Capsule Summary

Building 265 – Biological Poultry Laboratory USDA – Beltsville Agricultural Research Center (BARC) Bureau of Engraving and Printing EIS Beltsville, Prince George's County, Maryland Ca. 1934

Building 265 was constructed ca. 1934 and functioned as a biological poultry laboratory on the Central Farm within the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Agricultural Research Service's Beltsville Agricultural Research Center (BARC). It was built in an area used by the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI). Building 265 is a three-and-a-half-story, masonry building built on a concrete block foundation, has a rectangular footprint and is oriented on a north-south axis, with an east-facing primary facade. The concrete block walls, beside the basement floor which is clad in brick, are covered with stucco. The Dutch gableroof with overhanging eaves and exposed rafters is covered in composition shingles which replaced the original red asbestos shingles at an unknown date. The primary (east) elevation, is nine bays wide and features a decorative wood pediment canopy covered in composition shingles (originally asbestos shingles) supported by wooden brackets above the central main entrance. The canopy shelters double wood paneled doors with nine lights and a rectangular six light transom that has been boarded up. This entrance is accessed by concrete steps with iron pipe railings. Beneath these steps are additional steps leading to the base of the building which is below grade. Windows on this elevation are regularly spaced, operable steel sash windows varying between nine- and twelve-lights with brick sills that open outward for ventilation. The basement floor windows and doors feature brick lintels. These style of windows are seen throughout the building. Three pediment-roof dormers with exposed rafters clad in wood horizontal siding featuring nine-light steel sash windows extend from the roof. The south elevation consists of a non-original three-story fire stairwell with doors (that were once windows) providing access to each level. The west (rear) elevation consists of over a dozen windows and a double metal replacement door with a six-light transom that has been filled in with brick. Three pediment-roof dormers with exposed rafters clad in wood horizontal siding featuring ninelight steel sash windows extend from the roof. The north elevation mirrors the south elevation, again featuring a three-story fire stairwell that was added at an unknown date; however, on this elevation there are two separate entrances with single doors and filled in transoms. According to original drawings, the interior plan of the basement consisted of incubator units, refrigerators, and hatcheries. The layout of the first (main) floor included a hallway with stairwell, offices, physiological laboratory, physical & electrometrical laboratory, and general laboratories. Additional offices, laboratories and a record room were located on the second floor. On the third floor (attic) was a conference room and storage.

Building 265 is located on BARC's 2,980-acre Central Farm, the largest and oldest of all of BARC's farms. The USDA acquired the Central Farm in stages between 1910 and 1939; most of the buildings and landscape of the Central Farm were developed between 1911 and 1944. During the 1920s, the BAI's Animal Husbandry Division led the continued development of the site and was the largest section (i.e., in terms of both areas occupied and staff) at BARC. The division's research initially focused on the breeding of all domestic animals, except dairy (Robinson and Associates 1998). The BAI transferred other divisions to BARC during the late 1920s and early 1930s using New Deal funding sources at the Central and East Farms; the Swine Research unit was relocated from the Central Farm to the East Farm during the period between 1938 and 1942 (Robinson and Associates 1998). Over the years, the BAI's Animal Husbandry Division undertook critical poultry and swine research that improved the size and health of the farm animals; the BAI's researchers conducted important research at BARC that led to major improvements in eradicating and treating contagious diseases in farm animals, reducing parasite infestations, and improving nutrition.

In 1997, BARC was determined eligible for individual listing in the National Register for Historic Places (NRHP) as the largest national research facility for the USDA and for its role as the most diversified agricultural research complex in the world. The evaluation finds that while Building 265 is not individually significant, it contributes to the overall significance of BARC. Building 265 is a contributing property within BARC under Criterion A at the national level for its historical association with agricultural experimentation and under Criterion C as it embodies the distinctive characteristics of experimental agricultural architecture.

NR Eligible: yes MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST **DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY FORM**

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Description of Property and Justification: (Please attach map and photo)

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Agricultural Research Service's (ARS) Beltsville Agricultural Research Center (BARC) was one of the largest agricultural research facilities in the United States (Figures 1 and 2). Owned by the USDA, the facility was established in Beltsville in 1910 and significantly expanded in the 1930s and 1940s. In the 1960s, the USDA's research program began evolving from an internationally recognized research center to a decentralized model. In 1984, BARC was re-designated as a regional center. BARC's period of significance ranges from its inception in 1910 to its reclassification as a regional center in 1984.

BUILDING LOCATION

BARC identifies the address of Building 265 as 10300 Baltimore Avenue, Building 265, Central Farm. Building 265 is located 72' west of Poultry Road; 1,000' south of the intersection of Odell and Poultry Roads.

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Building 265: Biological Poultry Laboratory

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BUILDING DESCRIPTION

Located in the USDA ARS BARC's Central Farm (Figures 3 through 6), Building 265 (Photos 1 through 4) was built as a biological poultry laboratory, ca. 1934 (Figures 7-15, USDA 1934). The three-and-a-half-story, masonry building is built on a concrete block foundation, has a rectangular footprint and is oriented on a north-south axis, with an east-facing primary façade. The concrete block walls, beside the basement floor which is clad in brick, are covered with stucco. The Dutch gable-roof with overhanging eaves and exposed rafters is covered in composition shingles which replaced the original red asbestos shingles at an unknown date.

The primary (east) elevation (Photo 1), is nine bays wide and features a decorative wood pediment canopy covered in composition shingles (originally asbestos shingles) supported by wooden brackets above the central main entrance. The canopy shelters double wood paneled doors with nine lights and a rectangular six light transom that has been boarded up. This entrance is accessed by concrete steps with iron pipe railings. Beneath these steps are additional steps leading to the base of the building which is below grade. Windows on this elevation are regularly spaced, operable steel sash windows varying between nine- and twelve-lights with brick sills that open outward for ventilation. The basement floor windows and doors feature brick lintels. These style of windows are seen throughout the building. Three pediment-roof dormers with exposed rafters clad in wood horizontal siding featuring nine-light steel sash windows extend from the roof.

The south elevation (Photo 2) consists of a non-original three-story fire stairwell with doors (that were once windows, Figure 13) that provides access to each level. The west (rear) elevation (Photo 3) consists of over a dozen windows and a double metal replacement door with a six-light transom that has been filled in with brick. Three pediment-roof dormers with exposed rafters clad in wood horizontal siding featuring nine-light steel sash windows extend from the roof. The north elevation mirrors the south elevation, again featuring a three-story fire stairwell that was added at an unknown date; however, on this elevation there are two separate entrances with single doors and filled in transoms.

According to original drawings, the interior plan of the basement consisted of incubator units, refrigerators, and hatcheries. The layout of the first (main) floor included a hallway with stairwell (Photo 4), offices, physiological laboratory, physical & electrometrical laboratory, and general laboratories. Additional offices, laboratories and a record room were located on the second floor. Lastly, on the third floor (attic) was a conference room and storage (Figures 7-10).

Building 265, which is currently vacant, is in fair condition.

HISTORY OF PROPERTY

Central Farm

Building 265, constructed ca. 1934, is located on the 2,980-acre Central Farm. The largest and oldest of all of BARC's farms, the USDA acquired the Central Farm in stages between 1910 and 1939; most of the buildings and landscape of the Central Farm were developed between 1911 and 1944. The Central Farm is located at the center of BARC and is adjacent to BARC's Linkage Farm to the west, single-family homes along Odell Road to the north, facilities associated with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and U.S. Department of State (DOS) to the northeast, the Baltimore-Washington Parkway to the east, and the City of Greenbelt to the south. The Central Farm has approximately 12 clusters of buildings situated on approximately 336 acres (of the 2,980-acre total), as well as pastures, wetlands, and forested areas used for animal husbandry, production crops, animal and plant research, and wildlife management. The USDA's Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) has historically been the Central Farm's main user (Robinson and Associates 1998).

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The USDA acquired the first portion of the Central Farm in 1910 when it purchased 475 acres of the Hall Farm for the Farm Dairy and Animal Husbandry Divisions of the BAI to establish an experimental farm. To accommodate the experimental farm's many research tasks during BARC's early period (i.e., 1910-1933), the USDA constructed laboratories, farm buildings, pastures, and staff housing. In addition, the BAI added laboratories for its Pathology and Zoological Divisions.

In the 1920s, the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI) began to operate at BARC on approximately 425 acres of leased land that was subsequently purchased with Public Works Administration (PWA) funds in the 1930s, expanding the Central Farm (Wiser and Rasmussen 1966; USDA ca. 1937). In 1924, the Farm Dairy and Animal Husbandry Divisions separated into the Bureau of Dairy Industry (BDI) and the BAI. The BDI used 190 acres for continued experiments on dairy cattle breeding, forage crop, silage, and milk research, and the BAI kept 285 acres for its animal research. By 1925, the USDA owned 1,062 acres of the Central Farm and leased about 1,000 more acres (Wiser and Rasmussen 1966). By 1933, four land purchases totaling an additional 1,381 acres further increased the Central Farm's size (USDA ca. 1937; Robinson and Associates 1998).

The majority of the Central Farm was acquired under New Deal policies and funding of the 1930s, when the USDA transformed BARC into a model experiment station. A series of land acquisitions during the 1930s grew BARC to more than 12,000 acres. With this expansion, many of the Bureaus either established, enlarged, or constructed new research facilities on the Central Farm. These included the BAI's pathology, zoology, and insecticide divisions, the Bureau of Entomology and Plant Quarantine, the Bureau of Human Nutrition and Home Economics, the Bureau of Agricultural Engineering, the Bureau of Cultural and Industrial Chemistry, and the Food and Drug Administration (Robinson and Associates 1998).

The expansion of BARC required major infrastructure improvements that were undertaken with PWA funding and oversight, and Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) assistance and labor. A CCC camp was established on the north end of the Central Farm in 1933; eventually, four CCC camps were established at BARC, although their exact locations are not known. The CCC workers cleared and drained land, built fences and roads, and constructed small sheds and structures. The overall design of the Central Farm in the 1930s was guided by a master plan that was the work of A.D. Taylor and Delos Smith; H.F. Seahorn of the Public Buildings Administration; Robert T. Walker, CCC landscape architect; and Hugh H. Bennet of the Soil Conservation Service (Robinson and Associates 1998). The Central Farm's character-defining landscape features include:

-- Topographical and anthropogenically altered features, such as major paved roads, minor service and field roads, drainage systems, Beaver Dam Creek, and graded fields;

-- Vegetation features, such as field and research crops, pastures, Beltsville Seasonal Ponds, Beltsville Bottomland Forest, and meadows;

-- Circulation features, such as Dairy Farm, Powder Mill, Entomology, Research, BioControl, Poultry, and Beaver Dam Roads, as well as secondary and service roads;

-- Five main clusters of development, including the 100 Area Cluster (BDI), 200 Area Cluster (BAI – Poultry Research Division), 300 Area Cluster (BAI – Parasitological Laboratory of the Zoological Division), 400 Area Cluster (Bureau of Entomology and Plant Quarantine [BEPQ] – Entomology Research Division), and 1000 Area Cluster (Animal Disease Station); and -- Small-scale features, such as fencing, culverts, an amphitheater, and a cemetery (Robinson and Associates 1998).

Bureau of Animal Industry

The USDA's BAI, the earliest of the USDA's research bureaus at BARC, came to the Central Farm in 1910 when its Dairy and Animal Husbandry Divisions established an experimental farm within BARC's initial 475 acres. When the USDA reorganized the Dairy Division into a separate BDI, the BAI retained 285 acres of the Central Farm for its Animal Husbandry Division. During the

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1920s, the BAI's Animal Husbandry Division led the continued development of the site and was the largest section (i.e., in terms of both areas occupied and staff) at BARC. The division's research initially focused on the breeding of all domestic animals, except dairy (Robinson and Associates 1998).

By the early 1930s, the BAI's Animal Husbandry Division's needs far exceeded its facilities. To address these needs, the PWA allotted over \$1 million for a major construction program at BARC that included laboratories, an abattoir (slaughterhouse), and animal buildings. These facilities were constructed at BARC with the assistance of CCC workers, with funding and oversight provided by the PWA and the Civil Works Administration. A new Main Laboratory (i.e., Building 200), constructed under this program, was the showpiece of the new animal husbandry area.

As a result of the expansion, by the mid-1930s, the BAI's Animal Husbandry Division was the largest experimental farm in the country and the center of nation's research on animal husbandry (Robinson and Associates 1998). In addition to animal husbandry, the BAI transferred other divisions to BARC during the late 1920s and early 1930s using New Deal funding sources at the Central and East Farms. The BAI's Zoological Division moved its experimental headquarters to, and the BAI's Animal Disease Station was established at BARC's Central Farm in 1929 and expanded in 1935 (Robinson and Associates 1998).

In 1953, the USDA undertook a major reorganization and decentralization of the USDA's agricultural research program that continued through the 1970s (Office of Technology Assessment [OTA] 1981). The decentralization had long-lasting consequences for BARC. The department's scientific bureaus, including the BAI, were discontinued and the department's research functions were centralized under the new Agricultural Research Administration (now the ARS) (OTA 1981). The USDA again reorganized in 1972 with administrative decentralization as its goal (OTA 1981). Through this process, operating responsibility was delegated to four regions, which were then subdivided into research area centers. BARC's scientists and facilities thus became a regional research facility, rather than a national one (OTA 1981). By 1980, the USDA's research program was highly decentralized, with research undertaken at 148 locations, including the much diminished 450-scientist facility at BARC (OTA 1981).

Over the years, the BAI's researchers conducted important research at BARC that has led to major improvements in eradicating and treating contagious diseases in farm animals, reducing parasite infestations, and improving nutrition. The BAI's Animal Husbandry Division undertook critical poultry and swine research that improved the size and health of the farm animals. The BAI's Zoology Division's parasite research brought innovative new approaches to treating infestations. The BAI's Animal Disease Station developed vaccines to prevent Bang's disease and developed sterilization methods for contaminated hides (Robinson and Associates 1998).

History of the Biological Poultry Laboratory, Building 265

According to John R. Mohler's publication Federal Poultry Research at the Agricultural Research Center, Beltsville, MD from 1939, the poultry farm had been used for experimental work for more than 25 years. At this time, 177 acres of the area were devoted to yards, buildings, and other facilities used for poultry research. According to Mohler, the laboratory buildings were constructed around 1934, while other poultry buildings were being rebuilt. The buildings are described as being used for poultry experimentation and administration, and even more specifically as for biology, nutrition, genetics and physiology, and fattening and cold storage (Mohler 1939). In 1952, author H.R. Bird describes the laboratory buildings in his article, "Chicken a la Laboratory," as being located at the center of a 160-acre poultry farm (Bird 1952).

According to the original drawings, dated 1934 (Figures 7-15, USDA 1934), the interior of Building 265 consisted of various laboratory spaces. The first and second floors contain general, physiological, and physical and electrometrical laboratories and offices while the third floor is used as space for a conference room. Some of the research and experiments conducted in these

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Building 265: Biological Poultry Laboratory

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laboratory buildings included poultry-breeding and physiology of development and reproduction investigations, poultry-feeding and physiology of nutrition investigations, poultry-meat and egg-quality studies, and treatment of poultry parasites and diseases (Mohler 1939).

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES EVALUATION

In 1997, BARC, a 6,582-acre federal agricultural research facility, was determined eligible in its entirety for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) as the largest national research facility for the USDA and for its role as the most diversified agricultural research complex in the world. Building 265 was not described in the 1997 report. This evaluation finds that while Building 265 is not individually significant, it contributes to the overall significance of BARC. The history and development of the agricultural research facility also reflects New Deal policies and programs, and contains notable landscape architecture, Georgian Revival architecture, and experimental agricultural architecture. The criteria applied to evaluate properties for the NRHP are presented below.

Under Criterion A, Building 265 is a contributing property within BARC, which is significant at the national level for its association with events that have made significant contributions to the broad pattern of our history with agricultural experimentation. Many aspects of twentieth century living for the farmer and consumer were influenced by the scientific research conducted at BARC. BARC is a prominent example of the federal role in agricultural research, scientific agricultural research in general, and New Deal policies and programs, such as the 1930s agricultural policies and funding, the PWA, and the CCC, which all played important roles in shaping the experimental farm. BARC's scientists and researchers have made major contributions toward scientific knowledge that have resulted in incredible advances in crop production, plant and animal disease control, and pest control. Building 265 was specifically designed and operated as a biological poultry laboratory within the BAI's 200 Area Cluster - Poultry Research Division. BARC scientists and researchers made valuable scientific contributions, both in foundational and applicable science.

BARC and Building 265 have not been determined significant under Criterion B for its association with the lives of persons significant in our past.

Under Criterion C, Building 265 is a contributing property within BARC, as it embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction. The physical appearance of BARC was strongly influenced in the 1930s by the planning team of A.D. Taylor, landscape architect, and Delos Smith, architect. The majority of BARC's buildings share a Georgian Revival style and/or display the characteristics of experimental agricultural architecture. BARC's landscape includes major paved roads, minor service roads, field and research crops, pasture lands, seasonal ponds, forests, sustainable meadows, and other landscape features and buildings. Building 265, while relatively modest in design, represents an example of the experimental and purpose-driven agricultural architecture trends for which BARC is significant, and contributes to the overall landscape.

Neither BARC nor Building 265 specifically has been evaluated under Criterion D for its yielding, or likelihood to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Building 265 retains its original location and setting within an agricultural research complex. Building 265 is specifically linked in its design and operation as a biological poultry laboratory and its ties to the BAI's 200 Area Cluster (Poultry Research Division) research buildings. The feeling of, and association with, an agricultural research center is intact. Building 265 maintains key elements of its original design including massing, fenestration, roofing pattern, cladding, and internal layouts, despite the minor alterations of windows, doors and roofing. Building 265 retains its integrity of design, workmanship, and materials. The building is in fair condition.

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Although Building 265 does not reach the level of significance necessary for individual listing on the NRHP, it maintains its significance within BARC under Criteria A and C.

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Robinson and Associates

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1934 Biological Poultry Laboratory, Beltsville, MD. Division of Plans and Service. Drawn by G. Bassett. Beltsville Agricultural Research Center (BARC) Archives.

Wiser, Vivian and Wayne D. Rasmussen

1966 "Background for Plenty: A National Center for Agricultural Research." Maryland Historical Magazine 61:4, December1966.

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Photograph Log

Building 265: Biological Poultry Laboratory USDA – Beltsville Agricultural Research Center (BARC) Bureau of Engraving and Printing EIS 10300 Baltimore Avenue, Central Farm Prince George's County, MD Photographer: Rebecca McGovern, Architectural Historian September 25, 2019 MD SHPO

Archival Black and White Photographs and Digital Photographs for the Maryland Historical Trust.

- 1. PG:62-68_2019_09_25_01.tif, Building 265, Biological Poultry Laboratory, Central Farm, View of East Elevation, Looking West
- 2. PG:62-68_2019_09_25_02.tif, Building 265, Biological Poultry Laboratory, Central Farm, View of East and South Elevations, Looking Northwest
- 3. PG:62-68_2019_09_25_03.tif, Building 265, Biological Poultry Laboratory, Central Farm, View of West Elevation, Looking East
- 4. PG:62-68_2019_09_25_04.tif, Building 265, Biological Poultry Laboratory, Central Farm, View of First Floor Hall, Looking West

Photo 1 – Building 265, Biological Poultry Lab, Central Farm, View of East Elevation, Looking West

Photo 2 – Building 265, Biological Poultry Lab, Central Farm, View of East and South Elevations, Looking Northwest

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Photo 3 – Building 265, Biological Poultry Lab, Central Farm, View of West Elevation, Looking East

Photo 4 – Building 265, Biological Poultry Lab, Central Farm, View of First Floor Hall, Looking West

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