

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At the request of the Will County Land Use Department, acting as liaison for the Will County Historic Preservation Commission, Wiss, Janney, Elstner Associates, Inc. (WJE) has prepared this report of the intensive survey of farmsteads in Green Garden Township in Will County, Illinois. The survey was performed from November 2003 through April 2004, and included 36 square miles with 149 farmsteads and related sites containing over 850 individual structures. Also, the context history of Will County and agricultural architecture was revised, and historic background related to schools, churches, cemeteries, and adjoining communities was developed for Green Garden Township.

Farmers of European descent first settled in Green Garden Township beginning in the late 1840s. Settlement increased following the construction of the Illinois Central Railroad just east of the township in the early 1850s, and Green Garden was organized as an independent township in 1853. The Illinois Central allowed farmers to ship their products to market in Chicago. The paving of rural roads in the 1920s improved the ability of farmers to transport their products to market. After the completion of Interstate 57 around 1970, suburban residential development began to occur in Green Garden Township. Today, approximately one-fifth of the 23,000 acres in Green Garden Township has been subdivided for suburban development.

Of the 149 farmsteads identified in the current survey, three sites are eligible for Will County Historic Landmark designation as locally significant. These three sites may also be considered for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. In addition, 27 sites have the potential to be considered for Will County Historic Landmark designation, if certain historic features were restored or non-historic cladding materials such as vinyl siding were removed. The remaining sites have either been designated Contributing, which means in the context of this report that they retain their overall character as historically agricultural sites but lack individual distinction; or Non-contributing, which indicates that the site lacks sufficient integrity to present the theme of agricultural history in the survey region. Although no potential landmark districts or multiple property theme designations were identified as part of the current survey, the potential for districts that include parts of Green Garden Township along with portions of adjoining townships should be considered when intensive level surveys of the adjoining townships are performed.

The Green Garden Township intensive survey was performed to update the previous survey of the township performed in 1988. In the previous survey, 182 farmsteads and related sites were identified in Green Garden, containing roughly 1,000 structures.¹ Because of the rapid pace of contemporary development in Will County since 1988, the Will County Historic Preservation Commission recognized the need to reassess the agricultural heritage of the region. WJE has previously performed intensive surveys of Wheatland, Plainfield, and Lockport Townships (completed November 2000); DuPage Township (November 2001); Homer Township (November 2002); and New Lenox Township (August 2003). Copies of the previous survey reports were provided to public libraries in the area. To date, the surveys have identified over 2,750 structures on about 570 sites over 252 square miles of Will County. Performing a separate survey for each township allowed more detailed information to be collected, such as individual photographs of each historic structure, an assessment of current building condition, and preparation of site sketch plans. With the permission of property owners, the survey work was performed with close-up access to the buildings, which allowed for close range photography and a reliable identification of building materials. The survey data was compiled and analyzed using database software and geographic information system (GIS) software.

¹ The 1988 survey, as a reconnaissance-type survey performed from the public right-of-way, did not necessarily identify every historic structure. The loss of 33 farmstead sites is likely a more reliable indication of the changes in the township since 1988.

Chapters I and II provide the context in which the surveyed farmsteads were established, grew, were reconfigured, and in some cases were abandoned. Chapter I, Context History, covers the geological, historical, and architectural contexts of Will County agriculture. Chapter II discusses the context of Green Garden Township and focuses on a select number of historically and/or architecturally significant farmsteads. Chapter III summarizes the survey results, and includes a discussion of the National Register and Will County criteria for designation of historical and architectural significance. Also in Chapter III are several tabulations of the survey results. Chapter IV contains a description of the project methodology. A bibliography of research sources follows the text. Appendices include historic and contemporary plat maps for Green Garden and adjoining townships; and maps developed for this report to present the results of the survey and research.

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Illustrated above is a view of a farmstead on Manhattan-Wilton Road in Section 33 of Green Garden Township.