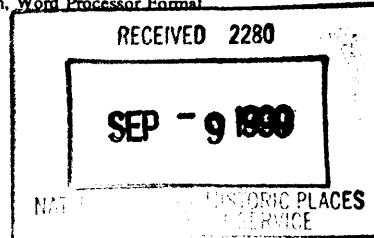


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



SEP - 1 1999

1229

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" on the appropriate line or by entering the information requested. If an 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 WASSON, DR. JESSE, BUILDING

other names/site number Knights of Pythias Lodge, K. P. Building

2. Location

street & number 201 Main Street N/A not for publication

city or town La Porte City N/A vicinity

state Iowa code IA county Black Hawk code 013 zip code 50651

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this (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 (meets does not meet) the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant (nationally statewide, locally). (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)
Patricia Chertani 9-2-99
Signature of certifying official/Title 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 certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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
Signature of Keeper

Date of Action
10-7-99

Dr. Jesse Wasson Building
Name of Property

Black Hawk County, Iowa
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many lines as apply)

Category of Property
(Check only one line)

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

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

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE/specialty store

SOCIAL/meeting hall

COMMERCE/specialty store

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE VICTORIAN

foundation Stone/limestone

walls Stone/limestone

roof Metal

other Wood

Narrative Description

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

Dr. Jesse Wasson Building
Name of Property

Black Hawk County, Iowa
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" on one or more lines 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" on all the lines 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 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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT
ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1878-1889

Significant Dates

1878

1889

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Wasson, Dr. Jesse

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance - (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

9. Major Bibliography 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):

- previous determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Record
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository _____

Dr. Jesse Wasson Building
Name of Property

Black Hawk County, Iowa
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property Less than one acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

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Zone Easting Northing

2	---	- - - - -	- - - - -	
---	-----	-----------	-----------	--

Zone Easting Northing

3	---	- - - - -	- - - - -	
---	-----	-----------	-----------	--

Zone Easting Northing

4	---	- - - - -	- - - - -	
---	-----	-----------	-----------	--

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 William C. Page, Public Historian; Geraldine Wester, Chairperson
organization La Porte City Historic Preservation Commission date September 20, 1998
street & number 300 Walnut Street (Wester) telephone 319-342-2043
city or town La Porte City state Iowa zip code 50651

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 SHPO or FPO.)

name Kenneth and Patricia Benda
street & number 201 Main Street telephone 319-342-3023
city or town La Porte City state Iowa zip code 50651

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 time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden

**United States Department of the Interior
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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 7 Page 1

CFN-259-1116

Dr. Jesse Wasson Building, Black Hawk County, Iowa.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The Wasson Building is a 2-story, limestone, commercial property. Completed and first occupied in 1878, the building is entirely constructed of native limestone quarried on what is now the Ben Brown farm in La Porte City. This limestone is beige in color and laid in regular courses of square-cut ashlar. The ashlar finish is natural (or quarry) face. The building's architectural design is influenced by Italianate styling, and the integrity of the building is good.

The Wasson Building possesses six rooms and a stair hall on the first floor. The second floor features two small rooms and a large meeting hall. The building is located in the original plat of LaPorte City and is the first permanent building to be erected in the town proper. The building is situated on Main Street and is the focal point of business conducted in the small town.

EXTERIOR

The basic footprint of the building is a rectangle, measuring 34' x 67' including the canted entry, which measures 7.5'. A parapet surmounts the building on three sides and rises four feet above the roof line. The roof itself slopes from the front to the back and is constructed of metal, sealed with hot tar around 1950. The original stone exterior surfaces of the building remain intact on two of the building's elevations. The other two elevations have been parged.

A small, 1-story addition, covered with a flat roof, is attached to the rear of the building. It measures 8' x 10' and is constructed of concrete block. Another addition, also covered with a flat roof, is located on the west elevation of the building. It measures 8' x 10' and is also constructed of concrete block. These additions were constructed in the 1950s or 1960s. They are not intrusive because they are located at the rear of the building.

The Wasson Building possesses two facades. One faces Main Street, and one faces Locust Street. The canted wall, mentioned above, joins these facades.

The Main Street facade of the Wasson Building faces La Porte City's chief downtown street. This elevation also best shows the architectural design of the building. It generally features a symmetrical design with a centrally-located door flanked by two windows on the first floor and three window on the second floor. Each of these openings is capped with segmental arches of stone. The windows sills are of wood. Although the front door itself has been replaced, its original jamb and the transom above it remain intact. The transom itself has been covered over with plywood, but its original materials remain beneath. A limestone threshold is situated at the base of the door. Four tie rods with "S"-shaped anchors are situated on the Main Street facade. These iron tie rods provide structural support for the building. A modern, over-the-street sign is situated above the first floor of the Main Street facade. This fixed sign is easily removable.

This canted wall features another entrance to the first floor and a window on the second floor. While both the door and transom openings have been covered over with plywood, the door and transom

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Section number 7 Page 2

CFN-259-1116

Dr. Jesse Wasson Building, Black Hawk County, Iowa.

remain intact behind that material. The main entrance is capped with a segmental arch, worked in limestone, with the year date "1878" carved into the stone. The threshold of this door is constructed of limestone. Originally limestone steps led up to this door from grade. These steps were removed and not replaced when the present sidewalk was laid, so that the canted entry is no longer serviceable. The window on the second floor features an arched lintel of stone. This window is 3.5' wide and 5.5' tall.

The Locust Street facade is similar to that on Main Street. It possesses a centrally placed door flanked by a series of three windows on the first floor and seven windows on the second floor. Seven tie rods with "S"-shaped anchors are situated on this elevation between the first and second floor.

The rear of the building features a centrally-placed door flanked by two windows on the first floor. Although the door itself is a replacement, the transom above it (presently covered-over with plywood) remains intact. The second floor features three windows.

The south elevation of the building is a carbon copy of the Locust Street facade in terms of its design. The south elevation retains its original stone surfaces. A narrow walkway is situated between this elevation and the commercial building to its east.

A cornice originally embellished the two facades and the canted wall of the building. Constructed of wood, this cornice featured a series of paired brackets, illustrated in a circa 1900 photograph. (See Continuation Sheet 7-12.) Although the removal of this cornice is regrettable, it could be reconstructed in a documented design.

The Wasson Building features its original 2/2 double hung sash. Although the windows on the Main Street facade, the canted wall, and some other first floor windows are covered over with plywood, their original sash remain beneath that material. The remaining sash on the building--including the entire second floor--are not covered.

The Wasson Building is constructed of native limestone quarried in the vicinity of La Porte City and laid rough cut in regular courses. The interior walls were covered with plaster applied directly to the limestone. Brick footings run the entire length of the building in the crawlspace. It is not presently known if these footings were original to the building.

FIRST FLOOR INTERIOR

The first floor plan presently features six rooms and a main hall. Each of the rooms is of different size. The largest room fronts Main Street.

This front room is accessed by one door in the canted bay and one door situated in the middle of the facade. Originally this space was divided into two rooms with each door accessing one of them. The partition between these two rooms was removed many years ago. (Dr. Wasson operated a general store in the room accessed by the door fronting Main Street.) The front room has a large display

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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CFN-259-1116

Dr. Jesse Wasson Building, Black Hawk County, Iowa.

window measuring 10' x 10'. Although this opening might not be original to the building, it is of considerable age, given the fact that the historic photograph, referred to above, shows it in place.

Two small rooms are located behind the front room. A hall is situated behind these two rooms. This hall provides additional access to the interior of the building from a door opening on Locust Street and a door opening on the west side of the building. The stairway to the second floor is located in the southeast corner of the building. The risers in the staircase are constructed of oak planks with an oak railing.

Each of the door openings on the first floor feature transoms. The woodwork in these rooms is wide and original to the building. The floors are of oak and are late Nineteenth or early Twentieth Century improvements to the building. The walls are covered with plaster one inch thick, applied directly to the limestone.

SECOND FLOOR INTERIOR

The second floor remains much as originally constructed with some improvements, added in the late Nineteenth or early Twentieth Century. The second floor possesses three rooms--two small rooms and a meeting hall. For convenience in this nomination, these two small rooms are named the cloak room and the Locust Street room. Original plaster remains extant throughout the second floor. The second floor was originally heated with wood burning stoves with the pipes running through the nearest windows.

Cloak Room

The cloak room is situated at the head of the stairs from the first floor. This room retains a four inch oak rail surrounding the entire room situated four feet from the floor. Small iron hooks are attached to this rail every 12 inches around the room. The cloak room is lighted by one window. It features old glass, and measures 3' x 5'. The window sill measures one foot in length. The remaining woodwork is simple and original to the building.

Locust Street Room

The small room adjacent to the cloak room has been used for several purposes over the years, including an office and a water closet. It can be accessed by a door from the cloak room and by a door to the meeting room. The door to the meeting hall features a double paned transom. The floor of the Locust Street room is tongue-in-groove oak.

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CONTINUATION SHEET**

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CFN-259-1116

Dr. Jesse Wasson Building, Black Hawk County, Iowa.

Meeting Hall

The meeting hall has been home to many different organizations in the past 120 years. The room measures 50' x 37' with a height of 15'. The ceiling is pressed metal in a clover leaf design. Although it has been painted, the original finish of the metal is evident in places where the paint has peeled. There are six light fixtures, dating to circa 1915, the date when LaPorte City installed its first electric plant. These fixtures are still in use, along with some fluorescent lights, installed in 1970. The 1915 fixtures are utilitarian in style and are hung from six foot cords with exposed light bulbs without shades.

The floor is 2.5 inch tongue-in-groove oak and laid in a decorative pattern. This pattern begins with a small square in the center of the room with floor boards laid to ever-expanding squares to the corners of the room. It is presumed that this flooring was laid in the late Nineteenth or early Twentieth Centuries. Mopboard, 12 inches in height, is situated around the entire room.

A small wall box is situated along the rear wall of the meeting hall. It measures 2' x 3' and was used to store candles and unused keys. It features beaded woodwork and a crown molding.

CRAWLSPACE

A small crawlspace, 2' to 3' in height, is situated under the Wasson Building. A brick footing runs the entire length of the building, but it is not known if it is original to the building or if it was installed at a later time to help support the weight of the upper floors. The crawlspace is accessed by a 4' high door in one of the first floor rooms.

INTEGRITY

Overall, the integrity of the Wasson Building is very good. Stone constituted an important building material during the first generation of improvements in Black Hawk County, Iowa. Unfortunately, few of these resources remain extant today, and the building should be evaluated within that context.

Alterations to the building include the removal of its cornice. Although the reconstruction of this cornice would not augment the building integrity, an historic photograph documents its design and such an improvement would improve the building's appearance. In 1970 the City of La Porte City widened the sidewalks in front of the Wasson Building. At that time, limestone steps leading to the main entrance were removed and not replaced. Most of the windows on the first floor have been covered with plywood, but their original double-hung sash remain intact underneath. Although two walls of the Wasson Building have been parged, this alteration might be reversible.

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CFN-259-1116

Dr. Jesse Wasson Building, Black Hawk County, Iowa.

SURROUNDINGS

The Wasson Building is located in the heart of the central business district of La Porte City, Iowa. This district stretches about two blocks along Main Street to the southeast, with an additional portion of the district spilling over into Commercial Street to the north and south of its intersection with Main Street. The topography in this area is generally level.

The La Porte City Station of the Waterloo, Cedar Falls, and Northern Railroad (now serving as City Hall) is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is situated directly opposite the Wasson Building. Both buildings are located on Main Street, which is surfaced with brick pavers. Big Creek is situated one-half block to the northwest.

Main Street formerly served as a portion of the in-town route of Iowa 218 from La Porte City to Waterloo, Cedar Falls, and the north. Some years ago, this highway was rerouted in La Porte City, and Main Street no longer serves that purpose.

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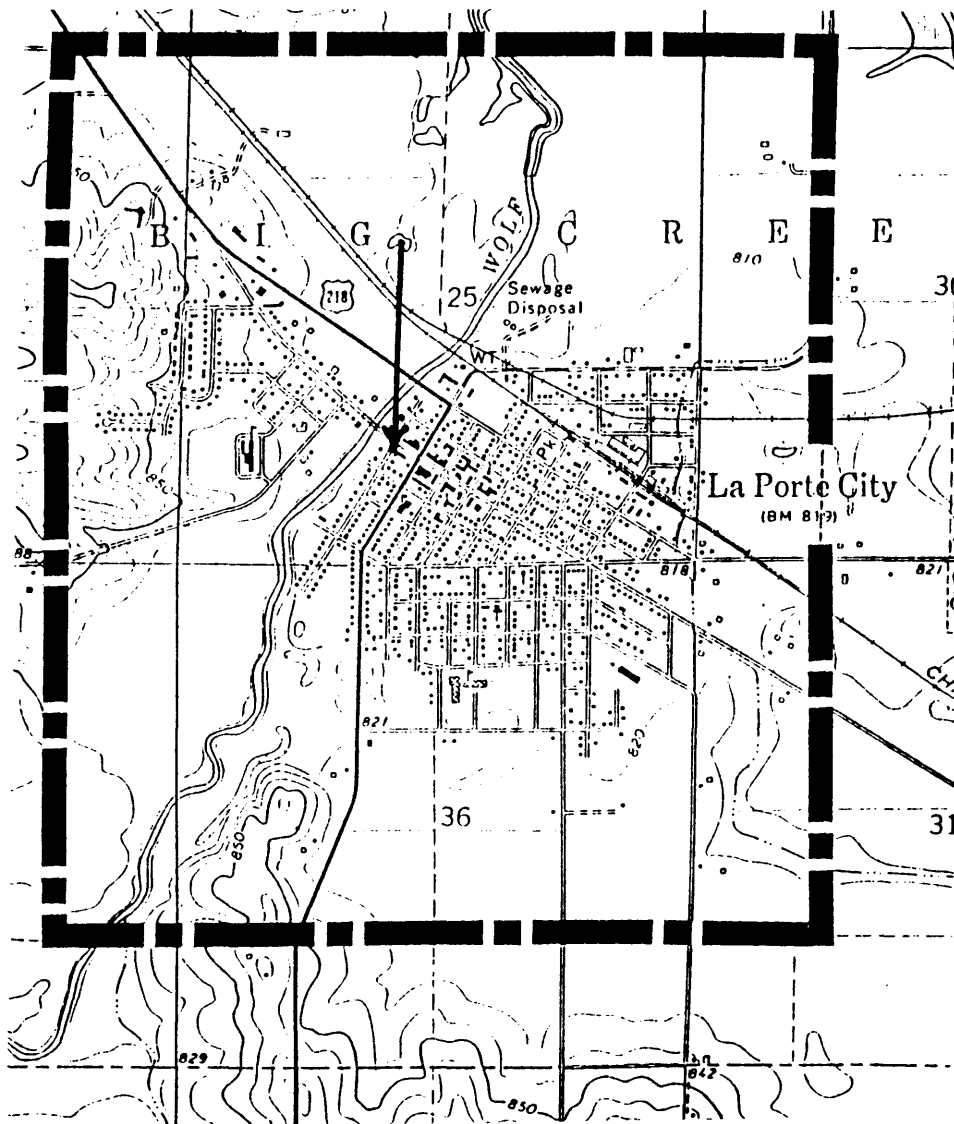
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Dr. Jesse Wasson Building, Black Hawk County, Iowa.

SITE MAP

ARROW LOCATES PROPERTY



Source: U.S.G.S. Map (7.5 Minute Series), La Porte City Quadrangle, 1956, Photorevised 1976.

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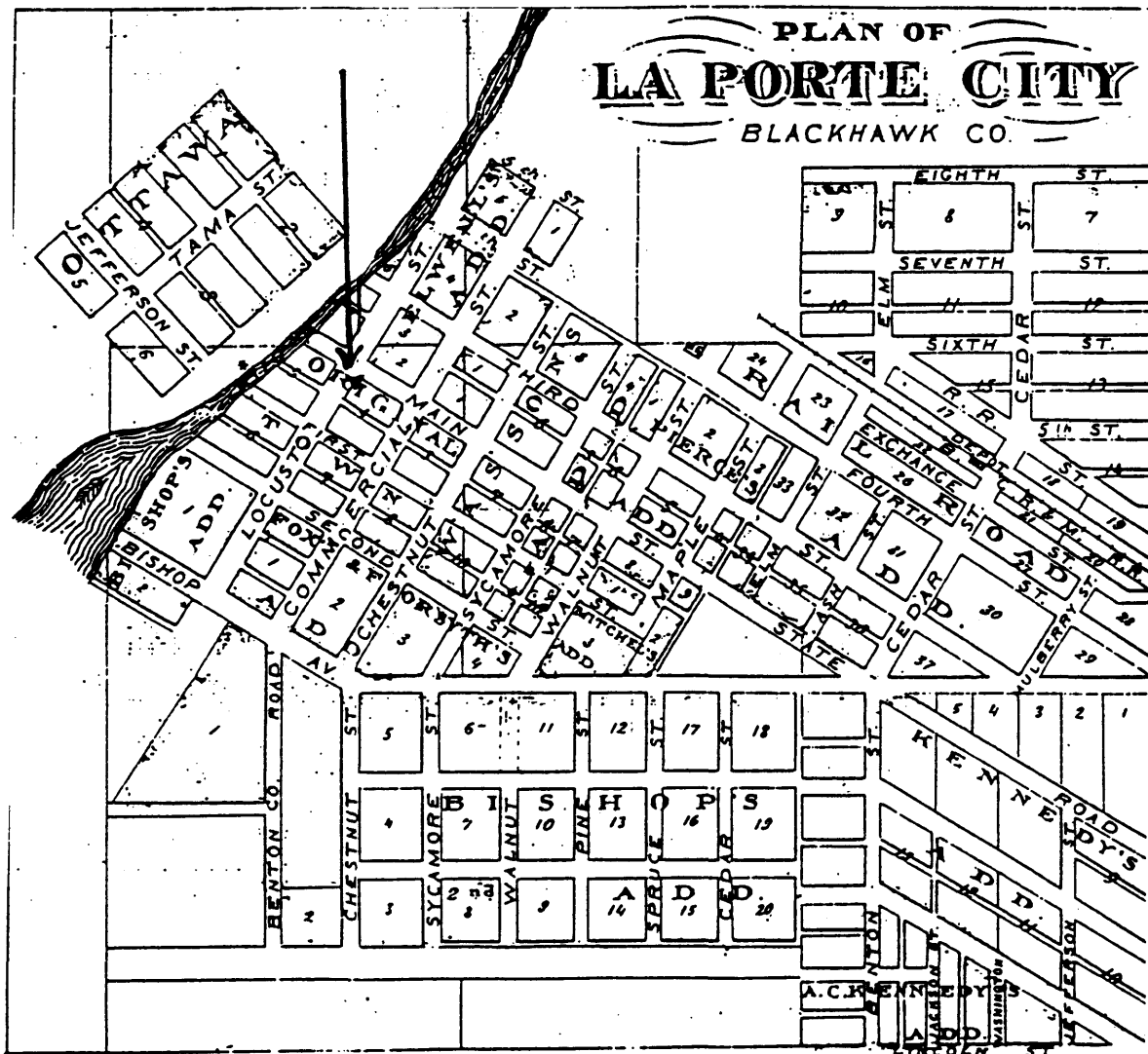
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CFN-259-1116

Dr. Jesse Wasson Building, Black Hawk County, Iowa.

LA PORTE CITY IN 1875



Arrow locates the Wasson Building.

Source: A. T. Andreas Illustrated Historical Atlas of the State of Iowa, 1875.

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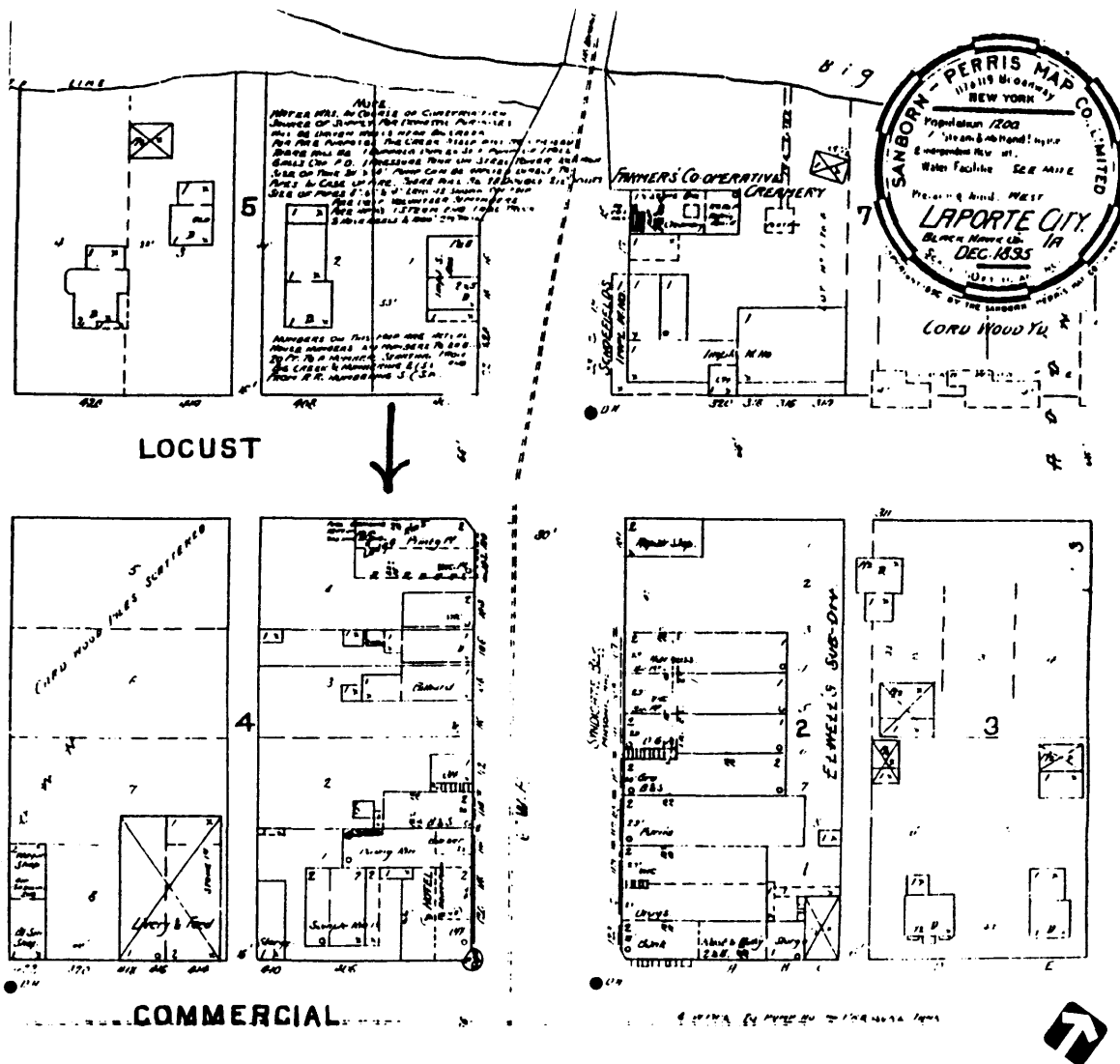
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CFN-259-1116

Dr. Jesse Wasson Building, Black Hawk County, Iowa.

1895 FIRE INSURANCE MAP

ARROW LOCATES PROPERTY



United States Department of the Interior
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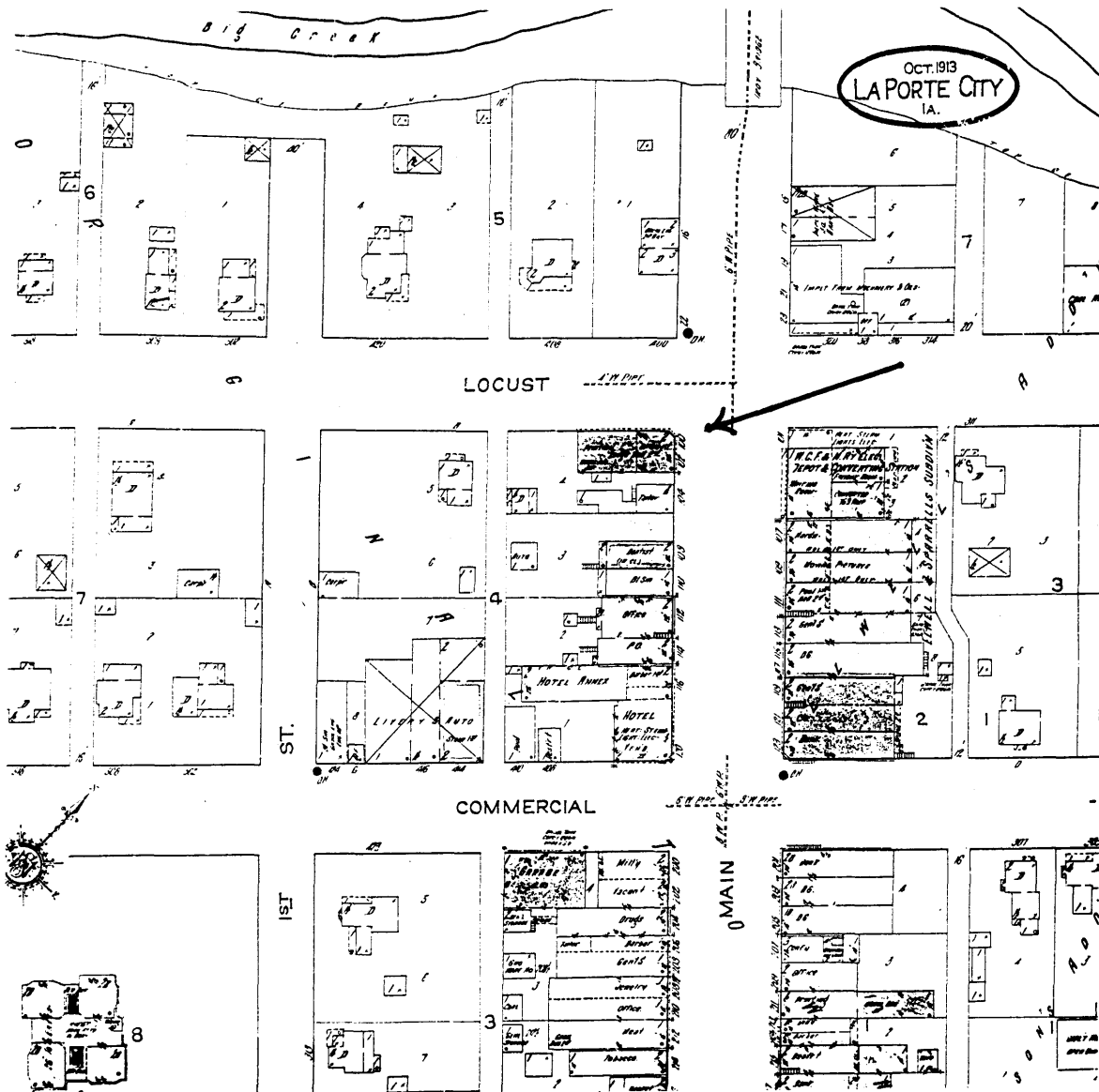
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Dr. Jesse Wasson Building, Black Hawk County, Iowa.

1913 FIRE INSURANCE MAP

ARROW LOCATES PROPERTY



Source: Sanborn Map Company, La Porte City, 1913, p. 3.



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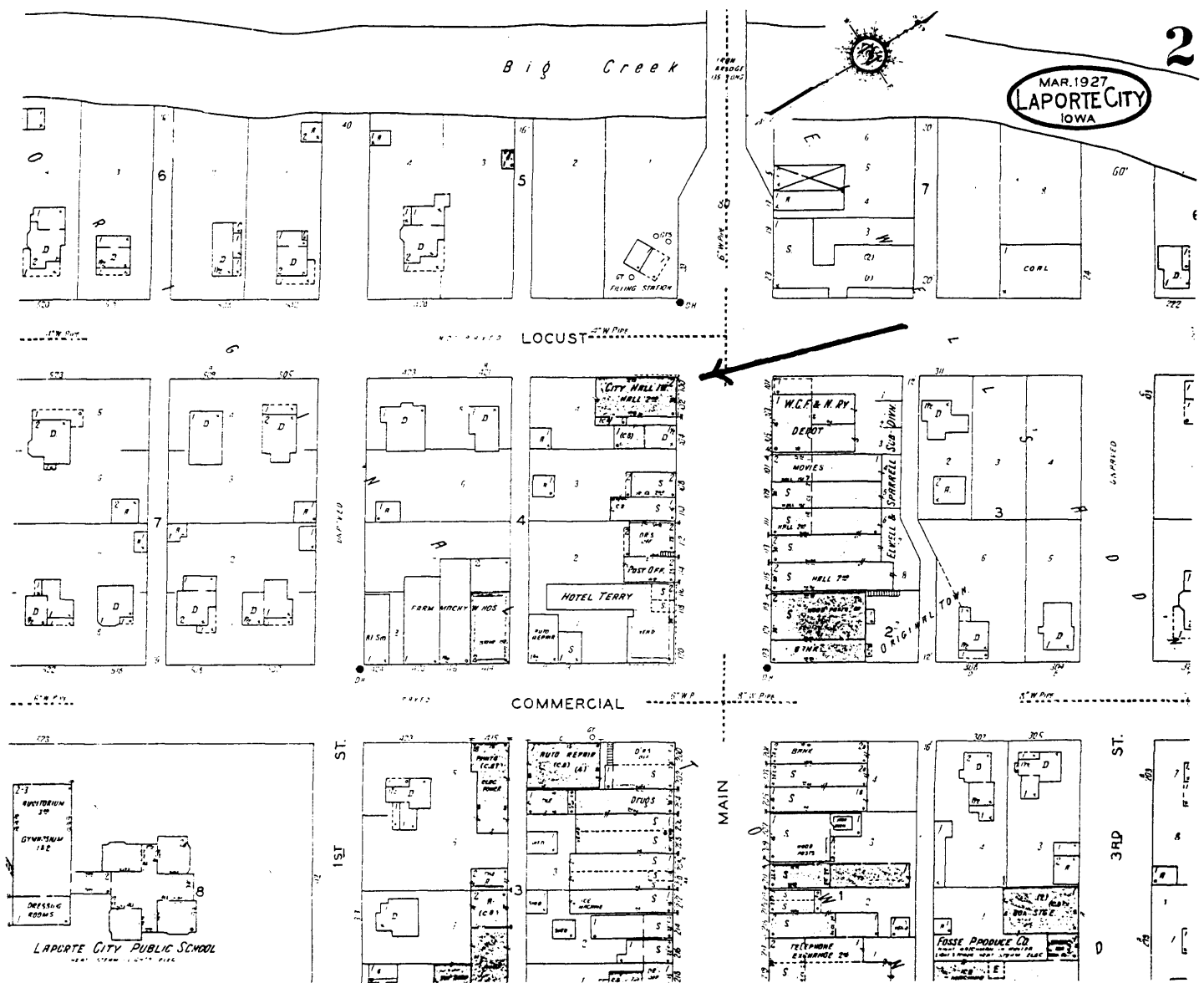
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Dr. Jesse Wasson Building, Black Hawk County, Iowa.

1927 FIRE INSURANCE MAP

ARROW LOCATES PROPERTY



Source: Sanborn Map Company, La Porte City, 1927, p. 2.



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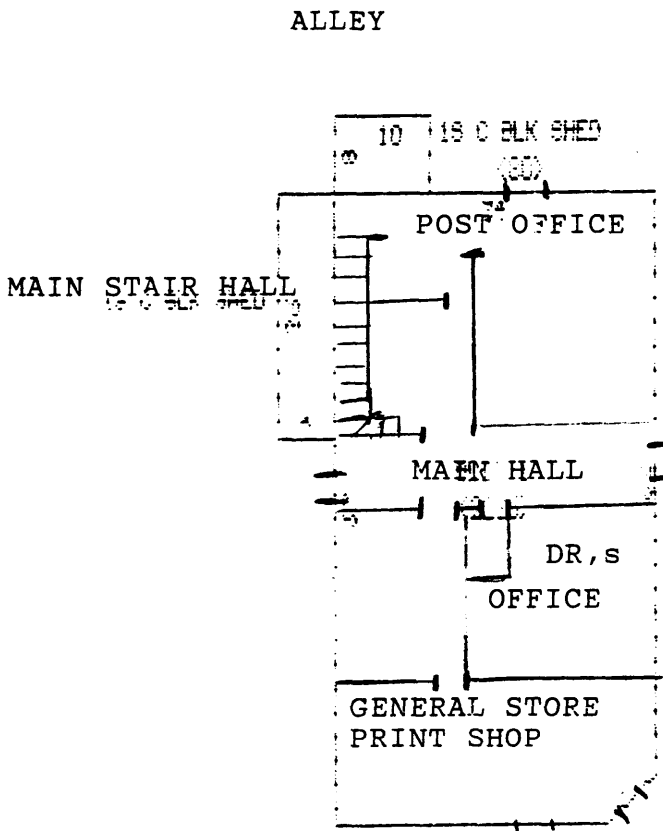
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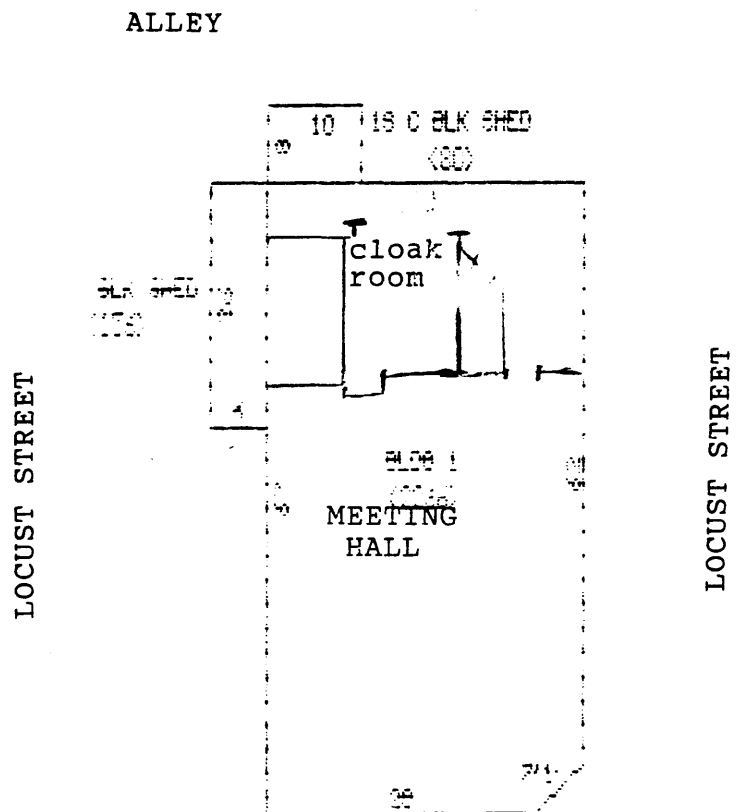
Dr. Jesse Wasson Building, Black Hawk County, Iowa.

FLOOR PLANS



FRONT
FIRST FLOOR PLAN

MAIN STREET



FRONT

MAIN STREET

SECOND FLOOR PLAN



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Dr. Jesse Wasson Building, Black Hawk County, Iowa.

POST CARD VIEW CIRCA 1900

ARROW LOCATES PROPERTY



Source: Courtesy David Hopkins, La Porte City, Iowa.

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CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8 Page 13

CFN-259-1116

Dr. Jesse Wasson Building, Black Hawk County, Iowa.

SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANCE

Built and first occupied in 1878, the Dr. Jesse Wasson Building is locally significant, under National Register Criterion C, as the oldest surviving example stone construction and the only surviving example of first generation commercial buildings. Its design is Late Victorian.

The Dr. Jesse Wasson Building is locally significant, under National Register Criterion B. The building calls direct attention to the career of Dr. Jesse Wasson, a founding proprietor of La Porte City, its chief booster for many years, and a man of wide interests and civic contributions. The name of this property reflects its close historical associations with the man.

The period of significance, under Criterion C, for the Wasson Building is 1878, the year in which the property was completed and first occupied. The period of significance, under Criterion B, is 1878-1889, the time in which Wasson owned the building.

The property contains one resource for this nomination--the building itself.

DR. JESSE WASSON

The life of Dr. Jesse Wasson (1821-1889) provides a fine example of a local leader during Iowa's period of pioneer settlement. As the original proprietor of La Porte City and its most prominent civic leader during its years of early growth, Wasson served the community as its postmaster, physician, newspaper publisher and editor, mayor, and chief booster. He also held elective county and state offices. Although Wasson's birthright Quaker upbringing probably affected his humanitarian interests throughout his life, the man's personal lifestyle abjured that belief's tenets of simplicity.

The Dr. Jesse Wasson Building calls direct attention, under National Register Criterion B, to this historic context. Wasson constructed this building for his office and used it as such for many years. His residence in La Porte City, constructed circa 1873, is no longer extant.

Jesse Wasson was born in Richmond, Indiana, on October 22, 1821, a son of Jehail and Lydia Wasson, natives of North Carolina. His parents were members of the Society of Friends, and Jesse is presumed to have been raised as a Quaker. When he was 12 years of age, he moved with his parents to La Porte, Indiana, where he grew to manhood. Wasson received a good, common school education. At nineteen he commenced reading law, which he continued for about one year. Owing to the continued opposition of his mother, Wasson then abandoned the idea of entering that profession and commenced the study of medicine, self-educating himself in that discipline until he was 22 years of age. At that time, he matriculated at Indiana Medical College and attended one course of lectures for four months. He later returned to that institution for another eight months of study, attending a second course of training. During the Spring and Summer of 1846, he began a medical practice at Milton, Indiana, and in the Fall and Winter, he completed his final course at the school, graduating in February 1847.

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CFN-259-1116

Dr. Jesse Wasson Building, Black Hawk County, Iowa.

In the Spring of 1846, Wasson relocated to New Buffalo, Michigan, where he began in earnest a medical practice. He remained in New Buffalo for about three years, subsequently returning to La Porte, Indiana. There he continued the practice of medicine until June or July 1853, when he relocated to Iowa. He settled first at Vinton in Benton County, where he engaged in the real estate business in addition to his medical practice, and remained for some two years. On May 31, 1855, Wasson and Junia Haun of Vinton, Iowa, were united in marriage. This was Jesse's second marriage. Little is known about his first marriage, although the union produced five children.

At about the same time, John A. Dees platted a town site on a tributary of the Cedar River, known as Big Creek, in Black Hawk County. Dees called this "paper town" Ottawa. Soon after Wasson's arrival in Iowa, Dees opened up negotiations with him for the sale of the Ottawa property. Wasson investigated the site in 1854. Ottawa stood on the north bank of Big Creek. Wasson reckoned the south side of the creek offered a better site for a town. As a result, he quickly purchased a large acreage of this land and platted another town, naming it after a place of his residence in Indiana. Joel W. Catlin, Wasson's business partner in Vinton, Iowa, was also a partner in this land transaction. This land was laid out in a town plat on June 5, 1855.

Now, both Wasson and Catlin and their families moved to the new town. A storeroom 18' x 50' was erected on the southeast corner of Main and Locust Street, on the present site of the Wasson Building. The corner location of this site and its prominent situation near the stream and on the town's principal street conferred prominence on the building. Wasson and his family lived in this building until a permanent residence (now nonexistent) was built in La Porte City. (See Continuation Sheet 8-23.)

Jesse Wasson's drive and civic spirit bolstered the prospects of the fledging community and pushed its growth forward. He became the first postmaster of La Porte City and served in this office from 1855 to 1860. The town was off the regular route traversed by the mail carrier, and Wasson individually paid for the delivery of mail the first year. Wasson was also the first Justice of the Peace in the community. When government surveyors entered Black Hawk County to lay out what has become the present-day Iowa Highway 218, Wasson induced the route to be drawn through La Porte City, reputedly by bribing the surveying party with whiskey.

Wasson's activities during the Civil War further illustrate the man's drive and civic-spirit. At the outbreak of the war in 1861, Wasson took an active interest and encouraged enlistments. He was appointed Assistant Surgeon of the 23rd Regiment of the Iowa Infantry Volunteers in 1862 and held this position for nine months. Subsequently, he was commissioned Surgeon of the 9th Cavalry, with which unit he remained until March of 1865. Failing health compelled his resignation.

Dr. Wasson also led an active life in state and local politics. Initially affiliated with the Whig Party, Wasson joined the Republican Party at its inception. He assisted in organizing the party in Iowa and acted with it until the Spring of 1872, when, according to one source, he "liberalized, and has since supported the opposition under the various names which it has received in this state." (Van Meter:316) Wasson was a member of the Black Hawk County Board of Supervisors for the years 1867, 1868, and 1869. He was an elected member of the legislature of the State of Iowa in 1869 and served in that body through the adjournment of the 13th General Assembly in 1870. His other political offices

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Dr. Jesse Wasson Building, Black Hawk County, Iowa.

included service as the mayor of La Porte City in 1875, 1876, 1877, and 1881. Wasson was also a prominent member of the Grand Army of the Republic and the Masonic fraternity.

Perhaps as an extension of his interest in politics, Wasson and two partners purchased in 1871 the *La Porte City-Progress*, a neat seven column paper, which he enlarged to eight columns in 1872. Wasson served as both publisher and editor of the newspaper. Following his death, the paper combined with the *La Porte City Review*, which survives today as the local newspaper under the name *La Porte City Progress-Review*.

Wasson's medical practice is documented by several sources. According to a history of Black Hawk County, Wasson was one of 22 early physicians in that area. He was also the first physician in La Porte City. (Hartman:402) In 1876 Wasson was one of the 13 charter members of the Black Hawk County Medical Association. (*Ibid.*)

Wasson has been described as a most picturesque, big hearted, big brained, diligent, and liberal man with deep convictions, wide knowledge, and a strong personality. (Van Meter:316) He also cut a figure in La Porte City. Weighing anywhere between 300 to 350 pounds at times, Wasson was a big man physically. He also sported a large mustache, wore a wig topped by a high black-silk hat, and carried a gold headed cane.

Wasson died on May 15, 1889. His last resting place is in West View Cemetery, La Porte City, and is marked with a marble slab, such as the U.S. Government provides for war veterans. Wasson's bigger-than-life reputation in La Porte City was memorialized in a tribute at the time of his funeral. Two symbols of his personality--the cane with the gold-head and his black-silk top hat--were displayed prominently among the floral arrangements. (See Continuation Sheet 8-22.)

Much later, in August of 1943, a larger tombstone was ceremoniously placed at Wasson's grave. It reads:

Physician, soldier, legislator, merchant, editor.
This monument to Dr. Wasson is not the stone,
But La Porte City
which as a Vigorous Pioneer community Sprang
from his labors and his leadership

Wasson's memory continues to stir the respect and admiration of La Porte City residents. For example, it was reported in 1997 that:

To honor Wasson, well-known and well-liked resident John Comstock left the city, among other endowments, \$20,000 when he died in October to build a monument [to Wasson]. That monument is starting to take shape. (*Waterloo Courier* 1997)

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Dr. Jesse Wasson Building, Black Hawk County, Iowa.

Wasson was a birthright Quaker. Although Wasson's flamboyant appearance contradicted Quaker standards of simplicity, other religious tenets of that faith--its concern for humanitarian issues, for example--may have motivated his public service.

Jesse Wasson clearly enjoyed the market-place of life. This trait led him as a young man to study law. While his mother's distaste for worldly activity finally persuaded him to pursue another career--medicine--Wasson's pursuit of journalism and politics as careers illustrates how he was continually driven to an active life in spite of religious principles inculcated in boyhood. Further research is recommended to flesh out this story--particularly his early religious training and his family's standing in the Quaker community. The minutes of the Quaker meetings in Richmond and La Porte, Indiana, could be consulted to learn more about this topic. The archives of Earlham College in Richmond might also yield information in this regard.

ARCHITECTURE

The Dr. Jesse Wasson Building is architecturally significant as a fine, local example of a first generation building and the sole surviving limestone building in La Porte City.

During the period of early settlement in Black Hawk County, limestone was the building material of preference for permanent edifices of quality. (Page 1992:E-30) Limestone was readily available in the locality, and lime for mortar was locally produced. A number of resident stonemasons provided the necessary expertise to quarry, dress, and construct stone. Soon, however, the advent of railroads brought manufactured building materials within easy reach, and the era of first generation buildings constructed largely from locally-produced building materials quickly closed.

According to the Black Hawk and Bremer County survey report (1992):

About two dozen stone buildings and structures were identified in this reconnaissance survey in Black Hawk and Bremer Counties. About an equal number of Nineteenth Century stone masons and quarrymen, including their domiciles, were also identified. Superimposed on a composite map, these locations indicate areas of concentrated historic activity. In Black Hawk County, several conclusions can be drawn. First, stone resources occur all along the Cedar River. Second, these resources cluster in the northwest corner, in the Cedar Falls, Waterloo area, and around Gilbertville. Finally, local stone masons generally lived in Waterloo, Cedar Falls Township, and in Big Creek Township. (*Ibid.*:E-31)

This reconnaissance survey identified a total of three stone buildings in and around La Porte City. All are of limestone construction and included:

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Dr. Jesse Wasson Building, Black Hawk County, Iowa.

Name of Resource	Location	Notes
Wasson Building	201 Main Street La Porte City	Built in 1878, 2-story, commercial
Lime Kiln	Section 28 Big Creek Township	Rare survivor of an early and important industry in eastern Iowa
Lange Smokehouse	8214 Spring Creek Road Spring Creek Township	Late 19th century, NRHP, contributing resource to Lange Farmstead Historic District

Source: *Ibid:passim*.

Limestone often remained the choice for building foundations in La Porte City until late in the Nineteenth Century. (*Ibid*.:E-30)

The Page survey also cited the following information obtained from the biographical directory of *The History of Black Hawk County, Iowa*, published in 1878:

Name	Occupation	Domicile
B. F. Barnes	mason	Big Creek Township
Jos. H. Nichols	gardener & mason	Big Creek Township
A. Palm	stone mason	Big Creek Township
H. Stone	mason	Big Creek Township
J. D. Susong	mason	Big Creek Township

Source: *Ibid*:E-31.

Although it cannot be stated definitively at the present time, it seems likely that the builder of the Wasson Building was one of the above-named masons. This list was up-to-date when the Wasson Building was constructed, being published the very year it was built.

The Wasson Building is architecturally significant because it illustrates how Italianate styling could influence the design of a stone commercial building. This influence is most prominent in the arch above the second floor window of the building's canted entrance. Although the name of the building's stonemason has not been identified to date, the field has been narrowed to a handful of likely candidates, as presented above.

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Dr. Jesse Wasson Building, Black Hawk County, Iowa.

The date of construction for the Wasson Building--the year 1878--is documented by the presence of that date, hewn in stone, within the keystone of the arch above the canted entrance to the building.

OTHER OWNERS OF THE PROPERTY

The first transfer of this property occurred on June 4, 1853, when the United States sold 17.5 acres of land to a George Cook. Cook in turn sold the same property to Joel W. Catlin, who was the partner of Dr. Jesse Wasson, on June 14, 1853. Catlin sold the property to Junia Wasson, the wife of Wasson, on June 15, 1853. A store-house, measuring 18 x 50 feet, was located on the corner where the Dr. Jesse Wasson Building now stands.

Following Jesse's death in 1889, his estate was divided according to his will. Wasson bequeathed to his first wife and children (Amos, Augusta, Merrill, Josephine Kinley, and Alice Pickerell) a sum of one dollar. The rest of his estate was to be divided equally between Junia Wasson, his present wife, and children (Buren S., Addie V., Jesse G., George W., and Maudie). Junia and the children had the property appraised in 1894 but were unable to sell it. In 1897 the court was petitioned to sell the building because the rents were insufficient to pay off its debt, drawing 10% interest.

After Julia Wasson sold the building in 1897, it was purchased by various persons until 1914, when the local Knights of Pythias purchased the building for their lodge hall. They held title to the building until 1961. In 1972, Kenneth and Patricia Benda, the present owners, purchased the building.

REPRESENTATION IN OTHER CULTURAL RESOURCES SURVEYS

The Wasson Building was surveyed in 1992 as part of the Preservation Partnership project in Black Hawk and Bremer Counties, Iowa. At that time, the building was evaluated as eligible for nomination to the National Register as well as a contributing resource to the potential Main Street Historic District, an area of architectural significance in La Porte City. Other contributing resources included the Syndicate Block (built in 1891) and the brick-paved Main Street, which forms that district's corridor. The Waterloo, Cedar Falls, and Northern Railroad: La Porte City Station, another contributing resource to that district and built in 1914, was listed on the National Register in 1979. It is located directly across the street from the Wasson Building.

PRESENT STATUS OF PROPERTY

The Wasson Building currently houses Ken's Electronics, with storage on the second floor. There are no plans to change any of the building as the owners wish to preserve as much of the original integrity as possible. The purpose of this nomination is to call the community's attention to the historical importance of the building, instill community pride in its architecture, and stimulate interest in historic preservation.

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Dr. Jesse Wasson Building, Black Hawk County, Iowa.

POTENTIAL FOR HISTORICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

Although the site's potential for archaeological research is, as yet, unevaluated, the historical record attests to the fact that there was a building located on the site in 1855. Probably of wooden construction, it measured 18' x 50'. It is unlikely that subsurface deposits remain from this earlier building, having most likely been obliterated by the construction of the present building.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This nomination is a collaborative effort. Geraldine Wester, Chairperson of the La Porte City Historic Preservation Commission (LPCHPC), researched the history of the Dr. Jesse Wasson Building and provided photographic documentation of it. William C. Page, Public Historian of Des Moines, Iowa, had previously prepared an Iowa Site Inventory Form for this building, which was included in a report--*Reconnaissance Historical and Architectural Survey of Black Hawk and Bremer Counties, Iowa*--prepared in 1992 for the State Historical Society of Iowa. Shelly Ringelstetter, Vice-Chairperson of the LPCHPC, took the research information and formatted it into a National Register nomination. Wester, Ringelstetter, and Page subsequently collaborated to prepare the final nomination under the auspices of the LPCHPC.

Documenting the history of the Dr. Jesse Wasson Building stems from physical evidence, archival data, and oral history. The keystone above the canted entry on Main Street bears the date "1878." Local histories and newspapers were consulted for information about the life of Wasson. Oral history documents that the building was constructed for Wasson and provided information about its more recent past. These sources of information are cited in the bibliography, which appears in Section 9 of this nomination.

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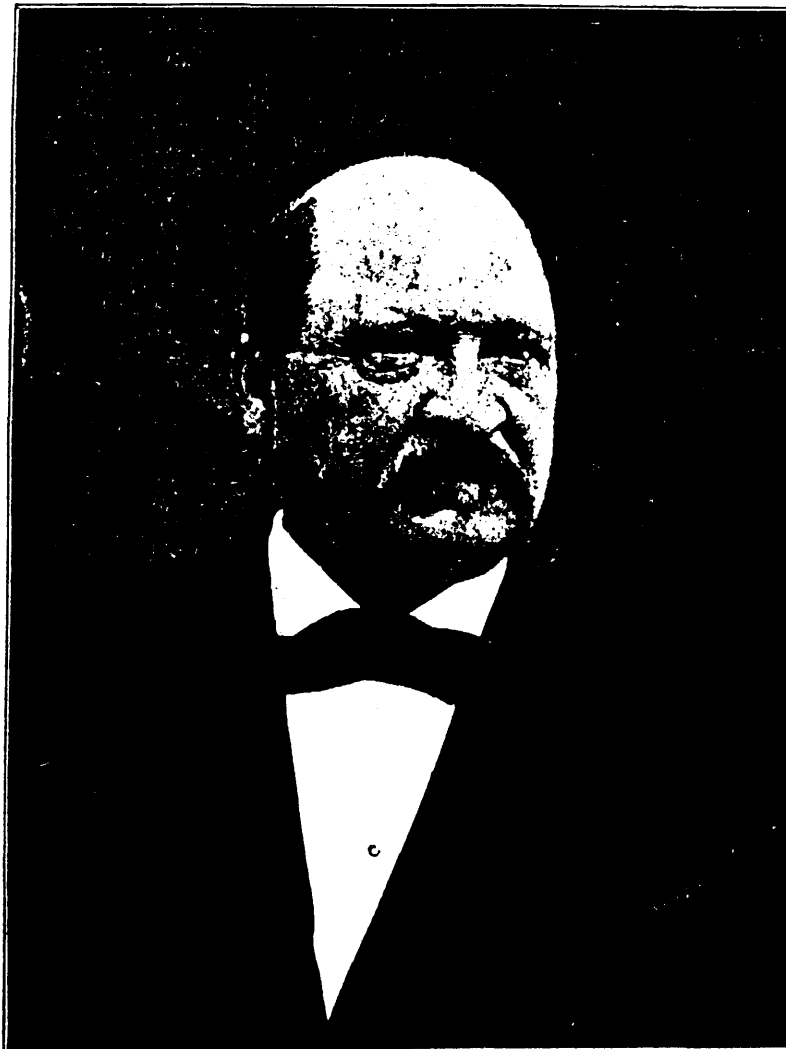
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Dr. Jesse Wasson Building, Black Hawk County, Iowa.

PHOTOGRAPHIC PORTRAIT



DR. JESSE WASSON
Founder of La Porte City, Iowa.

Source: Hartman's *History of Black Hawk County, Iowa, and Its People*, between pages 294-295.

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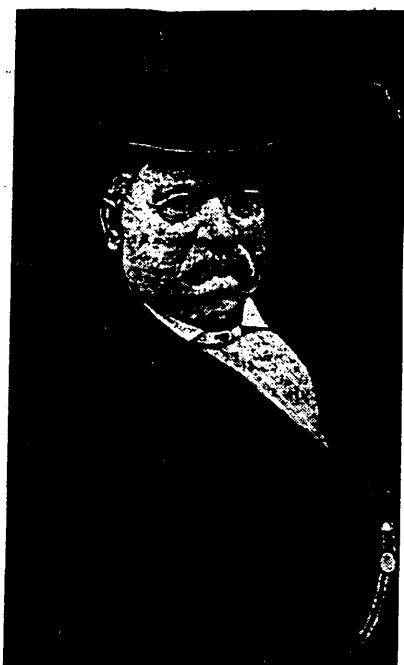
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Dr. Jesse Wasson Building, Black Hawk County, Iowa.

PHOTOGRAPHIC PORTRAIT



Jesse Wasson

Source: Historic photograph published in the *Waterloo Courier* in 1997.

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Dr. Jesse Wasson Building, Black Hawk County, Iowa.

MEMORIAL REMEMBRANCE



This memorial tribute to Wasson--featuring his gold-headed cane and black silk hat--befitted the man's expansive spirit and his larger-than-life presence in La Porte City.

Source: Centennial Publication, 1971.

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Dr. Jesse Wasson Building, Black Hawk County, Iowa.

WASSON HOUSE IN LA PORTE CITY



RESIDENCE OF HON. J. WASSON M.D. LA PORTE CITY, IOWA.

This depiction of Dr. Wasson's nonextant house in La Porte City evidences the man's interest in architecture. Its Greek Revival design would have been a common sight in Indiana during his childhood for residences of quality. According to one historical account, the house was built in 1856. (Van Meter:231)

Source: *A. T. Andreas Illustrated Historical Atlas of the State of Iowa, 1875.*

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Dr. Jesse Wasson Building, Black Hawk County, Iowa.

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Dr. Jesse Wasson Building, Black Hawk County, Iowa.

MAPS

La Porte City Utilities; Topographic map.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps

1886, 1895, 1913, 1927, 1948.

United States Geological Survey; La Porte City Quadrangle; 1956, revised 1976.

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Dr. Jesse Wasson Building, Black Hawk County, Iowa.

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Northwest 40 feet of Lot 4 in Block 4 of the Original Plat of the City of La Porte
City, Iowa.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

Contains all land associated originally with the resource.

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Dr. Jesse Wasson Building, Black Hawk County, Iowa.

LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

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| 1. Dr. Jesse Wasson Building
201 Main Street
La Porte City, IA 50651
Looking southeast
Geraldine Wester, Photographer
August 28, 1998 | 6. Dr. Jesse Wasson Building
201 Main Street
La Porte City, IA 50651
Looking northeast
Interior detail of front room (east unit)
Geraldine Wester, Photographer
August 28, 1998 |
| 2. Dr. Jesse Wasson Building
201 Main Street
La Porte City, IA 50651
Looking southwest
Geraldine Wester, Photographer
August 28, 1998 | 7. Dr. Jesse Wasson Building
201 Main Street
La Porte City, IA 50651
Looking southwest
Interior detail of pressed metal ceiling
Geraldine Wester, Photographer
August 28, 1998 |
| 3. Dr. Jesse Wasson Building
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Looking northwest
Geraldine Wester, Photographer
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Looking northeast
Interior detail of meeting hall
Geraldine Wester, Photographer
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| 4. Dr. Jesse Wasson Building
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Looking west
Geraldine Wester, Photographer
August 28, 1998 | |
| 5. Dr. Jesse Wasson Building
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La Porte City, IA 50651
Looking northeast
Interior detail of front room (west unit)
Geraldine Wester, Photographer
August 28, 1998 | |