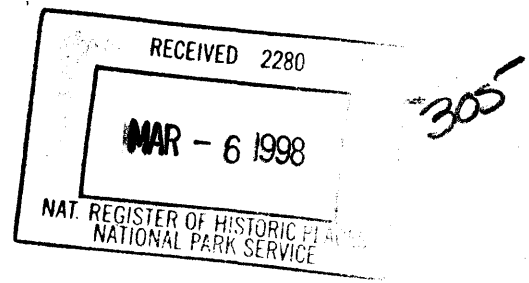


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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 How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Lincoln Pioneer Village  
other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number Rockport City Park (9th and Eureka Road) N/A  not for publication  
city or town Rockport N/A  vicinity  
state Indiana code IN county Spencer code 147 zip code 47635

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 36CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. (  See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature] 2/19/98  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

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

Signature of the Keeper Patrick Anderson Date of Action 4/20/98

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
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
8	6	buildings
1	0	sites
1	0	structures
1	0	objects
11	6	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION/CULTURE: Museum

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION/CULTURE: Museum

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: split log cabin

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation N/A

walls WOOD: Log

roof WOOD: Shingle

other

Narrative Description

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

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
B removed from its original location.
C a birthplace or grave.
D a cemetery.
E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
F a commemorative property.
G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

SOCIAL HISTORY
ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION

Period of Significance

1935-1947

Significant Dates

1935

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

WPA/FERA, Builder

Honig, George

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
previously listed in the National Register
previously determined eligible by the National Register
designated a National Historic Landmark
recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
Other State agency
Federal agency
Local government
University
Other

Name of repository:

Lincoln Pioneer Village  
Name of Property

Spencer IN  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreege of Property 1.8

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	16	494920	4192300	3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2				4			

See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Glory-June Greiff, Consulting Historian

organization \_\_\_\_\_ date 9/29/97

street & number 1735 South Talbott telephone 317/637-6163

city or town Indianapolis state IN zip code 46225

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**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.

**Photographs**

Representative **black and white** photographs of the property.

**Additional items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name City of Rockport

street & number City Hall telephone 812/649-2242

city or town Rockport state IN zip code 47635

**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. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

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Lincoln Pioneer Village

Spencer County IN

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

Lincoln Pioneer Village sits in something of a hollow at the southeast corner of Rockport City Park on the southwest edge of town, at the corner of 9th Street and Eureka Road. A narrow creek bed cuts across the northeast corner of the village area. The complex contains a collection of gabled log buildings replicating several that figured significantly in the boyhood and adolescence of Abraham Lincoln. The buildings are placed in a random manner presenting the ramshackle appearance of an early pioneer settlement, and scattered about the site are numerous millstones, two replicas of sheltered stone-and-timber wells, and some split-rail fencing. The village today is surrounded by a chainlink fence, masked behind standard stockade fencing on the north side. When it opened in 1935, the village was entirely enclosed by a stockade fence that had been hand-fashioned of rough-cut poles. The original main entrance is gone; it was near the northwest corner, and had incorporated a double cabin as an administration building and gift shop. Today's visitors enter either through the museum building or through a small gated opening immediately west of the Josiah Crawford Home (see photo 1). Just northeast of the museum is the city swimming pool, built in the 1960s, which intrudes a few yards south into the original boundary of the village.

The concrete block museum building, which has a sandstone facade on its north elevation, was built in 1950 at the north edge of the village. A modest addition was constructed on the south of this building in the early 1990s. The museum houses a collection of mostly nineteenth century artifacts from the Rockport area and Spencer County, including a large cabinet built by Thomas Lincoln. It also contains (in storage) the original wooden signs that once graced the entrance to the village.

As one enters the village through the gate opening, the replica of the Josiah Crawford home (photo 1), a one-story gabled cabin with a wood-shingled roof, stands immediately to the east. Like most of the cabins, it has a fireplace chimney (on the north) and hearth within. These chimneys are constructed of brick covered with mortar and sticks to resemble the crude daub chimneys of pioneer cabins. Much of this covering is crumbling.

The museum building is immediately east of the Crawford home. Formerly, a log blockhouse stood at the site immediately east of the museum. To the southwest once stood the Barter House, a replica of a building where pioneers traded goods. Both were

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Lincoln Pioneer Village

Spencer County IN

demolished in the 1980s, having suffered extensive termite damage. Southeast of the museum is the Brown Tavern or Brown's Inn, a one-story building with a lean-to on the southeast and chimney on the east (see photo 2). The roof presently is sagging badly, having been damaged by a falling tree. To the southeast is the replicated Lincoln Cabin (photo 2), with a lean-to on the rear (north) and chimney on the east. The windows boast six-over-six double hung sashes; inside is a loft reached by a series of pegs driven into the wall (interior view, photo 3).

Beyond the creek that crosses the northeast corner of the village area lies the one-story Mackey cabin (photo 4), which was rebuilt in 1988. A little south of the cabin is a small stone footbridge (photo 5) leading to the area where the original Mackey cabin replica had stood; it had deteriorated badly and was demolished. Southwest of the bridge is the large Early Transportation Museum (photo 6) that was constructed in the early 1950s as part of the movie set of The Kentuckian. The building blends well into the village and was retained to display old wagons, large farm implements, and the like. Several of these had originally been placed randomly about the village grounds. Southwest of this building is the Pioneer Schoolhouse (see photo 7), rebuilt in 1990. South of the school is a large boulder with a bronze commemorative plaque (the work of sculptor George Honig--photo 8) featuring a relief portrait of William Holmes McGuffey, known for his McGuffey Readers.

Southwest of the memorial is the Daniel Grass Home (see photo 9), a two-story dogtrot cabin. Its windows have six-over-six double hung sashes. The stability of the building is presently aided by turnbuckles, as it tilts somewhat. Nearby a bit to the west is the two-story Azel Dorsey Home (see photo 9), also featuring windows with six-over-six double hung sashes and a chimney on the east. Northwest of the Dorsey cabin is the Old Pigeon Baptist Church, a large two-story building with flanking fireplace chimneys east and west.

Northwest of the church is the so-called Gentry Mansion (photo 10), a one-and-a-half story cabin with a large front porch. West of it is the Jones Store (photo 11), a small one-story cabin also with a porch. The Jones Store is south of the afore-mentioned Crawford Home near the village entrance. Off to the southwest is the small Grigsby cabin, rebuilt in 1989, and north of it is the equally small Pitcher Law Office (photo 12), a cabin which was rebuilt in 1985.

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Lincoln Pioneer Village

Spencer County IN

Most of the buildings, unless otherwise noted, contain but one room. All are sparsely furnished (see photo 3) largely with nineteenth century artifacts, many of which are heirlooms from the descendants of the families whose homes the cabins represent. Some of the furniture was crafted by New Deal workers at the time of the village's construction. Many of the original interpretive signs, handpainted on pieces of masonite to hang outside the entrances of the buildings, survive, despite neglect.

The eight contributing buildings in the district are the Crawford home, the Brown Tavern, the Lincoln Cabin, the Gentry Mansion, the Daniel Grass Home, the Azel Dorsey Home, the Old Pigeon Baptist Church, and the Jones Store. There is one contributing structure, a stone foot bridge; one contributing object, the McGuffey Memorial; and a contributing site, the grounds of the village, which include wells, a split log fence, millstones, and landscaping.

Non-contributing buildings are the museum, the Early Transportation Museum, the Mackey Home (moved and rebuilt), the Pioneer Schoolhouse (rebuilt), the Grigsby cabin (rebuilt), and the John Pitcher Law Office (rebuilt), a total of six. Except for the last, all used old hand-hewn logs, some of which may have been part of the original New Deal buildings.

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Lincoln Pioneer Village

Spencer County IN

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Lincoln Pioneer Village is an unusual example, unique in Indiana, of an educational tourist attraction built under the auspices of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) and the Works Progress Administration (WPA). It is eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion A, as it represents some of the more atypical work of the New Deal and embodies the ideal that was so prevalent in the 1930s: "the intelligent use of leisure time." A particularly ambitious project for such a small town, Lincoln Pioneer Village was designed by noted artist and sculptor George Honig, probably best known for his heroic works in bronze, "Spirit of 1861" and "Spirit of 1916" in Evansville, and numerous small bronze memorial sculptures throughout southwestern Indiana. Honig supervised the construction, although not all the elements present in his early sketches were realized.

Living history museums, most notably, Colonial Williamsburg, had just begun to appear in the United States, and local boosters around the country were mining their area histories for possibilities. Another recreated village that used New Deal labor (the Civilian Conservation Corps, in this case) was New Salem in Illinois, young Abraham Lincoln's first home independent of his family. That some of these sorts of projects, as well as other examples of educational tourist attractions (such as Dinosaur Park near Rapid City, South Dakota, where the WPA constructed concrete replicas of the creatures that once roamed the Badlands), were created under New Deal auspices should come as no surprise. The concept of the "intelligent use of leisure time" had begun to enjoy mass appeal toward the end of the Progressive Era and especially after World War I. In seeking New Deal funds, a community project that not only provided employment and a permanent attraction that would generate local business, but that also reflected this ideal of using one's recreational time advantageously, would enhance its value.

Next to roads, various recreational facilities comprised the largest proportion of FERA and WPA projects in Indiana. Most of these, however, were developments of a more traditional nature. City parks projects often included "beautification" that sometimes featured rock gardens. Sports facilities such as ball diamonds, tennis courts, even golf courses and swimming pools, were fairly typical. The WPA did some of this more typical sort of work in the Rockport City Park as well, improving the recreational grounds as well as constructing a landscaped entrance that led to the village and a small lake with an island. Some of the landscaping remains, but the lake with its island is gone.



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National Park Service

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Lincoln Pioneer Village

Spencer County IN

In 1926 the city of Rockport purchased the long-abandoned Spencer County Fair Grounds for a new park. The town already had one park, Rockyside [alternatively spelled Rocky Side]. But this was only a narrow strip of land below the bluffs along the Ohio River. It was historically significant as the site of the boat landing from which Abraham Lincoln had embarked on his fabled trip to New Orleans. In contrast, the new Rockport City Park had ample room for a variety of recreational facilities, although little development took place for several years, save for clearing the weeds for some picnic grounds.

The Lincoln Pioneer Village was primarily the brainchild of sculptor George Honig, a native of Rockport and well known regionally as a Lincoln scholar, who approached the Spencer County Historical Society with his idea in 1933. The society, which had formed in 1915 to prepare for Indiana's centennial celebration the following year, enthusiastically supported the plan. Incorporated in 1928, the organization's mission was largely to promote the Lincoln legacy as well as the general history of the area. Every two years at Rockyside Park, the society presented a pageant on Lincoln's flatboat trip from Rockport to New Orleans, but the proposed Lincoln Pioneer Village would be something new and permanent. Honig and a society representative approached the Civil Works Administration (CWA) in early 1934 but nothing came of it. The project may have been much too grand to have been accepted by the CWA, since that temporary agency was only meant to provide jobs to help tide unemployed workers over the winter. CWA was discontinued at the end of March 1934, but the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) began a program of work projects soon after. Honig, with the full support of the historical society, took his plans to the city council, which successfully applied to FERA for funding to erect the memorial village that would "make our town a center for tourists."

FERA would provide funds for the labor, but nearly everything else was the local sponsors' responsibility. An intensive public campaign to solicit money, materials, and artifacts from the community, the county, and even statewide was very successful. Descendants of the pioneers whose homes were replicated in the village even donated family heirlooms to furnish the buildings. With much ceremony and festive celebration, the Lincoln Pioneer Village was dedicated July 4, 1935. Scores of costumed interpreters portrayed specific characters and generic pioneer Hoosiers.

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Lincoln Pioneer Village

Spencer County IN

Ten log buildings had been constructed by FERA workers, along with various elements of landscaping: wells, fencing, and replica pieces, such as an ox cart, standing about to add to the pioneer atmosphere. While placed in a setting to represent a typical early nineteenth century village in southern Indiana, each building replicated one that had actually existed in Rockport or at various sites throughout the county. With the introduction of the WPA the same year, a new project was immediately applied for that would add more buildings to the village, as well as substantial landscaping and recreational facilities to the park. This work was completed in 1936 and dedicated, again with much fanfare, on July 4.

Lincoln Pioneer Village was vigorously promoted by Rockport and the Spencer County Historical Society. Its president, Bess V. Ehrmann, hailed the village as "a memorial unlike any other ever built to honor [Lincoln]," as well as a worthwhile attraction depicting "a type of pioneer village in Spencer County between 1807 and 1830."<sup>1</sup> Most of the individual structures were replicas of actual buildings, as close to the originals in appearance and construction as could be ascertained, that had been scattered throughout Spencer County in the early nineteenth century. Many played some role, large or small, in Lincoln's coming of age there. Some of the buildings were more significant for their place in the early history of the county, such as the Brown Tavern or Brown's Inn, which, crude as it was, was Rockport's first inn and accommodated many famous visitors. The blockhouse fort replicated one that had been located in Grandview, one of four in the county. (It had collapsed into ruin and was recently demolished.) The Daniel Grass Home, a dogtrot cabin, was that of the judge who first owned land in what is now Rockport. The Axel Dorsey Home, a large, two-story cabin, served as the first "courthouse" in Spencer County. Dorsey was briefly schoolteacher to Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln worked as a clerk in the Jones Store, which had been located in Jonesboro (present Gentryville). John Pitcher's Law Office in Rockport was the first in Spencer County; Pitcher lent young Lincoln books.

The Old Pigeon Baptist Church replicated the one that Thomas and Abraham Lincoln helped to build. Although his family belonged, Abraham himself was not a member. The James Gentry Home, today called the "Gentry Mansion," housed neighbors of the Lincolns who sometimes employed Abraham on their farm. Both Lincoln children

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<sup>1</sup> Bess V. Ehrmann, "Lasting Memorial to Lincoln Boyhood." Indianapolis Star 11 Febraury 1940.

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Lincoln Pioneer Village

Spencer County IN

worked at the Josiah Crawford Home; Abraham borrowed books from the family. The building called the Crawford cabin was originally interpreted as a pioneer church during its first year, until the present Old Pioneer Baptist Church was completed in 1936. The Pioneer School represented the crude sort of building in which young Lincoln received a smattering of education when he could be spared from work. In 1938 the Southern Indiana McGuffey Club, which had officially organized at the village dedication in 1935, erected a monument near the school commemorating that event. Sculpted by George Honig, it honors William Holmes McGuffey, who developed the famous readers bearing his name.

The Lincoln Cabin is a replica of the family's second homestead in Spencer County, with a loft reached by a series of pegs driven into the wall. The Grigsby Cabin was first interpreted as the home of cooper Reuben Grigsby, a neighbor of the Lincolns; later it came to represent the home of Aaron and Sarah Lincoln Grigsby, Abraham's sister, who died after two years of marriage while the family was still in Indiana. The Mackey (alternatively, McKay) House was the home of Aunt Lepha of Rockport, who taught African American children to read and write before there were schools allowed for them. Lepha Mackey once owned the land upon which the present Pioneer Village stands. The village also had included a Barter and Market House that was demolished a few years ago. The original entrance was through a double cabin that served as office, gift shop, and museum. It was torn down in the early 1980s.

Honig's original conception had included several more buildings, including artisans' shops and a small cluster of Native American dwellings, but no more were built and Lincoln Pioneer Village remained essentially as it had looked at the second dedication ceremony in 1936. In the early 1950s scenes from the Hollywood film The Kentuckian starring Burt Lancaster were shot in the village. The production crew constructed an additional building (a tobacco warehouse) for the movie, which has remained part of the village, housing several examples of early horse-drawn conveyances. Today, most of the wagons are alongside the building, and the interior is used for storage.

For decades Lincoln Pioneer Village remained a successful educational and tourist attraction. Thousands of schoolchildren from around the state visited on fieldtrips. By the 1970s the village had declined. The building of the city swimming pool in 1963 in such close proximity to the village was an unfortunate choice esthetically, and poor maintenance and the elements were

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Lincoln Pioneer Village

Spencer County IN

taking their toll on the buildings. The original entrance, which had begun to sag dangerously, was demolished. The original fence that completely encircled the village was replaced with chainlink, more secure, to be sure, and faced with commercial stockade fencing on the north side only. Four of the buildings eventually succumbed to termite damage and were rebuilt in the late 1980s using labor donated by the Seabees (U.S. Navy Construction Battalion), during a misguided effort to revive the village. Two others that were in a sorry state were demolished, the Grandview Blockhouse and the Barter House.

Nevertheless, despite the shrieks of children splashing in the nearby pool, despite the neglected buildings with their valuable artifacts unprotected within, Lincoln Pioneer Village succeeds in retaining its original atmosphere as conceived in 1930s, evoking an early nineteenth century settlement in southern Indiana. It is a unique example of New Deal construction, and represents a type of educational tourist attraction that was highly in favor in that era.

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Lincoln Pioneer Village

Spencer County IN

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National Park Service

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Lincoln Pioneer Village

Spencer County, Indiana

### Boundary Description:

Starting at a point at the northwest corner of Ninth Street and Eureka Road go west along the north side of Eureka road to a north-south line which intersects a point ten (10) feet west of the west elevation of the Pitcher Law Office building. Turn right and follow this imaginary north-south line to a point which is the westward extension of the north wall of the village (stockade fence). Turn east and continue along that line until it meets the west side of the swimming pool pumphouse. Then south along that wall (39 feet 4 inches) to the south wall of the pumphouse. East along the south wall (39 feet 4 inches) to the east wall of the pumphouse. North along the east wall (39 feet 4 inches) back to the original north line (line of stockade fence). Then turn east along that line to the west side of Ninth Street. Turn south along the west edge of Ninth Street to the starting point.

### Boundary Justification:

This boundary roughly follows the path of the original stockade fence and encompasses all of the historic resources of Lincoln Pioneer Village.

LINCOLN PIONEER VILLAGE  
HISTORIC DISTRICT

rural ↑→

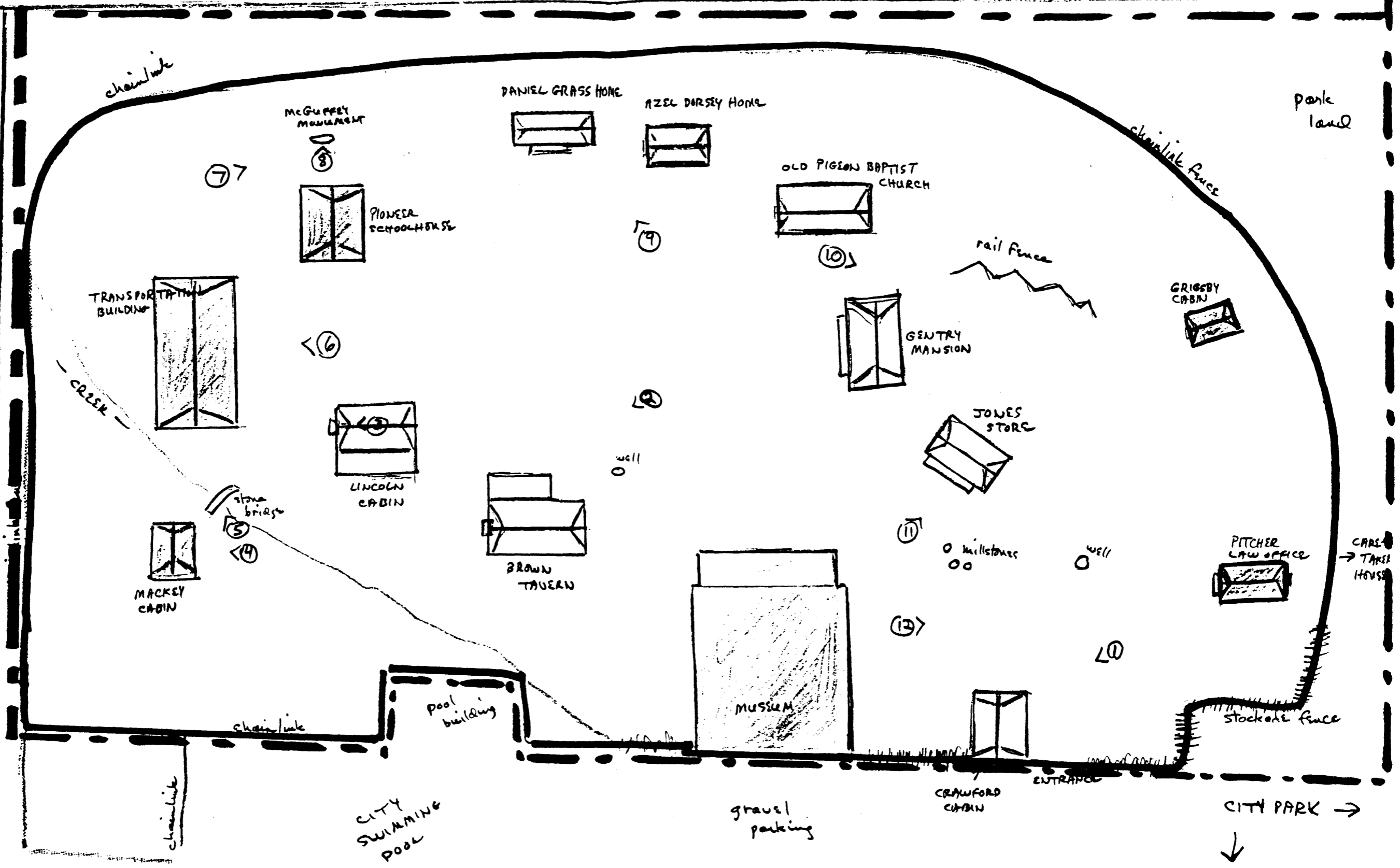
NON-CONTRIBUTING BUILDINGS ARE  
SHADED.  
BUILDINGS NOT TO PERFECT SCALE OR  
JUXTAPosition  
DISTRICT BOUNDARY

EUREKA ROAD

residential

9th STREET

N ↓



park  
land

CITY PARK →

↓