

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 for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. 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 certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

historic name Brownell-Cornell-Gibbs Farmstead
other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 606 Groveside Rd (and 3 Pine Hill Rd) not for publication
city or town Pittstown vicinity
state New York code NY county Rensselaer code _____ zip code 12028

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,
I hereby certify that this X nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.
In my opinion, the property X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:
___ national ___ statewide X local

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official Date

Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:
___ entered in the National Register ___ determined eligible for the National Register
___ determined not eligible for the National Register ___ removed from the National Register
___ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property
 (Check as many boxes as apply.)

Category of Property
 (Check only **one** box.)

Number of Resources within Property
 (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	private
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

<input type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
4	0	buildings
0	0	sites
1	0	structures
0	0	objects
5	0	Total

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

Pittstown Farmsteads

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC, single dwelling
AGRICULTURE, storage
AGRICULTURE, agricultural field
AGRICULTURE, animal facility
AGRICULTURE, agricultural outbuilding

Current Functions
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC, single dwelling
AGRICULTURE, storage
AGRICULTURE, agricultural field
AGRICULTURE, animal facility
AGRICULTURE, agricultural outbuilding

7. Description

Architectural Classification
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

MID-19th CENTURY

Materials
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: stone; concrete block (replacement)
 walls: wood

 roof: asphalt; metal
 other: _____

Narrative Description

Summary Paragraph

The Brownell farmstead is located in the Groveside section of the eastern part of the Town of Pittstown, Rensselaer County, New York. This area lies within Sawyer's Third Tract of the Pittstown Patent, which was platted in oblong rectangular lots of about 125 acres each with their short ends on the north and south and their

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long sides on the east and west. The property occupied all of Lot 143 during the historic period. The 24-acre portion of the lot north of Pine Hill Road was divided off in 1980 by Charles and Lois Cornell when they deeded the property to their daughter and son-in-law.¹ They built a house there soon after. This parcel is encompassed by this nomination for its historic association with the farmstead.

Narrative Description

The historic buildings of the Brownell farm are located at the intersection of Pine Hill Rd and Groveside Rd (CR 109). The latter highway parallels several south-flowing tributaries of the Sunkauissia Creek, which flows generally westward into the Hudson River watershed. The house, located close to the east side of the highway (about 600' above sea level), overlooks the valley. A row of sugar maples between the house and Groveside Rd mark the former east side of the highway, which was moved westward to straighten a sharp curve in the 1987. The outbuildings are located behind and slightly below the grade of the house, south of Pine Hill Rd and east of Groveside Rd. The land is roughly half woodland and half cropland, the latter mainly in hay. The land is fenced using posts and wire. For the purposes of this description, Groveside Rd, directions will use cardinal points of the compass.

House (built ca.1800-1825; contributing): is composed of a two-story, gable-roofed rectangular plan main block on a banked foundation with a large, two-story woodshed attached to its southeast corner. The long walls of both the house and the woodshed face Groveside Rd. The woodshed's low, level foundation has been replaced with cement blocks. Its top plate is about the same height as the ceiling of the first floor of the house. A single-story, hip-roofed addition (added 1943) rests on a steeply banked, concrete foundation adjoining the south gable end of the house. The north, south, and west sides of the house as well as the woodshed and glazed porch have wood clapboard siding. The east side of the house has wide cut, wood novelty siding put on in 1942. The roof is clad in asphalt shingles.

The Federal-period house exterior appears to have been partially remodeled in the first half of the twentieth century using a classically inspired Craftsman-style aesthetic. The north gable end of the house retains a Federal-style full return, fairly deep eaves, and delicate pilasters with a fretwork detail applied just below the caps. The tympanum, however, has paired, louvered, quarter-moon vents, which appear to go with the remodeling. The south gable end may retain its earlier appearance with a pair of squared attic windows containing four-light sash in the tympanum and plain cornerboards.

The main entrance is located just north of the center of the main block on the west façade. It is composed of a single-width opening with a Craftsman-style door and matching storm door flanked by four-light sidelights set above clapboarded panels. A plain frieze adorned by a simple ogee molding surmounts the door and sidelights. A narrow wood valance projects above the frieze and extends beyond its ends.

The fenestration plan is slightly irregular. On the three-bay north façade, windows in two of the three bays are set closer to each other than the remaining windows. All align vertically. In the west façade, the windows also align vertically, with two sets of single windows south of the door. A third aligns with the doorway, but the remaining section north of the door has no openings. On the east façade, the windows do not align vertically. The window sizes and sash configurations vary too. The oldest sash—twelve-over-eight wood ones—are located in the banked basement in the east wall. The most recent ones, one-over-one wood sash, are in the upper story of the same façade in small openings that appear of recent construction and do not align vertically with other openings. The largest number of sash, however, are two-over-two wood ones in locations characteristic of

¹ *Book of Deeds 1321/24.* (Troy, New York: Rensselaer County Clerk's Office)

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fenestration plans dating to the house construction period through the early 1900s. Although two-over-twos were most popular before 1900, the reuse of the wood twelve-over-eight sash from the main house in the hen house (built 1936) could date the present sash in the house as an atypically late use of two-over-two sash.

The interior plan of the house suggests at least two early nineteenth-century building phases. It incorporates two kitchen hearths, each with a brick bake oven. These are stacked one above the other in the basement and on the first floor on the south wall of the main block of the house. The basement kitchen is the only finished room on that level of the house. Its southeast corner is framed, and an exterior entrance with an early period door is located near the east corner of the south wall. The kitchen hearth, which retains its very plain trim scheme is placed west of the doorway. Two large windows with period twelve-over-eight wood sash face east. An ancient and simple stair from the northwest corner of the first floor descends to the kitchen door in the north wall. The northeast corner of the basement is unfinished storage space.

The first floor plan in the main block has two large rooms. The one with the second kitchen hearth located in the southeast corner spans most of the width of the house. The other is a more formal chamber in the northeast corner. The stair to the upper story is stacked above the cellar stair in the northwest corner, accounting for lack of windows in the north end of the west façade of the house. The mantel on the first floor hearth is more decorative than the one in the older kitchen below, but the tool marks on it suggest that this trim work dates to the early twentieth-century renovations.

The addition on the south wall is entered through a door in its west façade. Paired windows on the west and south walls retain period wood sash with three vertically oriented lights in the upper sash with single-light sash below. The house interior is being remodeled with a new kitchen on the first floor and bathroom.

The footprint of two-story frame woodshed (built ca.1810-1835) is nearly as large as the house. Its frame is built of heavy hewn timbers joined using mortise-and-tenon construction. The roof has sawn rafters, lapped and pinned at the ridge line. The building has a metal roof and wood novelty siding on the north, east, and south walls, which matches that on the east side of the house. The west wall is sided with wood clapboards. A large opening with an elliptical arch cut using three straight lines is nearly centered on the east wall. This retains no door. A second opening, not quite as wide, with a massive door, is located nearly opposite in the west wall. The door has a Z-batten and is hung using very long hinges with bean ends. A narrow door, which appears to be of later date is located on the east side in the north bay.

The first floor of the wood shed is a single open space with a dirt floor. A simple open stair composed of treads and stringers abuts the west wall north of the door to reach the upper story. There are two finished rooms, one spanning the southern third of the building and a second smaller room on the east wall. These retain deteriorated plaster on split lath and very plain board trim. The window in the east wall of the south wall retains a period twelve-over-eight wood sash. This room also retains remnants of a small stove chimney, but the stack was removed in a later roofing episode. Two additional openings in the east wall also have two-over-two sash like most of those in the house.

A large stone slab covers a well dug in the sheltered, low-lying space between the south end of the house and north wall of the wood shed.

Threshing barn (built ca.1800; contributing): The side-gabled frame barn (ca.1800) faces onto a circular drive arching off Pine Hill Rd east of the house. The ridgeline of its steeply pitched roof runs east-west. A large, single-story, shed-roofed leanto projects from the west end wall; a second, smaller shed-roofed addition projects from this leanto's south wall. A gable-roofed frame milk house (ca.1960) with wood clapboard siding built on a poured concrete foundation projects from the long wall facing the road. A recently added open shed-roofed leanto spans the south wall of the barn.

The three-bay main block of the barn is its oldest section. The hewn frame of heavy timbers is mortised

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and tenoned, and its widely spaced hewn common rafters are lapped and pegged at the ridgeline. The doors to the threshing floor, located in the wide (19') center bay, are in the north and south long walls. The framing for large paired doors survives, but the south opening has been boarded over and the north opening now has a sliding door reached via the low earthen ramp piled against the stone foundation. The boarded over door is largely hidden by a recently built open, shed-roofed leanto spanning the width and nearly the height of the south wall. On the north side, a narrow pent roof extends the roof face over the recently resided (wood novelty siding) wall and new sliding doors. A narrow door is located west of the larger opening, designed to allow quick access to the mow.

The heavy threshing floor is raised above the floors of the flanking east and west stable bays. The ceilings of each of the stable bays are about a half-story higher than the threshing floor, and the vertical spaces on each side of the threshing floor rising to those ceilings are enclosed with board walls. A ladder to the mow, probably dating to the barn's construction, is mortised in above the east wall.

The stable area at the east end, outfitted with wooden stanchions for about a dozen cows, is reached through two doors—both wide enough to accommodate cows—in the gable wall. While the framing in the mow is typically English, the large scale of the joists and frequency of the posts in this area suggest Dutch influence, as does the wood clapboard siding nailed to studding mortised into the frame. The stable at the west end of the building, once used as a sheep shed, is entered via a walkout bay in the north long wall, and is currently used to house machinery. The foundation here has been replaced with cinder blocks. The framing here also displays the same heavy joists and frequency of posts as the east end. The single-story, shed-roofed leanto (added ca.1840-50) spans the west gable wall, and a still lower shed-roofed leanto is attached to that leanto's south wall. Large, paired period doors with Z-battens are centered in the north wall of the leanto, which is referred to as the wagon shed. Like the gable ends of the main structure, the sheep shed and its leanto retain very weathered, probably original, wood clapboard siding and corrugated metal roofs. The original weight, width, and possibly color (red oxide) of the clapboards can be observed on the west wall of the barn protected by the first leanto.

Corn house (built ca.1830; contributing): This two-bay, gable-roofed, frame outbuilding known as the corn house by the current owners, stands on a banked foundation south of the threshing barn. Its ridgeline parallels that of the threshing barn, and the bank descends southwards. Its frame is constructed with hewn timbers and braced with up-and-down sawn lumber. The east bay retains an unusual secondary truss, which divides that section into two north-south bays. The building retains a variety of wood clapboard siding, with that on the north side appearing to be the most recent, and a delicately designed cornice with partial returns and deep cornice boards. The stone foundation has been mostly replaced with poured concrete, and a corrugated metal roof replaces the earlier one.

The upper level is entered through paired doors with Z-battens edged with a bead and clenched using nails with wrought heads. The sills are located about a foot above ground level at the east end of the north long wall, and they open into the east bay of the building. Two window casings—one with boards recently inserted into the tracks and the other partially boarded over with a louvered panel above—are located in the upper story, one in the north wall and one in the east wall respectively. The dimensions of these openings suggest they once had nine-over-six sash. The floor of the west bay is raised about a foot, and the south-facing wall is now a corncrib (probably built ca.1900).

The lower level is entered by a fairly wide, six-panel door in the west gable wall. A six-light sash in a casing matching those of the upper story is located north of it. Two additional openings, now fitted with translucent panels, are evenly spaced in the east end of the lower level. A third opening designed for double-hung sash is asymmetrically placed in the south wall. This opening and an adjacent horizontally oriented panel, are also fitted with the same material as the east windows. A chute is framed in the poured concrete foundation of the south

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wall. It seems a little large for hens, but the interior of the lower level is fitted with about a dozen galvanized laying boxes and additional framed boxes enclosed with chicken wire.

Hen house (built 1936; contributing): The chicken house is a single-story, shed-roofed, frame building with its taller long wall oriented directly to the south. Regularly spaced windows—reused twelve-over-eight wood sash taken from the house and woodshed—in this wall allow the interior to be bathed in light during the day. Directly behind it, at its northeast corner, stands a small, shed-roofed grain shed of similar date. The chicken house has a poured concrete foundation, novelty wood siding, and a corrugated metal roof. The grain house is similarly finished, but its wood sills lie on large stones.

Garage (built 1926; contributing): A two-bay, shed-roofed frame building designed to house a Model T automobile located northeast of the house. Its paired doors open eastward. It retains wood novelty siding.

Barn (built 1940s; contributing): A large two-bay frame shed designed for hay wagons stands at the far end of the circular drive. This shed's long wall faces the house. Like the other twentieth-century buildings on the property, it has wood novelty siding (no corner boards) and a corrugated metal roof. An open shed-roofed enclosure attached to the south gable shelters the gas tank used for fueling tractors and other machinery.

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

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Period of Significance (justification)

The Brownell-Cornell-Gibbs Farmstead was first developed ca.1800 during the settlement period of the Third Tract of the Pittstown Patent. The period of significance extends to the 50-year mark to encompass continued agricultural use of the historic buildings.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

n/a

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

AGRICULTURE

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

ca.1800-1962

Significant Dates

1828, 1869, 1903

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

n/a

Cultural Affiliation

n/a

Architect/Builder

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

The Brownell Farmstead is located on the eastern boundary of the Town of Pittstown, Rensselaer County, New York. It satisfies National Register of Historic Places Criterion C as an intact and representative example of an historic farmstead in the Town of Pittstown. This property is being nominated in association with the Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) entitled "Historic Farmsteads in Pittstown, New York." The Brownell Farmstead retains an intact assemblage of historic agricultural outbuildings and a house embodying characteristic construction features of the region during the cited period of significance and which exhibit distinctive and qualifying attributes as outlined in the associated MPDF context. Among the farmstead's contributing resources are a house with large attached woodshed (ca.1800-25; remodeled early 1900s); a threshing barn (ca.1800); a tool barn/grain house (ca.1830); a hen house and associated feed shed (1936); a frame garage (1926); and a wagon shed (1940s). This assemblage survives in an intact rural setting, which provides an appropriate context for this substantially intact Rensselaer County farm. Additional significance is being cited, in association with Criterion A in area of agriculture, given the property's longstanding representation of regional agricultural pursuits.

Narrative Statement of Significance

Ownership of the Brownell-Cornell-Gibbs farmstead, 1828-2011

The earliest known documentation of ownership of the Brownell-Cornell-Gibbs farmstead located is the 1807 Kiersted map of Sawyer's Third Tract in the Pittstown Patent, which depicts the earlier distribution of lots within the tract to the patentees. Lots 142 and 143 (the two lots were held by a single owner until the mid-1800s) were assigned to Alexander Colden (1716-1774), one of five proprietors in the Third Tract and the son of Cadwallader Colden, a lieutenant governor and later governor of the New York province. Alexander Colden was appointed Joint Surveyor General of the province in 1751, and he succeeded his father as chief surveyor in 1761/2. This position provided him firsthand knowledge of all dealings in land in the province.² The other lots in the Third Tract were assigned to Goldsborough Banyer, the provincial secretary for New York at the period; Abraham Jacob Lansing, founder of Lansingburgh; William Smith, chief justice of the colony from 1763 to 1782; and Edward Wells, of whom little is known. Provincial appointees and members of the merchant class were common in the lists of patentees. They were directly involved in the process of opening new lands for development, and many amassed fortunes via land speculation. As large landholders, they emulated the British aristocracy by leasing their lands, and the rents they collected formed significant portions of their incomes.

The physical evidence of the threshing barn and the house strongly suggest that Lot 143, now the Brownell farm, had been occupied and improved before Preserved Gibbs (1797-1869) bought it in combination with Lot 142 (totaling 248 acres) from Cadwallader and Eliza Colden on 6 April 1827 for \$5,000.³ The conveyance was accompanied by quit claims from Jonathan Burr and John Dickinson, of whom little is known. Both surnames, however, have long histories among the landed classes of the colonial era. The Gibbs deed is flanked in the record by several other similar instruments executed by Colden to others for land in the Pittstown Patent, suggesting that Colden, a large landholder, liquidated these holdings in a group. Without more work on

² Edwin R. Purple, *Genealogical Notes of the Colden Family in America* (New York: privately printed, 1873): 12-3. Located on line at <http://briantonenmph.com/6-history-of-medicine-and-pharmacy/hudson-valley-medical-history/colonial-herbalism/cadwallader-colden/colden-family-genealogy/>.

³ *Book of Deeds 16/152*. All deeds referenced are located in the Rensselaer County Clerk's Office in Troy, New York. They are referred to as *Liber number/page number*.

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the Colden family genealogy, it is uncertain which of several Cadwalladers the seller was. Based on traditional inheritance patterns he may have been the son of Richard Nicholls Colden and grandson of Alexander, the patentee.

Preserved Gibbs was the son of Job (also listed as Joseph and Jacob) (d.1841) and Louisa Eddy Gibbs (ca.1771-1843), who apparently came from Swansea, Massachusetts, and settled in Pittstown in 1796, two years after their marriage in 1794. Swansea is located on the Rhode Island border with Massachusetts, and quite a number of Pittstown settlers were Quakers coming from this border region in New England. Several branches of the Eddy family also settled in Pittstown during this period. Job and Louisa's daughter, Polly, who later lived with Preserved, is recorded in some sources as being born in Rhode Island in 1795. Census records for Preserved, born in 1797, show that he was born in Pittstown, so the family probably moved between those two births. Younger children, including David Benjamin Gibbs (1810-1876, usually referred to as David B. Gibbs), and possibly also Hannah Williams, Eunice Slade, and Asenath Williams, were born in Pittstown.⁴

The patriarch Job Gibbs died in 1842. His son, David B., possibly the youngest of his children, returned to Pittstown with his new wife in 1841, possibly at his aging parents' request. David B. had married Lucy A. Sterry (1807-1896), daughter of Stephen and Elizabeth Etheridge Sterry, in Norwich, Connecticut, the previous year, in 1840, but what took him to Connecticut as a young man remains unknown. David eventually gained Job and Louisa's lands—65 acres in Lots 96 and 97, 30 more in Lot 97, and 40 acres in Lot 5—in 1849, when Preserved and his sisters Polly, Hannah (residing in Pittstown), Eunice (residing in Saratoga), and Asenath (residing in Dayton, Ohio), sold their interests in those lands to him for \$2,025.⁵

The 1854 Rogerson *Map of Rensselaer County* and the 1861 Lake map show David B. Gibbs owning two houses farther south on his parents' former lands. Lucy and David had one child, Eugene, and their household also included Lucy's older and unmarried sister, Marina. The latter was listed as a seamstress in the 1855 state census, and in later censuses as a female servant. Preserved was shown owning both houses on his farm in Lots 142 and 143, but without greater local genealogical work, it remains uncertain which house he occupied.

Preserved apparently never married, and he devised Lot 143 to David B. Gibbs after his death in 1869. This information does not appear to have been publicly recorded until 1897, when Lot 143 was sold at a public auction mandated by a special term of the state Supreme Court to Jesse Stiles and George F. Waring, both of Saratoga County, for \$2,000. In its details, this deed states that David's wife Lydia probably inherited the property soon after she was widowed in 1876. The auction deed shows that Lydia A. Gibbs, apparently daughter of Benjamin Gibbs, and other Gibbs relations, were sued by Emily F. Boynton.⁶ William and Emily F. Boynton were censused in Pittstown in 1880 and 1900; "W. Boynton" was marked living in the Boyntonville area of Pittstown in the 1876 atlas. The lawsuit appears to have been part of the action taken to settle the estate of David's widow, Lucy Gibbs, who died on 11 January 1896. Emily Boynton's exact relationship to the list of apparent heirs is unknown. It is unclear whether David B. and Lucy A. Gibbs ever lived in the house on Lot 143, and if they did not, who did. The degree of preservation of the two older outbuildings and the house, which retains both kitchen hearths might be evidence that the house was used by tenants, who did not modernize the buildings.

⁴ This information and all other genealogical material referenced in this nomination is drawn from records collected by www.ancestry.com and accessed freely.

⁵ 84/55.

⁶ 256/35. This is part of an action pending in the county between Emily F. Boynton, plaintiff, and Lydia A. Gibbs, Adeline M. Penney(?), Elise Pietz(?), Mary E. Rowland, Asenath Donovan, Frances Foot, Sarah M. Finch, George Waring, Alfred Waring, Harry Waring, Mary Waring, George F. Waring, and Calvin Matteson, defendants. Lot 142 remains intact as the Donald Skott farm. If Lydia was Benjamin's daughter, Adeline was probably her married sister. Lydia A. (b.1824) resided with her father in 1880.

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After the sale of Lot 143 by Jesse Stiles, a bachelor, to Walter G. Cornell (b.1869) for \$1,200 in December 1903, family history documents who lived on Lot 143.⁷ The price for which Stiles sold the property, apparently an arm's length sale, may indicate the decline in value of agricultural land typical of much of the Northeast by this period. Walter Cornell was the son of Flavius Cornell (b.1832), who raised a family of eight children in Eagle Bridge. Walter married Minnie Fisk (b.1873), who grew up in North Hoosick, and they raised three sons on the farm on Lot 143 in Pittstown. These were Perrin C. (b.1907), who married Mildred Cottrell (b.1897); Charles (b.1914); and Ira (b.1910), who married Agnes Baker (b.1911) and bought the former Manchester farm adjacent to the south in 1940.

Walter G. Cornell conveyed Lot 143 to his son and daughter-in-law, Charles W. (1914-2012) and Lois B. Cornell (b.1913), soon after their marriage in 1942. Charles and Lois raised three daughters: Arlene (b.1944). Geraldine (b.1950), and Lorraine (b.1952). Lorraine married Carl Brownell in 1971, and Charles W. Cornell conveyed the 100 acres lying south of Pine Hill Rd in Lot 143 to them in 1980.⁸ They reside on the property today. Charles Cornell retains the 24 acres north of the road. (tax parcel 35.00-2-19.1)

Architectural and agricultural development of the Brownell-Cornell-Gibbs farmstead

The very earliest history of the Brownell-Cornell-Gibbs farmstead is largely unknown. Lots in Sawyer's Third Tract were rectilinear, roughly three times as long as they were wide and encompassing about 125 acres apiece. This section of Pittstown attracted New Englanders, who were streaming west during the 1780s and 1790s after two generations of rapid population growth hemmed in by war with Britain and France. A descendant of Alexander Colden, to whom Lot 143 was assigned in the distribution of lots to patentees in Sawyer's Third Tract, sold it in association with Lot 142 to Preserved Gibbs in 1827.

The Colden-Gibbs deed provides no detail about previous occupancy or improvements on the lots, but the threshing barn and a lower level portion of the house appear old enough to have been part of his purchase. These may be evidence of a Colden family tenant's occupancy; later Gibbs family deeds show that Preserved, one of the middle children of his parents' progeny, was probably not acquiring a property leased by his father Job. Preserved's brother David Benjamin, his junior by more than a decade, did that fifteen years later.

The threshing barn on Lot 143 is an unusually intact survival probably built ca.1790-1800. Its steep roof pitch and wood clapboard walls with mortised hewn studs suggest a Dutch-influenced builder, but its form with its main entrances centered on its long walls is typical of New England threshing barns. Although its large paired doors to the threshing floor located in the wide center bay are gone, the posts on which they were hung remain. The stable areas, framed with narrowly spaced heavy timbers and located below the mows in both end bays also suggest Dutch or Palatine influence. The single-story, shed-roofed addition spanning the west gable end, which the Brownell family calls the wagon shed, dates later than the main block. This addition retains a wide period door, and was added early enough to preserve the original weight and width of the clapboard siding of the barn's west wall. The banked basement level of the house preserves a kitchen hearth and oven of possibly similar date to the main block of the barn. The trim scheme, fenestration plan, twelve-over-six wood sash, and the hardware on the exterior door in the lower level are all representative of this era.

While Preserved Gibbs apparently never married and died without issue in 1869, he did not live alone. His older sister Polly, age 53, and an aunt, Hannah Slade, age 85, and a laborer, Thomas Dillingham, age 41, were recorded living with him on a 200-acre (150 acres improved/50 acres unimproved) farm valued at \$10,000 in the 1850 census. His brother David B. Gibbs was recorded the same year living with his wife Lucy, age 40, and

⁷ 292/221.

⁸ 1321/241.

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their son Eugene, age 7, and two women, Marina and Lucy Sterry (surname is difficult to decipher in this document; later censuses show that Marina's surname was Sterry, which was Mrs. Gibbs' maiden name), aged 65 and 20. David's farm numbered 96 acres, ten of them unimproved. Neither of these farms matches the stated acreages of the brothers' properties recorded in deeds. Relying on the published maps, Preserved resided on Lots 142 and 143 in 1854, and David lived farther south on Lots 96 and 97, probably his father's lands, valued at \$5,000.

Both the 1854 and 1861 maps show two houses, both marked "P.Gibbs," on the property: the Brownell house on Lot 143 and the house now owned by Donald Skott on Lot 142. It is unclear in which house Preserved lived, and it is interesting to note that the main blocks of both houses strongly resemble one another even though a closer look reveals they the houses probably did not resemble each other much in the earliest period. The house on Lot 142 incorporates a large back ell and a single-story wing beyond that, but its two-story, frontal gable main block with sidehall entrance resembles at first glance the massing of the two-story, gable-roofed frame house on the Brownell property. The Brownell house retains a fenestration plan on the north gable end suggestive of an earlier entrance in that wall, which would have faced the corner of Pine Hill and Groveside rds. The pilasters on this façade—and their absence elsewhere—also suggest that the house, when it achieved its present size, probably by the mid-1800s—had a frontal gable orientation. In 1850, Preserved's frame house was valued \$900 in the census—a figure that aligns with an older, but fairly sizable dwelling like this one.

The form, construction, and details of the large, two-story woodshed adjacent to the house probably date this building to the second quarter of the nineteenth century. The finished rooms in the upstairs might have afforded accommodation for a laborer, at least during the warmer months. Other possible uses for these rooms include work space for a clean trade or a meeting or classroom. So far, no source documents such chambers in this section of Pittstown.

The entry detailing Preserved's farm in the 1850 census shows an established farm of above average valuation, probably due to its fairly large size and its amount of improved land. He owned \$200 worth of implements and kept five horses. He kept a fairly large number of pigs—20—for the period, and more typical numbers of cattle: four milch cows, four oxen, and four more bovines. The dairy produced 700 pounds of butter, suggesting unusually good management for the period. This was probably the responsibility of the two women of the house. In 1849, he harvested large crops of corn (500 bushels) and oats (900 bushels) as well as forty tons of hay. The threshing barn on the Brownell property as well as additional barns on Lot 142 would have provided ample storage and stable space.

Based on its form and details, the neatly finished corn house on the Brownell farm, was surely standing by this time. With its paired doors in the upper level, it appears designed to house implements, but the threshold is more than a foot above grade. An entrance ramp may be gone. If not, the upper chamber was probably designed to house something that was bulky, but not on wheels. The lower level, with its banked foundation and wood floor might have been used as stable space in the earliest period. Preserved's fifth horse suggests he kept a riding or carriage horse, and this building's handsome cornice and understated elegance would be typical of a carriage barn, which tended to be more stylishly appointed than strictly agricultural barns and sheds.

Preserved devised Lot 143 to his younger brother David B.[enjamin] Gibbs when he died in 1869. The acreage recorded in David's 1875 agricultural schedule matches neither his 96 acres recorded in 1860 nor that of the lot he inherited, but it seems closer in valuation to the former. The 1876 Beers atlas labels both the house at the corner of Pine Hill and Groveside rds and the ones farther south on his father's old farm "D.Gibbs." The census valued David's dwelling at \$2,500, a very large figure for a dwelling house at the time. Such a number would have suggested two full stories and a costly renovation, and this does not seem a good match based on

Brownell-Cornell-Gibbs Farmstead
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other comparisons of known houses and their valuations. Although relatively large, the house was probably very old-fashioned by 1875. This leaves open the question of who lived at this house in 1875 even though David B. Gibbs owned it.

The other buildings on the property all date to the Cornell family tenure begun in 1903 when Walter G. Cornell acquired the 124-acre property, designated Lot 143 in the Pittstown Patent, from Jesse Stiles of Saratoga Springs for \$1,200.⁹ The 1916 *American Agriculturalist Farm Directory* listed W.G. and Minnie Cornell living on the property with three minor children (their sons Perrin, Ira, and Charles). They listed their chief crops as grain and potatoes; other activities like dairying, were considered of less economic importance. The lower level of the east bay of the threshing barn may already have been fitted with wood stanchions, or they may date to this period. During the early 1920s, Walter Cornell put laying boxes in the basement of the corn house. Raising poultry for eggs was increasingly common in the early twentieth century, especially with Troy as a nearby market, and it appears that the Cornells' foray was successful. In 1936, they built the single-story, shed-roofed, frame hen house for egg production on the lower ground south of the house. This structure is easily picked out by its south-facing bank of windows designed to collect sunlight to encourage egg production in the days before electricity reached this part of Pittstown. It incorporates several windows with twelve-over-eight wood sash matching the oldest sash in the house and woodshed, few of which remain in those buildings openings.

The openings in the house mostly now have two-over-two wood sash, which date to the 1930s according to family history. After the property's sale at auction in 1897 to Jesse Stiles of Saratoga, it seems possible the house lay empty for a short time. A Craftsman-influenced renovation of the house appears to date to the first quarter of the century, soon after the Cornells moved in. Although the two-over-two sash seem old-fashioned for this date, it appears they go with this renovation phase rather than to the period when by David Gibbs' widow owned the property in the late 1800s. Walter and Minnie Cornell also built the Ford Model T-scale frame garage located on the lower grade northeast of the house and opening onto the semi-circular drive off Pine Valley Road.

In 1946, Walter Cornell deeded the property to his son Charles W. Cornell and daughter-in-law, Lois. They built the barn for hay wagons north of the main barn, which supported Charles' small dairy operation milking about a dozen. He added a frame milk house to the north side of the barn to comply with new regulations, but it did not meet changing regulations requiring a door between the stanchion area and the tank room. Rather than invest to increase the herd and pay for infrastructure changes, he stopped milking in the mid-1960s.

In 1980, Charles and Lois deeded the 100 acres of Lot 143 south of Pine Hill Rd and east of Groveside Rd to their daughter, Lorraine, and her husband, Carl Brownell (b.1948). The Brownells's sons, Eric (b.1975) and Mark (b.1976) raise beef cattle on the property. The acreage south of Pine Hill Rd is nearly evenly divided between open land (49 acres) and woodlot (51 acres), a proportion maintained since 1903, according to Lorraine Cornell Brownell. The most important crop raised is hay.

Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)

n/a

⁹ 292/221.

Brownell-Cornell-Gibbs Farmstead
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9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Refer to source list provided in associated MPDF.

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 # _____
 recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

State Historic Preservation Office
 Other State agency
 Federal agency
 Local government
 University
 Other
Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 124
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 _____
Zone Easting Northing

3 _____
Zone Easting Northing

2 _____
Zone Easting Northing

4 _____
Zone Easting Northing

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Please refer to attached map

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

Boundary encompasses Lot 143 in Sawyer's Third Tract of the Pittstown Patent, the historic boundary of the property purchased by Walter G. Cornell in 1903. Even though there were two lots during the Gibbs era, Lot 143 has been an intact farm for more than a century and accurately reflects the farm's nineteenth and twentieth century use.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jessie A. Ravage
organization _____ date 30 April 2012
street & number 34 Delaware St telephone 607-547-9507

Brownell-Cornell-Gibbs Farmstead
Name of Property

Rensselaer, New York
County and State

city or town Cooperstown state NY zip code 13326

e-mail jravage@stny.rr.com

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **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. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

List of digital photographs for NY_Rensselaer County_Pittstown Farmsteads MPS_Brownell Farmstead
Photographs 0001-0006 of property shot by Jessie A. Ravage (34 Delaware Street, Cooperstown, NY, 13326, 607-547-9507, jravage@stny.rr.com), August 2011. Constance Kheel (32 Joslin Ln, Buskirk, NY 12028) shot 0007 in April 2012.

0001: House and wood shed, back and north facade (camera facing southwest)

0002: Threshing barn, north and west sides (camera facing southeast)

0003: Wagon barn (a.k.a. corn house) (camera facing southeast)

0004: Hen house and grain shed (camera facing northwest)

0005: Threshing barn, interior

0006: House, north and west sides (camera facing south)

0007: Woodshed, upstairs interior

Property Owner:

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

name _____

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

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.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Property Name *Brownell-Cornell-Gibbs Farmstead*
Location *Rensselaer County, New York*

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

PHOTOGRAPHS



Property Name *Brownell-Cornell-Gibbs Farmstead*
Location *Rensselaer County, New York*

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

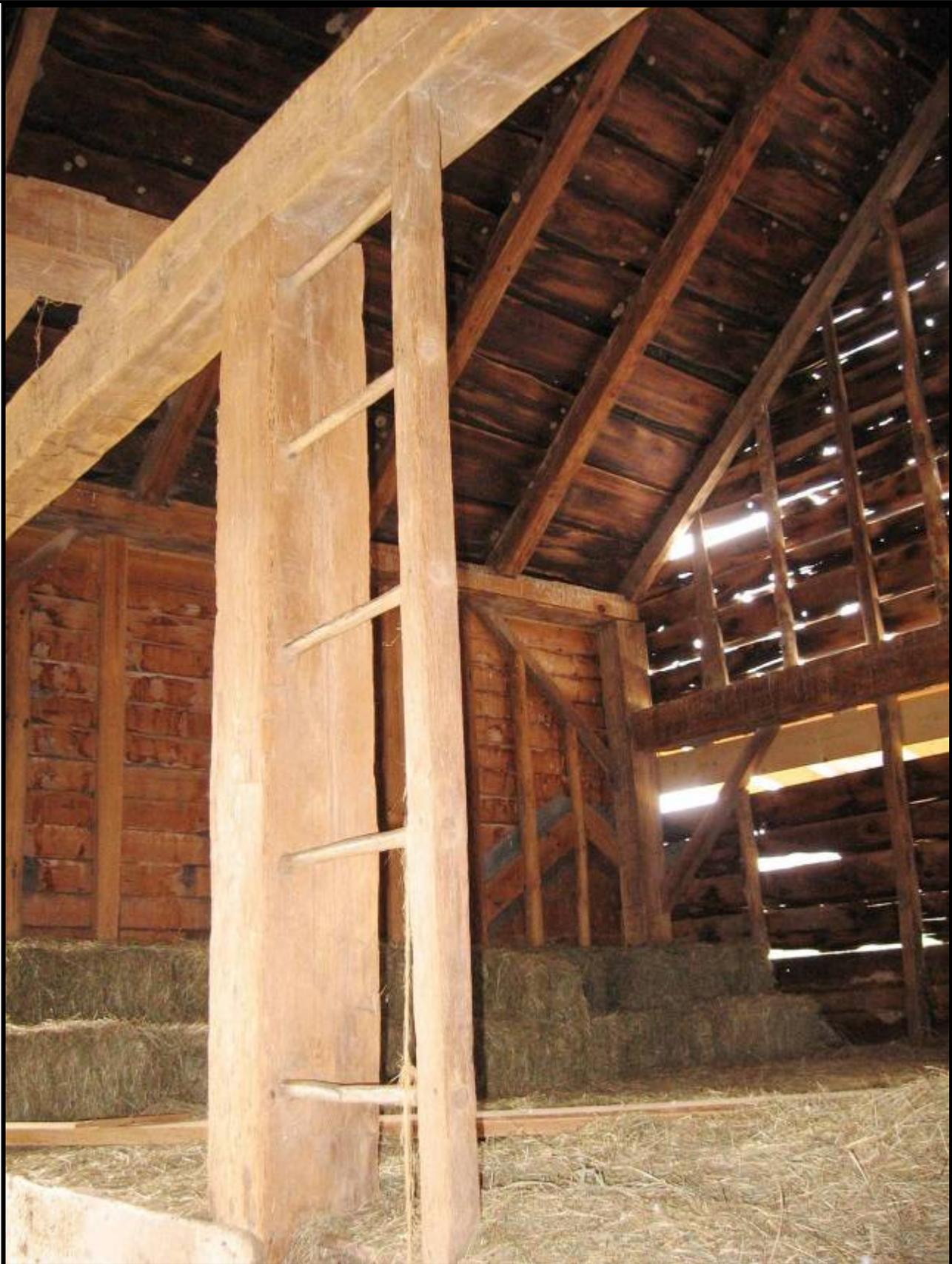
PHOTOGRAPHS



Property Name *Brownell-Cornell-Gibbs Farmstead*
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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

PHOTOGRAPHS



Property Name *Brownell-Cornell-Gibbs Farmstead*
Location *Rensselaer County, New York*

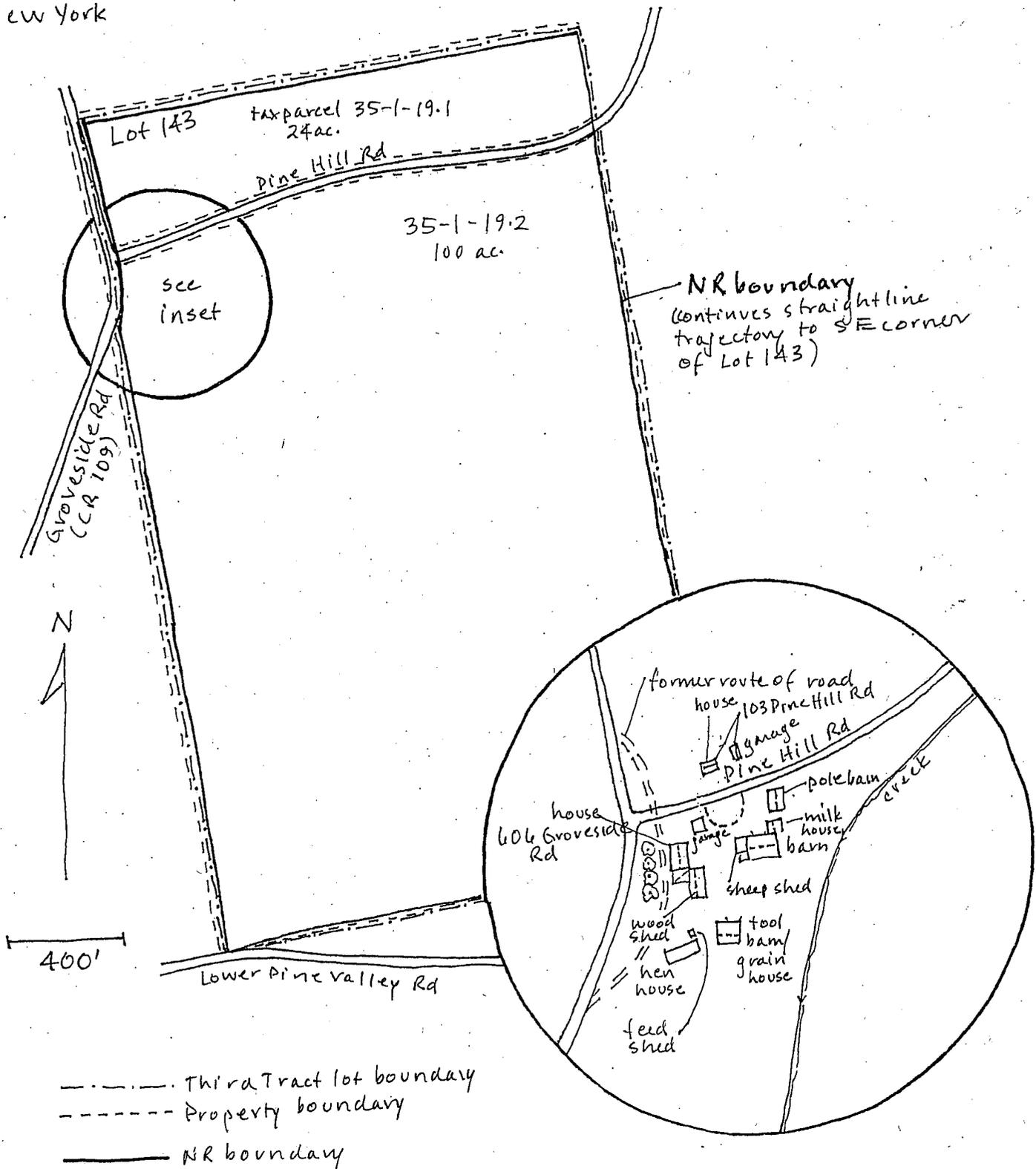
**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

PHOTOGRAPHS



BROWNELL FARMSTEAD

606 Groveside Rd (CR 109)
 Town of Pittstown, Rensselaer County
 New York



Jessie Ravage 2012



Continue in Delorme's Vermont Atlas and Gazetteer

B

C

NORTH ADAMS MA