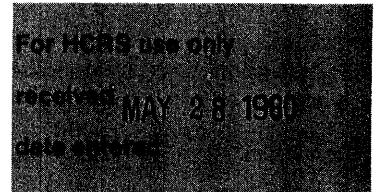


**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

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



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

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

historic *Historic Resources of Isanti County (Partial Inventory)*

and/or common

2. Location

street & number *The County Limits of Isanti County, Minnesota* not for publication

city, town _____ vicinity of _____ congressional district *8th*

state *Minnesota* code *22* county *Isanti* code *059*

3. Classification -- Multiple Resources

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input 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 type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input 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 *Multiple Ownership -- see individual forms*

street & number

city, town _____ vicinity of _____ state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. *Recorder's Office -- Isanti County Courthouse*

street & number *237 SW 2nd Ave.*

city, town *Cambridge* state *Minnesota*

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title *Statewide Survey of Historic Resources*

has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date *1979* federal state county local

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

city, town *St. Paul* state *Minnesota*

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

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

Isanti County MRN

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 1 PAGE 1

This Multiple Resource Area Nomination is based on a survey of standing structures conducted in Isanti 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 have been deemed eligible for nomination at the conclusion of the survey. Additional information and new perspectives for evaluation of specific types of historic properties are continually being gained as the statewide survey progresses, and it is quite possible that additional Isanti County properties will be nominated in the future. These may be presented individually or as parts of thematic groups when the entire survey is completed. For this reason, this Multiple Resource Area Nomination should not be construed as representing all properties in Isanti County eligible for nomination.

(The above disclaimer is based on an agreement between Charles Herrington, HCRS, and Russell Fridley, Minnesota SHPO, August 31, 1979.)

ISANTI COUNTY

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 late summer and fall 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 maps from the 1914 Isanti County Atlas 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 additional 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 contextual) 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 over 150 sites, nine individual structures 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.

ISANTI COUNTY

Isanti County is located in the east-central part of Minnesota, thirty miles north of the Minneapolis-St. Paul area and one hundred miles southwest of Duluth. Chisago County borders to the east, Anoka County to the south, Sherburne and Mille Lacs Counties to the west, and Kanabec County to the north. The county boundaries follow the straight lines of the government survey system.

The topography of the county varies from nearly level over most of the area to rolling in the northern townships, and features several small lakes and streams. The Rum River, the county's major waterway, follows a meandering course.

Originally Isanti County lay within the southern limit of the great pine forest of Minnesota. Today the cultivated fields covering the county and scantily wooded pasture lands bear witness to the dramatic transformation that has taken place since settlement. Only scattered wooded areas in the northern tier of townships remain of the once dense pine forest.

The county shares with other Minnesota counties a history of European exploration and fur trading activity and an early Indian heritage. The earliest Euro-Americans in the region are believed to have been the French explorers Radisson and Grosseillers, who traversed the area in the 1650s. They were followed by Father Hennepin in 1680. At that time the area was the home of four Sioux tribes, known as the Isanyati or Isantees.

When the Indian treaties of 1837 opened the lands between the St. Croix and the Mississippi, the rich pine forests lured lumbermen to the area and precipitated the first permanent white settlements in the county. Daniel Stanchfield discovered the area's lumber potential on a trip to the area in 1847, and by 1852 over twenty logging firms were operating on the Rum River within the county. Most of the early loggers were of American descent and were responsible for many of the county's place names. Although the majority were transients, the group included the county's first permanent settlers.

In the early 1850s a group of New Englanders, settled in the regions of the Rum River in what became known as Spencer Brook. Another concentration of Yankees was located along the banks of the Rum towards the eastern edge of the county. Here the small settlement of Cambridge was founded to serve as a post office and central place. It was platted in 1856, and became the county seat when Isanti County was formed in 1857. As in other areas of the state, the 1850s were characterized by a wave of speculative townsites, most of which proved unsuccessful.

Isanti's speculative period was an unstable one, and little further settlement occurred until land was opened up for homesteading in 1862. The 1860s began a new phase of county development as Swedish and German immigrants

began to settle the region. Isanti County is noted as the area of highest concentration of Swedish settlement in America. Immigration occurred in two waves, the first during the late 1860s and early 1870s and the second a decade later. The population filled in during this period of immigration; the 1860 count of 284 had grown to 5,063 by 1880 and to 7,607 by 1890. By 1886 all of the townships were organized and initial settlement had been completed.

Historically, the county might be characterized as a predominantly agricultural region with strong ethnic concentrations. The absence of towns is notable. Rather, settlement cores developed as service areas for the surrounding rural community. Over twenty-three "cross-roads communities" sprang up during the late nineteenth century.

Railroad trackage did not reach the county until 1899, but the railroad's effects on county settlement date to the late 1860s when odd numbered sections of government land were granted to the railroad and offered for sale. The Lake Superior and Mississippi Railroad launched on a major project to draw settlers to the county, extensively circulating their propaganda in Sweden.

When the Eastern Railway Company (now the Great Northern) finally built a line through eastern Isanti County in 1899, the region entered a new phase of its development. The county did not experience the sudden boom in population experienced in regions reached by railroads at earlier dates, but the road brought considerable growth to the city of Cambridge, caused new communities (Braham and Grandy) to be platted, and caused the village of Isanti to move to its present trackside location. The railroad facilitated trade and shipping for the county and established its trackside towns as important centers for the rural population.

The county's basic layout has remained intact since the completion of the railroad in 1899. Most of the county is rural, spotted with remnants of the crossroads communities; often now consisting only of an empty school, store, or a cluster of houses. The major population centers are all located on the Great Northern Rail Line. In recent years the county's proximity to the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area has assumed an increasing importance. The southeastern part of the county (particularly the cities of Cambridge and Isanti) has experienced new growth with the influx of a commuter population.

The architecture of the county follows the typical building patterns of other rural midwestern areas. The earliest Euro-American buildings were of log, sod, or dugout construction. These were replaced in later years by simple frame structures of modest proportions and design. Wood is the dominant construction material for both residential and agricultural structures. Commercial buildings in the rural areas and the earliest commercial buildings in the more populated centers are also of frame construction. In the larger trackside communities masonry commercial buildings dominate the business streetscape.

Buildings in Cambridge, Isanti, and Braham are situated on streets which follow a strict grid system. The buildings in the crossroad communities and on the county's numerous farmsteads are usually oriented to county roads, which follow the grid of section lines except where they bend to accommodate the contour of the topography.

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ISANTI COUNTY

The significance of the area now known as Isanti County lies in its continuous history as a predominantly rural agricultural region of the state within the area of highest concentration of Swedish settlement in America. As an area where ethnic concentrations have endured and where agriculture has remained the county's economic base, the county has a remarkably undisturbed historic fabric which provides a valuable model for the study of immigrant settlement patterns and the development of agriculture in east-central Minnesota.

The earliest permanent white settlements in the county were made by native-born Americans who first engaged in lumbering and later turned to farming when the forests were depleted. A notable structure associated with the county's earliest settlement and its largest native-born American population is Isanti School District No. I (1874, Spencer Brook).

The Yankees who scantily populated the area in the 1850s were followed by German and Swedish immigrants, who began arriving in the early 1860s. St. John's German Lutheran Church (1882 Bradford Township) is a well-preserved structure linked to the German population which settled in southern parts of the county and made up the county's second largest immigrant group. The Swedes who settled the region were by far the largest and dominant ethnic group; Isanti's Swedish population is frequently noted as the center of the more pietistic groups that broke off from the Swedish State Church (Lutheran) and thus contrasts from the predominantly Swedish Lutheran population of neighboring Chisago County. The Svenska Mission Kyrka i Sodre Maple Ridge (1897, Maple Ridge Township) is significant for its association with this large non-Lutheran Swedish population.

Agriculture has been an underlying theme in county development since settlement. The Linden Barn (1914, Isanti Township) provides a link with the Swedish population that farmed the county's rural areas, and is associated with the county's important dairying industry. The Erickson Farmstead (ca.1915, Athens Township) is a particularly handsome representative of a brief but extremely prosperous period in the county's agriculture, the potato boom of 1890-1920. Cooperatives were established across the county and have played crucial roles in the development of area agriculture. The Farmers Mercantile Cooperative of West Stanford (1926, Stanford Township) is representative of the organizations formed by area farmers to solve economic problems.

In a rural county dominated by foreign immigrants rural education played an important role in not only educating area children but also naturalizing foreigners. The West Riverside School (1898, Cambridge Township), one of the county's best preserved rural schools, represents the importance of rural places of learning in the county's history.

Area Significance

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Nineteenth century pre-railroad urban development was most extensive in the county seat of Cambridge; the Isanti County Courthouse (1887, Cambridge) continues to mark the city as the most important urban center of the county. The limited additional urban settlement precipitated by the 1899 rail construction is linked to the Oscar Olson House (1914, Braham), the home of one of the community leaders of the new trackside towns platted at the turn-of-the-century.

The buildings in the county are architecturally significant in that they represent vernacular building trends in rural counties settled by immigrant populations. Notable public and semi-public examples are St. Johns Lutheran Church (1882, Bradford Township), the Svenska Mission Kyrka i Sodre Maple Ridge (1897, Maple Ridge Township), and the West Riverside School (1898, Cambridge Township). Agricultural buildings of interest include the locally atypical but focal Linden Barn (1914, Isanti Township), built on the round barn plan, and the more typical but impressively scaled Erickson Farmstead (ca.1915, Athens Township). Both the home at the Erickson Farm and the Oscar Olson Home (1914, Braham) are domestic structures notable for their conscious attention to design.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

See attached sheets

10. Geographical Data -- See individual forms

Acreege of nominated property UTM NOT VERIFIED
Quadrangle name _____ Quadrangle scale _____

UMT References ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

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G	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	H	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

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 Britta Bloomberg -- Research Historian-Survey

organization Minnesota Historical Society date February 1980

street & number 240 Summit Avenue-Hill House telephone 612-296-0101

city or town St. Paul state Minnesota

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:
 national state local See individual forms

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 7/8/80

For HCERS use only
 I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

W. Ray Luce date 7/27/80
 Keeper of the National Register

Attest: Kristin J.O. Connell date 7/23/80
 Chief of Registration

ISANTI COUNTY BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Isanti County Bibliography - page 2

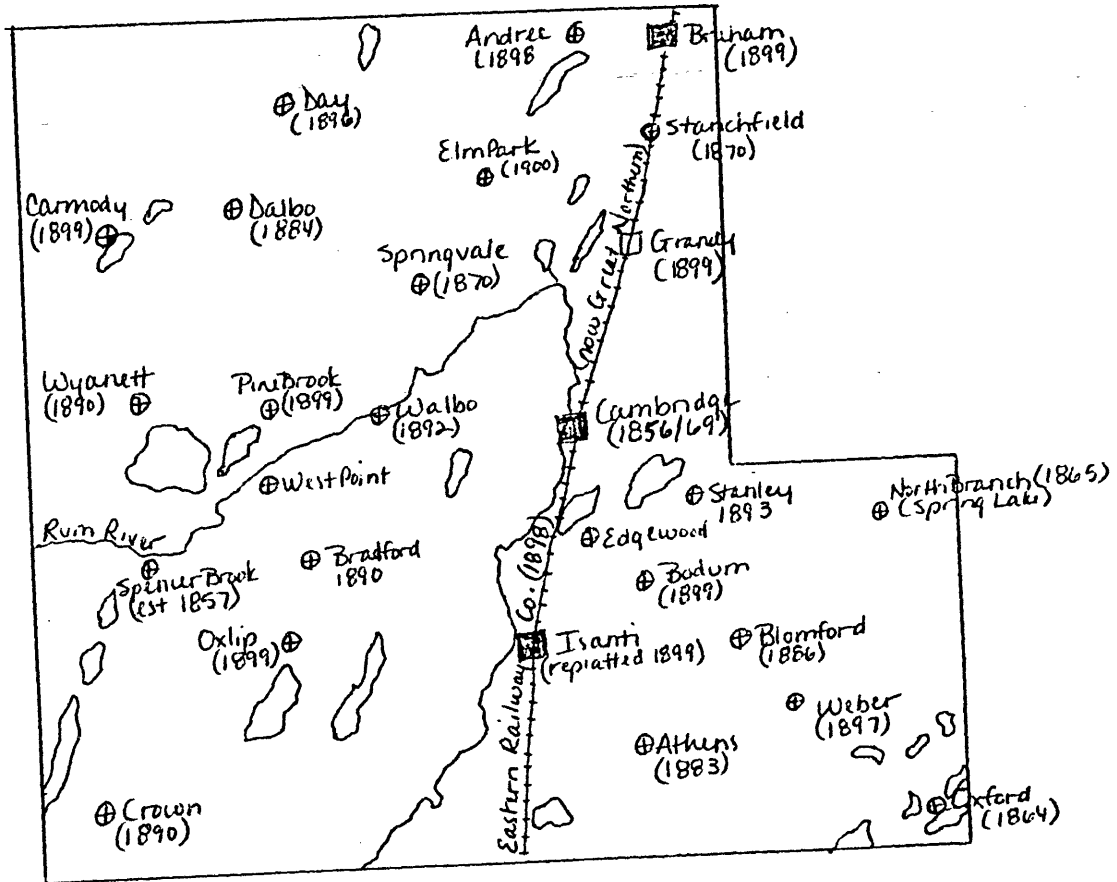
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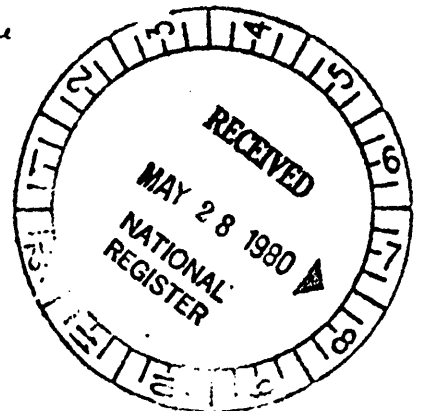
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Townsite and Railroad Development

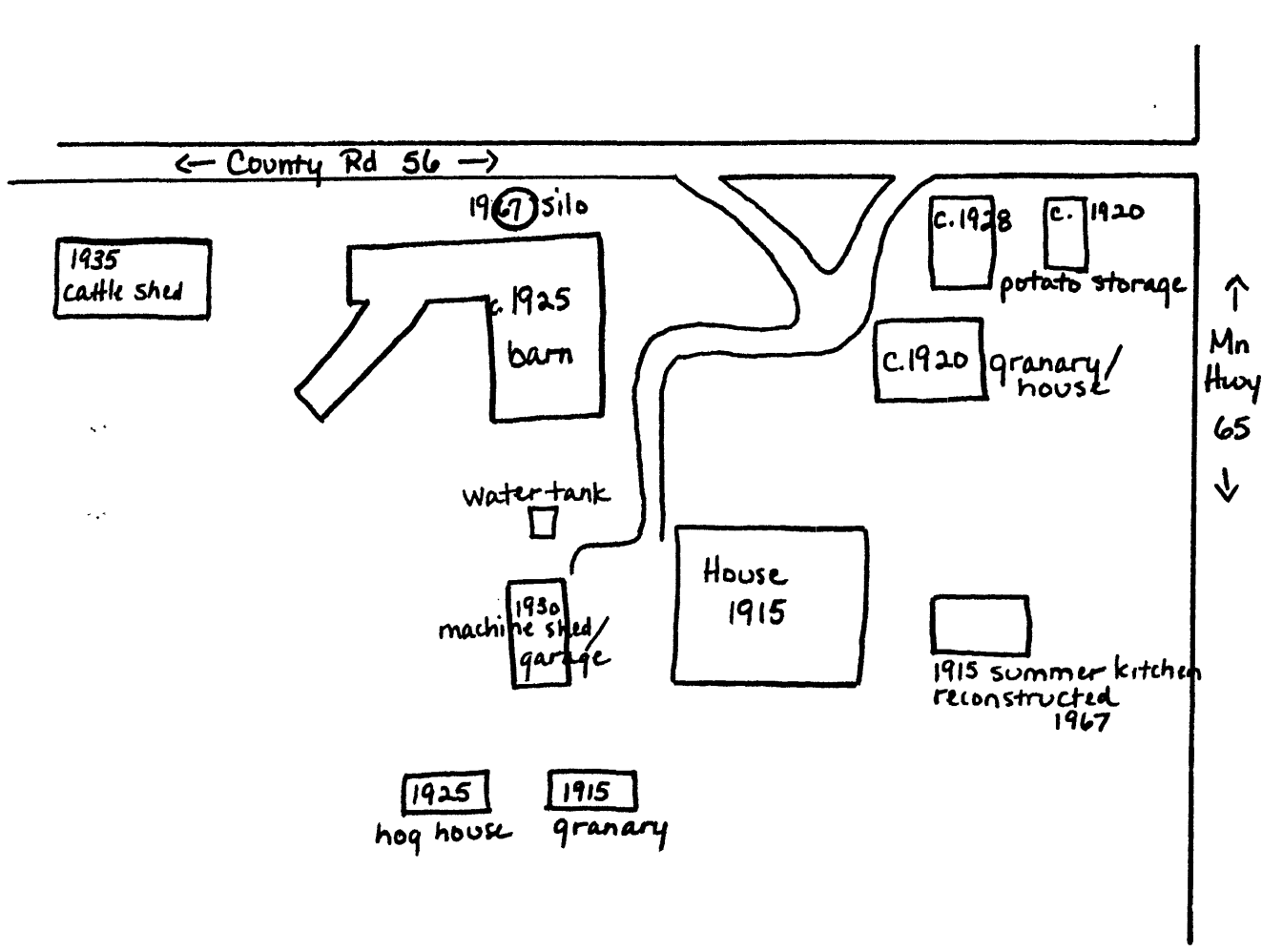


key to map symbols:

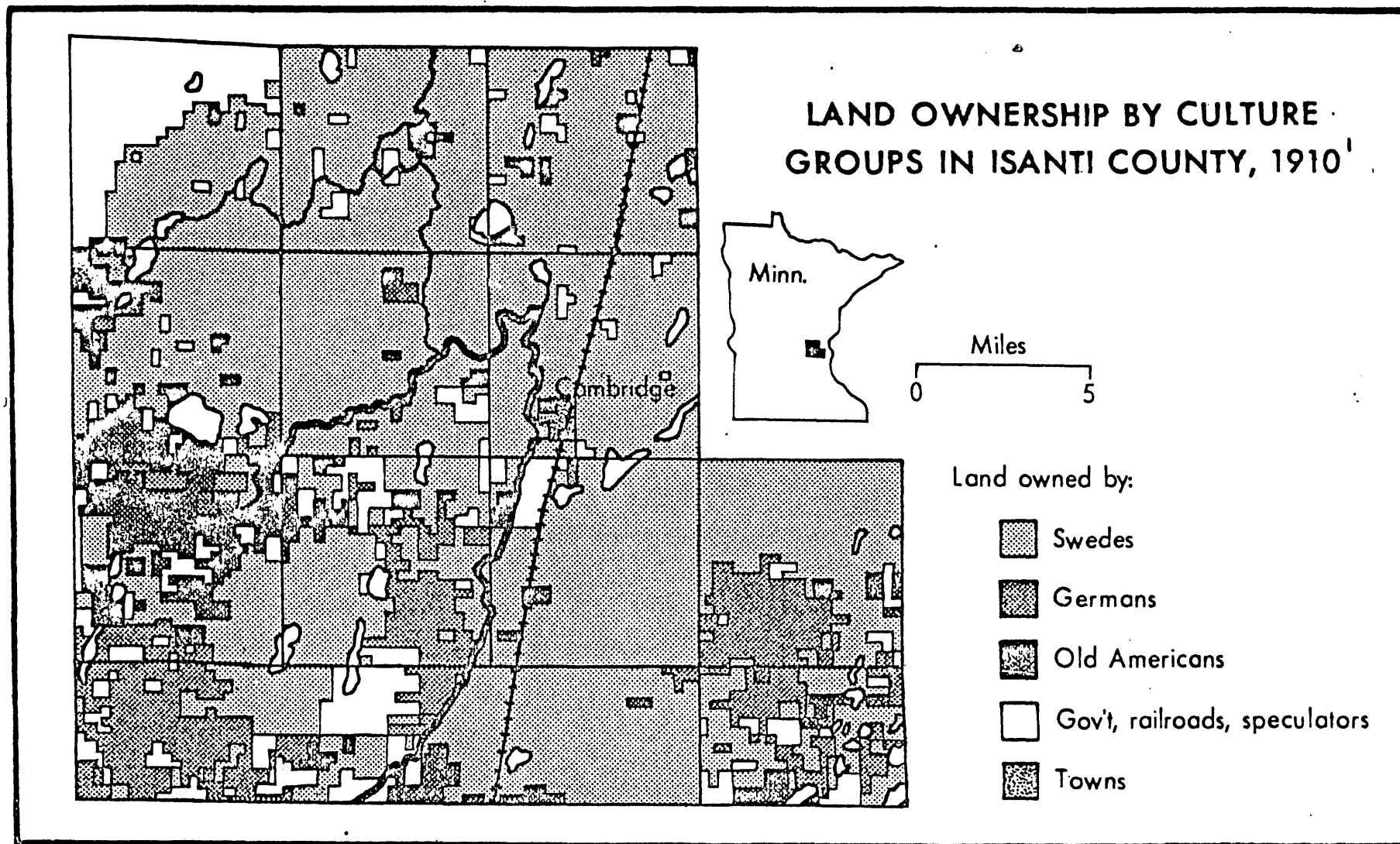
- ⊕ "crossroads" communities
dates correspond to Post Office
establishment dates.
- ⊠ platted incorporated city
- platted unincorporated



ERICKSON FARMSTEAD (ATHENS TOWNSHIP, ISANTI CO.)



N ↑



¹ Robert Clifford Ostergren, "Rattvik to Isanti: A Community Transplanted", PhD Thesis, University of Minnesota, December, 1976, page 68.