in the fourth room (Fore 1965:5). The housing of “all types of poor, ill, and dependent persons” in the same room subdivided only by gender resulted in an “unhealthy and uncomfortable” situation (Eckhardt 1992:3). This building was located on 160 acres of land that had been purchased by the county to serve as the beginnings of a poor farm operation. Of the 110 acres in the nominated district, 90 acres were part of the original 160 acres of the poor farm property.

In 1861, the Johnson County Committee on the Poor determined that the original building was too crowded and “utterly inadequate” (Aurner 1912:637). It was noted “ten or twelve persons crowded together in one small badly ventilated apartment, some of whom are sick, and all generally very uncleanly and offensive in their personal habits, present a very forbidding prospect to the deserving poor” (ibid.). The committee recommended new and enlarged buildings, with the result being two long additions made to the original poorhouse/asylum, now with separate facilities for the paupers and the insane (Miltner and Miltner 1976; Fore 1965). The north half of the extant asylum building at the Poor Farm site was the wing built for the insane around 1861. This section contains six cells, three on each side of an open center aisle. The cells on the west side are larger in size than those on the east side. The wing was later added onto its south end adding ten more cells in the same configuration.

The center aisle was probably used as a general ward and exercise area (Eckhardt 1992:3-4). There were no indoor toilet facilities (inmates either used chamber pots or were taken to an outdoor privy); with a large wood burning stove in the hallway providing the sole source of warmth. Natural light was provided by the rows of windows that line the long sides of the building. Two of the cells probably functioned as a caretaker’s office and for storage (ibid.). The cells in the oldest section were generally larger than those in the south added section. Some of the rooms could have held more than one person, while others were likely for solitary confinement. The front wall of each cell was constructed of 2-foot by 4-foot boards vertically placed and separated sufficiently to form slats or bars. When the doors were closed, a board or iron bar could be slipped through heavy iron brackets that effectively locked each door from the aisle outside of the cell. The doors also feature an opening through which food could be passed to the occupants of the cell. Those inmates in less need of supervision were probably allowed to walk around in the hall, while those prone to violence or difficult to control would have been locked in their cells.

The building continued to serve as the asylum until the new, much larger County Home building was constructed to the east of the farm buildings in 1886.<sup>6</sup> The need for the expanded asylum facility in Johnson County was well founded particularly after a state law was passed in 1860 that allowed for the transfer from state hospitals to county homes of mentally-ill persons, who were considered “harmless and incurable” (Fore 1965:5). It should be noted that the

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<sup>6</sup> This brick “Main Building” was torn down in the 1964 when the current facility was constructed. The county home facility was privatized in 1988 and became known as Chatham Oaks at that time and operates as such to the present day (Dyke 2001).

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criminally insane were not housed in the county home system but rather were housed at the Iowa state hospitals in Mt. Pleasant (first opened in 1861) and Independence (opened in 1873). If someone was found to be a danger while residing in a county home, that person would have been transferred to the appropriate state hospital.

Treatment for the mentally ill incarcerated in this asylum was non-existent, with the amount of physical care administered here crude by modern standards. However, the intent of the Board of Supervisors at the time was that this was to be “an asylum second to none in the state” and a facility for compassionate care (Knock 2002). For nearly 30 years, this rudimentary facility served the county’s insane until the late 1880s when the new complex of brick buildings was constructed with separate facilities for administration, for paupers, and for the insane. “In this facility, too, patients were confined behind bars, but conditions here were reported in 1900 to be ‘above the average county institution’” (Miltner and Miltner 1976).

The buildings of this complex were two stories in height, with attic space useable as a third floor, and constructed with bricks “made from clay on the farm by the Oakes Tile Company” (Fore 1965:6) (see Figure 5). The older asylum building was subsequently converted to a hog house and was the only surviving component of the original poor farm and asylum frame building; the other wings and the original core having been demolished through the years (see Figures 6-7).

In 1888, there was a notable entry made in the Johnson County Board of Supervisors’ meeting minutes that stated: “*the old buildings which were used previous to the section of the new buildings, as paupers and insane department, except the dwelling house for the [here the record is illegible but probably was the dwelling house for the steward], were moved to a suitable place on the grounds and converted into barns, cribs, granaries, and sheds*” (emphasis added; Johnson County Board of Supervisors Minutes, County Record Book 5).

To do this of necessity required the outlay of considerable expense as will be seen by the examination of the sum paid for removing buildings, masonry, carpentry, painting, etc., in the disbursement column. But in the judgment of your committee and the better care of the stock and preservation of the grain, etc., will in a few years be more than a compensation for the same. The buildings are kept insured thus avoiding the necessity of loss in case of fire or damage from the elements (ibid.).

This entry would indicate that the original buildings that housed the poor and insane, including the extant building listed in the NRHP, were moved from their original site on the property to the current location within the main farmstead where they were converted to agricultural uses. It is known that the extant asylum building became a hog house in its later use.

The original location of the asylum building would have been within the original 160 acres of the Poor Farm property in the NE1/4 of Section 13, Union Township. According to the 1870 plat map of this area, the only building site then depicted was on the south side of what is now Melrose Avenue within the current district boundary in the NE1/4 of the NW1/4 of the NE1/4 of Section 13 but closer to the road than the asylum building is now located (see Additional

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Documentation, page 73).<sup>7</sup> Therefore, it is suspected that the original site is within the nominated boundaries probably in the grassy lawn area between Melrose Avenue and the east-west driveway north of the extant dairy barn. This area is due north of the dairy barn and east of the granary. This location has not been tested archaeologically and would be a good location for future study.

Even in the new brick building that housed the insane in the 1880s-1960s,

the patients slept in rooms, the doors, with iron bars, locked with padlocks at night. Tranquilizing and energizing drugs were first used about 1948 and more extensively since. In August, 1962, there were 16 mental, 33 retarded patients, and 9 dependents at the County Home—a total of 58 patients. Mr. and Mrs. [Joe] Miltner were first employed at the County Home nearly five years ago [i.e., c.1960]. They encouraged relatives and other guests to visit the home. Being a fire hazard, the costs for repair, heating, etc. were deplored. Mrs. Miltner spoke at Women's Clubs; the medical profession and other public citizens were aroused. The Chamber of Commerce gave support to the Supervisors who were interested (Fore 1965:6).

The result was the construction of a new county home in 1964 at a cost of \$795,000. The new building was dedicated on September 19 of that year. In the 1960s, the patients, “especially the mentally retarded,” were doing much of the work in the home and on the farm, which then totaled 310 acres. At that time, there were only nine employees—“the steward and his wife, a registered nurse, two cooks, one hired man, and three house attendants” (Fore 1965:6).

Operation of the Johnson County Poor Farm and Asylum

In the nineteenth century, the Johnson County poor farm operation was perhaps more successful than its asylum as a means to provide the indigent and mentally disabled with purpose and some dignity. The early hope that the farm operation could be self-sustaining appeared successful even at an early date, with the farm showing a profit by 1863 (Eckhardt 1992). The farm operation included barns, granaries, cribs, and sheds, with twentieth century additions including the dairy barn with concrete silo built in 1912. In addition to the dairy operation, the farming operation included: hogs, cattle, poultry (chickens, turkeys, and ducks), orchards, grape vines, vegetable gardens, and fields where sweet corn and hay were raised (Dyke 2001; Johnson County Board of Supervisors' Minutes).

In 1862, the poor farm reported the following crops: wheat 773 bushels, corn 1,400 bushels, potatoes 30 bushels (with this crop pronounced a failure), sorghum 175 gallons, and tobacco 30 pounds. In addition were five horses, 22 head of cattle, and 12 hogs “to kill and 11 to keep over” (Aurner 1912:639). In 1864 it was recommended that a yoke of oxen be purchased “since another team was needed on the farm” (ibid.). In 1863, the poor farm reported a profit of more than \$500 (ibid.).

An 1875 report to the Board of Supervisors showed that the poor farm had raised corn, hay, wheat, oats, potatoes, cabbage and “various other products” as well as adding to their stock one horse, eight cattle, and 50 hogs (Unigraphic

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<sup>7</sup> The 1870 plat map depicted residential facilities as black squares; therefore, the black square depicted within a small grove of trees on the Poor Farm property was likely the asylum and poor farm building complex (i.e., the original building with the two wings built in the mid-1850s to mid-1860s).

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1973:224). The report also noted that three inmates had died that year but noted “the general health, considering the age, has been good” (ibid.). After the report submittal, the Board of Supervisors ordered that either a new poorhouse was to be constructed or that the rooms in the existing poorhouse be remodeled in order to “provide suitable accommodations for the insane of this county” and that the improvements were to be executed as soon as possible (ibid.). It may be that the south addition to the insane asylum enlarging it from six cells to sixteen was made in response, or at least set in motion the plans for the new county home building, which was finally built in the late 1880s.

The following is a copy of the 1874 county poor farm report as it appeared in the 1883 Johnson County History book (Unigraphic 1973):<sup>8</sup>

COUNTY POOR FARM REPORT.

From county board proceedings of January 9, 1875, the following is of permanent interest and value as showing how well the institution was administered for one year at least:

Supervisor Spurrier, chairman of committee on poor and poor-house for 1874, submitted the following report, which was adopted:

*To the Board of Supervisors:*  
GENTS:—Your committee on poor would make the following report:

There has been expended for permanent improvements.....	\$ 175.15
For farm implements and household furniture .....	132.20
For clothing and bedding.....	224.66
For groceries.....	395.86
For contingent expenses.....	88.85
For outdoor help.....	140.00
Total.....	\$1,367.62

There has been produce sold for cash to the amount of .....	\$ 947.27
There has been raised 2,200 bushels of corn, at 45 cents.....	990.00
There has been raised 35 tons of hay, at \$10.....	350.00
There has been raised 316 bushels of wheat, at 70 cents .....	221.20
There has been raised 290 bushels of oats, at 48 cents.....	139.20
There has been raised 200 bu. potatoes @ 40c.....	80.00
There has been raised 600 heads cabbage @ 5c.....	30.00
There has been raised various other products.....	40.02
Increase in horses, 1.....	25.00
Increase in cattle, 8 @ \$7.....	56.00
Increase in hogs, 50 @ \$5.....	250.00
Total.....	\$3,128.78

There were at the beginning of the year 18 inmates. There have been received during the year, 11. Discharged 14. Leaving now in the house, 15. There has been an average attendance of a little over 15½. There have three deaths occurred; the general health, considering the age, has been good. The present steward and matrons have not abated (since our last report) any in their zeal, fidelity or success; we would heartily recommend their retention in their present position, and in view of their meager allowance in comparison with their toil and grave responsibility, would recommend a further allowance for the past year's services of \$100. All of which is respectfully submitted.

SAMUEL SPURRIER,  
THOS. COMBE.

The next day the board made the following order for an insane hospital. On motion, ordered that the committee on poor-house be instructed to either construct a new building or remodel rooms in the poor-house, as in their discretion may seem best, for the purpose of providing suitable accommodations for the insane of this county, not admissible to the insane hospital of the State, said improvement to be completed as soon as possible.

<sup>8</sup> Note that the county reports were made around the first of the year but summarized the accounts and events of the year prior. For example, the report filed in January 1875 was the summary for 1874. However, it is referenced by the year it was filed in the official county records.



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Review of the Johnson County Board of Supervisors' meeting minutes from 1888-89 (County Record Book 5) revealed that a county physician was on a salary of \$350 per year to care for the medical needs of the poor farm, with the pay not to increase "unless an epidemic occurs." The record also contains a lengthy report from the Chairman of the Board of Supervisors on the poor farm operation for the year 1888 that included the following information: the poor farm for the year 1888 showed a total of 240 acres of land valued at \$9600, insane and pauper buildings valued at \$20,000, "barn, cribs, and sheds [built] this year" for \$750, household goods valued at \$1000, and an ice and wash house valued at \$500, for a total overall value of property and goods at \$32,650. It was also noted "the stock of the poor farm are in excellent condition, and are of a quality much above the average" (ibid.).

The 1888 report went on to value the stock on hand as follows: 8 head of horses (\$800), 2 head of colts (\$125), 22 head of cows (\$550), 1 bull (\$115), 12-year old steer (\$25), 10 head of yearlings (\$160), 10 head of spring calves (\$525), 35 head of fat hogs (\$525), and 70 head of stock valued at \$560 and another animal that was valued at \$15, with total stock on hand valued at \$2975. The report also listed that \$197.17 had been received from the sale of hogs and \$103.55 from the sale of cattle during the year. The 1888 report also listed the following grain on hand: 22 bushels corn (\$506), 600 bushels oats (\$132), 50 bushels wheat (\$50), 500 bushels potatoes (\$125), 75 tons of hay (\$450), and "vegetables in cellar" valued at \$100, for a total value of \$1363.

The Pauper Dept. In this department on January 1, 1888, there were in charge and cared for twenty-two persons. We received during the year from the several townships upon order of the trustees thereof eight additional persons. Four of the inmates died and seven were discharged leaving us at this date in this dept., 19 persons of whom 14 are males and 5 are females.

Insane Dept. In this department of the poor farm we had on the first day of Jan. 1888 16 insane persons. These persons had been returned to us incurable from the insane hospital at Mount Pleasant. During the year we received from the same source ten persons and one person was sent directly to this depart. by the commissioner of insanity. There have been discharged upon the authority of the proper persons to the custody and care of their friends during the year six persons and five of the inmates died leaving us at this date confined in the dept. 18 insane persons of whom 15 are males and 3 females. These persons require constant care and attention on account of the unfortunate condition they are in, some of them are exceedingly dangerous and during a part of the year it has been found necessary to employ an assistant to the warden to prevent these dangerous persons from injuring themselves or other inmates on the [ward?] with whom they come in contact. Including everything there have [sic] been expended on account of this depart. during the year the sum of \$1894.97 which itemized is as follows to wit: Boots and shoes, beds, dry goods and clothing (\$214.53); transp[ort] (\$365.99); clerks fees, com. Fees, med. Exam and meds (\$468.80); committee work, supervision (\$129.75); misc. supplies (\$124.05); sheriffs fees (\$138.35); witnesses (\$140.85); and carpenter work, painting, etc. (\$313.65) (County Record Book 5).

Other itemized expenses in 1888 included the following: Warden's salary \$500, groceries \$525, dry goods \$106.97, clothing \$49.80, boots, shoes and repair \$54.65, flour \$424.29, labor \$693.43, hardware, machinery, etc. \$267.33, stock and seed \$225.65, blacksmithing and repair \$43.05, meat, wood and coal \$390.31, tanner repairs and supplies \$40.40, drugs and meds \$73.35, carpenter work and repairs \$471.32, harness and repairs \$34.60, plumbing and repairs and supplies \$70.24, ice and [illegible] \$69.40, insurance \$67.50, fruit trees and netting \$95.37, grading road \$10.00, lumber \$306.87, hay and corn \$107.99, painting \$275.92, moving buildings \$229.00, mason work \$89.05, and hauling

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\$81.50, for a total of \$5,530.82.

Disbursements made through township trustees for short-term problems included: furniture poor \$18.50, groceries \$2873.79, dry goods \$56.44, flour \$110.25, meat \$74.20, clothing \$64.20, fuel \$861.20, medicines \$465.55, the balance of the County physician's salary \$75.00, rent poor \$69.00, [illegible] \$38.00, coffins and funeral expenses \$204.50, funeral of soldiers \$106.65, transportation of poor out of county \$230.87, boots, shoes and repairs \$59.10, cash support order of trustees \$689.55, board order of trustees \$127.20, board order of supervisors \$521.50, and Mercy Hospital care of poor \$127.40, for a total of \$7,047.90. Other expenses included payments to Linn County for the care of poor from Johnson County (no dollar amount given), to Johnson County for an unnamed expense (\$109.75), and for the committee work of the Board of Supervisors (\$129.25). The Orphans Home received \$900, and the home for the Feeble Minded was paid \$75 by Johnson County.

The final tabulations for 1888 noted the following: Collections \$8082.94, Sale stock \$300.72, Sale brick \$1620.00, Jno. Mullin for board \$180.00, Boarding insane \$2000.00, and Misc. supplies \$29.93, with disbursement of Supplies, improve[ments] \$5530.82 and \$7550.90 and refunds \$8.07 for a balance of \$719.19 and a total of \$13,828.98. The Chairman's report ended with this statement: "No money will need to be expended for buildings within the next twenty years unless destroyed by something more than ordinary usage" (signed Chairman Frank Tamun) (County Record Book 5).

Interesting notations in the 1888 report concerning inmates who died during the year and the expenses for funerals and coffins, including expenses for soldiers' funerals may be linked to the cemetery on the poor farm property. At least twenty burial records for this cemetery have been located, with at least two having been Civil War veterans (Johnson County Historical Society 2001). The burial records refer to individuals being buried in various numbered lots at the "Poor Farm grave yard" in the 1880s-early 1900s. Some records also indicated that a person had been buried in the Poor Farm grave yard but then the body was removed for reburial elsewhere in Iowa City (Handwritten notes from research into the Johnson County Poor Farm burial entries, Johnson County Historical Society Vertical Files, Coralville, Iowa). Therefore, there could be some grave features in the cemetery site that contain no human remains.

The 1893 index of bills paid by the County for the "Poor Fund" included a host of services and items to provide the care and upkeep of the poor farm and its residents. Among those items were groceries, ice, wood, coal, medical and hospital care, clothing, shoes, and drugs, and seeds for the farming operation. The farming operation was supported by some outside labor including the hiring of John Lorack to trim the grapes<sup>9</sup> and Dr. Edwards to provide veterinary medical services. Other laborers hired included: George Cline (for one month in the winter), Ellen O'Connell and Josie Shimek (over the winter and early spring), Mary Doyle (in late spring or early summer), James Burk, and Patsy Quinlin (*Iowa City Daily Citizen*, April 15, 1893 and June 24, 1893). The women laborers would have worked in the residential buildings in the kitchen, laundry and other service areas, while the men listed could have assisted with the farm work but also may have been hires for indoor or repair work, such as George Cline, who was listed as working in the

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<sup>9</sup> While the grapes could have been for eating raw or making juice and jelly, there were notations in some of the annual reports for the Poor Farm of gallons of wine among the farm's products, such as in December 1904 when 17 gallons of wine were among the farm's inventory of products (County Record Book 7).

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wintertime. The items and services paid from the "Insane Fund" in 1893 included clothing, telegrams to the state hospital in Mt. Pleasant, and conveying persons to that hospital (*Iowa City Daily Citizen*, April 15, 1893).

The January 1894 report on the Poor Farm and Asylum noted that in the Pauper Department, there were then 31 persons in residence but that there had been 36 persons during the year, four of whom died and 16 were discharged or left of their own free will. The Insane Department had 20 persons during the year, of which two had died and two were discharged to the custody of their friends. There were 18 persons in the insane department. Therefore, the facility had seen six deaths in 1893. Disbursements were noted for the year as including the cost of coffins and for "digging graves" (County Record Book 6).

In January 1896, the poor farm inventory reported the following the inventory and valuations:

*Inventory:*

240 acres of land @ \$50 per acre	= \$12,000.00
Insane and Pauper Buildings	= \$20,000.00
Barns and Sheds	= \$ 1,500.00
Household Goods	= \$ 1,000.00
Ice and Wash Houses	= \$ 500.00
Farm Machinery Vehicles	= \$ 500.00
Total Value	= \$35,500.00

*Grain and Vegetables*

2200 bushels of corn	25 bushels of seed corn
807 bushels of oats	30 tons of hay
15 tons of straw	100 shocks of fodder
300 bushels of potatoes	1 barrel of pickles
3 barrels of kraut	2 barrels of sorghum
"lot of vegetables"	

*Fuel*

65 tons of coal	15 cords of wood
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*Stock and Poultry*

15 cows	6 steers
4 steer yearlings	4 heifer yearlings
1 heifers	10 calves
97 shoats	1 short horned bull
14 fat hogs	7 head of horses
Poultry	

Sales from the Farm:

Turkeys	\$ 18.00
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Hogs	\$ 856.17
Cow	\$ 30.00
Cattle and hogs	\$ 120.00
Hides	\$ 2.85
Total sales	\$1027.92

The total number in the Pauper Department as of January 1, 1895, was 36 persons. Three people died during the year, with 21 discharged. There were 33 persons in the department as of January 1, 1896. Of that total, 23 were male and 10 were female. The total number in the Insane Department as of January 1, 1895, was 18 persons. As of January 1, 1896, there were 20, 15 of which were males and 5 were females. "Funeral Expenses" were listed among the disbursements for 1895. The report ended by noting that "the inmates were furnished with good quarters clean and comfortably heated good Beds and a Bountiful Table" (County Record Book 6).

By January 1900, the annual report for the Poor Farm noted the following inventory and valuations:

*Value of Poor Farm:*

240 acres of land	= \$12,000
Insane and Pauper buildings	= \$20,000
Tower and Tank	= \$ 2,000
Barns Cribs and Sheds	= \$ 1,400
Ice and Wash houses	= \$ 500
Furniture and Fixtures	= \$ 2,873
Farm Machinery and Vehicles	= \$ 500
Scales	= \$ 65

*Grain and Vegetables:*

1400 bushels oats	700 bushels potatoes
2800 bushels corn	60 tons hay
15 tons straw	30 bushels onions
20 bushels beans	350 heads cabbage
10 bushels parsnips	20 bushels turnips
2 barrels sauer kraut	1-1/2 barrels pickles
175 squash	300 oak posts
60 tons coal	23 cords wood
3 "setts harness"	20 bushels seed corn

*Stock on hand:*

14 milch cows	9 two year old heifers
9 two year old steers	8 heifers
16 spring calves	1 bull
22 fat hogs	2 horses



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repairs well, board teamsters, mattress, molasses, tile, surveyor, oil tank, corn, Poor Farm Report 1904, potatoes, gas machine, grates, part payment on well, and threshing.

The expenditures outside the County Home included:

Committee Work	County Physician (1904 and 1905)
Groceries	Support and care at hospitals
Support and care outside hospitals	Transportation
Trustee service	Coal
Flour and feed	Bread
Wood	Iowa City, burial permits
Meat	Overseer salary (1904 and 1905)
Overseer sundry expense	Burials (\$197.20)
Use of ambulance	Sawing wood
Livery	Shoes clothing
Medical service	Drugs
Dry goods	Settlements and Refunds

Expense of County Home for the year	= \$8922.32
Less sale of stock and hides	- 1020.77
Less M. Miltner, support	- 78.00
Less permanent improvements	- 2161.31
Net Cost of running the Home	= \$5622.24

Average cost of \$1.78 per week per inmate

Pauper Department number of inmates = 24 males, 10 females

Insane Department number of inmates = 15 males, 14 females

The report noted that during the past year they had installed a new lighting system, "which is of great improvement, over the old way of lighting with the ordinary lamps." The Committee was contemplating installing "a new and up to date laundry plant" and other "minor improvements."

Expenditures noted in February 1906 included payments for "searching parties, telephone, installing laundry (\$1261), new buildings (\$977), cement work, laying tile, drilling well, wind mill, sand, and outstanding warrants" (County Record Book 7). These payments indicate the installation of the new laundry plant at the County Home and a new deep well and wind mill probably associated with the stock watering system on the farm. The "new buildings" were further described as having been the remodeling of the interior of the Stewards department, while the notations on the searching parties and outstanding warrants indicate some of the issues with the resident population in the Home, including runaways.

The annuals reports for the 1910s were very similar to one another listing many of the same values, expenses, and inventory items. In 1911, however, some new expenditure items noted were cement blocks, meals for teamsters, digging

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drain, hauling, plastering, eggs for setting, bull calf, and “breaking horse.” The expenses paid for the poor outside of the County Home included expenses related to a quarantine for an unspecified illness. In 1912, mention was made of expenses related to “rodding barn,” referring to placement of lightning rods on one or more of the barns. There was also an expense for “conveying to pest house.” Iowa City had a pest house (three different incarnations) in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The pest house was an isolation house for victims afflicted with smallpox and other highly contagious diseases (Weber 1976:229).

In 1913, the report noted expenses related to a new barn (suspected to have been the extant dairy barn) including plans for the barn, lumber and other costs for building the barn. “Cupolas” were an expense noted in 1914, likely for placement on top of the dairy barn. Quarantine was still an issue in 1914 and 1915 (County Record Books 7-8). The inventory for the Poor Farm in 1914 was as follows:

2 teams mules	1 mule
1 team mare and horse	1 grey mare
4 sets harness	1 yearling mare colt
1 yearling horse colt	5 steers
7 heifers	6 two year old heifers
6 steers	2 heifers
13 calves	10 cows
2 canners	1 bull
1 veal calf	70 fat hogs
11 sows	44 sows
50 tons hay	20 tons straw
1200 bushels oats	200 bushels barley
1600 bushels corn	25 bushels seed corn
25 cords wood	1 corn cultivator
1 corn cultivator	1 binder
1 planter	1 stalk cutter
2 harrows	1 three horse evener
1 potato digger	1 gang plow
1 mower	3 stirring plows
1 sulky plow	1 potato planter
1 broad cast seeder	1 road cart
1 manure spreader	1 garden cultivator
1 disc	2 hay racks
1 fanning mill	1 corn shelter
Sundries in granary	3 sets single harness
1 wagon box	3 scoop boards
1 scales	1 feed grinder
1 spring wagon	3 wagons
2 pair bob sleds	1 wood rack and box

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2 hog racks	1 single seated buggy
1 two seated buggy	1 sleigh
1 side delivery rake	1 hay loader
1 buggy	500 chickens
18 ducks	40 tons coal
1 water tank	kindling

In 1922, it was noted that the Johnson County Poor Farm was “the only one in the state that made a profit on the inmates” (*Oxford Leader*, March 22, 1923). It was claimed that the “cost of keeping the inmates ranged in the various counties from two cents per week to \$42.88 per week per person” (*ibid.*). Reportedly, Iowa County had the two cents per week total; however, in Johnson County “Supt. Vitosh has not only made the Poor Farm self-supporting, but has made a profit for the county of \$1.74 per person kept there” (*ibid.*).

In the early 1930s, it was noted that “much of the food necessary for the consumption of the occupants [of the County Home] is raised on the farm adjoining the home” (Wilcox 1934:71).

Garden and orchard space, tilled by those capable of working, produce green vegetables and fruits in season. In 1932 some 4500 quarts of beets, beans, peas, apples, cherries, tomatoes, and pickles were canned for use during the winter. Most of the eggs and milks produced are consumed at the home, the steward maintaining that only the surplus of such items should be sold. Hogs and cattle are raised for both consumption and for sale (*ibid.*).

The impact of the Great Depression had been felt at the Johnson County Home, with occupants increasing the pauper department from 26 in 1928 to 42 by 1932. The increase in number of the poor, coupled with the typical population in the insane department was close to taxing the occupancy limit of 70 persons in the early 1930s (Wilcox 1934:71). The Depression also decreased the income from the sale of the farm’s surplus agricultural products due to declining prices in general. “In 1928, the sale of cattle, hogs, and cream returned \$10,106.39 to the farm. In 1931, the receipts had dropped to the low total of only \$3886.73, and in 1932, to \$2,086.29” (*ibid.*:72). To offset this loss of income, the steward did some cost cutting of the home’s expenses by limiting improvements to the property and greatly reducing the amount of stock purchased. With less stock, the cost of feed was reduced and the amount of extra help needed was also reduced (*ibid.*:73).

It was noted in 1934 that “those who seem physically able are required to work,” with the steward estimating “that one-third of the inmates are capable of working very little, one-third can do no work at all, while the remaining one-third are able to work at least a half of the day whenever their services are needed. The greater part of the help, of course, is required during the growing season” (*ibid.*:72). Most of the workers were part of the pauper department, although some inmates in the insane department worked “occasionally in the gardens or on the farm” (*ibid.*:79).

The steward of the County Home during the 1920s-30s was Paul Leuz, with his wife Elsie being the matron. They served in this capacity from 1926 to 1960 when they retired. Leuz noted that during the Great Depression, the facility was taxed by additional residents; however, “the federal government established the WPA, and the county home was



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able to get much needed additional facilities without cost to the county” (*Iowa City Press-Citizen*, September 14, 1977). It is not currently known what exactly the WPA-built facilities involved, but they do not appear to have included any new farm buildings. Leuz also noted that when he arrived in 1926, all of the farm work was done with mules, with the farm work assisted by a farm manager but “with the residents of the home providing much of the labor” (*ibid.*). “Many of the men had farm experience and were good workers” (*ibid.*). Mrs. Leuz recalled “each year she supervised the canning of some 5,000 quarts of fruits and vegetables that were raised on the farm—using kitchen ranges fired with wood, also cut on the farm” and that they “put up some three barrels of sauerkraut and stored three acres of potatoes in their cave” (*ibid.*).

Melvin Dvorsky, a former resident of the Johnson County Home, was interviewed for this nomination. Mr. Dvorsky was born on November 23, 1943, on a farm near the town of Solon, Iowa. He came to the home in 1962 as a teenager after his mother was killed in a tragic accident. He lived at the County Home for 26 years during which time he experienced the end of the Poor Farm operation and the replacement of the late 1880s County Home building with the extant Chatham Oaks facility. He noted that he had lived in a dormitory setting in the old building but had his own room at Chatham Oaks. The new facility could house more residents and had a much larger staff. For most of his stay at the County Home, Mr. Dvorsky worked in the dairy barn, rising at 4:30 a.m. every day to milk the 32 Holstein cows. He had three men (other residents) who worked in the dairy barn under his supervision. By that time, the milking was done by machine and the County Home had its own cream separator and pasteurizer. They processed about 30 gallons of milk for the home’s use each day, with the rest of the Grade A milk picked up by the Twin County Dairy out of Kalona. The Home did not make its own butter or cheese. He noted that most residents could manage their own time once the farm work was done. He would write letters, do his Rosary, and walk in the garden. Residents ate in the general dining room for all meals. He would retire to bed around 7 p.m. because he had to get up so early. He was allowed to leave the facility for visits, which he did on Christmas, New Years, and Easter. He often visited relatives (Melvin Dvorsky, personal communication with Leah Rogers, September 4, 2013).

Dvorsky noted that the residents did all of the farm work including working in the fields but that there was a hired man, who was the overseer or farm manager. He stated that they did not have outside help for the fieldwork until after Steward Joe Miltner left.<sup>10</sup> The new administrator then hired more outside help to farm the land. Both men and women worked, although the women worked in the building doing domestic chores, while the men did all of the outside work including tending the flower and vegetable gardens. The fields were planted with sweet corn and hay and straw for livestock feed and bedding. The residents also planted, tended and harvested the vegetable gardens. He recalled four large gardens, one of which was north of the monitor-roofed stock barn. He recalled that the farm had all the equipment and machinery needed to work the farm fields including tractors, plows, balers, etc. The residents also helped with the canning of tomatoes, beets, green beans, and pears from the orchard. They froze sweet corn, peas, strawberries, rhubarb, squash and apples and peaches from the orchards. They ate the rest of the produce and orchard products fresh. The orchards included apple, peach, pear, and plum trees. In addition to the dairy herd, the farm livestock included 600 head

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<sup>10</sup> However, in the 1950s-1960s it has been noted that some of the County Home’s farm land was rented out on a shares basis (Notes from interview with Keith Pirkel of Tiffin, Iowa, Johnson County Historical Society Vertical Files, Coralville, Iowa). This indicates that the County Home’s subsistence needs were being met with less acreage, with the surplus land then rented out to local farmers for some monetary return.

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of hogs, a small herd of beef cattle (20-25 head), chickens, and even some sheep. During his tenure there were no turkeys or ducks raised, although the annual reports from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries noted turkeys and ducks in addition to chickens in the farm inventory. Dvorsky noted that the residents did not do the butchering but did help with the dressing of the chickens for the kitchen and storing the meat in the big walk-in cooler in the basement of the new building. Milk was also kept in this cooler (Melvin Dvorsky, personal communication with Leah Rogers, September 4, 2013).

During Joe and Dorothy Miltner's tenure as the Steward and Stewardess of the County Home, they described the farming operation as involving "raising corn, oats, Triticale and Hay. Also have a Dairy Herd, Hogs, Feeding Cattle, Spring Chicken Fryers, and Chicken Laying Flock" (Miltner and Miltner 1971). In addition were approximately five acres of vegetables including a wide variety of vegetables such as broccoli, turnips, eggplant, cabbage, squash, rutabagas, Swiss chard, etc., with 3,984 gallons of vegetables canned and frozen for the year (ibid.). In 1971, the county home employed two cooks, two men Ward attendants, two women Ward attendants, one farm hand, one Registered Nurse, two Doctors, and one Psychiatrist, with Joe and Dorothy Miltner the Steward and Stewardess of the home (ibid.). The home housed 106 patients in 1971, of which 46 were classified as mentally retarded and 60 were mentally ill (ibid.). In general, it was the custom at the County Home from its earliest days to its last days to have the wife of the appointed steward to serve as matron in charge of the female inmates. In the earliest days, it appears that the stewardess was not necessarily paid, but by the early 1900s, payment for her services became more typical.

Melvin Dvorsky spoke fondly of the Miltners and was not happy with the change in administration when they left. It was very hard for him to adjust when residents were no longer allowed to do the farm work. He commented that the change was not good because the whole concept of the poor farm was to provide the sick and the poor, and those who could not care for themselves, a place to live and work—to have a productive life. He did not feel exploited by having to work because he benefitted in so many ways from the fruits of his labor. Dvorsky had to leave the facility in 1988 when he no longer qualified for the Chatham Oaks program. He was quick to note how much he missed his old life at the poor farm. He would seem to be a testament to what could be right and good about the poor farm system in Iowa (Melvin Dvorsky, personal communication with Leah Rogers, September 4, 2013).

The total of 240 acres for the County Home property by the 1880s remained constant into the early twentieth century. The value of that land rose steadily, from \$9,600 in 1888 to \$19,200 by 1908, to \$24,000 by 1915 (County Record Books 6-8). By the early 1930s, the acreage total had risen to 327 acres valued at \$49,000 (Wilcox 1934:69). At that time, the County Home's buildings were valued at \$36,000 and included "fourteen outbuildings – garages, sheds, and barns – all equipped to carry on a farming business in a modern and scientific matter" (ibid.:70).

The original property purchased for the Poor Farm encompassed 160 acres. This original tract included the N1/2 and the SW1/4 of the NE1/4 of Section 13 and the SE1/4 of the NW1/4 of Section 13 included 90 of the 110 acres of the proposed National Register historic district. By 1870, an additional 40 acres had been added in the SE1/4 of the NE1/4 of Section 13, making a total of 200 acres, which included the entirety of the nominated acreage. By 1889, the 40 acres in the SE1/4 of the NW1/4 of Section 13 had been sold but 80 acres in the S1/2 of the SE1/4 of Section 12 to the north had been added, making a total of 240 acres. This would remain the total acreage of the property through much of the

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early twentieth century but would eventually increase to 327 acres at the County Home's peak (Wilcox 1934:69; Novak 1889; Thompson and Everts 1870) (see Additional Documentation, pages 73-74).

All of the Poor Farm reports in the Board of Supervisors' minute books show an operation that was mostly self-sustaining but always required some goods and services to be purchased from the outside. The records show that there were never enough laborers hired to do all the farm work, and it is known from the historic inventories of the farm as well as oral histories that the residents did the bulk of the farm work, both in the barns and in the fields. Most of the outside labor hires shown through the years were for specialty services, such as the veterinary care, dental work, tuning the piano, plumbing repairs, building repairs and construction, threshing, and trimming grapes as well as overseers, but also included tasks that might have been considered too dangerous or risky for the residents, such as making sorghum molasses, pruning apple trees, blacksmithing, grinding feed, dehorning cattle, cleaning the privy vaults, breaking horses, butchering, and well digging (County Record Books 6-8). In the early 1930s, it was noted that paid "assistants include two cooks, one farm helper, one houseman, one night watchman, and one attendant" (Wilcox 1934:70). However, as previously noted, in the mid- to late twentieth century, some of the County Home's farmland was being rented out to local farmers on a shares basis, likely for a monetary return on land unneeded for the basic subsistence needs of the County Home operation.

There was also notice made in 1918 of "a dual orchard and poultry demonstration" to be held at the Johnson County Poor Farm (*Weekly Oxford Leader*, February 28, 1918).

The orchard pruning and spraying work will be carried on by Mr. R.A. Herrick, and the poultry work will be demonstrated by Mr. W.H. Lapp. Both of these men are from the Agricultural Extension Department of Ames (ibid.).

This was a demonstration for the general public and may have been a one-time offering at the Poor Farm. This notice does, however, further substantiate the presence of a large apple orchard on the farm in 1918. According to former resident Melvin Dvorsky, the orchards were located east of the main building, a location outside of the district boundary (Personal communication with Leah Rogers, September 4, 2013). It is also an area that has been impacted in the modern era by the interstate construction and more recently by new buildings added in that vicinity.

In all of the poor farm/county home reports, the need for burial, funeral expenses, coffins, and digging graves were annually noted. In April 1893, the County had paid Schneider Bros.<sup>11</sup> for "coffins for poor" and Noah Yoder for a "coffin for poor" (*Iowa City Daily Citizen*, April 15, 1893). In June 1893, the County paid the funeral expenses of Charles Quillen and W.P. Hosensehuh(sp.?) for coffins (*Iowa City Daily Citizen* on June 24, 1893). A 1901 article noted that Mrs. Rose Flood had died at the County Poor Farm at the age of 76.

She was the oldest inmate of the house, having been there from its establishment about forty-five years ago. At the time she was received no records were kept, and practically nothing is known of her past history. She had

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<sup>11</sup> Schneider Bros. was primarily a furniture store but such stores in the nineteenth century provided coffins as part of the furniture business or as part of the undertaking services that many came to offer.

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been ill for some time and was carefully attended by Steward Wicks, and his family, who also arranged for her burial which took place this morning (*Daily Iowa State Press*, February 24, 1901).

In 1903, the list of claims presented to the Board of Supervisors for the Poor Farm included: claims by Schneider Bros. for “burials for poor” and for a “coffin;” Frank J. Brosh for “burial for poor;”<sup>12</sup> Dr. J.G. Mueller “services county coroner, poor;” and Iowa City for “grave for poor” (*Iowa State Press*, October 3, 1903). This last item is one of the few recorded indications of an actual burial location. In this instance, the notation appears to indicate payment to Iowa City for burial in a city cemetery rather than at the county poor farm. It appears that by the early twentieth century, burials were being made elsewhere as payments were increasingly made for Iowa City burial permits. There is a specific notice in the county expenditures in early 1941 of a payment to St. Mary’s Cemetery for graves (*Iowa City Press-Citizen*, February 19, 1941). It would always have been an option to bury the dead elsewhere if surviving family members chose outside burial and certainly if they could afford to pay for outside burial. However, payment for coffins was an annual expense in the available reports in both the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and burial at the Poor Farm cemetery, as long as it was allowed, would have been the only option for most of those who died here. Melvin Dvorsky, when asked about the Poor Farm cemetery, noted that he had never visited the site and that no one was buried there in his memory, which would have been in the 1960s-1980s (Melvin Dvorsky, personal communication with Leah Rogers, September 4, 2013). One of the farmers, who rented some of the farm ground in the 1950s-1960s also noted that the cemetery site was then being used as a cow pasture (Notes from interview with Keith Pirkel of Tiffin, Iowa, Johnson County Historical Society Vertical Files, Coralville, Iowa).

Resident Population of the Johnson County Poor Farm and Asylum

The annual reports on the operation and expenses of the Johnson County Poor Farm and Asylum as recorded in the Board of Supervisors’ minute books did not often include specific names of residents or “inmates” as they were referred to well into the twentieth century. However, there were items that were recorded with specific names both in the minute books and in the local newspapers. There are some complete lists of residents recorded in the census records, such as the 1880 Federal Schedules of Defective, Dependent, and Delinquent Classes and the 1900 Federal population census listing for the Johnson County Poor Farm and Asylum. In 1880, there were approximately 30 persons listed, although several names had been scratched out indicating either they had left the poor farm/asylum or had passed away. One column listed each person’s disability, giving clues to the various reasons that people ended up in this facility. These reasons included: “disability,” “old age,” “blind,” “crippled,” “idiotic,” “paralyzed,” and “insanity.”

At the time of the 1900 Federal census, George Wicks was the superintendent of the Johnson County Poor Farm, and he and his family were in residence at the property. His family included: wife, Maggie E. Wicks, and their son Francis and daughter Lauretta. There were also two “servants” whose occupations were listed as “farm labor” enumerated in his household including Patsy Dunilan and Thomas Burke. In this case, the “farm” in question was the poor farm and the occupation identified does not necessarily indicate that they were doing agricultural work. This would have been particularly true for Patsy, who would have worked in the county home. A number of the inmates recorded in the 1900

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<sup>12</sup> Schneider Bros. and W.P. Hosenshuh were paid for burials in 1912 out of the poor fund (*Iowa City Daily Press*, March 30, 1912).

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census were immigrants from Bohemia (number = 15), Germany (number = 11), and Ireland (number = 6), with lesser numbers from England (3), France (1), and Sweden (1). However, the greatest number had been born in Iowa (23) and other states in the United States (5).<sup>13</sup> Ages of the inmates ranged from 22 to 83. The total inmate population was 66, of which 45 were males and 21 were females. There were 31 of the 66 inmates listed in the insane department and 35 in the pauper department.

The inmate population held fairly steady in the early twentieth century ranging from 33 to 40 persons in total. The greater number of the inmates listed in the 1920 Federal census were Iowa-born, although there were still some Bohemian (number = 9), German (4), Irish (2), English (1), and Swiss (1) immigrants in residence. The pauper department always had more residents than the insane department, with males outnumbering females in both departments. The cost of operating the county home, as reported in the late 1890s-1920s at a per-inmate per-week cost, ranged from a low of \$1.25 to a high of \$1.78 (County Record Books 6-8). For every year recorded in the Board of Supervisors' minute books and the local newspapers, the Johnson County Poor Farm and Asylum never operated at a deficit and posted a healthy operation budget where expenses never exceeded income.

Evolution of the Care and Treatment of the Insane and Poor in the State of Iowa and Johnson County

In the 1890s, the proper care and treatment of the poor and the insane became the subject of somewhat heated debate. One argument focused on whether the State or the County was the best caretaker. Conditions in some county poor houses and insane asylums continued to be a concern even though most facilities had been modernized and treatment of the insane made more humane. By that time, Johnson County had just improved their pauper and insane facilities by building a large new masonry building with separate wings for the pauper and insane departments. The building was a great improvement over the prior facilities and provided a clean and warm environment better able to handle residents and their special needs and problems. The *Waterloo Daily Courier* carried the following article on November 27, 1893:

CHRONIC INSANE IN POOR HOUSES.

Of the two thousand insane persons who are outside of the three State hospitals, it is probable that one-half of this number is being kept in county poor houses. If it is the policy of the legislature to care for all the insane in hospitals, there is a sufficient number ready to fill another institution now.

STATE VERSUS COUNTY CARE.

Most of the northern States have a State Board of Charities, whose functions are to visit and report the condition, not only of the State, but also of county institutions. In Iowa supervisors are the only ones whose duty it is to inspect the county poor houses. Economy is the criterion of these men. They have no opportunity to learn how the insane should be cared for. Not many members of the legislature have given much attention to caring for the insane, either in State or in county institutions. No persons, who were qualified to determine, have ever reported to the Governor or to the General Assembly, the exact condition of the insane in county poor houses. On the other hand, the supervisors and the steward, who have exclusive charge of the insane in county poor houses, *are accountable to no one*, so can keep these unfortunate persons in whatever quarters they may happen

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<sup>13</sup> Since most of the inmates were born in the United States but were of European extraction, the cultural affiliation for the Poor Farm site is listed in this nomination as "Euro-American."

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to have, giving them such attention as may be convenient. The insane, unlike paupers, cannot have permission to leave the poor house, nor are many of them able to make their wants known, or to complain of insufficient care.

STATE MEDICAL SOCIETY.

At the annual meeting of the Iowa State Medical Society at Des Moines, last year, a committee, was appointed to aid in molding public opinion concerning the care of the insane. The report of this committee at Burlington, last May, was embodied in the following resolutions, which were unanimously adopted:

WHEREAS, The three hospitals for the insane in Iowa are full, and many insane persons are from time to time, of necessity, placed in county poor houses, be it therefore, by the members of the Iowa State Medical Society,

*Resolved*, That neither county poor houses nor county asylums are proper places for the care and treatment of the insane.

*Resolved*, That we will use our influence with the members of the next General Assembly to the end that increased accommodations for the insane in Iowa may be made as soon as possible.

*Resolved*, That another hospital for the insane should be located next year in the northwestern quarter of the State, with the determination to have it ready for use as soon as practicable.

*Resolved*, That in our opinion, it is desirable for the State to establish and maintain a hospital for the care and treatment of epileptics, consisting of a system of cottages for the accommodation of both sexes; *children as well as adults*, for the sane as well as for the insane; for the cure of cases where complete and permanent restoration is possible; *for educating those susceptible of it*; for furnishing occupation, amusement, and an isolated home for all sorts of persons afflicted with epilepsy.

*Resolved*, That, in our judgment *the State of Iowa should make adequate provision, not only for the care and education of feeble-minded children, but also a home for persons who outgrow such an institution, and yet are unfit to care for themselves or to mingle in society.*

This article made the good point that in the county home system, the only oversight came from the Board of Supervisors, few of whom would have been capable of truly assessing proper treatment of the insane beyond assessing whether they were being physically mistreated or being poorly housed. The State, on the other hand, was operating three hospitals for the insane in the 1890s and should have been in a better position, and have the expertise, to handle the care and treatment of the insane. However, the 1893 article indicates that the Iowa State Medical Society had concerns with the state hospitals as well, specifically the need for a fourth hospital for the insane located in the northwest part of the state and for a hospital for epileptics that could provide separate living quarters for men and women but could also provide treatment and care for children afflicted with epilepsy (*Waterloo Daily Courier*, November 27, 1893).

On December 12, 1899, *The Daily Iowa State Press*, indicated that the State Board of Control had paid surprise visits to some of the county homes in Iowa, "and the results of their visits have caused a mild sensation." The conditions at one home reportedly "shocked the state," and the livestock on that farm were found to be "better housed and cared for than

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are the people in the insane department.” The article went on to assure the citizens of Johnson County that their county was “one of the Iowa counties that cares properly for its unfortunates and insane.”

We believe the conditions here are better than they were until very recently at Mt. Pleasant. It is worth something to reflect that public charity at home is well applied (ibid.).

It appears by 1900, the State Board of Control<sup>14</sup> was routinely inspecting county facilities for the poor and insane. The *Daily Iowa State Press* summarized on July 13, 1900, the most recent inspection by the Board of Control of the Johnson County Poor Farm. John Cownie of South Amana was the inspector and it was reported that it was his general opinion that “no county can take care of insane patients as well as the state institutions.” “Mr. Cownie is rather set in his views and seems to be of the opinion that all insane patients should be put in charge of the state institutions and under the direct control of the board of control” (ibid.). Cownie’s trip to the Johnson County Poor Farm was reported as follows:

The inspection of the county farm took place this morning and Mr. John Cownie is inspecting the hospital of the Sisters of Charity this afternoon. Mr. Cownie stated to our reporter at noon that he was not satisfied with conditions existing at the Johnson County farm. On being asked what his objections were he stated that we did not have the proper facilities for the care of the insane. No women were employed at the place. He learned that two women and the matron were engaged at the county farm but he saw none of them except the matron, and would report that there are none other. He stated that the water closets were not built on the proper plan and had to be washed out with the hose.

On being asked how the institution compared with other counties he declined to make a comparison, but said that Steward Wickes was doing all in his power and he had no criticism on his work. There were some patients confined in the attic in what he called “bull pens.” He did not want to find fault with our board of supervisors, as in his opinion they were as good as all other boards with the exception of the board of control, in the work of managing institutions.

There are a number of patients here he says that should be sent to Mt. Pleasant. He didn’t think they could be cured but said the board did not allow the term incurable to be applied to any insane people. It was not the idea of the board of control to take all of those here to Mt. Pleasant, but those who are kept here must in the future receive better care and attention. All the uncleanly, violent and vicious should be sent to the state hospitals. In county hospitals there is a lack of help to care for the insane properly. In a number of houses he found the patients locked into a big pen, absolutely without proper care. This was not the case in Johnson County, however. Mr. Cownie then went on to tell of the superior advantages offered by state institutions and told all about the fine pianos the board of control provides at the state expense, of ball games, bands, and dances, and painted a glowing word picture of the beauties and conveniences of the state institutions.

He states that each member of the board would visit about twenty county homes, and on the first of August would formulate a set of rules and regulations for the government of the same, and would see that they were observed (*Daily Iowa State Press*, July 13, 1900).

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<sup>14</sup> The Iowa State Board of Control was also responsible for the operation of the state’s penitentiaries and reformatories.

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It is perhaps unrelated to Cownie's bragging on all the "fine pianos" that had been purchased for the state institutions, but the 1905 report to the Johnson County Board of Supervisors on expenditures at the poor farm did note that they had paid for "tuning piano;" therefore, it is assumed that a piano had been donated or purchased for the poor farm (January 1, 1906 Board of Supervisors' Meeting Minutes).

The state inspection was followed up by a Grand Jury inspection of the Johnson County Poor Farm and the Iowa City Jail, the results of which were reported on September 21, 1900, in the *Daily Iowa State Press*. The Grand Jury reported their results to the District Court of the State of Iowa "in and fore Johnson County." Their assessment of the conditions at the county poor farm was as follows:

We would also further state that we visited the home for the poor, that we did all that men could do in investigating said home, we find everything in and about said home clean and well kept; the inmates in said home seemed contented and had no complaints to make and all seemed to have a kind word for Mr. and Mrs. Geo. Wicks, the steward and stewardess of said home who from our observations we believe to be humane and kind and have the welfare and well being of each inmate of the home at heart and care for them under that spirit. The farm stock and implements in said home farm show the same care and consideration, and we know of no recommendations to make. In view of the fact that State Board of Control have under consideration many needed improvements soon to be made in said home and which we understand have been recommended (*Daily Iowa State Press*, September 21, 1900).

By the year's end, however, the Johnson County Poor Farm and Asylum would be shocked by an incident of violence that nearly took the life of Steward Wicks. On the evening of December 4, 1900, an inmate in the insane department stabbed George Wicks and left the steward in serious condition. The partially blind inmate had been formerly a resident of the Institute for the Blind in Vinton and had only been at the Johnson County Home a short time when the incident occurred. He had threatened two members of the Board of Supervisors with a knife a couple of days prior but on December 4<sup>th</sup> he became "crazed" and took his complaints to the extreme.

Kauffman objected to living up to the rules of the institution and of late had been leaving the farm and going about the neighborhood scaring women and children. Complaint was made to the steward and Kauffman was put into a room by himself and locked in. Yesterday he escaped from his cell and came to town, going into the auditor's office with a complaint of being mistreated at the farm. While in the office he pulled out his knife and told how he had made the supervisors beg to not be hurt and said he would fix Wicks. Going back to the farm at night he went to his room and began yelling for the steward. Mr. Wicks came and as he opened the door Kauffman jumped upon him with knife in hand and cut a great gash in the steward's stomach. Wicks grappled with the insane man and a struggle took place. The steward received another bad wound in the hip and five bad cuts in the back. Finally Kauffman was overpowered and locked up in the cell. He will be taken to the hospital at Mt. Pleasant tomorrow (*Cedar Rapids Daily Republican*, December 6, 1900).

While badly wounded, Wicks did not succumb to the stabbing and continued to serve as the Steward of the county home. Kauffman had made some trouble before at the facility in Vinton; however, there was no report of prior violence. Of course, with better psychiatric evaluation, he might have been properly placed in the state facility in Mt. Pleasant rather than the Johnson County Home which was not meant to house criminally violent individuals. A somewhat curious notice in the February 25, 1903, edition of the *Iowa Citizen* indicated that George Wicks was the "steward-elect



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of the county poor farm” and was replacing W.F. Schnare, “the retiring steward.” Since Wicks had been the steward in 1900 and some years prior, it may be that his injuries from the stabbing prevented him from working for a few years and Schnare had taken the job in his place only to retire when Wicks had fully recovered.

By 1903, the County Board of Supervisors determined that a set of rules and regulations needed to be formally adopted. Whether prompted by the attack on Steward Wicks or if other problems had arisen to warrant formal action is not currently known. The adopted rules and regulations included prohibitions against leaving the premises without permission of the superintendent, fighting or quarreling, use of profane or vulgar language, entering the rooms or halls of the opposite sex, smoking “in the dining rooms or kitchen, or in an around the barn or sheds on the premises,” throwing any refuse or slops out a window or near the house or other buildings, carrying fire arms or dangerous weapons, and possession of articles of value. Additionally, inmates were required to obey orders. If any inmate failed to comply with the rules and regulations, they could be “punished by being deprived of tobacco, portions of food, or placed in solitary confinement for such length of time, and to such extent as the superintendent shall determine, or in such other reasonable manner as he may designate” (*Iowa State Press*, April 22, 1903).

The debate over state versus county care for the poor and insane continued into the early twentieth century. Dr. Frank I. Herriott, a professor of economics and political science at Drake University in Des Moines made “a vigorous attack on the county poor farm system in Iowa” at the Iowa Conference of Charities and Correction in 1903 (*Iowa State Press*, November 16, 1903).

Dr. Herriott favors the abolition of the county poor farm system and the care of such defectives by the state. He claims that the state of Iowa could board the inmates of the county poor farms at the Savery and Kirkwood hotels in Des Moines and then make money.

He charges that the present system is ineffective and needlessly expensive and extravagant. Dr. Herriott says the counties of the state have 20,000 acres of land worth all told \$2,400,000, plus the energies of 400 employees, and from \$400,000 to \$500,000 in machinery, etc. enlisted for a population not larger than the average population of the state institutions at Mount Pleasant and Independence or about 2,300 altogether.

Whether this argument was well founded or not, the point remained that there was increasing advocacy for state control over the care and treatment of the insane and indigent by some parties. However, the county poor farm system in Iowa was far from becoming obsolete in 1903. In fact, in 1903, the *Iowa Citizen* (November 3, 1903) reported that “the board of insane commissioners” had just visited the Johnson County Poor Farm “with a view to bringing here some of the cases now in the insane hospitals.” This was because “Johnson county’s care and equipment for such cases has been among the foremost in the state and the county is today taking care of a great many of its insane patients,” thus making a case that at least some of the county poor farms in the state were capable of caring for the insane as well as the state. The fight against the county poor farm system intensified again in 1926 when it was reported that Harry C. Evans of Des Moines had been appointed by Secretary of Labor James C. Davis to “survey alms-house conditions in the United States” (*Iowa City Press-Citizen*, August 2, 1926). Evans’ survey called “the American system of county poor houses, ‘the worst mis-managed public business in the world,’ and ‘the symbol of humanity’s degradations’” and urged for the abolishment of this system.

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In the place of the poor house, the report of Mr. Evans recommends the establishment of one state-owned and operated institution called by a kinder name, in every commonwealth, where intelligent poor may be cared for, treated humanely and where they may live by and for themselves alone. This plan, the report will state, would dignify the last days of the country's poor, give them a home rather than a mere lodging house where now are kept not only the indigent but the "insane, the criminal and the feeble-minded, under conditions that are a disgrace to our civilization."

The number of poor inmates of county alms-houses is so few and the investment in lands and buildings is so great, that the county system of poor houses have become a ridiculous piece of financial folly, Mr. Evans states.

The report, covering an investigation of approximately two years in every state, financed by an appropriation from the United States Department of Labor, and with funds contributed by nearly a dozen fraternal organizations, cites a large number of indictments against the county poor house system, and recites discovery of conditions that are "well-nigh appalling."

Filth, neglect, inhuman treatment, disease, ill-kept records, housing together of criminals, insane, feeble-minded, homeless children and a system of "letting out" intelligent poor under labor contracts and to prison camps, are but a few of the counts in the indictment of the system as viewed by Mr. Evans and his investigators in nearly every state.

Poor farms and their helpless inmates, the report adds, are a part of the political spoils system of the community, with the superintendent, manager or overseer receiving appointment to the place because of his influence in politics, and not because of any special fitness for the place; the buildings are dangerous "fire-traps," as a general thing, and "little or no attempt is made to control disease, filth or contamination."

The state plan of one institution to house intelligent poor would provide for the segregation of insane, feeble-minded, criminals, and homeless children in their proper institutions now established in all states (ibid.).

The description of county poor farms as exploiting helpless inmates for political spoils certainly seems overstated for most county poor farms in Iowa by the 1920s. Very few appear to have been profitable for the counties but most appear to have been at least self-sustaining. Residents at the Johnson County Poor Farm who were able were required to work; however, it is uncertain whether anyone was forced to work against their will. At least one former resident has indicated that working on the farm gave purpose and structure to his life rather than viewed an oppression (Melvin Dvorsky, personal communication with Leah Rogers, September 4, 2013). There is even a newspaper item describing a female inmate at the Johnson County Poor Farm, who for years masqueraded as a man and each spring would leave the county home "to labor on farms at man's labor, doing farm hand work" (*Ames Daily Tribune*, February 6, 1931). Here was a person who was free to come and go and sought out farm work even off the county property and was a woman to boot; hardly indicative of an oppressive work-house type of situation.

Of course any system responsible for the care and treatment of those who cannot take care of themselves is a system open to abuse; however, this would apply to state-run institutions as well. If one can assess the operation of the Johnson County Poor Farm and Asylum from the low number of complaints about care at the facility and good reports from visits to the facility by the state Board of Control, if not also the county Board of Supervisors, as reported in the local

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newspapers, then this facility appears to have been comparatively well run and humane in its treatment from at least the 1890s into the twentieth century.

As with prior complaints and advocacy against the county poor farm system, the system itself continued to operate county facilities in Iowa well into the twentieth century. It should also be noted that the county system in Iowa provided assistance for the poor both within the county poor farm/county home institution setting as well as from outside of that setting. In Johnson County, the Poor Fund report to the Board of Supervisors included an accounting of funds expended within the facility and those expended outside of the facility from the late nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries. There were rents paid, groceries, shoes and clothing, and fuel purchased, and medical care, hospital stays, transportation, and burial and funeral expenses provided for persons living outside of the county facility (Board of Supervisors Minutes Books 6-8, Auditor's Office, Johnson County Administration Building, Iowa City). This type of outside assistance, or "outdoor relief," was not unique to Johnson County and was part of the county system statewide.

In 1941, it was noted that "in one way or another it cost the average person living in Iowa \$3.68 in 1939 to help the poor keep body and soul together" (*Iowa City Press-Citizen*, July 28, 1941). In Johnson County, the cost of maintaining the poor outside of the county home had dropped from \$4.49 per person in 1938 to \$3.95 per person in 1939. "The total cost for Johnson County was \$130,962" (*ibid.*).

It is likely that the county system of poor relief continued despite calls for its abolishment by the federally-funded study of 1922 in some part because of the economic downturn of first the farm depression, which hit the Midwest in the 1920s, and then the Great Depression, which swelled the ranks of the poor nationwide in the 1930s. Perhaps the increase in poverty due to the regional and national crises overwhelmed any thoughts of replacing a long-standing system of county-run facilities with new state institutions and facilities that did not yet exist.

In July 1941, the Johnson County Board of Supervisors received notice from the State of Iowa that "the state would no longer contribute any funds to Johnson County for relief purposes" (*Iowa City Press-Citizen*, July 1, 1941). In response, the county appointed two county department social welfare workers to the positions of "overseer of the poor for Johnson County" (Marjorie Beckman) and "director of old age assistance for the county" (Dorothy Buchanan) (*ibid.*). While this change in policy was not explained in the news item, a 1939 article noted the enactment that year of a new relief law in the state which authorized grants to be made from the state to county funds for emergency relief and relief labor (*Iowa City Press-Citizen*, July 31, 1939). It seems that on the eve of World War II, the economic situation in Iowa had improved to the point that emergency assistance from the state was no longer needed at the local level.

By the late twentieth century, assistance for the poor had been completely removed from assistance for the mentally ill, and residential housing for the poor became a thing of the past as did the idea and operation of county poor farms. Social welfare in the form of monetary and educational assistance has replaced residential programs except in the private sector where charitable organizations still provide temporary shelters, assistance in finding jobs and housing, and even building homes through programs such as Habitat for Humanity, which have tried to address the chronic problem of homelessness. By 1970, the treatment of the mentally ill had become more preventive in trying "to head off early signs of mental illness, thus avoiding a possible need for hospitalization later" (*Iowa City Press-Citizen*, February 23,

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1970). At the dedication of the new Mid-Eastern Iowa Community Mental Health Center serving both Johnson and Cedar counties, it was noted:

In addition to prevention, the center,..., has three other primary purposes. They are to provide: out-patient psychiatric, psychological and social work services; post-hospital care, and centralization of the community's mental health services (Svoboda 1970).

This new program was noted as having been "part of a growing trend in Iowa" and was one of 23 community mental health centers established around the state. It was supported by taxes from the county residents the center served (ibid.).

However, there remained a need for residential care and supported community living services for those suffering from chronic mental illness. To that end, the former Johnson County Home evolved into the private, non-profit agency known as Chatham Oaks in the 1980s. Today, Chatham Oaks is Johnson County's only residential care facility for mentally ill adults but its future is uncertain. "The uncertainty comes from the Mental Health and Disability Services Redesign passed by the Iowa Legislature" in 2012 (Marshall 2012). This redesign shifted responsibility for funding such facilities "from the county to the state through a system of regional administrators" (ibid.). While supervisors assured the staff and board of Chatham Oaks that the county has no intention of closing the facility, there is a federal push to downsize large mental institutions and this remains a concern for the future of such facilities (ibid.). By January 2013, it was reported that "the number of residents living at Chatham Oaks, Iowa City's only residential care facility for adults with chronic mental illness, is slowly dropping as county funding to keep them there dwindles" (Bannow 2013). The future of this facility remains uncertain.

The Architecture of Iowa's County Poor Farms and Asylum

In the earliest days, poorhouses in Iowa often "began operations in buildings constructed originally as private farmhouses and later converted to poor house service" (Page 1990:1-8). Second-generation poorhouses were more likely to be constructed of more permanent materials and on a grander scale than their early predecessors. Many had an institutional look to their design but some architectural stylistic influence from popular residential styles of the day might also be expected on the second- and later generation buildings. A 1911 survey of county home facilities, conducted by Professor John L. Gillin of the University of Iowa, found that "of the 52 facilities which responded to his questionnaire, 22 of the poor houses were constructed of frame, 23 of brick, 6 of frame and brick, and 1 of frame and stone" (Page 1990:1-9; see also Gillin 1911:41).

Floor plans of these poor houses varied and sometimes reflected the special needs of care facilities. Some poor houses separated in different wings of the building the insane from other residents. Often times these other residents were separated on different floors by gender. As the study of public welfare progressed, experts began to recommend the separation of sexes into different wings of facilities. The situation in 1911 in Iowa, therefore, could be seen as a combination of all the different sorts and conditions of care facilities as outlined above (Page 1990:1-9).

The farming operations of the county poorhouses could include the full complement of barns and support outbuildings tailored to the specific operations of farming in that region, such as dairy barns or cattle sheds.

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County homes sometimes had their own cemeteries on the property where residents were buried, often in unmarked graves. The Muscatine County Home was one exception where there were 86 numeric cast iron markers stuck in the ground, although it is known that 156 people were laid to rest in this cemetery (McCleary 2001). Unfortunately, most county home cemeteries were poorly documented and many locations remain uncertain.

Historic county poor house/poor farm/asylum facilities in Iowa that are known to have been standing into the modern era include the following by county with their respective Inventory numbers in parentheses where properties have been inventoried (State Historical Society of Iowa Site Inventory Database, accessed March 2014, and other sources including: Eckhardt 1998 and Crannell 2013):

- Audubon      1890 brick Italianate-style Poor Farm House (05-00371) and some farm buildings (05-00052)
- Boone        County Home cemetery (08-01921)
- Bremer      County Home (09-00212) determined to be ineligible for the NRHP; and County Home Cemetery (09-01348)
- Buchanan    County Home cemetery (10-00638)
- Butler       County Home cemetery (12-00355)
- Carroll     County Home (14-00137) built in 1937 determined to be eligible for the NRHP and the County Home dairy barn (14-00139)
- Cedar        County Home cemetery (16-00671)
- Chickasaw   County Home cemetery (19-00397)
- Clayton     1897 brick insane asylum and County Home cemetery (22-02283)
- Clinton     County Home (23-01681) determined to be ineligible for the NRHP and County Home Cemetery (23-01848)
- Crawford    brick county home now used for apartments located between Arion and Denison along Highway 30
- Dallas       County Home cemetery (25-01713)
- Decatur     County Home cemetery (27-00252)
- Dubuque    1876 brick poor house/orphanage (31-03017), barn (31-03023), and other outbuildings of the Dubuque County Poor Farm (31-03011) extant in the 1990s but no longer standing (Eckhardt 1998)
- Floyd        Poor Farm building still located outside of Charles City
- Hamilton    County Home (40-00170)
- Hancock    County Home cemetery (41-00191)
- Hardin      County Home Historic District (42-01379) listed in the NRHP in 2010; includes the poor farm cemetery (42-02646) and the County Home building built in 1926
- Howard     County Poor Farm (45-00232) determined eligible for the NRHP
- Jackson     1872 stone insane asylum (49-00257) (listed in NRHP)
- Jasper      County Home (50-01595) determined to be ineligible for the NRHP
- Johnson    1861 frame asylum (52-00135) (listed in the NRHP), barns, cribs, and granary extant (52-04415)
- Jones        Edinburgh Manor (County Home) built in 1911 and determined eligible for the NRHP in 2007

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	(53-00644)
Linn	Barn from county poor farm still standing on county-owned property
Madison	1878 brick County Home building, 1878 barn and other outbuildings (61-01291) (extant in the 1990s but since demolished)
Marion	County Home (63-00185) with poor farm barn south of Knoxville
Marshall	Brick poor house and 11 other buildings and structures related to poor farm (64-00545) determined to be ineligible for the NRHP
Story	County Home (85-00223) determined as a potentially eligible historic district
Union	Brick Italianate-style poor house and poor farm (88-00038)
Wapello	County Home (90-00313) determined eligible for the NRHP
Washington	Built 1879-80, brick poor house/hospital ward building, pavilion and root cellar (92-00075) determined eligible for the NRHP
Winneshiek	County Poor House (96-00659) built in 1866 now non-extant; County Home caretaker's house (96-00644) determined to be ineligible for the NRHP
Woodbury	Brick poor house designed by architect William Steele in 1917

Some of these examples represent comparatively intact poor farms; however, the majority represents remnant buildings and/or cemeteries from those operations. Furthermore, the poor farm as a property type is becoming rare in Iowa, with those in the list above that have since been demolished being a testament to the diminishing numbers of this property type in a state where once nearly all of the 99 counties had a county home or poor farm facility. Even rarer still are the earliest buildings from these operations, with the extant circa 1861 frame asylum on the Johnson County Poor Farm a potentially rare survival. The only comparable known example would be the 1872 stone Insane Asylum at the County Poor Farm in Jackson County that has also been listed in the NRHP.<sup>15</sup>

As noted previously, the frame asylum building on the Johnson County Poor Farm is only one wing of the original asylum and pauper department buildings. Its floor plan with a center aisle flanked by varying sizes of cells or compartments was both functional and secure. The wide aisle enabled one to walk down the aisle and not be grabbed by an inmate in a cell, thus providing some measure of security along with the locked doors on each cell. The size of the cells seems to denote different functions as well as the ability to have more than one person in some of the cells, while reserving others for solitary confinement as needed. By the 1860s when the extant wing was added to the original asylum building, the design of asylums in the United States and Europe had progressed far beyond this simple and rustic plan. The advances in asylum design may have been known to the Johnson County Board of Supervisors; however, it is unlikely that such design advancements had much impact on mid-nineteenth century Johnson County, with cost, functionality, and efficiency probably the guiding forces in the original design of the asylum building and its expansion circa 1861. The addition of windows to each cell in the addition certainly reflects a conscious attempt to improve the lighting and ventilation of the building and thus improving the environment and conditions in which the inmates lived. It would not be until the construction of the new County Home building complex in 1886 that formal influence from

<sup>15</sup> The stone asylum building was listed as part of the "Limestone Architecture of Jackson County" Multiple Property Submission (National Register of Historic Places database accessed at <http://www.nps.gov/nr/>, 2014).

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institutional building design could truly be seen in the Johnson County design. One influential asylum plan in the nineteenth century was devised by Thomas S. Kirkbride, who “promoted a standardized method of asylum construction and mental health treatment” that came to be known as the “Kirkbride Plan” or model (McElroy 2014). The Kirkbride Plan “significantly influenced the entire American asylum community during his lifetime” (ibid.).<sup>16</sup>

The Kirkbride model envisioned an asylum with a central administration building flanked by two wings comprised of tiered wards. This "linear plan" facilitated a hierarchical segregation of residents according to sex and symptoms of illness. Male patients were housed in one wing, female patients in the other. Each wing was sub-divided by ward with the more "excited" patients placed on the lower floors, farthest from the central administrative structure, and the better-behaved, more rational patients situated in the upper floors and closer to the administrative center. Ideally, this arrangement would make patients' asylum experience more comfortable and productive by isolating them from other patients with illnesses antagonistic to their own while still allowing fresh air, natural light, and views of the asylum grounds from all sides of each ward (Treece et al. 2011).

The state hospitals in Iowa located at Mt. Pleasant, Cherokee, Clarinda, and Independence followed the Kirkbride Plan (McElroy 2014). While Johnson County's late 1880s Asylum and Poor Farm complex was a more scaled-down version, it essentially followed the basic principles of the Kirkbride model. However, this complex also had to accommodate within its floor plan the need for housing the poor and disabled in addition to the mentally ill, thus it had uses and functions, including those related to the poor farm operation that did not fit the asylum model.

*The Architecture of the Johnson County Poor Farm and Asylum*

The original building on the Johnson County Poor Farm was a log or frame four-room building that housed everyone, the poor, the insane, and their caretakers as well as the kitchen and dining room. The only segregation between the insane and the poor was by sexes. This building quickly proved inadequate, and two wings were added to the original building in the 1860s-70s, one to house the paupers and one for the insane. The insane wing was also subsequently enlarged from six cells to sixteen. It is this enlarged wing that is the extant asylum building within the district. This wing is a front-gabled building with wooden siding, a new wood-shingled roof, and historic-age if not original windows. The interior still retains the central aisle flanked by wood-framed cells, portions of which were recently restored. This frame building housed the insane until a new, much larger and better equipped County Home building was finally erected in the late 1880s. The building survived because it was moved from its original site closer to the road to its current location where it was adapted for use in the farming operation, specifically housing hogs in the twentieth century. While in need of repair once the farming operation ceased, the building had not been greatly altered from its original configuration.

On September 12, 1883, it was noted in the *Davenport Weekly Gazette*, that Johnson County was taking measures “for the erection of a \$15,000 hospital for the accommodation of the insane and paupers” of the county. However, this new building would not be completed for occupancy until 1886. As the complex grew, the main buildings consisted of three connected buildings, with the central part, consisting of the steward's living quarters with dining rooms in the rear (see

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<sup>16</sup> Kirkbride died in 1883 at the age of 74 at his home on the grounds of the Pennsylvania Hospital for the Insane (McElroy 2014).

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Figure 5). The buildings on either side were “devoted to the use of the insane and the poor” and “these units were further divided into separate sections for male and female occupants” (Wilcox 1934:70).

The annual report for the County Poor Farm and Asylum to the Board of Supervisors for the year 1898 noted that \$3,695.81 had been paid out for “water tower and improvements.” This water tower would have been the large steel tower that once stood just south of the main building built in 1886 (see Figure 5). The tower’s erection was part of the effort to improve the living conditions and sanitation at the county home.

The poor farm had always included barns, sheds, cribs, and assorted outbuildings as needed for the farming operation. None of the original farm buildings appear to still be standing (except possibly the granary); however, there were reports through the years on the Poor Farm operation of buildings being lost and added. For example, on December 5, 1899, the *Daily Iowa State Press* noted that “a new barn is badly needed at the [Poor] farm and the board is considering the advisability of building one in the spring.” This barn may have been the small gabled barn that is still standing and was historically used to house the farm’s bull. A date of construction of 1900 is postulated for that building, which is consistent with the materials used and the construction of the extant building.

On April 13, 1903, the *Iowa Citizen* noted that the Board of Supervisors had just made a visit to the County Home and “were well satisfied with the condition of the farm.” They decided to “build a new barn on the premises. The dimensions will be 52 by 30 and have a hay loft” and would “take the place of the one destroyed by fire” (ibid.). The board also decided that the “next improvement” would be a “complete sewage system” (ibid.). By May 1903, the same paper noted that there were “two new structures going up at the County Poor Farm” (*Iowa Citizen*, May 27, 1903). Superintendent George Wicks noted that “the foundations were now in for the two new barns that are being erected there and that the carpenters were now commencing on the frame work” (ibid.).

One of these barns is to be a hay barn and will be 48 feet in width with 22 foot posts. The lumber for this is on the ground and it will be the first to be erected.

The other is to be a cow barn and will be 48 feet in length by 16 feet in width and will be constructed adjoining the hay barn. All of the lumber for this is not on the ground yet.

Henry Lininger has the contract for the carpenter work and is on the ground with his man (*Iowa Citizen*, May 27, 1903).

It appears that the original stated plans in April 1903 of building a single barn 52 by 30 feet in dimension had changed by May 1903 to building two adjoining barns, one for hay and one for cows. The notation in April that the new barn was prompted by the loss of an older barn to fire suggests that one of the new barns might have been part of the extant stock barn. Specifically, the presence of the limestone foundation on the interior section of the stock barn, which otherwise has a concrete foundation, suggests the possibility that the stone foundation was from the barn that burned down. Its foundation was then incorporated into part of the new, larger stock barn.

The extant bull barn measures 30 feet in length by 24 feet in width; therefore, it does not match or come close to any of the above reported measurements. The extant stock barn measures in its entirety, 64 feet long by 56 feet wide, also not



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matching those measurements; however, the limestone foundation in the center section of the extant barn measures approximately 48 feet long by 26 feet wide. The 16 foot width for the cow barn reported in 1903 does seem odd for a barn because 16 feet is not very wide and would not seem very practical for livestock to maneuver. It is suspected that the “16” is a typo and that 26 feet was the actual width. Even the extant bull barn that housed the farm’s single bull (based on both the recorded farm inventories and oral history) was 24 feet wide. If the stated 16 feet was actually 26 feet, then the “cow barn” being constructed in 1903 to replace a barn that had burned is likely the center section of the extant stock barn built on the limestone foundation, with the limestone foundation being that from the burned barn. At some point, probably in 1916 based on the date inscribed in the concrete floor in the southwest corner, the walls of the 1903 barn were opened up and the shed-roofed sections were added on the north, west and south sides to make the stock barn as it now exists. The “adjoining” hay barn described in 1903 would appear to be non-extant since its measurements cannot be reconciled with any of the extant barns.

The 1903 list of claims allowed by the Board of Supervisors for the “Poor and Poor Farm Fund” included the expenses associated with the construction the new barns (*Iowa State Press*, October 3, 1903). Henry Lininger was paid \$70 for “building barn poor farm,” W.F. Leinbaugh was paid \$53.06 for lumber for “barn at poor farm;” and Frank Patterson was paid \$9.00 for “mason work at poor farm” (ibid.). These must have been partial payments because later in October, it was noted that the cost of “Barn, to replace that burned in 1903” totaled \$385.20 (*Iowa State Press*, October 28, 1903). Why the two October 1903 notations referred to the new barn in the singular rather than in the plural if two were actually built remains uncertain. The same report also noted that the heating plant at the poor farm was being replaced and that repairs were being made to the building and fire escapes were being added as ordered by the Board of Control (ibid.).

In 1905, one of the major improvements was a deep well that had been ordered to provide a better water supply for the County Poor Farm (*Iowa Citizen*, October 18, 1905). It is suspected that this deep well fed the large water tower that had been built in 1898.

In March 1906, it was reported that “a new laundry would be erected the coming year at the county home” (*Iowa City Daily Press*, March 7, 1906). The article further noted the addition of a new light plant, which was “a big thing for the county home, and that the laundry plant will complete the work of converting our county home into one of the finest in all Iowa” (ibid.).

In 1912, the County Board of Supervisors approved the construction of another new barn on the poor farm, with F.E. Ayers & Co. receiving the contract for providing the lumber for the project (*Iowa City Daily Press*, March 5, 1912). On March 30, 1912, the County reported that the bids for furnishing lumber for the proposed new barn ranged from a low of \$1022.50 to a high of \$1200.00 from a total of five firms. The contract was awarded to Ayers & Co., one of two companies that submitted the lowest identical bids. Three bids for furnishing the labor were also submitted with the lowest being \$420.55 and the highest being \$485.06 (*Iowa City Daily Press*, March 30, 1912). Notable among the payments made from the Poor Fund was \$20 paid to J.H. Hunzinger for “plans for barn” (ibid.). This is notable because when the prior barns were built around 1903, there were no specific payments made for barn plans. The fact that this barn needed plans suggests that the barn in question is the extant dairy barn, which was a specialized barn design, one that likely required plans to be drawn up or purchased from a catalog of plans.

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The 1912 barn was assessed by the *Iowa City Daily Press* (April 1, 1912) to be “a barn of which nobody need be ashamed. It will be uptodate [sic], well-built, and yet economically constructed.”

The contracting for the carpenter work was let this afternoon to R.H. Smith of Sharon Center, who will do the building for \$420.55. The foundation will be laid by men under the guidance of Steward Wicks, and Mr. Smith’s contract calls for the erection of the framework on that foundation.

The completed structure, equipped will cost about \$2,050, and be worth considerably more, when the board’s savings are taken into consideration (ibid.)

While none of the notices concerning this barn identify its intended function, the fact that it required special plans and cost a great deal more than the barns built just nine years prior, strongly suggests that this is the extant dairy barn. Of particular note is the reference to the barn being “equipped.” Since the extant barn has installed within it special dairy equipment including state of the art (for the time) milking stanchions and water delivery system, again supports the conclusion that the barn being described is the dairy barn. The stanchions and water delivery system was manufactured by the Loudon Machinery Company based in Fairfield, Iowa. The stanchions are a Loudon Standardized Manger fitted with Spring Balance Manger Divisions. “Loudon invented and exhibited the first practical all-steel cow stall at the 1907 National Dairy Show” (Loudon Machinery Company Tour, Fairfield, IA, accessed at <http://www.jeffersoncountytrails.org/Loudon/h-stanchion.htm>, September 2013). The watering system is the Loudon Automatic Watering Bowl, a design invented by the Loudon Company. The pattern was made by Albert Neller, who was William Loudon’s pattern maker and “the key to the success of the Loudon Engineering Department during the 1910’s and 20’s” (Loudon Machinery Company Tour, Fairfield, IA, accessed at <http://www.jeffersoncountytrails.org/Loudon/h-watercup.htm>, September 2013). The company also offered design plans for dairy barns; however, at present there is no confirmation that the 1912 dairy barn was a Loudon design.

By the late 1930s, a plat map of the main cluster of buildings at the north end of the property showed the Main Building complex built in the late 1880s on the east side, with a cluster of outbuildings behind and to the east side of that building, with the west side of the property consisting of the farm buildings (see Figure 4). This mapped configuration closely matches the 1937 aerial photograph of the property confirming the date of the plat map (see Additional Document, page 72). Among these buildings was the extant asylum building, which was then being used as part of a wagon and implement shed but was subsequently converted into a hog house. Of the buildings and structures present in the early twentieth century, four buildings and eight structures remain standing within the historic district. Archaeological evidence of some of the non-extant buildings appears to be present at the site location. Two foundation remnants are visible on the ground surface, while other areas were found during the prior archaeological studies and the current ground penetrating radar study to contain intact foundation remnants and artifacts in a surface to near-surface context.

In conclusion, the proposed historic district contains extant buildings, structures, and sites dating from the earliest years of the operation of the Johnson County Poor Farm and Asylum through its peak in the mid-twentieth century. While the location of the late 1890s County Home main building is excluded from the historic district boundary because of private operation and modern impacts, the retention of so many historic-age Poor Farm buildings, the earliest farm fields, and

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the Poor Farm and Asylum's cemetery increases the historic integrity of the district, which appears to be a rare survival in the state of Iowa. Some portions of the former poor farm agricultural fields were excluded because they are no longer under county ownership, have been built over by modern developments, or are proposed for future residential or other development expansion (see Davidson and Neumann 2003). This nomination is being set forward by the Johnson County Board of Supervisors and the Johnson County Historic Preservation Commission to help preserve as much of the property as feasible along with the recorded sites and the extant buildings.

The activity that is the subject of this National Register nomination has been financed in part with Federal funds from the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. However, the contents and opinions do not necessarily reflect the view or policies of the Department of the Interior, nor does the mention of trade names or commercial products constitute endorsement or recommendation by the Department of the Interior.

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*Historical Intensive Survey and Evaluation and Archaeological Reconnaissance of the Johnson County Poor Farm and Asylum, Johnson County, Iowa.* Tallgrass Historians L.C., Iowa City, Iowa.

Plat Plan of County Home, undated but appears to date from circa 1937. On file, Johnson County Board of Supervisors, Iowa City, Iowa.

University of Iowa Professors of Anthropology, Dr. Thomas Charlton and Dr. James Enloe, conducted a three-week summer course in 1996 on the Johnson County Farm that included an archaeological investigation around the extant Asylum building. The results were reported in a series of student papers that summarized the research, fieldwork activities, and conclusions. This coursework is on file in the Department of Anthropology, University of Iowa, Iowa City.

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**10. Geographical Data**

**UTM References continued:**

#5	Zone 15	616109 easting	4611965 northing
#6	Zone 15	616109 easting	4611910 northing
#7	Zone 15	616244 easting	4611911 northing
#8	Zone 15	616245 easting	4611851 northing
#9	Zone 15	616648 easting	4611851 northing
#10	Zone 15	616648 easting	4612381 northing
#11	Zone 15	616289 easting	4612378 northing
#12	Zone 15	616289 easting	4612636 northing

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The boundary of the Johnson County Poor Farm and Asylum Historic District is shown as the dashed line on the accompanying map entitled "Topographic Map Location of Johnson County Poor Farm and Asylum Historic District Showing Boundary as Dashed Outline" (see Figure 1, page 2).

**Boundary Justification**

The boundary includes the extant farm buildings, the asylum building, the cemetery, and the surrounding farm fields dating from the period of significance when this property functioned as the Johnson County Poor Farm and Asylum and that maintain historic integrity. The parcels east and north of the district that were originally part of the Poor Farm, were excluded because of private operation and modern development in those areas. The parcel at the southwest corner of the farm field was excluded from the district boundary because it was set aside by the Board of Supervisors for a potential housing development.

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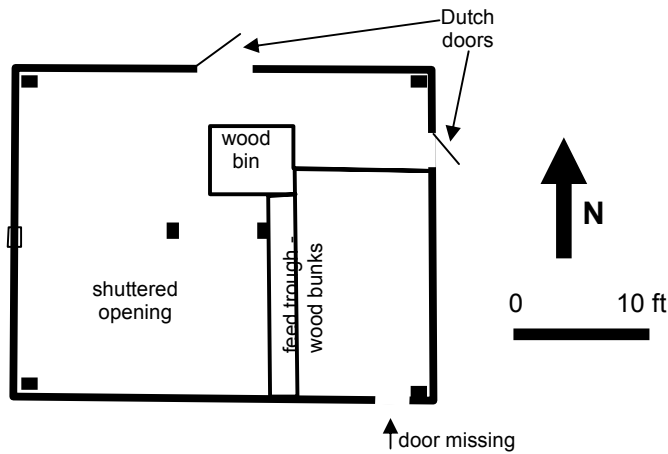
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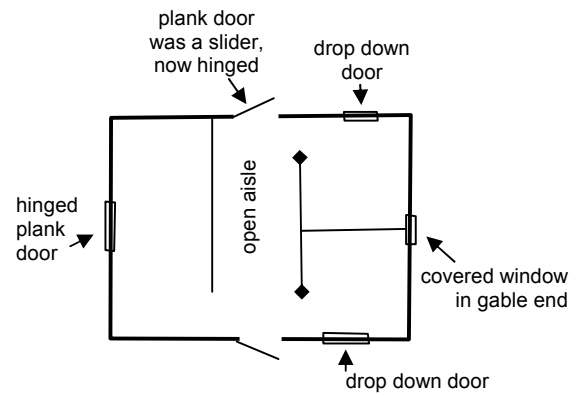
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**Sketch Floor Plans of gabled bull barn, granary, and asylum building.**

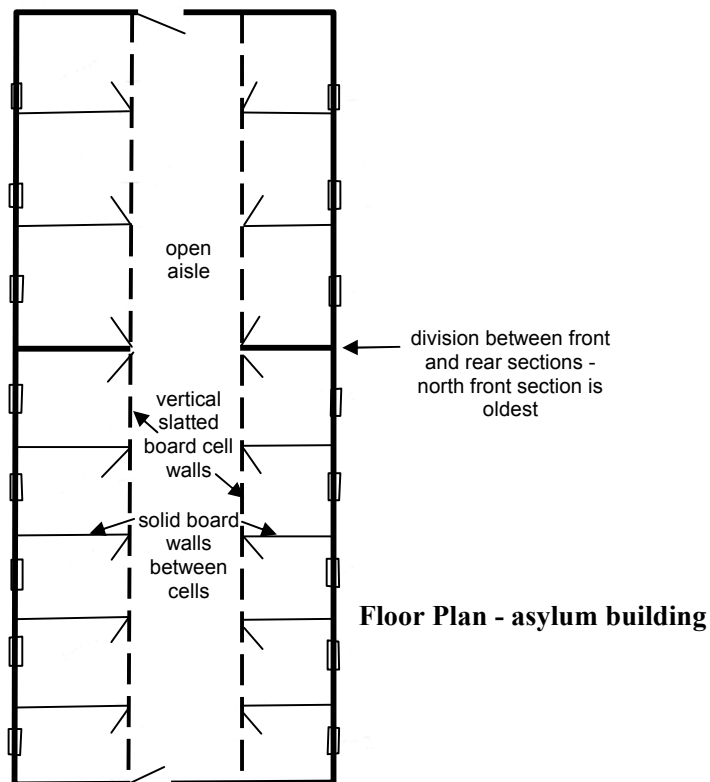
Drawn by Tallgrass Historians L.C., 2013



**Floor Plan - gabled bull barn**



**Floor Plan of granary**



**Floor Plan - asylum building**

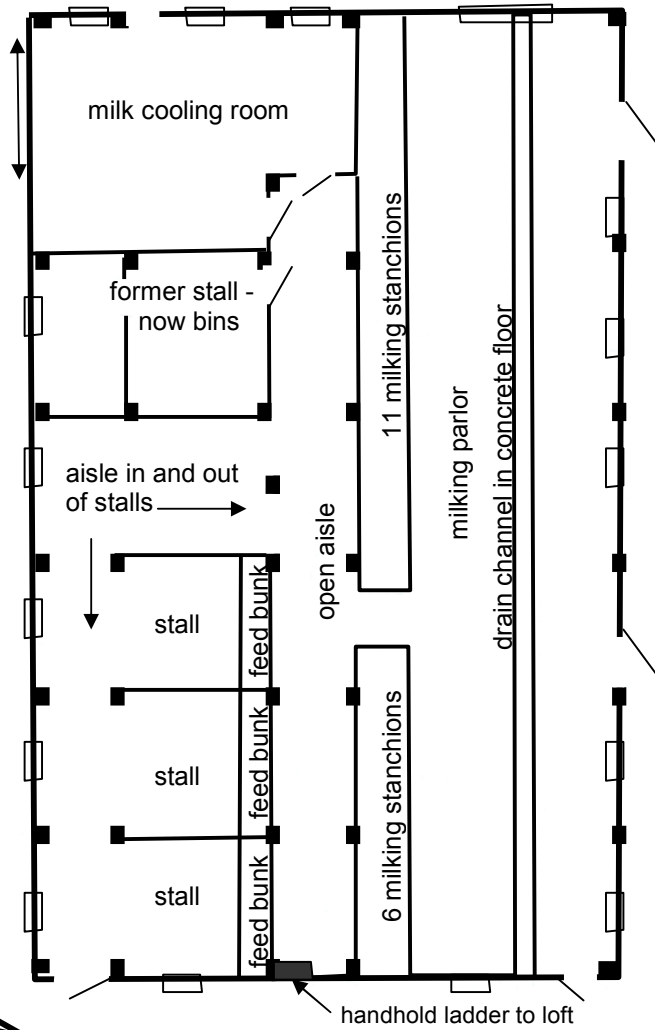
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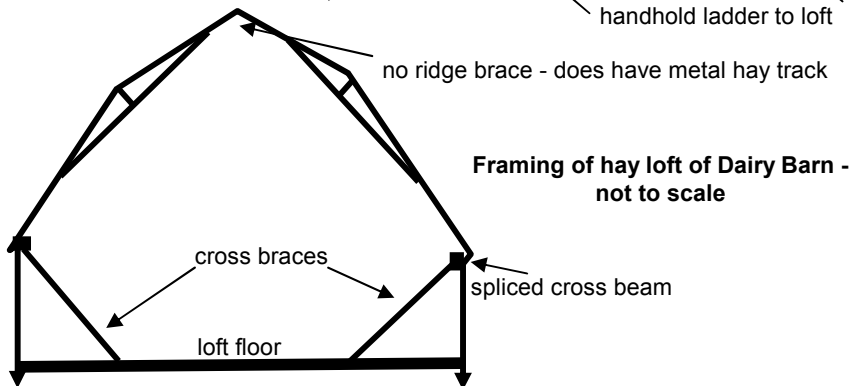
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Sketch floor plan and interior framing of dairy barn  
Drawn by Tallgrass Historians L.C., 2013

Floor plan of lower level of Dairy Barn



Framing of hay loft of Dairy Barn -  
not to scale

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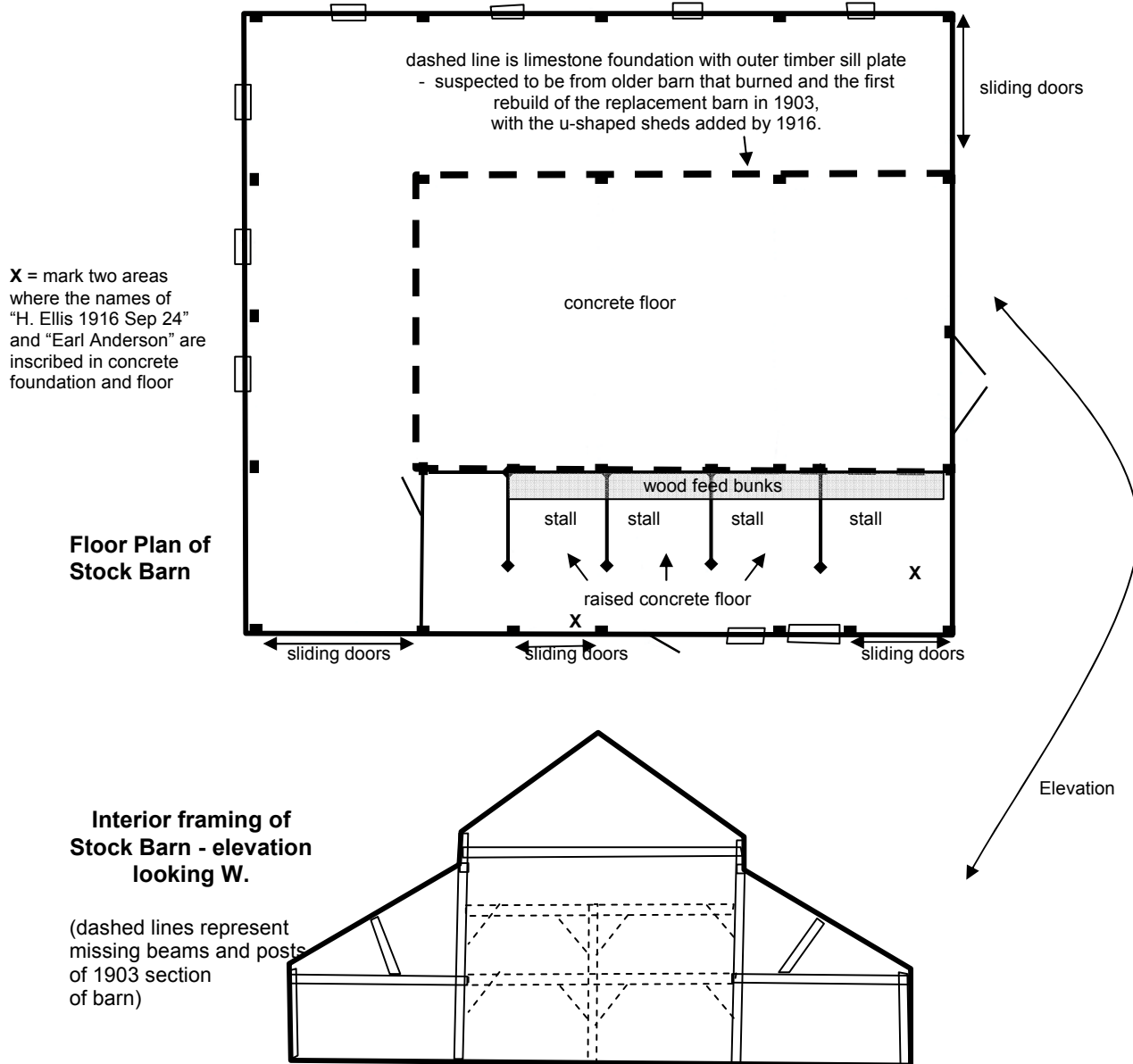
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**Sketch floor plan and interior framing of stock barn.**

Drawn by Tallgrass Historians L.C., 2013





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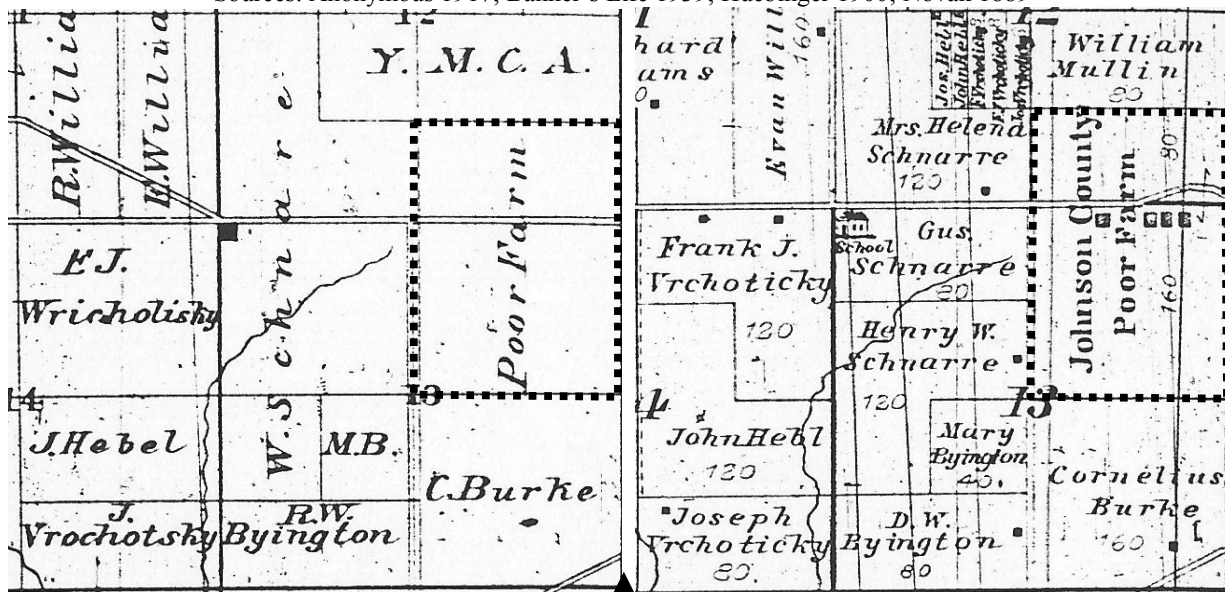
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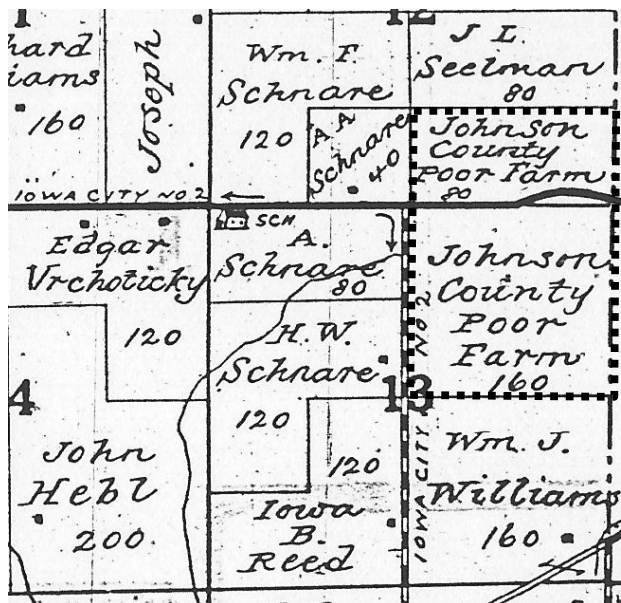
1889-1939 Plat maps showing "County Poor Farm" property (dashed outline) in Union Township

Sources: Anonymous 1917; Banker's Life 1939; Huebinger 1900; Novak 1889

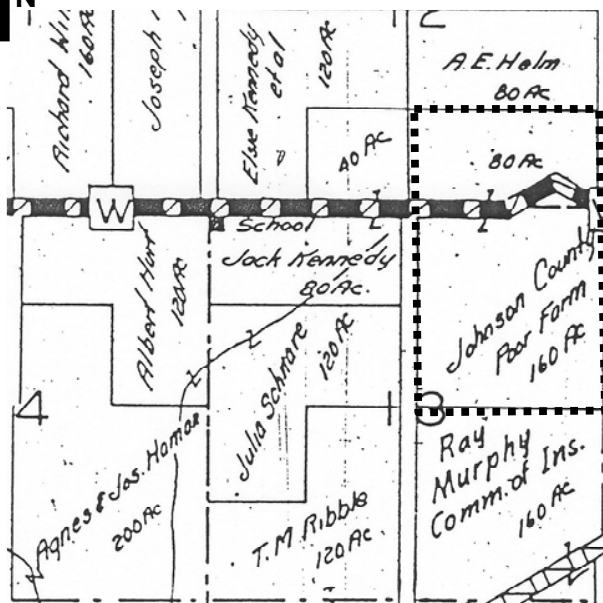


1889 plat map showing "Poor Farm" parcel

1900 plat map showing "Johnson County Poor Farm"



1917 plat map showing "Johnson County Poor Farm"



1939 plat map showing "Johnson County Poor Farm"



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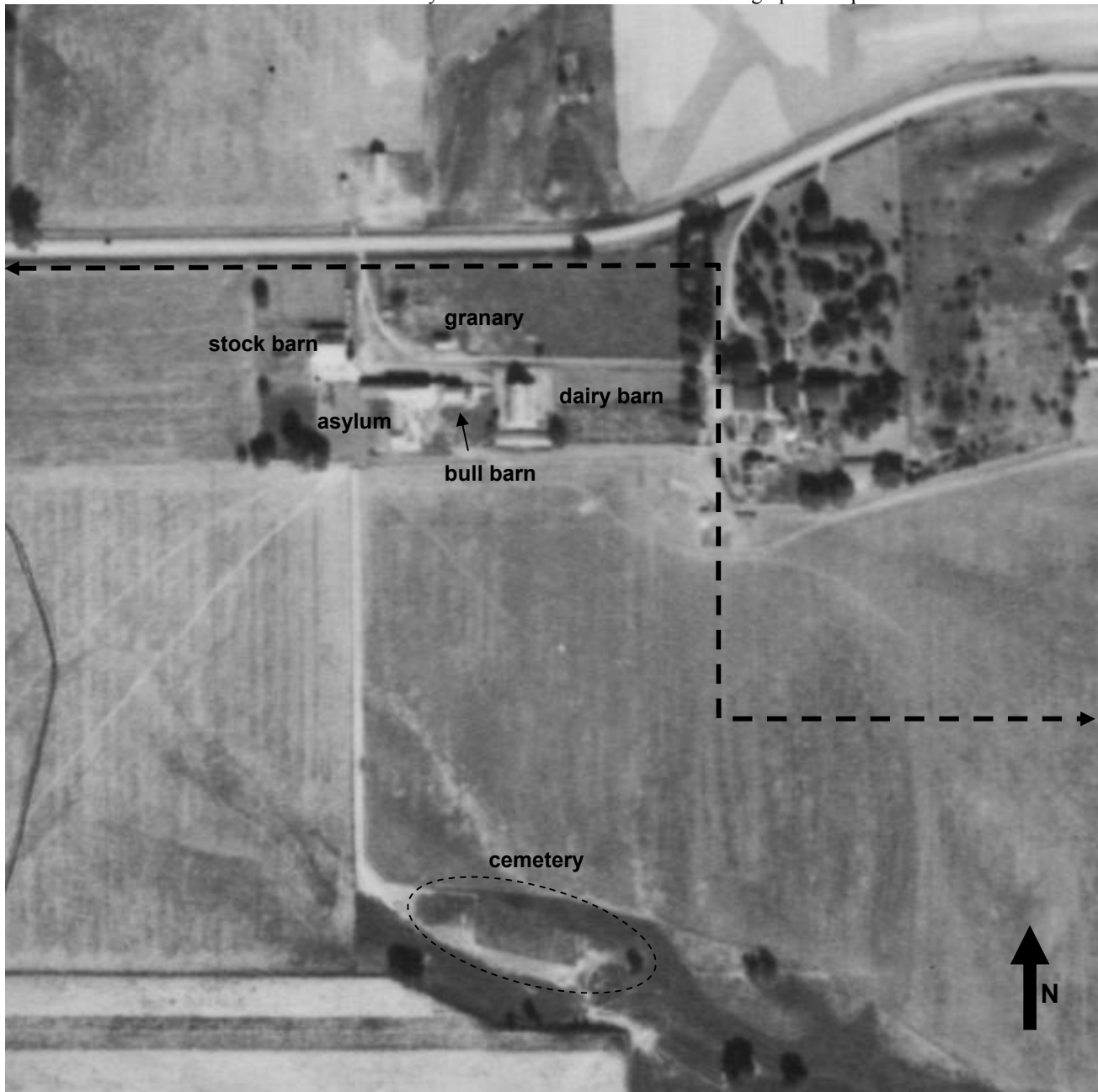
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**1937 overhead aerial photograph of the Johnson County Home.**

Dashed line is the district boundary within this view. Source: Iowa Geographic Map Server 2013



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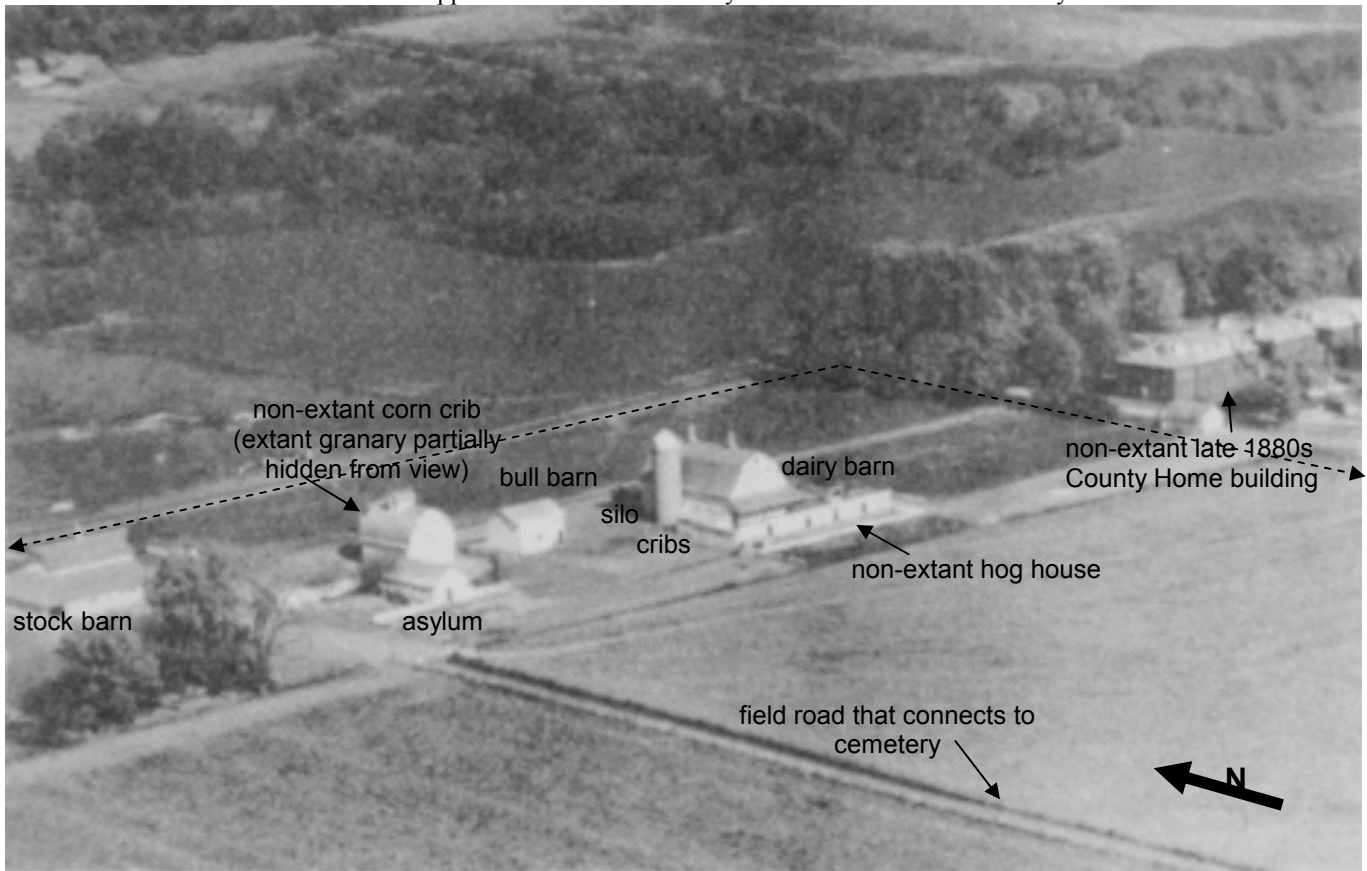
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**1955 aerial photograph of the Johnson County Home property, Looking to NE.**

Dashed outline is approximate district boundary within this view. Source: Drury 1955



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**1970 overhead aerial photograph of the Johnson County Home property.**

Dashed line is the district boundary within this view. Source: Iowa Geographic Map Server 2013



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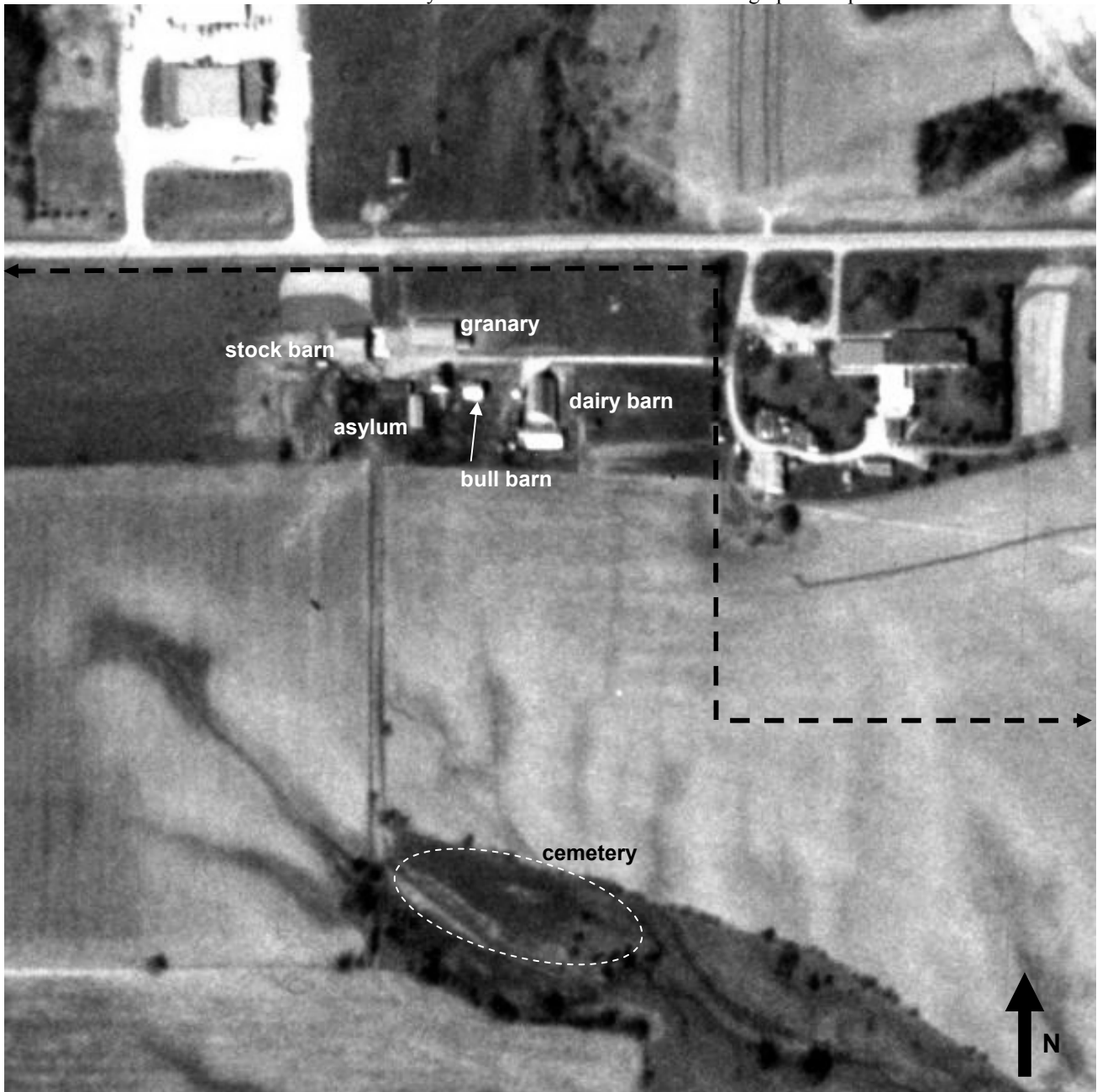
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**1983 overhead aerial photograph of the Johnson County Home property.**

Dashed line is the district boundary within this view. Source: Iowa Geographic Map Server 2013



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**Ground-Penetrating Radar Survey being conducted by Dr. Glenn Storey and students from the University of Iowa, at the Johnson County Poor Farm, August 21, 2013.**  
Photographs taken by Leah D. Rogers, Tallgrass Historians L.C.



Grids 1 and 2, Cemetery Site, looking NW



Grid 3 on West side of Asylum Building looking NNW



Transects in grassy area east of Dairy Barn looking West



Dr. Storey (top right) and students with data unit

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**Detail Photographs of Historic District**

Photographs taken by Leah D. Rogers, Tallgrass Historians, L.C., October 15-16, 2013



Cell in Asylum showing original and restored framing



Louden watering cup in milking parlor of Dairy Barn



Original hand-held ladder built into south wall of Dairy Barn



Metal basin built into east side of Crib



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**2013 Aerial map showing direction of photographs #2-6, #8-26 of Johnson County Poor Farm and Asylum buildings and structures. Source for base aerial: 2013 aerial photograph obtained from ExpertGPS mapping software, 2014**



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**2013 Aerial map showing direction of photographs #1, #7, & #27-30 of Johnson County Poor Farm and Asylum Historic District Environs.** Source for base aerial: 2013 aerial photograph obtained from ExpertGPS mapping software, 2014





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**List of Photographs**

Digital photographs were printed on HP Premium Photo Paper using HP564 Black ink only

Dates of Photographs: October 15-16, 2013 (#2-6 and #11-12, 14-16, and 19-20), March 31, 2014 (#1, 7, and 27-30), and May 23, 2014 (#8-10, 13, 17-18, and 21-26).

Photographer: Leah D. Rogers, Tallgrass Historians L.C.

Location of Original Photographs: 2460 S. Riverside Drive, Iowa City, IA

Description of Photographs:

- #1 General view of Poor Farm buildings, looking SW
- #2 Asylum building looking SE
- #3 Asylum Building, looking NW
- #4 Interior of Asylum Building, looking north along center aisle with cells to either side
- #5 General view of silo, corn cribs, dairy barn, and machine shed looking NE
- #6 Dairy barn, small shed, and concrete water trough looking WNW
- #7 Dairy barn with new cupolas installed and machine shed in background looking SW
- #8 Dairy barn and silo looking SSE
- #9 Interior of Milking Parlor in Dairy Barn, looking NNW
- #10 Interior of Milking Parlor in Dairy Barn, detail of Loudon milking stanchions and watering bowls, looking North
- #11 Interior of Hay Loft in Dairy Barn, looking North
- #12 Interior of Hay Loft in Dairy Barn, detail of rafter framing system, looking up facing NE
- #13 Dairy Barn Silo, looking SE
- #14 Bull Barn looking NE
- #15 Bull Barn looking SW
- #16 Interior of Bull Barn looking WNW
- #17 Stock Barn, looking SW
- #18 Stock Barn, looking NW
- #19 Stock Barn, looking NE
- #20 Interior of Stock Barn, looking East
- #21 Granary, looking SW
- #22 Granary, looking WNW
- #23 Corn Cribs, looking SE
- #24 Water Trough and Shed on South side of Stock Barn, looking NW
- #25 Metal Trough and pump by County Shed, looking ESE
- #26 County Shed, looking SE
- #27 Cemetery Site, looking SE
- #28 General view of farm fields looking NE towards Poor Farm buildings
- #29 General view of farm fields looking SSE towards Poor Farm cemetery site
- #30 General view of farm fields between the Poor Farm buildings and the cemetery site looking ESE