

NOV 17 2000

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

DEC 19 2000

1676

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 Nishnabotna Ferry House

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number West Minnesota Street N/A not for publication

city or town Lewis N/A vicinity

state Iowa code IA county Cass code 029 zip code 51544

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 nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Patricia Winkler DSMPD 12-8-00
Signature of certifying official/Title Date
STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA

State of 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 commenting 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:)

Edson H. Beall
Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action
1-26-01

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	2	buildings
1		sites
		structures
		objects
2	2	Total

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)

Domestic/single dwelling

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Work in progress

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Mid 19th century/Greek Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation stone/sandstone

walls wood

roof Metal

other Brick

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.

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Transportation

Period of Significance

Circa. 1857 to 1859

Significant Dates

Circa 1857

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

10. Geographical Data

Cass County, Iowa

Acreeage of Property Approximate one acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 11S 3247115 4574890
Zone Easting Northing
2

3
Zone Easting Northing
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 Valda Kennedy/Treasurer

organization Cass County Mormon Trails Ass'n date May 22, 2000

street & number 601 West 29th Street telephone 712/243-1931

city or town Atlantic state Iowa zip code 50622

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 Lewis Betterment Committee c/o Betty Sanny

street & number 110 Nebraska Street, Apt. 5 telephone 712/769-2337

city or town Lewis state Iowa zip code 51544

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.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Nishnabotna Ferry House Cass County, Iowa

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

The Nishnabotna Ferry House is located on approximately one acre on the west edge of Lewis, Iowa adjacent to the original channel of the East Nishnabotna River in Parcel "A", N $\frac{1}{2}$ of the SW $\frac{1}{4}$, Section 10-75-37, Cass County, Iowa. It is owned by the Lewis Betterment Committee. Being in a state of neglect, it is in the process of restoration.

The Nishnabotna Ferry House is a 24'x26' story and a half wooden structure in the 19th century Greek Revival style. It was used in the late 1850's as the home of the ferryman S. H. Tefft who sold the house in 1890. After that, a number of families were in residence until the mid 1970's when it was vacated and then used for storage.

The house is now in a state of neglect. A small entry stoop was attached to the south side but is now gone. The basement (under half of the house) and foundation of local sandstone were repaired in 1996. The sills under the two west rooms are hand hewn. Ceiling rafters, above the first floor are of various measurements (visible through holes in the plaster of the east room). The wood frame building is sheathed in horizontal drop siding. Window and door surrounds are plain milled boards with no moulding. Corner boards and fascia are the same simple millwork. The area of exterior wall with lattice surrounding the door based on historic photograph predates 1930. It is unknown at this time what explains this architectural feature. The roof is covered with corrugated metal roofing over old wood shingles. There is a small dormer on the west side which may be a later addition. Electrical wiring added in the 1940's, needs to be replaced.

The interior walls and ceilings are covered with lath and plaster. Several places are missing because of a leaky roof. The floor was of 3" tongue and grooved wood, some of which can be seen in one room downstairs as well as upstairs. The narrow, curved stairway to the upstairs still exists but needs repair. Two triangular walnut corner shelves and two walnut 2"x6" pillars on each side of an open doorway are still intact. All rooms downstairs featured matching shelves and wall supports. The wood south door has an arched top. A twelve paned double hung window is in the north side upstairs.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 2
Nishnabotna Ferry House Cass County, Iowa

There are two small storage buildings on this site that had multiple uses. The smaller one directly north of the house has vertical wood siding with batts (doors are missing) and is considered to be the older of the two buildings. The other building is of much newer construction and was used for storage of wood.

Being surrounded by farmland on three sides, the setting of this home remains rural in character with an "air of serenity" and an authentic "sense of time" reflecting its place in history. Hitchcock House, listed on the National Register of Historic Places for its association with the Underground Railroad, is visible in the distance.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Nishnabotna Ferry House is locally significant under Criterion A as a rare surviving ferry keeper's house. It was the home of Samuel Harlow Tefft who operated the ferry at this crossing of this main transportation route that crossed the East Nishnabotna River. This cable ferry was in operation from 1857 to 1859. Originally, the State Road was an Indian trail. The road and ferry were used by the western migration of emigrants, stage coach and mail route, the Underground Railroad, a later Mormon Trail, and the Mormon handcart companies.

On a visit here in 1993, Mike Duwe and Kay Threlkeld of the National Park Service, stated it is probably the only known ferry keeper's home in existence on the Mormon Handcart Trail.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

The original site, counted as contributing, of approximately one acre was purchased by S. H. Tefft in March, 1857 in two parcels. The west parcel was purchased from F. W. Hostetter for \$500. The east parcel was purchased from Reuben Brackett for \$50. It would seem that the parcel bought for \$500 would have included the house since it was ten times the cost of the east parcel. No records have been found indicating when or who built the house but it is assumed that the house was built by the time Tefft bought the property.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 3
Nishnabotna Ferry House Cass County, Iowa

The house sill, under the two west rooms, is hand hewn. Some of the roof rafters still have bark attached and are of various dimensions. The lumber for this house could have come from either one of two sawmills. In the fall of 1852, a water-powered sawmill was built at Iranistan, 2½ miles west. A steam-powered sawmill was built in Lewis in the fall of 1856.

The road directly to the south of the house, began as a buffalo and Indian trail. Early settlement was along this trail which soon became a road used for transportation and mail. It subsequently became known as Clark's road, the State Road between Des Moines and Council Bluffs, and the twentieth century White Pole Road that ran from coast to coast. When US #6 was established one half mile north, it became a dusty country road for local traffic.

At this crossing, various activities took place that contributed significantly and were associated with the broader patterns of our history and the settlement of the Western Frontier.

In 1850-51, Wm S. Townsend kept the first ferry at this site.

From the 1877 History of Cass County, we learn "By act of the General Assembly, in 1853, V. M. Conrad and Harry Dunn were appointed commissioners to locate a State Road from Lewis to Council Bluffs....In 1853-4, there were toll bridges at Iranistan (2½ miles west) and at Lewis."

A bill of sale recorded at the Cass County Court House on July 11, 1854, indicates C. E. Woodward sold the "bridge across the East Nishnabotna River on the State Road leading from Lewis to Council Bluffs City--also all my right, title, and interest in the charter for erecting and keeping such bridge to James W. Benedict."

This bridge became unusable by 1856 when Keyes and Peck built a cable ferry at this site on the State Road. In 1857, S. H. Tefft came with his family from Montgomery County to operate this ferry. Mr. Tefft was born in Mystic, Conn. From there he traveled twice on the ship "Curlew" to San Francisco as a "seaman before the mast" by way of Cape Horn. While in California, he engaged in mining and owned 160 acres near Oakland, before coming to Iowa for the rest of his life. He and his wife are buried at the Oakwood Cemetery at Lewis, Iowa.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 4Nishnabotna Ferry House Cass County, Iowa

Cass County records show that "In November 1858, Cass County bought the ferry boat for \$210. At the April term of county court, S. H. Tefft, filed the following report:

"Amount received by S. H. Tefft, ferryman, for tolls from Nov. 4, 1858 to April 1859--\$98.00

Amount due Tefft for attending ferry and other expenses about said ferry from Nov. 4, 1858 to April 1859--\$186.00."

Cass County road records reveal that by 1858 new roads were being surveyed to intersect with the State Road from Des Moines and Council Bluffs. In 1859 the county built a bridge to replace the cable ferry.

The state road and Nishnabotna Ferry was a point of convergence for the underground railroad activity in southwest Iowa. The cable ferry carried fugitives across the river. This was a critical point as it was closely watched when fleeing black people were thought to be around and suspected to be heading toward Hitchcock House.

In 1853, the Rev. Geo. B. Hitchcock arrived at Lewis with a commission from the American Home Missionary Society, to preach in Cass County. He lived in a log cabin west of Lewis and later built a stone house (now being considered for National Landmark status) when his log cabin became too small to accommodate the escaping slaves. This stone house (visible from the ferryman's house) harbored the fugitives in a secret room in the basement. John Brown is believed to have visited here many times.

Rev. Hitchcock states in a letter to the American Home Missionary Society dated Nov. 1853 that "All roads passing through this state and the northeastern part of Missouri meet at this point...."

In Dec. 1858, two runaway girls were brought from Nebraska City (Nuckolls incident) and kept at the Oliver Mills residence in Lewis for about a week until they could be safely transported to the next station.

John Brown, with the help of others, escorted a party of 18 Negroes, well armed and with wagons and teams, through the county (Feb. 1859).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 5Nishnabotna Ferry House Cass County, Iowa

Later in 1859, a pair of runaway Negro men were traced to the vicinity of Lewis. Everyone was on the lookout for them, especially the sheriff who had warned the ferrykeeper to watch for them. One Sunday morning, a farmer living west of Lewis drove down to the ferry, accompanied by his family and two finely dressed and "veiled ladies". The ferry, being busy, didn't notice the two extra people. However, after leaving his family at church, the farmer continued on to the next underground station with the "wanted men".

By 1883, Franklin Whitney had finished grading the bed of the Kansas City, Atlantic, and Northern Railroad from Atlantic to three miles below Lewis. It was parallel to the Rock Island Railroad but was never completed. A portion of this grading can be seen on the west side of the Ferry House site, adding historic richness to the region.

Related events of the surrounding vicinity are numerous.

H. A. Disbrow, in his reminiscences (History of Cass County, 1884), states that he and his family arrived at Lewis at 11 AM on May 9, 1857. The only place of shelter for his family was an old log cabin on the east bank of the East Nishnabotna River on the road to Council Bluffs, but west of Lewis. "Fortunately we lived on the State Road, so that the great western emigration passed by our door. From two to four times a day the ponderous stage coach loaded inside and out, and drawn by four good horses, passed by. In the summer of 1857, five hundred Mormon emigrants passed through Lewis enroute to Salt Lake. They took up their line of March at Iowa City and expected to make the whole journey to Salt Lake City on foot, and draw all their worldly goods on a small handcart. Men, women, and children plodded along in their bare feet, being otherwise miserably clad, they endured hunger, fatigue, and want, in a hundred different forms."

Coming from the northeast, five Mormon companies passed by the Nishnabotna Ferry House in 1856, two in 1857.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 6
Nishnabotna Ferry House Cass County, Iowa

A diary excerpt from "Emigrating Journals of the Willie and Martin Handcart Companies and the Hunt and Hodgett Wagon Trains" by Lynne Slater is as follows:

"18 August 1856: We started for Morrison's Grove at eight o'clock, when we stopped two hours for dinner. Started again, traveled 21 miles and pitched our tents at 6 o'clock, close by the river.

19 August 1856: We started at twenty minutes to eight o'clock, passed through Indiantown, which at that time the Saints were driven from Nauvoo, they passed this place. It was settled by Indians and was an Indian village. We passed over the Indian River (Creek). We stopped three hours for dinner."

Other diaries also mention camping on the Nishnabotna River and passing through Indiantown.

The first post office of the county was established by the Mormon's at Indiantown (1847). In 1849, stagecoaches brought the mail from Des Moines to Council Bluffs through Indiantown. As late as 1851 the members of the church (LDS) had a baptismal ceremony in the East Nishnabotna River when 15 people were received into full membership.

The town of Lewis was established in 1853 as the county seat and was a place of importance.

According to McGeehon's reminiscences, History of Cass County, 1884, "The opening of the road from Des Moines to Council Bluffs, by way of Dalmanutha and Morrison's Grove and the placing of a line of four horse coaches, making daily trips upon it, brought a large emigration through that part of the country....In the spring of the year, long trains of wagons passing by daily, bound for the land of gold-California and Oregon...."

"The early settlers of Cass County looked upon the advent of the four horse coaches (May 1855), at that time passing by their door, with more pride than would be shown for the laying out of two or three new railroads through the county."

By the spring of 1868, the Chicago, Rock Island, and Pacific Railroad began to build the first line across the county. At this time, the county seat had been removed from Lewis to Atlantic. Once the railroad was established, the State Road became less important.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 7

Nishnabotna Ferry House Cass County, Iowa

In 1879, a branch of the C., R.I., & P. Railroad was built from Atlantic to Lewis, with the first train arriving at Lewis on Jan. 1, 1880. At this time, the center of trade was at the east end of Lewis and had to be moved to the west side to be nearer the depot.

In 1880, a large skating rink was built where Cold Springs State Park is now located. The Rock Island Railroad ran special trains on holidays bringing people from Audubon and Atlantic to this place for skating, swimming, and picnicing. It stopped nearby at a place called the "Ripples" near what is now called the "rock cut".

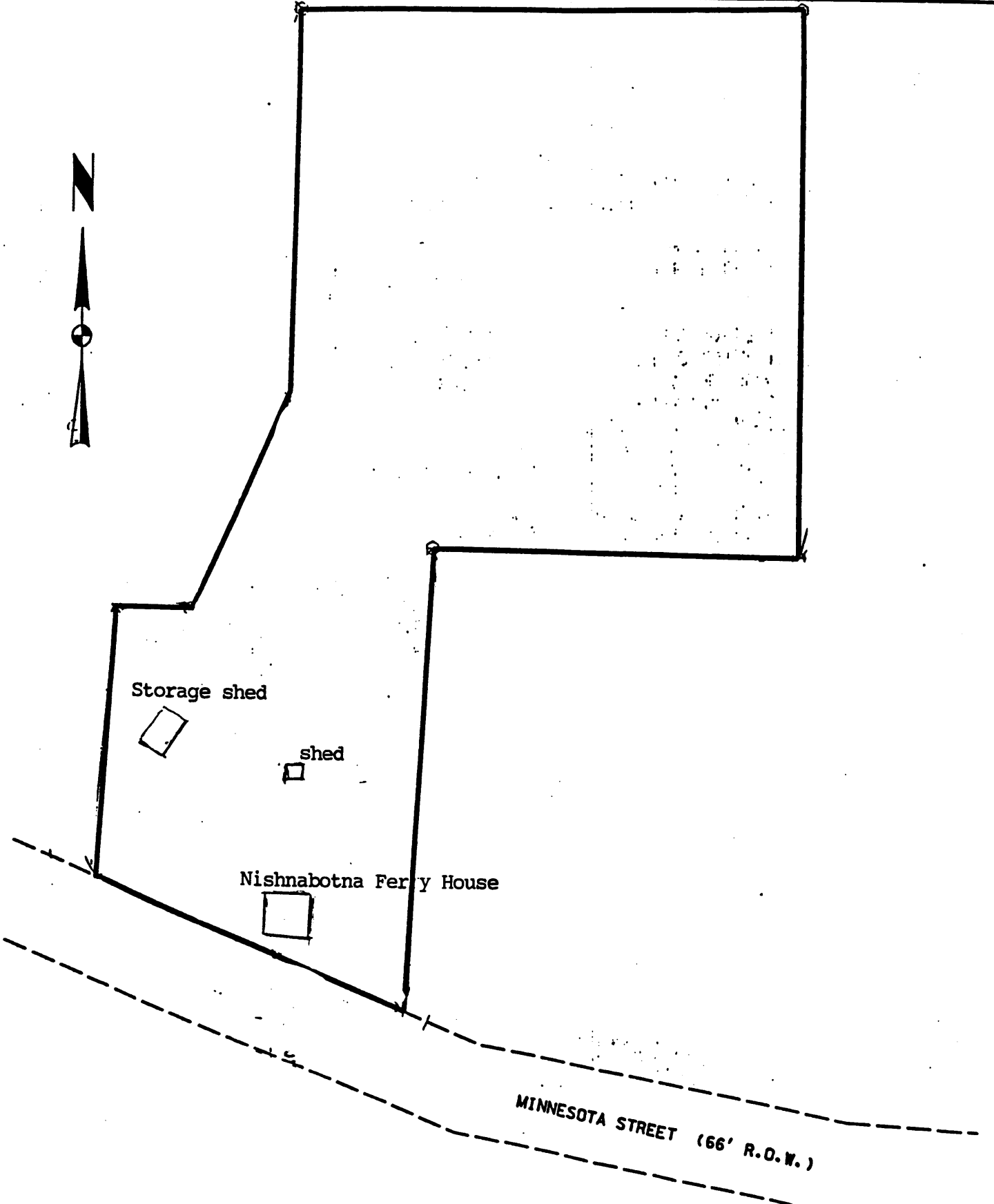
In October, 1994, National Park Service Archaeologist Steve Devore did an assessment of the Mormon Trail crossing (13CA32) about 2½ miles downstream from the Ferry House. It was determined that Brigham Young and his followers had crossed the East Nishnabotna at this point on their journey to Salt Lake after being evicted from Nauvoo, Ill. After reaching Council Bluffs in 1846, 20 families returned to the area and established Indiantown ½ mile west of the Ferry House. Indiantown was located near the spot called Mi-au-mise where the wigwams of the Pottawattamie Indians once stood. Later crossings are said to be near Cold Springs Park as well as the ferry crossing site.

The Nishnabotna Ferry House and grounds will be used to interpret the rich trails history of the site. The combination of trail routes, town sites, and Hitchcock House presents opportunities for the interpretation of site specific information. The ferry, Underground Railroad, Mormon Handcart Trail, pioneer life, and life of S. H. Tefft are some examples of the many educational opportunities for a broad and diverse audience.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 8

Nishnabotna Ferry House Cass County, Iowa



National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9, 10 Page 10

Nishnabotna Ferry House Cass County, Iowa

Bibliography

- Lafe Young, History of Cass County Iowa, Atlantic, Ia, 1877
Compendium of History and Biography of Cass County, Iowa,
Henry Taylor & Co., Chicago, 1906
History of Cass County, Iowa, Continental Historical Co.,
1884
Fred B. De Witt, The land and men, now and then, 1954
Wm J. Petersen, Iowa-The rivers and her valleys, State
Historical Society of Iowa, 1941
Atlas of Cass County Iowa, Title Atlas Co., 1965
Abandoned towns of Iowa, Annals of Iowa, Vol. 17, 1929-1931
Glenn Noble, John Brown and the Jim Lane Trail, Purcells, Inc.,
Broken Bow, NE., 1977
Lynne Slater Turner, Emigrating Journals of the Willie and
Martin Handcart Companies and the Hunt and Hodgett Wagon
Trains, 1996
Excerpts from the letters from Rev. Geo. B. Hitchcock to
the American Home Missionary Society, Grinnell College Library
Obituary-Samuel H. Tefft, Dec. 15, 1904, Lewis Standard
Rev. John Todd, Early settlement and growth of Western Iowa,
Historical Dep't of Iowa, 1906
Floyd E. Pearce, Indiantown: The Mormon Settlement in Cass
County, The Nauvoo Journal, Vol. 6, Spring 1994 No. 1
Deed Records, Cass County Recorders Office, Atlantic, Ia
Pauline Franklin, Historical Lewis, 1976
Wm H. Thompson, Transportation in Iowa before Railroads-
A historical summary, Iowa Department of Transportation,
1989
Jonathan R. Sellars, Archeological investigations associated
with the proposed renovation of the Nishnabotna Ferry House,
City of Lewis, Cass County, Iowa. Report CAS-184

Verbal boundary description

Parcel "A", N $\frac{1}{2}$ of the SW $\frac{1}{4}$, Section 10-75-37, City of Lewis,
Cass County, Iowa per plat of survey dated December 9, 1998

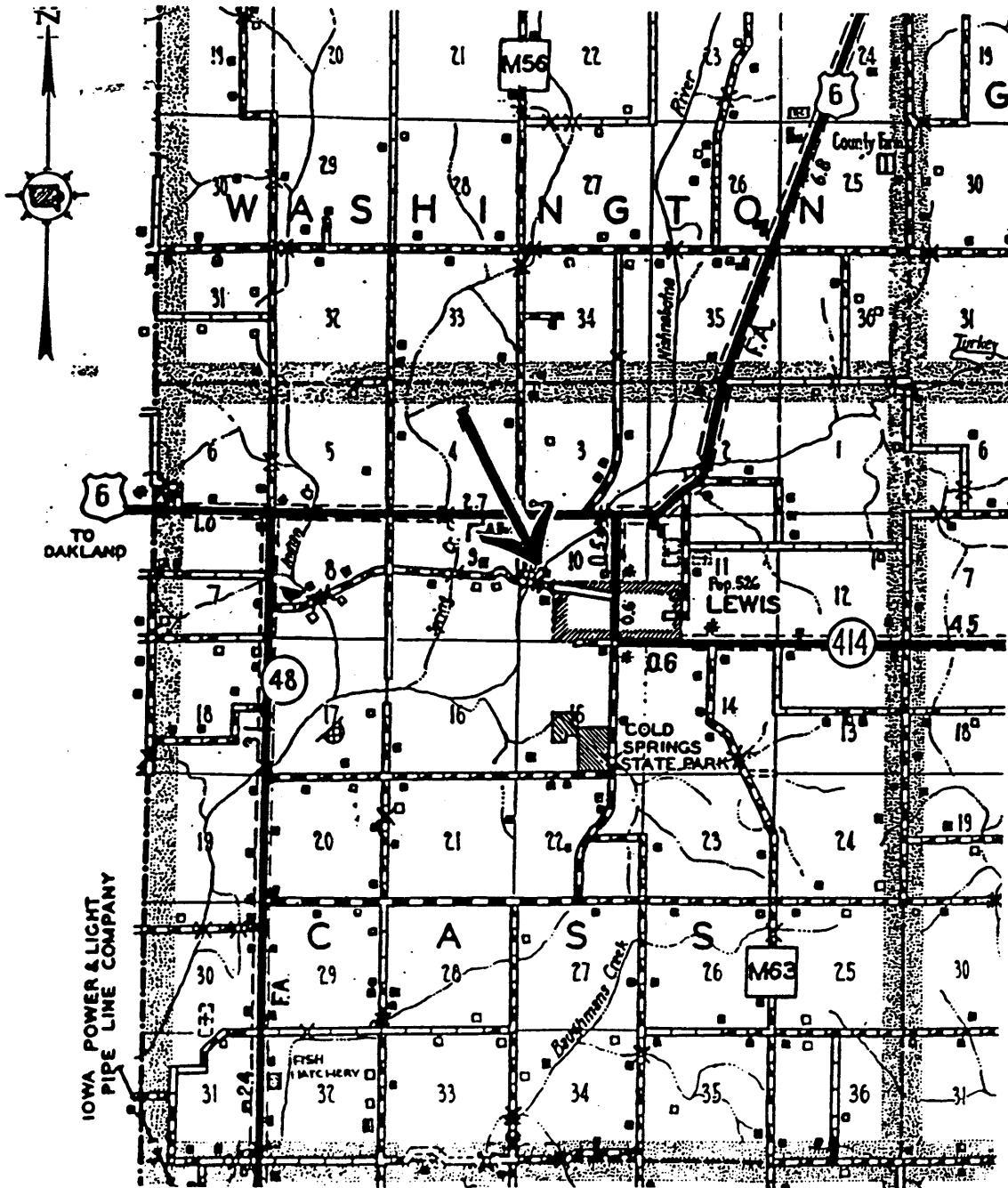
Verbal boundary justification

The nominated property includes the entire parcel historically
associated with the ferrykeeper's home as well as an adjacent
wooded area.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Maps Page 12
Nishnabotna Ferry House Cass County, Iowa



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number Maps Page 13

Nishnabotna Ferry House Cass County, Iowa

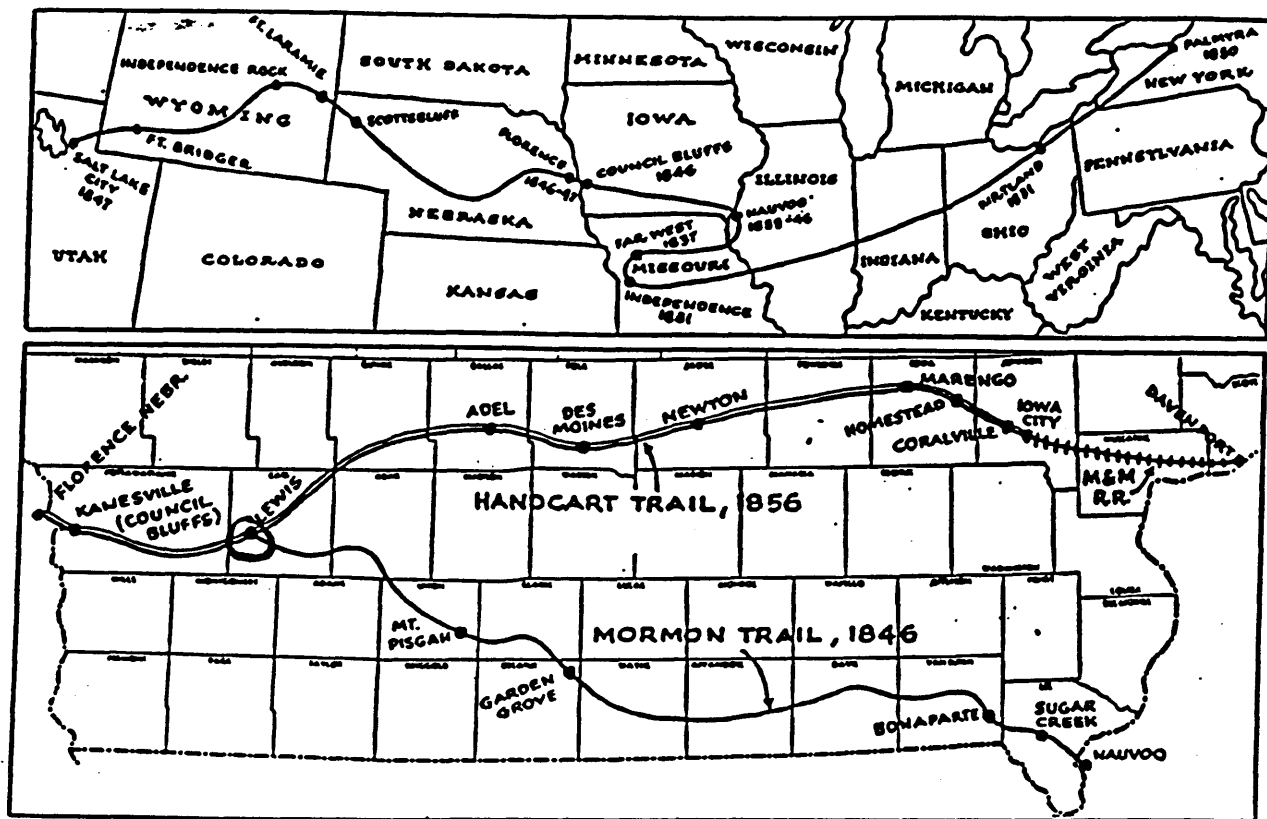


Figure 1-3
Mormon Trails
(Courtesy: State Historical Society of Iowa)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Maps Page 14
Nishnabotna Ferry House Cass County, Iowa

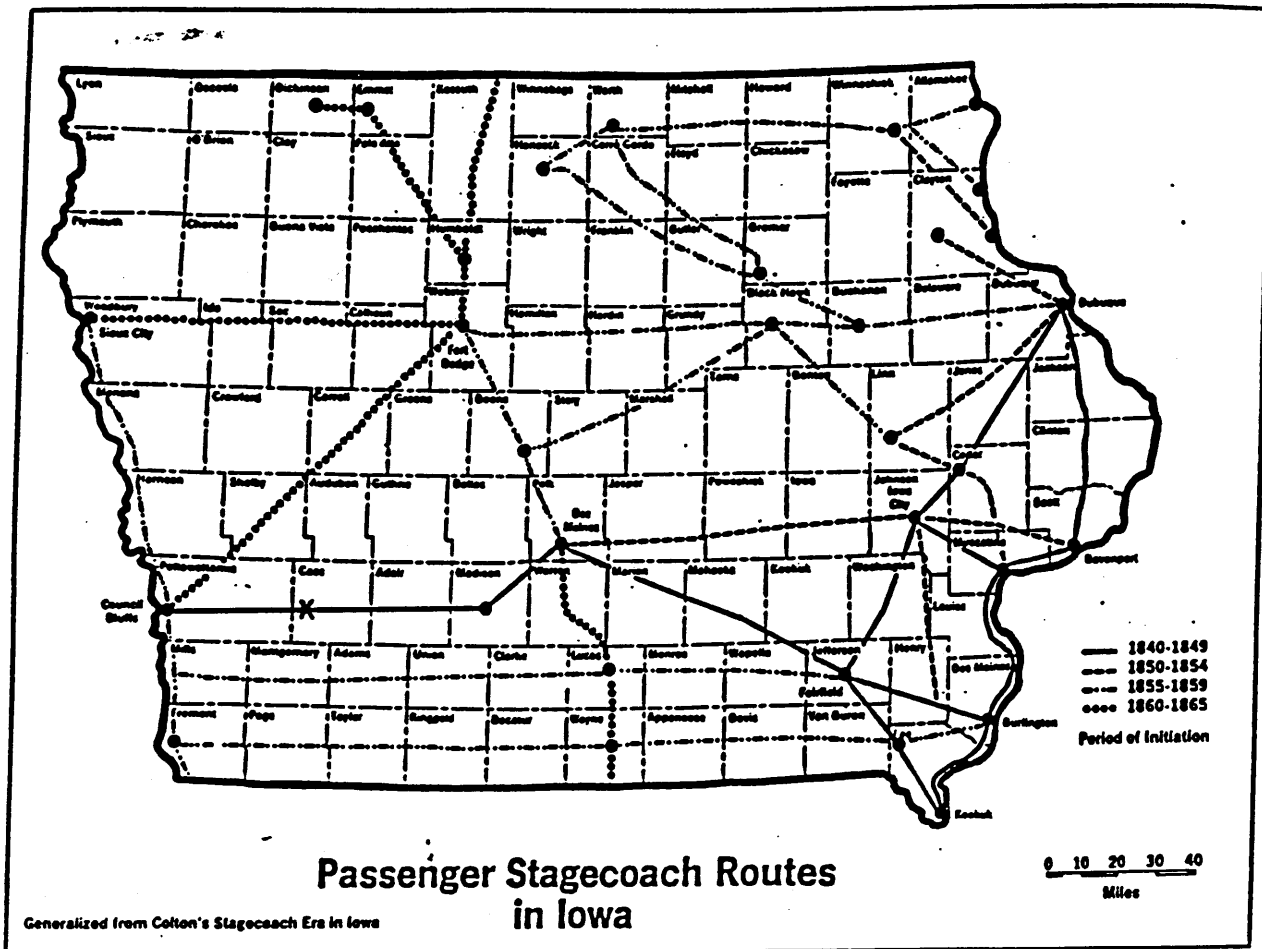


Figure 1-4

(Courtesy: Clare C. Cooper, "The Role of the Railroads in the Settlement of Iowa," M.A. thesis, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, 1958.)