

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

U.S.D.O.
6-30-95

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an 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 entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Ashelford Hall

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 566 Eychaner Road not for publication

city or town Esmond vicinity

state Illinois code IL county DeKalb code 037 zip code 60129

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this 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 meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

William L. Wheeler, SHPO 6-26-95
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Illinois Historic Preservation Agency
State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

William L. Wheeler / SHPO 6-26-95
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register. <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other, (explain): _____	_____	_____

Ashelford Hall
Name of Property

DeKalb, Illinois
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

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

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

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Social/Meeting Hall
Recreation and Culture/Music Facility

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Work in progress

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th and Early 20th Century
American Movements: Commercial Style

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete
walls Concrete
roof Asphalt
other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Ashelford Hall
Name of Property

DeKalb, Illinois
County and State

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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Entertainment/Recreation

Social History

Architecture

Period of Significance

1925-1945

Significant Dates

1925

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Ashelford, William Henry, Builder

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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 # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Asheford Hall
Name of Property

DeKalb, Illinois
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	16	339750	4655080
Zone	Easting	Northing	
2			

3			
Zone	Easting	Northing	
4			

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Daniel J. and Pamela L. Hansen
organization N/A date April, 1995
street & number 553 Eychaner telephone 815-393-4845
city or town Esmond state IL zip code 60129

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

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.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

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

name Daniel J. and Pamela L. Hansen
street & number 553 Eychaner Rd. telephone 815-393-4845
city or town Esmond state IL zip code 60129

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. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Ashelford Hall

Description

Ashelford Hall is located at 566 Eychaner Road, in Esmond, Illinois. Esmond is located in South Grove Township in DeKalb County, approximately 15 miles northwest of DeKalb. Ashelford Hall is located on the south side of Eychaner Road between Esmond Road on the west and Stickney Street on the east. A corrugated metal quonset building sets immediately to the east of Ashelford Hall. The Chicago and North Western Depot was located to the south of the building. It was demolished in the 1970s. The train tracks were removed in 1980. No other buildings are located between the south side of Eychaner Road and the railroad tracks. Across Eychaner Road to the northeast is the former Esmond State Bank, which is currently a residence. Two former general stores are located east of Stickney Street. They are currently both residences.

The building, built in 1925, by William Henry Ashelford, is a large two story wedge shaped concrete block structure. It is 108 feet long, with an additional 40 feet for the single story generator room, for a total of 148 feet on the north side. On the south side it is 112 feet long, with an additional 41 feet for the generator room, for a total of 153 feet. The east elevation is 40 feet long. The west end of the two story section, which is also the east end of the generator room, is 13 feet wide. The west end of the generator room is 5 1/2 feet wide. The two story section is 23 feet tall, and the generator room is 10 feet tall.

The building is constructed of concrete block, handmade in Esmond, in five different styles. The main block is 16" by 8", with a panel face and beveled edges. This block is used for all but a center band, seventeen courses up, and the top five courses which are rockface. The center band is a 16" by 8" daisy pattern embossed block. Just below the top course are 16" by 8" blocks with a rockface. This block starts out four courses high on the northeast side and tapers down to two courses high on the northwest side. On the west side it is five courses high and on the east side it is ten courses high. On the south side it is five courses high with the top course a panel face. The top course, on the east, west, and north sides, is a 16" by 4" flat faced block. The header and sills for the windows and doors are precast concrete with inset rectangular panels.

The roof is virtually flat with only a maximum of 16 inches of pitch at the forty foot maximum width of the building. There is a one foot overhang at the rear of the building where steel gutters were once attached. The original roofing was asphalt over a wood

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Ashelford Hall

deck. Currently there is a steel roof laid over the original roof. This was installed in 1979, but will be removed for restoration. There are two chimneys located on the south wall to the west side of each of the main rooms. They extend from the first floor on through the roof. The windows are wood double-hung, one-over-one except where noted. Some have been boarded over but many have their original frames and casings. The windows have cast concrete sills and lintels with inset panels.

Beginning at the east end of the north elevation first story a single wood door. To its west is a window and a 9' x 9' sliding door. West of the sliding door is a single door, a 9' x 8' overhead door, a picture window, two double-hung windows, one of which was made into a door, another picture window, and an entrance door. To the west in the generator room section is a door and two small windows. The second story north elevation has eight windows.

The west elevation first story has no openings. On the second story west elevation is a window.

Beginning at the west end of the first story south elevation of the generator room section is are three small windows. To the east in the first story main building section are two windows, a double door that has been boarded over, a 9' x 9' sliding door, and a window. On the south elevation second story are eight windows.

On the east elevation first story are two windows that have been bricked shut. Beginning at the south end of the second story east elevation is a window. To its north is a door to an outside stairway and another window. The west end has a door leading to a stairwell leading to the second floor and an entrance door.

Inside in the two story section are four main rooms, a bathroom, and two coat rooms. The lower level walls are exposed concrete blocks. The upper level walls and ceilings are covered with Beaver Board, the brand name of a plaster alternative. It is a fibrous material in four foot by eight foot panels one quarter inch thick. It is nailed to furring strips with wood lath covering the joints and nails. The lower level floors are concrete and upper level are tongue and groove fir. Interior ceilings are 10' 6" high for the lower level and 8' 6" for the upper level. In the lower level of the east room are two, 18" by 6" I beams and a concrete block dividing wall running the width of the building for

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Ashelford Hall

support of the second floor. Heat was provided by two large coal furnaces. One was located in the second story east room and one was located in the first story east room.

In the lower level under the concrete floor is a 32' by 32' basement. In one corner there is a six foot deep cistern below the basement floor. The cistern was supplied by runoff from the roof through the down spouts.

In the northwest corner of the east room is a staircase leading to the second floor. A concrete block wall divides the east and west rooms on the first story. In the middle of this wall is a 12' x 8' opening with a pair of sliding doors. The west wall of the west room has a staircase leading to the second floor.

The second story east room has an outside stair access door on the east wall and an interior staircase on the north wall. A small coat room is located at the northwest corner. The west room has a large coat room in the southeast corner and a staircase leading down to the first story in the southwest corner. A bathroom to the west is very simple with water supplied from the cistern. The septic tank is located underneath the generator room.

In the middle of the generator room is an eighteen inch high concrete pad where the generator was mounted.

The current condition of the building is poor, but solid. The block has some small cosmetic cracks that tuck pointing will cure. All but a few windows are left, with the wood frames and casings needing repair and some replacement. Three windows have recently been replaced with new wood frames and aluminum storm windows. The roof, which has leaked in some areas, needs to be replaced. Most repairs are planned for 1995 through 1996.

The roof over the generator room is completely gone along with a few of the cement block for its walls. The generator, which has been removed, was used to power Ashelford Hall, Ashelford General Store, and the Esmond State Bank.

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Ashelford Hall

Ashelford Hall
Statement of Significance

Ashelford Hall meets Criterion A for listing in the National Register of Historic Places for the period from 1925, when the building was constructed, to 1945, the fifty year cutoff for the National Register of Historic Places. It is locally significant for social history and entertainment/recreation for its role as a home for the local chapter of the Grange and Esmond Men's Community Club, and as a community center, providing a location for many town dances and plays.

Ashelford Hall meets Criterion C for architecture for its method of construction as a good example of ornamental concrete block concrete construction. The period of significance for architecture is 1925, the year Ashelford Hall was built. The block was made by hand with a system made popular between 1905 and 1930.

Out of more than a half dozen historic businesses in Esmond, Ashelford Hall is the only one left standing as built. Some have been converted into homes, while others have been torn down. Both school buildings are still standing, but have been converted into homes.

History of Esmond

Esmond is a small town on the western edge of South Grove Township in DeKalb County, Illinois, two miles north of Illinois Highway 64, seven miles southwest of Kirkland, and five miles south of Fairdale and Illinois Highway 72.

It has three streets and no more than one hundred and twenty people have ever lived in Esmond at one time. Esmond is not even listed on most maps.

Early settlers arrived about 1850 of Scottish and English descent. Farming was the major occupation for the area.

By 1886 there were three post offices in South Grove Township. The first opened in 1841, the second, Dustin in 1886, and a third in Deerfield Prairie, one mile south of Esmond.

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Ashelford Hall

By 1887, two general stores were built in Esmond, the first served the community until closing its doors in 1970. In 1977 it was sold and remodeled as a rental two family dwelling. As of 1994, it was sold again, remodeled and updated as a single family dwelling. In 1887, the second general store also served as the Post Office and later added a coffee shop. The post office moved into a new building in 1969 and the general store and coffee shop closed its doors. The building was sold and converted into a large single family dwelling. In 1912, another general store was opened, built by William Henry Ashelford. An ice cream parlor was in back on the main floor, upstairs was the first community center/dance hall. The store was torn down in 1969.

The Great Western Railroad came into Esmond in 1886. Shortly after a train depot was built. The railroad stopped serving Esmond in the 1970's and the depot was demolished in the 1970's. The tracks were removed in 1980.

The first home in Esmond still stands. Built in 1887-1888, it has been completely remodeled. The blacksmith shop, built in the late 1800's, no longer exists. The Esmond State Bank, built in 1909 by William Ashelford, served the rural community until the Depression. Its doors closed in 1931. It later served as a tavern, barber shop, and clothing store. During the war the Red Cross used this building to sew items for the soldiers. It is constructed of stucco over concrete block with the original 24 inch thick concrete vaults still inside. This building was converted into a home in 1961.

A saloon, which later was used as a chicken house, is now a single family dwelling. A concrete block house was built by William H. Ashelford around 1912 for \$800.00, for Henry Rand. A large concrete block building built in 1930 which served as a livestock trucking business was erected by Lester Holmes.

The first elevator built in the early 1900's was purchased by Farmer's Grain Co. in 1928. Farmers Grain Co., established in March 13, 1915 held its first meetings in Ashelford Store and Community Center. This grain elevator is Esmond's only surviving historic original business.

The first school building in Esmond was built around 1860. A second building was built in 1907 to replace the original one. It was destroyed by fire in 1926. During 1927, the school was rebuilt and remains as a converted and remodeled duplex. A new and larger school was built on land purchased from the Ashelford family in 1951. This

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Ashelford Hall

building still stands but as of 1993 it closed its doors. Children from Esmond are now bused to the Lindenwood School, located seven miles from here. The school building was sold in 1993 and has been updated and remodeled into a large single family dwelling of over 10,000 square feet. The gym remains in its original condition as a playroom for their children.

The Esmond Methodist Church, built in 1891, still holds services today. Through the years it has been modernized and additions have been put on. The block basement was added in 1912 using the first handmade concrete blocks constructed by the Ashelford family. The basement cost \$335 to build.

Esmond's community served its nation well in both wars at home as well as in the Armed Services. A chapter of the Red Cross was organized in Esmond on June 26, 1917. Esmond's chapter went over the top of every quota in the War Relief Funds and Liberty Loan Drives put before her.

William H. Ashelford

In 1903, the VanHorn property, consisting of 183 acres, was offered for sale. It was auctioned off at DeKalb County Courthouse in Sycamore, to the highest bidder. Mr. William H. Ashelford bought the farm for \$85 per acre. He and his family moved from his father's farm south of Clare to the new farm in 1904. Mr. Ashelford built many buildings on the farm. He bought hogs and cattle from the farmers who lived in the surrounding area. When the animals were ready for market, they were shipped to the Union Stockyards in Chicago. At times Mr. Ashelford would board a train and travel to large ranches in Montana or Wyoming where he would help owners round up herds of cattle. He would then buy ten to twenty carloads at a time and ship them back to Esmond for the farmers to buy. He soon became a buyer for the farmers of the community. In buying such large herds, additional bank loans were needed, so he saw the necessity of building and opening a bank in Esmond.

In 1908, Mr. Ashelford made an application to the state government for a charter and permit to organize a state bank. The bank served the community until the Depression and closed its doors on November 18, 1931. Mr. Ashelford was the first cashier. He held that position for nine years, at which time he sold his bank stock.

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Ashelford Hall

In 1912, Mr. Ashelford erected a large two-story concrete block building just west of the bank and opened a general store (demolished). Everything a rural community needed could be purchased there, it even had an ice cream parlor. The upper floor became a well known and patronized dance hall. Each Saturday night the Hamilton Orchestra, from Rochelle, provided an evening of fun and dancing for the neighboring villagers.

To the west of the store he built a blacksmith shop (demolished) for horseshoeing and general repair work.

In 1921 the Ashelford's home in town burnt down which forced them to move into the upper floor of the store. So in 1925 he built Ashelford Hall across the street from the store and bank, to provide a garage, barber, shop and community center for the village of Esmond. The building had a garage on the ground floor, rented to the late LaVern (Skinny) Barnes, and a barber shop at one end, rented to the local barber, Mark Goodrich. The second floor was used as a community center for entertainment, parties, showers, dances, meetings of the Grange and Esmond Men's Community Club. A generator was located in the western one story section of the building. The generator provided electricity to the Ashelford General Store, the Esmond State Bank, and Ashelford Hall. Little is known about the generator as it was removed shortly after electricity came to town in the early 1930s.

Later Mr. Ashelford built a concrete block ice house (demolished) north of the bank, to supply ice for the summer months, as this was before the days of electricity. He was also instrumental in bringing a new school to Esmond and the first hard roads in the area.

Mr. Ashelford lived in Esmond until the late 1920's when he moved his family twenty-five miles west to Byron, Illinois. There he began building up that town and community. He owned a large farm in Byron while still managing the Esmond farm and overseeing Esmond's business needs. Mr. Ashelford started the Byron Sand and Stone Company, moving his concrete block business from Esmond to Byron in the early 1930's. Here his family continued making blocks until the late 1940's.

Many homes, two grocery stores, a hardware store and garage were built and owned by Mr. Ashelford in Byron.

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Ashelford Hall

Mr. Ashelford continued to expand his farms and businesses in Esmond and Byron until his death on February 24, 1944.

Entertainment, Recreation and Social History

Ashelford Hall served as Esmond's center of entertainment and recreation as well as a meeting place from 1925 through 1945. After the Ashelford's moved into the upper story of the Ashelford General Store in 1921, there was no community center in Esmond until the erection of Ashelford Hall in 1925.

One of the most active organizations in Esmond was the Esmond Men's Community Club, organized on February 17, 1928 at a meeting held in Ashelford Hall. The club was formed by businessmen that had met a few nights prior at the Esmond State Bank. Their purpose was to promote closer fellowship with the men in the community and assist as a body with other organizations in the community regarding various activities. Three of the men most responsible for this were: Rev. N. T. Gottschall, pastor of the Esmond Methodist Church; William Greenwood, cashier of the Esmond State Bank; and Raymond Duell, station agent at the Chicago Great Western depot in Esmond.

The meeting at Ashelford Hall was well attended and real enthusiasm was shown as 52 members joined, thereby becoming charter members. The first President was Emmett Rand, with William Greenwood as vice-president. Raymond Duell was elected secretary and treasurer and served in this office for 39 years until his retirement in 1967, due to ill health. The first directors were John Hutcheson, Charles Busse, Ray Eychaner, and Will Bell. The club was incorporated in 1934 and became known as the Men's Community Club of Esmond, Inc. Meetings were held at Ashelford Hall on the third Friday night of the month for 24 years. Upon completion of the new school building, in December of 1951, the club moved to meet in the school gym to take advantage of more modern conveniences.

The club meetings would open with a roll call, followed by a business meeting and after adjournment, it would be turned over to the entertainment committee. During the years many fine speakers and entertainers visited the club and when none were available, cards were played. Dinner would follow, served by a committee from the club.

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On July 4th, 1928, the club sponsored a picnic at Scamp's Grove. It was a community picnic with races, entertainment, and a ball game. Crowds increased over the years to where it became one of the largest 4th of July celebrations around.

In the early 1930's the club appointed a committee to work on the matter of bringing electricity to the community. They met with other communities as well as the light company and succeeded in bringing electricity to Esmond. This eliminated the need for the generator located in Ashelford Hall. For the first 25 years, the club had an annual average enrollment of 105 with an average attendance at meetings of between 40 and 50. Its highest enrollment was 169 in 1934. The dues were one dollar per year for a number of years and then were raised to two dollars.

On December 11, 1974 the club disbanded, after almost 46 years. An interesting item is that of the 52 charter members, four were still members and had been every year since it had been started. The club always tried to live up to its motto: "We belong to the construction gang--not the wrecking crew."

During the 1920's, a Community Orchestra performed in Ashelford Hall for community and Grange events. This group disbanded in the late 1930's. Other entertainment/recreation events in Ashelford Hall during the 1920s and 1930s included many traveling vaudeville and medicine shows and numerous parties, showers, and wedding receptions. The second story became a well known and patronized dance hall. Every Saturday night local bands and orchestras provided an evening of fun and dancing for the neighboring villagers.

Organized in 1867, the Grange is the oldest general farm organization in the world and America's only rural fraternity. This organization, which eventually joined with other groups to become nationwide, was formed to protect the interest of farmers against financial trusts. The idea was to fight the trusts by organizing farmers into cooperatives for marketing their crops and buying collectively.

In 1925, several members from Willowdale Grange in DeKalb County, helped Brother F. A. Jones of Peoria organize a new Grange in DeKalb County in Esmond with a membership of 118 members. Meetings of the South Grove Grange No. 1838 were held in Ashelford Hall. It was a meeting place for farmers of the Grange organization to discuss new and improved techniques and methods of farming, to see demonstrations

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of new farming equipment, and to discuss the problems that farmers encountered in marketing their products for the best possible prices. In 1929, a juvenile Grange was organized with 18 charter members. Programs were exchanged with other Granges and presented sometimes to raise money. In 1929, at the farmers picnic in Rochelle, the Grange received a prize of \$25.00 for the program they presented. They participated in 1935 in a Rockford Fall Festival. Ten members of the adult Grange and five members from the juvenile Grange took part in the Historical Pageant of Corn in Sycamore.

In 1932, their enrollment was 72, the largest in DeKalb County. The organization disbanded in 1939, with a membership of 31 men and 30 women.

Other groups that met in Ashelford Hall include Esmond Echoes (4-H Club DeKalb County Charter 1936) which still operates today and Home Extension which met during the early 1930's (later changed to the Home Bureau which exists today).

Architecture

Ashelford Hall's unusual wedge shape can only be assumed to have been built that way because of the location between the railroad tracks to the south, which were laid in a northwest to southeast direction in Esmond, and Eychaner Road to the north. There is 200 feet between Eychaner Road and the railroad at it widest point to the east and the lot tapers down to 150 feet on the west. The railroad depot was also located between Ashelford Hall and the railroad tracks.

Concrete was in use long before 1900. The Romans used concrete in many famous buildings including the Pantheon. Nineteenth century inventors experimented with concrete and concrete block throughout America and Europe. A number of patents were issued to inventors in the second half of the nineteenth century for making concrete blocks. None of these patents let to any widespread production of concrete block. Instead they were all isolated experiments that produced only a few buildings and was not widespread into mass production.

Nationally, the trend of using concrete block for low-cost commercial and domestic architecture became popular from 1905 - 1930. Literally thousands of buildings were constructed with the material.¹ Two occurrences facilitated the production of concrete block. First, Harmon S. Palmer received a U.S. patent in 1900 for a machine to make

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hollow concrete blocks. Palmer's machine proved to be durable and practical in design, setting the pace for the industry.² Second, the production of Portland cement was improved with firing and grinding techniques, creating an overall standardization of the material.³ By 1902, Palmer's plant had made approximately four hundred block-making machines and by 1907, nearly one hundred companies were competing with him.⁴

By 1910, over one thousand companies were reportedly manufacturing concrete block in the United States. The popularity may have been national but the manufacturing was local. Many areas were often identified with a particular supplier, giving the material names to identify it locally (for example, Boyd Block).⁵ Concrete block was cheap, quick, and easy to make. A machine to manufacture concrete block could cost less than \$100. All an entrepreneur needed was a good supply of sand and Portland cement to begin manufacturing block. The Sears catalogues quickly spread the news about concrete block, which was promoted as a cheap, durable, fireproof material needing little care. Concrete block was also advertised that it required no paint and little repair, and would "last practically forever." The new material was popular for garages (like Ashelford Hall) since the automobile seemed a fairly combustible machine to its many new owners.⁶

One reason why concrete block was popular was its potential for ornament. Concrete block manufacturers could order plates for machines that produced a variety of ornamental faces for the block. The Sears Company included a whole page of ornamental plates in its catalog. The most popular ornamental plates were rockface imitating stone. Other plates included cobblestone, bushhammer edged, pressed brick, ornamental wreaths and scrolls, floral patterns, and rope moldings. By imitating quarried stone or brick that looked expensive, with a cheap and easy material to make, concrete block manufacturers rapidly sold numerous quantities of block to consumers for commercial, institutional, and residential buildings. Rockface and other ornamental concrete blocks satisfied the desire by consumers for decorative surfaces at a fraction of the cost of stone or brick. By the 1930s changes in the industry led to the decline in the local manufacture of concrete block. Large-scale manufacturers turned toward the use of cinder block with plain, smooth surfaces that was cheaper to manufacture. Builders and homeowners tastes turned from the use of ornamental concrete block to the use of cinder block for only foundation materials from the 1930s.⁷

The concrete block used in the construction of Ashelford Hall was handmade in Esmond, by William Ashelford and his family. He first began making concrete block

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around 1912. His first delivery of block was used in the Esmond Church basement. After purchasing a truckload of sand from Janesville, Wisconsin, he discovered that there were differences in sand. The sand from Janesville was "round sand" and would cause the sand and cement to separate. There was a pit in Byron, Illinois that he found contained "cut sand" which would bond better with the cement. After discovering this, he decided that he wanted to invest in the pit in Byron. When it went up for sale in the early 1930's, he purchased one hundred forty-six acres and started Byron Sand and Stone Company. The block was well known as "Byron Block" and many people in the region still recall "Byron Block" buildings. "Byron Block" was named for the location of Ashelford's Byron Sand and Stone Company where Ashelford moved the block making business to in the early 1930's.

The block used in the construction of Ashelford Hall was of five different styles, a panel face with beveled edges, a rockface, a daisy pattern embossed face, a smooth face with an inset rectangular panel, and a plain face. In comparison to other block buildings in Esmond, Ashelford Hall maintains the best integrity and is the only one that exhibits five different types of block face styles.

The Esmond Methodist Church built in 1891 on the north side of Eychaner Road, east of Ashelford Hall was the first building in town to use concrete block. In 1912, in order to add more space, the wood framed building was raised up and William Ashelford erected a concrete block basement underneath. The basement cost \$335 to build and is constructed of rockface concrete block manufactured by the Ashelford family.

The Henry Rand House faces north on Eychaner Road near the east end of the village. It is a two-story Four Square residence built by William Ashelford for Henry Rand for approximately \$900 in 1912. The house has alternating courses of rockface and plain face concrete block with a hipped roof. There are wooden porches on both the front, north facade and rear, south facade. Both porches have been enclosed. The front, north facade has been entirely covered with wood fascia board blocking the view of the concrete block wall. The side and rear facade walls still remain intact.

The Lester Holmes Building was constructed in c. 1930 for a livestock auction business. It is located east of Ashelford Hall on Eychaner Road and faces towards the south. It is a concrete block building, approximately 18' high with a bowed wood truss roof. The concrete blocks are smooth faced. The front, south facade has three overhead doors that allow large trucks to enter. On the north facade are six small windows. Currently the building houses a storage company.

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Endnotes

1. Pamela H. Simpson, "Cheap, Quick, and Easy: The Early History of Rockfaced Concrete Block Building," Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture, III (1989): 108.
2. Ibid., p. 109.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., p. 114.
6. Ibid., p. 112.
7. Ibid, p. 115-118.

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1. Ashelford, Herman. And These Are My Thoughts. DeKalb County Archives, Spring 1985.
2. Esmond 1861-1981. Committee of the Esmond Methodist Church, DeKalb County Archives.
3. Liebs, Chester H. Main Street to Miracle Mile, American Roadside Architecture. Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., Boston, 1985.
4. Old House Journal. "Concrete Techniques." March/April 1995.
5. Simpson, Pamela H. "Cheap, Quick, and Easy: The Early History of Rockfaced Concrete Block Building." Thomas Carter and Bernard L. Herman, ed. Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture, III. University of Missouri Press, Columbia, 1989.

Oral history interview with: Ann Angel, June 1994
 Walter Beydler, January 1995
 Ila Gustafson, September 1994
 Stanley and Marge Gustafson, February 1995
 Helen Cruell (granddaughter of William H. Ashelford), April
 1995

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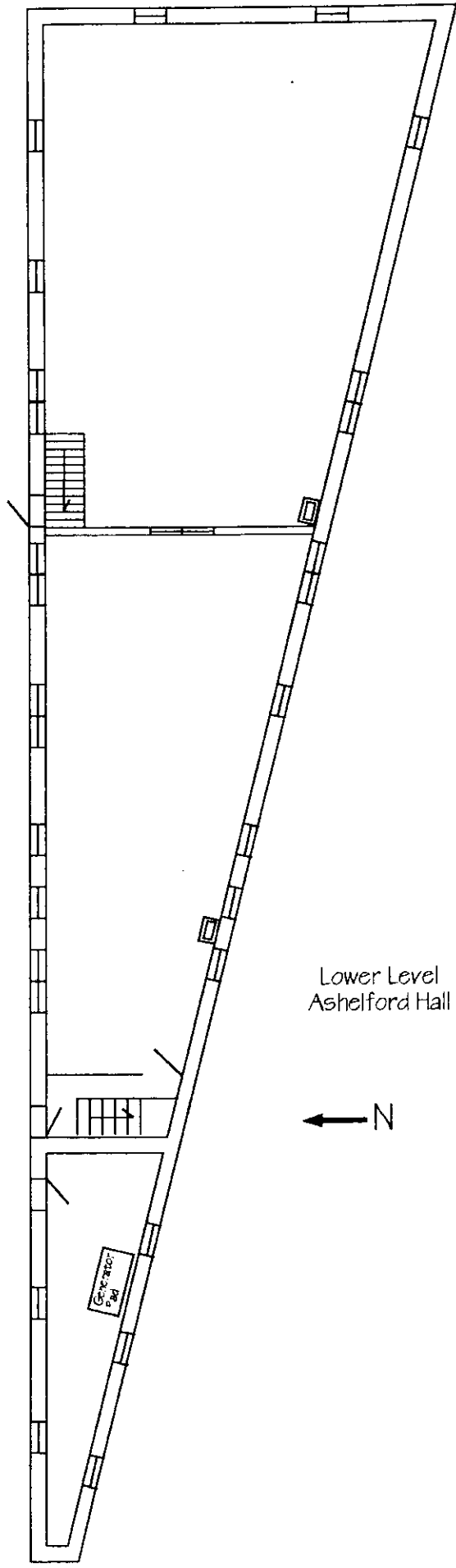
Ashelford Hall

Verbal Boundary Description

The parcel is located in Block 4 of the Village of Esmond, situated in DeKalb County, in the state of Illinois, described as follows: Beginning at the northeast corner of the foundation of Ashelford Hall, then proceed directly south 40 feet along the east wall of the foundation, then proceed in a northwest direction 178 feet along the south foundation to a point that meets the north foundation line, then proceed east 170 feet along the north foundation to the point of beginning.

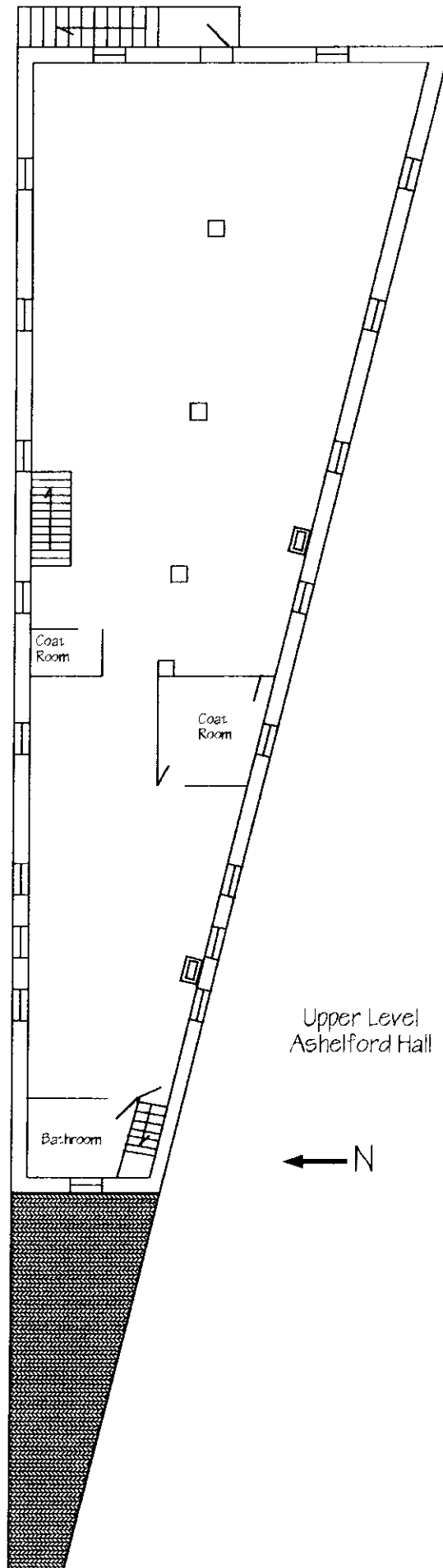
Verbal Boundary Justification

The nominated property includes the building and immediately surrounding parcel of land historically associated with Ashelford Hall.



Lower Level
Ashelford Hall





Upper Level
Ashelford Hall



