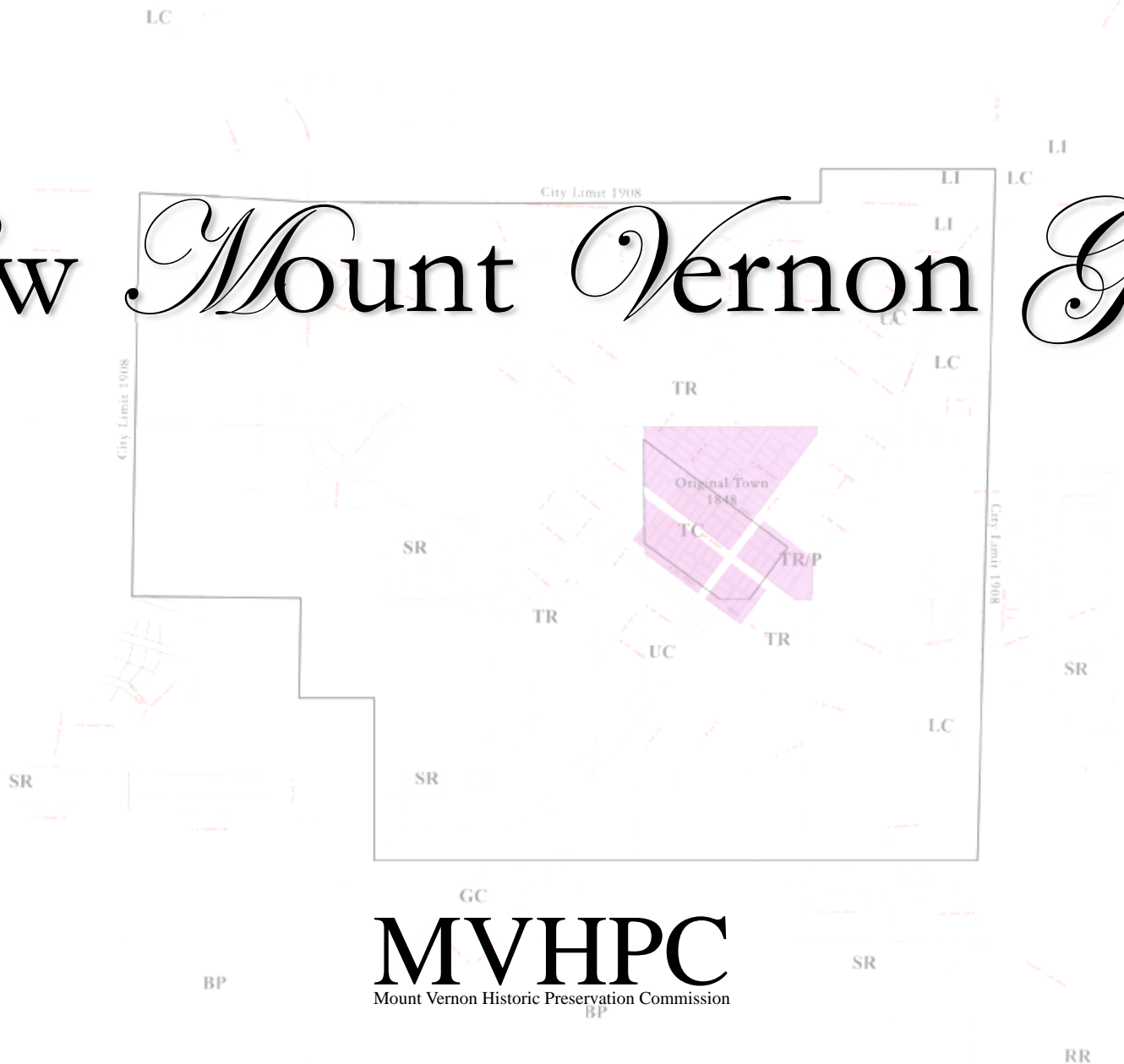


How Mount Vernon Grew



MVHPC
Mount Vernon Historic Preservation Commission

How Mount Vernon Grew

The following maps and overlays trace the development of Mt. Vernon from the initial survey of 1847 to 2004. This is the story of the why, how, when, and where a small town grew

Here the forces of topography and history intersect to determine patterns of development on a scale that can be easily understood. Welcome to this fascinating history

MVHPC

Mount Vernon Historic Preservation Commission

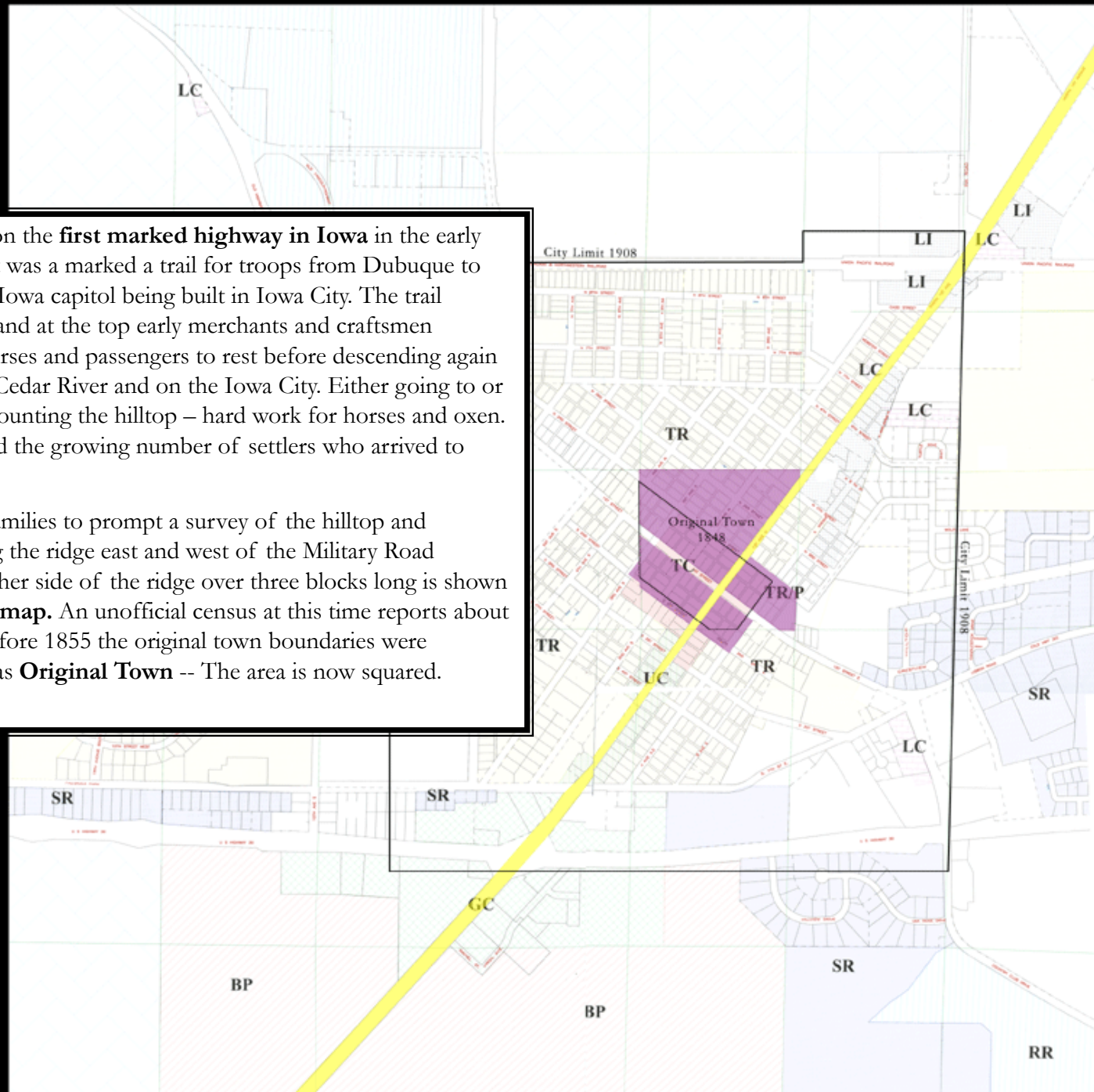
Chapter I

How a Small Town Grew – A little

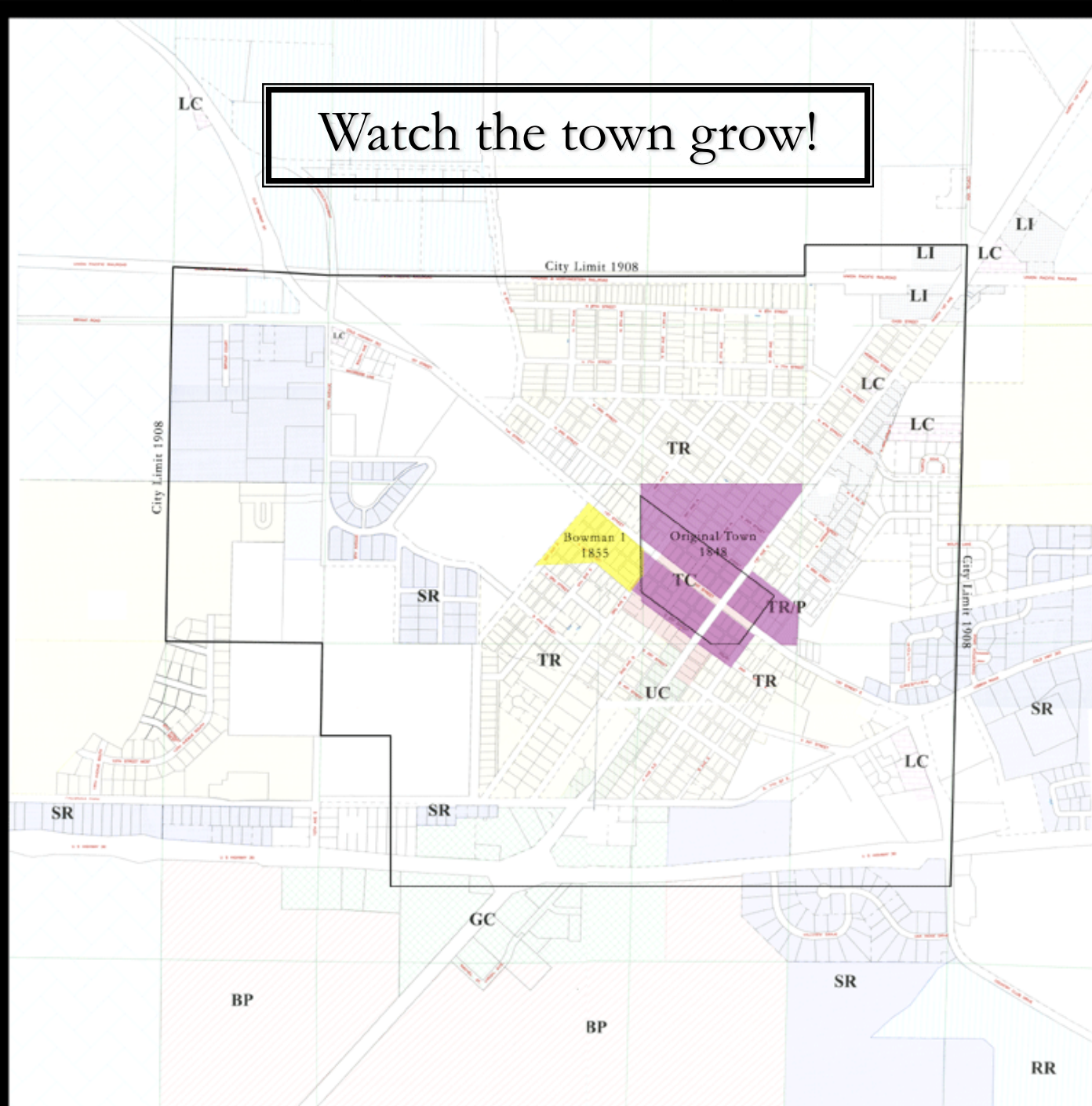
Note to reader: Watch the map, then read the text

Mt. Vernon grew as a rest stop on the **first marked highway in Iowa** in the early 1840s called the Military Road. It was a marked trail for troops from Dubuque to quickly move to defend the new Iowa capitol being built in Iowa City. The trail crossed the top of the steep hill and at the top early merchants and craftsmen provided services for wagons, horses and passengers to rest before descending again to the broad flats along the Red Cedar River and on the Iowa City. Either going to or coming from Dubuque meant mounting the hilltop – hard work for horses and oxen. The small service area also served the growing number of settlers who arrived to claim the flat lands.

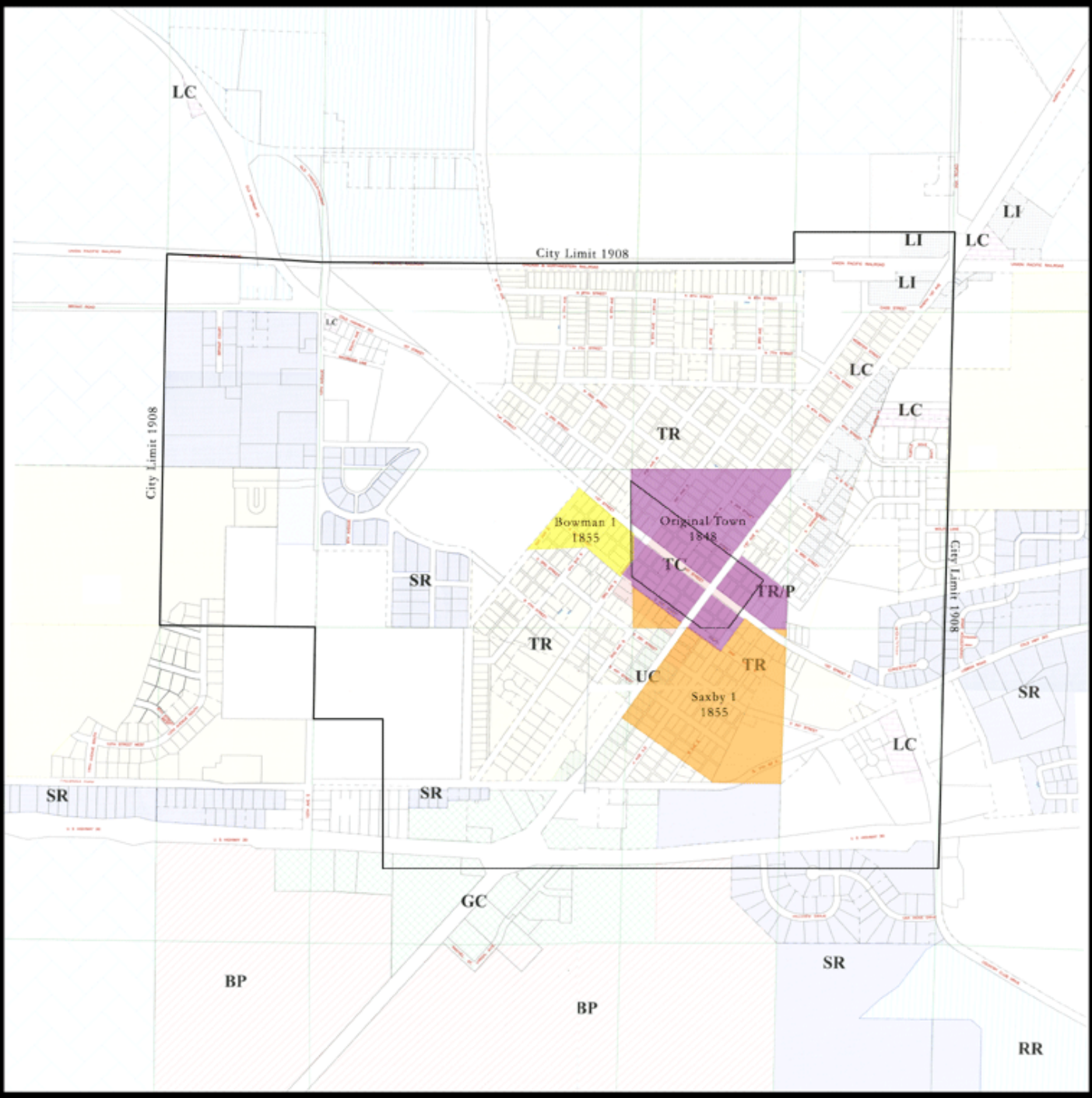
By 1847 there were enough families to prompt a survey of the hilltop and mapping a small settlement along the ridge east and west of the Military Road crossing. A one-block area on either side of the ridge over three blocks long is shown as **The Original Survey on the map**. An unofficial census at this time reports about 55 persons in the community. Before 1855 the original town boundaries were extended to the north as shown as **Original Town** -- The area is now squared.



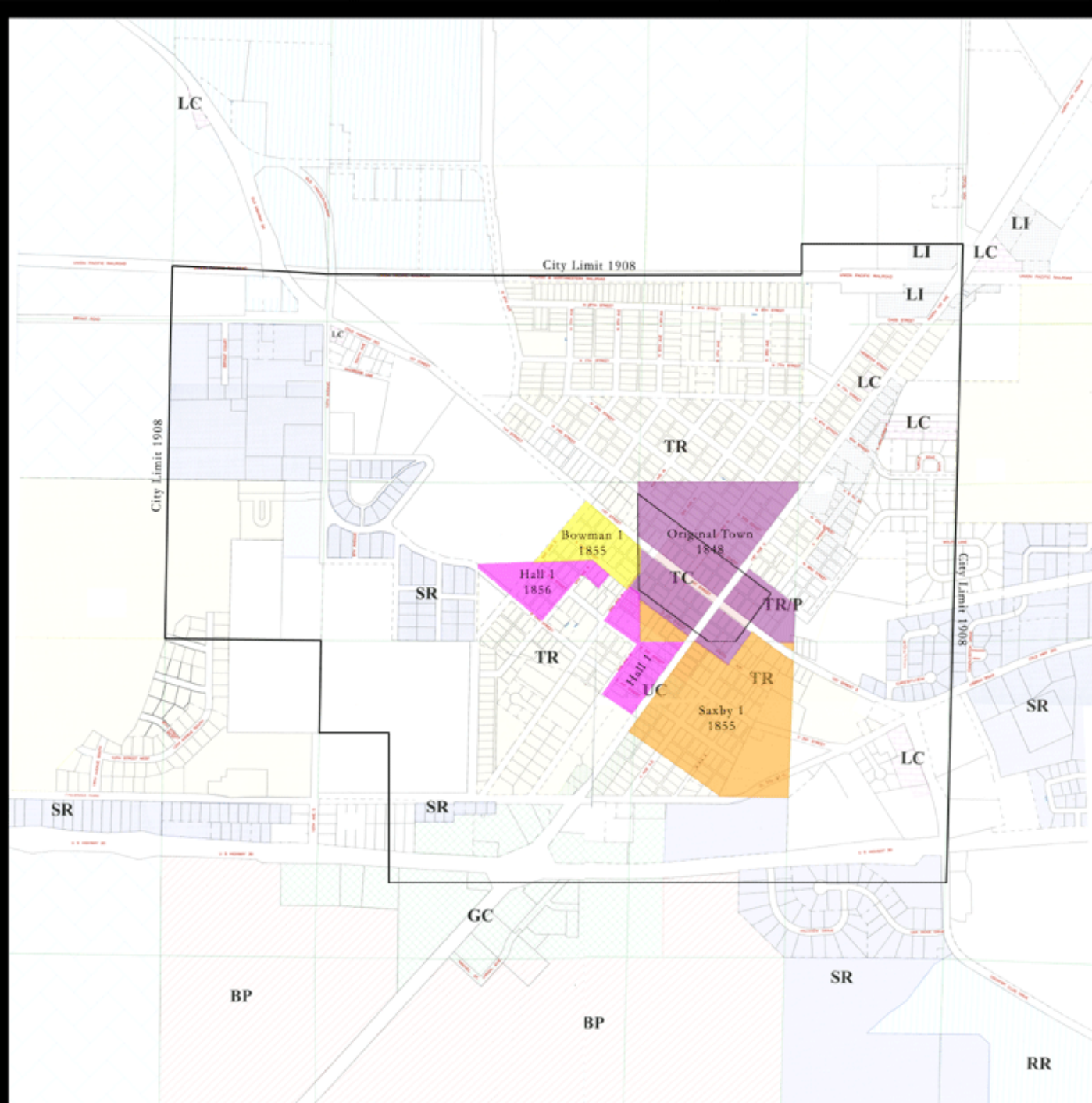
The original Cornell College campus was about 25 acres (1853) to the west of the original town with large additions following in 1857. The Rev. George B. **Bowman** was the founder of the first Methodist congregation and Cornell College in addition to having a sharp eye for land deals. Note that his **First Addition in 1855** (two years after the establishment of Cornell) connects the original town with the campus along Main Street.



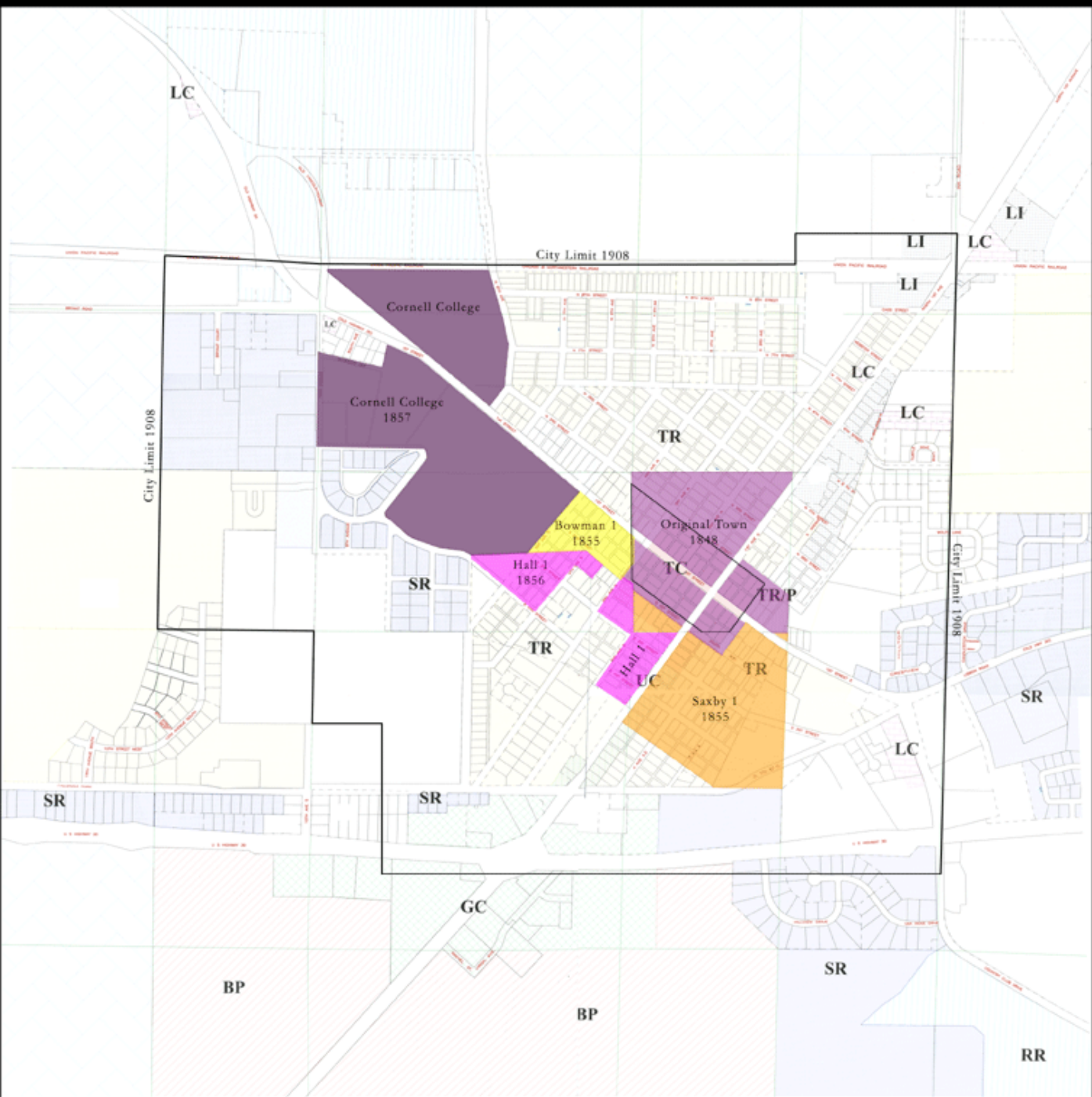
In the same year **Saxby's First** addition incorporates land along the Military Road and the well-drained land to the east of the Road.



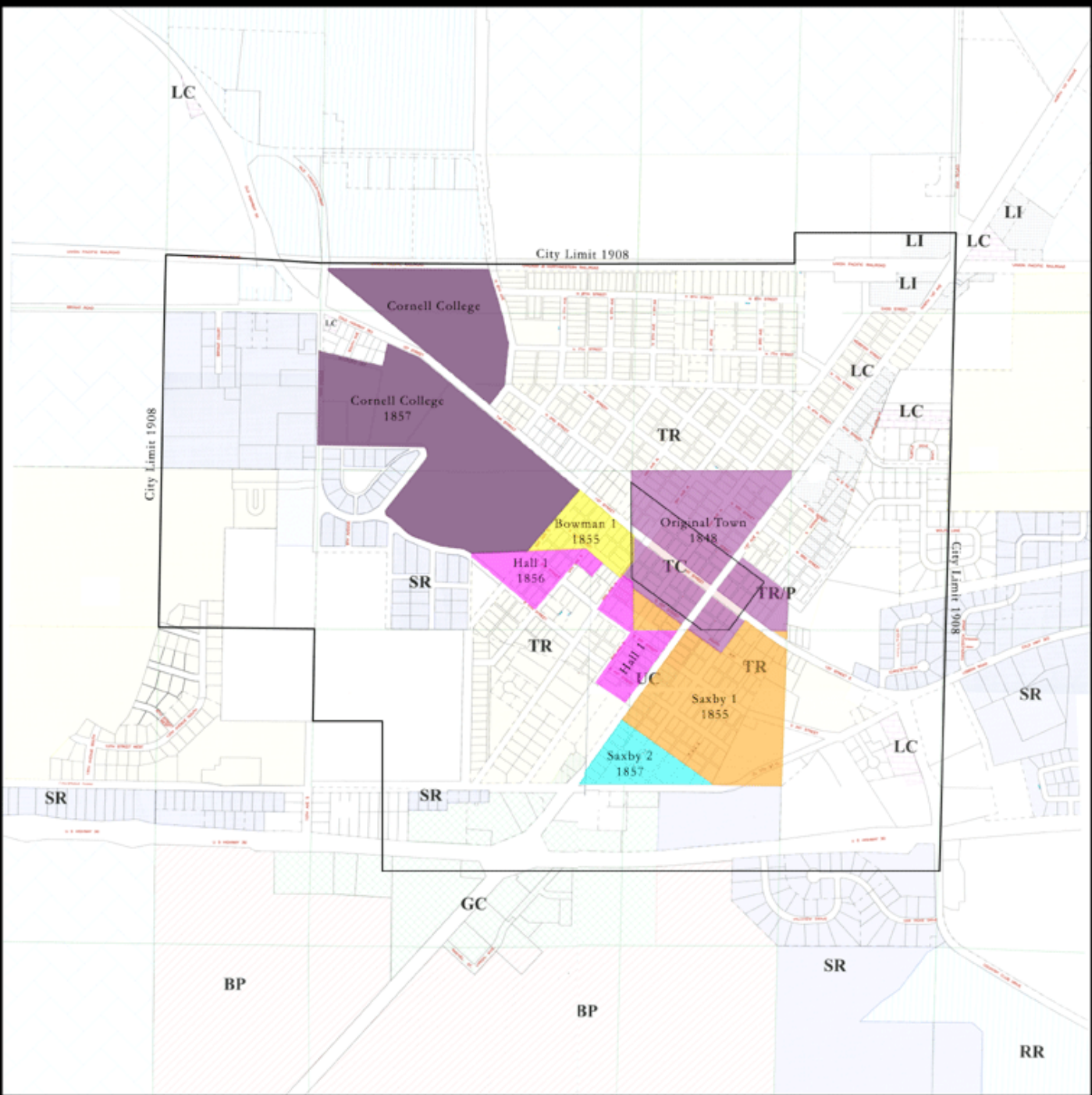
Mr. **Hall in 1856** also had an eye on the future adding lots on the west side of the Military Road across from Saxby AND adjacent to the college to the south and joining Bowman's land.



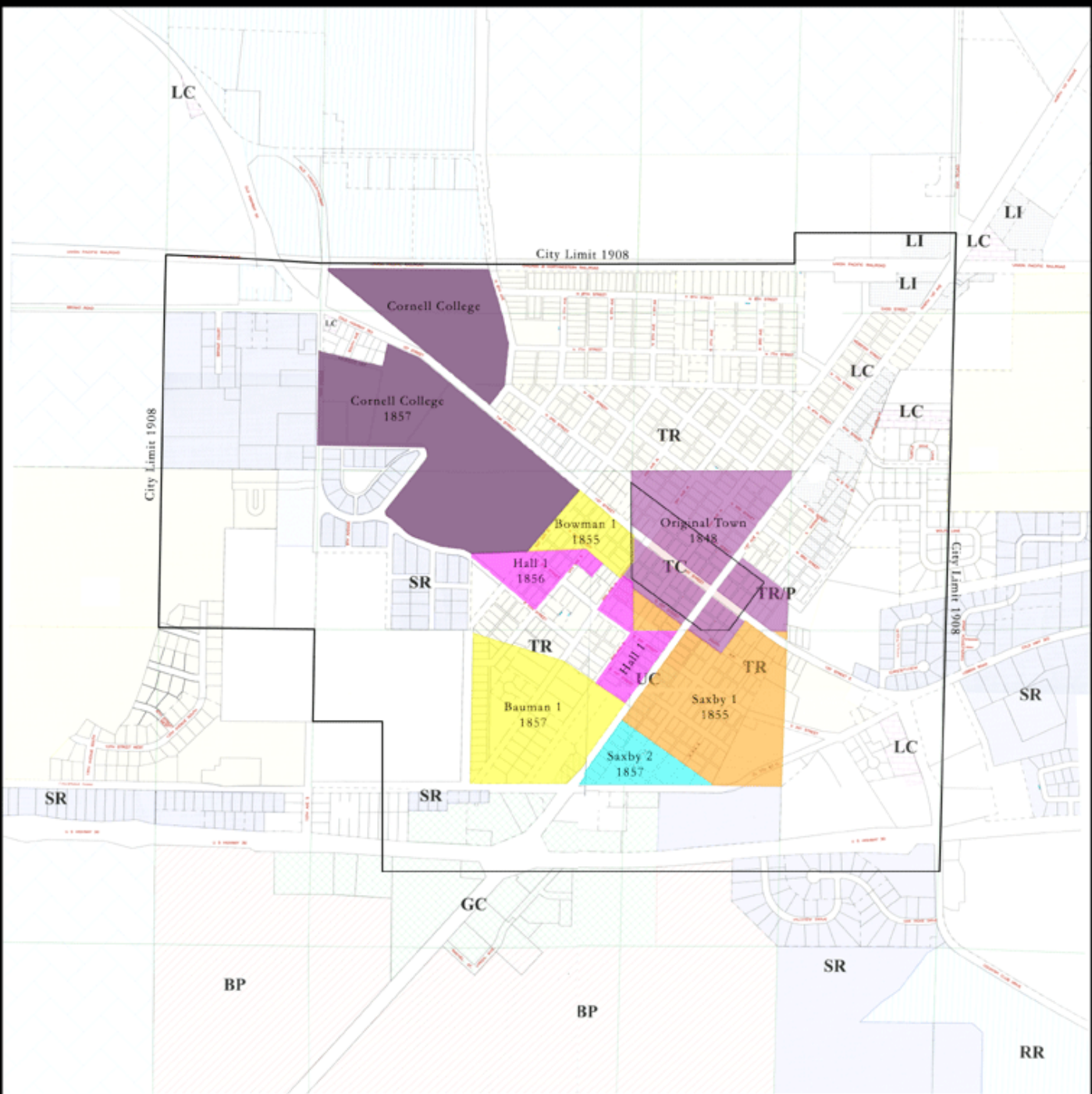
This map shows the **Cornell College** campus as brought into the town in 1857. The college owned much of this land before that date but had not filed legal papers.



Five additions were made to the town in 1857. **Saxby's Second** to the south along the Military Road to the city boundary,

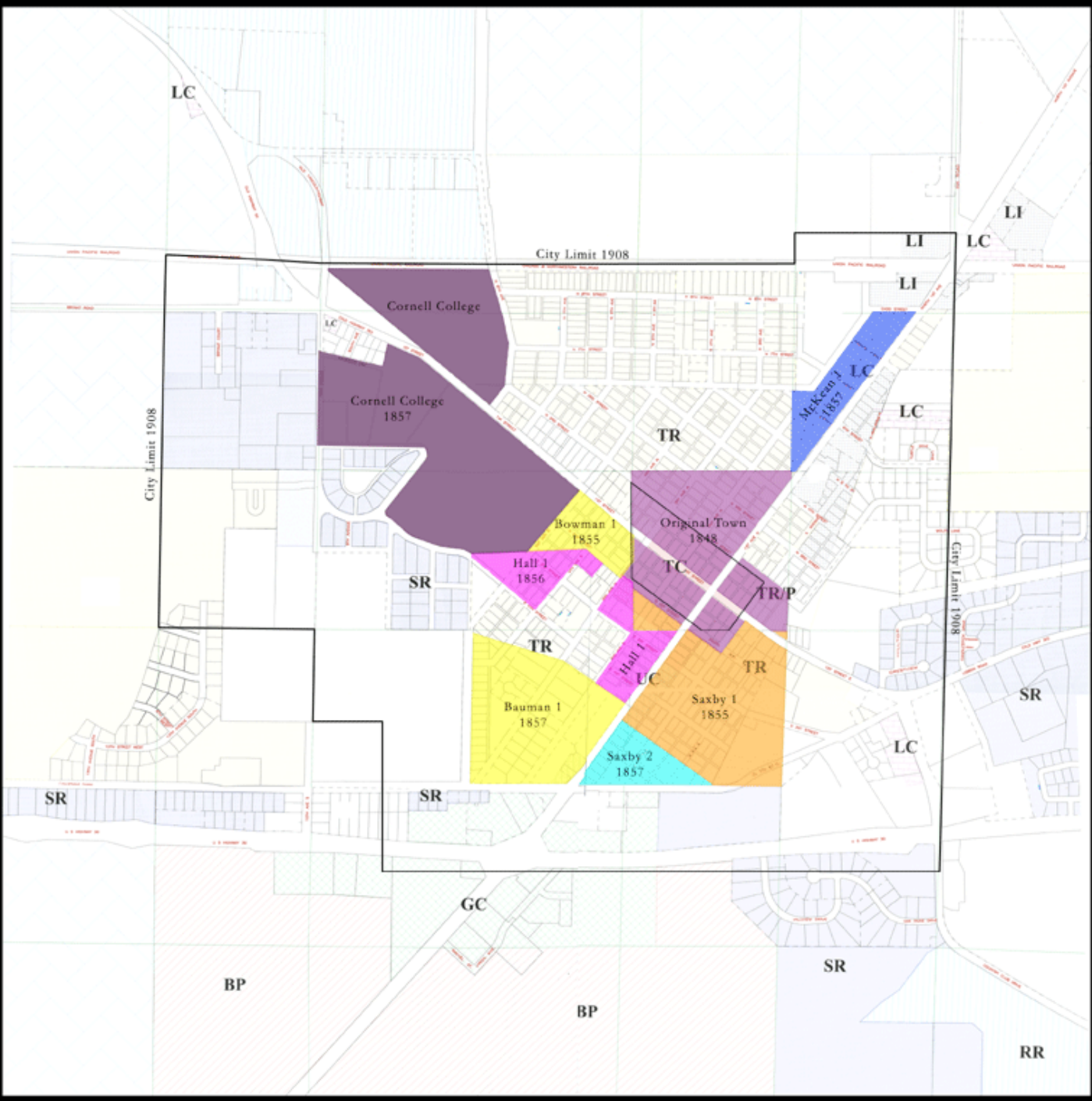


Bauman's Addition to the west
of Saxby,

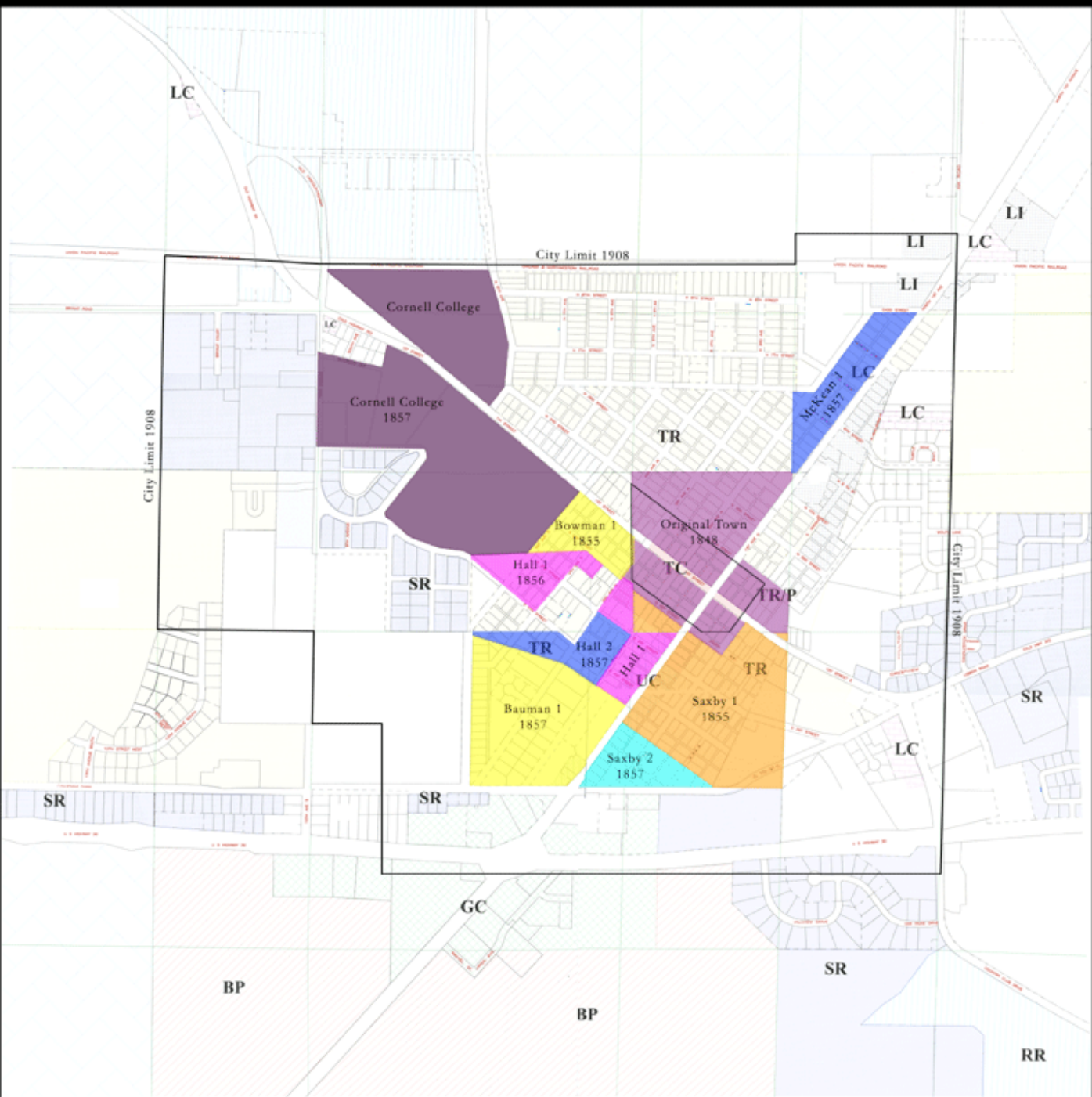


McKean's Addition north along the Military Road shows how the trail influenced town growth.

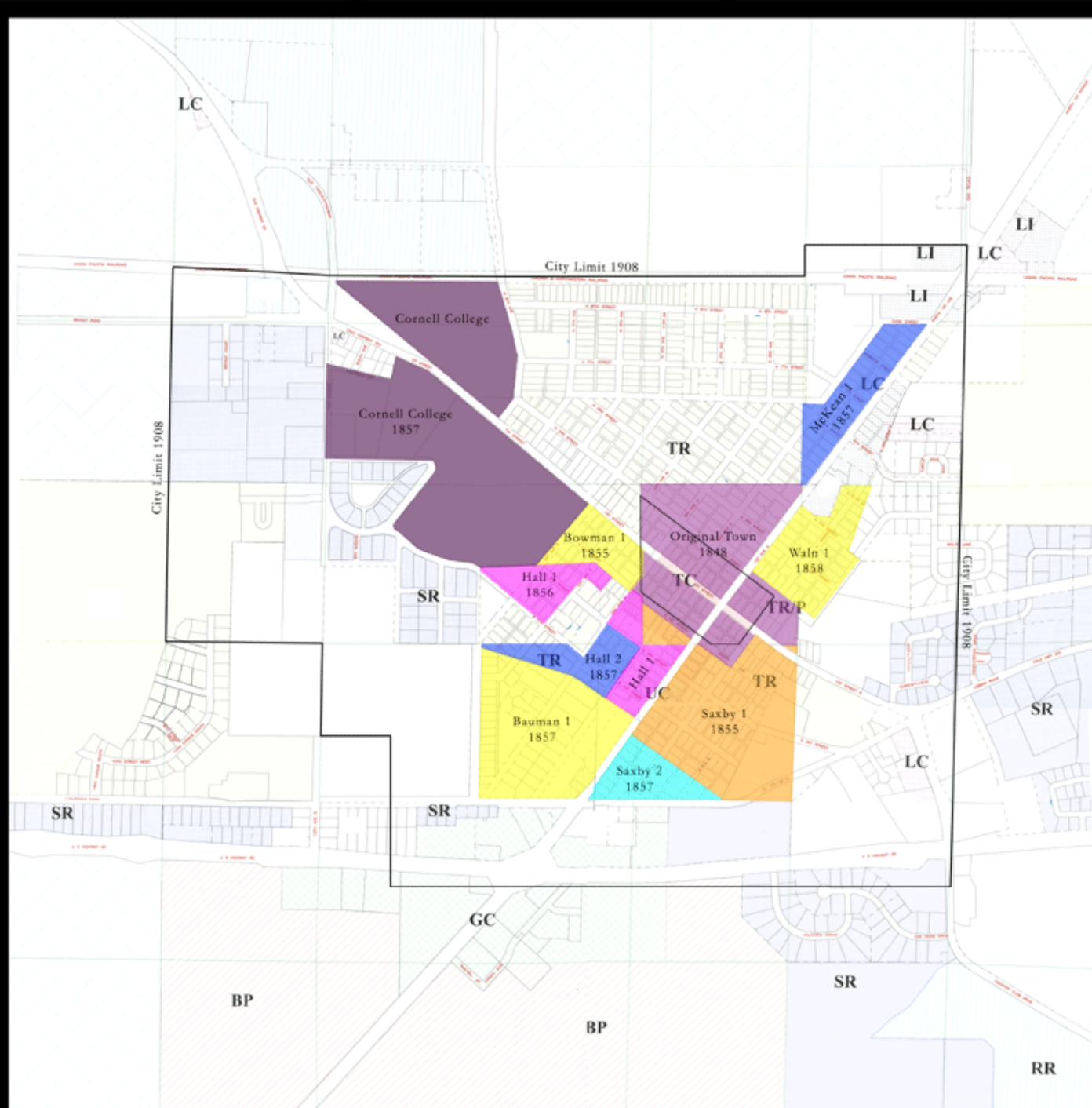
Note that in 1858 the railroad defined the northern boundaries and KcKean's addition may have been made with the knowledge that the crossing of the Military Road and the railroad would invite residential and commercial development.



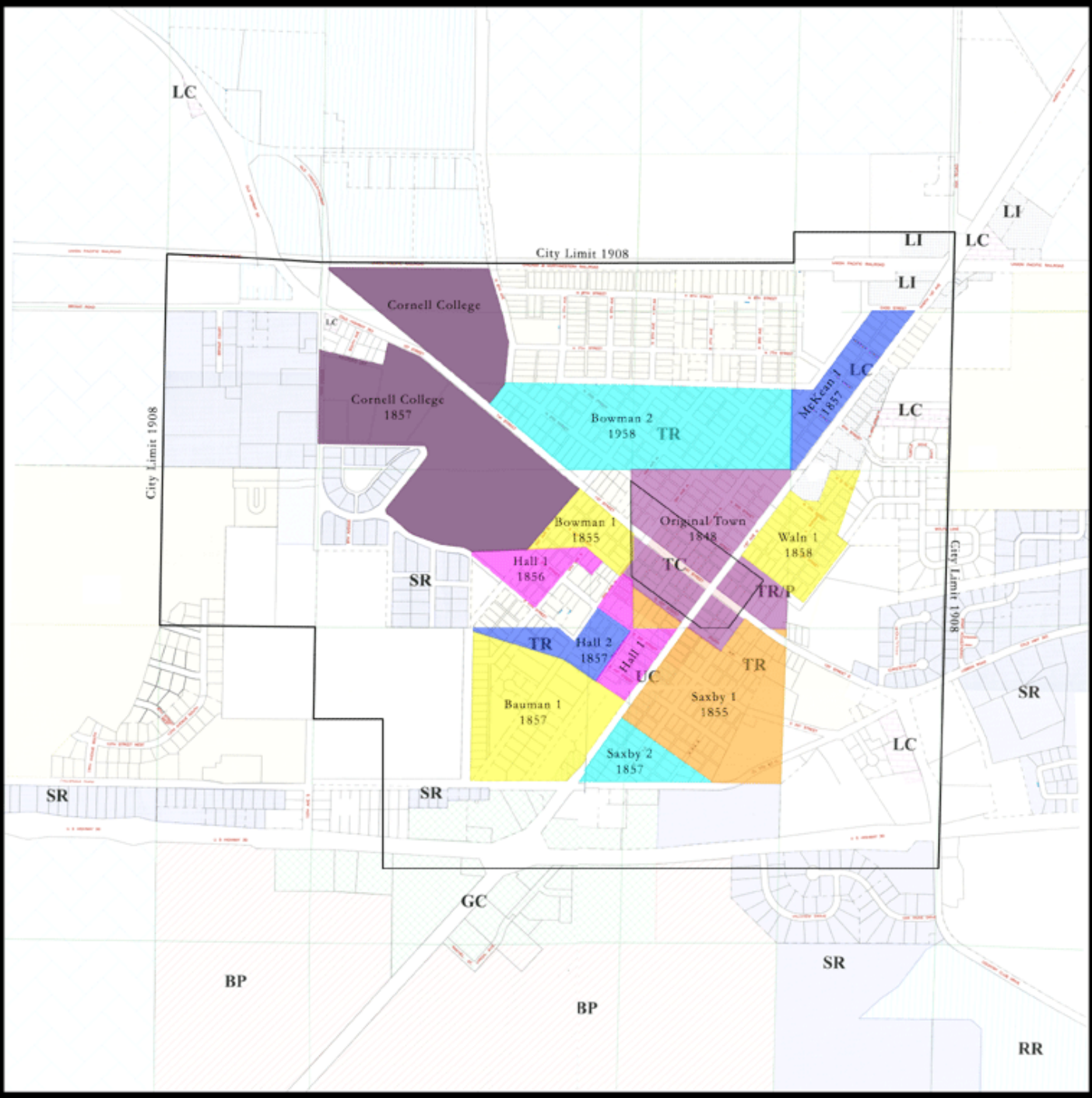
Hall's Second Addition
completed the additions so that
nearly all of the land south of
Main Street to Palisades Road
(1908 city limits)
was part of the
city.



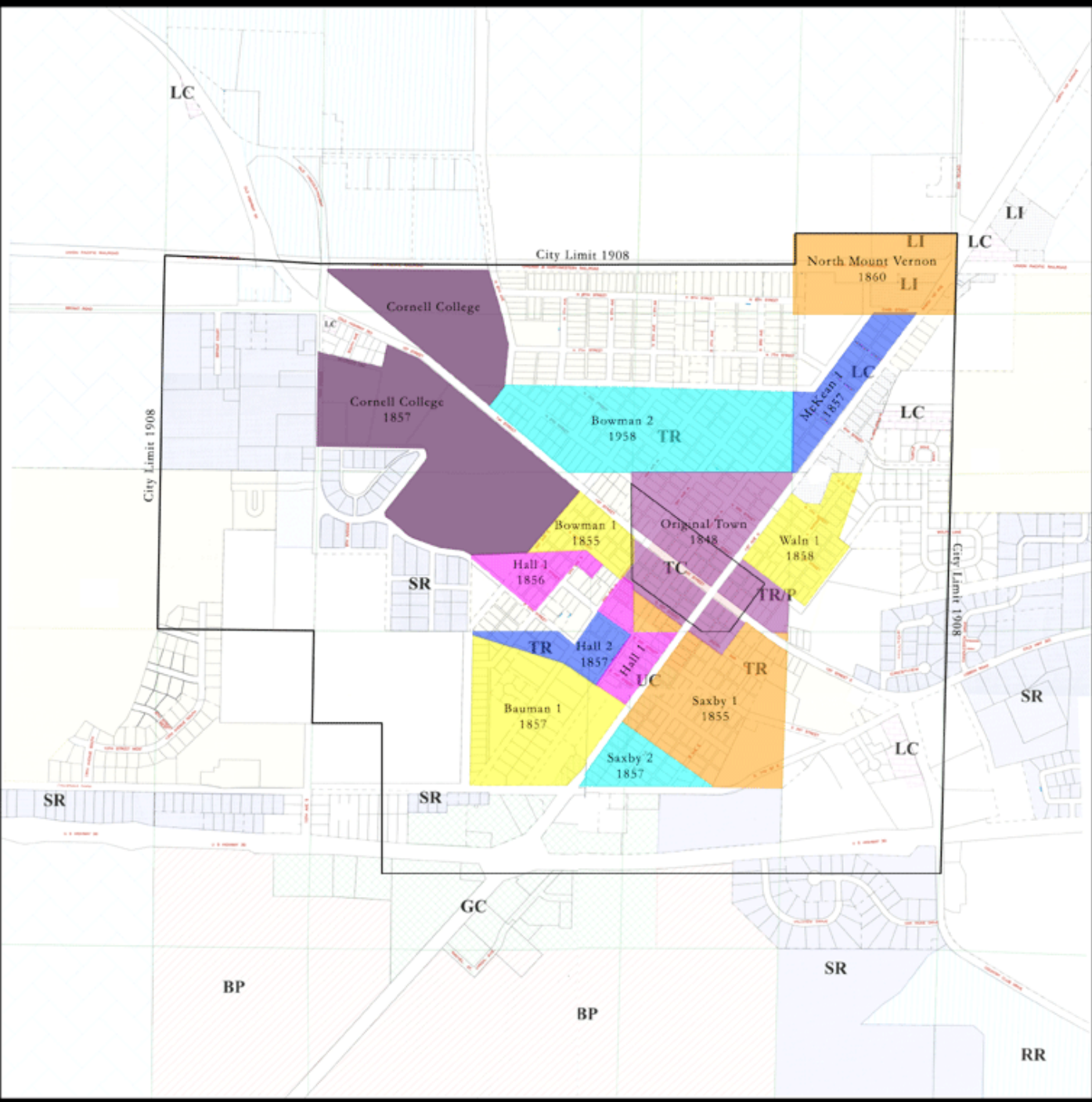
Waln's Addition to the east of the Military Road in 1858 was suitable land for homes but the remaining land to the east was a hollow and would not be developed until the 21st century,



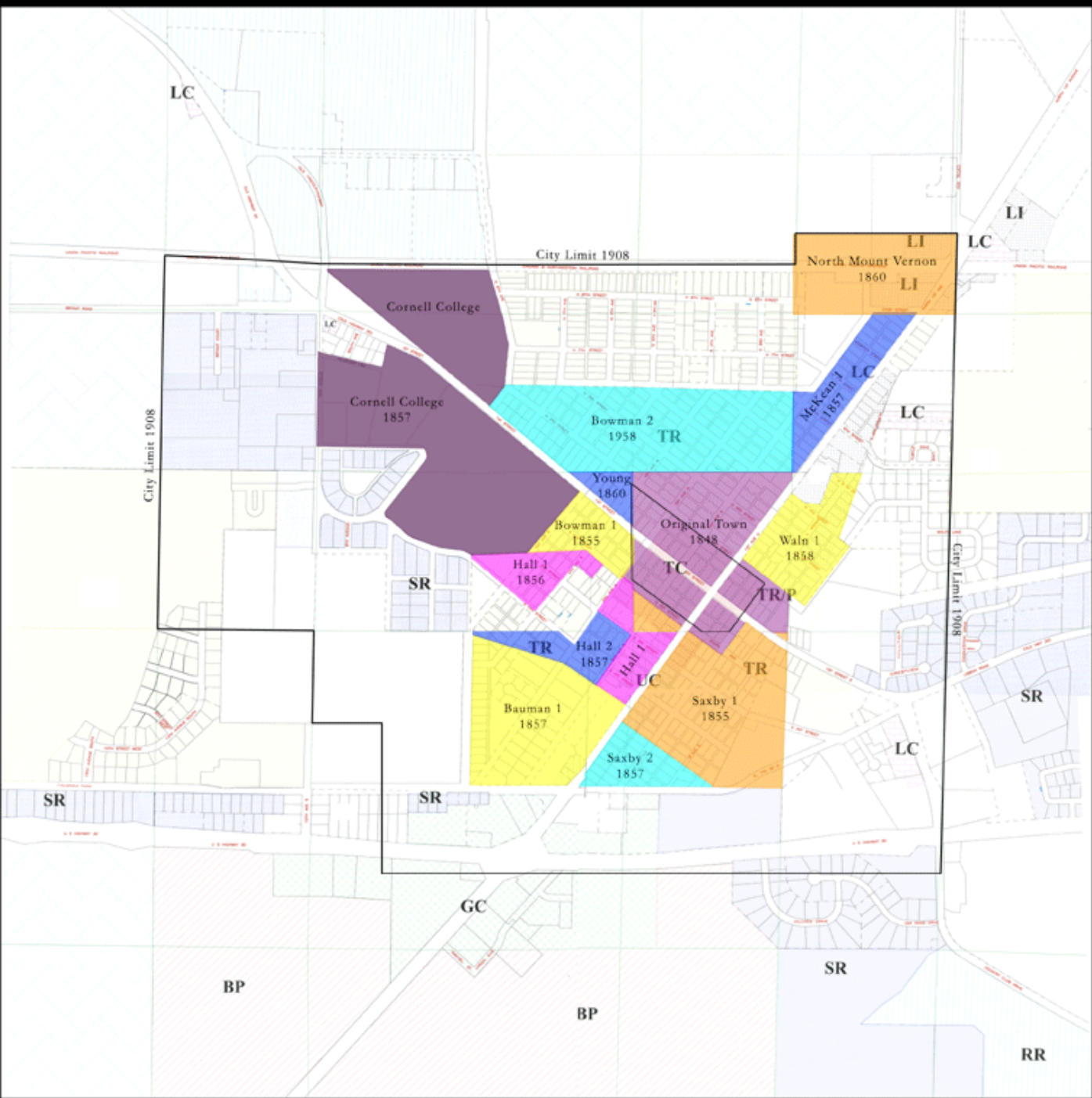
George Bowman's Second Addition (1858) plotted almost the enter buildable land on the north slope of the hill. The addition is the largest in the city.



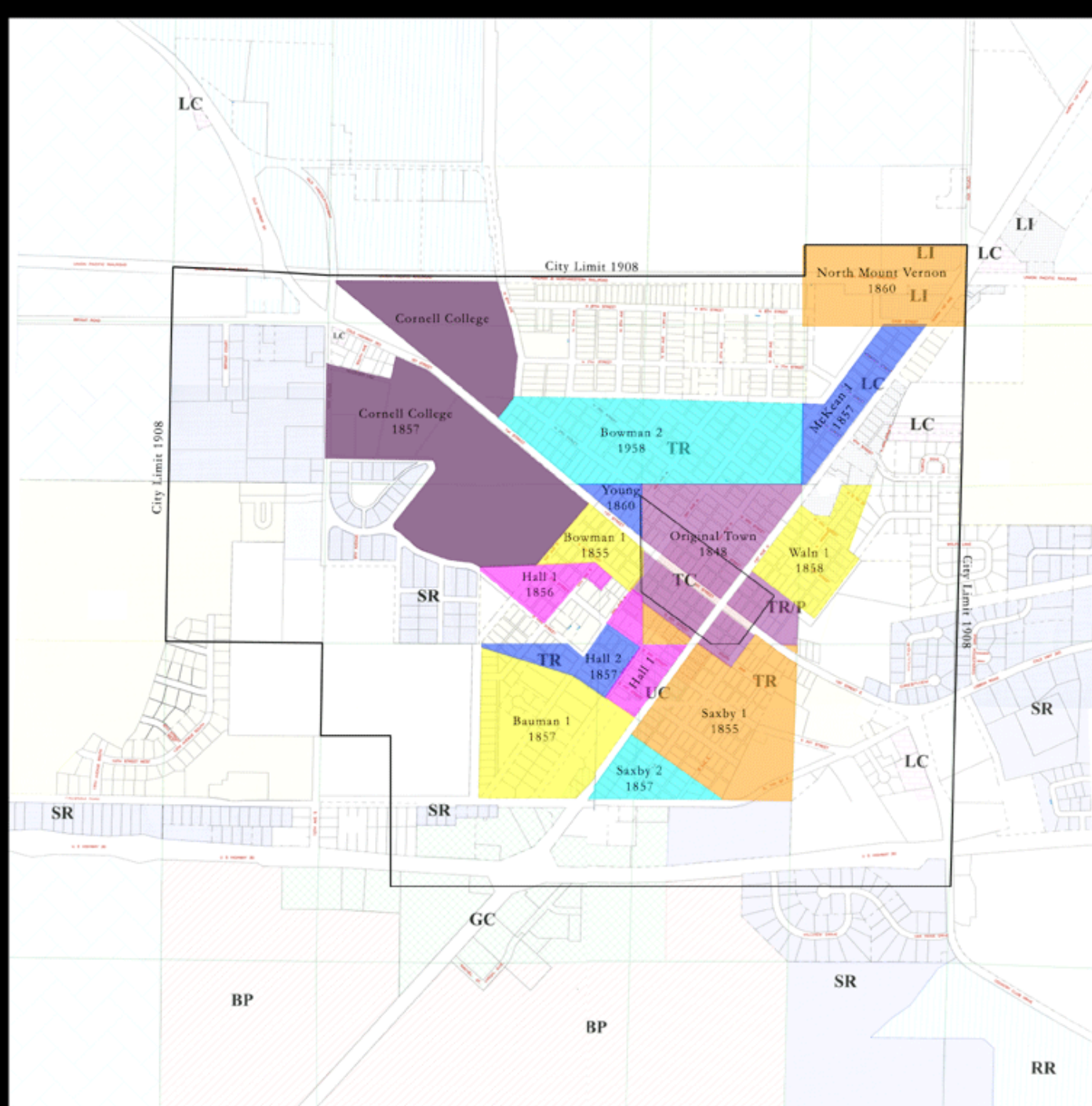
The plot for a **North Mount Vernon Addition** in 1860 suggests a developer was sure the new railroad and station would draw many to the area. The plotting had 67 lots.



Young's Addition (a small area)
(1860) resulted in all the land along
the ridge being organized.

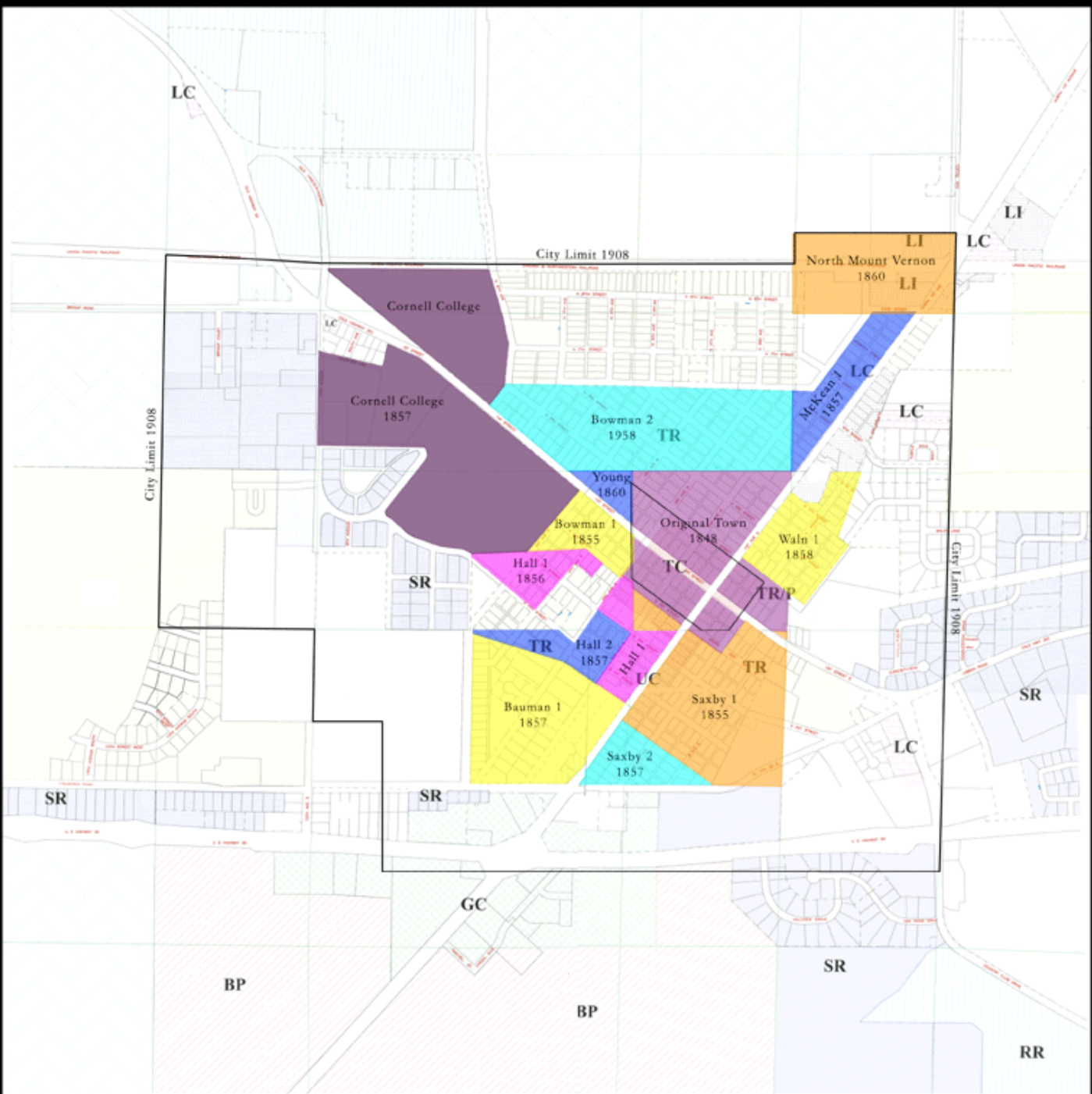


NOTE: The town population in 1860 was 760 so given the total number of lots included in the town by then, it seems there were many lots for sale. At the coming of the Civil War Cornell was well established, the town had a railroad, several churches, and many small businesses.

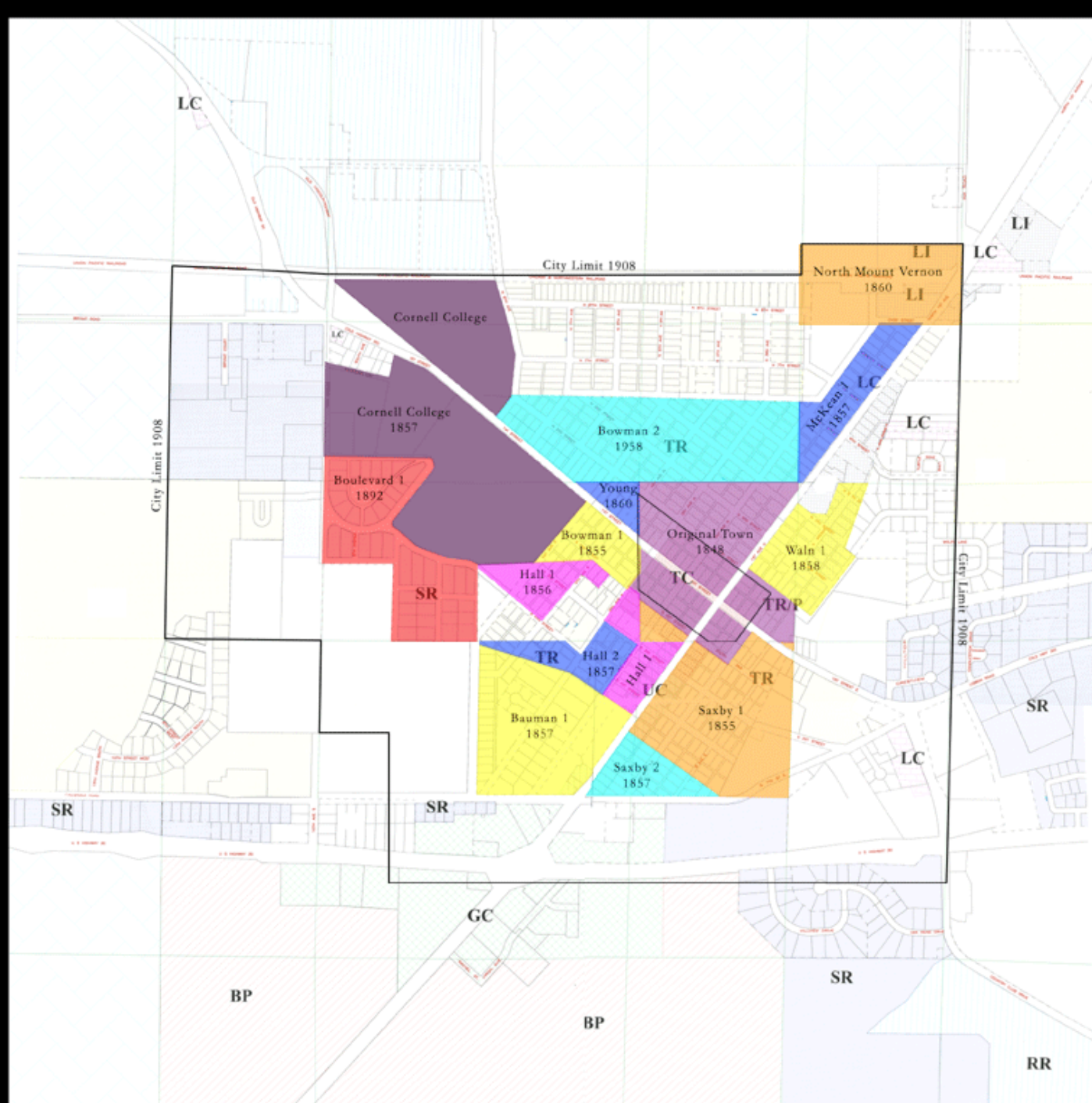


The town grew first to the south as the incline of the hill is more gentle than approaching from the north or north slop. The land between Bowman's Second and the railroad is generally low and not well drained which contributed to the area growing more slowly.

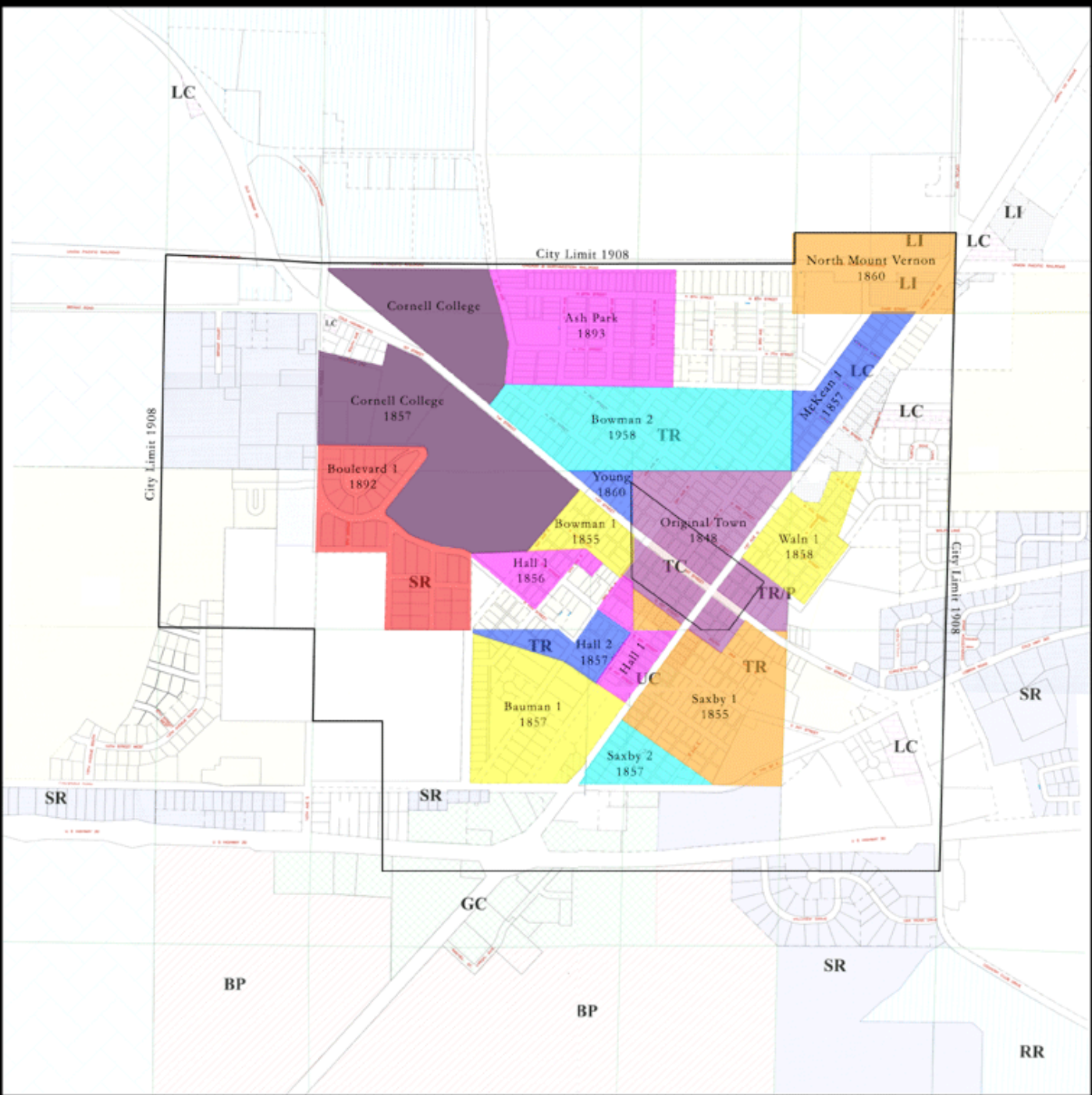
The next addition to the town after 1860 does not occur until 1892 – thirty-two years. The population over those years shows 1870 = 910, 1880 = 977, and 1890 = 1256. Thus, a faster growth rate around 1890 encouraged new developments.



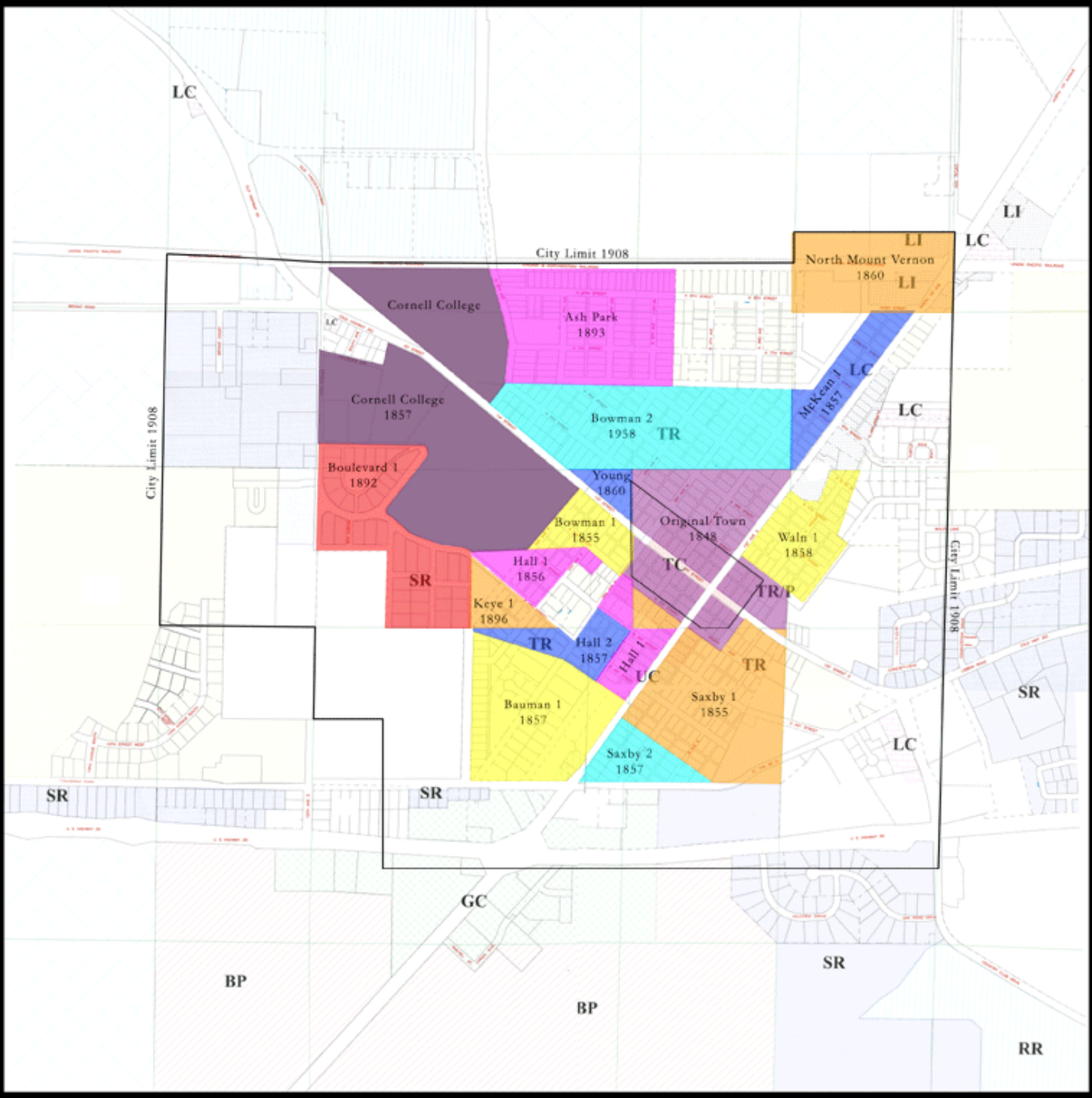
The **College Boulevard Addition** in 1892 was the first area to break from tradition grid streets/avenues and perhaps shows the influence of the newer ideas of city planning often encouraged by the City Beautiful movement.

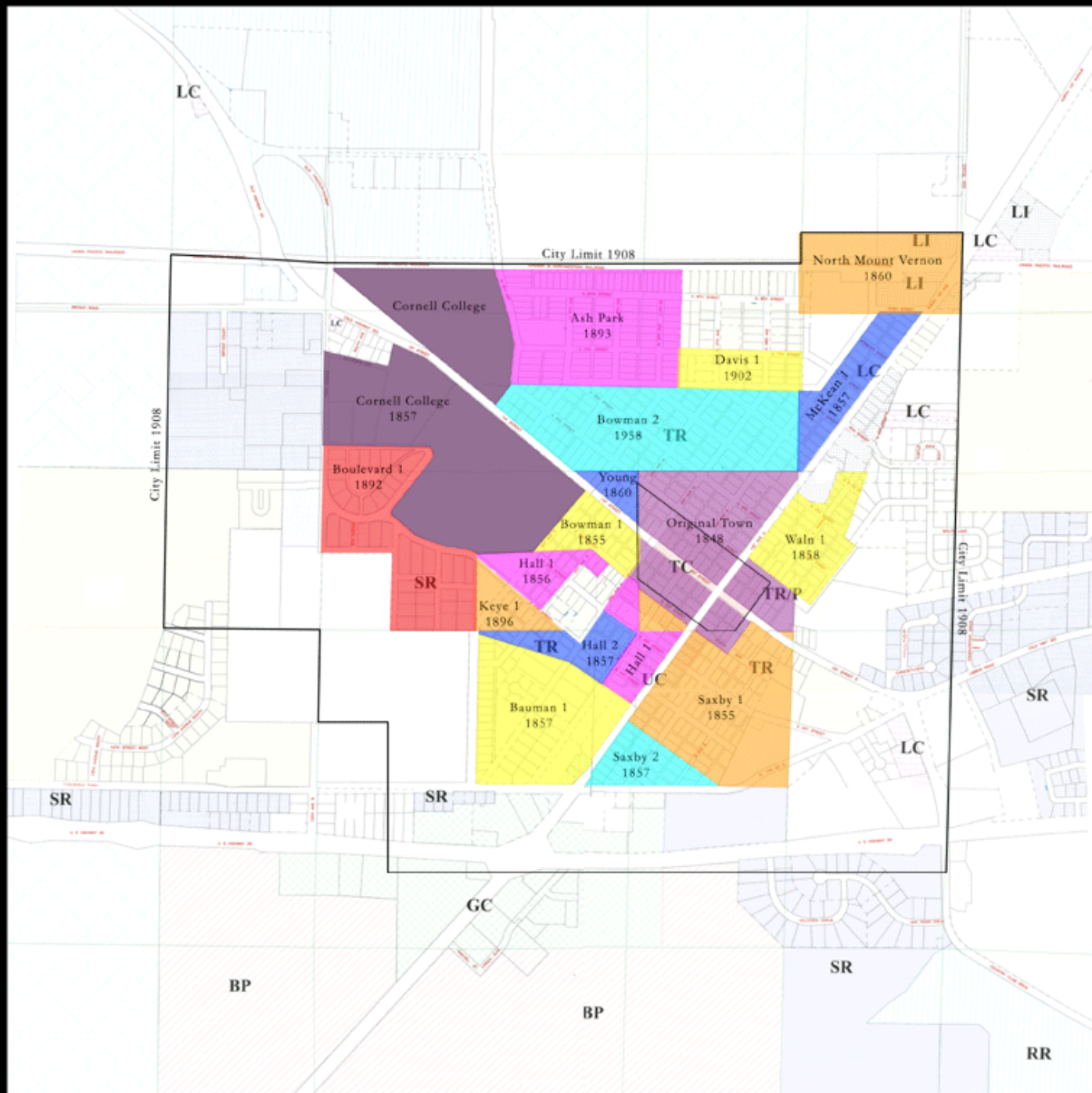


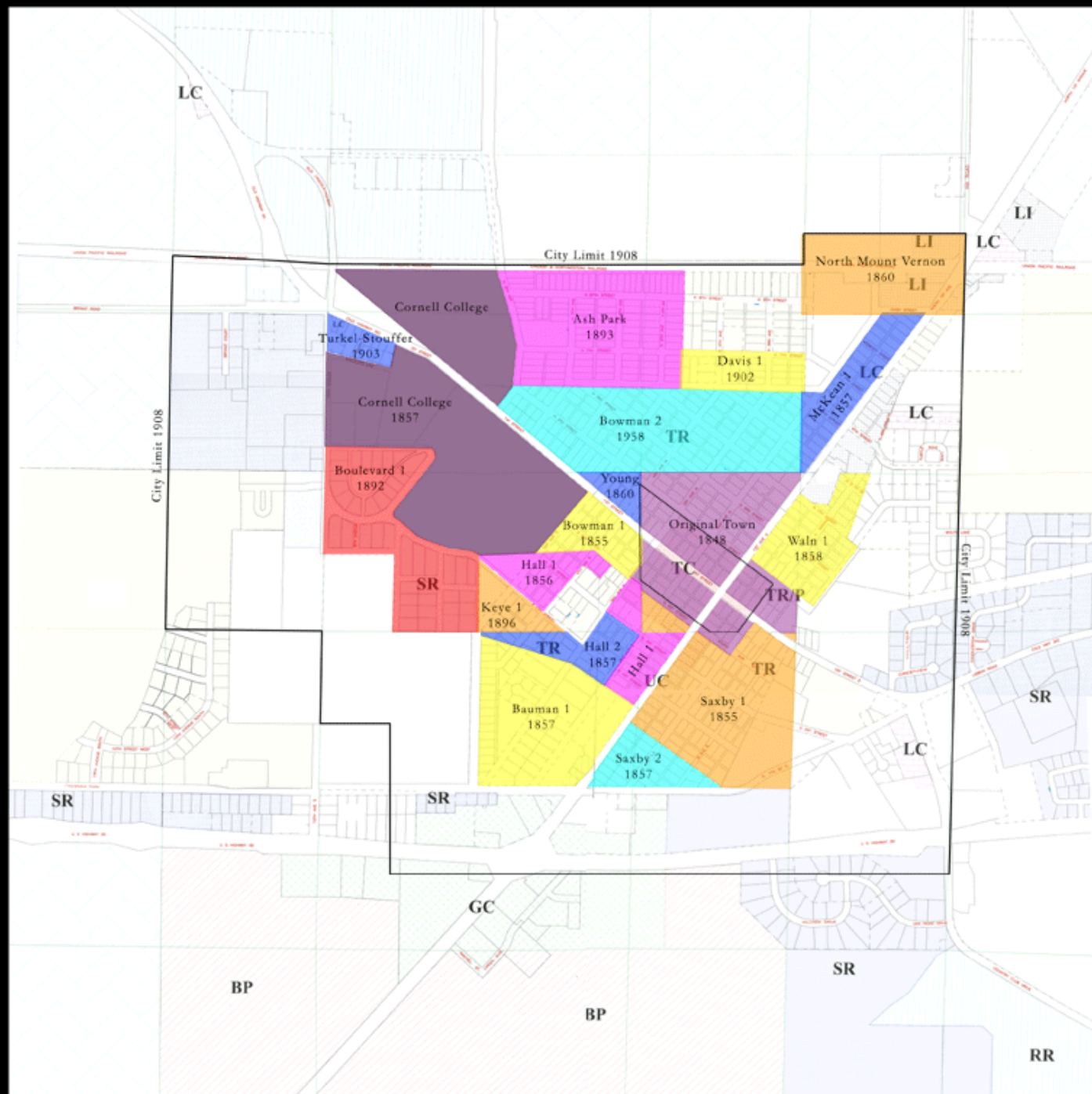
The **Ash Park Addition** from the following year (1893) was the former orchard and pasture of Rueben Ash, early pioneer and owner of a large part of the west end of the new city. Unlike the College Boulevard planners, Ash Park is a continuation of older city planning.



With the coming of the small **Keye's Addition** (1896) nearly all the land to the west of the Military Road to the 1908 city limits is organized.

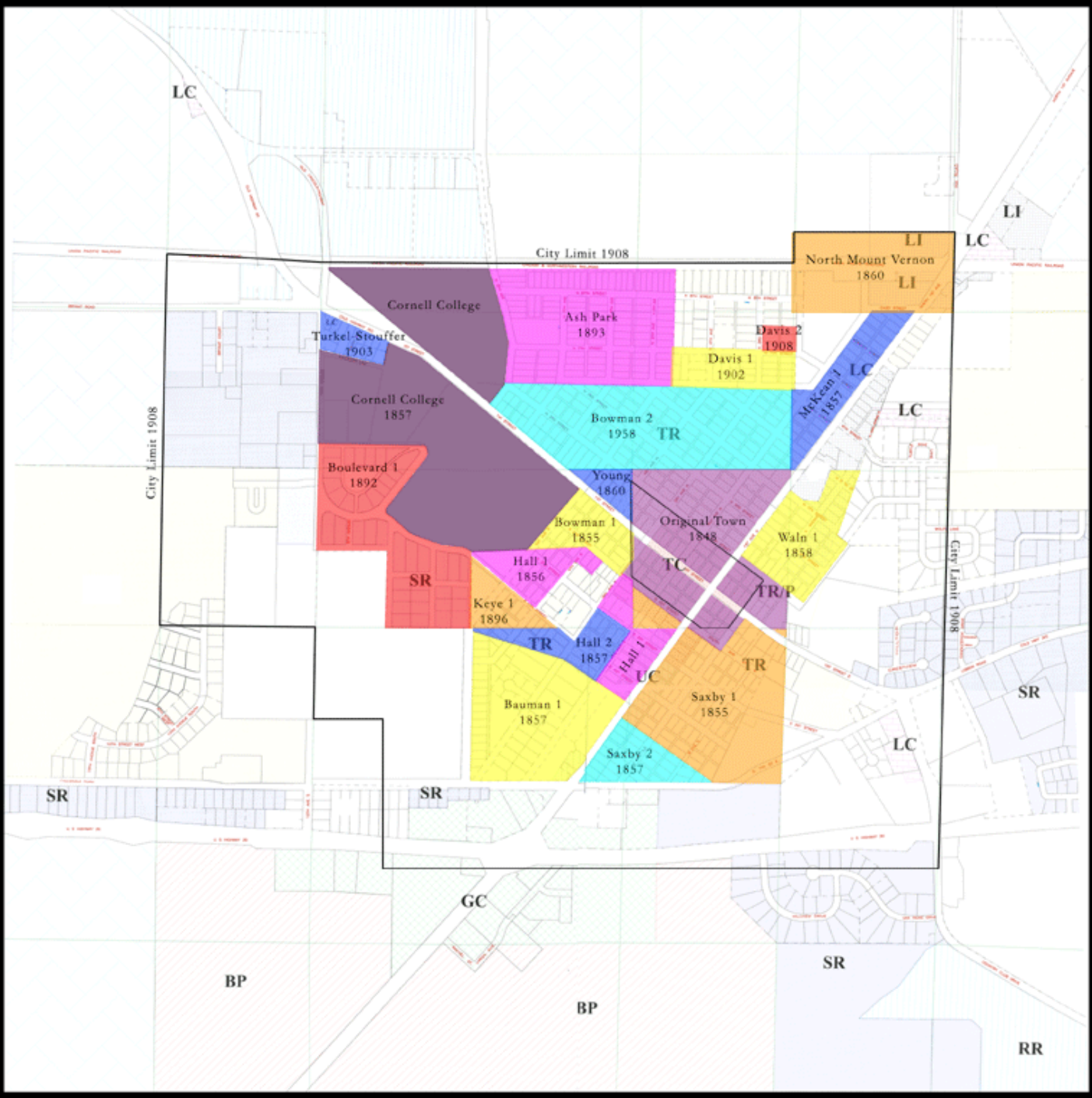




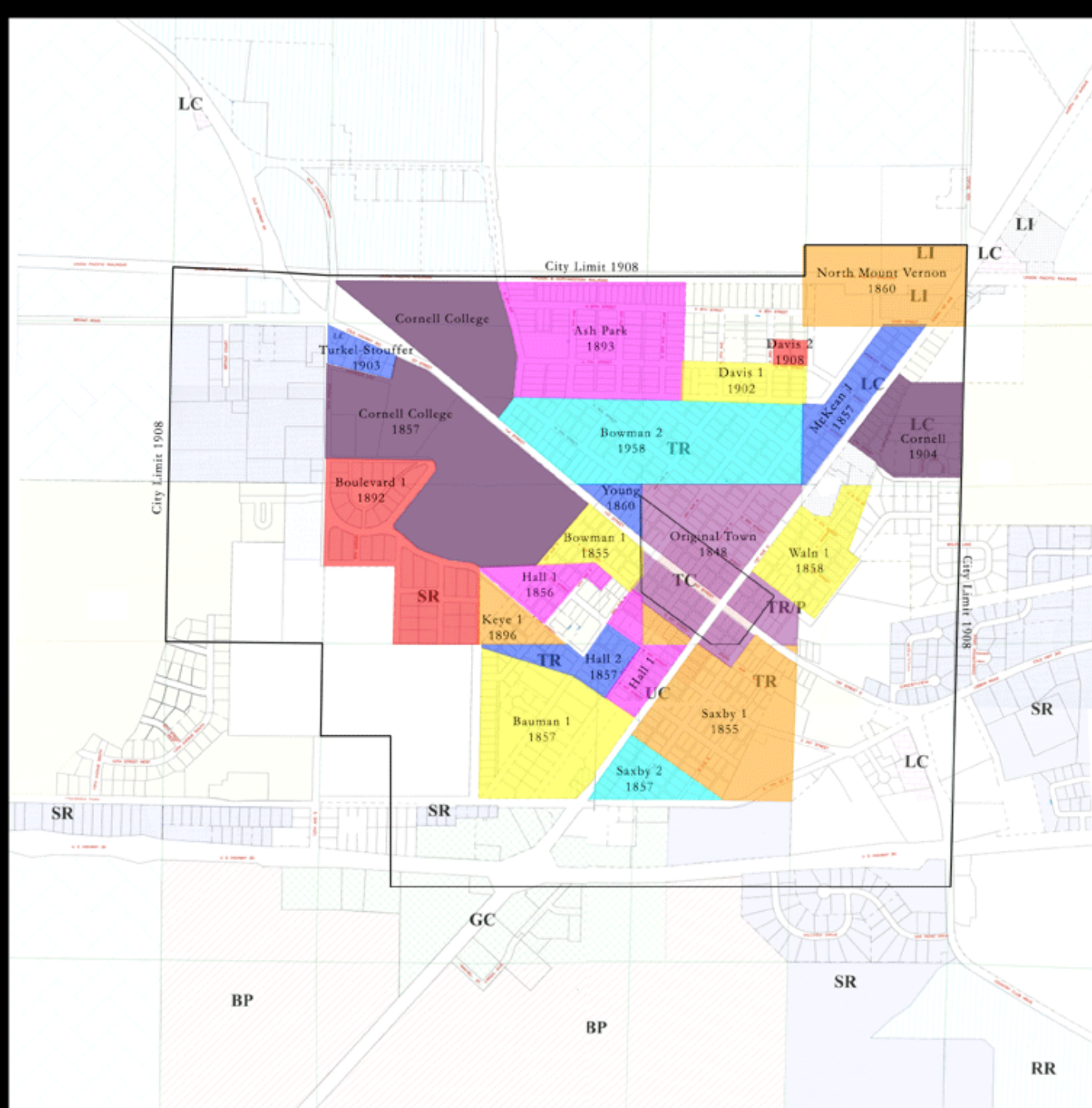


The division of the **Davis** farm into **additions** in 1902, 1903, 1904, 1908 organized for the entire estate. Poor drainage of much of this farm accounts for very slow construction on these lots until after the 1920's.

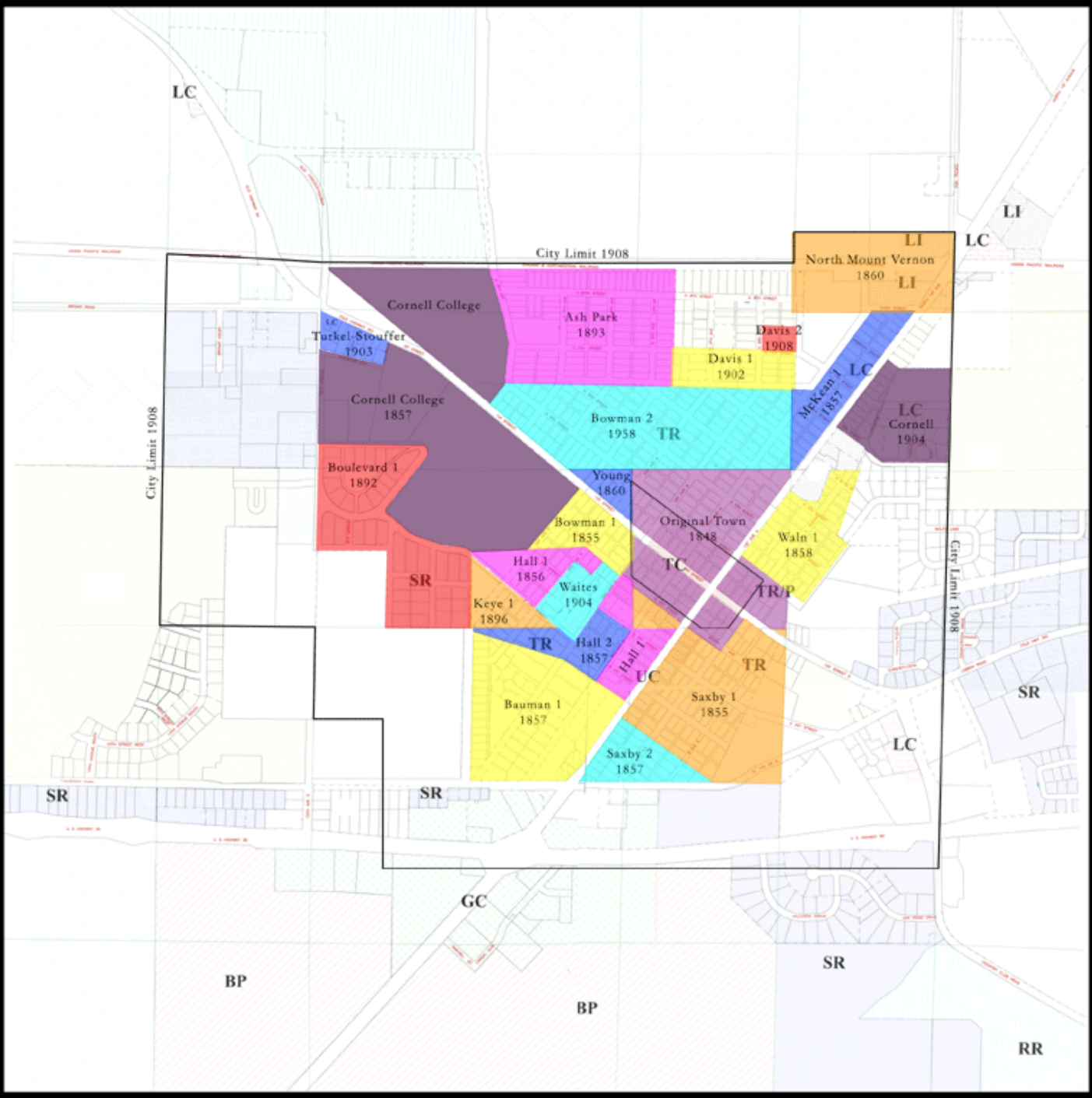
The **Turkel-Stouffer Addition** in 1903 along Main Street west completes the last remaining track along the main east-west artery that runs the length of the city.



The **Cornell Addition** (a gift of the Keedick estate) in 1904 to the north and west along the Military Road indicates the west side of the trail lagged well behind most other areas of the city in development at least until 2000.

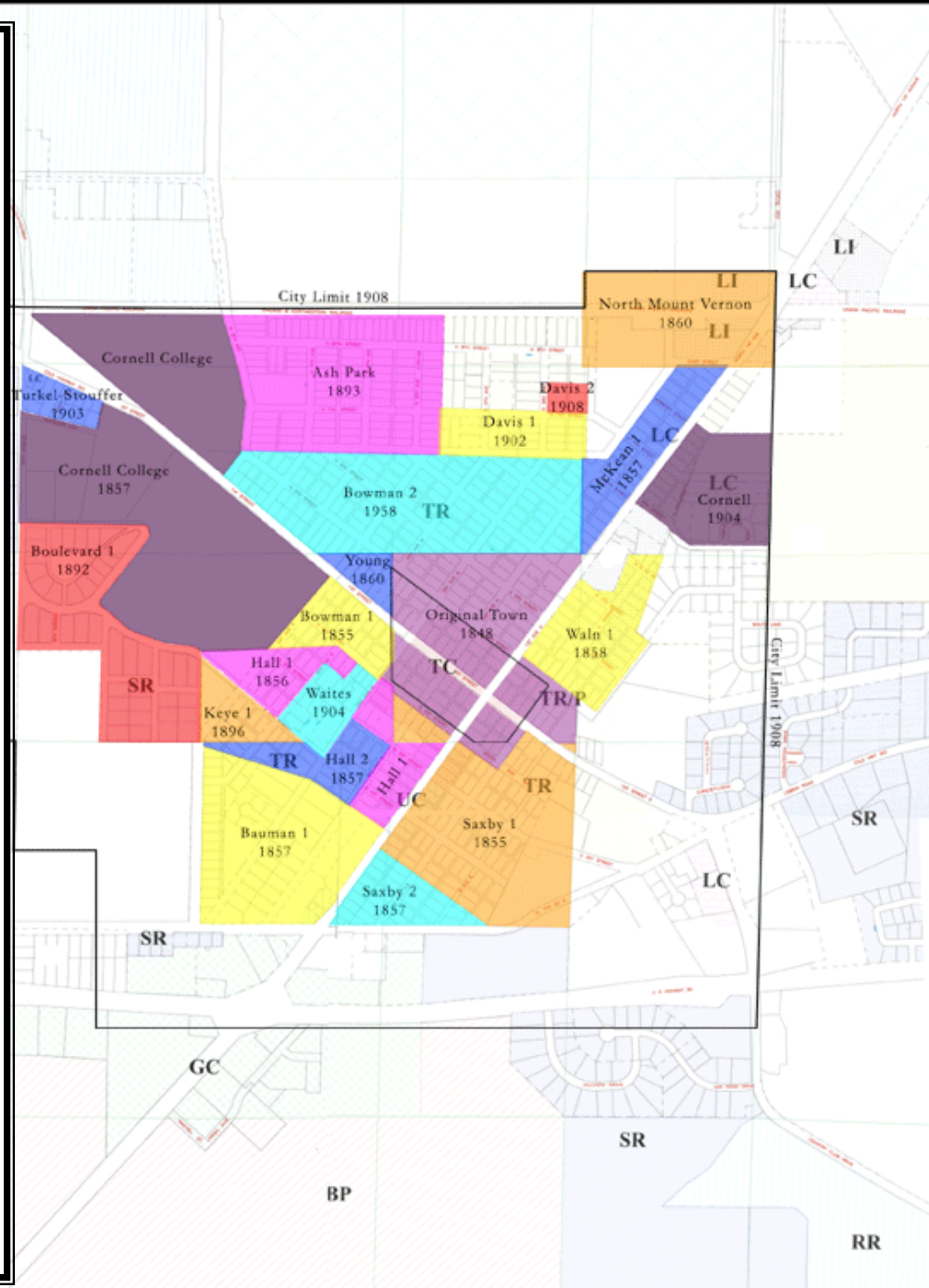


Waite's Addition is the final area on the south side to be plotted into lots. There seem a number of family reasons may be responsible for this area being held back from development when residence lots already surrounded it by 1904.



You now see the **city as it was in 1908** and how it grew slowly from 1847. The **topography** of the hill not only shaped the town its economic foundation but also determined the directions of its growth. In many towns the railroad played a central role in their development, but Mt. Vernon was well established before the railroad determined to build along the north edge and the topography near the tracks prevent any large-scale developments, both commercial and residential. The railroad was of enormous value to the city and particularly Cornell College as it searched further and further away for students. It did connect the city with both east and west coasts and brought cheap goods and cultural events to the community. Visually, it did set the north boundary for many years. With the decline of railroads the city easily extended its jurisdiction north of the tracks. Yet, compared to other communities, the city shows little impact of the railroads in its geography. With the coming of new railroad technology and Diesel locomotives property along the track was more attractive and developed in the 1970s.

In 1910 the **population of the city** stood at 1532 – a drop of 100 since the 1900 census. Despite farm prosperity between 1910 and 1920 there was little optimism about the economic future in the increasingly urban and industrial America. The population of Mt. Vernon **declined** between 1910 and 1930 and roses slightly in 1940 but did not exceed the population of 1532 reached in 1910 **until 1950**. The impact of these factors on city growth is easily apparent and dramatically in Mt. Vernon. **There are no additions to the city from 1908 to 1957 – fifty years of stagnation.** Consider the history of urban American in those years! The city did well to holds its own as small town America began and continued to decline. It was aided by being on the first marked and pave transcontinental highway in the nation – the Lincoln Highway/U.S. #30 – beginning a few years before W.W.I. The Lincoln Highway was to its time what the railroad had been in the earlier years.



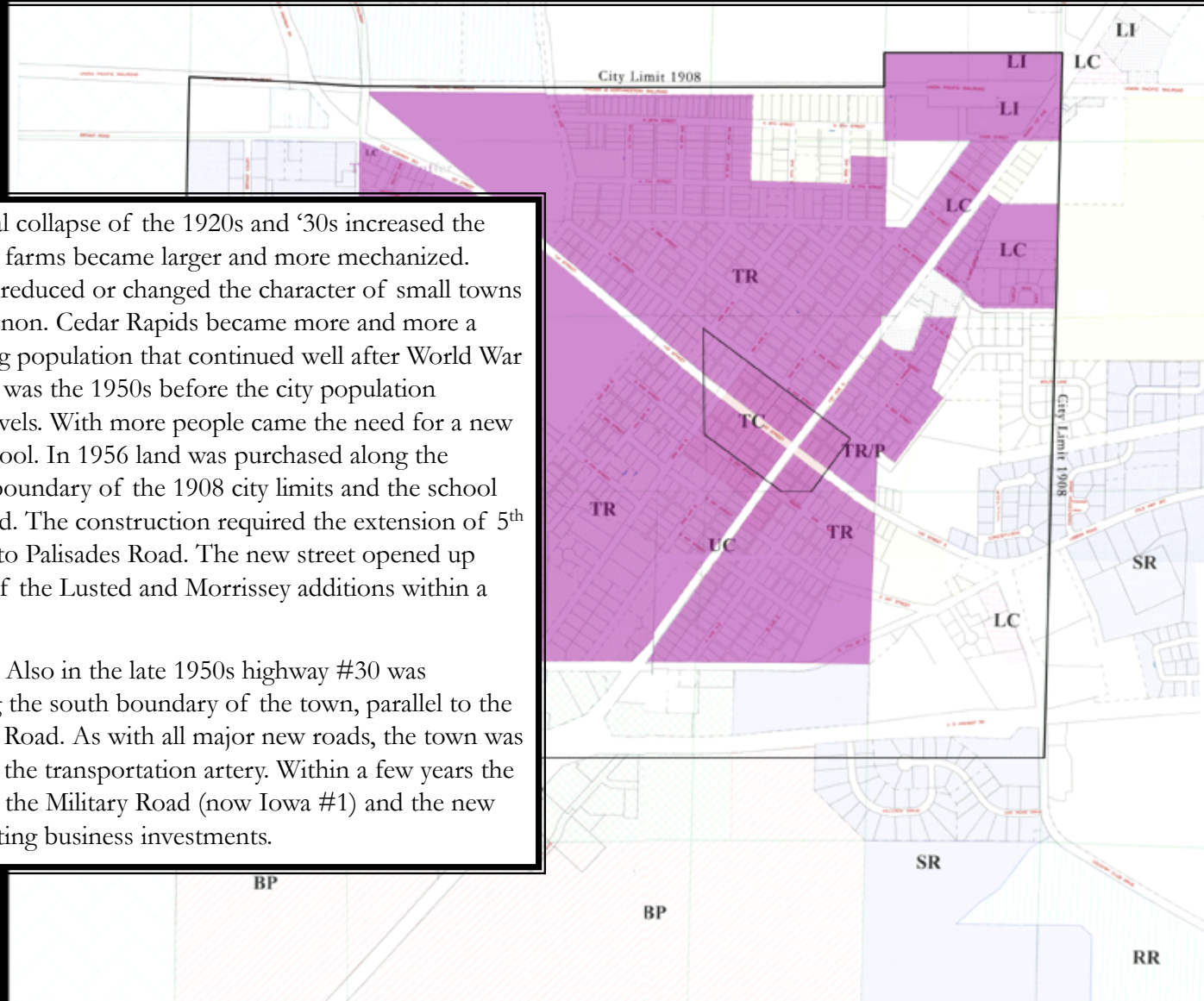
Chapter II

How a Small Town
Grew – A little MORE

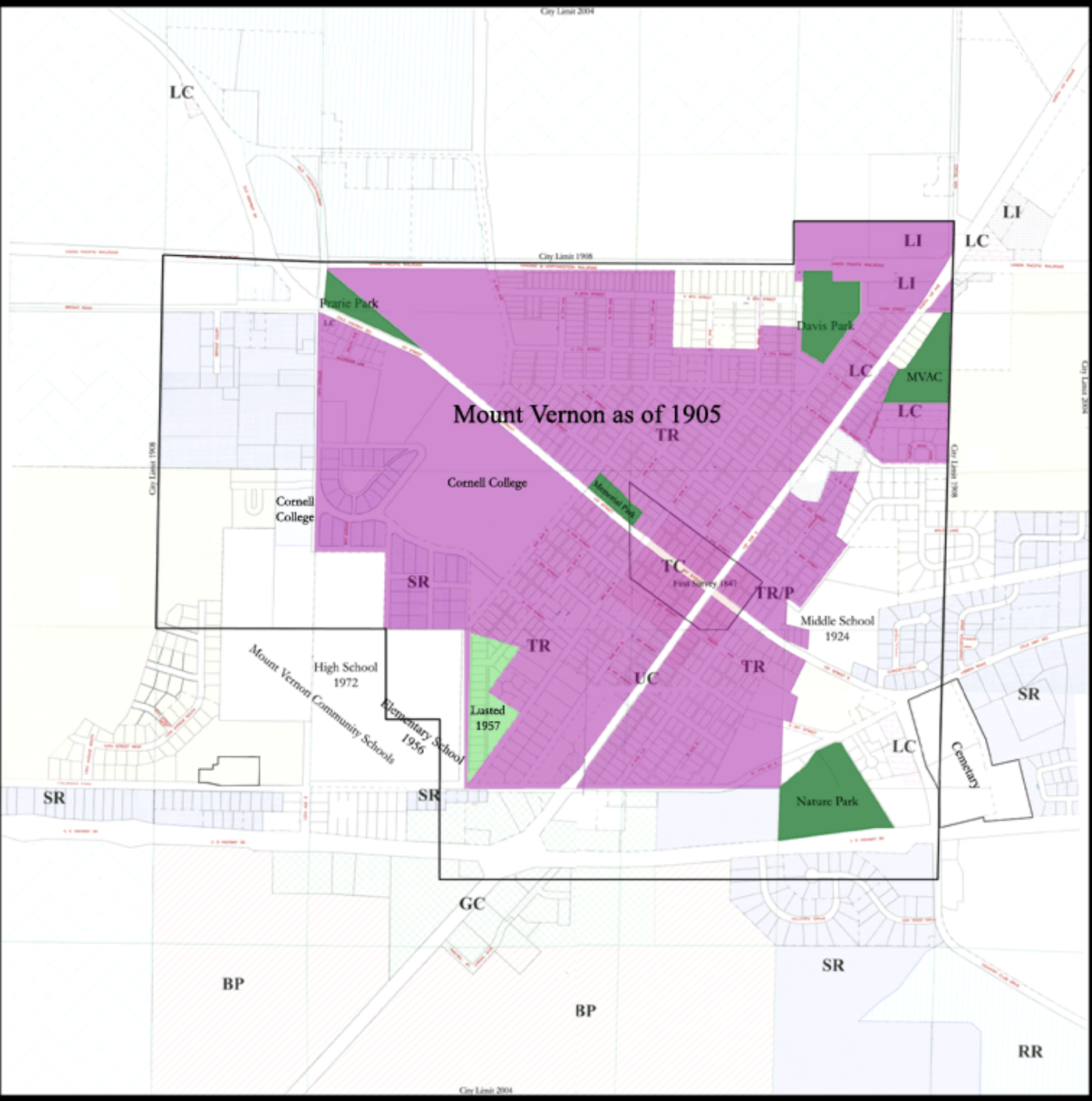
Mount Vernon as of 1905

The agricultural collapse of the 1920s and '30s increased the speed at which farms became larger and more mechanized. Fewer farmers reduced or changed the character of small towns like Mount Vernon. Cedar Rapids became more and more a magnet drawing population that continued well after World War II. As noted, it was the 1950s before the city population reached new levels. With more people came the need for a new elementary school. In 1956 land was purchased along the southwestern boundary of the 1908 city limits and the school was constructed. The construction required the extension of 5th Avenue South to Palisades Road. The new street opened up development of the Lusted and Morrissey additions within a year.

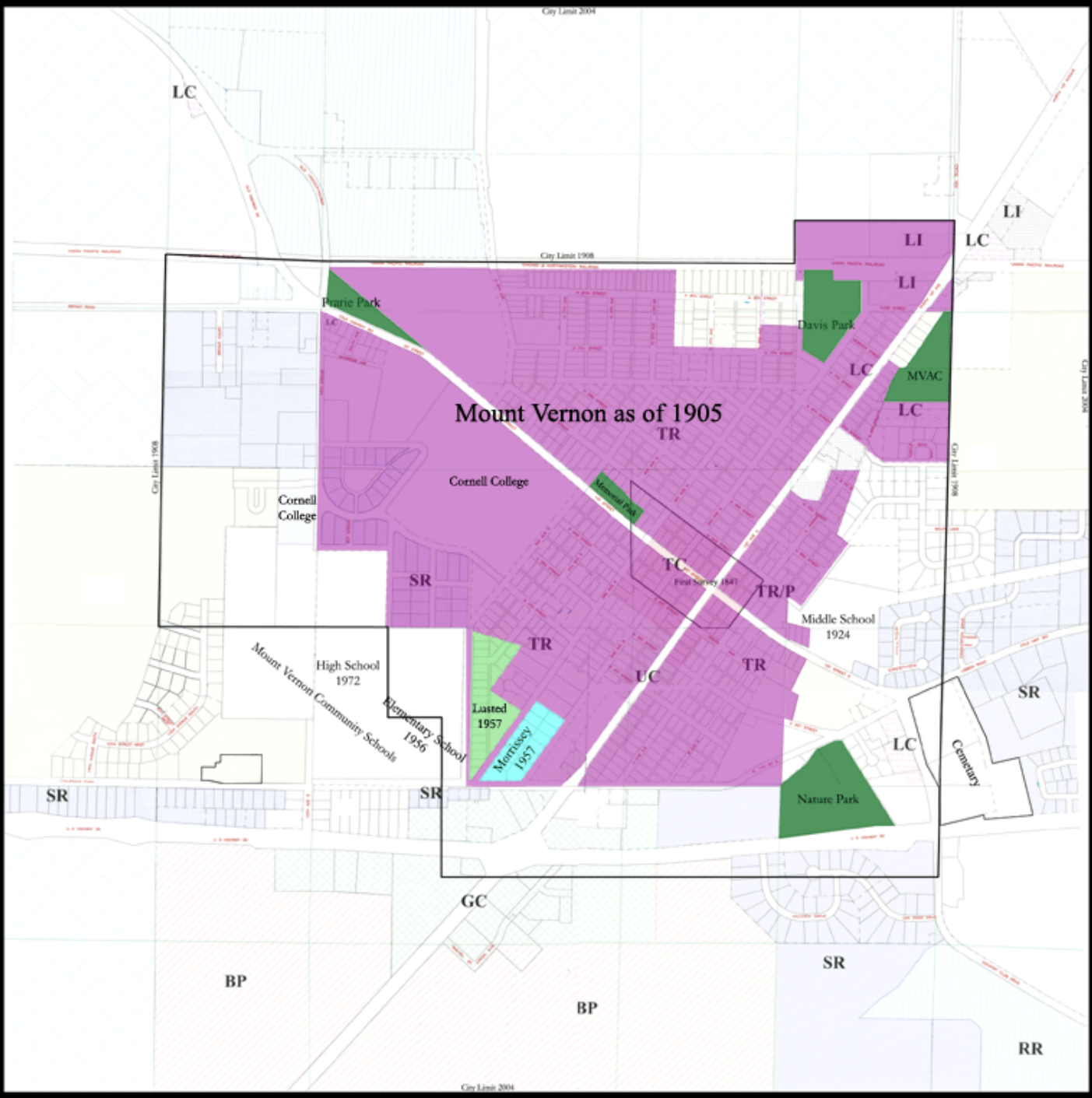
Also in the late 1950s highway #30 was relocated along the south boundary of the town, parallel to the older Palisades Road. As with all major new roads, the town was drawn towards the transportation artery. Within a few years the intersection of the Military Road (now Iowa #1) and the new #30 was attracting business investments.



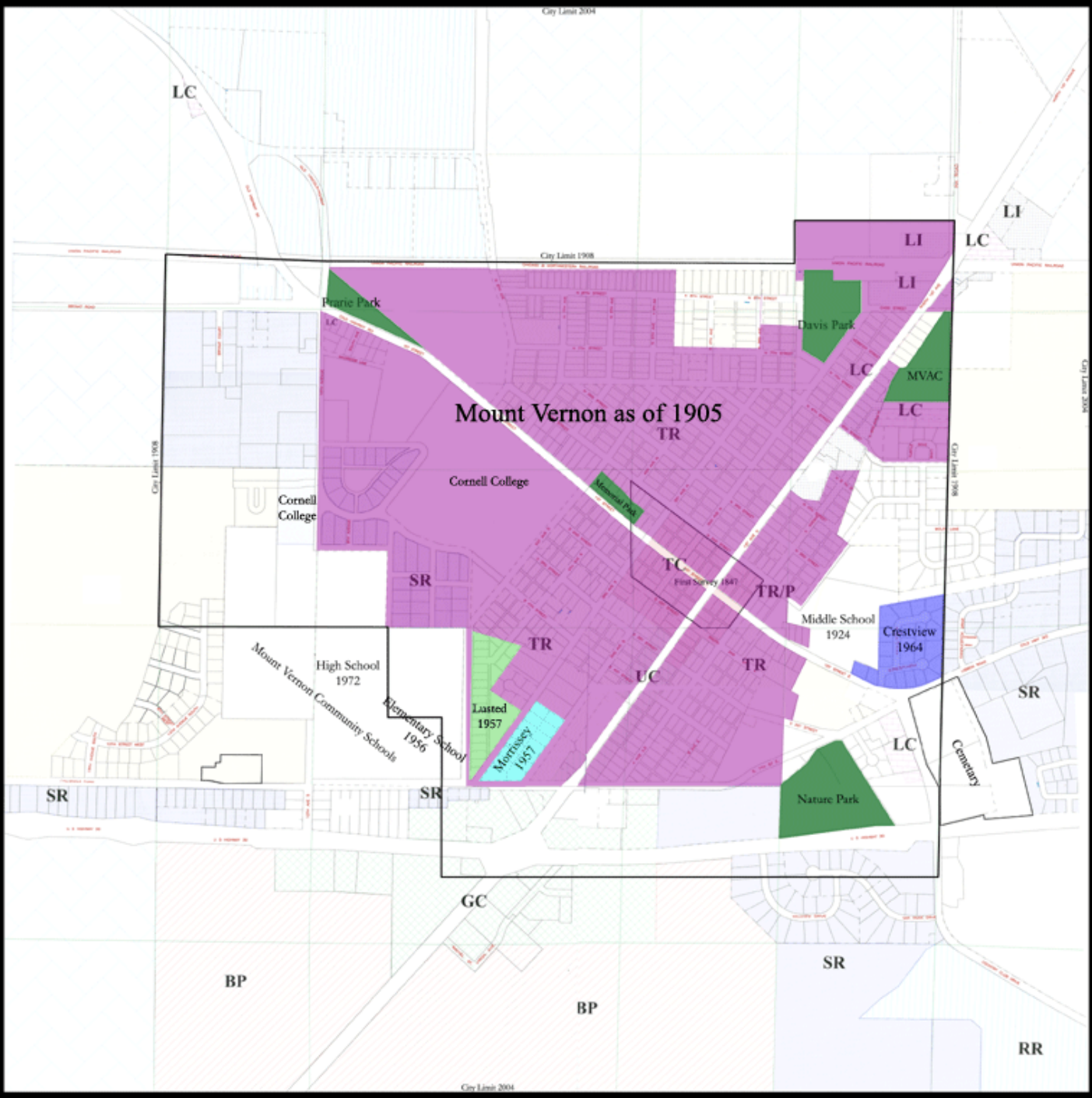
The **Lusted Addition (1957)** was attractive because of the school and new access to the new #30.



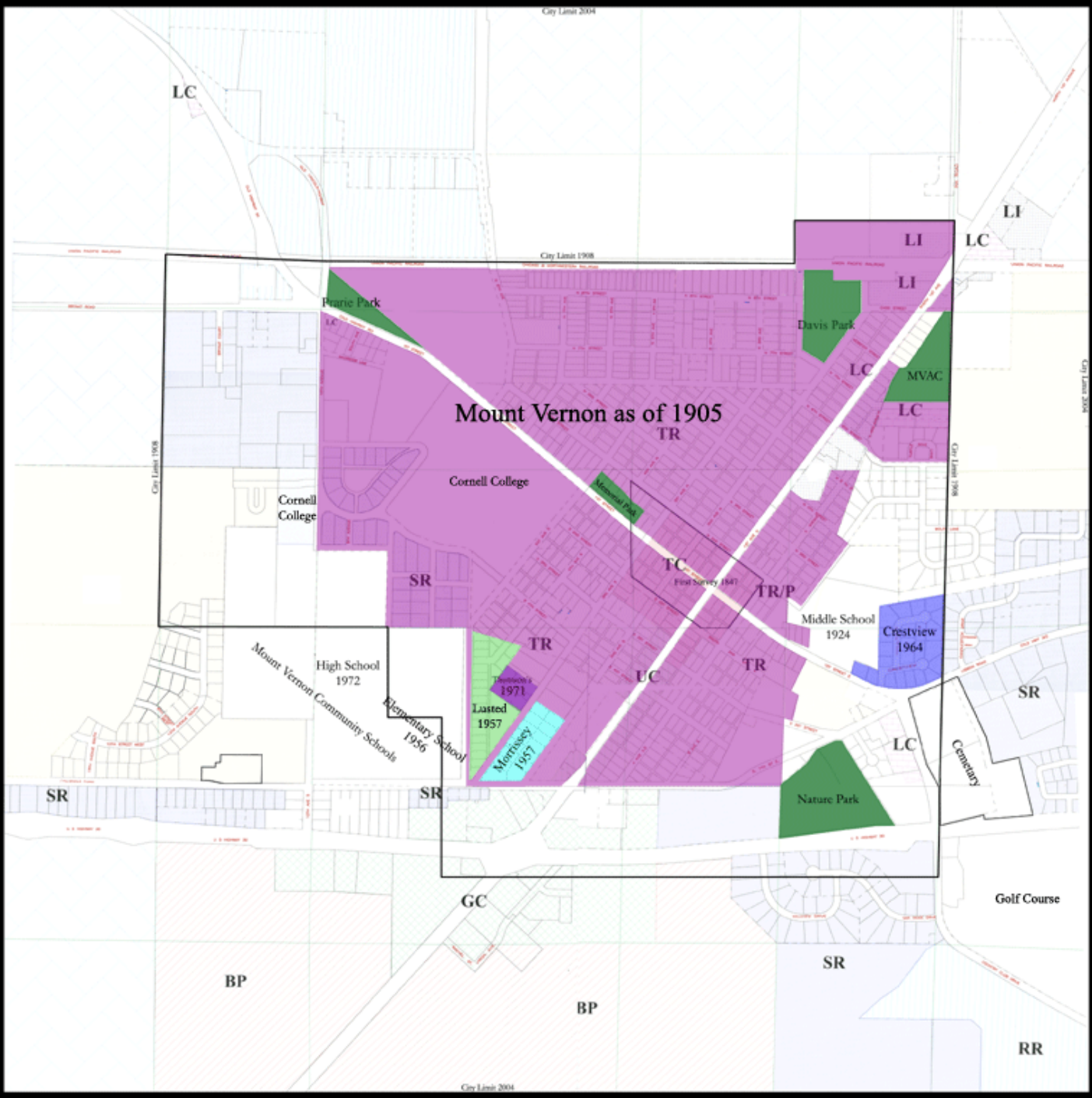
Morrissey's Addition (1957) benefited from the same factors and was cut from the older Bauman's Addition. Portions of the land were a gift to Cornell College and new faculty housing was quickly constructed.



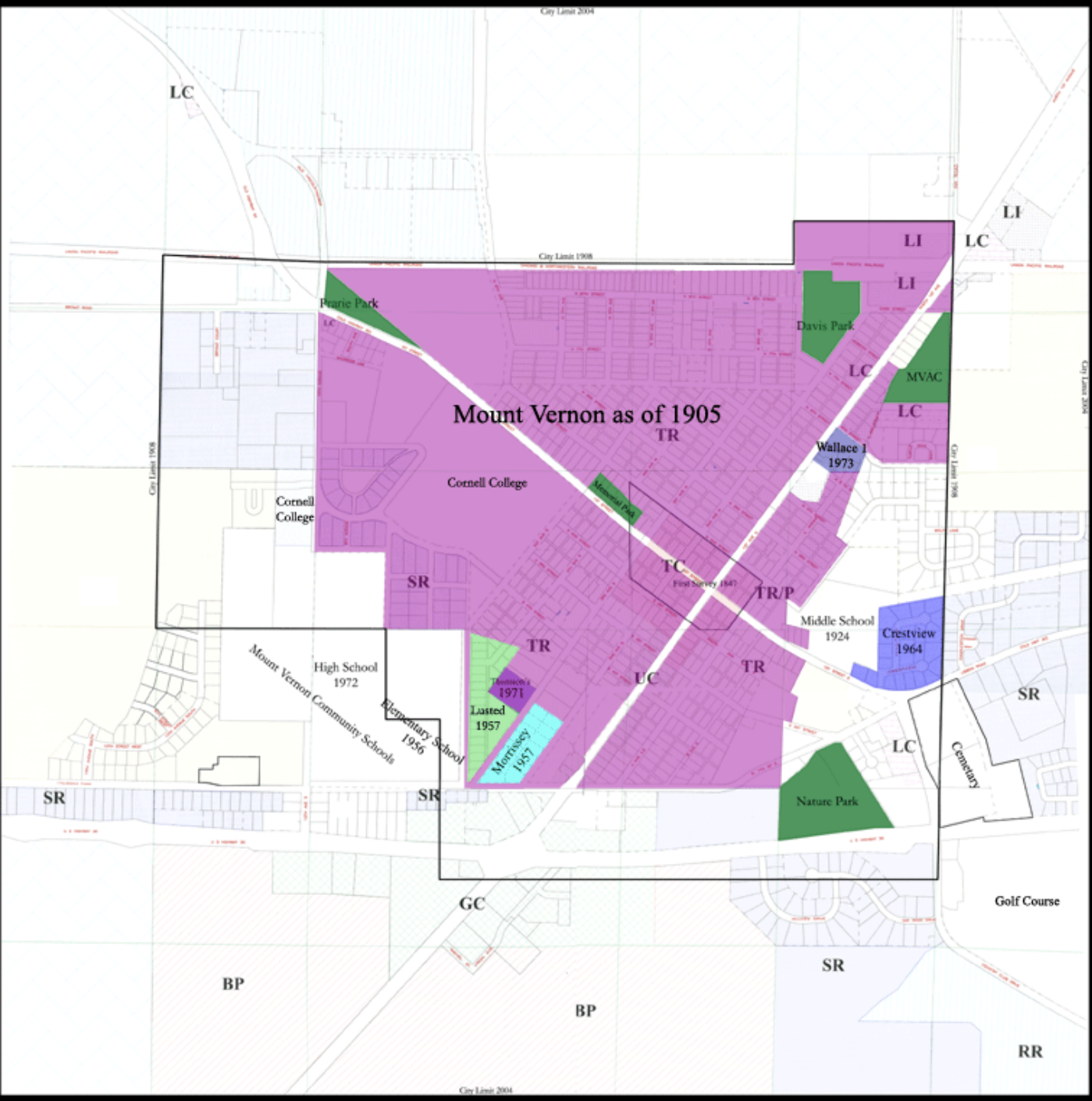
Crestview Addition (1963) began a series of additions and expansion along the old Lincoln Highway cutting into previous farmland at the east edge of the town of 1980.



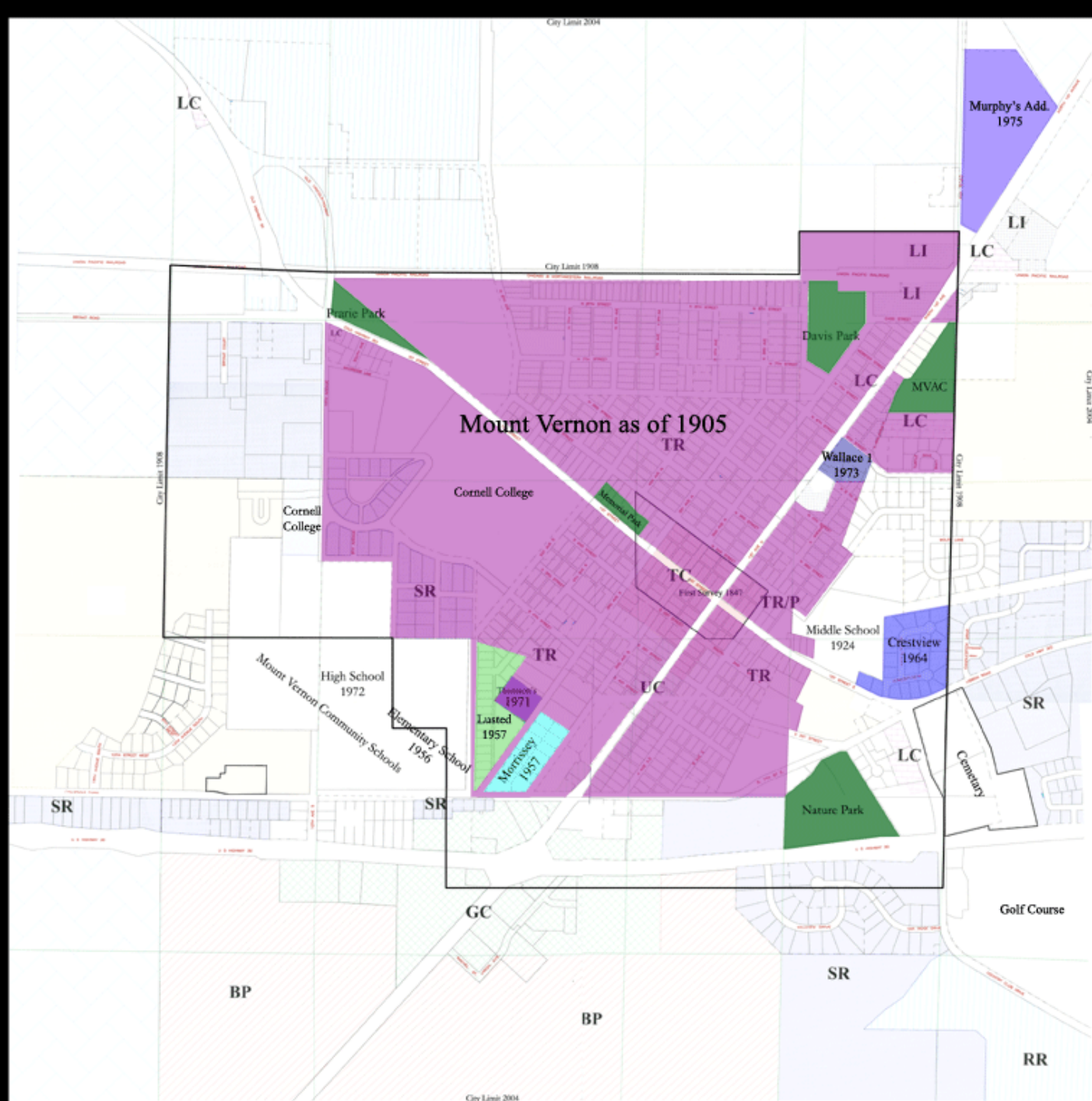
In 1977 the **Thomson Addition** at the edge of the Lusted plot was approved and immediately developed with in this older section of town.



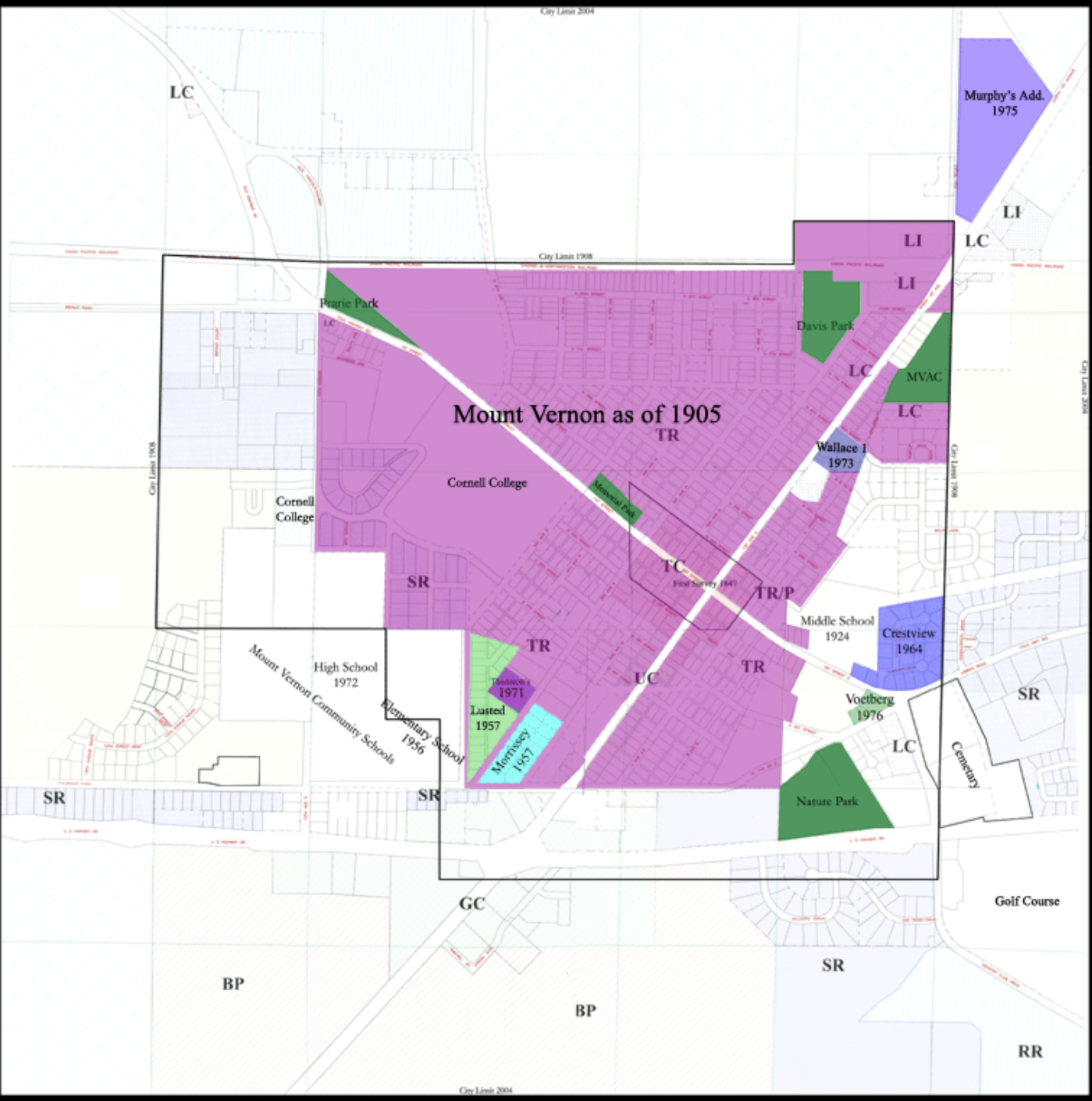
The **Wallace Addition** (1973)
filled in ownership along Iowa #30
and contained apartments.



The **Murphy Addition** followed on the heels of the extension of the city boundary to the north. The railroad as a long standing barrier to northern expansion was breached. The area was designed primarily for a mobile home park.



The **Voetberg Addition** (1976) sustained the movement towards the east with duplex structures.

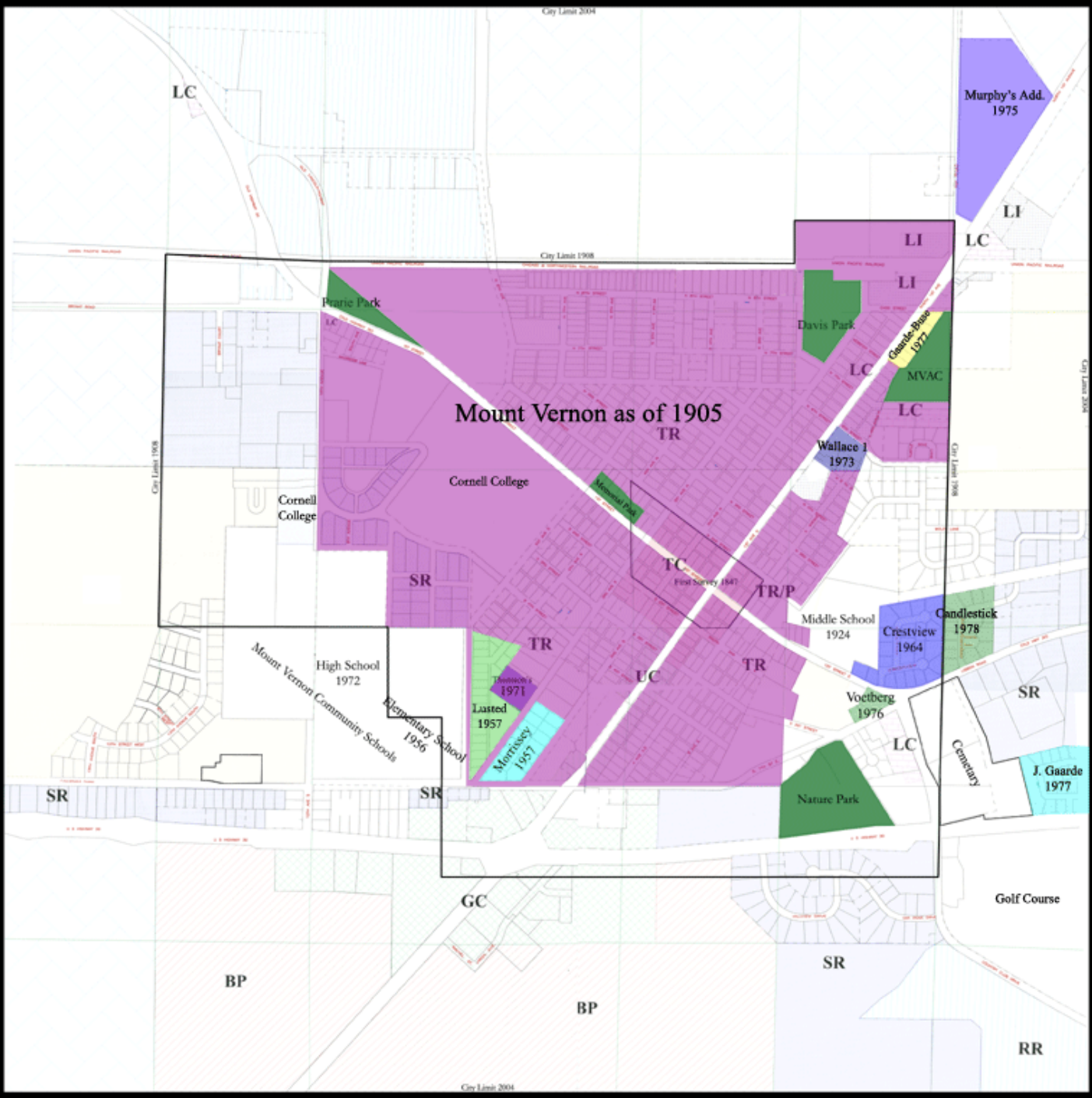


The map displays the city of Mount Vernon, Ohio, with various land use designations and landmarks. The central area is labeled "Mount Vernon as of 1905" and is primarily designated as residential (TR). Surrounding areas include commercial/industrial (LI), residential (LC, SR, BP, GC, RR), and parks (Pearie Park, Davis Park, Memorial Park, Nature Park). Key landmarks include Cornell College, Mount Vernon Community Schools, and a Golf Course. The map also shows city limits (1908, 2004) and various parks and schools established in different years (e.g., 1972, 1976, 1977).

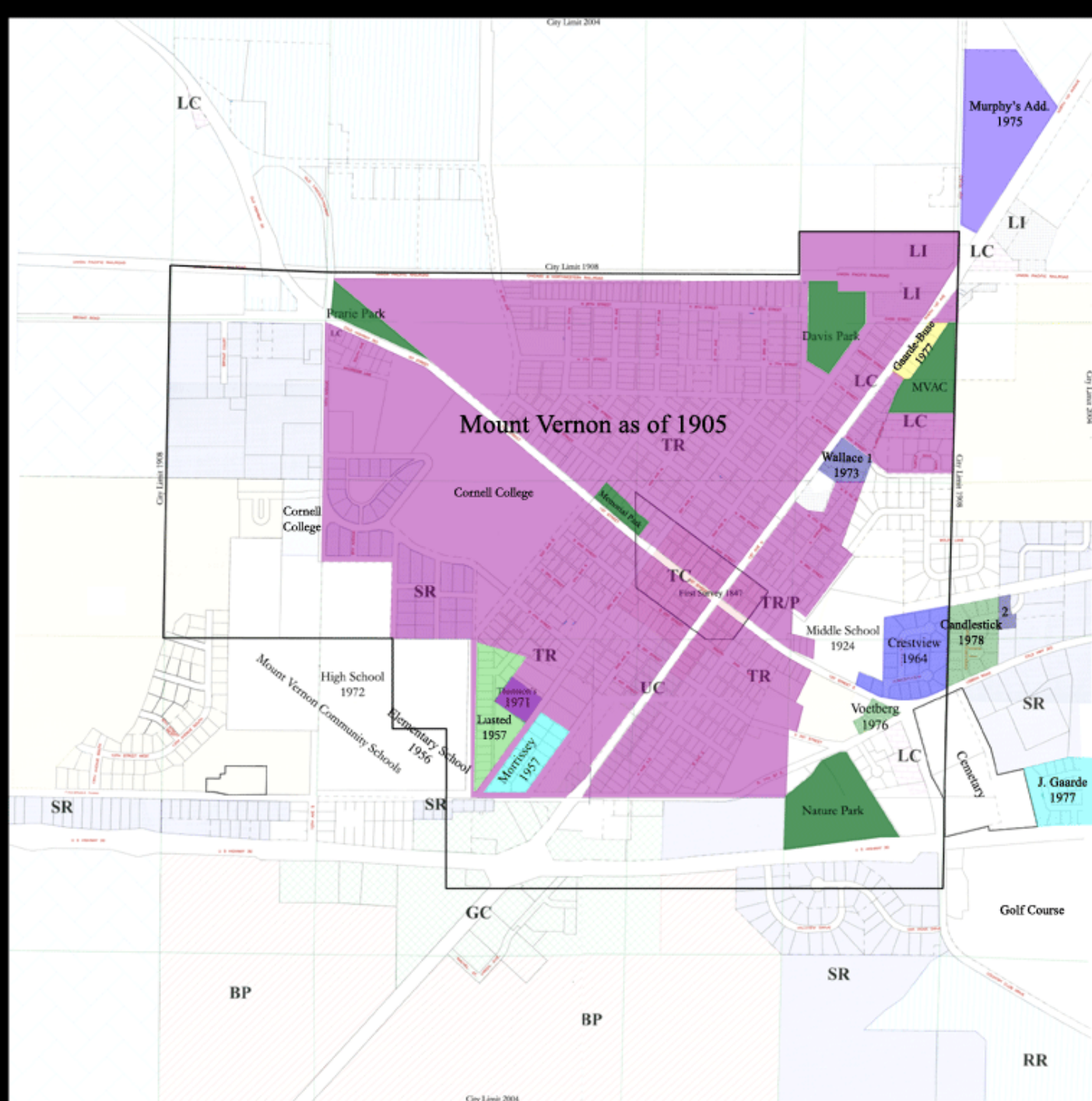
City Limits 2004

The first **Candlestick Addition** (1978) continued the move eastward as well as the well-established design for suburban development popular in the years following WWII. Other addition in this land were to follow

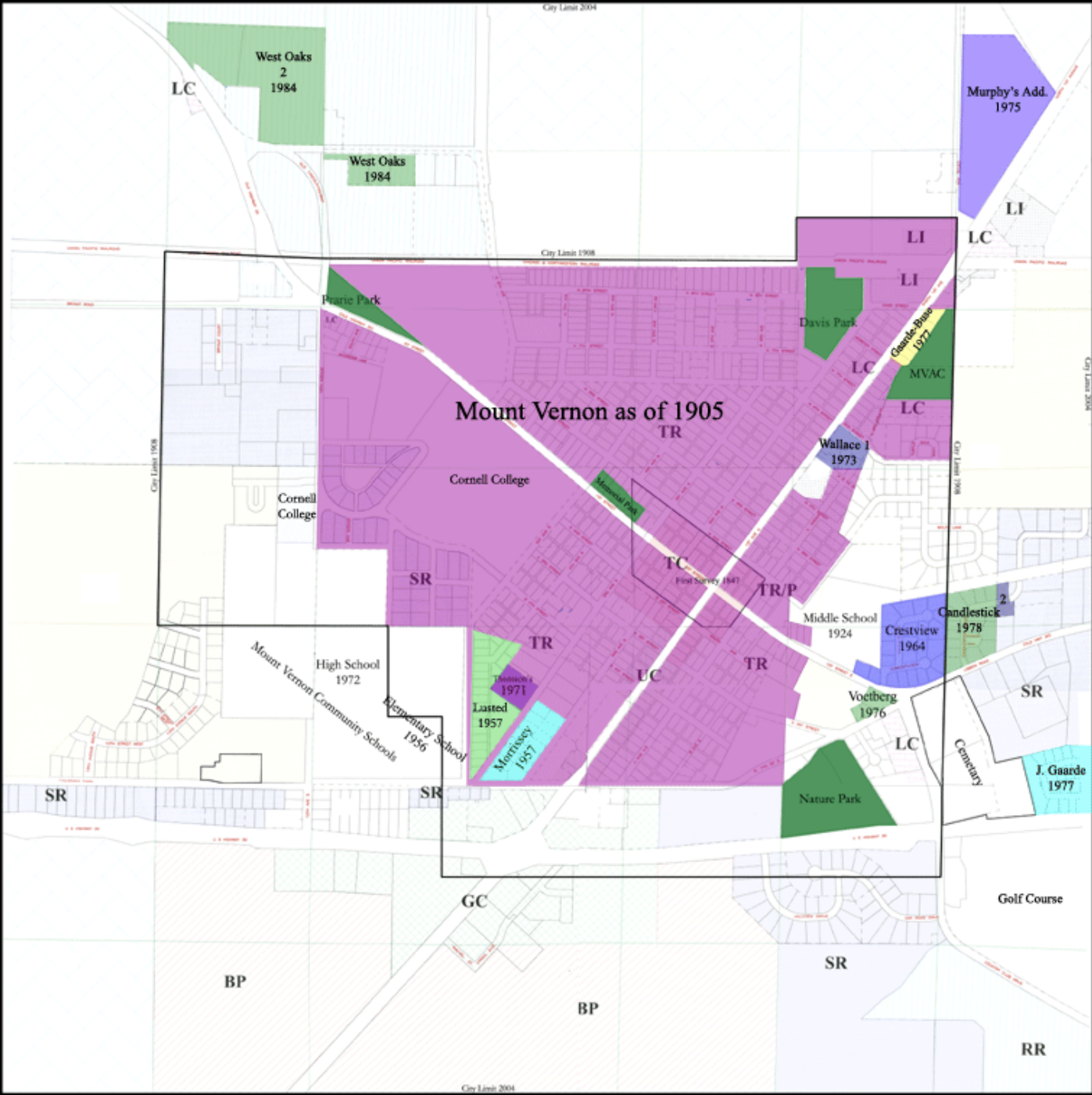
Note: Between 1956 and 1980 some seven additions were made to the town. In those years the population rose from 2,320 to 3,325. Beginning in 1960, resident student were included in the city data thus increasing the total between 700 and 900 as enrollments varied. The college doubled its enrollment in the mid-'60, adding four dormitories. The same years indicate a solid growth in the population of Cedar Rapids. The new US #30 brought a new way of commuters to Mount Vernon.



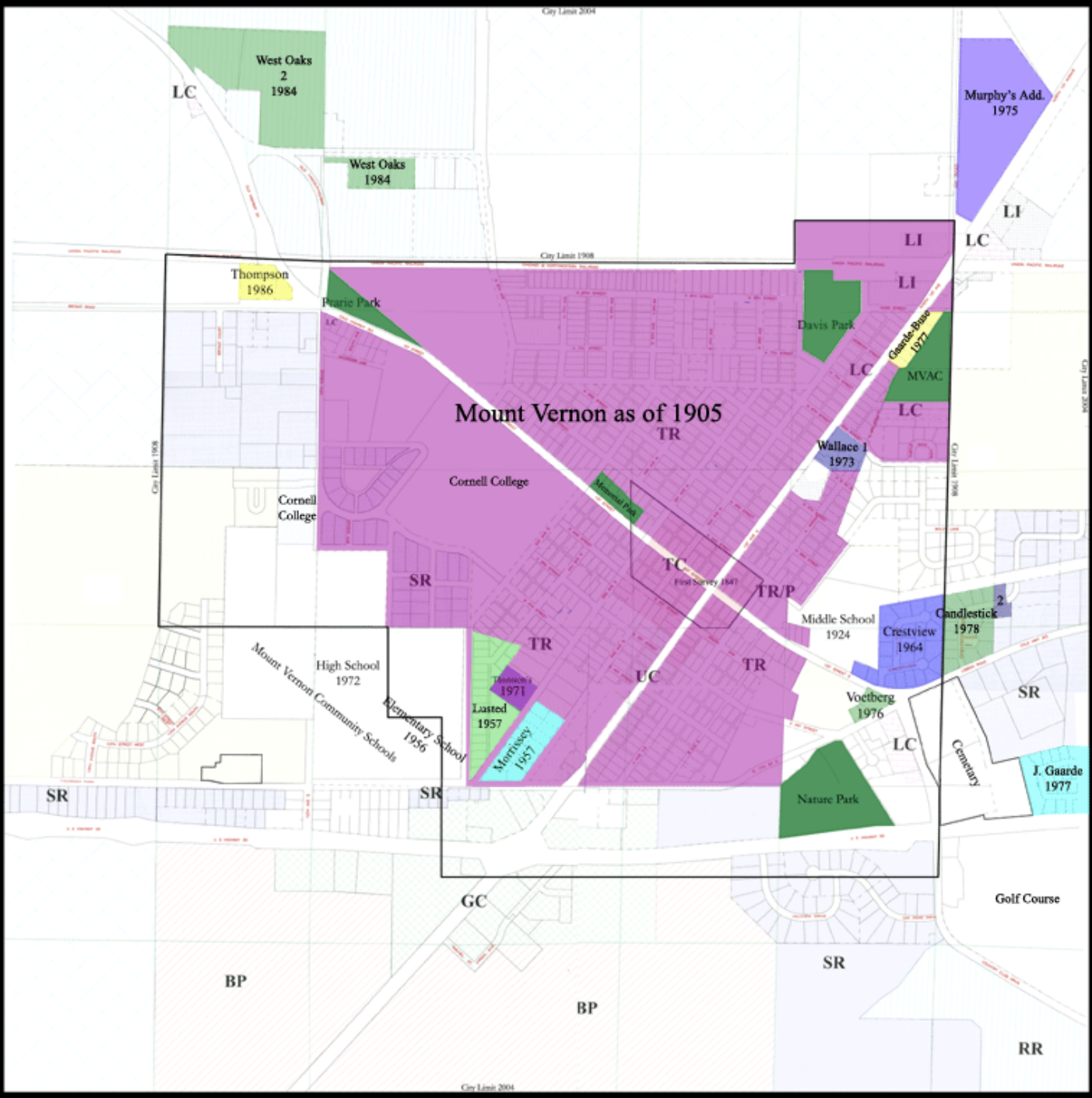
The 1980s brought continued expansion. Another **small addition** was made to **Candlestick** in 1983. The following year saw the move to the north.



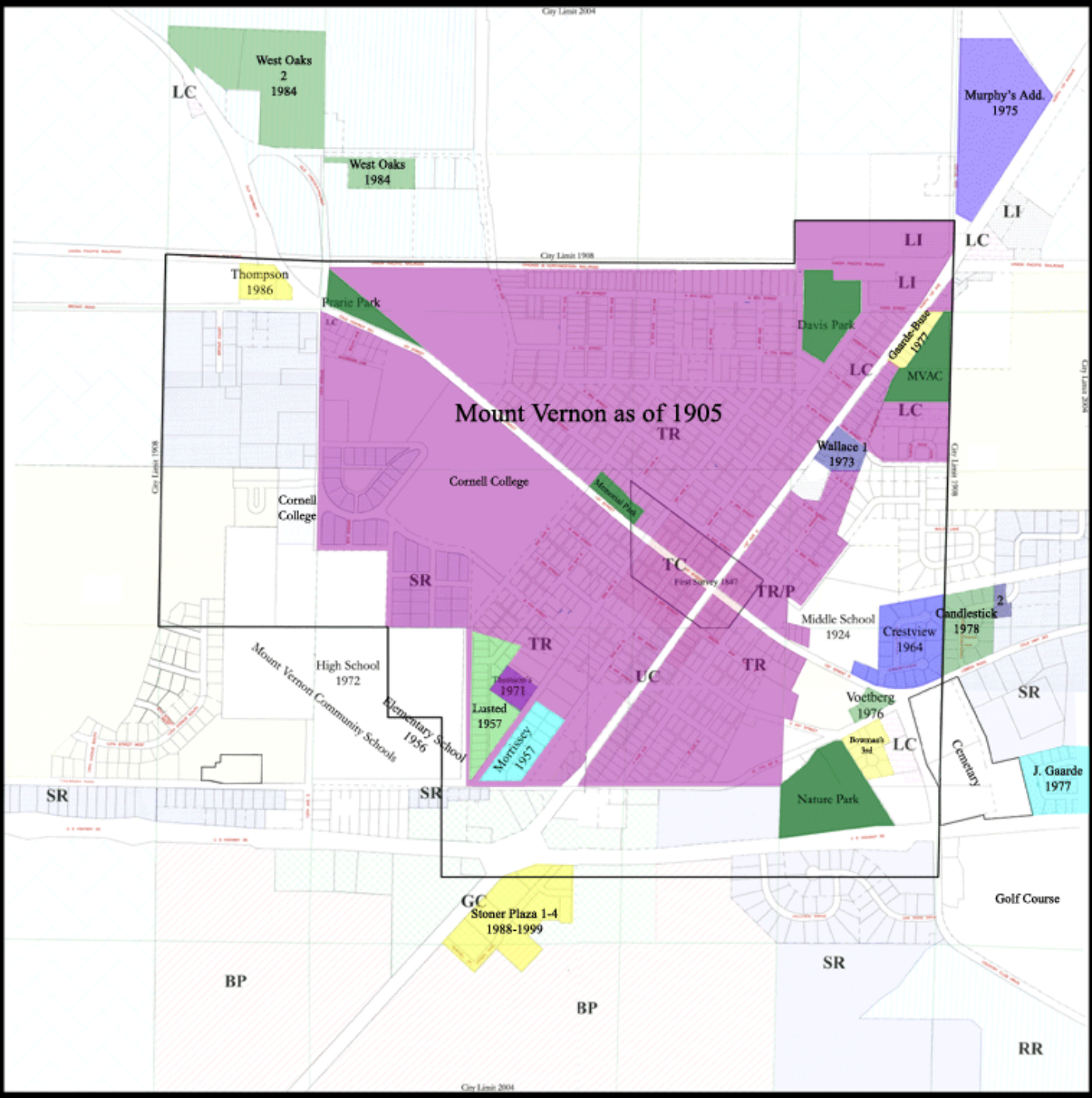
The map illustrates the land use designations for Mount Vernon, Ohio, as of 1905. The central area is labeled "Mount Vernon as of 1905" and is primarily designated as residential (TR). Surrounding areas include various other land use types: commercial/industrial (LI), parks (green), schools (blue), and agricultural/open space (BP, RR, GC). The map also shows the city limits for 1908, 1975, and 2004. Key landmarks and schools are labeled, including Cornell College, Mount Vernon High School, Mount Vernon Community Schools, and Elementary School. The map is color-coded to represent different land use categories: purple for residential, green for parks, blue for schools, and yellow for commercial/industrial.



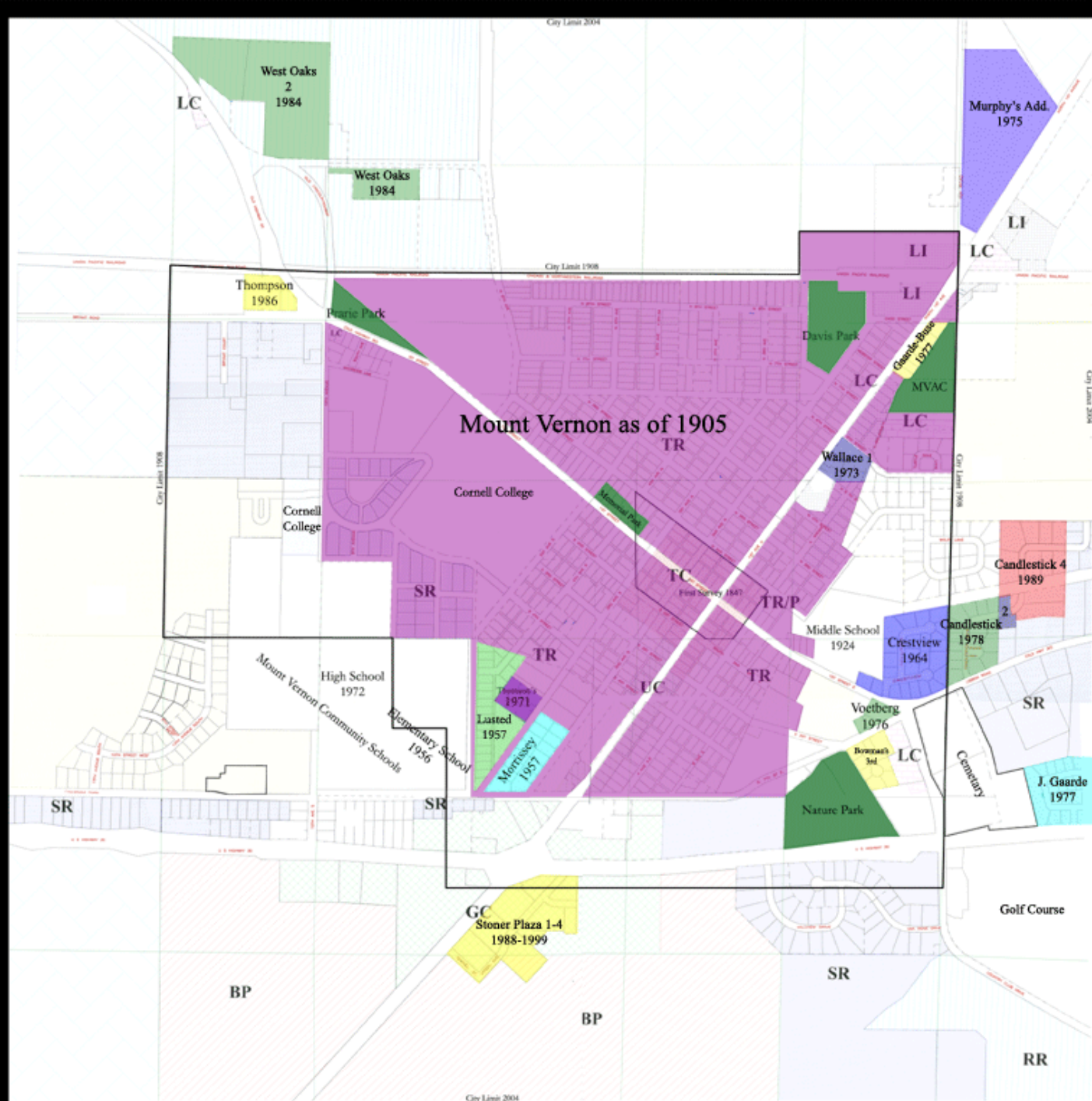
Another small addition along Mount Vernon Road at the east end of the city by **Thompson** was added in 1986.



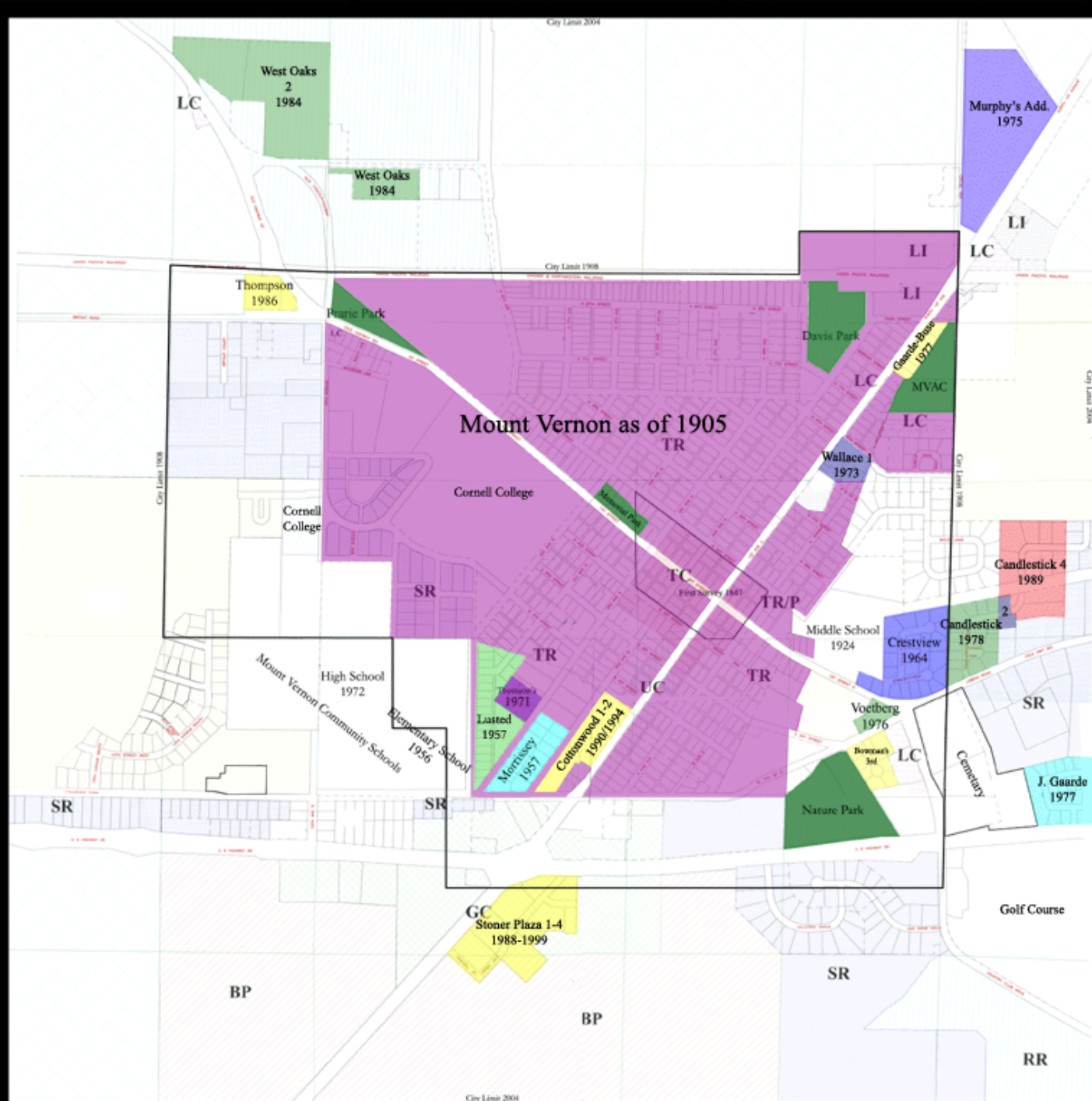
The intersection of the new #30 and IA #1 was opened to the south for commercial development with the first two **Stoner Plaza Additions** in 1988 & 1989. Stoner added a **4th Plaza Addition** to the intersection commercial development in 1999.



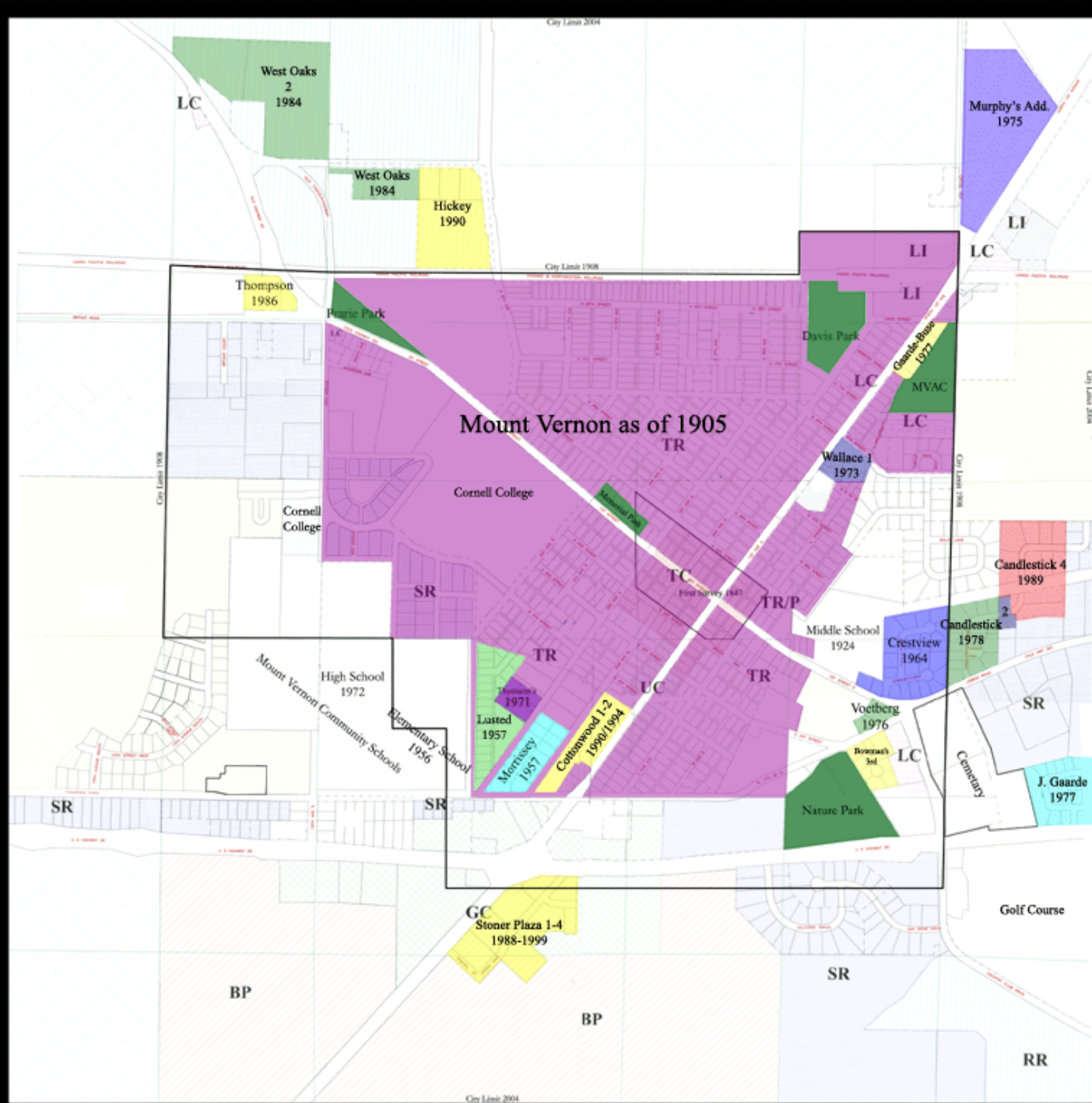
Note: The 1980s brought the first important commercial addition to Mount Vernon in many years at the southern intersection. Both large and small additions continued development as population grew slowly over the decade to reach a new high 3,657 in 1990.



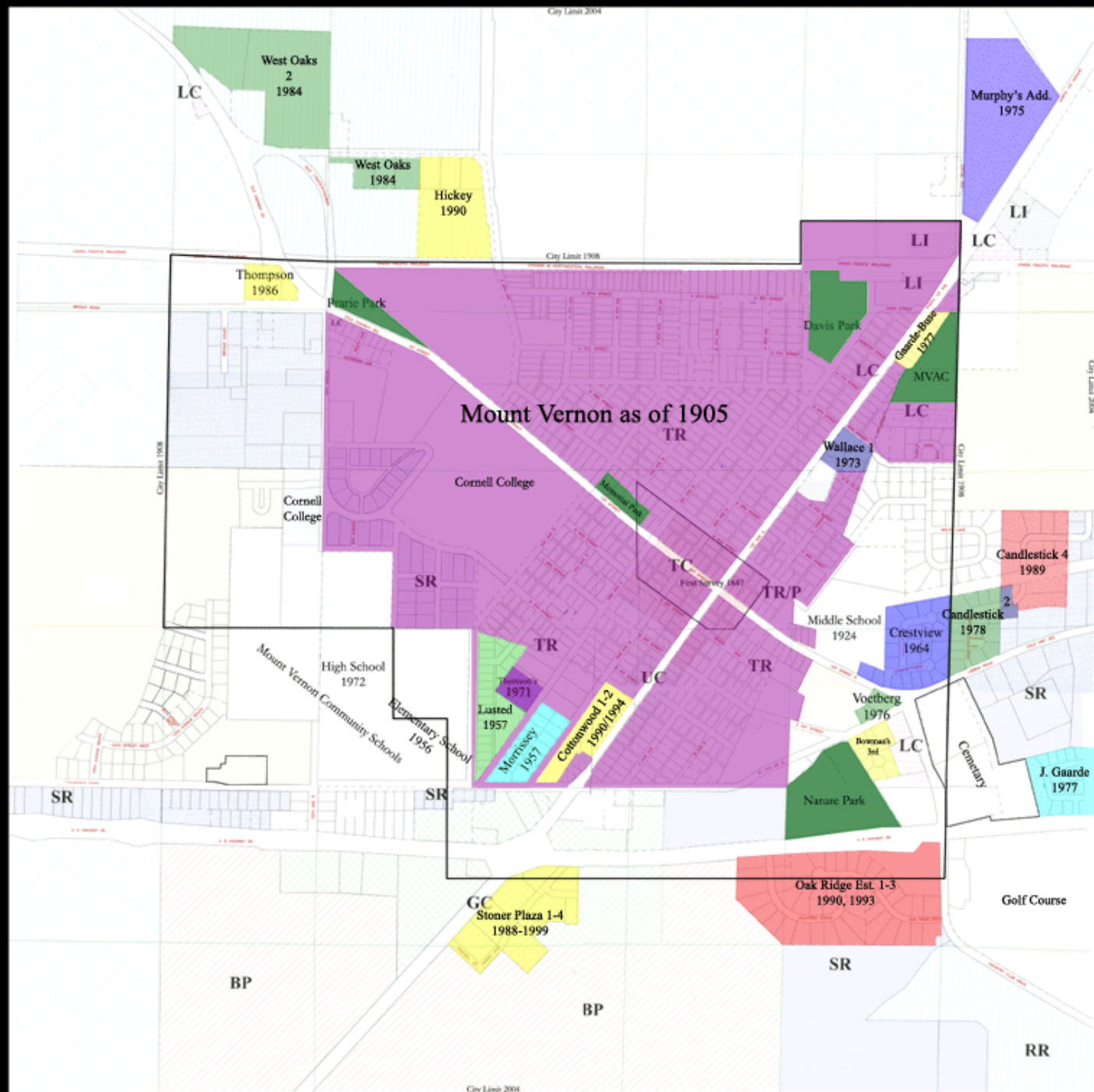
The first serious effort to establish **condominiums** in town came in 1990 with the plotting of two sections of the **Cottonwood Units**. Only one large unit was built. The remaining units waited for four years. The area was part of the original Bauman's Addition laid out much earlier.



Another large addition north of the railroad came in 1990 with the plotting of the **Hickey** farm.

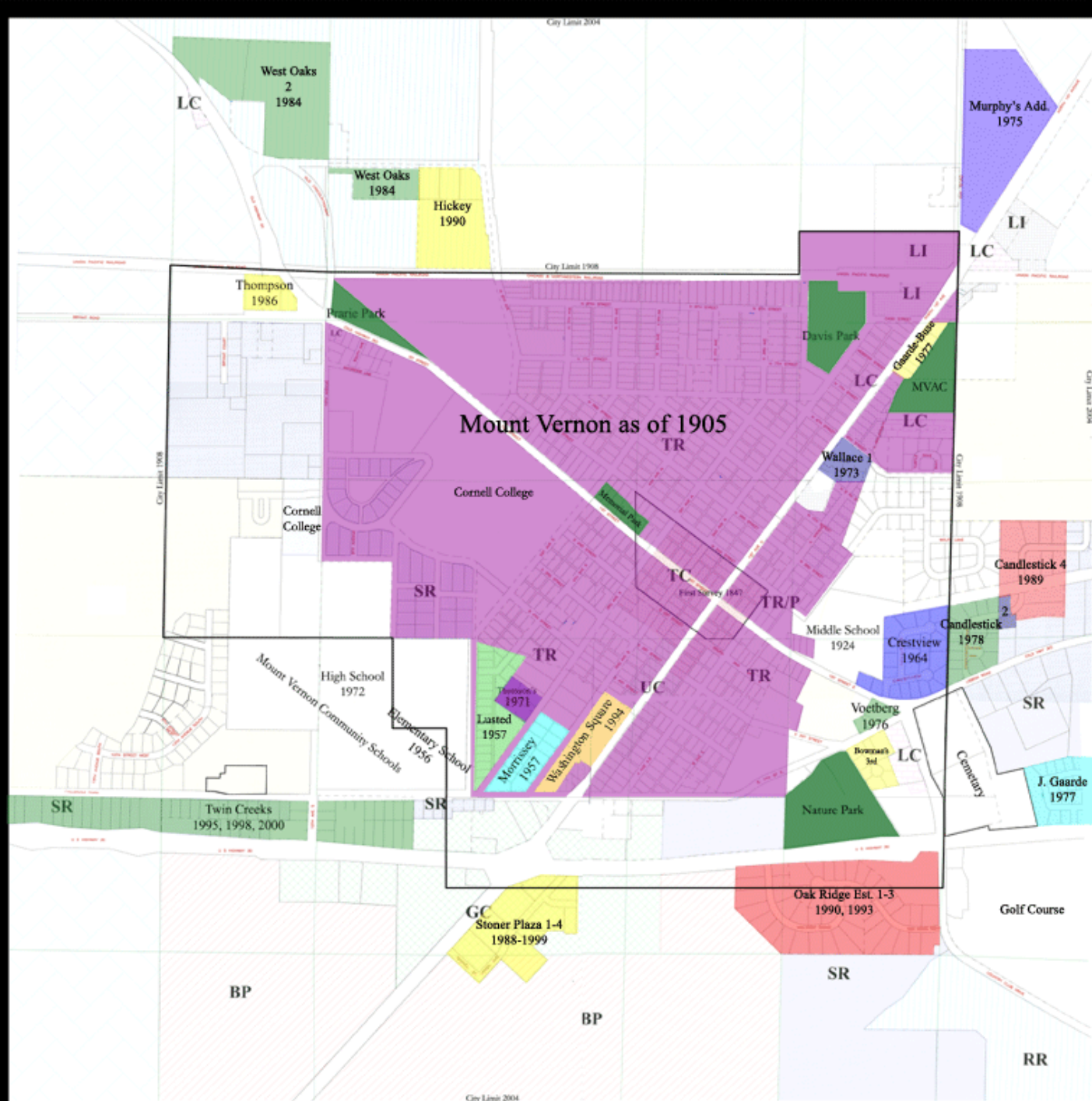


In the same year the first residence were built south of US #30 in the three-part development of the **Oak Ridge Estates 1** (1990 - 1993).



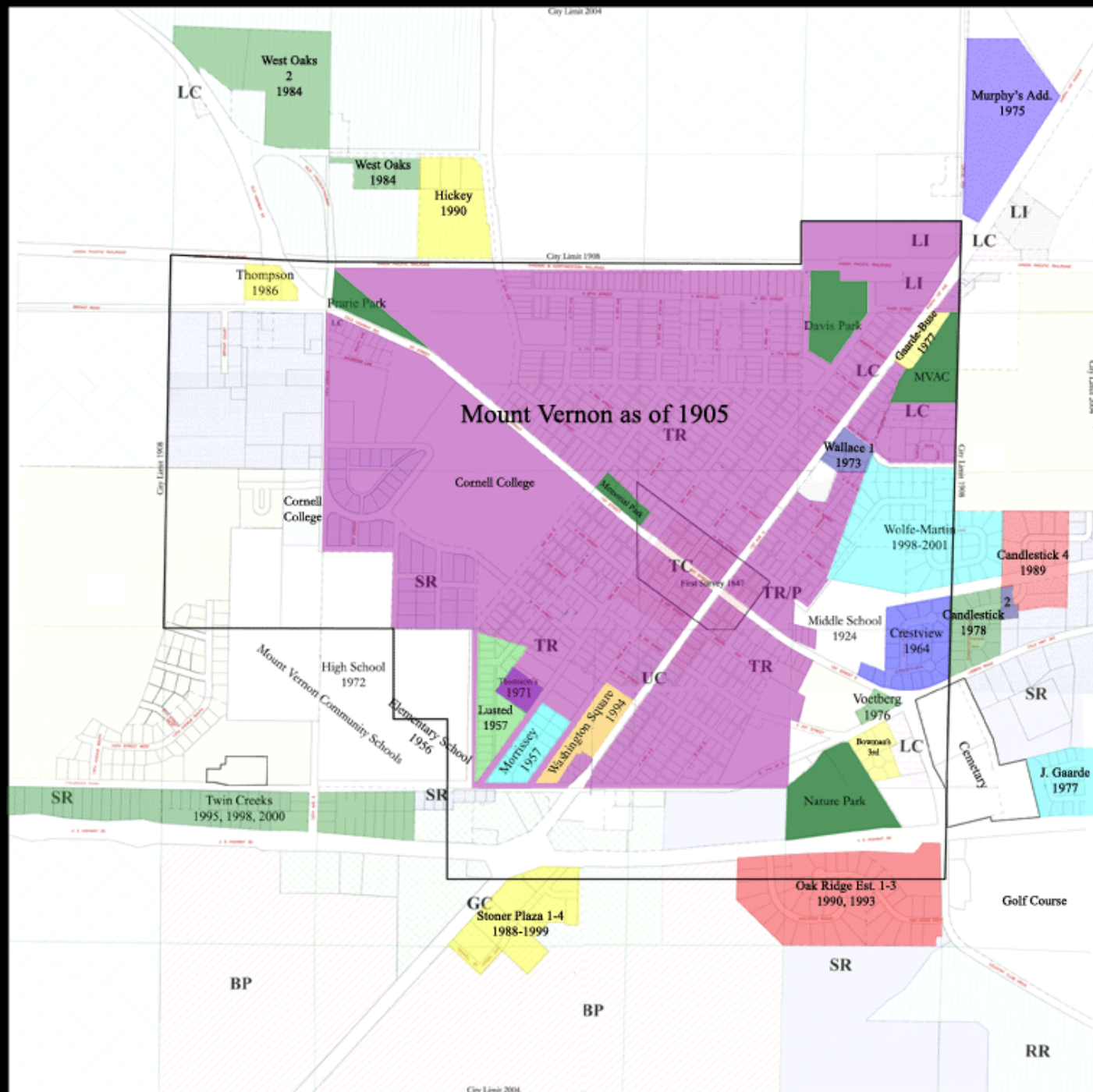
The map illustrates the land use zones and historical developments in Mount Vernon, Ohio. The central area, labeled "Mount Vernon as of 1905", is primarily residential (TR) and commercial/industrial (GC). Surrounding areas include various parks (Pearce Park, Davis Park, Nature Park, Memorial Park), schools (Cornell College, Mount Vernon Community Schools), and other landmarks (Candlestick 2, 4, J. Gaarde, Oak Ridge Est. 1-3). The map also shows the city limits for 1908 and 2004.

The **Twin Creeks** Addition (beginning in 1995) over a five year period filled in the south side of Palisades Road and included a number of apartments with access off US #30.

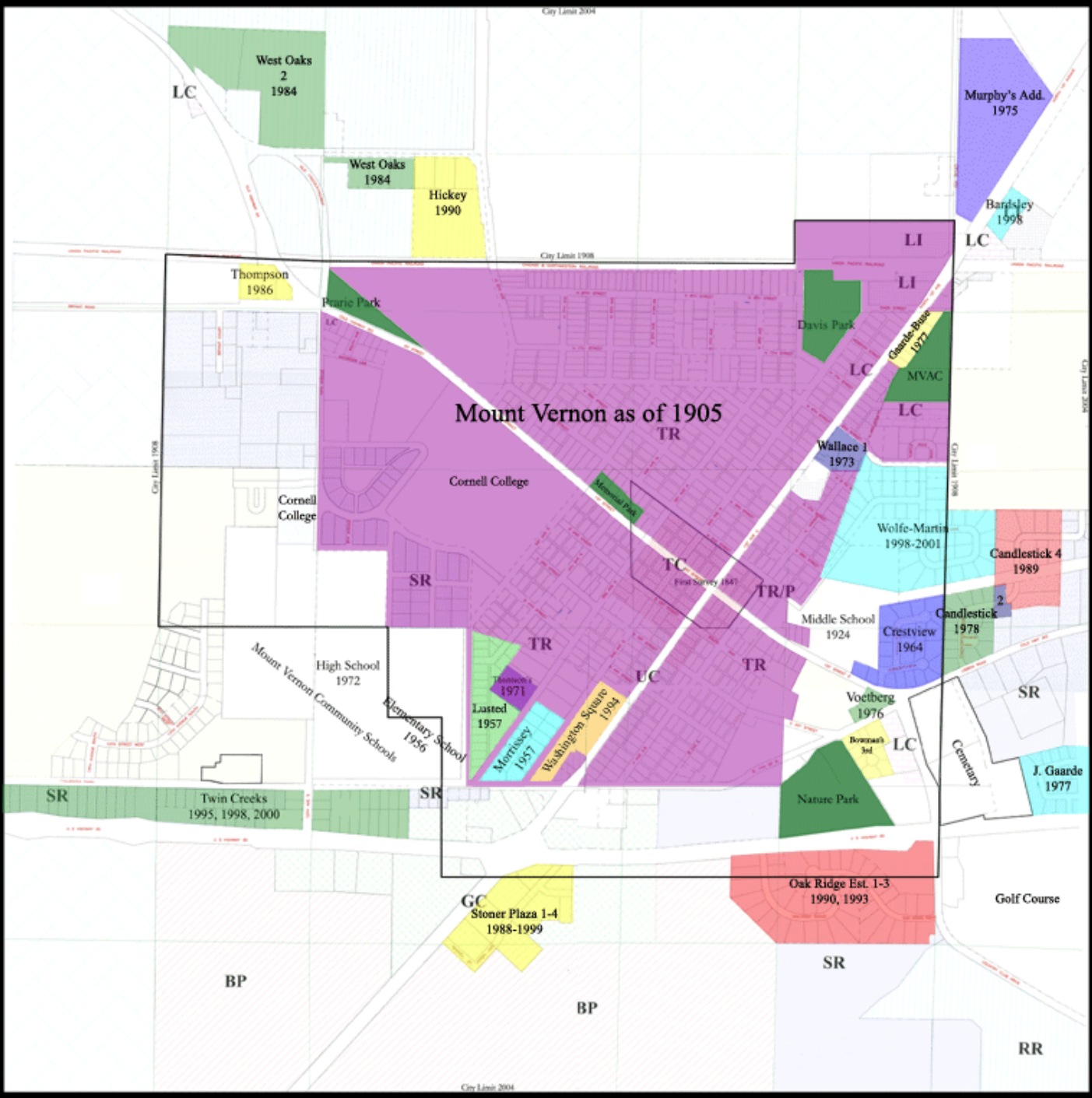


The map illustrates the land use designations for Mount Vernon as of 1905. The central area is designated as TR (Residential Medium Density). Surrounding areas include LC (Local Commercial), SR (Residential Single-Family), BP (Business Professional), RR (Residential Rural), LI (Light Industrial), MVAC (Medium Density Residential), TC (Town Center), TR/P (Residential Medium Density), and GC (General Commercial). Specific locations and their designations are as follows:

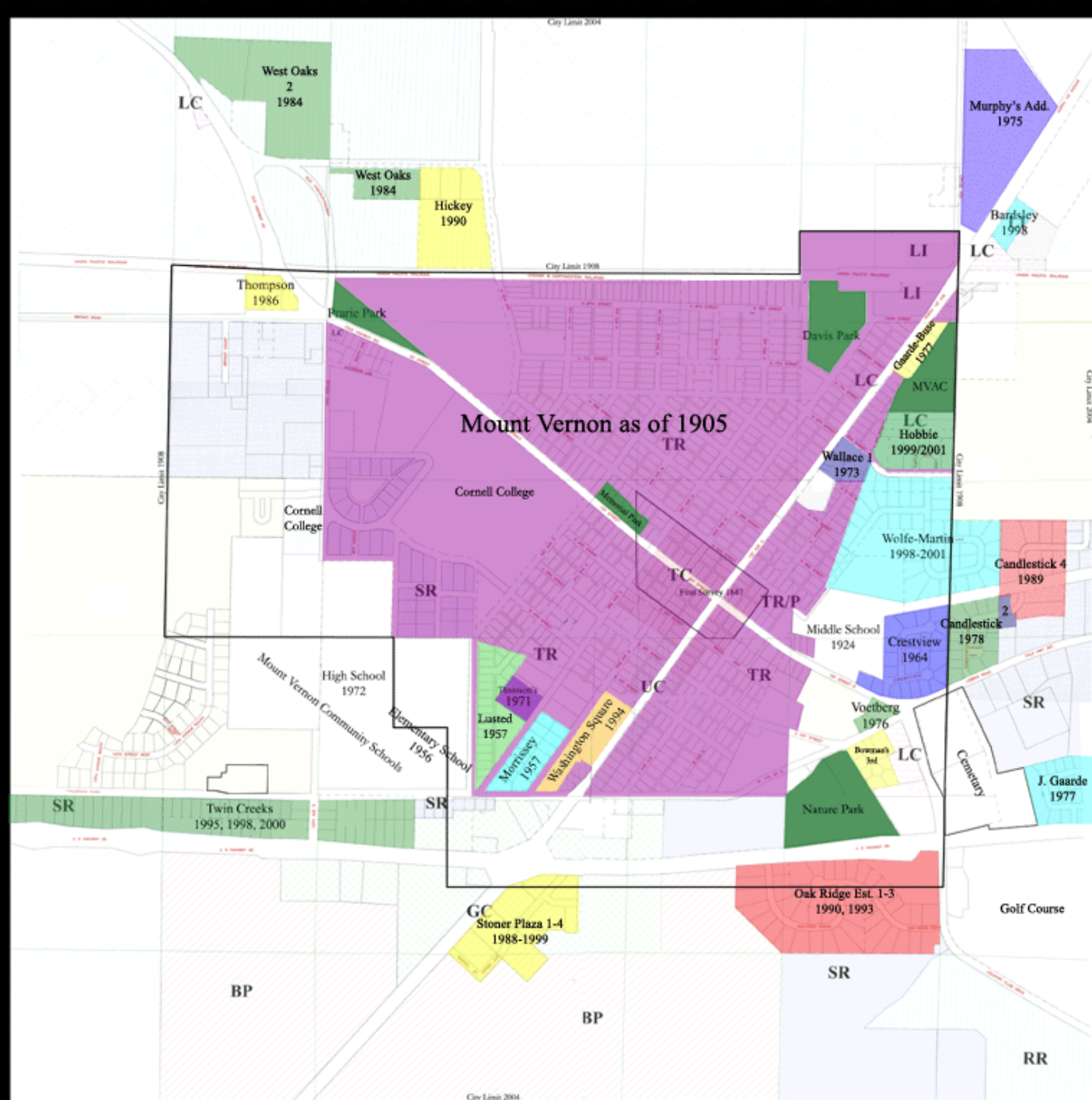
- West Oaks 2 1984 (LC)
- West Oaks 1984 (LC)
- Hickey 1990 (LC)
- Thompson 1986 (LC)
- Prarie Park (TR)
- Cornell College (TR)
- Mount Vernon Community Schools (TR)
- High School 1972 (TR)
- Elementary School 1956 (TR)
- Twin Creeks 1995, 1998, 2000 (SR)
- Stoner Plaza 1-4 1988-1999 (GC)
- Laisted 1957 (TR)
- Thompson's 1971 (TR)
- Morrissey 1957 (TR)
- Washington Square 1984 (TR)
- Memorial Park (TR)
- Wallace 1 1973 (TR)
- Guarde-Rouse 1977 (TR)
- MVAC (TR)
- Wolfe-Martin 1998-2001 (TR)
- Candlestick 4 1989 (TR)
- Candlestick 2 1978 (TR)
- Crestview 1964 (TR)
- Voelberg 1976 (TR)
- Bonnan's 3rd (TR)
- Nature Park (TR)
- Oak Ridge Est. 1-3 1990, 1993 (TR)
- Golf Course (TR)
- J. Gaardo 1977 (TR)
- Murphy's Add. 1975 (LI)



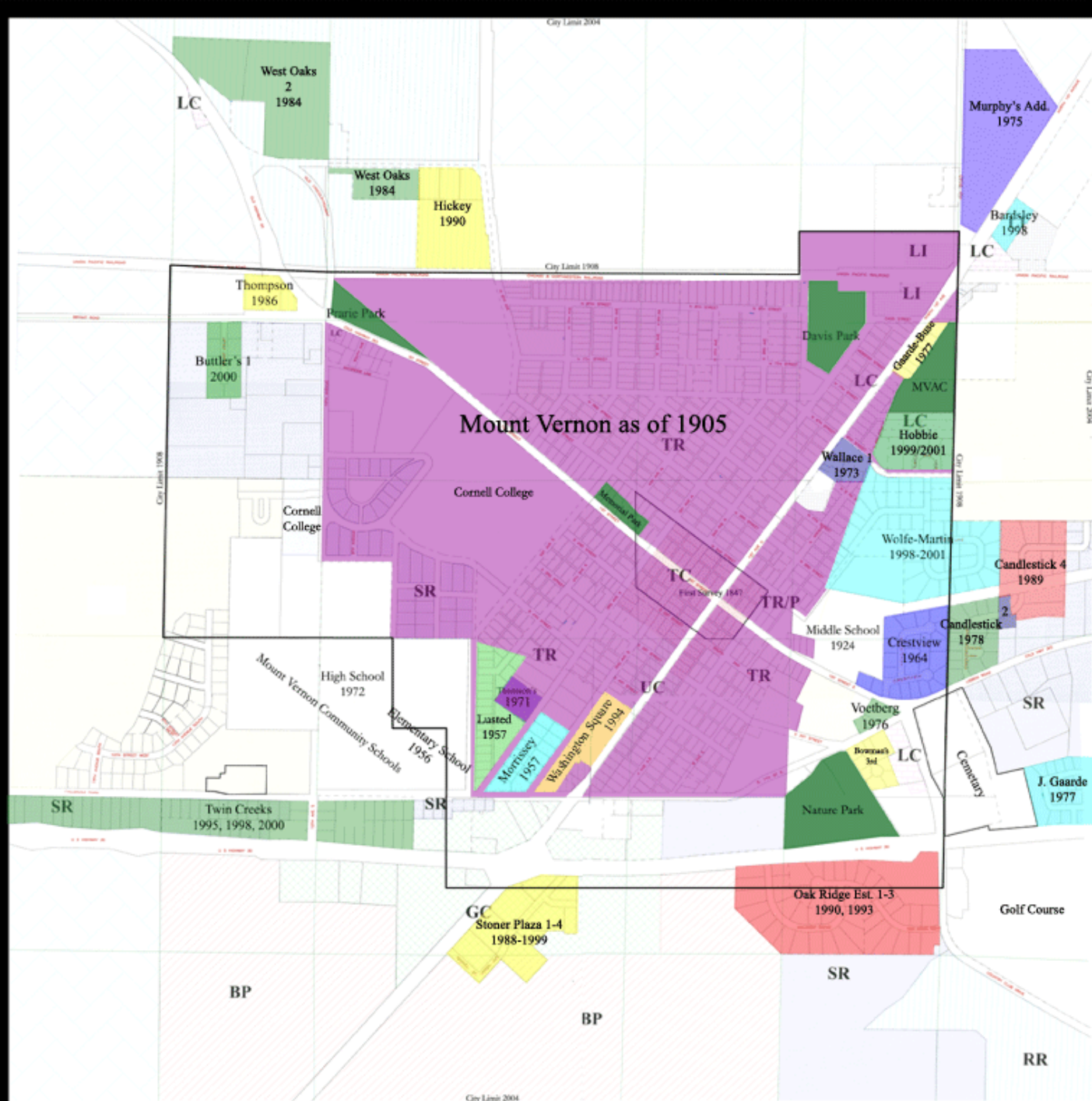
Commercial development along Ia #1 to the north was stimulate by **Bardsley's Addition** in 1998 providing him space for a nursery business.



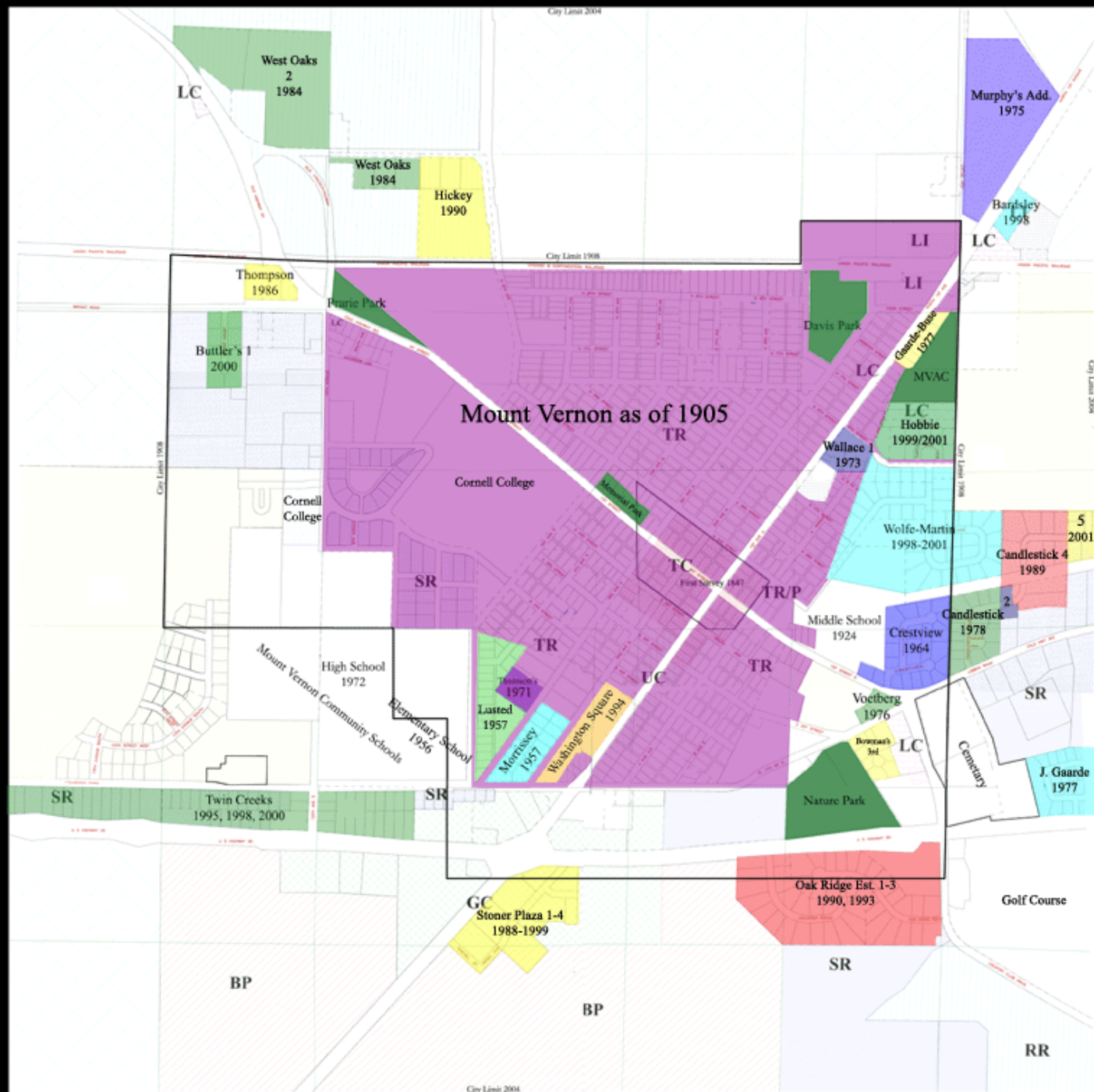
Hobbie's Additions in 1999 – 2000 (cast of Ia #1) nearly finished the task of filling up all the land within the city limits of 1908



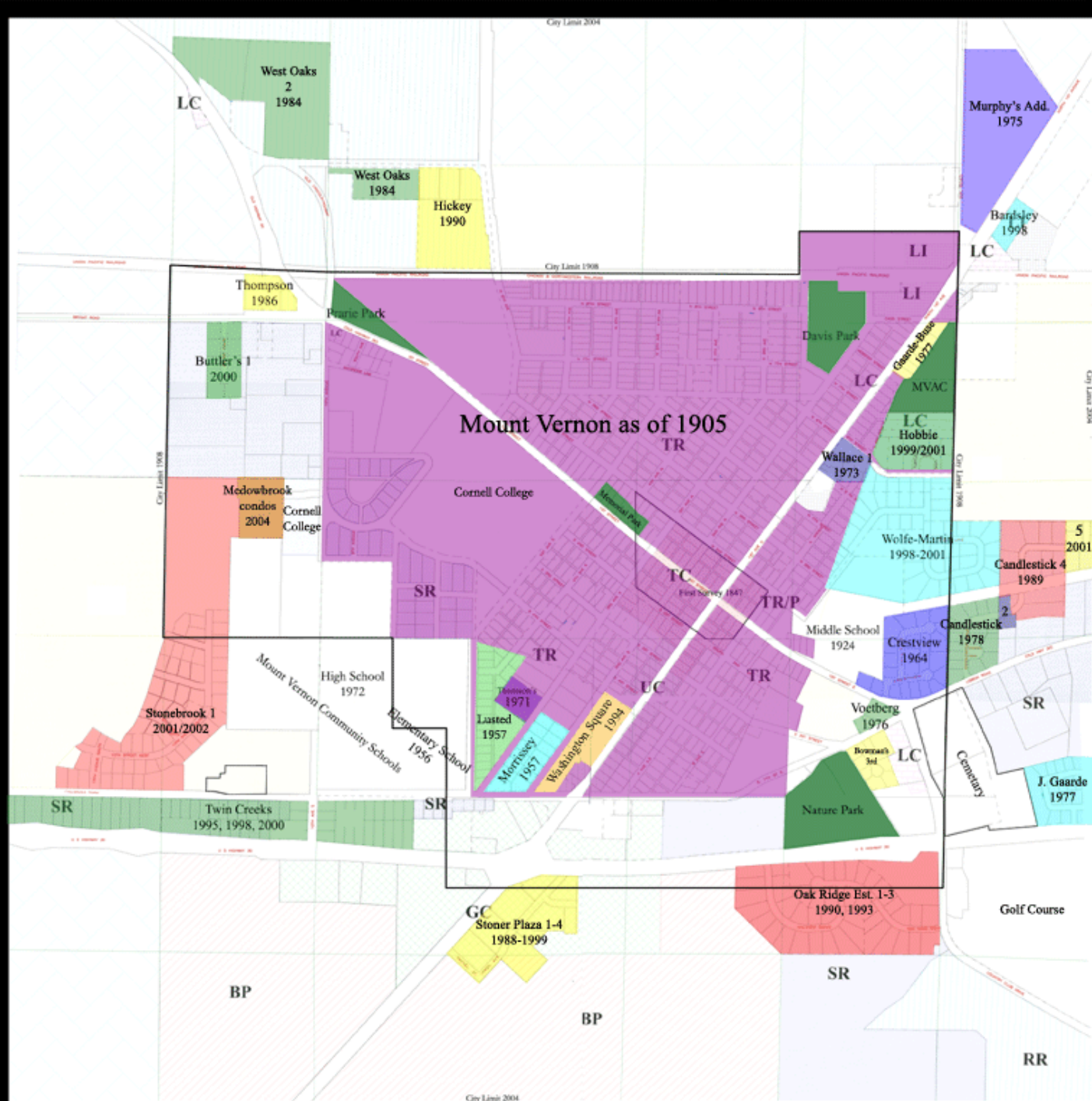
The small **Butler 1 Addition** along the south side of Bryant Road to the north and west of the old town was registered in 2000.



Candlestick 5 in 2001 reached the new city limits to the east. The **last phase** of **Twin Creeks** along Palisades Road completed that area the same year.

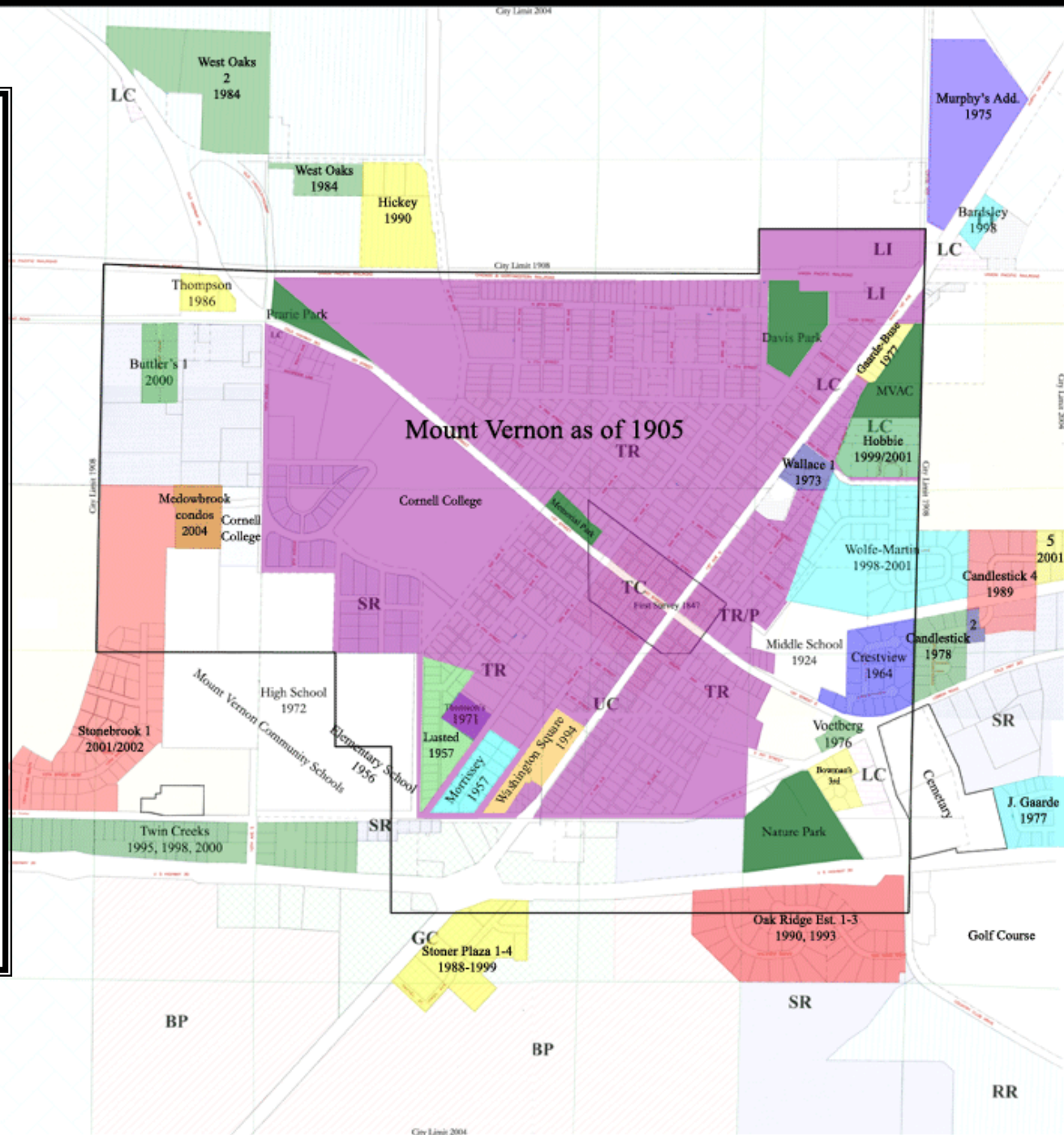


The purchase and development of a substantial farm along the north side of Palisades Road west began an extensive enlargement of the city. **Stonebrook Additions** 2001, 2002, and **Meadowbrook Condo** (2004) started the development with enough room for continued expansion



Note: The city approved at least twenty additions during the past twelve years representing an enormous investment. The total number of new lots and completed buildings testifies the general economic health of the community.

The extension of the city limits to its current definition in the mid 1970s recognized that slow growth (already a pattern) was necessary. By 2005 the town population was about 3500, doubling that of 1940. Sustained economic and population growth in the region from Waterloo to Iowa City, despite the Farm Crisis of the 1980s, contributed to the attractiveness of the town as the enormous increase in new lots indicates. It is clear that in large measure the town's future is linked to the increasing urban movement in the region. The availability of capital and enthusiastic developers is an important factor as well in the immediate future. A healthy education sector continues to give the community a solid foundation as it has for 150 years.



Thus end the tale of How A Small Grew A Little -- and A Little More -- and ? (Herein is the future).

This illustrated essay was written and produced by Dr. Richard H. Thomas of the Historic Preservation Commission and Cornell College with all technical assistance by Mitchel Bloomquist (Intern).

Aug. 2004

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