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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

FEB 23

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

AUG 25 2005

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 Universalist Church

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 420 4th Street

city or town Mitchellville

state IA code IA county Polk

code 153

zip code 50169

not for publication N/A

vicinity N/A

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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.)

Rowell G. Soike
Signature of certifying official

February 22, 2005
Date

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):

Linda McClelland 9-6-05

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

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

Category of Property (Check only one box)

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

Number of Resources within Property

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: RELIGION

Sub: religious facility

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: RECREATION AND CULTURE

Sub: museum

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

MID-19TH CENTURY

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation BRICK

Roof WOOD/shingle

Walls WOOD/weatherboard

other GLASS

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

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.)

- 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.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

Ca. 1868

Significant Dates

Ca. 1868

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Mitchell, Thomas

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

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

Previous documentation of file (NPS)

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

Primary Location of Additional Data

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

Name of repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one

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

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	<u>15</u>	<u>469925</u>	<u>4613125</u>	3	___	___	___
2	___	___	___	4	___	___	___

- See continuation sheet

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

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

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Elizabeth Foster Hill

organization State Historical Society of Iowa

date August 6, 2004

street & number 600 E. Locust

city or town Des Moines

state IA

zip code 50319

telephone number 515/281-4137

e-mail address beth.foster@iowa.gov

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

name/title City of Mitchellville

street & number P.O. Box 817, 110 2nd Street NE

city or town Mitchellville

state IA

zip code 50169

telephone number 515/967-2631

e-mail address _____

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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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Universalist Church
Polk County, Iowa

Materials Continued:

Roof: METAL

Narrative Description

The town of Mitchellville is located in Polk and Jasper counties, Central Iowa. The Universalist Church at Mitchellville is situated in Polk County within a residential neighborhood on the northeast side of Mitchellville. The site includes two city lots and measures 132' x 165'. Located on the northwest corner of 4th Street Northwest and Market Avenue Northwest, this corner location lends visual presence to the building. This visually prominent church, completed and first occupied circa 1868, is the oldest documented building in the city. The building is in excellent condition and retains outstanding integrity of design.

Two frame privies, built ca. 1920 and covered with front gable roofs, are located on the site to the west of the church and they are counted as contributing resources for this nomination. These privies feature wood siding, wood shingled roofs, door trim similar to that used on the church and modern flush toilets.

A livery stable once stood behind the church and provided shelter for the congregation's horses. A parsonage, of later date than the church, once was attached to the northeast corner of the church. It was relocated ca. 1980 to 5th Street Northwest. The stable was demolished ca. 1920.

The church is a rectangular frame building resting on brick footings, covered with wood siding and capped with a front gable roof, featuring a bell tower, steeple, and weathervane. A square bell tower projects from the front of the building and serves as entry to the building. It has two louvered openings on the south elevation and one louvered opening on each of the other elevations. Arched hoodmolds crown each of these openings. A hipped roof covers the bell tower, with an octagonal steeple, fabricated of sheet metal. An iron weathervane and lightning rod are located on top of the steeple. In an historic photograph of the church, the steeple appears to be shingled. Although the present steeple may not be original to the building, it matches the original design. An alcove is located at the rear of the building.

The exterior walls are clad with wooden weatherboard. A wooden water table surrounds the building. Wooden corner posts with decorative capitals are situated at each of the corners of the building. A wide cornice is located at the roofline. The closed soffits are moderately wide.

The fenestration originally featured 9/9 double-hung sash. Most of these sashes were replaced, apparently in the 1880s, with double-hung windows featuring frosted glass. Two of these windows are memorials. One reads "1826/Jane Sternberg." The other reads "1835/Wm. S. Jones/1885." The transom over the front double doors has red flashed glass, with "Universalist Church/1868" lettered in unflashed glass. A round, louvered opening is situated above the front entrance. Arched hoodmolds surmount the building's windows and doors.

The brick footings have been repaired at various times over the years and consequently contain a number of different kinds of brick. The original, low-fired, light orange-red brick is visible in several places. A partial basement is situated under the rear of the building.

The interior of the building has two rooms. Double doors from the exterior are used to access the vestibule. A rope in the northeast corner is used for ringing the bell in the tower. Original 9/9, double-hung sashes provide light to the vestibule. Double-doors lead from the vestibule into the meeting room. The central aisle leads to a raised dais at the north end of this room. An alcove is situated behind this dais. A wall mural (described in Section 8) is flanked by two windows. Pews set at an angle flank the central aisle. These pews

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likely date from the late 19th century improvements to the building. Original built-in pews, with lift-top seats for storage, are situated at the rear of the meeting room.

The woodwork of the interior features false graining. The windows and doors have wide architrave trim with friezes above the upper portions. There is a wooden wainscoting in the vestibule and meeting room. The plank floors are painted reddish-orange. The wood trim around the dais is painted apple green and reddish-orange.

Statement of Significance

The Universalist Church at Mitchellville is locally significant under Criterion C. The church, completed and first occupied circa 1868, is an outstanding example of a early church design based on examples found in small New England towns. It is likely very similar to the ones found in the builder's hometown. The building is the oldest documented in the city. The building is in excellent condition and retains outstanding integrity of design. This nomination meets criteria consideration A because it is being nominated primarily for its architectural significance.

Latter-day histories sometimes date construction of the church to 1862. (*"A Community of Communities"*:334) However, the transom above the church entrance depicts the date "1868." The 1862 date is most unlikely. Not only did little construction occur in Iowa during the Civil War; the site of the church had not yet been platted. (Perhaps this date refers to another event in the congregation's history.) The 1868-year is more likely correct. Mitchellville was platted in 1867, and this layout provided the legal description for the church property.

Following the disbanding of the church congregation in 1970, the title to the property passed to the Polk County Conservation Board. That board transferred the property title to the City of Mitchellville in 1986. Currently, the Thomas Mitchell Historical Society administers the maintenance and use of the building for the City.

With further research the church could possibly be found eligible under Criterion A for the settlement of Mitchellville and Criterion B for its association with Thomas Mitchell, the community's founder.

Architecture

Thomas Mitchell designed this house. His design blends into the building certain other stylistic influences popular in the mid-19th century for manufactured building materials. Mitchell imported ready-made materials like hoodmolds, doors, and windows into Mitchellville by rail and employed them to construct the building.

The symmetry of the front façade with its central entrance flanked by windows, the multi-paned windows, and most notably the bell tower with its tall steeple and weathervane are hallmarks of the Federal influence.

Manufactured building materials include the arched hoodmolds above the louvered openings in the bell tower, and the architrave trim around the interior windows and doors. The employment of the latter shows the on-going influence of Greek Revival styling, while the round-arched hoodmolds are reminiscent of Late Victorian taste. The soft brick, used for the footings of the building, were likely locally fired, although such a source has not yet been identified.

There is a *Trompe l'oeil* at the front of the church in the alcove situated behind the dais. *Trompe l'oeil* is a French term literally meaning "to deceive the eye." This artwork employs a one point perspective to achieve dramatic effect. The viewer is invited to travel along a long hall. The closed door at the end of the hall invites speculation as to what lies beyond it. In this depiction, the picture suggests two essential ingredients of the American experience—movement and exploration. The identity of the artist and the date are unknown, but the picture likely dates to the 1880s. When the Polk County Conservation Board acquired the property, they began a rehabilitation of the building. This included the removal of wallpaper, which clad the alcove at the front of the meeting room. This *Trompe l'oeil* was discovered behind the wallpaper. (Artis C. Fenimore)

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Universalist Church
Polk County, Iowa

The congregation in Mitchellville undertook numerous improvements to the church building in the 1880s. These included the installation of frosted glass windows, two of which are memorials; a colored glass transom above the front doors; and likely the mural. In 1998 the building was re-roofed with wood shingles and painted.

Thomas Mitchell

The Universalist Church at Mitchellville also calls attention to the career of Thomas Mitchell, the community's founder and long-time leader but no claim is being made in this nomination. Mitchell's personal example shaped the civic persona of the community. One eulogy of him in 1894 summarized this outlook:

A city of intellectual enlightenment, religious toleration and moral integrity....and all of this, more than anything of marble or brass which they may build in the park or cemetery, will be Thomas Mitchell's monument. (Meador, unidentified source)

The Universalist Church is a symbol of those civic virtues. It was completed just one year after the establishment of the Mitchellville community.

The Universalist Church at Mitchellville may be eligible under Criterion B for calling attention to the career of Thomas Mitchell (1816-1894). However, Thomas Mitchell's house is located at 206 4th Street Northwest, diagonally across the street from the church.

Born in New Hampshire, Mitchell relocated to the west in 1839 and settled in Fairfield, Iowa, in 1840. He subsequently relocated to Polk County, Iowa where he continued to live until his death. His New Hampshire background may possibly have influenced the design of this church.

Mitchell was actively engaged in the local political affairs of his time. In Fairfield, he served two years as a county commissioner. Mitchell subsequently helped to organize Polk County and was elected its sheriff in 1846. In 1857, Mitchell was elected to serve as a representative in the first General Assembly of Iowa to be held in Des Moines. He later served for six years as a commissioner of Polk County and then as a State Senator for Polk County. (Andreas:388) Thomas Mitchell was an ardent abolitionist. His championing of the movement furthered its spread in central Iowa, and he was an acknowledged leader of the Underground Railroad. The monumental *Andreas Illustrated Historical Atlas of the State of Iowa* contains a prominent portrait of Thomas Mitchell, situated on the page even above notables like Hon. B.F. Allen; Wesley Redhead, Esq.; and former Iowa governor Col. Samuel Merrill. (Ibid.9)



Thomas Mitchell, top center
Andreas, A.T. (*Alfred Theodore*), 1839-1900,
Chicago: Andreas Atlas Co., 1875

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Thomas Mitchell resided in Section 1 of Beaver Township in Polk County. His farmstead is pictured in the *Andreas Atlas*. (Andreas: 261) This farmhouse remains extant. In 1892, Mitchell and his family moved to Mitchellville to live in the house at 206 Northwest 4th Street (extant). Oral tradition holds that this house was relocated to Mitchellville from Mitchelltown. (Artis C. Fenimore, handed down from Virginia Meader)

In 1856, Mitchell platted a new town (a.k.a. Mitchelltown), laid out in anticipation of the railroad's arrival. As it happened, the railroad chose a slightly more southerly route. To remedy the bypassing, Mitchell platted another town, Mitchellville, in 1867, sited immediately north of the new tracks.

Mitchell documented his ability at construction in a newspaper interview before his death. In it, Mitchell discussed the construction of houses and outbuildings on his farm. About the construction of his second house, Mitchell recalled:

The day following their arrival [builder Eli Trullinger and his brother Jacob at the Mitchell farm in Polk County in 1844] we put the roof on the second house. Mr. Trullinger stayed with us and broke prairie for us that summer. Two days after my brother came up [from Fairfield, Iowa] I started back to Fairfield for doors and windows for our houses, the family is living in them without doors or windows. After we had made these two houses comfortable and built a smokehouse, we then built the third house, which is the one now standing, as I am informed. (Meader, unidentified source)

Mitchell evidenced considerable concern for religion and education. "He was the actual founder and life-long friend and supporter of this church." (Meader, unidentified source quoting the Clerk of the Church minutes) In addition to a driving force behind the establishment of the Universalist Church in Mitchellville, Mitchell promoted plans for the establishment of a Universalist academy in Mitchellville in 1870. The buildings erected for this institution later became the Iowa State Girls Training School. In turn, that site became the Mitchellville State Prison for Women, when that facility was relocated from Rockwell City, Iowa to Mitchellville in the late 20th century.

Previous Cultural Resources Surveys

In 1974, Stephen Stimmel photographed the Universalist Church at Mitchellville for the State Historical Society of Iowa but did not evaluate its significance.

In 1978, Jack Lufkin, surveyor for the Central Iowa Regional Association of Local Governments (CIRALG) evaluated the church as having outstanding historical value because of its associations with the founding of Mitchellville.

In 2004, William Page completed an Iowa Site Inventory form on which this nomination is based.

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Universalist Church
Polk County, Iowa

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Bibliographic References

“A Community of Communities”

1981 *A Pictorial History of Southeast Polk County, Iowa*. Marcelline, Missouri, Walsworth Publishing Company.

Andreas, A. T.

1875 *Andreas Illustrated Historical Atlas of the State of Iowa*. Chicago, Andreas Atlas Co.

Calendar

2003 Produced by the Thomas Mitchell Historical Society, Mitchellville, Iowa. Reproduces historic photographs of Mitchellville.

CIRALG

1978 “Mitchellville, Iowa.” Central Iowa Regional Association of Governments Survey for State Historical Society of Iowa.

Craig, Lois

1956 *Village on the Prairie, A Centennial History of Mitchellville, Iowa*. Des Moines, York Printing Company.

Shane, George

1956 “Serene Old Church in Mitchellville Recalls Landscapes of New England.” *Des Moines Sunday Register*, July 15, 1956. “This is one in a series of historic Iowa scenes George Shane is painting for Picture Magazine.” Includes story under Shane’s byline.

Dixon, J. M., Blind Editor

1876 *Centennial History of Polk County, Iowa*. Des Moines, State Register, Printer

Fenimore, Artis C.

2004 Oral informant interview with William C. Page, April 19, 2004. Fenimore, who lives across the street from the Universalist Church, is the curator of the property. She shared information from her long memory of it.

Flansberg, Elizabeth

1984 “Home of Mitchellville founder a stop on Underground Railroad.” *Des Moines Register*, Neighbors Section (East Edition), February 22, 1984.

Lufkin, Jack

1978, Surveyor for the Central Iowa Regional Association of Local Governments (CIRALG) evaluated the church as having outstanding historical value because of its associations with the founding of Mitchellville.

Lutz, Renda

2003 “Inn Owner Helped Establish Polk County.” “Meet Me on the Corner Feature.” *Des Moines Register*, March 26, 2003. Includes historic photograph of the Mitchell Farmhouse.

Meader, Virginia

n.d. Scrapbook collection of clippings from unidentified newspapers and other sources.

Page, William

2004 “Iowa Site Inventory Form”

Shivvers, Rev. Charlotte

2003 “Thank You, Thomas Mitchell.” MS read on June 15, 2003 before the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Des Moines, Iowa, at their annual service in the Universalist Church at Mitchellville.

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Taylor Vernon DeVotie

2004 Oral informant interview with William C. Page, April 19, 2004. Taylor, a seventh generation Mitchellvillian, shared information he has gathered for many years about the church.

Verbal Boundary Description

Block G, Lot(s) 15 & 16 of the original town subdivision

Verbal Boundary Justification

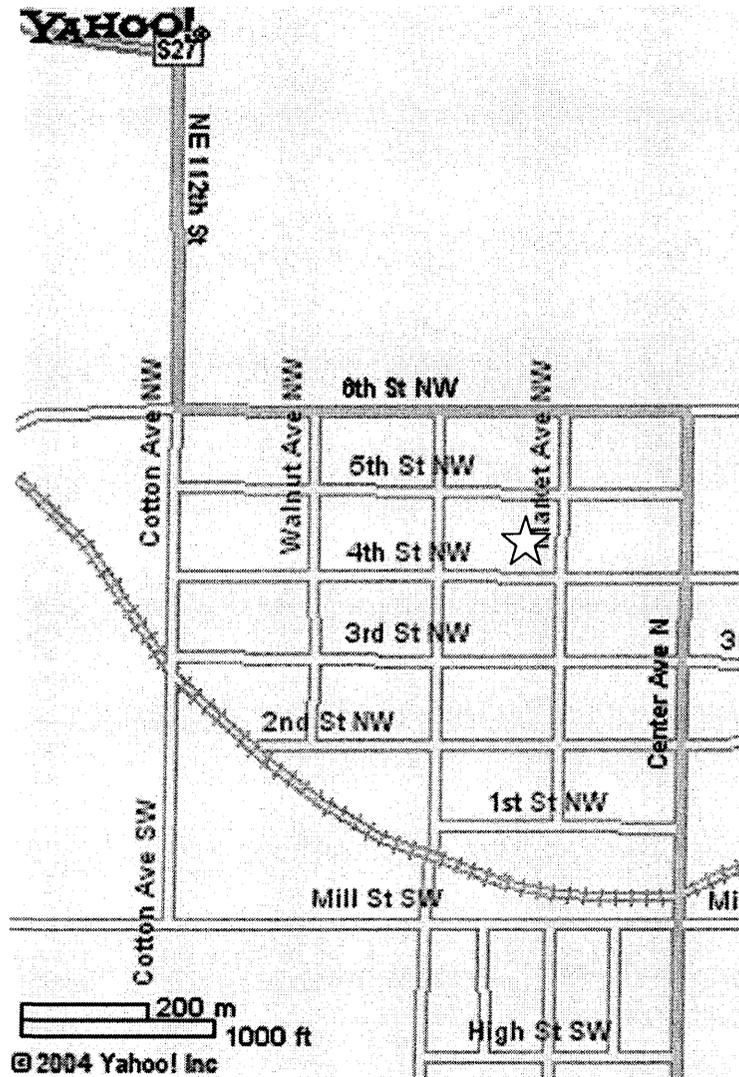
The nominated property includes the entire parcel historically associated with the church.

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Location of the Universalist Church at Mitchellville
<http://maps.yahoo.com>

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Universalist Church
Polk County, Iowa



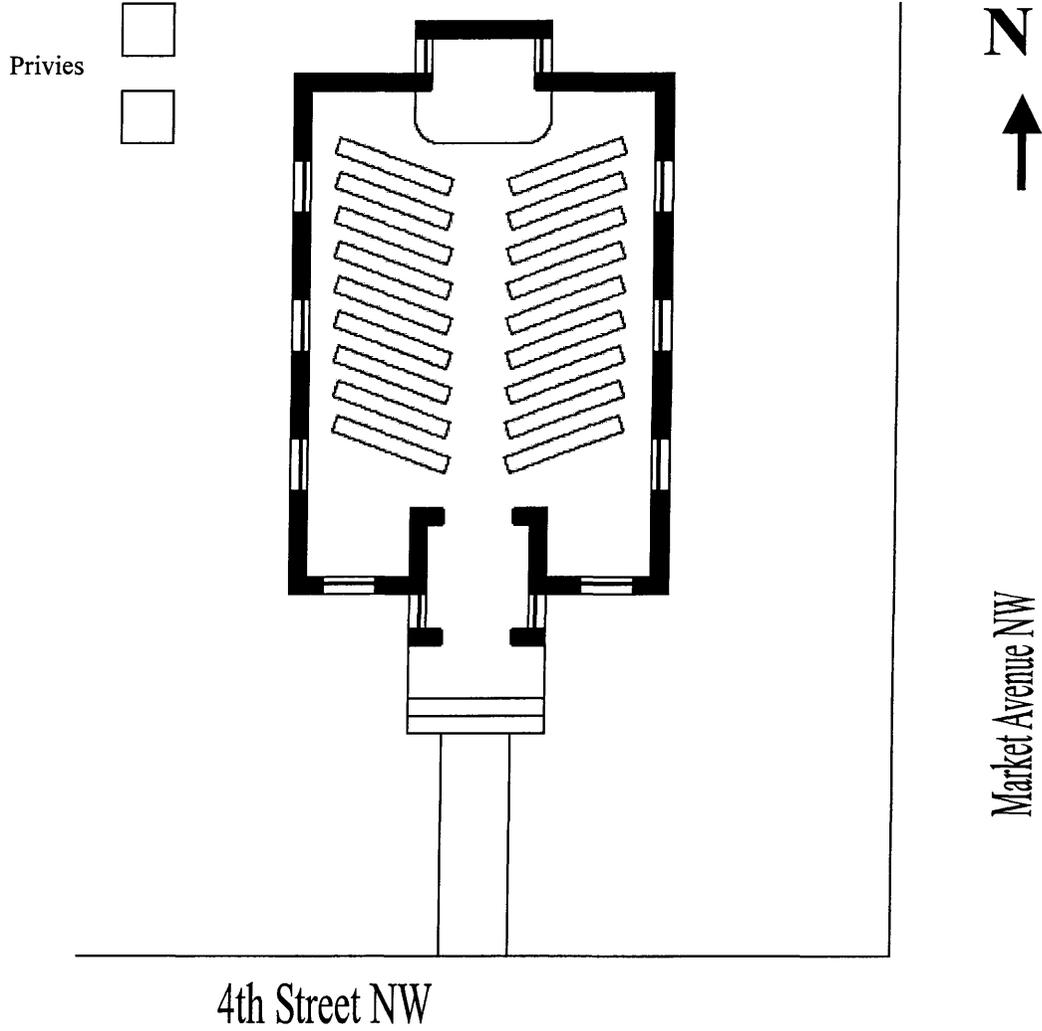
Historic Postcard, ca. 1900 Property of the Thomas Mitchell Historical Society

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Universalist Church at Mitchellville
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2nd Home
of Thomas
Mitchell

NOT TO SCALE

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Section number Photos Page 10

Universalist Church at Mitchellville
Polk County, Iowa

All photographs were taken by Anna Van Oort on July 11, 2004. The negatives are in possession of the Thomas Mitchell Historical Society.

1. Camera Facing North
2. Camera facing Northeast
3. Camera facing Northwest
4. Camera facing Southeast
5. Camera facing Southwest
6. Privies – camera facing Northwest
7. Camera facing Northwest
8. Camera facing Northeast
9. Camera facing North
10. Camera facing North
11. Camera facing North
12. Trompe L'Oeil (mural), camera facing North
13. Elder chair, camera facing North