

A HISTORICAL INVENTORY  
OF  
WORTH COUNTY, MISSOURI

Spring 1980

## INTRODUCTION

The historic inventory of Worth County was conducted during the Spring of 1980. In attempting to locate the various sites, buildings and objects, local resource persons were contacted in each township. Mrs. Mary Ray of Columbia, Missouri served as the local resource person and nominated the majority of the architectural sites in Isadora. Being a long time resident of the county, she was of valuable assistance in surveying the area.

Miss Nancy Sandehn worked as an assistant in surveying the area. She made the primary contacts with the resource persons in Grant City and the initial survey of that city was carried out under her guidance. Another source of obtaining site and architectural locations in the county was by using the windshield technique. This was extremely useful in discovering agricultural architecture since a majority of these structures were missed in the first survey of the area.

The final forms were completed by Thomas W. Carneal, Associate Professor of History at Northwest Missouri State University. John Huffman of Architects and Planners Collaborative, Kansas City, Missouri, served as the architectural resource person and Robert Bray of the State Archaeological Survey office as the archaeological resource person.

After completing the initial survey, one must conclude that some sites were missed and therefore, the survey must remain open for further additions as more research is carried out. Some of the nominated sites stand on their architectural merit, but need further research on their historical significance.

The survey indicated there is a wealth of Queen Anne and rural Gothic architectural styles in the area. There are several areas which possess the possibility of being developed as historical districts, especially Grant City. In Grant City there would be the option of developing a multiple resource district in the downtown area around the square. There is a voluminous amount of sites and materials which portray the agricultural nature of the county.

In attempting to evaluate the significance of the inventory in each township, the resource and advisory group looked at each nomination. The historical sites are separated from the archaeological sites and have separate code and numbering systems and can be checked against the map included with the survey.

The inventory definitely indicates several sites that are worthy of nomination to the National Register. In addition to the options mentioned above, the primary project for the next year should be the nomination of:

1. The Boundary Marker north of Sheridan.
2. The Courthouse at Grant City.
3. The Warden Barn near Grant City.

#### Addendum

The Boundary Marker between Iowa and Missouri, which was left over from the Honey War, was nominated by Thomas W. Carneal to the National Register of Historic Places in April, 1980. The nomination was approved by the State Council on April 25, 1980 and was forwarded to the Department of Interior as of May 1, 1980.

## A SHORT HISTORY OF WORTH COUNTY

Worth County, located in the Northwestern part of the state, is bounded on the north by Iowa, east by Harrison County, south by Gentry County and the west by Nodaway County. Worth County was originally part of Ray County. Later it became a part of Clay County, and then a part of Clinton County, then a part of DeKalb County and later a part of Gentry County. Worth County finally found its independent status on February 8, 1861.

Worth County is the smallest county in the state. It is twenty-one miles from east to west and thirteen miles from north to south and contains 174,720 acres.

The first settlement in what is now Worth County was made in 1840 by Adam (Henry) Lott, who located Lott's Grove in the northeastern part of the county. In 1857, Smithton was established as a post-office and the site of the first county seat in 1861. In 1863, the county seat was moved to Grant City which caused the development of this community. There are numerous communities that developed in Worth County, but only a few survive today and they are small. Sheridan in 1970 had a population of 251, Worth had 113 and Allendale and Denver both contained a total of 104 residents each. The counties population for 1970 was 3,359, down from a high of 8,007 in 1910. This population has always had an all white, rural oriented characteristic.

The early settlers of Worth County were nearly all from the South and were known as Southerners. Although some immigrants did settle in Worth County, the majority of residents today trace their ancestry to the immobile Carolinians, blue-blooded Virginians or some "Kentucky Colonel". A quick look at the strong

fundamental religious groups in the county like the Baptists and Church of Christ confirms this southern tradition.

Worth County has played a conservative role in the politics of the State. Although there has been two party contests on some issues, the democratic majority in most elections is the norm for the area. During 1978 and 1979, the voters turned down an increase in the tax levy to operate the county which resulted in the closing of the Courthouse during the winter of 1979-1980. Most of the elected public officials operated out of their homes and at the present time it is the biggest issue in Worth County. Only a new tax levy will keep the county solvent during the upcoming year.

The wealth in Worth County is in land. The large land holdings, grazing lands, farming equipment and farm buildings all give evidence to this agricultural basis. The people of Worth County are a hard working lot and are determined to maintain their independent county status.