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National Register of Historic Places  
Multiple Property Documentation Form

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This form is for use in documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Type all entries.

**A. Name of Multiple Property Listing**

Historic and Architectural Resources of Lake City, Iowa, 1854-1940

**B. Associated Historic Contexts**

Prairie Settlement, 1854-1880	Depression Era, c. 1925-1940
Railroad Boom Town, 1881-c.1895	Lake City Architecture, 1854-1940
Progressive Community, 1893-c.1924	

**C. Geographical Data**

The boundaries include the town limits of Lake City, portions of Jackson and Calhoun townships that lie southwest and south of the town, and the Earl-Sorenson Farm lying in Carroll County. The portion outside the town limits begins at the west edge of Lake City at Highway 175, then runs west for approximately 2.25 miles to the western edge of Section 15 T86N R34W, then south along the section line to the Raccoon River, then southeasterly following the line of the river to County Road N37, then south along N37 to the Carroll County line, then east along the line to the Earl-Sorenson Farm (located just south of the Calhoun-Carroll County line on County Road N41), encompasses the whole of the Earl-Sorenson Farm, then north along N41 to the town limits. The boundaries delineate an area of approximately 13.5 square miles in size.

See continuation sheet G-4  
Map

**D. Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Planning and Evaluation.

David [Signature]  
Signature of certifying official  
Bureau of Historic Preservation  
State or Federal agency and bureau

7/12/90  
Date

I, hereby, certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

Beth Boland  
Signature of the Keeper of the National Register

8/27/90  
Date

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**E. Statement of Historic Contexts**

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Discuss each historic context listed in Section B.

See Continuation Sheet

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## **E. Associated Historical Contexts:**

**Prairie Settlement, 1854-1880**  
**Railroad Boom Town, 1881 - c. 1893**  
**Progressive Community, 1893-c. 1924**  
**Depression Era, c. 1925-1940**  
**Lake City Architecture, 1854-1940**

### **I. Introduction**

Lake City, Iowa, is located in the southwestern corner of Calhoun County, approximately 40 miles southwest of Fort Dodge, the nearest regional center. In 1854, eight years after the U.S. government forced the Sauk and Fox to cede their last claims to western Iowa land, settlers began to purchase land in this area. Founded in 1856, Lake City is the oldest town in the county, and it served as the first county seat. Lake City also is one of the oldest towns in northwest Iowa, predating the era of town development that began with the Homestead Act of 1862 and continued as railroad lines were extended through this area of the state from the late 1860s through the late 1880s.

Lake City's historical development from 1854 to 1940 can be divided into four chronological periods: the Prairie Settlement Period, which began in 1854 and lasted until 1880; the Railroad Boom Town Era, which began in 1881 and lasted until the mid-1890s; the Progressive Community Era, which began as early as 1893 and lasted until about 1924; and the Depression Era, which spanned the period from about 1925 to World War II.

The prairie town that emerged in the 1860s and 1870s actually was a loose collection of buildings covering a distance of at least four miles, anchored on the north by the County Courthouse and on the south by a farm settlement area known as Cottonwood. It would be difficult to establish precise boundaries, but part of the original community lay in Calhoun Township, where the town was platted; the other part lay in Jackson Township, where farmsteads were established in close proximity to the Raccoon River or its tributaries. By 1870, the town proper comprised only 18 households, representing a total population of 103 adults and children. The town population grew slowly during the next decade, reaching about 300 by 1880. Because the pioneer settlers who provided the land for the town selected an area away from the major locus of farmstead formation, i.e., the Raccoon River, rather amorphous community boundaries evolved during the first 25 years of Lake City's existence.

The first railroad tracks through Calhoun County were laid in 1870 when the Iowa Falls and Sioux City Railroad (Illinois Central) extended its line through Pomeroy on the route destined to connect Sioux City with Dubuque. The IC line ran considerably north of Lake City and appears, therefore, to have had little direct influence on the town. In 1881, however, the Toledo and North Western Railroad (later Chicago & North Western) extended its line through Jewell, Dayton, and Gowrie to Lake City. The railroad opened up Des Moines and Sioux City as market points for Lake City farms and

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merchants. It also initiated an era of rapid expansion and attendant prosperity. Intense residential construction marked the late 1880s and early 1890s, as the town absorbed this population influx.

When the construction boom began to subside, townspeople turned their attention to providing the accoutrements of modern urban life. From 1893 until the early 1920s, the town's population stabilized at slightly above 2000. In many ways, Lake City mirrored the progressive character of the country as a whole. Development was focused on providing or upgrading community services. Men and women led spirited community drives to establish a sanitary water system, electric light and telephone service, better streets and sidewalks, and new cultural and community centers. The automobile revolution, which hit Lake City about 1910, brought more than a new mode of travel: it affected social patterns, created new economic opportunities, and influenced architectural design.

The late 1920s and 1930s, in contrast, were a period of relative quiet. The agricultural recession of the 1920s, which deepened to a nationwide economic depression during the 1930s, meant foreclosures for many farm and town property owners. The experience matured the community in certain respects: hardship tempered the progressive spirit of the early 20th century. Little new construction occurred in Lake City between 1925 and 1940. Buildings which were constructed tended to reflect a utilitarian attitude toward the built environment: commercial buildings were plainer and houses were smaller.

Throughout each historical period run familiar themes of economic, political, and social life: the establishment and development of agriculture, industry, commerce, government, transportation routes, schools, churches, health care, and community organizations. Except for the boom town era which came with the railroad, however, Lake City's development is not strongly tied to historical themes. Although Lake City played an important role as the seat of county government for 20 years from 1856 to 1876, the central public square is the only tangible record of this function. Farming has certainly influenced the character of the town's culture and built environment, but the influences are indirect and widely dispersed. Likewise, buildings in Lake City do not reflect a history of ethnic distinctiveness or diversity. With the exception of the railroad influence there are no broad themes which tie several properties together. For this reason, Lake City's buildings, sites, structures, and features, have been evaluated within chronological contexts. There are four: Prairie Settlement, 1854-1880; Railroad Boom Town, 1881-mid-1890s, Progressive Community, 1893-c.1924, and the Depression Era, c. 1925-1940.

## II. Prairie Settlement: 1854-1880

White settlement in Calhoun County dates to April 1854, when Ebenezer Comstock and his family claimed land "near the western limits" of present-day Lake City and built a log cabin there. By the end of the year, about 15 additional settlers had joined the Comstocks [Stonebraker 1915:56-57]. Some newcomers stopped only briefly on their westward odyssey; others, such as Peter Smith, William Oxenford, Charles Amy, and Alford White, stayed to establish a community. Those who came to put down roots lost no time in organizing a government and platting a town. In April 1856 voters decided to locate the county seat in the area of greatest settlement, the present-day town of Lake City. The next month, Alford and Phebe White and Peter and Sarah Smith deeded land for the sale of town lots.

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Charles Amy platted the original town, reserving a block in the center of the grid for a courthouse, a town plan then in vogue among surveyors [see Price, 1986:124-145 for a typology of central courthouse squares]. The Original Town Plat of 1856 identifies this block as a "Public Square." A year later, in 1857, Amy and Moses Sherman erected the first county courthouse in the square.

As settlement proceeded during the next two decades, Lake City's claim to be the natural county seat lost force as more towns were established and the county's population balance changed. In 1876, voters opted to remove the seat of government to Rockwell City, more nearly situated at the county's geographic center [Stonebraker, 1915:67-71].

During the 20 years that Lake City served as the county seat, official government functions focused on building roads and bridges as well as on encouraging new settlement. But the land in Calhoun County was mostly swampland, hence Lake City's name, and the cost of internal improvements exceeded available resources. Consequently, in 1861, the County Court [later known as the Board of Supervisors] entered into an agreement with the American Emigrant Company whereby the County would deed over certain swamplands in return for which the Company would build bridges and improve certain roads. Various delays ensued, and the American Emigrant Company never carried out the provisions of its original contract. This delay may have slowed the pace of settlement for a few years, but by the late 1860s, homesteaders were entering claims on land still owned by the American Emigrant Company, and new and old settlers alike began draining the swampy land. After that, settlement proceeded gradually, while the County, the American Emigrant Company, and various individual homesteaders worked out their differences in court [Stonebraker 1915:82-92].

The origin of Lake City's pioneer settlers differed very little from the statewide profile, which shows that the great bulk of Iowa's immigrants came from the Old Northwest states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin, with substantial concentrations from the Mid-Atlantic and border slave states [Wall 1978:50-51]. Lake City's immigrant mixture was probably similar to that of many, if not most, northwest Iowa towns, which, in general, attracted settlers of Northern European and Anglo-Irish ancestry. Among the 103 heads of household enumerated for Jackson and Calhoun townships in the 1870 U.S. manuscript census, 53 of them came, in descending order of importance, from Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, and Wisconsin. Most of them, 24 (representing 23 percent of the total) came from Ohio. Another 32 heads of household came from the Mid-Atlantic and New England states of New York, Pennsylvania, Vermont, and Connecticut. New York had the highest representation from this region, with 21 heads of household (20 percent). Only a few inhabitants listed the border states of Tennessee, Virginia, Kentucky, and North Carolina as their natives states. Among direct immigrants, five came from Germany, four from England, and one each from Canada and Denmark.

An accounting of 75 "old settlers" taken in 1902 suggests that migrants from Mid-Atlantic states perhaps were more likely to have stayed and become permanent residents. Fully 40 percent of Lake City's long-time residents came from New York and Pennsylvania, and 31 percent came from Old Northwest states. The remainder came from New England, generally Vermont, from points east in Iowa, and from aboard, usually from the British Isles or from Northern Europe [Graphic, September 25, 1902].

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Like the vast majority of Iowa's interior towns, Lake City's initial economic support came from the farms which surrounded it. For instance, among the 19 heads of household listed on the 1870 U.S. manuscript census for Lake City proper, 12 of them identified their occupation as either farmhand or teamster. In addition, many, if not most of the early-day settlers who played key roles in Lake City's development actually lived outside the town borders. These included Peter and Sarah Smith as well as Alford and Phebe White, the families who deeded land for the original town plat. Other key individuals included William and Lucinda Oxenford, Cyrus and Sarah Fulkerson, Joseph and Sue Hutchinson, Moses and Sarah Sherman, and Charles and Sophia Amy. The few retail and professional businesses established by 1870, which included a tinsmith, a blacksmith, a real estate office, a law office, a hotel, a general store, and one doctor's office, most likely were located along the streets bordering the courthouse square. Photographs taken at the beginning of the 1880s show residences scattered around the town center. At most, no more than four homes were located in any square block. Streets were no more than well-traveled dirt lanes, and a network of boardwalks elevated pedestrians above the dust and mud.

Wagon roads connected Lake City to Fort Dodge and Des Moines. These were vital links to the outside world and supply routes to obtain what could not be provided locally, not regularly traveled farm-to-market routes. The stage route reportedly ran south of the present-day town. Tradition holds that Larkin and Sarah Williams operated a stage stop out of their house, still extant, located in Jackson Township approximately two miles southwest of the town center. The location of the stage route and the extant house associated with it reflects the dispersed nature of settlement during the 1860s and 1870s. During these decades, the majority of the population actually lived in Jackson Township, whereas today about 90 percent of the town population is located in Calhoun Township.

While the courthouse provided a nominal town center for 20 years and most commercial enterprises located nearby, the community was, in fact, not defined by town boundaries. The dominance of agricultural and the distance between the courthouse and the Raccoon River, a major waterway through northwest Iowa, influenced the development of a community with little separation between town and country. Initially, wheat was the major food crop and exchange item; consequently, a flour mill was an establishment necessary to the local economy. In 1855, Henry W. Smith built the first mill, about four miles southwest of town on the Raccoon River. The mill was better known as the Oxenford Mill after brothers William and John Oxenford purchased it during the late 1850s. The Oxenfords added a sawmill sometime in the 1860s. Nearby stood Cottonwood Church, an interdenominational church with an associated cemetery. The mill and the church/cemetery constituted the southern anchor of the prairie settlement. Only the cemetery remains.

### III. Railroad Boom Town, 1881 - c. 1893

In the winter of 1881, the Toledo and North Western Railroad (which became the Chicago & North Western in 1890) made its way into Lake City. The railroad, when completed through to Sioux City in 1887, ushered in an era of rapid growth and economic development which finally peaked in the mid-1890s. Between 1887 and 1895, Lake City's population more than doubled, growing from about 900 to

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over 2000. Although the town newspaper, the Graphic, boasted a population of 2500 in May of 1893, in 1895 the U.S. Census Bureau deflated this figure to 2053 inhabitants, still a sizable increase, though, and enough to declare Lake City officially as a second-class town. Although the earlier figure is most likely a figment of wishful thinking, the decline may have been a legitimate result of a short but serious depression that swept the country between 1893 and 1896. The Midwest additionally suffered severe drought during the summer of 1894.

In any case, the Panic of 1893 came at a time when Lake City was experiencing phenomenal growth, and the nationwide economic trend does not seem to have slowed the local economy to any measurable degree. To accommodate this population growth, 19 additions to the Original Town were platted between 1881 and 1894 [see Figure 1]. In general, the town seems to have expanded contemporaneously south, east, and west from the platted center. Subdivisions to the north appeared beginning in 1887, although many of the lots platted in this area have never been built upon. The location of the railroad yard, south of the town center probably influenced this geographical pattern of expansion as much as anything.

The transition from a quiet prairie settlement to a railroad boom town seems to have proceeded at a relatively gradual pace from 1881 to mid-decade. Photographs taken in about 1885 show some new construction in progress, but residential blocks were still characterized by plenty of open space. A north-south stage line continued to run at least through 1888; ironically, a railroad barn housed stage line equipment for a time. Between 1885 and 1888, however, the railroad complex came to dominate the townscape. A 12-stall engine house was constructed, later expanded to 16 stalls; five miles of tracks were added; a large windmill and water tower went up; railroad yards and warehouses extended for about a half-mile along the tracks; 11 coal chutes were built, capable of holding up to seven tons; and the depot included a lunch counter for passengers and railroad employees. By 1887, the railroad complex was both a major physical presence and the major source of employment. Ninety-seven men were on the payroll that year. Anywhere from 20 to as many as 54 trains rolled through Lake City daily [Graphic, 1887-1888 passim]. Central School, erected in 1884, provides good evidence of town growth during these years. In 1889, five years after the school was constructed, it had to be doubled in size in order to accommodate the student body.

The railroad transformed subsistence farming into commercial agriculture by providing easy access to regional markets. Grain farming gave way to diversified operations. By the early 1890s, farmers produced corn, hogs, cattle, and wheat in varying degrees depending upon market fluctuations. Compared to the surrounding area, Calhoun County was not one of the major cattle-producing counties in northwest Iowa; but as an index of agricultural expansion in the county, beef cattle increased dramatically from about 15 head per square mile in 1880 to about 55 head per square mile in 1890 [Hopkins, 1928]. A stock train left every night from Lake City bound for the Chicago stockyards.

The railroad also helped to expand the town's economic base. Lake City was a division town, halfway between Des Moines, 100 miles east, and Sioux City, 100 miles west. The railroad yard not only served as a shipping point, but took on additional importance as a point where engines were serviced and trains were made up. Private enterprise flourished. By mid-1888, Lake City Creamery (not extant) was turning out about two tons of butter a week and shipping much of it by rail to outside markets.

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The creamery was one of at least two such establishments in town; and although its export market probably ended about 1900, Lake City Creamery supplied the local market until 1959. The railroad also spawned a short-lived clam fishing industry. For a brief period beginning in 1891, fishers scraped the Raccoon River for clams, retrieving incidental caches of pearls before shipping the shells by rail to button factories in eastern Iowa. New businesses arose -- ladies' and men's apparel shops, lumber yards, paint and wallpaper stores, grain elevators, flour mills, meat markets, and ice cream parlors -- catering to the needs and fancies of a growing community. By 1885, Lake City could support two banks, one organized by the Peter Smith family in the 1880, and Citizens Bank of Lake City, organized in 1885 by W.A. Townsend [Graphic, 1890-1900 passim]. Buildings associated with both banks are extant, but considerably altered.

Railroad construction and operation brought new residents and created a housing shortage which lasted into the 1890s. The Columbia and Park Hotels, as well as various boarding houses, provided temporary residence for many railroad employees and new businessmen, who often resettled their families here at a later date. None of these hostleries is extant. Four local brickyards turned out bricks for stores and homes, and the railroad brought milled lumber and other building materials to supplement the local supply [Graphic, 1890-1900 passim]. The brick factories long ago ceased operation, but ruins mark the location of one of them.

**IV. Progressive Community: 1893-1924**

As the Railroad Boom-Town Era began to reach its crest, town leaders turned their attention to the provision of modern infrastructures and public services. A growing population required sanitary water and sewer systems as well as new and improved streets. By now the tax base had expanded to allow the construction of such necessities.

In July of 1893 voters passed ordinance No. 30 creating a Water Works Department, thus providing the mechanism for the City to replace the public well with a piped-water system. A.F. Paige Co. of Sioux City had already negotiated a contract with the City to provide a complete system, including a 90-foot standpipe, a boiler, a pump, and a heater. Work began as soon as the ordinance passed. The system was completed and accepted in November of that year, after which Paige Co. commenced work extending the water mains [Minutes, City Council: 1893-94 passim]. Although a water tank has also served the city since the 1920s, the standpipe and parts of the original water system are still in use.

Electric street lights were the next order of business. The first franchise went, in 1894, to E.B. Hillman and Co. of Peoria, Illinois, which installed 15 arc lights for street lighting, thereby replacing the gas lamps tended nightly by lamplighters. Wiring of private residences did not begin until the late 1890s. In 1894, the town also organized the first official Fire Department, although an ad hoc volunteer company apparently had replaced the bucket-brigade method as early as 1889 [Minutes, City Council: 1894 passim; Graphic, June 28, 1956].

The earliest sidewalks were wooden plank boardwalks, which the City and the railroad company were still constructing as late as 1888. Private property owners, however, often opted for brick sidewalks,

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and the earliest cement sidewalk was poured in 1891. Boardwalks presented a fire hazard, though, and required frequent repair. Slowly, cement and brick replaced wooden structures throughout town. After 1915, brick gave way almost entirely to cement. Under the guiding hand of Mayor Oscar Lundberg, owner of Lake City Concrete Works, the City Council condemned about a mile of brick sidewalks and ordered them replaced with cement walks. At the same time, the City placed cement obelisk street markers throughout the town. Not surprisingly, these were manufactured by Lundberg's manufactory. A few extant patches of brick sidewalk managed to escape the fate imposed by the City Council's action. About a dozen street markers also survive.

Women played an important role in improving the community. In 1905, the ladies of the Library Association secured use of Central School's primary class building, an older wood frame building located just south of the brick school, for use as a subscription library. The Library Association then began to canvass the town for books, book cases, tables, and chairs. By 1908 the library had grown to 1500 volumes, and the Association approached the City Council for assistance in securing a Carnegie library. The Council consented, and in June of that year Andrew Carnegie gave the City \$7500 for the erection of a public library, with the City agreeing to provide a suitable site and to maintain the building. Construction began in July 1909, and the library's Board of Trustees accepted the completed building (extant) in April 1910 [Graphic 1905-1910 passim; Minutes, City Council:1908-1910 passim].

Women likewise spearheaded the effort to erect a community memorial building (extant). Their campaign started early in 1919 when the Civic Improvement Society began to solicit subscriptions in order to purchase a building site. Intended to be a "living memorial" to soldiers of three wars, the building was designed to accommodate all kinds of community social functions. Fittingly, it was dedicated on Armistice Day, 1920 [Community Improvement Society Minutes; Graphic, 1919-1920 passim]. The new library and community building, along with Lake City's churches, provided convenient meeting places for many civic organizations. Besides the Community Improvement Society, the V.F.W., the American Legion, the WCTU, the YMCA, literary societies, and art clubs met regularly at one or both of these buildings.

The Community Improvement Society also was behind the 1915 effort to transform the old Courthouse Square into a city park. Eventually, the square was beautified with a fountain, a bandstand, cement walkways, and a watering trough for horses and dogs [Community Improvement Society Minutes; Graphic, 1915, passim].

A growing population and changing ideas about education led the Lake City Independent School District to construct a new high school in 1904. When fire destroyed the building in 1922, the school district took the opportunity to upgrade its facilities in keeping with then-current educational theories. The new school building (extant) had large casement windows to let in air and light, and separate side entrances for girls and boys [Graphic, 1904, 1922-1924 passim].

The general prosperity and civic pride which characterized this period manifested itself in architect-designed commercial buildings, as discussed further in Section VI. Some of these buildings served multiple purposes, housing retail stores, offices, meeting rooms, perhaps an entertainment hall, and, in one case, a public bath. This was usually accomplished by having a fraternal order or other

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community organization pay part of the construction cost. Multipurpose commercial buildings enabled the community to have a downtown business district composed of substantial brick buildings even though not all businessmen had the trade or capital to erect such imposing structures on their own. Citizens Bank and the I.O.O.F., for instance, teamed up to build the Townsend Block, a striking Richardsonian Romanesque building designed by Harry E. Netcott of Independence and constructed by Zitterell and Atkinson of Webster City in 1899. Though much altered, the building still stands. Prosperity also attracted one major new industry: the manufacture of concrete products. In 1905, local businessmen J.B. Smith and R.E. Smith provided the capital to establish an Electrical Concrete Post Co. in town. The Lake City plant reportedly was one of about 100 such factories in the United States. Like pearl fishing, however, the manufacture of electrical concrete posts turned out to be a short-lived phenomenon, and the Lake City factory closed in about 1911.

Lake City also began to emerge as a medical center during this period. At one time shortly after the turn of the century, no fewer than 16 doctors were practicing in the town. In 1918, Drs. D.W. and Warren McCrary extensively remodeled the old Columbia Hotel, fitting the first and third floors for use as a clinic and hospital. Today, a modern medical clinic, McCrary-Rost Clinic, occupies the site of the former hotel-hospital. A year earlier, in 1917, Dr. M.J. McVay established medical offices downtown, which he converted to the McVay Hospital in 1927. The building still stands, although it has now been converted into an apartment building.

### V. Depression Era: 1925-1940

For the rural Midwest, the Great Depression includes much of the 1920s. Foreign markets for agricultural products shrank following World War I. Agriculture suffered a period of slow decline throughout the 1920s, punctuated by general economic collapse in 1929. As a town that depended heavily on agriculture for its economic support, Lake City experienced the debilitating effects of the depression for almost two decades. In addition, the railroad began to decline in local importance. In 1916 Chicago & North Western moved its division administrative functions from Lake City to Sioux City, and the office building, constructed in 1899, was converted to a depot (extant). By 1920 maintenance functions had also been transferred, and the roundhouse and machine shops were closed. These changes meant a significant loss of jobs locally, and with this loss a decline in the need for new housing. When the roundhouse burned in 1926, its passing symbolized the end of Lake City's heyday as a railroad town.

By 1925, the depression was evident in the building trades. Only a small portion of the present-day built environment recalls the Depression Era because so little new construction occurred during these years. New residential construction seems to have been at almost a complete standstill during this period. If the statistics shown on Table 1 accurately reflect the level of building activity, no more than an average of two houses per year were built between 1925 and 1940. It therefore is likely that many building alterations occurred during these years as property owners sought ways to reduce housing costs. Likewise, in sharp contrast to the Boom Town and Progressive Community historical periods, few commercial buildings, public/institutional buildings, or other structures were erected between 1925 and 1940. Although Lake City took advantage of New Deal programs to fund civil works, these

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monies were not used to bankroll projects of architectural or engineering distinction. The City did erect a new waterworks building (extant) with Works Progress Administration funds, but for the most part the it chose to spend federal money to maintain streets and repair existing structures.

## VI. Lake City Architecture, 1854-1940

### A. *Houses and Other Domestic Structures*

Domestic architecture is the most prevalent property type within Lake City and environs. Of 623 properties recorded in 1987, 493 of them (approximately 65%) were houses. The overwhelming majority of Lake City's houses are single-family residences. Dwellings built for multiple-family occupancy are rare, although several older homes have been converted to apartments. Subjectively, compared to surrounding towns, Lake City looks older. In large part, this is because 57 percent of the town's pre-1940 houses, 279 homes, were built between 1881 and 1895, reflecting the rapid growth that took place during the Railroad Boom Town Era. Despite the large number of pre-1900 residential buildings, overall the historic integrity of individual structures has been compromised to the degree that there is no collection of houses which can be grouped into a historic district.

In Lake City the earliest pattern of settlement is revealed in the oldest houses, which are generally located in the southwest part of town and on the farmsteads south and west of town. Nevertheless, the pattern is a subtle one to discern, because in reality very little remains to reflect the prairie community as it appeared between 1854 and 1880. Although log cabins were the first type of dwelling to be constructed, these were considered to be temporary structures. Only one is known to have survived, and it has been almost completely enveloped by later additions. Only three farm houses have been identified from this period: the Williams-Campbell Farmhouse (c. 1860), the Fitch Farmhouse (1870), and the Peter Smith Farmhouse (c. 1880).

Most of the town's existing housing stock dates from the years between 1881 and 1895, the Railroad Boom Town Era. Practically all of the homes built during this period are of vernacular type and construction: gable-front-and-wing, or ell houses; one-story cubes with pyramid or hipped roofs; and foursquare houses. They were built by local carpenters and tradesmen. Ornamentation on these houses was sparse: pilasters on the cornerboards to suggest added support under the eaves, plain brackets, spindlework porch supports, or modest pediments in the window casing.

Homes of the more affluent reflected their economic status. Research to date has identified only one as architect-designed, the Smith-Jacobs House. In general, these homes are a full two stories, or more, and sometimes built of brick. The designs incorporate more complex architectural elements, such as two-story bay windows, wrap-around porches, or turrets, and are laden with more ornamentation, such as leaded glass windows, Palladian windows, or ornate millwork. It is likely that most of these homes were designed by their owners in consultation with local builders. In general, they reflect a preference for the Italianate style, probably achieved through the application of standard building components selected from catalogs available at the local lumber yard and shipped in by rail. Interestingly, there is no expansive mansion, nor any small collection of ornate homes to

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suggest that the wealth generated by the economic boom period filtered into the hands of one or two individuals. The homes of the affluent were built larger, certainly, and with greater attention to stylistic details, but, unlike most towns in Iowa, there are no ostentatious high-style Victorian Era homes in Lake City that stand out in contrast to their neighbors. The historical reason for this circumstance remains elusive.

A quantitative analysis of pre-1940 houses reveals that two house types predominate in Lake City: the one-story cube [Plate 1] and the one-and-a-half or two-story ell house [Plate 2]. Both the cube and the ell house types are associated primarily with the Railroad Boom Town Era although they continued to be constructed until the turn of the century. Together, they represent about 35 percent of the housing stock built prior to 1940.

**Lake City House Types, 1854-1940**

Stories/ Type*	Prairie 1854-80	RR Boom Town 1881-mid'90s	Progressive 1893-1924	Depression 1925-1940
1-log	1			1
1-Brick		1		
1-Cube		66	17	
1-Ell		20	14	4
1-Other**	1	33	34	19
1-1 1/2 Bungalow			16	
1 1/2 Other	1	17	23	2
1 1/2-2 Ell	4	63	29	
2-Brick	2	5		
2-Cube		18	14	
2-Gable Front		15	7	
2-Other	3	42	21	

\* = wood frame unless noted otherwise

\*\* = miscellaneous styles or buildings so altered that the basic style is not obvious

It has been suggested that the cube house type is associated in Lake City with the railroad. Historical research neither confirms nor refutes this speculation. There is no local documentary evidence that the Toledo and North Western railroad built housing for its employees in the one subdivision which it owned, although the company certainly could have subsidized the cost of housing construction through employee wages. The physical evidence is likewise ambiguous. Cube houses are not clustered in one

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neighborhood, nor do they necessarily occur in the earliest subdivisions or the subdivisions located nearest the railroad yard.

The ell house, especially with an upper story, is a relatively common farm house type in Iowa. The number of such houses extant in Lake City contributes to an overall rural aesthetic. More specifically, these houses reflect the strong cultural ties between town and country that existed throughout the Railroad Boom Town Era despite the fact that a town community was being more sharply defined.

Many new residences continued to be constructed throughout the Progressive Community Era. There is no documentary evidence that any of them was architect-designed, but the number of extant buildings from this period reflects a continuation of prosperous times. In addition, these buildings exhibit architectural elements associated with a greater variety of styles, as opposed to folk house types. Vernacular and Italianate-influenced designs certainly continued to be built through the turn of the century, though some owners preferred the wraparound porches and towers associated with the Queen Anne style. Still others preferred the more classical lines of the Colonial Revival style. A few homes built or remodeled in the 1910s incorporate Prairie School design elements. Several homes built between c. 1910 and c. 1920 were designed in the popular bungalow style. No doubt many of the houses built during this period were constructed from plans (or kit houses) available by mail through such outlets and Sears Roebuck and Company.

The Great Depression of the 1930s is reflected in the relative absence of homes that date from this period. Among the approximately 25 houses built between 1925 and 1940, maybe a half-dozen are Period Revival styles which borrow from the Colonial tradition. During the 1930s, house designs moved toward the early ranch style, and some homes originally constructed during this period show evidence of later remodeling in the ranch style. For the most part, however, homes built during the late 1920s and the 1930s are extremely modest in size, reflecting both the economic downturn and an architectural trend toward smaller homes inspired by the popularity of Small Homes of Architectural Distinction, published in 1925.

The vast majority of Lake City's houses have been substantially altered: porches removed or restyled, exterior walls resided, windows modernized, or new wings added to the side or rear elevations. Building modification is the rule. In addition, during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, newspaper accounts indicate that it was fairly common to move buildings from one location to another in Lake City and adapt them for new uses.

Although many of the town's houses date from the years between 1881 and 1895, these are the houses that generally have been the most altered. Houses associated with the Progressive Community Era and the Depression Era seem to have been less altered. Several properties retain their historic fabric nearly intact, but they are scattered throughout the city, and there is no logical group of houses with sufficient integrity of design, workmanship, and materials to constitute a historic district.

There are a few town and farm houses in Lake City with related outbuildings. Since outbuildings such as horse barns, privies, and wash houses were common features of the townscape during the Railroad Boom Town Era, and since so few of these structures remain, properties associated with this era which

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still have outbuildings take on added significance. Likewise, intact or nearly intact farmsteads associated with any historic period are becoming scarce in Iowa, and those that remain therefore have more historical value.

Several types of outbuildings are to be found in Lake City. During the 1987 survey, a total of 45 outbuildings plus one hitching post and one cave were recorded: 9 barns, plus 1 stone foundation for a barn; 2 ice houses; 2 pump houses; 2 privies; 1 smokehouse; 1 wash house; and 22 other farm outbuildings, including chicken houses, hog houses, corn cribs, and machine sheds. Most of these outbuildings were constructed between 1880 and about 1915, and 13 of them are situated on one farm, the Earl-Sorenson Farm, an Iowa Century Farm established in 1879. [Note: Since 1987 at least one barn, one privy, and one chicken coop have been razed. These were situated on the Eula Smith farmstead, located within the town limits.] Five garages built between 1910 and the early 1920s were specially designed to match the bungalow-style houses with which they are associated, reflecting the influence of the automobile on domestic architecture.

## *B. Public and Institutional Structures*

Public buildings and structures reflect the civic and institutional development in Lake City. Although structures and facilities for public use were created during every historical period, the greatest number of extant properties are associated with the Progressive Community Era. A key structure of this property type which is no longer extant was the first Calhoun County Courthouse along with its related buildings and features. Architect-designed buildings constitute a large percentage of public facilities in Lake City, reflecting, of course, the greater importance that the community placed on such structures and the functions they housed. Examples include the Community Memorial Building, designed by the firm of Proudfoot, Bird & Rawson and constructed in 1919-1920; the Lake City Public Library, designed by Edgar Lee Barber and erected in 1909-1910; Westview High School (nonextant), designed by W.R. Parsons and built in 1904; Lake City High School, designed by Thomas McLennan & Thomas of Des Moines and erected in 1923-24; and Central School, designed by Foster and Leibbe and built in 1884.

Several public or institutional properties associated with the Progressive Community Era exemplify a theme of civic pride and community involvement that was particularly evident during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. At a time when Eastern cities were concerned with cleaning up their environs and reforming local government, Lake City, like many Midwestern and Western towns, was still in the formation stage. In Lake City, there really was no filth and corruption to clean up; nonetheless, it was a town that had just experienced chaotic rapid growth. Thus, public buildings and structures in Lake City reflect not so much the need to reform an old order as they do the urge to create order. There is no hint of any direct link between Lake City architecture and the City Beautiful Movement, as is the case with some Iowa cities, notably Des Moines. Nonetheless, in a general way, Lake City participated in a nationwide trend during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and that participation is exemplified in the public and institutional properties which date from this era.

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### *C. Commercial Properties (Including Railroad or Railroad-Related)*

The coming of the railroad in 1887 provided the major historical impetus to town growth and development. Except for the depot (originally a CN&W division headquarters office building), one railroad service building, and four deteriorating wooden commercial buildings (a lumber yard, carpenter's shop, a coal house, and storage shed), the railroad complex is essentially gone; and the one remaining structure with integrity and good physical condition, the depot, therefore takes on considerable significance as the primary symbol of a bygone era. The railroad spurred commercial development throughout Lake City, but there are no extant commercial properties which harken back to either the pre-railroad or to the early railroad periods. Several sites of early commercial activity have been identified, including the site of the Oxenford Mill and one of four brick manufacturing operations. By and large, however, the commercial properties surviving in Lake City are the brick and other fireproof structures that began to replace the older commercial buildings after the City passed a fire ordinance in 1889. Some commercial properties are architect-designed, reflecting the general prosperity as well as the civic pride which characterized the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

There is no commercial property in Lake City that has not been modified. Most have been substantially altered by replacing the lower storefront with modern materials that are entirely incompatible with the original design. There are very few commercial buildings in Lake City that meet integrity standards.

### *D. The Legacy of Iowa Architects in Lake City*

Architect-designed buildings in small towns are the exception rather than the norm. In Lake City, such buildings are associated especially, though not exclusively, with the Railroad Boom Town Era and the Progressive Community Era. Available evidence indicates that residential buildings in Lake City by and large were constructed from traditional knowledge or from purchased plans. The legacy of Iowa architects in Lake City is found almost exclusively in commercial, public, church, and educational structures. Generally, these buildings are understated in their design, so they do not stand out in stark contrast to the vernacular designs which predominate throughout residential areas. They are more noticeable because they are more substantial in size, materials, and construction. Substance notwithstanding, the majority of these buildings have been subjected to considerable modification.

Central School (1884, 1889) is the oldest extant Lake City building known to have been architect-designed, by the Des Moines firm of Foster and Leibbe. The building, one of the first brick structures, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Early in the 20th century, when the school board decided that a separate high school building was warranted, it commissioned the Des Moines firm of W.R. Parsons and Son to design Westview High School (1904-05). In 1893 the firm claimed to have 35 years of experience and to have designed hundreds of buildings in the Midwest. This may have been promotional excess, but W.R. Parsons and Son certainly specialized in schools, to the point of developing standardized plans for "village schools." Westview High School was one of the firm's later designs and appears to have been among its larger schoolhouse commissions [BHP: Architects Files for W.R. Parsons; Graphic, 1904-05 passim]. Fire destroyed the Parsons and Son building in 1922. A

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new building, the extant Lake City High School, was designed by Thomas, McLennan & Thomas of Des Moines, and it was built in 1923-24. Western Architect 32 (1925 Supplement): 111; Graphic, 1923-24 passim].

Edgar Lee Barber designed the Lake City Public Library (1909-10), Barber located his practice in Denison throughout his career, which began as early as 1904 and lasted until the 1950s. Thus, the library was one of his earlier designs. Most of Barber's commissions were for buildings in western Iowa, but his practice also extended to Nebraska, South and North Dakota, Montana, and Colorado. He designed all types of buildings: dwellings, stores, hotels, libraries, banks, and schools [Graphic, 1910 passim; BHP: Architects file for Edgar Barber]. The library is extant but has been somewhat altered.

The firm of Proudfoot, Bird and Rawson, recognized as one of the firms that made significant contributions to Iowa's architectural heritage, designed the Community Memorial Building (1919-20). Although the firm is better known for the many buildings it designed for the State Board of Education on the three state university campuses as well as major office and commercial buildings in the state's larger urban areas, its buildings can be found throughout Iowa. The Lake City Community Building is among the smaller institutional buildings the firm designed, and it demonstrates the level of commitment and attention its architects gave to every building, regardless of size or cost [BHP: The Architectural Legacy of Proudfoot & Bird in Iowa, 1882-1940; Graphic, 1923-24 passim].

Harry E. Netcott, who practiced in Parkersburg, Dubuque, and Waterloo as well as in Independence, designed the Townsend Block [1899]. A cooperative venture by Citizens Bank and the I.O.O.F., the three-story Townsend Block, of Richardsonian Romanesque design, was one of the most prominent commercial buildings in downtown Lake City. Before the top two stories were removed in 1969, the Townsend Block provided a good example of the multistoried, multipurpose buildings which enabled the commercial district to rise above the surrounding town, giving the town a visual status befitting the boosterism of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Although Netcott promoted himself as a specialist in school buildings, he appears to have accepted commissions to design most any kind of building. The Townsend Block is one of his earlier designs and may be one of his earliest commercial buildings [BHP: Architects file for Netcott and Netcott; Stonebraker 1915:228].

Robert R. Mayberry of Cedar Rapids designed Farmers State Bank, constructed in 1917. Very few Mayberry-designed buildings have been identified in Iowa. He apparently had no formal architectural training, although the bank, a stylish design of Beaux Arts influence (as originally designed), is evidence of considerable talent [BHP: Architects file for R.R. Mayberry]. Unfortunately, the building has been substantially altered.

Three buildings in Lake City have been identified as the work of James Early of Ames. In 1927, Early redesigned McVay medical offices into a small hospital (extant but altered). In the same year, he also designed a Gothic-influenced brick-and-stone church for the Woodlawn congregation. The latter building (extant) is interesting as an early example of single-story church design. According to newspaper reports, Early proposed an L-shaped building to take full advantage of the corner lot location. This allowed him to design, at the building committee's request, a one-story plan with two

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auditoriums, one for use as a sanctuary and the other as a general utility room with folding partitions. The second auditorium eliminated the need for a basement to accommodate Sunday school rooms and a dining room, then the more typical interior church arrangement. In 1950, Early designed a small chapel addition to the church. While he was overseeing this project, he came to the attention of Austin and Helene Farley, who engaged him to design their home, an eclectic one-story stone-faced building with a Tudor-influenced front entry.

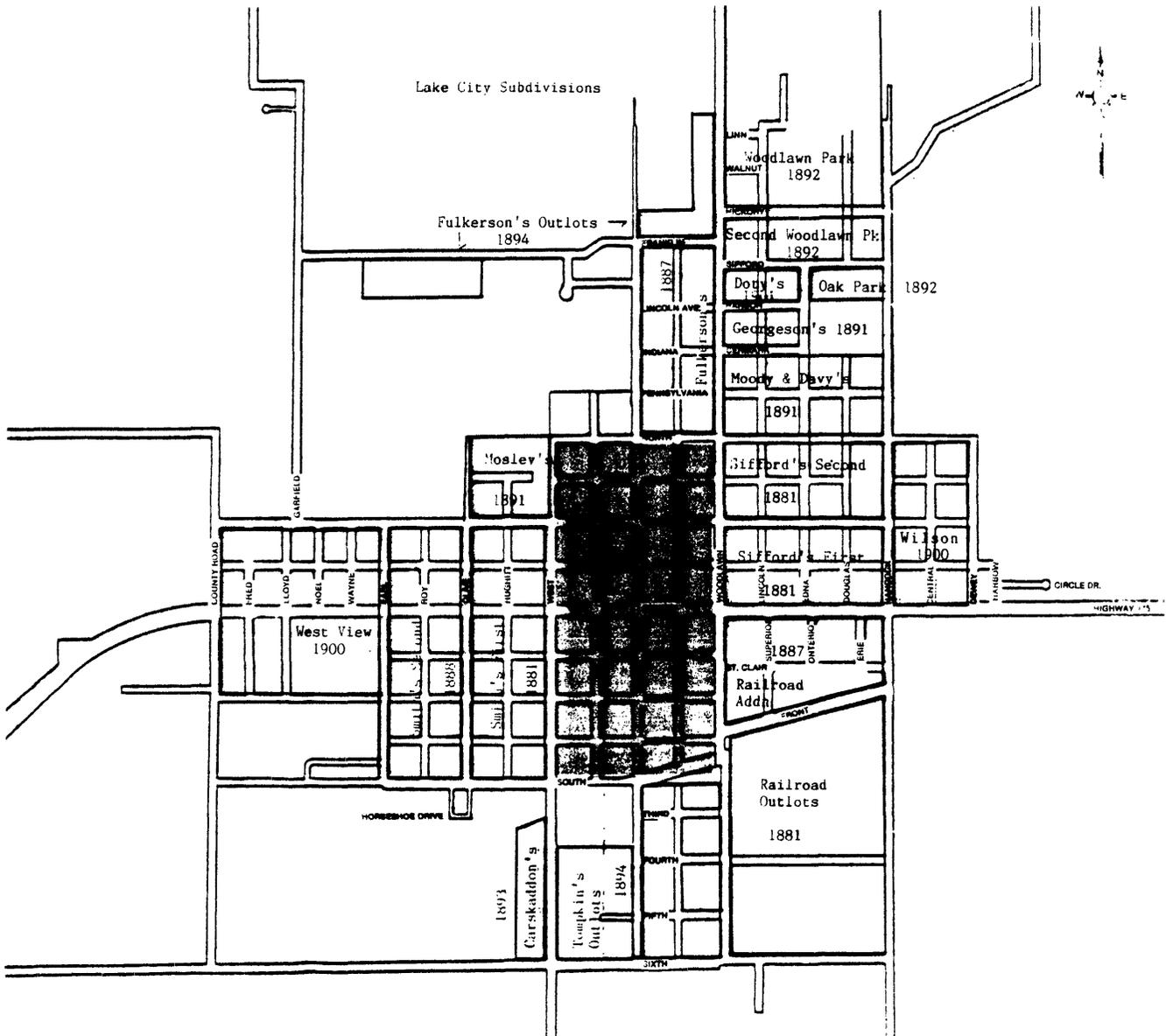
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Figure 1: Map of Lake City Subdivisions



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**Plate 1: Farmer House  
712 S. Center Street**



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Plate 2: Johnston House  
S. West Street



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**F. Associated Property Types**

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I. Name of Property Type See Continuation Sheet

II. Description

III. Significance

IV. Registration Requirements

See continuation sheet

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See continuation sheet for additional property types

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**G. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods**

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Discuss the methods used in developing the multiple property listing.

See Continuation Sheets

See continuation sheet

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**H. Major Bibliographical References**

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See Continuation Sheets

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional documentation:

- State historic preservation office  
 Other State agency  
 Federal agency

- Local government  
 University  
 Other

Specify repository: Iowa Bureau of Historic Preservation

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**I. Form Prepared By**

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name/title Rebecca Conard (Research assistance by Lake City Historic Preservation Commission)  
organization PHR Associates date March 22, 1990  
street & number 725 Garden Street telephone 805/965-2357  
city or town Santa Barbara state CA zip code 93101

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## F. Associated Property Types

*I. Property Type:* Buildings, structures, sites, and features associated with the Prairie Settlement Period, 1854-1880.

*a. Description:* Very few resources associated with the Prairie Settlement Period are extant, and those that remain include a limited number of resource types. What is now called the City Park, originally called the Public Square, marks the location of the first Calhoun County Courthouse. Only a few residential structures associated with this period remain, and no commercial structures are left. Both of the town's cemeteries were established during this period, and each of them contains several headstones marking the gravesites of pioneer settlers. The most common building material was wood, but there is evidence of brick construction toward the end of the period. Since the community was loosely spread out over a wide area during the Prairie Settlement Period, most of the extant resources associated with this period are located outside present-day city limits.

*b. Significance:* Because there are few extant structures which date from the Prairie Settlement Period, those that remain take on added importance. Through them the original settlement pattern can be still be discerned, however vaguely. In addition, these few resources constitute the basic physical record through which the material culture of this period can be studied. The potential archaeological record has not been adequately assessed at this point, but initial indications, as determined during the 1987 survey, are that some historic sites of potential importance have been disturbed. The Oxenford Mill site, for instance, is now under cultivation, and the mill race has been filled with earth. Other areas, such as the City Park, have undetermined potential for containing buried deposits. cursory site inspection of the park reveals linear ridges that may conceal building foundations associated with the first Calhoun County Courthouse, but no testing has been done. Likewise, known locations of occupation by pioneer settlers have not been tested for buried deposits.

*c. Registration Requirements:*

*1. Area of Significance:*

*Criterion A:* Properties that reflect the dispersed pattern of community development during the Prairie Settlement Period or are directly associated with important events of the period.

*Criterion B:* Properties that are directly associated with individuals who played a leading, pivotal, or important role in shaping the development of Lake City during this period.

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**Criterion C:** In Lake City, no particular architectural style has been noticeably popular at any given time, and vernacular building types have been the standard in every historical period. Since there are so few examples of houses, commercial structures, or other property types associated with this period, all extant resources are potentially significant.

**Criterion D:** Sites of nonextant properties that contain intact subsurface deposits with good information potential concerning the material culture of identifiable pioneer settlers.

**Integrity Considerations:** Unless a property has lost most of the characteristics that convey a sense of time and place associated with the Prairie Settlement period or no longer has the ability to provide important information with respect to spatial patterns, technology, building types, domestic practices, or other topics of scholarly interest associated with this period, it should be considered eligible.

**d. Eligible or Potentially Eligible Properties:** [an asterisk denotes properties nominated with this submittal]

\*Smith Farmhouse (ca. 1877)

Vicinity of Smith Farmhouse; should be tested for historical archaeology

Public Square (City Park) (1856); should be tested for historical archaeology

Williams-Campbell Farmhouse (c. 1860); 2 miles SW of town

Nokes-Shaffer Log Cabin (bet. 1854-1861); needs building audit to establish integrity and information potential

William and Sarah Fitch Farmhouse (c. 1870); SW edge of Lake City

Cottonwood Cemetery; 4 miles SW of Lake City; should be evaluated within a statewide context for pioneer cemeteries

Lake City Cemetery; .5 mile west of Lake City; should be evaluated within a statewide context for pioneer cemeteries

Oxenford Mill Site; 4 miles SW of Lake City; should be tested for historical archaeology

Ebenezer Comstock Homestead Site; south of Smith Farmhouse and NW of intersection of County Road and Sixth Street; should be tested for historical archaeology

**II. Property Type:** Buildings, structures, sites, and features associated with the Railroad Boom Town Era, 1881 to the mid-1890s.

**a. Description:** The C&NW railroad yard is, of course, one of the most important resources associated with this period, although the extant structures associated with the yard, including the depot, actually were built after the growth boom had subsided.

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In terms of quantity, most of the extant properties associated with this period are residential structures. As shown on Table 1, houses constructed between 1881 and 1895 constitute approximately 57% of the present-day housing stock in the city as a whole. Despite the influence of the railroad, no residential neighborhood has been linked directly to it; railroad employees seem to have lived throughout the town and not congregated in one or two areas. Vernacular house types are most common, though a few high-style Victorian houses were erected. Two vernacular house types of this period are more prevalent and therefore linked more strongly to it architecturally: the one-story cube and the multi-story ell. The most common residential building material was wood, although locally manufactured bricks were also available and presumably were used to construct the brick houses and commercial structures that were erected during this period. A few extant outbuildings are associated with town dwellings and rural farm houses built during this era. Very few commercial buildings associated with this period remain because in 1889 the City Council moved to replace wooden commercial buildings with brick structures.

- b. Significance:* Since the railroad provided the major impetus to town growth and development, properties erected during this period created much of the historic character that is associated with Lake City today. These properties are the visual reference points that set Lake City apart as an older town than those communities which surround it.

*c. Registration Requirements:*

*Criterion A:* Properties that are directly associated with the railroad; directly associated with patterns of community development influenced by the railroad; or directly associated with important events of this period.

*Criterion B:* Properties that are directly associated with individuals who played key or influential roles in the development of the community during this period.

*Criterion C:* Properties that embody the distinctive characteristics of vernacular building types associated with this period, especially the one-story cube and the multistory ell house types.

*Criterion D:* Sites of nonextant structures or features that contain intact subsurface deposits with good information potential concerning the material culture associated with domestic or commercial activities of this period.

*Integrity Considerations:* It is rare in Lake City to find an original design that has not been changed in some way. Alterations are acceptable if they are at least 50 years old; are compatible in design and materials with the original structure; are reversible; or do not detract from the historic design.

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**d. Eligible or Potentially Eligible Properties** [an asterisk denotes nomination with this submittal]:

Central School (1884); 211 S. Center St. *NRHP listed*

\*Peter and Mary Smith House (1886)

Baptist Church/GAR Hall (1882), should be evaluated within statewide context addressing buildings of fraternal and service organizations

Josiah D. McVay House (c. 1883), 613 W. Jefferson St.

Railroad Yard; should be tested for historical archaeology

Relatively unaltered (at this time) cube houses include the following:

Farmer House (c.1882), 712 So. Center St.

Goettsch House (c.1883), 318 No. Center St.

Heath House, 515 No. Lincoln St.

Burley-Binkert House, 315 No. Woodlawn Ave.

Relatively unaltered (at this time) multi-story ell houses include the following:

Johnston Farmhouse

Clow House (c.1884), 217 Hughitt

Rice House, 321 Edna

**III. Property Type:** Buildings, structures, features, or sites associated with the Progressive Community Era, 1893-1924

**a. Description:** Residential and commercial structures erected between 1893 and 1924 often have more style and substance, reflecting a higher level of prosperity, generally speaking, and greater community stability. The commercial buildings extant in Lake City generally are associated with this period because legal requirements imposed by the City Council forced a change from wood to brick or other fireproof materials. The most striking change associated with this period is the appearance of substantial public and institutional structures, reflecting an era when relative prosperity and civic pride expressed itself in community service and public improvements as well as in commercial boosterism. Thus, many of the architect- or engineer-designed structures in Lake City were erected during this period. The railroad continued as a major presence in the town until 1916. One result of this is that most if not all of the extant structures directly associated with the railroad actually date from this period rather than the Railroad Boom Town Era.

**b. Significance:** Significance can derive from a variety of ways in which civic pride was manifest during this period. It can derive from association with entities or individuals who made outstanding efforts to raise the social, cultural, moral, and sanitary standards of living. Significance can also derive from manifestations of a generally higher level of prosperity, particularly as reflected in attention to architectural style and building design. If vernacular building types characterize the

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Railroad Boom Town Era, it is the trend away from folk traditions that marks the Progressive Community. Stylistic differentiation reflects community maturation (political, economic, and social) as well as more prosperous times.

**c. Registration Requirements:**

**Criterion A:** Properties directly associated with outstanding civic improvement efforts; properties directly associated with the railroad; directly associated with important patterns of community development characteristic of this period; or properties directly associated with important events of this period.

**Criterion B:** Properties that are directly associated with individuals who played key or influential roles in the development of the community during this period.

**Criterion C:** No one architectural style predominated during this period. Nevertheless, since buildings of identifiable architectural style are a hallmark of the Progressive Community Era, eligible properties include those which are associated with architects/designers who have contributed to Iowa architecture as discussed in Section V.

**Criterion D:** Sites of nonextant structures or features that contain intact subsurface deposits with good information potential concerning the material culture associated with specific households or commercial activities that are poorly documented in the archival record.

**Integrity Considerations:** Considering that more substantial structures were erected during this period and more attention was paid to style, one might expect to find a higher degree of historic integrity embodied in the resources associated with the Progressive Community Period. This, however, is not the case. Relatively unaltered structures dating from this period are rare, and there are no extant commercial buildings of good integrity. Alterations are acceptable if they are at least 50 years old and therefore considered part of the historic fabric; are compatible in design and materials with the original structure; are reversible; or do not detract from the historic design. Relocation is acceptable if the new setting is compatible with the historic setting.

**d. Eligible Properties [an asterisk denotes NRHP nomination with this submittal]:**

- \*Waterworks Standpipe, 1893
- \*Lake City Public Library, 1909-10
- \*Community Memorial Building, 1919-20
- \*Smith-Jacobs House, 1901
- \*C&NW Depot, 1899
- Delbert and Anna McCrary House (1900); 203 W. Main St.

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**IV. Property Type:** Buildings, structures, sites, and features associated with the Depression Era: 1925-1940

**a. Description:** Since there was little building activity in Lake City during this 15-year period, the number of resources associated with the Depression Era is relatively low and no building types are particularly associated with it. The 1987 survey identified 26 houses as being constructed between 1925 and 1940, most of them vernacular in design and construction. Houses of identifiable architectural style are rare for this period. Perhaps the most interesting house from this period is an owner-built log cabin constructed in 1934. Likewise, few commercial, public, or institutional buildings were constructed.

**b. Significance:** Properties associated with this period derive significance, in part, from what was *not* happening in Lake City during the Depression Era. The town had stopped growing, and no new patterns of community development were evident. Thus, the comparatively few properties that are associated with this period reflect an important historical period, that is, one of stagnant economic growth. These structures therefore contribute to our understanding of the dominant trends and exceptions to it. In addition, properties associated with New Deal programs have value as physical examples documenting the influence of the federal aid to local communities.

**c. Registration Requirements:**

*Criterion A:* Properties directly associated with New Deal programs or with other aid programs to offset the economic effects of the Great Depression; properties directly associated with important events occurring during this period.

*Criterion B:* Properties that are directly associated with individuals who played key or influential roles in the community during this period.

*Criterion C:* Properties that display architectural characteristics associated with federal works projects; properties associated with the architectural influences of the Depression Era "back-to-the-land" movement.

*Criterion D:* Sites of nonextant properties that contain intact buried deposits with good potential to provide information concerning domestic or commercial activities that are poorly documented in the archival record.

**Integrity Considerations:** Properties associated with this period generally display fewer design modifications than older buildings and structures, though alteration is still the rule in Lake City. Consequently, alterations are acceptable if

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they are at least 50 years old, are compatible in design and materials with the original structure, are reversible, or do not detract from the historic design.

**d. Eligible or Potentially Eligible Properties:**

Bennett Log House (1934), W. Franklin St.

Lake City Water Works Building (1940), WPA project; may qualify if rehabilitated  
Woodlawn Church (1927; 1950), 200 N. Woodlawn Ave.; needs to be evaluated within  
a statewide context covering churches and religious structures

Lake City Sale Pavilion (1936-37), west edge of town on Highway 175; needs to be  
evaluated within a statewide context on farm-related commercial structures

**V. Property Type: Buildings, Structures, Sites, and Features Associated with Lake City Architecture, 1854-1940**

**a. Description:** Three basic types of architectural and engineering structures are found in Lake City: residential buildings, mostly single-family houses; commercial buildings, including railroad or railroad-related structures; and public and institutional structures. There are also a few features under the general category of street furniture which contribute to Lake City's distinctive visual character. These include remnants of 19th century brick sidewalks, found here and there in the town; about a dozen remaining cement streetmarkers cast in the form of an obelisk, erected during the early 20th century; and some isolate features, such as a patterned cement sidewalk and an early 20th century drinking fountain fashioned to accommodate man and beast. There are no industrial buildings in Lake City.

**b. Significance:** The stereotypical conception of rural Midwestern towns is that they all look alike: endless minor variations on the basic grid pattern of community design. There is a certain truth in this stereotype, yet it is equally true that communities derive their individual identities from architectural subtleties as much as from landmark [small "l"] features. In Lake City the preponderance of 1-story cube and multistory ell house types associated with the Railroad Boom Town Period contribute an important element to the architectural character of the town as a whole. Significance is also derived from those properties that have, in the eyes of the community, become established and familiar visual reference points. Familiar features are important everywhere, but small town residents especially "know" their communities by the spatial relationships that exist between and among their physical surroundings. Street addresses are of little practical use; visual landmarks are pregnant with meaning. Quite often it is architect-designed buildings which become established as common visual reference points because their designs, materials, and massing set them apart from the ordinary. Thus architect-designed buildings may be significant as familiar visual features. Architect-designed buildings may also have significance for

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documenting the professional careers and bodies of work associated with architects, engineers, and builders who were prominent in their fields.

**c. Registration Requirements**

**Criterion A:** Properties associated only with this context will not have significance under A.

**Criterion B:** Properties associated only with this context will not have significance under B.

**Criterion C:** Eligible properties include vernacular building types that contribute to the distinctive architectural character of Lake City, notably the one-story cube and the multistory ell; properties that are familiar and established visual landmarks; and properties associated with individuals and/or firms that have made unusual, distinctive, or otherwise important design or engineering contributions to Iowa architecture. Outbuildings are eligible as related structures and not as individual structures.

**Criterion D:** Sites of nonextant structures or features that contain intact buried deposits with the potential to yield information concerning the materials, design, spatial arrangement (in the case of complexes), and/or building technology associated with important vernacular building types or recognized landmark structures.

**Integrity Considerations:** Alterations are acceptable if they are at least 50 years old, are compatible in design and materials with the original structure, are reversible, or do not detract from the historic design. With respect to outbuildings, minor alterations are acceptable if the building still reflects its original function. Since most outbuildings, with the exception of barns and other larger farm buildings, were simply and inexpensively constructed, physical condition is a primary consideration. Good or repairable condition is a prerequisite for eligibility. The essential consideration is whether the property still conveys a sense of time and place.

Historical research shows that building relocation was common during the late 19th and early 20th centuries; hence, integrity of location may not be intact. However, since the character of the town does not vary much from one subdivision or neighborhood to the next, the integrity of setting is likely to remain uncompromised even if a structure has been moved. In addition, if a structure was moved more than 50 years ago, the move itself may reflect a pervasive local attitude toward the built environment. Outbuildings have been particularly susceptible to relocation, but it is unusual to find them much altered because they were of utilitarian design to begin with and therefore could be adapted to a new use without much change. Relocation of outbuildings is acceptable so long as the structure is still spatially related to its original or historic complex.

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- d. Eligible or Potentially Eligible Properties:* the following properties, in addition to all properties previously listed, would be eligible under this context]:

Earl-Sorenson Farm (1879), 4 mi. south of Lake City; house and related outbuildings  
span two or more historical context periods  
Haverfield-Crandall House (c.1895), E. Sifford St. & Hancock St.; has related  
outbuildings  
Oscar and Bertha Lundberg House (1914); 620 W. Main

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## G. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

The multiple property listing of historic and architectural resources of Lake City, Iowa, is based on a 1987 survey of resources conducted by the Lake City Historic Preservation Commission under the direction of Rebecca Conard. All properties dating from 1940 or earlier were surveyed and recorded. A total of 554 Iowa Site Inventory Forms were prepared on which were recorded 623 buildings, structures, features, and sites that date between 1854 and 1940. Domestic architecture constitutes the largest property type, with 493 houses recorded. Over one-half of the houses, 279 or 57 percent, were constructed between 1881 and 1895, reflecting the overwhelming influence the railroad played in town development.

While the official geographical limits of the survey were set at the present-day city boundaries, the history of town development suggested that some properties outside these boundaries should be included in order to document the original settlement pattern and the strength of town-country cultural ties. Archival research revealed that, historically, the Lake City community encompassed parts of Jackson and Calhoun townships, located respectively southwest and south of the town. Figure 1 delineates the probable extent of the original community. The survey included properties within these bounds, although no attempt was made in 1987 to identify all the pre-1940 properties outside the town limits in these two townships.

Rebecca Conard holds a Ph.D. in history from the University of California, Santa Barbara, and has ten years of professional experience in historic resources documentation, evaluation, and preservation planning. Ms. Conard acted as the Consulting Historian for the Project, designing the research approach and project schedule, directing project research, evaluating properties for significance, writing statements of significance for key properties, writing the survey report, and writing the body of the text for the survey publication, Lake City: A Blueprint of its History, published in 1987. Under the guidance of Rose E. Rosendahl, Martha E. Sorenson, and Vivian Campbell, members of the Lake City Historic Preservation Commission provided research assistance, conducted the photography, and completed the site inventory forms. Additional detail concerning the actual survey methods is contained in the final 1987 survey report on file with the Bureau of Historic Preservation, State Historical Society of Iowa.

Because the survey revealed only one strong historical theme in Lake City's development, the influence of the railroad, strict chronological periods offered a better method of grouping associated properties. By looking at Lake City's past in terms of chronological development, four logical periods of time emerged. Within each of these time periods, one, two, or maybe several properties might reflect a particular historical theme, such as civic improvement or settlement patterns. Realistically, however, life in small towns does not lend itself to the use of historical themes as an organizing principle. In Lake City's case, for instance, there is no section of the town associated with industrial development, there are no monumental public institutions, and architect-designed buildings are few in number. In the case of the railroad,

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its influence on development was so pervasive that to have defined it as a theme would have left very few resources to group and consider under any other meaningful category. Chronology at least provided the advantage of discerning a progression of influences, however subtle, that are sometimes reflected in the built environment.

The seven nominations included with this submittal represent a broad spectrum of resources reflecting Lake City's past. Figure 2 shows the location of these properties. There are a number of other properties which are potentially eligible for the National Register, and future efforts should concentrate on at least two areas. First, since all of the properties nominated with this submittal are located within the present-day town limits, an additional set of nominations could be generated from among rural properties historically associated with the community. Such a project would require additional survey work and research, but at a minimum the Williams-Campbell Farmhouse, the Fitch Farm, the Earl-Sorenson Farm, and Cottonwood Cemetery would be likely candidates for nomination. Second, future nominations might also be based on houses of the Railroad Boom Town Era. As noted elsewhere, there is no potential for a historic district; however, there are several good examples of 1880s vernacular architecture associated with this period. Additional research would be necessary in order to determine whether any direct associations exist between the railroad and the housing of this era, e.g., railroad-financed housing or neighborhoods of railroad workers. However, even if no such links can be established, nominations that include a representative sampling of Boom Town Era vernacular architecture would have historic architectural merit since this is the type of architecture which gives Lake City much of its historic character. Other possibilities for NRHP nomination await the development of statewide contexts, including contexts for fraternal and service organizations, churches and religious structures, and farm-related commerce. Lake City also holds some potential for historic archaeology, though testing is necessary in order to determine whether there are any intact buried deposits of potential significance. Sites with suspected deposits include the first county courthouse site, now the City Park; at least one brick yard site; the Oxenford Mill site; the railroad yard; and the vicinities of the Peter Smith and Ebenezer Comstock homesteads, located on the west edge of town.

With the 1987 survey and the completion of these nominations, Lake City, as a Certified Local Government, is in a good position to formulate specific procedures and programs to implement its historic preservation ordinance. Although there currently are no specific plans, the City could, for instance, adopt guidelines and criteria for designating City Landmarks or Places of Historic Interest. The City could also adopt regulations to prevent the demolition of or the exterior alteration of historic places. Likewise, the City could work with the County to effect property tax benefits for private owners who dedicate facade easements to preserve historic buildings. Such steps would define the role of the Historic Preservation Commission as the City agency charged with the responsibility for advising on historic preservation matters. Few small towns in Iowa have taken public responsibility for preservation planning, though Lake City has laid an impressive groundwork for continued activity. The survey, for instance, generated an extensive archive of information on community development as well as detail on specific buildings and structures. Survey activities and the resulting publication also

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heightened community awareness of its past. What is needed now is coordination between the Historic Preservation Commission and other entities, including the City Council, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Community Development Association in order to formulate a set of long range planning objectives that will provide mechanisms for protecting and enhancing historic structures.

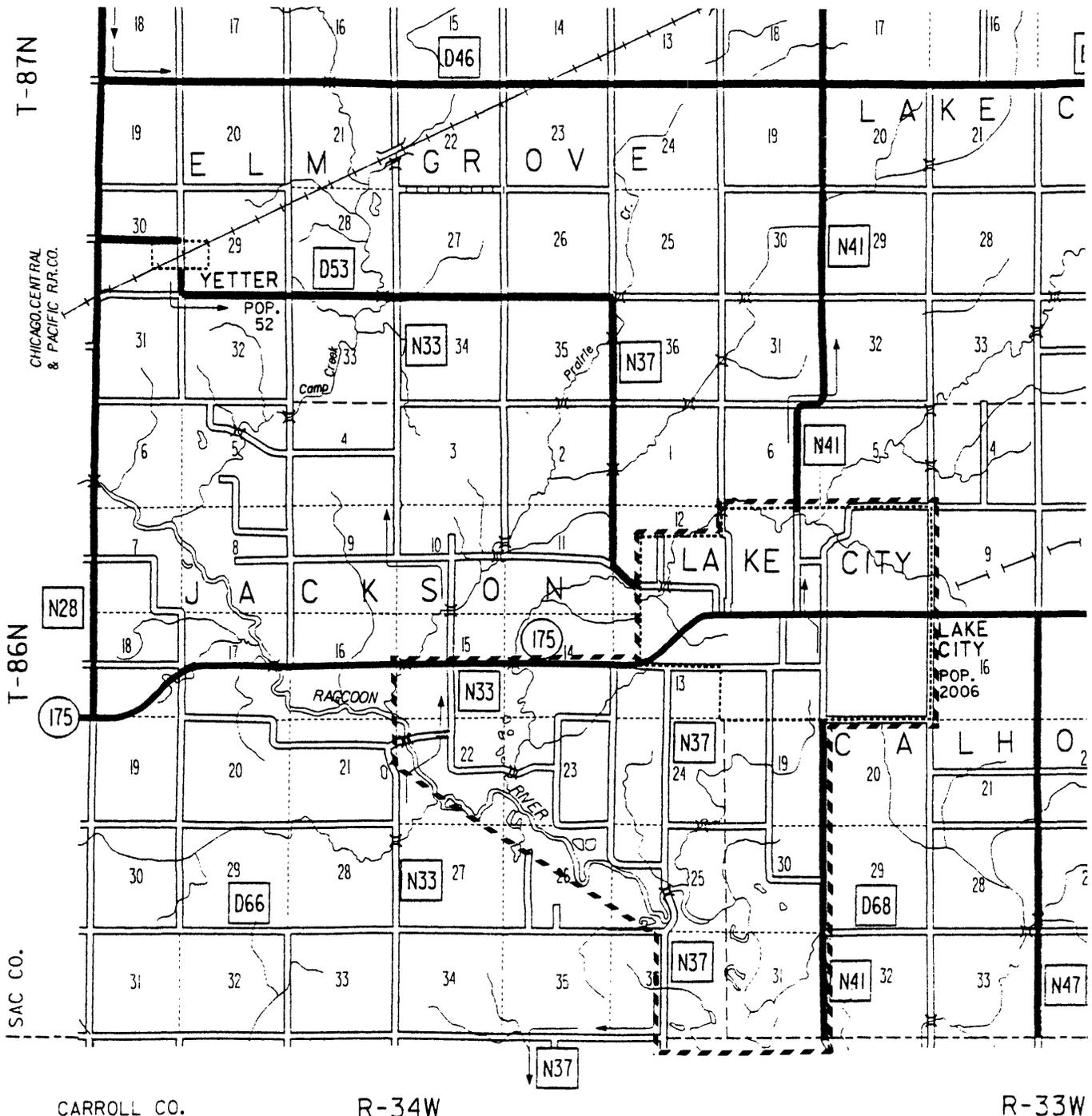
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Figure 1: Probable Boundaries of the Historic Lake City Community



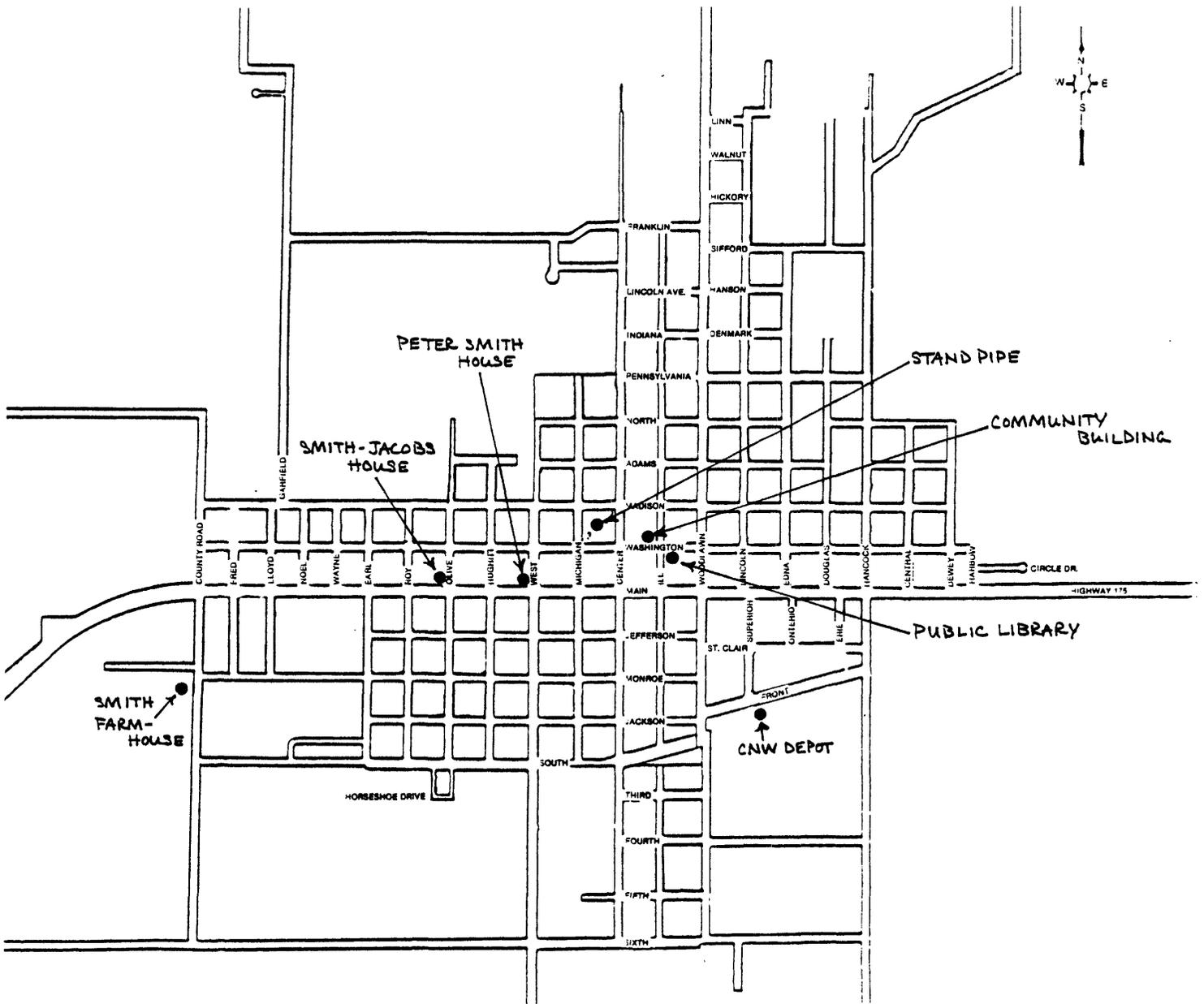
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Figure 2: Locations of Nominated Properties



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