

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register

See continuation sheet.

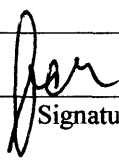
determined eligible for the
National Register

See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the
National Register

removed from the National Register

other (explain):



Signature of Keeper Date
of Action

12/27/02

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u> 1 </u>	<u> 1 </u>	buildings
<u> 0 </u>	<u> 0 </u>	sites
<u> 0 </u>	<u> 0 </u>	structures
<u> 0 </u>	<u> 0 </u>	objects
<u> 1 </u>	<u> 1 </u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)
 N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: DOMESTIC Sub: SINGLE DWELLING

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: _____ Sub: SINGLE DWELLING
DOMESTIC HOTEL
WORK IN PROGRESS

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

LATE VICTORIAN

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation LIMESTONE
roof WOOD/ SHINGLE
walls STONE/LIMESTONE
WOOD/WEATHERBOARD
other _____

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT
 ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance 1864 - 1897

Significant Dates 1864

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

TAFT, STEPHEN HARRIS

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect The /Builder TAFT, STEPHEN, H.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

previously listed in the National Register

previously determined eligible by the National Register

designated a National Historic Landmark

recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository: HUMBOLDT PUBLIC LIBRARY

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property LESS THAN 1 ACRE

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	15	400140	4730470	3	_____	_____
2	_____	_____	_____	4	_____	_____

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title SHIRLEY CURRY organization _____
date 4/15/02

street & number 809 FIRST AVENUE NORTH telephone 515-332-3167

city or town HUMBOLDT state IA zip code 50548

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name GEORGE & SHIRLEY CURRY

street & number 809 FIRST AVEUNE NORTH telephone 515-332-3167

city or town HUMBOLDT, state IA zip code 50548

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 1

Stephen H. Taft House
Humboldt County, IA

Description

The Stephen H. Taft house is located at 809 1st Avenue North, one block from the town main street in a middle class neighborhood. The street was originally named Fremont Street by Mr. Taft when he platted out the town, but was later changed to First Avenue. The house sits right up to the sidewalk in front of the house. The house had not been occupied for 2 years when the present owners purchased it in 1990 and was in a very run down neglected condition. The exterior had not been altered, just neglected. The interior wall structure was not altered, only repaired after the fire in the late 1950's. There is one out building (a garage, a noncontributing structure) located north of the house. The garage was built in 1991.

The house is a large 2 1/2 story house with a modified rectangular plan, gable roof and front porch. After its construction in 1864 it was home to Stephen H. Taft, its original owner, builder and his family. They occupied the house until 1897 when Mr. Taft and his wife moved to California for her health. Some of his family members owned and occupied the house until 1933 when it was purchased by Earl Butterworth, who lived in the home until 1988. It stood empty until October 1990 when George and Shirley Curry, present owners purchased it from Mr. Butterworth. The house at that time was basically the same as the day it was built, no major or structural changes had been made. There was a fire in the 1950's. The fire started in the dining room, spread to the parlor and up the open stairway to the second floor. There was smoke, extreme heat and water damage to walls and woodwork on both the first and second floor. The open stairway was closed off and nothing was cleaned or repaired on the second floor until the Curry's purchased the house. The dining room, parlor and foyer were covered with paneling and new oak floors installed after the fire. In the years following the fire the house had been sadly neglected until the Curry's started the restoration.

The house has a rectangular plan approximately 38' x 40'. An open porch is attached on the front, (south). A wing on the north is approximately 22' x 24', which originally housed the summer kitchen and is now the main kitchen of the home. Also the east side of the wing has an enclosed porch. It is still used as a porch at this time. A three window shed type dormer on west side of the third floor, was added after the house was built, but the date is unknown.

Three of the four sides of the house, plus the wing on the back (north) are made of coursed, irregularly shaped limestone rock. The limestone was quarried locally. The front facade, however, is a cedar clapboard covered wood frame.

The front (south) of the house has 9 curved topped windows, 4 on the first floor, 4 on the second floor (directly over first floor windows), and 1 on the third floor centered under the roof peak. They all have decorative curved tops, with 2 over 2 window panes. These are all original windows. There is a 9' curved top front door centered between the 4 windows on the first floor. There is an open front porch centered across the front of the house. The porch has wood railing with wood balusters and wood floor. The front exterior is painted cedar clapboard, most of which is original, a few boards were replaced due to splitting and cupping that precluded repair.

The east side of the house has 4 rectangular windows with beamed headers and 2 over 2 panes, 2 are on the first floor and 2 are on the second floor. A smaller rectangular window with 2 panes is also on the main floor. Two windows were replaced after a fire in the late 1950's. The opening remained the same just new matching windows put in. The exterior wall is coursed, irregularly shaped native limestone.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 2

Stephen H. Taft House
Humboldt County, IA

Description (continued)

The west side of the house has 1 rectangular window on the main floor and 2 rectangular windows on the second floor. All windows have wood beamed headers and 2 over 2 panes. All of these windows are original to house. There is also an enclosed entry on this side of the house, originally an entry to the house but which has been turned into a storage closet off the bedroom. The exterior walls of the entry are clapboard siding. There are no windows and one door in the entry. The exterior walls on the west side are also of coursed, irregularly shaped native limestone. There is a ground level iron covering over an opening to the basement. There are no steps, so it may have been used for delivery of coal. The basement is 12' x 26' and consists of 2 small rooms, the walls are limestone and the floor is part dirt and part cement. Interior steps leading up to first floor are at the back of the front foyer hall.

The north side of house has 6 rectangular windows, 1 on the main floor, 4 on the second floor and 1 on the third floor. They are 6 over 6 panes and all have beamed headers and are all original to the house. The exterior wall is also coursed, irregularly shaped native limestone. There is an attached wing, 22' x 24' originally used as summer kitchen which is now the main kitchen. There are 3 windows on the west side of the wing, 2 small windows and entry door on the north side of the addition, and 4 windows and entry door on east side of addition. There are 2 small windows on the main floor which at some unknown time were closed and filled in with wood. There is also 1 large window that was stoned up, the beam header is still there and you can see where the stone was filled in. These all can be seen in the photos. Exterior walls of the wing are coursed, irregularly shaped native limestone and wood clapboard siding. The interior walls of the kitchen are the original wood walls used when it was a summer kitchen. The floor is planked boards.

The roof was originally wood cedar shingles and the present owners have replaced them with new cedar wood shingles. The house originally had 4 brick chimneys. At some point one was removed, but three remain.

On the 2 sides of the home (east and west) there are steel rods (3 on each side) which are fastened into large beams between the first and second floor of the structure. Apparently this was done when built as extra support for the limestone walls. Each rod has an iron S shaped piece attached on the outside of the limestone walls.

The house interior design features a center hall plan on both the main floor and also on the second floor. A long straight open stairway just inside the front door was originally solid black walnut most of which was destroyed by fire in the late 1950's. The original newel post was found in the attic and restored and used. The present owners have restored the original stairway using oak stair treads, painted poplar risers, solid black walnut railing, turned balusters made of poplar and painted the same as the risers. They are a very close match to the turnings of the original balusters. There is also a back stairway. It is a tight winder stairway with 2 landings.

The interior walls are all hand plastered over lath, with smooth finish, some are original and some have had to be restored due to the fire in the 1950's. Part of the main floor has the original hardwood maple floors and the other half had to be replaced after the fire, oak was used. The ceiling height on main floor is 11 foot and 10 foot on the second floor. The main floor consists of a parlor, dining room, pantry, bathroom, small bedroom and a double room thought to be a second parlor and is now a family room for the owners. The restoration started in late 1990 and while much has been done, is still in progress.

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 & 8 Page 3

Stephen H. Taft House
Humboldt County, IA

Description (continued)

The following modifications or alterations to the original house have resulted in little or no change in the building's integrity.

The limestone exterior has been tuckpointed by hand on all sides except the north, which is not completed yet. Wood storm windows have been installed over windows. New wiring and plumbing have been installed. New cedar shingles have been installed.

Statement of Significance

The Stephen H. Taft house is locally significant under Criterion A as one of the earliest extant houses from Humboldt's settlement period.

It is also significant under Criterion B as the home of the founder of the town of Springvale (now Humboldt) and the now defunct Humboldt College, Stephen H. Taft who lived here from 1864 - 1897.

Finally it is significant under Criterion C as an early model and inspiration for Humboldt's tradition of limestone architecture. Limestone was plentiful and there were several limestone homes and businesses constructed during the early era. Other early limestone buildings include a small stone stable or carriage house in the center of the block due west of Taft's house and was part of Taft's property, however it seems too distant to have been part of the Taft home. Also nearby, Judge Dickey's house exhibits a much more refined use of limestone, both in design and in masonry techniques. Downtown stores were also constructed from limestone, several still remain.

Historical Background and Significance

The town of Humboldt was established largely through the efforts of a single individual, New York native Stephen Harris Taft, a Congregational Society minister. Mr. Taft told of his thoughts the day he arrived in 1862. "I well remember the delight which I felt when I first looked at this beauty spot of the Des Moines river valley. It was in the afternoon of a perfect September day and I can never forget the impression it made upon me by its wild and marvelous beauty."

As a leader of a Congregational following, Taft represented one of the oldest religious sects in the United States, members of which were among the Pilgrims who crossed the Atlantic in 1620. A principal tenet of the Congregationalists was that each congregation of believers was independent and free to choose its own minister. Taft's group chose him, and he chose to lead them out of New England to an unsettled portion of the middle West. Taft referred to his congregation as a "colony". It implies a group of individuals with common interests --and ties to a parent elsewhere--which transplants itself to a new and perhaps hostile, location. Taft and his group shared a religious commitment to the abolition of slavery and the equality of the races. In a time of civil war over the institution of slavery and the economic and political structures supporting it, Taft blended the independence of his Congregationalist beliefs with the free will necessary of the abolitionist.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 4

Stephen H. Taft House
Humboldt County, IA

Historical Background and Significance (continued)

Stephen H. Taft was born in New York in 1825 and as a young man came to Iowa in 1862 to locate some land on which to form a town. In 1863 he brought his wife and family along with several other families to settle in what is now called Humboldt, IA. He purchased five sections of land from the Dubuque & Sioux City Rail Road. The land lay between the east and west fork of the Des Moines river. It was here he platted out his town. His wife, Mary named the town Springvale, because the location was in a valley and along the river in which were many springs. The name was changed to Humboldt in 1873.

Mr. Taft gave the streets names of generals and statesmen for whom he held in high regard. Gerritt Smith Avenue and (Joshua) Giddings Street after anti-slavery congressmen who objected to the 1854 Kansas-Nebraska Act. Garrison Street after the prominent white abolition leader William Lloyd Garrison, (John Charles) Fremont, (Phillip Henry) Sheridan and (Phillip) Kearney Streets after Union generals; and of course, Lincoln Street after the much admired President. Sadly, except for John Brown Park, evidence of this settlement-era abolitionist commitment now largely has been erased from the town's landscape. Taft's original street names were changed in 1925 to a system of numbered streets and avenues.

Mr. Taft not only laid out the town, but took a very active part in constructing many of the buildings. He brought with him from the east individuals and families who were store keepers, hotel keepers, stone masons and etc. for his town. He also was responsible with both money and his labor for building the first saw mill.

He had a dream of building a college which he hoped would be the "Harvard of the Midwest". He did realize his dream, the Humboldt College was built and opened to students in 1872 even though it never achieved the prominence he had hoped. He was president of the college for 9 years. It was torn down in the 1920's. Mr. Taft was a minister, but as stated in his biography he was also a man with a dream and with a tremendous amount of foresight and determination, he made his dreams a reality. He never let problems and hardships keep him from finishing what he started. Mr. Taft's biography was written by his oldest son Fred Taft. The book was called, "An Empire Builder of the Middle West". Mr. Taft not only was the town founder and key to the development of the town of Humboldt, he also established one of the earliest precedents locally for the use of limestone as a building material. The use of such an abundant native material was an obvious choice and Taft provided the employment context for masons in town to ply their craft. In following years his use of limestone continued. An 1866 plat map shows a quarry and lime kiln located on the bank of the river just south of Taft's mill (the dam for the sawmill was constructed c. 1864). When flooding necessitated relocation of his dam, Taft constructed a mill race in c. 1867, necessarily cutting through limestone. Area newspapers reported the limestone removed from the millrace bed was used in a block of stores downtown, some are still standing and in use today.

Mr. Taft's residence built in 1864, shows both his preference for stone as a building material and his proclivity for mixing frame and stone construction together in less than common ways. Taft's clapboard facade serves as a model for the later use of brick facades in downtown commercial buildings. It may be that clapboard and brick were seen as more refined construction materials, saved for the public approach to the building, while stone, because of its abundance or economy was used for the other walls. Local tradition has it that the house was originally built for a commercial purpose, such as a business or lodging house and that Taft himself worked on its construction. Research has uncovered no record that the house was used commercially as well as the Taft family home. According to Taft's biographer, dignitaries visiting from the east to see Humboldt College did stay with the Taft family in their home. The house is a large gable-front rectangular building.

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Section 8 Page 5

Stephen H. Taft House
Humboldt County, IA

Historical Background and Significance (continued)

Three of its walls are stone, but the facade is a wood frame covered with narrow clapboard siding. The stone walls are of irregularly coursed, rough-cut limestone. A small rear wing is also of the same irregular, course, rough-cut limestone.

According to Taft's biography more than half a century after Springvale was founded, a local paper, recounting the history of the region, had this to say. . . . "Mr. Taft faced conditions, natural and man-made, that would have discouraged and broken down a less courageous and determined personality. He faced the mental hazards of slander and adverse criticism as stoutly as he did the elements of nature he had to contend with in the course of the years he gave to making his dreams come true. There was hardly a development project of that day and age in which Mr. Taft was not a leading factor. In many ways he was the most picturesque figure in Humboldt county history. A saintly man of education and refinement who could far more easily be placed in the security and comforts of the more densely populated and developed eastern sections of the country than as the organizer of an expedition that had for its purpose the subduing of an unknown and remote frontier civilization. But he was a robust man having a most fertile mind and an abundance of imagination and initiative. He was by instinct an empire builder and the walls of civilization oppressed him. This impression of Mr. Taft's character is borne out in the later years of his life when he left Humboldt and founded the town of Sawtelle in California."

This quotation was published in The Humboldt County Republican, the local newspaper and is also found in Mr. Taft's biography.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 6

Stephen H. Taft House
Humboldt County, IA



Copy of picture of hous in early 1900's
Photographer - Unknown
Negative Location - Unknown
Humboldt Genealogy Committee has the original
picture

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National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 9 & 10 Page 7

Stephen H. Taft House
Humboldt County, IA

Bibliography

The History of the City of Humboldt - written by Oliver H. DeGroot, Jaqua Printing Company, Humboldt, IA

An Empire Builder of the Middle West, biography of Stephen H. Taft, by Fred H. Taft, printers Parker, Stone & Baird Co. of Los Angeles County, copyright, 1929.

1884 History of Kossuth and Humboldt Counties, Iowa, Springfield, ILL.. Union Publishing Co. 1884

Stone Buildings of Humboldt - by Ray & Helen Lindhart, 1980

Verbal Boundary Description

Parts of lots 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, & 6 in block 43 in the city of Humboldt, (formerly Springvale)

Boundary Justification

The boundary of the nominated property includes the entire parcel historically associated with the Stephen H. Taft House.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

Section Photos Page 8

Stephen H. Taft House
Humboldt County, IA

The following information is common to photographs 1 through 8:

Photographer - Shirley Curry
Date - May 2, 2002
Original negatives in possession of Shirley and George Curry

1. Front (south) of house as it appears today. Camera facing north.
2. East side of house. Camera facing west
3. North side of house. Camera facing south.
4. Northeast side of house. Camera facing south west. Shows the wing on north side of house.
5. North side of house, showing the wing on north side of house. Camera facing southeast.
6. West side of wing. Camera facing southeast.
7. West side of house. Notice the S shaped iron pieces that are attached to steel rods that are fastened to large beams that run through the house.
8. Garage (non-contributing structure, built in 1991) Camera facing northwest.
9. Copy of picture of house taken in the early 1900's,
Photographer - unknown.
Negative location - unknown.
Original snapshot is in the possession of Humboldt Genealogy Committee
South and east side of house. Camera facing northwest.

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Section maps Page 9

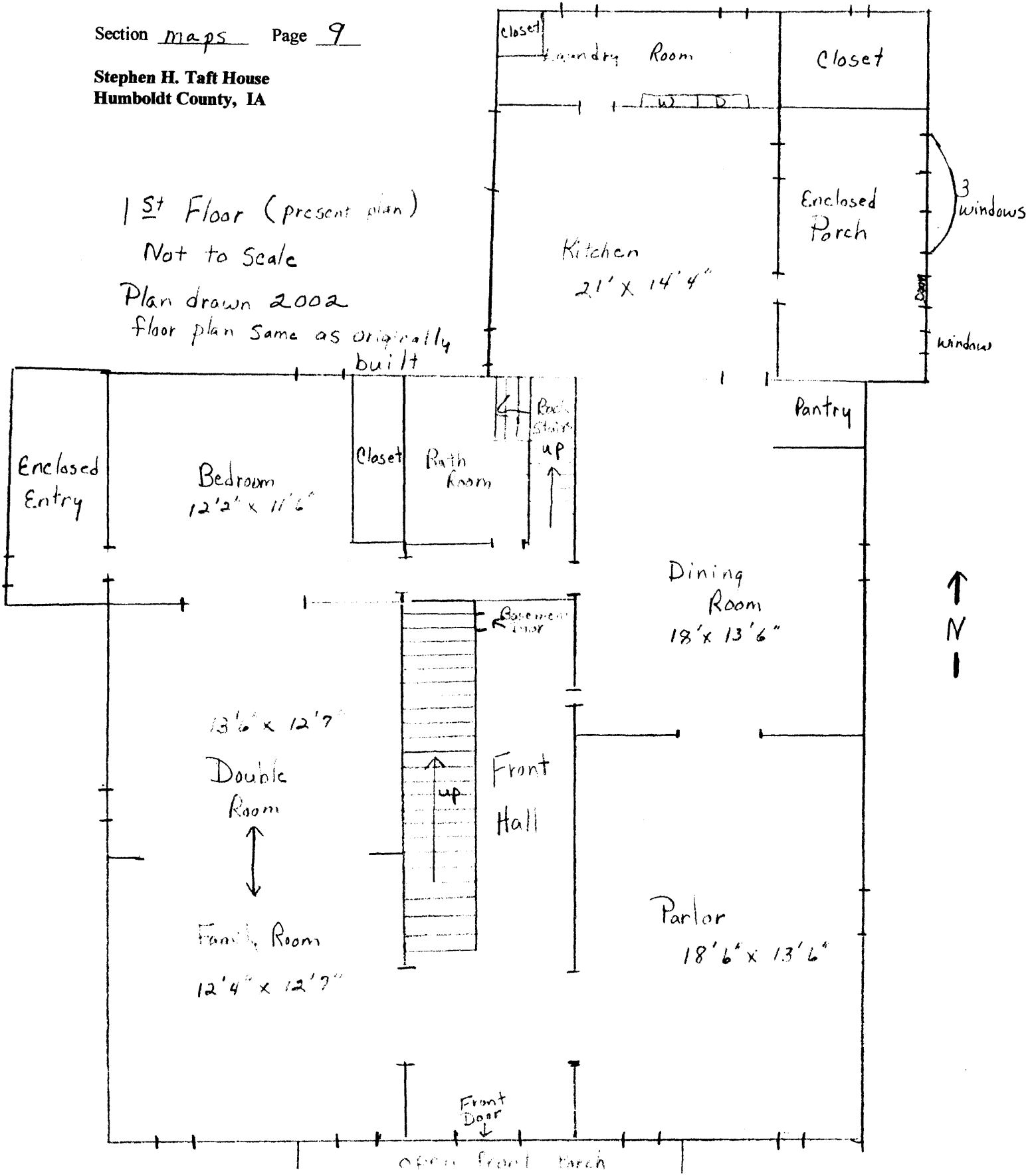
Stephen H. Taft House
Humboldt County, IA

1st Floor (present plan)

Not to Scale

Plan drawn 2002

floor plan same as originally
built

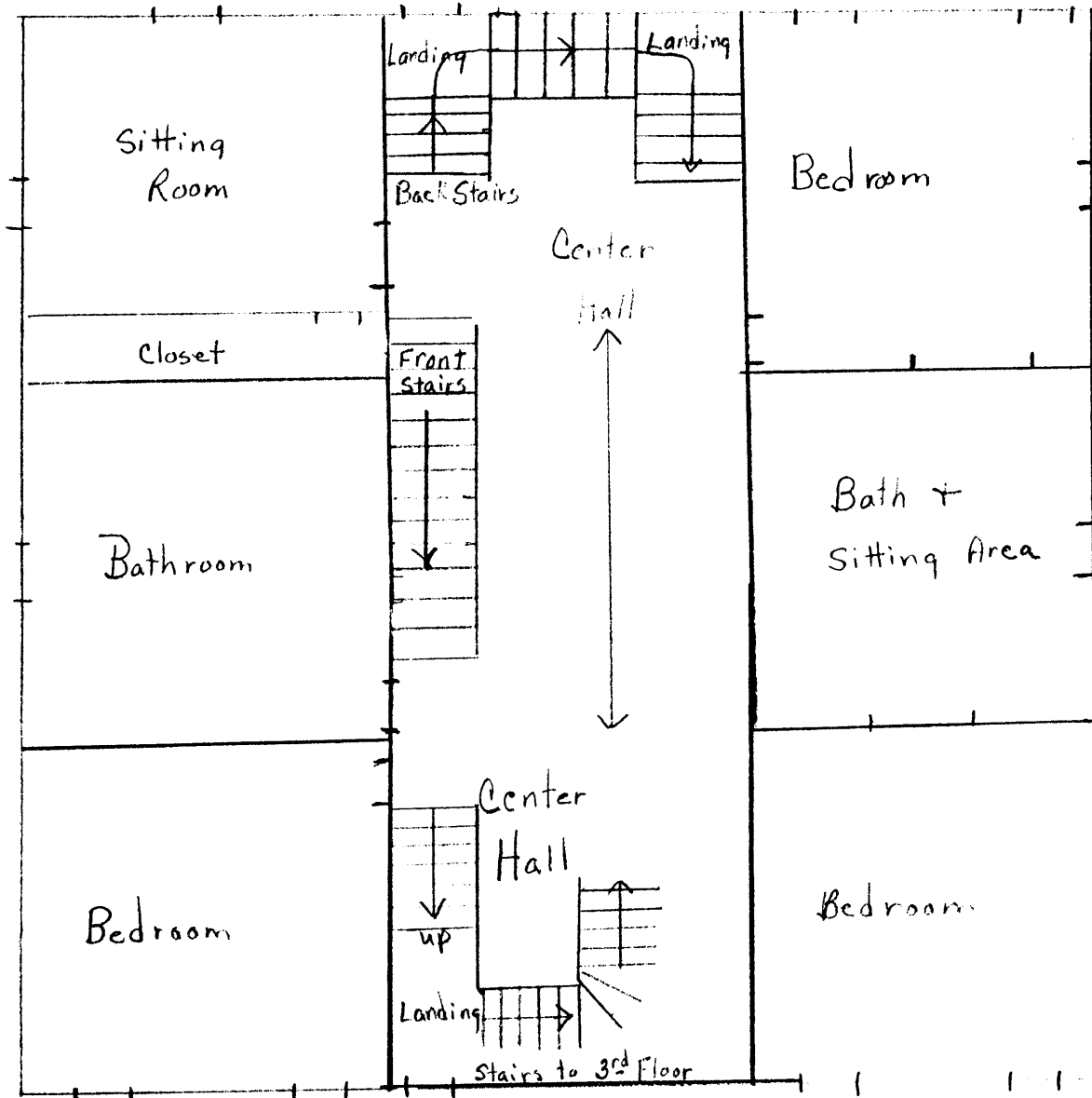


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CONTINUATION SHEET

Section Maps Page 10

Stephen H. Taft House
Humboldt County, IA



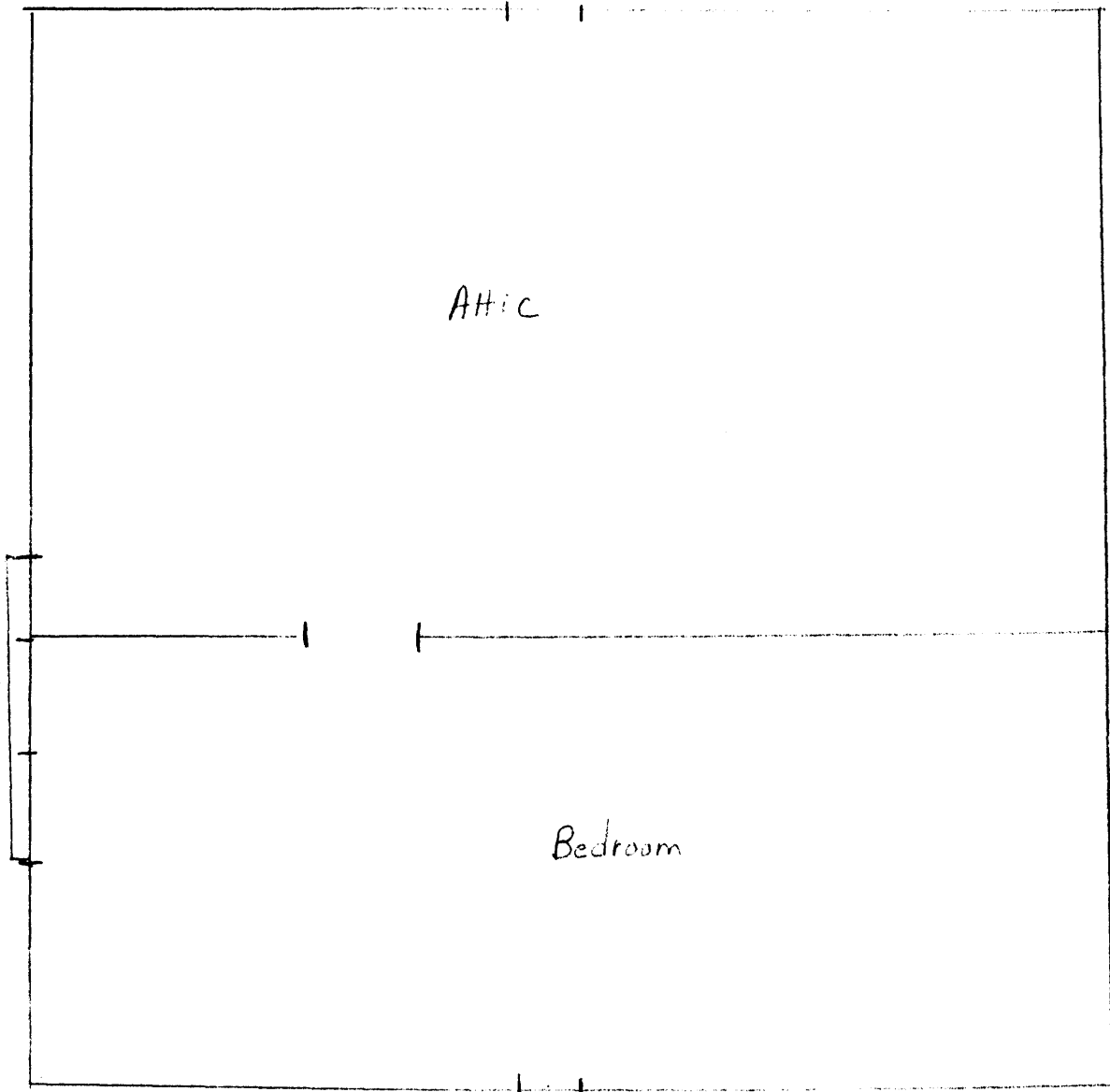
Present 2nd Floor Plan Plan drawn 2002
Not to Scale floor plan same
as originally built

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section Maps Page 11

Stephen H. Taft House
Humboldt County, IA



3rd Floor (Present Plan)
Not to scale

Plan drawn 2002
same structure as
built

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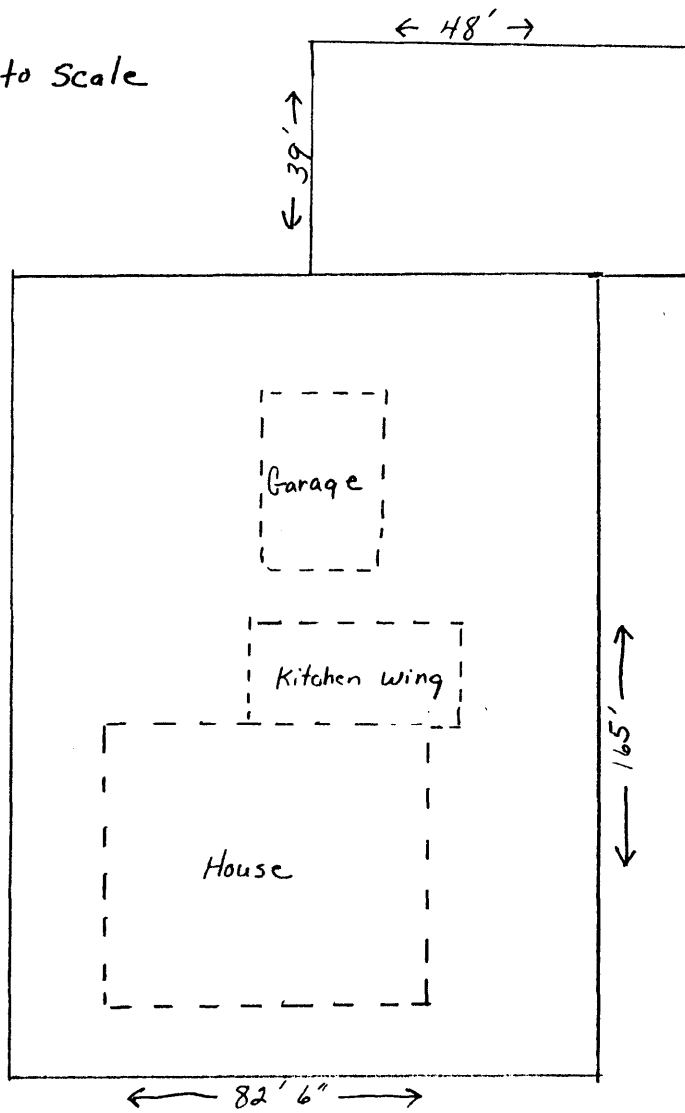
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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Section Map Page 12

Stephen H. Taft House
Humboldt County, IA

Taft Property
Block 43

Drawing not to scale

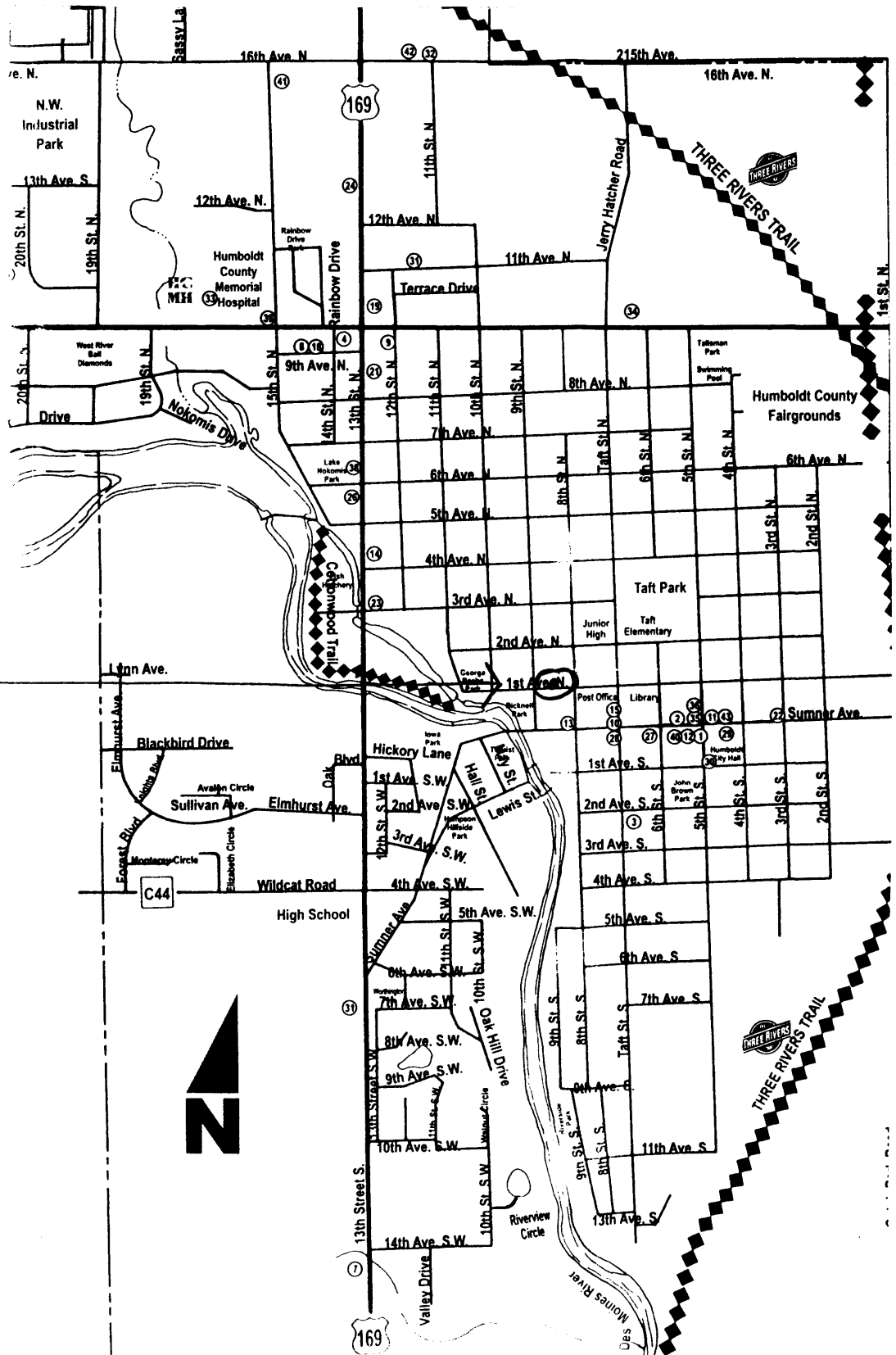


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CONTINUATION SHEET

Section Maps Page 13

Stephen H. Taft House
Humboldt County, IA



Property Location

*Humboldt City Map
Chamber of Commerce
Jan. 2001*



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Section Map Page 14

Stephen H. Taft House
Humboldt County, IA

Illustration 1. Original Town Plat, Springvale [Humboldt], Iowa, 1865.
(Source: Humboldt County)

