Capsule Summary PG:62-72

Building 273 – Experimental Laying House for Breeding USDA – Beltsville Agricultural Research Center (BARC) Bureau of Engraving and Printing EIS Beltsville, Prince George's County, Maryland Ca. 1935

Building 273 was constructed ca. 1935 and functioned as an experimental laying house for poultry breeding 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 273 has a rectangular plan and faces south towards an unnamed access road on its south side that is perpendicular to Poultry Road to its east. The single-story building is oriented on an east-west axis. Building 273 is 96' long and 20' wide and is built with wood-frame construction and rests on a concrete foundation. The exterior walls are clad in tongue and groove v-joint vertical boards. On the upper half of the primary (south) elevation, there are rows of wood-frameopenings filled with chicken wire panels. According to the original measured drawings, the rear (north) elevation once had eight, evenly spaced, three-light steel windows that were hinged at the top as well as four openings for poultry to access a rear yard, but vegetation obscured the elevation to verify their existence. Various types of metal vents and exhaust fans protrude from the north elevation wall. The building has four entries, two evenly spaced on the primary (south) façade and one each off-center on the east and west elevations. The entries were originally filled with 6'-by-3' wood doors with cross-braces, and most have been replaced with plain wood doors. The building's shed roof is higher at the primary (south) façade and slopes down toward the rear (north) elevation. There is a full-length overhang that begins at the apex of the roof and projects down and out 1'8" from the wall. Both the roof and overhang have a non-historic elastomeric roof coating that replaced (or covers) the original slate surfaced roll roofing atop 1"-by-6" shiplap roof sheathing. The interior of Building 273 has a single wood partition with an off-center wood door, separating the building into two equally-sized open rooms. The interior walls are clad with broad rectangular boards. There is an approximately 12'-tall metal grain bin adjacent to the building's west elevation.

Building 273 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 273 is not individually significant, it contributes to the overall significance of BARC. Building 273 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.

# MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY FORM

NR Eligible: yes

Property Name: Building 273: Experimental Laying House - Breeding	Inventory Number: PG:62-72								
Address: 10300 Baltimore Avenue Building 273, Central Farm, Beltsville Agricultural Research Center (BARC)	Historic district: yesX no								
City: Beltsville Zip Code: 20705	County: Prince Georges								
USGS Quadrangle(s): Beltsville									
Property Owner: U.S.A U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)	Tax Account ID Number: 01-0070151								
Tax Map Parcel Number(s): 0143 Tax Map Numb	ber: 0019								
roject: Bureau of Engraving and Printing EIS Agency: USACE-Baltimore District									
Agency Prepared By: AECOM									
Preparer's Name: Melanie Lytle, MA Date Prepared: 10/31/2019									
Documentation is presented in: MIHP Form, PG:62-14									
Preparer's Eligibility Recommendation:  X Eligibility recommended	Eligibility not recommended								
Criteria: X A B X C D Considerations: A	B _ C _ D _ E _ F _ G								
Complete if the property is a contributing or non-contributing resource									
Name of the District/Property: Beltsville Agricultural Research Cer	Name of the District/Property: Beltsville Agricultural Research Center								
Inventory Number: PG:62-14 Eligible: X ye	es Listed: yes								
Site visit by MHT Staff yesX no Name:	Date:								
Description of Property and Justification: (Please attach map and photo)									
The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Agricultural Research Service's (BARC) was one of the largest agricultural research facilities in the United States facility was established in Beltsville in 1910 and significantly expanded in the 192 research program began evolving from an internationally recognized research center-designated as a regional center. BARC's period of significance ranges from its regional center in 1984.	s (Figures 1 and 2). Owned by the USDA, the 130s and 1940s. In the 1960s, the USDA's neter to a decentralized model. In 1984, BARC was								
BUILDING LOCATION									
·	BARC identifies the address of Building 273 as 10300 Baltimore Avenue, Building 273, Central Farm. Building 273 is located 530' west of Poultry Road; 885' southwest of the intersection of Odell and Poultry Roads.								
MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST REVIEW	1								
Eligibility recommended Eligibility not recommended									
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Date

**Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services** 

**Reviewer, National Register Program** 

## **BUILDING DESCRIPTION**

Located in the USDA ARS BARC's Central Farm (Figures 3 through 6), Building 273 (Photos 1 through 4) was built as an experimental laying house for poultry breeding, ca. 1935 (Figures 7-8, Robinson and Associates 1998). Building 273 has a rectangular plan and faces south towards an unnamed access road on its south side that is perpendicular to Poultry Road to its east. The single-story building is oriented on an east-west axis. Building 273 is 96' long and 20' wide and is built with wood-frame construction and rests on a concrete foundation. The exterior walls are clad in tongue and groove v-joint vertical boards. On the upper half of the primary (south) elevation, there are rows of wood-frame-openings filled with chicken wire panels (Photos 1 and 2). According to the original measured drawings (Figure 8), the rear (north) elevation once had eight, evenly spaced, three-light steel windows that were hinged at the top as well as four openings for poultry to access a rear yard, but vegetation obscured the elevation to verify their existence (Photo 3). Various types of metal vents and exhaust fans protrude from the north elevation wall. The building has four entries, two evenly spaced on the primary (south) façade and one each off-center on the east and west elevations. The entries were originally filled with 6'-by-3' wood doors with cross-braces, and most have been replaced with plain wood doors. The building's shed roof is higher at the primary (south) facade and slopes down toward the rear (north) elevation. There is a full-length overhang that begins at the apex of the roof and projects down and out 1'8" from the wall. Both the roof and overhang have a non-historic rubberized aluminum roof coating that replaced (or covers) the original slate surfaced roll roofing atop 1"-by-6" shiplap roof sheathing (Photos 1 and 2). The interior of Building 273 has a single wood partition with an off-center wood door, separating the building into two equally-sized open rooms (Photo 4). The interior walls are clad with broad rectangular boards. There is an approximately 12'-tall metal grain bin adjacent to the building's west elevation.

Building 273, which is currently vacant, is in good condition.

#### HISTORY OF PROPERTY

#### Central Farm

Building 273, constructed in ca. 1935, 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).

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

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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 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.

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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 Experimental Laying House for Breeding, Building 273

Building 273 is one of six identical experimental laying houses (Buildings 273-278) that were built ca. 1935 (only five remain since Building 276 was demolished ca. 1990) (Robinson and Associates 1998). One set of original design drawings exists for Buildings 273-278 (Figures 7 and 8). They were drawn by the USDA Bureau of Agricultural Engineering, Division of Plans and Service, circa mid-1930s. The timeline and construction methodology for Building 273 is consistent with the New Deal development of BARC, which prioritized simple utilitarian design elements (Robinson and Associates 1998).

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 by the late 1930s. In 1934, around the time when new laboratory buildings were being constructed, the farm was enlarged, and the poultry houses rebuilt. Thus, at the time of Mohler's report, all the poultry houses and other buildings used for poultry investigations, including Building 273, were practically new, with only one original building still standing (Mohler 1939).

Mohler describes the poultry farm as consisting of four laboratory buildings, a central heating plant, and more than 200 houses of various sizes for housing the experimental flocks and equipment. At this time, the poultry buildings had the capacity to house approximately 7,000 adult chickens, 1,500 turkeys, and 200 pigeons. Additionally, facilities for brooding 13,000 chicks and 2,500 poults during the normal brooding period (February 1-June 1) were available, with incubator capacity of about 150,000 eggs (Mohler 1939).

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Mohler describes the laying houses as having fronts that were left open to the cold weather, since the Maryland climate was not too cold for the laying hens. Each laying house was divided into sections with solid partitions between. The drawings (Figures 7 and 8) are consistent with Mohler's description, and the building appears to have been used for this purpose since its construction (Mohler 1939).

#### NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES EVALUATION

Building 273 was evaluated in 1997 to determine the building's individual significance or status as a contributing or non-contributing property at BARC, a 6,582-acre federal agricultural research facility. BARC 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. That evaluation determined Building 273 to be eligible for listing in the NRHP as a contributing property within BARC. This evaluation concurs that while Building 273 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 273 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 273 was specifically designed and operated as an experimental laying house for poultry breeding 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 273 have not been determined significant under Criterion B for its association with the lives of persons significant in our past.

Under Criterion C, Building 273 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 273, 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 273 specifically has been evaluated under Criterion D for its yielding, or likelihood to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Building 273 retains its original location and setting within an agricultural research complex. Building 273 is specifically linked in its design and operation as an experimental laying house for poultry breeding 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 273 maintains key elements of its original design including massing, fenestration, roofing pattern, cladding, and internal layouts,

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despite the minor door and window changes. Building 273 retains its integrity of design, workmanship, and materials. It is in good condition.

Although Building 273 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.

#### REFERENCES

## Mohler, John R.

1939 Federal Poultry Research at the Agricultural Research Center, Beltsville, MD. United States Department of Agriculture Miscellaneous Publication No. 368. Pages 1-7.

https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=s3iVjVr3lKYC&printsec=frontcover&pg=GBS.PP1 (accessed October 10, 2019).

Office of Technology Assessment (OTA), U.S. Food and Agricultural Research Advisory Panel

1981 An Assessment of the United States Food and Agricultural Research System.

https://books.google.com/books?id=0Muy9v0PQckC&lpg=PA29&dq=The%20Role%20and%20Development%20of%20%20Public%20Agricultural%20Research&pg=PA29#v=onepage&q&f=false (accessed October 10, 2019).

#### Robinson and Associates

1998 Historic Site Survey, Beltsville Agricultural Research Center, Beltsville, Maryland. On file at the Maryland Historical Trust.

## United States Department of Agriculture

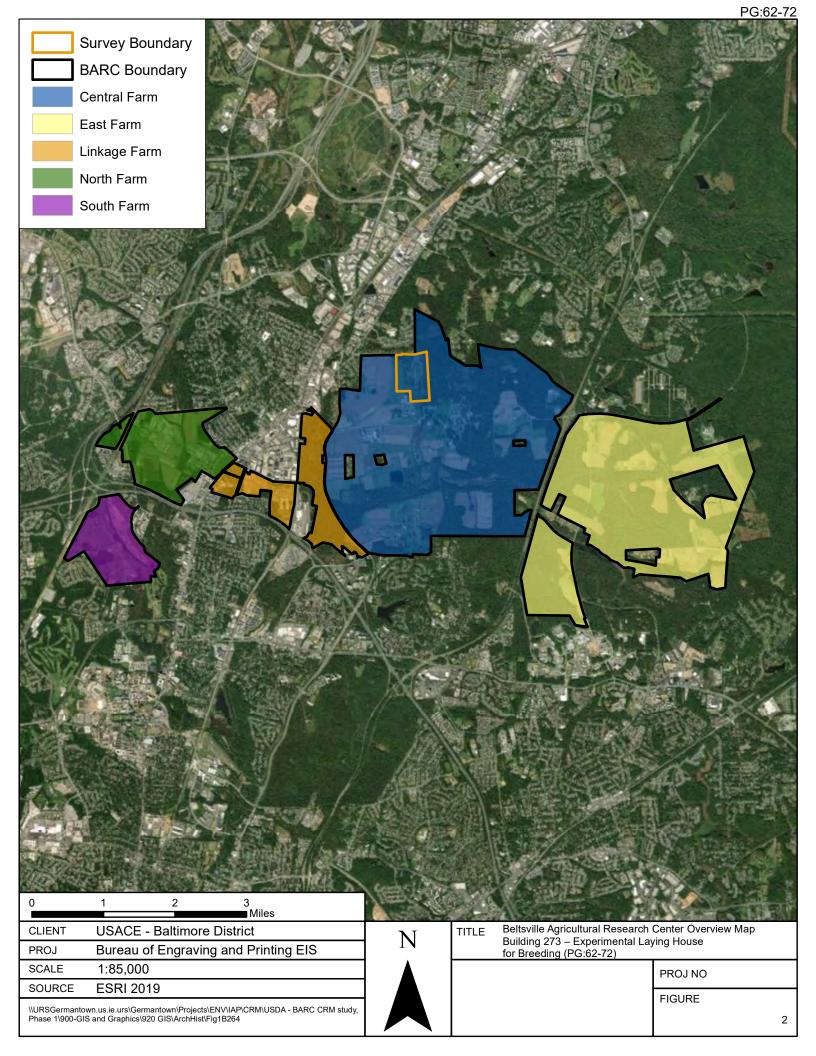
ca. 1935 Experimental Laying House for Breeding. Bureau of Agricultural Engineering, Division of Plans and Service. On file, Architectural Drawings Collection, Facilities and Engineering Branch, Building 273-278, BARC.

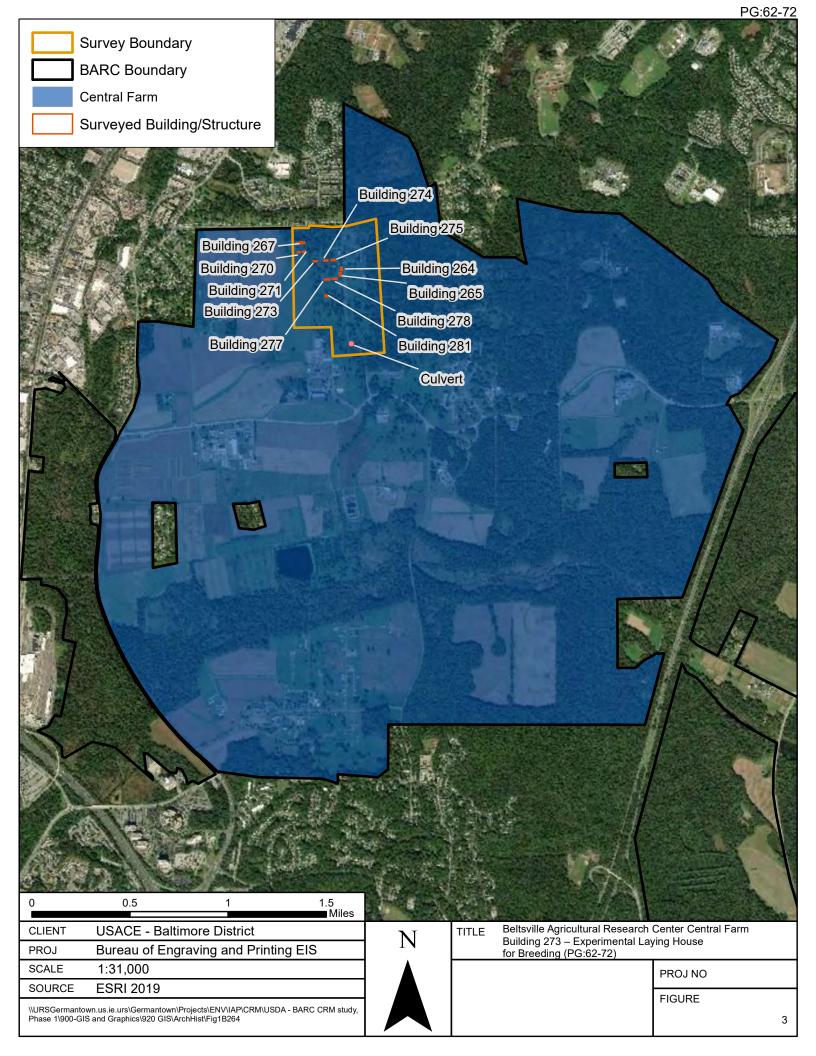
ca. 1937 The National Agricultural Research Center of the Department of Agriculture. USDA Library, Special Collections 360.

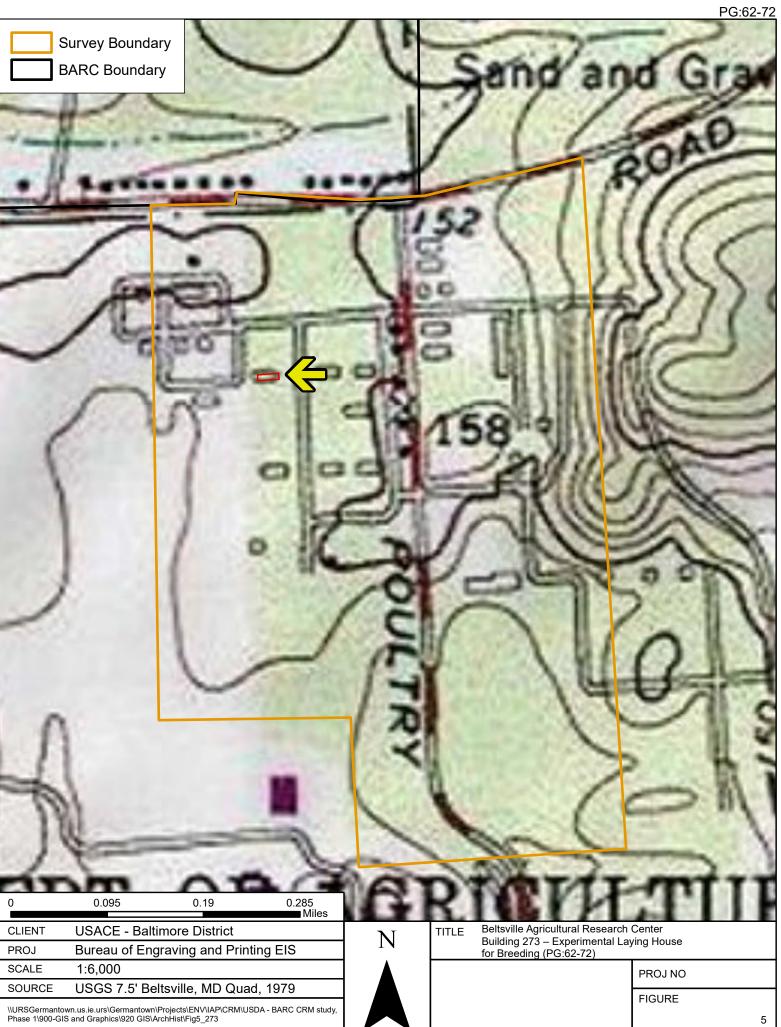
## Wiser, Vivian and Wayne D. Rasmussen

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

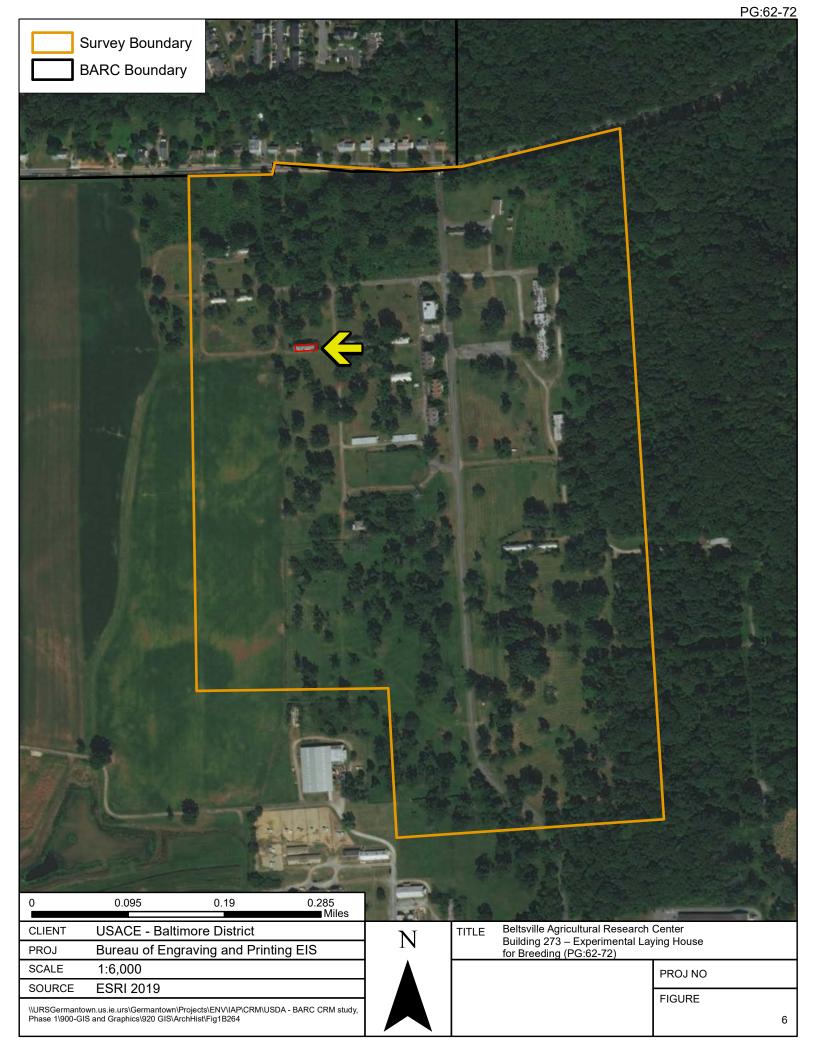
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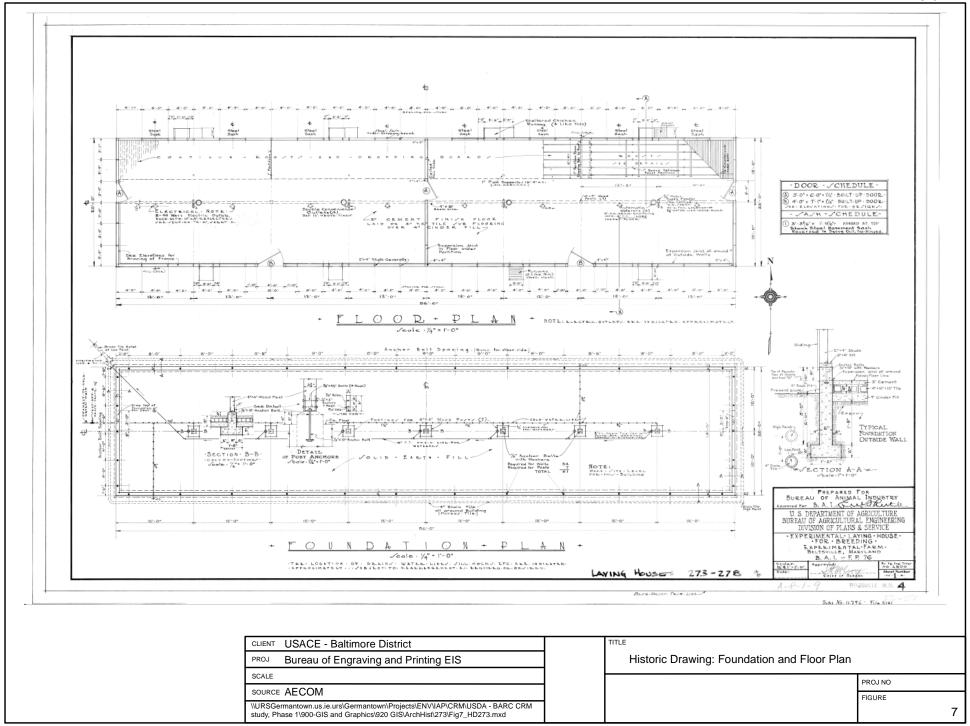


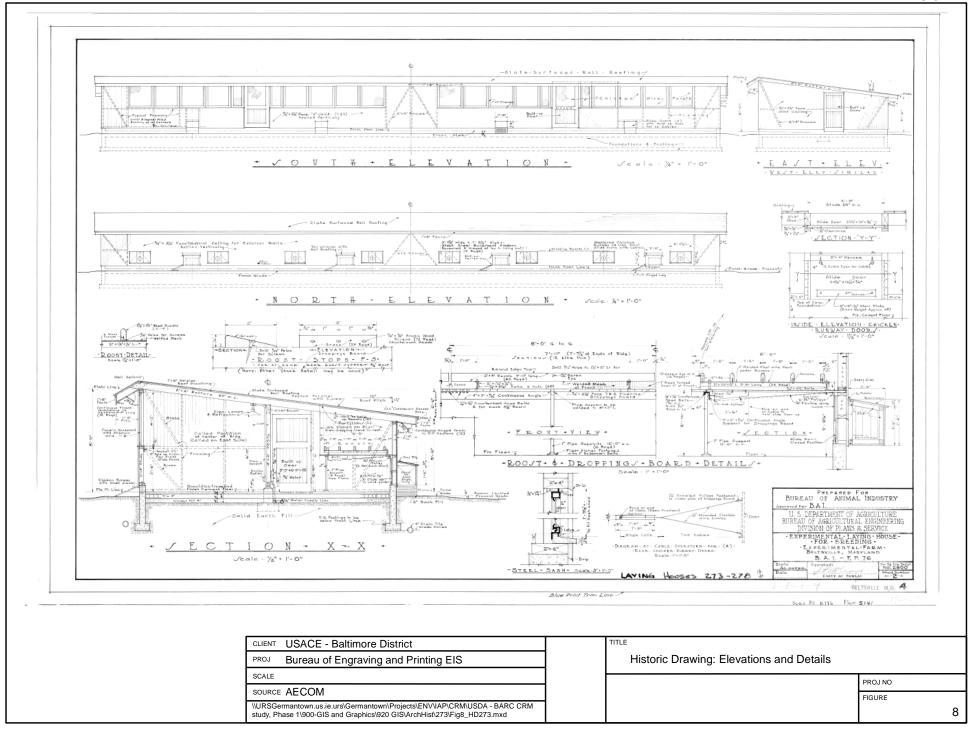




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Photograph Log PG:62-72

Building 273: Experimental Laying House for Breeding 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:62-72\_2019\_09\_25\_01.tif, Building 273, Experimental Laying House for Breeding, Central Farm, View of West and South Elevations, Looking Northeast
- 2. PG:62-72\_2019\_09\_25\_02.tif, Building 273, Experimental Laying House for Breeding, Central Farm, View of South Elevation, Looking Northeast
- 3. PG:62-72\_2019\_09\_25\_03.tif, Building 273, Experimental Laying House for Breeding, Central Farm, View of West and North Elevations, Looking Southeast
- 4. PG:62-72\_2019\_09\_25\_04.tif, Building 273, Experimental Laying House for Breeding, Central Farm, Overview of the Interior, Looking West



Photo 1 – Building 273, Experimental Laying House for Breeding, Central Farm, View of West and South Elevations, Looking Northeast

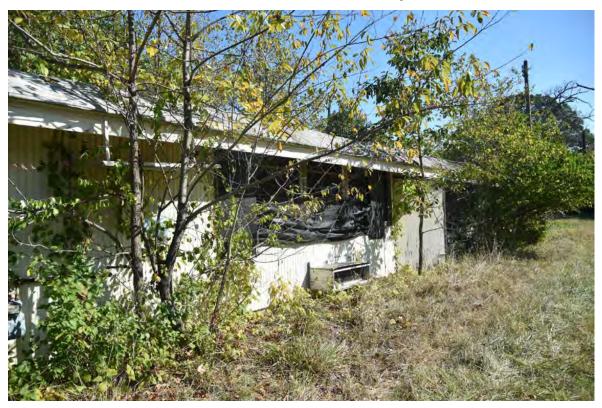


Photo 2 – Building 273, Experimental Laying House for Breeding, Central Farm, View of South Elevation, Looking Northeast

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Photo 3 – Building 273, Experimental Laying House for Breeding, Central Farm, View of West and North Elevations, Looking Southeast



Photo 4 – Building 273, Experimental Laying House for Breeding, Central Farm, Overview of the Interior, Looking West

CLIENT	USACE - Baltimore District	TITLE	Photographs	ving Hause		
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