

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NCRS use only
 received APR 8 1980
 date entered MAY 13 1980

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
 Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name *Faribault County Multiple Resource Area (Partial Inventory)*

Historic Resources of Faribault County
 (Partial Inventory - Historic Properties)

historic

and/or common

2. Location

street & number *The County Limits of Faribault County, Minnesota* not for publication

city, town _____ vicinity of _____ congressional district *Second*

state *Minnesota* code *22* county *Faribault* code *043*

3. Classification *Multiple Resources*

| Category | Ownership | Status | Present Use |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> district | <input type="checkbox"/> public | <input type="checkbox"/> occupied | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture |
| <input type="checkbox"/> building(s) | <input type="checkbox"/> private | <input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied | <input type="checkbox"/> commercial |
| <input type="checkbox"/> structure | <input type="checkbox"/> both | <input type="checkbox"/> work in progress | <input type="checkbox"/> educational |
| <input type="checkbox"/> site | Public Acquisition | Accessible | <input type="checkbox"/> entertainment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> object | <input type="checkbox"/> in process | <input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted | <input type="checkbox"/> government |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> being considered | <input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted | <input type="checkbox"/> industrial |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> no | <input type="checkbox"/> military |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> museum |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> park |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> private residence |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> religious |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> scientific |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> other: |

4. Owner of Property

name *Multiple Ownership - see inventory forms*

street & number

city, town _____ vicinity of _____ state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. *Recorders Office - Faribault County Courthouse*

street & number

city, town *Blue Earth* state *Minnesota*

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title *Statewide Survey of Historic Resources* has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date *1979* federal state county local

depository for survey records *Minnesota Historical Society - 240 Summit Ave. - Hill House*

city, town *St. Paul* state *Minnesota*

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FARIBAULT COUNTY

The basis of the survey is an inventory of structures which are indicative of various aspects of the county's history.

Selection of structures for the inventory included both field reconnaissance or pre-identified sites and isolation of sites on a purely visual basis. Pre-identification of sites was limited to a small number of the most significant locations (those unique on a county-wide scale, or significantly linked with some aspect of the county's history). County histories, individual community and township histories, and photographs from both the state and county societies were researched for site-specific information.

Township maps from 1896 and 1913 Faribault County Atlases were copied. Plat maps on file in the county recorder's office were researched for original plat information (proprietors, survey and filing dates) and for additional dates. The maps were useful in gaining a sense of development for all areas of the county.

All city streets and a large sampling of township roads were walked or driven. Buildings with unusual integrity or unique features were inventoried.

In general, structures built before 1940 were considered for the inventory. No attempt was made to locate the "oldest" structures in any one location, except as related to specific historical or physical significance.

In each community, at least one contact was made through the county historical society and by random inquiry. These were most often used to locate information on selected properties, but were helpful in pointing out additional locations for potential inventory.

From the inventory of over 150 sites, 11 individual structures were selected for nomination to the National Register on the basis of their significance with the county and the state. Information and photographs on all sites is recorded on inventory forms for a permanent record.

Survey Method

MAY 23 1980

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FARIBAULT COUNTY

Physical Description

Faribault County is located in the center of the southern tier of Minnesota counties immediately north of the Iowa state line. It is 30 miles long, east to west, and 24 miles wide, north to south, comprising 725 square miles.

The surface of the county ranges from nearly level to strongly rolling. There are two belts of hills, one in the southeast corner of the county extending northwestward, the other extending from Iowa into a portion of the southwestern area of the county. Between, moderately rolling land is found.

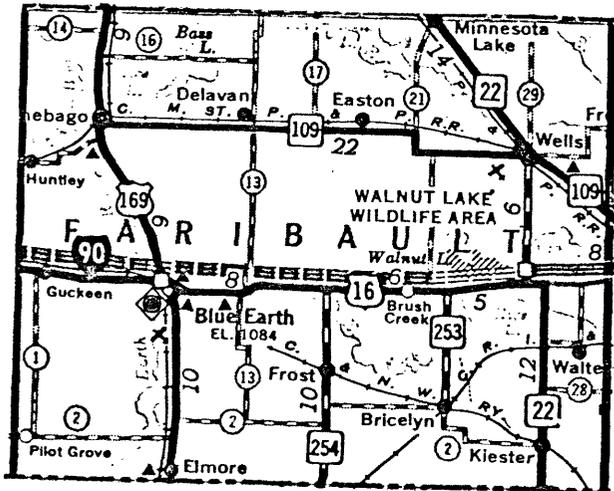
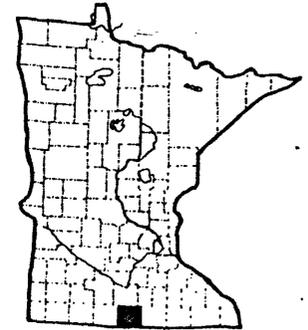
The valley of the Blue Earth River and its three forks (West, Middle and East) extends through much of the county. The Maple River and the Cobb River, in the northeast corner of the county, drain into the LeSueur River. A number of small creeks which eventually empty into the Blue Earth River complete the natural drainage pattern.

At one time there were numerous lakes and sloughs in the county, but many have been drained. The largest remaining are Minnesota Lake, two Rice Lakes, Bass Lake, two Walnut Lakes and part of Lura Lake.

Original vegetation included mostly prairie grass, none of which remains. Natural timber was confined mainly to the border of streams and lakes and consisted of basswood, cottonwood, elm, maple, oak and walnut. The pasturing of woodland and the increasing value of tillable land are taking their toll on the remaining wooded areas.

The soil in Faribault County, its most valuable resource, is a black loam, ranging in depth from two to four feet. The extent of tillable soil, its high productivity, and its ease of workability account for the high percentage (95%) of the county's area which is used as cropland.

Area Description



| | | | | |
|----------------|----------------------------|---------|----------------|---------|
| FARIBAULT CO. | | | | |
| WINNEBAGO CITY | DELAVAN | LURA | Minnesota Lake | |
| Winnebago | Delavan | Easton | MINNESOTA LAKE | DUNBAR |
| VERONA | PRESCOTT | BARBER | WALNUT LAKE | Wells |
| JO. DAVIESS | Blue Earth BLUE EARTH CITY | EMERALD | BRUSH CREEK | FOSTER |
| | | Frost | | Walters |
| PILOT GROVE | ELMORE | ROME | Bricelyn | KIESTER |
| | Elmore | | SEELY | Kiester |

Agricultural use of the land began slowly in 1856. Although some potatoes, vegetables, and corn for seed were grown, many food stuffs were imported from Iowa. Later, the passage of the Homestead Act opened the county to increased settlement, and the many new farmers came to rely on wheat and then corn as cash crops. In the early 20th century some crop and livestock diversification occurred. The emphasis today is on soybeans, corn and hogs, ranking the county 1st, 2nd and 10th respectively in total state production. The number of farms in the county is 1,640 with an average size of 272 acres.

There are eleven platted townsites in the county, ranging in population from 152 in Walters to 3,965 in Blue Earth, the county seat. The towns of Guckeen and Huntley were platted but were never incorporated and have no separate population statistics. The following is the population of the incorporated communities in the county:

| | |
|----------------|-------|
| Walters | 152 |
| Delavan | 281 |
| Frost | 290 |
| Easton | 352 |
| Bricelyn | 470 |
| Kiester | 681 |
| Minnesota Lake | 711 |
| Elmore | 910 |
| Winnebago | 1,791 |
| Wells | 2,791 |
| Blue Earth | 3,965 |

Pilot Grove, Brush Creek, Marna and Dell remain as unincorporated and unplatted villages which because of natural hardship or commercial competition never prospered but managed to retain their name and locale.

From its initial settlement in 1856 to 1900 the county population steadily increased. After 1910 the population fluctuated, and peaked in 1940. Since then the county population has slowly decreased. Census data indicates that the cities' population remained fairly constant after 1910, with most city populations peaking in 1960. Minnesota Lake shows promise of maintaining its population level due to a pre-fabricated housing industry that provides a steady income base. Blue Earth may benefit from light industry that has moved into the area in the past decade.

Historical Description

Before Faribault County was traversed by European explorers and traders, it was home to prehistoric Indians. Archaeological excavations conducted in Verona and Delavan townships suggest that their occupation dates from 5500 B.C. to 1700 A.D. Bands of Dakota Indians occupied the territory until 1857 when they were confined to reservations in other parts of Minnesota. The Minnesota River, one of the state's major water arteries, provided the first access for Europeans in the 18th century. But not until the middle of the next century and the passage of the Treaties of Traverse des Sioux and Mendota in 1851 was the land opened to full scale settlement.

The county was established in 1855, organized in February in 1856 and named for Jean Baptiste Faribault, a well known Minnesota trader. Riding the crest of frontier speculation which was characteristic of the decade were the two Faribault County communities of Blue Earth and Winnebago City ("city" discontinued in 1905) platted in 1856 and 1857 respectively. Despite a financial panic that brought many speculative schemes to a halt, the two cities, nurtured by politically and financially astute proprietors, survived the crises and grew to be two major centers in the county. Minnesota Lake, privately platted in 1866, joined as another early community.

The effects of the Pre-Emption Act and the Homestead Law passed to facilitate settlement and acquisition of land, were temporarily stalled by the Dakota War of 1862 and the Civil War, but by 1870 practically all of the homestead land in the county had been claimed.

Until 1870 stage coach lines provided the chief means of transportation for Faribault County communities and rural residents. The state lines which criss-crossed the county provided connection to the cities of Waseca and Albert Lea to the east. Along the stage route, way station communities consisting of little more than a store, post office and hotel provided accommodations.

The three decades 1870 to 1900 represent a crucial development period for Faribault County. The construction of the railroads strengthened the already platted communities, established new communities, and eliminated those hamlets not located on the rail line. The first railroad to enter the county was the Southern Minnesota (Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific). Built in 1870 from Albert Lea to Wells, it made Wells, platted in 1869 in anticipation of the railroad by a local railroad promoter and official, the first railroad community in the county. The line extended westward to pre-existing Winnebago in 1870-71; Delavan was platted in 1870 by officials of the Southern Minnesota, and Easton was platted in 1874 by J.C. Easton, statewide railroad investor. In 1874 the Minnesota Central (later a branch of the Southern Minnesota) connected Mankato to Wells via pre-existing Minnesota Lake. Blue Earth, the county seat, gained its first trackage in 1879 when the St. Paul and Sioux City Railroad extended south from Lake Crystal to the Iowa border. Elmore was platted on this line in 1880. Kiester, Bricelyn and Frost were all platted in 1899 by the Iowa and Minnesota Townsite Company when the Iowa, Minnesota and Northwestern (Chicago and Northwestern) was constructed through the southeastern townships. The last railroad to enter the county was the Burlington, Cedar Rapids, and Northern (Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific) that extended north in 1900 from Iowa through the newly platted city of Walters (1900) and eastward to Albert Lea. The unincorporated villages of Huntley (1879) and Guckeen (1913) were platted late on their respective lines, and because of their proximity to larger centers never grew beyond the confines of a small village.

The small, non-rail settlements (Clayton, Banks, Wesner's Grove, Alton, Seely, Homedahl, Grapeland, Bass Lake, Verona, Cornet, Blaine, Sheridan, Bruch Creek and Marna) that typically contained no more than a school, post office or store lost their commercial identities to the platted railroad communities. In some cases these settlements folded, the commercial buildings and homes were moved or dismantled, and little or nothing remains to mark the village's location.

In essence, the railroad was central to Faribault County's growth and development. Although three out of eleven townsites were platted prior to railroad construction, there is little doubt that rail traffic maintained and enhanced their position. Convenient crop marketing provided by the railroad in turn focused county agriculture on the production of grain and hogs, and the cities responded to this production by providing good and services for agricultural use. The inter-relationship between farm and city remains basically unchanged today. Cities have retained their basic commercial interests and crop production in the county continues at record setting levels.

Architectural Description

Manufacturing of home building materials was one of the first major industries in Faribault County. When settlers first arrived they built homes of native timber found by lakes and streams; finished lumber was hauled from as far away as Hastings. Early in 1857 steam sawmills appeared in various parts of the county and ran day and night to keep up with local demand. Brick was produced as early as 1856 in kilns throughout the county, and some brick structures can be found in scattered areas. Production continued for the next twenty-five years until lumber brought in by rail provided inexpensive building material. The frame houses built 1880-1910 reflect details of mass produced Victorian ornamentation (towers, shingle and spindle work). Frame construction still predominates for city residences and farmhouses.

Early barn and farm outbuildings were simple structures designed to offer rudimentary animal shelter and crop storage. Late 19th and early 20th century farm buildings were of wood construction. The county's progressive agricultural operations have relied on highly technical and automated farming methods which have resulted in great changes on the rural landscape. Many of the remaining 19th and early 20th century barns and outbuildings have been razed and replaced by modern animal shelter facilities or sheds built to accommodate oversize machinery and equipment. Crops once held in barn lofts and smaller outbuildings are now stored in metal storage bins or silos of fiberglass or cement construction. Many farm houses are currently being replaced by rectangular, one story dwellings built to match the new low profile of many county farms.

The initial commercial buildings were usually false front, frame structures. With the early introduction of brick many of the frame buildings were replaced by the 1880-90s. Many late 19th century commercial buildings remain, but efforts to modernize store fronts in most of the cities has resulted in the removal of many of the decorative elements (metal cornices, towers, brackets) and the construction of "modern" store fronts.

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Historical Significance

The significance of Faribault County during the historic period lies in the inter-relationships of settlement, agriculture and rail transportation. The American-born settlers who arrived in the area in 1855 wasted little time in platting a townsite and, in the following winter, organizing the county. The northern European immigrants, arriving shortly thereafter, established the farms which were to become the economic focus of the area. With the construction of the railroad in the 1870s, the farming community was promised a nation-wide market and the cities, once isolated, rural settlements on the periphery of the western frontier, matured into business centers capable of handling the increased agricultural commerce.

Until the mid 1860s the focus of white settlement occurred primarily in the western portion of the county in the cities of Blue Earth and Winnebago. The community of Blue Earth as county seat was the nucleus of the county and the construction of the Constans Hotel (1868 & 1896, Blue Earth) reflects the propensity to provide a commercial and social focus for the town. The James B. Wakefield House (1868 Blue Earth) reflects the personal commitment made to the county by one of its principal founders.

Agricultural development in the county began immediately after permanent settlement by New England and European farmers, and its impact on the county's economy has never lessened. The construction of the Adams H. Bullis House (ca.1875, Delevan Township), built before the construction of the railroad in western Faribault County, marks the commitment made to farming early in the county's history and also marks the transition from subsistence to scientific farming and the rapidity in which such changes occurred on area farms.

The buildings constructed in the latter part of the 19th century reflect the maturity of the county. Three out of the four rail lines were constructed by the 1880s and the cities were established in their roles as primary commercial centers. Original public service facilities were replaced; the best example is the construction of the second Faribault County Courthouse (1891, placed on the National Register in 1977, Blue Earth). Increased township population required improved educational facilities, and District School #40 (1896, Walnut Lake Township), was one of many constructed on the site of an earlier school. It operated until consolidation in the 1950s. An example of the same phenomena on a smaller scale is the brick Walters Jail (1902, Walters), which replaced an earlier frame building.

The Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul, and Pacific Railroad Depot and Lunchroom (1903, Wells), constructed to replace earlier facilities is indicative of the growing role the railroad played in Faribault County cities. The success of individual entrepreneurs in the growth of the rail communities is represented in the M.N. Leland House (c.1886, Wells), the Thomas C. Dunn House (1901, Winnebago), and the Peter Kramer House (1906, Minnesota Lake).

Area Significance

Since initial settlement, Faribault County's population has, in general, declined. Despite this fact, the county has retained a high degree of economic vitality based primarily on continued high agricultural productivity. For this reason, the cities are maintained as commercial centers and despite the added decline of railroad transport, the increase of truck traffic combined with the location of the county on a new transportation line -- this time a major interstate freeway, the relationship between farm, city and transportation remains supportive and unchanged.

Architectural Significance

Faribault County structures are architecturally notable for style variation and adaption. There are few true "high style" buildings in the county and fewer than can be attributed to a specific architect. Nonetheless, the buildings which were constructed during Faribault County's formative years to World War I often reflect a simplified local version of a popular style at the time of their construction.

The domestic structures best exemplifying adaption of an identifiable style are the Italianate Adams H. Bullis House (ca.1875, Delevan Township), the Queen Anne M.N. Leland House (ca.1886, Wells), the Queen Anne Thomas C. Dunn House (1901, Winnebago) and the Queen Anne Peter Kremer House (1906, Minnesota Lake). All are moderate in size, and of relatively modest design. The Leland House's rich wood ornamentation, characteristic of the style, makes it the most visually prominent of the domestic structures.

Three public or semi-public buildings stand out as notable examples of an traditional styles. The Gothic Good Shepherd Episcopal Church (1872, Blue Earth), strongly characterizes the ecclesiastical architecture prominent in the mid-19th century frontier towns. The Richardsonian Romanesque Faribault County Courthouse (1892, listed on the National Register in 1977, Blue Earth) by Minneapolis architect C.S. Dunham, and the Classic Revival First National Bank of Winnebago (1916, Winnebago) by St. Paul architect Franklin Ellerbe, are both outstanding for their attention to design.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See attached Sheets

UTM NOT VERIFIED

10. Geographical Data -- see individual inventory forms

Acreage of nominated property _____

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

Quadrangle name _____

Quadrangle scale _____

UMT References

A
Zone Easting Northing

B
Zone Easting Northing

C

D

E

F

G

H

Verbal boundary description and justification

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Susan Roth, Research Historian

organization Minnesota Historical Society

date March, 1980

street & number 240 Summit Ave-Hill House

telephone 612-296-9544

city or town St. Paul

state Minnesota

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is: See individual inventory forms

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Russell W. Fridley

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date 3-20-80

For HCRS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Keeper of the National Register

date 5/23/80

Attest:
Chief of Registration

date 5/17/80

FARIBAUT COUNTY

MAY 28 1980
APR 8 1980

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FARIBAUT COUNTY
Railroad Construction
and Urban Settlement

-  Platted community pre-railroad
-  Platted railroad community
-  Crossroads community

