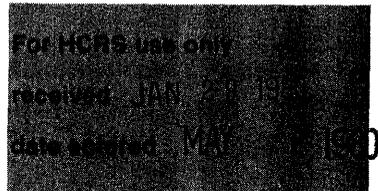


**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**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** Clay County Multiple Resource Area (Partial Inventory)

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

and/or common

**2. Location**

street & number The County Limits of Clay County  not for publication

city, town \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ congressional district 7

state Minnesota code 22 county Clay code 027

**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	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<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 inventory forms

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

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

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Recorders Office County Courthouse

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

city, town Moorhead 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

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED JAN 29 1980	
DATE ENTERED	MAY 7 1980

Historic Resources of Clay County

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 1 PAGE 1

This Multiple Resource Area Nomination is based on a survey of standing structures conducted in Clay 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 Clay 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 Clay County eligible for nomination.

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

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### SURVEY METHOD

The standing structures survey was conducted during the spring and summer of 1979 in conjunction with a survey of adjacent Wilkin County. A geographer with the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office conducted the survey. Assistance on the Clay County historical context and on inventoried properties was provided by historians and architectural historians on the SHPO staff.

County and regional histories, narrative materials, maps, and archival sources were consulted to identify potentially significant structures. The Clay County Historical Society and county residents provided additional information.

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.

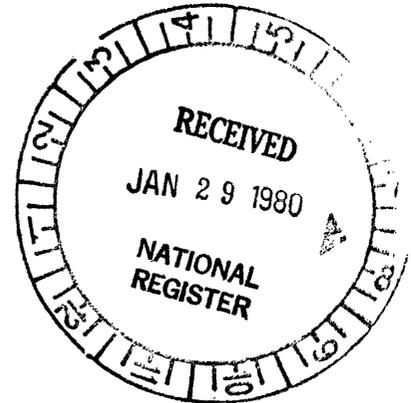
All city and town streets were walked or driven during the survey. Limits of time and expense required that the rural survey be limited to a sample of roads. All rural non-farm structures, pre-identified sites, and locally suggested buildings, were visited. The roads connecting these dispersed sites 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.

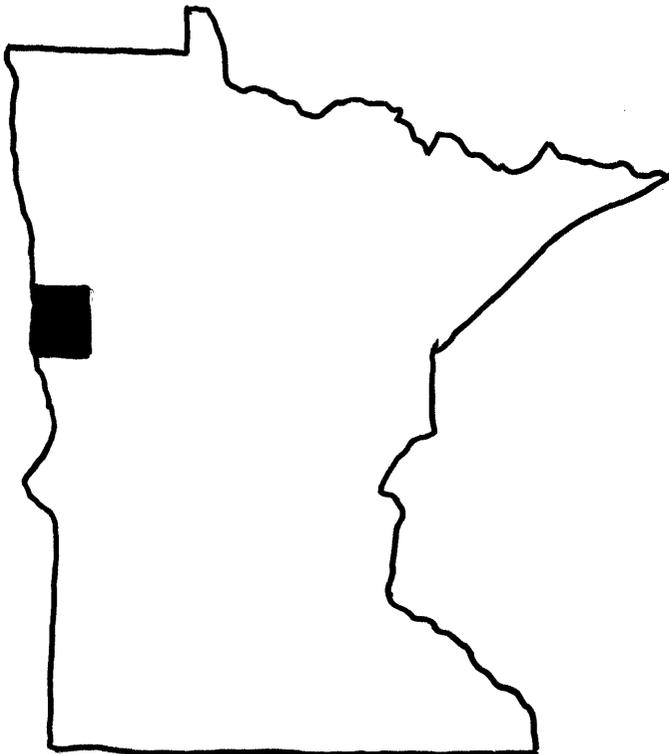
CLAY COUNTY

Multiple Resource Area Nomination to the National Register

- I. Area Description
  - Physical Description
  - Historical Development
  - Cultural Landscape
- II. Area Significance
  - Historical
  - Architectural
- III. Survey Method
- IV. Bibliography
- V. National Register Nominations



AREA DESCRIPTION



Physical Description

Clay County borders North Dakota along the Red River in west central Minnesota. The western two-thirds of the county are in the Red River Valley, an exceedingly flat alluvial plain formed by Glacial Lake Agassiz. The soil - rich, deep, and virtually free from stones - is so productive that the Red River has been called "the American Nile." The eastern third of the county is rolling uplands marked by scattered lakes. The beach ridge of the former Lake Agassiz marks the division between these parts of Clay County. Aside from the Red River along the western boundary and the striking

flatness of the land, there are no outstanding physiographic features in the county. Except for brick clay found at several locations, mineral resources are non-existent. The original vegetation was high grass prairie broken by trees found along streams. Clay County is in a transition zone between the forests of eastern Minnesota and the vast prairies of North Dakota.

### Historical Development

Though significant permanent settlement in Clay County post-dates 1870, prior to the 1870s the county was an important link in early transportation routes linking St. Paul with Canadian Red River settlements. The Red River served as an important waterway for central North American fur operations, both from Canada and, after the establishment of Ft. Snelling at the junction of the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers in 1819, from the United States. Oxcart transportation formed the link between the Red River and the Mississippi River. By 1858 over 600 vehicles traveled the trails each year.

Stagecoach and steamboat service supplemented the oxcarts around 1860. The first steamboat on the upper Red River put in at Georgetown, where the Hudson's Bay Company had a trading post in 1859. In 1860 the Blakely-Burbank firm of St. Paul started a combined stage and steamboat service between St. Paul and the Red River settlements at the north end of the valley. The displacement of stage transportation by railroads and continued steamboat service opened the whole Red River Valley to settlement.

Prior to the building of rail lines in Clay County, there had been only two hints at settlement. In 1857 a group of speculators surveyed several townsites along the Red River. Breckenridge (in Wilkin County) and Lafayette and Shayenne City in Clay County were created on paper in anticipation of settlement and Red River rail crossings. Shares were sold in the venture and some town lots were sold, but nothing came of the Clay County towns. (Breckenridge's plat was later refiled with the construction of railroads to the townsite.) As early as 1859 the Hudson's Bay Company had a warehouse and trading post near Georgetown. It was abandoned and later reopened in 1864, with R.M. Probstfield as manager, but it did not develop into a permanent settlement.

Railroads played a vital role in Clay County settlement. They furnished the transportation facilities that allowed agricultural development, encouraged settlement, and established numerous townsites. Private proprietors established several other towns at trackside locations. Two major railroads cross Clay County, the Northern Pacific and the Great Northern (begun as the St. Paul and Pacific). Both lines had large land grants in the county. Their branch and subsidiary lines completed the rail network. Figure 1 shows the rail construction and original town plat dates for Clay County.

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The Northern Pacific Railroad took an active role in promoting settlement at Hawley and Glyndon in the 1870s. Glyndon was the site of an immigrant reception house and the Red River Colony. Hawley was started by the Yeovil Colony. Both were English settlement schemes. Hawley attracted at least eighty English settlers before the group immigration plans were abandoned. Both the NP and the Great Northern promoted rural settlement to sell off their extensive land grants and were active past the turn of the century. Company platted towns served as trade centers for the rural population.

Agriculture has been to key economic factor in Clay County history. Though rail lines entered the county in the early 1870s, the area was in a depression until late in the decade. Early settlers took advantage of the Homestead Act to establish farms on government lands. Few were interested in purchasing railroad lands. Financial problems for the railroads and the extensive land grants led to the establishment of large bonanza farms. Railroad stockholders established large-scale, specialized wheat farming operations that attracted national attention. The bonanza farm era continued into the 1880s along with a boom in family farm homesteading. By 1891 less than 3,000 acres of unappropriated government land remained.

After the 1880s, as land speculators and bonanza operators sold their holdings and swamps were drained, agricultural development was rapid. Within about thirty years the present-day pattern of Clay County agriculture was set. The early emphasis on wheat has given way to diversified farming. Crops have changed since the first decades of the 20th century. Sugarbeets and sunflowers are now far more important than flax and potatoes, but the diversified pattern remains.

The growth in Clay County population reflects the development of the county. An unofficial census of 1860 showed 79 residents. The Sioux Uprising of 1862 reduced the population to one person, R.M. Probstfield. In 1870, 92 people resided in the county. With the expansion of the rail network, growth was rapid. The 1880 population of about 6,000 doubled by 1890 and tripled by 1900. The county has continued to grow, but since the thirties most of the increase has been in the city of Moorhead. Of the 46,585 residents in 1970, nearly 30,000 lived in Moorhead.

### Cultural Landscape

In developing the agricultural potential of Clay County, man has dramatically altered the natural landscape. The tall grass prairie has been nearly completely plowed under to create cropland. Extensive swampy areas have been artificially drained to create more usable land.

Farms dominate the county. In 1976 the 1,415 farms occupied over 98% of the land area. Average farm size was 472 acres. Large scale, diversified agriculture is common. Clay County ranked second in Minnesota's production of barley, sugarbeets, and sunflowers, and third in wheat and

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potatoes. Sugarbeet loading stations - large, open-field storage and huge mechanical truck loaders - are scattered through the county. Farmsteads complete the rural, agricultural landscape. The farmsteads are small and compact, and protected by tree windbreaks on their north and west sides. Long shelter belts protect some fields. Few abandoned farmsteads are standing; they are soon removed to clear more land for crops.

Several of the 25 identifiable "central places" have disappeared. Lafayette, Shayenne City, and Catton never got past the paper town stage. Muskoda no longer exists, and Dale has no functioning businesses and only a few residences. Changing rail networks caused Winnipeg Junction and Manitoba Junction to disappear. The hamlets of Rollag and Tansem support several churches, a store, and a museum. The other towns range in service function and size from Rustad with a grain elevator, town hall and church; to Dilworth, a Northern Pacific division point and Moorhead suburb; to Moorhead, a major regional urban center. Moorhead has a strong industrial, economic, and agricultural processing base, as well as being the county seat.

The smaller towns, all located on railroad tracks, serve as agricultural trade centers and shipping points. Industrial and storage facilities, grain elevators, lumber yards, and farm equipment lots, line the tracks. Commercial establishments locate along the central main street. Residences, churches, and schools are located away from the business street on side streets.

AREA SIGNIFICANCEHistorical Significance

Clay County's historical significance is in its role as a transportation corridor and its development as a major agricultural county in Minnesota. The earliest transportation role of the county was on and along the Red River. The site of the Hudson's Bay Company trading post near Georgetown became a link in the oxcart and later stage-steamer connections between southeastern Minnesota and the Canadian Red River settlements.

The St. Paul and Pacific Railroad (later to become the Great Northern) reinforced the north-south transportation routes through Clay County. This line became the key to agricultural development of the whole Valley. The Northern Pacific main line, one of the major trans-continental railroads, crossed the Red River at Moorhead. This important junction of railroad and river guaranteed the success of the city.

The development of Clay County as an important center for agriculture began with the early 1870s rail connections. Only a handful of settlers preceded the railroads. The R.M. Probstfield House (1869) is Clay County's oldest known house. Probstfield had been in the county for ten years before settling on his Oakport Township Farm. He served as manager of the Hudson's Bay Company post in the mid-1860s. Two other early settlers settled near the Red River in 1870. The John Bergquist Cabin (1870) was the first house in what is now Moorhead and the Bernhardson Cabin (also 1870) was one of the first houses in the southern part of the county.

The agricultural patterns of Clay County were established between 1870 and 1920. The early bonanza wheat farms gave way to family diversified farms. The Wulf C. Krabbenhoft Farmstead (1890-1910) represents a successful farm operation as it existed around the turn-of-the-century, with its horse and cow barns, private grain elevator, and substantial farmhouse.

The link between the farms and the agricultural service centers is reflected in the John Olness House (1902) located on a farm just north of the railroad town of Kragnes. Olness was a successful farmer as well as owning several Kragnes businesses including the local grain elevator and lumber yard. Solomon G. Comstock (whose 1882 house was previously listed on the National Register) was a major land speculator in Clay County. Comstock was a partner with Almond White. The two of them platted five towns in Clay County along branch lines of the Great Northern, including the town of Kragnes. Another townsite proprietor was Frank Burnham, who was a partner in the platting of Glyndon. Burnham was an important business figure during the early years of Moorhead and built the 420 Main Avenue Commercial Building (c.1880).

The towns of Clay County developed as the centers of government, education, and religion. The Barnesville City Hall and Jail (1899, 1910) is a good example of a municipal services complex, housing city offices, a municipal liquor store, opera hall, and fire station. The Federal Post

Office Building (1915) in Moorhead shows the influence of federal government function found in most towns. Two individuals whose houses are significant played active roles in county and state government, R.M. Probstfield and Solomon G. Comstock.

Educational and religious functions are now centered in the towns. The once common rural school has disappeared as consolidated schools like the one in Comstock (1909) centralized the educational functions of the county. Moorhead is noted for its two colleges - one a branch of the state university system; the other a Lutheran-affiliated college, Concordia College, that occupies the campus of the former Bishop Whipple School. Significant structures on the Concordia campus are Main Building (1906) and the Huntoon House (1910), originally built for the resident director of the Moorhead State Normal School. A number of small, rural churches are found in rural Clay County. The larger churches are located in the larger towns, such as St. John the Divine Episcopal Church (1899) in Moorhead.

#### Architectural Significance

Rural buildings in Clay County reflect changing tastes, agricultural development, and economic success. Building materials were limited to log and sod prior to the railroads. Early small subsistence structures, such as the log Bernhardson Cabin (1870) have, for the most part, disappeared. They were replaced early on by larger homes, also sometimes built of log, for example the 1½-story John Bergquist Cabin (1870) in Moorhead. Railroads brought milled lumber from eastern Minnesota. With agricultural success farmers were able to build impressive farmstead complexes. The Krabbenhoft farmhouse, a 2½-story adapted Queen Anne house, has extensive milled decorative trim. A grain elevator on the farm is similar to the trackside elevators found in every town.

Brick construction is rarely found outside of the towns, but was used extensively for public buildings and main street commercial structures. The Barnesville City Hall and Jail (1899) was constructed of locally produced brick. John Bergquist operated a Moorhead brickyard and manufactured the bricks for a now razed county courthouse. Main street brick commercial buildings replaced once-common frame false-front structures like the 420 Main Avenue Commercial Building (c.1880) in Moorhead. Masonry construction is rare even in the towns. Even the most substantial public buildings on the college campuses use stone only for foundations. One exception is Barnesville's Patterson-Hernandez House (1900), a Queen Anne residence built of locally gathered glacial boulders.

High style architecture is atypical of Clay County. Residences, both rural and in towns, are usually modest and unadorned. Local builder-vernacular uses of popular styles, especially Queen Anne, are found. Numerous houses in Moorhead show such influences, as do more successful examples such as the Krabbenhoft Farmhouse (1901), the John Olness House (1902), and the Solomon G. Comstock House (1882). The shingle style is

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well-used in St. John the Divine Episcopal Church (1899) designed by Cass Gilbert. Several public buildings use the Classical Revival style. Of note are Main Building at Concordia College and the Federal Post Office Building (1915) designed by a government architect). Unusual in its uniqueness to Clay County is the English Cottage style Huntoon House (1910).

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

see attached bibliography

UTM NOT VERIFIED

# 10. Geographical Data

see individual inventory forms

Acreeage of nominated property \_\_\_\_\_

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

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

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

UMT References

A            
Zone Easting Northing

B            
Zone Easting Northing

C

D

E

F

G

H

Verbal boundary description and justification

The county limits of Clay County

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 December 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

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date 1-28-80

For HCRS use only

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

Keeper of the National Register

date 5/7/80

Attest: Kristin O'Connell

date 5/6/80

Chief of Registration

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- ◇ Paper towns
- ◂ Hamlets
- Towns platted by private proprietors
- Towns platted by railroads and their affiliates

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- |                              |                                         |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| 1. Lafayette (1857)          | 18. Downer (1902)                       |
| 2. Shayenne City (1857)      | 19. Baker (1903)                        |
| 3. Moorhead (1872)           | 20. Manitoba Junction (1906)            |
| 4. Hawley (1874)             | 21. Dilworth (1906)                     |
| 5. Muskoda (1874)            | 22. Kragnes (1907)                      |
| 6. Glyndon (1875)            | 23. Dale (1909)                         |
| 7. Felton (1881)             | 24. Rollag                              |
| 8. Sabin (1881)              | 25. Tansem                              |
| 9. Barnesville (1882)        |                                         |
| 10. Catton (1882)            | A. Northern Pacific - Main Line (1871)  |
| 11. Georgetown (1885)        | B. St. Paul and Pacific (1872)          |
| 12. Ulen (1896)              | C. Red River and Manitoba (1877)        |
| 13. Winnipeg Junction (1897) | D. Barnesville and Moorhead (1880)      |
| 14. Comstock (1898)          | E. Minnesota and Dakota Northern (1883) |
| 15. Rustad (1899)            | F. Duluth and Manitoba (1886)           |
| 16. Hitterdahl (1900)        | G. Moorhead and Southeastern (1888)     |
| 17. Averill (1901)           |                                         |

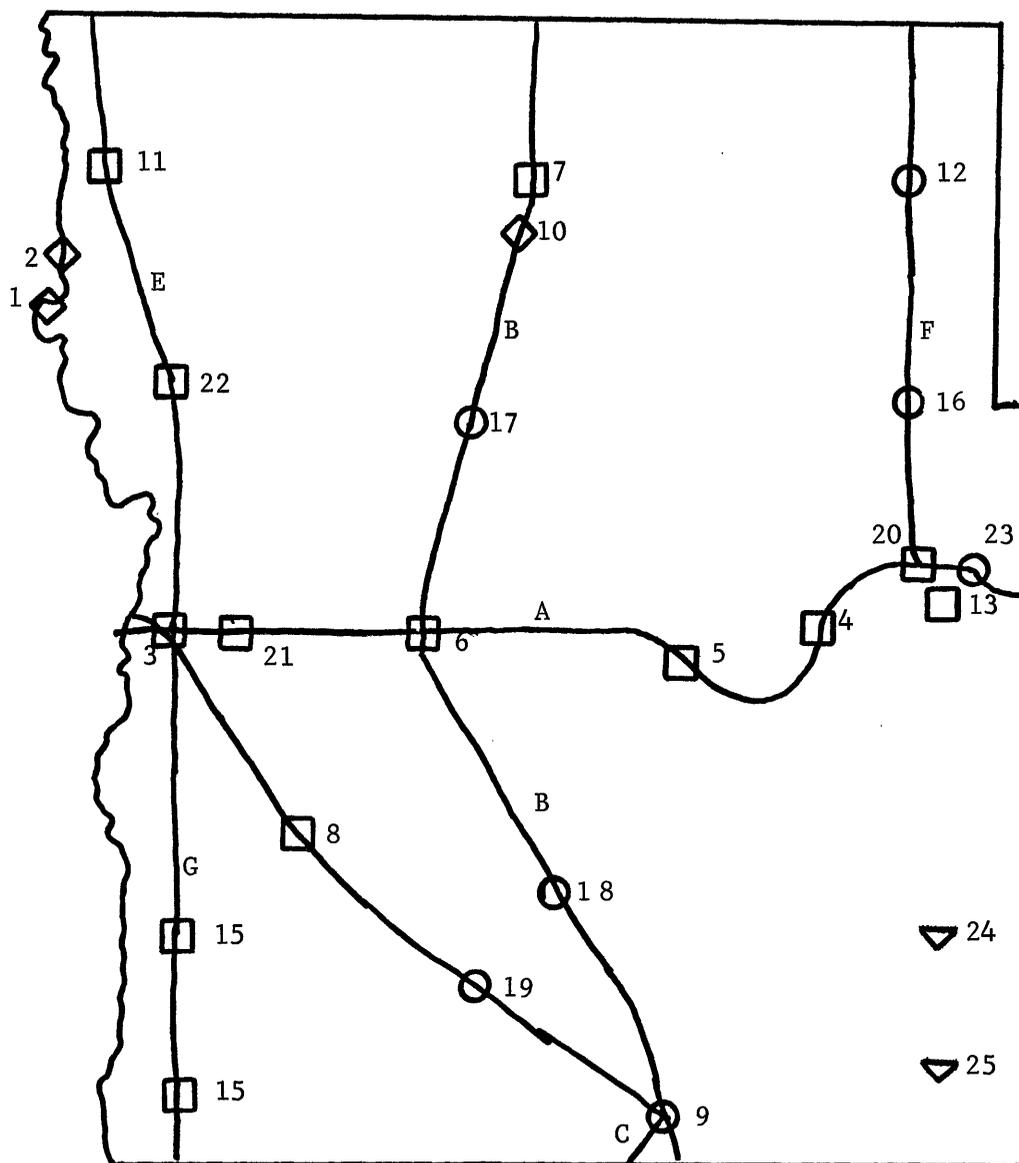


FIGURE 1. Railroad Construction and Town Plat Dates, Clay County, Minnesota.