

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

Listed 7-28-04  
04000750

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" 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 Herter Farmstead-Boundary Increase  
Other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Location**

Street & number 4949 S. 148<sup>th</sup> St. Not for publication   
City or town Walton Vicinity   
State Nebraska Code NE County Lancaster Code 109 Zip code 68461

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

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

*Laurence Sommer* \_\_\_\_\_ Date 6/9/04  
Signature of certifying official Date  
Director, Nebraska State Historical Society  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register. \_\_\_\_\_  
 see continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register. \_\_\_\_\_  
 see continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register. \_\_\_\_\_
- removed from the National Register. \_\_\_\_\_
- other, (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Keeper Date of Action

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Continuation Sheet**

Herter Farmstead-Boundary Increase

Name of Property

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In the opinion of the Nebraska State Historic Preservation Officer, the majority of the acreage that comprise this boundary increase is not eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Specifically, the approximately seventy acres west and north of the previously listed property and directly west of the heavy timber growth should not be considered eligible for the Register. Currently in agricultural production, these acres have undergone significant physical changes within the past fifty years, and have been visually and physically separated from the National Register-listed farmstead by substantial volunteer shrub and tree growth. As evidenced by aerial photography and on-site inspection by a number of experts in Nebraska agricultural history and soil conservation practices, these changes have been caused by soil conservation practices within the past fifty years. In the SHPO opinion, therefore, the acreage does not exhibit the characteristics of late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century agricultural practices.

However, in the SHPO opinion, approximately thirty acres east of the heavy timber growth directly north of the currently listed property and included in this boundary increase are eligible for the Register. These acres, currently in grass and hay production, appear largely unchanged in the past fifty years as evidenced by aerial photography and on-site inspection.

The SHPO opinion is based upon a laboriously developed methodology meant to identify acreages associated with significant agricultural practices and assess their historic integrity. This methodology was developed through several years of professional research and public input. This methodology was judged as "useful" and "valuable" by the Keeper of the National Register in her April 29, 2004 letter upholding the property owner's appeal that this boundary increase be listed in the National Register.

In the SHPO opinion, the approximately seventy acres that exhibit physical changes imposed within the past fifty years does not retain historic integrity as defined by the methodology established for this purpose. These non-historic changes were caused by 1950's and 1960's soil conservation practices—conservation terraces—and concurrent agricultural practices which produced substantial volunteer tree and shrub growth which create a visual and physical separation from the National Register farmstead. As is her privilege, the Keeper of the National Register disagrees with this assessment.

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5. CLASSIFICATION

*Category of Property:* District

A rural property including buildings as well as land is considered a district.

*Number of Resources within Property: Contributing:* 1 site

The property's 120 acres are defined as one site.

*Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register:* 9 buildings

6. FUNCTION OR USE

*Historic Functions:*

Add under AGRICULTURAL/SUBSISTENCE: agricultural field

*Current Functions:*

Add under AGRICULTURAL/SUBSISTENCE: agricultural field

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7. DESCRIPTION

The amendment increases the historic district's boundary to include 120 acres, adding 100 acres to the 20 acres covered by the original nomination.<sup>1</sup> The historic district is located in a rural setting in Section 9 of Stockton Township, Lancaster County, Nebraska, about five miles east of Lincoln. The entire parcel consists of three zones: the farmstead on the southeast corner (the subject of the original nomination), a pasture to the north, and a cultivated field west of the farmstead and pasture. The land slopes away from the farmstead, which stands on the highest point of the parcel at an elevation of approximately 1,330 feet. A slight ridge extends northwest from the farmstead. The land drops gradually to about 1,270 feet at the property's northwest and southwest corners. The steepest grade changes are apparent along the gullies edging the pasture in the property's northeast corner. The district is delineated by 148<sup>th</sup> Street to the east, Pioneer to the north, and farm fields to the south and west.

The rectangular farmstead includes a house, barn, and outbuildings, with a driveway providing access from 148<sup>th</sup> Street. Just north of the farmstead and barnyard is the triangular pasture, which is bounded to the east by 148<sup>th</sup> Street and to the north by Pioneer. Ditches and a barbwire fence separate the pasture from both roads. Osage orange and other deciduous trees edge the northern end of the pasture, marking a gully that ultimately drains into Stevens Creek. The pasture's eastern border is largely open. Its western side is

<sup>1</sup> The following description is based on observations during site visits by the author on December 28, 2000; March 14 and August 28, 2001, and May 16, 2002, and on the USGS topographic map for the Walton, Nebraska, quadrangle.

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defined by another tree-lined gully that meanders at a slight northwest-southeast angle. At one time, a small farm pond fed by a fresh water spring was located in this vicinity, but it has long been dry. The variety of vegetation has evolved over time, but the basic pattern of vegetation has remained consistent and the integrity of the pasture is very good.<sup>2</sup>

The perimeter of the field to the west is defined by deciduous trees, many planted as windbreaks. The field is open and cultivated, except for grassy areas flanking the gullies that extend southeast from the northwest corner and northeast from the southwest corner. Planting patterns in this working landscape follow the contours of the land, a practice that reduces erosion. The field, which has not been terraced, maintains very good integrity.

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<sup>2</sup> Wayne and Norma Hagaman and Joel and Kathy Sartore to Carol Shull, letter, June 12, 2002.

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8. SIGNIFICANCE

*Period of Significance:* 1885-1953

The Herter Farmstead was listed in the National Register on July 24, 2000, under Criterion A because it "illustrates an historical farmstead in Eastern Nebraska." The Queen Anne style house was also found eligible under Criterion C. The nomination for the property, which comprised the 20-acre farmstead, defined the period of significance beginning in 1885 and ending in 1930.<sup>1</sup> The following documentation justifies an extension of the period of significance to 1953 and an expansion of the property's boundaries from 20 to 120 acres.

Farm fields are, by definition, integral to the history of the working farmsteads that have tended them, and the Herter Farmstead is no exception. The expanded historic district was associated with the Herter family for over a century. Abraham Herter came to America from Switzerland in 1855 at the age of twenty-three, and eventually saved enough money to purchase a farm in Saint Clair County, Illinois. In 1861 he married a German immigrant, Catherine Oberle. Of the ten children born to the couple, only three survived to adulthood: Jacob W., Katie C., and Frederick C.

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<sup>1</sup> The beginning of the period of significance is incorrectly given as 1876 on the summary for Section 8 on the original nomination form; the 1885 date, however, is provided in the Section 8 narrative. See Todd Knipsel, "Herter Farmstead," April 1, 2000, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, available at Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln.

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America in the mid- to late nineteenth century was characterized by mass migration, which carved the western frontier into farms and villages. The Herters joined that surge, arriving in Lancaster County, Nebraska, in 1876. Initially acquiring 80 acres in Section 10 of Stockton Township and another 160 acres in Stevens Creek Township to the north, they established a farmstead on the Stockton Township land. By the late 1880s, their holdings had increased to 520 acres, including 120 acres in Section 9 just across a section line road (now 148<sup>th</sup> Street) west of the farmstead. The Herters purchased the 120-acre parcel, the subject of this nomination, from the estate of Charles Guthman in 1885. The parcel had originally been granted to the Burlington and Missouri Railroad in 1870 to encourage the line's development in the area.<sup>2</sup>

An etching in a local history published in 1888 shows a building and rows of trees on the southeast corner of Section 9, suggesting that some development might have occurred on the site prior to the Herters' ownership. Major improvements, however, were inaugurated in the 1890s when farming operations were taken over by Abraham and Catherine's son Jacob, who had been born in Illinois in 1864. The probable stimulus for this development was Jacob's marriage to Mary Elizabeth Meyer in 1892. Around this time, a small existing house was expanded and given a Queen Anne facelift, and a barn and a number of outbuildings were constructed. All told, Jacob was to

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<sup>2</sup> *Portrait and Biographical Album of Lancaster County, Nebraska* (Chicago: Chapman Brothers, 1888); Executors of Charles Guthman estate to Abraham Herter, June 3, 1885, Deed 23:227, located at Lancaster County Courthouse, Lincoln, Nebraska; National Register nomination, 8-1.

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oversee the farm's operations for nearly six decades.<sup>3</sup>

Abraham Herter had been described as "one of the most extensive agriculturists of Stockton Precinct. . . . His land has yielded generously under careful and judicious cultivation the richest crops of this section of the State." Jacob carried on this tradition. Known locally as "Jake," Jacob also earned the nickname "Alfalfa Bill" for his role in promoting that crop in the region in the early twentieth century.<sup>4</sup> Prairie hay had been a staple cattle

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<sup>3</sup> Jacob officially obtained title to the 120 acres in 1905; see Abraham and Catherine Herter to J. W. Herter, May 29, 1905, Deed 126: 466, located at Lancaster County Courthouse, Lincoln, Nebraska. Additional references: *Portrait and Biographical Album*; Knipsel, 7-1; Norma Hagaman, "Jacob W. Herter," 1997, unpublished manuscript, located at Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln; Norma Herter Hagaman, untitled typed manuscript, n.d., available from Mrs. Hagaman, Lancaster County, Nebraska.

<sup>4</sup> Fred Retzlaff interview, March 14, 2001; *Portrait and Biographical Album*. The nickname "Alfalfa Bill" was presumably borrowed from William H. Murray, a colorful politician and farm activist who was born in Texas in 1869 and moved to the Chickasaw Nation (later the state of Oklahoma) in 1898. Biographer Keith L. Bryant Jr. explained that Murray was "an advocate of diversified agriculture. His speeches in favor of the cultivation of alfalfa led to the sobriquet Alfalfa Bill." Murray was the first Speaker of the House of Representatives when Oklahoma achieved statehood in 1907. He was elected governor in 1930, and competed with Franklin D. Roosevelt for the Democratic presidential nomination in 1932. Bryant also notes that Murray "wrote numerous pamphlets and books attacking industrialization, urbanization, and mechanization." This perspective would have been attractive to Jacob Herter, who eschewed electricity and indoor plumbing in his house and used horses to pull farm equipment long after most neighbors had acquired tractors. Bryant's quotes are found at the Handbook of Texas Online ([www.tsha.utexas.edu/hadnbook/online/articles/view/MM/fmul6.html](http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/hadnbook/online/articles/view/MM/fmul6.html)). For additional information on Murray, see Keith L. Bryant Jr., *Alfalfa Bill Murray* (Norman:



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feed until the arrival of alfalfa, which could be harvested three or four times a year. Alfalfa was introduced into Kansas in about 1894 and Nebraska soon thereafter.<sup>5</sup> Nebraska's Agricultural Experiment Station began testing alfalfa at the turn of the century. Alfalfa promised more consistent yields and a higher feed value per bushel than wheat, oats, barley, and rye. It became the leading hay crop in the state, occupying 7 percent of the state's cultivated land in 1927. During the 1920s and 1930s, Nebraska led the nation in alfalfa acreage. It attained this rank by adding over 500,000 acres to alfalfa cultivation between 1909 and 1919, a 77.2 percent increase, mostly in the eastern third of the state. Total alfalfa acreage in the United States nearly doubled in the same period, after doubling between 1899 and 1909.<sup>6</sup>

Alfalfa was primarily raised as livestock feed. According to the early twentieth-century *Book of Alfalfa*, "The cattle feeder is not

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University of Oklahoma Press, 1968). For a more folksy approach that appeared at the time Murray made his presidential bid, see Gordon Hines, *Alfalfa Bill: An Intimate Biography* (Oklahoma City: Oklahoma Press, 1932).

<sup>5</sup> Joseph E. Wing, *Alfalfa Farming in America* (Chicago: Sanders Publishing Company, 1912), 71.

<sup>6</sup> Fred Retzlaff, interview by author, March 14, 2001; H. M. Tysdal and T. A. Kiesselbach, *Alfalfa in Nebraska*, Nebraska Experiment Station Bulletin 331 (Lincoln: Agricultural Experiment Station, University of Nebraska College of Agriculture, 1941), 3; Harold Hedges and F. F. Elliott, *Types of Farming in Nebraska*, Bulletin 244 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska College of Agriculture Experiment Station, 1930), 11; George Stewart, *Alfalfa-Growing in the United States and Canada* (New York: MacMillan Company, 1926), 3-8; 476; J. L. Bolton, *Alfalfa: Botany, Cultivation, and Utilization* (London: Leonard Hill [Books] Limited, and New York: Interscience Publishers, 1962), 38.

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much given to sentiment and cares less for the beauty of the purple flowers of the alfalfa than he does for the best method of converting those purple flowers and the accompanying foliage into marketable beef." Both alfalfa and livestock were key components of the area's "mixed farming" economy. "A farmer who practices mixed farming," explains geographer John Fraser Hart, "may sell some of his crops for cash, but he feeds most of them to fattening animals or to workstock on the farm, and he returns manure from the animals to the soil to maintain its fertility for crop production." Typical mixed-farm crops included corn, small grains, and hay, all of which were grown annually but rotated from field to field to sustain the soil. Alfalfa was particularly efficient at returning nutrients to the soil.<sup>7</sup>

Mixed farming "was part of the agricultural revolution in Europe," according to Hart. "German-speaking farmers brought the concept to southeastern Pennsylvania long before the Revolutionary War, and in the early 1800s their descendants transplanted it to the Miami valley of southwestern Ohio, which was the seedbed of the Corn Belt." In Lancaster County, Nebraska, the transmission of this practice came more directly in the late nineteenth century from newly arrived German immigrants, including the Herters.<sup>8</sup>

Mixed farming was a logical choice for Nebraska farmers in the late

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<sup>7</sup> F. D. Coburn, *The Book of Alfalfa: History, Cultivation and Merits, Its Uses as a Forage and Fertilizer* (New York: Orange Judd Company, 1908), 138; John Fraser Hart, "Change in the Corn Belt," *Geographical Review* 76 (January 1986): 51.

<sup>8</sup> Hart, 51.

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nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as a bulletin from the Nebraska Experiment Station explained: "Livestock usually provides the best means for economic utilization of the feed grain and forage crops, which occupy such a large proportion of the farm area of Nebraska. That such Nebraska crops are disposed of largely thru livestock is evident from the small proportions of the crops that are marketed in their original form." Between 1923 and 1927, for example, Nebraska farms used over 96 percent of the alfalfa they grew for their own livestock. During that same period, three-quarters of the farmers' income came from selling livestock and livestock products, particularly beef cattle (28 percent) and hogs (30 percent). Jacob and Mary Herter raised both, as well as dairy cattle. Their granddaughter Norma, who grew up on the farm, later wrote the "corn was raised and picked by hand and used for livestock feed and also seed for planting the next spring. Alfalfa and prairie hay was cut and put in the barn for feeding the livestock. Cane was raised for a roughage feed for the cattle." The Shorthorn and dairy cattle grazed in the pasture directly north of the farm buildings that offered an open field for forage, a wooded area for protection from the elements, and a small pond for water. The farmstead included a smokehouse where meat from butchered animals was processed.<sup>9</sup>

Mary died in 1952. Jake lived on the farm until 1960 when, at the age of 97, he passed away. His son Edward and daughter-in-law

<sup>9</sup> Harold Hedges and F. F. Elliott, *Types of Farming in Nebraska*, Nebraska Experiment Station Bulletin 243 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska College of Agriculture Experiment Station, May 1930), 5-6, 11, 15, 17; Hagaman, untitled typed manuscript, n.d.

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Marguerite, who had married in 1926, stepped in to manage the farm. After Edward's death in 1973, farm operations were passed to his daughter, Norma, and her husband, Wayne Hagaman, although Marguerite occupied the house until 1988. The Hagamans farm 100 acres of the property today, continuing a four-generation tradition spanning more than a century. They discontinued dairy operations at the farm into the early 1970s, and sold the buildings and 20 acres in 1995 to Joel and Kathy Sartore, who are preserving the structures. The Sartores substantially upgraded the house's minimal electrical wiring and introduced indoor plumbing; early owners had relied on an outhouse.<sup>10</sup>

The lack of indoor plumbing exemplified the Herters' conservative approach to farming. Jacob Herter relied on horses for plowing and other farm work long after most neighbors had shifted their loyalty to tractors and combines. Tradition was trusted over new technology. This philosophy led to a thrifty lifestyle that helped the family weather the economic downturns that periodically plagued agriculture. It also encouraged them to continue with mixed farming

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<sup>10</sup> Fred Retzlaff, interview by author, March 14, 2001; Hagaman; National Register nomination, 8-1 and 7-2; Angela Heywood Bible, "Preserving the Past: Sartores Restore Farmhouse to Its Full Splendor," *Lincoln Journal Star*, September 24, 2000. The Herters' reluctance to adopt modern utilities was not a complete surprise in Nebraska, which was generally slow to convert to these conveniences; in 1940, only 22.3 percent of the state's farmhouses had running water, 12.4 percent had flush toilets, 14.1 percent had bathtubs or showers, and 16.3 percent had central heating. See Ruby Loper, Margaret Fedde, Margaret Liston, and T. A. Filipi, "Postwar Housing and Equipment," in *Nebraska Looks Ahead: Postwar Agricultural Problems and Proposed Programs*, Bulletin 380 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska College of Agriculture, Agricultural Experiment Station, 1945), 86.

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after World War II, when many local farmers specialized their operations—either expanding livestock feedlots, or getting out of livestock and into cash-grain farming.

While successive generations of Herters bought and sold many parcels of land during the course of the twentieth century, the 120-acre Herter Farmstead Historic District remained the nucleus of farm life throughout most of that period. Other land that was historically part of the farm has been compromised by new development, making the inclusion of the intact 120 acres in the historic district all the more crucial.

**I. Conclusion**

Farming is one of the most significant factors in Nebraska's history. Agricultural landscapes are working landscapes. As a property type, farms in eastern Nebraska are characterized by a farmstead—with a house, barn, and various outbuildings—and associated farmland. There is, historically, a fundamental physical and functional relationship between a farmstead and its fields, pasture, and other holdings. Livestock, for example, need a pasture for grazing, feed from the fields for winter nourishment, and a barn for shelter.

The Herter Farmstead exemplifies the state's agricultural heritage. Because the existing division of the farm's 120 acres into farmstead, pasture, and field continues the pattern of use traditionally associated with this land, the Herter Farmstead Historic District should be expanded to include the entire 120 acres. And because farming operations continue on the property much

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as they have since the late nineteenth century, the period of significance should be extended to 1953, reflecting the fifty-year cutoff typically adopted for National Register properties.

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10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of property: 120 acres (including 20 acres previously listed)

*UTM References:*

	Zone	Easting	Northing
1.	14	708650	4515900
2.	14	709260	4515920
3.	14	709280	4515120
4.	14	708680	4515110

*Verbal Boundary Description*

The nominated area is 120 acres of land occupying the eastern three-quarters of the northeast quarter of Section 9, Township 9N, Range 8E, in Lancaster County, Nebraska.

*Boundary Justification*

The boundary encompasses the entire original tract of land acquired by Abraham Herter in 1885 from the executors of the estate of Charles Guthman. This tract became the nucleus of the farm that Herter and his heirs operated for over one hundred years. The Herters acquired additional parcels of land during that time, but the integrity of these parcels has been damaged by modern construction. The pasture, field, and farmstead on the original 120 acres, however, are a well-preserved functional unit

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representative of a typical farming operation in the area. The boundary includes the farmstead, which was previously listed in the National Register.

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11. FORM PREPARED BY

Charlene Roise, Hess, Roise and Company  
100 North First Street, Minneapolis, MN 55401  
612-338-1987  
February 2003

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

USGS map

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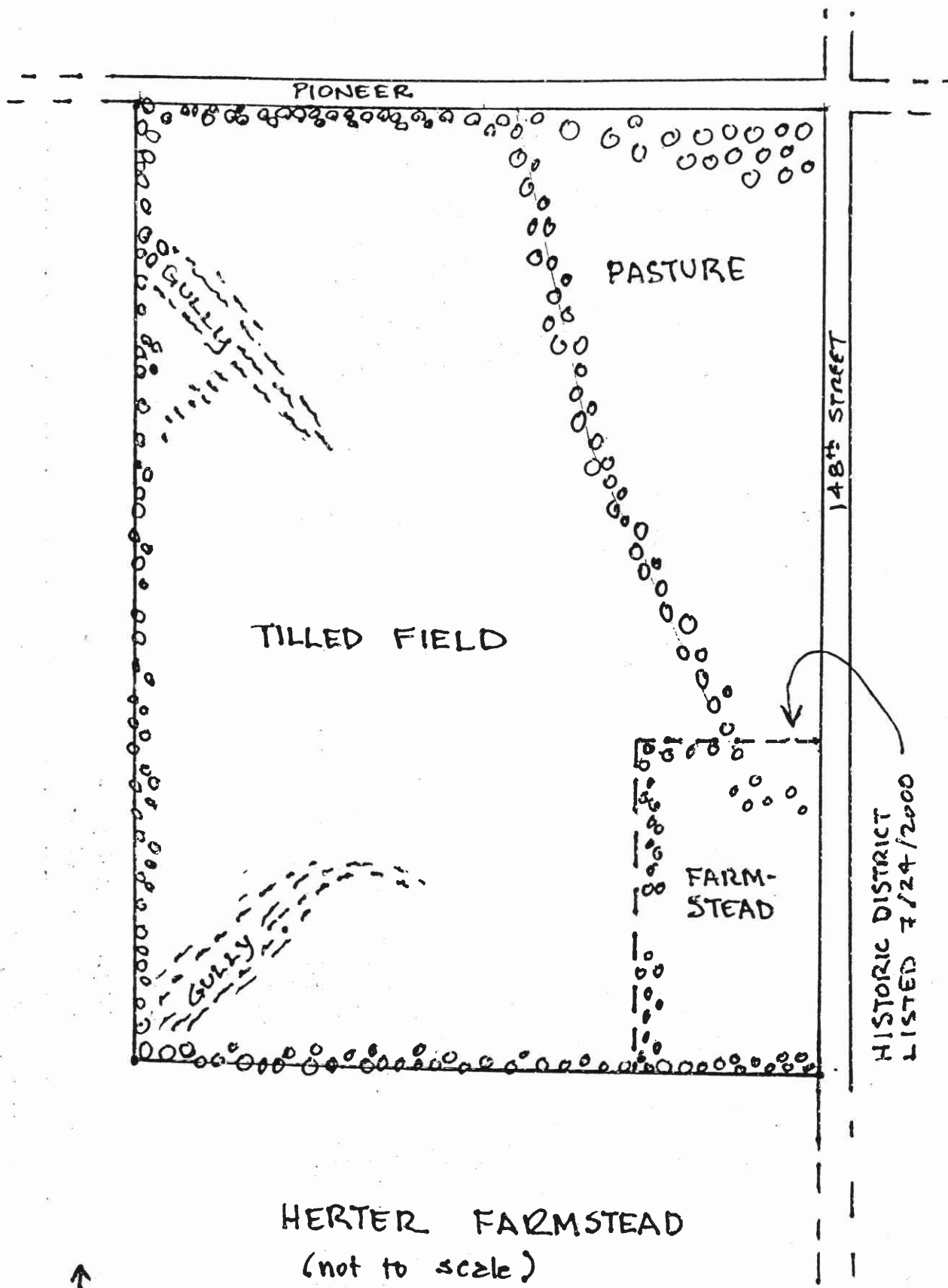
For all photographs:

Photographer: Charlene Roise

Date: August 29, 2001

Original negatives located at Hess, Roise and Company, 100 North First Street, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55401

1. Southwest corner of property from east side of field (behind farmstead). Looking southwest.
2. Center of property from east side of field (behind farmstead). Looking northwest.
3. Pasture on northeast quadrant of property. Looking southwest from 148<sup>th</sup> Street.
4. West side of field, near southwest corner of property. Looking northeast.



TILLED FIELD

PASTURE

FARM-STEAD

GULLY

GULLY

148th STREET

HISTORIC DISTRICT  
LISTED 7/24/2000

HERTER FARMSTEAD  
(not to scale)

↑  
NORTH

2. 2003

WALTON VICINITY  
LANCASTER CO., NEBRASKA



Photo 1



Photo 2



Photo 3



Photo 4