

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received JAN 5 1987

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections**1. Name**

historic Iowa State Fair And Exposition Grounds Historic District

and or common Iowa State Fairgrounds

2. Location

street & number East 30th Street and Grand Avenue not for publication

city, town Des Moines vicinity of

state Iowa code 019 county Polk code 153

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	N/A	<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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: State Fair

4. Owner of Property

name State of Iowa/Iowa State Fair Board

street & number Iowa State House/Capitol Complex

city, town Des Moines vicinity of state IA 50319

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. County Recorder's Office

street & number Polk County Courthouse, Court at 2nd Ave.

city, town Des Moines state IA 50309

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title N/A has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date federal state county local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Condition

☐ excellent
☒ good
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated
☐ ruins
☐ unexposed

Check one

☐ unaltered
☒ altered

Check one

☒ original site
☐ moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Iowa State Fair and Exposition Grounds Historic District comprises a large collection of late Nineteenth and Twentieth Century fair and exposition type buildings. There are approximately 111 buildings and structures in the district. Their construction dates from 1886 to the 1980s.

The general integrity of these buildings is high. Few buildings have received alterations of exterior wall cladding over the years. Roof configurations have remained basically the same as when built. When buildings have expanded, these additions have been by way of careful plan rather than ad hoc accretion. Few buildings with masonry exterior walls have been painted. Window configurations remain basically unaltered in most buildings. Condition of these buildings is mixed but mostly good or better.

Areas of change on the Fairgrounds have been, primarily, the in-filling of open ground between the main fair and exposition buildings. In earlier days, tents provided dining hall and display space. Since the 1960s, concessionaires have been allowed to construct semi-permanent buildings for these purposes. There are about two dozen of these buildings, mostly of a pole barn type. Since the 1960s, the Fair Board has also constructed a number of pole barn type buildings to provide specialized services. These also act as in-fill between the major Fair buildings.

Building types on the Fairgrounds include those with balloon frame; masonry load-bearing walls; steel frame; and reinforced concrete. There is a wide range of building scale. The Fairgrounds comprise approximately 400 acres, 240 acres for the Fair proper, and approximately 160 acres of campground. Campground is located on the eastside of the property.

CONTEMPORARY APPEARANCE

The entire Fairgrounds presents an organized plan with activities grouped into departmental areas: the various livestock departments (cattle, horses, sheep, & poultry) are in the south; plant departments (cash crops, fruit, & floral) are centrally located; amusement area (midway & race track/grandstand) is northeast, and machinery department is in the west.

The following paragraphs more specifically discuss the physical situation of the district. Des Moines is capital of Iowa. The Fairgrounds are located near the eastern city limits. Traveling east along University Avenue from downtown Des Moines, the viewer receives a clear impression of the Fairgrounds as a major eastside landmark in the city. The key intersection is at East 30th Street and University Avenue. At this point the site opens up with a foreground of park-like, turfed parking area. The major line terminates at the impressive red dome of Pioneer Hall. The backdrop

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> education (agricultural)	<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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" 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		

Specific dates 1886-1936 **Builder/Architect** Various

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Criteria: A, C
Contributing Resources: 38

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

The buildings at the Iowa State Fair point to a past century of continuous readjustment and transition as the fair grew and adapted to keep abreast of the times. The development of this major Iowa event and attraction, in keeping with the fair's enlarging functions, exemplifies the historical pattern of American Agricultural fairs.¹ Since its 1810 beginnings in New York, the American agricultural fair was demonstrating by the 1860s that its greatest strength would be found in the Midwest.² There, states such as Iowa which were largely peopled by those who found the appeals of agricultural societies especially attractive, namely small, prosperous, general farmers. The fairs began strictly along educational lines: agricultural societies organized the fairs to improve agriculture and the domestic arts by competitively offering attractive premiums for superior exhibits. The ancient elements of informal amusement were always there--the festival spirit and respite from harvest labor. But commercialized entertainment functions gradually assumed increasing emphasis as the various amusements succeeded through continuous struggle to justify themselves as a legitimate integral part of the fair. The result is that today the educational exhibits, the racetrack, the midway and other amusement or administrative functions are inseparably joined in the modern fair. The blend of old and new buildings together form a composite of the state fair's transformation by which the past lends temporal weight to the new creation, offering its visitors both a sense of continuity and familiar scenes of their own immediate past. Agricultural education and entertainment thus form the central themes of its history, although the planning and design of the Iowa Fair and its elements of architectural significance also have prominently shaped its resulting historical character.

The themes of development worked their influence in the context of a fairgrounds that: (1) gradually expanded by 46 percent in size from 266 acres in 1894 to 389 acres today; and (2) undertook successive replacements of many original buildings with more permanent and substantial structures (especially between 1902 and 1927) as well as making street and sanitation improvements, with the help of substantial

1. Presentation of the education and entertainment themes draws heavily upon two companion articles by Fred Kniffen, "The American Agricultural Fair: The Pattern," Annals of the Association of American Geographers 39 (March 1949), 264-282; and "The American Agricultural Fair: Time and Place," Annals of the Association of American Geographers 41 (March 1951), 42-57. Useful background information also came from two articles by Earle D. Ross, "The Evolution of the Agricultural Fair in the Northwest," Iowa Journal of History and Politics 24 (July 1926), 445-480; and "The Iowa State Fair," Palimpsest 35 (July 1954), 261-324.
2. Kniffen, "American Agricultural Fair: Time and Place," 44, 46, 48, 50, 52, 54, 56.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Refer to Continuation Sheet 9-2

10. Geographical Data

Acres of nominated property 313
Quadrangle name Des Moines S.E.

Quadrangle scale 1/24,000

UTM References

A

1	5	4	5	5	3	8	0	4	6	0	5	1	3	0
Zone			Easting					Northing						

B

1	5	4	5	2	4	9	0	4	6	0	5	1	4	0
Zone			Easting					Northing						

C

1	5	4	5	3	4	9	0	4	6	0	4	6	0	0
Zone			Easting					Northing						

D

1	5	4	5	3	7	1	0	4	6	0	4	3	4	0
Zone			Easting					Northing						

E

1	5	4	5	4	6	8	0	4	6	0	4	2	9	0
Zone			Easting					Northing						

F

1	5	4	5	5	3	7	0	4	6	0	4	6	5	0
Zone			Easting					Northing						

G

Zone			Easting					Northing						

H

Zone			Easting					Northing						

Verbal boundary description and justification Beg, at the intersection of E. 30th & Lyon Streets, thence south to the intersection of E. 30th & Walnut Sts., thence east to the intersection of E. 31st St. & Dean Ave., thence E. to the intersection of Dean Ave. & Lucas St., thence N. 650', thence E. 666', thence N. 350', thence E. 1,650', thence N. 1,900', thence W. to pt. of beginning.

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

state	N/A	code	county	code
-------	-----	------	--------	------

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

11. Form Prepared By

Text by William C. Page, Lowell J. Soike
name/title Form by James E. Jacobsen, National Register Coordinator
State Historical Society of Iowa
organization Office of Historic Preservation date 24 August 1986
Historical Building
street & number E. 12th & Grand Ave. telephone 515-281-4137
city or town Des Moines state IA 50319

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

___ national XXX state ___ local

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 National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Deputy

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date

12/10/86

For NPS use only

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

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Description

Item number 7

Page 2

The Iowa State Fair and Exposition Grounds Historic District comprises a large collection of late Nineteenth and Twentieth Century fair and exposition type buildings. There are approximately 111 buildings and structures in the district. Their construction dates from 1886 to the 1980s.

The general integrity of these buildings is high. Few buildings have received alterations of exterior wall cladding over the years. Roof configurations have remained basically the same as when built. When buildings have expanded, these additions have been by way of careful plan rather than ad hoc accretion. Few buildings with masonry exterior walls have been painted. Window configurations remain basically unaltered in most buildings. Condition of these buildings is mixed but mostly good or better.

Areas of change on the Fairgrounds have been, primarily, the in-filling of open ground between the main fair and exposition buildings. In earlier days, tents provided dining hall and display space. Since the 1960s, concessionaires have been allowed to construct semi-permanent buildings for these purposes. There are about two dozen of these buildings, mostly of a pole barn type. Since the 1960s, the Fair Board has also constructed a number of pole barn type buildings to provide specialized services. These also act as in-fill between the major Fair buildings.

Building types on the Fairgrounds include those with balloon frame; masonry load-bearing walls; steel frame; and reinforced concrete. There is a wide range of building scale. The Fairgrounds comprise approximately 400 acres, 240 acres for the Fair proper, and approximately 160 acres of campground. Campground is located on the eastside of the property.

CONTEMPORARY APPEARANCE

The entire Fairgrounds presents an organized plan with activities grouped into departmental areas: the various livestock departments (cattle, horses, sheep, & poultry) are in the south; plant departments (cash crops, fruit, & floral) are centrally located; amusement area (midway & race track/grandstand) is northeast, and machinery department is in the west.

The following paragraphs more specifically discuss the physical situation of the district. Des Moines is capital of Iowa. The Fairgrounds are located near the eastern city limits. Traveling east along University Avenue from downtown Des Moines, the viewer receives a clear impression of the Fairgrounds as a major eastside landmark in the city. The key intersection is at East 30th Street and University Avenue. At this point the site opens up with a foreground of park-like, turfed parking area. The major line terminates at the impressive red dome of Pioneer Hall. The backdrop

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Description

Item number 7

Page 3

of wooded hillsides, together with the overlapping rooflines of the Grandstand, Livestock Pavilion, and Agricultural Building gives the site a most impressive introduction.

When arriving on the grounds from the east, the impression is somewhat different. Rising from the Four Mile Creek flood plain, the traveler climbs a long, steep hill and views the Fairgrounds filtered through stands of firs and cedar trees bordering the parking lot along University Avenue.

Dean Avenue, on the south, serves currently (as in the past) as the livestock, service, and campgrounds approach. It retains a rural character which complements these uses.

Once on the Fairgrounds proper, one's primary impression is a T-shaped road system. This is comprised of east/west Grand Avenue (also called Grand Concourse) and the north/south Rock Island Avenue. These two streets form a central spine which holds the Fairgrounds together. There is a grassed park-like, pedestrian area which runs on an east/west axis, beginning west of the Varied Industries Building and terminating at the Cultural Fine Arts Building. A dominant visual edge is the west-facing slopes of the major land form which serves to separate the Fairgrounds proper from the campgrounds. This hill has a ridge line running on a north-south axis. Once on the ridge line, the environment turns from park-like to a natural hardwood forest.

The Iowa State Fairgrounds has a system of landforms which consist of hilly terrain on the east portion of the Fairgrounds and a flat area in the west. The hilly area comprises approximately 60% of the total site and is indented on the east and west facing slopes with a series of swales, creating several knolls and valleys. The valleys serve to direct drainage. A prominent knoll located east of Pioneer Hall is the highest point on the site with an elevation of 175'.

The existing on-site drainage is divided into two categories: natural drainage occurring along swales and sloughs on the eastern portion of the site, and a series of underground storm drains on the flatter, western portion.

Slope analysis indicates the site to have (approximately): 05% flat zones; 5-10% slightly sloping zones; 10-20% moderate sloping zones; and 20-30% steep slope zones.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

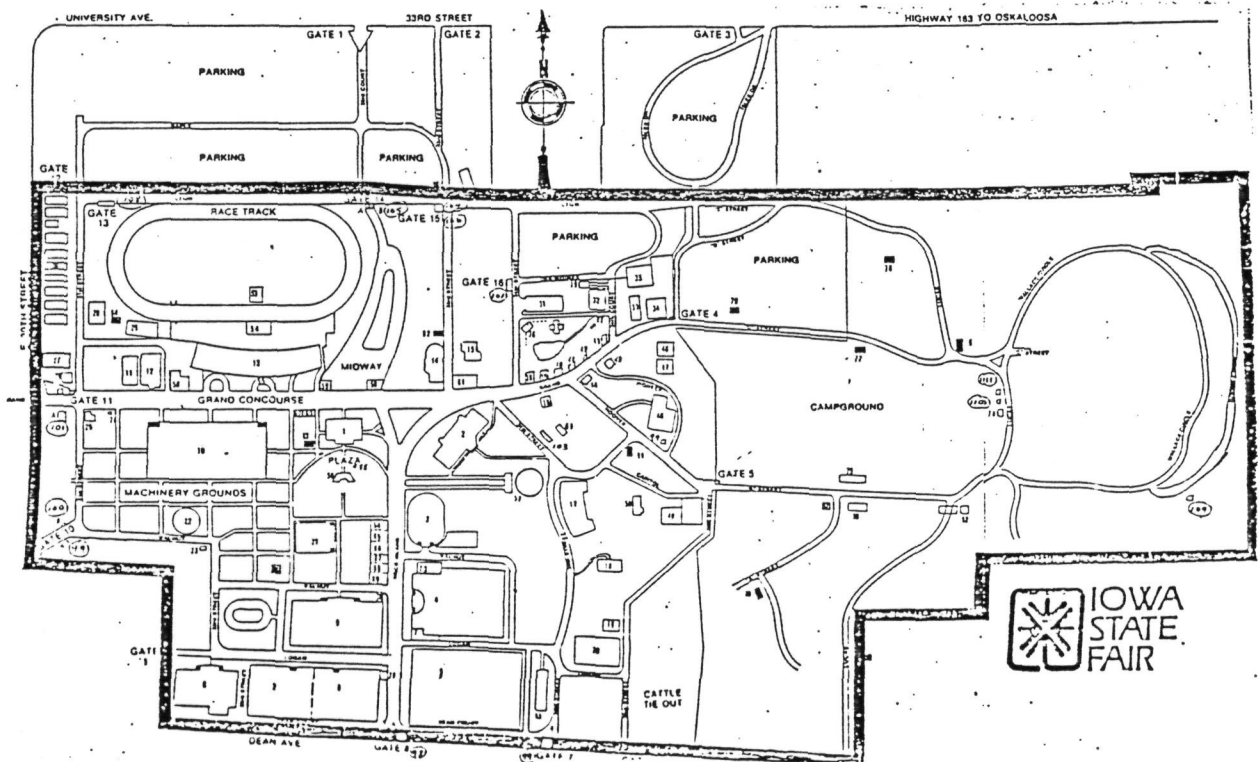
Continuation sheet Description

Item number 7

Page 4

As concerns vegetation, the western portion of the Fairgrounds has lost a considerable amount of trees through the years to Dutch Elm disease. The eastern portion remains heavily wooded with stands of mixed hardwood, primarily oaks.

Over 60 acres of the campgrounds is heavily forested while the balance has a moderate amount of tree cover. The west facing slopes, particularly near the Girls' and Boys' Dormitory Buildings are planted with evergreen conifers which provide privacy for the housing elements and serve as a backdrop for the Fair grounds. An evergreen hedgrow along University Avenue provides a strong northern edge to the Fairgrounds. Planted in the 1930s, many of these conifers were transplanted some feet south in the early 1980s to make way for widening of University Avenue. A poplar hedgrow along the northern edge of the race track provides screening and wind buffering.



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Description Item number 7 Page 5

HISTORIC APPEARANCE

Physical development of the Iowa State Fair and Exposition Grounds Historic District can best be documented through historic photographs, fire insurance maps, and maps prepared by the Fair for Fairgoers. This archival material does not, however, necessarily represent the major periods of the Fairgrounds physical growth.

The earliest period is not represented with visual images. Of the original Charles Thornton Farmstead, two buildings are extant. The barn (Site #49) remains on its original site with a high degree of physical integrity. The farmhouse (Site #50) also remains on its original site but has been modified so as to remove most integrity. The purchase of the farmstead's 269 acres was prompted by the beauty of the property view towards downtown Des Moines and the north, west, and south expanse of the Des Moines River valley. There are no known maps of the property from this earliest period. It was outside city limits.

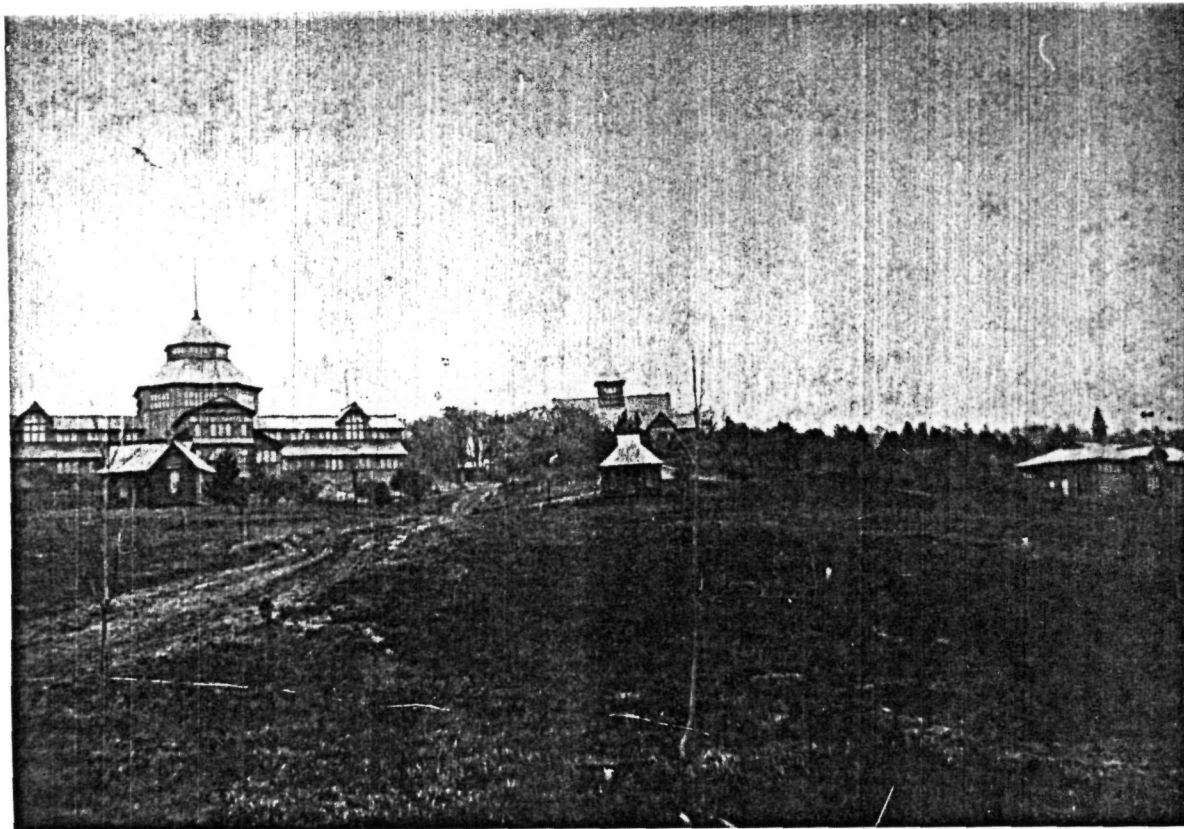
Other information about the Thornton farm and its outbuildings is sketchy. The farmhouse did have several service structures dependent to it. These included a wood shed, a garage, and a chicken house. These structures survived into the late 1940s. Photographs of them are included in the 1942 US Army survey of the Fairgrounds. The pictures indicate, however, structures clearly built after the Fairgrounds were established. They did not date from the Thornton residency.

The first visual documentation of the historic district occurred about 1886. An antique photographic image shows an early view of these buildings: Exhibition Hall, Pinecrest Lodge, Floral Hall, and 2 fair officials' cottages.¹ All these buildings are non-extant, although some not pictured, like Agricultural Bldg/Pioneer Hall (Site #48), had similar design and scale and remain extant today. Notable in this early view were the grounds. Looking from the plain easterly towards the hill, there was little tree plantings and no shrub or flower vegetation on the slope. A tree canopy began towards the crown of the hill. Saplings had been planted on the hill but they were sited in an apparent random manner (one tree was planted directly next to a road). Roads themselves were dirt with little delineation between them and the grass ground cover.

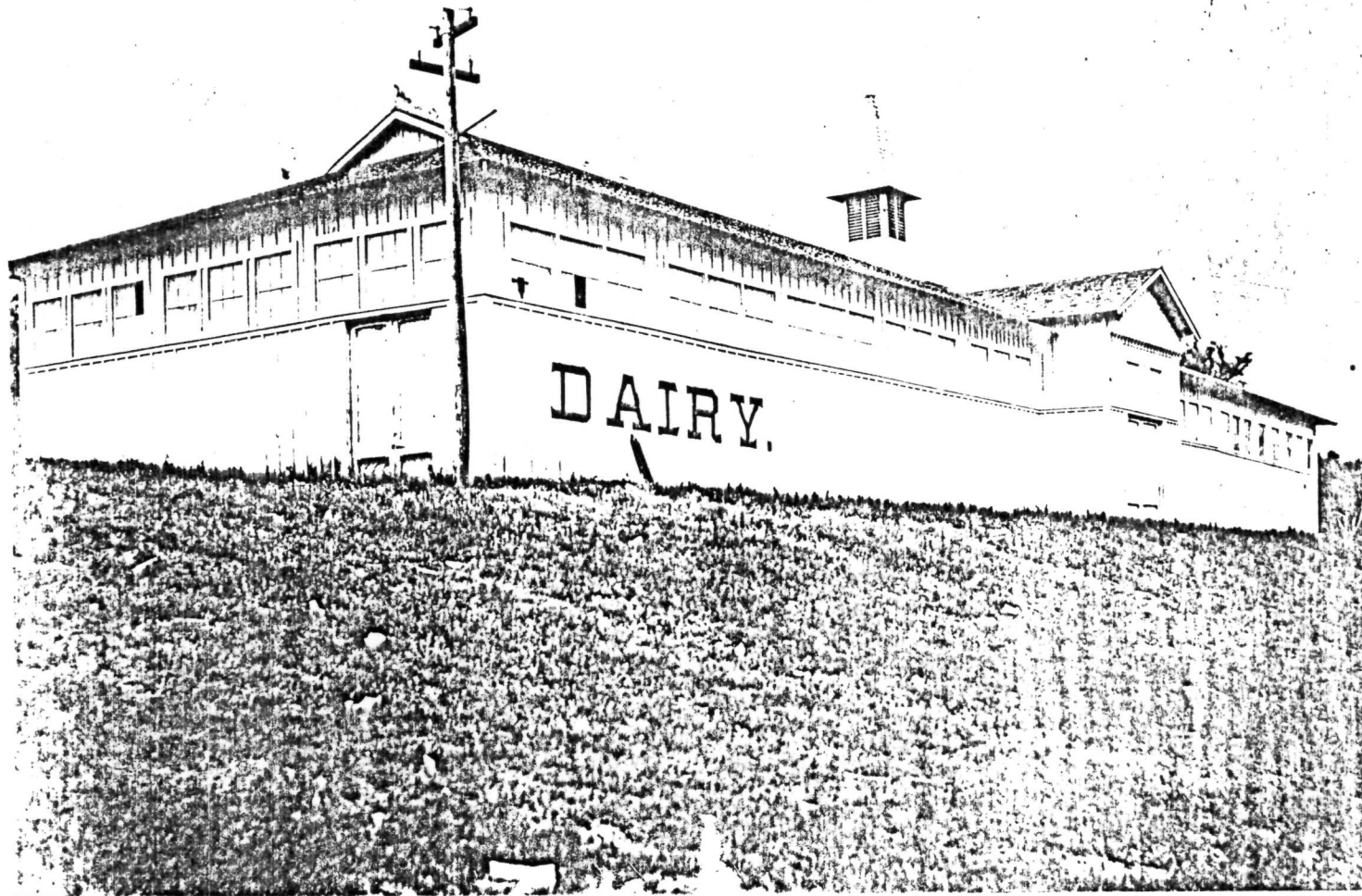
This early photograph clearly showed that Exhibition Hill provided the Fairgrounds with its dominant topographical feature and that architectural and landscape architectural planning had integrated this feature carefully into its scheme. The buildings were situated across the west slope of the hill, latterly, and at various grades on the hill, vertically, to provide a picturesque composition when viewed from the plain. The major buildings had cupolas which increased the visual interest of the buildings in addition to their mass. All buildings were frame.

NOTES

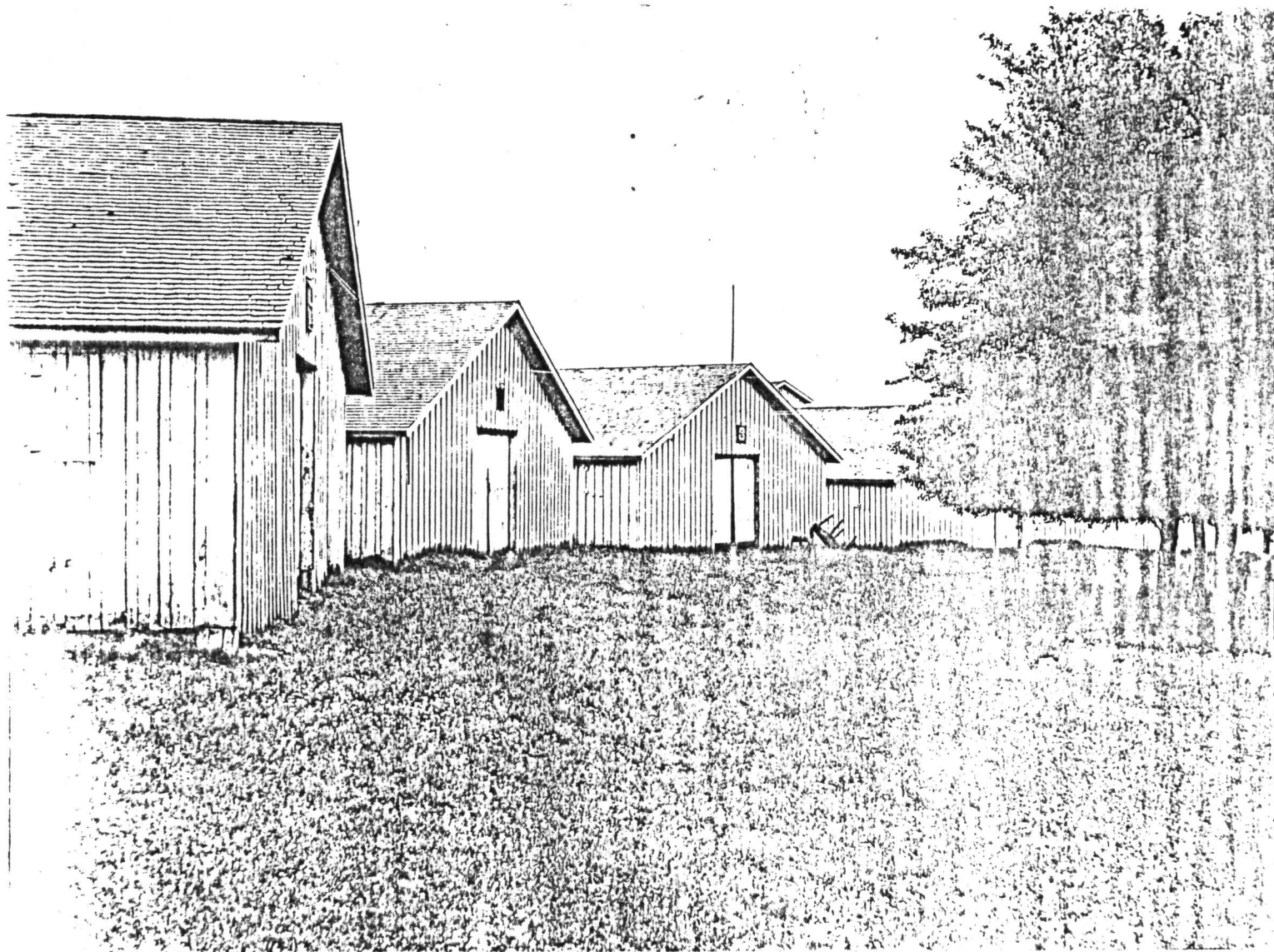
1. Antique photographs from the period show buildings painted in polychrome.



IOWA STATE FAIRGROUNDS CIRCA 1886. This is the best extant photograph or other visual documentation picturing the grounds directly after the completion of the William F Hackney set of buildings. Exposition Hall stands at left, Pinecrest Lodge in center with cupola, and Floral Hall at right. The small cottages suggest the mix of scale on the grounds at this time. Landscaping with plantings is minimal. Roads are primitively defined. All buildings pictured are non-extant.



DAIRY HALL, DESIGNED BY WILLIAM F HACKNEY 1886. NON-EXTANT
STOOD SOUTHEAST OF PRESENT AGRICULTURAL BUILDING.



BARNs IN CATTLE DEPARTMENT DESIGNED BY WILLIAM F HACKENY IN 1886.
PHOTOGRAPHY SHOWS SEMI-CIRCULAR ARRANGEMENT OF BARNs, BOARD & BAT-
TEN CLADDING, & SIMPLE DESIGN. PHOTO CIRCA 1900.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Description

Item number 7

Page 6

Photographic coverage and a 1901 Sanborn Fire Insurance map, taken together, presents a good idea of how the Fairgrounds appeared circa 1900. Frame buildings were omnipresent and no masonry buildings were shown. Exhibition Hall continued to dominate the Fairgrounds. The cupolas of Pinecrest Lodge and the Agriculture Building (Pioneer Hall) continued to provide counterfoils to the large dome of Exhibition Hall. Most buildings employed boards and battens as exterior wall covering. (The 1886 construction employed almost exclusively this method). Between 1886 and about 1900, there was considerable construction on the grounds, primarily between 33rd Street & 34th Court north of Grand. This construction provided housing for commercial activity: dining rooms, hotel accommodations, and exhibit buildings for farm machinery and products. Buildings built in the 1890s employed novelty siding with tongue and groove as well as clapboard in preference to the earlier boards and battens.

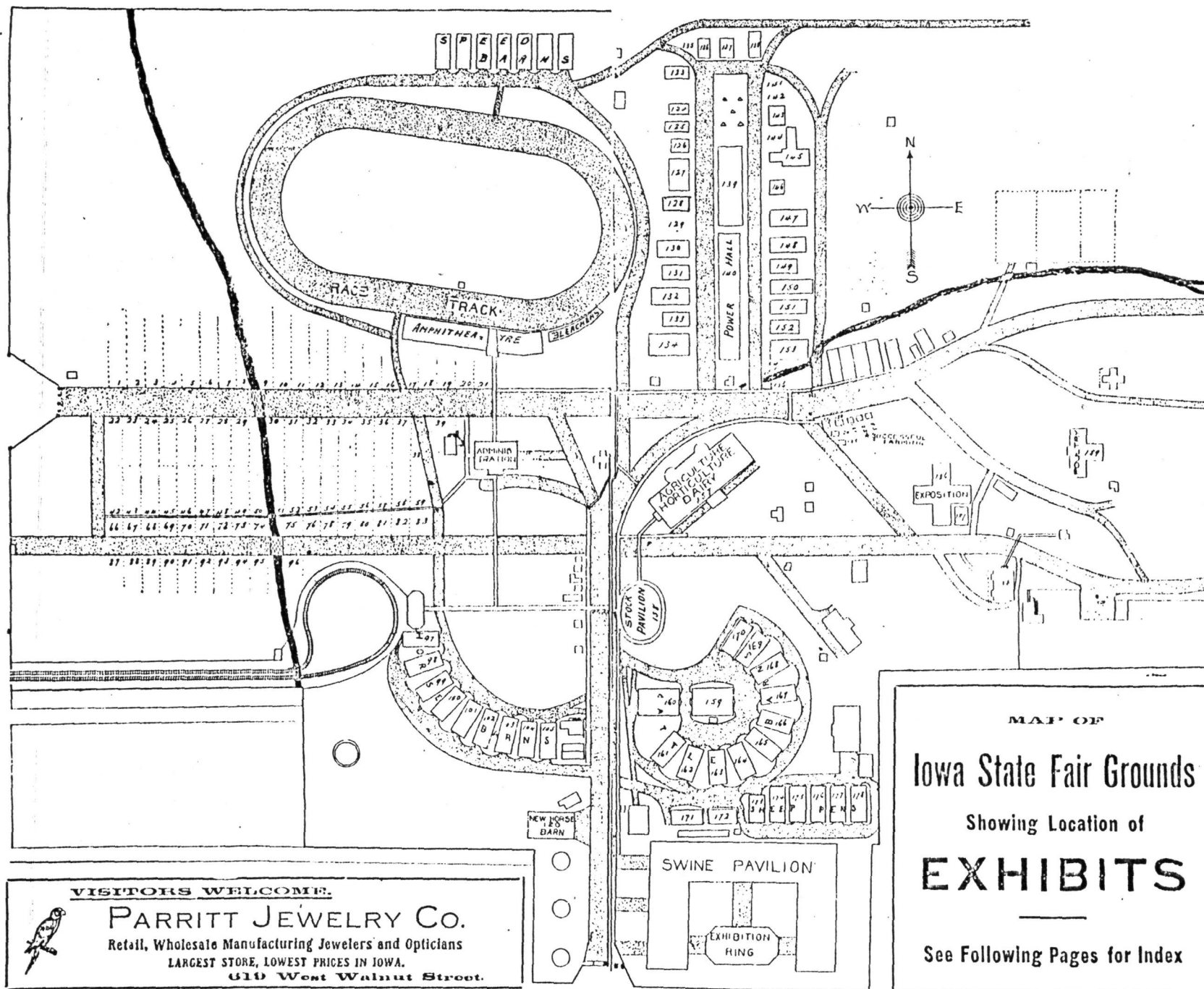
The 1901 Sanborn Fire Insurance map clearly outlines the land-use plan of the grounds. Buildings were grouped throughout the acreage in definite patterns. There are sections for camping, cattle, sheep, hogs, horses, machinery, amusements and race track, dining & lodging, domestic exhibits, and offices for Fair officials. There appeared a logic for these groupings. Animal barns were located in the southern portion of the grounds. Land was level here and nearest railroad connections. Exhibition halls were located on the west slope of Exhibition Hill. This location provided a panoramic view of the countryside to the viewer from the top & a picturesque view when seen from the plain in the west. Farm machinery was located about where the present day Midway stands. Land in this area was level. It was also close to important services like the post office, dining halls & lodging accommodations. These creature comforts were located north of Grand between East 34th and East 34th Court.

In 1901 roads on the Fairgrounds were unpaved and without curbing or gutters. The street system followed routes very much as they remain today. Rail sidings were still adjacent to the grounds beyond the southern boundaries.¹ Paved sidewalks were still absent.

Street lighting made its appearance on the grounds about 1890. In that year oil lamps were situated² and in 1891 500 electric lights were established on the grounds.³

NOTES

1. By 1901 the Fair Board moved that because the amount of freight arriving to the Fairgrounds by rail was so great, the rail sidings should be increased and improved, and some even brought into the grounds. Fair Board Minutes; State Archives; 12 December 1901. The next year, 1902, the Board allowed the Des Moines street car company to lay tracks into the Fairgrounds for passenger convenience. Op cit; January 1902.
2. Fair Board accepted proposal of Globe Light & Heat of Chicago to install oil lamps at \$3.00 per lamp. Op cit; 13 August 1890.
3. Fair Board accepted contract with Hawkeye Electric Manufacturing to put up 500 electric lights and a plant to power them for \$4,860. Op cit; 5 September 1891.



FAIR GROUNDS CIRCA 1908

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Description

Item number 7

Page 7

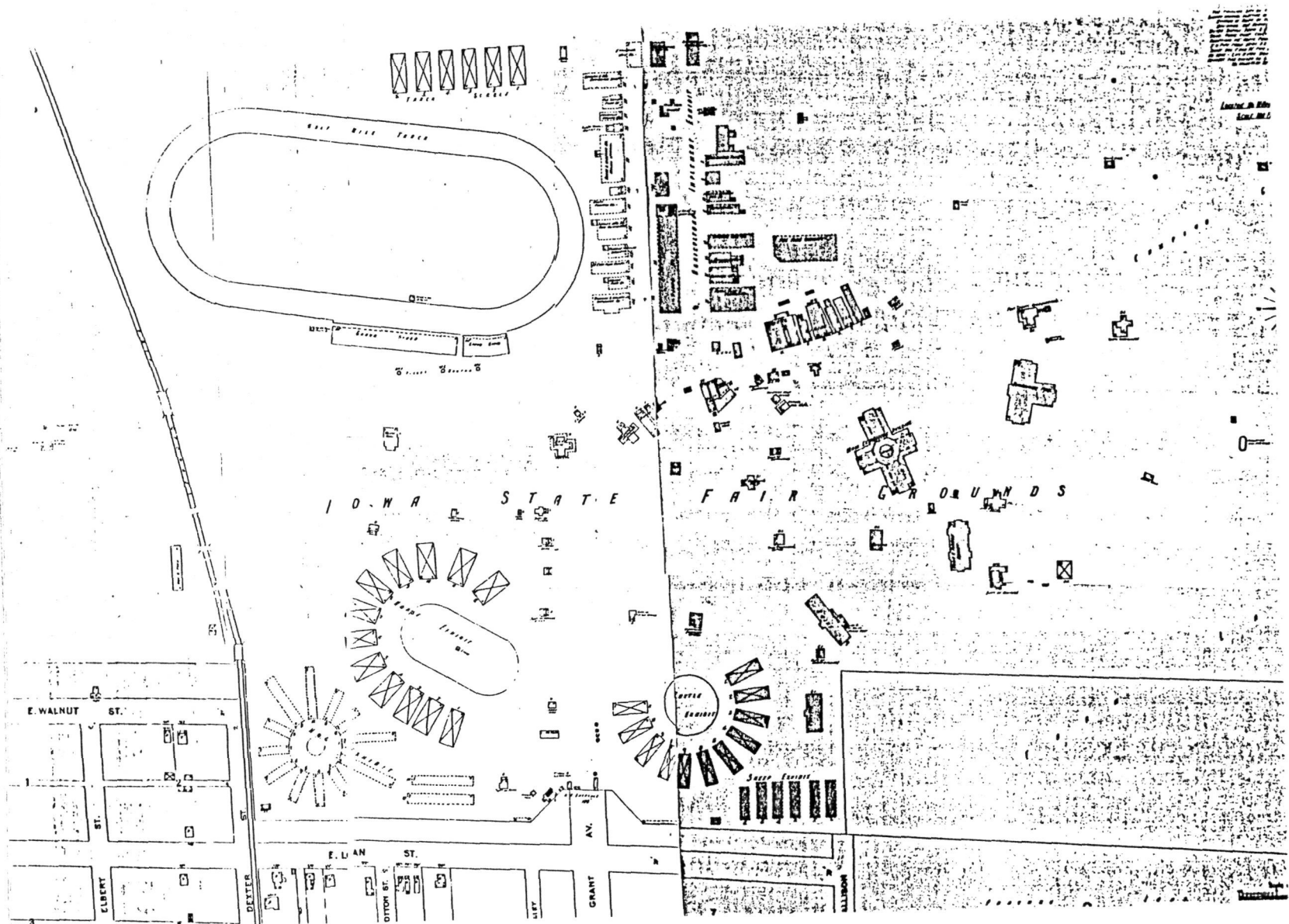
As to buildings, the Fairgrounds about 1900 continued to use those five dozen buildings constructed for the 1886 Fair. These were the frame structures already mentioned. They were constructed in haste and within a tight budget. Soon after construction, many of these buildings required extensive maintenance. Roofs were, in particular, bad. Foundation systems of many of these buildings were temporary.¹ Most of these frame buildings were now painted white.

Antique photographs of the Fair circa 1900 show another facet of building construction. The Machinery Department and the area for dining and lodging had grown very much in an ad hoc manner. Commercial business presented a haphazard design and a mixed maintenance record.² Frame buildings with some architectural pretense stood side-by-side with tents for machinery display and for amusements like the Battle of Manila show. Commercial signage was employed on the roofs of buildings, facades, and on fabric banners. Most every building had at least one flag pole and American flags were frequently attached to support columns of buildings. Buildings did, generally, share a uniform line of facade abutting East 33rd Street, East 34th Street, and Grand Avenue, and buildings were uniformly one-story. There was otherwise no attempt at harmony. Tightly packed together, the buildings presented a commercial jungle at once fascinating and repellent.

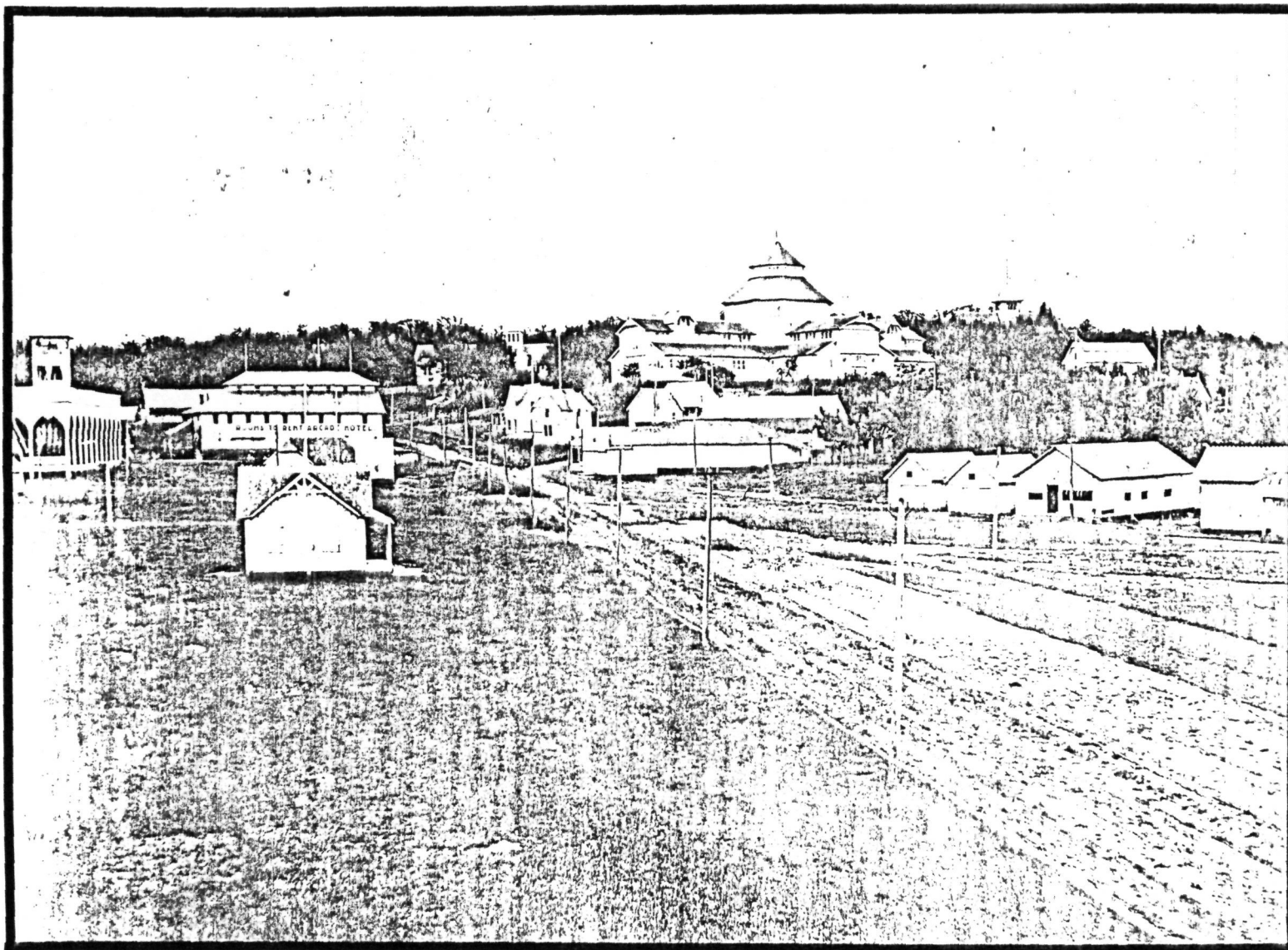
Taken as a whole, the 1900 Fairgrounds looked like a somewhat enlarged version of the 1886 Fairgrounds. Most of the original, frame buildings remained,³ the patterns of land-use were the same, and new construction concentrated mainly in the commercial departments. Telephone poles did line streets and this was new. Tree plantings had achieved a degree of landscape interest on Exhibition Hill, but the level grounds were still without tree cover.

NOTES

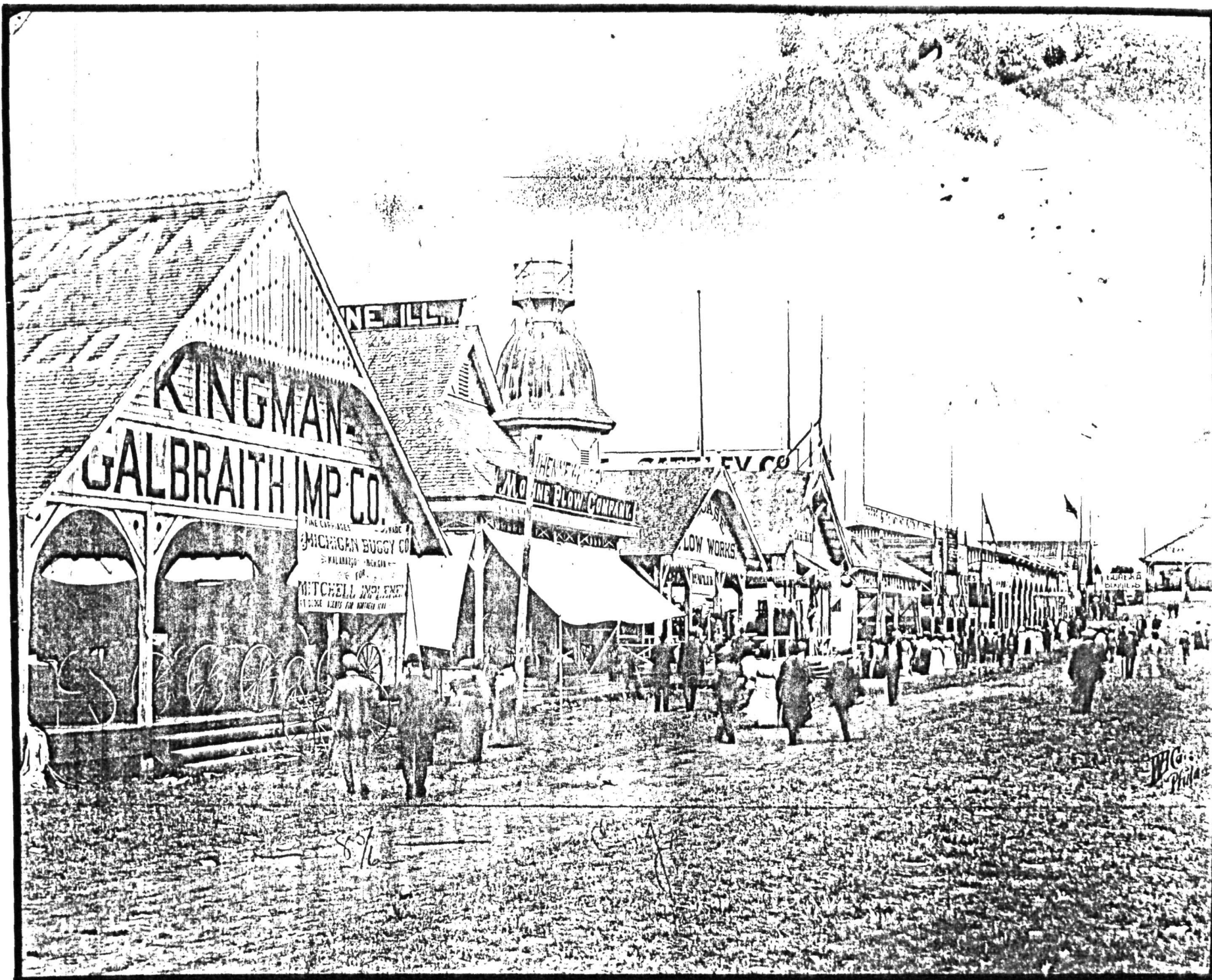
1. The Secretary reported in 1903: "While the condition of the grounds is now better than ever, this can not be said about the buildings thereon. Many of the buildings have been patched and repaired so often that there is now little left but repairs. Time has come when many of the buildings will have to be replaced if a Fair is to be held. The only way in which permanent fire-proof buildings can be erected is by appropriations from the legislature. It is absurd to think that sufficient money can be secured from gate admissions for this purpose when the burden of keeping the old buildings on the grounds in a state of safe and habitable condition is increasing yearly." Fair Board Minutes; State Archives; 9 December 1903.
2. Already in 1890 Fair President Hayes called attention at the Fair's annual meeting of the "unsightly shanties" which should be removed from the grounds. Op cit; 8 January 1890.
3. Some of these had been resited on the grounds and this practice continued.



1901 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map



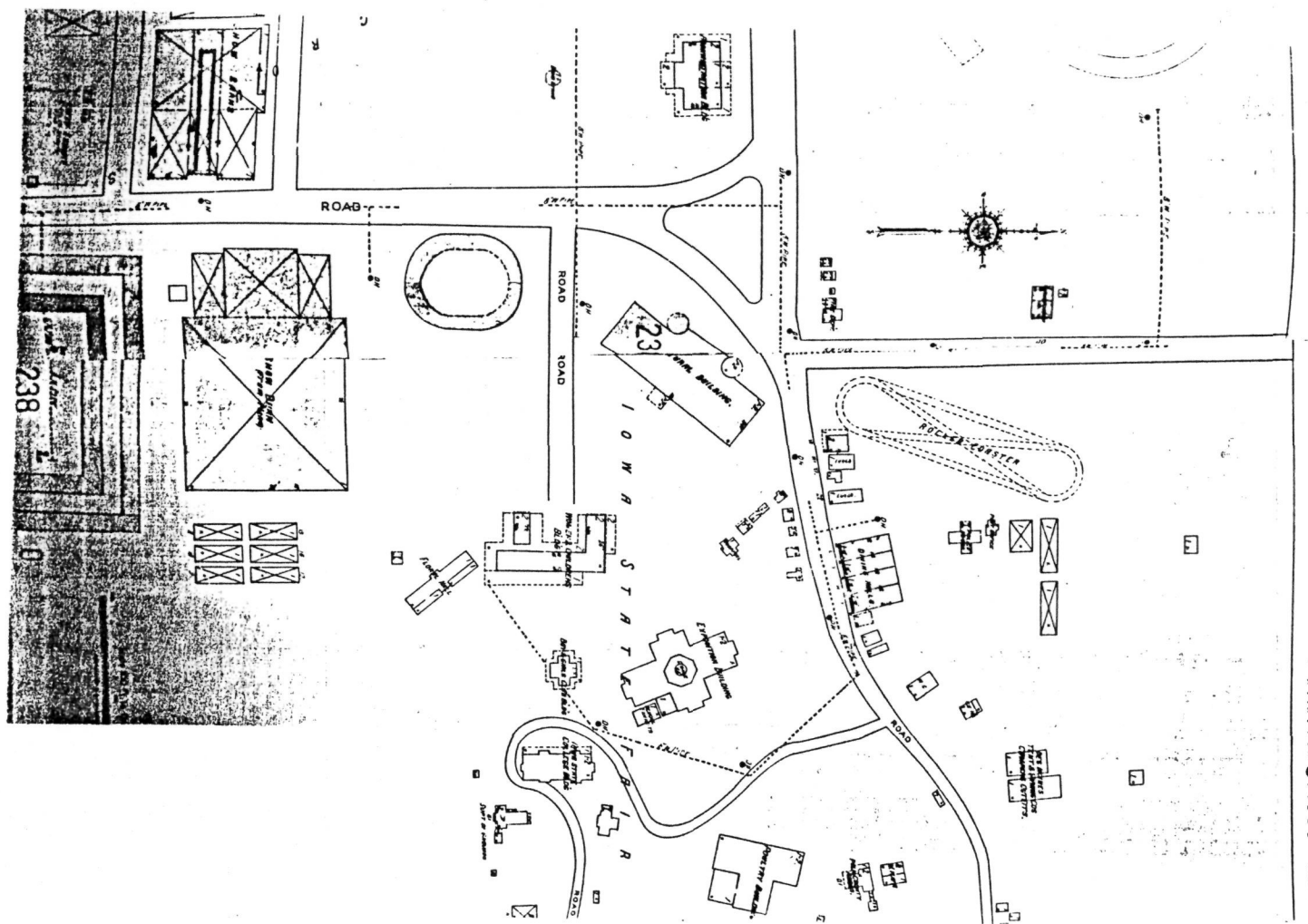
IOWA STATE FAIRGROUNDS CIRCA 1900. Grand Avenue looking ESE. Exhibition Hall dominates Exhibition Hill. Agricultural Building (Pioneer Hall) located left, Pinecrest Lodge located right. Machinery Department at extreme left on plain. Only Pioneer Hall remains.



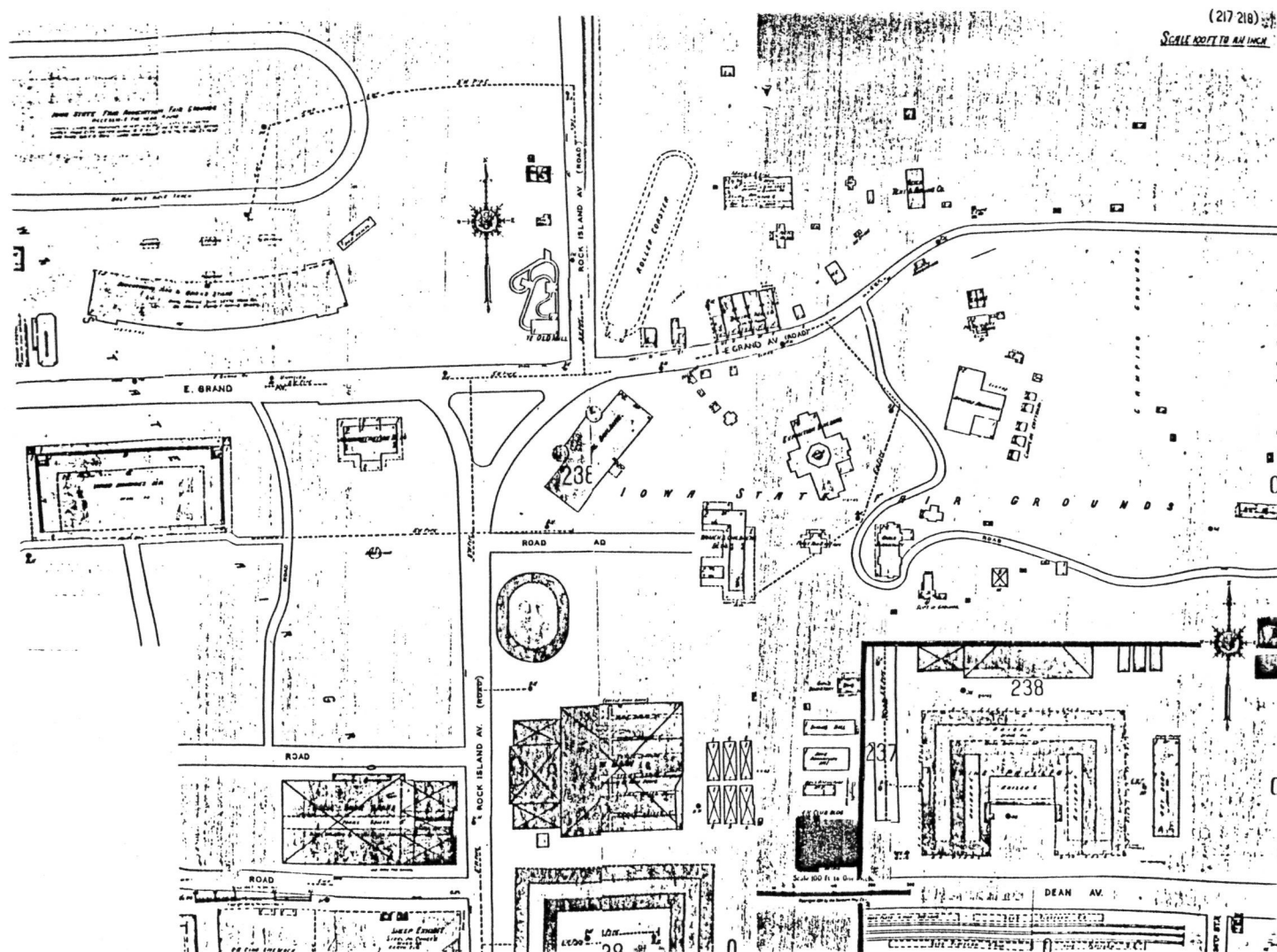
East 33rd Street

MACHINERY DEPARTMENT CIRCA 1900

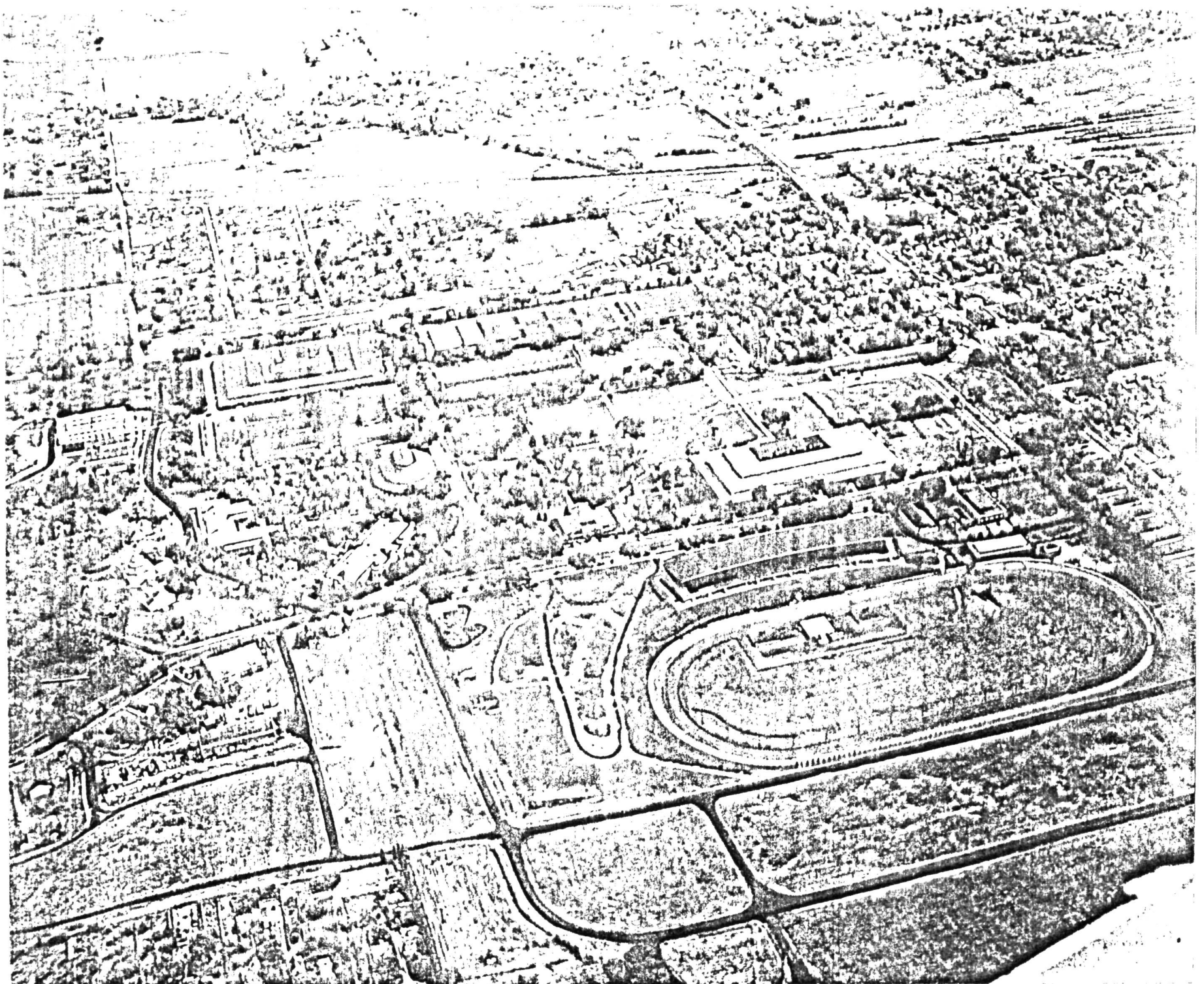
looking NW



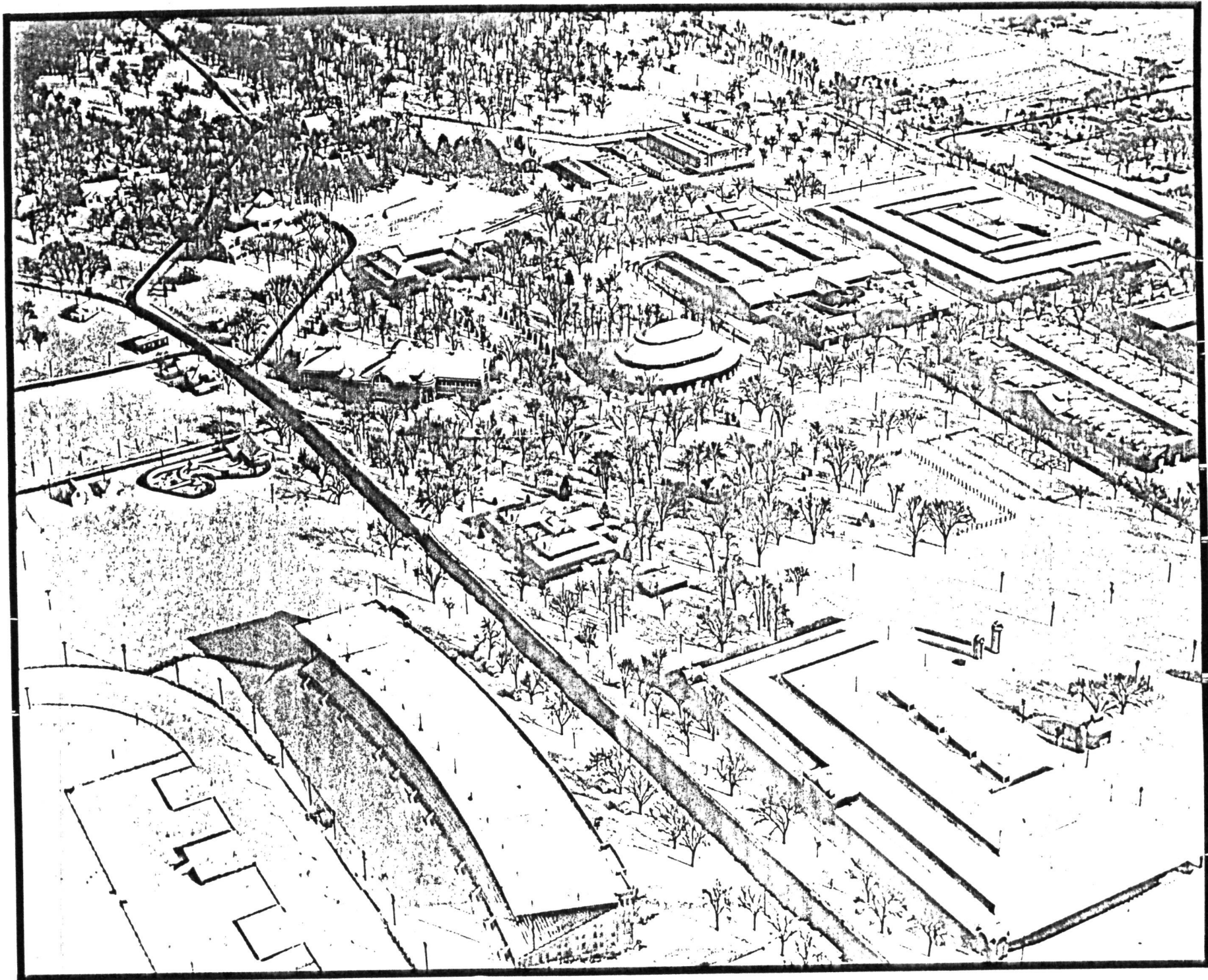
1920 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map



1942 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map



IOWA STATE FAIRGROUNDS CIRCA 1946 LOOKING SOUTH.



IOWA STATE FAIRGROUNDS CIRCA 1948. Aerial view looking SE.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Description

Item number 7

Page 8

As to buildings, the Fairgrounds about 1900 continued to use those five dozen buildings constructed for the 1886 Fair. These were the frame structures already mentioned. They were constructed in haste and within a tight budget. Soon after construction, many of these buildings required extensive maintenance. Roofs were, in particular, bad. Foundation systems of many of these buildings were temporary.¹ Most of these frame buildings were now painted white.

Antique photographs of the Fair circa 1900 show another facet of building construction. The Machinery Department and the area for dining and lodging had grown very much in an ad hoc manner. Commercial business presented a haphazard design and a mixed maintenance record.² Frame buildings with some architectural pretense stood side-by-side with tents for machinery display and for amusements like the Battle of Manila show. Commercial signage was employed on the roofs of buildings, facades, and on fabric banners. Most every building had at least one flag pole and American flags were frequently attached to support columns of buildings. Buildings did, generally, share a uniform line of facade abutting East 33rd Street, East 34th Street, and Grand Avenue, and buildings were uniformly one-story. There was otherwise no attempt at harmony. Tightly packed together, the buildings presented a commercial jungle at once fascinating and repellent.

Taken as a whole, the 1900 Fairgrounds looked like a somewhat enlarged version of the 1886 Fairgrounds. Most of the original, frame buildings remained,³ the patterns of land-use were the same, and new construction concentrated mainly in the commercial departments. Telephone poles did line streets and this was new. Tree plantings had achieved a degree of landscape interest on Exhibition Hill, but the level grounds were still without tree cover.

NOTES

1. The Secretary reported in 1903: "While the condition of the grounds is now better than ever, this can not be said about the buildings thereon. Many of the buildings have been patched and repaired so often that there is now little left but repairs. Time has come when many of the buildings will have to be replaced if a Fair is to be held. The only way in which permanent fire-proof buildings can be erected is by appropriations from the legislature. It is absurd to think that sufficient money can be secured from gate admissions for this purpose when the burden of keeping the old buildings on the grounds in a state of safe and habitable condition is increasing yearly." Fair Board Minutes; State Archives; 9 December 1903.
2. Already in 1890 Fair President Hayes called attention at the Fair's annual meeting of the "unsightly shanties" which should be removed from the grounds. Op cit; 8 January 1890.
3. Some of these had been resited on the grounds and this practice continued.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Description

Item number 7

Page 9

A Sanborn Fire Insurance map pictures the Fairgrounds in 1920. This date provides an arbitrary but nonetheless convenient point of comparison of the Fairgrounds' development since 1901. A continuity of land-use patterns remained. The livestock departments were in the southern grounds, cash crop, floral, and domestic displays still remained in the southern grounds. Cash crop, floral, and domestic displays still clustered around Exhibition Hill. Dining facilities remained in the easterly portion of Grand Avenue.

A new location for the machinery and equipment displays was one point of departure from the 1901 pattern. Machinery Hall/Varied Industries Building (Site #10/1911) was a major improvement on the grounds. This building now housed, under one roof, the myriad commercial displays which had previously stood in the corridor between the present East 33rd & East 34th Streets north of Grand. The building employed steel as structural system and red brick for corner piers and low walls. The building's design was utilitarian although barrel dormers on the northwest and northeast corners provided notes of architectural interest.

With removal of machinery to a more westerly location, Fair amusements began to occupy the vacated land. This land-use remains today as the Midway grounds.

A minor alteration in land-use also occurred in 1909 when a new race track and Grandstand (Site #13/1909) were constructed. The new location was west from the previous one somewhat. The result of this relocation and that of the Machinery Department expanded the built environment of the Fairgrounds towards the main entrance at East 30th Street and Grand Avenue.

In terms of buildings, the 1920 map showed many changes from 1909. Notable was the removal of the circular and semi-circular livestock barns erected in 1886. Cattle, horse, and swine departments each had, by 1920, permanent homes within steel framed buildings with brick clad exterior walls. Cattle and horse departments remained where they had been established in 1886. With the purchase of some new land about 1906, the Swine Department had been relocated a little south of the Cattle Department.

A list of the permanent buildings which appeared between 1901 and 1920 reads like a summary of the key buildings in the historic district. In addition to those buildings already mentioned, the 1920 Fairgrounds also contained the Livestock Pavilion (Site #3/1902), Agriculture Building (Site #2/1904), Administration Building (Site #1/1908), and Women and Children's Building (Non-extant/1913).

Mixed within these new buildings were a number of the original 1886 buildings. Some of these frame buildings remained on their original sites: Floral Hall (southeast of the new Agricultural Building, Exposition Building (Exhibition Hill), Agriculture Building/Pioneer Hall (Site #48/1886). This group of buildings clustered around Exhibition Hill.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Description

Item number 7

Page 10

By 1920 other frame buildings from the original Fair construction had been re-located to new sites. Cattle barns were relocated, for example, from the department's semi-circle and regrouped in 2-parallel rows behind the new brick Cattle Barn (Site #4). Some of the small frame cottages which has served as Fair officials' offices were also, by 1920, relocated from the general area where the Agriculture Building (Site #2) stands today to a location directly southeast of Agriculture Building/Pioneer Hall (Site #48). These cottages provided quarters for campers in 1920. Some of the Race Horse Barns (Sites #30) also were relocated, about 1909, from their original 1895 location north of the race track to a location west of the new race track.

The overall impression of the 1920s Fairgrounds was one of growing prosperity. The permanent building improvements noted consisted, uniformly, of red brick walls with light color, stone trim, and with steel frame construction. Expansion of the built environment extended farther along Grand Avenue on the west than any previous time. The new Grandstand, Livestock Pavilion, and Agriculture Building presented multi-story mass and added a considerable feeling of height and presence.

By 1920 the infrastructure of the Fairgrounds had increased considerably since 1901. The campgrounds received in 1910-1911 a platting system so campers could easily locate their campsites. On the grounds proper, a sewer system provided improvements in waste water management.¹

Roads in 1920 remained dirt as they were in 1901. There were now some stone curbing and this added to the definition of streets. Streets in 1920 continued to receive, as they had in 1901, periodic oiling to control dust. Cinders also continued to be spread to improve street durability. By 1920 a park triangle had been established at the intersection of Grand and Rock Island Avenues.

1942 stands as another convenient reference point in Fairgrounds' development. In that year the United States Army leased, for the duration of World War II, a large portion of the Fairgrounds. The need was for a storage depot for the Air Corps. Before grounds occupation, the United States undertook a comprehensive survey of the Fairgrounds' physical plant. (Another report was prepared in 1945 when the grounds were returned to the State of Iowa as proof of the federal government's careful stewardship). The 1942 document provided a detailed picture of the Fairgrounds that year. A Sanborn map from 1942 provided additional documentation.

NOTES

1. Lack of a sewer system had embroiled the Fair Board in a legal indictment in 1915. Although the case was dismissed in Polk County District Court, Fair officials moved to provide a sewer system. "The Department officials have just recently had a survey made and plans drawn for a complete sewer system..." Greater Iowa; February 1915; p 3 c 3-4. This first sewer project was completed by F C Young of Iowa City. Greater Iowa; May 1915; p 5 c 3-4.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Description

Item number 7

Page 11

Both change and continuity were apparent in the years intervening between 1920 and 1942. Most important was the continued land-use plan virtually unchanged in this time. Despite the radical changes between 1901 and 1920, the Fairgoer at any time would have had no difficulty locating exhibits. The same could be said between 1920 and 1942.

Continuity also characterized the development of buildings between 1920 and 1942. In the Livestock Department, for example, changes were in degree, as barns expanded, rather than in the substance of new design. Large additions to these buildings increased stall and show ring areas in buildings like the Horse Barn (1929), Sheep Barn (1923), and Swine Pavilion and Barn (1936).

The Fairgrounds had continued to expand westward. The Fish and Game Building (Site #11/1927, 1929) joined the Grandstand and the Machinery Hall/Varied Industries Building in this area. Grand Avenue began to assume the look of a boulevard as its original planners had intended. To this end, electric lighting was installed provided by electroliers.¹ Night lighting was also installed on the race track and this increased the facilities on the Fairgrounds for evening entertainment.²

By 1942 running water was available throughout the Fairgrounds. Restrooms were located over the grounds, and, in the campgrounds, bath and shower houses were also available.

A number of the original, frame 1886 buildings remained on the grounds. They continued to cluster around Exhibition Hill and Exhibition Hall. Other frame buildings extant in 1920, like Floral Hall, had been razed. Cottages from the 1886 construction period continued in use as campers' quarters near the Agriculture Building/Pioneer Hall. As the livestock barns expanded, the frame barns from the 1886 construction were removed. Still other 1886 buildings were relocated to new sites. Building (Site #19) is a good example. It stood originally near the Machinery Department. In the 1930s it was moved to its present site and converted into a boys' 4-H Dormitory. Undoubtedly other relocations were undertaken but cannot be documented.

NOTES

1. "GREAT WHITE WAY TO BE COMPLETED SOON" "2-rows of big electroliers from main entrance up Grand Avenue to Rock Island Avenue, thence down Rock Island to south entrance." "It will make these two streets almost as bright as day." Greater Iowa; May 1924; p 4 c 3.
2. "Night Racing New Iowa State Fair Feature;" "To Illuminate Half Mile Track For This Season." Greater Iowa; May 1933; p 7 c 1-2.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Description

Item number 7

Page 12

Although most Fair roads remained, as mentioned, dirt in the 1920s,¹ pavement projects began in the 1930s.² Until that time, the dirt had been treated with oil and with cinders. In the 1930s the campgrounds were also extended.³ The 1900-1942 period saw sidewalk construction both of the brick and of the concrete sort, the one replacing the other.⁴ By 1942 another entrance to the Fairgrounds provided access. This was at East 33rd Street and University Avenue.⁵ Much of the grounds were also fenced by 1942.⁶ In 1936 the City of Des Moines built storm sewers across the Fairgrounds as a WPA project.⁷ Additional water drains were laid in 3 areas in 1938 to provide fire protection for the horse, sheep, baby beef, and poultry buildings.⁸

SUMMARY OF EVOLUTION

The sum total of these and other improvements presented, in 1942, a Fairgrounds vastly more developed than in 1900. There remained, however, continuity. The basic land-use pattern remained intact and this harkened back to the original 1886 Fairgrounds layout. Another source of continuity centered on Exhibition Hill and the surrounding slopes. Here clustered a group of frame buildings. These dated from 1886 and before and included the Agricultural Building/Pioneer Hall (Site #48), Thornton Barn (Site #49), Polk County Fair Headquarters Building (Site #47), Exhibition Hall (non-extant), and the Thornton Farmhouse (Site #50). These

NOTES

1. Greater Iowa; May 1924; p 4 c 1-4. Photograph showing Grand Avenue as a dirt street in Fairgrounds.
2. "IMPROVE GROUND FOR 1934 OPENING" "Contracts have also been let to fence the east end of the new campground and for paving Dean Avenue to the south entrance." Greater Iowa; May 1934; p 4 c 2-3.
3. "40 ACRES ADDED TO STATE FAIR FREE CAMP" "160 acre Tract to be Improve This Summer." 2-miles additional gravel roads being built. "One road is being built from the swine barn through the exhibitors' camp grounds, and a mile of gravel road is being built through the 40 acres of new camp grounds." Greater Iowa; May 1934; p 3 c 4.
4. "Brick sidewalks throughout the grounds are being taken up and replaced with concrete." About 20,000 square feet of new concrete sidewalks were laid in 1936 alone. Greater Iowa; May 1936; p 4 c 2.
5. The idea was to relieve congestion at other entrances. Greater Iowa; May 1936; p 4 c 2.
6. 3,600' of new fence installed by Cyclone Fence-Corp along University Avenue and East 30th Street. Fence will have 6" concrete curbs, 8'4" high w/barbed wire and will extend from East 33rd to East 30th, thence south to Grand Avenue. Greater Iowa May 1936; p 4 c 2.
7. Greater Iowa; July 1936; p 8 c 1.
8. Greater Iowa; May 1938; p 4 c 1.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Description

Item number 7

Page 13

buildings were of substantial proportions and continued to fulfill important purposes. Also in this general area, there were, haphazardly arranged, a number of small, frame, cottage-like buildings. These had served varied purposes over the years, had been constructed in 1886 and in the 1890s, and had been relocated from site to site. In 1942 they provided employee and fairgoer housing. None of these cottages is extant on the site today. A third source of continuity was the street system layout. This plan had remained basically unchanged since the 1886 Fair.

One additional source of continuity: the use of canvass tents for exhibition and food booth purposes. This form of shelter remained in use throughout the 1900-1942 period. Although ephemeral, this form of shelter gave the Fairgrounds a special feel during Fairtime.

The Fairgrounds, as they appear today, are illustrated in the many photographs attached to this application. They include groups & individual views. The grounds are, many ways, unchanged in 1986 from 1942. Roads remain the same, but East 33rd Street has become a major entrance to the Fairgrounds. Grand Avenue between East 30th Street and East 33rd Street is now called Grand Concourse but this change is mostly verbal. All roads in the Fairgrounds are now paved with the exception of those in the campgrounds which are gravel covered. Grand Avenue and Rock Island remain the primary roads on the grounds and give the Fair its shape.

The major Fair buildings, extant in 1942, remain so in 1986 with the single exception of the Women's and Children's Building. This collection of red brick structures continues to dominate the visual image of the Fairgrounds. The movement, apparent in 1939-1942, towards employment of poured concrete continued for a while on the grounds. The Girls' 4-H Dormitory (1947/Site #17) is the largest example of this building technique. (It is also the last example).

Changes on the grounds have resulted mostly from the in-fill of buildings. Fair attendance in one of the record years, 1925, totaled 408,363. Attendance in 1985 was 688,000. This increase in attendance has required bigger food service facilities. The Fair Board has allowed construction of permanent buildings for these services. Many of the not-eligible sites in this historic district are these buildings erected, primarily, in the 1970s and 1980s. They serve a practical purpose. These pole barn type buildings have all but replaced the former canvass tents.

The growth of the Fair's complexity has also required new service related buildings. These are another source of in-fill. The Electrical Building (1964/Site #15) is a case in point. This building continues the employment of red brick, but others, like the Feed and Forage Barn (1964/Site #85), are pole barn types.

A third source of in-fill are new buildings to house exhibits and demonstrations.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Description

Item number 7

Page 14

Here again, some buildings, like the Family Center (1956/Site #12) conform to the red brick standard, while others like Aquarium Building (19 /Site #34) do not. This latter building is a pole barn type.

In addition to new buildings, older buildings have been brought into the Fairgrounds. During the 1960s and 1970s, theme parks such as Disney World were popular across the United States. The Iowa State Fair Board supported here in Iowa the relocation of selected buildings onto the Fairgrounds from other parts of the state. The idea was to establish "Heritage Village", a mini-theme park. Grand Avenue between East 34th Street and East 34th Court received most of these buildings. They included a small railroad depot (Site #42/cl880) and the Harper Mutual Telephone company office (Site #41/1915). Reconstructions were another aspect of the Heritage Village movement. They included construction of replicas of a log church in Iowa (Site #44/1967) and erection of a totem pole during the 1965 "Indian Heritage" theme for the Fair. Some of the buildings in Heritage Village are actually old buildings from the Fairgrounds itself. Site #40 is an excellent example. This building appears to date from 1886. Its boards and battens & small scale match many traits of the W F Hackney designed buildings. Although moved from its (unknown) original site to its present location, the building is considered as a contributing structure in this application. Site #37 is another case in point and it too is contributing. The replicas and buildings moved onto the grounds are considered not-eligible for the purposes of this application. They in no way call attention to the development of the Fairground's architecture although they are regularly visited by Fairgoers.

In 1986 a small complex of frame buildings remains extant around Exhibition Hill. Exhibition Hall itself was dismantled in 1948. The small cottages east of Agricultural Building/Pioneer Hall are also gone. Pioneer Hall itself remains, as do the Thornton Barn and the Polk County Fair Headquarters. All these buildings date from the earliest period of construction.

The sum total of the Fairgrounds in 1986 is substantially the same as in 1942. Red brick continues to dominate the district, especially in the southern, livestock section, both because of the number of buildings employing the material and in terms of their immense scale. Three years of Army occupation of the Fairgrounds altered the district minimally. Dutch Elm disease took a major toll, particularly on Grand Avenue between East 30th Street and Rock Island Avenue.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Description

Item number 7

Page 15

ARCHITECTURAL TYPOLOGY

The Iowa State Fair and Exposition Grounds Historic District contains buildings which fall clearly into five building types. Structural systems define these building types and form a typology. Each building type has one or more methods of exterior wall cladding particular to its type. The degree to which buildings retain their cladding provides a test of integrity for the building's contribution to the historic district. One building type (Type 5) falls outside the time-frame of this nomination. Type 5 comprises two buildings of note. Several other structural types (like pole barns and a geodesic dome) are also outside the time-frame. Buildings like these and other buildings built post 1936 are deemed not-eligible/intrusion and are excluded from the typology which follows.

TYPE 1 comprises building with heavy wood post and beam supports. These are the oldest buildings on the Fairgrounds. They include a barn original to the farmstead which pre-dates the Fair's establishment on the site. Other Type 1 buildings were erected in 1886 during the period of first construction for the Fairgrounds. Boards and battens were used exclusively to clad the exterior walls of these buildings. The buildings were strictly utilitarian in design with little, if any architectural detail. Most Type 1 buildings are non-extant. The largest remaining example, Agriculture Building/Pioneer Hall (Site #48) employs a roof system of cross gables, window groupings, and some decorative millwork to provide a picturesque composition. The scale of Type 1 buildings is large. They were designed to provide space for large exhibitions of farm products, machinery and equipment, livestock, and other domestic and educational displays. Extant Type 1 buildings all have gable roofs.

TYPE 1 SITES

Site #19

Site #48

Site #49

Building 1886

Agricultural Bldg/

Pioneer Hall 1886

Barn 1885 o/b

TYPE 2 comprises of buildings using balloon frame. This technique finds expression in virtually every period of construction on the Fairgrounds. The earliest example, the Charles Thornton Farmhouse, dates prior to 1885. It originally contained interesting Gothic Revival architectural detail but alterations to the building have radically altered its appearance. Most Type 2 buildings employ clapboards for exterior cladding although novelty siding with tongue and groove is also used. Type 2 buildings constructed in 1886 have, uniformly, board and battens. Type 2 buildings are considerably smaller in scale than Type 1. Type 2 buildings were designed to provide area for small displays and other service oriented activities, like office space. Many Type 2 buildings were without

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Description

Item number 7

Page 16

permanent foundations and were relocated over the years to serve ad hoc purposes. Many have since been demolished. Extant Type buildings all have gable roofs. Most have side gables, and some have center gable facades, a note of architectural interest. Millwork is kept at a minimum.

TYPE 2 SITES

Site #37	Building	1886
Site #14	Ye Old Mill	1920-24
Site #16	Model Cottage	1920s
Site #26	Model Cottage	1920s
Site #30a	Racehorse Barn	1895
Site #30g	Racehorse Barn	1895
Site #30h	Racehorse Barn	1895
Site #30i	Racehorse Barn	1895
Site #30j	Racehorse Barn	1895
Site #46	Women's Farm Bureau	1924
Site #33	Sieck's Tent Co.	1927
Site #47	Polk Co. Fair Hdqrs.	1886
Site #50	Thornton Farmhouse	1885 o/b

TYPE 3 comprises buildings with steel frame structural system. These buildings constitute the first designed as so-called permanent improvements to the Fairgrounds. They date from 1902 and continue to be erected to the present time. (Newer buildings are, however, considerably smaller.) Type 3 buildings contributing to the historic district were all erected with financial support from the State of Iowa. None have been moved and only one, the Women and Children's Building (1913) has been razed. Type 3 buildings cover large floor spaces. They were designed for a variety of purposes: To display exhibits, house livestock; provide show rings for showing and judging; to seat spectators; and for administrative offices. Most Type 3 buildings have flat roofs, but a few have gable, slope, or monitor roof systems (Administration Building, Grandstand, Livestock Pavilion). A notable feature of most Type 3 buildings is their phased construction. Barns for the Sheep, Cattle, Horse, and Swine Departments were each constructed over a period of years, as was the Grandstand and Machinery Hall/Variety Industries Buildings. The level of architectural detail varies from building to building in this type. Keffer and Jones of Des Moines designed many Type 3 buildings. The firm showed a respect for rigorously utilitarian design. Stylistic details were, when employed, restrained. In this context, however, stylistic details ranged over those popular during the period. The Administration Building (Site #1) has some Craftsman elements; the Sheep Barn (Site #6) has Neo-classical Revival; the Educational Building (Site #13) has Art Deco. The State Fish and Game Building (Site #11) has a quantity of eclectic, Italian Renaissance detail. This building is the exception that proves the rule as it was designed by Proudfoot, Rawson and Soeurs of Des Moines. Type 3 uniformly employs brick for exterior wall cladding. It frequently uses cast or cut

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Description

Item number 7

Page 17

stone and, in one case, terra cotta with polychrome for trim.

TYPE 3 SITES

Site #56	Bandstand	1927
Site #1	Administration Bldg.	1908
Site #2	Agriculture Bldg.	1904
Site #3	Livestock Pavilion	1902
Site #4	Cattle Barn	1909, 1914, 1920
Site #5	Swine Pavilion & Barn	1907, 1936
Site #6	Sheep Barn	1915, 1923
Site #7	Baby Beef Barn	1939
Site #9	Horse Barn	1909, 1912, 1929
Site #10	Machinery Hall	1911
Site #11	State Fish & Game	1927, 1929
Site #13	Grandstand/Education Bldg.	1909, 1927
Site #29	Cooling Out Paddock	1914
Site #31	Machinery Storage	1936

TYPE 4 comprises buildings with masonry load-bearing walls. These buildings were among the first so-called permanent improvements to the Fairgrounds. They date from 1907 and continue to be erected to the present time. Several kinds of masonry material are employed in their construction including brick, concrete block and hollow tile. Combinations of materials are also used like the Poultry Building where hollow tile is faced with brick. Type 4 buildings are generally smaller in scale than Type 3 buildings. They serve a variety of purposes like storage, small exhibit space, exhibitor housing, bath houses and restrooms. Type 4 buildings employ gable, hip, or flat roof systems. Like other buildings on the grounds, Type 4 buildings show a restraint of architectural detail. This restraint is even more pronounced in Type 4 than in Type 3 buildings. While Type 3 buildings serve major purposes, most Type 4 buildings play more minor roles. They are, as a result, designed with more rigorous utilitarianism.

TYPE 4 SITES

Site #8	Poultry Building	1938
Site #18	Girls' 4-H Dorm	1930
Site #38	Inside Inn Cafe	c1905
Site #75	Bath House	1931

TYPE 5 comprises buildings with reinforced concrete structural system. There are three buildings of this type on the Fairgrounds. Each was built outside the period of significance for this nomination and each of these buildings is not eligible for inclusion. Type 5 buildings were built in the decade between 1938/1939-1949 and show modernistic design elements. They are notable for their use

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Description

Item number 7

Page 18

of curved corners and opaque glass. The buildings have flat roofs. Each of these buildings is of major importance to the architectural development of the Fairgrounds except Site #53 and should be reevaluted for inclusion in the historic district when they reach acceptable age.

TYPE 5 SITES

Site #17	Girls' 4-H Dorm	1949
Site #20	4-H Club Bldg.	1939-42
Site #53	Infield Stage	1938

APPLICATION HISTORY AND METHODOLOGY

This application is the outgrowth of the Iowa State Fair Board's concern for the continued vitality of the Iowa State Fair and the future of its historic facilities. In 1975 staff of the Fair initiated application for several buildings' nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. The opinion of the State Nominations Review Committee determined, in 1980, that the entire Fairgrounds should be nominated as an historic district. Mr. Bill Fisher, Assistant Manager of the Fair, began research to this end.

A major issue emerged at the same time concerning the redevelopment or relocation of the Iowa State Fairgrounds. A Master Plan Committee of the Iowa State Fair Board was organized to evaluate options for the Fair's future. To this end, the Fair employed Economics Research Associates and POD, Inc., of Los Angeles, California, to study development alternatives for the Fair. This study was underwritten by funding from the Iowa General Assembly.

A consultants' report was completed in 1979. It presented five alternatives for the Fair. Three alternatives centered on the Fair's present location; two alternatives centered on relocation of the Fairgrounds. The Master Plan Committee decided, at an interim meeting, to exclude consideration of relocation of the grounds.

An important thrust of the consultants' report was the value of the Fair's collection of buildings. Adaptive reuse of some buildings was recommended, maintenance was urged, and the demolition of two buildings, the Women and Children's Building and the Administration Building was suggested. The Iowa State Fair Board is presently moving towards implementation of the report and plans to remain at the present Fairgrounds.

Nomination of the Fairgrounds to the National Register fits into this long-range plan for the Fair. This project continued through the late 1970s and early 1980s. The present Fairgrounds was established in 1886 at the present site. A

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Description

Item number 7

Page 20

IOWA STATE FAIR AND EXPOSITION GROUNDS HISTORIC DISTRICT
LIST OF BUILDINGS BY LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

<u>Site #/Site Location</u>	<u>Level of Significance*</u>
Administration Bldg.	1 B
Agriculture Bldg.	2 A
Livestock Pavilion	3 A
Cattle Barn	4 A
Swine Barn	5 A
Sheep Barn	6 A
Baby Beef Barn	7 C
Poultry Bldg.	8 C
Horse Barn	9 A
Varied Industries Bldg.	10 A
Conservation Bldg.	11 A
Family Center	12 C
Grandstand/Educational Bldg.	13 A
Ye Old Mill	14 B
Electrical Bldg.	15 C
Model Cottage	16 A
Girls' 4-H Dorm	17 C
Girls' 4-H Dorm	18 B
Building	19 A
4-H Club Bldg.	20 C
International Place	21 C
Power Pavilion	22 C
Electrical Sub-Station	23 C
Model Meat Locker	24 C
Model Gas Station	25 B
Model Home	26 A
Aquarium Bldg.	27 C
Gas Model Home	28 C
Cooling Out Paddock	29 A
Racehorse Barns	30a B
Racehorse Barns	30b C
Racehorse Barns	30c C
Racehorse Barns	30d C
Racehorse Barns	30e C
Racehorse Barns	30f C
Racehorse Barns	30g B
Racehorse Barns	30h B
Racehorse Barns	30i B
Racehorse Barns	30j B
Storage House	31 B

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Description

Item number 7

Page 21

<u>Site #/Site Location</u>		<u>Level of Significance</u>
Warehouse	32	C
Sieck's Tent & Awning Co.	33	B
Poultry & Rabbit Display	34	C
Surplus Property Bldg.	35	C
Ft. Madison Blockhouse	36	C
Building	37	A
Inside Inn Cafe	38	C
Grocery Store	39	C
Cottage	40	C
Harper Mutual Telephone	41	C
Railroad Station	42	C
Building	43	C
Log Church	44	C
Schoolhouse	45	C
Women's Farm Bureau Bldg.	46	C
Polk Co. Fair Headquarters	47	A
Agriculture Bldg/Pioneer Hall	48	A
Barn	49	A
Farmhouse	50	C
Shelter	51	C
Shelter	52	C
Infield Stage	53	C
Rolling Show Stage	54	C
Show Stage	55	C
Bandstand	56	B
Fairview Show Stage	57	C
Master Jack's	58	C
Steer & Stein	59	C
International Food Buffet	60	C
Beer Garden	61	C
New Orleans Cafe	62	C
Des Moines Register Bldg.	63	C
Diamond Jack's	64	C
Kentucky Fried Chicken	65	C
Maid Rite	66	C
Tri-Met Dining Hall	67	C
Chesterfield Dining Hall	68	C
Beef Palace	69	C
Coney Corner	70	C
W. Des Moines UM Church	71	C
Stockman's Inn	72	C
Dairy Prlor	73	C
Building	74	B
Bath House	75	B
Shower House	76	B

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Description

Item number 7

Page 22

<u>Site #/Site Location</u>		<u>Level of Significance</u>
Restroom	77	C
Restroom	78	C
Restroom	79	C
Restroom	80	C
Restroom	81	C
Restroom	82	C
Restroom	83	C
Restroom	84	C
Feed & Forage	85	C
FFA Bldg.	86	C
Gazebo	87	C
South Booth	88	B
Compactor Bldg.	89	C
House	90	C
West Arena	91	C
Campground Office	92	C
Pit Shack	93	C
Sky Glider	94	C
Ticket Booth	95	C
Ticket Booth	96	C
Ticket Booth	97	B
Ticket Booth	98	B
Ticket Booth	99	B
Ticket Booth	100	B
Ticket Booth	101	B
	102	No site
Earth Shelter Model Home	03	C
Ticket Booth	104	C
Ticket Booth	105	C
Ticket Booth	106	C
Ticket Booth	107	C
Ticket Booth	108	C
Ticket Booth	109	C
Building	110	C
Building	111	C

*Key to evaluative scale: A=Key Contributing, B=Contributing, C=Intrusive

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Description

Item number 7

Page 19

celebration seemed appropriate for the grounds' centennial. Such celebration fitted into the broader "Iowa Homecoming 86" celebration. Homecoming was chosen as theme for the 1986 Fair and nomination of the grounds to the National Register of Historic Places is intended to highlight the celebration.

In addition to Mr. Fisher's research, William Wagner began, in 1984 a series of interviews and architectural evaluations for nomination material. Wagner's conclusions are attached to the Iowa Inventory Site Sheets included in this application. Much of Wagner's information stemmed from Floyd Deets, long-time Superintendent of Grounds at the Fair. Subsequent research substantiated, through independent sources, the accuracy of much of Deets' information. Deets' data and Wagner's evaluations are valuable contributions to this application.

In Summer 1984 Fisher submitted to the Office of Historic Preservation a draft Statement of Significance for the Fairgrounds' application. OHP Staff replied with suggestions and recommendations. Fisher submitted a second draft and the Staff responded with further recommendations.

In October 1985 Fisher consulted with W. C. Page, Public Historian. Page and the Fair Board contracted together to prepare an application for the Fair. Page agreed to complete additional research, prepare the text, and liaison the application with the Office of Historic Preservation.

The application in hand is, clearly, the result of many preparers. Fisher evaluated the physical condition of sites and prepared preliminary site sheets. POD, Inc. prepared some background passages in the text. Page developed the architectural typology and evaluated architectural significance. Wagner prepared architectural descriptions. The document enjoys, as a result, the benefits and suffers the drawback of a group undertaking. Throughout the process, the Fair Board's intention has remained the same: to seek National Register status for long term goals and to provide a central highlight for the 1986 Fair.

A special note is needed for the individual Iowa Site Inventory Forms attached to this application. Each site finds reflection in a 2-page inventory form. Many sites also contain additional information gathered in 1942 by the United States in a survey project explained elsewhere in this document. This survey contained many excellent photographs which pictured buildings on the Fairgrounds in 1942. These have been included here. This survey treated only those buildings involved in the lease agreement between the Fair and the U. S. Army (This area comprised the Fairgrounds south of Grand Avenue only.) Buildings outside the leased area were excluded from the 1942 survey.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Significance

Item number 8

Page 2

legislative appropriations. Notwithstanding these changes, the general locations of the major functions--livestock displays, main exposition buildings, racetrack and parking and campground areas--remain as they were positioned on the fairgrounds in 1886. The noteworthy exception is the machinery and equipment exhibits area which has shifted from the east to the south of the racetrack area.

THE STATE FAIR AS AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION AND ENTERTAINMENT

Iowa's State Fair opened at its new permanent Des Moines location in 1886 as the editor of the Iowa Homestead enthusiastically proclaimed¹: "The State Fair is a great school, teaching by object lessons, when rival breeds and rival machines and rival varieties of trees and seeds come in active competition, and their merits are decided by competent committees." Not only that, the visitors attend "to study the improvements in stock, in farm machinery, in horticulture, and, in fact, in every department of fair work." This educational emphasis, founded upon the old cattle show and the central features of exhibiting and judging livestock, linked Iowa's fair directly to the traditions of earlier Iowa fairs and to the antecedent influences of New England-New York prototypes.

Unlike many state fairs (especially further to the East), which catered increasingly to city crowds and became largely sporting events, the Iowa fair remained far more true to its earlier function of representing and furthering the interests of agriculture. Its distinctiveness evidently existed from the very start, as witnessed by a traveler returning in 1886 from visits to the Minnesota and Iowa fairs (both just opening at their new permanent locations) remarked: "My impression was, in regard to the State fair at Minnesota, that it was more in the nature of an exposition than of a great farmers fair like that of Iowa. . . . It looked to me more like a city affair than a State institution, for and by the farmers, like your Iowa shows."² That Iowa's fair has remained truly a statewide rather than simply a large city event (compared to major fairs elsewhere) is borne out by a 1979 study.³ This indicates that Iowa's fair attracted 52 percent of the state's population living beyond the local county compared to 39 percent for the State Fair of Texas, 32 percent for the Tennessee State Fair, 15 percent for the Mid-South Fair, and 4 percent for the Florida State Fair. Yet another indicator underscoring its statewide popularity is that attendance at Iowa's fair between 1904 and 1985 has steadily outpaced the rate of state population growth, with attendance increasing 450 percent compared to but a 31 percent increase in the state's

1. "The State Fair," Des Moines Iowa Homestead (September 3, 1886).
2. All Is Ready: For the Great Iowa Fair, Which Opens Today," Des Moines Iowa State Register (September 8, 1886).
3. Economic Research Associates and POD, Inc., "Analysis of Redevelopment/Relocation Alternatives Iowa State Fair," Vol. 1 (Privately printed, 1979), pp. 111-14--111-16.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Significance

Item number 8

Page 3

population. By 1985, the number of visitors (expressed as a share of Iowa's population) constituted nearly one-fourth of the state's residents.¹

The educational function was and continues to be expressed in buildings for displays of agricultural products and the domestic arts; livestock judging and parades, the booths, lectures and exhibits of educational and propaganda organizations; and demonstrations of machinery and equipment by manufacturers. A comparison of permanent buildings standing in 1901 with those of today reveals that the commitment to educational functions has remained constant. About three-fourths of the area taken up by buildings (based on calculations of their exterior dimensions) continues to be for educational as opposed to entertainment, leisure and administrative support functions. This shows that the expansion of entertainment/leisure functions has occurred not in buildings but in structures such as the roller coaster (1915) and the sky glider (1975). The most noticeable change is the educational exhibits, which in 1901 were housed in eighty-three small frame buildings, today have been consolidated (especially livestock presentations) into thirty-five more substantial buildings.

Within the educational tradition, however, great change has necessarily taken place as the fair increased in complexity to find and keep its place in the new agriculture and the modern world. By the time when the Iowa Fair was locating in its permanent home, the old plowing matches had been discontinued as had the evening discussion meetings among farmers. Fair organizers found new educational opportunities, however, in cooperating with the agricultural college and state government agencies to present exhibits and organize training seminars that gradually augmented regular traditional displays. Also, technical advancements of all kinds guaranteed the displacement of old with new lines of commercial/industrial exhibits. Overall, since 1901, the emphasis of educational functions in the permanent buildings of the fair has shifted from showing rival improvements in farm machinery, equipment and other commercial displays toward exhibiting materials associated with the domestic arts and governmental, cultural and historical activities.

The most substantial buildings of the fair, the majority of which were erected during the prosperous agricultural years during the first two decades of the twentieth century, are devoted to educational activities, displays, and exhibits. With the establishment of the State fair as a regular State activity under a Board of Agriculture in 1900, large infusions of legislative appropriations produced a

1. Compiled from information contained in Economic Research Associates, "Analysis of Redevelopment/Relocation Alternatives Iowa State Fair," 1:111-11; Ross, "Iowa State Fair," 323-324; and attendance figures for the years 1954-1968 and 1979-1985 provided by Bill Fisher of the Iowa State Fair.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Significance

Item number 8

Page 4

whole series of "permanent improvements". The more notable of them include the Livestock Pavilion (1902), the Agriculture Building (1904), the Swine Pavilion and Horse Barn (1907), the Varied Industries Building (1911), the Sheep Barn (1915), and the Cattle Barn (1920). By 1915 the secretary of the Iowa fair could boast that "Iowa has what is recognized by fair managers, exhibitors and breeders as the best balanced and greatest livestock fair and exposition in America. . . ."¹ Educational purposes also have continued to occupy the largest of the remaining early buildings--Pioneer Hall (1886, contains the museum of Iowa Farm Life), and the barn building (1865, exhibits "Grandfather's Farm" displays for children). Since the 1930s new education efforts in the main have been associated either with less elaborate structures such as the created thematic attraction known as "Historic Village" (1960s), or the substitution of one educational use for another (e.g., the 1928 Poultry Building became the 4-H Exhibits Building), or the conversion of a non-educational facility into one for educational use (e.g., the Girls 4-H Dormitory (1947) now serves as the Arts and Crafts Exhibit Building and the former Polk County Fair Headquarters (1887) is the Iowa State Fair Museum).

Today numerous entertainment and amusement activities are interspersed among the educational presentations and they play an equal if not greater part in the plans of visitors to the Iowa Fair. Some, such as food concessions, have always been a part of fair festivities and other mild amusements (e.g., plowing contests and ladies riding contests) were early conceded a role at agricultural fairs. The two main entertainment forms--horse racing and the midway carnival--for years, however, galvanized much opposition. Such diversions, many feared, encouraged lower entertainments--gambling, drunkenness and licentiousness. But fair organizers could not exclude for long what people wanted in the way of amusements. Thus, to keep in tune with the changing times, horse racing, being more on the border between exhibits and amusement, found permanent inclusion in most fairs by the 1880s. Carnival attractions found their place within a few years after the tremendous boost of popularity given them by the Midway at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair.²

By the time that the Iowa State Fair had selected its permanent site in Des Moines, therefore, amusements were expanding in importance at agricultural fairs generally, although not without great opposition. Accordingly, the new fair grounds in 1886 sported a racing track claimed to be "one of the finest and fastest tracks in the West" while at the dedication of the new fair Josiah B. Grinnell vociferated: "I would bar the gates forever to gamblers, jockeys, whiskey vendors and oleomargarine frauds, and leave reptilian monstors, with acrobats, pigmies and fat women to the showman, Barnam". Instead, urged Grinnell, "write over your portals, dedicated to art, animal industry and agriculture. . . ."³ Within only a

1. Iowa's Great State Fair--A Contrast Between 1887 and 1915," Des Moines Register and Leader (August 15, 1915).
2. Kniffen, "Agricultural Fair: The Pattern," 272-279.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Significance

Item number 8

Page 5

few years, however, the public's growing thirst for entertainment had broken down all opposition. By the time of the 1915 fair, grandstand officials were promising that "In addition to auto polo which will be played on the track, eight vaudeville acts have been engaged to entertain the crowds in the amphitheater in the afternoon. At night the 'War of Nations,' with nine vaudeville acts, ending with a fireworks display, will be presented. This will consist of reproducing many scenes of the European war."

The grandstand, track, cooling out paddock and race stables continue to stand out as the most striking entertainment feature at the Iowa Fair. The original grandstand was replaced with a large open "steel amphitheater" in 1919, followed in 1927 by further additions and a brick exterior. Increasing demand for midway style amusements has increased the number of associated structures over the years (e.g., roller coaster (ca. 1924), Ye Old Mill (1920-1924), and various people lifts and slides during more recent years). Show structures for presenting everything from hog calling contests to rock bands to cheerleader competitions have also grown more numerous to include the bandstand (1927) and various show stages (1967, 1968, 1981). Food concessions, the one constant at all fairs, have become more substantial structures than their predecessors and the number of smaller stands have multiplied to cater to the public's increased tastes for culinary variety.

It is in the buildings devoted to entertainment/leisure and administrative functions that the fair mainly shows appearances of its "recent" or "post-1940s" development. Whereas only 42 percent of the post-1940s fair buildings are educational related, such buildings house 56 percent of the administrative functions and 86 percent of the entertainment/leisure functions. Notwithstanding these directions of development, however, the state fair continues to largely impart a 1900-1930 feeling. This is because the largest most substantial (educationally associated) buildings date from those earlier years while the updated entertainment/leisure activities and modernized administrative functions have been expressed through a scattered multitude of smaller, non-descript buildings.

The permanent buildings, in sum, reveal an Iowa Fair that has successfully adapted itself to the mechanical/electronic age and to a population growing more urban than rural. Educational presentations become increasingly refined as the blending of entertainment with instruction activities shows close attention being paid to remaining in touch with the modern tempo and expectations of visitors to the fair. In its succession of permanent buildings and structures, the Iowa State Fair

3. "The Great Iowa State Fair," Des Moines Iowa Homestead (August 27, 1886); "Soldiers' Day: The Largest Attendance Ever Present on a Tuesday--The Vets Take the Grounds, Des Moines Iowa State Register (September 8, 1886).
1. "Iowa's Great State Fair--A Contrast Between 1887 and 1915," Des Moines Register and Leader (August 15, 1915).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet significance

Item number 8

Page 6

fits the historical pattern shown by the larger midwestern state fairs. Wire fences have replaced wood fences enclosing the grounds. Weatherproof permanent buildings for livestock, judging arenas, machinery exhibits, agricultural displays, various entertainments and administrative functions have to a large degree neutralized the effects of bad weather on the holding of events. The other part of the fair not addressed in this nomination --its ephemeral temporary structures--continues much as it has since the nineteenth century although improved facilities are in place to service the enlarged campgrounds, parking areas, and Midway.²

FAIRGROUNDS AS PLANNED RESOURCE

Considerable credit goes to the Iowa State Fair Board. The Board has been conscious from 1885, the year the grounds were purchased, of the need to develop the grounds systematically. The Board has achieved this over the years through the employment of professionals in land-use planning. Immediate on acquisition of the grounds, the Board employed Jacob Weidenmann of New York City to prepare a master plan for the Fairgrounds' physical development. Weidenmann was a landscape architect, based in New York, and enjoyed a nationally recognized practice. Other actions by the Board illustrate the broad historical process of their policies. In 1890, for example, the board responded to the Fair's rapid growth by employing another landscape architect, A. N. Carpenter of Galesburg, Illinois, to reevaluate the master plan. The Carpenter Plan reaffirmed the basic 1886 land-use design and cemented in place Weidenmann's template for livestock, produce, exhibition, and amusement areas on the grounds which obtains today. The Board responded to further growth of the Fair by the employment in 1910-1911 of O. C. Simonds of Chicago to reevaluate yet once again the long-term planning of the Fair's physical growth. Simonds is remembered today particularly for platting the campgrounds and beautifying the Fairgrounds proper. After a long period of further growth, the Board employed in the late 1970s Economic Research Associates and POD, Inc. of Los Angeles, California to prepare an economic and physical analysis of the Fairgrounds. Although outside the time-frame of this application, the current master plan calls further attention to the Board's historic concern for long-term development of the Fair's physical resources. The current master plan recommended, incidentally, that the Iowa State Fair should remain on its current site, a point of debate in the 1970s.

Several historical figures have played leadership roles on the Board. Notables included William T. Smith of Oskaloosa. Smith led the drive to persuade the Iowa General Assembly to allocate funds to purchase a permanent site for the Fair. S. B. Packard of Anamosa played a pivotal role. As President of the Board, he was a leader in the turn-of-Twentieth Century movement to reorganize state involvement in

2. Kniffen, "American Agricultural Fair: The Pattern," 279, 282.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Significance

Item number 8

Page 7

agricultural affairs. The major result of this movement was the creation in 1902 of a state Department of Agriculture. The State of Iowa accepted, in this action, an important role in the funding of the Fair's physical growth. Packard later became Governor of Iowa. Arthur R. Corey also played a pivotal role on the Fair Board. From 1911 until World War II, Corey served as Assistant Secretary. This position was tantamount to a manager of the State Fair. Corey was an able politician. He effectively coordinated his Board's desire to construct new buildings with the General Assembly's function as funding agent. Most of the major buildings on the Fairgrounds today were constructed during Corey's tenure.

Other historical figures have influenced the Fairground's development as a planned resource. Notable in this regard is Isaac S. Brandt, a successful East Des Moines merchant and booster. Brandt led a local campaign in Des Moines to raise matching money for purchase of the Fairgrounds in 1885. Considerable credit goes to Brandt for selection of a site which combines utility with beauty.

FAIR BUILDINGS AS CULMINATION OF PHASED CONSTRUCTION

A number of buildings on the Fairgrounds illustrate phased construction, another aspect of long-term planning. The Horse Barn (Site #9) is a good example. Originally designed in 1907 by Smith, Wetherell, and Gage, the completed building comprises five units constructed in four phases. The building required 22 years to complete. Units were completed as funds for construction became available. The original two units (northeast and southeast corners) were constructed in 1907. A connecting link designed by Oliver O. Smith was added in 1909. In 1912 an addition was added on the west. Smith also designed this unit. In 1929 the Horse Barn was completed after plans of Keffer and Jones, Smith's associates and successors to his practice. Underlying this phased construction was a long-term plan devised by Smith. The systematic development of this plan assured the successful utility of the Horse Barn. Other buildings on the Fairgrounds also illustrate a planning and phased construction. The Grandstand and Educational Building (Site #13/1909/1927), the Cattle Barn (Site #4), and Machinery Hall/Varied Industries Building (Site #10) are a few examples.

CONTINUUM OF ARCHITECTURAL FIRMS

The Fair buildings represent today, by and large, two sets of architectural designs. Each set was designed by one architect or group of architects. William F. Hackney of Des Moines planned the first complete set of buildings in 1886. A few of these buildings, like Agriculture Building/Pioneer Hall (Site #48/1886) survive intact. Between 1904-1954, one group of architects designed every major building on

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Significance

Item number 8

Page 8

the Fairgrounds save he Both change and continuity were apparent in the years intervening between 1920 and 1942. Most important was the continued land-use plan virtually unchanged in this time. Despite the radical changes between 1901 and 1920, the Fairgoer at any time would have had no difficulty locating exhibits. The same could be said between 1920 and 1942.

Continuity also characterized the development of buildings between 1920 and 1942. In the Livestock Department, for example, changes were in degree, as barns expanded, rather than in the substance of new design. Large additions to these buildings increased stall and show ring areas in buildings like the Horse Barn (1929), Sheep Barn (1923), and Swine Pavillion and Barn (1936).

The Fairgrounds had continued to expand westward. The Fish and Game Building (Site #11/1927, 1929) joined the Grandstand and the Machinery Hall/Variied Industries Building area. Grand Avenue began to assume the look of a boulevard as its original planners had intended. To this end, electric lighting was installed, provided by electroliers.¹ Night lighting was also installed on the racetrack and this increased the facilities on the Fairgrounds for evening entertainment.¹

By 1942 running water was available throughout the Fairgrounds. Restrooms were located over the grounds, and, in the campground, bath and shower houses were also available.

A number of the original frame 1886 buildings remained on the grounds. They continued to cluster around Exhibition Hill and Exhibition Hall. Other frame buildings extant in 1920, like Floral Hall, had been razed. Cottages from the 1886 construction period continued in use as campers' quarters near the Agriculture Building/Pioneer Hall. As the livestock barns expanded, the frame barns from the 1886 construction were removed. Still other 1886 buildings were relocated to new sites. Building (Site #19) is a good example. It stood originally near the Machinery Department. In the 1930s it was moved to its present site and converted into a boys' 4-H Dormitory. Undoubtedly other relocations were undertaken but cannot be documented. Although most Fair roads remained, as mentioned, dirt in the 1920s,² pavement projects began in the 1930s.³ Until that time, the dirt had been

1. "GREAT WHITE WAY TO BE COMPLETED SOON" "2 rows of big electroliers from main entrance up Grand Avenue to Rock Island Avenue, thence down Rock Island to south entrance." "It will make these two streets almost as bright as day." Greater Iowa; May 1924; p. 4 c. 3.
1. "Night Racing New Iowa State Fair Feature;" "To illuminate Half Mile Track For This Reason." Greater Iowa; May 1933; p. 7 c. 1-2.
2. Greater Iowa; May 1924; p. 4 c. 1-4. Photograph showing Grand Avenue as a dirt street in Fairgrounds.
3. "IMPROVE GROUND FOR 1934 OPENING" "Contracts have also been let to fence

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Significance

Item number 8

Page 9

treated with oil and with cinders. In the 1930s the campground was also extended.⁴ The 1900-1942 period saw sidewalk construction both of the brick and of the concrete sort, the one replacing the other.⁵ By 1942 another entrance to the Fairgrounds provided access. This was at East 33rd Street and University Avenue.⁶ Much of the grounds were also fenced by 1942.⁷ In 1936 the City of Des Moines built storm sewers across the Fairgrounds as a WPA project.⁸ Additional water drains were laid in three areas in 1938 to provide fire protection for the horse, sheep, baby beef, and poultry buildings.⁹

SUMMARY OF EVOLUTION

The sum total of these and other improvements presented, in 1942, a Fairgrounds vastly more developed than in 1900. There remained, however, continuity. The basic land-use pattern remained intact and this harkened back to the original 1886 Fairgrounds layout. Another source of continuity centered on Exhibition Hill and the surrounding slopes. Here clustered a group of frame buildings. These dated from 1886 and before, and included the Agricultural Building/Pioneer Hall (Site #38), Thornton Barn (Site #49), Polk County Fair Headquarters Building (Site #47), Exhibition Hall (non-extant), and the Thornton Farmhouse (Site #50). These buildings were of substantial proportions and continued to fulfill important purposes. Also in this general area, there were, haphazardly arranged, a number of small, frame, cottage-like buildings. These had served various purposes over the years, had been constructed in 1886 and in the 1890s, and had been relocated from site to site. In 1942 they provided employee and fairgoer housing. None of these

the east end of the new campground and for paving Dean Avenue to the south entrance." Greater Iowa; May 1934; p. 4 c. 2-3.

4. "40 ACRES ADDED TO STATE FAIR FREE CAMP" "160 acre Tract to be Improved This Summer." 2 miles additional gravel roads being built. "One road is being built from the swine barn through the exhibitors' campground, and a mile of gravel road is being built through the 40 acres of new campground."
5. "Brick sidewalks throughout the grounds are being taken up and replaced with concrete." About 20,000 square feet of new concrete sidewalks were laid in 1936 alone. Greater Iowa; May 1936; p. 4 c. 2.
6. The idea was to relieve congestion at other entrances. Greater Iowa; May 1936; p. 4 c. 2.
7. 3,600 feet of new fence installed by Cyclone Fence Corp. along University Avenue and East 30th Street. Fence will have 6" concrete curbs, 8'4" high with barbed wire and will extend from East 33rd to East 30th, thence south to Grand Avenue. Greater Iowa; May 1936; p. 4 c. 2.
8. Greater Iowa; July 1936; p. 8 c. 1.
9. Greater Iowa; May 1938; p. 4 c. 1.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Significance

Item number 8

Page 10

cottages is extant on the site today. A third source of continuity was the street system layout. This plan had remained basically unchanged since the 1886 Fair.

One additional source of continuity: the use of canvas tents for exhibition and food booth purposes. This form of shelter remained in use throughout the 1900-1942 period. Although ephemeral, this form of shelter gave the Fairgrounds a special feel during Fairtime.

The Fairgrounds, as they appear today, are illustrated in the many photographs attached to this application. They include groups and individual views. The grounds are, many ways, unchanged in 1986 from 1942. Roads remain the same, but East 33rd Street has become a major entrance to the Fairgrounds. Grand Avenue between East 30th Street and East 33rd Street is now called Grand Concourse but this change is mostly verbal. All roads in the Fairgrounds are now paved with the exception of those in the campground which are gravel covered. Grand Avenue and Rock Island remain the primary roads on the grounds and give the Fair its shape.

The major Fair buildings, extant in 1942, remain so in 1986 with the single exception of the Women's and Children's Building. This collection of red brick structures continues to dominate the visual image of the Fairgrounds. The movement, apparent in 1939-1942, toward employment of poured concrete continued for a while on the grounds. The Girls 4-H Dormitory (1947/Site #17) is the largest example of this building technique. (It is also the last example.)

Changes on the grounds have resulted mostly from the in-fill of buildings. Fair attendance in one of the record years, 1925, totaled 408,363. Attendance in 1985 was 688,000. This increase in attendance has required bigger food service facilities. The Fair Board has allowed construction of permanent buildings for these services. Many of the not-eligible sites in this historic district are these buildings erected, primarily, in the 1970s and 1980s. They serve a practical purpose. These pole-barn type buildings have all but replaced the former canvas tents.

The growth of the Fair's complexity has also required new service related buildings. These are another source of in-fill. The Electrical Building (1964/Site #15) is a case in point. This building continues the employment of red brick, but other, like the Feed and Forage Barn (1964/Site #85), are pole-barn types.

A third source of in-fill are new buildings to house exhibits and demonstrations. Here again, some buildings, like the Family Center (1956/Site #12) conform to the red brick standard, while others like the Aquarium Building (19/Site #34) do not. This latter building is a pole-barn type.

In addition to new buildings, older buildings have been brought into the Fairgrounds. During the 1960s and 1970s, theme parks such as Disney World were

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Significance

Item number 8

Page 11

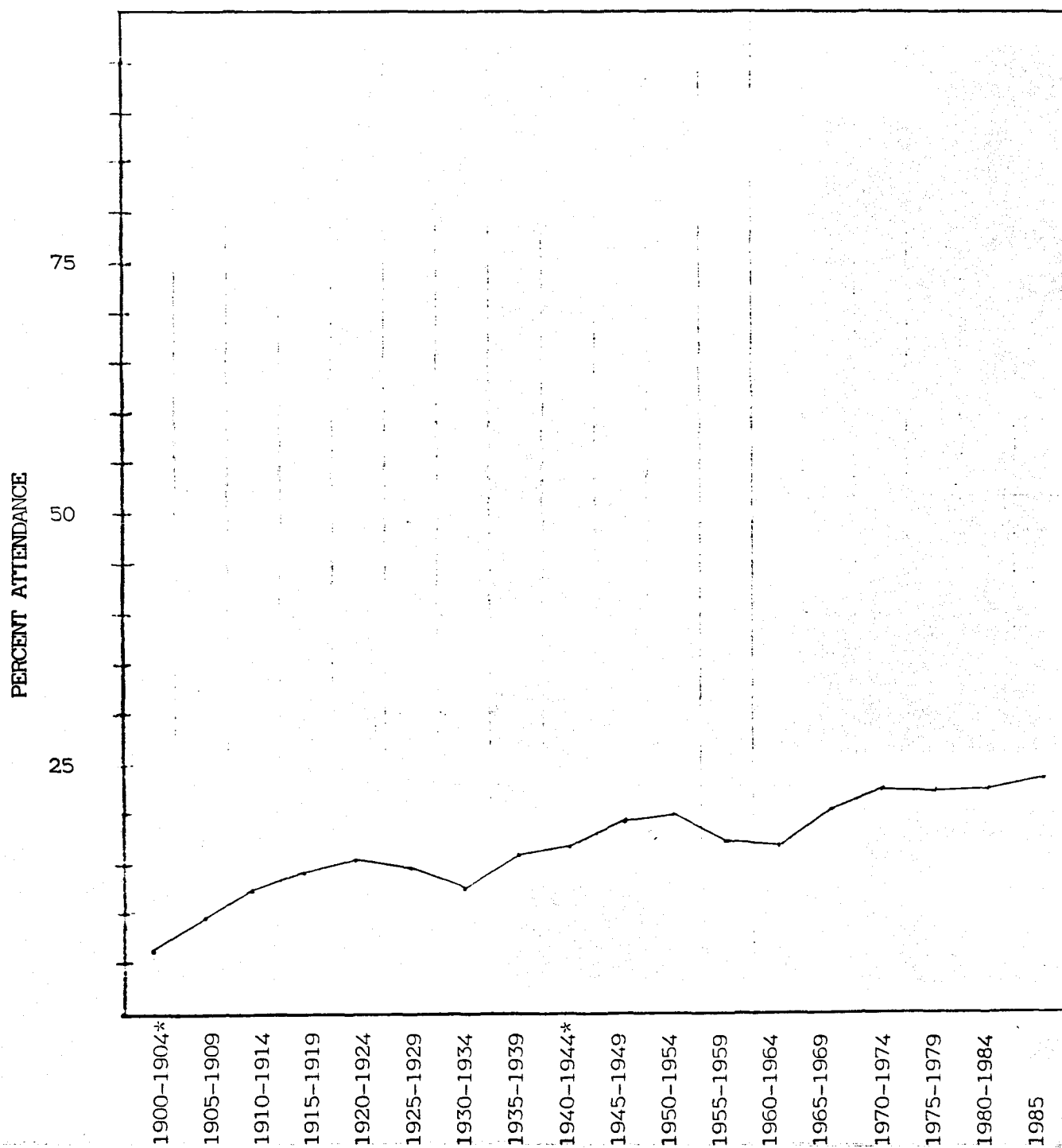
popular across the United States. The Iowa State Fair Board supported here in Iowa the relocation of selected buildings onto the Fairgrounds from other parts of the state. The idea was to establish "Heritage Village", a mini-theme park. Grand Avenue between East 34th Street and East 34th Court received most of these buildings. They included a small railroad depot (Site #42/1880) and the Harper Mutual Telephone company office (Site #41/1915). Reconstructions were another aspect of the Heritage Village movement. They included construction of replicas of a log church in Iowa (Site #44/1967) and erection of a totem pole during the 1965 "Indian Heritage" theme for the Fair. Some of the buildings in Heritage Village are actually old buildings from the Fairgrounds itself. Site #40 is an excellent example. This building appears to date from 1886. Its boards, battens and small scale match many traits of the W. F. Hackney designed buildings. Although moved from its (unknown) original site to its present location, the building is considered as a contributing structure in this application. Site #37 is another case in point and it too is contributing. The replicas and buildings moved onto the grounds are considered not-eligible for the purposes of this application. They in no way call attention to the development of the Fairgrounds' architecture, although they are regularly visited by Fairgoers.

In 1986 a small complex of frame buildings remains extant around Exhibition Hill. Exhibition Hall itself was dismantled in 1948. The small cottages east of Agricultural Building/Pioneer Hall are also gone. Pioneer Hall itself remains, as do the Thornton Barn and the Polk County Fair Headquarters. All these buildings date from the earliest period of construction.

The sum total of the Fairgrounds in 1986 is substantially the same as in 1942. Red brick continues to dominate the district, especially in the southern, livestock section, both because of the number of buildings employing the material and in terms of their immense scale. Three years of Army occupation on the Fairgrounds altered the district minimally. Dutch Elm disease took a major toll, particularly on Grand Avenue between East 30th Street and Rock Island Avenue.

STATE FAIR ATTENDANCE, 1904-1985

Estimated Share of Iowa Population



*Missing attendance data for 1900-1903, 1942-1945.

USE OF STATE FAIR BUILDINGS

1901 AND 1986 COMPARED¹

FUNCTIONS	1901		1986	
	Number Buildings	% of Total Building Exterior Dimensions	Number Buildings	% of Total Building Exterior Dimensions
<u>EDUCATIONAL</u> ²				
General Exhibits/Displays	12	12	23	19
Livestock Judging/Display	44	37	7	42
Machinery/Equipment Display	27	23	5	13
Total Educational	83	72	35	75
<u>ENTERTAINMENT/LEISURE</u> ³				
Dining Establishments	18	5	15	3
Other Amusements	2	5	7	8
Total Entertainment/Leisure	20	10	22	12
<u>ADMINISTRATIVE</u> ⁴				
General Operations	37	6	38	6
Educational/Entertainment Support	14	10	18	4
Lodging/Residence	1	1	4	3
Total Administrative	52	18	60	13
Grand Totals	155	100	117	100

¹ Data gathered from planimetric calculations of exterior building dimensions of permanent buildings shown on 1901 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map and present-day Iowa State Fair Map.

² Educational functions include: General (displays of agricultural products, domestic arts, cultural and propaganda organizations); Livestock: (display barns, pavilions & show buildings); Machinery/Equipment: (displays of commercial and industrial products).

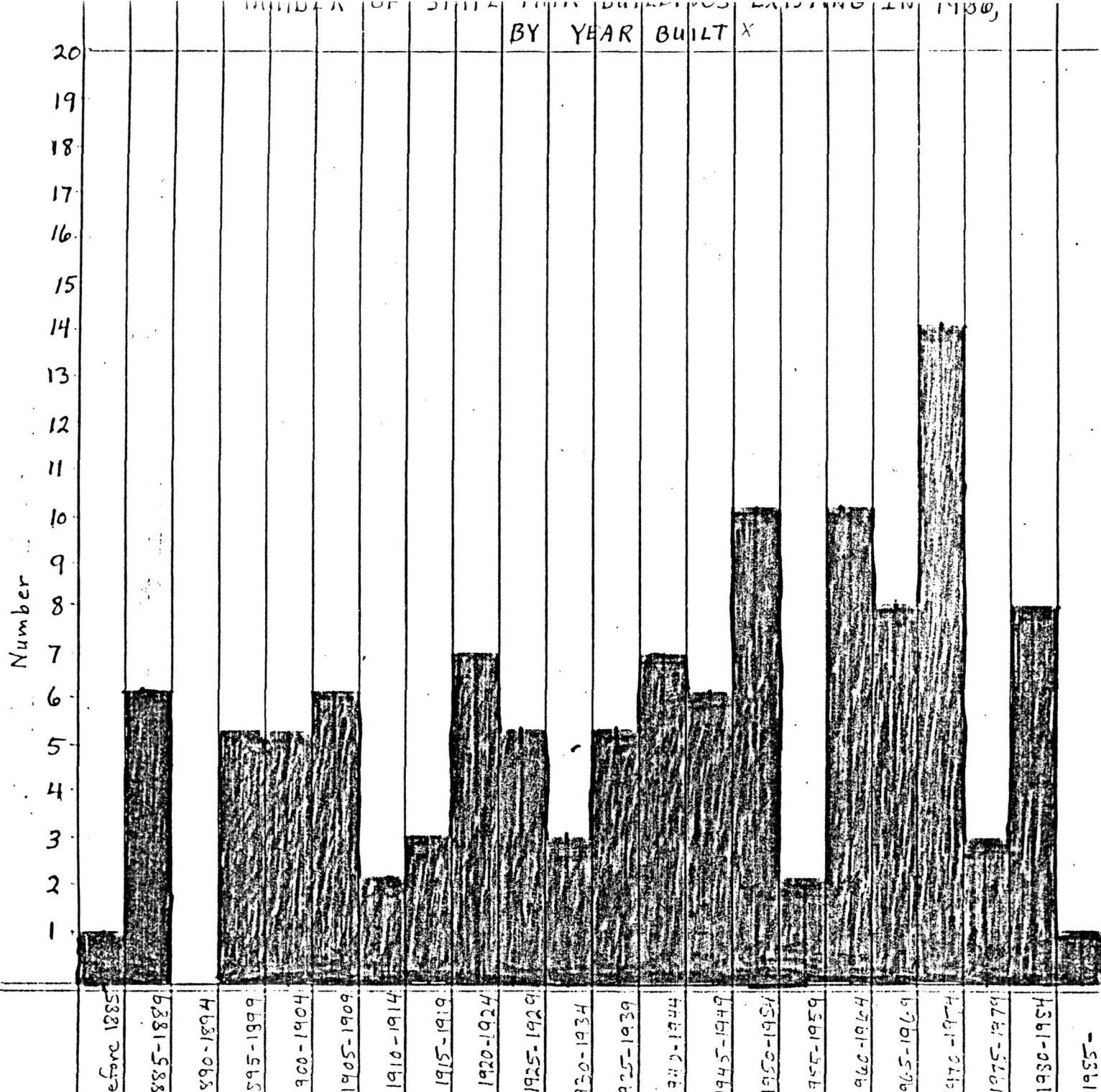
³ Entertainment/Leisure functions includes dining, grandstand, and amusement buildings.

⁴ Administrative functions include: General operations (offices, maintenance, storage, refuse collection, restrooms, ticket booths); Education/Entertainment support: (shelters, race horse stables, animal feed storage); Lodging/Residence: (permanent staff residences, hotel-dormitory buildings).

USE OF STATE FAIR BUILDINGS IN 1986

BY TWO ERAS OF CONSTRUCTION

Period of Construction	Function					
	Educational		Entertainment/ Leisure		Administration	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Pre-1940	19	58	3	16	26	44
1940-1986	14	42	19	86	33	56
Totals	33	100	22	100	59	100



* Year built data missing for 3 buildings and year built estimates made for the following: 1915=1, 1920-24=4, 1925-29=1, 1930-34=1

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Significance

Item number 8

Page 12

The Iowa State Fair and Exposition Grounds represents the culmination of a century of conscious design effort on the part of the Iowa State Fair Board and other historical figures. Considerable credit goes to the Iowa State Fair Board. The Board has been conscious from 1885, the year the grounds were purchased, of the need to develop the grounds systematically. The Board has achieved this over the years through the employment of professionals in land-use planning. Immediate on acquisition of the grounds, the Board employed Jacob Weidenmann of New York City to prepare a master plan for the Fairgrounds' physical development. Weidenmann was a landscape architect, based in New York, and enjoyed a nationally recongized practice.

Other actions by the Board illustrate the broad historical process of their policies. In 1890, for example, the board responded to the Fair's rapid growth by employing another landscape architect, A N Carpenter of Galesburg, Illinois, to reevaluate the master plan. The Carpenter Plan reaffirmed the basic 1886 land-use design and cemented in place Weidenmann's template for livestock, produce, exhibition, and amusement areas on the grounds which obtains today. The Board responded to further growth of the Fair by the employment in 1910-1911 of O C Simonds of Chicago to reevaluate yet once again the long-term planning of the Fair's physical growth. Simonds is remembered today particularly for platting the campgrounds and beautifying the Fairgrounds proper. After a long period of further growth, the Board employed in the late 1970s Economic Research Associates and POD, Inc of Los Angeles, California to prepare an economic and physical analysis of the Fairgrounds. Although outside the time-frame of this application, the current master plan calls further attention to the Board's historic concern for long-term development of the Fair's physical resources. The current master plan recommended, incidentally, that the Iowa State Fair should remain on its current site, a point of debate in the 1970s.

Several historical figures have played leadership roles on the Board. Notables included William T Smith of Oskaloosa. Smith led the drive to persuade the Iowa General Assembly to allocate funds to purchase a permanent site for the Fair. S B Packard of Anamosa played a pivotal role. As President of the Board, he was a leader in the turn-of-Twentieth Century movement to reorganize state involvement in agricultural affairs. The major result of this movement was the creation in 1902 of a state Department of Agriculture. The State of Iowa accepted, in this action, an important role in the funding of the Fair's physical growth. Packard later became Governor of Iowa. Arthur R Corey also played a pivotal role on the Fair Board. From 1911 until World War II, Corey served as Assistant Secretary. This position was tantamount to manager of the State Fair. Corey was an able politician. He effectively coordinated his Board's desire to construct new buildings with the General Assembly's function as funding agent. Most of the major buildings on the Fairgrounds today were constructed during Corey's tenure.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Significance

Item number 8

Page 13

Other historical figures have influenced the Fairgrounds' development as a planned resource. Notable in this regard is Isaac S Brandt, a successful East Des Moines merchant and booster. Brandt led a local campaign in Des Moines to raise matching money for purchase of the Fairgrounds in 1885. Considerable credit goes to Brandt for selection of a site which combines utility with beauty.

FAIR BUILDINGS AS CULMINATION OF PHASED CONSTRUCTION

A number of buildings on the Fairgrounds illustrate phased construction, another aspect of long-term planning. The Horse Barn (Site #9) is a good example. Originally designed in 1907 by Smith, Wetherell, & Gage, the completed building comprises five units constructed in four phases. The building required 22 years to complete. Units were completed as funds for construction became available. The original two units (northeast and southeast corners) were constructed in 1907. A connecting link designed by Oliver O Smith was added in 1909. In 1912 an addition was added on the west. Smith also designed this unit. In 1929 the Horse Barn was completed after plans of Keffer & Jones, Smith's associates and successors to his practice. Underlying this phased construction as a long-term plan devised by Smith. The systematic development of this plan assured the successful utility of the Horse Barn. Other buildings on the Fairgrounds also illustrate a planning and phased construction. The Grandstand and Educational Building (Site #13/1909/1927), the Cattle Barn (Site #4), and Machinery Hall/Varied Industries Building (Site #10) are a few examples.

CONTINUUM OF ARCHITECTURAL FIRMS

The Fair buildings represent today, by enlarge, two sets of architectural designs. Each set was designed by one architect or group of architects. William F Hackney of Des Moines planned the first complete set of buildings in 1886. A few of these buildings, like Agriculture Building/Pioneer Hall (Site #48/1886) survive intact. Between 1904-1954, one group of architects designed every major building on the Fairgrounds save one. These architects comprised Oliver O Smith, associates in his firm, and Keffer & Jones, successors to his practice. Each of these designs conformed to a pattern of red brick and light colored stone trim. (Reeves & Baillie, architects of Peoria, Illinois, had set this precedent in their Livestock Pavilion (Site #3/1902).



CAMPGROUNDS IOWA STATE FAIR. PHOTOGRAPHY CIRCA 1911. SHOWS
NEW PLATting ARRANGEMENT ACCORDING TO O C SIMONDS PLAN.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Significance

Item number 8

Page 14

Smith himself designed about eight steel frame and brick walled buildings between 1904-1916. He worked alone and in association with associates on these projects. Between 1916-1954, Keffer & Jones of Des Moines, successor to Smith's clientele, designed more than a dozen major buildings on the Fairgrounds. They had inherited Smith's practice with the Des Moines Public School District and, between 1921-1939 built up the largest practice of any other architectural firm in the design of junior and senior high school buildings in Iowa. Their success with these clients as well as with the Iowa State Fair Board indicates their ability to provide quality design for the public sector. Keffer & Jones designs for the Fairgrounds were primarily utilitarian. The firm used restraint in application of architectural detail and allowed the mass and groupings of the buildings to make a statement. Two exceptions prove the rule: the higher level of architectural detail on the Sheep Barn and the Grandstand/Educational Building.

As poured concrete technology advanced, Keffer & Jones adopted it. The 4-H Club Building (Site #20/1939-42) was the first major structure on the Fairgrounds to break with the red brick tradition. This was followed by the Girls' 4-H Dormitory (Site #17/1947). Neither of these buildings is included as key buildings in the historic district because of their age, but both buildings should be reevaluated for potential inclusion at a later time.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Fairgrounds achieves considerable architectural significance through the unity of its architectural composition. Instrumental to this end is the employment of red brick and light colored stone trim. These materials provided the basis for most every permanent erection between 1902 and 1939. To list these buildings is to repeat a litany of the Fair's key buildings: Livestock Pavilion (Site #3/1902); Agriculture Building (Site #2/1904); Administration Building (Site #1/1908); Cattle Barn (Site #4/phased construction); Swine Pavilion & Barn (Site #5/phased construction); Sheep Barn (Site #6/phased construction); Horse Barn (Site #9/phased construction); Poultry Industries Building (Site #8/1939); Grandstand and Educational Building (Site #13/1909/1927); and State Fish and Game Building (Site #11/phased construction). Terra cotta detail is also employed in the Sheep Barn.

In addition to the unity of these materials and colors, other architectural features also contribute to a feeling of uniform composition on the Fairgrounds. The scale of key buildings is large. Many have 2-stories. Others, like the Livestock Pavilion, have high roofs. All these buildings cover large floor space. These buildings make the dominant visual impact in the district. Their large scale carries the viewer's eye across the infill of recent construction. (This infill is, in terms of scale, considerably smaller than the key buildings).

The complexity of Fair activities requires specialized buildings to house them. The Fair Board has, over the years, shown considerable concern that such specialized

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Significance

Item number 8

Page 15

construction should reflect state of the art design. The Cooling Out Paddock (Site #29/1914) is a case in point. A committee of the Fair Board inspected several such facilities in the eastern and southern United States to determine a design best suited for Iowa. The results of this inspection became specifications for the building's design. The Fair Board's action illustrates its commitment that the Fair should provide a model for Fairgoers and similar building construction in the state.

Style has played a not very important role in the architecture of the Fairgrounds. Some buildings employ stylistic details, some buildings more than other, and these features are noted on the individual Iowa Site Inventory Forms attached to this application. The Agriculture Building (Site #2) has 2-domed entryways, barrel dormers, & shell decorations. The World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893--and its Beaux Arts exuberance--is noted. The Grandstand/Educational Building (Site #13) has some good eclectic detail. The primary source of architectural significance for the Fairgrounds remains the long-term planning required to construct the buildings, the adherence to these plans, the planning underlying the siting of buildings, and the employment of a common building material to insure a continuity of design.

CONCLUSION

The Iowa State Fair and Exposition Grounds Historic District represents a fine collection of late Nineteenth and Twentieth Century fair and exposition type buildings in Iowa. Their large scale, specialized uses, the quantity of their number, the long-term planning required for their erection, adherence to the long-term plans over time, and the unified composition of building design distinguish the Fairgrounds. The contribution of one architectural firm, founded by Oliver O Smith and continued by Keffer & Jones, is notable. The Fairgrounds also reflect the designs of such nationally and regionally recognized landscape architects as Jacob Weidenmann, A N Carpenter, and O C Simonds. The Iowa State Fair Board played an important role in the successful design of the Fairgrounds through their employment of the above mentioned professionals.

The next section of this document goes into detail about the Statement of Significance discussed above. The section below contains two parts: Background and Section of the Present Site, and Development of the Physical Plant.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Significance

Item number 8

Page 16

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE IOWA STATE FAIR & EXPOSITION GROUNDS

BACKGROUND & SELECTION OF PRESENT SITE

A convention of county agricultural societies was first called in December 1853 to discuss the establishment of a State Agricultural Society and to petition the Iowa General Assembly to provide monetary aid for it. The newly elected President of the State Society, Judge Thomas Claggett, stated that "experience has shown that the best and surest mode of bringing agriculture to a high state of perfection is by stimulating emulation among farmers by annual fairs and the awarding of premiums to meritorious exertion."¹ The first Iowa State Fair was held in Fairfield (Jefferson County) in October 1854. This was an experiment and the second fair, which followed the next year also in Fairfield, established the fact that a State Society for the promotion of agriculture and mechanics could and would be sustained by the people of Iowa.²

As early as 1855, there had been serious discussion of securing a permanent location for the Fair. Society President Claggett suggested that the property of the Society would be greatly promoted by securing a permanent location for the annual exhibition.³ The idea of a permanent location continued. There were, however, still some who felt that a migrating Fair was necessary in order to gain state-wide support and keep the Fair from becoming simply a local institution.⁴ The prevailing view remained that time had come for concentrating agricultural interests of the state at a central location.⁵ The Iowa Agricultural and Mechanical Association was formed in Des Moines in November of 1874. Des Moines had become capital of Iowa by this time. The purpose of the Association was to bring the Fair permanently to Des Moines and to promote the interests of agriculture, horticulture, mechanics and fine arts in Iowa.⁶ Factors that led to making Des Moines a possible permanent home of the Fair included its central location in Iowa, the development of extensive railroad lines, and the increasing growth of hotels and other accommodations for exhibitors.⁷

NOTES

1. Ross, Earle D; "Signs of the Times;" The Palimpsest; 1954; p 263.
2. Ross, Earle D; "The Pioneer Period;" The Palimpsest; 1954; p 280.
3. "State Fair News;" Supplement Section; Iowa State Register; August 1875.
4. "Experience has shown that all persons residing within a radius of 50 miles will attend the Fair, and history has proven that any Fair in a permanent location has proven either a partial or entire failure..." "A permanent location for a state Fair, after a few years, entirely destroys its character and leaves it simply a local institution." Letter to the Editor; The Iowa Homestead; 12 January 1883; p 8 c 2.
5. "State Fair News;" Supplement Section; Iowa State Register; August 1875.
6. The Prairie Farmer; 7 July 1874; p 356. Capital stock fixed at \$38,000.
7. "State Fair News;" Op cit.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Significance

Item number 8

Page 17

The Iowa State Fair and Exposition first moved to Des Moines in 1879. It took six years to persuade the Iowa General Assembly to appropriate money for purchase of a permanent site.¹ In this interim the Iowa State Fair was held on Des Moines' westside in a city park now non-extant. Some crude facilities and buildings were constructed in the park for Fair useage, but the Fair Board was interested in a larger grounds with more extensive facilities that would be devoted solely to the use of the Fair and under the control of the Board.

Finally in 1885 the legislature appropriated money for the purchase of a permanent Fair site.² The \$50,000 appropriation contained the proviso that residents and businesses in Des Moines had to raise an equal sum for improvements to the property.

The Board inspected several parcels of ground around Des Moines in 1885 and finally decided to secure a location about three miles due east of the state capitol building. The chosen site was a farmstead owned by Calvin Thornton. Thornton had improved the farmstead with buildings notable of which was his house and barn.³

Des Moines greeted the purchase of the Fair site with a burst of enthusiasm. One historian of the times wrote: "There is doubtless, no more beautiful site for the Fair in the United States! Situated about two miles east of the State Capitol it rises from the plain in a beautiful and sightly eminence from which the country for miles to the west, northwest and southwest stretches out before the view."⁴

Considerable credit for the purchase of the Thornton Farm is due Isaac S Brandt, a successful eastside Des Moines merchant and booster. Civic leaders in Des Moines initially failed to raised the \$50,000 match required by the legislature in 1885. Brandt aggressively campaigned to get the money. He not only obtained \$55,000 in pledges, he followed up and twisted enough arms so that more than \$51,000 was also collected. Part of the money came from railroad companies.⁵

NOTES

1. Ross, Earle D; "The Fair in Transition;" The Palimpsest; 1954; pp 293-94.
2. Ibid.
3. State Agricultural Society Board; State Archives; 20 June 1885. The board rode in sleighs on January 20, 1885 to view the Thornton farm which was later purchased for the fairgrounds on June 19, 1885. Included were 265-91/100 acres at \$175.00 per acre and 3 acres at \$1,000.00 per acres. On June 20, 1885, the board moved to collect all donations from Polk County residents.
4. "Analysis of Redevelopment/Relocation Alternatives; Iowa State Fair;" Volume 2; Economic Research Associates & POD Inc (Consultant Report); 1979; p II-3.
5. Quoted in ibid; p II-3.

A photographic portrait of Issac S Brandt appears in "The State Fair--Past and Present;" The Midwestern; August 1907; p 65.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Significance

Item number 8

Page 18

Brandt was elated with the Thornton site. Tradition credits Brandt with the planning of Grand Avenue, the main street leading, historically, into the Fairgrounds. "Standing on the highest point (in the grounds), which he (Brandt) called Inspiration Point, he suggested a boulevard into the city 100 feet wide, to be called 'Grand Avenue.'"¹ That was the beginning of the present name of Grand Avenue which runs today from the Fairgrounds to the west limits of Des Moines and beyond. The avenue had three other names in the early days, all at the same time. It was called "Sycamore" from the Des Moines River west through downtown. Some place on the west side it became "Greenwood" and from the river east to East 18th Street, it was known as "Keokuk Road." With the coming of the Fair, the street became Grand Avenue its entire length.²

In purchasing these new Fairgrounds, Iowa became the second state in the old northwest to own permanent property for this purpose.³

DEVELOPMENT OF THE PHYSICAL PLANT

The Fair Board met in session the day after voting to purchase the Thornton Farm. In 1885 there were not many working models to serve as patterns for a state fairgrounds. The Board decided to send its president, vice-president, and an architect or engineer to make an inspection tour of other fair and exposition grounds and to report back as to best plans for buildings, layout, and race track on the new grounds.⁴ The Board also moved to employ Mr Pelton of Des Moines, a land surveyor, and landscape architect Jacob Weidenmann of New York City to plan the new grounds in Des Moines. Fair Board Minutes remain silent about the proposed inspection tour. Perhaps it remained unfunded and board officers balked at private sponsorship. On 2 September 1885 Weidenmann and surveyor Pelton submitted plans for the new Fairgrounds. No action was taken by the Board.⁵

Weidenmann enjoyed at this time a wide-spread reputation in Des Moines and Iowa. Jacob Weidenmann (1829-1893) was born in Switzerland and came to America in 1856. He succeeded in establishing a landscape architecture practice in Hartford, Connecticut. In 18 , Wiedenmann published "Beautifying Country Homes," a collection of model landscape designs and information by various landscape architects. Weidenmann returned to Europe for several years, returning to America in 1871. He established a working relationship with the firm of Olmsted & Vaux of New York City continuing with Olmsted after dissolution of the partnership. By this time, Weidenmann has established a solid reputation for landscape architecture in New York State and New England. His speciality was cemetery design.

NOTES

1. Economic Research Associates & POD Inc, Op cit; p II-3.
2. Ibid.
3. Ross, Earle D; "The Fair in Transition;" The Palimpsest; 1954; p 295.
4. State Agricultural Society Board Minutes; State Archives; 20 June 1885.
5. Ibid; 2 September 1885.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Significance

Item number 8

Page 19

By 1884 Weidenmann had accepted a commission to landscape the Iowa State Capitol Grounds in Des Moines. He described this project as "the most detailed work I have ever prepared."¹ The German equation connecting precision with quality suggests Weidenmann's pride in his work at the state house. While in Des Moines he also accepted the commission of J S Polk and F M Hubbell to lay out an important residential subdivision, Polk and Hubbell Park. Weidenmann also undertook a landscape project for Terrace Hill.²

During the 1880s Weidenmann enjoyed numerous commissions in the Midwest. In January 1886 he accepted the superintendency of the Mount Hope Cemetery Company in Chicago. In March of that year, he relocated his office (much against Olmsted's advise) from New York City to Chicago. Unfortunately for Weidenmann, neither his practice nor the superintendency prospered. He returned to New York in 1888 after winning litigation to recover salary denied him by the cemetery company. Weidenmann died before he was fully able to reestablish his practice in the East.³

Weidenmann's reputation nationally and in Des Moines undoubtedly prompted the Fair Board to employ him in planning the new Fairgrounds.⁴ Weidenmann's tenure was of short duration between 20 June 1885 and 2 September 1885 when he and Pelton, the surveyor, submitted the new plans to the Board. The Board Minutes are reticent about their relationship with Weidenmann but there clearly had been a falling out. Already on 27 June 1885 Weidenmann had told The Iowa State Register that the planning of the Fairgrounds "cannot be done in less than five years, and those who supposed that the work would all be completed in time for the fair of 1886 are, of course, very much mistaken."⁵ The Board's point of view was quite different: they wished built improvements on the grounds for the 1886 Fair. For his labor, Weidenmann finally settled with the Board in 1886 for a fee of \$160.00.

NOTES

1. "The Fairgrounds;" Iowa State Register (Des Moines); 27 June 1885). Interview w/Weidenmann.
2. Harvey, Robert R; "Documenting a Victorian Landscape in the Midwest;" Association for Preservation Technology Bulletin; Vol 9 #3 (1977).
3. Schuyler, David; "Introduction" to Victorian Landscape Gardening A Facsimile of Jacob Weidenmann's Beautifying Country Homes; Watkins Glen, NY; The American Life Foundation; 1978. Introduction supplies much of Weidenmann's biographical data.
4. State Agricultural Society Board Minutes; State Archives; 20 June 1885.
5. "The Fairgrounds;" Iowa State Register (Des Moines); 27 June 1885). Interview w/Weidenmann.
6. State Agricultural Society Board Minutes; State Archives; 20 June 1885. "The Buildings and improvement committee met with J. Weidenmann--there was disagreement between Weidenmann and Pres. Wheeler in regard to work accomplished for the interest of the Agricultural Society and the understanding

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Significance

Item number 8

Page 20

The Fair Board now turned to Wm F Hackney of Des Moines to prepare architectural plans for the Fairgrounds. On 19 January 1886, the Board accepted the proposal of Hackney to make "all plans, details and specifications for buildings for the new Fairgrounds for 2½% of construction cost."¹ Hackney was a very known quantity in Des Moines. He served assistant (along with Mifflin E Bell) to A H Piquenard, architect of the Iowa State Capitol Building. When Piquenard died in 1876, Hackney & Bell became chief architects.² Hackney's other credits included Callanan Female Seminary (Des Moines/1880); Commercial Block (Des Moines/1886); Chemical Building (Iowa City/1886); G W Marquardt House (Des Moines/1886); and a double tenement (Des Moines/1886).³

The Board had more than \$50,000 left for improvements to the Fairgrounds. The concentration of construction on the Fairgrounds in summer 1886 was intense.⁴ There were only four buildings on the site when Fair officials took possession 22 June 1886. When Fair time arrived 3 September 1886, ten weeks later, 55 new buildings were all set and ready. A story in the Iowa State Register said "...private parties for the exhibition of their implements have erected eight buildings, some of them large and well ornamented. This makes 67 buildings on the grounds and this does not include the large number of private booths, houses and sheds, for furnishing food and all classes of innocent refreshments and amusements." The Fair built ten horse barns that summer, each with a capacity of 32 horses, and ten cattle barns, each holding 48 cattle. For stock and visitors, fifty wells were scattered around the grounds to provide water "ample and of the choicest kind, pure and cool." Each well was equipped with a "good strong" pump. Two "immense tanks on top of the hill" carried reserve water supplies. The main Fair buildings drew newspaper praise. "The exhibition halls are large, neat, well lighted and built in good architectural style, all painted outside in all varieties

NOTES

each had obtained from former President Smith. After consultation the committee offered Weidenmann \$160.00 as full payment for all claims against the Board."

1. State Agricultural Society Board Minutes; State Archives; 19 January 1886.
2. "The Old Capitol and the New;" Annals of Iowa; Vol 8 #1; Spring 1905; p 293. "Messrs. Bell and Hackney, his assistants took charge of the building. It was completed under their supervision."
3. Various sources; "Architects in Iowa" Project Files; Office of Historic Preservation; Iowa State Historical Department. W F Hackney File.
4. In his final report to the Board, Hackney said his design allowed for the growth of Fair activities. His "first study was in regard to the probably increase in needs of the society in the future, so that he could plan the present work with a view to enlargement and expansion in all departments, as well as the desire to secure the best adapted building for each department. State Agricultural Society Board Minutes; 15 January 1887.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Significance

Item number 8

Page 21

of colors, and styles, without violating any artistic taste. The main buildings are on the side of a hill thickly wooded with native trees and overlooking the amphitheater and all the stock barns and pens." The original amphitheater seated 6,000. "There is also a fine level lawn inside the track to which ladies and gentlemen in carriages will be admitted, which is a delightful privilege to that class of people."¹

Following the 1886 Fair, Hackney reported to the Board. "In our arrangement of the buildings we have taken advantage of the condition of the ground and the effect is one of grandeur and symmetry. The buildings rising one above the other when looking back the whole grounds can be overlooked spreading out like a panorama."²

To prepare for his plan, Hackney studied the fairgrounds of other state agricultural societies.³ His stock barn plans follow a popular arrangement during late Nineteenth Century. Hackney described the arrangement like this: "Barns are built with one end resting on a circle (where the show ring is located) and prolonged in a radial line from the common center making each barn equidistant from the show ring."³ The horse ring was 300' diameter; cattle ring 250' diameter; and hog ring 150' diameter at the Iowa State Fairgrounds.

Hackney's arrangement provides each stock department a visual impact. The barns radiate like spokes from the open lawn of the hub. Such arrangement forms a unity to each department visually and separates the departments in a way a parallel grouping would not. Parallel rows of buildings would blend departments. The hub plan also works intellectually. The arrangement focuses on the hub where showing, competition, and judging--the purposes of the fair--take place.

Hackney's buildings are uniformly frame. The larger, exhibition halls, employed heavy wood posts and beams for support. The smaller buildings used balloon frames. Exterior cladding was usually board and batten. Architectural detail was kept at a minimum due to budget and rushed construction. Total cost amounted to \$69,346.65 for the improvements.

Hackney deserves considerable praise for his work. He accomplished an impressive fairgrounds in a close time-frame. Hackney had the ability to get

NOTES

1. "The Fairgrounds;" Iowa State Register (Des Moines, IA); 27 June 1885.
2. State Agricultural Society Board Minutes; State Archives; 15 January 1887.
3. Ibid. Hackney also provided a water system for the grounds. There was a reservoir at the top of the east hill and a steam pump to pump the water.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Significance

Item number 8

Page 22

the job done because of his contacts with local Des Moines building trades, because of his experience with public works at the Capitol Building, and, also because Robert S Finkbine provided support. Finkbine was a former Iowa State Senator and a building contractor. Finkbine served as superintendent of construction of the Capitol. He earned a reputation famous to this day for insistence on absolute integrity in that huge construction project. Finkbine made certain there was no graft and that every supplier lived up to the specifications religiously. The Iowa State Register said Finkbine followed the same ethics on the Fairgrounds construction: "The world knows he never puts up jobs for his own advantage in such opportunities."¹

The Hackney design is notable for its employment of activity areas. Each department of the Fair was located geographically to promote efficiency of movement and benefit from the topography of the grounds. The livestock departments, for example, were situated in the southern portion of the grounds. Land was flat here and practical for the stabling and showing of livestock. The southern portion of the grounds was also most convenient to railroad lines, the transportation system which brought animals to the Fair. The Machinery Department was situated on the north of the grounds, also on flat land. The Hackney layout sited exhibition buildings on the slope of the east hill. The idea here provided picturesque pleasure walks and panoramic vistas of the grounds and surrounding countryside. The roofs and cupolas of the exhibition halls provided, in turn, visual interest when viewed from the lower grounds.

Unfortunately there is, to date, no known overall plan of the Hackney design, as there is no known overall plan of the Weidenmann design. It is impossible to evaluate the work each man performed in designing the Fairgrounds. The subdivision of the grounds into departments is a most important design feature. Its evolution remains a mystery, although the general outline of its design remains, with few exceptions, intact to this day.

The Hackney design provided little in the way of landscaping with vegetation. There remain extant several antique photographic images of the Fairgrounds soon after initial construction. They picture a grounds devoid of plantings and without clearly defined roadways. Hackney had urged the Board in 1887 to plant trees as soon as possible "because a building can be built in a short time, an eloquent elm requires years to reach maturity."² In April 1887 the Board engaged Mr York to plant approximately 2,000 trees. These were to be about 1½" in diameter, to cost 22¢ each, and to be warranted to grow. An equal number of white elm, catalpa, soft maple, and boxelder were to be planted.³ The Board later availed itself of

NOTES

1. Quoted (without citation) in Analysis of Redevelopment/Relocation Alternatives; Iowa State Fair; Op cit; Vol 2; p II-4.
2. State Agricultural Society Board Minutes; State Archives; 15 January 1887
3. Ibid; 11 April 1887.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Significance

Item number 8

Page 23

York's warranty as a number of the first plantings died.¹

Only a handful of Hackney's buildings remain extant today. The largest building, Exhibition Hall, was raised in 1949 due to deterioration. "Exhibition Hill" retains locative meaning on the Fairgrounds today. It indicates the site west of the present Agriculture Building where Exhibition Hall stood. The old Agriculture Building (presently Pioneer Hall) is now the largest Hackney building extant. The Agriculture Building is T-shaped and the top cross forms the facade. The building is two stories and completely open on the inside. Such large space adapts easily to numerous purposes and the building has been used for a variety of them over the years. Architectural detail is restrained, the most notable element being a cupola. Roof originally employed crenelations. Exterior walls are boards and battens. Rafters are exposed on exterior. There are celestory windows on the second floor. Window framing is simple. Horizontal wood trim surrounds the building on several levels and breaks the monotony of the vertical boards and battens. The building featured several flag poles with the clear intention exhuberantly to display Old Glory.

Most of Hackney's buildings employed, more or less, these same architectural elements. The buildings were intended to provide simple, functional shelter for only short occupancy during the year. A complete list of Hackney's buildings is unavailable. The following is a composite list of those mentioned in print sources and those pictured in antique images with their names painted on exterior walls. Asterisks indicate extant buildings.

Fruit & Floral Hall
Exposition Hall
*Agriculture Hall (Site #48/1886)
Power Hall (Machinery Department)
Dairy Hall
Poultry Building
Cattle Barns
Horse Barns
Swine Pens (w/o roof)
Sheep Cotes (w/o roof)
*Polk County Fair Headquarters (Site #47/1886)
*Building (Site # 19/1886)
Amphitheater

NOTES

1. Informant Interview; Bill Fisher, Assistant Manager; Iowa State Fair w/W C Page. April 1986.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Significance

Item number 8

Page 24

During this first period of Fair construction, the Board allowed commercial exhibitors to construct buildings ad hoc on the grounds. These buildings conformed to their specific departmental areas, but the quality of construction and maintenance varied. By 1890 the Fair presented a clutter of commercial buildings. To preserve order, State Agricultural Society President Hayes proposed that "our grounds should be laid out by a competent landscape engineer." Hayes noted that "unsightly shanties should be removed and the grounds beautified."¹ The fruit of hasty construction had also begun to surface. "Because of want of money the buildings of the Fair were originally built quite imperfectly." Hayes cited lack of ventilation, battered and leaky roofs (unsafe for show horses, unfit for man or sulky housing, and resulting in reduced entries). The same was true of the cattle and draft horse barns.²

The Board moved to solve this problem. On 21 March 1890, the Board contracted with A N Carpenter of Galesburg, Illinois to draw up a master plan of the Fairgrounds.³ Carpenter (1828-1906) established a successful, regional landscape architectural practice in the Midwest. He is today remembered for his work in Quincy, Illinois (Riverside Park) and in Peoria, Illinois (Bradley Park). Carpenter submitted his preliminary plan for the Iowa State Fairgrounds on 18 June 1890 before the Board. He recommended the removal of a number of buildings so others could be built and conform to the remaining ones. Carpenter presented his final ground plans on 13 August 1890. This plan remains extant and is housed in the Fair's museum building (Polk County Fair Headquarters Building).

The Carpenter Plan is a graphic presentation of various land grades, water pipes, sewer systems, surface water catch basins, boundary lines with property measurements, buildings, avenues, walks, a race track, lake, creek, fences, foot bridges & pump and boiler houses. The plan contains a list and location of "Trees Now Growing" and a "List of Trees and Shrubs to be planted."⁴ The Carpenter Plan is the first master plan for the Fairgrounds available for study.

The Carpenter Plan included a campgrounds in its design. This had been a priority of President Carpenter. ("Multitudes of campers descended upon the last Fair. It is our special desire to attract and not estrange this class of our visitors. The extension of the camp and the introduction of more conveniences is work that should not be postponed").⁵ The Carpenter Plan provided for roads, horse corrals, fences, trees (specific as to species and location), a Grand Army

NOTES

1. State Agricultural Society Board Minutes; State Archives; 8 January 1890.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.; 21 March 1890.
4. "Iowa State Fair Ground/Des Moines, Iowa." A N Carpenter Masterplan dated 1890. Ink on linen backed paper.
5. State Agricultural Society Board Minutes; State Archives; 8 January 1890.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Significance

Item number 8

Page 25

of the Republic area to include a hall, a water tower, and a tenant house.

Another interesting feature of the Carpenter Plan is its concern for a water system. Carpenter designed a specific plan in this regard ("For plans of the water works see the plans we made expressively for that purpose showing water tower etc etc and specifications for the same"). The location of this document is not known. Included in the design was "Crystal Lake" (where the present speed barns now stand) and "Silver Creek" which ran, north to south, through the present site

NOTES.

"A. N. Carpenter, the American Landscape Architect, at Galesburg, was born in Rehoboth, Bristol Co., Mass., June 2, 1828. His parents were Asaph and Caroline Carpenter, natives of Massachusetts, and of English descent, and reared two sons and two daughters, Asaph Newton being the eldest. The senior Mr. Carpenter was a farmer, and had lived his fourscore years, when his demise took place at Norton, Mass. His widow still survives him, and is 76 years of age, and now resides at Taunton, Mass.

"The subject of this sketch was educated in the common schools, and from his 18th to 21st year served an apprenticeship at carpentering. This trade he followed for about 18 years. In 1854 he moved from Massachusetts to Janesville, Wis., and during the same year to Galesburg. While working at his trade he studied architecture, and planned many of the prominent buildings which he erected, and also furnished plans for contractors in the Eastern and Western States. In landscape architecture, Mr. C. is the pioneer in the United States. He was only 15 years of age when he conceived the idea of reducing landscape ornamentation to a practical science, and it required many years of patient study, application and experience to bring the work to what is now termed a profession, of which he is the master. Mr. Carpenter was also the first man to give this profession its name, 'landscape architecture,' and since 1870 he has devoted his entire time to this, his profession, and has furnished plans for some of the finest homes in this country, as well as for farms, parks, cemeteries and many other public and private grounds. Duplicates of these have been called for in Europe. No such showing as that of Mr. Carpenter can be found in any other office or studio. His office is nearly a museum of art, as he keeps a photograph of all his plans; none are duplicated or used again, as he makes every subject a separate study, and as they are each made to order and for special purposes. No two plats of grass even are formed alike, nor in his estimation could one be properly exchanged for another without losing sight of the main ends sought in each. It is surprising to note the perfection and simplicity to which the mind of Mr. Carpenter, unaided by any precedent, has brought this art and reduced it to practical use. To accomplish this he has had to contend with the wealth and education of other established professions, and that he has brought his art to the favorable notice of the moneyed public the

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Significance

Item number 8

Page 26

of the Varied Industries Building. Neither these man-made features was constructed and an inadequate water system continued to plague the Fairgrounds. It was to involve the Board in a lawsuit in 190 .

The Carpenter Plan is conservative. It accepts the givens of departmental, of road, and of major building sites. The plan addresses fundamental questions which were unaddressed by construction in 1886 (land grades, sewer system, landscaping) and provides acceptable solutions to these problems. The plan is compre-

NOTES

patronage which he receives fully attests. He is constantly employed and has inaugurated a branch of art which will perpetuate his name as long as the world loves the beautiful. To those who do not fully understand the term 'landscape architecture,' we give Mr. Carpenter's own definition, namely: making clear, distinct plans to a scale in advance of the work for a farm, park, cemetery, public or private grounds; establishing the surface and under-draining, etc.; sewer and water systems; locating and forming the avenues, walks, fences, lakes, fountains; the various kinds of trees, shrubs, flowers, etc., so that everything will not only be beautiful, but harmonious and of utility, for the party and purpose to which the place is to be devoted. This Mr. carpenter maps out clearly and distinctly in advance of the work to be done, so that the proprietor and others can fully comprehend it and count the cost before actual work is commenced upon the place. By this method the plan is also made plain to those who are to perform the work, and this is a matter of economy of time, money and labor to all concerned. Economy intelligently enters into the whole plan, which is the forte of Mr. Carpenter in all his transactions and is one secret of his remarkable success and popularity. He has published a little pamphlet which he will send to all applicants, and takes pleasure in exhibiting the numberless drafts and outlines, the result of his taste and ingenuity brought out by years of study and experience.

"Mr. Carpenter was married at Westerly, R.I. Nov. 20, 1853, to Miss Mary Elizabeth Winterbottom, a native of Connecticut, who has borne him two children—Mary Isabelle, now Mrs. D. W. Bunker, and Carrie E., who died in 1874, at the age of 16 years and 7 months.

"In the battles of life Mr. Carpenter has relied upon his individual resources, the recipient of no bounties or legacies. What he has accomplished is to be credited to his own efforts, prudence and industry." History of Knox County, Illinois; pp 919-920.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Significance

Item number 8

Page 27

hensive in scope. The Carpenter Plan sets aside land unused in 1890 but projected for growth. He terms this land "reserves" and provides such expansion space for country cottages, dining halls, a race track park, hitching park and machinery display. Each of these reserves abuts land used in 1890 for similar purposes.

The Carpenter Plan surveyed and mapped a comprehensive "List of trees now growing." These included elm, white oak, black oak, hickory, burr oak, wild cherry, honey locust, linn, hackberry, coffee nut, Scotch pine, European larch, Austrian pine, Norway spruce, and white pine. In addition, the Carpenter Plan included a "List of trees and shrubs to be planted." These included American arborvita, catalpa, Norway maple, hard maple, elm, linn, hackberry, magnolia acuminata, cut leaf birch, red cedar, and, concerning shrubs, snowball, cranberry, white lilac, Prussian lilac, upright honeysuckle, weigelica rosea, and various climbing vines for the restrooms.

The Carpenter Plan shows less concern for buildings than for the landscape. Most of Hackney's buildings remain on the Fairgrounds. The few recommended for removal were sited, inconveniently, in street thoroughfares. (Streets were unpaved, and commercial displays built ad hoc). The Carpenter Plan does not address the deterioration of livestock and exhibition buildings. The plan genuflects before retention of officials' housing. These cottages included the "President's House," "Vice-President's House," "Secretary & Treasurer's House," and "Superintendent of Privileges House." ("Priveldges" meant "concessions" in 1890). These cottages were located in prime land where today the Agriculture Building stands. Officials' used these cottages during Fairtime. The Administration Building provided the same purpose after its construction in 1908.

The Machinery Department provided a problem. Commercial display often leads, without regulation, to disorder. More than any other section of the Fair, this Department (and, to a certain extent the adjoining dining hall area) presented a pluralism of buildings both in terms of design and maintenance. The Carpenter Plan's solution to the problem was restrained. Basically, it recommended two large, flower gardens, one round, the other oval. These were to be located at the hub of the intersection of Grand Avenue and Rock Island. The Machinery Department would remain north of the Rock Island intersection with Grand. By their large scale, the two streets and the gardens (which were centered in them) would impose an order on this section of the Fairgrounds. (O C Simonds found, to preview, in 1910 that the Machinery Grounds remained a problem. His solution differed radically from the Carpenter Plan).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Significance

Item number 8

Page 28

Implementation of the Carpenter Plan was slow. The Board advanced to illuminate the grounds and accepted a contract to put up 500 electric lights and a power plant in 1891.¹ The Board also acted to maintain the fabric of the improvements as illustrated in 1892 when they employed Mr Liebbe, architect of Des Moines, to design repairs for the grandstand damaged by a storm.² Exhibitors continued to complain about inadequate facilities for the housing and showing of livestock.³

The United States as a nation suffered an economic panic in 1893. This combined with bad weather and poor crops in Iowa in 1894. As a result, the 1894 Iowa State Fair was a failure. It posted a deficit of \$25,000, the nadir of indebtedness for that time. Only after citizens of Des Moines guaranteed financial assistance did the Board agree to hold a state fair in 1895. The Board postponed improvements of the Fairgrounds and the Carpenter Plan remained an unimplemented design.

A major redirection of development on the Fairgrounds coincided with the Iowa State Fair becoming an agency of state government. In 1902 the Twenty-eighth Iowa General Assembly passed a bill authorizing creation of a Department of Agriculture. The bill also created a Board of Agriculture to direct the department.⁴ In effect, the State Agricultural Society became the Board of Agriculture.

NOTES

1. State Agricultural Society Board Minutes; State Archives; 13 August 1890. Hawkeye Electric Manufacturing, contractor, for \$4,860.
2. Ibid; 19 July 1892.
3. Ibid; 27 August 1890.
4. Ibid; Minutes for January 1902.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Significance

Item number 8

Page 29

This reorganization brought state government directly into the Fair's business. What followed was a period of substantial appropriations from the legislature, beginning in 1902 with construction of the Livestock Pavilion, for so-called "permanent improvements" on the Fairgrounds. The period saw new construction on a magnificent scale. It included such fine exposition buildings as the present Agricultural Building (1904), the Administration Building (1908), the aforementioned Livestock Pavilion (1902), Grandstand/Education Building (1909/1927), and large barns for sheep, swine, horses, and cattle. The new Board intended the Fairgrounds to project an image of grandeur, permanence, park-like beauty, and a source of state pride. Important features included paved walks, street curbing, weather-tight roofs, and good shelter from inclement weather. A collection of about a dozen large, major buildings were constructed during this period. All but one remain extant today and form the backbone of present Fairgrounds.

As already mentioned, the Livestock Pavilion (1902) was first of the permanent improvements. The Board employed an out-of-state firm for architectural design. Reeves and Baillie, Peoria, Illinois, provided plans. This building was the first to employ iron and steel as a structural system on the Fairgrounds. The building established a precedence in the use of dark red brick and light colored stone trim.¹

The next major improvement, the Agriculture Building (1904) demonstrated the work of a local, Des Moines architectural firm, Smith & Gage. The design repeats the red brick and stone trim of the Livestock Pavilion. Notable are the large, barrel dormers on the building and the two domed entryways. The building appears as a vernacular interpretation of Beaux-Arts style popular at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Charles Weitz & Sons of Des Moines served as general contractor for the Agriculture Building as they had for the Livestock Pavilion.²

The Agricultural Building began cooperation between the Fair Board and one architectural firm which lasted for more than three decades, and, in some respects, continues to the present day. Before the telling of this story, the narrative will first discuss the Fair Board's long-term planning.

The period prior to and during World War I is widely remembered as a Golden Age of agriculture. Prosperity was all but assured whomever undertook farming.

NOTES

1. The Livestock Pavilion was a turning point for design of Fair buildings because of its structural system and brick cladding. The building must be understood as a response to a new direction from the Fair Board rather than the result of Reeves & Baillie's influence over design.
2. "Exhibition Building/Fair Ground, Des Moines, Iowa;" "Smith & Gage, Architect." Original building plans; Ink on linen backed paper. Office files; Karl Keffer Associates; Masonic Temple Building; Des Moines, IA.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Significance

Item number 8

Page 30

State fairs across the farm belt improved their grounds. In 1908 Iowa had the largest acreage of any major state fair with 280 acres. The next biggest was Minnesota with 247 acres.¹ In terms of value of improvements, Ohio ranked first with \$800 millions; Illinois second with \$750 million; Minnesota third with \$500 million; and Michigan, New York, and Iowa tied for fourth with approximately \$400 million each.²

In Iowa, the Fair now enjoyed the support of state appropriation and a booming economy. The Fair Board decided to underwrite another comprehensive plan for the Fairgrounds in 1910. Two decades had already passed since the Carpenter Plan. The Fair Board prepared a Request for Proposal and sent it to the major landscape architectural planners in the United States. In a letter dated 15 February 1910, Secretary Simpson of the Board submitted drawings of the Fairgrounds and the request for a contract bid to the firm of Frederick Law Olmsted. Olmsted the Younger thanked the Secretary in a letter dated 21 February 1910 but said the firm's time table was so complete as to be unavailable for long term commitment.³

The Fair Board evidently also sent a RFP to O C Simonds of Chicago because his was the firm that accepted the assignment. Simonds (1855-1931) was a founder and sometime president of the American Society of Landscape Architects. Trained originally as an engineer. Simonds broadened his scope to include landscaping. He performed work for Iowa State University on the Central Campus and for Lake Laverne landscape design.

Simonds' master plan for the Iowa State Fairgrounds remains extant, today, in the form of a drawing on brown paper with water color at the Fair's museum. No other archival material has come to light as yet. The Simonds' plan proposed buildings, roads & landscaping. It included buildings already on site (Grandstand; Agriculture; Administration; Livestock Pavilion; Cattle, Horse & Swine Barns; and Agriculture Bldg (Pioneer Hall). The plan also projected new buildings: Machinery Hall (Varied Industries Building), a second Livestock Pavilion (west of the present one), removal of Exhibition Hall; an open air stage & seating at the present site of Fairview Stage; a model farm in the northeastern area of the grounds; a new Sheep Barn; campground roads and landscaping; and three large, multi-domed buildings, one east of the Agriculture Building & two north of the Agriculture Building. Design of these three large buildings was influenced by neoclassical revival taste as the

NOTES

1. Greater Iowa; "Table of Comparative Statistics of State Fairs for 1908;" 5 June 1909; p 3.
2. Ibid.
3. Frederick Law Olmsted Archives; Brookline, Massachusetts. Research courtesy Robert R Harvey, Iowa State University, Ames, IA.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Significance

Item number 8

Page 31

domed buildings suggested.¹

Lack of archival material makes an assessment of Simonds' plan difficult. Fair Board Secretary's letter to Olmsted, however, survives, and indicates what the Fair Board wished to achieve through the new master plan. One can assume similar specifications were sent to Simonds. These specifications included:

"B. Group or general plan showing the grounds in their present state of improvement; permanent buildings to be plainly designated from temporary buildings or buildings to be removed in carrying out scheme for permanent arrangement of grounds.

"C. A group or general plan showing the entire property, with the location of buildings, drives, walks, sewers and water mains, line for lighting, etc. indicated.

"F. Make a complete engineering plan showing location and grades of all walks and drives, cuts and fills on the grounds, and engineering grade levels for the location of all buildings.

NOTES

1. "OSSIAN COLE SIMONDS was born in Grand Rapids, Michigan, in 1855. He took his degree as Civil Engineer from the University of Michigan in 1878 and for a time was a member of the architectural firm of Holabrid, Simonds & Roche in Chicago. He then became superintendent and landscape architect of Chicago's Graceland Cemetery, which he developed into one of the most remarkable park-like cemeteries of the Western World. After 1888 he branched out into an extensive private practice, starting with the layout of Fort Sheridan, Illinois; but Graceland continues to be regarded as his masterpiece. The ASLA elected him president in 1913, the first sign of a move away from the Atlantic seaboard. In 1929 the University of Michigan conferred upon him the honorary degree Master of Arts, citing his creative work in landscape architecture. In his latter years his firm was known as Simonds, West & Blair. He died in Chicago, November 20, 1931. Newton, Norman T; Design on the Land; The Development of Landscape Architecture; Harvard University Press; 1971; pp 389-90.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Significance

Item number 8

Page 32

"The present and proposed buildings and other improvements shall be rendered or washed in with brush and water color so as to make apparent the disposition of buildings, driveways, shrubbery, flower beds, etc, without shading or shadows."¹

Although these specifications are loosely worded, the Fair Board clearly intended the master plan to overhaul the Fairgrounds.

The program Simonds recommended is likewise clear, even from the scanty material available. In addition to the neoclassical revival taste noted above, the Simonds Plan recommended four-square retention of the departmental areas as developed on the Fairgrounds since 1886. The Simonds Plan confirmed what the Carpenter Plan had confirmed twenty years earlier--that the basic land-use design of the Fairgrounds was sound.

A specific result of the Simonds appeared immediately following submission of the report in 1911. The campgrounds were newly platted. Campsites received "addresses" so to better organize the facility.² The map on the following page illustrates this new plat.

One other reorganization occurred at the same time the Simonds Plan was submitted to the Fair Board. This is the kind of rationalization that interested Simonds.³ His recommendation had, possibly, heavy influence. The matter concerned the relocation of the Machinery Department. As noted in other sections of this ap-

NOTES

1. Letter, J C Simpson, Secretary State Department of Agriculture to Olmsted Brothers, 15 February 1910. Job Correspondence File; Olmsted Archives; Brookline, Massachusetts. Research courtesy Robert R Harvey; Iowa State University.
2. "Back from the crown of the hill are the camping grounds so ideally located for camping, with their well-laid-out avenues, waterworks, and electric lights, and beautiful trees. The camp grounds have been platted, the streets numbered, and the avenues lettered. The camper can always be located by his friends, for he is registered at camper's headquarters by street and number." Greater Iowa; May 1913; p 6 c 1. "The streets are numbered and lettered, and the blocks already bear numbers. White posts have been placed to mark the streets, and already the lights have been replaced to correspond with these new blocks." Greater Iowa; 13 July 1912; p 2 c 3.
3. Telephone interview: Robert R Harvey w/W C Page; Spring 1986.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Significance

Item number 8

Page 33

plication, the commercial displays presented a discordant note on the Fairgrounds. The area between East 33rd Street and East 34th Street (north of Grand) was a jumble of buildings. In 1911 the entire commercial component of the Fair was relocated and organized under one roof. Machinery Hall/Variety Industries Building was constructed by the Fair Board and space thereafter rented to exhibitors. This effectively relocated commercial displays about one block west from the old site. Such action at once provided better facilities for commercial exhibitors and, because the old frame buildings were removed, beautified the grounds.

The Des Moines firm Smith & Gage, it will be remembered, designed the Agriculture Building in 1904. Oliver O Smith also worked independently on designed projects while a partner with Gage. When Frank Wetherell joined the firm, about 1908, Smith continued both in partnership and independent design. Over time, Smith was to be the principal with the Fair Board. Wetherell established his own firm about 1915 and Gage died about the same time.

For the record, the firm Smith and Gage designed the following Fair buildings:

Agriculture Building	1904	Site #2
Cattle Barn (part)	1914	Site #4

The firm Smith, Wetherell, & Gage designed

Horse Barn (part)	1907	Site #9
Administration Bldg	1908	Site #1
Swine Barn	1914	Site #5

Oliver O Smith designed, under independent name

Cattle Barn (part)	1909	Site #4
Horse Barn (part)	1909	Site #9
Grandstand	1909	Site #13

Long-term planning was an important component for the success of these buildings. Their architectural significance stems, to a considerable degree, from systematic design. The grandstand (1909, 1927/Site #13) is a case in point. It was designed by Smith for a two-phased construction. An architect's drawing illustrates in 1909 the proposed grandstand.¹ It shows spectator seating and a roof as one phase and an en-

NOTES

1. Greater Iowa; 15 May 1909; p .

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Significance

Item number 8

Page 34

closed space under the tiered-seating as a second phase. The Fair Board carried through this plan, although it required 18 years for realization. The spectator phase was completed in 1909. The enclosed area was completed in 1927 as the Educational Building (Site #13). This original drawing is included with Iowa Site Inventory Form #13 in this document.

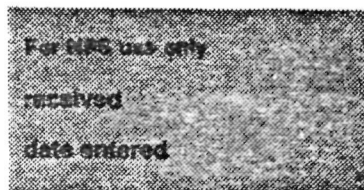
Phased construction is evident in other buildings on the Fairgrounds. The Horse Barn (Site #9) is a good example. Originally designed by Smith, Wetherell, & Gage in 1907, the completed building comprised five components built in four stages. The first 2 components were constructed in 1907. They stand at the southeast and northeast corners of the building. A third component, designed by Oliver O Smith,¹ was constructed in 1909 and joined the original components into one unit. In 1912 yet another addition was completed to the west. The building was completed in 1929² with a component which presently serves as west facade. The Horse Barn (Site #9) presents a unified, architectural composition. Red brick building material and stone trim remain constants throughout the construction phases and contribute to the unified feeling. The employment of symmetry also contributes to this feeling. The original 2 components were sited in a way to allow for systematic expansion. In all, the Horse Barn required 22 years and four phases to complete.

Each of the other livestock barns does, in fact, illustrate a planned expansion. The Cattle Barn (Site #4) required 11 years and 3 phases; the Sheep Barn (Site #6) 8 years and 2 phases; the Swine Pavilion and Barn (Site #5) 29 years and 2 phases.

Another reason for the Fairgrounds' unity of composition is the continuity of its architectural designers. Karl Keffer had entered Oliver O Smith's practice about 1915. Keffer continued Smith's practice after his early death in 1916. This inclu-

NOTES

1. "Oliver O. Smith (1868-1916) was a "widely known architect." "Mr. Smith was the son of J. B. Smith, who died several years ago. His father also was an architect. He had lived all his life in Des Moines, where he was born forty-eight years ago. Mr. Smith received his early education in local schools and studied later in St. Louis and Boston. His labors were confined to designing buildings in this city. (Ed note: Smith had a wider practice than this as his 1902 design for the Monroe County Courthouse at Albia, Iowa indicates). Mr. Smith was a member of the firm of Smith & Keffer. Recently he was appointed architect for the school board. The Historical building, the city library, Mercy hospital and all of the buildings at the fair grounds are some of the structures for which he drew the plans." The Register and Leader; Des Moines, IA; 29 May 1916; p 1 c 6. Page one
2. "To Build New \$50,000 Horse Barn/Completing the Original Plan of the Iowa State Fair Horse Barn..." Greater Iowa; April 1929; p 8 c 1-4.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

Continuation sheet Significance

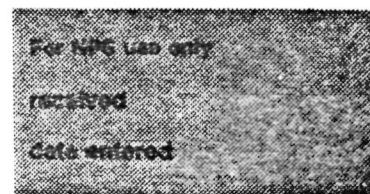
Item number 8

Page 36

ded Smith's work with the Des Moines School Board. School design would develop into a staple for Keffer. Keffer also succeeded into Smith's work with the Iowa State Fair Board. Keffer¹ had studied at the Graduate School of Architecture at Columbia University in the City of New York. While a student he met Earl E Jones.² It was through Keffer that Jones entered into the Des Moines practice also in 1915. After

NOTES

1. Karl Keffer (1883-1954) was "a life long resident of Des Moines, headed Karl Keffer Associates, architect firm with offices at 202 Masonic Temple Building. The Keffer firm, for many years known as Keffer and Jones, designed many Des Moines and Iowa school buildings... A graduate of the former West High School, he took his college work at Iowa State College and Columbia University, New York City. Mr. Keffer established the Karl Keffer Award at Iowa State College, a scholarship fund for architectural students." Des Moines Tribune; 6 September 1954; p 1 c 7. Front page obituary indicates stature in community.
2. Earl E Jones (1886-1950) was "an architect who helped design hundreds of schools and public buildings in Iowa... had been a partner of Karl K. Keffer in the firm of Keffer and Jones since 1915. The firm specialized in public school design. The firm designed Windsor school here, the addition to Monroe school and Adams school. The new library at the State University of Iowa is one of the firm's current projects as is the new juvenile home at Toledo, due to open this fall./The firm had done a great amount of work for the state boards of control and education./Since 1915, Jones and Keffer have been the architects for the state fair board, designing the state fair amphitheater and all other structures erected on the grounds since that year./The firm has designed more than 200 school buildings in town and cities in Iowa./Mr. Jones, born on a Nebraska farm, was reared at Indianola and attended high school there. He married an Indianola girl, Florence Piffer, in 1907./Following graduation from high school, Mr. Jones studied at Simpson college; Washington university, St. Louis, Mo.; and Columbia university, New York, N.Y., where he and Keffer became acquainted./After two years at Columbia, Mr. Jones worked for architectural firms in Chicago, Ill. and Omaha, Neb. before coming to Des Moines to associate with Keffer./Nr, Jones was called into government service during the war and was area engineer for the Navaho Ordnance depot at Flagstaff, Ariz. He was in complete charge of a 80 million dollar project there for the storage of explosives./He was a licensed architect and for many years a licensed engineer. He was a member of the Iowa chapter of the American Institute of Architects, Central Presbyterian church and was active in Masonic and Shrine organizations." Des Moines Register; 7 June 1950; p 1 c 1. Front page obituary indicates stature in community.
3. Informant Interview: Harold Bullington, AIA, w/W C Page; Spring 1986. Mr Bullington became a senior partner at Karl Keffer Associations in 1954.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

Continuation sheet Significance

Item number 8

Page 37

Smith's death in 1916, Keffer and Jones formed a partnership. Their work continued until Jones' death in 1950.

A list of Keffer and Jones projects at the Iowa State Fair between 1916-1954 indicates their rightful title as its official architects for those years.

Grand Avenue Entrance N/E	1920	N/E
Cattle Barn	1920	Site #4
Sheep Barn	1923	Site #6
Agricultural Bldg Balcony	1924	Site #2
Educational Bldg	1927	Site #13
Plaza Band Stand	1927	Site #56
Post Office Sub-station	1928	N/E
Horse Barn	1929	Site #30
Girls' 4-H Dormitory (Hillcrest Dorm)	1930	Site #18
Bath House	1931	Site #75
Swine Barn	1936	Site #5
Poultry Industries Bldg	1938	Site #8
Feed Barn (non-extant)	1938	N/E
4-H Club Barn	1939	Site #7
4-H Club Bldg	1939-42	Site #20
Girls' 4-H Dormitory (Cultural Center)	1947	Site #17
Race Horse Barns	1953 1	Site #30

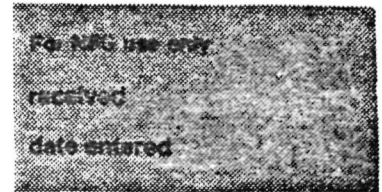
To give perspective to this list, one other architectural firm designed one other major building during the same period. Proudfoot, Rawson, Soeurs of Des Moines designed the State Fish and Game Building in the 1920s (Site #11).

Harold Bullington and Tom Atherton became senior partners of Karl Keffer Associates following Keffer's death. The Fair Board continued, and continues, to use this firm for architectural design. These commissions include:

Communications Bldg	1956
Warehouse	1958
Feed Barn	1962

NOTES

1. Source of information: Karl Keffer Associates; Masonic Temple Building; Des Moines, IA; Spring 1986. Information courtesy Harold Bullington & Tom Atherton.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

Continuation sheet Significance

Item number 8

Page 38

Feed and Forage Barn	1963	Site #85
Electrical Substation	1964	Site #23
All Gas Home	Revised 1966	Site #28
Moving Stage	1966/68	Site #54

Karl Keffer Associates has also designed building repairs, fences and gates, lighting systems, water mains, and other planning for the Fair since 1954.

Keffer & Jones provided the Fair Board with a reliable planning firm. Jones was the structural engineer for projects. The firm also provided designs for the Oklahoma State Fair and for the Clay County Fair in Iowa. The firm was also noted for courthouse design. Iowa credits include Audubon County Courthouse, Warren County Courthouse at Indianola, and O'Brien County Courthouse at Primgar.

The care with which both the Fair Board and Keffer & Jones employed to insure quality and efficiency is indicated by the following story. During construction of the Cattle Barn 1920 segment, face brick from an earlier segment was salvaged for recycled use. W C Beard, associate of Keffer & Jones, inspected the operation and approved using one-half this salvage for the new segment but disallowed its use on the building's west facade.¹

The firm Keffer & Jones understood the workings of the public sector. Their approach to architecture was usually utilitarian. Architectural significance for their buildings stemmed from their utility and the way quality building materials, like brick and simple cast trimwork, were used. The Keffer & Jones collection of buildings demonstrate how the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Taken individually, each Keffer & Jones building obtains architectural interest. Taken as a collection, however, the buildings transcend their immediate sitings and work together to unify the architectural composition of the Fairgrounds.

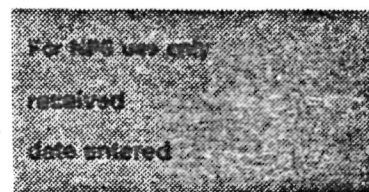
Some of the buildings on the Fairgrounds illustrate the Fair's role as a design model. The Model Cottage (Site #16) is a case in point. Constructed in the 1920s, the building demonstrated a modest home which any Iowan could afford. Another Model Cottage (Site #25) was also constructed in the 1920s and points out the popularity of model homes at the Fair. Also in the 1920s, a model gas station (Site #25) was constructed to demonstrate good design in this growing commercial area. Construction of model homes continues to the present day. Other examples include the Blue Flame Gas Industry Model Home (Site #28/ 1972), Earth Shelter Model Home (Site #103/ 1983), and the Superintendent of Grounds House. None of these buildings contributes to the historic district because they fall outside the application's time-frame and the Superintendent' House is outside the boundary. Still, taken together, this collection of buildings points out how architecture at the Fair provides a living pattern book of design.

NOTES

1. "Report on the Cattle Barn;" Keffer & Jones Correspondence. Letter dated 21 April 1920; "Regarding the Salvaged Face Brick." Karl Keffer Associates Office Files; Masonic Temple Building; Des Moines, IA.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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



Continuation sheet Significance

Item number 8

Page 39

During World War II the Air Corps of the United States Army leased the Fairgrounds south of Grand Avenue. Buildings in this lease were used primarily as a storage depot. The Army undertook a minimum of alterations. These included construction of entry ramps into the Swine Barn (Site #5). The Army returned its leased quarters to the Fair Board in time for the 1946 Fair.

Few changes took place on the Fairgrounds between the end of World War II and the 1960s. In the early 1950s, railroad tracks were removed from Rock Island Avenue as truck transportation supplanted the railroads in conveying livestock and Midway equipment to and from the Fair. Tents provided the ubiquitous shelter for dining halls, small concessionaires, and some machinery displays.

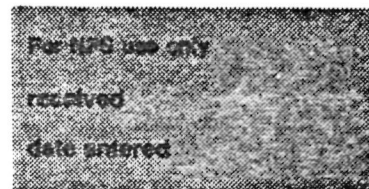
During the 1960s, Fairgoers expected more sophisticated dining facilities. Health codes also changed. Responding to this, the Fair Board began to allow concessionaires to build permanent quarters. These new buildings provided solid floors, screened openings for ventilation and insect protection, and weather tight roofs. Many sites, all not-eligible/intrusive to the district, resulted from the Board's policy change. A few of these buildings include Diamond Jack's (Site #64), Kentucky Fried Chicken (Site #65), Maid Rite (Site #66), Tri-Met Dining Hall (Site #67), and the Chesterfield Dining Hall (Site #68). These buildings constitute today the primary form of building in-fill on the Fairgrounds. Many of these buildings are of a simple, pole barn type construction. They strike a discordant note in the overall harmony of Fairground architecture.

In the late 1970s, Economic Research Associates and POD, Inc of Los Angeles prepared a 2-volume long-term master plan for the Fairgrounds. These consulting firms recommended the Iowa State Fair remain on its present site, that historic buildings on the grounds be rehabilitated, and that concessionaires should be encouraged to employ construction design more harmonious with the general tone of the Fairgrounds. The consultants also recommended demolition of two historic buildings deemed maintenance problems. These included the Administration Building (Site #1) and the Women and Children's Building. The latter building has been razed.

In conclusion, the Iowa State Fair and Exposition Grounds Historic District represents a fine collection of late Nineteenth and Twentieth Century fair and exposition type buildings in Iowa. Their large scale, specialized uses, the quantity of their number, the long-term planning required for their erection, adherence to the long-term plans over time, and the unified composition of building design distinguish the Fairgrounds. The contribution of one architectural firm, Keffer & Jones of Des Moines is notable. The Fairgrounds also reflect the designs of such nationally and regionally recognized landscape architects as Jacob Weidenmann, A N Carpenter, and O C Simonds. Over the years, the Iowa State Fair Board has been conscious of the need to develop the Fairgrounds systematically. The Board's employment of the professionals mentioned above is an expression of this concern.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet

Bibliography

Item number 9

Page 2

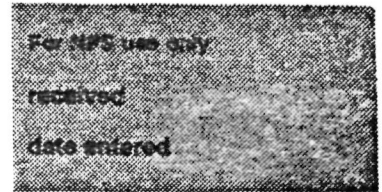
MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

P R I M A R Y

- Fire Insurance Maps; Sanborn Map Company; New York, NY; 1901; 1920; 1942.
- "Present Plan/Iowa State Fair and Exposition Grounds;" "July 1924;" Shows both Fairgrounds and Campgrounds; Location of Original Unknown; Xerox Copy courtesy Robert R Harvey, Iowa State University.
- "Map of Iowa State Fair Grounds Showing Location of Exhibits;" Shows Fairgrounds proper w/o campgrounds; Location of Original Unknown; Xerox Copy courtesy Robert R Harvey; Iowa State University. New buildings indicate this map circa 1908. This map was found in the Olmstead Archives; Brookline, Massachusetts.
- State Agricultural Society Board Minutes; State Archives of Iowa; East 7th & Court Avenue; Des Moines, IA.
- The Prairie Farmer; Des Moines, IA; 7 July 1878; p 356. Article discusses organization of Iowa Agricultural & Mechanical Association.
- "State Fair News;" Iowa State Register; Des Moines, IA; August 1875. Supplement Section.
- "The State Fair--Past and Present;" The Midwestern; Des Moines, IA; August 1907; pp 65-75.
- "The Fairgrounds;" Iowa State Register; Des Moines, IA; 27 June 1885. Discusses new fairgrounds and interviews Jacob Weidenmann.
- "Iowa State Fair Ground/Des Moines, Iowa;" A N Carpenter Master Plan; Dated 1890; Ink on linen backed paper; Museum Building; Iowa State Fairgrounds.
- "A N Carpenter, the American Landscape Architect;" (Biography); History of Knox County, Illinois; pp 919-920.
- Frederick Law Olmsted Archives; Brookline, Massachusetts. Letters from Iowa State Fair Secretary J C Simpson to Olmsted Brothers dated 15 February 1910 (includes specifications, Request for Proposal); Letter from Olmsted Brothers firm to J C Simpson dated 21 February 1910. Research courtesy Robert R Harvey; Iowa State University.
- Simonds, O C; Landscape-Gardening; New York; The Macmillan Company; 1920. Simonds' major book on landscape architecture.
- Victorian Landscape Gardening; A Facsimile of Jacob Weidenmann's Beautifying Country Homes; The American Life Foundation for The Athenaeum Library of Nineteenth Century America; Watkins Glen, NY; 1978.
- Des Moines (Iowa) City Directory: 1879-80: W F Hackney "Architect;" "New Capitol Building" address.
- "Death of Mr. Carpenter;" Daily Republican; Galesburg (IL); 19 July 1906; p 1 c 2. Location of obituary indicates Carpenter's position in city.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet

Bibliography

Item number 9

Page 3

"O. C. Simonds & Company/Landscape Gardeners/Chicago, Illinois;" Original rendering of Iowa State Fair Grounds with proposed buildings, drives and landscaping; Ink and watercolor on brown paper; Museum Building; Iowa State Fairgrounds; Des Moines, IA. Plan w/o date but other archival sources date Simonds work 1910-1911.

Greater Iowa; Iowa State Fair Board; Des Moines, IA; 1909-1938. "Published occassionally by the Iowa Department of Agriculture during the summer months... Its special mission is to be a medium of communication between the Department of Agriculture and the friends and patrons of the Iowa State Fair and Exposition;" (15 May 1909; p 3. First edition). Greater Iowa is one of the best sources of information on the building up of the Fairgrounds. It includes articles on building construction and landscaping and frequently prints photographs. See text and individual site sheets for specific citations from Greater Iowa.

"Survey of The Iowa State Fair Buildings and Grounds/Des Moines, Iowa/ to determine the present condition of the/buildings and premises/for transfer from/The State of Iowa/to/The United States of America/Under lease dated April 17, 1942;" 2-volumes; Des Moines, IA; 1942. Mimeographed document containing original photographs. 12 copies of document printed. This survey was designed to inventory the Iowa State Fairgrounds when leased during World War II to the United States Government. A comprehensive document. Volume 1 contains 329 pages.

Letter to the Editor; The Iowa Homestead; 12 January 1883; p 8 c 2.

"Earl E. Jones, Architect, Dies;" Des Moines Register; 7 June 1950; p 1 c 1. "An architect who helped design hundreds of schools and public buildings in Iowa..." Page one news indicates Jones' importance in community.

"Karl Keffer Is Dead at 71;" Des Moines Tribune; 6 September 1954; p 1 c 7. Page one news indicates Keffer's importance in community. "Was widely known D. M. Architect."

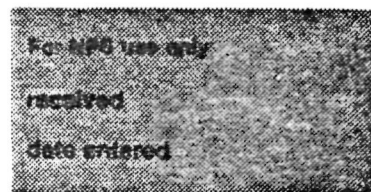
Plan Card Files; Karl Keffer Associates; Masonic Temple Building; Des Moines, IA. File contains cards indicating buildings the firm designed for the Iowa State Fairgrounds. These cards also indicate extant plans to build-ings. See following page for specific plans extant at the firm for particular buildings on the Fairgrounds.

"Oliver O. Smith Dies Unexpectedly/Well Known Architect and Business Man Expires Suddenly/at Home;" The Register and Leader; Des Moines, IA; 29 May 1916; p 6. "Mr. Smith was a member of the firm of Smith & Keffer. Recently he was appointed architect for the school board. The Historical building, the city library, Mercy hospital and all of the buildings at the fair grounds are some of the structures for which he drew the plans."

"Prominent Architect Dead;" The Register and Leader; Des Moines, IA; 30 May 1916; p 9. "Mr. Smith, who died suddenly at his home, 1168 Tenth street, was one of the leading architects of Des Moines." Includes photograph portrait.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet Bibliography

Item number 9

Page 4

S E C O N D A R Y

Ross, Earle D; "Origin of the State Fair; The Palimpsest; 1954.

"The Iowa State Fair;" The Palimpsest; 1954.

"The Pioneer Period" (Iowa State Fair); The Palimpsest;
1954.

"The Fair in Transition;" The Palimpsest; 1954.

Economic Research Associates (and) POD, Inc; "Analysis of Redevelopment/
Relocation Alternatives, Iowa State Fair; Final consultants' report con-
tains 2 volumes; Volume 1 Economic Analysis, Volume 2 Physical Analysis;
Recommends improvements to economic base of Fair and its continuation at
present site; April 1979.

Harvey, Robert R; "Documenting a Victorian Landscape in the Midwest;" As-
sociation for Preservation Technology Bulletin; Vol 9 #3; 1977. Con-
tains information about Weidenmann's activities in Des Moines.

Schuyler, David; "Introduction" to Beautifying Country Homes; Watkins Glen,
NY; The American Life Foundation; 1978. Supplies much of Weidenmann's
biographical data.

"The Old Capitol and the New;" Annals of Iowa; Vol 8 #1; Spring 1905; p
293.

"Architects in Iowa;" Project Files; Office of Historic Preservation,
Iowa State Historical Department.

Newton, Norman T; Design on the Land; The Development of Landscape Archi-
tecture; Cambridge (MA); The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press;
1971; pp 307-308 (Weidenmann); 390-391 (Simonds).

Informant Interview: Floyd Deets (Superintendent of Grounds, Iowa State
Fair circa 1954-1985) w/William Wagner; 1984. Mr Deets father served
as Superintendent of Grounds as well. Floyd grew up, consequently, on
the Fairgrounds in addition to his own experience as superintendent.

Informant Interview: Harold Bullington, AIA, Karl Keffer Associates;
Masonic Temple Building; Des Moines, IA w/ W C Page; Spring 1986. Mr
Bullington began his career as an architect in the firm of Keffer and
Jones in 1948. Bullington became a senior partner in the firm's successor,
Karl Keffer Associates, on the death of Keffer in 1954.

Informant Interview: Tom Atherton, AIA, Karl Keffer Associates; Masonic
Temple Building; Des Moines; IA w/W C Page; Spring 1986. Atherton be-
gan his career in architecture in 1948 in the firm Keffer & Jones. Ath-
erton became a senior partner in the firm's successor, Karl Keffer Associ-
ates, on the death of Keffer in 1954.

Informant Interview: Bill Fisher, Assistant Manager, Iowa State Fair w/W C
Page; Spring 1986. Fisher has served in this position since 1970 and
has closely followed the upbuilding of the physical plant.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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

For NPS use only
received
date entered

Continuation sheet Geographical

Item number 10

Page 2

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Beginning at the intersection of East 30th and Lyon Streets, thence south to the intersection of East 30th and Walnut Streets, thence east to the intersection of East 31st and Walnut Streets, thence south to the intersection of East 31st Street and Dean Avenue, thence east to the intersection of Dean Avenue and Lucas Street, thence north 650 feet, thence east 666 feet, thence north 350 feet, thence east 1,650 feet, thence north 1,900 feet, thence west to the intersection of East 30th and Lyon Streets, the point of beginning.

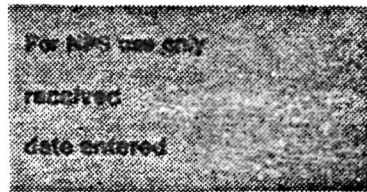
Note: All boundaries shown as footage abut private property lines.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The 313 acres included in this historic district comprise the entire acreage of the Iowa State Fairgrounds with the exception of 87 acres on the north side of the property. This land is used for automobile parking and was deemed by the Fair Board, the Office of Historic Preservation, and the nomination consultant best to best excluded from the nomination.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form



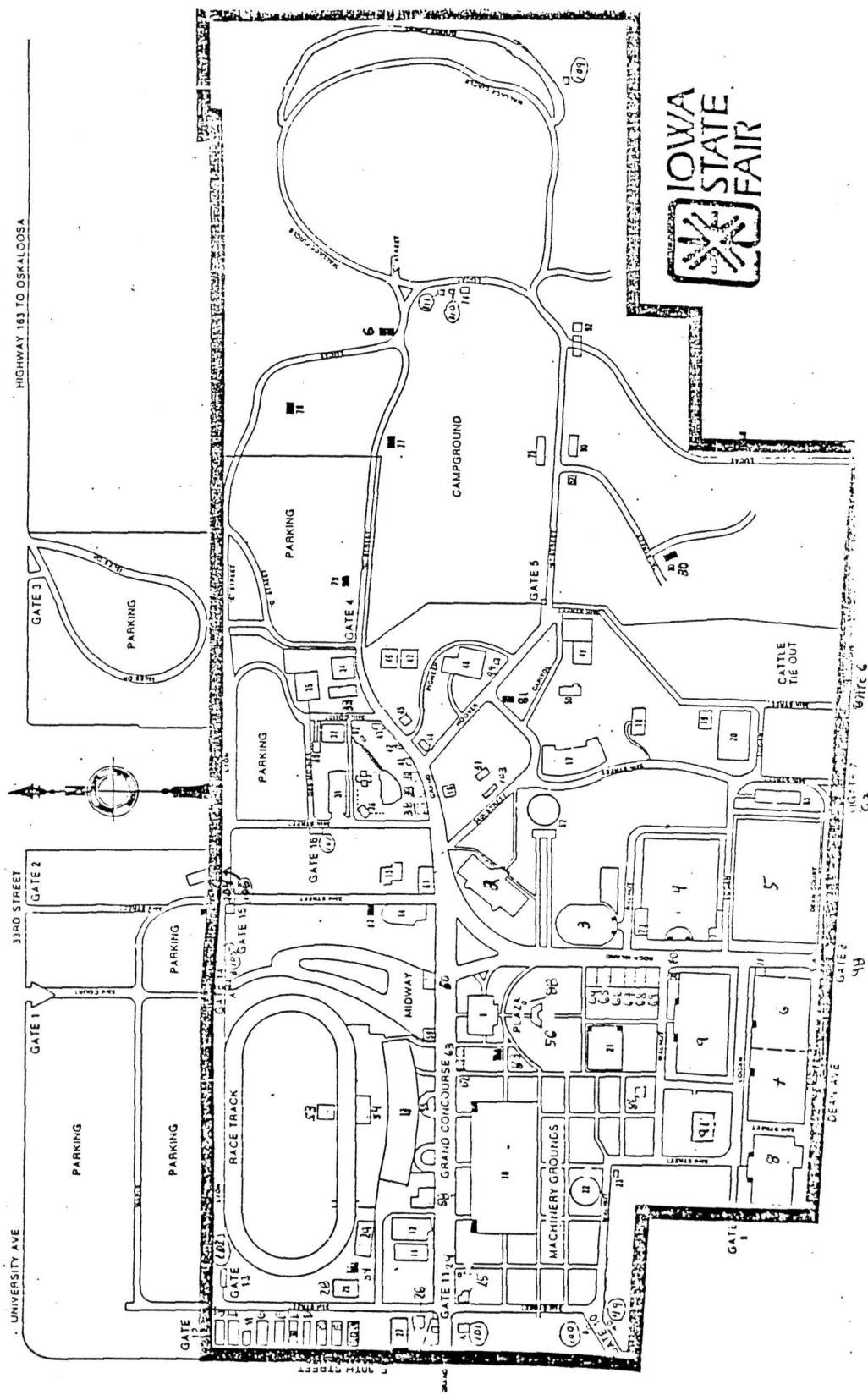
Continuation sheet

Geographical

Item number 10

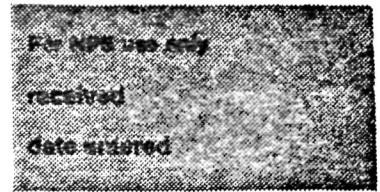
Page 3

Site Number
Map



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form



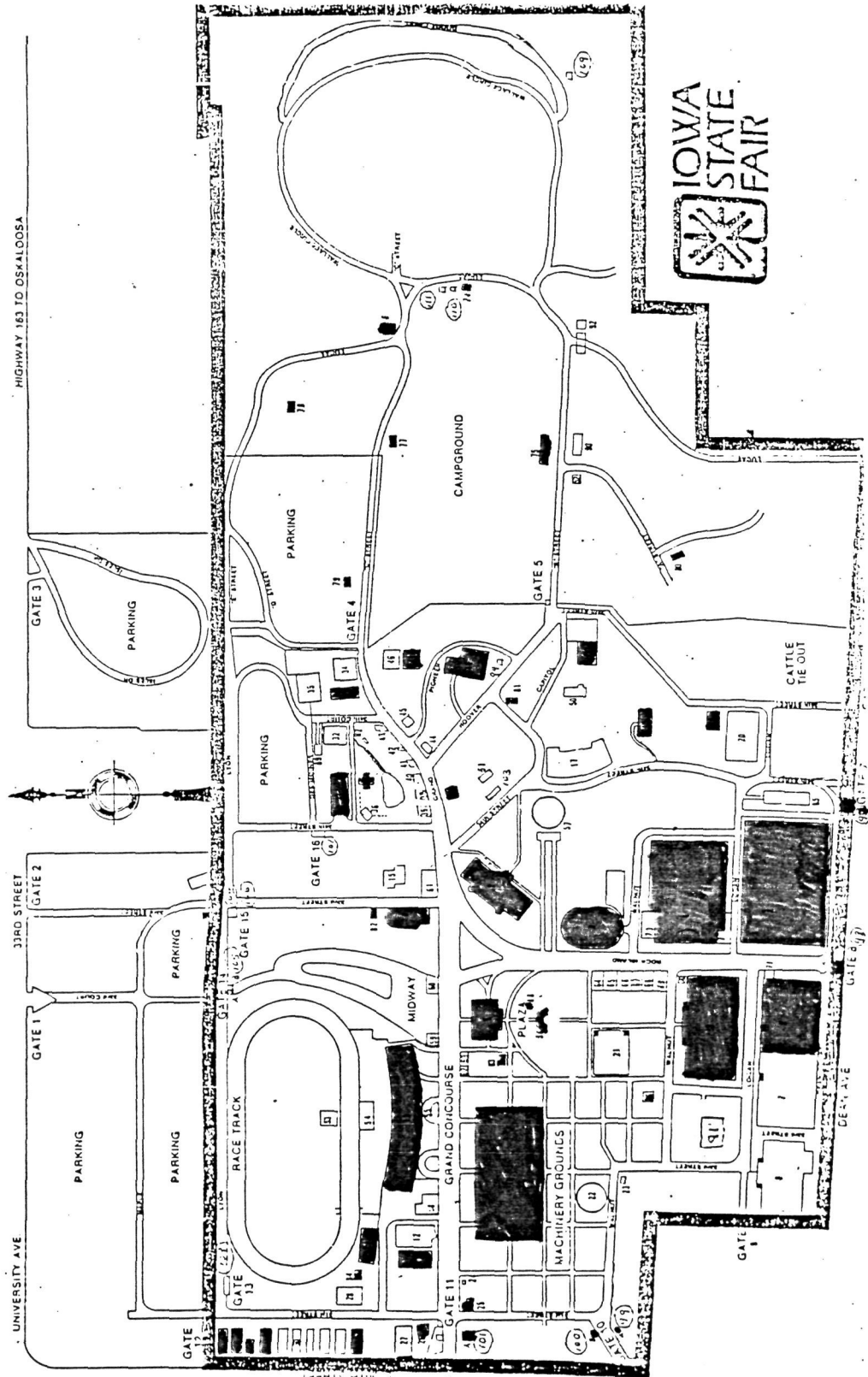
Continuation sheet Geographical

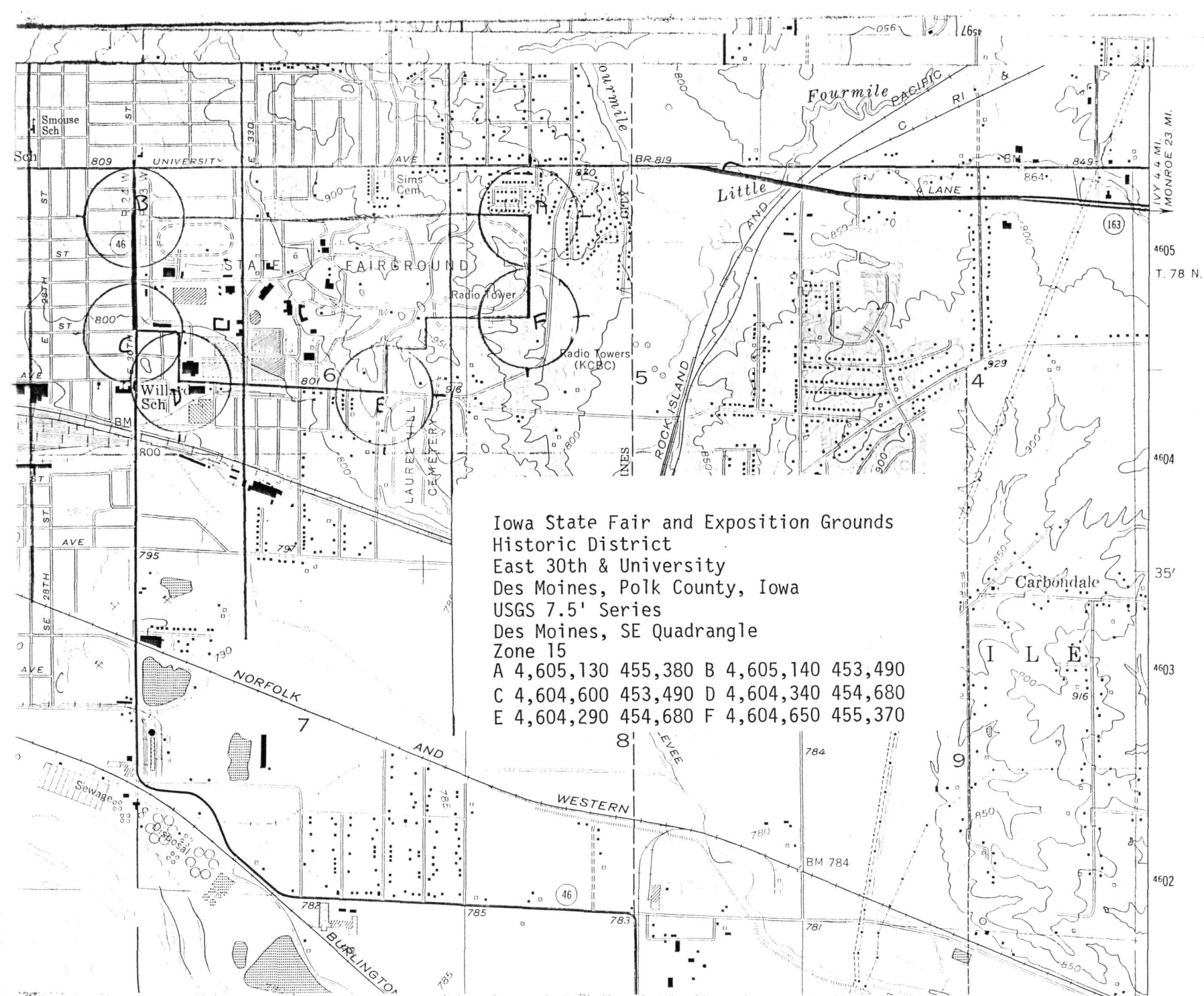
Item number 10

Page 4

Site Map:
Contributing
Resources

■ = Contributing
Resource







IOWA STATE FAIRGROUNDS

DES MOINES, IOWA

PHOTO #5

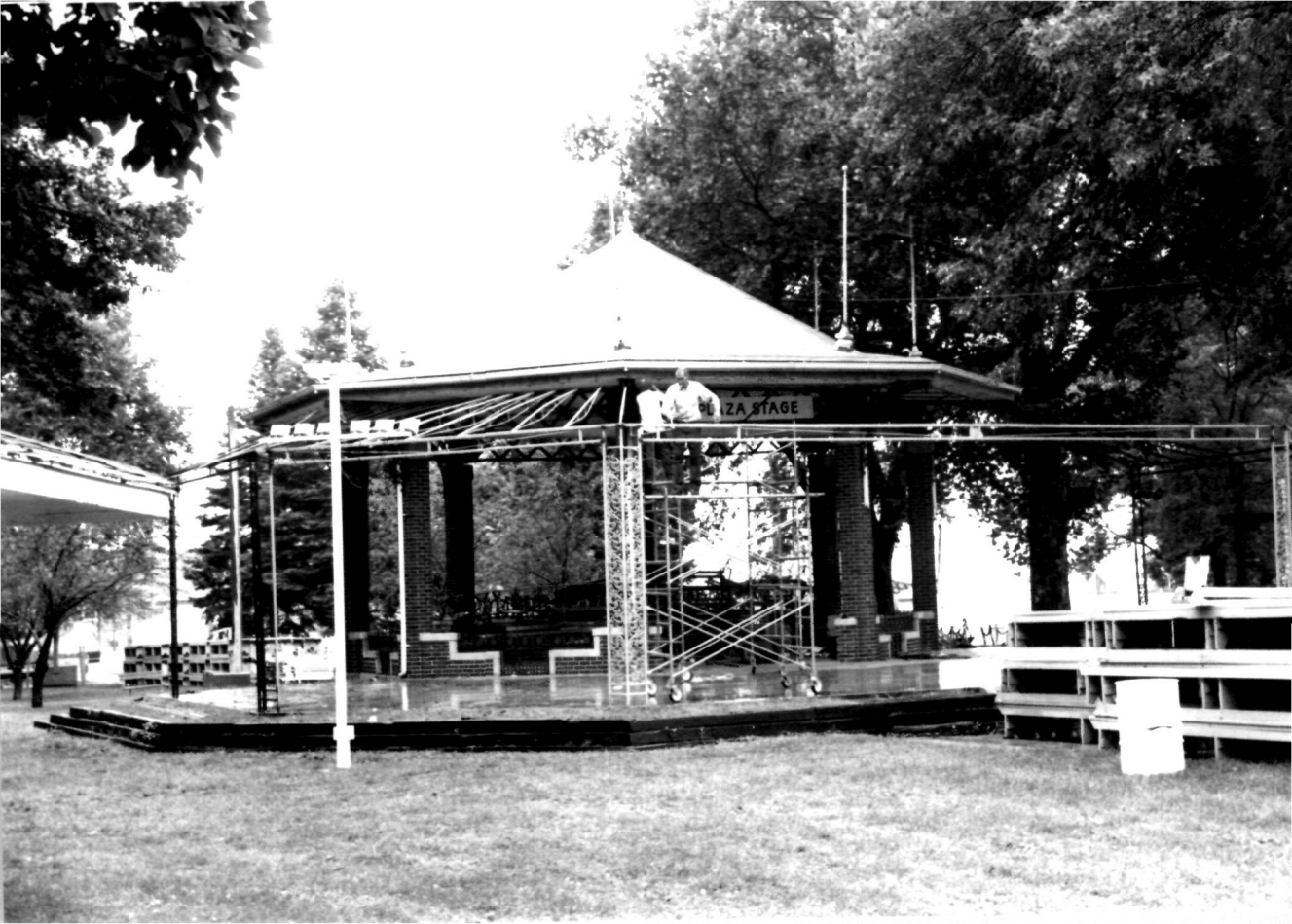
W C Page, Copystand Photo

Spring 1986

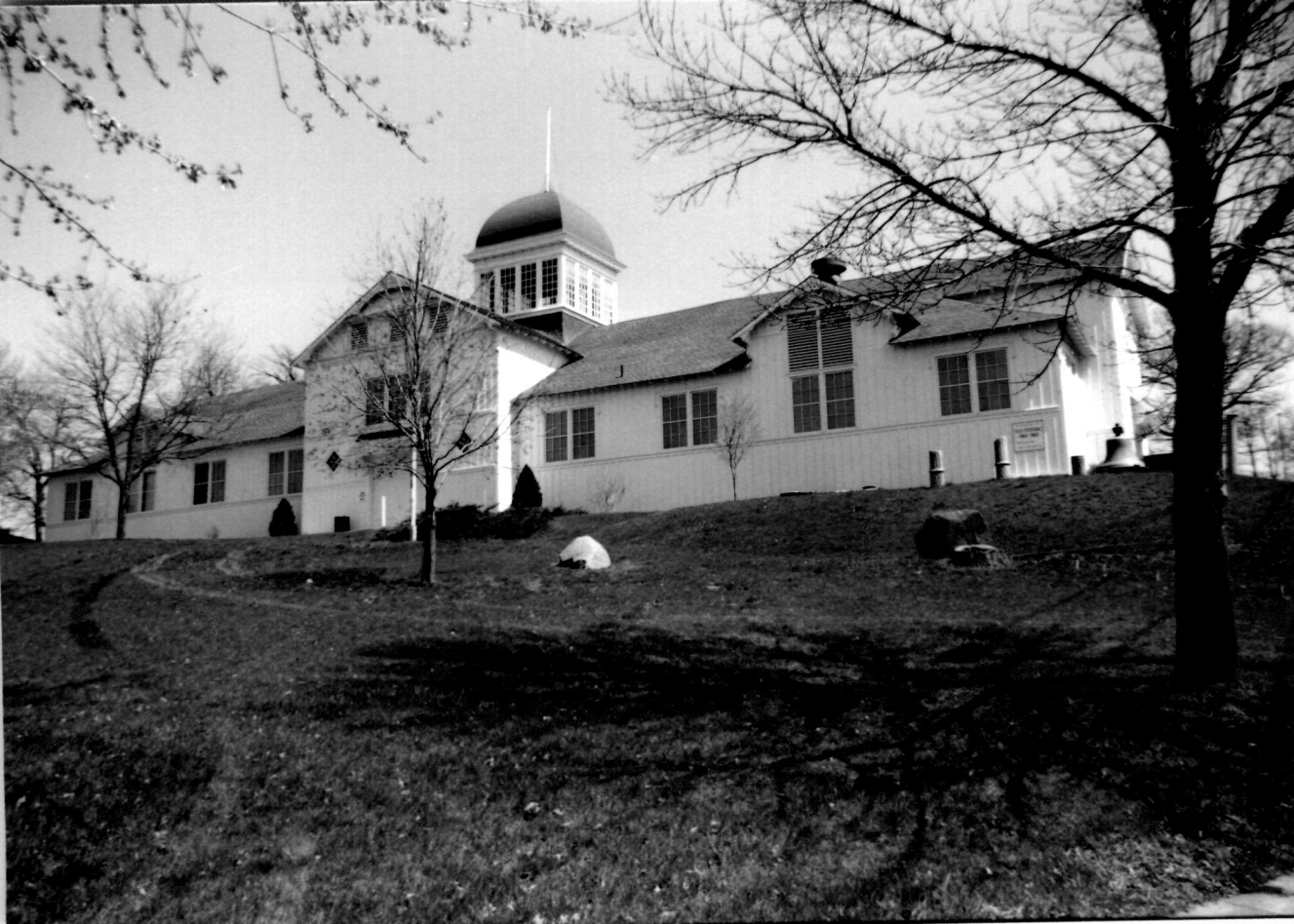
Aerial View looking W circa 1979













PIONEER













