

# Iowa Site Inventory

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

Site Number 77N 29W - 24.1  
District Name Legacy In Stone TR  
Map Reference # 56

## Identification

1. Site Name W.T. Ford House
2. Village/Town/City Vic. Earlham Township Penn County Madison
3. Street Address 2 1/2 Miles South of Earlham on P57, 1/4 Mile West
4. Legal Location 77N 29W 24 NE1/4 SW1/4 \*
- Urban: subdivision Rural: township block range parcel section subparcel 1/4 section of 1/4 section
- (Map 7)
5. UTM Location: zone 15 easting 405,210 northing 4,589,510; Acreage less than one acre
6. Owner(s) Name Virgil Ackerman
7. Owner(s) Address Route 1 Box 261 Earlham IA 50072  
(Street address) (City) (State) (Zip)
8. Use: Present Residence Original Residence

## Description

9. Date of Construction pre 1870 Architect/Builder J.G. Parkins
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 Native limestone
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:  
Dormers, enclosed porch, chimneys removed, partially repainted
15. Related Outbuildings and Property:  barn  other farm structures  carriage house  garage  privy  
 other Smokehouse
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 Farmstead

18. Map



19. Photo

Roll \_\_\_\_\_ Frame \_\_\_\_\_ View \_\_\_\_\_

\*Nomination boundary:  
A circle, 150' diameter, with center point located at center point of house. Excludes outbuildings.

## **SIGNIFICANCE**

### **20. Architectural Significance**

—a. Key structure/individually may qualify for the National Register

—b. Contributing structure

Theme(s): Vernacular Architecture

Subtheme(s): Identified master designer/builder: Parkins; Function: Residential.

The W. T. Ford House is an early example of a vernacular farm residence built of limestone to which expensive stone additions were built about 1870. The last addition is an asymmetrical massed rectangle house with entrance at the side of the gable front. It is the only known residence which was probably built by J. G. Parkins, owner of the Eureka Quarry.

The original house was probably built by George Francis. It is a 12' x 28' one and one-half story house built of locally quarried rubble, some of which is almost finished cut with exaggerated quarry face. The east under eave facade has a door at either end and two windows between. The north gable facade has a window on the main floor and a centered window in the gable peak. The west facade has, three windows, one in the north end and two together in the south end. The middle window has a basement walkout below it. Fenestration on the south facade is obscured by the Ford Addition. This facade faced the road.

The original building is constructed of coursed rubble. Some of the stone on the entrance facade is finished cut and has exaggerated quarry face. Most of the building has been repointed, but what remains has grapevine tooling. There are axed intels and protruding axed sills. The doors are recessed with paneled reveals. The south door is taller and has a transom above it. Overhanging eaves and verges are closed.

Attached to the south end of the Francis House is a 25' x 30' east west gable addition constructed of locally quarried finished cut and ashlar limestone. The east gable facade has a window at each side with two windows between and above in the gable. There is a water table of protruding axed limestone. The water table serves as lintels for basement windows directly below the two first floor windows. The south facade has a window on the right. There is an enclosed stucco porch remodeling across most of the facade. Below the remodeling is a protruding axed water table which serves as lintels for the basement windows. The last addition obscures the west facade and half of the north facade was attached to the Francis House. There is no fenestration in the north facade.

The south main facade is constructed of coursed ashlar with raised ribbon joints. The surface texture of the stone has been exaggerated with long side blows with a square ended tool. The east facade is constructed of finished cut stone with exaggerated quarry face. The coursed stonework has been repointed. Quoins and jambs on the main facade have draft lines struck diagonally to give a feather-like appearance. The face was tooled with long strokes of the square ended tool. Lintels are axed and there are protruding axed water tables.

The last addition to the house is a 24' x 30' two and one-half story north/south gabled house attached to the west side of the second addition. It is constructed of dimension ashlar and rubble quarried at Parkins's Eureka Quarry in Madison Township Section 18. The south gabled main entrance facade has a door on the right with two windows to the left. There are three windows directly above in the second story and a centered gable attic window. There is a protruding axed water table that forms the lintels for the basement windows. The west facade has two first floor windows with two second floor windows directly above. There is a water table of protruding axed stone which forms the lintels for basement windows directly below the first floor windows. The north facade has a window on the left, a second floor window directly above it, and a centered window in the gable.

The south public facade and the west facade are constructed of dimension ashlar. Stone surfaces have been exaggerated with long blows from a square ended tool. Quoins and

jambes have diagonally tooled draft lines which give a feather appearance. Stone is coursed, but two against one bond is used within courses between quoins and jambes. There are raised ribbon joints. Lintels have an axed surface and protruding cornices. Protruding sills have axed texturing. The back north facade is constructed of coursed rubble with grapevine joints. The same protruding axed sills are used on this facade; but lintels are flush and textured overall with a small pointed tool. The main entrance is recessed with paneled reveal and a transom. The second and third additions have extended, closed, mitred eaves and verges. The east, west, and south facades of the second and third additions have pairs of carved brackets. There are three pairs under each edge of the roof.

**21. Historical Significance**

—a. Key structure/individually may qualify for the National Register

—b. Contributing Structure \_\_\_\_\_  
Theme(s) Early Settlement

George Francis was one of the first settlers in the township. He bought 880 acres in 1855. This wealthy land owner contracted to have the first stone house built on the property. This first house is built in the tradition identified with Caleb Clark. In 1868 Francis sold the property to W. T. Ford. Ford came from Chenango County, New York, to buy farm land for himself and his partners. Ford owned about 2000 acres. He and his partners had a 5000 acre farm. One of those partners was David Rankin who built another stone house (77N28W-19-R). Ford probably contracted with J. G. Parkins, owner of the Eureka Quarry in Madison Township Section 18, to build the west addition to the house. Parkins may also have built the earlier south east addition.

Atlas of Madison Co., Iowa Philadelphia: Harrison & Warner, 1875.

Courthouse Records. Winterset, Iowa: Madison County Recorders' Office.

Davies, J. J. History and Business Directory of Madison Co., Ia. Des Moines; Mills and Co. Printers and Publishers, 1869.

Mueller, Herman. History of Madison County, Iowa, 2 vols. Chicago: S.J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1915.

**22. Sources**

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