

FILE COPY

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Rohrer, Joseph J., Farm
other names/site number Rohrer Place

2. Location

street & number 24394 County Road 40 N/A not for publication
city, town Goshen vicinity
state IN code IN county Elkhart code 039 zip code 46526

3. Classification

| Ownership of Property | Category of Property | Number of Resources within Property | |
|---|--|-------------------------------------|---------------------|
| | | Contributing | Noncontributing |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private | <input type="checkbox"/> building(s) | <u>5</u> | <u>0</u> buildings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-local | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district | <u>0</u> | <u>0</u> sites |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-State | <input type="checkbox"/> site | <u>1</u> | <u>1</u> structures |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal | <input type="checkbox"/> structure | <u>0</u> | <u>0</u> objects |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> object | <u>6</u> | <u>1</u> Total |

Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. See continuation sheet.

Patricia K. Kaban 1-4-90
Signature of certifying official Date
Indiana Department of Natural Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. 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 the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE:
processing, storage, animal
facilities
DOMESTIC: single dwelling

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling
VACANT/NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

EARLY REPUBLIC: Federal
OTHER: Bank Barn

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE
walls WOOD: weatherboard
roof STONE: slate
other ASPHALT
STONE: fieldstone

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS

See continuation sheet

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Section No. 7 Page 1 Joseph J. Rohrer Farm

The Joseph J. Rohrer Farm is located in rural Harrison Township in Elkhart County. The farm is surrounded on two sides by agricultural fields, on the west by the Christner Gravel Company, and County Road 40 is the northern boundary. The farm is situated about 200 feet off the road (photo 1). The driveway leads past the house and the old house (photo 2) to the barnyard, where there are a large barn, a corn crib, and a milk house (photo 3). Just south of the house are the chicken house and the smoke house (photo 4). Of these, there are five contributing buildings (the house, the old house, the barn, the chicken house, and the smoke house), one contributing structure (the corn crib), and one non-contributing structure (the milk house). The layout of the farm is shown in sketch A.

The house, constructed in 1858, is a two story building with a side gable roof, and a three bay facade. The foundation is stone; the roof is slate; and the exterior walls have clapboard siding. The house is of timber frame construction. Main structural members are joined by mortise and tenon and pegged (photos 5 and 6). Old, hand made, square headed nails were also used in the construction.

There is a one story, five posted, segmental arched, wood porch which runs the length of the facade. This porch does not appear to be original; its date of construction is not known. Windows on the house are generally double hung with six lights over six. Most of the openings are original, though all of the window sashes have been replaced. Window openings that have been altered are the window on the southernmost bay of the east (main) facade, which has been replaced by a double window; and the window on the southernmost bay of the west facade, which has been replaced by one large window (photo 7). It is thought that these windows were added during a 1950 or 1951 remodeling. Other windows on the original part of the house are two small attic windows which flank an interior brick chimney (not the original chimney, but rebuilt in the same location) on the south side of the house (photo 8). There are identical attic windows on the north side of the house (photo 2).

One of the most distinct stylistic features of the house is the front door surround (photo 3), a typical Federal detail with sidelights and an elliptical sunburst fan. Other details include a wide fascia and cornice returns (photo 8).

The house has a one story kitchen addition on the south side (photo 8). This addition, which is actually an expansion, and

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remodeling of a summer kitchen, was probably built during the 1950's remodeling.

The addition has clapboard siding, windows similar to those on the original part of the house, and a door which opens off the south side. There is a brick, exterior chimney on the south side. The roof of the addition, which was originally flat, was changed to a gable roof after a chimney fire.

The interior of the house has been slightly altered in configuration. It most likely originally had two rooms on each side of the central entry and stairway on the first story, with an essentially identical plan on the second story. There is evidence of a wall which was taken out in the north bedroom, which reveals that the room was originally two, with a doorway between (photo 10). On the first story, a bathroom, two closets, and an interior stairway to the basement have been added, resulting in the alteration of the first story southwest room. It is assumed that the large room on the south side of the first story of the house was originally two rooms, and that a wall was removed, as was done in the large second story bedroom. Since this room is now carpeted, and the ceiling has been replastered, no evidence of this is revealed.

The northwest room of the first story is unaltered, except for the addition of a door for a closet which was created from part of the hall. Significant features of this room include original walnut paneling (photo 11). This beautiful paneling, which had been painted, is currently being restored. It is recalled by the present occupant that some of the other rooms had similar paneling, which was removed and burned during the 1950's remodeling. The original hardwood floor is underneath a layer of plywood in this room and will also be restored, as will the floor in the large upstairs bedroom. Some of the original floor has been replaced by a flagstone floor in the entry (see photo 12).

The basement and the attics of the house are virtually unaltered and reveal the structure of the house.

A few feet in front of the house is the garage, which was the original house on the property (the "old house"). The old house is of stone and wood construction and has a gable roof. The roof has asphalt shingles, underneath which can be seen old wood shingles. Part of the building has vertical board siding. There are several small windows. There is a garage door on the south side. The interior of this building has

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Joseph J. Rohrer Farm

two small rooms, one with a fireplace; and a garage section. It is difficult to discern the exact original appearance of the building, but it is thought that the two small rooms are original, and that the other section was added later, possibly for use as a storage shed or wagon shed, and that the garage door was added sometime during the automobile era (photo 2; sketch B).

To the southwest of the house are the smoke house and the chicken house (photo 4). The smoke house has vertical board siding and a gable roof. There is a door on the east side. A group of three windows has been added to the south side. The chicken house has clapboard siding, a shed roof, and several double hung, six over six windows. The door is on the east side.

The milk house, the corncrib, and the barn are to the south of the house. The milk house is of concrete construction and is assumed to be a recent structure. It is the only building on the property determined to be non-contributing to the historic farm.

The corn crib is of timber frame construction, has a gable, asphalt covered roof, and both vertical and horizontal wood siding. There is a large, sliding door on the west side. In plan, it is 14 feet (east-west) by 28 feet (north-south). The interior is divided into three bays. The central bay is an open area, and the end bays are the cribs.

The last structure is the large bank barn. It is 74 feet (east-west) by 44 feet (north-south) in plan. The building has vertical wood siding, a stone foundation, and a tin gable roof. There are several small, multi-paned windows. The barn has three stories. There is a large sliding door on the south side, where access to the second level is provided by way of built up earth; and another small entrance to the lower level on the north side. The second level is divided into three large bays, designed to house horses and equipment. The loft was designed for the storage of hay. The lower level is set up for a dairy operation. The barn is of timber frame construction. A detail of the construction is shown in photo 13. The structural members of the barn, some of which span its width, are incredibly massive, having been hewn from the large trees of a virgin forest, cleared for farming. In the east gable on the exterior is "J.J. Rohrer" and the date, "1861." On the north side of the barn is "Josiah Rohrer" (son of Joseph J.).

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)
AGRICULTURE
ARCHITECTURE
EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT

Period of Significance
Ca. 1854-1900

Significant Dates
Ca. 1854
1858
1861

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Significant Person
N/A

Architect/Builder
unknown

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS

See continuation sheet

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Joseph J. Rohrer Farm

The Joseph J. Rohrer Farm is a significant representation of a 19th century farm. The buildings which comprise the farm are: the original house, constructed about 1854; a Federal style house, constructed in 1858; the barn, constructed in 1861; a smoke house, a corncrib, and a chicken house, all 19th century structures; and a milk house, of fairly recent construction, which does not contribute to the historic character of the property. The Rohrer Farm represents a way of life and a type of farming operation that changed after the turn of the century. An example of this type, with so few intrusions, is uncommon in Elkhart County, and in Indiana. The two dwellings have additional significance: the original house is significant for its association with the settlement of Harrison Township; and the 1858 house is one of few Federal style houses in Elkhart County.

The property was evaluated within the following historic contexts: Agriculture in Elkhart County, 1850-1900; Early Architecture of Elkhart County, late 1820's-1860; and Settlement of Harrison Township, 1840-1860. The Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory, conducted in Elkhart County in 1977, and histories of Elkhart County, were used in establishing these historic contexts.

From the time Elkhart County was first settled in the 1820's until late in the 19th century, farming was the principal occupation, as it was in Indiana in general. It was back breaking work in the early days and most farmers were lucky if they could produce enough for their own families. Between 1850 and 1900, farming was still the way of life for most people in the county. But the period was a transitional one, in which farming changed from subsistence into a real business.

The end of this period marked the beginning of a "golden age of farming." Technological improvements, scientific advancements, and market demands had meshed, making farming more profitable. The character of farming began an irrevocable change in this new age. Other industries became as important to the county and state economies as farming had been. The number of people involved in farming began to decline gradually, as fewer hands were required to produce a larger amount of goods on less land.

Many factors, such as development of transportation routes, inventions of new equipment, as well as agricultural research and education, were responsible for the changes in agriculture during the 1850-1900 period. The railroads, for

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example, were first routed through Elkhart County in the 1850's. This gave farmers markets for surplus goods. It was during this period that iron and steel plows replaced wooden ones. Mechanical threshers, particular important for Elkhart County, where wheat was a principal crop, were in general use by the beginning of the period. Tractors came on the scene near the end of the period. Breeding, processing, and soil conservation techniques were all greatly improved. Agricultural journals, Farmers' Institutes, and the Grange, as well as other agricultural organizations, were also started during these years.

The Rohrer Farm has a high degree of integrity for an Elkhart County farm of this period. The owners seem to have resisted changes that would transform the appearance of other farms after the turn of the century. Most other early Elkhart County farms have been altered to a great extent, and have many 20th century intrusions. The Rohrer Farm is remarkable for the survival of so many 19th century buildings which illustrate the lifestyle of a early Elkhart County farm family.

The farm, larger than average for the day, consisted of 200 acres purchased by Rohrer in 1853. It was a diverse operation. The barn is set up to house dairy cows and other stock, as well as equipment and hay. There is also a smoke house, a corn crib, and a chicken house. Probably wheat, corn, and hay were among the crops grown. Corn and hay would have been grown to feed the stock. Most other products were for the family's consumption. There was most likely a surplus of wheat, which provided cash for taxes, new equipment, and miscellaneous expenses. This would have been a typical farm in Elkhart County for period. Towards the end of the 19th century, there began in the county a concentration on dairying, which had become profitable with the improvement of breeding, feeding, and processing methods. This is reflected in silos and newer, larger barns on many farms.

The architectural history of Elkhart County dates from the 1820's, when the county was first settled. Eighteen-sixty is an approximate cut off date for early construction techniques and early 19th century styles (Federal, Greek Revival, and Gothic Revival). The Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory identifies only two Federal style houses, other than the Rohrer House, in Elkhart County (Elkhart Township #479 and Harrison Township #514). There are a number of houses identified in the inventory as having been constructed

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during the early period, but these are Greek Revival, Gothic Revival, or simple, unstylistic dwellings. The reason for so few Federal houses is probably because there were so few people in Elkhart County during the time that the style was most popular. Pioneers who entered the Indiana through northern routes oftened bypassed the northern counties in favor of better farmland in Illinois. Even though the first settlers arrived in the county in the 1820's, there were fewer than 1,000 people in 1830, and only 6,660 in 1840. By this time, the Greek Revival Style was in vogue, and the Federal style was waning in popularity. All three of the Federal houses are significant as rare Elkhart County examples of the style.

The settlement period for Harrison Township, approximately 1840 to 1860, starts later than for the County in general. Harrison Township was in the southern part of the county, removed from the Elkhart River and other transportation routes. The southern part of the county was also swampy. These factors made the township less desirable for settlement than the northern part of the county. Most of the early settlers of Harrison Township, of German descent, came from Pennsylvania. Many others of English descent came from the Carolinas and Virginia. They likely came - from these older areas, where the land had been subdivided, and the soil spent from abusive farming techniques - seeking larger farms, with better soil. What they got was not prime farmland; rather, at this late date, they got what northern Indiana had to offer: swamplands that had to be drained and cleared.

The original house on the property, probably constructed shortly after Joseph J. Rohrer purchased the farm, in 1853, and married, in 1854, is significant as one of the earliest extant houses in Harrison Township, and as perhaps the only example of an old home which was later replaced by a larger house. Each pioneer family put up a small, often temporary, shelter before undertaking the enormous task of clearing the land. Later, the dwelling was usually abandoned in favor of a larger house. Very few of these original houses survive on contemporary Elkhart County farms. The original Rohrer house is interesting as an example, in construction and layout, of a typical German pioneer house, like many seen in Pennsylvania. Joseph J. Rohrer, who most likely built the house himself, was of German descent, and a native of Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

The Rohrer Farm remained in the same family until the 1950's, when it was purchased by the present owner, Christner Gravel

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Section No. 8 Page 4 Joseph J. Rohrer Farm

Company.

The Rohrer Farm was inexplicably omitted from the Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory. The appearance of the farm is, today, the same as it was 11 years ago, when the survey was conducted. Since there are many other farms included in the inventory which have less integrity than the Rohrer Farm, it appears that the omission was an oversight.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Elkhart County Atlas, 1937.

Elkhart County Land Records.

Illustrated Historical Atlas of Elkhart County, Indiana. Chicago: Higgins, Belden, and Company, 1879.

Gordon, Leon M. II. "The Influence of River Transportation on St. Joseph and Elkhart Counties, 1830-60," Indiana Magazine of History, XLVI. Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1950.

Plat Book of Elkhart County, Indiana. Chicago: George A. Ogle and Company, 1892.

See continuation sheet

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

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 2.3

UTM References

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Zone Easting Northing

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Starting at a point approximately 488 feet east and 265 feet south of the point which defines the northwest corner of the northeast quarter of Section 34, Township 36 North, Range 5 East; thence 360 feet south; thence 56 feet east; thence 248 feet south; thence 144 feet east; thence 278 feet north; thence 24 feet west; thence 330 feet north; thence 176 feet west to the point of beginning.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary for the historic property has been established on the basis of historic fence lines and tree lines. The boundary encompasses land directly relating to the historic use of the buildings. No agricultural fields have been included.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Laura Thayer, Historic Preservation Consultant

organization _____ date March 15, 1988

street & number 3905 N. 500 W. telephone 812/372-6806

city or town Columbus state IN zip code 47201

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Standard Atlas of Elkhart County. Chicago: George A. Ogle
and Company, 1915.

Begley, Phyllis. Interview, 27 January, 1988.