



## The John Wasson Farm, Madison Township, Jones County, Iowa

*Land belonging to farms established in 1853 and 1854 eventually became part of the John Wasson Farm. John and Jemima Wasson bought the farm in 1864, and lived on it for the rest of their lives, leasing it to their son Joe for several years. We are direct descendants of John, Jemima and Joe.*

### **1853-1856 Early History of the Farm**

Farming began in Madison Township on June 4, 1852 when John Bender first broke ground, although the township wasn't officially organized until 1855.

In a September 7, 1905 article in the Anamosa Eureka, retired farmer Emerson E. Brown described his early years in Jones County.

Brown had worked in the gold mines of California for a few years before returning home to Vermont. He came to Jones County in September 1853, following his brother Daniel who had come to the county in June 1853.

According to Emerson Brown, Daniel Griswold Brown had entered a quarter section in Madison Township at that time, establishing a farm, part of which would eventually become part of the John Wasson Farm. Daniel Brown and his family were still on their farm at the time of the 1856 Iowa Census, but they moved to Kansas the following year.

I believe the quarter section where Brown established his farm was section 2, SE ¼. However, at the time I searched the Bureau of Land Management database, its records did not include relevant government property sales in sections 1 and 2 of Madison Township.

166

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

CERTIFICATE  
No. 16422

CERTIFICATE  
No. 16422

WHEREAS Benjamin Bosler, of Jackson County, Iowa,

has deposited in the GENERAL LAND OFFICE of the United States, a Certificate of the REGISTER OF THE LAND OFFICE at Dubuque, Iowa, whereby it appears that full payment has been made of the said

Benjamin Bosler 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 North half of the North East quarter of Section eleven, in Township eighty four, North, of Range two, West, in the District of Lands subject to sale at Dubuque, Iowa, containing eighty 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 tract has been purchased by the said Benjamin Bosler,

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 Benjamin Bosler,

and to his 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, thereto belonging, unto the said Benjamin Bosler, and to his heirs and assigns forever.

In Testimony Whereof, Franklin Pierce

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA has 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, this fifteenth day of June, in the Year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and fifty four, and of the Independence of the United States the thirty eighth.

BY THE PRESIDENT, Franklin Pierce,

By James H. Fowler, apt.

J. N. Granger  
RECORDED OF THE GENERAL LAND OFFICE.

1738438

This June 15, 1854 General Land Office certificate records Benjamin Bosler's Madison Township land purchase. This is the oldest known document regarding land that became part of the John Wasson Farm.

BLM records did include property sales in section 11 of Madison Township. Benjamin Bosler purchased section 11, N ½ NE ¼ from the federal government, recorded on June 15, 1854. These 80 acres later were the part of the John Wasson Farm on the south side of present-day Highway E29 (Anamosa Road) and west of present-day 80<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Bosler's purchase rules out section 11, NE ¼ as Brown's quarter section. This was the only record of any sort I could find on Benjamin Bosler. He did not appear in the 1856 Iowa Census for Madison Township.

The C.C. Himebaugh Farm had been established around that same time on section 1, E ½ SW ¼, ruling out section 1, SW ¼ as Brown's quarter section.



*View from the northwest corner along Highway E29 of what began as the 80-acre Benjamin Bosler Farm in 1854. This later became the part of the John Wasson Farm south of the road, although for a time its western half was owned by John's son James.*

### **1857-1863**

I have not found plat maps, real estate transaction records or any other information on who owned any of the land that would become the John Wasson Farm for these years.

### 1864-1879 The John Wasson Farm

John and Jemima Wasson bought the John Wasson Farm in 1864, and settled there with their seven surviving children – John Jr., Jane, Mary, Jeannette, William, James and Joseph (Joe).

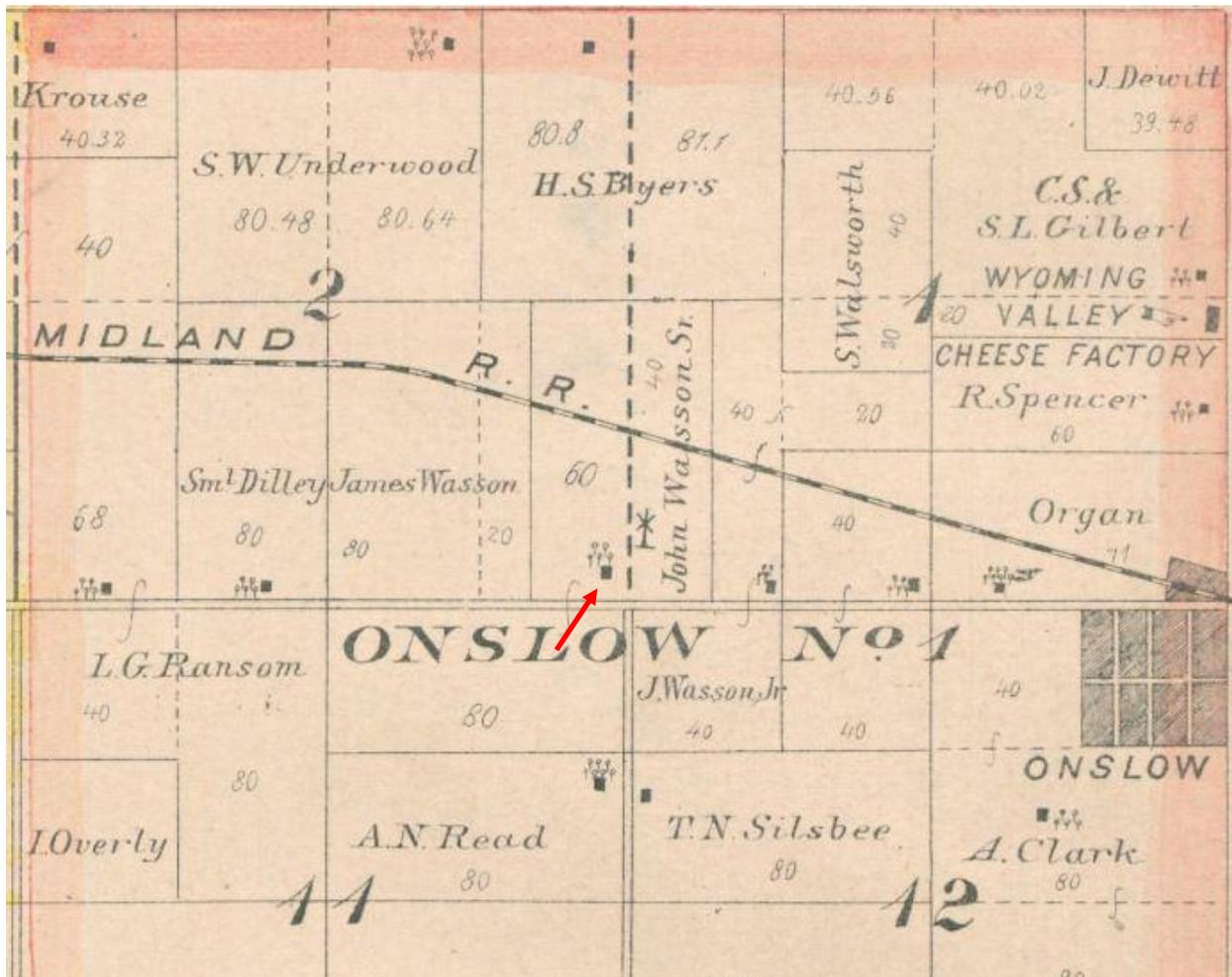
Some accounts suggest that the Wassons first settled on this farm as early as 1853 or 1854 when they arrived in Iowa from New York. But the Wassons did not sell their New York home until 1854. Census records show that the Wassons lived in Canton Village in 1854 and then as tenant farmers in Brandon Township in 1856, both in Jackson County, and later became tenant farmers in Clay Township (Johnson Post Office) in Jones County in 1860 before settling on this farm. Obituaries for both John and Jemima suggest that they lived on the John Wasson Farm starting in 1864.



*The 1867 plat map for the northeast corner of Madison Township, Jones County. The John Wasson Farm effectively included section 2, E ½ SE ¼, approx. 80 acres, section 2, SW ¼ SE ¼, approx. 40 acres, section 11, N ½ NE ¼, approx. 80 acres, and section 1, W ½ W ½ SW ¼, approx. 40 acres, a substantial farm of 240 acres.*

The John Wasson Farm was at its largest known size at the time of the 1867 plat map, at about 240 acres; 160 acres were on the north side of present-day Highway E29 (Anamosa Road) in sections 1 and 2, and 80 acres were on the south side of Highway E29 and west of present-day 80<sup>th</sup> Avenue in section 11.

According to the plat map, a school house was located opposite from the John Wasson Farm on the southeast corner of present-day Highway E29 (Anamosa Road) and 80<sup>th</sup> Avenue on the neighboring H. Dockstader Farm. Known as the Wasson School, it was a 14'x18' frame building. After Onslow opened a public school in 1874, this school was closed. It was purchased and moved by Nelson Reade, who used it for storage. It was still used as a granary as recently as the 1920s.



*The 1877 plat map for Madison Township, Jones County. The John Wasson Farm effectively included section 2, E ¼ E ½ SE ¼, approx. 60 acres, section 11, N ½ NE ¼, approx. 80 acres, and section 1, W ½ W ½ SW ¼, approx. 40 acres.*

By 1877, John and Jemima's three oldest sons – John Jr., James and William – had farms of their own. The John Wasson Jr. Farm was just to the east, and the William Wasson Farm was in Wyoming Township.

The James Wasson Farm was just to the west of the John Wasson Farm, and at this time it included 60 acres in section 2 that had once been part of the John Wasson Farm. This reduced the John Wasson Farm to about 180 acres – 177, actually, as the farm lost a few acres as railroad right-of-way when the Iowa Midland Railroad (later part of the Chicago and North Western Railway) was built across the northern part of the farm in 1872.



*This barn on what had been the John Wasson Farm has a wood sign with the date 1878 on it. The barn would have been built by John Wasson, Sr. before his son Joe took over operations and started renting the farm. The barn was later reroofed and re-sided with metal, and sheds were added to the front and right. The sign was preserved.*

## **1880-1889**

Son Joe stayed on the John Wasson Farm with his parents. In February 1879, Joe married Carrie Sawyer, who moved onto the farm with her husband. It was not long after this that Joe started leasing the farm from his parents.

A separate residence for John and Jemima was built on the farm near the road so that they could have their own home, a garden and a small orchard. The separate residence was noted in the 1880 U.S. Census and appeared on subsequent plat maps.

Joe, Carrie and eventually their children Ella, Jessie and Duncan, who were born on the farm, lived in the main farm house. Joe's lease covered everything except for his parents' residence and its associated garden and orchard. Joe renewed his lease regularly for about 20 years until after both of his parents had died. His last renewal, which covered the 1903-1905 growing seasons, was signed shortly before Jemima died in October 1902.

According to their 1880 Federal Census Non-Population Schedule that captured information on farm productivity, the Wassons reported the following:

- 6 milk cows
- 20 cattle raised for slaughter
- 20 sheep
- 60 hogs
- 134 chickens
- 6 acres barley
- 40 acres corn
- 15 acres oats
- 4 acres wheat
- ¼ acre sorghum for molasses production
- ¼ acre potatoes
- 20 apple trees
- 500 pounds butter produced in the previous year

Although the diversity of crops helped to meet the needs of the family, it also helped to spread out the work involved. Plowing, planting and harvesting were manually-intensive tasks back in those days. Because different crops could be planted and harvested at different times, plowing, planting and harvesting tasks for the different crops could be staggered.

In 1883, nearby farmer A.N. Reade and others petitioned for a new road in Madison Township. As this would have taken some land from the John Wasson Farm, John Wasson asked for \$3000 in damages – assessors awarded him \$240 later that year. The road was possibly today's 80<sup>th</sup> Avenue or a proposed extension of that road north through the John Wasson Farm, given the location of the Reade Farm, just to the south of the John Wasson Farm, and the location of the farm of fellow damages recipient Joseph Tomlinson, just to the north of the John Wasson Farm. The 1877 plat map shows that today's 80<sup>th</sup> Avenue already existed south of the farmhouse at that time. None of the subsequent plat maps show a northern extension of that road through the Wasson and Tomlinson farms.

John Wasson died on his farm on February 4, 1888. In his will he left \$100 to each of his daughters. The bulk of his estate, including the farm, was left to Jemima. Jemima continued to rent the farm to her son Joe, and she continued to live in her own separate residence on the farm for several more years.

I found news items reporting a handful of unexpected real estate transactions involving John and Jemima Wasson:

- In July 1886, David Sim sold section 11, NW ¼ NE ¼ (the west half of the portion of the John Wasson Farm south of Highway E29) to John Wasson for \$1.
- In November 1888, Jemima sold the whole farm to Joe for \$8850. Joe sold the farm back to his mother for the same price in October 1889.
- In October 1901, Jemima sold unspecified property in Onslow to Joe for \$1.

It turned out that the Sim transaction was related to the settling of son James Wasson's estate. James died with a lot of debt and no will. At some point, James had purchased those 40 acres of the John Wasson Farm to add to his own farm. That was probably by 1879, as The History of Jones County, Iowa published that year said that John Wasson owned 140 acres rather than the 180 acres suggested by the 1877 plat map.

The court ordered the sale to help pay off part of the estate's debts. The farm was appraised, and on February 19, 1886, the section 11 portion of the James Wasson Farm was sold to David Sim for \$1700. Sim, who was married to John and Jemima's daughter Jeannette, sold that land to his father-in-law for \$1 that summer. These transactions all occurred between plat map updates, so they are not reflected on any of the available plat maps.

Given the 1888-1889 timings of the farm transactions between Jemima and Joe, and I suspect that these were likely tied to circumstances surrounding the settling of John Wasson, Sr.'s estate.

I also wonder if the \$1 transactions suggested that the farm and Onslow property were used as collateral for loans.

By the time of the 1901 \$1 transaction, Jemima was living with Joe, so this may have been done to compensate Joe for some of the costs of caring for his mother.

### 1889-1902 Jemima Owns the Farm



*The 1893 plat map for Madison Township, Jones County. The John Wasson Farm effectively included section 2, E  $\frac{3}{4}$  E  $\frac{1}{2}$  SE  $\frac{1}{4}$ , approx. 60 acres, section 11, N  $\frac{1}{2}$  NE  $\frac{1}{4}$ , approx. 80 acres, and section 1, W  $\frac{1}{2}$  W  $\frac{1}{2}$  SW  $\frac{1}{4}$ , approx. 40 acres. On this map, the farm is now in Jemima's name.*

The farm boundaries were the same in 1893 as in 1877, as the 40 acres that James had purchased by 1879 were once again part of the John Wasson Farm, now owned by Jemima Wasson.

In April 1895, it was reported that Joe was building an addition to his house on the John Wasson Farm. Later that year he renewed his lease of the farm for another three years.

In 1897, Joe lost 20 tons of hay to a fire on the farm.

Jemima visited her daughter Mary Gridley starting in the fall of 1896 and stayed for a few months, returning home in January 1897. But due to her declining health, Jemima reached the point where she could no longer live alone. She moved off the farm and in with Mary later that year.

That living arrangement didn't last. As Joe testified after Jemima died when he made a claim against her estate, "My mother stayed a time in Wyoming with Mrs. Gridley, but did not stay long. They did not get along well. She lived in the house with me for five years before she died." Jemima moved back to the John Wasson Farm in June 1897, this time moving in with Joe, Carrie and their family instead of returning to her old residence.

Carrie left the farm in April 1898, moving to Stanwood. Joe and Carrie got divorced in 1899. Daughter Ella moved to Stanwood with Carrie, but son Duncan stayed on the farm with his father and grandmother. Daughter Jessie remained on the farm with her father until June 1899 when she finished school. Jessie moved to her mother's home in Stanwood at that point.

A Mrs. Beck moved onto the farm in March 1901 to work as a housekeeper for Jemima, Joe and Duncan.

### **1902-1906 Settling the Jemima Wasson Estate**

Jemima died on her farm on October 26, 1902, apparently of a heart attack. In her will, Jemima left the farm to her five surviving children.

Jemima originally named Joe as the executor of her estate, but later Jemima added son William and daughter Jane as co-executors. Jane died during the probate process, although that created problems from the inheritance standpoint rather than the executor standpoint.

Jemima's will itself was pretty straightforward. It gave \$500 each to her six surviving grandchildren through her deceased sons John (Albert, Bertha, Arthur, John D., Sarah) and James (Minnie). The rest of her estate, including the farm, was to be divided equally among Jemima's five surviving children, Jane, Mary, Jeannette, William and Joe.

But there were two complications. Joe had just renewed his lease for the farm for another three years starting March 1, 1903 (he rented the farm for \$450/year under the terms of that lease). The siblings agreed that they would honor the lease, and would not sell the farm until the lease was up.

Joe also filed a \$6000 claim against his mother's estate. Much of his claim was for compensation for work he did for his mom after his father died, first for general farm maintenance and improvements over the years, followed by board and nursing starting in June 1897, and another change in Jemima's care starting September 7, 1899 (I have not found anything about what happened that resulted in a change to her care on such a specific date).



*The 1905 plat map for Madison Township, Jones County. The John Wasson Farm effectively included section 2, E ¼ E ½ SE ¼, approx. 60 acres, section 11, N ½ NE ¼, approx. 80 acres, and section 1, W ½ W ½ SW ¼, approx. 40 acres. The farm boundaries were the same as in 1893. Although the plat map suggests that the estate farm was now divided between J. Wasson (either Jemima or Joe) and Joe Wasson, the farm was still owned by Jemima's estate in 1905.*

Joe's claim also included charges for boarding people doing work for Jemima, as well as for assorted farm and building additions and improvements. In addition, it included the cost of 18 apple trees, two cherry trees, two pear trees, two plum trees, six grapevines, three gooseberry bushes and three currant bushes.

The siblings negotiated Joe's claim down to \$3000 to be paid upon the sale of the farm. The court okayed that. They paid Jemima's other debts, paid the six grandchildren, and divided what was left of Jemima's money - \$375 apiece.

Daughter Jane died in the middle of this in February 1903. Her husband John G. Krouse decided to file objections with the court on behalf of Jemima's grandchildren through Jane. Krouse objected to the distribution of the cash to the heirs while there were still outstanding debts, and that the estate was still accumulating debts (e.g., taxes, ongoing maintenance). He also objected to Joe's claim as being a lien on the real estate itself. He made a push to force the immediate sale of the farm.

There was some legal back and forth on that between the Wasson siblings and Krouse. This dispute was resolved when Joe bought out the Krouse share in September 1904 for \$2000. This gave Joe a two-fifths share in the farm at its eventual sale once his then-current lease was up. Mary, Jeannette and William still held a one-fifth share each.

Mr. and Mrs. Bert Bates moved onto the farm in March 1903 to work for Joe as housekeepers.

Joe married Lydia Arnold in July 1903. She moved onto the John Wasson Farm with Joe and Duncan.

### **1906 The Farm is Sold**

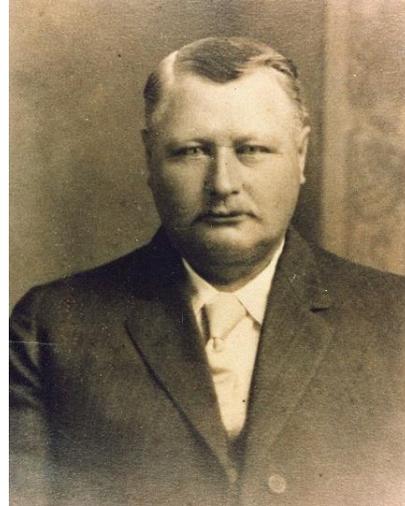
Anticipating of the end of Joe's lease in early 1906, the Wasson siblings put the John Wasson Farm up for sale in 1905.

**FARM FOR SALE--The Wasson Es-  
tate farm situated one mile west of  
Onslow. 177 acres good land, two  
fair houses, frame barn 36x50, 18-  
foot posts and basement, hog house,  
corn crib, cattle sheds, etc. Living  
water on place. Well and windmill  
at house. For price and terms en-  
quire of Joseph Wasson, executor, on  
farm, or address at Onslow, Iowa.**

*Sale offering notice for the John Wasson Farm, Wyoming Journal, January 1, 1905*

The farm was sold to Andreas D. "Andrew" Jansen on August 29, 1905 for \$88.50 per acre, or about \$15,665.

The **Jemima Wasson** estate farm, consisting of 177 acres, situated about one mile west of Onslow, was sold Tuesday by the heirs to Andrew D. Jansen of Madison township, consideration eighty-eight dollars and fifty cents per acre. This is one of the best of Jones county farms, living water as well as wells, and every acre tillable. The price was a reasonable one—the purchaser getting full value for his money.



*The John Wasson Farm was sold, Wyoming Journal, August 31, 1905 (left); Andreas “Andrew” Jansen bought the John Wasson Farm (right)*

As Joe’s lease was coming to an end in early 1906, Joe, his wife Lydia and son Duncan moved off the John Wasson Farm and onto the Sim-Wasson Farm east of Onslow, which Joe rented from his sister Jeannette. Jansen took possession of the John Wasson Farm on March 1, 1906 when Joe’s lease expired. This ended 42 years of Wasson ownership of the John Wasson Farm.

The following year, Jansen added a barn. He used John and Jemima’s old residence on the farm to expand the main farmhouse.

Jansen retired from farming in 1915 and moved to a house in Wyoming. The farm remained in the Jansen family for more than 100 years, making it a Century Farm. It passed from Andrew first to his son John and then to John’s son Daryl.



*Daryl Jansen died in 2008. The headstone for Daryl and his wife Edna, who died in 2015, features a depiction of their farm, originally the John Wasson Farm.*



*Andreas Jansen stands in front of his farm, what was the John Wasson Farm that he acquired from the Jemima Wasson estate in 1906. This undated photo was likely taken between 1907 and 1915, after Jansen expanded the main farm house and added a barn.*



*The former John Wasson Farm in 2021*



*This is the barn that John Wasson built in 1878, with what looks like the 1878 sign just below the roof line.*

1910 Plat Map



The 1910 plat map for Madison Township, Jones County. The John Wasson Farm, now the A.D. Jansen Farm, effectively included section 2, E ¼ E ½ SE ¼, approx. 60 acres, section 11, N ½ NE ¼, approx. 80 acres, and section 1, W ½ W ½ SW ¼, approx. 40 acres.

The farm boundaries in 1910 were the same as in 1893 and 1905. By 1910, Andrew Jansen had owned the farm for four years. Joe Wasson now owned the farm just to the east that had once belonged to his brother John Wasson, Jr., and was renting it out.

**Photos of the John Wasson Farm**



*Site of the former John Wasson Farm from the south on 80<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Madison Township*



*Site of the former John Wasson Farm from the south*



*The Jansen Farm, shown in 2007, was the John Wasson Farm from 1864 to 1906. The red barn to the right was originally built in 1878.*



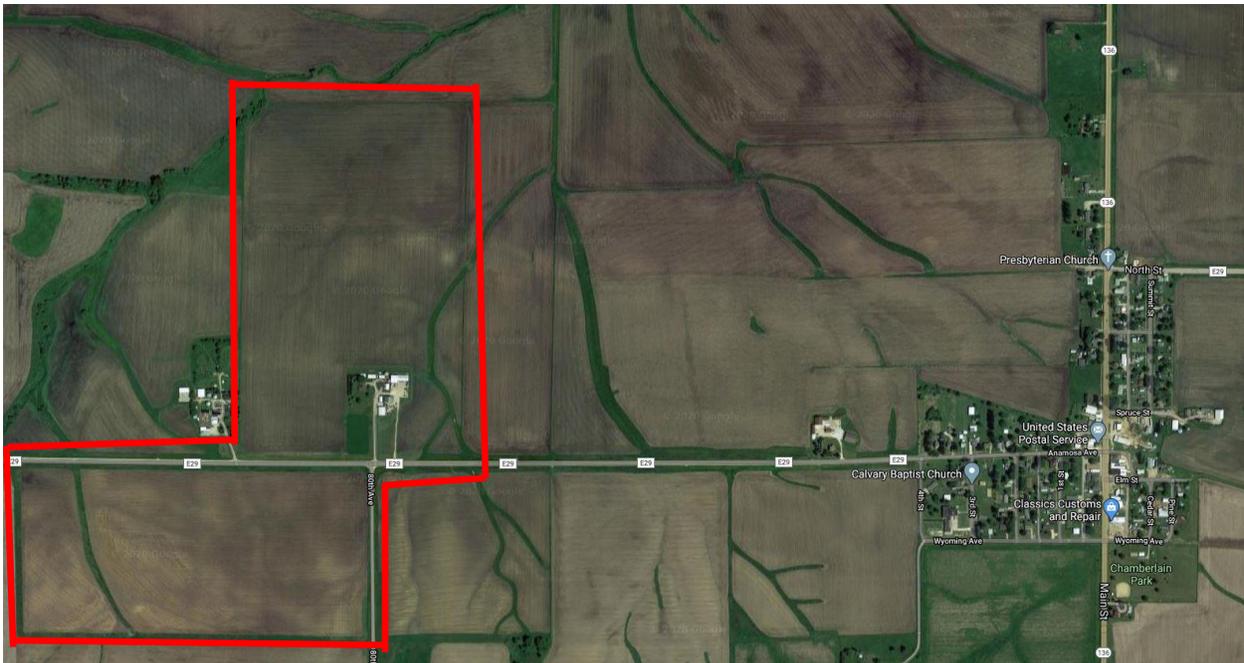
*This land in Madison Township, section 2, was part of the John Wasson Farm for a time, including where the neighboring farm now stands. Some of this land was sold to son James Wasson, but that portion has had a number of owners since then.*



*View of the former John Wasson Farm from the former John Krouse Farm*



View of the former John Wasson Farm from the northeast



*This Google Satellite image shows what once was the John Wasson Farm in 1905, west of Onslow, Iowa.*

Prepared by Mark David Wasson  
Last updated February 8, 2022