

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

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

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

For HCRS use only

received MAY 20 1980

date entered JUL 28 1980

**1. Name** *Blue Earth County Multiple Resource Area (Partial Inventory)*

historic Historic Resources of Blue Earth County (Partial Inventory)

and/or common

**2. Location**

street & number The County Limits of Blue Earth County, Minnesota not for publication

city, town \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ congressional district Second

state Minnesota code 22 county Blue Earth code 013

**3. Classification**

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

**4. Owner of Property**

name Multiple Ownership - see inventory forms

street & number \_\_\_\_\_

city, town \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Recorders Office - Blue Earth County Courthouse

street & number \_\_\_\_\_

city, town Mankato state Minnesota

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Statewide Survey of Historic Resources

has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1979 \_\_\_\_\_ federal X state \_\_\_\_\_ county \_\_\_\_\_ local \_\_\_\_\_

depository for survey records Minnesota Historical Society -- 240 Summit Avenue-Hill House

city, town St. Paul state Minnesota 55102

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED MAY 20 1980

DATE ENTERED JUL 28 1980

Historic Resources of Blue Earth County (Partial Inventory)

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 1 PAGE 1

This Multiple Resource Area Nomination is based on a survey of standing structures conducted in Blue Earth County by the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office as part of a long-range statewide survey of historic resources. The properties included in the nomination represent those which illustrate significant aspects of the history of the county and which were processed for nomination at the conclusion of the survey. Additional Blue Earth County properties may be nominated in the future, however, and this Multiple Resource Area Nomination should not be construed as representing all properties in Blue Earth County eligible for nomination.

## Standing Structures

The basis of the survey for this nomination is an inventory of structures which are indicative of various aspects of the county's history. Structures were identified and inventoried during a county-wide survey conducted during the summer of 1979.

Selection of structures for the inventory included both field reconnaissance of pre-identified sites and isolation of sites on a purely visual basis. Pre-identification of sites was limited to a small number of the most significant locations (those unique on a county wide scale, or significantly linked with some aspect of county history.) County histories, individual community histories, and photographs from both the state society and private collections were researched for site-specific information. General references to common buildings were not noted.

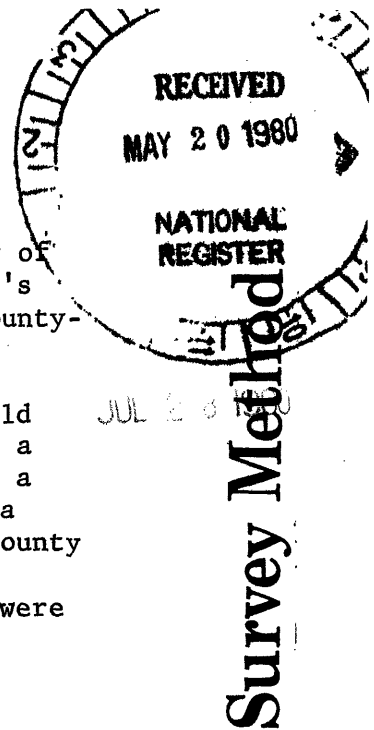
Township and city maps from the 1895 and 1914 Blue Earth County Atlases were copied for field use. Plat maps on file in the county recorder's office were researched for original plat information (proprietors, survey and filing dates) and for addition dates. The filing dates for the various platted areas were noted on current highway department city maps. This collection of maps was useful in gaining a localized sense of development for areas of the county.

All city streets were walked or driven. All rural non-farm structures, pre-identified sites, and locally suggested buildings were visited. The roads connecting these dispersed sites provided a strong sampling of the rural landscape. Pre-identified sites were inventoried regardless of integrity. Other buildings with unusual integrity or unique features were also inventoried. In general, structures built before 1940 were considered for an inventory.

Follow-up information (both localized specific and generalized contextural) on some sites was gathered to help establish significance.

In each region of the county, at least one and in most cases several local contacts were made through the county historical society and by random inquiry. These were most often helpful in locating information on selected properties, but also in pointing out additional locations for inventory.

From the inventory of approximately 400 sites, 22 properties were selected for nomination to the National Register, mostly on the basis of their significance within the county. Information and photographs on all sites are recorded on inventory forms for a permanent record.



## BLUE EARTH COUNTY

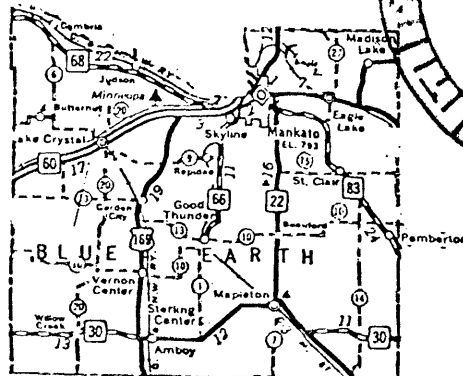
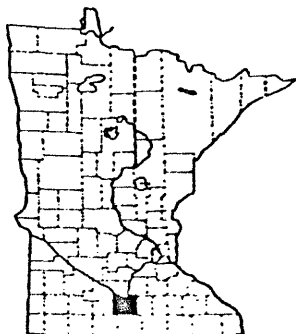
The area now known as Blue Earth County is located in the south central area of Minnesota. Most of its borders follow the straight lines of the government survey system; the irregular western portion of the northern edge is defined by the course of the Minnesota River where the flow of the river bends from a southeasterly to a northeasterly direction.

The name of the county is a holdover from an incident in the earliest recorded Euro-American history of the area. In 1700, the French explorer LeSueur made an unsuccessful attempt to mine copper from the blue earth found in the area. Today, the name Blue Earth designates not only not the county, but an important river of the area, and, in a derivation of its Dakota form (Makato), the county seat of Mankato as well.

The major waterways run irregular courses through the county and empty into the Minnesota River on the north. A few sizable lakes are scattered through the county. The topography ranges from the rugged wooded areas of ravines and river valleys (especially in the area radiating from the south of Mankato) to the flat prairies of the southern sections. The county also includes extensive deposits of oolite dolomite in the northern portions along the Minnesota River.

The beginnings of permanent Euro-American settlement of the area came after the Dakota had ceded the land under the treaties of 1851 at Traverse des Sioux and Mendota. The Minnesota River and its tributary streams provided ready access to the territorial capital of St. Paul, located downstream, and Mankato was one of several cities platted along the upper Minnesota in 1852. The county was established in 1853.

As in other areas of the state further east, there was considerable rural agricultural settlement as well as a wave of speculative townsites platted during the 1850s and 1860s. These townsites were often platted by organized groups of individuals (such as the Blue Earth Claim Association of St. Paul, which platted Mankato, and the Minnesota Settlement Association, which platted the first townsite of Mapleton); others were the effort of individual landholders. Virtually all of these towns were located near water arteries.



Area Description

JUL 28 1980

RECEIVED  
MAY 20 1980

NATIONAL  
REGISTER

The population of the county filled in during this period. The scattered 1860 population of 4,803 had grown by 1870 to 17,302, with individual township totals ranging from 234 to 1,391. By the late 1860s, all townships had been organized into governmental units. Nationality groups included German, Welsh, Norwegian, Swedish, Irish, Scottish, and Swedish.

The Dakota Indians were removed from the area to reservation land further west after the 1851 treaties, but a considerable portion of the county was utilized as a reservation for the Winnebago tribe from 1855 to 1863 (the original reservation boundaries were reduced in 1861). Members of the tribe had previously lived near Long Prairie, Minnesota. After the Dakota War of 1862, the Winnebago were once again moved, to land in Nebraska.

A significant and typical change in urban settlement occurred with the coming of the railroad. From the laying of the first tracks in 1868 to the completion of the last segment in 1908, several new townsites were platted as station points. At times, pre-existing towns received a boost from gaining railroad connections; just as often, the designation of a station point a few miles distant from an earlier town signaled the disappearance of the latter. The intersection of several lines at Mankato helped to solidify its position as a regionally important center of commerce and industry; the elevators and depots of the network of country stations further encouraged the agricultural development of the rural county. Complementing the railroad townsites were several small unplatted crossroads communities, usually centered around a creamery, school, town hall, or general store.

The county's basic layout has remained intact since the completion of the rail system, as is the case in most of prairie southern Minnesota. All but one of the incorporated communities surviving today were either platted on a rail line or were pre-existing communities which gained a rail line. (The sole exception is Skyline, incorporated as a completely residential suburb of Mankato in the late 1950s.) Mankato remains, as it did at the turn of the century, as a regional center for education, commerce, and industry; the out-county towns, despite the recent removal of much of the trackage of the rail system, continue in their role as agricultural service centers and shipping points. The vast majority of land in the county remains in agricultural use.

The architecture of the county generally follows the typical building patterns of rural mid-western counties. Initial Euro-American buildings were of log, sod, or dugout construction; subsequent designs followed the common builder styles of the period. Although there is often use of modest characteristic embellishment, architectural ostentation is rare. Most of the architect-designed, style-conscious building has taken place in Mankato.

The dominant construction material for domestic and agricultural structures is wood; most commercial buildings are of masonry. The buff-colored oneota dolomite quarried in the county appears both as a basic and an ornamental material.

Historic urban buildings are most often situated on the lots of strict grid townsites; an exception is Mankato, where the irregular topography and many ravines have resulted in the juxtaposition of several grids at varying orientations. Even with the abandonment and removal of rail lines, most of the smaller trackside townsites continue to locate their commercial, industrial, and residential areas as the original plat dictated (with a few "highway strip" exceptions). In Mankato, the early spatial interplay between the Normal School Campus, the surrounding residential area, and the downtown commercial area has been obliterated by the removal of the college to a more spacious hilltop campus, the enclosure of the heart of the main street into an indoor mall, major highway construction in the southwest area, and an alteration of the traffic pace through minor route changes and one-way street designations.

The cultivated rural landscape is often broken only by the groves and buildings of individual farmsteads, occasional rural churches, and the scattered railroad townsites and crossroads communities.

BLUE EARTH COUNTY

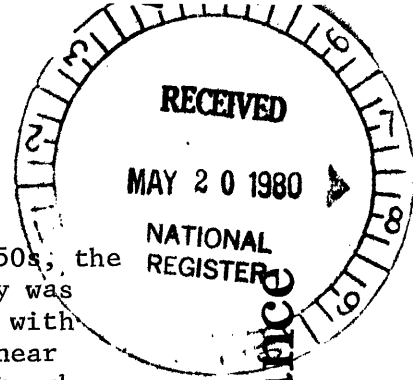
At the beginnings of Euro-American settlement in the 1850s, the major significance of the area now known as Blue Earth County was as a frontier region on the upper Minnesota River. As such, with an important frontier center established at Mankato, it was near the western limits of the areas which experienced significant urban and rural settlement during the 1850s and early 1860s. After rail development and the extensive settlement of areas further west, the county became important as one part of the agricultural producing and processing region that constitutes southern Minnesota. Additionally, the area around Mankato became significant for its stone quarrying, and Mankato itself became significant as a regional center of education and commerce.

Notable structures associated with the rural settlement during the pre-railroad frontier period include the Gail Octagon Farmhouse (c.1855-1859, Garden City Township), built by an early settler from New York state; the house at the Jones-Roberts Farmstead (c.1860, Judson Township), built by one member of the important Welsh settlement of the northwestern portion of the county; and the Sterling Church (1867, Sterling Township), built by a group of Scottish and other settlers who established themselves in the southeastern portion of the county. The Gail Farmhouse also represents a link with the beginnings of urban settlements, as its builder, James Gail, platted one of the early but unsuccessful townsites. Other structures associated with urban development of the period are the Charles Chapman House (c.1858, LeHillier), built by a Massachusetts settler who was responsible not only for the townsite of LeHillier, but also for surveying many of the early additions to the city of Mankato; and the First Baptist Church (1868, Garden City), a well-preserved semi-public structure in one of the most successful of the early, pre-railroad townsites.

Although the entire area of the county was transferred from the Dakota Indians to the U.S. Government at the 1851 treaties, simultaneous occupation by both Indians and Euro-Americans continued from 1855 through 1863 during the period of the Winnebago Reservation. Remaining from this period is the Winnebago Agency House (1855-63, McPherson Township, placed on the National Register in 1975).

Structures which represent beginnings of significant industry during the pre-railroad period are the Seppman Mill (1863, South Bend Township, placed on the National Register in 1971), a unique stone wind-powered mill; and the Adam Jefferson House (c.1865, Mankato), the stone residence of one of the first developers of the area's important stone-quarrying industry.

The rail development, which provided improved transportation for agricultural products and resulted in a whole new system of townsites, had as its most visible symbol the railroad depot. Originally a key



Area Significance

structure for each townsite, only the Union Depot (1896+, Mankato) remains today. In Mapleton (platted 1871), one of the larger of the trackside towns, both the Lucas Troendle House (1896, Mapleton) and the Main Street Commercial Buildings (1895-c.1900, Mapleton) represent a stage of stability reached in many of these rail communities by the turn of the century.

Development of the family farm during this period formed a basis for the agricultural economy of the area. The Jones-Roberts Farmstead (1860+, Judson Township) is one of the few early farmsteads to have survived without major intrusive additions. A later agricultural operation of singular importance was the Mankato Holstein Farm, which won national recognition for its Holstein breeding. The Mankato Holstein Farm Barn (1917, Lime Township) remains as a rural landmark.

Mankato's growth as a regional center is evidenced by several structures. Its retail activity developed along a large area of Front Street; a well-preserved section survives as the North Front Street Commercial District (c.1871-c.1910). Besides the stone industry, the town also developed extensive flour-milling activity; the R.D. Hubbard House (1871, 1888, placed on the National Register in 1976) was the residence of one of the partners in the important Hubbard Milling Company. Public structures which have contributed significantly to Mankato's urban landscape are the Blue Earth County Courthouse (1886-89), the Federal Post Office and Courthouse (1896, 1932)\*, the Union Depot (1896+), and the Mankato Public Library and Reading Room (1902-03). Besides the important State Normal School, which was established in 1868 (and whose remaining buildings are being evaluated as part of a survey of state college campuses), the city also developed parochial educational institutions and two private vocational schools. The J.R. Brandrup House (1904) was the home of the central figure in the Mankato Commercial College, and is an outstanding residence in Mankato's Lincoln Park. One Mankato residence, the Adolph Eberhart House (c.1903), gains its significance for an achievement that brought its owner away from the city; Eberhart was governor of Minnesota from 1909-1915.

The vast majority of buildings in the county are architecturally significant in that they represent typical (and, in some cases, counter-typical) vernacular building trends as manifested in the southern Minnesota counties that developed during the late 19th and 20th centuries. These include the Adam Jefferson House (c.1865, Mankato) and the Charles Chapman House (c.1858, LeHillier) both of local stone; the Gail Octagon Farmhouse (c.1855-59, Garden City Township), a rare octagon example of a simple brick farmhouse; and the Jones-Roberts Farmhouse (c.1860, Judson Township), a simple frame dwelling. The barn, granary, and other outbuildings at the Jones-Roberts Farmstead illustrate typical agricultural building types for the late 19th century. Both the frame Sterling Church (1867, Sterling Township) and the concrete block First Baptist Church (1868, Garden City) are early vernacular semi-public structures. The First Baptist Church has additional architectural significance as a very early use of locally-manufactured concrete block as a building material.

\* Nomination in process as a Federal Nomination.

Several domestic structures constructed by figures prominent in the educational, commercial, industrial, and political activity of the area illustrate more style-conscious building trends. The designs of Mankato architects are evidence of local (and often late) adaptations of conventional building styles. Two early French Second Empire examples, the elaborate R.D. Hubbard House (1871, 1888, placed on the National Register in 1976), and the simpler William Irving House (1873, Mankato) have unknown designers. Other notable examples, all designed by Mankato architects, are the Queen Anne Lorin Cray House (1896-99, Mankato) by Frank Thayer; the Queen Anne Lucas Troendle House (1896, Mapleton) by Pass and Schippel; the Queen Anne/Classical Revival J.R. Brandrup House (1904, Mankato) by Albert Schippel, and the Neo-Classic Oscar W. Schmidt House (1923-25, Mankato) by Henry C. Gerlach, Jr.

A few Mankato public and semi-public structures are architecturally significant for their individual design merits. These include the French Italian Renaissance Blue Earth County Courthouse (1886-89), by Minneapolis architects Haley and Allen; the Richardsonian Romanesque First Presbyterian Church (1893-96), by Minneapolis architect Warren H. Hayes; the Richardsonian Romanesque Federal Post Office and Courthouse (1896, 1932) by U.S. Treasury Department Architects William Martin Aiken (1896) and J.A. Wetmore (1932); the Renaissance Revival Mankato Public Library and Reading Room (1902-03) by New York architects Jardine, Kent, and Jardine; and the Prairie School First National Bank (1913, placed on the National Register in 1974) by Minneapolis architects Ellerbe and Round.

Two structures in the county distinguish it as an area of engineering interest; the abundance of waterways has provided an opportunity for examples of river-related engineering skills. Of notable significance are the Kern Bridge (1873, South Bend/Mankato Townships), the only example of a bowstring arch truss in the state and the Marsh Concrete Rainbow Arch Bridge (1911, Cambria Township), the oldest of its type in the state.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

See attached sheets

## 10. Geographical Data

**UTM NOT VERIFIED**  
**ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED**

Acreage of nominated property \_\_\_\_\_

Quadrangle name \_\_\_\_\_

Quadrangle scale \_\_\_\_\_

UMT References see individual inventory forms

A 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

  
Zone Easting Northing

B 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

  
Zone Easting Northing

C 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

D 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

E 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

F 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

G 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

H 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Verbal boundary description and justification

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

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Dennis A. Gimmestad, Supervisor, Standing Structures Survey

organization Minnesota Historical Society date April 1980

street & number 240 Summit Avenue-Hill House telephone 612-296-9545

city or town St. Paul state Minnesota

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

see individual inventory forms

\_\_\_\_ 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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Russell W. Fridley

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date 5/8/78

For HCERS use only

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

Keeper of the National Register

date 7/21/80

Attest: Kristin O'Connell

date 7/18/80

Chief of Registration

# BIBLIOGRAPHY

Chapman, Charles A. Mankato and Blue Earth County, Minnesota. Mankato: Wisc. & Coffin, Printers, 1878.

History of the Minnesota Valley, including the Explorers and Pioneers of Minnesota ... and History of the Sioux Massacre. Comp. by George E. Warner and Charles M. Foote. Minneapolis: North Star Publishing Co., 1882.

Hughes, Thomas. History of Blue Earth County, and Biographies of its Leading Citizens. Chicago: Middle West Publishing Company, (1909?).

Mankato Centennial Souvenior Program Century of Progress. Mankato: Privately published, 1952.

Mankato. Its First Fifty Years. Mankato: Free Press Printing Co., 1903.

Standard Atlas of Blue Earth County, Minnesota. Chicago: George A. Ogle & Co., 1914.

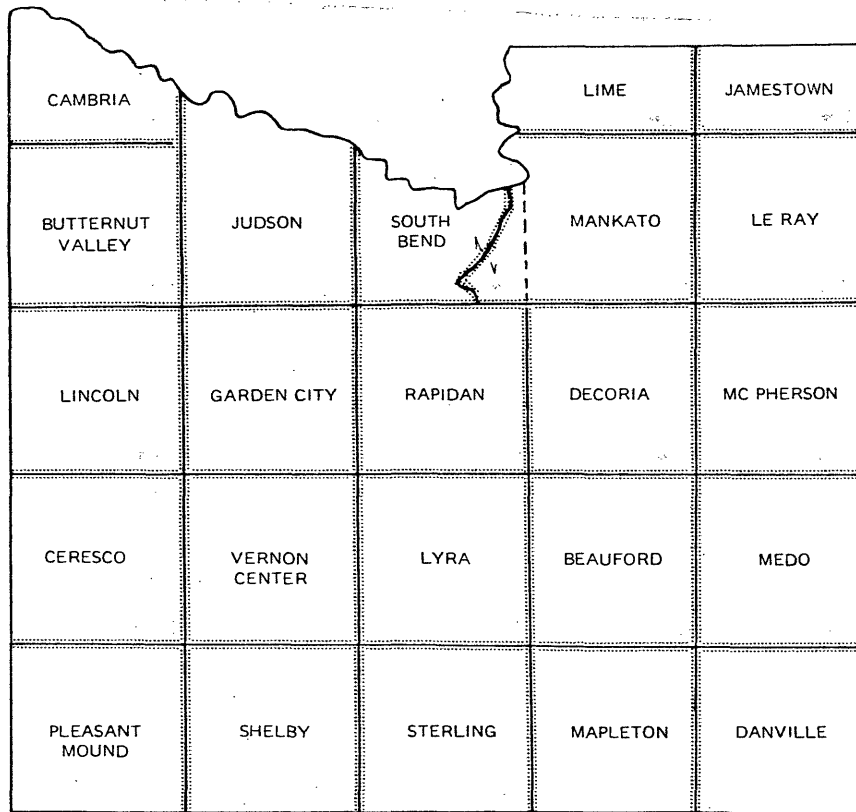
Standard Historical and Pictorial Atlas and Gazeteer of Blue Earth County, Minnesota. Minneapolis: Central Publishing Company, 1895.

Willard, J.A. Blue Earth County Its Advantages to Settlers. Mankato: Record Office, 1868.

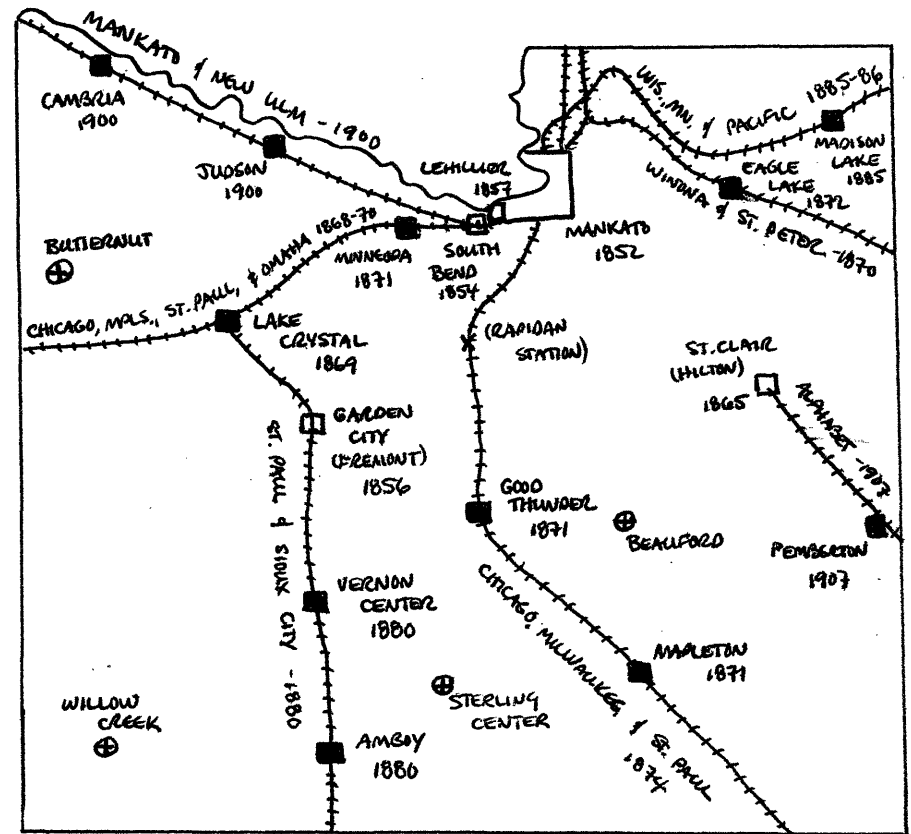
Also see bibliographies on individual inventory sheets.



JUL 28 1980



BLUE EARTH COUNTY TOWNSHIPS



BLUE EARTH COUNTY  
RAILROAD / TOWNSITE  
DEVELOPMENT

- RAILROAD TOWNSITE
- PRE-EXISTING TOWNSITE ON RAIL LINE
- ⊕ "CROSSROADS" COMMUNITIES
- X UNPLATTED STATION POINTS

LOCATIONS ARE  
APPROXIMATE