

Alexandria – "The Birthplace of America"

City of Alexandria Historic Context Study

Prepared for the City of Alexandria, MN

By Patrick Smith SMITH & MAIN, IIc July, 2013



"We live not alone in the present, but also in the past and future. We can never look out thoughtfully at our own immediate surroundings but a course of reasoning will start up, leading us to inquire into the causes that produced the development around us, and at the same time we are led to conjecture the results to follow causes now in operation. We are thus linked indissolubly with the past and the future.

If, then, the past is not simply a stepping-stone to the future, but a part of our very selves, we cannot afford to ignore, or separate it from ourselves as a member might be lopped off from our bodies; for though the body thus maimed, might perform many and perhaps most of its functions, still it could never again be called complete."

- Charles S. Bryant

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City of Alexandria's Historic Context Study

Purpose of the Historic Context Study

The City of Alexandria commissioned this study in 2012. It was completed under contract by Smith & Main, a planning firm that specializes in historic preservation and economic development.

The City of Alexandria recognizes that the well-being of its downtown, the heart of the community, is paramount to the economic success of the city. To that end, the city has undertaken a number of initiatives to improve the commercial center. The city has a Revolving Redevelopment Loan for downtown businesses, for example. In addition, the city and Douglas County are in the process of redesigning and improving Broadway Street (Alexandria's main street, TH 29).

The city is in the process of updating its comprehensive plan. The document will include Alexandria's first Historic Preservation Plan, in an effort to strengthen its small-town character, created in cooperation with city residents, business owners and policymakers.

The historic preservation plan would explore different aspects of historic preservation, identify the city's preservation challenges, determine preservation goals and prioritize preservation efforts. Public participation efforts could include enlisting an appointed steering committee to help guide the planning process, conducting several open houses to solicit community feedback, using the city's website and working with the local newspaper to highlight the planning process and publicize the Open House dates.

Another part of gathering information for developing a historic preservation plan is completing this Historic Context Study. As recommended in the U.S. Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Preservation Planning, any decisions regarding a Historic Preservation Plan are best made when the relationship of individual properties to other properties within the City are understood through a historic context study.

The Importance of Historic Context

A historic context study is a document used in planning to protect a community's historic resources. It identifies a community's broad patterns of historic development and identifies historic property types (or resources) -- such as buildings, sites, structures, objects, or districts -- which represent these patterns of development.

The purpose of this historic context study is to describe Alexandria's historic development through several major historic themes. These themes help explain the economic, social and political influences that have shaped Alexandria's development and construction of the city's historic buildings.

As a planning document, the context study is intended to be a dynamic document. It will evolve as community needs and desires change. The context study is based primarily on historical research and has not involved a comprehensive inventory of buildings, structures, and landscapes. Future inventory and evaluation will further assist in determining which properties relate to specific themes, possess historical significance, and retain historic integrity.

Preservation planning, as developed by the National Park Service for preserving historic resources, is based on the following principles:

- Significant historic properties are unique and irreplaceable.
- Preservation must often go forward, even without complete information.
- Planning can be applied at any scale.
- History belongs to everyone.

The themes developed for Alexandria reflect certain statewide historic contexts developed by the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office. These statewide contexts include:

- Indian Communities and Reservations, 1837-1934
- Railroads and Agricultural Development, 1870-1940
- Urban Centers, 1870-1940
- Minnesota Farms, 1820-1960
- Tourism and Recreational Development in the Minnesota Northern Border Lakes, 1880s-1950s

The geographical limits of the study go beyond Alexandria's city limits into the surrounding countryside, since farming and tourism both have played a significant role in the development of the community. The time period analyzed in this historic context study is between prehistory and 1967, when I-94 opened near Alexandria.

Preservation Planning Projects to Date

National Register of Historic Places - Alexandria Public Library (Aug. 23, 1985)

National Register of Historic Places - Alexandria Residential District (Jan. 11, 1991)

National Register of Historic Places - Cowing, Thomas F., House (Aug. 23, 1985)

National Register of Historic Places - Douglas County Courthouse (Aug. 23, 1985)

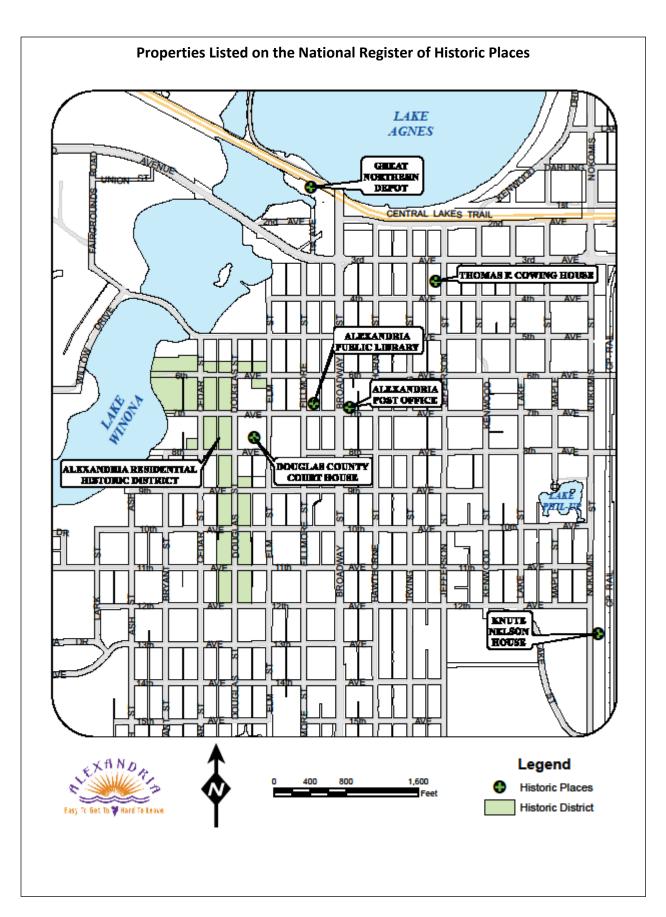
National Register of Historic Places - Great Northern Passenger Depot (Aug. 15, 1985)

National Register of Historic Places - Nelson, Knute, House (April 13, 1977)

National Register of Historic Places - U.S. Post Office (April 16, 1979)

National Register of Historic Places - Ward, Noah P., House 422 7th Ave., W. (Aug. 23, 1985)

The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) completed a Historic Properties Inventory of 23 buildings in Alexandria in 1985.



| Alexandria | Timeline | U.S./Minnesota |
|--|------------------------------|--|
| | 1820 | |
| | 1830 | 1825 – Fort Snelling is completed |
| | 1840 | 1837 – Treaty with the Ojibwa opens lands east of the Mississippi for settlement 1843 – Stillwater settled |
| | 1850 | 1847 – St. Paul surveyed and platted 1849 – Congress establishes the Minnesota Territory 1850 – 6,077 white settlers living in Minnesota 1851 and 1855 – treaties of Traverse des Sioux allows settlement in |
| First road connecting St. Paul, St. Cloud and Alexandria to Ft. Abercrombie is completed and Kinkead brothers arrive— 1858 | 1860 Civil War 1861-65 | certain areas west of Mississippi 1858 – MN becomes 32 nd State 1860 – MN population shows 172,023 1862 – First train arrives in St. Anthony (Minneapolis) 1862 – U.S./Dakota War 1862 – Homestead Act becomes law |
| Douglas County formally organized, Alexandria County Seat - 1866 Hicks buys townsite - 1867 Alexandria is incorporated as a Village – February 20, 1877 | 1870 1880 | 1873-1879 Recession - (caused by Jay Cook failure in 1873 and five seasons of grasshopper raids) 1876 – first appearance of the "four new wonders of the world" - the electric light, the phonograph and the microphone invented by |
| St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba (the Great Northern) arrives – 1878 James Letson constructs first hotel in the area, the Letson – 1880 Letson Opens the Alexandria Hotel on Lake Geneva- 1883 | 1890 | Thomas Edison, and telephone developed by Alexander Graham Bell. 1889 – Electric street cars began running in the Twice Cities 1890 – MN population shows 1,301,826 1893 – Cleveland Recession |
| Hotel Blake opens between Lakes Carlos and Le Homme Dieu and Soo Line arrives- 1903 | 1893-98 1900 1910 | 1900 – MN population shows 1,751,394 1901 – In the Pan-American Exposition, at Buffalo NY, the superior exhibits of wheat, flour, and dairy products of MN caused her to be called "the Bread and Butter State." 1908 – Model – T Ford automobile introduce 1910 – MN population shows 2,075,708 |
| Village of Alexandria becomes a City - 1909 Maryland Hotel opens on Lake Mary- 1917 | 1920 | 1917 – Ford Motor Co. introduces the Fordson tractor, the first mass produced tractor 1920 – Census shows for the first time most Americans live in urban, |
| iviai yiaitu notei opeiis oii Lake iviai y- 1917 | | not rural areas |

Great

Depression 1929-40

US in WWII 1941- 45

Main Street renamed Broadway Street - 1922

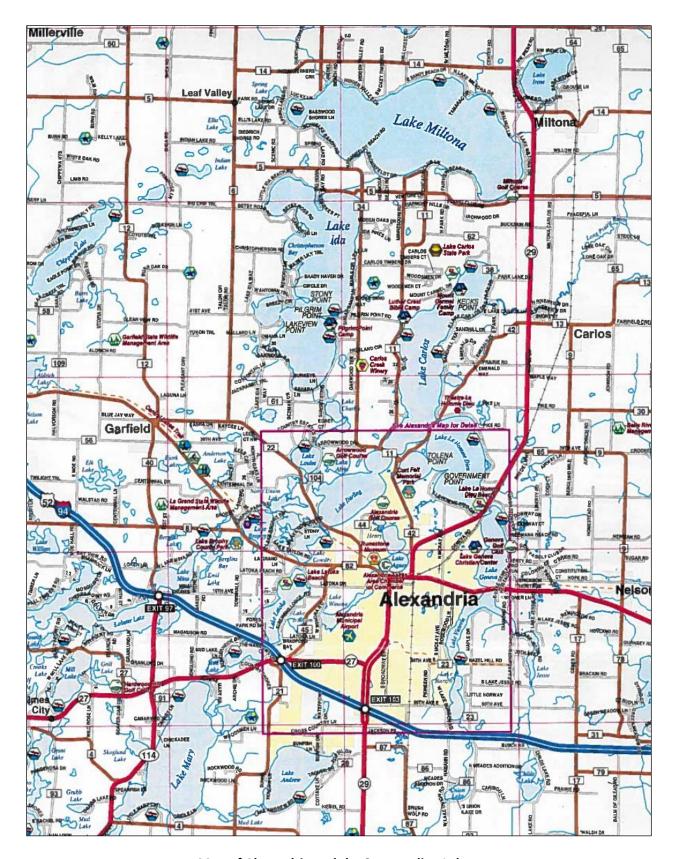
City adopts first Zoning Ordinance - 1931

1940 – MN population shows 2,792,300

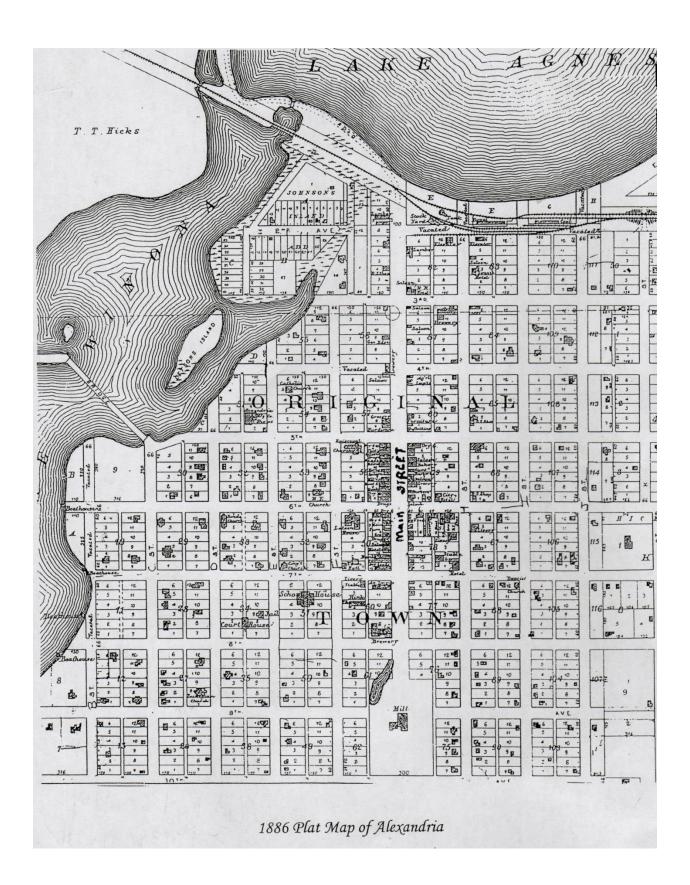
1950 1956 – Southdale - first enclosed shopping mall in the United States

1920 – Babcock Amendment creates MN's trunk highway system

1924 – The Farmall tractor introduced; widespread tractor use begins



Map of Alexandria and the Surrounding Lakes



Brief History of Alexandria

Brothers Alexander and William Kinkead were the first white settlers to arrive at the union of Lakes Agnes and Winona in 1858. The following year, they formed a townsite company and platted the new townsite there. The new community was named Alexandria in honor of Alexander Kinkead. The Kinkead brothers believed the area's natural beauty, including natural lakes, native oak and maple forests and open prairies, would create the perfect setting for their prospective townsite (Larson p. 125).

Alexandria's early development was not spectacular for a variety of reasons. First, during the Civil War years, 1861-1865, European immigration almost stopped as European immigrants were naturally wary of the U.S. Civil War. Second, settlers abandoned Alexandria following the U.S. – Dakota War of 1862, and did not return to the area until 1866, even though the government built and manned a log stockade called Fort Alexandria to protect the new settlement.

The year 1866 saw a rebirth for Alexandria. Civil War veterans were returning home. The closing of Fort Alexandria that year signaled the end of aggression from the Dakota Indians, which encouraged more settlers to return to the area. Also in 1866, Douglas County was formally organized; Alexandria was named the county seat. Finally, William Everett Hicks, a New Yorker by birth, came to Alexandria in 1866. He was so charmed by the beauty of the area that he purchased the townsite the following year.



Raiter's Meat Market – 1876 (MHS)

Hicks single-handedly fueled Alexandria's second start. He built a log store for the sale of general merchandise (the town's third store), a new hotel, a frame courthouse, a

combined grist and saw mill. He organized the first newspaper, "The Alexandria Post," supervised the replatting of the town in 1868 and donated property for the town's first schools and first three churches. After Hicks' death, his wife, Teresa, donated a block of land for construction of the Douglas County courthouse (Gardner p. 4).

On Feb. 20, 1877, Alexandria was incorporated as a village. Voters met on March 12, 1877 and selected the first officers.

One of the most important developments in the new village occurred the following year. James J. Hill's St. Paul, Minneapolis & Manitoba Railway Company (Great Northern Railway) reached Alexandria on November 5, 1878. The arrival of the railroad era expedited agriculture and tourism as Alexandria's most important industries. A link with the outside world enabled farmers to send their commodities to markets and created a conduit to bring inventory to the village's businesses. The link also meant tourists from as far away as the Twin Cities, Omaha, Chicago and St. Louis could travel to the lake country to hunt and fish (Gardner p. 5).

Just two years after the first train reached Alexandria, in 1880, James H. Letson developed the city's first tourist hotel, The Letson House, in the central part of the village. A friend of the railroad magnate Hill,

Letson took advantage of the region's abundance of lakes and wooded areas. In 1883, Letson built an exclusive resort hotel on the south shore of Lake Geneva, the Alexandria Hotel. Soon, Alexandria had developed into one of the state's three most important early resort centers, rivaling Lake Minnetonka, west of Minneapolis, and White Bear Lake, north of St. Paul.

With rail transportation now available, Alexandria and the surrounding townships in Douglas County were settled rapidly. Scandinavian, German, and Austrian, and Yankee homesteaders streamed into the region to establish farms. Roads were constructed and rural schools and churches established. Nine of Douglas County's twelve major townsites were established along the route of Great Northern and its competitor, the Soo Line, which was built through the county in 1903 (Granger).

In 1892, Minnesotans for the first time elected a foreign-born governor – Alexandria's Knute Nelson. To the state's many immigrants his election signaled that they were no longer second-class citizens. Nelson was re-elected governor in 1894.

In 1908 Alexandria changed its status from a village to that of a city. Businesses that were founded before 1872 outgrew their original log and wood-frame storefronts. A large commercial district filled with solid brick, stone, and wood-frame commercial structures developed along Broadway Avenue (Alexandria's main street).

By 1910, the city's population had grown to 3,000 residents, and Alexandria was becoming a mature and flourishing community. By 1915, municipal services were extended to include a sewer system and a half mile of street lighting along Broadway. A telephone company, a new post office, a library and a school gave the city added stature.

Phil Noonan became President and General Manager of his father's company, North American Creamery

Inc., in 1920. In the 1920s and 1930s Noonan's North American Creamery and Cold Storage was the only industry consistently providing jobs for the local working class. During the Great Depression, Noonan also planned and built 29 model homes for his employees (one of the state's first housing developments), developed "Little Bit O'Heaven," Noonan Park and Lake Phil-Up, Alexandria City Park, helped to improve the Alexandria Airport and Knute Nelson Baseball field and opened the Garden Center in downtown.



Parade along Main Street – ca. 1910 (MHS)

In the meantime, as automobiles surpassed trains as the preferred mode of vacation traveling, the grand hotels gave way to summer cottages and resorts. New pastimes joined old favorites, and new summer traditions were established.



Broadway Street looking south – 1942 (MHS)

From 1910 to the 1960s, Alexandria consistently increased its population, each decade showing at least 13% growth. Even in the depression years of the 1920s and '30s when growth in the county as a whole slowed down, Alexandria showed no marked fall in its expansion rate. Development in the city constantly was greater percentage-wise and increased even when the county's total population decreased in total numbers.

| Year | Alexandria | Douglas County | Minnesota |
|------|-------------|----------------|-------------|
| 1880 | 1355 | 9130 (+115%) | 780,000 |
| 1890 | 2118 (+56%) | 14,600 (+60%) | 1.3M (+68%) |
| 1900 | 2681 (+27%) | 17,960 (+23%) | 1.7M (+34%) |
| 1910 | 3001 (+12%) | 17,670 (-2%) | 2.0M (+19%) |
| 1920 | 3388 (+13%) | 19,040 (+8%) | 2.4M (+15%) |
| 1930 | 3876 (+14%) | 18,810 (-1%) | 2.6M (+7%) |
| 1940 | 5051 (+30%) | 20,369 (+8%) | 2.8M (+9%) |
| 1950 | 6319 (+25%) | 21,300 (+5%) | 3.0M (+7%) |
| 1960 | 6713 (+6%) | 21,300 (0%) | 3.4M (+15%) |
| 1970 | 6970 (+4%) | 22,890 (+7%) | 3.8M (+11%) |

U.S. Census

Context 1 - Early History

Geography and Location

Douglas County was created in 1866 and includes the cities of Alexandria, Brandon, Carlos, Evansville, Forada, Garfield, Kensington, Millerville, Miltona, Nelson and Osakis. Located in the west central Minnesota in the section of the state designated as the Park Region because of its natural beauty, approximately one seventh of the total acreage is water. Two hundred and sixty four classified lakes dot the county. Located in the southeast quadrant of Douglas County, Alexandria is the County Seat and is located 120 miles west-northwest from St. Paul and Minneapolis (Larson p. 49).

The City of Alexandria's strong and diverse economy is a result of the diverse geography of the area. Alexandria strategically lies in or near all three of Minnesota's biomes: prairie grassland to the west providing rich agricultural land, deciduous forests and numerous lakes in the central providing abundant recreational opportunities, and coniferous forests to the east providing excellent lumber for building homes and businesses.



Drainage, Vegetation, Settlement Alexandria Region – Gardner

Alexandria's vital agricultural economy is the result of the rich soil that has been about two million years in the making. That is when glaciers began molding the surface of the state. The temperatures cooled and warmed four times causing glaciers to make four incursions and retreats across the state. With each of the four glacial movements, the glaciers leveled rocky ridges, scoured hills and deposited fertile pulverized limestone, the rich subsoil. Formation of fertile, black topsoil in the prairie-grass region began about 10,000 years ago as centuries of prairie grasses grew, died and decayed (WPA p. 13).

The movement of the glaciers and the melting of the last glacier also created Minnesota's undulating surface and its 10,000 lakes, including Lakes Winona, Agnes, Henry, Geneva and Victoria, which circle Alexandria and give the city its nickname of "Lady of the Lakes." Because of these lakes and the fishing and hunting opportunities, the city has been a mecca for summer visitors and potential residents since 1880.

"Minnesota," the name the Dakota Indians gave to the river before the whites arrived, means the river of the bleary water. As early as 1700, French fur traders called it the St. Pierre or St. Peter River. In 1852 Martin McLeod asked the territorial legislature to change the name contending that, "Minnesota is the true name for this stream, as given to it in ages past, by the strong and powerful tribes of aborigines, the Dahkotahs, who dwelt upon its banks...." (Neill p. 168).

Native American Settlement

The first Native American settlement of the area appears to have been the Mound Builders of the Woodland period, beginning around 1200 BC. "Mound Builders" is a term applied to a diverse group of people who constructed earthen mounds for religious and burial purposes. Their remaining mounds can be found over a great portion of North America, including throughout Minnesota, even though they are fairly rare today. Archeologists have found Indian mounds between Lakes Carlos, Darling and Le Homme Dieu. The largest mound is 60 feet across and 15 feet high (Douglas County – Album of the Ages p. 4 and Alex 150 p. 67).

The Dakota were the last Native Americans to control the Douglas County area. Originally from the Great Lakes region, the Dakota moved to western Minnesota after being pushed out by the Ojibwa. The Dakota lived in villages in the summer, and broke up into smaller groups in the winter to follow deer and other animals. The Dakota nation occupied most of present-day Minnesota, and parts of the current states of North and South Dakota. There were originally seven tribal groups in the Dakota nation: Mdewakanton, Sisseton, Wahpeton, Wahpekute, Yankton, Yanktonais, and Teton.

In 1851, the Dakota signed two treaties with the U.S. government: the Traverse des Sioux and Mendota treaties. The accumulative result of the two treaties was the relocation of the Dakota to two adjoining reservations stretching 150 miles along the Minnesota River. Encompassing a strip of land 10 miles wide on each side of the river, the original reservations reached from northwest of New Ulm to near the present-day border of South Dakota.

Under the terms of the two treaties the Dakota agreed to give up approximately 35 million acres of land in exchange for "perpetual peace," \$1,665,000 to be paid out over 50 years and services that included blacksmiths, doctors, schools, carpenters and training on how to become farmers. Although the Dakota had been hunters for generations, the federal government pressured them into becoming farmers instead. Any Dakota that did not cooperate was denied food or money promised to them through the treaties.

The treaties required two Dakota Indian bands, the Sesseton and Wahpeton, to move from the area and in turn opened 24 million acres of land up for settlement as speculators and immigrants surged across Minnesota looking for investment opportunities and farm sites to call their own (Gardner p. 2).

Early White Settlement

The Kinkead brothers, Alexander and William, came to Minnesota in the early summer of 1857, before it was even a state. Prior to their arrival in Alexandria, the Kinkead brothers located on Lake Minnewaska, 20 miles south of Alexandria, where they started a settlement which later developed into the town of Glenwood. The following summer, in 1858, they traveled farther north on a prospecting expedition and upon arriving at the banks of Lake Agnes became so deeply impressed by the beauty of the spot that they determined there to "pitch their tent," and hence Alexandria was founded (Larson p. 125).

The Kinkead brothers built a log cabin on the shore of Lake Agnes near its union with Lake Winona, just south of where the Great Northern railway depot stands. Soon after their arrival, other pioneers found their way to this spot between Lakes Agnes and Winona. In 1859, the Kinkead brothers formed a townsite company and secured the services of Gen. T. F. Barrett of St. Could, a government surveyor, who surveyed and platted the townsite (Larson p. 125). The new community was named Alexandria in honor of Alexander Kinkead, who was also the area's first postmaster. The form of the name follows that of Alexandria, Egypt, founded in 332 B.C. by Alexander the Great. Fifteen other states in the United States have villages or cities with the same name (Douglas County – Album of the Ages p. 9).

That same year, in 1859, the government troops completed cutting a road across Douglas County that connected Fort Snelling with Fort Abercrombie, in present-day North Dakota. After 1859, early settlers, traveling by ox carts called Red River carts, reached Alexandria on this new government road. Later, a stage line that followed this trail was established by the Burbank Company (Schoellkopf p. 4). Known as the Stage Route or the Old State Road, this road was the lifeline of the community as supplies and people flowed between St. Cloud and Fort Abercrombie.

One of the early pioneers travelling this route in the summer of 1860 had this to say about the area,

Here the beauty of the landscape quite surpassed anything we had yet seen. A cluster of lakes, cold and marvelously clear and connected by little rivulets, glistened in the sun like a chain of diamonds, reflecting in their surfaces the charming groves of oak and maple that friended the shores. Fish were jumping everywhere. Aquatic fowl of various species were wading in the shallow water or sporting on the surface (Schoellkopf p. 4).

Early houses in the area were built of hewn logs. Floors were made of wood planks. Some houses had moss between the logs and birch bark and dirt on the roof. Those less fortunate lived in holes in the ground or huts built of round logs. The dwellings had one room that acted as the sitting room, dining



Log Home - unknown (DCHS)

room, bedroom, and kitchen. Furniture consisted of a couple of hewn log benches and table. Logs were nailed up in a corner for a bed. Pioneers ate potatoes, salt bread and butter, coffee and milk. Those that had a gun and could shoot could get game all they wanted. Plus, the plethora of lakes provided plenty of fish (Larson p. 358).

Between 1858 and 1862, the new community grew slowly suffering from bad roads and mosquitoes which plagued all settlers. Moreover, the service function of Alexandria was much smaller than that of St. Cloud to the southeast (Gardner p. 4). However, the event that almost caused the demise of the new community was the U.S. Government – Dakota conflict, which began in August of 1862, when residents abandoned the settlement just three years after the town was established.

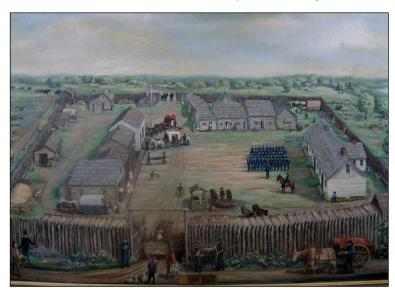
The U.S. – Dakota War of 1862 (also known as the Sioux Uprising) broke out in part as a reaction to events a thousand miles to the southeast. When the Civil War broke out in 1861, the federal government redirected funding and attention to troops fighting the Confederates. As a result, the Dakota Indian's promised supplies came months late. The Dakota War effectively ended after the Battle of Wood Lake in September 1862. Even though the Dakota War lasted only six weeks, the panic it caused among the white settlers took years to overcome.

At least 500 white settlers were killed during the conflict; it is unknown how many Dakota died. The Dakota paid dearly, though. As Little Crow, leader of the Dakota, had predicted, "Kill one, two, or ten, and ten times ten will come to kill you." Those Dakota Indians that were not killed, lost their land, forfeited all payments due to them, and were moved into camps and reservations far from Minnesota. The largest mass execution in U.S. history was a result of the Dakota War. Originally, over 300 Dakota men were sentenced to be hanged, but President Abraham Lincoln commuted most of their sentences to prison. On December 26, 1862, 38 Dakota men were hanged in Mankato. Little Crow finally said, "We are only little herds of buffalo. The great herds that covered the prairies are no more" (Minnesota Travel Companion p. 125).

In October of 1862, Alexandria was established as a government post and the military moved in and stayed until the spring of 1866. The soldiers built a stockade about 160 feet square, locating it on the hill

in the vicinity of present Highway 27 and Hawthorne Street. Once Fort Alexandria was built, settlers moved back to Alexandria but lived in the stockade for protection. Fort Alexandria became the center of business and social life as it contained a post office, school, hotel and a variety of stores (Larson p. 150 and Grover p. 13).

A number of factors led to Alexandria's solid and uninterrupted growth after 1866. First, in 1862 President Lincoln signed the Homestead Act into law and as a result people from northern Europe



Fort Alexandria (Runestone Museum)

began to flock to the new world to claim free land.

Second, the end of the Civil War in the spring of 1865 enabled soldiers to return from the war. Third, the closing of Fort Alexandria in 1866 signaled the end of any potential aggression from the Dakota Indians encouraging more settlers to return to the area. Lastly, and most importantly, in 1866, Douglas County was formally organized with Alexandria being named the county seat (Larson p. 151 and Gardner p. 4).

Acquiring county-seat status was very important for settlements that lacked the commercial advantages of river towns. People employed in the various courthouse offices enriched the community's economy, as did citizens who traveled to the county seat to conduct courthouse business.

After it was discontinued, Fort Alexander was torn down by order of the city council in 1878, and its timbers were used for other building purposes (Larson p. 151).

Early Townsite Development

The one person that had the most influence on the development of the infant community was William Everett Hicks, who has been credited with giving Alexandria its second start through his contributions to the civic, commercial and industrial life of the growing community. A New Yorker by birth, Hicks was encouraged by his doctor to go west. He came to Alexandria in 1866 and was so charmed by the beauty of the area that he bought the townsite of Alexandria the following year.

Hicks then built a log store for the sale of general merchandise (the third store for the town), a new hotel, a wood-frame court house, a combined grist and saw mill and organized the first newspaper, *The Alexandria Post*. The mill in particular was of tremendous importance to the success of Alexandria as it



Alexandria Steam Mill – 1876 (MHS)

was the only one in the area. Buildings could now be constructed much faster with milled lumber and farmers from all directions came into Alexandria to mill their grain, creating a thriving trade center (Gardner p. 4). The mill was located on Main Street (now Broadway) between Eight and Ninth Avenue. The mill was destroyed by fire in 1907 (Grover p. 16).

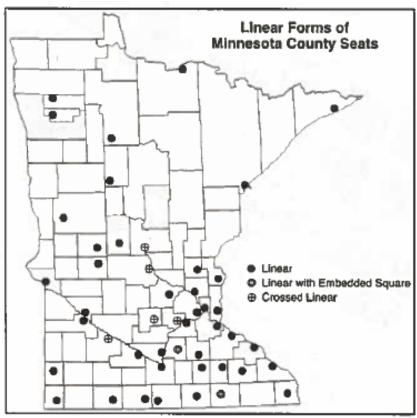
Hicks and his wife, Teresa, also donated land for the first three churches in Alexandria, the block of land for the county courthouse, and land for the first jail and school.

Another cause of the rapid growth of population in the new settlement was that in 1868 Alexandria received the district land office for the entire area. This meant that all claims and purchases of land in the region had to be registered in Alexandria. By the time all the tillable land had been claimed in the area, the office moved to Fergus Falls in 1874. F.B. Van Hoesen was responsible for the location of the land office and also helped organize the first bank of Alexandria in 1869 adding another economic function and further strengthening the community (Gardner p. 5).

Hicks also supervised the replatting of the early town site in 1868. Like many towns in Minnesota, Alexandria was platted in a gridiron scheme – eight blocks north/south and 8 blocks east/west orientation. The regular, standardized grid introduced by the Land Ordinance Survey of 1785 became the dominant physical control over town form. The grid scheme was an advantageous one in many ways: it could be easily laid out by anyone who could work with survey equipment; since land was a major commodity, the grid pattern facilitated the ease of both sale and resale of land as well as the

preparation of the necessary legal descriptions. The grid pattern also was used for the safety of the horse and buggy because it is much easier to see at right angles than sharp corners (Schmiedeler p. 334).

The layout of Alexandria exemplifies how most county court houses in Minnesota are located off of the Main Street, the focus of the town being commercial not political. Only 2 of Minnesota's 87 county seats were plated with a prominent, central-court house square (Windom and Preston) (Schmiedeler, p. 343).



Schmiedeler, p. 337

Of the approximately 100 surveyors and proprietors of Minnesota's county seats whose origins can be identified, at least 65 percent were born in the Yankee culture region. To the Yankee planner, the business district, not the courthouse, was the focus of the county seat because in New England the town was far more important than the county as a unit of local government (Schmiedeler p. 334).

Robert Walker, a Scottish immigrant blacksmith, convinced Hicks to plan a wide main street because his hometown was completely destroyed when fire jumped from one side of a narrow street to the other. The 76-foot-wide Main Street remains a unique feature of present day Alexandria (Grover p. 21).

Before the 1860s came to a close, access into Alexandria had been extended and improved to accommodate the expanded functions for the settlement. New roads had been surveyed and cut through the woods, gradually connecting Alexandria with the smaller, outlying communities and gathering to itself a greater trade area. However, the village had to await the coming of the railroad before it had good enough transportation links to tap the larger markets that were still being served by St. Cloud and Melrose to the southeast.

By 1878, Alexandria boasted a population of approximately 400 and:

- 1 large steam mill
- 10 general stores, 3 hardware, 3 drug
- 4 hotels and 4 variety stores
- 2 breweries, 2 printing offices
- 4 saloons, 1 bank, 6 churches
- 2 school buildings (fully graded)
- 10 professional men 4 attorneys
- 5 physicians, and 1 dentist
- Lodges of the Masons, Odd Fellows, Good Templars and a library association

(Gardner p. 5)



Main Street, looking south – 1876

Expected Property Types

Property types listed within these contexts will generally identify specific Alexandria examples when possible. Unfortunately, few of these examples exist for the Early History context.

Gravesites/mounds
Other archaeological sites
House/cabin/farmstead sites

Context Recommendations

Alexandria should pay special attention to archaeological investigations of Native American sites. Ideally, a full archaeological survey should be completed of the mounds between Lakes Carlos, Darling and Le Homme Dieu.

Context 2 - Agriculture and Agribusiness

Along with tourism (Context 7) the agricultural industry has had the most significant impact on the physical and economic development of Alexandria, some of which are still evident today from farm buildings to local roads. During the village's infancy (1860-1900), agriculture was the leading export industry, bringing the most wealth into the community. Local businesses like the blacksmiths, general stores, saloons, harness shops, hardware stores, banks and bakeries all initially relied on the success of the local farmers. The farmers have made significant investments in mills, grain elevators, creameries and their farms that helped shaped the landscape of Alexandria and the surrounding country side.

Early Agriculture

In the 1850's, when agriculture began in earnest in Minnesota, farmers ignored the rich prairies and instead chose areas such as those along the Mississippi and Minnesota Rivers, which had wooded valleys and hills. Clearing the Big Woods of eastern Minnesota to farm was time consuming work, but early farmers were wary of land where trees did not grow, where water was obtainable only by digging deep wells, and where cyclones and prairie fires were a periodic menace. "It was not until after immigrants had followed the railroads across the State, and had proved the richness of this prairie country, that they realized their mistake" (WPA p. 69). Farmers soon found out that it only took three years to prepare the prairie for farming compared to twenty years to prepare woodland of the Big Woods for crop production (Drache p. 22).

The area which was to become the Alexandria community offered the best of both wooded and prairie areas, making the development of agriculture in Douglas County as rapid as in any section of Minnesota. In nearly all sections of the county there were sufficient areas of natural meadows to enable the settler to begin his farming operations at once, without the tedious and arduous labor of clearing stumps. However, plenty of excellent timber was easily accessible to build a little log cabin as a temporary shelter for the family (Larson p. 194). In fact, the number of acres under cultivation in Douglas County in 1868 was 4,452, increasing to 26,683 acres by 1878 (Grover p. 31). Once established, most farms began on a subsistence basis. Early settlers planted vegetables such as potatoes, carrots, corn, onions and cabbage.

In 1862, during the Civil War, President Lincoln signed the Homestead Act. To take advantage of the Homestead Act, settlers had to be over 21 and must never have borne arms against the U.S. (i.e. not fought for the Confederate Army during the Civil War.) The Act promised 160 acres of land, which would be owned outright by the settler after five years if he built a home, made improvements and farmed the land. The land could also be bought outright for \$1.25/acre.

Northern politicians wanted the land west of the Mississippi be made available to independent farmers, rather than wealthy plantation owners who would develop it with slaves, and force yeomen farmers onto marginal lands. The Homestead Act was vital in allowing immigrants of modest means the opportunity to own a sizeable farm and use their financial resources to improve the land rather than paying a mortgage. But even with free land, a farmer often had to borrow money to get started (house, barn, fences, tools, animals, seed, etc.) (Gilman p. 125).

After becoming established nearly all the pioneer farmers acquired a few hogs, sheep, beef cows, dairy cows, and a small flock of chickens. They could make milk, cream and butter from the dairy cows. Eggs

and butter were traded for household needs. A trip to the village to exchange produce for supplies established the term "trade area" which is still used today.

"King Wheat"

Market demand, population growth, technological innovation and transportation improvements all enabled farmers to move from subsistence farming to profitability for the first time during the 1870s and 1880s. Wheat was the first crop grown commercially on a large scale in Minnesota. Wheat was considered a frontier crop because it is dependent on abundant and inexpensive land. It had arrived in Minnesota in 1859 after moving westward along the U.S. frontier. Wheat was "the premier lazy man's crop, taking relatively little labor (and little expertise) to produce," according to historian David Danborn (Danborn p. 147).



Stacking Wheat - 1918 (MHS)

During the late 1800s and early 1900s, Douglas County was long famous for raising the largest crops of wheat of any county in the state, holding the record for the highest yield per acre for many years. In the earlier years of its history wheat and other cereals constituted its principal crops and little attention was given to the raising or corn, livestock or dairying. Following are the tillable acres of crops on Douglas County farms in 1909 (Larson p. 199):

Wheat – 63,653 Oats – 23,385 Barley – 15,609 Corn – 8,927 acres Flax seed – 4,859 Rye – 3,148 Potatoes – 1,532

Not only was wheat easy to grow but it was also easily stored, transported and graded so as to become an article of trade earlier and for longer distances than more bulky and more perishable products. Grain could also be converted into money the same year it was grown.

New machines and techniques that were introduced in the Minneapolis mills in the early 1870s made Minnesota wheat as viable for flour for bread as high-quality wheat grown elsewhere. Moreover, the railroads enabled farmers to ship their wheat to Minneapolis' Mills and Duluth's shipping ports (Larson p. 118-119). This led to Minnesota moving from fifth to first rank in wheat producing states of the Union during the 1880s.

The introduction of the threshing machines and mechanical reapers in the 1850s also assisted in moving farmers past the subsistence level of farming. An 1850 threshing machine could thresh 24 bushels an



Olaf Larson Threshing Machine – 1910 (MHS)

hour compared to six men who could manually thresh two bushels an hour. The first threshing machines were pulled by steam engines, wood or a straw being the fuel. During the 1890's communal farming reached its peak in Douglas County as the large threshing machines and steam engines were too expensive for every farmer. Thus farmers helped each other harvest their wheat fields. Sometimes a threshing crew slept at the farm where they were working. A man who owned a threshing rig could be away from home until winter set in to get all the threshing for people done (Johnson).

All of the grain that Minnesota farmers were growing could not be turned into flour as soon as it was harvested. Thus, the grain elevator was introduced to store all and sell all the grain streaming in from the Minnesota prairies. Large grain elevators soon distinguished Minnesota's rural skylines as every railroad station had a grain elevator associated with it. The Osborne-McMillan Company built its grain elevator next to the Soo Line Railway in Alexandria, the same year the railroad came to town, in 1903.

The first grain elevators were typically made of wood and covered on the outside with sheets of iron to prevent fire. They later were often made of steel or concrete.

By the early 1900's Minnesota was no longer a state of subsistence farmers who struggled to put food on the table. A vast expansion of farmland and the application of modern technology had turned this state into one of the nation's leading producers of wheat, giving Minnesota the nickname, "King Wheat."

Diversification

But soon farmers realized that it did not pay to put all their eggs into one basket, and the methods of farming started to gradually change between the 1900s and 1920s. The acreage of wheat gradually decreased while that of corn increased, and more and more attention was being given to dairying and stock raising (Larson p. 199). This gradual change to a diversified farm practice can be attributed to a number of factors.

• The settlement of the Dakotas and the consequent breaking up of the virgin land, after 1885, almost doubled the wheat yield of the northwestern states effectively reducing the prices Minnesota farmers could collect for their wheat (Larson p. 199).

- Years of growing wheat exclusively and the associated deteriorating of soil quality prompted farmers to diversify their crops.
- The State Agricultural College introduced a number of varieties of white and yellow corn that were well adapted to the county (Larson p. 199).
- New farmers were moving into Douglas County from southern Minnesota, lowa, and Illinois, who were skilled in corn cultivation, so that the yield of corn rapidly increased until it began to rival the best yields of those other states.
- Most families owned a cow or two in town, which they kept in a barn in the backyard. There were no pastures, so an elderly man with the help of boys gathered up the "town cows" and drove them to a pasture on the edge of town every morning and brought them back late in the afternoon. In the 1880s Douglas County was becoming known for its tourist industry, and it was frowned upon for town people to keep a family cow. So some farmers decided to acquire more dairy cows to supply the many town people with milk, cream and butter. With large families there were enough hands to milk every morning and evening. Thus the dairy farm came into being (Johnson).

Diversification was beneficial to the farmers. It protected farmers from being completely wiped out by the failure of a single crop. Farmers could earn regular "egg money" and a "milk check" instead of relying on a single payment for the grain harvest in the fall. Livestock and poultry made better use of the family's total labor pool, including children, and spread farm labor more evenly throughout the year. Diversification also made good use of farm by-products. Livestock could eat crop residue missed during harvest, and excess milk could be fed to young pigs and calves. Fields could be naturally fertilized with manure, and untillable land could be used for pasture (Granger p. 3.29).

The effect of diversification on the built environment on farms surrounding Alexandria was profound. Livestock farming, and especially dairying, required farmers to make significant capital investments for new buildings and equipment. Silos (air tight structures that preserved green fodder for the winter months) allowed farms to feed dairy cows nutritious green material year-round, which encouraged

more milking through the winter. A silo alone could increase the livestock-carrying capacity of a farm by more than one-fourth (Wayne p. 30-37). Two-story barns (usually housing animals below and feed such as hay above) and silos became a significant part of Alexandria's rural landscape. The first silo built in Douglas County was in 1911 on the Mathison farm north of Brandon (Douglas County – Album of the Ages p. 75). By 1916 there were approximately 150 silos in the county, with at least 25 in one township alone (Larson p. 199).



Besides dairy barns and silos, a variety of smaller structures were required for the multiple farming tasks involved in a diverse farming operation. Smaller barns, such as granaries, were used to store small grain like wheat or oats. Machine sheds were used to store farm equipment and implements. Chicken barns housed the chickens that were taken care of by the lady of the farm for her egg money. Hog barns to keep pigs. Corn cribs were used to store ears of picked corn to dry and grind up for feed for the cows and pigs. They were open so that the ears of corn would dry naturally. Well houses were used to stores the pump for pumping water.

Below is a picture of a farm in Douglas Coutny that shows the physical effects of farm diversification on the rural landscape.



Farm in Douglas County – unknown (DCHS)

| Granary | | | | | |
|----------------|------------|--------------|-----------|--|--|
| Dairy Barn | Well house | Machine Shed | Farmstead | | |
| Hog Barn | | Chicken Barn | | | |
| Open Corn Crib | | | | | |

It was the financial boom for farmers during the 1910s, however, that enabled many farmers to erect the big dairy barns, silos and secondary structures needed to diversify. Diversified farming dominated Minnesota agriculture until the late 1950s (Granger p. 3.29).

Industrialization

It was during the first two decades of the 20th century that Minnesota farmers "began to shift to intensive production, employing technology and scientific methods to increase the output of their land and labor – a process some call industrialization.

Gasoline tractors first appeared in about 1910. At that time, no one anticipated how they would transform the agricultural landscape. Tractors worked faster than horses, did not grow tired and did not eat. Fields once needed for hay and oats to feed horses could be used for other crops. However, most farmers kept a team of horses for certain jobs, even when they had a tractor (Gilman p. 160).

About this time, Congress promoted the Agricultural Extension Service, which was a federal-state partnership with the federal government funding the placement of an extension agent in each county seat. Working through state colleges, the service agents told farmers how to make more money by using "scientific" methods. Among these were new kinds of crops, new fertilizers, chemicals to kill insects and plant diseases – and, of course, more machinery. To be successful, the agents told farmers, they had to produce more – just as other non-agricultural industries did (Gilman p. 161).

World War I brought greater demand for food and high prices. The government urged farmers to help the country win the war by raising more food. Between 1917 and 1919 many farmers bought tractors to keep up with the demand. Gasoline tractors and efficient machinery, such as mechanical manure spreaders, corn binders, and hay loaders, made the farmer more proficient and self-reliant. More efficient machines enabled a farmer to plant and harvest his crops faster by himself without help of his neighbors as his father and grandfather did. This efficiency also allowed farmers the opportunity to buy and farm more land (Danbom p. 142).

Eventually, farmers were caught in the tide of industrialism. After World War I, too much food was being raised causing crop prices to fall. To make money at the lower prices, each farmer had to grow even more crops. Many small farmers gave up through hard times in the 1920s and 1930s. They could not afford the new machines and could not keep going without them. Their fields were taken over by others who could. So year after year, Minnesota counted fewer but larger farms, a trend also experienced in Douglas County.

Electricity and the Rural Electrification Act brought about great modernization to farming (Johnson). World War II increased the demand for power machinery as sons of farmers and hired men left the farms for the war. After the war, many veterans found a new way of life off the farm which began the exodus to cities and suburbs

This period of industrialization of farming marked an unparalleled growth in agriculture, both locally and nationally.

Douglas County Fair

The Douglas County Fair Association was organized in 1874 for the purpose of holding annual fairs in the City of Alexandria. Fair activities, however, came to a halt during World War I due to redirecting public funds to the "war effort." By 1923 interest to revive the fair surfaced, and by 1924, a new county fair board was in place, and fundraising for an exhibit building, stock pavilion and a poultry building began.

The first grandstand for the county fair was built in 1915. The grandstand was blown down during a severe storm in 1924. Lumber from the wreckage was salvaged, and the grandstand was reconstructed in time for the 1925 fair. In 1937, taking advantage of Works Progress Administration (WPA) labor, the 1925 wooden grandstand was torn down, and construction on a modern concrete and steel building with a corrugated steel roof was begun. By 1939 the grandstand, with a seating capacity of 5,000, was finished and still being used today Douglas County now boasts one of the best county fairs in the state, rated as one of the top 10 in Minnesota (Otterson p. 100 and Alex 150 p. 45).



Agribusiness

The farming community is of utmost importance to the Alexandria economy since many agricultural businesses have developed in Alexandria as a direct result of the surrounding farming enterprises.

Flour Mills

In 1869, William Hicks constructed Alexandria's first flour mill in the middle of Main Street (now Broadway) between 8th and 9th Avenues (Larson p. 301). The three-story, steam-powered flour mill, with its 50-foot smokestack was an impressive site in Alexandria. By 1905, Alexandria had three flour mills in operation. Harry Atwood produced "Lady of the Lakes" flour at the Atwood Brother's and White Mill at the southeast corner of 6th Avenue and Hawthorne Street. The Bredenberg family operated the "Crown Roller Mills" for the production of flour and feed and also a saw mill at 13th Avenue and Hawthorne Street. Hicks' flour mill was destroyed by fire in 1907. The Wegener Brewery was converted to a flour mill by Hans Birkhoffer. He ended up selling the building to the Kiger Feed Company. Birkhoffer's mill was the last flour mill in operation in Alexandria, located on the corner of 8th Avenue and Main Street, a block from Alexandria's first flour mill (*Echo Press*, June 28, 1996).

Feed Mills

The Osborne-McMillan Co. Feed Mill & Grain Elevator was built in 1903 along the Soo Line Railroad. The mill was remodeled in 1948 for retail and wholesale feed and seed business. Hubbard Milling Company, a flour-milling firm, took ownership in 1965. The mill is still in business, serving the surrounding agricultural community (Grover p. 125).



Creameries

The difficulty in the dairy business during the 1890s was that it was divided into two parts – production and manufacturing. The farmer had to produce, and a company had to do the manufacturing, and their interests were conflicting. The farmer was interested in good prices for his cream; while the manufacture wanted a wide spread between cost of cream and the price he got for butter. The only remedy for these conflicting interests was for the producer to also take charge of manufacturing and thus eliminate the middleman who had absorbed all profits in the business. This could only be accomplished by cooperative effort among farmers (Slettom).

The task of organizing co-ops began as conversation at community and church events. Farmers were impressed with the cooperative idea. Committees were soon appointed to secure pledges of milk, draft articles of incorporation, select a site, and raise capital for a building (Slettom). Minnesota soon had 555 co-op creameries by 1906 and an all-time high of 671 in 1930 (Slettom). Creameries were not considered monopolies, however, because Andrew Volstead, a U.S. Representative from Granite Falls, helped pass the Capper-Volstead Act in 1922, which exempted farm cooperatives from anti-trust laws.

However, the federal government passed the Rural Electrification Act (REA) in 1935, inadvertently causing the decline of creameries by allowing farmers to cool and process their own milk on site. Rural Douglas County was electrified in 1937 when Douglas County Electric began to bring electrical power to farms throughout the countryside (Alex 150 p. 106).

There are many who believe that if not for the North American Creamery Company there would be no Alexandria today. In 1904, Mr. and Mrs. Frank R. Noonan came to Alexandria and established the North American Storage Company on the corner of Nokomis Street and Lincoln Avenue near the Soo Line Depot on the east side of town. At the time Lincoln Avenue (now Sixth Avenue) was the highway. In the fall of 1907 construction started on the north end of that building adding the largest and most up-to-date creamery in Minnesota.

This plant was one of Alexandria's main industrial institutions, employing about 45 people in 1907 with employees earning 30-cents an hour. In 1926, a new poultry packing department was added creating more jobs for the community, including for women. Employees numbered over 200 during the rush season. Beginning with the manufacturing of butter and distribution of farm fresh eggs, North American Creamery also distributed milk, cream, buttermilk, cottage cheese and other dairy products. In 1929, an ice cream operation was added, and by 1930 the milk pasteurization process was in place. By 1939 the company was bottling soft drink beverages including Nesbitt Soda Pop, Red Rock Cola, and eventually Pepsi Cola and beer.



North American Creamery – unknown (DCHS)



Wedum Supply (2013)

Under the management of Frank Noonan, 80 to 100 train cars of produce were shipped in a year. By 1928, then under the leadership of Frank's son, Phil, 2,000 cars were leaving Alexandria each year to destinations including Chicago and Boston. During the depression years, long-time residents remembered going with their containers for cracked eggs and buttermilk and being charged little or nothing. There were many transients who camped along the tracks or by Lake Agnes and they found their way to North American Creamery for handouts.

Most workers lived near the plant so they could walk to work. This created a division in the city with professional people and businessmen living mainly in the west part of town while the east side was regarded as the place where the working class lived. Though wealthy and successful, the Noonans were not society people and lived on Sixth Avenue in the east part of town. They were very much a part of that neighborhood and at the same time were leaders in the community. The creamery remained in business until the late 1970s, providing blue-collared jobs in Alexandria for over 70 years.

Poultry

As part of the farm diversification, farmers used to raise anywhere from 300 to 600 chickens for egg-laying. They would buy the chicks from local hatcheries because it was cheaper and safer. In 1920 there were three hatcheries in Minnesota. By 1928, there were 270 hatcheries (*Park Region Echo*, May 24, 1928). Special feed with more nutrients and vitamins produced super chickens that could lay eggs all year round, not just in the summer months. With the advent of the new breed of "miracle" chickens, hatchery operations became specialized and they grew larger, while the smaller hatcheries had to close because they could not compete.

In the 1930s there were seven hatcheries in Alexandria. The Douglas County Hatchery was built in 1924 on East 7th Avenue, next to the Post Office, which was convenient as most of the chicks were shipped by parcel post. The last hatchery in Alexandria, Lake Region Hatchery, closed in 1985. Located on Lincoln Ave East, it started operation in 1938 and provided new-born chicks for 47 years to farmers throughout West Central Minnesota (*Lake Region Echo*, March 30, 1985).

Expected Property Types

Barns
Creameries
Farmhouses and farmstead structures
Feed mills
Flour mills
Grain elevators and bins
Hatcheries
Offices of trade, farming, and related organizations
Other factories
Seed and nursery companies
Stockyards
Warehouses, agricultural
Warehouses, industrial

Houses of individuals associated with the context

Recommendations and Future actions

- Conduct a cultural resources survey to identify and evaluate all resources in the city relating to the agricultural and agribusiness context. Further specific recommendations should be based on the findings of the survey.
- Because of its historical significance to the local economy, the City should consider nominating the North American Creamery to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Context 3 - Transportation

Minnesota became a state in 1858. That same year, Douglas County had its first road construction project. At this time the vast majority of Minnesota's 150,000 residents lived east of the Mississippi River, while west of the river was a wilderness frontier. The state had three military forts — Fort Snelling near St. Paul, Fort Ripley in north-central Minnesota, and Fort Ridgely in southwestern Minnesota. State leaders believed a fourth fort in the west was needed, and in 1858-59, Fort Abercrombie was established on the Minnesota-Dakota border. The army needed a passable road so horses and wagons could travel between the forts to ferry supplies and mail. That year, government troops cut a route through timbered lands running from St. Cloud northwest through Alexandria and up to Fort Abercrombie.

The following year, James and Harry Burbank hired a party of road builders to improve the military trail made the year before with the goal of establishing stage and freight service to the Upper Red River from St. Cloud. The road, then known as the Stage Road, was the lifeline of the Alexandria community, as J. C. Burbank and Co. transported supplies and people along the road. By the winter of 1859-60, about 50 people lived in Douglas County. Most of them reached the area via the Stage Road.

However, because of the time and difficulty involved in transporting commodities and building supplies along primitive roads, transportation costs slowed growth in Alexandria and other communities on the

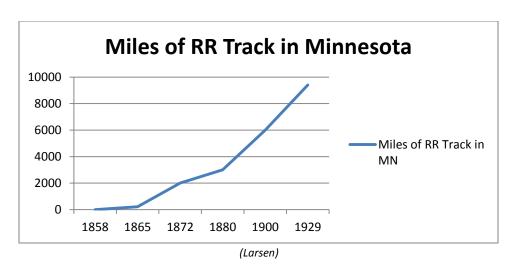


Farm to Market Road - 1936 (MHS)

frontier. Until a more efficient -- and therefore economic -- means of transporting goods to city markets and building supplies to the frontier was developed, settlement of the frontier would lag. "The frontier country was united in a desire to find a cure for the barrier of distance which discouraged settlement in the rich but isolated western lands. Without navigable rivers, the one practicable means of making such lands accessible was the construction of the railroads" (Larsen p. 238).

Trains

Construction of the railway network through Minnesota was delayed by financial panic in 1857, then by the State's foreclosure on all railroad properties in 1860, and then by the Civil War from 1861 to 1865. But once the railroads were underway, the system developed at a lively pace. The first tracks to be laid in Minnesota were between St. Paul and St. Anthony in 1862. Just three years later, trains were operating over 200 miles of tracks in the state. With the end of the Civil War, construction of the railroads began in earnest. By 1866, trains from the Twin Cities reached St. Cloud. By 1871 trains from Minneapolis reached the Red River Valley. By the end of the decade, railroad mileage had increased to more than 3,000, and by the end of the century, that figure had more than doubled. The mileage of railroad track peaked in 1929, when the automobile was becoming popular, at nearly 9,400 miles.



St. Paul, Minneapolis & Manitoba Railway Company (Great Northern Railroad)

In 1866, the Northern Pacific railroad reached St. Cloud and rumors began that it would reach Alexandria as early as 1869. *The Alexandria Post* began to tout the advantages of the rail. It would take several years, however, before it finally reached the limits of the village. The severe depression of 1873 dampened the hopes of a railroad reaching Alexandria for some years as the Northern Pacific declared bankruptcy.



James J. Hill - 1916 (MHS)

James J. Jill, an immigrant from a struggling Canadian family, moved to St. Paul at the age of 18 and became a bookkeeper for a steamboat company, sparking his interest in the freight and transportation business.

Hill began to achieve his dream of owning a railroad when, with a great deal of political maneuvering (including gaining the active support of State Legislator Knute Nelson), he purchased the bankrupt St. Paul and Pacific Railway, which had been completed only as far as Melrose. Hill brought the railway to Alexandria on November 5, 1878. Hill later would rename his new railway company the St. Paul, Minneapolis & Manitoba Railway Company.

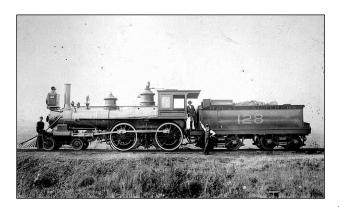
The beginning of the railroad era was critical for the long-term success and growth of Alexandria, and the establishment of agriculture and tourism as Alexandria's most important industries.

This link with the outside world allowed farmers to send their commodities to broader markets and created a method to bring inventory to the village's businesses. Alexandria soon became a major agricultural marketing and service center. The Great Northern's depot and various warehouses and grain elevators which were built along the tracks, became the focus of daily commercial activity.

The link also meant that tourists from as far away as Omaha, St. Louis, Chicago, and the Twin Cities could travel to the lake country to hunt and fish. Just two years after the first train reached Alexandria, Alexandria's first tourist hotel was developed by James H. Letson, a friend of Hill, taking advantage of

the abundance of lakes and wooded areas in the Alexandria area. Three years later, in 1883, Letson built an exclusive resort hotel on the south shore of Lake Geneva.

The arrival of the railroad also signified the permanence of the community and gave business owners and residents an insurance that their investments were protected. Soon residents and business owners began building more permanent and elaborate stores and homes "definitely ending the frontier character of that community (Gardner p. 5). Towns such as Urness in southwest Douglas County and Joy in northeast Douglas County, on the other hand, disappeared altogether without having a railway connection (Grover).



Great Northern Locomotive - 1896 (MHS)

Just 15 years after reaching Alexandria, Hill's railway reached the Pacific Coast in 1893, connecting Minneapolis to Seattle, Washington. (Hill had once again renamed his St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba Railway, to the Great Northern Railway in 1890.) Its route was the northernmost transcontinental railroad route in the United States. The Great Northern was also the only railroad to successfully reach the Pacific without public money and just a few federal land grants, unlike every other transcontinental railroad, earning Hill the nickname, "Empire

Builder". Because the railway was privately funded, it was one of the few transcontinental railroads to avoid bankruptcy following the Panic of 1893.

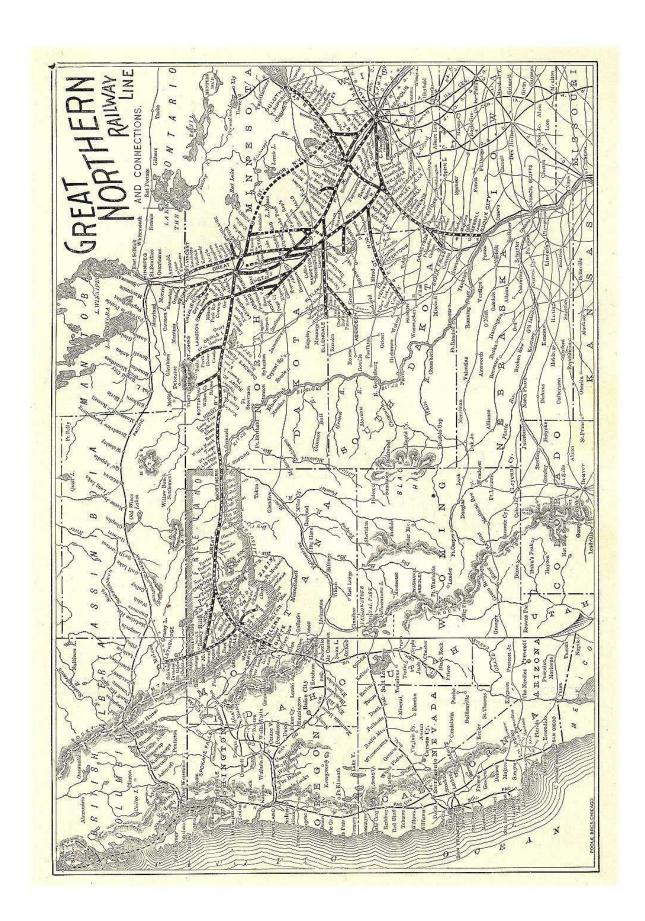
Hill was just as successful promoting his railway as he was building it. In addition to providing transportation to the region, Hill actively promoted tourism in Douglas County, using brochures and specially priced fares to the area. The Great Northern Railroad essentially became Alexandria's first marketing organization. Now linked to St. Paul and Minneapolis via the railroad, Alexandria grew rapidly to become one of the largest communities in west-central Minnesota.

By 1907, 11 Great Northern trains stopped at the depot each day. During the summer months hundreds of tourists arrived at the Alexandria Depot, where horse drawn taxis arrived to take them to the resorts and hotels around the lakes (Granger).



Rocky, the Great Northern Goat – ca. 1955 (MHS)

Railroad passenger service continued to be vital to the development of Alexandria and its tourism industry until after World War II. Passenger service was discontinued in 1967. (The railroad continued freight service when the Burlington Northern Railroad, which absorbed the Great Northern circa 1976, eliminated nearly all train service to the area.) (Granger).



Great Northern Depot

Because the town was already platted by the time the Great Northern Railway arrived, the Great Northern built its first passenger depot, a wood frame structure, circa 1878 on the outskirts of town on the south shore of Lake Agnes near the site of the present depot. However, by 1907, the Great Northern responded to increased passenger traffic by building a new depot. The second depot, which was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1984, is known as one of the largest and most ornate depots on the Great Northern line in Minnesota and as the most intact turn-of-the-century depot standing on its original site in Douglas County (Alex 150 p. 65). In fact, the railroad's official publication promoted the depot as the most beautiful station on its line. The former passenger depot was moved to a nearby site and remodeled as a freight station and has since been moved out of the city (Granger).



Alexandria's Great Northern Depot

Alexandria's depot was built by local contractors and designed by the staff of the Great Northern Engineering office. The Great Northern probably custom-designed the depot rather than using standardized plans, which was the common practice for the Great Northern's smaller depots. Most train depots were used for both passengers and freight. Having two railroads and two depots in Alexandria, however, enabled this one to be more elaborate than dual-purpose depots (Granger).

The newer 120-by-32-foot brick depot was finished with mosaic tile floors, grained birch woodwork, enameled brick wainscoting and was furnished with comfortable ornate hardwood furniture. (In 1984 the depot building was sold, and the new owners sandblasted the exterior walls, which had been painted in 1957, exposing the original red pressed brick. They converted the depot into a restaurant called the Depot Express - Douglas County – Album of the Ages p. 64).

Soo Line Railroad

In 1902, Douglas County again was traversed by a railroad. The Minneapolis, St. Paul & Sault Ste. Marie, or "Soo" ran north and south, from Warroad, near the Canadian border, to Minneapolis and St. Paul. The Soo Line, which was the Great Northern's competitor in Alexandria, opened valuable markets in Duluth and Lake Superior.

Work on the Soo Line's depot begun on September 3, 1903. It was located on Sixth Avenue East, on the east side of the main track. Passenger and freight service were part of the Soo Line until 1967, when passenger service was discontinued. The depot stood vacant for 20 years, but was razed in 1979. Freight service is still in operation (Grover p. 49).

Like the Great Northern, the Soo Line also marketed the Alexandria area to increase its own business. Below is from a Soo Line brochure:

Alexandria is but a short distance from the Twin Cities, St. Paul and Minneapolis, only a few hours' run, within an easy reach by telegraph, letter or 'phone, which means much to the busy man who feels he cannot lose touch entirely with his business or vocation.

The village nestles, like the central jewel in a marquis' ring surrounded by the crystal waters of lakes almost without number, and everyone well worthy of a visit, whether one is in quest of shady nooks, health or strength, or of that king of fish, the black bass, which inhabits all waters in this region (Minnesota Lakes Maritime Museum).



Source of picture: Runestone Museum

Automobile

If the railroads helped build and shape the towns in Minnesota's western prairies, then the gasoline engine helped change them. People were very intrigued by the horseless buggies. In the 1890's people were trying to attach engines to bicycles, wagons, and buggies. By 1910 Minnesotans owned more than 7,000 automobiles.

The rapid development of the automobile as a means of rapid and convenient transportation revolutionized local travel throughout this part of the Minnesota, as well as all over the country. Farmers found that an automobile was one of the best investments that could be made on the farm. By 1916, there were few farms in the county that did not have an automobile. The automobile brought the farm within easy distance to the market, and in consequence the growing cry for better roads resulted in much more systematic attention to the construction and maintenance of highways (Larson p. 214).

Impact of the Increasing Popularity of the Automobile

The evolution of the primary mode of transportation moving from the railway to the automobile has had a dramatic impact on the built environment of Alexandria in three significant ways:

First, the ever increasing use of automobiles and trucks and the development of the highways, especially after 1920, heightened competition between towns. Residents and farmers were able to travel farther to shop, leading to the growth of larger trade centers as they absorbed services from small ones. The increase in the number of tractors on farms and the expansion of the average farm size shrank the trade

area for towns, also contributing to the increased competition between rural towns (Gilman p. 109). Alexandria benefited from this trend as it has always been the largest service center in Douglas County.

Second, increased use of the automobile made transportation more feasible to more than just the wealthy people who could afford to ride the train. This increase in mobility brought thousands of tourists into Douglas County during the summer season (Larson p. 214). In response to this increase in demand in tourists, more resorts opened around the lakes and more tourist-oriented businesses opened or expanded in the city.

Third, as the automobile became more attainable and popular during the 1920s, federal, state and the county road systems were expanded to keep up with the demand for better roads (Gebhard p. 14). Increasingly one entered a town via the automobile, not the train. Investment followed the mode of transportation as new industrial and commercial businesses located on the outskirts of town where land was plentiful and inexpensive. Eventually such activities created the familiar commercial strip similar to Alexandria's North Side, along Third Avenue and Minnesota Hwy. 29 on the south side.

Many other small cities in Minnesota experienced a removal of pedestrian-oriented buildings in the downtown in favor of developments more oriented to the automobile. Commercial buildings constructed prior to 1920 that were designed for pedestrians (e.g. large display windows, buildings adjacent to the sidewalk, entrances facing the sidewalk, and potentially a new business every 25 feet) were replaced by buildings catering to the automobile with parking lots placed between the building and the sidewalk. Nonetheless, Alexandria's Broadway Street (main street) has remained remarkably intact through this change in transportation modes.

Roads

Automobiles could not replace horses until better roads were built. Prior to the 1920s, there were no highways and many roads still had a grassy ridge in the center between two parallel paths. Travelers still took the train if they were going more than a few miles. Railroads were made possible by the American people giving land to the railroad companies. Along those same lines, Americans made automobile travel possible by paying taxes to build highways. Minnesota was one of the first states to tax gasoline and dedicate the funds to building roads. The state also started a system of numbered highways that the whole country followed (Gilman p. 162).

Interstate 94

Interstate 94 affected Alexandria from the moment it opened for travel in 1967. Most importantly, city limits expanded to the south, adding 1,468 acres. Slowly merchants of downtown Alexandria, such as the Garden Center, moved toward the freeway, closed their doors, or changed to other types of merchandise. The freeway also affected Alexandria by providing easy access for businesses to get their products to market, and for residents of neighboring communities to patronize Alexandria's businesses, hospitals and schools. Big box stores became the welcoming monuments to Alexandria. Local farmers had their farms sliced in half, unable to access fields that they could see just across the way. Quiet county homes could hear the all-night whine of semi-trucks on the freeway (Alex 150 p. 68).

Alexandria Airport

Following World War I, a few planes landed at a field called Raiters Pasture, which is close to where the present airport is located, in the southwest corner of Alexandria. The official airport, however, started in 1942 when city officials went on record pledging full and complete cooperation with the federal government for the establishment of a federal military airport in Alexandria. Later that year, a million-dollar federal airport was approved by the Civil Aeronautics Authorities, if the city approved a bond to help finance the airport. The airport bond issue passed with voters casting one of the most overwhelming majorities of "yes" votes ever recorded for any bond issue in the county (1,769 for and 60 against) (Alex 150 p. 2).

The airport has had a positive economic impact on Alexandria. (A study completed in 1984 by the Alexandria Vocation Technical Institute, after interviewing merchants, resort owners, motel operators and restaurant owners, showed that over \$6 million a year in income and business was brought into the area by the airport.) The airport has historically been used for business charters, freight and private planes.

Sites Currently Designated

Great Northern Passenger Depot - N. Broadway & Agnes Blvd. (Aug. 15, 1985)

Expected Property Types

Railroads

Bridges

Depots, passenger and freight

Railcars

Railroad offices

Section Houses

Shops and roundhouses

Tracks

Roads and Bridges

Bridges

Roadbeds

Highway signage

Stop lights

Traffic signs

Airport

Hangers

Runways

Terminal

Recommendations and Future actions

Conduct a cultural resources survey to identify and evaluate all resources in the city relating to transportation. Base further specific recommendations on the survey findings.

Context 4 - Commerce

Original Plat

The commercial centers of Minnesota's towns typically are located near the earliest form of transportation (a river or railroad). However, Alexandria is unique in that it was founded not because it provided ease of transportation but because of the beauty of the surrounding lakes. So instead of locating the commercial center at the edge of town, near a river or railway, Alexandria's commercial center is at the heart of the original plat.

Alexandria's original plat was eight blocks by eight blocks. All the streets have 66-foot right-of-ways, except Main Street, which has a right-of-way of 100 feet. A blacksmith convinced Hicks to make Main Street wide to prevent fires from leaping over the thoroughfare and spreading among the wood-frame commercial buildings (Grover p. 21).

All of the lots in the original plat were identical in size (60-by-150 feet). The city did not adopt a zoning ordinance until 1931, and the plat did not indicate which lots should be developed for commercial, industrial or residential purposes. However, business entrepreneurs tended to establish their businesses along Main Street, between Fifth Street and Seventh Street. Blacksmith shops and livery stables, however, were established around the commercial center, and early businesses also located on Sixth Street between Main Street and I Street, forming a "T" with the commercial businesses on Main Street.

Because of the lack of zoning, commercial, industry, agriculture and residential uses were intermingled. It was common to keep horses, pigs and cattle along with gardens in the backyards of early residences.

Because the lots of the original plat were 60 feet wide and the original businesses were established in small, modest buildings, it was very common to build two stores on one lot in Alexandria. The original



Sims and Jenkins Hardware – 1876 (MHS)

commercial buildings along Main Street were constructed of logs (Sims & Jenkins Hardware Store and Hicks' Old Log Store built in 1866). Hicks constructed his sawmill in 1868, making construction of commercial and residential buildings much easier. Buildings along Main Street were then constructed of wood-frame with wood lap siding. Commercial buildings were either one or two stories. All had gable roofs though some had a false parapet.

Early Businesses

Early businesses catered to the variety of needs of the pioneers purchasing lots in the new settlement or the earliest farmers establishing homesteads in the surrounding countryside. Typical businesses included:

- Banks (Bank of Alexandria opened in 1868)
- General stores (L.K. Aaker and Company opened in 1868)
- Saloons (13 saloons and breweries were located along Main Street)
- Shoemakers (Oppel Shoemaker was founded in 1870)
- Hardware stores (Cowing & Robards started in 1872)
- Dentist (A. P. Bell)
- Barber shops
- Drug stores (the L. G. Sims Drug Store was founded in 1871)
- Hotels to temporarily house workers and families (Wissahickon Hotel opened in 1872.
 Minnesota House was located on the west side of Main Street with Douglas Hotel across the street, City Hotel on the north side of Sixth St. between Main and I streets)
- Furniture (Anderson & Lundgren Furniture store was founded in 1872)
- Mercantile (L. J. Brown & Co. opened in 1876 and Swenson, Kron & Co. was founded in 1876)
- Tailors shops (Charles Sonday Tailor Shop & Clothing Store)
- Gun shops (Charles Schultz's Gun Shop)
- Livery stables (Baker's Livery, Colby's Livery and Stevens' Livery)
- Breweries (Volk's brewery)
- Harness shops
- Attorneys (N.B. Fuller had an office above the Skandinavisk Saloon)
- Blacksmiths (Gatchell Fleming located on southwest corner of Sixth Street and I Street, and Robert Walker's Black Smith Shop)
- Meat markets (Hoffman's on the northwest corner of Fifth and Main Street, and Fred Raiter purchased John Cowing's meat market in 1869)
- Implement dealers (H. H. Wilson Farm Implement Store located on the southwest corner of Seventh and Main Street)
- Grocery stores (the N. P. Patterson store and the Zimmerman store located on the northwest corner of Fifth and Main.)
- Newspaper (*Alexandrian Post*)
- Doctors (Dr. Lewis J. Brown and Dr. Vivian Godfrey had an office above Sims & Nelson Drug Store)
- Ladies Bazaar
- Dry good stores

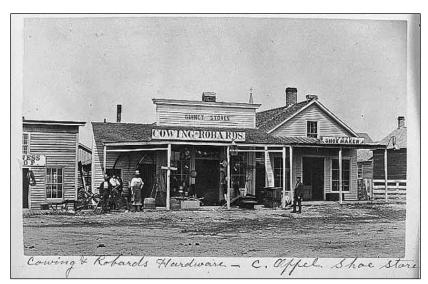
(Grover p. 18-29 and photos from MHS)



Aberle's Saloon and Barber shop – 1876 (MHS)

Cowing – Robards

John B. Cowing and George and Oscar Robards organized a partnership and purchased a hardware store in Alexandria in 1872. After the death of Oscar Robards in 1918, ownership of the store passed to his son, Pat Robards, who continued to manage the store until his death in 1980. Cowing & Robards is the only remaining of the original businesses on its downtown block. First a hardware store, Cowing & Robards has expanded and evolved over time, catering to tourists stocking tackle, fishing poles, oars, and even outboard



Cowing and Robards Hardware - 1876 (MHS)

motors when fishing boats came on the market in the early 1920s (Grover p. 19 and Schoellkopf p. 7). In March 1880, Cowing and Robards moved their hardware store and built a new 28-by-100-foot brick store (where the business exists today).

Livery Stables



Bakers' Livery - 1876 (MHS)

Before "Rent-A-Car" or gas stations, there was the town livery stable. The livery rented and sold teams and rigs, as well as feed. Similar to gas stations today with mechanics, livery stables often had an attached blacksmith shop for the making of horseshoes and metal fittings for the wagons. Early livery stables included Baker's Livery, Colby's Livery and Stevens' Livery.

Blacksmiths

One of the first brick buildings located in Alexandria was logically the Gatchll Fleming Blacksmith Shop, located on the corner of Main and Seventh Avenue (ca. 1876). While few of the commercial buildings of the 1860s and 1870s survived, they established a pattern of land use which was duplicated in stone and brick in the construction of the 1880s.



Gatchell and Fleming Blacksmith - 1876 (MHS)

After the Great Northern arrived in 1878, businesses started to locate near the depot, stretching the commercial center of the village toward Lake Agnes. By 1886, two lumberyards, stockyard, five saloons and a brewery established themselves near the Great Northern Depot, catering to passengers or taking advantage of the freight trains. The arrival of the Great Northern also signaled a permanency for the village, giving entrepreneurs more insurance in their investments.

Furthermore, the economic environment in the United States during the 1880s was one of great prosperity. "The prosperity of the country was so great – and importations from foreign countries were so large that the public monies derived from the duties accumulated in the treasury until the Government actually had more money than it knew what to do with" (Gaylord Hub p. 75). While in Minnesota, historian Constant Larson writes that between 1880 and 1890 there was a period of great activity in the railroad building, and 2,310 miles of road were put in operation. This alone gave great energy to the business of the state, and caused a large increase in the population of the cities, and gradually culminated in a most extravagant real estate boom, and an era of the wildest speculation (Larson p. 45). The culmination of these events encouraged commercial entrepreneurs to begin replacing their wood-framed shops with building of more permanent material of brick and stone, and creating a lasting streetscape that is still evident today.

The two pictures below reveal the drastic transformation of Alexandria's downtown from wood-framed buildings in 1876 to brick buildings built during the 1880s and 1890s. The picture on the left is Main Street looking south in 1876. The picture on the right is Main Street, again looking south, in 1909.



Main Street – 1876 (MHS)



Main Street – 1909 (MHS)

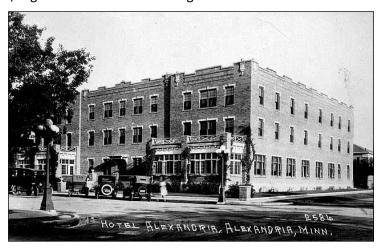
Hotels

In 1880 James Letson constructed a three-story, wood-framed Letson House on the southeast corner of 6th Avenue and Fillmore St. Also known as the Alexandria Hotel, the Letson House was the first hotel in the area that catered to the tourists who come to Alexandria because of the nearby lakes. From its beginning, it was then known as the best "hostelry" in this section of the state. The Letsons' daughter had her reception at the Letson House in 1897 which was billed as the "swellest social function" in Alexandria.

Louis Ginther purchased the hotel from Letson in 1908 and renamed the hotel the Alexandria Hotel. In 1918 the wood-frame structure was razed and the current brick hotel was built on the same site. The hotel had 75 rooms and was built by the National Contracting Company and the architect was Joseph Lutz. The hotel was faced with cream colored, rug faced brick with trimmings of white limestone. The

grand opening of the new hotel was reported to be one of the most elaborate functions given in Alexandria, and the public saw the building as a testimony to the people of Alexandria and the positive future of the city (*Alexandria Post News*, November 22, 1917).

People from miles around would come by buggies to dine on the fine cuisine in the elegant dining room. The building has functioned as a resort hotel, hotel and motel, and currently is a 50-unit apartment building (Alex 150 p. 20).



Hotel Alexandria – 1925 (MHS)

Douglas Hotel was located on the second floor of the Loseth Building, at 503 Broadway. Tenants of the street-level store have included Montgomery Ward, Glenwear Dress Shop, Viking Saving and Loan, and Downtown Floral (Grover p. 123).

Drug Stores

Similar to drug stores today seeking the corner with the most traffic, the Johnson and L.G. Sims Drug Store was situated at the busiest corner in Alexandria at the northwest corner of Sixth and Main Street. The store was constructed in 1881; it eventually became Spaulding and Nelson Drug Store. However, the building is best known for the location of C. O. Peterson Drug, which occupied the space from 1905 to 1970.



In the early part of this century, Mr. Liebengouth opened the Liebengouth Drug Store at 604 Broadway. However, soon after World War I, Liebengouth renamed his store to Boston Drug Store (his store was a part of the Rexall franchise and Boston was its home base). The drug store was most popular with the summer tourists because of its beautiful marble-topped soda fountain. The store became a meeting place for the young and not-so-young. An ice cream creation called a "Mulligan" was the big attraction. (However, costs of ice cream necessitated the closing of the fountain in 1975 – Schoellkopf p. 9).

Bakeries

Carl Hamp built one of the first bakeries in Alexandria in 1886 at 430 Main Street, the northwest Corner



of 5th Avenue and Main Street. The business was called Hamp's Bakery and was located in a two-story, wood-frame building. In 1902 Joseph and Bertha Leuthner bought the bakery and renamed it St. Paul Bakery. Ownership has changed through the years, but the location and purpose remain the same. The bakery with the longest tenure, however, was the Blue Ribbon Bakery, which was in business from 1940 to 1970. It was under the ownership of this bakery that the exterior of the building was renovated and the blue "slipcover" was installed in honor of the Blue Ribbon

Bakery (Grover p. 48 and June Roers). (Currently it is the family-owned Roers Family Bakery.)

Restaurants

In 1887, James Walker opened one of Alexandria's original grocery stores at the building located at 661 Main Street. However, the building is most famous for housing the Osterberg's Café. Richard Osterberg opened the café on Lincoln Avenue in 1921 but moved it to this building on Main Street in 1928. It remained at that location for more than 50 years. The café was an immediate success with patrons of all ages. It was a popular hangout after high school games and dances. "Meet you at Osterberg's" was a part of every citizen of Alexandria and beyond for more than half a century. The family restaurant business was carried on by sons Lenore, Tony, and Sonny until Osterberg's Café closed in 1984 (Grover p. 61 and Alex 150 p. 96). The Odd Fellows Lodge was located upstairs in this building for many years.



Osterberg's Café – (DCHS)

Travelers Inn opened on Main Street in 1924. In 1928 it moved two doors north and established in its current location. During World War II, it was a

hub of activity. As the local bus depot, Travelers Inn was open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Buses arrived eight times daily. It was not unusual to see three or four huge Greyhound buses parked diagonally on Main Street. The Travelers Inn slogan was "Where town and country meet to eat" (Alex 150 p. 122).

Jewelry

The S. N. Miller Building located at 613 Main Street was constructed in 1891. The building is one of six ornate Victorian commercial building on both sides of Main Street between Sixth and Seventh Streets. The Hedine Jewelry started in 1922 at this location and is now in its fourth generation of Hedine owners (Grover p. 108).



Millinery

At the turn of the century when Alexandria was just a small village, there were three millinery establishments. Kate and Maude Knapton owned one of those millinery businesses, known as the Knapton Sisters Millinery. The Knapton sisters were two of Alexandria's few early downtown businesswomen during the first decade of the 20th century. They started their millinery shop on the second story of the Jones Company building on Broadway, which was where the J. C. Penney's store was originally located (Grover). The inside balcony from which the sisters conducted their business is still in the building today. Many of Knaptons' hats were custom-made and all of the hats were hand sewn. During the nearly three decades that they ran their business, hats were quite popular and often reflected the temperament of changing society. At the time of their retirement in 1932, the sisters had been in the business for 29 years and only a few Alexandria establishments could match their record of longevity (*Echo Press*, September 26, 2003).

Banks

The First National Bank building, located at 520 Broadway St., was originally constructed in 1900 but the present building is a remodel of the original bank building and was completed in 1919-20. The architect of this Beaux Arts-designed building was Peter J. Linhoff of St. Paul, Minnesota.

Alexandria's first bank, Bank of Alexandria, was located on this site in 1867. It became a National bank and changed its name to First National Bank. First National Bank closed Jan 8, 1925. In 1926, Alexandria State Bank (which had been founded as Park Region State Bank in 1919) acquired the

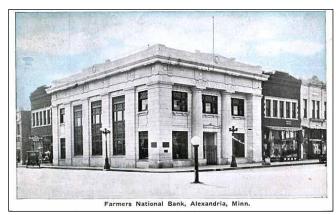


building. In 1968, Alexandria State Bank moved into a new building at 720 Broadway and changed its name to Bremer Bank in 1998 (Barduson p. 108 and Granger).

Farmers' National Bank chartered in 1901 by Tollef and Andrew Jacobson, brothers who owned several banks in the county - known as "Jacobson's Bank." They constructed the existing bank building at the southeast corner of Sixth and Main in 1910. The exterior of the Beaux Arts-styled building is of white

ashlar Maine granite. In 1950 the name was changed to First Farmers' National Bank. In 1970, it became Herberger's Department Store when First Farmers built a new bank (Granger).





Farmers National Bank - 1923 (MHS)

Douglas County State Bank was established in 1883 by Joseph W. Barnes and William Moses in rear of



the Walker's Block but was known as the "Moses' Bank." In 1900 they built a bank building at 608 Main Street. The present façade of this building is a 1919-20 remodeling of an older building and was designed by Foss & Foss of St. Cloud. Bank folded mid-1920s. The building was then used by the Alexandria Commercial Club and Chamber of Commerce for close to 40 years. Rodger J. Pappenfus and Fred Hanson moved their law office into the building in June 1966 (Granger).

Clothing Stores

Alexandria has a unique collection of long-running clothing stores through its history. The fact that the Alexandria lakes area was a summer residence for many wealthy people must have helped increase the demand for furs and fine clothing.

Before furs were fashionable for women, they were used to make outer garments for men, who were frequently exposed to below-zero weather for long periods of time. Men wore thick coats of otter, muskrat, beaver, raccoon or even coyote fur. Fur coats for women were not common until the 1920s and were often worn as a fashion statement. Alexandria's fur business started when J. R. Hanson, while still a schoolboy, made himself a robe and mittens out of a hide of a farm horse. A neighbor admired the robe and asked him to make another, thus began his "fur business."

Hanson started the business on his farm, but moved to Alexandria in 1901. When his brother, A. C.

Hanson, constructed a large building to house a furniture store in 1909 at 619 ½ Main Street, J. R. Hanson took over the second floor. By the late 1920s Hanson employed approximately 20 furriers, custom tailoring nearly 400 fur coats and hundreds of caps and mittens annually. In 1927, the three oldest Barthelemy brothers – Leo, Cecil and Felix – purchased the J. R. Hanson furrier firm in Alexandria. (The Barthelemy's also opened furrier shops in Bemidji and St. Cloud). The business that was founded at the turn of the century closed its doors in December of 1993 (Douglas County – A Retrospective p. 93).



Cleve "Spot Cash" Kolstad started his career as a young boy working for a men's store known as Canfield



and Sons. In 1911, he bought the business and called the new shop The Eagle Clothing Company. The Eagle was a country store, but it carried first class merchandise and kept up with the times. The store closed during the Depression but reopened with the name Kolstad's Clothing Company. Karl "Bud" Kolstad joined his father in 1930, and he was later joined by his son Kurt. Kolstad's Clothing closed in 1995 after 85 years of family ownership (Grover p. 60).

Kolstad's Clothing – ca. 1960's DCHS)

Bob Chan, who had worked for Kolstad's Clothing, opened Bob's Clothing in 1927 in the building located at 520 Broadway (between the old Chamber of Commerce building and the former Red Owl Store). His twin sons joined his business. Their logo, "Bob and the Twins Want To See You," was famous. They remained at this located for close to 50 years when the moved into the former First National Bank building 1976 until they ceased operations in 1991, completing 64 years of clothing business in Alexandria. Bob Chan died in 1998 at the age of 92. Bud Kolstad celebrated his 98th birthday in 2012 (Grover p. 60).



Theater

The Baehr Building at 618 Broadway was constructed in 1936. Eva Baehr, owner, opened the 800-seat Andria Theater on February 7, 1936. Baehr sold to a group of partners named Tentellino Enterprises in 1958. Movies continued to be enjoyed at the downtown location until 1972 when a new theater was built on Broadway near the Viking Plaza (Grover p. 97). (Alexandria Area Arts Association (AAAA) purchased the old movie theater in 1990.)

Garden Center

Phil Noonan, long-time chair of the Alexandria Park Board and President of the North American

Creamery, began building Garden Center in 1938. It was his dream to provide Alexandria with a "first-class" recreation center. It is believed that the name was inspired by the 1925 New York Madison Square Garden. Noonan saw that Madison Square Garden hosted many sporting events, and that its amenities included a state-of-the-art bowling center. With that in mind, he began building Alexandria's "Garden Center."

When Garden Center opened in 1939 it featured an eight-lane bowling alley, pool tables and a restaurant. It was one of the first bowling centers in the state with automatic pin setters. More lanes were added



Garden Center postcard – 1950 (MHS)

later in the basement. In 1957, Garden Center was purchased by the LeRoy Meyer family and the business continued to expand and modernize (Alex 150 p. 58). The Garden Center moved closer to I-94 in 1966. (The original Garden Center building remains and is currently being used for a day care center, but the exterior of the building has been completely altered.)

Social Aspect of the Downtown

Downtown historically has been the heart of the community, where people would congregate and farmers would get a chance to meet with their town neighbors. Main Street was lined with longtime business owners who were active in local affairs. The social importance of downtown Alexandria is best summarized in Alex 150:

It is well know that folks living in the rural area around Alexandria came to town on Saturday to do their "trading" and, since the stores were open until 9 o'clock, stayed on into the evening. What many people have forgotten was that it provided town and rural folks alike with the greatest "stop and chat" opportunity ever. Almost everyone living in Alexandria had relatives or friends living out in the county — and when Saturday came, people went downtown and sat in their cars on Main Street to "watch the people go by." Of course there were only so many parking places, so it wasn't unusual for someone to drive a car uptown earlier in the day and park it in a good location and then walk home ensuring that a car would be there for everyone to use that evening. In fact, the car doubled as a living room. Invitations were often issued to those walking by to come and sit bit while catching up on all the news. When the stores changed from being open on Saturday evening to Friday evening, I can remember my grandmother remarking, "It will never work. People are just not going to take two baths - one on Friday to come to town and then have to take another bath to go to church on Sunday." Well she was right. For whatever reason, Saturday evenings in Alexandria are just not what they used to be! (p. 110)



Broadway Street - 1955 (MHS)

Industry

Industry always has been an integral part of Alexandria's economy. From agricultural-related industries like the North American Creamery to manufacturing industries like Alexandria Boat Works, these businesses brought capital into Alexandria, which helped the community prosper and grow. The industrial spirit of the pioneers is still evident today with many new industries and the establishment of Alexandria's Technical College.

Industrial uses like lumberyards were regularly located among residences and other businesses before the turn on the century. However, once Alexandria had two railroad stops, industries tended to locate near the railroad depots (e.g. North American Creamery near the Soo Line Depot). Furthermore, in 1931 the City of Alexandria adopted its first zoning ordinance, which for the first time classified land uses and regulated the location of businesses, residential and industrial land uses. It was believed that the intermixture of land uses was incompatible and detrimental to each other. This essentially pushed the industrial land uses to the periphery of the town.

Similar to residences, during the 1940s and 1950s industries started to locate beyond the city limits where regulations were non-existent and land was cheap. These included some gravel pits and a dump to the south of the city; a farm machinery firm, Fischer house movers, and an oil tank firm to the east of the airport, and a wood working shop to the north along Highway 29.

Brickyard

John A. McKay was born in Brockville, Ontario, Canada. He met and married Angeline Hainor in Montrose, Minnesota, and moved to Douglas County in 1870, establishing a farm just east of Alexandria. He established the Alexandria Brick Manufacturing Company in 1870 on his farm, which was located on the northeast corner of present-day 6th Avenue and McKay Street, which was named after him. The brickyard had the capacity to make a million bricks a year. McKay employed 12 to 16 workers during the rapid building boom of Main Street, making most of the bricks used in the



McKay Brickyard - 1876 (MHS)

brick buildings along Broadway Street. The Alexandria Brick Manufacturing Company was in business for 26 years until 1896. McKay also served as a justice of the peace, sold real estate, and opened a grocery store with his sons (Grover p. 46).

Furniture

In 1876, Swenson, Kron & Co. opened a general store on the east side of Main Street on Fourth Avenue. This site became the site of the Anderson Furniture Store in 1903. John Anderson was a Swedish immigrant and cabinet maker and moved to Alexandria in 1872. His son, Carl, join Anderson's business in 1910. Grandson Paul joined the owners in 1938. Great-grandsons Tom and David operated the furniture store from 1980 until it was sold to Hennen's furniture in 1989. The four generations of Anderson Furniture represented one of the longest-running ownerships in Alexandria (Grover p. 29).

Alexandria Boat Works (ABW)

Erick G. Erickson was born in Sweden in 1866 and arrived in America at the age of 2 with his parents. When he was 17 he decided to build a boat for himself. Others liked his boat so well that they hired him to build boats for them. Soon he earned the nickname "Boat" Erickson. In 1885, "Boat" Erickson started the Alexandria Boat Works, the first boat company in Minnesota and has been the longest tenured industry in Alexandria. In 1902, he designed the smooth convex-concave tapered sty branded as "Lady of the Lakes." The name stuck and was used as a trade name for their boats for the remainder of their existence.





In 1903 he moved his shop to a new location at the northwest corner of what is now Broadway and Third Avenue. Most of the boats were sold within a small radius of Alexandria; however, some went as far as Kansas City and Chicago. Erickson patented many inventions including oarlocks, so the oars would not fall off. When "Boat" Erickson died in 1936 at the age of 69, his widow, Anna, took over the reins. By adapting business to the times, the Erickson family kept the business for nearly 100 years. In 1954 the Erickson

family quit building wooden boats, as the demand was increasing for aluminum and fiberglass boats. By 1952, ABW had manufactured and sold some 15,250 boats (*Park Region Echo*, September 18, 1952).

Many boat work buildings were destroyed by fires. Erickson's building was unusual: it lasted for more than 77 years. The building was razed in the 1980s when a new building on Highway 27 was constructed (Grover p. 37, Douglas County – A Retrospective p. 90, and Mary Mische – Minnesota Lakes Maritime Museum).



Alexandria Boat Works (DCHS)

Expected Property Types

Retail

Auto Dealerships

Breweries

Butchers

Cigar

Clothing and Shoes

Drugs

Dry good stores

Feed stores

Furniture

Groceries

Hardware

Implement Dealers

Jewelry

Lumber

Other commercial buildings

Service

Auto repair shops

Banks

Blacksmith shops

Bowling Alleys

Breweries

Builders and Contractors

Business offices

Carriage shops

Dance halls

Funeral homes

Gas stations

Hotels

Land Agents

Newspapers

Painters

Photographers

Plumbers

Restaurants

Saloons

Shoe Repair

Tailors

Theaters

Professional

Clinics

Offices of doctors, dentists, and lawyers

Industry

Blacksmiths

Brickyards

Boat Works

Cigar Factories

Factories

Furniture/Cabinet Makers

Foundries

Lumberyards

Livery Stables

Sawmills

Wagon makers

Recommendations and Future actions

Alexandria's commercial boom period (1880-1920) is physically evident through the significant number of historic brick buildings along Broadway Street (Main Street) constructed during this period. Moreover, it is to Alexandria's benefit that the buildings along Broadway Avenue have remained intact between Fifth Street and Seventh Street. City leaders should advocate preservation of these historic buildings along Broadway Street. As historian Thomas Harvey said, "the solid blocks of two-story brick buildings that are so much a part of Main Street imagery are rare and thus worthy of preservation where they are found. Years of neglect, alterations, and fires have left few commercial streets intact" (Clark p. 111).

- The City should complete a historic survey of all the buildings in the downtown area.
- The City should complete design guidelines for the downtown area.
- The City should complete a Façade Improvement Study to demonstrate the results of some minor or major alterations to the fronts of the historic buildings.

- The City should consider requesting the downtown commercial core from 5th Street to 7th Street, including the Hotel Alexandria and Roers' Bakery, be on the National Register of Historic place and place it on a newly created local register.
- The Douglas County Historical Society has an excellent collection of information on individual businesses; however, businesses are constantly relocating, making researching those movements difficult. The Historical Society, or a Heritage Preservation Commission, should create a comprehensive database that cross-references past businesses and buildings in a systematic order.

Context 5 – Religion

Religion was very important to the pioneers for a variety of reasons. Spiritual faith lifted the spirits of the early settlers who faced difficult and uncertain lives. Churches also played a role in the acclimation of the pioneers, as early settlers found their own language and traditions. Churches also were significant in the social lives of Alexandria's first residents, especially to the farmers who spent most of their waking hours working on their farms.

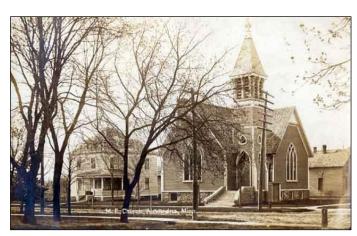
A number of church denominations in the East sent missionary preachers to tend to the early pioneers. Many congregations were formed and services held in homes, as soon as settlers built their first homes (Douglas County – A Retrospective p. 38). Like most communities, Alexandria had a range of congregations that reflected the ethnicity of the early settlers (primarily Norwegians, Swedes and Germans).

William and Theresa Hicks donated land for the first three churches in Alexandria – Methodist, Episcopal, and Congregational (Grover p. 32). As early as 1880 there were five churches located in the village – the above, plus Norwegian Lutheran (Norwegian) on the west side of town, where most of the early settlers lived, and Baptist (Swedish) on the east side of town. All of the early congregations placed their new church buildings prominently on street corners in the young village, a trend that has continued.

A familiar theme among the congregations in the Alexandria area is the constant need to construct new church edifices to accommodate the growing congregations. Most of the churches stayed at their original locations, but some (Methodist and Episcopal) followed the population growth west of the city.

Methodist Church

The Alexandria Methodist Church was the first church in Alexandria. Established by the Minnesota



Methodist Church - 1910 (MHS)

Conference in 1867, the small, white edifice was erected on the northwest corner of Sixth Avenue and Fillmore Street. A second church was built on the same corner in 1888. For 82 years this church was a prominent fixture in the downtown area until the property was sold to the post office and a new church was built in 1970 at 2210 Sixth Avenue East, on the west side of the city (Grover p. 31). The old church building was razed in 1972 (*Lake Region Echo*, November 11, 1972).

Episcopal Church

Early Episcopal services were held in the home of Charles Cook, one of the original citizens of the village, as early as 1859. Because of the U.S. – Dakota War of 1862, services were discontinued, and then relocated in 1863, when Bishop Benjamin Whipple conducted services in the officers' quarters in the stockade. In 1873, the first Episcopal Church building was built on the southeast corner of Fifth Avenue and Fillmore Street. The edifice followed a design by James Tway, modeled after the English Gothic style of churches with hand-carved beams on the interior. Originally, the exterior consisted of vertical planks, but these were later covered with stucco. The design was very unusual, because the steeple was situated at the rear of the building. In 1965 the old church was razed and a new church was built in 1966 on 12th and Lake Street (Grover p. 31).



Episcopal Church – 1910 (MHS)

Congregational Church

The original 1875 structure, located on the northeast corner of Seventh Avenue and Elm Street, was known as the "Toothpick Church". The steeple was designed by Rev. William Norton to present the thorny crown of Christ at his crucifixion. In 1893, the congregation determined a larger edifice was needed for the growing community, and a large red brick structure on top of a decorative base of native cobblestone was constructed. The "Toothpick Church" was moved and served other congregations until 1976 when it was destroyed by a fire (Grover p. 32). In 1904, the community built a new parsonage directly west of the church, across Elm

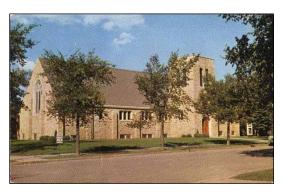


Congregational Church - 1876 (MHS)

Street with the address of 303 Seventh Avenue West. A fire completely destroyed the brick church in 1936. The following year, in 1937, the current church building was constructed.



Congregational Church - 1915 (MHS)



Congregational Church - 2013

Evangelical Norwegian Lutheran (First English Lutheran)

Although the oldest Lutheran Church in Douglas County appears to be the Norwegian Lutheran Church in Brandon, Minnesota, it would appear that First Lutheran is the oldest surviving Lutheran Church in Alexandria. Established as the Evangelical Norwegian Lutheran Church of Alexandria on April 17, 1872, the community was incorporated in 1875 and constructed its first building in 1876 at the northwest corner of Ninth Avenue and Douglas

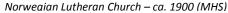


Evangelical Lutheran – 1876 (MHS)

Street. The modest wood-frame structure had white wood lap siding. In 1907, the original church was replaced with a new

edifice that had seating for 300 worshipers. The original church was moved to 13th Avenue and Fillmore Street (still existing) (*Alexandria Post News*, July 1, 1909). Because of an expanding congregation, the 1907 church building was razed and a third church building was constructed in 1948 (*Park Region Echo*, October 21, 1948). The church has also undergone several name changes, from the original Evangelical Norwegian Lutheran Church of Alexandria to the First Norwegian Lutheran Congregational to First English Lutheran Congregation to its present name of First Lutheran Church (Alex 150 p. 55).







First Lutheran Church - 2013

Calvary Evangelical Lutheran Church (Swedish Lutheran Church)

The Swedish Lutheran Congregation, Svea, was organized in 1877. Similar to other congregations, early services were held in the homes of church members. In 1885, the Norwegian and Swedish Lutherans united, and the first church was built on the southeast corner of Sixth Avenue and Douglas Street. In 1887, the Swedes became sole owners of the church and the name of the congregation became "Svea". This structure was sold and moved in 1908. A new red-brick building was constructed in 1909 at the same location and expanded in 1926 (*Lake Region Press*, Aug. 25, 1977). In 1948 the congregation's name changed from Svea to Calvary. The third house of worship for Svea-Calvary was constructed in 1954, again at the same location. The first parsonage was located



Swedish Lutheran Church – c. 1915 (MHS)

on the corner of 11th Avenue and Hawthorne Street. The second parsonage was built in 1891, with extensive remodeling completed in 1928. The current brick parsonage, located to the east of the church building, was constructed in 1939 (*Lake Region Press*, Sept. 1, 1977).



Calvary Evangelical Lutheran Church - 2013

First Swedish Baptist Church

The First Swedish Baptist Church was organized in the home of John Broms on July 2, 1881. The congregation first used the Courthouse and then the First American Baptist Church's edifice at the corner of Irving and Seventh Avenue, after that community disbanded. The congregation constructed its first church building in 1888 on the corner of Hawthorne Street and Seventh Avenue. The building was expanded in 1911. Services were delivered in Swedish until 1943. A new building was dedicated June 17, 1962 on the same location (Centennial History Booklet – First Baptist Church).

St. Mary's Catholic Church

The fact that Alexandria has only one Catholic Church can be traced back to John Ireland, who served as archbishop in Minnesota from 1875 until his death in 1918. During these formative years of Minnesota, many religious groups were establishing churches specific to their ethnicity. Immigrants tended to associate with people from their original country and service was usually spoken in the worshipers' native language. This is why many towns have more than one Lutheran church. Archbishop John Ireland, on the other hand, insisted that the Catholic Church must become American and welcome people from all ethnic backgrounds with services spoken in English. Thus, Alexandria's Catholic Church consisted of parishioners of all ethnicities, but mainly Irish and Germans.

The first Mass was recorded on October 6, 1879 at the home of Peter Stern on the west shore of Lake Winona. In 1901, a red-brick church was built on the corner of Fifth Avenue and Hawthorne. In 1950, the 1901 building was razed and a new stone church was constructed. Our Lady of Runestone School was started in 1957 with 4 grades.





St. Mary's – 1917 (MHS)

St. Mary's - 2013

Expected Property Types

Churches
Parsonages and rectories
Parish Halls
Cemeteries
Parochial schools

Recommendations and Future actions

Similar to other communities, many of Alexandria's original churches have been lost because congregations have needed to expand on limited budgets. However, the City should conduct a cultural resources survey to identify and evaluate all resources in the city relating to the religious context. Base further specific recommendations on the findings of the survey.

Context 6 – Civic

Communication

Post Office

When settlement began in Alexandria, the telegraph was not available and telephone had not been invented. So, the first order of business for the fledgling village was to establish a post office to connect



Post Office - 1930 (MHS)

the community with the rest of the country. The first post office was established in 1858, the same year that the Kinkead brothers arrived (Grover p. 50).

Between 1858 and 1910, the post office often moved from building to building. Early locations included Fort Alexandria and L. G. Sims' building that he constructed in 1868 on the northeast corner of 7th Avenue and Main Street, the same location as the future post office, the Alexandria Federal Building.

The Alexandria Federal Building, at 625 Main Street, was constructed in 1910 and served as the post office facility until 1977, when it was declared a surplus by the federal government. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the building was designed by the architects Earl and Aiton. Stylistically it is a fine example of the Renaissance Revival mode. Exterior design features include a Roman Doric entrance portico, trabeated window surrounds, inset stone panels above the windows, a modillioned cornice and a decorative parapet. The body of the building is of brick, whereas all trimming is of stone. Inside, oak woodwork is used throughout for door surrounds, dados, and pilasters, and the basement is sheathed in polished granite (Nelson). (A realtor office currently is located in the Alexandria Federal Building.)

In 1922, the name of Main Street was changed to Broadway Street. The "ABC" street designation became Ash, Bryant, Cedar and so on, and city postal delivery began in 1924 (Grover p. 55). Prior to 1924, residents came to the post office to pick up their mail.

Newspapers

Similar to the post office, it was important from the beginning for the new village to establish a newspaper. The first newspaper was established September 3, 1868 by William E. Hicks, owner of the Alexandria townsite. The newspaper was named the *Alexandria Post*. In the fall of 1870, Joseph Gilpin took over when Mr. Hicks was elected to the legislature. Gilpin published the *Post* until 1874, when A. B. Donaldson took over and renamed it the Douglas County News. It was then consolidated as the Post News until 1902.

In 1908, Carl Wold moved the *Park Region Echo* paper from Brandon, located 13 miles northwest of Alexandria, where it had been called the Brandon Bluebell, to Alexandria. The *Echo Press* is now the official newspaper of Douglas County published twice a week (Larson p. 134).

Telephone

The Park Region Telephone Company was organized in 1899 for a 150-phone system. The company was originally located on the second floor of the Spaulding's Drug store (*Alexandrian Citizen*, July 6, 1899).

Public Utilities

Though less visible than the stores and businesses, public utilities were vital in establishing a town's image. Running water, gas lines, and sewers vastly improved the quality of life for those who could afford them. But electricity was the ultimate symbol of urban success for early towns. In 1889, the village agreed to purchase the privately-owned electric light plant from J. B. Hardebeck. It has since been operated as a municipal plant.

Also in that year village residents approved a bond to construct a waterworks plant. A similar proposal for a sewer system, however, was rejected. In 1900, a well was dug, and a wooden water tank was erected back of the Village Hall (Larson p. 305).



Power Plant - 1950 (MHS)

Concrete sidewalks replaced the old boardwalks along Main Street in 1913 and Main Street and Sixth Avenue were paved in 1919 (*Alexandria Citizens*, 8-7-1919). The combination of electric power, three-globe streetlights, sewer lines, water pipes, and now paved street and concrete sidewalks greatly enhanced the business section of the city.

President Franklin .D. Roosevelt granted powers in 1935 to bring electricity to rural areas. The Runestone Electric Association (REA) was created on May 11, 1935, to begin constructing 53 miles of power lines in rural Douglas County. On Sept. 16, 1937, when the 50 lines were completed, electricity was turned on for 45 farms.

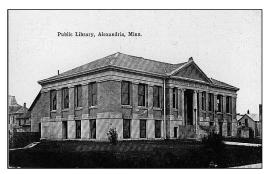
Public Buildings

Land Office

One of the reasons for the rapid growth of population and rise in business in the new settlement was the establishment of a government land office in Alexandria in 1868. The office at first was located in the courthouse building. In 1875 the office moved to Fergus Falls; however, during those seven years the town of Alexandria was busy with people stopping at the land office to stake their claim on property to farm. Historian Constant Larson states that the land office gave an impetus to trade and every branch of business at Alexandria as settlers driving there to mill even from the Red River settlement and Rush Lake, distances of more than one hundred miles. For several years during the early 1870s, the town was constantly full of people, hotels crowded and all businesses busy accommodating the settlers, who came with very few belongings. By the time the land office moved to Fergus Falls, almost all the tillable land in this region had been taken (Larson p. 305). The Land Office building has been razed.

Public Library

The Alexandria Public Library was organized in the 1880s by members of a local reading club. Before 1904 the library was housed in a succession of buildings including the city hall and a local hotel. In 1902, the library board petitioned Andrew Carnegie for funds to construct a new building. Carnegie agreed to build the Alexandria Library in 1903, the same year he approved the funding of 203 other libraries nationwide, more than any other year. Carnegie's donation to the Alexandria library was dependent on his usual stipulation that the village government provide a building site and agree to allocate at least \$1,000 annually (a minimum of 10 percent of the amount donated) toward library maintenance and operation. The Carnegie grant was initially approved at \$10,000 and later raised to \$12,000, a sum larger than that allocated to any other community in the region.



Alexandria Public Library – ca. 1910 (MHS)

The Alexandria's public library is located at the northeast corner of Seventh Avenue West and Fillmore Street, half a block west of Alexandria's business district. The building was designed by Henry A. Foeller, who also designed the Federal Building a block and a half away. Since its establishment, the Alexandria Public Library has provided vital library services to residents of Alexandria and the rest of Douglas County.

Architecturally, the Alexandria Public Library is a good example of the Beaux Arts, a style favored by communities and institutions nationwide for use in public buildings, schools and banks. The Alexandria library was a forerunner of a small Beaux Arts building movement in the community, which produced the U.S. Post Office (1910), the Farmers' National Bank (1912), the Douglas County State Bank (ca. 1915), and the Alexandria Bank and Trust (1919-1920), all located in downtown Alexandria Granger). Douglas County acquired the library from the city in 1991, opened a new library in 1995 and sold the Carnegie building to a private party.

City Hall

City Hall and Fire and Police departments shared an original building, which was built in 1882. In 1961, the old City Hall was torn down to make room for the new fire and police station. This one-story structure is located on the southwest corner of Seventh and Broadway Street, where the old City Hall stood (*Park Region Echo*, December 20, 1962). City offices moved into the Geske building located immediately west of the old City Hall in 1961(*Park Region Echo*, July 18, 1961).



Alexandria City Hall - ca. 1920s (DCHS)

Fire Department

For villages in the Midwest in the late 1800s, uncontrolled fires were recognized as an enemy of the entire settlement, especially since the early buildings were all constructed of wood. While larger eastern cities had organized fire companies, sponsored by insurance companies, the frontier towns had to protect themselves without much equipment and using volunteer manpower. As the village grew and development increased, the citizens knew that fire projection was a necessity.

In 1880 the Village Council took the first step in purchasing equipment for a hook and ladder company. About a year later, in April 1881, the hook and ladder truck arrived. In August 1883, two chemical engines arrived from Chicago. The Village Council decided to store the fire equipment at Seventh and "F" (Fillmore) which was a "convenient central place for the public library and fire apparatus." That same year the council established a volunteer fire department.

The new fireman's quarters in city hall were completed in 1913 and used for 50 years, until the building was demolished and the new structure built in 1963. (In 1994, a new fire station was built at 302 Fillmore.)

In 1921 the Relief Association bought 7 acres of land with more than 400 feet of lakeshore on Lake Latoka for the use by the volunteer firefighters in lieu of receiving pay for their services. The firemen constructed a large cabin now referred to as the "Lodge" and five smaller cabins on the property. This attractive property is a landmark on the lake (Douglas County – A Retrospective p. 52-55).

Armory

Located at 310 Broadway Street, the Armory was constructed in 1922, one of at least eight armories built in Minnesota that year. Unlike many of the same vintage, Alexandria's Armory does not have a large, projecting, flat roof (Minnesota Historical Society State Survey). The armory was dedicated in 1922 by Gov. J. A. Preus. The Honorable Knute Nelson was one of the eight remaining Alexandria Civil War veterans who attended the dedication. The armory still continues to serve the U.S. military during peacetime and warfare (Grover p. 58).



Armory – 1935 (MHS)



Biq Ole

Big Ole welcomes visitors to Alexandria, proudly proclaiming, "Alexandria, birthplace of America!"

A collection of business and government officials, called the North Star World's Fair Corporation, created Big Ole as part of Minnesota's display featuring the Kensington Runestone for the 1964 New York World's Fair. The theme of this promotional scene was "Minnesota Birthplace of America." Thus, Big Ole was born. Big Ole is 28 feet high, weighs 4 tons and is made out of fiberglass. He has been moved and had a facelift, but continues to be a proud symbol of Alexandria.



Big Ole – 1975 (MHS)

County Seat

County officials kept legal records at their homes until 1867, when the county decided to lease a two-



Original Douglas County Court House – 1876 (MHS)

story wood-frame building on Main Street. The building was constructed for this purpose by William E. Hicks and Thomas F. Cowing who leased the structure to the county. The building housed four offices on the first floor and a large courtroom/public meeting hall on the second floor. Because of the lack of an official jailhouse, prisoners were kept in various locations at the discretion of the County Sheriff until the County erected a 12-by-14-foot oak timber jail in 1868.

As the population in Douglas County grew and the volume of official business increased, a new, official, courthouse was needed. In 1875, Theresa Hicks, the widow of town proprietor William E. Hicks, agreed to donate the block between Elm and Douglas Streets and between Seventh and Eighth Avenues to the county for a new courthouse. A new two-story wood-frame courthouse was completed in 1876. It had five office rooms on the first floor and a courtroom on the second floor. In the fall of 1880 a brick jail containing eight cells and construed mostly underground was built next to the new courthouse. This courthouse served the county for 20 years. After the construction of the existing courthouse, in 1900, the building was moved to a site by Lake Winona and remodeled as a hospital, but has since been razed (Grover p. 33 and Larson p. 156).

The existing courthouse was designed by the St. Paul firm Buechner & Jacobson. Together they designed the Lac Qui Prairie County Courthouse in Madison (1899) and the Swift County Courthouse in Benson (1889). Completed in the fall of 1895, the building is constructed of common brick from J. A. McKay, of Alexandria and brickyards from Evansville and Ida. The facing red brick were brought from St. Paul. It sits on a rockfaced red Kasota limestone foundation and is trimmed with Kasota stone. It is the largest Victorian building still standing in Douglas County. There are eight offices on the first floor and five offices and the court room on the second floor. Fire-proof vaults are provided for the safe storage of official records. The 1895 courthouse was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1976 (Larson p. 156, Granger, and Grover p. 33).

In 1900, a new jail and sheriff's residence was built southeast of the courthouse to replace the 1880 jail, which the State Board of Corrections condemned in 1899 as generally "damp and unhealthful" and "crude and wholly insufficient" in its provisions for female prisoners. The new jail was faced with red brick and designed to harmonize with the new courthouse (Larson p. 158). By the 1970s, the population of Douglas County had increased significantly since the turn of the century, and county government was outgrowing its facilities. In 1973, the jail and sheriff's residence was razed and the courthouse was expanded with a two-story jail, sheriff's department and office addition built onto the east and rear facades of the 1895 courthouse building (Larson p. 158 and Granger).

Parks and Recreation

Similar to other frontier towns in Minnesota, Alexandria did not include any public parks in the original plat. This may be due to the speculative nature of the original developers of the town and also because the dispersed development pattern of the early settlement already created a park-like feeling. It was not until 1923, that the Phil Noonan purchased eight and a half acres of land between Lake Agnes and Lake Henry for the city's first park (Grover p. 72).

This 8¼-acre site was chosen for its natural beauty. The park included a public beach, a water wheel, diving boards, bathhouse, a concession stand and picnic areas. In 1925, a bandstand was dedicated, followed by many summer concerts given by the Alexandria City Band and the High School Band. The park was closed in 1971, due to water impairments, and the bathhouse was removed. (By 2005, the water improved and the beach was reopened. In 2007, the City built a new bathhouse.)

Baseball



Alexandria Baseball - 1909 (MHS)

Baseball has provided the Alexandria community a common source of excitement and civic pride. Alexandria had a semi-pro team as early as 1907. The last year that players were paid was 1912. Writing about the role of baseball, Historian Ross Bernstein said, "in small-town America, being on a team was like being royalty. It gave communities a sense of pride and helped them to form a sense of identity. Summers were planned around the teams' schedules, and their games were front page news" (Bernstein p. 74).

Knute Nelson Ball Park was opened in 1938, originally as City Athletic Field. Phil Noonan paid for the design and construction of the field. The area was originally a slough with houses that Noonan needed to purchase to make room for the park. Noonan built new homes for those residences that needed to be relocated. The park was named Knute Nelson Ball Park at a park dedication on June 10, 1939.

Ceremonies were headed by Norwegian Crown Prince Olaf and Minnesota Governor Harold Stassen. The current stadium was constructed in 1967.

Schools

The citizens of Alexandria historically have sought excellent school facilities for their children. That desire for excellence and a growing number of children have led to a continuous cycle of school buildings being built, added onto or razed and rebuilt.

In 1861, the first school in the district was taught in a little log cabin, the home of J. A. James, on the west side of Lake Agnes. The next school was taught in the old stockade, in a small log building for the few pupils who attended. The first school uptown was taught in the winter of 1867-68, on the second floor of the old courthouse building.



Original Schools - 1876 (MHS)

In the summer of 1869, eight years before the village incorporated, a site for a school house was donated by William and Teresa Hicks on Seventh Avenue, between Elm and Fillmore Streets. A half block of land was acquired and has since remained the property of District No. 2. The following year, a 24-by-44-foot school building was constructed. A lower room, 35-by-22 feet, 10½ feet high, was lighted by six windows. A second-story room, 43-by-22 feet and the same height, was lighted by 11 windows (Larson p. 219). In 1876 a second school building with a bell-tower was constructed just east of the original school building. By 1880, Alexandria Independent School District No. 2 had 379 students registered (Grover p. 32).

In 1883, a new building replaced the twin schools. The three-story structure was constructed of brick and stone, and named Lincoln School. Both of the earlier school buildings were removed and one became the Ward School for elementary students, located on Sixth Avenue East. The second building was moved to Seventh Avenue and Hawthorne Street, and renovated as a hotel, the Central House (Grover p. 32). Both school houses have been razed.



Lincoln School -1910 (MHS)

In 1899, Washington School was built on Jefferson Street and Sixth Avenue for grades 1 to 6. The



Victorian-designed school building was used until 1937, when it was condemned by the fire marshal. The building was razed in 1945, but the red bricks from the walls were used in the construction of a school bus garage on the same property (*Echo Press,* December 1944).

Washington School – ca. 1910 (MHS)

In 1915, a new high school was built on Fillmore Street between Seventh and Eighth Avenues. The 1915 High School was eventually razed in 1979 to build administration offices and a new gym. In 1930, the Lincoln grade school from 1883 was razed and replaced with an addition to the Alexandria High School. The addition added 20-some classrooms, a library, a new gymnasium and an auditorium. This was the High School until Jefferson Senior High was built in 1958. (The 1930 high school addition is currently being used for Douglas County offices.)



Alexandria High School (DCHS)



High School 1930 Addition (DCHS)

In 1936 a new Washington Elementary School was built next to the 1899 school on Jefferson Street between Fifth and Sixth avenues, near downtown Alexandria. The new Washington School was



Washington Elementary – 1983 (MHS)

constructed with Public Works Administration funds. The building had seven classrooms for 300 students, a gymnasium with an auditorium on the ground floor, principal's office, library and nurse's office. The building housed kindergarten through sixth grades. Desks from the old Washington building were refinished and moved into the new building (*Park Region Echo*, September 3, 1936). A 1964 addition added six classrooms and new physical education facilities. The building was last used as a school in 2009 and converted to senior housing in 2011.

In 1953, Lincoln Elementary school was built on Lark Street for grades kindergarten through sixth. The one-story building had 16 classrooms and a capacity of 500 students. The building was designed by Traynor and Hermanson of St. Cloud, and touted for its "ultra-modern lines" and not having a "solitary step or stairway in the entire structure," (*Park Region Echo*, June 30, 1953).

Jefferson Senior High was built in 1959. Located at 11th Avenue and Jefferson Street, the building consisted of 17 classrooms, cafeteria, agriculture area, industrial arts, boys' and girls' gymnasiums, commercial area, music area, art room, and office suite. Built and put into use for the 1964-65 school year was an addition consisting of 12 new classrooms. Central (1915) was then used for grades 7 – 9.

Parochial Schools

Starting in 1950, St. Mary's taught school in the old (1902) church building. In 1957, the congregation razed the 1902 church building in order to build a new school. The school is 1½ stories, with 12 classrooms, located on the corner of Fifth Avenue and Hawthorne Street (*Park Region Echo*, July 17, 1956). The first Catholic school in Alexandria, the building had a capacity for 300 students in six grades (*Park Region Echo*, June 6, 1956).

Alexandria Technical College

Alexandria Technical College, located in the southeast section of the city, was founded by Vernon R. Maack in 1961 with three programs and 23 students. During the 1950s, Maack realized that there was a disconnect between local businesses that needed mechanically-trained workers and the secondary schools that focused on college preparatory. Focused on technical education, the school originally offered carpentry, farm equipment mechanics, and machine shop. (The school now has 50 programs and 3,300 students) (Alex 150 p. 18).

The Technical College has had a very positive impact on the Alexandria community since its inception. Students don't have to leave town for post-secondary education, which also keeps their spending money in town. Furthermore, major industries have located in Alexandria with the Technical College being a primary reason.

Hospitals

Medical care in the pioneer days was typically provided in the home; there were no hospitals in Douglas County the first few decades. The first hospital located in Alexandria was St. Luke's Hospital, which opened in 1900 by Dr. J. J. Boyd. Dr. Boyd's hospital was located in the Peck house, which was built in 1896 on the corner of Ninth Avenue and Elm Street. Dr. Boyd's nurse, Erica Bach, managed the six-bed facility for 46 years (Grover p. 48). In 1910, Dr. A. D. Haskell arrived in Alexandria and helped reopen Boyd's Hospital as St. Luke's Hospital. In 1926, a fire occurred there. The building was then remodeled and expanded to 22 beds. In 1956 St. Luke's Hospital closed, and the building was converted into a board and care facility for the aged. The building remains but has dramatically changed when it was originally the Peck house.

Beginning about 1919, Mercy Hospital, located at 415 Seventh Avenue East was the second hospital to open in Alexandria. This former home of Charles Cowing was owned and operated by Mrs. Frances Klein who sold it to Mrs. Bertha Hardekopf in 1925. There were 10 beds, all on the second floor (Barduson p. 68-71).

As Alexandria's population had reached 2,600, Dr. Ed J. Tanquist opened the third hospital in Alexandria in 1927. Dr. Tanquist purchased the L. J. Brown house on the east shore of Lake Winona in 1927, and converted it to the Tanquist Hospital. An expansion two years later added 30 beds. In 1944, the operation was turned over to the Franciscan Sisters and given a new name, Our Lady of Mercy (OLOM) Hospital (Grover p. 62). Our Lady of Mercy Hospital continued service until 1974, when a merger with the Douglas County Hospital South closed this hospital, and its rooms were converted to office space. (Grover p. 78-79).

A few years after the end of World War II, a group of local citizens began to promote the construction of a new public hospital. Feelings were so intense that *The Park Region Echo* finally refused to print anything on the subject. Citizens ultimately voted for the new hospital, and the 50-bed Douglas County Hospital opened its doors to the public in 1955. In the spring of 1969, Our Lady of Mercy Hospital and the Douglas County Hospital merged to become Douglas County North and Douglas County South (Barduson p. 68-71).

In 1916, C. H. Raiter donated 6 acres of land in the southwest part of Alexandria near Lake Winona to build a home for the elderly. The Board of Charities of the Red River Valley Conference of the Swedish Lutheran Church was instructed to find a location for a home for the growing number of seniors displaced from their homes and farms. Bethany Home opened on Jan 1, 1917. The name was inspired by the village Bethany, where Jesus rested with his friends. Because of the high demand for accommodations like Bethany Home, the Board decided to build an annex which was completed in 1924. It included 34 beds. In 1946 a new addition with beds for 54 residents was added (Alex 150 p. 31 and Barduson p. 84-85).

Civic Organizations

When Alexandria was established, opportunities to socialize and work for the common good led to the variety of organizations which developed through the years. Alexandria and its residents have benefited from the social, educational and philanthropic opportunities that these service organizations have provided.

Chamber of Commerce

In 1907, the Business Men's Association began promoting the businesses of Alexandria. The organization officially took the name of Chamber of Commerce on Feb 23, 1928. Their offices were located at 608 Broadway for close to 50 years. A new Chamber building was constructed on the Alexandria Boat Works property and dedicated on June 17, 1958 (Barduson p. 98).

Alexandria League of Women Voters

Although the Alexandria League of Women Voters no longer exists, the organization was active in Alexandria for more than 50 years. The women were leaders of the community and made a difference in many facets of community life. Most importantly, the sponsored candidate forums for school board elections right on up to the national level elections for U.S. House of Representative and Senate. The League studied and acted upon many local issues and was regular participants at local governmental group meetings (Alex 150 p. 14).

Rotary

Organized in February of 1938, the Rotary Club of Alexandria is another civic organization that has had a positive effect on the community for an extended amount of time. The Rotary is still working toward the same objective of local and worldwide service (Barduson p. 132).

Civic Leaders

The physical development of any community is determined by the collective decisions of its citizens. Such is the case of Alexandria, which has had its share of important figures during its history. Erc Aga, a local radio personality, summed it up best, "our town is not what it is because of the lakes, wide streets and nice homes. It is because of the people who live here" (Grover p. 60). Below are just a few of the individuals who have left a positive impression on the development of Alexandria.

William and Teresa Hicks, town proprietor



Hicks - 1876 (MHS)

On a pleasure trip to the Alexandria area in 1866, William Hicks became so enchanted with the Alexandria area that he bought the townsite the following year from the Kinkead brothers. The townsite had not been making any headway after the 1862 US-Dakota War. Hicks is credited for giving Alexandria its second start. Hicks built a log store in 1867 for general merchandise (the third store in town), erected a hotel (Woodhull House) and a two-story frame building which was used for some time as a courthouse. On the second floor of that building, Hicks started the *Alexandria Post*, the first newspaper in Douglas County in 1868. That same year he we elected to the Minnesota State Legislature but continued to take an active interest in the development of Alexandria.

Working with Thomas Cowing, Hicks erected a saw-mill on Long Lake, and the following year added a flouring mill. Both of these industries attracted settlers for many miles, providing lumber for new buildings, and gave a real impetus to the development of this area. In addition, William and Theresa Hicks are credited for donating property for Alexandria's first school and for the first three churches (Congregational Church, Methodist Church, and the Episcopal Church). Hicks died in Alexandria on July 17, 1874. After his death, Theresa Hicks is credited for donating land for the present courthouse site (Larson p. 341). Hicks built a small log home



Hicks' homestead – 1876 (MHS)

on the west shore of Lake Agnes near the original townsite that had been established by the Kinkead brothers, which has been razed (Grover p. 14).



Theresa Hicks built a new home on Fillmore Street and Sixth Avenue, which has been moved to the northwest corner of Jefferson Street and Sixth Avenue (Grover p. 15).

Thomas Cowing, businessman

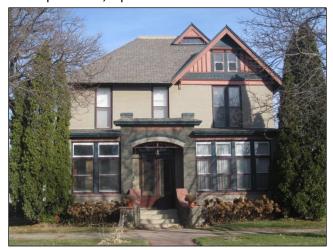
Thomas Cowing served in the Civil War, opened Alexandria's second store, and served as the county's first sheriff and treasurer in 1866. He was also Alexandria's second postmaster around 1870-1874, elected a village judge in 1877, village trustee in 1879, and president of the village council in 1880. Cowing's house, located at 316 Jefferson Street, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places (Grover p. 65).



Cowing House - 1876 (MHS)

Francis Bennett Van Hoesen, banker and public servant

Francis Bennett Van Hoesen moved to Alexandria in 1867, after receiving a law degree. Van Hoesen opened a branch land office, which generated much economic activity in the newly formed community. In 1869, he joined with his uncle, George Ward, and Robert Smith in the establishment of the first bank in Alexandria. When the bank was reorganized as the First National Bank in 1883, Mr. Van Hoesen was made president, a post he held until his death. When the village of Alexandria was incorporated in



1877, Van Hoesen was elected first president. He was county attorney, clerk of the court and register of deeds. In 1872, he was elected as a representative to the Minnesota Legislature and was re-elected in 1881. In 1883, was elected to the Minnesota Senate. Van Hoesen took an active interest in the schools and the library association. He served 11 terms as worship master of the Accepted Masons at Alexandria (Larson p. 343). Van Hoesen's house is located at 421 Seventh Avenue and is part of Alexandria's Residential Historic District.

Knute Nelson, immigrant and civic leader



Nelson - 1919 (MHS)

Knute Nelson is a symbol of the American dream, providing an inspiration to not only the U.S. citizens in Alexandria but also to the immigrants to Minnesota. Born into poverty in Norway, Nelson became the first foreign-born elected in the state of Minnesota.

Nelson moved to Alexandria in 1871 and was Douglas County Attorney from 1872 to 1874. He became a member of the Minnesota Senate in 1874, where he served until 1878. In the Senate that year, he worked to pass legislation that began construction of railroads in Minnesota and to Alexandria. Nelson also served as a member of the University of Minnesota Board of Regents from 1882 to 1893, and was a member of

the United States House of Representatives from 1883 to 1889. Alexandrians marched to his farmhouse to celebrate "the first election of a Norseman to the United States Congress" (Barduson p. 50).

Thousands of immigrants had moved to Minnesota from the countries of northern Europe. By 1880 three of every four white Minnesotans were from Europe or had parents who were. However, nativeborn white Americans still ran the state's government and held nearly all public offices. They were also most of the lawyers, doctors, teachers, and businessmen. But things had begun to change. In 1892, Minnesotans for the first time elected a foreign-born governor – Nelson. To the state's many immigrants his election was an important first step (Larson p. 145). Nelson was re-elected governor in 1894.

Nelson did not serve out his second term as governor because he was elected to the United States Senate in 1895. He served three full terms in the Senate and a partial fourth term, for a total of 28 years. In 1923, after suffering a heart attack, and against his doctor's advice, he boarded a train to return to his beloved Alexandria. On the evening of April 28, Knute Nelson passed away on that train at the age of 80 (*Echo Press, October 29, 2004*). He was buried next to his wife at Kinkead Cemetery.

Phil Noonan, businessman and park patron

Phil J. Noonan was born July 24th, 1886. He married Mollie Aberle of Alexandria in August 1912. Noonan had a most significant impact on the physical and economic development of Alexandria. Noonan became President and General Manager of his father's company, North American Creamery Inc., in 1920.



Noonan – ca. 1930s (DCHS)

Just after World War I, prominent Alexandria citizens preferred a tourist town, not an industrial, blue-collar, "dinner-bucket" town. Noonan's North American Creamery and Cold Storage brought in a whole "bucket brigade" of eager wage seekers. In fact, it was reported that in the 1920s and 1930s, the Noonan plant was the only industry consistently providing jobs for the local working class. At one time the company employed 250 people in Alexandria during a period when no other large company was in the Alexandria area. This may explain why Alexandria's population soared during the Great Depression of the 1930s. Alexandria saw a population increase of 30 percent during the 1930s, the highest growth rate of any decade between 1900 and 1970. This was more than triple the rate of growth for the State of Minnesota (nine percent).

During the Great Depression, also Noonan planned and built 29 model homes for his employees – one of the first housing developments in the state. Many of Noonan's other achievements came through the park board, on which he served for 20 years. These included developing three parks: Noonan Park and Lake Phil-Up, "Little Bit O'Heaven" and Alexandria City Park, installing the skating rink with the warming house at Noonan's Park, a Boy Scout Indian Camp with teepees, Alexandria Airport and Knute Nelson Baseball field. Lastly, Noonan provided more recreation by opening the Garden Center on July 1, 1930, which included eight bowling alleys, billiards, table tennis and a rifle club, as well as a lunch counter. Noonan passed away November 10, 1945.

Sites Currently Designated

The following sites are currently designated to the National Register of Historic Places:

- Alexandria Public Library Seventh Ave. W. and Fillmore St. (1985-08-23)
- Thomas F. Cowing's House 316 Jefferson St. (1985-08-23)
- Douglas County Courthouse 320 Seventh Ave., W. (1985-08-23)
- Knute Nelson's House 1219 S. Nokomis St. (1977-04-13)
- U.S. Post Office--Alexandria 625 Broadway St. (1979-04-16)

Expected Property Types

Government/Municipal Services

City Halls

Courthouses

Fire stations

Hospitals and clinics

Jails

Library

Nursing Homes

Police Stations

Post Office

Sewage treatment plants

Social service buildings

Utility plants

Waterworks

Water towers

Other Public Improvements

Bandstands

Bridges

Parks

Picnic Areas

Playgrounds and sports facilities

Prominent natural features

Recreational structures

Sidewalks

Statuary and monuments

Education

Public schools

Parochial Schools (See also Religion context)

Homes of Civic Leaders

Recommendations and Future actions

- Conduct a cultural resources survey to identify and evaluate all resources in the city relating to the public and civic life context. Base further specific recommendations on the findings of the survey.
- The City should work with the current property owner and recommend that the Phil Noonan house be added to the National Register of Historic Places.

Context 7 - Tourism

Lakes

Alexandria owes its existence to the lakes surrounding the community. The Kinkead brothers established the village of Alexandria because of the beauty of the lakes in the area. The town's proprietor, Hicks, came to Alexandria because of the surrounding lakes. Tourists started to come to Alexandria after Letson built his Letson House in 1880 to fish the lakes, hunt fowl, and just relax. The tourists supported many of Alexandria's long established businesses, especially the furriers and fine clothing stores. Natural waterways connect the 11 lakes surrounding Alexandria. Below of is a short description of the seven of the larger lakes in the vicinity of Alexandria.

Lake Miltona is the largest of the chain of lakes. It has an area of about nine square miles. It is six to

seven miles long from east to west, and about two miles wide. Most of the lake is 14-25 feet deep.

Next in size and order is Lake Ida. It is 4½ miles long and 1-1½ miles wide. It has an area of about five square miles. The water is very pure and crystalline.

The charming little Lake Latoka is only two miles from Alexandria. It is about 1½ miles long and half a mile wide. It has average depth of 50 feet, the greatest being 80 feet.

Lake Victoria receives the drainage from half a dozen smaller lakes at the south. There are two arms, an eastern



Lake Ida Postcard – ca. 1930 (MHS)

and a western. The western arm is much the larger. In this basin the great mass of the water lies. Its depth, near the center, varies from 40-50 feet. The eastern arm is 30-40 feet deep. The water is not very pure; it contains a considerable amount of decaying vegetable matter, brought down from swamps and shallow lakes above.

Lake Geneva is nearly two miles long and half a mile wide. Its waters are clearer than those of Victoria. In some parts it is also considerably deeper.

Lake Le Homme Dieu has a quite irregular shape and lies in two distinct depressions of unequal depth. In the southern basin, not far from the inlet, the water is from 60 to 75 feet deep. The lower basin at the north end of the lake is larger and includes a deep bay on the west side, but on the whole his portion of the lake is shallower than the other. As a whole, it is one of the most beautiful sheets of water in MN. The shores are moderately high and well rounded. It is separated only by a narrow bar from Lake Carlos. The water is clear and pure.

Lake Carlos is the gem of this group of lakes. It is the last and lowest of the series. It has two inlets, one from lake Darling at the southern extremity, and the other from Lake Le Homme Dieu. It thus receives the surplus waters of all the other lakes north and south and the drainage of six townships. The lake in some places is 150 feet deep. And there is a channel averaging 50 feet deep, extending the entire length of the lake. It is about five miles long and a mile wide. The water is perfectly pure.

Water quality gradually improves as we proceed down the chain. Lake Geneva is purer than Victoria, Le Homme Dieu is purer than Geneva, and Carlos is purest of all.

"Easy To Get To, Hard To Leave" - The Start of Alexandria Tourism Business

The great natural beauty of the "Park Region," which attracted the first settlements of this area also spawned the tourism business. The many wood-fringed lakes, with their opportunity for fishing, and for hunting waterfowl and deer created a natural asset for tourism in the area. Alexandria has been promoted as a tourist attraction since the earliest days of its settlement. As early as 1871, the *Alexandria Post* boasted, "Alexandria, as a summer resort, compares in its air to sunny Italy. Indeed, the whole of Douglas County seems to be intended for one grand pleasure garden."

However, tourism was not significant during Alexandria's first 20 years of existence, until 1878 when the St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba Railroad (later the Great Northern) arrived in Alexandria. The rail offered ready access to the area for visitors from such places as Chicago, Kansas City, St. Louis and beyond.

James H. Letson was the first entrepreneur to realize the "Park Region" area for its tourism potential. Letson already was running a summer resort in Excelsior on Lake Minnetonka, west of the Twin Cities in the 1870s. A hunting expedition in this more remote and unexplored section of the state led Letson to sell his Excelsior property and in 1880 build the Letson House (also known as the Hotel Alexandria) in the center of Alexandria. That move was destined to set off the entire "Ten Thousand Lakes" movement (The name of this hotel has changed over the years, but it continues to operate as the Alexson). Success at the Letson House encouraged Letson to build the first resort hotel north of the Twin Cities, Hotel Alexandria, on the south end of Lake Geneva in 1883.

The Great Northern Railroad already had been serving the Alexandria region for a quarter of a century when the Soo Line Railroad arrived in the area to provide additional service to the area. Between the two lines, Alexandria had daily service by as many as six passenger trains each way in the era before easy automobile travel.

Many early resorts would meet their guests at either of the two railroad stations and take them back to their resorts, first by horse and buggy and later by automobile. The highway between Alexandria and Osakis was paved in 1930, which for the first time made the resorts in the area easily accessible by automobile. However, it was not until after World War II that the majority of the tourists started traveling by automobile rather than the train to Alexandria's resorts. Tourist traffic increased with the continued upgrade of Minnesota State Highways 29 and 27, the main routes into town.

Early Promotion

As early as 1895, the Business Men's Association published a pamphlet intended to bring more public awareness to the attractions of Alexandria as a summer resort. The pamphlet was titled, *The Lady of the Lakes*, and contained 10 full pages with halftone images of fishing scenes, hunting scenes, hotels, and club houses, all based in the Chain of Lakes, Lake Miltona and Three Havens.

Soon Minnesota's residents were receiving promotional pamphlets issued by the railroad company and newspapers, touting the beauty of Alexandria's countryside and lakes, the unrivaled resorts and only a seven-hour rail journey from St. Paul. The city had gained the reputation of being "a lovely New England village, far removed from the Eastern seaboard, in a land of exquisite beauty." (Gardner p. 6).

Leading Industry

By 1900, Alexandria was one of the state's three best-known resort centers, rivaling Lake Minnetonka and White Bear Lake. Throughout the first quarter of the 20th century, the resort business was Alexandria's leading industry, and population of Alexandria and the surrounding countryside swelled with visitors each summer. In addition to the resorts, clubs, camps, and hotels, the industry supported enterprises such as fishing and hunting guides, steamboat excursions, dance pavilions, restaurants, taverns, boat works, sporting goods and fishing equipment stores, and the banks that financed the industry – providing hundreds of service jobs for area residents (Granger).



Alexandria Postcard – 1945 (MHS)

Development of the Resort Industry

Development of the resort industry in the Alexandria area can be divided into three periods that reflect the general evolution of tourism in the rest of the state:

- 1880s to the 1920s wealthy tourists stayed at luxurious hotels for the entire summer (e.g. Letson House, Geneva Beach Hotel, Hotel Blake and Maryland Hotel)
- 1920s to the 1940s resorts with primitive cabins began catering to vacationers with smaller incomes, but who now could access the north country because of road improvements, auto ownership and increased leisure time (e.g. Viking Trail Resort, Miller's Cottage Inn and Bedman's Beach Resort)
- 1950s through the 1960s typically considered the heyday of mom and pop resorts when servicemen came home from World War II and opened small resorts in Minnesota to cater to the growing middle class, working people who had ever more vacation time (e.g. Berg's Resort, Windjammer).

1880s to the 1920s

The early development period, starting in the 1880s and peaking in the 1920s, is distinguished by the dominance of summer resort hotels for wealthy tourists and outdoor adventurers who were able to finance a prolonged vacation in northern Minnesota. The Letson Hotel, Geneva Beach Hotel, Hotel Blake, and Maryland Hotel were all constructed during that time. Several exclusive private clubs also were established by the turn of the century, including the Minnesouri and Chicago Clubs on Lake Miltona and the Wikiup Club on Lake Ida.

Because roads were so primitive in the 1870s and earlier, the resort business did not get its start in Alexandria until the arrival of the first train, on November 5, 1878. James J. Hill brought his St. Paul, Minneapolis & Manitoba Railway from St. Paul to Alexandria as a transcontinental rail line was connecting the East and West Coasts. Now, Alexandria was connected to southern states such as Texas, Missouri, Nebraska and Iowa, where those who could afford to travel escaped the oppressive summer heat before the advent of air conditioning

Early tourists were mostly upper middle-class to wealthy and often stayed for most of the summer, departing around Labor Day. They would arrive at the resort hotels by train with their luggage trunks packed for the summer. Domestic help often accompanied the early tourists to help with fishing, taking care of the laundry, and caring for children. Local guides were popular for fishing, as fishing was the chief pastime, at least for the men, and the fish were plentiful in those days.

In these early days, there were very few privately-owned summer cabins, which created a more special, remote, atmosphere for the tourists. The same families went to the same places year after year. "You were the Dickinson Inn people, or the Blake people, or the Maryland ones" (Schoellkopf p. 2).



Alexandria Postcard – ca. 1930 (MHS)

Besides fishing and golfing, when the Alexandria Golf Club opened in 1915, activities included dances, swimming, diving off diving towers, tennis, croquet and row boats. Children and their parents enjoyed "walking the ties to town" on the Great Northern Railroad. The group would arrive in time to take the 11:30 am "local" train back to the Inn in time for lunch (Schoellkopf p. 6).

Sporting clubs also were developed during this period. The structures for these clubs typically included small cabins for individual members and larger cabin with bunkhouse arrangements that

featured as the social building for the vacationers. Sporting clubs were organized for the privilege of hunting and fishing members only (National Park Service p. 49).

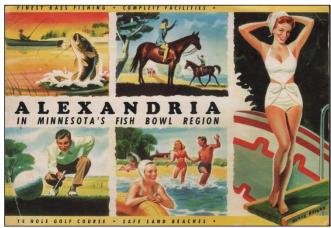
Families that did not take the train arrived by automobile on the primitive roads. Miss Margaret Milne remembers in 1915 "driving all day in the Iowa mud. We made 90 miles that day" (And Then Came Summer, p. 27). The long drive may help explain why most families stayed the entire summer at the luxurious resorts prior to the 1920s.

1920s to the 1940s

The period from the 1920s to the 1940s saw a gradual growth in tourism as increased automobile use, improved roads, and a general increase in vacation time and disposable incomes drew more vacationers with smaller incomes. Minnesotans began to view lakes as places for recreation during the summer months. As a result, both resorts and lakeside vacation home numbers grew. In addition, Minnesota saw an increase in tourist traffic in the late teens and early 1920s as many tourists who would have vacationed in Europe turned to alternate recreational locations in the United States during and after World War I (National Park Service p. 29).

With an increasing number of vacationers traveling by car or bus, improved roads were critical to attracting tourists to northern Minnesota. In 1921, the state passed the Babcock plan, which started the upgrade of the state's highways throughout Minnesota. New paved sections advanced every summer at a rate of between 5 to 27 miles. By 1932, another 504 miles had been paved in the state, and nearly 800 miles finished with bituminous covering (National Park Service p. 14).

Promotion of the recreational opportunities in northern Minnesota also increased significantly during this period. In 1916, 13,000 tourists visited Minnesota. The next year, the Ten Thousand Lakes Association was formed to promote tourism in the state. The association brought together communities and recreational property owners throughout the state to cooperate in taking advantage of Minnesota's recreational resources through marketing. Just a year later, the association's marketing campaign attracted 40,000 tourists in 1918, increasing to over 300,000 by 1921. The Ten Thousand Lakes Association operated on state government funding. The campaign was so successful that in the early 1930s, the state took over functions of the association, and established a tourist bureau within the Department of Conversation (National Park Service p. 13).



Alexandria Promotional Material (DCHS)

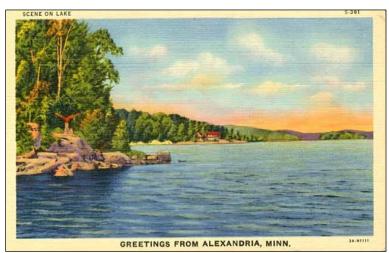
The Ten Thousand Lakes Association was not the only promotional organization in the state. Other tourist promotional organizations included the Minnesota Land and Lakes Attractions Board, the Minnesota Scenic Highway Association, the Northern Minnesota Development Association, and the Automobile Association of America.

After automobiles became affordable for the middle class after World War I, resorts offering primitive cabins proliferated. Camp Preston (now Viking Trail Resort) on Lake Darling, on Lake Darling, Bedman's Beach on Lake Ida, and the Evergreen Inn on Lake Miltona were among the first of these resorts. The

typical resort featured a central lodge structure with outlying cabins. Visitors could choose between the American Plan (in which meals were provided in the main lodge) or "Housekeeping Cottages," equipped with beds and kitchen supplies. Rather than the season-long residents, these vacationers often stayed for a shorter amount of time an average of ten days (Lehman).

Tourists during this period did not have the financial resources of their predecessors, and the new lodging facilities developed generally were unfinished cabins without baths or refrigeration. Cabins were small (generally 300-600 square feet), cozy, individual cottages located in a cluster facing the lake, yet sufficiently apart and screened to give a sense of seclusion and privacy. Cabins had a rustic appeal - likely to be of frame construction and have rustic touches such as log or cedar siding (National Park Service p. 45). Ice harvested from the lakes and cut into blocks was used to keep food cool (Lehman).

During this period resorts typical included a central office, which usually provided board games and cards, and maybe a pool table. Sometimes the office would include a fireplace to enhance the rustic ambiance. However, the offices of this period rarely provided meals, snacks or fishing bait, as Alexandria was only a short drive away and catered to the tourists needs (Kevin Berg). The offices during this period frequently were designed similar to the outlying cabins.



Alexandria Postcard – ca. 1930 (MHS)

This period also saw vacationers constructing their own modest, vernacular cabins around the lakes. Their properties usually consisted of a small frame, log or log-sided cabin, a privy and a dock (Lehman).

During this period, the number of vacationers increased and the visitors included a broader range of incomes. In addition, the region saw a wider variety of recreational interests. Fishing remained extremely popular but more tourists were interested in golfing, water-skiing, horseback riding, etc.

Other businesses developed to profit from the increased in vacationer traffic during this period, including souvenir shops, service stations, fishing guides, eateries, and taverns. However, during World War II, the state's tourism industry sagged as a nationwide gas and tire rationing in went into effect.

1950s through the 1960s

After World War II, the number of travelers in Minnesota and the associated vacation-related structures increased dramatically. Paid vacations, which prior to World War II were the privilege to only the wealthy, were becoming universal. Before the war, only 25% of the workers in the United States were allowed vacations, after the war this increased to 85%. By 1949, 62% of all Americans were taking vacations. Furthermore, these vacationers were "traveling America" as travel to Europe was once again limited immediately following the war (National Park Service p. 27).

In addition, significant increases in automobile ownership and improvements to the United States highway system, created an unprecedented number of vacationers seeking outdoor recreational opportunities and accommodations. A survey completed in 1963 indicates that the number of accommodations in Douglas County doubled from 1945-1960, which closely follows the development trend in resorts in all of Minnesota.

Number of Resorts

| | Before 1945 | 1945 - 1950 | 1951 – 1955 | 1956 – 1960 |
|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Douglas Co | 19 (51%) | 3 (8%) | 10 (27%) | 5 (14%) |
| MN | 1335 (49%) | 669 (25%) | 457 (17%) | 234 (9%) |

The Economics of Outdoor Recreation in the Upper Midwest

Berg's Resort on Lake Le Homme Dieu and Windjammer on Lake Carlos are good examples of resorts developed during this period.

The post-war resort boom underway in the north county included many small resorts established by returning servicemen and women. These resorts were generally modest and developed as finances allowed. A 1962 University of Wisconsin Survey found that 85% of post-war resorts developed in northern Minnesota had 10 or fewer units; most commonly, resorts had five to seven cabins. In an effort to assist servicemen embarking on their new businesses opportunities, the Governor's Tourist Advisory Council offered the "Veteran's Resort Training School," a training program on the "proper" methods of operating a recreational business, including development of modern facilities to cater to increasing numbers of outdoor recreational tourists (Sielaff p. 51).

The State of Minnesota continues to provide critical support to the small resorts, which rely on promotion from the Explore Minnesota tourism board. In addition, two non-profits — Congress of Minnesota Resorts and Minnesota Resort Association are very influential. In Alexandria, 90 percent of resort owners belong to one of these groups. Both lobby for resort owners and provide an education benefit, keeping resort owners up to date on their market, clientele, regulations, employee information and even small engine repair. The local Chamber of Commerce also promotes tourism in Alexandria (Aarsvold).

After World War II, resort owners found that the more modern cottages were easier to rent, so there was substantial upgrading and expansion of old facilities and new cottages and entire resorts were built during this period. Families usually brought their own groceries, moving away from the once popular American plan. Instead of providing three meals a day, the new resorts often provided a small store on the premises where staple food items and snacks could be purchased (Schoellkopf p. 5). The chief recreation during this period continued to be fishing, so a boat was typically provided for each cottage.

Because families became attached to the resorts they visited and would return year after year, families would often get to know one another and "reunions" between families became popular (Alex 150 p.5).

Another significant change occurring in the resort business during this period was the amount of time visitors stayed at resorts. Before World War II, visitors tended to stay a month or longer; after World War II families stayed typically a week or two at the resorts. (Most recently this has even shrunk further to extended weekends as children are busy with sporting games, and sport and hobby camps throughout the summer, making weeklong trips difficult to schedule – Aarsvold).

Increased discretionary income and expansion of interstate highways during the 1960s also made it more feasible to have a second home. The 1950s and 60s saw a large increase of modest cabins being built around the Alexandria's lakes. (A lot of these have been replaced - Aarsvold).

The table below from "The Economics of Outdoor Recreation in the Upper Midwest" indicates the importance of the tourist industry to Douglas County and Alexandria. Douglas County had the third highest concentrations of tourist accommodations of all Minnesota Counties in 1965. Only Crow Wing County in central Minnesota and Hubbard County in north-central Minnesota had higher concentration of establishments for vacationers than Douglas County.

| Counties | Hotels | Tourist Cts. Or Homes & Motels | Resorts | Trailer & Camp Grounds | Total Establishments | County- Total Acres | Establishments per 10,000 acres |
|--------------|--------|--|---------|------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Crow wing | 5 | 16 | 371 | 5 | 397 | 639,360 | 6.30 |
| Hubbard | 1 | 8 | 216 | 19 | 244 | 596,480 | 4.14 |
| Douglas | 5 | 9 | 126 | 1 | 141 | 407,680 | 3.53 |
| Cass | 3 | 9 | 415 | 5 | 432 | 1,313,920 | 3.30 |
| Becker | 2 | 19 | 167 | 14 | 202 | 841,600 | 2.40 |
| MilleLacs | 2 | 9 | 59 | 8 | 78 | 363,520 | 2.17 |
| Otter tail | 7 | 17 | 189 | - | 213 | 1,280,000 | 1.66 |
| Itasca | 2 | 24 | 224 | 4 | 254 | 1,704,320 | 1.50 |
| Aitkin | 3 | 8 | 143 | 3 | 157 | 1,167,360 | 1.35 |
| Pope | 1 | 3 | 29 | - | 33 | 435,840 | .77 |
| Wadena | 3 | 9 | 7 | - | 19 | 343,040 | .55 |
| Morrison | 3 | 8 | 22 | - | 33 | 727,040 | .46 |

The Economics of Outdoor Recreation in the Upper Midwest

The resort industry in Minnesota peaked again about 1960 with more than 3,500 resorts, but has declined since. Minnesota lost about half of its resorts during the 1960s, a trend that continued though the 1970s. This broader trend also has affected Alexandria's resort industry. Alexandria had 72 resorts in 1950, but currently has 26 resorts within 10 miles of Alexandria (Aarsvold and Explore Minnesota). A number of factors have influenced this decline. The appeal of the North's natural cooling air dwindled with the development of air conditioning. Many of the family-owned operations have been divided up for lake homes after the owners passed away. Other family-owned resorts that survived have changed

from traditional, small rustic resorts for fishermen to larger, more luxurious resorts offering year-round recreational facilities. (The number of small, family-owned resorts has stabilized – Aarsvold.)

Origin of Visitors

Prior to the 1960s at least one half the tourists have come from outside of Minnesota, a proportion that has continued to steadily decline.

A survey from 1961 indicates that close to 60% of vacationers to Douglas County came from Minnesota, while another 20% came from Iowa and Illinois.

| | Minn. | N and S Dakota | Mich. | Wis. | III. | Neb. | lowa | Mo. | Others |
|----------------|-------|-------------------|-------|------|------|------|-------|------|--------|
| Douglas Co. | 59.6% | 4.2% | .21% | .83% | 6% | 3.8% | 13.3% | 3.4% | 8.66% |

The Economics of Outdoor Recreation in the Upper Midwest

Since then, the proportion of out-state has declined to around 25%. Iowa has historically led all states with the number of vacationers coming to Minnesota. Illinois, South Dakota and Nebraska follow. People from states farther away, such as Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma, California and Texas, are more likely to stay at a private summer home and stay for a longer time. The proportion of people from out-state appear to be declining because of the higher costs of travel, and perhaps even more so, the advent of almost universal air conditioning (Lehman).

During Carolyn Aarsvold's tenure of 17 years at Geneva Beach Resort, return visitors have declined from 60 percent to 40 percent. It is difficult to get families together anymore because more families have spread out across the country. Most of this decline comes from visitors from Kansas and Missouri. One Texas family, though, still comes up because it is too hot for their kids to play outside in the Texas summer heat.

Fires

Fires have been a persistent danger for the Alexandria resort industry, particularity in the earlier history of the resorts when large resort hotels were prominent, naturally changing the landscape of the resorts around Alexandria. In 1911, a fire completely destroyed the Geneva Beach Hotel. In 1942, a second fire caused extensive damage to the hotel that replaced the original Geneva Beach Hotel. Only a portion of the hotel remained after the 1942 fire and continued in use after rebuilding.

The Hotel Blake burned in 1920 and was rebuilt. In 1936, another fire damaged Hotel Blake. The Maryland Hotel, the third resort hotel, burned in 1936. The largest cottage, which had become the office dining room and kitchen, burned in 1938. Subsequently, there were several other fires at the Maryland until the resort was reduced to a single cottage. The hotel was never rebuilt.

Alexandria's Resorts

Of the many resort hotels that have been developed around the lakes that surround Alexandria, this Historic Context Study focuses on those that have had the greatest impact on the city, have been in existence the longest and that demonstrate the three distinct periods of resort development in Alexandria and Minnesota.

The original resort hotels laid the foundation of branding the area as a tourist destination. The first resort hotel, Hotel Alexandria on Lake Geneva, was constructed in 1883. The Minnesouri Club was founded in 1890 on Lake Miltona. The second resort hotel, Hotel Blake on Lake Carlos, opened in 1903. The Maryland Hotel on Lake Mary was built in 1917.

Hotel Alexandria (Geneva Beach Resort)

A flag stop for the trains at Lake Geneva left the tourists within just a few hundred feet of the hotel and eliminated the need for further transportation.

Business was so good at Letson's first resort hotel, that he built a second resort hotel in 1883. He selected the south shore of Lake Geneva. That site was a wise choice, on the shore of an excellent fishing lake with easy access to the fishermen's other favorites: Victoria, Jessie and Le Homme Dieu. There was another reason to choose this site: the railroad had finally arrived in Alexandria, and a local stop had been "declared," only 500 feet from the doorstop of the new hotel.



Geneva Beach Hotel - 1907 (MHS)

In 1896, Letson sold the Alexandria Hotel to his nephew, J. L. Dickinson, who changed the name to the Geneva Beach Hotel. In 1911, a fire caused by "those infernal new electric lights" destroyed the hotel. Construction of a new hotel started in 1914. In 1915, Dickenson gave the hotel to his son Harry and his bride Muriel, as a wedding gift, as well as money to restore it. Construction on the new hotel was completed in 1917, and the name was changed to the Dickinson Inn. A gazebo served as the waiting station for the train carrying eager passengers from warmer climates (Grover p.40).

The new hotel was more modern than the original Alexandria Hotel. There were no turrets or



gingerbread decorative elements that were prominent on the Hotel Alexandria. The restaurant was located on the first floor, and rooms on the second floor. The Inn had electricity and indoor plumbing – each bedroom had a wash bowl with running water and there were three indoor toilets to serve the 70 guests. Chamber pots were available for nighttime emergencies. A bathroom with a tub was added in 1917, but the lake and a bar of soap remained popular (Schoellkopf p. 23).

Dickinson Inn - ca. 1930 (MHS)

The Carey family traveled 3½ days from Cedar Rapids, Iowa, spend the entire summer at the Dickinson Inn in Alexandria, with friends from Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Missouri and Kansas. The adults enjoyed the "gracious living with freedom from running a house, planning meals, and coping with maids" while all of the children's activities were safely on resort grounds with the exception of supervised trips to the movies or to the Boston Drug Store for a Mulligan (Schoellkopf p. 24).

Dickinson owned the hotel for 13 years until he sold it in 1930 to A. J. DuBeau who renamed it the Geneva Beach Hotel. In 1936, DuBeau sold the Geneva Beach Hotel to the A. L. Roberts Hotel Corporation, who owned a large number of properties across the country. The hotel burned on June 10, 1942, a day before the summer guests were set to arrive; however, seven other cottages remained open. The Roberts Company rebuilt the hotel, and then sold it to Robert and Evelyn Brown in 1943 (Aarsvold).

The Browns changed the name to the Brown's Geneva Beach. The Brown's owned the resort from 1943 to 1969, making them the longest-standing owners. They also owned the resort during the period of greatest change in the resort industry. The most significant changes during the Browns' tenure was that people were not as interested in staying in individual cabins. So the Browns razed the hotel in 1971, subdivided the property into five lots and sold them to individual property owners. In 1948, the Browns built the Cottage Annex (which



is still a part of the current Geneva Beach Resort). Another significant change was the transformation from wooden boats to aluminum fishing boats, which they purchased from the Alexandria Boat Works.

The Browns were also very involved with the effort to promote tourism statewide. The Browns' house, constructed in the 1920s, is still standing and is the oldest building on the resort property. Lake Geneva is the oldest resort in Minnesota. A resort in Lutsen, Minnesota also claims that title, saying Lake Geneva is not open year round. However, Lake Geneva is open year-round (Aarsvold).

Hotel Blake (Blakes-by-the-Lakes)

In 1903, John C. Blake built the second lake-side resort, Hotel Blake, between Lakes Carlos, Darling and Le Homme Dieu, just north of Alexandria. Blake previously had managed the Letson House in Alexandria. Similar to the Geneva Beach Hotel, the Hotel Blake was a fine summer hotel in its day. The trains brought people to Alexandria and the Hotel Blake and Geneva Beach Hotel kept bringing them back, summer after summer (Schoellkopf p. 29). In July, 1920, the hotel caught fire and everything burned except some cooking and dining facilities, and the quarters for the staff. Blake rebuilt the hotel in 1921, incorporating the parts of the hotel that survived into the new hotel (Douglas County – Album of the Ages p. 51).



Hotel Blake - 1917 (MHS)

After owning the hotel for 20 years, Blake sold the hotel to A.J. DuBeau in 1923. DuBeau changed the name to Blakes-by-the- Lakes. Under DuBeau's management the hotel reached its peak. The main building could accommodate 80 guests. Guests ate three delicious meals a day (American Plan) in a lovely dining room built around a tree and overlooking Lake Carlos. Every June all the cottages and most of the hotel were filled with Mayo Clinic doctors, including Will and Charles Mayo (Douglas County – Album of the Ages p. 51). For several years Young-Quinlan, a clothing store from Minneapolis, set up a small shop in the hotel, selling clothes and accessories and putting on style shows. Guests to Blakes-by-the Lakes came from all over the country – "some with maids, many with chauffeurs and everybody with mountains of luggage" (Schoellkopf p. 29). The hotel had another brush with fire in 1936 (Douglas County – Album of Ages p. 51).

DuBeau ran the hotel for 24 years until he sold it to the Awes family in 1947. The hotel was open until 1960 but never really regained its pre-WWII popularity. Condominiums now occupy the site of the old hotel, which was torn down.

Maryland Hotel

The third lakeside hotel in Alexandria, the Maryland Hotel, was built in 1917 by O. J. "Fuzzy" Reynolds, on the west shore of Lake Mary, about five miles southwest of Alexandria. Lake Mary was named for Mary Kinkead, sister of the Kinkead brothers, but the hotel was probably named for Reynold's wife,

Mary. Like Geneva Beach and Blake's Hotels, Maryland Hotel operated on the American Plan, serving three meals a day to visitors. The hotel reached its peak business in the 1920s when the dining room was patronized by both local and summer residents and dances were held. The hotel catered to middle to upper middle class people, and was probably a step below Blake's and Geneva Beach. Its life as a hotel lasted for less than two decades, however. It burned in 1936. (Douglas County – Album of the Ages p. 51) The resort continues today in the form of housekeeping cottages.

Minnesouri Angling Club

At one time Minnesota was home to hundreds of fishing clubs. These clubs were as much for fishing as they were social clubs. Over the years, however, most of these clubs have disappeared. The Minnesouri Angling Club was founded in 1890 as a fishing and social club. In fact, the Articles of Incorporation stated: "Its general purpose shall be instruction and mutual improvement in the art of angling, the social culture and entertainment of its members." The social and fishing club is still in existence today.

Formed by a group of approximately 30 men from Minnesota and Missouri, they combined the names of the respective states to form "Minnesouri." The club is located on the south shore of Lake Miltona, about 10 miles north of Alexandria. Original members camped out in tents; however, they told their wives how nice the area was, and the wives insisted on visiting the area but insisted on building cabins instead of sleeping in tents (Mary Mische – Minnesota Lakes Maritime Museum).



Minnesouri Club (DCHS)

The clubhouse was built right before the turn of the last century, and includes a living room, dining room, and kitchen on the first floor and bedrooms above. The building still stands and serves the same purpose today. The grounds and clubhouse are owned by the Club, but the 19 private cottages built by families are owned individually and have been passed on to the fourth and fifth generations. Originally, the means of transportation were the train and the automobile. Today, some members fly up for the weekend in their own airplanes (Schoellkopf p. 70 and Grover p. 44).

Bedman's Beach Resort

James Bedman was one of the first pioneers to move to the Alexandria area in 1858, settling on the southwest corner of Lake Ida, about five miles northwest of Alexandria. In 1880 James and his wife, Elizabeth, opened a camp, similar to a bed-and-breakfast, for fisherman arriving by train. From this beginning came several generations of Bedman's resorts.

Bedman's Beach Resort was a small fishing resort more suited to the means of the average citizen; families returned each year, often reserving the same dates, creating reunions as well as vacations. One family probably holds the record for continued returns to the same resort. In 1932, Walt Anderson began



Bedman's Beach Resort (DCHS)

coming to Bedman's Beach Resort. He returned each year for at least 63 years. For more than 40 years, he and his family stayed in Cabin One.

Harry Bedman, a great-grandson of James and Elizabeth Bedman, later operated the resort with his wife, Hilda. Harry Bedman died in 1958. His wife passed away in 1973. Their son, Harry Jr., and Marylyn Bedman were the last to operate the resort. It closed in 1998.

Camp Preston (Viking Trail Resort)



Originally owned by Samuel and Susie Preston, Camp Preston was located on the southwest shore of Lake Darling, just to the northwest of Alexandria. One of the earlier cottage resorts in the area, this camp started in the 1920s as a farmhouse which accommodated summer tourists and served meals. Most of their customers came from Kansas City and Minneapolis, and probably found the place by word of mouth. The Prestons sold the lots to people so they could build cottages on them. This is why the existing

cottages do not look the same. Whenever the people did not want the cottages anymore, the Prestons would buy them back. Meals were discontinued about 1928.

The Prestons owned the resort until they sold it to Mr. and Mrs. Robert Hultman in the late 1950s, and they changed the resort name to Viking Trail Resort. At that time, very few cabins had bathrooms and three outhouses were still being used. The Hultmans started with nine cabins and added five during their ownership. The Hultmans added an in-ground swimming pool, which increased business. Today it continues under the name Viking Trail Resort and still has the original cabins.







Darling Dude Ranch (Arrowwood Resort)

In 1946, brothers George and Paul Anderson purchased a 70-acre farm on the west side Lake Darling, and a year later opened the Darling Dude Ranch. The Anderson brothers believed a "dude ranch" would attract young people from the Twin Cities; however, the dude ranch seemed to scare people away, thinking it was too exotic and expensive. The Anderson brothers soon changed the emphasis to a resort concept and renamed it the Darling Ranch Resort. The original 70 acres gradually expanded to 450 acres. The resort specialized in three sports: golf, water skiing and horseback riding. This was the beginning of the development of the property which would eventually grow into the largest resort in the Alexandria

area. (In 1971 the resort was sold to the Radisson Hotel Corporation, who built a year-round center called Arrowwood. Unlike the resort hotels of old that entertained many guests for the entire summer, the average stay at Arrowwood is just two days.) (Grover p. 92.) None of the original farm structures remain.

Berg's Resort

In 1945, O. E. and Mary Casto acquired a 3%-acre property on the south side of Lake Le Homme Dieu, about five miles north of Alexandria. The property included a three-bedroom cabin. Around 1950, the Casto's proceeded to build three two-bedroom cabins (which still exist).

Herbert and Adeline Berg, from Minneapolis, launched into a new adventure and purchased Casto's Resort in 1955. In 1957 they renamed the resort to Berg's Resort. In 1960, Herbert and his father, Oscar, built a four-bedroom cabin (now Cabin #5) across from the original cabins.



In 1962, they added another two-bedroom cabin next to #5, calling it #6 (Kevin Berg and Richard Kracht). (The resort is now owned by the children of Herbert and Adeline Berg).



Fish House



Storage Shed

Carlos State Park

Itasca State Park, located in northern Minnesota near Park Rapids, is the first and largest in state park in Minnesota. The park was established in 1891, when the earliest parks commemorated historic events – Itasca contains the headwaters of Mississippi. The parks established after 1920, however, were geared toward the national increase interest in outdoor sports and recreation. During this national recreational phase, the state purchased 1,214 acres for the Carlos State Park in 1937. Located on the north end of

Lake Carlos, the park was improved by WPA laborers constructing during the Great Depression. The entrance road, picnic ground, water system, tourist campground, bathing beach, and a group camp with a recreation building. Many of these structures are still being used and many are classified as historic buildings that represent the architecture of state parks (Alex 150 p. 39).

Alexandria Resorts in 1950

Below is a list of resorts in the Alexandria area listed in a 1950 vacationers guide. It is a snapshot of the number and type of resorts that were offered during what is considered the heyday of the resort business.

American Plan Hotels and Lodges

- 1. Blakes by the Lakes Lake Carlos
- 2. Brown's Geneva Beach Lodge and Cottages south shore of Lake Geneva
- 3. Phillips Lodge north side of Lake Le Homme Dieu
- 4. Tolena County Club north shore of Lake Le Homme Dieu at Campbell's Point

Modern Housekeeping Resorts

- 1. Bisek's Modern Resort Lake Darling
- 2. Blue Shutter Resort north shore of Lake Le Homme Dieu
- 3. Bragg's Place south shore of Lake Le Homme Dieu
- 4. Casa Marina Little Lake Darling
- 5. Casto's Resort (changed to Berg's Resort in 1955) Lake Le Homme Dieu
- 6. Darling Heights west side of Lake Darling
- 7. Ekdahl's Motel west shore of Lake Le Homme Dieu Bay
- 8. Englund's Pla-cation cottages east shore of Lake Darling
- 9. Floding's Cottages west shore of Lake Brophy
- 10. Four Lakes Cottages west shore of Lake Carlos
- 11. Happy Day's Resort east shore of Lake Carlos
- 12. Hidden Inn east shore of Lake Ida
- 13. Hobart's Resort west shore of Lake Darling
- 14. Holmgren's Resort Mill Lake
- 15. Kenwood Cottages Lake Carlos
- 16. Lake Darling Ranch Resort northwest shore Lake Darling
- 17. Lake Geneva Lodge north shore of Lake Geneva
- 18. Lee's Swan Resort north of natural bridge between Lake Carlos and Lake Le Homme Dieu
- 19. Lilac Lodge Lake Victoria
- 20. Miltona Beach Resort north shore of Lake Miltona
- 21. The Elmwood Resort west shore of Lake Mary
- 22. Three Havens Resort and Grocery east shore of Lake Carlos
- 23. Tip Top Cove east shore of Lake Miltona
- 24. Morningside Cottages east side of Lake Carlos
- 25. Neumann's Modern Resort Lake Carlos
- 26. Orono Cottages north shore of Lake Le Homme Dieu
- 27. Royal Oaks west side of Lake Ida
- 28. Shor-wood Resort and Motel Lake Carlos
- 29. Surprise Resort south shore of Lake Carlos

- 30. The 4'D's Resort west shore of Lake Little Darling
- 31. Wahlstrom's Resort northwest Lake Carlos
- 32. Young's Resort on Lake Le Homme Dieu

Semi-Modern Resorts and Others

- 1. Allen's Resort south shore of Lake Darling
- 2. Bedman's Beach south shore Lake Ida
- 3. Big Horn Bay cottages north shore Lake Ida
- 4. Blakesley's Resort east shore of Lake Andrews
- 5. Brakken Beach east shore of Lake Ida
- 6. Bullerts Resort east shore Lake Ida
- 7. Camp Karle Lake Mina
- 8. Camp Omaha Lake Ida
- 9. Camp Preston –west shore of Lake Darling
- 10. Camp Welcome west shore of Lake Cowdry
- 11. Cottage Grove Resort Lake Andrews
- 12. Curry's Cottages east shore of Lobster Lake
- 13. Dolly and Earl's Rainbow Cottages north shore of Lake Mary
- 14. Godfrey's Resort Lake Cowdry
- 15. Gross Resort north shore of Lake Lakota
- 16. Hazel Hill resort southeast shore of Lake Victoria
- 17. Linden Beach Resort south shore of Lake Darling
- 18. Lobster Lake Cozy Cottages west shore of Lobster Lake
- 19. Nick's 20 Acres Resort north shore of Lake Mary
- 20. Ninneman's Log Cabin Resort Lake Mary
- 21. Nortrom's Edgewater Beach Resort lake Cowdry
- 22. Olson's Resort lake Lakota
- 23. Outer's Inn south shore of Lake Brophy
- 24. Pat's Resort north shore of Big Lake Darling
- 25. Plagman's Resort Lake Cowdry
- 26. Reuter's Resort east shore of Lake Carlos
- 27. Rush Inn Lake Le Homme Dieu
- 28. Shady Lane Lake Carlos
- 29. Sorensen's Lakeview Lake Cowdry
- 30. Sportsmen's Paradise Lake Mary
- 31. Stowe Lake Resort Stowe Lake
- 32. Sunny Hollow on Lake Lakota
- 33. The Maryland Resort west shore of Lake Mary
- 34. Tollefson's Shady Lawn Resort south shore of Lake Darling

Tourism Attractions

Besides the lakes and natural beauty and great fishing and hunting opportunities, several man-made developments attracted tourists to the Alexandria area.

Alexandria Golf Club

The Alexandria Golf Club was incorporated in 1915, and a nine-hole golf course was constructed on former farm land, two miles north of Alexandria. The inaugural Resorters Golf Tournament was held in 1921. Shortly thereafter, additional farm land was acquired and the second nine holes were developed



Alexandria Golf Course Club House – ca. 1955 (MHS)

across the road. This became the first nine holes and the original course became the back nine. A farm house was remodeled for the clubhouse. The second Resorters Tournament in 1922 drew 115 golfers. By 1936, this increased to 527 golfers. Held during the first week of August at the height of the tourist season, the Resorters Tournament continues to be social highlight of the summer for Alexandria, with much entertainment throughout the week (Alex 150 p. 2 and Schoellkopf p. 7).

Gang Plank

In 1927, A. J. DeBeau, owner of Blakes by the Lakes on the shores of Lake Carlos, constructed the Gang Plank on Lake Le Homme Dieu. Named the Gang Plank because of the "gangplank" that jutted off the main stage on which the leader stood, DeBeau constructed the building as a ballroom and recreational hall for his guests. The Gang Plank was a popular tourist attraction for dancing and roller-skating. The roof of the recreation center collapsed from heavy snow in 1986. The building was razed (Alex 150 p. 57 and Grover p. 68).

Little Bit O'Heaven

Another attraction that that brought many people to Alexandria was Phil Noonan's garden "Little Bit O'Heaven" which opened in Alexandria in 1934. Located behind Noonan's house at 420 6th Avenue East, Noonan developed the park in hopes of beautifying the east side, making it a place where people would be proud to live and creating jobs for unemployed people. Construction on the gardens began in the midst of the Great Depression. Noonan squeezed as much nature and beauty as the block long and half block wide space would permit. The gardens included waterfalls, a martin birdhouse constructed with 36,000 pieces of lumber, 16 varieties of trees, a wide variety flowers and shrubs, a brook lined with 700,000 pounds of limestone, and a statue of Pan, Greek god of field and forest. Thousands of people from every state and many foreign countries visited the garden each year until it closed in 1954(Grover p. 72 and



Little Bit O'Heaven postcard – ca. 1935 (MHS)

Douglas County – Album for the Ages p. 16). Noonan offered the park to the city, but the city declined, believing they did not have funds to continue the park's maintenance. The park was replatted for two single-family residences. Part of the original limestone wall is still in place.

Runestone Museum

The Runestone Museum was opened in 1958 on the property that Alexander and William Kinkead first claimed that began the development of Alexandria. The museum houses the Kensington Runestone, which was unearthed by a Kensington farmer, Olof Ohman, in 1898. The Runestone has been dated to 1362. Many believe that at least one group of Norsemen traveled from Hudson Bay, up the Red River and then to southwest Douglas County. The inscription on the Kensington Runestone has been determined as being from the Norse runic alphabet and describes the journey west from Vinland by eight Goths and 22 Norsemen, who return to their camp after a fishing trip and find 10 of their party "red with blood and dead."

Even though the runes are consistent with the time frame etched in the stone, it has been debated since their discovery whether the runes are the work of Ohman or another pioneer had the skill, knowledge, and tools to carve the stone as a hoax, or whether they are the work of the earliest explorers to America (Douglas County – Album for the Ages p. 4).

Theater L'Homme Dieu

Most recently, Theater L'Homme Dieu was added to the attractions that draws visitors to the Alexandria area. The theater began in 1961 at the former site of Miller's Cottage Inn, which opened in 1925 on the north shore of Lake Le Homme Dieu. Theater L'Homme Dieu brings together professional actors, directors, designers, and technicians who work with student actors from across the country during their summer vacation.

Expected Property Types

Seasonal Estates

Seasonal Cabins

Resorts – including the lodge, rental cabins, caretaker's cabin, privies, storage buildings, garages, generator sheds, storage sheds, laundries, boathouses, fish houses, pools and pumps, and boat docks and ramps

Sporting Clubs and Group Camps

Tourists attractions such as museums, golf course, horse ranches, bowling alleys, theaters, parks, etc.

Recommendations and Future actions

- The resorts have been critical to the success and growth of Alexandria. A survey should be completed of the resorts, and the City should nominate those resorts that would qualify to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
- Lakes are not often considered in preservation efforts; however, since the proximate lakes give Alexandria its identity, they should factor into future planning and preservation pursuits.

Context 8 - Residential

Early Plats and Early Housing

Similar to other towns located in western Minnesota, the original plat of Alexandria was designed in a grid pattern, oriented north to south along the original Fort Abercrombie Road (present day Third Avenue). The original plat included 54 rectangular blocks, measuring 316-by-360 feet, bisected by 16-foot alleys. With Lake Winona to the west and Lake Agnes to the north, the original plat went as far south as 10th Avenue and as far east Jefferson Street. The east/west streets were numerical (First, Second, Third, etc.) while the north/south streets were alphabetical (A, B, C, etc.) Commercial lots were platted the same size as residential lots – 60 x 150 feet. This resulted in 12 lots per block.

Alleys crossed north to south in the original plat (south of High Street), resulting in most homes having an east or west orientation and fronting the alphabetized-named streets.

Early additions to Alexandria's Original Town plat were as follows:

- Hicks 1st Addition (June 14, 1876)
- Holes' Addition (July 14, 1879)
- Holes' 2nd Addition (Feb. 19, 1880)
- Lakeside Addition (Oct. 28, 1881)
- Hicks 2nd Addition (Nov. 14, 1881)
- Hicks 3rd Addition (Aug. 2, 1882)
- Hicks 4th Addition (Aug. 29, 1883)
- Kilburn's Addition (Nov. 24, 1895)
- Nelson's 1st Addition (May 20, 1903)



Standard Atlas of Douglas County, Minnesota

Directions of the alleys stayed consistent with subsequent additions. However, Hick's 1st and 3rd Additions included only four lots per block. The lots then were subdivided if requested. This resulted in larger residential lots for these to additions (Between 10th and 13th Avenue and between Ash and Jefferson Streets). Lots in the Holes and Holes' 2nd Addition (east of the eventual Soo Line Railroad) were

smaller than those of the Original Town Plat. These lots were 50' x 150' in size, making 14 lots to a block.

The first permanent dwellings were built in Alexandria in 1858, the year the Kinkead brothers settled on the shores of Lakes Agnes and Winona near the north end of Alexandria's present day Broadway Street. These first houses were log cabins built from local white oak. Ten years after the Kinkead brothers built the first log cabins in Alexandria, William E. Hicks built the county's first sawmill in 1868, the year Alexandria was platted. Thereafter, settlers used milled lumber to construct wood-frame vernacular style houses.

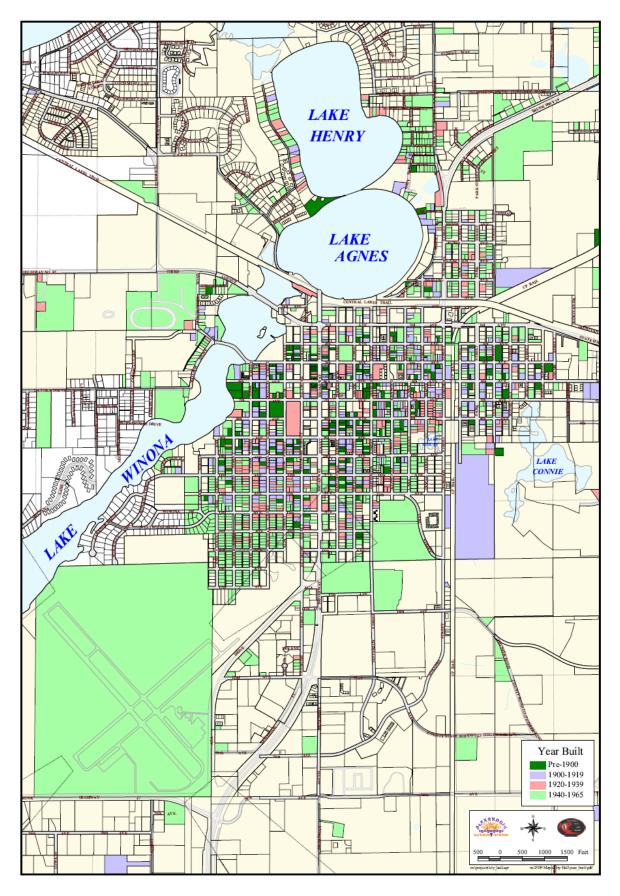
As the population increased in the 1880s and 1890s, development spread southward from the lakes. Through much of the townsite, modest and middle class houses were built next to each other, and the more expensive houses were occasionally scattered throughout middle class neighborhoods. By the turn of the century, however, a cluster of blocks immediately east of Lake Winona became a neighborhood favored by many of the city's affluent residents. This area later was dubbed the "Silk Stocking District."

Development Patterns

The housing development pattern in Alexandria represents a synopsis of not only the rate of residential growth in the city but also the location of that growth. Residential blocks were not developed all at once. The first single-family homes were dispersed throughout the Original Plat (north of 10th Avenue and east of Jefferson Street). However, most of the development occurred between then Main Street and Lake Winona. This sporadic development pattern gave the village a more open appearance in its infancy. As time passed the vacant residential lots of the original plat were ultimately developed at different times, which resulted in a mixture of architectural styles from different time periods.

Most of the existing houses built before 1900 are located east of Broadway Street. A bird's eye view of the city dated 1880, on the other hand, shows most of the houses west of Broadway Street. One could conclude then that most of the houses built west of Broadway Street between 1900 and 1920 (i.e. Silk Stocking district) required the razing of the vernacular houses built before 1900. Besides the Silk Stocking area, other houses built between in the 1910s, 20s and 30s are scattered throughout the older part of town.

Prior to World War II, contractors tended to build single-family houses one at a time on individual vacant lots as evident by the following map provided by the City of Alexandria. It was not until after World War II that contractors started to build multiple single-family homes in clusters. This is evident in the cluster of homes located in east of Lake Henry, the southwest corner of the city (including Westwood Addition), and in Victoria Heights (northwest of Lake Victoria). Moreover, post-war developments along Lake Geneva and Victoria Heights were the first subdivisions to leap undeveloped land in order to enjoy the benefits of the location along lake shores, creating a sense of isolation from the city.



Over the years, as the community grew away from Lakes Winona and Agnes, the new residential areas to the south and east continued the grid pattern established by the original plat. However, as development naturally encroached on the outlying lakes (Victoria, Geneva, Le Homme Dieu, and Darling) during the 1940s and 50s, the original grid pattern deviated to curvilinear streets. The greatest residential development that has taken place beyond the city limits, after World War II, was located to the north and northwest of Alexandria. This development falls into three categories – (a) frontage on lake shores; (b) logical extension of a residential area inside the city; and (c) scattered development along transportation routes.

The development of Alexandria continued the Victorian era preference of having a single family home as the predominant residence. Contrary to the model of a residence above a shop, the detached single-family home offered more privacy and space, centered on the family nucleus, and separated work from residential space. The concept of a single house on a lot also enabled families to own outbuildings for raising animals. The detached, single-family home became attainable for early settlers as land was plentiful and inexpensive, and labor cheap.

Community Growth

Alexandria experienced slow but steady growth in population prior to the arrival of the railroad in 1878; however, the city experienced a 56 percent increase of residents in the 1880s, the decade following the coming of the railroad. Between 1890 and 1900, Alexandria's population grew 27percent, from 2,118 residents to 2,681 residents. According to city records, 186 single family residences remain from these boom years prior to 1900 (or 9 percent of houses built before 1970).

The United States experienced a recession during the first decade of the 1900s; residential growth in Alexandria similarly slowed between 1900 to 1930, averaging a 13 percent population growth rate during this period. The second population growth spurt in Alexandria came, ironically, during the Great Depression of the 1930s. Alexandria saw a population increase of 30 percent during the 1930s, the highest growth rate of any decade between 1900 and 1970. This was more than triple the rate of growth for the State of Minnesota (9 percent). The second greatest growth rate occurred in the following decade, the 1940s, with a 25 percent increase in population. Again, this was more than triple the growth rate for the state (7 percent). However, while the rest of the state increased the rate growth during the 1950s and 1960s (15 percent and 11 percent, respectively), Alexandria's growth rate slowed to a standstill at 6 percent and 4 percent respectively.

Construction Year of Housing Built Prior to 1970

| Period | Prior to | 1900- | 1910- | 1920 - | 1930- | 1940- | 1950- | 1960- |
|--|----------|-------|-------|--------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| | 1900 | 1909 | 1919 | 1929 | 1939 | 1949 | 1959 | 1969 |
| Percent of Total Housing Units Prior to 1970 | 9% | 9% | 7% | 8% | 8% | 17% | 22% | 19% |

City of Alexandria's Building Records

As the table above indicates, housing construction lagged behind Alexandria's population boom during the 1930s and 40s, about 10 years after the growth spurt. Ironically, the decades that saw the most

houses constructed in Alexandria (1950s and 60s) during the 21st century also saw the least population gain during that century.

Silk Stocking District

Three blocks west of Broadway Street toward Lake Winona is the "Silk Stocking District," which was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1991. The district is T-shaped, which includes portions of Lincoln (formerly Sixth) Avenue, Seventh Avenue and Cedar Street at its north end, and then extends southward down Douglas Street to 12th Avenue.

The area has been deemed significant enough to be on the National Register because it contains most of the town's 1900-1910 houses, which are larger and more ornate than the average Alexandria house. Both the houses themselves and their streetscape setting retain a high degree of integrity, providing an excellent and well-preserved example of an upper middle class, greater Minnesota residential neighborhood.

Historically, the houses in the district are significant because they were the residences for many of the men and women who laid the foundations of Alexandria's business community, tourism industry, city and county government, civic organizations, and church congregations between 1872 and 1930.

The northern part of the district is made up of houses of Classical Revival style or altered Victorian designs. The houses which line Cedar and Douglas Streets, on the other hand, are mostly post-1905 vintage, and provide an excellent showcase of historic architectural styles ranging from Queen Anne and Colonial Revival to Craftsman and Prairie styles (Granger).

The term "Silk Stocking District" has been used to describe this district because all of the city's wealthiest and most powerful people have historically lived in this area. Only rich people could afford to wear silk stockings, so they were a symbol of opulence and class.

Phil Noonan's Residential Development

Prior to the 1930's, professional people and businessmen lived mainly in the west part of town, and the east side, near the tracks, was regarded as a place where the "dinner-bucket set" or working class lived. Phil J. Noonan, who lived on the east side of town, employed many of these "dinner-bucket set" of residents at his North American Creamery.

During the Great Depression Noonan wanted to provide even more jobs to the unemployed so he conceived, planned and, in 1936, developed 29 affordable houses for his employees, one of the first "suburban" housing developments in Minnesota. All material, labor and services were provided by local Alexandria firms, and 74 to 120 men worked on the project at any one time (*Park Region Echo*, Oct. 1, 1936).



Located on Maple Street, between Seventh and Eighth Avenues, the homes represent Colonial, Cape Cod and Dutch Colonial styles. Noonan proposed to maintain the lawns and landscaping and even had an underground sprinkling system installed. (*Park Region Echo*, Oct. 1, 1936). The development has Victorian lampposts and unique street signs that that stand only in this area of the city.



(DCHS)

The development lifted the spirits of Alexandria during the Great Depression. The Park Region Echo stated that "crowds estimated at nearly a thousand persons visited the new Phil J. Noonan addition on Maple Street to inspect the [first] sixteen homes under construction. Mr. Noonan is making every effort and is sparing no expense to make Maple Street a model" (*Park Region Echo*, Oct. 1, 1936). Looking back, one resident declared, "The development was the equivalent of a respirator for a city that was gasping for just such relief after the devastating effects of the Depression (Alex 150 p. 90).



A year later, in 1937, Noonan continued to provide additional jobs and help beautify the east side of Alexandria, the working class side, by purchasing the property on the south edge of his housing development and building a park, making the east side a place where people would be proud to live. The new park included a pond with live ducks, geese, and swans; a fairy-tale Duck Inn patterned after a house in the famous Mother Goose rhymes; picnic areas and a playground. Noonan donated the park to the City with the understanding that the property would remain and be used for park purposes only (Grover p. 73).

Prominent Properties

The Noah P. and Sally Ward House, constructed ca. 1903, 422 Seventh Ave. W. The house best exemplifies stylistic innovations made by architects working in the city around 1900. It is also significant because it was built for the family of Noah P. Ward, one of Alexandria's earliest and most successful businessmen and civic leaders. Ward was President of the Alexandria Village Council for six terms, the first president of the Douglas County Humane Society, and chief of the fire department (Douglas County – Album of the Ages p. 62).



The Knute Nelson House, located at 1219 Nokomis St., was constructed in 1872, and was the residence of Knute Nelson during more than 50 years of public service. Upon his death in 1923, the house and

surrounding land were willed to the American Lutheran Church for service to the aged. The house was extensively remodeled in the 1940s to serve as a retirement home. The house has Gothic features, such as a steep pitched roof and window proportions that emphasize height. It since has been moved to a site on another part of Nelson's original homestead, where it serves as the new headquarters for the Douglas County Historical Society (Douglas county – Album of the Ages p. 62). The house is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



Nelson residence - ca. 1942 (MHS)

The Thomas F. Cowing House, built in 1875 and located at 316 Jefferson St. The Cowling house is one of the oldest buildings still standing in Alexandria that retains its original design. The house is significant as



Cowing residence - 1876 (MHS)

the home of Cowling and, later, Gustave A. Kortsch, both of which were important to the history of early business and politics in Alexandria. The house is an excellent example of a Gothic Revival cottage, which is uncommon to west central Minnesota because this style was popular in the 1850s and 1860s, while settlement in this area did not occur until the late 1870s and 1880s, by which time other architectural styles came into vogue (Douglas County – Album of the Ages p. 63). The house is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Robards House, was built in 1889 and is located at 518 Sixth Ave. W. This immaculate Queen Anne home was the residence for Oscar and Cecile Robards, co-owners of Cowing Robards Hardware Store, founded in 1872 during the formative years of Alexandria's commercial district (Grover p. 65).



The Stevens House, built in 1868 and located at 321 Sixth Ave. W. This vernacular-style home is one of only a handful of homes that remain from the postwar resettlement period, 1868-1869 (Grover p. 67).

The Sims House, built in 1876 and located at 521 Seventh Ave. W. One of the oldest extant buildings in Alexandria, this house was built for Lorenzo and Sarah Sims. Lorenzo established the first drugstore in the village, and Sarah was the sister of William Hicks, owner of most of the townsite lots. The vernacular-style home is set back from the street on a rolling hill overlooking Lake Winona. Future owners included George and Mary Robards, co-owners of Cowing Robards Hardware Store (Grover p. 67).



Sims residence – 1876 (MHS)

The Noonan House, is located at 420 Sixth Ave. E., on the southwest corner of Sixth Avenue and



Noonan residence (DCHS)

Kenwood, three blocks west of his parents' house. Built in 1915, Noonan's house is one of the most sophisticated and intact house of the Craftsman style in Alexandria (Granger). "Little Bit O'Heaven" gardens was located behind his house, between Sixth and Seventh, where two ramblers have been built. Noonan's parents' house is located at 721 Nokomis Street.

Architectural Styles

It is important to understand the different architectural styles present in Alexandria in order for the community to appreciate the rich diversity of housing styles in the city. Residents are more likely to undertake preservation efforts individually if they first understand how their own houses play a part in defining Alexandria's historic context.

Folk houses are utilitarian in design because they are constructed by builders who lack specific architectural training, but instead follow designs and construction methods that have been handed down through the generations. In Folk houses function often dictates the design. Academic architecture, on the other hand, describes buildings that are designed by trained professionals. Style and aesthetics are as important as function, with the goal as a balance of all elements. Because the emphasis on style and fashion is so great, architectural styles grow in popularity, evolve, and fade over time. Often, early examples of a style are quite different from late examples.

Both Folk style and academic architecture are represented in Alexandria. While some pure styles exist, most houses in Alexandria were designed with a blend of architectural styles. Early settlers constructed wood frame houses in vernacular versions of the Greek Revival and Gothic Revival style. As the town's population grew, wood-frame house in the Italianate, Queen Anne, and vernacular Victorian styles filled the blocks of the original townsite plat. Few, if any, Second Empire-style houses apparently were built in the city. During the 1890s-1910s, housing styles in Alexandria followed styles then in vogue throughout the rest of Minnesota. These included vernacular Victorian designs, Queen Anne, Classical Revival, Colonial Revival, and the boxlike American Foursquare. During the decades before and after World War I, Craftsman style houses were built throughout the city and on the lakes north of Alexandria. During the 1920s, a few Prairie style houses and a number of Tudor Revival and Colonial Revival style houses were built (Granger).

The houses in Alexandria were most likely constructed by one of the several independent contractors living in Alexandria. Most designs of the homes in Alexandria were determined by the residential contractors rather than architects. Residential contractors most likely used "pattern-books" specifically aimed at the middle class.

Houses in Alexandria were built almost exclusively of milled lumber. A small brickyard, founded around 1880, provided bricks for many downtown commercial buildings; however, only a few brick houses were built in the city, most for affluent citizens.

Below is an overview of the architectural styles found in Alexandria and examples of houses that best exhibit the characteristic features of the different styles of architecture.

Italianate

Predominant period 1840s to late 1880s

Inspired by paintings of rural villas of Italy, Italianate was promoted as a romantic alternative to classical Greek and Roman architecture. Because the style was more easily adapted to narrow urban lots, it became the dominant style for residential and commercial architecture from about 1855 to 1880. It continued as a popular style for commercial buildings to the turn of the century. Two good examples of the Italianate style in Alexandria are the somewhat altered John B. Cowing House (ca. 1875), and the intact John Sunblad House (ca. 1885-1890).



Cowing House at 415 7th Avenue

Defining characteristics:

- Two or three stories (rarely one)
- Single or paired decorative brackets under wide cornices
- Balanced, symmetrical rectangular shape
- Tall, narrow windows, commonly arched or curved above
- Projecting door and window crowns/hood moldings

Gothic Revival

Predominant period 1840-1880

The Gothic Revival began in England in 1749 when Sir Horace Walpole began remodeling his country house in the Medieval style, with battlements and multiple pointed-arch windows. Architect Alexander Jackson Davis popularized the style in the United States with his 1837 book, *Rural Residences*. The style was not popular in the urban setting because Davis stressed its suitability as a rural style, compatible with the natural landscape. Alexandria contains one excellent example of the Gothic Revival, very rare in western Minnesota, the Thomas Cowing House.



Cowing House at 316 Jefferson St

Defining characteristics:

- Steeply pitched roof
- Windows extending into gables, with Gothic shape
- One-story porch, commonly supported by flattened Gothic arches

Gabled-Ell

Predominant period 1865 - 1920

Gable-front houses are simple folk houses that descended from the Greek Revival style, placing an emphasis on the gabled end of the house reminiscent of a pediment. Gabled-Ell houses are a variation of the Gable-front houses by adding a side-gable wing at a right angle to form an L. With the coming of the railroad supplying abundant lumber and the introduction of balloon frame construction, Gabled-Ell houses first became popular in rural areas in the Northeast and Midwest. For the first time families were able to inexpensively build two-story dwellings. These prevalent rural homes became common for the urban working class for its simple and utilitarian design.



House at Goose Park

Defining characteristics:

- Minimal architectural detailing
- Two stories with a wing of equal height added at a right angle creating an L.
- A shed-roofed porch placed within the L made by the two wings

Folk Victorian Predominant period 1870-1910

Before the age of railroads, pioneers built no-fuss, square or L-shaped houses in the Greek Revival style like the Gable-Ell houses. But the rise of industrialization made it easier and more affordable to add decorative details to otherwise simple homes. Decorative architectural trim could be massed produced. As the railroads expanded, factory-made building parts could be sent to far corners of the continent.

Many Folk Victorian house were adorned with flat, jigsaw cut trim in a variety of patterns. Others had

spindles, gingerbread and details borrowed from the Gothic Revival style. With their spindles and porches, some Folk Victorian homes may suggest Queen Anne architecture. But unlike Queen Annes, Folk Victorian house are orderly and symmetrical houses. They do not have towers, bay windows, or elaborate moldings like Queen Anne houses.

Defining characteristics:

- Porches with spindle work detailing
- Symmetrical façade (except gable-ell subtype)
- Brackets under eaves were common.



511 Lake Street

Queen Anne Predominant period 1880 – 1910

The elaborate style known as Queen Anne became an architectural fashion during the 1880s and 1890s. The industrial revolution during this period enabled ornate spindle work to be mass produced and the expanded railway network made the decorative trim easily available throughout the country. Only a



Sunblad House at 914 Douglas Street

handful of intact Queen Anne style houses exist in the city. They include the W. F. Sunblad House (ca. 1899) and the Frank R. Noonan House (ca. 1895).

Defining characteristics:

- Steep roof with a front-facing gable
- Complicated, asymmetrical shape with round or square towers
- One-story porch that extends across one or two sides of the house
- Differing wall surfaces textured with decorative singles, patterned masonry, or bay windows
- Ornamental spindles or brackets

Colonial Revival Predominant period 1880 – 1955

As a clear reaction against excessively elaborate Queen Anne architecture, the Colonial Revival became a popular house style from 1880 to 1955. The Colonial Revival refers to the return of interest in the Federal and Georgian house styles found on the East Coast. Reflecting American patriotism and a desire for simplicity, the Colonial Revival house style was the most popular historic revival style between the World Wars. Colonial Revival-style houses are scattered throughout the city but are more common in the blocks west of Broadway Avenue and adjacent to Noonan Park near the city's eastern edge.



519 Lincoln Ave. W. (1910)

Defining characteristics:

- Symmetrical façade with central entrance
- Accentuated front door with decorative crown supported by pilasters
- Sometimes the entryway has a projected portico supported by slender columns
- Double-hung windows with multi-pane glazing

Neoclassical Predominant period 1895-1950

The Neoclassical style refers back to the inspiration of Roman philosophy and architecture. A resurgence of this style occurred after the World's Columbian Exposition, held in Chicago in 1893. Many of the best-known architects designed dramatic colonnaded buildings. The exposition was widely publicized and soon these Neoclassical models became the latest fashion throughout the county and inspired countless public and commercial buildings in the following decades.

Alexandria has two elaborate examples of the Classical Revival style, both of which are basically intact. The first is the Volker House (1902) which has an unusual and massive dual level porch. The second is the Andrew Jacobson House (1904), which is a much more restrained version of the style with simple volumes and flat wall treatments.

Defining characteristics:

- Columns typically have Ionic or Corinthian capitals
- Facade dominated by full-eight porch wit roof supported by classical columns



804 Douglas St. (1902)



405 Seventh Ave W., 1904

Dutch Colonial Revival Predominant period 1910 – 1955



720 Maple Ave. - (2012)

Dutch Colonial Revival was a widely popular variant within the larger Colonial Revival movement. The unique gambrel roofs of Dutch Colonial architecture provided an interesting focal point for houses of medium or small size and allowed for more headroom in the second story without the expense of constructing a full second story. Front-facing gambrel roofs were dominant in the style to about 1915, while side gambrel roofs, often with full shed dormers, are most common on later examples. Decorative details are similar to the Colonial Revival style.

Tudor Revival Predominant period 1920s – 1930s

The Tudor Revival style is based on a variety of late Medieval English influences. The earliest Tudor style houses date from the late 19th century and tended to be architect-designed landmarks. It was not until after World War I when masonry veneering techniques made brick and stone facades of English prototypes affordable. The style quickly faded from fashion in the late 1930s. Tudor Revival styles are scattered throughout the city but tend to be more common in the blocks west of Broadway Avenue and adjacent to Noonan Park near the city's eastern edge.

Alexandria has one very unusual turn-of-the-century example of the Tudor Revival style, a house which is earlier and much more ornate than the city's later versions of the style which date from the Period Revivals of 1920s. It is the N. P. Ward House (1903, on the National Register) which stands in the historic district.

Defining characteristics:

- Steeply pitched roof, usually side-gabled
- Front façade dominated by one or more prominent cross gables
- Tall narrow windows with multi-pane glazing
- Massive chimneys
- Brick, stucco and/or stone exterior finish with decorative half-timbering
- Steeply pitched gable dormers



1117 Douglas Street (1925)

Craftsman Predominant period 1905 – 1935

The most popular historic house design in Alexandria is the Craftsman Bungalow. The Craftsman style was a product of the British Arts and Crafts movement. As a reaction to the industrial revolution and the excesses of the Victorian era, emphasis was placed on simple design, honesty in construction, and fine craftsmanship. In America, the Arts and Crafts movement was led by furniture maker Gustav Stickley who began promoting the style in 1903 through his magazine, The Craftsman. Numerous house plan books, architectural magazines, popular magazines (e.g. *Good House Keeping, House Beautiful, and Ladies Home Journal*) and manufacturers of pre-fabricated "kit houses" such as Sears, Roebuck and Co. further popularized the style.

Though Craftsman buildings and two-story houses are plentiful, the most common expression of the Craftsman style is the "bungalow." This term came from India (via England), and refers to a low house surrounded by porches or galleries. Bungalows are one or one-and-a-half story houses of modest size with low-gabled roofs and wide porches, which are often integrated into the structure. Because of their

affordable size, yet fashionable appeal, Craftsman Bungalows were widely popular in America's growing middle class neighborhoods of the early 20th Century, including Alexandria's. Craftsman style houses appear to have been favored by Alexandria's residents during the 1910s and 1920s. A large number of good examples stand throughout the city, ranging from small bungalows to more expensive two story residences with deep porches and well executed Craftsman detailing. Fieldstone or lake boulder porch piers, chimneys, and foundations are found on few houses.

Defining characteristics:

- Low-pitched gabled roof
- Deep eaves with exposed rafters
- Decorative beams or knee braces under gables
- 1 − 1 ½ stories
- Large, covered front porches, supported by square or battered columns



922 Douglas St. (1920)



1022 Douglas St. - 1909 (2012)



1121 Douglas St. - 1916 (2012)

The two houses pictured below are good examples of Craftsman architecture while not being classified as Bungalows because they have the defining characteristics of the Craftsman style but are not one or one and half stories in height, which defines a Bungalow.



1106 Douglas Ave. (1919)



417 Lincoln Ave. W (1904)

Ranch

Predominant period 1935 – 1975

The Ranch style originated in California in the mid-1930's but did not gain in popularity elsewhere until the 1940's. The "rambling" Ranch style became the dominant style throughout the country during the 1950s and 1960s.

The popularity of this style was made possible by the country's shift in transportation preferences from streetcars to the automobile. Houses built prior to World War II were relatively compact structures on narrow lots, as people walked to places of employment or to streetcar lines. However, as the automobile replaced the streetcar and busses as the primary mode of transportation, sprawling houses could be built on wide residential lots, typically twice the size of lots platted prior to the war.

The Split Level Ranch became popular during the 1950s as a multi-story variation to the Ranch house. The Split Level incorporated an additional story to split three family functions on three separate levels: the wing (quiet living area), the lower level (noisy living and garage), and upper level (sleeping areas.)



97 Lincoln Ave. (1960)

Defining characteristics:

- Single-story residence with a strong horizontal orientation
- Low pitched gable and hipped roofs
- Clad with wood or brick exterior materials, sometimes in combination that would emphasize the horizontal design.
- Wide use of "picture windows" with or without flanking side windows

Multifamily Dwellings

The earliest apartments were located above the stores in the commercial district along Main Street as shopkeepers conveniently lived above their stores or as rental rooms for extra income for the shopkeeper. Over time most of these apartments have been converted to offices or storage.



The Belmont - 307 Lincoln (1920)

The first dwelling in Alexandria constructed as an apartment building is located at 307 Lincoln Ave. W. The Belmont Apartments, which were built around 1920, have distinctive Craftsman style features such as brick detailing at the cornice level, a triangular projection at the center of the main façade and at the porch cornice. Reportedly, Dr. Fleming, a veterinarian, built the Belmont Apartments for the children of the "Silk Stocking District" when they returned home from college or got married (Granger and Alex 150, p. 30).

Sidewalks

City residents have historically been required to petition the City Council if they wanted sidewalks and pay for two-thirds of the cost of installation. This is one reason why sidewalks are intermittent throughout the older section of the city, and may be the reason why sidewalks are more common on the west side where residents tended to be more wealthy and could afford paying the city to install sidewalks.

Expected Property Types

Single family dwellings
Multi-family dwellings
Duplexes
Apartment Buildings

Garages Gardens Driveways Fences Outbuildings Sidewalks

Sites Currently Designated

- Alexandria Residential District (1989-09-30)
- Thomas F. Cowing's House 316 Jefferson St. (1985-08-23)
- Knute Nelson's House 1219 S. Nokomis St. (1977-04-13)

Recommendations and Future Actions

- The first step in any preservation effort should be to fully survey the entire residential housing stock of Alexandria. Among other findings, the survey should determine if any catalog or Sears houses exist in Alexandria.
- The City should encourage house owners of Craftsman style houses to join the Twin Cities Bungalow Club, which is an excellent resource for maintenance information for this style of housing.
- The City should consider nominating the Noonan house to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
- The City should consider establishing a Paint-A-Thon or Rebuild Together, part of a national effort that assists low-income homeowners and seniors in maintaining their homes.
- The City should educate city residents regarding the different architectural styles in Alexandria and the most appropriate preservation techniques.

Preservation Planning Recommendations

Over the past 100 years, the City of Alexandria has lost a few significant historic resources. However, a fair number of historic residential and commercial buildings remain that physically tell the story of the celebrated development of Alexandria. In addition, these historic buildings have demonstrated their importance to the City, in general, and the downtown, in particular, with their adaptability and durability over the past 100 years. Not only should Alexandria explore future historic preservation activities for the sake of preserving these valuable resources but also because historic preservation has proven to have a positive economic impact on communities that undertake preservation efforts.

The primary purpose of historic contexts is to develop an understanding of Alexandria's historic development in order to evaluate its historic resources and to determine which preservation efforts the City may want to evaluate further. Specific planning recommendations are listed in the individual context chapters. Below are the more general Preservation activities that Alexandria may want to explore implementing in the future.

- Historic Preservation Plan is usually the first step in a city's preservation efforts. A historic
 preservation plan reviews all the preservation tools in more detail, provides a public forum to
 decide which preservation efforts should be used, explains historic preservation's terminology,
 outlines the legal basis for historic preservation, and prioritizes the community's preservation
 goals.
- **Survey** examines in more detail all residential, commercial and industrial buildings to determine their historic significance.
- Historic Preservation Ordinance should be tailored to the needs and desires of the particular community. They cover the spectrum from being lenient (providing only recommendations) to being stringent (determining paint colors). Just like any planning effort, the community determines where on the "regulation" spectrum they would prefer to be positioned. Preservation ordinances also establish nomination standards and procedures.
- Heritage Preservation Commission The City should consider establishing a separate Heritage
 Preservation Commission to advocate for the preservation of Alexandria's significant historic
 structures, educate the public on the architectural styles and importance of Alexandria's historic
 structures, and help determine which historic resources are significant.
- **Nomination to National Register** The National Register of Historic Places honors buildings and places that have a national historic significance. Buildings listed on the National Register are able to receive a Federal and State tax-credit for major improvements.
- **Local Historic Register** Resources that are of local importance should be listed on a Local Historic Register. Historic Preservation Ordinances only affect buildings on a Local Register, not the National Register.

- Design guidelines Prepared by historic preservation architects, design guidelines give city
 officials and building owners ideas on the best preservation practices for building
 improvements.
- **Certified Local Government** —Being a CLG brings many benefits to a community such as preservation grants, technical resources, and networking opportunities. However, one of the requirements is that a separate Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) be established.
- **Education** The City should use the Historic Context Study as an educational resource for all Planning Commission members.

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Appendix A - Research Design

Introduction

This Research Design describes the objectives and methodology of the historic context study completed for the City of Alexandria. The City commissioned Smith & Main to complete the study. The project began in November, 2012 with the consultant meeting with Mike Weber, Alexandria's City Planning Director, and Barbara Grover from the Douglas County Historical Society.

Objectives of Alexandria's Historic Context Study

Ultimately, the City of Alexandria plans to engage the residents, business owners and policymakers and create a Historic Preservation Plan, which would explain the different aspects of historic preservation, identify the preservation issues in Alexandria, determine preservation goals for the city and prioritize preservation efforts. As part of the public participation process of developing a historic preservation plan, the proper procedures for identifying, evaluating, registering and treating historic properties will be discussed. However, as part of the background information for developing a historic preservation plan, the City of Alexandria is completing this Historic Context Study. As stated in the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Preservation Planning, any decisions regarding a Historic Preservation Plan are best made when the relationship of individual properties to other properties within the city are understood through a Historic Context Study.

A principle goal of the project is to excite residents, business owners and policymakers into wanting to pursue further historic preservation projects.

This project meets the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Preservation Planning by explaining: what aspects of geography, history and culture significantly shaped the physical development of Alexandria.

- 1. What important property types were associated with those developments.
- 2. Why those property types are important.
- 3. What characteristics do the property types need to have to be considered an important representation of their type and context.
- 4. The study is organized into the different development themes and contexts of the city. A narrative for each context describes the nature of each context or theme. Representative buildings, structures, and area for each context are referenced. In addition to describing the themes which illustrate the patterns of Alexandria's development, the report also places the city in the larger context of Minnesota's early settlement, particularly with regard to early agricultural and tourist towns. A time table with important dates of U.S, Minnesota and Alexandria's history is also included to help place the development of Alexandria within the context of the development of the nation, generally, and the State, specifically.

Recommendations and/or note of any special situations related to the resources: ownership patterns, existing conditions, etc. are provided. In addition, the report concludes with a list of general historic preservation planning programs that the city should discuss during their historic preservation planning process.

A final presentation to the community was given to the Planning Commission on July 15, 2013. The PowerPoint presentation illuminated the highlights of the study, and discussed the next steps in the planning process.

Methodology

1. Identifying the concept, time period and geographical limits for the historic context.

The Historic Context Study examines the general historic development patterns of the community. The geographical limits of the study are Alexandria's city limits and the surrounding countryside since farming has played a significant role in the development of the city.

This historic context study describes the historical and architectural development of Alexandria between pre-history and 1967.

2. Assembling the existing information about the historic context.

The study process began by meeting with Mike Weber, Alexandria's Planning Director, and Barbara Grover, member of the Douglas County Historical Society and local historian, to identify prominent local resources, sites and priorities. The local newspaper, *Echo Press*, also printed an article describing the Historic Context Study process and solicited stories about Alexandria's history.

Archival research and fieldwork have formed the basis of the context study. These sources included state, county, and local histories, land use and other historic maps, archival materials such as those found in local collections (most notably the Douglas County Historical Society) at the Minnesota Historical Society, and state contexts on file at the State Historic Preservation Office. Primary sources such as historic photographs, historic plat maps, and city directories were also studied.

Field work included a thorough reconnaissance of the city's existing building types and architectural styles.

Oral histories have also been used to supplement the archival research and fieldwork by the consultant.

Historic photos are from the Runestone Museum, the Maritime Museum, Douglas County Historical Society (DCHS), and Minnesota Historical Society (MHS). Current pictures were taken by this author in 2012 and 2013.

3. Synthesizing the information

The narrative of the Historic Context Study covers the history of Alexandria and identifies important patterns, events, persons and/or cultural values that shaped the development of the community.

4. Defining the property types

Groups of property types are identified that link the relationship between the historical narratives of the context study with the actual historic properties that illustrate that narrative. Aerial photographs and fieldwork have determined the locational patterns of the different property types.

5. Identifying information gaps

The Douglas County Historical Society has a wealth of information on the variety of businesses throughout the history of the city. However, there is no cross-reference that lists all the historical uses for a given building. This type of reference would help fill the information gap for future historical research.