

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

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received **JUL 18 1986**
date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Old Settlers' Association Park and Rhodham Bonnifield House

and/or common Old Settlers' Park and Bonnifield Cabin

2. Location

street & number Old Settler's Park, "B" Street not for publication

city, town Fairfield vicinity of

state Iowa code 019 county Jefferson code 101

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<u>N/A</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Old Settlers' Park Association, c/o Mr. Ben Taylor

street & number 304 South Main Street

city, town Fairfield vicinity of state IA 52556

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. County Recorder's Office

street & number Jefferson County Courthouse

city, town Fairfield state IA 52556

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Area XV Cultural Resources Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1981 federal state county local

depository for survey records Office of Historic Preservation

city, town Des Moines state IA 50319

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved

date October 1907

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Jefferson County Old Settler's Association established this 11-1/2 acre park in 1907. The goal was to provide a "preserve for natural grasses, plants, and fauna."* The park was also to serve as setting for the relocated Bonnifield House, a log building constructed in 1838 in Round Prairie Township, Jefferson County. The log house is focal point of the park.

The park is located north of Fairfield town center and near the city limits. The Fairfield Waterworks and Waterworks Park is adjacent immediately east of the Old Settlers' Park. The two parks serve visually as one unit and are maintained by the City of Fairfield although ownership is legally distinct.

Land slopes upland to Old Settlers' Park from the Crow Creek flood plain in the south. The log house faces south (as on its original site). Access road to the park is from the northwest and serve the entire park system. The viewer's initial exposure to the building is, consequently, rear elevation. Acreage of Old Settlers' Park protects the building from intrusion.

One parcel is excluded from this nomination and comprises 9,000 square feet in the northwest corner of the Old Settlers' Park. Girl Scouts use it. One modern cabin, four shelters, and one barbeque are situated in this area. The area could later be included in the nomination if the Girl Scouts ever should wish to vacate. The National Park Service has approved the acreage as indicated in this nomination.

Vegetation in the park is dense on the upslope from Crow Creek. Native and introduced specimens are mixed. This area is no longer maintained. Maintained park begins approximately 60' south of the log house. Dense vegetation is cleared in the balance of the park which contains hard and softwood tree cover and a cut grass floor.

Concerning the log house. Rhodham Bonnifield (1788-1840), his sons, and neighbors raised the building in 1838 in Section 4, Round Prairie Township Jefferson County. The house continued to serve as a residence until 1902, although most of the Bonnifield family died in 1840 from cholera. Demolition threatened the building in 1906. The Jefferson County Old Settler's Association accepted the building as a gift that year, systematically dismantled it, and removed the logs to Fairfield. The following year, the Old Settlers Association purchased the specially selected tract of 11-1/2 acres for the house and reconstructed it using the original logs. This nomination treats the building as a 1907 reconstruction. The architectural significance of the original building was lost in reconstruction. The building derives historical significance as a commemorative site. The National Park Service has reviewed and approved this methodology.

The Rhodham Bonnifield House measures 28' (north elevation, 16'4" (east elevation), 27'6" (south elevation), and 15'7" (west elevation). A gable wall chimney stands on west elevation and measures approximately 3' x 7'5" at base. A

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
___ prehistoric	___ archeology-prehistoric	___ community planning	___ landscape architecture	___ religion
___ 1400-1499	___ archeology-historic	___ conservation	___ law	___ science
___ 1500-1599	___ agriculture	___ economics	___ literature	___ sculpture
___ 1600-1699	___ architecture	___ education	___ military	XXX social/
___ 1700-1799	___ art	___ engineering	___ music	humanitarian
___ 1800-1899	___ commerce	___ exploration/settlement	___ philosophy	___ theater
XXX 1900-	___ communications	___ industry	___ politics/government	___ transportation
		___ invention		___ other (specify)

Specific dates 1907-1917 Builder/Architect N/A

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Old Settlers' Association Park and Rhodham Bonnifield House are fine examples of commemorative properties with historic significance. The Jefferson County Old Settlers Association established the park "to preserve that old settler sentiment of freedom and equality, hospitality, sympathy and love of fair play that characterized the men who first took up land in Jefferson County, but which in this sordid age of mere money making seems so far removed from us."* The park was the first of its kind in eastern Iowa established for this purpose.**

For their commemoration, the Old Settlers Association undertook two tasks: the purchase of the park grounds and the relocation and reerection of the Bonnifield House. Concerning the park, the association declared "this park will be public. There will be no drives through it, (by) which those who have carriages or automobiles may vaunt their better fortune to those that have not."* No admission has ever been charged for entry to the park. Arbor Day provided the Old Settlers Association opportunities to improve the grounds. In 1911, for example, "about 80 trees were planted also some hazel and hickory nuts." In 1910: "Old Settlers met at the Old Settler Park and Planted the following Plants, trees, Shrubs and Flowers as a living Monument to the Pioneers who helped to bring about our Present peaceful Happy reunion."#

The Rhodham Bonnifield House is a fine example of a commemorative property with historical significance. The building was dismantled and removed from its original to its present site to preserve the building as a symbol of pioneer values. Succeeding generations have maintained the fabric of the building. Over the years, the Bonnifield House has increased as a symbol and it is now used as a graphic to represent Fairfield and Jefferson County. This relocation was the first of a log building in southeast Iowa and probably Iowa. Architectural significance is not claimed as integrity of the original is compromised.

Turn of the Twentieth Century saw considerable interest on the national scene for historic log buildings. About 1895 national concern began to surface about the Lincoln birthplace. The Buffalo Exposition of 1901 featured six historic log structures in an "Old Plantation" display. The 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition in Saint Louis relocated four historic log buildings to the expositions grounds, including Grant's birthplace, a cabin built in 1803 on Patrick Henry's farm, and a house where Lincoln had lived as a child.+

Here in Iowa, local interest in log buildings also surfaced. It took several forms: the reconstruction of log houses and the relocation of original ones. A park or other public place was usually chosen as site for the activity. The intention was to create a memento of pioneer days readily available for the public's view.

In 1898 the Johnson County Old Settlers' Association constructed two log buildings on the county fairgrounds in Iowa City. New materials were employed but

9. Major Bibliographical References

Refer to Continuation Sheet 9-2

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property 1.5 acres

Quadrangle name Fairfield North

Quadrangle scale 1/24,000

UTM References

A

1	5	5	8	7	7	3	0	4	5	4	1	1	6	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

B

Zone			Easting				Northing							

C

Zone			Easting				Northing							

D

Zone			Easting				Northing							

E

Zone			Easting				Northing							

F

Zone			Easting				Northing							

G

Zone			Easting				Northing							

H

Zone			Easting				Northing							

Verbal boundary description and justification

Refer to Continuation Sheet 10-1

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Text By: William C. Page, Historical Consultant
Form By: James E. Jacobsen, National Register Coordinator

organization Cultural Affairs Department, State Historical Society of Iowa Division, Community Programs date July 11, 1986

street & number Bureau, Office of Historic Preservation Section E. 12th & Grand Ave. telephone 515-281-4137

city or town Des Moines state IA 50319

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature David [Signature]

title State Historic Preservation Officer date 7/14/86

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

[Signature] date 8-14-86
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: _____ date _____
Chief of Registration

front porch stands on south elevation

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front porch stands on south elevation and measures 24'6" x 6' 3". The building faces south.

Logs used in construction are thought to be white oak. They are chinked with cement fortified with lime. The building is 1-1/2 stories high. Foundation is thought to consist of stone corner piers. Poured concrete now surrounds foundation and provides additional support. Log corner system is V-notched. Roof is side gabled with clapboard filling gables. Wood shingles replaced asphalt shingles in 1976.

Original facade featured three symmetrically arranged windows on second floor. First floor featured three windows and door, door and middle window arranged asymmetrically with other two windows symmetrical to those on second floor. When house was rebuilt in 1907, east window on first floor facade was blocked to provide interior space for inside stairway.

Facade features a front porch. This is a reconstruction as original front porch was non-extant before house relocation. Porch roof is shed and covered with wood shingles. Three wood posts support roof. Porch floor is wood.

Chimney is outside wall type and consists of composite masonry. Limestone provides the principal material and brick forms the flue. The chimney was reconstruction from the well documented original. Sticks daubed with clay mud originally masked the brick of the 1907 reconstruction but have fallen off over the years.

Windows feature barn sash. First floor are 6/6; second floor are 6/2. Sash are original to 1907. East elevation features one window on first floor. North elevation features one window on west end of second floor, two windows on first floor and a back door between them. Back door was boarded up in 1960s. Windows are covered with steel fence wire against vandalism.

To support the heavy log construction, the building received in 1955 additional structural support, accomplished by Lloyd Lynn, to include vertical support-posts on facade. The posts have poured concrete foundation. Tie rods run between north and south walls from the support posts and are connected to ever-stick anchors in the ground on north. Interior-wise, some two-by-sixes have been added to floor joists under second floor for added strength.

In 1976 the Rhodham Bonnifield Log House was object of a US Bicentennial project in Fairfield. A new, wood shingled roof was installed, and logs rechinked and treated with Penta wood preservative.

Floor plan is simple with one room on each floor. Stairway in southeast corner is a 1907 addition as noted elsewhere. Fire place on first floor consists of

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cobblestones. Walls retain very old whitewash. Floor is plank and original to reconstruction. Country antique furniture provides seatings and meeting accomodations. First floor walls are approximately 7'8" high. On second floor, bats are a problem during incubation period.

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"greybeard carpenters" used traditional, pioneer building techniques. One building featured hewn logs (a log house). The other featured unhewn logs (a log cabin). The reconstruction of log buildings has remained popular in Iowa to the present. Reconstructions (also known as replicas) include Livermore Log Cabin, Fort Madison, Fort Dodge, and Morris Log Cabin at Birmingham. A list is in the appendix.

The relocation of historic log buildings also has a long tradition in Iowa. Likely as not, the relocation occurred when original land-use changed and threatened the historic building with demolition. Relocation on the Bonnifield House appears to be the first example of such commemoration in Iowa. It certainly is the earliest such example in south/south-central Iowa. Comprehensive cultural resource surveys exist for this region of the state and corroborate this statement.** Other relocation projects followed: Alexander Young Log House (1912 to Washington from rural Washington County); Ronze-Morgan Log House (1929 to Oskaloosa from rural Marion County and later to Nelson Pioneer Farm). There are many post World War II relocations such as in Selma (Van Buren County) and Corydon (Wayne County) to name two. A comprehensive list follows in the appendix.

The on-site preservation of log buildings is rare in Iowa as compared with reconstructions and relocations. In south/southcentral Iowa, Mars Hill Church (1857 Wapello County) is a fine example. Most extant examples are, however, either badly deteriorated (Michael Hildebrand House; Jefferson County) or so completely engulfed by later construction (Elmer Sheppard House; Van Buren County) that integrity is compromised.

Specific as to the commemorative value of the Bonnifield House is the building's history. Even before completion in 1838, it was used as a church by Methodist ministers. On the night of 4 March 1838, the three County Commissioners who that day had determined the new county seat location named the new town "Fairfield" in this house. The fact that Fairfield received its name in this house has more than antiquarian interest. The fact galvanized enthusiasm for the structure and helps account for its symbolism.

"Malignant fever" struck the Bonnifield family in winter 1839/40. Three children and both parents died. In 1852 Bonnifield heirs sold the property to the Rizer family. Vertical siding was applied to the house in 1890. (Already during the Bonnifield residency, an addition had been constructed at the rear to serve as Mr. Bonnifield's study). The house remained a single-family dwelling until 1902.

In 1906 Dr. W. Fordyce, the new owner, announced his intention to raze the building, offering it as a gift to the Old Settlers' Association if they would remove it. Spearheaded by local historian and school teacher Hiram Heaton (1845-1922), the Old Settlers Association undertook the project.

The Old Settlers Association systematically dismantled the house on 9 August 1906, numbered the logs, and transported them to Fairfield. A heated discussion ensued as to where to re-erect the building. Sites on the courthouse grounds and at Chautauqua Park were rejected. The logs lay in storage throughout the winter. The Old Settlers Association achieved a major breakthrough the following year. W. B. Bonnifield, President of First National Bank of Ottumwa, a son of Rhodham

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Bonnifield, contributed \$500.00 for the purchase of a site for the house's re-erection. Eleven and one-half acres were bought north of Fairfield adjacent to the 200+ acres of Waterworks Park. On 25 October 1907 the house was re-erected amid much celebration and festivity.

Why did the Old Settlers' Association Park and the Bonnifield House project attract so much attention? Part of the answer lies in the fact it coincided with high water mark of the Old Settlers Association phenomenon across the Midwest. The decade before World War I experienced an immense popularity of Old Settlers Association annual gatherings. Fairfield, for example celebrated Old Settlers' Day in 1913 with 10,000 visitors. Attendance rose to 15,000 in 1915. Special trains were scheduled into Fairfield to accomodate passengers. The gatherings featured parades, pioneer amusements, meeting people, and exchanging stories. Nostalgia supplied much of the stock in trade. Later interest in the gatherings began to decline and World War I brought America into a new world.

The project also achieved success through hard work. The ad hoc preservation committee of the Old Settlers Association, led by Heaton, carefully researched and publically stated the reasonf for the building's significance.

- "1. It has always been much above the average log house having had very few superiors for appearance and comfort.
2. The building's state of preservation is 'very tolerable' as it was used as a residence up until one year ago.
3. Even if all log cabins in Jefferson County had survived (as they have not) Bonnifield would be the most significant because of age and historical associations...
4. Bonnifield is one of three 18' x 20' log buildings in Jefferson County;
5. Bonnifield log house is regarded as 'a most precious relic of pioneer times.'###

All major ethnic groups arrived in Jefferson County Old during the pioneer period (circa 1839-1861). The Civil War bound these groups together in common cause. Ethnicity was socially acceptable in the Old Settlers Association. When the ad hoc preservation committee issued their appeal in 1906, they capitalized on a social homogeny derived from respect for a shared past.

The Jefferson County Old Settler Association effectively transformed a plot of ground and a derelect and abandoned building into a site to commemorate a shared past and the spirit of cooperation felt during pioneer times. Later, other communities in the region adopted the idea and created public parks with log houses as centerpieces.

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P R I M A R Y

- Miscellaneous Book 147; p. 459; Jefferson County Recorder's Office. Legal description of Old Settlers' Park when annexed to City of Fairfield as "Part of Tract H (east portion)." Recorded 13 March 1972.
- Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps; New York; Sanborn Map Company; 1907; 1913; 1927. 1907 map shows Old Settlers Park boundaries; others do not show area.
- #Old Settlers Association Guest Book; Newspaper Room; Fairfield Public Library. Begins with list of participants during house raising in 1907.
- Warranty Deed; Deed Record (Lands) Book; Book 59; p. 475. Henry Alston et al to the Jefferson County Old Settlers Park Association in consideration of 2,000.00; entered 23 March 1908.
- Secretary's Book, Volume 11; Jefferson County Old Settlers Association; Fairfield, Jefferson County, Iowa; Dean Taylor, Secretary. "Recorded from July 16, 1904--First Meeting of Year--to--." 1904 entries include necrology. Taylor elected Secretary in 1913. No minutes had been recorded since 1906 and Taylor brings minutes up to date through newspaper articles and memory. Last minute dated 4 October 1915. Newspaper Room; Fairfield Public Library. Location of Volume 1 unknown.
- Murray, W. B.; "The Birth Of A Thot;" Epithalamium for long house relocation ; Jefferson County Republican; 6 October 1911; p. 7 c. 3. Logs lay in Chautauqua Park for months because agreement about land use for house was unresolved with park board.
- "Historic Cabin Is Raised Today/Bonifield Homestead Oldest Building in Iowa Re-erected by Old Settlers Who Hew Beams, Roll Logs and Rive Shingles---Occasion One Long to be Remembered in Fairfield;" Fairfield Journal; 25 October 1907.
- "Log-Rolling and cabin raising" on Friday; Fairfield Tribune; 23 October 1907; p. 2, c. 4.
- "Report of Old Settlers Association Ad Hoc Committee for the Preservation of Bonnifield Log House;" 1906; Leisure Hours of Hiram Heaton (Scrapbook); p. 139; Newspaper Room; Fairfield Public Library.
- "Bonnifield Cabin Site/Son of Builder and Companion Help/Pick Spot for Re-Building." Ibid; p. 98.
- "Indian Treasure Buried Near Cabin/Lewtter and Map Giving Location, Found Secreted in the Walls when the Ancient Dwelling was Dismantled--Bears out Pioneer Traditin;" Ibid; p. 120.
- "Subscribes to Log Cabin Fund/W, B. Bonnifield, Ottumwa, Subscribes \$500 Towards Moving Cabin;" Reprint of Bonnifield letter to Old Settlers Association 28 July 1906; Ibid; p. 121.
- #"Wonderful Growth of An Idea;" Ottumwa Courier; 11 August 1906; reprints 2 photographs of house on original site.
- Building inspection and direct measurements; W. C. Page; 15 July 1985.
- ##Leisure Hours of Hiram Heaton (Scrapbook); Newspaper Room; Fairfield Public Library; p. 139.
- "The Oldest House Now Standing In State of Iowa'" The Register and Leader; Des Moines; 29 March 1904; p. 33 c. 2.

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- Fulton, Charles J.; History of Jefferson County, Iowa; Chicago; The S. J. Clarke Publishing Co.; 1914; Vol. 1; p. 182.
- History of Jefferson County, Iowa; Chicago; Western Historical Co.; 1879; pp. 361, 433.
- National Register Criteria for Evaluation; National Park Service; Lynn Bebee and Carol Dubie, Coordinators; "Guidelines for Considering Moved Properties" (pp. 49-53); "Guidelines for Considering Commemorative Properties" (pp 60-62).
- Iowa State Nominations Review Committee Policy Statement "Relocated Buildings and National Register Eligibility;" Log Buildings and Structures and National Register Eligibility;" Office of Historic Preservation, Iowa State Historical Department; 1985.
- Naumann, Molly M.; Architect Survey, Fairfield, Iowa; Area XV Cultural Resources Survey; Ottumwa, IA; 1983. Recommends Bonnifield Log House for National Register of Historic Places nomination with architectural significance.
- **Page, W. C.; Jefferson County, Iowa; An Historic Survey of Buildings; Area XV Cultural Resources Survey; Ottumwa, IA; 1980. Recommends Bonnifield Log House for National Register of Historic Places nomination with historical significance.
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Mary Alcinda Bonnifield Sharp; Ottumwa, IA; October, 1985.
Ben J. Taylor; Fairfield, IA; July, 1985.
Lyman Evans, Fairfield, IA; October, 1985.
- +Hosmer, Charles B., Jr.; Presence of the Past; A History of the Preservation Movement in the United States before Williamsburg; New York; G. P. Putnam's Sons; 1965; pp. 140-47.
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- Leonard, L. O.; "Famous Homes on the Rock Island Lines;" "The Bonnifield Home at Fairfield, Iowa." Appeared in Rock Island Magazine; October, 1929.
- Henning, Darrell, Curator, Norwegian-American Museum; Decorah, IA; Telephone interview with W. C. Page; 28 January 1986.

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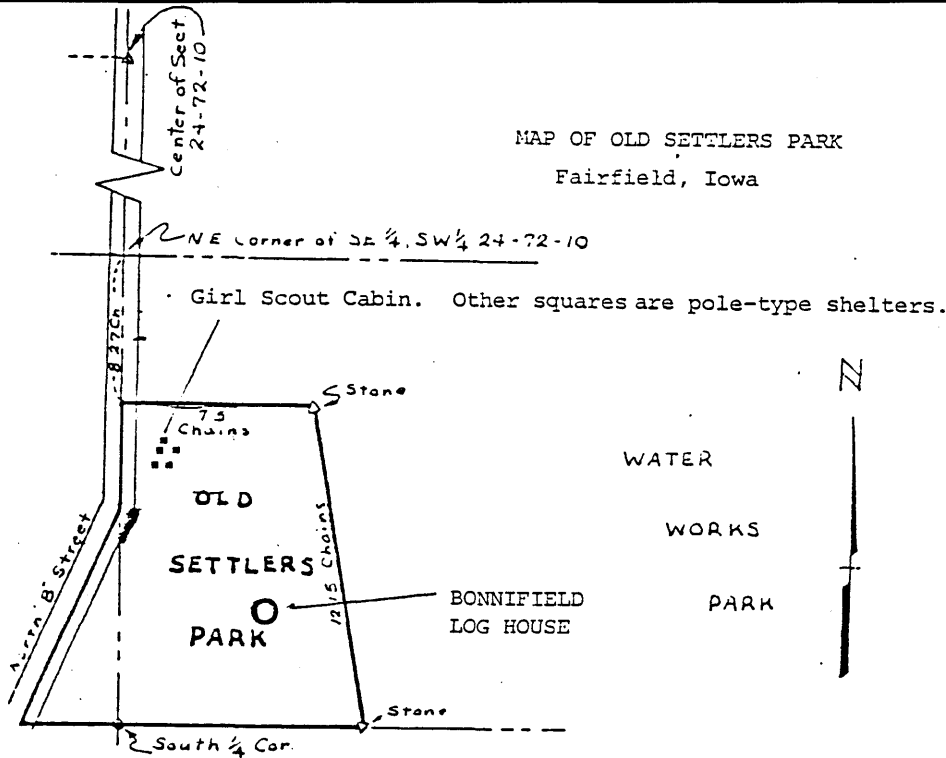
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Part of the SE 1/4 and part of the SW 1/4 of section 24, Township 72 North, Range 10 W. of the 5th P.M., Jefferson County, Iowa, described more particularly as follows:

Beginning at a point on the west line of the SE 1/4 of said Section 24, 27 chains south of the NE corner of the SW 1/4 of the SE 1/4 of said Section 24; thence east 7.5 chains to a stone; thence south 15 1/2 degrees east 12.15 chains to a stone and the south line of said Section 24; thence west to the south 1/4 corner of said Section 24; thence north to the point of beginning and containing 10 acres more or less. Also beginning at the south 1/4 corner of said Section 24, thence west along the south line of said section 24 to the center of a County Road; thence north easterly along the center of a County Road to the east line of the SW 1/4 of said Section 24; thence south to the point of beginning containing 1 1/2 acres more or less.

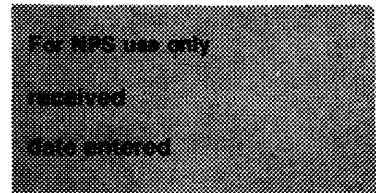
The above described area to be known as Old Settlers Park Addition to the City of Fairfield, Iowa

Part of Tract "H"
(east portion)

REVISIONS			Tract "H"		
NO	DATE	BY	City of Fairfield, Iowa		
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
			DRAWN BY	SCALE	MATERIAL
			CHK'D	DATE	DRAWING NO.
			THALED	APP'D	

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Part of the SE $\frac{1}{4}$ and part of the SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of section 24, Township 72 North, Range 10W, of the 5th P.M., Jefferson County, Iowa, described more particularly as follows:

Beginning at a point on the west line of the SE $\frac{1}{4}$ of said Section 24, 8.27 chains South of the NE corner of the SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of the SE $\frac{1}{4}$ of said Section 24, thence east 7.5 chains to a stone; thence South 15 $\frac{1}{2}$ degrees east 12.15 chains to a stone and the Southline of said Section 24; thence West to the South $\frac{1}{4}$ corner of said Section 24; thence North to the point of beginning and containing 10 acres more or less. Also beginning at the South $\frac{1}{4}$ corner of said Section 24; thence West along the South line of said Section 24 to the center of a County Road; thence Northeasterly along the center of a County Road to the East line of the SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of said Section 24; thence South to the point of beginning containing 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ acres more or less.

The above described area to be known as Old Settlers Park Addition to the City of Fairfield, Iowa.

Excluded from the boundary of this National Register of Historic Places property is the following parcel within the above described description:

Beginning at a point on the West line of the SE $\frac{1}{4}$ of said Section 24, 8.27 chains South of the NE corner of the SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of the SE $\frac{1}{4}$ of said Section 24; thence East 300 feet; thence South 300 feet; thence West 300 feet; thence North 300 feet to the point of beginning, containing 9,000 square feet more or less and leased by agreement to the Local Council of Girl Scouts from the Old Settlers Park Association.

Source: Miscellaneous; Book 147; p 459; Jefferson County Recorder's Office; Courthouse; Fairfield, Iowa.

Lease Agreement between Old Settlers Park Association and Local Council of Girl Scouts; Office File; Lyman Evans; Fairfield, Iowa.