

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Multiple Property Documentation Form**

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This form is for use in documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Type all entries.

A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

HISTORIC RESOURCES OF MT. VERNON, IOWA

B. Associated Historic Contexts

Military Road Era, c. 1840-70

Mt. Vernon Local Brick Buildings, c. 1840-93

Cornell College, 1853-1941

Railroad Era, 1859-1913

Lincoln Highway Era, 1913-41

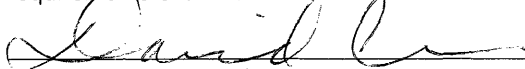
C. Geographical Data

Boundaries are the current (1991) city limits of Mt. Vernon, Iowa.

☐ See continuation sheet

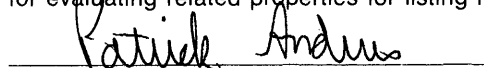
D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Planning and Evaluation.


Signature of certifying official
State Historical Society of Iowa
State or Federal agency and bureau

10/4/91
Date

I, hereby, certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.


Signature of the Keeper of the National Register

9/18/93
Date

E. Statement of Historic Contexts

Discuss each historic context listed in Section B.

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E. Statement of Historic Contexts

Introduction

"Mount Vernon is situated on a high and gracefully curving ridge, which runs northwest and southeast, near a beautiful grove. From the apex of this ridge one of the grandest views of the county can be had."¹

The characterization is as accurate today as it was when it was penned in an 1887 county history. Technically known as a paha,² the hill directed settlement patterns in the "Hill City." Cornell College, founded in 1853, occupies the top of the paha. Several of its substantial brick and stone buildings date from before the Civil War, and the entire campus is part of a National Register historic district. The spires of King Chapel, a stone church on campus dating from 1876, pierce the tree canopy and are visible for miles.

Laid in a grid pattern, the older streets of Mount Vernon are aligned with the hill. The main commercial street, First Street, runs precariously along the ridgeline and intersects with the old Military Road at the east end of the commercial district. Not until the 1890s were subdivisions laid out in accordance with the cardinal directions, forming a clear break of triangular lots and oddly intersecting streets along North 6th Street.

Other natural conditions besides the paha influenced settlement. At the easterly end of the hill, a creek with steep banks effectively halted growth in that direction while providing water to travelers resting from the rigors of the climb up the hill. It was not until the late twentieth century that housing was built directly east of the creek, in the Crestview Addition. At this spot east of town, First Street and the Palisades Road converge at the cemetery and then continue to nearby Lisbon.

Wet low land north of the hill similarly inhibited settlement. The lowest spot in town, especially north of North 3rd Street, was not developed until the turn of the century. Low freestanding concrete walls mark the waterway's course through this residential area. Early settlement in Mount Vernon was concentrated along and on the south side of the paha as well as the north and south sides of the old Military Road (First Avenue).

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The geology of the area--the clays of the paha--also influenced the early settlement of Mount Vernon by providing a plentiful supply of building materials. Clay was of suitable quality for brickmaking, and limestone was in abundance. Small creeks near town provided water power for milling lumber.

The brick and stone buildings of the college well reflect the impact of natural building materials on the appearance of present Mount Vernon, as do a notable collection of brick houses. This major grouping dates from the early settlement period (or Military Road era), before the Civil War, although prominent houses of local brick were built into the 1880s, evidence of the continuing favor for the material.

In addition to illustrating the building materials, construction techniques, and stylistic influences of the mid-nineteenth century, the early housing aptly illustrates the importance of this period in Mount Vernon's historical development. The key influences of area settlement--the Military Road, Cornell College, and the railroad--were all in place by 1859, and the community prospered accordingly.

Located just sixteen miles east of Cedar Rapids (the county seat of Linn County), Mount Vernon is now a satellite community for the considerably larger Cedar Rapids as well as a pleasant college town in Linn County.

The Military Road Era, c. 1840-70. The foundation for Mount Vernon's evolution can be traced to Iowa's Territorial years, around 1840 when the Military Road was established. (Accounts vary and give 1838, 1839, and 1840 as the date of Military Road construction.)³ Now known as Highway 1, the Military Road connected Dubuque and Iowa City, then continued south to the Missouri border. With the establishment of the Military Road, Pinhook (as Mount Vernon was first known) stood poised to compete with nearby Ivanhoe for eminence in Franklin Township in extreme southeast Linn County. Ivanhoe, a ferry site on the Cedar River, initially appeared to have the upper hand, for it was located on the Cedar River, a popular river and river road route.

In the late 1830s a handful of pioneers settled around the mighty mile-long hill that characterizes present Mount Vernon. By 1838 perhaps ten families settled in or near Mount Vernon. A number built log cabins for dwellings and commercial use near the Military Road. Stage coach travelers, immigrants, homesteaders, and dragoons used the Military Road. Beginning in 1846, state legislators bound for the state capital, Iowa City, also frequented the route.

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Mount Vernon residents established businesses to accommodate these travelers. By 1847 general stores and a blacksmith shop were in operation, most of them on present First Street, which intersects with the Military Road at the ridgeline. Just east of this intersection is a steep drop-off and a spring for travelers to quench their thirst. By 1851 travelers could tarry at Allison Willits' hotel, Mount Vernon House.⁴

Evidence of settlement in Mount Vernon mounts beginning in 1847. That year residents changed the community's name from the rather unpleasant-sounding Pinhook to the more respectable Mount Vernon. They also platted the Town of Mount Vernon, filing the six-block plat with the county the following year. The plat reflected the importance of the Military Road, for the blocks straddled the road. The steep topography dictated that Mount Vernon's main commercial street ran along the ridgeline, east-west, rather than along the north-south Military Road.

Despite the steep topography--or perhaps because of its inherent beauty and natural benefits--Mount Vernon rapidly settled up after the designation of the Military Road. By 1848 not one but two sawmills in the area provided locally cut lumber. Wood frame construction and milled lumber began to replace or cover log buildings.

As many as twelve houses went up each year during the 1850s. Additional plats, such as Saxby's Addition of 1856, supplemented the original town plat as housing sites. A number of early settlement houses were built along Second Avenue Southeast, one block east of the Military Road. The Knott House at 417 A Avenue South (extant) in the next block east of Second Avenue, may date from the 1850s. Even more commercial buildings--a hotel and two stores--were built on First Street at the Military Road intersection.⁵

In 1850 the Franklin Post Office moved from a farmstead to Mount Vernon, further evidence of the community's growth. And the following year the Methodists established a cemetery on the east end of town, more testimony to settlement activities.

Mount Vernon Local Brick Buildings, c. 1840-93. To build Military Road era housing and also campus buildings, Mount Vernonites exploited the plentiful natural resources in their own backyard beginning in the 1850s. Using bricks from a brickyard located at the foot of the hill, Elder George G. Bowman built the village's first brick church building in 1850. By 1856 brickmaking was a considerable local industry. In her letters home Mrs. Benjamin Ford noted that her four boarders "are making brick and burning lime and they earn \$1.25 a day."⁶

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In many cases, housebuilders erected crude kilns for brickmaking right on the house site and brought their clay from a site just south of town. The area was blessed with clay of sufficient quality for making the distinctive dark red-orange Mount Vernon bricks. Brick for the 1850s collegiate buildings (extant) on the Cornell campus was fabricated right on the campus. Local brick was used for some commercial buildings, especially for early non-extant examples.

It appears that the earliest brickmaking in Mount Vernon consisted of a series of small-scale operations. Later (until 1893) the Robinson brickyard was located by the creek on the east end of town south of First Street. The stone quarry was a little farther south, also along the steep dropoff of the creek, on both sides of the present Highway 30 route.⁷

Locally available limestone received limited use and was typically used only for foundations (rubble, roughly cut, or cut) and for trim. Few buildings were constructed entirely of stone. Only a handful of prominent ecclesiastical buildings--King Chapel (1876), First Presbyterian Church (1895), and First Methodist Church (1899)--were stone, and only King Chapel was built of local stone. The other churches were built using stone from the Stone City quarry in adjacent Jones County. Although the stone was from a regional source, it was shipped to Mount Vernon on the railroad by a most indirect source. First it went to Clinton on the Mississippi River, then to Mount Vernon. These churches are the only extant 19th century stone buildings in Mount Vernon. Buildings built of the distinctive red-orange locally produced brick are an important and dominant feature associated with the early developmental period of the community.

Cornell College, 1853-1941. Each year during the 1850s seemingly brought a new cause for further growth and development in Mount Vernon. One of the most far-reaching events occurred in 1853. Allison Willits, merchant, hotelier, and one of the town platters, conceived of the idea of a private school. Establishment of a school was among the typical booster occurrences in a new and ambitious community, but few survived and thrived. Local residents contributed money toward the new school. Willits enlisted the support and enthusiastic leadership of Elder Bowman, a local Methodist minister who had consolidated area Methodism in Mount Vernon.

Bowman was successful in enlisting the sponsorship of the Methodist church, and in 1853 the Iowa Conference Male and Female Seminary opened for classes. The Upper Iowa Conference of Methodists officially adopted or sponsored the then-named Iowa Conference Seminary. The college

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received its present name of Cornell College in 1857 when backers hoped (without success) that New York businessman William W. Cornell would be a major benefactor.⁸

Although he moved to California in 1858, Bowman left his imprint on the physical and intellectual development of Mount Vernon. It was Bowman and Willits who ensured that Cornell College would be sited on the highest part of Mount Vernon's lofty paha. Willits donated ten acres on the hill, "the most prominent portion of the ridge on a commanding eminence."⁹ And Bowman convinced Isaac Julien to sell the school a ten-acre site at a good price. Julien, an area farmer, had bought the land for a home site, but Bowman was a persuasive man.

The school was an immediate success. For the first term held, in 1853, there were 161 students. By 1857 two college buildings, "Old Sem" and Old Main (both extant), were in use. In addition to enjoying strong local support, Cornell College benefitted from the early arrival of railroad connections, from being co-educational from the beginning, its early adoption by the Methodists, and a board of trustees not exclusively local who provided a broad base of support.¹⁰

With creation of Cornell College, the second major piece in the pattern of Mount Vernon's historical development was in place. The year 1859, just a dozen years after Mount Vernon was platted, brought yet another major source of advancement.

The Railroad Era, 1859-1913. The role of the Military Road as the dominant transportation mode and related purveyor of prosperity for Mount Vernon diminished even before the Civil War. In 1858 trackage of the precursor of the Chicago & North Western Railroad, the Chicago, Iowa & Nebraska Railroad, entered Linn County. Construction stopped for the winter in Lisbon, just east of Mount Vernon. Between 1859 and 1913, when electric interurban service became available to Mount Vernon, the steam railroad was the sole source of rail transportation serving the community.

In the spring of 1859, the railroad came to Mount Vernon. Mrs. Benjamin Ford, an 1854 arrival in the area, wrote home about friends having tea when the first train entered town, noting that "...from an upper floor window at the Seminary they watched the first train pull in."¹¹ Such was the height of the campus (at 920 feet) that the tea drinkers readily could view the tracks located some six blocks north (at 850 feet).

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The steep topography of First Street and the substantial dropoff from there (sixty feet in one block at some points) effectively eliminated the traditional preference for a depot site near the main commercial center of town. Contemporary writers recognized the limitations of the community's perch. "It is really the prettiest located village in the county, though from the narrowness of this ridge, its situation would not be so good for a large town."¹²

The tracks for the Chicago & North Western Railroad were located about seven blocks north of the main commercial street. In retrospect, the distant site was a fortunate one, for residents avoided the sparks, noise, and soot of steam railroads and the inconvenience of waiting for trains to pass on the principal village streets. The northerly location of the railroad tracks also stimulated platting and eventual settlement of the area north of the paha and main street. Portions of the area were very low and before actual settlement could occur had to be drained. A visual reminder of the low character of the area, especially beyond Third Street NW, are low concrete walls marking culverts.

The arrival of rail connections affected virtually every aspect of Mount Vernon life. It was a boon to the college, for more students could reach the school from distant homes. By 1860 enrollment had reached 407, up from 294 in 1857.¹³ Merchants could receive shipments of varied merchandise from the East. Farmers could ship produce to eastern markets. Transportation emphasis shifted from the north-south of the Military Road to the east-west route of the railroad (although the road remained an important local transportation route).

With the coming of the railroad, contractors had access to more varied and prefabricated building materials, such as window frames, turned porch columns, and fancy pressed brick. Indeed, the local lumber yard was eventually located by the tracks, off of Highway 1. Mount Vernon residents no longer needed to rely solely on traditional local building techniques. Patternbook buildings replaced vernacular buildings. The attendant prosperity and access to popular building materials and designs that characterized Mount Vernon's railroad era were evident in the residential and commercial districts that developed.

The commercial main street matured during the railroad era. Its appearance directly reflected the availability of manufactured building materials brought in by train. These exotic elements--metal beams with Adamesque swags, heavy decorated lintels, fancy art glass windows--transformed main street. The commercial main street lay on either side of the Military Road along First Street. Even in the 1870s there were

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19 buildings in the solid blocks on either side of First Street between First and Second Avenues (that is, west of the Military Road).

New construction in Mount Vernon reflected steady increases in population through the peak year of 1905. Population rose from 859 in 1880 to 1,664 in 1905. The 1890s, in particular, were notable for the amount of new housing. As many as thirty new houses were built a year in that decade. By 1895 nearly 150 new buildings lined the streets of the Hill City.¹⁴ In 1894-5 alone nine new commercial buildings reportedly went up along First Street. A relatively healthy local economy spurred construction, but the primary impetus was a series of three fires between December 1893 and July 1894. Among the new business houses from the 1890s were four built by Doctors John D. and Thomas L. Wolfe, including the extant Smith-Hogle Block at 109 First Street. And in 1892 Captain Charles W. Kepler built at 104 First Street West (extant) and put his law office on the second story.¹⁵

The 1890s brought a nationwide financial depression, but Mount Vernon was less adversely affected than some communities. The presence of a thriving college probably helped during the uncertain times. Still, one bank established in 1891 was closed by 1895. In addition, school enrollment declined following the Panic of 1893, dropping from 674 in the 1891-92 school year to between 550 and 571 in the years between 1892 and the 1896-97 school year. While the presence of the school, its employees and students must have contributed to the economic health of Mount Vernon, it does not appear that the college was the primary impetus behind the late 19th century development of main street.¹⁶

The prosperity and growth of the 1890s in Mount Vernon made several new residential additions necessary to accommodate the demand for new housing. Boulevard Addition (tucked behind the campus), Rigby Addition, and Ash Park Addition (just south of the railroad tracks) were all platted during this period and rapidly built up with houses in the latest styles. These and other sections of town well reflect Mount Vernon's late 19th century prosperity. They illustrate the newspaper's contention in 1895 that visitors would conclude: "Here is an ideal village, here is an ideal home."

The Lincoln Highway Era, 1913-41. The time up to the turn of the century was the fundamental period of Mount Vernon's historical development. But the twentieth century was not without effect. Of special note was the return of the roadway as a major transportation route for Mount Vernon. Now known as U.S. Highway 30, the Lincoln Highway was the first transcontinental highway across the nation. The Lincoln Highway dated from 1913 when a group of businessmen in the automobile industry

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conceived of the idea. Communities across the country worked to fund a "seedling mile" of the Lincoln Highway. Concrete highway markers, such as the one moved to Mount Vernon's park, marked the route for automobilists.¹⁷

The route of the Lincoln Highway left Cedar Rapids and entered Mount Vernon at the northwest edge of town. It then crossed the railroad tracks (over the former major transportation mode) using the present bridge, then turned east past the college, then along the main commercial street, First Street. The route continued out of town on First Street--after crossing the venerable Military Road--to Lisbon and points east. The intersection of the Lincoln Highway, designed for automobiles, and the Military Road, designed for horse carriage and ox cart, symbolized the arrival of a twentieth century technology.¹⁸

Automobile enthusiasts traveled to and through Mount Vernon. The Hill City became, in effect, closer to Cedar Rapids, since travel time lessened. A tourist camp, small hotel, billboards, garages, and filling stations were built along or near the Lincoln Highway. New housing, some overlooking Lincoln Highway, displayed architectural styles of the new century, especially the Craftsman Style. Plats or other planned expansion directly associated with the route of the Lincoln Highway does not appear to have occurred.

By the 1920s the defining attributes of Mount Vernon were in place. Attracted to the charms of small town living, Cedar Rapids residents moved to Mount Vernon and commuted to work. Farmers retired and moved to town. Mount Vernon residents, in turn, sought work in the nearby county seat. Highway 30 became an ever busier route between Cedar Rapids and Mount Vernon. The automobile hastened the demise of village isolation Mount Vernon had enjoyed. Still, the community continued to offer basic retail goods and services for residents, farm families, and students. But the emphasis on a farm-to-market economy lessened and the trappings of a suburb--albeit a highly attractive one with the added benefit of college life--took on more importance.

F. Associated Property Types

I. Name of Property Type _____

II. Description

III. Significance

IV. Registration Requirements

☒ See continuation sheet

☒ See continuation sheet for additional property types

G. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

Discuss the methods used in developing the multiple property listing.

☒ See continuation sheet

H. Major Bibliographical References

☒ See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional documentation:

☒ State historic preservation office
☐ Other State agency
☐ Federal agency

☐ Local government
☐ University
☐ Other

Specify repository: _____

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F. Associated Property Types

Military Road-era Buildings, Structures, and Objects, c. 1840-1870
Local Brick and Stone Buildings, c. 1840-93
Cornell College Campus, District, Related Buildings, 1853-1941
Railroad-era Buildings, Districts, Structures, 1859-1913
Lincoln Highway-era Buildings, Structures, Objects, 1913-41

I. Military Road-era Buildings Structures, and Objects, c. 1840-1870

Description. Historic resources for this topic could date from the time of early settlement in the Mount Vernon area, the late 1830s. However, the Military Road was established by 1840 (sources vary), and permanent settlement associated with the creation of this important transportation route likely dates from c. 1840. The 1870 end date allows for the time lag as settlers continued to use traditional building techniques.

The best known examples are residential and brick (and thus also fall under the Brick Buildings Property Type). Barns, other outbuildings, and nonresidential buildings could be included in the property type, but no significant examples have come to light. Prominent buildings such as residences or collegiate or commercial buildings would be expected to rank more highly than ancillary buildings.

An important aspect of this property type is the use of vernacular building techniques. Early settlement building techniques and materials, including log construction, post-and-beam construction, locally quarried limestone foundations, and locally produced brick, are additional features. Significant examples illustrate the building techniques, designs, and materials associated with the early settlement of Mount Vernon.

Most known resources for this topic are found along or near the old Military Road, especially south of the paha, the dominant topographical determinant of Mount Vernon settlement. A significant number of the best examples are built of locally manufactured brick. (Since locally produced brick continued to be used as a building period beyond the Military Road era, it is considered as a separate property type. There is of course overlap with the Military Road era.)

Significance. Significant properties call attention to the establishment of the Military Road and illustrate the effect the route had on settlement in the Mount Vernon area. The Military Road was a key ingredient in fostering area settlement. Significant examples reveal an

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important architectural period and building tradition in Mount Vernon. Through their use of local building materials, these resources show how early settlers took advantage of natural resources to provide shelter during the Military Road era. They also represent the effects of a specific period of local efforts to capitalize on the presence of a major transportation route, the Military Road. Finally, significant properties illustrate a specific and influential period, the early settlement of Mount Vernon. In short, they date from the founding of the community.

Surviving properties from this pivotal period in the history of the community are so rare that examples from prominent building types, such as houses, that retain sufficient integrity are considered significant to understanding Mount Vernon's development. Seven examples are known to date from the Military Road era. Two other examples merit further study before their eligibility can be determined, and two others are potentially important but have been altered substantially.

Registration Requirements.

Criterion A: Properties that illustrate the effect the Military Road had on Mount Vernon settlement or are directly associated with important events of the period.

Criterion B: Properties that are directly associated with individuals who played a leading or pivotal role in shaping Mount Vernon's development during the Military Road period.

Criterion C: Properties that display vernacular building techniques and traditional building materials, such as locally produced brick, locally quarried stone, logs.

Criterion D: Sites of properties that would have been significant under Criterion A, B, or C, but have been razed. Sites must have the potential of providing good information about the material culture of important early settlement practices. Sites of kilns and brickyards and others associated with the physical development of the community are good candidates.

Integrity Considerations: Some alteration is expected for such old buildings. Alterations are acceptable if they are at least 50 years old, the main facade is relatively unaltered, window frames appear original, and the roofline is essentially unaltered. Unintrusive additions are acceptable. Alterations must not detract from the historic design of the property.

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II. Local Brick and Stone Buildings, c. 1840-1893

Description. Mount Vernon is blessed with a distinctive collection of brick buildings. By far most are houses. A significant number date from before the Civil War through the 1860s, but there are important examples from the 1870s and 1880s as well. Since locally produced brick continued to be used as a building material beyond the Military Road era (especially for houses), brick buildings are considered as a separate property type. There is overlap with significant examples from the Military Road-era context property type, however. In some cases the date of construction has not been more firmly determined than placing them before 1890. The local brickyard closed in 1893, marking the end of the locally produced brick period for the community. The visual impact of the 21 residential examples (including two requiring more study) upon the appearance of Mount Vernon is clear.

The houses for this property type are built of deep red-orange local brick. Rooflines vary and include gable-side (the dominant shape), gable-front, crossed-gable, upright-and-wing, mansard, and hipped. Later examples are more likely to be hipped and early examples tend to be gabled. Most are two-story. Foundations are of locally quarried limestone (generally rubble or roughly dressed). Some lintels and sills are also stone. Brick is sometimes used decoratively for cornices, cornice returns, and more elaborate lintels. With the earliest examples, the use of brick with simple details and form results in a simplicity that contributes markedly to the charm of the community. Good representative examples are: 113 and 201 2nd Ave N, 417 A Ave S, 224 1st St SW, 600 and 601? 1st Ave S.

Stylistic influences include Greek Revival (the principal influence), Italianate, and Gothic Revival. The earliest examples often exhibit no strong stylistic influence but have a Federal stylistic simplicity and arrangement. Little has been determined about the designers and builders of most of the brick houses, although a later example, the Boyd House at 405 3rd Street SW, was designed by architect Cass Chapman.

Brick houses constitute the primary significant examples that have come to light that well illustrate the context.

Significance. Buildings of locally produced brick and stone are a key visual element defining the nature and character of Mount Vernon, and their primary area of significance is architectural. Because of the key visual importance of this property type, most examples from the period c. 1840-1893 which retain their integrity are likely to be significant.

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Although their significance is primarily architectural, many examples also call attention to the early settlement period of Mount Vernon. Their construction is associated with the establishment of the Military Road around 1840 and they illustrate the effect the route had on settlement in the Mount Vernon area.

Examples built after the Military Road era, that is, after 1870, reflect the continued interest in local brick as well as the prosperity that characterized the railroad era in the community. These later examples are typically more elaborate than those associated with the early settlement period. Together, they constitute a visually distinctive feature that is a major and longstanding visual defining element for Mount Vernon.

Registration Requirements.

Criterion A: Properties may have associations with settlement patterns but their primary significance is under Criterion C.

Criterion B: Properties may have associations with individuals who played a leading or pivotal role in shaping Mount Vernon's development but their primary significance is under Criterion C.

Criterion C: Properties are those brick and stone buildings that contribute markedly to the distinctive architectural character of Mount Vernon. Significant examples will have a wall covering of locally produced brick or stone. They may exhibit such stylistic influences as the Federal, Greek Revival, Italianate, and Gothic Revival. Traditional building materials, especially locally produced brick, locally quarried stone, are important features. Properties should date from early settlement period, 1830s-1860s, or exhibit continued local preference for local brick and date from the 1870s-1893.

Integrity Considerations: Some alteration is expected for such old buildings. Alterations are acceptable if they are at least 50 years old, the main facade is relatively unaltered, window frames appear original, and the roofline is essentially unaltered. Unintrusive additions are acceptable. Alterations must not detract from the historic design of the property.

III. Cornell College Campus, District, and Related Buildings, 1853-1941

Description. The present Cornell College/Mount Vernon Historic District is listed on the National Register and consists of approximately 120 buildings and structures on the west end of town. Located on the highest

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part of the Mount Vernon paha, the approximately five-square-block campus forms the heart of the district. Other historic resources in the district include a bridge, houses, a former hotel, and stone churches. The Gothic Revival King Chapel, visible for several miles, is a dominant visual element. Campus buildings, which date from 1853 through the 1960s, are randomly placed about the hill.

Approximately seventy houses in the district form a fringe around the campus on the west, southeast, and northeast sides. Construction dates range from the 1850s to the mid- to late-twentieth century. Stylistic influences are similarly diverse and include excellent examples of the Greek Revival, Italianate, Second Empire, Queen Anne, Stick, Gothic Revival, Colonial Revival, and Craftsman styles.

Historic properties located outside the district but related to the theme could include important and longstanding boarding houses and homes of key professors and administrators. Few such examples came to light during the survey related to this multiple property document, however. Since the historic district is already listed on the National Register, minimal consideration of its boundaries and content was included in this survey.

The period of significance for the context and related property type is 1853, when the school was established, to 1941, when the "fifty year rule" takes effect. The college, of course, continues to exert a major influence on the community. The period of significance for the district begins with construction of the first campus building, 1853, and continues to 1930. No significant properties were constructed on the campus after that date until the 1950s. In 1930 Cornell built another dormitory to supplement living quarters dating from 1885, and students ceased to board with area residents in their homes. The year 1930 marked a notable change in "town-and-gown" relations, but it is certainly possible that post-1930 significant properties exist related to this context and property type.

Significance. Various transportation modes affected Mount Vernon's commercial, industrial, and residential development. The establishment of Cornell College in 1853 affected and stimulated the community's intellectual climate and educational standing. The area of significance is the development of higher education in Mount Vernon, specifically the role of Cornell College.

The college also affected residential development near the campus, for professors and students alike needed housing. The campus district

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with its attendant residential district directly and best illustrates the role of the school in community development.

Registration Requirements.

Criterion A: Properties that are directly associated with the historical development of Cornell College.

Criterion B: Properties that are directly associated with individuals who played leading or pivotal roles in the development of the college during this period.

Criterion C: Properties that display notable educational design.

Criterion D: Sites of non-extant properties that contain important information regarding the material culture associated with Cornell College and that are poorly documented in the archival record.

Integrity Considerations: Alterations are acceptable if they are at least 50 years old. The main facade should be relatively unaltered. Unintrusive additions are acceptable. Alterations must not detract from the historic design of the property. They should be reversible and compatible in design and materials with the original.

IV. Railroad-era Buildings, Districts, and Structures, 1859-1913.

Description. The Chicago & North Western Railroad arrived in Mount Vernon in 1859. Between 1859 and 1913 it was the sole source of rail transportation serving the community. In 1913 the electrically powered interurban railway commenced service between Mount Vernon and Cedar Rapids. The interurban complemented steam railroad service but marked the end of the older transportation technology's exclusivity in the community.

During the railroad era, new types of construction replaced the vernacular forms of the Military Road era, such as balloon framing and brick veneering. While locally quarried limestone continued to be used for foundations, many architectural details were brought in by rail. These probably included windows frames, elaborate Italianate brackets, and turned porch columns.

Patternbooks and other architectural plan sources began to replace traditional building methods in the decades following the Civil War. Architects and local builders consciously designed the hundreds of new houses, business houses, campus buildings, and churches rather than

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simply following vernacular traditions. These consciously designed buildings reflect the outside forces tied to railroad access that transformed the face of Mount Vernon.

A large collection of late 19th century housing and the main street commercial area well illustrate Mount Vernon's period of railroad-related prosperity from the 1860s through the 1910s. That they are concentrated in districts underscores the prosperity that characterized the railroad era and notably strengthens their impact.

Most of the housing under this property type dates from the turn of the century. South along the paha it is generally interspersed among early settlement housing; north of the paha are exclusively late 19th century areas. Most house shapes are present, but hipped, gable-side, and crossed-gable examples are the dominant forms. The majority of these houses are or were sheathed in clapboard and have front porches. Despite their later construction date, many have limestone foundations.

The Ash Park subdivision is one of the best examples of railroad-related prosperity in Mount Vernon, for houses are largely unaltered and date from the same period, the turn of the century. Commodious dwellings exhibit a cohesiveness of size, shape, siting, materials, and stylistic influences. Unlike other areas in town, there are relatively few intrusions. A remarkable number of the houses retain original details and clapboarding. An important stylistic influence is the Colonial Revival. Varying widths of clapboard (on the same house) and prominent gabled front dormers are typical unifying features.

The main commercial street developed into its present form during the railroad era. It is filled with brick-faced two-story storefronts and forms a distinct commercial district. The linear First Street commercial district falls east and west from the crucial intersection of the old Military Road (First Avenue). The one and one-half block sector contains 27 mostly two-story brick-faced commercial buildings. Unifying features include many 1890s construction dates, pressed brick in unusual patterns, metal cornices, trim of local limestone, and similar size and shape.

No buildings directly related to railroad travel remain in Mount Vernon. Neither the original nor the 1902 replacement depot--buildings with strong and direct association with this theme--still stand in Mount Vernon. Little warehousing was built along the tracks, and no significant examples remain.

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Significance. Examples for this property type call attention to the arrival of the steam railroad and illustrate the effect the new transportation technology had on the development and prosperity of the Mount Vernon area. Railroad connections were critical to any Iowa community for its continued survival and growth, for railroads offered direct connections with markets in the East. Local merchants could more cheaply receive a wider variety of goods, and farmers could ship their produce. And in Mount Vernon the railroad was an efficient means for students to travel long distances from their homes to Cornell College.

Railroad connections meant prosperity, as the many new homes and businesses built during the era reveal. Railroad-related prosperity translated into commodious dwellings such as those of the Ash Park area and also a thriving main street commercial district. The railroad brought new styles and materials to the Hill City, and the railroad era was characterized by considerable growth and prosperity in the community.

Registration Requirements.

Criterion A: Properties that are directly associated with the railroad, with patterns of community development influenced by the presence of the railroad, or that are directly associated with important events of this period.

Criterion B: Properties that are directly associated with individuals who played key or influential roles in community development during this period.

Criterion C: Properties that embody the distinctive characteristics of types and methods of construction of the period, especially districts exhibiting clear visual cohesiveness. Significant examples are likely to display such later building techniques as balloon framing or brick veneering.

Criterion D: Sites of non-extant properties that contain important information regarding the material culture associated with specific residential or commercial activities that are poorly documented in the archival record.

Integrity Considerations: Alterations are acceptable if they are at least 50 years old (and thus part of the historic fabric), if they are compatible in design and materials with the original structure, if they are reversible and reasonably unobtrusive, if they do not detract from the historic design. Districts should be sufficiently free of inappropriate intrusions so that their historic fabric can be appreciated. Some

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ground floor alteration to commercial buildings is expected, and common in Mount Vernon, and the presence of a relatively unaltered upper story helps offset such changes.

V. Lincoln Highway-era Buildings, Structures, and Objects, c. 1913-1941

Description. Buildings, structures, and objects for this topic date from the establishment nationally of the Lincoln Highway, 1913, and could continue to 1941, when the "fifty year rule" takes effect. Lincoln Highway-era buildings and structures are likely to be found on the route of the Lincoln Highway, present First Street. Related examples could include a Lincoln Highway marker or sign, bridges and other transportation structures, gas stations, tourist camps, and hotels from the period.

Relatively few eligible properties have been found thus far in Mount Vernon, despite the importance of the theme in American life. The early settlement period and railroad eras are far better represented in the community. It appears that the community was "completed," built up, by the 1910s, and there was no boom in new construction related to the automobile or other new technologies. Property owners simply changed the use of an existing building, and, for example, a hardware store and tin shop became a moving picture theater (100 1st Street W). In other cases, the buildings that were built for automobile-related use were of inexpensive construction and failed to survive. Since the Lincoln Highway route ran through old established parts of Mount Vernon, existing buildings could readily be put to automobile-related use.

Significance. The Lincoln Highway symbolized the transcendence of the automobile (and other new technologies) in American life. The connection with Cedar Rapids by a transcontinental highway in effect brought Mount Vernon "closer" to Cedar Rapids. In many ways, it marked the beginning of Mount Vernon's position as a satellite residential community of the county seat. In addition, the Lincoln Highway brought tourists and other travelers past the Cornell campus and through the heart of Mount Vernon (until the bypass was built in 1953).

The Lincoln Highway fittingly brought the transportation history of Mount Vernon full circle. From a site on the Military Road to a whistle stop on the Chicago & North Western Railroad to its position on the Lincoln Highway, Mount Vernon has enjoyed the fruits of its strategic location.

Significant examples would be important in the areas of architecture (embodying the characteristics of the period in Mount Vernon's develop-

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ment) or transportation (illustrating the effect of the automobile on the community) or both.

Registration Requirements.

Criterion A: Properties that are directly associated with the automobile, with patterns of community development influenced by the designation of the Lincoln Highway, or that are directly associated with important events of this period, especially early 20th century technologies that affected daily life.

Criterion B: Properties that are directly associated with individuals who played key or influential roles in community development during this period.

Criterion C: Properties that embody the distinctive characteristics of types and methods of construction of the period.

Criterion D: Sites of non-extant properties that contain important information regarding the material culture associated with specific significant residential or commercial activities that are poorly documented in the archival record.

Integrity Considerations: Alterations are acceptable if they are at least 50 years old (and thus part of the historic fabric), if they are compatible in design and materials with the original structure, if they are reversible and reasonably unobtrusive, if they do not detract from the historic design.

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G. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

Because of the degree of local expertise available at the beginning of the project, the survey was designed to combine these substantial local talents for photographic, research and clerical work. Consultant expertise was intended to be limited to evaluating the significance of the properties, training volunteer surveyors, and preparing the final report.

The survey covered all areas within Mount Vernon's city limits, 2 square miles. Formerly rural areas now within city boundaries were part of the survey. Virtually all old buildings within the city limits, including outbuildings, were photographed and evaluated. Portions of the existing Cornell College/Mount Vernon Historic District were not recorded since the Mount Vernon Preservation Commission and the Bureau of Historic Preservation felt the area had already been studied. Volunteers, who received training as well as study guides, visited the already photographed sites and attempted to map, describe, and generally find out about the buildings.

The consultant categorized and analyzed all of the surveyed buildings and structures (over four hundred). Mount Vernon enjoys a major collection of relatively unaltered 19th century housing. An inventory of key structures, buildings, objects, and districts was created. In addition to categorizing and analyzing hundreds of buildings, the historic contexts and related property types were identified. Information for this Multiple Property Documentation Form was drawn from a more detailed survey report which is on file with the Bureau of Historic Preservation, State Historical Society of Iowa.

Data was ample to allow characterization of the architectural and historical contexts for Mount Vernon. Cornell College professor Richard Thomas has long supported research regarding Mount Vernon, and his interpretations and findings were the foundation for the survey and report. A number of his students have prepared term papers that were of value in this project. The McAlesters' Field Guide to American Houses served as the basis for much of the residential analysis.

Through this and other research, it became apparent the key contexts for understanding the historical development of Mount Vernon were a series of transportation modes, the establishment of Cornell College, and the presence of suitable building materials. The typology of most of the significant property types was based on associations with these contexts. The property type related to local brick and stone relied more heavily on the method and materials of construction. The standards of integrity

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were based on the National Register standards for assessing alterations. Survey data was used to assess the relative condition and the rarity of examples of the property types.

Two potential historic districts were identified as well as some thirty individually eligible buildings and structures. A data base was collected and was the basis for a computerized data base, subsequent research, and local preservation planning. Insufficient information surfaced regarding the contribution of local builders, design sources for the brick houses, the sources of and leaders in the community's late 19th century prosperity, and the impact of the Lincoln Highway.

The Bureau of Historic Preservation required that a separate report be created for the project. The report, "Architectural/Historical Sites Survey, Mount Vernon, Iowa - the Hill City," contains context and property type statements as well as detailed discussions of survey methods, recommendations, maps, representative photographs, lists of eligible historic properties, and a bibliography that included sources for historic preservation information.

Among the recommendations were to nominate specific properties and districts to the National Register, to generate publicity and community interest, to strengthen awareness of preservation principles and practices, to prepare a local preservation plan, to expand the computerized data base, and to address research questions that arose as part of this project. These questions include the effect of Cornell College on housing, especially the construction of large houses to accommodate student boarders in the absence of adequate dormitory space. Design sources for the many vernacular brick houses are also of interest as is further study of the role of the Lincoln Highway in fostering change in the built environment or economy of Mount Vernon.

Following the close of the citywide survey, interest remained high in the community. A Cornell College student has diligently perused Mount Vernon newspapers, collecting valuable information on commercial buildings and also the residential district of Ash Park. The City has prepared an attractive brochure and a fine photographic display at City Hall. A number of home owners have painted their houses in more historically accurate colors, and two commercial property owners have rehabilitated their buildings.

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Notes

1. Portrait and Biographical Album of Linn County, Iowa, Chicago: Chapman Brothers, 1887, p. 956.
2. A ridge of silt and clay in the area of the Iowan glacial drift in northeast Iowa.
3. The Centennial history gives 1838 as the date as does the D.A.R. plaque in Mount Vernon. But the Centennial history also notes that Congress passed the legislation authorizing the road in 1840. The WPA Guide to Cedar Rapids and Northeast Iowa states that Lyman Dillon of Cascade plowed a furrow between Dubuque and Iowa City establishing the route in 1839.
4. Portrait and Biographical Album, p. 957. The hotel burned in 1868.
5. A Centennial History of Mount Vernon, Iowa, 1847-1947, Mount Vernon: Centennial Committee, 1948, p.23; survey form for 417 A Avenue South.
6. Centennial, p. 42, quoting.
7. G. Ann Schultis, "A Survey of the Brick Homes of Mount Vernon, Iowa Built Prior to 1900," 1973, p. 1; interview with Richard Thomas, Cornell professor, May 19, 1988.
8. Chapman Brothers county history, p. 958; Ada Sherwood, "'At Old Cornell,'" pp. 5-7'; A Record of the Celebration of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Founding of the College... Mount Vernon: Cornell College, 1904, p. 101.
9. Portrait and Biographical Album, p. 958.
10. Centennial, p. 42.
11. Centennial, p. 49.
12. Portrait and Biographical Album, p. 956.
13. A Record of the Celebration of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Founding of the College..., Mount Vernon: Cornell College, 1904, pp. 95, 101.
14. Mount Vernon Hawkeye, May 6, 1892, May 3, 1895; Centennial, p. 90. The June 13, 1890 issue of the Hawkeye noted that improvements for the year were the best yet.
15. Ibid.; "Fires that Changed Main Street."
16. Hawkeye, May 3, 1895; memorandum from Charles Milhauser to Richard Thomas, November 8, 1990, Enrollment Statistics, 1880-1910.

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17. Drake Hokanson, "Transcontinental Travel. Iowa's Lincoln Highway," Iowa Architect 35 (November/December 1986): 38-39.

18. In 1953 the present route of Highway 30 was built to bypass Mount Vernon.