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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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NATIONAL REGISTER

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional 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 Military Road Segment
other names/site number NeHBS # DO09:0684-001

2. Location

street & number 82nd and Fort Streets not for publication [N/A]
city or town Omaha vicinity [N/A]
state Nebraska code NE county Douglas code 055 zip code 68128

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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.)

Lawrence Summers November 1, 1993
Signature of certifying official Date
Director, Nebraska State Historical Society
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this 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): _____

Entered in the
National Register 12/10/93
Gary M. Lapsley

Signature of Keeper Date of Action

Military Road Segment
Name of Property

Douglas, Nebraska
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

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

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
_____	_____	buildings
1	_____	sites
_____	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
1	_____	Total

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Transportation

Vacant/Not in use

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

N/A

foundation N/A
walls N/A
roof N/A
other N/A

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

Military Road Segment
Name of Property

Douglas, Nebraska
County and State

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 a grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Transportation, Military, Exploration/Settlement

Period of Significance

1856-1858

Significant Dates

1858

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Beckwith, Captain Edward

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 # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository:
Douglas County Surveyors Office

Military Road Segment
Name of Property

Douglas, Nebraska
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 2.78 acres.

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1.	14	747555	4577040	3.			
2.				4.			

[] See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description

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

Boundary Justification

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

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Greg Miller, Preservation Historian and Terry Steinacher, Preservation Archeologist

organization Nebraska State Historical Society date July 1993

street & number 1500 R Street telephone (402) 471-4775

city or town Lincoln state Nebraska zip code 68501

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 the SHPO or FPO.)

name County of Douglas, Board of Commissioners

street & number 1819 Farnam telephone (402) 444-7025

city or town Omaha state Nebraska zip code 68183

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 the 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 Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Military Road Segment

Name of Property

Douglas, Nebraska

County and State

Section 7,8 Page 1

Description

This segment of the Military Road is located on the east side of Little Papillion Creek near its junction with Thomas Creek. The road, at this location, descended from the uplands down into the creek valley along a narrow, ridge-like, toe slope. The segment is orientated along a northwest to southwest alignment. The northern, eastern and most of the southern sides of the site are surrounded by urban development. To the south and west a small, open, cultivated field still remains undeveloped. The current and an earlier, now abandoned, segment of Military Avenue is located along the northeast edge of the site.

The ridge line segment of the Military Road relates to the earliest development and layout of the route in 1856. The segment was probably in use through the 1860s. The road was originally utilized for movement of supplies from the Missouri River landings to the frontier military posts to the west.

This preserved segment of road was improved through excavation of the slope providing a flatter surface and decreasing the angle of descent. Spoil piles from the excavation are still present, with the most prominent along the northeast side of the cut. Near the top of the upland the road measures 7.3 meters wide on the flat road surface and widens out near the bottom of the slope to 11.1 meters. Total width of this segment varies from 14.8 meters to 19.2 meters as measured from the top of the spoil piles.

A possible older segment of unimproved road is still present near the center of the site and just north of the improved segment. This segment appears to have originally used a more serpentine approach to the creek bottom.

The site is currently overgrown with trees and brush. During the original period of use it was almost certainly open grassland. The growth of the trees and brush has served to help stabilize the area and slow erosion. However, some water erosion is continuing along the middle of the road track with a 1- to 2-foot deep channel being cut. Modern trash dumping has and continues to occur on the site. The lower edge of the site lines up with a later bricked section of Military Avenue. This bricked section appears to be coterminous with the older unimproved wagon track.

Statement of Significance

The nominated segment of road, located in Omaha, Douglas County, Nebraska is significant at the state level under Criterion A for its association with the military, road development and westward expansion. This section is part of the old Military Road that originally went from Omaha to Fort Kearny. As such, it was the primary route used by the military to transport supplies between the two points. The road also accommodated the movement of non-military supplies and civilian settlers. The period of significance is from 1856 to 1858. The year 1856 denotes the year the road was first surveyed and the later date indicates the year the road first came into use.

Starting in the early 1840s, large numbers of immigrants began moving west of the Missouri River. Initially these settlers followed a few established routes such as the Oregon and Mormon Trails. By the late 1840s, however, variants to the well-known roads began to be developed. Some trails were initiated and financed by local communities that hoped to become, or strengthen their position as, freighting centers for

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Military Road Segment

Name of Property

Douglas, Nebraska

County and State

Section 8 Page 2

Statement of Significance (continued)

points west. But most road building projects were beyond the financial means of local and state governments. The responsibility then fell on the federal government. While some of the routes had already been laid out by early explorers and settlers, the national government's agents became the primary decision makers on where the new roads would be constructed.

Within the government, the main burden for construction went to the United States Army. The early frontier roads, developed by the army, often became known as military roads. Despite this designation these routes served as wagon roads for early settlers "and when a community was occupied they were quickly used for commercial purposes."¹

As part of this road construction Congress appropriated \$50,000 in 1855 to establish a more direct route between Omaha and Fort Kearny (near present-day Kearney). The following year the army appointed Lieutenant John Dickerson to lead the survey and construction project. As he considered possible routes he was ordered to take into consideration construction costs, river crossings, and supplies of wood and water.²

Leaving from Omaha, Dickerson's group followed the Mormon's "Winter Quarters' Trail" that led them across the Little and Big Papillion rivers and then on to the Elkhorn River (fig. 1). Dickerson noted that the "broken country between the Missouri and the Elkhorn had made the route circuitous and would necessitate extensive grading on approaches to streams."³ Captain Edward Beckwith replaced Lt. Dickerson in 1857, and while no road improvements occurred because of a lack of funding a new survey was completed. The following year the road builders commenced work in April and immediately began improving the road out of Omaha that Dickerson had preliminarily established.

A lack of written documentation after Dickerson's 1857 report makes it difficult to determine exactly how the development of the road progressed. In his report to Congress, Dickerson noted that the road he surveyed in 1857 from Omaha to Fort Kearny was 189 miles long and "very circuitous" between the Missouri and Elkhorn rivers.⁴ However, Captain Beckwith, in his report to Congress, described the military road he laid out two years later, connecting the same points, as being 180 miles.⁵ The nine-mile discrepancy between the two routes may have resulted from Beckwith straightening a northern loop originally taken by Dickerson when he crossed the Little Papillion on the Mormon Road.⁶ An 1868 survey map (fig. 2) does not show this loop, but rather indicates a relatively direct route to the Little Papillion. Still, it cannot be determined with complete certainty that the 1868 map depicts the road established by Beckwith.

The next documented change is illustrated on an 1885 county survey map (fig 3). The survey was done as part of a road abandonment project. This map shows the route as being even straighter than in 1868. Had the abandonment included the nominated ruts it would help explain why they are still present, but the accompanying surveyors' notes do not support this thesis.⁷ Rather the abandoned section was southeast of the ruts in question.

The final document is a contemporary map (fig. 4) that shows the current Military Avenue and the center line of the Old Military Avenue (road). The ruts lie between these two features. This would seem to indicate that at some point after 1885 the Military Road was realigned and the area containing the ruts abandoned, thus helping to ensure their preservation.

Even though the history of these particular ruts cannot be traced with precision, there is no doubt they are part of the old Military Road that originally went from Omaha to Fort Kearny. As such, they are eligible

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Military Road Segment

Name of Property

Douglas, Nebraska

County and State

Section 8,9,10 Page 3

Statement of Significance (continued)

at the state level under Criterion A for their association with the military and westward expansion. The establishment of this road also helped ensure that Omaha continued as an important freighting station and a jumping-off point for travellers going west. Finally, these ruts are an incredibly rare resource given their location in a highly developed urban area.

Bibliography

Jackson, W. Turrentine. Wagon Roads West. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1964.

Mattes, Merrill J. The Great Platte River Road. Lincoln: Nebraska State Historical Society, 1969.

Lincoln: Nebrasak State Historical Society. File DO09:0684-001. Charles Martin letters.

United States General Land Office. RG509, Series Five, Roll 1. Lincoln. Nebraska State Historical Society.

United States Senate. 1858. Message of the President of the United States. 35th Cong., 1st sess.

Verbal Boundary Description

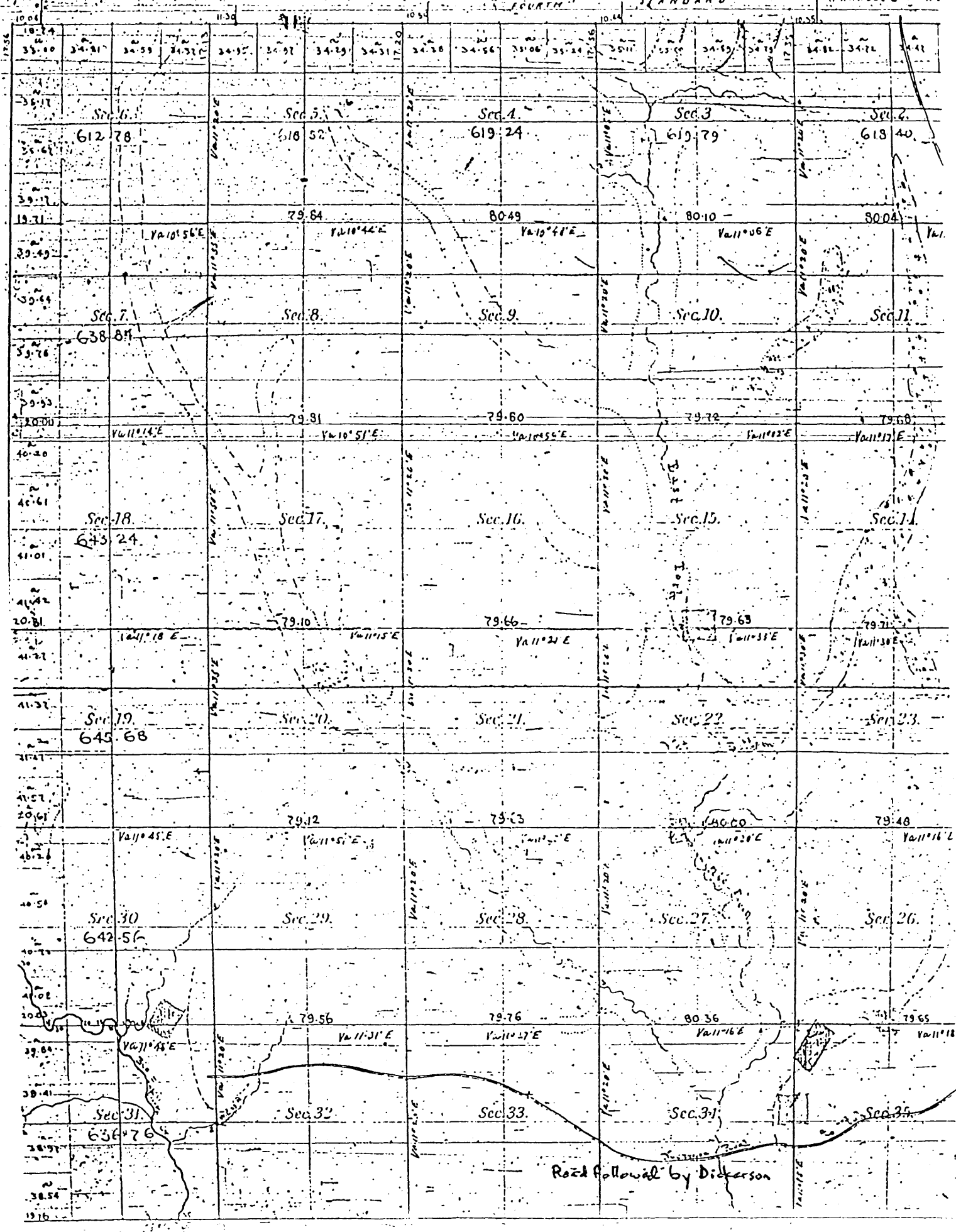
Beginning at a point that bears N 90° 15' east 775 ft from the southwest corner of Section 35, Township 16 North of Range 12 East, thence south 66° 15' east 313 ft, thence south 45° 45' east 555 ft, thence north 72° west 105 ft, thence north 57° 45' west 1009 ft, thence south 53° east 225 ft, thence south 66° 15' east 144 ft to the place of beginning located in the SW quarter of SW quarter of Section 35 and SE quarter of SE quarter of Section 34, Township 16 North of Range 12 East.

Boundary Justification

This area includes all continuous ruts and remnants of the contiguous ruts included in the nomination.

End Notes

1. W. Turrentine Jackson, Wagon Roads West (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press), p.1.
2. Jackson, Wagon Roads West, p.132.
3. Jackson, Wagon Roads West, p.133.
4. U.S., Senate, Message of the President of the United States, 35th Cong., 1st sess., 4 January 1858, p.529.
5. U.S., Senate, 35th Cong., 1st sess., 4 January 1858, p.534.
6. Correspondence. File DO09:0684-001. Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln.
7. Nebraska, Douglas County, "Report of Commissioner in Favor of Petition", 18 September 1885.

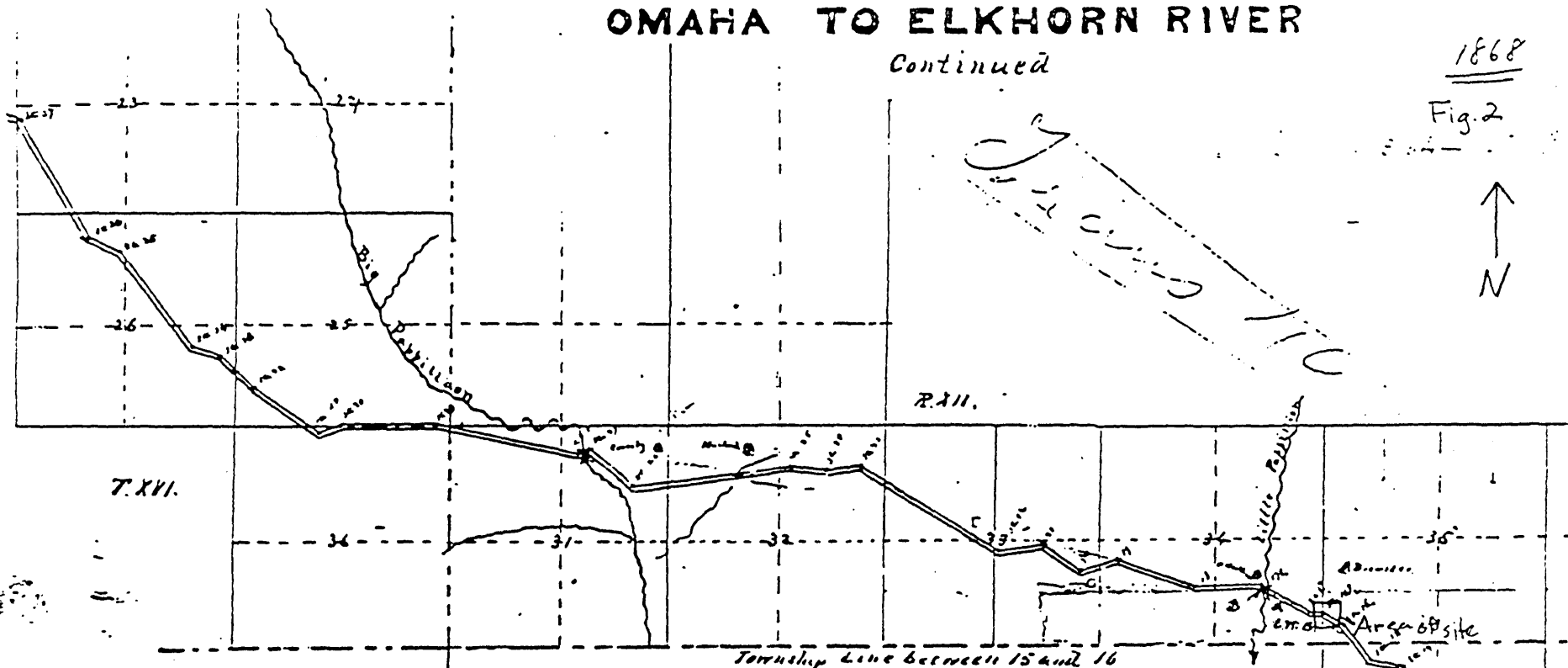


OMAHA TO ELKHORN RIVER

Continued

1868

Fig. 2



T. XVI.

R. XII.

Township Line between 15 and 16

T. XV.

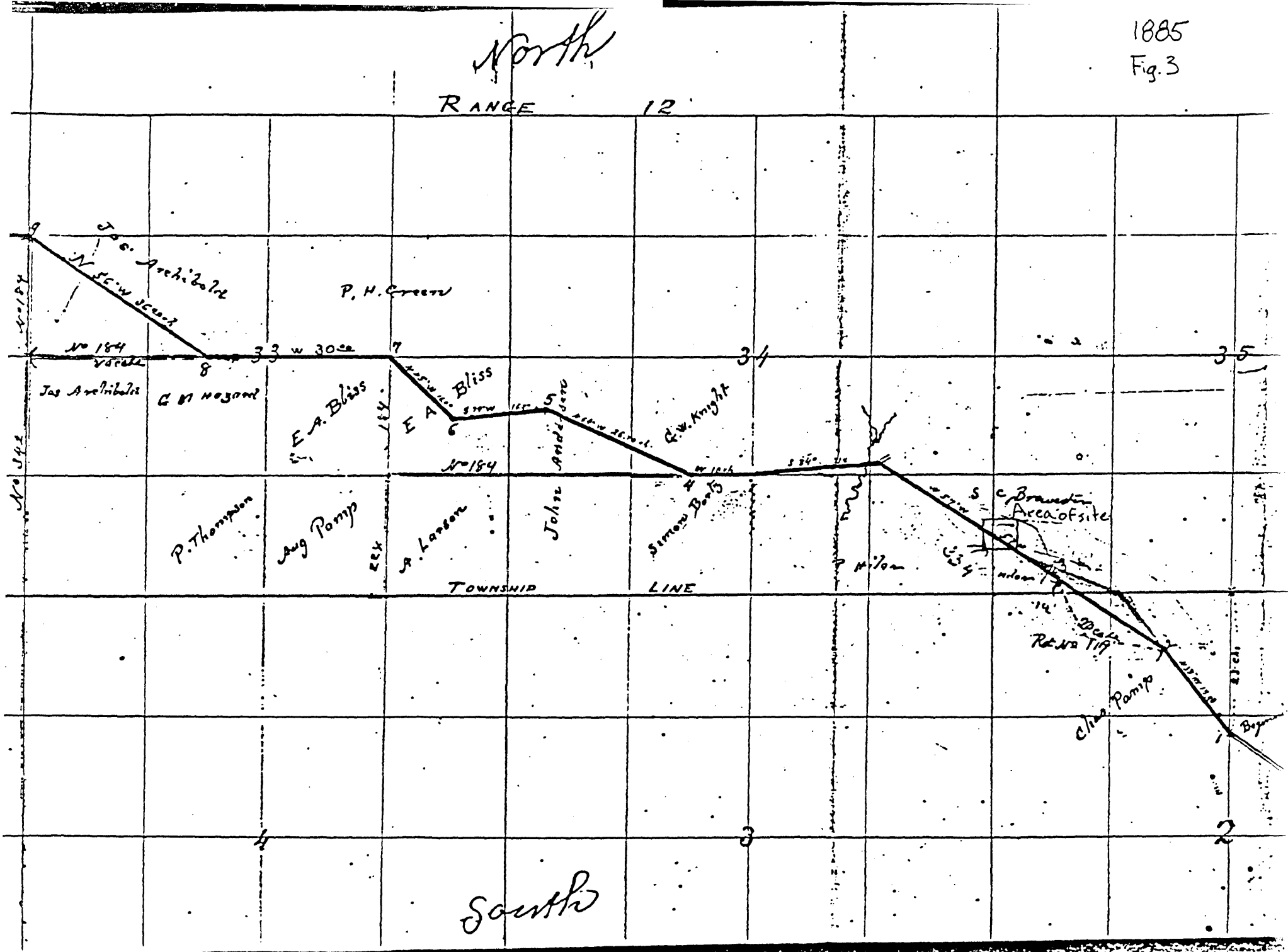
Field Notes continued.

From	S&E	Angle	Distance	Notes
20	4 50' 30" W	25.00		
21	4 45' 00" W	42.00		parallel line to line 2nd and 3rd of sec 16-17-18.
22	4 45' 30" W	42.00		(Continuation of line)
23	4 00' 00" W	18.00		
24	4 00' 00" W	10.75		
25	4 35' 00" W	11.25		
26	4 30' 00" W	17.00		
27	4 25' 00" W	12.00		To Sta 167 then 4 15' N 65.00 to
28	4 25' 00" W	112.00		(From line between 20-21-22-23-24-25-26-27-28-29-30-31-32-33-34-35-36-37)
29	4 25' 00" W	27.00		(then 810' N approx. to)
30	3 30' 00" W	10.00		
31	3 25' 00" W	15.00		
32	3 25' 00" W	12.00		
33	4 41' 00" W	22.50		
34	4 30' 00" W	12.50		
35	4 30' 00" W	13.00		
36	4 30' 00" W	37.00		at station corner of section line 1st and 2nd of sec 32-16-17.
37	4 30' 00" W	20.00		
38	4 30' 00" W	4.00		ending at station corner of section line 1st and 2nd of sec 32-16-17.
39	4 30' 00" W	4.00		(as per field notes) line then to station
40	4 30' 00" W	33.00		(From Sta 167-168)
41	4 30' 00" W	14.00		to Sta 167-168
42	4 30' 00" W	31.50		
43	4 30' 00" W	16.50		
44	4 30' 00" W	11.50		
45	4 30' 00" W	43.00		To Sta 30. Then 4 50' 30" N 11 1/2' at Sta 36 Then 4 30' 00" W 52.00 along to Sta 37

1885
Fig. 3

North

RANGE 12



South

TOWNSHIP LINE

