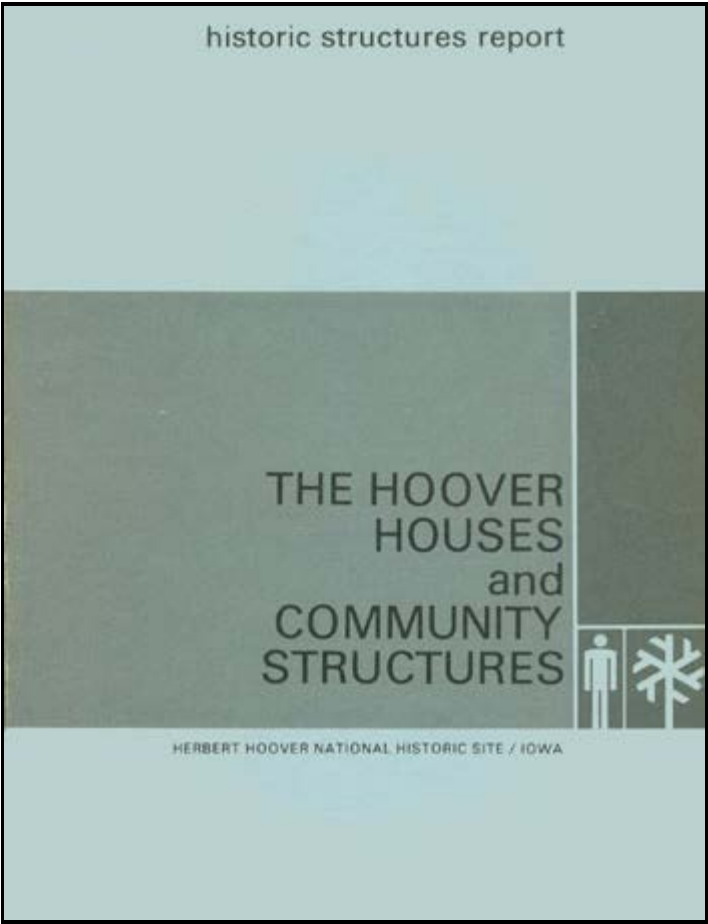


HERBERT HOOVER

The Hoover Houses and Community Structures Historic Structures Report



THE HOOVER HOUSES AND COMMUNITY STRUCTURES Historic Structures Report

Herbert Hoover National
Historic Site
West Branch, Iowa

HISTORICAL DATA
by Edwin C. Bearss

November 30, 1971

Denver Service Center
National Park Service

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CHAPTER 1: HOOVER COTTAGE

I. ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

A. Name and Number of Structure

The Hoover Cottage, Structure No. 1, West Branch, Iowa. The Hoover Cottage is classified as a structure of 1st Order of Significance.

B. Proposed Use of Structure

The restored and refurnished Hoover Cottage is a historic house museum used to interpret the birth and childhood of our 31st President and the way of life of his parents in the years 1870-79.

C. Justification for Such Use as Shown in the Master Plan

The Hoover Cottage and Grounds are to be restored to their appearance, circa 1875.

D. Provision for Operating the Structure

The Hoover Cottage will be used as a historic house museum and exhibit in place.

E. Cooperative Agreement, if any Executed or Proposed for Operating the Structure

Cooperative agreements will not be needed to operate and interpret this structure.

F. Brief Description of Proposed Construction Activity

Before commencing this study, I met with William Wagner, the distinguished historical architect, who has been intimately associated with the area and the Herbert Hoover Birthplace Foundation since 1956. Mr. Wagner was responsible for overseeing a number of maintenance projects at the Cottage in 1961-62, besides preparing the measured drawings of that structure. Mr. Wagner suggested that the Cottage, as built, may have had siding rather than boards and battens. He also questioned Bruce McKay's 1938 decision to use shakes rather than shingles in the restoration and the type of interior finish.

Keeping these points raised by Bill Wagner in mind, I began the subject report as will be shown in this study, McKay's decision to use boards and battens has been vindicated, but his use of shakes was a mistake. Consequently, construction activity proposed for the Cottage will be minimal, and will consist of (a) replacing shakes with shingles; and (b) killing the gloss of the modern paints and treating the exterior to simulate the historic whitewash.

G. Estimate of Cost of Proposed Construction

\$7,500

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CHAPTER 1: HOOVER COTTAGE *(continued)*

II. HISTORICAL DATA

A. Significance

The Hoover Cottage is the birthplace of our 31st President and is of 1st Order of Significance. In this simple three-room board and batten structure on August 10, 1874, Herbert Hoover was born. The second son of Jesse and Huldah Hoover, Herbert lived in this cottage with his parents and older brother and younger sister until May 1879. Orphaned in 1884, Hoover rose above adversity to become a distinguished statesman. In 1938 Mrs. Lou Henry Hoover had the cottage faithfully restored.

B. Legal Description of Property and Chain of Title

The Hoover Cottage is located in the northeast quarter of Section 7, Township 79 North, Range 4 West. On January 23, 1852, Aaron Baker of Baltimore, Maryland, entered on the northeast quarter of Section 7, Township 79 North, Range 4 West, surrendering a land warrant issued to him for service in the Mexican War. [1] Baker's 160 acres extended to the north and east to what is today the intersection of Main and Downey streets. Within four months, Baker sold his 160 acres to Samuel King of Cedar County for \$162.50. [2]

King and his wife, Constant, on March 28, 1853, sold to Joseph Steer for \$208 a tract in the subject quarter section, beginning at the northeast corner of Section 7, then west 69 rods with the section line, then south 30 rods, then east 13.54 rods, then south 130 rods, then east 82.54 rods to the section line, and then north with the section line 160 rods to the point of beginning. The tract conveyed contained 80 acres. [3]

Steer in turn sold five acres in the northeast corner of the subject tract to J. M. Wetherell. In 1871 Wetherell divided his five acres into town lots. [4] On April 13 of that year Wetherell sold Lots 42 and 43 to Jesse Hoover for \$90. In the ensuing months, Jesse Hoover erected a three-room board and batten cottage on Lot 42. [5]

Nine years later, on May 25, 1879, Jesse and Huldah Hoover sold to G. M. D. Hill of Johnson County for \$1,000 Lots 41, 42, and 43 in Joseph Steer's plat of the Town of West Branch. Lot 41, on which Jesse Hoover's Blacksmith Shop was located, was 35 x 86 feet and Lots 42 and 43 were each 30 x 99 feet. [6]

G. M. D. Hill and his wife (Martha) on Christmas, 1885, sold Lots 41, 42, and 43, along with the improvements thereon, to Z. T. McCaleb for \$500. [7] The McCalebs retained possession of the property for 21 months. When they disposed of the subject real estate, on September 17, 1887, they sold the cottage and Lots 42 and 43 to Victoria Hill; the Blacksmith Shop to Dr. Joseph Baker; and Lot 41 John Hirst. Lots 42 and 43 and the improvements thereon

brought the McCalebs \$250. [8]

Victoria Hill, following her marriage to Oliver C. Pennock, sold Lots 42 and 43, along with the Hoover Cottage and other improvements, to R. P. Scellers on December 23, 1889, for \$250. [9]

R. Portland Scellers and his wife, Jennie, had previously acquired four lots in Joseph Steer's plat of the Town of West Branch. On January 13, 1886, they had purchased from Samuel and Anna Gruwell for \$100 Lots 37, 38, 39, and 40. These lots bounded Lots 42 and 43 on the west. [10] In 1901 Scellers added to his real estate holdings north of the Wapsinonoc. He purchased from C. L. and M. A. Penrose for \$25 a 16-foot wide strip of land, bounding Lots 37-40 on the south and Lot 43 on the west. [11]

Port and Jennie Scellers in December 1900 had found themselves short of cash, and they borrowed \$100 from the West Branch Bank, giving as security a mortgage on Lots 42 and 43. [12] The loan and interest were repaid, and the Scellers given a release. Three years later, in February 1904, the Scellerses mortgaged their real estate (Lots 37, 38, 39, 40, 42 and 43, and the 16-foot strip) to D. E. Fairall, as security for a \$500 loan at seven per cent. The mortgage was satisfied on January 10, 1906. [13]

On November 13, 1911, Port Scellers purchased five more lots in Joseph Steer's Plat. Lots 44, 45, 46, 47, and 48, to the south of Lot 43 and bordering Downey Street on the west, were bought from Sem Jenson for \$300. [14]

Port Scellers died in July 1916, having willed his "home place, including the lots to his beloved wife." [15] The widow continued to reside on the property until her death on June 28, 1934. Mrs. Scellers "left to her four children her property to be divided equally," after her son, Elmer, had received \$800 from the estate. [16]

The heirs on July 29, 1935, sold to Fred Albin for \$4,500 the 12 lots they had inherited. Albin had acted as agent for Allan Hoover and on Tuesday, October 15, 1935, he conveyed to Allan the subject lots. It was noted in the deed that "no consideration has passed between the parties hereto other than the \$4,500 shown in the deed from the heirs of Jennie Scellers . . . to Fred Albin." The grantor, Fred Albin, had taken title for the benefit of Allan Hoover. [17]

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CHAPTER 1:

HOOVER COTTAGE *(continued)*

III. THE COTTAGE AND ITS OCCUPANTS, 1871-89

A. The Hoovers, 1871-79

1. Jesse and Eli Hoover Build a Cottage

Within 13 months of his March 12, 1870, marriage to Huldah Minthorn, Jesse Hoover had purchased Lots 42 and 43 in Joseph Steer's Plat of West Branch. To provide a home for his wife and their first son, Theodore, born in the last week of January 1871, the young blacksmith assisted by his father, Eli, built a three-room board and batten cottage on Lot 42.

The foundation stones were boulders hauled in a wagon from the open prairie to the west. Auger holes, still visible in the rafters, indicate that the "timbers from which the frame work of the cottage were hewn had been lashed together" and rafted down the Mississippi from Wisconsin or Minnesota to Muscatine sawmills. After being turned into lumber, they were hauled overland to West Branch.

The Cottage was 14 x 20 feet. Its front door of vertical boards with a thumb latch faced Downey Street. The little room, 13-1/2 x 7 feet, in which Herbert was born on August 10, 1874, looked out upon the yard. The house's north room served the family as parlor, kitchen, and dining room.

At the rear of the Cottage was a back porch with its north end enclosed as a shed room for use as a summer kitchen or spare sleeping quarters. It is recalled that on the night the future President was born E. D. King, who had been hired to assist Jesse in his blacksmith shop, was occupying the shed room. He was awakened and sent to summon assistance. [1]

2. Contemporary Descriptions and Photographs of the Cottage

There are no contemporary descriptions of the Hoover Cottage during the years 1871-79 and only one contemporary photograph. The subject photograph, taken in the autumn of 1878, from Cook's Hill, looking north toward West Branch, shows the south elevation of the Cottage. Details identifiable are the south window, the south gable, a chimney, and a white bargeboard. The Cottage, itself, is brown. A copy of this photograph is in this report. [2]

B. The G. M. D. Hills, McCalebs, and Victoria Hill and the Cottage

1. The Cottage as a Domestic Battleground

Before selling the Cottage to G. M. D. Hill and moving to the northeast corner of Downey and Cedar streets, Jesse Hoover in April 1879 made "some needed improvements" to the structure. [3] G. M. D. Hill and his wife, Martha, had been married 16 months, when they

and their infant daughter moved into the Hoover Cottage in May 1879. The North Carolina-born Hill had become owner-operator of the blacksmith shop.

While they called the Cottage their home, the Hills became parents of a second child, Maggie Dell, born in 1881. The Cottage, however, no longer sheltered a happy family. Domestic troubles between the Hills culminated in divorce on July 31, 1896.

When Mrs. Hill filed for divorce, she charged that within two years of their wedding her husband was abusing and mistreating her. [4]

After listening to the testimony, the court granted Mrs. Hill a divorce, and a generous property settlement. She was awarded the family home, lot, cow, and all the furniture, dishes, bed clothing, except the defendant's clothing and family Bible. Hill would be allowed to select "one bedstead, a straw bed and sufficient blankets and linen for the same, a rocker, and two common chairs." In addition, he was to pay his ex-wife \$200 for child support, plus court costs. [5]

Hill, plagued by domestic difficulties, had announced as early as September 1881 that he wished to sell the Cottage, and his combination blacksmith and wagon shop. [6] There were no buyers for either the shop or his home, and Hill continued in business. In May 1883, Hill again advertised his property for sale. In addition to his house, lots, and shops, he proposed to sell his blacksmith tools. These would be sold cheap, as he was desirous of quitting the trade because of ill-health. [7] Once again, there were no buyers.

2. The McCalebs and the Cottage

Hill in October 1885 finally found a buyer, Z. Taylor McCaleb, of Oasis. McCaleb, a blacksmith, took immediate possession of the shop, but he and his family permitted the Hills to occupy the Cottage until the following spring. [8] The McCalebs moved from Oasis to West Branch on November 10, 1885, and rented rooms in Benjah Miles' building. [9] In the spring of 1886, the Hills having vacated the Cottage, the McCalebs took possession.

3. Victoria Hill and the Cottage

The McCalebs continued to live in the Cottage and operate the blacksmith shop until March 1888. The previous September they had sold the Cottage and Lots 42 and 43 to Victoria Hill, a widow with three young children. The widow and her children lived on the property for about 20 months. Having married Oliver C. Pennock, a wealthy Springdale Township farmer, Victoria sold the Cottage and lots to R. P. Scellers in December 1889, and moved in with her new husband. [10]

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CHAPTER 1:

HOOVER COTTAGE *(continued)*

IV. THE SCELLERSES AND THE COTTAGE, 1890-1923

A. A Structural History

1. Port Scellers Relocates and Remodels the Cottage

The son of Abraham and Susan Scellers, R. Portland ("Port") Scellers, was born on November 26, 1856, in Louisa County, Iowa. He married Jennie Marshall of Rochester on December 26, 1882, and by 1885 the Scellerses were living in West Branch, where Port operated a dray service. [1]

In mid-July 1885 Scellers purchased the two-story frame house behind the post office and, employing his equipment, moved it onto his Penn Street lots, west of G. M. D. Hill's blacksmith shop and cottage. Scellers had contracted to purchase the lots and barn thereon from Samuel and Anna Gruwell. Reporting these developments, the editor of the Local Record observed, "Port is fixed up to stay." [2]

Having purchased the Hoover Cottage and Lots 42 and 43 from Victoria Hill Pennock, Scellers in May 1890 relocated the Cottage. Employing his heavy equipment, Scellers moved the structure nearer the rear of Lot 42 and turned it 90 degrees, so that the east elevation faced south. Next, he moved his two-story frame Penn Street House onto Lot 42, faced it to front Downey Street, and connected its west elevation to the new east elevation of the Cottage. [3]

2. Improvements to the Cottage, 1890-1912

It is probable that Scellers at this time made several major improvements and alterations to the Cottage. The two-story house was covered with siding and the Cottage with boards and battens, so in the interest of homogeneity siding was added to the Cottage. The shed room was removed and the back porch partially enclosed and screened.

Sixteen years later, in April 1906, Scellers had his residence re-roofed. [4]

3. Life in the Cottage, 1890-1916

a. The House and the Family

The Scellerses had five children (four boys and one girl), one, Ira C., dying in infancy. With four growing children, they found space at a premium. In the front of the house, on the first floor, were the parents' bedroom and a living room. The front door opened off a porch into the living room, which was on the north side of the house. Between the downstairs bedroom and the kitchen were the stairs to the upper floor, where there were two bedrooms and a hall. Port Scellers had removed the wall separating the Hoovers' bedroom from the combination

parlor, dining room, and kitchen, thus providing his family with a commodious kitchen-dining room. A window had been enlarged into a doorway to provide access from the kitchen to the Scellerses' living room. [5]

Port Scellers had the interior of his kitchen-dining room refinished. Wainscoting was installed to a height of about three feet from the floor. Above the wainscoting, the walls and ceiling were plastered. The wood box was in the southwest corner of the room and the dining table in the opposite corner. Mrs. Scellers' cooking range was in the middle of the kitchen. In the northwest corner was Port Scellers easy chair.

When not working, during the winter months, Port liked to sit in the chair and visit. Glenn Brown, who stabled his horse at the Scellerses in the second decade of the twentieth century and subsequently wired the house for electricity, fondly recalls Port Scellers and the way he murdered the English language. For example, one day Port in describing someone as suffering from "nervous prostration" used the words "nervous prostitute." [6]

b. Thirteen Tears with the Scellerses

The Scellerses were a close-knit family, and their home was a scene of frequent family gatherings, even after the boys had come of age. Lewis, who in 1903-04 was living and working in Cedar Rapids, visited his folks wherever there was an opportunity. In the summer of 1904, Port Scellers' mother, Mrs. York of Muscatine, spent several weeks in June with her son and his family. Mrs. Scellers' mother, Mrs. Marshall, was in West Branch for several days in August. [7]

Lew Scellers, Henry Davis, and Bye Wright spent the summer of 1904 at St. Louis, working at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition. [8] In mid-December 1904 Earl Scellers traveled to Kanaranzie, Minnesota, for a three-week visit with relatives. While in the North Country he shot a large jack rabbit, which on his return to West Branch he had mounted by a taxidermist. [9]

Earl Scellers by 1907 was no longer living with his parents on south Downey. He had gone to Iowa City to work as a mail weigher in the post office. [10] By late summer he had quit the government and was clerking in Shrader's grocery store. Like his brother Lew, who was now married, Earl was a frequent visitor in the home of his parents. [11] The Scellerses' daughter, Della, liked to travel with her mother. On October 5, 1907, she accompanied her mother to Iowa City to visit Mrs. Scellers' hospitalized sister. [12]

On July 4, 1908, Port Scellers' brother, William, and his wife of Fruitland arrived in West Branch and spent the weekend with their kinfolk. [13] That autumn Port and Jennie Scellers became grandparents, when their daughter-in-law Mrs. Lew Scellers gave birth to a son. Mrs. Scellers accordingly spent Sunday, November 7, in Cedar Rapids making the acquaintance of her grandson. [14] Mother and baby spent several days in West Branch at the end of March 1909 visiting the proud grandmother and grandfather. [15]

Mrs. Jennie Scellers was seriously ill in mid-February 1909. Among her many visitors was her son Lew over from Cedar Rapids on the 23d. [16] She soon recovered, and was elected to membership in the West Branch Cemetery Association. On September 30, 1910, she hosted a meeting of the Association in her Downey Street home. [17]

In 1910 Elmer, the Scellerses' youngest son, got a job selling Baker Patent Medicine in Johnson County. This necessitated him being away from home during the week. [18]

Mrs. Scellers now that her children were grown had more time for outside activities. Besides the Cemetery Association, she was an active member of the Rebekah Lodge. As an officer of

the lodge in January 1911, she attended the installation of officers at the Mechanicsville and Tipton lodges. [19] Mrs. Scellers on October 4, 1911, left West Branch by train for a three-week visit with her mother, Mrs. Amanda Edwards, at Magnolia, Minnesota. She returned on the 25th. [20] Two months later, on Christmas, she traveled to Cedar Rapids to spend the day with son Lew and his family. [21]

Earl Scellers, having married, moved across Downey Street into the old Forney House in the first week of March 1912. [22] On Sunday, June 9, Mr. and Mrs. Lew Scellers and their son Robert drove over to West Branch to see Port and Jennie. As automobiles were not numerous in the community, Lew's vehicle was popular with the neighbors. [23] Earl and his wife did not live in the Forney House many months. In August they moved to Solon, a more convenient base from which to operate his patent medicine route. [24]

On Sunday, October 5, 1913, Port and Jennie Scellers entertained their four children at a family reunion. Motoring over from Cedar Rapids were Lew, his wife and son, and Elmer. From Honey Grove came Earl and his family. [25] Earl and his family were again residing in West Branch in October 1914, when the senior Scellerses held another family reunion. [26]

c. Port Scellers—Thresher

Port Scellers in the first decade of the twentieth century broadened his horizons and entered the threshing business. There was sufficient work in the area to keep both Scellers and John Randall busy, and in July 1906 Scellers bought a new Port Huron engine. "It was a beauty," the editor of the local newspaper reported, and "is guaranteed to be as good as it looks." [27] Four years later, in July 1910, Scellers unloaded a "fine new" Avery separator. With this, he would be better "equipped than ever for taking care" of the bumper crop of grain being threshed. [28]

In October 1913 Scellers traded his Port Huron engine for the 20-horsepower Reeves traction engine John Randall had turned into Emerson Brantingham Company of Rockford. [29]

d. Port Scellers Passes On

Death from pernicious anemia claimed Port Scellers on July 24, 1916, at his home in West Branch. He had been seriously ill only a few days Port had lived in West Branch for more than 30 years, and would be missed by his many friends. Unlike his wife, he had remained aloof from clubs. The only group of which he was a member was the West Branch I.O.O.F. Lodge. Funeral services were held in the home on south Downey at 3 p.m., Wednesday, the 26th, with burial in the West Branch Cemetery. [30]

Scellers had drawn his will on July 7, leaving his real estate and personal property to his "beloved wife." When his will was probated and his personal property inventoried, it was found that the deceased possessed one horse valued at \$15; one set of harness at \$20; one Reeves traction engine at \$600; one Avery separator at \$250; one corn sheller at \$10; one hay loader at \$15; one 16-inch walking plow at \$1; one single stove plow at 50¢; one bobsled at \$10; one iron-wheeled truck wagon at \$25; one steel water tank at \$5; five acres of corn at \$75; a lot of hard timber at \$2; one hay fork, carries & rope at \$2.50; one shovelling board at 50¢ one lot of forks, shovels, tools, collars, etc., used, about the barn at \$10; and one old brick board at 50¢.

To satisfy claims against the deceased's estate these items were sold at an administrators' sale, on December 2. A large crowd was in attendance, and the Scellers' property "sold well." J. T. Butler purchased the new barn and lot; an association of 13 farmers living southwest of West Branch purchased the threshing outfit; and the corn brought 85 cents per bushel. [31]

e. The Last of the Children Leave Home

In April 1917 the United States declared war on Germany. Mrs. Scellers and her daughter had continued to live in the family home. Her son Lew had moved to Mason City, and on June 6 mother and daughter caught the morning train to that point to visit Lew and his family. [32]

Elmer Scellers, like many local boys, soon found himself in the United States Army. He was stationed at Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana, in December 1917. Granted a ten-day furlough, Scellers arrived by train in West Branch on December 21 to spend the holidays with his mother and sister. The other Scellers boys and their families likewise came home on Christmas to exchange gifts and eat a family dinner. [33] Elmer, having spent a delightful week and a half at home, returned to Fort Benjamin Harrison on New Year's Day. [34] He was discharged from the army in 1919 and returned to West Branch.

Carl Wilhelm, who had moved to Springdale Township from Virginia in 1918, worked as a delivery boy for the East Side Store. As Mrs. Scellers bought her groceries from the store, Wilhelm made deliveries to her home. He recalled that Mrs. Scellers used the Cottage as a kitchen and storeroom. In 1919 two of the Scellers children, Della and Elmer, were at home. [35]

In 1920 Elmer was still living at home and Della was clerking at the West Branch Post Office. In July she resigned her position, [36] but she continued to live with her mother until May 1923, when she married John C. Enlow. The "quiet wedding" took place on Tuesday evening, the 8th, in the parlor of her mother's house on south Downey. Miss Dorothy Enlow played the wedding march as the couple entered the room and took their positions before the Rev. W. Glenn Rowley. After the ceremony, the newlyweds left on a honeymoon, and after June 1 their address was 3848 Fagan Drive in Des Moines. [37]

With her children married, Mrs. Scellers kept busy with her club and other outside activities. To supplement her income, she rented the coal shed to one of her neighbors as a garage. [38] Since 1914, when Herbert Hoover had been named to head the American Relief Committee, Mrs. Scellers found that as each year passed and Hoover's fame spread more and more people were becoming interested in the Birthplace Cottage. She came to enjoy meeting people and showing them through her house. [39]

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HERBERT HOOVER

The Hoover Houses and Community Structures

Historic Structures Report



CHAPTER 1:

HOOVER COTTAGE *(continued)*

V. THE HOOVERS AND WEST BRANCH, 1914-1928

A. The "West Branch Times" Discovers Herbert Hoover

After having taken cognizance of Herbert Hoover's activities during the Boxer Rebellion in 1900, the West Branch Times did not again mention the man destined to be the 31st President until October 29, 1914. On that date his hometown newspaper called attention to a news release of October 24, announcing that Herbert C. Hoover had been named chairman of a committee in London organized to assist the 150,000 Americans stranded in Europe by the outbreak of World War I to return to the United States.

Although barely 40 years old, the West Branch native had had "a most astonishing career." After having graduated from Leland Stanford University, Hoover, it was pointed out, had

served the government in the western mountains, went from there to Australia, from there to China, where he took part in the defense of Tientsin in the Boxer Rebellion, from there to London, where his home now is.

He is interested in many of the biggest mining ventures in China, South Africa, Australia, Russia, a number of the great scientific societies, a trustee of Stanford, and a world figure in mining and mining investments.

He has been acting as chairman of the American Relief Commission in London and will now undertake the larger work of caring for the Belgians with American aid.

In closing, Editor Frank Corbin observed, "West Branch is justly proud of having contributed a world figure to the present situation." [1]

Facilities having been secured by Editor Corbin for reproducing illustrations, the West Branch Times for April 8, 1915, featured a photograph and brief biography of Herbert Hoover, the former West Branch boy, "who had gained a noteable place for himself" in world affairs. During the past several months, Hoover's fame had spread, as activities of the Commission for Belgium Relief, which he headed, expanded. [2]

When the United States declared war on Germany in April 1917, Hoover was called home and appointed chairman of the food section of the Council of National Defense. Four months later he headed the Federal Food Administration, and in that office he organized the United States Grain Corporation and Sugar Equalization Board. Hoover's fame as an administrator and fighter against hunger spread.

Laban J. Miles, former West Branch merchant and Indian agent, wrote the editor of the West

Branch Times on January 31, 1918, from the nation's capital, enclosing a clipping from the Washington Post about his nephew Herbert Hoover. Miles pointed out that this was similar to many others, appearing daily, concerning Hoover's role in feeding the starving millions of the world. He reminded Editor Corbin that West Branch has the distinction of being Hoover's birthplace, and it was not too many years ago that Hoover was a "barefoot lad running errands for his father and mother, who now lie in the little 'white city' near the town."

From this humble beginning, Miles continued, Hoover had pushed himself forward "until his ability is not only recognized county-wide, state-wide, nation-wide, but world-wide." Riles had spoken with Hoover on the 30th, and he had talked of "world needs and world production with . . . knowledge and directness that a farmer would of his last year's crops." Hoover had explained how by securing the cooperation of the rice growers, millers, and distributors, he had been able to fix the price for the grower and consumer for 1918 and assure to the people of Europe an ample supply of this staple.

Miles closed with the observation, West Branch should "be proud to have produced such a lad." [3]

B. The Cottage as a Source of Mementos

With Herbert Hoover a world figure, interest began to focus increasingly on his birthplace. This manifested itself in one way, which if pursued, would have resulted in destruction of much of the Cottage's original fabric. In July 1917 Alfred H. O'Connor was the principal speaker at the West Branch Chautauqua. With Hoover's name a household word, the West Branchers to honor O'Connor determined to present him a cane carved from wood from the Birthplace Cottage. Mrs. Scellers was agreeable. Two different kinds of wood was obtained from the Cottage and carved into a handsome cane which was presented to the distinguished speaker. [4] Fortunately, the presentation of canes carved from the Hoover Cottage fabric did not become a fad.

C. Mrs. Hoover's First Visit to West Branch

Lou Henry Hoover first visited her husband's home town on October 11, 1921. This was eight months after Herbert Hoover had been named Secretary of Commerce in President Warren G. Harding's cabinet. Mrs. Hoover had been called to Monterey, California, by the illness and death of her mother. After attending the funeral, Mrs. Hoover, accompanied by her father, her nephew, and a Filipino chauffer, started back to Washington in her sports-model, four-passenger Cadillac.

Mrs. Hoover and her party stopped on the night of the 10th in Waterloo, former home of the Henrys. From there they drove to West Branch to visit scenes of her husband's boyhood. While in Cedar County, Mrs. Hoover and her party were guests of her husband's cousin, Mayor G. C. Hoover. He accompanied Mrs. Hoover as she visited sites, including the Cottage, she had heard her husband describe.

Mrs. Hoover expressed herself as "delighted" with West Branch, and she was surprised at the "size and progressiveness of the town." She told Editor Corbin that she and her husband had "many times planned to visit his birthplace, but something had always prevented them from doing so but they would certainly arrange to come at some future date." [5]

D. Secretary Hoover's 1923 Visit

Herbert Hoover spent several hours in West Branch on Friday afternoon, April 13, 1923. He was accompanied by his secretary and chauffer. The Secretary of Commerce had come to Iowa to address a League of Women Voters meeting in Ames on Thursday afternoon. After

spending the night in Le Grande with the Pembertons, Hoover motored to West Branch to see friends and relatives before returning to Washington by train from Iowa City. [6]

Mrs. Maud Stratton, correspondent for the Times, introduced herself to Secretary Hoover, with the exclamation, "I want to meet you because my mother used to go with your father!" Hoover replied, "This is logical reason enough." [7]

As he was preparing to leave West Branch after a three-hour visit, Hoover remarked to his friends, "I am disillusioned. The hills have flattened out; the old familiar buildings are gone; the town has trebled in population and the old swimming hole down under the railroad bridge is only about half the size it was when I was a boy."

The Birthplace Cottage did not resemble the building he recalled. It had been incorporated into the home of Mrs. Jennie Scellers, and her two unmarried children—Della and Elmer. His father's blacksmith shop was gone, and the home where his parents had died would soon be razed. [8]

E. The 1928 Homecoming

1. Hoover is Invited to Speak at West Branch

The Republican National Convention at Kansas City in June 1928 nominated Herbert C. Hoover as its candidate for the Presidency. On Friday evening following Hoover's nomination, more than 4,000 people crowded the streets of West Branch to demonstrate their enthusiasm and confidence in the local boy who had grown into a world leader.

A huge "Hoover's Birthplace" banner was hung above the intersection of Main and Downey streets. More than 50 newspaper correspondents, a score of photographers, and several newsreel cameramen covered the activities. There were fireworks, flags, and bunting. Bands, drill teams, speeches, and cheers paid tribute to the candidate and his Iowa background. Mayor N. P. Olsen was master of ceremonies. Dr. L. J. Leech and other West Branchers addressed the crowd. [9]

Soon afterwards, West Branch civic leaders contacted James Good of Cedar Rapids, Hoover's western campaign manager. Good, having represented the Congressional district in which Cedar County was located, was well known to the West Branchers. They suggested to Good that Hoover make their town his mid-western campaign headquarters. They were realists, however, and when Chicago was chosen over West Branch, they volunteered to assist in any manner possible.

An invitation was extended for Mr. Hoover to speak at West Branch. It was suggested that the occasion of the annual community picnic and homecoming, "when the village was in the habit of entertaining as many as 4,000 visitors in ordinary years," would be an appropriate date for the candidate to open his mid-western campaign in his native state and home town. [10]

A local committee, known as the Hoover Birthplace Committee, was organized with T. A. Moore as chairman, F. L. Pearson as secretary, and Mayor N. P. Olsen, John Thompson, and William B. Anderson. The committee traveled to Chicago in July to meet with Mr. Good. When they returned to West Branch, they announced that Hoover would speak at West Branch on August 21. [11]

2. The Preparations

Preparations for the Hoover homecoming engrossed the community for the next several

weeks. Civic pride manifested itself "in freshly painted houses, neatly trimmed lawns, carefully graded parkings, removal of trash from back yards and alleys, and the appearance of shining windows and well swept pavements." Rock Island Railroad maintenance people painted the depot and policed the right-of-way through the town.

The school grounds were mowed and two huge circus tents secured. These tents were pitched on the football field behind the school to provide an outdoor auditorium with seating for 18,000. They were flanked by "several large rest tents," equipped with chairs, telephones, cots, and running water. Drinking fountains and toilet facilities were provided for the anticipated thousands of visitors.

Plans were made to serve the official guests at luncheons in the church dining rooms. Seven free parking fields were laid out to accommodate an estimated 4,000 automobiles. Emergency services for motorists were organized, while free camp grounds were laid out.

An amplifying system was installed by the National Broadcasting Company to carry the words of the speakers to every part of the huge tents and to those to be seated on the nearby grassy slopes. The second floor of the grade school was outfitted as a press room, with accommodations for 250 correspondents. Microphones were positioned to carry Hoover's speech to 20 radio broadcasting stations, which in turn would carry the words of the candidate to millions of listeners. Western Union installed 20 special circuits, with an office from which to transmit the stories of newspaper correspondents. [12]

Great numbers of green corn stalks were used to decorate the speakers' platform in the big tent and buildings on Main Street. Bunting in the national colors and huge welcome signs decorated the streets, while United States flags were displayed from the homes. [13]

3. The Hoovers Breakfast at the Cottage

On Monday night, August 20, a savage wind and rain storm punished Springdale Township. Trees were up-rooted, and there was an electric power failure. The storm, however, failed to dampen the ardor of the West Branchers. By daybreak the townspeople had turned to and the debris was quickly cleared. The committee observed with pleasure that the bunting decorations were the kind that did not fade.

The morning dawned bright and clear, and by 7:30 a.m., when the campaign special chuffed into West Branch from Palo Alto, a large crowd had assembled at the depot to welcome Herbert Hoover. On hand were Governor John Hammell of Iowa and several bands. After Hoover and his official party had detrained, they got into automobiles for the drive to the Birthplace Cottage, where they would be guests of Mrs. Jennie Scellers for an old fashioned Iowa farm breakfast.

With the bands in the lead, the caravan drove west on Main Street and turned south on Downey to the Scellers' home. There another crowd eagerly awaited the coming of Mr. and Mrs. Hoover and their sons Herbert and Allan. [14]

Mrs. Scellers had notified the committee that she would like to serve breakfast to Mr. Hoover and his family. The storm, having toppled a tree across the power lines on south Downey, had handicapped Mrs. Scellers' breakfast preparations. But she was ready when her distinguished guests arrived.

Assisted by her daughter, Mrs. J. C. Enlow of Des Moines, she had tastefully arranged her kitchen "with its daintily ruffled window curtains and shining linoleum and the old fashioned extension table pulled out its full length and spread with a snowy cloth." Hothouse flowers had been provided by the committee, but Mrs. Scellers had replaced them with a vase of

flowers from her garden.

When the Hoover party arrived, Mrs. Scellers removed her apron, smoothed her hair, and opened the door to the kitchen fronting on Penn Street. Her visitors entered the room in which, as a small boy, "Bert Hoover" had eaten his meals more than 50 years before.

While Mrs. Scellers and her daughter completed breakfast preparations, Mr. and Mrs. Hoover, their two handsome sons, and Mrs. Mollie Curran were invited into the parlor. There they discussed the trip, the change in the town's appearance, and the day's schedule. [15]

Mrs. Hoover, when asked if she believed that a family of five had lived in the three-room cottage, replied, "Oh yes, many people do live in such small houses. I have myself."

Preparations for breakfast completed, the Hoover party returned to the kitchen and sat down at the table. When offered the platter by Mrs. Scellers, Herbert Hoover exclaimed, "Ham and eggs just the kind of breakfast I'm used to. For 30 years, I suspect, I have not missed having eggs for breakfast." Mrs. Hoover spoiled his story by reminding him that during the Boxer Rebellion, they had gone a whole month without their breakfast eggs. The nominee praised the coffee, while his wife complimented Mrs. Scellers on her hot buttered rolls, and strawberry jam. The sliced peaches and country cream were delicious.

While they ate their leisurely breakfast, there was small talk. The current climate in Iowa was contrasted with that of the 1880s. The Hoovers wondered if the "snow drifts ever got as deep as they used to," and whether the Wapsinonoc carried as much water as formerly.

After they had finished breakfast and had gotten up to leave, Mrs. Scellers presented Mrs. Hoover with a bouquet of gladiolas from her flower garden. On behalf of the people of West Branch, she presented Mr. Hoover with a cane carved of wood from the room in which he was born. The cane was a painstaking copy of a stalk of corn, with the ears growing from the sides.

Before saying good-bye to their hosts, the Hoovers signed Mrs. Scellers' guest book. Mr. Hoover graciously insisted that Mrs. Curran join them in signing. He then accepted the photographs of the house, which his hostess presented and autographed a number for her. [16]

On emerging from the Cottage, the Hoovers posed for a number of photographs by the battery of cameramen awaiting them on the south lawn. From Mrs. Scellers', the Hoover party was driven to the cemetery to visit the graves of Jesse and Huldah Hoover. Next, they drove to the farm where Grandfather Eli Hoover had lived and to Uncle Allen Hoover's farm, with stops at other sites associated with boyhood memories. They were then driven to the school grounds. It was an eventful day, and one that is vividly recalled in West Branch.

That night the Hoover family was entertained in the home of Mr. Hoover's cousins, the O. O. Yoders. On the morning of August 22, driving in open cars, they traveled west ten miles to Iowa City. After an impromptu reception, they continued on to Cedar Rapids. [17]

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HERBERT HOOVER

The Hoover Houses and Community Structures Historic Structures Report



CHAPTER 1: HOOVER COTTAGE *(continued)*

VI. JENNIE SCHELLERS—HOSTESS TO THE NATION

A. The Cottage as a Tourist Attraction

In the weeks immediately following Hoover's nomination for the Presidency, the "little cottage under the maples" became a Mecca for thousands of tourists. Motorists driving east or west over the recently designated Herbert Hoover Highway turned south on Downey Street "to view the cottage and to stop a while in the town where history was made." Mrs. Scellers opened her house to these visitors. In the first month after the Kansas City Convention, 1750 visitors had registered in her guest book, and hundreds had driven past, pausing to take photographs, but not coming in to register.

Mrs. Scellers enjoyed her title as "hostess to the nation." An examination of her register showed that Herbert Hoover was especially popular with visitors from abroad. These people spoke of their great respect for the man who had done so much to alleviate suffering in their homelands during and after World War I. [1]

A "knight of the road" had also stopped off to see the Cottage and to ask Mrs. Scellers directions to the cemetery where Hoover's parents were buried. His reasons for doing so, he explained, was to tell his fellow "knights" that he had visited these historic sites. [2]

On November 6, 1928, the nation's voters went to the polls and Herbert Hoover was elected President of the United States by a landslide. On March 4, 1929, he was inaugurated as our 31st President. With Herbert Hoover in the White House, the Birthplace Cottage continued to be a popular tourist attraction. On May 14, 1929, the baseball team from Meiji University in Japan visited West Branch. Stopping at the Cottage and registering with Mrs. Scellers, the Japanese took group photographs and sang several songs in their native tongue. [3] On July 13 Will Irwin, author of Herbert Hoover: A Reminiscent Biography, and his wife, also an author, visited the Cottage. Although he had written about Hoover's boyhood, it was his first visit to the town where the President had lived for his first ten years. [4] Five days later, 45 members of Phi Lambda Theta, a national education fraternity meeting at Iowa City, drove to West Branch and presented an interesting program at the Cottage. [5]

In the year since the Kansas City nomination, the number of registered visitors at the Cottage numbered more than 17,000. For tours of the house, Mrs. Scellers charged ten cents. On summer Sundays and during dedication of the D.A.R. marker, Mrs. Scellers set up a souvenir stand on her front lawn, where the curious could purchase everything from a biography of Herbert Hoover to a flower basket. [6]

Visitation to the Cottage fell during the winter of 1929-30 to almost nothing, but with the coming of spring and the end of the school year, it again picked up. Mrs. Scellers registered a

large number of tourists during the week of July 4, 1930, including on one day three from Austria and Germany.

Among the visitors was the Rev. J. P. Schell of Ambrose, North Dakota. Schell, who was 86, told Mrs. Scellers that he had once lived in West Branch and before construction of the Presbyterian Church, he had organized a Presbyterian Sunday School. Services had been held in William Collins' Wagon Shop, across the street from Jesse Hoover's Cottage and Blacksmith Shop. [7]

Throughout the summer visitors continued to come. On the Labor Day weekend, Mrs. Lillian Clark Casey, past National President of the Ladies of the Grand Army of the Republic; Mrs. Joseph Chaloupka, president of the Dubuque Circle of the order; Mrs. Harriet K. Hardy, chaplain of the Dubuque Circle; and Mr. Casey, who acted as chauffeur, drove down to West Branch to see the Cottage.

Mrs. Casey had recently returned from the National Convention in Cincinnati. As they toured the Cottage, Mrs. Casey explained to Mrs. Scellers that she was interested in the preservation of Presidential Birthplaces. [8]

Interest in the Hoover Birthplace showed no signs of ebbing, although the nation was caught in the throes of a world-wide depression. Mrs. Scellers reported in mid-July 1931 that since the summer of 1928, 34,348 persons had signed her register. Addresses entered included every state in the union, as well as many countries abroad. Since January 1, 1931, more than 2,000 had registered, with 120 signing the book on Sunday, July 12. [9]

School groups also came to the Cottage. Typical of these was the Junior Class of Deep River, Iowa, High School. Accompanied by their history instructor, the students toured the birthplace on Thursday, October 22, 1931, and secured a "first hand impression of the surroundings among which the president was born, to supplement their classroom work." [10]

There was a distinguished visitor at the Birthplace on Tuesday, May 10, 1932. He was Dr. Daniel A. Poling, chairman of the Allied Forces for Prohibition, editor in chief of The Christian Herald, and president of the World's Christian Endeavor Union. While in West Branch, Dr. Poling addressed a card to President Hoover, telling him how much he enjoyed his visit to the "babyhood Home." Taking cognizance of the "simple two-room Cottage with its old fashioned small paned windows and door built of three or four plain boards, with their homely latch," Dr. Poling suggested that President Hoover "must have had some long thoughts as he visited again the home he knew long ago." [11]

It had looked for several weeks in 1929 as if the Cottage would become a Gretna Green. On May 14 at the birthplace, Miss Dorothy Helen Franco of Tipton was married to Francis C. Riedesel of Bennett. Eight weeks later, on July 11, Miss Ettyl Countryman of Wyoming, Iowa, became the bride of Harry H. Dice of Wilton. [12] This fad did not catch on, and there were no more weddings at the Cottage until 1940.

President Hoover's political enemies also visited the Cottage to pay tribute to Hoover—the man. The presidential election campaign of 1932 was exceptionally bitter, as Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Democratic speakers hammered away at the theme that Hoover and the Republican Party were responsible for the depression engulfing the nation. On September 23 Josephus Daniels, who had been Secretary of Navy in Woodrow Wilson's cabinet, was in Iowa City to address a Democratic rally. Learning that Hoover had been born in West Branch, Daniels motored over to Cedar County. He was accompanied by F. R. Boyles, William Hart, and other Johnson County Democratic wheelhorses. While at the Cottage, Daniels purchased a postal card of the house, which he mailed to his wife in Raleigh, N.C., and told his traveling companions and Mrs. Scellers that he and his wife and the Hoovers had

been personal friends since the World War. [13]

Although Herbert Hoover and the Republican Party were snowed under by a Democratic landslide in November 1932, the Hoover Cottage continued to be popular with tourists. Typical of those visiting the cottage in 1933 were Mr. and Mrs. James E. Potter and their two sons of Akron, Colorado. They stopped in West Branch on Monday, August 21, while en route to Chicago's Century of Progress. Mrs. Potter's interest in the Cottage had been whetted several years before, when several of her friends had returned from West Branch with souvenirs they had purchased. She had accordingly written Mrs. Scellers, ordering a number of Hoover Birthplace plates and postal cards. [14]

Another interesting visitor during the week was Vera E. Fawcett of Kirksville, Missouri, a great granddaughter of West Branch pioneer Elisha Haines. [15]

B. Two Famous Bands Visit the Cottage

1. The U. S. Marine Corps Band's September 1930 Performance

On Saturday, September 20, 1930, the stirring strains of John Phillip Sousa's march "Stars and Stripes Forever" blared out on south Downey Street. The United States Marine Corps Band, the President's own, had come to West Branch. Leaving Washington, D.C., on a tour which would take the bandsmen across country, they had given a concert in Iowa City on Friday night, and were scheduled to play in Cedar Rapids Saturday afternoon.

President Hoover having consented to the band's appearance in West Branch, 20 cars driven by local businessmen picked up the bandsmen at their Iowa City hotel. The Marines in their handsome blue dress uniforms were driven to West Branch. The first stop was at the cemetery to allow the band to visit the graves of the President's parents. From there they were driven to the Birthplace Cottage. There they met Mrs. Scellers and registered. Capt. Taylor M. Branson and his men cheerfully posed for a number of photographs, as a crowd, estimated to number about 2,000, gathered.

Meanwhile, a portable bandstand, 60 feet long, was set up on south Downey Street, in front of Dr. L. J. Leech's House. The bandsmen took their positions on the stand, and, shaded by the giant maples, Captain Branson raised his baton, and at 9:30 a.m. the 30-minute concert began. In addition to "Stars and Stripes Forever," six other stirring patriotic numbers were played. Members of the community were delighted with the performance, and the band was given several rounds of applause. As his men were loading their instruments into automobiles for the trip to Cedar Rapids, Captain Branson expressed "the pleasure of himself and his men at being able to play at West Branch, and for the courtesies shown them." [16]

2. The U.S. Army Band's September 1931 Performance

The following September 5, the United States Army Band, not to be outdone by the Marines, gave a concert at West Branch. Advised that the band's annual tour included dates in Iowa, a local committee had contacted C. C. Cappel, manager of the tour, and a performance was tentatively scheduled for the President's birthplace. [17]

It was not until the evening of the 4th, while the band was playing in Muscatine, that the local committee was assured that arrangements had been perfected for a visit to West Branch. The word went out, and early on the 5th a crew, under the supervision of the street commissioner, erected a temporary bandstand under the 60-year-old maples in front of Dr. Leech's. Flags and bunting decorated the bandstand, while welcome signs and flags were displayed in front of every business house.

The Army Band arrived from Muscatine on the morning train and was met by citizens in cars. Capt. William J. Stannard then ordered his bandsmen into the automobiles, and they were driven to the cemetery for a visit to the graves of Jesse and Huldah Hoover. Next, they were driven to other points of interest and finally to the Birthplace Cottage. Like the Marines the year before, the bandsmen registered and posed for photographs with Mrs. Mollie Curran and Dr. L. J. Leech.

Captain Stannard ordered his men to their places and the concert commenced. The shining instruments, the immaculate uniforms, and the stirring music thrilled the large audience, "as it was recalled that the occasion was a very special one, because it was here the first president from west of the Mississippi River was born, and this same U.S. Army Band had led the inaugural parade, when the West Branch boy took the oath of office."

During an interlude in the concert, United States Representative W. F. Kopp made a few remarks, welcoming the band, thanking the visitors, and complimenting West Branch and the committee which had arranged the visit.

At the end of the concert, the band was driven to Waterloo by West Branchers, where it was programmed to give a concert on Saturday evening. [18]

C. The D.A.R. Marker

In 1929 the Pilgrim Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution of Iowa City determined to mark the site of President Hoover's birth. The marker, a "native boulder," a gift of Samuel Hemphill of North Liberty, Iowa, with its attached bronze plaque, was positioned in front of the Scellers Home in the first week of July. [19]

The marker was dedicated on August 10, the 55th anniversary of the President's birth. On that day the streets of West Branch were decorated and a platform erected on the street east of the Cottage. Mrs. Scellers had her house "freshly painted a delicate cream." On the lawn were clusters of wild flowers, while in the distance to the west could be seen cornfields and pastures. With the stone positioned, the large wooden sign in Mrs. Scellers' front yard to call attention to the Hoover Birthplace was removed.

On dedication day, celebrities came from many points, including several from Waterloo, Mrs. Hoover's former home. There was Father F. J. Flanagan and the Boys Town, Nebraska, Band. While Mrs. George M. Clearman presided, Mayor N. P. Olsen made a few remarks and Benjamin F. Shambaugh, Superintendent of the State Historical Society of Iowa, made the principal address. Shambaugh referred to the cottage as "a symbol that American democracy still lives." While Mrs. Robert T. Johnson, state chairman for historic sites, spoke in dedication Misses Betty Boiler and Margaret Chittenden of Iowa City lifted the United States flag which had veiled the monument. [20]

D. The Des Moines Reconstruction

In March 1929 the Better Homes Committee of Des Moines sent a committee and several architects to West Branch. While the committee met with West Branch civic leaders, the architects, having secured Mrs. Scellers' cooperation, made measured drawings of the Birthplace Cottage. These drawings were used by the Better Homes Committee to have the Cottage reconstructed. The reconstruction was featured at the Better Homes Exposition in Des Moines. It was then sold to the State Fair Association and relocated on the State Fair Grounds. [21]

The Diamond Jubilee of the Iowa State Fair was in August 1930. Although this was the second year for its exhibition, the reconstructed Hoover Cottage remained a popular

attraction. Mrs. Mollie Brown Curran served as hostess, and it was estimated by fair officials that about two-thirds of those in attendance walked through the structure. [22]

E. The Cottage as a Subject for Artists

In the period, 1928-1933, four artists painted the Hoover Cottage. Three sought to depict the Cottage as it appeared when it was the Hoover's home. The fourth artist, Grant Wood, painted the house and its environment as it appeared in September 1931.

1. The Allen Philbrick Painting

Soon after Herbert Hoover's nomination, Allen Philbrick, an instructor at the Chicago Art Institute, traveled to West Branch to paint the Birthplace Cottage as it appeared before it was relocated and remodeled by Port Scellers. Relying on recollections of old-timers and working under the supervision of State Curator Edgar Harlan, Philbrick prepared his large canvas for display in the State Historical Building at Des Moines.

When completed, the Philbrick painting showed the Cottage as it was when Theodore Hoover

picked the horseshoe clinchers from the floor of his father's shop and nailed them to the walls in grotesque frescos around the walls of the little room, and Bertie Hoover trotted across the dusty road every morning with a pail of milk for the Sullivan family, who lived back of the shop. [23]

The Philbrick painting shows a single-story frame structure, with siding. There is a stoop, similar to the one on the restored Cottage, and two windows, each with 12 lights, in the east elevation. The brick chimney is near the north elevation, and Lots 42 and 43 are enclosed by a three-board fence. (A copy of the Philbrick Painting is in this report.)

2. The Henry Standing Drawing

Levi Boweles, former superintendent of Scattergood Seminary, had Henry Standing in 1928 prepare drawings of four West Branch structures, intimately associated with Hoover's boyhood. One of these was the Hoover Cottage. Standing, like Philbrick, relied for his information on recollections of long-time residents of West Branch. [24]

The structure shown in the Standing drawing is similar to Philbrick's Cottage, except that the art work is primitive. There is the same siding; stoop; two windows, each with 12 lights; a chimney near the north elevation; and a three-board fence. The similarity of the structures depicted by the two artists leads to the conclusion that they either relied on the same sources or closely collaborated. (A copy of the Standing Drawing is in this report.)

3. The Grant Wood Painting

The famed American painter Grant Wood of Cedar Rapids spent several days in West Branch in mid-September 1931. While in town, he prepared a number of interesting sketches of the Scellers House, the neighboring structures, and grounds. [25]

In the weeks following his return to his studio, Wood completed his painting, "The Birthplace of Herbert Hoover." When subscribers to Fortune received their August 1932 issue in the mails, they found that an article titled, "The President's Fortune," was illustrated by a reproduction of the Wood painting. A color illustration had been used by the editors of Fortune in flyers to advertise the Hoover article. The painting had also been reproduced in color in the Des Moines Register for Sunday, July 24, while the original of the Wood canvas had been placed on exhibition in an eastern gallery. (A copy of the Wood painting is in this

report.) [[26](#)]

4. The Morgan Painting

W. L. Morgan of Iowa City in 1933 painted a canvas depicting the Cottage and the Blacksmith Shop. For information on the appearance of these structures in the historic period, Morgan had relied on the reminiscences of Tad Hoover and "old time settlers of West Branch." On forwarding photographs of his canvas to Tad Hoover, Morgan observed:

The cottage door is left partly open as if inviting hospitality . . . that pronounced Quaker characteristic. Instead of depicting the barn I have replaced it with a maple tree, one as voiced by Mrs. Carran as vivid in her memory west of the house. The Siberian Crab is peeping over the cottage ridge pole, and the coal shed is to be found where it belongs. The flowers I did not care to detract from the whole by too many details. [[27](#)]

The Cottage in the Morgan painting has siding; a stoop; two front windows, with 18 lights; chimney near the north elevation; and is enclosed by a picket fence. (A copy of the Morgan painting is in this report.)

F. Mrs. Jennie Scellers Dies

In mid-June 1934 Mrs. Scellers suffered a stroke and was hospitalized in St. Luke Hospital in Cedar Rapids. Her condition took a critical turn on the 26th, and her doctors sent for her children. Earl, her eldest son, drove over from West Branch, while her other children, all of whom lived on the Pacific coast, headed east. The airplane, on which Elmer had booked space, landed at the Iowa City airport, on Thursday afternoon. In his race against death, Elmer reached the hospital shortly after his mother had breathed her last. Lew and Della arrived by train the next day. [[28](#)]

Mrs. Scellers, the daughter of Isaac and Amanda Marshall, had been born near Barnesville, Ohio, June 14, 1864. She had moved with her parents, while still a child, to Illinois, where she lived until 1878, when they moved to Iowa. She had married Port Scellers on December 26, 1882. In the years since 1928, she, as owner of the Hoover Cottage, had become a familiar figure to thousands of tourists, "who registered in her books and enjoyed her pleasant personality, when they visited the cottage." She had received several attractive offers for her historic real estate, "but the ties of a lifetime were too strong" and she had refused to sell.

Her "silver hair, motherly figure and wholesome friendly ways" had given her an identity. She had greeted the "famous and humblest with the same gracious friendliness, and maintained always a staunch friendship" for the Hoovers, dating to the August 21, 1928, breakfast. Besides her hostess duties, Mrs. Scellers had been prominent in the Methodist Church, the Ladies Aid Society, the W.C.T.U., and the West Branch Cemetery Association.

Funeral services were held at the Methodist Church at 2:30 p.m., Sunday, July 1, with the Rev. H. M. Grant officiating. The body was laid to rest in the West Branch Cemetery beside that of her husband. [[29](#)]

When Jennie Scellers' will was probated, it was found that she had left her real and personal estate to be divided equally among her four children, after Elmer had first received \$800. [[30](#)]

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HERBERT HOOVER

The Hoover Houses and Community Structures Historic Structures Report



CHAPTER 1:

HOOVER COTTAGE *(continued)*

VII. THE RESTORATION OF THE COTTAGE

A. Allan Hoover Acquires the Property

1. Initial Efforts of the Family to Purchase the Cottage

In the late summer of 1930, Presidential Secretary Lawrence Richey contacted J. N. "Ding" Darling, famed cartoonist for the Des Moines Register about possible acquisition by the Hoover family of the Birthplace property. After checking into the subject, Darling on September 17 wrote Richey in regards to "matters at West Branch." He reported that he had "located the best possible man to act for me and hope to have something definite to report in the near future." [1]

This inquiry was triggered by reports that Mrs. Scellers was using the property for commercial purposes. Darling's agent was able to partially alleviate these fears. On September 26 Darling reported, Mrs. Scellers

is not doing as badly by the job as we had feared. It [the property] is kept in apple pie order; the yard is well sodded and flowers around the house make it very attractive to the eye. There are no refreshment stands either on the premises or near it, and Mrs. Sellers [sic], herself, conducts the job of showing the visiting tourists through the house with fine dignity and sympathetic affection. [2]

Moreover, Mrs. Scellers was not interested in selling the property, because the ten-cent admission charge provided her "a very nice income, and she enjoys the process." Since January 1, 1930, there had been about 6,000 registered visitors, while in 1929 the number had been about 7,500. Continuing, Darling reported, "She looks for more income during the next two years owing to the increasing interest of the coming political campaign." [3]

No offer had been made for the property, but his agent thought that \$2,500 would be a fair price. But if Mrs. Scellers wanted more, the agent would be authorized to "gradually run the price up a thousand dollars." [4]

Richey replied on September 30, authorizing Darling "to raise the ante a thousand or even two thousand dollars," as he was "anxious to get this place." [5]

On October 20 Darling wrote Richey from a New York City hotel room. He reported that his West Branch agent had notified him that Mrs. Scellers had taken up the matter with her children, then living on the Pacific coast. If they were agreeable to her making her home with them, she might willingly dispose of the Birthplace. [6]

Either the agent was mistaken or Mrs. Scellers charged her mind, because on January 28,

1931, Darling notified Richey that she did not choose to sell. He then outlined the steps he had taken. First, he had employed his agent, in guise of "a prospective small town resident, to try to purchase the place for a home." But this had fallen through when Mrs. Scellers' plan to sell and move to the west coast and live with one of her children received no encouragement. She had then rejected the agent's offer "with such completeness," and her refusal to place a price on the property was so firm that Darling gave up all hope of his agent acquiring the property.

Next, he contacted his friend Edgar R. Harlan, custodian of the State Historical Museum. Harlan had long wanted to "buy the Hoover homestead as a state monument, but lacked the funds." Darling had asked Harlan "to use all the ingenious devices at his command to get the Hoover birthplace" for Richey.

If Mrs. Scellers would not come to terms, Darling wanted Harlan to get an option on the Birthplace, "giving him first opportunity [to] buy in case and when she arrives at the point where she wants to sell." This would insure that the property would not fall into "other hands and will guarantee that when any sale is made we can get the house if you still want it."

Finally, Darling called Richey's attention to "a provision in the Statutes of Iowa providing for condemnation of property for state park and monument purpose." Harlan thought that he might take advantage of this statute to acquire the Birthplace for the state. This, however, would not answer Richey's purpose, because if it were secured by condemnation, it could not be turned over to the family.

Before turning to another subject, Darling observed:

I have presumed all along that you were anxious to obtain it in order to preserve it from abuse that might result from commercial uses. It might be possible, as Harlan suggests, that you would like to have the house put under the care of the state. [Z]

This letter from Darling to Richey brought to a close the initial efforts of the Hoovers to acquire the Birthplace Property. Reassured that Mrs. Scellers' commercial exploitation of the Cottage was not being carried to extremes, the Hoover family apparently determined not to push for public acquisition of the property in 1931.

2. The September 1933 Visit to West Branch

The Ex-President and his wife made their first visit to West Branch in more than five years on Thursday, September 21, 1933. Having attended Chicago's Century of Progress, the Hoovers, accompanied by Ex-Governor Arthur Hyde of Missouri and a Mr. Gipson, drove into town at 8:35 a.m. They stopped briefly at the intersection of Main and Downey to visit with old friends, "who . . . , learning of the celebrities presence, crowded around to speak to them."

From there they drove to the home of Mrs. Mollie Brown Curran, where they visited for 30 minutes. Mr. Hoover assured his listeners that he "wasn't talking politics and is supporting the administration whole-heartedly in their efforts toward recovery."

Next, Mr. and Mrs. Hoover and their party walked across Main Street to the West Branch School, where the Ex-President briefly addressed the students. He said a few words regarding his recollections of his days as a pupil, and Mrs. Hoover told the assembly of the pleasant memories associated with their August 1928 Homecoming to West Branch.

Leaving the school, the Hoover party drove west to Des Moines, where they ate lunch. They

then headed south to Clinton, Missouri, where they spent the night and said goodbye to Ex-Governor Hyde, before continuing on to their home in California. [8]

3. Fred Albin Acquires the Property

The Scellers Estate remained in the hands of the heirs for more than one year following Jennie Scellers' death. Although the Birthplace Property was sold to Fred Albin on July 29, 1935, six weeks passed before it was announced on September 12 that the estate had been settled and the house and lots on south Downey Street sold. Legal formalities had been closed and a deed executed to Fred Albin, a boyhood friend of Herbert Hoover.

Workmen had been engaged by Albin to make "repairs and improvements about the lot." No drastic changes were programmed for the Cottage by the new owner. Earl Scellers, who had been living in the house since his mother's death, would continue to reside there as Albin's tenant. Since Mrs. Scellers' death, the house had been closed to the public by the estate, and few tourists had been able to view the structure's interior.

As yet, Albin was unready to reveal what his plans for the historic property were, but he was reminded by Editor Corbin that the Cottage would always be of interest for "its associations, and a source of pride to the town as the birthplace of one who achieved the highest honors his countrymen could bestow." [9]

In effecting this transaction, Albin had acted as agent for Allan Hoover, the Ex-President's youngest son. On Tuesday, October 15, 1935, Albin drove to Tipton, where, at the office of the County Clerk, he conveyed to young Hoover the property he had purchased from the Scellers Estate. It was noted in the deed of conveyance that "no consideration has passed between the parties hereto other than the \$4,500 shown in the deed from the heirs of Jennie Scellers . . . to Fred Albin." [10]

B. The Restoration of the Cottage

1. Hoover Visits the Site with Architect McKay

The acquisition of the property was especially gratifying to Lou Henry Hoover, who wished to have the Cottage restored to its appearance during the years it had served as the home of Jesse and Huldah Hoover and the birthplace of her husband. No work, however, could be done on the project until Herbert Hoover could find time to visit the site with a restoration architect.

It was late spring 1937 before Hoover again visited Iowa. On Thursday morning, June 10, Fred Albin received a telephone call from Herbert Hoover in Chicago. Hoover told his friend that he would be in West Branch the next morning, and asked that "no publicity be given to his visit, as it was to be a business errand, and of short duration."

Accompanied by Arthur Hyde and Mr. and Mrs. Allan Hoover, the Ex-President drove from Chicago to Cedar Rapids on the 10th. There he said goodbye to Hyde and spent the night with Mr. and Mrs. Harrison Spangler. After an early breakfast, on the 11th, Hoover, his son and daughter-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Spangler, and Bruce McKay of McKay Construction Company, motored to West Branch. Stopping at the Birthplace Cottage, they were greeted warmly by Fred Albin. [11]

Reticent as usual about his private affairs, Hoover chatted in the front yard of the Birthplace, explaining to his friends who dropped by that he was "just paying a little visit." While outlining his views to Contractor McKay and discussing his recollections of the Birthplace, Hoover admitted that "the old homestead was to be restored." But, he added, "the old place

looks all right to me just the way it is."

He explained that the restoration was Mrs. Hoover's idea, but it had been held up by his failure to visit West Branch and "tell others what his boyhood home was like." Continuing, he explained, "This isn't my idea, but it would please Mrs. Hoover who is the one who wants to have the old home restored." Further than that Hoover would not discuss the restoration, stating that plans would not be completed until "Mr. McKay submitted an outline of the proposed layout."

While walking about the property, Hoover explained to McKay that the front portion of the house would have to be removed leaving the original one-story Cottage of two rooms and a long back porch. The Cottage would then be turned so that the present south wall faced east. A window would be placed in the doorway currently giving access from the Cottage to the newer section of the Scellers House. The old pump, near the south elevation of the Cottage, would be the "pivotal point" in the restoration, as it was to be inside the back porch when the project was completed. [12]

The asphalt shingles would be replaced with wooden ones, and a new chimney, similar to those found in West Branch in the 1870s, erected. A stone foundation would be positioned under the relocated Cottage. There would be no basement. The ceiling, flooring, and doors, dating to the Hoover years, would be retained in the restoration.

The lot on which the Cottage was to be relocated would be only half as large as the present lot, and be enclosed by a picket fence. Hoover had proposed to relocate the front part of the house on the rear of the lot, where it would be used as quarters for the caretakers. But when they studied the situation on-site, it was found that there was too little space and that proposal was scrapped. [13]

What was to be done with the bronze statue of Isis was also discussed. This bronze statue, a gift to Hoover from the children of Belgium, was to be placed at the site of their benefactor's birth. The statue was an expression of gratitude for Mr. Hoover's work in behalf of Belgium relief. [14]

Those touring the property with Mr. Hoover were impressed with his ability to recall details of his birthplace. Displaying his skill as a professional engineer, Hoover expressed "his recollections and wishes very clearly and easily to Mr. McKay, once the two found a common ground of interest in the engineering phases" of the project. Although the restoration might not begin for some time, McKay voiced the opinion that once started, it would be completed in a month. As to what would happen to the Cottage after it was restored, it was suggested that the Hoovers would probably turn it over for administration and interpretation to the Iowa Historical Society or a similar agency interested in historic preservation. [15]

Local people at the site were charmed by Allan Hoover's wife. She explained to them that this was her first visit to Iowa, and she was "delighted with the climate, the lovely trees, and the luxuriant greenness." [16] Before leaving West Branch, shortly before noon, the Hoover party called at the home of Mr. and Mrs. O. C. Yoder and visited the cemetery. From there they drove to Le Grand for a brief visit to the Pembertons, and then on to Des Moines, where they spent the night. [17]

2. Plans are Prepared and Approved

In the weeks following his June 11 meeting with Mr. Hoover, Architect Bruce McKay prepared preliminary working drawings of the restoration, which he forwarded to Mrs. Hoover on July 28. Lou Henry Hoover on August 28 replied, and, referring to Drawing No. 1, she wrote, "The house needs to be turned around so that the two windows are in front." As to

the question as to whether there should be a stoop, she would defer to McKay. Members of the family, who recalled the Cottage, were divided in their views. But as Mrs. Mattie Pemberton believed there had been one, Mrs. Hoover thought a stoop desirable.

The Cottage would be "re-shingled to do away with these modern cut shingles," positioned on a "sound foundation," along "with any necessary repairs." McKay was to keep in mind that the object was to restore the Cottage to its appearance, circa 1875.

About all her husband could recall about the Cottage was the location of one window and the back porch. He remembered a window in the west elevation of the bedroom, "looking on the garden in back." Mr. Hoover was of the opinion that there were no windows in the north and south elevations. The back porch, he had told her, ran the entire length of the west elevation, and there was a small woodshed at its north end. But as McKay was on-site, Mrs. Hoover suggested that an investigation of the Cottage's fabric would document her husband's recollections. [18]

To provide for protection of the Cottage, McKay had urged that it be enclosed. Mrs. Hoover vetoed this suggestion, and recommended that a small caretakers' lodge be connected with the Cottage by "some sort of a covered way." The caretakers' quarters should be one-story, with three rooms, and a porch, to accommodate a couple. She wanted it to be of the same type architecture as the Cottage, with a low silhouette so its roof would not "rise above the skyline of the old house." If the Cottage were painted white, the lodge was to be a more subdued color, "perhaps a gray that most harmonizes with the surroundings." She wanted McKay to investigate the possibility of screening it with shrubs, vines, or trees.

Mrs. Hoover desired McKay to investigate the possibility of connecting the caretakers' quarters to the Cottage by a corridor. She believed that if this were feasible, the lines of the Cottage could be better preserved by connecting the corridor with the old woodshed rather than the kitchen door. She wished McKay to express his opinion as to the desirable length of the corridor, as she did not "have a perfect idea of the amount of ground on that side, or of how much space there is between the old house and that end" of the lot on which the caretakers' lodge was to be built. [19]

Turning to the grounds, Mrs. Hoover urged that the tract west and east of that purchased from the Scellers Estate be acquired to round out the property. Fred Albin would be authorized to handle this transaction. The statue of Isis would then be positioned "to be contemplative of the Cottage." [20]

Mrs. Hoover's letter of August 23 constituted McKay's authority to proceed with the restoration and to bill Mrs. Hoover for the expenses involved. As in the past Fred Albin would be the Hoovers' representative on-site. [21]

McKay, before proceeding with the restoration, desired to settle a few details and to complete his working drawings. Writing Mrs. Hoover, on August 30, he agreed that the corridor to the caretakers' lodge would be better through the woodshed door. It was his recommendation that the north wall of the corridor be of solid wood, with the caretakers' door in the center of the subject wall, and to the south an open porch looking toward the Isis Statue. This porch would be open during the warm months and glassed in during the winter.

He would like to know if Mrs. Hoover wanted a basement for the caretakers' lodge; a coal furnace in the basement or a heating stove on the first floor; a coal or electric cookstove; a modern bath and sink with running water in the kitchen; an electric refrigerator or ice box. As to floor plan he suggested three rooms (a sitting room, bedroom, and kitchen) and bath.

Turning to the Cottage, he wanted to know whether Mrs. Hoover desired heat other than that

afforded by a stove. [22]

Mrs. Hoover, who was preparing to depart Palo Alto for the Atlantic Seaboard, notified McKay in mid-September that she would defer to his judgment on such domestic matters as were "affected by cold winters." This included the necessity for a basement, the sink and running water, and the type of heating required in both the Cottage and caretakers' lodge. She approved the proposal for a lodge with three rooms and a bath, and the covered way.

Before beginning restoration of the Cottage and construction of the caretakers' lodge, McKay was to submit his final drawings for approval. [23]

McKay had completed and forwarded his drawings to Mrs. Hoover by mid-November. (Copies of McKay's drawings are in this report.) Meanwhile, Mrs. Hoover had discussed the proposed restoration with Tad Hoover, her husband's older brother. Tad told her that the Cottage had been brown, and there had been

five rooms; a sitting-room on the east, with flowers blooming in the high windows; a bedroom adjoining, where I was born and remember sleeping in my trundle bed. Then on the west a kitchen, with which are identified fat Annie Dow the cook, and her cookies. On the south another bedroom, where there is a vivid impression of a memorable night when my father came to my room with a lamp and announced that "you have a little baby brother." This would be August 10, 1874. [24]

Tad also told his sister-in-law that there had been a front storm door, which was removed in the summer. After studying McKay's drawings, Mrs. Hoover questioned Theodore's memory of the Cottage floor plan. She did not believe it possible to partition the limited space into the four rooms and woodshed recalled by Tad. [25]

Mrs. Hoover, in the ensuing months while McKay marked time, contacted surviving members of the family and friends who recalled the Cottage before its relocation and alteration by Port Scellers. Since she had "great faith in a small child's memory" of his early surroundings, she was inclined to rely on Tad's recollections of the Cottage's floor plan, rather than trust those of "older people whose memories of that time are so much crowded." But, on June 10, 1938, she wrote McKay, the rest of the family felt that "the preponderating numbers of the other view must outweigh Theodore's lone one." The Cottage would be restored as a three-room structure, as shown in the drawings. [26]

One final change was made before restoration was commenced. It was decided to position the caretakers' lodge 40 feet, rather than 18 feet, west of the Cottage and to eliminate the covered way. Mrs. Hoover, in approving the change, suggested that the lodge's exterior be "dark stain natural wood," as this would "tend to obscure it especially if old house is painted a light color" as planned. [27]

3. The Restoration of the Cottage

Bruce McKay in the third week of July 1938 drove over to West Branch, accompanied by Robert McLeod of Cedar Rapids. McKay would be supervising architect and McLeod would be project superintendent. Several local men were employed, and McLeod turned them to tearing down the two-story frame house moved onto the lot by Port Scellers 48 years before. Extreme care was taken not to damage the Cottage fabric. Removal of the weatherboarding, revealed details of Hoover workmanship. And, "Whitewash and cloth stripped seams provided interior finish." [28]

Most of the two-story house had been demolished by the 28th, and workmen were ready to

relocate the Cottage on its original site. Walter Heabel, a Cedar Rapids house mover, had visited West Branch on the 26th to make measurements and gather necessary data. [29]

When the West Branch Times went to press on August 4, Editor Corbin informed his readers, "the work of restoring the birthplace of Herbert Hoover to its original appearance is progressing rapidly." The front part added in 1890 had been torn away "revealing the original board and batten sides, showing the whitewash which was the exterior finish." [30]

While demolition of the Scellers house was in progress, Mrs. Maud Stratton took photographs, copies of four of which are in this report. A close examination of photograph (00015) shows a section where siding has been removed, exposing the board and battens. [31]

Early in August the Cottage was relocated by F. Heabel & Co. workmen, and Fred Albin on August 12 wrote Allan Hoover, enclosing three photographs his son Oliver had taken of the restoration. If there had been any doubts about the decision to use boards and battens on the exterior of the Cottage, rather than siding, they could be forgotten, because the photographs showed that under the siding there were "boards and Bats straight up and down." [32]

With work progressing satisfactorily, McKay wrote Mrs. Hoover, on the 18th, informing her that the hand split shakes on the roof and the "board and batton sides really . . . look just right for such a place." To complete the restoration, he needed authority to grade the yard, built a fence on the Downey and Penn streets sides, and place a gate where the walk enters the yard. Mrs. Hoover, having once stated that the Cottage should have some heat, McKay suggested that they place a central steam heating plant in the basement of the lodge, with underground pipes to the Cottage. Such a heating system would cost \$1,500. But if the Hoovers did not want to spend this much on heating the Cottage, they could put a coal furnace in the lodge for \$275. Because of the fire hazard, McKay advised against any "direct heat in the Cottage, such as a stove or furnace." [33]

Allan Hoover, with his Mother on a trip, answered McKay's letter. The architect was authorized to grade the yard, build the fence, and put a \$275 heating unit in the lodge. He suggested that an electric heater be employed in the winter to keep the Cottage dry. [34]

By the time the West Branch Times went to press on August 25, McKay Construction Co. workmen had completed restoration of the Cottage. The "little house" now faced east, "with its neat windows and white walls." A crew was at work landscaping the grounds. [35] Joseph Barnett & Co. of Cedar Rapids was in West Branch on October 27 and 28 to place lightning rods on "the ridge" of the Cottage. Commenting on this development, Editor Corbin reported, "Not only do the old fashioned lightning rods look natural on top of the structure, but they will provide safety against fire and the elements, insurance which is worthwhile on such a building, which could never be replaced." [36] This completed the restoration of the Cottage.

4. The Construction of the Caretakers' Lodge

Bruce McKay, on August 6, 1938, telegraphed Mrs. Hoover recommending that the "wide dimension" of the lodge be changed from east to west to north to south, and that it be located on Lots 38 and 39. This would site the lodge about 100 feet to the rear of the Cottage. In support of his position, McKay pointed out that it would provide better observation by the caretaker, besides removing the lodge from proximity to the Cottage. [37] The Hoovers were absent on a trip to the mountains, and four days passed before Mrs. Hoover saw the telegram. When she did, she approved McKay's proposal. [38]

Having cleared this hurdle, McKay turned his crew to in late August and ground was broken. [39] The lodge was completed in mid-November, and to insure that it did not overpower the

Cottage, it was long and low. The exterior was board and batten, which was stained a "soft wood brown." Windows of twelve lights each continued the exterior simplicity, which was broken by a lattice pergola over the entrance.

Completely insulated and fitted with storm windows, the caretakers' lodge was "equipped to defy wintry blasts." There was a hot air furnace in the basement, and a spacious living room (13-1/2 x 17 feet), with windows on three sides. Its interior walls, like those in the other rooms, were tinted a cheerful buff. The wood work was ivory, and the doors red oak. There was a 10 x 10-foot dinette, with windows on three sides, opening into a small hall, which connected with the basement stairs, the bedroom, the bath room, as well as opening into the kitchen. In the basement there was a laundry, fuel room, and furnace. [40]

5. The First Caretakers—Mr. and Mrs. Stratton

With restoration of the Cottage completed and construction of the lodge proceeding as scheduled, Fred Albin was bombarded with applications for the position as caretaker. To escape from the dilemma in which he found himself, Albin suggested that either the Hoovers or Harrison Spangler pick the custodians. Then if the couple were unsatisfactory, they could be more easily discharged. [41]

The Hoovers were agreeable, and in December 1938 Mr. and Mrs. Charles Stratton were employed as temporary caretakers. In June 1939 the appointment was made permanent, and Mrs. Stratton resigned her position with the West Branch Times to give full attention to the Cottage. Like all major changes in a person's life and affairs, this caused mixed feelings, both to Mrs. Stratton and Editor Corbin—"pleasure that a congenial occupation is in store, but sincere regret at severance of pleasant and satisfactory associations during many years."

Maud Stratton had gone to work for the local newspaper in the 1890s, before she was 15, as a typesetter. Following her marriage and while raising a family of four girls, she had worked intermittently in the office of the West Branch Times in various capacities. Since 1921 she had been in the front office of the newspaper three days each week, and had authored many stories, a number of which had been featured in big city dailies. [42]

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HERBERT HOOVER

The Hoover Houses and Community Structures Historic Structures Report



CHAPTER 1: HOOVER COTTAGE *(continued)*

VIII. THE SOCIETY AND THE FOUNDATION

A. The Herbert Hoover Birthplace Society

1. Its Organization

Mrs. Lou Henry Hoover, on June 28, 1938, wrote Harrison Spangler about the possibility of organizing an association to have custody of the Birthplace. She hoped that he would consult with Allan Hoover and "take a hand in its legal organization." She would like to have both trustees and a general membership. The association would be open to anybody, and the Board of Trustees would consist of representatives of the membership, with the majority to be of a permanent character, such as the Presidents of Coe College and the University of Iowa, the Superintendent of the Iowa State Historical Society, and the Mayor of West Branch.

After the association had been organized and had given evidence of permanency, she and Allan would transfer to it the Birthplace property. [1]

Spangler followed up on Mrs. Hoover's suggestion, and contact was established with other interested parties. As a result, an important meeting was held on Wednesday afternoon, March 22, 1939, in the caretakers' bungalow. There were about 30 in attendance. Bruce McKay, who had had charge of the restoration, presided. After McKay had opened the meeting, which had been called to organize the Herbert Hoover Birthplace Society, it was addressed by Benjamin F. Shambaugh, Superintendent of the Iowa State Historical Society, H. J. Thornton of the History Department of the State University of Iowa, and others. Their theme was the importance of historic preservation to the community.

Articles of incorporation for the Birthplace Society, prepared in accordance with Spangler's request, were read, approved, and signed by 30 charter members, most of whom were from West Branch. Included were boyhood friends and schoolmates of Herbert Hoover, the original Hoover Birthplace Committee, and others interested in the restoration and preservation of the Cottage. The next item on the agenda was the election of officers. Fred Albin was chosen president, W. B. Anderson vice president, and F. L. Pearson secretary. [2]

The Society, before adjourning, determined to undertake a campaign to furnish the Cottage "as nearly as possible as it was in the early days," and to landscape the grounds, preparatory to positioning the statue of Isis. [3]

Editor Corbin of the Times, commenting on the organization of the Society, observed that it was "gratifying that the work of restoring the original two-room house with its lean-to, to its first site and appearance could be done while the Hoover family could give it authenticity." Old timers had been heard to declare that the Cottage looked just as they remembered it. [4]

2. Bill Anderson is Elected to the Presidency

There was a called meeting of the Herbert Hoover Birthplace Society in the first week of October 1946, at which Fred Albin submitted his resignation as president. This would be a grievous loss, as Albin had cooperated closely with the Hoovers in the acquisition of the Scellers' property and restoration of the Cottage. No successor was elected at this time.

Almost a year passed before the vacancy was filled. On September 18, 1947, at a meeting held at the First State Bank, William B. Anderson was elected president of the Society. Anderson was a popular choice, as he had long been active in the Society, and had headed the committee that had transformed the once "barren grounds" into a beautiful park. Other officers re-elected at this meeting were A. M. Leech vice president, and L. C. Rummells secretary-treasurer. [5]

When the Society held its annual meeting on August 10, 1950, one of those in attendance was Herbert Hoover, Jr. [6] The Society lost Vice-President Bert Leech by death on June 1, 1951. He was succeeded by John Thompson, who was elected by the Board of Trustees to that office on September 12. [7]

On March 5, 1953, there was a meeting of the Herbert Hoover Birthplace Society for election of officers. Bill Anderson was re-elected president, John Thompson vice-president, and L. C. Rummells secretary-treasurer. As in the past, these officers would constitute a committee charged with day-to-day administration of the Herbert Hoover Birthplace Park. [8]

B. The Organization of the Herbert Hoover Birthplace Foundation

After Hoover's Eightieth Birthday, Bill Anderson called a meeting of the Committee of Fourteen at the Ox Yoke Restaurant in the Amana Colonies. There it was decided to establish a national organization to honor Herbert Hoover. There was a good response, and it was determined to incorporate as the Herbert Hoover Foundation, with a national and international base. A small roadblock was discovered and overcome when it was called to Anderson's attention that another Herbert Hoover Foundation had been chartered in Oregon. The Iowa-based group was accordingly redesignated, "The Herbert Hoover Birthplace Foundation." For the next several years, Bill Anderson headed both the Herbert Hoover Birthplace Society and the Herbert Hoover Birthplace Foundation. In 1957 the two organizations merged. [9]

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HERBERT HOOVER

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CHAPTER 1:

HOOVER COTTAGE *(continued)*

IX. CONSTRUCTION, MAINTENANCE & LANDSCAPING, 1939-1970

A. Landscaping the Grounds, 1939-40

1. Positioning the Bronze Isis

The March 22, 1939, decision of the Society to landscape the Birthplace grounds was implemented. In the second week of August workmen began landscaping the area south of the Wapsinonoc, where the Isis statue was to be positioned. The bronze statue of Isis, the Egyptian goddess of life, was a gift from the children, refugees, and soldiers of Belgium to Herbert Hoover, in recognition of his work as head of the Belgium Relief Commission. It was the work of the Belgium sculptor Puttemans, had been cast in that nation, and shipped to the United States in 1922. As the Isis bronze was designed for the Hoover Birthplace, and the Scellers still owned the property, the veiled Isis was stored in California.

The selection of Isis was probably made by Puttemans because of the suggestion of plenty, but this interpretation shares also the eternal wonder at the mystery of life. On the base of the statue, in French, is the inscription, "I am that which was and is, and will ever be; and no mortal has yet lifted the veil which covers me."

The veiled Isis was seated in a throne-like chair, and over her head and shoulders was draped a veil concealing, yet suggesting the strength and beauty of her features. In her right hand she held the lamp of life, the three flames denoting the past, present, and future. Her left hand carried, half hidden, the key of life. [1]

By the time the statue had arrived from California, workmen had filled and graded the site, and the four-foot concrete base had been poured. On August 21 the statue was placed on its pedestal to face the cottage and draped. Next workers from McGuire Grading Co. moved in with their heavy equipment to fill and grade around Isis. To secure dirt for the fill, the Society purchased one-third acre of Miss Anna Kniese's pasture west of the Scellers lots. The hole from which the dirt was removed and provided a skating pond for West Branchers during the coming winter. [2]

After the grounds adjacent to the statue had been filled and graded, they were seeded. Plans were made to dedicate formally the veiled Isis in late September or early October, but the outbreak of World War II in Europe caused its cancellation. [3]

2. Beautifying the Grounds, 1939-40

During the autumn of 1939 and the spring of 1940, the grounds were beautified by the planting of trees, shrubs and flowers. Most of these plantings consisted of flora popular in the

1870s. Included were pines, maples, elms, and willows. Hedges provided a needed background. [4]

3. The Stone Retaining Wall

To control flooding and prevent the new fill about Isis from eroding, a stone retaining wall was built along the south bank of the Wapsinonoc. Stone for this structure was secured from the foundation of the old Cedar Valley blacksmith shop. Ivy was planted along the wall. [5]

4. The Wooden Bridge, Picnic Tables, and Dam

A wooden bridge of rustic design was erected across the Wapsinonoc. It was stained brown and gave access to flagstone walkways leading to the Cottage and the statue of Isis. Picnic tables were positioned in a triangle beneath the big willow tree south of the Wapsinonoc. [6]

In mid-June 1940 workmen cleaned out the stream bed and erected a low stone dam to pool water under the rustic bridge. Flagstones for the curving walkways leading from the Cottage to the bridge and giving access to the statue were laid. [7] A few additional plantings were made, and the landscaping program formulated by the Herbert Hoover Birthplace Society in 1939 was completed.

B. The Iowa Legislature Makes an Appropriation

The Iowa legislature was apprised of the nation-wide interest in the Cottage. At the request of the Birthplace Society, Representative Gordon Smith of Cedar County on February 18, 1941, introduced a bill in the House, asking an appropriation of \$1,200 annually for maintenance of "the birthplace of Herbert Hoover." [8] Smith's bill was referred to the Appropriations Committee which, on April 7, recommended its passage. The House passed the bill on Wednesday, the 9th, 68 to 7 and the Senate gave it a favorable vote of 45 to 0 on the 10th. It was signed into law by Governor George Wilson on April 21. [9]

As visitation and development increased, the General Assembly boosted its appropriation in support of the park. By the late 1950s the biennial appropriation was \$24,000. In 1964, with General Services Administration assuming an important role in park development and maintenance, the General Assembly, at the request of the Foundation, reduced the biennial appropriation to \$12,000. Four years later, in 1968 with the establishment of Herbert Hoover National Historic Site and increased Federal involvement, the General Assembly, again at the request of the Foundation, cut its biennial appropriation in support of the Foundation to \$6,000. [10]

C. Park Development, 1948-1954

1. Land Acquisition

The first major improvement to the park made after the end of World War II and the election of Bill Anderson to the presidency of the Herbert Hoover Birthplace Society coincided. This was the acquisition of 25 acres to the south and west of the Cottage for \$20,000. Included in the land purchased was the two-story Norman Rogers House on south Downey. To accomplish this task involved two years of negotiations by Anderson, and was consummated when the Society purchased the Floyd Thomas property, one mile east of town, and exchanged it for the Rogers house and lot. [11]

In addition to the Rogers house to be retained on-site, there were two other dwellings, one of brick, fronting on Downey Street in the newly acquired 25 acres. Soon thereafter, the purchase of a two-acre tract on the northwest side of the park further increased the acreage.

[12]

2. The 1948 Master Plan

To provide for the development of the new acreage, the Society requested the Iowa Conservation Commission to prepare a Master Plan. The plan as presented to the Society called for a serpentine drive through the grounds with its only entrance from south Downey. Shrubbery and trees would be planted in profusion.

In the new addition south of the Wapsinonoc, within view of the Cottage, would be a museum to house for posterity momentos of the former president. It was to resemble a Friends Meeting House, and would be "the same kind of simple structure in which the former President with his parents attended meetings every 'first day.'" Also proposed was a reconstructed Jesse Hoover Blacksmith Shop. The shop was to be outfitted with tools and equipment either used by or similar to those used by Herbert Hoover's father.

In discussing the Master Plan, President Anderson explained to the press that there would be changes. For example, if Mr. Hoover wanted "a tree moved or the elevation of the land raised or lowered that's just what will be done." Moreover, Anderson continued, "those of us in charge, want to carry out the wishes of the one-time engineer." [13]

The former President was shown the Master Plan when he was in West Branch on August 10, 1948, for his 74th birthday celebration. He liked what he saw and the Society prepared to issue the first work orders.

3. Landscaping

Landscaping of the recently acquired acreage, in accordance with the approved Master Plan, commenced in the autumn of 1948, when a row of evergreens were set out south of the park entrance. More work was undertaken in April 1949, when Baumhoefener Nursery of Cedar Rapids on Thursday the 21st, trucked down a load of trees. Sixteen were planted during the week, while a number of evergreens and shrubs were set out near the park entrance, and four native elms planted for shade. [14] Jesse Kohl in mid-September was employed to enlarge the picnic facilities. The pasture fence near the east entrance was set back about ten rods, and the ground shaded by a small orchard in the southeast corner of the park graded and sodded. New benches and tables were positioned. [15]

On March 9, 1950, Bill Anderson, Dr. William J. Petersen, L. C. Rummells, and Bert Leech of the Birthplace Society drove to Coe College. There in the office of Dr. Byron S. Hollinshead, they met with Dr. P. H. Elwood of the Iowa State College Landscape Architecture Department, and Wayne Ferris of Ferris-Kinsel Nurseries. Members of the Society then reviewed with Drs. Hollinshead and Elwood and Mr. Ferris the park Master Plan prepared the previous year by the Iowa Conservation Commission. This plan approved by the Hoover family called for 1,800 individual plantings. These plantings, which had been started in the autumn of 1948, were programmed to take place over several years. Plans called for the extensive use of "native Iowa trees and plants . . . [to] eventually include specimens from all 48 states, if species" of sufficient hardiness could be found. [16]

In response to a request from the Society, Dr. Elwood spent March 23 in the park. He studied the plantings already made and made suggestions as to future landscaping. [17]

Acting on Dr. Elwood's recommendations, the Herbert Hoover Birthplace Society in late April expanded its efforts to implement the approved Master Plan. Earl Stayler of the Iowa Conservation Commission spent two days in West Branch staking the area to be landscaped. He was assisted by Bert Leech, Irvin S. Harvey, and a group of Future Farmers of America.

Bill Anderson, who was very active in the Boy Scouts, secured the assistance of scout troops and Future Farmers of America Chapters from West Liberty, Springdale, Tipton, and West Branch. The boys under the supervision of Mr. Stayler were turned out on Thursday, April 27, setting out trees indigenous to Iowa. Future plantings, Anderson told the press, might include some exotics. To protect the trees they were immediately heeled in.

The plantings were arranged to screen or shade the playgrounds and the picnic and parking areas. Trees were also set out to border the roadway projected to wind through the park. [18]

4. Construction of the Serpentine Drive

In June 1951 work was commenced on the park drive and auto mobile entrance. Jesse Kohl had contracted with the Society to undertake this project. When the West Branch Times went to press on June 21, Kohl's crew was in the southwest section of Hoover Park and was "running the grade to the north. The low hills which once formed a natural amphitheater to the south of the old race track" had been cut back. Dirt from these cuts was used as fill in the lower places. [19]

It was the spring of 1952 before Kohl's people completed construction of the serpentine driveway, giving access to the park from south Downey Street. This improvement cost the Society more than \$5,300.

5. The Stone Entrance-Way

The Society Trustees at their September 12, 1951, meeting approved drawings and specifications prepared by Professor Raoul Delmare for a stone entrance gateway to the park, the grading of the park drive, and conversion of the Scellers barn into a garage and storage building. [20]

By mid-June 1952 work on the entrance was nearly finished. The West Branch Times reported that the handsome new gateway to the park drive had been completed and the serpentine roadway surfaced. The gateway consisted of pillars and walls graduated in height from three and one-half feet next to the fence to five feet at the driveway. There were four square piers incorporated in the wall south of the drive, while the wall to the north, which had a wider angle, was broken by six posts. Inset in the principal pier of the north wall was a granite tablet 18" x 4', with the inscription, "Herbert Hoover Park, West Branch, Iowa, 1952." [21]

6. The Gateway to Cottage Yard and the Park Dedication

At the Iowa State Fair in Des Moines on August 30, 1951, Herbert Hoover, before a crowd of 20,000, was presented the first Iowa Award Plaque. Prior to returning to New York City with the 30-pound plaque, Hoover announced his intention to return it to West Branch. "In that way," he jested, "the people can see that the fellow who was born there came to a good end."

Continuing, he added, "there is no point in having a memorial telling how a fellow started out without knowing how he finished." [22]

To display properly the plaque, it was decided to construct a gateway giving access to the Cottage yard. Plans and specifications were prepared by Dr. Delmare and reviewed and approved by the trustees in mid-November. The entrance would be about 15 feet south of the present gate, so as not to obstruct a view of the Cottage from Downey Street, and it would be recessed in the fence line. A graceful curving flagstone walk, similar to those providing access to the rustic bridge, would lead from the sidewalk to the front door of the Cottage.

The entrance would be built of white brick, and consist of four pillars supporting a canopy. Lattice-work would fill the south side of the enclosure and on the brick north wall would be positioned the Iowa Award Plaque. [23]

On Monday, June 30, 1952, the Herbert Hoover Birthplace Park was dedicated and the Iowa Award Plaque hung. Superintendent Bill Petersen of the Iowa Historical Society acted as master of ceremonies. After brief speeches at the brick entrance-way by John Henry of the Iowa Centennial Commission; Robert Evans of the Iowa Conservation Commission, representing Governor William S. Beardsley; and Bill Anderson; Iowa Attorney General Robert Larson officially opened the park, when he snipped a yellow ribbon stretched between the gateway pillars at the entrance to the park drive. [24]

7. The Park Gets a Utility Building

In calendar year 1952 the old barn west of the caretakers' lodge was razed. The materials were salvaged, and at a cost of \$714 a utility building and garage built. [25]

8. The Shuffleboard Courts

Tom Davis, who lived in the Hayhurst House, and a number of fellow West Branch senior citizens had become shuffleboard enthusiasts, while vacationing in Florida and California during the winters. As a representative of this group, Davis contacted the Society and secured permission to construct two shuffleboard courts and a horseshoe court in the park, west of the maintenance area. Davis and his friends, in the fourth week of July 1952, undertook a successful drive to raise necessary funds. [26]

Money and labor were pledged and construction commenced. Two shuffleboard and two horseshoe courts were completed and opened by August 20. Four light poles were erected, enabling West Branchers to enjoy these games in the evenings. These courts were popular with both local residents and tourists. [27]

It was apparent by late spring 1953 that more shuffleboard courts were needed. Construction was started on two more courts that autumn. These were finished in time to be ready for "the late season players." [28]

9. Landscaping and Maintenance, 1952

In the late summer and fall of 1952 several landscaping projects were accomplished. Drain tile was laid, ground leveled, and 30 trees, a gift of the Mechanicsville community, set out. The banks of the Wapsinonoc in the formal area of the park were "shaped and cleaned." [29]

With the entire 30 acres landscaped and seeded in grass, mowing became a serious maintenance problem. The cost of keeping up the buildings and grounds by 1953 had climbed to \$2,000 per year, and necessitated the employment of a part-time maintenance man to assist Custodian Thompson. [30]

10. Capital Improvements, 1953

Improvements programmed by the Society for 1953 included: (a) completion of the entrance landscaping; (b) upgrading the parking facilities; (c) construction of a shelter house to be funded in part by money pledged by the Negus Family Association; (d) construction of several stone picnic fireplaces, one to be in the Walnut Grove, and one drinking fountain; and (e) the acquisition of additional picnic tables. [31]

During the late spring and early summer these projects were undertaken and completed.

When the Society held its annual meeting for 1953, it was in the new shelter, and the members were delighted with this structure, as well as the three fireplaces and the drinking fountain. Besides listening to reports by President Anderson and Secretary-Treasurer Rummells, the group learned that the trustees had purchased the Methodist Parsonage Property for \$8,600. [32]

11. The Boy Scout Shelter

A proposal to erect a Boy Scout Shelter in the park had been first discussed in 1950. [33] It had been held in abeyance until March 1953, when the Board of Trustees, President H. H. Brooks of Coe College, and Dr. W. J. Petersen of the Iowa Historical Society, met with officials of the Buffalo Bill Council of the Boy Scouts. [34] By late August plans for the Boy Scout Shelter had developed to the point where construction was scheduled to begin on the 29th, provided sufficient volunteer labor was available. On the 23d a number of scout leaders had spent the afternoon in West Branch, staking out the site north of the Wapsinonoc previously selected by an engineer sent out by the National Council of Scouts in New York City. The shelter would be 40 x 24 feet, with a stove inside. Fronting the structure would be a council fireplace with encircling seats, where ceremonies could be held. [35]

Ground was broken at the site at 8 a.m. on Monday, August 31. Dr. L. A. Royal of West Liberty, president of the Buffalo Bill Council, presided at the ceremonies and turned the first spadeful of earth. Carl Wilhelm and Alfred Anderson then took over with their tractors. [36] Work progressed rapidly, and by mid-September the shelter was nearing completion. [37]

The editor of the West Branch Times, taking cognizance of the construction of the Boy Scout Shelter, informed his readers, "The other shelter house built earlier this season has seen much use this season and the new one will be equally popular." With the addition of the two fireplaces at the Scout shelter to the three previously built, it was forecast that the "open air eaters will be saving weiners and marshmallows for chilly day diets at the park." [38]

On Wednesday evening, September 30, local scouts formally opened the new shelter at a Round-up for the Buffalo Bill Council. By this time, the bronze tablet on the west wall of the shelter, describing the purpose of the structure as a testimonial from the Boy Scouts to Herbert Hoover for his services to youth all over the world, had been positioned. [39]

D. The Reconstruction of the Blacksmith Shop

1. As Part of the Park Master Plan

The reconstruction of Jesse Hoover's Blacksmith Shop had been proposed in the 1948 Master Plan prepared for the Society by the Iowa Conservation Commission. In response to a request by the Society, Tad Hoover prepared a sketch of his father's shop. He vividly recalled the forge, and the "comfortable seat against the wall of the forge and in front of the fire" built by his father. Here he sat and watched his father, and there was "no clearer memory than that of the forge, the fire, the bellows, the anvil, and the shower of flying sparks, as father and his helper would make a weld." The shoeing of "large draught-horses was also an interesting operation." [40]

Mrs. Maud Stratton, having studied Theodore Hoover's sketch of the Blacksmith Shop, wrote him on June 14, 1949. She wanted to know: (a) if the shop had a false front, and, if so, if it faced east; (b) if it were whitewashed both outside and inside; (c) on what kind of block was the anvil mounted; (d) did Jesse Hoover bore out wooden pumps in the shop, or did he assemble the chain type of cistern pumps; and (e) was there a dirt floor. [41]

2. The Family Withdraws its Opposition to a Reconstruction

Either Tad Hoover failed to reply to Mrs. Stratton's letter or his answer has not been preserved. This is unfortunate because his recollections of the shop are generally accurate. With the Society's attention focused momentarily on higher priority items in the Park Master Plan, no funds were budgeted for the proposed reconstruction at this time.

While in West Branch for his father's 80th Birthday celebration, Allan Hoover discussed at length with members of the Society the proposed reconstruction of Jesse Hoover's Blacksmith Shop, which heretofore had been assigned a low priority in the park's development plan. On returning to New York City and reviewing the subject with his father, Allan wrote Bill Anderson. He reported the family was in agreement that: (a) the Methodist Parsonage and the King House could be disposed of in any manner the Society saw fit; (b) Penn Street should be relocated north of Lot 41; and (c) Lots 31-35 and 41 should be landscaped. [42] The family, however, did not believe the Blacksmith Shop should be reconstructed, because there was "no authentic and accurate print or plan in existence." [43]

After reviewing the subject correspondence, Anderson reported that the Society would dispose of the Parsonage and King house, but months might pass before they could be sold and removed. Referring to the projected reconstruction, Anderson admitted that logic was on the side of the family. [44]

In February 1955 Herbert Hoover withdrew his opposition to the proposal to reconstruct the Blacksmith Shop. He was agreeable, provided there was no "attempt at an original restoration since everyone seems to have forgotten it, but merely a sample of what a typical one of that vintage used to be." As for the projected location, it was Mr. Hoover's opinion that it should be in the general vicinity of his father's shop, and a "little farther from the cottage so as not to be crowded." The family was interested in receiving suggestions from Anderson as to the form the reconstruction should take. [45]

3. Bill Wagner Plans a Reconstruction

It was the autumn of 1955 before the structures were removed from Lots 35 and 41, and the following spring before they were landscaped and Penn Street relocated. Meanwhile, Bill Anderson had contacted President Virgil Hancher of Iowa State University to secure names of qualified architects, experienced in historic architecture. He was referred to Wetherell & Harrison of Des Moines. [46] The architectural firm placed Anderson in contact with William J. Wagner, A.I.A., one of its three junior partners, and chairman of American Architects' Association for preservation of historic buildings. Wagner, a dynamic and talented historical architect, had recently finished remodeling the Salisbury House. [47]

Anderson was delighted to find a man of Wagner's experience interested in the project. When advised of Wagner's credentials, Allan Hoover wrote that the family was "in entire agreement . . . that Wetherell and Harrison should be started on the job of the blacksmith shop." [48]

Bill Wagner spent several hours on April 2, 1956, at West Branch, reconnoitering the Birthplace grounds. When questioned, he told local residents that he was preparing plans for a 1875 Blacksmith Shop, to be erected to complete "the setting of the Birthplace as it was during the time Herbert Hoover lived" there. [49]

In planning the reconstruction, Wagner relied heavily on the Tad Hoover sketch. As Tad recalled, the main shop, exclusive of the wagon shop, was "20 x 30 ft. or 25 by 35 ft." Wagner and Anderson determined to use the larger dimensions, because they would "allow plenty of walking room back of the horses." [50] By the second week of April, the drawings had been completed and two sets forwarded to the Hoovers. The sketches were Wagner's interpretation of how Jesse Hoover's shop may have looked in the 1870s.

It having been decided not to locate the reconstructed shop on the site of Jesse Hoover's shop, Wagner suggested that it be "moved further to the west and that it should face south rather than east." If this were done, the Cottage, the caretakers' lodge, and the Blacksmith Shop "would make more of a park or campus area, and . . . the rear of the blacksmith shop would be close to the north lot line" and abut on relocated Penn Street. In accordance with recommendations made by Bill Anderson and John Henry, the wagon shop had been reversed and would join the west elevation rather than the east elevation of the smithy.

Wagner suggested that the grounds be landscaped with structures associated with late nineteenth century blacksmith shops—watering troughs, hitching posts, a pump, and an outdoor area where fires for heating iron could be built. The front elevation of the shop could be built of siding and the rest of the exterior walls of boards and battens. [51]

By mid-June the lots had been graded and sodded, and Bill Anderson contacted Wagner, asking him to restudy the proposed location of the reconstruction to make certain that they were not getting too close to the Cottage. So far no one seeing the plans had desired any changes. Before planning proceeded any further, Anderson wanted more information. He wanted to know: (a) the estimated cost of the reconstruction; and (b) the type of flooring desired. In addition, he would like Wagner to list the type of materials needed, "such as the insulation, whether the boards should be rough or smooth on the outside, the shingles," etc. [52]

Wagner replied on June 20, pointing out that he believed "a concrete sub-floor with brick for a finish floor would be nice." He suggested that

studding, rafters and joists be native cut wood and be left in the rough for the exterior wall. Wall construction [to be] rough sheeting laid horizontally, then 1" of fibre board insulation, a building paper and then board and battens run vertically, as an exterior finish. With this type of building you would have the boards in side which would give the feeling of an unfinished building inside, yet provide insulation which . . . is important for your blacksmith museum. For the roof [there would be] a rough sheeting and 1" of insulation and the roofing whatever type is decided upon.

Until such time as the type of wall construction was decided, it would be impossible for Wagner to estimate the cost of construction. [53]

The Board of Trustees of the Society in July reviewed Wagner's plans and made necessary decisions on building materials. This enabled Wagner to estimate the cost of the reconstruction as between \$8,000 and \$9,000. Bill Anderson, who had championed the project, headed the campaign to raise money to underwrite the work. By late August about \$4,000 had been pledged. [54]

Wagner in July saw former President Hoover at the Republican National Convention in San Francisco. Hoover reviewed the plans with the architect and gave his approval. [55]

In the autumn of 1956, Wagner revised his plans. The wagon shop lean-to was changed from the west to the east elevation. This positioned it in the same relation to the smithy as in the historic shop. The forge was also relocated. Copies of the revised prints were forwarded to and approved by the trustees and members of the family. [56]

4. The Reconstruction

To secure old framing and lumber for the reconstruction, Bill Anderson in the winter of

1956-57 traveled the back roads of Cedar and Johnson counties. He and Bill Wagner were understandably delighted to find a barn dating to the 1870s, on Lloyd Henderson's place, two miles north of West Branch. Henderson was agreeable to razing the barn, built by Jesse Negus (a contemporary of Jesse Hoover), and selling the material to the Foundation. Brick for the forge was secured from an old building in Downey, owned by Anton Sorensen and reportedly used as a blacksmith shop many years before. [57]

After inspecting the Henderson Barn, Wagner finalized his plans for the reconstruction. (a) Boards were to be reversed to show the exterior as the inside of the building. (b) Stone was to be cut in widths of "approximately 5" so that the wall can be laid up true both inside and out and [have] a total width of 11" or 12". (c) Insulating board was to be 3/4" celotex or its equal. (d) Boards on the side walls were to be vertical and on the roof horizontal, with tight joints. (e) Roof construction was to be 3/4" celotex on top of the sheeting; then layers of 15- and 30-pound asphalt felt; and then cut shakes. Before being set down the shakes were to be dipped. Nails were to be galvanized, and long enough "to just go through all the construction." (f) Any "new joining of structural members should be . . . as near the same as [in] the original barn." (g) All new sills and any posts coming in contact with the foundation were to be treated to prevent dry rot and termites. Termite barriers were recommended for installation between the foundation and sills. (h) Wagner would order from Venetian Ornamental, iron hardware for the doors. (i) Wooden latches or sliding bars would be fabricated for the blacksmith shop doors. (j) Efforts would be made to secure sufficient "human-living blown cylinder glass" for the shop windows. (k) Coated nails were to be used to secure the wall boards to the structural timbers, and cut nails wherever they might be exposed. [58]

Work on the reconstruction began in mid-February. Within a week, the foundation had been completed by Crew Construction Company and the Henderson Barn dismantled. The shakes and rough boards were also on-site. [59]

Bill Anderson, besides raising funds for the project, took an active interest in day-to-day construction details. The formula for the dried clay and Portland Cement floor in the shop was found by Anderson in Better Homes and Gardens. Gardeners had been told of its wonders for laying out pathways in formal gardens. Much of the equipment and fixtures came from a New Liberty Blacksmith Shop which had closed. Anderson bought the contents (anvils, tools, horse shoes, etc.) for the Foundation for \$50 and had them trucked to West Branch. The bellows were given to the Foundation by a Washington, Iowa, man. [60]

Throughout the late winter and into the spring work on the reconstruction continued under Bill Wagner's close supervision. By late April, Anderson reported that a forge, typical of those found in late nineteenth century Iowa blacksmith shops, had been built; part of the metal roof on; and the boys ready to begin shingling as soon as the weather was favorable. [61]

When the West Branch Times went to press on May 9, the south and west doors still had to be hung. The exterior of the building had been stained with materials purchased from Stillwell Paint Store. In accordance with Bill Anderson's suggestion, the area in front of the shop, around the hitching posts and watering trough, had been cindered. [62]

5. The Dedication

Bill Anderson on May 23, 1957, announced that the dedication of the Hoover Blacksmith Shop was scheduled for June 20. Two days before he had received a telephone call from Admiral Lewis Strauss, Retired, Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, confirming that he would be the dedicatory speaker.

This was welcome news, because Bill Wagner's crew had completed the building during the week by hanging the doors. A few interior arrangements remained to be taken care of, but Wagner forecast they would be attended to before the end of the month. [63]

On the day of the dedication, June 20, the West Branch Times featured a photograph of the reconstructed Blacksmith Shop. Since the photograph had been made, Bill Wagner and his people had added a sign above the door: the symbol of the blacksmith trade, a large horseshoe, and the name Jesse Hoover. A wooden pump and trough had been positioned.

Dedication guests saw the Blacksmith Shop equipped as it might have been in the late 1870s. Timbers salvaged from the Henderson Barn showed the mortice and tennon joints and pegged construction characteristic of that period in eastern Iowa. [64]

E. Landscaping Goals

Bill Anderson's goal, as President of the Society, was to landscape the park in such a manner that Herbert Hoover would want to be buried in West Branch. As an initial step in that direction, the trustees in late 1952 began discussing the "advisability of having a bronze statue" of Herbert Hoover, as "The Elder Statesman," cast for the birthplace grounds. If the family were agreeable, the statue would be unveiled on August 10, 1954, on Hoover's 80th birthday. [65]

The family was cool to this suggestion and it was dropped. But by 1954 a vista had been opened from the overlook at the southwest corner of the park to the Cottage. Plans had called for positioning the statue at the overlook. When Allan Hoover was in West Branch to help his father celebrate his 80th birthday, Anderson took him up to the overlook. While they stood there admiring the beauty of the grounds, Anderson broached the subject of death, its inevitability, and the need for planning.

Allan told Anderson that the family had never been able to bring themselves to discuss the subject. As they sat down, Anderson pointed to the Cottage and discussed the historic significance of the area, and suggested that, here within several hundred yards of where he had been born, would be a beautiful place for Hoover's final resting place. Allan said the family would have to think about the matter.

After returning to New York and discussing the subject with his father, Allan Hoover called Anderson and said, "Dad wants arrangements carried out as you explained." [66]

F. Maintenance and Repairs to the Cottage, 1961-62

1. Yokum's Inspection

From 1938 until 1961 maintenance to the Cottage had been minimal. But by the latter year, with construction of the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library and General Services Administration now responsible for the area, it was apparent that some of the Cottage's fabric had deteriorated.

At Bill Anderson's request, E. L. Yokum, General Engineer for General Services Administration, made an inspection of the Cottage on May 8, 1961. He summarized what he found and his recommendations under ten headings:

(a) Foundation—There was "a rubble stone exterior wall with a battered brick wall on the inside, topped out approximately 4'-0" above the basement floor," forming a rough shaft around the basement perimeter. The original foundation walls had been reinforced in places with poured concrete.

As the basement would not be open to the public, repairs and improvements could be undertaken with impunity.

(b) Floor Joists—The original joists were 2 x 6s and spaced 24 inches on center. These joists bore about 8" on the rubble stone wall and a number had been "partially destroyed by termites."

To correct this situation and combat termites, it was recommended that "new 2 x 6 wolmanized joist be installed between the existing joist and then all existing and new exposed wood joist, flooring, etc.," be treated for termites. The cost of this work was placed at \$300.

(c) First Floor—The first floor was constructed of 1 x 12 boards nailed to 2 x 6 floor joists and running at right angles to the joists. The boards were sound.

(d) Superstructure—It consisted of "a 2 x 4 stud wall with vertical 1 x 12 boards on the inside as finish material."

Yokum recommended that the Cottage, except the shake roof, be repainted and the windows reputtied.

(e) Roof—It was constructed of 2 x 6 lumber "forming a closed triangle, with the exposed 2 x 6 ceiling joists forming the base of the triangle." Rough 1 x 12 boards had been nailed over the top of the exposed ceiling joists to form the ceiling of the rooms. The shake roof installed in 1938 seemed satisfactory. There were several leaks around the chimney, resulting from poor flashing.

To replace the flashings would cost \$75. [67]

(f) Exterior Board Siding—This was pronounced satisfactory, except near the ground, where the bottom 6 to 8 inches of several boards showed signs of rot and termite damage.

(g) Heating Unit—Yokum did not believe the building should be exposed to excessive temperatures in the winter. To maintain the character of the structure, he recommended that if a heating unit were installed, it and its fuel supply be concealed. He suggested that an oil-fired or propane gravity unit with insulated ducts to horizontal floor grilles be located in the basement. The fuel tank could be buried. Cost of the unit and its installation would be about \$1,500.

(h) Fire Alarm System—Because of the structure's historical significance and its all-wood construction, a fire alarm system utilizing "the conization chamber principle" should be installed. Such a system would detect the presence of "combustibles," and did not "require the presence of fire or smoke for activation." Cost of such a system, wired to the local telephone company, was placed at \$2,000.

(i) Fire Extinguishers—Two carbon dioxide fire extinguishers should be purchased and placed in the Cottage. [68]

(j) Long-Term Preservation of the Cottage—Yokum recommended that to preserve the structure for posterity, "it would be necessary to install the birthplace within an enveloping structure which would provide protection from the weather and where the environment could be controlled." [69]

2. Bill Wagner's Inspection

After reviewing Yokum's report, Bill Anderson contacted Bill Wagner, who had planned and supervised the Blacksmith Shop reconstruction. Wagner was given the task of overseeing the necessary maintenance projects. On visiting West Branch and inspecting the Cottage, Wagner found:

(a) Flooring—He agreed with Yokum that the flooring should be reinforced. To do this, he recommended "insertion" of two 4 x 6 treated beams between the existing joists. If these 4 x 6s were no longer than seven feet, they would present no difficulty in inserting. About six months after they were positioned, it would be necessary to add wedges, because the floors might squeak. The wood posts would be cut off about 4" above the basement floor and placed on concrete pedestals. The sills and joists would be treated for termites. Wagner would not remove the old joists, "even though they were shot because of the past termite action," as it added authenticity "to look at the old joist shells." [70]

(b) Chimney—Wagner saw that at least six bricks needed to be replaced. Rather than rebuild the chimney, he would "cut out the bad brick and replace [them] with other old brick to match, rake out all old mortar to a depth of an inch and repoint." A cement washer would be built on top of the corbel and a cap added. The cap, of sheet lead, would prevent "moisture from getting down inside the chimney and leaking out lower down." [71]

(c) Exterior Boards—Exterior boards, showing evidence of rot of the lower end, would be handled as follows: A "good board" would be removed from the structure south of the east door, and replaced with a "new rough cut board." As this area was screened by a vine, it would not be noticeable. The removed board would be used to replace the rotted portions of the other boards. To enable the splice to weather, it was to be cut on a slope. [72]

(d) Porches—Wagner had observed that the ground under the east and west porches was lower than that adjoining. As the east porch needed to be replaced, Wagner would add a foundation wall, building it about two inches smaller than the finished wood line. This would give an illusion of no foundation. In working on the west porch, his crew would dig down around it to a depth of 3' 6" to provide work space. Next an eight-inch concrete block wall would be raised to within a few inches of the finished grade and topped with Stone City stone. The west porch flooring would be removed, the sills replaced, and the planking relaid.

Wagner's arguments for concrete slab porches was that no longer would "the flooring have to be structural." The flooring could be allowed to weather and even deteriorate, without structural "worry or creating a safety hazard." In addition, it could easily be replaced. [73]

(e) Sash and Lights—The sash was to be cleaned of old paint and reglazed, and lights of modern glass replaced "with old hand blown green glass to match as near as possible the existing old glass in some of the east windows." [74]

3. The Improvements

a. The Underground Electrical System, Recapping of the Chimney, & Installation of a Sprinkler System

In October 1961 a crew of maintenance men from the Presidential Library was turned out by Bill Anderson. Working under the supervision of Superintendent Gilbert Lindberg, they repaired and capped the chimney. It had been decided to replace the overhead electrical wiring, so a trenching machine was used to lay more than 1,000 feet of wire for the underground electrical system. Four hundred and ten feet of high-voltage wire was positioned leading from the transformer to the Cottage. Additional wiring led to the Blacksmith Shop, Caretakers' Lodge, and Maintenance Area. Wire for three additional lanterns to light the flagstone walkway from the Cottage to the Library was laid, along with an underground wire

from the Cottage to the Library, and from the Caretakers' Lodge to the Library's central fire alarm system. A concrete junction box was positioned near the Cottage for a fuse panel. A sprinkler system was installed in the Cottage, and the attic insulated and sprayed with a fire resistant paint. [75]

b. The Cottage Gets a Heating System

In late January 1962 Bill Wagner forwarded to Superintendent Lindberg the drawing he had prepared "showing the heating layout and location of the new joist to reinforce" the Cottage floor. To conserve space in the basement, the joist had been varied to permit location of supply air ducts between. The new joist would be of treated wood, and be spiked to the old with galvanized iron nails. The heating system was to consist of Lima floor registers; a Chromalxo Type FTD Heating Coil, controlled by a Honeywell T42M thermostat; and a Lennox #812 Blower with filters. The housing for the heating coil fan and filters was to be fabricated of 22 gauge galvanized iron; the main duct of 24 gauge; and other ducts of 26 gauge. The main duct and heating unit were to be attached to the underside of the joist, while the other ducts were to be fitted between the joist. [76]

Personnel of the General Services Administration reviewed Wagner's plans and specifications for the Cottage heating system, and recommended that the heating coil be a

10KW, single phase, 2 stage in 2 circuits with thermostat having a sub-base with fan heat switch. Thermostat should have a neat appearance . . . Coil must have high temperature cutout for each of the two contractors. Revise the electric service size to provide proper power with adequate excess for future additions. [77]

c. The Stabilization of the Porches & Replacement of Rotted Exterior Boards

When the new heating system was installed by Lindberg's crew, the wood was treated for termites and dry rot. The exterior of the Cottage was inspected and "bad wood replaced," while Wagner's recommendations for stabilizing the porches were implemented. [78]

d. Repairs to the Sash

Mid-February found Lindberg's crew working on the sash. They found that the north and south sash, installed by McKay in 1938, had started to rot. It was replaced. The west sash, which could be original, was left in place and retouched. The east sash, both originals, had suffered because of exposure to the elements. These were removed and replaced with new sash with hand blown glass. The old sash was stored for future use. [79]

e. Other Projects—Rebuilding the Rustic Bridge & Repairs to the Isis Statue

In conjunction with the work on the Cottage, the maintenance people repaired the base of the Isis Statue and rebuilt the rustic bridge spanning the Wapsinonoc. [80]

4. Hoover Vetoes the Proposal to Enclose the Cottage

United States Archivist Grover, while on one of his periodic visits to the Presidential Library, discussed with Bill Wagner, E. L. Yokum's proposal to place the Cottage in an enclosure. Grover's argument was that such a significant structure must be protected from the elements.

This proposal was shelved, when it was learned that Herbert Hoover had voiced strong opposition. Hoover wanted the Cottage to be open and free to public access. He wanted the Cottage to look lived in, and hoped to see the immediate environment restored to its late

nineteenth century appearance. [[81](#)]

G. Cottage Maintenance, 1963-70

General Services Administration was responsible for maintenance of the Cottage during the years the Estalls were custodians. Following the departure of Dr. Lassner, who exhibited considerable interest in historic structures, the Library staff paid little attention to the upkeep of the Cottage and related structures. Prior to his departure, Dr. Lassner had had the Cottage painted, but after that no major maintenance projects were undertaken. Minor ones recalled by the Estalls were the replacement of the rubberized floor matting and the straw tick mattresses. The mattresses had fallen victim to the periodic autumn mice invasions, and the new ones were made by Mrs. Estall. A good example of the lack of day-to-day maintenance are the Cottage curtains. By the summer of 1971 these curtains were in shreds, and could not be washed for fear they would disintegrate. [[82](#)]

H. Problems Caused by Flooding

The core-area of the park is subject to flooding. In the six and one-half years the Estalls were custodians, water on two occasions flooded the basement of the Cottage to a depth of eight to ten inches. The first time was in 1967, when flood waters cascading down Poplar Street, poured into and filled the basement of the Caretakers' Lodge, and the second was in the summer of 1969, when the Wapsinonoc spilled over its banks.

The absence of a sump pump in the basement of the Cottage compounds the difficulty. To rid that area of water, the West Branch Volunteer Fire Department has to be called on for pumping service. [[83](#)]

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HERBERT HOOVER

The Hoover Houses and Community Structures Historic Structures Report



CHAPTER 1: HOOVER COTTAGE *(continued)*

X. THE GREAT—THE HUMBLE—THE COTTAGE

A. Visitation, 1938-39

The restoration of the Cottage and grounds was a source of deep gratification to Mrs. Hoover and her son Allan. West Branchers were also delighted, and the word spread rapidly. By late August 1938, even before the McKay workmen had finished, large numbers of people, mostly local, were gathering daily to see what the Cottage looked like in the 1870s, when it was the home of Jesse and Huldah Hoover. [1]

Interest in the Cottage continued during the winter of 1938-39. Even on the coldest days, tourists, as they motored across Cedar County, took time to turn south at the intersection of Main and Downey to view the shrine. With the approach of spring visitation climbed. On Sunday, March 19, 1939, 81 visitors toured the house. [2]

Taking cognizance of this situation, the Commercial Club had directional signs erected at the intersection. This improvement was hailed by Editor Corbin, who pointed out that heretofore many tourists had been uncertain as to the whereabouts of the Cottage. In the two months since mid-March, when a register had been placed in the Cottage by the Society, nearly 1000 had signed their names. [3]

Throughout the late spring and summer, the Strattons kept the Cottage open daily. In July more than 1600 visitors were registered, which boosted the number to more than 4200 since late March. [4]

Jack London's wife, Charmion, spent several hours at the Cottage on Friday, October 9. An author in her own right, she was en route to the Jack London Ranch, near Glen Ellen, California. [5] Within six weeks, the Cottage had another interesting visitor, Mrs. Mattie Pemberton, the only surviving child of Eli and Hannah Hoover. Her Monday, November 20, trip to West Branch was her first to Springdale Township since the restoration of the Cottage. She expressed herself to Mrs. Stratton as "delighted with the work already done on the little house and its surroundings." Mrs. Pemberton, who had spent many hours in the Cottage before she moved to Hardin County with her parents, recalled many of the furnishings. She approved of what had been done, and made several suggestions, which she believed would "more accurately picture the interior," as she recalled it. [6]

B. Lou Henry Hoover's June 1939 Visit to the Cottage

Mrs. Hoover and her son Allan and his wife saw the restored Cottage for the first time on Friday, June 2, 1939. They were driving east from California to meet Mr. Hoover, who had been on a speaking tour and had given the commencement address at Earlham College.

Previous to their arrival in West Branch, Mrs. Hoover and her party had stopped at Le Grand to visit her husband's aunt, Mrs. Pemberton.

While in West Branch, the Hoover party, guided by Fred Albin and Mrs. Stratton, toured the Cottage and grounds. Because of their deep personal interest in the restoration, this was a very gratifying experience for Mrs. Hoover and her son. Both Mrs Hoover and her daughter-in-law took many feet of film with their cameras, and would "carry some of their West Branch visit to Mr. Hoover." [7]

C. Visitation 1940-46

1. The Shrine Becomes Increasingly Popular

Publicity regarding the restoration of the Cottage caused visitation to zoom in the late spring of 1940. On Sunday, June 16, more than 300 visitors signed the Strattons' guest book. The acquisition and positioning of picnic tables near the triangle, south of the Wapsinonoc, brought out picnickers, and groups from Davenport and Iowa City inaugurated them. Many of these people were deeply impressed with the beauty of the site. [8]

Even on cold winter days tourists stopped to see the Cottage. They were welcomed by the Strattons and cheered and warmed by the fire in the "old fashion heating stove." Mrs. Stratton reported, in mid-April 1941, that since New Year's Day visitation to the area had exceeded the corresponding period in the previous year. [9]

2. The Johnson Wedding

In the summer of 1940, after an 11-year hiatus, there was an other marriage at the Cottage. The couple was Miss Bonnie L. Barracks, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Glenn Barracks of Mason City, and William L. Johnson, son of Mr. and Mrs. C. C. Johnson of Iowa City. The wedding took place in the parlor of the restored Cottage, with the Rev. James P. Gable of the Methodist Church officiating. [10]

3. Governor Wilson's Visit

Governor George Wilson of Iowa and United States Representative Thomas E. Martin, accompanied by State Senator Marian C. Hamiel and Cedar County Attorney Reid Hunt, spent a short time on the morning of September 3, 1941, in West Branch. Reaching the Cottage at 10:30 a.m., they were met by members of the Herbert Hoover Birthplace Society and given a tour of the house and grounds by Mrs. Stratton. The Governor was delighted with what he saw: the acre of green lawn; the landscaping; the little white Cottage, with its surrounding white board fence; the brown-stained bridge; and the triangle park south of the Wapsinonoc. [11]

4. The War Years

On December 7, 1941, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, and the United States was plunged into World War II. Travel restrictions and rationing reduced visitation to the Hoover Birthplace to a trickle. In the autumn of 1944, while the allied armies were stalemated before the Westwall and the battle for Leyte raged, Mr. and Mrs. Stratton notified the Herbert Hoover Birthplace Society, that they were resigning as caretakers, effective January 1, 1945. The Strattons on the designated day moved out of the lodge, and Lawrence Heald was employed as temporary custodian.

During the spring of 1945, the Society engaged Mr. and Mrs. William I. Thomas of Streator, Illinois, as custodians. The Thomases reached West Branch on June 12, where Mr. Thomas

had lived as a boy, and took charge of the Hoover Park. [12]

The Thomases were Friends and quickly developed an empathy for the environment in which Herbert Hoover had lived as a boy. This was fortunate because 1945 saw the surrender of Germany in May and Japan in September. With the end of the war and a relaxation of rationing and other controls, there were again large numbers of motorists on the highways of the United States. Visitation to the Cottage climbed rapidly in 1946, when more than 6,000 persons registered at the Cottage. [13]

When the Herbert Hoover Birthplace Society held its annual meeting on the Birthplace grounds on Tuesday, September 2, 1947, Mr. Thomas announced that more than 7,800 had registered at the Cottage in the past two years. As it was believed that about 60 per cent registered, this would boost total visits to the park for the subject period to about 13,000. [14]

D. Herbert Hoover's 1948 Visit to West Branch

Bill Anderson, who succeeded Fred Albin as president of the Society in 1947, was an energetic and dynamic individual. In late winter of 1948, Anderson, on behalf of the Society, wrote Herbert Hoover inviting him to return to West Branch on August 10, 1948, to celebrate his 74th birthday. He had written:

We have long cherished the hope that you may again find it convenient to visit the place of your birth and we would like if it is agreeable for you and your family on the occasion of your birthday on August 10, 1948. . . . It would please us immensely to observe this day, making it an occasion upon which all might unite in honoring Iowa's most distinguished citizen. [15]

A number of weeks passed before Anderson received a reply from Hoover, dated June 10, informing him, "I am happy to accept your most kind invitation to visit West Branch on August 10th," because he had a message to leave with the American people, and the Birthplace would be an appropriate setting. [16]

Herbert Hoover, his sons and their families, reached Cedar Rapids by train from California early on the morning of Tuesday, August 10. They were entertained at breakfast by Mr. and Mrs. Harrison Spangler, and then driven to West Branch. As the Hoover caravan entered the village, where the world statesman had been born 74 years before, thousands of enthusiastic people lined the streets to cheer as the motorcade passed.

The crowd at the Birthplace sang "Happy Birthday" and applauded as the Ex-President stepped from his car at the entrance to the restored Cottage. Bill Anderson and Fred Albin were among the first to greet and shake hands with Hoover. In the Cottage, accompanied by officials of the Society, he was shown "many articles of furniture and family portraits which had been donated by relatives and friends."

When asked if the Birthplace looked familiar, Hoover was candid. "I left this house when I was four years old," he replied, "and we moved across the street. I don't remember anything about this house."

Emerging from the back door, Hoover graciously posed for photographs at the old wooden pump. From there, the official party walked to the caretakers lodge, where they were welcomed by the Thomases. There trustees of the Society met with Hoover to discuss plans for development of the recently acquired 25 acres. [17]

The Hoover Homecoming and his much quoted, "Meaning of America," speech received nation-wide coverage. It was reported that Hoover came home to be honored by thousands on

his 74th birthday. Once again, West Branch had taken advantage of an opportunity "to pay homage to Mr. Hoover," and according to the press it was acknowledged that not only the world statesman but the more than 25,000 in attendance thoroughly enjoyed the day. [18]

E. Park Visitation, 1948-1953

By 1948 annual registered visitation to the Cottage had passed 5,000. [19] In 1949 there was an increase of 40 per cent in visitors over the previous year, and Caretaker Thomas forecast that more than 10,000 people would tour the Cottage or picnic in the park before the end of the year. [20]

During the winter of 1948-49, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas took several months off to vacation in California. While they were absent, Mr. and Mrs. Austin Ellyson served as temporary caretakers. [21]

Early in 1951 the Thomases were replaced as caretakers by Mr. and Mrs. John Thompson. Once again, the Society was fortunate in its choice of custodians. They were interested in the area, and while Mrs. Thompson devoted her time to visitor services, her husband looked after the grounds. [22]

On August 10, 1951, the annual meeting of the Birthplace Society brought out 50 members. Mr. and Mrs. Thompson told those in attendance that between April 1 and August 1, 5,147 persons had registered at the Cottage. The only states not represented in the log were South Carolina and Mississippi. [23]

The development of a multi-use park proved popular. On June 12, 1952, Custodian Thompson reported visitation constantly increasing. Registrations for April and May had averaged more than 200 in excess of registrations for the corresponding months in 1951. Registrations for May 1952 were 787. [24] This trend continued throughout the year. Custodian Thompson reported in January 1953 that more than 10,000 persons had signed the register in the preceding year. This averaged 250 a month above the 1951 average monthly attendance. Since it was estimated that only 60 per cent of the visitors registered, total attendance for 1952 would be more than 16,000. In August, the high month, there had been 2,300 registered visitors, which was 739 more than the previous August. December, with less than 100 visitors, had been the slowest month. The only state from which no visitors had registered was Rhode Island. [25]

F. The Eightieth Birthday Celebration

1. The Invitation

Early in 1953 Bill Anderson, President of the Herbert Hoover Birthplace Society, was having dinner in Iowa City with Herbert Hoover, Jr. Anderson told Hoover, "We would like to do something pleasing for your father." Hoover replied that he would have to give some thought to the subject. While en route to the airport, Hoover told Anderson, "You people in Iowa don't realize how much that Cottage means to dad." This conversation was the origin of the 1954 celebration. [26]

Anderson moved promptly, contacting members of the Iowa General Assembly, then in session. A joint resolution was introduced and passed, inviting Hoover to participate in a celebration of his 80th birthday at West Branch on August 10, 1954. In the first week of February, 1954, Hoover responded favorably, writing State Representative A. L. Mensing, "I have not forgotten the resolution of . . . April 14, 1953," and "I shall be glad to accept this invitation. I consider it a great honor from my native state." [27]

2. Planning the Celebration

When it was learned that Hoover had accepted the invitation to return to West Branch for his 80th birthday, it was determined by the Society to invite as guests men who had worked closely with him. But if this were to be done, money was needed to pay the travel expenses of invited guests. For assistance in meeting this problem, Bill Anderson drove to Des Moines to see his friend Bob Goodman of the Central National Bank and Trust Company. He told Goodman of the Society's plans, and asked him to head a committee to raise the necessary money.

Goodman was agreeable, and called Howard Hall of Cedar Rapids. A 14-man fundraising committee was organized by Goodman and Hall. To secure the cooperation of the influential Des Moines Register, John Henry, its public relations officer, was contacted. The Committee of Fourteen worked hard and raised more than \$16,000 to defray the cost of the celebration. [28]

3. The Celebration

Plans and preparations proceeded accordingly, and the day for the celebration was soon at hand. Herbert Hoover, as was becoming his custom, traveled from California to Iowa by train, arriving in Cedar Rapids late on August 9. He was accompanied by his two sons and their families. After having breakfast in the home of Howard Hall, the Ex-President and his party were driven to West Branch. [29]

The motorcade entered West Branch at 10 a.m. As the cars drove slowly through the grounds of the park and north on Downey Street to the site of the new Herbert Hoover Elementary School, the world statesman was given an enthusiastic greeting by an estimated 20,000 people. At the school Hoover made a short dedicatory speech, the title of which was "Protection of Freedom," and helped plant a tree. This was one of the four schools named in his honor at which he was to make dedicatory speeches during his brief visit to his native state. [30]

From the school, the official party drove to the cemetery, where Hoover visited the graves of his parents. Next they called at the Cottage and then proceeded to the Boy Scout Pavilion. After the pavilion had been dedicated in ceremonies at which Fred Maytag of Newton presided, Hoover and 200 invited guests sat down to a birthday dinner. True to Iowa's rural traditions, the dinner, prepared by the W.S.C.S. of the Methodist Church, featured fried chicken, corn, potato salad, sliced tomatoes, apple sauce, pickled beets, Amana bread, coffee, ice tea, and a six-layer cake surrounded by 80 candles.

After the dinner and before the parade featuring 15 military and school bands, Hoover was presented the first copy of J. N. "Ding" Darling's new book of political cartoons, As Ding Saw Hoover, published by Iowa State College. After saying goodbye to his thousands of friends, Hoover left West Branch for Iowa City and the dedication of the Herbert Hoover High School. [31]

G. Hoover and Truman and the Dedication of the Library

1. The Beginning of a Life-Long Friendship

With the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library under construction in West Branch, the Birthplace Foundation became increasingly active. In 1961 Bill Anderson attended a meeting in Kansas City at the Harry S. Truman Presidential Library. While there he was notified that Former President Truman wished to see him at the reception to be held at the Kansas City Club. After Anderson was introduced to Mr. and Mrs. Truman, they chatted at length. Truman told Anderson of his association with Hoover, who had been "nicer to him than a lot

of other people."

It was no secret, Truman observed, that he was not a confidant of President Franklin D. Roosevelt. When he was sworn into office on the death of Roosevelt, Truman knew that he needed help. One of the first men he called upon was Former President Hoover. When he got Hoover on the telephone, Hoover asked what he could do to assist his President. Truman invited him to come to Washington on May 28, 1945, his first visit to the White House since March 4, 1933.

Hoover, on reaching Washington, met with the President and was told that starvation was threatening to engulf much of the world. Department of Agriculture experts had estimated that Europe, not including the British Isles, would need 12,000,000 tons of food in 1946 to prevent large-scale starvation. Production for 1946, they estimated, would be five to ten per cent below 1945, the lowest since 1939. Farm yields in the United States were less promising than they had been since 1941, and surpluses were insufficient to meet the emergency.

Through his contacts abroad, Hoover knew that there had been bumper crops of wheat and corn in Argentina. But with diplomatic relations between the two nations strained, there was nothing official Washington could do to alleviate the situation. Hoover volunteered to negotiate personally with President Juan Peron. President Truman promised to honor any agreements made by Hoover with the Argentine dictator.

President Peron was approached by Hoover through President Manuel Avila Camacho of Mexico. Informed that Peron would see him, Hoover traveled to Buenos Aires. When he met with Peron, Hoover said that the United States was willing to purchase his country's agricultural surplus. Peron inquired about the possibility of securing the release of Argentinian assets frozen in the United States by executive order. A quid pro quo was worked out, whereby Hoover promised to secure the release of the impounded assets, provided President Peron consented to the sale of his country's agricultural surpluses for famine relief.

On his return to Washington, Hoover told President Truman of his agreement. Picking up the telephone, the President called Secretary of State Edward R. Stettinius and told him to release the impounded funds. [32]

2. The Dedication of the Library

It came as no surprise when Former President Truman accepted an invitation to attend the dedication of the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library, scheduled for August 10, 1962, Hoover's 88th birth day. To accommodate the hundreds of special guests and thousands of citizens expected to attend, elaborate planning and preparations were required. The speakers' stand was erected northeast of the entrance to the Library. East of this stand was a platform for TV cameras to provide nation-wide coverage by the three networks of this historic event.

On the afternoon of August 9, Herbert Hoover arrived in Cedar Rapids and proceeded to Howard Hall's, where he would spend the night. Former President Truman, who was to have a major role in the dedication, reached Cedar Rapids by air to be welcomed by the 9540th Air Reserve Group. He was driven to the Roosevelt Hotel. That evening Hoover, Truman, the two Hoover sons and their families, Admiral Strauss, Fred Maytag, and Bill Anderson, were dinner guests of Hall at the Brucemore.

Next morning, the 10th, the hundreds of special guests assembled at 8:20 a. m. at the Roosevelt and Sheraton-Montrose to board air-conditioned buses for the ride to West Branch, via Highways 218 and 1. On their arrival in West Branch at 9 o'clock, the special guests were given a tour of the Library Museum.

Mr. Hoover picked up Mr. Truman at the Roosevelt Hotel. The car in which the two Ex-Presidents rode proceeded to West Branch, via Highways 218, 6, and 1. At the speakers' stand near the Library, they were greeted by Mayor L. C. Rummells, Bill Anderson, and Admiral Strauss.

By this time it was 10:30, and the special guests had taken their seats. While more than 25,000 looked and listened, bands played a massed concert. Governor Norman A. Erbe of Iowa called the assembly to order, and Admiral Strauss took over as master of ceremonies. There were brief speeches by Mr. Truman, United States Archivist Wayne Grover, and President Virgil M. Hancher of the State University, and a dedicatory address by Mr. Hoover.

Following the dedication, Mr. Hoover and his party were given a tour of the Library Museum, which housed "memorabilia of his administration, and his service to the world and nation." While the tour was in progress, Mr. Truman was introduced to Caretaker Wilhelm. Wilhelm asked Truman for an autographed photograph. Truman was agreeable, and a treasured possession of the Wilhelms is this item.

Hoover and his party left West Branch to return to Cedar Rapids at 12:20. About 1,000 guests sat down to honor Hoover and Truman at a luncheon at the Roosevelt Hotel. This closed the day's activities. [33]

H. The Eisenhower, Nixon & Johnson Visits

Al Estall and his wife took over from the Carl Wilhelms as custodians of the Cottage on January 1, 1965, and remained in charge of the historic structure until June 30, 1971, when the National Park Service assumed responsibility for interpreting, maintaining, and protecting the structure. [34]

The highlights of the Estalls' stewardship were on August 10, 1965, and on February 20, 1969. On the 91st anniversary of the birth of Herbert Hoover and ten months after his death, General Dwight D. Eisenhower and Richard M. Nixon were in West Branch. Accompanied by Dr. Franz Lassner, Director of the Presidential Library, they toured the Cottage and visited the restored Blacksmith Shop. Of the great and near great whom the Estalls met during their years as custodians, they were the most impressed with General Eisenhower. He radiated great warmth. When he and Nixon were returning to the Library from the Blacksmith Shop, Ike waved to the crowd that had assembled.

August 10, 1965, was a day the Estalls will always remember. In addition to a former President and a future Chief Executive, they were hosts to 4,000 other visitors who passed through the Cottage during the day. [35]

President Lyndon B. Johnson and Lady Bird were in West Branch on a cold February day in 1969. It was late in the afternoon, when the Johnsons, accompanied by Acting Library Director Dick Jacobs, visited the cottage. The President and First Lady were given a tour of the Cottage by the Estalls. [36]

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HERBERT HOOVER

The Hoover Houses and Community Structures

Historic Structures Report



CHAPTER 1:

HOOVER COTTAGE *(continued)*

XI. THE COTTAGE AND ITS FURNISHINGS

A. Personal Property Owned by Jesse & Huldah Hoover

1. Inventory of Jesse Hoovers Estate

Jesse Hoover died on December 13, 1880, 18 months after he moved his family from the Cottage into the two-story frame house at the northeast corner of Downey and Cedar streets. Immediately following his death, an inventory was made of his personal property and real estate, for the Cedar County Probate Court. Shown on the inventory was property found in the home of the deceased and at the implement shop. The inventory listed:

<u>Items</u>	<u>Value</u>
23 wood pumps	
150 feet wood pump tubing	
18 feet wood pump couplings	
4 wood pump rubber buckets	
2 wood pump leather buckets	
36 wood pump valves for buckets	\$ 2.75
5 chain pump curbs	
300 feet chain pump tubing	
114 pounds of chain pumps chains	10.41
24 chain pump rubber buckets	6.25
3 new wheelbarrows	
1 old wheelbarrow	
3 plows	42.92
1 sulky plow bottom	9.00
1 set of iron pump tools	10.10
ladders	2.00
2 barbing machines	25.00
100 pounds of barbs	8.50
94 pounds of fence wire	5.03
1 hay carrier with hooks	8.73
6 washing machines	25.50
1 set of runners for bobsled	3.50
1 heavy bobsled	17.00

1 sleigh	10.00
1 sleigh frame	2.00
1 spring seat	2.50
3 spring buggies (new)	67.00
2 spring wagons (second hand)	15.00
stovepipe & elbows	3.67
brace & bits	.60
3 iron cylinders	6.00
1 monkey wrench	.60
1 porcelain chamber	2.75
1 farm wagon (second hand)	15.00
2 sewing machines (second hand)	\$ 20.00
6 sewing machines (new)	133.83
2 cultivators	25.00
1/2 of a harrow	2.00
1 set of shafts	3.00
barley fork and fork handles	1.00
1 20-foot lightning rod	10.40
1 dark bay horse	65.00
1 light bay horse	60.00
2 sets of light double-harness	14.00
1 set single harness	8.75
1 well auger	50.00
1 cow (	34.00
2 hogs (	
Second Hoover House & one acre of land	550.00
Implement Store & lot	550.00
sewing machine	
6 chairs	
1 bedstead	
1 oil stove	
1 cookstove	2.75
pictures	
1 string of bells	1.00
1 pump	4.00
1 set fly nets	4.00
18 dozen cans of sewing machine oil	1.12
3 blades for rolling cutter	3.00
1 office chair	.75
1 office file	.90
1 set buggy lamps	2.00
6 braces	2.00 [1]

Of the enumerated items, it was determined by the Probate Court that the following belonged

to the widow:

<u>Items</u>	<u>Value</u>
pictures	
6 chairs (	
1 bedstead (	
1 oil stove (	200.00
1 cookstove (	
1 sewing machine (	
1 cow (	34.00
2 hogs (	
1 dark bay horse	\$65.00
1 light bay horse	60.00
1 farm wagon (second hand)	15.00 [2]

2. Inventory of Huldah Hoover's Personal Estate

Huldah Hoover died on February 24, 1884, almost five years after the family had moved from the Cottage into the Second Hoover House. An inventory made for the Cedar County Probate Court showed that at the time of her death, she owned:

<u>Items</u>	<u>Value</u>
1 lot of books	\$ 3.00
1 single bedstead	1.00
1 lounge & tick	3.00
1 paper holder	.25
2 looking glasses (one of which belongs to Mrs. Miles)	.20
10 pictures (small)	1.00
1 case of wax flowers	1.00
1 corner whatnot	.50
2 pairs of Texas Longhorns	.25
10 chairs	2.00
2 rocking chairs	.75
1 heating stove	1.00
1 center table	1.00
2 center table cloths	.50
20 yards of rag carpet (good)	6.00
2 lace curtains	.50
1 piece stairs carpet	.50
1 oak bedstead (Mrs. Miles')	
2 bedcloths (plane)	1.00
1 sewing machine (Mrs. Minthorn's)	4.00
3 feather beds	5.00
4 pairs of pillows	1.00
1 barrels of flour	.75
20 yards of rag carpet	2.00

1 bureau	3.00
1 clock	.75
1 wheelbarrow	1.00
1 lounge	.25
1 hammock	.50
40 yards of rag carpet	4.00
1 lot of potatoes	
1 cookstove & furniture	\$5.00
1 extension table	3.00
1 common table	.25
1 sink	1.00
1 coal bucket	.10
1 water bench (goes with oil stove)	
1 oil stove & furniture	2.00
3 lamps	.50
5 curtains for windows	.50
15 glass cans with fruit	2.25
1 pie safe	1.00
1 washing machine	.50
1 clothes wringer	1.50
1 ton soft coal	3.00
32 gallon jars	1.00
11 sheets (cotton)	2.00
9 pairs pillow cases	1.00
5 table cloths	1.00
2 chairs tidies	.25
5 comforters (Mrs. Minthorn's)	3.00
7 quilts	3.00
1 bed spread	.25
1 oil cloth coat	.25
7 dresses (Mary Minthorn's)	5.00
5 skirts (Mary Minthorn's)	1.00
22 pieces underwear	.50
2 dolmans	10.00
1 coat	.50
2 bonnets	1.00
1 lot of dishes	3.00
I lot of sundries	1.00
1 lot of jars and jugs	.50
5 straw ticks	1.00 [3]

On April 14, 1884, the personal property of the deceased was sold at public auction at the Second Hoover House. The items sold, their purchasers, and prices paid were:

<u>Items</u>	<u>Purchasers</u>	<u>Sale Prices</u>
--------------	-------------------	--------------------

5 comforters	Mary Minthorn	\$ 4.00
7 dresses	Mary Minthorn	15.00
5 skirts	Mary Minthorn	3.00
22 pieces of underwear	Mary Minthorn	3.00
2 dolmans	Mary Minthorn	\$ 12.00
2 bonnets	Mary Minthorn	2.00
1 bureau	Allen Hoover	4.50
1 coat	Allen Hoover	2.00
1 ton of coal	J. Y. Hoover	3.00
1 oil stove	Benijah Hoover	5.00
1 cookstove &c	Sarah Collins	7.75
1 featherbed	F. Berkhermer	2.20
1 featherbed	H. Bradley	3.50
1 featherbed	J. Y. Hoover	2.00
1 rocker	Benijah Hoover	1.45
19 yards of carpet	C. H. Wickersham	3.42
19-1/2 yards of carpet	J. J. Kerr	2.73
20 yards of carpet	J. J. Kerr	6.20
20 yards of carpet	H. Bradley	10.00
4 pairs pillows	F. Berkhermer & Sons	1.30
1 wringer	J. C. Coombs	3.50
1 extension table	Wm. Hargrove	5.00
1 sewing machine	Wm. Hargrove	3.25
1 center table	Wm. Walker	1.50
10 chairs	Sundry persons	2.60
1 lounge	J. C. Coombs	2.00
5 quilts	Sundry persons	3.20
1 pie safe	Joseph Cook	.50
1 wheelbarrow	Benijah Hoover	1.10
		\$116.70
Sundry items too numerous to enumerate		31.33
		\$148.03

Not Sold

1 case wax flowers	11 sheets
1 lot of books	6 pairs pillow cases
1 rocking chair (owner found)	4 table cloths
2 pairs of Texas Longhorns (owner found)	2 quilts
1 hammock	1 oil cloth coat [4]

The subject inventories provide detailed information on the number and kind of furnishings owned by the Hoovers in March 1884. We may assume that following their May 1879 move

to the two-story frame house that Jesse and Huldah Hoover purchased additional furniture. Such action would have been dictated by two factors—Jesse's improved economic situation and the availability of more space.

B. "Memories of a Little House" by Lou Henry Hoover

1. Mrs. Hoover's Interest and Research

Mrs. Herbert Hoover, in the 1930s, became interested in the restoration of her husband's birthplace to its appearance, circa 1874. In 1938 Bruce McKay carried out the restoration. Mrs. Hoover, at the same time, prepared a manuscript titled, "Memories of a Little House," descriptive of the Cottage, its furnishings, and the grounds. To secure information and to insure accuracy, Mrs. Hoover consulted all surviving members of her husband's family familiar with the Cottage in the 1870s and 1880s. Drafts of the manuscript were circulated by Mrs. Hoover to interested parties for possible corrections and additions. When these drafts were returned, they were reviewed, and corrections to the original noted.

Mrs. Hoover, having grown up in a similar environment, was intensely interested in the Cottage's furnishings. Her meticulously researched monograph provides the Service with a documented study of the Cottage's furnishings, and constitutes the core of this section of this report.

2. The North Room

a. Parlor

Mrs. Hoover's research divulged that Jesse and Huldah Hoover used one end of the north room as a sitting room or parlor. Here, she wrote, were

two or three rockers or other comfortable chairs and a lounge, later called a sofa. In the northeast corner there was a small drop-leaf table for the lamp, the Bible, books or paper, and a round sewing basket with needles and thread in it and scissors, thimble and button box. A "table cover" was on the table. One remembers vividly "a fruit picture" on the wall, probably a lithograph, but cannot recall exactly where it hung. And there were other pictures, perhaps one or two historic or religious prints and perhaps an embroidered cardboard motto or two, in cross-stitch, the latter very likely "worked" by young relatives. [5]

b. Dining Room-Kitchen

Mrs. Hoover continued:

The other or west end of this room was the dining-room in the long months of pleasant weather. It was the combined dining-room and kitchen in the cold winter when the passage across the corner of the open porch to the little lean-to summer kitchen would not be good for either cook or food. In winter the arrangement would be very like the kitchenette and dinette of today but for the difference in the domestic gadgets.

In 1870 there would have been in this dining end a sturdy table, on which in winter would be carried out the various culinary operations of preparation of the meal and of "cleaning up." Between these two periods the impedimenta would have been whisked off to a nearby shelf, the cloth would have been spread, dishes and cutlery placed in orderly array, and the kitchen table would have become the dining table and the straight-backed chairs would be drawn up for

the delicious meal. We say delicious advisedly, for many of us still live with clear memories of the Iowa eating of that time, and no people was ever better or more temptingly fed,—although today it might not be considered that theirs was a balanced ration! [6]

Then, as the family dispersed, the remaining food was put away, dishes were gathered up, cloth carefully folded and put in a drawer if it were still clean, or in the "dirty clothes box" if soiled, and the dish pan was brought out and dishes washed on the same table, which had become kitchen table again.

Neither in this little house nor in the largest in the town (perhaps in the state) was there any plumbing. No sink, no drying board, no hot or cold water to be turned on nor to run away. Instead, the big teakettle which simmered on the back of the stove all day in the winter, was carried to the table and the steaming water poured into the dish pan. Then Huldah would have taken the long-handled dipper and dipped more cold water into the kettle from the water bucket sitting on a nearby shelf, with its top the same height as the stove.

The stove, doubtless, stood near the south wall, just west of the door leading into the bedroom, and served as the "central heating plant" to the whole house, as that door remained open most of the time during the winter.

Jesse and Huldah's stove was a wood-burning one which had to be replenished every two or three hours. So unless one of them planned to waken two or three times during the night (with out an alarm clock!) the fire went out a couple of hours after they went to sleep, and the room was near or quite a freezing temperature by the time they waked in the morning to rebuild it. [7]

This end of the living-room no doubt contained a cupboard for the dishes and glassware. It was doubtless one with drawers across the central portion where the silver, cutlery and linen lived. Some arrangement of shelves and hooks, or cupboard, housed the pots and pans nearby in winter. Probably this arrangement was easily carried to the lean-to when the kitchen moved out there in the spring.

It is remembered that when the kitchen was indoors there hung against the wall a large cupboard for food, known as a [pie] safe,—ventilated through perforated doors. No doubt in summer it was carried outside and hung on the porch wall near dining-room and kitchen door when the latter moved to the lean-to. In winter nothing could remain outside which would be injured by freezing. [8]

3. Bedroom

"From the living-room," Mrs. Hoover wrote,

a door through the south wall opened into the bedroom. On the west side of the room stood the high-legged double bed with the solid headboard and footboard that followed the four-posters in the Middle West. After little Theodore outgrew his cradle, there was his trundle-bed, which rolled under the big one when he was not in it. On them both were woolen "spreads" beautifully woven by some older member of the family on one of the family looms, the last remnant of domestic weaving to disappear from pioneer life. The intricate pattern was very likely in indigo blue and white, although red may have been introduced, probably of cochineal dye. The wool they no doubt carded and spun themselves as well as dyed. Under the "spreads" were charming patch work "quilts" of gay calico, the winter ones heavily padded. Some of these "spreads" and "quilts" of

Grandmother Minthorn's own weaving are still in possession of the family. [9]

In the southeast corner of the bedroom, was the bureau with its drawers. This was called the "wedding-chest"—filled with household linens it was given to Huldah before her marriage by her mother. It had been made by her mother's brother near Detroit and sent out to Iowa. It was very like the one he had made for this very sister when she was married in 1840. The looking-glass hung over the bureau. There was a couple of chairs and perhaps a little table. Without doubt there was a Singer or Florence sewing-machine, for which Jesse was agent as he was for various kinds of farm machinery. [10]

Built-in closets had not yet come to little houses in Iowa. Few, indeed, were in large ones. But a couple of horizontal strips of wood were nailed to the wall in the corner at the north end and at convenient heights were supplied with clothes hooks. Huldah made curtains to hang over the front of this practical closet to protect the garments from dust. Indeed it is remembered that Jesse had made a couple of shelves overhanging the row of clothes hooks, from the top one of which the curtains hung to the floor. Thus hats and treasured articles were on the protected lower shelf, and dust-proof things or covered boxes stood on the uncurtained top shelf. "The shoes stood in a row on the floor underneath, with scrap boxes and many necessary things," remembers one frequent . . . visitor. [11]

Mrs. Harriette Odell had been told that the curtains were of "unbleached muslin with three bands of chambray about one inch wide across the top and bottom." Some of the chambray was blue and some buff. Huldah had bought the material at Laban Miles' store and had hemmed them herself. [12]

4. Carpets and Wallpaper

"The floors of both rooms," Mrs. Hoover wrote,

were carpeted with rag carpets, for which the cloth of discarded family garments had been cut into long strips, perhaps an inch wide, sewed end to end and rolled into great balls by Huldah and her family before her wedding. On Mother Minthorn's loom these were woven into gay, striped widths of the hit-and-miss pattern which could be sewn together to fit the rooms. The carpet went close up to the walls to keep the floors warm in winter, and was underlain with many layers of old newspapers for the same purpose. In the restoration the architect discovered that inside the cracks of the outer wall boards had been covered or stopped with ticking before the papering, as a further protection against cold. [13]

Some family members recalled that "the inside of both rooms were papered." Mrs. Pemberton vaguely remembered "a very small figure, flower, or stripe as its pattern." [14]

5. Back Porch and Woodshed

"Outside, to the north at the back was the little 'lean-to' room," Mrs. Hoover continued,

whose door opened on to the covered back porch at right angles to the living-room door. Whether it was built at the same time as the rest of the house or shortly after is now uncertain. It was no doubt intended as a general utility room to be adapted to the greatest need of the moment. It has been called the woodshed in recent decades. When built it was doubtless anticipated as a wood-shed

to the larger house that the little one would grow into. And indeed from the very first it would become primarily a woodshed and storeroom during the cold winter months when the kitchen perforce moved indoors for its own sake as well as for providing the heat for the house. Relatives who frequented the little house in those years have very clear remembrance of it as a kitchen in pleasant months, with the north room used as sitting-room and dining-room only. A relative says "At one time I remember the north end of the lean-to housed the cook stove and a small table in summer time. There was a high chair there and another chair or two. Seasons changed the arrangement of things a great deal in those times."

Undoubtedly it occasionally became the spare bedroom for visiting friend or relative when a gathering of the family's many branches filled the bedrooms of the larger houses of father and older brothers and sisters.

Certain it is that it was used as his bedroom during part of the year at least, by the time little Theodore was old enough to leave his mother's room for the night. He remembers distinctly that as he grew to five or six years of age this was his room.

At the birth of his little brother Herbert, Theodore remembers his father coming there in the night to tell him that he had a little baby brother in mother's room with her. [15]

C. Toys and Christmas

May (Mary) Hoover, it was recalled, had dolls and was "absorbed in them." A precocious child, she learned to read at an earlier age than her contemporaries. [16]

At Christmas, the Hoover and Miles children exchanged gifts. There were knitted or cross-stitch mittens, stockings, scarfs, and table covers from Grandmother Minthorn; books like Happy Days and Chatterbox; and hazelnuts. [17]

D. Items Purchased from Miles & Townsend

Huldah Hoover bought from her brother-in-law's store tin cans and sealing wax for canning fruit, five gallon stone jars (for spiced pears), merino, cashmere, flannel, and black silk for dresses, and churns both stone and wood. [18]

E. Cottage Fixtures

Mrs. Pemberton recalled that her father and Jesse Hoover had built the Cottage. When she had visited the site in 1929, her brother Davis, who was only three years younger than Jesse, pointed out many oddities in the structure, such as the iron latches, the straight board doors, the small paned windows, and the low loft, formerly used for storage. [19]

F. The Furnishings, 1939-1970

1. Furnishing the Restored Cottage

The decision to refurnish the Cottage made, Mrs. Lou Henry Hoover contacted relatives to ascertain if they knew the whereabouts of the original furnishings, most of which had been sold at the auction following Huldah Hoover's death. Mrs. Mattie Pemberton reported, sadly, that she would not be of much assistance. She had the family Bible, and a period drop-leaf table and kerosene lamp which she would like to place in the Cottage, while Cora Hoover had a bureau similar to Huldah Hoover's. [20]

Mrs. Pemberton in the autumn of 1939 donated the family Bible and drop-leaf table to the Society, while Cora Hoover gave the bureau. In May 1940 Maud Stratton forwarded to Mrs. Hoover, in California, the Bible, to be rebound by experts. [21]

Mrs. Odell and her sister had cleaned out the attic of her mother's home following her death, and had found a package marked, "Huldah's bonnet and shawl." But they had been so moth eaten that they had to be burned. Mrs. Odell recalled that the bonnet was not the "long Quaker bonnet," but was "a neat inconspicuous poke bonnet of shirred black velvet." This satisfied her that Huldah had not been "a radical about dress." [22]

Meanwhile, Fred Albin, having received clearance from Allan Hoover, was spearheading a local campaign to secure period furnishings for the Cottage. A number of objects were obtained locally for display by Albin's committee. [23] Maud Stratton made a carpet similar to those woven by Mrs. Minthorn, and the Cottage walls were whitewashed.

Family portraits were mounted in "some lovely old frames" and a "God Bless Our Home" sampler placed over the back door. [24]

By April of 1941 the Cottage had been "refurnished to bring back the atmosphere of the days when the family occupied it and during which time the three Hoover children were born." [25]

During the winter of 1953-54 plans were announced by the Society to place period dining room furnishings in the Cottage. Already on hand were the table and high chair, but to complete the exhibit the committee in charge needed several wooden chairs, steel knives and forks, ironstone place settings, a castor, knife box, and spoon holder. In a successful effort to obtain these objects, the committee addressed an appeal through the local newspaper to the community. [26]

Visitors to the Cottage in 1954 were told by Mrs. John Thompson that the structure in the 1870s looked "just like it does now, for in restoring" it "close attention was paid to detail." The curtains at the windows, several of which were originals, were similar in pattern to those hung by Huldah Hoover. The rag carpet, made by Maud Stratton, was of the same pattern as the one Mrs. Minthorn had woven for her daughter's home. The bureau in the bedroom had belonged to Jesse and Huldah Hoover, and had been made by Herbert Hoover's great uncle, a Detroit cabinet maker. The high chair at the dinner table had been used by Herbert Hoover, while the cupboard was a family piece. Positioned in the cupboard was a deep glass dish, with maple leaf pattern, once owned by Huldah Hoover. The drop-leaf table had been donated to the Society by Mattie Pemberton, and the tea service had been the pride of Ellen Hoover, one of Herbert's aunts. [27]

2. The Waters Cradle

In mid-June 1930 Wilbur Waters excitedly told Editor Corbin of the West Branch Times that he had located the cradle in which Huldah Hoover had rocked her children to sleep. "The old-time cradle of walnut, built on graceful lines, with beautiful turned rockers, and artistic handholes carved in the side" had been found in Waters' barn, hidden behind the "stanchion in the manger of a cow stable, sheltering the nests of fussy setting hens."

Waters explained to Corbin that his father Milton had acquired the cradle at the auction disposing of Jesse Hoover's estate. Milton Waters had bought an Ottawa wagon and the cradle had been "thrown in."

A generation of Waters children had been rocked to sleep in the Hoover cradle, and in due

time it, along with the wagon, had been inherited by Wilbur Waters. His children had gone to sleep in the cradle, until one of the rockers warped and the cradle was discarded in favor of a crib and sent to the barn. [28]

H. A. Larew of Waterloo challenged Waters' claim that he owned the Hoover cradle. He asserted that the cradle displayed by Waters was the "one in which he and his brothers and sisters were rocked, when his father lived on the farm now owned by Waters." Waters countered that the Larew cradle was much larger than "the four-by two box which held Hoover." Continuing, he pointed out that he had left the Larew cradle "on the old farm southeast of West Branch eighteen years ago." [29]

Despite the doubt raised by Larew regarding the authenticity of the Waters Cradle, it is displayed in the Hoover Cottage and identified as the cradle in which Huldah Hoover rocked her children.

3. Care and Cataloging of the Objects

Until the Estalls became custodians on January 1, 1965, inadequate attention was given to preservation and protection of the objects, especially those in the Blacksmith Shop. Assisted by Historian Glennie Murray of Herbert Hoover National Historic Site, the Estalls took steps to preserve and protect this valuable collection. Order was brought out of chaos in the Blacksmith Shop. Surplus objects not on display were stored in the basement of the Friends Meeting House. [30]

At present, Historian Nash, assisted by Park Technician Estall, is cataloging the objects.

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HERBERT HOOVER

The Hoover Houses and Community Structures

Historic Structures Report



CHAPTER 1:

HOOVER COTTAGE *(continued)*

XII. THE GROUNDS AND OUTBUILDINGS

A. Fence Enclosing the Yard

Fronting Downey and Penn streets was a picket fence. There were three swinging gates giving access to the yard from the east and north, one on the Downey Street side and two on the Penn Street side. The Downey Street gate and the east Penn Street gate were of average width, while the other Penn Street gate was wide enough to permit passage of a wagon.

Bounding Lots 42 and 43 on the west and south was a board fence. The Hoover fencing, both picket and board, was whitewashed. [1]

B. Boardwalk from Cottage to Downey Street

There was a "little boardwalk" leading from the front door of the Cottage to the Downey Street boardwalk. [2]

C. Pump

Near the southwest corner of the back porch was a wooden pump, and dangling from it a gourd dipper. Beneath the pump spout was a wooden tub. On summer evenings, Herbert, Tad, and May would cool their feet in the tub. [3]

D. Drain and Rain Barrel

Mrs. Lou Henry Hoover wrote in "Memories of a Little House," there was a well and pump near the garden, a few feet from the kitchen door. Nearby was the drain into which Huldah Hoover poured her dishwater. Whenever she wished soft water, she dipped it from the rain barrel, positioned to catch the run-off from the roof. [4]

E. Flowers and Shrubs

In addition to the "little brown house," Tad Hoover recalled, "the high windows in front of which one had to stand on a chair to see out; the old fashioned garden in front, with the white-painted fence, the marigolds, snap-dragons, tiger-lilies and the tansy bed." [5]

Huldah Hoover was an ardent gardener and, as Harriette Odell recalled, "soon had lovely flowers all around about the little house. 'Phlox, wild sweet Williams, columbine, petunias, balsam and verbenas . . . and . . . very dark red tulips.'" The walk was bordered with portulaca, and the flower beds edged with shells. Iris was also recalled, as were lilacs and peonies. Relatives and friends exchanged seeds, roots, bulbs, and plants. Huldah and her sister Agnes Miles, after Laban was named agent to the Osage and Kaw, exchanged such

items. [6]

The flowers were beautiful in the spring of 1940. The tulips sent by Mrs. Odell were in bud, in their old fashioned brick bordered bed. "Modern tulips" planted by the Strattons, next to the lodge, were a blaze of bloom, as were the pansies, bleeding hearts, bluebells, and peonies. Aunt Mattie Pemberton's live-forever, iris roots, and columbine were "doing nicely," as were the shubbery, pines, and weeping willows. [7]

F. Vegetable Garden

Tad Hoover in 1911 placed the vegetable garden behind the Cottage. "Perhaps," he wrote, "my earliest memory is of being in the garden with my mother, and somehow with this rather indefinite picture is associated the golden red Siberian crab-apple." [8] Because of the space factor, the garden would be located on Lot 43.

G. Privy

There was a privy, probably a two-holer, near the northwest corner of Lot 42. Such a site would position it on the opposite side of the lot from the well and at the same time it would be convenient to the blacksmith shop. [9]

H. Chicken House

The Hoovers had a chicken house. This structure was located on the rear of Lot 42. [10]

I. Orchard

Tad Hoover remembered that there was a "young orchard" behind the Cottage. He particularly recalled a Siberian crab-apple. [11] Mrs. Odell recalled a few apple trees and some pear trees. [12]

J. Cellar

Lou Henry Hoover, after checking with Aunt Mattie Pemberton, wrote:

There was a cellar, of course, where vegetables and other edibles were stored beyond reach of the frost. In such a tiny house the cellar door was of necessity outside, demanding the throwing of shawl over head and shoulders as one ran to it from the back door of the kitchen on a freezing day. The sloping cellar door still stands at the left as one leaves the kitchen. [13]

K. Outbuildings Purchased or Built by Port Scellers

The Scellers privy, like the Hoovers', was behind the Cottage. Between the privy and the big barn in which Port Scellers parked his separator and traction engine, when they were not in use, was Jennie Scellers' chicken house. The Scellers privy and chicken house may have been built by the Hoovers. [14]

In October 1912 Port Scellers erected a coal and woodhouse behind the northwest corner of the Cottage. [15] Then, in late March 1913, he purchased from Mrs. J C. Stoufer her barn and adjoining lot on south Poplar. Scellers employed A. C. Hunter to put a concrete foundation under his new barn and built a concrete sidewalk in front of his lots fronting on Downey Street. This work was completed in the last week of May. [16] Port Scellers used his new barn, which was west of his old barn, as a stable for horses. Glenn Brown rented space in the northwest corner of this barn for his horse. [17]

13. L. H. Hoover, "Memories of a Little House," not paginated. Mrs. Pemberton had informed Mrs. Hoover that West Branch cellars were dug to keep out the frost during the cold Iowa winters. Items placed in them never froze unless there were no fires in the house for several days, permitting the frost to penetrate through the floors. Mrs. Pemberton to L. H. H., Sept. 30, 1939, HHPL, Post Presidential Subject—Birthplace.

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HERBERT HOOVER

The Hoover Houses and Community Structures Historic Structures Report



CHAPTER 2: FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE

I. ADMINISTRATIVE DATE

A. Name and Number of Structure

The Friends Meeting House, Structure No. 3, West Branch, Iowa. The Friends Meeting House is classified as a structure of Second Order of Significance.

B. Proposed Use of Structure

The Friends Meeting House has been relocated on the east side of Downey Street, opposite the Presidential Library, and restored to its appearance circa 1880. The Meeting House, which was intimately associated with the Hoover family, constitutes a valuable in-place exhibit and plays a vital role in interpreting the Hoover West Branch years.

C. Justification for Such Use as Shown in the Master Plan

The Perkins & Will Master Plan proposes to restore the core area of Herbert Hoover National Historic Site to the appearance of a typical eastern Iowa village of the 1880s. Jesse and Huldah Hoover, along with many of their neighbors, were Friends. Huldah Hoover was a minister, and the Quaker religion, symbolized by the Meeting House, had a significant role in molding Herbert Hoover's character.

D. Provision for Operating the Structure

The Meeting House was relocated and restored by the Herbert Hoover Birthplace Foundation, which holds title to the property. The National Park Service interprets the structure, and since July 1, 1971, has maintained the grounds and building.

E. Cooperative Agreement, if any Executed or Proposed for Operating the Structure

The Foundation holds title to the Friends Meeting House, while the Service maintains and interprets the structure.

F. Brief Description of Proposed Construction Activity

The picket and board fences will be reconstructed. When the structure is programmed to be repainted, the interior (including the partitions) will be painted a "dove grey"; the paint will be removed from the benches and pews, as they were unpainted in the historic period; and the exterior will be repainted white with a lead based paint rather than titanium based paints. If period hanging lamps can be secured, they should be used to light the structure.

If a contemporary photograph or sketch can be located to provide necessary construction

details, a shed porch will be added to what is now the west elevation of the Meeting House. If no such documentary evidence is found, the shed porch could be reconstructed by restoration architects, relying on photographs of shed porches found on contemporary Iowa meeting houses.

G. Estimate of Cost of Proposed Construction

\$6,000.

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HERBERT HOOVER

The Hoover Houses and Community Structures

Historic Structures Report



CHAPTER 2:

FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE *(continued)*

II. HISTORICAL DATA

A. Significance

The Friends Meeting House is a key structure in interpreting the importance of the West Branch environment in the development of Herbert Hoover. The Hoovers were Friends, and the Hoover children were raised in an atmosphere that championed hard work, education, democracy, the brotherhood of man, and frowned on ostentation. To understand Herbert Hoover—the President, humanitarian, and world-statesman—it is necessary to know and appreciate the environment in which he was born and spent his first ten years.

B. The History of the Meeting House, 1855-1879

1. The Friends Come to Iowa

Isaac Pidgeon and his wife were the first Friends to settle in what is today Iowa. In the summer of 1835 they and their children crossed the Mississippi from Illinois and settled on Little Cedar Creek. That autumn Aaron Street and Peter Boyer arrived and a town site, which they named Salem, was platted. Two years later a number of other Friends, nine families of whom were from Wayne County, Indiana, emigrated to Iowa Territory, settling in and around Salem. These Friends "held worship together on First Day in the home of Henry Joy for over a year." [1]

Requests were soon made to the Vermilion Monthly Meeting in Illinois to set up a Preparative Meeting. Shortly thereafter, there was a call for Monthly Meeting status in the Western Quarterly Meeting. Bloomfield, Indiana, granted the request and the "Salem Monthly Meeting of Friends" convened at Salem on October 8, 1838. The next year the Salem Monthly Meeting erected "a hewed-log meeting house with two rooms 22 feet square at the cost of \$340." [2]

During the next several years additional Friends crossed the Mississippi into Iowa. Other Meetings were established, and in 1844 Salem and Pleasant Plain Meetings requested the Western Quarterly Meeting in Indiana for authority to establish their own Quarterly Meeting, and in 1847 the request was granted. The first Quarterly Meeting west of the Mississippi assembled on May 20, 1848, with Salem, Cedar Creek, Pleasant Plain, Richland, New Garden, East Grove, and Spring River in attendance. [3]

2. The Friends in Cedar County

The first Friends to settle in Cedar County were the Brinton Darlington, Lawrie Tatum, and John H. Painter families. They were in the area by 1845, and constituted a nucleus that

attracted other Friends. When he invited neighbors to help him raise his cabin, Painter informed them no hard drink would be provided to those answering his call. This did not scare them off, and a good turn out showed Painter that his neighbors valued his friendship and respected his beliefs. [4]

By the early 1850s newcomers were entering on land that would become West Branch. The first settlements made in the immediate vicinity were by Joseph Quaintance, Isiah Morris, and David Tatum, and by the end of 1853 William Townsend, Samuel Abbott, Eli Hoover, James Townsend, Thomas Barrington, Joseph Steer, and Michael King had arrived. A Friends Meeting was started before 1853, probably in 1851. It was made a Preparative Meeting, and on January 1, 1851, the Red Cedar Monthly Meeting was established. It belonged to and was established by authority from the Salem Quarterly Meeting. [5]

So many Friends took up land in this area that the fertile divide between the Iowa and Cedar rivers to the northwest of Springdale became known as Quaker Ridge. The Red Cedar Monthly Meeting was soon composed of Meetings from West Branch, Springdale, Honey Grove, Bloomington, and Muscatine. The establishment of post offices at West Branch and Springdale proved confusing, because the Springdale Indulged Meeting was held at West Branch and the Red Cedar at Springdale. To solve this problem in nomenclature, the Springdale Indulged Meeting on April 9, 1862, was redesignated the Aberdeen Preparative Meeting. Fifteen months later, the Aberdeen Preparative Meeting received permission to change its name to the West Branch Preparative Meeting. Before the year was over the Red Cedar Monthly Meeting was redesignated the Springdale Monthly Meeting. Subsequently, the Red Cedar Quarterly Meeting changed its name to the Springdale Quarterly Meeting. [6]

The Red Cedar Monthly Meeting had been incorporated under the laws of Iowa in 1853. It received by certificate and request during its first year 302 persons. The second year 192 were received, and 176 in the third year.

3. The Schoolhouse as a Meeting House

Friends settling on the West Branch of the Wapsinonoc held their meetings in 1851 and 52 first in the home of William Townsend and then in the shop of Samuel King. On June 3, 1853, residents of the community purchased a one-acre lot at the northeast corner of Section 7, Township 79 North, Range 4 West, from James Steer. Next they launched a campaign to raise funds for the erection of a school building. Eight hundred dollars were pledged and a one-story frame school was built.

As much of the money for the project was contributed by Friends, the school was also used as a meeting house. For business meetings, "a canvas stack cover was hung in the center of the school room, dividing the men's and women's groups. On regular meeting days the men and women were seated separately, but no partition was used." [7]

4. The Construction of the Meeting House

An influx of Ohio Friends, principally from Belmont and Columbiana Counties, in the mid-1850s created pressure for construction of a regular Meeting House in the community. The first step in this direction was taken in March 1854, when the Red Cedar Monthly Meeting purchased for ten dollars a four-acre tract from Samuel and Rebekah Abbott. The boundary of the subject tract was to begin at the southeast corner of Section 6, Township 79 North, Range 4 West and run north 42 rods and 17 links, then west 15 rods, then south 42 rods and 17 links, and then east 15 rods to the beginning. If the Red Cedar Monthly Meeting should be discontinued, title to the subject tract was to be vested in "such person or persons as may thereafter be appointed by the Quarterly Meeting to which the said Monthly Meeting may belong." [8]

The land acquired, work was started on the frame Meeting House in 1855. Thomas Barrington was in charge of construction of the building, located north of today's Main Street and west of present day Downey Street. On the sloping hillside north of the construction site was the Friends Burying Grounds.

Barrington hauled the lumber used in building the Meeting House 12 miles from Big Grove (Newport), where Joseph Steer had a sawmill. The task of cutting, sawing, and hauling the lumber was time consuming, and it was 1857 before the structure was completed. As finished the Meeting House faced south, with two entrance doors—one for men and the other for women—in the south elevation. Behind the Meeting House were erected hitching posts and sheds for sheltering teams. Subsequently, shutters were positioned at the windows. [9]

The first marriage to take place in the Friends Meeting House occurred on January 14, 1858. On December 9 Benjamin Miles and Elizabeth Bean had notified the Monthly Meeting of the Red Cedar Preparative that they "intend marriage with each other," their surviving parents have "consented thereto." No objections were raised, and on January 14 Benjamin Miles and Elizabeth Bean, before a large crowd, recited the Friends ceremony. The following month the Red Cedar Preparative was advised that "those appointed to attend the marriage of Benjamin Miles and Elizabeth Bean report they attended the marriage, saw it conducted orderly, and that the certificate has been placed in the hands of the recorder." [10]

C. Construction and Maintenance History of the Meeting House, 1879-1883

1. Construction of South Porch & Other Improvements, 1879

In April 1879 it was proposed at the Monthly Meeting of the West Branch Friends that a porch be built onto the south elevation of the Meeting House. The subject was referred to the committee having charge of the house and grounds who were authorized to "immediately proceed in erecting the said porch." To fund the project, the committee was to draw on the fund accruing from the sale, three years before, of lots at the corner of Main and Downey to the West Branch Bank for \$500.

Two months later, the House and Grounds Committee, headed by Tristram Coggleshall, was given additional projects by the Preparative Meeting. Coggleshall and his people were to have the interior of the Meeting House painted, a front fence built, and sheds for teams erected. [11]

A crew of workmen were turned out in June, and on the 19th the editor of the West Branch Local Record informed his readers, "the Society of Friends are making great and useful improvements to their meeting house in erecting a fine porch along the south side of the building." [12] Before the end of the month, the porch had been completed and a neat picket fence erected on the south side of the meeting house. Painters had treated the building's interior to a new coat of "dove colored paint." [13] In July the sheds were built.

These improvements, Coggleshall informed the October Meeting, had cost \$304.21 for materials and paint, and \$140.90 for labor. He also notified those in attendance that his committee had contracted with William Miles for janitorial services for 1880, with a remuneration of \$80. [14]

2. Construction of Boardwalk & Fencing of Burial Grounds

In May 1880 the Monthly Meeting was advised of the ordinance passed by the Town Council, requiring the construction of a boardwalk on the east side of the Meeting House grounds. This problem was referred to the Committee on House and Grounds, and it was

given authority to build the subject boardwalk at the expence of the Meeting. The walk was constructed in May at a cost of \$106.27. [15]

Maintenance costs were held at a minimum in the period 1880-83. Contracts were signed with William Miles in each of these years to take care of the house and grounds. Except in 1882, when he was paid \$100 for his services, Miles' price for this work was \$80 per annum. In October 1881 the Committee on House and Grounds paid \$25.40 to have the burying grounds and east side of the lot fenced. [16]

3. Crosbie's 1881 Description of the Meeting House

Archibald Crosbie emigrated from the British Isles with his family in 1881 He reached West Branch in the late spring of that year, and as a good Friend attended the June Monthly Meeting. He found that there were about 200 in attendance, all sitting "in light clothing many of them with fans in their hands and all the doors and windows open." The grounds, he observed, were fenced, and nearly all the members, even those living within one-half mile, came in "some trap or other." [17]

D. Cleavages in the West Branch Meeting

1. The Gurneys and Wilburites—Progressives and Conservatives

By 1880 there were two meetings of Friends in West Branch—the Gurneys and the Wilburs. Archibald Crosbie on June 16, 1881, reported that there were more than 800 Gurneys in the Monthly Meeting, and this figure did not include "the Wilburite Friends, perhaps the best and certainly the strictest sect of our profession." [18]

The Gurneys and Wilburites were both plagued with doctrinal disputes, which caused Archibald Crosbie to complain "there is . . . a dividing spirit at work felt . . . among the Friends giving much trouble to many." Gurney progressives were championing changes in the meetings that were anathema to conservatives. Until 1865 the Gurneys had held "old fashioned, quiet meetings, with no introduction of new-fangled ideas or paid oratory." Then in 1865 Elizabeth Ann Harris, a minister, sang a hymn in the Monthly Meeting. "This was a great trial to some, but not all. Jeremiah Gruwell, Joel Bean, John Y. Hoover, Lawrie Tatum and some others thought it was of the Lord and had no condemnation for it." After all, George Fox and other Friends of the seventeenth century had "placed preaching, prayer and singing on the same basis, but singing was so completely dropped out of use that it was even startling to some to hear it at a Friends meeting." [19]

Crosbie found this situation

seriously trying and hurtful to the progress of truth. My prayer is that the great head of the church will open up some way by which so many decidedly good people might see more eye to eye. In the meantime there seems nothing for it but to bear and forbear. [20]

Before many months, the schism had reached a point where the Conservatives withdrew from the Meeting and established one of their own. Soon thereafter, they built a meeting house on Second Street. [21]

2. Removal of the Partition & Remodeling of the Meeting House

Following the withdrawal of the Conservatives, the question of continuing to divide the meeting, with the male and female members separated by a partition, was raised by the Downey Street Friends. On March 13, 1884, a three-member committee—James Townsend,

Joseph Steer, and C. H. Mathews—was named to "consider the advisability of holding our meeting jointly." [22]

The committee referred the subject of holding joint meetings to the Monthly Meeting, which determined to permit "each preparative . . . to use its own judgment." After a thorough and frank discussion, on June 12, 1884, it was decided by the members "to hold meetings in the future jointly." The decision made, it was determined on December 2, 1884, "to proceed at once in making such changes" to the building "as seem necessary, the expense to be born by voluntary contributions." A committee was named to arrange for and oversee the work. [23]

By mid-March 1885 the committee had made the necessary arrangements. Plans had been drawn, building materials collected, and funds raised. Approval had also been received from the meeting to expend funds for re-roofing and painting the structure. Work on altering the building's interior was commenced. "The whole inside work" was removed, and the Meeting House "rebuilt on the modern plan, dispensing with the partitions and galleries and instituting pens and pulpit." [24]

The south porch was removed, and the doorways in the south elevation of the structure converted into windows. Double doorways were cut into the east elevation and double doors hung. Hereafter, the Meeting House would be entered through its east rather than south elevation. Carpenters by mid-April had re-roofed the building. Lumber from the porch, along with the partitions and other surplus interior fixtures, was sold at public auction by the Friends on April 9. [25]

The renovation of the Downey Street Meeting House had been completed by April 30, 1885, and the editor of the Local Record reported, "The changes made in the Friends Church building have added greatly to the general appearance in that part of town." [26]

3. New Lamps and Fencing

Sixteen months before the remodeling of the Meeting House, James Pinkham, in December 1883, had been authorized to purchase "four hanging lamps suitable for lighting the house better." This was done, but we have no description of either the new lamps or those which they replaced. [27]

Additional improvements were made to the property in the autumn and winter of 1885-86. Janitor Miles, in his spare time, fenced the grounds. To the south, the fence was "a tight board fence, seven feet high, while to the east it was a neat picket fence." [28] This fence stood until the autumn of 1888, when it was replaced with another, which enclosed the Meeting House grounds and old cemetery. According to the editor of the Local Record, this was "an improvement worth noting." [29]

4. Janitorial Duties

Throughout the 1880s, the Building and Grounds committee continued to contract with William Miles for janitorial services. By 1888 it had become necessary to reduce the agreement to writing. For sums varying from \$80 to \$110 per year, the janitor would see that: (a) the Meeting House was "opened in warm weather a full half hour before meeting time; (b) the Meeting House was opened one and one-half hours before meeting time in cold weather, "leaving the windows open until the fires are made then closed until the house is warm"; (c) the lamps were clean and in "good condition to give a clean bright light"; (d) the house was "well warmed for prayer meetings and the lamps at the porch lighted when needed"; (e) the cobwebs were removed from the walls; and (f) the house was swept, dusted, and scrubbed at least once a year. In addition, he would serve as an usher at the meetings. [30]

5. The Interior is Repainted & New Lamps Acquired

In March 1889 a committee was named to see that the inside of the Meeting House was repainted. The committee moved promptly, and on the 21st the editor of the Local Record informed his subscribers that "the interior of the Friends Downey Street Church is undergoing a thorough overhauling with new paint and mahogany finish." [31]

The next improvement undertaken by the meeting was in the late spring of 1890. To improve the interior lighting, the trustees purchased a set of "new and better lamps," with funds raised for this purpose by private subscription. The old lamps were sold. [32]

E. Construction of the Parsonage

In 1889 the Progressive Friends determined to hire a minister—Susie Sisson. It became apparent that if this practice were to be continued, they would have to provide their pastor with a parsonage. Consequently, on March 13, 1890, it was proposed in the meeting that "a house be built on our grounds for the residence of the pastor and that money which is now in the treasury from the sale of lots be used and the residue barrowed." It was agreed that the cost of the parsonage was not to exceed \$800, and that it was to be located on the vacant lot south of the Meeting House. [33]

Construction was started immediately on the simple, frame, two story parsonage, "on the shady and otherwise pleasant location south of the meeting house." [34] The carpenters moved slowly, and when the Building Committee made its report to the meeting on November 12, 1890, it was stated that the parsonage had been completed, except for the outside painting. [35]

F. The 1891-94 Remodeling of the Meeting House

1. The Organ

The parsonage was painted before the end of 1890. Ezra Pearson replaced Susie Sisson as pastor in 1891, and during his pastorate an organ was moved into the Meeting House. It, however, was not used regularly for services for several years. [36]

2. The Removal of the Sheds & Construction of a Barn

In 1891 a committee was named to see to the moving of the sheds and to solicit "such funds as needed for the purchase of timber for the construction of a small barn." These improvements were necessary to keep the horses away from the immediate vicinity of the parsonage. The cost of relocating the sheds and erecting the barn was \$37.88—\$25.51 for lumber, \$7.37 for hardware, and \$5 for labor. [37]

3. The Proposal to Modernize is Approved

While Henry C. Pemberton was serving as pastor in 1893, the trustees determined to modernize the Meeting House. At the April 15 meeting, a committee was named to assist the trustees in drafting necessary plans, and empowered to proceed with the improvements. The committee, in funding the improvements, was authorized to draw on the Monthly Meeting Treasury for funds not to exceed \$505. [38]

4. The Work

Six months passed before plans and specifications were prepared and approved. In mid-October Jesse Miles and his gang of carpenters and laborers were turned to making extensive

alterations to the building. The changes called for were radical, and consisted of: (a) raising the walls and ceiling four feet; (b) adding a vestibule; (c) installing new windows and frames; (d) constructing a belfry at the northeast corner; (e) excavating a basement; (f) installing a furnace in the basement; and (g) hanging a bell in the belfry.

A cold winter delayed the contractor, and by mid-March 1894 the carpenters were still working on the belfry. When the West Branch Times went to press on March 22, the editor reported, "the belfry . . . has gone up another story and we hope to soon be able to hear the third church bell chiming in . . . union with the others." [39]

By April 5 the belfry tower had grown to a spire, and it had been painted. Before another week passed, the bell had been hung, and the meeting was notified by the committee that the contractor had completed the project. The cost of remodeling was found to be \$1196.59. [40]

While the Meeting House was being remodeled, the congregation met in the new store opened by Gruwell & Crew opposite the post office. Soon after the meetings were resumed in the structure, five large and ten small hymn books with music were acquired. Music now became a regular part of the services in the Friends Church, as it was now called to differentiate it from the meeting house of the Conservatives. [41]

5. The May 1894 Hail Storm

Within a month after Contractor Miles had finished remodeling the church, a terrible hail storm hammered Springdale Township on Saturday afternoon, May 5. The storm began at 5 o'clock and lasted for 90 minutes. Hail stones, some as big as oranges, caused considerable damage. Striking the roof of the parsonage, they glanced into the south elevation of the Friends Church, shattering every window. These windows were new and the lights were of heavy ground glass. To replace the glass cost the meeting \$18.06. [42]

G. The Church is Wired for Electricity

The next improvement made to the church was in May 1896, when the Friends put down carpeting. [43] In the spring of 1898 work was commenced on a powerhouse for a municipal electric light plant. The dynamos and the 33-horsepower engine were positioned in the first week of May, by which time the building had been completed. Next a crew began to set poles and string wire for the incandescent street lights that were to carry electricity to light businesses, homes, and institutions on Main and Downey streets. The company was also contracting with homeowners desiring street lights in front of their houses. [44]

On Thursday evening, May 26, the electric light system was put into operation in West Branch and "performed well." There were about 150 lights burning, and by the night of the 28th additional lights, including one of 50-candlepower at a street crossing, were burning. [45]

The lamps "gave splendid satisfaction along Main Street," and they would be extended throughout the town "as fast as people petition for them." This would be rapid, as they were "a great improvement over the old dingy lamps." Ibid., Feb. 23, and March 9 & 16, 1899.

The Progressive Friends moved promptly to take advantage of this civic improvement. Arrangements for wiring the Meeting House were made and eight lights ordered. Simultaneously, in the last week of May 1898, MacKey & Ross were employed to repaper the interior of the church. Taking cognizance of these developments, the editor of the West Branch Times wrote, "With the new paper and electric lights, the church's interior will be greatly lightened and improved." [46]

H. The Friends Church, 1903-15

1. John S. Stribbling as Pastor

Elwood Tatum and his wife on Saturday evening, October 31, 1903, honored the new pastor of their church, the Rev. John W. Stribbling, and his family with a "welcome" reception. There were about 60 guests in attendance, and Henry Vore "in his usual happy manner extended the greetings of the church to her new pastor." The Reverend Stribbling responded with a few well chosen words, and the guests united in singing, "Blest be the Tie."

A good time was had by all. For entertainment, a booth had been positioned in the corner of the dining room. It was decorated with autumn leaves and berries, and lighted by jack-o-lanterns. Two young ladies occupied the booth and served refreshments. After "an evening most pleasantly spent, the guests went home feeling that it was good to have been there." [47]

Six days later, on Friday, November 6, the Quarterly Meeting convened in the Friends Church. It continued until Sunday, with Jasper Hadley and several other "able ministers in attendance." Reverend Stribbling issued a cordial invitation for "all to come and worship" with his meeting. [48] The following week found a revival in progress at the church. It was open to the public and sponsored by the Bachelor Girls. [49]

One Sunday before Christmas, the 13th, there was a missionary meeting at the church. Although the weather was bitterly cold and there were snow flurries, there was good attendance, with a liberal collection for missionary work in Jamaica. The evening program was given by the Endeavorers to an interested audience. Then on Christmas Eve there was a program at the church, with "an old fashioned Christmas Tree." Gifts were exchanged and everyone had a wonderful time. [50]

The Endeavorers in 1904 continued to present evening programs at the Friends Church at monthly intervals. At their quarterly meeting on February 6, the service was conducted by Henry Vore, while singers from Springdale entertained. [51] On September 5 a number of the members of the church traveled to Oskaloosa for the Iowa Yearly Meeting. [52] The following month, ten or 12 West Branch Friends left for Earlham to participate in the Indiana Yearly Meeting. They, along with other Iowa Friends, were encouraged to attend by the favorable round trip excursion fares made available by the Rock Island Railroad. [53]

Sada Stanley, a missionary from Jamaica, was in town on Sunday, October 23, 1904. She addressed a children's meeting in the afternoon and the missionary society that evening. The church was crowded for both meetings, with West Branchers eager to hear about life on the Caribbean Island. [54]

The Reverend Stribbling served as pastor of the Friends Church for 23 months. Having accepted a position at Earlham, he and his family moved out of the parsonage and shipped their household effects to Richmond, Indiana. As they had made many friends during their stay in West Branch, the townspeople hated to see them go, but extended their best wishes to them in their new home. [55]

Reverend Stribbling's departure was most inopportune, because in mid-October 1905, a Yearly Meeting was held at West Branch. It was well attended by the local people, and "many eminent ministers from abroad were present." There were night meetings on Friday and Monday. Everybody was so well satisfied that it was determined to return to West Branch for next year's meeting. [56]

2. Clarke Brown as Pastor

The Rev. Clarke Brown followed Stribbling as pastor, and during his tenure the Friends Church joined with other West Branch churches in observance of a week of prayer, beginning January 6, 1907. On Sunday and Monday evenings, the 6th and 7th, the meetings were held in the Presbyterian Church, with the topics, "God's call to His People" and "The Church of the Living God." On Tuesday and Wednesday, they were at the Methodist Church, and the lessons were, "The Gospel of God's Son" and "The Christian Ministry." The Friends Church was host on Thursday, Friday, and Sunday evenings, with the topics respectively, "Missions Home and Foreign," "The Coming of the Kingdom," and "The Power of Christ Crucified." The choirs of the three churches had been practicing for weeks, and the way they sang the stirring old hymns and classic selections earned the respect of those in attendance. The meetings were well attended, as West Branchers began the new year with a "Week with God." [57]

Normally in the first decade of the twentieth century, there were two regular Sunday services in the Friends Church—the first at 11 a.m. and the second at 7:30 p.m. Bible school was from 10 to 11 o'clock; the Junior Endeavor at 2:30 p.m.; and the YPSCE from 6:45 to 7:30 p.m. On Wednesday evenings, Prayer Meeting began at 7:30. [58]

3. Laura Townsend's First Pastorate

In August 1907 the Reverend Brown resigned as pastor and moved to Linnville, Iowa, where he would take the pastorate. He was succeeded on August 26 by the Rev. Laura Townsend. Mrs. Townsend was no stranger to West Branch, as she and her late husband had formerly lived in the town. [59] On Saturday, the 24th, there had been a farewell reception at the S. C. Gruwells for Reverend Brown and his wife. While members of the congregation in attendance watched, Henry Vore presented the Browns with a handsome postal card holder as a token of esteem. Reverend Brown responded with a few well chosen remarks. [60]

The Yearly Meeting which convened in West Branch on Wednesday, October 14, 1908, drew a large crowd. There was an "unusual number of members and their families from a distance" present. Several ministers of note were there, and the public meetings were well attended. To feed the crowd, a dining hall was opened in the recently vacated furniture store. This enabled many local women to attend the meetings. [61] Reverend Townsend was absent, as she had been called to the bedside of her father in Puyallup, Washington. Her father soon died, and, after attending his funeral, Mrs. Townsend returned to West Branch on October 23. [62]

During Laura Townsend's pastorate, the Progressive Friends began to sponsor picnics. On Tuesday, August 10, 1909, the Sunday School held an outing in the Iowa City River Park, to which all members of the congregation were invited. [63] Long remembered was the picnic at the same Iowa City Park held on Monday, August 15, 1910. The morning was "beautifully light and clear," and "all went happily until in the midst of the dinner" a driving rain commenced. The picnickers sought shelter in nearby summer houses, leaving their food on the tables. Good humor, however, prevailed, as the drenched and hungry Friends drove back to West Branch. [64]

John Y. Hoover, a pillar of the church and Herbert C. Hoover's great uncle, died on October 5, 1909. Born in Ohio in 1834, he had moved to Springdale Township in 1854, and in October of the following year he married Mary Jay. Hoover had been very active in affairs of his church. He had spent two years as a missionary in North Carolina and had served his church as a minister, in the years before the pastors were paid. One of those attending Hoover's funeral was the Reverend Stribbling. [65]

Besides conducting services for deceased members of the meeting, like John Y. Hoover, Reverend Townsend was called on to preach before other groups. On Sunday evening, May

29, 1910, she gave the baccalaureate address before the graduating class of West Branch High School. Those in attendance agreed that Mrs. Townsend's sermon was up to her usual high standards, and "it was listened to by a crowded house with rapt attention." [66]

Mrs. Townsend, having served the church as its pastor for three years, was compelled by failing health in 1910 to resign. Her doctor had suggested that she move to a warmer and dryer climate. On October 8, 1910, she sold her household effects at public auction, and in the following week left for southern California. She traveled west with T. T. Barrington and his family. [67]

4. Walter Miles' Pastorate

Mrs. Townsend was succeeded as pastor of the Friends Church in late November by the Reverend Walter Miles, a graduate student at the State University of Iowa. Miles and his family moved into the parsonage, a few days before Thanksgiving. [68] Several days later, Mrs. Huldah Enlow gave a reception for the Mileses in her home. There were about 50 in attendance, and the conversation was lively. [69]

The Reverend Miles, like Mrs. Townsend, was very popular. Having secured his Ph.D. in Psychology from the University of Iowa, Miles in February 1913 left West Branch on a three-week trip to the Atlantic Seaboard. He would represent the university at a meeting of a national education society being held in Philadelphia. On his way east, he spent a day in Chicago, visited Niagara Falls, and stopped off at Ithaca, New York, and Middletown, Connecticut, before proceeding to Washington, D.C., where he watched the inauguration of President Woodrow Wilson. En route back to West Branch, where he arrived on March 8, he stopped off in Richmond, Indiana, for 48 hours.

While on his trip, Miles had made contacts which resulted in his being appointed professor of Psychology at Wesleyan University to replace Dr. Raymond Dodge. [70] On April 9, 1913, he submitted his resignation as pastor of the Friends Church, to take effect about July 10. A committee was named by the Board of Oversight "to look after supplying the church with a pastor." [71]

5. Fred L. Ryon as Pastor

On the evening of July 6, a Union Meeting was held at the church at which the Reverend Miles delivered his farewell sermon before a large audience. [72] It was mid-September before the Rev. Fred L. Ryon, the minister employed by the committee, arrived in West Branch from South Glen Falls, New York. The new pastor had been several years in the ministry, and had been in charge of the Friends Church at Indianola, Iowa, before going to New York State. Ryon was accompanied to West Branch by his wife, who was also a minister. [73]

The Reverend Ryon conducted his first services in the West Branch Friends Church on Sunday, September 21. Since the July departure of Dr. Miles, Louis Jones had conducted the Sunday services.

Ryon was active in the National Anti-Saloon League. Two months after his arrival in West Branch, he attended the national convention of that organization in Columbus, Ohio. During his absence his place in the pulpit was filled by his wife. He returned on Saturday, November 15, and told his congregation that resolutions had been adopted favoring national prohibition of traffic in liquor. What he had seen and heard, while at the convention, buoyed up his hopes that the forces of temperance would be successful in their fight against liquor. [74]

6. Charles W. Mesner as Pastor

The Ryons remained in West Branch one year. In mid-September 1914, having accepted a call from the Muscatine and Bloomington churches, they prepared to move. On the 15th members of the meeting gave the Ryons a farewell reception at the church. There was a short program of songs and speeches, after which light refreshments were served. The Ryons having vacated the parsonage, it was occupied by the new pastor, the Rev. Charles W. Mesner, and his sister. Mesner, before accepting the call of the West Branch Friends, had been pastor of a church in Central City, Nebraska. [75]

7. The 1910 & 12 Yearly Meetings

The annual meeting of the Friends of the West Branch Preparative had convened on October 12, 1910, with many in attendance. For two days before the meeting was called to order, delegations from points as far away as Springville, Marshalltown, Le Grand, and Earlham were detraining at the depot. From the east came several well-known ministers, and it was forecast that this would be "the largest meeting in history in this section." Arrangements had been made to quarter a number of visitors in the "old furniture building."

On Monday evening, the 17th, the annual meeting, which had transacted much business, closed. The public meetings on Saturday evening and Sunday had been crowded with both Friends and members of other denominations, attracted by a desire to hear outstanding sermons. By Tuesday most of the visiting Friends had departed, and West Branch returned to normal. [76]

Christmas 1911 was a joyous season at West Branch. The holiday was observed at the Friends and Methodist churches on Saturday evening, December 23, with Christmas trees and treats for the children. The Presbyterian Church had treats for the little ones on the 24th, while the Danish Church had appropriate ceremonies on the morning of the 26th. [77]

In the summer of 1912, the Methodists made extensive alterations to their church. While construction was in progress, that congregation, having secured permission from the Board of Oversight, held services in the Friends Church. [78]

The Annual Yearly Meeting in 1912 sparked a lively interest in the Friends, and on October 13 the church took in 34 new members, 17 of whom were adults. [79]

8. Improvements to the Building & Grounds

An improvement was made to the grounds in late summer of 1904. A ditch was dug and a sewer pipe buried in front of the church. This eliminated the "unsightly open ditch" about which there had been many complaints through the years. [80] Seventeen months later, new seats were ordered and installed in the church. All concurred that this was "a much needed improvement and will make the appointment of the church more comfortable and convenient." [81]

In April 1913 Chris Anderson and Harley Smith, bricklayers, took down and rebuilt the church's chimney. [82]

Additional improvements were made to the building in the autumn of 1914. In accordance with instructions from the Monthly Meeting, the trustees made needed repairs to the Sunday School Room. A new stove was purchased and installed in the primary department. This would make those in attendance more comfortable during the approaching winter, but it would not alleviate the overcrowding. [83]

I. The Meeting House Becomes a Theater

1. The Decision to Build a New Church

At the July 1915 Monthly Meeting, the Building Committee was instructed to secure plans and specifications for a new church. Bids would then be invited. The new structure was to be adjacent to the site of the frame Meeting House, but was to be farther back from Downey Street to conform with the buildings to the north and south. [84]

Plans and specifications had been approved by late August and distributed to interested contractors. Seven bids were received, opened, examined, and abstracted by the Building Committee on September 6. After careful consideration, the committee voted to award the contract to Wood & Paulson, local builders.

Work on clearing the grounds was to begin immediately, as the contract called for completion of the new structure by January 1, 1916. While the new church was under construction, the Downey Street Friends would hold their services in the Presbyterian Church, at the usual hours. [85]

2. The Meeting House is Relocated

Wood & Paulson, confronted as they were by a tight deadline, had a force at work by September 16. Their first task was to get the frame Meeting House off the lot. The structure was sold to J. C. Crew, who proposed to move it onto his lot across Downey Street, next to the Opera Block. Before the building could be moved the belfry tower was razed.

In the third week of September, the men who had contracted to move the building were ready. The foundation was demolished and rollers positioned under the historic old Meeting House. As the new site was downgrade from the old, it would be necessary to control the movement once the inertia had been overcome. To do so, a capstan was positioned with lines attached to the structure.

School had just been dismissed for the day, and as Glenn Brown and several of his friends walked down the hill, the Meeting House was being skidded toward the street. The lines paying out slack from the capstan slipped, and the building gathered speed. A Friend (W. C. Mott) in a tall hat drove the team used to ease the building into motion. He was startled to see the structure rushing toward him. Glenn and his friends cheered as the frightened driver lashed his team out of the way. After shooting across Downey Street, the Meeting House, having overrun the rollers, came to an abrupt stop. The excitement over, it was eased onto its new site. [86]

3. The New Church

With the old Meeting House out of the way, Wood & Paulson workmen began excavating the basement for the new church on September 22. [87] Construction was slowed by a hard winter, and it was March 12, 1916, before the new church was formally dedicated. The weather on the 12th was perfect and a large crowd was in attendance. Members of the congregation recalled that it had been about a year ago that they had begun "to consider seriously the erection of a new church home."

The new building was simple colonial in style, and built of "hand face brick" backed by hollow tile blocks. Its dimensions were 58 x 46 feet; the plan "simple and plain throughout, yet with good taste . . . to make a very attractive and pleasing effect." The basement was finished in yellow pine, with a floor of the same material. Its ceiling was ten feet in the clear. In the basement, which was well arranged for comfort and utility, there was a kitchen; a furnace room, with a coal room built outside; an assembly room; a kindergarten room; a boy

scout room; two toilets; and a storage room built under the front entrance.

On the main floor there was a 41 x 43-foot auditorium, with a choir loft and pulpit platform. To the right of the pulpit, there was a 8 x 10-foot room, outfitted as the pastor's study. It was equipped with folding doors and rolling partition, so that it could be incorporated into the auditorium. The Christian Endeavor Room could be divided by a rolling partition into two rooms, and was separated from the partition by another rolling partition. All rooms on this floor were finished in oak, with light golden oak finish.

The electric lighting was "semi-indirect in all parts of the building." Plain or chipped glass was used in all windows, and fitted with Whitney casement windows. The building was heated by steam, while there was "a good system of sanitary plumbing." Wood & Paulson had subcontracted the plumbing, heating, and electrical systems. [88]

4. Remodeling the Meeting House into a Theater

During the winter of 1915-16, carpenters remodeled the historic old Meeting House into a theater. The east window was framed in, and a new window cut between the door and the framed-in window. An ell-addition to be used as a box office was built on the west elevation of the structure, while the two windows in the subject elevation were framed in. The interior of the building was "fitted" out to seat 250 in comfortable opera chairs. The screen, near the east wall, was located so it could be comfortably viewed from any seat in the house. The projection booth was fireproofed, and equipped with one of the most up-to-date projectors in the state. There was a furnace in the basement, and the building was said to be well ventilated.

5. The Pastime Theater Opens

The altered Meeting House would be the new home of the Pastime Theater. Nate Crook and P. V. N. Meyers had leased the building from J. C. Crew, and on Saturday afternoon, January 27, 1916, the Pastime opened in its new location. Admission was five and ten cents, unless otherwise stated. The feature attraction was Nat C. Goodman, America's "favorite actor," in the gripping French drama, "Business is Business," in six great acts. There was also a comedy. The afternoon show began at 2:30, while there were two evening showings, one at 7 and the other at 9 o'clock. Before the curtain went up and during intermissions, the audience was entertained by Miss Pearl Fitzsimmons at the piano. L. C. Rummells operated the projector. Although it was cold with snow flurries, there was a large crowd in attendance. [89]

In mid-June the owners of the Pastime introduced their patrons to the serial, "The Iron Claw," featuring Pearl White, Creighton Hale, and Sheldon Lewis. West Branchers were urged not to "miss the first number of this thrilling and enthralling serial." [90]

Crook and Meyers on September 6, 1916, sold the Pastime Theater to Delbert Fairall. The new owner took possession on the 11th, and proudly announced that the theater would open on the 14th with Charlie Chaplin in "Charlie's Stormy Romance." [91]

J. The Pastime Theater Becomes a Garage

By the 1930s the Pastime Theater had closed. The building was acquired by Frosty Krouth and converted into a garage by the removal of the seats, stage, and projection booth. Double doors were cut and framed in the west elevation. Krouth in the 1940s sold his business to Lee and Bessie Oostendorp Lee operated a garage in the main building, and his wife turned the ell, which had served the theater as its box office, into a gift shop. [92]

Bessie's Gift Shop was broken into on the weekend of September 5 and 6, 1953, and a small amount of jewelry and pens stolen. Entry to the shop was gained by forcing the back door to the connecting garage. The thieves then removed the door providing access from the garage into the shop. Most of the stolen merchandise was soon recovered. [93]

K. The Purchase, Relocation, and Restoration of the Meeting House

The 1948 Master Plan proposed the construction of a typical Friends Meeting House, to be located south of the Wapsinonoc, to serve as a Hoover Museum. This proposal was dropped in 1955, when Herbert Hoover told his son, Allan, that he felt a reconstructed Meeting House "would be a little out of place since nothing of that kind . . . used to be on the immediate grounds." [94]

This situation changed in the early 1960s, when Lee and Bessie Oostendrop secured a divorce. The settlement left Mrs. Oostendrop in possession of the historic building housing her gift shop and her ex-husband's garage, which she decided to sell. Floyd Fawcett, a successful local farmer and member of the Herbert Hoover Birthplace Foundation, heard that Mrs. Oostendrop was interested in disposing of her historic property. Fawcett moved with alacrity, contacting Historical Architect Bill Wagner and several others interested in historic preservation. Wagner examined the building and found that its structural timbers were sound, and that it would be possible to restore the Meeting House to its appearance during the Hoover West Branch years.

Fawcett then contacted Mrs. Oostendrop, and learned that her price for the building was \$4,000. Fawcett and L. C. Rummells proceeded to organize a campaign to raise money locally. The drive was successful and title to the building secured.

Meanwhile, the Foundation had been in touch with Herbert Hoover, and had learned that the acquisition, relocation, and restoration of the Meeting House was a project "very close to his heart." The Foundation accordingly agreed to fund the relocation and restoration of the structure. Fortunately, a site was already available, as the Foundation had recently bought three lots east of Downey Street and south of the Wapsinonoc. The structures located on these lots (the Ketchum, Endsley, and Kramer houses) were scheduled for demolition.

While hundreds watched, the houses were burned by the West Branch Volunteer Fire Department and the debris bulldozed. Next, the Foundation, having secured title to the Meeting House, had it moved from the site it had occupied since 1915 to its new location. By mid-August 1964 the Meeting House was on-site, and Historical Architect Bill Wagner was ready to begin work.

In restoring the building's exterior, Wagner was guided by a study of the fabric and the drawing of the Meeting House found in the "Hoover Sketch Book" compiled by Levi Bowles. The seats and interior fixtures for the restoration were salvaged from the Hickory Grove Meeting House, a contemporary structure. The Cardinal Council of Girl Scouts provided funds for landscaping the grounds. [95]

The Meeting House was opened to the public in 1965. Since then it has been a popular stop for the visitor. Its popularity and value as an interpretive tool have vindicated the foresight of Fawcett, Wagner, and their associates in championing its preservation and restoration.

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HERBERT HOOVER

The Hoover Houses and Community Structures Historic Structures Report



CHAPTER 2:

FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE *(continued)*

III. THE MEETING HOUSE—ITS INTERIOR ARRANGEMENTS & FURNISHINGS

A. Tad Hoover's Recollections

Theodore Hoover in 1911 recalled that the Meeting House was

a plain wooden building, about fifty by one hundred feet, with a partition down the middle dividing it into two sections, fifty by fifty feet. This partition was about four and a half feet high, so that a man standing near could see over it but seated in the pews no one could see from one section to the other. This partition had shutters which could be raised to the ceiling, thus making two separate rooms.

At general meetings the shutters were pulled down, the women sitting on one side of the low partition and the men on the other. During "business sessions" the shutters were raised, and "the women on their side conducted a session with their clerks, etc., and the men on their side did likewise." Should a question be broached which involved action by the entire meeting, the men on their side would deliberate and act, and then send a messenger to confer with the messenger on the women's side, they having also deliberated and acted. [1]

The seats for the congregation were placed at right angles to the partition. Instead of a pulpit, there was, facing the congregation, a tier of five seats, one above "the other like seats in an amphitheater, running the "width of the house, and parallel to the seats of the congregation. On this tier of seats sat the elders, lowest down, and the ministers above them, the most important minister, or the visiting minister whom it was desired to honour sitting on the topmost seat next to the partition, with those of lesser importance grading off away from him to the left." On the opposite side of the partition would be seated the most important woman preacher or elder, and grading off from her right those of less importance. [2]

"Services," Tad Hoover recalled, "were conducted without any set programme." The Friends depended on the "guiding of the Spirit to indicate" what they should say or do. Generally someone was moved to preach or pray, sometimes several, but at times no one. Occasionally a woman would be moved by "the spirit to sing a hymn, but not often as this form of human expression was somewhat under suspicion, and one who did this often was generally urged later in private by an elder to be very certain that she had been guided by the Heavenly Father so to express herself." Some of the elders were afraid that the "inspiration might come from some other source."

Hannah Bean, the Hoover boys' step-grandmother, was often moved, and she sang "the old-fashioned hymns very beautifully, but there were many of those who greatly feared that she

was moved by vanity." [3]

In the matters of dress there was a certain laxity from the "ideals of George Fox and William Penn, but it was largely the exigencies of the frontier and the expense of maintaining a seventeenth century costume which prevented its persistence."

Tad Hoover recalled that all dressed very plainly, and for "meeting days nearly all ministers and elders had some sort of drab or gray-coloured suit and a broadbrimmed hat of sorts." The women, especially the older ones, wore the "peculiar Quaker 'poke' bonnet, which defies masculine description, and they wore gowns which were severely plain and of drab, brown or gray." There were however, signs of revolt, as the girls and younger women, though only on week days at first, "shared a natural desire for ribbons, ruffles, and lace." [4]

B. Mrs. Odell's Recollections

Mrs. Odell in the 1930s had discussed her recollections of the Meeting House with her cousins Tad and Herbert Hoover. It was agreed that the room was divided through the center by a partition about four feet high. From the ceiling, shutters could be pulled down to the partition making two separate rooms. At the north end of the room, opposite the doorways, were raised seats for "those of the ministry and elders." Just below these there were tables for "the clerk of the meeting," then the pews. The pews were narrow, with straight high backs. On the top row on the men's side sat Joel Bean, while on the women's side sat Hannah Bean, these two being the elder ministers. Next to them sat respectively, John Y. Hoover and Mary Hoover.

There were two coal-burning stoves, at opposite ends of the room. There were two doors, one for women and the other for men, giving access to the building from the outside, and a doorway leading into the room at the west end of the structure, in which the women left their babies while the meeting was in progress. In this room, there were cradles, rocking chairs, and a stove. A copy of the interior arrangements plan, prepared by Mrs. Odell, is found in this report.

The women, during cold weather, would enter the Meeting House carrying soap stones. These would be placed on the rail around the stove to heat. They would then be placed in a flannel bag, and the women, after slipping into their pews, placed the warm stones under their feet. [5]

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HERBERT HOOVER

The Hoover Houses and Community Structures

Historic Structures Report



CHAPTER 3:

WEST BRANCH SCHOOLHOUSE

I. ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

A. Name and Number of Structure

West Branch Schoolhouse, Structure No. 17, West Branch Iowa. This structure is of the 2d Order of Significance.

B. Proposed Use of Structure

The exterior and interior will be restored to their appearance, circa 1870, and the building furnished as a period one-room primary school. The restoration and refurnishing of the Schoolhouse, although it will not be on its historic site, will add authenticity to the core-area of Herbert Hoover National Historic Site.

C. Justification for Such Use as Shown in the Master Plan

The Perkins & Will Master Plan proposes to restore the core area of Herbert Hoover National Historic Site to the appearance of a typical eastern Iowa village of the 1880s. The restoration and refurnishing of the Schoolhouse adds an essential ingredient to the Herbert Hoover Story. Here will be interpreted the story of Hoover's West Branch school years and the significance of education to the community.

D. Provision for Operating the Structure

The Schoolhouse will be refurnished and will constitute an exhibit in place.

E. Cooperative Agreement, if any Executed or Proposed for Operating the Structure

The Herbert Hoover Birthplace Foundation, which holds title to the structure, will fund the restoration and refurnishing of the Schoolhouse. The Service may assist in this work and will interpret the structure.

F. Brief Description of Proposed Construction Activity

The Schoolhouse has been relocated on Lots 29 and 30, Joseph Steer's Plat of West Branch, to front on Poplar Street, and a basement excavated. Historical Architect Bill Wagner has investigated the fabric of the structure and has prepared measured drawings. The construction activity proposed for the Schoolhouse will consist of removal of portions of the fabric not associated with the exterior of the structure in the period 1853-1877, and restoring them to their appearance in the historic period. To carry out this program it will be necessary to: (a) study the building's fabric; (b) replace the window framing and cut new windows; (c) repair and replace siding as needed; (d) roof the structure with wood shingles; (e) replaster the

interior walls and add wainscoting as indicated by a study of the fabric; (f) add chimney post; and (g) position blackboards and chalk troughs.

G. Estimate of Cost of Proposed Construction Activity

The cost of restoring and refurnishing the Schoolhouse will be assumed by the Herbert Hoover Birthplace Foundation.

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HERBERT HOOVER

The Hoover Houses and Community Structures Historic Structures Report



CHAPTER 3:

WEST BRANCH SCHOOLHOUSE *(continued)*

II. HISTORICAL DATA

A. Significance

Built in 1853, 16 years before West Branch was platted, this one-room frame structure served the community as its first school and the local Friends as a meeting house. It was the focal point around which the town grew and prospered, as a school and a meeting house were prerequisites for a viable Quaker Community.

After the new school was built in 1867, this structure was relocated and housed the primary grades. Tad Hoover's first year in school was spent in this building, while Herbert Hoover may also have learned his A, B, Cs here. The Cottage, the Blacksmith Shop, the Meeting House, the 2d Hoover House, and the Schoolhouse are part of the community which produced Herbert Hoover—statesman and humanitarian.

B. Construction History of the Schoolhouse

1. Building the Schoolhouse

On January 23, 1852, Aaron Baker of Baltimore, Maryland, entered on the northeast quarter of Section 7, Township 79 North, Range 4 West, surrendering a land warrant issued to him for service in the Mexican War. [1] Baker's 160 acres extended to the north and east to what is today the intersection of Main and Downey streets. Within four months, Baker sold his 160 acres to Samuel King of Cedar County for \$162.50. [2]

King and his wife, Constant, on March 28, 1853, sold to Joseph Steer for \$208 a tract in the subject quarter section, beginning at the northeast corner of Section 7, then west 69 rods with the section line, then south 30 rods, then west 13.54 rods, then south 130 rods, then east 82.54 rods to the section line, and then north with the section line 160 rods to the point of beginning. The tract conveyed contained 80 acres. [3]

By 1853 there were enough settlers on the West Branch of the Wapsinonoc that there was a need for a school. A school district was organized, and William Townsend elected president of the school board. Before a building could be erected, a lot had to be acquired, and on June 3, 1853, the school board purchased from James Steer for ten dollars a one-acre lot. The boundary of the lot conveyed began at the northeast corner of Section 7, then west eight rods, then south 20 rods, then east eight rods, and then north 20 rods to the beginning. [4]

Having acquired the site, the school board undertook a campaign to raise funds for construction of a schoolhouse. Eight hundred dollars were raised, and a one-story frame structure erected in the summer of 1853. The schoolhouse was located about 100 feet

southwest of the northeast corner of Section 7, and a little north of where Wetherell Street was subsequently platted. The structure faced the country road destined to become Main Street. [5]

Mary Mills, a young lady from Ohio, was recalled as the teacher during the 1853-54 term, the school's first. Others who taught in the little frame schoolhouse were Mahlon Oliphant, Mary Smith, Dora Darlington, and Jessie Cartland. [6]

Much of the money to fund construction of the school had been donated by Friends, so the structure was also used as a temporary meeting house, until the Society erected its own Meeting House in 1856-57. Each First Day and Fourth Day Meetings were held, and the children were obliged to attend the midweek meetings. For the business meetings a canvas stack cover was hung in the center of the school room, dividing the men's and women's groups. On regular meeting days, the men and women were seated separately, but no partition was used. [7]

2. The Construction of a New Schoolhouse

In the immediate post-Civil War years there was an influx of settlers into western Springdale Township. This increase in population taxed the facilities of the one-room schoolhouse. Some years there were as many as 60 pupils in attendance. Taking cognizance of this situation, a number of public spirited Friends, along with their neighbors, subscribed \$1,500 for construction of a new building to be known as the "Friends Academy of West Branch." An organization of stockholders was effected, and a building committee composed of Joseph Steer, Sr., Asa Staples, and James Hirst appointed. There were two building sites favored—one was on Main Street, west of the Friends Meeting Grounds, and the other a two-acre tract in William Oliphant's field, north of the Friends Burying Grounds. [8]

The Building Committee determined to build in Oliphant's field, and a two-acre lot fronting today's Downey Street acquired. Construction was started immediately, and a two-story frame building, 24 x 44 feet, fronting east, was built. Joel and Hannah Bean, experienced teachers and preachers, who had "conducted a Select School at their home, 'The Evergreens,' a mile east of the crossroads, were employed as teachers at the new academy." West Branch had not been platted when the academy opened in the autumn of 1867. [9]

3. The Organization of the Independent School District

A change in the Iowa School laws permitted subdistricts to be reorganized into independent districts, thereby increasing the powers of taxation by vote of the taxpayers. To take advantage of this legislation and provide better quality education for their children, the subdistrict was reorganized as the Independent School District. The academy had been in operation only a short time, when the Friends agreed to rent it to the Independent School District. The academy passed out of existence, and the first term of public school opened in the recently platted town of West Branch in the autumn of 1869. Joel and Hannah Bean were retained as teachers. [10]

4. The Old Schoolhouse is Relocated

In the spring of 1870 the Independent School District purchased for \$2,500 the property belonging to the Friends Academy of West Branch. The one-acre school lot at the southwest corner of Main and Downey was subdivided and sold at public auction for \$900. The old one-room schoolhouse was relocated in late May 1870. James Cook was paid \$30 to move the structure from the one-acre school lot and position it adjacent to and northwest of the new schoolhouse, on the hill north of the Friends Burying Grounds. The building was outfitted as the primary department. When the fall term opened in September 1870, Miss Mary

G. Townsend had charge of the primary department. [11]

The relocation of the old schoolhouse and the subdivision of the one-acre lot made possible the growth of the West Branch business district at the intersection of Main and Downey streets. With a steady increase in population, facilities of the West Branch School were again crowded. In 1877 a two-story wing, 28 x 40 feet, was added to the north elevation of the school. The cost of this addition was \$1,775, and it provided West Branch with, a four-room structure. [12]

5. Tad and Herbert Hoover Enter School

Soon after his fifth birthday in 1876, Jesse Hoover entered his son, Tad, in the "old district schoolhouse on top of the hill above the Friends meeting-house." Between the "old district school" and the Meeting House was the new two-story school building. The "old district school" was used for the primary grades and Mary Townsend was Tad's first teacher, and

if she failed to arouse in me that enthusiastic love which I felt for some of the later ones, she at any rate holds the highest place in reverence; she was very dignified and kind. I remember learning here the A, B, Cs, and reading about the trout caught in the brook. [13]

Herbert Hoover entered school in 1880. His primary teacher was Lizzie Chandler, and she subsequently recalled that her department met in the little one-room schoolhouse. Records of the West Branch Independent School District for this period are in complete, so it is impossible to document Miss Chandler's statement. We do know that the old schoolhouse was not removed from the grounds to the corner of Orange and Oliphant streets until the mid-1880s. This, however, does not constitute conclusive evidence that the structure was used as quarters for the primary department subsequent to the construction in 1877 of the two-story 28 x 40-foot wing. [14]

6. West Branch High School Graduates its First Class

The construction of the addition to the school resulted in a reorganization of the curriculum, and the establishment of a course of study sufficiently advanced to insure that a graduate might enter the freshman class at the State University. Nathan W. Macy, who had succeeded Eugene Elliott as principal, besides organizing the high school, had the pleasure of graduating the first class in 1878. There were eight seniors, Lida Gruwell, Emma Miles, Anna Penrose, M. W. Savage, Sadie Vore, Etta Bean, Willis Atkins, and Isabel Cole. By 1892 there had been 72 graduates of West Branch High School, of whom 35 to 45 per cent had gone on to college. [15]

C. The Schoolhouse as a Residence

1. It is Relocated and Becomes a Home for the Rowlens

J. W. Witter had platted a subdivision in northwest West Branch in the late 1870s. On August 4, 1881, he sold Lot 15 in his addition to Martha Rowlen for \$100. [16] Some time before 1884 Frank and Martha Rowlen purchased the little one-room schoolhouse from the trustees of the Independent School District for \$50. They had it moved from the school lot and positioned on Lot 15, at the southwest corner of Orange and Oliphant streets. [17]

The Rowlens, who had three children, remodeled the schoolhouse into a home. On June 2, 1884, the Town Council directed the recorder to notify Frank Rowlen, in writing, to build a sidewalk in front of his house on Oliphant Street, as required by the Sidewalk Ordinance of September 1883. [18] Rowlen built the walk as directed.

On January 10, 1887, the Rowlens found themselves short of money, and mortgaged their house and lot to W. M. Steer for \$213.20, at ten per cent interest. [19] The mortgage was retired, and the Rowlens retained possession of the property until 1911.

Frank Rowlen was a collector of oddities, and as such he frequently exhibited objects at county fairs. In September 1887 it was announced that Rowlen would display a table of curiosities including "blocks of wood, a petrified stump, and Noah's grindstone," at the West Branch fair. [20]

The Rowlen sons, Ben and Ed, enlisted in the U. S. Army and served in Cuba. Ben Rowlen was discharged in January 1899 and returned to West Branch, with his wife, and re-entered the construction trade as a plasterer. Ed Rowlen remained in the army and returned to Cuba with his unit, where he died of typhoid on May 12, 1899. (See Appendix B for a history of "The Rowlen Boys in the Spanish-American War.")

Frank Rowlen in mid-September 1905 moved part of his and his wife's household goods to West Liberty. The senior Rowlens had decided to retire and make their home for the time being with their daughter, Mrs. E. Stokes. On leaving West Branch, they told their friends that they planned to spend part of the coming winter with relatives in Nebraska. [21]

Ben Rowlen, who was now a railroad clerk, moved into his parents' house with his family. He continued to live there until his transfer to Iowa City. Following the death of her husband, Mrs. Frank Rowlen on November 27, 1911, sold the house and lot to George Yetter for one dollar and other valuable considerations. [22]

2. George Yetter as Owner

Yetter, the son of George W. and Catherine Yetter, had been born near Plato, December 15, 1872. He had married Edith Holloway on December 31, 1902, and she had died in January 1908. Five years after Yetter purchased the Rowlen property, he married a second time, taking Myrtle Holloway for his wife on January 18, 1916. She died on July 16, 1926, leaving Yetter a widower for the second time. [23]

George Yetter lived in the historic old structure from 1911 until his death in the summer of 1939. Eleven years before his passing, Yetter had sold on June 27, 1928, the subject property to Thomas A. Taylor for one dollar and other valuable considerations. He, however, reserved a lifetime in the house and lot. [24] Taylor and his wife, Thelma, on May 24, 1941, sold to his grandmother, Helen B. Butler, for one dollar and other valuable considerations Lot 15 and the improvements thereon. [25]

3. Improvements Made by the Taylors

Mr. and Mrs. Tom Taylor, after taking possession of the Yetter property, had the old schoolhouse remodeled in the summer of 1940 into a modern bungalow. When carpenters removed the wallpaper, they found the "old blackboards, painted on the plaster, and the troughs for chalk" hidden by the wainscoting. Other signs of pioneer useage were the high ceilings.

Visitors to the Taylors' house were delighted with "the attractive modern cottage with its roomy fireplace and cheerful refinished interior," which "masqueraded one of the first three houses built in what is now West Branch." The Taylors had also added an ell, housing their kitchen, a front porch, and a basement garage. [26]

4. The Bruce Thompsons and the Schoolhouse

Five years later, on May 22, 1946, L. C. Rummells as trustee for Helen B. Butler sold to Herbert and Dorothy Sorenson for one dollar and other valuable considerations the subject property. [27] The Sorensens, in August 1946, sold the subject property to Higdon and Katherine Elkins for one dollar and other valuable considerations. [28] Within one month, on September 15, the Elkinses sold to Bruce and Lila Thompson for one dollar and other valuable considerations Lot 15, the house, and improvements thereon. [29]

In 1954, when the new Herbert Hoover High School was dedicated, the Bruce Thompsons resided in the cottage at the southwest corner of Orange and Oliphant streets. The Iowa City Press-Citizen ran a feature article on the new school, in which it was pointed out that it stood near "the one-room structure in which Herbert Hoover is said to have begun his formal education."

The late Mrs. Stephen Sunier of Iowa City had recalled many times that in 1880, when she, as Miss Lizzie Chandler, had charge of the primary children, Herbert Hoover was one of her pupils, and they met in the little one-room schoolhouse. [30]

D. The Foundation Acquires and Moves the Structure

The Thompsons in the late 1950s conveyed the subject property to the West Branch Community School District. An affidavit testifying to this was filed on July 27, 1967. [31]

After acquiring the cottage from the Bruce Thompsons, the School District used it first as a teacherage, and then as a storage facility and bandroom. The West Branch Heritage Foundation, a local organization championing historic preservation, became interested in the old Schoolhouse. Glenn Brown, acting as agent for the Foundation, purchased the building from the School District in 1968. Bill Wagner paid to have the structure moved from the corner of Orange and Oliphant to the National Historic Site, where it was temporarily located in July at the northeast corner of Penn and Poplar streets. The Heritage Foundation at this time transferred title to the structure to the Herbert Hoover Birthplace Foundation. [32]

In late August and early September 1971, a basement was excavated, a foundation poured, and the Schoolhouse relocated on Lots 29 and 30, Joseph Steer's Plat of West Branch. To help fund this undertaking, the Herbert Hoover Birthplace Foundation made use of the \$1,000 donated to it by the Questers.

HERBERT HOOVER

The Hoover Houses and Community Structures

Historic Structures Report



CHAPTER 4:

SECOND HOOVER HOUSE

I. ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

A. Name of Structure

The Second Hoover House. This structure stood until the autumn of 1923 on the lot at the northeast corner of Downey and Cedar streets.

B. Proposed Use of Structure

At a meeting held at Herbert Hoover National Historic Site on August 19, 1971, it was determined to recommend reconstruction of the Second Hoover. [1] This will be an exterior reconstruction, because documentary data necessary for an accurate reconstruction of the interior, despite an exhaustive search, is unavailable. The building's interior will house interpretive exhibits and other related activities.

C. Justification for Such Use as Shown on the Master Plan

The Perkins & Will Master Plan proposes to restore the core-area of Herbert Hoover National Historic Site to the appearance of a typical eastern Iowa village of the 1880s. The reconstruction of the Second Hoover House is vital to a correct interpretation of Jesse Hoover's economic role in the community.

After marrying Huldah Minthorn, Jesse Hoover and his father built the little three-room Cottage, while he worked as a blacksmith. By 1879 Jesse Hoover had become a successful businessman and was ready to expand his economic horizons. In that year he sold his blacksmith shop and entered the implement business. Like most Americans who have improved their economic status, Hoover bought and moved his family into a more commodious home. It was in this house that Jesse and Huldah Hoover died. This was the house that was associated with Herbert Hoover's boyhood memories of West Branch.

The reconstruction of the Second Hoover House will compliment and enhance the P. T. Smith House, and will constitute a prominent landmark near the entrance to the roadway leading to the Presidential Library and grave sites. The projected reconstruction will meet the guidelines for reconstructions enumerated in, Administrative Policies for the Historical Areas of the National Park Service. It should be noted, however, that an attempt to restore and/or refurnish the interior—if such should ever be contemplated—will not meet the policies, owing to the necessarily speculative nature of such a project. The reconstruction will be exterior only, with the interior given adaptive (exhibit) use.

D. Provision for Operating the Structure

The Second Hoover House will constitute an exhibit in place and be a part of the historic

scene. The structure will house interpretive exhibits.

E. Cooperative Agreement, if any Executed or Proposed for Structure

No cooperative agreement is anticipated.

F. Brief Description of Proposed Construction Activity

Before the restoration architects prepare their working drawings for reconstruction of the Second Hoover House, an archeological excavation should be programmed. The goal of this project will be the location and identification of the foundation of the Second Hoover House. Such information will enable the restoration architects to determine accurately the dimensions of the structure.

After drawings and specifications have been prepared, the Second Hoover House will be reconstructed. It will be an exterior reconstruction, with the interior modified to provide space for such activities as management determines.

G. Estimate of Cost of Proposed Construction

Preliminary Archeological Investigation	\$ 5,000
Reconstruction of Second Hoover House	25,000
Total	30,000

Note: Costs of interior finishing and exhibit planning and installation are not included in these figures.

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HERBERT HOOVER

The Hoover Houses and Community Structures Historic Structures Report



CHAPTER 4:

SECOND HOOVER HOUSE *(continued)*

II. HISTORICAL DATA

A. Significance

In May 1879 Jesse Hoover moved his family into the two-story frame house at the northeast corner of Downey and Cedar streets. It was in this house that Jesse Hoover died on December 13, 1880. His widow and three children continued to live in this house. On February 24, 1884, death again visited the house and claimed the life of Huldah Hoover. The three children, now orphans, went to live with relatives.

It was this house and not the Cottage that the Hoover children recalled. The house is also symbolic of Jesse Hoover's success in improving his economic status. The purchase of the two-story house documents this change in the Hoovers' economic fortunes and way of life.

B. Legal Description of Property and Chain of Title

The Second Hoover House was located on a lot in the west one half of the northwest quarter of Section 8, Township 79 North, Range 4 West. On June 10, 1851, Samuel Mather had been issued a patent by the General Land Office for the west one-half of the northwest quarter of Section 5 and the west one-half of the northwest quarter of Section 8 in Township 79 North, Range 4 West. To pay for the 160 acres, he surrendered the land warrant issued by the United States to William L. Eleman for service in the Mexican War. [1]

Mather retained possession of the property for 20 months. On March 17, 1853, Samuel and Lydia Mather sold to Joseph Straughn of Columbiana County, Ohio, for \$140 the two 80-acre tracts. [2] Nine years later, on May 3, 1862, Joseph and Jane Straughn sold the 80 acres of the west one-half of the northwest quarter of Section 8 to James Hirst for \$500. [3]

Seven months later, on January 28, 1863, James and Anna Hirst of Cedar County, Iowa, sold the west one-half of the northwest quarter of Section 8, less two acres in the southwest corner, to Joseph Cook of Belmont County, Ohio. Cook paid \$1,600 for the 78 acres. [4] On May 19, 1866, Joseph and Elizabeth Cook sold to James Cook for \$1,300 the 78 acres they owned in the west one-half of the northwest quarter of Section 8. [5]

Three years later, on May 29, 1869, the village of West Branch was platted by Joseph Steer, as attorney for John M. Wetherell. [6] In November of that year, William W. Lamborn platted a village east and north of Main Street to be called Cameron. [7] The year before, James and Mary Ann Cook began to subdivide and sell lots in the west one-half of the northwest quarter of Section 8. The subject property was known as Cook's Addition.

When he subdivided Cook on March 25, 1868, sold to David Hildebrand for \$100 a tract in

the west one-half of the northwest quarter of Section 8. The boundary of the tract conveyed to Hildebrand began 42 rods south of the northwest corner of the section, then east ten rods, then south 16 rods, then west ten rods, and then north 16 rods to the point of beginning. The subject tract contained one acre. [8]

Hildebrand retained possession of the real estate for 23 months before selling it to Charles Berryhill of Iowa City on February 28, 1870, for \$750. [9] The rapid increase in value of the property indicates that Hildebrand built the house and made the improvements purchased by Jesse Hoover in 1879.

Berryhill died on May 29, 1874, and the administrator of the estate, Samuel Sharpless, exposed the deceased's real estate to public sale from the Johnson County Courthouse steps in Iowa City on March 20, 1879, to satisfy creditors. Jesse Hoover was high bidder and purchased the subject property for \$140. [10]

Five years after the death of Jesse Hoover and two years after the death of his widow, Lawrie Tatum, guardian of the three minor Hoover children, sold the subject real estate on April 5, 1886, for \$500 to David Witter. [11]

Witter died on July 24, 1888, and the other heirs quit-claimed their share of the subject real estate to the widow, Elizabeth Witter, on October 19, 1891. Soon thereafter, Mrs. Witter sold to Joseph Cook a tract off her acre beginning at a point 52.17 rods south of the northwest corner of Section 8, then east ten rods, then north 66 feet, then west ten rods, then south 66 feet to the place of beginning. [12]

Mrs. Witter died on October 20, 1911, and O. C. Pennock was named administrator of her estate. Four years later, on December 9, 1915, Pennock sold the lot and improvements to P. V. N. Myers. The lot's boundary commenced 58 rods south of the northwest corner of Section 8, then east along the north line of Cedar Street ten rods, then north 93 feet, then west ten rods, and then south 93 feet to the point of beginning. [13] Myers retained title to the subject property for four months before selling it to O. C. Pennock on April 15, 1916. [14] On March 3, 1919, the Pennocks sold the subject real estate to John Kelch. [15] Four and one-half years later, on September 13, 1923, Kelch and his wife conveyed the property to G. Dewey Linn. [16] Linn tore down the historic Second Hoover House and built a new dwelling.

C. A Structural History of the House

1. The First Owners

The Second Hoover House was built by David Hildebrand between 1868 and February 1870. Charles Berryhill, its second owner, was a native of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, and an Iowa pioneer. He had crossed the "Indian line" in 1838 to trade in Poweshiek's village. The Sac and Fox bartered their furs and pelts to Berryhill for trade goods. When settlers began to emigrate to Iowa, they found Berryhill "speaking the Indian language and . . . laying the broad foundation of that fortune which in the various enterprises of his later career contributed to the business prosperity" of Iowa City. [17]

Berryhill, who lived in Iowa City, owned a large number of lots there, many with improvements, and farms in Iowa, Carroll, and Louisa counties, in addition to the Second Hoover House. Early in 1874 Berryhill went insane and was taken to the state asylum at Mt. Pleasant, where he died on May 29, leaving a widow and several children. When the will was probated, it was found that claims against the estate totaled \$22,260.87. To settle these, it was necessary for the administrator to sell much of the deceased's real estate.

During the period—February 12–March 5, 1879—Administrator Samuel Sharpless advertised

in the Iowa City Republican that on March 19, at 2 p.m., "at the front door of the Court House, in Iowa City," he would sell for cash "the following described real estate, the property of the estate of Chas. H. Berryhill, deceased, or so much as will be necessary to satisfy the unpaid claims against said estate." Among the 47 properties advertised for sale was a one acre tract (including a frame house) in the north part of the northwest quarter of Section 8, Township 79 North, Range 4 West. [18]

2. The Hoovers and the House

Jesse Hoover attended the public auction, and as the highest and last bidder purchased the frame house and lot for \$140. Ten weeks later, on Tuesday, May 27, 1879, Jesse Hoover moved his family out of the Cottage and into their new two-story home, causing the editor of the Local Record to write, they are "now as snug as a bug in a rug." [19]

Nineteen months after he moved into the house, Jesse Hoover at 5 a.m., on December 13, 1880, died of rheumatism of the heart, complicated by gastritis. [20] Tragedy struck again on February 24, 1884. About midnight Huldah Hoover, a minister, was stricken with typhoid, complicated by pneumonia, and died at 10 a.m. [21] The three Hoover children—Theodore, Herbert, and Mary—went to live with relatives.

While they were alive, Jesse and Huldah Hoover insured their property with Springdale Mutual Fire Insurance Co. The first policy, written on June 2, 1879, insured the dwelling for \$250 and its contents for \$150. When this policy lapsed on December 13, 1883, it was renewed, with the dwelling again being insured for \$250 and the value of the contents boosted to \$200. [22]

3. The Witters and the House

Lawrie Tatum, as guardian of the Hoover children, sold the property on April 5, 1886, to David Witter. Immediately after acquiring title, Witter made some unspecified improvements. [23] Eighteen months later, in the autumn of 1887, he added a "monster new kitchen" to the east elevation of his house. The carpenters were Joe Branson and Hamilton Barnes. [24]

David Witter in the spring of 1888 rented his property and moved to Logan, Phillips County, Kansas. There in mid-July he suffered a heart attack from which he died on Sunday, July 29. [25]

The widow, known to West Branchers as Aunt Lib, continued to live in Kansas until the mid-1890s, renting her property at the northeast corner of Downey and Cedar streets. Like the Hoovers, she insured her real estate with Springdale Mutual. The first policy, written on December 18, 1889, insured the dwelling for \$400, its contents for \$100, and the barn for \$50. [26]

Upon her return to West Branch, Mrs. Witter lived in two rooms of the house and rented the remaining space. Among her renters were the parents of L. C. and C. A. Rummells. They lived at Aunt Lib's from about 1907 to 1910. [27]

Aunt Lib Witter died in her home on October 29, 1911, and her funeral services were held in the Friends Church on the 30th, with burial in the West Branch Cemetery. Out-of-town people in attendance at the funeral were her brother John J. Pickering and his wife of Vinton, a nephew Charles Christie and his wife of Iowa City, and nephews Frank Bell and Orval Pickering of Pekin. [28]

4. Dewey Linn & Glenn Brown Raze the House

The property, following Lib Witter's death, passed through a succession of owners before it was acquired by John Kelch, a retired farmer, in March 1919. Kelch erected a garage on the southeast corner of the lot and made plans to build a new house. Before these could be consummated, the man who had purchased his farm was unable to make the payments, and Kelch replevined the farm. This dashed his retirement plans, and he offered to sell the Second Hoover House and lot to Glenn Brown. But before any consideration changed hands, Kelch sold the property to Dewey Linn. [29]

In September 1923 it was reported in the local newspaper that Linn had purchased the Second Hoover House at the northeast corner of Downey and Cedar. Assisted by Glenn Brown, Linn was razing the house. In its place, he would build a bungalow. [30] Much of the lumber (window casings, studding, framing, rafters, etc.) was salvaged by Linn and Brown and used in construction of the new house. [31]

Construction of the new house was well along by mid-November, and readers of the West Branch Times learned that there would "soon be another attractive addition" on south Downey. [32] The house was closed in, but it was not ready for occupancy until early spring. It was the first week of May 1924 before Linn sold his new bungalow to Mrs. Alice Gongwer, with the new owner to have possession in the near future. [33]

Subsequent to the establishment of Herbert Hoover National Historic Site, the house built by Linn and Brown and now owned by Mrs. Kofoed, was moved. It is now owned by Kenny Larimer and located at 244 South Maple Street.

D. Reminiscences of the Second Hoover House

1. Tad Hoover's Recollections

The Second Hoover House, Tad recalled, had "five large red maples in front and a wild crab apple tree behind, where lived a 'katydid' who made the hot summer nights uncomfortably vibrunt."

The house was near the foot of Cook's Hill. It was a splendid hill for coasting, Tad recalled

and, as I remember it now, unbelievably long. Starting from the top near the entrance to the Chambers' place, one glided past Joseph Cook's orchard on the east side of the road, and then his house; then with a heart raising swoop along by . . . [P.T.] Smith's lot with the cottonwood trees; then on the west side past the Coombs' place, where lived George and Mamie Coombs; then on the east side again past . . . [P.T.] Smith's house where lived Addie and Eddie and Willie Smith; then past the entrance to the lane [Cedar Street], from which teams might suddenly emerge. . . ., then past our home, and out upon the flat embankment leading to the bridge by the little brown house [the Cottage]. [34]

2. Mattie Pemberton's Recollections

Aunt Mattie Pemberton recalled that the Second Hoover House had two rooms downstairs and a like number upstairs. The front door gave access to the kitchen-dining room, "the north room (parlor), and the stairway up stairs." There was a lounge in the southwest corner of the kitchen, with a picture of fruit above it. There was an oil cookstove, and Huldah frequently invited Mattie over on Saturdays to bake a cake. It was here that her brother Jesse "smoked mullen leaves on advise of [an] Iowa City dr. for throat trouble." Whenever Huldah had "neuralgia of the stomach," Aunt Mattie would stay with the children.

In the north room (the parlor) was a "ingrain carpet, a new lounge, lace curtains and a

whatnot and so forth." At Christmas, the Hoovers placed their Christmas tree in the room's northwest corner.

Jesse Hoover died in the upstairs north bedroom. Mrs. Pemberton recalled her brother telling their father that "he would like to go [to heaven] if he could take his wife and children with him." Little May was crying in her mother's arms.

Soon after Jesse's death, Aunt Mattie chanced to sleep one night in his bed. She could recall the heartache, as her brother had "always been so good to her." [35]

3. Mrs. Lou Henry Hoover Writes of the House

Mrs. Hoover, after discussing the Second House with her husband and Theodore and checking their recollections with Aunt Mattie Pemberton and Harriette Odell, wrote:

Its dining-room-and-kitchen was much the same as that in the little house, but now there was a "parlor" also. "Here . . . other pieces of furniture were added with pride, an ingrain carpet, a new lounge, lace curtains and a whatnot and so forth. The same wood stove [was] moved over, but now there was also a useful modern, little oil stove to help out." Later they got one of the new anthracite baseburners which had to be filled with coal only twice a day, so one could awaken in the morning with a warm fire still glowing behind its isingglass windows. There were two stories to this house, two bedrooms upstairs. [36]

4. L. C. Rummells' Recollections

L. C. Rummells lived in the Second Hoover House in the period 1907-10. His parents rented the north part of the house from "Aunt" Lib Witter, who was no relation. Mrs. Rummells was paid \$3.50 per week for taking care of Mrs. Witter, while the Rummells were charged six dollars rent on their one-half of the house.

Mr. Rummells, after checking with his Mother, reported that there were four downstairs rooms. The front door provided access to the downstairs of the "duplex" and to a steep stairway leading to the second floor. The downstairs apartments consisted of two rooms, with similar floor plans. Living rooms occupied the original section of the house, and kitchens the addition built for David Witter in 1888. The south kitchen (Mrs. Witter's) may have been larger than the Rummells', and had a door opening from its south elevation onto the back porch. There were brick chimneys at opposite ends of the house. Upstairs there was a north and south bedroom, entered by doors opening off a landing. There were no closets in the house.

South of Mrs. Witter's kitchen behind her living room, was a back porch. Between the back porch, and the south property line was a well and pump, from which was obtained the best "tasting and coldest water" in West Branch.

Under the north living room was a cellar, with a dirt floor and plastered walls. Access to the cellar was gained by a stairway opening directly below the stairs leading to the cellar. [37]

5. Glenn Brown's Recollections

Glenn Brown helped Dewey Linn raze the house in 1923. His recollections of the floor plans coincide, in general, with L. C. Rummells. The only difference pertains to the kitchens. In 1923, Brown stated, there was only one kitchen, and it was located in the addition at the rear of the house. Perhaps, after Mrs. Witter's death, a partition had been removed and the two small kitchens converted into one large one.

Brown, who has been a contractor and carpenter, estimated the length of the house at 28 feet and its width at 14 feet. The kitchen addition was about 12 x 14 feet, and the adjoining porch 8 x 10 feet. He located the well and cellar in the same positions as Mr. Rummells. He reported that Linn had covered the well with a block of concrete.

When Linn and Brown razed the building, they found that the house had double walls. To a height of about three feet above the flooring, the space between the walls was filled with soft brick, laid in mortar, to combat rats. There were laths on the inside of the 2 x 4 studs, with weatherboarding nailed to the outside of the studs. There was no sheathing above the sills. [38]

E. Photographs of the Second Hoover House

1. Photograph, Circa 1882

The subject photograph details the west and south elevations of the structure. The house is weatherboarded and the roof shingled. There is no front stoop, and there are two windows in the west elevation and a similar number in the south elevation. There are two brick chimneys—one at either end of the house. The lady in the yard is Huldah Hoover.

2. Photograph, Circa 1910

This photograph details the west elevation of the Second Hoover House. Except for the storm door, which has replaced the screen door, no changes have been made to this elevation in almost 30 years. The boys in the yard are the Rummells Brothers, L. C. and "Stub."

3. Photograph, Circa 1907

The subject photograph details the south elevation of the subject structure, and provides indistinct details of the east elevation and the kitchen built by David Witter in 1888. Aaron Eaton's trees and outbuildings obstruct the view and prevent the viewer from ascertaining much detail. The kitchen chimney and shed roof may be seen.

4. Photograph, Circa 1920

This photograph details the west and south elevations of the house. In the background can be seen the south elevation of the back porch, which with the kitchen, was built by David Witter. No changes have been made to the west and south elevations of the house in the years since it had been the Hoover's home. Copies of this photograph, as well as the other three, are in this report.

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HERBERT HOOVER

The Hoover Houses and Community Structures

Historic Structures Report



CHAPTER 4:

SECOND HOOVER HOUSE *(continued)*

III. OUTBUILDINGS AND GROUNDS

A. Fences

Fronting Downey and Cedar streets was a four-board fence, with cap on the top board. Entrance was gained to the front yard through a swinging picket gate. Both fence and gate were whitewashed.

The north and east sides of the lot, north of the outbuildings, were enclosed by a wire fence, with several boards at the bottom to keep out hogs and chickens. On the east side of the lot, behind the outbuildings, was a five-board fence. [39]

B. Walks

On the east side of Downey Street was a narrow boardwalk, the planks paralleling the street.

A walk, the boards laid parallel to the street, led from the sidewalk to the front door.

A second boardwalk, connecting with the front walk, and, passing south of the house, gave access to the well and privy. [40]

C. Trees

Tad Hoover recalled, "five large red maples in front" of the house and a "wild crab apple behind, where lived a 'katydid.'" [41]

According to Rose Wilder Lane, an early Hoover biographer, there was a row of six large maple trees in front of the house, paralleling Downey Street. [42]

The Circa 1882 Photograph shows two of the maples and one sapling, west of the house.

D. Vegetable Garden

Northeast of the house was the family garden, "where the snow humped over buried potatoe-vines and lay in a drift besides the grape-arbor." [43]

E. Flower Garden

As Mrs. Hoover loved flowers and was an ardent gardner, there were flowers in the front and side yards, adjacent to the house. There would be marigolds, snap-dragons, tiger-lilies, phlox, sweet williams, columbine, petunias, balsams, verbenas, dark red tulips, and portulacas, along with a tansy bed. [44]

F. Well

The well was between the walk leading to the privy and the south fence. L. C. Rummells and Glenn Brown, who were familiar with the well in the years 1907-1923, recalled that the water was cold and popular with the neighbors. [[45](#)]

G. Outbuildings

1. Barn

The Hoover barn, a frame two-story structure, was in the south east corner of the lot. In the barn, during inclement weather, they stabled their two horses and kept the family cow. The Circa 1907 Photograph shows the barn's south elevation. [[46](#)]

2. Privy

The Hoovers' frame privy was northwest of the barn. [[47](#)]

3. Shed or Chicken House

A shed or chicken house, with shed roof, was positioned north of the Hoover privy. By 1907 the shed had been relocated, and what in 1882 had been its north elevation was now its east elevation. [[48](#)]

4. Rain Barrels

There were several huge rain barrels behind the Second Hoover House, on which the children, standing on their tip toes, sailed folded paper boats. [[49](#)]

HERBERT HOOVER

The Hoover Houses and Community Structures Historic Structures Report



CHAPTER 5: WEST BRANCH BANDSTAND

I. ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

A. Name of Structure

The West Branch Bandstand. This structure stood during the years 1895-1912 in the southwest quadrant of the intersection of Main and Downey streets.

B. Proposed Use of Structure

After the Bandstand is reconstructed, management will encourage groups to use the structure for concerts. The Bandstand will become an effective and popular tool in the Park's interpretive program.

C. Justification for Reconstruction

Although the Bandstand was built in 1895, ten years after Herbert Hoover left West Branch to live with his uncle and aunt in Newburg, Oregon, it was intimately identified with his hometown for 17 years. The Saturday evening concerts by the Cornet Band and its successors were the most popular form of local entertainment for more than 60 years. Most midwestern towns, during this era, had bandstands. But with changes in the social and economic life of these communities, these structures have been demolished and the Saturday evening concerts abandoned.

If the Service is to restore the core-area of Herbert Hoover National Historic Site to the appearance of a typical midwestern village of the late nineteenth century, the Bandstand should be reconstructed. Photographs included in this report insure that the subject reconstruction will be authentic.

An effort should be made by management to secure permission from the City Council to reconstruct the Bandstand on its historic site. If this is impossible, the reconstructed Bandstand must be located on Park land adjacent to the point, where the Downey Street trace intersects Wetherell Street. This will place it in the same relative position as the historic structure, but one block farther south.

D. Provision for Operating Structure

The reconstructed Bandstand will constitute an exhibit in place and will be used for band concerts, as part of the Service's interpretive program.

E. Cooperative Agreement, if any Executed or Proposed for Operating Structure

An agreement with the city should be negotiated to permit reconstruction of the Bandstand on

its historic site. If this is impossible and the Bandstand is reconstructed on Park property, no cooperative agreement will be necessary.

F. Brief Description of Proposed Construction Activity

Utilizing the documentary materials, restoration architects will prepare plans and specifications for the reconstruction of the Bandstand. The Bandstand will then be reconstructed and the village pump positioned.

G. Estimate of Cost of Proposed Construction

\$5,000.

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HERBERT HOOVER

The Hoover Houses and Community Structures Historic Structures Report



CHAPTER 5:

WEST BRANCH BANDSTAND *(continued)*

II. HISTORICAL DATA

A. Significance

Although Herbert Hoover would have seen the Bandstand only once in his life, he was familiar with the Cornet Band and the town pump. The Bandstand and the Saturday night concerts were symbolic of the way of life in midwestern towns during the last third of the nineteenth century and for the first third of this century. The West Branch Bandstand, because of its unusual design, was intimately associated with Herbert Hoover's hometown.

B. Structural History

1. The Town Pump and the Cornet Band

West Branch from the early 1870s had a town well and pump, located in the southwest quadrant of the intersection of Main and Downey streets. Herbert Hoover and his playmates would have been familiar with the town pump. In the third week of May 1884, three months after the death of Huldah Hoover, the Town Council purchased from Gruwell & Sons a Gould & Astor force pump for the village well. [1] This well, it was pointed out, was "handy to all the business houses and the hitching racks." [2]

Hoover and his friends also loved the town band. In the early 1870s a community band had been organized. Known as the "Cornet Band," the men dressed in "elaborate uniforms, coats with gold braid and epaulettes, and nifty caps with brilliant feather plumes." The band played for weddings, picnics, and occasionally for funerals. [3]

2. The Construction of the Bandstand

To W. W. Gruwell, editor of the West Branch Local Record, belongs credit for initiating the proposal to construct a bandstand at the town well. On July 28, 1887, he wrote:

Wonder if the Town Council could be persuaded to build an awning over the street well and fix up a platform . . . large enough to hold the town band; it would make a nice cool shade for the pump, and the band would serenade the town every Saturday evening free gratis. [4]

No action was taken to implement Editor Gruwell's suggestion until the summer of 1889, when a number of citizens decided that West Branch needed a community bandstand. A petition was circulated and presented to the Town Council on August 5, requesting an appropriation "to build a bandstand over the town well." Councilman J. W. Witter's motion to grant the petition was defeated by a vote of four to one. [5]

This vote prevented construction of a community bandstand until the summer of 1895. Meanwhile steps had been taken in the spring of 1892 to rehabilitate the town well. At that time an investigation showed 15 feet of water standing in the well, and the Gould & Astor pump out of order. To relieve this situation, the depth of the well was increased from 17 to 27 feet. It was then walled by brick, laid in concrete mortar, and covered with a double-plank platform, eight-foot square. A new iron force pump was installed. The total cost of these improvements was \$70. [6]

In the late spring or summer of 1895, the Town Council reversed itself and voted funds for construction of a Bandstand at the town well. Unfortunately, the Minute Books of the Town Council for this period are missing, so it is impossible to document the proceedings that led to authorization to begin construction and the expenses involved.

The Bandstand was completed in mid-August 1895, and the Cornet Band gave its first concert from it on the 17th. Members of the band told the editor of the West Branch Times that they liked the structure. [7]

3. Band Concerts, 1908-11

In January 1908 the West Branch Band was reorganized, and practice sessions commenced under the direction of George W. McLarand. The bandmaster was beginning his second year, and the citizens agreed that there had been a marked improvement in the performance of the band in 1907 over the previous year. Hopes were high that the band would continue to improve, and the town during the coming season would have a first class band. After a few more practices, the band planned to give a concert, the proceeds to be used to defray their expenses. [8]

There were a number of unforeseen difficulties, however, and it was Saturday evening, June 6, before the band gave its opening concert of the season. A large crowd was on hand, and all agreed that it was "an extra good program." [9] Throughout the summer, on Saturday nights, the concerts continued before enthusiastic audiences.

In 1909 there was a new bandmaster—J. A. Heacock. The summer's first concert was on Saturday night, June 19, and it drew a large crowd, "who expressed themselves as well pleased with the music." The boys, as yet, had not had much practice, but they believed they would soon regain their "old-time proficiency." [10]

The Saturday evening concert on July 10 was unusually well attended—the largest crowd of the season. Main and Downey streets were jammed with teams and horseless carriages, while the benches provided by the merchants were filled, and many in the audience had to stand. [11]

In 1910 the Bandstand was in use every Saturday evening during the summer, but by early spring of 1911 it seemed for several weeks that interest in the Cornet Band had lagged, and there might be no summer concerts. A plea for funds was made in late April, and enough money pledged to assure the bandsmen of the wherewithal to meet their expenses for uniforms and to pay a bandmaster. The editor of the West Branch Times therefore informed his readers on May 11 that the "usual Saturday evening concerts will be resumed to the satisfaction of the people who enjoy an evening of music at least once a week." [12]

The year's first concert was on Saturday evening, May 20. Among the numbers played were "Alamosa," a quickstep; "Mountain Echo," a waltz; "Lillie," a polka; "Glen Rose," a waltz; "Ladies' Band," an overture; "Silverton," a quickstep; "The Queen," a serenade; "Third Battalion," a march; "White Rose," a three-step; and "Castle Rock," a quickstep. [13]

With more and more cars being purchased by Springdale Township residents, the concerts drew record crowds. The concert on the evening of June 11 was especially successful. The business district was jammed with people. There were 28 automobiles "curbed at one time and all available hitching room . . . occupied." Many of the listeners sat in their rigs throughout the concert. When he described the activities in a column of the West Branch Times, the editor observed, "These Saturday evening gatherings have a social value seldom attributed to them. Much praise is due the band boys who are improving rapidly." [14]

The Saturday evening concerts were equally popular with the West Branch merchants. Their stores remained open several hours after the band had ceased playing, and with many farm families in town they were busy waiting on customers. [15]

4. The Removal of the Bandstand

On June 1, 1912, the Cornet Band entered on a new season, its last in the handsome Bandstand. The merchants, realizing that the concerts were a magnet which pulled large crowds into town on summer Saturday nights, had agreed to underwrite the expenses of the band. A new bandmaster, E. E. McElhinney of the 53d Regimental Band of Cedar Rapids, was employed to "instruct the boys and we hope in time to have a band that all should be proud of." McElhinney had held several practices, and the bandsmen were working hard.

Editor Frank Corbin of the West Branch Times asked his subscribers to "help the boys by speaking a good word or giving a little money." They should become band boosters, not knockers. [16]

Before the last day of June 1912, the Bandstand was no more. The decision by the Town Council to remove the structure was triggered by traffic congestion at the intersection caused by the increased popularity of automobiles. In addition, a runaway had raised fears for the structure's stability. At one of the concerts, an automobile had backfired causing a team hitched to a buggy on Oliphant Street to stampede. Turning east into Main Street, the team and buggy thundered toward the Bandstand. Pedestrians scattered as the band played on. The runaway entered the intersection, and as the buggy careened past the Bandstand, the right rear wheel struck the northwest support post. The wheel was torn off, and the Bandstand trembled. For a few anxious moments, it seemed to the bandsmen and onlookers that the structure was about to collapse. The stand soon ceased teetering; the team and battered buggy were corraled near the depot; and the crisis had passed. Many of the younger boys in the crowd now made sport of the bandsmen's momentary fright. [17]

When the Bandstand was taken down, Dr. Milo W. Munger purchased the structure, had it moved, and, after the legs were cut off, the upper portion was positioned in his back yard and used as a gazebo. Time and weather took its toll, and the gazebo-bandstand was eventually dismantled. [18]

Following the removal of the Bandstand and the town pump, the Town Council raised the town automobile speed limit from 10 to 15 miles per hour. In commenting on these changes, Editor Corbin wrote, "any autoist caught turning a corner without tooting his horn will be punished by being slapped on the wrist." With the Bandstand gone and the town well filled up, it was pointed out that the many West Branchers currently living in California, and, recalling the "cool, refreshing drinks they used to get from the well," could "content themselves with the thought that the town boasts a sanitary drinking fountain that can quench their thirst." [19]

Apparently, the street commissioner did not effectively fill in the well. On Monday, July 21, 1913, Port Scellers' big Port Huron traction engine, as it chugged up Downey Street, broke through into the old well. The huge engine passed on without getting stuck in the cave-in, but

it left an immense hole which had to be filled.

Editor Corbin, on reporting the incident, criticised, "such a place as an old well should be covered over with a cement arch that would never give way, especially when located in a street." [20]

The removal of the Bandstand did not end the Saturday evening concerts by the Cornet Band. A mobile bandstand was built. Hereafter whenever a concert was scheduled, it was positioned near the intersection of Main and Downey streets. After the concert, the chairs were removed from the stand, and it was towed back to the shed, where it was stored when not in use.

The community concerts, on Saturday summer evenings, were continued, except when suspended for World Wars I and II, until the 1950s. They were then abandoned because the local people no longer turned out in large numbers, preferring to stay at home and watch television or go to drive-in movies. [21]

C. Photographs of the Bandstand

Because of its popularity, the Bandstand was much photographed. These photographs document its appearance. A number of these photographs are in this report.

1. Circa 1909 Photograph of West Elevation

This photograph, made in the spring, provides construction details of the wainscoting, red cedar foundation posts, 8 x 8 support posts, brackets, and shingles. The viewer's attention is called to the iron force pump, well, and wooden platform.

2. Circa 1910 Photograph of East Elevation

The subject photograph provides construction details of the wainscoting, red cedar foundation posts, 8 x 8 support posts, brackets, shingles, and flagstaff. In addition to the iron force pump, well, and wooden platform, is the tin drinking cup.

3. Circa 1900 Photograph of East and South Elevations

The subject photograph provides construction details of the wainscoting, red cedar foundation posts, 8 x 8 support posts, brackets, shingles, and flagstaff. This photograph was made in the winter after a snow storm.

4. Circa 1908 Photograph of North Elevation

This photograph documents the flagstaff, well platform, and color scheme.

D. Recollections of Details not Shown in Historic Photographs

Glenn Brown recalls that the foundation of the Bandstand was four red cedar posts buried in the ground. The 8 x 8s supporting the stand were bolted to the cedar posts.

Members of the band gained access to the stand by a ladder and trapdoor. The ladder was hinged, and when not in use was folded against the trapdoor in the floor of the stand.

The bench on which members of the band sat was a 1 x 12.

Brown recalls that the Bandstand was painted cream, with a dark green trim, and that a United States flag may have flown on special occasions from the flagstaff. [22]

Mrs. Golda Gruwell recalled that the Bandstand was painted yellow and trimmed in green.
[23]

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HERBERT HOOVER

The Hoover Houses and Community Structures Historic Structures Report



CHAPTER 6: DOWNEY STREET BRIDGES

I. ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

A. Name and Number of Structures

The Downey Street Bridges. A succession of structures carried vehicular and pedestrian traffic across the West Branch of the Wapsinonoc from the 1860s until 1937.

B. Proposed Use of Structures

It is proposed to reconstruct two period bridges across the West Branch of the Wapsinonoc. One will be for pedestrians and the other for vehicles.

C. Justification for Such Use as Shown on the Master Plan

The Perkins & Will Master Plan proposes to restore the core area of Herbert Hoover National Historic Site to the appearance of a typical eastern Iowa village of the 1880s. The present concrete bridge on south Downey Street was built in 1916-17, and is out of character with the scene the Service proposes to recreate.

D. Provision for Operating Structures

The reconstructed bridges will constitute part of the historic scene and will be used by visitors and park maintenance vehicles in crossing the Wapsinonoc.

E. Cooperative Agreement, if any Executed or Proposed for Operating Structures

No cooperative agreement is anticipated.

F. Brief Description of Proposed Construction Activity

Before the restoration architects prepare their working drawings for reconstruction of the two bridges, the Park staff must supply the Service Center with a plat of the position of the pilings of the historic bridges. These pilings are still visible.

In preparing the specifications and drawings, the restoration architects should examine two extant West Branch bridges. One of these, still in use, carries College Street across the Wapsinonoc and the other, no longer in use, is located east of the railroad and south of Water Street.

After drawings and specifications have been prepared and the concrete bridge removed, the south Downey Street bridges will be reconstructed.

G. Estimate of Cost of Proposed Construction

\$15,000.

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CHAPTER 6:

DOWNEY STREET BRIDGES *(continued)*

II. HISTORICAL DATA

A. Significance

The south Downey Street bridges were an important part of the historic scene and very familiar to the Jesse Hoover family and their contemporaries. In 1911 Tad Hoover wrote of the Wapsinonoc, "flowing a short distance away [from the Birthplace Cottage] under the wooden bridge with a separate foot bridge alongside." [1]

B. Structural History of the Bridges

1. The Vehicular Bridge

In the period between 1875 and 1917 there was a succession of vehicular bridges carrying south Downey Street across the Wapsinonoc. In March 1875 the citizens of West Branch petitioned the Cedar County Board of Supervisors to build "a bridge on Downey Street, near Jesse Hoover's blacksmith shop." [2]

A wooden bridge was accordingly built by the county. It can be seen in the photograph of West Branch, taken by I. L. Miles, from Cook's Hill in the autumn of 1878. [3] This bridge was still in use in September 1885, but it was being poorly maintained by the county. At a meeting of the West Branch Town Council on September 7, 1885, Street Commissioner J. D. Johnson reported that the south Downey Street wagon bridge was unsafe. Although upkeep of the bridge was a county responsibility, the council directed Johnson to procure material and labor for repair of the bridge, provided the total expenses did not exceed \$15. There was more work than anticipated, and it cost the town \$35.28 to repair the bridge. [4]

Six years later, in June 1891, the county rebuilt its bridge on south Downey Street. [5] In the late winter of 1886, the Town Council had placed a street lamp at the south Downey Street bridge. [6]

In mid-October 1916 the County Board of Supervisors sent a crew into Springdale Township to replace the county bridge on south Downey Street. In 1912, with establishment of a State Highway Commission, funds were now being allotted by the state to enable the counties to replace with concrete the wooden bridges on county roads. These concrete bridges, unlike the wooden bridges, were built in accordance with plans and specifications. Plans for the south Downey concrete bridge are on file in the office of the County Engineer in Tipton, Iowa.

The construction people were on-site on October 19 and began unloading their equipment. Sand and pilings had been on the ground for several weeks. [7] Winter came early in the fall of 1916, and the workmen were unable to pour any concrete before the temperature dropped

below freezing. On March 15, 1917, the editor of the West Branch Times informed his readers that "the workmen have been busy this week taking down the forms for the new bridge on south Downey." [8]

Before the month was over, the new bridge was opened to vehicular traffic. The wooden sidewalk bridge, east of the new concrete structure, continued to be used by pedestrians.

2. The Footbridge

The wooden footbridge, which carried the boardwalk across the Wapsinonoc, was replaced in late September 1886. This proved to the editor of the Local Record that our town "is not dead yet, at least the street commissioner." [9]

Flash floods on the Wapsinonoc were always a threat to the footbridge and to the property of those living nearby. On the evening of July 10, 1907, a cloudburst drenched the area north west of West Branch. Within a short time both branches of the Wapsinonoc were spilling over their banks. A number of houses and outbuildings on the "lower flat" were soon surrounded by water. Boardwalks were afloat, and there was a "wild scurrying after chickens, and as the stream continued to rise it became a grave question for the safety of some of the residents." Old timers feared a repetition of the flood of 1876, when a number of West Branchers had been compelled to flee their homes to escape the torrent. But just as the situation was beginning to look very bleak, the Wapsinonoc crested and began to fall rapidly.

When the inhabitants cleaned up after the flood, little damage was reported beyond the displacement of the boardwalks on either side of the Downey Street footbridge and the drowning of a few chickens. [10]

A cloudburst on Sunday night, May 10, 1914, sent the Wapsinonoc spilling over its banks. The flats on either side of Downey Street were flooded. Mrs. Scellers' chicken house was engulfed, and she lost seven setting hens, two old hens, and 19 chicks. The foot bridge on the east side of Downey Street was swept away and considerable damage done to fences and the few remaining boardwalks. [11]

The footbridge was rebuilt, but it was again washed away by a deluge which drenched Springdale Township on Wednesday, September 8, 1915. Early that morning there was a four-inch rain, causing the Wapsinonoc to run bank-full. The sky cleared and the sun came out, drying the roads. About 1:30 p.m. it again clouded up, and by 2 o'clock the rain was beating down. The creek began to rise, and by 4 p.m. the water was over the walks on south Downey, east Main, and 2d streets. The footbridge on south Downey was washed out, and school children living south and east of West Branch had to be driven to their homes in wagons.

Water covered the walks at the city hail and was within two or three inches of the cement bins at the Cedar County Lumber Company, and swept across the floor of Frazee's store to a depth of four inches. About 500 feet of railroad track was washed out near the depot, and until a crew could effect repairs all northbound rail traffic was stopped. [12]

In the week following the record flood, the Downey Street foot bridge was rebuilt by a crew headed by the Street Commissioner.

The footbridge continued in use until July 4, 1937, when it was closed and dismantled. Pedestrian traffic was diverted to the concrete bridge which had carried Downey Street across the Wapsinonoc since 1917. Since then and for many years before, pedestrians had "walked the more or less shaky wooden bridge," and after each cloud burst the piers "were loosened a bit and the structure grew a bit more wobbly."

Mayor T. A. Moore had told Editor Corbin that when the concrete bridge was built, he had been serving as councilman, and, with others on the council, had insisted that the county build the bridge wide enough for sidewalks. The County Board of Supervisors had countered that this would make the concrete bridge too expensive. To obtain the extra funding, the cooperation of the Town Council and adjoining property owners was secured, and the bridge built with raised walkways on each side.

Approaches from the adjoining sidewalks were not built, and for the next 20 years pedestrians continued to use the footbridge. Finally, however, this deficiency had been rectified, and the necessary connecting concrete sidewalks poured. [13]

C. Recollections of the Bridges

1. The Vehicular Bridge

Mrs. Golda Gruwell recalls that the floor of the bridge was of heavy plank. The trusses were of steel. At the bottom of each truss, attached to the roadway, was a heavy plank, positioned "to keep the runaway teams from going through the railing into the creek, on their mad rush to go places."

The trusses were "painted dark red (like old blacksmith shops) not barn red." [14]

Glenn Brown and Ross Sayles reported that the pilings, the ends of which are still visible, supported the roadway (2 x 6 sleepers secured to heavy stringers). On either side of the roadway were built-up steel trusses. Two hanging rods connected each truss with the flooring. [15]

The bridge recalled by Mrs. Gruwell, Glenn Brown, and Ross Sayles is the 1891-1917 structure, while the bridge on this site in the years 1875-1891 had wooden, not steel, trusses. The wooden trusses were similar to those found on the College Street bridge.

2. The Footbridge

Mrs. Gruwell recalls that the footbridge was located 15 to 20 feet east of the vehicular bridge. It was built of wood and was the same width as the boardwalk. The railings were 2 x 4s, with trusses and posts of similar dimensions. The bridge was not painted. [16]

Glenn Brown stated that the footbridge was downstream from the vehicular bridge. On August 26, 1970, he was able to pinpoint the site. The walkway consisted of 2 x 6s spiked to three 3 x 12 stringers. The railings were 2 x 4s with 1 x 6 caps. Ross Sayles' recollections of the footbridge were similar to Brown's. He recalled that it was about 15 feet east of the concrete highway bridge. [17]

D. Photograph of the Footbridge

A photograph, taken while the Wapsinonoc was at flood stage, shows the south approach to the subject bridge, and provides structural detail of the railings and support posts. A copy of this photograph is in this report.

HERBERT HOOVER

The Hoover Houses and Community Structures

Historic Structures Report



APPENDIX A:

The Rowlen Boys In The Spanish-American War

The oldest Rowlen boy, Benjamin W., was born in Barnesville, Ohio, June 23, 1870, and his younger brother, Clarence E. (called Ed), was born on March 23, 1872. Ben had moved to Iowa with his parents in 1876, and was educated in the West Branch schools. He took a course in the Iowa City business college, but soon dropped out and entered the building trade as a plasterer. On March 2, 1896, Ben Rowlen traveled to Des Moines, where he enlisted in Troop C, 1st United States Cavalry. Fifteen months later, Private Rowlen transferred to Company F, 4th U.S. Infantry.

Meanwhile, Ed Rowlen, a West Branch teamster, had gone to Chicago, where on March 31, 1897, at Camp Sheridan, he enlisted as a private in Battery A, 2d U.S. Light Artillery.

In April 1898 the United States declared war on Spain, and the units to which the Rowlen boys were assigned were soon en route to Tampa, Florida, a port of embarkation. It was rumored in West Branch that Ed had been seen sneaking about the town after dark, and that his parents were harboring a deserter. To squelch these stories, Ed on June 9 wrote the editor of the West Branch Times, pointing out that he had not been in West Branch since his hasty departure in March 1897. If any one doubted this statement, they should write his battery commander, Capt. G. S. Grimes. [1]

With her husband en route to Cuba, Ben Rowlen's wife visited her West Branch in-laws. On Thursday evening, June 23, Mr. and Mrs Frank Rowlen entertained their daughter-in-law, members of the West Branch band, and other associates of their eldest son at an ice cream social at their home. [2] Two days later, Mrs. Ben Rowlen returned to Chicago. Though a stranger when she detrained in West Branch, by the end of her three-week visit she had made many friends and was "much pleased with her visit and thought West Branch a good place to live." [3]

The invasion convoy sailed from Port Tampa on June 13, 1898, and hove to off Daiquiri, 40 miles east of Santiago-de-Cuba. After the fleet had shelled the area, the troops prepared to disembark. Pvt. Ed Rowlen reported:

We could not get close enough to the dock to unload the ships so we had to push the horses overboard into the ocean and swim them ashore. Then the barges were towed alongside the ship and the cannon, forge, and provisions were loaded on and towed to the dock, where they were packed off, where we could get at them.

On going ashore, Battery A camped near a coconut grove. Private Rowlen informed the West Branchers, in a letter written on June 25, that because of crowded conditions aboard ship there had been much suffering. All the men in the battery had survived but several horses had died. The sight of Cuban soldiers, many of whom were half-starved, was a sobering experience. They lived on nothing but fruit, and hung around the regulars' camp, trying to

swap fruit forhardtack. Their uniforms were nondiscript and most of them were barefoot. [4]

The next letter to arrive from Cuba and appear in the West Branch Times was from Pvt. Ben Rowlen. He reported that his unit, the 4th U.S. Infantry, had been in "some hot places" and had lost heavily. He was unable to "imagine, and never will know how I escaped, my neck is sore yet [from] dodging Spanish bullets, which came fast and thick." During the July 2 attack on San Juan Hill, his regiment had advanced to within 1,000 yards of the blockhouse. It was his opinion that the attack would have been repulsed "had it not been for our artillery," which hammered down the fortifications and caused the foe to panic.

He had seen his brother only once since they had landed in Cuba, and that was after the battle of San Juan Hill. Battery A had seen heavy action and had suffered a number of casualties. Ben had accompanied his brother back to the battery's camp, where they cooked their rations. While en route, they had crossed ground where 15 American soldiers had been killed and 60 wounded. Eight of the bodies were laid out in a row, ready for burial.

Ben Rowlen found Cuba a delightful country, which "beats Florida all over." The temperature was about the same; there was "plenty of good water and shade;" and few men on sick call. [5]

The war soon ended with Spain asking for peace. Peace came none too soon, because malaria and yellow fever had made their appearance in the camps of the American army. Battery A, 2d U.S. Light Artillery left Cuba on August 23, 1898, for Camp Wikoff, New York, where it reported on September 20. On October 20 Pvt. Ed Rowlen was hospitalized with malaria, but he returned to duty on the 24th.

Meanwhile, the 4th U.S. Infantry had been evacuated from Cuba and returned to the United States, going into camp at Montauk Point, Long Island. There Pvt. Ben Rowlen was stricken with fever. To speed his recuperation, Private Rowlen was given a 30-day furlough in the first week of September, and traveled to West Branch in a "very weak condition." He was "unable to walk from the depot to his parents' home on Orange Street." When the West Branch Times went to press on September 22, the editor reported that Private Rowlen "even with the best of care and medicine . . . has failed to improve. The malerial trouble has developed into a regular course of typhoid fever, from which he is now lying in a critical condition." [6]

By the end of October, Ben Rowlen was recovering and Ed was also home on furlough. On the 31st members of the local G.A.R. post and the West Branch band marched out to the Rowlen home, "to honor the brave boys who so nobly did their part at Santiago, and who are still in the service of their country." After being serenaded by the band, the Rowlen boys were presented with gifts as tokens of friendship from "their old associates and those who have watched with interest their gallant and obedient response to the call in defense of human liberty." Ben's gift was a "finely mounted cane" and Ed's a gold pin. [7]

Shortly thereafter, the Rowlen boys returned to duty, Ben reporting in at Camp Sheridan, where he was honorably discharged on January 5, 1899, and Ed to his unit at Huntsville, Alabama. On January 17, 1899, Battery A returned to Cuba, going into camp at Camp Columbia. In April, Ed was stricken with typhoid fever and died in the hospital at Columbia on May 12. [8]

Mrs. Rowlen, in applying for a Mother's Pension on the death of her son, reported that her husband's annual income was only \$225. Real estate in her possession consisted of a house and lot in West Branch valued at \$1,000. Up-keep on the house and taxes totaled \$25 annually. [9]

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HERBERT HOOVER

The Hoover Houses and Community Structures Historic Structures Report



APPENDIX B:

Additional Data on Houses Covered in Historic Structures Report—Buildings in the Core-Area, Herbert Hoover National Historic Site

A time factor prevented a week-to-week examination of back issues of the West Branch Times for 1901-09, 1911-15, 1917-19, 1923-1970, in fiscal year 1971, the year in which RSP HEHO-H-1, Historic Structures Report, Buildings in the Core-Area, was programmed. In preparation of Historic Structure Report, Hoover Cottage and Related Historic Structures, the West Branch Times for 1901-1970 was examined. Structural data pertaining to houses studied in the Core-Area report was extracted and is herewith presented.

I. Hannah Varney (Effie Smith) House

Miss Golda Branson, who had been librarian at the Enlow Library, on April 19, 1911, was married by the Rev. E. A. Lang to Harry C. Gruwell. The wedding took place at 6 o'clock at the home of the bride's mother, before "a small company of near relatives and friends." Immediately after the ceremony, the newlyweds left for their new home on south Downey, "which they had already furnished ready to begin housekeeping in the good old fashioned way." The couple had rented the Varney House from Elwood Tatum. [1]

II. Amanda Garvin (Minnie Siler) House

Lafe Randall and his family moved their household effects out of the Garvin House and to Iowa City on Monday, September 6, 1909. Their many friends hated to see the Randalls leave, and trusted that they would be happy in Johnson County. [2]

Harry and Golda Gruwell, having purchased the Garvin Cottage from Emma Randall, moved their household effects to their new home from the Varney House on Tuesday, September 3, 1912. [3] During the following week, Gruwell added "a cement floor to the porch on the south side of his residence . . . and otherwise improved the premisses." [4]

III. Charles E. Smith (Phelps) House

On Tuesday, December 24, 1907, there was a wedding at the Charles Smith home on south Downey. The principals were Miss Carrie Smith and Dr. Milo W. Munger. At 4 p.m. Miss Mabel Hathaway began playing the wedding march on the Smiths' piano. This was the signal for the wedding party to descend the stairs and enter the parlor. Miss Carrie Smith was accompanied by her maid-of-honor Miss Ocean Doch and Dr. Munger was escorted by Dr. James Irwin of Bright, Iowa.

While 30 relatives and guests watched, the Rev. Laura Townsend joined the young couple in holy wedlock. After the ceremony, the parents of the bride entertained at a three-course

luncheon. The bride and groom left on the evening train for a short honeymoon in Nebraska. When they returned on January 15, 1908, they moved into their 5th Street home. [5]

Charles Smith, in the spring, habitually made maple syrup. The editor of the West Branch Times reported on March 13, 1913, that Smith had tapped his five maples and had drawn off several gallons of golden syrup. [6]

IV. James Staples (Endsley) House

Mrs. A. M. Bremner advertised on July 9, 1908, in the West Branch Times, that she wished to sell or rent her property on the southwest corner of Poplar and Wetherell. [7] Four months passed before Mrs. Bremner found a renter. On October 31 she rented her property to James Clempson and his wife, newcomers to West Branch from Ohio. The Clempsons told Mrs. Bremner that if they liked West Branch, they would purchase the property. Satisfied with the transaction, Mrs. Bremner, accompanied by her granddaughter (Inez Wilson), moved to Manchester in mid-November. [8]

The winter of 1908-09 was especially severe, and the Clempsons decided to return to their old home near Alliance, Ohio. On April 8, 1909, they moved out of the Staples House, loaded their household effects aboard a railroad car, and caught the train for Alliance the next day. [9]

In December 1911 O. C. Pennock announced that he had purchased the Staples House from the Bailey estate, and that his son, Adelbert, would move into the dwelling on March 1, 1912. [10] The date on which Bert Pennock occupied the house was postponed until May, when it was decided to build an ell on the north elevation. Editor Corbin, in writing of this development, observed, Bert Pennock "is remodeling the house in such a manner that when completed it will certainly be a modern home." [11] After moving into his new home, Pennock graded and leveled the lawn. [12] In May 1913 Pennock built a concrete sidewalk in front of his Poplar Street property. [13]

V. Hayhurst (Davis) House

Martin Van Buren Butler, in the late winter of 1906-07, had local carpenters built an ell on the south side of his home. The ell added "much to the conveyance" of the Butler house. [14] Five years later, in the summer of 1912, Van Butler converted one of his front rooms into a shoe repair shop, and advertised that he would repair a person's shoes while he waited. [15]

In the spring of 1915 Butler had a new roof put on his Poplar Street residence. [16]

VI. Mackey (Marie Allen) House

In the last week of March 1914, A. C. Hunter hired Sherman Eves and his carpenters to add a bay window to the south elevation of his wife's house. The contractor at the same time put "in larger windows throughout the structure and made other improvements." [17] Hunter during the summer added a concrete-block porch to the cottage. [18]

VII. McClellan House

On Saturday morning, February 16, 1924, Mrs. Mattie Stuart, as was her practice, bent over to light her oil stove. The match head snapped off, stuck in her gown, and within moments she was engulfed in a sheet of flames. She extinguished the flames, but she suffered third-degree burns of the neck, face, and right hand. The West Branch Volunteer Fire Department responded to Mrs. Stuart's call for help, and she was given medical attention.

Although she suffered severely from her burns, Dr. Leech believed that she would recover. On Thursday, the 21st, Mrs. Stuart suffered a relapse, and she died on Saturday morning. The funeral was held on Sunday at the Friends Church. [[19](#)]

VIII. P. T. Smith House

On Sunday, March 12, 1881, sparks from the chimney of the P. T. Smith house caused the roof to catch fire. In response to the alarm, a bucket brigade was formed, and the fire extinguished before much damage was done. A large crowd, which undoubtedly included the Hoover children, watched as the bucket brigade successfully battled the blaze. [[20](#)]

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HERBERT HOOVER

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APPENDIX C:

Notes on Boardwalks, Sidewalks, and Streets in the Core-Area

I. Boardwalks and Sidewalks

In the autumn of 1884 new board sidewalks were put down on south Downey Street, as required by a city ordinance. On October 23 the editor of the Local Record informed his subscribers that the new sidewalks on south Downey are almost complete, and if we "could prevail on some of the property owners along the line to build new fences it would correspond better." [1] Before the end of the year, the editor reported that the Downey Street walks had been straightened and "new plank put down nearly the entire length." About one mile of the subject street was "now supplied with sidewalk and more than one-half the distance on both sides." Most of the planking as specified by town ordinances, was two-inch, laid "crosswise." [2]

According to the ordinance, the walk on the east side of Downey, between Main Street and the Wapsinonoc, was to be four feet wide. South of the creek it was to have a width of three feet. The cross pieces were to be two-inch plank, laid on three stringers. The stringers to be 2 x 4s, while the cross pieces were to be securely spiked to the stringers. [3]

In the autumn of 1891, Dr. Joseph Baker built a new board sidewalk on the west side of Downey Street, extending from Wetherell to Penn street. [4]

The Street Commissioner in the summer of 1901 saw that the boardwalks on south Downey were rehabilitated. Reporting this development, the editor of the West Branch Times observed, "The long string of new sidewalks put on line and grade gives that part of town a neat and substantial appearance." [5]

In the autumn of 1908, the boardwalks on south Downey Street were replaced with cement sidewalks. These walks, the editor of the West Branch Times informed his readers, "will add much to the appearance and convenience of this street." [6]

II. Streets

Penn Street in the summer of 1912 was widened. [7]

The Town Council ordered on May 8, 1924, that certain city streets be oiled, and "the entire cost thereof, except the cost of oiling the intersections," be assessed against the property owners "abutting upon such streets in proportion to the benefit conferred thereby." Among the streets to be oiled were: (a) Downey Street from the north and south corporation lines; (b) Poplar Street between Main and Penn streets; and (c) Penn Street between Downey and Poplar streets. [8]

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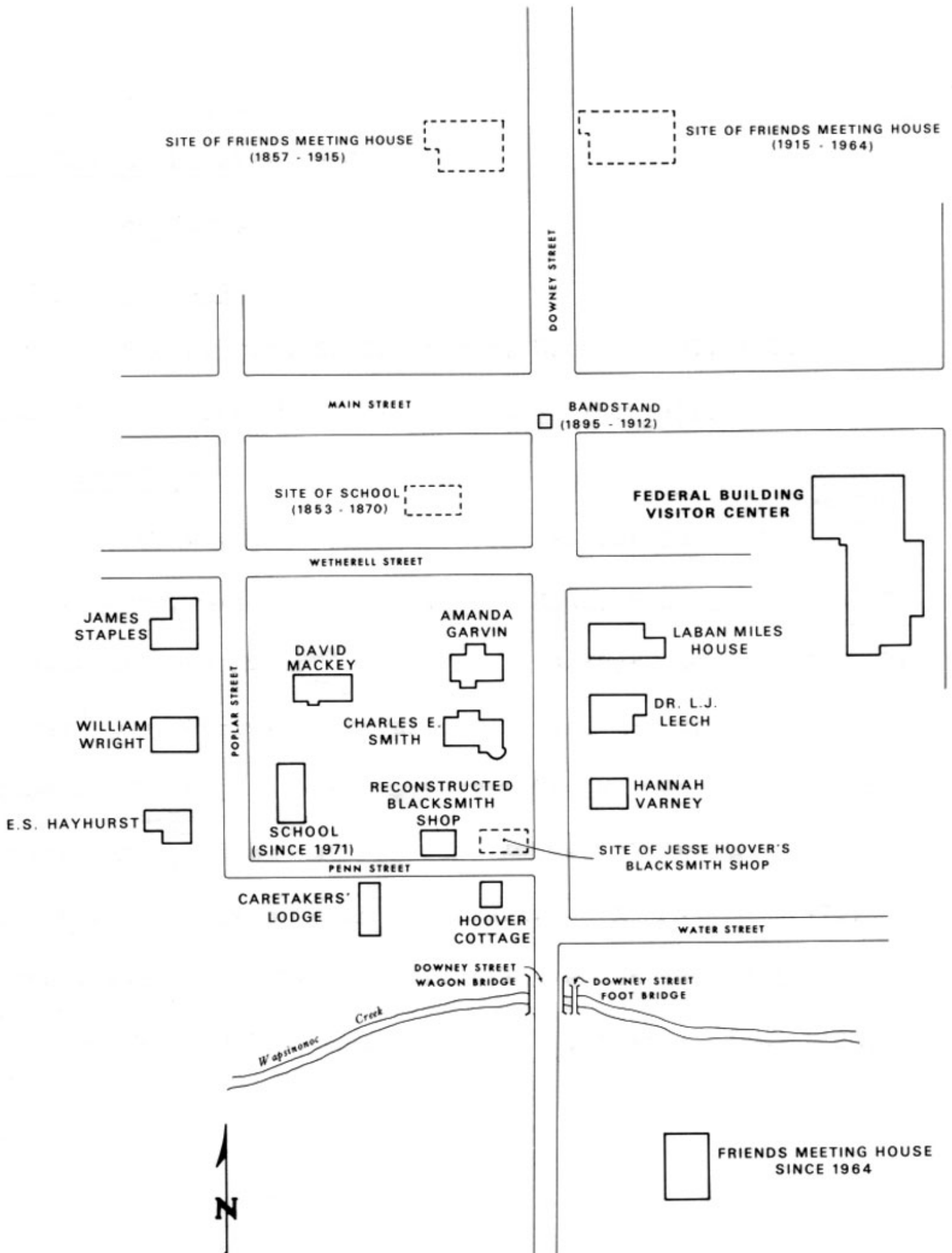


PLATE I

**LOCATION OF HISTORIC STRUCTURES
HERBERT HOOVER NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE**

NOTE: BUILDINGS SCHEMATIC

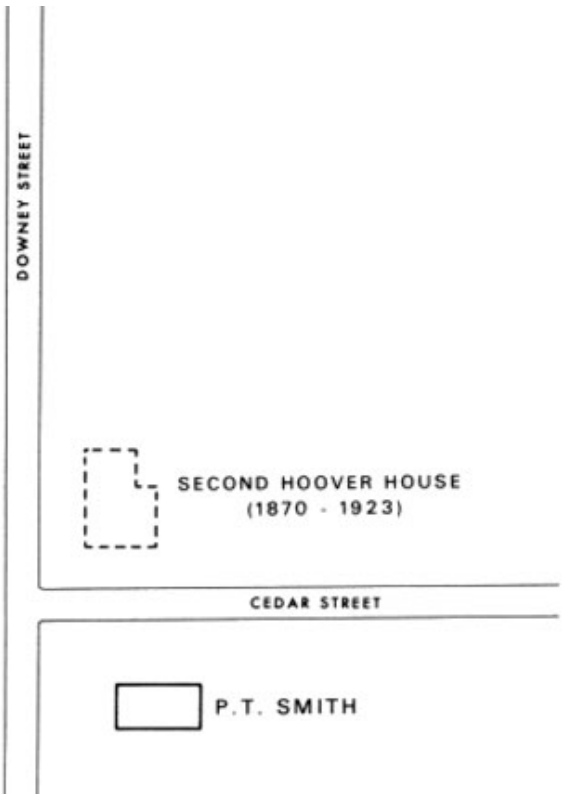
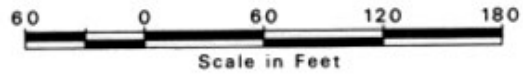




PLATE II

The Miles 1878 Panoramic View
Branch from Cook's Hill. The so-
tion of Jesse Hoover's Cottage c



Birthplace of
Herbert Hoover

West Branch, Iowa
He was born in 1874

*Painted under the
auspices of*

*Historical,
Memorial and Art
Department
of Iowa, 1928*

*From the original
structure and from the
joint recollection of
Mr. Hoover's neighbors
and relatives.*

*Painted at
West Branch, Iowa
by Allen Fairbank*



Copyright by Allen Fairbank



PLATE V
The W. L. Morgan Painting of the
Neover Cottage and Jesse Hoover's Black



PLATE VI
Grant Wood's Painting, "The Birth-
place of Herbert Hoover." Note the Hoover
House and the Donkey



PLATE VII

Herbert Hoover returns to West
and the Birthplace Cottage, on August
1932 as seen by his Midwestern Campaign



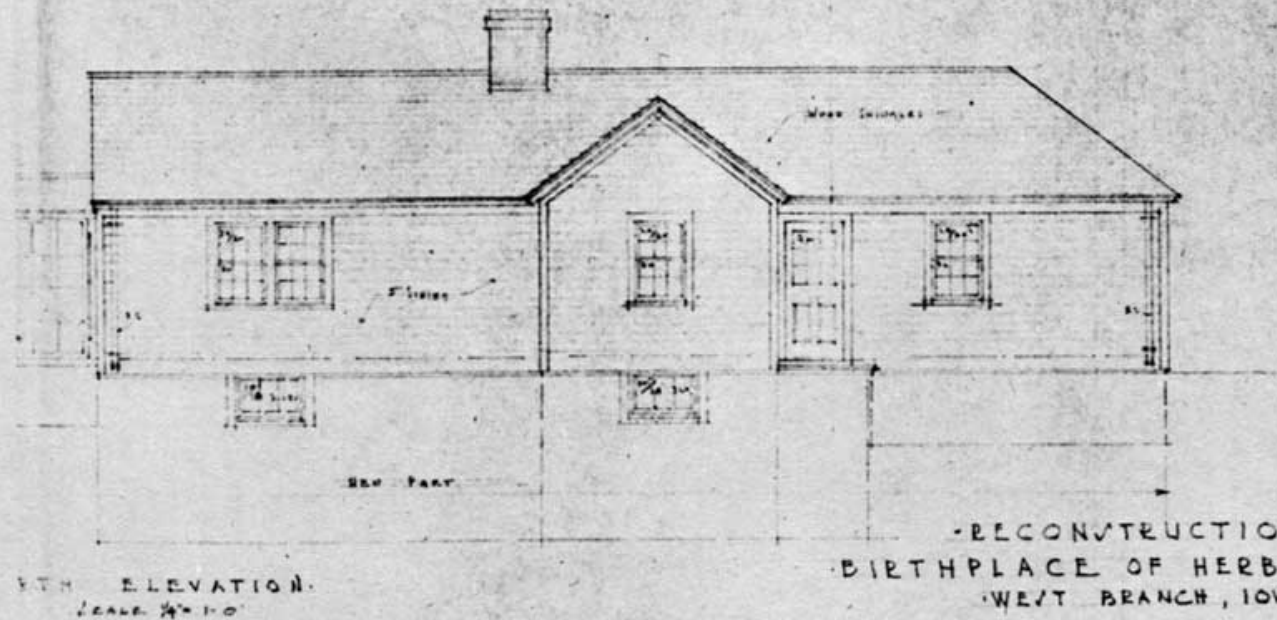
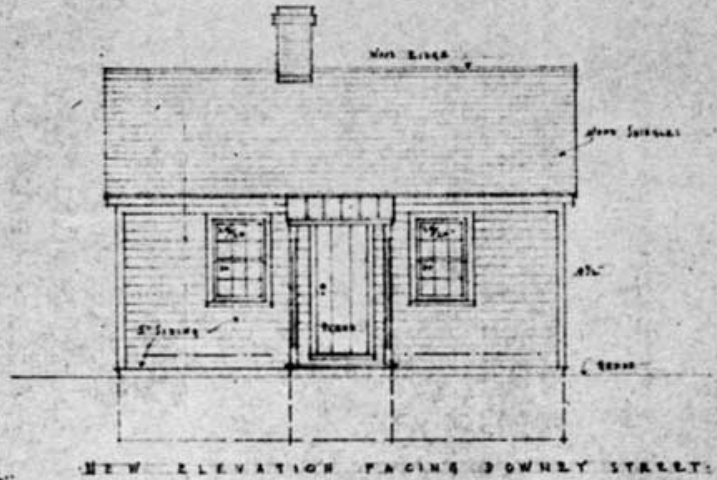
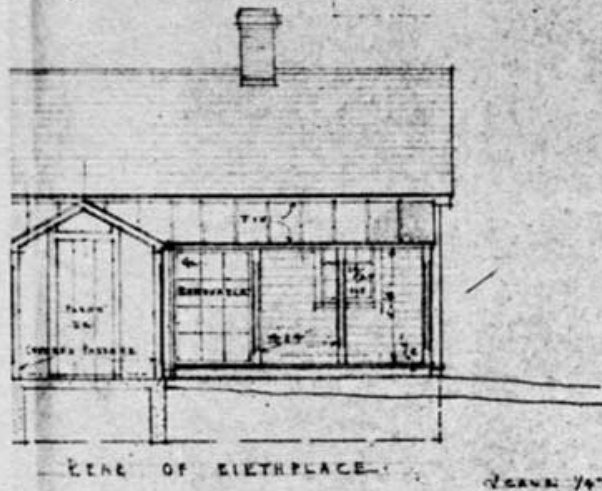
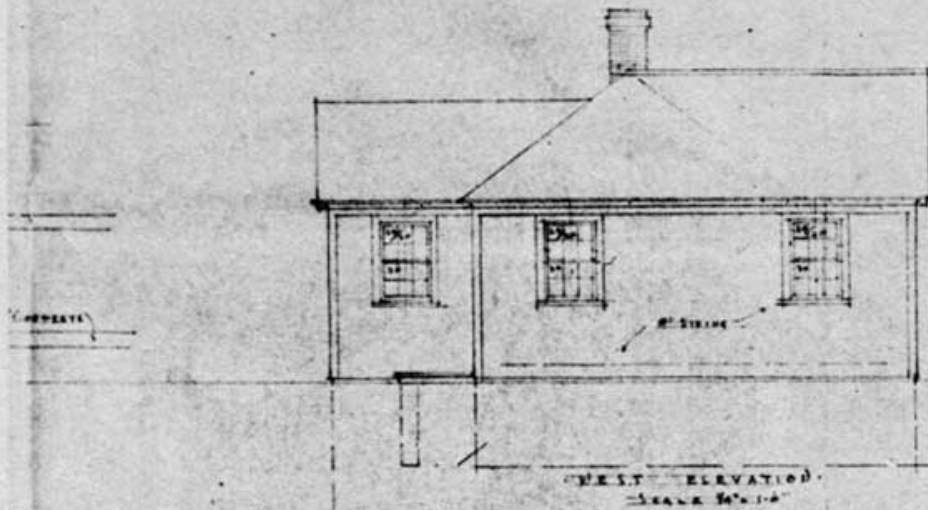
HERBERT HOOVER'S BIRTHPLACE
AT WEST BRANCH, IOWA

PLATE VIII

Jennie Scellers' House, south
view, 1915. The hill at the r

PLATES IX & X

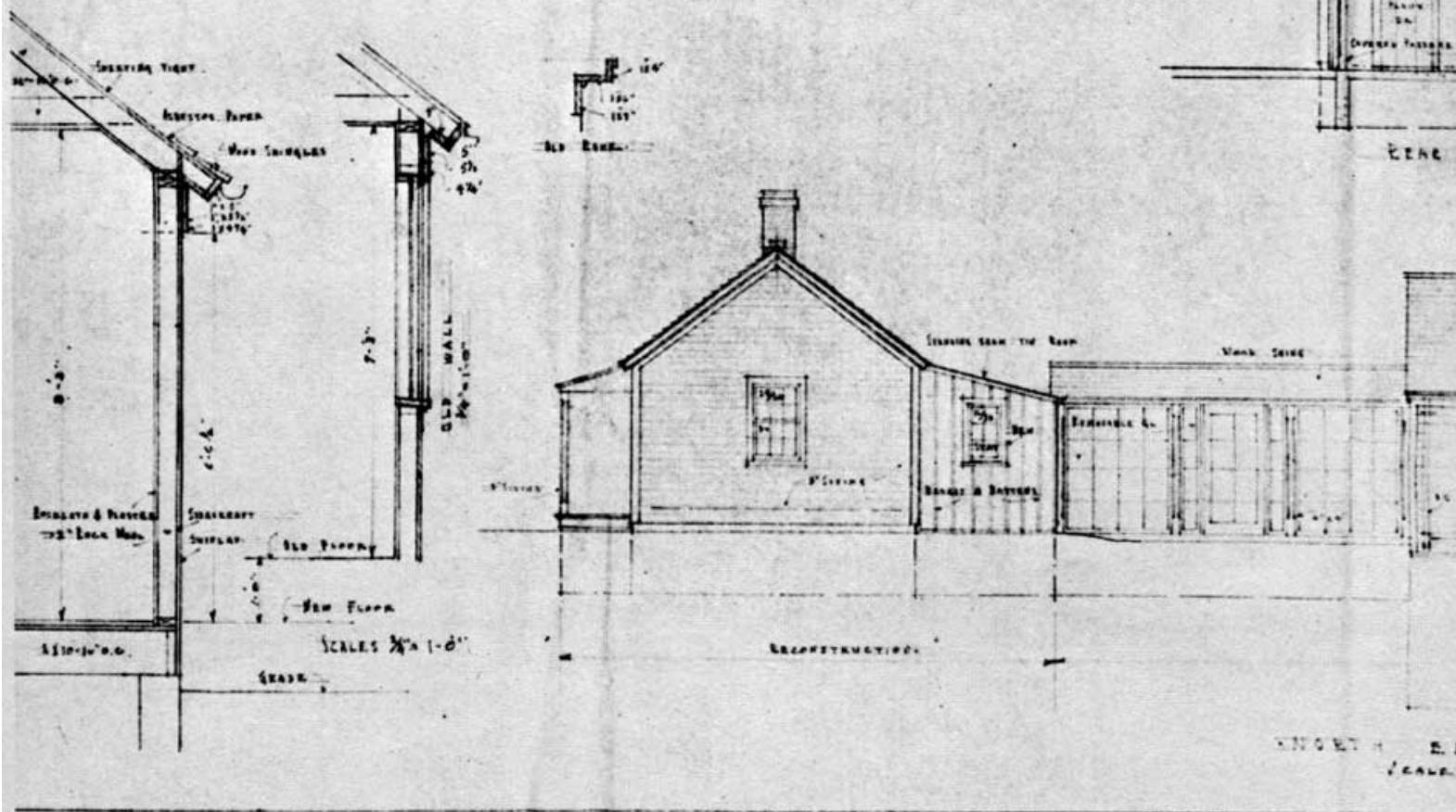
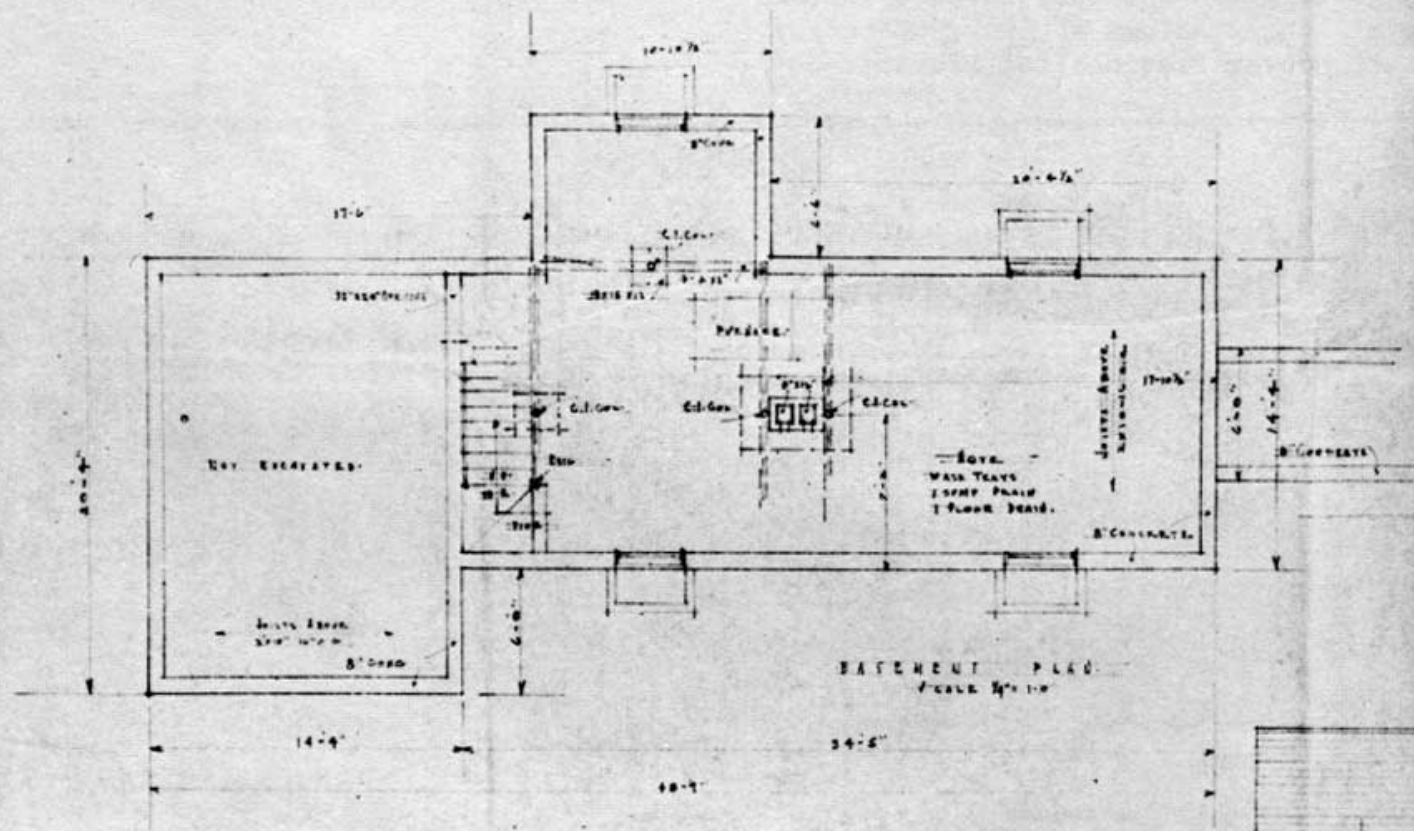
Bruce McKay's Drawings of Proposed Restoration of Hoover Cottage and Construction of Caretakers' Lodge, Autumn 1937. Courtesy Herbert Hoover Presidential Library.



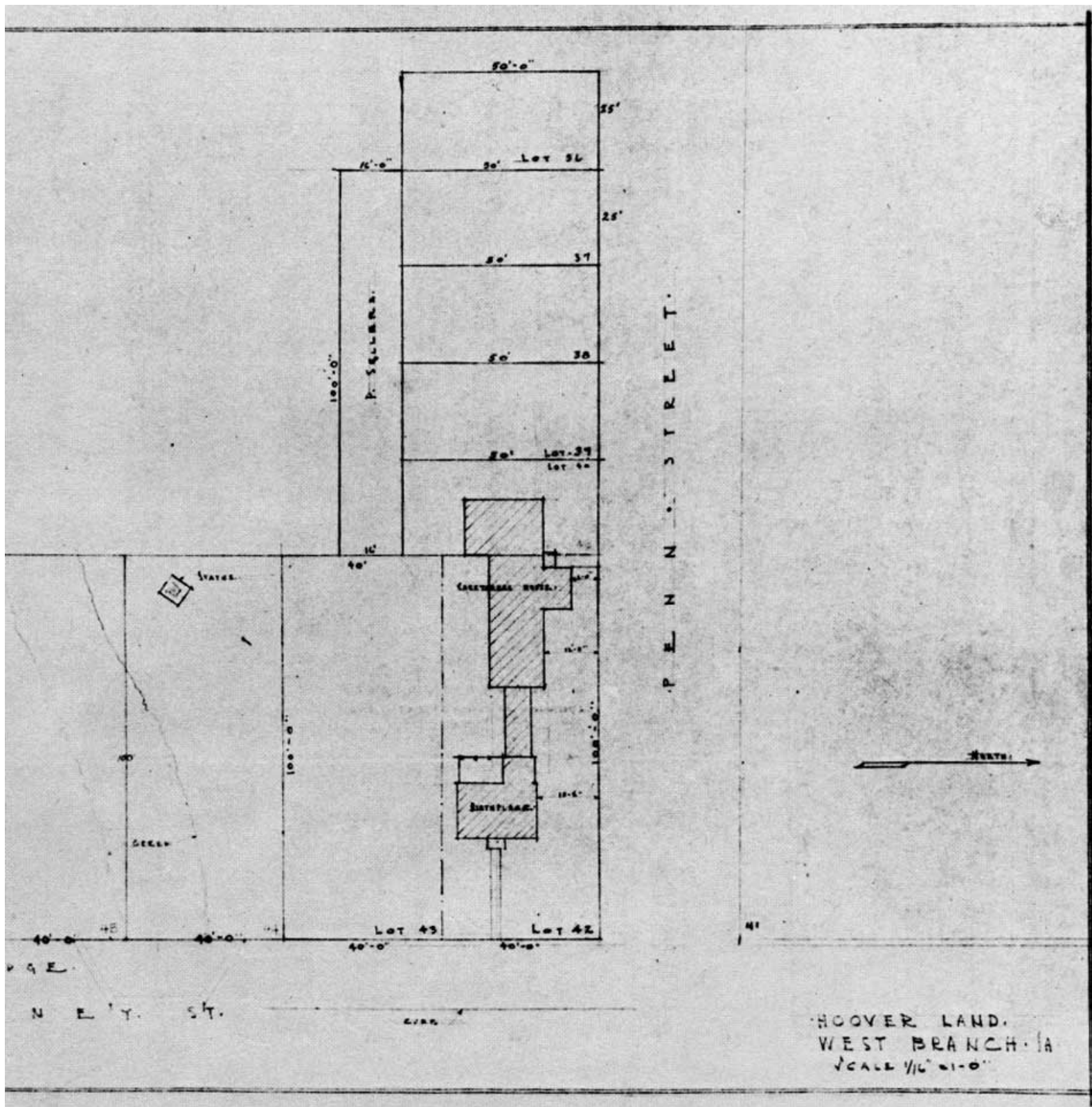
RECONSTRUCTION
BIRTHPLACE OF HERBERT HOOVER
WEST BRANCH, IOWA

McKAY BROTHERS - CEDAR RAPIDS, IA
OCT - 1937









CITY LIMITS

P. S. LUMMA

100'-0"

40'

STATE

DEER

40'-0" 48 40'-0" 47 40'-0" 46 40'-0" 45 40'-0" 44 40'-0" LOT

BRIDGE

D O W N E Y ST.



PLATE XIII





PLATE XV
Restoration of the Hoover
Palace





PLATE XVII
Restoration of the Hoover
Cottage
The east wing of the Scollers H



PLATE XVIII

Restoration of the Hoover
Cottage

East Elevation of the Hoover Cottage. The build-
ing is constructed of weatherboarded siding, consisting of the b



PLATE XIX

Restoration of the Hoover
Cottage

The Cottage has been relocate
south elevation now faces east. T
way in the south elevation has not

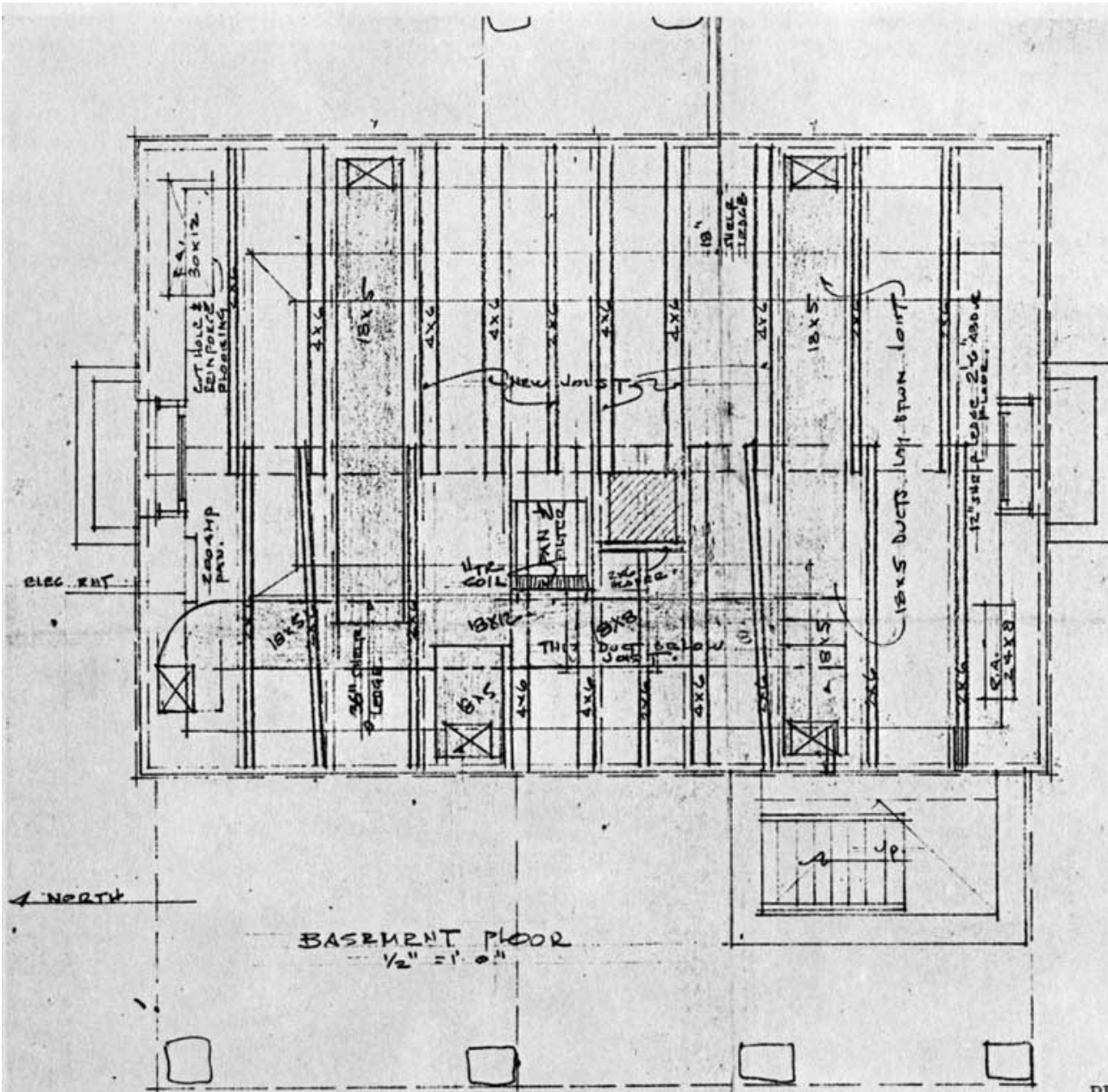












BASMENT FLOOR
 $\frac{1}{2}" = 1' - 0"$

PLATE XXIV-A

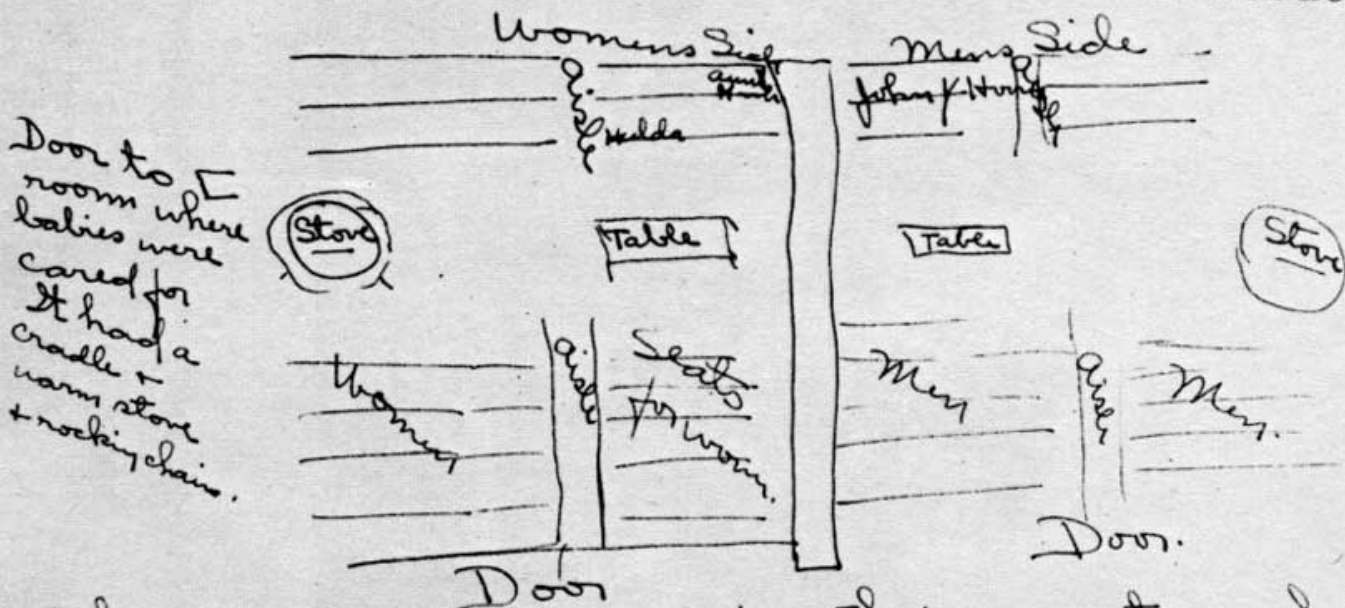
RESTORATION of place.
 Restoration, Hoover Birthplace,
 ing UTG Duct Lay Out and Reinforceme
 Floor Construction, William Wagner,
 23, 1962.



Once in California Tad and Bert and I had a merry time trying to remember all about that meeting. It filled me with awe it was so different from the noisy Indian Sunday School that was my only church experience.

The room was divided through the center with a partition about 6 feet high. From the ceiling shutters could be rolled down to the partition making two separate rooms. This was not often done.

At the far end of the room as one entered were raised seats for "those of ministry and elders". Just below these was a table for "the clerk of the meeting" (for mid week meeting) then the pews. On the top row on the men's side sat John Y. Hoovs. On the top row on the woman's side sat Aunt Hannah Bean. These were the older ministers.



The women would enter carrying their soap stones place them on the nail around stove to heat. Then slip them into a flannel bag and quietly slip into a pew placing the warm stone under their feet. (We have mother's stone). The pews were narrow and straight high back very severe for restless children.





PLATE XXVIII

Friends Meeting House

Photograph made by Bill Wagner, cir 1963, of the west elevation of the Meeting House, when it was used as a Garage. Note the arcade which at this time house

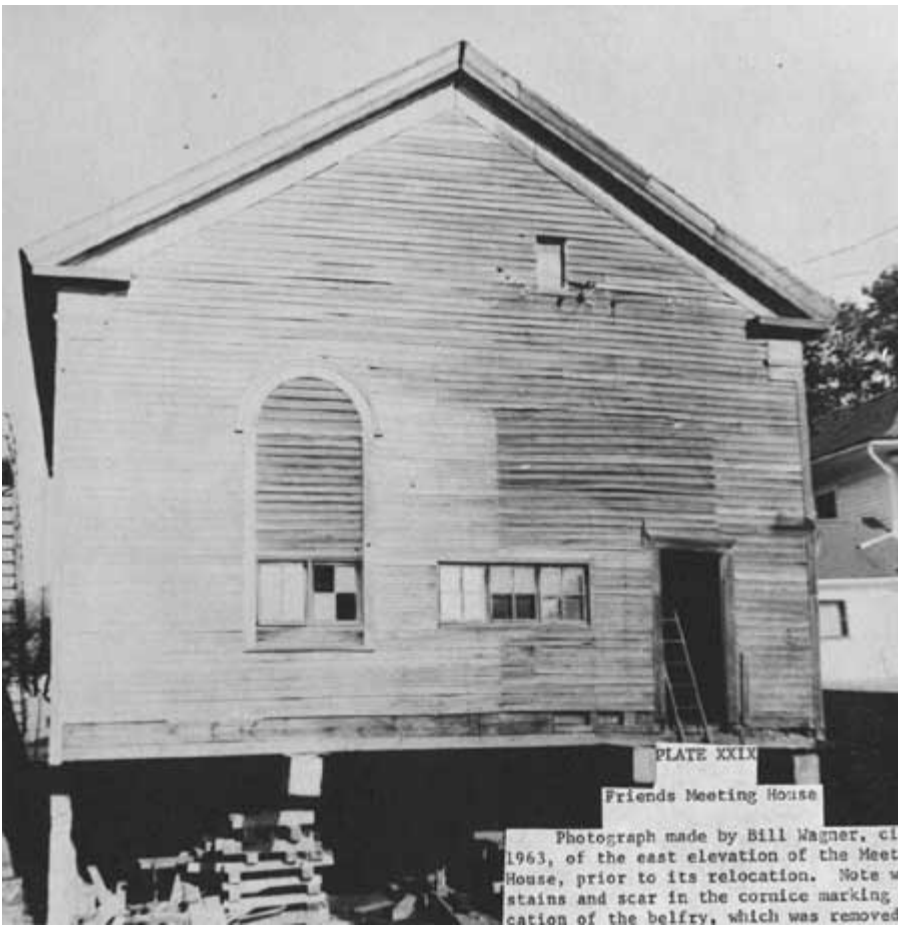


PLATE XXIX
Friends Meeting House
Photograph made by Bill Wagner, c. 1963, of the east elevation of the Meeting House, prior to its relocation. Note stains and scar in the cornice marking location of the belfry, which was removed.



PLATE XXX
Friends Meeting House
Photograph of north elevation of
the Meeting House, circa 1963. Note
the arcade housing Bessie's Gift Shop

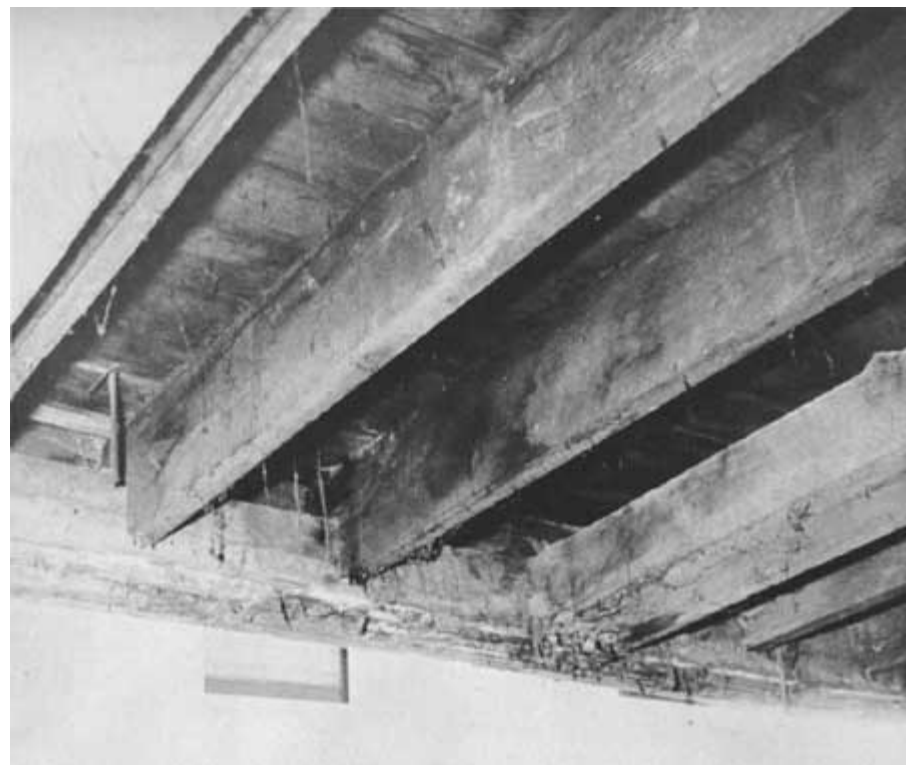




PLATE XXXII
Friends Meeting House



PLATE XXXIII

Friends Meeting H

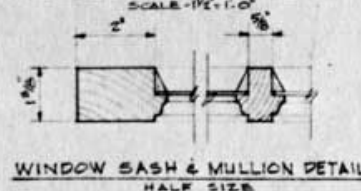
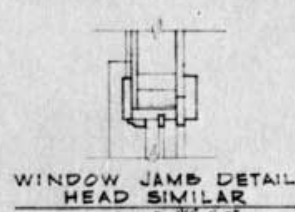
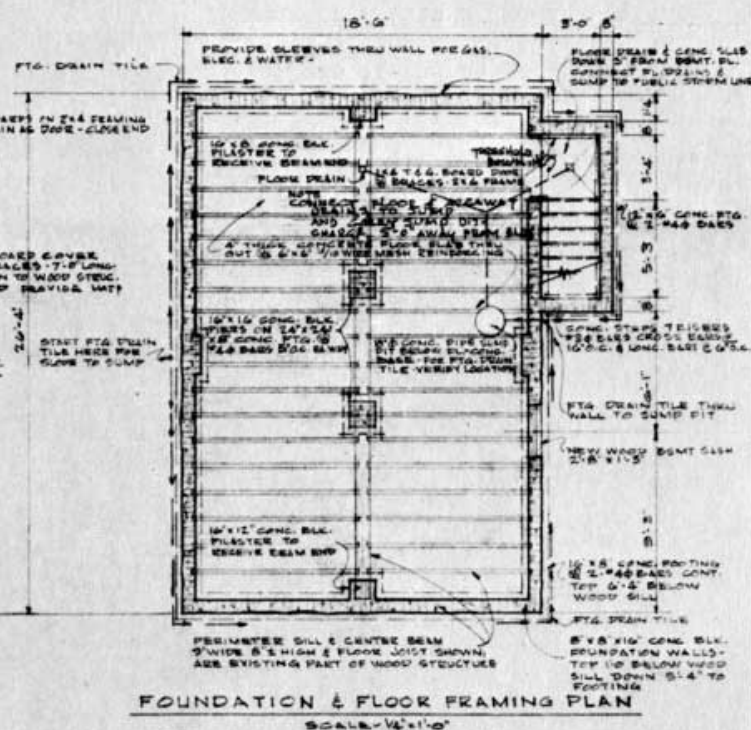
West elevation of relo
Meeting House. The structu
located, and Architect Bill
his crew in 1964-65 are res
elevation to its appearance

West Branch Schoolhouse

Photograph of the east elevation of the West Branch Schoolhouse, circa 1875. This photograph was made after the construction of the 1877 addition. To the right of the new schoolhouse can be seen the south elevation of the 1853 Schoolhouse. Mrs. Glenn Spe Collection, Herbert Hoover Presidential Library.







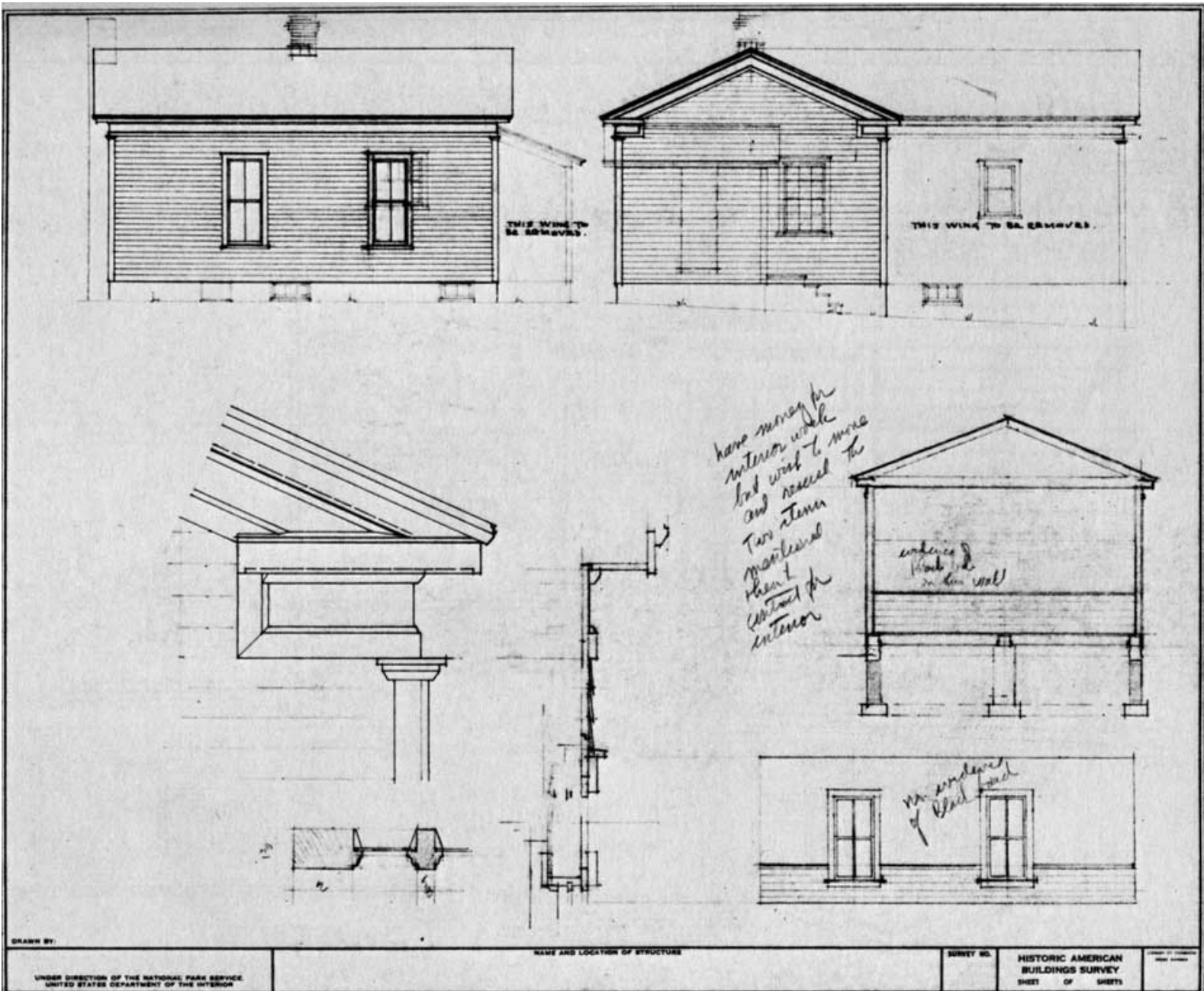
NOTE: 1" IF FOUNDATION-KEEP OF CONC. BLK. TO BOTTOM OF WOOD BILLY; TO E.B. 5" WIDE STONE CITY STONE. APPLY MIN. 1/2" THICK TROWLED ON HYDROPHOBIC MASTIC FIBER WATERPROOFING ON EXTERIOR CONC. BLK. WALL LAD UP OVER STONE-BLOCK JOINT, CEVE AT FOOTING.

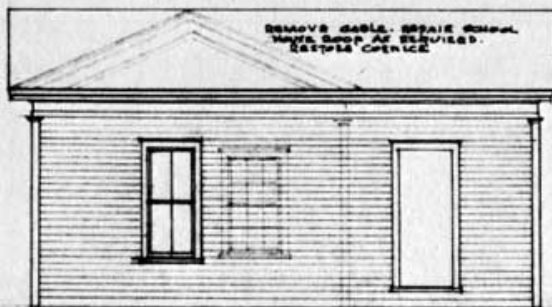
NOTE: UNTIL SUCH TIME AS DUMP CAN BE MOVED UP TO CITY DRAIN - CONTACT; WATER ONLY TO BE DUMPED BY PPE. 5' O' AWAY FROM BUILDING ON THE DRAINAGE.

PLATES XXXVI-XXXIX

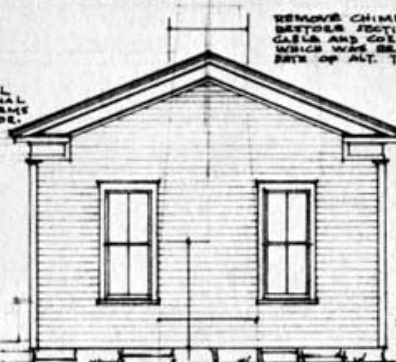
West Branch (Quaker) Schoolhouse.

Plans for Restoration of West Branch (Quaker) Schoolhouse prepared by Wagner & Marquart Architects, 1971. Courtesy Wagner & Marquart Architects, 1106 High, Des Moines.





AT DATE OF CONVERTING OLD SCHOOL HOUSE INTO A RESIDENCE ALL NEW EXTERIOR ARCHITECTURAL DETAIL WAS MADE TO COPY ORIGINAL SCHOOL HOUSE DETAIL. THESE ITEMS ARE SAID TO BE USED IN RESTORATION OF THE SCHOOL HOUSE.

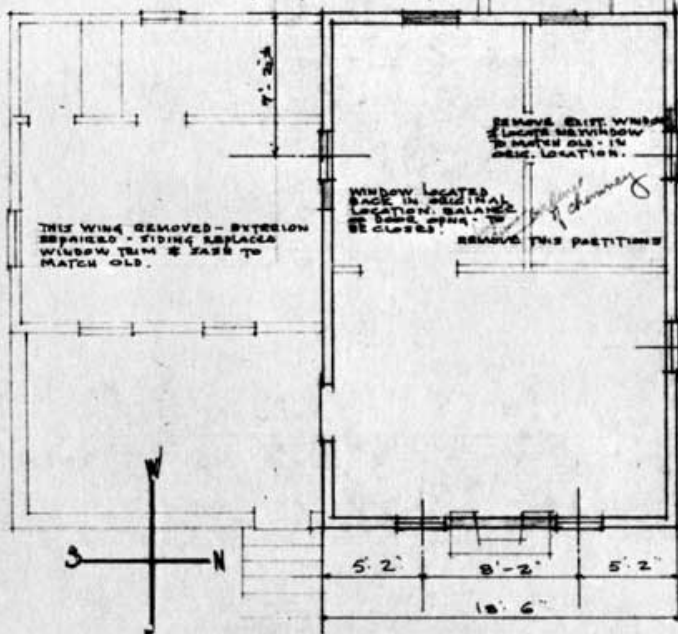


EAST ELEVATION
SCALE 1/4" = 1'-0"

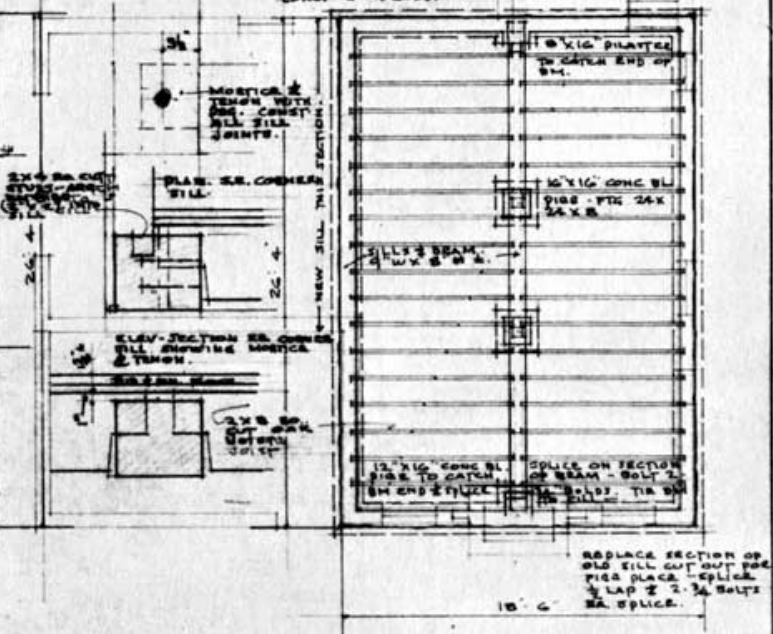
SOUTH ELEVATION
SCALE 1/4" = 1'-0"

REMOVE STUCCO & REPAIR WITH ASP. REPAIR WALL & FILL OPENINGS & REPLACE SIDING & CORNER TRIM.

6" CONC. BLOCK TO FILL BELOW GRADE - 8" STONE CITY STONE WHERE EXPOSED - 16" X 8" CONC. 2" X 8" BOLTS.



FIRST FLOOR



FOUNDATION & FLOOR PLAN

DRAWN BY:

NAME AND LOCATION OF STRUCTURE

SURVEY NO.

HISTORIC AMERICAN
BUILDINGS SURVEY
SHEET OF SHEETS

UNDER DIRECTION OF THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

DATE OF SURVEY
BY



THE SECOND HOOVER HOUSE, CIRCA 1882.
THE LADY IN THE YARD IS MRS. HULDAH HOOVER.
NOTE THE WEST AND SOUTH ELEVATIONS, THE
FURNISHED FRONT PORCH.

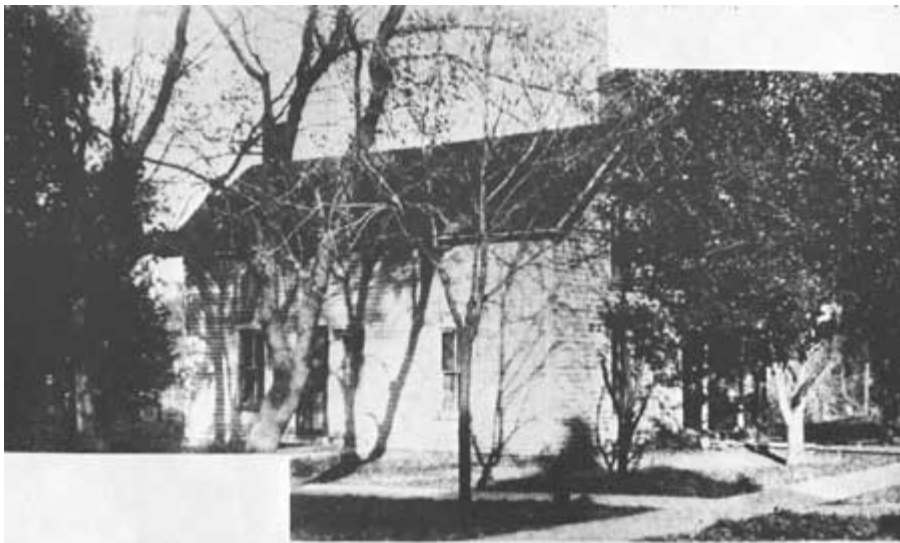
THIS WAS HOME FOR HERBERT HOOVER



PLATE XLII

View of West Branch from Cook's Hill looking northwest, circa 1907, courtesy Herbert Hoover Presidential Library. In the foreground can be seen the south and east elevations of the Second Hoover House and the south elevation of the Witter House to the rear of the Second Hoover House.





Herbert Hoover's father and mother as he knew them, and the "house of the maples" where they died when their children were little. There was no place in that house where a boy could not go and be happy, and the heart of it all was his mother

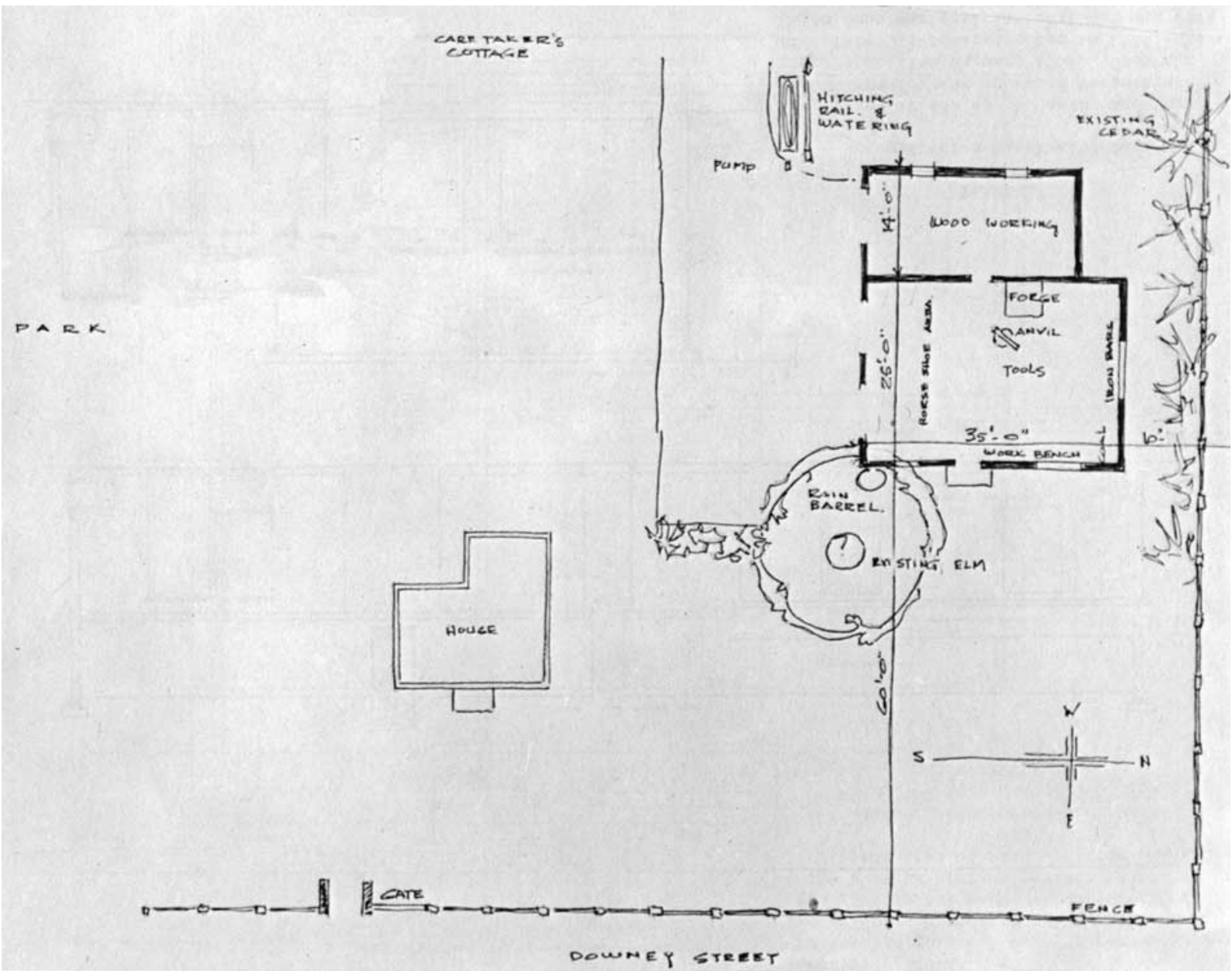












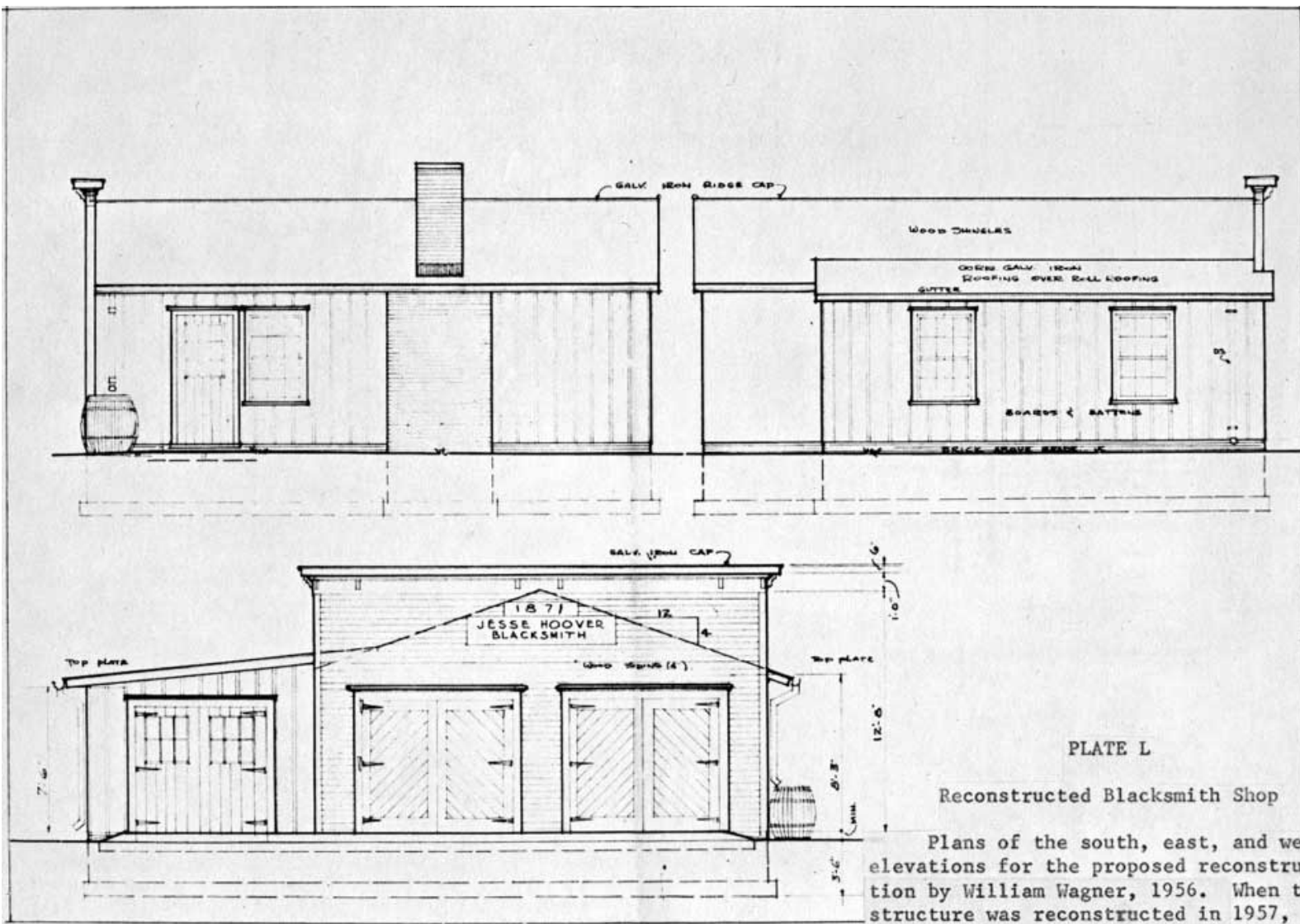


PLATE L

Reconstructed Blacksmith Shop

Plans of the south, east, and west elevations for the proposed reconstruction by William Wagner, 1956. When the structure was reconstructed in 1957,

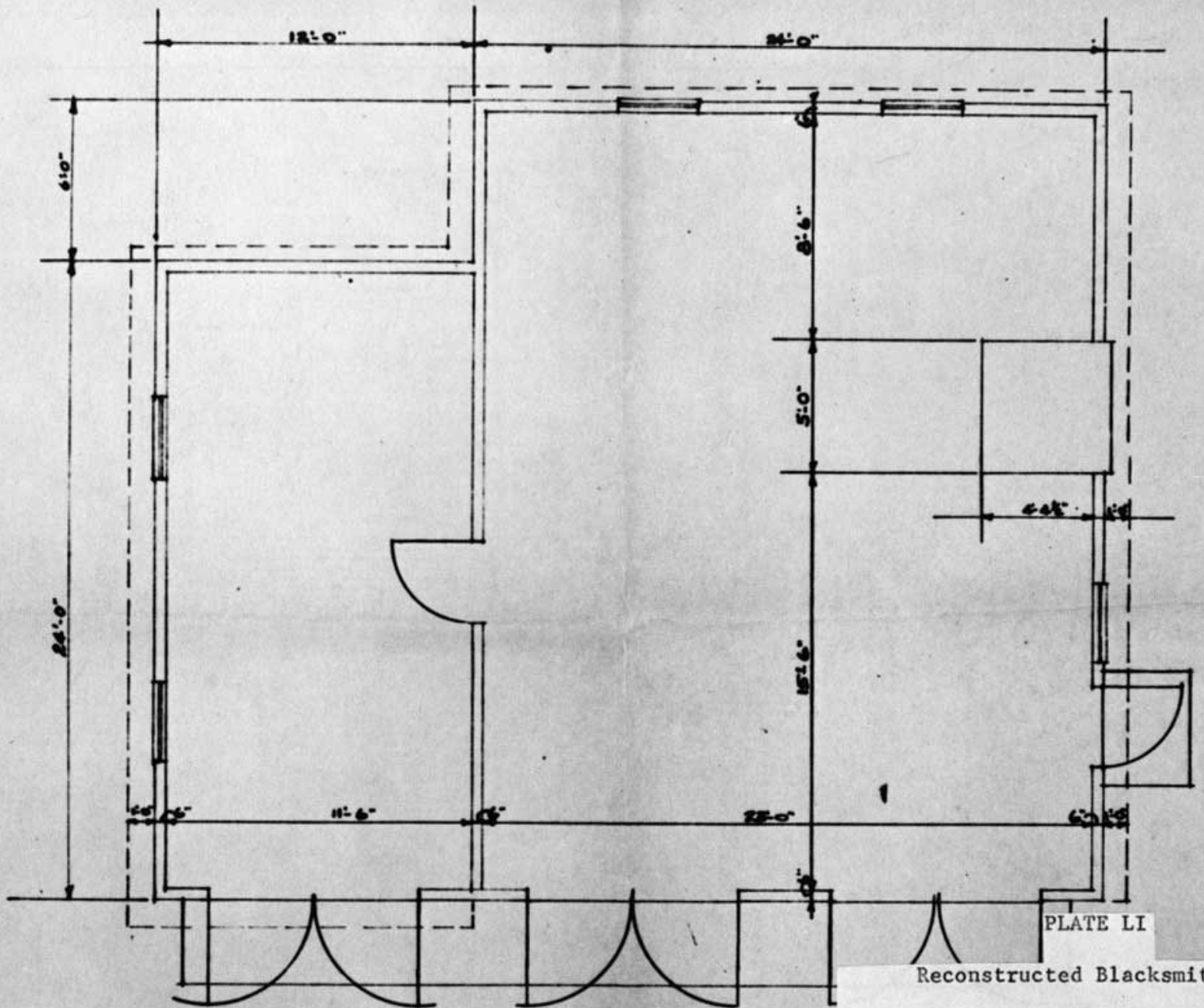


PLATE LI

Reconstructed Blacksmith

Floor Plan of Reconstructed Blacksmith Shop by William Wagner, this time it was proposed to the Wagon Shop west of the Smith Collection.

FLOOR PLAN
SCALE: 1/4" = 1'-0"

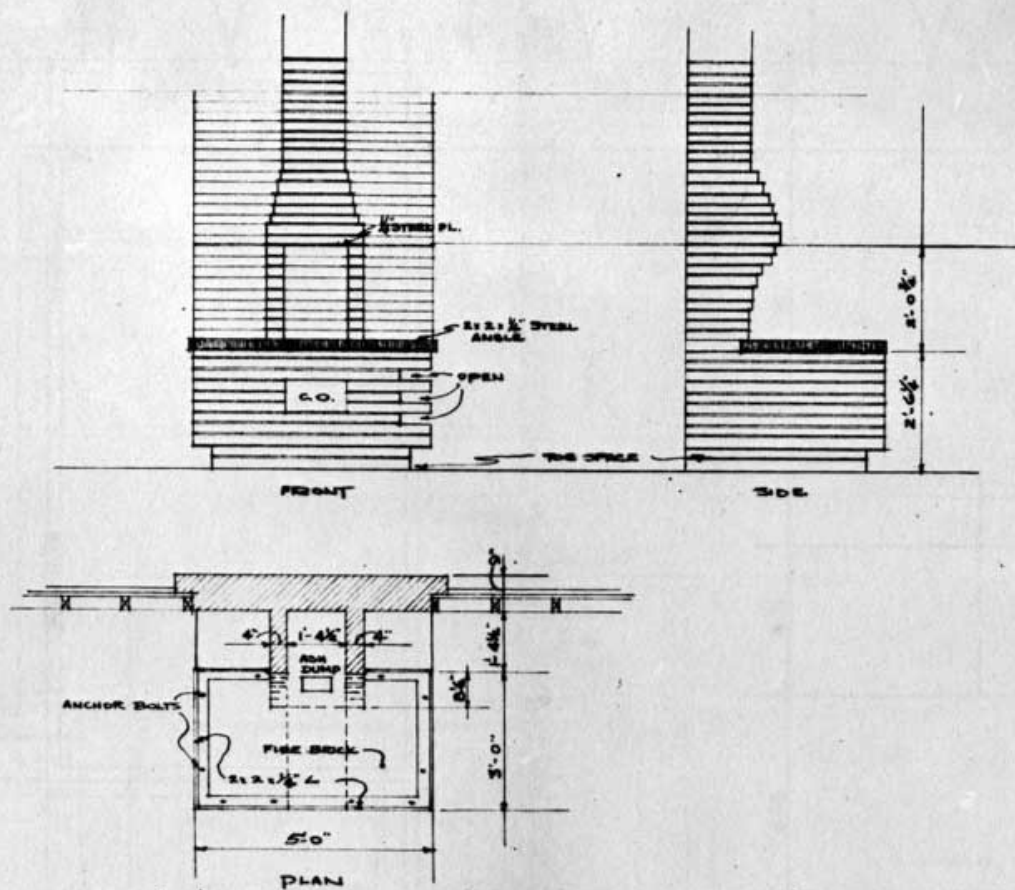


PLATE LII

Reconstructed Blacksmith Shop





Charles E. Smith House, Front
of, courtesy Mrs. Ona Morris. This
view, circa 1915, was taken near



HERBERT HOOVER

The Hoover Houses and Community Structures Historic Structures Report



FOREWORD

This report has been prepared to satisfy the research needs as enumerated in Historical Resource Study Proposals, HEHO-H-8, Historic Structure Report, Hoover Cottage; HEHO-H-9, Historic Structure Report, Friends Meeting House and Outbuildings; HEHO-H-10, Historic Structure Report, West Branch Schoolhouse; HEHO-H-11, Historic Structure Report, West Branch Bandstand; HEHO-H-12, Historic Structure Report, Second Hoover House; and HEHO-H-13, Historic Structure Report, Downey Street Bridges. To avoid needless repetition in the future, sections have been included in the Historic Structures Reports pertaining to the Hoover Cottage and Friends Meeting House satisfying the requirements of Parts C and D of Furnishing Plans for these buildings. This report also contains the Administrative History of the Birthplace Cottage before the establishment of the park, to satisfy the needs outlined in PSP-H-5, Administrative History of Herbert Hoover National Historic Site.

All available documentary material and historic photographs of the subject structures have been collected, studied, synthesized, and evaluated to provide restoration architects with a document to assist them in preparing measured drawings to be used in reconstructing the Second Hoover House, the Downey Street bridges, the West Branch Bandstand, and certain outbuildings and fences. Detailed structural histories of the restored Hoover Cottage and Friends Meeting House provide information and data useful in management, interpretation, and maintenance of these historically significant buildings. Information compiled on the West Branch School will be useful in interpreting the structure and its role in the community. Sections of the Hoover Cottage and Friends Meeting House Chapters will constitute part of the Furnishing Plans for these structures.

Many persons have assisted in the preparation of this report. Particular thanks are due: former Superintendent Randy Pope, Chief of Interpretation and Resource Management Wallace Elms, Administrative Assistant Judy Maske, Clerk-typist Vivian Kaefring, Historian Robert Nash, Park Technician Al Estall, and Superintendent David L. Hieb of Herbert Hoover National Historic Site for their assistance in and around West Branch; Director Thomas T. Thalken, Assistant Director Robert R. Wood, Librarian Ruth Dennis, Senior Archivist Dwight Miller, and Audiovisual Archivist J. Patrick Wildenberg of the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library for their cooperation in making available valuable source materials entrusted to their safe keeping.

As heretofore residents and former residents of West Branch extended themselves to make me welcome and share their source materials, recollections, and photographs. Mrs. Golda Gruwell, Mrs. Lucille Vincent, Mrs. John Kofron, Mrs. Ona Morris, Mrs. Mildred Speight, Ross Sayles, Al Estall, Glenn Brown, L. C. Rummells, Sig Larsen, and Bill Wagner are to be thanked for permitting me to copy and use invaluable photographs of the structures covered in this report and their immediate environment. Mrs. Mildred Speight, Mrs. Golda Gruwell, Mrs. Malissa R. Fawcett, Glenn Brown, Ross Sayles, L. C. Rummells, Bill Anderson, Floyd Fawcett, Mr. and Mrs. Al Estall, and Mr. and Mrs. Carl Wilhelm shared their recollections of

the structures.

Don Wehrman of the Springdale Mutual Fire Insurance Company permitted me to examine the records of his company; Mr. and Mrs. Walter Hansen opened the archives of the West Branch Friends Church; Mrs. Ruth Kessler of Oskaloosa made the records of the Springdale and West Branch Preparative Meetings available; the Records of the West Branch Town Council were made available by Mayor Minard Thomas; while the Superintendent of the West Branch Independent School District opened his files for the 1870s and 80s. Editor Jack Maher of the West Branch Times supported my efforts by publicizing my search for early West Branch photographs.

Historical Architects Henry Judd of the Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation, Charles Lessig of the Midwest Regional Office, and Frank Gerner of the Denver Service Center were helpful in making suggestions as to what was of interest to the Restoration Architects, in studying paint samples, and reading the fabric of the extant structures. Architect William Wagner of Wagner and Marquart shared with me the encyclopedic knowledge acquired in the years since 1956, when he became architect for the Herbert Hoover Birthplace Foundation. My colleagues Dave Clary and Bob Nash read the manuscript, and made valuable suggestions, while Mrs. Judy Sprouse skillfully typed the subject manuscript.

Edwin C. Bearss

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