

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Name of Property
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number _____ Page 1

Supplementary Listing Record

NRIS Reference Number: SG100004017

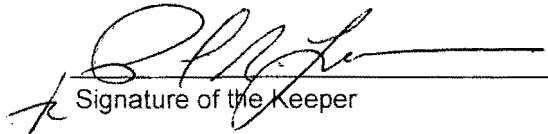
Date Listed: 5/28/2019

Property Name: Downey School

County: Cedar

State: IA

This Property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation


Signature of the Keeper

5/28/2019
Date of Action

Amended Items in Nomination:

Bibliographical Documentation:

The box for "preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested" should be checked. [Project #39394 - Downey School, Part 1 Approved 10/30/2018.]

Photographs

Photographic image #4 (entry detail) has been removed from the public nomination documentation-objectionable material.

The IOWA SHPO was notified of this amendment.

DISTRIBUTION:

- National Register property file
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. 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 certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

1. Name of Property

historic name Downey School

other names/site number Downey High School, Downey Public School

Name of Multiple Property Listing N/A

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

2. Location

street & number 212 Broadway Street not for publication

city or town Downey vicinity

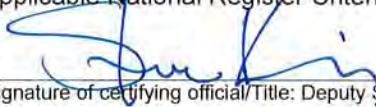
state Iowa county Cedar zip code 52358

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 at the following level(s) of significance: national statewide local

Applicable National Register Criteria: A B C D

 22 APR 2019
Signature of certifying official/Title: Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer Date

State Historical Society of Iowa
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official Date

Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

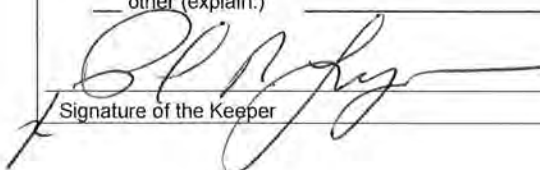
4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register determined eligible for the National Register

determined not eligible for the National Register removed from the National Register

other (explain:)

 5/28/2019
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

Category of Property
(Check only **one** box.)

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	
1	0	buildings
0	0	site
0	0	structure
0	0	object
1	0	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION / school

VACANT / NOT IN USE

SOCIAL / meeting hall

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19th CENTURY AND 20th CENTURY

foundation: STONE / limestone

REVIVAL STYLES / Classical Revival

walls: BRICK

roof: ASPHALT

other: _____

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Narrative Description

Summary Paragraph (Briefly describe the current, general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Downey School is located in the small community of Downey in the southwest corner of Springdale Township, in the southwest corner of Cedar County, Iowa, about four miles south of West Branch and Interstate 80 (Figure 1). It sits on the southeast corner of Broadway and Center streets in a prominent location on a slight hill in the center of Downey, facing Broadway Street to the north (Figure 2). The railroad tracks through town, the depot, and a handful of commercial buildings along Front Street were located one block to the north, with the school overlooking this nexus of town activity amid the residential blocks. The two-story, four-room school is centered towards the rear of a double lot (Lots 4-5) along Broadway Street, with two additional lots to the rear (Lots 6-7) utilized for outdoor activities, extending the property the full block south to Cedar Street (Figure 3). The two-story brick school reflects the Classical Revival style, with its symmetrical design, pilasters, quoins on all corners, and large arch emphasizing the entry. The building was designed by Waterloo architect John G. Ralston in 1905, with construction completed by the end of the year by Waterloo contractor Frank W. Chapman. The school sits on a raised basement/foundation, with limestone utilized below grade for the foundation and tile block construction above grade on the raised foundation clad in red brick up to the limestone water table. The main body of the school is buff brick, with red brick utilized for accents on the pilasters/arch, quoins, window lintels, frieze, and basement/foundation level. There is some damage to the brick, particularly along the foundation level, and the mortar joints are in fair condition. The school has copper gutters/eaves, which are in poor condition and partially missing. The roof has been clad in asphalt shingles, which are in fair condition. The school retains two central brick chimneys, also in fair condition, but the cupola in the center was removed prior to 1978 (visible in historic images). No additions have been constructed on the school. The interior of the school continues to reflect its layout and features from its years as an operating school. The building is divided by a central hall with a large room on either side on both stories, with smaller spaces along the south wall (coat room, bathrooms, office/storage). The basement is similarly divided into two main spaces with a central hall. The main stairs, historic wood doors, wood trim, and some chalkboards remain intact in the building. The school has been vacant for many years, only partially maintained after the school closed in 1954. Thus, the plaster walls/ceilings and wood floors are in good to poor condition, depending on the space. Overall, the historic integrity of the building is excellent.

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable.)

(**Iowa SHPO Additional Instructions:** After the main **Narrative Description**, discuss any physical alterations since the period of significance under the subheading **Alterations**, and the seven aspects of integrity as it applies to the resource in a **Statement of Integrity** with each aspect discussed in its own paragraph.)

Downey is located in the far southwest corner of Springdale Township and Cedar County, with Johnson County located about one mile to the west and Muscatine County located about one mile to the south. The town was initially platted along the Mississippi and Missouri Railroad (later the Chicago, Rock Island, and Pacific Railroad), but its development was stunted by its proximity to the larger towns of West Liberty, five miles to the southeast, and Iowa City, nine miles to the northwest. The town was never incorporated, and Downey was noted with a population of approximately 200 residents at the turn of the 20th century.¹ Downey School faces Broadway Street to the north. The current school sits on the same site – Lots 4-5-6-7 in Block 14 – as the previous two schools in Downey.² Thus, this site has served the educational needs of Downey since the 1860s. Overall, the site is slightly elevated above the residential lots to the south, west, and east,

¹ WBHF 2001: 100, 102

² *History of Cedar County, Iowa* 1878: 513

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with the school site likely originally selected for this feature. The rear of the property slopes to the south through the rear lots. Thus, the school stands as a prominent landmark in Downey. Trees line the edge of the property along Broadway Street and wrap around the Center Street corner to the west, visible also in historic photographs. The school is situated on the rear half of Lots 4 and 5, creating a large front yard. An older concrete sidewalk extends from Broadway Street straight south to the front entry of the school. Remnants of a concrete sidewalk from the Broadway/Cedar street corner remain. An old well is covered in the front yard to the northeast of the entry. The additional lots to the rear (6-7) then provided a larger rear space, which was utilized throughout the first half of the 20th century for a baseball diamond. With the closure and subsequent demolition of the Methodist Protestant church to the east on Lot 3 around 1930, this parcel became part of the school property, providing some additional yard space and room for playground

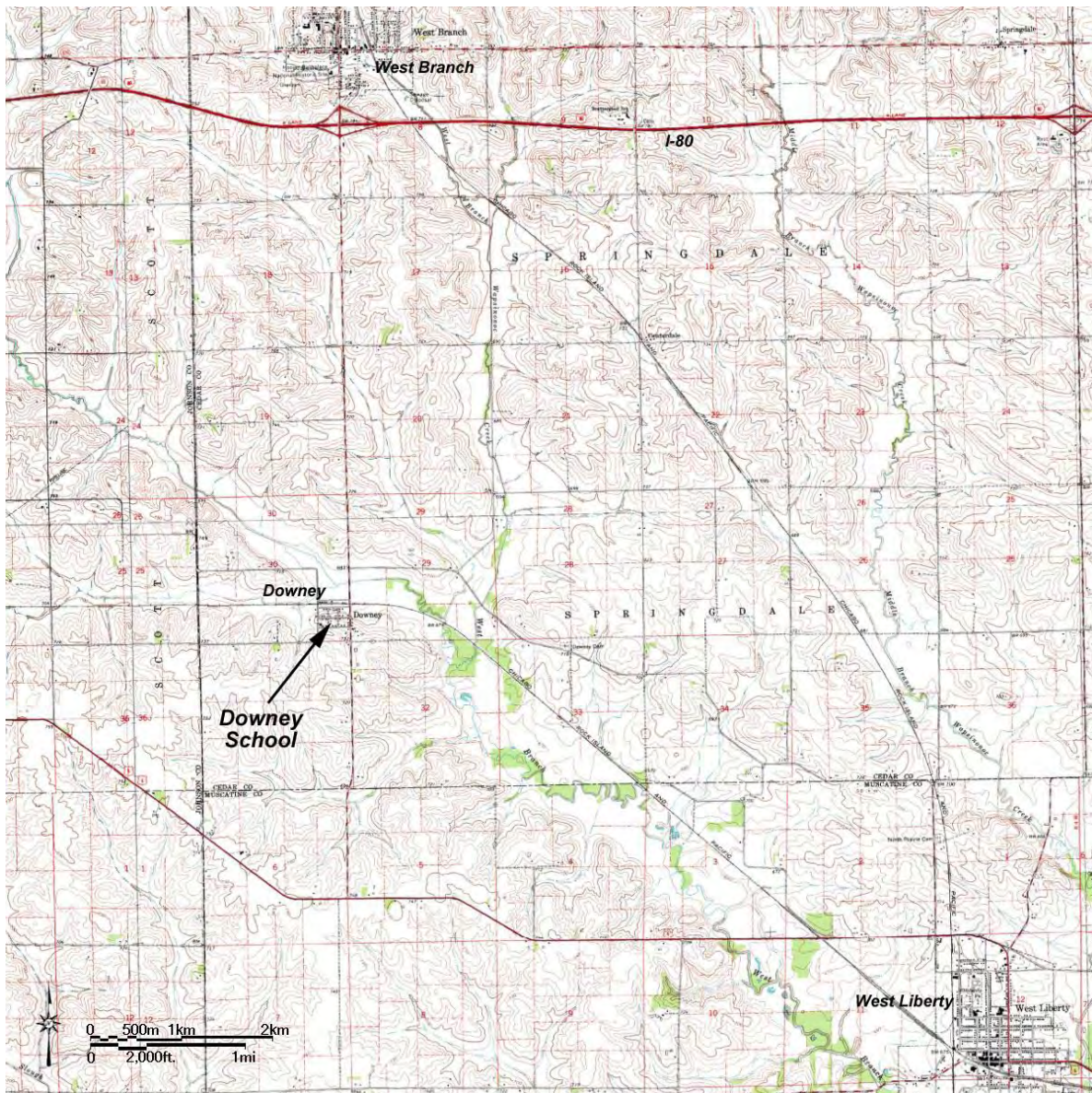


Figure 1. Location map showing Downey School and Downey in southwest Cedar County.
(base map: Springdale, USGS topographic quadrangle map)

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Figure 2. Location of Downey School in Downey, with property line indicated (National Register boundary) (McCarley 2018).
(2016 base aerial photography, Iowa Geographical Map Server)

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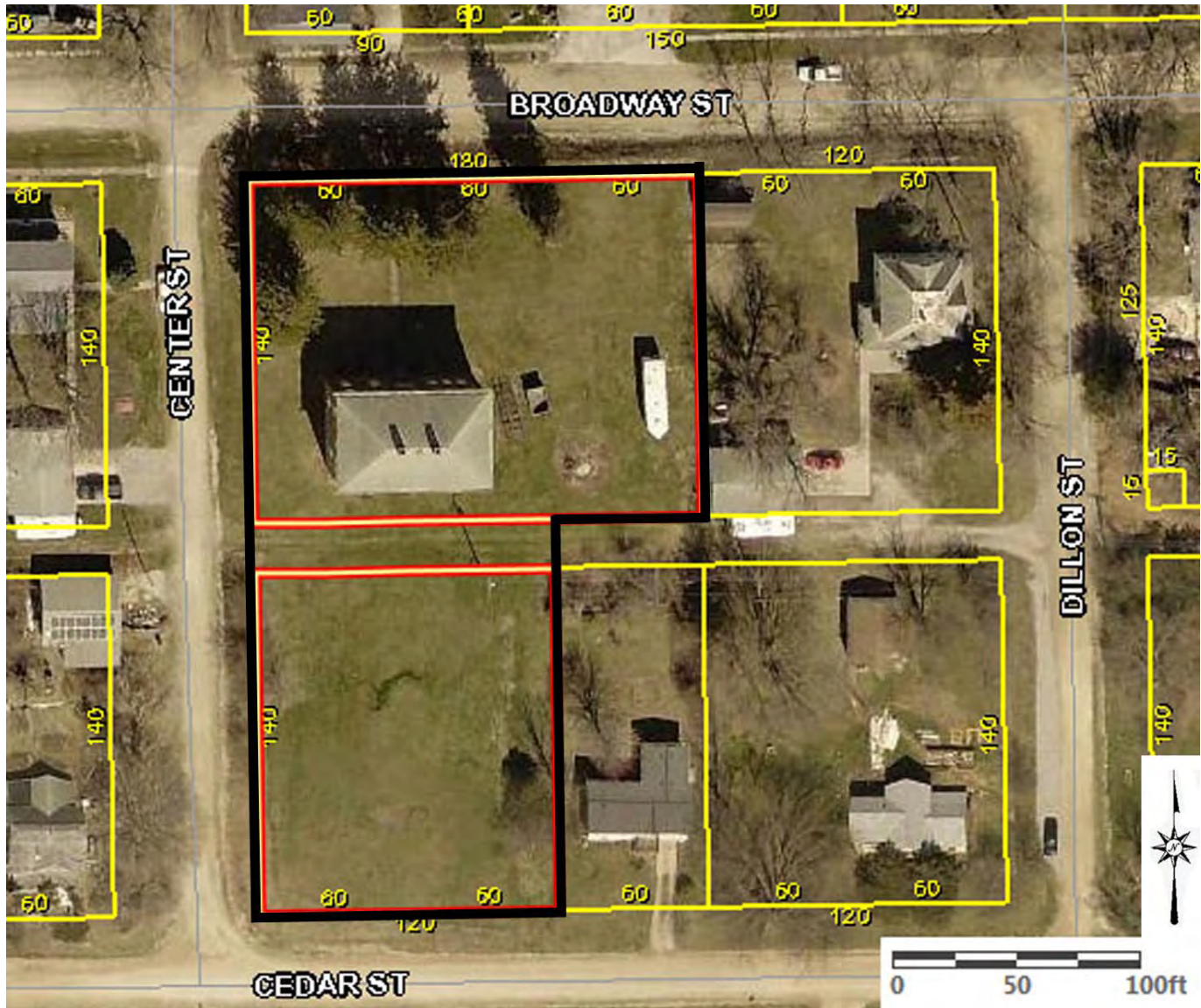


Figure 3. Site plan for Downey School, with property line indicated (National Register boundary) (McCarley 2018).
(2016 base aerial photography, Cedar County GIS)

equipment. Playground equipment was installed in the 1930s to the east of the school, including two slides (large and small), swings, monkey bars, teeter-totter, and a merry-go-round.³ None of these site features remain. The alley originally platted through the block has been vacated, and it is planted with grass. While archeology was not included as part of this project, future investigations may identify the sites of additional school features on the property.

The north elevation of Downey School is the primary façade, overlooking the blocks to the north. The school reflects the Classical Revival style, and it is perhaps the most stylistic building from this period in Downey.⁴ In

³ Laura (Sexton) Slach 2018; Carol (Byers) Slach 2018.

⁴ The Downey Savings Bank on Front Street, built in 1903, would be the second building in Downey with stronger stylistic influences (listed on the NRHP in 1976). The remaining buildings in town are primarily residential buildings, generally more vernacular designs.

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1905, architect John G. Ralston of Waterloo was hired by the board of the Independent School District of Downey to design a two-story, four-room, brick school for the community. The façade is symmetrical, with a centered entry accentuated by a large brick arch. While the school was built utilizing buff brick, the arch and other accents are created by the use of red brick. The main entry is then set back into the mass of the school. Buff brick pilasters frame either side of this open vestibule, with a concrete stoop within the vestibule. Metal boot scrapers remain on either side of the sidewalk prior to the step into the entry vestibule. The main entry then consists of double wood doors, with wide sidelight windows on either side with paneled bulkheads. Transom windows are located above the set of doors and the sidelights. The windows have been boarded over to secure the property, with the sash/glass in various conditions. The main wall of the school then continues above the entry with a rectangular detail outlined in red brick. It appears that this location would have provided a space for a name and/or date plate, but no historic photographs have been identified that show this detail. A set of windows within the arch opening is then located on the landing of the stairs above the entry, with wood sashes in poor condition. The arch transom area is covered by plywood. Historic photographs show three one-over-one-light double-hung windows with an arch transom divided into four sections around the arch above a lower semi-circular window. The buff brick is angled to reflect the arch around this window. The window retains its stone sill. The larger red brick arch has an elongated keystone at the top, which extends into the red brick band across the frieze. The façade to the east (left) and west (right) of the entry is symmetrical with three windows on each story on either side. The first and second story windows retain red brick segmental arch lintels and stone sills. The windows are covered with plywood on the exterior and on the interior, with some open areas that reveal that sashes range from poor/missing to fair condition. The school generally retains its original one-over-one-light double-hung wood windows, with segmental arch glass tops. Each side has three rectangular basement windows, which are also covered with plywood. Remaining sash on the interior appears to have been originally two-light wood windows, and several sashes are missing in whole or parts. The brick along the basement level is red brick, extending up to the ashlar limestone water table that extends across the building. The base of the wall sits on two courses of ashlar limestone as well, with the basement window sills incorporated into the top course. The building is framed by red brick quoins on each corner. The bases of the corners are deteriorated due to water damage, with some bricks missing. As noted, a red brick band extends across the top of the building to delineate the frieze, with buff brick again above this point on the frieze. The original copper gutters and eaves are in poor condition, with copper missing in several sections leaving the structure of the wood eaves open. The roof is clad in asphalt shingles, which are in fair condition. Two brick chimneys remain near the center of the roof, originally flanking the cupola. The left/east chimney is missing some brick near the top. Historic photographs of the removed cupola show an octagonal frame structure with openings with louvers on each side. It has an octagonal roof, which appears to be clad in copper.

The west elevation of the school follows the design of the façade, with buff brick walls accented by red brick details. Details from the façade are carried over to the west elevation, including the stone courses at the base of the building, stone water table above the basement line, red brick on the basement/foundation level, red brick quoins on the corners, and red brick band across the base of the frieze at the top of the building. The copper gutters/eaves are in very poor condition on this side, exposing the underlying tile block construction along the eave. There are four windows per story on this side, and the windows retain their red brick segmental arch lintels and stone sills. The windows are covered by plywood or tin sheets on this side as well, with the second story windows covered on both sides. The first story windows appear to have been replaced at some point, perhaps in the 1950s or 1960s, with four-over-four-light double-hung sashes. It is believed that the original windows on this side would have been one-over-one-light double-hung windows that would have matched the façade and other elevations. The basement has four rectangular windows, with the stone sills incorporated into the base courses of ashlar limestone. Remaining sash on the interior appears to have been originally two-light wood windows, and several sashes are missing completely or in parts.

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The east elevation of the school is a mirror image of the west elevation. Buff brick walls again are accented by red brick details. Design elements are carried through this side, including the stone courses at the base of the building, stone water table above the basement line, red brick on the basement/foundation level, red brick quoins on the corners, and red brick band across the base of the frieze at the top of the building. The copper gutters/eaves are in poor condition on this side. There are also four windows per story on this side, and the windows retain their red brick segmental arch lintels and stone sills. The windows are covered by plywood or tin sheets on this side as well, with the second story windows covered on both sides. Some portions of the original one-over-one-light double-hung windows remain in the openings, with other sashes missing completely or in parts. The second window from the right/north on the second story was converted into a fire escape door for the upper level classroom at some point, perhaps in the 1910s or 1920s.⁵ The metal fire escape remains on the building, in fair condition. The added door is covered in plywood and in poor condition. The basement has four rectangular windows, with the stone sills incorporated into the base courses of ashlar limestone. Remaining sash on the interior appears to have been originally two-light wood windows, and several sashes are missing completely or in parts.

The basic design elements of the school are carried through to the south (rear) elevation as well. There are fewer windows on this side, so the buff brick walls appear more prominent. Red brick provides accents on this elevation as well, including the basement level, quoins on the corners, window lintels, and frieze band. The stone courses at the base of the wall and stone water table above the basement level are also carried across this elevation. The rear entry is centered on the south elevation. A later ramp has been constructed to access the entry, likely in the 1960s. The entry consisted of a paneled wood door with sidelights, which remains in parts and covered by plywood. The basement entry is centered under the rear entry. Historic photographs show wide wood steps with a landing at the top that extended straight out from the entry, likely with side steps to the basement entry similar to the current basement steps. The south elevation is divided into five bays, with windows in the outside two bays on the first story along with the centered entry. Basement windows are found under these two widely spaced windows. The second story then has three windows in the center three bays, with no windows above the first story windows. Similar to the other elevations, the windows appear to have originally had one-over-one-light double-hung wood sashes, which are in poor condition or missing. They are likewise covered with plywood and/or tin sheets, often on the exterior and interior. The windows retain red brick segmental arch lintels and stone sills. While still in poor condition, the copper gutters and eaves are more intact on this side, with a piece of the copper trim along the cornice hanging near the center that provides information on the original design.

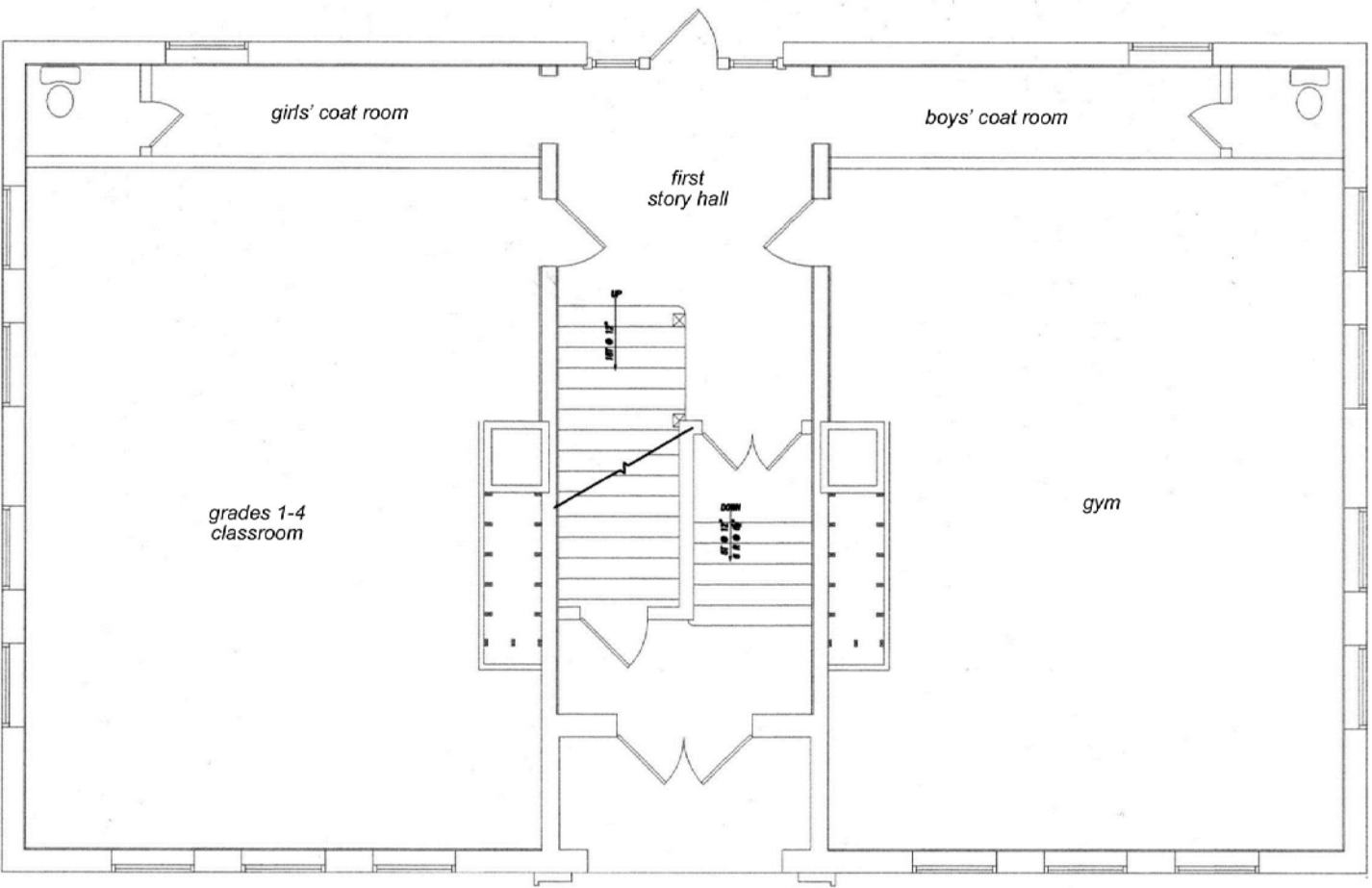
The school originally supported all grades through high school for the first decade of its operation, including grades one to twelve. Thus, the school was designed to fully serve the educational needs of Downey and the surrounding rural area. The school was later reduced to ten grades and then to eight grades, impacting the interior use of spaces. The first story is divided into an east and west half by a central hallway. The main entry leads into a small interior landing / entry vestibule, with the main stairs ascending to the first story on the west half. A door leads to the basement stairs on the east half. There is a door with transom at the top of the short flight of wood stairs into the first story hall. The first story hall is wide, and it extends to the rear entry in the north wall. Originally, the first story appears to have been configured with a classroom on either side of the hallway, with the coat room extending along the south wall. This general layout remains intact. When the number of grades in the school was reduced, the west room became utilized as a gymnasium and the east room became utilized as the lower grades room (grades 1-4). The coat room on the west side was utilized for boys, and the coat room on the east side was utilized by girls.⁶ A small beadboard partition was added at the

⁵ Mina (Thomas) Landes, who attended here in 1927-1934, recalls the fire escape, as do former students who attended in the middle and later 1930s. Mina (Thomas) Landes 2018.

⁶ Uses noted in the late 1930s and early 1940s by former students interviewed for this project.

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EXISTING MAIN LEVEL FLOOR PLAN

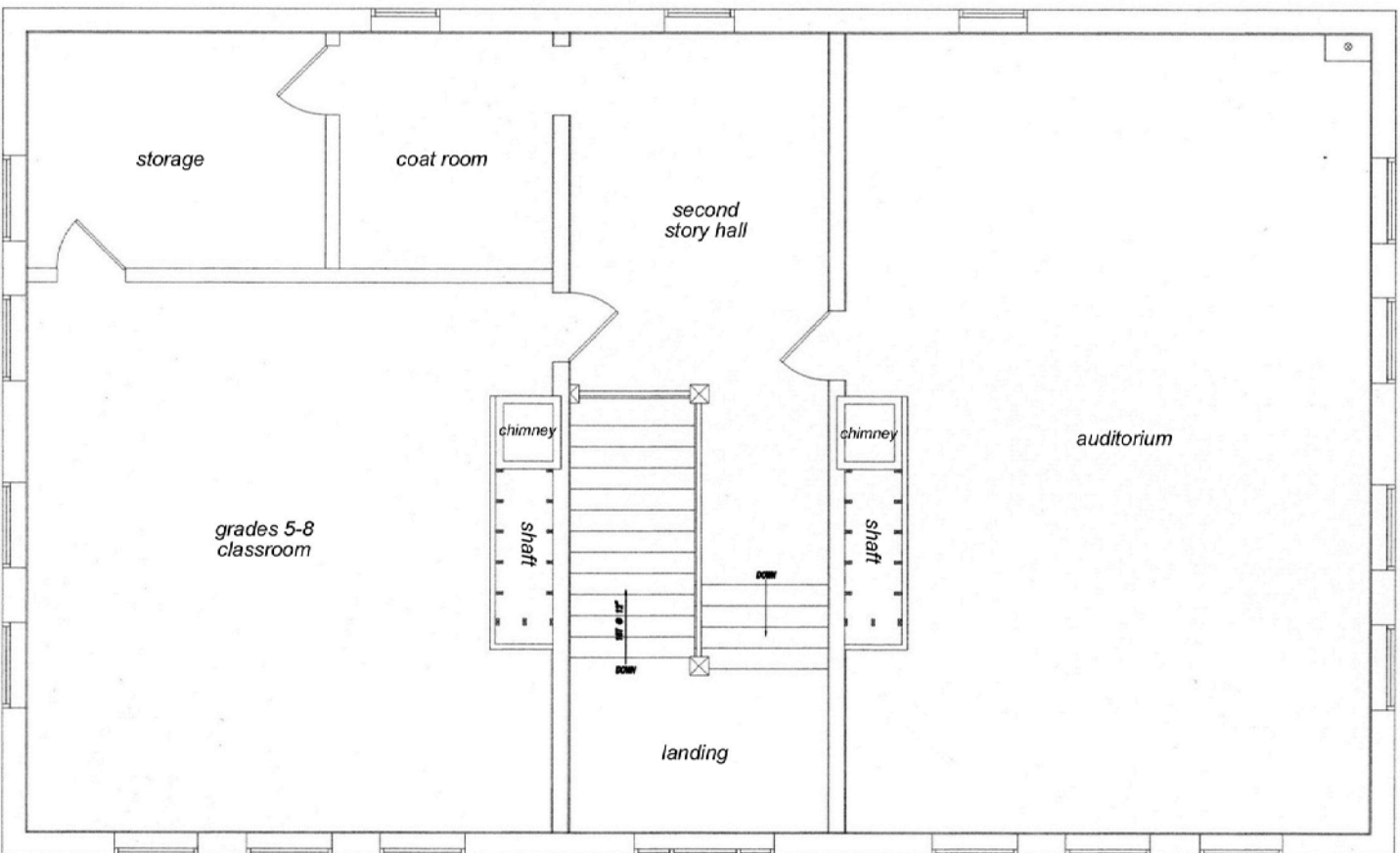
1/8" = 1'



Figure 4. First story plan of Downey School.

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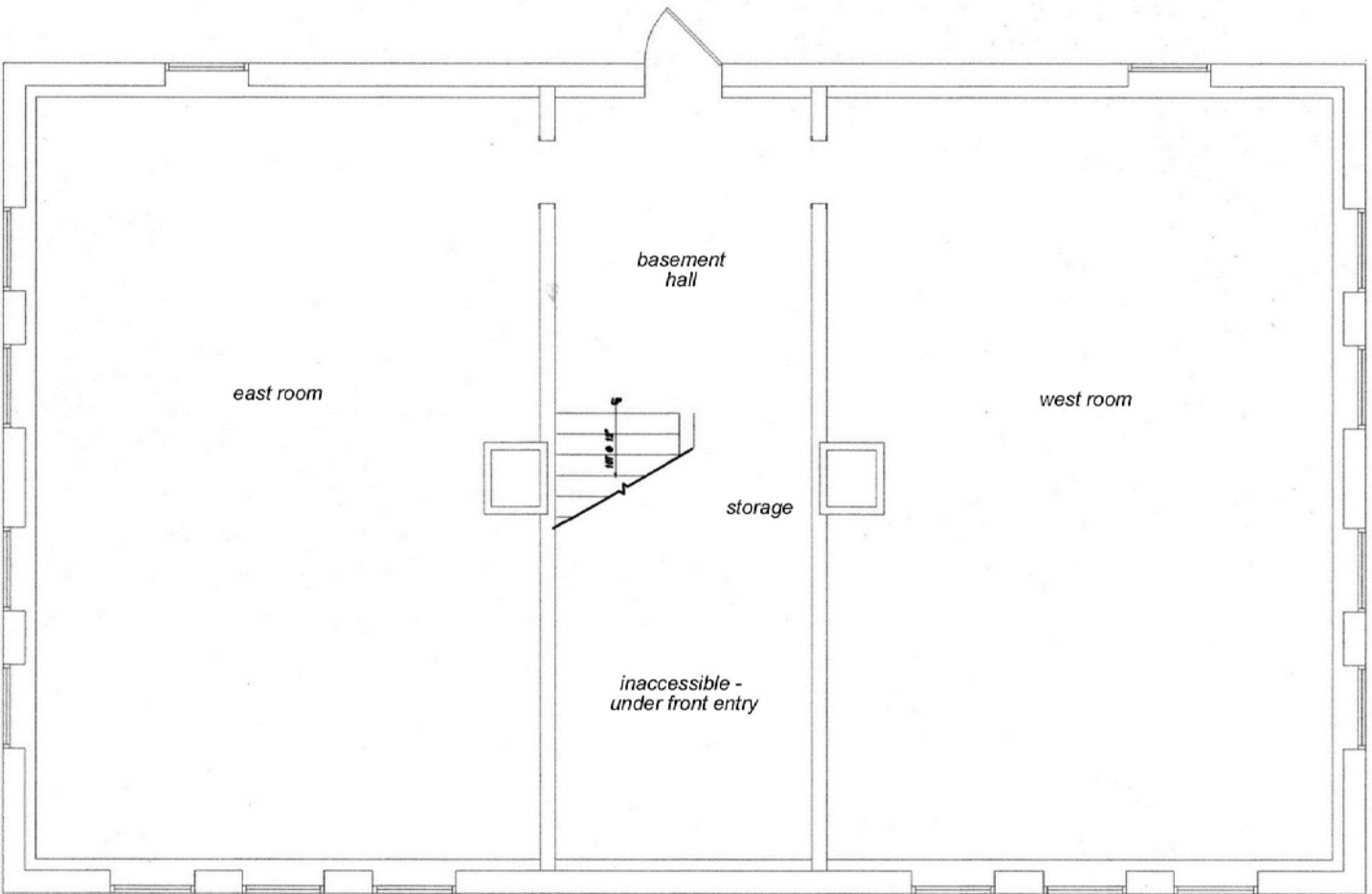
EXISTING UPPER LEVEL FLOOR PLAN

1/8" = 1'

Figure 5. Second story plan of Downey School.

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EXISTING LOWER LEVEL FLOOR PLAN

1/8" = 1'

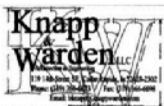


Figure 6. Basement plan of Downey School.

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outside end of each coat room to incorporate indoor toilets ("chemical" toilets, not connected to a sewer system). The toilets remain, though their collection tanks in the basement are in poor condition.

The overall structural system consists of load-bearing tile block exterior walls with brick veneer on a stone foundation, interior tile block walls along the hall in the basement, and interior wood-framed partitions along the halls on the upper stories. Horizontal framing is sawn wood floor joists and roof joists. The main hall on the first story retains its wood floor, plaster walls, and plaster ceilings. The surfaces are in fair to good condition. The baseboard trim is simple with a profiled top. The door trim is typical of the early 20th century, with simple details and a small lintel piece. The five-panel wood doors are generally intact on the interior, though the rear entry door is in poor condition (falling apart with panels missing). The west room, utilized as a gymnasium, remains a large open space. A kitchen area has been added at the north end, providing serving and storage space for meals associated with the later Wapsie Valley Grange meetings and community activities. The room retains its wood floor, plaster walls, and plaster ceiling. These surfaces are in fair to good condition, with some plaster cracking and minor failure noted. The room appears more recently painted than some of the other spaces, and the west windows appear replaced in the 1950s or 1960s, as previously noted. Beadboard appears added on the south wall, covering an entry into the former coat room and bathroom. The windows have wood sills, but no trim around the sides or top (currently and appears historically). The west coat room retains evidence in the plaster of wood coat rail with hooks, but it is not there currently. Remnants of Greek Key stenciling remains above the coat hook line, and it remains more clearly within the partitioned end, which retains a portion of the wood coat rail and a few hooks. This appears to have been partitioned off on both sides after the original construction, by the late 1920s. The far west window on the first story of the south elevation is found within this space. The partition for the toilet is then located to the west and extends to the ceiling, with a six-light window near the top. The wood rail with coat hooks remains within the toilet space, as well as the toilet itself.

The east room on the first story, utilized in later years as the grades 1 to 4 classroom, appears to not have been utilized or maintained since the school closed in 1954. Student desks and a piano remain scattered within the space, along with various pamphlets associated with the Wapsie Valley Grange. A roof issue on this side of the building resulted in water damage through the second story floor into the first story space, causing the wood floor joists to deteriorate and partially fail in a section on the west side. Thus, the wood floor remains, but varies from fair to poor/missing condition. Likewise, there is more damage to the plaster on the walls and ceilings in this space, with several missing sections exposing the construction of the tile block walls and the second story floor joists. Baseboard and window trim is the same as the hall and west room. Blackboards remain on the west and south walls, including wood trim. The door into the coat room remains visible, though partially filled with beadboard as it now leads into the toilet end of the space. Similar to the west half, no stenciling remains visible in the classroom space, but remnants remain in the coat room / bathroom space along the south wall. This coat room is similar in design and configuration as the west space, with a partial partition added in the end with the window and then a full height partition with a six-light window at the top for the toilet area. The wood coat rail remains on the north wall of the coat room, though missing hooks, with a modern clothes rod projecting from the wall above it. The toilet remains at the end of the space.

The main stairs ascend from the south portion of the first story to a landing on the north side of the building. The wood stairs and trim remain intact. There is a short handrail with a square newel post and an engaged square post at the base of the stairs. The landing has the arch window centered on the façade. A small five-panel door is accessed by moveable wood stairs to provide access to the north end of the west room (back stage area). The stairs continue to the south from the landing, and the wood rail is partially missing in this section, with only the square post remaining. The missing post at the top of the stairs remains lying on the landing, but the square balustrade appears missing. The short section of the handrail in the second story hall remains partially intact, as well as another square column and engaged column. The second story hall retains

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its wood floor, plaster walls, and plaster ceilings. The surfaces are in fair condition. There is an old wood ladder sitting in the hall that pulled down to provide access to the attic through a hatch in the ceiling of the hall historically. The ladder is in poor condition, and it is no longer attached to the ceiling/hatch. Three doors provide access from the south end of the hallway into the rooms on either side, with the five-panel wood doors currently not within the openings. One is leaning against the wall next to the door. The wood trim for the door remains intact, matching the first story trim. Likewise, the wood baseboard remains intact. The hall window at the south end is finished the same as the first story as well – wood sill with no trim around the sides/top.

The west half of the second story is one large room. While its original use is not confirmed, it was likely a large classroom. Originally, school events and productions were held in the auditorium on the second story of the bank building. After the high school grades were moved to West Branch, it appears that this space was then converted for use as an auditorium, with a stage added at the north end of the space. The stage construction is built over the wall trim and features, indicating its later addition. Former students confirm that the stage was here by the late 1930s. The stage is a simple wood platform, clad in beadboard and wood panels on the front. The materials are in fair condition. The space retains its wood floor, plaster walls, and plaster ceiling. The plaster has not been maintained or painted since the school closed, including remnants of the Greek Key stenciling in a band on the walls (roughly at seven feet). The plaster on the exterior walls has partially failed, revealing the tile block construction. A section of plaster ceiling is also missing in this area, revealing the wood ceiling joists. The chase for the toilet vent is framed at an angle in the southwest corner. The room has three windows on the north wall behind the stage, four windows on the west side wall, and one window on the south wall. The windows match the other windows, with a wood sill and no further trim. The wood baseboard and door trim remains intact. Remnants of two hanging lights remain in the south half of the space.

The east half of the second story has a large classroom in the northern two-thirds of the space and two smaller rooms in the south one-third of the space. This room appears to have originally been the high school room, with an office for the teacher (noted as a professor or principal at times) and a coat room. In later years, the office room was primarily used for storage. The classroom was then utilized for grades 5 to 8 from the late 1920s to 1950s. It does not appear that the room has been maintained or painted since the school closed in 1954. An issue with the roof on this side resulted in damage through the ceiling and floor of this space, also damaging the ceiling and floor of the classroom below. Thus, while the classroom retains its wood floor, plaster walls, and plaster ceilings, there are large sections that are missing or severely damaged. There are three windows on the north wall and three windows on the east wall, with the center window converted to a door for the exterior metal fire escape at some point after construction (perhaps in the 1920s or 1930s). The windows have wood sills and no trim around the sides or top. The wood baseboard remains intact around the room. The blackboards on the west and north walls remain partially intact, with sections of slate missing on the west wall and nearly all of the slate missing on the north wall. The wood five-panel door and trim remain, leading to the east room of the two south rooms. This room has no evidence of a coat rail, likely originally the teacher's office. The room retains its plaster walls, plaster ceiling, and wood floor. The surfaces are in fair condition. The plaster walls retain remnants of two bands of Greek Key stenciling, the small red/brown band at roughly a seven foot height and a wider blue band at slightly less than a six foot height. The room has a window on the east wall, similar in detail to the other windows. The room retains its wood baseboard and door trim. The toilet vent pipe runs through the room, exposed in the southeast corner. The five-panel wood door to the west small room, historically a coat room, remains intact in the opening. This room originally had two coat rails around the room, roughly 18 inches apart. Portion of the lower wood coat rail and metal hooks remain intact. This room has one window on the south wall, with the same trim detail as the other windows.

The attic space is accessed by a ladder to a hatch in the ceiling of the second story hall. The attic space is tall but not finished. The ceiling joists for the second story ceilings are exposed, and there is no plaster on the

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tile block walls. The roof joists are likewise exposed. The ventilation shafts on either side of the hall are open into the attic space. The two brick chimneys extend through the attic on either side of the center space. A wood ladder remains in place that accessed the cupola, prior to its removal. It appears that the support structure for the cupola remains in place as well.

The stairs from the main entry on the north side descend to the basement level. A large hall is located in the center of the basement, similar to the upper stories, with the space under the stairs as storage. An exterior basement entry is also located at the south end of the hall. Pieces of the door remain in place. The door frame is square, with a segmental arch brick lintel in the wall above the door. The interior basement walls are tile block construction, and the exterior basement walls are limestone below grade and tile block construction above grade. The walls in the hall appear to have had plaster originally. Doorways lead to the west room and east room near the south end of the hall, simple square openings with no doors remaining in place. A wide segmental arch lintel is located in the wall above each doorway. The west room is a large open space. The walls and ceiling are not finished, with exposed limestone and tile block on the walls. The floor joists for the first story are exposed. The floor is concrete, in fair condition. There are three rectangular window on the north wall, four windows on the west wall, and one window on the south wall. As noted, remnants of two-light sashes remain in some of the openings. The furnace sits near the east wall, connected into the chimney. The collapsed tank for the first story west toilet is located in the southwest corner. The east room is likewise a large open space. The walls and ceiling are not finished, with exposed limestone and tile block on the walls. The floor joists for the first story are exposed, and several have failed and are collapsing into the space along the east wall on the north half. The floor is concrete, in fair condition. There are three rectangular window on the north wall, four windows on the west wall, and one window on the south wall. As noted, remnants of two-light sashes remain in some of the openings. An old furnace sits in the space, no longer connected to any pipes. The rusted out tank for the first story east toilet sits in the southeast corner of the space.

Integrity

The Downey School retains excellent historic integrity overall. The building remains on its original site and setting within the small community of Downey. The overall integrity of design, workmanship, and materials is good on the exterior and interior, with some loss of historic materials due to the minimal maintenance on the building since the school closed in 1954. The building clearly retains its association to the educational history of Downey and Cedar County, and it retains the overall feeling of a historic school. Specific aspects of the integrity of the property include:

Location: The school remains on its original site in Block 14 on Broadway Street in Downey, so its integrity of location is excellent.

Setting: The setting of Downey School remains a large lot with trees surrounded by residential blocks, set on a slight hill within the small community of Downey. The integrity of setting is excellent.

Design: The overall design of Downey School remains intact, clearly reflecting an early 20th century two-story brick school. The building retains its overall symmetrical design, with corners framed by quoins. The recessed entry vestibule under a brick arch remains intact, along with the arch window. While the cupola has been removed and windows covered, these changes do not detract from a clear understanding of the overall design concept. On the interior, the school retains its historic layout of a central hall with stairs and one large room on either side of the hall. Smaller support spaces are found along the south wall. The interior retains its historic design features, such as doors, trim, and some chalkboards. Overall, the integrity of design is excellent.

Materials: Downey School retains good integrity of historic materials, with the lack of maintenance as the primary cause of any loss of material integrity. Historic materials remain intact throughout the building; however, the condition of the materials has been impacted by water damage through the roof/eaves and the overall minimal maintenance since the school closed in 1954. On the exterior, the buff brick walls with

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red brick accents, stone foundation bands, brick window openings with some wood sashes, wood entry doors and windows, and portions of the metal eaves/gutters remain intact. On the interior, the wood floors and plaster on the walls and ceilings remain mostly intact, with some damage to plaster in each room and damage to the wood floors in the east rooms. The paneled wood doors and trim remain intact, along with the wood baseboard. The school retains its original stairs and portions of the wood balustrade, with segments missing in place but found in the building. The basement retains plaster on the hall space, with unfinished walls and ceilings in two large rooms used for mechanical space and storage.

Workmanship: The historic workmanship of the building continues to be reflected in the overall historic design elements and materials, as noted above. The loss of some historic materials due to minimal maintenance since the school closed in 1954 has impacted the workmanship to some degree, but the overall integrity of workmanship is good.

Feeling: The overall feeling of Downey School is that of a school constructed in the early 20th century in a small town, with its exterior design and interior layout clearly reflecting this purpose. Former teachers and students would easily recognize the building as the school, both on the exterior and the interior. The integrity of feeling is excellent.

Association: The Downey school retains strong association with the educational history of Downey throughout its period of significance from 1905 to 1954. The integrity of association is excellent.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

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 grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Education

Period of Significance

1905-1954

Significant Dates

1905

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation (if applicable)

Architect/Builder

Ralston, John G. (architect)

Chapman, Frank W. (contractor)

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations).

The Downey School is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A at a local level of significance for the significance of the building in the educational history in Downey and southwest Cedar County. The school was designed by architect John G. Ralston in 1905, with construction complete by the end of the year. The school opened at the start of January 1906 for the winter term, serving as the only school for the small town of Downey. Grades one to twelve were originally located in the building, providing local high school instruction for town and rural residents. The number of grades was reduced to ten in fall of 1916 and then to eight in fall of 1925. The building continued to serve grades one through eight in Downey through June 1954 when the school was closed. While the school was then used for several years by the Wapsie Valley Grange, few alterations were made, and it retains strong integrity as an early 20th century school in a small town. The period of significance spans throughout the history of the building as a school from 1905 to 1954.

Narrative Statement of Significance

 (Provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance.)

(Iowa SHPO Additional Instructions: For properties not nominated under Criterion D, include a statement about whether any archaeological remains within or beyond the footprint of the property were assessed as part of this nomination under the subheading **Archaeological Assessment**.)

The Downey School is significant under Criterion A in the educational history of Downey. The school is located on the site of the first school in Downey, a site that served the educational needs of Downey from the 1860s to 1954. This school was built in 1905 to serve as the sole school for this small community, and it was largest building in Downey at the time. It was constructed during a period focused on school improvements, both in terms of modern buildings and improved curriculum. While several schools were built in communities in Cedar County in the first decade of the 20th century, Downey School appears to be the only one that is extant. Downey School operated as the only school in town from 1906 to 1954, when the district was fully consolidated with West Branch schools. All children in Downey and the surrounding rural area from grades 1 to 12 attended the school starting with the winter term in January 1906, with the last class graduating in June 1916. At the time that the school was built, an independent school district could meet state requirements for high school level courses. As boys in rural areas typically did not complete a full high school course, most of the high school graduates from Downey High School were girls, with only a few in each class. Thus, Downey School never had a large number of high school students. The school continued its high school program for grades 9 and 10 from 1916 through 1925, with the students continuing in their studies at West Branch High School for subsequent grades and graduation. These two remaining high school grades were discontinued in the summer of 1925, with Downey School then serving as an elementary and intermediate school with grades 1 to 8. This change reflects the consolidation movement in education across Iowa in this period due to changes in state laws, with high school grades shifted to larger consolidated schools. By the 1930s, there was a lower level classroom (grades 1-4) on the first story and an upper level classroom (grades 5-8) on the second story. This arrangement continued through the close of the school year in June 1954, which ended with the annual picnic. Downey School operated as the only school in Downey through these decades, drawing students from town and the immediate surrounding rural area. Starting in fall 1954, students from the Downey area were bused to schools in West Branch, as schools further consolidated in this period. The school was later utilized for several years by the Wapsie Valley Grange, with only a few alterations. Downey School remains standing as a prominent landmark in the small town of Downey. The overall design of the school and interior configuration remains intact. Lack of maintenance over the past several decades has resulted in some loss of historic materials and design elements. However, Downey School clearly conveys its historic significance as a school on a prominent site in Downey.

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Developmental history/additional historic context information

Early educational history of Cedar County and development of Downey, 1850-1905

Similar to a number of towns in Iowa, Downey developed in response to the construction of a railroad. In the 1850s, railroads were building routes across Iowa, connecting the new state with points to the east, as well as opening up new points to the west. While the first settlers arrived in Springdale Township in southwest Cedar County in the 1830s, significant development did not occur until the arrival of the railroad in the 1850s.⁷ About nine miles to the west, Iowa City grew as the capitol for Iowa in the 1840s, further enhanced by the establishment of the State University of Iowa in town in 1847. Hugh D. Downey was a prominent Iowa City resident in this period, serving as the secretary of the Board of Trustees for the university from 1847 to 1851.⁸ The Mississippi and Missouri Railroad Company organized in October 1852, with efforts from Iowa City residents in May 1853 to attract the route of the line west from Davenport through Iowa City to Des Moines by subscribing stock to the railroad.⁹ On January 18, 1853, Hugh D. Downey bought a parcel of land in the southeast quarter of Section 30 from James B. Berryhill, and he then bought the adjacent parcel on September 21, 1853. The town of Downey was subsequently laid out.¹⁰ Other towns were laid out in northern Muscatine County along this line, including Moscow in August 1853 at the site of the bridge over the Cedar River. The main line of the railroad was built west from Davenport through the northern edge of Muscatine County in 1855, crossing into the southeast corner of Cedar County at Durant and then into the southwest corner of Cedar County at Downey. On January 3, 1856, a celebration was held in Iowa City for the arrival of the Mississippi and Missouri Railroad. The town remained the terminus for the railroad until 1859 when construction continued west.¹¹ The railroad spelled growth for towns along the line and death for towns not directly connected. The original site of West Liberty in northwest Muscatine County was bypassed slightly, prompting town residents to plat a new location along the railroad on January 21, 1856 and move a number of buildings to a site on the railroad.¹² The Chicago, Rock Island, and Pacific Company then bought out the struggling Mississippi and Missouri Railroad in 1856. The financial firm of Cook, Sargent, and Downey in Iowa City acted as the official collectors for the Mississippi and Missouri Railroad.¹³

Educational development in Cedar County followed early settlement in the middle and later 1850s, framed by state laws. The earliest town schools were typically held in private homes, with a public school then built as towns became more firmly established.¹⁴ In 1853, the first school was established in Cedar County in Tipton, with a combination school/meeting house built by Friends in West Branch the same year. Union School was then established in Tipton as a public school in 1856, and a school was built in Springdale by Friends. The Tipton and Springdale schools became leaders in Cedar County in training of local teachers, with a teachers' institute held annually.¹⁵ Durant created an independent school district in 1857, establishing a graded school with two departments (primary and secondary).¹⁶ A school was built in Clarence then in 1858.¹⁷ In 1858, the General Assembly of Iowa passed legislation that established the office of county superintendent of schools, with each county then electing their first superintendent.¹⁸ The legislature also passed an education bill to make the civil township the official school district in 1858, and towns with more than 1,000 residents could

⁷ *History of Cedar County, Iowa* 1878: 511; *History of Cedar County, Iowa* 1901, Vol 2: 160

⁸ *History of Cedar County, Iowa* 1878: 188, 193

⁹ Aurner 1912, Vol 1: 210, 220-221; Richman 1911, Vol 1: 410

¹⁰ *History of Cedar County, Iowa* 1878: 512; Aurner 1910, Vol 1: 129; Stout 1981, Vol 1: 179

¹¹ Aurner 1912, Vol 1: 224

¹² Richman 1911, Vol 1: 226

¹³ Aurner 1912, Vol 1: 447, 659

¹⁴ Deiber 2002: 3

¹⁵ Aurner 1910, Vol 1: 159, 162, 166, 167, 169

¹⁶ Aurner 1910, Vol 1: 156

¹⁷ Aurner 1910, Vol 1: 180

¹⁸ Aurner 1910, Vol 1: 181

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become independent districts and operate separately from the township. The county superintendents supervised both the township and independent schools.¹⁹ They also assisted in matching teachers with schools.²⁰ Subdistricts were then established within the township, starting out as numbered schools with some later adopting names. Typically there were about four sections for one school in Cedar County.²¹

Downey began to develop in 1856 in the southwest corner of Cedar County, located on the railroad between West Liberty about five miles to the southeast in northwest Muscatine County and Iowa City about nine miles to the northwest in Johnson County. The first building was constructed in 1856 by Edward Fowler for a carpenter shop, located on the site of the school and later moved for the school construction.²² By fall 1856, the railroad depot had been completed in Downey.²³ The post office was established on April 19, 1857, with Fowler as postmaster.²⁴ In 1857, four buildings were built by Hugh Downey in town, and another house was built by John Loy.²⁵ The depot served as the early community gathering place, including serving as space for early church services.²⁶ Downey followed the typical early pattern of development for education in a community. In the winter of 1858-59, school was held for the first time in Downey, taught by V.R. Cornwall in the Fowler building. School was held in 1860 in the house owned by owned by James Crozier in 1878 (Lot 10, Block 10), and school in 1861 was taught by Z. Broadhead in the house of E. Riley. School in 1862 was then in the house of J. Johnson, taught by Lizzie Ealey and Charles O'Conner. They had 37 pupils. The growth of the community appears to have then led to the construction of the first school in 1863, a building that was utilized until 1871 when a new two-story building was constructed on the site, also the site of the current school.²⁷

Downey continued to grow slowly through the 1860s and 1870s. A tax of five mils for a school house fund in Downey was passed in March 5, 1866.²⁸ The Downey Baptist Church was officially organized in 1865, with services held in the depot until a church was built in 1869.²⁹ James Crozier established a store, and the elevator was built by Isaac Heald.³⁰ On June 29, 1869, the 80 acres associated with Downey was sold by Hugh D. Downey to A.B. Cornwall, who had it resurveyed. The small town consisted of about 15 families: A. B. Cornwall, James Crozier, general store; J. C. Evans, grain and stock dealer; V. R. Cornwall, store keeper and railroad agent; James R. Singleton, constable; Edward Riley, section boss; Thomas Fern, hotel keeper; Jonas Hinchliffe, shoemaker; D. Kinkaid, blacksmith; L. E. Elliott, stock dealer; E. W. Luster, stock dealer; William M. Wilcox, laborer; Dennis Cunningham, laborer; William Brisbine, farmer; and Wat. Sanders, laborer.³¹ Thus, a number of pupils at Downey School walked from the surrounding rural area. In 1869, the Methodists built a church immediately to the east of the school, served initially by the pastor from West Liberty and then by a pastor from Iowa City.³² With plans for a new railroad line across central Cedar County and through Tipton in 1869, the town of West Branch was platted about four miles to the north, also in Springdale

¹⁹ Deiber 2002: 3; Beedle 2002: E:5

²⁰ The first announcement from first county superintendent for schools in Cedar County, J. McClung, on May 7, 1860 noted that teachers without jobs should apply to him to find a position (Aurner 1910, Vol 1: 181)

²¹ Stout 1981, Vol 1: 266

²² *History of Cedar County, Iowa* 1878: 513

²³ *History of Cedar County, Iowa* 1878: 513

²⁴ Frymoyer, July 1981, 8; WBHF 2001: 93

²⁵ The one on Lot 2 of Block 10 was opened as hotel by Beech Downes, later the grocery store of Harvey Watson in 1878; the one on Lot 7, Block 10 was occupied by V.R. Cornwall in 1878; the one on Lot 10, Block 10 was occupied by James Crozier in 1878, and the one on Lot 7, Block 12 was the residence of James R. Singleton in 1878. The house built by John Loy was on Lot 4, Block 11, the 1878 residence of Edward Riley (*History of Cedar County, Iowa* 1878: 513).

²⁶ Aurner 1912, Vol 1: 363; Stout 1981, Vol 1: 64

²⁷ *History of Cedar County, Iowa* 1878: 513

²⁸ *History of Cedar County, Iowa* 1878: 513

²⁹ It was used until destroyed by fire in 1917, and a new structure built. *History of Cedar County, Iowa* 1878: 514; Stout 1981, Vol 1: 64; Aurner 1912, Vol 1: 363

³⁰ *History of Cedar County, Iowa* 1878: 513

³¹ *History of Cedar County, Iowa* 1878: 512

³² The church was used until around 1930 and then demolished. *History of Cedar County, Iowa* 1878: 514

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Township. It became a station on the new railroad in 1870, later incorporated in 1875.³³ N.W. McCain opened a drug store in Downey around 1872, and James M. Elliott started a blacksmith and wagon shop in town in 1875.³⁴

Education laws were amended in Iowa in the 1870s, impacting schools in Cedar County. Per an amended law in 1879, any town of 2,000 inhabitants or greater could petition a vote to establish a high school.³⁵ Independent districts remained limited to larger communities. In 1870, there were 334 independent school districts in Iowa.³⁶ Cedar County had seven independent districts per a January 1871 report: Tipton, Springdale, West Branch, Durant, Lowden, Clarence, and Mechanicville. There were 130 subdistricts in Cedar County with 5,644 children of school age, including 1,343 enrolled in town schools and 4,212 enrolled in rural schools. The county had 135 school houses, including one stone, ten brick, and 124 frame.³⁷ The school in Downey was then rebuilt in 1871 at a cost of \$10,000, located on the same site (Lots 4-5-6-7 in Block 14). It was a two-story frame building with three rooms.³⁸ In 1872, the state education law was again amended to permit subdistricts to become their own independent school district. Thus, control of country schools was transferred from the township to rural neighborhoods/districts, as well as control of schools within smaller communities. An independent school district could be formed if there were at least 10 students enrolled, with its own board of trustees to exercise more local control over the school. A town school could only count students within corporate limits, not any rural residents that attended. As an independent school district, the board was then free to establish any number of schools, including both graded elementary and high schools. They could also hire their own teachers, establish their own curriculum, and set their own taxing and bonding limits to build and maintain schools. The number of independent school districts jumped from 400 in 1872 to 1,270 in 1873.³⁹

In 1876, Springdale Township in southwest Cedar County had a population of 1,500 residents, including four towns. West Branch (population 500) was located in the northwest portion of the township, and it was the largest community, complete with a large graded school, several stores, and two churches. Springdale (population 200) was located in the northeast portion of the township, and it was noted for its academy, two churches, and three stores. Downey (population 200) was located in the southwest portion of the township, including a Methodist Church, Baptist Church, three general stores, a few shops, one seed store, and a grain elevator. Finally, Centerdale was the smallest community, located in the center of the township.⁴⁰ The strengths and challenges of Downey were nicely summarized in the 1878 county history: "While it cannot anticipate a great increase in size, being situated between and near West Liberty and Iowa City, yet it has a large scope of excellent farming land surrounding it, from which an unusual amount of produce shipping is done; and as its farmers leave their farms to rest from the life of labor, they will naturally find a home in the village on the beautiful hillside, where they are best acquainted and in the midst of life-long friends."⁴¹ Downey retained its post office and stores. Two carpenters, a lumber/stock/grain dealer, an implement/seed dealer, and two physicians were noted in town. School was being held in one room of the school built in 1871, with the 35 pupils taught by John Waters.⁴²

Cedar County schools were improved in this period under the direction of Miss E.E. Frink of Clarence, who served as county superintendent from 1876 to 1881. Teachers conventions were held to provide training, and

³³ WBHF 2001: 62

³⁴ *History of Cedar County, Iowa* 1878: 513

³⁵ Beedle 2002: E:6

³⁶ Deiber 2002: 3

³⁷ Stout 1981, Vol 1: 266

³⁸ *History of Cedar County, Iowa* 1878: 513

³⁹ Deiber 2002: 3-4

⁴⁰ Stout 1981, Vol 1: 458-459

⁴¹ *History of Cedar County, Iowa* 1878: 514

⁴² *History of Cedar County, Iowa* 1878: 513; 652-662

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teachers were required to pass an examination to test their credentials, raising the quality of teaching.⁴³ In April 1878, the *West Branch Local Record* noted that the "Downey school will open next Monday with Mr. Will Barnes as teacher. Will is making for himself an excellent reputation as a teacher, and we congratulate the people of Downey for having served his service."⁴⁴ The legislature discontinued the preparatory school at the State University in Iowa City, instead "certifying" high schools where they would accept graduates for admission without examination. Both Springdale Seminary and Tipton High School were on the list for Cedar County.⁴⁵ Through the 1880s, the county superintendent for schools in Cedar County remained filled by a woman. They continued to encourage Teachers' Conventions, and Normal Institutes were well attended. Welch's Classification Register was purchased by the Board of Supervisors for every rural school in county. Grading and classification of students made it possible for graduates of rural schools to enter any high school in county without further examination. Cedar County schools in this period were later noted to be second to none in the state.⁴⁶

The basis of a strong educational system in Cedar County continued to be maintained through the end of the 19th century. Scattergood Seminary was established by Friends in rural Springdale Township to the northeast of Downey (southeast of West Branch) in 1890⁴⁷ After a fire destroyed the school in West Branch, a new six room school was built in 1893.⁴⁸ A new high school building was constructed in Tipton in 1895.⁴⁹ Women continued to dominate the field of teaching through this period, with only 32 men among the 145 teachers in Cedar County in April 1896.⁵⁰ The 1896 annual report noted that there were 12 district townships, 44 independent districts, and 100 sub-districts in Cedar County. Among the schools, there were only eight graded schools, with 132 ungraded schools. The 145 school houses in the county reported a total of 2,868 volumes in libraries. Overall, 4,765 of the 6,220 children of school age attended school, with 3,225 average daily attendance.⁵¹ In 1897, the state education law was amended to lower the number of inhabitants for an independent district in a town to 100, again supporting more local control for schools.⁵² A state law was also passed that permitted school funds to be used for the transportation of students to school, starting to encourage consolidated districts among the smaller schools.⁵³ By 1900, there were consolidated school districts in 28 counties, including 19 that provided transportation for students. Consolidated schools were typically located in a town with a railroad station, as these towns were regularly spaced due to stations. However, the difficulties in transporting students to school led to a decrease in consolidated schools to 10 by 1910.⁵⁴ This trend would reverse itself throughout the next five decades with better transportation options.

Downey did not grow significantly through the end of the 19th century, with the population remaining reported as approximately 200 in the 1899-1900 *Iowa State Gazetteer and Business Directory* and the town remaining unincorporated. The *Gazetteer* noted that Downey had mail service, as well as a railway express and telegraph agent. The remainder of businessmen in town consisted of one barber, one blacksmith, four carpenters, one general store, one grain/seed/coal business with elevator, one livestock dealer, one mason, one notary public, one painter, and three physicians.⁵⁵ While railroad traffic continued through Downey, the number of stops was decreased in small towns along the line, with only three trains stopping in Durant in

⁴³ Aurner 1910, Vol 1: 181-182

⁴⁴ *West Branch Local Record*, April 3, 1879, 1

⁴⁵ Aurner 1910, Vol 1: 162

⁴⁶ Aurner 1910, Vol 1: 182

⁴⁷ Aurner 1910, Vol 1: 165

⁴⁸ Later also destroyed by fire. Aurner 1910, Vol 1: 165

⁴⁹ Aurner 1910, Vol 1: 167

⁵⁰ Stout 1981, Vol 1: 266

⁵¹ Elijah, July 1966, 8

⁵² Deiber 2002: 4

⁵³ Deiber 2002: 10

⁵⁴ Deiber 2002: 10

⁵⁵ WBHF 2001: 100, 102

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1900.⁵⁶ The 1901 county atlas shows Downey, including the site of the school, post office, and both churches (Figure 7). The narrative in the county atlas notes: "No class of people gives more attention to educational matters, both in schools as well as at home, than the residents of Springdale and Gower townships. The schoolhouses are in good shape and the best of teachers are selected to give instruction. In nearly all homes you will find more or less of a library and other means of entertainment, so that after a day's work is done the pleasures of an ideal home can be enjoyed."⁵⁷ The citizens of Downey strove to improve their community over the next few years. In March 1901, the Downey Mutual Telephone Company was organized, providing connections to the surrounding area. It operated through 1932.⁵⁸ In March 1903, the Savings Bank of Downey was organized, with capital of \$15,000. The first officers were J.L. Lefevre, president; S.T. Evans, vice president; and Ray Nyemaster, cashier. A two-story building was constructed on the southwest corner of Front Street and Center Street, including an auditorium space on the second story that would be referenced as "bank hall."⁵⁹ Thus, momentum was building towards the construction of a new brick school for the community.

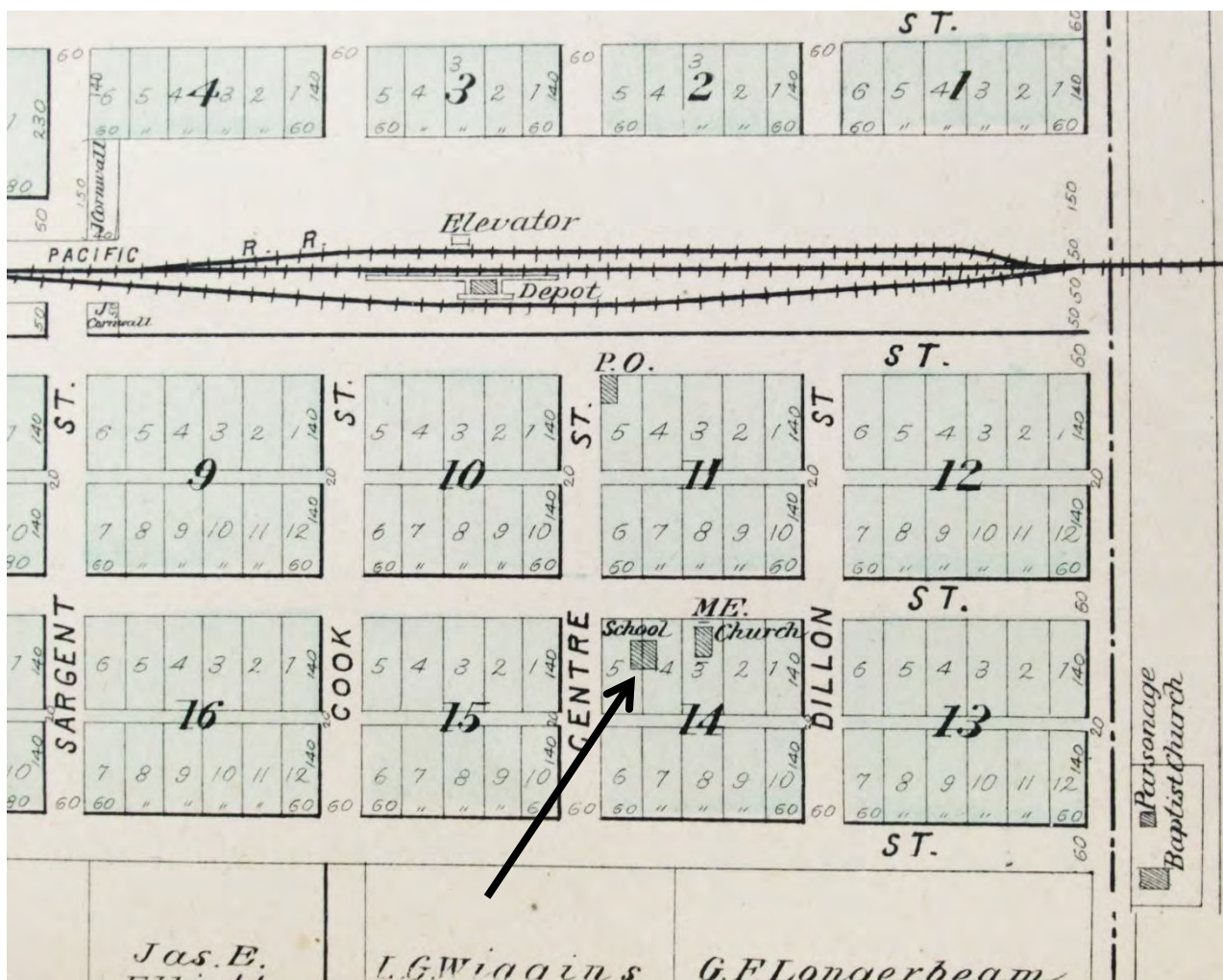


Figure 7. Downey in 1901 atlas of Cedar County, with school location indicated (*Atlas of Cedar County, Iowa* 1901: 64).

⁵⁶ Anderson, July 1965, 33

⁵⁷ *Cedar County Historical Review*, July 1966, 48

⁵⁸ Coxon, July 1981, 43

⁵⁹ Stout 1981, Vol 1: 97; WBT 1996: 48

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Momentum was also building in this period across Iowa to improve and modernize the educational system. At the turn of the century, there remained two de facto types of educational systems in Iowa: graded elementary and high schools in towns and ungraded one-room schools in rural areas.⁶⁰ By 1901, 624 towns in Iowa with a population less than 1,500 had a graded school, but only 48 towns had a high school. The number grew to 66 by 1904. The high school was designed to prepare students for college or a career in teaching or business. Thus, many farmers were not supportive of high schools, as they expected their children to remain in an agricultural life. As a result, rural residents often did not see any need to send children to town schools beyond 8th grade. An effort was made in the early 20th century to incorporate agricultural subjects in schools, with 57 of 99 counties including related coursework by 1904. By 1910, agriculture and agricultural botany classes were included in a model high school program advocated by the Superintendent of Public Instruction. A law also was passed in 1902 for the inspection, recognition, and supervision of schools for the instruction and training of teachers for the common schools, with licensing standards for graduates to be teachers. High schools were inspected for their curriculum, with 19 schools approved to train teachers. Overall, the number of high schools increased to 554 in 795 towns by 1910.⁶¹ Thus, the stage was set for the construction of new schools throughout Iowa in the early 20th century.

Construction and operation of Downey High School, 1905-1916

Cedar County continued to be served by proactive county superintendents for its schools through the first decade of the 20th century. Miss Aurora Goodale served as superintendent from 1900 to 1904, and she introduced a daily register in connection with the Classification Register. A system of "card reports" of attendance was also introduced, designed to bolster attendance.⁶² A new two-story brick school was built in 1902 in north-central Cedar County in Stanwood, including a high school.⁶³ In January 1904, George H. Kellogg took office as superintendent of schools. He was born in New York in 1871 and then moved to Iowa, growing up in Cedar County. He attended the Iowa State Normal School in Cedar Falls in 1901, obtaining his state certificate. He was then hired as the principal of the schools of Bennett in east-central Cedar County. He left the position to serve as county superintendent in January 1904, re-elected to the position for at least two subsequent terms. During this period, he was an active member of the Northeastern Iowa Teachers Association and of the Southeastern Iowa Teachers Association. He was then elected as the first vice president of the Iowa State Teachers Association in 1909-10. In Cedar County, Professor George H. Kellogg started the County School Officers' Association, which met annually in Tipton to discuss various educational matters. He was a strong advocate for the employment of more efficient teachers at better salaries, with salaries increasing about 20% under his time in office. He also was a "stalwart advocate of centralized rural schools and has put forth most effective effort along the lines of general improvement and progress in connection with the cause of public education in Iowa."⁶⁴

Improvements to the physical building of the school were also a priority of the new superintendent. The 1911 county history noted that modern and sanitary school buildings were taking the place of worn-out buildings, and modern heating and ventilating plants were being introduced.⁶⁵ The 1911 biography of Professor George H. Kellogg noted: "His term of office in the position of county superintendent has been characterized by a continuous progress and by urgency on his part for the betterment of conditions in public schools. He has been instrumental in securing the erection of sixteen rural schools as well as several new high-school buildings, including the Durant high school (1904), erected at a cost of sixteen thousand dollars; the West Branch at a cost of twenty thousand dollars; the Downey (1905), at a cost of eight thousand dollars;

⁶⁰ Deiber 2002: 4

⁶¹ Deiber 2002: 5-6

⁶² Aurner 1910, Vol 1: 182

⁶³ Aurner 1910, Vol 1: 180. Building has been demolished; later school built in 1963 and used as part of North Cedar schools.

⁶⁴ Aurner 1910, Vol 2: 330-332

⁶⁵ Aurner 1910, Vol 1: 183

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Mechanicsville (1909), at twenty thousand dollars; and the Lowden (1909) at fifteen thousand dollars.”⁶⁶ The new school built in Durant in 1904 was a four-room school, including a recitation room and a library. By 1910, the school was up to four departments, including a high school.⁶⁷ A new school in West Branch was built in 1905, but fire then destroyed the school only a few years later, leading to the construction of the new \$20,000 school mentioned as recently completed in the 1911 history. Downey, with an estimated population in 1900 of approximately 200, was decidedly the smallest town to construct a new school in Cedar County in this period.⁶⁸ None of the other early 20th century schools in Cedar County towns have been identified as extant.

Downey School was constructed through the efforts of the board of the Independent School District of Downey, which operated under the eye of the county superintendent. They hired architect John G. Ralston of Waterloo, Iowa, in 1905 to design the new two-story brick school. The proposed school was designed to be large enough to add a complete high school course to the local school, with an additional teacher hired. The school was estimated to cost \$6,000, and it was to be completed by the start of the school year in fall 1905. The board hoped that the new school building and addition of the full high school course would lead to a prosperous year for Downey School.⁶⁹ John G. Ralston completed plans for the new school in spring 1905. John Glen Ralston was born in Vinton, Iowa, in 1870, and he worked as a carpenter for Murphy & Wallace, architects and contractors, in Vinton from 1892 to 1897, learning the building trade. He married his wife Gertrude in 1897, and they moved to Waterloo. He worked with contractor W.F. Murphy, with the firm of Murphy & Ralston listed among local architects as well in the 1899 city directory. By 1901, John G. Ralston devoted his time solely to designing buildings, and he continued as an independent architect after the death of Murphy in 1904. Many of his identified buildings are designs for school and other institutional buildings. By 1912, he had designed 79 commercial and institutional buildings since moving to Waterloo, as well as 190 houses. With school consolidations in the 1910s and 1920s, he actively pursued school commissions.⁷⁰ A search of historic publications reveals a large number of schools that he designed in the early 1900s as well.⁷¹ Unfortunately, a fire in his office building in Waterloo in 1914 appears to have destroyed all his drawings and files of work prior to this point, including any drawings that may have been retained for Downey School.⁷²

The plans for Downey School were completed by John G. Ralston in spring 1905, with construction slated to begin in the summer. The *West Branch Times* ran the notice to contractors from W.L. Mackey, president of the Board of Independent School District of Downey, Iowa, advertising for sealed bids for the erection and completion of a brick school building in Downey, Iowa, according to plans and specifications as made by J.G. Ralston, architect, of Waterloo, Iowa. Bids were due by 1:30 p.m. on Friday July 7, 1905, along with a certified check of \$200 for each bid that would be forfeited if the contractor failed to sign the contract and furnish satisfactory bond within reasonable time. Plans were available at the architect's office and would be available at the home of at C.T. Walley, secretary of the board, after June 23.⁷³ The notice was also picked up by other publications. *The Improvement Bulletin* included a short notice for the project: “Downey, Ia – J.G. Ralston, architect, of Waterloo, Ia, has plans for 4-room school building, press brick, metal cornice, furnace

⁶⁶ Aurner 1910, Vol 2: 331. Dates added by author.

⁶⁷ Aurner 1910, Vol 1: 156

⁶⁸ Populations in 1900 of other Cedar County towns with new schools in this period include Stanwood at 415, Durant at 560, West Branch at 647, Mechanicsville at 703, and Lowden at 544.

⁶⁹ *West Branch Times*, June 29, 1905, 5

⁷⁰ Shank 1999: 135

⁷¹ On April 9, 1904, Murphy & Ralston, architects of Waterloo, advertised for bids for erecting a two-story school in Waverly (*American Architect and Architecture*). In June 1905, John G. Ralston advertised for bids for Downey School, as well as a school in Morning Sun, Iowa (“Educational,” *The Improvement Bulletin*, June 24, 1905, 20). In May 1907, J.G. Ralston of Waterloo advertised for bids for plans for 3-story parochial school in Laporte City (*School Board Journal*, May 1907, 26).

⁷² The fire that destroyed the Russell-Lamson Block in Waterloo on January 25, 1914 was noted as one of the most disastrous fires in Waterloo in recent years. Among other businesses with significant losses, the article notes that more than \$1,000 of nearly finished plans and specs on the work table of architect John G. Ralston were destroyed, along with copies of his work from throughout his career and plans for work in the future. (“Fire Destroys the Paul Davis Dry Goods Stock and the Russell-Lamson Building,” *Waterloo Evening Courier*, January 26, 1914, 1, 10)

⁷³ “Notice to Contractors,” *West Branch Times*, June 15, 1905, 10; repeated in June 22, June 29, and July 6 newspapers

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heat, etc. Bids close at 1:30 p.m., July 7.”⁷⁴ As the new school would be located on the current school site, the old frame school building was placed on auction and sold to the highest bidder on June 24. The school building was bought by John Cornwall, who divided it into two sections and moved each section to his properties to use as the basis for two rental houses.⁷⁵ However, the contract for the new school was not let on July 7 as anticipated, as the board decided that the budget authorized was not sufficient to complete a building such as was considered necessary. Thus, they rejected all bids and called another vote to authorize additional bonds to cover the cost of construction as well as furnishing it in an up-to-date manner.⁷⁶ On July 19, the contract was awarded to Frank W. Chapman, a resident of Waterloo and highly recommended as a reliable builder.⁷⁷ The \$6,500 contract included the construction of the 38 by 62 foot school with hard wall plaster, yellow pine floors, oak finish, and a furnace.”⁷⁸



Figure 8. Postcard of Downey School, likely shortly after completion in 1905, looking southwest (Ericson collection).

While the original intent appears to have been to construct the school over the summer and into early fall, construction appears to have spanned through the end of 1905. The *West Branch Times* noted on August 31, 1905 that the new school in Downey was progressing nicely, and it would likely be completed in time for the

⁷⁴ “Educational,” *The Improvement Bulletin*, June 24, 1905, 20

⁷⁵ “Downey,” *Muscatine Journal*, June 27, 1905, 6; “Downey,” *Muscatine Journal*, June 30, 1905, 2; *West Branch Times*, June 29, 1905, 5. The houses were occupied by Mrs. Lucille Vincent and C.C. Morrison in 1980 (Stout 1981, Vol 1: 180).

⁷⁶ *West Branch Times*, July 13, 1905, 4

⁷⁷ *West Branch Times*, July 20, 1905, 5

⁷⁸ “Educational,” *The Improvement Bulletin*, July 22, 1905, 20

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winter term of school at least, perhaps sooner.⁷⁹ A "junior department" letter to the *Muscatine Journal* from Ruth Compton of Downey noted on September 1, 1905 that "A new brick school building is being erected here and I will not have to go to school till it is finished."⁸⁰ Thus, school does not appear to have been held in an alternate location during this period of construction. On October 12, the *Muscatine Journal* noted that Bessie Hudson has secured a position in the Downey schools.⁸¹ A letter from Etta Gregg Wilson documenting her recollections of Downey School notes that she started school in the old building after turning five in March 1897.⁸² The new brick school was built in 1905, and it was supposed to be completed in time for classes to start in fall. However, it was not ready in time, so it did not open as a high school until January 1906. Will Huff started as the teacher for the high school, which was a four year course that included Latin, algebra, English, and history.⁸³ School opened by early January 1906 for the winter term, with a note in the newspaper on January 4 that Charlie Heald has been kept out of school during the past week by chicken pox.⁸⁴ Professor William Huff was noted to have spent the day with friends in Cedar Bluffs in early January, with "professor" often utilized as a reference for the high school teacher.⁸⁵ He was noted as attending a business class in Iowa City in April.⁸⁶ Intermediate grades teacher Miss Bessie Hudson is also referenced in newspapers in winter/spring 1906, typically spending time at her parents' home near West Liberty.⁸⁷ The Downey high school pupils enjoyed a week of vacation for spring break in late March 1906.⁸⁸ In April 1906, Mr. Kellogg, the county superintendent, visited the Downey school.⁸⁹ Baseball was the early sport associated with Downey School, with games played against West Branch in June 1906. The Downey field was noted on nice ground, with the field practically level. They had gone to the expense of a skinned diamond.⁹⁰ The baseball field was located on the rear lots behind the school, and it would continue to be used as such through the middle of the 20th century. The school year ended in Downey on Friday June 15, 1906, closing with a picnic and ball game between West Branch and Downey.⁹¹

Various notes appear in local newspapers over the next several years regarding the operation of Downey High School, or simply Downey School. In fall 1906, Downey high school started classes on Monday September 2.⁹² Students that attended Downey were from the immediate area, as well as the surrounding rural area. In March 1907, Irwin and Ira Heald, who were attending the Downey high school, were noted to have spent Sunday with their parents near Centerdale.⁹³ Baseball games between Downey high school and West Branch high school, as well as other teams, were reported in the newspaper as well.⁹⁴ A play was presented by the Downey high school in June 1907, with a large crowd in attendance.⁹⁵ A debate between Downey high school and West Branch high school was held in the West Branch opera house on Friday May 1, 1908.⁹⁶ A program was again given at the end of the school year in May 1908, presented in the Bank Hall

⁷⁹ *West Branch Times*, August 31, 1905, 5

⁸⁰ "Junior Department," *Muscatine Journal*, September 16, 1905, 21

⁸¹ "East Wapsie," *Muscatine Journal*, October 12, 1905, 7

⁸² Etta Gregg Wilson graduated from Downey High School in 1911.

⁸³ Letter from Etta Gregg Wilson to Kathryn Hill Meardon, June 26, 1978. In SHPO file on Downey School compiled and submitted by Kathryn Hill Meardon for initial evaluation of significance in 1979.

⁸⁴ "Downey," *West Branch Times*, January 4, 1906, 4

⁸⁵ "Downey," *West Branch Times*, January 4, 1906, 4

⁸⁶ "Downey," *Muscatine Journal*, April 28, 1906, 10

⁸⁷ "East Wapsie," *Muscatine Journal*, February 8, 1906, 7; "Downey," *Muscatine Journal*, April 5, 1906, 6; "Downey," *Muscatine Journal*, April 28, 1906, 10

⁸⁸ "Downey," *Muscatine Journal*, March 22, 1905, 2

⁸⁹ "Downey," *Muscatine Journal*, April 28, 1906, 10

⁹⁰ *West Branch Times*, June 14, 1906, 4;

⁹¹ *West Branch Times*, June 21, 1906, 5

⁹² "Downey," *Muscatine Journal*, August 31, 1906, 2

⁹³ "Downey," *Muscatine Journal*, March 29, 1907, 6. The 1910 census lists the twin brothers, then age 21, living with their parents in Springdale Township. Irwin is a house carpenter, and Ira is a public school teacher.

⁹⁴ "Downey," *Muscatine Journal*, May 17, 1907, 5

⁹⁵ "Downey," *Muscatine Journal*, June 11, 1907, 3

⁹⁶ "Downey," *Muscatine Journal*, April 28, 1908, 7

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with a large number present.⁹⁷ Alice Gates Coxon later wrote that there was no auditorium in the school building during these early years of the school, with plays, social events, and graduation held in Bank Hall. The hall on the second story of the bank building consisted of a large room with a stage.⁹⁸ Downey high school was noted as growing in December 1908, with five new scholars enrolled.⁹⁹ In January 1909, the school closed for two weeks due to measles, with 30-35 cases already reported by January 22. School resumed on Monday February 8.¹⁰⁰ The *Muscatine Journal* noted in May 1909 that the “baccalaureate sermon for the Downey High school will be preached by Rev. Albert H. Linder, pastor of the Downey M.P. church, Sunday morning at 11 o’clock.”¹⁰¹ The number of graduates in 1909 is unknown. The graduates in 1910 were Mildred Jenkinson and Myrtle Lodge.¹⁰²

The development of Downey remained concentrated on a nine block area in the first decade of the 20th century. The railroad, depot, and buildings to the north composed the northern three blocks, Front Street and the handful of commercial buildings spanned along the northern edge of the next tier of three blocks, and residences were found along Broadway Street and the final tier of three blocks. Downey School sat on the slight hill within this last tier, with the Methodist Church immediately to its east. The Baptist Church was located to the southeast of the core area, along the north-south road to West Branch. The depot and grain elevator were located along the railroad tracks. There were two passenger trains each way every day in this period, per resident Alice (Gates) Coxon. Kids would meet the trains, and they could travel to Iowa City at 4:00 to shop and dine, returning at 9:00 that evening. Downey was a large shipping center for livestock, with hogs driven to the stock yards in town to be loaded on freight trains to Chicago. The local telephone

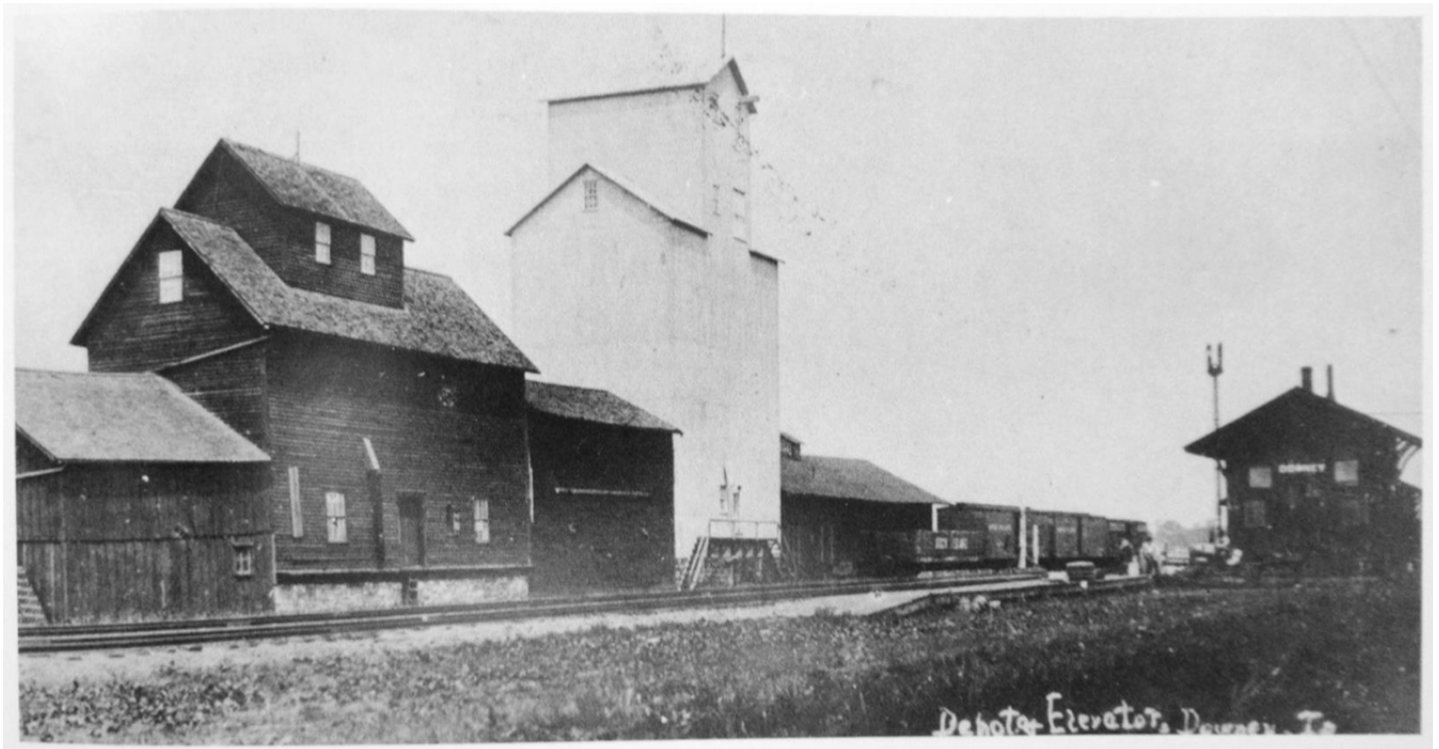


Figure 9. View of grain elevator, buildings, and depot along railroad in Downey in early 1900s (WBT 1996: 43).

⁹⁷ “Downey,” *Muscatine Journal*, May 22, 1908, 3

⁹⁸ Coxon, July 1981, 45. Alice Gates Coxon graduated in 1916 from Downey High School, and then taught here for several years.

⁹⁹ “Downey,” *Muscatine Journal*, December 10, 1908, 8

¹⁰⁰ “Downey,” *Muscatine Journal*, January 22, 1909, 9; “Downey,” *Muscatine Journal*, February 6, 1909, 6

¹⁰¹ “Baccalaureate Sermon,” *Muscatine Journal*, May 29, 1909, 2

¹⁰² Letter from Etta Gregg Wilson to Kathryn Hill Meardon, June 26, 1978.

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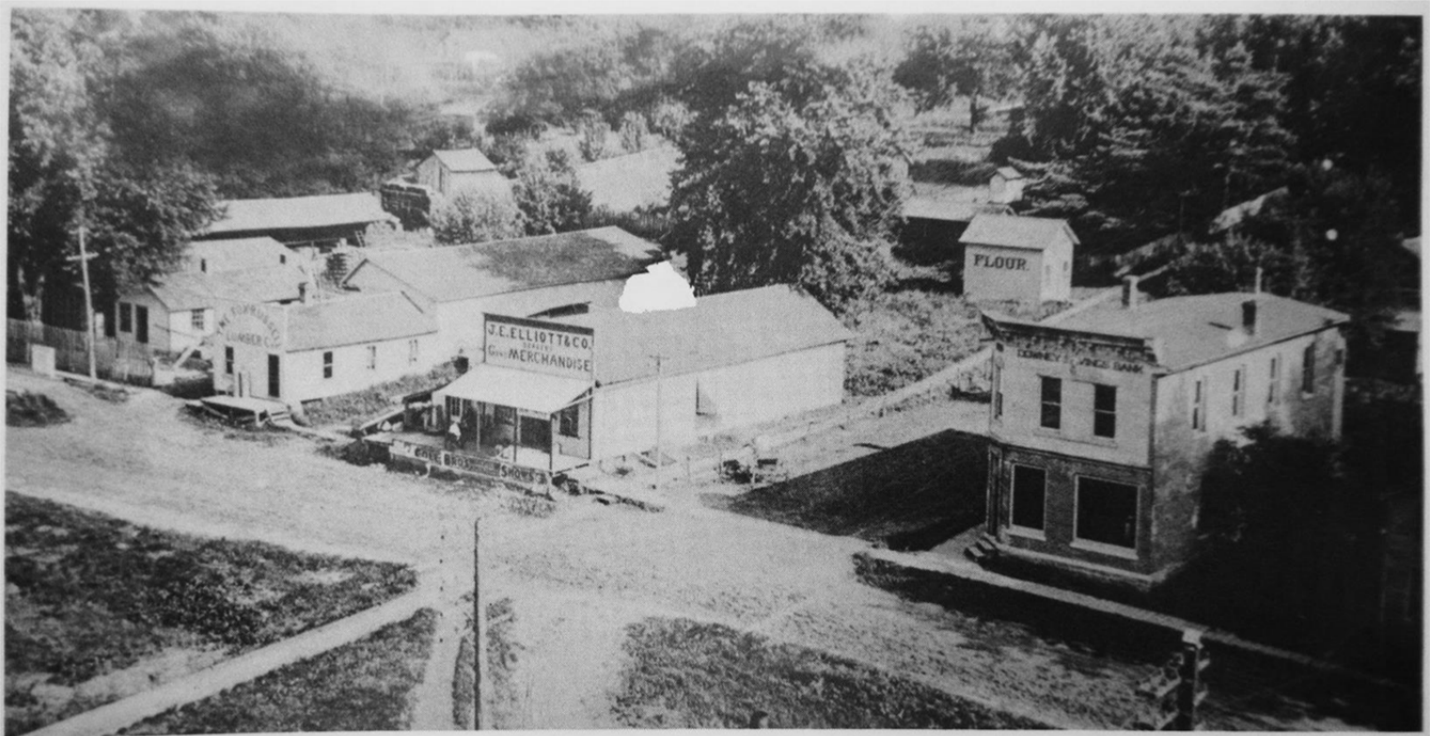


Figure 10. View of Downey, looking southeast from grain elevator in early 1900s – Downey Savings Bank at right at corner of Front Street and Center Street, commercial buildings on east block of Front Street (WBT 1996: 33).



Figure 11. View of west block of Front Street, with bank at left, in early 1900s (WBT 1996: 34).

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Figure 12. Pupils in front of Downey School in early 1900s, looking southeast (edge of Methodist Church visible on east at left) (WBT 1996: 63).

exchange provided modern communication, with several families on one line. The general ring was used to make announcements, such as related to a fire, farm sale, merchandise specials, or events such as an ice cream social. The two churches cooperated for services and events, often alternating Sundays with services. The Grange was also an active part of the community, with regular meetings, local plays, and other social events. Entertainment included square dances and box socials, with girls decorating boxes with a dinner for two that was auctioned to the highest bidder. Season tickets were sold for the lecture series, which include lectures, musical programs, and magicians.¹⁰³ The 1910 county history described Downey as located in the extreme southwest corner of Cedar County, reached by the Rock Island railroad through other counties. It noted: "Downey has at the present time a school building of sufficient pretensions to meet the needs of a town much larger in population and has attempted to raise the standard of the schools far beyond most districts of the valuation. An elevator and bank are among the recent improvements."¹⁰⁴ The four-room school in Downey was noted with enrollment of 60 pupils.¹⁰⁵

As noted, Downey School was one of several substantial schools built in Cedar County in the first decade of the 20th century, with an emphasis on improved education and modern buildings. With a state law passed in 1907 mandating that children ages 7-14 attend school, school enrollment increased in this period.¹⁰⁶ As an early adopter of the graded school system, Tipton schools celebrated their 50th anniversary of graded schools in 1907.¹⁰⁷ The 1910 county history includes photographs of the other schools located in towns in Cedar County in this period (Figures 13-15). A handful of older school buildings remained in towns, such as the

¹⁰³ Coxon, July 1981, 46

¹⁰⁴ Aurner 1910, Vol 1: 129

¹⁰⁵ Aurner 1910, Vol 1: 165

¹⁰⁶ Deiber 2002: 4

¹⁰⁷ Aurner 1910, Vol 1: 170

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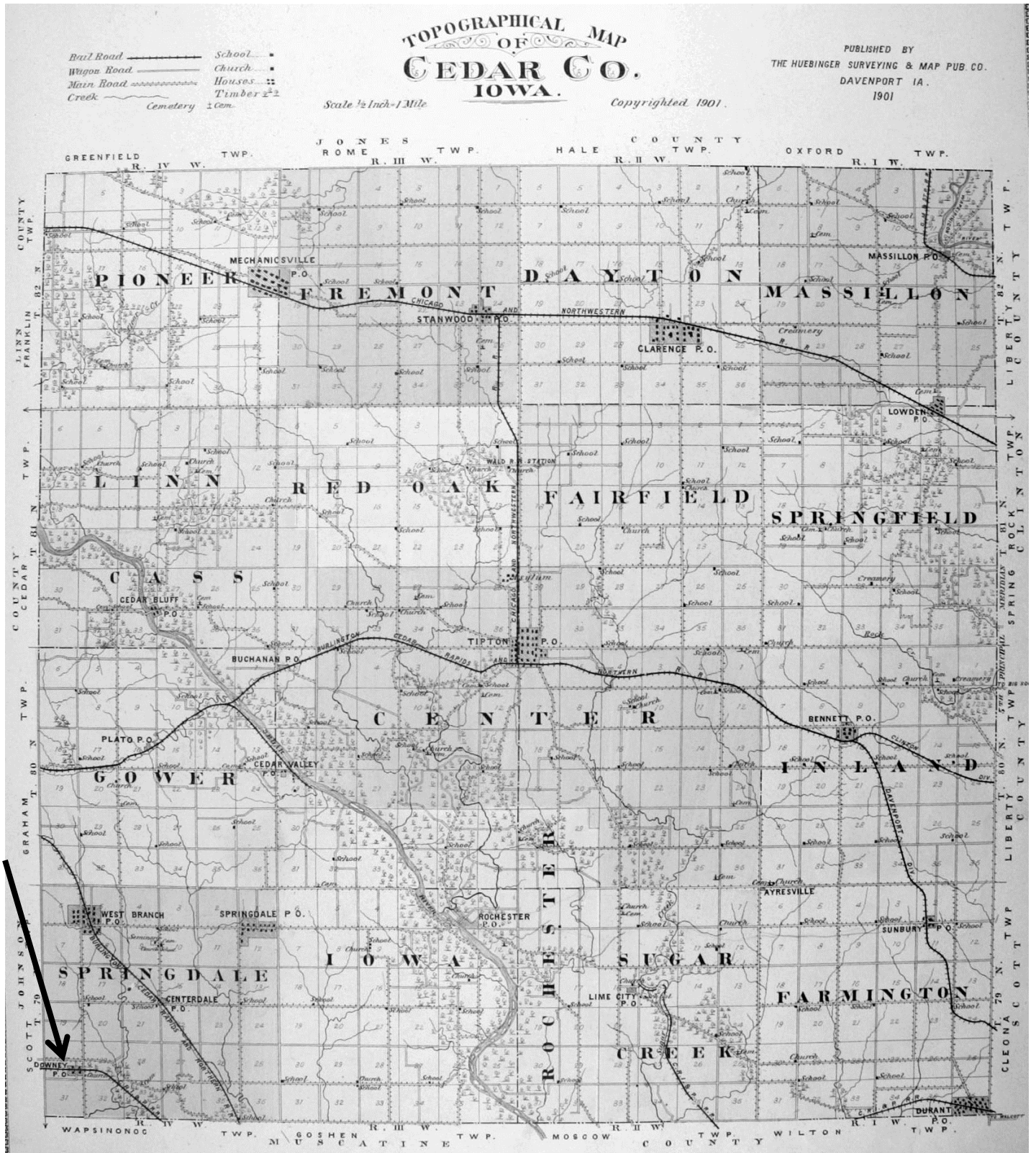


Figure 13. Cedar County in 1901, with Downey indicated (*Atlas of Cedar County, Iowa 1901: 7*).

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Mechanicsville Public School



Lowden Public School



Bennett Schoolhouse



Rochester Schoolhouse After Rebuilding



Stanwood High School



Scattergood Seminary

Figure 14. Cedar County schools in 1910 (Aurner 1910, Vol 1: 167).

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Durant High School



West Branch High School



Clarence High School



Springdale High School



Downey High School

GROUP OF HIGH SCHOOL BUILDINGS

Figure 15. Cedar County schools in 1910 (Aurner 1910, Vol 1: 171).

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Rochester School, Clarence High School (c.1858), Springdale High School (c.1867), Scattergood Seminary (c.1890), and Bennett School (c.1891, plans for new building). The Tipton High School (1895) was easily the largest school building in Cedar County at the time. The Stanwood High School, built in 1902, was the first to follow a more modern school design in a smaller town, followed by the Durant High School (1904) and Downey High School (1905). Larger, more square, school buildings were then constructed by the next set of schools in 1908-1909, including the Mechanicsville Public School, Lowden Public School, and West Branch High School.¹⁰⁸ Among these six schools built in towns in the first decade of the 20th century in Cedar County, only the Downey School has been identified as extant, with other schools replaced due to consolidation in the 1920s and then again in the 1950s/60s.

The enrollment at Downey School in 1910 was noted as 60 pupils, though attendance and graduation sometimes varied significantly from enrollment. As noted, measures were put in place in Cedar County and through state law in the early 20th century to encourage and increase attendance. With this focus, perfect attendance records – including no absences or tardies – were included in the local newspaper. For example, an article in the *West Branch Times* in February 1910 listed six students with perfect attendance in the primary room under teacher Miss Marie C. Anderson, and 11 students on the “honor roll” per se – an average above 90 in their studies and an average of 90 or higher in deportment, neatness, and politeness.¹⁰⁹ The high school teacher reported ten students in 9th grade, three students in 10th grade, and six students in 11th grade with above 90 in deportment and above 94 in studies at least one class. High school classes included algebra, geometry, history, English, Latin, and economics.¹¹⁰ Miss Anna Barry of Iowa City served as “principal” of Downey High School in 1910-1911, teaching the high school classes.¹¹¹ Students that completed some high school classes or upper grades did not always end up graduating from Downey, either pursuing another course or simply ending their education. Etta Gregg, among the six or more 11th grade students in spring 1910, ended up as the lone graduate from Downey High School in 1911.¹¹² The *Muscatine Journal* noted in their “Downey news” in May 1911 that “Rev. H.P. Chaffee of the Baptist church here, will deliver the commencement address to the one lone graduate, who is to compose the 1911 graduating class of the Downey high school at the coming commencement exercises.”¹¹³ The *West Branch Times* likewise noted: “The 1911 class of the Downey high school consists of one lone graduate, who will naturally carry off all the honors at the coming commencement.”¹¹⁴ Anna Barry returned as principal in fall 1911, and Delta Walker and Eva Jennings also taught then in Downey School.¹¹⁵ Vava Brisbane was the only graduate in 1912. The class of 1913 had a record three graduates: Charles Gates, Clute Bowman, and Grace Applegate. Tracy Brisbane was then the only graduate in 1914.¹¹⁶

¹⁰⁸ Aurner 1910, Vol 1: 165, 175,180

¹⁰⁹ Primary students with no absents/tardies included: Vera Lehman, Florence Mackey, Raymond Fagle, Beryl Cornwall, Harold Holcomb, and Lloyd Cornwall. Primary students with an average above 90 in their studies and an average of 90 or above in deportment, neatness, and politeness included: Irene Waters, Verda Waters, Vera Lehman, Zoe Lodge, Irene Jenkinson, Florence Mackey, Ruth Brisbane, Beryl Cornwall, Earl Ervin, Carlisle Lodge, and Harold Holcomb (“Report of Downey School,” *West Branch Times*, February 24, 1910, 5)

¹¹⁰ 9th grade – Grace Applegate (algebra, Latin), Marie Holcomb (Latin), Lloyd Hormel (algebra, Latin), Earl Smith (algebra), Koert Longerbeam (algebra), Paul Wilson (Latin), Charles Gates (Latin, algebra), Clute Bowman (Latin, algebra, history, English), Chris Christensen (Latin, algebra), Paul Wilson (algebra, English, history); 10th grade – Herbert Longerbeam (economics), Vava Brisbane (Latin), Verda Lodge (algebra, Latin, English); 11th grade – Lillian Applegate (geometry, English, Latin), Etta Gregg (geometry, English), Elsie Compton (geometry, English), Koert Longerbeam (English), Herbert Longerbeam (English), Earl Smith (English) (“Report of Downey School,” *West Branch Times*, February 10, 1910, 8)

¹¹¹ “Miss Anna Barry, principal of high school, spent Sunday with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Barry, of Iowa City.” (“Downey,” *Muscatine Journal*, November 5, 1910, 16); Miss Anna Barry, principal of Downey High School, returned to her school work Tuesday morning after a few days’ sickness (“Downey,” *Muscatine Journal*, January 27, 1911, 3). The 1910 federal census shows that Anna was one of seven older children living with her parents in Iowa City, and four of her siblings were also listed as teachers.

¹¹² In addition to being the sole member of her class to graduate, she also recalls that her teacher was Anna Barry of Iowa City. Letter from Etta Gregg Wilson to Kathryn Hill Meardon, June 26, 1978.

¹¹³ “Downey,” *Muscatine Journal*, May 17, 1911, 8

¹¹⁴ *West Branch Times*, May 25, 1911, 5

¹¹⁵ “Downey,” *Muscatine Journal*, October 5, 1911, 4; “Downey,” *Muscatine Journal*, October 6, 1911, 8

¹¹⁶ Letter from Etta Gregg Wilson to Kathryn Hill Meardon, June 26, 1978

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Figure 16. Students and teachers at Downey School around 1914 (Ericson collection).

Changes in education at the state level in Iowa began to impact schools across the state by the middle of the 1910s. In 1906, the Iowa legislature passed the Consolidation Act.¹¹⁷ There was no particular impetus to consolidate at the time, with more opposition than support for the measure. Six major concerns of farmers have been highlighted related to consolidation effort: imposition of consolidation when it is not needed or wanted, loss of local control of schools especially hiring of teachers, higher property taxes as a result of consolidation, disproportionately higher taxes on the rural residents in a consolidated district, busing of small children to school, and determining whether or not a country school was “beyond redemption.”¹¹⁸ However, there also was increasing concern of the quality of the growing number of high schools. State colleges created a system of accreditation for high schools based on entrance requirements for their schools, classifying as accredited, part-accredited, or non-accredited. This classification resulted in the number of high school years credited to a student, and it contributed to a perceived wide gulf between city and town high schools.¹¹⁹ A law was passed in 1911 to ensure every student have access to a high school education by requiring school districts without a high school to pay tuition for a student to attend in another district. The debate on what qualified as “high school” supported the need for standardized school curriculum and teacher qualifications.¹²⁰ In 1911, a law was also passed to establish teacher-training courses in high schools to meet the demand for teachers in Iowa. Any high school that had 10 students enrolled in the normal (teacher) course would receive \$500 in funding from the state, with smaller high schools given preference over city high schools.¹²¹

¹¹⁷ Beedle 2002: E:8

¹¹⁸ Beedle 2002: E:7)

¹¹⁹ Deiber 2002: 6-7

¹²⁰ Deiber 2002: 7

¹²¹ Deiber 2002: 8

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The first strong move towards encouraging consolidation of schools occurred in 1913 with the passage of a new law that provided state funding for consolidated districts. In order to qualify, schools had to meet certain building/grounds requirements, have acceptable public transportation for students, hire certified teachers, maintain an agriculture experiment plot, and own proper equipment to teach agriculture, home economics, and manual training. They received money for equipment and instruction based on number of rooms in school. Thus, a two-room school received \$250 for equipment and \$200 for instruction, a three-room school received \$350 for equipment and \$500 for instruction, and a four room school received \$500 for equipment and \$750 for instruction.¹²² This spurred the growth of certain high schools and the demise of other high schools. The program did prove popular. In 1913, there were only 17 consolidated schools in Iowa, and the number increased to 239 by 1917. There was a belief that consolidated schools gave educational value to rural school children, with the value of the education enriched by adding agriculture, manual training, and home making to the high school curriculum.¹²³ This movement was enhanced at the national level in 1917 by the passage of the National Vocational Education Act, or Smith-Hughes Act, designed to improve education in agriculture, industrial arts, manual arts, and home economics by providing funding through matching grants for teacher training, teacher salaries, and research in vocational arts. By 1920, 32 high schools in Iowa were providing year-round courses in agriculture, resulting in increased enrollment of rural students.¹²⁴

Downey High School does not appear to have met the state requirements for the additional funding sources under any of the new state laws or programs. At the same time, the larger West Branch High School, about four miles to the north, did work to meet the program requirements and expand their curriculum. The struggles for funding the high school then fell solely to the local board and their collection of taxes and any tuition, as well as other fundraising efforts. For example, in April 1913, the Streed Family Orchestra and Entertainment Company performed at Bank Hall in Downey for the benefit of the Downey high school, arranged by the lecture and Chautauqua bureaus. Admission was 10 or 25 cents, with all residents encouraged to attend.¹²⁵ Miss Catherine Barry was a teacher in the school in this period, and Etta Gregg returned to Downey School as a teacher, teaching here from 1914 to 1916 and then again from 1918 to 1920.¹²⁶ The last identified graduating class was three graduates in May 1916: Alice Gates, Lizzie Ervin, and Verona King.¹²⁷ The school program presented at the end of the year by the students, including the graduation exercises, was held in Bank Hall. The program on June 1, 1916 included an invocation by Rev. J.S. Wood, a song (Happy School Day) by the chorus, piano duet by Mary McVey and Helen Mackey, a vocal duet by Verona and Bertha King, a cotillion by Miss Swains' primary pupils, a piano solo by principal Nellie Barry, and a dialogue / class play – "From Down East." These performances were followed by an oration by each of the graduates: The Value of Time by Alice Gates, Wealth by Lizzie Ervin, and In the Wake of Civilization by Verona King. The principal, Nellie Barry, then said a few words for the presentation of the class, and school board president Walter L. Mackey presented the diplomas.¹²⁸ A later article on a reunion of Downey School students who attended from 1912 to 1917 noted that there were then only 10 grades in the school in 1917.¹²⁹ Thus, some high school course work was offered, but students seeking graduation would attend all or later years at West Branch High School.

Continuation of local education through Downey School, 1917-1954

¹²² Deiber 2002: 4; Beedle 2002: E:8

¹²³ Beedle 2002: E:8

¹²⁴ Deiber 2002: 6

¹²⁵ "Downey," *Muscatine Journal*, April 11, 1913, 9

¹²⁶ "The City," *Iowa City Citizen*, January 3, 1916, 5; Letter from Etta Gregg Wilson to Kathryn Hill Meardon, June 26, 1978.

¹²⁷ Letter from Etta Gregg Wilson to Kathryn Hill Meardon, June 26, 1978; Coxon, July 1981, 45; Graduation program in collection of Lorna (Coxon) Ericson, whose mother Alice Gates Coxon was among the graduates. The class motto was "Our Ships are Launched; Where Shall We Anchor?"; the class colors were maroon and white; and the class flower was the American Beauty rose.

¹²⁸ "Downey," *West Branch Times*, June 1, 1916, 6; Program in collection of Lorna (Coxon) Ericson, daughter of Alice Gates Coxon.

¹²⁹ "Downey School Reunion Held at West Liberty," *Iowa City Press Citizen*, August 6, 1969, 6

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Downey School remained an independent school district through the late 1910s and into the 1920s, simply did not offer the full high school course. School officers in January 1918 for Downey included: W.L. Mackey, president; Frank Gregg, secretary; and W.A. Cameron, treasurer. The board also included Wilson Ervin, J.E. Elliott, H.K. Gates, and Thomas Seaton.¹³⁰ Traditions began in the first years of Downey School were continued in this period, such as closing the school year with the annual picnic.¹³¹ The students were also active in national efforts related to World War I. The newspaper reported in January 1918 that the Downey school has taken up Red Cross work and numerous knitted articles have already been completed.¹³² The school held a Red Cross benefit program at the Methodist Protestant church on February 22, 1918, including a Mother Goose operetta, songs, recitations, and various other numbers rendered by the school children and talent of the community. Admission was 10 cents for children and 15 cents for adults, with ladies encouraged to bring a basket supper for two for the box social.¹³³ The benefit netted a total of \$221.05 for the Red Cross, including \$21.50 in admissions and \$198 from the box social.¹³⁴ The Methodist Church, immediately to the east of the school, had completed their remodeling a few years earlier, with the original church remodeled



Figure 17. Downey School, c.1910s, with Methodist Church visible to east/left (Ericson collection).

¹³⁰ "List of School Officers," *West Branch Times*, January 10, 1918, 4

¹³¹ "Downey," *West Branch Times*, May 31, 1917, 6

¹³² "Downey," *West Branch Times*, January 31, 1918, 6

¹³³ "Downey," *West Branch Times*, February 21, 1918, 6

¹³⁴ "Downey," *West Branch Times*, February 28, 1918, 6

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Figure 18. Original Methodist Church and remodeled Methodist Church in Downey (WBT 1996: 70).

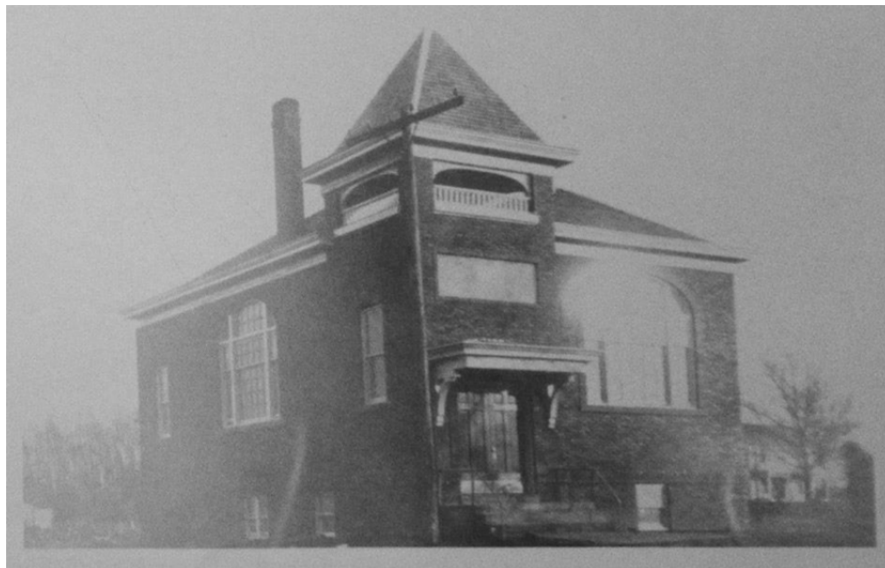


Figure 19. New Baptist Church in Downey (WBT 1996: 71).

by removing the steeple and constructing a side wing with a new tower entry.¹³⁵ Fire destroyed the Baptist Church in Downey in March 1917, and it was rebuilt as a brick church with a large auditorium, dedicated on December 16, 1917.¹³⁶ After completing coursework in Ames, Etta Gregg returned to teach at Downey School in 1918 to 1920.¹³⁷ She joined Miss Fahey of Iowa City and Miss Birk of Tipton as the teaching staff when school started in Downey on September 4.¹³⁸ Another recent graduate, Alice Gates, attended Coe

¹³⁵ Coxon, July 1981, 45

¹³⁶ "Church Dedication at Downey," *West Branch Times*, December 20, 1917, 2; Stout 1981, Vol 1: 64

¹³⁷ Letter from Etta Gregg Wilson to Kathryn Hill Meardon, June 26, 1978.

¹³⁸ "Downey," *West Branch Times*, September 5, 1918, 6

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College in Cedar Rapids in 1916 to 1918, and then she taught first to third grade at Downey School in 1919 to 1921.¹³⁹

The move towards more consolidated school districts continued in Cedar County and across the state through this period. The decline in rural pupils continued through the end of the 1910s. In Cedar County, 22 rural schools were noted with daily attendance of less than six students in 1919.¹⁴⁰ Students had shifted to attending town schools and consolidated schools that offered better education and more specific instruction. Consolidated schools were required to “give special emphasis to vocational subjects, with greatest stress upon manual training, domestic science, and agriculture,” including five acres for agricultural experimental work, drawing in more rural students. In 1920, there were 246 consolidated schools in 81 of Iowa’s 99 counties. In the first six months of 1920, an additional 83 consolidated school districts were formed.¹⁴¹ In August 1918, the West Branch Consolidated District was approved by voters, including nearly 24 square miles in the northwest portion of Springdale Township around West Branch, central Springdale Township including Centerdale, southwest Gower Township to the north, and part of Graham Township in Johnson County to the west (Figure 18).¹⁴² Springdale Twp School No. 2 (Highland or Yankee Center) in Section 9 was moved to the school grounds in West Branch.¹⁴³ In April 1920, school No. 5 in Centerdale in Springdale Township and Prairiedale School in Section 29 in Gower Township were sold by the West Branch Independent Consolidated School District of Cedar and Johnson Counties.¹⁴⁴ The Tipton Consolidated School District likewise moved six rural schools into Tipton for use in July 1920, selling the remainder.¹⁴⁵ The Clarence Consolidated School opened in northern Cedar County in fall 1920, absorbing six of nine Dayton Township schools. Two additional schools in Dayton Township then became part of the Stanwood Consolidated School.¹⁴⁶ In June 1921, the Springdale Consolidated School District was established, including the northeast and east portion of Springdale Township, southeast and east portion of Gower Township, and the southwest and west portion of Iowa Township.¹⁴⁷ Thus, Downey remained as an independent district in southwest Springdale Township. The four sections associated rural schools No. 4 (Prairie Knoll) to the north in Section 20, No. 1 (Linn Grove) to the east in Section 34, and No. 3 (North Prairie, or Snake Hollow) to the east in Section 35 also remained outside of consolidated district boundaries. In 1923, there remained 76 rural schools in Cedar County.¹⁴⁸

Population of Downey in the 1920s was estimated at approximately 150 residents. The town continued to include a grain elevator, general store, blacksmith, lumberyard, stockyards, bank, ice house, and two churches. A large school was noted in the center of town.¹⁴⁹ Baseball remained a popular sport associated with the school, with the Downey High School boys noted playing Springdale in a game in April 1921.¹⁵⁰ In May 1922, Perry Clifford sold the Downey store to Charles Jacobs. He also ran the post office and telephone service, with Jacobs then appointed to replace him as postmaster. He would continue to serve as such in

¹³⁹ Interview with Alice (Coxon) Gates in files of daughter Lorna (Coxon) Ericson.

¹⁴⁰ Stout 1981, Vol 1: 266

¹⁴¹ Deiber 2002: 10

¹⁴² “Notice of Hearing of Proposed Consolidated District,” *West Branch Times*, July 18, 1918, 4; *West Branch Times*, July 25, 1918, 4; “Schools to Consolidate,” *West Branch Times*, August 8, 1918, 1; “Extension of Boundaries of Original Consolidated School District to Be Determined at West Branch Election,” *Muscatine Journal*, June 14, 1952, 8

¹⁴³ Stout 1981, Vol 1: 275

¹⁴⁴ “Notice of Sale of School Properties,” *West Branch Times*, April 29, 1920, 7

¹⁴⁵ Stout 1981, Vol 1: 266

¹⁴⁶ J.C. Dettmann of Clarence bought two closed rural schools and moved them into town, converting them to residences. He also bought 20 other schools from Cedar County and surrounding area, either moving them into Clarence or tearing them down for lumber. (Elijah, July 1966, 3-6)

¹⁴⁷ “Notice of Special Election,” *West Branch Times*, May 26, 1921, 6; Stout 1981, Vol 1: 275

¹⁴⁸ Stout 1981, Vol 1: 266

¹⁴⁹ Stafford, July 2000, 51

¹⁵⁰ “Downey,” *West Branch Times*, April 21, 1921, 6

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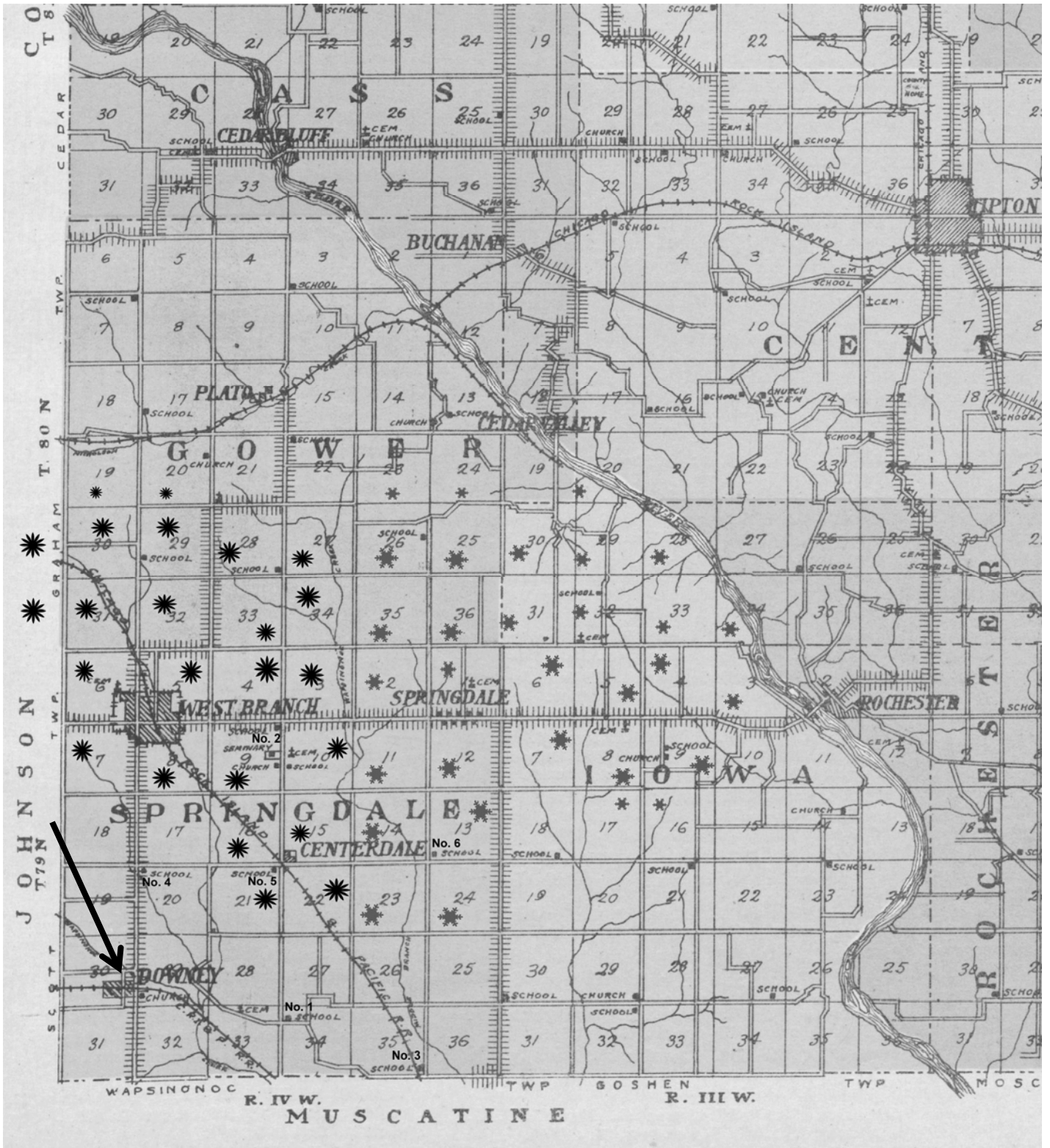


Figure 20. Southwest Cedar County in 1916, with Downey indicated (*Atlas of Cedar County, Iowa 1916: 3*).

1918 consolidated West Branch district indicated by black asterisks
1921 consolidated Springdale district indicated by gray stars

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Downey through 1956.¹⁵¹ In March 1924, the first electrical service arrived in Downey through the Iowa Railway and Light Co of Mount Vernon. Street lights were added in town, and many houses were then wired over the next few years.¹⁵² On September 24, 1925, Charles Jacobs, George Gates, and K.E. Longerbeam were noted as having wired the school house over the past week.¹⁵³ Residents around Downey demonstrated a particular interest on improved agricultural methods. The annual Downey Institute was held on February 6, 1925, noted as having "received state-wide publicity during the past year for its success in putting over a community corn yield contest."¹⁵⁴ Three corn yield test plots were established in Cedar County in 1925 under the direction of Professor Dyas of Ames, including one on the Wilson Erwin farm at Downey that was harvested on October 24.¹⁵⁵ Wilson Erwin also served as president of the Downey Independent School Board in this period, elected to the position in March 1925.¹⁵⁶

Downey School continued similar events and activities through the 1920s as held in the previous decade. In November 1924, the school gave a box social and Thanksgiving program in Downey hall, with everyone invited.¹⁵⁷ In February 1925, the Downey High School girls gave a Valentine's Day party for the upper grades in the home of Bernice Schiele, with classmates and teacher Professor Erwin Domke attending.¹⁵⁸ The school year closed in May 1925 with the annual picnic on the last day of school, held in the Gates timber. A baseball game was played with two local teams, with married men winning over single men.¹⁵⁹ William S. Secretst attended 10th grade at Downey School in 1924-1925, which was the last year that high school classes were held in Downey. He then continued his education at West Branch High School, graduating in the class of 1927.¹⁶⁰ Thus, Downey School resumed classes as a grades 1 to 8 school in September 1925. At a reception for the new school teachers at Downey Baptist Church in October 1925, the attendees decided to organize the Downey Community Club to hold social events for its members during the year.¹⁶¹ The organization worked several times with the school over the next few years. Their first event was held on October 27 at the Baptist Church, with a fine program given by the school followed by a nice luncheon and lively games.¹⁶² Their next event was held at the Methodist Church.¹⁶³ School attendance continued to be noted in local newspapers. Students with perfect attendance from September through November 1925 included five students in the intermediate room (grades 5-8) and seven students in the primary room (grades 1-4).¹⁶⁴ In June 1926, high school graduates from the Downey area included Wilma Harrington from West Liberty high school, Freda Cameron from West Branch high school, and Marion Cornwall from Iowa City high school.¹⁶⁵ Thus, Downey students had their choice among high schools in the area to attend.

With less enrollment overall at Downey School, the two-story brick building constructed in 1905 continued to easily serve the needs of the school district. In other areas of Cedar County with consolidated districts, this was not the case. Plans were made for a new school in West Branch. A new large brick high school was

¹⁵¹ Coxon, July 1981, 43-44

¹⁵² Stout 1981, Vol 1: 179

¹⁵³ "Downey News," *West Branch Times*, September 24, 1925, 6

¹⁵⁴ "Downey Institute Feb 6," *West Branch Times*, February 5, 1925, 6

¹⁵⁵ "Harvesting of Test Plots," *West Branch Times*, October 8, 1925, 5

¹⁵⁶ "Downey News," *West Branch Times*, March 19, 1925, 6

¹⁵⁷ "Downey Hall" is likely the space on the second story of the bank, usually referenced as Bank Hall. *West Branch Times*, November 20, 1924, 5

¹⁵⁸ "Downey News," *West Branch Times*, February 19, 1925, 6 ; "School Girls Hold Party," *Iowa City Press Citizen*, Feb. 20, 1925, 6

¹⁵⁹ "Downey News," *West Branch Times*, May 28, 1925, 6

¹⁶⁰ Letter from William S. Secretst to Kathryn Hill Meardon, October 20, 1978. In SHPO file on Downey School compiled and submitted by Kathryn Hill Meardon for initial evaluation of significance in 1979.

¹⁶¹ "Downey Organizes Community Club," *West Branch Times*, October 1, 1925, 4

¹⁶² "Downey News," *West Branch Times*, November 5, 1925, 6

¹⁶³ "Downey News," *West Branch Times*, December 3, 1925, 6

¹⁶⁴ Students in the intermediate department included Ella Mollback, Laurence Fingle, Kathryn Muriar, Erma Jacobs, Florence Berry; students in the primary room included Wilma Roth, Earl Grizel, Harold Mellback, Harold Paulson, Lowell Warren, William Roth, and John Ervin ("Downey News," *West Branch Times*, December 3, 1925, 6).

¹⁶⁵ "Downey News," *West Branch Times*, June 17, 1926, 6

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built in Tipton in 1925.¹⁶⁶ Thomas, McLennan, and Thomas of Des Moines designed the new school in Springdale in 1926, dedicated in May 1927.¹⁶⁷ A new school was also built in Mechanicsville, including a space large enough to host community events.¹⁶⁸ Thus, earlier schools were demolished or repurposed. Meanwhile, school opened in the 1905 school in Downey on Monday September 6, 1926. Floyd W. Sapp of Colfax arrived on Thursday to be superintendent, and Miss Bessie Thompson of Moravia began as the intermediate teacher and Miss Helen Wroe of West Branch as the primary teacher.¹⁶⁹ Students seeking high school education continued to enroll in neighboring school districts. For example, Margaret Erwin started high school in West Liberty in September 1926, staying with her sister Mrs. Alvin Anderson.¹⁷⁰ In October 1926, G.V. Cornwall was elected president of the board of the Downey Independent School District.¹⁷¹ G.V. Cornwall, J.S. Bowman, and C.R. Gates were reelected to the board in March 1927, with W.E. Holloway remaining on board and J.L. Bashor added as a new member.¹⁷² Six pupils in 8th grade at Downey were sent to West Branch to take 8th grade examinations at West Branch in May 1927 to receive their official completion certification, along with two students from Prairie Knoll school to the north in Section 20 (Springdale Twp No. 4).¹⁷³ Professor Clyde C. Bender arrived as principal of Downey School in September 1929, a position that he would retain for six years and one associated with teaching the intermediate classroom. The primary grades teacher was Miss Marie Dannerberger. Seven students from Downey were attending West Branch High School that fall.¹⁷⁴ Both Marie Dannerberger, primary room teacher, and Prof. C.C. Bender, principal and intermediate room teacher, returned to Downey in September 1930.¹⁷⁵ The school held programs at Bank Hall in November 1929 and November 1930.¹⁷⁶ Thus, the auditorium space was likely not created in Downey School by the end of the 1920s. A short Christmas program and gift exchange was held at the school in December 1930, with the rooms decorated in Christmas colors and a large decorated Christmas tree in the building.¹⁷⁷

Economic conditions across the United States worsened at the start of the 1930s, with farmers and businessman impacted by the Great Depression. The Methodist Church next to the school in Downey closed in early 1929, with members transferring to West Liberty.¹⁷⁸ The church was then demolished about a year later, leaving an open lot next to the school.¹⁷⁹ This property appears to have then been developed with playground equipment over the next few years. The local railroad station continued to complete a large business in shipping for area farmers. Grain was shipped in boxcars, chickens were shipped in coops, and cream was brought in 10 gallon containers and shipped. Coal arrived via the railroad, as well as tankage to feed hogs.¹⁸⁰ In February 1933, Guy Secrest, manager of the Downey Shipping Association, reported that they had shipped 227 cars of livestock to Chicago during past year.¹⁸¹ Downey Savings Bank continued to operate through the end of 1933. The bank then consolidated with two West Liberty banks on January 4,

¹⁶⁶ Appears to be extant at 400 E. 6th Street and surveyed as Iowa #16-00450 and #16-00455.

¹⁶⁷ "Notice to Contractors, School Building, Springdale, Iowa," *West Branch Times*, June 3, 1926, 6

¹⁶⁸ "School houses are very properly community centers – if they are large enough" ("School Building is Completed," *West Branch Times*, December 23, 1926, 6)

¹⁶⁹ "Downey News," *West Branch Times*, September 9, 1926, 6; "Downey School Starts Monday," *Iowa City Press Citizen*, September 10, 1926, 14

¹⁷⁰ "Downey News," *West Branch Times*, September 16, 1926, 6

¹⁷¹ "New Member for Downey School Board," *Iowa City Press Citizen*, October 8, 1926, 4

¹⁷² "Downey Scene of Election," *Iowa City Press Citizen*, March 18, 1927, 4

¹⁷³ Students from Downey were Ivah Delmer, Jessie Cornwall, Martin Molback, Erma Jacobs, Claude Harrington, and Fred Waters. ("W-B-H-S," *West Branch Times*, May 12, 1927, 1)

¹⁷⁴ Students attending West Branch this year included Erma Jacobs, Pearl Oyler, Martin Melback, Ella Molback, Iva Helmer, Joe Bowman, and Florence Secrest ("Downey," *West Branch Times*, September 4, 1929, 6)

¹⁷⁵ Students attending West Branch High School in fall 1930 included Jessie Cornwall, Ruth Cornwall, Erma Jacobs, Floyd Holloway, Florence Secrest, Ella Molback, Joe Bowman, and Martin Molback ("Downey," *West Branch Times*, September 4, 1930, 6)

¹⁷⁶ "Downey," *West Branch Times*, October 31, 1929, 6; "Downey," *West Branch Times*, November 13, 1930, 6

¹⁷⁷ "Downey," *West Branch Times*, December 25, 1930, 6

¹⁷⁸ "P.E.O. Chapter at West Liberty Meets Tuesday," *Muscatine Journal*, February 21, 1929, 2

¹⁷⁹ Coxon, July 1981, 45

¹⁸⁰ Stafford, July 2000, 53

¹⁸¹ "Downey," *West Branch Times*, February 9, 1933, 6

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1934.¹⁸² The store in town was sold to W.E. Holloway, D.H. Howry, and Harold Harlan in February 1934.¹⁸³ The telephone exchange continued to operate in a residence a block south of the bank by Mrs. Charles Jacobs, and Charles Jacobs remained as postmaster.¹⁸⁴ The former bank building was sold to John Bashor in 1935, and he operated a general store here until 1963, carrying groceries and hardware.¹⁸⁵ In 1936, the old lumber yard was bought by the Pioneer Hi-bred Corn Company, remodeled for sorting corn. The company contracted with local farmers to plant a few hundred acres of seed corn, with the success of the program and yields resulting in some farms increasing to several thousand acres. Some of the highest yields in the state were noted in Springdale Township in Cedar County in this period. Many women were employed at the plant, husking and removing corn from ears.¹⁸⁶ In September 1938, around 85 were noted as working at the plant on day and night shifts since Pioneer Hi-bred Corn Company started sorting and drying seed corn.¹⁸⁷

Downey School maintained their normal set of activities through the first half of the 1930s. Clyde C. Bender and Marie Dannerberger returned as teachers in fall 1931.¹⁸⁸ The newspaper continued to report students with perfect attendance, including five students in the "upper room" and six students in the "lower room" of Downey School for the first three months of school in 1931.¹⁸⁹ On December 11, 1931, the school children presented a program in the evening at school.¹⁹⁰ The program was held at school, not at Bank Hall, so it appears that the second story space may have been remodeled as the auditorium by this time, likely around 1930 or 1931. Mina (Thomas) Landes, who attended Downey School from 2nd grade starting in fall 1927 to 8th grade in spring 1934, remembers the stage in the auditorium, with programs held there as well as PTA meetings.¹⁹¹ Students who attended in the later years of the 1930s likewise recall that the stage and auditorium were utilized in that time.¹⁹² Downey School closed in May 1932 with the annual picnic on school grounds.¹⁹³ Downey School was recognized in October 1932 as the first village, town, or city in the state to have 100% enrollment in dental hygiene, with a notice of the recognition sent by the bureau of dental hygiene at Iowa City to county superintendent Jane McCormick.¹⁹⁴ The program presented by Downey school students in November 1932 was noted as held at the school house, likely in the auditorium, with admission of 10 cents per family.¹⁹⁵ The students presented a short program at the school on the day before Christmas break in December as well, with popcorn balls given to all in attendance.¹⁹⁶ In July 1933, a Homecoming Day was held at Downey School, including a parade, picnic dinner at noon, ball games, horse shoe pitching, music by the Downey Junior Band, and a professional band in the evening. Sandwiches, coffee, ice cream, and pop were served on the grounds for the event.¹⁹⁷ Mina Thomas graduated from 8th grade in May 1934, and she completed an examination in Tipton to certify completion and to obtain a certificate to enter West Branch High School in the fall.¹⁹⁸ Clyde Bender finished out six years as upper grades teacher and head of Downey

¹⁸² "Statement of Condition of Downey Savings Bank," *West Branch Times*, November 9, 1933, 6; Stout 1981, Vol 1: 97

¹⁸³ "Downey," *Muscatine Journal*, February 13, 1934, 8

¹⁸⁴ Stafford, July 2000, 52-53

¹⁸⁵ Spencer 1975

¹⁸⁶ Reier, July 1993, 23-24

¹⁸⁷ "Plant Starts Operations," *Muscatine Journal*, September 28, 1938, 8

¹⁸⁸ "Downey," *West Branch Times*, March 26, 1931, 6

¹⁸⁹ Perfect attendance for three months: Upper room: Earl Grizel, Harold Melback, William Bowman, George Cornwall, Harold Paulsen; Lower room: Betty Lou Rayne, Duane Lodge, Gale Baldrige, Leland Morrison, Bobby Lodge, and Florence Melback ("Downey," *West Branch Times*, December 3, 1931, 6)

¹⁹⁰ "Downey," *West Branch Times*, December 10, 1931, 6

¹⁹¹ Mina (Thomas) Landes, 2018. She attended first grade at Linn Grove school to the east of Downey.

¹⁹² Laura (Sexton) Slach, 2018; Carol (Byers) Slach, 2018; Benita Bender, 2018.

¹⁹³ "Downey," *West Branch Times*, May 19, 1932, 6

¹⁹⁴ "Downey School First in Dental Honor Roll," *West Branch Times*, October 6, 1932, 2

¹⁹⁵ "Downey," *West Branch Times*, November 10, 1932, 6

¹⁹⁶ "Downey," *West Branch Times*, December 29, 1932, 6

¹⁹⁷ "Downey Homecoming Next Tuesday," *West Branch Times*, July 13, 1933, 1

¹⁹⁸ Mina (Thomas) Landes, 2018

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School in May 1934, turning to life as a farmer. J. Edwin Gray of Springdale was hired to take his place in fall 1934, with Miss Alberta Hemingway re-elected as primary teacher.¹⁹⁹

While a number of schools had consolidated by the end of the 1920s, poor economic conditions in the 1930s affected both independent and consolidated districts. By 1931, there were 412 consolidated districts in Iowa.²⁰⁰ Rural schools continued to be absorbed by consolidated districts in this period, such as Springdale No. 4 (Prairie Knoll) to the north of Downey merging with West Branch Consolidated Schools.²⁰¹ By 1939, only 867 students were enrolled in the remaining 63 rural schools in Cedar County, an average of less than 14 students per building.²⁰² In February 1933, a meeting was held at West Liberty high school of 36 school board members from several towns in Cedar and Muscatine counties, including Downey, West Branch, Tipton, Stanwood, Mechanicsville, Durant, Nichols, Wellman, Williamsburg, Marengo, Atalissa, Wilton, Solon, Conesville, and West Liberty. They discussed practical issues and shared priorities, such as carefully considering areas to reduce expenses in response to reductions in school income to continue to meet the needs of the school and community.²⁰³ By the middle of the 1930s, students from rural districts comprised nearly 50% of enrollment in high schools in towns of 2,500 or less.²⁰⁴ In 1935, there were 4,679 school districts in Iowa, ranging from 80 acres to 72 square miles in size. A total of 2,812 were rural districts, either township districts or rural independent districts.²⁰⁵ A map from 1935 shows the distribution of rural, consolidated, and independent districts in Iowa (Figure 21). In Cedar County, the lack of rural schools around the consolidated districts clearly shows the impact of this trend. Four independent districts remained in Cedar County: Downey, Durant, Bennett, and Lowden.²⁰⁶ Students attending high school in West Branch or other towns had to figure out transportation to get there. For example, Mina Thomas drove herself and other students to school in West Branch starting at age 14 in 11th grade (1936-37).²⁰⁷



Figure 21. Portion of the map of rural, independent, and consolidated districts in Iowa in 1935, with the independent district of Downey indicated (Deiber 2002: 13).

large solid dot = consolidated district, large open dot = independent district, small solid dot = rural school

¹⁹⁹ "Downey Elects Teachers," *West Branch Times*, April 19, 1934, 1; "Downey," *West Branch Times*, May 24, 1934, 6

²⁰⁰ Deiber 2002: 10

²⁰¹ Stout 1981, Vol 1: 275

²⁰² Stout 1981, Vol 1: 266

²⁰³ "West Liberty News," *Muscatine Journal*, February 22, 1933, 7

²⁰⁴ Deiber 2002: 7

²⁰⁵ Beedle 2002: E:8

²⁰⁶ Deiber 2002: 11

²⁰⁷ Mina (Thomas) Landes, 2018; She graduated 8th grade in Downey in 1934 at age 12 having completed both 7th grade and 8th grade in one year (she was the only 7th grade student that year), and then graduated 7th from high school in 1938 at age 16.

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Figure 22. Class photograph of the lower grades in October 1936 (Laura Slach collection).

*back: Howard Skriver (1st), Robert Skriver (3rd), Patty Ruppenkamp (4th), Miss Stahle, Bonita Jensen (4th), Franklin Stagg (2nd), Melvin Morrison (2nd);
front: Katherine Morrison (1st), Bonita Bender (2nd), Carol Byers (2nd), Joan Ruppenkamp (2nd), Doris Jean Coxon (3rd), Evelyn Morrison (4th)*



Figure 23. Class photograph of the upper grades in October 1936 (Laura Slach collection).

back: Bob Lodge (7th), Emory Stagg (7th), Alvin Pauson (7th), Gale Baldrige (8th), Duane Thomas (8th), Mr. C.D. Welty, Leland Morrison (8th), Pete Morrison (6th), Ray Ruppenkamp (6th), Tom Morrison (5th); front: Nannette Bowman (7th), Margaret Ruppenkamp (6th), Darlene Byers (6th), Dorothy Stagg (6th), Maxine Morrison (7th), Gladys Stagg (5th), Betty Bashor (5th), Florence Molback (7th), and Evelyn Gates (8th)

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Downey School continued to operate in the 1905 brick building in Downey through the 1930s and into the 1940s, with more than sufficient space for the eight grades and associated activities. Class photographs from October 1936 depict 12 children in the lower grades room (grades 1-4) with teacher Maurita Stahle and 18 children in the upper grades room (grades 5-8) with teacher C.D. Welty. Doris Jean (Coxon) Newlin later wrote her recollections about Downey School in a family history book. She was the oldest daughter of John and Alice (Gates) Coxon, and she attended the school starting in 1st grade in September 1934. Her younger sister Lorna (Coxon) Ericson then attended from first grade in 1939 through seventh grade in 1945. Laura (Sexton) Slach and Carol (Byers) Slach both attended through the same time period, starting in second grade in September 1936. Their recollections outline and corroborate the role and utilization of Downey School through this period. Downey School had two rooms on the first story, with the east room utilized as the lower grades classroom and the west room utilized as a gymnasium. There were coat rooms on the south end of the each side of the hall, with the west one used for boys and the east one used for girls. Indoor toilets were located at the end of the coat rooms. These were chemical toilets, not connected to indoor plumbing, with a bottomless design and tank in the basement. They were an improvement over an outhouse. There was also a water cooler in the main hall that was shared for drinks. A wide stairs led to the second story, which had the upper grades room and a coat room on the east side and an auditorium on the west side. The stage for the auditorium was located at the north end, with a door from the stairs landing and moveable wood stairs utilized to access "back stage" for performances. Desks in classrooms were typically hooked together and bolted to the floor. Students were not typically allowed in the basement or attic, though they would sneak into both of these levels at times. On rainy or cold days, children would play under the stairs in the basement, a place full of cobwebs and perfect for telling of spooky stories. As one teacher was in charge of teaching four grades in the classroom, students typically only had his/her full attention while working on reading or arithmetic for their grade. Music class was held a couple times per week, and art class was held at the end of the day on Fridays. Many students walked a mile or two to school from the surrounding area, bringing their lunch to school, while town children could return home for lunch. Playground equipment was located to the east of the school, including a including two slides (large and small), two sets of swings, teeter-totters, monkey bars, and a merry-go-round. Games played at recess included varying games of tag, such as kick-the-can, darebase, red rover. Jump rope was also popular, as well as baseball played to the rear of the school. During the winter, children could sled down the front hill towards the railroad tracks. County spelling contests were held, with a school contest to send one student in each grade to the county level competition.²⁰⁸

The overall utilization of Downey School continued to be similar through the 1940s. The lower grades met in the first story classroom, and the upper grades met in the second story classroom. With the start of World War II, the school again became involved in supporting the war effort. A scrap metal drive was held in 1941, with a photograph on the rear steps of the result of their efforts (Figure 24). Lorna Ericson recalls her father John Coxon cleaning up around the farm and collecting scrap metal for the project.²⁰⁹ As an 8th grade project, Laura Sexton made a booklet about the school in 1942-43, including this photograph on the cover. At this time, the Downey School Board included: Floyd Byers, president; George Gates, treasurer; Charles Jacobs, secretary; and directors Clyde Bender, Wilbur Ruppenkamp, Jasper Oyler, Ben Wilcox, and Ralph Bayne. Teachers were Sylvia Cooper and Mary Dell-Hintz. There were 18 children in the primary room in grades one to four, and there were 15 pupils in the intermediate room in grades five to eight. The class size varied from eight pupils in first grade to one pupil in both second and sixth grades.²¹⁰ Two students had perfect

²⁰⁸ Laura (Sexton) Slach 2018; Carol (Byers) Slach 2018; Bonita Bender 2018; Doris Jean (D.J.) Coxon Newlin, *As I Remember It: Stories of Childhood*; Lorna (Coxon) Ericson, "The Downey School," 1997 manuscript in family collection.

²⁰⁹ Lorna (Coxon) Ericson, "The Downey School," 1997 manuscript in family collection.

²¹⁰ Primary room: First grade – Wayne Brenneman, Derald Hanson, Velva Klinkkammer, Janice Bayne, Marion Hickman, Ruth Handon, Marilyn Bell, Robert Bell; Second grade – Maureen Bender; Third grade – Phillip Ferguson, Gary Butler, James Skriver, Rita Ruppenkamp; Fourth grade – Catherine Ferguson, Patricia Bayne, Shirley Woltman, Lorna Coxon, Mary Ruppenkamp; Intermediate room: Fifth grade – Ronald Wilcox, Robert Lucassen, Paul Sexton, Dale Brenneman, Keith Skriver, Ruth Ruppenkamp, Frank Sexton, Joe Bayne; Sixth grade – Virginia Klinkkammer; Seventh grade – Lawrence Sexton, Thomas Sexton, Howard Skriver; Eighth grade – Joan Ruppenkamp, Laura Sexton, Bonita Bender (Laura Slach collection)

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Figure 24. Photograph of children and metal collected in 1941 for scrap metal drive (Laura Slach collection).



Figure 25. Photograph of all the students at Downey School in 1941-42 (Laura Slach collection).

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Figure 26. Certificate of admission to high school in May 1943 (Laura Slach collection).

attendance, and several were listed on the dental honor roll. Social activities for the year included a watermelon feast, school program, Halloween party, Thanksgiving potluck dinner, Christmas party, Bayne's farewell, Valentine party, Easter egg hunt, school picnic, and birthday treats. The students also participated in a scrap iron drive.²¹¹ Some classmates went to West Branch for 8th grade, including Carol Byers in 1942-43 and Lorna Coxon in 1945-46, with additional options such as band available for students there.²¹² Students that graduated from 8th grade at Downey School received a Certificate of Promotion for completing elementary school from Iowa Public Schools and a Certificate of Admission to High School, given by county superintendent Jane McCormick.²¹³ In May 1944, a total of 135 "rural" 8th grade students in Cedar County were taking their examinations for graduation.²¹⁴ Downey Independent School opened again in early September 1944, with Sylvia Cooper and Mary Hintz returning as teachers.²¹⁵ Those students attending high school continue to arrange their own transportation into West Branch, with Laura Sexton remembering riding across the front seat of their car with her two brothers and a neighbor for the daily drive to town.²¹⁶

With the conclusion of World War II, economic conditions improved across the county. Downey continued to serve the agricultural region around the town as a shipping point for various products. When fire struck the elevator in Downey in September 1946, fire departments from West Branch and West Liberty arrived to fight the blaze.²¹⁷ While the automobile would become a more dominant force in American life, freight continued to

²¹¹ Laura (Sexton) Slach collection
²¹² Carol (Byers) Slach 2018; Lorna (Coxon) Ericson, "The Downey School," 1997 manuscript in family collection.
²¹³ Laura (Sexton) Slach collection
²¹⁴ "Rural" at this point appears to have included non-consolidated independent schools. Stout 1981, Vol 1: 266-267
²¹⁵ "Rural Schools in Cedar County Nearly All Open," *Muscatine Journal*, September 9, 1944, 7
²¹⁶ Laura (Sexton) Slach 2018.
²¹⁷ Stout 1981, Vol 1: 179

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be shipped via railroad. In November 1948, new steel was laid on the double track of the Rock Island railroad through Downey by approximately 100 men.²¹⁸ In this period, Downey had a grocery store, grain elevator, farm supply store, and seed-corn processing plant, as well as maintaining their post office.²¹⁹ Aurilee Geertz taught in the upper grades classroom at Downey School in 1945-1946, and she recalls that teachers were in short supply at the end of the war. She graduated from West Liberty High School with a Normal Training Certificate, which allowed her to teach in country schools. Clyde Bender was the director on the school board that hired her, and she recalls being paid \$125 per month for teaching at Downey, which was more than at a rural one-room school.²²⁰ New teachers arrived for Downey School in September 1946, Mrs. George Thompson and Miss Elsie Mae Potter.²²¹ Overall, there were 32 men and 141 women teaching in Cedar schools in 1946, with an average salary of \$1,788.²²² A shortage of rural teachers was noted in May 1947, with 18-year-olds encouraged to take a summer course and teach in the fall in Cedar County. The number of country schools was down to 31 by August 1947, with three additional schools closing due to lack of teachers in September. By August 1949, only 23 country schools operated in Cedar County.²²³

Downey School continued to operate through the end of the 1940s and into the 1950s. With differences among the school board, Clyde C. Bender, H.J. Meek, and Leonard King resigned in April 1947, leaving only Wilbur Rubbenkamp and Fred Watters on the board.²²⁴ The normal school board election in March 1948 resulted in Clyde Bender, Jasper Oylar, Leonard King, Fred Waters, and Wilber Ruppenkamp serving as directors for the school board. A total of 37 votes were cast at the election, providing a glimpse of the size of the district.²²⁵ William Secrest was elected to the board in March 1949, and Lewis Maske was elected in March 1950.²²⁶ Downey School maintained their typical activities from the past decade through this period. The school year closed in May 1947 with the annual picnic, hosted this year in an Iowa City park.²²⁷ Downey retained one teacher, with Elsie Mae Potter returning to teach at Downey School in September 1947 and September 1948.²²⁸ The Christmas program was held in December 1948 as normal, with Miss Potter and mothers serving refreshments.²²⁹ Sharon Thomas (Harrington) attended Downey School from first grade in 1949-50 through third grade in 1951-52, and she recalls the school continuing to be laid out as in the previous decade. The lower level classroom was on the east side of the first story, and the gymnasium was on the west side. The girls' coat room and toilet was on the east side, and the boys' coat room and toilet were on the west side. The chemical/pit toilets continued to be used, as the school did not have running water. There was a water cooler with a spigot maintained in the hall in this period, with pointed paper cups. Mrs. Helmers taught the lower grades, and Mrs. Alberta Peterson taught the upper grades. The upper grades (5-8) classroom was on the east side of the second story, with the auditorium with a stage on the west side. Playground equipment remained on the east side of the school, one large apparatus including a set of swings and slide. During warm months, students played baseball on the diamond to the rear of the school, and, in winter months, student would sled down the hill in front of the school to the railroad tracks.²³⁰

School consolidation continued to be a topic of discussion in Cedar County in the early 1950s. At this time, there were several outlying "tuition districts" that were being served by West Branch High School, and a proposal was made in June 1952 to consolidate these areas into West Branch Consolidated Schools. Each

²¹⁸ "Crew Lays New Steel on Double Tracks in Downey," *Iowa City Press Citizen*, November 10, 1948, 15)

²¹⁹ WBHF 2001: 127

²²⁰ Aurilee Geertz 2018

²²¹ "School at Downey Opens on Monday; Teachers are Named," *Iowa City Press Citizen*, September 5, 1946, 9

²²² Stout 1981, Vol 1: 266

²²³ Stout 1981, Vol 1: 267

²²⁴ "Call Election to Name Directors to Downey Board," *Muscatine Journal*, April 2, 1947, 8

²²⁵ "Directors, Treasurers for School Districts in Area Selected at Polls," *Muscatine Journal*, March 9, 1948, 6

²²⁶ "Hold School Elections in Towns Nearby," *Iowa City Press Citizen*, March 14, 1950, 17

²²⁷ "Annual Picnic of Downey School is Held in Park Here," *Iowa City Press Citizen*, May 28, 1947, 2

²²⁸ "School Picnic Is Held at Downey," *Iowa City Press Citizen*, May 19, 1948, 7

²²⁹ "Annual Christmas Party is Given by Downey Sewing Club," *Iowa City Press Citizen*, December 22, 1948, 21

²³⁰ Sharon (Thomas) Harrington, 2018.

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district paid a certain amount per pupil for their students to attend the high school, and consolidation was a way to reduce this expense for districts. There were 11 "tuition districts" to the west and south of West Branch in Cedar and Johnson counties, with a tax levy of 18.9 mil proposed for new, larger consolidated school district. At the time, Downey School was noted as serving grades 1 to 8, with two teachers and about 20 students. The proposal outlined keeping the grade school at Downey open under the same program as in former years.²³¹ The proposal passed with by 341 to 157, with a vote of 186 to 10 in the current district boundary and a vote of 155 to 147 in the tuition districts. The new consolidated district included 34 square miles, and they hoped to be able to build a modern four or five room, one story school with the increased tax base. However, if Springdale decided to consolidate with West Branch, then no new building would be required.²³²



Figure 27. Downey School students in September 1953 (Meder collection).

School continued to be held at Downey School for two more years after this measure passed. In November 1952, 28 pupils of the Downey grade school visited Muscatine industries on their semiannual educational tour with teachers Mrs. Alberta Petersen and Miss Cordelia Meek. Their stops included the Automatic Button Co, Kautz Baking Co, and *The Muscatine Journal*, with lunch at Weed Park.²³³ School opened on Monday August 31, 1953, with Mrs. Alberta Peterson of West Branch and Mrs. Mary Helmers of West Liberty as teachers for the year.²³⁴ Mary Ann Thomas attended Downey School for first and second grade during these last two years of its operation, with a school photo taken in September 1953 showing 29 students at Downey School for its last year serving as an educational facility (Figure 27).²³⁵ They continued to hold their regular programs

²³¹ "Extension of Boundaries of Original Consolidated School District to Be Determined at West Branch Election," *Muscatine Journal*, June 14, 1952, 8

²³² "Consolidation Wins in Vote at West Branch," *Muscatine Journal*, June 17, 1952, 2

²³³ "28 Pupils from Downey School Journal Guests," *Muscatine Journal*, November 1952, 14

²³⁴ "Downey," *Muscatine Journal*, September 2, 1953, 8

²³⁵ Mary Ann (Thomas) Meder, 2018

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and events through this year.²³⁶ The upper grades class and their teacher, Mrs. Alberta Peterson, visited the Royster museum in Muscatine in March 1954, a private collection of natural history artifacts.²³⁷ The annual picnic to close out the school year was held on Wednesday June 2, the last picnic to be held in Downey.²³⁸ No particular articles have been located to date specifically on the closure of Downey School in 1954. Springdale No. 1 (Linn Grove) school to the east of Downey closed in 1954 as well, with students sent either to West Branch or West Liberty.²³⁹ When classes resumed in fall 1954, the Downey students were bused to West Branch. In fact, the school bus with 40 pupils from the Downey area, driven by Charles Geertz (age 19), was struck by a gravel truck on the way to school in early September 1954, about two miles south of West Branch. A school bus was sent from West Branch to bring the students to school, where a physician examined them for injuries.²⁴⁰ Mary Ann Thomas likewise recalls Downey School closing in 1954 and then being sent by bus to school in West Branch for third grade and subsequent years. She, along with many other Downey students, then completed their education at West Branch schools, which continue to serve the Downey area today.

Further moves towards consolidation affected schools across Iowa over the next decade. While the average size of a district was 16 square miles in 1951-52, it grew to 97 square miles by 1963-64. The number of school districts fell from 4,417 in 1954 to 1,575 in 1960. The consolidation led to needs for increased space in school buildings, as well as a move towards modern schools. Over 90% of the school buildings constructed in Iowa in the 1950s were one story in height, designed to fit the terrain and promoted as safer in case of a fire.²⁴¹ The result was the demolition of schools from the early 20th century across Iowa and Cedar County. In May 1955, West Branch Community School District was again enlarged, with the annexation of additional land in Cedar and Johnson counties.²⁴² A new school was then built in West Branch in 1955, currently serving as an elementary and middle school. The high school was destroyed by fire in the late 1970s, with the new high school then opening in 1981. In 1957, five new schools were built in Cedar County. A new school was built in Clarence in northern Cedar County, which continues to serve as North Cedar middle/high school.²⁴³ A new school was also built in Lowden to the east in northeast Cedar County, which is currently one of North Cedar elementary schools.²⁴⁴ In the southeast corner of the county, a new school was built in Tipton, currently the elementary/middle school.²⁴⁵ The county seat, Tipton built a new building on 7th Street, which continues to be used as an elementary/middle school.²⁴⁶ A new school was also built on the private Scattergood School campus in 1957. A few years later, a new school was built in Stanwood in northern Cedar County in 1963, now the North Cedar High School.²⁴⁷ In January 1965, the Iowa General Assembly passed a law that required all areas of the state to be included in a high school district by July 1, 1966, either by choice or forced consolidation. While most schools had already consolidated, there were five “non high school” districts in Cedar County in March 1966 that then took measures to consolidate, leaving none in place by April 1966.²⁴⁸ With no need for a new school in Downey, the building was neither demolished nor replaced, leaving Downey School as a landmark in town and a rare example in Cedar County of an early 20th century town school.

²³⁶ Mary Ann (Thomas) Meder, 2018

²³⁷ “Downey Youth Group at Meet at Cedar Rapids,” *Muscatine Journal*, March 2, 1954, 7

²³⁸ “Downey,” *Muscatine Journal*, June 2, 1954, 13

²³⁹ Stout 1981, Vol 1: 275

²⁴⁰ “School Bus With 40 Passengers is Hit by Truck,” *Muscatine Journal*, September 8, 1954, 1

²⁴¹ Beedle 2002: E:8, E:25

²⁴² “School Merger Elections Tuesday in Two Areas,” *Iowa City Press Citizen*, May 9, 1955, 9

²⁴³ Clarence Junior-Senior High School – Iowa #16-00446 – 400 or 402 Ball St

²⁴⁴ North Cedar - Lowden Elementary School – Iowa #16-00447 - 703 Park Ave, near 8th Ave

²⁴⁵ Durant Community School District – Middle School Gymnasium – 16-00471 – 408 7th St

²⁴⁶ Tipton Elementary/Middle School - 725 W. 7th St; the 1925 Tipton High School (or Consolidated school) also remains extant at 400

E. 6th St – Iowa #16-00450 / 16-00455

²⁴⁷ North Cedar High School – Iowa #16-00449 – 102 E. North St, Stanwood

²⁴⁸ Elijah, July 1966, 2; Stout 1981, Vol 1: 267

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Subsequent history of Downey School, 1955-2018

With the end of its place within the educational history of Cedar County, the community of Downey was left with its most substantial building in town vacant. Downey School was used as the site for a handful of community events in 1954 to 1955, such as a farewell party for Mr. and Mrs. R.T. Craig.²⁴⁹ The field behind the school was used for baseball games by the Baptist Church.²⁵⁰ On June 18, 1955, the West Branch Community School District of West Branch transferred Downey School to The Wapsie Valley Grange, Number 2208, for \$100 (Lot 3-4-5-6-7 in Block 14 in Town of Downey). The Wapsie Valley Grange had previously used the auditorium space on the second story for some meetings and events, and residents of Downey supported their acquisition of the building.²⁵¹ Farmers were primarily members of granges, organized to promote agricultural issues, educate local farmers, and provide social activity for rural residents. While grange organizations had operated in the late 19th century and early 20th century in parts of Muscatine and Cedar County, including Downey, this particular organization dated to 1939. The *Muscatine Journal* reported that a new grange known as the Wapsie Valley Grange had been organized in Downey and the first meeting was held on Tuesday January 17, 1939.²⁵² C.C. Jacobs was elected master of the Wapsie Valley Grange in November 1939, with George Gates as overseer, Walter Coxon as secretary, Walter Secrest as treasurer, W.E. Holloway as gate-keeper, Norman Rogers as lecturer, Earl Wiggins as steward, Ben Wilcox as assistant steward, and Phyllis Wiggins as assistant steward.²⁵³ Thus, members included residents of both Downey and the surrounding area. In November 1940, the *Muscatine Journal* reported that the Wapsie Valley Grange met in regular session on Tuesday evening at the Downey school house, electing officers for the coming year.²⁵⁴

The Wapsie Valley Grange was affiliated with the broader regional "Pomona Grange" of Muscatine County. Local granges were associated with a Pomona grange, which provided leadership at a regional level for the state organization. The Pomona Grange of Muscatine County met at various local grange halls for monthly meetings, and it included local granges in Muscatine County, Cedar County, and Scott County. In September 1948, the Wapsie Valley Grange hosted the Pomona Grange meeting.²⁵⁵ In 1950, the Wapsie Valley Grange had 59 members, 31 males and 28 females.²⁵⁶ In November 1952, state officers attended the Pomona Grange meeting at the Wapsie Valley Grange room, with 41 members in attendance.²⁵⁷ In October 1954, the Wapsie Valley Grange of Downey won a community service award from the state Grange at their annual convention.²⁵⁸ The Wapsie Valley Grange held a booster night in October at the Grange hall in Downey, and they held their annual Christmas program and party in December.²⁵⁹ Thus, it appears that they were using the school building for their meetings and events prior to officially purchasing the property in June 1955. After they acquired the school, newspapers continue to refer to events held in the "grange hall" in Downey, including the Juvenile Grange sponsoring a Western style dance and a fish fry held for the public in March 1956.²⁶⁰ In September 1956, the Wapsie Valley Grange of Downey received \$200 for outstanding community

²⁴⁹ "Craigs Honored On Departing for Cedar Rapids," *Muscatine Journal*, July 21, 1954, 4

²⁵⁰ Mary Ann (Thomas) Meder, 2018

²⁵¹ Letter from William S. Secrest to Kathryn Hill Meardon, October 20, 1978. In SHPO file on Downey School compiled and submitted by Kathryn Hill Meardon for initial evaluation of significance in 1979.

²⁵² "Downey," *Muscatine Journal*, January 18, 1939, 11

²⁵³ "Wapsie Valley Grange Elects Jacobs Master," *Muscatine Journal*, November 17, 1939, 17

²⁵⁴ Wapsie Valley Grange elected officers for coming year: W.E. Holloway, master; Ben Wilcox, overseer; Earl Wiggins, steward; Leo Tesar, Jr., assistant steward; Edith Wiggins, chaplin; Walter Secrest, treasurer; Walter Coxon, secretary; Charles Jacobs, gate keeper; Mrs. W.E. Holloway, Ceres; Mrs. B.F. Wilcox, Pomona; Miss Maurita Stahle, Flora; Patricia Wiggins, assistant steward ("Officers Names by Wapsie Valley Grange," *Muscatine Journal*, November 14, 1940, 14)

²⁵⁵ "Pomona Grange Advances Plans for State Meet," *Muscatine Journal*, September 21, 1948, 12

²⁵⁶ Quarterly report for Wapsie Valley Grange, March 31, 1950. Rex collection.

²⁵⁷ "Officers Attend Grange Meeting," *Muscatine Journal*, November 3, 1952, 11

²⁵⁸ "Three Granges of Area Claim Service Awards," *Muscatine Journal*, October 4, 1954, 8

²⁵⁹ "Wapsie Valley Grange to Note Booster Night," *Muscatine Journal*, October 13, 1954, 12; "Program, Party Feature Meets of Grange Groups," *Muscatine Journal*, December 29, 1954, 3

²⁶⁰ "Juvenile Grange Will Hold Dance," *Muscatine Journal*, February 28, 1956, 5; "Wapsie Valley Grange Arranges for Fish Fry," *Muscatine Journal*, March 7, 1956, 8

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service from the Iowa Grange state convention. They were cited by the judges for their contribution of the Wapsie Valley Grange hall as a community center, the former Downey school. It was noted as a four-room brick structure in the center of town surrounded by a large playground area.²⁶¹ The Pomona Grange of Muscatine County re-elected Harry Peterson of Downey as master in November 1956. At this time, there were eight local granges reporting: Bloomington Grange (Muscatine area), Cedar Grange (Cranston), Hebron Grange (Tipton), Pike Grange (Nichols), South Prairie Grange (West Liberty), Sweetland Grange (Sweetland), Wapsie Valley Grange (Downey), and Ebenezer Grange (Fairfield).²⁶² Penn Ave Grange also operated in Atalissa.²⁶³ The former Downey School, now Wapsie Valley Grange Hall, was utilized for other community events in this period, such as the double anniversary party of anniversaries of Mr. and Mrs. J.M. Zenisk and Mr. and Mrs. James Ham.²⁶⁴ With this role, the Wapsie Valley Grange took second place in the annual community service contest at Iowa State Grange meeting in September 1957, with South Prairie Grange awarded fifth place.²⁶⁵

Other changes impacted Downey in this period. In 1955, the Rock Island railroad discontinued passenger train service through Cedar County.²⁶⁶ In April 1956, Charles C. Jacobs retired as postmaster after 34 years. The Jacobs home had been serving as post office and telephone exchange for several years, with mail delivered four times per week. Laura Jacobs took over as acting postmistress for a year. When she resigned on April 16, 1957, the post office in Downey closed. Mail was then delivered on West Liberty and West Branch rural routes.²⁶⁷ Thus, the post office in Downey operated for nearly 100 years to the day. The local telephone exchange was also ended.²⁶⁸ Roads continued to be improved as transportation corridors in this period. On August 24, 1962, Interstate 80 opened from Davenport to Highway 1 on the east side of Iowa City. The West Branch interchange was located slightly south of town and about three miles north of Downey, intersecting with the road to Downey.²⁶⁹

The Wapsie Valley Grange continued to meet at the former Downey School through the 1960s and into the 1970s. Lecturers from local granges attended the Corn State Lecturer's conference held in Newton in February 1958.²⁷⁰ The regular meeting of the Muscatine County Pomona Grange continued to rotate among the local grange halls, hosted by the Wapsie Valley Grange at Downey in December 1960. A program was presented by the Ebenezer Juvenile Grange from near Fairfield.²⁷¹ Various needlework and baking contests were held at the local level for grange members in the 1960s, with winners advancing to the state level. The state judging contest was held at the Wapsie Valley Grange hall on September 18, 1961.²⁷² The Pomona Grange of Muscatine County included 10 subordinate granges in December 1961, with Wapsie Valley Grange given a plaque for recognition in placing fifth in the state community service program.²⁷³ A potluck supper was held in conjunction with the Pomona Grange meeting at Wapsie Valley Grange hall in Downey in March 1963, with veterinarian Dr. John Carey speaking on work to eliminate hog cholera.²⁷⁴ In October 1964, Walter Coxon of the Wapsie Valley Grange of Downey was re-elected as master of the Muscatine County Pomona

²⁶¹ "Contest Winners Receive Awards As Sessions of Iowa State Grange Continue at Muscatine Elks Club," *Muscatine Journal*, September 27, 1956, 8

²⁶² "Harry Peterson Renamed Pomona Grange Master," *Muscatine Journal*, November 27, 1956, 5

²⁶³ "Grange Conduct School at Meet," *Muscatine Journal*, March 11, 1957, 3

²⁶⁴ "Two Couples Note Anniversaries at Party at Downey," *Muscatine Journal*, June 10, 1957, 9

²⁶⁵ "Granges of Area Merit Honors at State Convention," *Muscatine Journal*, September 26, 1957, 5

²⁶⁶ Anderson, July 1965, 34

²⁶⁷ Stout 1981, Vol 1: 179-180

²⁶⁸ Coxon, July 1981, 47

²⁶⁹ WBHF 2001: 130

²⁷⁰ Lecturers include Mrs. Harry Peterson, past state lecturer of Wapsie Valley Grange. Others in attendance from Cedar Grange, Pike Grange, Sweetland Grange, South Prairie Grange, Penn Ave Grange, Hebron Grange, and Bloomington Grange ("Nine Lecturers Attend Conference," *Muscatine Journal*, February 6, 1958, 8)

²⁷¹ "Pomona Grange Meeting Slated Monday Night," *Muscatine Journal*, December 22, 1960, 14

²⁷² "Pomona Grange Contest Winners are Announced," *Muscatine Journal*, September 15, 1961, 8

²⁷³ "Conference for Officers Held at Cedar Grange Hall Dec. 13," *Muscatine Journal*, December 15, 1961, 8)

²⁷⁴ "Pomona Grange Meeting Held at Downey," *Muscatine Journal*, March 27, 1963, 3

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Figure 28. Aerial photograph of Downey in 1969, with the school indicated (Iowa Geographical Map Server).

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Grange.²⁷⁵ The Pomona Grange met in September 1967 at the Wapsie Valley Grange Hall. The needlework contest has resulted in 38 entries, with seven advanced to the state level and four on to the National Grange Needlework contest.²⁷⁶ By September 1969, Wapsie Valley Grange was noted as the last grange left in Cedar County, affiliated with the Muscatine County Pomona Grange.²⁷⁷ Membership, however, was declining across the subordinate granges. A total of 23 members attended the meeting of Pomona Grange held in October 1970 at the Wapsie Valley Grange hall, with reports from the Bloomington Grange, Penn Ave Grange, Pike Grange, Sweetland Grange, and Wapsie Valley Grange.²⁷⁸ The 103rd state convention of the Iowa Grange was held in September 1972. Local granges with members serving in a state office or on a state committee included the Wapsie Valley Grange (Downey), Bloomington Grange (Muscatine area), Cedar Grange (Cranston), Penn Ave Grange (Atalissa), Pike Grange (Nichols), South Prairie Grange (West Liberty), and Sweetland Grange (Sweetland). Walter Dixon of the Wapsie Valley Grange was one of the local delegates to the session, and Margaret Coxon of Wapsie Valley Grange served on the resolutions committee.²⁷⁹ With declining membership, the Wapsie Valley Grange discontinued regular meetings around 1973. They retained ownership of the former Downey School into the 2010s.

Reunions for former Downey School students were held in the late 1960s and 1970s, though not hosted at the former school building. The school reunion of former students at Downey School from the years of 1912 to 1917 was held in the 4H building at West Liberty Fairgrounds in August 1969, organized by Mrs. Iren Seaton Perkins, Mrs. Margaret Elliott Peterson, Mrs. Zae Lodge Asquith, and Mrs. Florence Mackey Deming.²⁸⁰ The 5th annual Downey School reunion and picnic was held on Sunday July 22 at the Ivan N. Gates farm home, two miles east of Downey. It was open to all former pupils, teachers, and others interested in the Downey School. A picnic lunch was held at noon. The committee included Ivan N. Gates, West Liberty; Freda Cameron Berry, Iowa City; Leland Waters, West Branch, and Lawrence E. Roth, Atalissa.²⁸¹

Interest in protecting the historic resources of Downey increased in the 1970s as well. In 1974, the former Downey Savings Bank was bought by Judith Spencer, who remodeled it into pottery shop to produce pottery relating to the 1600-1800 period.²⁸² She worked to nominate the building to the National Register of Historic Places in 1975 to recognize its significant role in the history of Downey as a bank and then store. It was listed in 1976 as a well preserved example of an early 20th century bank building and the only remaining historic commercial building in Downey.²⁸³ Kathryn Hill Meardon compiled documentation in 1978 on the Downey School for review by the State Historic Preservation Office in 1979, speaking with former students and local residents. Downey School reunions continued to be held annually, with good attendance. The school was noted as typical of the 1905 era, with most other town schools from this period demolished. Photographs of the building from 1978 show the cupola on the roof removed and windows boarded over.²⁸⁴ No further action was taken to nominate Downey School to the National Register of Historic Places at this time. By 1980, Downey was noted as a small bedroom community with many residents working in Iowa City or Muscatine. The Baptist Church continued to hold services. Businesses in town included the Pioneer Seed Corn Plant (manager by Jim Walker), Iowa Valley Milling (Harold Spencer, president), the fertilizer plant (managed by Bill

²⁷⁵ "Pomona Grange Elects Officers," *Muscatine Journal*, October 2, 1964, 11

²⁷⁶ Four entries from Muscatine County advanced to National Grange Needlework contest: doily by Mrs. Elmer Windman of Bloomington Grange, sweater by Mrs. Roth of Penn Avenue Grange, pillowcases by Patsy Marine of Wapsie Valley Grange, and dresser scarf by Margaret Coxon of Wapsie Valley Grange ("Muscatine Pomona Grange Re-elects Grim as Master," *Muscatine Journal*, September 22, 1967, 3)

²⁷⁷ Stout 1981, Vol 1: 308

²⁷⁸ "Arthur Black installed master of Pomona grange," *Muscatine Journal*, October 29, 1970, 7

²⁷⁹ "Area residents taking part in annual meeting of grange," *Muscatine Journal*, September 27, 1972, 3

²⁸⁰ "Downey School Reunion Held at West Liberty," *Iowa City Press Citizen*, August 6, 1969, 6

²⁸¹ "Downey School Reunion Sunday at Gates Farm," *Iowa City Press Citizen*, July 20, 1972, 27

²⁸² Stout 1981, Vol 1: 180

²⁸³ Spencer 1975

²⁸⁴ SHPO file on Downey School compiled and submitted by Kathryn Hill Meardon for initial evaluation of significance in 1979.

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Figure 29. Downey School in 1978, looking southwest (SHPO files).



Figure 30. Downey School in 1978, looking southeast (SHPO files).

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Name of Property

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Figure 31. Downey School in 1978, looking south (SHPO files).

Burton), and the pottery shop of Judith Spencer. Two businesses were noted in town in spring 1981: Pioneer Hi-Bred Seed Co and Downey Savings Bank Pottery.²⁸⁵

Over the last 40 years, Downey School has continued to sit as a prominent, though not well-maintained, landmark on the hill in the small community of Downey. Various members of the Wapsie Valley Grange died through the end of the 20th century, eliminating further maintenance on the building. The last older members of the grange died in the 2010s, leaving the question of what to do with the building. On August 16, 2017, Dwight Baldwin, representing the Wapsie Valley Grange, transferred the building to the Iowa State Grange. They then handled the sale of the building to Tim and Madonna Rex on September 22, 2017 for \$14,000. Tim and Madonna Rex live in Downey, and they are working on a plan to rehabilitate the building and utilize it as a bed and breakfast / event center.

²⁸⁵ Stout 1981, Vol 1: 180; Coxon, July 1981, 47

Downey School

Name of Property

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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Name of Property

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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 # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): Iowa Site #16-00046

Downey School
Name of Property

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property

less than one acre

(Do not include previously listed resource acreage; enter "Less than one" if the acreage is .99 or less)

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS8: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1	<u>41.614998</u> Latitude	<u>-91.349198</u> Longitude	3	_____ Latitude	_____ Longitude
2	_____ Latitude	_____ Longitude	4	_____ Latitude	_____ Longitude

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary begins at the southwest corner of Broadway and Center streets in Downey, at the northwest corner of Lot 5 in Block 14. The boundary extends east 180 feet, south 140 feet, west 60 feet, south 160 feet, west 120 feet, and north 300 feet to the point of beginning. It encompasses Lots 3-4-5-6-7 in Block 14 in the town of Downey (see Figure 3, page 6).

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

Downey School historically has been located on Lots 4-5-6-7 since the original school was built in this location in the 1860s, with the Methodist Protestant Church originally to the east on Lot 3. After the church was demolished around 1930, this lot became associated with the school property. The current property, Lots 3-4-5-6-7, was sold by the school district in 1955 to the Wapsie Valley Grange. The same parcel was then sold in 2017 to the current owners and remains as the existing parcel for Downey School.

Downey School
Name of Property

Cedar County, Iowa
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Rebecca Lawin McCarley date April 17, 2019
organization SPARK Consulting telephone 319-200-9767
street & number 1630 Park Ave SE email sparkconsulting@octaspark.com
city or town Cedar Rapids state IA zip code 52403

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **GIS Location Map (Google Earth or BING)**
- **Local Location Map**
- **Site Plan**
- **Floor Plans (As Applicable)**
- **Photo Location Map** (Key all photographs to this map and insert immediately after the photo log and before the list of figures).

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.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Downey School
Name of Property

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Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs under separate cover. The size of each image must be 3000x2000 pixels, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and does not need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

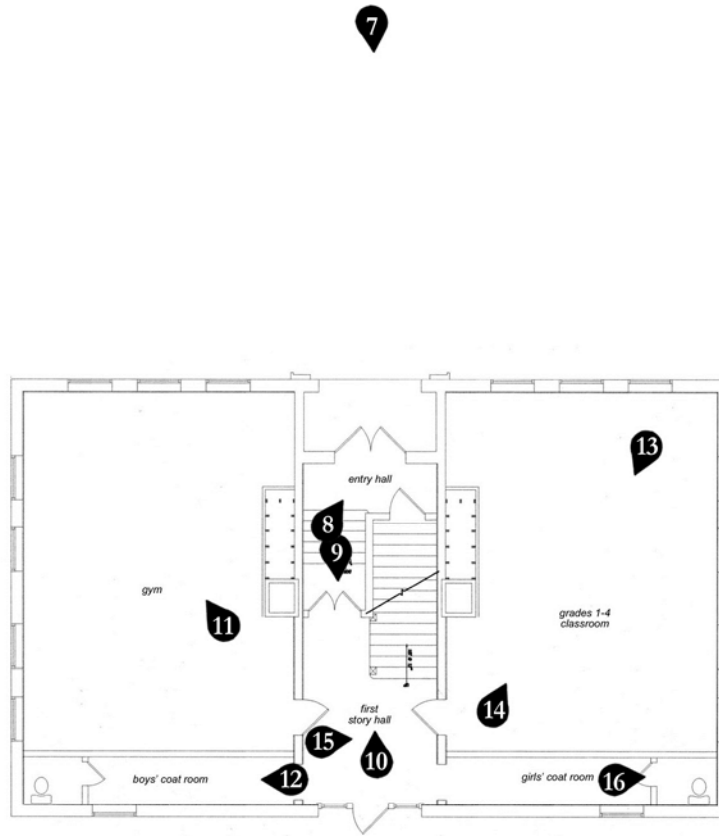
Name of Property: Downey School
City or Vicinity: Downey
County: Cedar County **State:** Iowa
Photographer: Rebecca Lawin McCarley
Date Photographed: June 6, 2018

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1. Setting of Downey School, camera facing southwest
2. Downey School, camera facing southwest
3. North elevation, camera facing south
4. Detail of entry, camera facing southeast
5. West elevation, camera facing east
6. East elevation, camera facing west
7. South elevation, camera facing north
8. Main entry, camera facing northeast
9. Entry into first story hall, camera facing south
10. Main stairs in first story hall, camera facing north
11. West room on first story, camera facing northwest
12. West coat room on first story, camera facing west
13. East room on first story, camera facing southwest
14. East room on first story, camera facing northeast
15. Hall doors into east room and east coat room, camera facing east
16. Toilet at end of east coat room, camera facing east
17. Landing on stairs to second story, camera facing northwest
18. Second story hall, camera facing southeast
19. West room on second story, camera facing northwest
20. East room on second story, camera facing northwest
21. East room on second story, camera facing northeast
22. Coat room on second story, camera facing east
23. Stairs to basement, camera facing northwest
24. West room in basement, camera facing north
25. East room in basement, camera facing north
26. Attic, camera facing southwest

Downey School
Name of Property

Cedar County, Iowa
County and State



EXISTING MAIN LEVEL FLOOR PLAN
1/16" = 1'

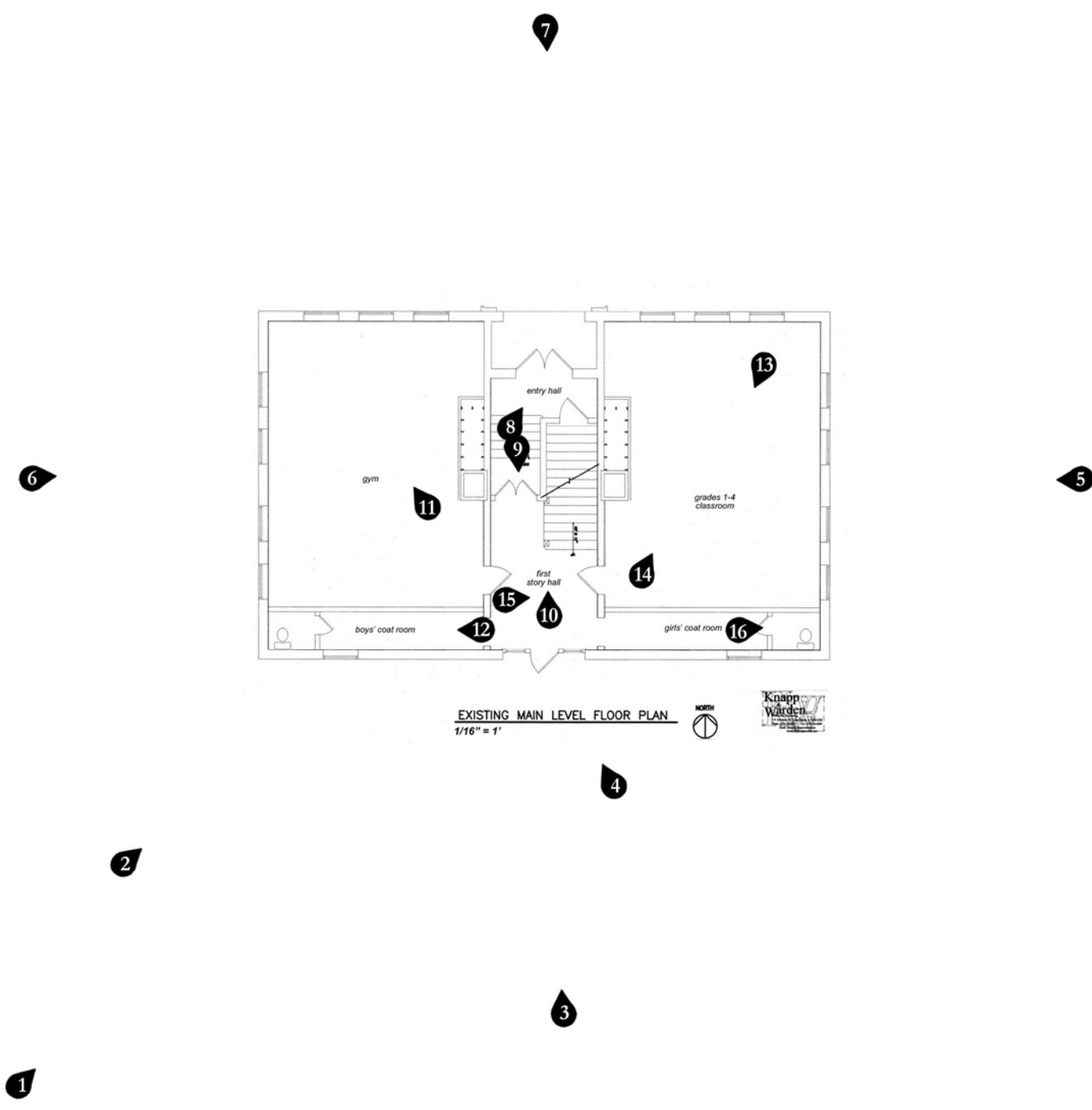
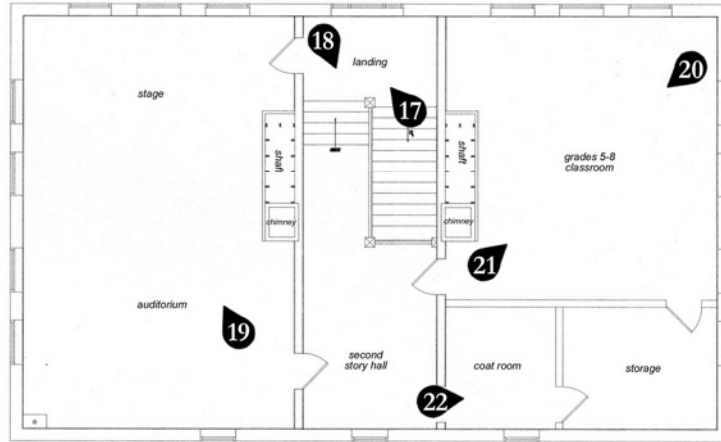


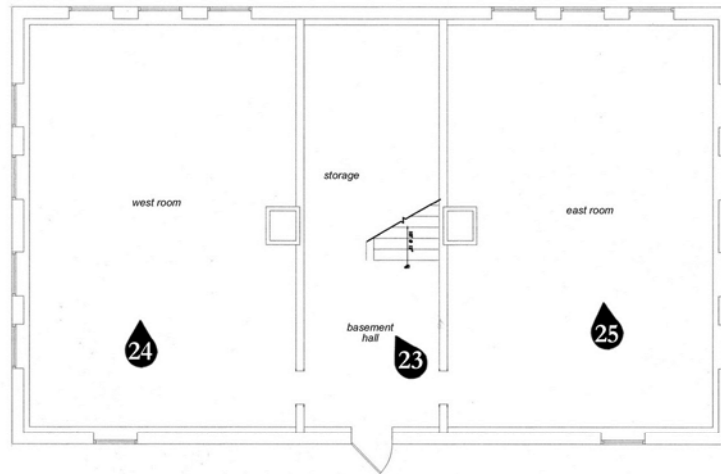
Photo key 1
Downey School
Downey, Iowa
R.L. McCarley
July 2018

Downey School
Name of Property

Cedar County, Iowa
County and State



EXISTING UPPER LEVEL FLOOR PLAN
1/16" = 1'



EXISTING LOWER LEVEL FLOOR PLAN
1/16" = 1'



Photo key 2
Downey School
Downey, Iowa
R.L. McCarley
July 2018









46
1166

AM
EYES

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12/9

KEEP
OUT

PRIVATE
PROPERTY



D.G. 1871









EXIT





















YOUR BEST
TEACHER WAS
JUST AS FLAWED
AS
YOU ARE.















UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action: Nomination

Property Name: Downey School

Multiple Name:

State & County: IOWA, Cedar

Date Received: 4/24/2019 Date of Pending List: 5/9/2019 Date of 16th Day: 5/24/2019 Date of 45th Day: 6/10/2019 Date of Weekly List:

Reference number: SG100004017

Nominator: SHPO

Reason For Review:

<input type="checkbox"/> Appeal	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PDIL	<input type="checkbox"/> Text/Data Issue
<input type="checkbox"/> SHPO Request	<input type="checkbox"/> Landscape	<input type="checkbox"/> Photo
<input type="checkbox"/> Waiver	<input type="checkbox"/> National	<input type="checkbox"/> Map/Boundary
<input type="checkbox"/> Resubmission	<input type="checkbox"/> Mobile Resource	<input type="checkbox"/> Period
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> TCP	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than 50 years
	<input type="checkbox"/> CLG	

Accept Return Reject 5/28/2019 Date

Abstract/Summary Comments: The Downey School is locally significant under National Register Criterion A in the area of Education. Set on a slightly elevated site, the two-story, four-room, brick school house was completed in 1905 and served as the main educational facility for the small agricultural community of Downey and the surrounding township up through 1954.

Recommendation/ Criteria Accept NR Criterion A

Reviewer Paul Lusignan Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2229 Date 5/28/2019

DOCUMENTATION: see attached comments : No see attached SLR : **Yes**

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF
CULTURAL AFFAIRS

KIM REYNOLDS, GOVERNOR
ADAM GREGG, LT. GOVERNOR

IOWA ARTS COUNCIL PRODUCE IOWA STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA

CHRIS KRAMER, DIRECTOR



IOWA ARTS
COUNCIL

PRODUCE
IOWA

STATE HISTORICAL
SOCIETY OF IOWA

STATE HISTORICAL
MUSEUM OF IOWA

STATE HISTORICAL
LIBRARY & ARCHIVES

STATE HISTORIC SITES

STATE HISTORIC
PRESERVATION
OFFICE OF IOWA

IOWA HISTORICAL
FOUNDATION

April 22, 2019

Joy Beasley, Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
1849 C Street, NW, Mail Stop 7228
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Ms Beasley:

The following National Register nomination(s) from Iowa are enclosed for your review and listing if acceptable. There are two owners listed for this property, but no objections were received.

Downey School

The Downey School is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A at a local level of significance for the significance of the building in the educational history in Downey and southwest Cedar County. The school was designed by architect John G. Ralston in 1905, with construction complete by the end of the year. The school opened at the start of January 1906 for the winter term, serving as the only school for the small town of Downey. Grades one to twelve were originally located in the building, providing local high school instruction for town and rural residents. The number of grades was reduced to ten in fall of 1916 and then to eight in fall of 1925. The building continued to serve grades one through eight in Downey through June 1954 when the school was closed. While the school was then used for several years by the Wapsie Valley Grange, few alterations were made, and it retains strong integrity as an early 20th century school in a small town. The period of significance spans throughout the history of the building as a school from 1905 to 1954.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Laura Sadowsky
State Historian and National Register Coordinator
State Historical Society of Iowa

Enclosures.