

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Kent Union Chapel and Cemetery
other names/site number Kent Chapel

2. Location

street & number 3386 V18 Road not for publication N/A
city or town Brooklyn vicinity X
state Iowa code IA county Poweshiek code 157 zip code 52211

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide X locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Barbara A. Mitchell, DSHPO July 30 2009
Signature of certifying official Date
STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official Date
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:
 entered in the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
 determined eligible for the
National Register
 See continuation sheet.
 determined not eligible for the
National Register
 removed from the National Register
 other (explain):

Edson H. Beall 9.16.09
Signature of Keeper Date of Action

Kent Union Chapel and Cemetery
Name of Property

Poweshiek County, Iowa
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)
 private
 public-local
 public-State
 public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)
 building(s)
 district
 site
 structure
 object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>2</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> sites
	<u> </u> structures
	<u> </u> objects
<u>3</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)
SOCIAL/meeting hall
SOCIAL/civic
SOCIAL/clubhouse
RELIGION/religious facility
FUNERARY/cemetery

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)
VACANT/NOT IN USE
FUNERARY/cemetery

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)
LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS/Classical Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)
foundation CONCRETE
roof WOOD
walls BRICK
STONE
other _____

Narrative Description
(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Kent Union Chapel and Cemetery
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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

SOCIAL HISTORY

Period of Significance

1909-1959

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)
Property is:

A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

B removed from its original location.

C a birthplace or a grave.

D a cemetery.

E a reconstructed building, object, or structure

F a commemorative property.

G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Significant Dates

1909

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

UNKNOWN

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

previously listed in the National Register

previously determined eligible by the National Register

designated a National Historic Landmark

recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository: _____

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone Easting Northing	Zone Easting Northing
1	<u>15 546190 4628420</u>	3 _____
2	_____	4 _____

____ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jan Olive Nash/Historian & Architectural Historian, & Jennifer A. Price/Historian

organization Tallgrass Historians L.C. date September 2008

street & number 2460 S. Riverside Drive telephone 319.354.6722

city or town Iowa City state IA zip code 52246

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Kent Chapel, c/o Gary Showalter / Marvin Keller, Don Ryan, & Gary Whitsell, Madison Twp Trustees

street & number 5005 N. Lakeshore Dr. / c/o Mr. Keller, 3411 150th St. telephone 641-522-7509 / 641-522-5556

city or town Brooklyn / Brooklyn state IA zip code 52211 / 52211

=====
Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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7. Description

Summary Paragraph

The Kent Union Chapel and its associated Cemetery are located in central Iowa, in the rural northeast quadrant of Poweshiek County, about five miles north of the community of Brooklyn. The property sits along the north side of county road V18 at the outside of a wide curve that routes the road from a north/south to a more angled east/west trajectory. For traffic moving north from the vicinity of Brooklyn, V18 is a straight section-line blacktop with wide sweeping views of the prairie-turned-agricultural landscape on either side. As motorists approach the Kent Chapel "corner" they enter a wide curve to the right. After less than a mile, the road curves sharply left, or northwest, and descends quickly down to the basin of Holiday Lake, a recreational reservoir created in 1962. The wood-frame chapel building sits close to V18 on flat terrain, surrounded by a wire fence, which is open in spots to allow passage between the chapel's grassy yard and the adjacent cemetery to the west. Trees—both planted specimens and the volunteer variety—align with the fence lines. A windrow of mature evergreens separates the building from the cemetery; other tall evergreens mix with scrubby volunteers along the property's north and the cemetery's west perimeter lines. A modern white vinyl fence spans the cemetery's south side, separating the 14 or so irregular burial rows marked by headstones, from the road in front of it. The chapel faces south and its entrance is marked by an aged concrete sidewalk that also leads around the east side of the chapel to the entrance of the small kitchen addition off the chapel's northeast corner. Behind the chapel, tucked into the far northeast corner of the yard is a combination outhouse/storage shed.

Chapel Exterior

The chapel sits on a rock-face concrete block foundation and is a tall, single story in height. The *south gable end wall* of the wooden building is its primary facade (Fig. 1). A double-door entrance under a fanlight transom is located in the robust square bell tower attached to the front wall, just left (west) of the chapel's gable peak. A Palladian window composed of three



Figure 1 South primary façade, Kent Union Chapel. A cemetery grave stone in the grave row closest to the building is visible to the left. The outhouse/storage shed is to the far right. Tallgrass Historians L.C.

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one-over-one sash windows with a central fanlight transom completes the fenestration on the front wall. The base of the square bell tower is clad in horizontal wood siding similar to the chapel walls, while the shaft above it is covered by wood shingles. This shaft is slightly flared where it "sits" on the base. Centered on each side of the shaft except the north (rear), is a single small rectangular opening covered with louvers. The south window louvers have been replaced or covered by wood fill. The top rim of the shaft is edged with narrow trim boards above which is a short section of wall (originally an open belfry) holding the roof proper—a pyramid-shaped structure with flared eaves and a round metal finial. Pediment returns at either lower end of the gabled walls combine with the Palladian window to suggest the widespread influence of the 1893 Chicago World's Fair (World's Columbian Exposition) and the popularity of classical influences on architecture early in the twentieth century.¹

The long *east side wall* (Fig. 2) is broken by four tall, regularly spaced sash windows (the opposing long west side wall is similarly treated; see Figure 5), two of which are covered with plywood because of broken glass in one or both sashes. Glazing that remains is patterned and opaque, with changes in the pattern—snowflakes or abstract lines, for example—seen in different windows. Crown molding headers top each window. Attached to the east rear corner of the chapel is small gable-roof *kitchen addition*, reached both by an exterior entrance with a concrete stoop and through an interior doorway into the chapel's sanctuary. The addition appears to be nearly as old as the chapel itself. Irregular joinings of siding and foundation material indicate it was added shortly after the chapel was completed, though perhaps not until after 1911, the publication date of a historic photograph that shows the chapel without the rear addition (refer to Figure 18 at the end of this Section 7). The kitchen wing (Fig. 3) has a rock-face concrete block foundation and smaller sash windows. Downspouts and a pump on a concrete pad indicate a cistern is located off the corner of the kitchen wing.



Figure 2 East side and rear kitchen wing. Tallgrass Historians L.C.

The *north gable end* of the chapel (Figs. 3-5) has a bumped-out wing (chancel) that holds the elevated platform or stage area inside. Each side of this small chancel has a window (including one that now looks into the kitchen wing), but the north rear

¹ Stanley Appelbaum, *The Chicago World's Fair of 1893* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1980); Virginia and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide To American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986), 344.

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wall is solid.



Figure 3 The kitchen wing, looking northwest at the chapel's east side and the north end bumped-out chancel. *Tallgrass Historians L.C.*



Figure 4 The north end wall chancel houses the interior's raised platform area. *Tallgrass Historians L.C.*

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Figure 5 West side wall, with north end chancel at left, and south bell tower at right, looking southeast.
Tallgrass Historians L.C.

Chapel Interior

The chapel's interior is divided into three physical and functional spaces: a small entrance vestibule housed in the base of the bell tower (Fig. 6); the sanctuary, which is the largest volume of space and includes a raised platform as a stage and altar area at the north end (Figs. 7-9); and the kitchen wing (Fig. 10). The vestibule has plastered walls below a coat rail of yellow pine. Above the coat rail the walls are clad with panels of a composite material that appear to be from the mid-twentieth century. Both the exterior and interior 5-panel double doors leading to and from the vestibule are of yellow pine. Yellow pine is also used for the *sanctuary's* trim work around the windows, the beadboard skirting of the stage, and the floors. The sanctuary walls are covered with the same composite panels seen in the vestibule and a faux wood vertical paneling from, perhaps, the 1960s. Water damage is apparent in the ceiling tiles in several spots, most especially in the southwest corner from a significant roof leak to the floor below where the floorboards are broken. A heater hangs from the ceiling at this southwest corner of the sanctuary. Removal of an earlier form of heating stove chimney may be the source of the roof leak. A historic photograph of the chapel, however, shows a brick chimney centered on the ridge line, so the corner moisture problem may be unrelated to the original heating method. Rows of dark, wooden Gothic-inspired church pews, which are not original but donated from another location, sit on the sanctuary floor. The raised stage area at the north end of the church fills the chancel and is accessed by steps on either side of the platform. Near the east set of steps is the doorway to the *kitchen wing*, which has a single long counter with a sink and hanging cupboards. One hanging cupboard just inside the sanctuary door was used to store hymnals.

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Figure 6 This view looks southeast from the sanctuary's west side aisle through the vestibule to the front entrance. *Tallgrass Historians L.C.*



Figure 7 The chapel's sanctuary and raised platform are seen here from just inside the vestibule. *Tallgrass Historians L.C.*

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Figure 8 The raised platform floor of the north chancel extends a few feet into the main space and terminates in a slight convex curve toward the seating. The kitchen is seen through the doorway at right. *Tallgrass Historians L.C.*

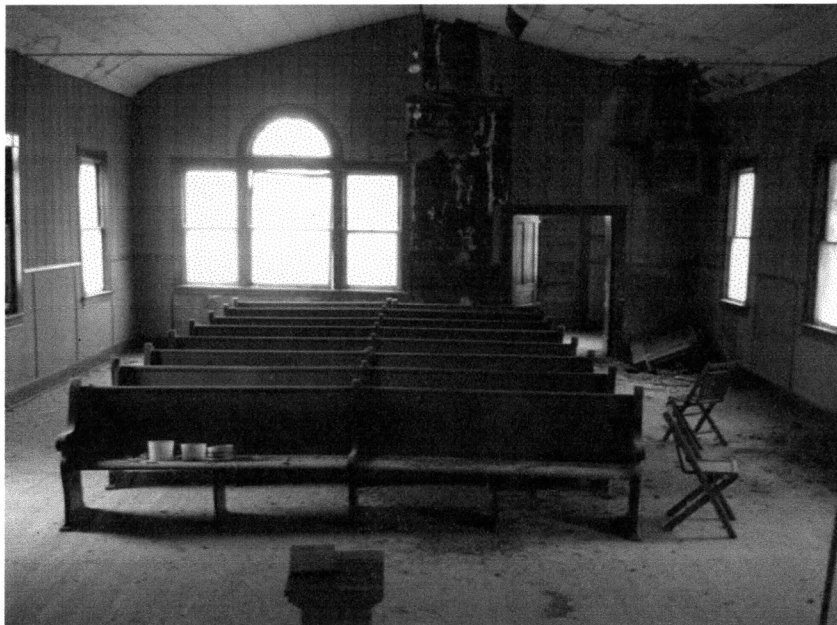


Figure 9 This view looks south over the seating from the raised platform. *Tallgrass Historians L.C.*

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Figure 10 The kitchen, looking slightly northeast. *Tallgrass Historians L.C.*

Outbuilding

The only *outbuilding* (Fig. 11) on the property is located in the far northeast corner of the chapel's yard and appears to be of the same construction materials and era as the chapel. Its wood frame sits on a poured concrete foundation and is clad with horizontal wood siding. Two interior compartments are functionally divided into a privy chamber in the smaller front (south) compartment and a storage area in the larger north section. The privy end of the building has a small window in the gable end. The outbuilding is a feature that is historically associated with the chapel.

Cemetery

The cemetery is adjacent to the chapel lawn's west side (Figs. 12-14). Containing about 14 more or less irregular rows of headstones, there are over 300 graves dating from before the Civil War to the present decade. Graves near the evergreens separating the cemetery from the chapel and on the sloping ground toward the rear (north) fence line appear to be the oldest (Fig. 15). Several World War II veterans are buried along the far west property line, in the rows farthest from the chapel (Fig. 16). Grave markers and headstones are very diverse in age, materials, sizes, and designs and represent members of many of the area families responsible for and associated with the Kent Union Chapel (Fig. 17). The cemetery is a site that is historically and visually associated with the chapel; however, it is controlled by the Madison Township trustees.

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Figure 11 The outbuilding's two doors lead into the single-chamber privy on the right and a storage area on the left.
Tallgrass Historians L.C.



Figure 12 Chapel and cemetery, looking east northeast. *Tallgrass Historians L.C.*

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Figure 13 Chapel and cemetery looking northwest. Tallgrass Historians L.C.



Figure 14 The westernmost rows of headstones seen here are more regularly aligned than other areas of the cemetery. Note the slope of the ground toward the treed north fence line in the distance. Some of the oldest graves are located under the tree overhangs in the distance. Tallgrass Historians L.C.

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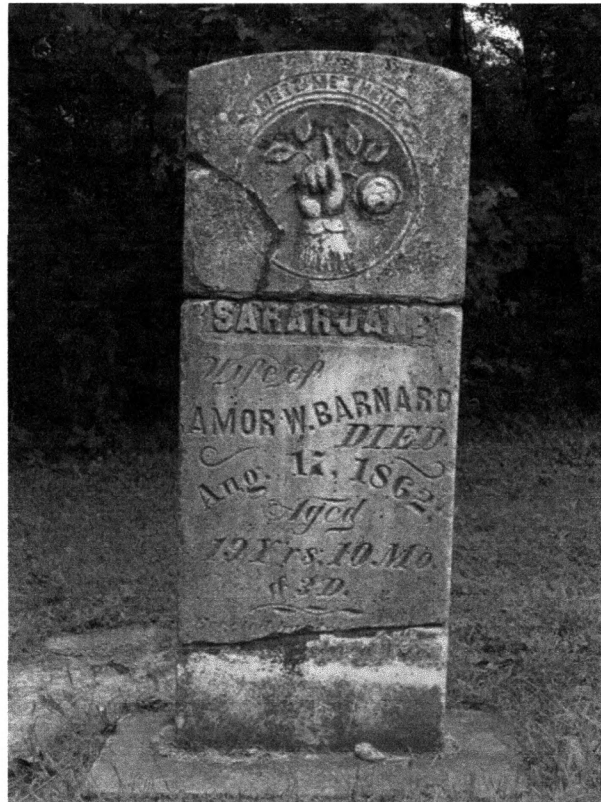


Figure 15 One of the earliest headstones in the cemetery, this limestone memorial is located along the northern fence line and stands relatively apart from other graves (at least there are no close markers extant or visible above ground). The stone is for Sarah Jane Barnard who died just short of 20 years of age in 1862. Women who died that young in the nineteenth century often died in childbirth. The iconography of this marker reflects the Victorian era in which it was crafted. A feminine hand holds a traditional cabbage rose in full bloom and points with one finger toward heaven above. The phrase “meet me there” over the hand suggests Sarah Jane’s otherworldly destination was certain as was the expected destination for those who followed. *Tallgrass Historians L.C.*

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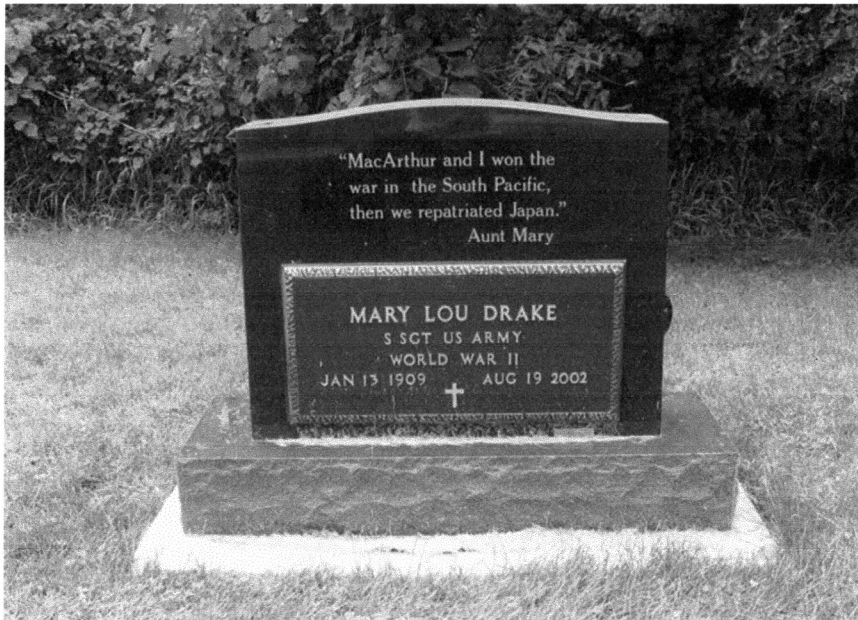


Figure 16 Among the most recent burials was that of 93-year-old Mary Lou Drake in 2002. As a World War II veteran who was proud of her service to the country, the quote on the marker suggests much about her personality as well as her family's affection for her. *Tallgrass Historians L.C.*



Figure 17 This lovely and a bit grand marker, as well as numerous other smaller ones, bears the chapel's family namesake. The marker is centrally located in the cemetery; the chapel is visible in the background. *Tallgrass Historians L.C.*

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Integrity

Integrity of the Kent Union Chapel is very good to excellent, though its physical condition is deteriorated. Only two windows have been altered, one of which has most of its opaque pattern-glass extant and is covered with plywood only because the lower sash glazing has a hole in it. The open top section of the bell tower, the belfry, appears to have been filled in with wood siding many decades ago (Fig. 18). Alterations to the interior are largely confined to the surface material covering the plastered walls, which itself may now be considered a historic treatment by mid-twentieth century custodians of the building. All seven aspects of integrity (location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association) are maintained at high levels. The chapel sits in its original location, surrounded by undeveloped agricultural land, and, despite the modern intrusion of a communications tower a couple hundred yards to the northwest of the property, the overwhelmingly rural character of the neighborhood within the chapel's viewshed still supports excellent integrity of setting and feeling. The property's integrity of design, materials, and workmanship are virtually intact with the exception of the two windows, the belfry infill, and, as seen below, an early brick chimney that is now gone. Currently, the church is unused but is owned by a local farming landowner and monitored by a local historical group. The associated outbuilding is likewise intact. The associated cemetery exhibits excellent integrity of all seven aspects as well, though the white vinyl fence across the front is less appropriate than the wire fencing used elsewhere.

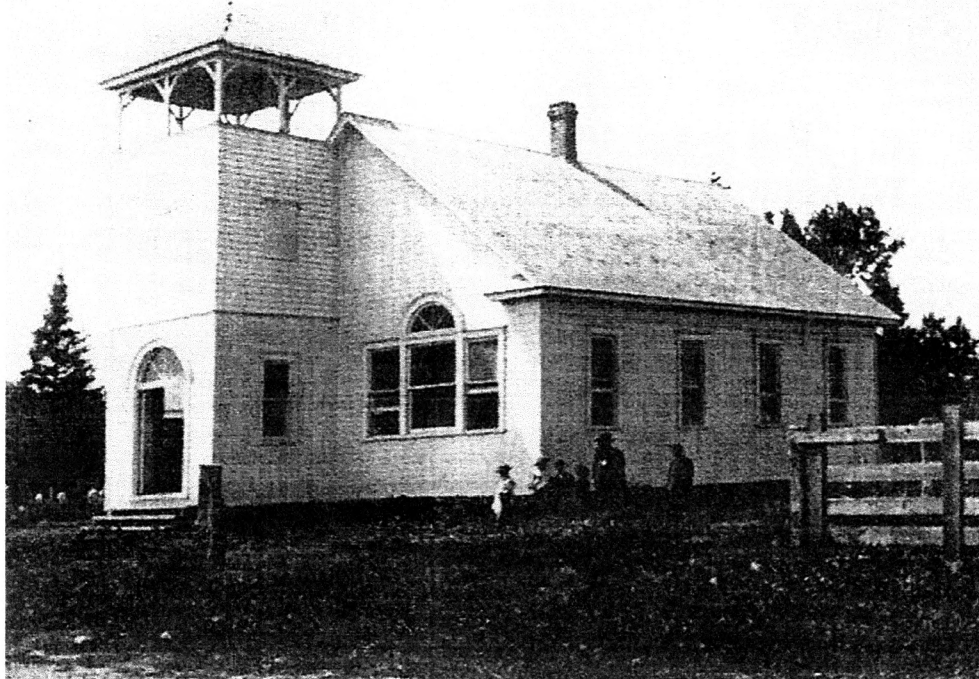


Figure 18 This historic photograph of the Kent Union Chapel confirms the enclosure of the open belfry, removal of the original central brick chimney, and the later addition of the kitchen wing. Note the evergreens in the windrow to the left (west) are already quite established at this time. While the photograph was published in 1911, it is unknown how soon after the building's construction it was taken. *From Parker, History of Poweshiek County, 1911.*

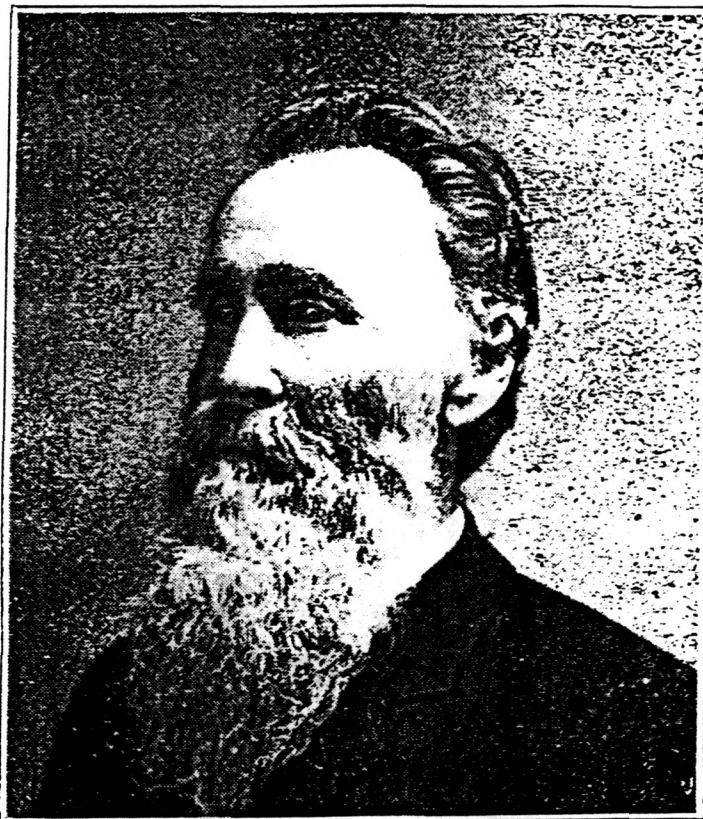
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 Manatt, William, House
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Source: History of Poweshiek County, Vol. I, 1911; opposite p. 314.



WILLIAM MANATT

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Railroad) would stop in Brooklyn, five miles to the south.³ The sparse settlement and rugged landscape compounded the sense of isolation for the forty or so farming families who had settled in Madison Township in the 1850s, and who by necessity relied on family, kin, and neighbors.⁴

As in most of the upper Midwest, the settlement pattern of Madison Township was kin-based, with several generations and sometimes more than one branch of a single family arriving together. The Kents were no exception. The elder Kents—Moses, Sr. and Dolly—along with their extended family were among the first settlers in Madison Township, having left New York in the early 1830s to begin what became a two-decade trek west. After settling in Putnam County, Indiana, for a number of years, the extended Kent family moved on to Iowa, arriving in northern Poweshiek County in 1853.⁵ There the senior Kents acquired land in several sections of Madison Township.⁶ Eventually, it would be in Section 23 that the Kent family and their descendants would leave the most lasting imprint on the cultural landscape.

In 1853, when the Kent family arrived, they settled at an undetermined location but it was near the township's first white settler, Joseph Enochs, who had arrived in 1852 and first settled in Section 24.⁷ In 1858, Enochs and his wife, Betsey, transferred a parcel of land in Section 23 to the Madison Township trustees for use as a "burying ground." The Enochs' deed to the trustees for this land specified that "said piece of land is for burying the dead on and for no other purpose."⁸ The following year, in 1859, Moses Kent Sr. acquired the land surrounding the cemetery from the Enochs family.⁹ From that point on, the area became identified with the Kent family name. A school house was constructed next to the cemetery by at least 1870 (Fig. 19), and it became known as Kent school house¹⁰ and the burial ground became the Kent cemetery. The road through Section 23 became known as Kent street or road and the whole area was known as the Kent neighborhood and "Kent's Corners." Thus, the Kent family name became ingrained in the physical landmarks and community identity of that part of Madison Township.¹¹

³ A. T. Andreas, *Illustrated Historical Atlas of the State of Iowa* (1875, reprinted Des Moines: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1970), 461.

⁴ Iowa State Census, 1856. For a discussion of the interdependency of the first families who settled the Midwest prairies and created rural neighborhoods that served as their "community," see John Mack Faragher, *Sugar Creek: Life on the Illinois Prairie* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986).

⁵ *The History*, 594; Iowa State Census, 1856, Poweshiek County, Iowa, Madison Township.

⁶ Based on Poweshiek County Recorder Deed Book 1, which appears to cover 1851-1855, the name "Moses Kent Sen." [Sr.] is connected with several parcels in Sections 24 and 26 in 1853, but not the Section 23 parcel on which the present Kent Chapel would be built eventually.

⁷ *The History*, 594. How Joseph Enochs acquired his land remains unknown, but it had been surveyed and was available for purchase. See generally, Roscoe L. Lokken, *Iowa Public Land Disposal* (Iowa City: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1942), map at 47, 144.

⁸ Deed, Joseph Enochs and Betsey Enochs to the trustees of Madison Township, Poweshiek County, Iowa, dated October 6, 1858, recorded in Deed Book G, page 131, Poweshiek County Recorder's Office. By 1880, the cemetery contained "about 100 graves," *The History*, 598. By the 1930s, twenty members of the Kent family had been laid to rest there. See Iowa WPA Graves Registration Survey. Accessed at <http://iowawpagraves.org/index.php?cid=79> on August 27, 2007.

⁹ The early records of the Kents' purchase of the land on which the Kent Union Chapel would eventually be built are incomplete and confusing, no doubt in part because of the number of Kents in the township. Some clarification of when Moses Kent Sr. acquired the Kent Union Chapel parcel was sought as early as 1882, when one Donald Fraser, a personal acquaintance, averred in a filed affidavit that he "was well acquainted with Moses Kent Sr. who on [January] 31, 1859 purchased of Jacob Enochs the SW of SE qr Sec 23-81-14 West..." See Poweshiek County Recorder's Office, Deed Book 18, page 609. The reference to Jacob Enochs rather than Joseph Enochs is probably an error in the memory of the affiant or of the transcriber who recorded the affidavit in the book.

¹⁰ The 1880 *History of Poweshiek County*, which states that the first school in the township was "Kent's school-house" does not specify a date or location for this school and nothing can be found that convincingly connects the Kent log school with the land next to the cemetery in Section 23. An 1870 township map shows a school next to the cemetery, but labels it "No. 6," suggesting that there are at least five other schools in the township by that year. *Lewis' Map of Poweshiek County, State of Iowa* (Des Moines: Mills & Co., 1870).

¹¹ *Brooklyn Chronicle*, August 25, 1965, reprinting an article from the same newspaper published July 3, 1930.

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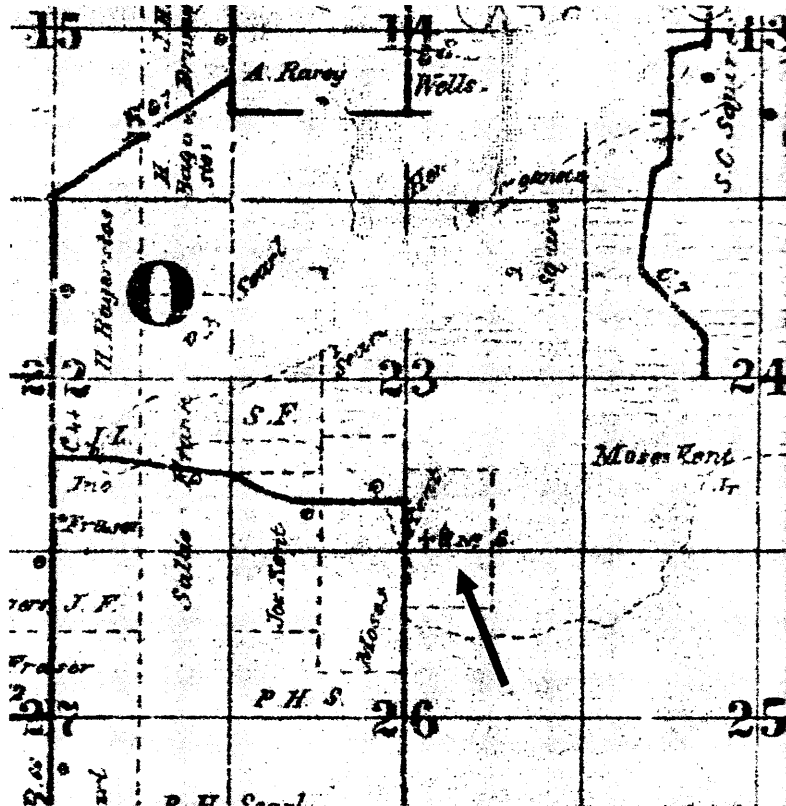


Figure 19 Section 23 and its surroundings, in Madison Township, 1870. Note the extensive landholdings of the extended Kent family in and around Section 23. The map is marked with a cross to signify the extant cemetery next to school house “No. 6,” later the site of the Kent Union Chapel. *Lewis’ Map of Poweshiek County, State of Iowa, 1870.*

The Kent school house was central to the surrounding community, nearly all of whom were native-born farm families, many of them Methodists.¹² From its beginning, the Kent school house served many community functions that encompassed both the secular and spiritual. The school house was a venue for church services, a polling place for elections, a social center for rural neighborhood gatherings, and a wedding chapel. Adjacent to the township cemetery, the school house naturally was used for funeral services. The “Kent Sunday school” met weekly in the school house, and “ice cream and cake socials” and other events took place there as well.¹³ Many activities were intended to raise funds for the Sunday school, building maintenance, or some larger community purpose. Other gatherings were held purely for “fellowship.” The historical record suggests that many of these activities and functions at Kent school were organized, scheduled, and managed by a small group of local women who informally thought of themselves as a ladies aid organization, but occasionally publicly called

¹² Iowa State Census, 1895. The Methodists, including the Kents, organized as a church in 1856, but they held their meetings in several district school houses. Two decades later, in 1875, the Madison Township Methodists reorganized and built a large church a little over a mile north of Kent school house.

¹³ *Brooklyn Chronicle*, June 15, 1900.

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themselves the “Kent Ladies Aid Society,” and, later, formally incorporated themselves as the “Kent Cemetery Aid Society.”¹⁴

In 1907, Poweshiek County redistricted its public schools and the Kent school building was physically relocated one mile to the northeast to better serve its newly drawn district.¹⁵ The removal of the school from its time-honored place, however, left a void in the rural neighborhood, acutely felt by area residents. No longer was there a shelter to host the funerals prior to burials in the adjacent cemetery, no place to hold Memorial Day services, no building in which to gather for ice cream socials, Sunday school, quilting, or other social activities. The informal rural community that had so long relied on the school building to hold civic, social, cultural, and religious events was missed and so the women of the ladies aid group began planning a replacement for the school building.¹⁶

The Kent Cemetery Aid Society and Kent Union Chapel

What became the formal Kent Cemetery Aid Society upon its incorporation in 1908 appears at first glance to have been a more or less typical ladies aid group, composed of an association of farm wives who lived within a five- to six-mile radius of the Kent Cemetery. Some lived in neighboring Jefferson Township to the east. Most of the women in the group traced their families back to Madison Township’s first settlers and many had relatives buried in Kent Cemetery. Though all were native-born Christians, the women represented several denominations, including Methodist, Catholic, and Presbyterian, and less typically, a few women who claimed no religious affiliation at all. In this membership make-up, the women mirrored the broader rural community of which they were a part. According to state census records, Madison Township families near the turn of the twentieth century included Methodist, Christian, Protestant, Presbyterian, Baptist, Episcopal, Lutheran, Catholic, Free Thinker, United Brethren, Dunkard, Quaker, Mormon, Deist, and even an “Infidel,” while many admitted to no religious affiliation at all.¹⁷ The women’s decision to replace Kent school with a union chapel that would serve multiple denominations as well as the non-religious needs of the district reflects their commitment to “the proposition that faith is important, but ‘community’ is critical.”¹⁸ The group’s non-denominational mission in replacing the school made Kent Union Chapel “more truly a community enterprise than most country churches.”¹⁹

Ladies aid societies originated in the 1880s in large urban churches, where ministers gave the congregation’s female members a distinct but limited role within the church. The ideology of separate and gendered spheres pervasive in the middle class in the mid-nineteenth century, initially confined women to the home in order to tend to domestic needs and raise children to be good citizens. Gradually, women of better economic means expanded their sphere of moral influence to include new roles in schools, churches, and communities. Ladies aid societies were one type of women’s association that promoted moral influence to attain collective goals. Though they worked closely with “the men who controlled the church’s

¹⁴ Primary sources suggest that over the decades the public and the women themselves mingled these references. What was consistent was the sex of the membership and the community-supportive mission. See, for example, references contained in the article published in the *Brooklyn Chronicle*, on August 25, 1965, which was a reprint of an article from the same newspaper published July 3, 1930; also see the slim collection of Kent Union Chapel and Cemetery records held by the Poweshiek County Historical Society.

¹⁵ *Brooklyn Chronicle*, August 25, 1965, reprinting an article from the same newspaper published July 3, 1930. Later, Madison Township built all new schools. By 1930, the old Kent school house had been converted to a farm house.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Iowa State Census, 1895. Under the category of “Religion,” an answer of “None” or no response could also indicate an unwillingness to give an answer to the census taker.

¹⁸ Jan R. Olive [Nash] Full, “Hinterland or Heartland: The Survival of Small-Town Lake Mills, Iowa” (unpubl. Ph.D. dissertation, Loyola University Chicago, 2006), 80. The observation related to a similar non-denominational “union church” built in around 1880 in a north-central Iowa village when disagreements among local Methodists threatened to exclude some town residents from their services.

¹⁹ *Brooklyn Chronicle*, August 25, 1965, reprinting an article from the same newspaper published July 3, 1930.

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temporal affairs,” the women of urban ladies aid societies largely remained subordinate to male church authority.²⁰ By contrast, and suggesting its lack of religious origins—though not necessarily any lack of faith on the part of the women themselves—the newly formed Kent Cemetery Aid Society answered to no male church authority in 1908. The religiously diverse women who were members of the Kent Cemetery Aid Society not only built Kent Union Chapel, they controlled its “temporal affairs” and maintained it through their own fundraising and physical efforts.²¹ By naming their organization the Kent Cemetery Aid Society instead of the Kent Ladies Aid Society, the women effectively made their sex irrelevant and subordinate to their mission (Fig. 20).²²



Figure 20 Members of the Kent Cemetery Aid Society at a gathering some time around 1917 to 1919. Photographed by member Mrs. Luetta Brimmer, the women posed with their Red Cross sewing projects during World War I. From left to right: Mrs. Art Undiedt, Mrs. Mike Dee, Mrs. Frank Force, Mrs. John Dee, Mrs. Charles Irwin, Mrs. George Haswell, Mrs. Balzer Kriegel, Mrs. Ed Dee, Mrs. John Baggenstos, and Mrs. Lewis Kent. Mrs. Fred Beadle sits at the treadle sewing machine. *Brooklyn Historical Society, Brooklyn, Iowa*

²⁰ See Nancy Grey Osterud, *Bonds of Community: The Lives of Farm Women in Nineteenth-Century New York* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 268-269, 273: “The urban ministers who originated the ladies’ aid societies intended to provide women with a distinct, limited, and subordinate domain of activity within the church which supported the institution without threatening its male domination, but rural women turned it to different ends; they sought to expand their collective power within the church and to promote more gender-integrated modes of social action.”

²¹ See Osterud, *Bonds of Community*, 268-269.

²² Article X of the Society’s Articles of Incorporation specified in clear language that “no person shall be denied the use of Kent Union Chapel on account of religious creed or political party affiliation.” “Articles of Incorporation for an Aid Society,” Poweshiek County Recorder, Miscellaneous Record Book No. 236, page 553-554 (this citation is to the Articles as re-filed when the 50-year charter expired in 1958).

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Planning for the new chapel began on June 2, 1907, when the women met at the home of Dolly Roudabush in Jefferson Township.²³ At that meeting, the members refocused themselves “to swing this project [of replacing the school with a new building].”²⁴ The women selected the name, Kent Cemetery Aid Society, to emphasize their specific mission, and elected officers and a building committee that included Mary Hilligas as President, Carrie Houck as Secretary, and Miriam A. Johnston, J. Alice (“Allie”) Miller, Dolly Roudabush, and Flora Kent as Trustees. A year later, on June 4, 1908, the Kent Cemetery Aid Society signed a 50-year lease for the land next to Kent Cemetery, then owned by F. O. and Grace Cunningham. In signing the lease, the parties agreed that “within a reasonable time” the Kent Cemetery Aid Society would “erect on said land a building suitable for housing public gatherings of people.”²⁵

The members also formally incorporated the Kent Cemetery Aid Society in that year, 1908, and the women set to work soliciting funds for a new building and organizing fund-raising events such as chicken suppers, ice cream socials, apron sales, and waste paper drives.²⁶ From these efforts, the Kent Cemetery Aid Society raised \$1,595.58 and successfully secured many in-kind donations that made Kent Union Chapel a reality. Several Brooklyn businesses, for example, donated material and merchandise to the project. Light Lumber Yard furnished the lumber; Breckenridge Hardware donated the stoves and other hardware accessories; and B. E. Dayton Furniture Store donated some of the interior furnishings. Art Coburn, a local carpenter, lent his services, as did Will Pierson, who wrote Kent Union Chapel’s first insurance policy.²⁷ Kent Union Chapel was dedicated May 23, 1909. Though well attended, dedication collections amounted to only \$92.63.²⁸ The following Sunday, Kent Cemetery served as the site of the township’s Memorial Day address given by W. L. Clapp and a performance by the township band directed by Miss Thursia Manatt.²⁹

²³ *Brooklyn Chronicle*, August 25, 1965, reprinting an article from the same newspaper published July 3, 1930.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Deed Book 76, page 439, Poweshiek County Recorder’s Office.

²⁶ “Articles of Incorporation for an Aid Society,” *Brooklyn Chronicle*, August 25, 1965, reprinting an article from the same newspaper published July 3, 1930.

²⁷ *Brooklyn Chronicle*, August 25, 1965, reprinting an article from the same newspaper published July 3, 1930.

²⁸ *Ibid.* On May 27, 1909, the *Brooklyn Chronicle* reported a collection “only a little over \$100 being taken up.”

²⁹ *Brooklyn Chronicle*, May 27, 1909.

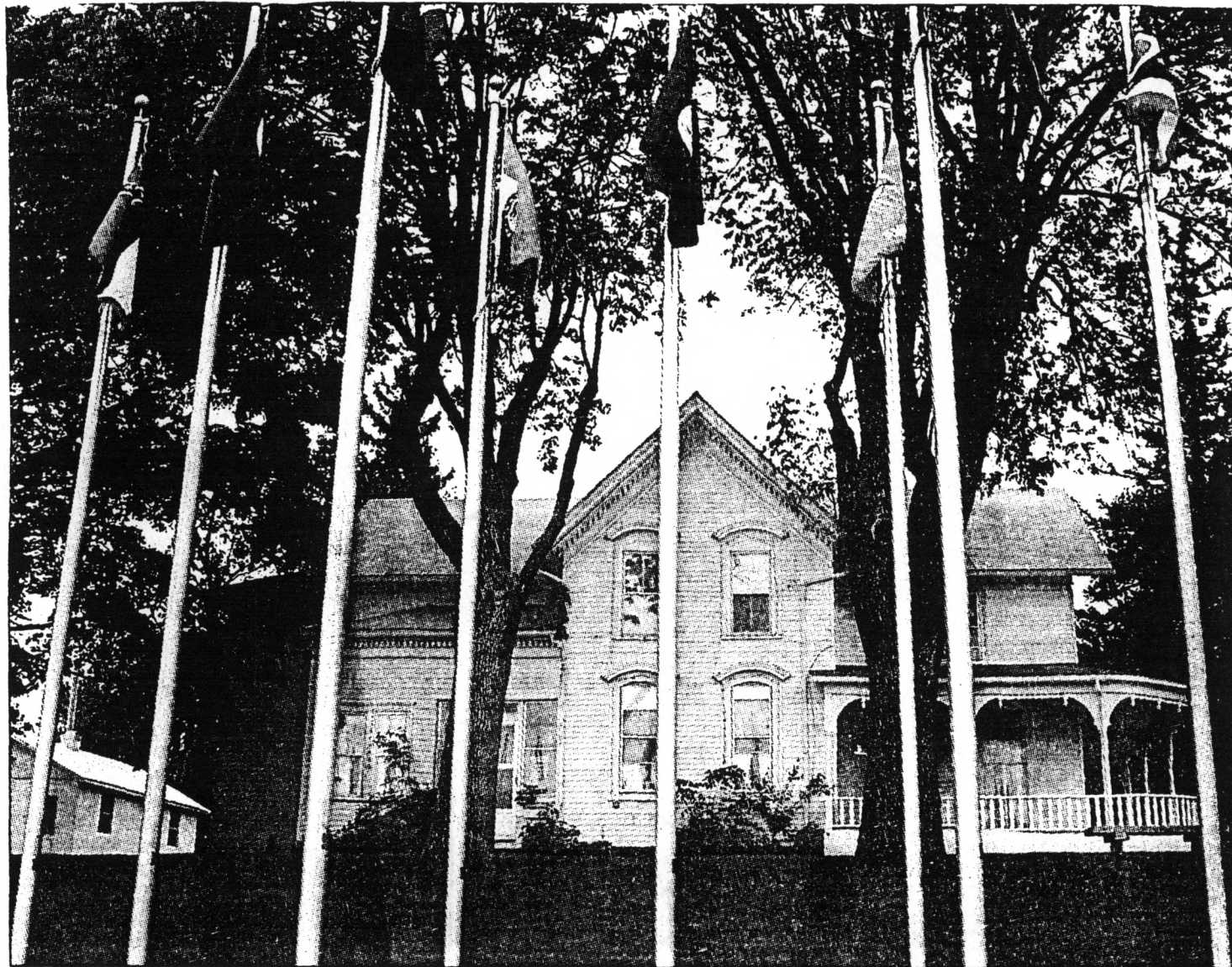
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Photograph from THE DES MOINES SUNDAY REGISTER, June 23, 1996, page 1C, "On the Road to Brooklyn," by Alyssa Haywoode.



Some of the state flags that fly beside the Brooklyn Public Library.

PHOTO BY ALYSSA HAYWOODE/THE REGISTER

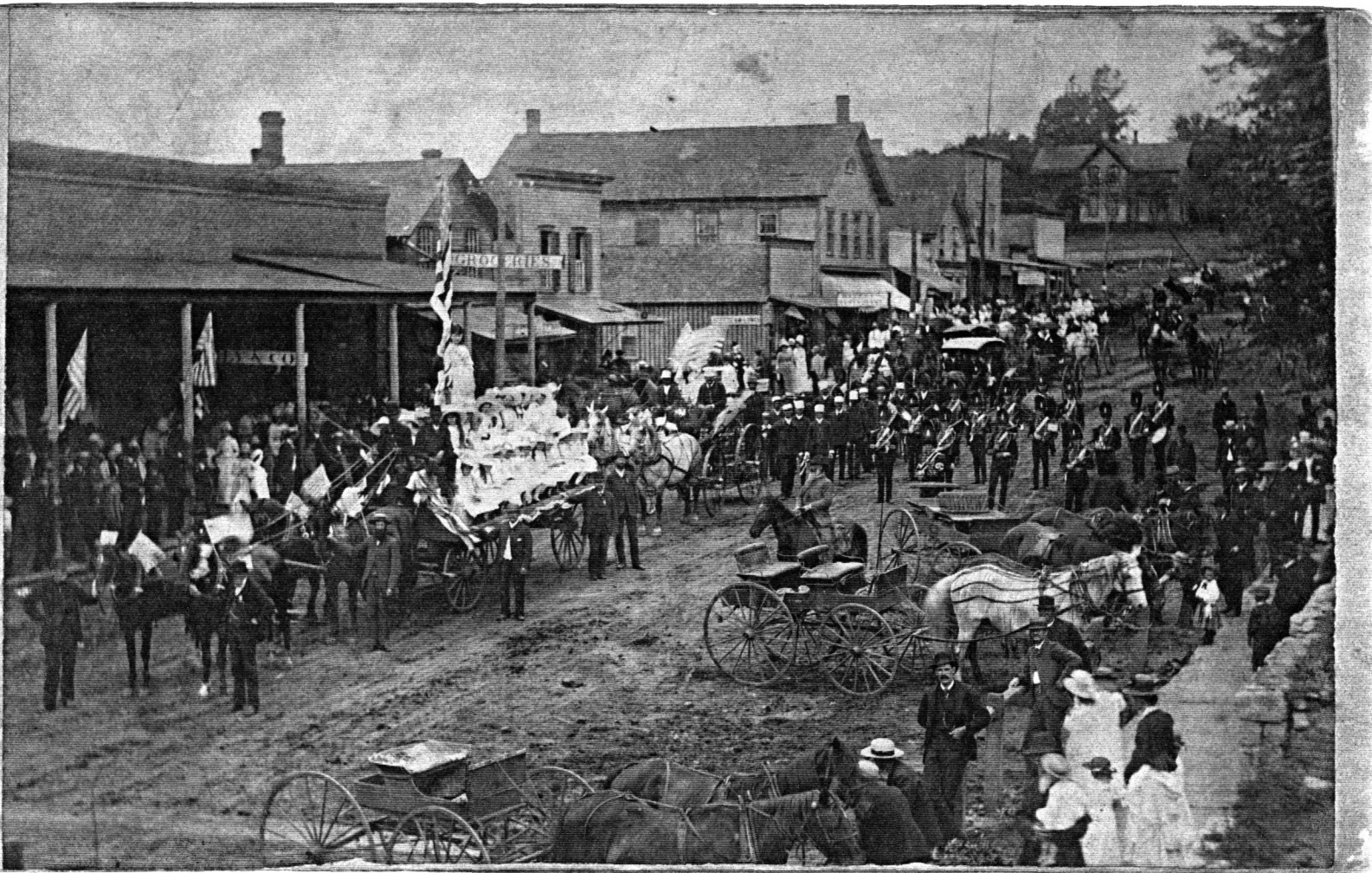
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Photograph of a downtown Brooklyn, Iowa, celebration, "Goddess of Liberty," on July 4, 1886. The William Manatt house, built in 1869, is seen at upper right corner.



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10. Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

The nomination includes that portion of the southwest quarter of the southeast quarter of Section 23, Madison Township, Poweshiek County, described more specifically as the two fenced enclosures on the north side of county road V18, between Kent Church Road on the west and Holiday Road on the east, such fenced enclosures surrounding Kent Union Chapel and, adjacent to it on the west, the Cemetery.

Boundary Justification

The boundary is the description, using current visual landmarks, of the entire property historically associated with Kent Union Chapel and Cemetery. The chapel and cemetery are under the control of different property owners—the chapel is owned by the adjacent farmer, while the cemetery is under the jurisdiction of the township trustees—but the two resources are inextricably linked historically.

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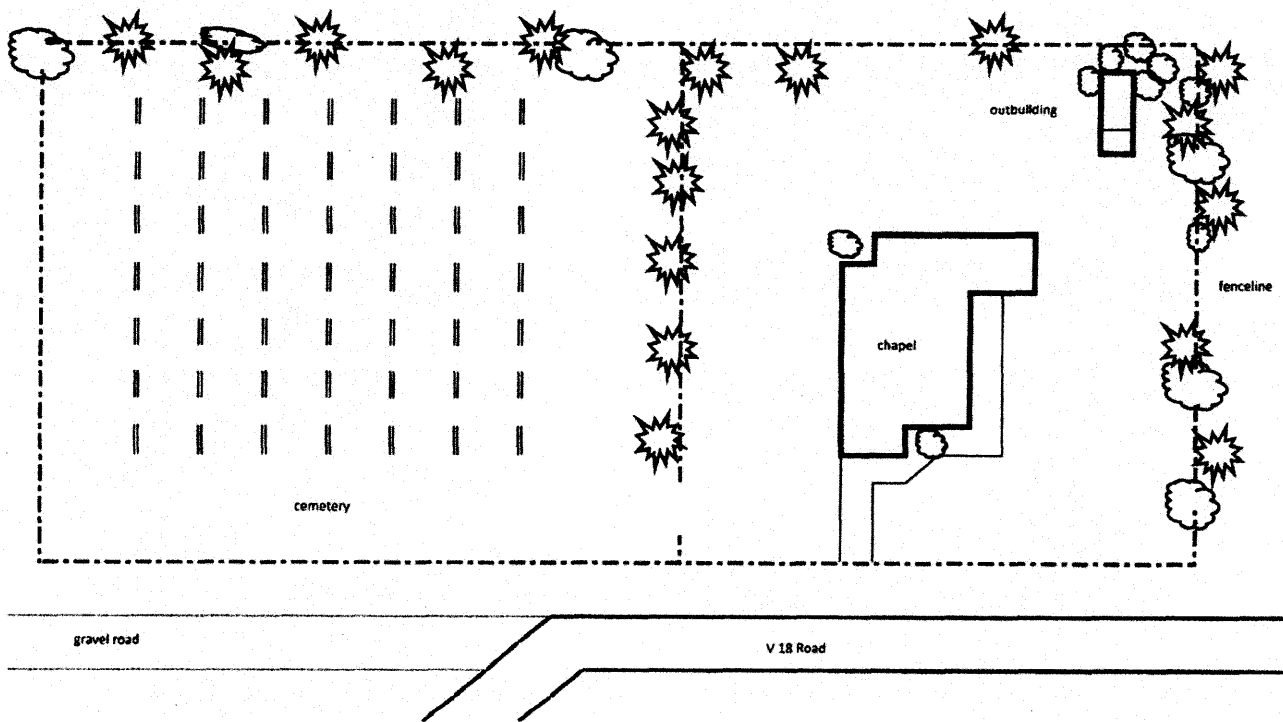
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Site Plan
(sketch map by Tallgrass Historians L.C., 2008)



50 yards

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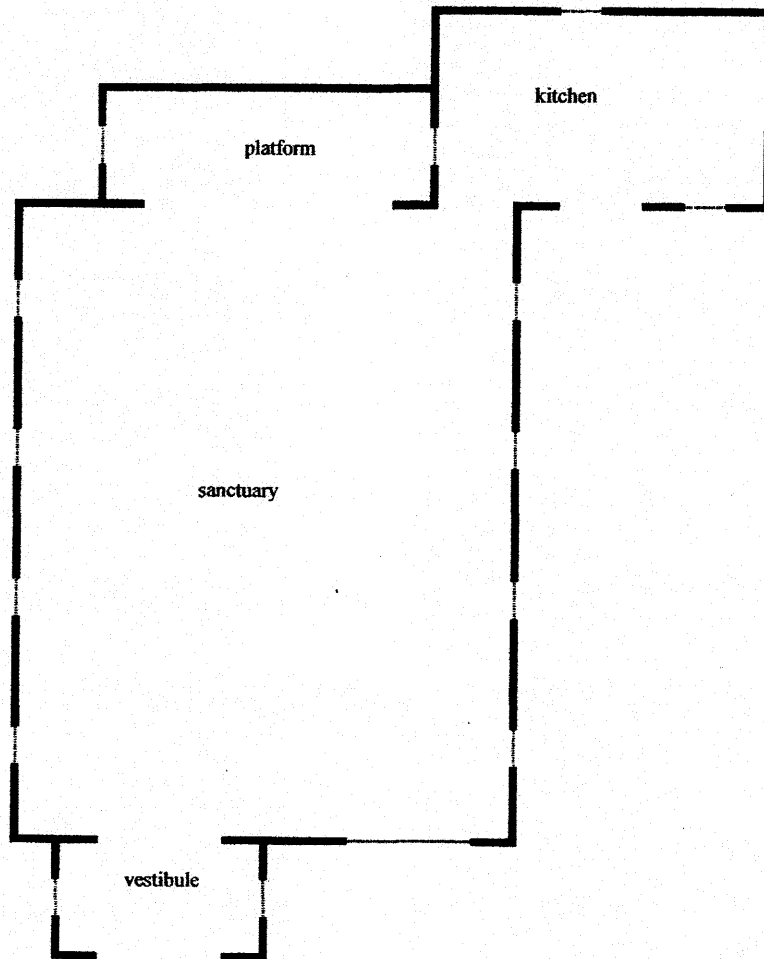
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Chapel Floor Plan (Tallgrass Historians L.C., 2008)



10 ft.

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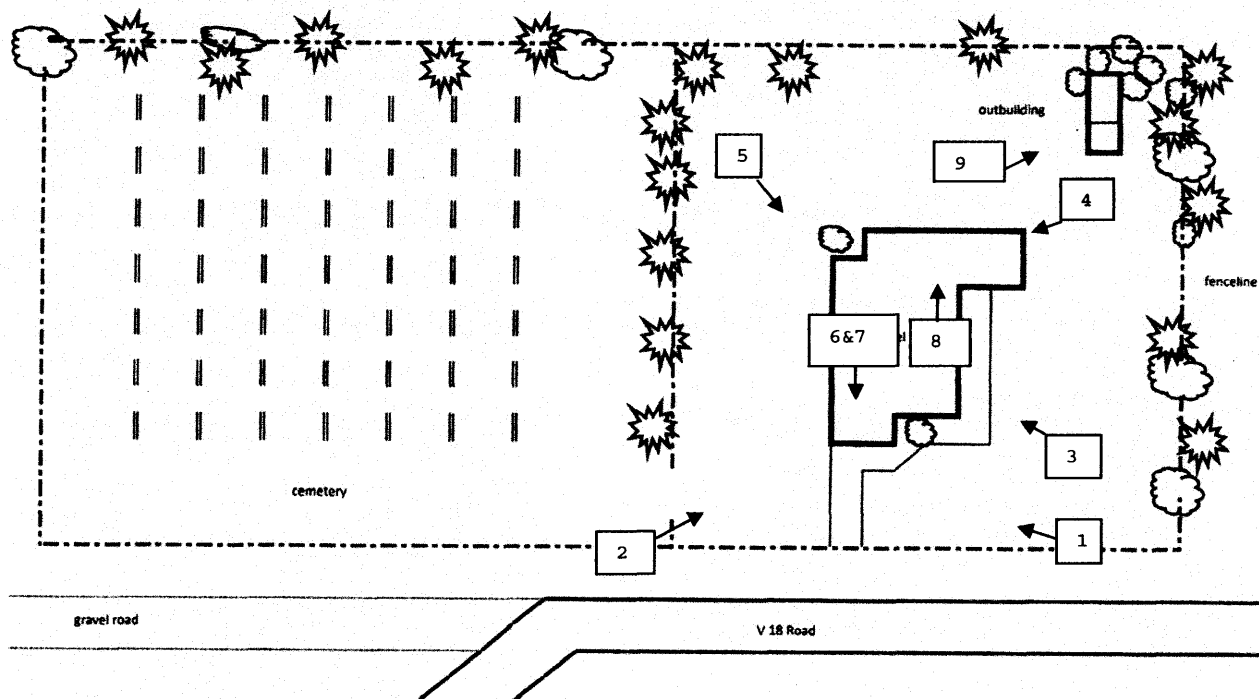
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Photograph Locations



Photograph Label Information (## 3, 4, & 5 share information)

- 3. Tallgrass Historians L.C., Jan Olive Nash
- 4. September, 2007
- 5. Tallgrass Historians L.C., Iowa City, Iowa
- 6. Photograph #1: Exterior of chapel's south facade and cemetery beyond, facing NW
- Photograph #2: Exterior of chapel's west side and south facade, facing NE
- Photograph #3: Exterior of chapel's east side and kitchen wing, facing NW
- Photograph #4: Exterior of chapel's kitchen wing, facing SW
- Photograph #5: Exterior of chapel's west side and north chancel, facing SE
- Photograph #6: Interior from sanctuary looking toward vestibule, facing S
- Photograph #7: Interior from kitchen doorway area, looking into sanctuary, facing SSE
- Photograph #8: Interior from near southeast corner of sanctuary, looking toward the raised platform, facing N
- Photograph #9: Exterior of outbuilding, facing NE