MANTI: THE LIFE OF A SHELL-BARK HICKORY GROVE

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Manti is a word that denotes several different places. The oldest are found in the Book of Mormon, a book that is considered scripture to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and some of its break-away groups. The Book of Mormon is believed to be the history of Jews who inhabited the Americas approximately 600 B.C., though there is no indication in the Book of Mormon where its Manties were located. Today there are at least two Manties, one a town in central Utah and the other a hickory grove and cemetery in extreme southwest Iowa. One hundred forty years ago the hickory grove area was the site of another Manti, one of the first communities in southwest Iowa; today little remains except the grove and the community's cemetery. Contrary to what some believe, the word Manti has no other meaning than being a place name in the Book of Mormon.

Though this community was one of the first permanent settlements for white European-Americans in the area, there is no doubt that these settlers were not the first inhabitants. Archaeological evidence puts human inhabitants in the area at least 10,000 years earlier and possibly as much as 30,000 years before the pioneers arrived to build Manti.[1] No evidence exists to date the beginning of the hickory and walnut grove that made the location desirable for settlement, but what is known is that the grove definitely existed in 1833 when the Pottawattamie Indians were deeded five million acres of what would become Iowa in exchange for their homelands in Indiana.[2] The land given to the Pottawattamie Indians extended north from what is now Page and Fremont Counties to the Iowa-Minnesota border, with the Missouri River on the West [see appendix A].

The best known chief of these Indians was Chief Wau-Baun-See, who made his permanent settlement near what is now Tabor, Iowa. These Indians were friendly, peace-loving people who welcomed the white people and gave them assistance in getting settled.[3] This is possibly why the Pottawattamie and their chief were honored by having area places named after them, such as Pottawattamie County and Waubaunsie State Park. Even with the presence of the Indians, southwest Iowa was considered safe for white settlement. The area was open prairie with timber only near rivers and streams. The streams provided abundant water and fish, while the timber sheltered buffalo, deer, elk and small game; the prairie offered productive soil on gently rolling hills and very fertile valleys. Possibly one reason the Indians and white man could co-exist is that the Indians did not live in the immediate proximity of the white man, but rather twenty to thirty miles northwest, coming into the settlers' area only periodically to hunt.[4] Since game was abundant enough for both groups and the settlers were not taking Indian land, all could live in harmony, at least for a time.

Unknown to the few white men and the Indians in the area, a series of events were taking place across the state near Nauvoo, Illinois, which would soon have a tremendous impact on the area. After being driven out of New York State, Kirtland, Ohio, and Far West, Missouri, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints thought they had finally found a haven at Commerce, Illinois, in 1839.[5] Commerce was just a "little cluster of houses on the banks of the Mississippi" located in very wet, swampy land, making the area undesirable as well as unhealthy.[6] With the coming of the Saints, Commerce became

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Nauvoo, meaning "beautiful place,"[7] and indeed this swampy marshland did become a beautiful place. For several years the Saints lived in peace with their neighbors; unfortunately, that peace proved to be short-lived. The Saints who came to Nauvoo were very industrious people, used to hard work. As their hard work paid off in drained swamps and a prosperous community, the old tensions, now with new neighbors, reappeared. The Saints' "strange religious beliefs and practices," coupled with their industry, eventually turned their neighbors into another jealous mob, just as had happened in Missouri. June 27, 1844 climaxed the situation when a mob disguised as Indians breached the "security" of the Carthage jail and murdered the Prophet Joseph Smith and his brother, Hyrum.[8]

Though the Saints behaved with admirable restraint (no retaliation),[9] the peace was irreparably damaged and they realized that staying in Nauvoo would be impossible. While making plans to leave, the Saints were motivated by one primary goal—to finish a temple before they would be forced to move on. Unfortunately, many of the Saints would not witness the completion of that goal. Though they worked diligently at both completing the temple and preparing to move, the mob refused to be placated and forced the Saints to begin their exodus in February 1846.

Four hundred families made that first crossing over the ice of the frozen Mississippi during the night of February 5th. Nine babies were born that harsh, winter night in the comparative safety of the open prairie of Iowa.[10] Other companies would follow as quickly as possible until mid-April, when the main body of the church had left Nauvoo.[11] The few Saints who chose to remain behind in Nauvoo completed and dedicated the temple May 1, 1846.[12]

But the many who left were heartbroken over seeing their hard work again taken from them by an angry mob. At the time of the exodus, the population of Nauvoo was between 12,000 and 20,000 people. The saints had reclaimed the swamps to create an "agricultural center, unsurpassed in the United States." Nauvoo was also a manufacturing and commercial center for Illinois. All this had been accomplished in less than seven years.[13]

Among the many Saints that left Nauvoo that winter was Alpheus Cutler, the principal stonemason for the Nauvoo Temple,[14] who also served as one of several unofficial Church leaders after the Prophet Joseph's murder until the Apostles returned from various missions, after the murder of the Prophet Joseph. Additionally, Cutler was chosen to lead an advance party across Iowa during the exodus and to serve as President of the High Council at Winter Quarters, present day Florence, Nebraska, during 1846-47. Later Cutler returned to the Iowa side of the Missouri as the leader of the branch located near Silver Creek.[15]

It is important to remember that during this time Cutler had accepted Brigham Young as the new leader of the Church, as well as the practice of polygamy, instituted under Joseph Smith, Jr. In fact, two of Cutlers' daughters became plural wives of another church leader, Heber C. Kimball, in 1845, and each had a son by him. Cutler also served a mission among the Lamanites (Indians) in Kansas, a call which had initially been extended by Joseph Smith and sustained by Brigham Young. When Heber C. Kimball continued West in 1848, Cutler persuaded his daughters, along with their infant sons, to remain behind with him.[16]

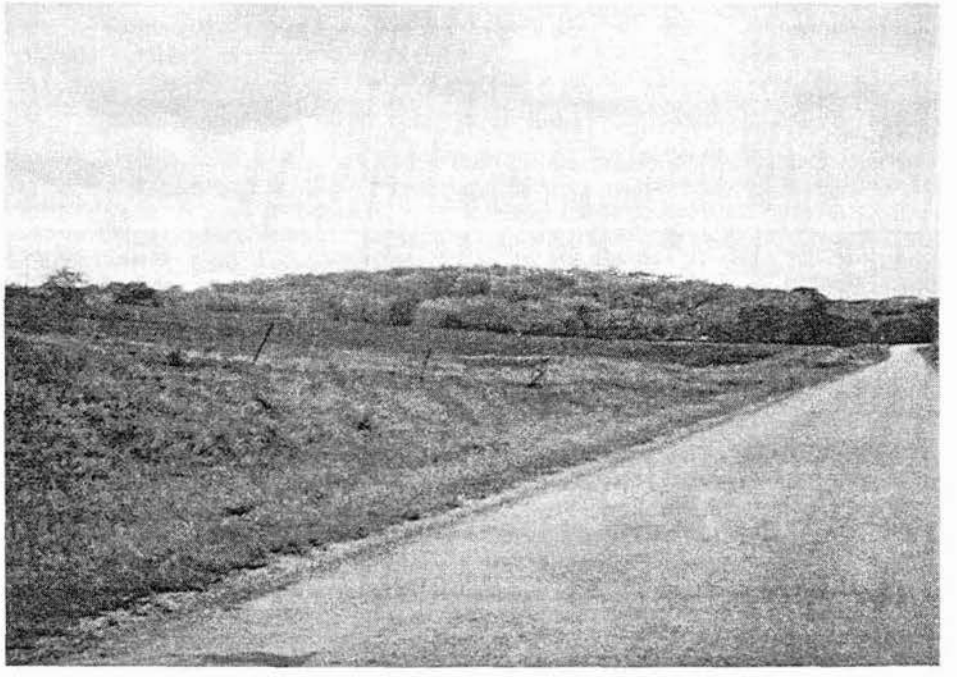
Between 1849 and 1852, while Cutler was President of the Silver Creek Branch, the branch "became embroiled in a series of conflicts" with the High Council, led by Orson Hyde at Kanesville (Council Bluffs). Eventually, in 1851, Cutler and other members of the Silver Creek Branch were excommunicated.[17] What led such a prominent church member into such a situation is unknown since few primary documents have survived and most of those few papers are in the possession of the Cutlerite Church and inaccessible to non-members. One theory is that before the Prophet Joseph was murdered, he had appointed "a number of men," including Cutler, "to go to various localities and states" to settle and "build up communities and branches." The belief is that at some point, Alpheus Cutler became convinced that his appointment equated with being appointed the successor to Joseph Smith, Jr.[18]

After the excommunication, Cutler and his followers moved to an area further south in Fremont County, near present day Malvern. Deeming the spot unacceptable, Edmund Fisher led a small party of men to find a new location. Fisher purchased land at Walnut Grove, the same shell-bark hickory and walnut grove known as Manti today. It was around this grove that Manti, the town, was founded in 1851-1852.[19] The only natural timber in Fisher township, Fremont County,[20] the grove skirts what was originally called Little Walnut Creek[21]

but has been known as Fisher Creek[22] since at least 1854.[23] Both the township and the creek were named for Edmund Fisher. By 1855, most of the Silver Creek Branch had joined the group at the new location called Manti.[24]

The group of Saints that followed Cutler and helped found a new church and community was unusual. Unlike the other schismatic groups, Cutler's followers had largely joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in the 1830s. Thirty-six of the families had joined the Church during its New York/Ohio period, with forty-five families having converted before the Nauvoo period. This means that many of the Cutlerite group stayed firm in their new faith despite experiencing the persecutions which included the expulsion from Missouri, the murder of their leader, the change in leadership, the exodus from Nauvoo and the hardships of traveling across open prairie in winter. Additionally, of one hundred adult males, at least ten were elders, seven were Seventies, and twelve were High Priests. The terms Seventy and High Priests are an indication of responsibility in the Melchizidek, or higher, priesthood. Of the eighty original families, thirty-three had also received at least part of the temple endowment before leaving Nauvoo. This view of the early Cutlerites shows them to be some of the most committed, faithful, devout and involved members, contrary to most of the other groups that broke away which were usually on the periphery of the Church.[25] In addition, the early Cutlerites had many relatives who continued west under Brigham Young.[26]

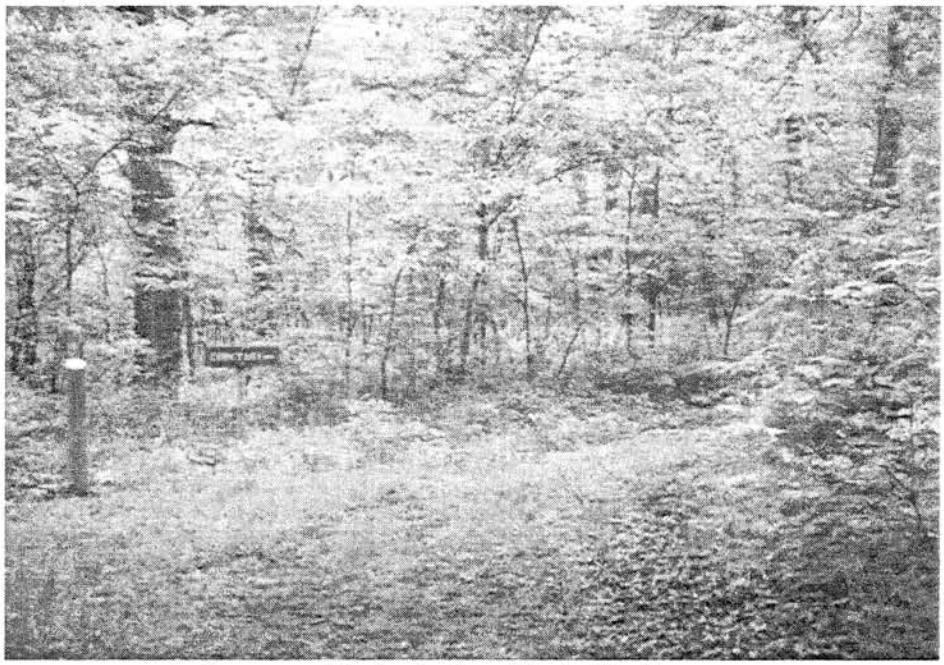
Officially, the Cutlerite Church was organized in 1853 with Alpheus Cutler as the leader. Cutler taught his followers that Joseph Smith, Jr. was a true Prophet of God and that Cutler was to be his successor, not Brigham Young.[27] Cutler also taught a unique Lamanite doctrine,[28] which came from the belief that the Jews had rejected the Gospel through Jesus Christ; the Gentiles had rejected the restored gospel brought by Joseph Smith, so the only ones left to be offered the Gospel were the Indians (Lamamites).[29] Cutler also taught the "law of all things in common," although participation was not required.[30] Even though the Cutlerite group rejected the practice of plural marriage,[31] they continued to practice other parts of the temple work[32] and are the only schismatic group to continue to do endowment work and baptism for the dead today.[33] During these early years, the best estimate of total membership is approximately four hundred people, contrary to the previously accepted two hundred members.[34] Perhaps the confusion results from the fact that by 1855 approximately half of the four hundred members had been rebaptized into the Utah Church.[35]



The Grove from a distance

If these figures are correct, then how did Manti continue to grow and thrive with half its people now gone? Perhaps because Manti had the only cemetery in the area. Edmund Fisher donated the cemetery land, at the crest of the hill, behind the timber. According to at least one source, Fisher's own daughter was the first to be buried in the new cemetery,[36] but another source lists one year-old An(n) Taylor as the first recorded burial at the Manti site.[37] Regardless of who was buried first, the

cemetery brought people to the area to bury their dead and some of the living chose to remain. It is estimated that eventually the cemetery contained the remains of between three hundred and four hundred people.[38]



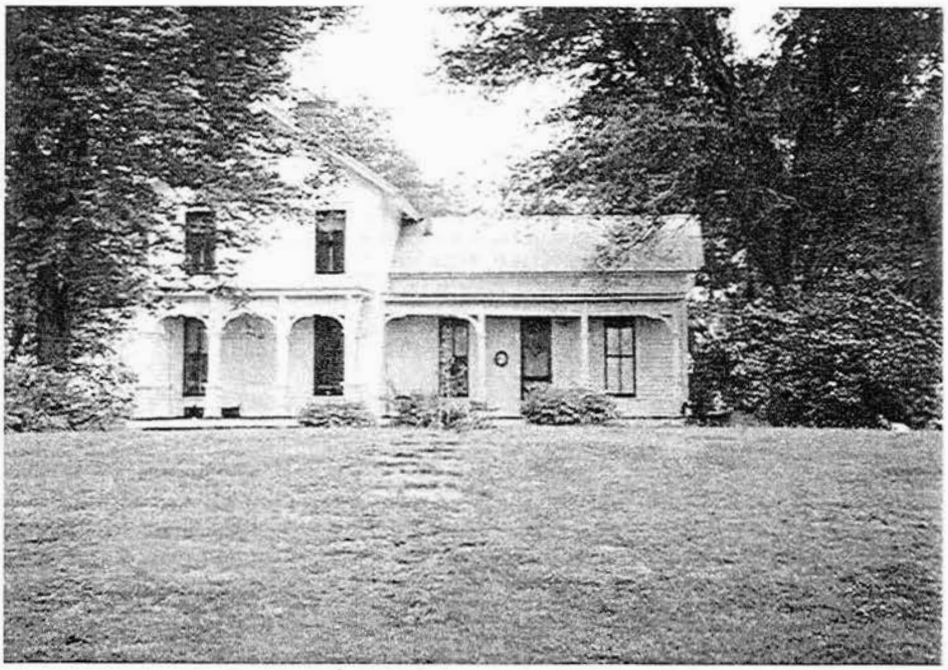
In the grove at the beginning of the trail to the cemetery

Manti's location on the Missouri-Iowa border, "which was also the line between slavery and freedom,"[39] also contributed to the town's growth. This allowed settlers on both sides of the slavery issue to live near Manti. Another factor was Fremont County's designation as "the gateway to the American West." An overland emigration route, starting on the Mississippi and ending at East Nebraska City on the Missouri, passed through Manti. An excellent steam ferry took settlers across the Missouri, where they joined the South Platte Route of the Oregon Trail.[40]

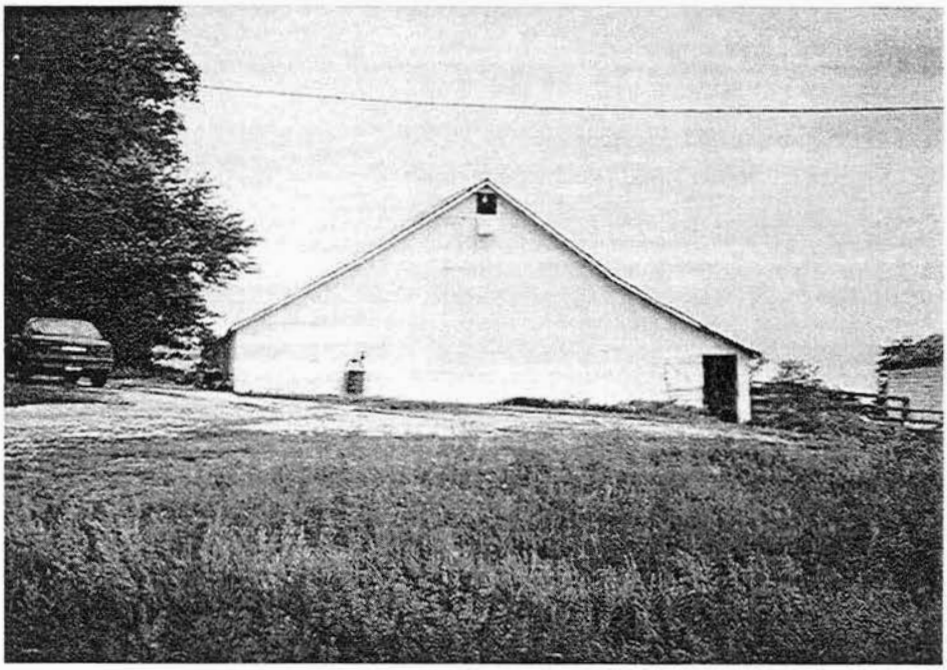
Manti's location on this Southern Tier Emigration Route helps explain how the town became part of the mail system. Edmund Fisher became the first postmaster when a post office was opened on April 4, 1854. The post office probably helped insure that stage lines would extend westward along the same route.[41] By 1856 two stages per day passed through Manti; in fact, the route divided there, with one route turning north to Council Bluffs and the other continuing west to the Fremont County seat, then located at Austin. At this time Ottumwa was the last stop on the Burlington Railroad; from there, mail and passengers had to continue their journey by stage.[42] In 1855 a ferry crossing was built near Manti which facilitated the development of the stage lines and emigration route by providing an easier crossing of the Nishnabotna River. Once the ferry was completed, travelers could connect with a major stage route running from Council Bluffs, Iowa, to St. Joseph Missouri.[43]

The first settlers to come and stay were primarily farmers who took land in the area. But as Manti grew many of the families also established businesses. Where specific businesses were located is unknown because sources do not agree. Remnants of only one business remain, W. C. Mathews' tavern, part of which is contained in the present-day barn on the old McComb homestead. The current house on the property dates to 1873, built after the first house was destroyed by fire. There is also an old one-room school house located in what is now Manti Park. This is believed to be the location of the original log school built in 1853.[44] Members of the local historical society also believe that the house built in 1854 for Alpheus Cutler and his family[45] still stands, but not in its original location.[46]

When a new frame school was built in 1869, the old log school was used as a blacksmith's shop. Whether this was an additional blacksmith shop or a move of the original shop is unclear, since a blacksmith shop was one of the first necessary businesses to develop in Manti. Another necessity was the first dry good store, which R. B. and Jack Crose operated. There was also a general store, chair factory, harness shop, the post office, a wagon factory, a clock and watch-maker's shop as well as a music, candy and stationery shop.[47] By 1860 the town had two more general stores, a hotel, a doctor, and a drug store [see appendix B]. A church had also been



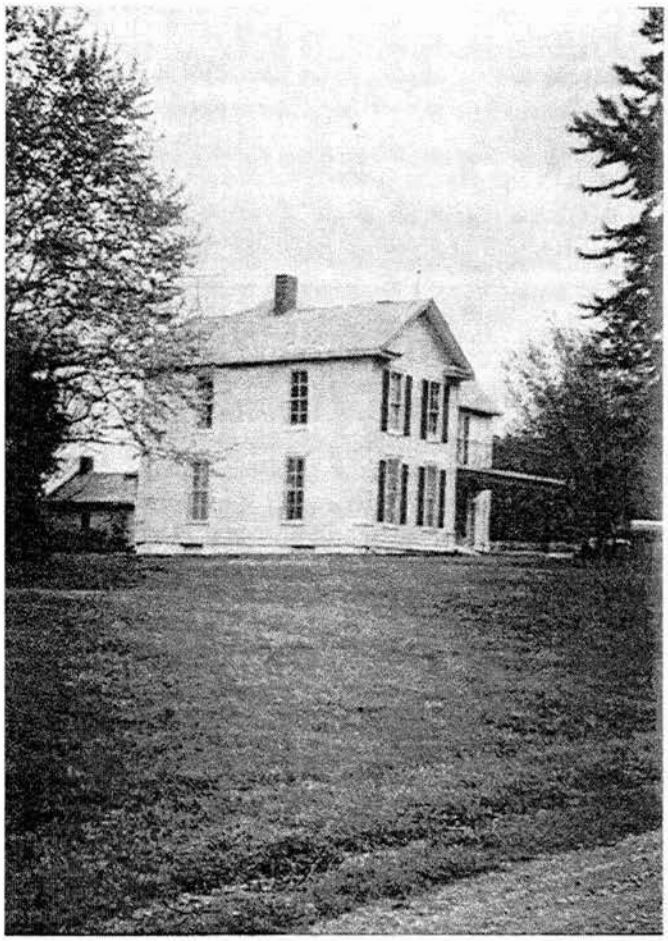
The McComb Homestead



The barn on the McComb homestead said to contain timbers from W. C. Matthew's Tavern

built, but there is disagreement over when it was built, one source claiming 1854 or 1855[48] and another source saying the church and school were not built until 1857.[49]

Life was hard on the prairie in the 1850s. Settlers usually built homes out of logs which were abundant at Manti; sometimes they used fieldstone mortared



Alpheus Cutler's house

with a mixture of ground limestone, clay and water.[50] Others built frame homes with the lumber hauled thirty-six miles from McKissick's Landing, south of what is now Hamburg, Iowa.[51] Authentic replicas of the small homes await visitors at the Shenandoah Historical Museum and the Visitor's Center at the Winter Quarters Cemetery, Florence, Nebraska. In Manti, one's arrival time would determine which activity took precedence over others: building a home or clearing land for crops. Too late an arrival in the spring meant living in the wagon a while longer, since a family had to clear fields and plant crops if it was to have a reasonable expectation of food in the coming winter.

Regardless of what task took priority, it had to be done by hand since there were no power tools in those days. Farmers planted crops by hand, producing corn with an average yield of thirty-five to forty bushels per acre. Corn suited the fertility of the soil, could feed both the livestock and the family, and stored well. Settlers cut prairie grasses by hand, then stacked them to use as hay for the cattle and horses. Vegetable gardens were a necessity since the general stores typically only sold staples like flour, sugar and salt.[52]

Sometime during their first summer, families built a root cellar or cave to store the garden vegetables for winter use. Carrots, cabbages, potatoes and later apples could be stored in the cave to feed the family during the winter and early spring. In addition, the women would preserve wild fruits and berries for later use.[53] After the Mason jar was invented in 1857, they canned meat, vegetables and fruit in addition to using other methods to provide food for the winter months.[54]

It was essential that a family be as self-sufficient as possible since the nearest town for shopping was St. Joseph, Missouri, about seventy miles southeast of Manti. Stage coach or farm wagon was the normal means of travel over roads that were little more than trails across the prairie. Once a week to town (Manti) for staples was about the only trip the early settlers made by choice, because of the difficulty of travel.[55]

Additional family labors included herding livestock (since there were no fences), butchering, soap-making, cooking, washing laundry, ironing, sewing, mending, spinning, weaving and knitting. Families also made their own candles, but after coal oil was discovered in 1850 they gradually replaced that chore with cleaning and filling the kerosene lamps. In addition, they had to dig wells, carry water, and build outhouses. All these chores were extremely labor intensive since everything had to be done by hand with a minimum of even hand tools.[56]

Yet families found time for social gatherings, so life on the prairie was not all work. One of the most popular activities combined work and play: a barn raising. Here the neighbors got together to work, build a barn, and have a barn dance.[57] Sometimes the women would quilt in the afternoon while the men finished the barn. Other activities revolved around church and the

school. Neighborhood picnics were also common in the summer, particularly on Sunday.[58]

Other events that enlivened life on the prairie were not so eagerly anticipated. Prairie fires started through carelessness or lightening. Walls of fire fifty to sixty feet high would race across the open prairie, destroying everything in their path. Tornadoes and hailstorms were other events the settlers feared. Grasshoppers were also a concern, although the worst devastation in the Manti area did not occur until 1875.[59]

One event that brought a mixture of anticipation and danger was cattle drives of Texas Longhorns. The local newspaper described one drive of over 1700 longhorns, only a small part of the original drive, most of which had passed through several weeks earlier. Chicago was the destination and the drive averaged eighteen miles per day. The wild and easily started longhorns elicited fear in bystanders, even though cowboys controlled any stampedes, since the cattles' horns averaged three feet from tip to tip. Children walking to school at Manti feared meeting a herd of longhorns with good reason.[60]

Looking east down what was Manti's Main Street. The house on the left is Cutler's

The Nishnabotna River Valley, Manti's location, was part of the original "Shawnee Trail" from Texas to Chicago. Cattle drives would remain part of the settlers' lives until the late 1860s when expanding settlement blocked the trails across Nebraska and Iowa. As a result, the "Shawnee Trail" shortened to end in Abilene and Dodge City, Kansas, where the cattle could be loaded into boxcars on the Atchison-Topeka and Santa Fe railroad to finish the trip to market. The shortened "Shawnee Trail" was then the "Chisholm Trail."[61]

By the late 1850s more "civilized" entertainment had come to the prairie. Nearby Sidney formed a brass band which apparently traveled around the area giving well-received concerts.[62] A traveling circus, Mabie's Menagerie and Circus, played to a crowd of 1,500 on July 23, 1859 in Sidney. People traveled from miles around to see the circus even though one Sidneyite described it as "poor, miserable, lean, squint-eyed [and] utterly contemptible."[63] Some who attended the circus arrived by Banks' Daily Lightening Express which traveled between Clarinda, twenty-five miles east of Manti, and Sidney, fifteen miles to the west. The trip took over night, leaving Clarinda at 5:30 p.m. and arriving at Manti four hours later. After spending the night in Manti, the journey continued the next day. A through trip from Clarinda to Sidney required five hours, traveling one way one day and returning home the next day.[64]

Direct stage connections between Denver and the Southern Tier of Iowa were completed by 1862. Travel by stage from Denver to Nebraska City took four and one half days. The remaining 219 miles from Nebraska City through Manti to Ottumwa, the nearest railroad terminal, occurred in daily stages. Reliable stage traffic also brought crime to the area, mostly in the form of robbery and murder. Stages carried the U. S. mail which became a prime target for hold-ups. If the robbers were caught, frontier justice was often handed down on the spot. One reported crime, in particular, is familiar today—murder for drug money. In this case a man

traveling with four hundred dollars to purchase legal drugs for a Sidney merchant was robbed and murdered for the money, although no one knew for sure what had happened until his body was discovered six months later.[65]

Westward expansion was also evident in growing political involvement. Organization of the Republican Party occurred in Fremont County on April 21, 1856. Three years later, Manti was selected as the site of what may have been the first Republican senatorial convention in southwest Iowa. The August 4, 1859 convention nominated a Fremont County man to a senate seat in the Iowa legislature. Although defeated for that position, he was later elected as Registrar of the State Land Office in 1862.[66]

Another seemingly distant event which would prove to have a major impact on Manti occurred in 1860. Various schismatic groups from the original Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints joined together under the leadership of Joseph Smith III, son of the murdered Prophet. The group called itself by the same name as the original church, since it considered itself the true successor to the church restored by Joseph Smith, Jr., but it added the word "Reorganized" to its title in 1869 to differentiate itself from the Utah Church.[67] The infant Reorganized Church conducted proselytizing activities to bring other schismatics into its fold. One such activity occurred at Manti in the fall of 1862.[68] Apparently Joseph III, president of the newly reorganized church, did not meet Alpheus Cutler on that trip and consequently made a return trip in 1863 specifically to meet him. Many of Cutler's followers, including his son, Thaddeus, who served as counselor to his father in the Cutlerite Church Presidency, and William Redfield, who would be a prominent businessman in what would become Shenandoah, had joined the new church during Smith's 1862 trip.[69]

During the 1863 visit, Joseph III uttered what he believed was a prophecy concerning the area. He urged the people to gain control of as much of the land in the area as they could legally possess, for within fifteen years, he said, "a railway will be pushing its way down the Nishnabotna valley, and the . . . land . . . would have increased in value many times over." Joseph III also told the Cutlerites that the call to build a temple in Zion ,which they expected, would not come and that the destruction they expected (probably from the Civil War) would also not occur. For the most part the prophecy fell on deaf ears, but those who did heed the counsel given that day saw the prophecy fulfilled, not in fifteen years but in less than eight years with the railroad's arrival.[70]

Father Cutler had warned his followers not to listen to Joseph III since Cutler believed young Joseph would lead them astray. Cutler is quoted as saying, "Have nothing to do with the 'prophesys' of this young prophet. Get yourselves out of this place, flee to the north country lest your blood flow in the streets of Manti to the depth of a horse's bridle."[71]

Saddened that his followers had not listened, Cutler made plans to move the remainder of his group north to Minnesota. However, before that journey could begin, Alpheus Cutler died on August 10, 1864, and was laid to rest in the Manti Cemetery. Plans for the journey continued and the first group left in late September 1864;[72] the remainder followed in May 1865.[73] Only approximately 100 Cutlerites moved, since out of the estimated four hundred original members, half had rejoined the church in Utah and fifty percent of the remaining half had joined the new "reorganized" church.[74] Some of the who did go north returned to Iowa.

Where exactly Heber C. Kimball's sons by Cutler's daughters were during this time is unclear, but at some point the two boys, Abraham and Isaac, went to Utah to find their father.[75] Members of the Utah Kimball family did stop at Manti to visit these two sons of Heber,[76] but whether Heber, himself, ever visited them is unclear.

One might expect that the loss of Father Cutler and his followers would finish off Manti, but that was not the case [see appendix C]. Manti continued to thrive for several more years, although the population had already peaked at 1,000 or more residents.[77]

Spring, 1868, provided another turning point: Urban D. Coy arrived in Manti and bought 1,700 acres of land four miles west of town. Two years later, in 1870, Coy sold 160 acres to the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy railroad for the town of Lowland. In 1872, Lowland was renamed Farragut, after the Civil War Naval Admiral.[78] Urban Coy's arrival in Manti and his subsequent actions sounded the death knell for the town, although probably no one sensed this at the time. Available information does not give Coy's selling price, but at the time the railroad commonly offered five dollars per acre. Manti lost its railroad station when no one else would sell the necessary land at the offered price. Since few people had

heeded the advice of Joseph Smith III in 1863, no one on the proposed route between Red Oak and Manti had enough land to sell some to the railroad and still keep enough to support a family, nor could they realize, from the sale of their land, enough profit to start over somewhere else; besides, most wanted to stay in the area and continue to farm.

It is interesting to note that while no one was willing to sell to the railroad in 1870, the same farmers sold their land to nurseries in 1885.[79] D. S. Lake had started the nursery business during the Manti years,[80] and it would later become very important to Shenandoah.[81] The railroad and the nursery business seem to be the final nails in the coffin for Manti—there was no corpse yet, but it was just a matter of time before it died.[82]

Another town, Fair Oaks, was founded along the railroad, northeast of Manti. According to legend the name derives from the planting of four oak trees to commemorate the founding of the town. As recently as 1982, two of the original four trees were still growing near the Baptist Church on Clarinda Avenue in Shenandoah.[83] Fair Oaks soon changed its name to Shenandoah, "Daughter of the Stars," after the Shenandoah River Valley in Virginia.[84] Fair Oaks was considered an inappropriate name since there were no other trees for miles and the area was entirely covered with blue stem prairie grass and wildflowers.[85] The 1875 county maps for Page and Fremont Counties verify that trees were not prevalent in the Shenandoah area except near rivers or streams [see appendix D for a portion of these counties]. Manti is not shown on that map but Fisher Township can be found and by locating the J. H. McComb property, one can locate the grove and the stream where Manti was founded.

While the coming of the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy railroad is the most popular explanation for the demise of Manti, a more likely reason is that once the railroad was finished, during the summer of 1870, Manti merchants loaded their businesses onto sledges and hauled them to Shenandoah, and no community can survive long without its businesses. Teams of oxen dragged some of Manti's buildings to Shenandoah.[86] Since Manti also had a Persian Draft Horse importer in their midst,[87] it is possible that teams of these draft horses may have also hauled Manti buildings to Shenandoah.

The first Shenandoah businesses, opened August 1870, were two lumber yards,[88] one started by J. J. Kaster, a Manti pioneer.[89] Rider's General Store also moved to Shenandoah and provided "the largest stock and most complete assortment of dry goods and farming implements offered for sale in Page County."[90] J. H. McComb moved his harness and hide business from Manti October 24 1870, followed closely by Mettleman and Crose, who moved their general store on November 28, 1870. In a very short time almost all of Manti's businesses moved the four miles to Shenandoah. The first boarding house in Shenandoah was also a building moved from Manti.[91]

The original plat of Shenandoah shows that a wide street, Thomas Avenue, was intended to be the main street; Thomas Avenue was twenty feet wider than Sheridan Avenue's eighty foot width. However, the narrower street became main street partly because the Manti merchants preferred that location for its lower cost. Since main street was already ensconced on Sheridan Avenue, new merchants continued to establish their businesses on that street.[92]

Once the businesses left Manti, it would not be long before homes were also moved. Eventually most of Manti moved to Shenandoah,[93] with the result that the Manti post office closed in 1873.[94] Even then a few people continued to live there until 1878, when Manti officially ceased to exist.[95] Then all that remained of a once-thriving community were farmers who continued to work their land, the grove of trees, and the cemetery. The grove and the ground containing the cemetery have been verified as virgin timber and prairie, never cleared or plowed.[96]

It is tempting to assume that Manti's story ends with the death of the town, but anyone reaching that conclusion would be wrong. Manti's existence as a town may be long forgotten by most of the area's residents, but Manti left an indelible imprint on Shenandoah that can still be seen today. Already mentioned are two significant Manti legacies: Shenandoah's very existence, which might never have occurred if Manti farmers had been able to sell land at Manti, the railroad's preferred location, and the choice of Sheridan Avenue as main street, a choice that today causes many a motorist to swear at the idiot who made main street so narrow.

Another obvious legacy is Manti street, but most local people assume the name comes from the grove and cemetery rather than the town which gave birth to Shenandoah. The same situation probably exists

concerning Crose Addition and the Anna B. Crose Highway.[97] Few people probably know that they were named after early Manti pioneers. The most beautiful park in town, McComb Park, was a gift to the city from Manti pioneers John H. and Mary M. McComb. The McComb homestead, built at Manti before the Civil War, still stands. The barn on the homestead is said to contain part of the original stagecoach tavern and stable from 1856.[98] Even today the homestead is still inhabited and the barn is still used.

Looking east on Shenandoah's narrow Main Street The railroad tracks in the foreground are from the railroad that wanted to locate at Manti

The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints is another Manti legacy. The Church officially moved to Shenandoah in 1875.[99] Shenandoah, a religiously tolerant town, supports a wide variety of churches, but the Reorganized Church is probably one of the strongest as well as the oldest. Today both the Reorganized and the Utah churches co-exist in Shenandoah. The Utah church successfully established itself in Shenandoah in October, 1975 after an unsuccessful attempt in the 1950s.

Although Manti pioneers may not have realized how the railroad would affect their community, they must have understood how important the railroad would be to the development of the nation. They chose well their location for such an eventuality. The future would show that any railroad planning to cross southwest Iowa would either have to "enter the Nishna Valley or traverse the valley at this point" so the selection of the Manti pioneers proved to be shrewd indeed. This was the only place that construction would not require substantial grading.[100] Though Manti did not become the railroad center, it was the first choice of railroad men; if Manti farmers had been able to sell at five dollars per acre, history might have a different story to tell today.[101]

In addition to the choice location, climate was another factor that drew settlers to southwest Iowa. The area was described as

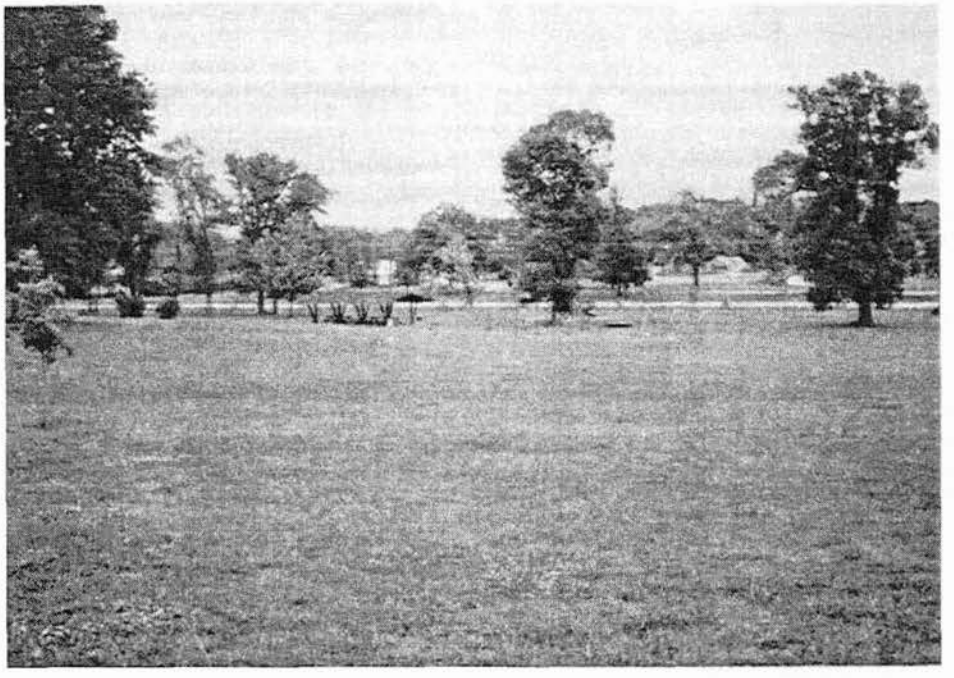
> . . . land with a climate of pure delight. In Spring the prairie was green and beautiful with a scattering of wildflowers. The grasses bent before the wind like the waves of a great lake. The breezes were scented with the fragrance of flowering trees. The glorious Autumns shimmered in the haze of Indian Summer and the whole land was colored with the gold and crimsons of sumac and cottonwoods. The Winters were crisp and clear with endless fields of unbroken snow glistening in the brilliant sun. Each season seemed the best.[102]

It is interesting to note that although the above quotation mentions all the seasons, it says nothing specifically about the summers, which anyone who lives in the area knows are unpleasant. High temperatures and equally high humidity are ideal for corn but hard on humans and animals. Even so, the combination of the richness of the soil, the location, and the climate insured that the area would thrive.

Of all the possible explanations of why a thriving community like Manti would vanish from the face of the land, almost without a trace, the ultimate seems to be encroaching civilization. Manti was founded as a theocracy; as long as civil government left it alone, the two could co-exist, but as the area became increasingly populated, civil government intruded more and more into daily life,[103] and Manti lost its primary reason to exist. The coming railroad might have filled the void and given the community a reason to continue, but when that too was lost, there was nothing to hold the people's allegiance to the community; hence that allegiance was easily transferred to the new town of Shenandoah.

In the space of twenty-five years, Manti went from being part of the "gateway to the west" on the edge of the frontier to the hub of commercial activity with the advent of the railroad. What had originally been open prairie inhabited by Indians and large quantities of large game became a very civilized area. The Indians were gone, the last buffalo had been killed in 1856,[104] the prairie was replaced by cultivated farms, the excitement of daily stages was replaced by the noise of giant steam locomotives, the need for an emigration route was largely gone and the nurseries were growing rapidly.

Manti could not or would not take advantage of all the rapid changes confronting it, so the town ceased to exist physically. Though the town is gone, Manti, in its largest sense, still exists today in the legacies bequeathed to her successor, Shenandoah. All that physically remains of the town of Manti can be seen in a handful of pictures. The Grove and the cemetery remain preserved by concerned Shenandoahans, as a link between the past and the future. One can examine a map of Shenandoah and discover the legacies of Manti there also [see appendix E], but only in the Grove can one stand in the present, be immediately transported to the past and know unquestionably that one is part of the future. Manti was a unique spot in 1850 and continues to be unique today as the only truly historical spot in the area. Manti is part of our heritage and must never be forgotten.



Looking north across McComb Park.
Anna Crose Highway is in the distance

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MAPS

Manti prior to the 1860's by C. L. LeBaron. [SHM].

Manti in the 1860's by C. L. LeBaron. [SHM].

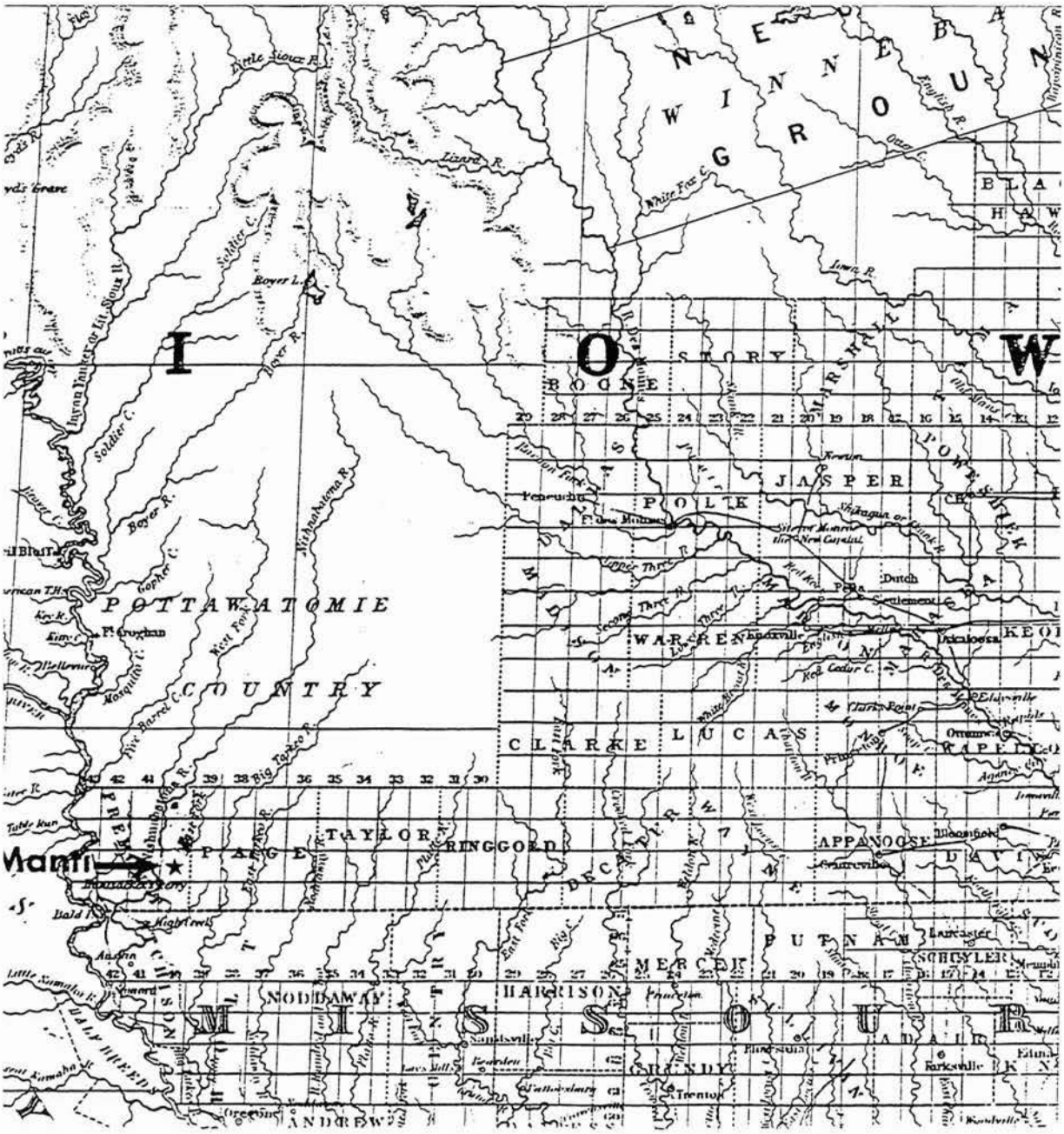
Plat of Iowa-1850. Manti...The Grove.... SHM.

Shenandoah Plat-1875. A. T. Andreas.... SPL.

Shenandoah Plat-1988. City Hall, Shenandoah, Iowa.

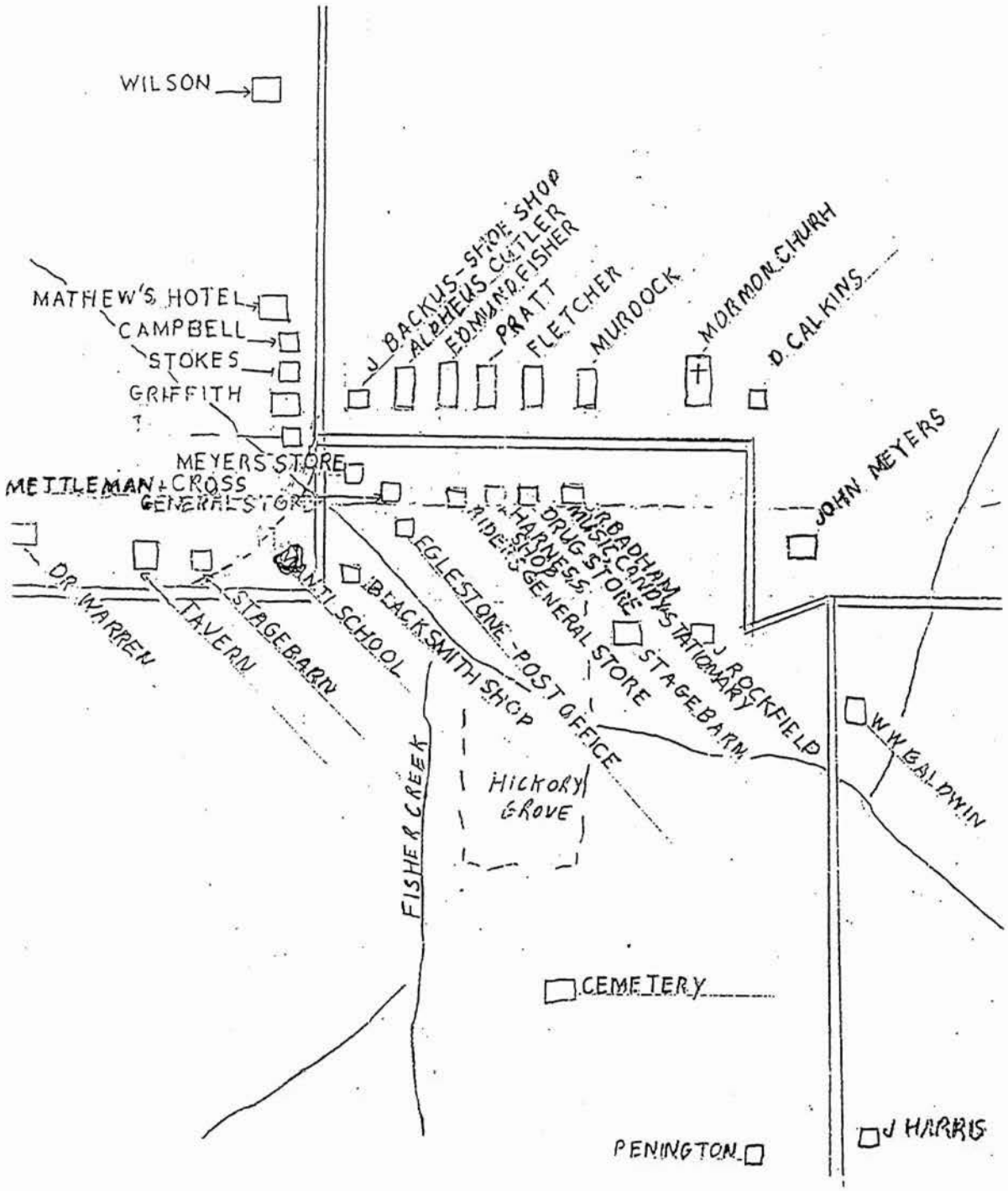
Shenandoah city map. Chamber of Commerce, Shenandoah, Iowa.

APPENDIX A



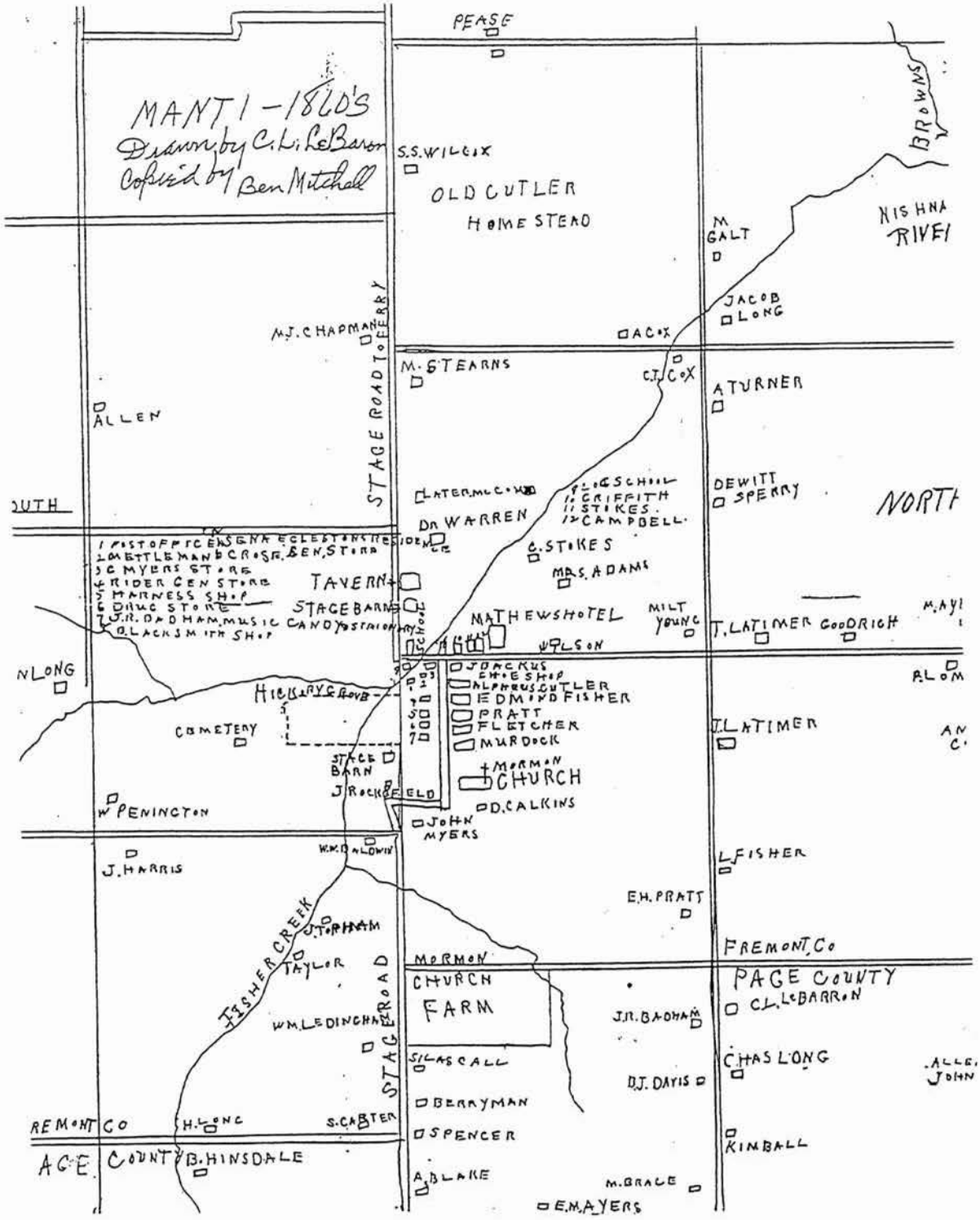
Part of Iowa Map showing boundaries in 1850 and the 5,000,000 acres in Northwest Iowa deeded to the Pottawatamie Indians. The star showing in Fremont County indicates the location of Manti. from Manti . . . The Grove, The Town, The Cemetery. [SHM]

APPENDIX B



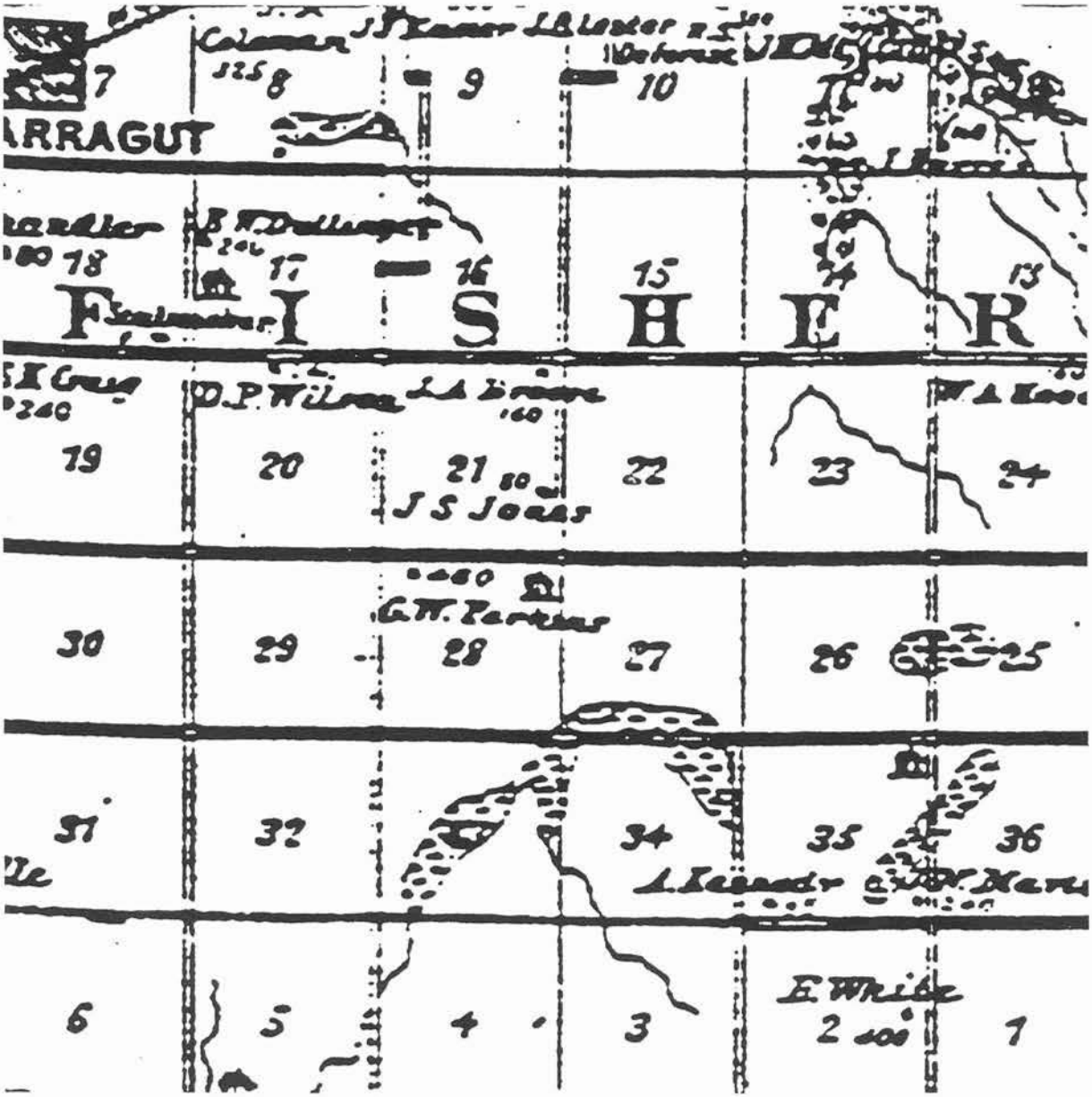
Manti prior to 1860, from C. L. LeBaron
Shenandoah Historical Museum

APPENDIX C



Manti in the 1860s, drawn by C. L. LeBaron, copied by Ben Mitchell
Shenandoah Historical Museum

APPENDIX D



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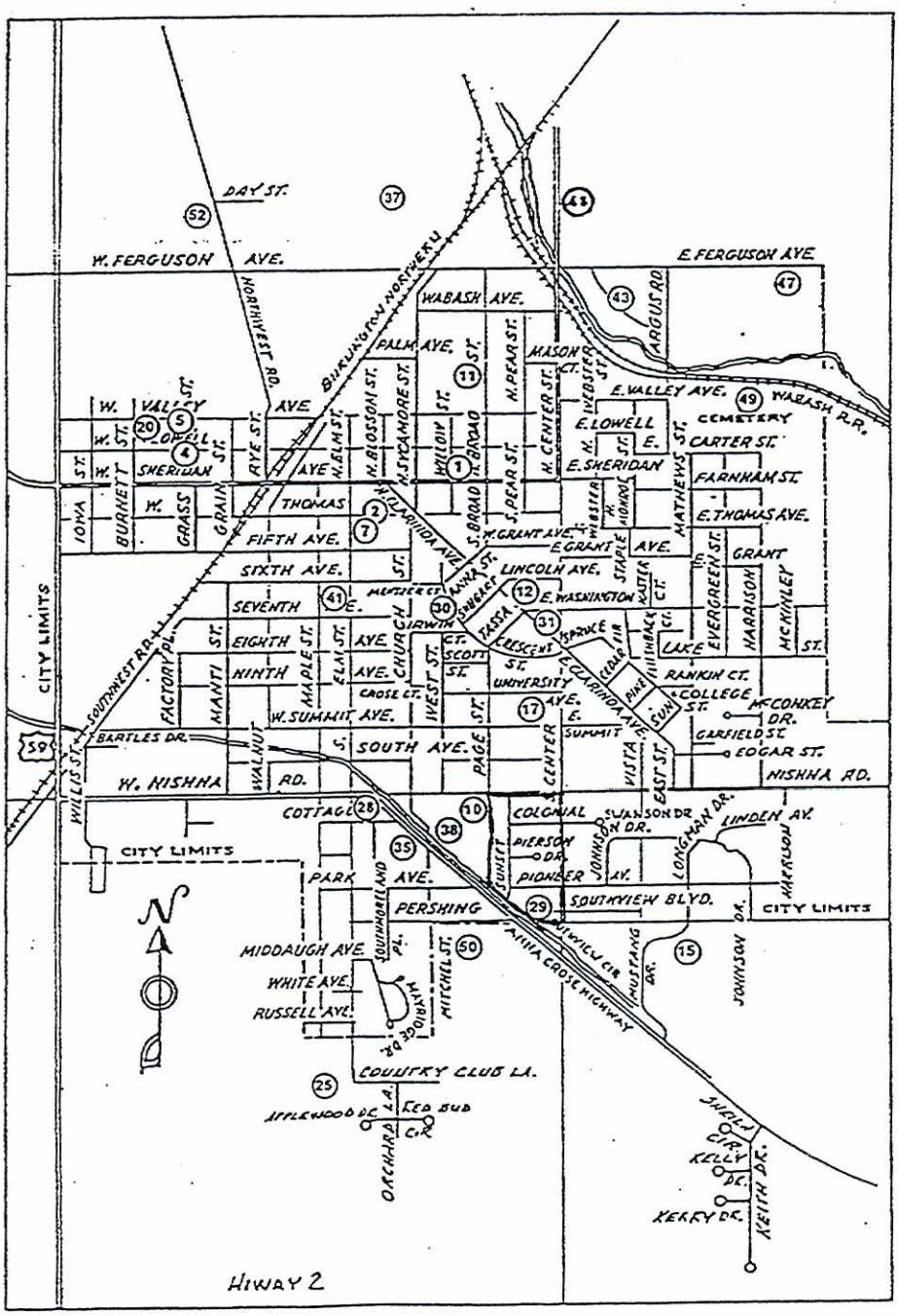
APPENDIX E



City of Shenandoah
Chamber of Commerce, Shenandoah, Iowa