

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

DATA SHEET

RECEIVED OCT 12 1976

DATE ENTERED DEC 19 1976

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC **
Mentor Graham House
AND/OR COMMON

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

U.S. 70

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

CITY, TOWN

Blunt

VICINITY OF

2nd

STATE

South Dakota

CODE

046

COUNTY

Hughes

CODE

065

CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

DISTRICT

BUILDING(S)

STRUCTURE

SITE

OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

PUBLIC

PRIVATE

BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

IN PROCESS

BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

OCCUPIED

UNOCCUPIED

WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

YES: RESTRICTED

YES: UNRESTRICTED

NO

PRESENT USE

AGRICULTURE

COMMERCIAL

EDUCATIONAL

ENTERTAINMENT

GOVERNMENT

INDUSTRIAL

MILITARY

MUSEUM

PARK

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

RELIGIOUS

SCIENTIFIC

TRANSPORTATION

OTHER:

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

State of South Dakota (Historical Preservation Center)

STREET & NUMBER

USD Alumni House

CITY, TOWN

Vermillion

VICINITY OF

STATE

South Dakota

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Hughes County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Pierre

STATE

South Dakota

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

South Dakota Historic Sites Survey

DATE

January 1976

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Historical Preservation Center

CITY, TOWN

Vermillion

STATE

South Dakota

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Mentor Graham house, built in 1884, is a one and one-half story clapboard home with two one story additions--one to the right of the front facade and the other to the rear. An open porch with spindle columns and lattice work adorns the left or south facade. The rear features a lattice enclosed entry. The windows are rectangular in shape, double-hung and have four sashes. Wood and asbestos shingles are on the gable roof.

The structure is not of any particular design but typical of small, late nineteenth century dwellings found in South Dakota. Portions of the interior are reminiscent of how the house must have appeared when Mentor Graham lived there. Surrounding the property is a two rail, rough lumber fence.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

1884-1885

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Mentor Graham's significance lies in the fact that he was Abraham Lincoln's tutor. Most biographers give Graham credit for giving the future President the impetus to study grammar and for teaching him the rudiments of surveying. In fact, one historian states, "Among the friendships which Lincoln formed in New Salem, one of the most important was that of Mentor Graham, the school teacher."¹ He spent his last years in this house in Blunt, South Dakota; and because the original buildings associated with him in New Salem are gone, this structure takes on added importance. For these reasons and the fact the state believes the structure to be important, the site should be placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Graham was born in 1800 in Green County, Kentucky. His early interest in reading and learning as much as possible resulted in his becoming a teacher; however, he also became quite skilled as a carpenter and a surveyor. In 1816 he married Sarah Rafferty who was just thirteen years old and began his teaching career. In 1826 he went to New Salem, Illinois.

In 1831 in this newly developed city, Mentor Graham first met Lincoln. This meeting occurred at an election in which Graham got Lincoln to assist as a clerk. During the next few years Lincoln became close friends with the school master; he even lived with him for six months. Besides teaching Lincoln how to survey and impressing upon him the importance of learning grammar to anyone who had political interests; Graham helped foster the romance between Lincoln and Anne Rutledge whom he was also teaching. The closeness of these two men is evident when in 1842, Mentor named one of his sons Harry Lincoln; this was before Lincoln became important.

Graham considered the future President his best student, and his proudest day was attending Lincoln's inauguration. At this event the President saw his former friend in the crowd and invited him to sit on the platform. Of course, the saddest day was when he learned of Lincoln's death.

¹William E. Barton, The Life of Abraham Lincoln (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1925) I., 187.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Duncan, Kunigunde, and D.F. Nickols, Mentor Graham: The Man Who Taught Lincoln, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1944. 274 pp. notes, appendices, index.
 "Lincoln Prairie Shrine Mentor Graham House, " The Wi-iyohi, XVIII (February 1965), pp. 1-6.
 "Mentor Graham," pamphlet, Blunt, South Dakota.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than 1 acre

UTM REFERENCES

4929-060					
A	1,4	42,13,6,0	4,9,3,10,3,0	B	
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE EASTING NORTHING
C				D	

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Scott Gerloff, Historical Preservation Assistant II

ORGANIZATION

Historical Preservation Center

DATE

January 1976

STREET & NUMBER

USD Alumni House

TELEPHONE

(605) 677-5314

CITY OR TOWN

Vermillion

STATE

South Dakota

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL STATE LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE John J. Little - SHPO

DATE 5 Oct 76

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Attesting: [Signature]
 DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE 12/13/76

ATTEST: [Signature]
 KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 12/10/76

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Graham continued to teach until 1878. After sixty years of teaching, he had a considerable amount of money saved in real and personal property; but shortly after his retirement, he gave a nephew his savings, and in 1882 he realized he had been bilked out of his savings. Mentor then lived with his son, Harry Lincoln, and moved with him to Blunt, South Dakota, in 1883. In 1884 they built their house and the next year Mentor died at the age of eight-five. Graham's body was moved in later years to Farmer's Point, Illinois.

Over the years, the house gradually started to deteriorate, but in 1946 Roy Poole convinced the South Dakota State Historical Society that the site should be preserved. The Society bought the home at a tax sale for two hundred dollars and also spent funds in partially restoring the structure. In 1974 the Board of Cultural Preservation appointed the Historical Preservation Center to administer the site.