

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any 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 certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Sherman Nursery Company Historic District

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Location

street & number 1300 Grove Street

N/A	not for publication
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city or town Charles City

N/A	vicinity
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state Iowa code IA county Floyd code 067 zip code 50616

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,  
I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national  statewide  local

Steve King 19 SEPT 2014

Signature of certifying official/Title  
State Historical Society of Iowa  
State Historic Preservation Office

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government \_\_\_\_\_

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register  determined eligible for the National Register

determined not eligible for the National Register  removed from the National Register

other (explain:)

Don Elson H. Beall 11.12.14

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Sherman Nursery Company Historic District  
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**5. Classification**

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

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

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

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

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
1		sites
3		structures
		objects
5		<b>Total</b>

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

N/A

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

0

**6. Function or Use**

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

- COMMERCE/TRADE / business
- TRANSPORTATION / road-related
- TRANSPORTATION / rail-related

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

- VACANT / NOT IN USE
- TRANSPORTATION / road-related

**7. Description**

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

- LATE 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY REVIVALS / Italian Renaissance
- Other

**Materials**  
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

- foundation: Stone / limestone
- walls: Stone / limestone
- roof: Other
- other: Concrete

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## **Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

### **Summary Paragraph**

The Sherman Nursery Company Historic District is located on the west side of Charles City and on the east edge of the overall Sherman Nursery Company property, with nursery and agricultural land stretching to the west (Map 1). Wildwood Park is located immediately south of this portion of the Sherman Nursery Company property as well, and a residential neighborhood stretches to the east and north in this section of Charles City. The area within the historic district provides the entry to the Sherman property from the west side of Charles City, and this approach and view over the creek to the office building is well-documented through historic postcards and photographs. This "front face" of Sherman Nursery Company consists of the stone office building (1906) and three bridges (c.1902, 1910, 1910) over Sherman Creek, and the boundary for the historic district includes these built resources and Sherman Creek (Map 2). The greenhouses to the south and west of the office building have been replaced by newer greenhouses (1980s-90s), and the packing/shipping facilities along the north edge of the property have been replaced and enlarged. Thus, these resources and the additional nursery land to the west in Section 11 have been excluded from the boundary for the historic district at this time. The current contiguous land holdings in Section 11 and the west edge of Section 12 represent the majority of the land in this area operated by the Sherman Nursery Company through its operational history from 1884 to 2012. While buildings on the landscape have changed, the overall land use and patterns have been consistent with aspects of the nursery operations for over 100 years. Thus, the overall setting of the Sherman Nursery Company Historic District with greenhouses and packing facilities in the immediate vicinity and additional nursery land to the west remains intact. As noted, one building and three structures are tabulated as contributing within the boundary for the Sherman Nursery Company Historic District, with the later buildings excluded from this area. The contributing building is a two-story stone office building constructed in 1904-1906, and it served as office space from 1906 to 2012. The first contributing structure is the stone arch bridge over Sherman Creek, providing vehicular access to the east edge of the Sherman property from Grove Street and S. Illinois Street on the west side of Charles City. It was constructed around 1902 as the first construction (a greenhouse) was started on this portion of the Sherman land (Section 12). The other two contributing structures are two concrete arch railroad bridges built in 1910 to the north and south of the stone arch bridge, providing access to the packing/shipping facility (north) and coal bunker for the heating plant for the greenhouses (south). Finally, Sherman Creek and picturesque setting of the bridges and stone office building is tabulated as one contributing site.



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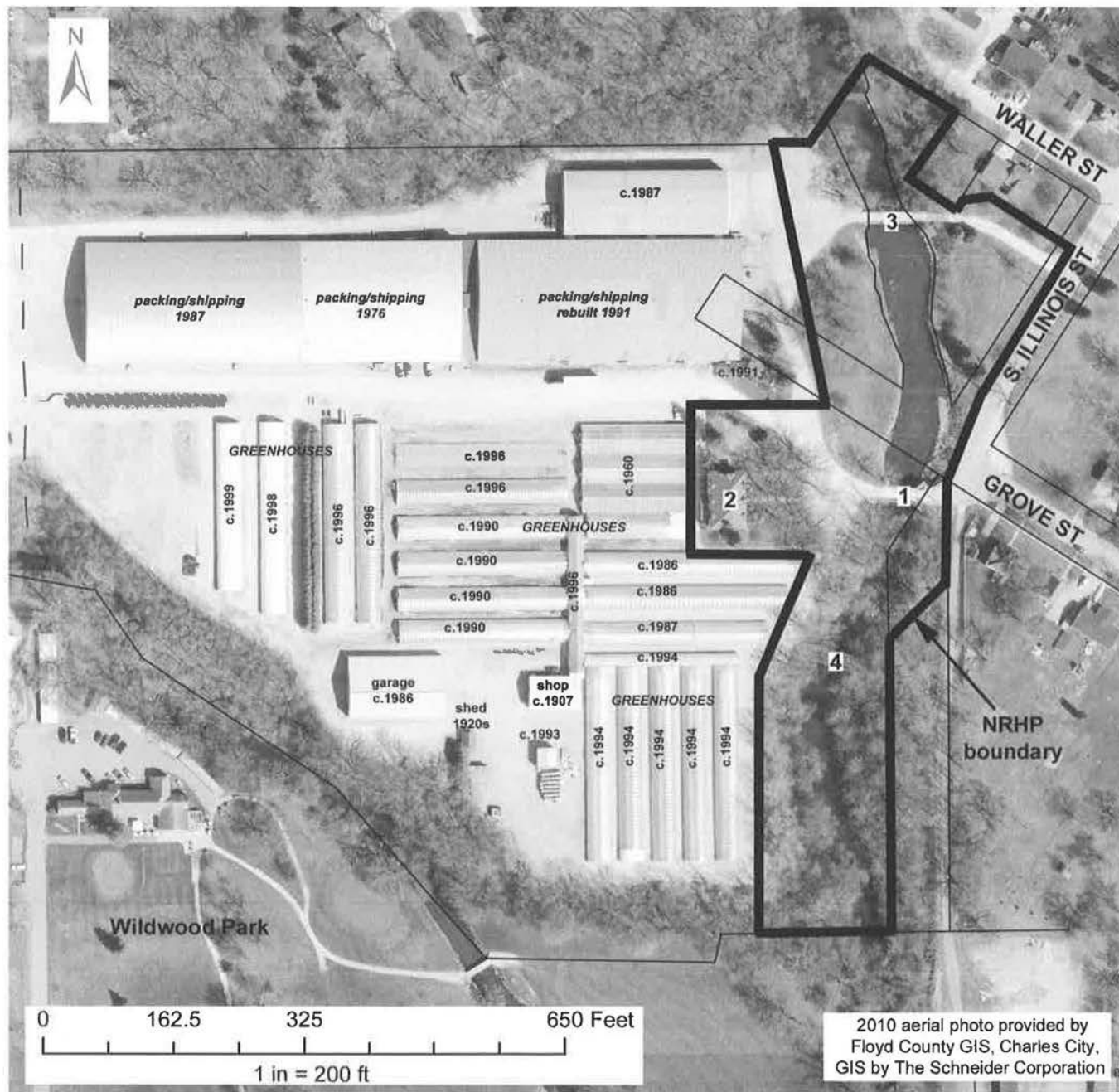


**Map 1. Location map for Sherman Nursery Company Historic District.**  
*base map: USGS topographical quadrangle map, Charles City, 1972*



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Map 2. Sherman Nursery Company Historic District, with boundary and built resources indicated.

- 1 = c.1902 stone arch bridge
- 2 = 1906 stone office building
- 3 = 1910 concrete railroad bridge
- 4 = 1910 concrete railroad bridge

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## Narrative Description

The Sherman Nursery Company Historic District encompasses the entry to the property from the west side of Charles City, including the stone office building (1906) and three bridges (c.1902, 1910, 1910) over Sherman Creek. The historic district includes the three bridges and land along Sherman Creek from the north to south property lines and extends west around the stone office building, an area visible from the approach to the property from Grove Street and S. Illinois Street on the west side of Charles City. The stone office building is set among large trees, with Sherman Creek and the stone arch bridge in the foreground of any viewpoint of the office building from the streets of the residential neighborhood in this section of Charles City. The concrete arch railroad bridges are visible looking to the north and south, with more trees and vegetation currently growing along the creek to the south. Overall, these built resources and Sherman Creek create a serene entry area for the nursery operations, imagery historically utilized by the Sherman Nursery Company in promotion of their products (see Figures 4, 21, 32 in Section 8). Greenhouses are somewhat visible to the south and west of the office building, historically and currently screened by trees and the office building from the east approach. Likewise, though replaced, the large packing shed to the north remains set within the hillside, somewhat masking its size and scale. While these resources date to later replacement of earlier buildings serving the same purposes and have been excluded from the district boundary, they provide context for the nursery operations that stretch to the west behind the boundary of the Sherman Nursery Company Historic District. No archeological survey has been conducted on the property to date, with the strongest potential for historic archeological sites in the area to the west of the entry area included within the boundary for the Sherman Nursery Company Historic District.

### Office building (#2 on Map 2)

This two-story stone office building with a raised basement constructed from 1904 to 1906 reflects the Italian Renaissance style. Overall, the office building retains a high level of historic integrity. The stone building sits on a stone foundation, and it retains its characteristic low-hip, red tile roof. The overall façade (east) is symmetrical and balanced. The centered arch entry is accented by large cut stones similar to quoins, a feature typical to Italian Renaissance buildings. The opening includes an original decorative half-circle wood transom window and decorative wide sidelight to the right (north) of the single-door entry. Two first story windows are found on either side of the entry, with basement windows centered under these openings and second story dormers located above between the windows. The basement and first story windows have jack arch lintels and cut stone sills. All windows appear to retain their original decorative wood windows. The basement windows have one-over-one-light double-hung wood sashes. The first story windows have irregular double-hung sashes, with a smaller sash of diamond lights across the top one-third of the opening and a large single-light lower sash that can be raised. Two-light wood storm windows are installed on the exterior of each of these sashes. The three second-story windows are set within stone gable roof dormers that are flush with the wall of the building. They are paired windows with double-hung sashes in the same style as the first story windows, with a smaller diamond upper sash over a larger single-light lower sash. This style of windows and opening details are carried around the building. The north side provides secondary entries into the building, with wood steps leading up to each door. The first story openings consist of a window, door, window, and door, with one-over-one-light double basement windows with jack arch lintels under each of these four openings. The two first story windows are identical in style to the façade windows, and each entry has a wood door with large window, wood storm door, decorative transom window, and jack stone arch lintel. A large stone gable-roof dormer that is flush with the wall of the building is centered on the second story, with two double-hung wood windows similar to the first story windows in style flanking a recessed center stone opening. The massive stone chimney rises above the center of the gable, with stone brackets supporting the smooth cut stone top. The south side of the building has two windows identical to the façade windows in size and style on the first story, with a one-over-one-light double-hung wood basement window under each of these

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windows. The second story has a large stone gable-roof dormer that is identical to the north dormer, with two decorative wood windows flanking a center inset stone panel. The stone chimney on this side likewise rises above the center of the gable, with stone brackets supporting the smooth cut stone top. The symmetry of the rear (west) is interrupted by the one-story vault rooms that extend from the south portion of the rear of the building. The four first story windows north of the vault section and one to the south of the vault section reflect the same decorative wood sashes with stone jack arch lintels as on the other elevations. Likewise, the three stone gable-roof dormers are flush with the wall of the building and have paired double-hung windows in the same style as the façade. The vault section, which includes two interior rooms on the first story, has two small windows with metal bars on the first story of the west side, as well as two basement windows with metal bars. Three one-over-one-light double hung wood basement windows are located north of the vault section, and one is found to the south. The "center" opening, immediately to the north of the vault, is a rear basement double-door entry with a later frame enclosure over the concrete steps.

The interior of the office building was restored and remodeled in the 1980s. The overall layout was not modified. The wood staircase from the basement to the second story is intact, with refinished wood. Likewise, the wood trim through the first story was stripped and refinished. The stairs occupy the center one-fifth of the east side of the building, with two offices to the north and two offices to the south on the first story. The two north offices open to the large stenographers' room that stretches across the north three-fifths of the west half of the first story. These offices have large multi-light wood windows and transom windows that provide a visual connection yet separation between these spaces. Access to the north vault room is provided in the southwest corner of the large stenographers' room. The south two-fifths of the first story includes two offices in the east half portion, one office in the southwest corner (with access to one vault room), and a hall with men's and women's restrooms between the large stenographers' room and southwest corner office on the west half. The finishes of the first story spaces generally dates to the 1980s remodeling, with dropped ceilings with suspended lights, linoleum in the stenographers' room and bathrooms, and carpet in the offices and on the stairs. The basement is divided into a large north room and a large south room by a large center hall. These spaces were also remodeled in the 1980s. Originally, cold storage was provided in the basement, and these spaces were remodeled for Cashman's Gift and Flower Shop in 1951. The north room has a bathroom and furnace room divided along the south wall. The lower level of the rear vault section is accessed from the south room. The second story includes a large room at the top of the stairs that was remodeled for use as a kitchen. The area to the north of this space is unfinished storage space. The exterior stone walls and wood joists of the roof are exposed, and the chimney is brick with two small openings. Several shelves and cabinets with old office equipment and document boxes are located in this large room. The two-thirds of the building to the south of the center includes a large conference room with smaller room and closet on the east half and a bathroom and southwest corner room on the west half accessed along a hall from the center kitchen area. This section was utilized most recently as a small apartment. Historic wood trim and doors remain through these spaces, though it is painted unlike the restored wood trim on the first story. Carpet was installed on most of the floors in the 1980s, with the historic wood floor in the southwest corner room remaining exposed.

#### Entry bridge (#1 on Map 2)

The entry bridge to the Sherman Nursery Company property over Sherman Creek is a stone bridge reportedly built from a large granite boulder found on the property and blasted for building material. The closed spandrel arch bridge is designed with angled abutments on either side of the creek. The abutments are three courses lower in height than the main side walls of the bridge, on either side of the gravel roadway. The corners of the north side wall is missing a few stones, providing a further stepped appearance that is not the historic appearance. With this exception, historic photographs show that the bridge does not appear to have been altered since its construction (see Figures 4 and 21 in Section 8). Visually, the bridge appears to be a stone



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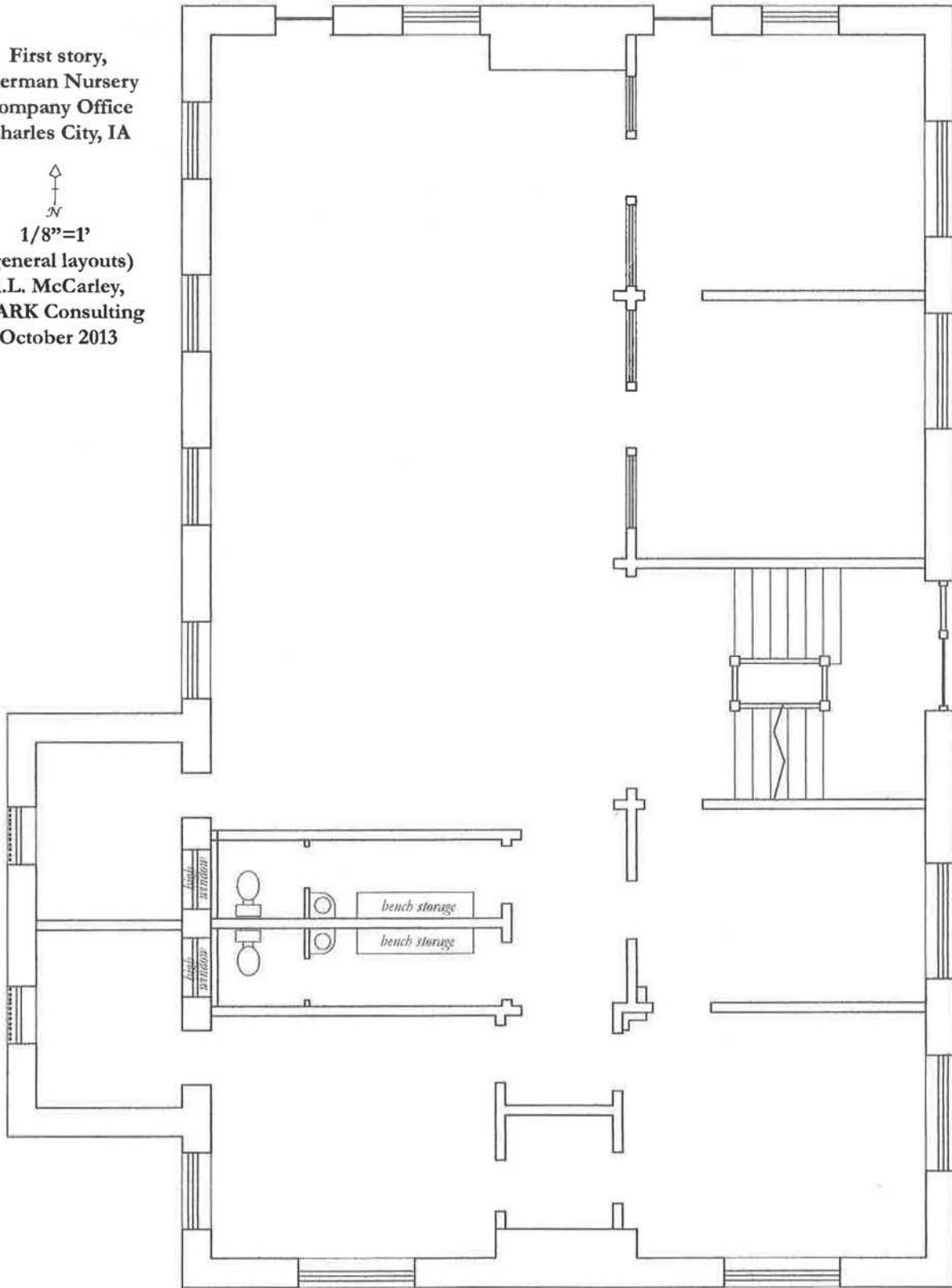
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First story,  
Sherman Nursery  
Company Office  
Charles City, IA



1/8"=1'

(general layouts)  
R.L. McCarley,  
SPARK Consulting  
October 2013



First story of Sherman Nursery Company office building.

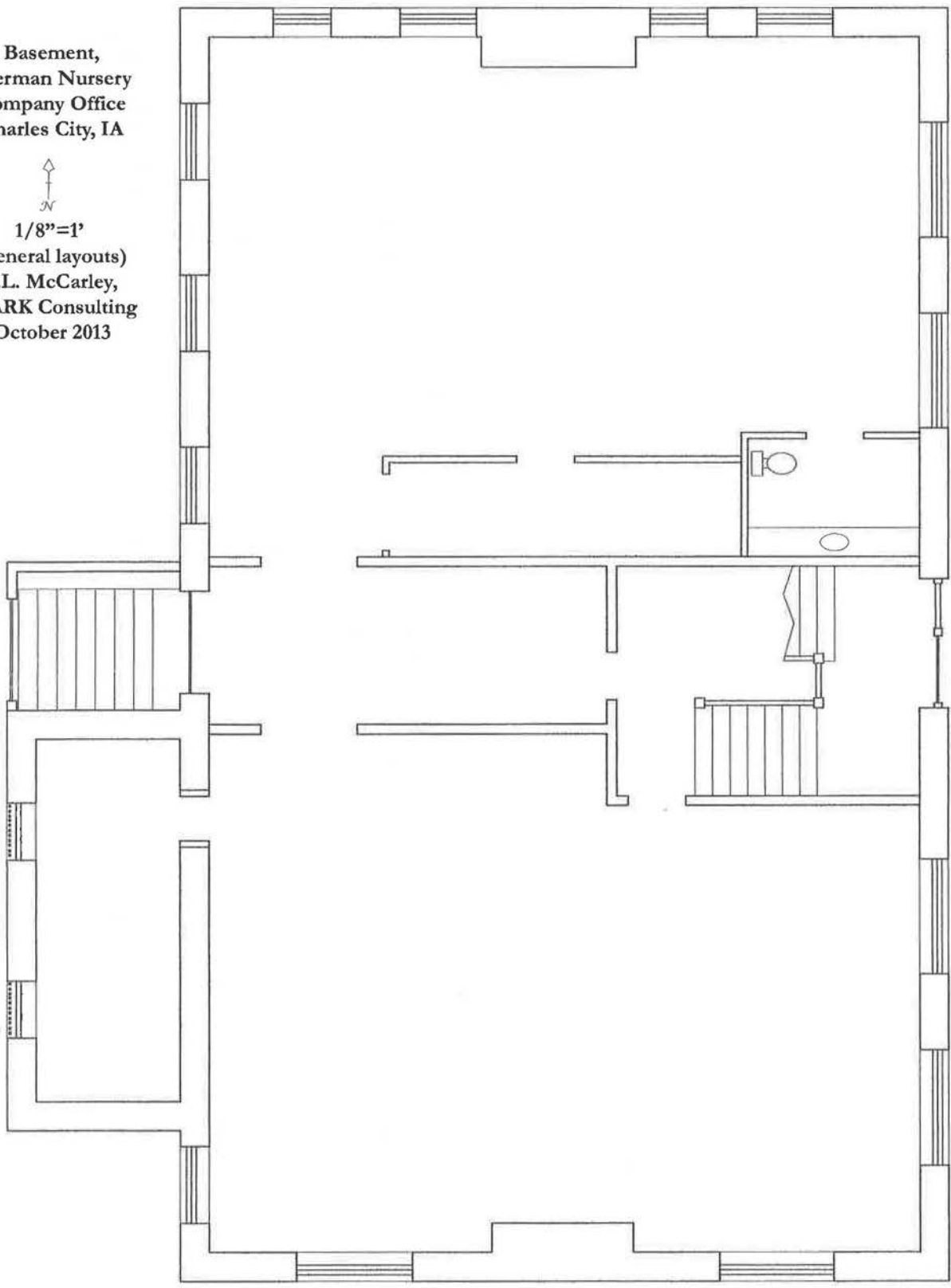
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Basement,  
Sherman Nursery  
Company Office  
Charles City, IA



1/8"=1'  
(general layouts)  
R.L. McCarley,  
SPARK Consulting  
October 2013



**Basement of Sherman Nursery Company office building.**

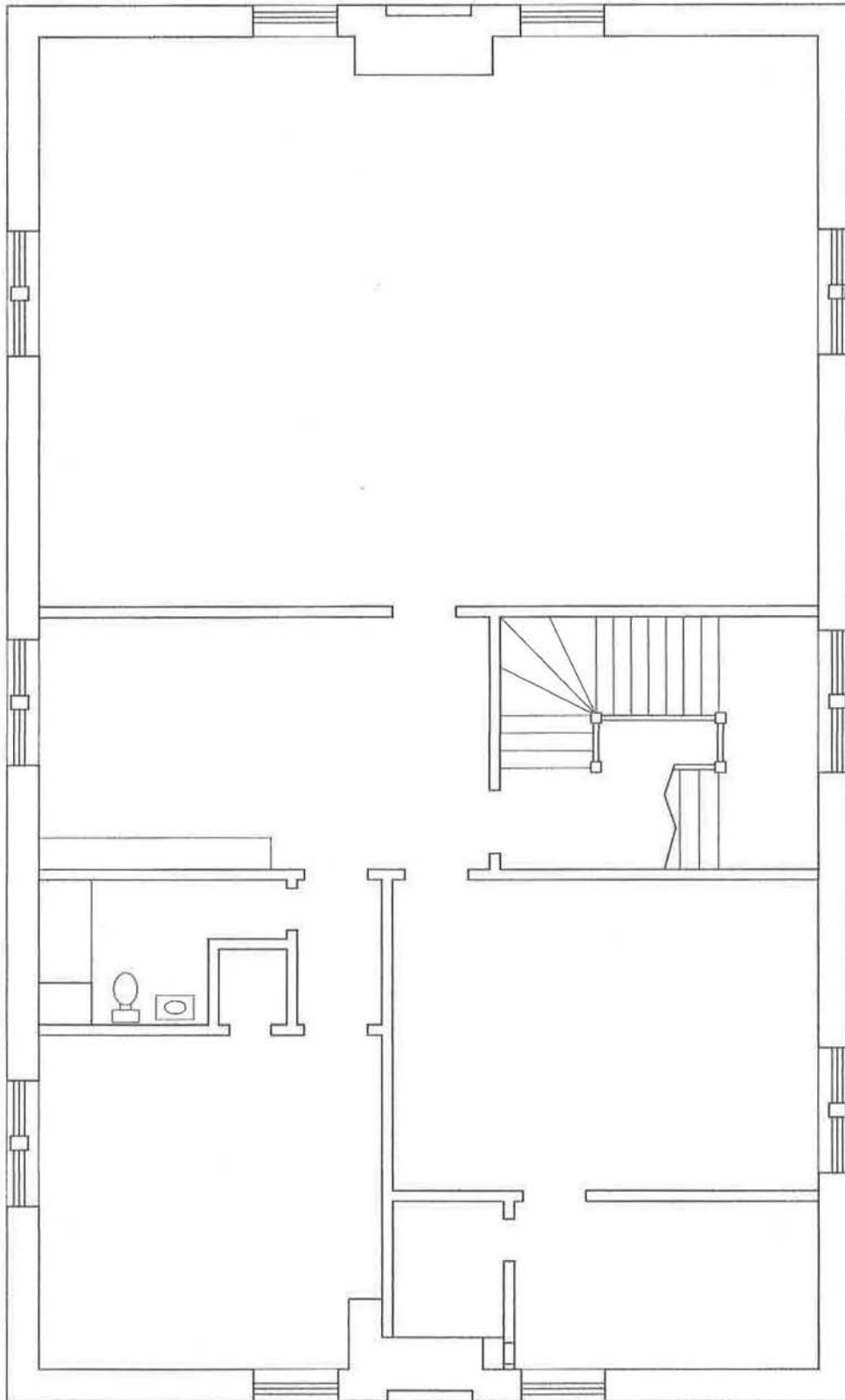
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Second story,  
Sherman Nursery  
Company Office  
Charles City, IA



1/8"=1'  
(general layouts)  
R.L. McCarley,  
SPARK Consulting  
October 2013



**Second story of Sherman Nursery Company office building.**



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arch bridge, and it is referenced as such in later articles and company histories. However, it may have a concrete structural component, as the first contemporary newspaper reference to the bridge identified in the *Charles City Herald* on May 31, 1905 notes: "The erection of the cement bridge at the entrance of the nursery grounds was a piece of work reflecting great credit upon the enterprise of Mr. Sherman, together with the greenhouses at a cost of \$15,000..." ("An Important Local Enterprise," *Charles City Herald*, May 31, 1905, 21). It is possible that the reference is noting use of a Portland cement mortar. The *Charles City Herald* again references the "cement bridge over the "bayou" in June 1907 in conjunction the issuance of the company calendar (which included an illustration of the entry bridge), while the *Iowa State Register and Farmer* and *Charles City Daily Intelligencer* reference the stone arch bridge leading to the property in the same period. It was and is commonly referenced as the stone arch entry bridge. Writing in a mortar joint on the north (road) side of the center of the south wall of the bridge appears to state that the bridge was constructed in "1902" and for "Sherman Nurseries." Later company histories date the stone bridge to the start of Sherman Nursery Company, which is then extrapolated as 1884. This may be a misinterpretation of information dating the construction of the bridge to the start of the built development of this east section of the nursery property in Section 12, which occurred in 1902. While no newspaper articles have been identified thus far confirming any date of construction of the bridge, the 1905 article appears to link the construction of the bridge with the greenhouse in 1902, which then supports and is supported by the date in mortar on the bridge. The bridge is generally in good condition, and it retains a high level of integrity.

#### Railroad bridges (#3 and #4 on Map 2)

In contrast, the two concrete railroad bridges over Sherman Creek have thorough newspaper documentation on their construction. In August 1910, it was noted that when these two bridges were completed, E.M. Sherman would have "three fine bridges" spanning the creek that would be all in sight of each other. Thus, the bridges were envisioned and recognized as visually connected along the creek. After consulting with other bridge builders, E.M. Sherman had the two railroad bridges for the two spurs onto his property over Sherman Creek built himself. The north spur and bridge led to the packing cellar for shipments. The bridge was designed in concrete with steel reinforcement. Construction on the north bridge began by August 1910. The 80-foot bridge was designed with an elongated, flattened arch measuring 42 feet. The initial goal was completion in time for the fall shipping season ("Will Build Own Bridges," *Charles City Daily Intelligencer*, August 25, 1910). The north railroad bridge is currently set within a fairly open area on the north side of the east edge of the Sherman Nursery Company property in Section 12. The railroad tracks over the bridge have been removed and replaced with a gravel bed. The low bridge design with a flattened arch provides a low profile for the bridge. The abutments extend straight into the east and west banks of the creek. The side walls are gently arched across the span, barely noticeably, and terminate near ground level. The exterior lips of the walls overhang slightly on the bridge, creating a simple design element. Likewise, a line in the concrete across the top of the arch provides additional simple accent. The bridge appears to be in good condition, and it retains a high level of integrity. The largest change is not to the structure of the bridge itself but the removal of the railroad tracks.

With the work complete on the north bridge for shipping, work was then started on the south bridge, which was also 80 feet but with a full (not flattened) arch measuring 30 feet in width ("Will Build Own Bridges," *Charles City Daily Intelligencer*, August 25, 1910). By October 11, the newspaper noted that Mr. Patten and Mr. Carpenter had a crew working on preparing concrete for the arch for the south bridge across Sherman's Creek ("Sherman Nursery Co. Grounds Busy Place," *Charles City Daily Intelligencer*, October 11, 1910, 1). The south railroad bridge is set within a wooded area in the southeast corner of the east edge of the Sherman Nursery Company property in Section 12. The railroad tracks over the bridge have been removed and replaced with a gravel bed. The high bridge design with a full arch provides a higher profile for the bridge than the north railroad bridge. The abutments extend straight into the east and west banks of the creek. An inset

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rectangular detail in concrete on each side of each abutment provides a design element for the bridge. The side walls have an exterior lip that overhangs slightly on the exterior of the bridge, creating a simple design element. Likewise, a line in the concrete across the top of the arch provides additional simple accent. The bridge retains a high level of integrity. Overall, the bridge appears to be in good condition, though some concrete cracking and potential future issues are noted on the south side of the west end of the bridge.

### Sherman Creek and setting of built resources

As noted, Sherman Creek and picturesque natural setting of the bridges and stone office building is tabulated as one contributing site within the Sherman Nursery Company Historic District. The creek extends north-south along the east edge of the property included within the historic district, tying together the three bridges. The natural landscape of the creek, trees, and shrubs contribute to the imagery evoked through marketing for the Sherman Nursery Company through the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Thus, the overall natural setting with Sherman Creek of this entry area to the Sherman Nursery Company operations contributes to the significance of the Sherman Nursery Company Historic District.

### Integrity

The Sherman Nursery Company Historic District retains sufficient integrity to convey its significance. The office building, stone arch bridge, and two concrete railroad bridges remain in their original locations and settings, retaining their historic relationships to each other, Sherman Creek, the remaining nursery grounds, and the residential neighborhood of Charles City to the east. The overall integrity of design, workmanship, and materials is intact. It retains its association to the Sherman Nursery Company and the overall feeling of the "public face" of this significant local business. Specific aspects of the integrity of the property include:

Location: The resources of the historic district (office building, bridges, and Sherman Creek) remain in their original locations on the west side of Charles City and on the east edge of the overall Sherman Nursery Company property.

Setting: The setting of the office building and bridges within the historic district remains largely unchanged in terms of relationship to surroundings uses. The areas to the east and north of the historic district remain as residential neighborhoods on the west side of Charles City. Historic views towards the office building remain intact over Sherman Creek and the arch stone bridge. The bridges remain within their historic setting of Sherman Creek, which contributes directly to the significance of this historic district. The concrete arch railroad bridges are visible looking to the north and south, with more trees and vegetation currently growing along the creek to the south. The office building is set among trees on the west side of Sherman Creek, with greenhouses to the south and west. While the current structures largely date to the 1980s and 1990s, they replaced historic greenhouses in the same locations. Likewise, packing/shipping facilities remain west of the north end of the historic district, with the current building replacing the historic 1907 building in 1991 while maintain the same usage.

Design: The overall design relationships between the office building and three bridges within the historic district remain intact, tied visually together by views from the residential streets to the west and along Sherman Creek to the north and south. Individually, the design integrity of each resource is also strong. The Italian Renaissance design of the stone office building is intact, including key features such as the stone walls, symmetrical appearance, accented arch entry, historic decorative wood windows, and low-pitch tile roof. The historic layout and features remain intact on the interior as well. Likewise, no major modifications have been made to any of the three bridges. The original stone arch design of the entry bridge, the flat arch design of the north railroad bridge, and the full arch design of the south railroad bridge remain intact.

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Materials: Each of the four built resources within the historic district retains a strong integrity of materials. The bridges retain their original materials, either stone or reinforced concrete. Stone is the dominant exterior material for the office building, along with the intact wood windows and red tile roof. The historic wood stairs, wood trim, and wood doors remain intact on the interior as well. Some modern materials are located throughout the interior, primarily utilized for floor coverings and in bathrooms.

Workmanship: The historic workmanship of the office building, stone bridge, and two concrete railroad bridges remains intact, reflected in the historic design elements and materials.

Feeling: The overall feeling of the Sherman Nursery Company Historic District as the entry for the greater nursery property remains intact. The office building and bridges remain on the east edge of the Sherman Nursery Company property, with the additional buildings and nursery lands stretching to the west. The feeling of an overall serene entry to the property with the setting along Sherman Creek remains intact. The land included within the historic district continues to provide the "first impression" for the Sherman Nursery Company property for any visitor from Charles City.

Association: The historic district retains strong association to the Sherman Nursery Company, with the office building serving as the local headquarters for the Sherman Division of Bailey Nurseries until 2012 and stone arch bridge continuing to be utilized as access to the property. To date, these resources have always and only been affiliated with the nursery company operations since construction.



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**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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Commerce  
Architecture

**Period of Significance**

1902-1964

**Significant Dates**

1902  
1906  
1910

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Sherman, Erwin Milo

**Cultural Affiliation**

**Architect/Builder**

unknown

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Sherman Nursery Company Historic District is nominated under Criterion A for the commercial significance of the Sherman Nursery Company, under Criterion B for the significance of Erwin M. Sherman, and under Criterion C for the design significance of this core group of resources. Erwin M. Sherman started this nursery in 1884, incorporating the Sherman Nursery Company in 1888. Sherman focused on raising and marketing hardy forest, fruit, and ornamental trees and plants throughout the Midwest and Northwest through a massive sales force. The company expanded into roses around the turn of the century, building several greenhouses at the east end of their property on the west edge of Charles City and connecting their property to town by a stone arch bridge. The subsequent construction of the two-story stone office building in 1904-06 next to the first two greenhouses marked the significant growth of the company under the first 20 years of leadership of Erwin M. Sherman, and the building continued to serve as the headquarters until operations were closed here in 2012. The stone architecture of the office building is unique in this area, as well as among other known nursery properties. The picturesque setting of the office building across the stone arch bridge is depicted in postcards and promotional images for the company. Further development of Sherman Nursery Company required a more direct railroad connection, and Erwin M. Sherman incorporated the Charles City Western Railroad with two other local businessmen in 1910, building two railroad spurs and associated concrete bridges to connect his property. The designs of the concrete bridges appear likewise considered for their contribution to the picturesque quality of this public face of the company. Sherman Nursery Company grew rapidly through the 1910s and 1920s, known for its evergreens, fruit trees, and other hardy trees and plants, as well as for its cut roses shipped daily to large Midwest cities. Products were sold wholesale and retail through a system of sales agents. Erwin M. Sherman continued to serve as president of the Sherman Nursery Company until 1931 when he sold the business to an investment company, Ellis & Ellis, a few years prior to his death in 1934. He was recognized locally, statewide, and nationally for his success in and contributions to the nursery business. Sherman Nursery Company maintained its national presence through the 1930s and into the 1940s. The company was sold in 1947, and the associated greenhouses and large packing shed were refurbished or rebuilt from 1948 to 1964 under the leadership of Richard J. Cashman as the company continued to grow. The nursery operated on the west side of Charles City until 2012. The period of significance spans from 1902 with the construction of the stone arch bridge to 1964, the 50-year cut-off for National Register properties and general conclusion of a period of middle 20<sup>th</sup> century development for Sherman Nursery Company. The four contributing built resources within the Sherman Nursery Company Historic District date to construction within the period from 1902 to 1910, and they continued to serve integral roles in the operations of the Sherman Nursery Company through this period of significance to 1964 and beyond. The Sherman Nursery Company Historic District is nominated at a local level of significance at this time. Sherman Nursery Company stands out as one of the largest nursery businesses in Iowa and the Midwest, with a national presence and scope of operations. With further contextual research on the nursery industry, the Sherman Nursery Company Historic District would likely be demonstrated to have a state level of significance, as well as potential significance within a national context.

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance.)

The Sherman Nursery Company Historic District is nominated under Criterion A for the commercial significance of the Sherman Nursery Company. The company grew from small beginnings to a regional and then national company within the first few decades of its existence, and it maintained a national presence and client base through the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Erwin M. Sherman moved to Charles City from nearby Chickasaw County and launched his nursery business in 1884. The company was incorporated in 1888, and he bought land in 1894 and 1895. In 1902, he began shifting the core of the office operations to the east edge of his property on the west side of Charles City, first building a stone arch bridge over the creek (extant) and two greenhouses with a heating plant (demolished). Subsequent construction in this area from 1904 to 1909

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included the stone office building (extant), a large stone packing/shipping building (demolished), and four additional greenhouses (demolished). The buildings and business of the Sherman Nursery Company were profiled in March 1907 in the *Iowa State Register and Farmer* under the headline of "Largest Nursery in World." Further development of Sherman Nursery Company required a more direct railroad connection, and Erwin M. Sherman organized the Charles City Western Railroad with two other local businessmen in 1910 to provide a railroad route along his property. He built two railroad spurs into his property, requiring two concrete bridges to span the creek. Products were sold wholesale and retail through a system of sales agents. The company grew rapidly through the 1910s and 1920s, known for its evergreens, fruit trees, and other hardy trees and plants, as well as for its cut roses. Sherman Nursery Company was also among the oldest nursery companies in Iowa by 1922, with only nine other companies listed in the *Iowa State Gazetteer* in existence in 1889. In 1925, Sherman Nursery Company encompassed nearly 1,000 acres and was self-proclaimed as the "largest growers of Evergreens in the world," "the largest growers of Hardy Nursery Stock in the Northwest," and operated one of the largest number of greenhouses west of Chicago for their roses. Their stock included: 50 million evergreens, 1 million apple trees, 150,000 plum trees, 35,000 cherry trees, 500,000 grape vines, 200,000 currants, 150,000 gooseberries, 200,000 raspberries, 575,000 ornamental shrubs, 20,000 roses, 20,000 climbing vines, 5 million seedlings, 3 million forest and shade trees, 300,000 phlox, and 130,000 peonies ("Sherman Nursery Company Stock" 1925: 1, 4). By 1930, their sales force had climbed to nearly 450 agents covering 15 states across the Midwest and Northwest, with many salesmen also skilled landscape designers. Erwin M. Sherman continued to serve as president of the Sherman Nursery Company until he sold it in 1931, a few years prior to his death in 1934.

The Sherman Nursery Company continued to be a significant local and Midwest nursery company through the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Sherman Nursery Company maintained its national presence through the 1930s and into the 1940s under ownership of an investment company, Ellis & Ellis, and the leadership of Clifton C. Smith. The company continued to sell stock wholesale to other nurseries, retail direct to customers with 500 full or part time salesmen, and by mail orders through catalogs. The Sherman Nursery Company started a new chapter in its history on July 1, 1947 with the purchase of the company by M.R. Cashman, manager of Cashman Nursery, Inc. in Owatonna, Minnesota. His son Richard J. Cashman moved to Charles City to manage the operations of Sherman Nursery Company, and Clifton C. Smith remaining as vice president into the 1960s. Richard bought out his father in 1951, and he worked to rebuild or refurbish all the buildings associated with the nursery over the next decade. Earlier greenhouses were replaced with new greenhouses with iron frames, and the distinctive roof of the large packing shed – still noted to be the largest in the industry – was replaced with a new concrete roof. This work positioned the company for success through the next decades, with nursery practices shifting to container growing by the 1950s. In 1954, Sherman Nursery owned 500 acres of land with another 250 acres rented for nursery production. Cashman Greenhouses operated as a subsidiary, with over 125,000 square feet of greenhouses that contained roses, carnations and other cut flowers. The focus of Sherman Nursery Company in the 1950s shifted to ornamental and flowering shrubs, shade trees, and ground covers. The client base also shifted in this period, with wholesale business to garden centers, nurseries, and landscapers increasing. This wholesale business became the focus of the company's operations in the 1950s, with sales agents discontinued in 1961. In 1965, Sherman Nursery Company utilized 1,000 acres of land for nursery stock and had four acres under glass in greenhouses. They employed 60 people year round with 100-150 people in peak seasons and through the summer. The stone packing cellar with its new roof continued to be the largest single packing cellar in the nursery industry, and Sherman Nursery Company shipped stock to nearly every state. Sherman Nursery Company continued to operate as an independent company through the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 2009, 125 years after its start in Charles City, Sherman Nursery Company formally became a division of Bailey Nurseries, and operations were closed in Charles City by the company in 2012.

The Sherman Nursery Company Historic District is also nominated under Criterion B for its association with prominent businessman Erwin Milo Sherman. The significance and leadership of Erwin M. Sherman was already recognized in February 1905: "Much of the success of the company is due to the energetic intelligence



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and careful supervision of Mr. Sherman, its president. Few men in Iowa have made a more patriotic and careful study of the conditions which confront the grower of fruits in this northwest territory" ("The Sherman Nursery Company," *Iowa State Register*, February 24, 1905, 2). His 1915 biography in *Iowa: Its History and Its Foremost Citizens* noted: "Erwin Milo Sherman is president of the Sherman Nursery Company, which has one of the largest nurseries of the entire country, and his name is widely known in that connection. He has built up a mammoth business from a comparatively small beginning, his success being based upon first, a love of nature; second, an intimate knowledge of plant life, together with practical and systematic methods of propagation; and third, the close application and unfaltering industry which are always concomitants in the attainment of prosperity" (*Iowa: Its History and Its Foremost Citizens* 1915: 1311). Erwin M. Sherman continued to develop the scope and success of the company through the 1920s, serving as president of the company until 1931. The resources within the Sherman Nursery Company Historic District, particularly the office building, are integrally connected to his productive life as a prominent businessman. No other extant resources related to the Sherman Nursery Company from this period have been identified. The Shermans' Shingle-style home continues to stand in Charles City at 800 Gilbert Street (Iowa Site Inventory #34-00214), built in 1888 and bought in 1900 by the family. No other sites are known to be associated with Erwin M. Sherman in the Charles City area.

Finally, the Sherman Nursery Company Historic District is nominated under Criterion C for the design significance of this core group of resources. The boundary of the historic district includes the east edge of the Sherman Nursery Company property, which was the focus of the built resources of the company. The creek along this edge provided a picturesque quality with the bridges and stone office building for the entry to the Sherman Nursery Company from Charles City, evoking a designed and yet natural quality for this "public" face of the company (Figures 5, 21-24). As noted in the *Iowa Register and Farmer* in 1908: "The entrance to the grounds is reached over a beautiful stone arch bridge, which leads up to the imposing office building with its red roof, partially hidden by the foliage of trees...it should be seen in summer when everything is green and the trees in full foliage" ("Charles City's Famous Nursery," *Iowa State Register and Farmer*, February 21, 1908, 8). Postcards and images through the 1910s illustrate the stone office building, stone arch bridge, and concrete railroad bridges within the picturesque setting of the creek and nursery grounds. The stone office building, three bridges, and the creek continue to form a significant and distinguishable entity with design significance as the entry and public face of Sherman Nursery Company. Additionally, the stone office building is architecturally significant for its notable Italian Renaissance architecture, including arch entry accented by cut stones, decorative wood windows with jack arch stone lintels, gable roof dormers, red clay tile roof, and stone chimneys. While the headquarters for a large commercial operation, Erwin M. Sherman chose a more residential architecture for the office building, evoking the quality of an estate house rather than commercial building. The Italian Renaissance style was utilized from the 1890s to the early 1900s for primarily larger, architect-designed, masonry houses. It represents an evolution of earlier Italian villa and Second Renaissance Revival houses of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, with a more direct influence from actual Renaissance buildings in Italy that architects visited through this period. Design features were often copied from Roman, Venetian, and Florentine country villas, then translated into estate houses in the most fashionable areas of America (Carley 1997: 179-181; McAlester 1997: 396-398). The Italian Renaissance style is reflected in the office building in the symmetrical appearance, stone construction, low-pitched clay tile roof with wide eaves, arch entry with accented by cut stones, and windows with diamond lights. Within the relatively small town of Charles City (population of 5,892 in 1910) in rural Floyd County, the stone Sherman Nursery Company office building stands as the best, and only known, example of Italian Renaissance architecture. Additionally, the choice of the architectural style for the office building for this nursery company is significant for the imagery evoked for the grounds and company.

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**Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)**

***Formation and early growth of the Sherman Nursery Company, 1860-1900***

When the Sherman Nursery Company was incorporated in 1888, the nursery industry in the United States had existed for a century. The nursery industry in the United States started in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and grew across the country in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Through this period, New York was considered the center of the nursery industry. With the completion of the Erie Canal in 1824, the orchard industry moved into and prospered in western New York. This area remained ranked at the top of horticultural production until 1940. Prominent, successful nurseries were founded in the 1830s, and nurserymen published books that promoted use and proper methods of raising their stock. As settlement moved west into Pennsylvania and the Midwest, these areas also became key centers for the industry. A survey of the 39 "century" companies in 1990 listed 17 in seven Midwestern states, including Sherman Nursery Company. These nurseries largely grew with the railroad connections of these areas in the 1850s and the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869 (Higginbotham, June 15, 1990, 38-40; Block, June 15, 1990, 83-86).

Events in the early 1860s influenced the formation and development of the Sherman Nursery Company. Settlers first arrived in the Charles City area in Floyd County in 1852, with land platted for various sections of the city over the next few years. The courthouse for the county was built on the south side of the river in Charles City in 1861, and a number of downtown buildings were rebuilt using local limestone after a devastating fire in 1862. A number of bridges were built in this period to connect the portions of town on the north and south sides of the Cedar River, with the iron bridge constructed in 1870 standing the longest (*Iowa: Its History and Its Foremost Citizens* 1915: 1311; Hanson and Hull 1996: 25-27; EPRI 1976: 5-6). The earliest nursery in Charles City was started in this period. In 1864, Charles G. Patten moved to Charles City with new wife Anna. He would later write that in 1866: "without the least practical knowledge in nursery work, I began in that business, impelled to it by my natural love for trees and fruit for which I saw such a pressing need in this country. In 1868 I made quite a large planting of apple seed with a view of improving the then known varieties here, tho I had made some effort in this work in Wisconsin. The year following, in 1869, I planted the seeds which secured my 'Duchess No. 3,' afterwards known as 'Patten Greening.' From that time on my planting and care of the seedling work has been continuous. Twenty-two years were devoted to the breeding work by selection and since then both by cross-breeding and selection" (Beach, December 1922, 353). Charles G. Patten continued his nursery and experimental fruit trees in Charles City until his death in 1921.

Other nurseries in Iowa that were successful well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century were also founded in the late 1860s and 1870s. The 1865 *Iowa State Gazetteer* listed 26 nurserymen, seedsmen, and florists in Iowa, including 11 in southeast Iowa (two in Burlington, one in Fort Madison, four in Keokuk, two in Mt. Pleasant, one in Muscatine, one in Ottumwa). Others in Iowa included two in Decorah, one in Delhi, one in Des Moines, two in Dubuque, one in Eddyville, one in Fayette, one in Iowa City, two in Lyons City, one in Marengo, one in Pella, one in Volney, and one in Waukon (Hair 1865: 532). In 1869, Solomon W. Ferris founded Ferris Nursery and Florists in Bristow, about 25 miles southwest of Charles City. This company started as a mail order nursery, and it moved to Hampton around 1889. It continued to operate there into the 1990s. Across the state in southwest Iowa, the prominent nursery businesses of Shenandoah in Page County date their history to this period as well. In 1870, David S. Lake started the Shenandoah Nursery, later joined in business by his sons A.F. and Ralph Lake who continued the business after his death in 1922. In 1890, he had 400 acres assembled, selling 800,000 apple trees in the wholesale market. By 1909, they had a brick packing shed that covered one acre that was fireproof and frostproof, employed 150 people, and specialized in apple seedlings. In 1875, T.E.B. Mason began Mount Arbor Nursery four miles to the south of Shenandoah. He sold the business in 1885, and it was sold again in 1891 to Edward S. Welch and E.I. Martin. They were one of the earliest retail nursery businesses. The Welch family continued to operate the business into the 1980s (Block, June 15, 1990, 85,



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87; Kershaw 1909: 419-420, 472-73; *History of Page County, Iowa* 1890; Page County Genealogical Society 1984: 7).

Through the 1870s, the nursery industry further developed across the United States. The industry received a boost in the deciduous seedling market in 1873 as the federal government mandated that new prairie homesteads should contain 40 acres of timber trees. In this period, four general types of nursery operations developed: small nurseries producing fruit and ornamental products for local sale largely through grafting, mail order nurseries who advertised in newspapers or catalogs and shipped stock by mail or railroad, wholesale nurseries supplying other growers and retail nurseries through railroad shipments, and retail nurseries selling stock door-to-door through "tree agents" with agents from Western companies offering both fruit and deciduous tree seedlings. With poor economic and weather conditions in the early 1870s, the industry banded together to form the American Association of Nurserymen to identify problems and promote solutions. Key issues at the time were transportation, postal rates, dishonest agents, compilation of industry statistics, and consistency in grading of stock (Higginbotham, June 15, 1990, 40, 42).

Focus also continued in the 1870s and 1880s on the development of better or hardier nursery stock, a key factor considered by E.M. Sherman when starting his nursery in 1884. Charles G. Patten in Charles City was active in this aspect of the industry, serving as chair of the standing committee on new fruits of northern origin for the Iowa State Horticultural Society in 1879 and then on the committee on experimental horticulture. This committee developed a plan of inaugurating experiment or trial stations for testing new seedlings and little known varieties in 1883, and Patten successfully advocated to the state legislature in 1884 for funding. Each of these stations was managed by a designated station keeper, and Patten served on the committee supervising the stations. Through his own experimentation in 1874, the Eastman apple was developed, and it was first offered to the nursery industry in 1884 (Beach, December 1922, 354).

The work and prominence of Charles G. Patten in Charles City likely attracted the attention of Erwin M. Sherman and contributed to his decision to start his business in this location. On March 2, 1862, Erwin Milo Sherman was born to Buell and Celia Sherman near Fredericksburg in nearby Chickasaw County. His father was a farmer raising Durham cattle, and he also maintained a small nursery. Sherman attended Upper Iowa University to study the nursery business, while assisting his father with the farm and nursery. He assisted his father in closing out the nursery business, and then he bought the nursery of George Webster in Bonair, (Howard County, Iowa) in 1882. In 1884, E.M. Sherman moved to Charles City, later noting that he chose Charles City as it was the coldest place in Iowa, and thus trees raised here would have a natural hardiness not obtained any other way. Sherman reportedly worked with Charles Patten for a few years, and he certainly was close to the Patten family, as he married daughter Gertrude in 1889. E.M. Sherman rented land in 1884 to start his own nursery stock, and the Sherman Nursery Company dates its origination to spring 1884. His initial stock was developed through trial and error as he experimented with different varieties, similar to the efforts of his father-in-law. However, Sherman focused on the development of a large nursery business. The *Charles City Advocate* noted on April 29, 1886 that E.M. Sherman was busy in the last week shipping nursery stock to different parts of the state, with ten salesmen on the road doing good business (*History of Floyd County, Iowa* 1917: 510; *Iowa: Its History and Its Foremost Citizens* 1915: 1312; *Senior Cycle Yearbook* 1912: 64; "E.M. Sherman, Nurseryman," May 15, 1910, 12; Sherman Nursery Company Stock" 1925: 3; *Charles City Advocate*, April 29, 1886).

In spring 1888, the Sherman Nursery Company was incorporated with \$100,000 in capital stock. Paperwork was filed in the county on March 10 and recorded in the Office of Secretary of State on April 13, 1888. Officers listed were E.M. Sherman, president; B. Sherman, vice president; M.B. Sherman, secretary; and S.F. Farnham, treasurer. The 1880 census lists the Sherman family in Fredericksburg, including father Buel (age 54), son Erwin (age 18), and son Marinus B. (age 15), and interestingly the 1885 Iowa census continues to list the family living together in Fredericksburg. Thus, the company appears to have been incorporated as a family business, with local banker Samuel F. Farnham as investor and treasurer. Erwin M. Sherman was the

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largest stockholder. Buel Sherman appears to have died by 1900, and Marinus B. Sherman moved to Idaho, where he had a fruit farm in the 1910s. The purpose of the company was to purchase, propagate, cultivate, and sell nursery stock, including all kinds of trees, plants, vines, shrubs, and flower, as well as sell seeds. The officers were authorized to buy, own, or sell real estate and equipment related to this function. At this time, the company operated on rented land (Articles of Incorporation, Recorder's Office; "Sherman Nursery Company Stock" 1925: 3; United States Census 1880; *History of Floyd County, Iowa* 1917: 510; *Iowa: Its History and Its Foremost Citizens* 1915: 1313).

The incorporation of Sherman Nursery Company occurred as the nursery industry moved into a strong period of prosperity. In 1888, the Association of American Nurserymen successfully secured a reduction in freight rates for nursery stock, which was previously charged first class rates. This reduced operating costs for wholesale growers shipping to retail clients and customers across a region (Higginbotham, June 15, 1990, 42). The 1889-90 *Iowa State Gazetteer* listed 135 nurserymen in Iowa, a significant increase in the last 25 years. Both the Sherman Nursery Company and C.G. Patten were listed in Charles City. Only one company listed in 1889 dated back to the 1865 gazetteer (located in Fort Madison), with nurseries now scattered throughout the extent of the state. Additionally, nurseries were typically located in smaller towns than in large urban areas with only a few exceptions. Nurseries promoting themselves with bold listings in the directory include Green Hill Nursery, Cherokee; Nichols & Lorton, Davenport; and Shenandoah Nurseries, Shenandoah (R.L. Polk 1889: 1415-1416).

Charles City offered several benefits for the Sherman Nursery Company in 1890, in addition to its climate. The population grew to 2,802 in 1890, and two railroads served the community, the Iowa & Dakota division of the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad and the Cedar Falls & Minnesota branch of the Illinois Central Railroad. The town boasted a fire department, water works, good hotels, typical stores, good schools, eight churches, and three newspapers. They had strong additions to their businesses in town, including the Sherman Nursery Company. The company was "one of the largest nurseries west of the Mississippi River" and was planning to plant the largest and finest grove of evergreens in the state. They were already noted for their large plantations of evergreens. They annually planted millions of trees, including native trees and vines as well as plants, trees, and shrubs from other climates to determine what varieties would prove to be the hardiest in this climate (*Charles City, Iowa, as it is in 1890*: 1, 6).

While Erwin M. Sherman followed the lead of counterpart Charles G. Patten in experimentation for improved varieties, he focused his business and interests in a different direction. In 1893, E.M. Sherman was listed as a life member of the Iowa State Horticultural Society, among approximately 50 other nurserymen in the state. C.G. Patten and J.W. Smith were also listed in Charles City. Sherman spoke at the annual meeting on "Native Trees and Plants," with attention given to their destruction over the last 50 years (*Report of the Iowa State Horticultural Society for the Year 1893*: 13, 339). With business success sustained for several years and focused on evergreens and hardy nursery stock, E.M. Sherman also looked to invest in his own land, likely purchasing land that he had previously leased. On May 1, 1894, he bought land in the northwest quarter of Section 11 from William Braudeau and wife. The 1895 atlas depicts the 100 acres owned by Sherman in this area, including a building labeled as "nursery" near the creek and road on the south end (Figure 1). On December 19, 1895, E.M. Sherman bought additional land that was owned by James R. Doolittle on the 1895 atlas. This land included 80 acres in the north half of the northeast quarter of Section 11 and about 20 acres in Section 12 at the end of Grove Street on the west side of Charles City that provided a connection from the town to his land in Section 11 (Figure 2). Thus, by the end of 1895, he owned about 200 acres. In comparison, the 1895 map shows C.G. Patton owning 70 acres on the south side of Charles City. Over the next year, Gertrude Sherman bought the various interests in the 20 acres in the east half of the southwest quarter of the northwest quarter, adjacent to their other land (Floyd County Transfer Books).



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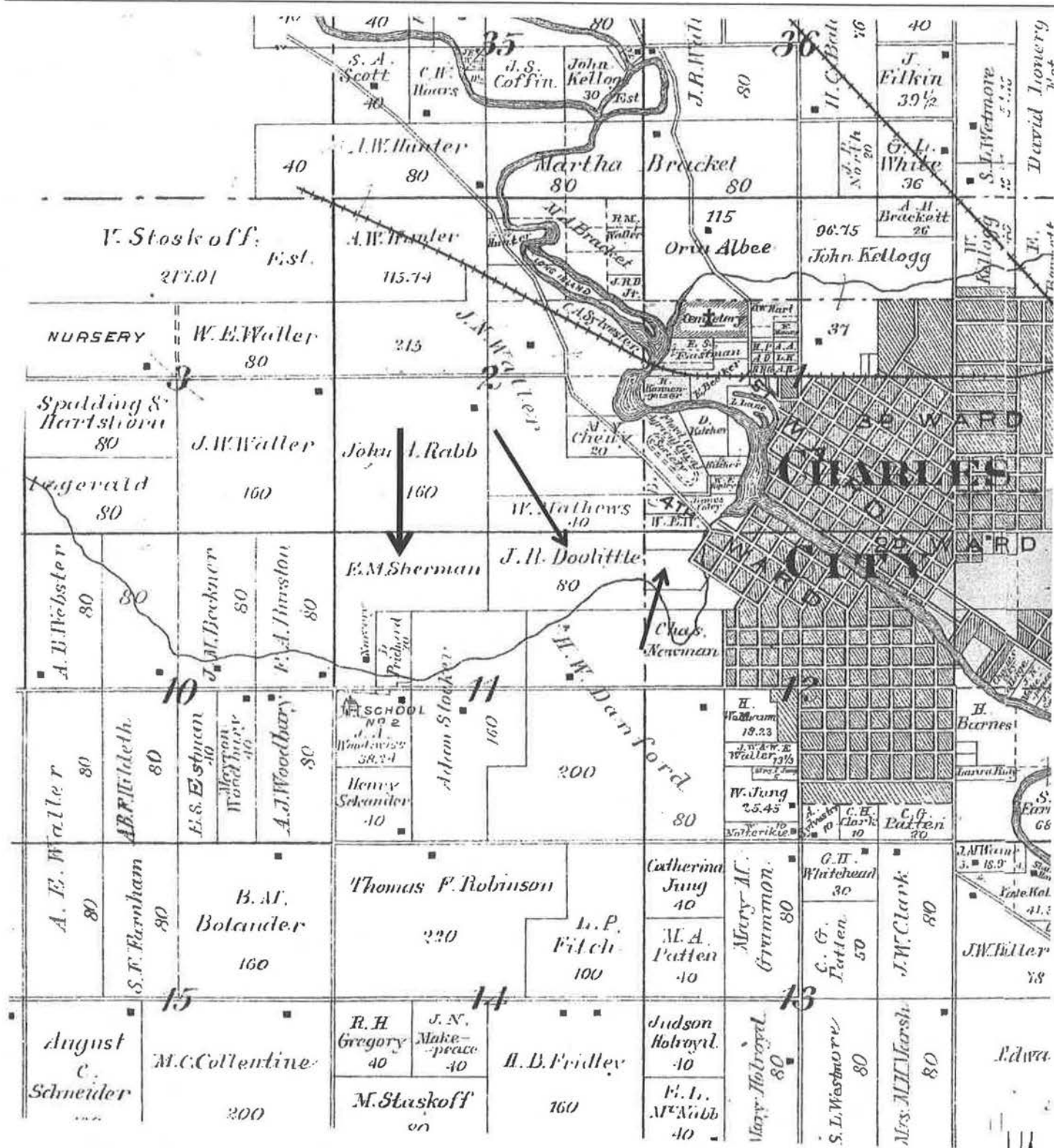


Figure 1. Land parcels acquired by Sherman (indicated by arrows) west of Charles City (Atlas of Floyd County, Iowa 1895: 22-23).

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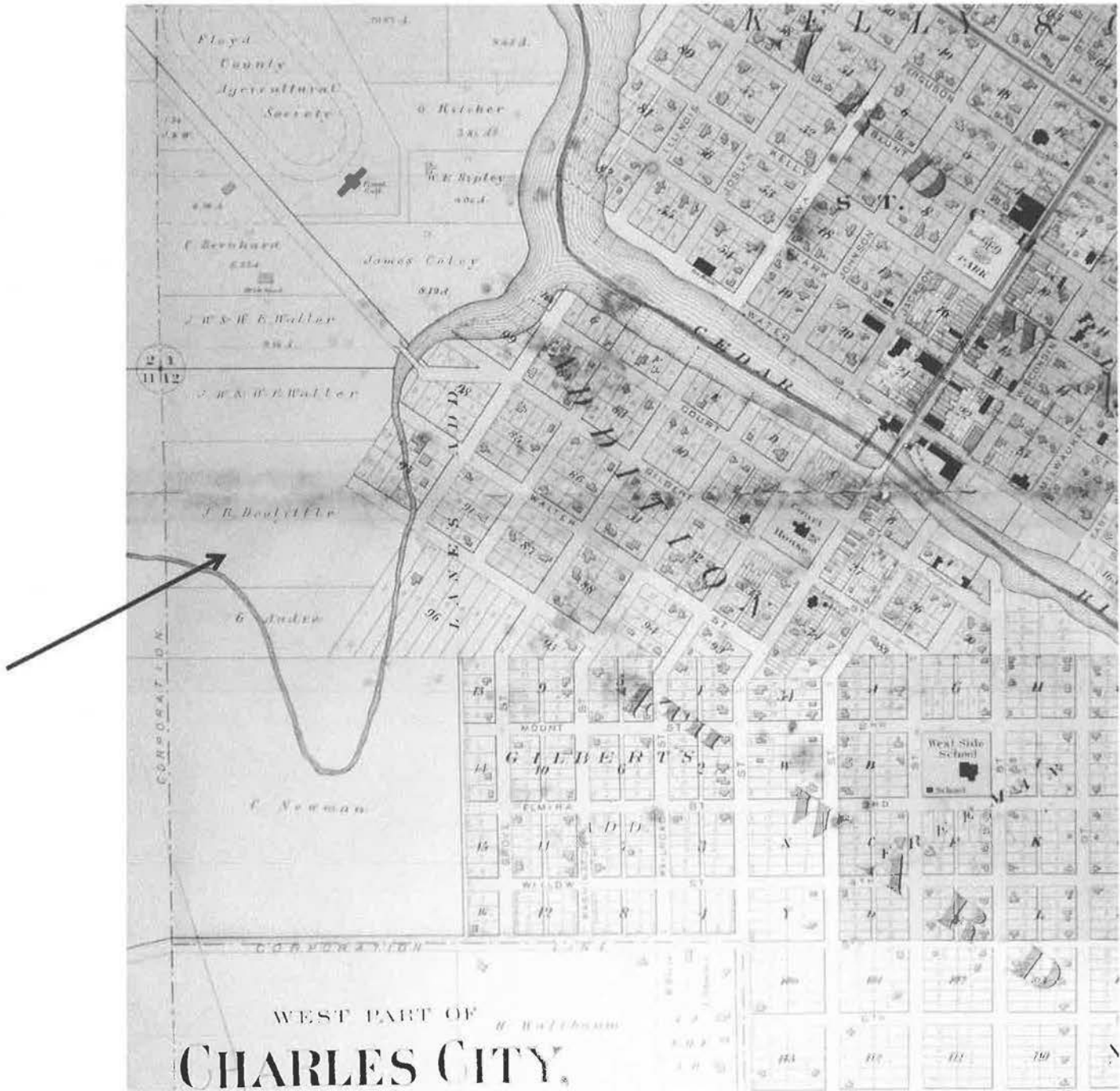


Figure 2. Land owned by Sherman (bought from J.R. Doolittle) on west side of Charles City (Atlas of Floyd County, Iowa 1895: 22-23).

Since it was not until the end of 1895 that E.M. Sherman bought this land in Section 12 on the west edge of Charles City, it is likely that he did not make any significant improvements on the land until after this point. The building noted as nursery on the 1895 map in the northwest quarter of Section 11 may have been built for Sherman after the purchase of this land in May 1894 or may have been an earlier building then used by Sherman. Likewise, the 1895 map does not show the stone arch bridge at the end of Grove Street over the creek into the Sherman (then Doolittle) property. Bridges are depicted on this map two blocks north on Gilbert Street and leading from the courthouse to downtown on Main Street. Thus, though later company histories

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note construction as early as 1884, the main stone arch bridge was built after 1895 and likely not until the built development of this portion of the property in 1902.

The 1896-97 city directory for Charles City listed Erwin M. and Gertrude Sherman living at 405 Clinton, and this address was also provided for the Sherman Nursery Company. The company was listed under nurserymen in the business listings, along with Charles G. Patten on the south side of the city. Mark H. Wetherbee was listed with a florist business at 804 Main, living next door at 802 Main (Weber 1896). Both E.M. Sherman and C.G. Patten were listed as life members of the Iowa State Horticultural Society in 1897, with a notation of "deceased" for J.W. Smith. E.M. Sherman again spoke at the annual meeting, this year on "The Mission of Horticulture" and utilizing trees and floriculture around the home (*Report of the Iowa State Horticultural Society for the Year 1897*: 1, 339). The 1899-1900 *Iowa State Gazetteer* listed the Sherman Nursery Company in Charles City under both nurserymen and florists, indicating an expansion in their products. C.G. Pattern (nurserymen) and M.H. Wetherbee (florists) were other local listings among the 150 nurserymen and 105 florists listed (R.L. Polk 1899: 1439-1440).

### ***Development of the Sherman Nursery Company property, 1900-1915***

The period from 1900 to 1915 marked a period of growth for the Sherman Nursery Company that focused on the construction of numerous buildings and structures at the east edge of their property along Grove Street on the west edge of Charles City and the development of acres of nursery land to the west. The four contributing built resources for this property were all constructed in this period, beginning with the stone arch bridge connecting Charles City to the Sherman Nursery Company property. The construction of the stone office building spanned from late 1904 to early 1906, and two concrete railroad bridges were then built in 1910 to connect the nursery company property to the Charles City Western Railroad. This construction marked a shift in the center of Sherman Nursery Company operations from the previous location in rural Section 11 to a concentrated business center at the east edge of their property on the west side of Charles City. This core area served as the center of office, shipping/packing, and greenhouse operations from completion of the first buildings in 1902 to 1907 until nursery operations closed here in 2012.

With Sherman Nursery Company expanding into the florist aspect of the nursery industry, specifically cut roses, new buildings were required to meet their needs. The listing in 1899 suggests that they began to explore the rose business at a local level a few years prior to the construction of their first greenhouse and associated heating plant to expand into the wholesale industry. Per the 1925 company history: "In 1902 the Company built its first green house with the necessary heating plant and began the growing of roses for cut flowers in connection with the nursery work ("Sherman Nursery Company Stock" 1925: 3). By February 1905, the *Iowa State Register* noted that in addition to the extensive nursery business, the company property also included two greenhouses, each 34 by 250 feet (both later replaced). They were devoted entirely to the growing of cut flowers, mainly roses, for the wholesale trade. Flowers were shipped to Minneapolis, St. Paul, Chicago, and St. Louis, all of which provided ready markets for all roses produced ("The Sherman Nursery Company," *Iowa State Register*, February 24, 1905, 2). The rose industry continued to grow, with three additional greenhouses under construction by July 1906 (also later replaced) ("Big Building Under Way," *Charles City Intelligencer*, July 12, 1906).

The stone arch bridge leading onto the east end of the Sherman Nursery Company from Grove Street on the west edge of Charles City appears to have been constructed around the same time as the first greenhouse and heating plant in 1902. Though 1884 is cited in later company histories as the date of the construction of the bridge, the entry bridge does not appear to have been built nearly this early, as Sherman had yet to acquire this property and no bridge is indicated here on the 1895 atlas. Unfortunately, no information could be located in newspapers from the 1880s to 1905 regarding the construction of this bridge. The first contemporary newspaper reference to the bridge was identified in the *Charles City Herald* on May 31, 1905:



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"The erection of the cement bridge at the entrance of the nursery grounds was a piece of work reflecting great credit upon the enterprise of Mr. Sherman, together with the greenhouses at a cost of \$15,000, which supplies cut flowers to St. Paul, Minneapolis, Chicago, St. Louis, and many nearby cities, and there is nothing of the kind in this section of country that represents anything near like the volume of business that is transacted by this concern" ("An Important Local Enterprise," *Charles City Herald*, May 31, 1905, 21). Thus, the bridge was constructed by 1905, and the article appears to link the construction of the bridge with the greenhouses. This date is supported by writing in a mortar joint on the center of the bridge, which appears to include "1902" and "Sherman." While the 1905 article notes it as a cement bridge, this may have referenced the underlying structure or use of cement mortar, as the exposed portions of the bridge are stone. Stone for the bridge was reportedly taken from a large granite boulder in the quarry on the property along the creek and blasted for the material, and the bridge then connected the grounds to the city ("Largest Nursery in World," *Iowa State Register and Farmer (Des Moines, IA)*, March 15, 1907; *Iowa: Its History and Its Foremost Citizens 1915*: 1313). While the *Iowa State Register and Farmer* and *Charles City Daily Intelligencer* reference the stone arch bridge leading to the property in 1907, the *Charles City Herald* again references the "cement bridge over the bayou" in June 1907 in conjunction the issuance of the company calendar, which included an illustration of the entry bridge. However, it was and is commonly referenced as the stone arch bridge.



Figure 3. Writing in mortar on arch entry bridge to Sherman Nursery Company (McCarley, June 3, 2013).



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The significance and leadership of Erwin M. Sherman was recognized by the *Iowa State Register* in February 1905. The editor noted: "Much of the success of the company is due to the energetic intelligence and careful supervision of Mr. Sherman, its president. Few men in Iowa have made a more patriotic and careful study of the conditions which confront the grower of fruits in this northwest territory, and a man unable to determine what variety of fruit he should plant will be carefully and correctly informed as to those varieties which are best adapted to his locality by leaving the matter entirely to the good judgment and knowledge of Mr. Sherman" ("The Sherman Nursery Company," *Iowa State Register*, February 24, 1905, 2). It was his nursery knowledge and business acuity that directly led to the success and growth of the Sherman Nursery Company for the first 20 years, positioning the company for further expansion and development for the next 20 years. The nursery business required a level of detail work and expertise not known to many men. Cross breeding had to be done carefully to end with the correct variety of fruit tree, and the editor noted that Mr. Sherman was known for selling trees that matured true to their name. He concluded: "While there are many other reliable nurserymen in Iowa, we have never hesitated when asked to name a good house of which to buy trees true to name, we refer to the Sherman Nursery Company of Charles City, Iowa, and, whether the order be large or small, we believe that the experience of the *Register* readers will coincide with our own in realizing the pleasure that comes with dealing with a square and reliable house" ("The Sherman Nursery Company," *Iowa State Register*, February 24, 1905, 2). The local *Charles City Herald* also noted that the success of the Sherman Nursery Company was "due to the energy, business capacity, and executive ability of Mr. E.M. Sherman." It was "one of the important, progressing, and growing enterprises in Charles City," employing from 50 to 200 men throughout the year ("An Important Local Enterprise," *Charles City Herald*, May 31, 1905, 21).

The operations of Sherman Nursery Company were also highlighted in the February 1905 article to "show how from a very small beginning a wonderful business has been built up and developed in the matter of supplying the settlers of the northwest with forest, fruit, and ornamental trees at low prices especially suited to the soil and the climate of the northwest" ("The Sherman Nursery Company," *Iowa State Register*, February 24, 1905, 2). J.S. Trigg, the editor of the *State Register*, had watched the development of the business of Sherman Nursery Company for the last 20 years, since its small start in 1884. E.M. Sherman began planting fruit and forest trees to supply the northwest trade, and business grew with their good recommendations on trees. More acres of trees were planted each year to supply the growing demand. By 1904, the company had 450 acres of land, including 300 with nursery stock planted. Forest trees, ornamental trees, shrubs, and vines that were hardy for the northwest section of country were grown by the company. Their stock included 800,000 apple grafts and 40 acres of grapes, including over a million grape cuttings. A five-acre arbor with a bush screen protected young evergreen and other seedlings. The company employed an office force of 10 to 15 men, as well as employing 125 men during the growing season to properly care for and cultivate the vast nursery. An additional 700-800 salesmen were employed throughout the northwest in selling stock grown in the nursery ("The Sherman Nursery Company," *Iowa State Register*, February 24, 1905, 2). The Sherman Nursery Company also offered design services in this period, with Lewis E. Pricer in Buffalo Center for several days in December 1905 to survey and design the grounds of the Chicago Stock Farm for owner B. B. Young. He was striving to introduce the latest in landscape design by bringing out the artistic beauty of the natural lay of the ground and the large number of elegant buildings on site (*Buffalo Center Tribune (Buffalo Center, Iowa)*, December 22, 1905, 5). The siting and landscape design concepts appear to have also been considered in the construction of the stone office building at this time, as noted in later descriptions of the building.

With the growth of the Sherman Nursery Company, E.M. Sherman turned his attention to the construction of a large stone office building on the east edge of his property near his new greenhouse and heating plant. Construction spanned from fall 1904 until spring 1906. The *Charles City Herald* reported on September 19, 1904 that "E.M. Sherman is excavating for an office building near his greenhouse" ("City Notes," *Charles City Herald*, September 29, 1904, 5). No newspaper articles or other sources were identified on the architect or contractor for this project. In May 1905, the newspaper reported:

Mr. Sherman is now engaged in the erection of a fine new office building on the banks of the bayou near the bridge which is to be an attractive piece of architecture built of stone taken from his farm, with cut

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stone for trimming purchased from Dubuque. The building will have a concrete basement of approved modern arrangement, the first floor will be arranged for office rooms, and another half story will be added which will give it a symmetrical and finished appearance. The roof will be tile, and the heat will be furnished by steam from the green house. The interior will be finished in hard wood and will be ready for occupancy this fall ("An Important Local Enterprise," *Charles City Herald*, May 31, 1905, 21).

The completion of the office building in 1906 brought the offices from one-and-one-half miles out in the country to within four blocks of Main Street ("Sherman Nursery Company Stock" 1925: 3; "Largest Nursery in World," *Iowa State Register and Farmer (Des Moines, IA)*, March 15, 1907). Later company histories state that construction was slow, with stones cut by hand and only four or five stones laid each day. An Italian stone mason reportedly set the arch above the front entry (Figures 4-5). The limestone was taken from the quarry about one-quarter mile to the west along the creek on the property. Since the building was considered to be fireproof, no insurance was carried on it (*Looking Back* c.2000; Buehner, Kristin, "Aged to Perfection," *Mason City Globe Gazette*, November 30, 2006). In February 1906, the *Charles City Herald* reported that the "fine office building" was "recently completed" ("The Sherman Nursery Company," *Charles City Herald*, February 21, 1906, 5). Likewise, the "new office building" is referenced in the *Iowa State Register and Weekly Florist Review* in March 1906 in conjunction with other construction planned for 1906 ("Iowa News," *Iowa State Register and Farmer*, March 9, 1906, 17; *The Weekly Florists Review*, March 10, 1906, 1). An October 1906 article notes that "The new office building which was under course of completion during a part of the winter months is now done and thoroughly settled and furnished." ("Are Busy People in a Busy Place," *Charles City Daily Intelligencer*, October 1, 1906, 1). The building is described in 1907 as follows:

The office building of the Sherman Nursery Co., as before noted, is a magnificent specimen of architecture designed and constructed with a view to the same permanence that characterizes government buildings. The heavy stone walls, the tile roof, the solid oak finish of the interior and the splendid adaptation of the building to its uses are all in harmony with the purposes and plans necessary to carry on a great business. The main floor of the office building is devoted to the private offices of the managers, a large room for a dozen stenographers, with an adjoining dictating booth, toilet rooms, vault, etc. The basement is devoted to greenhouse work, has a cold storage room for cut flowers with rooms for packing, pipe-fitting, etc. The upper floor is a large room devoted to the storing of seed and office materials. ("Largest Nursery in World," *Iowa State Register and Farmer*, March 15, 1907, 12).

Sherman Nursery Company continued to expand in other areas at the completion of the office building. On February 14, 1906, E.M. Sherman bought the 160 acres of Adam Stoecker in the center of Section 11, bringing his land holdings in this immediate area to 360 acres (Floyd County Transfer Books). The *Charles City Herald* reported that the purchase brought 400 acres under ownership of the Sherman Nursery Company, and they continued to lease another 200 acres of land. With the office building completed, the company was planning to build three more greenhouses to the west of the office for a total glass surface of 20,000 square feet, which would almost double their current capacity (Figure 6-7). Tea and American Beauty Roses were shipped to Chicago, St. Louis, Minneapolis, and St. Paul, sold for \$6 to \$12 per dozen. E.M. Sherman was installing a private telephone system with a 50-drop switchboard to connect the farm tenants, packing houses, green houses, offices, and heads of department. The office building also had speaking tubes and a system of electric bells for convenience and efficiency in communications. The company employed 17 stenographers in addition to management in the office. They employed 150 men in the nursery in the summer season and 60 men in the winter season, as well as 800 field sales agents. Their sales territory extended from western Pennsylvania, throughout the middle states, and to the Northwest. The large and rapidly growing business was cited as "due entirely to the energy and business foresight of Mr. E.M. Sherman, which is thoroughly appreciated by the community" ("The Sherman Nursery Company," *Charles City Herald*, February 21, 1906, 5).



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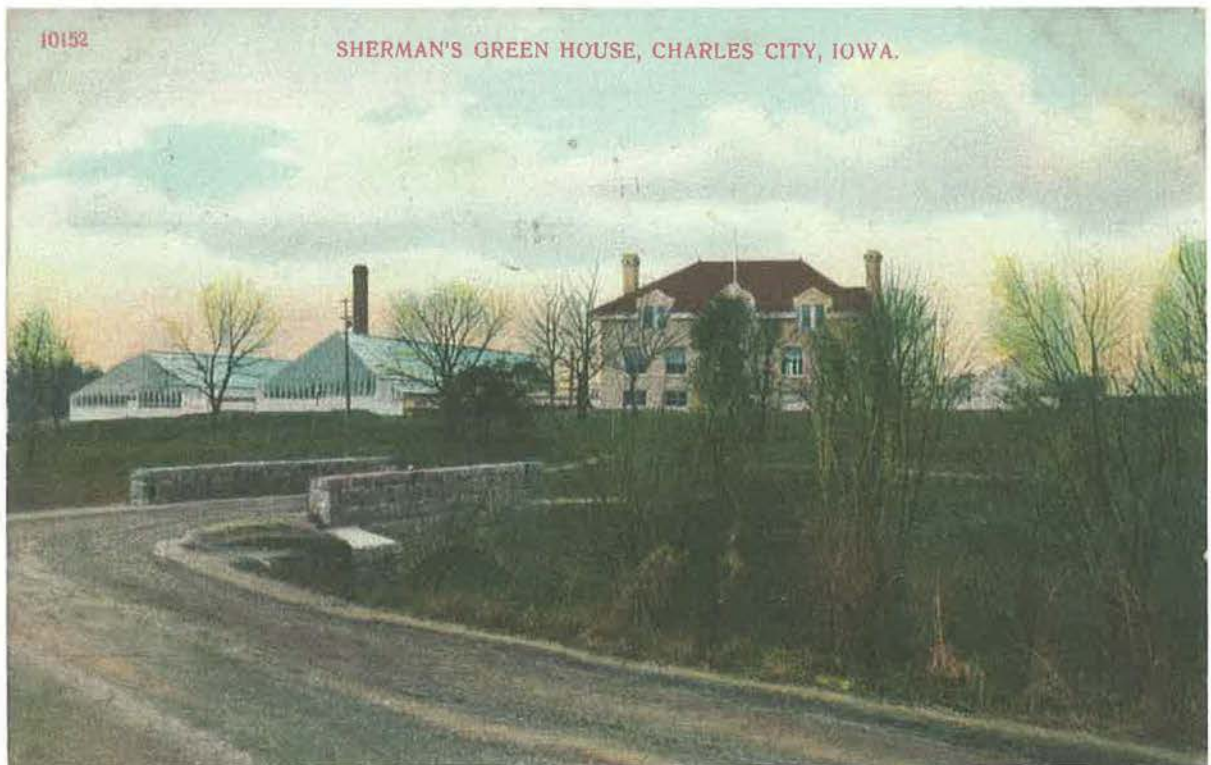


Figure 4. Popular postcard of Sherman Nursery Company with 1908 and later postmarks, looking southwest at stone entry bridge, office building, and earliest greenhouses (Floyd County Historical Society).



Figure 5. Postcard of Sherman Nursery Company office with a 1909 postmark, looking southwest (Floyd County Historical Society).

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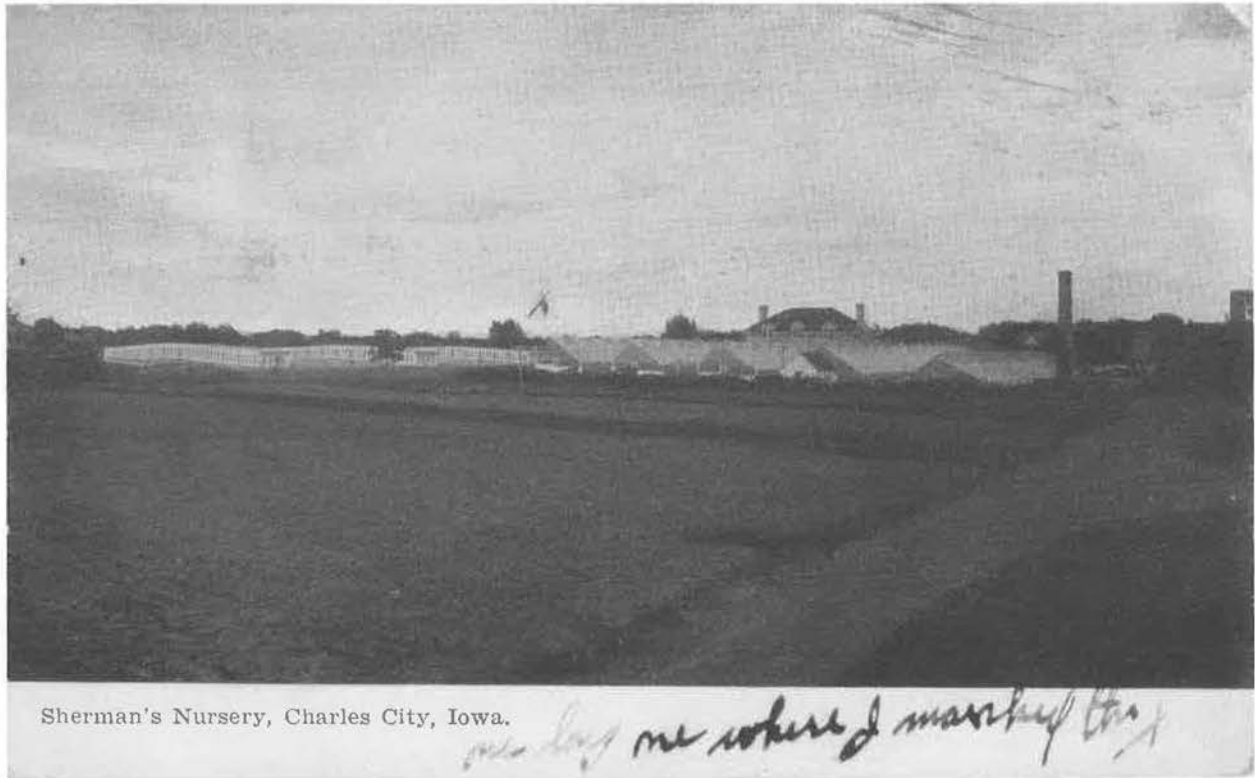


Figure 6. Postcard of Sherman Nursery Company grounds and greenhouses with a 1909 postmark, looking northwest (Floyd County Historical Society).



General view of Buildings and Grounds of SHERMAN NURSERY CO., the largest growers of Hardy Nursery Stock west of the Mississippi ri

Figure 7. Photograph of the Sherman Nursery Company grounds and greenhouses in the 1908 county directory, looking northwest (Overman 1908: 106).



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In addition to the significant construction of the new greenhouses in 1906, construction of the large packing cellar to the north of the office building was a large undertaking that stretched from 1906 into 1907 (demolished and rebuilt in 1991). The February 1906 article noted that "northeast of his office building, [Mr. Sherman] will erect a one-story building 16-foot under the eaves with basement, constructed of cement and stone, 150x300 feet, with tar and gravel roof and lighted by three rows of elevated sky lights" ("The Sherman Nursery Company," *Charles City Herald*, February 21, 1906, 5). The foundation for the large new packing house was noted as under construction in July 1906, with the lengths to make it frost proof described in an October 1906 article. The final "mammoth" building was described in March 1907. It was built into the hillside, assisting in the year-round regulation of the temperature and considered to be "frost proof." The building was 150 by 300 feet with 16 foot walls that were 22 inches thick, and it had every modern feature for moving the shipments conveniently and economically through the building and then off site to the railroad connection. It was built of stone from quarries on the property, with a gravel roof and three rows of skylights on the roof for light. The company had 150 people on payroll in this period and the construction in progress resulted in giving "the company one of the best equipped nurseries and greenhouses in the United States." When completed, the 45,000 square foot building was largest packing and storage cellar in the nursery industry, with 175 workers here in the fall and 225 during the busy season in April. In May 1907, Sherman Nursery Company reported the largest spring delivery in its history, with the new packing shed providing great convenience and savings in stock and labor (*The Weekly Florists Review*, March 10, 1906, 1; "Big Building Under Way," *Charles City Intelligencer*, July 12, 1906; "Are Busy People in a Busy Place," *Charles City Daily Intelligencer*, October 1, 1906, 1; "Largest Nursery in World," *Iowa State Register and Farmer (Des Moines, IA)*, March 15, 1907; "Sherman Nursery Company Stock" 1925: 3; Hanson and Hull 1996: 118; "Charles City and Vicinity," *Charles City Herald*, May 15, 1907, 5).

The buildings and business of the Sherman Nursery Company were profiled in March 1907 in the *Iowa State Register and Farmer* under the headline of "Largest Nursery in World." Data are unknown to either prove or disprove their claim. Needless, the company is noted to have 600 acres stretching a mile to the west of the newly completed magnificent office building at entrance of grounds, though they would not actually own the extent of this land for another few years. However, this does suggest that they were already renting the extensive land holdings of H.W. Danford in this area prior to their official purchase. The office, moved recently to the west edge of the city, was joined by five iron and glass greenhouses to the west sited somewhat among native trees and a mammoth packing house under construction on the hillside to the north. The quarries on the grounds provided stone for the construction of the buildings and arch bridge. A modern telephone system connected all areas of the nursery with the office, and the company made its own boxes for packing trees for shipment using 400,000 feet of lumber annually. The company had grown to an office force of 40 to 50 people. Five acres were devoted to arbors for evergreen seedlings, with nearly 10 million young evergreens growing on the property for shipment across the country. There was high demand in the Northwest for quick growing trees, such as the Laurel Willow and Carolina poplar trees. Over 300 acres were planted with nursery stock, including 500,000 apple grafts on ten acres, 40 acres for grape vines, ornamental trees, shrubs, vines for northwest. Nearly a full section of land was laid out in fruit and ornamental trees, conveying the beauty and size of the enterprise. The other acreage was planted with forest stock. Charles City had been selected as the location for the nursery as the coldest place in Iowa, which was ideal for growing the hardy nursery stock that the company specialized in ("Largest Nursery in World," *Iowa State Register and Farmer (Des Moines, IA)*, March 15, 1907).

The profile also provided insights into the rose business of the Sherman Nursery Company as well as their sales and distribution strategies. The author noted that the rose industry built up by Sherman was only second to its great nursery business. A select few varieties of the best roses were grown in the five greenhouses behind the office building with cut flowers sold to the large Midwest cities, particularly Minneapolis and St. Paul. The modern greenhouses that maximized light were substantial, with two 250 feet in length and three 125 feet in length. Each July, roses were dug out, new soil installed, and roses planted for the next season. Sherman had started with other plants as well, but he found roses to be the most profitable.

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Then, he worked to produce the best varieties from American Beauty to tea roses, which were considered the most beautiful on the market. Maiden Hair ferns were also sent to the same markets as the roses. While cut flowers were shipped on a regular basis, the packing season for the nursery stock started in the first week of March. Sherman Nursery Company had a systematic plan for distribution with orders shipped to distribution points in larger cities, thus only incurred the billing cost to that city. Then, Sherman's sales force of over 1,000 men across the county distributed orders from that point, carefully handling all stock to insure that they arrived in excellent condition ("Largest Nursery in World," *Iowa State Register and Farmer (Des Moines, IA)*, March 15, 1907).

The activities and success of Sherman Nursery Company was well documented in the *Charles City Daily Intelligencer* throughout 1907. The spring packing season was nearly over by May 11, with the largest delivery in the history of the company. Over 1,000 deliveries were made in a dozen states to more than 15,000 customers. The wholesale trade was also the heaviest in the history of the company. The new packing shed was a benefit in protecting stock as well as for efficiency in the packing and shipping process. Mini flats cars carried prepared orders through the building. By May 20, a carload of lumber arrived for making crates and boxes for the fall packing season. Workers were busy transplanting evergreens, and the greenhouses were producing heavy shipments of flowers weekly, meeting the increased demand for Memorial Day due to poor weather conditions. With heavy demand, 1,500-2,000 roses were cut each day for local and wholesale orders. Evergreen planting continued on May 26, with hundreds of thousands of seedlings moved out from the ten acres under the screen for additional growth. Sherman reportedly grew more evergreens from seed than any other nursery in the country. About 30 bags of mail were also filled to send out the 1907-08 calendar. The calendar featured the office building, stone arch bridge, packing cellar, greenhouses, and grounds. In June, nearly 30,000 roses had been transplanted to open fields, transplanting evergreens was finished, and planting new seeds was underway. Orders were also beginning to come in for fall deliveries. The grounds around the office were cleared by June 12, with the remodeled Stoeger barn moved onto a foundation near the office. By July 1, rose production ceased as they began the annual process of removing and resetting the beds. New soil was installed and over 13,000 young plants six to ten inches in height were planted starting around July 10. These roses then produced flowers from September to the following July. A staff of six to eight people worked with them in the greenhouses through this period. On August 22, the company was building concrete sidewalks radiating from the office entrance to the stone arch bridge and the packing cellar as well as grading and planting the surrounding grounds. Black dirt from the removed rose beds was laid around the office, and crushed rock or cinders were planned for roads within the property. With a light plum crop, the Sherman Nursery Company put out a call for a couple hundred bushels of pits for planting on September 9, 1907.

Construction to expand the buildings and operations of the Sherman Nursery Company also continued in late 1907 and into 1908. On November 16, 1907, the *Charles City Daily Intelligencer* reported that work had begun on the sixth greenhouse on the property, located to the north of the others towards the packing cellar. It would be the same size as the three north greenhouses (125 feet) when completed in spring. Work was also underway to connect the greenhouse water system with the motor pump station at the barn. Crews were setting posts for an extension of the evergreen screen west of the office, which would permit Sherman to retain their place as the heaviest growers of evergreens from seed in the United States. The rose propagating house was doing well as reported on January 10, 1908, with over 25,000 plants anticipated to be planted in greenhouses next summer. E.M. Sherman was gone for horticultural conventions during the week of January 25. Box construction was underway on January 31 for spring packing on the property, with 25,000 grafts completed in the last week. On March 14, a large number of workers in the new storage cellar were making boxes for shipment of spring stock with the assistance of electric circular saws installed this spring. The greenhouse construction was also progressing rapidly and would be ready for glass next week. By April 21, men and women were working to pack the spring shipment, with 160 people on payroll for the company in Charles City. They expected to ship 80 carloads for the season, with four loaded that day. Boxes were loaded on small cars in the building and then taken to the team sheds, who then delivered them to the railroad tracks. With shipments increasing, a railroad spur connection to the grounds was begun to be investigated. Once



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again, the *Charles City Daily Intelligencer* reported on May 10, 1908 that the company had the largest spring shipment of nursery stock in history, sending orders as far as New York, Texas, Montana, and Alberta and delivering to more than 1,000 towns and more than 18,000 customers.

The grounds and business of the Sherman Nursery Company were again described in print in February 1908 with a visit from Charles H. Clarke, the editor-in-chief of *Iowa Register and Farmer*. He wrote: "The entrance to the grounds is reached over a beautiful stone arch bridge, which leads up to the imposing office building with its red roof, partially hidden by the foliage of trees...it should be seen in summer when everything is green and the trees in full foliage. There are nearly 1,000 acres altogether in the nursery and packing grounds, and it lays ideally for the growing of nursery stock." According to Mr. Sherman: "We make a specialty of growing evergreen trees and we are one of the largest growers of this kind of trees in America." Seed was imported from across the country and from Europe to grow the hardiest variety of trees, with over 10 acres devoted to seed beds protected by large arbors. They also planted 800,000 to 1,000,000 apple grafts annually: "There is perhaps no firm growing as many trees of what are considered the iron clad varieties as are grown by the Sherman Nursery Company. There are some firms in the south that grow the largest quantities of apple trees, but of the hardy sort devoted to the northwest, there is probably no establishment where so many trees of these varieties are found as can be found on our grounds." Other fruit plants were also grown, with grapes grown until sufficiently developed for planting in vineyards and small fruit grounds throughout the country. Native wild plum trees were used for grafts for other varieties, as they were "absolutely iron clad against the cold and damp." Hardy varieties of cherry trees were also raised. Mr. Sherman noted that they were one of largest growers of hybrid perpetual and hardy roses in west, and the company strove to grow all ornamental plants that are hardy in this section of the country. They also were one of the most extensive growers of forest and ornamental trees in the country. The immense packing shed built into the hillside north of the office was frost proof even in bitter winter weather, and it was equipped with up-to-date equipment and good lighting for packing both day and night. The rose houses to the south and west of the office were noted as the best arranged and most beautiful in America, as well as the largest west of the Mississippi River. They were devoted to the growing of American Beauty, Bride, Bridesmaid, Ivory, Perles Des Jardin, Richmond, and Kate Moulton roses, as well as some Asparagus Sprengeril and Asparagus Plumosa for greenery. The rose houses were located so that they supplied the heat for the offices and other buildings from the greenhouse boilers. Sales were made through agents throughout the north half of the country, though purchases could also be made through the company catalog. The catalog included instructions on how to plant and care for the stock for years of success for orchard businesses and farmers ("Charles City's Famous Nursery," *Iowa State Register and Farmer*, February 21, 1908, 8).

Thus, 20 years after its incorporation, the Sherman Nursery Company had not only survived but was quite successful. A special meeting of stockholders was held on May 28, 1908 to renew the charter for another 20 years, with the paperwork filed by E.M. Sherman, president; and A.G. Page, secretary (Renewal of Articles of Incorporation, Recorder's Office). The Floyd County directory for 1908 listed Sherman Nursery Company with an office at the corner of Grove and Illinois under the direction of E.M. Sherman. The directory also included a photograph of the grounds (Figure 7). They were listed under both nurserymen and florists in the business section. Other nurserymen included C.G. Patten and Sons at the east terminus of 9<sup>th</sup> Street and the Charles City Orchard and Nursery Company run by another son of Patten. Mark H. Wetherbee continued to be listed as a florist at 800 N. Main as well (Overman 1908). In the *Iowa State Gazetteer* for 1908-09, 143 nurserymen were listed, including 32 with generally the same name and location as in 1889. Both the Sherman Nursery Company and C.G. Patten were among these 32 companies that had survived and prospered over the last 20 years. Nurseries with bold listings included S.A. Love, Centerville; Oaklawn Nursery Co., Cresco; M.J. Wragg Nursery, Des Moines; A.L. Glasner, Dubuque; G.N. Heyne, Dubuque; Mount Arbor Nurseries, Shenandoah (R.L. Polk 1908: 1866).

Other documents and maps provide further information on the Sherman Nursery Company buildings and operations around this time. A multi-page promotional brochure for the company also included a number of

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photographs of buildings and operations around 1908 as well as testimonials for the company (Figures 8-14). The cover of the brochure included a photograph of E.M. Sherman – “who has made the Sherman Nursery Co. what it is.” Letters from Iowa, Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota also suggest the focus for the market area for the company and its hardy nursery stock, as well as supporting that they focused their business success on recommendations from past customers based on the quality of their stock sold. A photograph of the interior of the main room on the first story of the office building depicts the historic layout and features of this building. The large stenographers’ room on the first story is shown, with two rows of desks facing to the east (Figure 11). The glass windows separating the offices on the east are visible at the left, as is the door to the safe in the far back corner. The 1909 Sanborn fire insurance map also shows the buildings in the immediate area of the office (Figure 15). The office (1906), packing cellar (1907), and six greenhouses (1902-1908) are depicted on this map, including the heating plant on the south side of the south (1902) greenhouse. Other buildings outside this immediate area are not depicted, including the barn/stables for the 35 horses described as northwest of the greenhouses and an extant one-story stone building later labeled as carpenter shop or box factory. The barn was destroyed by fire after a lightning storm on June 28, 1908, and it was immediately rebuilt along with a new granary in fall 1908 (“Sherman Nursery Co. Lose Big Barn by Fire,” *Charles City Daily Intelligencer*, June 29, 1908; “Sherman Nursery Company,” *Charles City Daily Intelligencer*, September 5, 1908).

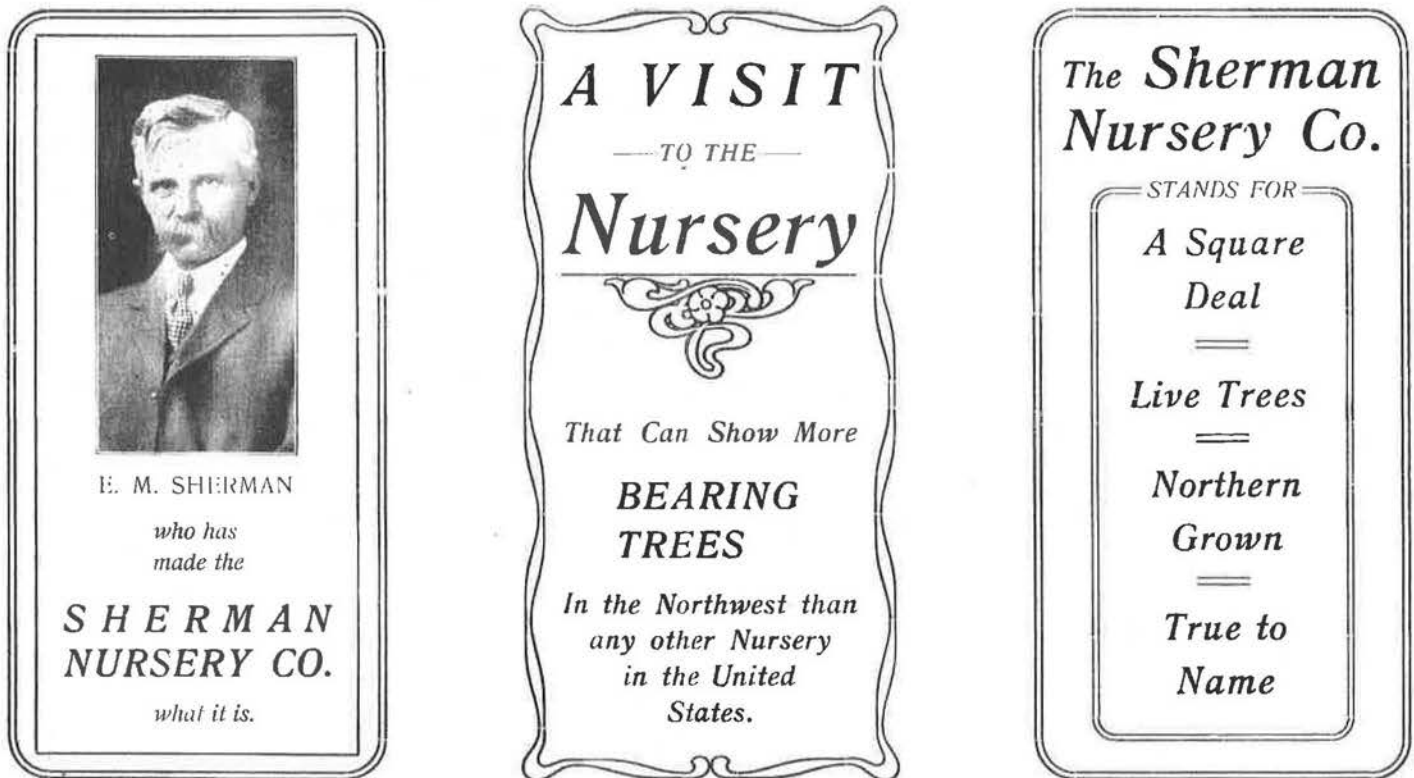
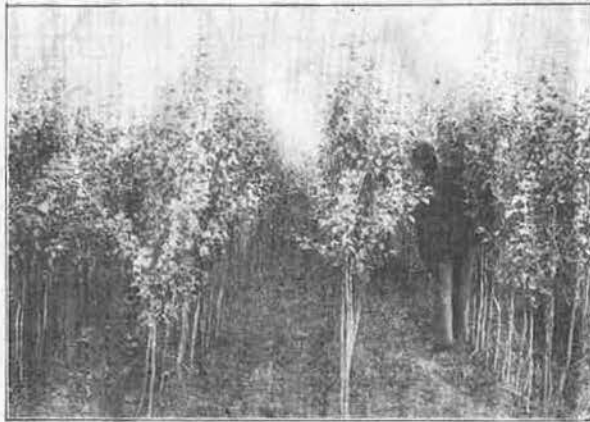


Figure 8. Cover of promotional booklet on Sherman Nursery, c.1908 (Siems collection).



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A block of our apple trees four years old, from the graft, showing their height.

Harvey, N. Dak., February 10, 1908.  
Sherman Nursery Company, Charles City, Iowa.  
GENTLEMEN: Thinking you might be interested and to demonstrate that fruit can be successfully grown in this state, I wish to inform you that in the spring of 1906, I planted some plum and apple trees received from you. In 1907, I had one plum tree that produced about nine hundred plums and one smaller tree, one-half dozen.  
The apple trees blossomed but they were too small to bear fruit. However, my neighbor raised apples from trees six years old. I raised large quantities of currants, gooseberries and raspberries of excellent quality.  
Yours truly  
AUGUST PETERSON.

## The Best There Is.

The Only Words that will Fitly Describe the Sherman Trees.—The Best there is.—Everybody says so that has tried them.

Boshnell, S. Dak., June 25, 1908.  
Sherman Nursery Co., Charles City, Iowa.  
GENTLEMEN: Within the last dozen years I have bought nursery stock from a number of nurseries, including your own, and that purchased of you has grown the best of any. I have blackberries of you, delivered in the spring of 1907, that are now loaded with fruit. I can recommend your stock as the best of any I have planted and true to name.  
Very truly yours,  
W. S. SPAULDING.  
I heartily endorse Mr. Spaulding's statement. The Sherman trees are the best I ever put into the ground.  
F. D. NORTON,  
Brookings, S. Dak.  
I heartily endorse the two above gentlemen's statements and would recommend that anyone buying stock from the Sherman Nursery Company will be well pleased with their goods and fairly dealt with, and further will state their evergreens are the only ones I have had success with. Out of ten set out there are ten living and growing nicely.  
S. B. ELSTON,  
Brookings, S. Dak.

Watertown, S. Dak., August 24, 1908.  
This is to certify that I have known the Sherman Nursery Company for the last fifteen years and believe it to be a first class nursery. I am personally acquainted with the proprietors and believe that any contract entered into by them will be carried out to the letter. At the present time I have over a thousand trees growing that I have purchased from the company and am well pleased with all the trees and ornamental stock received of them. The stock was well packed and came through in perfect condition. Some of the street trees have grown over three feet the first season. I do not hesitate to recommend the Sherman Nursery Company as a good reliable place to get trees from to plant in this soil and climate.  
Very truly,  
H. M. FREEBURG, M. D.  
Moorhead, Minn., March 21, 1908.  
Hon. E. J. Sarles, Hillsboro, N. Dak.  
DEAR SIR: In traveling through Trail, Steele and Cass counties in North Dakota, I find that the Sherman Nursery Company, of Charles City, Iowa, has the largest percentage of living, growing and bearing apple trees.  
Yours truly,  
C. H. SIKES.

Figure 9. Apples trees and letters in promotional booklet on Sherman Nursery, c.1908 (Siems collection).

## A FEW NICE THINGS THEY SAY

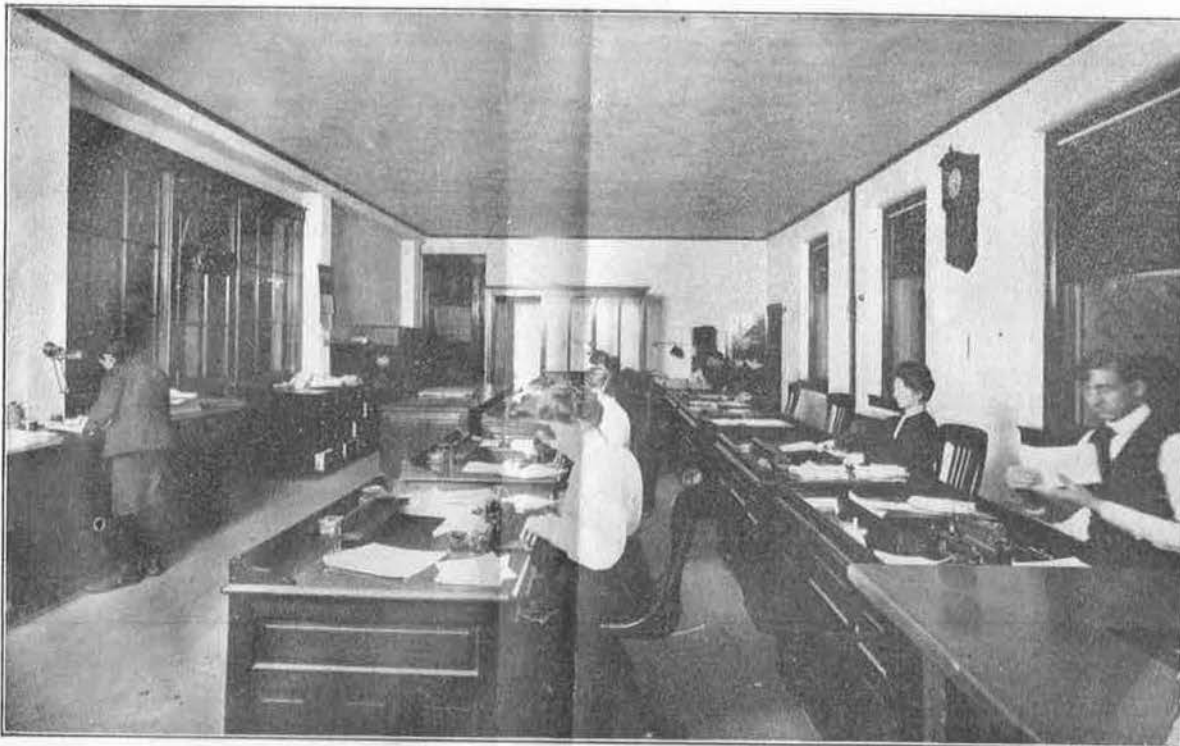
Canon, Minn., August 7, 1908.  
Sherman Nursery Company, Charles City, Iowa.  
I am pleased to say that the trees and small fruit shipped to me and to my care are making fine growth. Some of my grape vines have clusters of grapes. The currants bore fruit and the one-half dozen Columbian raspberries are a wonder. We have been and are yet using delicious berries from them. The rose bush, Mrs. John Lalage, that we received from you this spring, has grown eight beautiful, large and fragrant roses. Everything true to description.  
With best wishes for the Sherman Nursery, I am  
Yours truly,  
C. E. MILLER.  
Chamberlain, S. Dak., June 14, 1908.  
Sherman Nursery Company, Charles City, Iowa.  
GENTLEMEN: I bought one hundred Carolina Poplars, three Russian Golden Willows, twelve apples, six plum and four cherry trees of your agent last year and they are all growing. Am well pleased with the goods you have sent me.  
TRUMAN SOMERS.  
St. John, N. Dak., July 2, 1908.  
Sherman Nursery Co., Charles City, Iowa.  
GENTLEMEN: My orchard purchased three years ago from you has been replaced and looked after as per your agreement made with me and am satisfied with my order and have given an additional order to be delivered at St. John this coming season. I have recommended your company to my friends and believe you treat all your customers with fairness and liberality.  
WILLIAM BAARLY.  
Rolla, N. Dak., July 2, 1908.  
Sherman Nursery Co., Charles City, Iowa.  
GENTLEMEN: My bill of nursery stock purchased from your company is growing and doing finely. My order was for one hundred dollars.  
(Signed) PAUL LAFRANCE.  
This is to certify that I have purchased trees from the Sherman Nursery Company, Charles City, Iowa, for the past three years. I have plum and cherry trees bearing fruit this year purchased from the Sherman Nursery Company, and am satisfied with my dealings with the above company.  
(Signed) C. D. GARDNER.  
Rolleite, N. Dak., June 10, 1908.  
This is to certify that I have purchased nursery stock from the Sherman Nursery Company, of Charles City, Iowa, for the past three years. I have an orchard of one acre of fruit trees. All are growing and doing nicely with the exception of a few that have died and been replaced for me. In every way the Sherman Nursery Company have done exactly as they have agreed with me and their stock has been just as represented. I can not say too much in favor of the company and can truly say that they are honest, reliable and trustworthy.  
JOHN SEGERBORG.  
Rolleite, N. Dak., June 10, 1908.  
This is to certify that I can recommend the Sherman Nursery Company to all people wishing to purchase trees as being perfectly reliable and trustworthy. In all my past dealings with the company they have fully complied with every agreement made with me, and from my dealings with many companies during the last few years I believe the Sherman Nursery Company deserving of patronage in preference to any other company doing business in this section of country.  
Rolleite, N. Dak., June 10, 1908.  
JOHN W. HARTSOCH.

Arvo, S. Dak., Sept. 21, 1908.  
The Sherman Nursery Company, Charles City, Iowa.  
GENTLEMEN: This is to certify that I have on my farm the White Niagara Grape that is loaded down and I have one peach tree that has fifteen peaches on at this writing and last year had one bush of peaches. And after all of the frost I have some very fine apples now.  
PETER REISDORFER.  
Rogby, N. Dak., August 21, 1908.  
The Sherman Nursery Company, Charles City, Iowa.  
GENTLEMEN: I take pleasure in informing you that all the trees and shrubbery, including crabapple and cherry trees and strawberry plants you delivered to me last year, are doing fine and living. Cherry and crabapple trees I can recommend for this climate and I think everyone should have a few of each.  
Yours truly,  
A. M. IVERSON.  
Chamberlain, S. Dak., June 4, 1908.  
Sherman Nursery Company, Charles City, Iowa.  
GENTLEMEN: I have been dealing with you for two years and have always found your goods all O. K. My stock all looks nice and I gave your agent an order for this spring for one hundred more apples. Wishing you well, I am,  
Yours truly,  
LAWSON BEACH.  
Geddes, S. Dak., June 30, 1908.  
Sherman Nursery Company, Charles City, Iowa.  
DEAR SIR: I bought a bill of trees from your firm in the spring of 1907, consisting of plums, cherries, apples, pears, peaches and Russian Golden Willow. They are all doing remarkably well. I can recommend your goods to anyone wishing to plant trees.  
Respectfully yours,  
HENRY KALSKA.  
Hillsboro, N. Dak., September 1908.  
Sherman Nursery Company, Charles City, Iowa.  
DEAR SIR: My two grape vines set out this spring grew nicely in spite of the dry weather for their first season. I believe they will do well here as they are said to be perfectly hardy in our climate.  
Yours truly,  
WM. VON STEINWHER.  
P. S. The Norway spruce bought of you some twelve years ago are all doing well and are some twenty feet high now.  
Eagle Grove, Iowa, May 15, 1908.  
Sherman Nursery Company, Charles City, Iowa.  
GENTLEMEN: I received my trees in first class condition and I write to tell you that you have treated me right and I appreciate it and thank you for your kind favors in the past. I assure you I shall be glad to speak a good word for you whenever the opportunity presents itself. The cherry trees I received from you last year are in blossom this year and the apple trees are in fine condition. If I need any more in your line at any time, I shall certainly give you my order.  
Yours truly,  
GEO. M. WINTER.  
Chamberlain, S. Dak., June 14, 1908.  
Sherman Nursery Company, Charles City, Iowa.  
GENTLEMEN: I bought an orchard of your agent last year and they all grew but four. Your agent, R. E. Sandgrass, called and replaced them and I am well pleased with the goods you have shipped me.  
Yours very truly,  
JOHN DUSSEAN.

Figure 10. Letters in promotional booklet on Sherman Nursery, c.1908 (Siems collection).

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The Stenographers Room, Sherman Nursery Company.

**Figure 11. Main room on first story of office, promotional booklet on Sherman Nursery, c.1908 (Siems collection).**

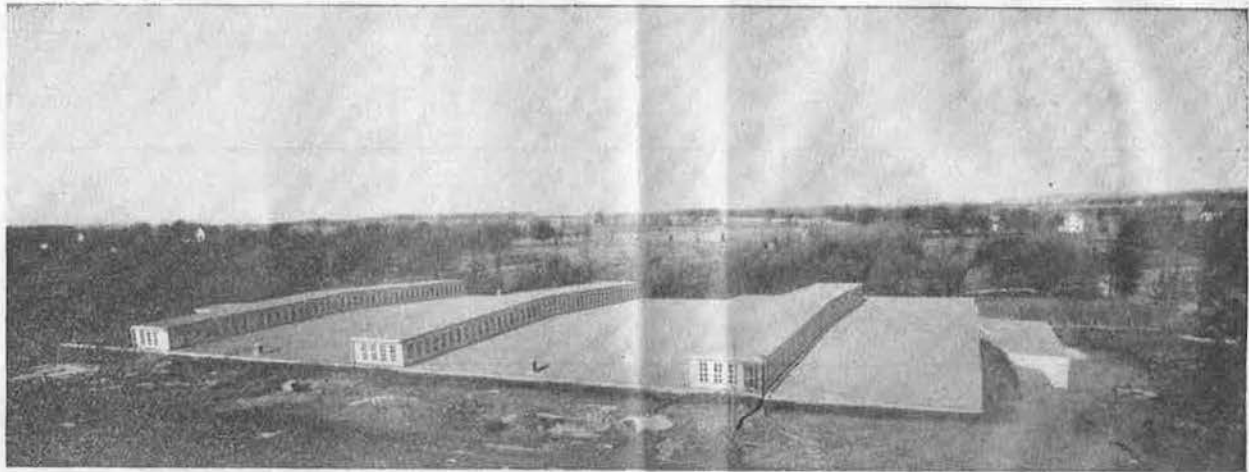


A gang planting grafts on grounds of Sherman Nursery Company.—We plant them by the million each spring. Note that they are planted on the open prairie, no shelter belt, no bluffs, no protection of any kind. No "molly-colly" trees here.

**Figure 12. Planting photograph in promotional booklet on Sherman Nursery, c.1908 (Siems collection).**

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A Birds-eye View of our Frost Proof Packing Cellar, covering nearly two acres of ground.  
Built of solid rock quarried on our own grounds.

This is the largest structure of its kind in the west. It is fully lighted by electricity enabling us to pack both day and night when necessary.

**Figure 13. Photograph of packing cellar in promotional booklet on Sherman Nursery, c.1908 (Siems collection).**



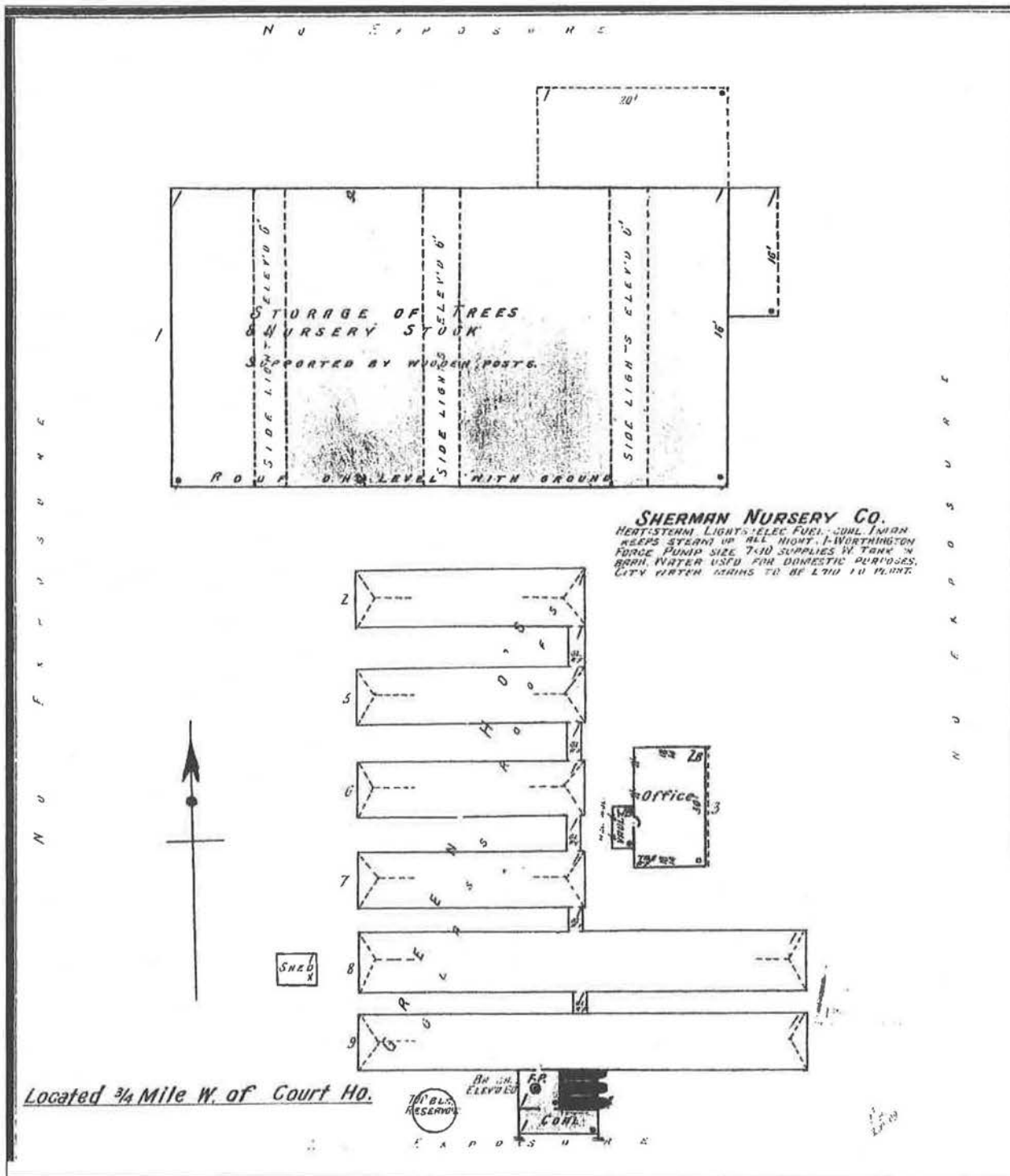
A part of the Packing House gang outside one of the entrances to the Packing Cellar.

**Figure 14. Photograph of packing cellar in promotional booklet on Sherman Nursery, c.1908 (Siems collection).**



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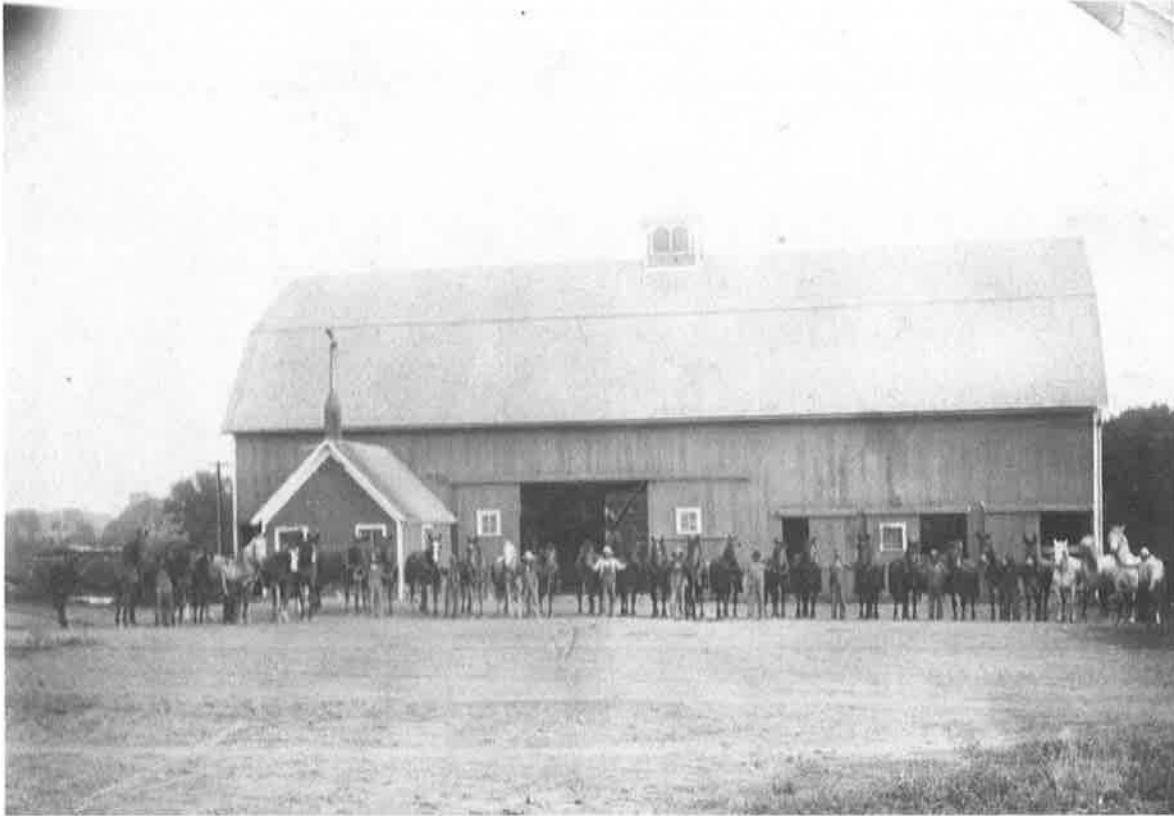
**Figure 15. Sanborn fire insurance map of Sherman Nursery Company property, 1909 (Sanborn Map Company 1909).**

Packing cellar – top – completed in 1907 – demolished/replaced in 1991  
 Office with vault – right – completed in 1906 - extant

Greenhouses – from top to bottom – completed in 1908, 1906, 1906, 1906, c.1902, 1902 – all replaced/upgraded stone carpenter/black smith shop, assuming complete, would be further south than the depicted area – extant/alterd large barn/stables for horses is also not shown on the map, described as northwest of the greenhouses

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**Figure 16. Photograph of barn at Sherman Nursery built in 1908, prior to fire in 1914 (Floyd County Historical Society).**

The year 1909 was again prosperous for the Sherman Nursery Company, with deliveries reportedly up 30% for the spring packing season. The packing cellar was busy with 175 people on payroll on April 14 working on orders to be sent to the southern states where the climate was ready for planting. The new barn built was modern with a concrete floor, electric lights, steam heat, stalls for 40 horses, loft for hay, and a grain elevator with an electric motor. Work had begun on an addition to the greenhouse, measuring 11 by 106 feet ("Nursery is in Midst of Shipping Season," *Charles City Daily Intelligencer*, April 14, 1909). The company profile in the *Charles City Intelligencer* on July 29, 1909 noted that Sherman Nursery Company conducted both wholesale and retail business, with sales agents handling the retail customers in Ohio, Illinois, Kentucky, Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, and all states to the north of these states. Past customers could also order stock through the mail order business, though this business was not promoted so as not to detract from the business of their agents. Workers in the fine office building totaled 18, with typewriting machines, dictation machines, and phonographs of the latest design. The greenhouses employed eight to ten year round, with the boiler house and coal bunkers to the south of the greenhouses. Roses were cut daily for shipment to the Twin Cities and Chicago. Ten foremen led the other departments for the company whose grounds totaled over 600 acres. Sherman Nursery Company specialized in growing evergreens, and they were the largest grower of this class of tree in United States. Over ten acres were devoted to seed beds, protected by large arbors. Additionally, they were one of the largest growers of hardy apple trees in the north with 8,000 to 10,000 apples trees grafted annually. They also grew grapes, current, plum, and Compass cherry trees. Their well-lit packing house ensures that orders were packed and shipped correctly ("The Sherman Nursery Company," *Charles City Intelligencer*, July 29, 1909, Part 2, page 9).

The Sherman Nursery Company continued to grow in multiple ways from 1909 and into 1910. Though their land holdings were cited at over 600 acres for the past few years, the company only owned 360 acres in the immediate area of the office, either leasing adjacent land or adding land from other areas to their total.

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However, the company's success necessitated additional land by spring 1909, and E.M. Sherman bought land south of the office, including the 40 acres of Charles Newman in the southwest quarter of the northwest quarter of Section 12 on June 29, 1909 (see Figure 1). This purchase meant that Sherman owned all the land from the office in a direct line south to Rockford Road ("Buys Still More Land," *Charles City Daily Intelligencer*, August 23, 1909). Sherman's Creek was located through the tract, now named in respect to the company. This purchase was followed by a larger purchase of 200 acres from Hobart Danforth (Danford) that encompassed the remainder of the land not owned by Sherman in the east half of Section 11. The 80 acres homestead tract in the west half of the southwest quarter of Section 12 was then bought by E.M. Sherman on February 15, 1910. This purchase brought the total land owned by Sherman Nursery Company to 720 acres (*Charles City Daily Intelligencer*, February 17, 1910). Across the country, Sherman employed 400 agents. Labor was short for spring packing season in 1910, with at least 225 people needed. A number of Greeks previously working at the cement mill at Mason City were hired, and advertisements were published in nearby newspapers for additional workers. Wholesale shipments to Montana, Missouri, Wisconsin, Ohio, Nebraska, New York and southern Canada were started by March 25, with retail orders to be filled second. Over 25,000 orders were to be filled this spring, and 15 carloads of lumber had been used to make boxes. By the end of the packing season on May 1, 75 carloads had been shipped from the company and several large orders had been refused, particularly for apple trees, due to a lack of stock. The recently purchased 330 acres would help meet this demand next year ("Nursery Stock Being Sent All Over Country," *Charles City Daily Intelligencer*, March 25, 1910; "Sherman Nursery Co. Refuses Many Orders," *Charles City Daily Intelligencer*, May 2, 1910).

The *Iowa State Register and Farmer* again visited and highlighted the Sherman Nursery Company in an article on May 15, 1910. They reported that the grounds had grown to over 700 acres, with all in use for growing or propagating nursery stock. The 40 by 60 foot office was built from limestone quarried on the site. Three boilers heated the office and greenhouses to the west and south. The greenhouses totaled 75,000 square feet of glass for the roses that were cut and shipped daily to Minneapolis, St. Paul, Chicago, St. Louis, and other cities in wholesale lots. The office was thoroughly modern with a telephone system connecting all parts of the property, adding machines, copying machines, and phonographs for dictation. The underground packing cellar covered more than two acres with electric lights for packing around the clock as needed. A total of 12 to 15 carloads of lumber were used annually to make boxes for shipping stock. Customers of the company could be assured of the good quality of the product, with trees raised in a manner to ensure that they are hardy in cold weather. The company advocated planting trees on waste land on farms to make this land productive for lumber. They also encouraged the planting of evergreens for windbreaks. Upwards of one million apple trees were grown annually, with over two million planted on new land in spring. With this expansion, they then claimed to have more apple trees than any other nursery in America. Judd E. Case had worked with E.M. Sherman for 23 years, and he was superintendent of sales. A.G. Page, superintendent of grounds, had worked for Sherman for a similar length of time. Other employees also had worked for the company for several years assisting with the growth and development, including H.O. Clark, sales manager assistant for 12 years; H.L. Petersen, head of the auditing department for 10 years; J.C. Grinde, head of the bookkeeping department for 10 years; and F.A. Thomas, head of wholesale department for 8 years. The author noted: "All over this country are groves and orchards that owe their origin to the Sherman Nursery company and myriads of owners attest to the company's generous and fair dealings, square business methods, and integrity" ("E.M. Sherman, Nurseryman," *Iowa State Register and Farmer (Des Moines, IA)*, May 15, 1910, 13).

The population of Charles City grew in this period from 4,227 in 1900 to 5,892 in 1910, with the Sherman Nursery Company as one of the largest local businesses. Another successful large local business was the Hart-Parr Gasoline Traction Engine Company on North Main Street (demolished). Charles W. Hart and Charles H. Parr started manufacturing tractors in Wisconsin and were attracted to Charles City in 1900 by local investors to expand and develop their company here. They produced the first successful production farm gas traction engine, forerunner of the modern tractor, in the winter of 1900-1901. By 1907, one-third of all



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tractors were manufactured in Charles City, with the term "tractor" coined that year by Hart-Parr sales manager, W.H. Williams (Page 1996: 1-7-8). The impact of these companies was noted in 1912 as significant in the population growth of Charles City from 1900 to 1910 – a "rare development for a town whose youth promised no great future" (*Senior Cycle Yearbook 1912*: 39).

Both Hart-Parr and Sherman shipped extensively by rail, benefiting from the Illinois Central and Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul railroads crossing on the northeast side of town. However, the Chicago, Rock Island, and Pacific Railroad crossed about 13 miles to the southwest through Marble Rock, and the companies desired a direct connection to this route as well for lower shipping rates. As early as 1908, Sherman had discussed a railroad spur directly to their grounds with the Milwaukee railroad. With the incorporation of the Charles City Western Railroad on February 3, 1910, the Sherman Nursery Company achieved both goals. The railroad was incorporated by C.W. Hart, C.H. Parr and E.M. Sherman, who also served as the officers. The railroad was then built to Marble Rock with a line around the west side of Charles City and direct spurs into the Sherman property to their coal bunker (for delivering coal) and packing cellar (for shipments). A streetcar system was started for transportation within Charles City, with passenger service later expanded to Marble Rock. The line became electric in 1915, with city passenger service running until 1921. Alva J. Grover served as chief engineer with W.S. Beattle as resident engineer for grading, bridge construction, and other design elements. Construction was well underway by August 1910, with areas being cut and filled as needed for laying of the railroad track ("Nursery Spur," *Charles City Daily Intelligencer*, March 27, 1908; *Charles City Daily Intelligencer*, July 22, 1910; Hanson and Hull 1996: 120; EPRI 1976: 47). Thus, these two local companies also had a significant impact on transportation in and around Charles City as well.

After consulting with other bridge builders, E.M. Sherman decided to build the two railroad bridges onto his property over Sherman Creek for the two spurs with his own crew. Due to the layout of the property, his facilities were best served by two bridges. The north spur and bridge would lead to the packing cellar for shipments, while the south spur and bridge would lead to the coal bunker and heating plant for deliveries. Both concrete bridges are extant, and they are contributing within the boundary of the historic district. Both bridges were designed as concrete with steel reinforcement. Construction on the north bridge began by August 1910. The 80-foot bridge was designed with an elongated, flattened arch measuring 42 feet. The initial goal was completion in time for the fall shipping season. Construction on both bridges was noted to be steel reinforced concrete. Work was then started on the south bridge by October. It was also 80 feet in length, with a more typical fuller arch measuring 30 feet in width. On October 11, the newspaper noted that Mr. Patten and Mr. Carpenter had a crew working on preparing concrete for arch for south bridge across Sherman's Creek with use of a steam cement mixer. A railroad track had been laid across the top of the arch structure, which was being used to carry to concrete over for construction on east side and saving a lot of time. The new 38 by 45 feet coal bunker to the south of the old bunker was also under construction, built with stone from the quarry on the Sherman grounds and a reinforced concrete roof. Track crossed the roof for direct deposit of coal down into the building. While there was some discussion on extending the south spur to the quarry one-quarter mile west of the office along the creek and expanding the quarry operations, this does not seem to have occurred ("Will Build Own Bridges," *Charles City Daily Intelligencer*, August 25, 1910; "To Open Big Stone Quarry Next Year," *Charles City Daily Intelligencer*, July 22, 1910; "Sherman Nursery Co. Grounds Busy Place," *Charles City Daily Intelligencer*, October 11, 1910, 1; "Sherman Nursery Company Stock" 1925: 3).

South of town, the lines around the east and west side of Charles City split at Sherman Junction, on the south portion of the Sherman property in the southwest corner of Section 12 (Figures 17 and 18). The majority of the freight traffic was routed on the line around the east side. On December 4, 1910, the Charles City Western Railway picked up its first carload of outbound freight – a car of nursery stock from Sherman Nursery Company – which was delivered to the Illinois Central line. Already, a number of incoming carloads had been delivered to Sherman Nursery Company. On December 12, workers were noted to be installing the south spur

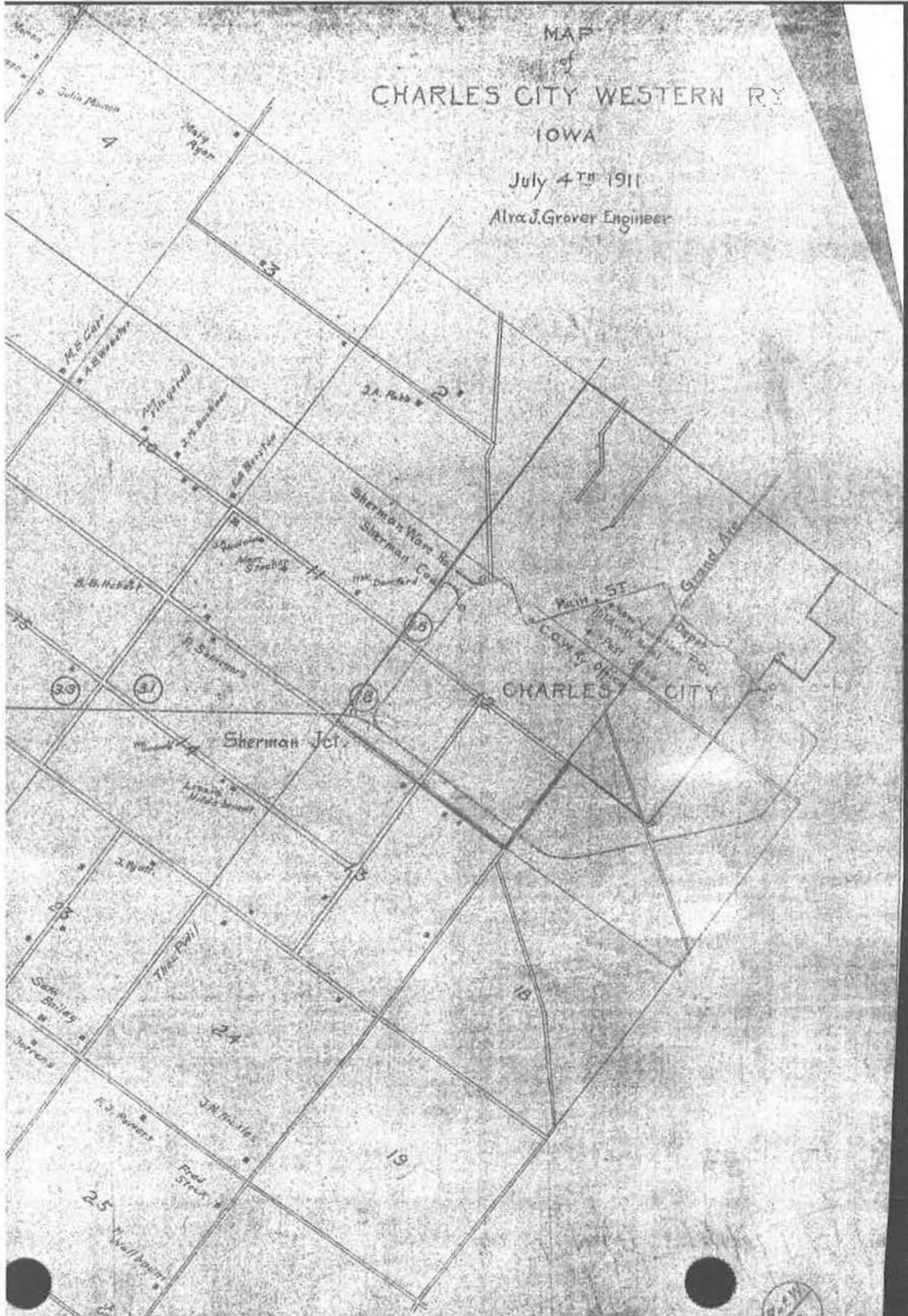


Figure 17. Map of the Charles City Western Railroad (Floyd County Historical Society).

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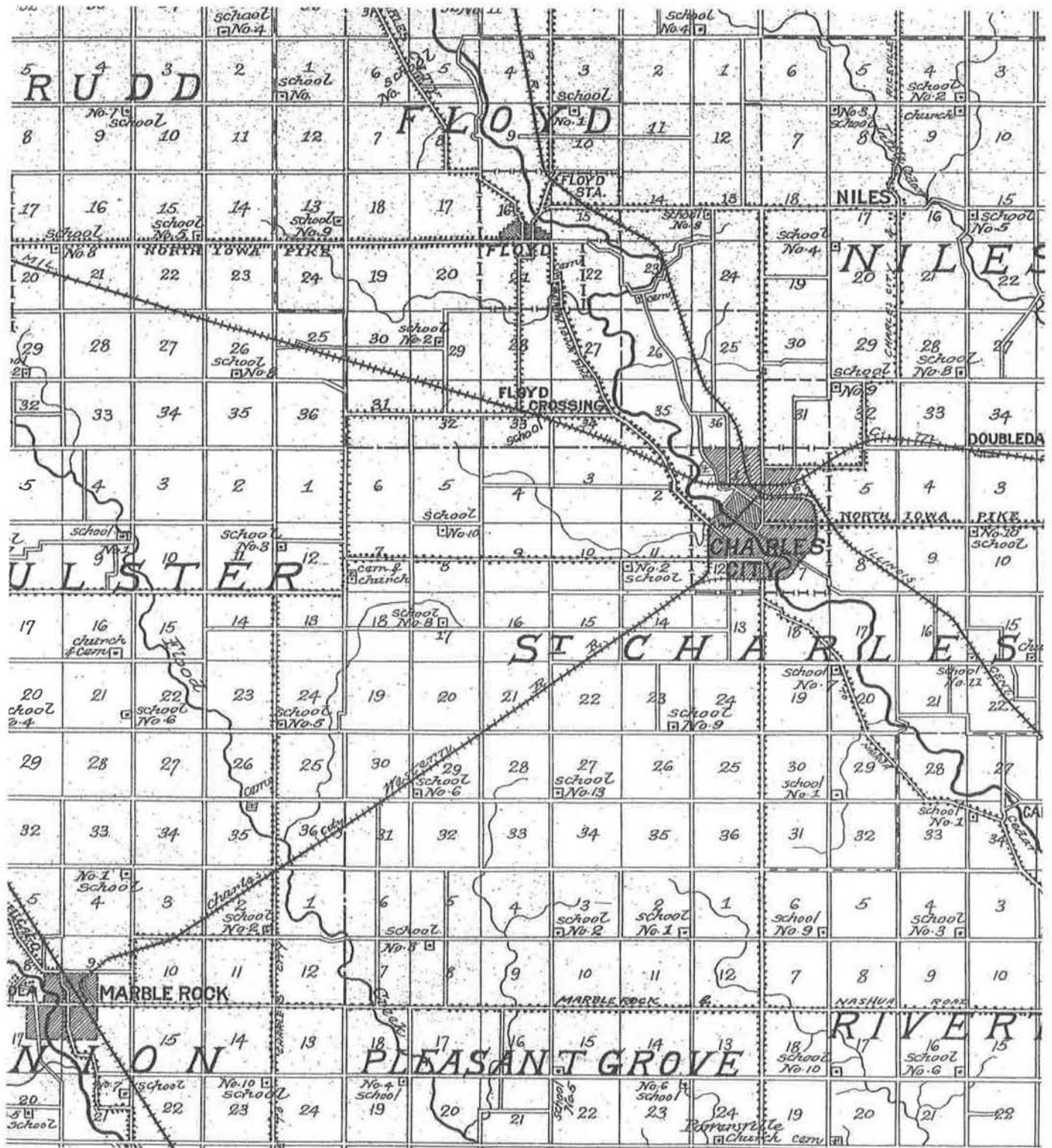


Figure 18. 1913 map of Floyd County showing Charles City Western Railroad and other railroad connections in Charles City (Atlas of Floyd County, Iowa 1913: 3).



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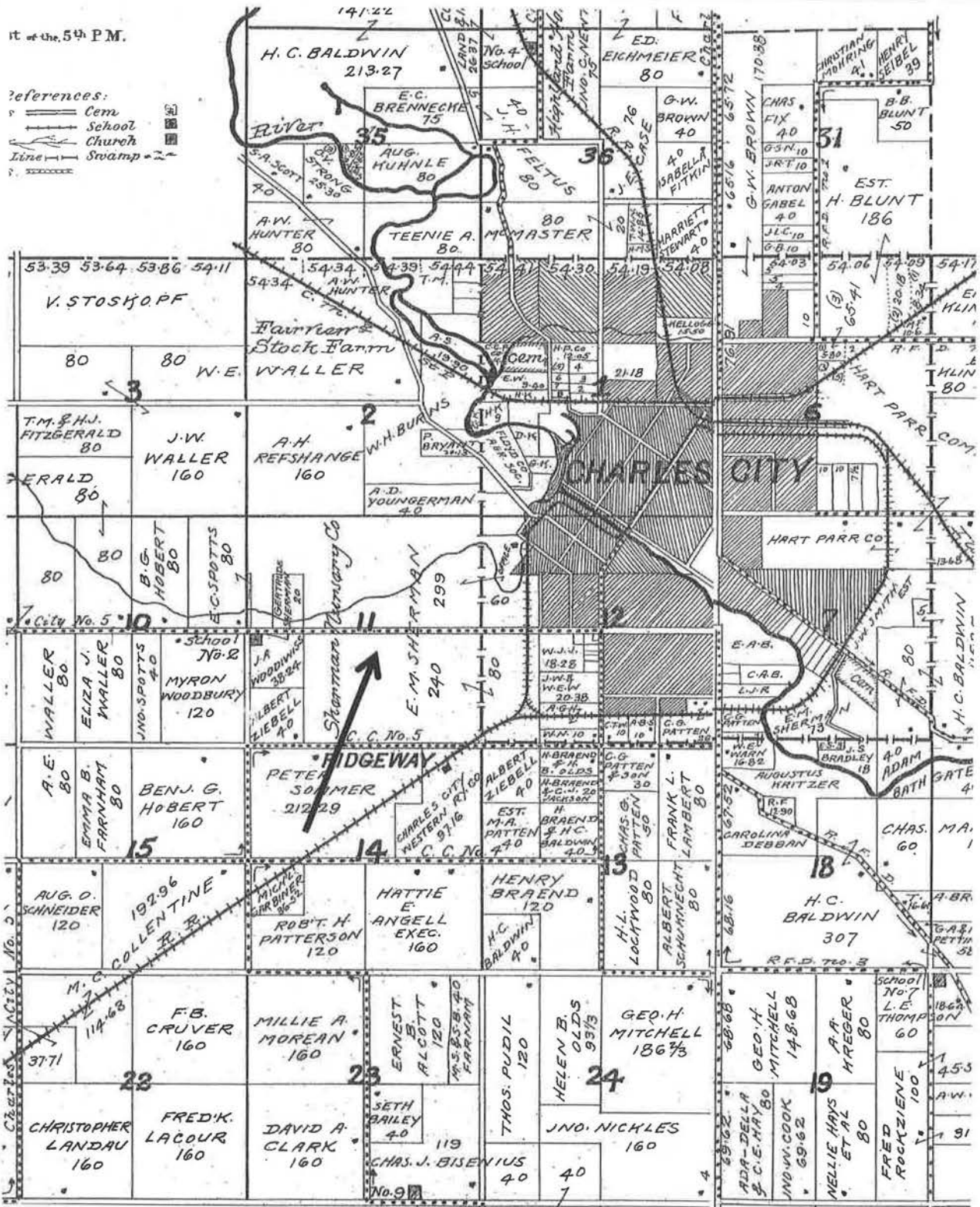
at Sherman Nursery. The line was nearly complete to Marble Rock at this time, with the line opening for passenger service in January 1911. The new railroad connection was a great benefit for the 1910 spring packing season, which opened on March 18. With increased land, a summer drought, and continual expanding business, shipments again exceeded previous years. Up to four carloads were shipped daily with 75 people working in the packing cellar at the height of the season in late April. Additionally, 15 teams of horses and an "army" of Greek laborers were working the fields digging and planting. Roses continued to be shipped daily to Chicago and Minneapolis. By June, normal freight traffic began on the Charles City Western Railway to Marble Rock. On July 31, 1911, right of way in Sections 11 and 12 was officially deeded over from Sherman to the Charles City Western Railway ("Western Will Soon Enter Marble Rock," *Charles City Daily Intelligencer*, December 5, 1910; "Fall Short at Flood Creek," *Charles City Daily Intelligencer*, December 12, 1910; Hanson and Hull 1996: 121; "Western Big Aid in Handling Shipments," *Charles City Daily Intelligencer*, April 26, 1911).

While the Sherman Nursery Company's market extended well beyond Charles City, they also satisfied local customers. The 1911-12 city directory for Charles City listed them under nurserymen, fruit trees and orchard supplies, and florists. It also listed C.G. Patten & Son at 9<sup>th</sup> Street and Grand Avenue under the same three headings, and they continued to have a local market as well as the state experiment station. Mark H. Wetherbee continued to be listed under florists at 800 N. Main Street (Polk 1911). The 1912 yearbook notes that the C.G. Patton & Son nursery was devoted to producing the finest fruits by cross breeding. It was the largest station of its kind, considered an expert breeder of fruits for the United States government through Iowa State Experiment station in Ames (*Senior Cycle Yearbook* 1912: 40). At the same time, the Sherman Nursery Company was a large commercial operation, occupying 700 acres of land and including five greenhouses for rose growing alone: "The Sherman Nursery is one of the best known throughout the middle west and especially in Northern Iowa. From here shipments are made to all parts of the country and exquisite roses are sent daily to St. Louis, Minneapolis, Chicago, and many other of our large cities...The outer nursery is devoted to growing evergreens, orchard trees and other shrubs of purely commercial value. To say the least the Sherman nursery is an object of pride to Charles City" (*Senior Cycle Yearbook* 1912: 39-40). "All over this country are groves and orchards that owe their origin to the Sherman Nursery Company and myriads of owners attest to the company's splendid development of its stock and the real values of their product" (*Senior Cycle Yearbook* 1912: 64). In addition to Iowa, Sherman Nursery Company also held licenses to operate in other states. For example, a list of licensed nurseries in Wyoming in 1912 included the Sherman Nursery Company of Charles City, Iowa, with a certificate valid through July 1, 1913. They were among 24 nurseries listed from out of state, and one of four nurseries based in Iowa. They were also a member of the Wyoming State Horticultural Society (Wyoming State Board of Horticulture 1912: 43).

The 1913 map of the Charles City area shows the extent of the Sherman Nursery Company holdings prior to the transfer of the land for Wildwood Park (Figure 19). The map outlines land owned by E.M. Sherman at the start of 1912 on the west side of Charles City, including 140 acres on the west edge of Section 12 (with office and other buildings) and 539 acres through most of Section 11, as well as the 20 acres owned by Gertrude Sherman in Section 11. By comparison, C.G. Patten owned 106 acres on the south side of Charles City. E.M. and Gertrude Sherman deeded 74.5 acres south of the creek to City of Charles City for a park in 1912, currently known as Wildwood Park. Later company histories report that Sherman Nursery Company then owned 712 acres in Floyd County as well as 160 acres in Emmet County in northwest Iowa (*Atlas of Floyd County* 1913: 20; Floyd County Transfer Books; "Sherman Nursery Company Stock" 1925: 3; Hanson and Hull 1996: 117; *Looking Back* c.2000; Page 1996: 1-6; "Public Invited to Use Sherman Park," *Charles City Daily Intelligencer*, June 10, 1914). Until February 27, 1914, E.M. Sherman owned the company land in his own name, and he transferred 12 tracts in Section 11 and four tracts in Section 12 to the Sherman Nursery Company on this date (Floyd County Transfer Books).

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On February 11, 1912, E.M. and Gertrude Sherman deeded 74.5 acres to City of Charles City for a park, currently known as Wildwood Park, for \$9,440 and "in consideration of the low price made on same" that the City would use the land as a public park (Page 1997: 8:34). This land was located immediately south of Sherman Creek in the northwest quarter of Section 12 and northeast quarter of Section 11 and accessed by the Charles City Western Railroad. Donation of the land for the park has been linked to the rise of the municipal park movement in this period and creation of a local park board in 1910. While other local residents advocated for the sale of this donated land and creation of a park within city boundaries, the Shermans included a condition on the deed that if the property were to be sold that E.M. Sherman or his heirs would have the first right of purchase at a set price (Page 1997: 8:37). Initially, the park was known as Sherman Park, and it was developed as a Victorian pleasure grounds. Other than the significant sale/donation of land, the Shermans do not appear directly connected to the development of the park, which was initially planned by park commissioner Charles G. Patten. In 1915, the park was renamed Wildwood Park. Wildwood Park would be developed with a nine-hole golf course, club house, and stone retaining walls and bridges over the next three decades (listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1998, see nomination for additional details) (*Atlas of Floyd County* 1913: 20; Hanson and Hull 1996: 117; "Public Invited to Use Sherman Park," *Charles City Daily Intelligencer*, June 10, 1914).

A company booklet published around 1913 provides an update on the business of the Sherman Nursery Company since the circa 1908 pamphlet. This 16-page booklet focused on letters from satisfied customers, organized to highlight the various strengths of the company and its nursery stock. Letters were published from customers in Iowa, Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Nebraska, South Dakota, North Dakota, and Montana, with the focus on customers in these five latter states. Numerous accounts noted the hardiness of the Sherman trees, surviving and bearing fruit in conditions fatal to other trees. L.M. Strain of Stamford, South Dakota wrote: "I have been dealing with the Sherman Nursery Co. of Charles City, Iowa, for four years and can highly recommend the company to anyone who wants to buy trees. Their stock is hardy, all grown in the North, and will stand the test of the Dakota climate. I have the finest orchard west of the Missouri River and so acknowledged by everyone who has seen it" (*The Tree Man's Story Come True* c.1913: 3). Another customer in South Dakota bought 27 fruit trees, six grape vines, and 12 raspberry plants last year that all grew well despite the drought. A sales representative visited a Montana customer to see how the stock was doing in adverse circumstances, and the customer was happy to write a letter that their 714 fruit trees, 660 grape vines, 362 small fruit plants, and 300 ornamental shrubs that were planted in April had arrived well packed and fewer than 10 had died despite no irrigation until June (*The Tree Man's Story Come True* c.1913: 7). *Spirea* and *hydrangea* were blooming nicely in Minnesota, and roses and shrubs were reported as doing very well in Nebraska, living up to the talk of quality (*The Tree Man's Story Come True* c.1913: 8, 10). Only three or four of the several hundred arbor vitae bought by a Minnesota customer two years ago for a windbreak on the open prairie had died, and the customer reported five years later that only three more had died despite a drought that had killed numerous on neighboring properties (*The Tree Man's Story Come True* c.1913: 13).

E.M. Sherman continued to develop and expand his nursery business as well as starting another interest in 1914. Fire struck his new barn in November 1913, killing 25 horses specially trained for work in the nursery. H.G. Patten, son of C.G. and brother of Gertrude, was cited in the article as general overseer of nursery grounds. The 1914-15 city directory then listed the other son, Ernest C. Patten, as managing C.G. Patton & Son. Other listings were similar to the 1911-12 directory, with the addition of Arthur M. Briscoe and Edward B. Stowell's florist business at 97 N. Main and greenhouses on Chautauqua Avenue. Construction on a new barn at Sherman Nursery Company started in 1914, as well as construction of a new greenhouse to the west of the earlier ones that would be the largest yet at 300 feet. In early 1914, E.M. Sherman started a modern dairy farm with pure bred Jersey cattle. The manure was utilized for fertilizer in the greenhouses, and the farm grew to over 150 cows by 1925. Sherman also focused on quality production at the dairy farm, developing stock that would set records for milk and butterfat production in the 1920s ("25 Horses Burn as Fire Destroys Barn," *Charles City Intelligencer*, November 18, 1913; "New Greenhouse for Sherman Nursery Co.," *Charles City Daily Intelligencer*, January 7, 1914; Polk 1914; "Sherman Nursery Company Stock" 1925: 3).



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The new greenhouse as well as the full extent of the development near the office is depicted on the 1915 Sanborn map of the Sherman Nursery Company property (Figure 20). The three bridges over Sherman Creek – one vehicular and two railroad – are shown on this map and are extant. Likewise, the office with vault is extant. The packing cellar to the north and seven greenhouses to the west and south have been demolished and replaced with newer buildings for these purchase, and the heating plant and coal bunker have also been demolished. The small stone building to the southwest of the greenhouses is extant though somewhat altered, labeled on this map as box factory and blacksmith shop. Large scale box production appears to have been undertaken in the packing cellar, so this building may have been more of a carpenter and blacksmith shop. A small frame building to the southwest of this stone building currently exists (assuming it is the same building), which is labeled as the tool house on this map. The other lumber sheds and small buildings in this area have been demolished. Again, the stables/barn were not shown in the immediate area of the office.

These buildings continued to be depicted in postcards through the 1910s as well (Figures 21-30). A 1913 postcard prominently features the stone arch bridge in the foreground, leading into the property with the stone office building set behind larger trees and a greenhouse visible at the left (Figure 21). The picturesque qualities of the stone arch bridge are further emphasized with the view from the creek, including a pleasure boat on the water (Figure 22). The high arch concrete railroad bridge to the south is likewise pictured in the serene natural setting of Sherman Creek to the south (Figure 23). A winter photograph of the bridge shows the railroad tracks leading over the coal bunker and heating plan, with the first two greenhouses to the right next to the office building (Figure 24). Even the heating plant is portrayed with natural qualities from the east end, with vines growing over the sunken building (Figure 25). With the trees in front of the office building, the only full view of the stone Italian Renaissance architecture is from the northeast corner (Figure 26). A picture postcard from the top of the roof of the underground packing shed shows the side of the office building and subsequent greenhouses to the west/right (Figure 27), as does the more popular postcard view from immediately south of the packing shed (Figure 28). The extent of these greenhouses is visible from the west side, looking northeast to the office building from the nursery land (Figure 29). From the lower ground level to the north, the large stone packing shed built into the hillside is visible (Figure 30), with the three characteristic rows of raised windows visible from ground level near the office and greenhouses (Figure 13).

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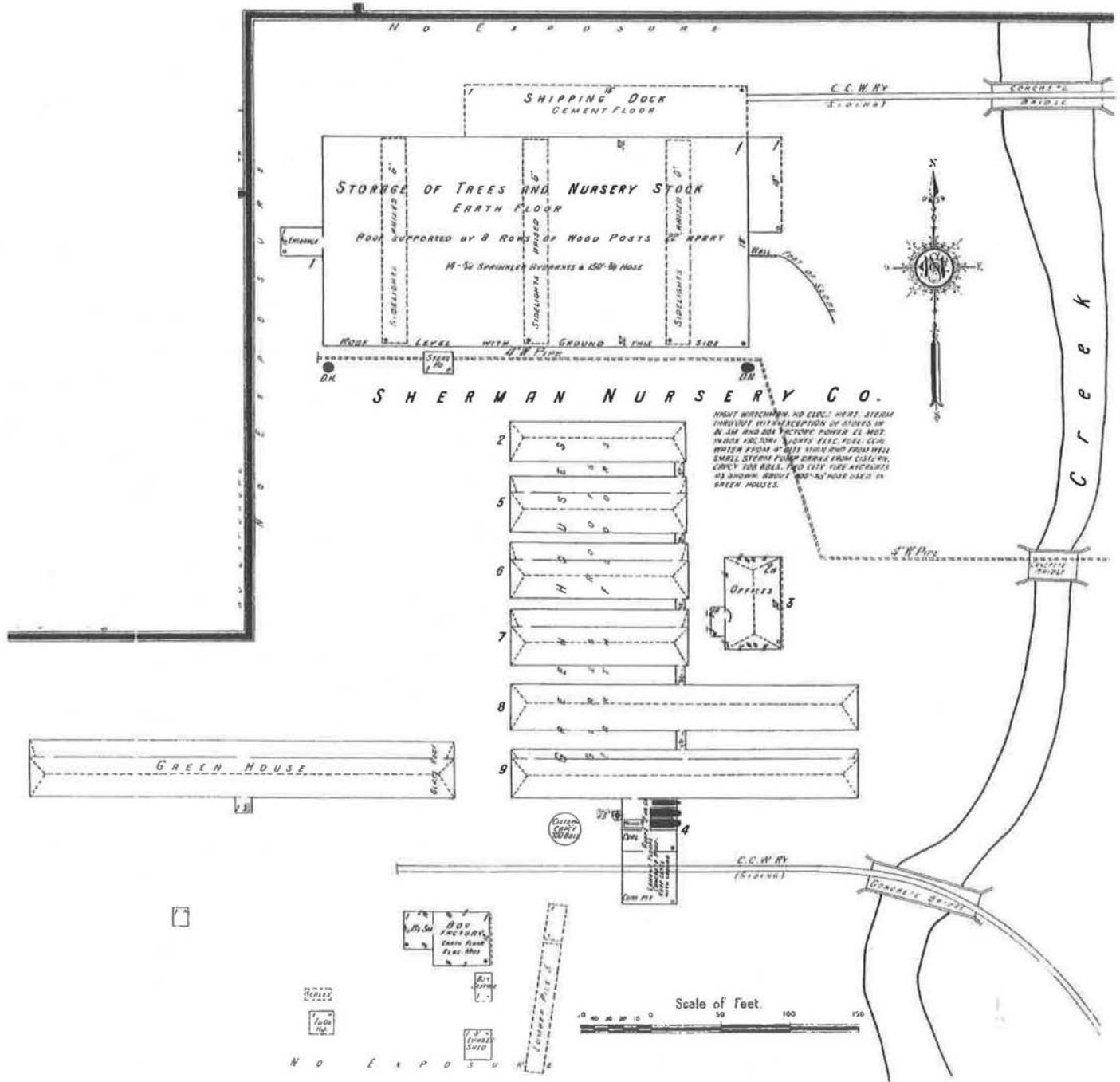


Figure 20. Sanborn fire insurance map of Sherman Nursery Company property, 1915 (Sanborn Map Company 1915).

Three bridges over creek (extant) at right – 1910, c.1902, 1910

Packing cellar (demolished) – top – completed in 1907

Office with vault (extant) – right – completed in 1906

Greenhouses (demolished/replaced)– from top to bottom – completed in 1908, 1906, 1906, 1906, c.1902, 1902, west greenhouse – 1914; heating plant, chimney, coal bunker – 1910 (all demolished)

Box factory/blacksmith shop (extant/altered) – built around 1906 – nearby lumber sheds demolished

Tool house at southwest corner – appears to be extant (if same building)

Large barn/stables for horses not shown on the map (demolished)

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Figure 21. View looking west over stone entry bridge to office, 1913 postmark (Floyd County Historical Society).

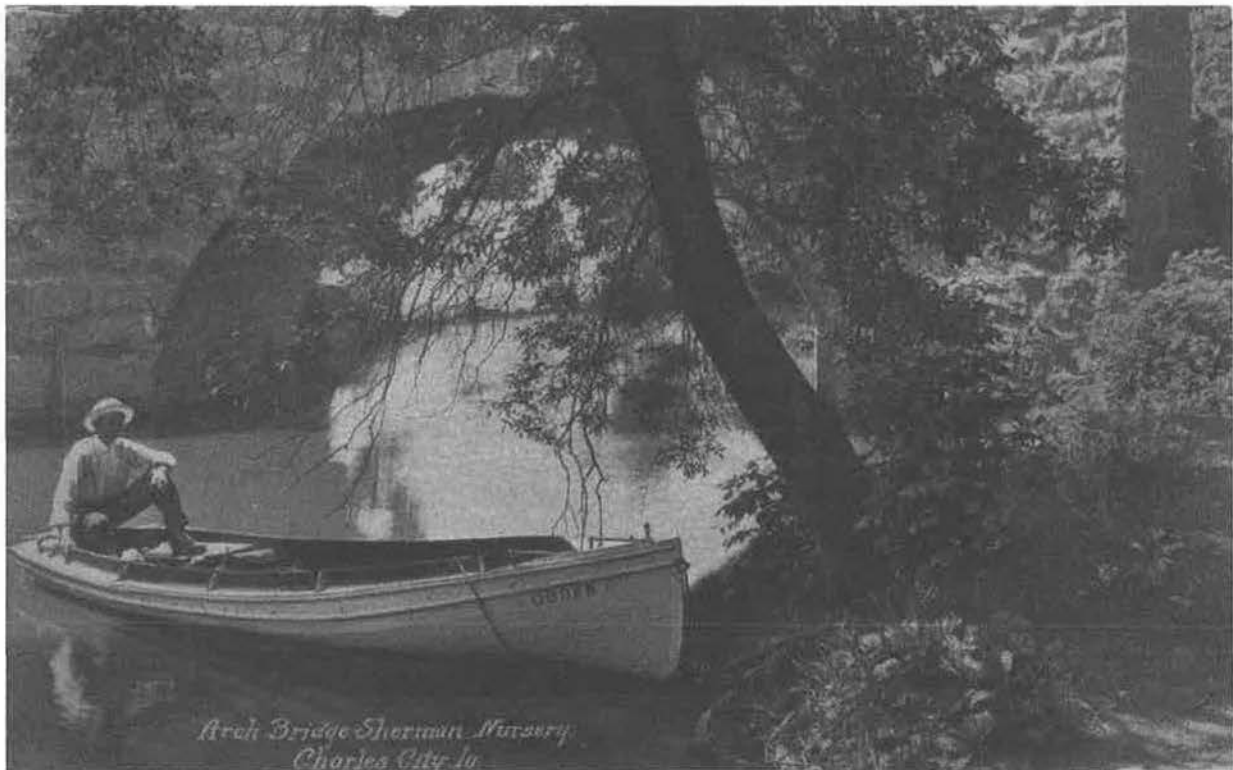


Figure 22. View of stone arch entry bridge, 1912 postmark (Floyd County Historical Society).



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**Figure 23. View south to south (full arch) railroad bridge with greenhouses at right, no date (Floyd County Historical Society).**



**Figure 24. View looking west over south railroad bridge toward office, no date (Floyd County Historical Society).**

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Figure 25. View of ivy at Sherman Nursery, appears to be on heating plant to the south of the office, no date (Floyd County Historical Society).



Figure 26. View looking southwest at office, no date (Floyd County Historical Society).

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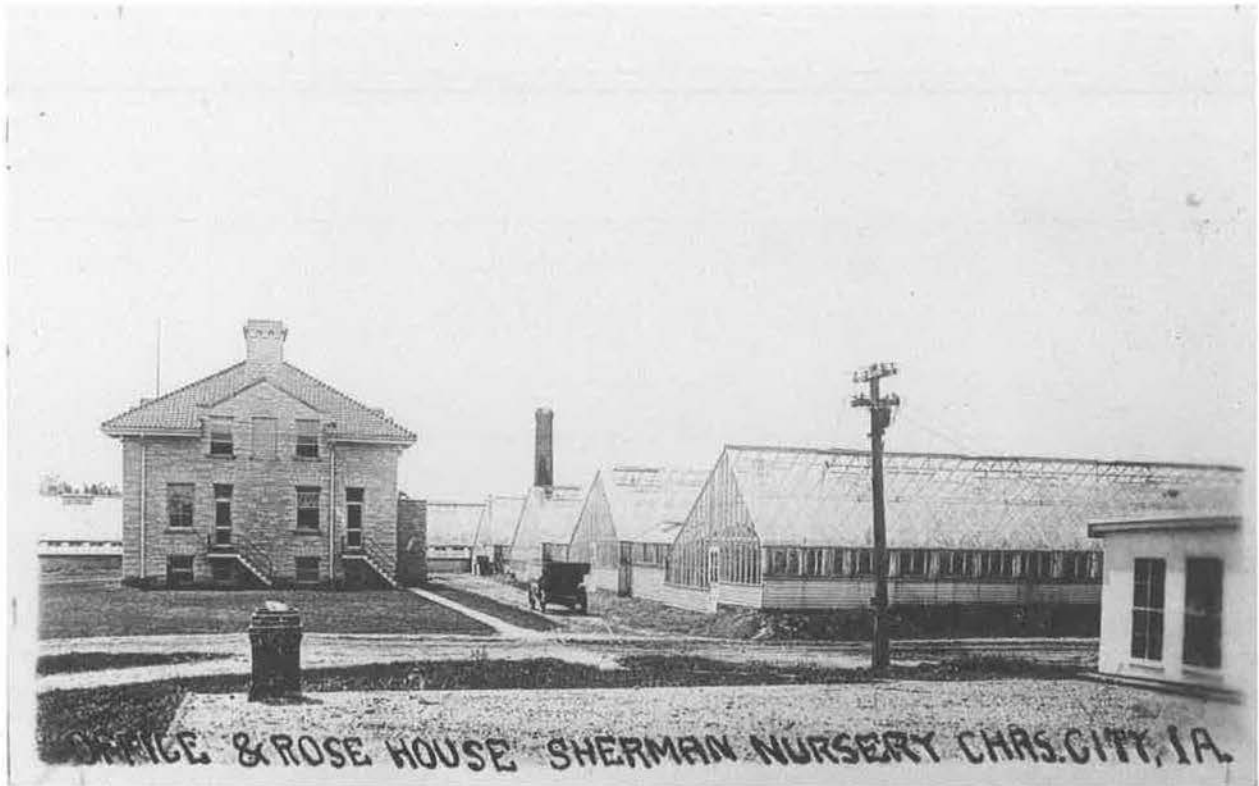


Figure 27. View from top of packing cellar to south at Sherman Nursery, 1912 postmark (Siems collection).

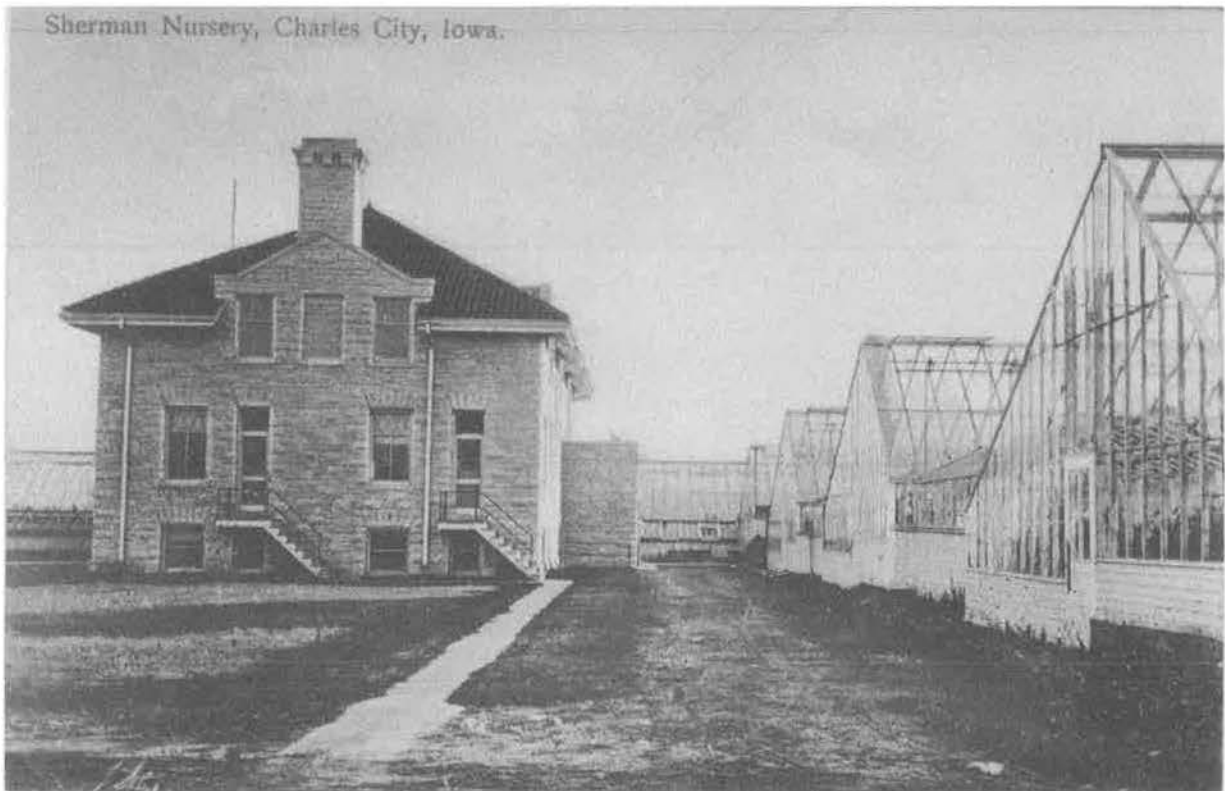


Figure 28. View looking south at office and greenhouses, no date (Floyd County Historical Society).



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Figure 29. View looking at greenhouses prior to 1914 construction (Floyd County Historical Society).

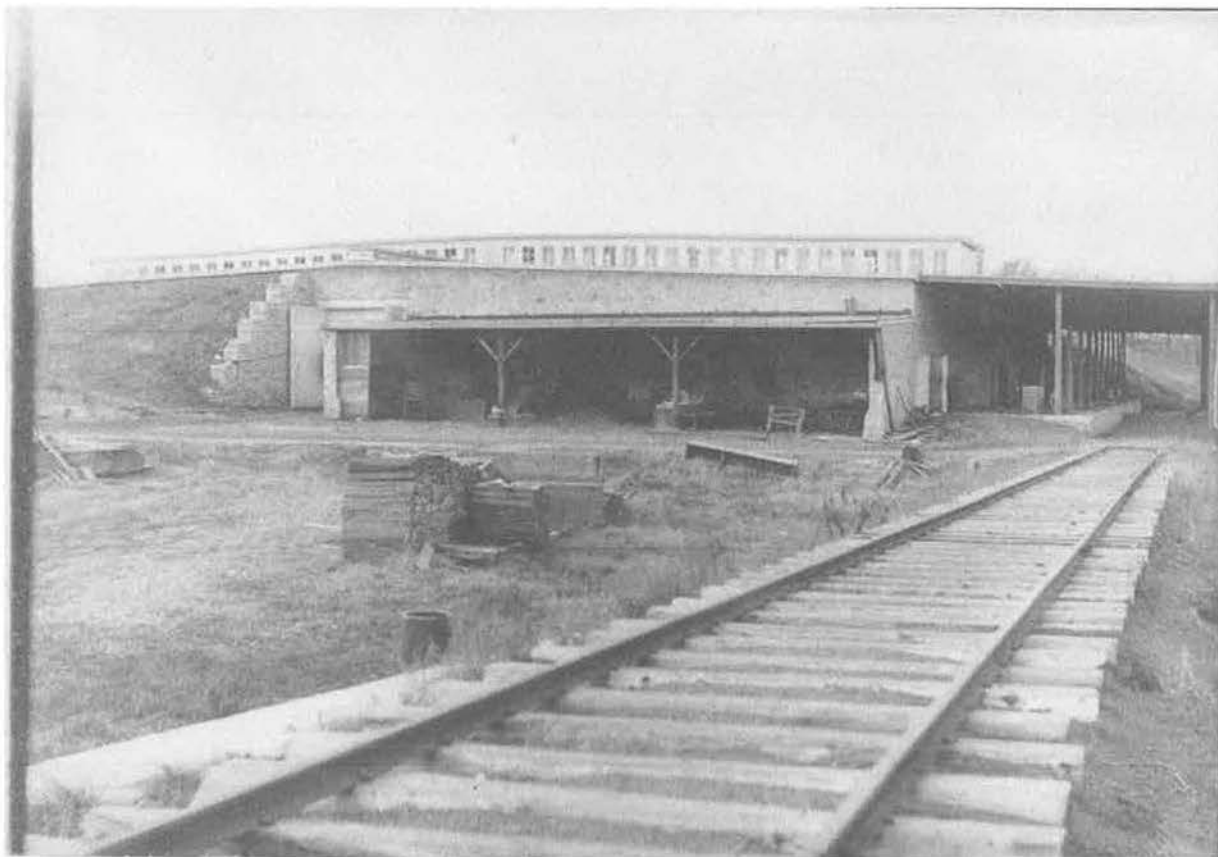


Figure 30. View looking west at stone packing cellar from near north railroad bridge, no date (Floyd County Historical Society).

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### ***Prosperity and prominence of the Sherman Nursery Company under E.M. Sherman, 1915-1930***

With the major construction projects complete by 1915 that would sustain their various aspects of business through the next decade, the Sherman Nursery Company entered a period of prominence and prosperity under the leadership of Erwin M. Sherman, who had built the company to this point over the last 30 years. He also continued to be recognized for his significance within business circles and the nursery industry in Iowa and across the county. In 1915, his biography was included in *Iowa: Its History and Its Foremost Citizens*, which outlined both information on Erwin M. Sherman as an individual and information on the success of his Sherman Nursery Company. The biography starts:

Erwin Milo Sherman is president of the Sherman Nursery Company, which has one of the largest nurseries of the entire country, and his name is widely known in that connection. He has built up a mammoth business from a comparatively small beginning, his success being based upon first, a love of nature; second, an intimate knowledge of plant life, together with practical and systematic methods of propagation; and third, the close application and unfaltering industry which are always concomitants in the attainment of prosperity. (*Iowa: Its History and Its Foremost Citizens* 1915: 1311)

Mr. Sherman was known as "very pleasant, genial gentleman, who adds to executive force, courtesy, consideration, and kindness." His business success was both recognized and respected: "To become, as he has done, a leader in a line of business indicates notable power and ability and yet he has attained to his present position only through the exercise of effort and the utilization of opportunities such as many others have enjoyed" (*Iowa: Its History and Its Foremost Citizens* 1915: 1314).

The buildings and grounds of the Sherman Nursery Company also received acclaim in this 1915 biography, intimately associated with Erwin M. Sherman. The new stone office is noted to have grand old trees nearby, and "stretching away for over a mile is the farm of seven hundred and twenty-five acres devoted to growing of trees and shrubbery and to the propagation of plants" (*Iowa: Its History and Its Foremost Citizens* 1915: 1312). The stone buildings and bridge on the grounds were constructed with stone from quarries on their grounds. The up-to-date telephone systems connected all parts of the property, and the greenhouses were built of iron framework and glass for maximum light. The special feature of business was growing of roses for the wholesale trade, including American Beauty, Killarney, Sunburst, My Lady, Aaron Ward, Melody, and Minatonka. The author had visited the spectacular plants that filled the greenhouses, which were worth the trip to see. The roses were shipped to dealers in St. Paul and Minneapolis where they were considered the best grown on the market. The Maiden Hair fern industry was a counterpart with the rose industry, with several thousand cut and sent daily with the roses (*Iowa: Its History and Its Foremost Citizens* 1915: 1312-13).

The majority of the grounds at the Sherman Nursery Company were devoted to growing of trees and shrubbery and to the propagation of plants. The company was cited for its significant role in beautifying the country with its stock, and its resulting impact as "beauty leads to contentment, good cheer, and happiness, especially that beauty which finds its expression in growing things of nature" (*Iowa: Its History and Its Foremost Citizens* 1915: 1314). Sherman's success over the last 30 years was attributed to his love of his products, excellent business ability, and distribution system. The packing house, 150 by 300 feet with 16-foot walls, was the center of activity at the company when 175 were employed in fall for digging and packing and 225 were employed in spring for packing and shipping. The company made its own boxes, using 400,000 feet of lumber each year. On the grounds, 20 acres of arbors protected evergreens grown from seed, with about 50 million young evergreens in the nursery. These were shipped to all parts of North America, with demand in the Northwest for laurel willow and Carolina poplar. Additionally, nearly three million apple trees were grown on the grounds and over one million grape vines. The company had made a careful study of soil and climate, developing stock even for the coldest areas of the country. They had sales in every state across the country as well as Canada. Reportedly, Sherman had the best salesmen in the industry, with each carefully selected (*Iowa: Its History and Its Foremost Citizens* 1915: 1313-14). Sherman had also started a dairy farm near Charles City with "his object in so doing being to get manure for his greenhouses" as he was unable to get

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enough from other local farms. His thoroughly modern dairy farm consisted of 20 Jersey cows at this time (*Iowa: Its History and Its Foremost Citizens* 1915: 1313).

The Sherman Nursery Company also continued to stand out for its impact locally. As noted, E.M. Sherman was active in the construction of the new \$75,000 Y.M.C.A. for the community, serving on the board of trustees since its organization. He also continued to serve as vice president of the Charles City Western Railroad. In July 1915, the railroad became an electric line through town and to Marble Rock, and it expanded its track to Colwell to potentially connect with the Chicago Great Western Railroad in the future. This line was in operation by November 1915. The Sherman Nursery Company was cited in promotional material on Charles City as the largest nursery west of the Mississippi. Hart-Parr Company appears to have been the largest employer in town at this time, with 1,000 workers. They were also cited as the largest manufacturer of gasoline traction engines in world. Other prominent companies included the Fisher-Stevens Company (store fixtures), George P. Smith Company (sash, doors, millwork), and Patten & Son (nurserymen and experimental orchard and seedsmen). Both local nurseries continued to be among the 88 nurseries listed in the 1916-17 edition of the *Iowa State Gazetteer*. They were also among only 13 nurseries with listings dating back to the 1889-90 *Iowa State Gazetteer*. At this time, Charles G. Patten was in his mid-80s, and the Patten Plant Breeding Station was discontinued in 1915 by the Iowa Horticultural Society with his work transferred to the State Experiment Station. On April 28, 1917, the State of Iowa bought the 17 acres associated with his experimental section in the southeast quarter of Section 12, and he served as an associate in fruit breeding until his death on November 28, 1921 (Hanson and Hull 1996: 121; Vertical Files, Floyd County Historical Society; Beach, December 1922, 356; Floyd County Transfer Books; *History of Floyd County, Iowa* 1917: 511).

The *History of Floyd County, Iowa* published in 1917 noted that the Sherman Nursery Company was the largest nursery or florist in Charles City, with extensive gardens and grounds. The complex included a large two-story stone office building, 50,000 feet under glass in greenhouses, and a side track from the electric railroad into the property. The connection permitted ease of shipping from their large cold storage cellar to Illinois, Iowa, Missouri, Nebraska, South Dakota, North Dakota, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, and Utah. E.M. Sherman was president as well as the largest stockholder. They had over 700 acres of land locally plus land elsewhere, and they specialized in small evergreen trees. They also shipped roses extensively. They supplied customers in Charles City with milk from their Jersey dairy farm, which supplied manure to keep their soil rich. E.M. Sherman also continued to serve as vice president of the Charles City Western Railroad, which he had incorporated, and serve as a member of the board of trustees for the Y.M.C.A., which he had helped organize. He also served as president of the board of trustees for the Methodist Episcopal Church (*History of Floyd County, Iowa* 1917: 192, 510-11). The 1920 census lists Erwin M. Sherman, age 58, as a proprietor of a nursery, living with his wife Gertrude (Patton) Sherman at 800 Gilbert St (extant). Their only child, daughter Katherine, had died in September 1910 at age 9 ("Started the Nursery that Bears His Name," *Charles City Press*, June 9, 1934, 1).

The extent of the land holdings of Sherman Nursery Company was maintained in Charles City through the 1920s with additional growth within the industry. In April 1919, the company had over 50 people working for two weeks to dig and ship 1.5 million Norway Spruce trees to a large lumber company in Michigan. It was noted as one of the largest evergreen order ever known within the industry. With additional federal regulation on imported plants after World War I, nurseries across the country scrambled to produce additional stock to fill the void, and nurseries entered a strong period of prosperity. The activities of E.M. Sherman were logged in other newspapers across the state as well. The company advertised landscape architecture services in the *Emmetsburg Democrat* on February 16, 1921. The newspaper had previously published an interview with E.M. Sherman in July 1920 advocating the planting of trees to reforest the country and produce lumber for building materials. He had personally sawed 500,000 feet of lumber from land owned near Nashua that had belonged to his father. Interestingly, in addition to his extensive nursery business, Sherman was noted as a very successful breeder of Jersey cattle and Poland China hogs with 60 cows and 300 hogs ("The Sherman



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Nursery Makes a Big Shipment," *Charles City Press*, April 14, 1919; Higginbotham, June 15, 1990, 44; *Emmetsburg Democrat (Iowa)*, February 16, 1921, 4; "Sawed 500,000 feet of Lumber," *The Democrat (Emmetburg, Iowa)*, July 28, 1920, 5).

The nursery and florist industry in Charles City and across Iowa evolved in the 1920s as a generation retired and new names appeared. By the 1922-23 *Iowa State Gazetteer*, only 10 of the 90 listings for nurserymen dated back to 1889, with identical or similar names: Morris J. Graham, Adel; Nicholas M. Shaffer, Cascade; C.G. Patton & Son, Charles City; Sherman Nursery Company, Charles City; Des Moines Nursery Company, Des Moines; C.L. Hull, Fort Madison; Earl Ferris Nursery, Hampton; Pierce Bechtel, LeMars; Gardner Nursery Company, Osage; and Shenandoah Nurseries, Shenandoah. By comparison, 37 of the 90 companies reflect identical or similar names to the listings 15 years earlier in 1908 (R.L. Polk 1922: 1606-1607). Eleven nursery companies in Iowa are listed as members of the American Association of Nurserymen in 1923. The five companies paying dues greater than \$20 included Sherman Nursery Company – Charles City (\$95), Shenandoah Nurseries (\$160), Mount Arbor Nurseries – Shenandoah (\$160), Ferris Nursery Company – Hampton (\$50), and Des Moines Nursery Company (\$50) (Sizemore 1923: 15-24). Locally, the 1922-23 city directory for Charles City listed the Sherman Nursery Company (E.M. Sherman, president) at the west end of Grove Street and C.G. Patten & Son (Ernest C. Patten) at 9<sup>th</sup> and Grand. Sherman was also listed under greenhouses. Long-standing florist Mark H. Wetherbee was last listed with a business in 1920, with the Ferris Greenhouse listed at his old address of 800 N. Main in 1922. The Briscoe & Stowell business evolved into Riverside Greenhouses, with a flower shop at 92 N. Main and greenhouses on Chautauqua Avenue north of Gilbert. E.B. Stowell continued to be listed as an individual florist at the same addresses. Sherman and Patten continued to be listed under nurserymen in Charles City in the 1925-26 city directory. Riverside Flower Shop and E.B. Stowell continued to operate at 92 N. Main, with the florist at 800 N. Main changing to Howard W. Fay and the Fay Greenhouse.

The 1924 Sanborn map depicts the complex around the main office as similar to the 1915 map (Figure 31). The bridges off the map to the east are extant. An ice house, 25 feet in length, is noted at the top of the map, extending off of the page north of the large packing cellar. The seven greenhouses are located to the west and south of the stone office, with the coal/power house appearing somewhat reduced in size. The one-story stone "box factory" is now labeled as carpenter and blacksmith shop, likely a similar use as in 1915 despite the different labels. The miscellaneous sheds to the east and south have been replaced by a large attached lumber shed. The small building noted previously as a tool house is still standing, with a granary now located to its south. The rose business expanded in 1924 with the construction of two more greenhouses, bringing the total up to nine. The company had one of the largest greenhouses west of Chicago with roses shipped daily. Nearly two city blocks were now under glass and devoted exclusively to growing roses (Sanborn Map Company 1924; "Sherman Nursery Company Stock" 1925: 3).

By 1925 at age 63, E.M. Sherman began to look over the success of his company over the last 40 years and position it to continue in the future. In June 1925, the directors of Sherman Nursery Company voted to increase capital from \$100,000 to \$300,000 and sell preferred stock at \$100 per share with a 7% rate of annual return over a minimum of five years. In November, they issued a four-page booklet profiling the company and highlighting its history and success. It was noted as one of the oldest and largest nurseries in the country. The company boasted nearly 1,000 acres of land with scores of substantial up-to-date buildings, splendid horses, one of finest Jersey herds in world, the latest and best machinery, and hundreds of acres of nursery stock. They were self-proclaimed as the "largest growers of Evergreens in the world," "largest growers of Hardy Nursery Stock in the Northwest," and operated one of the largest number of greenhouses west of Chicago for their roses. Each year, 10 to 15 carloads of lumber were used to make boxes for spring shipping, and they used at least 50 carloads of coal each year to heat the greenhouses. Their current stock

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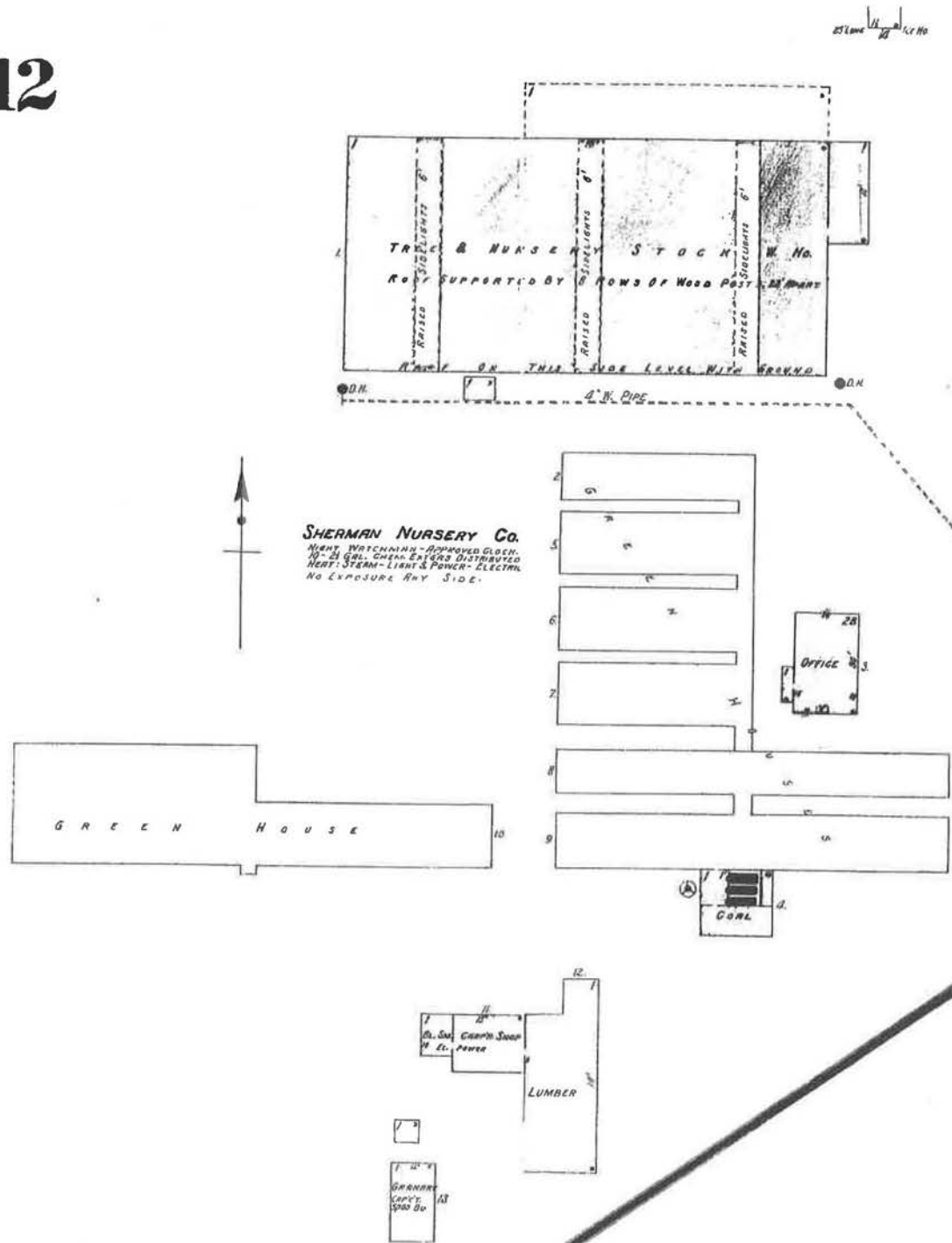
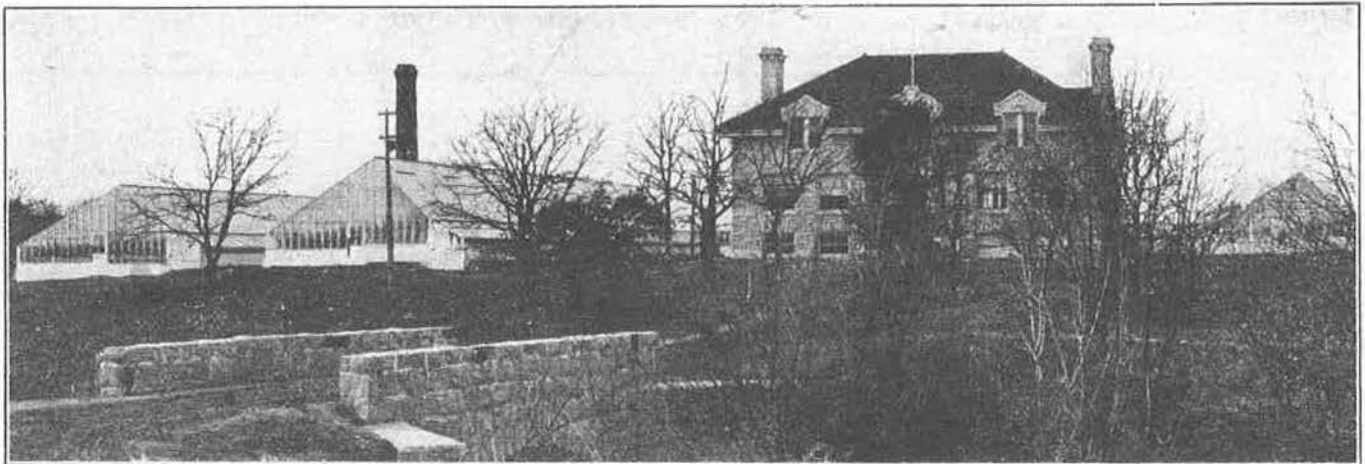


Figure 31. Sanborn fire insurance map of Sherman Nursery Company property, 1924 (Sanborn Map Company 1924).

- Packing cellar (demolished/replaced) – top – completed in 1907 – ice house to north off map (demolished)
- Office (stone) with vault (extant) – right – completed in 1906
- Greenhouses (demolished/replaced)– from top to bottom – completed in 1908, 1906, 1906, 1906, c.1902, 1902, coal bunker – 1910 (demolished), west greenhouse – 1914 with later north side addition (demolished/replaced)
- Carpenter/blacksmith shop (stone) (extant/altered) – built around 1906 – attached lumber sheds demolished
- Tool house at southwest corner (frame) – appears to be extant – granary to south is demolished

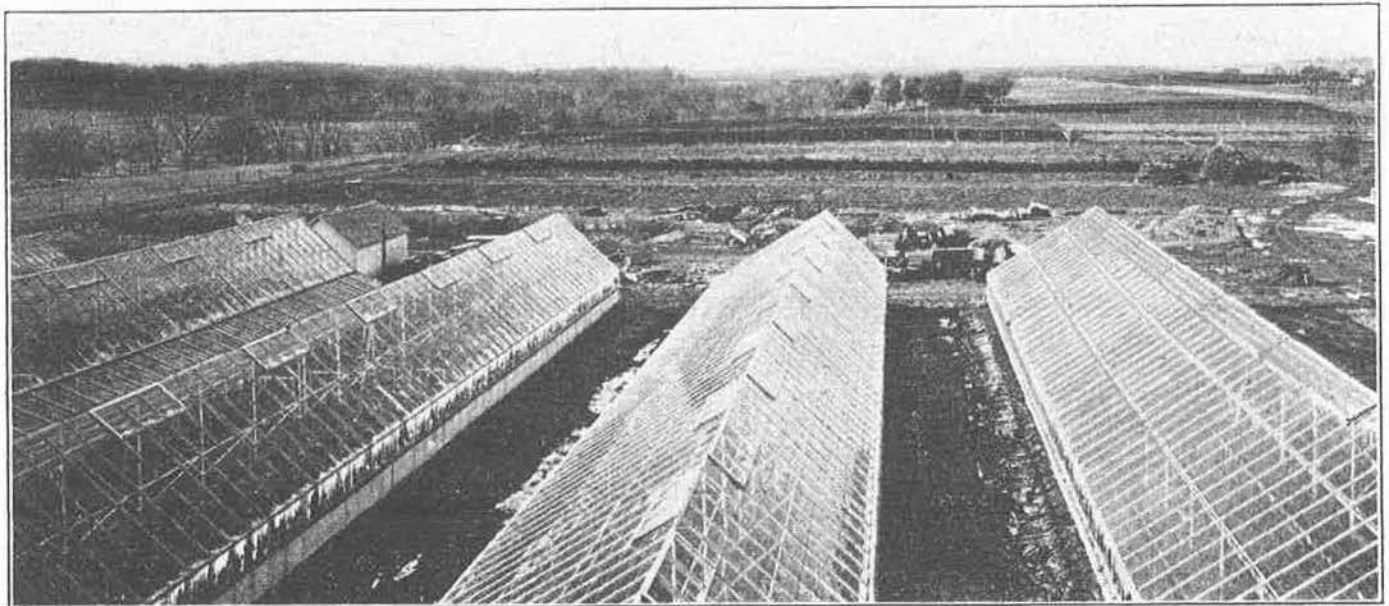
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THE HOME OF THE BIG NURSERY

Figure 32. View west across stone bridge to office and greenhouses in 1925  
("Sherman Nursery Company Stock," 1925).



A view from office window showing "lay" of ground—Sherman Nursery

Figure 33. View west from office across greenhouses to nursery grounds in 1925  
("Sherman Nursery Company Stock," 1925).



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A View of Evergreen Beds—Sherman Nursery Company  
Millions of Evergreens in Sight

**Figure 34. Evergreen seedlings under the arbor at Sherman Nursery Company in 1925  
("Sherman Nursery Company Stock," 1925).**

included: 50 million evergreens, 1 million apple trees, 150,000 plum trees, 35,000 cherry trees, 500,000 grape vines, 200,000 currants, 150,000 gooseberries, 200,000 raspberries, 575,000 ornamental shrubs, 20,000 roses, 20,000 climbing vines, 5 million seedlings, 3 million forest and shade trees, 300,000 phlox, and 130,000 peonies. Anyone was invited to visit to see for themselves ("Sherman Nursery Company Stock" 1925: 1, 4).

The Sherman Nursery Company had grown considerably over its 41 year history, and it had a strong wholesale as well as retail trade. E.M. Sherman remained at the head of the company, with several long time employees as well as a "corps of younger men" with strong experience ready to carry the company forward. The company was well-known across the county with 1,500 salesmen working for the company. The United States had the largest nurseries in the world, and Sherman was one of the largest in the United States, thus in the world. The value of its land, buildings, and equipment was estimated at \$1.5 million, with gross business in 1924 ten times that of 1903. The company did sound business supplying nursery stock, including trees of all kinds, vines, rose bushes, and various kinds of seedlings. They boasted the goodwill of over 250,000 satisfied customers. Their land holdings appear to be identical to 1912, with 712 acres of land around Charles City and 160 acres located two miles from Estherville in Emmet County. Nursery stock was grown on over 500 acres. Other visible resources included the limestone office building with tile roof, 150 by 300 foot packing cellar with 16 foot stone walls accessed by 1,000 feet of track and switch and concrete bridge, nine greenhouses covering two city blocks with heating plant and coal bunker of reinforced concrete accessed by 1,000 feet of track and switch and concrete bridge, a blacksmith shop and box factory with electrical machinery, lumber shed with capacity of 10 carloads of lumber, 25 line private telephone system, several thousands of dollars in office equipment, and 2,000 sets of plate books of stock for sales. Additionally, the company had eight sets of farm buildings, including dairy farm with a large herd of pure bred Jersey cattle, tractors, automobiles, and trucks ("Sherman Nursery Company Stock" 1925: 2-3).

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Through this period, the Jersey cattle of E.M. Sherman gained additional attention. Since fall 1920, they had completed Register of Merit work with high production records logged. In 1925, Raleigh's Torono's Meme was a World Champion two-year-old Jersey with a record 902.15 pounds of butterfat in 365 days. Likewise, Brown Lady's Little Jewel was a Champion Jersey of the Middle West with a record 1,019.73 pounds of butterfat in 365 days. A group of Hart-Parr boosters from Illinois toured the Sherman Nursery and Sherman Jersey Farm in February 1925. Many farmers had ordered trees from the nursery, and they desired to see the prize winning cattle. Sherman was noted as known across the country for having developed one of great production herds of Jersey cattle over the last few years, and the manager offered practical suggestions to the visiting farmers. Newspapers outside the immediate area also covered the Sherman Jersey Farm. In July 1927, the *Waterloo Evening Courier* cited the farm as a good example of a dairy farm, which was operated as a not-for-profit farm by the Sherman Nursery Company. They noted that the farm was started 20 years ago for the nursery to supply fertilizer for the large green houses on several acres of ground. E.M. Sherman was raised on a pure bred stock farm and decided to make the herd strictly pure bred Jersey cows. His herd had grown to over 100 cattle, with 46 cows producing 13,345 pounds of milk containing 638.23 pounds of butterfat at a high net profit of \$260.76 for each cow. Merry Maiden's Brown Lady and her daughter Brown Lady's Little Jewel were cited as particularly high butterfat producers. The buildings on the farm were noted to be inexpensive and ordinary, while the dairy herd included nine gold medal cows and 21 silver medal cows ("Sherman Nursery Company Stock" 1925: 4; "Illinois Boosters Visit the Sherman Nursery and Jersey Farm," *Twice a Week News*, February 10, 1925, 1; "Nursery Concern Develops Noted Jersey Cow Herd," *Waterloo Evening Courier*, July 9, 1927, 17).

Profits continued to be strong in 1928, 40 years after the original incorporation of the company. The charter was renewed this year, with Erwin M. Sherman maintaining his position as president. Advertisements through the year continued to emphasize the hardiest of the nursery stock, and the nursery stock included shrubbery, evergreens, and fruit trees grown here for the cold climate. The trees were noted as having a strong root system and thus were fast growers ("The Sherman Nursery Co. - Charles City," *Nashua Reporter*, March 14, 1928, 8). Sherman Nursery Company was in the process of constructing a large arbor covering ten acres of land, though already "the Sherman Nursery company leads the world in the number of evergreen seedlings started each year, and the addition of the new arbor will greatly increase the present production" ("Sherman Leads the World in Evergreens," *Charles City Press*, January 1, 1929). Clifton C. Smith served as sales manager for over 250 active salesmen. A sales convention was held at the nursery this year for the salesmen to visit and inspect the nursery stock, something noted to likely become an annual event. The packing cellar under August Ebert was running efficiently with work on grafts over the winter in the cellar under the direction of R.E. Page. The rose department under C.E. Smith also continued to gain outstanding recognition for the quality of the roses ("Sherman Leads the World in Evergreens," *Charles City Press*, January 1, 1929; "1928 Best Year in the History of Charles City," *Charles City Press*, January 1, 1929).

The Association of American Nurserymen launched a national marketing campaign in 1928 to maintain demand for nursery products by focusing more on landscaping. Their efforts included booklets, advertising, yard and garden contests that introduced the concept of an "outdoor living room." They saw the industry shifting from fruit trees focused on production to more ornamentals planted to beautify a property. Already, ornamentals were three-quarters of the sales volume across the industry, a notable shift over early years of nurseries. While the market for fruit trees was saturated, they encouraged nurseries to focus on shrubs, evergreens, roses, and ornamental trees (Higginbotham, June 15, 1990, 44). The Sherman Nursery Company followed this suggestion. The *Waterloo Evening Courier* noted that E.D. Allan, landscape architect for Sherman Nursery Company's interests in Waterloo, spoke to the Commercial Club of Monona on planting of shrubs and beautifying the lawns of homes and the town parks ("Talks on Landscaping," *Waterloo Evening Courier*, April 10, 1929, 19). Their evergreen business also continued to grow with the addition of the new arbor for evergreens and ornamental shrubs. In 1929, they saw unprecedented business as the "world's largest growers of evergreens," and they were working to clear more land for additional nursery stock in 1930. Their sales force had reportedly climbed to nearly 450 agents covering 15 states across the Midwest. They

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reaped benefits from the company's connection with the national publicity campaign of American Association of Nurseryman with an emphasis on landscape gardening. Many of the new sales men were also skilled landscape designers. Additionally, several cities had sent representatives to Sherman in the last year to pick out shade trees for parks and streets ("Nursery is Speeding Up for New Year," *Charles City Press*, January 1, 1930, 7).

Despite declining economic conditions across the country after the stock market crash in 1929, the Sherman Nursery Company continued to fare well in 1930. Locally, the population of Charles City had grown to 8,039 in 1930. Two nurseries continued to operate in town, Sherman Nursery Company with E.M. Sherman as president and C.G. Patten & Son with Ernest C. Patten as president. Four florists were listed in town: Riverside Flower Shop – 401 N. Main, E.B. Stowell – 401 N. Main, Fay Greenhouse – 800 N. Main – Howard W. Fay, and Mark H. Wetherbee – 602 Clark. Though E.M. Sherman continued to serve as president, Clifton C. Smith appears to have taken a more active leadership role by this time. He started with the company as an assistant bookkeeper in 1912, and he became secretary in 1925. He served as sales manager through this period, a key management position for the company. In a talk to the Rotary Club in April 1930, he noted that Sherman had 750 salesmen including 20 that had worked for the company for at least 15 years. The company employed 112 people year round, including an office staff of 20 clerks and stenographers. During the shipping season, they paid \$1,000 a day in labor. The nursery continued to grow many varieties of apple trees, evergreens, spruce, and pine for distribution from coast to coast (Polk 1930; "Rotary Club is Told about the Nursery," *Charles City Press*, April 29, 1930, 8).

The Sherman Nursery Company was active locally in 1930 as well. In spring, they planted 200 or more Black Hill Spruce evergreens around the Hanford McNider home. Samples of their Arbor Vitae were displayed in the window of the Torrence Printing Company with pages from the company's catalog showing beautifully illustrated examples of the shrubs, flowers, fruits and evergreens grown by them. The plants were in pottery jars and noted for their symmetry and color, appropriate to ornament an entry. The company was cited as over 1,000 acres at the end of 1930 and the "largest growers of evergreens in the world" with demand for evergreens increasing. The company did a large volume of retail business in 1930 with hundreds of salesmen across 15 Midwestern states. Additionally, several large eastern nurseries and landscape firms handled Sherman grown evergreens exclusively. This demand required strict planning on the part of the nursery with the average evergreen sold for retail sale at age six. Other evergreens were grown in the nursery for ten or even 20 years. The system in place at Sherman insured the quality of the stock as well as availability of several sizes of trees. Additionally, they carried a large assortment of hardy stock of shade and ornamental trees, fruit trees, berry bushes, shrubs, perennial plants, and vines (*Charles City Press*, June 5, 1930, 5; *Charles City Press*, July 25, 1930, 3; "Sherman Nursery Gives Much Encouragement in Prospects for Thirty-one," *Charles City Press*, December 31, 1930, 5).



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### ***Changes and evolution of Sherman Nursery Company, 1931-1946***

Likely a combination of the economic conditions and the near retirement of Erwin M. Sherman led to the reorganization efforts of the Sherman Nursery Company in the early 1930s. As noted, in the latter years of the 1920s, Clifton C. Smith started occupying a stronger management role, and he is noted as secretary of the company under Sherman and appears prominent in efforts to sell and restructure the company in 1931. Sherman Nursery Company operated under the ownership of a local holding company, Ellis & Ellis, from 1931 to 1947. During this period, Clifton C. Smith, appears to have been the active nurseryman and face of the company, formally serving as secretary, treasurer, and sales manager. He worked to maintain the national prominence and recognition of Sherman Nursery Company, as well as personally serving in leadership positions of national and regional nursery organizations. With this leadership, Sherman Nursery Company emerged from the years of the Depression and World War II in a strong position for further development in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The articles of incorporation for Sherman Nursery Company were amended in January 1931 to reflect a shift in the management structure of the company, certified by E.M. Sherman, president, and C.C. Smith, secretary. The "general nature of the business" section was expanded to include the livestock and dairy products of the Sherman Jersey Farm. A board of directors was given greater prominence within the following sections. The annual meeting of stockholders would now elect a board of directors, rather than officers. The officers would then be elected by the board of directors to a one year term. The president would no longer also serve as business manager per the by-laws, and the secretary and treasurer positions could be held by the same person. Transfers of shares of stock no longer required approval by the board of directors. Finally, the limit on the debt of the company as corresponded to the capital stock was eliminated ("Notice of Amendment of Articles of Incorporation of Sherman Nursery Company," *Charles City Press*, February 28, 1931, 6).

These amendments to the articles of incorporation preceded a sale of 3,001 shares of new stock to local holding company Ellis & Ellis with a reorganization plan presented by C.C. Smith to the stockholders for approval in a special meeting on August 25, 1931. The company would continue to operate over the next 16 years under this new ownership (*Looking Back* c.2000; Hanson and Hull 1996: 118). The 1934 city directory lists J.F. Christiansen, president; W.B. Johnson, vice president, and C.C. Smith, secretary and treasurer. E.M. Sherman was listed in 1934 as living at 800 Gilbert and as associated with the Sherman Jersey Farm with an office at 219 S. Main Street. Patten & Son is no longer listed under nurseries, though Ernest C. Patten continued to be listed as a nurseryman. Wetherbee and Ross were a short-lived listing under nurseries at 1714 Clark, and florists in town included Fay Greenhouses (800 N. Main), Mary E. Homaas (104 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave), and Riverside Flower Shop (401 N. Main).

The context of the Sherman Nursery Company operations in the 1930s is set against the Depression that impacted all areas of business across the United States. The economic troubles were complicated by a drought in 1930 and a large decrease in sales in 1931 and 1932. Prices dropped as supply of stock was high. However, a bad winter in 1933 and subsequent drought in 1934 reduced the overall amount of stock. The industry found a new market with the rise of the garden club movement over the next few years. This movement increased landscape gardening in the middle class and created new demand for stock. Single companies began to offer design and installation services, laying the groundwork for modern retail companies. By the late 1930s, a large number of wholesale growers also operated retail outlets. With an increasing number of department and chain stores also carrying bare-root nursery stock, the need for sales agents began to decline. New government regulations, such as plant patent law, affected the industry, and the creation of conservation and forestry programs resulted in government nurseries (Higginbotham, June 15, 1990, 44-46).

The Sherman Nursery Company had already begun to offer the design and installation services as well as the plants for landscaping by the early 1930s. Agents and landscape architects were one and the same or worked together. Thus, advertisements for design services appeared in communities across the Midwest. For

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example, the *Tribune and Leader-Press* in La Crosse, Wisconsin carried an advertisement for the company on February 19, 1931 with local representatives listed as A. E. Snyder, Salesman; L. B. Snyder, Landscape Architect; and L. E. Pricer, Landscape Architect. The ad noted that successful growth depended on the timing of the planting and the use of sturdy, high grade nursery stock, such as that of the Sherman Nursery Company of Charles City, Iowa ("Plant this Spring," *La Crosse Tribune and Leader-Press (La Crosse, WI)*, February 19, 1931, 3). The *Mason City Globe-Gazette* (Iowa) noted that George J. Barbour had been working for the Sherman Nursery Company in Charles City and now was transferring to Mason City as head of sales. He was a landscape architect and gardener with a degree from the American Landscape School of Newark, New York. Barbour could be consulted to discuss landscape design, rock garden, trees, shrubs, or plants of any kind as well as proper pruning and maintenance ("Sherman Nursery Company," *Mason City Globe-Gazette*, June 29, 1931, 9). E.D. Allen, landscape architect and superintendent of landscape division, supervised the design and installation of landscaping for the home of Archbishop Beckman in Dubuque in 1931. Likewise, the company was awarded the landscaping and installation of the municipal swimming pool in New Hampton. Around their office, they completed extensive landscape development of grounds including several hundred evergreens, shrubs, and trees as well as a large rock garden on side hill near east end of packing house in 1932. In 1933, the *Estherville Enterprise* noted that the Sherman Nursery had shipped eastern Iowa limestone to the city for rock gardens. A number of elms from the company as well as rock gardens were being installed in town as well as on rural farms ("Nursery Here Landscapes Dubuque Home," *Charles City Daily Press and Evening Intelligencer*, November 18, 1931, 8; "Sherman to Landscape Pool Grounds," *Charles City Daily Press*, November 18, 1931, 8; "Nursery has Completed Landscaping," *Charles City Daily Press*, July 14, 1932, 6; "Sherman Nursery to Ship Limestone Here for Rock Gardens," *Estherville Enterprise (Iowa)*, July 26, 1933, 1).

The Sherman Nursery Company also worked to maintain a national presence through this period. They began advertising in the national publication, *American Nurseryman*, in 1932, a tradition that would continue through the 1990s and was later noted as key in the growth and development of the business. Clifton C. Smith, serving as secretary, treasurer, and sales manager, appears to have been the active nurseryman and face of the company in this period. He was also elected president of the United States Retail Nurserymen's Association at their annual meeting in Chicago in July 1933. This office was then followed by election as president of Northern Retail Nurserymen's Association, which included Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, North Dakota, and South Dakota, in December 1934 ("Integrity is a valued industry tradition," Sherman Nursery Company ad in *American Nurseryman*, September 1, 1937; "C.C. Smith is New President of Nurserymen," *Charles City Daily Press*, July 24, 1933, 6; "Is Elected President of Nurserymen," *Charles City Daily Press*, December 20, 1934, 6).

Both Erwin M. Sherman and his wife Gertrude died in Charles City in 1934. Gertrude died on February 17, 1934, recognized in her obituary as the daughter of C.G. Patten, a nationally recognized horticulturalist, and the wife of E.M. Sherman, the former president of Sherman Nursery Company ("Four Deaths Bring Sorrow to the City," *Charles City Press*, February 27, 1934). A few months later, Erwin M. Sherman died on June 9, 1934 at age 72. He was cited as "one of Charles City's most prominent citizens and formerly president of the Sherman Nursery company and of the Charles City Western Railway and owner of a very fine Jersey herd, numbering among it many champion animals." He started the Sherman Nursery Company in 1884 and served as president until a few years previous. He was also an organizer of the United States Retail Nurseryman's Association, as well as serving as president, vice president, and secretary at various times. He was a past president of the Iowa State Nurseryman's Association, past vice-president of American Plant Propagator's Association, and director of Iowa State Horticultural Society. Locally, he was active in as the president of the board of trustees at First Methodist Church, president of the Y.M.C.A., and charter member of the Rotary Club. He was also president of the Charles City Western Railway, and he achieved national medals and records for his Jersey herd. E.M. and Gertrude Sherman's daughter Katherine died in 1910 at age 9, and they had no other children. E.M. was survived by brother M.B. Sherman of Modesto, California, and sisters Ida Caulkins, Minnie Sherman, and Dora Gordon ("Started the Nursery that Bears His Name," *Charles City Press*, June 9, 1934; "Tributes Paid to Nurseryman," *Mason City Globe-Gazette*, June 12, 1934, 5).



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The Sherman Nursery Company continued to operate successfully in Charles City through the end of the 1930s and the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its incorporation. By 1936, L.H. Bloom took over as vice president, with J.F. Christiansen continuing as president and C.C. Smith as secretary and treasurer. L.H. Bloom noted at the Chamber of Commerce meeting in January 1936 that he expected that 1936 would have a greater increase in sales than 1935 with the noted strides in overall business last year. Sherman Nursery's landscape architect A.E. Snyder spoke at the first meeting of the garden and home department of the Women's Club in Charles City in March 1937. D. Unsell was listed as contact for landscape architect and designer for shrubbery and trees with the Sherman Nursery Company in the *Ada Evening News* in November 1938. The south portion of the first story of the stone office building was repaired after extensive damage by fire in March 1937. The 1939 city directory for Charles City listed the Sherman Nursery Company and Riverside Greenhouse (100 Chautauqua Avenue) under local nurserymen. The officers at Sherman were J.F. Christiansen, president; Harly J. Deecus, vice president; Clifton C. Smith, secretary, and Morris W. Swartz, treasurer. The only other florist listing was for Fay Greenhouse at 800 N. Main ("Optimism is Key Note at C of C Meeting," *Charles City Daily Press*, January 22, 1936, 1; "Nursery Offices at Charles City Damaged by Fire," *Waterloo Daily Courier*, March 9, 1937, 12; "First Meeting Held by Department of Town's Women's Club," *Mason City Globe-Gazette*, March 17, 1937, 8; *Ada Evening News*, November 27, 1938, 9; Polk 1939).

An aerial photograph dating to July 1939 shows the Sherman Nursery Company property through Section 11 and into Section 12 (Figure 35). The buildings are clustered at the east edge of the property in the northwest corner of Section 12 (Figure 36). The size and number appear to be generally the same as shown and constructed in 1924. Thus, the built landscape does not appear significantly different over the 15 year period. The land stretching to the west and southwest from the office and greenhouse area is planted in nursery stock with visible rows on the aerial photograph. Overall, these use patterns on the landscape were similar in 2010 within the current land in this immediate area still association with the Sherman Nursery Company, with the buildings concentrated at the east end in the northwest corner of Section 12 and nursery stock growing on the land throughout Section 11 to the west.

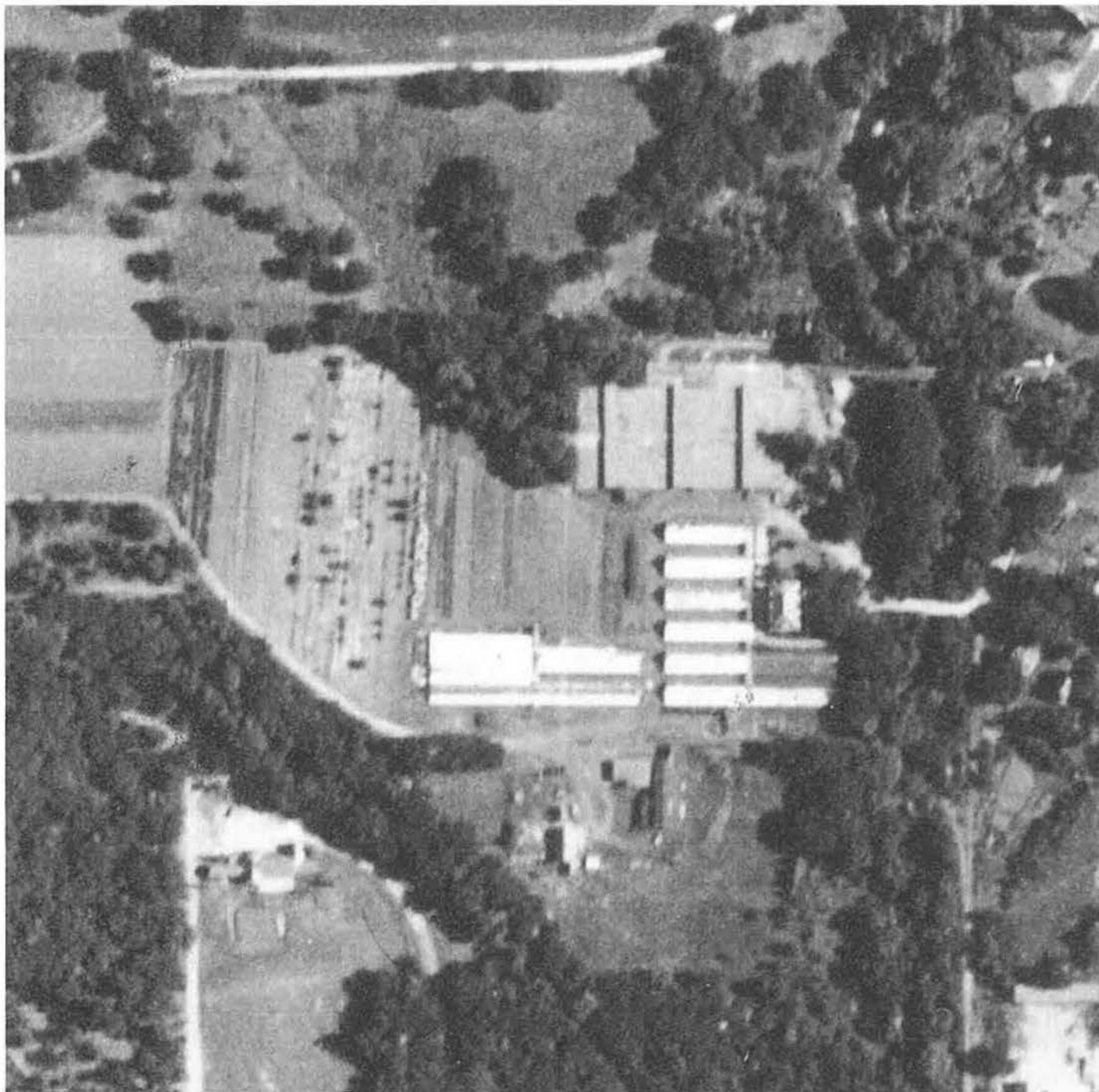
Similar to companies around the world, the nursery industry and Sherman Nursery Company were impacted by World War II. The Association for American Nurserymen secured "essential" status for industry, permitting companies to access materials needed to maintain operations. They encouraged companies to grow fruit for war-torn countries, plants for camouflage, and ornamental shrubs for morale support. Acreage was also diverted for agricultural production. The nursery industry benefitted from promotion and popularity of the Victory Garden, resulting in demand for products. With a labor shortage, nurseries hired other types of workers, including women, high school students, Mexican migrants, and prisoners of war (Higginbotham, June 15, 1990, 46). Like other companies, Sherman Nursery Company found that adjustment needed to be made through the war years. Labor was key for the nursery, and increasingly labor shortages in the later war years became problematic. In October 1944, they reached an agreement with the War Manpower Commission to hire 50 German prisoners of war from Algona branch camp No. 17 as no other labor was available for the fall packing season. The prisoners lived at the nearby country club in Wildwood Park and worked under the supervision of Captain K.F. McClintic ("Company Hires War Prisoners," *Mason City Globe Gazette*, October 25, 1944, 8; "War Prisoners Housed Here," *Des Moines Register*, October 29, 1944).





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**Figure 36. Aerial photograph of Sherman Nursery Company property on July 14, 1939 in Section 12 (Floyd County BZN-3-40, Map Collections, University of Iowa).**

*Packing cellar (demolished/replaced) – top – completed in 1907*  
*Office (extant) – right – completed in 1906 – three bridges visible in trees over creek at right (1910, c.1902, 1910)*  
*Greenhouses (demolished/replaced) – from top to bottom – completed in 1908, 1906, 1906, 1906, c.1902, 1902,*  
*- greenhouses to west – construction in 1914 and 1924 (demolished/replaced)*  
*Carpenter/blacksmith shop (extant/alterd) – built around 1906 – attached lumber sheds demolished*  
*Tool house at southwest corner – extant – building to south is demolished*

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With the end of the war, the housing and building boom across the country spurred new growth within the nursery industry with demand for landscaping products. The design contest for "sales and display grounds" sponsored by the National Landscape Nurserymen's Association stimulated the growth of seasonal retail garden centers in the 1940s and into the 1950s (Higginbotham, June 15, 1990, 48). Sherman Nursery Company continued to supply wholesale and retail customers in this period. The 1945 city directory for Charles City lists the company at the west end of Grove Street with familiar officers: J.F. Christiansen, president; Harly J. Deecus, vice president; Clifton C. Smith, secretary; and Morris W. Swartz, treasurer. The Riverside Greenhouse at 100 Chautauqua Avenue is also listed under local nurseries, with an independent landscape gardener, Roy Jurrens, listed at 92 ½ Main Street. A newspaper advertisement from August 1946 shows the office building and its setting at this time (Figure 37).

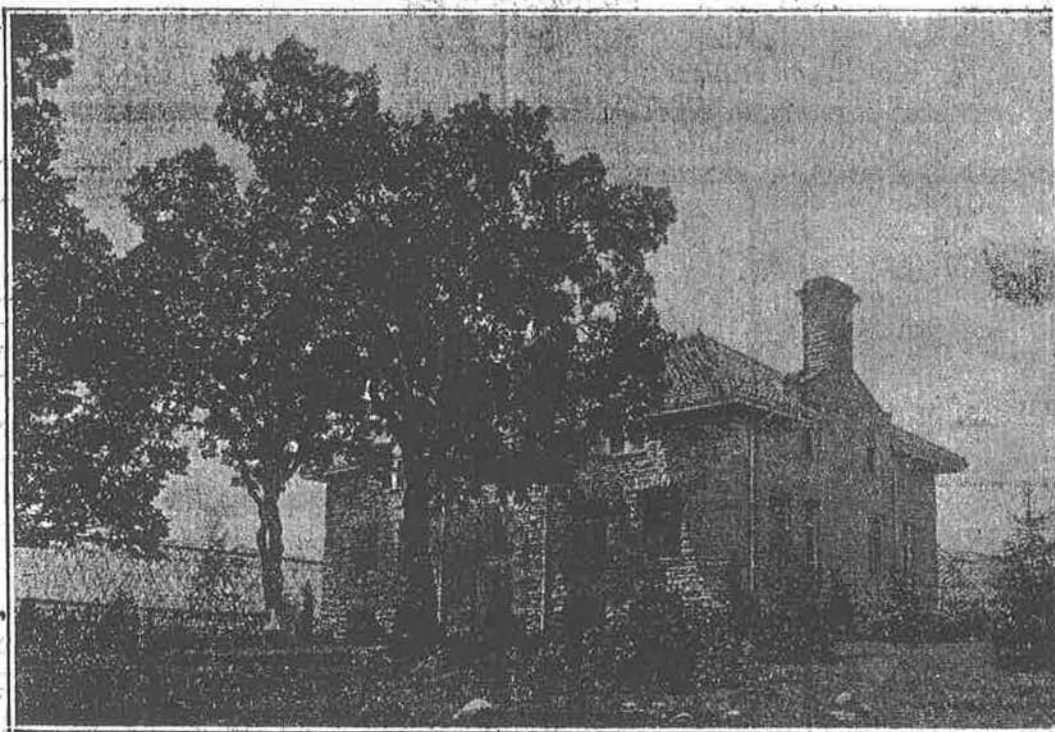
The 1947 Sanborn map depicts the complex around the main office as similar to the 1915 and 1924 maps (Figure 38). The majority of the substantial construction was complete by 1915, with the addition of the last two greenhouses to the west in 1924 to bring the total to nine. The bridges off the map to the east are extant. An ice house continues to be shown at the top of the map, extending off of the page north of the large packing cellar. The six older greenhouses are located to the west and south of the stone office, with the coal/power house appearing similar to the 1915 map. The one-story stone carpenter and blacksmith shop continued to be used as such, with the large attached lumber shed. The small building to the southwest was still noted as the tool house. The granary to the south was replaced or rehabilitated for worker housing, with an attached garage. A smaller dwelling was also shown to the east. The reason or date of this housing is unknown at this time, but it is likely related to migrant workers.



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**Our Market is the whole U. S.  
IOWA is our home!**



**THE SHERMAN NURSERY OFFICE**

**From only a few acres we have grown to one of  
the largest and finest nurseries in the middle-  
west . . . 600 acres in 62 years . . . in Iowa, the  
most bountiful land in the world!**

**SHERMAN NURSERY**

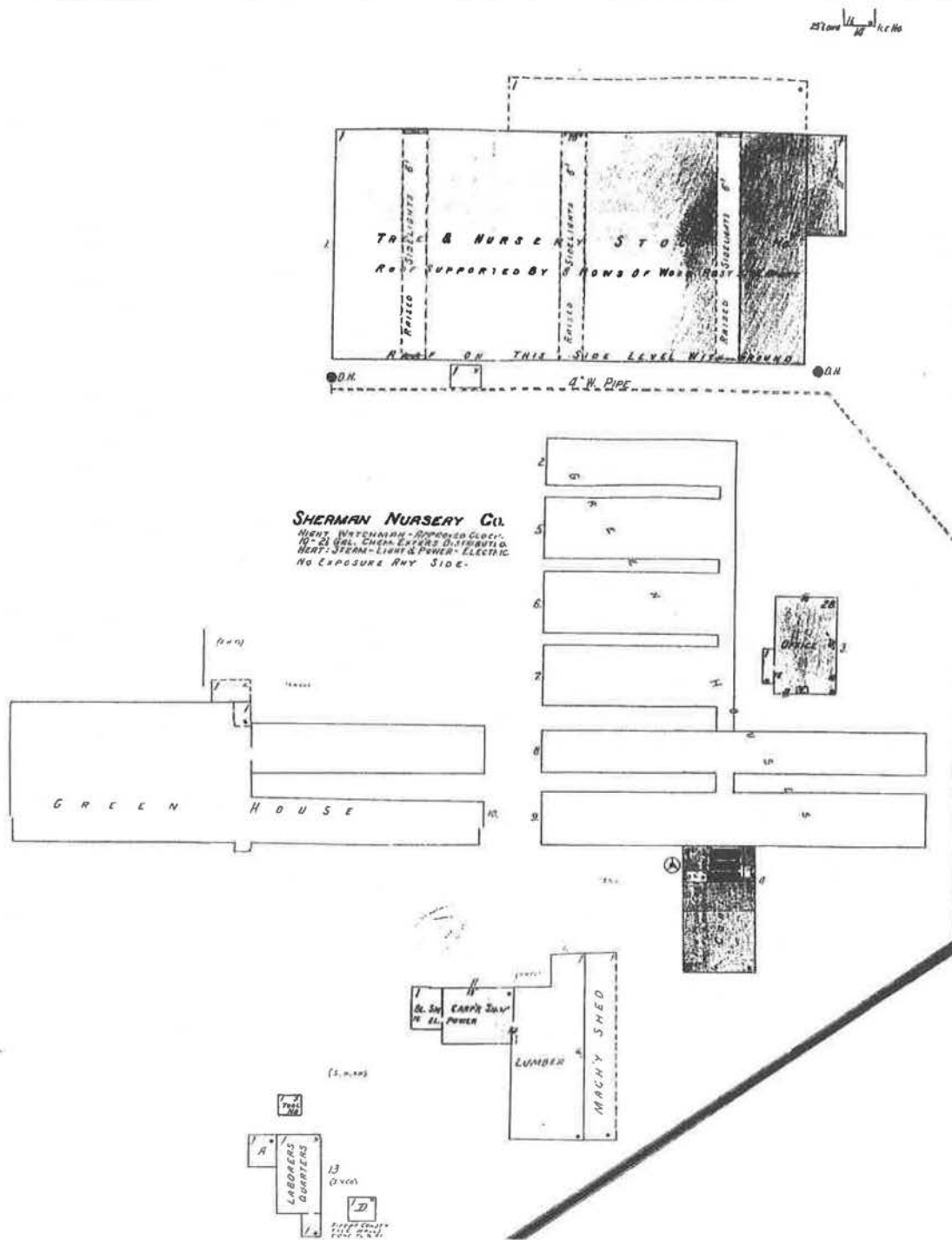
**LANDSCAPING**

**Cut Flowers For All Occasions**

**Figure 37. Advertisement in *Charles City Daily Press* on August 14, 1946.**

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**Figure 38. Sanborn fire insurance map of Sherman Nursery Company property, 1947 (Sanborn Map Company 1947, revised 1924 map).**

- Packing cellar (demolished/replaced) – top – completed in 1907 – ice house to north off page is demolished
- Office with vault (extant) – right – completed in 1906 – bridges off page to right
- Greenhouses (demolished/replaced) – from top to bottom – completed in 1908, 1906, 1906, 1906, c.1902, 1902, heating plant to south expanded since 1924 – three greenhouses to west – construction in 1914 and 1924 (demolished/replaced)
- Carpenter/blacksmith shop (extant) – built around 1906 – attached lumber sheds demolished
- Tool house at southwest corner – extant if same frame building
- laborers' quarters with garage and adjacent small dwelling – built since 1924 ( demolished)

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### ***Evolution of the Sherman Nursery Company under Richard J. Cashman, 1947-1964***

The Sherman Nursery Company started a new chapter in its history on July 1, 1947 with the purchase of the company by M.R. Cashman. On March 26, 1947, M.R. Cashman, manager of Cashman Nursery, Inc. in Owatonna, Minnesota, announced that he had agreed to purchase Sherman Nursery Company by buying all the shares of stock. With the death of president J.F. Christiansen earlier this year, the managing company, Ellis & Ellis, was looking for a new direction. M.R. Cashman was a friend of E.M. Sherman with a comparable nursery in Minnesota and sought to maintain the success and name of the company. He was a veteran nurseryman at age 71, and his son Richard J. Cashman was set to provide the active Sherman nursery management. With the recent sales of about 100 acres along the east edge of Section 11, the Sherman Company holdings totaled approximately 500 acres, concentrated in Section 11. This land is depicted on the 1949 highway map (Figure 39). The company continued to sell stock wholesale for other nurseries, retail direct to customers with 500 full or part time salesmen, and by mail orders through catalogs. The nursery was known across the country for its evergreen trees, complete line of hardy nursery stock, and around 100,000 square feet of greenhouses that provided cut flowers for wholesale and retail trade. Sherman Nursery Company employed around 50 people, with up to 100 in the spring packing season. Cashman took over operations on July 1, 1947 ("M.R. Cashman of Owatonna purchases nursery," *Charles City Daily Press*, March 26, 1947; "Nursery Passes to New Owners," *Mason City Globe-Gazette*, March 28, 1947, 7).

By January 1948, Richard J. Cashman moved to Charles City and started implementing his vision for the growth and development of the Sherman Nursery Company to expand production and sales. Other officers of the company remained familiar, with the 1948 city directory for Charles City listing Richard J. Cashman, president; Clifton C. Smith, vice president; H.J. Deems, vice president; and Morris W. Swartz, secretary and treasurer. The directory noted that they provided hardy nursery stock and cut choice flowers. Riverside Greenhouse at 100 Chautauqua Avenue was the only other local nursery or florist (Polk 1948). Other employees also stayed with the company. In April 1949, Sherman landscape architect Art Snyder was supervising the installation of landscaping around the swimming pool at Lions field in Mason City. The landscaping included 100 shrubs, some of which were planted to screen the filter tank on the north side of the pool ("Beautify Pool Site," *Mason City Globe-Gazette*, April 18, 1949, 7).

The business development of the company evolved in September 1949 when a subsidiary was established for the greenhouse department, known as Cashman Greenhouses, Inc. Sherman Nursery Company also announced a plan to expand production within their facilities, which had been modernized and updated. Around this time, they had 500 acres planted in trees, shrubs, and flowers, and the company continued to specialize in evergreens. In the 100,000 square feet of greenhouses grew roses, carnations, and miscellaneous cut flowers that were shipped to Iowa, Minnesota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin florists. Their packing cellar at 150 by 300 feet remained noted as the largest in the industry. Stock dug in the fall was graded by size and stored in the cellar with violet ray germicidal lamps to guard against disease. The side track of the Charles City Western Railroad provided access from the cellar for shipping. The company sold wholesale to nurseries and florists in every state, and they had 260 agents in Iowa, North Dakota, South Dakota, Missouri, Nebraska, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. Locally, around 50 people were employed with up to 140 in the peak spring season. The stone office building continued to have the administrative offices with cooling and packing facilities for greenhouse products in the basement. Advertisements in December 1950 showed Christmas greens and plants for sale at Cashman's retail store at Gilbert and Illinois.



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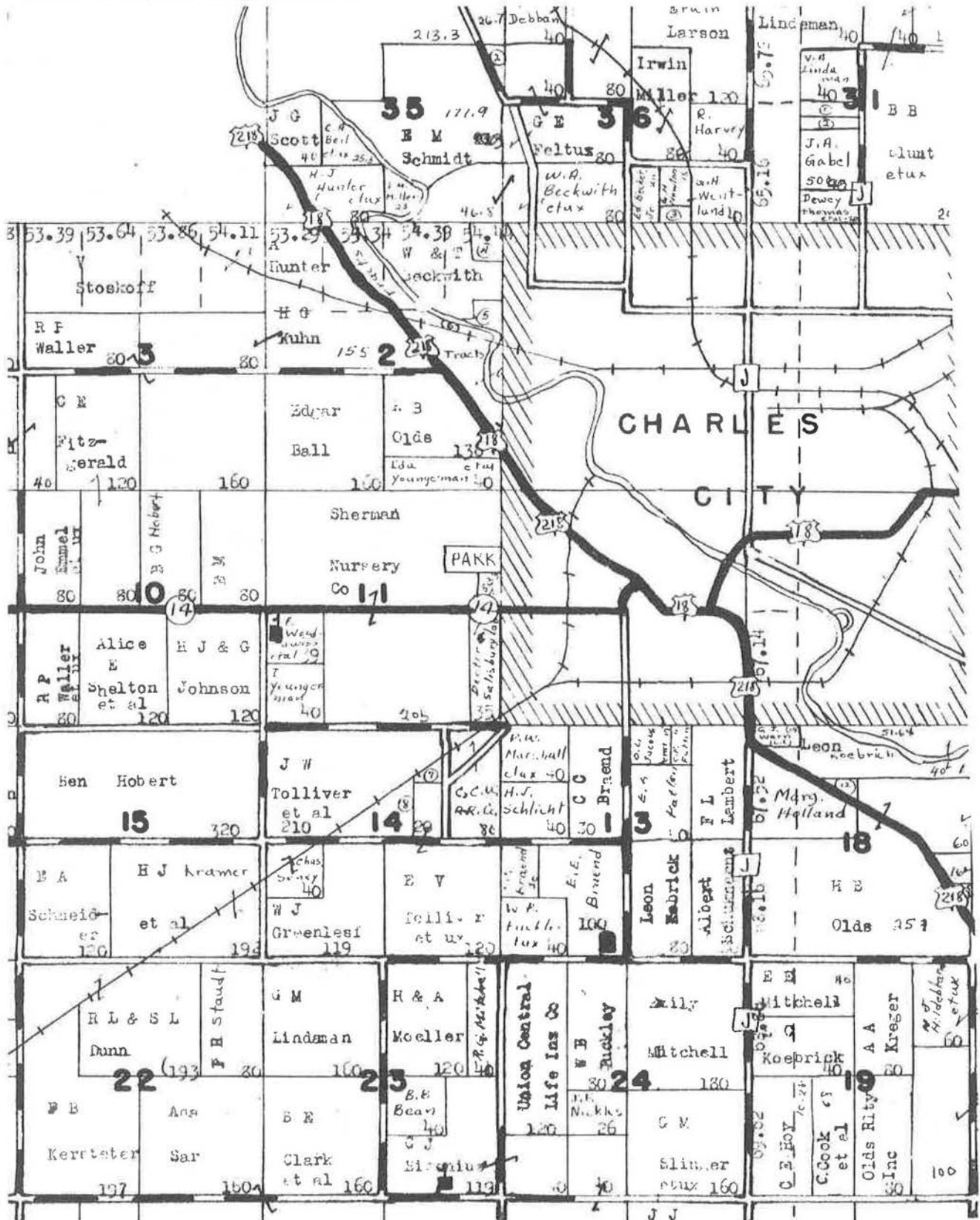


Figure 39. Highway map of Floyd County in 1949.

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Richard J. Cashman continued the development of the Sherman Nursery Company after he bought out his father in August 1951. Cashman's Gift and Flower Shop opened on December 7, 1951, operating with the Sherman Nursery Company on Grove Street. New greenhouses built in the late 1940s brought the total up to 14, followed by two additional greenhouses built in 1950. A third new greenhouse was built for the flower shop in 1951. The three new greenhouses added over 25,000 feet of glass to the grounds. The shop was located in the basement of the stone office building, with the related greenhouse immediately behind it up a flight of stairs from the basement. The shop was decorated in a provincial theme, with plants displayed in the greenhouse. The other greenhouses were open to the public for the gift shop grand opening weekend, with several thousand roses noted to be in bloom. Cashman Greenhouses was one of the largest growers of roses in the Northwest. The new Cashman's Gift and Flower Shop was also covered by *Florist Review* in February 1952 (Figure 40). The article noted that more than 3,000 of the local population of 10,000 attended the grand opening held in December, with a rose given to every woman. The basement storeroom in the office building had been transformed into an attractive, inviting shop with a yellow and brown theme. A short flight of stairs at the rear connected the shop to the adjoining greenhouse ("Cashman Opens Gift, Flower Shop for Inspection," *Charles City Press*, December 6, 1951; "Cashman's Flower Shop," *Florist Review*, February 7, 1952, 23).

The Sherman Nursery Company continued to be prominent locally, statewide, and nationally in this period. The 1952 city directory for Charles City lists Richard J. Cashman, president; Clifton C. Smith, vice president; and Morris W. Swartz, secretary and treasurer. They are the only nursery listed locally. Additionally, two other listings are found at 1300 Grove Street under florists: Cashman Greenhouses, Inc. and Cashman Gift and Flower Shop. The Riverside Greenhouse also continued to be listed at 100 Chautauqua Avenue. An article in the *Council Bluffs Nonpareil* on March 17, 1952 noted that Iowa, California, and New York were the three leading nursery states in the country, with larger nurseries found in Iowa and more smaller nurseries found in the other states. In Iowa, the centers of the nursery industry were found in Shenandoah, Hampton, Charles City, and Hamburg, with the largest number of companies found in Shenandoah. Leading Iowa nursery companies included Mount Arbor, Henry Field, Earl May, Welch Nursery, and Lakes Nursery in Shenandoah; Sherman Nursery Company in Charles City; Earl Ferris Nurseries in Hampton; and Interstate Nurseries in Hamburg. An estimated 2,000 people would be employed in the busy spring packing season across the state. While companies such as Interstate relied on a mail order business, Sherman maintained a system of sales agents for orders. They were also involved in the wholesale business to supply other nurseries, along with two nurseries in Shenandoah ("Spring Means Heavy Rush for Big Iowa Nurseries," *Council Bluffs Nonpareil*, March 17, 1952, 1). Advertisements in various newspapers across Iowa and neighboring states promoted the Sherman Nursery Company's landscape design services and sale of evergreens, roses, shrubs, vines, hedges, bulbs, grapes, fruit trees, shade trees, and ornamental trees through local sales agents.

Photographs from the 1950s show the development of the Sherman Nursery Company through this period. The retail greenhouse offered cut flowers and potted plants for sale (Figure 41). Though the glass upper portion of some greenhouses were rebuilt, they continued to exist in the same locations with four directly west of the office building, two longer ones toward the south (with smokestack of heating plant to south), and the four larger greenhouses then to the west (Figure 42). The large packing cellar is distinctive through this period with the three rows of raised windows along the roof (Figure 43). Through the 1950s, the greenhouses were modified and expanded with two new buildings to the west built by 1957 (Figures 44-46). Land use patterns throughout the land associated with the property appear to have generally remained the same, with land in production for nursery stock (Figure 45). Land previously in nursery stock immediately to the west of the greenhouse was converted for new greenhouse use in this period (Figure 46).

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FLORIST REVIEW

FEBRUARY 7, 1952

23

CASHMAN'S FLOWER SHOP

Holds 3-day Opening

More than 3,000 of the 10,000 population of Charles City, Ia., attended the 3-day opening of Cashman's Gift & Flower Shop, December 7 to 9. A rose was given every woman who came to the opening ceremonies, and a grand prize of a dozen roses every week in 1952 was awarded to a lucky winner.

Prior to the opening, Richard Cashman, owner of Sherman Nursery and Cashman's Gift & Flower Shop, planned and executed a large advertising program. The shop, located several blocks from the business district, had to be brought to the attention of the town.

One week in advance, every family at Charles City received a formal invitation to the opening. Four days previous to the opening, newspaper and radio advertising was launched. Every day the newspaper carried a large ad, with a full-page announcement the day before the opening. Five spots a day were used on the radio for the entire week.

Since the opening, the shop has continued a definite advertising program. A 15-minute program of music, with three commercials, is heard daily at 10:15. The newspaper carries two ads a week; one on Wednesday, the other on Friday.

Provincial Decor

When Mr. Cashman took over the operation of the nursery, the grounds were overgrown and cluttered with debris. The transformation of the drab, basement storeroom into an attractive, inviting shop required thought and planning.

A provincial theme was carried out in shades of mustard yellow with accents of brown. Sunk into one wall is a large glass door refrigerator filled with flowers. On the same wall is an old schoolmaster's desk painted the



Spacious Nursery Office Building Houses Cashman's Flowers and Gifts.

mustard color, in front of which is a tall stool topped with a fabric-covered, ruffled pillow that matches the wallpaper. Full, shirred valances of the matching fabric top the two high glass-shelved windows over a cabinet the length of the room. Display shelves of glass line another wall. A large, central display table is changed constantly with new arrangements of flowers and gifts.

The mustard-colored walls not only give light to the basement room, but also make a perfect background for the flower and gift items. Five brass light fixtures, copies of early American hanging oil lamps, illuminate the room. The floor is covered with light brown asphalt tile.

The new greenhouse, connected to the shop by a short flight of wide, native limestone stairs, is one of the most attractive features of the shop. Displayed there are green and flowering plants, ranging from the smallest to those suitable for floor use. Many

of the unusual containers from the gift shop are planted, adding to the eye appeal of the greenhouse.

Imported items from Europe and Asia are included in the shop's inventory, as well as a large and different collection of plant and flower containers. Gracious service, high-quality gift merchandise and excellent plants and flowers draw visitors from all over the surrounding territory.

Pittsfield, Mass.—James H. Letourneau has become associated with his brother, Joseph L., in the Park Floral Shop, 60 Adams street, having purchased the interest of Howard J. Guinan, who founded the concern. Mr. Guinan has left the florists' business.

Slayton, Minn.—An open house, featuring free roses, contests, prizes and a treasure hunt, was held recently by Mr. and Mrs. Dwaine Linson, owners of Slayton Greenhouse, in celebration of the firm's 10th anniversary.



Attractive Basement Gift Section of Cashman's Gift & Flower Shop.



Stairway Leads to Greenhouse.

Figure 40. Photos and article in *Florist Review* on February 7, 1952.



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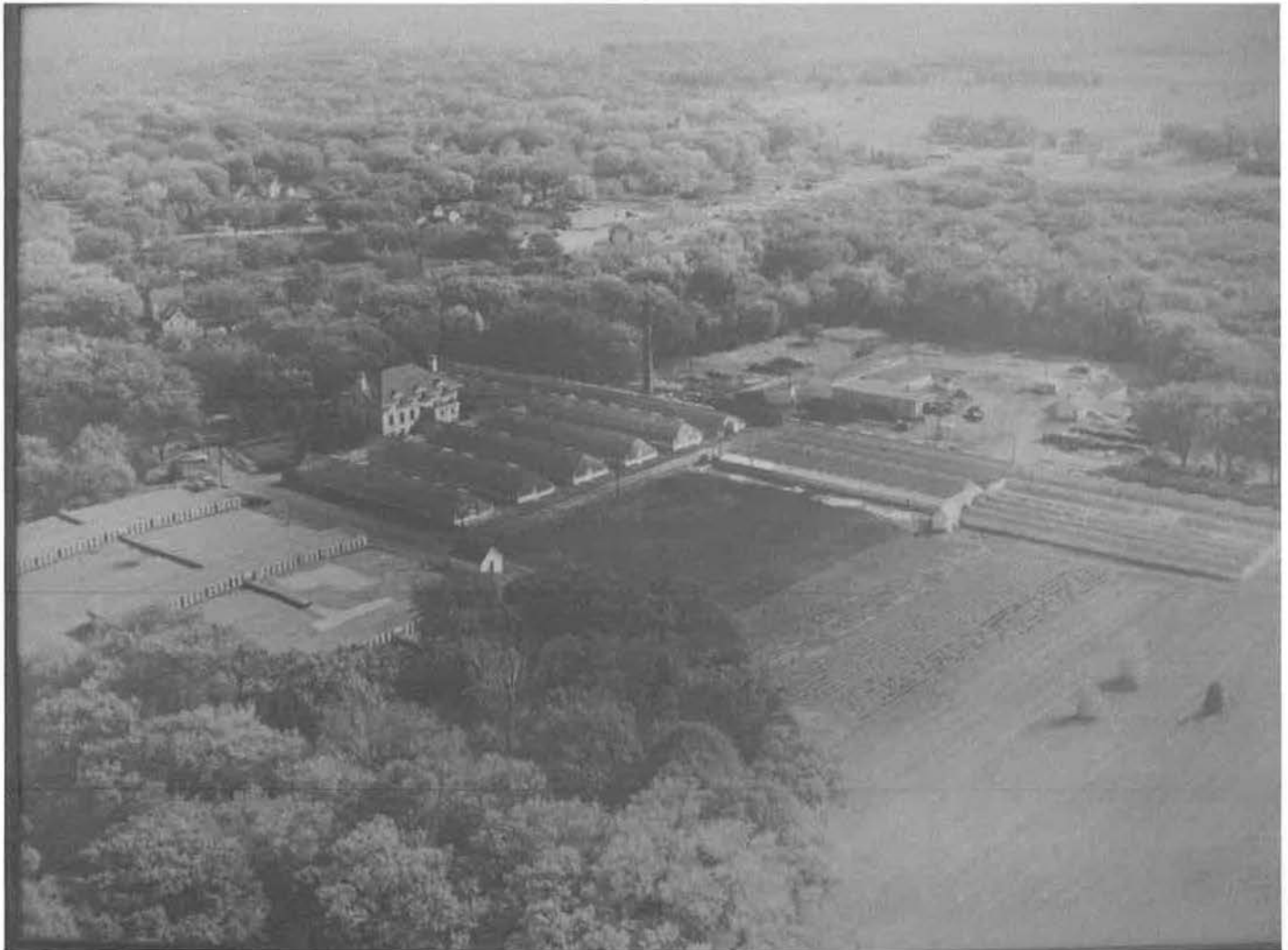
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**Figure 41. Photograph of the retail greenhouse around 1951 (Siems collection).**

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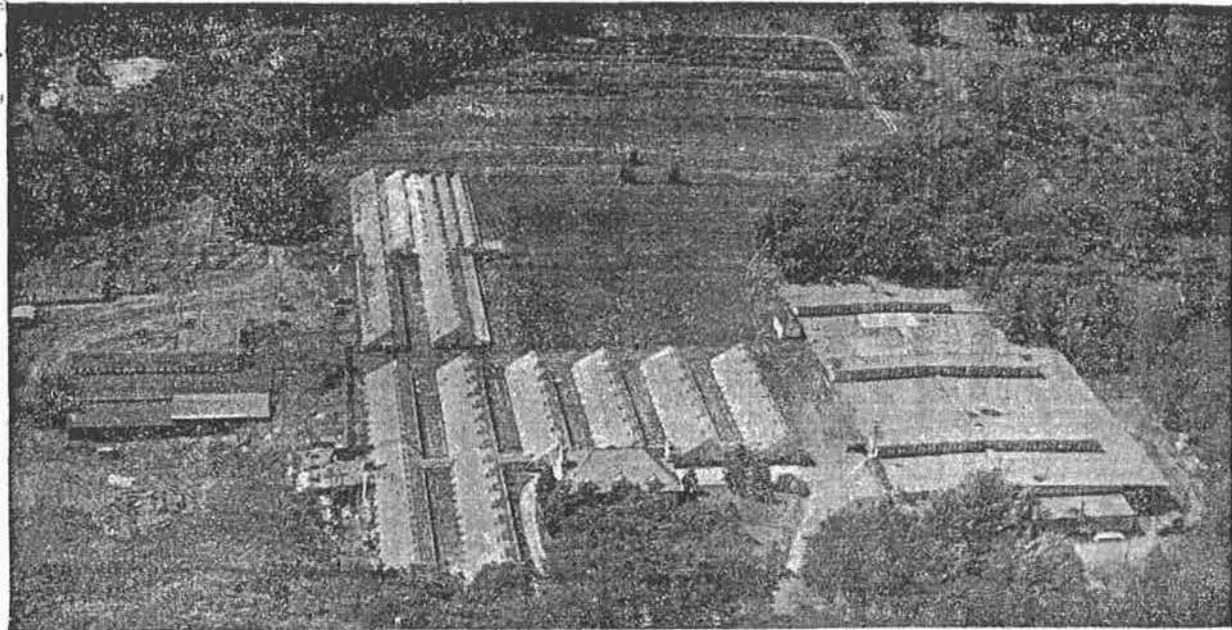
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**Figure 42. Aerial view of Sherman Nursery Company looking southeast in early 1950s (collection in office of Sherman Nursery).**

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**ONE OF OLDEST**—This view of Sherman Nursery Co. from the air shows one of Charles City's oldest industries. The nursery, founded 70 years ago by E. M. Sherman on a small tract of land, now includes 500 acres in the southwest corner of the

city. An additional 250 acres is leased for nursery production. Cashman Greenhouse, a subsidiary corporation of Sherman's, operates over 125,000 square feet of greenhouse space.

**Figure 43. Aerial view of Sherman Nursery Company looking west around 1954 (Charles City Daily Press, FCHS files).**



**Figure 44. Aerial view of the Sherman Nursery Company looking west in the 1950s (Siems collection).**



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Figure 45. Aerial photograph of Sherman Nursery Company property on August 7, 1957 with 2010 boundary overlaid for holdings in the north half of Section 11 and northwest corner of Section 12 (Floyd County BZN-3T-190, Map Collections, University of Iowa).

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**Figure 46. Aerial photograph of Sherman Nursery Company property on August 7, 1957 in Section 12 (Floyd County BZN-3T-190, Map Collections, University of Iowa).**

*Packing cellar (old roof still on – demolished/replaced) – top – completed in 1907*  
*Office with vault (extant) – right – completed in 1906 – bridges visible in trees over creek at right (1910, c.1902, 1910)*  
*Greenhouses (demolished/replaced) – from top to bottom – completed in 1908, 1906, 1906, 1906, c.1902, 1902 – some rebuilt in late 1940s-50s - greenhouses to west – construction in 1950s, 1914, 1924 (also demolished/replaced)*  
*Carpenter/blacksmith shop (extant/alterd) – built around 1906 – attached lumber sheds demolished*  
*Tool house at southwest corner (extant) – building to south is demolished*

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The nursery industry in general evolved through the 1950s with changes on several fronts. The Association of American Nurserymen launched the "Plant America" campaign in 1950 to encourage rural and urban beautification with efforts praised through landscaping awards. This period also saw a rise in container growing, which started in California and spread across the country. There proved quickly to be a market there for young, inexpensive but healthy plants in metal containers, and many nurseries began to offer these products. The containers helped sustain the root system better through the summer months than burlap, which tended to break down. The construction of the interstate highway system starting in 1956 changed preferences for shipment of stock, with a rise in transcontinental trucking over the traditional railroad shipments. Tractors and mechanized machinery also replaced horses and traditional implements in this period. These changes continued into 1960s. Problems during this time included rising freight rates, competition from government nurseries, and the need for better industry research. By the late 1950s, there was an increase in specifications of individual ornamental shrubs and plants for particular locations as the variety of plants available continued to increase. Books on landscaping and gardening encourage designers and home owners to integrate landscape plans with pools, walls, walkways, decks, and other hardscape elements, all supplied from the nursery company. This approach evolved into modern design-build companies (Higginbotham, June 15, 1990, 48-50).

Sherman Nursery Company evolved along these industry-wide patterns through the 1950s as well. The benefit of landscaping for "growing" property values was advertised in newspapers across Iowa. According to a Sherman Nursery advertisement in the *Cedar Rapids Gazette* on September 12, 1954, attractive landscaping would add up to 12% to city property values, as well as increase the comfort and beauty of farm and city homes ("Growing Property Values with Sherman Nursery Landscaping," *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, September 12, 1954, 50). During December, Christmas trees were offered through their Christmas Store at 813 E. Riverside Drive in Charles City. An article in 1954, when Sherman Nursery had operated for 70 years in Charles City, noted that the company owned 500 acres of land with another 250 acres rented for nursery production. Cashman Greenhouses operated as a subsidiary, with over 125,000 square feet of greenhouses that contained roses, carnations and other cut flowers. The stone office building had offices for both entities, with a gift shop in the basement. Since 1947 when most of cultivating and farm work was done with horses and mules, the company had modernized operations with a fleet of 14 tractors and caterpillars, as well as 10 large trucks, to prepare soil, cultivate, dig, and distribute nursery products. The original large storage cellar continued to be one of the largest and best in the industry. Over the winter months, dug products were carefully inspected, graded, and labeled for spring shipping. The company employed 75 people year round with over 100 in the shipping season ("Sherman Nursery Has Served Floyd County for 70 Years," *Charles City Daily Press*, 1954, in business file at Floyd County Historical Society).

Officers of the Sherman Nursery Company in 1954 included M.R. Cashman, chair of board; Richard J. Cashman, president and general manager; Clifton C. Smith, vice president and general sales manager; and Morris W. Swartz, secretary and treasurer. Clifton C. Smith, or "Smitty," had 45 years of service with the company, working his way up from assistant bookkeeper when he started working for E.M. Sherman in 1912. Over his tenure with the company, it had grown to wholesale trade of young trees and other plant stock to nurseries in 48 states and retail sales to public through over 400 retail sales men and ladies ("Long Years at Nursery Have Been Enjoyable for Smith," *Charles City Daily Press*, 1954, in business file at Floyd County Historical Society). The 1957 city directory listed the officers as Richard J. Cashman, president; Clifton C. Smith, vice president; Morris W. Swartz, secretary and treasurer for the Sherman Nursery Company, Cashman Gift and Flower Shop, and Cashman Greenhouses, Inc. The companies also shared the address of 1300 Grove Street. Riverside Greenhouse (E.L. Willson) continued to operate as the other florist in Charles City at 100 Chautauqua (Polk 1957).

The focus of Sherman Nursery Company in the 1950s shifted to ornamental and flowering shrubs, shade trees, and ground covers. In the late 1940s, the traditional focus on evergreens was shifted to the other nursery stock. Though some evergreens continued to be grown and sold, the numbers were significantly



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reduced over the previous decades. Varieties of ornamental and flowering shrubs, shade trees, and ground covers began to be expanded in the 1950s, a trend continued at Sherman Nursery in the 1960s. The greenhouses continued to be utilized for growing cut flowers and potted plants, though this was a small aspect of the greater Sherman operations in this period. Greenhouse production included poinsettias, Easter lilies, geraniums, and other potted plants. Through the 1950s, over 400 sales agents continued to market Sherman products direct to retail customers and by visiting homeowners door-to-door. At the same time, the wholesale business was increasing to garden centers, nurseries, and landscapers. By the late 1950s, this business strategy was adopted as the focus of the company's operations, with sales agents discontinued in 1961. Production of boxes for shipping stock shifted primarily to the large storage/shipping cellar by the 1950s. This production of boxes on the grounds of Sherman Nursery would end in the early 1960s, with boxes and containers purchased elsewhere for use of shipping nursery stock (Siems 2010).

Improvements to the physical facilities at Sherman Nursery Company and Cashman Greenhouses continued in the late 1950s. In 1958, the original distinctive roof on the packing cellar completed in 1907 was removed (Figures 47-49). The wood roof with rows of raised windows was demolished and replaced with a roof of pre-stressed concrete beams and forty concrete columns. At this time, the packing cellar was noted as the largest single building of this type in the country, measuring as long as a football field. Sherman Nursery was recognized throughout the country for the quality of its nursery stock, and the packing cellar was a vital part of the operations ("Vast 'Cellar' Provides Space for Handling Nursery Stock," *Charles City Press*, June 21, 1958; *Looking Back* c.2000). In a letter to customers on July 20, 1959, Cashman Greenhouses, Inc. wrote that they were working to overhaul their operations. Over 25,000 square feet of greenhouses had been demolished and replaced with 31,500 square feet of new greenhouses with glass and iron frames. More greenhouses were slated for replacement next summer. Thus, production of cut flowers was curtailed during these improvements. With the new greenhouses, the company planned to expand to additional pot plant production as well as seize other opportunities envisioned for their retail and wholesale departments. Robert H. Van Schoick had also been hired as general manager of Cashman Greenhouses (Siems collection).



**Figure 47. Demolition of roof of 1907 packing cellar in 1958 (Siems collection).**

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**Figure 48. Demolition of roof of 1907 packing cellar in 1958 (Siems collection).**



**Figure 49. New concrete roof for 1907 packing cellar in 1958 (Siems collection).**

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While Richard J. Cashman had only been associated with the company since 1947, he retained officers with a longer history with Sherman Nursery Company. Clifton C. Smith served briefly as president in the early 1960s. In January 1961, Richard J. Cashman, chair of the board, announced that Clifton C. Smith had been appointed as president. He had worked for Sherman Nursery Company for 49 years of its 76 year history, since age 18, including working for E.M. Sherman for two decades. He was elected secretary on November 7, 1925, and he became vice president on July 14, 1947. Additionally, he was past president of Iowa Nurserymen's Association, Western Association of Nurserymen, and U.S. Retail Nursery Association, a two term president of Iowa State Horticultural Society, secretary of the Western Association of Nurserymen for 12 years, and secretary of the Iowa association for seven years. At this time, treasurer Morris W. Swartz had worked for Sherman Nursery since 1921. He had been appointed assistant treasurer in 1937 and then treasurer in 1946. These men had seen the renovation of nearly all the greenhouses by Cashman Greenhouses, Inc. over the last few years. Production had been expanded from roses and carnations to a full line of flowering pot plants, green plants, and miscellaneous cut flowers to keep pace with changing market conditions. Leo J. Girard had also been hired as general manager of Cashman Greenhouses. Helen L. Cashman, wife of Richard, served as secretary in this period ("C.C. Smith is Named President of Nursery Here," *Charles City Press*, January 4, 1961; "C.C. Smith named head of Sherman Nursery Co.," *Mason City Globe-Gazette*, January 5, 1961, 17).

Officers and owners would shift over the next few years as the renovation and reconstruction efforts were finished throughout the Sherman Nursery Company grounds. In 1962, Clifton C. Smith retired from Sherman Nursery Company and started his own nursery at age 68. Richard J. Cashman then returned to the office of president as well as chair of the board. Helen L. Cashman continued as secretary, and Morris W. Swartz continued as treasurer. The company's payroll in 1962 was \$580,000, including \$150,000 to salesmen and others outside of Charles City. They employed 65 to 100 locally, depending on the season, with peaks in early spring and late fall. They had plans to build 38,000 cubic feet of refrigerated warehouse space. The business strategy evolved from over 400 independent salesmen in seven states in the 1950s to a focus on selling wholesale to garden centers, landscapers and other nurseries in the early 1960s (Todd Davis, "Sherman Faces Bare Facts," *Nursery Management and Production*, September 2006, 26-28; "Clifton C. Smith," *Waterloo Courier*, June 3, 1970, 22; "Sherman Nursery," newspaper article, no date, in business file at Floyd County Historical Society; Hanson and Hull 1996: 119; Siems 2010).

In 1964, Richard Cashman became sole owner of the Sherman Nursery Company and its subsidiary Cashman Greenhouses, Inc. In July 1965, the latter then became R.J.C. Corporation, established for flowers, pot plants, and supplies. By 1965, the entire physical plant had been refurbished, rebuilt, or constructed new since 1948. The company utilized 1,000 acres of land for nursery stock and had four acres under glass in greenhouses. They employed 60 people year round with 100-150 people in peak seasons and through the summer. The stone packing cellar with its new roof continued to be used for storing and grading the deciduous stock dug in the fall, with temperatures of 38 to 40 degrees maintained. It also continued to be the largest single packing cellar in the nursery industry. Sherman Nursery Company shipped stock to nearly every state, with shipments to Alaska significantly increasing over the last few years (Hanson and Hull 1996: 119; *Looking Back* c.2000; H.P. Stafford, "Nurseryman has "growing" business indeed in spring," *Mason City Globe Gazette*, May 15, 1965, 3). Over the last 15 years, Richard Cashman had led Sherman Nursery Company to adapt and prosper with changing nursery conditions, positioning the company for a strong future through the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.



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### ***Later years of the Sherman Nursery Company, 1965-2012***

The Sherman Nursery Company continued to operate in Charles City under two owners from 1965 until 2012 and generally under the leadership of Dale Siems. With Richard J. Cashman in place as sole owner and president, Dale Siems became wholesale manager in 1966 and then vice president and general manager in 1969. In 1975, Siems then became president of the Sherman Nursery Company. Business at this time focused on wholesale sales to independent garden centers, nurseries, and landscapers. In 1983, negotiations began for Bailey Nurseries of St. Paul, Minnesota to purchase Sherman Nursery Company, with the official transfer of ownership in February 1984. Though Bailey owned the company, Sherman Nursery Company continued to operate as an independent nursery and business, with finances separate from the parent company. Dale Siems remained as president of Sherman Nursery Company in Charles City under the new ownership. Building improvements and changes were made throughout the property in the 1980s. In 1991, Sherman Nursery was recognized as one of the largest wholesale nurseries in North America, serving over 2,500 garden centers and landscapers throughout the United States, Canada, Holland, and Japan. In 2007, Dale Siems retired, after working 50 years for the Sherman Nursery Company and serving 32 years as its president. Over the next two years, Bailey Nurseries then consolidated various aspects of Sherman's operations into the parent company. In 2009, 125 years after its start in Charles City, Sherman Nursery Company closed as an independent company, becoming solely a division of Bailey Nurseries. Growing operations were reduced on the 800 acres that continued to be associated with the company to about 40 acres, with the number of employees dropped to around 30 (Siems 2010). In fall 2011, Bailey Nurseries announced plans to close this location at end of the next growing season, and business was wrapped up in Charles City by the end of 2012.

The nursery industry improved across the country by the middle of the 1960s with economic conditions rebounding and new house construction on the rise creating a demand for landscaping. The Federal Highway Beautification Act of 1965 created additional demand for nursery products, ending the surplus of stock of the previous years. Technology in the industry evolved in this period with overhead irrigation evolving to drop systems and later trickle systems (Higginbotham, June 15, 1990, 53). New names took leading roles at the Sherman Nursery Company with Richard J. Cashman as sole owner. Leo J. Girard was appointed executive vice president of the Sherman Nursery Company and its subsidiaries (including R.J.C. Corporation) in 1965, and he became general manager in August 1966. Dale Siems, who had started with the company as a credit manager in 1955, became the wholesale manager in 1966 and then took over as vice president and general manager in 1969 ("Charles City Promotion," *Waterloo Daily Courier*, August 21, 1966, 21; Buehner, Kristin, "50 Years, Still Going Strong," *Mason City Globe Gazette*, February 21, 2005). In 1969, the Sherman Nursery Company had 964 acres for nursery stock and farm crops, and the R.J.C. Corporation had over 150,000 square feet of greenhouses. Officers included Richard J. Cashman, chair of board and president; Dale Siems, vice president; Helen L. Cashman, secretary; M.W. Swartz, treasurer. Trees and plants were shipped to all states, including Alaska, as well as Canada and Mexico. The acres of land owned were located within three miles of the original Sherman Nursery holdings in Section 11 and 12 (Hanson and Hull 1996: 119; *Looking Back* c.2000; "Sherman stock growing on all parts of the continent," *Charles City Press*, October 15, 1969; Siems 2010). Dale Siems notes that Richard Cashman considered liquidating these interests in Charles City in 1969, but he decided to continue operations with Siems as active manager (Siems 2010).

The aerial photograph of the Sherman Nursery Company in 1971 shows the development of the property over the previous ten to twenty years. The overall landscape of the acres associated with the company remained similar to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The land throughout Section 11 was utilized for growing nursery stock (Figure 50). The buildings were concentrated on the portion of land owned in Section 12 at the east end of the property (Figure 51). The three bridges over Sherman Creek remain, as well as the 1906 stone office building. The packing cellar, with new roof from 1958, stood at the north end of the complex. The new greenhouses occupied the land to the west and south of the office building, standing where earlier greenhouses were originally built nearly 70 years ago.

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**Figure 50. Aerial photograph of Sherman Nursery Company property on July 16, 1971 with 2010 boundary overlaid for holdings in the north half of Section 11 and northwest corner of Section 12 (Floyd County BZN-1MM-218, Map Collections, University of Iowa).**

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**Figure 51. Aerial photograph of Sherman Nursery Company property on July 16, 1971 in Section 12 (Floyd County BZN-3T-190, Map Collections, University of Iowa).**

*Packing cellar (new roof – later demolished/replaced in 1991) – top – completed in 1907  
Office with vault (extant) – right – completed in 1906 – three bridges visible in trees over creek at right (1910, c.1902, 1910)  
Greenhouses – first rebuilt from 1948 to 1965, as depicted here – later demolished/replaced again in 1980s-90s  
Carpenter/blacksmith shop (extant/alterd) – built around 1906 – attached lumber sheds demolished  
Tool house at southwest corner (extant) – building to south is demolished*



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The nursery industry continued to evolve across the country in the 1970s. With environmental concerns growing in this period, the Association for American Nurserymen launched their "Green Survival" program. This initiative stressed plants' role in buffering noise pollution, trapping air pollutants, cooling the earth, etc. Through the 1970s, there was a rise in horticultural distribution centers. These centers acted as a middle man between growers and wholesale customers. This practice of "rewholesaling" started in the middle of the 1950s but gained popularity in the 1970s. Interior house plants became more common in this decade as well. Increased demand for nursery products and poor weather conditions resulted in stock shortages by the late 1970s. National nursery production and sales increased significantly from \$283.6 million in 1970 to \$1.15 billion in 1982 (Higginbotham, June 15, 1990, 52-53).

After working for Sherman Nursery Company for 20 years, Dale Siems became president of the company in 1975. Business at this time focused on wholesale sales to independent garden centers, nurseries, and landscapers. Production increased on new acres bought by the company, and additional space was required for storing and shipping. Thus, a new 150 by 200 foot warehouse building was constructed in 1976 (Figure 52). The cut flower and potted plant business in the greenhouses had decreased significantly, and profits were eaten up by rising fuel costs and the deteriorating condition of the greenhouses. The basement of the office building stopped being used for cut flowers around 1975. Thus, this aspect of the operations was ended in the 1970s, with the subsidiary R.J.C. Corporation liquidated in 1981. The greenhouses shifted in use to starting small plants that were later transplanted to open fields. Ornamental shrubs, flowering shrubs, and ground covers become the focus of the local nursery land by 1980. At this time, Sherman Nursery began contract growing of shade trees in Oregon, where they fared better with the longer growing season (Siems 2010; Hanson and Hull 1996: 119; *Looking Back* c.2000). An aerial photograph shows the extent of the Sherman Nursery facilities by the early 1980s (Figure 53). Greenhouses remain to the west and south of the main stone office, as well as in the second row to the west. Three new hoopouses appear to have been built in the open corner of this second row. The carpenter/blacksmith shop with the attached lumber shop, heating plant with smokestack, and other small buildings were depicted to the south of the greenhouses. The original packing cellar with its 1958 roof as well as the new storage building with arch roof built in 1976 extended across the north side of the building complex.

The Sherman Nursery Company entered into the last chapter in its history with the purchase of the company by Bailey Nurseries of St. Paul, Minnesota. Negotiations began and plans announced in 1983, with the official transfer of ownership in February 1984. Bailey Nurseries decided to leave the Sherman name in place, as it had been associated with the company for 100 years. At this time, Bailey owned a 1,200 acre operation near St. Paul and an 800 acre operation near Portland, Oregon. Though Bailey owned the company, Sherman Nursery Company continued to operate as an independent nursery and business, with finances separate from the parent company. Sales at Sherman were around \$3 million annually in 1984. The sale resulted in an extensive program to renovate and update the facilities at Sherman Nursery. The office was carefully rehabilitated with historic features retained and restored in 1986. Painted woodwork was stripped and restored, and decorative wood windows were retained and painted. At the same time, the original heating plant and most of the original greenhouses were demolished and replaced. Four newer greenhouses were updated, and four additional greenhouses were built. In 1987, a third packing/shipping facility was built to the west of the one constructed in 1976. Storage area along this row of three massive buildings along the north edge of the property was increased to 2.5 million cubic feet (*History of Sherman Nursery Company* c.1990; Hanson and Hull 1996: 119; *Looking Back* c.2000; "Sherman Nursery continues building a bright future," *Charles City Press*, August 11, 1988, 2; Siems 2010).

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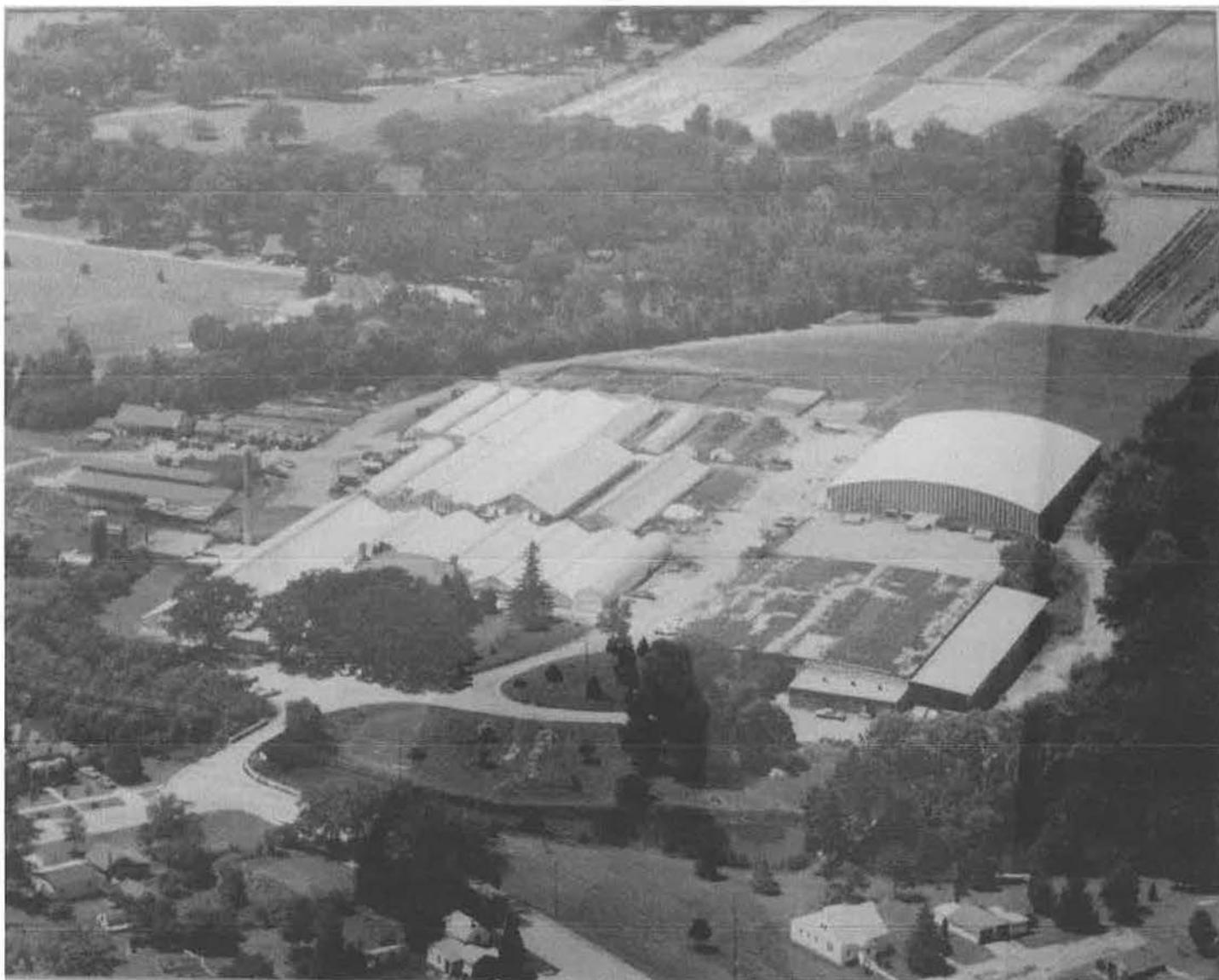
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**Figure 52. Buildings associated with Sherman Nursery Company in 1976 with new packing/storage building under construction, looking southwest (Siems collection).**

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**Figure 53. Buildings associated with Sherman Nursery Company in late 1970s or early 1980s, looking southwest (collection in Sherman Nursery office).**



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Recovery from the economic recession and high interest rates of the early 1980s began by 1983 and the nursery industry saw full demand for products again by 1985. In this period, there also became an increased demand for larger plants and trees, creating more of an instant landscape for a house or property. Trees were also increasingly planted for shade or as windbreaks. Century old problems such as droughts and labor shortages plagued the industry in the late 1980s. Technology introduced new insecticides and Integrated Pest Management. Within the office, new technology brought computerized job estimating and bookkeeping. Rewholesale centers, popular in the 1970s, became integral in the nursery product distribution pattern. By 1990, nursery stock sales reached nearly \$2 billion with an array of products and services (Higginbotham, June 15, 1990, 53-54).

In 1988, Sherman Nursery Company expected sales to reach \$7 million, with increase of 10% to 20% per year since 1984. The company served over 2,000 retail garden centers and wholesalers across the United States and Canada, with business concentrated in the northern one-third of the country. Fifty percent of their business was in Iowa, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Missouri. Products included flowering shrubs, vines, shade trees, evergreens, ground cover, and fruit trees suitable for winter climate. About 1.5 million cuttings were made each spring from plants and placed in greenhouses. The company owned around 500 acres, with 350 acres planted with nursery stock. Sludge from the Charles City waste treatment plant was mixed with the soil every three years for fertilizer. Traditional digging continued from mid-October through November after several frosts, with trees and shrubs dug, graded, and packed for spring shipments. The spring shipping season from six to eight weeks around April continued to be the other busy time of the year ("Sherman Nursery continues building a bright future," *Charles City Press*, August 11, 1988, 2).

A brochure on the history of the company published around 1990 noted that the Sherman Nursery Company was one of the largest wholesale nurseries in North America at this time. They served over 2,000 retail garden centers and landscapers in the United States and Canada, and the company had over 50 full time employees. Their three storage and shipping buildings covered over 91,000 square feet, providing over 2.1 million cubic feet of controlled storage. Increases in production and need for additional storage space necessitated the construction of a third storage building in 1989, measuring 268 by 150 feet. This building was located to the west of the 1976 building, continuing an expansion of this land use along the north edge of the property. Over 350 acres were planted with quality northern grown nursery stock, with an additional 250 acres in rotation with farm or green manure crops. Over 1.6 million rooted cuttings were in production in modern greenhouses, which included automatic mist, fertilizing, and pest control systems (*History of Sherman Nursery Company* c.1990; Siems 2010).

A special edition of *American Nurserymen* on June 15, 1990 included profiles of nursery companies in continuous existence for 100 years across the country. Sherman Nursery Company was among 39 nurseries across the country that had operated for at least 100 years in 1990. Though the company changed ownership, many employees and officers remained with the company through the years, such as C.C. Smith who worked for Sherman Nursery under three separate owners from 1912 to 1962, and Morris W. Swartz who worked as treasurer/comptroller from 1923 to 1983. The current president, Dale Siems, retained his position through the sale of the company to Bailey Nurseries in 1983 (Block, June 15, 1990, 92). Two other companies in Iowa were included on this list, the Ferris Nursery and Florists in Hampton (founded 1869, now closed) and Mount Arbor Nurseries in Shenandoah (founded 1875, still operating in 2013). Solomon Ferris founded Ferris Nursery in Bristow, Iowa in 1869, and the family moved it to Hampton in 1899. The company evolved from a mail order nursery to nursery, garden center, and floral operations by 1990, continuing to be run by the Ferris family. Mount Arbor Nursery was founded in 1875, and it was sold to the Welch family in 1891, who continued to operate it in 1990. It had been one of the earliest retail nurseries, though it no longer sold plants to the public in 1990. Illinois and Kansas had the most century nurseries of any state, with five in existence in each state. Nine other operated in the Midwestern states of Ohio, Indiana, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Missouri. Thus, half of the century nurseries were found in the Midwest in 1990. Eastern states had six century

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nurseries (PA, CT, NY, VA, MD). Seven century nurseries were found in the South (TN, KY, FL, GA, MS), and four century nurseries were found in the West (CA, WA, OR) (Block, June 15, 1990, 83-87).

The landmark packing shed, one of the original buildings associated with Sherman Nursery Company, was demolished and replaced in 1991. The stone walls of the original 150 by 300 foot packing cellar (with the new roof structure from 1958) were deteriorating. On July 26, 1991, the building was demolished. The company built a new 150 by 300 foot building with prestressed concrete with Behlon roof in its place. With this construction, the company had spent over \$5 million in building improvements since Bailey Nurseries gained ownership. According to president and general manager Dale Siems, the company was optimistic about future success and growth. They had over 350 acres in active production, with an additional 250 acres in rotation. Sherman Nursery was recognized as one of the largest wholesale nurseries in North America, serving over 2,500 garden centers and landscapers throughout the United States, Canada, Holland, and Japan and employing 60 people full-time (David Smith, "Sherman Nursery bids farewell to a century-old piece of its history," *Charles City Press*, July 27, 1991, 1-2).

Sherman Nursery Company continued this strong tradition of business success through quality nursery stock through the 1990s. In 1994, they bought the former warehouse of Allied Products warehouse at 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Cleveland for their stock. Sales reached \$7.6 million in 1994. In 1995, the company was noted as the third largest nursery in the United States in number of retailers supplied, as well as the oldest continuously operated business in Charles City. Their growing methods evolved with new technology, with gravel beds utilized for bare root stock permitting digging and sale as bare root plants year round. They also expanded to grow and market container stock. In the busy six to eight weeks of the spring season, they distributed 150 to 200 large semi-loads of nursery stock to around 2,800 retailers in 36 states. Sherman Nursery carried a complete line of ornamental flowering shrubs and evergreens. The number of greenhouses locally increased to 20 by 1996. The company grew and sold shade and ornamental trees, flowering shrubs, vines, peonies, and perennials, both bare root and container, to landscapers and garden centers in the northern two-thirds of the United States in 1997. Sherman Nursery Company had reached a national market through semi-monthly advertisements in the *American Nurseryman* since 1932. The company success was attributed to operating with integrity by meeting or exceeding customer expectations, encouraging personal and professional development, providing leadership in community and industry, protecting and enhancing the environment, and improving profitability through efficiency and team work (Teresa Forbes. "A growing concern," *Mason City Globe-Gazette*, April 2, 1995, sec C, p 1; Hanson and Hull 1996: 119; "Integrity is a valued industry tradition," Sherman Nursery Company ad in *American Nurseryman*, September 1, 1997).

The company brochure published around 2000 noted that Sherman Nursery Company continued to be one of largest wholesale nurseries in North America, employing over 60 people full-time and serving over 3,000 retail garden centers and landscapers through United States and Canada. The grounds in Charles City had more than 20 greenhouses, which produced over 2 million softwood cuttings and 250,000 three-and-one-half-inch potted liners annually. A container processing building had been added in fall 1999 further west of the earlier buildings. The "beautifully preserved main office building, warehouse, and various structures" were noted as "a symbol of the rich heritage and firm foundation on which the Sherman Nursery Company was founded" (*Looking Back* c.2000).

In 2005, Dale Siems celebrated his 50<sup>th</sup> year working for the Sherman Nursery Company as well as his 30<sup>th</sup> year serving as its president at age 78. He started on March 2, 1955 as a credit manager, not knowing anything about the nursery business. When Bailey Nurseries agreed to buy the company in 1984, they stipulated that Siems would continue to serve the Sherman Nursery in his previous capacity. Over his decades of management, the company grew to a large part of the bare-root nursery business in the United States. It evolved from a business in which independent door-to-door salesmen sold landscaping directly to homeowners, to a wholesale company supplying ornamental flowering shrubs, shade trees, vines, ground covers and evergreens to garden centers in 40 states. Annual sales now reached \$13 million. Additionally,



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Dale Siems was active in the broader industry, as a member of the Western Association of Nurserymen (since 1975); president of the Iowa Nursery and Landscape Association (1980), president of the American Nursery and Credit Association (1985), president of the Wholesale Nursery Growers of America (1990), and president of the Iowa Arboretum (Kristin Buehner, "50 Years, Still Growing Strong," *Mason City Globe Gazette*, February 21, 2005; Siems 2010).



**Figure 54. Buildings associated with Sherman Nursery Company in early 2000s, looking northeast (Siems collection).**

Dale Siems and the Sherman Nursery were also highlighted in the national trade journal *Nursery Management and Production* in September 2006. The company continued to market field grown, bare-root nursery stock successfully, a product that they had promoted since founding in 1884. The core of their business was wholesale sales to smaller, "mom and pop" nurseries rather than "big box" stores. National trends resulted in higher demand for container grown stock, and Sherman had increased this aspect of their business. With rising fuel costs, Sherman Nursery's centralized location in the country permitted them to supply garden centers at a lower cost than competitors. The heavier container products were primarily sold on a regional basis, while the bare-root stock, a lighter product, was shipped across the country. Sherman Nursery had launched an educational campaign with a booklet "Bareroot Basics" for nurseries, landscapers, and landscape architects to outline the advantages of bare-root stock, as well as methods for handling, storing, pruning,



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planting, and selecting this stock. The company had expanded its nursery stock to include 1 ½" to 1 ¾" trees sold as bare-root products, which was less expensive than container stock (Todd Davis, "Sherman Faces Bare Facts," *Nursery Management and Production*, September 2006, 26-28). While Dales Siems continued to enjoy leading the company at age 80 in 2006, his time to retire arrived in 2007.

With the retirement of long-time president and manager Dales Siems, Bailey Nurseries consolidated operations at Sherman Nursery Company into this parent company. The company had operated as an independent wholesale supplier of nursery stock under the ownership of Bailey Nurseries since 1984. David Fuchs, former accountant and comptroller, stepped in as president of the company in June 2007. Plans to consolidate various aspects of Sherman's operations into Bailey Nurseries were announced in October 2008, the transition extended through June 2009. Terri McEnaney, President of Bailey Nurseries, noted that "For well over a century the employees of Sherman have given their customers quality plants and superior service, setting the highest standard for Bailey Nurseries to uphold." Production facilities remained in Charles City, and the grounds and greenhouses continued to be used for growing nursery stock until 2012. However, the 65 workers and 20-25 seasonal workers were reduced significantly (Mark Wicks, "Sherman Nursery parent company to consolidate local operations, change name," *Charles City Press*, October 8, 2008, 1). David Fuchs guided the Sherman Nursery Company through the end of the sales year in summer 2009 and consolidation of the company into Bailey Nurseries. Dale Siems also continued to serve as a consultant for local operations through the end of 2009. In 2009, Sherman Nursery Company officially closed as an independent company after 125 years of operations in Charles City, becoming solely a division of Bailey Nurseries. Growing operations were reduced on the 800 acres that continued to be associated with the company to about 40 acres, with the number of employees dropped to around 30 (Siems 2010).

The Sherman Division of Bailey Nurseries continued to operate in Charles City until the end of 2012. In September 2011, Bailey Nurseries announced that the slowdown in the housing market had resulted in less demand for landscaping and that they would reduce their production by closing their Charles City location. The number of full-time employees in Charles City had already been reduced from 65 in 2008 to 25 in 2011 ("Charles City nursery will close its doors," *Waterloo Courier*, September 28, 2011). Bailey Nurseries harvested their last full crop in fall 2012 and then closed operations in Iowa. According to their website, Bailey Nurseries is a fourth-generation family-owned nursery serving customers throughout the U.S. and Canada. They are one of the largest wholesale nurseries in the United States, with products distributed by more than 4,500 independent garden centers, landscapers, growers and re-wholesalers. Their main offices and growing fields are located in Newport, Minnesota (just outside St. Paul), and they also operate nurseries in Yamhill and Sauvie Island, Oregon; Sunnyside, Washington; and Onarga, Illinois ([www.baileynurseries.com](http://www.baileynurseries.com)). At this time, Bailey Nurseries continues to own the property in Charles City, with no definitive future plans for the buildings or land. The office building is currently vacant, with plumbing winterized.

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*History of Floyd County, Iowa*. Indianapolis, IN: B.F. Bowen and Company, 1917.

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*Looking Back...A Complete History of Sherman Nursery Company*. Company brochure. Sherman Nursery Company, c.2000.

McAlester, Virginia and Lee. *A Field Guide to American House*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997.

Sherman Nursery Company Historic District  
Name of Property

Floyd County, Iowa  
County and State

Newspaper articles, various titles and dates as cited in the text. In the collection of the Floyd County Historical Society and on microfilm at the Charles City Public Library. Local newspapers include: *Charles City Daily Intelligencer*, *Charles City Daily Press*, *Charles City Herald*, and *Charles City Press*.

Page, William C. *Planning for Preservation*. Prepared for Charles City Historic Preservation Commission. Des Moines, IA, 1996.

Page, William C. "Wildwood Park Historic District," National Register of Historic Places nomination form. Des Moines, Iowa, December 31, 1997. In the files of the State Historic Preservation Office, Des Moines, Iowa.

Page County Genealogical Society. *Page County History*. Dallas, TX: Taylor Publishing Co., 1984.

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*Report of the Iowa State Horticultural Society for the Year 1893*. Des Moines, IA: G.H. Ragsdale, 1894.

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*Senior Cycle Yearbook*, 1912. In collection of Floyd County Historical Society.

"Sherman Nursery Company Stock," four-page brochure advertising sale of stock and highlighting history of company, Sherman Nursery Company, 1925. In collection of Dale Siems, Charles City, Iowa.

Siems, Dale, former president of Sherman Nursery Company. Personal collection of Sherman Nursery history, pamphlets, photographs, and articles. Charles City, Iowa.

Sizemore, Charles, ed. *48<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of American Association of Nurserymen*. Chicago, Illinois, June 27-29, 1923. Columbia, MO: E.W. Stephens Co, 1923.

*The Tree Man's Story Come True*. Charles City, Iowa: Sherman Nursery Company, c.1913. Promotional and customer satisfaction brochure. In collection of Dale Siems, Charles City, Iowa.

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*Development of this nomination has been financed in part with Federal funds from the National Park Service, U.S. Department of Interior, through the Certified Local Government program. However, the contents and opinions do not necessarily reflect the view or policies of the Department of the Interior, nor does the mention of trade names or commercial products constitute endorsement or recommendation by the Department of the Interior.*

*This program receives Federal financial assistance for identification and protection of historic properties. Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended, the U.S. Department of the Interior prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, disability or age in its federally assisted programs. Any person who believes he or she has been discriminated against in any program, activity, or facility as described above or if who desires further information should write to: Office of Equal Opportunity, National Park Service, 1849 C Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20204.*



Sherman Nursery Company Historic District  
Name of Property

Floyd County, Iowa  
County and State

**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 # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
  - Other State agency
  - Federal agency
  - Local government
  - University
  - Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): Iowa Inventory #34-00642

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** approximately 5 acres  
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_  
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1 \_\_\_\_\_  
Latitude Longitude

3 \_\_\_\_\_  
Latitude Longitude

2 \_\_\_\_\_  
Latitude Longitude

4 \_\_\_\_\_  
Latitude Longitude

or

**UTM References**

Datum (indicated on USGS map): \_\_\_\_\_ NAD 1927 or x NAD 1983

1 15 525295 4768110  
Zone Easting Northing

3 15 525435 4768190  
Zone Easting Northing

2 15 525360 4768245  
Zone Easting Northing

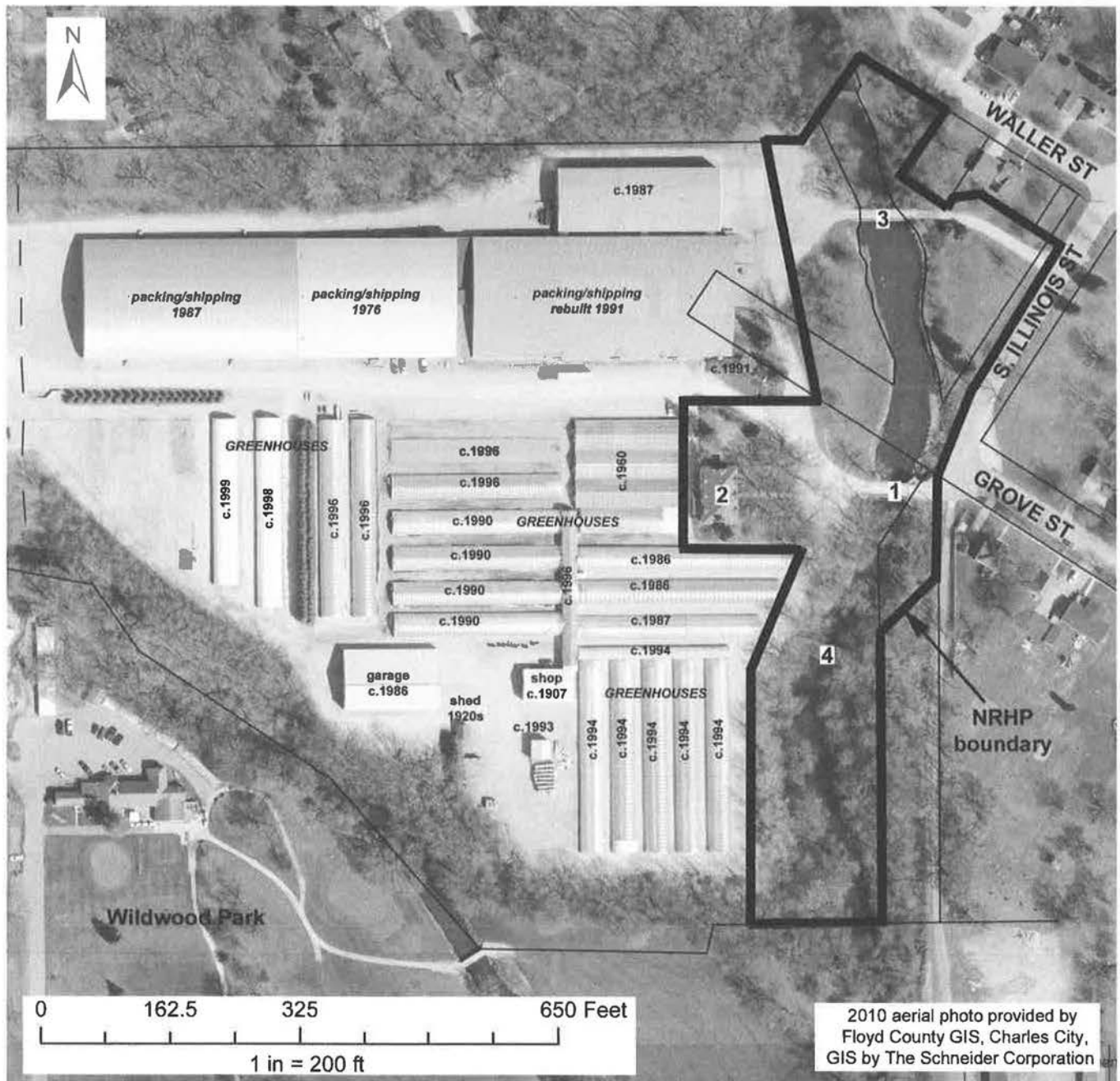
4 15 525360 4768030  
Zone Easting Northing

Sherman Nursery Company Historic District  
Name of Property

Floyd County, Iowa  
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**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary for the property includes the four extant resources built from 1902 to 1910 and the creek along the east edge of the Sherman Nursery Company property, as depicted on the 1" = 200' map below. The boundary begins at the southeast corner of the Sherman parcels, extends north along the parcel line for 400 feet, northeast across a city-owned parcel for 100 feet, north along the parcel line for 125 feet to the intersection with the right of way, north-northeast along the edge of Illinois Street for 320 feet, northwest along the rear parcel lines of the Waller Street parcels, then along the Sherman parcel lines to the northeast, northwest, and southwest across the creek, then roughly parallel to the creek to the south-southeast for 175 feet, west for 80 feet, south along the east edge of the greenhouse foundations for 100 feet, east for 70 feet, south-southwest along the east edge of the greenhouse foundations for 70 feet, south for 320 feet, and east for 175 feet to the point of beginning.



1 = c.1902 arch entry bridge, 2 = 1906 office building, 3 = 1910 concrete bridge, 4 = 1910 concrete bridge

Sherman Nursery Company Historic District  
Name of Property

Floyd County, Iowa  
County and State

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The section of the property within the boundary for the historic district encompasses the extant historic resources associated with the built development of the nursery from 1902 to 1910, as the center of Sherman Nursery Company operations shifted from the previous location in rural Section 11 to a concentrated business center at the east edge of their property on the west side of Charles City. The stone arch bridge (1) to connect the property to Grove Street was constructed around the same time as the first greenhouse was built in 1902 (demolished/replaced), and the stone office building (2) was then built in 1904-06 at the west end of the arch bridge and next to the original greenhouse. The two concrete railroad bridges to the north (3) and south (4) were built in 1910 for spurs from the Charles City Western Railroad into the property to delivery materials and ship trees and plants. These resources reflect the historic development of the nursery during this key period of growth as well as playing integral roles in the ongoing strong business of the nursery through the end of the period of significance in 1964. The boundary was drawn to include the areas along Sherman Creek within the nursery boundaries, providing the setting for the "public face" of the Sherman Nursery Company from the west side of Charles City as well as the natural eastern boundary for the property.

Non-historic resources within the greater Sherman Nursery Company to the west are excluded from the boundary. While greenhouses were located historically to the south and west of the office building, these greenhouses were generally replaced in the 1950s and again in the 1980s, with numerous additional greenhouses built in the 1990s with the focus on container plants. Likewise, the 1907 packing shed to the north of the office building was demolished in 1991, with a new packing/shipping building with concrete walls built in its place. Additional packing/shipping buildings were built to the west in 1976 and 1987. These later greenhouses and buildings are thus excluded from the boundary for the Sherman Nursery Company Historic District, though they provide a continuity for the usage of the property immediately to the west of the boundary for the historic district.



Sherman Nursery Company Historic District  
Name of Property

Floyd County, Iowa  
County and State

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Rebecca Lawin McCarley, Architectural Historian  
organization SPARK Consulting date July 10, 2014  
street & number 17 Oak Lane telephone 563-324-9767  
city or town Davenport state Iowa zip code 52803  
e-mail sparkconsulting@octaspark.com

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.  
A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

*Property owner info (as requested to be completed by SHPO):*

name John Bailey, Bailey Nurseries  
street & number 1325 Bailey Road telephone n/a  
city or town Newport state MN zip code 55055

name City of Charles City  
street & number 105 Milwaukee Mall telephone 641-257-6300  
city or town Charles City state IA zip code 50616

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Sherman Nursery Company Historic District  
Name of Property

Floyd County, Iowa  
County and State

**Photographs:**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

**Photo log:**

Name of Property: Sherman Nursery Company

City or Vicinity: Charles City

County: Floyd State: Iowa

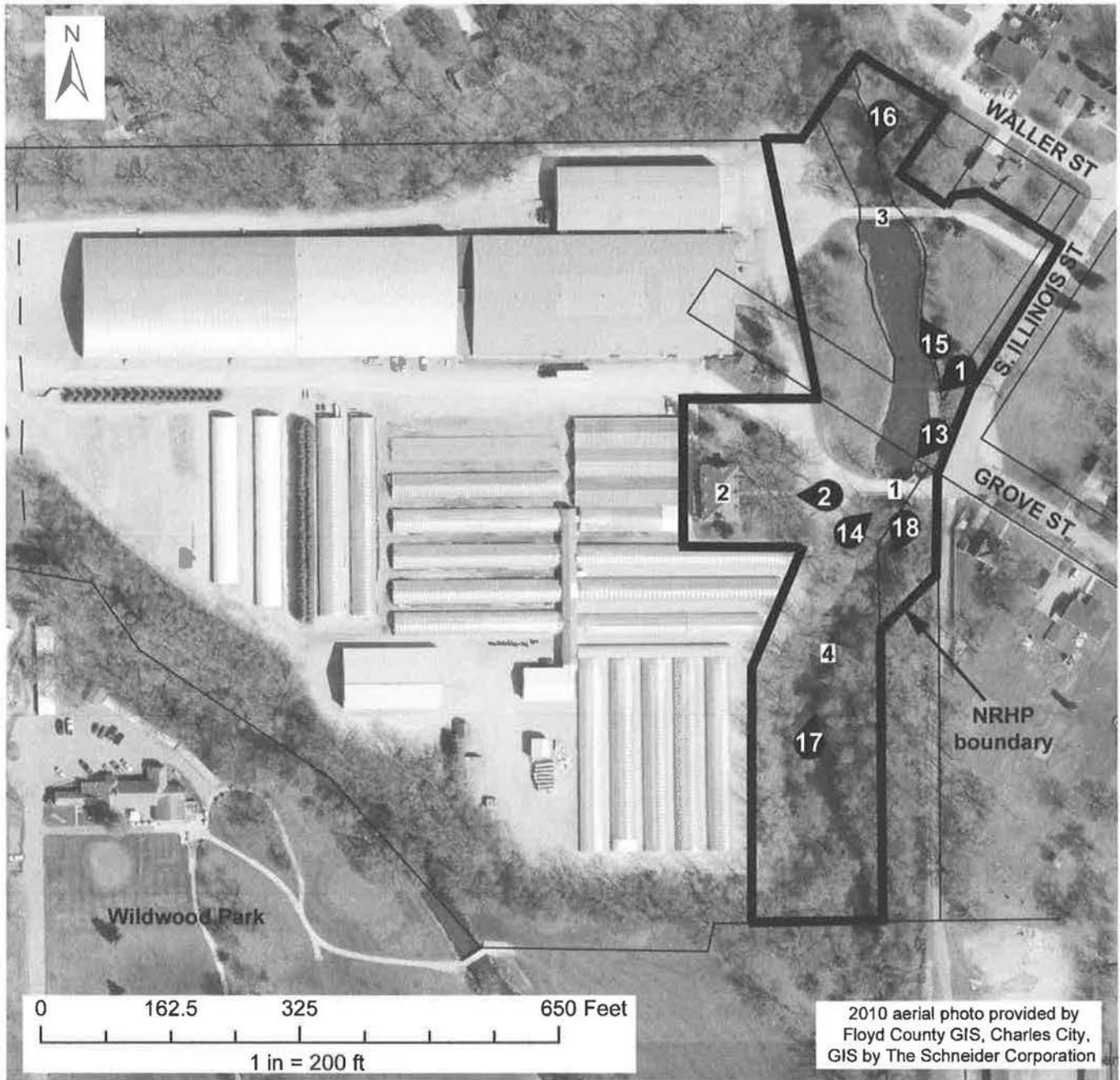
Photographer: Rebecca Lawin McCarley

*Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:*

1. Entry to Sherman Nursery Company grounds, looking southwest to stone arch bridge and office building (December 12, 2013)
2. East elevation of office building, camera facing west (November 27, 2013)
3. North elevation of office building, camera facing south (June 3, 2013)
4. West and south elevations of office building, camera facing northeast (June 3, 2013)
5. West elevation of office building, camera facing southeast (June 3, 2013)
6. Entry and staircase on first story, camera facing southeast (June 3, 2013)
7. Offices and stenographers' room on north end of first story, camera facing southeast (June 3, 2013)
8. Office with walk-in safe in southwest corner of first story, camera facing west (June 3, 2013)
9. Conference room and rooms on south half of second story, camera facing south (June 3, 2013)
10. Conference room on second story, camera facing southeast (June 3, 2013)
11. Unfinished storage room on north half of second story, camera facing northwest (June 3, 2013)
12. North half of the basement, camera facing northeast (June 3, 2013)
13. North side of entry bridge, camera facing southwest (June 3, 2013)
14. South side of entry bridge, camera facing northeast (November 27, 2013)
15. South side of north railroad bridge, camera facing north (June 3, 2013)
16. North side of north railroad bridge with entry bridge in background, camera facing southwest (December 12, 2013)
17. South side of south railroad bridge with entry bridge in background, camera facing north (November 27, 2013)
18. North side of south railroad bridge, camera facing south (December 12, 2013)

Sherman Nursery Company Historic District  
Name of Property

Floyd County, Iowa  
County and State



Photograph key 1: Office building and bridges for Sherman Nursery Company



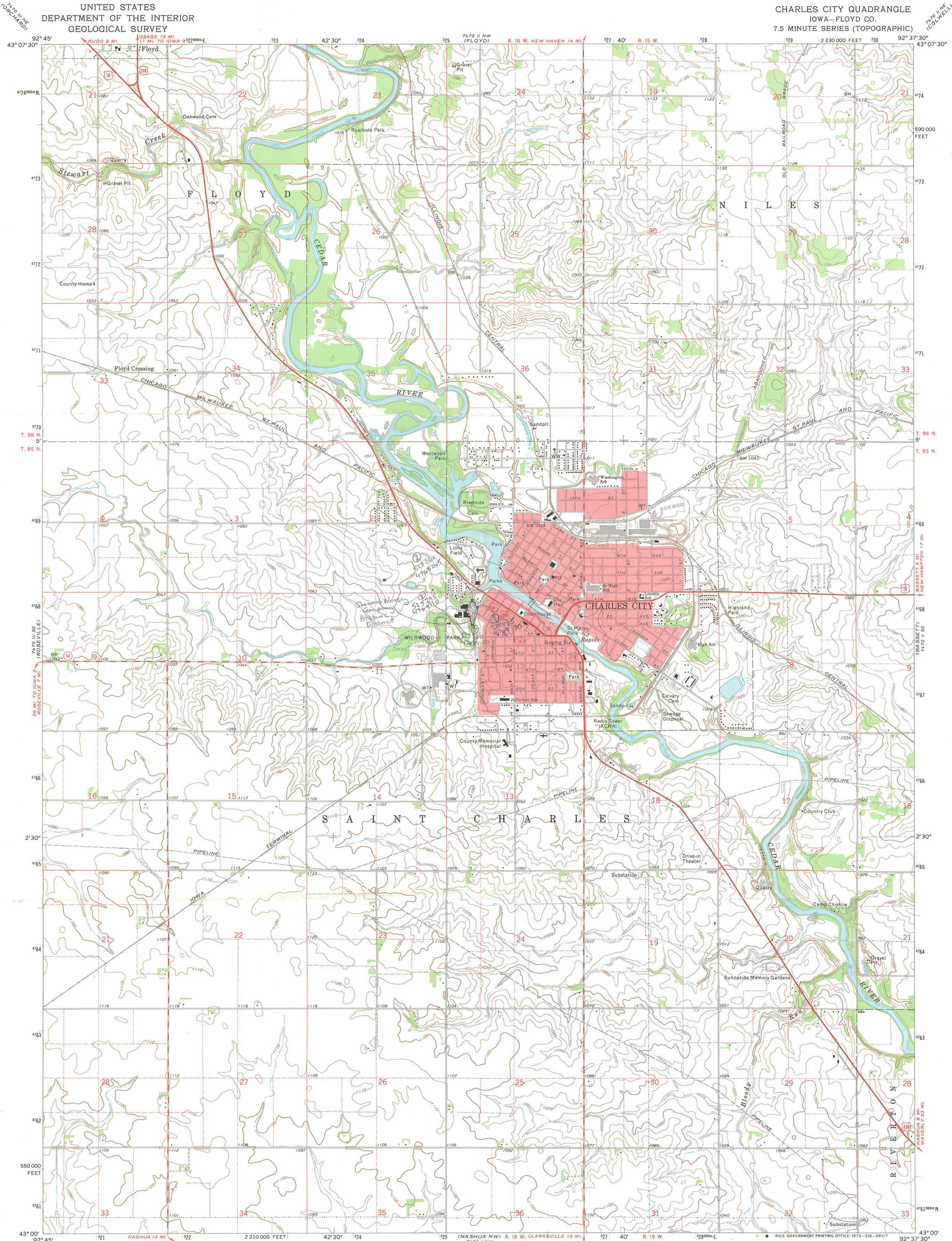
Sherman Nursery Company Historic District  
Name of Property

Floyd County, Iowa  
County and State

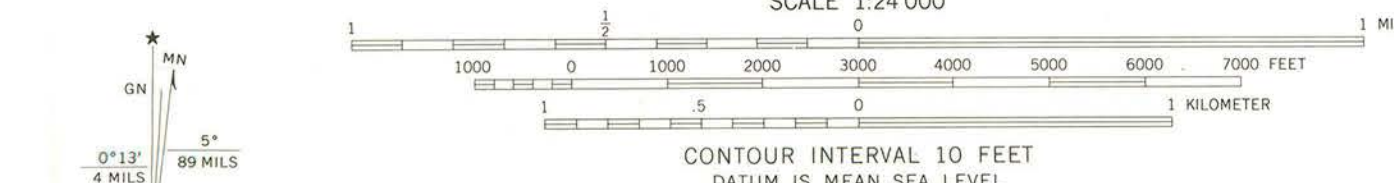


Photograph key 2: Office building for Sherman Nursery Company





Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey  
Control by USGS and USC&GS  
Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial  
photographs taken 1967. Field checked 1971  
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum  
10,000-foot grid based on Iowa coordinate system, north zone  
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,  
zone 15, shown in blue  
Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown  
Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence and field lines where  
generally visible on aerial photographs. This information is unchecked



ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Primary highway, hard surface	Light-duty road, hard or improved surface
Secondary highway, hard surface	Unimproved road
Interstate Route	U. S. Route
	State Route



THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS  
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR WASHINGTON, D. C. 20242  
AND BY THE IOWA GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, IOWA CITY, IOWA 52240  
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

CHARLES CITY, IOWA  
N4300—W9237.5/7.5

1971

AMS 7470 II SW—SERIES V876





Grove St































































UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Sherman Nursery Company Historic District

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: IOWA, Floyd

DATE RECEIVED: 9/26/14 DATE OF PENDING LIST:  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: DATE OF 45TH DAY: 11/12/14  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 14000905

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N  
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N  
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT  RETURN  REJECT 11.12.14 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in  
The National Register  
of  
Historic Places

RECOM./CRITERIA \_\_\_\_\_

REVIEWER \_\_\_\_\_ DISCIPLINE \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.

CLG NATIONAL REGISTER REVIEW

MAY 27 2014

CLG Name Charles City Date of Public Meeting June 7, 2013 - 5pm Public Library

Property Name Sherman Nursery Company Historic District, 1300 Grove Street, Charles City, Floyd County

1. For Historic Preservation Commission:

- Recommendation of National Register eligibility
- Recommendation of National Register ineligibility

Signature [Handwritten Signature] Date 22 Apr 14

Print Name Ronald F. Turner

Title Chairman - Historic Preservation Commission

Reason(s) for recommendation:

2. For Chief Elected Local Official:

- Recommendation of National Register eligibility
- Recommendation of National Register ineligibility

Signature [Handwritten Signature] Date May 12, 2014

Print Name James A Erb

Title Mayor, Charles City, Iowa

Reason(s) for recommendation:

3. Professional Evaluation:

- Recommendation of National Register eligibility
- Recommendation of National Register ineligibility

Signature [Handwritten Signature] Date 5/28/14

Print Name Ralph J. Christian

Title SHPO Historian

Reason(s) for recommendation:

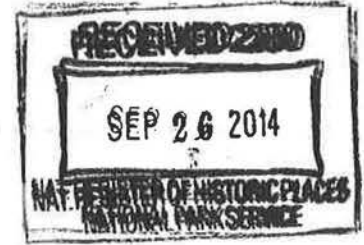
RETURN TO: State Historical Society of Iowa, ATTN: National Register Coordinator, 600 E. Locust, Des Moines, IA 50319



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF  
CULTURAL AFFAIRS

MARY COWNIE, DIRECTOR  
CHRIS KRAMER, DEPUTY DIRECTOR

TERRY E. BRANSTAD, GOVERNOR  
KIM REYNOLDS, LT. GOVERNOR



IOWA  
ARTS  
COUNCIL

September 22, 2014

PRODUCE  
IOWA

Paul Loether, Chief  
National Park Service  
National Register of Historic Places  
1201 Eye Street, N.W.-- 8th Floor  
Washington, D.C. 20005

STATE HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY OF IOWA

Dear Mr. Loether:

STATE HISTORICAL  
MUSEUM OF IOWA

The following National Register nomination(s) are enclosed for your review and listing if acceptable.

STATE HISTORICAL  
LIBRARY & ARCHIVES

- Second Baptist Church, 407 W Saunders St, Mount Pleasant, Henry County, Iowa
- Sherman Nursery Company Historic District, 1300 Grove St, Charles City, Floyd County, Iowa

STATE  
HISTORIC  
SITES

Thank you for your consideration.

STATE HISTORIC  
PRESERVATION  
OFFICE OF IOWA

Sincerely,

*Elizabeth Foster Hill*

Elizabeth Foster Hill  
National Register

IOWA  
HISTORICAL  
FOUNDATION