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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

JUL 13 2000

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National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

NATIONAL REGISTER OF  
& EDUCATION

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 Kreinbring Phillips 66 Gas Station

other names/site number Farm Service Station

2. Location

street & number 200 Main Street N/A  not for publication

city or town Lowden N/A  vicinity

state Iowa code IA county Cedar code 013 zip code 52255

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

031

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.)

Patricia Underkin 7-10-00  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

GREEN MEDICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA  
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register  
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Edson H. Beall

5/10/00

Kreinbring Phillips 66 Gas Station  
Name of Property

Cedar Iowa  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

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

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

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	Total

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

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION/road-related(vehicular)  
COMMERCE/TRADE/specialty store

VACANT/NOT IN USE

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19th & 20th CENTURY REVIVALS/  
Tudor Revival

foundation CONCRETE  
walls WOOD/weatherboard

roof ASPHALT

other

**Narrative Description**

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

Kreinbring Phillips 66 Gas Station  
Name of Property

Cedar Iowa  
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)

COMMERCE

TRANSPORTATION

ARCHITECTURE

**Period of Significance**

1934-1949

**Significant Dates**

1934

1949

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

**Architect/Builder**

unknown

**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: \_\_\_\_\_



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Kreinbring Phillips 66 Gas Station  
Lowden, Cedar County, Iowa

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### 7. DESCRIPTION

#### SUMMARY PARAGRAPH

Kreinbring Phillips 66 Gas Station resembles a one-story Tudor-Revival style cottage with a one-story attached service bay and storage room located on the corner of Main Street and Grant Avenue in Lowden, Iowa. The gas station, built in a residential section of eastern Lowden, originally occupied a lot almost half a block along the former Lincoln Highway/U.S. Route 30. The cottage portion of the south-facing station sits near the eastern edge of its lot, close to present-day Grant Avenue. In front of the station, a gravel horseshoe drive gave customers access to (now removed) gasoline pumps situated on a small concrete island directly in front of the cottage portion of the station. A very narrow alley separates the service bay annex from the station's western neighbor, a small frame house, which was moved onto the station property by a station owner in 1946. A grass-covered gravel parking lot lies behind the building. The cottage portion of the gas station was built in 1934 utilizing the specifications of the Phillips Oil Company. The original owner/operator of the station, August L. Kreinbring, added landscaping and amenities to his property west of the cottage station, creating a welcoming park-like setting in which weary travelers could relax. In 1949 new owners built the service bay annex on the western side of the cottage station, obliterating what remained of the old park area and a separate repair shed. A storage room behind the north exterior wall of the old station was also added at this time. The expanded service station was in almost continuous operation under a succession of owners and petroleum brands until its final closing in April 1998.

#### DESCRIPTION

##### *Exterior*

The roof of the cottage portion of the gas station is steeply pitched and characteristic of the Tudor Revival style. It has asphalt shingles. The building is side-gabled, and has a steeply-pitched cross-gable with a decorated vergeboard over the station's central door. One-over-one double hung windows with simple pine sills and casings are located on either side of the doorway. Diamond-patterned glass in the upper half of the door admits light into the office area inside the building. The walls of the building are covered in horizontal cedar lap siding, painted white and gray. A brick faux chimney is attached to the eastern exterior gable wall of the cottage. Located to the left of the chimney on the eastern wall is another one-over-one window; the door to the women's rest room is to the

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eastern wall is another one-over-one window; the door to the women's rest room is to the right of the chimney. The building sits on a poured concrete foundation.

The service annex and storage room sections of the service station have a low-pitched, metal roof, covered in asphalt shingles. The western edge of the service bay annex roof is stepped, with a decorative edge of half-bricks. The front edge of the service bay roof also has half-brick trim. The annex is of concrete block construction, painted the same white and gray as the cottage portion of the station. Two bay openings with separate aluminum garage doors dominate the exterior of the service bay. Six large six-over-six windows provide light for the workspace inside, with two on the west side and three on the north side in the service bay area, and one on the north wall of the storage room. A set of double doors is located on the eastern wall of the storage room area. A coal furnace chimney is situated near the northwestern exterior corner of the service annex. The building has a concrete foundation.

The old concrete gas pump island is extant, though the pumps have long since been removed. It is located in front of the cottage portion of the station.

### *Interior*

The interior of the cottage portion of the gas station has a concrete floor, fiberboard-tiled walls and ceiling, and pine trim. A tiny men's room with what could be original plumbing fixtures sits in the northeastern corner of the room, opening to the interior of the station. A service counter-- two boards wedged against the eastern exterior wall and one of the bathroom walls-- provided support for the station's cash register. Display shelving lines the northern wall.

The service bay and storage areas of the station also have concrete floors. The central posts supporting the roof of the service bay area also support a tire rack and divide the space into two sections. The station's original double cylinder hydraulic hoist is located in the eastern section.<sup>1</sup> Long shelves and a work counter stretch the length of the northern wall of the space.

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<sup>1</sup> Bob Gottschalk, former employee of Harry Fletcher, Phillips 66 Station operator, interview with author, March 19, 1999.

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A door in the eastern wall of the service bay area opens into the storage room. The southern wall of the storage room is actually the original northern exterior wall of the cottage portion of the station. The weather-beaten boards of this wall still retain traces of peeling green paint and orange trim, colors used by the Phillips brand to identify their stations in the 1930s. The edge of the old roof is also visible.

### 8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

#### SUMMARY STATEMENT

The Kreinbring Phillips 66 Station in Lowden, Iowa, is significant as an example of the impact that the development of the automobile and long-distance highway travel had on the cultural and physical landscape of small towns in Iowa. Main Street in Lowden is the former route of the first coast-to-coast roadway, the Lincoln Highway, later named Route 30 and colloquially known as the Main Street of America.<sup>2</sup> Like other roadside service providers such as cafes, hotels, and cabin courts, the Kreinbring station was built by a local resident to capitalize on the traffic brought through the town by Route 30, which at the time of the station's construction in 1934 was one of the busiest east-west transcontinental routes in the United States. In addition to its link to the national highway, the little station was part of yet another growing nation-wide system: the development of the modern corporate gasoline chain. The eastern portion of the Kreinbring station was built in a Tudor Revival cottage style that the Phillips Oil Company and other petroleum firms utilized to advertise an image of wholesome respectability to potential gasoline customers in the late 1920s and early 1930s. The addition of the service bay portion of the station by a new owner in 1949 mirrored on a local level another national pattern, the expansion of gas stations into automotive repair services. This expansion into services was a path pursued by both corporate and independent stations attempting to increase their profit margin in an era of cheap gasoline prices. The Kreinbring Phillips 66 Gas Station is significant on a state and local level under Criterion A because of its association with the Lincoln Highway/Route 30 and the development of modern automotive transportation services. The station is also significant under Criterion C on a state and local level as an excellent example of a cottage-style gas station.

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<sup>2</sup> Drake Hokenson, *The Lincoln Highway: Main Street Across America* (Iowa City, Ia.: University of Iowa Press, 1988). Others have claimed the title of Main Street of America for another famous American highway, Route 66. See Quinta Scott and Susan Kelly, *Route 66: The Highway and its People* (Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988).

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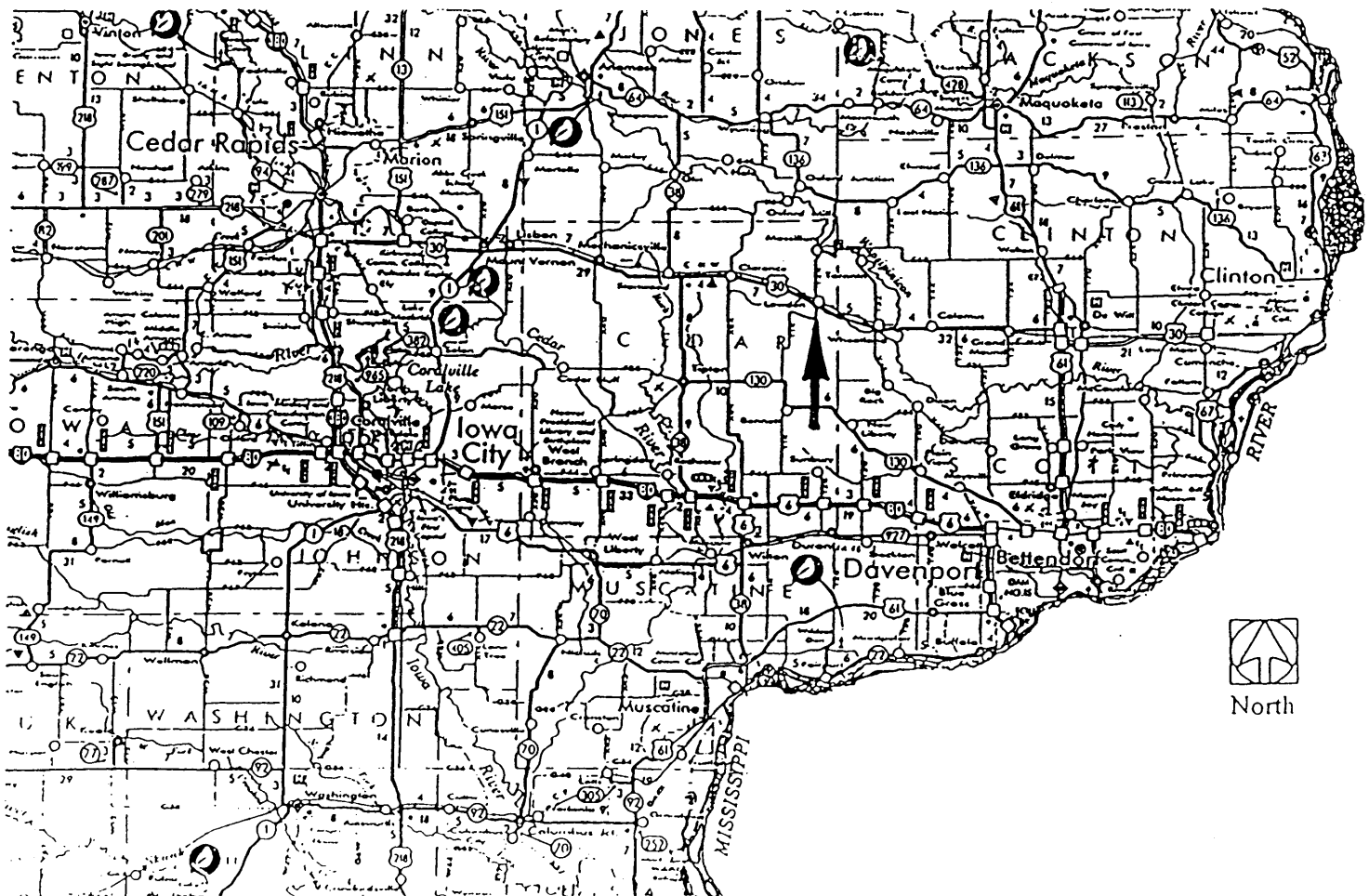
Kreinbring Phillips 66 Gas Station  
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FIGURE 1

The Kreinbring Phillips 66 Gas Station is located midway between the larger towns of Clinton, on the Mississippi River, and Cedar Rapids in eastern Iowa.  
(Iowa Department of Transportation road map, 1995.)





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## *Criterion A*

When the route of the Lincoln Highway was officially announced in September 1913, it represented little more than a line on a map. At that time, of the nearly 2,500,000 miles of roads in the United States, 93 percent were unimproved dirt roads. Of these, the state of Iowa claimed "... about 107,000 miles of road in 1912, and the fact that most of these miles were referred to as "wagon" roads speaks for their condition as well as their use. Iowa's mud was legendary; roads were virtually impassable in bad weather."<sup>3</sup> Given the contemporary state of the roads, the Lincoln Highway Association's proposal for a graded and surfaced continuous transcontinental highway was truly ambitious.

In the beginning, fulfillment of the LHA's dream seemed far off, but entrepreneurs in communities along the Lincoln Highway-- some of whose local "road boosters" had lobbied hard for inclusion on the route-- began preparing for the roadside business sure to follow the development of the national roadway. Cafes, motor courts, and gas pumps were erected to provide for the food, lodging, and fuel needs of motorists. In Lowden, Iowa, the original Lincoln Highway route had west-bound travelers entering town on Clinton Street, making a right onto Main Street, and leaving Lowden to the north. One of the earliest roadside businesses, the Lincoln Hotel, was built by Celia and A.F. Clemmens on the corner of Clinton and Main in anticipation of motorists traveling to California's Panama-Pacific International Exposition in 1915.<sup>4</sup> Its visibility to travelers remained strong even after the Lincoln Highway's name and route through town were changed in 1925. On the new Route 30, west-bound motorists entered town on Clinton Street (renamed Main Street in 1924 in anticipation of the route change) and continued straight west through town.

Other automobile services in Lowden, particularly filling stations, also thrived before and after the route change. In the early days of automobiles, motorists either bought their gasoline from bulk depots located on the outskirts of towns or from a barrel provided by an enterprising local merchant. In Lowden, one resident remembered local pharmacist P.H. Jurgensen selling gas from a barrel kept in a shed in an alley near his store.<sup>5</sup> The fuel was transferred to a spouted can and then poured through a chamois filter into the automobile tank. The procedure was smelly, untidy, and sometimes dangerous, as spilt

<sup>3</sup> Rebecca Conard. *The Lincoln Highway in Greene County, Iowa* (NRHP Multiple Property Documentation Form, 1992), 6.

<sup>4</sup> See Jan Olive Nash. *Lincoln Hotel, Lowden, Cedar County, Iowa* (NRHP Nomination Form, 1996).

<sup>5</sup> *Lowden Historical Society 1987* (T.S. papers presented to the Society), 10.

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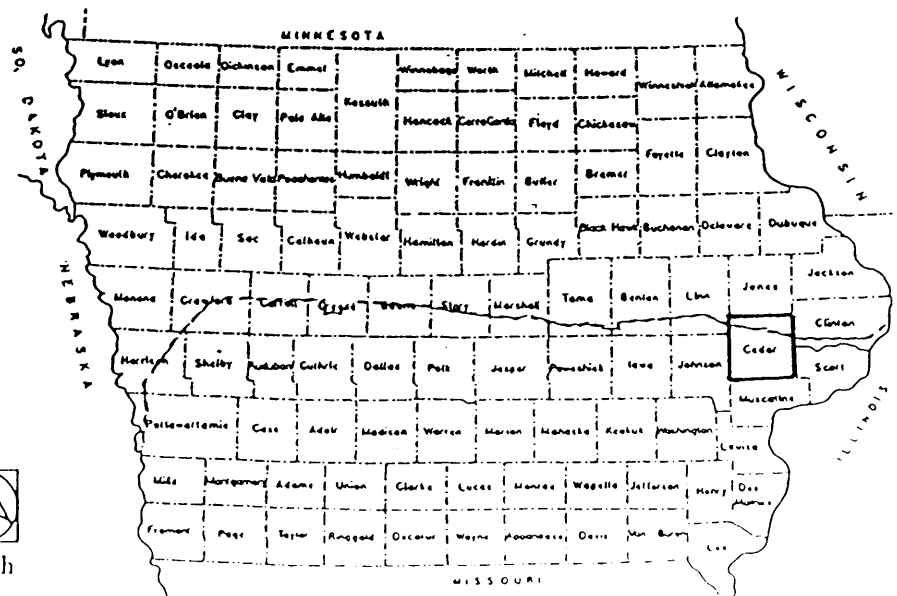
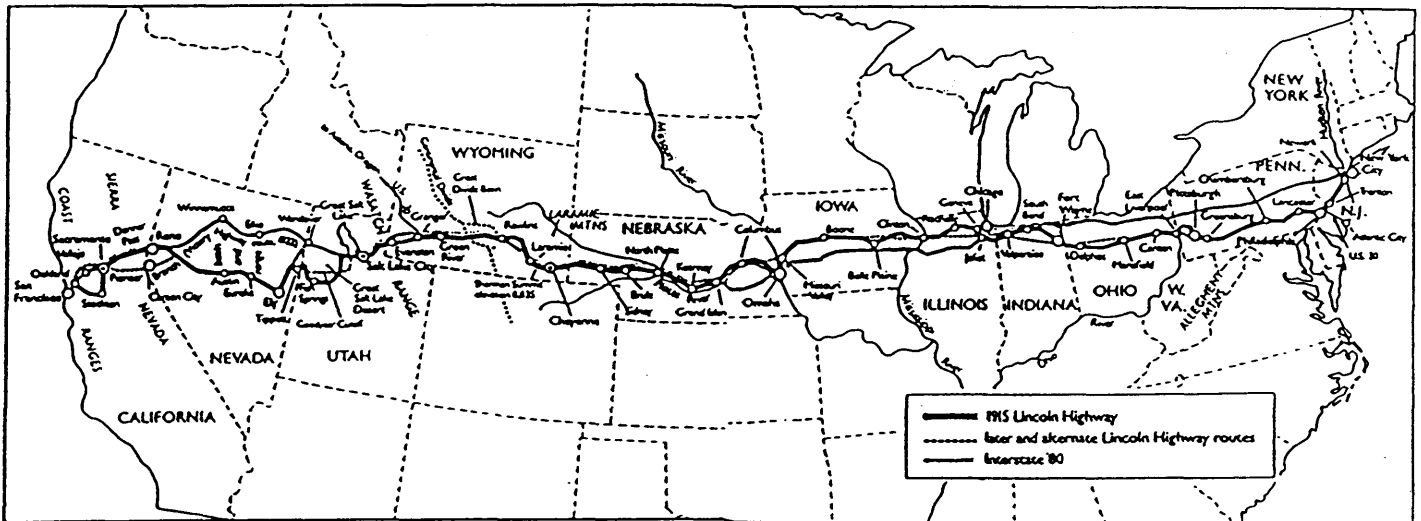
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FIGURE 2

The Lincoln Highway route across the United States and across Iowa. (Top map taken from *The Lincoln Highway: Main Street Across America.*)



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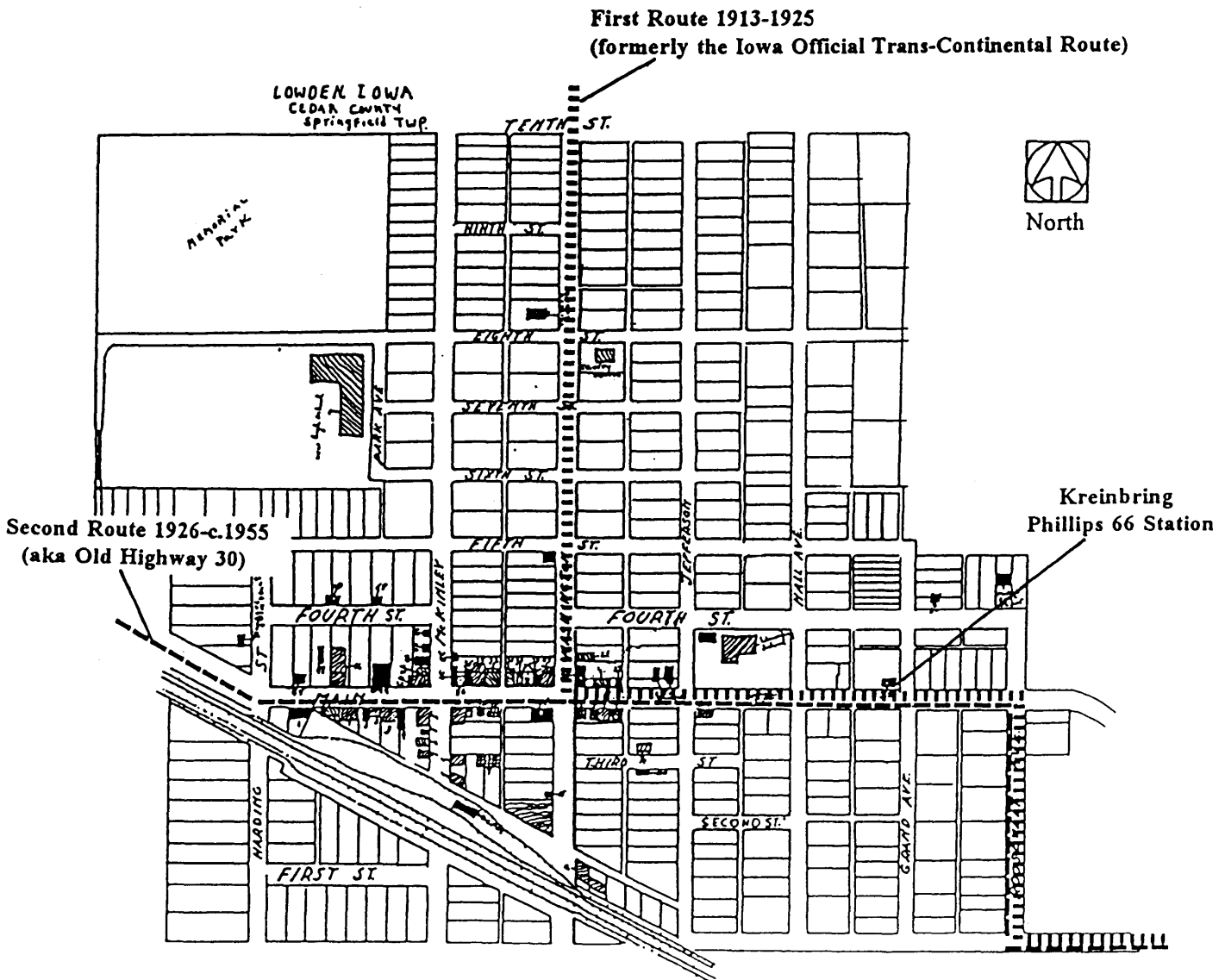
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## Lincoln Highway (later Route 30) routes through Lowden, Iowa.



Source: Jan Olive Nash, *Lincoln Hotel, Lowden, Cedar County, Iowa*, NRHP Nomination Form, 1996 (adapted from Lowden Historical Society, *Lowden Centennial*, 1957).

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gasoline represented a definite fire hazard. The quality of the product motorists were paying for was also suspect.

The development of gravity gas pumps and underground tanks after the turn of the century made transferring fuel into the tank less difficult, and the refinement of underground tanks meant that gas could be dispensed at more (and more convenient) locations. In this period, a variety of businesses-- including blacksmiths, general stores, bicycle shops, feed companies, hardware stores, and livery stables-- started retailing gasoline. They secured contracts with refiners, installed underground tanks and gasoline pumps on the curbs in front of their shops, and sold gas to passing motorists. In Lowden, the owner of H.L. Deichmann's grocery had a pump installed in front of the store. By 1915 Freund's, the town's general store, also retailed fuel. A town resident later reminisced:

In the summers of 1915 and 1916, on Saturday evenings after supper, all the stores were opened until 9:00 or 10:00 p.m. That was the big night when many farmers came to town... Most every one that drove a car had a Model T Ford car. The gas tank was under the front seat. At Freund's Store, they had a small shed (about 3 or 4 feet square and 6 feet high) in which was a gasoline pump. No glass bowl on top, that had yet to come. Gas was dispensed into a 5 gallon can. A ruler with a black strip adjacent to the numbers on it to improve visibility was calibrated in figures saying 1/4 or 1/2 or 3/4 or Full, and numbers telling how many gallons would fill the tank, when inserted into it from the top. Then I would pump the five gallon can to whatever amount was requested... Many a Ford or other tank was gassed up those Saturday nights.<sup>6</sup>

Other Lowden businesses added retailing gasoline to their operations. Gade's Garage, built on the lot just east of the Lincoln Hotel in 1925, sold Cities Services gasoline. A garage called Freund's was also opened in 1925; like Gade's, Freund's sold gas in addition to performing car repairs. While the location of gas pumps like these in downtown areas made obtaining fuel easier for many automobile owners, it also caused problems. As car ownership increased, the lines of autos queued up to get gas grew longer, causing traffic bottlenecks.<sup>7</sup> Accidents happened in crowded downtown areas.<sup>8</sup> While the new gas

<sup>6</sup> *We Remember When... Our Tribute to America's Bicentennial* (Lowden, Ia.: Lowden Historical Society), 87; *Lowden Historical Society 1987*, 10.

<sup>7</sup> Michael Witzel, *The American Gas Station: History and Folklore of the Gas Station in American Car Culture* (Osceola, Wis.: Motorbooks International, 1992), 25-32.

<sup>8</sup> In September 1913 Lowden's local paper noted the following news item which illustrates some of the hazards of curbside gas pumps: "Yesterday after filling the tank of a large touring car at the corner of

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pumps made dispensing fuel safer, wayward autos sometimes knocked over curbside pumps and caused fires. These dangers and nuisances led many municipalities to ban curbside pumps by the mid-1920s.

With the banning of curbside pumps, new specialized filling stations began to appear along the roadscape. The Kreinbring Phillips 66, built in 1934, is representative of the new type of gasoline station built alongside roadways in the mid-1920s and early 1930s. Like Kreinbring's station, these operations were owned by a local resident, but sold the product and advertised the corporate image of a large petroleum company to travelers along national highways like the Lincoln.

By the early 1930s, most of the Lincoln Highway-- now called Route 30-- was graded and paved.<sup>9</sup> The improved highway was one of the busiest east-west coast routes in the nation. In the midst of the economic uncertainties of the Depression, August Kreinbring decided to take a gamble on a new roadside venture along Route 30, a Phillips 66 filling station. Formerly, Kreinbring operated a farm northeast of the neighboring Lincoln Highway town of Clarence. Because of his new business, he and his family moved to Lowden in the winter of 1934-35. In November 1934 the excavation for the foundation of the new filling station was begun.

Kreinbring sited his new venture on a 140 by 150 feet lot along a section of Route 30 on the eastern side of Lowden, where westbound highway traffic made a zigzag turn west onto Main Street.<sup>10</sup> In the 1930s, this area contained some residential housing, but was the eastern edge of town. This aspect of the station's site is visible in a historic photograph, which shows a field of corn crowding the gas station's lot to the north (see Figure 4). Later, Grant Avenue would be developed north of Main Street/Route 30, giving the station the type of intersection site favored by many filling station owners because it gave customers traveling from all directions access to the station's services.

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H.L. Deichmann's Store, the chauffeur cranked the engine without setting the brake and the machine started backwards, crossing the street and climbed the two and a half foot embankment just missing the large tree on the C.F. Richmann place. The lady in the back was not injured." (*Lowden Historical Society* 1987, 10).

<sup>9</sup> Hokanson, 116.

<sup>10</sup> Robert Ausberger, *Kreinbring Phillips 66 Gas Station, Lowden, Cedar County, Iowa* (Draft NRHP Nomination, 1992), 2.

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Beginning in the late 1920s, filling stations were leased by the petroleum companies to dealers, who were expected to absorb the steep price cuts needed to beat the competition in an era of gasoline overproduction.<sup>11</sup> During the Depression, economic downturn and increased overproduction put even more pressure on station operators. In this business atmosphere, gas stations competed fiercely for customers. Small franchises benefited from the national advertising campaigns of the oil companies, but station operators were also encouraged to take action to attract business. A trade journal appropriately entitled *Filling Station* suggested ways in which station operators could lure travelers. The magazine urged that a clean coat of paint, well-dressed attendants, attractive landscaping, and the provision of bathrooms could make all the difference in a potential customer's decision to stop their car or drive on.<sup>12</sup> Courtesy services like filling tires with air, wiping windshields, and checking the oil were also part of the attempt to sell an image of a clean and professional station that station owners hoped would create repeat customers.

Even in the small town of Lowden, five filling stations open in the 1930s and 40s competed for business. Gade's Garage still had pumps out in front of the building. The Mid-Continent Service Station (later known as Stolte's D-X), built in the early 1920s, was still operating, as was the Standard Oil Station west of Lowden (later rebuilt as a Texaco). The town's first Mobil Station was built in 1936, two years after Kreinbring's Phillips 66.

A 1938 photograph that Mr. and Mrs. Kreinbring sent as a Christmas card reveals some of the ploys used at their Phillips 66 to attract customers. Signs displayed on the exterior of the station advertise "ice cold" Coca-Cola, Hires Root Beer, and Orange Crush for sale. A neatly painted sign indicates the location of a ladies' rest room around the eastern corner of the station. (Rest rooms for customers were an amenity not always provided but increasingly available at stations wishing to project an up-to-date, sanitary image.) Lights are positioned above the Phillips 66 sign and the gasoline pumps, drawing attention to the brand name and product sold. Mr. Kreinbring, wearing a spotless white uniform with a

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<sup>11</sup> According to John A. Jackle and Keith A. Sculle, petroleum companies began leasing programs in response to state tax laws regarding franchises. For example, "[u]nder the Iowa chain-store law, every store belonging to a chain of more than 50 outlets had to pay a tax of \$155 a year, and the gross receipts of the chain were taxed up to 10 percent for receipts of \$1 million or more. Jobbers [independent retailers] in Iowa successfully included gasoline retailing under the law's umbrella." Standard Oil responded with its Iowa Plan, in which its 350 stores in Iowa were converted to lease operations, making retailers independent owners. Other companies, including Phillips, followed suit on a nation-wide basis (Jackle and Sculle, *The Gas Station in America*, 66).

<sup>12</sup> Scott and Kelly, *Route 66*, 162-63.

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FIGURE 4

Photograph of the Kreinbring Phillips 66 Gas Station, c. 1938



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Phillips 66 badge, stands proudly in front of his tidy station. Also visible in the photograph is the hoist and small storage shed Kreinbring added to the west of his station, in order to accommodate automobile repairs.<sup>13</sup>

The Kreinbrings' Christmas card also helps to illustrate the transition from the unique roadside businesses of the early automobile era to the generic chain gasoline station taking place in the 1930s. As corporate chains replaced filling stations run by entrepreneurs coast to coast, "[s]ervices were standardized over space and time... [and] the anxieties of roadside consumption [were] thereby reduced in standardized formats offering easily anticipated satisfactions."<sup>14</sup> The Kreinbrings' photograph provides evidence that, during this period of development of national identities for gasoline chains, there was still some room left for the expression of the personal idiosyncrasies of individual station owners. August Kreinbring and his assistant Heinie Otte, Jr. may have been following the advice of industry publications when they improved the grounds surrounding the station with shrubs, flowers, a picnic table, and chairs placed under the shade of a tree. But their station beautification efforts included more unusual touches. Kreinbring and Otte built a rock garden with specimens Mr. and Mrs. Kreinbring brought home from sight-seeing trips through eastern Iowa.<sup>15</sup> The addition of bird houses and sculptures fashioned out of oil cans (including a rather large cannon) gave the station grounds a distinctive appearance, probably setting it apart from other gas stations in town.

By June of 1939, Kreinbring had leased the Phillips 66 station to his assistant, Otte. The business was transformed into a Cities Services station, and August Kreinbring took a new position driving the Cities Services tank wagon. The re-opening of the station as Cities Services was celebrated on June 16 and 17 with the distribution of free souvenirs. The turnover of owners and brand names at most of the other gas stations in Lowden was quite high, and after Kreinbring's tenure, the turnover at his former Phillips 66 station followed this pattern as well. After it was sold to Al Buchanan of the neighboring town of Wheatland, Lee Milota leased the station. Dick Sennett took over the operation of the station from Milota in 1946. In its announcement of the change in operation, the *Lowden News* also noted that owner Buchanan moved a house from nearby Toronto, Iowa to the lot west of the station, which was to be occupied by the Sennett family. Just one year

<sup>13</sup> The hoist would later be enclosed by the service bay addition added by a later owner, Harry Fletcher. The shed was probably torn down to accommodate the new service bay, built in 1949 (Bob Gottschalk, interview by author, 19 March 1999).

<sup>14</sup> Jakle and Sculle, *The Gas Station in America*, 18.

<sup>15</sup> *Cedar County Post*, 9 June 1938.



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later, Don Van Pelt of Durant bought the station from Buchanan. In July of 1948 E.R. Goddell of DeWitt purchased the station and leased it to Charles Starkey, who operated it in connection with a used car lot.<sup>16</sup> Less than six months later, Harry Fletcher purchased the station.<sup>17</sup>

### *From Filling Station to Service Station*

Beginning in the 1930s, the functions of the gasoline station and the automobile garage began to merge. Expanding filling station businesses to include automobile service and the sale of related items, including tires, batteries, and accessories, helped struggling owners make profits during the Depression. This period of transition in the products and services provided by filling stations was also accompanied by the development of a new architectural style for gasoline retailers. New filling stations-- now referred to as "service stations"-- were often boxy buildings in the new modern style, bereft of any ornamental architectural detail. Oil companies built prototype stations to show station operators how to effectively display the new products they were now retailing and how to sell an image of modernity to their customers.<sup>18</sup> Existing stations adapted the practical aspects of the new designs and built their own additions of lubritoriums and mechanical bays. In Lowden, filling stations began adding service bays to their buildings. In 1942 Hans Brock, owner of the Texaco station, advertised that he was "equipped to do tractor and auto work." Warren Stolte also added a "grease room" to his D-X station in 1947.<sup>19</sup>

Harry Fletcher, the new owner of the old Kreinbring station in 1948, was not far behind his competitors in expanding his business to include more automotive repairs. The previous five years Fletcher had operated a Phillips 66 station in neighboring DeWitt, another Lincoln Highway town. Soon after his purchase of the station, Fletcher and his wife moved into the frame house next door formerly occupied by the Sennett family. Fletcher told the local paper that he chose to move to Lowden because he liked the town and its reputation for friendliness.<sup>20</sup> His tenure as owner was one of the longest in the

<sup>16</sup> The location of Starkey's used car lot is unknown; one possible (but unconfirmed) location is the vacant lot in back of the gas station.

<sup>17</sup> *Lowden Historical Society 1987*, 12-13.

<sup>18</sup> Scott and Kelly, 163.

<sup>19</sup> *Lowden Historical Society 1987*.

<sup>20</sup> *Cedar County Post*, 19 January 1949.

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station's history; he held the property until 1960. Fletcher also replaced the Cities Services brand sold by previous owners of the station with Phillips 66 products.<sup>21</sup>

Under Fletcher's ownership, the service station became a Phillips 66 retailer once again. Fletcher's tenure also saw the building of a service annex on the western side of the cottage station, in 1949.<sup>22</sup> Fletcher engaged Hank Sanders, a local farmer, to build the addition, and station employees assisted in the construction. Timber from the old Chicago Northwestern Railroad water storage tanks on the edge of town was recycled and used for ceiling beams in the service annex.<sup>23</sup> The new addition enclosed the old hoist located on the western side of the cottage station, allowing employees to perform automobile repairs in the winter and during inclement weather.

The re-routing of Route 30 completed in the 1950s moved the highway and its traffic, which had supported the myriad travel-related businesses in downtown Lowden, south of the town. Re-routing of traffic around business districts was gaining popular support nationwide in this period. By avoiding the parked cars, pedestrians, and local traffic of downtown areas, motorists could pursue high-speed travel without the inconvenience of changing speed zones and unscheduled stops. During the construction of the new Route 30, some Lowden service stations saw an increase in business. Hoffmeiers' Mobil Service Station enjoyed its busiest time fueling road construction trucks the year new Route 30 was paved. However, Hoffmeier's Mobil was forced to close after the paving of the re-routed portion of Highway 30 was finished in July 1956 and the new route opened to motorists. The old Kreinbring station fared better. Despite the falloff in highway-related business, the cottage station and its service annex remained in business under a succession of proprietors until August 1998.

### *Criterion C*

Starting with the development in St. Louis in 1907 of the first gasoline station chain, the American Gasoline Company, petroleum retailers were faced with a dilemma shared by all

<sup>21</sup> *Lowden Historical Society 1987*, 13.

<sup>22</sup> Bob Gottschalk, a former employee of Harry Fletcher who assisted in the construction of the garage addition, recalls it being built in 1952-53. However, textual evidence suggests that the service bay was constructed in 1949. In May of that year, Fletcher began running ads in the local paper advertising spring tune-ups-- including services requiring an enclosed service area (Bob Gottschalk, interview with author, 19 March 1999; *Cedar County Post*, 11 May 1949 and 18 May 1949).

<sup>23</sup> Bob Gottschalk, interview with author, 19 March 1999.

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roadside businesses, chain and independent, large and small alike.<sup>24</sup> Their challenge was trying to sell to customers "... enclosed in fast-paced vehicles. A roadside merchant needed not only to grab the attention of the speeding motorist in a very short period of time, but also to prompt the critical decision to stop and purchase."<sup>25</sup>

One way to grab the customer's attention-- and his/her dollar-- was to establish a particular brand identity for a product, one which could be easily advertised to the passing motorist. Beginning in the 1840s and 50s, American merchants in downtown areas used signs and billboards to advertise the products they had for sale and ornate architecture to advertise their store's image to passing pedestrians and passengers in horse-drawn vehicles.<sup>26</sup> Roadside architecture in the era of the automobile took this method of advertising one step further. In addition to posting eye-catching signs, retail buildings were designed by entrepreneurs and corporations to link the architecture of the store and the identity of the product for sale in the consumer's mind. This was particularly important in the case of a retailer like a filling station, which sold a commodity nearly physically indistinguishable from its competitors' products. Because "... all across America petroleum companies were selling, essentially or actually, the very same product, the gas station itself was the definitive physical manifestation of each brand's identity."<sup>27</sup> Thus, linking a distinctive architectural style with their company's product in the consumer's mind became of paramount importance to the marketing and advertising methods of oil producers and their retail gasoline chains.

In formulating their architectural designs, some early independent and chain filling stations drew on Americans' rich store of associations with domestic architecture. Domestic imagery was popular in many types of roadside commercial building in the 1920s, including cafes and motor courts. In *Main Street to Miracle Mile*, Chester Liebs describes the "deep-rooted symbolic value" of domestic imagery used by businesses to play upon the feelings travelers associated with their own homes and the expectations of security and comfort found therein. In addition to the positive impression they allegedly invoked in potential customers house-like structures had the advantage of being easily adaptable

<sup>24</sup> Thomas J. Schlereth, *Reading the Road: U.S. 40 and the American Landscape* (Knoxville, Tenn.: University of Tennessee Press, 1997).

<sup>25</sup> Chester H. Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile: American Roadside Architecture* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 43-44.

<sup>26</sup> Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile*, 41.

<sup>27</sup> John Margolies, *Pump and Circumstance: Glory Days of the Gas Station* (New York: Bulfinch Press, 1993), 30.

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buildings that were simple to construct and could be built out of commonly available local materials. The "home-sweet-home" image could also be promoted by proprietors through simple landscaping of the building's surrounding property, including the addition of flower gardens and picket fences.<sup>28</sup> Domestic architecture became particularly appealing to oil companies after it was discovered that designing gas stations like houses could sometimes help the corporations evade zoning regulations enacted to keep the fumes and traffic of more ramshackle or ostentatiously designed filling stations out of residential areas.<sup>29</sup>

Pure Oil was the first major oil corporation to use the cottage style on a wide-spread basis. Pure Oil hired self-taught architect Carl August Petersen to produce a standard station design. The original Pure Oil filling station was a one-story Tudor Revival cottage, with a steeply-pitched roof and faux chimneys marked with a "P" for Pure Oil flanking each gable end. When Phillips Petroleum expanded their operations to include retail gasoline stations with the debut of their '66' brand gasoline in 1927, Phillips' design department took a cue from the Pure Oil cottage station. The first Phillips station, erected in Wichita, Kansas, possessed architectural characteristics which would be repeated in subsequent Phillips' retail outlet designs, including a steeply pitched roof and central cross gable. Like the Standard Oil stations, Phillips' Tudor Revival structures also utilized faux chimneys to enhance the domestic architectural image of their filling stations. The chimneys were marked with a distinctively scripted "P" for Phillips and usually located to the right or left of the main front entrance of the building.

Phillips Petroleum's staff drew up standard blueprints and plot plans, and potential Phillips station owners were given a few architectural variations on the Tudor cottage theme from which to choose. Most of the variations were in the cost of materials, rather than the design details of the buildings. The Kreinbring station seems to be a variation on a plan drawn by Phillips Corporation architect and engineer Clarence Reinhardt, the Phillips Type 'M-B' Building. The 'M-B' was a one-story 13' x 20' structure with a steeply-pitched roof and central cross-gable over a main door flanked by windows on either side. The Phillips 'M-B' blueprint calls for a partial faux chimney to be attached to the north-east section of the roof.<sup>30</sup> Kreinbring (or his unknown builder) chose instead to construct a single

<sup>28</sup> Chester A. Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile: American Roadside Architecture* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 44-47.

<sup>29</sup> Jakle and Sculle, *The Gas Station in America*, 138.

<sup>30</sup> *Phillips Petroleum Company Marketing Department Standard Buildings, March 1, 1931*. Collection of Phillips Petroleum Company Archives, Bartlesville, Okla.

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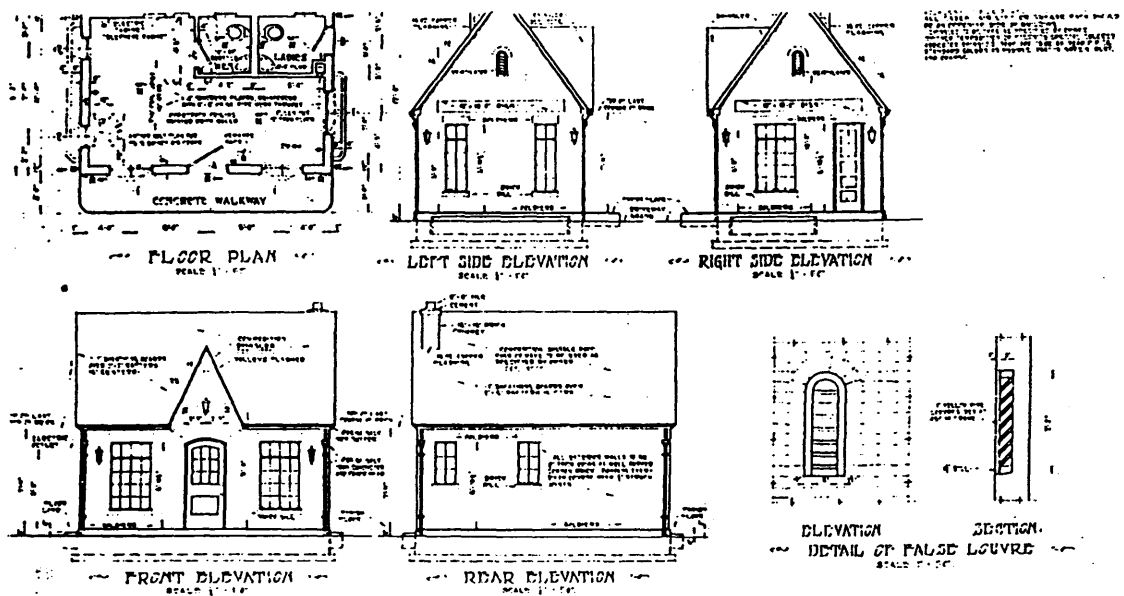
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FIGURE 5

Blueprint of Phillips Petroleum Company Type 'M-B' Building, c. 1930.



NO.	DESCRIPTION	QTY.	UNIT	PRICE	TOTAL
1	DOOR SCHEDULE	1	EA	10.00	10.00
2	WINDOW SCHEDULE	2	EA	15.00	30.00
3	CONVENTIONS	1	EA	5.00	5.00
4	BRACKET WELLY	1	EA	2.00	2.00
5	DOUBLE CONVENIENCE OUTLET	1	EA	1.00	1.00
6	WALL SWITCH	1	EA	1.00	1.00

**GENERAL SPECIFICATIONS**

1. ALL WORK SHALL BE ACCORDING TO THE LATEST EDITIONS OF THE BUILDING CODES AND SPECIFICATIONS.

2. ALL MATERIALS SHALL BE OF THE BEST QUALITY AND SHALL BE SUBJECT TO INSPECTION AND APPROVAL BY THE ARCHITECT.

3. ALL WORK SHALL BE COMPLETED WITHIN THE SPECIFIED TIME FRAME.

PHILLIPS PETROLEUM CO.	
BARTLESVILLE, OKLA.	
PLANS AND DETAILS FOR	
13'-0" x 20'-0" BRICK	
SERVICE STATION BUILDING	
TYPE 'M-B' BUILDING	
DESIGNED BY	JAN 6 1930
CONTRACT NO.	MC-84
DATE	NOVEMBER 1929

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chimney positioned on the east gable end of the building. The extant chimney is similar to those placed on either side of the main front door on other Phillips designs. It is difficult to determine from period photographs if the Phillips "P" was marked on the Kreinbring station's chimney as it was at other Phillips stations.

Particular color schemes were also utilized by the various oil companies at their filling stations to promote brand-name recognition of their products. Phillips prescribed specific color schemes for its outlets, giving station owners the names of appropriate paint colors available from DuPont. In the mid-1930s, Phillips gas stations were painted green, with orange and blue trim. The color scheme was also extended to the roof of the building, which was covered in tiles painted orange and green. Black-and-white period photographs make determining whether or not Kreinbring followed the Phillips' preferred color scheme difficult. The roof shingles appear to be all one color. Small sections of flaking paint found on the old north exterior wall of the station are green with orange trim, but whether these paint remains date from the station's early years as a Phillips station is unknown.

Tudor cottage filling stations were one of many early roadside building types developed through the "marriage of architecture and advertising, a blend of building and sign" which would become more and more ubiquitous in an American commercial landscape that catered to the automobile owner.<sup>31</sup> The Kreinbring Phillips 66 Gas Station is an excellent example of the adaptation of domestic architecture for commercial purposes and its role in the early development of "one of the most prolific twentieth-century building species," the filling station.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile*, 43.

<sup>32</sup> Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile*, 97.

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### 10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

#### VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Lot 4, block 3, August Meyer's Second Addition to the Town of Lowden, Iowa, excluding frame house west of the gas station.



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## BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary selected includes the portion of the lot on which the gas station sits but does not include the frame house to the west of the station. This frame house had early associations with the station when it served as a residence for station owners. In subsequent years it lost that association, and does not contribute to the station's present eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places.

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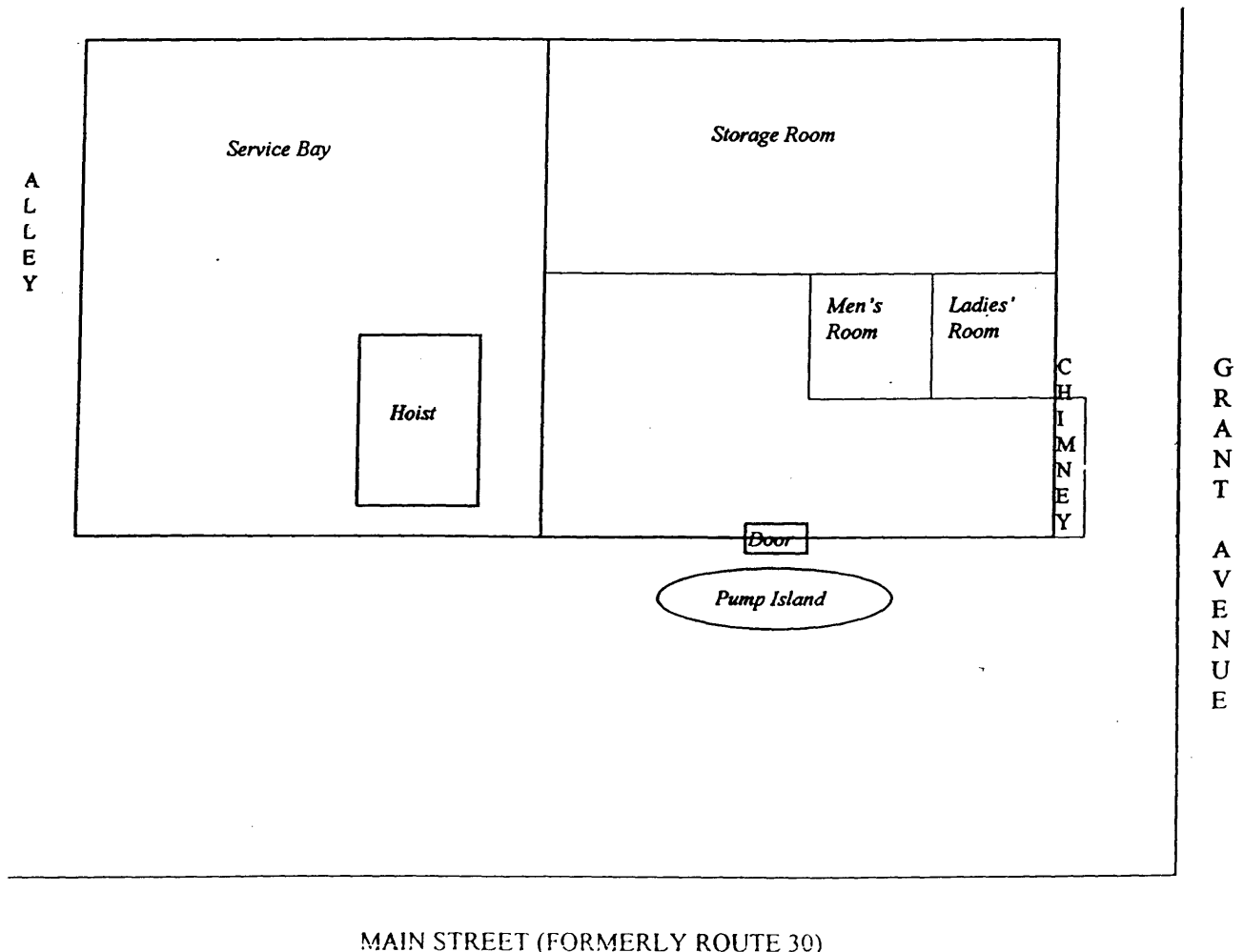
Kreinbring Phillips 66 Gas Station  
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## Floor Plan/Site Plan of Kreinbring Phillips 66 Gas Station

(Not to scale.)

North  
↑



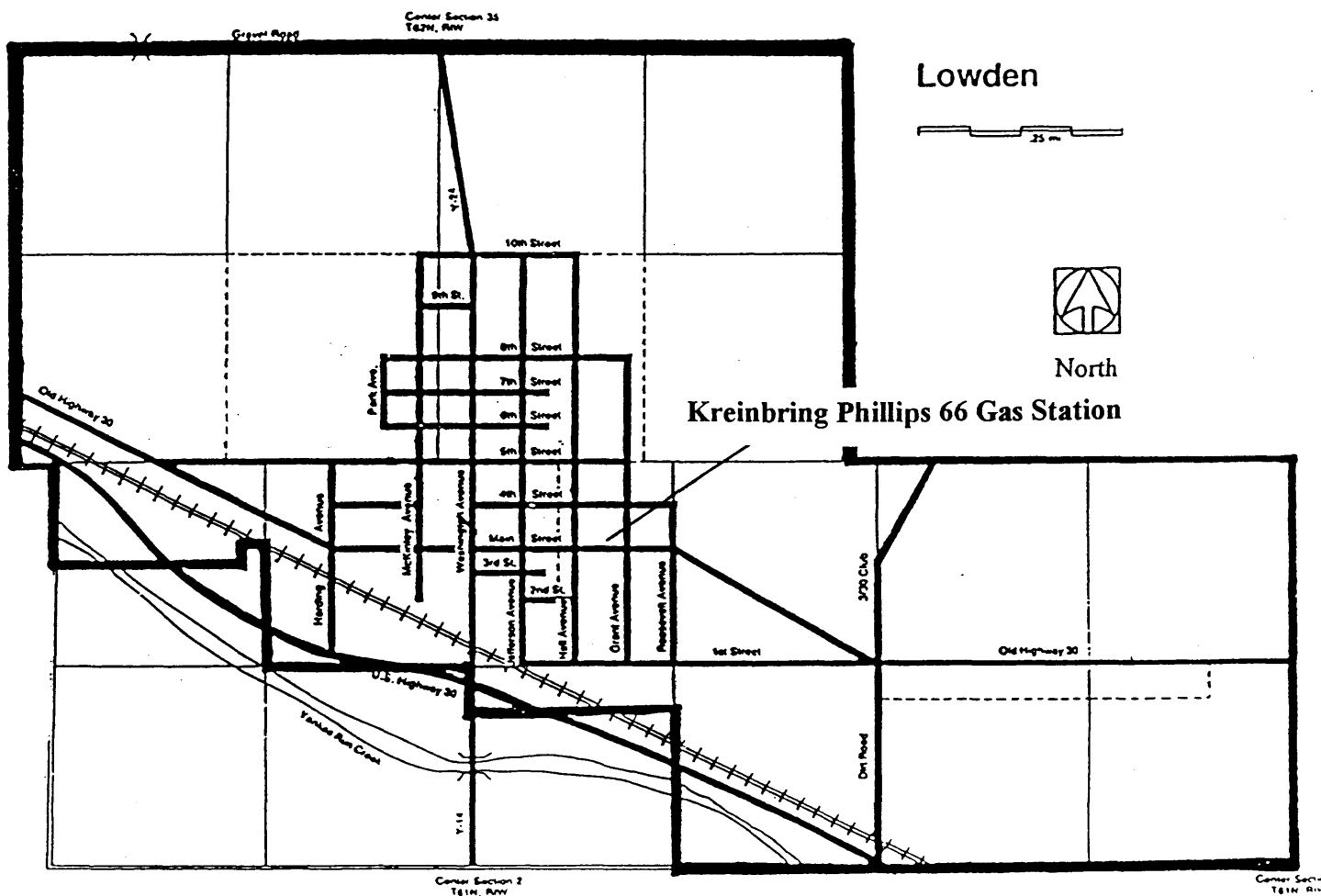
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Adapted from: Jan Olive Nash, *Lincoln Hotel, Lowden, Cedar County, Iowa*, NRHP  
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