



The Gensicke Farms, St. Clair Township, Benton County, Iowa

In late 1854, Christian Gensicke in partnership with Anton Esterle and Anton Zieher purchased two 200-acre land parcels in Benton County, Iowa. One-third of this land would eventually become the Christian Gensicke Farm. Christian and then his son F.H. (Henry) Gensicke owned this farm until 1903. It is where most of Henry's children were born, including daughter Esther. We are direct descendants of Christian, Henry and Esther.

The Sections 27 and 28 Land Patents

The first white men to settle in what is now Benton County, Iowa, arrived in 1839, although the county itself was not formally established until 1843. The first land claim in St. Clair Township in Benton County was recorded in 1852.

On December 1, 1854, Christian Gensicke along with Anton Esterle and Anton Zieher purchased two adjacent 200-acre parcels in sections 27 and 28 of St. Clair Township from the General Land Office of the United States through its Iowa City, Iowa register. The parcels included section 27, SW $\frac{1}{4}$ and SW $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$, and section 28, SE $\frac{1}{4}$ and SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$.

These parcels were about a mile to the southwest of the present-day village of Watkins, Iowa, which was platted starting in 1873 at the site of a train station midway between Blairstown and Florence, Iowa.

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

CERTIFICATE
No. 9265

CERTIFICATE
No. 9265

Whereas *Anton Zieher, Anton Esterle, and Christian Gensicke,*

of Benton County, Iowa,

have deposited in the GENERAL LAND OFFICE of the United States, a Certificate of the REGISTER OF THE LAND OFFICE at *Suba City,* whereby it appears that full payment has been made by the said

Anton Zieher, Anton Esterle, and Christian Gensicke, according to the provisions of the Act of Congress of the 24th of April, 1820, entitled "An act making further provision for the sale of the Public Lands," for the South West quarter, and the South West quarter of the North West quarter of Section twenty seven, in Township eighty two North, of Range ten West, in the District of Lands Subject to sale at *Suba City, Iowa,* containing two hundred acres

according to the official plat of the survey of the said Lands, returned to the General Land Office by the SURVEYOR GENERAL, which said tracts have been purchased by the said *Anton Zieher, Anton Esterle, and Christian Gensicke.*

NOW KNOW YE, That the United States of America, in consideration of the premises, and in conformity with the several acts of Congress, in such case made and provided, HAVE GIVEN AND GRANTED, and by these presents DO GIVE AND GRANT, unto the said *Anton Zieher, Anton Esterle, and Christian Gensicke,*

and to their heirs, the said tracts above described, TO HAVE AND TO HOLD the same, together with all the rights, privileges, immunities, and appurtenances of whatsoever nature, thereto belonging, unto the said

Anton Zieher, Anton Esterle, and Christian Gensicke, and to their heirs and assigns forever.

In Testimony Whereof, I, *Franklin Pierce,*

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, have caused these Letters to be made PATENT, and the SEAL of the GENERAL LAND OFFICE to be hereunto affixed.

GIVEN under my hand, at the CITY OF WASHINGTON, the *first* day of *December* in the Year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and *fifty four* and of the Independence of the United States the *Seventy-ninth*

BY THE PRESIDENT: *Franklin Pierce*

By *H. E. Baldwin* Asst.

J. N. Granger RECORDER of the General Land Office.

This December 1, 1854 General Land Office certificate records Christian Gensicke, Anton Esterle and Anton Zieher's St. Clair Township Land purchase in section 27.

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

CERTIFICATE
No. 9266

MADE PUBLIC

To all to whom these Presents shall come, Greeting:

WHEREAS Anton Zieher, Anton Esterle, and Christian Gensicke, of Benton County, Iowa,

have deposited in the GENERAL LAND OFFICE of the United States, a Certificate of the REGISTER OF THE LAND OFFICE at Iowa City,

whereby it appears that full payment has been made by the said Anton Zieher, Anton Esterle, and Christian Gensicke,

according to the provisions of the Act of Congress of the 24th of April, 1820, entitled "An act making further provision for the sale of the Public Lands," for the South East quarter and the South East quarter of the North East quarter of Section twenty eight, in Township eighty two North, of Range ten West, in the District of Lands Subject to sale at Iowa City, Iowa, containing two hundred acres

according to the official plat of the Survey of the said Lands, returned to the General Land Office by the SURVEYOR GENERAL, which said tracts have been purchased by the said Anton Zieher, Anton Esterle, and Christian Gensicke.

NOW KNOW YE, That the United States of America, in consideration of the premises, and in conformity with the several acts of Congress, in such case made and provided, HAVE GIVEN AND GRANTED, and by these presents DO GIVE AND GRANT, unto the said Anton Zieher, Anton Esterle, and Christian Gensicke,

and to their heirs, the said tract above described: TO HAVE AND TO HOLD the same, together with all the rights, privileges, immunities, and appurtenances of whatsoever nature, thereunto belonging, unto the said

Anton Zieher, Anton Esterle, and Christian Gensicke, and to their heirs and assigns forever.

In Testimony Whereof, by Franklin Pierce, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, have caused these Letters to be made PATENT, and the SEAL of the GENERAL LAND OFFICE to be hereunto affixed.

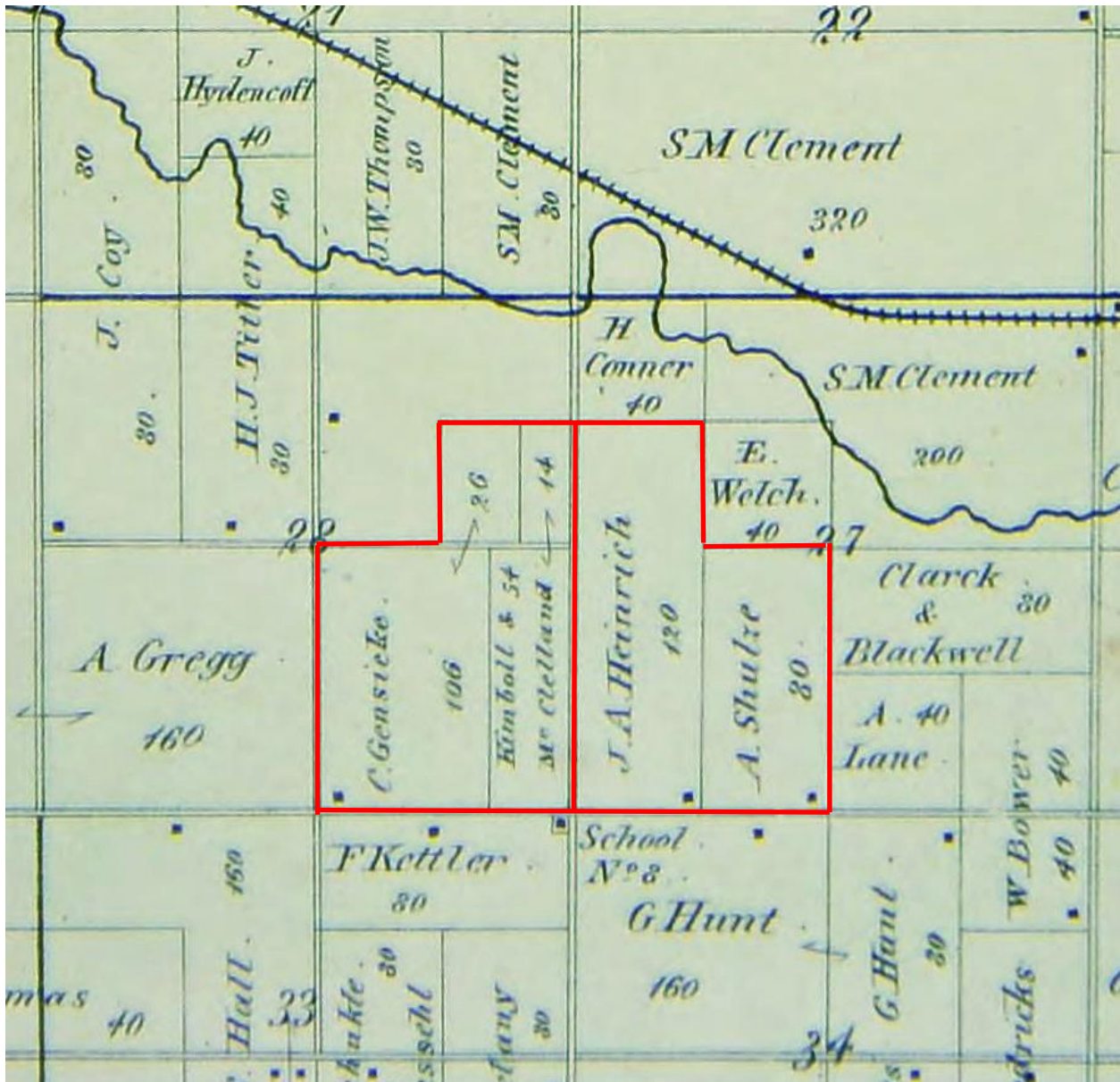
Given under my hand, at the CITY OF WASHINGTON, the first day of December in the Year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and fifty four and of the Independence of the United States the Seventy ninth

BY THE PRESIDENT: Franklin Pierce
By H. E. Baldwin Offt.

R. M. Granger RECORDED of the General Land Office.

Copy sent cert. to Benton Co. Iowa Aug 30/69

This December 1, 1854 General Land Office certificate records Christian Gensicke, Anton Esterle and Anton Zieher's St. Clair Township Land purchase in section 28. This is the oldest known document regarding the land that became the Christian Gensicke Farm.

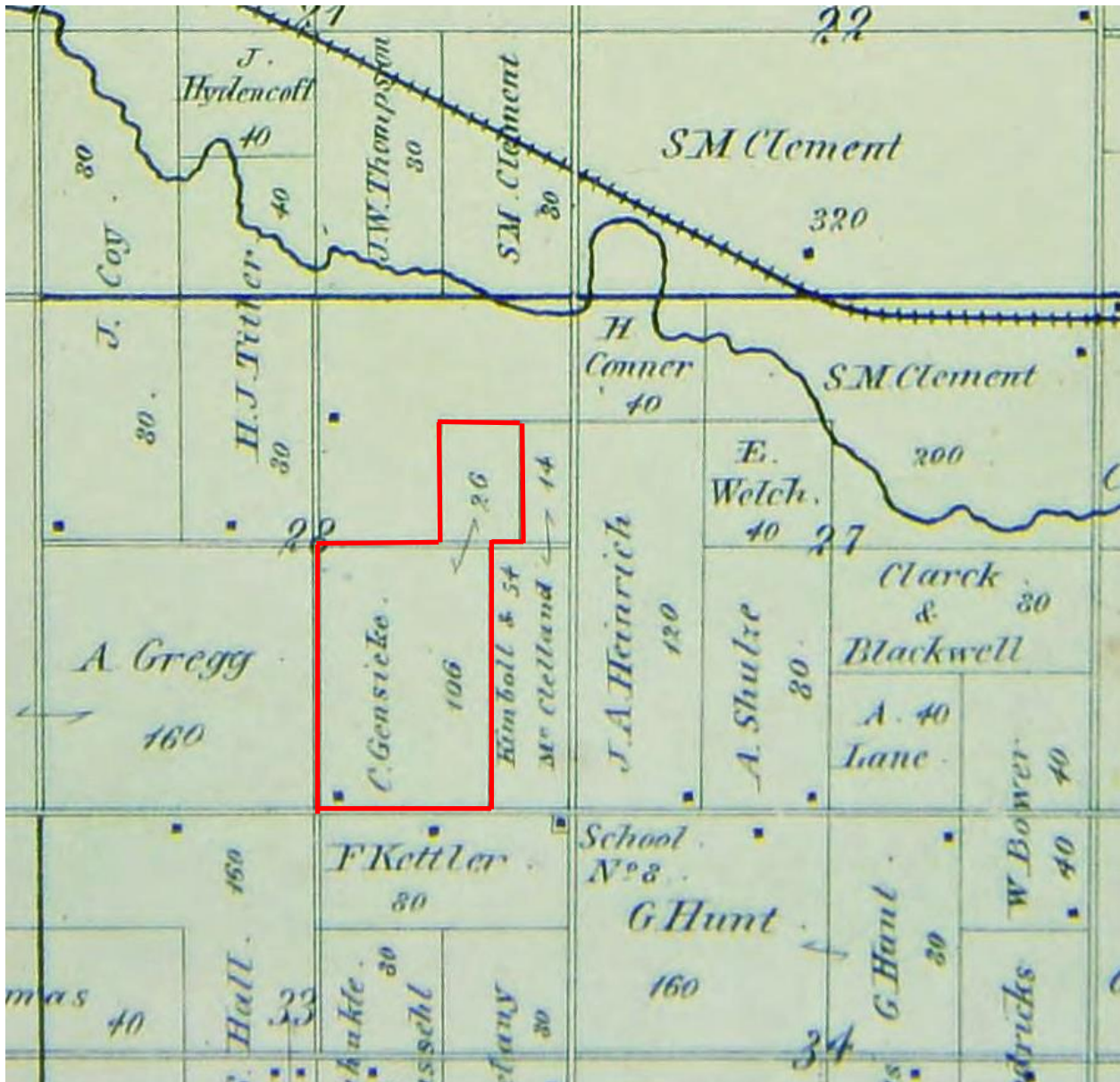


This 1872 plat map is marked to show the boundaries of the two 200-acre parcels in sections 27 (right) and 28 (left).

It appears that the partners rented out this land for several years, as I have not found Esterle or Zieher in any relevant U.S. and Iowa census records or other Benton County records, and in the mid-1850s Christian and Elisabeth Gensicke had settled about 70 miles away at Wilton Junction in Muscatine County, Iowa, where Christian worked as a wagon maker, and where six of their seven children were born.

The Christian Gensicke Farm

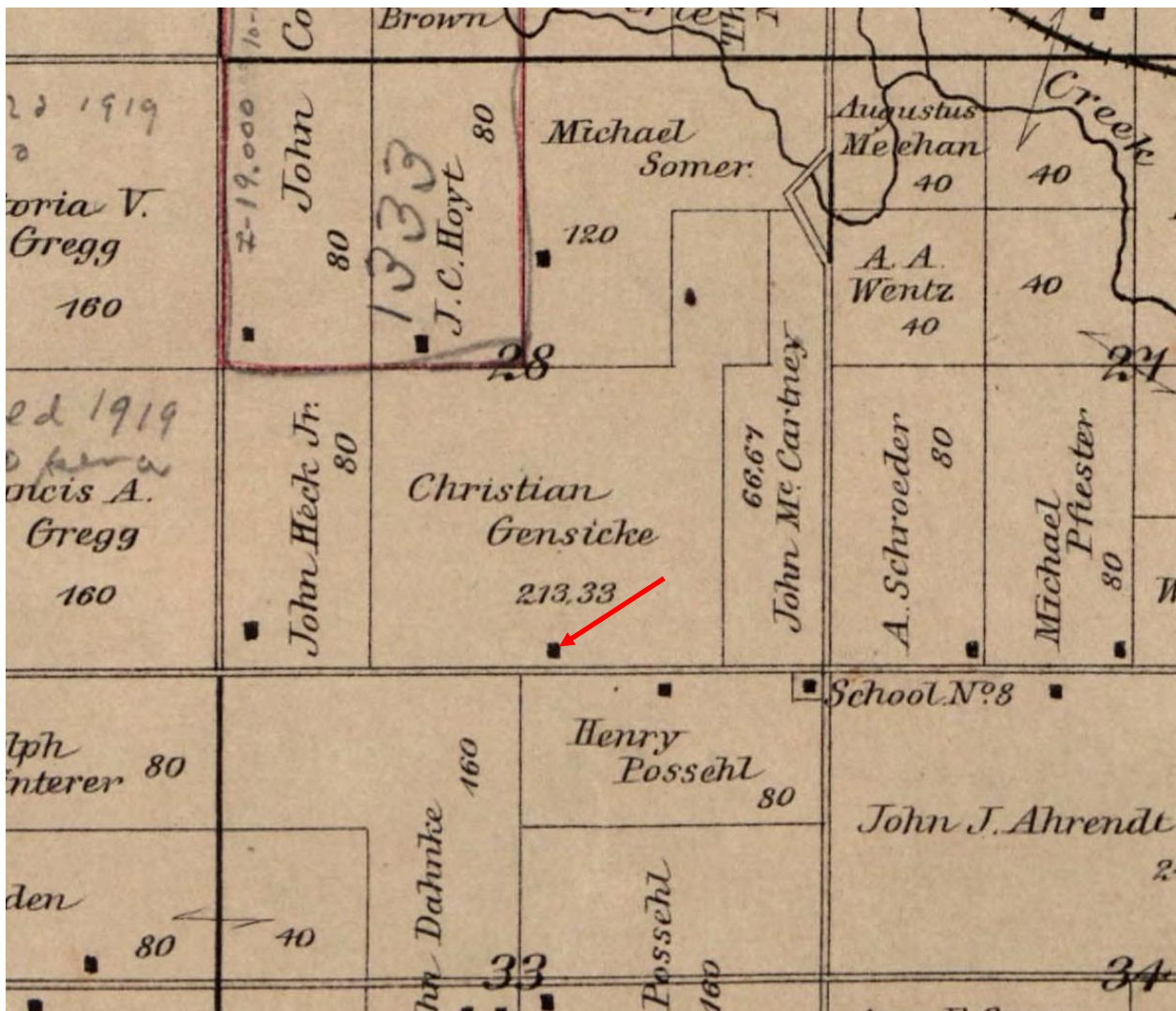
In 1868, Christian and Elisabeth Gensicke and their now-six children moved to a farm in St. Clair Township, Benton County, on part of the land that Christian, Anton Esterle and Anton Zieher had purchased in 1854.



This 1872 plat map is marked to show the boundaries of the Christian Gensicke Farm at that time.

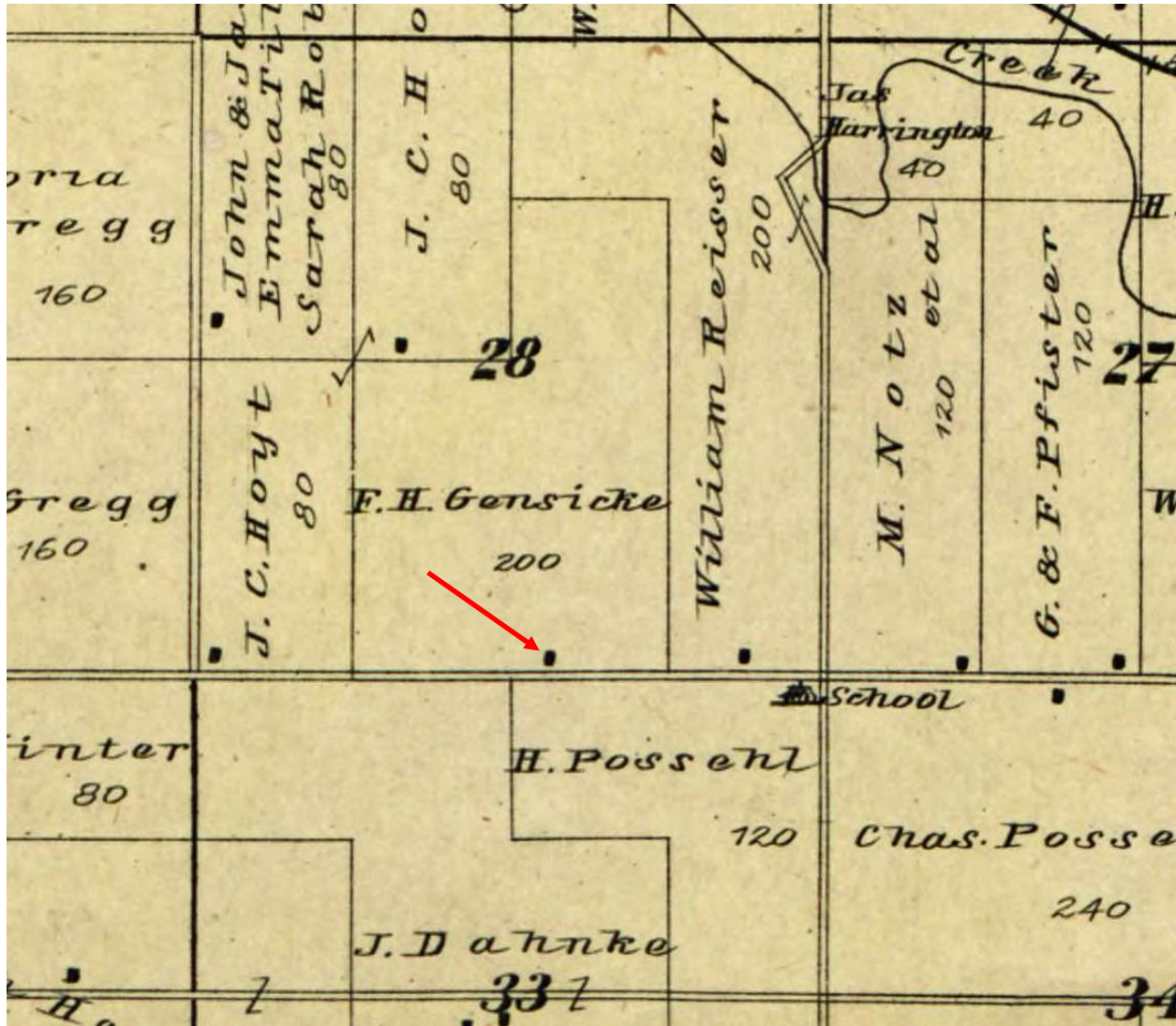
The Christian Gensicke Farm included section 28, W 106.67 acres SE ¼, and W 26.67 acres NE ¼. Although the acres on this map add up to 132, more precise acre information on the 1885 plat map suggests that the farm was actually 133.33 acres, or exactly one-third of the 400 acres that Gensicke, Esterle and Zieher acquired in 1854. This suggests that at some point the partners divided their land into thirds, and whereas Christian Gensicke moved onto his third, Esterle and Zieher sold their portions.

By 1885, the Christian Gensicke Farm had grown to 213.33 acres with the acquisition of 80 acres just to the west of his original farm. This included section 28, E ½ SW ¼, W 106.67 acres SE ¼, and W 26.67 acres NE ¼.



This 1885 plat map shows that Christian Gensicke had acquired another 80 acres just to the west of his original farm.

At some point between 1885 and 1900, Christian Gensicke retired from farming and rented this farm to his son F.H. (Henry) Gensicke, except for 13.33 acres that were transferred to the William Reisser Farm next door (Christian and Elisabeth Gensicke's daughter Sophia married Reisser in 1885). At this point, the Christian Gensicke Farm included section 28, E ½ SW ¼, W ½ SE ¼, and SW ¼ NE ¼.



This 1901 plat map suggests that the Christian Gensicke Farm was now owned by his son, F.H. Gensicke, except for 13.3 acres that had been transferred to the adjacent farm of William Reisser, husband of Christian and Elisabeth's daughter Sophia. However, other sources indicate that Christian Gensicke remained the owner of this farm until 1903.

Gensicke ownership of this farm ended in 1903 when F.H. Gensicke, his wife Hannah and their then-five children moved to Sunny Dale Farm, just west of Cedar Rapids, in Clinton Township, Linn County, Iowa. This ended almost 50 years of Gensicke ownership or co-ownership of the Christian Gensicke Farm.

Christian Gensicke lived with his son on the farm at the time of the 1900 census; his wife Elisabeth had died in 1897. At some point after 1903 and no later than 1907, Christian bought a house in Cedar Rapids, where he lived until his death in 1910.



Christian Gensicke's home at 524 7th Avenue SW, Cedar Rapids, where he lived the last years of his life.

Photos of the Christian Gensicke Farm



Approaching the Christian Gensicke Farm from the east, 2010; Christian and Elisabeth Gensicke finished raising their family here; their son Henry and his wife Hannah started raising their family here, where five of their six children were born



The Christian Gensicke Farm, 2010



The Christian Gensicke Farm, 2010. The house has been modernized and expanded since it was first built.



The Christian Gensicke Farm, 2010



The barn on the Christian Gensicke Farm, 2010. The barn has since been torn down.



Part of the original 1854 land patent that became part of the Christian Gensicke Farm, 2010



Land added to the Christian Gensicke Farm between 1872 and 1885, 2010

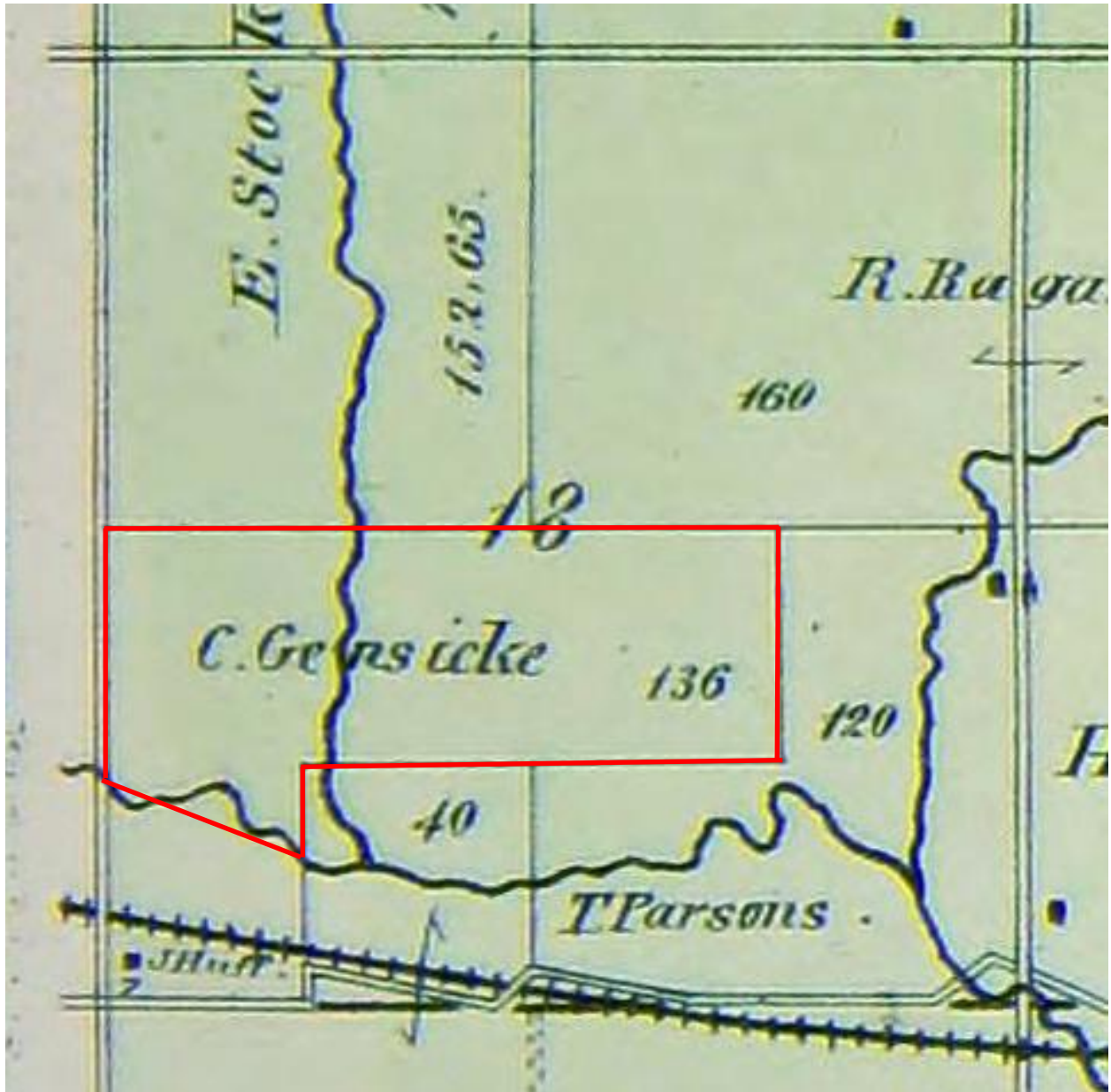


This Google Satellite image shows what once was the Christian Gensicke Farm in 1901, southwest of Watkins, Iowa.

The Section 18 Farm

In addition to the Christian Gensicke Farm, for a time Christian Gensicke owned a second farm in St. Clair Township. He purchased this parcel in time for it to be noted on the 1872 plat map. However, he no longer owned this farm when the 1885 plat map was published. The family apparently never lived on the land. It is not clear whether Gensicke farmed this land or rented it out.

This farm included section 18, N ½ SW ¼ and NW ¼ SE ¼, and the 16 acres north of Prairie Creek in section 18, SW ¼ SW ¼.



Christian Gensicke's Section 18 Farm

Photos of the Section 18 Farm



Prairie Creek defines the southwest boundary of what was the Section 18 Farm, 2022.



Part of the Christian Gensicke Section 18 Farm, 2022

Other Gensicke Land

An 1878 *History of Benton County* profile reported that Christian Gensicke owned 460 acres of land. At their maximum known sizes, the Christian Gensicke Farm and the Section 18 Farm combined totaled about 350 acres. This suggests that Christian Gensicke also owned another sizeable land parcel in the area at the time. However, I have not found it on the available plat maps published in 1872 and 1885.

Prepared by Mark David Wasson
Last updated November 1, 2023