

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received JAN 5 1987

date entered

APR 7 1987

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic West Branch Commercial Historic District

and or common

2. Location

street & number West Main and North Downey Streets not for publication

city, town West Branch vicinity of

state IA code 019 county Cedar code 031

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial <input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational <input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Multiple, refer to individual site sheets

street & number

city, town vicinity of state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. County Recorder's Office

street & number Cedar County Courthouse

city, town Tipton state IA 52772

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title N/A has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date federal state county local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Between 1850, when Quaker farmers and others first settled this area of eastern Iowa, and 1916, the closing date for this nomination, the site of West Branch evolved from a vast expanse of virgin prairie into a thriving commercial center. Most of the early commercial buildings (including 6,7, and 13) were erected along what later became Main Street, on a topographic rise that offered protection from the occasional spring and summer flooding of branches of the Wapsinonoc Creek to the south and east. The commercial district has always been anchored by the intersection of what are Main and Downey Streets. When the town was originally platted in 1869 in conjunction with the construction of the Burlington, Cedar Rapids and Great Northern Railroad, Main Street was designated as "Commerce Street." It became Main Street with the 1875 incorporation of West Branch and the arrival in that same year of the railroad. Main Street then extended east-west for three quarters of a mile and was on the stage route between Iowa's first territorial and state capital, Iowa City, and the Mississippi River port of Davenport. What became Downey Street in 1875 was originally platted as "Mechanics Street," running north-south. This intersection was the beginning point of public improvements such as the first sidewalk (1875), the first telephone line (1879), the first streetlight (1883), the first town pump (1884), and the first community bandstand (1895). The intersection remains the cornerstone of the 11 key and contributing structures within the district.

Architecturally, the 6 key and 6 contributing structures that now exist within the West Branch Commercial District collectively trace the evolution of small-town commercial building styles prompted by the turn-of-the-century boom in the Corn Belt's farm economy. In terms of social history, these 12 buildings illustrate the surge in development that occurred within the West Branch business district between 1895 and 1916, the opening and closing dates of the nomination. This growth was directly linked to the "Golden Era of American Agriculture" -- a period of unparalleled prosperity for Cedar County, Iowa, farmers and farmers throughout the Midwestern Corn Belt. As West Branch area farmers prospered, so did the merchants in town. A scattering of wood-frame, one-story storefronts gave way to more substantial, two-story brick business blocks constructed both in response to calamities, such as major fire in 1895, and to the economic momentum generated by a surge in farm prices and land values. This wave of commercial development continued during the next generation, until World War I disrupted the parity in supply and demand for grain and livestock that had made farming profitable.

The present-day West Branch Commercial District contains four early buildings (6, 7, 10, 11) that are representative of the wood-frame storefronts that lined Commerce/Main Street during the early commercial development of West Branch. Two others (9, 12) are brick commercial buildings constructed as replacements for wood-frame Main Street buildings lost to the 1895 fire that transformed the south side of Main Street. The six other brick business blocks within the district (4, 14, 1, 3, 2, 5) -- including the opulent, three-storefront, two-story Opera Block Building (4) -- are representative of the final phase of prosperity. Four of these six

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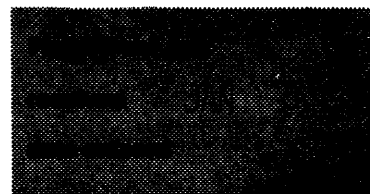
structures replaced older buildings (14, 1, 2, 5), two filled vacant lots (4,3) and four extended the commercial district north along North Downey Street (4, 1, 3, 2). The post-World War I-Era slump in the farm economy brought an end to the surge in commercial growth in West Branch in 1916 -- the closing date of this nomination. Two of the 14 buildings within the district are intrusive structures (13, 8). One of the two (13) has been classified as intrusive due to extensive exterior alterations, but is included within the district boundaries due to their locations within the 100 blocks of West Main and North Downey streets. This building has not been so altered as to preclude eventual restoration. The second (8) is considered intrusive due to its late construction date (1948) and because its scale and style are inconsistent with other buildings within the district. This building separates a key (5) and a contributing (10) structure.

Extension of the central business district to the south and the routing of north-south vehicular traffic through downtown West Branch were affected by the establishment of the 187-acre Herbert Hoover National Historic Site in the 1960's. Preservation of the Herbert Hoover birthplace cottage, which is located on South Downey Street approximately 100 yards from the south boundary of the West Branch Commercial District, has affected land use and development south of the downtown area since restoration was begun in the 1930's. In conjunction with the later construction of the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library-Museum and formal designation of the National Historic Site, South Downey Street was closed at its intersection with Wetherell Street, with north-south traffic being rerouted onto a new roadway, Parkside Drive. This federally funded road project routed traffic that otherwise would have passed within a few feet of the Hoover birthplace cottage along South Downey Street onto a new roadway a block east that now serves as a link between the West Branch business district and Interstate 80 to the south.

DESCRIPTION OF ARCHITECTURAL TYPES

Fourteen buildings are included within the boundaries of the West Branch Commercial District. Although the interiors and, to a more limited degree, the front facades of these buildings have undergone occasional renovations, the foundations, structural side walls and now-concealed remnants of original facades are known to date back to 1869. There are two preserved first-floor storefronts (1, 2) in the district and one restored storefront (4). The oldest, substantially intact facades within the district date from 1895, the beginning date of this district. These key structures (4, 9) are the largest brick blocks within the district and were constructed with bricks baked in kilns at a West Branch brickworks. The elaborate brick and iron front of the Opera Block (4) has been returned to its original splendor through a 1986 restoration.

Although two of the structures (14, 8) were constructed to house post offices, all 14 buildings within the physical boundary of the district are now commercial buildings. Architectural types are generally determined by the front facades of

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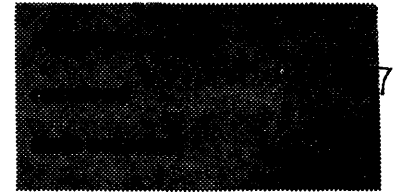
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these buildings. Street-level storefronts have been remodeled far more frequently than upper level facades, and have consequently been given less consideration in differentiating among architectural types. Building dates have been determined from documented histories, newspaper accounts on construction activities, historical photographs and abstracts of title. In some cases, Sanborn maps provided approximate dates.

Architectural styles within the West Branch Commercial District are grouped with three distinctive periods. The earliest period (1869-1895) includes five very simple structures (13, 6, 7, 10, 11) that are typical of Western town, false-fronted buildings of wood construction. The two oldest commercial buildings (13, 6) within the district have gables spanning their narrowest dimensions, which are almost the full width of the building lots. The similarities of their constructions indicate these two buildings were possibly built by the same carpenter, but not at the same time. The roof pitch and pediments over the windows appear to be identical. Of these five early buildings, the Gruwell and Crew General Store building (11) has undergone the least renovation over the years. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in October 1982 as a "well preserved example of a small-town commercial structure." Although this building's front steps have been replaced, other elements of the facade are virtually unchanged. For the purposes of the nomination, one of these five early 1940's era renovation that included construction of a brick facade that hides the building's original architectural character. This building is thought to be the oldest surviving commercial building within the district, with a construction date of 1869.

Three of the buildings within the district (4, 9, 12) are representative of the second distinctive architectural grouping within the district -- brick business blocks constructed in the 1890's including two (9, 12) built as an aftermath of the great fire of August 30, 1895, that destroyed or heavily damaged a row of wood-frame commercial buildings along the south side of West Main Street. These three fine brick buildings are key structures that were constructed in a Late Victorian style. They were built to be as fireproof as possible at that time, blending iron and brick for their first-floor exterior facades and stamped sheet steel for their cornices. Of these three structures, a 1986 restoration made the Opera Block building (4) the best example of this second group of architectural styles within the district.

Five buildings (14, 1, 3, 2, 5) are representative of the third architectural grouping within the district -- buildings constructed between 1907 and 1916. At least three of the buildings within this period (14, 1, 5) are top-quality structures that are not significantly altered. These three show some very fine brick and stone work. The West Branch State Bank building (5), designed by the Josselyn & Taylor architectural firm of Cedar Rapids, shows a touch of Prairie School style and Art Deco. The Citizens' Savings Bank building (1) on the opposite corner is a classical design in good proportion. It was during this period that

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office buildings were often designed like a classical column, with a base, a shaft and a cap. The Citizens' Savings Bank building (1) would have been more in scale to the style had there been one or more floors between the street-level base and the cornice, or cap. The old post office building (14) is a "little jewel." It, too, has a touch of Art Deco. North of the 1908 Citizens' Savings Bank building (1) are two brick buildings (3, 2) constructed in 1911 and 1912, respectively. The 1912 structure (2) has undergone only minor alteration. The 1911 structure (3) has been somewhat altered by the addition of a wooden "cowboy" awning and the use of clapboards to cover what a shallow brick cornice.

Summary

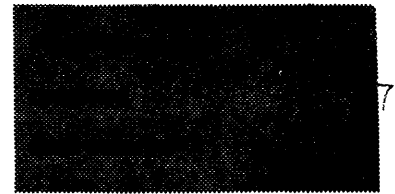
The West Branch Commercial District includes a range of architectural styles that have endured for more than a century. They range from very simple to quite original and include several examples of good architecture. Perhaps due to the Quakers' traditional concern for taking care of one's property, the buildings within the West Branch Commercial District have been well-maintained. None of the buildings within the district that fall within the 1895-1916 parameters of this nomination, has been altered beyond hope of restoration. Perhaps the greatest feature of this district is that no gaudy or "strip" architecture has appeared within the district to spoil the small-town feeling of downtown West Branch.

List of Intrusive Buildings

There are two intrusive structures within the boundaries of the West Branch Commercial District. One (13) is an older building (1869) that has been designated as intrusive structures due to extensive exterior alterations. The Faye's Bakery building (13) is believed to be the oldest existing commercial building within the district, but a 1940's-era remodeling included construction of a brick facade that now hides the original facade. It was originally constructed as a drug store and was subsequently used over the years as a jewelry store, meat market, variety store, antique store and bakery. The second intrusive building is the 1948 War Memorial building (8), which was designated as a non-contributing structure due to its late construction date.

DESCRIPTION OF BOUNDARY

The district's boundary was determined based on commercial growth patterns, construction dates, architectural integrity and uses of adjacent properties. The district includes the east side of the 100 block of North Downey Street, the south side of the 100 block of West Main Street and the four buildings along the north side of the 100 block of West Main Street that are west of the intersection of Main and Downey streets. The West Branch Commercial District is bounded on the north by residential properties. It is bounded on the west by a mixed-use area

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(commercial/public/residential) and on the east both by commercial buildings of later construction dates and commercial buildings of compromised architectural integrity.

The district is bounded on the south by the north edge of the 187-acre Herbert Hoover National Historic Site maintained by the National Park Service. While the West Branch Commercial District largely is buffered from the Historic Site through natural barriers, such as plantings, and physical barriers that restrict vehicular traffic, two pedestrian walkways link the Commercial District with an adjacent historic core area. This Downey Street "trace" includes six homes constructed between 1869 and 1874, two built between 1899 and 1903 and another constructed in 1920. Two of these nine homes were relocated onto the Downey Street trace. Three have been restored since 1983 and the others preserved for incorporation into the Historic Site. These nine trace homes are among 34 historic structures in the National Historic Site. These homes separate the West Branch Commercial District from the restored birthplace cottage of Herbert Hoover, 31st President of the United States. There are 34 structures located within the Herbert Hoover National Historic Site, which is a National Historic Landmark.

As the West Branch business district evolved, commercial growth was focused along West Main Street, both before and after a major fire in 1895 destroyed or heavily damaged wood-frame commercial buildings along the south side of the block. As the town prospered between 1895 and World War I, commercial activity spread to North Downey Street to a row of four adjacent structures (1, 2, 3, 4). Of the 14 buildings within the district boundaries, 13 were constructed before or during 1916 -- the closing date for this nomination. The one building within the district constructed after 1916 (8) is an intrusive structure that is included due to its location within the 100 block of West Main Street. Commercial buildings east and southeast of the district boundaries post-date 1916 and/or do not contribute to the district due to limited or irretrievable loss of structural or architectural integrity.

Verbal Boundary Description

Starting at the center point of the intersection of Main and Downey streets, thence east along the centerline of East Main Street to a point that intersects with an extension of the east lot lines of lots 1-4 of Block 34, Cameron Addition, thence north to a point that intersects with the north lot line of lot 4, Block 34, Cameron Addition, thence west to the centerline of North Downey Street, thence south to a point that intersects with the extension of the centerline of the alley that runs along the north lot lines of lots 1 through 4 of Block 38 of the Subdivision of Lot 64, thence west to a point that intersects with the west lot line of Lot 4, Block 38 of the Subdivision of Lot 64, thence south to a point that intersects with the centerline of West Main Street, thence west to a point that intersects with the extension of the west lot line of Lot 3, Block 44 of Steer's First Addition, thence

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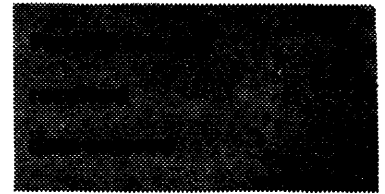
south to the centerline of Wetherell Street, thence east to the centerline of South Downey Street, thence north to the center point of the intersection of Main and Downey Streets (the point of beginning).

METHODOLOGY: History of the Project

This application is an outgrowth of the continuing interest demonstrated by the people of West Branch and the West Branch Chamber of Commerce in preserving the turn-of-the-century atmosphere of the town's central business district. West Branch has a rich historical tradition by virtue of its Quaker ancestry and the attention it has received as the birthplace of Herbert Clark Hoover, the 31st president of the United States. Ever since the formal dedication of the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library-Museum in 1962 and the subsequent creation in 1965 of the Herbert Hoover National Historic Site, commercial activity within downtown West Branch has been closely linked to tourism activity at these adjacent federal sites. As early as 1980, the West Branch Chamber of Commerce began exploring the possibility of nominating a portion of downtown West Branch for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places.

After a few false starts, the project was turned over in 1986 to the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library Association. This private, non-profit organization raised the funds needed to construct the Hoover Presidential Library and to acquire the land and many of the other buildings now within the 187-acre Herbert Hoover National Historic Site. The Association agreed to handle the West Branch Commercial District project without cost and assigned Tom Walsh, assistant director, to undertake the required research. In consultation with staff members at the Iowa State Historical Department's Office of Historic Preservation, Mr. Walsh spent nine months researching the individual properties within the district's boundaries, relying heavily on archival materials on file at the Hoover Presidential Library. Those materials included microfilmed copies of early West Branch newspapers, previously published West Branch histories, summaries of research undertaken by the National Park Service in conjunction with establishment of the Historic Site and historical photographs. Concurrent research into the history American agriculture before, during and after the construction dates of the buildings within the West Branch Commercial District resulted in a significant theme: the dynamic growth in commercial activity in West Branch as a result of the "Golden Era of American Agriculture" that occurred between the 1890's and World War I. The viability of the proposed theme was then assessed by Professor Walter Nugent, an agricultural historian at the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana. "I hope you succeed in your National Register application for downtown West Branch," Professor Nugent said in a letter to Mr. Walsh. "I looked at it (the commercial district) a few months ago and was struck by how closely in time most of those buildings must have been built, and what that says about the farm economy of the day."

With this assurance that the proposed theme has a strong historical base, this

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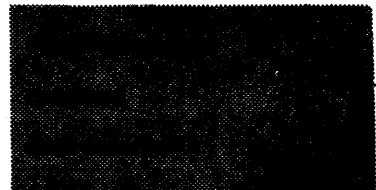
social history approach to a historic district nomination was reviewed and approved in April, 1986, by Jim Jacobsen, Iowa's National Register coordinator. This approval was contained in a letter written by Mr. Jacobsen after he had received verbal support for the thematic nomination from Beth Grosvenor of the U.S. Department of the Interior, who reviews National Register nominations that originate within the department's Rocky Mountain region. With a theme now determined, research continued and was expanded to include materials on file at the State Historical Society of Iowa research library in Iowa City, the University of Iowa Main Library in Iowa City and the Cedar County Court House. Mr. Walsh also conducted interviews with long-time West Branch residents and made use of historical photographs included in the collection of the West Branch Heritage Museum. A day-long seminar sponsored by the State Historical Preservation Office in Des Moines, frequent contacts with SHPO staff members, access to "how-to" handouts published by the U.S. Department of the Interior and copies of successful district nominations (Oskaloosa City Square Commercial Historic District and Bishop Hill Colony) were used in finalizing the form and content of the application.

As a first step locally, Mr. Walsh compiled a list of the owners of downtown properties likely to be included within the boundaries of the West Branch Commercial District. A letter was then sent to each property owner to inform them that research required to submit a historic district nomination was underway. Included was a copy of the Iowa Site Inventory forms, as an indicator of the types of information being gathered. The letter also discussed the implications of having their buildings included within a historic district. As a spinoff to this letter, a newspaper release was written to announce that the historic district effort had been revived. This story also outlined the implications of having downtown properties included in a historic district. The subsequent research conducted by Mr. Walsh was used during the process of finalizing the nomination application as source material for a series of 12 newspaper articles about various downtown buildings. These stories, illustrated with historical photographs and other illustrations, appeared between January and July 1986 in the West Branch Times newspaper. As a last step, Mr. Walsh made an appeal in The West Branch Times to anyone who might have noticed errors of fact or emphasis in the 12 newspaper articles. One written response was received and an error corrected as a result.

This application's "Description of Architectural Types" is the result of an analysis of building styles and alterations that was conducted by William J. Wagner, AIA, of Dallas Center, Iowa, a restoration architect and a member of the AIA's state and national committees on historic landmarks. His architectural research focused on the evolution of the commercial district as indicated by Sanborn maps, current and historical photographs, on-site inspections and personal familiarity with downtown buildings (6, 14) that have been renovated under Mr. Wagner's supervision. The reference map incorporated into the site inventory forms was prepared by graphic artist Chris Wolf of Solon, Iowa. The photographs of individual buildings and streetscapes were provided by Vid Johnson of West Branch, editor of The West Branch Times newspaper and a member of the West Branch Chamber of Commerce board of directors.

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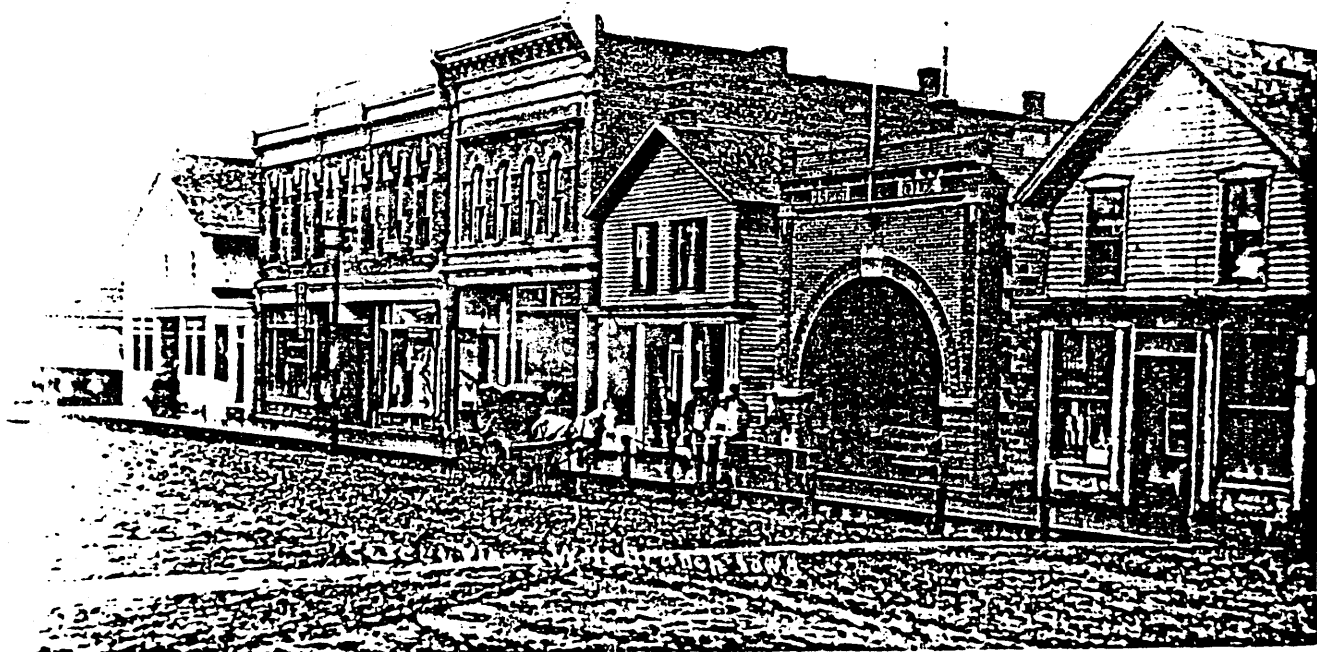
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Streetscape of West Main Street, looking west, circa 1914
(Source: West Branch Heritage Museum)



undate photograph taken after 1907. Shows south side of
West Main Street, including sites number 6,7,9,12,13,14 (left to right)

Photographer unknown Source: West Branch Heritage Museum

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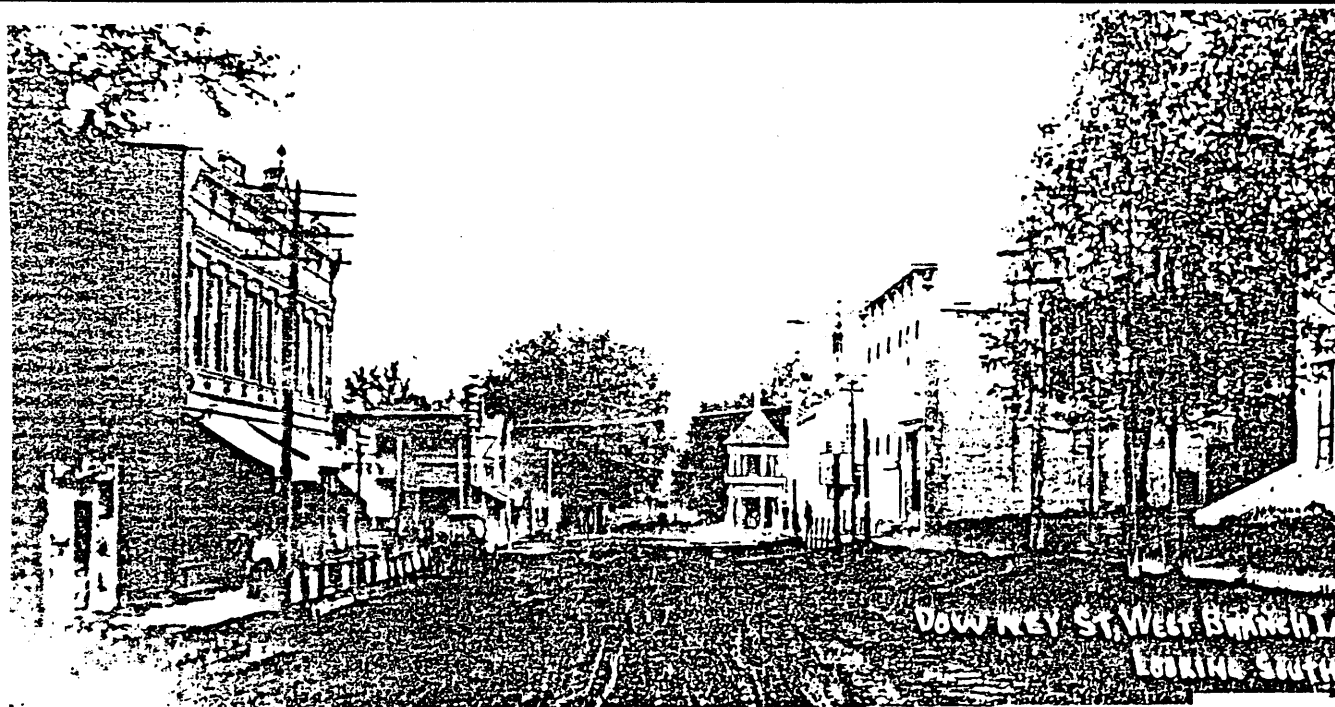
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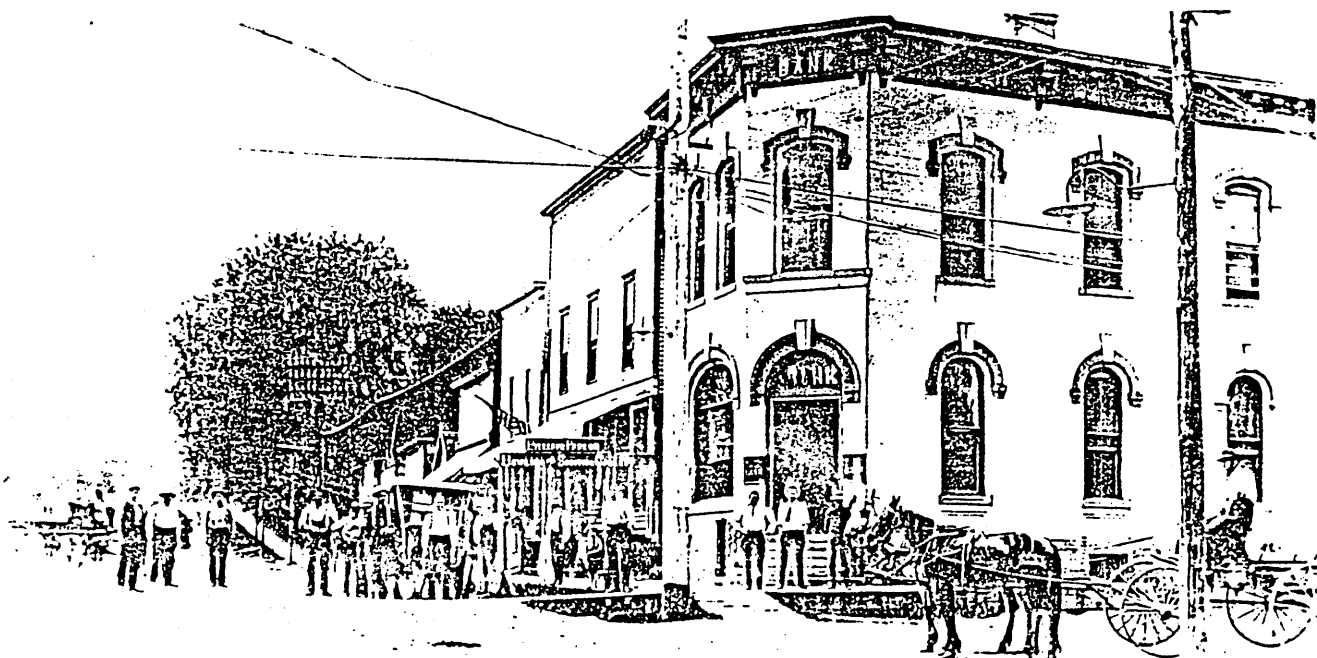
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Streetscape of North Downey Street, looking south, circa 1908
(Source: West Branch Heritage Museum)



Streetscape of the north side of West Main Street, circa 1910
(Source: West Branch Heritage Foundation)

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
___ prehistoric	___ archeology-prehistoric	___ community planning	___ landscape architecture	___ religion
___ 1400-1499	___ archeology-historic	___ conservation	___ law	___ science
___ 1500-1599	___ agriculture	___ economics	___ literature	___ sculpture
___ 1600-1699	___ architecture	___ education	___ military	___ social/
___ 1700-1799	___ art	___ engineering	___ music	___ humanitarian
XX 1800-1899	XX commerce	___ exploration/settlement	___ philosophy	___ theater
XX 1900-	___ communications	___ industry	___ politics/government	___ transportation
		___ invention		___ other (specify)

Specific dates 1895-1916 **Builder/Architect** Various

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph) Criterion A, City growth reflective of "Golden Age of Agriculture," Contributing 12, intrusive 2,

The West Branch Commercial District is a historical and very tangible economic total 14 indicator of the greatest period of prosperity in American agricultural history. Thirteen of the 14 commercial buildings within the West Branch Commercial District are illustrative of the commercial growth prompted by what has been termed the "Golden Era of American Agriculture." They illustrate the economic momentum that allowed a small Midwestern farm town to experience a period of unparalleled prosperity as grain and livestock farming quickly evolved from a primitive, pioneering exercise in self-sufficiency to a highly complex business organized on a scientific, capitalist, commercial basis. In West Branch that momentum peaked between 1895 and 1916 -- the opening and closing dates of the District nomination.

The mix of 6 key structures (4, 9, 12, 1, 2, 5) and 6 contributing structures (3, 6, 7, 10, 11, 14) within the proposed ditrict is illustrative of the commercial evolution of downtown West Branch. Two of the 6 contributing structures within the district (6, 7) were constructed between 1869 and 1875, including the building that housed Cedar County's first bank (7). One of these contributing structures -- The Gruwell and Crew General Store (11) -- was added to the National Register of Historic Places on September 9, 1982, as a well-preserved example of a small-town commercial structure. Also included in this group is a building (3) that was the first downtown automobile garage in an era when, as this item from The West Branch Times of July 22, 1909, illustrates, cars were symbols of successful farming: "The prospect for good prices for grain of all kinds, and with hogs at 8 cents per pound in Chicago, everything seems bright for the down-trodden farmer, most of whom will probably have automobiles next year, if they have not already purchased." The 6 key structures, all of which were constructed between 1895 and 1916, include the first home of the town's second bank (12) and two massive commercial blocks (4, 9) built with locally-produced brick. The remaining 4 key structures were built between 1907 and 1916. One of two intrusive structures within the district have some historical significance to the theme, but have been designated as intrusive due to extensive exterior alterations. The prime example of such extensive alteration is the Faye's Bakery building (13), which dates from 1869 and is the oldest existing commercial building in West Branch. The second intrusive structure is the War Memorial building (8) built in 1948 to house the West Branch Post Office and, on the second floor, an American Legion post.

The Early Days

Over two generations the farm families that began taming the rolling prairies near West Branch in the 1850's refined their farming techniques and improved their crop yields and animal husbandry techniques through the use of farm implements and scientific methods. As these farmers prospered, so did the merchants upon whom they relied for tools, seed, wagons, harnesses, dry goods, building supplies and other store-bought necessities. A commercial area that once was little more than a scattering of ramshackle wooden buildings underwent a major transformation between 1895 and World War I with the construction of eight new brick commercial buildings

9. Major Bibliographical References

Refer to continuation sheet 9-2+

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property one acre

Quadrangle name West Branch

Quadrangle scale 1/24,000

UTM References

A	1 5	6 3 7 7 0 0	4 6 1 4 5 0 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing

B	1 5	6 3 7 6 4 0	4 6 1 4 5 0 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing

C	1 5	6 3 7 3 6 0	4 6 1 4 5 8 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing

D	1 5	6 3 7 4 0 0	4 6 1 4 7 0 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing

E			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

F			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

G			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

H			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

Verbal boundary description and justification

Refer to continuation sheet 7-4, 7-5, 7-6, 10-2.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	N/A	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

Research and text: Tom Walsh, Hoover Presidential Library Association, West Branch
 name/title Form: James E. Jacobsen, National Register Coordinator

State Historical Society of Iowa, Bureau of
 organization Community Programs, Office of Historic Preservation date November 14, 1986

street & number Historical Building, E. 12th & Grand telephone 515-281-4137

city or town Des Moines state IA 50319

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 *David C...*

title ~~Deputy~~ State Historic Preservation Officer date 12/10/86

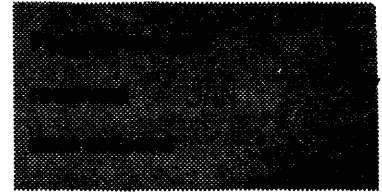
For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Beth Grosvenor
 Keeper of the National Register date 4/7/87

Attest: _____ date _____

Chief of Registration _____

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along West Main and North Downey Streets. This period of unparalleled growth of the local farm economy carried downtown West Branch in the 20th Century on a wave of progress. "And still they come," said an item in the April 7, 1898, edition of The West Branch Times. "It has been our pleasant lot since the beginning of the new year to announce nearly every week some new industry, institution or local enterprise come, opened up or about to come to our lively little city."

Early West Branch grew slowly but steadily in the decade between 1860 and 1870. Its growth was accelerated in the 1870's by the completion on December 20, 1870, of the Burlington, Cedar Rapids and Northern Railroad tracks. A list of local businessmen that appeared in the June 15, 1871, issue of The West Branch Local Record included a dentist, a stone mason, a wagonmaker/ painter, photographer, a jeweler, two cobblers, a cabinet/coffin maker, a dry goods store operator and an insurance agent. The locations of early commercial buildings in the West Branch Business district is perhaps best illustrated by a map entitled "The Hoovers and Their West Branch Neighborhood 1871 - 1884" that is included with this application as Appendix I. It was prepared by Edwin C. Bearss of the National Park Service during the late 1960's. The town's growth continued into the 1890's. "By actual count within the last five years there has been 100 houses and barns (sic) built or remodeled so as to be good as new in and adjacent to the town of West Branch, cost of the different improvements ranging from \$100 to \$10,000," The West Branch Times reported in January of 1894. A Year later, on January 3, 1895, the paper carried a listing of new construction and remodeling projects in and around West Branch during 1894. That list contained 60 projects estimated to have cost collectively \$28,465. Most were new houses and barns, including a \$4,000 "first class dwelling house" for blacksmith J. E. Michener, complete with indoor plumbing and steam heat. During the same year, the list shows, Michener spent \$500 improving his forge, while J. E. Steer, a West Branch pioneer who owned a lumberyard, spent \$300 adding a brick yard that would produce the bricks used in two major downtown building projects (4, 9) as this wave of improvements continued into 1895. "The carpenter's racket is heard all over town," The West Branch Times reported on March 14, 1895. "There are four or five new buildings now under construction." The paper even had its own "wish list" for the town: "West Branch wants an artesian well -- wants a water tower -- wants electric lights -- wants a factory or two -- wants 20 car loads of rock to begin paving the streets -- wants a grand hotel building -- wants a ready made clothing store -- wants an auction sale every Saturday afternoon -- wants an electric street car line to Springdale, Cedar Valley and Cedar Bluffs," said an item that appeared in the paper on May 2, 1895. "And West Branch wants to extend her corporate limits and take in \$100,000 more wealth and taxable property and it wants an ordinance requiring the issuing of building permits and prohibiting the erection of wood buildings on Main or Downey streets within one block from the center crossing." Before long, some of those dreams would come true.

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A Wave of Public Improvements

As West Branch began evolving into a thriving commercial center there was also an expansion of public improvements, beginning with the installation of sidewalks. In the mid-1870's, Nathan Crook, the proprietor of Crook's Hotel (6) at Main and Downey streets, solicited contributions from other merchants to install a sidewalk. Only two planks wide, it extended along the south side of Main Street from Crook's hotel corner to the railroad depot a quarter mile to the east. An 1879 city ordinance called for the installation of a sidewalk along the west side of Downey Street from Main Street to the Quaker cemetery just north of the business district. The sidewalk ordinance also called for sidewalks fronting Main Street businesses to be "built of 2-inch plank to be laid crossways 6 feet wide with four stringer 2x6 inches wide" and required that work be completed by May 15, 1880. Another wave of sidewalk improvement emerged after this comment appeared in the August 9, 1883, issue of The West Branch Local Record: "The most notable feature of our town is the dilapidated condition of our sidewalks." By 1885 there were 3.2 miles of wooden sidewalks in West Branch. A summary of improvements that appeared in The West Branch Times of January, 1896, notes that a mile of new sidewalk had been constructed during 1895. In 1898, the city fathers experimented with a new type of sidewalk made of broken brick and cinders (WBT 9-15-98), a composition that failed to replace the wooden walkways. Ten years later the town council decided that wooden sidewalks in a bustling business district were unsafe (WBT 8-6-08) and ordered them to be replaced by cement walks. "Four persons were looking for property last week and all claim that West Branch has the best walks of any town in eastern Iowa," The West Branch Times reported on June 18, 1908. "Four gangs of cement workers were in town last week and three are still at it this week and the end is not yet in sight."

Nathan Crook was also responsible for installing the town's first street light, not surprisingly in front of his hotel (6). It served as a beacon to weary travelers arriving after dark by train (Source: West Branch Local Record, December 13, 1883). Within a few weeks of installing his own street light, Crook raised \$62 by subscription that paid for nine additional kerosene street lamps. With the prosperity that brought a wave of commercial construction between 1895 and 1916 came electric lights, including street lights. The city's first "electric light plant" was built in the spring of 1898 (WBT 4-14-98). By September, electricity was available not only in the evenings but from 4:30 a.m. until daylight (WBT 9-22-98). In June of 1909, power was made available on Monday and Tuesday mornings to accommodate housewives using electric washing machines and irons. Twenty-four hour electric service wasn't available until 1916 (WBT 7-13-16). In March of 1909, city street lights were moved from the center of city streets to the sides of the roads.

Early roads in West Branch were either dusty thoroughfares or muddy bogs, depending on the weather. As the commercial district grew, the town man used a team of horses to grade and drag the streets to eliminate ruts and bumps. The summary of improvements during 1895 that appeared in The West Branch Times mentions "several hundred dollars worth of grading on the streets and public highway (Main Street) has

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been done." Later, when West Branch had its own street commissioner, roads were oiled. In 1916, 10,000 gallons of road oil were ordered by the city (WBT 8-31-16). By then, the city streets were busy enough to be the scene of three accidents during a single week, one involving two cars, another involving a car and a motorcycle and a third involving a car and a train (WBT 8-24-16). All this despite speed limit signs having been posted on downtown streets since May of 1911 (WBT 5-18-11).

The telephone arrived in West Branch in February 1879, when a line was installed between the Townsend, Edmundson & Co. general store on the southeast corner of Main and Downey streets and the railroad depot a quarter-mile to the east. In June of 1898, West Branch had a "talking booth" -- an early phone booth (WBT 6-2-98). That same year, phone wires were strung between new cedar poles, instead of from tree to tree. In July, 1900, the first rural telephone toll service in Iowa was available in West Branch, with the switchboard located at Ball's Hardware (4). Meanwhile, the telephone was being touted not only as a convenience, but as a necessity, especially for farmers. "Because some farmers are not getting rich after having (sic) had telephones installed for some years, is no argument against the phone," The West Branch Times noted on April 30, 1908. "The telephone has simply put him in a position to meet competition of other business men who have taken advantage of the service which may be gained over the wires." By the end of 1915, the West Branch Independent Telephone Company boasted the "largest percentage of subscribers compared with the residents of its district of any like county in the state." (WBT 12-8-15)

City water made its appearance in 1907, with a water tower constructed on a hillside northwest of the central business district. It was a welcome improvement but, as the West Branch Times noted on January 10, 1908, not without cost. "If you find your taxes a little high this year just remember that we are paying for our waterworks as well as the high school building, both of which are good improvements and worth all they cost." The paper also reported that a public drinking fountain installed in 1911 on the northwest corner of Main and Downey streets was "proving very popular and is being well patronized these hot days." (WBT 7-13-11).

The city began planning its sanitary sewer system in 1916, with the West Branch Times noting on August 10, 1916, that: "Sewer facilities are an absolute necessity for the continued health of the town." Prosperity even brought a public restroom to West Branch. "Did you notice when Iowa City was building a rest room, they said it was the first men's rest room in the state," the West Branch Times asked its readers on March 16, 1916. "We'd like to challenge that statement, for we have had one over a year."

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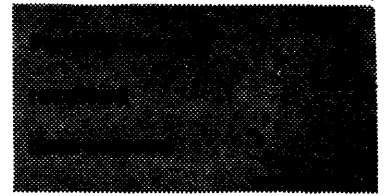
New Markets Mean New Income

During this "Golden Era of Agriculture" West Branch area farmers were among the Midwestern farmers who prospered from the expansion of domestic and foreign farm markets brought on by railroad extensions. The railroad had arrived in West Branch in 1870, allowing local farmers to take advantage of the tremendous growth on non-agricultural populations in urban centers such as Chicago and St. Louis that created tremendous markets for their farm products. What those growing cities couldn't consume they sent elsewhere, with Chicago becoming the nation's largest meat packing and rail shipping center. "Iowa holds the fort as the leading stock producing state in the Union," The West Branch Times reported on February 4, 1897. "The receipts in Chicago for the month of December gives Iowa the credit of 2,495 cars of live stock, Missouri 2,332 and Illinois 2,007."

Those carloads of cattle, hogs and sheep gave West Branch area farmers both money to spend and money to bank. These good times fueled the growth of downtown West Branch and even prompted the opening of a second bank (12) in 1898. "This is what brings good times and prosperity," said an item in the January 21, 1897, issue of the West Branch Times. "Within the past 20 days there has been 23 car loads of fat hogs and 6 car loads of fat cattle shipped from the yards at this place, making in all, 29 car loads. The shippers inform us that an average of \$600 to the car is not an overestimation of the returns to the farmer. The amounts to the sum of \$17,400 clear cash that has been distributed within the past twenty days among the farmers in this immediate vicinity; and it doesn't stop with the farmer, but plants confidence, inspires enterprise and brings prosperity to every business concern and every working man in the country. How much depends on the farmer."

With the birth of a new century came continued growth in demand for farm products, both within the United States and by foreign countries. Total U.S. grain exports climbed to 155 million bushels by 1902. Meat exports in 1901 and 1902 totaled \$121 million. The West Branch rail yards were busier than ever. "During the last 24 hours from midnight Sunday night to midnight Monday night there were 43 passenger and freight trains passed through West Branch," The West Branch Times reported on November 14, 1912.

"Gentlemen," asserted a orator at an 1899 Corn Carnival in Iowa, "from the beginning of Indiana to the end of Nebraska there is nothing but corn, cattle and contentment" (Source: Ross, Earls D., Iowa Agriculture, State Historical Society, Iowa City, IA, 1951). These good times for farmers saw net farm income increase from \$1.2 billion in 1860 to \$5.6 billion in 1910. Just as the local rail yard was bustling with activity, so were local banks. "That there is no financial crisis on hand just now is shown by the volume of business done by the two banks located in our town," The West Branch Times reported on March 4, 1909. "On Monday, March 1, \$280,000 worth of business

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was transacted by the two banks during the usual banking hours. This breaks the record for one days business in West Branch, yet, we expect to see this record broken in the near future." The farm prosperity saw the number of farms increase from 2 million in 1869 to 6.4 million in 1910 (Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Historical Statistics of the United States, 1789 - 1945, Washington, 1949, pp. 95 - 100.) Between 1900 - 1910 the value of Iowa farmland increases 104.2 percent and the average property value per farm increased from \$8,023 to \$17,259 (Source: Iowa Yearbook of Agriculture, 1910). In West Branch, the local paper followed land transactions with keen interest. "The Harmon Myers eighty acre farm one mile south of Centerdale was sold last week to Fred Hartley for the record price of \$190 per acre," the paper reported on December 20, 1909. "All guesses as to the limit that farm lands will reach are now off." A West Branch Times news story on the official government crop report for August 1909 ended with this paragraph under the subheading "Era of Prosperity Sure": "These figures show that the farmer will have an enormous amount of money to spend this winter. His prosperity will be reflected in manufacturing lines, because the pianos, automobiles and other luxuries the farmer will now find himself able to buy will have to be made in factories. The railroads will receive a double profit, because they will not only have to move the crops to market, but the said pianos and automobiles from the cities to the farmers. Consequently the great crop outlook makes it appear that the country is in for an era of prosperity such as it never saw before" (Source" WBT 8 - 26 - 09).

The Bubble Begins To Burst

The good times would continue, but not for long. By 1914, the gross income of Iowa farmers had grown to well over \$500 million, and, by 1916, it was estimated that 53 percent of the livestock receipts at the Chicago stockyards were from Iowa. The prosperity for U.S. agriculture that began just prior to the turn of the century and continued through 1919, termed the "Golden Age of Agriculture, was to define "parity", the balance of farm costs and profit and farm income, for future farm generations up to the present day. Between 1909 and 1914 the prices farmers received for their grain and livestock were in balance with their costs of doing business (Source: Guither, Harold D. Heritage of Plenty, A Guide to the economic history and development of U.S. Agriculture, Danville, Ill. 1972, p. 102). The outbreak of war in Europe in August 1914 accelerated farm profit and inflated farm land values. Response to abnormal demand required to support the Allied war effort resulted in post-war inflation, as farmers faced huge surpluses, low prices confronted a heavy burden of fixed costs. For example, the total cost of food for an average farm family increased from \$264.81 in 1887 to \$535.46 in 1918 (Source: Wallace's Farmer, XLIII, March 22, 1918, p. 551). Lynn Naines, Writing in Successful Farming magazine in July 1916 noted that farmers were getting more for the grain and livestock they had to sell, but that the cost of production

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was increasing far more rapidly than the prices they received. (Source: Lynn Haines, "The High Cost of Living," Successful Farming, XV, July 1916, p. 8). U.S. farm population began slipping from a 1916 figure of 32.5 million to 30.1 million by 1930 (Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census). Although the post-war farm economy didn't bottom out until 1920, the impact of the post-war farm economy put the brakes on commercial development in West Branch after the construction of the new West Branch State Bank building (5) at Main and Downey streets in 1916.

Summary

The impact of the wave of prosperity associated with the "Golden Era of Agriculture" in Iowa is best illustrated by the downtown structures within the West Branch Commercial District that remain today as monuments to better times for Midwestern farmers of the past. The period of downtown commercial development between 1895 and 1916 was directly linked to the bullish farm economy. In 1895, two hundred bushels of corn bought 1,000 feet of lumber; by 1908, when corn prices hit 50 cents per bushel, 100 bushels would buy 2,000 feet of lumber. It was a period of prosperity that transformed the West Branch Business district from a dusty little intersection into a thriving commercial center. It was this generation of growth that allowed the establishment of such nonessential enterprises as an Opera House (4), a music store (13, 11), a jewelry shop (13) and even a movie theater (8, 4) as well as expansion of essential commercial enterprises such as banks (12, 1, 5), hardware stores (1, 4), clothing stores (4, 2), grocery stores (4, 9?), harness shops (11, 16), drug stores (9), and meat markets (9, 5, 13). All of the buildings that housed these businesses are within the boundaries of the proposed West Branch Commercial District. All are intact today as examples of the good times that greeted the farming community of West Branch at the dawn of the 20th century.

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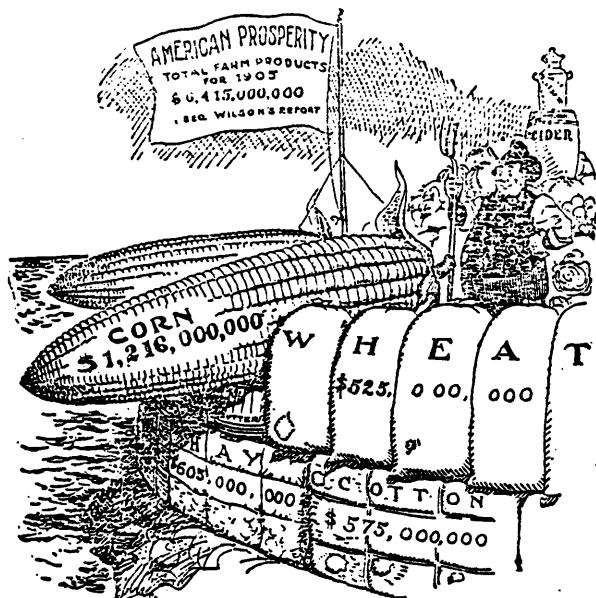
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—Chicago Chronicle.

December 7, 1905

-- The West Branch Times

September 15, 1910

-- The West Branch Times

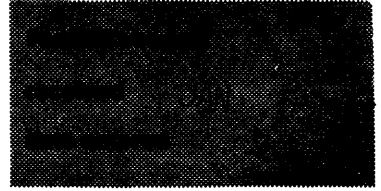
THE UNHAPPY FARMER.



Washington Star.

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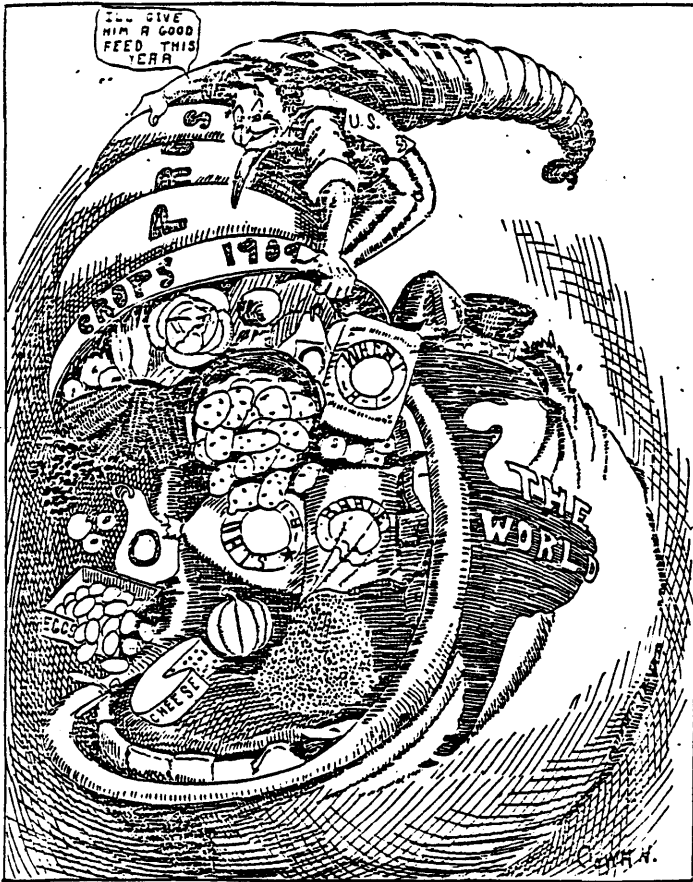
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UNCLE SAM CAN FEED THE WORLD.

September 2, 1909

-- The West Branch Times



OH, YOUNG LOCHINVAR CAME OUT OF THE WEST



August 8, 1910

-- The West Branch Times

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National Park Service

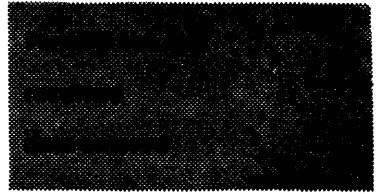
National Register of Historic Places
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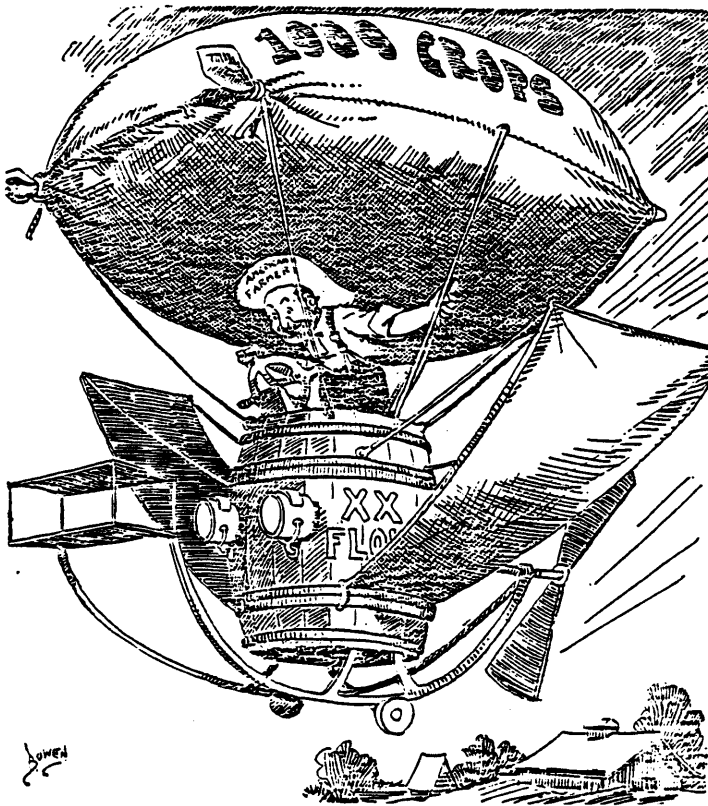
Significance

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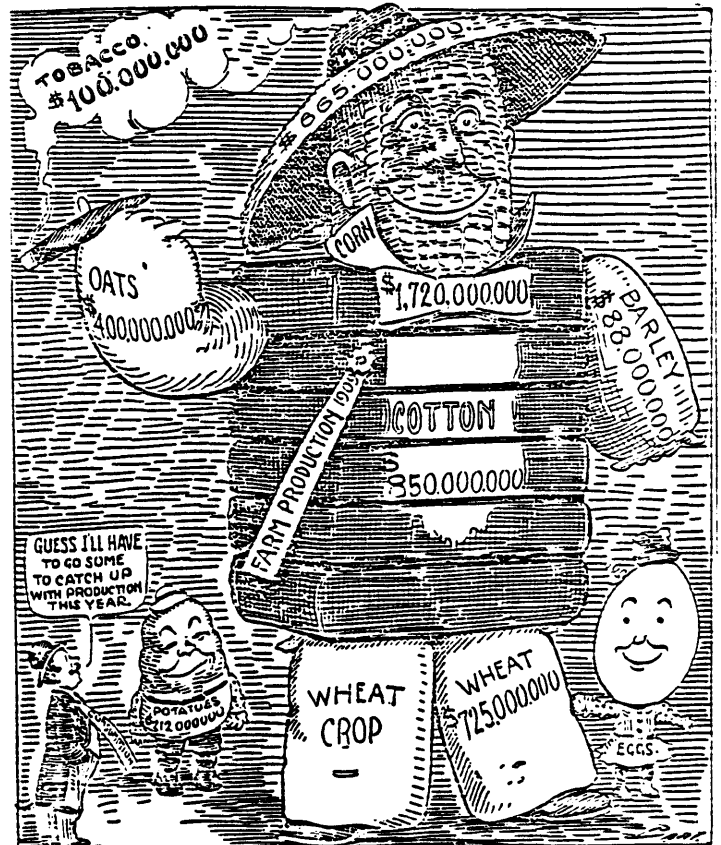


A RECORD BREAKER



August 26, 1909 -- The West Branch Times

THERE ARE GIANTS IN THESE DAYS

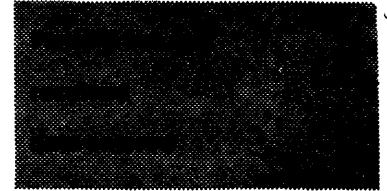


December 16, 1909

-- The West Branch Times

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Sources used in preparing this application included old newspaper articles, books, abstracts of title, historical photographs, Sanborn fire maps, a 1939 master's thesis, personal interviews with long-time West Branch residents, and items contained in the holdings of the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library in West Branch, including a cemetery registry and the program for a 1897 band concert.

Newspapers:

The dates of specific copies of the newspapers used can be found in section 22 of 14 the Iowa Site Inventory Sheets. Newspaper stories quoted in the "Significance" section of this application are noted within the text. Generally, in completing the research required to submit this application, microfilmed copies of early West Branch newspapers -- The Index, The West Branch Times and the West Branch Local Record -- Published between 1871 and 1916 were reviewed in the microfilm reading room of the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library. In some cases (obituaries, bank closings, etc.) later issues of these papers were used as well. One issue of The Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette -- November 9, 1907 -- was also used.

Books:

The following books proved most helpful:

Bearss, Edwin C.: Historical base Map and Ground Study, Herbert Hoover National Historic Site (Washington, D.C., 1968)

Fite, Gilbert C.: The Farmer's Frontier 1865-1900 (Albuquerque, New Mexico, 1974)

Guither, Harold D.: Heritage of Plenty, a guide to the economic history and development of U.S. Agriculture (Danville, Illinois, 1972)

Ross, Earle D.: Iowa Agriculture (Iowa City, Iowa, 1951)

Stratton, Maud: Herbert Hoover's Home Town: The History of West Branch (Iowa City, 1948)

Master's Thesis:

Woods, Elsworth P.: "The Effect of the World War on Iowa Agriculture, 1914-1920", a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, in the Department of History, in the Graduate College of the State University of Iowa, August 1939.

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Fire Maps:

Sanborn Fire Maps on file at the University of Iowa Main Library's map room, including West Branch maps for 1895, 1900, 1906, 1912 and 1927.

Personal interviews:

Occasional interviews with long-time West Branch residents, including L.C. Rummells, Glenn Brown, Minard Thomas and Murray Gibson.

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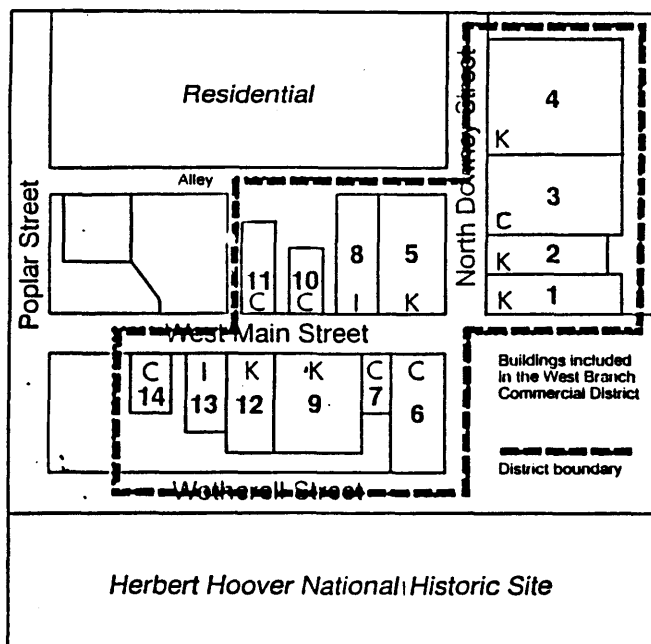
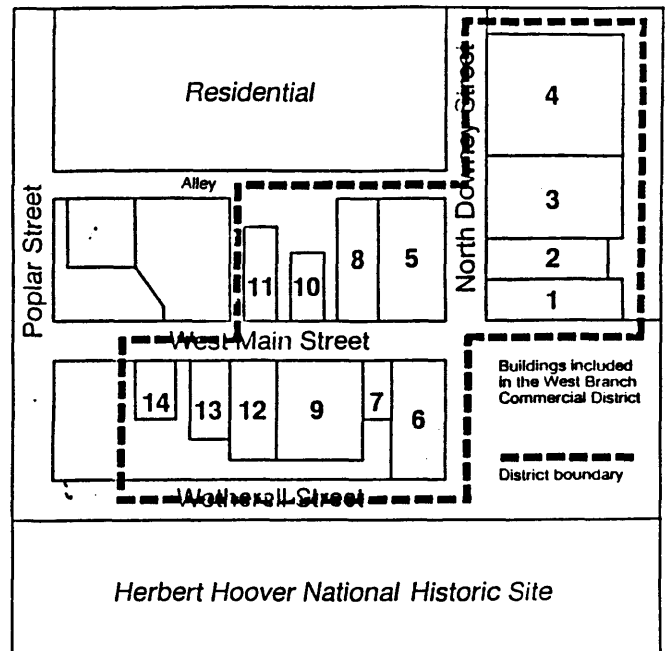
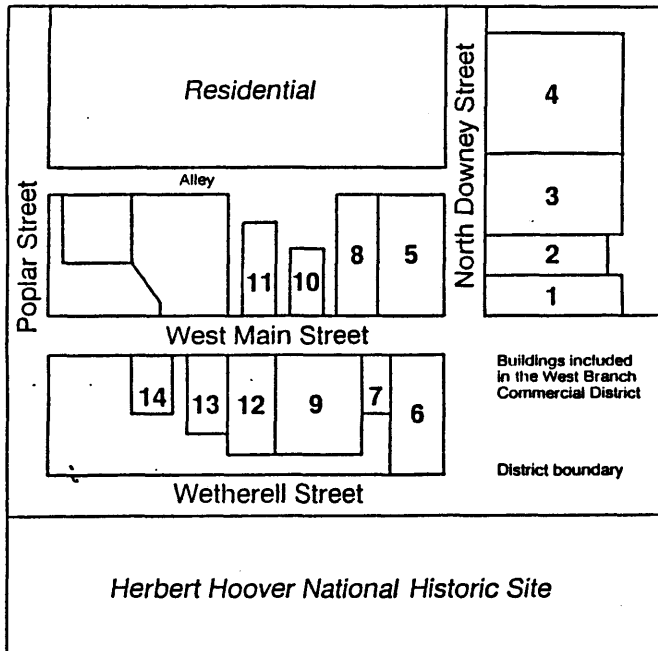


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Geographical Data

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K=key C=contributing I=intrusive

Iowa Site Inventory

Office of Historic Preservation
Iowa State Historical Department
East 12th & Grand Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

Site Number 1
District Name West Branch Commercial
Map Reference # 1

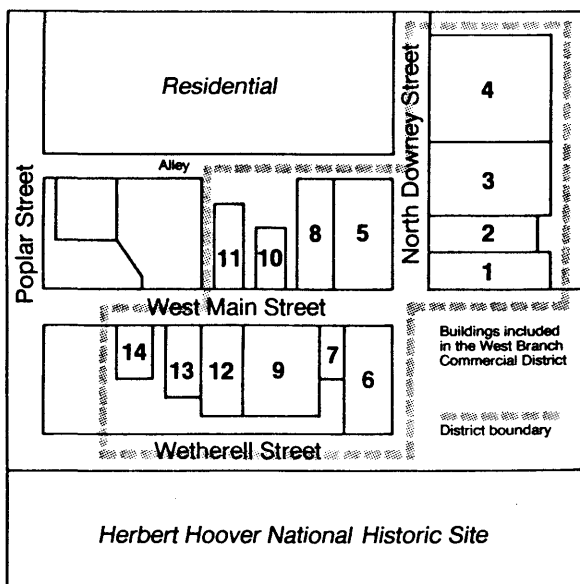
Identification

1. Site Name Wehrman Agency (Citizens' Savings Bank Building)
2. Village/Town/City West Branch Township Springdale County Cedar
3. Street Address 101 North Downey Street
4. Legal Location Urban Cameron 34 Lot 1
Urban: subdivision block parcel subparcel
Rural: township range section ¼ section of ¼ section
5. UTM Location: zone _____ easting _____ northing _____; Acreage less than 1
6. Owner(s) Name Don Wehrman
7. Owner(s) Address 137 West Main Street West Branch Iowa 52358
(Street address) (City) (State) (Zip)
8. Use: Present Insurance agency (first) Original Bank (first) Real estate
Apartment (second) Offices (second) Dentist/Physician

Description

9. Date of Construction 1908 Architect/Builder A.C. Hunter (stonework)
10. Building Type: XXXXX others unknown
 single-family dwelling industrial other institutional religious
 multiple-family dwelling educational public agricultural
 commercial
11. Exterior Walls: clapboard stone brick board and batten shingles stucco
 other _____
12. Structural System: wood frame with interlocking joints wood frame with light members (balloon frame)
 masonry load-bearing walls iron frame steel frame with curtain walls reinforced concrete
 other _____
13. Condition: excellent good fair deteriorated
14. Integrity: original site moved—if so, when? _____
 Notes on alterations, additions (with dates and architect, if known) and any other notable features of building and site:
only minimal alteration -- addition of combination storm windows on 2nd
15. Related Outbuildings and Property: barn other farm structures carriage house garage privy flr.
 other _____
16. Is the building endangered? no yes—if so, why? _____
17. Surroundings of the building: open land woodland scattered outbuildings densely built-up commercial
 industrial residential other _____

18. Map



19. Photo

Roll _____ Frame _____ View _____

Significance

(Indicate sources of information for all statements)

20. Architectural significance

- a. Key structure/individually may qualify for the National Register
- b. Contributing structure
- c. Not eligible/intrusion

Classical design with good proportions. This building has undergone virtually no exterior alteration. The building's pilasters are limestone, and the original tile (or terra cotta) coping remains. This building has a detailed corbel brick cornice.

21. Historical Significance

Theme(s) Social history

- a. Key structure/individually may qualify for the National Register
- b. Contributing structure
- c. Not eligible/intrusion

The growth in the banking business in West Branch was a key indicator of the economic prosperity that came to Cedar County during the "Golden Era of American Agriculture." For 10 years the Citizens' Savings Bank had conducted business in the brick banking house on West Main Street (12) constructed in 1898. In that decade, the bank's assets had grown from \$20,000 to \$121,000, and a new bank building was deemed a necessity. The new bank building was a source of pride for the community and its construction replaced a run-down wood-frame building that for years had been home to a series of hardware stores. "The old building so long known as the 'hardware corner' has been

22. Sources (for primary and secondary sources, give complete facts of publication: author, title, place of publication, date, etc.):

Sanborn fire maps: 1895, 1900, 1906, 1912, 1927 (cont'd)
Stratton, Maud: Herbert Hoover's Home Town: The History of West Branch (1948)
The West Branch Times: 1/23/08; 3/26/08; 4/2/08; 5/28/08; 6/25/08; 7/2/08;
7/23/08; 7/30/08; 8/6/08; 8/20/08; 9/17/08; 10/1/08; 10/22/08; 11/26/08;
1/7/09; 1/14/09; 4/7/98; 4/21/98; 6/16/98; 8/23/34
Interview with L.C. Rummells, president West Branch State Bank

Prepared by Tom Walsh Date 8/26/86
Address P.O. Box 696 West Branch IA 52358 Telephone (319) 643-5327
Organization Herbert Hoover Presidential Library Assn.

For Office of Historic Preservation Use Only

1. Office Information Sources on this Property

- County Resource File
- Windshield Survey
- National Register
- Grants-In-Aid: _____
- Determination of Eligibility

Review and Compliance Project:

- Other _____
- Other _____
- Other _____

2. Subject Traces

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____
- e. _____

3. Photo Images _____

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Iowa Site Inventory

Office of Historic Preservation
Iowa State Historical Department
East 12th & Grand Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

Site Number 1

Continuation Sheet

Item Number(s)

21. Historical Significance (cont'd)

wrecked and now remains only a memory," The West Branch Times reported on April 2, 1908. "Many different firms and individuals have dealt out hardware from this building but the ruthless hand of time has rendered it unfit for a place of business and must give way to progress and up-to-date ways." Work on the building was plagued by problems, at least one linked to the prosperity being enjoyed by area farmers. The good times that began in West Branch around 1895 were getting even better. Two hundred bushels of corn would buy 1,000 board feet of lumber in 1895. By 1908, 100 bushels would buy 2,000 board feet. The resulting epidemic of barn building created a shortage of carpenters for projects like the new Citizens' Savings Bank building. In May, 1908, the bank's officers decided the construction bids were too high and ordered the architect (unknown) to rethink the project with an eye toward thrift. In June, a survey showed that George S. Randall's buggy and implement house north of the bank's Downey Street building site had been built 10 inches onto the bank corner's lot. As the construction plans called for full use of the lot, Randall's shop had to be moved. Heavy rains delayed the stonemasons' work on the foundation, but by mid-August the first-floor joists were in place and the bricklayers were on the job. By late September a layer of gravel was spread on the new building's flat roof.

The new bank building meant a new doctor for West Branch. One of the three suites of office rooms on the new bank's second story would be occupied by Dr. J. Hill, a 1907 graduate of St. Joseph Medical College who had been practicing medicine in the Johnson County farm community of Hills, 25 miles southwest of West Branch. On New Year's Day, 1909, J.E. Larson moved into the front suite to open a real estate, insurance and loan business. The suite on the east end of the building had been outfitted as a new dental office for Dr. M.W. Munger, who had been pulling teeth in West Branch for years.

The bank moved into its new building over the weekend of January 9-10, 1909. A few days after a 7,500-pound Mosler safe was wheeled around the corner from the old bank building and installed, the bank's furniture, which had been refinished in Cedar Rapids, arrived and was moved into the building. "They are now at home in as cozy and up-to-date rooms as any bank in eastern Iowa," The West Branch Times reported on January 14, 1909. "They have a large vault and have installed a lot of steel safety deposit boxes which will be rented to customers at a reasonable rate, with a convenient counter nearby where the contents can be looked over in privacy. Back of the vault is a consultation room where matters can be talked over with customers, and in the rear is a director's room which is of good size and well lighted. The building is heated by steam throughout and is a model of comfort and convenience."

The Citizens' Savings Bank would remain in its new location for 25 years. Although it would survive a post-war collapse of farm prices that saw the \$2 corn of 1918 become the 15-cent corn of 1921, the bank would not survive the Great Depression. On August 24, 1934, the Citizens' Savings Bank would be absorbed by the West Branch State Bank under a reorganization plan that

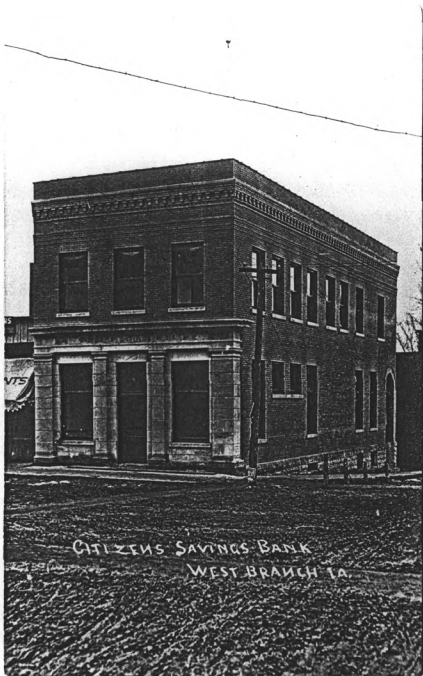
-- over

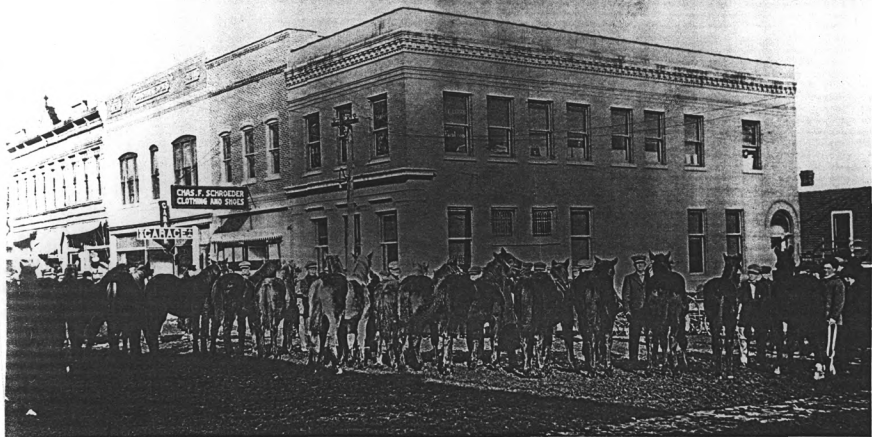
created a new First State Bank. Once a downtown showpiece, the proud new home of a growing bank would later become T.A. Moore's real estate and insurance agency and W.B. Anderson's funeral home. Today, the building at 101 North Downey Street houses the Wehrman Agency of the 115-year-old Springdale Mutual Insurance Association.

HISTORIC VIEW 'E-1'
W/ Site No. 1
undated photograph
taken prior to 1912

photographer unknown

Source: West Branch
Heritage Museum





HISTORIC VIEW 'E' W/Site No. 1 undated photograph taken after 1912

photographer unknown Source: West Branch Heritage Museum

Iowa Site Inventory

Office of Historic Preservation
Iowa State Historical Department
East 12th & Grand Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

Site Number 2
District Name West Branch Commercial
Map Reference # 2

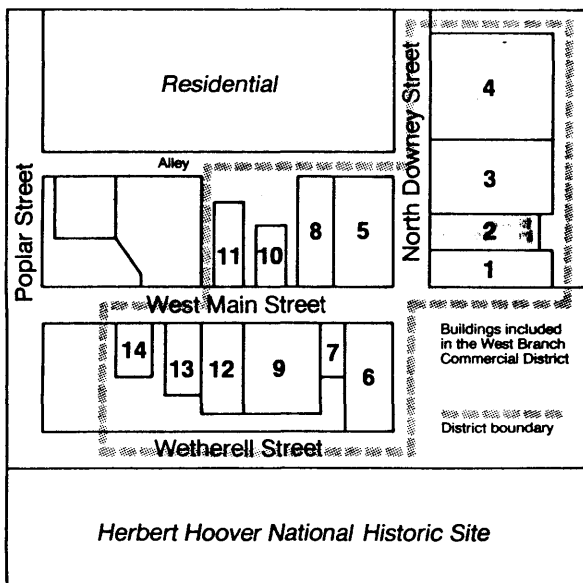
Identification

1. Site Name Cats 'N Dogs Antiques
2. Village/Town/City West Branch Township Springdale County Cedar
3. Street Address 103 North Downey Street
4. Legal Location Urban Cameron 34 Lot 2
Urban: subdivision block parcel subparcel
Rural: township range section ¼ section of ¼ section
5. UTM Location: zone _____ easting _____ northing _____; Acreage less than 1
6. Owner(s) Name John Jr. and Norma Beecher
7. Owner(s) Address Rural Route 2 West Branch Iowa 52358
(Street address) (City) (State) (Zip)
8. Use: Present Antique store Original Clothing store

Description

9. Date of Construction 1912 ~~1912~~ Builder unknown
10. Building Type:
 single-family dwelling industrial other institutional religious
 multiple-family dwelling educational public agricultural
 commercial
11. Exterior Walls: clapboard stone brick board and batten shingles stucco
 other _____
12. Structural System: wood frame with interlocking joints wood frame with light members (balloon frame)
 masonry load-bearing walls iron frame steel frame with curtain walls reinforced concrete
 other _____
13. Condition: excellent good fair deteriorated
14. Integrity: original site moved—if so, when? _____
 Notes on alterations, additions (with dates and architect, if known) and any other notable features of building and site:
transom over display windows has been covered
15. Related Outbuildings and Property: barn other farm structures carriage house garage privy
 other _____
16. Is the building endangered? no yes—if so, why? _____
17. Surroundings of the building: open land woodland scattered outbuildings densely built-up commercial
 industrial residential other _____

18. Map



19. Photo

Roll _____ Frame _____ View _____

Significance

(Indicate sources of information for all statements)

20. Architectural significance

- a. Key structure/individually may qualify for the National Register
- b. Contributing structure
- c. Not eligible/intrusion

This brick building is of a straightfoward design, with evenly spaced windows and brick cornice. The only exterior alteration appears to be the sheeting of the transom over the display windows.

21. Historical Significance

Theme(s) Social History

- a. Key structure/individually may qualify for the National Register
- b. Contributing structure
- c. Not eligible/intrusion

Although it was built the year the Titanic went down (1912), this two-story brick commercial building is the newest of the commercial buildings that line North Downey Street. The building was constructed as rental property by both Ross Leech, who at various time in his life was a farmer, carpenter and editor of The West Branch Times, and his

brother, Dr. L.J. Leech, a physician in West Branch from 1882 until 1937. The new building plugged a hole between the new Citizens' (cont'd)

22. Sources (for primary and secondary sources, give complete facts of publication: author, title, place of publication, date, etc.):

Sanborn fire maps: 1895, 1900, 1906, 1912, 1927

Stratton, Maud: Herbert Hoover's Home Town: The History of West Branch (1948)

The West Branch Times: 1/27/10; 2/3/10; 2/10/10; 8/25/10; 2/9/11; 4/6/11; 3/21/12; 9/12/12; 9-26-12; 10-3-12; 11-28-12

Interviews with L.C. Rummells, Glenn Brown, long-time West Branch businessmen

Prepared by Tom Walsh

Date 8/26/86

Address P.O. Box 696 West Branch IA

Telephone (319) 643-5327

Organization Herbert Hoover Presidential Library Assn.

For Office of Historic Preservation Use Only

1. Office Information Sources on this Property

- County Resource File
- Windshield Survey
- National Register
- Grants-In-Aid: _____
- Determination of Eligibility

Review and Compliance Project:

- Other _____
- Other _____
- Other _____

2. Subject Traces

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____
- e. _____

3. Photo Images _____

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Iowa Site Inventory

Office of Historic Preservation
Iowa State Historical Department
East 12th & Grand Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

Site Number 2

Continuation Sheet

Item Number(s)

21. Historical Significance (cont'd)

Savings Bank built in 1908 at the northeast corner of Main and Downey streets and the auto garage to the north Bert Leech had opened in 1911. For years on the site of Ross and L.J. Leech's new building had stood the warehouse where G.S. Randall & Co. stored farm implements, buggies and wagons. No tears were shed in February 1910 when the Randall building was torn down. "The old ware room, which had been a landmark of our town for more than 20 years and never was a thing of beauty, was wrecked last week," The West Branch Times reported on February 10, 1910. Local Masonic Lodge members had bought the lot in 1910 with the intention of constructing their own lodge building. That plan was abandoned in 1911 with a decision to move into the second story of Bert Leech's garage building (3), and the lot was sold to Ross and Bert Leech, who later sold his half-interest to his father, L.J. Leech.

The building was constructed during the summer of 1912. In September a local painting contractor -- the Randall brothers -- began painting the inside of the Leech's new commercial building. On October 1, Charles F. Schroeder, who had operated his men's clothing business in the north room of the Opera Block building (4) since 1907, finished moving his stock of "gent's furnishings" into the new storefront. By 1912, Schroeder had spent 20 years selling men's clothing. After 15 years in business in Muscatine, Iowa, he relocated to West Branch in 1907. On the main floor of his new store, he displayed an expanded stock of Elgin shirts, Arrow collars, Kirschbaum suits, Lorenz sweaters, My Own Brand overalls and Superior brand underwear. Schroeder used the balcony above the new store's main floor for children's clothes and for a new shoe department, a feature his old store didn't include. There he displayed the latest styles (Florsheim and Rice & Hutchins), as well as Ball brand rubbers to keep new shoes looking new.

"The new building is as well prepared for the business as any clothing house in the state, and is well and conveniently furnished with windows for display of goods and for lighting, and with electric lights for dark days and evening trade," The West Branch Times reported on October 3, 1912. "The building will be heated by steam and is supplied with city water. West Branch should be congratulated that it has such an elegant up-to-date store room, and one now occupied by a store equal to those found in cities of 15,000 or 20,000 inhabitants, with all the conveniences and benefits of a large city gents furnishings trade."

Charles Schroeder remained in the clothing business at his Downey Street location for many years. The building later housed a series of furniture and hardware stores and at one point was connected by an interior doorway with the building to the north (3). It has been an antique store since 1981.

Iowa Site Inventory

Office of Historic Preservation
Iowa State Historical Department
East 12th & Grand Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

Site Number 3
District Name West Branch Commercial
Map Reference # 3

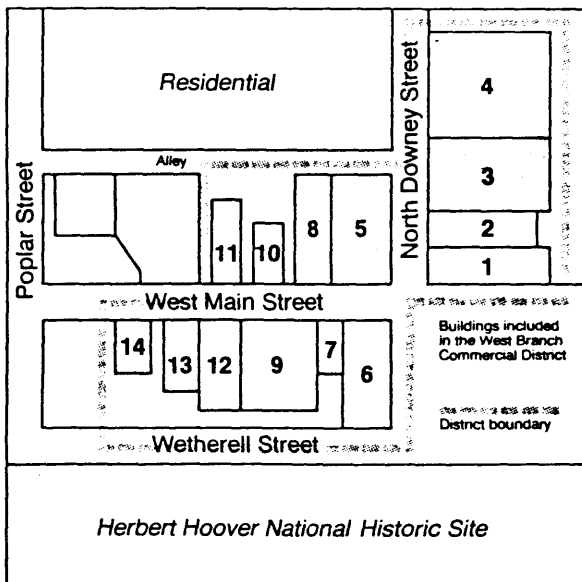
Identification

1. Site Name Rex Hardware Building
2. Village/Town/City West Branch Township Springdale County Cedar
3. Street Address 105 North Downey Street
4. Legal Location Urban Cameron 34 Lot 3
Urban Rural subdivision township block range parcel section subparcel 1/4 section of 1/4 section
5. UTM Location: zone _____ easting _____ northing _____; Acreage less than 1
6. Owner(s) Name Kenneth and Phillip Thomas Kenneth: RR2, West Branch IA
7. Owner(s) Address Phillip: 115 N. 5th Street West Branch IA 52358
(Street address) (City) (State) (Zip)
8. Use: Present Hardware store Original Auto garage -- 1st floor
Masonic temple -- 2nd floor

Description

9. Date of Construction 1911 ~~XXXXX~~ Builder Hoar & Parkison (Iowa City) general cor
10. Building Type: W.E. McCaleb (West Branch) concrete
 single-family dwelling industrial other institutional religious
 multiple-family dwelling educational public Masonic agricultural
 commercial Lodge
11. Exterior Walls: clapboard stone brick board and batten shingles stucco
 other _____
12. Structural System: wood frame with interlocking joints wood frame with light members (balloon frame)
 masonry load-bearing walls iron frame steel frame with curtain walls reinforced concrete
 other _____
13. Condition: excellent good fair deteriorated
14. Integrity: original site moved—if so, when? _____
 Notes on alterations, additions (with dates and architect, if known) and any other notable features of building and site:
Ornate brick cornice covered with clapboards. Western awning added to
15. Related Outbuildings and Property: barn other farm structures carriage house garage privy front facade.
 other _____
16. Is the building endangered? no yes—if so, why? _____
17. Surroundings of the building: open land woodland scattered outbuildings densely built-up commercial
 industrial residential other _____

18. Map



19. Photo

Roll _____ Frame _____ View _____

Significance

(Indicate sources of information for all statements)

20. Architectural significance

- a. Key structure/individually may qualify for the National Register
- b. Contributing structure
- c. Not eligible/intrusion

This brick commercial building has been classified as an intrusive structure due to extensive exterior alteration, including construction of a Western-style wooden awning that extends across the front of the building over the sidewalk. An ornate brick cornice has been covered with clapboard siding, apparently due to deterioration. It is a simple commercial brick building, its front divided into thirds with an entrance in the center and a stairway to the second floor on the south end of the street-level facade. It should be noted that these alterations could be corrected and the building's facade returned to its original 1911 appearance.

21. Historical Significance

Theme(s) Social History

- a. Key structure/individually may qualify for the National Register
- b. Contributing structure
- c. Not eligible/intrusion

Although somewhat altered, the Rex Hardware building, constructed by Bert Leech in 1911, this important landmark attests to the love affair West Branch's most prominent citizens had with the automobile in the early 1900's. By 1909 Albert M. (Bert) Leech was convinced there was money to be made in catering to this blossoming love affair. J. T. Butler, who ran the phone company, bought (cont'd)

22. Sources (for primary and secondary sources, give complete facts of publication: author, title, place of publication, date, etc.):

Sanborn fire maps: 1895, 1900, 1906, 1912, 1927
Stratton, Maud: Herbert Hoover's Home Town: The History of West Branch (1948)
The West Branch Times: 2/27/08; 6/11/08; 7/2/08; 9/17/08; 12/10/08; 3/11/09;
8/25/10; 10/13/10; 10/20/10; 10/27/10; 12/15/10; 2/9/11; 4/6/11; 4/13/11;
4/27/11; 5/4/11; 5/11/11; 5/18/11; 6/29/11; 8/24/11; 8/31/11; 10/5/11;
11/2/11; 11/23/11; 11/30/11

Prepared by Tom Walsh Date 8/26/86
Address P.O. Box 696 West Branch IA 52358 Telephone (319) 643-5327
Organization Herbert Hoover Presidential Library Assn.

For Office of Historic Preservation Use Only

1. Office Information Sources on this Property

- County Resource File
- Windshield Survey
- National Register
- Grants-In-Aid: _____
- Determination of Eligibility

Review and Compliance Project:

- Other _____
- Other _____
- Other _____

2. Subject Traces

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____
- e. _____

3. Photo Images _____

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Iowa Site Inventory

Office of Historic Preservation
Iowa State Historical Department
East 12th & Grand Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

Site Number 3

Continuation Sheet

Item Number(s)

21. Historical Significance (cont'd)

a Maxwell Runabout in February 1908, claiming it would be useful in searching for downed phone lines. Hotel owner Nathan Crook followed suit in June, as did Joe Albin, a well-to-do livestock buyer, in July. When a nine-car "parade" was spotted chugging down Main Street in September, 1908, it was front-page news in West Branch. By early 1909, Bert Leech had bought the G.C. Shrader grocery building at Main and Poplar streets and converted it into an auto garage and plumbing shop. With the healthy farm economy putting these new-fangled horseless buggies within the reach of the area's prospering farmers, Leech made plans to sell new cars, too. "Hogs reached the price of \$8.35 last Monday," The West Branch Times reported on September 9, 1909. "With a good corn crop already assured the farmer need have no fear as to the advisability of buying that automobile he has been wanting for so long."

By October, 1909, enough West Branch businessmen owned cars to prompt an "auto tour" so that "all may know of the best town on the map." After decorating their cars with advertisements, they cruised their mobile billboard through the Johnson County communities of Oasis, Morse, North Liberty, Coralville and Iowa City, where they stopped at City Park for a picnic lunch. On the way home, they visited two more Johnson County communities -- Hills and Lone Tree -- a community in Washington County, Riverside, and two Cedar County towns -- West Liberty and Downey. Automobile fever peaked at Christmas, when a newspaper advertisement for a downtown store showed Santa and his pack of toys arriving not in a sleigh, but in a roadster. Bert Leech had seen enough. By then the firm of Olsen & Anderson across town was selling cars, too. In February, 1911, Leech decided to expand, buying the two vacant lots next to the Opera Block building (4) on North Downey Street and taking on a mechanic as a partner.

Meanwhile, the local Masonic Lodge, which had been meeting in the south end of the second story of the Opera Block building (4) since 1895, had been raising funds for a building of its own. In 1911, the Masons' building committee decided instead to join Bert Leech in the construction of a two-story brick structure that would house both Leech's street-level garage and the Masons' second-story lodge rooms and temple. Bids from five builders were opened on April 1, 1911. The low bid of \$6,300 from Hoar & Parkison of Iowa City was accepted over a bid of \$7,452 from a West Branch firm -- Edgerton & Woods. Work began April 28 when W.E. McCaleb fired up his new cement mixer and, before an audience of stunned sidewalk superintendents, poured 60 feet of concrete footings in only a few hours.

On May 11, 1911, The West Branch Times reported that retired farmer Henry Gregg had bought yet another new car. "And so it goes," the paper reported. "Some people want a new machine each year, partly for a little more style and partly for a little more speed." A week later, speed limit signs were posted within the city limits and word spread that the speeding ordinance would be enforced. By mid-August the garage-temple building was complete. Bert Leech moved in his stock of plumbing goods, gasoline engines and auto supplies. "About the busiest place in town these days is the garage of Leech

& Gruwell," The Times reported on August 31. "They are busy from daylight to dark with their first floor space well filled with machines waiting for repairs in a more or less degree. It is seldom that an auto passes through town without at least a stop for gas or oil and mostly for some other repair."

The Masons, meanwhile, were busy ordering furniture for their new lodge rooms and temple from E.L. Hollingsworth, a local furniture dealer. A formal dedication was scheduled for November 23, 1911, to show off the temple's lodge rooms, library, dining room and kitchen. The 350 persons who attended the gala event were impressed, as was West Branch Times editor F.E. Corbin, who placed the value of the new building at \$9,000.

"There does not seem to be anything lacking in the appointments," he wrote. "The rooms are handsomely finished. The floors are covered with costly Wilton rugs, and other furnishings are in conformity. It is a beautiful temple the Masons have created, and it will long stand as a monument to the progressiveness of this substantial, prosperous and wholesome little city."

The 75-year-old building at 105 North Downey Street now houses Rex Hardware, the latest in a series of stores that sold hardware and furniture after Bert Leech's garage closed down. The second-story Masonic temple and lodge rooms remain intact on the now-vacant second floor, although unused since the October 1979 dedication of a new lodge building near North Sixth Street.

& Gruwell," The Times reported on August 31. "They are busy from daylight to dark with their first floor space well filled with machines waiting for repairs in a more or less degree. It is seldom that an auto passes through town without at least a stop for gas or oil and mostly for some other repair."

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HISTORIC VIEW 'P'

W/Site 3 (center bldg.)

undated photograph taken
in late 1911 or early
1912

photographer unknown

Source: West Branch
Heritage Museum

(also shows Sites 1,4
right to left)



Iowa Site Inventory

Office of Historic Preservation
Iowa State Historical Department
East 12th & Grand Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

Site Number 4
District Name West Branch Commercial
Map Reference # 4

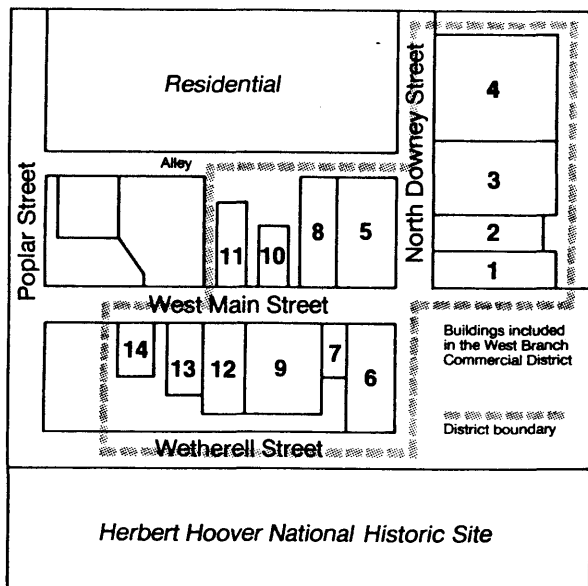
Identification

1. Site Name Opera Block
2. Village/Town/City West Branch Township Springdale County Cedar
3. Street Address 107 North Downey Street
4. Legal Location Urban Cameron 34 lot 4
Urban: subdivision block parcel subparcel
 Rural: township range section ¼ section of ¼ section
5. UTM Location: zone _____ easting _____ northing _____; Acreage less than 1
6. Owner(s) Name Joseph Svec
7. Owner(s) Address 420 First Street West Mount Vernon IA 52314
(Street address) (City) (State) (Zip)
8. Use: Present Restaurant/shops - 1st Original hardware/clothing/grocery - 1st
Apartments -- 2nd opera house/Masonic hall -- 2nd

Description

9. Date of Construction 1895 ~~XCMR~~ Builder Bingham & Ward -- stonework/masonry
10. Building Type:
 single-family dwelling industrial other institutional religious
 multiple-family dwelling educational public Masonic hall agricultural
 commercial
11. Exterior Walls: clapboard stone brick board and batten shingles stucco
 other brick produced at West Branch brickyard
12. Structural System: wood frame with interlocking joints wood frame with light members (balloon frame)
 masonry load-bearing walls iron frame steel frame with curtain walls reinforced concrete
 other _____
13. Condition: excellent good fair deteriorated
14. Integrity: original site moved—if so, when? _____
 Notes on alterations, additions (with dates and architect, if known) and any other notable features of building and site:
major restoration in 1986 eliminated previous altertaions
15. Related Outbuildings and Property: barn other farm structures carriage house garage privy
 other _____
16. Is the building endangered? no yes—if so, why? _____
17. Surroundings of the building: open land woodland scattered outbuildings densely built-up commercial
 industrial residential other _____

18. Map



19. Photo

Roll _____ Frame _____ View _____

Significance

(Indicate sources of information for all statements)

20. Architectural significance

- a. Key structure/individually may qualify for the National Register
- b. Contributing structure
- c. Not eligible/intrusion

This Late Victorian business block is a two-story brick structure that measures 70-by-60 feet and stands 40 feet tall. It was built in 1895 at an estimated cost of \$9,000. It contains three spacious commercial rooms at street level, with a stairwell separating two on the north end with the other on the south end. The second story originally housed a 500-seat opera house on the north end and a Masonic hall on the south end. The building has a front facade of cast iron and stamped metal. Its original ornate iron cornice remains intact. The building was constructed with brick produced at the J.E. Steer brickworks in West Branch. The building underwent a major restoration in 1986 that returned its facade to its original splendor.

21. Historical Significance

Theme(s) Social history

- a. Key structure/individually may qualify for the National Register
- b. Contributing structure
- c. Not eligible/intrusion

With the farm economy booming, the people of West Branch had never seen a year quite like 1895, nor a building project quite like Charles Macomber's Opera Block on North Downey Street. Construction of the opulent two-story brick structure -- still the largest commercial building in West Branch -- occurred in the midst of what West Branch Times editor W.W. Gruwell termed "an improvement rage." Gruwell wrote in March of 1895 that "the carpenter's racket is heard all over town. There are four or five new buildings now under construction." A list of improvements made in and around West Branch during

22. Sources (for primary and secondary sources, give complete facts of publication: author, title, place of publication, date, etc.): (cont'd)

Sanborn fire maps: 1895, 1900, 1906, 1912, 1927

Stratton, Maud: Herbert Hoover's Home Town: The History of West Branch (1948)

The West Branch Times: 1/24/95; 2/21/95; 3/14/95; 3/21/95; 3/28/95; 4/11/95; 4/25/95; 5/2/95; 6/13/95; 7/18/95; 8/8/95; 8/29/95; 10/17/95; 11/14/95; 12/5/95; 1/9/96; 1/16/96; 2/6/96; 2/13/96; 3/19/96; 10/17/12

Prepared by Tom Walsh Date 8/27/86
Address P.O. Box 696 West Branch IA 52358 Telephone (319) 643-5327
Organization Herbert Hoover Presidential Library Assn.

For Office of Historic Preservation Use Only

1. Office Information Sources on this Property

- County Resource File
- Windshield Survey
- National Register
- Grants-In-Aid: _____
- Determination of Eligibility

Review and Compliance Project:

- Other _____
- Other _____
- Other _____

2. Subject Traces

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____
- e. _____

3. Photo Images _____

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Iowa Site Inventory

Office of Historic Preservation
Iowa State Historical Department
East 12th & Grand Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

Site Number 4

Continuation Sheet

Item Number(s)

21. Historical Significance (cont'd)

1895 that appeared in The West Branch Times in January 1896 showed them to be worth \$50,100, with the most ambitious being the Opera Block at \$9,000. The building's construction was followed closely by the people of West Branch through Gruwell's weekly updates. Work on the foundation's front wall -- which required "over thirty perch of stone" -- began in April, thanks to warm weather. The job of laying the building's brick walls was interrupted in July due to a shortage of bricks being produced at J.E. Steer's brickyard south of Main Street, just east of the railroad tracks. "As soon as another kiln is burned the brick will hardly get cold before they are placed in the walls by Bingham & Ward, who are doing the brick work as well as the stone foundation," The Times reported on July 18, 1895. By late August, the paper reported, Steer had "placed a large brick machine in his yard...it weighs 8,000 pounds and with two horses attached will turn out 15,000 bricks a day." Before the building season ended, the brickworks would produce nearly 400,000 bricks.

The first floor of the Opera Block building was divided into three spacious commercial rooms. The first tenant -- Morris & Sons, dealers in hardware -- began moving into the south room of the first floor in November. By mid-March 1896, the north end of the first floor had been transformed into the "Model Clothing House." Neal Madson, who had been in the clothing business in West Branch for over 20 years, had relocated his east-side shop and had taken in his son as a partner. The store offered Monarch Brand shirts outfitted with Arrow Brand cuffs and collars. It also carried a full line of suspenders, neckware and gloves. At the same time, the middle room was being outfitted for Dean, Ball & Co., which The West Branch Times claimed would bring "the largest stock of groceries ever introduced in this city." The Times also assured its readers that these three new stores didn't represent any threat to local businessmen. "The new stores going in the opera block are West Branch institutions, run by West Branch men, no branch concern or commission business in this," read an item that appeared February 6, 1896.

Ever since the paper had announced plans for the Opera Block on January 24, 1895, there were mixed feelings within the community about the advisability of having a performing arts theatre in town. "The opera house was just as problematic a venture to the old timers as dancing had been," Maud Stratton wrote in her 1948 history of West Branch. "So many heads were shaken when the one-night stands were opened." Within two months of the first performance on Christmas night, 1895, by the "Criterion Players," West Branch Times editor W.W. Gruwell felt compelled to defend the Opera House against talk that, like whiskey and gambling, it was helping to unravel the moral fiber of the youth of West Branch. "Weston's Comedians closed their series of entertainments in the opera house at this place last week," Gruwell wrote in the paper's February 13, 1896, issue. "The plays have been of a good character and the best of order was maintained throughout. Nothing was presented that could be classed unchaste or immodest, but on the contrary in each there was a moral lesson taught, and if the managers of the opera house can continue to furnish entertainment of this class West Branch need not fear the influence of this

(cont'd)

new institution."

Season tickets were offered to Opera House patrons, and those who bought them at Gill's Drug Store were promised one free show. The hall was often booked for piano and vocal recitals and for fund-raisers featuring the West Branch Band. Local high school students often used the 20-by-40 foot stage for plays and musical reviews when the hall wasn't being tied up by traveling drama troupes, who some townspeople felt were nothing more than roving bands of undesirables.

The Masonic Hall that shared the upstairs with the opera house was dedicated on December 3, 1895, when members of Wapsinonoc Lodge No. 381, A.F. and A.M. gathered with their spouses for a musical performance and a supper of sandwiches, fruit, cake, coffee and ice cream that was served "after inspecting the fine finish and massive furniture of the hall." Both the Masonic Hall and the once-controversial opera house were gutted years ago and remodeled into apartments. The street-level storefronts have seen a variety of uses over the years, including "The Pastime" motion picture house that moved into the north room in October 1912 after Charles Schroeder relocated his gent's clothing store into the new Leech brothers' building (2) down the block. "The room is well equipped with opera chairs and other furniture, and an excellent machine in its fireproof booth, and other conveniences for the work," The West Branch Times reported on October 17, 1912. "The management has contracted for the best sixty-reel service for the winter, which doubtless will instruct and please our citizens."

Prior to its restoration in 1986, the 91-year-old building's lower level housed Woodlore, a woodworking and antique furniture store.

HISTORIC VIEW 'G'

W/ Site 4

undated photograph by
unknown photographer
showing Site 4 on
the left.

Source: West Branch
Heritage Museum



Iowa Site Inventory

Office of Historic Preservation
Iowa State Historical Department
East 12th & Grand Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

Site Number 5
District Name West Branch Commercial
Map Reference # 5

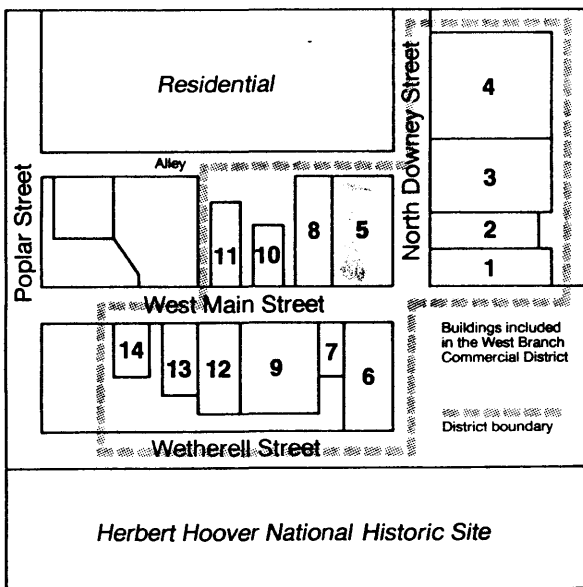
Identification

1. Site Name West Branch State Bank (1916)
2. Village/Town/City West Branch Township Springdale County Cedar
3. Street Address 101 West Main Street
4. Legal Location U Subdivision of Lot 64 38 1
Urban: subdivision block parcel subparcel
Rural: township range section ¼ section of ¼ section
5. UTM Location: zone _____ easting _____ northing _____; Acreage less than 1
6. Owner(s) Name John Kofoed
7. Owner(s) Address 136 Wetherell Street West Branch IA 52358
(Street address) (City) (State) (Zip)
8. Use: Present Social services agency- 1st Original Bank -- 1st
apartments -- 2nd Offices/apartments -- 2nd

Description

9. Date of Construction 1916 Architect Walter Josselyn & Taylor (Cedar Rapids)
10. Building Type: (cont'd)
 single-family dwelling industrial other institutional religious
 multiple-family dwelling educational public agricultural
 commercial
11. Exterior Walls: clapboard stone brick board and batten shingles stucco
 other _____
12. Structural System: wood frame with interlocking joints wood frame with light members (balloon frame)
 masonry load-bearing walls iron frame steel frame with curtain walls reinforced concrete
 other _____
13. Condition: excellent good fair deteriorated
14. Integrity: original site moved—if so, when? _____
 Notes on alterations, additions (with dates and architect, if known) and any other notable features of building and site:
Entrance altered through replacement of long, narrow windows on either side of the front door
15. Related Outbuildings and Property: barn other farm structures carriage house garage privy
 other _____
16. Is the building endangered? no yes—if so, why? _____
17. Surroundings of the building: open land woodland scattered outbuildings densely built-up commercial
 industrial residential other _____

18. Map



19. Photo

Roll _____ Frame _____ View _____

Significance

(Indicate sources of information for all statements)

20. Architectural significance

- a. Key structure/individually may qualify for the National Register
- b. Contributing structure
- c. Not eligible/intrusion

This large bank block designed by Josselyn & Taylor of Cedar Rapids shows both prairie school influence and Art Deco detail. The building shows fine stone and brick work, with an atypical cornice treatment that is a breakaway from then-standard detailing. This building is one of the architectural "gems" within the West Branch Commercial District and has undergone only minimal and correctable alteration around the front entryway.

21. Historical Significance

Theme(s) Social History

- a. Key structure/individually may qualify for the National Register
- b. Contributing structure
- c. Not eligible/intrusion

In September 1877, then only two years old, the West Branch Bank moved across Main Street to a new two-story brick banking house on the northwest corner of Main and Downey streets. The brick banking house that today houses the Families, Inc. social services agency was built in 1916 as a replacement for the smaller 1877 bank building erected on the same site. When the bank was organized in 1875, its assets were \$50,000. The prosperity that accompanied the "Golden Era of Agriculture" brought farmers to town with money to spend and money to bank. By 1916, when the new bank building was constructed, the

22. Sources (for primary and secondary sources, give complete facts of publication: author, title, place of publication, date, etc.):

(cont'd)

Sanborn fire maps: 1895, 1900, 1906, 1912, 1927
Stratton, Maud: Herbert Hoover's Home Town: The History of West Branch (1948)
The West Branch Times: 4/13/16; 6/8/16; 6/29/16; 7/27/16; 9/14/16; 12/7/16;
12/21/16; 1/4/17; 1/11/17; 1/18/17; 2/8/17; 8/23/34; 9/6/34; 11/29/45
Interview with L.C. Rummells, president of the West Branch State Bank

Prepared by Tom Walsh Date 8/27/86
Address P.O. Box 696 West Branch IA 52358 Telephone (319) 643-5327
Organization Herbert Hoover Presidential Library Assn.

For Office of Historic Preservation Use Only

1. Office Information Sources on this Property

- County Resource File
- Windshield Survey
- National Register
- Grants-In-Aid: _____
- Determination of Eligibility

Review and Compliance Project:

- Other _____
- Other _____
- Other _____

2. Subject Traces

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____
- e. _____

3. Photo Images _____

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Iowa Site Inventory

Office of Historic Preservation
Iowa State Historical Department
East 12th & Grand Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

Site Number 5

Continuation Sheet

Item Number(s)

9. Builders: Woods & Paulsen (West Branch), general contractor
(cont'd) Floyd and Charles Raudalt, painting contractors
F.M. Michael (Waterloo), decorator
St. Louis Bank Equipment and Fixture Co., marble, fixtures
and furniture

21. Historical Significance (cont'd)

assets of the West Branch State Bank (its name changed in 1895) had grown to \$402,897. "Service built up our name, our reputation and our splendid list of patrons," an ad in the January 11, 1917, issue of The West Branch Times said. "It made our old quarters cramped and inadequate."

While the new building was under construction, the bank moved its offices across Main Street into the west room of the Union Block building (9). The building to the west (12) was originally built in 1898 as the first permanent home of the Citizens' State Bank. In 1916 it was Blazek's Grocery, but the old vault remained, allowing a door to be cut into the vault from the Union Block building. This allowed the displaced West Branch State Bank to use its rival's old vault for fireproof storage of safety deposit boxes.

To allow for the larger building, the two-story frame building on Main Street just west of the construction site was torn down. It had housed a restaurant, a billiard parlor, a shooting gallery and, years earlier, a Quaker school for Osage Indian children who came to West Branch from Oklahoma for an education. During excavation for the bank building's foundation, the east side of the pool hall's foundation collapsed, nearly burying workmen with stone and brick. There were two slight injuries. By mid-September the building's walls of Bedford stone and brick were in place, and the carpenters and tinnners were busy installing the roof. When the bank was finally completed in December, the focus of attention wasn't its new Victor manganese steel safe with its triple time lock, but the bank's new women's bathroom. "One of the finest parts of the whole building is the ladies rest room," The West Branch Times reported on December 21, 1916. "All neatly and modernly equipped and furnished for the benefit of the ladies."

Fred Albin, whose meat market for years had fronted Downey Street at the rear of the old bank building, relocated his shop into the rear of the new building. Also returning to the new building was the West Branch Telephone Company, which had an oyster stew dinner in its new bank building office suite on April 24, 1917, to mark the installation of a new 500-drop switchboard. A three-room, second-story apartment was rented in January 1917 to W.H. Young and his wife. Another upstairs tenant -- Hubbard & Hubbard Chiropractors, practitioners of the Palmer System -- moved into their office suite in February.

This massive bank building was the last downtown commercial construction project before the post-World War I collapse of the farm economy that was the beginning of the end of an unparalleled generation of prosperity for both West Branch area farmers and the downtown businessmen who were reliant on their trade. "I remember that on November 11, 1918, when the war ended,

--over--

people had corn that they wouldn't sell until the price hit \$2 a bushel," recalls L.C. Rummells, who began working at the new bank building in 1919 as a janitor and bookkeeper for \$1.50 a day. "The prices kept going down until corn sold for 25 cents a bushel in 1921. I remember settling an estate in 1921 and having to sell corn for 15 cents a bushel just to pay the taxes."

The post-war collapse of the farm economy was followed by the Great Depression and the bank closings ordered on the heels of the election of Franklin D. Roosevelt. On August 23, 1934, it was announced in The West Branch Times that the West Branch State Bank had been reorganized and would absorb what was left of the holdings of the Citizens' Savings Bank and reopen the next day as the First State Bank. Like the rest of the nation, the First State Bank would endure the Depression and thrive again. On its 70th anniversary in 1945, the bank boasted of having seen the community through three wars and 10 major depressions. By then, deposits had reached \$1.2 million.

The bank remained in the brick building at Main and Downey streets until December 1974, when it was relocated to its present site at 127 West Main Street.

Iowa Site Inventory

Office of Historic Preservation
Iowa State Historical Department
East 12th & Grand Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

Site Number 6
District Name West Branch Commercial
Map Reference # 6

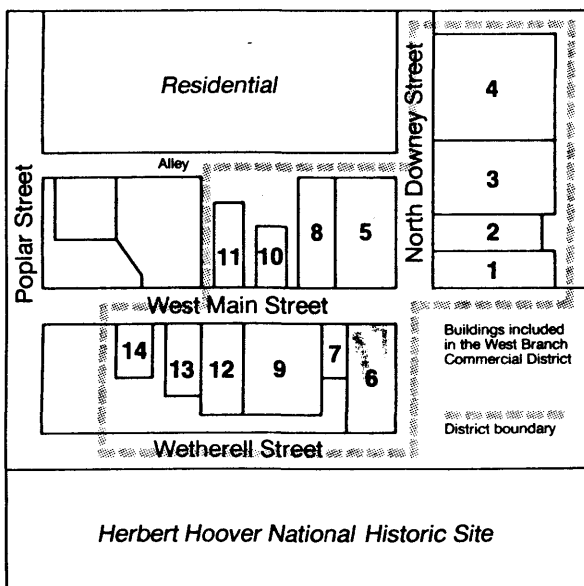
Identification

1. Site Name Hoover House
2. Village/Town/City West Branch Township Springdale County Cedar
3. Street Address 102 West Main Street
4. Legal Location Urban School Add. 39 Lots 1,2
Urban: block range Rural: subdivision township parcel section subparcel 1/4 section of 1/4 section
5. UTM Location: zone _____ easting _____ northing _____; Acreage less than 1
6. Owner(s) Name L. Sherie & Karl H. Luneckas
7. Owner(s) Address Rural Route 2 Iowa City IA 52240
(Street address) (City) (State) (Zip)
8. Use: Present gift shop/office -- 1st newspaper office -- 2nd restaurant -- basement
 Original barber shop/restaurant -- 1st butcher shop -- basement newspaper office -- 2nd

Description

9. Date of Construction 1870 Architect/Builder unknown
10. Building Type:
 single-family dwelling industrial other institutional religious
 multiple-family dwelling educational public agricultural
 commercial
11. Exterior Walls: clapboard stone brick board and batten shingles stucco
 other _____
12. Structural System: wood frame with interlocking joints wood frame with light members (balloon frame)
 masonry load-bearing walls iron frame steel frame with curtain walls reinforced concrete
 other _____
13. Condition: excellent good fair deteriorated
14. Integrity: original site moved—if so, when? _____
 Notes on alterations, additions (with dates and architect, if known) and any other notable features of building and site:
Two entrances with setback double doors changed to single, centered entrance. Original canopy removed. Additions in 1895, 1905.
15. Related Outbuildings and Property: barn other farm structures carriage house garage privy
 other _____
16. Is the building endangered? no yes—if so, why? _____
17. Surroundings of the building: open land woodland scattered outbuildings densely built-up commercial
 industrial residential other _____

18. Map



19. Photo

Roll _____ Frame _____ View _____

Significance

(Indicate sources of information for all statements)

20. Architectural significance

- a. Key structure/individually may qualify for the National Register
- b. Contributing structure
- c. Not eligible/intrusion

This two-story, wooden frame structure is built over two lots and is 50 feet wide and 70 feet long. It is sided with narrow clapboard and has a shingled gabled roof. An 1878 photograph shows there were originally two entrances, each set back with double doors. The west business room was narrower than the east, which had two display windows, not one. At some point the front facade was altered to construct a single, centered entryway. Large plate glass windows have replaced smaller, paned windows on the first floor. The front facade's attic story window is of a neo-Palladian style, which was popular at the time of construction. A wooden cornice ornamented with dentils runs above the plate glass windows across the length of the facade.

21. Historical Significance

Theme(s) Social History

- a. Key structure/individually may qualify for the National Register
- b. Contributing structure
- c. Not eligible/intrusion

This large, two-story wood-frame business building was erected in 1870 by owner J.W. Witter at the crossroads of Commerce Street (later Main Street) and Mechanics Street (later Downey Street). The basement housed a meat market and the upstairs the offices of the town's first newspaper, The Index. In 1871, Nathan Crook, who had come to West Branch in the 1860s from Indiana, quit his job with the railroad and rented space in Witter's new building for a barber shop and restaurant. On September 1, 1877, Crook expanded his operation into a hotel with the addition of two sleeping rooms. To accommodate travelers

22. Sources (for primary and secondary sources, give complete facts of publication: author, title, place of publication, date, etc.): (cont'd)

Sanborn fire maps: 1895, 1900, 1906, 1912, 1927
 Stratton, Maud: Herbert Hoover's Home Town: The History of West Branch (1948)
 Bearss, Edwin C.: Historical Base Map and Ground Study, Herbert Hoover National Historic Site, U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington D.C. 7/20/68
 The West Branch Times: 9/5/95; 9/26/95; 2/4/97; 6/6/98; 9/28/05; 10/12/05; 11/2/05; 11/9/05; 12/7/05; 9/23/37

Prepared by Tom Walsh Date 8/27/86
 Address P.O. Box 696 West Branch IA 52358 Telephone (319) 643-5327
 Organization Herbert Hoover Presidential Library Assn.

For Office of Historic Preservation Use Only

<p>1. Office Information Sources on this Property</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> County Resource File <input type="checkbox"/> Windshield Survey <input type="checkbox"/> National Register <input type="checkbox"/> Grants-In-Aid: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Determination of Eligibility 	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Review and Compliance Project:</p> <p>_____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other _____</p>
<p>2. Subject Traces</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. _____ b. _____ c. _____ d. _____ e. _____ 	<p>3. Photo Images _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>

Iowa Site Inventory

Office of Historic Preservation
Iowa State Historical Department
East 12th & Grand Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

Site Number 6

Continuation Sheet

Item Number(s)

21. Historical Significance (cont'd)

with horses, he added a livery stable out back. Guests who arrived by train were provided free rides to and from the east-side depot -- a clever way of getting them beyond Frank Savage's National Hotel, just a half-block south of the dept. Crook's aggressiveness and foresightedness earned him a reputation as one of early West Branch's most progressive businessmen. He was responsible for the town's first sidewalks, streetlights and arc lights. His generosity was legendary: A spectacular fire which destroyed a row of commercial buildings along the south side of West Main Street on August 30, 1895, very nearly gutted Crook's Hotel, too. When the volunteers of Rescue Hook and Ladder and Engine Company stopped the fire within three feet of the hotel, Crook expressed his thanks by presenting Fire Chief W.E. Bingham with a \$50 bill.

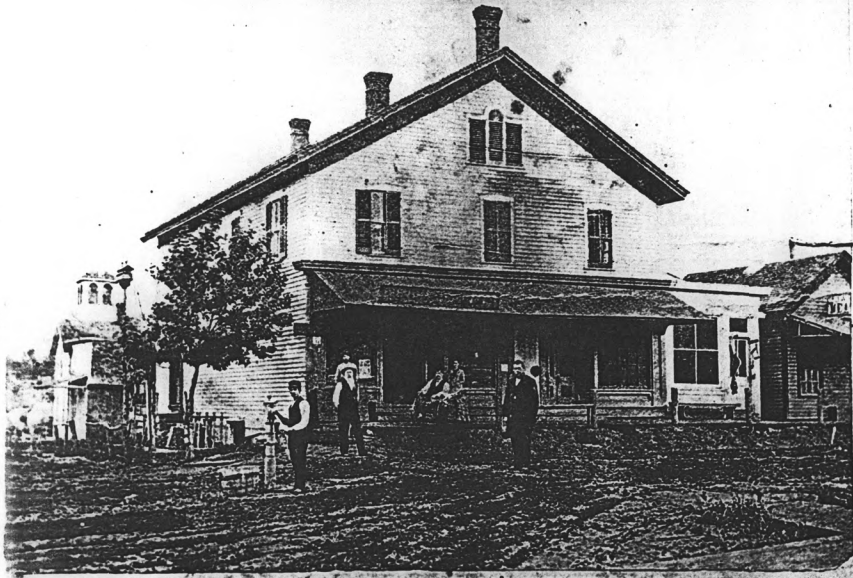
During the fall of 1895, as adjacent property owners rebuilt from the fire, Crook hired a team of workmen to remodel his hotel. They widened the barber shop by three feet, installed a new roof and new floors, and replaced the old plaster, paint and wallpaper. In February 1897, carpenters returned to add more second-story sleeping rooms. By 1898, West Branch had prospered to the point where a second bank was being planned. Nate Crook had prospered, too, and he would become both the vice president of the new Citizens' Savings Bank and the builder of the new bank's first permanent home (12). In late 1905, there was talk around town that Nate Crook was ready to retire from the hotel business. By then he was 61 years old, and his hotel building had been the cornerstone of downtown West Branch for 35 years. Before he leased the building, he had it renovated, much to the delight of the citizenry of West Branch. "It is reported that N.H. Crook has decided to renovate his hotel building on the corner and fix it up for a first class hotel," The West Branch Times reported on September 28, 1905. "This is something West Branch has long been in need of and an improvement that will be appreciated by the traveling public. Mr. Crook is to be congratulated on his public spirit and will receive the thanks of a long-suffering public as well as doing a good thing for himself."

Workers broke ground in October 1905 for a two-story addition that extended the south wall of the hotel building by 19 feet toward Wetherell Street. By the first week of November, the front of the building had been remodeled and new plate glass windows installed. By December 1, T.T. Barrington of West Branch had outfitted the building with a new steam heating plant. When the work was completed, Crook leased the building to W.J. Moylan, who used it as a new location for another West Branch hotel. "The European Hotel was moved across the street to the newly fitted building, better known as the old Crook Hotel, last Monday," The West Branch Times reported on December 7, 1905. "West Branch can now boast of as good, comfortable and well conducted a hotel as can be found on the line of the Rock Island. The dining room is light, cheerful, well fitted and cozy as can be found anywhere and with the steam heat the whole building will be comfortable during the coming cold weather."

--over--

Although it's unclear from surviving records what year Crook bought the Witter Building, he continued to own it until he died in Cedar Rapids on July 27, 1930, at age 86. In his obituary, The West Branch Times commended Crook's spirit as helping to provide the momentum that allowed West Branch to evolve into a thriving commercial center during the turn of the century. "In his prime he was noted as a keen business man and few things in the community were undertaken without his help and service."

The relocated European Hotel would eventually be replaced by the Julien Hotel and, later, the Hoover Hotel. The west half of the building's first floor was used over the years as a series of cafes. A major renovation in 1965 resulted in the opening of the Century House restaurant and, later, the well-known Hoover House Restaurant. Today, the building is a multi-use commercial building -- the same role the building played in the West Branch business district when it was constructed 116 years ago. In fact, the town's weekly newspaper -- The West Branch Times -- is again housed on the building's second floor.



HISTORIC VIEW 'F' W/Site 6 photograph believed to have been taken in 1878
Source: Herbert Hoover Presidential Library

Iowa Site Inventory

Office of Historic Preservation
Iowa State Historical Department
East 12th & Grand Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

Site Number 7
District Name West Branch Commercial
Map Reference # 7

Identification

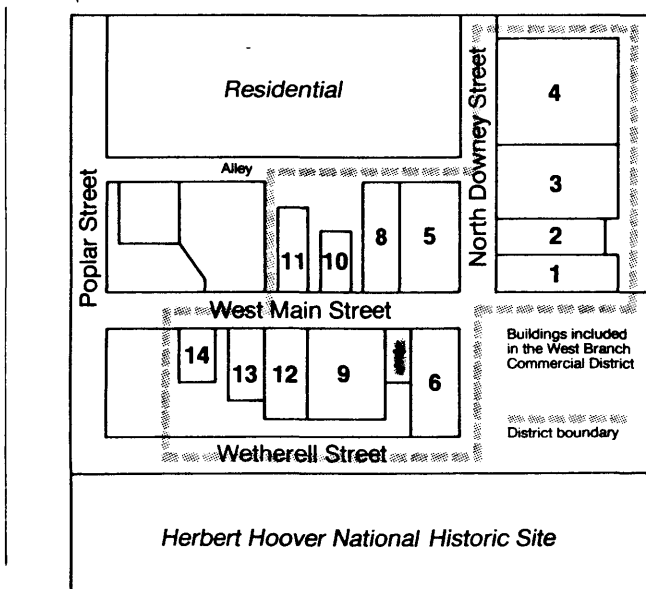
1. Site Name West Branch Bank (1875)
2. Village/Town/City West Branch Township Springdale County Cedar
3. Street Address 102 West Main Street
4. Legal Location Urban School Add. 39 Lot 2 (partial)
Urban: subdivision block parcel subparcel
Rural: township range section % section of 1/4 section
5. UTM Location: zone _____ easting _____ northing _____; Acreage less than 1
6. Owner(s) Name L. Sherie & Karl H. Luneckas
7. Owner(s) Address Rural Route 2 Iowa City IA 52240
(Street address) (City) (State) (Zip)
8. Use: Present Flower shop Original Bank

Description

9. Date of Construction 1875 Architect/Builder unknown
10. Building Type:

<input type="checkbox"/> single-family dwelling	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> other institutional	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> multiple-family dwelling	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> agricultural
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial			
11. Exterior Walls: clapboard stone brick board and batten shingles stucco
 other _____
12. Structural System: wood frame with interlocking joints wood frame with light members (balloon frame)
 masonry load-bearing walls iron frame steel frame with curtain walls reinforced concrete
 other _____
13. Condition: excellent good fair deteriorated
14. Integrity: original site moved—if so, when? _____
 Notes on alterations, additions (with dates and architect, if known) and any other notable features of building and site:
front steps removed, door sealed and interior doorway installed in 1965
to make this building a west wing of the Hoover House (6)
15. Related Outbuildings and Property: barn other farm structures carriage house garage privy
 other _____
16. Is the building endangered? no yes—if so, why? _____
17. Surroundings of the building: open land woodland scattered outbuildings densely built-up commercial
 industrial residential other _____

18. Map



19. Photo

Roll _____ Frame _____ View _____

Significance

(Indicate sources of information for all statements)

20. Architectural significance

- a. Key structure/individually may qualify for the National Register
- b. Contributing structure
- c. Not eligible/intrusion

This building's front facade was reconstructed during a 1965 renovation of the adjacent Hoover House building (6) that made this building a west wing used as a gift shop. It is a one-story wood-frame building with a flat roof, constructed so the cornice line carries through from the cornice of the Hoover House (6), which was built five years earlier in 1870.

21. Historical Significance

Theme(s) Social History

- a. Key structure/individually may qualify for the National Register
- b. Contributing structure
- c. Not eligible/intrusion

Though never more than a two-bank town, there are four old bank buildings along West Main and North Downey streets that are reminders of the prosperity that came to West Branch with the turn of the century. The city's first bank -- in fact, the first bank in Cedar County -- opened in this one-story, wooden building on January 15, 1875, the same year West Branch was incorporated. West Branch lumber dealer Joseph Steer and five other local businessmen came up with \$50,000 to begin the West Branch Bank. Steer and the other bank directors agreed to rent the new building for five years at \$45 a year.

22. Sources (for primary and secondary sources, give complete facts of publication: author, title, place of publication, date, etc.): (cont'd)

Sanborn fire maps: 1895, 1900, 1906, 1912, 1927
Stratton, Maud: Herbert Hoover's Home Town: The History of West Branch (1948)
Bearss, Edwin C.: Historical Base Map and Ground Study, Herbert Hoover National Historic Site, U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 7/20/68
The West Branch Times: 12/21/16;

Prepared by Tom Walsh Date 8/27/86
Address P.O. Box 696 West Branch IA 52358 Telephone (319) 643-5327
Organization Herbert Hoover Presidential Library Assn.

<h3>For Office of Historic Preservation Use Only</h3>	
<p>1. Office Information Sources on this Property</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> County Resource File<input type="checkbox"/> Windshield Survey<input type="checkbox"/> National Register<input type="checkbox"/> Grants-In-Aid: _____<input type="checkbox"/> Determination of Eligibility	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Review and Compliance Project:</p> <p>_____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other _____</p>
<p>2. Subject Traces</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. _____b. _____c. _____d. _____e. _____	<p>3. Photo Images _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>

Iowa Site Inventory

Office of Historic Preservation
Iowa State Historical Department
East 12th & Grand Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

Site Number 7

Continuation Sheet

Item Number(s) _____

21. Historical Significance (cont'd)

But within three years, the wave of prosperity that swept West Branch into the 20th century saw the young bank outgrow the tiny wooden building. In September 1877, the West Branch Bank moved across Main Street into a new two-story brick banking house on the northwest corner of Main and Downey streets.

The original bank building was later used as a harness shop, dressmaker's shop and a butcher shop, a barber shop and a gift shop. Today, it's used as a flower store and is attached to the Hoover House building (6) by means of an interior doorway constructed in 1965.

Iowa Site Inventory

Office of Historic Preservation
Iowa State Historical Department
East 12th & Grand Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

Site Number 8
District Name West Branch Commercial
Map Reference # 8

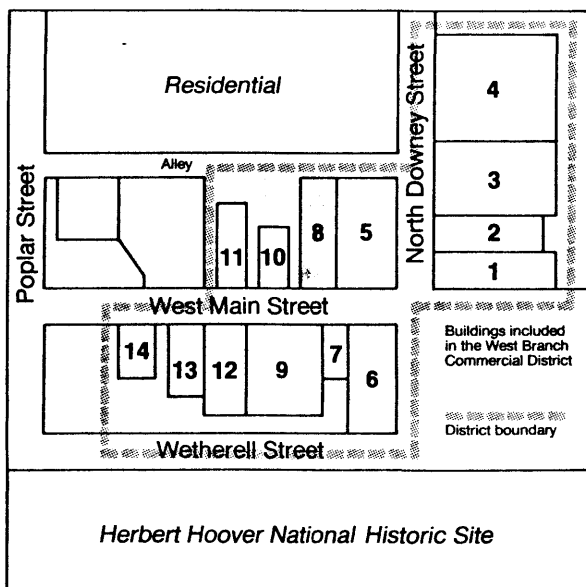
Identification

- Site Name War Memorial Building
- Village/Town/City West Branch Township Springdale County Cedar
- Street Address 105 West Main Street
- Legal Location Urban Subdivision of Lot 64 Block 38 Lot 2
Urban: Rural: subdivision township block range parcel section subparcel 1/4 section of 1/4 section
- UTM Location: zone _____ easting _____ northing _____; Acreage less than 1
- Owner(s) Name J. Patrick and Mary Wildenberg
- Owner(s) Address Rural Route 1 West Branch IA 52358
(Street address) (City) (State) (Zip)
- Use: Present vacant -- 1st floor apartment -- 2nd floor Original Post Office -- 1st floor American Legion Post -- 2nd floor

Description

- Date of Construction 1948 Architect/Builder NA
- Building Type:
 single-family dwelling industrial other institutional
 multiple-family dwelling educational public Amer. Legion
 commercial Post Office religious
 agricultural
- Exterior Walls: clapboard stone brick board and batten shingles stucco
 other _____
- Structural System: wood frame with interlocking joints wood frame with light members (balloon frame)
 masonry load-bearing walls iron frame steel frame with curtain walls reinforced concrete
 other _____
- Condition: excellent good fair deteriorated
- Integrity: original site moved—if so, when? _____
 Notes on alterations, additions (with dates and architect, if known) and any other notable features of building and site: _____
- Related Outbuildings and Property: barn other farm structures carriage house garage privy
 other _____
- Is the building endangered? no yes—if so, why? _____
- Surroundings of the building: open land woodland scattered outbuildings densely built-up commercial
 industrial residential other _____

18. Map



19. Photo

Roll _____ Frame _____ View _____

Significance

(Indicate sources of information for all statements)

20. Architectural significance

- a. Key structure/individually may qualify for the National Register
- b. Contributing structure
- c. Not eligible/intrusion

Because of its late construction date (1948) relative to the parameters of this district nomination (1895-1916) and its incompatibility with other district buildings in terms of style and scale, this two-story brick structure has been classified for purposes of this application as a non-contributing, intruding structure.

The building was constructed with private donations of approximately \$30,000. The first floor was used as a Post Office between 1948 and 1970. The upstairs and basement were used by the local American Legion Post. The building was later used as an antique shop and for apartments.

Social History

21. Historical Significance

Theme(s) _____

- a. Key structure/individually may qualify for the National Register
- b. Contributing structure
- c. Not eligible/intrusion

The building now in place on this lot was constructed 32 years after the closing date for this nomination (1916) and has no relevance to the theme of turn-of-the-century prosperity and its influence on commercial activity within the West Branch business district.

This building is situated on a lot that once housed a Quaker school for Osage Indian children, the European Hotel, a clothing store that was the site of a fatal shooting in 1897, a restaurant, a box ball alley and a pool hall.

22. Sources (for primary and secondary sources, give complete facts of publication: author, title, place of publication, date, etc.):

Sanborn fire maps: 1895, 1900, 1906, 1912, 1927
 Stratton, Maud: Herbert Hoover's Home Town: The History of West Branch (1948)
 The West Branch Times: 5/6/97; 10/7/09
 Interviews with Glenn Brown, Murray Gibson -- long-time West Branch businessmen

Prepared by Tom Walsh Date 8/27/86
 Address P.O. Box 696 West Branch IA 52358 Telephone (319) 643-5327
 Organization Herbert Hoover Presidential Library Assn.

For Office of Historic Preservation Use Only

<p>1. Office Information Sources on this Property</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> County Resource File <input type="checkbox"/> Windshield Survey <input type="checkbox"/> National Register <input type="checkbox"/> Grants-In-Aid: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Determination of Eligibility 	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Review and Compliance Project:</p> <p>_____</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
<p>2. Subject Traces</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. _____ b. _____ c. _____ d. _____ e. _____ 	<p>3. Photo Images _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>

Iowa Site Inventory

Office of Historic Preservation
Iowa State Historical Department
East 12th & Grand Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

Site Number 9
District Name West Branch Commercial
Map Reference # 9

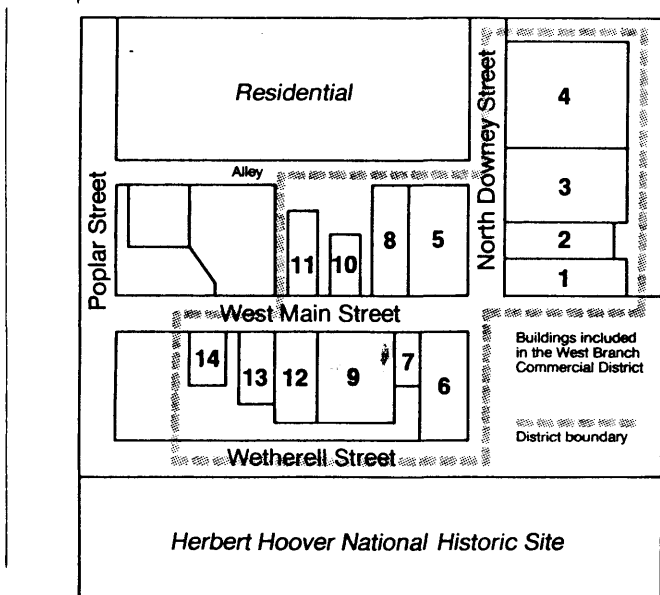
Identification

1. Site Name Union Block
2. Village/Town/City West Branch Township Springdale County Cedar
3. Street Address 108 West Main Street
4. Legal Location Urban School Addition Block 39 Lots 3-4
Urban: Rural: subdivision township block range parcel section subparcel 1/4 section of 1/4 section
5. UTM Location: zone _____ easting _____ northing _____; Acreage less than 1
6. Owner(s) Name Julia & Irene Montgomery
7. Owner(s) Address 1 Melrose Circle Iowa City IA 52240
(Street address) (City) (State) (Zip)
8. Use: Present vacant -- 1st floor Original Drug store/meat market -- 1st flr
apartments -- 2nd floor lodge -- 2nd floor

Description

9. Date of Construction 1895 Architect unknown Builder unknown
10. Building Type:
 single-family dwelling industrial other institutional religious
 multiple-family dwelling educational public lodge agricultural
 commercial
11. Exterior Walls: clapboard stone brick board and batten shingles stucco
 other _____
12. Structural System: wood frame with interlocking joints wood frame with light members (balloon frame)
 masonry load-bearing walls iron frame steel frame with curtain walls reinforced concrete
 other _____
13. Condition: excellent good fair deteriorated
14. Integrity: original site moved—if so, when? _____
 Notes on alterations, additions (with dates and architect, if known) and any other notable features of building and site:
entrance altered, wooden bulkhead replaced
15. Related Outbuildings and Property: barn other farm structures carriage house garage privy
 other _____
16. Is the building endangered? no yes—if so, why? _____
17. Surroundings of the building: open land woodland scattered outbuildings densely built-up commercial
 industrial residential other _____

18. Map



19. Photo

Roll _____ Frame _____ View _____

Significance

(Indicate sources of information for all statements)

20. Architectural significance

- a. Key structure/individually may qualify for the National Register
- b. Contributing structure
- c. Not eligible/intrusion

This Victorian style brick commercial block incorporates first-floor structural cast iron, decorative stone pediments and a decorative, highly ornate stamped metal cornice. Second story has double-hung, transomed windows. The building has a flat roof. First-floor entrance centered, with stairwell leading up and down.

21. Historical Significance

Theme(s) Social History

- a. Key structure/individually may qualify for the National Register
- b. Contributing structure
- c. Not eligible/intrusion

The Union Block building is illustrative of the resiliency of West Branch businessmen in responding to crisis in the midst of economic prosperity. An early morning fire on August 30, 1895, that began in the back of J.T. Butler's "Old Reliable Meat Market" at what is now 108 West Main Street destroyed most of what was then known as "the old South Side Block." Despite a valiant effort by the volunteers of Rescue Hook and Ladder and Engine Company, the fire destroyed or heavily damaged the line of wood-frame commercial buildings between Crook's Hotel (6) and the post office (14).

22. Sources (for primary and secondary sources, give complete facts of publication: author, title, place of publication, date, etc.): (cont'd)
- Sanborn fire maps: 1895, 1900, 1906, 1912, 1927
Stratton, Maud: Herbert Hoover's Home Town: The History of West Branch (1948)
Abstract of Title
The West Branch Times: 9/5/95; 9/12/95; 9/26/95; 8/15/95; 10/17/95; 11/7/95; 1/9/96; 2/13/96; 2/27/96; 4/9/96; 4/30/96

Prepared by Tom Walsh Date 8/27/86
Address P.O. Box 696 West Branch IA 52358 Telephone (319) 643-5327
Organization Herbert Hoover Presidential Library Assn.

For Office of Historic Preservation Use Only

1. Office Information Sources on this Property

- County Resource File
- Windshield Survey
- National Register
- Grants-In-Aid: _____
- Determination of Eligibility

Review and Compliance Project:

- Other _____
- Other _____
- Other _____

2. Subject Traces

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____
- e. _____

3. Photo Images _____

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Iowa Site Inventory

Office of Historic Preservation
Iowa State Historical Department
East 12th & Grand Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

Site Number 9

Continuation Sheet

Item Number(s)

21. Historical Significance (cont'd)

The big loser in the fire was J.T. Butler, whose butcher shop sustained damage estimated at \$1,400. Damage to the tiny shop to the east where H.C. Wenman sold pumps and windmills was estimated at \$150. The fire also claimed the office of Dr. L.J. Leech, who estimated his losses at \$700. In all, the fire caused \$2,855 damage, only \$950 of it insured by George Hoover, agent for the "old reliable Hawkeye Insurance Company."

If there was a winner in all this, it was the town itself, which prior to the fire had begun to regard the "old South Side Block" as something of an eyesore, as illustrated by this item that appeared in The West Branch Times of August 15, 1895 -- two weeks before the fire: "The improvement rage has finally struck the southside of upper Main Street, a new wood awning has been built over the front entrance of Crook's Hotel. Time brings change, before the rage ends who knows but some of the old rattle-trap buildings on that side may have given place to new ones." Within three weeks of the fire -- like a dream come true -- there was word around town of plans to erect a two-story brick business block once the rubble could be cleared from the fire site. J.T. Butler and Dr. L.J. Leech agreed to jointly finance construction of what The West Branch Times described as "a stately brick edifice" that was promised to be "first class in every particular." By mid-October the basement stonework was well under way. On October 30, a "large gang of men" began laying brick. By year's end, the Union Block -- 49 feet wide and 50 feet deep -- was in place.

"The front is composed of pressed brick, glass and steel cornice, making a very fine appearance," The Times reported on January 9, 1896. "The first story of the Union Block is divided into two business rooms with a hall and stairway in between. The west half is owned by J.T. Butler and will be occupied by the meat market, the second story for the MODern Woodmen Lodge room. The east half belongs to Dr. Leech and has not been let." When the dust had settled, the new building had cost \$4,300, less than half the \$9,000 being spent around the corner on North Downey Street by C.A. Macomber, who was building his Opera Block business block. The two buildings were the most ambitious of the building projects undertaken in 1895, when, by one estimate, \$50,100 in improvements were made to the town of West Branch.

J.T. Butler, who within a month of the fire had sold a half-interest in his meat market to Fred Albin, moved into the west business room on February 13, 1896. "The room is large and light, the front being of plate glass wherein is displayed from a broad shelf all the canned and bottled goods and other sundries that go to make up a complete stock in a first class meat shop," The West Branch Times reported on February 20, 1896. "The rooms are divided near the center by a refrigerator 13x8 and 12 feet high, with plate glass windows and mirrors and a capacity of 4 tons of ice. In front of this stands a marble top counter 16 feet long. Everything is new and clean; and while it is an establishment any large city might well be proud of, we think like the proprietors it is none too good for West Branch."

--over --

Within the next week, members of the Burr Oak Camp No. 2869 of the Modern Woodmen of America Lodge gathered in their new room above the meat market for a dedication banquet that required dinner for 90. But the east wing of the building remained vacant. After the fire, Dr. Leech had relocated across Main Street, leasing a storefront (10) that had been a millinery shop. There his medical practice would remain until his death in 1937. By the first week of April 1896, about the time the ironwork on the Union Block's facade was being painted dark green, Bert Gill had decided to sell his newly sided drug store building to a jeweler named Orr L. Keith, who had also lost his shop to the fire. Bert Gill moved out and leased Dr. Leech's Union Block storefront.

"Bert Gill has got moved into the new Union Block Drug Store, rooms finished and furnished expressly for the purpose in a style that would be a credit to any city in the state," The West Branch Times reported on April 30, 1896. "The shelving, cases and tables are all oak, finely carved and mounted with elaborate decorations. The perscription case which forms the partition between the rooms fronts the space between the counters with large plate mirrors, the middle one six feet high and three feet wide, the others not quite so large. Bert has placed a fine soda fountain in his store which is now on tap and if you want to know what the north pole tastes like, step in and take a sip."

The Union Block has housed more than a few shops, cafes and offices since it was the showpiece of Main Street in 1896. For many years now, its business rooms have been vacant. Legend has it the crack that runs through the plate glass window of what was once Gill's drug store was caused by a shotgun blast during the public celebration that marked the end of World War I.

Iowa Site Inventory

Office of Historic Preservation
Iowa State Historical Department
East 12th & Grand Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

Site Number 10
District Name West Branch Commercial
Map Reference # 10

Identification

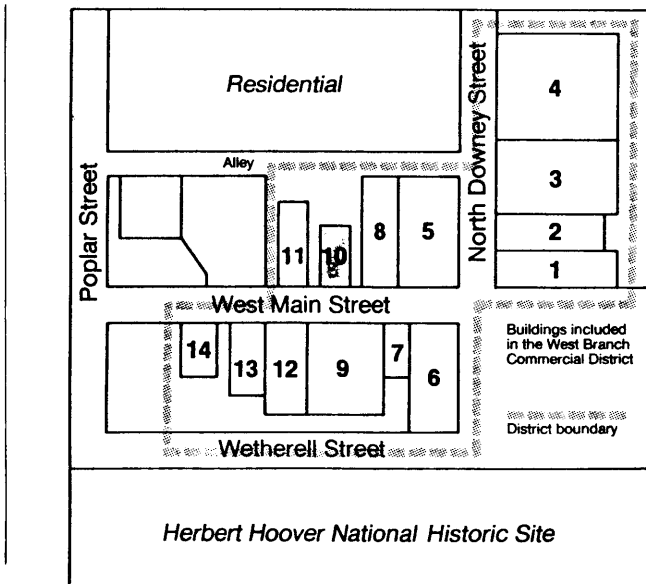
- Site Name Gibson's Barber Shop
- Village/Town/City West Branch Township Springdale County Cedar
- Street Address 107 West Main Street
- Legal Location Urban Subdivision of Lot 64 Block 38 Lot 3
Urban: Rural: subdivision township block range parcel section subparcel 1/4 section of 1/4 section
- UTM Location: zone _____ easting _____ northing _____; Acreage less than 1
- Owner(s) Name Dean Gibson
- Owner(s) Address 306 West Orange Street West Branch IA 52358
(Street address) (City) (State) (Zip)
- Use: Present Barber shop Original Millinery shop

Description

- Date of Construction 1890 Architect/Builder unknown
- Building Type:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> single-family dwelling	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> other institutional	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> multiple-family dwelling	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> agricultural
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial			
- Exterior Walls: clapboard stone brick board and batten shingles stucco
 other _____
- Structural System: wood frame with interlocking joints wood frame with light members (balloon frame)
 masonry load-bearing walls iron frame steel frame with curtain walls reinforced concrete
 other _____
- Condition: excellent good fair deteriorated
- Integrity: original site moved—if so, when? _____
 Notes on alterations, additions (with dates and architect, if known) and any other notable features of building and site:
addition of metal awning
- Related Outbuildings and Property: barn other farm structures carriage house garage privy
 other _____
- Is the building endangered? no yes—if so, why? _____
- Surroundings of the building: open land woodland scattered outbuildings densely built-up commercial
 industrial residential other _____

18. Map



19. Photo

Roll _____ Frame _____ View _____

Significance

(Indicate sources of information for all statements)

20. Architectural significance

- a. Key structure/individually may qualify for the National Register
- b. Contributing structure
- c. Not eligible/intrusion

This two-story, wood-frame, false-fronted building is typical of early commercial buildings constructed to allow business owners to keep shop on the street-level story and to keep house on the second story. Except for the addition of a metal awning, this building has undergone little alteration.

21. Historical Significance

Theme(s) Social History

- a. Key structure/individually may qualify for the National Register
- b. Contributing structure
- c. Not eligible/intrusion

The downtown building at 107 West Main Street is one of the oldest surviving commercial buildings in downtown West Branch. The property's abstract shows a local Quaker church, the Springdale Monthly Meeting of the Society of Friends, which owned all the property along the north side of the 100 block of West Main Street at one time, sold the 20-by-103 foot parcel in February 1890 to Lavina Patterson. By mid-March a building that housed her millinery (hat) shop was in place, with rooms above to house her family. Mrs. Patterson (cont'd)

22. Sources (for primary and secondary sources, give complete facts of publication: author, title, place of publication, date, etc.):

Sanborn fire maps: 18965, 1900, 1906, 1912, 1927

Abstract of Title

Stratton, Maud: Herbert Hoover's Home Town: The History of West Branch (1948)

The West Branch Times: 3/13/90; 9/5/95; 9/26/95; 10/3/95; 9/23/37

Prepared by Tom Walsh Date 8/28/86
Address P.O. Box 696 West Branch IA 52358 Telephone (319) 643-5327
Organization Herbert Hoover Presidential Library Assn.

For Office of Historic Preservation Use Only

1. Office Information Sources on this Property

- County Resource File
- Windshield Survey
- National Register
- Grants-In-Aid: _____
- Determination of Eligibility

Review and Compliance Project:

- Other _____
- Other _____
- Other _____

2. Subject Traces

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____
- e. _____

3. Photo Images _____

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Iowa Site Inventory

Office of Historic Preservation
Iowa State Historical Department
East 12th & Grand Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

Site Number 10

Continuation Sheet

Item Number(s)

21. Historical Significance (cont'd)

continued to operate her hat shop in the building until late summer 1895. On August 30, 1895, a fire destroyed or heavily damaged a row of commercial buildings along the south side of West Main Street. Among the businessmen uprooted by the fire was Dr. L.J. Leech, who reported \$500 damage to his doctor's office and \$1,000 damage to the equipment inside. Suddenly in need of a new office, Dr. Leech bought Mrs. Patterson's building.

On October 3, 1895, The West Branch Times reported that Mrs. Patterson had "moved her stock of millenry (sic) to the rooms first door east of Cochran's Book Store and invites the patronage of her old customers and others in need of millenry (sic)." What's now Dean Gibson's barber shop remained Dr. Leech's office until his death at age 91 on September 22, 1937. Born in Columbiana County, Ohio, Louis Leech came to West Branch at age nine. At age 16, he enlisted at Davenport in Company B of the Second Iowa Cavalry. During the Civil War he participated in battles in Tennessee and Alabama. After being mustered out of the army in the fall of 1865, L.J. Leech farmed briefly before enrolling in medical school at the University of Iowa. He received his diploma in 1882 and located his office in West Branch. Leech served as mayor, town councilman and school board member and was elected to the 29th, 30th and 31st Iowa General Assemblies.

The Gibson barber shop building appears to be the third oldest building within the West Branch Commercial District. Only the Faye's Bakery building (1869), which has been heavily altered, and the Hoover House building (1870) are older.

Iowa Site Inventory

Office of Historic Preservation
Iowa State Historical Department
East 12th & Grand Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

Site Number 11
District Name West Branch Commercial
Map Reference # 11

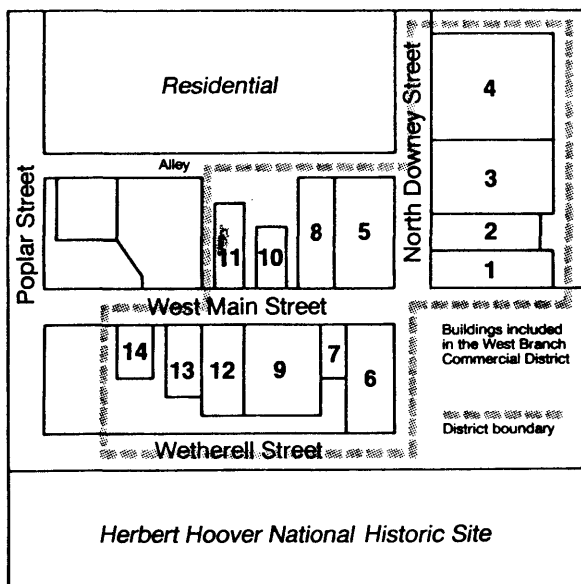
Identification

1. Site Name West Branch Heritage Museum (Gruwell & Crew General Store)
2. Village/Town/City West Branch Township Springdale County Cedar
3. Street Address 109 West Main Street
4. Legal Location Urban Subdivision of Lot 64 Block 38 Lot 4
Urban: Rural: subdivision township block range parcel section subparcel 1/4 section of 1/4 section
5. UTM Location: zone _____ easting _____ northing _____; Acreage less than 1
6. Owner(s) Name West Branch Heritage Foundation
7. Owner(s) Address 109 West Main Street West Branch IA 52358
(Street address) (City) (State) (Zip)
8. Use: Present museum Original general store

Description

9. Date of Construction 1894 Architect/Builder unknown
10. Building Type:
 single-family dwelling industrial other institutional religious
 multiple-family dwelling educational public agricultural
 commercial
11. Exterior Walls: clapboard stone brick board and batten shingles stucco
 other _____
12. Structural System: wood frame with interlocking joints wood frame with light members (balloon frame)
 masonry load-bearing walls iron frame steel frame with curtain walls reinforced concrete
 other _____
13. Condition: excellent good fair deteriorated
14. Integrity: original site moved—if so, when? _____
 Notes on alterations, additions (with dates and architect, if known) and any other notable features of building and site:
front steps not original
15. Related Outbuildings and Property: barn other farm structures carriage house garage privy
 other _____
16. Is the building endangered? no yes—if so, why? _____
17. Surroundings of the building: open land woodland scattered outbuildings densely built-up commercial
 industrial residential other _____

18. Map



19. Photo

Roll _____ Frame _____ View _____

Significance

(Indicate sources of information for all statements)

20. Architectural significance

- a. Key structure/individually may qualify for the National Register
- b. Contributing structure
- c. Not eligible/intrusion

This building was added to the National Register of Historic Places in October 1982 as a "well preserved example of a small-town commercial structure." The following description of the building was included in the 1982 nomination form: "The classical details displayed on the store are restrained and of appropriate scale. The raised parapet has a plain cornice and clapboard with a row of dentils between it and the large storefront windows and transomed double doors...A repeated motif is curved pieces added to corners of the door and window tops and also to door panels...Simple pilasters running to the cornice frame the tidy composition."

21. Historical Significance

Theme(s) Social History

- a. Key structure/individually may qualify for the National Register
- b. Contributing structure
- c. Not eligible/intrusion

This wood-frame building is one of four older storefronts that remain along West Main Street. The building's abstract of title suggests it was constructed in 1894, and it appears on the 1895 Sanborn fire map. The abstract shows the property on which the building was constructed was deeded on November 13, 1894, by the West Branch Monthly Meeting of Friends Church to two prominent West Branch businessmen -- Mayor S.C. Gruwell and J.C. Crew, a dry good store owner. The 1912 fire map shows the building was

22. Sources (for primary and secondary sources, give complete facts of publication: author, title, place of publication, date, etc.): (cont'd)

Sanborn fire maps: 1895, 1900, 1906, 1912, 1927
Stratton, Maud: Herbert Hoover's Home Town: The History of West Branch
Abstract of Title
National Register Nomination Form/Application, July, 1982
The West Branch Times: 2/9/10; 10/21/82

Prepared by Tom Walsh Date 8/28/86
Address P.O. Box 696 West Branch IA 52358 Telephone (319) 643-5327
Organization Herbert Hoover Presidential Library Assn.

For Office of Historic Preservation Use Only

1. Office Information Sources on this Property

- County Resource File
- Windshield Survey
- National Register
- Grants-In-Aid: _____
- Determination of Eligibility

Review and Compliance Project:

- Other _____
- Other _____
- Other _____

2. Subject Traces

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____
- e. _____

3. Photo Images _____

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Iowa Site Inventory

Office of Historic Preservation
Iowa State Historical Department
East 12th & Grand Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

Site Number 11

Continuation Sheet

Item Number(s)

21. Historical Significance (cont'd)

then used as a harness shop, a use confirmed by a West Branch Times item of February 9, 1910, which notes that Hans Johnson had purchased the C.M. Paulsen music store. The property's abstract shows Johnson, who had operated a harness shop elsewhere in West Branch since 1891, bought the property from Gruwell and Crew. The abstract also shows the building was sold to Johnson's daughter, Rena, and son-in-law, Einer Larsen, after Johnson's death in 1937. The couple carried on Johnson's business and added a shoe-repair service to the original stock of horse blankets, leather goods and buggy whips.

The abstract shows the building was sold again in 1960 to a local physician, who leased it for use as a variety store. In 1973, the building was deeded to the West Branch Heritage Foundation for use as a museum.

Iowa Site Inventory

Office of Historic Preservation
Iowa State Historical Department
East 12th & Grand Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

Site Number 12
District Name West Branch Commercial
Map Reference # 12

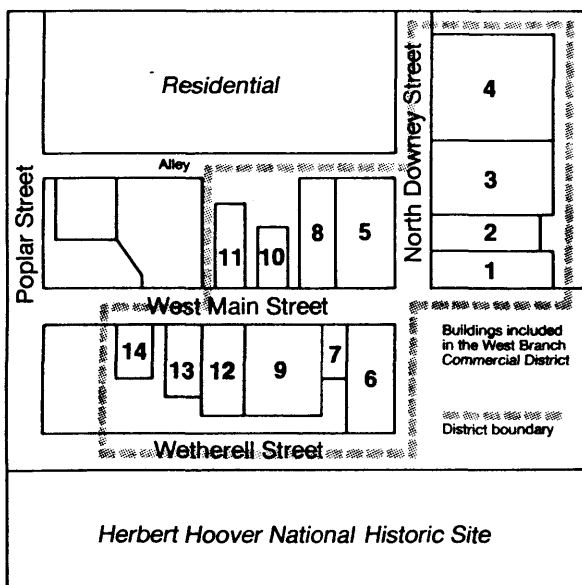
Identification

1. Site Name Main Street Art & Antiques
2. Village/Town/City West Branch Township Springdale County Cedar
3. Street Address 110 West Main Street
4. Legal Location Urban Steer's 1st Add. Block 44 Lot 1
Urban: subdivision block parcel subparcel
Rural: township range section ¼ section of ¼ section
5. UTM Location: zone _____ easting _____ northing _____; Acreage less than 1
6. Owner(s) Name Louis J. & Mary Collison Picek
7. Owner(s) Address 230 South 2nd Street West Branch IA 52358
(Street address) (City) (State) (Zip)
8. Use: Present Antique store/gallery Original Bank

Description

9. Date of Construction 1898 ~~XXXXXX~~ Builder Hunter & Ward: stone/brick work
10. Building Type: G.L. Barnes & Son: carpenters
 single-family dwelling industrial other institutional religious
 multiple-family dwelling educational public agricultural
 commercial
11. Exterior Walls: clapboard stone brick board and batten shingles stucco
 other _____
12. Structural System: wood frame with interlocking joints wood frame with light members (balloon frame)
 masonry load-bearing walls iron frame steel frame with curtain walls reinforced concrete
 other _____
13. Condition: excellent good fair deteriorated
14. Integrity: original site moved—if so, when? _____
 Notes on alterations, additions (with dates and architect, if known) and any other notable features of building and site:
transom windows covered by signage
15. Related Outbuildings and Property: barn other farm structures carriage house garage privy
 other _____
16. Is the building endangered? no yes—if so, why? _____
17. Surroundings of the building: open land woodland scattered outbuildings densely built-up commercial
 industrial residential other _____

18. Map



19. Photo

Roll _____ Frame _____ View _____

Significance

(Indicate sources of information for all statements)

20. Architectural significance

- a. Key structure/individually may qualify for the National Register
- b. Contributing structure
- c. Not eligible/intrusion

This two-story brick banking block is of Late Victorian design and features very ornate brickwork and a bracketed ornate cornice.

21. Historical Significance

Theme(s) Social History

- a. Key structure/individually may qualify for the National Register
- b. Contributing structure
- c. Not eligible/intrusion

The prosperity that settled over West Branch in the 1890s promoted the establishment of a second downtown bank. The growth in commercial activity in downtown West Branch, including the banking business, surprised even the editor of The West Branch Times. "And they still they come," said an item in the April 7, 1898, edition of the paper. "It has been our pleasant lot since the beginning of the new year to announce nearly every week some new industry, institution or local enterprise come, opened up or about to come to our lively little city. The latest is the new Savings Bank, which seems

22. Sources (for primary and secondary sources, give complete facts of publication: author, title, place of publication, date, etc.): (cont'd)

Sanborn fire maps: 1895, 1900, 1906, 1912, 1927

Stratton, Maud: Herbert Hoover's Home Town: The History of West Branch (1948)

The West Branch Times: 4/7/98; 4/21/98; 6/16/98; 7/14/98; 7/21/98; 8/11/98; 10/20/98; 11/17/98; 12/29/98; 1/19/99; 12/10/08

Prepared by Tom Walsh Date 8/28/86
Address P.O. Box 696 West Branch IA 52358 Telephone (319) 643-5327
Organization Herbert Hoover Presidential Library Assn.

For Office of Historic Preservation Use Only

1. Office Information Sources on this Property

- County Resource File
- Windshield Survey
- National Register
- Grants-In-Aid: _____
- Determination of Eligibility

Review and Compliance Project:

- Other _____
- Other _____
- Other _____

2. Subject Traces

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____
- e. _____

3. Photo Images _____

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Iowa Site Inventory

Office of Historic Preservation
Iowa State Historical Department
East 12th & Grand Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

Site Number 12

Continuation Sheet

Item Number(s)

21. Historical Significance (cont'd)

to be an assured success. It will be pre-eminently progressive and popular in all respects and strictly up-to-date, with a board of directors who will shape the policy of the institution so that none can complain. We understand a few shares of stock are still to be had."

Most of those shares were likely owned by two prominent West Branch businessmen: J.C. Crew, a dry goods store operator and the bank's new president, and Nathan H. Crook, vice president and owner of Crook's Hotel -- now the Hoover House (6). The Citizens' Savings Bank opened in temporary quarters in a drug store on South Downey Street on July 19, 1898. At the same time, Nathan Crook was making plans for a two-story brick banking house to be located at what is now 110 West Main Street. By mid-August, Nathan Crook had awarded the contracts for the new brick building to two local firms: Hunter & Ward would handle the stone and brick work, while G.L. Barnes & Sons would do the rest. Bad weather delayed construction, but, when the stone and brick work was finally finished on October 15, 1898, Nathan Crook pulled inspection. Crook was so delighted with the quality of the workmanship that he stepped inside O.L. Keith's jewelry store (14) and bought two silver cups and saucers and presented them to an astonished Hunter and Ward. "This is the right way for men to deal," The West Branch Times declared. "In the first place, Mr. Crook, in letting the contracts, gave home mechanics the preference, and by doing gets honest service, and all materials used, brick, lumber, hardware, has been bought of West Branch dealers, that could be furnished by them, and the result is he has a building he may well be proud of, one that is indeed a credit to the town."

On December 13, G.L. Barnes & Sons dazzled the community by installing the bank building's 8-by-11 foot plate glass window. "There is only one larger glass in Iowa City, that in the First National Bank building," The Times noted. "There were several other large pieces put in place, making as complete a glass front as will be found in any of the large cities." Cashier P.V.N. Myers moved into the new building even before the dust had settled. From a table in the corner he met the pre-Christmas banking needs of his customers amid the gang of carpenters installing furniture and fixtures. In business only six months, the assets of the Citizens' Savings Bank had grown from \$20,000 to \$40,650. On December 29, 1898, The Times declared the new bank building complete: "The Citizens' Savings Bank is now located in its spacious new home, planned and built for that specific purpose, which for convenience and beauty of finish these rooms are unsurpassed anywhere in this part of the state, not excepting many of the larger cities. The bank occupies all the first floor of N.L. Crook's new block except the stair hallway off the east side. The room is 50 feet deep and 20 feet wide, divided into three principle apartments; first the lobby or waiting room, which is supplied with a desk and writing material; then to the right, seperated from the lobby by a low partition, is an office room nicely furnished with table, stationary (sic) and chairs for the accommodation of customers. These rooms are seperated from the cashier's department by an angling counter about 30 feet long, semicircular in form. This is surmounted by high lattice and grill work of

brass, with panels of beveled and chipped plate glass. The convex or inner side of the counter is supplied with numerous drawers and cells, the outside with base ten inches wide of gray Tennessee marble. The woodwork of all the furnishings is of quarter-sawn hard oak, enamel finish. The parlor is in the south extremity of the building, divided from other apartments by an 8-foot partition. This room, as well as the little office in front, will be nicely carpeted in a few days. The monster burglar-proof safe and the fire-proof vault are among the important features of the institution, especially the vault, which is built up from below the basement on solid stone foundation. The walls around the vault have a four-inch air chamber and a double pair of thick steel doors."

After that description of the spare-no-expense approach to outfitting a new bank thriving amid an era of unparalleled farm prosperity, this closing statement to the newspaper review of the new building was hardly necessary: "It has been the design of the builder and the bank proprietors to have everything precisely as it should be, and as near first class as the necessities would warrant."

The Citizens' Savings Bank would prosper at its new location for 10 years. By 1908, its assets swollen to \$121,000, the bank's success had outgrown the building. A new bank building was planned for the northeast corner of Main and Downey streets (1). In December, 1908, G.C. Shrader agreed to buy the old bank building on West Main Street, which allowed him to expand his grocery store business.

Although it would not survive the Great Depression, the Citizens' Savings had seen West Branch through the best of times, if not the worst of times. It had, in fact, lived up to the prediction published in The West Branch Times on July 14, 1898, a few days before the bank opened for business: "This institution is another of the outgrowths of West Branch enterprise, owned and controlled entirely by and for the benefit of West Branchers and the business auxiliary to the town, bringing more capital (sic) will bring more investment and create new channels of business enterprise, give employment and general prosperity to the commonwealth."

Iowa Site Inventory

Office of Historic Preservation
Iowa State Historical Department
East 12th & Grand Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

Site Number 13
District Name West Branch Commercial
Map Reference # 13

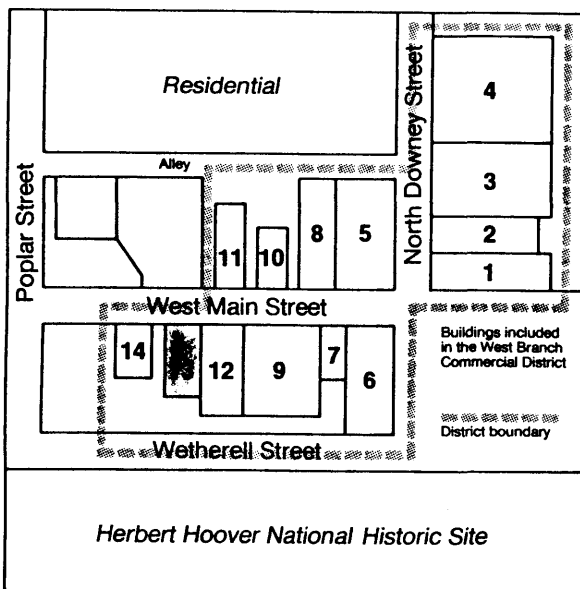
Identification

1. Site Name Faye's Bakery
2. Village/Town/City West Branch Township Springdale County Cedar
3. Street Address 112 West Main Street
4. Legal Location Urban Steer's 1st Add. Block 44 Lot 2
Rural: subdivision township block range parcel section subparcel 1/4 section of 1/4 section
5. UTM Location: zone _____ easting _____ northing _____; Acreage less than 1
6. Owner(s) Name Sue Ellyn Jensen
7. Owner(s) Address 2017 East 13th St. Davenport IA 52803
(Street address) (City) (State) (Zip)
8. Use: Present Bakery Original Drug store

Description

9. Date of Construction 1869 Architect/Builder unknown
10. Building Type:
 single-family dwelling industrial other institutional religious
 multiple-family dwelling educational public agricultural
 commercial
11. Exterior Walls: clapboard stone brick board and batten shingles stucco
 other brick facade added during 1940s remodeling
12. Structural System: wood frame with interlocking joints wood frame with light members (balloon frame)
 masonry load-bearing walls iron frame steel frame with curtain walls reinforced concrete
 other _____
13. Condition: excellent good fair deteriorated
14. Integrity: original site moved—if so, when? _____
 Notes on alterations, additions (with dates and architect, if known) and any other notable features of building and site:
original 1869 storefront covered with brick facade
15. Related Outbuildings and Property: barn other farm structures carriage house garage privy
 other _____
16. Is the building endangered? no yes—if so, why? _____
17. Surroundings of the building: open land woodland scattered outbuildings densely built-up commercial
 industrial residential other _____

18. Map



19. Photo

Roll _____ Frame _____ View _____

Significance

(Indicate sources of information for all statements)

20. Architectural significance

- a. Key structure/individually may qualify for the National Register
- b. Contributing structure
- c. Not eligible/intrusion

This early commercial building has been classified as an intrusive structure due to a 1940s remodeling that involved construction of a brick facade. This facade hides what was constructed as a combination residence and shop. Details included wood columns and display windows separated by a centered entrance door. A cornice constructed above the windows was designed to handle an awning. Pitch of gabled roof indicates this building may have been constructed by the same carpenter who built the Witter building (6) a year later in 1870. It should be noted that this facade could be removed and the storefront restored to its original appearance.

21. Historical Significance

Theme(s) Social History

- a. Key structure/individually may qualify for the National Register
- b. Contributing structure
- c. Not eligible/intrusion

Due to exterior alterations, the Faye's Bakery storefront no longer appears as it did between its construction in 1869 and the 1940s-era remodeling that resulted in the construction of a brick facade. For this reason, it is considered for the purposes of this application to be an intrusive structure, although it is believed to be the oldest surviving commercial building among the 14 included in the West Branch Commercial District. The property's abstract of title shows Edwin Grinnell bought the lot from John M. Wetherell

22. Sources (for primary and secondary sources, give complete facts of publication: author, title, place of publication, date, etc.): (cont'd)

Sanborn fire maps: 1895, 1900, 1906, 1912, 1927
 Stratton, Maud: Herbert Hoover's Home Town: The History of West Branch (1948)
 Abstract of title
 West Branch newspapers: The Index 6/15/71; The West Branch Times 9/5/95; 9/26/95.

Band concert program 3/27/96 -- on file at the Hoover Presidential Library

Prepared by Tom Walsh Date 8/28/86
 Address P.O. Box 696 West Branch IA 52358 Telephone (319) 643-2062
 Organization Herbert Hoover Presidential Library Assn.

For Office of Historic Preservation Use Only

<p>1. Office Information Sources on this Property</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> County Resource File <input type="checkbox"/> Windshield Survey <input type="checkbox"/> National Register <input type="checkbox"/> Grants-In-Aid: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Determination of Eligibility 	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Review and Compliance Project:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other _____</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other _____</p>
<p>2. Subject Traces</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. _____ b. _____ c. _____ d. _____ e. _____ 	<p>3. Photo Images _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>

Iowa Site Inventory

Office of Historic Preservation
Iowa State Historical Department
East 12th & Grand Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

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Site Number _____

Continuation Sheet

Item Number(s)

21. Historical Significance (cont'd)

on June 22, 1869. Although there's no known record of when Grinnell erected a building to house his drug store, the building very likely pre-dated the 1870 construction of the Witter Building (6). The drug store's address is listed as 9 Main Street in an advertisement that appeared in the June 15, 1871, issue of West Branch's first newspaper -- The Index. Grinnell shared the store with H.T. Hollingsworth, who did watch repairs. A series of druggists and jewelers would occupy the store over the next 53 years. Orr L. Keith moved into the building after the August 30, 1895, fire along the south side of West Main Street claimed his shop in addition to others. In addition to watches, jewelry and silverware, Keith sold musical instruments, including violins, guitars, banjos and mandolins. When the West Branch Band performed on March 27, 1896, in the new Opera House (4) on North Downey Street, Orr L. Keith boasted in an ad placed in the concert's program that the music and instruments used by the band had been purchased in his shop.

The building was sold by another jeweler, Earl L. Gregg, in 1924 for \$1,000 to local butcher Fred Albin. He used the building as a new location for his meat market, which since 1917 had fronted North Downey Street on the north end of the new West Branch State Bank building. Albin added a back room to the old building after first digging a basement to accommodate an ammonia ice machine required to cool his butcher shop's meat storage area. He also added the brick facade. In later years, the building housed a variety store, a clothing store and an ice cream parlor. It has been a bakery since August 1984.

Iowa Site Inventory

Office of Historic Preservation
Iowa State Historical Department
East 12th & Grand Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

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Site Number _____
District Name West Branch Commercial
Map Reference # 14

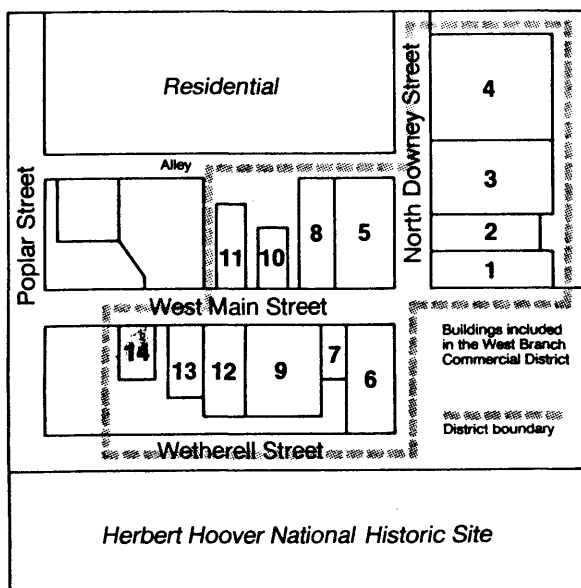
Identification

1. Site Name Jeffries Deep Rock
2. Village/Town/City West Branch Township Springdale County Cedar
3. Street Address 116 West Main
4. Legal Location Urban Steer's 1st Add. Block 44 Lot 3
Urban: Rural: subdivision township block range parcel section subparcel 1/4 section of 1/4 section
5. UTM Location: zone _____ easting _____ northing _____; Acreage less than 1
6. Owner(s) Name Loren M. Jeffries & Kenneth D. & Mary Edith Jeffries
7. Owner(s) Address 517 College Street/410 N. Downey St. West Branch IA 52358
(Street address) (City) (State) (Zip)
8. Use: Present Service station Original U.S. Post Office

Description

9. Date of Construction 1907 Architect/Builder unknown
10. Building Type:
 single-family dwelling industrial other institutional religious
 multiple-family dwelling educational public agricultural
 commercial Post Office
11. Exterior Walls: clapboard stone brick board and batten shingles stucco
 other vitrified tile
12. Structural System: wood frame with interlocking joints wood frame with light members (balloon frame)
 masonry load-bearing walls iron frame steel frame with curtain walls reinforced concrete
 other _____
13. Condition: excellent good fair deteriorated
14. Integrity: original site moved—if so, when? _____
 Notes on alterations, additions (with dates and architect, if known) and any other notable features of building and site:
entrance moved to west side in 1964 remodeling: Wm. J. Wagner, architect
15. Related Outbuildings and Property: barn other farm structures carriage house garage privy
 other _____
16. Is the building endangered? no yes—if so, why? _____
17. Surroundings of the building: open land woodland scattered outbuildings densely built-up commercial
 industrial residential other _____

18. Map



19. Photo

Roll _____ Frame _____ View _____

Significance

(Indicate sources of information for all statements)

20. Architectural significance

- a. Key structure/individually may qualify for the National Register
- b. Contributing structure
- c. Not eligible/intrusion

This 1907 Post Office building was constructed of hand-pressed brick and vitrified tile. Its design shows both prairie school and Art Deco influences. Its intricate brickwork is a break from standard designs, especially the archway over what originally was a recessed front entrance. A 1964 renovation relocated the entrance to the west facade, which originally had abutted another building. The original arched entryway is now a window wall. Because of these alterations, this building has been classidied as a contributing, rather than a key structure.

21. Historical Significance

Theme(s) Social History

- a. Key structure/individually may qualify for the National Register
- b. Contributing structure
- c. Not eligible/intrusion

Smoldering tobacco ashes ignited a fire that scorched the West Branch Post Office building on West Main Street on April 16, 1907. In the aftermath of the blaze, Postmaster Caleb Wickersham decided it was time to replace the old wood-frame building he had bought in 1898 for \$450. Once a sign-painter who was forced to retire due to the occupational hazard of lead poisoning, C.H. Wickersham received his Congressional appointment as postmaster in 1897. Located along a busy railroad, West Branch was then receiving five mail deliveries a day. When Wickersham announced plans for a new building in August

(cont'd)

22. Sources (for primary and secondary sources, give complete facts of publication: author, title, place of publication, date, etc.):

Sanborn fire maps: 1895, 1900, 1906, 1912, 1927

Stratton, Maud: Herbert Hoover's Home Town: The History of West Branch (1948)
Abstract of title

The Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette: 11/9/07

The West Branch Times: 4/18/07; 8/22/07; 8/29/07; 9/26/07; 10/31/07; 11/14/07

Prepared by Tom Walsh Date 8/28/86

Address P.O. Box 696 West Branch IA 52358 Telephone (319) 643-5327

Organization Herbert Hoover Presidential Library Association

For Office of Historic Preservation Use Only

1. Office Information Sources on this Property

- County Resource File
- Windshield Survey
- National Register
- Grants-In-Aid: _____
- Determination of Eligibility

Review and Compliance Project:

- Other _____
- Other _____
- Other _____

2. Subject Traces

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____
- e. _____

3. Photo Images _____

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Iowa Site Inventory

Office of Historic Preservation
Iowa State Historical Department
East 12th & Grand Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

Site Number 14

Continuation Sheet

Item Number(s)

21. Historical Significance (cont'd)

1907, much was made of the fact that it wouldn't be a fire trap: "The building is to be practically fire proof with cement floor and either rubberoid or metal roof," The West Branch Times reported. "It will be one story in height with the front in pressed brick and cement trimming. A large arch will span the entire front, back of which will be a porch four feet wide which will protect the glass front. A large entrance door will prevent much of the crowding usually indulged in at a post office."

The town's post office was temporarily relocated August 24 to facilitate construction. Within a month, the brick walls were in place. By the end of October, the new building was in use. The West Branch Times called the building "a great improvement to our town." The new building also attracted some out-of-town interest. The Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette even used a photograph of the building to illustrate a story that appeared November 9, 1907: "The office is a splendid improvement, a structure that is a credit to the progressive town of West Branch," The Gazette story said. "The building is practically fireproof. It is built of hand-pressed brick and vitrified tile; concrete floor and metal ceiling. It has a skylight over the distributing table and has asbestos lined fluted steel shutters at back door and windows. It is 20x50 feet and has a 13-foot ceiling. There is an arched vestibule or porch in front 4x20 feet."

The Gazette story credits West Branch as having "the first office in this congressional district to get rural free delivery and the first in the state to get more than one rural carrier. It was also the first international money order office in Cedar County."

Wickersham's building, which he initially leased to the federal government for \$294 a year, housed the West Branch Post Office until 1928, when postal operations were moved into a new building constructed at the southeast corner of Main and Downey streets. The old building later housed a potato chip and popcorn business, a piano tuner, a seed corn warehouse, a garage and a feed store before its career as a service station began 45 years ago. The building was restored in 1964, when it was transformed from a storage area into the service station's main office.

HISTORIC VIEW 'G'

W/ Site 14

1910 photograph by
unknown photographer

Source: West Branch
Heritage Museum

