



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Nomination 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 Sumner School
other names/site number Sugar Grove School, Kepler School, Little Brick School, Abbe School, Abbe Creek School

2. Location

street & number 877 West Mount Vernon Road not for publication N/A
city or town Mount Vernon vicinity X
state Iowa code IA county Linn code 113 zip code 52314

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.)

Russell Bennett DSHPO 3/13/13
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 5.8.13
Signature of Keeper Date of Action

Sumner School
Name of Property

Linn 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
(do not include previously listed resources in count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	buildings
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	structures
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	objects
<u>4</u>	<u>3</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)

EDUCATION/school

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION AND CULTURE/museum

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

MID-19TH CENTURY/Greek Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE
walls BRICK
roof WOOD/shingle
other _____

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

Sumner School
Name of Property

Linn County, Iowa
County and State

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.

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.

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 # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE _____
 EDUCATION _____
 RELIGION _____
 SOCIAL HISTORY _____

Period of Significance

circa 1858-1936

Significant Dates

circa 1858

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

unknown

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: _____

Sumner School
Name of Property

Linn County, Iowa
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.5 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing	
1	<u>15</u>	<u>628382</u>	<u>4644338</u>	3	<u>15</u>	<u>628338</u>	<u>4644312</u>
2	<u>15</u>	<u>628477</u>	<u>4644298</u>	4	<u>15</u>	<u>628494</u>	<u>4644239</u>

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 Leah D. Rogers/Principal Investigator and Jennifer A. Price, Research Associate
organization Tallgrass Historians L.C. date March 6, 2013
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 Linn County
street & number 935 2nd Street SW telephone 319-892-5000
city or town Cedar Rapids state IA zip code 52404

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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Section 7 Page 1 Property name Sumner School
County and State Linn County, Iowa

7. Narrative Description

The Sumner School (a.k.a., the Sugar Grove school, the Kepler school, the "Little Brick" school, and the Abbe Creek or Abbe school) is located on the north side of Mt. Vernon Road northwest of the city of Mt. Vernon in Franklin Township, Linn County, Iowa. The school is specifically located just east of the intersection of Mt. Vernon Road with Irish Lane, south of Abbe Creek, and northeast of the Abbe Creek Cemetery (historically known as the Sugar Grove Cemetery¹ and the Kepler Cemetery²). The school is a one-story, front-gabled brick building constructed in the 1850s using soft-mud brick manufactured in nearby Mt. Vernon.³ The 20 by 26 foot brick building is a vernacular expression of the Greek Revival style of architecture. This stylistic influence is expressed in the front-gabled orientation, the low pitch of the gabled roof, the centered front door, and the corbelled brick frieze around the building and cornice returns on the gable ends. A corbelled brick chimney rises from the roof ridge towards the rear of the wood-shingled roof. The sides of the building feature two windows on each side, with two windows on the rear of the building. All of the six-panes-over-six-panes (6/6) double-hung windows are currently covered with lockable wooden board shutters to protect the windows and building from vandalism. The shutters are kept closed except when the museum is open to the public.

¹ An interesting aside concerns a reference in the biography of John W. Kepler (nephew of Henry Kepler and eldest son of Conrad Kepler), which noted that John had "pursued his studies in the pioneer schools of Franklin Township" and "taught school at Sugar Grove for a term of eight consecutive years and then resigned, although the Directors wished him to continue" (Chapman Brothers 1887:825; emphasis added). Sugar Grove was the name of the early voting precinct that included this area (see also footnote #2 below). One of the names applied to the cemetery was also Sugar Grove; hence, it appears that the school was called this in its early years. John Kepler was born in 1834; therefore, if he completed eight grades of education before teaching, then he would have been of age to teach during the earliest years of the Sumner School in the 1850s-60s. The only known record book listing teachers for the Sumner School begins in 1875, although a 1931 newspaper article listed the first six teachers as including: William "Willcox," Tom Johnson, Miss Myra Neil, William Allbright, and "Issac" Julien (Linn County Conservation Board 1964, 1995; Van Buren 1931).

² In 1895, the cemetery was identified as the "Kepler Cemetery," which was "situated west of [Mt. Vernon] near Abby Creek" in the May 1, 1895 edition of the *Marion Register*. The 1895 newspaper article was a reprint of an item from the *Mt. Vernon Hawkeye*, which related that the ownership of the cemetery "had been under a cloud for many years" but was recently cleared up by transferring the title to the Franklin Township trustees (ibid.). However, the cemetery was also known locally as the Sugar Grove Cemetery. This appellation comes from the pioneer-era name for the first voting precinct in this area, which was called Sugar Grove (Brewer and Wick 1911:463). Henry Kepler, on whose early claim the Sumner School was built, was referred to as being from "North Sugar Grove" in the listing of the first board of trustees for what would become Cornell College in Mt. Vernon (ibid.:202-3). The Sugar Grove Precinct encompassed the early Abbe Creek settlement area and appears to have been named for a grove of sugar maples once in this area (*Cedar Rapids Republican*, September 1, 1914). A 1937 interview with Mrs. Robert Martin (née Mary E. Clark in 1855) related that she grew up on her grandparents' farm near Mt. Vernon. Mrs. Martin attended the "little brick school house, known as Abbey Creek" at least during the early 1860s and recalled that "the Indians had a maple sugar camp in her grandfather's timber. They came every spring, made their syrup and then traded it for hay for their ponies" (*Marion Sentinel*, January 28, 1937). The Clark family homestead was just south and a little west of the Sumner School, with the 1859 and 1869 maps showing a large grove of trees on the Oliver Clark, Sr. property extending all along Abbe Creek over to, and including the Henry Kepler property and the location of the school (McWilliams and Thompson 1859; Thompson and Everts 1869).

³ Through the years, school children have carved their initials into the soft brick of the school's exterior, with the tradition being that they could do so if they passed their eighth grade examination. Carved dates include ones from the 1880s (*Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, May 20, 1973).

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The windows are historic in age and may be original to the building's construction; however, a notation in the 1880 school district board of directors' minutes indicated that new sash had been purchased for the windows (*The Mount Vernon Hawkeye-Record and The Lisbon Herald*, August 29, 1946). Therefore, the extant windows may have been installed in 1880.

The front door to the school is a modern replacement, and the former three-light transom window over the door has been replaced by a board covering. The brick lintel above the transom remains the original "uncommon" type of soldier bond in which the bricks are laid upright with the narrow width exposed (McAlester and McAlester 1998:38). There has been some repair to the lintel and the area of the gable end above the lintel likely to resolve cracking and settling and/or water damage through the years. Some of this repair was done in the late nineteenth or early twentieth centuries based on a historical photograph of the building and a notation in the 1876 school board minutes that the building was to be repaired (*The Mount Vernon Hawkeye-Record and The Lisbon Herald*, August 29, 1946). However, some of the damage occurred when the school was moved in the mid-1920s. Two iron tie rods placed through the upper portion of the front gable ends were reportedly installed after the move had displaced some of the bricks and weakened the building (Van Buren 1931). In general, the brick walls are laid in a 5:1 common bond pattern.

The school currently faces southeast and rests on a concrete foundation. It originally sat on a limestone rubble or slab foundation and faced south-southwest fronting the old route of Mt. Vernon Road (originally the territorial road between Bloomfield and Marion, a.k.a., the Bloomfield Road or the Mt. Vernon to Marion Road).⁴ The story has been told that the building originally faced north and was moved to an east-facing direction when the road was widened in 1925 for use as the Lincoln Highway (later the original U.S. 30). The building would have been in the new highway right of way in its original location and was moved to accommodate the new road.⁵ However, examination of a historical photograph of the original configuration of the school prior to the move resulted in the conclusion that the front of the building faced the road to the south rather than north towards the creek. In the photograph, the direction of the sunlight and the fact that the landscape descends behind the school rather than ascends, which it would have done had the building faced north, supports this conclusion. The photograph further suggests that the school was also moved back to the west when it was turned.⁶ The available nineteenth century historic plat maps also depict the school located on the north side of the road and separated from the cemetery by the early roadway. Since the historical photograph shows the school facing a road, then this would confirm that it originally faced south and not north.

There are some oral historical accounts suggesting that the school was moved twice and that the school was on the same

⁴ Bloomfield was the original name for Muscatine, with this early road connecting this Mississippi River town with Marion, which was then the county seat of Linn County.

⁵ An interview with "Grandma Rebecca Brown," who was two years old when her family settled in Linn County in 1856, noted that she attended "the little brick school on Abbey creek" (*Cedar Rapids Gazette*, May 14, 1950). Mrs. Brown related that "the school has been moved" and that "the new Lincoln highway goes right through the spot where it used to be" (*ibid.*).

⁶ This is suggested by what appears to be the top of the school's storm cellar in the background of the historical photograph and visible on the northwest side of the building in its original location. The cellar is now to the northeast of the turned school building; therefore, the building would have to have been moved to the northwest as well as turned to the east in order to result in the current configuration. However, the current location of the building cannot be far from its original site.

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County and State Linn County, Iowa

side of the road as the cemetery and was separated from the cemetery when it was moved across the road in the mid-1920s (Austin Armstrong, personal communication with Leah Rogers, March 5, 2013; Van Buren 1931). However, all of the late nineteenth century maps depict the school as being on the north side of the road across from the cemetery. Again, the circa 1900s-10s photograph of the school clearly shows the building facing south, with the dirt road in front of the building. Perhaps the local lore grew out of the possibility that the original log or frame school was sited on the south side of road next to the cemetery since the earliest available nineteenth century map depicting the school location dates from 1859 after the brick school had been built.

A 1946 newspaper article stated that the original road was 40 feet wide and was widened to 66 feet in 1925. The school was in the new right-of-way and had to be moved back "80 feet" (*The Mount Vernon Hawkeye-Record and The Lisbon Herald*, August 29, 1946). The "as built" construction plans for the mid-1920s road widening do show the new road right of way in the vicinity of the school to be around 60 feet wide (Construction plans dated 1924, on file with the Linn County Roads Department, Marion, Iowa). However, if the school was moved back 80 feet from its original site, then this would have placed the school on the south side of the road in line with the cemetery prior to 1925, which does not correspond to the historic plat maps or the historic photographs of the building prior to the move. Rather, it appears that the building was more likely moved 40 to 50 feet north of its original location, a distance that would have placed the original spot near the centerline of the 1925 alignment of Mount Vernon Road and in a location that would have been on the north side of the original road across from the cemetery.

After the school closed in 1936, the building appears to have been little used until August 30, 1946, when the school district sold the building and its contents at auction. The Pitlik family purchased the building and subsequently converted it into a private residence. Following their marriage on September 14, 1949, Eddie Pitlik, Jr., and his bride Mary Kathleen "Sis" (Woods) Pitlik, took up residence (*The Gazette*, November 7, 2011). An extant concrete sidewalk that angles from the front door south-southeast to the current road right of way was present by the early 1950s and may have been added when the building became a residence. It was certainly added after the building was moved in 1925. A second concrete sidewalk leads from the front door of the building southeast out to the gravel parking lot, both of which were added in the 1960s when the property became a historical museum operated by the Linn County Conservation Board.

The interior of the school was restored in the 1960s back to the appearance of a one-room schoolhouse complete with three rows of wooden desks with cast iron legs, a "pot-bellied" cast iron stove and stove pipe in the center of the room; black boards; coat racks; a wooden teacher's desk; a wooden pump organ; a wooden and glass book case; and other antique objects one would typically find in a historic rural schoolhouse. Most of these items are not original to this school but were donated by local residents. The hardwood flooring is of historic age if not original to the building; however, the current wainscoting was installed during the 1960s restoration of the building for the school museum (*Cedar Rapids Gazette*, June 7, 1964).⁷ Room partitions, wallpaper, and an attached woodshed that had also been added during the residential use of this building were removed during the 1960s restoration (Linn County Conservation Board

⁷ It was noted in newspaper article for the dedication of the Abbe Creek School Museum that the restoration had included "reinforcement of the floors" (October 1964 article in folder labeled "Abbe Creek School," Mt. Vernon Historic Preservation Commission Archives, City Hall, Mt. Vernon, Iowa).

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c.1969). The exterior was improved with a new wood-shingled roof (*The Mount Vernon Hawkeye-Record and The Lisbon Herald*, August 22, 1963).

In addition to the brick schoolhouse, the nominated property includes: the school's storm cellar, which is a stone-walled and brick-vaulted room banked into the slope to the northeast of the school and covered by a wooden door and a later added concrete roof at the ground surface; an original Lincoln Highway commemorative concrete highway marker; a glacial boulder marker that features a bronze plaque in honor of William Abbe, considered to be one of the first settlers in the Mt. Vernon area and placed at this location in 1937 by the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR); a wood-frame privy on a concrete foundation to the northwest of the school building that is a modern reconstruction for museum purposes;⁸ a natural spring, which supplied the school with water and located to the northeast next to the creek and accessed from the fenced school property by a modern fence-straddling wooden staircase; a modern wood-framed pit toilet (both men's and women's sides) with underground concrete vault; a modern free-standing wooden information kiosk featuring an educational display imparting the history of the Lincoln Highway and the nearby Seedling Mile; and a stone retaining wall and grass-covered platform for picnic tables and a wooden sign added after the property became a historical museum and recreational site. The sign reads "Abbe Creek School Museum/school established - 1844/Linn County Conservation Board."

The Lincoln Highway marker is considered contributing because it was placed at this location in 1928 as part of a marking project executed by the Boy Scouts of America. The markers were placed to remember the Lincoln Highway even though the highway had been renumbered U.S. 30 and was no longer officially the Lincoln Highway. Since the marker was placed here within the period of significance and is related to the Lincoln Highway, the widening of which resulted in the moving of the school to its current configuration, the marker is considered a contributing object to the nominated property.

Also considered contributing are the storm cellar (a contributing building), the spring (part of the contributing site), and the identified historic/prehistoric archaeological component (Site 13LN1037) recommended as contributing to the overall significance of the Abbe Creek School property (Rogers and Price 2011). The spring is within the boundary of the County-owned parcel but can be accessed by the cattle pasturing on the adjacent privately-owned farm. Therefore, the spring water is no longer potable.

The site also includes the grass-covered sloping landscape historically associated with the school and the mature trees, most notably a large oak tree just north of the school in-between the fence and the creek. A prairie restoration plot is maintained along the west side of the parcel. The modern gravel parking lot is on the east side of the site, and the picnic table platform is

⁸ In the 1960s reconstruction, there were actually two privy structures built, one to represent girls' and boys' privies. The boys' privy structure is the one that survives, while the girls' privy has since been removed and was located closer to Mt. Vernon Road behind the school (*Cedar Rapids Gazette*, July 15, 1964; Linn County Conservation Board 1995). The archaeological remains of the original school privies have yet to be identified (Rogers and Price 2011). According to 98-year-old Austin Armstrong, who attended the school in the 1920s-30s, the privies were then located behind the school and towards the creek (Austin Armstrong, personal communication with Leah Rogers, March 5, 2013). Historically, privies were typically located behind a building a sufficient distance to keep offending odors out of the school. They often included separate facilities based on gender. Since the Sumner School originally faced the road and was located farther south and a little more east than its current location, the original privy features could be located to the east, northeast, or north-northwest of, or even at, the current location of the building.

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north and downslope from the school.

The modern privy and pit toilet are considered two non-contributing buildings and the kiosk is a non-contributing structure. The commemorative boulder, while of historical age, was added to this property a year after the school had ceased operations (and thus post-dating the period of significance for the school) and was unrelated to the history of the school itself. Therefore, it is considered a non-contributing object.

After the school closed in 1936, it was subsequently converted into a private residence before becoming a historical school museum in the 1960s under the ownership of the Linn County Conservation Board. Today, the interior has been restored back to a one-room school and is used as a museum to educate about Iowa's one-room schoolhouses of the nineteenth century.

Seven Aspects of Integrity

- Location - The Sumner School is located on its original parcel if not its original foundation nor in its original orientation. It was moved on-site to face southeast when it originally faced more southerly and appears to have been moved back farther to the west than the original site. This move was historic in age and occurred in 1925 when the adjacent roadway was widened for the Lincoln Highway. Based on historic map and photographic data, it appears that the school was probably moved a distance of 40 feet north from its original site. Therefore, while the schoolhouse was moved and changed direction, it is very close to its original location and remains on the original property associated with this historic school and was moved within the property's period of significance. It also still functioned as a school following its move.
- Design - The school building further retains good integrity of design retaining many original construction and design elements on both the exterior and interior. The most important exterior features include the overall Greek Revival-influenced design of the building and the corbelled brick frieze and cornice returns. Additionally, the historic-age windows are intact, with the primary exterior loss having been the front door and its transom window, which is now covered with a wooden panel. The hardwood floors are historic in age, with the interior having suffered little impact from its use as a residence. The interior has been restored to the look of a one-room schoolhouse using many items donated to the museum by local residents.
- Setting - The property retains fair integrity of setting, with the parcel associated with the original schoolhouse largely intact. The primary impacts to the setting have been the addition of a gravel parking lot, functional pit toilets, a display privy, and an educational kiosk associated with the current use of the property as a historical museum. Otherwise, the setting remains rural and surrounded as it always has been by Abbe Creek to the north and Mt. Vernon Road and Abbe Creek Cemetery to the south. The site's historical appearance is enhanced by the presence of a large, mature oak tree just north of the school that certainly dates from the property's period of significance.
- Materials - The main historical materials of the building still present consist of the locally-kilned soft mud brick walls and some of the interior woodwork. The foundation is not original and consists of a concrete foundation dating from the 1925 move of the building on site. The original foundation was made of local limestone.

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- **Workmanship** - The original workmanship of the building retains good integrity as seen in the brick wall construction and some of the interior details.
- **Feeling** - The school building and surrounding parcel still present a strong historical feeling despite the addition of modern appurtenances, such as the pit toilet and gravel parking lot, associated with its current use as a schoolhouse museum. The location of the pit toilet and the parking lot are well east of the building leaving the immediate viewshed around the old schoolhouse largely as it was in the early to mid-twentieth century.
- **Association** - The building is still recognizable as a historic one-room rural schoolhouse, representing an important stage in the development of Iowa's educational system.

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8. Narrative Statement of Significance

The Sumner School, located in Franklin Township northwest of Mount Vernon in Linn County, Iowa, is locally significant under Criteria A and C. Under Criterion A, the school is historically significant for its association with the earliest period in the development of the Iowa and Linn County public school systems. Built circa 1858, the school was built on land owned by Henry Kepler, a pioneer Franklin Township farmer, for public school purposes on part of his original land claim. Throughout its history, the school was known variously as the Sugar Grove School, the Kepler School, the Sumner School (Independent), the Little Brick School, and the Abbe Creek or Abbe School. Paid for and maintained by local and county property taxes, this one-room brick schoolhouse served this rural Linn County district for nearly eight decades, educating Kepler’s children and many other Franklin Township children until 1936, when the school closed permanently. The local history of the Sumner School is typical of thousands of other rural district schools across the state, and as such represents the history of early Iowans’ commitment to providing free education for all. The Sumner School is also locally significant under Criterion C because it embodies the distinctive characteristics of an antebellum one-room rural district school built in a vernacular expression of the Greek Revival style using locally-made brick. The Sumner School was used for Sunday church services during the period of significance and is considered to meet Criteria Consideration A for religious properties because it is significant for its primary use as a school. The building was also moved on site during the period of significance and is considered to meet Criteria Consideration B because of its architectural significance and the fact that it remained on its original parcel and continued to be used for a time as a school following its move in 1925. The period of significance is from circa 1858 to 1936, which represents the period in which this building was used as a school. The significant date is circa 1858 when the building was constructed.

Historical Significance of the Sumner School

The Sumner School is historically significant for its representation of “the importance that Iowans placed on free, public education” from the early pioneer days into the twentieth century (Neymeyer 2000:F-14). It was a one-room rural schoolhouse built by local residents on land donated by the Kepler family, who maintained an association with this school throughout much of its history. The school was under local control and was the embodiment of the independent school district aspect of Iowa’s educational development in the late nineteenth century. The building further functioned as the community church and local gathering place and played a prominent daily role in the neighborhood’s educational, religious, and social life from its inception to its closure.

History of the Sumner School

The Sumner School was built in the late 1850s using soft-mud brick thought to have been manufactured at the Port Stottler Brickyard in nearby Mt. Vernon. The exact date of construction has been variously reported in secondary accounts as 1854, 1856, or 1858. Both the 1854 and 1856 dates were used in accounts that stated the dates had been gleaned from records at the Linn County Assessor’s Office, with 1854 used in the 1964 dedication program for the Abbe Creek School Museum and 1856 used in the more recent literature and website concerning the museum (Linn County Conservation Board 1964, 1995; Abbe Creek School Museum accessed at <http://www.mycountyparks.com/>

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county/Linn/Park/Abbe-Creek-School-Museum.aspx, August 2012). The 1858 date was reported in several written accounts dating from the 1930s-40s. The first was reported in a newspaper article dating from 1931 noting that the brick school replaced an earlier frame school in 1858 (Van Buren 1931). This account also stated that “the bricks were hauled for many miles over the bumpy road in crude pioneer wagons” (ibid.). The second account dates from 1946 and stated that “the township trustees decided to replace [the] Abbe Creek building with a brick structure” and repeated the same “bumpy road” description for the hauling of the bricks (Goddard 1946). Finally, in the 1948 book of the centennial history of Mt. Vernon it was stated:

During the year 1844 five families united to build the Abbe schoolhouse two miles west of town. Fourteen years later, in 1858, it was rebuilt in brick, and after sixty years of valiant service it is now retired and is being used as a private home (The Centennial Committee 1948:20).

The “sixty years of service” was actually 78 years if the 1858 date of construction is correct in this account.⁹ While certainly there are errors in this centennial history book, the date of its publication in 1948 and the earlier newspaper accounts in 1931 and 1946 were closer to a time when persons would have still been alive who knew first-hand the early history of this school, lending some credence to that date of construction. For that reason, a “circa 1858” date of construction is used for this nomination because it appears to have the greatest credibility; however, it is qualified as “circa” because no primary sources giving that specific date have been located.¹⁰

While the Sumner School is reputed to be the oldest standing one-room brick schoolhouse in Iowa, this claim has not been substantiated. It can be stated, however, that this is the oldest standing one-room, rural brick schoolhouse in Linn County (Rogers and Price 2011). The origin of the Sumner appellation appears to date from 1875 when the school district board of directors’ minutes from May 22nd reported that “Sumner received nine votes as a name for the district” (*The Mount Vernon Hawkeye-Record and The Lisbon Herald*, August 29, 1946). Recent sources have suggested that Sumner was an early settler in the vicinity. However, examination of available plat maps, censuses, and township biographies has failed to identify any Sumner in the Franklin Township area or in any way directly associated with this school. In addition to the 1875 board of directors’ minutes, the other two primary sources for the Sumner name include the 1881 plat map, which labels this school as “Sumner School Independent” and the 1906 plat, which identifies the school district as “Sumner Ind.” (Iowa Publishing 1907; Warner and Foote 1881). An examination of the historical

⁹ The building was nearly replaced in 1883 when a motion was made at the March 12th meeting of the Board of Directors to levy a tax to build a new school. The motion failed (*The Mount Vernon Hawkeye-Record and the Lisbon Herald*, August 29, 1946).

¹⁰ The “little brick school” was certainly standing by the time of the Civil War as related by Rebecca Brown in a 1950 interview reported in the *Cedar Rapids Gazette* (May 14, 1950). Mrs. Brown, who attended “the little brick school” came to this area in 1856 with her family at the age of two. The brick school was standing by the time she entered school, which could have been as early as four years of age (or 1858). She also related that the school children used to play with “Indian children” down by the creek bottom and that there were sometimes fights at school “during the war years. Instead of fighting over who’s better, Democrats or Republicans, we had the abolitionists versus the copperheads (southerners)” (ibid.). The early settlers in the Abbe Creek settlement hailed primarily from Maryland and Ohio, some with expressed abolitionist leanings. However, there were southern sympathizers in the area as noted by an incident that occurred in the “Kepler School House” in 1863. This incident involved a Rev. Winton, who was a native of Tennessee and decided to give a sermon defending slavery. A fight ensued, with “old Henry Kepler” silencing the preacher, who left and never preached at the school building again (*Cedar Rapids Daily Republican*, January 12, 1906).

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records from the Mt. Vernon Independent School District in 1977 showed this school as the “Sumner” school, number 2 in Franklin Township (Goddard 1977).¹¹

The Sugar Grove and the Kepler names are grounded in the early history of the area, with Sugar Grove having been the place name of the early voting precinct in which the school was located and Kepler being the surname of Henry Kepler on whose land the school was built. Many members of the extended Kepler family were long-time residents of this area and many of the Kepler children attended this school. One family member, John W. Kepler (nephew of Henry Kepler), taught school “at Sugar Grove” for eight consecutive years and may have served the longest teaching tenure at this school, with his tenure pre-dating 1875 (Chapman Brothers 1887:825; Linn County Conservation Board 1964).

The school was built on land in the NE1/4 of Section 5, T82N-R5W (Franklin Township), with the school parcel specifically on a portion of the SW1/4 of the NE1/4. The NE1/4 of Section 5 was originally claimed by Henry Kepler, who entered the “NE fractional quarter” of Section 5 on June 16, 1842 (Original Land Entry Book, Recorder’s Office, Linn County, Iowa). This claim encompassed 169 acres, and the patent for his claim was recorded at the Dubuque Land Office on December 1, 1845, the same year that William Abbe patented the SE1/4 of Section 5 due south of the school location (Land Transfer Records, Recorder’s Office, Linn County, Iowa; United States General Land Office Records, accessed at www.Ancestry.com, August 2012). Abbe may have been the first white settler in Linn County and was certainly one of the first settlers in the Mt. Vernon area.¹² Abbe Creek was named in his honor.¹³

The school was first organized in 1844 in a log or frame building¹⁴ when “Alison J. Willets [sic], Jesse Holman and [brothers] Peter, Henry and Conrad Kepler” arranged for the construction of a frame building by a carpenter named Lichtenberger” (Van Buren 1931).¹⁵ The school appears to have been referred to as the Sugar Grove School and the

¹¹ Since the school was also listed in some sources with the number 3, but most often is referred to with no number attached, the official historic name for the property is considered simply to have been the Sumner School.

¹² There are other candidates who have been proposed as the first white settler in Linn County including Daniel Hahn, who was the first permanent Euro-American settler in the Mt. Vernon area. Abbe did not settle here permanently.

¹³ While it is reported in recent histories of the Abbe Creek School that the school was built on William Abbe’s claim, land records and plat maps confirm that the school was built on Henry Kepler’s claim and not Abbe’s. The 1964 Abbe Creek School Museum dedication program does state correctly that the school was built on Henry Kepler’s land claim (Linn County Conservation Board 1964).

¹⁴ While more recent accounts describe the first school building as built of logs, both the 1931 and 1946 newspaper accounts state that it was of frame construction (Goddard 1946; Van Buren 1931). There were sawmills in the vicinity in the 1840s; therefore, a frame building is possible.

¹⁵ Allison I. Willits settled in the Mt. Vernon vicinity in 1840 reportedly on land just east of William Abbe’s claim. He subsequently purchased much of the land where Cornell College was later established, with ten acres donated by Willits for the establishment of what was first known as the Iowa Conference Seminary. Willits was also one of the proprietors of the town and established one of the early stores. He died in 1858. Jesse Holman was also a resident of the Sugar Grove vicinity and served, along with Henry Kepler and A.I. Willits on the first board of trustees for the Iowa Conference Seminary (later renamed Cornell College) (The Centennial Committee 1948:17-18, 29; Western Historical 1878:456, 557-8). Reportedly, Kepler, Holman, and Willits were also among a group of six men who “went deep into their reserves to put the struggling institution [i.e., Cornell College] on its feet”

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Kepler School in its early years, with the Kepler appellation continuing to be used locally into the early twentieth century.¹⁶ The first school was replaced in the late 1850s with the extant brick school. After that time, the school was referred to locally as the “Little Brick” school but was listed officially as the Sumner School Independent on the 1881 plat map of this area (Warner and Foote 1881). It was also informally known as the Abbe Creek or Abbe School, although these appear to have been twentieth-century appellations. Austin Armstrong, who attended this school in the 1920s-30s knew at the time of the Kepler name for the school but stated that the school was called the “Abbe Creek School” during his attendance (Austin Armstrong, personal communication with Leah Rogers, March 5, 2013).

Children at the school started attending when they reached four years of age and “rarely finished the full eight grades” (Linn County Conservation Board 1995). Attendance at the school was not mandatory. “The farm work came first and in the time left over, the children went to school” (ibid.).

The school building also functioned as the community church and gathering place, with the 1948 Mt. Vernon centennial history book relating that “the red-brick Abbey [sic] school house where Elder Bowman preached every month is now changed into a home” (The Centennial Committee 1948:150). The building was also used for “singing schools and spellings schools [that] were the only special entertainment the community enjoyed” (Van Buren 1931). These special events were held once or twice a month with neighborhood families coming to the school “to sing and spell in the one crowded room” (ibid.).

One early attendee, Rebecca Brown (married name), noted that in the 1860s there were 30 children in attendance (*Cedar Rapids Gazette*, May 14, 1950). A circa 1885 class photograph from the school shows 27 students (*Cedar Rapids Gazette*, September 8, 1963). By the early twentieth century, attendance was around seven to eleven pupils depending on the year. The school operated for 92 years (78 years in the brick schoolhouse if built in 1858) until 1936 when it closed its doors for good.

The property came under the ownership of Charles M. and Agnes Hynek from 1936 to 1943, with Edward J. and Hazel Pitlik the owners after 1943. In 1949, Edward “Eddie” J. Pitlik, Jr., and his bride, Mary “Sis” Pitlik, took up residence following their marriage in September of that year¹⁷ (Land Transfer Records, Recorder’s Office, Linn County, Iowa;

(The Centennial Committee 1948:29). Thus, these three men appear to have been dedicated to furthering education at all levels in the Mt. Vernon area.

¹⁶ There were notices in the 1919 and 1920 *Marion Weekly Sentinel* of a box social at the “Kepler school house” (January 16, 1919) and that “the Kepler school began September 7 with Miss Robb as teacher” (September 9, 1920). In the October 30, 1920, *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette* rural school class winners in a school essay contest were reported to include “Margaret Kepler of Brick school, Sumner district 3” and Charlene Long of the same school. In 1922, the *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette* (December 11, 1922) reported that “the little Brick school in District No. 2, Mt. Vernon, has sent twenty little Christmas boxes filled with candy and nut meats” to war veterans. A list of school levies in Linn County in 1898 listed “Summer [sic] Ind. District No. 2” (*Marion Register*, October 17, 1898). Thus, the school appears to have gone by many names and numbers through the years, several often at the same time, with the only official name being the Sumner school after the independent district’s name, which it was so-designated in 1875 (*The Mount Vernon Hawkeye-Record and The Lisbon Herald*, August 29, 1946).

¹⁷ The school building and all its contents remained in possession of the school district until it was sold at auction on August 31, 1946, after which it was converted into a residence for the Pitlik family (Newspaper clippings in folder labeled “Abbe Creek

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The Gazette, November 11, 2011). On December 20, 1962, Edward Jr. and Mary Pitlik conveyed the school and surrounding lot to Linn County, with the deed fully executed on March 18, 1963 (Land Transfer Records, Recorder's Office, Linn County, Iowa; Warranty Deed dated December 20, 1962, copy provided by the Linn County Conservation Board). On October 25, 1964, the restored schoolhouse was formally dedicated as the Abbe Creek School Museum under the auspices of the Linn County Conservation Board (Linn County Conservation Board 1964).

The Henry Kepler Family

Henry Kepler was born in 1813 in Frederick County, Maryland, the son of John Kepler, a native of Pennsylvania, and his wife, Mary Young, a native of Maryland. Henry was the youngest of six children, the others being Rachel, John, Peter, Mary, and Conrad. Henry Kepler came to Linn County in 1839 and made a claim in 1842 to land along Abbe Creek in what would become Franklin Township. It was on this 169-acre parcel that Henry established his homestead on the north side of the creek. His homestead was nearly opposite where the first school would be sited on the south side of the creek in 1844. Henry Kepler was retired from farming by the time of the 1878 Linn County history book, which noted that his landholdings by that time totaled only 65 acres (Western Historical 1878:711). Kepler held the offices of County Superintendent and School Director.¹⁸ He married Emaline Willits in 1837. She had been born in Ohio in 1818.¹⁹ Henry and Emaline Kepler lived in Indiana prior to moving to Linn County in the Iowa Territory where they settled in 1839. They had ten children, nine of whom lived to adulthood: L. Monroe, Murray W., Viola J., Ira M., Mary E., James P., John W., Henry A., Jennie E., and Clara. It appears that Jennie E. was the child who did not survive to adulthood (Chapman Brothers 1887:420; Western Historical 1878:711).

Henry's sons, Henry A. and Murray W. Kepler also stayed in the Mt. Vernon vicinity with Murray purchasing the family homestead and part of Henry Kepler's original claim in the NE1/4 of Section 5 from his father in 1877 (*Cedar Rapids Times*, September 6, 1877). In that same transaction, Henry Kepler deeded part of the E1/2 of the NE1/4 and part of the NE1/4 of the SE1/4 of Section 5 (also 71 acres) to son, Henry A. Kepler (ibid.).²⁰ The school was located on Murray Kepler's parcel.²¹ The 1881 plat map shows this subdivision between Murray W. and Henry A. Kepler. Parents,

School," Mt. Vernon Historic Preservation Commission Archives, City Hall, Mt. Vernon, Iowa; *The Mount Vernon Hawkeye-Record and The Lisbon Herald*, August 29, 1946).

¹⁸ While county superintendent, Kepler petitioned for the construction of a bridge across "Aby" or "Abby's" creek "at the crossing of the Muscatine and Marion road in Franklin Township" (*Linn County Register*, June 13, 1863). This bridge would have been located northwest and very near the Sumner School on the Kepler property.

¹⁹ Emaline Willits had been born in Ohio, and it is suspected that she was related to Allison I. Willits, who was also born in Ohio and was of an age to have been Emaline's brother. She was seven years younger than Allison. The family surname is variously spelled Willits, Willits, and Willets in local histories and census records. Emaline's name is also reported as "Emerine" and "Emarine" in some sources. As noted previously, A.I. Willits first settled in the vicinity of William Abbe and Henry Kepler's early land claims. Willits died in Mt. Vernon in 1858. Jesse Holman was the administrator of his estate (*Linn County Register*, June 18, 1858).

²⁰ These deeds were actual sales in which Henry A. paid his father \$2200 and Murray W. paid \$2800 (*Cedar Rapids Times*, September 6, 1877).

²¹ Murray Kepler married Carrie Bromwell in 1866 and had three children: Maud, Evaline, and Jessie (Western Historical 1878:711).

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Henry and Emaline retired to Mt. Vernon where Henry died of “fever” on December 5, 1885 (*Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, January 1, 1886).²²

Other members of the John Kepler family migrated from Maryland to Linn County in the early 1840s settling in Franklin Township near Abbe Creek. Members of the Kepler family, who served as school director of the township schools and/or as county superintendent, included Henry Kepler and his nephew Peter H.H. Kepler (*Western Historical* 1878:711). Henry’s great-niece, Mary A. Kepler, daughter of Dr. Thomas S. Kepler, nephew of Henry, “taught in the district schools for a time” before becoming a milliner in Mt. Vernon (Clarke 1901:69-71, 225-227). However, Mary Kepler was not listed among the known teachers of the Sumner School between 1875 and 1936. A 1921 newspaper article concerning Charles W. Kepler, another nephew of Henry Kepler, noted:

the little red brick school house on the Lincoln highway, a short distance west of Mt. Vernon is where Mr. Kepler got his early start in education and where he got his religion. For there he went to school, to church and the Sunday school in the early days (*Cedar Rapids Republican*, September 11, 1921).

As noted previously, another nephew, John W. Kepler, eldest son of Conrad Kepler, reportedly taught for eight years at the “Sugar Grove” school (Chapman Brothers 1887:825).

Turnover in the teachers at this school was frequent and probably not at all unusual for the time. Salaries ranged from \$20 to \$30 a month in the 1870s-80s with no holidays allowed. “By 1897, Miss Isabel Cowen, teacher for the winter term, was paid \$35 a month and allowed \$10 for the care of the schoolhouse” (Linn County Conservation Board 1995). Other than the above-noted eight-year tenure of John W. Kepler prior to 1875, the longest stints after 1875 included those by Alma E. Kenderine (1884-87), C.M Spry (1901-04), Almand Whittington (1910-14), and Mrs. Florence Brace (1930-33) (Linn County Conservation Board 1964). Most tenures were limited to one to two years, with some serving more than one non-continuous terms, such as Mary C. Keidick, who served in 1879 and again in 1880-81 after a stint by U.D. Runkle in 1879-80. Mrs. Sucas A. Sucore also served in 1882 and again in 1883-84; F.M. Hicks served in 1894-95 and 1895-97; Anna Welty served in 1920 and 1921-22; and Mrs. Glen Dee served in 1925-26 and 1929-30. Different members of the Warren (Ellen S. and Arvilla), Wallace (C. Emma and Clara E.), Blinks (Clara E. and Bernice E.), and Spry (Mary, C.M., and Charlotte) families also taught at this school. The first reported teacher was William Wilcox (or Willcox), with the first recorded teacher having been Ellen S. Warren in 1875 (Linn County Conservation Board 1964, 1995; Van Buren 1931). The last teacher was Agnes Boyer (Mrs. Vrooman) in the spring of 1936. The school closed its doors on June 1, 1936 (Linn County Conservation Board 1964, 1995).

The Kepler family retained possession of the school property until 1904 when the estate of Howard Kepler conveyed the property to John C. and Mary Wickham. The Wickhams owned the land until March 26, 1936, when it was transferred to Charles M. and Agnes Hynek. The Hyneks retained possession until March 8, 1943, when it was transferred to Edward J. and Hazel M. Pitlik. In 1963, the Pitlik’s son, Edward J., Jr., and his wife, Mary Pitlik transferred the property to Linn County. It was during the Pitlik family’s tenure of ownership that the school building was purchased in

²² A number of Kepler family members are buried in the Abbe Creek Cemetery, but Henry was buried in the Mount Vernon Cemetery (Linn County Heritage Society 1990).

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1946 and converted into a dwelling. When the county acquired the property, the schoolhouse was restored for use as the Abbe Creek School Museum, which it remains into the present day.

The History of Rural Schools in Iowa's Educational System

Education was considered a fundamental necessity to Iowa's early settlers, and the State has always prided itself on its commitment to public education. The first school opened in Lee County in 1830, sixteen years before Iowa achieved statehood. The first schoolhouse was built in 1833 near the Dubuque lead mines and was a log building (Deiber and Beedle 2002:3). "By the time the Iowa Territory was organized in 1838, there were already between 40 and 50 established schools, and eight years later the state constitution made provision for a 'system of common schools' under a Superintendent of Public Instruction" (ibid.).

The Iowa legislature passed an education bill in 1858 "making the civil township the official school district" (Deiber and Beedle 2002:3).

Towns with more than 1,000 residents (a number later lowered to 100) could become independent districts operating separately from the township districts. County superintendents were elected to supervise both the township and independent schools.

An official school township district included up to nine sub-districts, each containing an area of four square miles, with the school building in the center. In this manner, no child would have to walk more than two miles to get to [his or] her school. In reality, local politics, large families, or changing demographics often dictated that a schoolhouse move to another more advantageous site in the district (ibid.).

In his thesis "A History of School Organization and Superintendence in Iowa," Wayne Palmer Truesdell considered 1858 as the end of the first period of Iowa education, with the "establishment of the common school under lay control" and the beginning of the second period, characterized by the "struggle for better schools through larger districts, better trained teachers, and better supervision" (Truesdell 1965:4; Beedle and Dieber 2002:E-4).

The 1858 law was refined in 1872 to allow sub-districts to become their own independent school districts. In the process, control of the rural schools was transferred from the township to rural neighborhoods. Schools had to maintain a minimum attendance of ten pupils to remain independent. As such, an independent school was governed "by its own board of trustees, and for a time at least, education came under the control of the local residents" (Dieber and Beedle 2002:3).

The Sumner School was first organized during that early period following territorial organization (1838) but prior to the state education bill (1858). The location selected for the school appeared more guided by the wants and needs of the rural neighborhood sometimes referred to as the Abbe Creek settlement or Sugar Grove, on land provided by one of the early settlers of this area. Site selection was probably also guided by the nearby presence of the territorial road through this area and a nearby natural spring where drinking water could be easily obtained. It was also far enough outside of the Mt. Vernon settlement to discourage residents in this neighborhood from sending their children to the early town

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schools.

Following the passage of the 1858 bill, and continuing beyond the 1872 refinement to that bill, the location of the school did not change; however, the original log or frame building was replaced by a substantial brick building. The reported construction date of 1858 for the brick building is interesting for the possible coincidence with the passage of the 1858 state education bill.

One account noted that it was “the township trustees,” who decided to replace the original school with the brick school in 1858; however, by the mid-1870s, the school was under the supervision of the Sumner District board of directors (*The Mount Vernon Hawkeye-Record and The Lisbon Herald*, August 29, 1946). The earliest extant minute books from the board specifically date from 1875, the year that the board of directors voted to name the district “Sumner” (*ibid.*). It continued to operate as an independent school until it closed in 1936.

It has been noted that “whether it was the township system or the independent school district, the result was the entrenchment of the one-room country school as the dominant educational force in the state” (Neymeyer 2000:E-5).

The tradition of the rural, ungraded school controlled by the immediate community was firmly established. In the years to 1900, some 66% of those students receiving primary education would attend these schools. The year 1901 was the high point for rural school districts [in Iowa] with 12,623 (*ibid.*).

That the Sumner School was able to remain open into the late 1930s, exactly thirty years after the state passed its first consolidation law (i.e., in 1906), is a testament to the dedication of this rural neighborhood to maintaining and populating this school.²³ It managed to survive the 1919 minimum attendance law that mandated school closure if a school had an average daily attendance of fewer than five students “or could not show the planned attendance of at least ten pupils for the following year” (Deiber and Beedle 2002:8). In 1925, it received a boost when the anticipated attendance requirement was lowered from ten to seven (*ibid.*). Historical photographs from the early twentieth century of Sumner School students show class sizes around eleven circa 1914-15 and seven to nine in 1921. One undated photograph, that appears to be from the early twentieth century, shows a class size of eleven. In that photograph, four of the students are members of the Kepler family. Austin Armstrong, who attended in the 1920s-30s, recalled a class size around a dozen during that time (Austin Armstrong, personal communication with Leah Rogers, March 5, 2013).

The reason for the school’s closure in 1936 was likely due in part to declining enrollment as families struggled to maintain their farms and their residency during the height of the Great Depression. Both farm size and family size were also trending downward during this period (Dreier 1998:5). The improvement of the state’s rural roads system also made traveling into nearby towns for school much easier and providing access to a more formal education. Young adults were also finding greater job opportunities in the towns and cities of the region. Continued agitation for “more teacher

²³ While agitation for consolidation began in the 1890s, Iowa legislators “steadfastly refused to mandate consolidation and local school boards were slow to change, even when subsidies were offered as incentives in the 1920s. The result was the development of a two tier education system, a more modern and larger system in the towns and cities and a smaller, traditional system in the country” (Neymeyer 2000:E-6).

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certification, improved buildings and expanded curriculum” increased the financial pressures on the rural schools to meet increasingly higher standards (Neymeyer 2000:E-7). The fact that this school was located along the Lincoln Highway (by the 1930s it had become U.S. 30), which was an improved, paved highway beginning in the 1920s, facilitated such travel. Mt. Vernon was located only two miles away. However, the Sumner School would not have survived much longer due to the passage of a law in 1945 allowing school directors “to close a school if the operating cost per pupil was greater than the cost of tuition at another school,” or after 1953, when a law was enacted that required community school district formation in order to qualify for public funding (Deiber and Beedle 2002:8). This resulted in each district “absorbing all elementary schools in the region” and “effectively closed any remaining county schools” (ibid.).

In 1857, there were 3,265 school districts in Iowa, with 1,680 schoolhouses, serving 79,670 students (Iowa Department of Public Instruction 1902:468-9; Neymeyer 2000:E-5). By 1933, there 9,279 rural schools in operation but most had an enrollment under ten students. In 1931-32, 372 rural school districts closed their schools (ibid.:E-8). “By 1972 there were only 472 school districts in the state, and not a single public one-room schoolhouse” in operation (Deiber and Beedle 2002:8).²⁴ Of the 12,623 rural school buildings in Iowa at the peak in 1901, only 2,911 were still standing in the late 1990s. Of those standing in 1998, 1,602 had been converted into dwellings or farm buildings, while 350 stood vacant and deteriorating. Over 100 had been made into public museums including the subject property (Neymeyer 2000:E-10).

Architectural Significance of the Sumner School

The Sumner School is architecturally significant because it embodies a distinctive building type—the one-room rural schoolhouse—that “remains the most recognizable building [type] in rural Iowa” (Neymeyer 2000:F-16). It is further significant architecturally for its design in the vernacular Greek Revival style and its construction by local builders using locally-made bricks.

The One-Room Rural Schoolhouse

The Sumner School resembles one-room school designs found in Henry Barnard’s popular and widely disseminated builders’ guide, *School Architecture*, first published as a book in 1848. Barnard’s popular guide was published in several editions and, following the settlement of the country westward, provided a ready reference when states, counties, towns, and rural communities began to build or replace their public schoolhouses. Many of his designs were inspired by Classical forms including the Greek Revival style.

Barnard’s *School Architecture*, written in the vein of the builder’s guides, had little to do with the theoretical concerns that distinguished the emerging profession of the architects. Barnard was not an artist; his designs for school buildings were simply offered to local boards of education as expedient building plans to rectify the scandal of public school building neglect....Yet there is some evidence to suggest that Barnard had been an avid

²⁴ In 1998, there were nearly 40 one-room schools in Iowa being used by various religious groups and providing instruction to nearly 1,000 students (Dreier 1998:9).

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student of the Classics in prep school and at Yale, although he was not known as a Classical scholar....

All the buildings pictured in *School Architecture* were roughly contemporaneous, having been built between 1800 and 1838, and were offered as examples for emulation if not outright imitation (Rothfork 1977:179-80).

Many of his schoolhouse designs were front-gabled and ranged in style from simple to more elaborate detailing. Most exhibited Greek Revival stylistic influences. A number featured bell towers or cupolas on the roof ridge, and most had a single central entry. The interior plans typically featured a single open room with rows of desks flanking a central aisle and the teacher's desk at one end. Some had vestibules and cloakrooms; all featured ample windows for light and ventilation (Barnard 1849).

Maturin L. Fisher, Superintendent of Public Instruction in Iowa in the late 1850s, believed that regulations regarding the construction of schoolhouses should be part of the new school law then being debated in the state legislature. Fisher specifically mentioned Barnard's guide:

Every school house should be built of substantial materials, on an eligible site, spacious, well ventilated and warmed, fitted with seats and desks of the most approved style, and furnished with apparatus for illustrating the studies pursued in them. In order to insure the erection of such houses in every district, the site and plan of every school house should be approved of by the County Superintendent, previous to the commencement of building, who should be furnished with a copy of *Barnard's School House Architecture*, to aid him in discharging this duty (Fisher 1858:20; emphasis added).

In 1858, the Iowa General Assembly passed a school law based on an 1856 report authored by Horace Mann, a national figure in American education at the time. The new school law made the civil township the official school district, and allowed towns with more than 1,000 residents to become independent districts.²⁵ County superintendents were elected to supervise the township and independent schools. The Iowa State Board of Education supervised the local districts (Beedle and Dieber 2002:E-4; Aurner 1914:32-34).

It may be coincidental that the Sumner School was rebuilt in brick around the same time that the new state law was passed in 1858, but it certainly was designed to be more substantial and more stylish than its log or frame predecessor. That it was built in a vernacular expression of the Greek Revival style may reflect some influence from Barnard's guide, but it also reflects a building style that was popular at the time in nearby Mt. Vernon where the bricks were made. The masons who built the school likely came from Mt. Vernon as well.

Greek Revival Style in Early Schoolhouse Designs

Built of locally-kilned brick, the front-gabled Sumner School displays the clean, symmetrical lines and cornice embellishments of the vernacular Greek Revival style, a style favored by Transcendentalist educational philosophers such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Bronson Alcott. Applied to a schoolhouse, Greek Revival architecture was "intended

²⁵ This number was later lowered to 300 (Beedle and Deiber 2002:E-4).

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to enliven the imagination and, by its association with Classical grandeur, to suggest that any farmboy could become another Socrates" (Rothfork 1977:173).

Such democratic sentiments were echoed in his 1857 report (published in 1858) by Marturin L. Fisher, Iowa's Superintendent of Public Instruction, a strong proponent of the 1858 School Law (Fisher 1858:28). In arguing for counties to divide school tax monies equally among all districts, whether in town or country, Fisher writes:

Is it to be tolerated in this agricultural State, that the word farmer should go into the same category with villain, pagan, and heathen, and that aspiring politicians shall be obliged to coin a new word to flatter the cultivators of the soil? The rural districts are the abodes of industry, of tranquility, and of virtue; and if, in the great cities are to be found the habitations of refinement and learning, the gorgeous palaces of wealth, and the sacred temples of piety, there are also to be found there, the purlieu of vice and crime, of famine, and of pestilence (ibid.:23).

Greek Revival was also a popular national style in the 1850s beginning on the east coast in the 1830s and spreading west with the settlers migrating into areas such as the Midwest. The popularity of the Greek Revival reflects an interest in classical buildings spurred by ancient Roman and Greek archaeological finds in the early nineteenth century. McAlester and McAlester (1998:184) also note that "Greece's involvement in a war for independence (1821-30) aroused much sympathy in the newly independent United States; at the same time, the War of 1812 diminished American affection for British influence, including the still dominant Adam [or Federal] style in domestic architecture." The monumentality and formality of the Greek Revival style certainly lent itself well to public architecture, with its use in school building design further imparting a sense of a formal education grounded in the Classics.

In Mt. Vernon in the 1850s-60s, a number of domestic and public buildings were constructed of locally-kilned brick in the Federal and Greek Revival styles of architecture. The clay resources around Mt. Vernon were being exploited at an early day. The first brick church building was erected in 1850, and "by 1856 brickmaking was a considerable local industry" (Long 1991:E-3). While some people simply erected temporary kilns for making bricks right on site, there were several early small-scale commercial operations as well. One of these was the Port Stottler Brickyard, which is oft-mentioned in early accounts of Mt. Vernon but the history and location of which are never elaborated. The Robinson brickyard was located by the creek on the east edge of town near the limestone quarry and lime kiln (ibid.:E-4). Most accounts of the construction of the Sumner School indicate that the bricks were brought by wagon from Mt. Vernon, with the Port Stottler brickyard sometimes the identified source (e.g., *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, June 7, 1964; Goddard 1946; Linn County Conservation Board 1964; Van Buren 1931). The principal stylistic influence used in the design of Mt. Vernon's early brick buildings was the Greek Revival style (Long 1991:F-3).

Among the most notable early brick buildings in Mt. Vernon were the first buildings for what would become Cornell College. These included the buildings known as "Old Sem" and "Old Main," both of which were built in the 1850s and remain standing to the present day. Brothers, William and H.D. Albright were prominent early brick makers and masons in the community and they did the work on the early Cornell College buildings (Western Historical 1878:456-7).

One interesting extant brick dwelling in Mt. Vernon located at 103 N. 2nd Street NE is very similar in form and style to the Sumner School and was estimated to have been built in the 1860s (Iowa Site Inventory dating from the 1970s on file

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at the State Historical Society of Iowa, Des Moines). This house is actually an L-shaped gable-front-and-wing; however, the low pitch to the front gable, the use of locally-fired soft mud brick, and the brick corbelled frieze and cornice returns are very close in design to the Sumner School. This suggests a potential common builder, but at the very least demonstrates the popularity of the Greek Revival style in early Mt. Vernon and the vernacular expressions of that style in this community that remain standing into the present day.

The Rural Schoolhouse as a Property Type

In general, the rural schoolhouse property type in Iowa was predominated by front-gabled buildings, with later types including bungalow-style or cube-shaped buildings with hip roofs. Most Iowa schools had a single entry door, with later examples including cloakroom vestibules or hallways and sometimes two entry doors, one for boys and one for girls. "The earliest schools did not have a cloakroom," with this feature starting to be added in the 1860s-70s to older schools as shed additions (Johnson 1998:11). "By 1890, schools were being constructed with an internal entry hall leading into the main classroom" (ibid.). Most schools were built without basements and were heated by wood or coal-fired stoves. Bell towers were not common on early schools, with most schools using hand bells to call in pupils from recess.

The window arrangement for the early rural schoolhouses had two to four sets of windows on opposing walls used for cross lighting. By the early 1920s, the state superintendent's office had issued new standards which endorsed the use of a bank of windows on only one elevation. It had been determined that cross lighting was harmful to pupils' eyes (ibid.).

The Sumner School followed the typical pattern for early Iowa rural schoolhouses being front-gabled in form with a single central entry and two windows on opposing sides but also two at the rear of the building.²⁶ There was no cloakroom and none was added in subsequent years. Coats were likely hung on hooks on the interior wall near the doorway. There was no basement, with the detached cellar banked into the slope near the school building providing students with shelter from storms. Austin Armstrong recalls as a student in the 1920s-30s that practice drills were held in the storm cellar since it was small and pupils needed to know where to stand in case of emergency; however, during his time, the cellar never had to be used for shelter (Personal communication with Leah Rogers, March 5, 2013). The bricks on the interior of the cellar vault became scarred with initials through the years just as the exterior of the school building had been scarred. Armstrong noted that the tradition of carving one's initials on the school building was a long-standing tradition for the male students, who knew there would be no punishment since at least one of Director's had also carved his initials on the building (ibid.).

A shed once stood near the school for storing wood for the stove. The circa 1900s-10s photograph of the school showed a gabled-roofed, wood-framed shed off the east side of the building. This shed would have been moved or rebuilt when the school was moved to its current location where the wood shed was again situated to the east of the building (Austin

²⁶ Since the rear was originally the north side of the building, these windows would have added additional ventilation and light without the sun hitting the students' eyes. These windows may have become problematic after 1925 when the building was turned so that the rear of the building now faced west, although the sun may not have reached these windows before the end of the typical school day.

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Armstrong, personal communication with Leah Rogers, March 5, 2013). Students were asked to bring firewood to help feed the stove. There was no bell tower on the Sumner School; however, the school did have a bell that was hung outside the building.²⁷

Iowa has been touted as “America’s Country School Capital” because it is believed that “no state can match Iowa’s total of standing one-room schools and the number that have been preserved as museums” (Sherman, ed. 1998:63). However, the rural schoolhouse building stock in Iowa will continue to lose those buildings that are not restored or converted to other purposes. In 1998, in Linn County, there were enumerated 54 standing school buildings including three used as museums (including the Abbe Creek School Museum), one as a community center, 35 as dwellings, and three for other uses (ibid.:64). Some of these schools were moved to insure their preservation such as three schools relocated to the Ushers Ferry Historic Village north of Cedar Rapids. The good news for Linn County is that none of the standing schools in 1998 were found to be vacant (ibid.). However, statewide, the same study found 350 vacant one-room rural schoolhouses, the status of which today is unknown.

In general, the Sumner School’s simple, yet stylish form, and its substantial masonry construction have made it a lasting and beloved landmark in Linn County. It is certainly evocative of the one-room school experience in rural Iowa. In its current function as a museum, the building imparts an experience for children to learn about Iowa’s educational past and the importance of a free, public education in the State’s history. Its ownership by Linn County and its maintenance by the Linn County Conservation Board will help insure its survival for many more years to come. The National Register nomination of the Sumner School will assist in the continued preservation of this important building.²⁸

²⁷ Armstrong also recalled that he and his brother had been asked by the teacher to light the stove on cold winter mornings and that the Board of Directors approved this action because they were Boy Scouts and could be trusted with this task for which they were paid. He indicated that this was the first money they had ever earned. He also noted that the bell from the school was in the possession of a local resident, who would like to see it back in the building but hung inside to avoid theft (Austin Armstrong, personal communication with Leah Rogers, March 5, 2013).

²⁸ The only other one-room rural schoolhouse in Linn County already listed in the National Register is the Beach School listed in 1983. This is a wood-frame building built in the early 1890s on the old Ridge Road north of Mt. Vernon.

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Linn County Conservation Board

1964 Dedication of Abbe Creek School Museum, October 25, 1964. Copy of the original dedication program provided by the Linn County Conservation Board, Marion, Iowa.

c.1969 Abbe Creek School. Brochure in folder labeled "Abbe Creek School," Mt. Vernon Historic Preservation Commission Archives, City Hall, Mt. Vernon, Iowa.

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1881 *Map of Linn County, Iowa*. Warner and Foote, Minneapolis and Philadelphia.

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Mrs. Robert Martin Observed Eighty-Second Birthday Anniversary Saturday. *Marion Sentinel*, January 28, 1937.

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Austin Armstrong of Cedar Rapids, telephone interview conducted with this 98-year-old former student of the Abbe Creek School in the 1920s-30s. Interview conducted on March 5, 2013, by Leah D. Rogers, Tallgrass Historians L.C., Iowa City.

Jeri Neal of Mt. Vernon and son of Gordon Neal, who once possessed record books from Sumner School. Gordon Neal has passed away, and Jeri Neal did not know the location of any school history his father reportedly had written.

Other Sources

Typewritten notes from old school records and articles about the Sumner School, on file Linn County Genealogical Society, Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

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10. Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the Sumner School is shown as the solid black outline on the accompanying map entitled "Topographic Location of Sumner School Showing National Register Boundary."

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the property historically associated with the Sumner School based on the current property boundary. This parcel includes the historic school, cellar, and spring as well as the site associated with the school.

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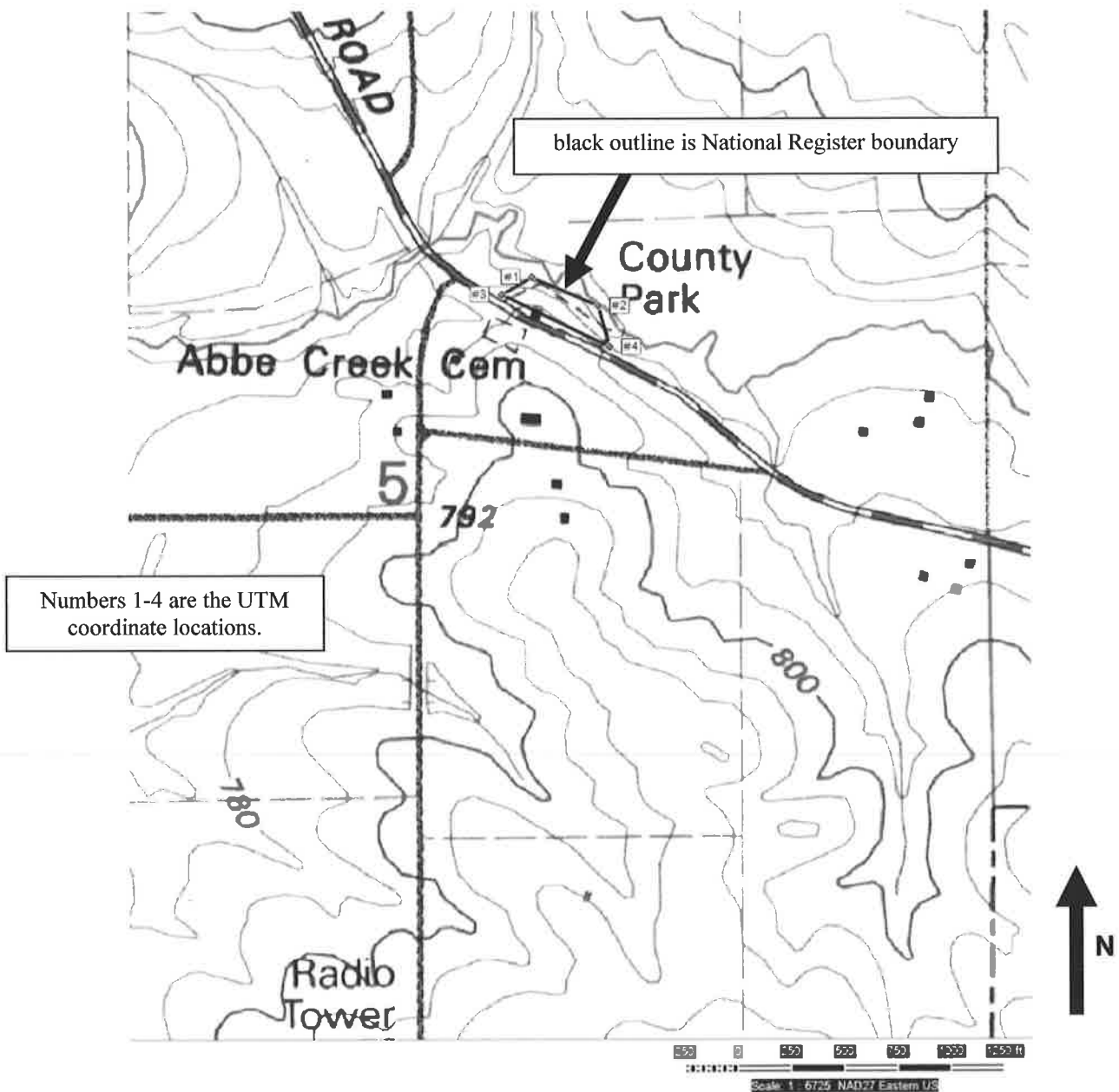
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Additional Documentation

Topographic Location of Sumner School Showing National Register Boundary

Source for base map: USGS Mount Vernon, IA Quadrangle Map, 1993, obtained from ExpertGPS mapping software.



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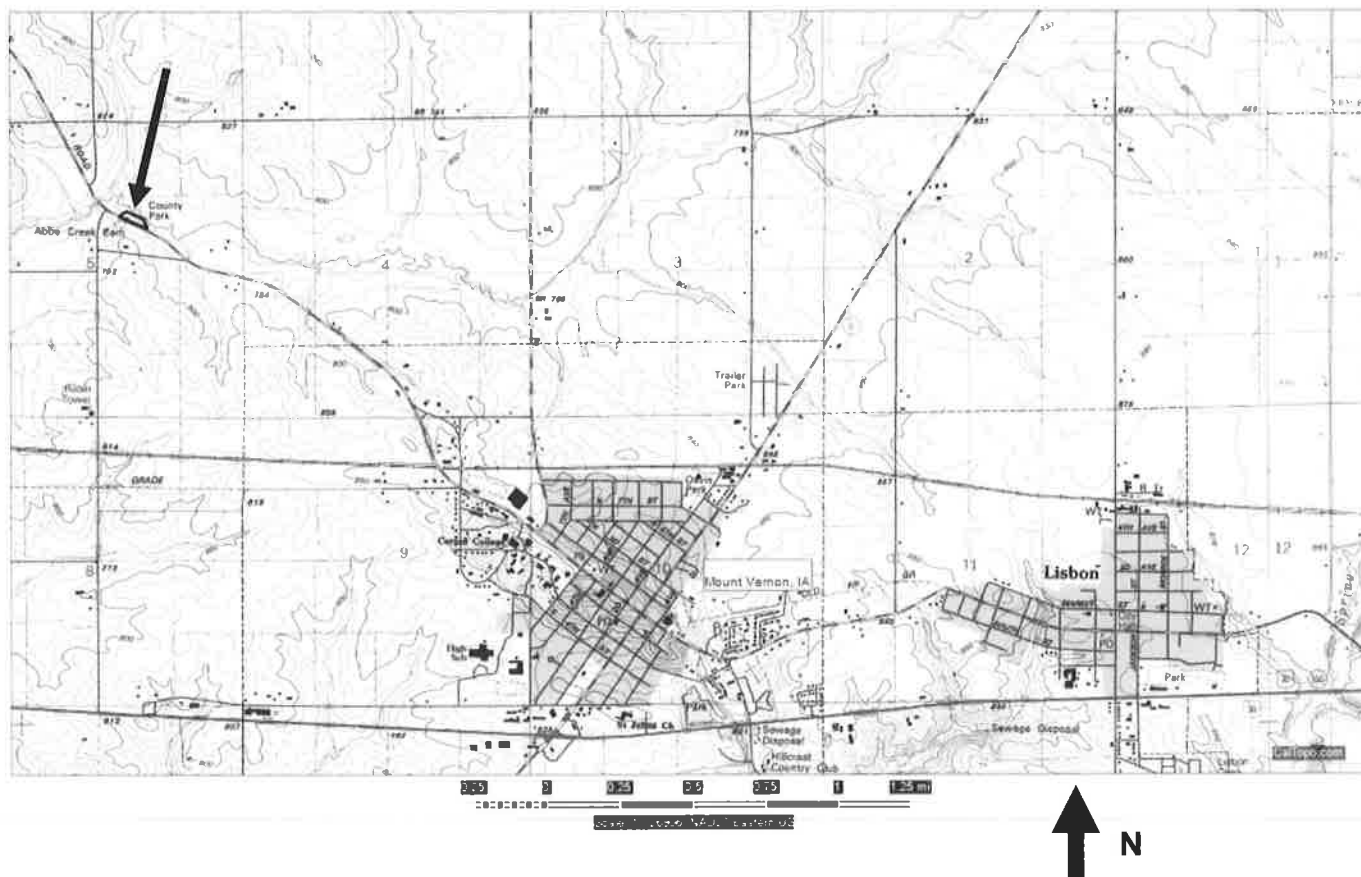
Additional
Section Documentation Page 25 Property name Sumner School

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**Topographic location of Sumner School (black arrow) in
relation to the cities of Mt. Vernon and Lisbon, IA**

Source for base map: USGS Mount Vernon, IA Quadrangle Map, 1993, obtained from ExpertGPS mapping software.



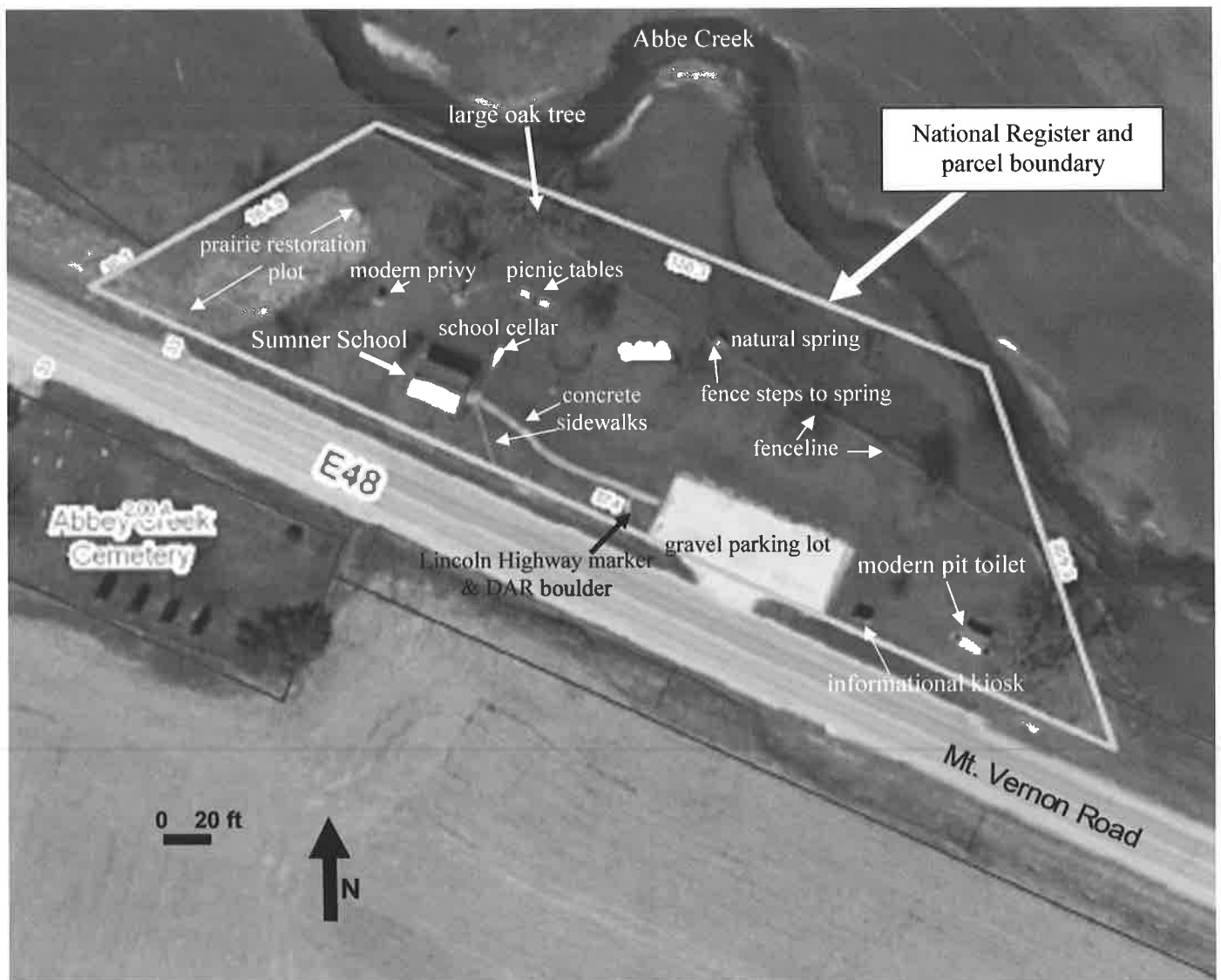
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Additional
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Additional Documentation
Current Site Plan Map

Aerial base map obtained from Linn County GIS Real Estate Mapping System, May 2011.

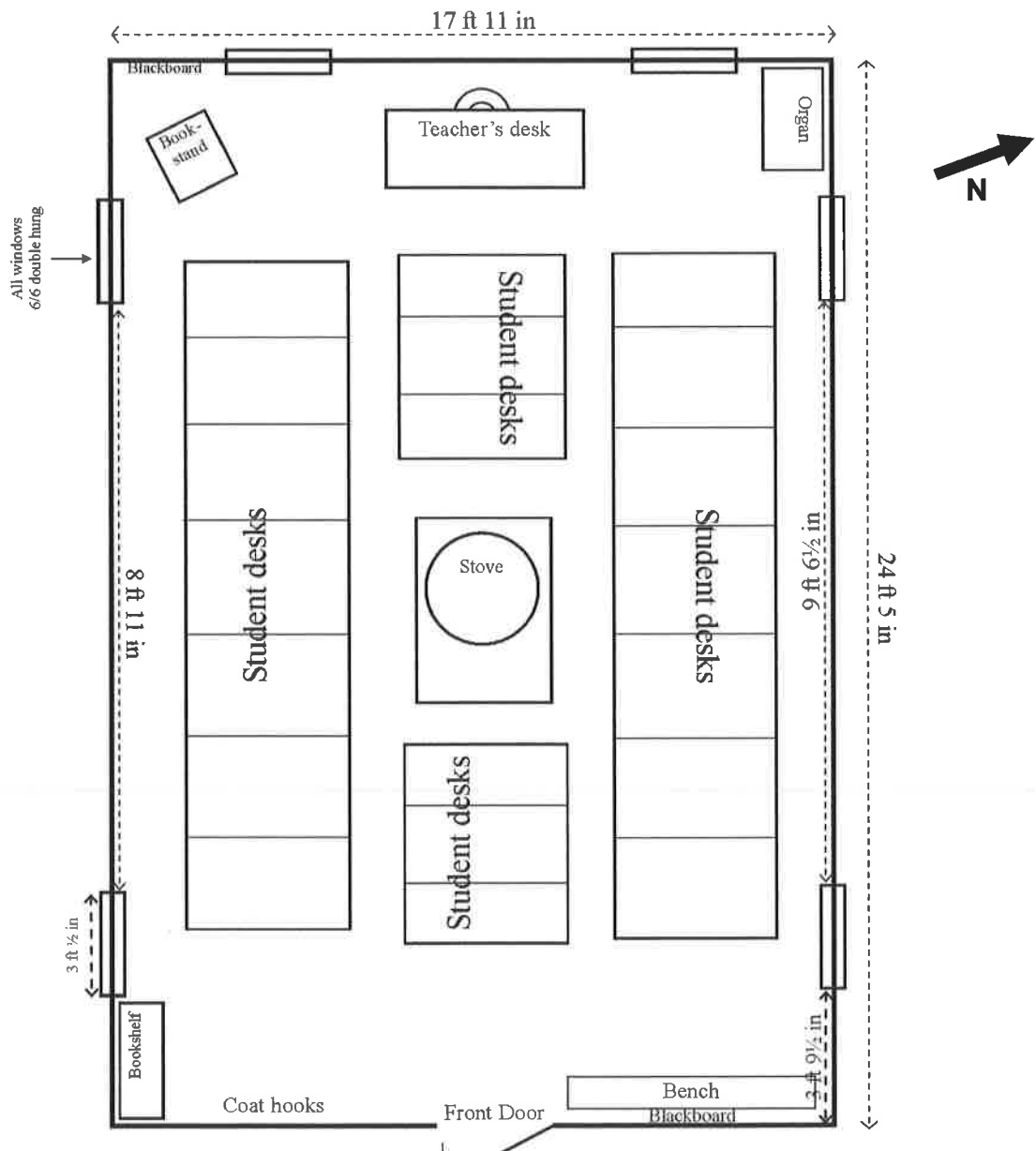


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Additional Documentation
Current Interior Floor Plan Map
Compiled by Jennifer A. Price, Tallgrass Historians L.C., Iowa City, IA.



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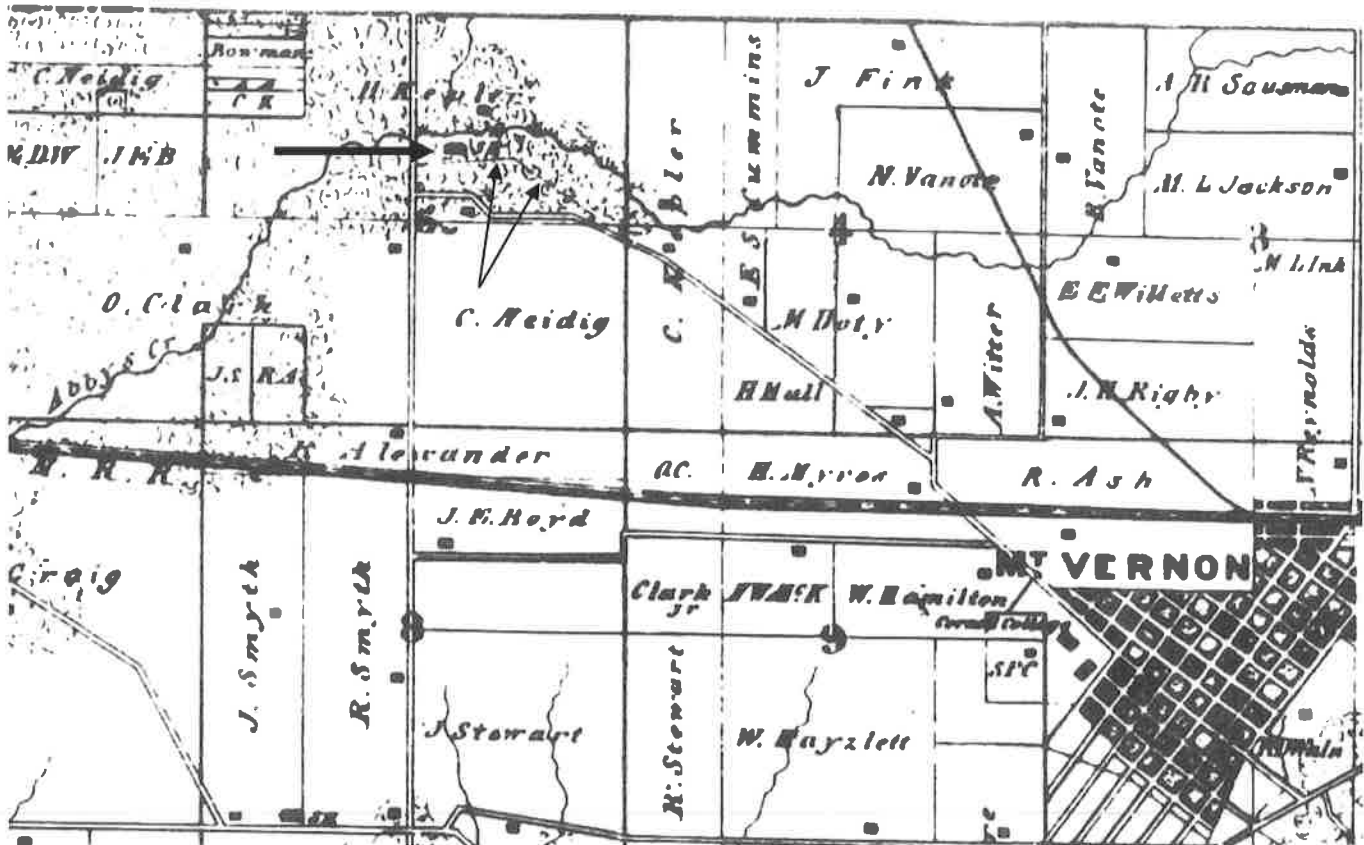
National Register of Historic Places
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Additional Documentation

1859 Plat map of Franklin Township, Linn County, Iowa, showing location of Sumner School
(large black arrow points to square labeled "SH" for school)

Source: McWilliams and Thompson 1859



Note the black line that extends northwest from the main road up to the school and then turns to the west where it reconnects to the main road west of the school (small black arrows point to this lane). This lane became a more established road in later years and became part of the main road now known as Mt. Vernon Road. The school would have faced this lane and later roadway. Also note the location of Henry Kepler's house (the black square on the north side of the creek) just north of the school and that the location of the school on his land.

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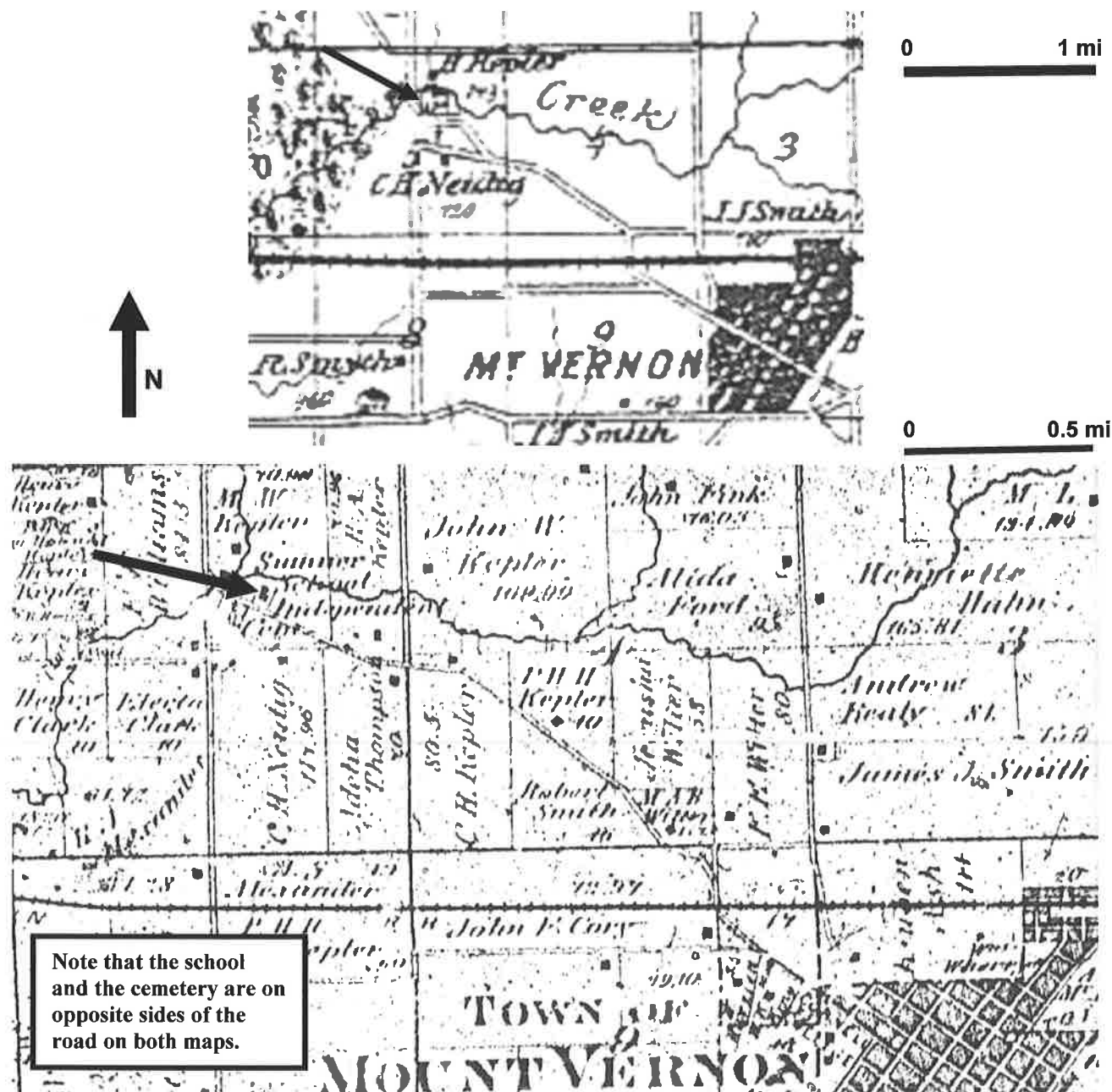
Additional

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Additional Documentation

1875 (top) and 1881 (bottom) plat maps of Linn County, Iowa, showing location of Sumner School (black arrow). Note label of "Sumner School Independent" in 1881. Sources: Andreas 1875; Warner and Foote 1881



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Additional Documentation

Undated historical photograph of the Sumner School on its original site and in its original orientation. View appears to be to the northeast based on the direction of the sunlight, which indicates that the school was facing south at the time. The photograph likely dates from the early 1900s-1910s.

Copy provided by the Linn County Conservation Board, Marion, Iowa.



Note dirt road in front of the school, with wood rail fence and opening at the front entry steps. Also note that the terrain behind the school descends. This photograph also shows that some of the repair above the front door is of historic age and that the building sat on a limestone foundation. The arrow points to a mounded area behind the school that may be the top of the storm cellar.

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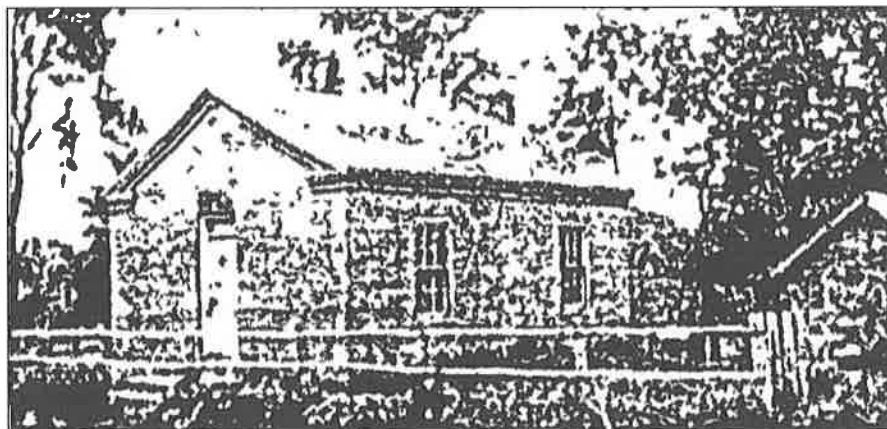
Additional Documentation

Top: undated but pre-1925 historical photograph of the Sumner School in its original location looking to the North; Bottom: c.1914-15 historical photograph of one of the classes of the Sumner School.

Source for top photograph: *The Mount Vernon Hawkeye-Record and The Lisbon Herald*, August 29, 1946.

Source for bottom photograph: scanned copy provided by the Linn County Conservation Board, Marion, Iowa.

[Note: Alice Fawcett taught the 1914-15 school term]



Back Row From Left: Mildred Collins,
Hazel Wickham, Alice Fawcett, teacher,
Lawrence Kepler, Romaine Kepler
Center Row: Sievers, Margaret Kepler,
Mable Collins
Front Row: Murton Kepler, James Sievers
Willard Travis

Again note that the direction of the sunlight in bottom photograph confirms that building originally faced south.

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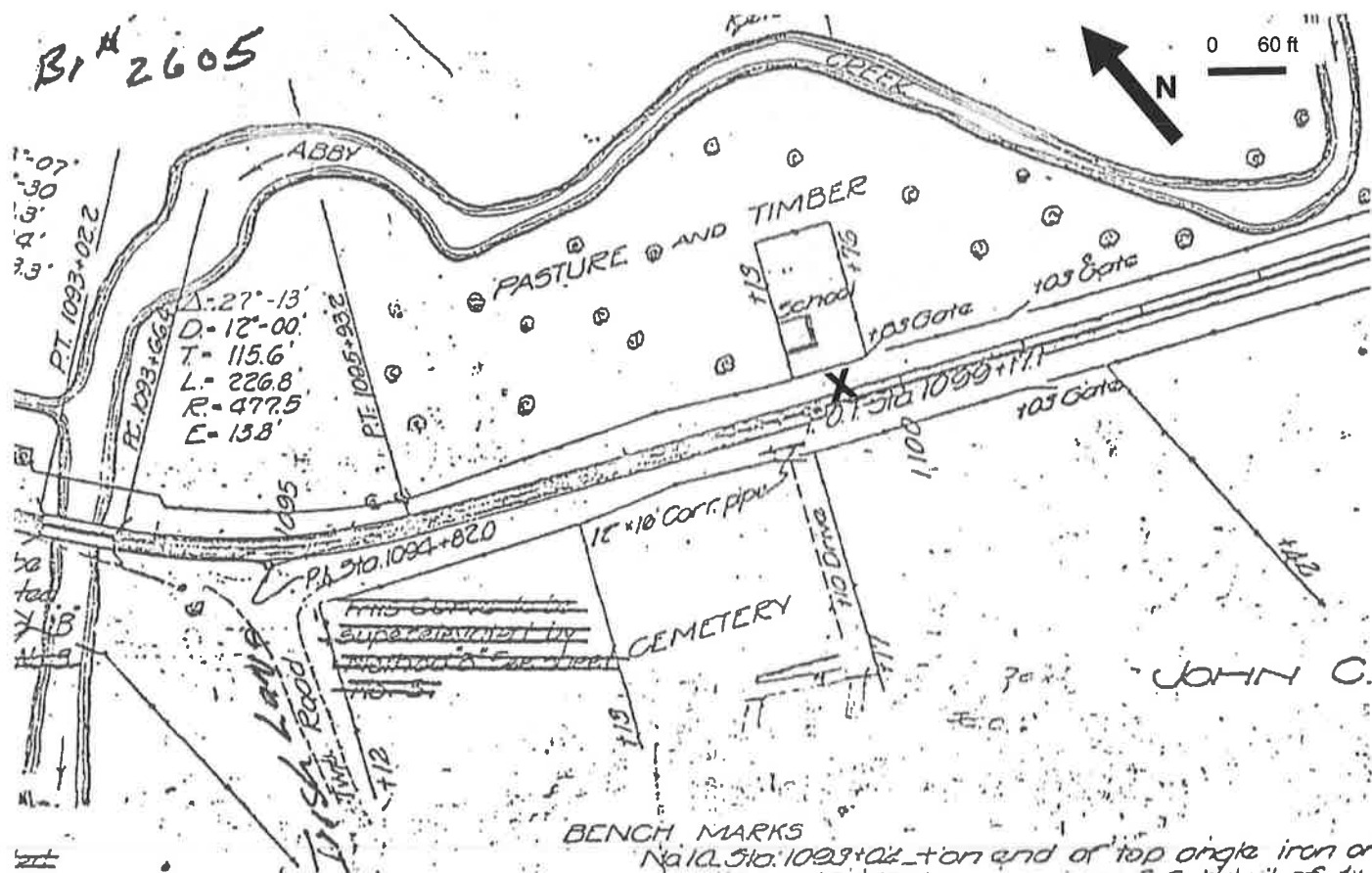
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Additional Documentation

1924 Construction plans for the improvements to the Lincoln Highway in the area of the Sumner School.

Source: Copy on file in the Linn County Roads Department, Marion, Iowa.



This map is an "as built" plan that shows the Sumner School in its current location. It was moved to this location during the 1924-25 construction project. Note the location of the cemetery across the road from the school. The creek channel has also shifted through the years.

The "X" denotes the suspected location of the 1858 brick school prior to the 1925 move.

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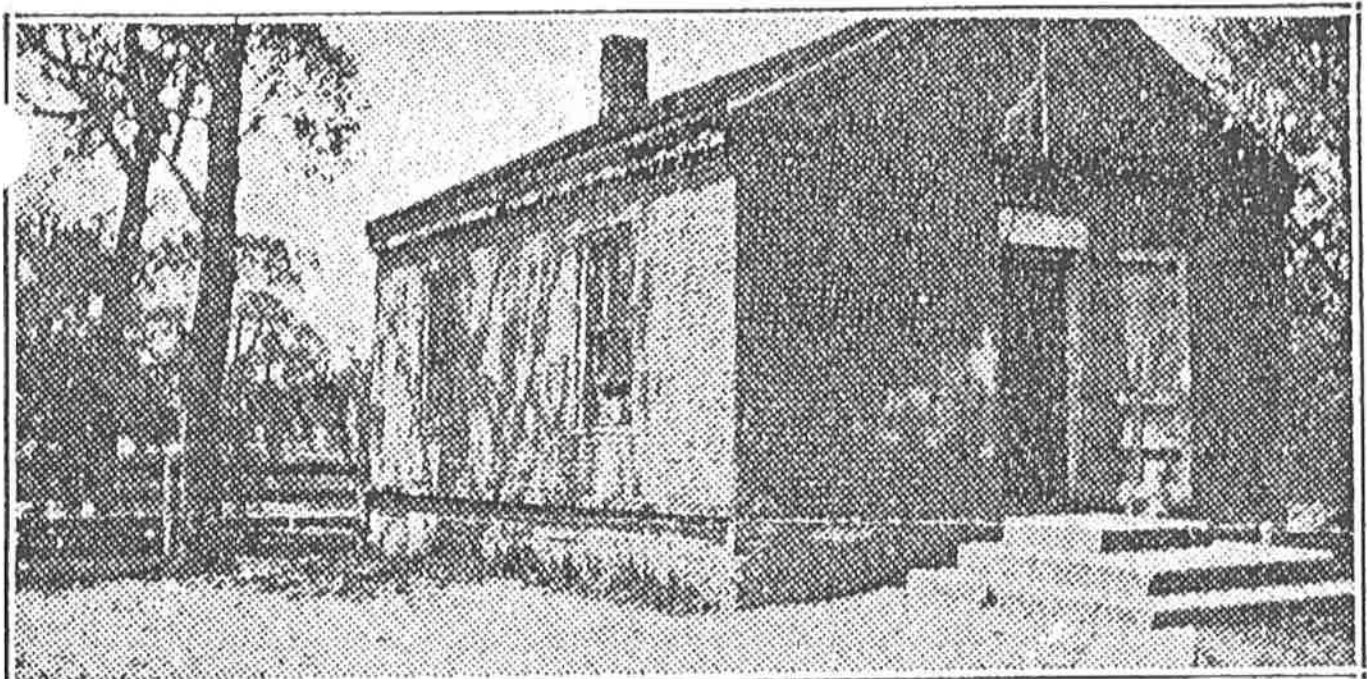
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Additional Documentation

Circa 1931 photograph of the Sumner School after it was moved to its current location, looking NNW.

Source: Van Buren 1931



Note direction of sunlight and the presence of the concrete steps and stoop.

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Additional Documentation

1940s historical photograph of the interior of the Sumner School after it was converted into a dwelling.
Copy provided by the Linn County Conservation Board, Marion, Iowa, and the Edward J. and Mary Pitlik family



Note the front door with three-light transom to the left of the photograph.

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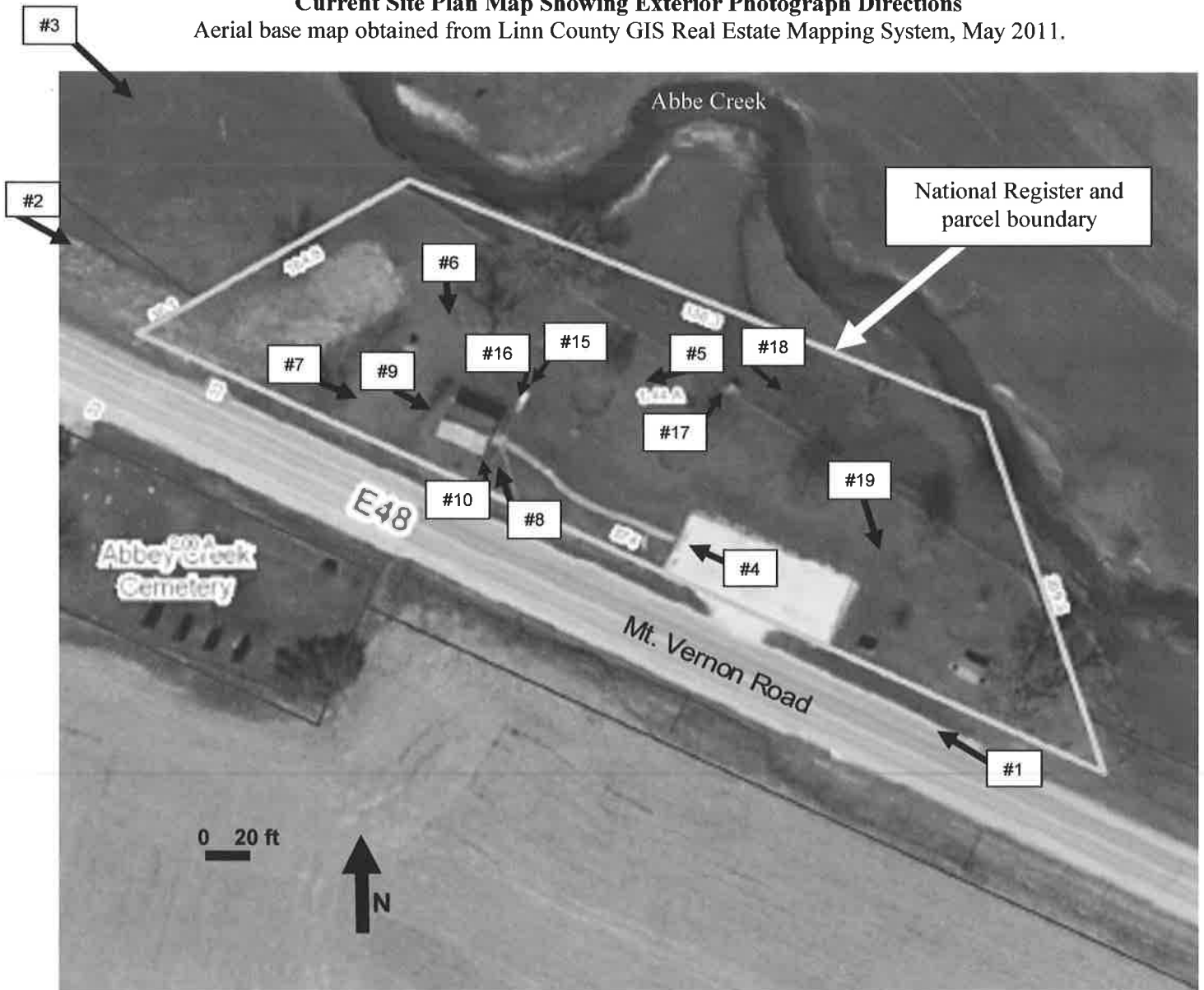
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Additional Documentation

Current Site Plan Map Showing Exterior Photograph Directions

Aerial base map obtained from Linn County GIS Real Estate Mapping System, May 2011.



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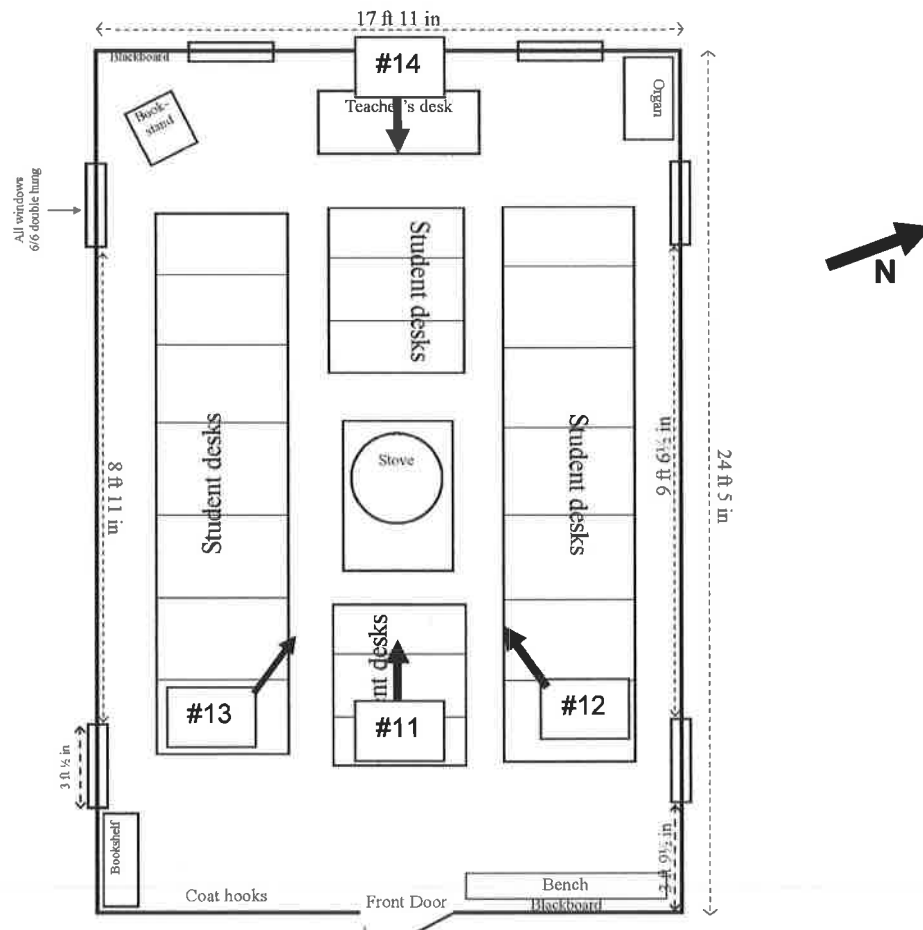
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Additional Documentation
Current Site Plan Map Showing Interior Photograph Directions



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**Additional Documentation
List of Photographs**

Name of Property: Sumner School

County and State: Linn County, Iowa

Name of Photographer: Jennifer A. Price, Tallgrass Historians L.C., Iowa City, IA

Date of Photographs: April 23, 2012

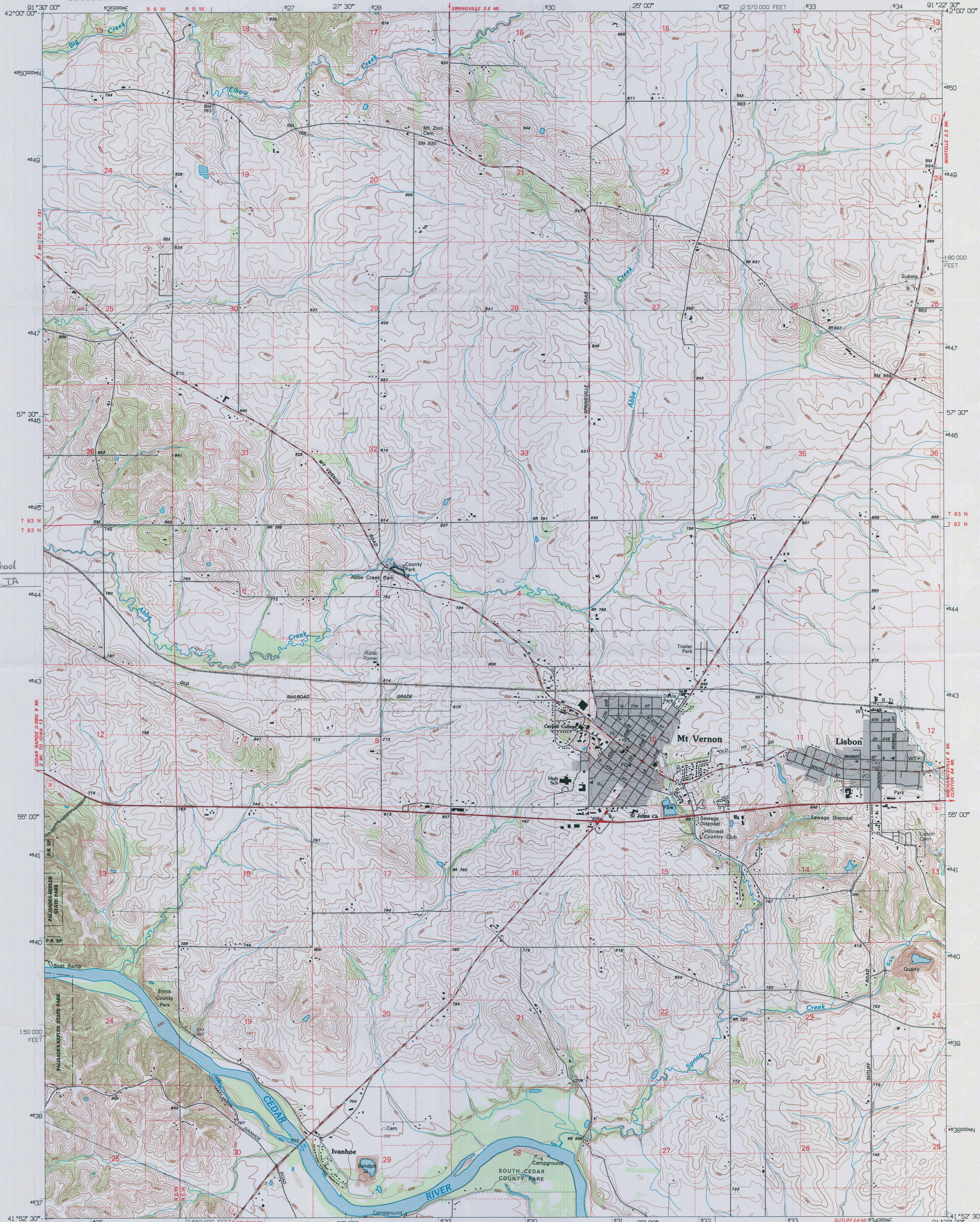
Location of Digital Photographs: Tallgrass Historians L.C., 2460 S. Riverside Drive, Iowa City, IA 52246

Photographs:

- #1 General view of property, looking to the WNW from Mt. Vernon Road
- #2 General view of property, looking to the ESE from the intersection of Irish Lane and Mt. Vernon Road
- #3 General view of property, looking to the SE from the Abbe Creek Bridge over Mt. Vernon Road
- #4 View of school building with the Lincoln Highway marker and DAR boulder in foreground, View to the WNW from the gravel parking lot
- #5 Sumner School, View to the WSW and showing the storm cellar just below the school and the modern privy and picnic tables to right
- #6 Sumner School, View to the SSE and showing the storm cellar to left and the modern privy to right
- #7 Sumner School, View to the ESE from the Mt. Vernon Road right-of-way and modern privy to left
- #8 Sumner School, View to the NW from the Mt. Vernon Road right-of-way
- #9 Rear of Sumner School, View to the ESE
- #10 Front of Sumner School, View to the NNW
- #11 Interior of Sumner School, View to the WNW
- #12 Interior of Sumner School, View to the West
- #13 Interior of Sumner School, View to the NNW
- #14 Interior of Sumner School, View to the ESE
- #15 Exterior of storm cellar, View to the SW
- #16 Interior of storm cellar, View to the SSW
- #17 Modern wooden stairs over fenceline to spring by Abbe Creek, View to the NE
- #18 Location of spring by Abbe Creek, View to the ESE
- #19 Modern pit toilet (left) and kiosk (right), View to the SE

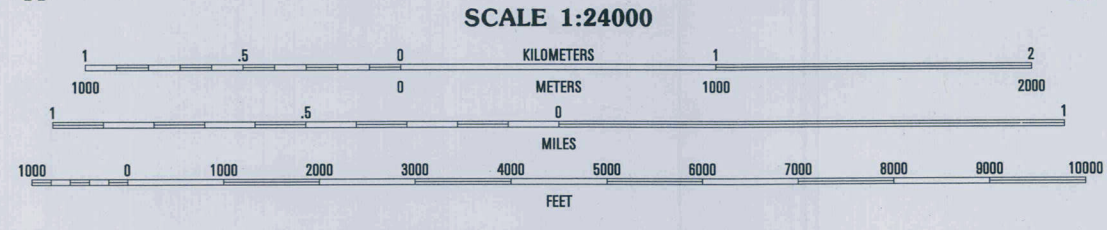
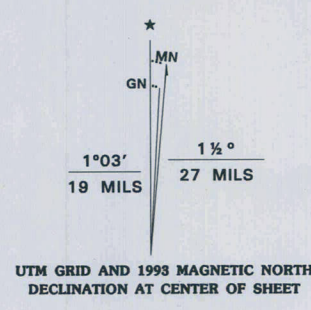
UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

MOUNT VERNON QUADRANGLE
IOWA-LINN CO.
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

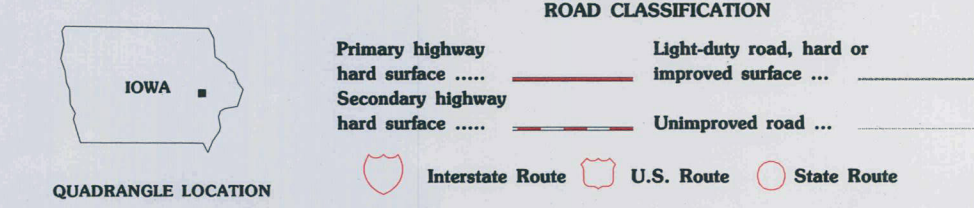


Summer School
Linn County, IA

Produced by the United States Geological Survey
Control by USGS and NOS/NOAA
Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1963. Field checked 1965. Revised from aerial photographs taken 1990. Field checked 1992. Map edited 1993.
Universal Transverse Mercator Projection
10,000-foot grid ticks: Iowa coordinate system, north zone
1800-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 15, shown in blue
1927 North American Datum (NAD 27)
North American Datum of 1983 (NAD 83) is shown by dashed corner ticks
The values of the shift between NAD 27 and NAD 83 for 7.5-minute intersections are given in USGS Bulletin 1575
There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of the National or State reservations shown on this map
Gray tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown
Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence and field lines where generally visible on aerial photographs. This information is unchecked



SCALE 1:24000
CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929
THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
AND IOWA GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, IOWA CITY, IOWA 52240
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST



QUADRANGLE LOCATION

1	2	3
4	5	6
7	8	

ADJOINING 7.5' QUADRANGLE NAMES

ROAD CLASSIFICATION
Primary highway hard surface
Secondary highway hard surface
Light-duty road, hard or improved surface
Unimproved road
Interstate Route
U.S. Route
State Route

MOUNT VERNON, IOWA
41091-H4-TF-024
1993
DMA 7767 IV NW - SERIES V876









Abby Creek School
Museum
School Established - 1844
The Old Schoolhouse

Abby Creek School
Museum
School Established - 1844
The Old Schoolhouse



















A large blue bulletin board is mounted on the left wall, displaying several notices and documents. The notices include various text-based announcements and small photographs.





PL
REG



MR. WILCOX

WELCOME TODAY
5:00P







TO SPRING  
SCHOOLS WATER SUPPLY







UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Sumner School
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: IOWA, Linn

DATE RECEIVED: 3/22/13 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 4/15/13
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 4/30/13 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 5/08/13
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 13000242

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 5.8.13 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in
The National Register
of
Historic Places

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF

CULTURAL AFFAIRS

MARY TIFFANY COWNIE, DIRECTOR



TERRY E. BRANSTAD, GOVERNOR
KIM REYNOLDS, LT. GOVERNOR

STATE
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY of
IOWA

JEROME THOMPSON
ADMINISTRATOR



MATTHEW HARRIS
ADMINISTRATOR

600 E. LOCUST
DES MOINES, IOWA
50319

T. (515) 281-5111
F. (515) 282-0502

CULTURALAFFAIRS.ORG

March 14, 2013

Carol Shull, Chief
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
1201 Eye Street, N.W.-- 8th Floor
Washington, D.C. 20005

Dear Ms. Shull:

The following National Register nomination(s) are enclosed for your review and listed if acceptable.

- Sumner School, 877 West Mount Vernon Road, Mount Vernon, Linn County, Iowa
- Oak Hill Cemetery Historic District, Roughly bounded by Mt. Vernon Rd. SE, 15th St SE and south and east lot lines, Cedar Rapids, Linn County, Iowa

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Foster Hill, Manager
National Register and Tax Incentive Programs