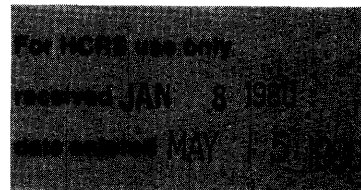**United States Department of the Interior**
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

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 *Nobles County Multiple Resource Area (Partial Inventory)*

historic   Historic Resources of Nobles County
                (Partial Inventory - Historic Properties)

and/or common

2. Location

street & number   The County Limits of Nobles County, Minnesota   ___ not for publication

city, town   ___ vicinity of   congressional district   6th

state   Minnesota   code 22   county   Nobles   code   105

3. Classification -- Multiple Resources

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
___ district	___ public	___ occupied	___ agriculture	___ museum
___ building(s)	___ private	___ unoccupied	___ commercial	___ park
___ structure	___ both	___ work in progress	___ educational	___ private residence
___ site	**Public Acquisition**	**Accessible**	___ entertainment	___ religious
___ object	___ in process	___ yes: restricted	___ government	___ scientific
	___ being considered	___ yes: unrestricted	___ industrial	___ transportation
		___ no	___ military	___ 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 - Nobles County Courthouse

street & number

city, town   Worthington   state   Minnesota

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title   Statewide Survey of Historic Resources   has this property been determined elegibie? ___ yes ___ no

date   1978-79   ___ federal ___ state ___ county ___ local

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

city, town   St. Paul   state   Minnesota

7. Description
see individual inventory forms

Condition
___ excellent   ___ deteriorated
___ good   ___ ruins
___ fair   ___ unexposed

Check one
___ unaltered
___ altered

Check one
___ original site
___ moved   date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

See Area Description

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED JAN 8 1980

DATE ENTERED   MAY 1 5 1980

Historic Resources of Nobles County

This Multiple Resource Area Nomination is based on a survey of standing structures
conducted in Nobles 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 and prehistoric pro-
perties are continually being gained as the statewide survey progresses, and it is
quite possible that additional Nobles 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 Nobles
County eligible for nomination.

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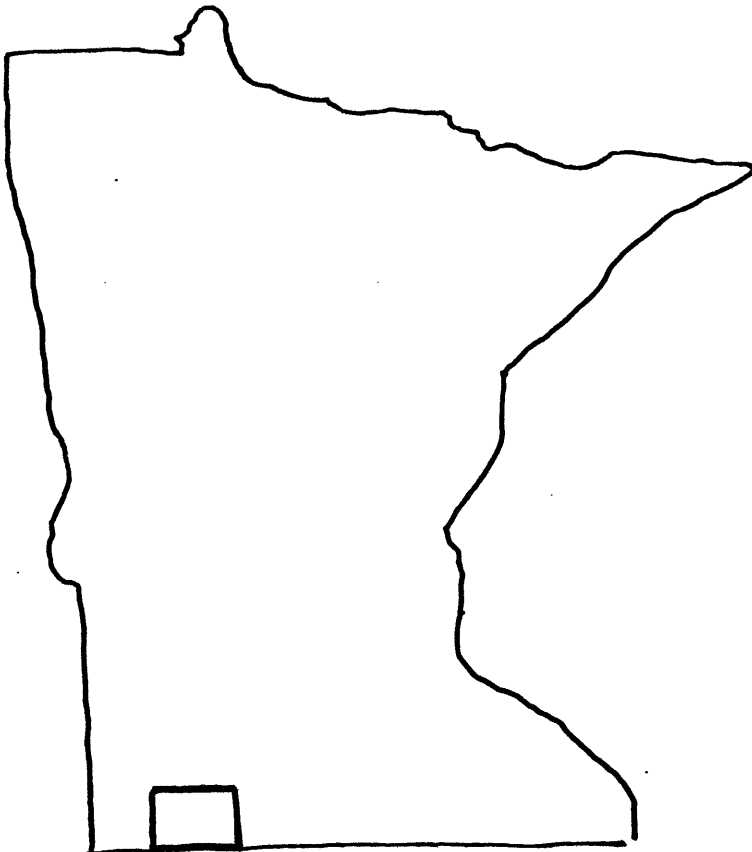and Russell Fridley, Minnesota SHPO, August 31, 1979).

NAME: Historic Resources of Nobles County

LOCATION: The county limits of Nobles County

CLASSIFICATION: Multiple Resources

PROPERTY OWNERSHIP: Multiple (see inventory forms)

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTIONS: Recorder's Office
Nobles County Courthouse
Worthington, Minnesota

Map 1

REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS:

The following county properties
have been previously listed in
the National Register:

Slade Hotel, Adrian

Kilbride, Dr. E.A., Clinic,
Worthington

SURVEY METHOD

Standing Structures

The standing structure survey was conducted during the spring and summer of 1978 in conjunction with a similar survey in adjacent Rock County. A geographer with the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office conducted the survey. Assistance on the Nobles County historical context and on inventoried properties was provided by historians on the S.H.P.O. staff.

Some potentially significant structures were identified prior to field work. Narrative materials and maps (listed in the bibliography), the Nobles County Historical Society, and many local residents provided information. Only a few, less than 25, properties were pre-identified.

Field Work provided the majority of inventoried and nominated structures. Broad themes in county history led to the identification of significant types of buildings, and a visual survey led to specific choices of buildings. National Register nominations were selected from the inventory on the basis of local significance and integrity. The buildings with the most available historical documentation did not always prove to be the most significant in the county.

Nobles County lacks a spectacular or unusual history. It is not unlike other Midwestern counties. Broad, general themes in history and development dominate local history. Only in rare cases were local persons or events the key factors in assessing significance. Integrity became quite important with the nominations. Nominated properties shared thematic importance and visual integrity at the least. A few nominations stand on local historical significance.

All city and town streets were walked or driven during the survey. Limits of time and expense required that the rural survey be limited to a sample of roads. 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.

Properties inventoried, but not nominated, were photographed and recorded and are on file at the Minnesota Historical Society.

<u>AREA DESCRIPTION</u>

Physical

Nobles County borders Iowa near the southwestern corner of Minnesota in the prairie part of the state. (Map 1). Rich prairie soils provide some of the best farmland in the state. The gently rolling to flat land surface is marked by several small lakes and many drained lake beds. Numerous glacial boulders are scattered through the eastern quarter of the county. Tall grass prairie greeted the earliest settlers; trees were found only along the small streams.

Historical development

Nobles County settlement lagged behind other regions of the state. The first, effective permanent settlements were established in 1872 with the building of the Sioux City and St. Paul Railroad. Brewster and Worthington were established that year in the southeastern part of the county. Bigelow followed in 1873 on the same rail line.

The railroads provided transportation links to markets to the east and spearheaded Nobles County settlement. The St. Paul and Sioux City Railroad was granted virtually every odd-numbered section of land in Nobles County. They vigorously promoted rural land sales, established several townsites, and worked with group colonization efforts. County organization in 1870 and rapid rail construction led to a rush to settle the county. Between 1870 and 1880, county population increased from 117 to 4,435. Rapid growth continued to 1900, when the population was 14,932. Since then growth has slowed and recently leveled off around 23,000. Worthington, the county seat, continues to grow at the expense of the smaller towns and rural areas.

The towns owe their existence, and often their creation, to the railroads. (Map 2) The Sioux City and St. Paul Railroad Company platted Brewster (1872), Worthington (1872), and Bigelow (1873), along its main line. In 1876-1878, the Worthington and Sioux Falls branch of the St. P. and S.C. was built west from Worthington. Rushmore (1878) and Adrian (1876) were platted by railroad officers. The Southern Minnesota Railroad built through the northeast corner of Nobles County in 1878-1880. Private proprietors established the townsite of Kinbrae. In 1879, the Minnesota and Black Hills branch of the S.C. & St. P. built through the same township. Dundee (1891) was later established at the site of the railroad section house. Another railroad, The Burlington Cedar Rapids, and Northern, built a line to Worthington in the southwest corner of the county in 1884 and crossed the southwest corner in 1886. Round Lake (1889) and Ellsworth (1884) were established by the railroad townsite company. The last rail line built in the county went from Worthington to Rock County in 1900. Three towns were established by the railroad in 1900: Reading, Wilmont, and Lismore. Two towns, both established around church centers, are not on a rail line. St. Kilian (1891) is a small Catholic village, and Leota (1902) was established as a Dutch Reformed community.

Cultural Landscape

Man has dramatically altered the original prairie landscape. The
dominant features of the cultural landscape are the township and range
survey system, farms and farmsteads, towns, and the transportation system.

Survey system - The township and range survey system forms tangible
patterns on the land. The mile-square grid survey was antecendent to Nobles
County settlement. The survey was developed to tie land to a national
grid, to ease ownership descriptions, and to facilitate settlement. The
system was well suited to the relatively flat terrain of Nobles County.
The survey grid forms an overall context and frame for other cultural
features. Farm and field sizes, road locations, town siting, and the
county political boundaries, are all oriented to the grid.

Farms - Agriculture is the primary activity whether measured by land
use or income. Of the 455,680 acres in Nobles County, 443,200 acres are
in 1695 farms. Average farm size is 261 acres. Most of the farm land is
cropped. An early emphasis on wheat has changed to a modern diversified
system of corn, soybeans, and hay. Nobles County is noted for its hog
production and poultry raising as well as cattle feeding. Fields and
farms are large; farmsteads are small and compact. All are set into the
compass oriented survey system. Tree windbreaks protect the farmsteads on
the north and west sides. The treeless prairie has become a series of L-
shaped woodlots that often obscure the farmstead buildings. Technological
advances in farm machinery have led to larger farms, increased specializa-
tion, and farmstead abandonment. Old farmhouses are left empty or whole
farmsteads are bulldozed to clear more land for crops.

Towns - Of Nobles County's platted townsites, none have disappeared
altogether, through Kinbrae is reduced to a few houses, a grocery, a
tavern, and a grain elevator. The towns have the look of urban places.
Most have north-south oriented grids, fitting into the township and range
survey network, and clearly defined limits. The small-town plats reflect
the importance of railroads in the town settlement of the county. Main
streets, distinguished by narrow commercial lots and wide streets, form
T-junctions with the railroads, intersecting at the depot location. The
cardinal direction oriented grids and the angled location of railroads
often form trapezoidal lots along the tracks. The early St. Paul and Sioux
City railroad towns are oriented to the tracks. Later additions, aligned
with the land survey, created breaks in the grid plans. Towns were most
often platted within quarter-section lines; section line roads rarely passed
through the towns. Today one sees H-shaped towns with main streets con-
necting the railroad and highway. Commercial lots disappear with a few
blocks of the track. Building patterns still reflect the depot oriented
development of Main Street. Commercial buildings often fade out even before
the commercial lots.

The smaller villages serve as agricultural trade centers and shipping
points. Grain elevators, small businesses, and modest residences form
Nobles County's urban landscapes. Industrial and storage facilities, grain
elevators, lumber yards and farm equipment lots line the tracks. Most

commercial establishments line Main Streets. Improved transportation and the increased use of cars and trucks have led some businesses to locate on emerging highway strips within the towns. Residences, churches, and schools are located away from Main Street on side streets.

Worthington, the county seat, is by far the most important town. In addition to agricultural services, it provides county government functions and is a regional shopping center. Interstate Highway 90, passing north of the city, has given rise to a major strip development of motels, restaurants, and service stations. Light manufacturing and food processing are Worthington's important industries.

Transportation - Farms and towns are connected by a system of state, county, and township roads. The road network, almost without exception. follows the section lines. Roads form a neat one-mile square grid. Nearly all section lines have roads. Direct town-to-town road connections are rare; those that do exist follow rail lines. The survey system road network is a dominant feature of the landscape, whether viewed from the air or from ground level. Survey offsets create T-junctions for most roads at the northern and southern county boundaries. No correctional offsets were necessary on east-west roads. Hence the road network makes some political boundaries more evident than others.

The railroads do not follow cardinal directions. Often established to connect cities outside the county boundaries and predating Nobles County towns, the rail lines follow the shortest distances and easiest grades. Rail abandonments have changed the system connections but have done little to alter town morphology or function. Most rural abandoned tracks have been obliterated for fields.

Architectural Description

Nobles County buildings reflect past investments in construction, changing fashions, and available building materials. The earliest settlement structures, built of sod, dugout, and log construction, have disappeared. Frame buildings are most common both in the town and in the country. The railroad section house at Dundee is typical. Built in 1879, the simple cottage was added onto and enlarged from its original size. The railroad brought with it lumber for this house and for other structures. The buildings reflect contemporary fashions and modest investments. A great number of farm and town residences are "Corn Belt cubes," two-story, square houses with pyramidal roofs. Many town residences are plain bungalows. These simple styles are significant in the county but are so numerous as to preclude selection of particular examples.

Most pre-1940 farm buildings are frame. Barns, granaries, corn cribs, and machine sheds are usually of wood construction. Modern farm buildings - metal sheds, corn drying bins, and silos - are scattered throughout the typical farmstead. One of the most striking features are the bright blue Harvestore silos rising above the windbreaks.

Major investments in construction are reflected in the masonry buildings of the county. The use of stone is rare. Brick was the preferred material for churches, banks, and some commercial buildings.

8. Significance see individual inventory forms

Period

___ prehistoric
___ 1400–1499
___ 1500–1599
___ 1600–1699
___ 1700–1799
___ 1800–1899
___ 1900–

Areas of Significance—Check and justify below

___ archeology-prehistoric
___ archeology-historic
___ agriculture
___ architecture
___ art
___ commerce
___ communications

___ community planning
___ conservation
___ economics
___ education
___ engineering
___ exploration/settlement
___ industry
___ invention

___ landscape architecture
___ law
___ literature
___ military
___ music
___ philosophy
___ politics/government

___ religion
___ science
___ sculpture
___ social/
humanitarian
___ theater
___ transportation
___ other (specify)

Specific dates   **Builder/Architect**

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

See Area Significance

9. Major Bibliographical References

see attached sheets

UTM NOT VERIFIED

10. Geographical Data   see individual inventory forms

Acreage of nominated property _____   **ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED**

Quadrangle name _____   Quadrangle scale _____

UMT References

A ⌊_⌋ ⌊_|_|_|_|_⌋ ⌊_|_|_|_|_⌋   B ⌊_⌋ ⌊_|_|_|_|_⌋ ⌊_|_|_|_|_⌋
  Zone Easting   Northing   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   Thomas Harvey, Research Associate

organization Minnesota Historical Society   date March 1979

street & number 240 Summit Avenue-Hill House   telephone 612-296-9072

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 inventory 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_

    Russell W. Fridley

title   State Historic Preservation Officer   date 12/18/79

AREA SIGNIFICANCE

Historical and Architectural Significance

Nobles County's historical significance is based on its development as an agricultural county in the southwestern Minnesota prairies. Railroads, rural settlement, and town service centers are the key factors of this development.

The importance of railroads is shown in the number of townsites platted by the rail companies or by their affiliates. Townsite activities did not stop with town founding. Settlement promotion was actively pursued, and depots, grain elevators, and lumber yards were established. The Sioux City and St. Paul Railroad Section House in Dundee (1879) was built to house the section foreman and the depot agents. It is Dundee's oldest building and predates the town plat by twelve years.

The towns were the focus of commercial activity and served as service centers for the surrounding farmers. The Adrian State Bank (1891), a substantial brick building, reflects the commercial aspects of the towns and a boom in town growth. Corner lots were the preferred locations for banks, hotels, and business blocks. The Adrian bank occupies a corner lot just across from the Slade Hotel, built in the same year.

The town of Adrian was the center of Bishop John Ireland's Catholic colonization efforts in Nobles County. Bishop Ireland worked closely with the railroads in attempts to encourage rural settlement. The churches were invariably located in nearby towns. St. Adrian's Catholic Church (1900), a substantial red brick Romanesque Revival church, post dates Bishop Ireland's settlement efforts of the 1870s, but replaced an earlier frame church built by his colonists.

Farming and rural settlement are of vital importance to Nobles County's development and economy. Farmstead modernization has drastically altered most farmscapes. Farm buildings often retain little integrity. The Siemer Barn (1918) and Silo (1936) are rare exceptions. The barn is a typical red frame structure - a good example of the traditional American barn as found in Nobles County. The silo is of wood hoop construction built by the local agent of the Independent Silo Company of St. Paul. It is a rare example of a once common silo construction method.

APPENDIX I

Preservation Activity

Preservation activity in Nobles County is centered in the county seat and reaches out to the Slade Hotel in Adrian (previously listed on the National Register) owned by the Nobles County Historical Society. The regional newspaper, the Worthington Daily Globe, takes an active interest in county historic preservation. Owners of several nominated properties have expressed their strong interest in preservation of their buildings, including the Siemer Silo and Barn and the Adrian State Bank.

APPENDIX II

Bibliography

Federal Writers' Project, <u>Minnesota: A Guide to the State</u>, American Guide Series, Viking Press, New York, 1938.

National Publishing Company, <u>Plat Book of Nobles County, Minnesota</u>, Philadelphia, 1888.

Ogle, George A. and Company, <u>Standard Atlas of Nobles County, Minnesota</u>, Chicago, 1914.

Prosser, Richard S., <u>Rails to the North Star</u>, Dillon Press, Minneapolis, 1966.
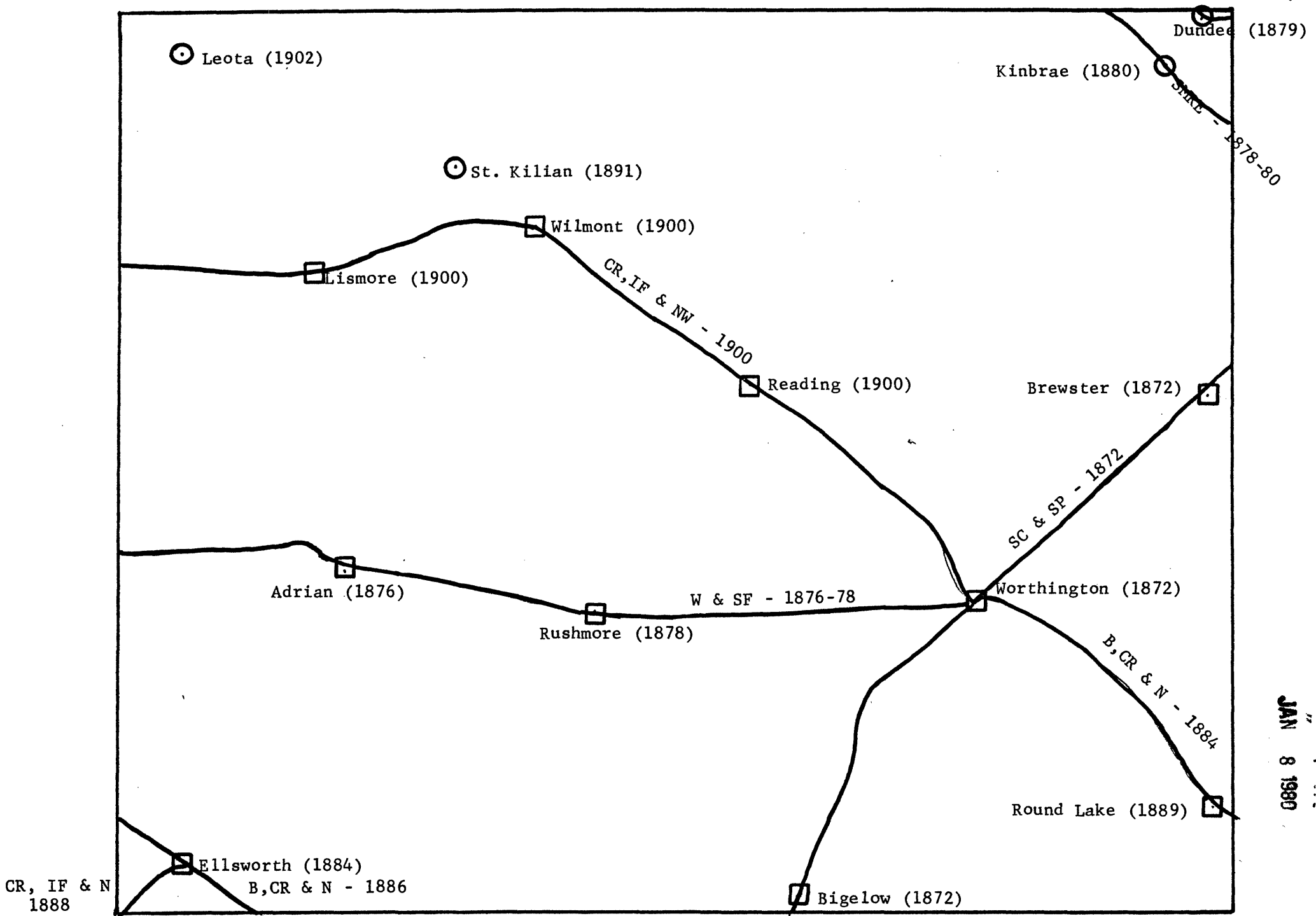
Rose, Arthur P., <u>An Illustrated History of Nobles County, Minnesota</u>, Northern History Publishing Company, Worthington, 1908.

St. Paul and Sioux City Railroad Company, <u>Land of Promise</u>, St. Paul, Minnesota, 1880.

Privately Platted Towns ○   Towns Platted by Railroads and Affiliated Companies □   M&BH - 1879

Leota (1902)

Dundee (1879)

Kinbrae (1880)

M&BH - 1878-80

St. Kilian (1891)

Wilmont (1900)

Lismore (1900)

CR, IF & NW - 1900

Reading (1900)

Brewster (1872)

SC & SP - 1872

Adrian (1876)

W & SF - 1876-78

Worthington (1872)

Rushmore (1878)

B, CR & N - 1884

Round Lake (1889)

Ellsworth (1884)
B, CR & N - 1886

CR, IF & N
1888

Bigelow (1872)

JAN 8 1980

MAP 2.   Town Plat Dates and Railroads, Nobles County, Minnesota.