

FINAL

**Historic Country Schools and Churches Survey,
Muscatine County, Iowa
VOLUME I: Report Text and Appendices A and B
Certified Local Government Grant**

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Tallgrass Project No. TA20-760**

Prepared for

**Muscatine County Historic Preservation Commission
and the
State Historical Society of Iowa -
Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs**

Prepared by

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All phases of the project were conducted under the direction of Leah D. Rogers, Principal Investigator, Tallgrass Archaeology LLC, with the assistance of the Muscatine County Historic Preservation Commission, Muscatine County, Local Volunteers, Property Owners, and Tallgrass personnel: Ray J. Werner, Project Historian and Ashlynn R. Brown, Project Assistant

CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

Information contained in this report relating to the nature and location of archaeological sites is considered private and confidential and not for public disclosure in accordance with Section 304 of the National Historic Preservation Act (formerly 16 U.S.C § 470 et seq., now 54 U.S.C. § 300101 et seq.); 36 CFR Part 800.6 (a)(5) of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation's rules implementing Sections 106 and 110 of the Act; Section 9(a) of the Archaeological Resource Protection Act (16 U.S.C. 470hh(a-b) and, Chapter 22.7, subsection 20 of the Iowa Code.

ABSTRACT

The Muscatine County Historic Country Schools and Churches Survey focused on the identification of rural churches and schools throughout the county. It also included the inventory of selected architectural and archaeological sites identified during the survey resulting in a total of 14 architectural properties and 14 archaeological sites newly recorded as part of the current study. Recommendations for potential NRHP eligibility of each property was made, with some requiring additional research and/or Phase I Archaeological survey before a final recommendation of eligibility can be made.

The research and survey for the current study were completed with the assistance of the Muscatine County HPC members as well as other interested volunteers who provided information, photographs, and memories of the properties. The location and basic information for all the schools and churches identified during the survey were entered into Muscatine County's MAGIC geodatabase system.

In total, the survey identified 104 school sites, 40 standing schoolhouses, 37 church sites and 34 standing church buildings. The survey did include reconnaissance of schools and churches in the towns outside of the City of Muscatine, which account for most of the extant church buildings. However, there are a notable number of extant rural church buildings, many of which are still active congregations. A few of the historic churches were moved but not as many as historic schoolhouses that were moved in the county, which often had more than one site location during their active use as schoolhouses.

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Introduction

This report presents the results of the Historic Country Schools and Churches Survey, Muscatine County, Iowa, conducted under the Certified Local Government (CLG) grants program as administered by the State Historical Society of Iowa – Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs and by the Muscatine County Historic Preservation Commission (HPC). The current members of the HPC include: Bill Koellner, Chair, Pam Collins, Lynn Ochiltree, Mary Beveridge, Jane Daufeldt, Lynn Pruitt, Becky Furlong, Rebeckah Allgood, and Jamie Bosten. Jane Daufeldt served as Project Director for the administration of this grant. These members participated in all aspects of the project including historic research, field survey, field photography, meetings, and GIS database entries. The members also reviewed the draft report. Other organizations that assisted with this study included the Muscatine County Board of Supervisors, Mark Yerington of the Muscatine Area Geographic Information Consortium (MAGIC), and members of the Muscatine County Genealogy Society. Other volunteers who assisted with the research and survey activities included: Robert Bancks, Terri Becker, JoAnn Carlson, Dan Clark, Jean Clark, Connie Fuller, Tom Furlong, Becky Hansen, Janina Hawley, Charles Hermann, Dale Irwin, Ione Irwin, Jerry Lamp, Lynn McCleary, Robert McCleary, Devin Pettit, Dana Pittman, Barb Rinnert Reesink, and Pam Schnittjer.

The Consultant for the project was Tallgrass Archaeology LLC of Iowa City under the direction of Principal Investigator, Leah D. Rogers, who was responsible for the overall conduct of the project and the completion of the project end products, including the draft and final reports and the Iowa Site Inventory and Archaeological Site Record forms. Rogers was assisted by Tallgrass staff, Project Historian Ray J. Werner and Assistant Ashlynn Brown in compilation of survey data, photographs, and completion of the Iowa Site Inventory and Archaeological Site forms for the project.

Muscatine County is located in southeastern Iowa along Iowa's eastern border with the Mississippi River (Figure 1). Because the shape of the county was influenced by the curving channel of the river, it only has 14 townships as opposed to the more common 16 townships in most of Iowa's rectangular-shaped counties. In addition, most of the townships in Muscatine County are not the six-mile-by-six-mile square townships seen in most other Iowa counties. Here, the township size and shapes are determined by the channels of the Cedar River and the Mississippi River, with the smallest township having only 18 sections and not all of those are one mile square. The typical township in Iowa has 36 one-mile square sections.

The county's southeastern border also includes that portion of the river channel within the state of Iowa. Muscatine County encompasses three landform regions including the Southern Iowa Drift Plain, the Iowa-Cedar Lowland, and the Mississippi River Alluvial Plain (Figure 2). The drift plain is Iowa's largest physiographic region and is characterized by a dissected landscape with steeply rolling hills, areas of nearly flat uplands, and level alluvial floodplains (Prior 1991:58-64). This region was formed by successive glacial ice sheet advances and retreats. Since the last glaciation, the majority of the land has been exposed to "episodes of downcutting alternated with periods of greater landscape stability when soil profiles could weather deeply into the exposed glacial deposits" resulting in a dendritic drainage pattern (Prior 1991:61). A moderate to thick mantle of Peorian Loess that was deposited during Wisconsinan time covers much of the region.

The Iowa-Cedar Lowland encompasses the alluvial plains of the Iowa and Cedar rivers where the Cedar River enters into the Iowa River just south of Muscatine County, with the Iowa River then entering the Mississippi River to the southeast. The Mississippi River Alluvial Plain encompasses the large floodplain of this major river, with a notable feature of the floodplain known as “Muscatine Island” located to the southwest of the City of Muscatine. This region is generally characterized by thick alluvium with level terrain along the valleys but including “stream channels, floodplains, oxbow lakes, terraces, alluvial fans, and sand dunes” (Prior 1991:34). The Muscatine Island Locality is a triangular-shaped section of bottomland that is over 22,000 acres in its extent. It is a level alluvial plain composed of low terraces and alluvial fans on the western and northern edges, with the Muscatine Slough being the primary waterway through the Island. Prior to the draining of Muscatine Island, the slough “connected many swamps and smaller meanders,” with the slough widening into Lake Odessa along the southwest edge of the Island (Benn and McKay 1977:2). A prominent feature along the west bank of the Mississippi River is the “Great Sand Mound,” which is “the single largest anomaly occurring on the Island,” but “sand dunes and large accumulations of sand are typical features of broad, alluvial floodplains” (Benn and McKay 1977:2). In the historic and modern eras, the Muscatine Island landform has been conducive to the cultivation of the so-called Muscatine Melons, which do well in sandy soil.

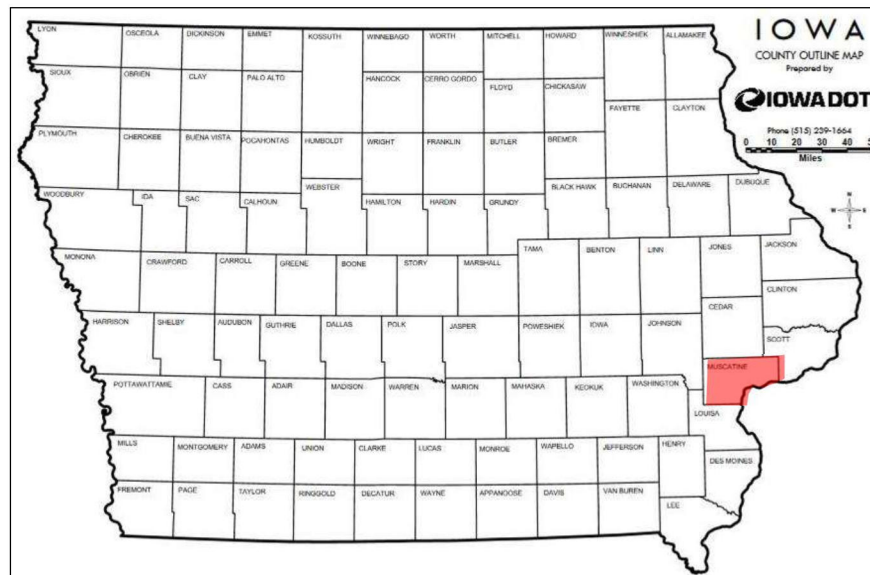


Figure 1. Map of the State of Iowa showing location of Muscatine County (red shaded).
Map obtained from the Iowa DOT.

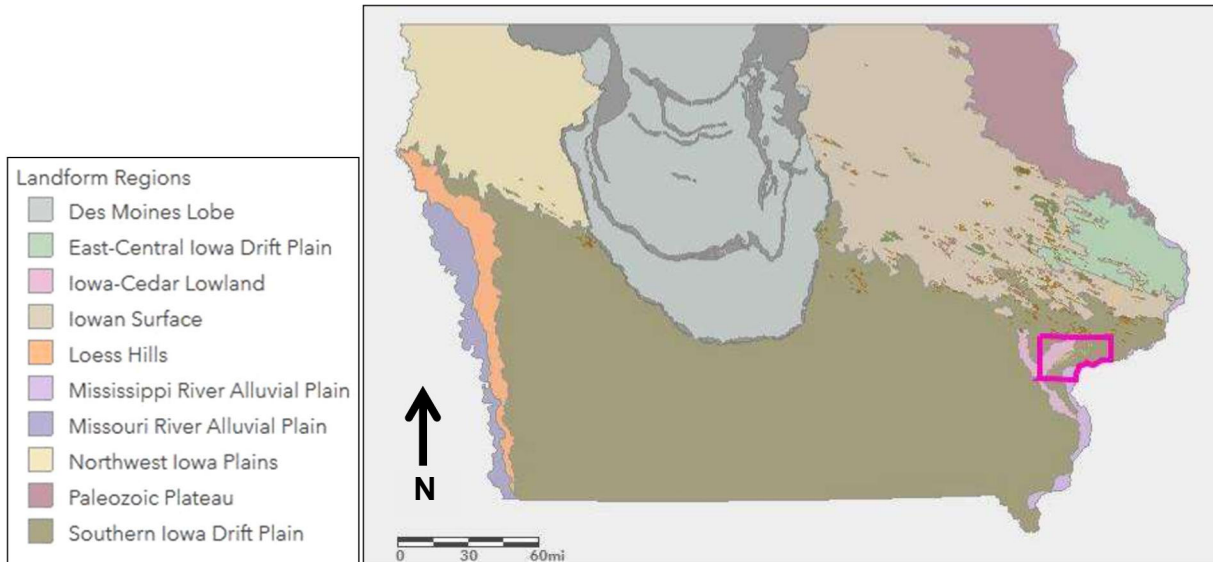


Figure 2. Landform regions of Iowa showing Muscatine County (pink outline).

Map obtained from ArcGIS Online through the Iowa Geographic Map Server 2021.

The environment at the time of the original land surveys for Muscatine in 1838 showed the river and creek valleys in timber but the rest of the county in open prairie (Figure 3). The mapped location of cabins and other settlements at the time clustered in the timber and along the waterways, with little or no settlement out on the open prairie (see Figure 3). This was a common pattern throughout Iowa, with the earliest settlement at the forest/prairie margins and along the waterways. This type of environment before 1860 provided pioneers with the fuel and building materials needed from the timber and a parcel of land along the timber/prairie margin that could be more easily broken for cultivation. During this early period, the thick prairie sod was an impediment to settlement away from the timbered area until John Deere's scouring plow began to be mass produced after the Civil War. This type of plow was able to turn the prairie sod with greater ease. After that, the prairies began to quickly fill up with settlement because this was the richest land for cultivation. But as can be seen in the 1838 Muscatine County map, settlement was then hugging the timber/prairie margins leaving much of the open interior vacant.

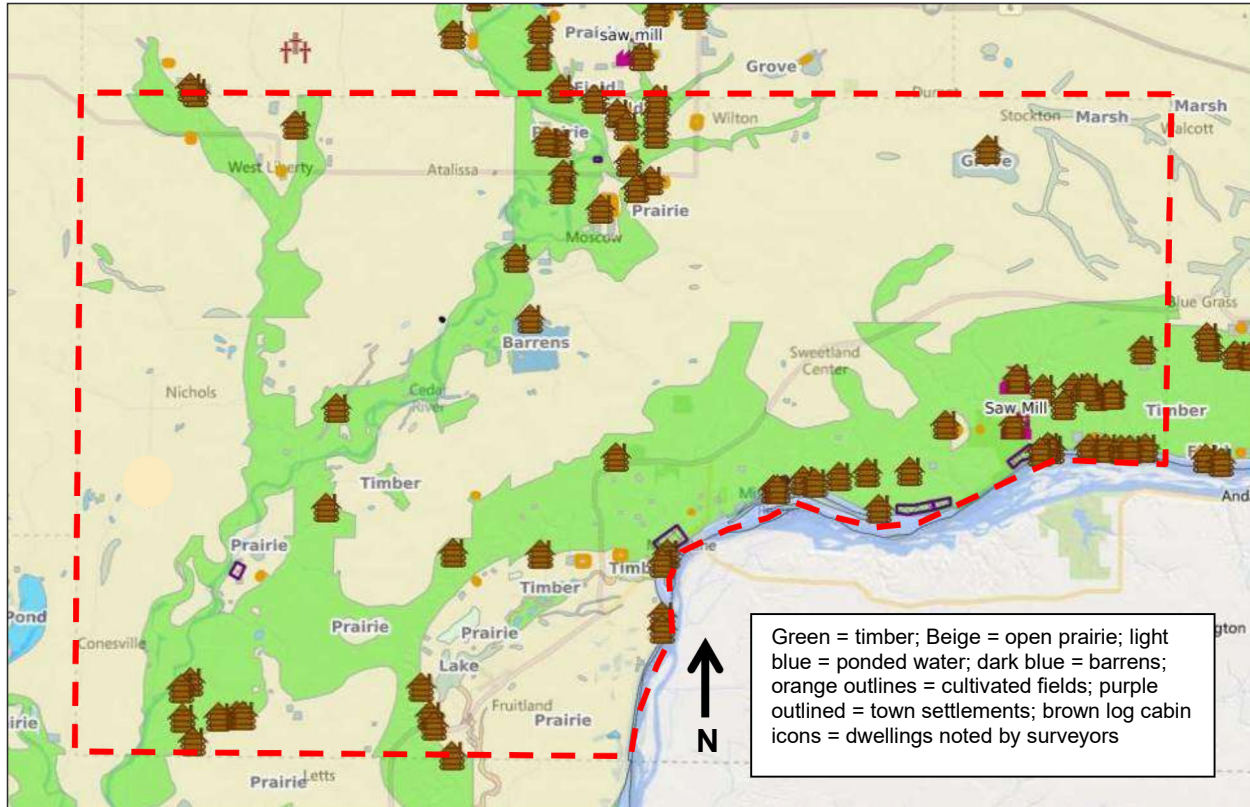


Figure 3. Map of Muscatine County (red dashed outline) showing the vegetation and settlement at the time of the 1838 General Land Office (GLO) original survey plats. Source: I-Sites Pro 2021.

The 14 townships in Muscatine County include (from top left to bottom right): Wapsinonoc, Goshen, Moscow, Wilton, Fulton, Montpelier, Sweetland, Bloomington, Lake, Pike, Orono, Cedar, Seventy Six, and Fruitland (Figure 4). Historically, Bloomington Township was much larger, with its south half later subdivided into Fruitland Township (Figure 5). The modern cities and towns in the county include the county seat of Muscatine, West Liberty, Atalissa, Moscow, Wilton, Stockton, Nichols, and Conesville. Other historical communities have included: Adams, Ardon, Cranston, Bayfield (sometimes represented as Dayfield), Fairport, Fruitland, Montpelier, Petersburg, Pleasant Prairie, New Era, Rainbow, Schmidt, Summit, Sweetland Center, and Port Allen (see Figures 5 and 7).



Figure 4. 2016 Muscatine County map showing voting precincts but also showing the modern township boundaries and town locations. Map obtained from <https://muscatinecountyia.gov/>, February 2021.

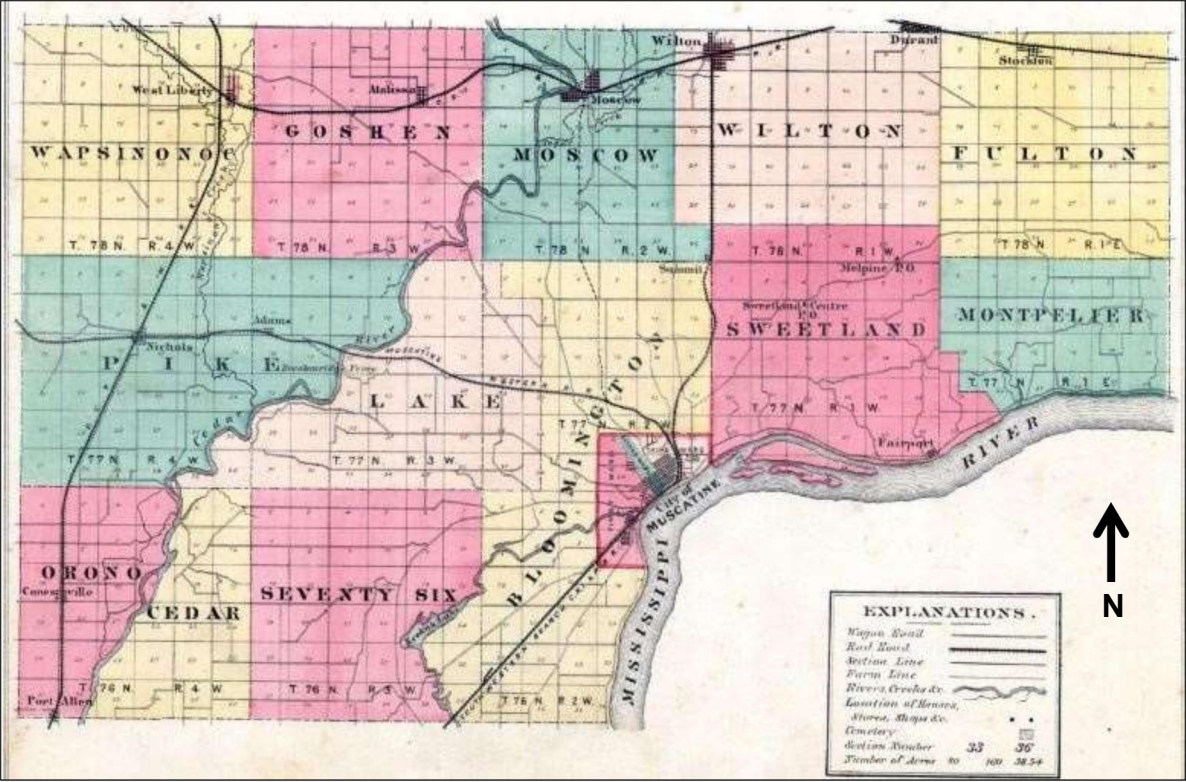


Figure 5. 1874 map of Muscatine County showing the townships and towns. Source: Harrison and Warner 1874 obtained from <http://www.historicmapworks.com>, February 2021.

Historic Contexts

A detailed historical summary of the growth and development of Muscatine County has been set forth in McCarley (2017), with the reader referred to that study for more information. The following focuses on those contexts that affected the establishment of schools and churches throughout the county but providing some background on the factors that played a role in the growth and development of the county as a whole.

Early Settlement and Growth of Muscatine County and The City of Muscatine

In 1834, Benjamin Nye, generally identified as the first white settler (not considering the many European and Euroamerican traders, who frequented this region), located with his family on a claim near the mouth of Pine Creek where he built Muscatine County's first grist mill. The year after Nye's arrival several more settlers came to the area including James Casey, who established a trading house at a spot where the Mississippi River was deep enough for steamers to approach the shore and became known as "Casey's Landing." It was a frequent stopping place for the steamers to harvest the abundant timber lining the river's shores for fuel and was the only such landing available on the west bank of the Mississippi above Burlington, which was 40 miles to the south. Timber would become Muscatine County's first important industry (Huebinger 1899:93; Randleman 1981:preface; Western Historical 1879:413).

By 1836, settlers were arriving in the area at an increased rate and mostly by steamer. Col. John Vanater and Benjamin Clark laid out a town on their purchased claim the following year. The fledgling town was variously named "Casey's Landing," "Newburg," and "Bloomington," the last selected by Vanater after his previous home in Illinois. It would be incorporated as Bloomington in 1839, but ten years later the name would be officially changed to Muscatine (Huebinger 1899:93; Randleman 1981:preface; Western Historical 1879:501-507).

Muscatine developed into a thriving river port primarily because "it was the first town on the west bank upriver from Burlington where a steamboat could dock" (Benn and McKay 1977:4). Muscatine also served as the county seat of government from circa 1840 to the present day, never having any serious contenders elsewhere in the county.

In the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries, Muscatine was noted for three major industries, specifically the lumber industry, shell button manufactories, and truck farming. While the lumber industry had declined by the 1920s, and the heyday of the shell button industry was from the 1890s to the late 1920s, truck farming continued to be of importance to the Muscatine vicinity into the late twentieth century, with Muscatine Melons still grown in the Muscatine Island vicinity and sold all over southeastern Iowa (Rousmaniere 1982:259-262; Scarpino 1985:107).

At the time of the original land surveys in 1838, settlement clustered along the Mississippi River and the timbered areas along the Cedar River and its tributaries (see Figure 3). The open prairie between the timbered valleys was largely unsettled because of the difficulty at the time of plowing the thick, tough prairie sod. It was not until the 1860s when John Deere's steel scouring plow was being mass produced, that the open prairies became attractive for settlement. It was not long after that the prairies were broken and put into cultivation. Settlement then spread throughout the county wherever there was habitable and cultivatable ground. There were some marshy and flood-prone areas that were slow to develop or avoided altogether.

The area of Muscatine Island saw only sparse settlement prior to 1845 when "a dam was constructed across the head of the slough and easy access could be gained to the arable land" (Benn and McKay 1977:5). After that time, the area became more settled but river flooding was still a problem. In 1883, a permanent levee was built from Muscatine to Port Louisa and effectively controlled the flooding of the Island. Benn and McKay (1977:5) have noted that reclamation and cultivation of the sandy Muscatine Island soil began in the mid-1840s, with the subsequent levee constructions bringing more land under cultivation.

Throughout the nineteenth century and up to the present time the low-lying portions of the Island have been subject to periodic spring flooding, but this event has not prevented people from settling on the Island. Presently, Muscatine Island is protected from extensive flooding by a river bank levee built in 1969 by the Corps of Engineers. Housing developments are springing up on the Island, Muscatine Slough has been channelized, and the arable land is undergoing capital improvements, such as draining and irrigating (Benn and McKay 1977:5).

The Sand Mound portion of Muscatine Island was first settled by Elisha Beatty, who settled here in 1850. He "ran 3 government navigation lights on the Mississippi River near his home, and eventually came to own 1400 acres of land on and around the Sand Mound" (Benn and McKay 1977:5). The area of Muscatine Island and Sand Mound is in Fruitland Township, downriver and to the southwest of the City of Muscatine.

Prior to the arrival of the railroads, the main transportation modes were steamboat and overland wagon and stage coaches. Ferries and fording places provided crossings across the county's watersheds, with bridges soon built to facilitate safer and more reliable river and stream crossings. Early stage and post roads connected Muscatine to Davenport, Tipton (to the north), West Liberty and Iowa City to the northwest, and Wapello and points south along the Mississippi River. The major stage lines across Iowa looked much like a spider web following the ridge tops and higher terraces wherever possible across the state and connecting to as many communities as they could (Figure 6). Some of these roads would develop into later highways but others were abandoned as the state's secondary road system developed largely following the section and township grid lines wherever possible.

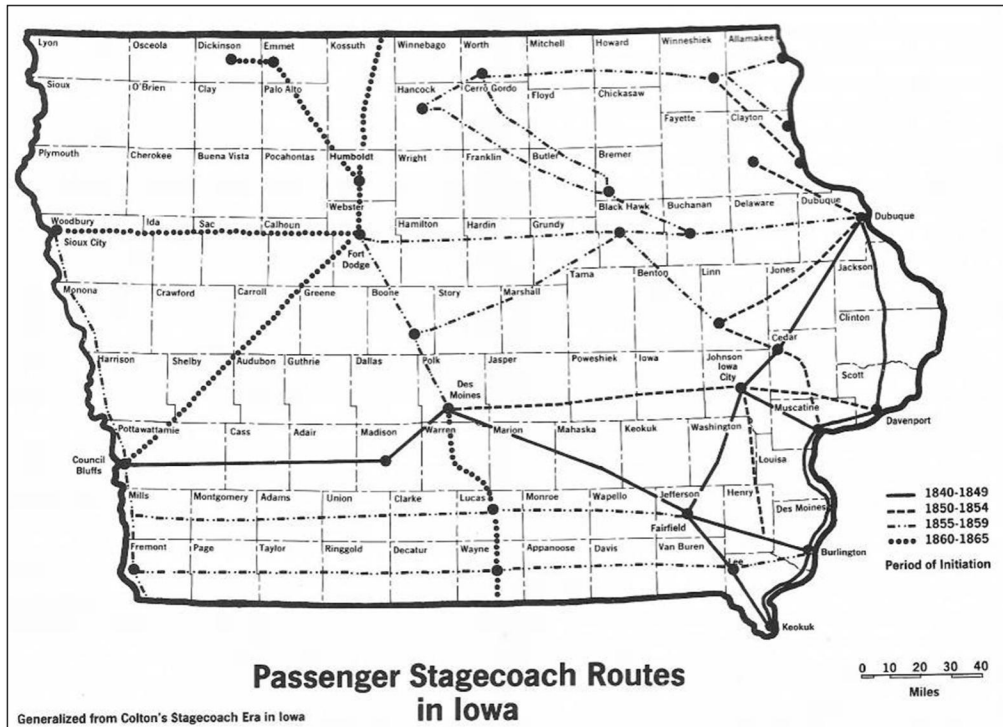


Figure 6. Major passenger stagecoach routes in Iowa in the mid-to-late nineteenth century.

Source: Thompson 1989:8.

Among the notable, and still extant, stagecoach inns in Muscatine County is the Beers and St. Johns Company Coach Inn located on Highway 6 west of West Liberty. This property was listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) in 2016 (Ingalls 2016).

As noted previously, by the 1870s, the county had been subdivided into 13 townships, with Bloomington Township then encompassing the entire area north of the city of Muscatine and all the land to the south along the river. The south half of this area is now Fruitland Township, with Bloomington Township confined to the north half of its original extent (Figures 4-5).

As the late nineteenth century progressed, Muscatine County benefitted from being along the first railroad across Iowa, originally known as the Mississippi and Missouri Railroad and later part of the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad system. However, that rail line only extended through the very northern part of the county. Additional rail lines were subsequently added that benefitted the rest of the county including three lines that radiated into and out of the City of Muscatine and one that extended north-south through the three western townships of Wapsinonoc, Pike, and Orono (see Figure 5).

In the 1850s, Chicago began to emerge as “the major financial, industrial, and transportation center of the Midwest” (Conard and Cuning 1990:E4). This was due in large part to the city’s linkage by rail with eastern markets beginning in 1853. This rail link was part of a much grander plan to construct a transcontinental railroad, a plan that would directly involve the young state of Iowa. What would become the Illinois Central (IC), the Chicago, Rock Island, and Pacific (CRIP, but more commonly referred to as the “Rock Island”), and the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy (CB&Q) railroads all became locked in a race to the Mississippi River, an event that was won by what was then the Chicago and Rock Island Railroad having completed its track to Rock

Island, Illinois, in early 1854, followed by the CB&Q and then the IC railroads. Rock Island was selected as the initial terminus because of the promise of this location for bridging the Mississippi River. The narrow channel between the island and the main land and the limestone bedrock of the island itself made for the ideal location for building a bridge (Roseman 2014).

The continuation of the westward building of the railroads in Iowa was joined by Iowa-based companies. This time, the race to the Missouri River was won by the Cedar Rapids and Missouri River Railroad (later part of the Chicago and North Western Railroad), which arrived in Sioux City in 1867, the race in general having been delayed by the Civil War. In 1869, the dream of a transcontinental link was finally realized with the construction of the Iowa section of the CRIP and CB&Q rail lines to Council Bluffs, the same year that the Union Pacific Railroad was linked to Council Bluffs from the west (Conard and Cunning 1990:E4 – E11).

Once the transcontinental linkage had been made, the focus of railroad construction in Iowa shifted.

After the first phase of railroad building in the 1860s and early 1870s established lines horizontally across the state, north-south and diagonal lines began filling in the map by the 1880s. Milwaukee, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Kansas City, St. Louis, and Omaha became increasingly desirable locations for commerce and industry, and the most direct routes between these cities often traversed some part of Iowa. Since Iowa cities like Cedar Rapids, Waterloo, Des Moines, Sioux City, and others were also experiencing their own business spurts, and since Iowa farmers were beginning to produce more than ever before, it made good sense to build railroads within the state (Conard and Cunning 1990:E13).

Iowa was profoundly affected by the development of the railroad, and its “status as a stable and prosperous agricultural state with an ethnically diverse population can be largely attributed to the growth of railroads in the Upper Mississippi River Valley” (Conard and Cunning 1990:E1). By 1870, there was a network of railroads crisscrossing the state funneling “immigrants and other opportunists through the state to Council Bluffs and Sioux City, major gateways to the West” (Conard and Cunning 1990:E1).

This network also facilitated the movement of livestock, agricultural produce, raw materials, and manufactured goods to, from, and within Iowa, and secured her reputation as a successful agrarian state for the next half-century. Despite the failures and abandonments of railroads following the Great Depression and World War Two, Iowa continues to serve as a major artery for the transportation of people and freight by rail (Conard and Cunning 1990:E1).

The Rock Island Railroad had a profound impact on the growth and development of northern Muscatine County, with towns along its route of Stockton, Durant (just over the Cedar County line), Wilton (formerly known as Wilton Junction), Moscow, Atalissa, and West Liberty owing their survival into the twentieth century largely to the railroad. Later U.S. Highway 6 continued to assist in their survival as that highway largely paralleled the railroad route through this area. Today, the railroad line is still in use by the Iowa Interstate Railroad (IAIS) but passenger service ceased in the late twentieth century.

The other later rail lines in the county included: the north-south Burlington, Cedar Rapids and Northern railroad, which intersected the main Rock Island line in West Liberty and was later acquired as a branch line by the Rock Island Railroad; yet another north-south branch line of the

Rock Island that extended from the main Rock Island line in Wilton and headed south into Muscatine; a line of the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul that extended west from Muscatine through Ardon, Cranston, and Conesville; and additional branch lines of the Rock Island Railroad from Muscatine west-northwest through Nichols, southeast from Stockton, and along the north bank of the Mississippi River east from Muscatine and to the southwest through Fruitland (Figure 7). The Davenport and Muscatine interurban railroad connected the two river towns by way of Sweetland, Wilton, and Fulton townships by the early twentieth century (see Figure 7). This railroad coverage meant that there was no township within the county that did not have at least one railroad connection, something that is not common in all areas of Iowa.

However, by the early twentieth century, the railroad began to decline largely as a result of the rise in popularity of the automobile and the trucking industry. The railroads reacted by consolidating their lines and making their freight and passenger service more efficient. One such attempt was to add the 100-MPH “Rocket Train” on the main Rock Island line that passed through Muscatine County (McCarley 2017:33). Although by the late twentieth century, the use of the railroads as a personal mode of transportation had given way to the automobile and passenger service had ceased in the communities in Muscatine County and across Iowa by the 1980s. The railroads did not die off completely, with consolidation continuing into the present day. In fact, the first railroad across Iowa still carries freight through Muscatine County on the original route of the M&M (Rock Island) railroad as part of what is now the IAIS railroad. In Muscatine County, the railroad line between Wilton and Muscatine was abandoned as early as 1934 and was the first line in the county to meet this fate (McCarley 2017:33).

The rise of the automobile also led to the improvement of the state’s road system, which into the 1920s was still dirt/mud roads outside of the cities. Paving of the growing highway system began in earnest in the late 1920s. U.S. Highway 6 (aka White Pole Road) through the northern tier of Muscatine County was paved by the early 1930s. The importance of this highway would later diminish with the construction of Interstate 80 in the 1950s but it still carries a lot of traffic between Davenport and Iowa City (Hancock 2020).

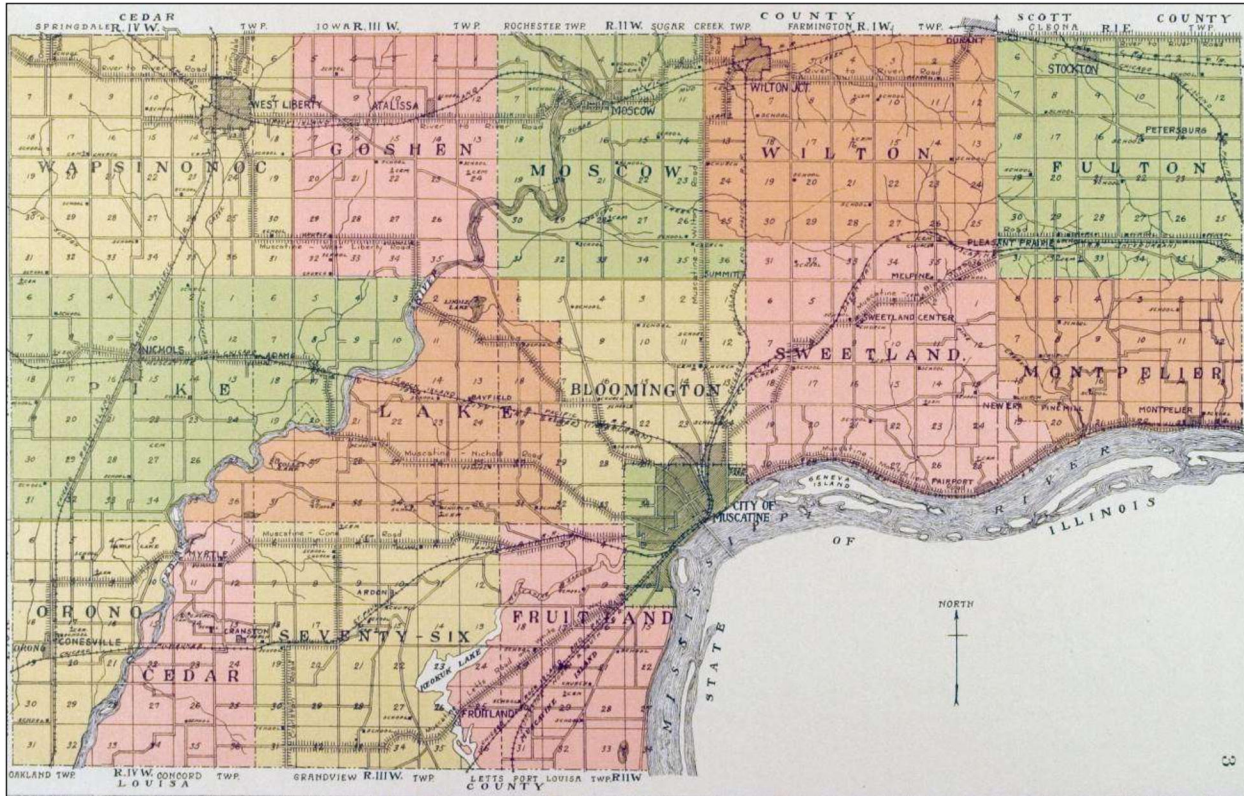


Figure 7. 1916 map of Muscatine County showing the roads and railroad routes across the county by that time. Source: Anderson 1916.

The City of Muscatine was on early state highways 2, 20, and 38, with a toll bridge across the river. In 1926, US Highway 61 replaced IA 20, with IA 22 replacing IA 2 east of Muscatine. In 1931, IA 22 was extended westward from Muscatine through the town of Nichols in Muscatine County. In 1984, the U.S. 61 bypass around the west side of Muscatine opened, with the route through the city now designated as Business 61 (Morrison 2019). IA 38 was first designated in 1920 from Anamosa to Muscatine by way of Wilton in Muscatine County. The section from US 6 in Wilton to Muscatine was paved in 1933 (Hancock 2020).

Iowa Highway 70 had its northern terminus in West Liberty at US 6 and its southern terminus at Columbus Junction at IA 92. It was designated in 1969 replacing IA 76, which had been first designated in 1920. Its original northern terminus was West Liberty but its southern terminus was Wapello before it was truncated south of Columbus Junction in 1933. The segment from West Liberty to Columbus Junction was paved in 1955 (Hancock 2020).

It is interesting to note that the major highways through Muscatine County essentially followed the railroad lines that they were replacing in the early twentieth century. Therefore, the established towns along the railroad lines were able to off-set some of the loss in trade and shipping with the diminishment of the railroads and continued to survive into the modern era by catering to road and highway traffic.

Towns of Muscatine County

Atalissa

This town is located in Section 11 of Goshen Township on the line of the Mississippi & Missouri Railroad (later part of the Rock Island system). The village of Atalissa actually began as a small settlement two miles west of its current location on the new line of the M&M Railroad. "A side-track was there laid, a platform built, and William Pickering engaged in buying grain, which was loaded directly into the cars" (Acme Publishing 1889:664). The 80 acres on which the subsequent town of Atalissa was located was owned by Capt. William Lundy, "who sold an undivided half to John P. Cook, of the firm Cook & Sargent, Davenport, with the intention of having it laid out in town lots" (Acme Publishing 1889:664). Lundy presented the railroad with money in order to secure the location of a station at the new town site, "with the privilege of using the water from an immense spring, situated in the northeast corner of the village" (Acme Publishing 1889:664). The town was surveyed, and a plat was filed by Cook and Lundy on January 31, 1856. The new town was named Atalissa after a small mining village that Lundy had lived near while mining for gold in California. The new Atalissa Post Office "was moved from Overman Ferry and established in this place in 1856, with N.C. Swank as Postmaster" (Acme Publishing 1889:664). The post office was located in the first building erected on the town site by Swank and in which he also kept a store (Acme Publishing 1889:664). By 1879, Atalissa's businesses included: "two general stores, one drug store, two physicians, one grain firm, one grocery store, two harness-shops, two blacksmith-shops, one wagon-maker's shop, one tin-shop, one meat market, one hotel, and boot and shoe and hardware store" (Western Historical 1879:587).

Atalissa was slow to grow but by 1889 was characterized as "a thriving town of some 300 inhabitants, having in it two church-buildings, the Christian and Presbyterian, a good public school-building, two general stores, one hardware and grocery store, one exclusively grocery store, one wagon-shop and implement store, one harness-shop, one shoe-shop, one restaurant, a meat market, one blacksmith shop, and a hotel" (Acme Publishing 1889:664). The public school building was a two story brick building erected in 1866 (Acme Publishing 1889:664). The town could also boast of the Atalissa Savings Bank organized in 1902 and occupying a new brick building on Main Street. By 1911, the contract had been let to build a new high school building in town (Richman 1911:248).

Shipments on the railroad from Atalissa included livestock, grain, hay, fruit, and cream. By 1911, it was noted that "Atalissa is quite a business center and is noted for its shipment of stock" (Richman 1911:248). Businesses in town by that time included: "two general stores, a drug store, meat shop, good hotel, grain elevator, blacksmith shop and cement factory, good churches, a high school and a grammar school" (Richman 1911:248). However, despite this seeming prosperity, the reported population of Atalissa by 1911 had dropped to 250 people down from the 300 reported in 1889. The population continued to decline, with a total of 181 by 1940. There was a rebound by 1950 of 204 total residents; however, the population total was still less than its peak in the late nineteenth century (Smith 1956).

The 1899 plat map showed that the commercial area of Atalissa developed north of the tracks along both sides of Cherry Street (Huebinger 1899). The businesses shown in this area included two hotels, three stores, and a drugstore and post office in one building. A livery and a feed mill were located north and west of the main commercial area. There was also an elevator across the railroad tracks to the northwest of the depot in 1899.

The 1899 plat map also showed a schoolhouse at the northeast corner of town but on the east side of the town plat as well as three churches in the western portion of the plat north of the creek and the railroad tracks (Huebinger 1899). These churches included the Adventist Church on Fifth Street, the Presbyterian Church on Fourth Street, and the Christ Church on Third Street. Historically, there was also a German Lutheran Church. The Presbyterians held their first services in the depot in 1857, with a church building soon built. The Christian Church (aka Church of Christ and Church of God) was organized in 1870, with the first church built the following year. In 1922, the church was raised for a basement, with a new front entrance and a new Sunday School room added; however, this church was torn down in 1984. There was a Methodist congregation as early as 1857; however, it “met with indifferent success” and never took hold. The Seventh Day Adventist Church held services in area homes until they built a church in 1900 (although the 1899 map suggests their church had been built by that time). The Zion Lutheran Church was founded in 1903, with a church built that same year. This church was raised for a new basement in 1936 when it was also enlarged. New stained glass windows were installed in 1948, with new pews and a pulpit purchased in 1977. The Zion church helped establish a mission in West Liberty that became Our Redeemer Church in 1953. The Pentecost Church was located in the Royal Neighbor Hall in 1931 (Atalissa Betterment Committee 1999).

Land was donated for the first Atalissa school by one of the town proprietors. Two other schoolhouses were built on donated land, with those buildings subsequently moved and two-story schoolhouse erected in 1863. This building was torn down in 1911 when the new high school was built. A gymnasium was added to the school in 1938. “In the beginning the school was a Select School where only students who paid tuition could attend. There were students from Muscatine and Cedar counties attending. There were no graduating classes until 1899 when the school became a graded one” (Atalissa Betterment Committee 1999). In 1901, this school added 11th and 12th grades. It was reported that the Board of Education allowed the principal and others to dictate the course of study, with the choices made for geometry and Latin, “which had very little use in a country high school which resulted in many quitting” (Atalissa Betterment Committee 1999). The last class of the Atalissa High School was in 1957 since re-districting made Atalissa part of the West Liberty School System. However, the Atalissa school building remained open for a time as a grade school for Wilton until they could finish their new building. The Atalissa school building was then given to the city and was rented out as home for disabled men who worked for Louis Rich Turkey Processing (later West Liberty Foods) (Atalissa Betterment Committee 1999).

Passenger rail service to Atalissa was eliminated in 1953, although the town was served for some time after by a Greyhound bus stop at the Midway garage on U.S. Highway 6 (Smith 1956). By 1956, the town’s businesses included: an implement and auto service; two trucking businesses, a grain elevator, the Waldo Elder Lumber Co., Tru-Valu food market, an appliance shop, a machine and repair shop, a rock and lime hauling industry, a café, a gas station, an auto repair

and gas station, a bulk gas and fuel oil station, and a barber shop (Smith 1956). Many of these businesses were tied to the auto and truck traffic associated with Highway 6, which formed the southern boundary of town. By the late 1980s, the town was described as a “bedroom town mostly” (Swadish 1988). Atalissa is one of the few communities between Davenport and Iowa City that remains on Highway 6 into the present day. West Liberty is the other example where the highway still routes directly through town.

Conesville

Conesville is located in the center of Orono Township in Section 17. It was named for its founder, Beebe S. Cone. The town was surveyed in 1870, with a post office established that year, with Cone designated as the first postmaster. The town was founded along the BCR&N Railroad, with a depot built. The railroad station was known as “Cone” (Bekker 1979). In 1878, the town was incorporated as Conesville. The businesses here in the late 1870s included: a mill, three general stores, a clothing and boot and shoe store, two blacksmith shops, a wagonmaker, a grain business, a hotel, and two physicians. The first schoolhouse built in the township was located in Conesville and was known as Township District School No. 1. The German Reformed Church was built in 1872 in Conesville, with the congregation having previously met in the schoolhouse. While built and used by the Reformists, the church was open to all denominations. Every other Sunday it was used by the Methodists (Western Historical 1879:595-586).

Moscow

The town of Moscow was first laid out in the fall of 1836 along the east bank of the Cedar River. Henry Webster and Dr. Charles Drury were the first settlers and staked out the town site on their claim. A post office was established in 1838. Alexander Ross and a Mr. Mitchell started the first stores on the new townsite followed by the blacksmith shop of William Hendrickson. Reportedly, Mitchell’s store built in the late fall of 1836 was frequented by Indians, who came to trade. “It is said that his trade with the Indians was so extensive that many settlers at a later day got the impression that Moscow was an Indian trading-post” (Acme Publishing 1889:663). The first residence was reportedly a two story log house that also served as the first school. A hotel soon established and a church was built in 1856. The church was used by several denominations including “the New Lights, Campbellites, and Mormons” (Richman 1911:217). The town grew slowly until the Mississippi & Missouri Railroad (later the Rock Island) arrived in 1855 extending through the town, the year that the bridge crossing the Cedar River was completed. This first bridge was replaced in 1876 with an iron bridge, which was subsequently replaced in 1912 with the present 11-span steel plate girder bridge.

The Rock Island depot building at Moscow is no longer standing. It was located at the east edge of the town plat where the road entered from the northeast and curved to the southwest cutting through the town plat. The route of the rail line through the town plat reflects that the town was laid out prior to the railroad and with no thought to the railroad’s eventual placement through the town. After the railroad had arrived, there was a rapid spurt of growth “until 1859, when it began to go down” (Richman 1911:217). Businesses established in 1855 included: several stores and groceries, a drugstore, and several saloons. A new large hotel was also built in 1855 and called the Cosmopolitan House. Two additional hotels were soon established, the hotels all catering to the increased traffic brought in by the railroad. The population of Moscow peaked at 400 in 1859, but by 1870 the total had declined to 346, followed by a decline to 222 just three years

later (Richman 1911:217). It is uncertain the cause of such a precipitous decline, although a nation-wide economic panic in 1857 certainly had a chilling effect on small towns that had not been long established by that time.

By 1879, the businesses of Moscow included: “two stores, two physicians, two blacksmith-shops, one harness-shop, and four taverns” (Western Historical 1879:584). A dam was built across the Cedar River in 1866, with a mill added in 1867 (Acme Publishing 1889:663). By the 1870s, the plat for Moscow conformed to the bend in the river at this location, with the town plat both north and southwest of the railroad tracks (Harrison and Warner 1874). While the town never filled up this plat as envisioned, the town did benefit from both the railroad and the early highway system in this area. In the early twentieth century, Moscow was along the route of first the River to River Road and later U.S. Highway 6 through this area. It was eventually bypassed to the south; however, Highway 6 is only one-half mile to the south and is connected to the town by Moscow Road. By 1935, Moscow’s businesses had been reduced to only a few stores and automobile service businesses as well as a blacksmith shop (Iowa Insurance Service Bureau 1935a).

Today, the town is largely a “bedroom” community, with residents living in town but working elsewhere. Commuting is facilitated by the easy access to Highway 6. The scenic location of the town along the Cedar River has always been one of the attractions of living in Moscow and is a factor in the town’s continued existence. The natural resources of the region also benefitted the community through the years, with limestone quarries established in the late nineteenth century and continuing into the present day located just across the river.

The first school was organized in Moscow in a log house in 1837. Until 1856, school in Moscow was “held in private residences and the cemetery church,” with a one-story school built in 1856 “in the block NE of the present church” (Frymoyer, ed. 1976). Then in 1867, a two-story school was built south of the railroad tracks housing the grade school until Moscow was consolidated with Wilton in 1955 (Frymoyer, ed. 1976). The Methodists met in the Christian Church and had Sunday School in the schoolhouse in 1889. The Methodists then built their own church in 1891, with a basement and new addition made in 1915.

The first church service in Moscow was held in a private residence, with a log house “on what is now the cemetery,” used jointly by the Christians (New Lights or Campbellites) and the Mormons. The Christians built a new church around 1855, and later a German Lutheran Church was built in Moscow. The Moscow Lutheran Church was later moved onto the George Duffe farm where it was converted into a farm building. There was also a Congregational Church in Moscow for a short time before moving to Wilton in 1856. The Methodists were meeting in Moscow in 1841 in an old frame house (Frymoyer, ed. 1976).

Nichols

Nichols is located in Section 15 of Pike Township on the line of the BCR&N railroad. It was named in honor of town founder, Benjamin F. Nichols’ father Samuel, who was instrumental in the establishment of a depot at this site. The first building was built in 1871 and used as a drug store and a dwelling. A post office was established in 1870, with Benjamin Nichols the first postmaster (Bekker 1979). In 1873, the Muscatine & Western Railroad (later the Rock Island

branch) was finished to Nichols, with a new addition (Railroad Addition) made. A depot was built at the junction of the two rail lines, with a stock yard built by the BCR&N. By the late 1870s, the town was flourishing with several brick business blocks, a flouring mill, a saw mill, an elevator, two hotels, and a “steam manufactory of wagons, pumps, churns, and broom-handles” (Western Historical 1879:581). In addition by the late 1870s, were a school and four churches. The town was incorporated in 1884. Among the early buildings was a small schoolhouse and the first churches for the Catholic and Christian congregations. A local brickyard supplied the bricks from which the first church buildings were constructed.

The first log schoolhouse located east of town was also used for regular religious meetings. The first in-town school was built after the town was laid out and was a two-story frame building built in 1872 on Grant Avenue. This public school became the Nichols High School in 1900 but burned down in 1915. It was replaced with a new three-story brick building in 1915 on the east side of Nichols on the north side of Ijem Avenue. A gymnasium was added in 1934, and a primary grade addition was made to the building in 1955. Consolidation and reorganization led to the closing of the Nichols High School in 1961, with the school district merged with the West Liberty School District in 1968. However, the former Nichols High School continued to be used for elementary classes until 1987 (Hixon, ed. 1984; Smith, ed. 2017). Today, the school building is an apartment building.

The early churches included the Christian Church organized in 1873-74, with a brick church built in 1875 next to the school. Prior to the church construction, the congregation had met in area schoolhouses. The church remains standing to the present day, but the original bell tower was replaced in 1934 with a shorter tower entrance, with a single entrance in this tower instead of the two original entrances to either side of the bell tower. In 1951 a frame addition was made to the east side for Sunday school classrooms and a church library. The German Evangelical Protestant Church was organized in Nichols in 1874, with a church built in 1876. The St. Mary’s Roman Catholic Church was a brick building built in 1874. A manse was built in association with this church. In 1904, the 1874 church was demolished and replaced with a new larger brick church, with tall bell tower and spire and Gothic-arched windows. This church was destroyed by fire in 1920, with a new church erected on the same site. The new church actually incorporated portions of the outer walls of the old church, with the new church built in much the same style as the old one. The Methodist Protestant Church was organized in Nichols in 1875, with the Methodists purchasing the German church in the north part of Nichols and then moving that building in 1910 to become the new Methodist church in its current location. In its centennial year (1984), Nichols had a population of 369 and had three churches, a bank, grain elevators, an opera house, a town hall, and a hotel among other businesses. The three denominations by then included the Methodists, Christians, and Roman Catholics (Hixon, ed. 1984:122-123, 127, 130; Smith ed. 2020; Western Historical 1879:581).

Stockton

The town of Stockton was originally known as Fulton Station after A.C. Fulton, for whom Fulton Township is also named. The township is located in the extreme northeastern corner of Muscatine County (Acme Publishing 1889:663; Downer 1910:913). The name of Fulton Station was retained for a time by the railroad (Western Historical 1879:584). The town “was laid out about the time the railroad [M&M] was surveyed through this section” (Acme Publishing

1889:663). A.C. Fulton built the first building on the new town site for a hotel (Richman 1911:246). The post office was established in 1855 and was first called Prairie Mills after a nearby steam milling operation. In 1866, W.J. Speer was appointed Postmaster and also operated a general store. "Owing to the fact that a bill of goods shipped to him, addressed Fulton, was sent to the town of that name in Jackson County, he used his influence and succeeded in having the name of both the town and the post office changed to Stockton" (Western Historical 1879:585). A schoolhouse (Township District No. 1) was added around 1856, with an addition made in 1875 when the graded system was introduced. By 1879, the business of Stockton was "represented by two general stores, two hotels, one blacksmith-shop, one wagonmaker's shop, two shoemaker's shops and one grain establishment" (Western Historical 1879:585).

Stockton became a good shipping point, "one of the best on the line of railroad; the country being noted for its fine stock," particularly short-horn cattle and pure-bred hogs (Acme Publishing 1889:664; Western Historical 1879:584). Hetzel & Haner built an elevator in Stockton and did a large grain business shipping "an average 300 cars per year" on the railroad (Western Historical 1879:585).

The depot for the Rock Island Railroad was built on the south side of the line between Iowa and Minnesota streets. Unlike Walcott where the depot was at the center of the town plat, the location in Stockton was on the north side of the original Fulton town plat. The depot for the BCR&N that also extended through Stockton was located to the south side of the Fulton plat. The 1899 plat shows the commercial development of Stockton by that time had focused around the depot south of the tracks (Huebinger 1899). There was an elevator, stock yards and a lumber yard on the north side of the Rock Island tracks by that time. None of these buildings remain standing, including the depot.

This area remained the focus for commercial development into the early twentieth century; however, by 1921, the Farmer Elevator Co. was located along the old BCR&N in the southeast part of town. By that time, the Rock Island Railroad had absorbed the BCR&N rail line (Huebinger 1921). When the town was mapped in 1935 for fire insurance purposes, there were only five businesses depicted along Commerce Street south of the Rock Island Depot (Iowa Insurance Service Bureau 1935b). Of these businesses, three were bars and a beer parlor. The beer parlor was in the building that had housed the Tagge & Hansen Store and the Stockton Post Office in 1899. This building is extant and is located at 200 Commerce Street. One of the bars in 1935 was attached to a dance hall. Also in 1935, there was a store building on the north side of Commerce and a machine shop on the south side.

It does seem unusual that a town that had two rail lines extending directly through town and including two depots and the business that goes along with the railroad, never flourished in the way that nearby towns did along a single railroad, such as Durant, which was just a few miles to the northwest along the Rock Island's main line. The proximity of Stockton to Durant may have been to the detriment of Stockton since proximity of less than six miles between towns typically results in overlapping competition. Stockton also was never directly on either the early River to River Road or its later incarnation as U.S. Highway 6, with the highway extending along the Scott/Muscatine county line north of town. Not having that direct highway route through town certainly would have had a detrimental impact on the town's commercial viability in the early to

mid-twentieth century, particularly as the railroads declined. There was a road that connected from Stockton north to the highway but this would not have provided the same commercial benefit as a direct route through town.

West Liberty

The earliest settlement at what would become West Liberty was known as the Wapsinonoc Settlement established in 1836 near Wapsinonoc Creek. It initially grew because of its position along an early trail that became an important stage and post road. West Liberty through its railroad connections was also along the 1856 Mormon Handcart trail, with the handcart portion of the journey starting where the railroad then ended in Iowa City. Through the railroad, West Liberty also played a role in Underground Railroad activities and the final exit from Iowa of abolitionist John Brown (Soike 2013; Thompson 1989:3-4, 8).

The main roadway through West Liberty eventually became part of U.S. Highway 6, which was first registered in 1922 as the Whiteway-7-Highway and was first numbered Highway 32. Currently, U.S. 6 extends through West Liberty, with the highway named “Columbus Street” within the city limits (Thompson 1989). Columbus Street is at the east end of the commercial district (now listed in the NRHP; Rogers and Barrett 2002), with the main commercial street being Third Street, which intersects Columbus Street. Fourth Street was also an important connector road between the main north-south route along Columbus Street and the railroad depot, which was located at the west end of Fourth Street.

The first post office at West Liberty was established on March 24, 1838, with Francis Foote as postmaster. This post office was located “at or near the southwest corner of Section 1, T78N-R4W where North Point Inn is located, and was known as Old Liberty” (Hise, ed. 1938). This location is to the northwest of the later platted location of West Liberty. The old North Point Inn is still standing along the north side of U.S. Highway 6. It was listed in the NRHP by its historic name of the Beers and St. Johns Company Coach Inn (Ingalls 2016).

However, it was the arrival of the Mississippi & Missouri Railroad in 1855 that prompted the platting of the town of West Liberty at its current location. The first postmaster of the new town was Isaac D. Vore. The town was first incorporated on January 1, 1868, with S.W. Sedgewick as Mayor. The railroad depot was west of the main commercial area. A town hall was built in 1886 on the west side of N. Calhoun Street, replaced with a new town hall in 1936 on the north side of Fourth Street. Other civic improvements in the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries included: a municipal water plant built in 1888, a municipal electric light plant established in 1897, the first street lights installed in 1893 and updated in 1915, and a sewer system built in 1911 (Hise, ed. 1938).

Along the railroad tracks, which angled from the southeast to the northwest and formed the south boundary of the commercial area, were several grain elevators and the freight depot for the Rock Island Railroad. Only one of the grain elevators remains standing, with the freight depot also non-extant. Lumber and coal sheds and stockyards also non-extant once lined the railroad tracks. On the west side of Clay Street was located the City Mills, a complex that is now non-extant, with the site later built over by the West Liberty Co-operative Creamery. Reportedly, during the early history of the City Mills, it was a stop on the Underground Railroad and figured in the story

about John Brown's exit from Iowa by securing a boxcar at West Liberty for travel on the railroad to Chicago (Hise, ed. 1938; Soike 2013). The mill was destroyed by fire in 1888. West Liberty was situated in a region settled early on by Quakers whose abolitionist activities included assisting runaway slaves along the Underground Railroad through Iowa. While very little documentation remains concerning West Liberty residents' participation in both the Society of Friends and the Underground Railroad, West Liberty was considered a waystation along this route and the Society of Friends were active in West Liberty in the 1850s-1860s, variously associated with the Prairie Grove and Springdale Society of Friends meetings (Jones 1914; The Iowa Yearly Meeting of Friends 1963).

By 1886, the types of businesses in the main commercial area included the above-noted grain elevators and City Mills but also included: two lumberyards; a number of grocery, livery, print shop, blacksmith, harness, tailor, drugstore, clothing, jewelry, and boot and shoe stores; feed mills and warehouses; agricultural implements; meat shops; and millinery, bakery, billiards, dry goods, furniture, and carpentry shops as well as two banks and one hotel. West Liberty is notable for the survival of so many of its fraternal halls and opera house/theater buildings through the years, particularly in the survival of both the first and second generation buildings for the Masons, Knights of Pythias, and Odd Fellows, with all of these buildings still standing. By the 1890s, many of the same businesses remained in operation with the addition of a flour warehouse, a larger furniture store, hardware and barber shops, and restaurants (Sanborn 1893, 1899).

West Liberty became known in the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries as a trade center for a purebred-stock region in northwestern Muscatine County. The large stockyards that lined the railroad tracks on the south edge of the commercial area reflected this agricultural industry. In addition, the many dairy farms of the region encouraged the development of several creamery companies and later the Iowa Condensed Milk Company in town (WPA 1986:486). In 1870 the Cedar Valley Creamery Company was established along S. Columbus Street and "was one of the largest and best equipped creameries in this part of the country" (WPA 1986:486). In 1914, the West Liberty Co-Operative Creamery Company was built at the corner of Fourth and Clay streets increasing their business in 1919 to include the selling of feed, eggs, poultry, and the drying of buttermilk (WPA 1986:486). Poultry figured prominently in the agricultural-related commercial development of West Liberty, with a turkey processing plant south of the railroad tracks still a major industry to the present day.

Other industries and commercial enterprises important to the development of West Liberty included: the brick and tile plant located near the Wapsie Creek supplying brick and tile for "most of the business houses and residences" in the community (Hise, ed. 1938); a carriage and wagon factory; a harrow factory; the Favorite Canning Factory established in 1880 east of the fairgrounds and canning beans, corn, peas, and tomatoes; a poultry and egg plant also near the fairgrounds (south of the railroad tracks); a broom factory; two cigar factories; a soap factory one-half mile southwest of town; a flax mill; a wagon factory; a saw mill; a fencing factory; the Hutchinson Ice Cream Company; a button factory; a grist mill; and a cement block factory built in 1913 (Hise, ed. 1938).

Transportation has always played a major role in the settlement and development of West Liberty. The community took hold because of its location along an early trail that developed into

an important stage and post route between Davenport and Iowa City. However, the community boomed and remained a viable community because it was able to secure a major rail line early in its history. It remained viable after the railroad declined in the twentieth century by being located directly on the route of what became U.S. Highway 6. As noted previously, it is one of only two towns between Davenport and Iowa City to remain directly on the route of the highway into the present day; the other town being Atalissa.

The main railroad line through West Liberty was the M&M Railroad, with the line built through West Liberty in 1855. Because of financial difficulties, this railroad was purchased by the Rock Island Railroad in 1866. The original plans for the M&M Railroad called for a north-south connection to Cedar Rapids through West Liberty; however, that plan was not realized until the organization of the Burlington, Cedar Rapids and Minnesota (BCR&M) in 1868 by Judge George Greene of Cedar Rapids. This railroad was built south to cross the main line of the Rock Island at West Liberty and the Muscatine Branch at Columbus Junction. To the north it extended through Cedar Falls to Plymouth Junction in Iowa. Suffering financial difficulties during the Panic of 1873, the BCR&M was reorganized as the Burlington, Cedar Rapids and Northern (BCR&N). In 1903, this line became part of the Rock Island system (Thompson 1989:23-28).

A hotel operated by William Hise was built in the early 1870s near the junction of the two rail lines on the south side of the main tracks. The Hise House hotel later operated as the National Hotel and the Hotel Moylan (Hise, ed. 1938). The junction of the north-south and east-west rail lines is approximately two blocks west of the main commercial district of West Liberty. The depot and rail yard for the Rock Island were established at the junction of the BCR&N and the Rock Island in West Liberty. The original depot burned in August 1897 and was replaced with a new depot that remains standing to the present day as part of a historical exhibit maintained by the West Liberty Heritage Foundation along with other historic buildings that have been moved to the site (Hise, ed. 1938). This building functioned as the depot for both the BCR&N and the Rock Island in West Liberty even before the two lines became part of the same system. Historically, it was called the Union Depot for that reason rather than carrying the name of either railroad, although it was built by the Rock Island line and is recognized today as the Rock Island Depot.

The securing of such a major railroad line plus a connecting branch enabled West Liberty to grow and prosper in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It was during this period that the commercial district reached its peak in construction, with many of the buildings constructed of materials brought in on the railroad. The railroads also made possible the burgeoning livestock, poultry, and other agricultural-related industries important to West Liberty's growth because of the shipping opportunities at this important junction point. One interesting development associated with the importance of the agricultural-related industries in West Liberty was the early arrival of Mexican immigrant labor attracted to the community's canneries, which began operating in the 1940s-1960s (Rogers and Barrett 2002:26). Mexican migrant laborers were also a smaller presence in the 1910s-1920s, with some finding more permanent employment in West Liberty as railroad section workers. Today, the Latino presence in West Liberty is strong, with the presence of multi-generational families, property ownership, and the installation of ethnic-related businesses such as the Mexican restaurants, bakeries, and groceries reflecting that influence (Rogers and Barrett 2002:26).

Railroad transportation began to wane in the first three decades of the twentieth century, largely because of the rise of the automobile and trucking industry which began to supplant railroads as the major mode of shipping across the United States. As the importance of the railroad waned, the importance of having and retaining U.S. Highway 6 through West Liberty and the rise in the number of automobile-related businesses in the main commercial district began to be felt in this community. Grain and poultry are still major industries in town but rely on the highway access to remain viable.

The first schoolhouse in the Wapsinonoc settlement was a log school built in 1839 or 1840, depending on the source (Hise, ed. 1938). The earliest schoolhouse in West Liberty stood on Spencer Street and was a small one-story, one-room building. A larger school building was also built on Spencer Street next to the "little school," with the larger school being two stories in height but had only one room on the ground floor. This building may have become part of a dwelling in its later years. The old Presbyterian Church was also used for a short time for school purposes. In 1864, the West Liberty schools became an independent district, with a grade school and a high school built in 1868. This was probably the large schoolhouse shown on the 1874 map of West Liberty on the north side of Seventh Street in the northwest part of town, although a local history states that the "1867" school was on Clay Street (Harrison and Warner 1874; Hise, ed. 1938). This building was later used for the grade school. The high school held its first commencement in 1875. This school would later be called the "West school," after a new two-story high school building was built in 1877. This building was located "at the end of Spencer street" and for a time housed both high school and grammar grades but as enrollment increased the grammar grades were moved to the "West school" (Hise, ed. 1938). Then in 1905, it was decided to rebuild the West school as a high school and repair the "East building" for grade use. From 1906 until 1916, the high school was housed in the new West building. The destruction of the East building by fire in 1916 came at a time when the town was in need of a larger school, so a new high school was built that same year, with the grade school moved to the West building (Hise, ed. 1938).

The churches shown on the 1874 map of West Liberty included a "Quaker Church" on the east side of Calhoun Street north of Seventh Street; a Catholic Church near the northeast corner of Clay and Sixth streets (fronting Sixth Street); a Christian Church on the north side of Sixth Street between Calhoun and Spencer streets; a Presbyterian Church near the northeast corner of Fifth and Spencer but fronting Spencer Street; and the M.E. Church on the south side of Third Street east of Columbus Street (Harrison and Warner 1874). The Quaker Church was actually the 1862 meeting house that had been first built one mile north of West Liberty and was moved into town to this location in 1869 (Hise, ed. 1938). By 1915, the numbers of this society had declined to the point that the Meeting was discontinued and the meeting house was moved to a lot just to the east and converted into a dwelling (Hise, ed. 1938). The Church of Christ (aka Christian Church) also held their first services in a schoolhouse on "South Prairie" in 1862, with the congregation increasing to the point that by 1868 they decided to build the church on Sixth Street. This church was dedicated in 1869 and was used for about 18 years when they moved the old church back on the lot and erected a larger church on the original site. That church was dedicated in 1887, with the old church building used for Bible school (Hise, ed. 1938). The first Methodist Church was erected in 1859 on E. Third Street. It was replaced in 1873 with a new church on the corner of Spencer and Fifth streets in 1874, with the brick church dedicated in 1875. The Rev. J.R.

Reasoner designed this church, with the interior of the church completely redecorated in 1937 (Hise, ed. 1938). The First Presbyterian Church was first organized in West Liberty in 1867, with the first services held in the combined freight and passenger depot. A church was built at Fifth and Clay streets and dedicated in 1876. This church was later destroyed by fire and a new church was built in its place, with that church also destroyed by fire in 1888. A third new church was built on the site that same year (Hise, ed. 1938). St. Joseph's Catholic Church also began in the late 1850s-early 1860s, with a church built in 1862. That church was replaced in 1891, with a large brick front-gabled building with gable end bell tower and spire. The design was influenced by the Gothic Revival style (Hise, ed. 1938).

Wilton

The town of Wilton (aka Wilton Junction) was platted on 40 acres of land in Muscatine County owned by a company formed by Muscatine bankers, Greene & Stone along with Franklin Butterfield, who had purchased land in this area in the early 1850s. The town was platted in September 1854 along the route of the M&M Railroad. Wilton would also benefit from being on the branch line to Oskaloosa by way of Muscatine (Richman 1911:240, 409). The town was first named "Glendale" but "before the plat was recorded the name of Wilton was selected" (Acme Publishing 1889:660). The town was named after Wilton, Maine, the birthplace of Mr. Butterfield (Richman 1911:240). The railroad construction train reached Wilton on October 1, 1855, with passenger service commencing two months later. A freight house was added in 1856, "along with the first real depot building adjacent to the freight house" (Jacobsen 1988). Wilton would become "a major repair point for trains" employing over 100 railroad men in the process (Jacobsen 1988). By 1866, other railroad buildings and structures in Wilton included a roundhouse and turntable, a carpenter shop, and a dispatch office. The Rock Island repair shops were relocated to Wilton in 1877. The repair shop would eventually be enlarged to twice its original size in 1885. However, in 1881, the Rock Island Railroad added a line between Davenport and Muscatine, which left the branch line between Wilton and Muscatine less important. This certainly had an impact on Wilton, which lost the roundhouse and car repair shops and reduced "Wilton to the role of a line junction point" (Jacobsen 1988). However, in 1883, a six-mile branch line to Lime City, for the hauling of lime and ballast and building stone, for a time increased rail traffic and shipping at Wilton. In 1898, "in response to the rapid growth of rail service and in anticipation of increased rail traffic" the present depot was built (Jacobsen 1988). That same year, the Rock Island double tracked the line to Moscow, Iowa. The 1898 depot building remains standing to the present day and has been restored as a historical museum. It was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1988 (Jacobsen 1988).

The first store established in Wilton had been located in part of a house built on the plat in 1855. The town grew steadily, with more houses and business buildings erected. In August 1874, the town was impacted by a disastrous fire, but "since that time the town has been growing steadily but not rapidly" into the early twentieth century. The fire had been reportedly started by sparks from a locomotive that set fire to the Reed & Dows Elevator on Third and Railroad streets (Western Historical 1879:573). The commercial area rebounded and came to fill two blocks. The town boasted of Wilton College, founded in 1866 as a seminary and reincorporated as the Wilton Academy in 1880 under the control of the Davenport Association of the Congregational Church of the State of Iowa. It became the Wilton German-English College in 1884. However, the college declined in 1904 essentially because "the German Congregational constitution was

largely in the Dakotas” and the school was “practically abandoned,” although new owners in 1907 breathed new life into the institution, and the college once again thrived (Richman 1911:240-246).

The construction of the new depot in 1898 and the increased rail traffic at the time also spurred a minor building boom in Wilton. The “high water mark of railroad service to the community” appears to have occurred by 1911, although the depot remained in service for a number of years after (Jacobsen 1988).

Wilton also benefitted from having been located along the early River to River Road and later U.S. Highway 6. In Wilton, the railroad angles to the southwest, and in this town, the River to River Road first entered Wilton one block south of the railroad tracks and headed west along 3rd Street before turning north to 4th Street where it then headed west crossing the railroad tracks in the process. However, by the 1930s, the route of U.S. Highway 6 entered the east edge of town at the railroad tracks but then followed along 5th Street straight west and staying north of the tracks and bypassing any track crossings. In later years, the highway was re-routed along the extreme western edge of the expanded city boundaries of Wilton one-half mile west of the original town plat. From there, the highway now extends north to Interstate 80 where it turns east on I-80 and stays along the interstate to the I-280 interchange just outside Davenport.

The churches of Wilton included the Presbyterian, Evangelical Lutheran, Grace Evangelical and Reformed, Methodist, Free Will Baptist, Congregational, Catholic, and Zion Lutheran. Presbyterian services were held in Wilton as early as 1855-56 meeting in the Lyceum Hall and the “old school house on the hill” (Rider & Stevenson 1876). In 1866 a brick church was built in Wilton and dedicated the following year. A parsonage was built on a half-lot adjoining the church in 1874. The Presbyterian Church was remodeled on both the exterior and interior through the years, with the original spire replaced, a choir loft added on the interior, and the façade changed to have two entrances instead of one that were entered through separated towers. A basement was excavated under the church in 1967 to provide increased space.

The German Evangelical Lutheran Church was organized in 1856 and built a small frame church in the summer of 1857. In 1867, this congregation built a brick building, along with a parsonage. Both buildings were destroyed by a huge fire in 1874 that also destroyed half of the business district. Both the church and parsonage were rebuilt in 1875 but of frame construction instead of brick. In 1875, the congregation split in two, with one becoming the Zion Lutheran Church and the other becoming the Salem Lutheran Church. The Zion congregation built a parsonage and school in 1881 on North Maurer Street, with a frame church erected in 1892. In 1928, a new brick Zion Lutheran Church was built, with the old church moved and converted into a two-room school and parish hall. The Salem Lutheran Church remained in the 1875 church building, which was eventually razed in 1944 when the Iowa Synod Congregation disbanded (Frymoyer, ed. 1976; Rider & Stevenson 1876).

The Grace Reformed Church was organized in 1860 as the German Reformed Church “in the old public school building, where the congregation had worshipped at first, afterwards in the Congregational and Presbyterian churches” (Rider & Stevenson 1876). In 1869, the name was changed to the Reformed Church in the United States, and in 1870, this congregation built a

church near the western city limits on W. Fifth Street. This was a frame building with a bell tower and steeple. It was torn down in 1904, with material salvaged for use in a new church on E. 5th Street built that same year. A parsonage was located across the street. In 1934, the Reformed Church and the Evangelical Synod of North America joined to form the Evangelical and Reformed Church, and in 1960, they united with the Congregational Christian Church to form the United Church of Christ. The church in Wilton then became the Grace United Church of Christ.

The Methodist Church was originally part of the Muscatine Circuit, with services held in the log post office in Bloomington (now Muscatine). In 1856, the Iowa Conference was divided, with the towns of Wilton and Moscow made a station. The first services in Wilton were held in the depot or freight house, with a church built with a tall spire in 1860. In 1878, the church was rebuilt to have a dome instead of the spire. This church was then remodeled and “modernized” in 1893 with a new frame church on the corner of 5th and Maurer streets. This church burned down in 1902 and was replaced with a new brick church on the same site in the same year. In 1945, the brick church was remodeled. There was a parsonage near this church. The church was later sold and a new church and parsonage were erected at the north end of Maurer Street in 1970-71.

The Free Will Baptist Church was organized in 1864 but no church was ever built, the congregation having worshipped in the Chapel of the Wilton College building. The Congregational Church was organized in Sugar Creek Township in nearby Cedar County in 1854 meeting in a schoolhouse. In 1855, the location of the church was changed to Moscow but was soon changed to Wilton where they incorporated as the First Congregational Church of Wilton. In 1857, they built a church. St. Mary’s Roman Catholic Church in Wilton began with the first mass celebrated in 1857 at a local house on Fourth street. The first church was a small frame dwelling located in the south part of town in 1858. A brick church was built in 1867, with a tower or steeple added around 1900-01. A manse was built nearby that was gutted by fire in 1953 and a new brick manse built on the old foundation. In 1966, the ceiling of the Catholic Church was lowered and the interior otherwise redecorated (Frymoyer, ed. 1976; Rider & Stevenson 1876).

The very first school was held in Wilton in 1856 in a small frame house. A two-story frame house was then built in 1857 to function as the public school. In 1875, a new brick three-story school was built to provide for a grade school and a high school. The architect was J.P. Walton of Muscatine. It served as the town’s high school but also served south-central Cedar County, northeast Moscow Township, and most of Wilton Township in its history (Frymoyer, ed. 1976). This building had a bell tower and a mansard roof. It received an addition to the east side, with the mansard roof removed and replaced with a flat roof in 1915. The new addition contained a gymnasium in the basement and assembly room on the top floor. Additional classrooms were also added in the remodel, which included covering the exterior brick walls with stucco. An addition was made in the early 1930s doubling the size of the building and adding more classrooms and a larger gymnasium, with the new addition faced with bricks. In 1952, a two-story, brick east wing was added for more classrooms, a new cafeteria and kitchen, and storage space in the basement. In 1954, the Community School District of Wilton was created uniting the Wilton Independent School District and other districts into a single district. This resulted in the need to bus students to the Wilton School. The district was further enlarged in 1958 to include

districts in Farmington, Sugar Creek, and Rochester townships in Cedar County. With the increased enrollment, the district had purchased a parcel on the northeast edge of Wilton where a new high school and football field were built and ready for use in 1958, with the old Wilton School building retained as the elementary school. In 1972-73, this building received a modern new addition that required the demolition of what remained of the old stucco-covered brick building. This remodeled school reopened in the fall of 1973 as a “long, two-story brick structure, coordinated and matching in architecture and material” (Frymoyer ed. 1976). A bell tower was erected on the high school lawn by alumni to house the old school bell in 1973-74.

Small Unincorporated Communities and Cross-Roads Villages of Muscatine County

Adams was established as Adams Station on the line of the Muscatine & Western Railroad (later a Rock Island branch line) in Pike Township. The town lots were surveyed in 1873, with the first store opened that year. A post office was established that same year, with the post office building also functioning as the depot. By the late 1870s, the town had a wagonmaker’s shop and a township district school (Bekker 1984; Western Historical 1879:588).

Ardon was a small railroad town located in Seventy-Six Township along the Milwaukee line. The town was laid out in 1902, with a depot among the first buildings. At its peak, Ardon was a busy livestock shipping point but also served rail passengers and other freight. The town had a general store and post office built in 1903, two blacksmith shops, Wigim Hall, and the Ardon Hotel. Wigim Hall was built in 1906 and burned down in 1917. The general store building burned down in 1931 operating out of some rooms in the Ardon Hotel for some time before closing in 1954 when the post office was terminated. The first depot at Ardon burned down in 1917, with two freight cars then used for freight storage and the depot until a new depot was built in 1918 on the old foundation. The depot was closed in 1949, with the building sold in 1956 to the township to be used as a townhall. While a number of the town’s buildings succumbed to fire, others were moved from the town site once it had declined. This included moving the United Brethren parsonage to Cranston in 1916-17 and the depot to Leo Furlong’s farm in August of 1956. The Ardon community was served by the United Brethren Church, St. Malachy’s Catholic Church, and the High Prairie School (Healey 1979). Other stations along the Milwaukee Railroad line in Muscatine County included Ludbury (1.3 miles west of Muscatine), Ardon (8.3 miles from Muscatine), Madura (12.3 miles from Muscatine), and Cone or Conesville (17 miles from the city), where there was a junction with the BCR&N railroad (Healey 1979).

Cranston is a small unincorporated community in Cedar Township. It began as a stop on the Milwaukee Railroad, which was removed in 1982. The town at its peak had a high school and the Cranston Methodist Church. The church eventually disbanded with the stained glass windows and the bell given to the Peach United Methodist Church in Wilton Township (Frymoyer, ed. 1976).

Bayfield (aka Dayfield) remained little more than a few neighboring houses in Lake Township, even after becoming the first flag stop outside Muscatine along the BCR&N. The village was designated as a full depot on the line in 1900, and although a physical depot building was never erected, it served as a passenger depot and livestock shipping point. A July 1 article in the *Muscatine News-Tribune* called the village a lively suburb, though that may have been

exaggerated. Circa 1905, a stone store was erected there by Charles S. Harper, and that building also served as a polling place. There was a school in Bayfield as well (Richman 1911:401-402; *Muscatine News-Tribune* July 1, 1900:17).

Fairport (aka Salem and “Jugtown”) was best known for its leading industry--pottery. It was the site of several pottery works in its early days and also claimed to have the best river harbor between St. Paul and St. Louis. Clamming and fishing were also important to the town’s early history (Bekker 1979). It was established in Section 25 of Sweetland Township at the location where the village of Salem had been laid out in 1839. By the late 1870s, Fairport was dependent on the pottery business. The town did have two stores but there was then no church in the village; however, a schoolhouse had been built by that time (Western Historical 1879).

Fruitland (formerly known as Island) was located in Fruitland Township, which was a subdivision of the larger Bloomington Township originally. The sandy soil of this township was ideal for the melons and sweet potatoes. It was in the mid-to-late 1870s, that the acreage planted in watermelons and sweet potatoes greatly increased.

During the winter of 1875, Alexander McDermint called a meeting at which a committee was appointed to contact the Rock Island Railroad about establishing a station near the site of the old Town of Owega. The agreement was reached whereby the farmers would pay \$1,000 and a building suitable for a store and post office would be built. In 1880, the Town of Island was established, the name later changed to Fruitland by the Post Office Department (Bekker 1979).

Fruitland was also a station on the southwestern branch of the Rock Island Railroad (Acme Publishing 1889:666). The Fruitland post office closed in 1954. The Town of Island had been so named because of the natural feature of the broad sandy plain in this area being called Muscatine Island.

Montpelier began as a stagecoach inn on the road from Muscatine to Davenport being half-way between the two cities. Mussel shelling was an early industry in Montpelier but the principal occupation in the area was farming. Pottery making was also an early undertaking in this settlement but after a few years had died out (Bekker 1979).

Petersburg was located in Section 13 of Fulton Township. It was located along the BCR&N Railroad and was shown to have a railroad station in the 1899 plat book of the county (Richman 1911:247).

Pleasant Prairie was located northwest of Muscatine and was a small cross-roads village that in 1900 had a general store, post office, and blacksmith shop. It had been established in the 1850s. There were also a school and a Methodist Church at Pleasant Prairie (Bekker 1979).

Port Allen was located in the southern part of Orono Township on the county line with Louisa County about a half mile from the Cedar River. It was situated along the line of the BCR&N Railroad, which was the reason the town was platted in 1871. A depot was built, with a store and post office established. A Methodist Church was built here in 1872 (Western Historical 1879:588).

New Era was located in western Montpelier Township, about two miles north of Fairport in Fruitland Township and one mile west of the Pine Mill post office. The Pine Mill site took its name from three grist mills on Pine Creek that were erected by Benjamin Nye, who became the vicinity's earliest settler in 1834. By 1911, only his 1850 mill remained, and no formal community had formed there. Instead, a small village formed around the nearby New Era church. This congregation was started by the local sisters Clara and Emma Brandt, who secured funding from their half-brother, William Ziegler, a New York City millionaire and founder of the Royal Baking Powder Company. By 1911, the community included the New Era Church (later the Ziegler Memorial Lutheran Church), its parsonage, a few houses of neighborhood farmers, and the New Era gymnasium. The gymnasium acted as an event facility for local youth and as a social and community center, where choirs sang, orchestras played, and gatherings of over 300 people could be held. The gymnasium was under the direction of the church reverend and was given the mission of serving the community's needs (Richman 1911:210-214; *Muscatine Journal* January 30, 2009).

Rainbow was located in Wilton Township and began with a rural school called the Rainbow School. However, a small trading center developed around the school in large part as a station on an interurban rail line also called Rainbow. This settlement included a general store, a grain elevator, stockyards, and two houses. This small trading center existed until the interurban was removed in 1942, but the corner was still called Rainbow for many year (Frymoyer, ed. 1976).

Sweetland Center was six miles northeast of Muscatine and also had a school and a Methodist Church, but in 1900 only had one business building, a combined post office and general store. The Muscatine-Davenport stage line passed through this hamlet (Bekker 1979).

Townships of Muscatine County

Bloomington Township

Bloomington Township was originally larger than it now is. In 1886, the south half was made into Fruitland Township, with the north half remaining Bloomington Township. However, the residents of the south half were not initially pleased with the subdivision because at the time, the north half had schoolhouses while there were none in the area called Muscatine Island, which comprised the new Fruitland Township (Acme Publishing 1889:666).

Cedar Township

Cedar Township is east of the Cedar River and was purely an agricultural township in the late nineteenth century having no villages or post offices. In 1889, it was noted that the "greater portion of the township is timber land, but in it are some of the best farms in the county" (Acme Publishing 1889:666).

Fulton Township

This township is in the northeastern corner of the county, bounded on the north and east by Scott County. At the time of early settlement, this township was all in prairie, which likely slowed its earliest settlement but became a productive farming region once the prairie sod could be

effectively plowed. The early settlers were primarily American born, but after the 1860s, a number of German immigrants settled in the township to the point that by 1889, they comprised the majority in the township. The Rock Island Railroad passed through the northern tier of sections in this township, with the village of Stockton located in Section 4 along this rail line (Acme Publishing 1889:663).

Goshen Township

Goshen Township is located between Moscow and Wapsinonoc townships and just south of Cedar County. The Cedar River flows through the southeastern portion of the township, with the Rock Island Railroad extending east to west through the northern portion of the township. This township was originally part of Wapsinonoc Township. At the time of early settlement, Goshen Township was mainly prairie land. The town of Atalissa is located in Section 11 of this township along the Rock Island line (Acme Publishing 1889:664).

Lake Township

This township has an irregular boundary because of the Cedar River. It is bounded on the east by Bloomington township, on the west by Pike and on the south by Cedar township. The BCR&N Railroad extends east-west through the township but there is no railroad station within the township boundaries. It was noted in 1889 that the township's citizens did their trading in the city of Muscatine (Acme Publishing 1889:666).

Moscow Township

This township is well watered having the Cedar River and three creeks that flow through its boundary. The Rock Island Railroad extends east-west through the township, with the town of Moscow along this line. Early pioneers came to Moscow Township as early as 1836 migrating from Indiana and laying claim to land along the Cedar River where the town of Moscow would be platted. A ferry was operated across the Cedar River at this location until the river was bridged in the late nineteenth century. A dam was built across the river in 1866, with the Moscow Mill and Dam Company building a mill in 1867 (Acme Publishing 1889:662).

Muscatine Township

This township was organized at the time of the subdivision of Bloomington Township in 1887. The new Muscatine Township comprises the city of Muscatine (Acme Publishing 1889:666). Its history is largely that of the city's.

Orono Township

This township is located in the southwestern corner of the county on the west side of the Cedar River. The BCR&N Railroad extends south to north through the township, with two stations known as Port Allen and Conesville along this line (Acme Publishing 1889:664).

Pike Township

Pike Township lies north and west of the Cedar River, with the line of the BCR&N Railroad extending south to north through the township. A branch of the Rock Island extends east to west

in this township. Along this branch, Adams Station was located in Section 7, with the town of Nichols located in Section 15 at the junction of the two lines (Acme Publishing 1889:665).

Seventy-Six Township

This township is located east of Keokuk Lake and the Muscatine Slough. Most of the township was prairie land at the time of early settlement. There was no village in this township in the late nineteenth century, with the residents trading at Letts in Louisa County and at the city of Muscatine (Acme Publishing 1889:666).

Sweetland Township

This township had a considerable amount of timber land at the time of early settlement and thus, was settled at an early date. It is bordered by the Mississippi River, with a branch of the Rock Island Railroad extending along the river in this township. Fairport was a station along this line but was also an early town first laid out as Salem in 1849. Fairport was famed for its potteries and for the “large amount of tiling” manufactured here (Acme Publishing 1889:665).

Wapsinonoc Township

This township was settled in 1836 along Wapsinonoc Creek, with the township lying west of the Cedar River. The Rock Island Railroad extends east-west through the township. The city of West Liberty along the Rock Island, grew out of the early Wapsinococ Settlement (Acme Publishing 1889:654).

Wilton Township

This township is just south of the Scott County line between Fulton and Moscow townships. It was prairie land at the time of early settlement, with the main line of the Rock Island Railroad extending east-west through the township. The town of Wilton was established along this line (Acme Publishing 1889:660).

Rural Schools and Churches of Muscatine County

Rural Schools

In Iowa and the Midwest, the heyday of country schools and churches was from the 1850s to the 1950s. These rural resources were the focal points of rural life for education, religion, and social life at a time when roads and modes of transportation limited the area that one could easily travel from home for such activities. Country schoolhouses were spaced close enough that no child had to walk more than two miles in any direction to attend school, an important factor given Iowa's unpredictable weather extremes. Getting caught in the white-out and freezing temperatures of a blizzard was a particular concern for parents of school-age children. Therefore, most schools were located along section line roads, often at or near road intersections. These were one-room schoolhouses where children of all ages would be taught by one teacher. Early schools were frame, brick, or stone construction depending on the availability of local resources. In Muscatine County, most of the early rural schools were of frame construction and having a simple, one-story, front-gabled roof configuration. Some had front vestibules for the entry door and space for a cloakroom. Restroom facilities consisted of privies placed to the rear of the school yard close enough for access but far enough to distance the smells from the schoolhouse. There were typically two privies, one for girls and one for boys. Other common features were wells for water and subterranean storm shelters since most early schools lacked a basement. By the early 1900s, many of the original frame schoolhouses were being replaced with somewhat larger and more modern schoolhouses often square in plan and having a hipped roof. Many of these newer schools showed influence from the Bungalow/ Craftsman style of architecture and had rows of windows for better light and ventilation and basements underneath the schoolhouse for more comfortable and closer safety as well as storage and room for a furnace. Playground equipment did not become popular until after 1900 (Deiber and Beedle 2002:10).

Schoolhouses were sometimes clustered with rural churches but were not typically operated by the church, although a number of early schoolhouses also functioned as a church on Sunday and as a community gathering place. Some of the schools in Muscatine County became township halls and polling places after their school function had ceased, which was typical for Iowa's rural schoolhouses.

Researchers estimate in 1913 there were 215,000 ungraded, elementary, one-room country schools across North America where one teacher was responsible for all elementary students through the equivalent of eighth grade. Today, there are still approximately 200 such learning centers still in operation nationwide. While every state had one-room schools, Iowa had the most operating one-teacher schools for the longest period of time. The number peaked in 1901 when there were 12,623 such rural schools in Iowa (Sherman, ed. 1998:9).

Country school students typically ranged in age from first through eighth grade; though a few would stay on to get their high school diplomas. Some country schoolteachers never went beyond the eighth grade themselves although many held teaching certificates. State legislation closed the doors of most Iowa country schools permanently in 1967 (Sherman, ed. 1998:7). Today, only an estimated 2,800 of these rural school buildings still remain but only a few of these still retain their original look while the remainder are in various states of decay, restoration,

or adaptive reuse. Many were moved from their original site, but a larger number remain only as potential archaeological sites.

The earliest schools in Muscatine County were often held in the log cabins of early settlers. In 1839, the first schools in the city of Muscatine were established with the first rural school opened in an unoccupied log cabin in Section 2 of Wapsinonoc Township by Valentine Bozarth. The first dedicated schoolhouse (a brick building) was built in the city of Muscatine in 1851, with the earlier schools having been held in dwellings, churches, and other buildings. Other school buildings in the city soon followed, with both public and private schools established (Richman 1911:342-343). By 1864, the schools in the city included both brick and frame schoolhouses, with around 700 children on the roll. Among these early schools was the “African school in the African Methodist Episcopal Church building on East Seventh street” (Richman 1911:344). That same year, there was agitation to establish a high school department in Muscatine, with the school reorganized in the grades of “Primary schools, grammar schools and high school” (Richman 1911:3344). The primary schools were subdivided into first and second grades, which were then further subdivided into classes. The grammar schools had at least four classes, with the high school having three classes, with a course of study taking three years to complete. Each of the school types were under the control of a principal. The high school was initially in various buildings before a large three-story brick building with a tower and a basement level was erected in Muscatine in 1873. By 1900, the city’s schools were housed in nine school buildings and included the high school building, seven ward buildings, and a “suburban building” (W.F. Chevalier in Richman 1911:347). In 1901, the schools included elementary schools at the First Ward, Second Ward and Fourth Ward buildings; eight grades at the Cedar Street school and ninth grade at the First and Third Ward buildings. Other schools were known as the East Hill, West Hill, and Musserville schools, with these three schools enlarged in the early 1900s. The ward schools were subsequently renamed Jackson, Jefferson, Franklin, Lincoln, McKinley, Garfield, Hamilton, and Harrison, obviously in the trend of being named for U.S. Presidents and prominent historical figures (Richman 1911:348-350).

In Muscatine County as elsewhere in Iowa, rural school consolidation began as early as the 1890s in an effort to improve rural education and reduce the perceived isolation of rural populations from “the economic and ideological changes that were happening in the nation at large” (Deiber and Beedle 2002:5).

The Country Life movement was meant to transform rural life from isolated small towns and farmsteads into a system of integrated communities, sharing ideas and improving their productivity. Consolidating rural schools was a significant step in that direction (Deiber and Beedle 2002:5).

However, rural school consolidation was met with some resistance, with objections including “the loss of local control over the schools, the likelihood of a higher property tax burden being placed on rural residents, and the lack of good roads to get the pupils to school” (Deiber and Beedle 2002:5). The first consolidation law in Iowa was passed in 1906 but the movement was slow in getting started. By 1910, there were only ten consolidated schools in Iowa, none of which were in Muscatine County. Funding was made available for consolidated schools in 1913, which further encouraged the movement, and a minimum attendance law passed in 1919, “forced directors to close a school that had fewer than five students in average daily attendance or could

not show the planned attendance of at least ten pupils for the following year” (Deiber and Beedle 2002:8).

Some interesting statistics on Iowa’s schools were published in the 1922 biennial report for the Department of Public Instruction. It was noted that in 1860, the state employed 6,374 teachers peaking in 1900 at 28,789 before falling to 25,827 by 1922. In 1860, more than 50% of the teachers were men, while in 1922 less than 10% of the teachers were men. In 1922, the state had more high school teachers alone than the state had in all public schools in 1860. As for student enrollments, in 1860 there were 167,869 pupils rising to 426,057 in 1880, 566,223 by 1900, and declining to 543,430 in 1922. “However, with 22,793 fewer people enrolled today [1922] than in 1900, the average daily attendance is 62,886 greater” (McClenahan 1922:7).

The 1922 report further noted that in 1850, the state had 522 schoolhouses, increasing to 3,208 by 1860, up to a high of 13,896 by 1910, and then decreasing to 12,726 in 1920 but rising slightly to 12,953 in 1922 (McClenahan 1922:11). But with increased numbers of facilities, so too did the increase in their upkeep, improvement, and replacement where needed. It was further noted that rural schools presented a special problem in that their upkeep and condition was tied to the taxable valuation of a district or township’s land. So in areas where the quality of the land was poor, the “buildings are old, the equipment meager, and teachers who have little training are hired because of the economic situation” (McClenahan 1922:16). However, “other districts have a large taxable valuation and as a result have been able to erect excellent buildings, well lighted, heated and ventilated, with a reasonable amount of equipment and have hired teachers well trained for the work” (McClenahan 1922:16). But the report also noted that the rural school of 1922 includes more subjects, teachers are better trained, and the buildings were getting better. That said, while there had been many changes and improvements, Iowa’s rural schools had “probably changed the least of any part of our educational system, and now needs the most attention” (McClenahan 1922:18). One notable change was in the definition of the “Standard School,” with not only the curriculum and the teachers needing to meet higher standards but the school buildings and grounds as well. Figure 8 is a photograph used in the 1922 report to graphically demonstrate the “before and after” of the type of Standard School building design in rural Iowa by the early twentieth century. However, while many rural school districts replaced their older nineteenth century schoolhouses with the new standard design, others retained their nineteenth century schoolhouses likely due to the economics of those districts.



Figure 8. 1922 photograph illustrating the “before and after” of the Standard School design of Iowa’s country schools. Source: McClenahan 1922:19).

The 1922 report indicated that the number of rural schools had been reduced by 1,171 schools and the enrollment had decreased by 41,239 pupils. The report stated that “this is a very significant fact. Whether it is for better or for worse remains to be seen, but the fact is that parents are getting their children out of the one-room schools and sending them to graded schools” (McClenahan 1922:38). Figure 9 is a map in the 1922 report showing the distribution of consolidated schools across Iowa, including Muscatine County where two to four consolidated schools were represented, with two of the schools mapped on the county line and may have been in neighboring counties rather than Muscatine. However, the tables presented of consolidated schools both state funded and not state funded did not include any identifiable Muscatine community schools (McClenahan 1922:39-49).

active school. School consolidation continues into the present day as fewer and larger schools now serve any given county's school-age population.

Once the rural schoolhouses closed down, many continued to be used as township halls or polling places. Some in Muscatine County served as grange halls for a number of years both during and after the schoolhouses closed. Other schoolhouses were converted into houses or farm buildings and were often moved from their original site in the process. It was noted in 1998 that at least 25 one-room schools remained standing in Muscatine County. Melpine #5 was moved to a location in Wildcat Den State Park where it still serves as a school museum to the present day. The 1998 survey noted the following in Muscatine County:

The former Walnut School is also being preserved as a school on the Swayze farm. It is located 1 mile east of the Highway 61 bypass and then 1 mile southwest on Old Burlington Road.

Former territorial Governor Robert Lucas once owned the Lucas Grove School. That school is now used as a farm building.

Thirteen other schools have been converted into homes, two others are used as farm buildings, and two are vacant. The former Cranston School is used as the Cedar Township community center and Clearview #2 is used as a Seventh Day Adventist Church in Muscatine (Deason 1998:200).

Photographs taken in 1998 by John Deason were of the Clearview #2, Geneva, Hazeldale #3, and Melpine #5 schools (Figure 10).

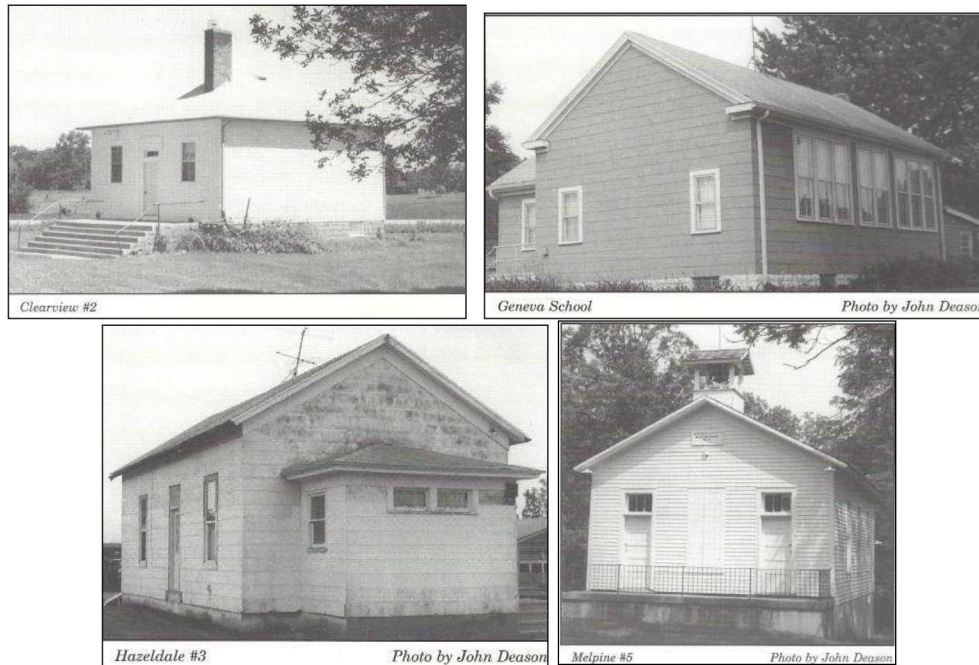


Figure 10. Muscatine country schools photographed in 1998 by John Deason.
Source: Deason in Sherman ed. 1998:200-201.

It should also be noted that it was not uncommon to move schoolhouses even in the late nineteenth century while still in use. The reasons for such moves probably varied but some reasons may have been population density changes that required moving a schoolhouse from one

location to another to help maintain that two-mile radius for school-age children and from road improvements that may have made an earlier location less desirable for a location that had better road access. Therefore, moving schoolhouses even while in use as such was rather commonplace in Muscatine County.

Rural Churches

Rural churches were also a fixture in the Iowa countryside in the late nineteenth century into the mid-to-late twentieth century. Ethnically, Iowa “is considered the most homogenous of all the states in the [Midwest] region – primarily white, Anglo-Saxon, and Protestant. But upon closer inspection it becomes apparent that it is actually home to a wide range of ethnic and religious groups” (Chiat 1997:154). It was, in fact, a place in the nineteenth century that attracted those who were migrating from east to west in search of better opportunities and fertile lands and those who were immigrating to America for the very same reasons. Iowa was also attractive to religious and ethnic groups seeking more freedom to practice their religion, such as the Mormons, and those hoping to establish religious and secular utopian and socialist societies (Chiat 1997:155).

In the nineteenth century, religion and church affiliations were a daily fixture of most people’s lives having been born out of the “Second Great Awakening,” which was a Protestant religious revival in the early nineteenth century in America that fueled evangelical fervor and revival. Colleges, seminaries and mission societies were entities founded out of this fervor, and new religious movements emerged including Adventism and Latter Day Saints. Baptists and Methodists grew in numbers relative to those that had previously dominated the Colonial Period in America, such as the Anglican, Presbyterian, Congregationalist, and Reformed churches. The movement greatly increased the number of Christians in New England and on the frontier (Kelly 2019).

The “Third Great Awakening” spanned the late 1850s into the early 1920s and much like the previous awakenings reflected a resurgence in religious interest and fervor. Religious education was further pursued through the establishment of bible colleges during this period along with regular prayer meetings and revivals. The Pentecostal movement emerged in the early 1900s (Hopkins n.d.). Billy Sunday, who had been born in Iowa in 1862 rose to fame as a professional baseball player and then as a Presbyterian preacher, whose fiery and dramatic revivals both enthralled and dismayed. He took a strong temperance position (among a host of other strong conservative stances of the day), which by the 1920s began to fall out of favor with many Americans. However, his legacy “helped strengthen conservative Protestantism” and he “became one of the most colorful and popular revivalists of the twentieth century” (Gurrentz n.d.).

Therefore, as people were migrating into Iowa to settle in the 1840s-1870s, they did so within the contexts of both the second and third awakenings. They brought with them their religious affiliations and social movements, with many denominations purposefully settling in the new frontiers, such as Iowa, in order to proselytize and establish new missions.

These movements are also reflected in the number of rural churches established in Iowa and Muscatine County, where each township had at least one if not two or more churches. This

pattern continued from early settlement into the early 1900s, but the loss of rural population by the 1920s-1930s began to impact rural churches to the point that only a few have survived into the modern day. There are other contributory factors to the loss of rural church congregations including the impact of the farm depression of the 1920s and the Great Depression of the 1930s where many farmers in Iowa lost their lands to banks and other mortgage lenders and had to move away. Then there was the physical toll of two world wars and the 1918 pandemic. The rise of the automobile and an improved road system made traveling to town to attend church much easier but also made it easier to live in town as young people began to move away from the family farms for new opportunities. Finally, there was the rising social unrest of the mid-to-late twentieth century and an increase in secularism that cumulatively resulted in a loss of membership and inability of many rural and small-town churches to survive. As a result, these churches often ended up with largely elderly members and congregations that were losing more members than they were gaining. The first reaction to this was to consolidate churches, resulting in denominations merging or “uniting” to form one larger church, often located in a town. One such example was the merging of the Evangelical United Brethren Church and the Methodist Church resulting in the modern-day United Methodist Church. However, dissension in some denominations also resulted in splits that were often acrimonious, greatly impacting some rural communities. Some early congregations simply migrated ever westward in their dedication to missions.

While some rural churches remain in use in Muscatine County, most united with their respective denominations at in-town churches. Rural churches were built for the same reasons as rural schools—the limitations of Iowa’s early road system and modes of transportation that inhibited travel in wet and snowy weather. However, rural churches were also placed to serve differing denominations and ethnic settlement areas. The represented denominations in Muscatine County in the nineteenth century included: Irish Catholic, Evangelical United Brethren, Methodist Episcopal, Society of Friends (Quakers), Presbyterian, German Lutheran, Congregational, Christian Church, Baptist, and Reformed.

By 1926, the Bureau of the Census report on religious bodies, reported a total of 12,444 persons in Muscatine County, who were members of some religious denomination. Of these, 1,449 identified as Northern Baptists, 427 as Congregational, 341 as Disciples of Christ, 49 as Evangelical, 88 as Evangelical Synod of North America, 150 as Friends (Orthodox), 300 as Jewish, 58 as Later-day Saints Reorganized, 346 as United Lutheran, 183 as Augustana Synod (Lutheran), 322 as Synod of Missouri (Lutheran), 993 as Synod of Iowa (Lutheran), 2,805 as Methodist Episcopal, 1,096 as Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., 356 as Protestant Episcopal, 2,289 as Roman Catholic, 632 as United Brethren in Christ, and 506 “all other bodies” (Bureau of the Census 1926). Some comments on the 1926 religious bodies listings for Muscatine County; first, it would appear that the majority of church members were in “main-stream” Protestant religious bodies including Methodist, Catholic, Lutheran, Baptist, and Presbyterian churches in descending order of membership numbers. While it is assumed that all of these congregations could have been represented in the rural areas, it is likely that some congregations, such as the Jewish population were urban in their settlement and in the location of their synagogues.

Some religious settlement in northern Muscatine County, particularly West Liberty may have been purposeful in their location in order to participate in the Underground Railroad and other abolitionist activities. Congregationalists and Quakers (Friends) were known to locate across southern Iowa in the pre-Civil War years for that purpose, but other congregations such as Methodists and Presbyterians were also known to participate in anti-slavery activities. Other denominations were known for ethnic affiliations such as Danish Lutherans and German and Irish Catholics.

Historically, the earliest congregation established in the county was the Methodist Episcopal Church, which began with the sending of Rev. Brace as a missionary in 1839 to the “field that included Bloomfield, now the City of Muscatine, and while he met with some support in his work, generally he was antagonized by the inhabitants” (Richman 1911:309). However, he persisted and a congregation was soon established. The field to which he and colleagues were assigned included the whole of Muscatine County as well as a portion of Scott and Louisa counties. The first Sunday school was established that same year as a uniting of the Methodists, Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and Baptists in this area. The united system prevailed until 1844 when the Methodist church organized their own Sunday school. The first house of worship for the Methodists was a small frame building that had been built for a schoolhouse but like many early schools became a meeting place for political, social, and religious activities. The one-story, front-gabled edifice was built on Iowa Avenue in Muscatine.¹ It was not until 1845 that movement for the construction of a formal church building gained ground, with a church built in 1851 that later became the Muscatine city hall. A second church was built around 1867 because the congregation size had surpassed the first church. The second church was built in 1868-69 at the corner of Third Street and Iowa Avenue in Muscatine. Additional churches followed including the Musserville Methodist Episcopal Church and another on Park Avenue (Richman 1911:309-312).

Other early churches included: the Trinity Episcopal Church (also used by the Presbyterians) built in 1841 being “the first Episcopal church building erected in the state of Iowa;” the Congregation Church of Muscatine built of brick in 1844 with the members holding their first services in the court room of the old courthouse; St. Matthias Catholic Church built in 1842 as a frame church, with the earliest Catholic mass held in Muscatine in 1841 in homes and a school room prior to the construction of the church; the St. Martin Church building is extant but was moved from its original location near the intersection of Second and Cedar streets to the grounds of Sts. Mary & Mathias Catholic Church in Muscatine; the United Brethren Church built in 1851; the First Baptist Church organized in 1841, with the first brick church built in the 1850s; the First Presbyterian Church organized in 1842, with a church built in 1849 having previously used a meeting house and a log school for services; the Evangelical Protestant Church organized in 1849, with a church building in 1860; the First United Brethren Church organized in 1850 with a church completed in 1851; the German Baptist Church organized in 1859, with a church built in 1864, the congregation previously worshiping in a schoolhouse in “South Muscatine;” the First German Presbyterian Church organized in 1855, which took over the “old Methodist church on Third street, which in 1876 they sold to the city and built a new church on Lucas Street in Muscatine; the African Methodist Episcopal Church organized in 1850, with the first meetings held in a house on Front Street and a small brick church built or purchased in 1851; the

¹ This building later became a stage and livery barn until it was demolished in 1868 (Richman 1911:312).

Society of Friends, which began meeting in Muscatine in 1852 in private homes until 1856 when a meeting house was built at the corner of Fifth and Sycamore streets in Muscatine; the Mulford Mission, which organized in 1857 and met in a shed known as the Green Street Mission, and then in a pork packing house, with a formal mission building built in 1906 that included a Sunday school and became known as the Mulford Mission; St. Mary's Catholic Church branch from St. Matthais originally), organized by German Catholics in 1863, with a church built in 1876; the Musserville Methodist Episcopal Church established in the south part of Muscatine in 1876; the Evangelical Lutheran Zion's Church organized in 1885 and previously associated with the German Protestant Lutherans; the Germain Methodist Episcopal Church first organized in the 1840s, with a church built in 1852; the First Church of Christ Scientist organized in 1897, meeting first in a hall on Iowa Avenue before building a church which was dedicated in 1906; the Grace English Lutheran Church organized in 1900, with a brick church built and dedicated in 1901; the German Congregational Church built in 1904 having organized in Muscatine in 1854; and the African Methodist Episcopal Church, which had a small congregation before emancipation but "took on new life" when there "was an inflow of people from the south, that strengthened the membership" and built a new church in 1885 (Richman 1911:313-341).

Churches established outside of Muscatine included: St. Malachy's Church at Ardon built in 1901 in Fruitland Township. This church is frame and has a "lofty steeple, and being located on high ground, can be seen for many miles" (Richman 1911:341). The 1901 church replaced an earlier church one mile west of its 1901 location. The 1901 church is still standing in Seventy-Six Township, with a Preservation Society formed to maintain the church building and grounds as a historical landmark (<http://iagenweb.org/muscatine/Societies/stmalachy.htm>, February 2021). The congregation that formed St. Malachy's grew out of an 1840s-50s settlement of Irish Catholics, who settled in Seventy-Six Township having fled Ireland during the potato famine. Their first church was a brick building on "present day X43 north of the existing 76 township hall" (St. Malachy's Church of Ardon, Iowa, Cookbook, 1988 accessed at <http://iagenweb.org/muscatine/Societies/stmalachy.htm>, February 2021). Their church was initially served by the Dioceses of Dubuque as an out-mission "to be served when a priest was available." As the congregation grew, they needed a new church, this one being frame and located west of Ardon where the Milwaukee railroad tracks intersected the gravel road to the St. Malachy Cemetery.

Over the years, the appearance of St. Malachy's has been altered as weather and time took their toll. The stable for horses no longer sets across the road and two stained glass windows high in the tower are gone, but a side door has been added. In 1918 a choir loft was built and in 1927 the present cement steps and porch replaced narrow wooden steps. Later, the ceiling frescoes were covered over and in the 1940's Miss Bride Coady paid for the installation of electricity. In the early 1950's the old wood and coal burning furnace was replaced with an oil burner.

In 1952, the present interior was completed and later the round, stained window behind the altar was removed. The grounds were landscaped with trees in 1982 and the windows protected from vandals and the elements with clear Lexan in 1984. The trains that interrupted many a Sunday service and thrilled the children in summer Bible school finally ceased and the high wooden bridge spanning the tracks was removed in 1984.

During this period the cemetery was improved also by the donation of a wrought iron front fence in 1952 by Miss Bride Coady. In 1983 a heavy duty panel fence surrounding the graveyard was installed.

Father Steve Ebel celebrated Mass weekly at St. Malachy's of Ardon in a setting the 1902 parishioners would be comfortable with, as the original pews, statues, altars and railing, and stained glass windows are intact. In 1981 the old brick church was torn down.

St. Malachy's parish was suppressed June 29, 1991 by the Bishop of Davenport due to a severe shortage of priests in the diocese. A non-profit corporation (St. Malachy's of Ardon Preservation Society) was formed in June of 1991, to take ownership of the building, contents and grounds (St. Malachy's Church of Ardon, Iowa, Cookbook, 1988 accessed at <http://iagenweb.org/muscatine/Societies/stmalachy.htm>, February 2021.

As with the schoolhouses, the earliest rural churches in Muscatine County included brick and wooden frame, front-gabled buildings with or without bell towers. Some had accompanying parsonages and rectories. In the early twentieth century, many of the older church buildings were replaced or remodeled in the popular Revival and late Queen Anne styles of the early 1900s resulting in buildings with square or complex ground and roof plans, many now with hipped rooflines that had lower cross-gables. Corner, or inset, entry towers became common. Pointed-arched Gothic Revival type windows were also common features of these churches.

There are fewer rural church buildings still standing in Muscatine County than rural schoolhouses. Part of the reason for that is that churches were privately owned by their congregations, parishes, or dioceses, and once the congregation either disbanded or shifted to in-town churches, unless a new use could be found for the old church, the tendency was to tear down the old church as it would have been a liability and the responsibility of the congregation. Rural schoolhouses were often easier to convert to other uses such as agricultural outbuildings and dwellings. Therefore, an extant rural church of historic age and retaining sufficient historic integrity should be considered significant because of the rarity of this property type to survive into the modern era.

Country churches were often, but not always, accompanied by an adjoining cemetery, most of which still endure up to the present day, although some now qualify as Pioneer Cemeteries because they are no longer used for burials in the modern era. However, there are rural cemeteries that were family, neighborhood, or township burial grounds that had no church affiliation. In addition to the formal rural cemeteries, there were family burial plots that were located on a family homestead or represent individuals buried along an active trail at locations that never became formal cemeteries and are now often unmarked. All of these cemetery/burial ground types are present in Muscatine County but remain for a future project to inventory and evaluate.

As rural resources, country schools and churches are disappearing at a fast rate as the rural population in Iowa declines. The abandoned schools and churches will be lost if they are not adapted for other uses, which can destroy their historic integrity. It is important to record and document these resources before they are entirely lost and to identify those resources that retain historic integrity and historical/ architectural significance sufficient to be eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. Such listings can provide opportunities for funding for restoration and rehabilitation that will insure that these resources remain standing into the future. However, rural resources are a challenge when on their original site as they were abandoned for a reason – loss of population and consolidation of population and schools and churches in towns. This makes preservation in place difficult and sometimes the only solution for preservation of the

resource is moving it to a new location where it can be preserved. However, such moves should be made only with careful planning and consideration of maintaining historic integrity as much as possible. Some country schools were moved into town settings for use as extra classrooms by the consolidated schools. In cases such as those, the significance of the school might include their later use even as moved buildings since they would represent the process of school consolidation from country to town schools. It is possible to list a moved school or church in the NRHP; however, the context of their move and the setting and context that they now have are key to their eligibility. However, as rural schools and churches continue to be demolished and become a rare property, those that survive, no matter their location may become NRHP eligible while currently they may not.

Research Design and Methodology

Goals and Objectives

A 2017 Planning for Preservation survey identified a list of historic country schools and churches in Muscatine County (McCarley 2017). The current survey built upon that list by confirming school and church locations, conducting research into the history of the county's schools and churches, and compiling historic contexts under which each property could be evaluated for potential eligibility for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Resources included standing properties and potential archaeological sites. A combination of reconnaissance and intensive survey was conducted. End products included a summary report (draft and final versions) and a minimum of 14 Iowa Site Inventory and 14 Iowa Archaeological Site Record forms, one each per township. The goal was to assist the Muscatine HPC in their mission to identify historic properties and preservation needs across the county in order to help preserve the county's significant cultural resources.

Additional objectives included involvement of the HPC and other volunteers in the fieldwork and research activities for the reconnaissance and intensive surveys and providing geographic coordinates and maps showing locations of all extant country schools and churches in Muscatine County. This information will be accessible to the public in printed and digital form and will provide the basis for a future project to install identifying markers for each country school and church location. The project report will be available in public libraries and on-line to disseminate information about these resources.

Methods

The Principal Investigator was responsible for all aspects of the reconnaissance survey and historic property identifications; compilation of the draft and final summary reports; and the submission of the required end products for the grant. However, HPC members and local volunteers were recruited to assist in the research, identification, and field survey activities as well as review of the draft products.

The initial phase involved a literature review including, but not limited to:

- review of the 2017 Planning for Preservation study (McCarley 2017);

- examination of the I-Sites: An Online GIS and Data Base for Iowa Archaeology for the location of all church and school archaeological sites and architectural properties that have been recorded to date in Muscatine County;
- review of existing databases and studies concerning rural schools and churches in Iowa for information about resources in Muscatine County; and
- review of the available historical maps to identify potential school and church sites and map their locations on modern maps for the reconnaissance survey.

Members of the HPC assisted in the literature review by examining local and county histories to identify the relevant historic contexts and in the compilation of a list of potentially significant resources associated with those contexts. Any newly-identified properties from the research and literature review were added to the list of potential properties for the reconnaissance survey.

The second phase of the study involved the reconnaissance-level survey of the identified rural school and church sites in each of Muscatine County's 14 townships. The surveys were led by the project consultant and at least one volunteer/HPC member who had researched that township. HPC members split the townships among the members, with most researching more than one township. The reconnaissance survey involved driving each township to examine the identified school and church locations to determine if there are standing architectural properties or if there is potential only for archaeological sites at those locations. Digital photographs were taken and locations were mapped using handheld GPS units from the public rights of way. From the reconnaissance survey and gathered historical information, properties were then targeted for intensive survey and evaluation of their eligibility for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

The Muscatine HPC partnered with Muscatine County and their GIS system (MAGIC) to map resources to facilitate searching for country schools and churches in the county. Other participants were recruited from county historical groups, interested citizens, and those who own potential historic properties.

Specific tasks included the following:

- compile and analyze all available historic maps, atlases other records pertinent to historic country schools and churches;
- field verify the map locations through windshield surveys taking at least one photograph of each building and/or vacant site;
- record on maps the GPS coordinates of all country schools and churches that currently exist or existed at some prior date;
- document dates of operation and any other historical information including key events and note-worthy personages;
- complete Iowa Site Inventory Forms for extant country schools and churches which have the potential for listing in the National Register of Historic Places;
- enter all Iowa Archaeological Site Forms into the I-Sites online database but include printouts of each form in the draft and final reports;
- plan for appropriate interpretive signs to document the locations of each historic country school and church in the county -- actual signs will be acquired and installed as a separate subsequent project;

- determine GPS coordinates for each historic country school and church with assistance from County personnel;
- coordinate with the County's GIS system (MAGIC) to facilitate searching for extant and historic country schools and churches; and
- summarize the research and survey findings along with maps and photographs in draft and final report form.

Because of current COVID-19 restrictions and considerations of public safety, the recruitment meetings had to be conducted virtually and by phone. Some oral history informants were visited outdoors at their properties and using safety precautions. Restrictions were also be taken into consideration for the windshield survey, which was conducted in more isolation than normal. The volunteer for each township led the survey of that township in their own car followed by the Consultant in a separate car, stopping to take photographs and map locations but maintaining proper social distancing in the process.

Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed during the study:

- 1) How many churches and schools are extant standing architectural properties and how many are at their original locations? A related question concerns their individual integrity at their current locations? How many are only represented as potential archaeological sites?
- 2) What religious affiliations are represented by Muscatine County churches and what does their presence in certain areas tell us about religious and ethnic rural neighborhoods in these townships?
- 3) What does the location and changing locations of schools and churches in the county tell us about the rural settlement and development of these areas as well as the changes in the rural school system and consolidation of both schools and churches in town settings?
- 4) How does the history of consolidation of schools and churches in Muscatine County compare to that seen in other counties? Did consolidation occur sooner or later and what were the reasons involved in that process?