

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

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

For HCRS use only
received MAR 2 1982
date entered APR 6 1982

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

1. Name Benton County Multiple Resource Area

historic Historic Resources of Benton County (Partial Inventory)

and/or common

2. Location

street & number The County Limits of Benton County, Minnesota N/A not for publication

city, town N/A N/A vicinity of congressional district 6th

state Minnesota code 22 county Benton code 009

3. Classification -- see individual inventory forms

Category	Ownership ^{N/A}	Status ^{N/A}	Present Use	^{N/A}
<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	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<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
<u>NR</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<u>N/A</u>	<u>N/A</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> no ^{N/A}	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Multiple Ownership -- see individual inventory forms

street & number N/A

city, town N/A N/A vicinity of state N/A

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Registry of Deeds -- Benton County Courthouse

street & number N/A

city, town Foley state Minnesota

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

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

date 1980 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	N/A	Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed	N/A	N/A

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	MAR 2 1982
DATE ENTERED	APR 6 1982

Historic Resources of Benton County

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

PAGE

This Multiple Resource Area Nomination is based on a survey of standing structures conducted in Benton 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 to the National Register 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 Benton 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 Benton County eligible for nomination.

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

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 spring and summer of 1980.

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 1903 and 1914 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 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 158 sites, seven 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.

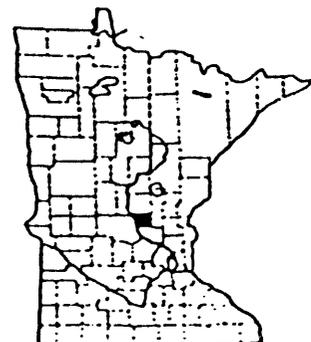
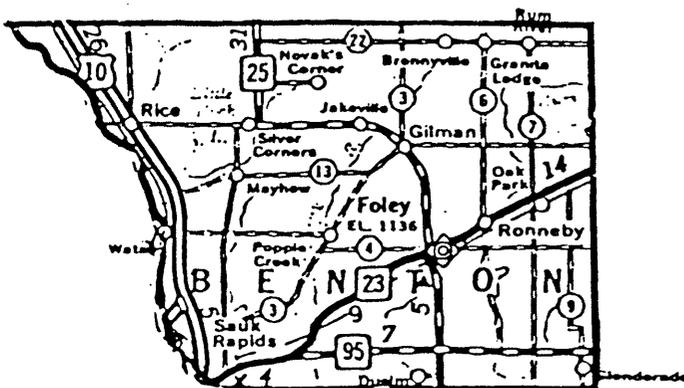
BENTON COUNTY

Benton County, one of Minnesota's smallest counties with only 405 square miles, is located in central Minnesota approximately sixty miles northwest of the Twin Cities. It is bounded on the west by the Mississippi River; all other boundaries follow government survey lines. The land surface is gently rolling with a nearly level outwash plain in the Mississippi River Valley. The county is well watered by the Mississippi and its tributaries; all streams flow generally in a southwesterly direction with the exception of the West Branch of the Rum River which flows southeasterly draining the county's northeast corner. There are only two lakes of any size -- Mayhew and Little Rock. Granite outcroppings are common along the Mississippi River and many of the smaller streams.

Benton County was originally well timbered: hardwood trees predominated except for a stand of pine along the Rum River. Open areas were limited to marshes, a few natural meadows, and a narrow strip of prairie along the Mississippi. Today, only thirteen percent of the land is classified as timbered. Most of the land is cultivated or used as pasture land.

Like many other Minnesota counties, Benton County has a rich history of Indian inhabitation, Euro-American exploration, and fur trading activity. The Chippewa Indians ceded the land to the United States in 1837, and the county was organized twelve years later as one of the original nine counties created by the First Territorial Legislature. The original county was about one hundred miles in length from north to south and nearly forty miles wide at its widest point. Benton County then included Sherburne and parts of present Crow Wing, Aitkin, Mille Lacs, and Morrison Counties. The county was reduced to its present size between 1856 and 1860.

Although the United States acquired the land in 1837, Benton County townships were not surveyed and opened for settlement until the 1850s. Initial white settlement occurred along the Mississippi River. Three river communities developed in the vicinity of trading establishments on the military road between Fort Snelling and Fort Gaines (now Fort Ripley). The foremost and sole surviving of these early communities was Sauk Rapids located at the head of steamboat navigation on the Upper Mississippi. Sauk Rapids received its initial impetus when the Territorial Legislature of 1849 stipulated that the county seat be located within one mile of the mouth of the Sauk River.



In 1854, the fledgling community was platted. Watab, a highly speculative community five miles north of Sauk Rapids, challenged its southern neighbor for commercial and political supremacy in the early 1850s before declining rapidly after the financial panic of 1857. (Watab was the county seat for a brief period between 1856 and 1859.) Langola, the last of the early river communities, was founded in 1857 near the mouth of the Platte River.

Settlement expanded eastward from the river communities in the 1860s and 1870s. Settlers advanced overland through the Big Woods by way of rough trails and, later, the 1875 government road between Sauk Rapids and Duluth. By 1870 all of the county's townships had been organized except for Mayhew Lake, Graham, and Granite Ledge. Although Yankees and immigrants from several European nations settled the county during the nineteenth century, two ethnic groups are particularly noteworthy for their successful colonization efforts. Germans have comprised the county's largest ethnic group since the early 1850s when German colonization of the area was first advocated by Father Franz Pierz, a Catholic missionary to the Chippewa Indians. A steady influx of German Catholics settled throughout the county during the remainder of the century. Areas of high German concentration developed in the vicinity of Duelm and Mayhew Lake. The Poles, the county's second largest ethnic group, are noted for the largest single colonization project. The substantial "Alberta colony", promoted by several prominent Chicago Poles, grew quickly after 1877. Today, the settlement remains the most recognizable of the county's ethnic communities.

Construction of rail lines between 1867 and 1882 had an immense impact on county development stimulating industrial growth, community development, and agricultural expansion. Completion of the St. Paul and Pacific Railroad between St. Anthony and Sauk Rapids in 1867 secured Sauk Rapids' position as the county's leading community and led to development of Minnesota's granite quarrying industry. Within a year of the railroad's completion, the state's first major granite quarry opened near the present Minnesota Correctional Facility (Sherburne County) south of Sauk Rapids. Several quarries opened in Benton County in subsequent years and in Stearns County after 1874. Extension of the railroad northward in 1877 resulted in the establishment of Rice (1877) and the gradual disappearance of bypassed Langola.

Construction of the Hinckley Branch of the Minneapolis and St. Cloud Railroad in 1882 accelerated settlement of the county's interior and spurred the county's lumbering industry. Small sawmills had been operating at various locations in the county's interior since the mid-1860s. Most of these mills provided local settlers with furniture products or wood for construction materials. With the arrival of the railroad through the county's hardwood forest, commercial lumbering commenced with mills located at various locations on the line. The largest and most important mill began operation in 1882 near the present location of Foley. This mill, with a capacity of 30,000 board feet per day, was operated by the Foley brothers and supplied oak railroad ties for construction of James Hill's Great Northern Railroad. In

addition to Foley, the communities of Ronneby and Oak Park developed in the vicinity of mills on the railroad line. As the county's vast stands of timber disappeared near the turn of the century, agricultural expansion extended outward from the railroad mill communities. These settlements and several smaller crossroad communities established themselves as agricultural service centers for the surrounding hinterland.

By 1900 the county's basic layout had been established. All townships had been organized and most present incorporated communities platted. The county's population had swelled from 1558 in 1870 to 9912 in 1900. The county's present agricultural economy was well established as evidenced by the dramatic increase in the number of farms from 54 in 1870 to 1276 at the turn of the century. During the following two decades, diversified farming became widely accepted and dairying increased in importance. Industrially, lumbering was in decline and would virtually disappear from the county scene by 1910. (The primary exception is the large St. Regis Paper Company complex at Sartell which began operation in 1909. This enterprise, however, depended on logs shipped by rail from northern Minnesota.) The region's granite industry had survived a tenuous initial phase of development characterized by an emphasis on building stone and the shaky existence of several small firms competing against established eastern firms and exorbitant transportation costs. By 1900, however, the industry had shifted its emphasis to monumental stone and was embarking on a period of rapid, sustained growth. By the 1930s central Minnesota was the second largest producer of granite in the world.

A review of Benton County's development cannot be considered complete without mentioning John Foley. Foley, perhaps more than any other individual, had a tremendous impact on county development. Foley, along with his three brothers, established the county's largest sawmill in the 1880s, platted the community of Foley (1899), and promoted its development. His influence was a primary factor in removal of the county seat from Sauk Rapids to Foley in 1901. Today, the rivalry between the two communities initiated by the county seat struggle is still apparent. Foley's rapid rise in the early 1900s resulted in neighboring Ronneby's declining importance as an agricultural service center.

The most important factor in Benton County's recent development has been its close proximity to St. Cloud, central Minnesota's leading industrial, trade, and service center. While most rural townships have experienced declining population in recent decades, the county's population has grown in excess of 40% since 1960 increasing from 17,287 to a preliminary 1980 figure of 24,269. Most of the increase is in Sauk Rapids, East St. Cloud, and the southwestern townships where suburban housing developments dot the countryside. The population of Sauk Rapids, Watab, and Minden townships more than doubled in the 1960s. Sauk Rapids City, now being integrated in the greater St. Cloud area, has lost much of its identity as a trade center.

The architecture of the county follows the typical building pattern of other counties in the region. Early settlement structures were sod and log in the rural areas. Several log outbuildings and houses sided with clapboard still stand. Most early log residential structures have been replaced by wood frame buildings with brick residences common on the more successful farms. Urban architecture followed a similar pattern. Most early commercial structures were of frame construction. Many, however, have been razed or destroyed by fire. Masonry structures have replaced the earlier frame commercial buildings in many of the platted communities. The housing stock of East St. Cloud, Sauk Rapids, and Rice features many brick structures. Locally quarried granite is quite common in foundations and sills, but seldom appears as a primary building material.

8. Significance -- See individual inventory forms

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

N/A

Specific dates	N/A	Builder/Architect	N/A
-----------------------	-----	--------------------------	-----

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

See Area Significance

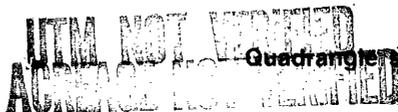
9. Major Bibliographical References

See attached sheets

10. Geographical Data -- see individual inventory forms

Acreeage of nominated property N/A

Quadrangle name N/A



Quadrangle scale N/A

UMT References

A

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

Zone Easting Northing

B

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

Zone Easting Northing

C

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

D

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

E

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

F

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

G

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

H

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

Verbal boundary description and justification

N/A see individual inventory forms

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

state N/A code county code

state N/A code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Mark E. Haidet, Research Historian-Survey

organization Minnesota Historical Society

date April 1981

street & number 240 Summit Avenue-Hill House

telephone 612-296-9075

city or town St. Paul

state Minnesota

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

N/A 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 2/3/82

For HCERS use only

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

See continuation sheet for listing

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

BENTON COUNTY: AREA SIGNIFICANCE

Benton County's historical significance lies in its transformation from a heavily forested wilderness to a settled region with an agricultural based economy. The inter-relationships of railroad transportation, industrial activities (lumbering and quarrying), immigration, and agriculture have determined the county's development.

Completion of the county's first railroad link to St. Anthony Village in 1867 secured Sauk Rapids' position as the county's foremost community in the nineteenth century, accelerated settlement, and led to quarrying of the extensive granite formations in the area. The Leonard Robinson House (1873, Sauk Rapids City), the stone residence of a prominent Sauk Rapids quarryman, is a rare structural link with the industry's initial development in central Minnesota. Today, this region ranks among the world's three largest granite producing centers.

Construction of the Hinckley Branch of the Minneapolis and St. Cloud Railroad in 1882 stimulated commercial lumbering of the county's hardwood forests. The Ronneby Charcoal Kiln (c. 1901, Maywood Township) is significant as the sole surviving industrial structure associated with the processing of the county's vast timber stands and as a unique industrial structure in Minnesota.

Settlement occurred primarily between 1870 and 1920, accelerating with the construction of railroad lines and the disappearance of the forests. Many settlers were European immigrants; Germans and Poles predominated. Significant structures linked with ethnic settlements are Esselman Brothers General Store (1897, Mayhew Lake Township) and SS Peter and Paul Catholic Church Complex (Church-1930, School-1909, and Rectory-1924; Gilman City). Esselman Brothers General Store, associated with German settlement in the vicinity of Mayhew Lake, is a well preserved example of the commercial structures erected in crossroad communities throughout the county near the turn of the century. The church complex is the focal point of the highly concentrated Polish settlement in north central Benton County. The church's massive scale and elaborate interior make it an atypical architectural structure.

Agricultural land use increased dramatically between 1880 and 1900. Farmers initially relied on wheat and potatoes as cash crops. With the turn of the century, they turned to diversified farming and dairying. The Cota Round Barns (early 1920s, St. George Township) are a notable link with this period in agricultural development. The reinforced concrete barns are also significant for their association with a locally important artisan whose work is visible on farmsteads throughout southern Benton County.

Southwestern Benton County has been greatly affected by the growth of neighboring St. Cloud (Stearns County) in the twentieth century. Suburbanization and building types uncommon to a rural oriented county have been the result of rapid urbanization. The Ice Service Company (1920, 1924; St. Cloud City) is an example of a structure constructed because of the area's close proximity to St. Cloud. The building is significant as a rare example of a structure type once common in Minnesota's larger communities and for its association with a successful local industrial firm.

A unique structure not closely associated with county development but of statewide significance is the Wippich Rock Garden* (1932-early 1960s, Sauk Rapids City). The garden is Minnesota's foremost example of the idiosyncratic architecture created by one of America's visionary environmental artists.

* Submitted as individual nominations - December 1981

MRN BIBLIOGRAPHY

Atlas and Plat Book, Benton County Minnesota. Rockford, Illinois:
Rockford Map Publishers, Inc., 1975.

Benton County News. Foley, Minnesota.

Benton County Registrar of Deeds Records.

Census Records, Federal and State.

Dziuk, Claudia. "The Benton County Story" in Benton County News. Foley,
Minnesota. Weekly column throughout 1958.

Dziuk, Claudia, ed. Scrapbook History of Foley, 1900-1950. 1950. History
compiled from the Foley Independent and the Benton County News.

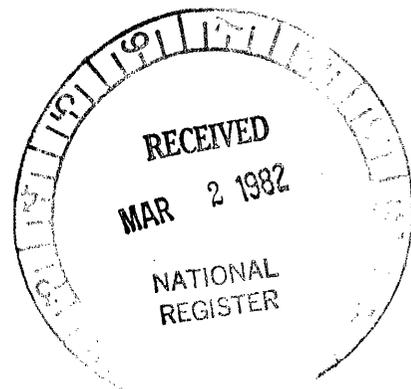
Foley Independent, Foley, Minnesota.

Neill, Edward D., N.H. Winchell, J.Fletcher Williams, and Charles S.
Bryant. History of the Upper Mississippi Valley. Minneapolis:
Minnesota Historical Company, 1881.

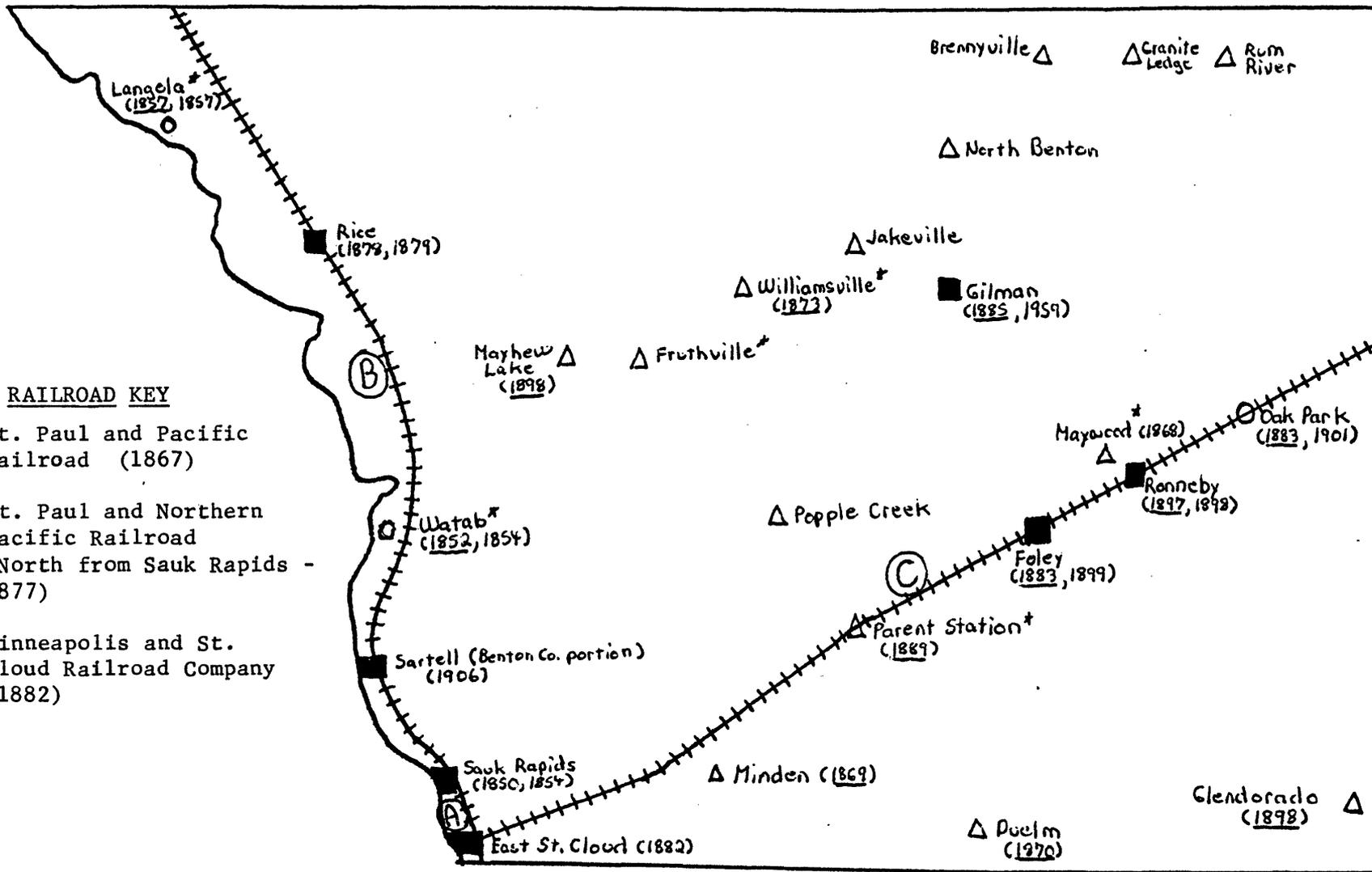
Plat Book of Benton County, Minnesota. Minneapolis: Northwest Publishing
Co., 1903.

Sauk Rapids Sentinel. Sauk Rapids, Minnesota.

Upham, Warren. Minnesota Geographic Names; Origin and Historic Significance,
2nd rev. ed. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1969.



BENTON COUNTY: COMMUNITY AND RAIL DEVELOPMENT



RAILROAD KEY

- A. St. Paul and Pacific Railroad (1867)
- B. St. Paul and Northern Pacific Railroad (North from Sauk Rapids - 1877)
- C. Minneapolis and St. Cloud Railroad Company (1882)

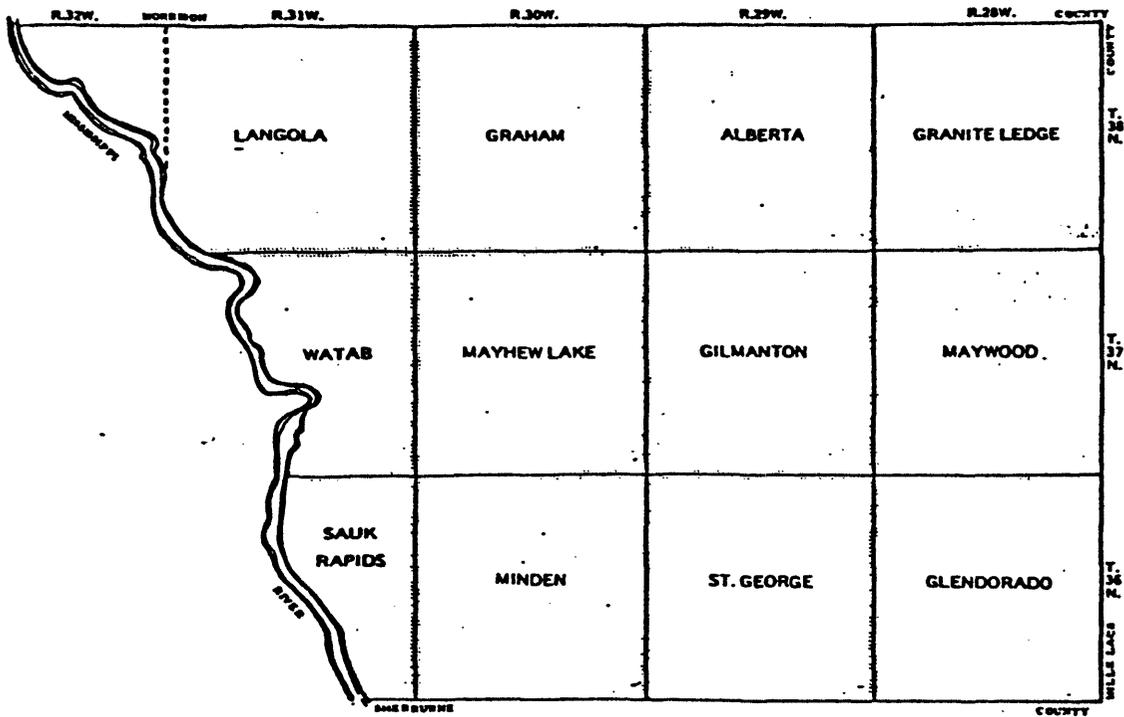
KEY TO MAP SYMBOLS

- - Platted incorporated community
- - Platted unincorporated community
- △ - Unplatted community
- * - No longer in existence

Note: Underlined dates correspond with post office establishment dates; dates not underlined are the plat date. Communities with no dates are, for the most part, twentieth century communities.

MAR 2 1982

BENTON COUNTY TOWNSHIPS



BENTON COUNTY POPULATION STATISTICS

County figures 1850 through 1980

1850 - 418	1900 - 9912	1950 - 15,911
1860 - 627	1910 - 11,615	1960 - 17,287
1870 - 1558	1920 - 14,073	1970 - 20,841
1880 - 3012	1930 - 15,056	1980 - 24,269 (preliminary figure)
1890 - 6284	1940 - 16,106	

1970 Township figures

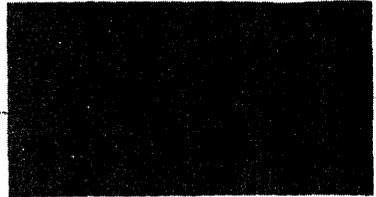
Alberta - 877	Mayhew Lake - 715
Gilmanston - 906	Maywood - 855
Glendorado - 726	Minden - 1307
Graham - 543	St. George - 888
Granite Ledge - 609	Sauk Rapids - 800
Langola - 338	Watab - 1086

1970 Incorporated community figures

Foley - 1271	St. Cloud (East St. Cloud) - 4180
Gilman - 111	Sartell (Benton County portion) - 264
Rice - 366	Sauk Rapids - 5051
Ronneby - 59	

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet

Item number

Page

Multiple Resource Area
Thematic Group

dnr-11

Name Benton County Multiple Resource Area
State MN

Nomination/Type of Review

Date/Signature

1. Robinson, Leonard, House

Entered in the
National Register

for
Keeper

Delores Byers 4/6/81

Attest

2. Cota Round Barns

Entered in the
National Register

for
Keeper

Delores Byers 4/6/81

Attest

3. Ronneby Charcoal Kiln

Substantive Review

Keeper

William H. Braconer 4.6.81

Attest

Linda McCallister 4/2/81

4. Esselman Brothers General Store

Entered in the
National Register

for
Keeper

Delores Byers 4/6/81

Attest

5. Saints Peter and Paul Catholic Church *Complex*

Entered in the
National Register

for
Keeper

Delores Byers 4/6/81

Attest

6. Posch Site
(previously listed 10-2-73)

Keeper

Attest

7. Ice Service Co. Bldg.
(submitted as individual nom.
12/81)

Keeper

Attest

8. Wippich Rock Garden
(submitted as individual nom.
12/81)

Keeper

Attest

9.

Keeper

Attest

10.

Keeper

Attest