

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# DRAFT

## 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 an 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 Hildreth Homestead

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

name of related multiple property listing N/A

### 2. Location

street & number 4083 State Highway 28 [ ] not for publication

city or town Herkimer [ ] vicinity

state New York code NY county Herkimer code 043 zip code 13350

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 as 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.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

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 the 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 the Keeper

date of action

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Hildreth Homestead**

Name of Property

**Herkimer Co., New York**

County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**

(Check only one box)

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

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	<b>TOTAL</b>

**Name of related multiple property listing**

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE: processing/storage

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY: Greek Revival

LATE VICTORIAN: Italianate

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation stone

walls wood

roof asphalt

other \_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

**Hildreth Homestead**

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**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 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 that 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 boxes that apply.)

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

**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 Building 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 repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**Areas of Significance:**

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

**Period of Significance:**

ca. 1860-1942

**Significant Dates:**

**Significant Person:**

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation:**

N/A

**Architect/Builder:**

# \_\_\_\_\_

**Hildreth Homestead**  
Name of Property

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**10. Geographical Data**

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**Acreeage of Property** 3.56 acres

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 17 500901 4772135  
Zone Easting Northing

3 17            
Zone Easting Northing

2 17          

4 17          

**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 Cynthia Falk, consultant edited by: Erin Czernecki, NYSHPO

organization SUNY Oneonta/ Cooperstown Graduate Program date 6/3/2020

street & number P.O. Box 4, 5838 State Route 80 telephone     

city or town Cooperstown state NY zip code 13326

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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 SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner** (Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO)

name     

street & number      telephone     

city or town      state      zip code     

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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 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, D.C. 20503

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Hildreth Homestead

Name of Property

Herkimer, New York

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**Narrative Description of Property**

*Overview*

The Hildreth Homestead is a 2.4 acre property that contains a mid-nineteenth century dwelling and barn, located in the Town of Herkimer, Herkimer County, New York. The dwelling consists of four distinct but attached sections with its principal elevation oriented eastwards, towards State Highway 28, with the barn occupying a position immediately behind it. Erected ca. 1860 and expanded subsequently, the house exhibits distinctive features of the mid-century Italianate style, both inside and out, and it retains numerous period historic features in spite of the introduction of vinyl siding and replacement windows. The barn, which like the house evolved from the original construct into the current one, contains multiple attached sections that chronicle the evolution of local agricultural practices during the cited period of significance.

*Setting*

The Hildreth Homestead is located at 4083 State Highway 28 in the Town of Herkimer. While the property came to encompass roughly 160 acres during the period of significance, the current parcel is 2.4 acres and includes a house and barn. The nominated parcel is a parallelogram with its long side facing east. The residence is located on the west side of State Highway 28, facing east, while the two small parcels of land east of State Highway 28 contain no built features; those belong to the current owner and historically were a part of the Hildreth's holdings. The first parcel is a quadrangle that borders State Highway 28 (1.00 acre); the second is a narrow "L" shape that runs along the south and east edge of the first parcel (.16 acres). All three parcels are included in the nomination boundary.

A paved asphalt driveway runs from State Highway 28 to the entrance of the barn, with a rectangular-shaped extension to the south with space for two to three cars to park. Two walkways lead from the driveway towards the house; one leads to a side door, the other to the stoop of the house's main block and the front porch of the wing. A third walkway extends from the front entrance of the main block to the middle of the front yard, towards the highway. An unused, obsolete well and associated cover is located outside the side door, between it and the driveway. Narrow ornamental gardens surround the house on all sides.

*Exterior Overview/Hildreth House (one contributing building)*

The house's exterior consists of four distinct parts that collectively form an "L" shape. The main block and the wing constitute the base of that "L" and form the house's east-facing façade. The main block is two stories and the wing is one-and-a-half stories, and both have four bays and have hipped roofs. The foundation consists of both masonry and poured concrete. The cladding on the main block is vinyl siding, fitted to imitate the original wood clapboard. Extending westwards from the south elevation of the house is an addition and woodshed, both one and one-half stories with front-facing gables and roof ridges aligned on an east-west orientation and masonry and poured concrete foundations. The addition is clad in vinyl siding while the woodshed is clad in vertical flush board. There are two concrete block chimneys; one that rises from the back side of the main block and the other extending from the roof of the wing. Later changes to the interior have largely obscured the order of erection of these various parts of the house, but the lack of a basement under the addition and the awkward rooflines connecting it to the wing suggest it was an addition that was moved to its current location.

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*Hildreth House/Exterior*

The façade consists of the principal elevations of the main block and wing, the latter which is set back slightly. The front door of the main block is approached via a three-step poured-concrete stoop. Shielding the door is a hood clad with elaborately carved wooden brackets and pendants; its roof is covered with asphalt. This door is spanned by a rectangular-shaped transom and has flanking, full-height sidelights. A one-story porch spans the wing and shields a corresponding entrance; it is supported by six lattice-work wood posts with an open-work diamond pattern. Open-work arches filled with a pattern of scrolls and wheels—with the area between the spokes designed to look like hearts—are aligned between the posts. The porch roof is flat and fitted with asphalt shingles, built-in rain gutters, and brackets spaced along the eaves. Both doors on the façade have nine-paned glazed white storm doors with a single horizontal wood panel below; behind each is a four-paneled wood door. Windows are mainly fitted with vinyl replacement sash with an applied six-over-six muntin pattern. The façade of the main block has a total of nine windows: four in a row at first-story level, four directly above at second-story level, in addition to a fifth situated above the entrance bay. Each window opening is framed with a pair of green louvered wooden shutters and surmounted by a pediment-form hood. On the first story of the wing are two windows with green louvered shutters; they have peaked surrounds. Above the porch, at half-story level, are three square-shaped three-over-three windows flanked by green louvered shutters. The cornices of the main block are boxed and molded with a deep fascia below; the eaves were once modillioned, but those were removed and remain stored on site. The wing's cornices are similar in treatment and embellished with closely spaced modillions.

The south elevation of the wing is all but obscured by the addition, leaving only a small area of wall surface exposed. At first-story level is a single window hung with replacement six-over-six sash with flanking shutters. The addition's south elevation has four tall windows with smaller fixed panes at the top and longer double-hung vinyl sash occupying the bottom three-quarters of each opening. One of the four windows is situated on the narrow, east-facing wall of the protruding bay; the other three are grouped on the south wall and are framed at the top by decorative wood trim. West of these three windows is a vinyl six-over-six window matching those on the east facade. The south elevation of the addition accommodates a side door, to the west of which are two shorter, six-over-six wood sash windows in wood frames. Above the two windows is a single three-paned frieze-band type window. The woodshed has one six-paned wood sash window, situated just below the roof line, as well as a shorter six-over-six wood sash window.

On the west elevation of the woodshed is one six-paned window, situated just below the peak of the woodshed's gable. On the west elevation of the main block are two six-over-six replacement windows. The windows are not centered but are to the south of the rear entry door.

On the north elevation of the main block are four of the six-over-six replacement windows, two on the first story and two directly above on the second story. All four include pediments and green louvered shutters. On the north elevation of the wing, which projects beyond the main block, two replacement windows are positioned vertically in line with each other. On the north elevation of the addition is one replacement window with shutters, a smaller six-over-six sash window flanked by shutters, and a three-paned frieze band window. On the north elevation of the woodshed is a single two-over-two wood sash window.

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*Hildreth House/Interior*

The first floor of the house's main block has an entrance hall with a staircase leading to the second floor, double parlors arranged side-by-side across the front of the house, and, behind the parlors and entrance hall, two narrow rooms, which currently accommodate a bathroom and den. The wing and addition on the south side of the main block includes, from front to back: a dining room in the wing; a kitchen, pantry, and workshop in the addition; and a partially finished wood shed. A sitting nook, or sunroom, is present where the addition joins the wing. There is an upper floor in the main block and wing, which includes a hallway on the south side of the plan in the main block; four rooms within the main block, one of which has been converted to a bathroom; and one large room, now the master bedroom, located in the half-story above the wing. A secondary staircase provides access from the wing's upper story of the wing to the dining room. A half story over the workshop area features what was once likely sleeping quarters for a non-family member, such as a seasonal farm laborer.

The front door is of a four-paneled type with arched upper panels; it has a cast brass doorbell set in the center on the interior face. Wood floorboards are aligned east-to-west, parallel to the long side of the entry, and are approximately three-inches wide. The walls and ceiling are plaster-on-lath with a struck plaster crown molding. A decorative plaster ceiling medallion is present on the ceiling, and it serves as a surround for an overhead light fixture. Opposite the front door is the principal staircase. Of the open-stringer type, it rises in a single run to the second floor; it has a turned wood newel post and turned balusters that sustain the handrail. There is a large cast-iron heating register set in the floor immediately in front of the staircase, and there are similar floor registers throughout the first floor.

To the north of the entry hall are the double parlors that align the east side of the main block's plan. Floors there are laid with approximately one-and-one-half-inch-wide wood flooring aligned parallel to the front of the house. Walls and ceiling are finished with plaster, the transition between the two marked by a crown molding. An arch with decorative moldings and brackets divides the parlors. Below each window in these rooms is a paneled wood apron with raised molding. The doorway from the front hallway and that leading to the bathroom at the rear of the plan have matching six-panel doors.

The bathroom is situated to the west of the north parlor, and south of it is a den, located behind the entry hall and the south parlor. The den has built-in wood bookshelves along the north-facing wall and exposed wood "shiplap" paneling on the other three. The door from the bathroom is a six-panel type. Flooring is wood with mostly wide planks aligned north-to-south and parallel to the length of the room, and the ceiling is fitted with wood tongue-and-groove boards. There is a small storage closet located off of the den, beneath the staircase to the second floor.

The den connects to the dining room, located in the wing, through a doorway with a six-paneled wood door. The dining room has thin inch-and-a-half-wide wood flooring aligned east-to-west. The walls and ceiling are finished with plaster. There are built-in cabinets with glazed doors along the west wall, and a cast-iron wood stove on the north side of the room, its pipe running to the ceiling in the northeast corner of the room.

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The dining room has a sitting area, or sunroom, separated from the main room by a wood archway. The sitting area has plaster walls and a linoleum-tile ceiling, molded to look like pressed tin. The floors are the same width as those in the dining room, but the floorboards run perpendicular to the floorboards in the dining room. The sitting area has a plaster ceiling medallion, from which is currently hung a chandelier. The dining room connects to the kitchen—which is located in the addition beyond the wing—through a six-paneled wooden door situated on the west wall. Flooring is linoleum while the walls and ceiling are plaster. There is an exterior door on the south wall, with six glazed lites above two wood panels. A pantry is located to the north of the kitchen; it has linoleum flooring, plaster walls, an acoustic tile ceiling, and built-in cabinets on the walls.

To the west of the kitchen is a workshop space. It has wood flooring with approximately three-inch-wide floorboards oriented perpendicular to the long axis of the room. The walls are fitted with vertical wood flushboard and the ceiling is plaster. To the west of the workshop is a storage area/woodshed with wide wood flooring and exposed wood walls. The east wall has wooden clapboards, which were formerly the exterior wall of the addition. The ceiling is unfinished and spanned by the upper floor joists. There is a wood staircase with open risers leading to the attic area that extends over the addition.

The main block's second-floor plan includes a hallway and four rooms arranged in a square: the southeast and northeast ones serve as bedrooms, the southwest one is a bathroom, and the northwest is currently a sitting room. The second-floor hallway has three-inch wood flooring, which runs east to west and continues throughout the second floor. Walls and ceilings are plaster. The hallway provides immediate access to the bedroom in the wing, one bedroom in the main block, and the bathroom. The two bedrooms, which communicate directly with one another as well as the hall and sitting room, have acoustic tile ceilings and plaster walls. The second-floor bathroom can be accessed through the sitting room or from the hallway at the top of the main staircase.

In the wing, the master bedroom is accessed from the hallway or via the secondary staircase. In the wing, the wood floor runs perpendicular to the floor orientation in the hallway. The ceiling is pressboard and the walls are plaster. The master bedroom has a closet situated adjacent to the stair.

Above the woodshed is an attic, which communicates with a room over the workshop space; it contains a brick chimney, and the walls and ceiling are finished in a horsehair plaster. As for the basement, it is accessible through the kitchen and from grade via an exterior bulkhead. It is unfinished and includes spaces once used for coal storage and food storage.

*Barn (one contributing building)*

The barn consists of five different but attached sections arranged on a north-to-south axis in linear fashion: the main barn, a stall addition, a tack room addition, a dairy/poultry addition, and chicken coop. It is of wood frame construction with a gable roof and rough stone masonry and poured-concrete foundation. The southernmost section is the main barn and hay loft; it is nearly square in footprint, is clad in wood board-and-batten siding and is covered by a metal roof. Immediately to the north is an addition consisting of a stall room, marked by vertical board siding, which extends the footprint of the main barn. A second addition, which likely served as a tack room, extends from this first addition and is marked by novelty siding and a metal roof. North of the tack room is a two-story addition, also clad in novelty siding and having a metal roof. It was formerly used as livestock

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quarters on the first story and a chicken coop on the second. A one-story chicken coop is the northernmost addition and is also outwardly marked by novelty siding and a metal roof. Windows are varied and include six-over-six sash; six-, four- and two-paned sash; and two-over-two sash.

The interior of the main, earliest section of the barn has a timber frame with mortise-and-tenon joinery and both hand-hewn and circular-sawn framing components. A large sliding door provides access to the interior from the driveway, and leads into the center bay, which presumably functioned at one time as a threshing floor. The first addition is a stall room with three metal stanchions; flooring is concrete, except in the center passage leading to the stalls, where it is wood. Walls and ceiling are wood beadboard. Both stalls are accessed through two doors with metal bars over the opening. The second addition, or tack room, is accessed immediately from the main passage of the stall room. The third addition is accessed directly from the tack room - two doors on the northern wall lead to the first and second floors. The first floor is whitewashed and was likely used in association with dairying operations. The second floor, accessed by a quarter-turn wood stairway, accommodates a fully outfitted poultry house. A narrow walkway is separated by chicken wire and wood framing. The fourth addition, the single-story chicken coop, is accessible through the third addition; it is outfitted with fixtures and cages that indicate its use as a chicken coop.

*Integrity Summary*

Changes have been made to the two nominated buildings and their accompanying agricultural landscape since the end of the period of significance, but the property nevertheless collectively retains a sufficient level of physical integrity to convey its significance. In photos dating to ca. 1900, the house appears very similar to its current state. The current vinyl siding closely mimics the horizontal clapboard shown in the photos; although the main block's modillions have been removed, they remain stored on site. The floor plan of the house has not undergone any significant changes, with the exception of the addition of bathrooms, and interior historic-period finishes are also largely intact, inclusive of flooring, baseboards, door and window moldings and trim, plaster work, and doors. The property surrounding the house and barn has lost its orchard and ephemeral kitchen garden, but it retains the spatial arrangements integral to a core farmstead, including house, barn, and also well.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance**

*Overview*

The Hildreth Homestead, located in the Town of Herkimer, Herkimer County, New York, is significant under Criterion C, in the area of Architecture. The nominated house, erected ca. 1860 and expanded subsequently, is a representative example of Italianate-style rural domestic architecture that retains many of its period character-defining features. The barn on the property speaks to agricultural activities especially involving animals, including dairy cows, horses, and chickens. Together the two marked the core of the farm, separate from the fields and pasture, and demonstrate what Sally McMurry has called the “interlocking of household and farmstead.”<sup>1</sup> Architecturally, the Hildreth house embodies distinctive features of the Italianate style as manifested in the mid-nineteenth century period in rural New York. The barn chronicles the evolution of the farm’s agricultural activities with a focus on more domestically-based agriculture often associated with farm women.

*Property Ownership*

The property gained significance during the period between 1860 and 1942 when the Hildreth family owned it. The parcel of land that the Hildreth family occupied was part of Great Lot No. 22 in the Hassenclevers Patent. It is not clear when the land was acquired by Thaddeus Hildreth (1785-1869), though county deed records indicate he had owned other property in the area since the early 1800s. The Hildreth family traces its roots to eighteenth-century New England; the 1860 federal census listed Hildreth’s birthplace as New Hampshire, indicating a familial relation to those early New England Hildreths.<sup>2</sup>

According to the property deeds, Thaddeus Hildreth transferred ownership of what would become known as the “homestead” to his son, Heman J. Hildreth (1827-1894), in 1860.<sup>3</sup> At that time the property consisted of “fifty nine acres more or less.”<sup>4</sup> A separate adjoining parcel of 104 acres owned by William B. Fenner and Eliza A. Fenner was sold to Heman J. Hildreth in 1877 for \$1,812.50. The deed for the Fenner farm refers to the land as by “the public highway,” which indicates that the roadway that would become New York State Route 28 was already well-established and popularly traveled.<sup>5</sup>

While the exact construction timeline of the dwelling and barn remains unclear, it can be inferred that Heman J. Hildreth built the main block of the current house ca. 1860, upon his receipt of the homestead land from his father Thaddeus Hildreth. According to the 1855 New York State census, Thaddeus Hildreth’s house was

<sup>1</sup> Sally McMurry, *Families and Farmhouses in Nineteenth-Century America: Vernacular Design and Social Change* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 68.

<sup>2</sup> Hildreth Family Association, [*Publications*] of the Hildreth Family Association: *Genealogical and Historical Data relating to Richard Hildreth (1605-1693), Freeman 1643, Cambridge and Chelmsford, Mass., Thomas Hildreth (died 1657), of Long Island, Southampton, N.Y.* Hildreth Family Association, [n.d.].

<sup>3</sup> Herkimer County Deeds, Herkimer, NY, Book 79, Page 24.

<sup>4</sup> Herkimer County Deeds, Herkimer, NY, Book 79, Page 24.

<sup>5</sup> Herkimer County Deeds, Herkimer, NY, Book 109, Page 548.

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valued at \$1,000; ten years later his son's house was valued in the state census at \$3,000; in another decade, the house value would increase once again to \$5,000.<sup>6</sup>

By the time Heman J. Hildreth drew up his will on April 19, 1894, he was able to bequeath "my farm known as the (Fenner Farm) consisting of about one hundred (100) acres of land and also my homestead place, consisting of about fifty-seven acres of land" to his son John T. Hildreth (d. 1933). The smaller nominated property, a portion of the "homestead place," which contained the "homestead dwelling and yard garden and barn" was left to his wife, Sophia F. Hildreth (d. 1917), for use during her widowhood. She presumably exercised "the right to use and occupy during her natural life...said homestead, dwelling house and the yard, garden and barn" until her death in 1917.<sup>7</sup>

Heman J. Hildreth left as the executors of his last will and testament his wife Sophia, his son John T. Hildreth, and his daughter, Mary E. Denison. Sophia F. Hildreth and Mary E. Denison officially transferred any of their property rights through quit claim—except for Sophia's right to occupy the house, barn, and adjoining land—to John T. Hildreth, making him the sole owner of the larger farm property.<sup>8</sup> During John T. Hildreth's ownership, several easements were established with the Village of Herkimer and the County of Herkimer to allow access for a water supply pipe line and the reconstruction of a portion of the Herkimer-Middleville County Highway #460.<sup>9</sup>

According to John T. Hildreth's will, drafted in 1929, he took up residence at the nominated property following his mother's death or perhaps even before, occupying both the house and barn with his second wife Nellie Hildreth (d.1952). He bequeathed the "house, home and home property upon which we now live" to Nellie, describing it as: "consisting of the house, garden, barns and chicken houses back of the houses back of the house, and extending north and including the apple orchard, which joins the F. G. Hildreth Farm, said property being located on the west side of the state road, and being the same and identical property which I now occupy, possess and cultivate independent of the farm."<sup>10</sup>

John T. Hildreth specified that the remainder of his real estate—the bulk of the original Hildreth farm property and the old Fenner farm—be sold within five years of his death in 1933.<sup>11</sup> Hence in 1938, Nellie Hildreth transferred the farm property to Mildred M. Wollaber of the Town of Columbia, Herkimer County.<sup>12</sup> In 1942, she filed a petition to sell the house, barn, and remaining property to which she had a life right. This was accomplished through a referee, who sold the property to Bruce Steele that spring, thus ending over 82 years of

<sup>6</sup> New York State Census, 1855, Town of Herkimer, Herkimer County, entry for Thaddeus Hildreth; New York State Census, 1865, Town of Herkimer, Herkimer County, entry for Heman Hildreth; New York State Census, 1875, Town of Herkimer, Herkimer County, entry for Herman (sic) Hildreth.

<sup>7</sup> Herkimer County Deeds, Herkimer, NY, Book 153, Page 564.

<sup>8</sup> Herkimer County Deeds, Herkimer, NY, Book 153, Page 564; Herkimer County Deeds, Herkimer, NY, Book 170, Page 389.

<sup>9</sup> Herkimer County Deeds, Herkimer, NY, Book 288, Page 64; Herkimer County Deeds, Herkimer, NY, Book 291, Page 502; Herkimer County Deeds, Herkimer, NY, Book 302, Page 170.

<sup>10</sup> Herkimer County Wills, Herkimer, NY, Book 54, Page 431.

<sup>11</sup> Herkimer County Deeds, Herkimer, NY, Book 317, Page 220.

<sup>12</sup> Herkimer County Deeds, Herkimer, NY, Book 317, Page 220; Herkimer County Deeds, Herkimer, NY, Book 331, Page 85.

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Hildreth ownership, over a third of which involved the use of the home, barn, and “homeplace” by Hildreth widows.<sup>13</sup>

*Agricultural Context*

The first people of European descent who settled in what would become Herkimer County were Palatine Germans, who came to the area, which had been the territory of the Haudenosaunee people, in 1722. The Town of Herkimer is located in the southern part of the county, in the fertile Mohawk River Valley. The Hildreth Homestead property was originally a part of the Hasenclever Patent, which was 18,000 acres and sold in 1769 to eighteen patentees.<sup>14</sup>

Central New York State has a long and storied agricultural history. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the primary crop grown was wheat, but as wheat cultivation exhausted soils, the nexus of wheat production moved westward, and many farmers in central New York took up dairying. Nineteenth-century New York was the “towering center of the dairy industry,” particularly for cheesemaking.<sup>15</sup> In Herkimer County, “in the mid-nineteenth century, the dairy farmer, and in particular the cheese he produced, became Herkimer’s centerpiece.”<sup>16</sup> The land in Herkimer County was “well suited to raising and keeping cattle, especially milk cows.”<sup>17</sup> The growth of railroads in the region made transportation of dairy products from rural New York to cities more feasible. In 1881, Heman Hildreth granted 0.774 acres of land as a right of way to the Herkimer, Newport & Poland Narrow Gauge Railway Company in exchange for \$532, connecting the Hildreth farm with larger markets.

During the first portion of the property’s period of significance, dairy products were of primary importance to the Hildreths. In 1870, Heman Hildreth owned twenty milk cows and one other head of cattle and owned fifty-eight acres of land; those cows allowed for the production of 400 pounds of butter, 2,500 pounds of cheese, and 8,467 gallons of fresh milk. The farm also produced oats, hay, and potatoes.<sup>18</sup> The farm grew to 160 acres with the addition of the Fenner land purchased in 1877, and by the 1880 census, Heman Hildreth owned forty-five milk cows and fourteen other head of cattle. The farm produced 21,600 gallons of milk sold to off-site creameries and produced 500 pounds of butter. It also produced 100 tons of hay, as well as field crops including oats, corn, potatoes, and orchard products, specifically apples. The 1880 federal census also enumerates Heman Hildreth’s fifty chickens, which produced 150 dozen eggs per year.<sup>19</sup> Additionally, the Hildreths kept honeybees, which the *Herkimer Democrat* noted in 1885.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Herkimer County Deeds, Herkimer, NY, Book 345, Page 420.

<sup>14</sup>“Herkimer County Patent Holders,” Martha S. Magill and Kathleen Teague, last modified March 20, 1998, <https://herkimer.nygenweb.net/herkpatents.html>

<sup>15</sup> Ralph Selitzer, *The Dairy Industry in America* (New York: Magazines for Industry, 1976), 18.

<sup>16</sup> Herkimer County Historical Society, *Herkimer County at 200* (Herkimer, N.Y.: The Herkimer County Historical Society, 1992), 3.

<sup>17</sup> Herkimer County Historical Society, *Herkimer County at 200*, 169.

<sup>18</sup> “Schedule 3 - Productions of Agriculture in District No. 265 in the County of Herkimer in the State of New York,” 1870 United States Census, [www.ancestrylibrary.com](http://www.ancestrylibrary.com), accessed March 24, 2019.

<sup>19</sup> “Schedule 2 - Productions of Agriculture in Herkimer in the County of Herkimer, State of NY,” 1880 United States Census, [www.ancestrylibrary.com](http://www.ancestrylibrary.com), accessed March 24, 2019.

<sup>20</sup> “Mohawk,” *Herkimer Democrat*, August 12, 1885, New York State Historic Newspapers.

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While census data about the Hildreths' agricultural production is listed under Heman's name, his will hints at the important role that his wife Sophia, daughter Mary, and female live-in workers played on the farm, as well as the spatial divide of the larger Hildreth property. Sally McMurry notes in describing the published plans of one upstate New York farmstead, "The farmhouse was embedded in farm work spaces: orchard, bee house, smokehouse, fruit patch, vegetable garden, hog house, and corncrib ... [and] large poultry yard."<sup>21</sup> At the Hildreth property, the well just outside the kitchen door and nearby barn speak to a similar arrangement, which facilitated women's work on the farm. The compact farmstead surrounding the house was conceptually separate from the fields and pastures further away, a fact made clear in Heman's will through his bequest of a life right to that portion of the property to his wife.

Sophia was granted the right to use not only the house upon her husband's death but also the barn. The field crops that the Hildreths cultivated were surely grown away from the "homeplace" bequeathed to Sophia. Furthermore, the purchase of the Fenner farm in 1877 allowed for a significant increase in dairy production, indicating stabling and milking of cows was not limited to the nominated property. However, the sizable quantities of butter and cheese produced, as well as quantities of apples and eggs and the presence of bees, suggest a domestically-oriented agricultural strategy that relied on the work of women, both family members and others.<sup>22</sup> This work would have centered around the house and barn that Sophia received life rights to, and which is the subject of this nomination.

Further supporting this orientation toward female farm work, the Hildreths housed unrelated female workers throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. The 1860 United States Census listed two women not related to the Hildreth family in that household: Mary Weber, age seventeen, born in New York; and Elizabeth Willard, age ten, born in Upper Canada. The 1870 United States Census listed an Amelia Ashman, age twenty-one and of German origin, as a "domestic." The 1875 New York State Census listed Amy B. Fisher, age twenty-three, as a "servant." The 1880 United States Census listed Caroline Raatz, age twenty-four and of German origin, as "domestic." Finally, the 1892 New York State Census listed Catherine Hines, age forty, as "cook."<sup>23</sup> While some of these titles suggest household work, it is likely that agricultural tasks such as butter and cheese production, apple picking, and the collection of eggs and honey were also expected.<sup>24</sup>

Following her husband's death in 1894, Sophia likely continued many of these activities on her own. Her son, John T. Hildreth was, in 1893, working for the Pullman Company, living in Chicago, and involved in a bitter

<sup>21</sup> McMurry, *Families and Farmhouses*, 64.

<sup>22</sup> Joan M. Jensen, *Loosening the Bonds: Mid-atlantic Farm Women, 1750-1850* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 77-128. McMurry speaks about changes in women's farm work in the late nineteenth century, ultimately leading to a de-feminization of agricultural labor. See McMurry, *Families and Farmhouses*, 94-95.

<sup>23</sup> "New York State Census, 1875." Accessed April 18, 2019, [www.ancestrylibrary.com](http://www.ancestrylibrary.com); "New York State Census, 1892." Accessed April 18, 2019, [www.ancestrylibrary.com](http://www.ancestrylibrary.com); "Schedule 1 - 1860 Federal Population Census." Accessed April 19, 2019, [www.ancestrylibrary.com](http://www.ancestrylibrary.com); "Schedule 1 - 1870 Federal Population Census." Accessed April 15, 2019, [www.ancestrylibrary.com](http://www.ancestrylibrary.com); "Schedule 1 - 1880 Federal Population Census." Accessed April 19, 2019, [www.ancestrylibrary.com](http://www.ancestrylibrary.com).

<sup>24</sup> Jensen, *Loosening the Bonds: Mid-atlantic Farm Women*, 36-56.

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divorce from his first wife Ida, which temporarily cost him custody of his daughter Ruby.<sup>25</sup> By 1906, he had apparently returned to Herkimer County; both the Homestead and Fenner farm properties are labeled with his name in the *Herkimer County 1906 Century Atlas*.<sup>26</sup>

John T. Hildreth continued the family dairy business through at least 1920. He also added horse breeding and racing to the farm's activities, receiving a listing in *Wallace's American Trotting Register* in 1901.<sup>27</sup> In 1917, a farm directory noted that John, with his wife Nellie, owned 160 acres of land used for dairy farming, just as his father had in 1880.<sup>28</sup> However, by the 1920s, the center of dairy production in the United States had shifted to the Midwest, and Wisconsin overtook New York as the nation's number one cheese-producing state.<sup>29</sup> Reflective of that trend, John T. Hildreth's occupation was no longer listed as dairy farming in the 1930 census; instead, he identified his occupation as "fruit growing."<sup>30</sup> As early as 1880, the Hildreths had five acres of apple trees on their farm with 160 fruit-bearing trees.<sup>31</sup> By 1930 fruit had become their focus, not milk. The change in the property from a primarily dairy farm to a fruit orchard is reflective of shifting trends in American and New York agriculture in the twentieth century.

If more attention had been paid in the historical record to the female members of the Hildreth family, poultry may have been given as much attention as fruit. When John T. Hildreth drafted his will in 1929, like his father before him, he left the core of the old homestead to his wife for her use while a widow. But he went into greater detail about what the property included. When his mother Sophia was granted rights to the land surrounding the house and barn, the census tells us the family already had an orchard and was raising poultry. However, neither was enumerated in Heman's will. When John prepared to disperse his holdings, he noted specifically, "I give, devise and bequeath to my wife, Nellie Hildreth during her natural life or so long as she shall remain my widow and unmarried, the use, occupation, possession and enjoyment of the house, home and home property upon which we now live, said property, consisting of the house, garden, barns and chicken houses back of the house, and extending north and including the apple orchard, which joins the F.G. Hildreth Farm, said property being located on the west side of the state road, and being the same and identical property which I now occupy, possess and cultivate independent of the farm."<sup>32</sup>

John T. Hildreth's will makes clear that the area immediately surrounding the home and barn had become set apart from the main farm, which contained the Fenner property and the bulk of the original homestead. This core area was an agricultural property, under "cultivation," but its products were distinct from the field crops of

<sup>25</sup> Wayne County, Michigan, Circuit Court, No. 12648, Book 2 of Misc. Records, Page 32; Herkimer County deeds, Herkimer, NY, Book 148, Page 449; "John T. Hildreth," Herkimer Evening Telegram, October 17, 1933, microfilm, 3.

<sup>26</sup> "Herkimer Town," in *Herkimer County 1906* (New York: Century Map Co., 1906).

<sup>27</sup> *Wallace's American Trotting Register: Containing the Pedigrees of Standard Bred Trotters and Pacers and an Appendix of Non-standard Animals*, vol. 15 (1901).

<sup>28</sup> *American Agriculturist Farm Directory and Reference Book of Otsego and Herkimer Counties, New York, 1917* (New York: Orange Judd Company, 1917), 188.

<sup>29</sup> Selitzer, *The Dairy Industry*, 17.

<sup>30</sup> "Fiftieth Census of the United States: 1930, Population Schedule," Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Enumeration District Number 27-27, [www.ancestrylibrary.com](http://www.ancestrylibrary.com), accessed March 24, 2019.

<sup>31</sup> Schedule 2, 1880 US Census.

<sup>32</sup> Herkimer County Deeds, Herkimer, NY, Book 317, Page 220; Herkimer County Surrogate's Office, Book 54, Page 431.

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the larger farm. That John's mother had it under her care during her widowhood and his wife was granted it after his death indicates the role that women played in this domestically-oriented agricultural landscape. Dairying, including the traditionally female tasks of butter- and cheese-making, had once been part of the Hildreths' endeavor. But as time passed, eggs and apples came to dominate. While the orchard no longer survives, the barn, with its multiple additions first for horses and then for chickens, speaks to this transition.

*Architectural Context*

The Hildreth Homestead was built in the mid-nineteenth century in the then-fashionable Italianate style. It additionally incorporates an earlier structure as the addition, Greek Revival in style, which would come to house spaces associated with domestic production, like the kitchen. It is not clear whether the addition represents an earlier house on the property, which was incorporated into the new build, or if it was moved to the site as an addition. Interior changes have obscured evidence that would help solidify the construction chronology.

While architectural elements inspired by Italy were recorded in the American countryside before 1811, the Italianate style was most common between 1840 and 1880.<sup>33</sup> Chronologically, the Italianate style was situated between the classical Greek Revival mode and the late Victorian-era styles of the later nineteenth century; it, along with the Gothic Revival, was born of the mid-century Picturesque movement. Inspired by distant Italian villas and first popularized as a design mode in England, Italianate architecture featured a wide range of manifestations; it was an extremely versatile design mode and one which found equal expression in country and city alike. The style was imported from Europe and "was at once Americanized by reproducing it in wood...with fancy brackets holding up the deep and heavy cornices. As time went on the cornices became more elaborate and heavy, the brackets larger and more fanciful."<sup>34</sup>

The following architectural features on the Hildreth Homestead relate it directly to the Italianate style: overhanging cornices, the decorative wood hood over the front door, brackets, modillions, and the wing's porch. The overhanging cornices and brackets are commonly employed features of the Italianate style. The front porch, or what was commonly termed a verandah or piazza, further embodied the Italianate style, and by mid-century "had become essential to the ideal American house."<sup>35</sup> Porches provided relief from the summer sun while also providing shelter for doorways and sheltered outdoor workspaces.

The house's principal section features a side hall with stairs leading to the second floor, which like the first floor features a hall with rooms on either side, one in the wing and the others in the main block. The rooms on either side of the hall on both the first and second floors are asymmetrical in layout, following contemporary design trends. The building has an overall "L" shape, which is also consistent with Italianate architecture, though in this instance that shape is accounted in part by the building's expansion.<sup>36</sup> As such, the Hildreth house

<sup>33</sup> W. Barksdale Maynard, *Architecture in the United States, 1800-1850* (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 2002), 180; John J.G. Blumenson, *Identifying American Architecture* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1981), 36-37.

<sup>34</sup> Henry Lionel Williams and Ottalie K. Williams, *A Guide to Old American Houses 1700-1900*, (New York: A.S. Barnes and Co, 1962), 124-125.

<sup>35</sup> Maynard, *Architecture in the United States*, 182.

<sup>36</sup> James C. Massey and Shirley Maxwell, "Italianate Architecture and History," *Old House Online*, August 10, 2011, <https://www.oldhouseonline.com/house-tours/all-about-italianates>.

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demonstrates the continual process of adaption, reuse, and incremental upgrades typical of nineteenth-century New York farmhouses.

The nearby barn embodies many distinctive characteristics of New York barns in the nineteenth century. The main section is an English or three-bay barn, which was a common form in central New York and was used on early farms with diverse products. English barns typically have gabled roofs with lofts, are divided into three interior sections, and are framed with heavy timbers that use mortise and tenon joinery.<sup>37</sup> All of these characteristics are portrayed in the main section of the Hildreth barn. The exterior board-and-batten siding on the original section, as opposed to traditional vertical-board siding, fits with trends farmers in New York used for building agricultural buildings and shows the distinctive influence of the Picturesque movement.<sup>38</sup> The main level of the barn would have been used for livestock, while the loft was used for storage of hay or farm equipment.<sup>39</sup> There is a hay chute on the eastern side of the loft and two hay doors on the west side of the loft, documenting former functions. Evidence of livestock in the main level remains in the form of three stanchions in the lower level of the main section and stables for horses in an added section. The tack room and horse stalls in the additional sections were most likely added under the ownership of John T. Hildreth, whose favorite hobby was raising horses.<sup>40</sup> There is also harness racing equipment in the loft, which further supports the racing interests of John T. Hildreth. The Hildreth name is handwritten above the doorway entrance to the second floor of the third addition.

The two last additions to the barn, which date to the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, were used for chickens, thereby illustrating the growing importance of poultry raising in New York in the early 1900s. These poultry-raising parts of the barn have large two-over-two windows to allow for ample light, and the interior spaces are outfitted with nesting boxes. Evidence exists in the two-story addition of insulation measures that acted to keep the chickens warm in the winter months. With the economic importance of dairy in the region, coupled with evidence of changes to accommodate horse racing and poultry production, the barn embodies the evolution and transformation of regional agricultural endeavors.

<sup>37</sup> Cynthia G. Falk, *Barns of New York: Rural: Rural Architecture of the Empire State* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2012), 30.

<sup>38</sup> Falk, *Barns of New York*, 37.

<sup>39</sup> Falk, *Barns of New York*, 37-38.

<sup>40</sup> "John T. Hildreth," *Herkimer Evening Telegram*, October 17, 1933.

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Verbal Boundary Description

The nomination boundary is indicated by a heavy line on the enclosed parcel map with scale.

Boundary Justification

Throughout Hildreth ownership, the 57-acre “homestead” property and the 104-acre adjoining Fenner Farm, purchased by the Hildreths in 1877, were considered separate farms. Heman J. Hildreth’s 1894 will clearly differentiated the two, although both were bequeathed to his son John T. Hildreth. A further mental, if not legal, division was made separating a smaller portion of the homestead property surrounding the house and barn, which is the subject of this nomination. Heman Hildreth bequeathed life use of “my homestead dwelling house and yard, barn and garden connected therewith” to his wife Sophia.

John T. Hildreth’s 1929 will, probated in 1933, provides further evidence of the separate nature of the house, barn, and land being nominated. He recorded: “I give, devise and bequeath to my wife, Nellie Hildreth during her natural life or so long as she shall remain my widow and unmarried, the use, occupation, possession and enjoyment of the house, home and home property upon which we now live, said property, consisting of the house, garden, barns and chicken houses back of the house, and extending north and including the apple orchard, which joins the F.G. Hildreth Farm, said property being located on the west side of the state road, and being the same and identical property which I now occupy, possess and cultivate independent of the farm.” During Hildreth ownership, the area being nominated had become conceptually separated from the remainder of the Hildreth farm property.

This separation became binding in 1942, following a legal battle in the Herkimer County Supreme Court, when a referee sold the 5.10 acre lot surrounding the house and barn to Bruce Steele (Book 345, Page 420). With this action, Nellie Hildreth, Ruby Botchford and Elizabeth Cameron (John T. Hildreth and Nellie Hildreth’s daughters), and their heirs gave up all remaining rights to this portion of the homestead property including the house and barn. The remainder of the original 57-acre Hildreth homestead, both east and west of State Highway 28, had become functionally incorporated in what was once known as the Fenner Farm. That larger farm includes at the time of this nomination a modern Cape Cod house and twentieth-century single-story dairy barns, and it has been carved up to include a number of residential lots around its perimeter. The 5.10 acres surrounding the Hildreth house was subsequently subdivided again in 2013 to create two lots along State Highway 28. The tract containing the house and barn is the subject of this nomination.

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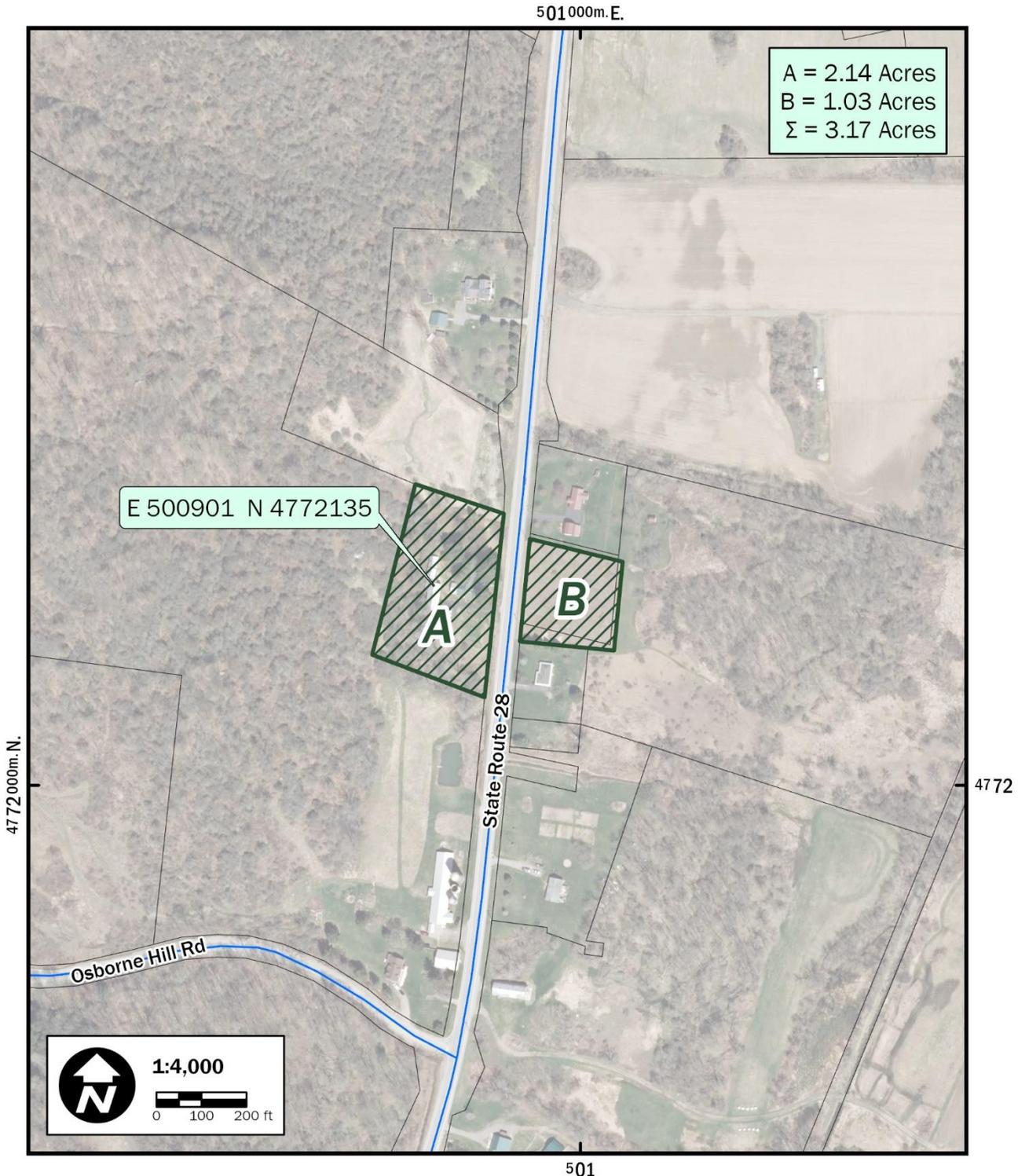
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Hildreth Homestead  
Town of Herkimer, Herkimer County, New York

4083 State Highway 28  
Herkimer, NY 13350



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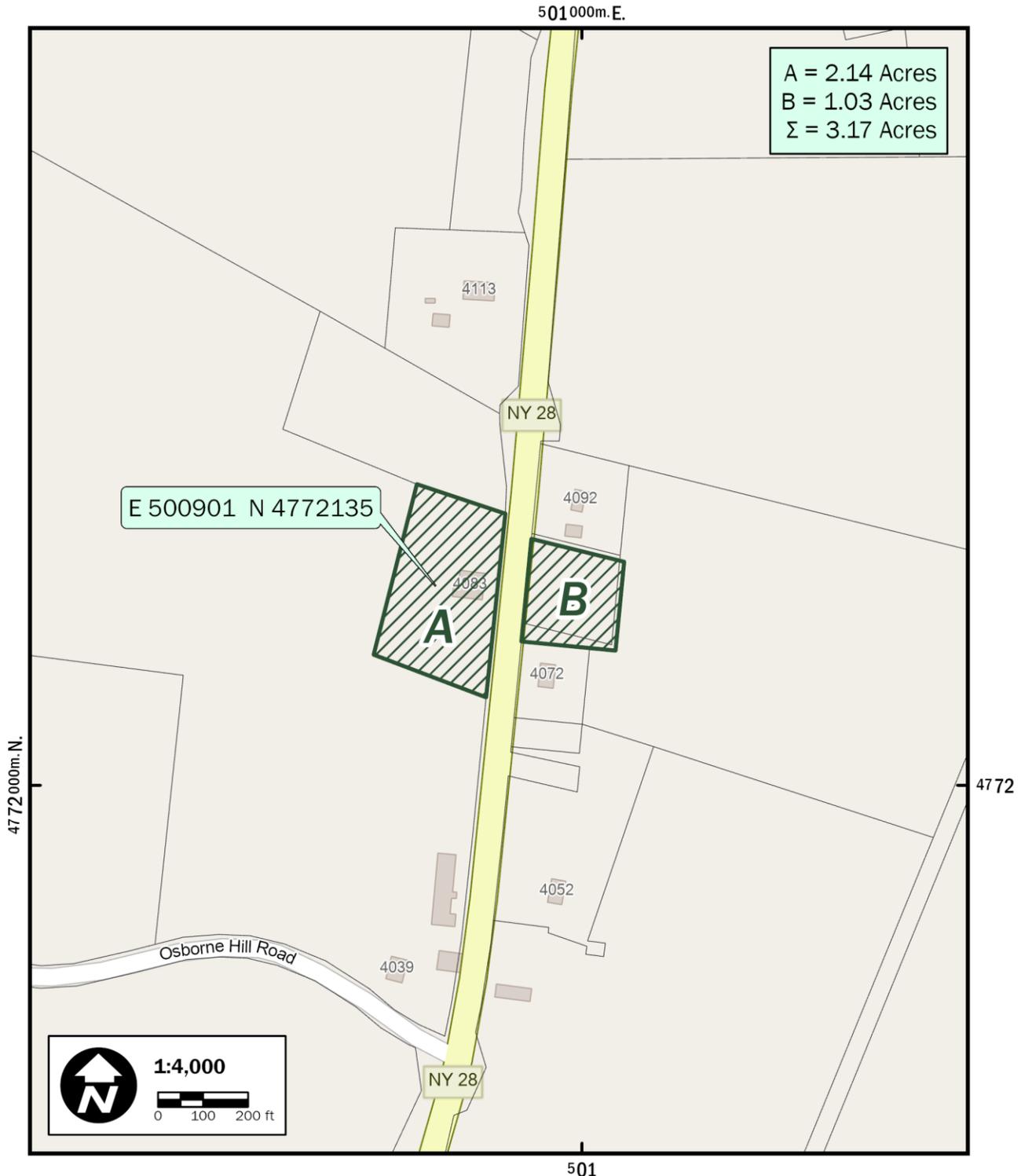
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**Herkimer County, New York**  
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Hildreth Homestead  
Town of Herkimer, Herkimer County, New York

4083 State Highway 28  
Herkimer, NY 13350



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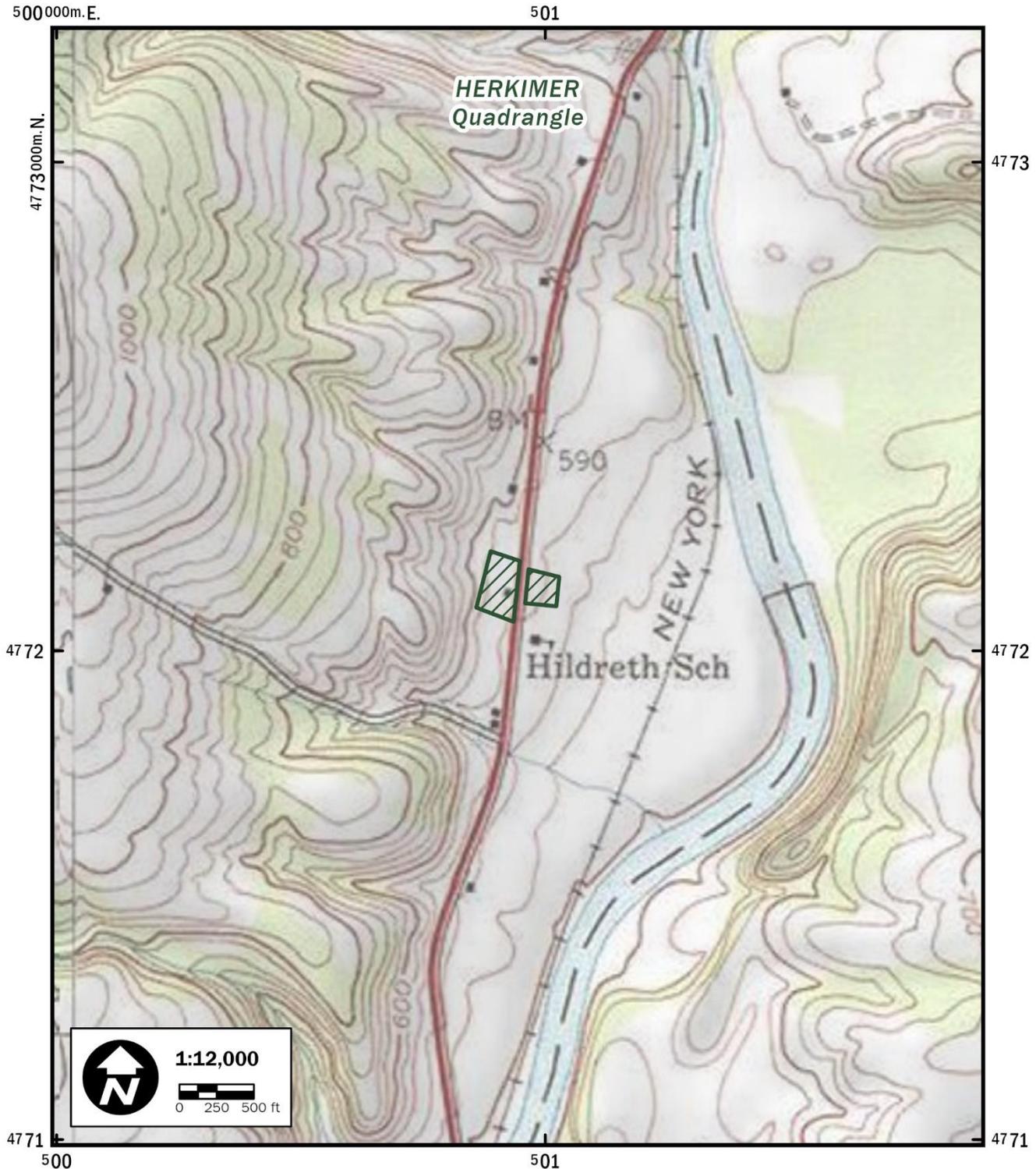
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**Hildreth Homestead**  
Town of Herkimer, Herkimer County, New York

4083 State Highway 28  
Herkimer, NY 13350



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Additional Information

Name of Property: Hildreth Homestead  
City or Vicinity: Herkimer  
County: Herkimer State: NY  
Photographer: Cynthia Falk  
Date Photographed: April 18, 2019

NY\_Herkimer Co\_Hildreth Homestead\_0001  
view of Hildreth Homestead showing the east-facing façade and the original section of the main barn.

NY\_Herkimer Co\_Hildreth Homestead\_0002  
view of Hildreth Homestead showing the east-facing façade including the Italianate style main section, wing and Greek Revival addition.

NY\_Herkimer Co\_Hildreth Homestead\_0003  
View of Hildreth Homestead showing the façade and north elevation of the Italianate style main block.

NY\_Herkimer Co\_Hildreth Homestead\_0004  
View of west elevation of main section and woodshed addition.

NY\_Herkimer Co\_Hildreth Homestead\_0005  
View of west elevation woodshed addition and south elevation.

NY\_Herkimer Co\_Hildreth Homestead\_0006  
Interior view of the façade door and foyer.

NY\_Herkimer Co\_Hildreth Homestead\_0007  
Interior view of the main section showing staircase to second floor.

NY\_Herkimer Co\_Hildreth Homestead\_0008  
Interior view of double parlor in the main section.

NY\_Herkimer Co\_Hildreth Homestead\_0009  
Interior view of dining room with sitting room bay.

NY\_Herkimer Co\_Hildreth Homestead\_0010  
View of east and south elevation of main barn.

NY\_Herkimer Co\_Hildreth Homestead\_0011  
View of east elevation including main barn and additions.

NY\_Herkimer Co\_Hildreth Homestead\_0012  
View of east elevation of barn additions.

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NY\_HerkimerCo\_Hildreth Homestead\_0013  
Interior view of main barn.

NY\_Herkimer Co\_Hildreth Homestead\_0014  
Interior view of chicken coop on second floor of the tack room addition.



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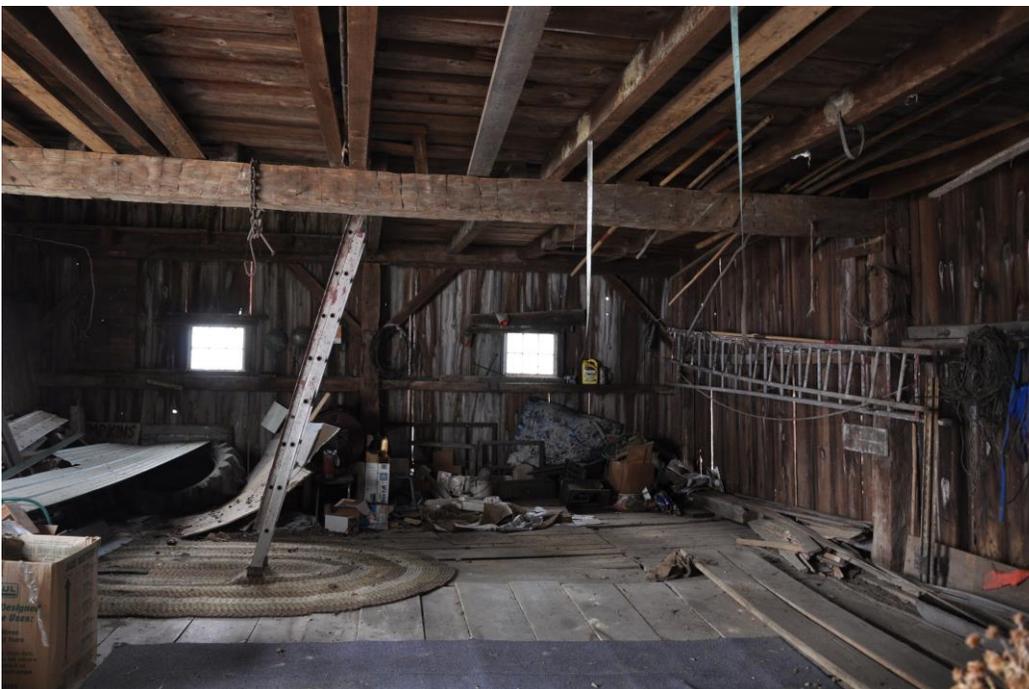


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