

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Iowa	
COUNTY: Van Buren	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	APR 25 1972

1. NAME

COMMON:
Bentonsport

AND/OR HISTORIC:
Bentonsport

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
Washington Township, rural route, Keosauqua, Iowa

CITY OR TOWN:
Keosauqua vic. (E. of Des Moines River)

STATE Iowa	CODE 52565	COUNTY: Van Buren	CODE 177
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3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
District <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/>	Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Occupied <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes:
Site <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/>	Private <input type="checkbox"/>	Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/>	Restricted <input type="checkbox"/>
Object <input type="checkbox"/>	Both <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Preservation work in progress <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Unrestricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Public Acquisition: In Process <input type="checkbox"/>		No: <input type="checkbox"/>
	Being Considered <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/>	Government <input type="checkbox"/>	Park <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Transportation <input type="checkbox"/>	Comments <input type="checkbox"/>
Commercial <input type="checkbox"/>	Industrial <input type="checkbox"/>	Private Residence <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Other (Specify) _____	
Educational <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Military <input type="checkbox"/>	Religious <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Entertainment <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Museum <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Scientific <input type="checkbox"/>		

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNERS NAME:
Van Buren County Conservation Board

STREET AND NUMBER:
Courthouse, Van Buren County

CITY OR TOWN:
Keosauqua

STATE:
Iowa

CODE
14

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:
Van Buren County Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER:
City of Keosauqua

CITY OR TOWN:
Keosauqua

STATE:
Iowa

CODE
14

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 35

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:
County Outdoor Recreation Plan...Master restoration plan by Bill Wagner

DATE OF SURVEY: 2/11/69 Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
County Courthouse of Van Buren County

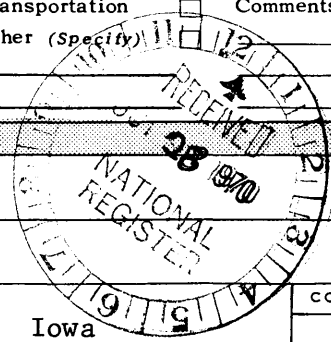
STREET AND NUMBER:
Keosauqua

CITY OR TOWN:
Keosauqua

STATE:
Iowa

CODE
52565

14



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: Iowa
COUNTY: Van Buren
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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	Excellent <input type="checkbox"/>	Good <input type="checkbox"/>	Fair <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Deteriorated <input type="checkbox"/>	Ruins <input type="checkbox"/>	Unexposed <input type="checkbox"/>
INTEGRITY	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	Altered <input type="checkbox"/>	Unaltered <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Moved <input type="checkbox"/>	Original Site <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The remaining store buildings in Bentonsport appear today much as they did originally. The buildings reflect a mid-nineteenth century village style which might be described as "Federalist" or colonial type.

Remaining buildings consist of a bank, blacksmith shop and two store buildings. . . what were once a dry goods and general store. A building to the west, apart from the main complex, is of "steamboat gothic" architecture, frame construction, and badly deteriorated. Two blocks to the west on the south side of the street stands the Odd Fellows Hall, the oldest in Iowa, which is in a fair state of repair.

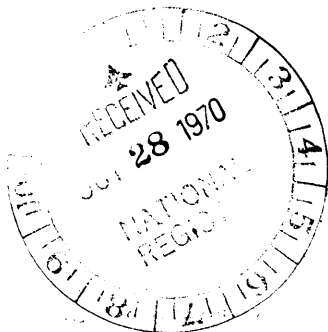
To the north, the Hancock house is privately owned, but in bad repair but worthy of restoration. It boasts a unique Turkish type mosque on the back T of the house, with a bell which was taken from a steamboat. The plans of this home are said to be in the National Archives in Washington, D. C., and the staircase contains some 12 varieties of wood, a very attractive open staircase.

To the north and across the road from the Hancock house stands the Presbyterian church, which is beautifully framed by tall evergreen trees at the entrance. The church is in bad need of repair, but the Bentonsport Improvement Association is now embarked upon a restoration program for the building. The only alterations to this building has been the closing of the balcony, but this could still be restored.

To the west of the Presbyterian church is the Bentonsport Academy, worthy of restorative effort. The buildings, all of them are in need of tuck pointing, exterior and roof repair.

A restoration project in the amount of \$5000. is now underway on the exterior of the Presbyterian church. This work is being done by the Bentonsport Improvement Association.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

Pre-Columbian 16th Century 18th Century 20th Century
 15th Century 17th Century 19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

Aboriginal	Education	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Political	<input type="checkbox"/>	Urban Planning	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prehistoric	Engineering	<input type="checkbox"/>	Religion/Philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (Specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Historic	Industry	<input type="checkbox"/>	Science	<input type="checkbox"/>	<u>Outstanding</u>	
Agriculture	Invention	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sculpture	<input type="checkbox"/>	<u>example of mid 19th</u>	
Art	Landscape	<input type="checkbox"/>	Social/Humanitarian	<input type="checkbox"/>	<u>century Midwest</u>	
Commerce	Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/>	Theater	<input type="checkbox"/>	<u>rural village.</u>	
Communications	Literature	<input type="checkbox"/>	Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Conservation	Military	<input type="checkbox"/>				
	Music	<input type="checkbox"/>				

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (Include Personages, Dates, Events, Etc.)

The village of Bentonsport was platted in 1839 by John Bending in association with Charles O. Sanford and H. P. Graves and claimed at one time more than 1000 residents. The village boasts pretentious brick homes, once the finest in Van Buren county and other points of interest.

The Mason House, a two and one half story brick hotel of modified Colonial architecture, was built in the 1840's. It became famous up and down the Des Moines River as the stopover for steamboat captains and railroad men. Privately owned, it is in a good state of repair and is open for public tours by admission. The two story brick academy in the western part of town was built in 1851 and little changed with the exception of the cupola. The Presbyterian and Methodist churches are still in use. The Presbyterian church, built in 1866, houses a steamboat bell noted for its clarity of tone. Bentonsport was the site of the first paper mill in Iowa and the first linseed oil mill in southern Iowa. The first flatboat loaded with produce out of the Des Moines river started from Bentonsport. Bentonsport is the site of the first dam with locks in the state of Iowa. Bentonsport was the home of Thomas McBride, president of the State University of Iowa for many years. The river bridge still stands, adding to the aesthetic atmosphere, built in 1885.

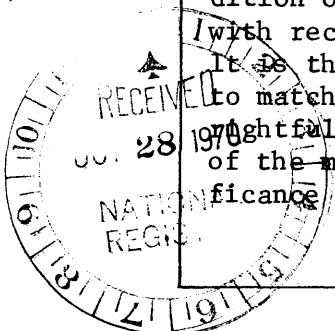
Bentonsport was the home of these noted people:

1. Secretary of War under President Hayes, Hon. George W. McCrary
2. William E. Mason, U. S. Senator from Illinois--1880's
3. Robert R. Mason, Clerk U.S. district court 1865-1905
4. William A. Clark, U.S. Senator from Montana 1901
5. Martha Burton, journalist
6. Gideon Bailey, U.S. Marshall, state senate
7. Albert Bigelow Paine, humorist, poet, biographer

As one of the few remaining unchanged villages in America, Bentonsport has a unique history and many buildings which have stood the test of time. Once a major Iowa steamboat port, the little village attracts thousands of visitors annually from over the country in spite of the deteriorated condition of many of the buildings. This is one of Iowa's most scenic areas, with recreational potential as well as historical and educative values.

It is the plan of the Van Buren Conservation Board to seek Federal funding to match local funds now available to restore this unique village to its rightful place as one of America's few remaining examples of village life of the mid 18th century. We deem this location to have national significance for these reasons.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

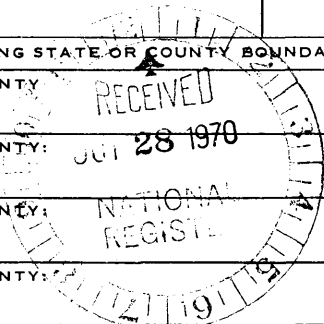
THE IOWAN MAGAZINE, 1955
 HISTORY OF VAN BUREN COUNTY
 AMERICAN GUIDE SERIES, 1940 "BENTONSPORT, IOWA"

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY				O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN ONE ACRE				
CORNER	LATITUDE				LONGITUDE				
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	40°	38'	32"	91°	52'	8"			
NE	40°	38'	24"	91°	51'	38"			
SE	40°	38'	10"	91°	51'	46"			
SW	40°	38'	18"	91°	52'	16"			

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE



NO UTM CO SEE INSTRUCTIONS

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: Carroll L. Caudle, Executive Director

ORGANIZATION: Van Buren Development Association Inc. DATE: 8/15/71

STREET AND NUMBER: 4038 33rd Street

CITY OR TOWN: Des Moines STATE: Iowa CODE: 50310
14

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National State Local

Name Adrian D. Johnson

Title State Liaison Officer

Date 3 Feb. 1972

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

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

Robert M. Utley
 Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

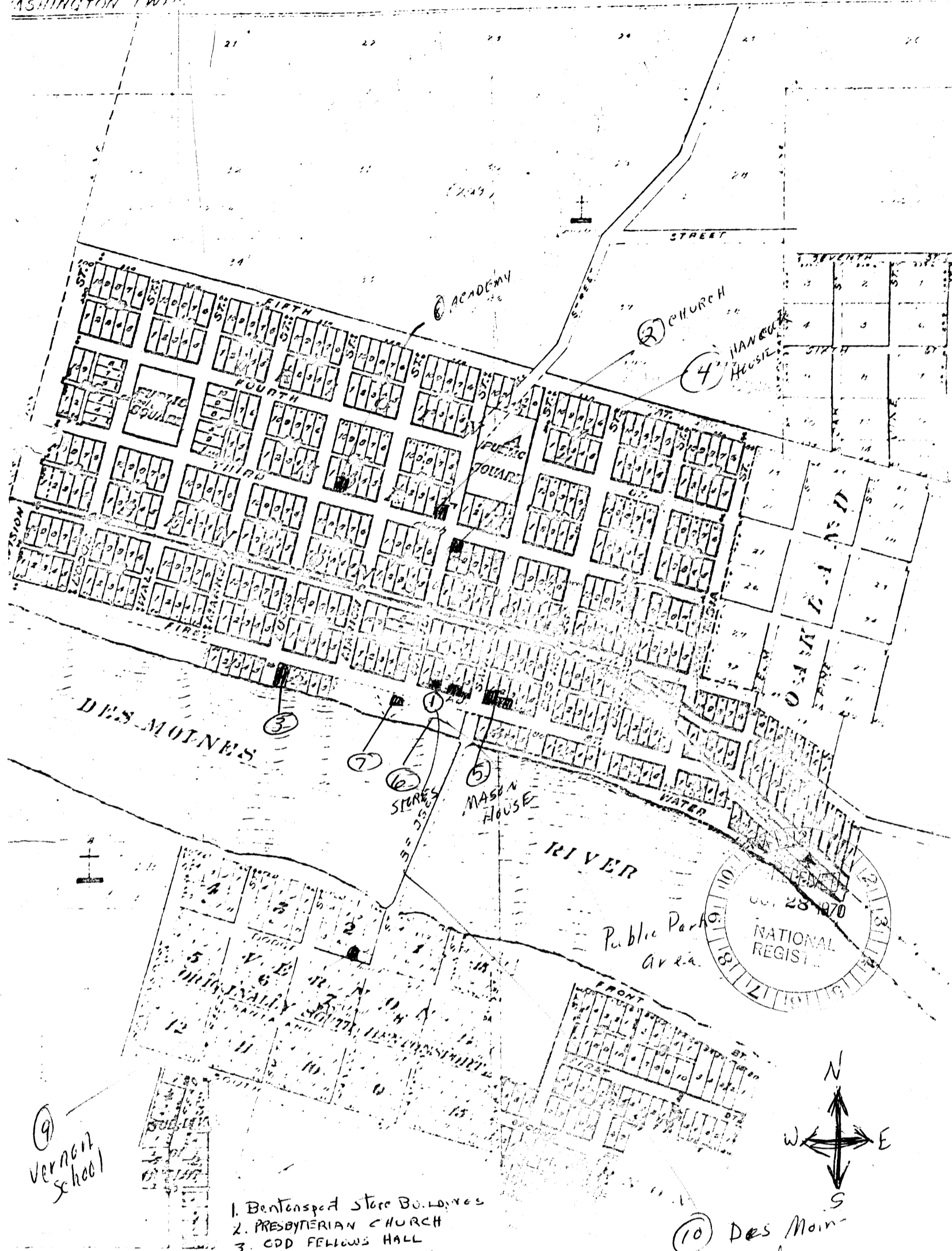
Date 4/25/72

ATTEST:
William H. Stapp
 Keeper of The National Register

Date APR 25 1972

BENTONSPORT AND VERNON

WASHINGTON TWP.



1. Bentonport Store Buildings
2. PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
3. ODD FELLOWS HALL
4. HANCOCK HOUSE
5. MASON HOUSE, GENERAL STORE & POSTOFFICE
6. PUBLIC PARK AREA
7. OLD MILL FOUNDATION
8. Academy
9. Vernon School
10. Bridge

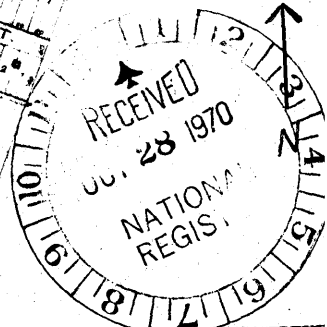
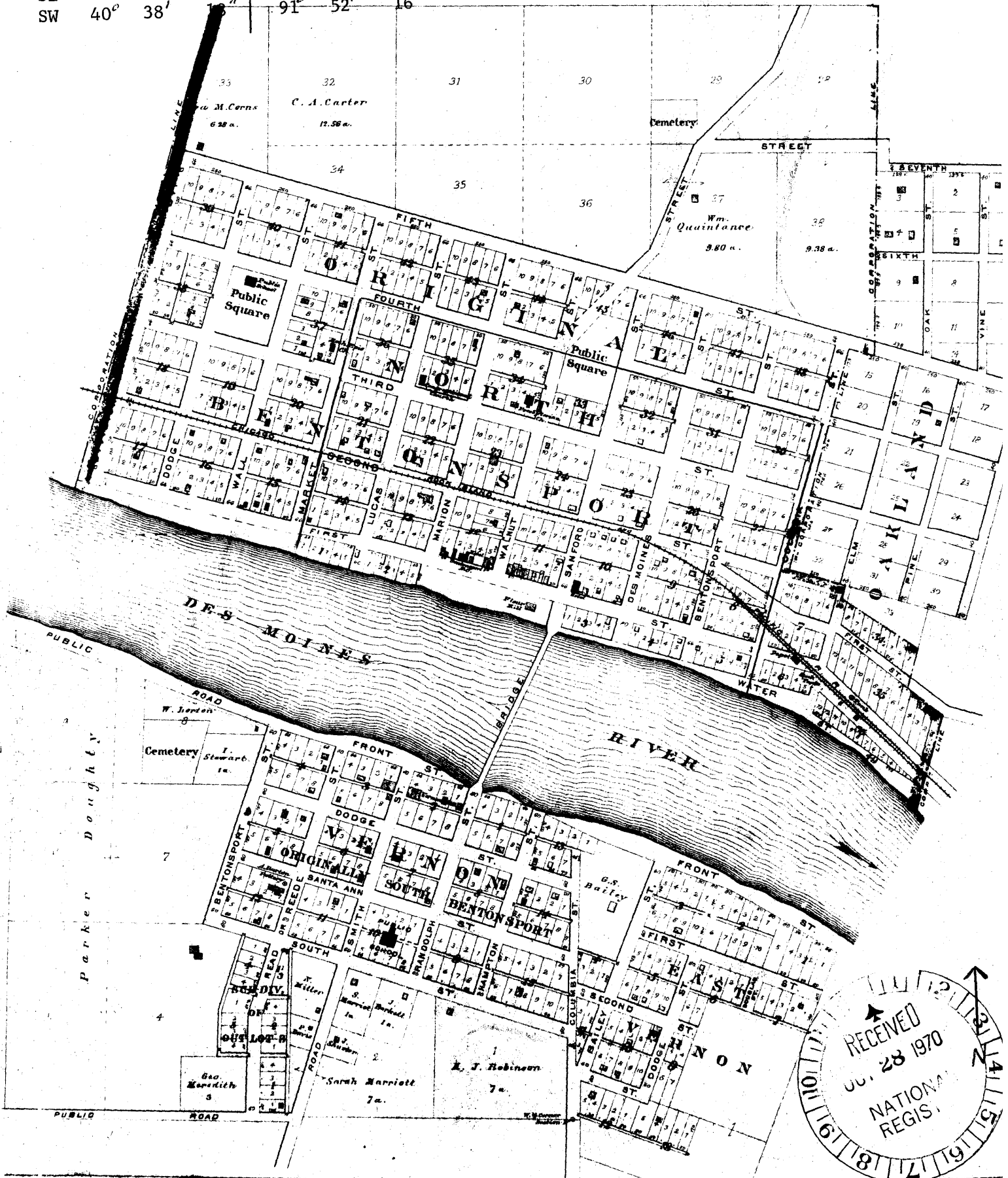
BENTONSPORT AND VERNON

Latitude & Long.

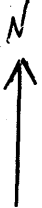
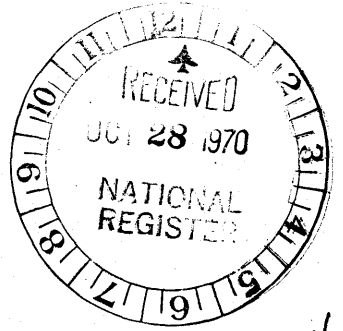
LOCATED IN HENRY & WASHINGTON TOWNSHIPS

Scale 300 feet to one Inch.

NW	40°	38'	32"	91°	52'	8"
NE	40°	38'	24"	91°	51'	38"
SE	40°	38'	10"	91°	51'	46"
SW	40°	38'	16"	91°	52'	16"



	Latitude			Longitude		
NW	40°	38'	32"	91°	52'	8"
NE	40°	38'	24"	91°	51'	38"
SE	40°	38'	10"	91°	51'	46"
SW	40°	38'	18"	91°	52'	16"



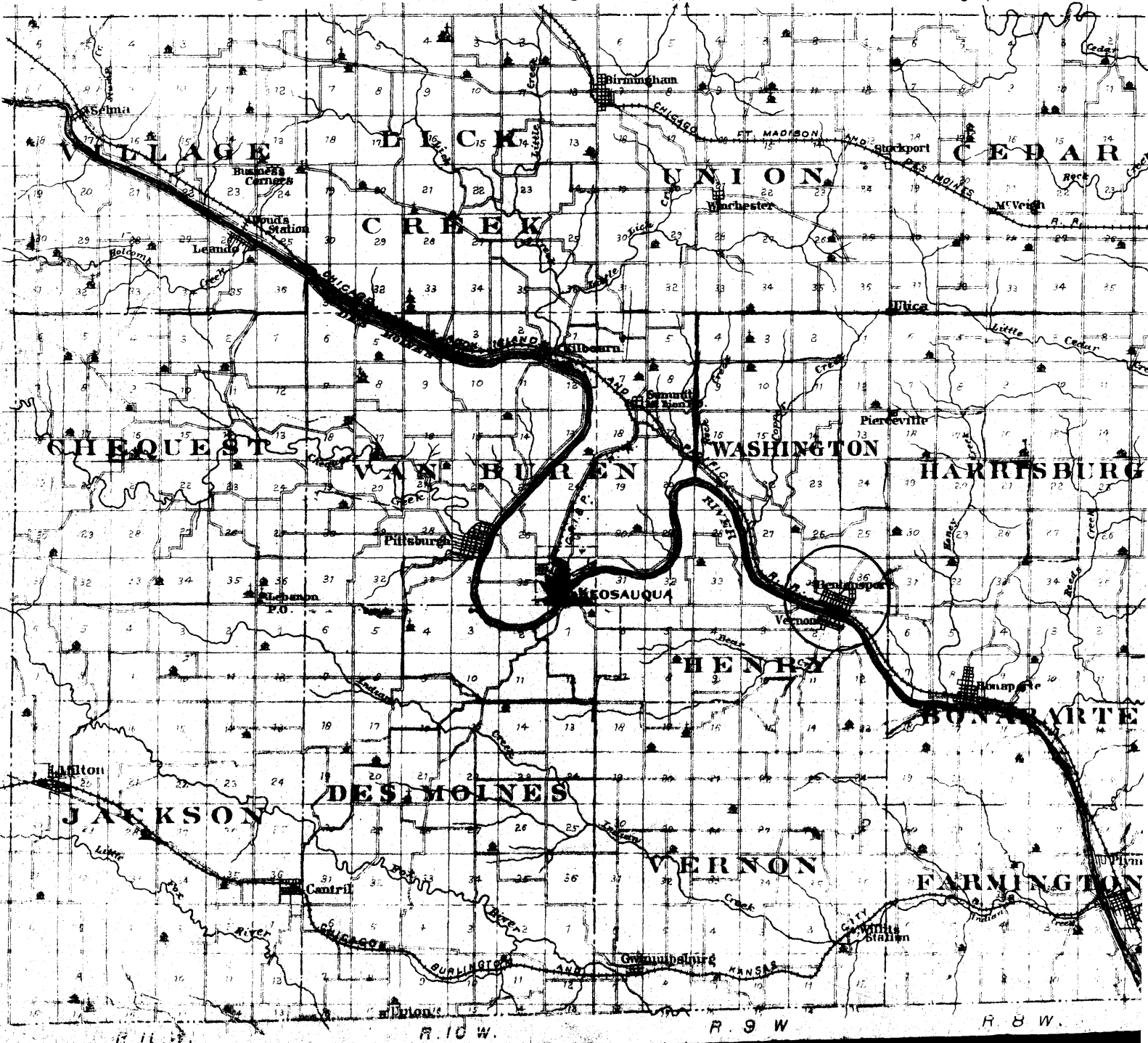
VAN BUREN COUNTY,

IOWA

.1897.

Scale: 1/2 inch to one mile.

J E F F E R S O N C O



R. 10 W. R. 9 W. R. 8 W.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number _____ Page _____

Bentonsport Van Buren County, Iowa

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION APPROVAL

Beth Beland 12/10/92

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

OCT 28 1992

NATIONAL
REGISTER

Section number 2 - 6 Page 2

CFN-259-1116

BENTONSPORT HISTORIC DISTRICT, VAN BUREN COUNTY, IOWA

BOUNDARY CLARIFICATION:

The following information is provided to more accurately reflect the actual location of already evaluated and listed significant resources within the Bentonsport Historic District.

Section 2: County Road J40 (Washington Twp.)
Keosauqua, IA 52565

Section 3: Category - District
Ownership - Both Public and Private
Status - Occupied, Unoccupied, Preservation Work in Progress
Accessible to the Public - Yes, Restricted and Unrestricted

Present use - Commercial, Entertainment, Museum, Park, Private Residence

Section 4: Owner of Property - Multiple

Section 6: Representation in Existing Surveys
County Outdoor Recreation Plan...Master Restoration Plan by Bill Wagner.
Area XV Cultural Resources Survey, 1980/81, Area XV Regional Planning
Commission and the State Office of Historic Preservation.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

CFN-259-1116

BENTONSPORT HISTORIC DISTRICT, VAN BUREN COUNTY, IOWA

BENTONSPORT HISTORIC DISTRICT List of Contributing and Non-contributing Resources

Area XV #	Contributing	Non-contributing
1	Bridge, 1882-85	
2	I.O.O.F. Hall, 1840s	
3	House w/ Gothic window, c.1860	Barn? Small hse (?) to east
4	Bentonsport Academy, 1851	One or two frame privies c.1980
5	Sanford House, 1852	
6		Stucco Bungalow, c.1920, deteriorated condition
7	Non-extant	
8	Methodist Church, 1857	
9	Methodist Parsonage, 1855	Garage to rear
10	Limestone House, c.1850	
11	Presbyterian Church, 1855	
12	Hancock House, c. 1840	Can't see outbldgs due to trees
13	"Mormon House", 1846	New garage or shed to rear
14	Julius Greef House, 1869	Garage to rear
15		New house on old foundation
16	Cowles House, c.1840 Board & Batten barn (no date)	
17	Blacksmith Shop, c.1840s	"New" house
18	Montgomery House, 1840s Brick office (?) - now garage	
19	Herman Greef House, 1863	
20	Mason House Inn, 1846	Bonaparte depot attached to east Garage and shed to rear
21	Bank of Bentonsport (?)	
22	Greef Store, 1853	
23	Greef Dry Goods Store, 1865	
24	"Dolly's House"	
25	Stone wall of Mill site	
26	Post Office (Moved)	
27	House w/ vergeboard (new siding)?	Garage and shed
28		House w/ five out bldgs.
29	Non-extant (Hse now attached to Sanford house?)	New Ranch House, Blk 21

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 3

CFN-259-1116

BENTONSPORT HISTORIC DISTRICT, VAN BUREN COUNTY, IOWA

	Contributing	Non-contributing
30		Small gable cottage, new siding
31		Small gable cottage, additions
32	Moved to Bonaparte	
33	Log house	
34		Ranch house w/ garage, Blk 36, lots 3, 4, 5
35		New timber bldg, Blk 11, lot 1
36		Shelter House, Blk 3
37		Bandstand, Pub Lndng W of bridge
38		Trailer & cabin, Blk 2, lot 1

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 2

CFN-259-1116

BENTONSPORT HISTORIC DISTRICT, VAN BUREN COUNTY, IOWA

Verbal Boundary Description:

Part of the Original Plat of North Bentonsport, located primarily in T68N, R9W, Sec 35 S 1/2 SE 1/4. Beginning at the northwest corner of the Public Square which is bounded by 4th Street on the north and Dodge Street on the west, thence east along 4th Street 1514' to the northeast corner of Blk 34, thence south along Walnut Street 412' to the northeast corner of Blk 23, thence east along 3rd Street 632' to the northeast corner of Blk 25, thence south Des Moines Street 412' to the northeast corner of Blk 10, thence east along 2nd Street 330' to the northeast corner of Blk 9, thence south along Bentonsport Street to the Des Moines River at low water mark, thence west following the meandering of the river to a point 33' east of the center of the bridge right of way, thence across the river approximately 750' to the intersection of the bridge floor and the county road, thence west 66', thence north across the river approximately 750' to the low water mark, thence west along the meandering of the Des Moines River to the southeast corner of Blk 1, thence north along Lucas Street 490' to the northeast corner of Blk 4, thence west along 2nd Street 632' to the northeast corner of Blk 16, thence north along Wall Street 412' to the northeast corner of Blk 19, thence west along 3rd Street 250' to the northwest corner of blk 19, thence north along Dodge Street 412' to the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification:

The boundaries of the Bentonsport Historic District were selected after carefully reviewing historic photographs and documentation which provide information on the over-all development of the community during the mid to late 19th century, and on-site visits to determine the physical integrity of both individual properites and the community as a whole. The district, as defined, basically includes the area which was the center of the community during its period of significance. It is based along the riverbank and is a visually cohesive area, with houses and buildings spreading across the valley from the river north to the hills. The area is bounded by the Des Moines River on the south, an irregular boundary on the west that follows Lucas, Wall and Dodge street, an irregular boundary on the east that follows Walnut, Des Moines and Bentonsport streets, and a somewhat irregular boundary along the north that follows 4th, 3rd, and 2nd streets. This area includes all major property types important to the community during this period: commercial, residential, educational, religious, and industrial. The bridge connecting Bentonsport with Vernon to the south has been included because it was a major factor in the community's economic life.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 11 Page 2

BENTONSPORT HISTORIC DISTRICT, VAN BUREN COUNTY, IOWA

Form Prepared by: Molly Myers Naumann, Consultant
PHR Associates August 1992
275 Crescent Park Drive 712-657-3347
Lake View, IA 51450

I certify that this boundary revision more accurately reflects the actual location of the previously listed Bentonsport Historic District, Van Buren County, Iowa.


Signature of certifying official/Title

10/15/92
Date

State Historical Society of Iowa
State or Federal agency and bureau