

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

REVEREND GEORGE B. HITCHCOCK HOUSE

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United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: HITCHCOCK, REV. GEORGE B., HOUSE

Other Name/Site Number: Slave House, Underground Railway House

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: 63788 567th Lane

Not for publication: N/A

City/Town: Lewis

Vicinity: N/A

State: IA

County: Cass

Code: 029

Zip Code: 51544

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property

Private: ___

Public-Local: ___

Public-State: X

Public-Federal: ___

Category of Property

Building(s): X

District: ___

Site: ___

Structure: ___

Object: ___

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

1

1

Noncontributing

1 buildings

___ sites

___ structures

1 objects

2 Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 1

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing: Underground Railroad Resources in the United States Theme Study

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4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this ___ nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

Signature of Certifying Official

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

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

Signature of Commenting or Other Official

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

- ___ Entered in the National Register
- ___ Determined eligible for the National Register
- ___ Determined not eligible for the National Register
- ___ Removed from the National Register
- ___ Other (explain):

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

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6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic: DOMESTIC

Sub: single dwelling

Current: RECREATION & CULTURE

Sub: museum

7. DESCRIPTION

Architectural Classification: FEDERAL

Materials:

Foundation: Stone/limestone

Walls: Stone/sandstone

Roof: Wood/shingle

Other: N/A

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Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

The Rev. George B. Hitchcock House is located on a high hill overlooking the East Nishnabotna River and the town of Lewis in Cass County, Iowa. When first built in 1856, this house was situated between two major trails that crossed the river in this area: one north and one southwest of the Hitchcock House (see attached maps).¹ Sited in view of these early trails and their respective river crossings, the Hitchcock House was in an ideal location to serve as a landmark for travelers, as well as being in an ideal location for its occupants to carry out Underground Railroad activities.

This house is a distinctive two-story rectangular building of locally-quarried, reddish-brown sandstone. The stones are laid in a random ashlar pattern and consist of rough-dressed blocks of varying sizes, some quite massive. Reportedly, Hitchcock quarried much of the stone himself having had previous experience in the construction of a stone church at one of his earlier charges.² The house is a vernacular variation of the Federal style but is a carpenter/ builder's interpretation of such a design.³ The walls average 21 inches thick, with an air space between double layers of stone. The foundation is constructed of locally-quarried limestone rubble. The interior base framing of the building consists of hand-hewn heavy timbers, while the lighter members of the upper interior wood framing are sawn.

The front (south) façade has symmetrical three-bay fenestration, with a central entry flanked by single windows on the first floor and three single windows across the second floor. The rear (north) wall of the house has a central door closely flanked by two single windows on the first floor but with only one single window on the second floor to the left of center. The east and west sides show two symmetrically-placed windows on each floor, with a basement entry door just off-center on the east side of the house. The basement entry is cut down into the slope and consists of poured concrete, with the side walls faced with sandstone slabs. The entry is covered by two hinged wooden doors that open out. This entryway was rebuilt during a 1980s restoration and rehabilitation of the Hitchcock House, with the current entry steps and sidewalls replacing older, but badly deteriorated, concrete steps and side walls.⁴ It is not known how the original basement entryway was constructed, but it probably consisted of stone side walls and either stone or wood stairs. The current open-out doors replaced a large single wood door, with the opening widened slightly to accommodate the newer double-doors and to facilitate visitor traffic up and down the stairs.

The windows of the house, refurbished during the 1980s restoration, are 2/2 double-hung. The front door has side lights and a fixed five-pane transom window. While the front and back doors

¹ These two trails included an early nineteenth century Potawatomi trail that was later used by the 1850s Mormon handcart migration and subsequently became a state post and stagecoach road, and the 1846 Mormon trail, which crossed the river southwest of the Hitchcock House. Floyd E. Pearce, *Notes for Guides at Hitchcock House: a station on the Underground Railroad* (Cumberland, Iowa: The Pterodactyl Press, 2003), 14-15.

² Fred B. DeWitt, *The Land and Men Now and Then* (Privately published, 1954, copy on file State Historical Society of Iowa [SHSI], Iowa City), 13; Truman Orville Douglass, *Builders of a Commonwealth: The Other Men of the Forties*, Volume III, Congregationalism in Iowa Collection, Grinnell College Archives, Grinnell, Iowa, 1842-1925, 31.

³ Ralph Christian, Architectural Historian, State Historical Society of Iowa, personal communication, 1996; Virginia and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), 153-158.

⁴ Details concerning the 1980s restoration/rehabilitation were provided by Sandy Fairbairn of the Hitchcock House Advisory Board and from photographs in her possession that were taken at the time of the 1980s project.

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are not original to the house, they are older doors reflective of the historic period of this house. A cantilevered porch hood appears to be an early twentieth century addition over the front door. All of the lintels and sills consist of large, dressed blocks of reddish-brown sandstone original to the house construction.

The hip roof is covered with wood shingles that are a 1980s restoration of the original roofing material. The original roof is still intact underneath the current roof, which has a slightly steeper pitch to the hip than the original roof. The original roof was retained during the 1980s rehabilitation project on recommendation of the Iowa State Historic Preservation Office.⁵

The house has a full basement that is divided into two rooms by an interior stone support wall. Additional structural support is provided by vertical timber posts within each room. The two rooms are connected by an opening in the center of the dividing wall. Reportedly, this opening was originally covered by a hinged cabinet or cupboard that could swing open to provide access to the west room and when closed gave the appearance of a fixed cabinet. There are three wood planks laid in-between the stones on both sides of this opening to which a cabinet could have been fixed; however, no definitive evidence of how this cabinet was either hinged or fixed within this opening could be discerned. Unfortunately, the hinged door itself no longer survives, and there are no detailed accounts as to its exact construction or configuration.⁶ The west room had no windows or other openings and could only be accessed through this opening. The lore surrounding this house holds that this room was specifically built to hide fugitive slaves, with the cupboard door disguising the opening to fool slave hunters.⁷ However, a full, two-room basement underneath a masonry house of this size and age is not all that unusual in Iowa during this period. Therefore, the lore that Hitchcock purposefully built this two-room configuration specifically to provide a "secret room" in which to hide fugitive slaves, remains just that—unconfirmed legend. However, Hitchcock's participation in the Underground Railroad has been documented for this property, and the use of west room as a haven for fugitive slaves is probable if not yet proven for certain.⁸

The east room in the basement can be accessed from both the exterior via the covered exterior stairway and from the first floor via a wood staircase that is entered from the first-floor kitchen. A large stone fireplace is situated along the east wall of this room. Here too, local lore holds that the fugitive slaves used this fireplace for heat, light, and cooking facilities when they did not have to be hidden away in the "secret room." However, the original purpose of this fireplace may simply have been for cooking in the summertime to better stand the heat and to provide a more effective drying environment for wintertime wash days.⁹

⁵ Lowell Soike, Iowa State Historic Preservation Office (IASHPO), e-mail communication dated May 12, 2004, concerning the Historic Preservation Development Grant-in-Aid project conducted at the Hitchcock House.

⁶ Pearce, 11-13. A telephone conversation with Max Peron on August 22, 1996, with Consultant Leah Rogers noted that Peron's mother had related to him that this cabinet had a hinge or pivot and the door opened from the right and inward toward the fireplace. The cabinet door had been removed by the 1940s (Personal communication, Max Peron, August 22, 1996).

⁷ Dennis E. Hoffman, "The Hitchcock House: an Iowa way station on the road to freedom." *The Iowan* 44 (Spring 1996), 47-51; Pearce, 11-13.

⁸ Jan Olive Nash, Tallgrass Historians L.C., Iowa City, Iowa, personal communication, 2003, regarding her professional knowledge of houses of this vintage in Iowa. Typically, the second room dug fully into the slope of the hill would have been used for storing canned foods. That Hitchcock used this room for hiding fugitive slaves may certainly be true; however, it is not confirmed that that house was purposefully designed for this use.

⁹ Pearce, 11.

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The hand-hewn vertical beams (measuring eight inches square) and sill plates are exposed in the basement, with the interior vertical support post in the west room retaining its tree bark. Several additional post and beam supports have been added in more recent years along the foundation walls to provide additional support to the floor joists. The floor of the basement is hard-packed earth, which may originally have been mixed with ashes and lime to form a hard surface that could be swept clean.¹⁰ The basement floor may have some potential for archaeological evidence of its original uses, and this potential should be considered for future investigations of this property.

There have been serious problems with the limestone foundation through the years, with a section along the northeast wall collapsing during the 1980s restoration project. Another section along the south wall had bowed out significantly but appears to have been stabilized by the recent foundation restoration work.

The interior plan of the upper floors shows a basic central hall plan, with the first floor consisting of two rooms flanking the central hall and the hallway only extending to the midsection of the house. The north half of the first floor consists of a larger central room flanked by two small rooms. The central room was the main kitchen of the house and has a door to the exterior. This room is also connected via doorways to the four other rooms and the hallway on the first floor (see attached floor plans). The plan of the second floor shows two sets of two rooms flanking the central hall, which stretches the full depth of the building.

Original interior components include the walnut woodwork, plank flooring, beveled mopboards, the wood staircase to the second floor, and the chamfered newel posts for this staircase, including the main post at the bottom of the stairs and the two posts that anchor the railing around the second floor landing. While much of the interior is original in its components and configuration, the staircase railing and balusters had to be rebuilt and the wall surfaces removed and refinished during the 1980s restoration project. During this project, it was found that the original lath and plaster had deteriorated to the point that it had to be removed. The cost of replacing the lath and plaster was prohibitive at the time; therefore, the wall surfaces were replaced with sheet rock, with that surface then either painted or wallpapered depending upon the known or suspected original finish for each room.¹¹

Overall, the house has seen some modification throughout its history; however, it has been refurbished to reflect the time period of 1856 to 1865 when the Hitchcock family would have been in residence. Perhaps one of the first modifications was the replacement of the original windows, which are believed to have been 6/6 double-hungs, with 2/2 double-hungs probably installed in place of the 6/6 windows in the very late nineteenth to early twentieth century.¹² In

¹⁰ Pearce, 12-13.

¹¹ Interestingly, while most of the lath was affixed horizontally as is more typical for this type of wall finish, some areas were found to have the lath affixed vertically (Sandy Fairbairn, Hitchcock House Advisory Board, personal communication, 2004). The use of sheet rock as a substitute material for the wall finish was considered an accepted method in keeping with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and was approved by the IASHPO during this grant-funded rehabilitation project (Lowell Soike, IASHPO, e-mail dated May 12, 2004).

¹² It is the opinion of this consultant, that 2/2 double-hung windows would have been more common in western Iowa after the arrival of the railroad following the Civil War, probably in the 1870s-1880s. The smaller panes of glass required for 6/6 windows would

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turn, these older 2/2 windows had been broken and damaged by vandalism and exposure during the period when the house stood vacant between 1966 and 1984. The current windows are restorations of the late nineteenth century 2/2 double-hung windows using the sash material salvaged from the broken windows. Older modifications also included the construction of a late nineteenth or early twentieth century frame, shed-roofed addition on the rear (north) side of the house and a long concrete stoop that was added along the front (south) side of the house in the early to mid twentieth century. Both the frame addition and the concrete stoop were removed during the 1980s restoration as they were not original to the house construction. The porch hood over the front entry is also a later addition to the front façade probably in the early twentieth century and originally had two decorative brackets that were removed during the 1980s restoration project.

The house stood vacant between 1966 and 1984 when the property was taken on by a group of Lewis residents, who, with the support of the mayor of Lewis and the local Methodist minister, obtained a matching grant from the Iowa Cultural Grants Program and the State Historical Society of Iowa to restore and rehabilitate the house.¹³ During the period of vacancy the house suffered from neglect and vandalism. Most of the window panes had been broken out, debris had accumulated on the interior, graffiti was etched into the soft stone walls, overhanging tree branches etched deep cuts into portions of the stone walls, several of the stone lintel blocks had shifted and cracked, insects had caused damage to the timber framing, and portions of the stone walls were in an advanced state of deterioration. A large section of the east wall had even collapsed leaving open holes on the first and second floors.

Restoration and rehabilitation of the property was undertaken in the 1980s and included reconstruction of the collapsed wall sections, tuckpointing, roof repair and reshingling, rebuilding the brick chimney, and repair of the windows using the remnant wood window sashes and restoring the windows to their late nineteenth century 2/2 configuration. Other restoration efforts have included refurbishing the interior to as close to its original state as possible. While the interior rehabilitation did involve the removal of the deteriorated lath and plaster and its replacement with sheet rock, every attempt was made to retain the original woodwork and other details and to restore the original interior configuration and look to the period when the Hitchcock family would have been in residence from 1856 to 1865.

It is estimated that nearly all of the original wood flooring and mopboards were retained and refurbished. In the process of removing the deteriorated wall surfaces, it was found that a doorway connecting the northeast and southeast first-floor rooms had been closed off at some point. It was also found that a wall in the northwest bedroom on the second floor had been moved to enlarge the room at some point. Both the closed-off doorway and the moved wall were restored to their original configurations and positions during the 1980s project. It is important to note that the interior was never updated with plumbing or bathroom facilities further enhancing the historic look and feel of this space. All of the restoration/rehabilitation work was accomplished under the guidance of the State Historical Society of Iowa using the Secretary of the Interior's standards for such work.

have traveled better by wagon than the larger panes used in 2/2 or even later 1/1 windows. Without a historic photograph as evidence, however, this cannot be verified.

¹³ This grant was a Historic Preservation Development Grant-in-Aid project conducted under the Emergency Jobs Act of 1983. Judy McClure, Staff Architect for the State Historic Preservation Office, and Wesley Shank, Field Consultant for that office, were involved in evaluating and approving the work at the Hitchcock House under this grant (Lowell Soike, IASHPO, e-mail dated May 12, 2004).

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During the restoration project, a section of the limestone foundation wall in the southeast corner of the basement collapsed requiring reconstruction and reinforcement of the basement walls in some areas.¹⁴ Another project involved the installation of a drainage system around the exterior and interior of the foundation. This is visible on the interior of the basement by a band of concrete that extends out from the wall base approximately one to two feet and on the exterior by the build-up of earth around the foundation to a slightly higher level than it was prior to the 1980s restoration project.

The yard area surrounding the house is landscaped and maintained. Walnut trees shade the yard and house. Several of these trees appear to be as old, if not older, than the house. The only other extant building in the immediate yard area is a gable-roofed, wood-framed privy dating from the early to mid-twentieth century occupation of this house. It is located off the northeast corner of the house along the east edge of the yard area. The privy building is considered non-contributing to the nominated property because it post-dates the period of significance (i.e., 1856-1865). Further, it is unrelated to the Underground Railroad history of this property.

A twentieth century wire fence, with at least one concrete post, lines the yard area on the south and west sides. A flower garden has been added to the southeast corner of the yard in more recent years. A gravel driveway leads into the site from the north, with a circle drive near the entrance to the rear yard area, which is now the main front entry to the Hitchcock House Museum.

Directly north of the Hitchcock House property are several buildings associated with the early twentieth century occupation of this farmstead and with its more recent function as a house museum. These buildings include a house, barn, and granary, with the house occupied by the site caretaker and the outbuildings used for activities for the house museum and park. The house was originally a schoolhouse that was moved to this location in the late twentieth century for its current use as the caretaker's house. Because these buildings are located outside of the primary yard area surrounding the Hitchcock House and because they post-date the property's period of significance and have no association with Hitchcock, they are not included within the nominated property's boundaries.

There is one more feature within the nominated boundary that requires mention. This is a cast iron fence frame located near a tree in the west side yard of the Hitchcock House property. This small frame was added in more recent years and was placed at this location to mark what was believed by some to be the site of one or two burials. One is reportedly the burial of Leang Afa Hitchcock, the eldest son of George Hitchcock, who died in a shooting accident at the age of 19. The other grave is reportedly that of a young girl, who died while migrating with her family along the nearby Mormon trail.¹⁵ Currently, the presence or precise location of these two graves is not confirmed by hard evidence, and there is sufficient doubt surrounding the location of these burial sites to place any weight in their presence within the vicinity of this cast iron frame. A magnetometer and resistivity study was undertaken in May 2003 by the National Park Service's

¹⁴ Sandy Fairbairn, Hitchcock House Advisory Board, personal communication, 2003.

¹⁵ Leang Hitchcock's accidental death, while serving as an escort for Capt. Chambry and his Indiana emigrant company on their way to Kansas, is recounted in Rev. John Todd's *Early Settlement and Growth of Western Iowa or Reminiscences* (Des Moines, Iowa: The Historical Department of Iowa, 1906), 123-125. According to Todd, Leang's body was transported back to the Hitchcock Farm in Lewis for burial but does not state where his final resting place is located. Leang died on September 12, 1856; Pearce, 13.

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Midwest Archaeological Center of the yard area surrounding the Hitchcock House.

Unfortunately, the cast iron fence is set in concrete and could not be moved for this study. As a result, the iron fence masked any possible ground anomalies in this area. It is recommended that test excavation be conducted in the future to determine whether any significant features or grave sites are present within the yard area of this property.

The cast iron fence enclosure is used as an interpretive tool for the house museum in telling the history of the Hitchcock House and in relating the story of the possible grave sites. The cast iron fence is considered to be a non-contributing object, which is a modern intrusion within the boundaries of the nominated property. For the moment, the presence of graves within the nominated boundary of this property remains unconfirmed.

Prior to 1966, the Hitchcock House was in continuous use as a farm residence. George B. Hitchcock sold the property to Lois Stanley in August 1865. Subsequent owners included James McElroy, George Roberts, Charles Saunders, Allan Miller, and the last private owners, Zoe E. and Alice Lou Kay. Zoe Kay completed the nomination that placed the Hitchcock House in the National Register of Historic Places in 1977. Kay then sold the property to the State of Iowa, with the property under the auspices of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, which in 1978 entered into a management agreement with the Cass County Conservation Board. The Board is responsible overall for the care and maintenance of the property. Since 1984 those duties have been shared first with the Hitchcock House Restoration Committee and presently with the Friends of the Hitchcock House and the Hitchcock House Advisory Board. These groups are composed of interested local and county residents who were appointed to manage all of the Hitchcock House business.¹⁶

The restored property serves as a historic house museum staffed by local volunteers. The museum interprets the history of the house during the period of 1856 to 1865 when the Hitchcock family was in residence and its use as a station on the Underground Railroad. It is the centerpiece of a 65-acre park in a protected setting under the supervision of the Cass County Conservation Board. The Hitchcock House was granted National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom status in 2001 by the National Park Service.¹⁷

The interior interpretation of the Hitchcock House museum includes a few items donated by descendants of the Rev. and Mrs. Hitchcock including a copy of the only known photograph of the Hitchcocks and a dining room table that had been the property of Milton Hitchcock, one of George and Caroline's sons. Four chairs around the table came from the Hitchcock Chair Factory in Connecticut.¹⁸ The collection at the Hitchcock House has attempted to remain true to the period when the Hitchcocks were in residence including attempts to match the original wallpaper

¹⁶ Cass County – 1980 History, Inc., *Cass County Iowa* (Atlantic, Iowa: Cass County – 1980 History, Inc., 1980), 73; Hitchcock House website (www.hitchcockhouse.org) accessed July 2, 2003; National Register of Historic Places website accessed July 1, 2003; Pearce, 6.

¹⁷ "Hitchcock House," Lewis, Cass County, Iowa, National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Site Application (U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Midwest Regional Office, October 30, 2001); Pearce, 6.

¹⁸ The Hitchcock Chair Factory was established by Lambert Hitchcock in 1818 in what is now Riverton, Connecticut. Lambert Hitchcock and George B. Hitchcock are 4th cousins, once removed. While George Hitchcock's father, David Jr., and Lambert Hitchcock both had ties to Litchfield County, Connecticut, and lived there around the same time, it is not known for certain if they were acquainted with one another (Sandy Fairbairn, Hitchcock House Advisory Board, e-mail dated November 10, 2004).

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found during the restoration.¹⁹

The Hitchcock House retains sufficiently high integrity to be considered eligible as a National Historic Landmark. Specifically, this property retains integrity of location and setting because the house is at its original location, with the topography, surrounding landscape, and much of the viewshed largely unaltered since it was first built. The only alterations to this viewshed and landscape have come from modern cultivation and terracing and some later building construction to the north of the property. Some of the walnut trees that were on this property when the house was first built remain standing and in good health. The historic ferry house at the nearby Nishnabotna River crossing is still extant and is visible from the Hitchcock House.

The property also retains integrity of design in that the house retains its original form, design, and style and the interior has been restored to its original floor plan. The house further retains sufficient integrity of materials and workmanship on both the exterior and interior. Most notable is the stone construction of this house, which evidences locally-obtained materials and the workmanship of the builders, which reportedly included Hitchcock himself. While the house did suffer from neglect and vandalism prior to the 1980s restoration/rehabilitation and the more recent tuckpointing and foundation repair work, the building still retains the majority of its original components. The restoration and rehabilitation work involved repairing wherever possible and replacing only when necessary, all the while retaining as much of the original and historic fabric of the house as possible. A major integrity consideration is that the house had never been modernized beyond the addition of electrical wiring in the mid-twentieth century and a forced-air hanging furnace in the basement. The latter was installed during the 1980s restoration.

The Hitchcock House is further considered to retain integrity of feeling. The property in its restored state projects a very strong sense of time and place, with the restoration and the house museum interpretation attempting to stay as true as possible to the time when Hitchcock and his family occupied this property between 1856 and 1865. Finally, the Hitchcock House has a high degree of integrity of association because this house is directly linked to George B. Hitchcock, having been built by him and having served as his primary residence during the period when he is known to have been directly involved in the Underground Railroad. While there is not absolute proof that fugitive slaves were housed in the basement of this house, there is strong evidence that Hitchcock was sheltering fugitives in his home and helping them on their way to freedom. During this period, he was also working cooperatively with other conductors in Lewis and southwestern Iowa and may have provided shelter for John Brown on one or more of his trips through Lewis.

¹⁹ Pearce, 6.

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8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

Nationally: X Statewide: Locally:

Applicable National Register Criteria: A X B X C X D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): A B C D E F G

NHL Criteria: 1

NHL Theme(s): II. Creating Social Institutions and Movements
2. reform movements

Areas of Significance: Social History

Period(s) of Significance: 1856-1865

Significant Dates: 1856

Significant Person(s): N/A

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Hitchcock, George B.

Historic Contexts: Underground Railroad Resources in the United States
XXXI. Social and Humanitarian Movements
D. Abolitionism

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State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

The Rev. George B. Hitchcock House is eligible under National Historic Landmark Criterion 1 for its association with the abolitionist reform movement and as a link in the network that came to be known as the Underground Railroad. The Hitchcock House is an outstanding example of a highly intact Underground Railroad site, and its integrity and location represent the diversity of localized efforts in this movement. It complements such existing National Historic Landmark properties as the Milton House in Wisconsin and the Johnson and LeMoyne houses in Pennsylvania. George B. Hitchcock was prominent among the militant anti-slavery leadership of the Congregational Church mission in western Iowa and it is believed he used his home in Lewis, Iowa, to assist in the safe passage of fugitive slaves through southwestern Iowa on their way east and north to freedom.

The Hitchcock House is also representative of the transplanting of the anti-slavery activism of eastern Congregationalism and the American Home Missionary Society to the western frontier as part of the so-called Congregational Renaissance of this period by the ministers in this movement. Congregationalists in the east, such as the Beecher family (staunch supporters of the Society) were active in the movement, and missionaries who encountered the issue in their "fields of labor" felt compelled to take an active stand against the institution they saw as "the nation's worst evil." The missionaries were "anti-slavery to a man," and they "could not but feel that it was incumbent upon them as missionaries of Christ...to do something toward the amelioration of Negro slavery as that social, economic and political institution was understood by them."²⁰ The idealistic young graduates of mostly eastern seminaries such as Yale and Andover, who volunteered for positions in newly settled portions of the country, recognized that they were in a position to influence the moral and intellectual character of these fledgling communities. They not only organized churches and Sabbath schools, but also founded colleges and female seminaries, and in this way sought to transplant the values of eastern Congregationalism throughout the old Northwest, and later, the Far West; values that included an ardent opposition to slavery, were grounded in religious conviction and communicated with missionary zeal.

George B. Hitchcock became directly involved in the Congregational Renaissance and its growing abolitionist militancy in both Illinois and Iowa beginning in the 1830s and culminating in the active role he played in spreading Congregational missions in western Iowa and in the Underground Railroad and the Free-State movement in southwestern Iowa in the 1850s.

The period of significance for this property extends from 1856 when Hitchcock built this large stone house, until 1865 when the Thirteenth Amendment was ratified, marking the end of slavery and the abolition movement. It was also in 1865 that Hitchcock departed from this house for new missions that focused on aiding and educating freed blacks in Missouri and Kansas.

²⁰ Frederick Irving Kuhns, *The American Home Missionary Society in Relation to the Antislavery Controversy of the Old Northwest* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Edwards Brothers, Inc., 1959), 1-2.

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The Underground Railroad

The Underground Railroad has been defined as:

the effort—sometimes spontaneous, sometimes highly organized—to assist persons held in bondage in North America to escape from slavery. While most runaways began their journey unaided and many completed their self-emancipation without assistance, each decade in which slavery was legal in the United States saw an increase in the public perception of a secretive network and in the number of persons willing to give aid to the runaway.²¹

The origin of the Underground Railroad is unclear, although the Quakers are commonly credited with initiating the formal operations of this system. One of the first organized actions occurred in 1780 in Philadelphia when Quakers assisted a group of runaways fleeing bondage in Virginia. By the 1830s, participation in this type of clandestine activity increased, and abolitionists were coming to recognize the underground as an effective means to attack the system of slavery in the United States. The involvement of the Quaker community in the assistance of runaway slaves helped initiate the early operations of the Underground Railroad in the northern states. However, free blacks, ex-slaves, and white abolitionists all played significant roles in the success of the underground network.

While the Quakers were prominent players given their anti-slavery stance, other religious groups became involved as well including Baptists, Congregationalists, Episcopalians, Methodists, and Presbyterians, among others.²² African American congregations of the Baptist and Methodist churches, such as the African Baptist, Union Baptist, AME, and AME Zion churches, contributed greatly to underground activities in both northern and southern states. These religious groups were often committed to other social causes in addition to abolition, with prohibition and anti-tobacco stances adhered to as well. Some groups chose a more passive and peaceful means to support these causes, while others followed a pro-active and sometimes militant approach. It was the latter followers who were most actively involved in the day-to-day activities of the Underground Railroad and who became involved in some areas, including Iowa, with the Free-Soil (or Free-State) movement and with radical abolitionist, John Brown, whose activities eventually led to violence and the final stand at Harper's Ferry. The passage by Congress of a more stringent Fugitive Slave Law as part of the Compromise of 1850 drove the underground network into greater secrecy. Persons aiding runaways on northern soil now ran a greater personal risk of prosecution. But however threatening the Fugitive Slave Law, it did not deter those who were fervently committed to the cause of abolition and the Underground Railroad.

Basically, the Underground Railroad was an activity that was “locally organized, but with no real center” and spread into the Midwest as the western frontier spread farther west and the question arose of whether new states admitted to the Union would be free or slave states.²³ The Missouri

²¹ Marie Tyler-McGraw and Kira R. Badamo, *Underground Railroad Resources in the United States Theme Study* (Washington, D.C.: National Historic Landmarks Survey, NRHE, National Park Service, 2000), 1.

²² While religious groups played a prominent role in the Underground Railroad, not all members of these religious groups were abolitionists or were active in the underground. Furthermore, many of the persons who took part in the abolitionist movement and in the Underground Railroad did so without any particular religious association.

²³ Tyler-McGraw and Badamo, 2.

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Compromise of 1820, which allowed Missouri to enter as a slave state but prohibited slavery in newly acquired territories and states located above the 36° 30' parallel, dictated that Iowa, which became a state in 1846, entered as free soil. However, even in Iowa there was internal conflict over the issue of slavery and the abolition movement. The passage of Iowa's so-called "Black Code" in 1841 was a reflection of the general desire to "escape from the disturbing demands of [Iowa's] anti-slavery conscience" by avoiding "all contact with the Black and with the system oppressing him."²⁴ In other words, if blacks could be discouraged from settling in the state, then the issue might be avoided altogether. Early in its history, the general public attitude in Iowa was marked more by anti-abolitionism and noninterference with slavery. However, as time passed, there was "growing resistance to slavery's demands while the term 'abolitionist' began to lose its stigma, all of which was underscored by the increasingly open support shown in Iowa for John Brown and others working on behalf of the free-state movement in Kansas."²⁵

The passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854, which "opened the door to human bondage on Iowa's western border" brought the slavery issue directly to Iowa.²⁶ From that point on, Iowa remained fairly consistent in its response to slavery. While unwilling to make overt threats to slavery in the South, "Iowa readily attacked the institution at any point where it entered into the state's jurisdiction."²⁷ Blacks in the state were given vestigial rights, such as the right to testify against whites. But, more importantly, Iowans felt less to fear from enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Act and increased their assistance in the Underground Railroad or turned a blind eye to these activities in their midst.²⁸

Runaway slaves from Missouri made their way north along the many trails and unmarked routes throughout southern Iowa to points east and north. Iowans also "contributed food, supplies, and guns to the free-soil cause in Kansas, thus giving themselves an introduction to John Brown and a role in the adventure at Harper's Ferry."²⁹ In 1856, John Brown made his first visit across Iowa where he met with the Rev. John Todd in Tabor, a Congregational minister who was an active abolitionist and Underground Railroad participant. Brown would cross the state several times, often with fugitive slaves in tow. His last trek out of Kansas on his way to Harper's Ferry crossed through Iowa taking the route that would lead from Tabor to Lewis and points east before crossing out of the state.³⁰ While it is not known for certain if Brown ever stayed at the Hitchcock House in Lewis, it is likely that he had contact with Hitchcock and probably shared the hospitality of the Hitchcock household during one or more of these trips.

Some of the documented Underground Railroad routes through southwestern Iowa, as they are known, are shown on two maps attached to this nomination. One was published in Siebert's *The Underground Railroad* in 1898, while the second was published in *The Iowan* in 1956 (see attached map figures). The Siebert map better represents the historic place names of that era (such as "Grove City" instead of "Atlantic" on the 1956 map—Atlantic was not platted as a town

²⁴ James Connor, "The Antislavery Movement in Iowa," *Annals of Iowa* 40 (Fall 1970), 476.

²⁵ Lowell J. Soike, Iowa Freedom Trail Program Proposal (Des Moines, Iowa: Department of Cultural Affairs, State Historical Society of Iowa, 1999), 6.

²⁶ Connor, 476.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Soike, 8.

²⁹ Connor, 478.

³⁰ Ibid., 462; Richard J. Hinton, *John Brown and his Men with Some Account of the Roads They Traveled to Reach Harper's Ferry* (London and Toronto: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1894), 225.

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until the railroad arrived after the Civil War and therefore did not exist as a place name during the ante-bellum period). However, the 1956 map includes additional routes that were gathered from various accounts accumulated to date from Underground Railroad studies in Iowa. On both of these maps, Lewis is shown as the hub of several intersecting routes, and would have been a key division point where a decision had to be made as to the safer route at the moment as fugitives moved through this area.³¹

In reality, the Underground Railroad through Iowa was not a formally established or surveyed route but rather was a loosely organized series of routes that took advantage of natural features such as creek and river valleys and high upland divides as well as already established trails and roads, such as the 1846 Mormon trail, the later 1856 Mormon handcart trail, and the Jim Lane Trail established for the safe passage of “free-soil” emigrants headed for Kansas, as well as formal stage and post roads established by state, county, and local authorities. Most of the Underground Railroad activity in Iowa came after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, which provided legal ramifications for assisting in the escape of fugitive slaves.³² As a result, the actual participants rarely kept any kind of documentation of their activities, and it is the few first-hand accounts, such as the Rev. Todd’s *Early Settlement and Growth of Western Iowa or Reminiscences*, that provide definite confirmation of these activities and the names of some of the participants. Documentation of the Underground Railroad routes, stations, and operators through the years has relied on memories of participants (where they were set down in writing), family stories handed down through the generations, and the rare collection of letters and papers that can be found scattered in repositories across the country.

While we now know many of the names of the most prominent operators of Iowa’s Underground Railroad, even Siebert’s seminal compilation on the Underground Railroad in 1898 did not list all of the operators in Iowa that have since been identified through other sources. Even so, Siebert’s list included 116 names in Iowa alone. Josiah B. Grinnell of Grinnell, Dr. Ira Blanchard of Civil Bend/Percival, and the Rev. John Todd of Tabor were prominent citizens, who were known to have been leaders in underground and other anti-slavery activities. All three shared the hospitality of their homes with John Brown. However, there was no overarching organization or leadership in the underground; rather, it was individuals who, primarily through their religious convictions and associations or their devotion to social and political causes related to abolition, came together at the local and regional level to assist fugitive slaves to freedom wherever possible. It is doubtful that most of the conductors knew the full extent of the routes in Iowa beyond their nearest contacts. However, all of the routes “shared a general destination towards Illinois” where fugitives would then move north and east into Canada.³³ The Mississippi River towns of Burlington and Clinton were the main crossing points in Iowa.

Free blacks along the southern borders of Iowa and in the state also assisted greatly in the Underground Railroad ferrying fugitives across rivers and directing them to the nearest conductors. Religious groups in Iowa, such as the Congregationalists and the Quakers, did overlay to some degree a framework of organization to the Underground Railroad, particularly

³¹ Lowell Soike and John Zeller of the State Historical Society of Iowa, as part of a documentation project of the Underground Railroad in Iowa, are currently revisiting these “route” maps, comparing them with archival research and community memory in an attempt to more accurately identify the people, places, and events involved in this activity.

³² G. Galin Berrier, “The Underground Railroad in Iowa” *Outside In: African-American History in Iowa 1838-2000* (Des Moines, Iowa: State Historical Society of Iowa, 2001), 45.

³³ Soike, 12.

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when one considers where both groups tended to concentrate their missions during this era—in the southern half of Iowa. Recognized abolitionist centers included the Quaker settlements at Salem and Springdale and the Congregationalist settlements at Denmark and Tabor.³⁴ But these were not the only religious groups involved in the Underground Railroad in Iowa. Others included Wesleyan Methodists, who “led by abolitionists Orange Scott and La Roy Sunderland, withdrew from the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1842 in large part over the slavery issue” and “Reformed Presbyterians, or ‘Covenanters,’ were probably just as active in aiding fugitive slaves as the Friends.”³⁵

G. Galin Berrier has noted that:

The major center of Underground Railroad activity in southwest Iowa was at Civil Bend – now Percival –and Tabor, settled by anti-slavery Congregationalists from Oberlin, Ohio, and where nearly everyone in the community was in sympathy with escaped slaves. After 1852 fugitives were brought from Nebraska City across the Missouri River at Old Wyoming by a ferryman named William Bebout, or farther north at Copeland’s Ferry. They were then passed on to farmer Lester Platt, Dr. Ira D. Blanchard, Reuben Williams, or Joseph Treat, and taken on to Tabor, where the key agent was Rev. John Todd.³⁶

From Tabor, known routes branched up through Lewis in Cass County and over through Quincy in Adams County where the routes continued to divide and branch (see attached Underground Railroad route maps). The route from Tabor to Springdale through Lewis came to be commonly known as “the John Brown line” because it was the route taken by John Brown in his highly publicized 1859 trip with twelve slaves that he had forcibly rescued from slavery in Missouri. That act also resulted in a formal rebuke from the Tabor group, who were appalled at the violence used by Brown; however, he was still warmly received in Grinnell and Springdale on his trip east to Harper’s Ferry. In reality, John Brown, while he made at least four trips to Iowa between 1855 and 1859, and was well known in Tabor, Lewis, Grinnell, and Springdale, “seems to have transported very few slaves across Iowa to freedom, and the line from west to east predated his use of it. Conducting fugitive slaves to freedom was subordinate to Brown’s larger goals, as events at Harper’s Ferry later in 1859 would demonstrate.”³⁷

How many fugitive slaves were led to freedom over Iowa’s Underground Railroad routes is unknown. Estimates have placed the numbers in the hundreds, perhaps more than one thousand; however, such numbers made only a small dent in the actual number in bondage in Missouri. Even nationally, it has been estimated that the South lost only about a 1,000 slaves a year as runaways. Berrier explains that “Although Wilbur Siebert argued that the Underground Railroad was ‘one of the greatest forces that brought on the Civil War,’ it was rather the very *inability* of the Underground Railroad to seriously undermine the institution of slavery that made the war unavoidable.”³⁸

Many of the participants in Iowa’s Underground Railroad in southwestern Iowa also became

³⁴ Berrier, 46, 49, 52.

³⁵ Ibid., 49; Wilbur H. Siebert, *The Underground Railroad from Slavery to Freedom*, Reprint of 1898 edition (Gloucester, Massachusetts: Peter Smith, 1968), 195-196.

³⁶ Berrier, 53-54.

³⁷ Berrier, 56; F.B. Sanborn, *The Life and Letters of John Brown* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington, 1885), 488-489; Dorothy Schwieder, *Iowa: the Middle Land* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1996), 71.

³⁸ Berrier, 57.

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involved in the anti-slavery Free Kansas Emigrant Aid societies and their efforts to safely transport emigrants to Kansas to aid in the retention of Kansas as free territory and as a free state. This effort was necessitated by the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854, which provided that residents in new territories would decide by popular vote whether to become free or slave-holding states. Kansas, in particular, became the battleground between pro-slavery and free-state proponents, with the resulting civil violence giving rise to what has been called “bleeding Kansas.” Emigrant societies organized in several states to move to Kansas to help insure a free-state status; however, Missouri was too dangerous a route during this period, so southern Iowa became the logical route to insure safe passage to Kansas. The established route generally extended from Iowa City (where the railroad then terminated) to Sigourney, Oskaloosa, Knoxville, Indianola, Osceola, Sidney, Quincy, Tabor, Nebraska City, and down to Topeka, Kansas, from that point. This trail was named for James H. Lane, who was the major leader of the Kansas free-state movement. Lane is known to have “repeatedly” visited Tabor and personally escorted several companies of emigrants to Kansas by way of Tabor. While this route bypassed Lewis to the south, the Hitchcock family would have been aware of the free-state emigrants and were willing in, at least one known instance (i.e., the incident involving the death of Leang Hitchcock), to lend assistance in providing safe escort for these emigrants.³⁹

The “Congregationalist Renaissance” and Abolitionism in Iowa

In Iowa, “the most committed among abolitionists were found mainly among two branches of religious adherents: Quakers and Congregationalists.”⁴⁰ Among Congregationalists, the American Home Missionary Society (A.H.M.S.) played a primary role in this movement in the Midwest. The author of a study on the role of the A.H.M.S. in the anti-slavery movement points out, many of the organization’s missionaries belonged to a religious and intellectual tradition—eastern Presbyterianism and Congregationalism—that was inextricably tied to abolitionism. Although individual missionaries in the west varied in their degree of militancy—from “gradualism” to radical “Garrisonianism”—the vigorous anti-slavery sentiment that characterized them as a group was frequently expressed in the form of resolutions, such as the ten passed by the Presbytery of Chillicothe, Ohio, in 1835.⁴¹ The fact that abolitionists saw the missionaries as instruments of their cause is evidenced by the financial backing they provided to the American Home Missionary Society. Indeed, the agent for the Western Reserve in the 1830s, the Rev. Daniel Lathrop, remarked in his correspondence with the Society that abolitionists were responsible for contributing “probably more than 4/5 of all your funds on this field, and embrace more than 3/4 of the intelligent, active piety in our Synod.”⁴²

The missionaries as a whole were outspoken in their denunciation of slavery, even when it was dangerous to do so. During the 1830s, Illinois in particular became the setting of frequent and dramatic, sometimes violent, clashes between the home missionaries and pro-slavery forces in

³⁹ A map of the Lane Trail actually shows two areas where branch routes could be taken (Soike, 10); Todd, 119-123.

⁴⁰ Todd, 2.

⁴¹ Garrisonianism is a movement named for William Lloyd Garrison, whose publication *The Liberator* was the first to publish abolition appeals. Garrison became an adherent of “immediatism,” which called for the immediate and uncompensated emancipation of all slaves. Garrisonianism took this a step further in viewing the U.S. Constitution as fatally flawed and the federal government incapable of supporting or forcing emancipation. Most Garrisonians did not vote, did not participate in politics, were pacifists (or “non-resisters”) in their approach to the ending of slavery, but were also suspicious of organized religion (Tyler-McGraw and Badamo, 24, 28-29); Kuhns, 6.

⁴² Kuhns, 5.

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the state, especially near the Illinois-Missouri border.⁴³ It was this group, anti-slavery to begin with and radicalized by their experiences on the border, which became the founders of a special brand of Congregationalism in Iowa.

Among the most active and outspoken in the cause was the Rev. Asa Turner, the future “Father of Iowa Congregationalism,” who, while at his post in Quincy, Illinois, “repeatedly exposed himself, enduring assault and battery, to strike hard blows against slavery’s brutality.”⁴⁴ One such incident is vividly related in the reminiscences of Julius Reed, his friend and associate and another of the “patriarchs” of Congregationalism in Iowa:

In 1836, the Anti-slavery excitement became intense, especially about Quincy. Dr. Nelson had been driven out of Missouri, while Mr. Turner was absent in Iowa. Dr. David Nelson, finding his life was in danger, hid in the Mississippi Bottom, watching for an opportunity to cross a ford which his enemies were also watching, armed with rifles and whiskey canteens.⁴⁵

After being rescued by members of Rev. Turner’s church, to whom Dr. Nelson had sent word, he was brought to Quincy, but found he was not yet out of danger. Illinois was populated by many emigrants from the south, and pro-slavery sentiment there was often just as strong as on the slave-holding side of the river. When Rev. Turner returned from his tour of the Black Hawk Purchase, he discovered a movement afoot to drive Dr. Nelson from Quincy, with that intention soon directed at him as well. While a potentially violent mob situation was averted without incident, this was not the Illinois missionaries’ last encounter with pro-slavery mobs as they persisted in their abolitionist activities even in the face of such intimidation.⁴⁶

In 1837, a year after the attempt to drive Turner from Quincy, another abolitionist and former A.H.M.S. appointee in Missouri, the Rev. Elijah Lovejoy, was murdered at Alton, Illinois. In 1835 Lovejoy had been run out of St. Louis, where he published the *St. Louis Observer*, by a mob who threw his printing press into the river. At Alton he continued to publish his paper, now the *Alton Observer*, where angry pro-slavery forces again attacked his press and hurled it into the Mississippi. Lovejoy’s friends, including Asa Turner, rallied to his defense. However, a month later Lovejoy was shot while defending his third press.⁴⁷ It was noted that Lovejoy “accomplished more by his death than he could have done by years of labor. The Congregationalists of Illinois were Abolitionists from that hour and so were the mass of intelligent and moral men.”⁴⁸

Congregationalism in this region had been heavily influenced by a group of recent seminary graduates known as the “Yale band,” of which Asa Turner was a member. The students decided while in their final year at seminary that upon graduation they would travel to Jacksonville, Illinois, where Rev. John M. Ellis, the second missionary in the state, wanted to found a

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 6.

⁴⁵ The Rev. David Nelson was a Kentuckian and former slaveholder. An outspoken abolitionist, he was driven from Marion County, Missouri, following a heated debate at his church which erupted into violence (Julius A. Reed, *Copies of Historical Papers and Addresses*, Julius A. Reed Letter and Papers, Grinnell College Archives, Grinnell, Iowa, Typescript donated 1896, 54).

⁴⁶ Kuhns, 6; Reed, *Copies of Historical Papers and Addresses*, 56-57.

⁴⁷ Kuhns, 5-6; Reed, *Copies of Historical Papers and Addresses*, 56-57.

⁴⁸ Reed, *Copies of Historical Papers and Addresses*, 58.

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college.⁴⁹ After the group conveyed their intentions to Rev. Ellis, Turner devoted himself to raising funds for the institution that the students envisioned “should in time become to Illinois what their own New England colleges were to them.”⁵⁰ In 1829 the band arrived on what was then the far reaches of the frontier, to help organize and found Illinois College.

That the prospect of being an anti-slavery force in the region was in part what attracted them to this remote location may perhaps be inferred from the historic compact signed by the students just before their journey west. It reads:

Believing in the entire alienation of the natural heart from God, in the necessity of the influences of the Holy Spirit for its renovation, and that these influences are not to be expected without the use of means; deeply impressed, also, with the destitute condition of the Western section of our country and the urgent claims of its inhabitants upon the benevolent at the East, and in view of *the fearful crisis evidently approaching, and which we believe can only be averted by speedy and energetic measures* [emphasis added] on the part of the friends of religion and literature in the older States; and, believing that evangelical religion and education must go hand in hand to the successful accomplishment of this desirable object—we, the undersigned, hereby express our readiness to go to the State of Illinois for the purpose of establishing a seminary of learning, such as shall be best adapted to the exigencies of that country, a part of us to engage in instruction in the Seminary, the others to occupy, as preachers, important stations in the surrounding country, provided the undertaking be deemed practicable and the location approved; and provided also, the providence of God permit us to engage in it.

Signed—Theron Baldwin,...[et al.]

*Theological Department, Yale College, Feb.21, 1829.*⁵¹

Although the students do not mention specifically what the “exigencies of that country” to which the college should be adapted, the fact remains that the college at Jacksonville became known for the abolitionist views espoused there. Dr. Edward Beecher, the institution’s first president, entered the fray quite literally when he helped Elijah Lovejoy defend his press in the warehouse at Alton when it was under attack. Indeed, “[s]o pronounced were its [Illinois College’s] anti-slavery sentiments that a pro-slavery man like the father of William H. Herndon, Abraham Lincoln’s law partner, took his son out of the college before his course was completed, but not soon enough to prevent him from becoming an outspoken abolitionist.”⁵² Before the outbreak of the Civil War, the college also did “a thriving business” as a station on the Underground Railroad.⁵³

After founding Illinois College, the members of the Yale band, in keeping with their stated intentions, took influential positions in the area at various schools and churches. Rev. Theron Baldwin became principal of the Monticello Female Seminary at Godfrey, four miles from Alton, and later was Secretary for the Society for the Promotion of Collegiate and Theological Education at the West. The Rev. Albert Hale was the pastor for thirty years of the second Presbyterian Church at Springfield, where Abraham Lincoln was for many years among his congregants. Dr. Julian Sturtevant devoted his career to the college he helped found, as its first

⁴⁹ Truman O. Douglass, *The Pilgrims of Iowa* (Chicago, Illinois: The Pilgrim Press, 1911), 28.

⁵⁰ Howard Allen Bridgman, *New England in the Life of the World* (Boston: The Pilgrim Press, 1920), 101.

⁵¹ Bridgman, 101-102.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 103.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

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teacher, and later as President.⁵⁴

In addition to their work as individuals, the Yale band, along with other Congregationalist and Presbyterian home missionaries in the area, also constituted a network that provided mutual support for their abolitionist activities. The missionaries' churches, schools, and associations provided both platforms from which to speak out against slavery, and also the protection necessary for proselytizing on such a volatile issue, as seen in the incidents involving Dr. Nelson and Asa Turner. These organizational structures provided a ready-made framework that lent itself to swift political organization, such as the Friends of Free Speech and the Illinois Anti-Slavery Society, where like-minded individuals could come together in their common cause.

Later, these networks would be recreated in Iowa, as Asa Turner and others continued their work of planting religious and educational institutions on the expanding western frontier. In Iowa, perhaps more than anywhere, Congregationalism and abolitionism went hand in hand. Asa Turner, called "Father Turner" for his role as "the first of the Patriarchs [of Iowa Congregationalism], in time and in effectiveness," preached the first Congregationalist sermon in Iowa while on a missionary tour of the Black Hawk Purchase in 1836, at Fort Madison.⁵⁵ He also became the pastor of the first Congregationalist church in Iowa, a church whose founding was directly related to the anti-slavery cause. This church was located in Denmark, Iowa.

The first Congregationalist minister to preach to the Denmark settlers was the Rev. William P. Anthorp, the home missionary for the area. Anthorp, stationed first at Fort Madison in 1836, had later added Denmark to his route of stations after being invited to preach there by the settlers. The community had been founded that same year by a band of pioneers of apparently strong anti-slavery belief. Shortly after their arrival they began working with the nearby Salem settlement of Quakers, who had come west in 1835 "because of their pronounced abolitionist conviction" and had immediately established a station on the Underground Railroad. Denmark supplied the next stop for fugitives on the way to Canada, and "in this movement the Quakers and the New England Congregationalists worked in harmony."⁵⁶

In 1837, Anthorp was teaching at Dr. Nelson's Mission Institute at Quincy, Illinois, but was drawn back to Iowa by the work of the abolitionists at Denmark:

Anthorp's interest was aroused. He, too, believed slavery to be a great evil, and he believed the west could solve the problem. He accordingly came back to Iowa to supply the Fort Madison community and neighboring settlements that preferred a Congregationalist minister. Anthorp thus became the first resident Congregationalist minister in Iowa.⁵⁷

Anthorp's mission was followed by the organization of a church by the residents of the Denmark settlement. The church was organized with the assistance of Rev. Turner and Rev. Julius Reed in the spring of 1838, at which time the settlers, apparently believing Turner to be well-suited to

⁵⁴ Ibid., 104; Douglass, *The Pilgrims of Iowa*, 37.

⁵⁵ Douglass, *The Pilgrims of Iowa*, 28; Julius A. Reed, *Reminiscences of Early Congregationalism in Iowa* (Grinnell, Iowa: Herald Office, 1885), 3.

⁵⁶ Charles A. Hawley, "Some Aspects of Congregationalism in Relation to the Early Cultural Development of Iowa," *Iowa Journal of History and Politics* 35 (April 1937), 190.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

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their community, invited him to become their minister. Turner accepted, thus becoming in August of 1838 the first pastor of the church known as “the cradle of Congregationalism in Iowa” for the church’s and Turner’s central role in the early history of the denomination in the state.⁵⁸

Later the same year Turner was joined in his Iowa labors by the Rev. Reuben Gaylord, who, with Turner’s help the following summer, organized the second Congregationalist church in Iowa, located at Danville. Gaylord also organized a church at Fairfield in 1839, several months after the Rev. Albert Hale of the Yale Band formed one in Davenport.⁵⁹

With Gaylord already serving as minister of the Danville church, Turner needed a pastor for the church being organized at Fairfield. For this position he recruited his old friend, the Rev. Julius Reed, another of the Iowa “patriarchs.” Reed was a Yale graduate who had decided to become a western missionary while visiting his brother in Jacksonville, Illinois, in 1833. After attending the seminary at Yale Divinity School, Reed returned to Illinois, where he was ordained in “God’s Barn” at Quincy in 1836, with Rev. Turner assisting in the services. Reed then commenced his Illinois missionary work, preaching at Warsaw, Monticello, Carthage and Nauvoo.⁶⁰

Like Turner, Reed was also an outspoken opponent of slavery. In fact, in 1840, the year Turner summoned him to Iowa, Reed had recently returned east after being ousted from his Warsaw church on account of his abolitionist preaching.⁶¹ Turner evidently believed that Reed would be of more use in the work of planting Congregationalism in the West than in the position he had taken as chaplain of an insane asylum in Worcester. Turner wrote to his friend in June of 1840: “The people and the church of Fairfield are all waiting for you: situation very pleasant, healthy, and a wide field of usefulness in the country.... I think you would be better satisfied here with us Hawkeyes. We should be able to form an association this fall.”⁶²

Reed returned that fall to the west, this time for good, and just in time for the convention being held at Denmark to address the issue of the formation of an Iowa Association. The convention consisted of four delegates from the Illinois Association, five “lay delegates” from Iowa, including William P. Hitchcock from the church at Fairfield, and three Iowa ministers: Turner, Reed, and Gaylord.⁶³ At this meeting the Iowa contingent formally decided to break with the established policy of the western missions and organize the Iowa Congregationalist Association, the first state Congregationalist Association west of New York.⁶⁴

Up until this time, the usual practice of western missionaries, whether Congregationalist or Presbyterian, was to organize Presbyterian churches. Under the Plan of Union, formed in 1801

⁵⁸ Reed, *Reminiscences of Early Congregationalism in Iowa*, 6.

⁵⁹ Douglass, *The Pilgrims of Iowa*, 36-37.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 40; James L. Hill, “Dr. Julius A. Reed, A State Builder,” *Annals of Iowa* (April 1922), 270.

⁶¹ Following the marriage between a slaveholding Methodist woman and one of the church deacons, who was part owner of the building where services were held, this man declared that if Reed did not leave, he would close the building (from a Feb. 11, 1839 letter to the A.H.M.S. from Reed to Milton Badger, cited in Kuhns, p. 44).

⁶² Letter quoted in Douglass, *The Pilgrims of Iowa*, 41.

⁶³ William P. Hitchcock was the older brother of George B. Hitchcock. In Douglass’ *The Pilgrims of Iowa*, 41, William is referred to incorrectly as “William O.” He died in 1850 at the age of 45 and was buried in the Davenport City Cemetery (W.P.A., *Tombstone Records of Scott County, Iowa* [W.P.A. Graves Registration Project, n.d.], n.p. On file State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City.

⁶⁴ Douglass, *The Pilgrims of Iowa*, 41).

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by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church and the General Association of Connecticut, churches formed by one or the other denomination could hire either a Presbyterian or Congregationalist minister; their choice would not affect the governmental organization of the church. Under this plan, churches could be interdenominational, sharing “services and church structures, as well as the support of a minister.”⁶⁵

Under the Plan of Union, the American Home Missionary Society originally hired ministers of both persuasions in equal numbers, but at the time of its formation, an idea prevailed that Congregationalism as such could only exist in New England.⁶⁶ Presbyterianism, on the other hand, was “not congenial to New England, but was especially adapted to new communities. Therefore, Congregational pastors advised their people moving west to become Presbyterians; students in theological seminaries were taught that ‘Congregationalism is a river rising in New England and emptying itself South and West into Presbyterianism’.”⁶⁷ As a result of this policy, many of the first Presbyterian churches in the old Northwest were actually organized by Congregationalists.⁶⁸

Around the time that western settlement was moving into Iowa, Congregationalist missionaries were beginning to rebel against this practice, deciding that “Congregationalism is as good for the West as it is for New England.”⁶⁹ The Rev. Turner was a key figure in this movement, known as “the Congregationalist Renaissance,” as seen by the Congregationalist churches already mentioned that he helped organize in western Illinois and eastern Iowa.⁷⁰ Turner assisted in the organization of at least a half dozen other Congregationalist churches while at Quincy, as well. Meanwhile, of the five “Congregationalist” churches established in Iowa in 1838-39, two actually began as Presbyterian: these were formed at Dubuque and Burlington, without the involvement of Turner or Gaylord.⁷¹

In commenting on the historical significance of the organization of Iowa’s state association, Reed explains that it constituted “a reversal of the policy pursued by the Congregationalists since the beginning of the century,” a policy that had resulted in the denomination’s being the smallest in the country.⁷² He goes on to say of the settlers in the area: “A large majority of the people were from the West and South. Half of them had never heard of Congregationalism...”⁷³ Turner and his band of pioneering missionaries recognized the challenge that confronted them, but remained committed to their vision of planting the seeds of Congregationalism, not Presbyterianism, in the new territory. As a result, “Congregational Iowa, the first of all the states

⁶⁵ Hovarth, David G., Editor. *A Guide to the Microfilm Edition of the Papers of the American Home Missionary Society 1816 (1826-1894) 1936* (Glen Rock, New Jersey: Microfilming Corporation of America, 1976), 2. On file at State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City.

⁶⁶ Hovarth, 2.

⁶⁷ Joseph S. Heffner, “History of the Congregational Church of Iowa City,” *Iowa Journal of History and Politics* 15 (January 1917), 71.

⁶⁸ Douglass, *The Pilgrims of Iowa*, 1-4; Reed, *Reminiscences of Early Congregationalism in Iowa*, 12.

⁶⁹ Douglass, *The Pilgrims of Iowa*, 4.

⁷⁰ Turner appears to have influenced other ministers in his opinion on this issue, such as Reed and Gaylord. For instance, Reed recalls that “I was in the seminary an advanced Congregationalist, according to the standard of the day, yet I expected to join the Presbyterians” as a missionary (Reed, *Reminiscences of Early Congregationalism in Iowa*, 12). Yet, after arriving in Illinois, Reed ended up being ordained, by Turner, as a Congregationalist, and his church at Warsaw, organized with Turner’s help, was also Congregationalist, not Presbyterian.

⁷¹ Douglass, *The Pilgrims of Iowa*, 37; Reed, *Copies of Historical Papers and Addresses*, 53-54.

⁷² Quoted in Douglass, 41.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

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to feel the full force of this great movement, was a conspicuous part and product of it.”⁷⁴

These ministers received an enormous boost to their efforts with the arrival of the Iowa Band in 1843, the same year the General Association of Iowa divided itself into two minor associations, with the association at Denmark comprising those churches south of the Iowa River. The so-called “Iowa Band” included Ephraim Adams, Harvey Adams, Ebenezer Alden, James J. Hill, Horace Hutchinson, Daniel Lane, Erastus Ripley, A.B. Robbins, William Salter, Benjamin Spaulding, and E.B. Turner.⁷⁵ (It is interesting to note that E.B. Turner hailed from Great Barrington, Massachusetts, the same town where George B. Hitchcock was born and raised.) The Denmark Association’s first service was the ordination of this group of nine recent graduates of the Andover Seminary, whose arrival doubled the number of Congregationalist ministers in Iowa.⁷⁶ This group proved to be so influential in the Congregational Renaissance that years later President Davis of Chicago Seminary would write of them: “In the entire history of American Christianity, there is probably no single group of men that has made a larger contribution to the growth of the Kingdom of God than that company of missionaries who made the long journey westward in 1843.”⁷⁷ Of the many institutions which members of this band helped found, the most well-known is Iowa College, later called Grinnell College, whose founding the group began planning along with the ministers of the Denmark Association. A committee had been formed by the association the year before to consider the organization of a college, but at the time it seemed impracticable. The arrival of the Iowa Band, however, “who included a college among the objects for which they intended to work in Iowa,” according to Reed, enabled the group to go forward with their plans, and “thence forward we all worked together in this enterprise.”⁷⁸ The college was begun at Davenport in 1848 by the Rev. Erastus Ripley, one of the Iowa Band, and later moved to Grinnell.⁷⁹

The Congregationalists wanted to found a college because they “aimed at creating influences and guiding public opinion,” according to the Rev. James J. Hill, the son of one of the Iowa Band.⁸⁰ The opportunity of shaping the character of a newly settled region was one of the attractions of the frontier to the missionaries, and while it is difficult to say to what extent the slavery question in particular figured in the students’ decision to emigrate to the west, it is interesting to note that several of these missionaries’ posts—including Burlington, the Rev. William Salter’s 1846 commission—would subsequently become documented stations on the Underground Railroad.⁸¹

According to Julius Reed, all of the Congregationalist ministers in Iowa at that time were abolitionists. He later wrote that, “The Congregationalist ministers of Iowa have been a unit politically from the first. Two subjects dominated and threw all others into the shade; they were

⁷⁴ Ibid., 4.

⁷⁵ Douglass, *The Pilgrims of Iowa*, 51.

⁷⁶ Reed, *Reminiscences of Early Congregationalism in Iowa*, 8; Thomas P. Christensen, “Denmark—An Early Stronghold of Congregationalism.” *Iowa Journal of History and Politics* 24 (January 1926), 121.

⁷⁷ Quoted in Douglass, *The Pilgrims of Iowa*, 132.

⁷⁸ Quoted in Hill, 273.

⁷⁹ Hill, 273.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ List of posts selected by Iowa Band in Christensen, 122, compared with map of The Underground Railroad in Iowa, in Cecil Turton, *The Underground Railroad in Kansas, Nebraska, and Iowa*, Unpublished Masters thesis (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University, 1935). On file State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City.

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the overthrow of the saloon and of slavery.”⁸² He goes on to explain:

There may have been differences of opinion on other subjects, e.g. Banks and Tariff, but these and other important questions could wait and at all events must not stand in the way of the establishment of temperance and freedom....

The ministers and delegates who organized the Association of Iowa... were all of them avowed abolitionists, and the zeal of some of them had been kindled anew by the events connected with the murder of Lovejoy. At their second meeting, held in April 1841 at Fairfield, they adopted resolutions against slavery as thorough as any that were adopted in later years. For 30 years there was no Congregationalist minister in Iowa who did not practice and advocate total abstinence from all that can intoxicate, and did not also advocate the abolition of slavery.

Frequently temperance and slavery were the subjects of sermons, and a religious service was rarely held in which one or both of these subjects were not mentioned.⁸³

The 1841 resolutions to which Reed refers concerned a set of laws that had been pushed through the territorial legislature by pro-slavery forces in 1839, restricting the freedom of movement of Blacks and mulattoes. Although later weakened by the ruling of a chief justice in a court case, the so-called Black Laws still “were obnoxious to Iowa Congregationalists.”⁸⁴ At the April 1841 meeting of the Denmark Association, a resolution was unanimously adopted which strongly denounced the laws and called for all of Iowa’s Congregationalist churches “to unite with us in petitioning for their repeal.”⁸⁵ More general resolutions condemning slavery were adopted by the association at their meetings in 1843 and 1846. The first of the 1843 resolutions read as follows: “1. We regard slavery as it exists in this country as a heinous sin against God and a gross violation of the laws of God and of the gospel of Jesus Christ.”⁸⁶ The resolutions of 1843 further called upon Christians “to do away with this legalized oppression,” and even went so far as to declare that anyone owning slaves would be expelled from the church.⁸⁷ This was considered a radical position at the time, and must have proved controversial, particularly among officers of the A.H.M.S. The policy was apparently never actually acted on; furthermore, the subsequent anti-slavery resolutions adopted in 1846 (both sets were drafted under the guidance of Asa Turner) were less aggressive in their wording.⁸⁸

The issue of slaveholding among members of its churches was becoming an increasingly nettlesome one for the American Home Missionary Society in the 1840s. The Society’s executive committee believed it was important to maintain missionaries in slaveholding regions of the south and in Indian territories (such as the Fox River in Illinois, where some Indians had slaves), with the hope of affecting change through the inculcation of Christian principles. Many of its missionaries, however—particularly those in the Western Reserve—held a different view. They found the Society’s financial support of churches admitting slaveholders as members troubling, particularly in light of the charge by abolitionist James Gillespie Birney that churches were “the bulwarks of American slavery.” Furthermore, some felt that they themselves, through their association with, and acceptance of aid from, the Society and the American Board of

⁸² Reed, *Copies of Historical Papers and Addresses*, 216.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ Christensen, 134-135.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 135.

⁸⁶ Reed, *Reminiscences of Early Congregationalism in Iowa*, 16.

⁸⁷ Christensen, 135.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*; Kuhns, 21.

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Foreign Missions, were implicated in this support. Not only was this objectionable as a matter of principle, but they felt it undermined their own moral authority on the issue; for how, some asked, could they preach that slavery was as intolerable evil, if the A.H.M.S. was, in fact, tolerating it within its own churches?⁸⁹

In response to demands that the Society publicly clarify where it stood on the slavery question—including an 1844 letter from the Rev. Oliver Emerson of DeWitt, a member of the newly formed Iowa Association—Secretary Milton Badger explained that:

- 1.) The American Home Missionary Society supported no missionaries who held slaves;
- 2.) The missionaries in the slave states had not been instructed to seal their lips against criticizing the slave system if they felt it their duty to preach on the subject.⁹⁰

This statement did not satisfy Rev. Emerson, who was one of several missionaries who resigned their commissions from the Society on principle because of its refusal to stop supporting “slaveholding” churches.⁹¹

As abolitionism grew among the western missionaries, the Society found their position on this issue increasingly under attack. This was especially true where Congregationalism was gaining strength as a denomination. As Kuhns explains, Illinois was where the “ecclesiastical revolution” of 1833 occurred. That year, four Congregationalist churches, including Rev. Asa Turner’s, were established; previous to this, the only church in the state that was Congregationalist instead of Presbyterian in denomination was one founded as part of a colony from Massachusetts.⁹² According to Kuhns:

There could be no doubt that the Illinois Congregationalists were in the forefront of the abolitionist crusade. To the steady witness of individuals and congregations was added the greater weight of their collective testimony as members of a denomination counting, in 1844, not less than 110 churches in the state. There was, besides, the testimony of the four local associations; this was registered against subsidizing slavery every time opportunity offered.⁹³

The A.H.M.S. thus faced a rising tide of public criticism from the Illinois Congregationalists, with five organizations (four local and one state), issuing forceful statements denouncing the Society’s position. By the 1850s, the issue of slaveholding among church members had reached a crisis for the A.H.M.S. missionaries, and congregations became increasingly insistent that the Society change its policy. With the formation in 1846 of the anti-slavery American Missionary Association (A.M.A.), founded in direct response to this issue, those objecting to the A.H.M.S. policy now had an alternative organization with which to affiliate. Following the organization of two new, abolitionist missionary associations in the west (both became auxiliaries of the A.M.A.), the A.H.M.S. began to see a decline in donations. Furthermore, missionaries in the field openly threatened defection to the new organizations if the Society did not reverse its policy.⁹⁴

⁸⁹ Kuhns, 9-10, 15, 21-22.

⁹⁰ Kuhns, 9.

⁹¹ Ibid., 10.

⁹² Kuhns, 19-20; Reed, Copies of Historical Papers and Addresses, 53.

⁹³ Kuhns, 21.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 10, 22, 29-30.

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The Congregationalist Renaissance underway in Iowa at this time only increased the pressure on the A.H.M.S. Being founded by a group particularly militant in their anti-slavery conviction, it is no surprise that as Congregationalism gained strength as a denomination in the state, so did the force of its opposition to A.H.M.S. policy. According to Kuhns, “the General Congregational Association of Iowa was more clamorous than any other state body in making abolition the ‘test issue,’ in making this the sole basis recognizable by the A.H.M.S. as the pre-condition for its grants of aid to struggling churches.”⁹⁵ A new sense of urgency was brought to bear on the issue with the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska bill in 1854. The western expansion of the United States stirred strong controversy and debate over the issue of whether slavery would be extended into new lands, and western missionaries felt more strongly than ever that the A.H.M.S. must place itself indisputably on the side of the abolitionists, and refuse to countenance slaveholding within its churches.⁹⁶ Passions on the issue ran particularly high near the Kansas-Missouri border, where missionaries found themselves on the front lines of an increasingly violent struggle. Some were involved in incidents of “border ruffianism,” while other appointees of the A.M.A. and A.H.M.S. in Missouri were harassed and even jailed as a means of intimidation. Kuhns writes:

Events marched on to their inevitable climax with the resolution of the General Congregational Association of Iowa (June, 1856), that “the time has fully come when the American Home Missionary Society should no longer grant aid to any church which allows the practice of slaveholding by its members.”

This action was duly transmitted to Secretary Milton Badger by the Association’s Registrar, the Rev. William Salter, a member of the Iowa Band from Andover Seminary.... In the correspondence which followed, the fact was brought out that the Missouri-Kansas border disturbances had involved certain Congregational ministers and church members originally from Iowa.⁹⁷

According to Kuhns, it was the resolutions and arguments put forth in 1856 by the Iowa Association that finally spurred the Society into action. At the New York meeting of its Executive Committee in December of the same year, a resolution was unanimously adopted stating that aid would not be granted to churches admitting slaveholders as members. In keeping with its new policy, the Society announced that it would henceforth require assurances of anti-slavery sentiment from churches seeking aid.⁹⁸

The Iowa Association urged publications against slavery and expressed support for “citizens in Kansas,” who had recently been attacked for anti-slavery work. A formal resolution was made to “aid them in every constitutional way to defend their rights and defend the institutions of Freedom and would urge the friends of Liberty in our State to devote themselves as well as their names to this work.” The minutes of the 1857 meeting held at Denmark, Iowa, expressed outrage at the recent Dred Scott decision and resolved to officially “commend all faithful pastors and preachers who are laboring for the [this portion was left blank in the handwritten text] to arouse the people of the land to the enormity and baseness of that decision.” Finally, at the annual meeting held in Muscatine in 1859, opposition was expressed to the Fugitive Slave Act, with support extended to “brethren now in trouble because of it.” It was voted to take up a collection

⁹⁵ Ibid., 25.

⁹⁶ Kuhns, 35.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 36.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 25, 37.

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to aid those in legal trouble because of their role in aiding runaway slaves. At the same time is noted that these individuals should be commended for being “courageous in enduring wrong for the cause of right,” that the Association was “one heart and one voice” on the issue of anti-slavery, and further that it was “essential to take a decided stand in all its missions against American Slavery.”⁹⁹

Kuhns points out another consequence of this long-sought action by the Congregationalists: a deepening of the divide between their own missionaries and that of the New School Presbyterians, also supported by the A.H.M.S. The “Congregational Renaissance” had been a western phenomenon, with only Presbyterian churches continuing to be organized in the southern states. Although officially considered a “western” state by the A.H.M.S., all of Missouri’s missionaries by 1856 were New School Presbyterian, and the Missouri synod of that denomination “was officially proslavery in its sympathies, a few slaveholders being found in nearly all of the churches within its bounds—churches owing their very existence to the American Home Missionary Society.”¹⁰⁰ Unwilling to change its position on this issue, the Missouri synod ended up withdrawing from the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, and the Missouri Home Missionary Society thereby lost its affiliation with the parent organization.

Throughout the 1850s, as the “resurgent denominationalism” of the western Congregationalists developed distinct from their New School Presbyterian brethren—a denominational identity wedded from the start to strong abolitionist conviction—the New School Presbyterians increasingly saw their own interests as not being best served by cooperation with the A.H.M.S. The crisis culminated in a formal break in 1861, when the Presbyterians withdrew from the Society and founded a separate missionary board, the Presbyterian Committee of Home Missions. The A.H.M.S. was from that point on the missionary arm solely of the Congregationalists, and thenceforth helped to forward the abolitionist aspect of that mission as well, joining forces with the anti-slavery A.M.A. in opposing the expansion of slavery into western territories.¹⁰¹

George B. Hitchcock (1812-1872)

George Beckwith Hitchcock was born in Great Barrington, Berkshire County, Massachusetts, on January 9, 1812. His parents were David H. and Sarah (Swan) Hitchcock, who had married in 1799 in Great Barrington. To this union were born 11 children, with George B. having been the sixth born. In addition to George B. Hitchcock, the other Hitchcock children included Harvey H. (born 1800), Elizabeth M. (b. 1802), William P. (b. 1805; died 1850 in LeClaire, Iowa), Lydia M. (b. 1807), Harriett (b. 1809), Allen B. (b. 1814), Charles R. (b. 1816; died in 1890 in West Liberty, Iowa), David (died young), Jared B. (b. 1818), and Caroline A. (b. 1824).¹⁰²

David H. Hitchcock, a shoemaker by trade, “was an ardent advocate of learning and religion; and

⁹⁹ All of the above quotes found in the General Congregational Association of Iowa Minutes and Resolutions re: slavery, Congregational Church Files, Congregational Church of Iowa Collection, Grinnell College Archives, Grinnell, Iowa, 1856-1860.

¹⁰⁰ Kuhns, 36.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹⁰² William Hartz and Scharlott Blevins, *Durant Cemetery* (Typescript on file State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City, 1975), 79; Pearce, 19).

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naturally the children followed his example.”¹⁰³ The Hitchcock family migrated to Illinois where George attended Illinois College at Jacksonville; “but he could not take the full course on account of sickness” and dropped out of college in 1835.¹⁰⁴ He married Caroline Grossman that same year in Jacksonville, and in 1841 they took up residence in Scott County, Iowa, where three of his brothers had settled. His parents also ended up in Iowa, with David H. Hitchcock passing away in 1849 in Fairfield at the age of 75. Sarah Hitchcock died in Durant, Iowa, on January 3, 1866, at the age of 86.¹⁰⁵

For a time George Hitchcock labored as a farmer in Scott County but he soon entered his true calling, the ministry. While his official Congregational Church biography states that Hitchcock attended Illinois College, his own personal response to a questionnaire sent out by Superintendent Julius A. Reed was that he had attended college “nowhere” and that his theological education had come in Fairfield, Iowa, under the tutelage of the Rev. Reed.¹⁰⁶ Hitchcock was ordained in the Congregational Church in 1844 by the Denmark Association at their spring meeting in Bentonsport, Iowa. While his first commission in the Congregational Church did not come until November 14, 1844, he already had begun, “unordained and unlicensed,” to minister to the “destitute fields in the neighborhoods about” prior to that date.¹⁰⁷ He was installed by the Denmark Association in 1847 at the spring meeting in Henry County, Iowa. His “fields of labor” in Iowa included Oskaloosa (November 1844-October 1848), Eddyville (November 1847-May 1853), and Lewis (May 1853 until May 1861).¹⁰⁸ It is important to note that all three communities became stops along Iowa’s Underground Railroad routes.

Hitchcock had been drawn to the Lewis area during an exploratory trip to southwestern Iowa that he had taken in the company of Julius Reed in 1850 following the Mormon trail out to Kaneshville (later known as Council Bluffs). This trip was prompted by the Association’s recognition that as western Iowa began to be settled, churches would be needed. Therefore, a tour of inspection was planned from Des Moines to the Missouri River, with Eddyville being the point of departure on October 14, 1850. “The Eddyville pastor, George B. Hitchcock, was Mr. Reed’s companion on the trip.”¹⁰⁹ During this trip, Hitchcock first set eyes on his future home and the resources that he would later use to build his large stone house in 1856:

To Hitchcock the most attractive spot on his missionary tour with Mr. Reed, was the Indian Town community where they found along the East Nishnabotna abundance of timber and limestone and some sand stone, and some said lead ore (which proved to be false). ‘Here will be a large settlement,’ said Mr. Reed, because there was abundance of water and timber and stone.¹¹⁰

¹⁰³ Douglass, *Builders of a Commonwealth*, 17.

¹⁰⁴ Reportedly, the illness that plagued Hitchcock throughout his life was “some sort of chronic lung condition” (Pearce, 13).

¹⁰⁵ Douglass, *Builders of a Commonwealth*, 17; Hartz and Blevins, 79; Pearce, 19.

¹⁰⁶ George B. Hitchcock, letter dated May 9, 1862, to Julius A. Reed concerning answers to a previous biographical questionnaire (Julius A. Reed Letters and Papers, Grinnell College Archives, Grinnell, Iowa, Box 6). This particular letter to Reed was in response to unanswered questions on the biographical questionnaire that Hitchcock had previously submitted. These questionnaires were sent out to gather information on each of the Congregational ministers who had served in Iowa as part of a church history that Reed was compiling (see also Reed, *Reminiscences of Early Congregationalism in Iowa*).

¹⁰⁷ Hitchcock letter to Reed, May 9, 1862, Julius A. Reed Letters and Papers, Grinnell College Archives, Grinnell, Iowa, Box 6.

¹⁰⁸ Douglass, *Builders of a Commonwealth*, 17-32.

¹⁰⁹ Douglass, *The Pilgrims of Iowa*, 100.

¹¹⁰ Douglass, *Builders of a Commonwealth*, 32.

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Upon settling in Cass County three years later, between old “Indiantown” and the newer town of Lewis, Hitchcock built a log cabin where he and his family lived for three years from 1853 to 1856 and where he began his ministry and his known stint as a “conductor” for the Underground Railroad. He was listed as one of four “Underground Railroad Operators” in Cass County, Iowa, in Wilbur Siebert’s 1898 book entitled *The Underground Railroad from Slavery to Freedom*.¹¹¹ This work was based on “gathered documents and reminiscences from aged abolitionists or their descendants in the 1890s” and is considered one of the best collections of primary sources of that era on the subject of the Underground Railroad.¹¹² The other three “operators” listed by Siebert in Cass County included James N. Coe, Amos Grindley, and the Hon. Oliver Mills, who lived in Lewis very near Hitchcock.¹¹³

Hitchcock’s original log cabin is no longer standing but its possible location is a potential archaeological site that has been examined by surface and geophysical survey. It currently remains unconfirmed as the site of Hitchcock’s cabin.¹¹⁴ The cabin was located on the east side of the Nishnabotna River less than one-half mile to the southeast of his later stone house and within eyeshot of that house. (The potential cabin site is not within the boundary of this nomination.)

According to the 1856 Iowa State Population Census for Cass County, Hitchcock’s household then included his wife, Caroline, their sons Leang Afa, David M., Harvey, Heber, and Milton, who ranged in age from seven to eighteen. An older daughter Mary had married Seth Tucker by that time and by 1860 they had three small children. That this crowded pioneer log cabin was also being used as a church and as a station harboring fugitive slaves certainly must have made the construction of a new, much larger home very attractive.¹¹⁵ This new house was built in 1856 on the high hill to the west overlooking the town of Lewis and the East Nishnabotna River valley.

George and Caroline Hitchcock’s eldest daughter, Mary, and sons, Leang Afa and David Hitchcock, were born while they were still in residence in Illinois, with the subsequent children all born in Iowa. Leang was named in honor of the first Chinese converted to Congregationalism. The 1860 U.S. Population Census for Cass County, Iowa, showed that the Hitchcock household had suffered the loss of Leang, with his tragic death in September of 1856, but had added George’s niece, Emily Cole, who was then seventeen years of age and had become orphaned.¹¹⁶

The Rev. John Todd provided a poignant account of Leang Hitchcock’s accidental death in his *Early Settlement and Growth of Western Iowa or Reminiscences*. In that account, Todd

¹¹¹ Siebert, 410.

¹¹² Tyler-McGraw and Badamo, 50.

¹¹³ Siebert, 410. The 1884 Cass County History listed Coe’s name as James “H.,” while Grindley’s name was spelled “Gridley.” This history also noted that Coe and Grindley came to Lewis together along with several other families in the Spring of 1857. Coe later became a Captain in the Union Army and helped raise a company of 40 men that became part of the Fourth Iowa Infantry during the Civil War (Continental Historical Company, *History of Cass County, Iowa*. [Springfield, Illinois: Continental Historical Company, 1884], 347, 553.)

¹¹⁴ Steven L. DeVore, *Geophysical Investigations at the Hitchcock House (13CA46) and Possible Cabin Location (13CA47), Cass County, Iowa* (Lincoln, Nebraska: Midwest Archaeological Center, National Park Service, 2003).

¹¹⁵ Deacon S.H. Adams, “Tabor and the Northern Excursion,” *Annals of Iowa*, Vol. 33 (1955), 128-131; DeWitt, 13; Pearce, 12.

¹¹⁶ Alson Deming Braley, The Emily S. Cole Story (<http://abraley.home.att.net/gendocs/deming/emilycole.html>, website accessed July 1, 2003, last updated May 12, 2003); 1856 Iowa State Population Census for Cass County, Iowa; 1860 U.S. Population Census for Cass County, Iowa; Pearce, 10.

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indicated that Leang Hitchcock and another young man by the name of Chapman from Lewis had volunteered to serve as armed escorts for a Free-Soil emigrant company traveling along the Lane Trail to settle in Kansas and help keep that territory from becoming a slave state. The two young men were on their way to Tabor to meet the company when they camped overnight near Thurman. As they were about to cross Plum Creek the next day, Leang's companion playfully aimed what he thought was an unloaded gun at Hitchcock and pulled the trigger delivering a fatal shot. Leang's body was returned to Lewis, with several going ahead to break the news to the family before the body arrived. Mrs. Hitchcock was said to have taken the news particularly hard and never fully recovered from the loss.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷ Todd, 123-125.

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By 1855, George Hitchcock had been successful in organizing a Congregational Church in Lewis. The charter members of this church numbered eleven. By 1862 the congregation had grown to seventy-three. In addition to the mission of his own church, Hitchcock served a circuit in several counties of the Council Bluffs Association. An ardent abolitionist, Hitchcock was also a vocal proponent of prohibition, which was then gaining ground in Iowa as a social and political issue. In 1860 Hitchcock was greatly discouraged by the loss of a number of members of the Lewis church due to the Gold Rush in Colorado, a problem that weakened churches all over Iowa. In May of 1861, Hitchcock resigned his commission at Lewis and was without a charge for two years. The reason for his resignation is not entirely known; however, the unruliness of his sons may have been a cause as will be discussed in more detail below. In May of 1863, he was commissioned for Olmstead, Exira, and Big Grove in Adams County, Iowa, although he and his family continued to reside on the farm at Lewis.¹¹⁸

In May of 1865, Hitchcock was commissioned at Kingston, Missouri, drawn by the opportunity to minister to newly freed blacks in this former slave state. It was later said that what took him to Missouri was that “he was by instinct and by grace a Christian frontiersman.” Having been “an active factor in the anti-slavery movement,” it was only natural for him to remain active in the cause, this time aiding in the assimilation of freed blacks through education. “Now that the war was over and the slaves were free, Missouri would furnish a new frontier of unique character, where he would have an opportunity to minister to the blacks as well to the whites.” In August 1865, Hitchcock reportedly wrote in a letter from his Missouri field that “no state in the Union so imperiously demands immediate attention as Missouri. It is not only the center, but is and is to be the great highway of the nation.”¹¹⁹

Hitchcock remained in Missouri until 1867 when he was commissioned “into a still newer frontier in Kansas.”¹²⁰ The lung ailment that had dogged him most of his adult life finally caught up with him on August 4, 1872, when he died at the age of sixty in Lowell, Kansas. He was buried in Baxter Springs, Kansas. It is not presently known what happened to Caroline Hitchcock after 1872. At the time of his death, Hitchcock was survived by all but two of his children. His sons David and Milton eventually settled in Colorado.¹²¹

George B. Hitchcock and the Underground Railroad

Hitchcock received his first commission from the American Home Missionary Society on November 14, 1844, thereby becoming the minister for Oskaloosa’s Congregational Church, organized the previous month. Two years later, a new commission was added to his duties: he was to preach among the “destitute counties on the Des Moines River,” identified in the notes on his commission in A.H.M.S. annual reports as Jasper, Marion, and Polk Counties. In 1847, Hitchcock’s field was expanded yet again with the addition of Eddyville to his circuit. For the next five years this was the only commission listed for the minister, although the 1850 A.H.M.S.

¹¹⁸ Douglass, *The Pilgrims of Iowa*, 109.

¹¹⁹ All of the above quotes from Douglass, *Builders of a Commonwealth*, 41-42.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 44.

¹²¹ While some believe that Caroline Hitchcock returned to Iowa and eventually died in Black Hawk County in 1897, the Caroline Hitchcock that died in 1897 and is buried in Hillside Cemetery in Washington Township, Black Hawk County, was married to a Walter Hitchcock in 1848, had only four children, and is not the Caroline Hitchcock of this study (Northeast Iowa Genealogical Society, *Black Hawk County Iowa Deaths 1890-1900* [Des Moines: Iowa Genealogical Society, 2002], 58; Pearce, 14).

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annual report, while including only the Eddyville commission for Hitchcock, also adds in the notes: "Three preaching places." Hitchcock remained in Eddyville until 1853, during which time he succeeded in establishing a Congregational church with its own meeting house, the construction of which, achieved largely by means of his own labor, cost him the loss of an eye.¹²²

It should be noted that while there are no references to Hitchcock participating in the Underground Railroad while in Eddyville and Oskaloosa, both locations were situated along known Underground Railroad routes.¹²³ It would be stretching mere coincidence to believe that Hitchcock's and the A.M.H.S.'s presence in these communities were entirely without abolitionist motives and actions.

Despite his sacrifice for the Eddyville congregation, it appears that by 1853, the Hitchcock family's welcome in the community was wearing thin. In one of his regular letters to Rev. Milton Badger, Secretary of the Home Missionary Society, Hitchcock reported that he did not expect to remain at the place much longer. He was leaving, he explained, "on account of my sons. They are now, several of them, of an age where they should have constant and regular employment, and this I am unable to provide for them here."¹²⁴ Hitchcock's anxiety to procure "employment" for his sons apparently arose not from any concern for their future economic security, but instead from a desire to keep them out of mischief. Exactly what transpired in Eddyville is still a mystery at this point, but Julius Reed hints at some sort of trouble involving the Hitchcock sons in a diary entry from January 1852, written a year before the above letter. In it, Reed records his concerns regarding Hitchcock's situation at Eddyville, where Reed had visited that day, and where apparently trouble was already brewing. "There is a hard feeling between Br. Hitchcock and J.V.A. Woods," he writes, "... I hope it will be done away. Br. H. has concluded to leave and go to Council Bluffs—I fear his boys will ruin his influence wherever he goes."¹²⁵

The behavior of Hitchcock's sons continued to be of concern to church leaders, who discussed them both in private diary entries and in their correspondence with each other. For example, in 1854, Rev. George Rice, minister of the Congregational Church at Council Bluffs, and founder of the Council Bluffs Association, reported to Julius Reed: "I think Bro. Hitchcock is devoting himself more to missionary work and if his boys are faithful his farm need not occupy much of his time. Leang [Hitchcock's son] I am told is more steady and industrious than formerly, and has done very well the past summer."¹²⁶

¹²² Missionary Tables, American Home Missionary Society Annual Reports for 1845, 1847-1852 (Papers of the A.H.M.S., Amistad Research Center, Dillard University, Annual Reports, 1826-1936). Microfilm edition on file State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City; Letter from George B. Hitchcock to Milton Badger, Secretary of the A.H.M.S. dated August [?], 1852 (Papers of the A.H.M.S., Amistad Research Center, Dillard University, Series I. Incoming Correspondence, 1816-1893). Microfilm edition on file State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City.

¹²³ Curtis Harnack, *The Underground Railroad*, *The Iowan* (June/July 1956):21; Siebert, 113.

¹²⁴ George B. Hitchcock to Milton Badger, Feb. 13, 1853, Eddyville, Iowa (Papers of the A.H.M.S., Amistad Research Center, Dillard University, Series I. Incoming Correspondence, 1816-1936). Microfilm edition on file State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City).

¹²⁵ Entry dated January [28?], 1852, Julius A. Reed Diaries, 1845-1868, Julius A. Reed Letters and Papers, Grinnell College Archives, Grinnell, Iowa, Box 8.

¹²⁶ George Rice to Julius Reed, Council Bluffs, Dec. 18, 1854, Council Bluffs. Julius A. Reed Correspondence 1852-1855, Julius A. Reed Letters and Papers, Grinnell College Archives, Grinnell, Iowa, Box 2.

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Apparently, however, the boys' reformation was not lasting. After a visit to the Hitchcock family at Lewis in 1856, Reed remarked in his diary, "This church will hardly be satisfied with Bro. Hitchcock. He like Eli does not govern his children."¹²⁷ In fact, the Hitchcock sons may have caused a rift with his congregation at Lewis as well. Although Hitchcock does not mention the boys in his 1861 letter to A.H.M.S. Secretary Badger explaining his resignation, a letter from George Rice to Julius Reed from September 1856 (shortly before Leang's death) suggests that they may indeed have played a part.¹²⁸ He reports that Hitchcock's family is "a great hindrance to his usefulness and some of the members of his ch. felt last spring that they could not invite him to remain another year..." However, Rice was able at that time to persuade the congregation to retain Hitchcock, due to their regard for the man himself. He added, "They all like bro. Hitchcock but such an uncouth set of boys I have never met with."¹²⁹

Although it seems apparent from this evidence that Hitchcock's sons were the compelling force in his leaving Eddyville (and may have been a factor in his resignation at Lewis as well) the exact reasons for his choosing Cass County for the family's new home are less clear. Obviously, Hitchcock chose "Indiantown" at least in part because he knew first-hand of this area's natural advantages, which he described in a May 25, 1853, letter to Milton Badger concerning the move:

I expect to start with my family for the West on Thursday next. We shall settle in Indiantown in Cass County. This will be a place of considerable importance. The county seat is located there, and all the roads running west take the same route to Kanessville. There is a good opportunity for a settlement, good land, good water power and good rock quarries. There are about 25 families in the settlement...

I have purchased some land there and expect to have my sons learn to be farmers. There is no preaching in any of the settlements, I shall supply them to the extent of my ability.¹³⁰

Hitchcock had visited the area with Julius Reed in the fall of 1850, and apparently had been considering relocating there for some time.¹³¹ According to Reed's diary, Hitchcock discussed the matter with him during Reed's visit to the family about a year following the men's western tour: "Br. Hitchcock thinks of removing to Indiantown. Mr. Chapman has bought there, and he expects several others will go with him." Apparently Hitchcock had not yet made up his mind to go, for Reed added "It is a doubtful plan on Br. Hitchcock's part."¹³²

¹²⁷ Entry dated Sept. 21, 1856, Julius A. Reed Diaries, 1845-1868, Julius A. Reed Letters and Papers, Grinnell College Archives, Grinnell, Iowa, Box 8.

¹²⁸ George Hitchcock to Milton Badger, Lewis, May 13, 1861 (Papers of the A.H.M.S., Amistad Research Center, Dillard University, Series I. Incoming Correspondence, 1816-1936). Microfilm edition on file State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City. According to Hitchcock, he is not remaining at Lewis because the congregation has decided not to apply to the Society for aid to pay his salary (e.g., renew his commission), because they are too poor to make up the rest, due to crop failures and the loss of many of the men to the Colorado Gold Rush. (Only a portion of his \$400 salary was paid by the A.H.M.S., as was the case with other missionaries, the balance being paid by the congregation.)

¹²⁹ George Rice to Julius Reed, Council Bluffs, Sept. 2, 1856, Julius A. Reed Letters and Papers, Grinnell College Archives, Grinnell, Iowa, Folder 1.

¹³⁰ George B. Hitchcock to Milton Badger, Eddyville, May 25, 1853 (Papers of the A.H.M.S., Amistad Research Center, Dillard University, Series I. Incoming Correspondence, 1816-1936). Microfilm edition on file State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City).

¹³¹ Ephraim Adams, *The Iowa Band* (Boston, Massachusetts: Congregational Publishing Society, 1870), p. 148.

¹³² Entry dated Dec. 10, 1851, Julius A. Reed Diaries 1845-1868, Julius A. Reed Letters and Papers, Grinnell College Archives,

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Western Iowa certainly had many attractions drawing emigrants to the area; another entry from Reed's diary of the same year about a report from Indiantown remarks on the abundant timber in the Council Bluffs region, and the area is described by the correspondent as "the best part of Iowa."¹³³ Reed himself apparently considered moving there, as evidenced by an 1856 letter in his correspondence from Hitchcock. In it, Hitchcock reports on his (unsuccessful) efforts to find his friend some available land for him to purchase near the family.¹³⁴

What is unknown is whether Hitchcock, Reed, Todd, and other Congregationalists were drawn to the area in any part by the region's strategic importance in the abolitionist and free-state movements, particularly for the Underground Railroad, although this seems highly likely.

As a missionary in southwestern Iowa, so close to Missouri, it seems inevitable that Hitchcock would become involved in anti-slavery activities there and presumably he knew that before he went. He and his family certainly did not seem reluctant in risking their safety for the cause. In addition to the well-documented incident of son Leang's death while on his way to escort "Free State men" to Kansas, a recently discovered entry in Reed's diary confirms the household's role as an Underground Railroad station.¹³⁵ Reed records his arrival at the Hitchcocks' house in Lewis on September 19, 1856, shortly after Leang's death. He reports finding the family "in deep affliction," and that Mrs. Hitchcock in particular is "deeply afflicted."¹³⁶ After narrating an unusually detailed account of the tragedy as it was related to him, Reed then goes on to record, more briefly, other noteworthy occurrences of his stay. On September 21, 1856, while still at Lewis, he records the following incident: "*Two fugitives from Missouri came on their way eastward [emphasis added]*"¹³⁷ The following day he records his departure by wagon for Tabor.¹³⁸ The Lewis entry provides a firsthand account to corroborate the various references in secondary sources regarding the Hitchcocks' assisting fugitives from slavery. It is further notable that in 1856, the Hitchcocks would have been residing in their new stone house rather than at their earlier log cabin, providing strong evidence that the stone house was in fact used as an Underground Railroad station.

While Hitchcock himself did not put into writing his Underground Railroad activities, others, including some who knew him personally and were eyewitness to his actions, made reference to his specific involvement. These eyewitness accounts document Hitchcock's direct association with the Underground Railroad in western Iowa. These references included the listing of George B. Hitchcock as an "Underground Railroad Operator" in Cass County, Iowa, by Wilbur Siebert

Grinnell, Iowa, Box 8.

¹³³ Entry dated Dec. [10? Page following that cited above.] The diary entry is written under the heading, "Mr. A. Ford's acct. of Council Bluff." Julius A. Reed Diaries, 1845-1868, Grinnell College Archives, Grinnell, Iowa, Box 8.

¹³⁴ George B. Hitchcock to Julius Reed, Feb. 26, 1856, Julius A. Reed Letters and Papers, Grinnell College Archives, Grinnell, Iowa, Folder 1.

¹³⁵ See, for example, the diary entry cited below, and Julius Reed to Milton Badger, Fairfield, Oct. 24, 1856, Julius A. Reed Letters and Papers, Grinnell College Archives, Grinnell, Iowa, Folder 4. George B. Hitchcock gives his own account of the tragedy in a letter to Milton Badger, Lewis, Nov. 15, 1856 (Papers of the A.H.M.S., Amistad Research Center, Dillard University, Series I. Incoming Correspondence, 1816-1936). Microfilm edition on file State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City.

¹³⁶ Entry dated Sept. 19, 1856, Julius A. Reed Diaries 1845-1868, Julius A. Reed Letters and Papers, Grinnell College Archives, Grinnell, Iowa, Box 8.

¹³⁷ Ibid., entry dated Sept. 21, 1856.

¹³⁸ Ibid., entry dated Sept. 22, 1856.

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in his 1898 *The Underground Railroad*.¹³⁹

The Rev. John Todd, who knew Hitchcock personally and who was a fellow Congregationalist minister and himself an identified operator on the Underground Railroad route through Tabor, related an incident concerning Hitchcock and the transport of a fugitive slave.¹⁴⁰ Specifically, Todd's account noted that a female fugitive slave was put in touch with the conductors at Tabor in April of 1857. This was at the same time as the scheduled Council Bluffs Association meeting, which the Congregational ministers (a number of whom were involved in the Underground Railroad) would be attending. It was arranged that the woman would be taken along with the "parson from Tabor" as far as "Deacon D. Briggs' place" and from there they would "get Brother George B. Hitchcock of Lewis," to come by Deacon Briggs' and take her home with him as he returned from the Association meeting. "But Brother Hitchcock could not return by Deacon Briggs', and so the parson returned home from the Association and with his buggy took the fugitive, cloaked, veiled and gloved out to Lewis, no one mistrusting that she was other than his wife. Other conductors passed her on from Lewis to the next station."¹⁴¹

In 1903, Deacon S.H. Adams, a long-time resident of Tabor, related a first-hand account of the transport of five fugitive slaves on July 6, 1854, over the "Tabor & Northern" Underground Railroad route. In this account, Adams noted that the group headed to the Nishnabotna River east of Tabor "to a point near Randolph" where, in the dead of night, the party crossed the river. On the east side of the river, they met up with Cephas Case and William Clark, who assisted the party on their way to Lewis. From that point:

Stealthily they made their way in a northeasterly direction, staying all night near Lewis in Cass county. Here they took breakfast on the morning of July 6th [1854] with a Methodist [sic] missionary named Hitchcock who was stationed at a place called 'Injun Town.'¹⁴²

This mention is notable for its confirmation that Hitchcock's Underground Railroad involvement had begun while he was living in the log cabin at Lewis prior to the construction of the stone house. Why Deacon Adams referred to Hitchcock as a Methodist missionary instead of the Congregationalist that he was is probably nothing more than the fallibility of human memory for detail that comes with the passage of time between the incident and when it was set down in writing.

The 1906 Cass County History book related "A 'Railway' Incident" that mentioned Hitchcock in relation to the Underground Railroad. The incident occurred in November 1858 and involved a man by the name of "Nichols" (as spelled in the 1906 book, or "Nuckolls" as spelled in most other sources, such as Todd's), who was a government contractor and a slave holder living in Nebraska City.¹⁴³ Nichols was preparing to send two of his female slaves south on a steamboat. Several free blacks in Nebraska City were able to spirit the women across the river to Tabor where "Benedict Hill and John Hunter" of Tabor then transported the women to Lewis. The

¹³⁹ Siebert, 410.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Todd, 137-138.

¹⁴² Adams, 130.

¹⁴³ Todd, 138-143. It should be noted that Todd's account of this incident did not specifically mention either Hitchcock or Lewis and focused more on Mr. Nuckolls' attempts to retrieve his slaves including an armed encounter with a company of men from Tabor and a subsequent court case.

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account went on to state that “Oliver Mills told the girls that it would be unsafe for them to stop at either his place or Mr. Hitchcock’s, and sent them three miles northeast of Lewis” to a place where they could stay overnight.¹⁴⁴ The Tabor men then “brought them to town, and soon as it was light enough to drive Monday morning James Baxter started to Quaker Divide with them.” Nichols followed in pursuit and offered a \$500 reward for their capture. Nichols arrived in Lewis early Monday morning, “and had a goodly number of people helping him, who thought they [the fugitive female slaves] could not pass through the place without being caught. The pursuers were watching for the girls to come from the west, but they had passed before Nichols arrived.”¹⁴⁵

There was another mention in the 1906 Cass County History book noting that fugitive slaves were “assisted on their way to freedom by such enthusiasts as Oliver Mills, D.A. Barnett and Rev. George B. Hitchcock.”¹⁴⁶ Finally, a third mention in the 1906 Cass County History book stated “Mr. Hitchcock was active in all branches of church work, and in all good movements—especially in helping negroes to obtain their freedom by escaping from their owners on what used to be called the ‘Underground Railway.’ Many times his cabin home was full to overflowing, and both they, and all others who were in need, were always welcomed, fed, aided, and well treated in every way.”¹⁴⁷

There are a number of other references to Underground Railroad stops and incidents with slave hunters in Lewis noting the activities of conductors living in Lewis. These mention the ferry crossing as being watched and the ferry operator warned, but they fail to name those specifically involved. It is likely that some of these incidents involved Hitchcock; however, there were at least three other known conductors in the Lewis area, including the Hon. Oliver Mills, who was described in one account as the “chief agent” for the Underground Railroad in that community, although he arrived in Lewis in the spring of 1857, by which time Hitchcock had been active for several years in the Underground Railroad in Lewis.¹⁴⁸ In short, it is impossible to specify for all these general mentions of Lewis and the Underground Railroad, which conductor was involved in which incidents. In most instances, they were all probably working closely together to ensure safe passage through this area.

What is often ignored in the accounts of Hitchcock’s life and his abolitionist activities is the role that his wife Caroline must have played in these same activities. She was certainly a partner in the legal danger posed by harboring fugitive slaves at the time and must have played some role in the sheltering and sustenance of these fugitives while in their home. The role that the Hitchcock children played is also largely undocumented beyond Leang’s willingness to escort

¹⁴⁴ Henry Taylor and Company, *Compendium of History and Biography of Cass County, Iowa* (Chicago, Illinois: Henry Taylor and Company, 1906), 110.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 76

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 109. It should be noted that all of the other facts related about Hitchcock in the biographical data on pages 109-110 were accurate as to dates and places, lending some credibility to this 1906 accounting.

¹⁴⁸ One account related in several references involved the transport of two fugitive slaves in 1859 through the Lewis area, with the fugitives transported through the watched ferry crossing by a “farmer who resided on the west side of the ‘Botna,” who drove them down to the ferry in a wagon, with the fugitives heavily veiled. He got them to Lewis where they were passed on to another conductor and safely headed their way east. One source refers to these fugitives as women, while another refers to them as men, who were veiled to look like women. It should be noted that by 1859 Hitchcock was living on the west side of the Nishnabotna River very near the ferry crossing. Whether he was the “farmer” who transported these fugitives is not known (Henry Taylor and Company, 77; Continental Historical Company, 281-282); W.W. Merritt, Sr., *A History of Montgomery County, Iowa* (Red Oak, Iowa, 1906), 81; Obituary – Oliver Mills, *Annals of Iowa*, Vol. 8 (1907-1908), 237-238.

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and protect Free-Soil emigrants to Kansas, an activity that had inherent danger (although ironically his death on this journey was an accident), and David's service in the Union Army during the Civil War. Even though their contributions to the success of the Underground Railroad and anti-slavery activities in southwestern Iowa is not fully known, any discussions and interpretations of the Hitchcock House should recognize that the whole family was involved to some degree in these activities.

Although no such direct evidence from Hitchcock himself has ever been discovered, his correspondence does provide insight into his anti-slavery beliefs, as well as what may be indirect references to his family's abolitionist activities. One of these appears in a letter to the A.H.M.S. written in 1855. In it, Hitchcock thanks the Society for the recent aid he has received from them, and goes on at some length to describe the relief it has provided to his family. In explaining how important foreign aid is to the support of his household, he writes, "There is quite a difference between leaving a family to go to distant appointments with [barely?] food enough to sustain life untill [sic] we return, not knowing where more is coming from, and leaving them with plenty to satisfy the demands of nature though it be coarse and homely. *But the missionary has privations and trials of which it would not be lawful to speak* [emphasis added]." ¹⁴⁹

This and other references are all contained in a cluster of letters to the A.H.M.S. dating from the same period (1855-56), in which several mentions are made to Tabor and Rev. Todd as well. Todd was a student of the Oberlin Theological Seminary in Ohio and believed that anti-slavery militancy had become the only answer to the abolition of slavery in the United States. He helped establish Tabor College and the town of Tabor, which became a focal point for abolitionist and free soil activities in southwestern Iowa. In a letter from November of 1855, Hitchcock writes, "We had an interesting meeting of the Association at Tabor, on the 25th of October. There was more than ordinary interest manifested in relation to a supply of the destitute places in our region of the State. We need some five or six ministers in Western Iowa and Nebraska." Hitchcock goes on to assert, "This field is becoming more and more important, and will soon need a large reinforcement of ministers to supply the thronging multitude who are pushing forward to these widespread regions." ¹⁵⁰ Although he does not mention slavery or the free-state movement specifically, this is obviously the context for this letter and the new and urgent "importance" of the field in western Iowa. We know that this issue was a pressing concern of the American Home Missionary Society following passage of the Kansas-Nebraska bill in May of 1854. According to historian Frederick Kuhns, the A.H.M.S. sent its first missionaries to Kansas—all of them Congregationalists—in November of 1854, in direct response to the bill. ¹⁵¹ In addition, Leang's death while on his way to help escort a convoy to Kansas (a year after the above letter was written) testifies to the direct involvement of Hitchcock's family in the struggle, as both pro- and anti-slavery proponents raced to "colonize" that state (and Nebraska) with those sympathetic to their side. Tabor, where the meeting referred to above was held, was by 1856 the staging center for those engaged in the militant side of the free state cause, where "guns, ammunition and other war materials" were stored in cellars and barns throughout the town. ¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ Hitchcock to A.H.M.S., March 6, 1855 (Papers of the A.H.M.S., Amistad Research Center, Dillard University, Series I. Incoming Correspondence, 1816-1893). Microfilm edition on file State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City.

¹⁵⁰ Hitchcock to A.H.M.S., Nov. 20, 1855. (Papers of the A.H.M.S., Amistad Research Center, Dillard University, Series I. Incoming Correspondence, 1816-1893). Microfilm edition on file State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City.

¹⁵¹ Kuhns, 35.

¹⁵² Gertrude Handy and Robert W. Handy, "The Remarkable Masters of A First Station on the Underground Railroad." *The Iowan*, 22:4 (1974), 46.

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In addition to the direct evidence that the Hitchcock family was actively involved in the free-state movement, Hitchcock's letters also indicate that by this time he and Todd were already working together on several fronts. In 1854, the two men had formed, along with George Rice and a Rev. Mefers, the Council Bluffs Association, (the "Association" of the meeting referred to in his letter), an endeavor that would presumably require frequent communication with each other.¹⁵³

In addition, Hitchcock was apparently involved in the planning and fundraising efforts for Tabor College. In his letter about the meeting at Tabor, he writes:

The course of education is beginning to interest the people, and there is some talk of founding two colleges in the Western part of Iowa, the Methodist and Congregationalist.

We begin to think that the present is the time for us to secure funds for such an enterprise. Of course nothing definite has yet been done, we are but planning a little.¹⁵⁴

Hitchcock then concludes his discussion of the topic with a question regarding fundraising for the proposed institution: "Is it probable that a donation of \$25,000, to be invested in lands for a college, could be secured in the east provided we could make it apparent that it would increase some four or five fold in five years? We think it would be a great saving."¹⁵⁵

Hitchcock advocates in this and other letters for the immediate outlay of resources to plant Congregationalism as the region is being settled, arguing that it will save the society from having to spend more in aid to missionaries in the future. In addition to the need of missionaries in the West, he also writes about the importance of bringing "sympathetic" families to the frontier. For example, in a letter dated Feb. 14, 1856, he writes: "There will be a large emigration to this county in the Spring which will materially change the aspect of the missionary work here. So far it has been a contest, and some times it seems an unegal. [sic?] one—but no, truth is equal and more than egal. to the boldest and most degrading errors."¹⁵⁶ Again, it is unclear whether Hitchcock is referring simply to the "contest" against general vice and irreligious behavior (such as breaking the Sabbath, which he also mentions in this letter), or the political struggle going on at that time as well. The same letter contains interesting references alluding to "secret prayer" and "the great work" in which they were engaged:

The few Christians who sympathies with us and you in the work of H. Missions have set apart Saturday evening as a season of secret prayer for the progress of the Gospel in Western Iowa. May we not ask and be assured that you and your associates will make this particular field the

¹⁵³ Constitution of Council Bluffs Association, 1854. Art. 2 states: "This Association shall consist of Rev. Mefers, John Todd, Geo. B. Hitchcock and Geo. B. Rice together with all whom they may hereafter receive into fellowship and two Lay delegates from each church associated." (Reed, Copies of Historical Papers and Addresses). The Council Bluffs Association embraced 35 counties in western Iowa and the eastern Nebraska territory, with Congregational churches eventually established at Florence, Fontanelle, Glenwood, Grove City, Harrison, Lewis, Magnolia, Nevin, Onawa, Pacific City, Sioux City, Tabor, Amity, and Quincy, Iowa (Julius A. Reed, Handwritten notes on history of Congregational Church and Ministers of Iowa, Julius A. Reed Letters and Papers, Grinnell College Archives, Grinnell, Iowa).

¹⁵⁴ Hitchcock to A.H.M.S., Nov. 20, 1855 (Papers of the A.H.M.S., Amistad Research Center, Dillard University, Series I. Incoming Correspondence, 1816-1893). Microfilm edition on file State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Hitchcock to Milton Badger, Feb. 14, 1856 (Papers of the A.H.M.S., Amistad Research Center, Dillard University, Series I. Incoming Correspondence, 1816-1893). Microfilm edition on file State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City.

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subject of special meditation and prayer upon that evening. Paul prayed for the brethren by name. May not we do so, and thus become more deeply interested in each other and in the great work in which we are engaged.¹⁵⁷

Most certainly Hitchcock and his fellow missionaries were concerned with combating evils other than slavery; yet we also know they considered fighting slavery to be part of their and the Society's "great work," as evidenced by the resolutions passed in 1856 concerning slaveholding in their churches. An indication that the "truth" which Hitchcock hopes will triumph over "error" refers to matters beyond the Gospel comes from a letter to the Society dated August 15, 1856:

There is a steady change working in the minds of the people which gives promise of a better state of society. The great moral questions of the day are more prominently before the minds of the people than ever before, and truth is gaining ground as fast, perhaps, as the capacity will permit.

The temperance question is felt to be one of great importance, and has many ardent advocates. The free state question is the all absorbing subject just now and it is very difficult to interest the people with any other subject. Our state election has just transpired and a handsome majority of the county voted the free state ticket.¹⁵⁸

That the western Congregationalists became personally and deeply involved with the free-state issue at this time is not surprising given their political activism in general, especially as it related to the anti-slavery cause. This may have been partly due to the influence of one of the founders of Congregationalism in Iowa, "Father Turner," according to whom "questions of political reform properly fell within the sphere of activity of the Christian minister." His congregation at Denmark followed the Puritan tradition that emphasized "religion, education, and political reform," and which saw each as complementing the other.¹⁵⁹ Turner saw political action as an effective means of furthering his deeply-held moral and religious principles. He became directly involved in the 1854 gubernatorial election on behalf of James W. Grimes, an outspoken opponent to slavery and its extension into new territories. At the nominating convention, he "drafted on the back of a letter in pencil the platform which, after exciting scenes, the convention adopted and on which Mr. Grimes ran and was elected."¹⁶⁰ Because of the crucial role Turner played in this political victory, Grimes later remarked in a speech (given as a U.S. senator), "I am myself the foster-son of him whom you call Father Turner."¹⁶¹

Because of Turner's and his congregation's activism—Denmark was known as a "hotbed" of abolitionism—it may not be unreasonable to suspect a political dimension (as well as religious) to the emigration to Lewis of several families from Turner's church at Denmark, mentioned by Reed in a letter to the A.H.M.S. in July of 1856.¹⁶² Among such families, church leaders such as

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Hitchcock to Milton Badger, Aug. 15, 1856 (Papers of the A.H.M.S., Amistad Research Center, Dillard University, Series I. Incoming Correspondence, 1816-1893). Microfilm edition on file State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City.

¹⁵⁹ Christensen, 123, 134.

¹⁶⁰ Bridgman, 135.

¹⁶¹ Christensen, 134.

¹⁶² Julius Reed to Milton Badger, July 17, 1856 (Papers of the A.H.M.S., Amistad Research Center, Dillard University, Series I. Incoming Correspondence, 1816-1893). Microfilm edition on file State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City. Denmark was widely known to harbor fugitive slaves, eliciting the anger of Democrats in Iowa and pro-slavery sympathizers in Missouri. The original Denmark Congregational Church was destroyed by fire. The rebuilt Congregational Church is listed in the National Register of Historic Places and was recently granted Network to Freedom status for its association with the Underground Railroad work of Asa Turner's congregation in Denmark, Iowa ("Denmark Congregational Church," Denmark, Lee County, Iowa. National Underground

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Reed and Turner, and the missionaries themselves, there apparently existed in the 1850s an added sense of urgency and purpose to the missionary work of western Congregationalists. This is apparent in Hitchcock's letters from the period, for example in the excitement he expresses over the arrival of new families coming to unite with his church at Lewis, some from as far away as Connecticut.¹⁶³ In one letter, written in August of 1856 (the summer the free state controversy ignited in the area) he describes the significance of such emigrations to western missionaries: "We have been much encouraged in our work," he writes, "by the accession of so many efficient, earnest Christians to help forward the work of God in this new and destitute region. How different would be the condition of the Great West if Christians generally felt the same obligations to sustain the missionary work that these Christians express."¹⁶⁴

The final summation in Hitchcock's biography noted the following:

As I read this sketch, Mr. Hitchcock comes before me as a man of fine ability and force of character; with a fund of ideas and suitable language to express them; with dreams and visions which he can interpret and tell how to bring them to pass; with brains to formulate and hands to execute. He could build cabins and meeting houses, even better than he could preach. He could tell things that were to be and how to bring them about. He was a missionary, always a pioneer, always at the front, with the passion and genius for laying foundations. One of the foundation stones of our goodly commonwealth is this noble frontiersman, George B. Hitchcock.¹⁶⁵

Interestingly, Hitchcock's own summation of his biographical data in 1862 noted simply in definite understatement, when asked to elaborate on his accomplishments: that "other particulars [were] of no special importance."¹⁶⁶

Comparative Analysis

Underground Railroad sites are found across the United States in northern and southern states. However, their documentation and evaluation is a relatively new undertaking. Projects to identify these sites, such as the National Park Service's Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program will certainly add to this database in the future. Underground Railroad properties have been previously listed in the National Register, such as the Hitchcock House, with a growing number now being further recognized as National Historic Landmarks. Consideration of Underground Railroad properties as National Historic Landmarks must take into account the regional variety of this property type. Compared with other Iowa properties, the Hitchcock House stands out in terms of its historical integrity and historical association because this property was built by Hitchcock himself during the time when he was directly involved in the activities of the Underground Railroad.

Two other properties associated with the Hitchcock House are nearby in the Lewis vicinity and

Network to Freedom Site Application [U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Midwest Regional Office, July 16, 2004]).

¹⁶³ George Hitchcock to Milton Badger, Feb. 14, 1856 (Papers of the A.H.M.S., Amistad Research Center, Dillard University, Series I. Incoming Correspondence, 1816-1893). Microfilm edition on file State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City.

¹⁶⁴ Handy and Handy, 46; George Hitchcock to Milton Badger, Aug. 15, 1856 (Papers of the A.H.M.S., Amistad Research Center, Dillard University, Series I. Incoming Correspondence, 1816-1893). Microfilm edition on file State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City.

¹⁶⁵ Douglass, *Builders of a Commonwealth*, 46.

¹⁶⁶ Hitchcock letter to Reed, May 9, 1862.

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include the Nishnabotna Ferry House, which was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2001 and was also granted Network to Freedom status that same year, and the potential archaeological site of George Hitchcock's original log cabin site, which was to the southeast of the later stone house.¹⁶⁷ The suspected location of the archaeological site was recently examined by pedestrian survey, controlled surface collection, and magnetometer survey in May 2003. To date, the results are inconclusive as to whether the cabin site has actually been located.¹⁶⁸ The current nomination did consider whether the Ferry House and/or the archaeological site of Hitchcock's log cabin could be included with this National Historic Landmark nomination of the Hitchcock House. It was determined, however, that the archaeological site does not yet have the documentation required to demonstrate association or integrity and should not be included at this time. The Ferry House was determined to be too far removed physically from the Hitchcock House to be considered part of a historic district and too problematic in its integrity to warrant National Historic Landmark status based on the registration requirements as outlined in the Underground Railroad Resources in the United States Theme Study.¹⁶⁹

The Hitchcock House is the only extant property in Lewis, Iowa, that was directly associated with a known Underground Railroad conductor in this community. It is also one of only two extant properties in western Iowa that was directly associated with the Underground Railroad, and with the involvement of the Congregational Church and American Home Missionary Society in the abolitionist movement. The other standing property is the Rev. John Todd House in Tabor, Iowa.¹⁷⁰ The Todd property has the same direct associations as the Hitchcock House and a documented association with John Brown's activities and movements through this area. As such, the Todd House is comparable to the Hitchcock House in significance and historical integrity, with both worthy of National Historic Landmark status. Todd would be more representative of the Oberlin College influence and objectives in the abolitionist movement, while Hitchcock was a product of the more eastern bred Yale Band/Illinois College/Iowa Band influence in this same movement. However, they worked together toward this common goal.

The only other known Iowa properties with similar Congregational Church/Underground Railroad associations are the Theron Trowbridge House and the Asa Turner House in Denmark. The Turner House has been moved from its original location and has been extensively remodeled. The Trowbridge House has replacement or cover-up siding that was applied in the twentieth century. As noted previously, the Congregational Church in Denmark has been recognized for its association with Asa Turner's congregation and their Underground Railroad activities. The original 1845 church burned in 1861, with only the exterior walls left standing. Those walls were incorporated into the extant church, which was built in 1863.¹⁷¹ While there was significant Underground Railroad activity in Iowa, the standing properties are few, with other known Underground Railroad-associated architectural properties including the J.H.B.

¹⁶⁷ "Nishnabotna Ferry House," Lewis, Cass County, Iowa, National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Site Application (U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Midwest Regional Office, May 15, 2002).

¹⁶⁸ DeVore, 2003.

¹⁶⁹ Tyler-McGraw and Badamo, 2000.

¹⁷⁰ "Todd House," Tabor, Fremont County, Iowa, National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Site Application (U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Midwest Regional Office, November 1, 2001); John Zeller, State Historical Society of Iowa, personal communication, 2004; Sidney Newlon, *Thanks, Tabor, for the Memories* (Council Bluffs, Iowa: Midwest Printing, 1990), 96.

¹⁷¹ About eight feet was added to the height of the 1845 walls, with a steeple added to the church in 1872. The steeple was toppled by wind in 1853, with the current bell tower added in its place ("Denmark Congregational Church").

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Armstrong House in Cincinnati, Iowa, the James C. Jordan House in West Des Moines, and the Henderson Lewelling – Nelson Gibbs House in Salem. Jordan had a Methodist affiliation, while Lewelling was a Quaker. Any religious connection of Armstrong and Gibbs to their individual involvement in anti-slavery and Underground Railroad activities is not presently known.¹⁷² Of these Iowa properties, the Hitchcock House is a standout in both its integrity and its associations. Furthermore, it is the only known standing building associated with Hitchcock's Underground Railroad and abolitionist work.

Comparing the Hitchcock House to other National Historic Landmark Underground Railroad-related properties in the United States, shows that it is certainly on a par with the Milton House in Milton, Wisconsin, the Johnson House in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and the Julius F. LeMoyne House in Washington, Pennsylvania. Specifically, the Milton House property underwent a restoration/remodeling project in 1954 that included an "addition to the wing and rear of the Milton House, enlarging the tunnel and lining it with masonry, enlarging the opening in the cabin floor into the tunnel, and constructing concrete steps in the cabin end of the tunnel."¹⁷³ Like the Hitchcock House, some of the rehabilitation effort was conducted to make the property accessible to visitors to the Milton House museum, while on the whole attempting to retain as much historic integrity as possible. The main part of the Johnson House also retains high integrity; however, the rear wing of this property underwent several alterations through the years, with a modern kitchen, bathrooms, and a laundry added to the interior of that wing unlike the Hitchcock House, which remained largely unimproved into the modern era.¹⁷⁴ Finally, the interior of the LeMoyne House has floors that were "repaired, replaced and refinished through the house" as well as the installation of modern utilities including gas, electricity, and plumbing. Bathrooms and an elevator were also added to the interior and then later removed. A roof deck featured in an anti-slavery rally was also covered, and the setting and the lot of the LeMoyne House were "altered since the period of significance."¹⁷⁵

Comparing historical significance, the Hitchcock House, and examples such as the LeMoyne House, Johnson House, and Milton House, all represent important regional expressions of the national abolition movement. In the case of the Hitchcock House, that expression is of the influence of the Congregational Church and the American Home Missionary Society in the spread of the Underground Railroad and anti-slavery support and militant activities from the northeastern United States into Illinois and Iowa, where in southwestern Iowa, the homes of Congregational ministers, George B. Hitchcock and John Todd, served as important stations along the underground routes. These ministers were supporters and active participants in both the Underground Railroad and Free-State efforts, further reflecting their important roles in the

¹⁷² "J.H.B. Armstrong House," Cincinnati, Appanoose County, Iowa, National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Site Application (U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Midwest Regional Office, July 16, 2004). "James C. Jordan House," West Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa, National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Site Application (U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Midwest Regional Office, May 10, 2002); "Lewelling-Gibbs House," Salem, Henry County, Iowa, National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Site Application (U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Midwest Regional Office, July 16, 2004).

¹⁷³ Elizabeth L. Miller, Milton House National Historic Landmark Nomination (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1997), 9.

¹⁷⁴ Avi Dector, Johnson House National Historic Landmark Nomination (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1997), 1-9.

¹⁷⁵ Carol Lee and Dan G. Deibler, Julius F. Lemoyne House National Historic Landmark Nomination (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1996), 8.

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Congregational Renaissance in Iowa.

Nationally, religious groups were influential in the establishment and operation of the Underground Railroad. Other religious groups involved in the movement included Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, Episcopalians, Shakers, and others; however of these groups, the Quakers and the Congregationalists, were prominent activists.¹⁷⁶ African American Methodist and Baptist members played a very prominent role as well, particularly in the southern and border states. This is not to say that all members of these religious groups were participants in the Underground Railroad or in abolitionist activities, or that participation in such activities was confined to religious adherents. Rather, it is to say that a number of religiously-motivated persons were abolitionists, took part in anti-slavery activities, and were influential in the spread of the Underground Railroad from early settlements in the northeastern United States into the Midwest, including the state of Iowa, where Quakers and Congregationalists were prominent in the establishment and conduct of the Underground Railroad.

The State Historical Society of Iowa is in the process of completing a documentation project concerning the Underground Railroad in Iowa. The goal of this project is to “reveal and present” the story of anti-slavery activities and the Underground Railroad in Iowa. This study involves archival research to identify properties associated with persons and events of the Underground Railroad and anti-slavery initiatives, followed by survey and National Register nomination of identified properties, and creation of a Freedom Trail driving tour and marker program.¹⁷⁷

In conclusion, it can be stated that the Hitchcock House was, in all probability, a documented station along the Underground Railroad in southwestern Iowa and that George B. Hitchcock and his family were involved in anti-slavery activities beyond assisting fugitive slaves and included some involvement in escorting free-state emigrants to Kansas. Hitchcock was noted for the passion of his beliefs and his devotion to social causes, notably abolition and prohibition. It has also been noted that he went beyond the preaching of his beliefs to militant action and was, therefore, representative of the anti-slavery militant activities associated with the Congregational Renaissance in Iowa as transplanted to the western frontier of Iowa through the mission of the Congregational Church and the American Home Missionary Society. Hitchcock continued his social work in Missouri and Kansas after the Civil War by helping to aid and educate freed blacks. His stone house on the west edge of Lewis, Iowa, stands as a testament to his life's work and to his family's courage and literal sacrifice to the cause. It also reflects the importance of the Congregational Church in the Underground Railroad and other anti-slavery/free-state activities in the region. As such, George B. Hitchcock and the Hitchcock House represent an important regional expression of the national anti-slavery movement.

¹⁷⁶ Tyler-McGraw and Badamo, 11, 18-20, 32.

¹⁷⁷ Soike.

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Rev. and Mrs. John Todd Papers currently being researched by James Morgans of Shenandoah, IA. A telephone conference with Mr. Morgans indicated that, to date, he has found no correspondence or other mention of Hitchcock in the Todd Papers (Personal communication, James Morgans, 7/2/2003).

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Swarthmore College and Earlham College Quaker archives were contacted for any documents or correspondence related to Hitchcock. Librarians and Archivists at both colleges reported finding no such documents.

Maps compiled and gathered by John Zeller concerning the Underground Railroad and Cass County, Iowa, State Historical Society of Iowa, Des Moines.

1856 Iowa State Population Census. Microfilm of manuscript copy on file State Historical Society of Iowa, Des Moines.

1860 U.S. Population Census. Microfilm of manuscript copy on file State Historical Society of Iowa, Des Moines.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- Previously Listed in the National Register.
- Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.
- Designated a National Historic Landmark.
- Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: #
- Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other (Specify Repository):

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10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: 1.08 acres

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing
	15	323900	4574350

Verbal Boundary Description:

The Hitchcock House property boundary begins at a point 2500 feet south of the southern edge of the right-of-way of the east-west gravel road (the old Mormon Trail) at a point 2800 feet west of the Lewis corporate limits where the entry road into the county park intersects the east-west road. From this point, the actual boundary extends 310 feet south along an existing fenceline, then proceeds 160 feet east to the southeast corner of the fenceline, then turns north 220 feet, then angles to the northwest for 140 feet, then proceeds 66 feet due west to the point of beginning. The boundary of the nominated Hitchcock House property is also shown as the dashed line on the accompanying map entitled "Site Plan Map." (The boundary line on the map begins on 567th Lane 850 meters from the point where 567th Lane intersects with Nishna Valley Road.)

Boundary Justification:

The boundary includes that portion of the former Reverend George B. Hitchcock property that encompasses the standing house and its demarcated house yard area that maintain historic integrity. This portion of the historic property has the strongest identifiable connection to Reverend Hitchcock and his abolitionist and Underground Railroad activities.

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11. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: Leah D. Rogers and Clare L. Kernek, Tallgrass Historians L.C.

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Date: November 15, 2004

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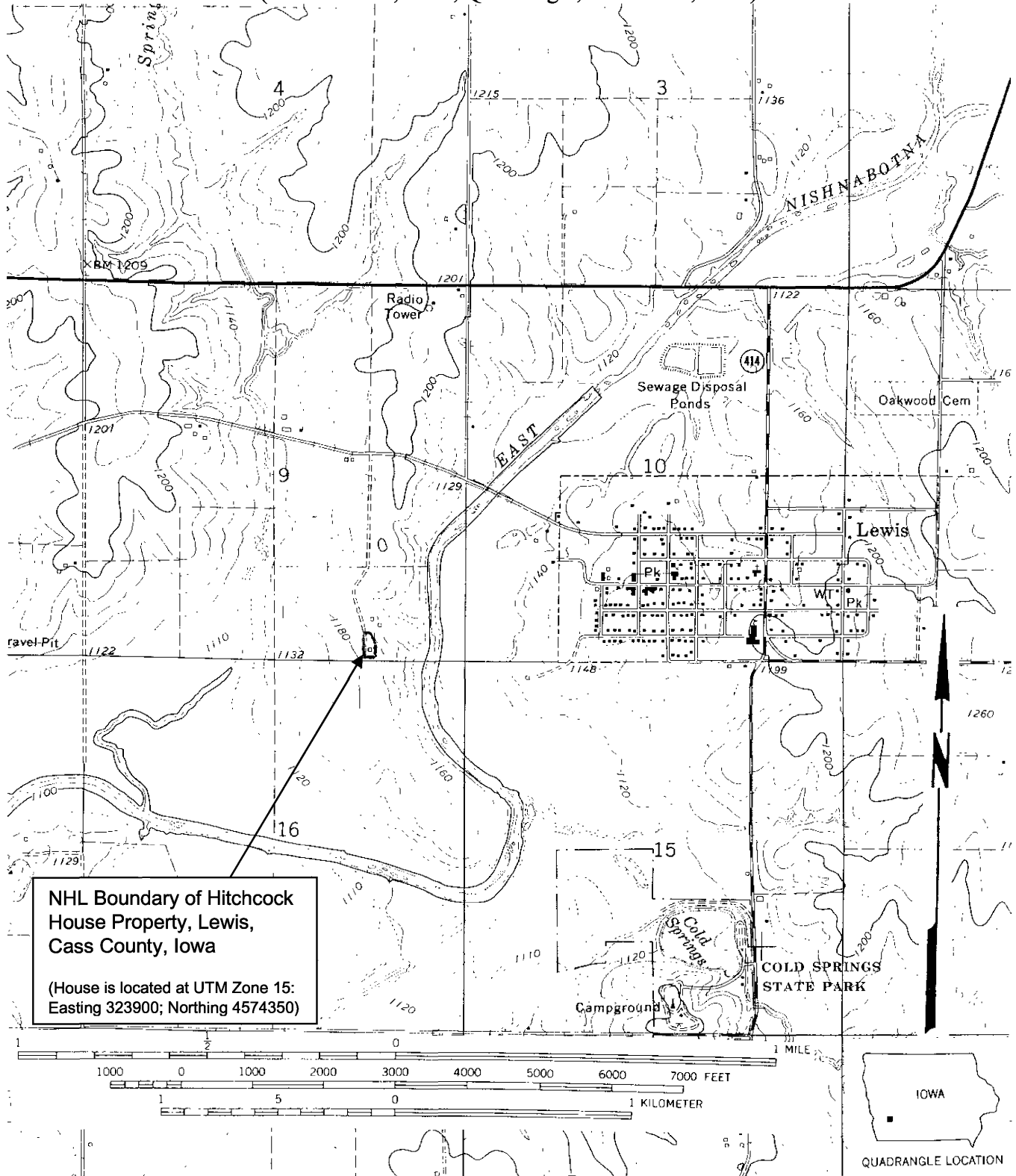
NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS SURVEY
July 27, 2006

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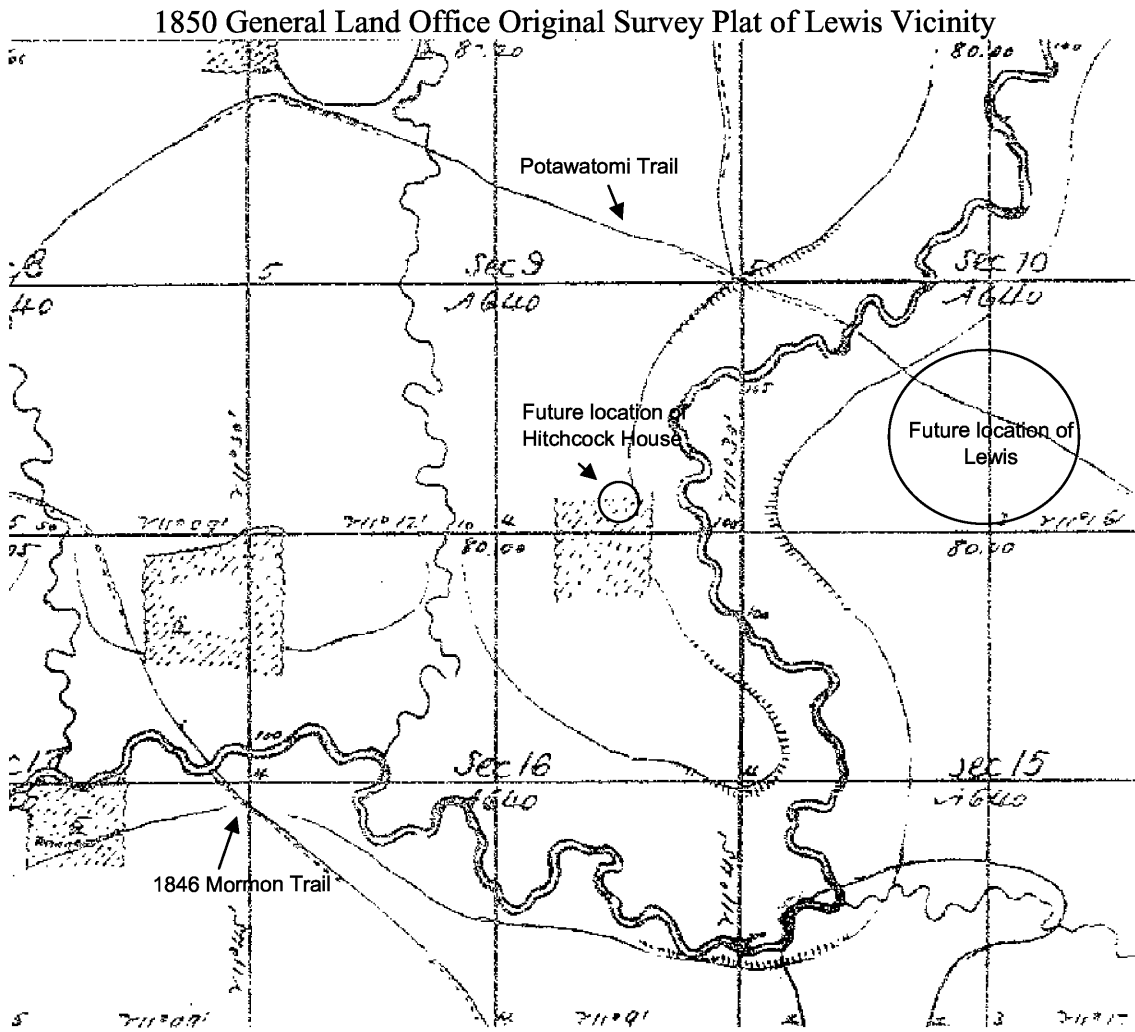
Location of Hitchcock House on USGS Topographic Map (USGS Lewis, Iowa, Quadrangle, 7.5' Series, 1971)



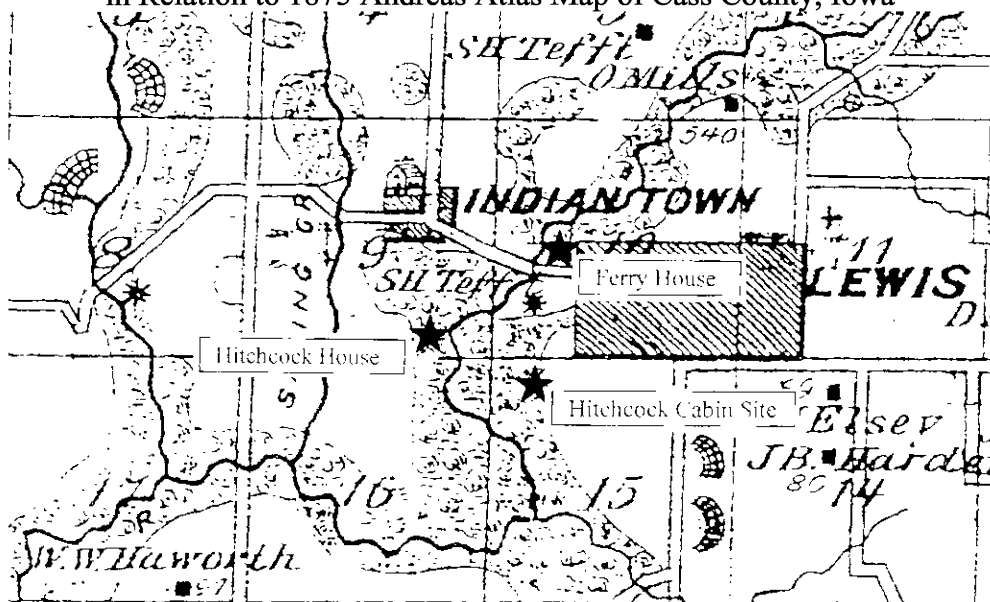
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Location of Hitchcock House, Ferry House, and Suspected Hitchcock Log Cabin Site in Relation to 1875 Andreas Atlas Map of Cass County, Iowa



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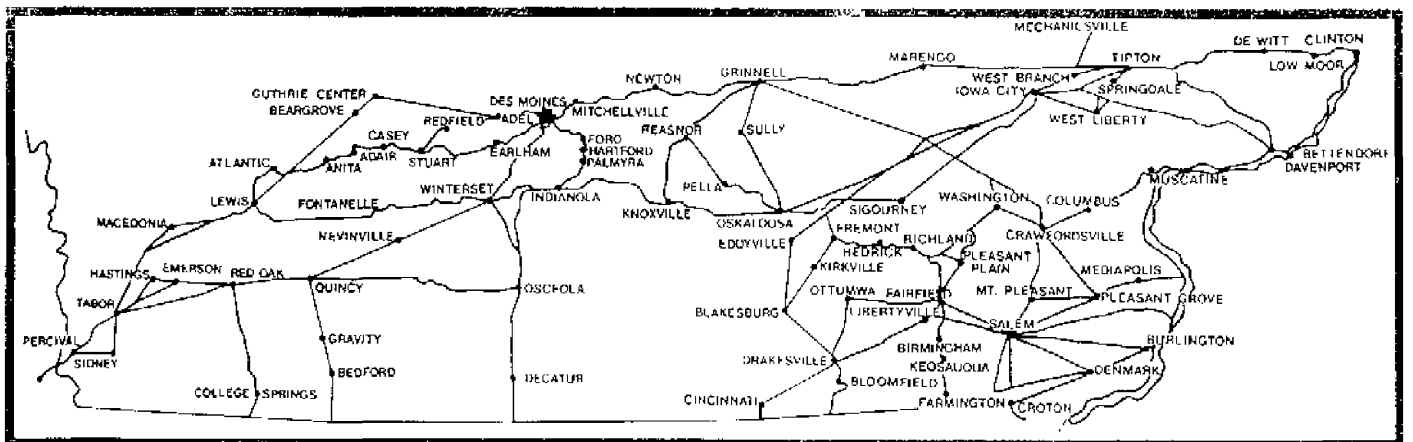
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Underground Railroad Routes through Iowa (Source: Siebert, 113)



Underground Railroad Routes through Iowa (Source: Harnack)

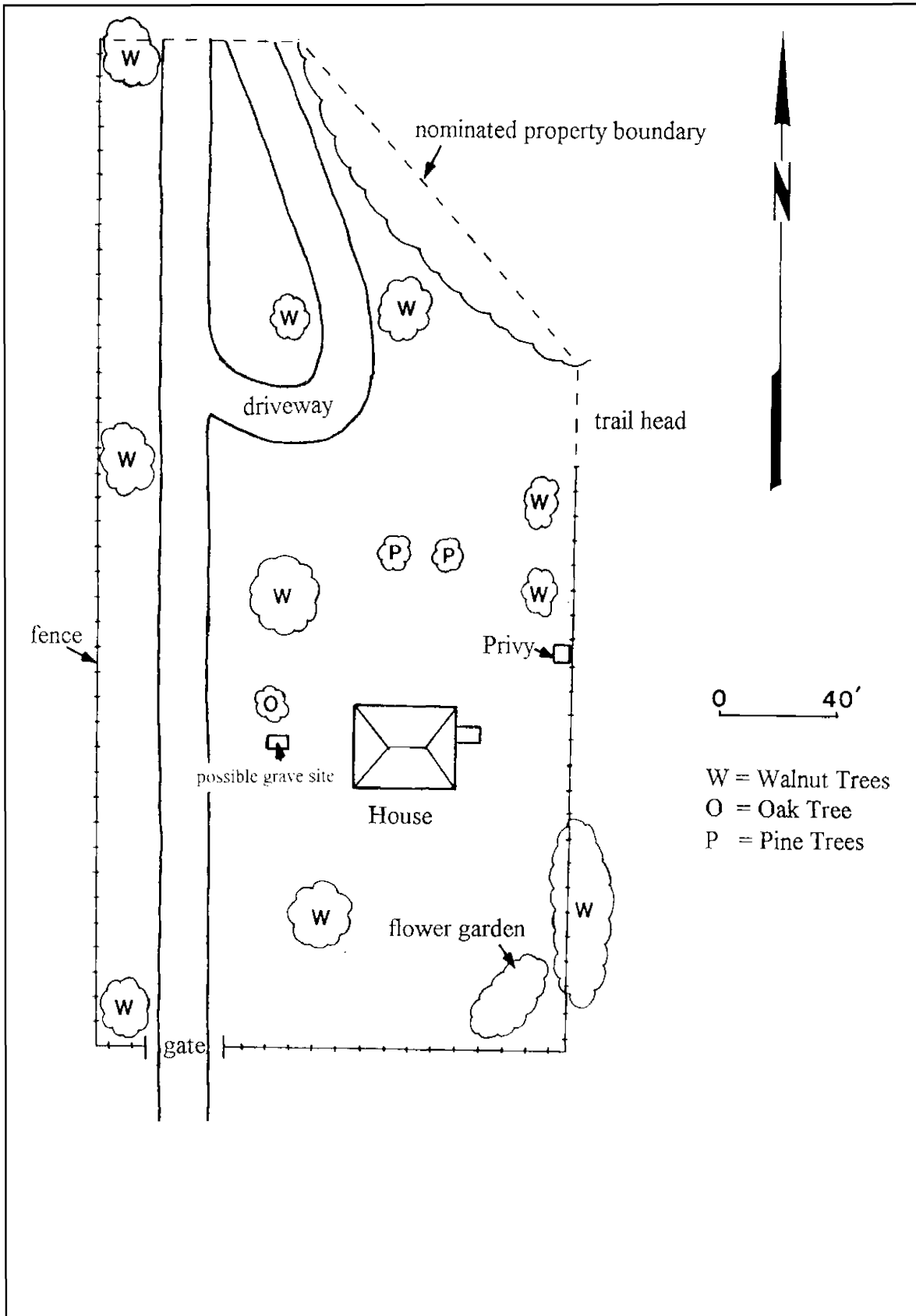


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Site Plan Map



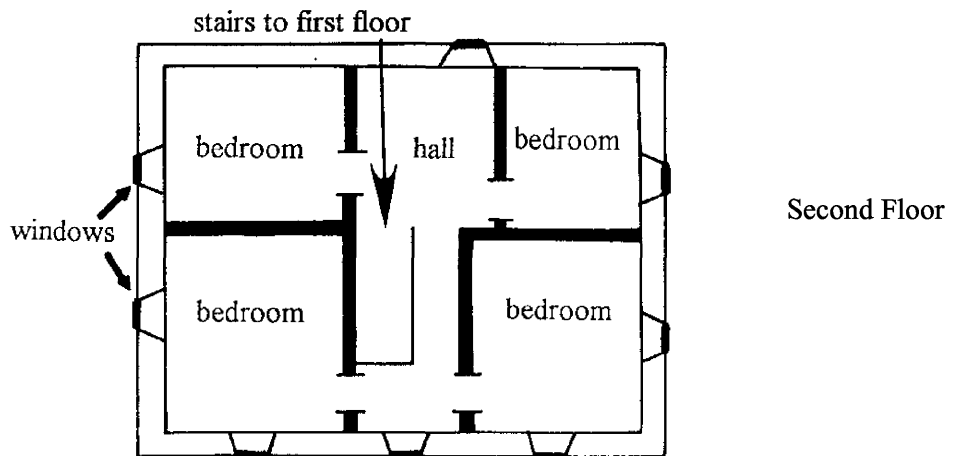
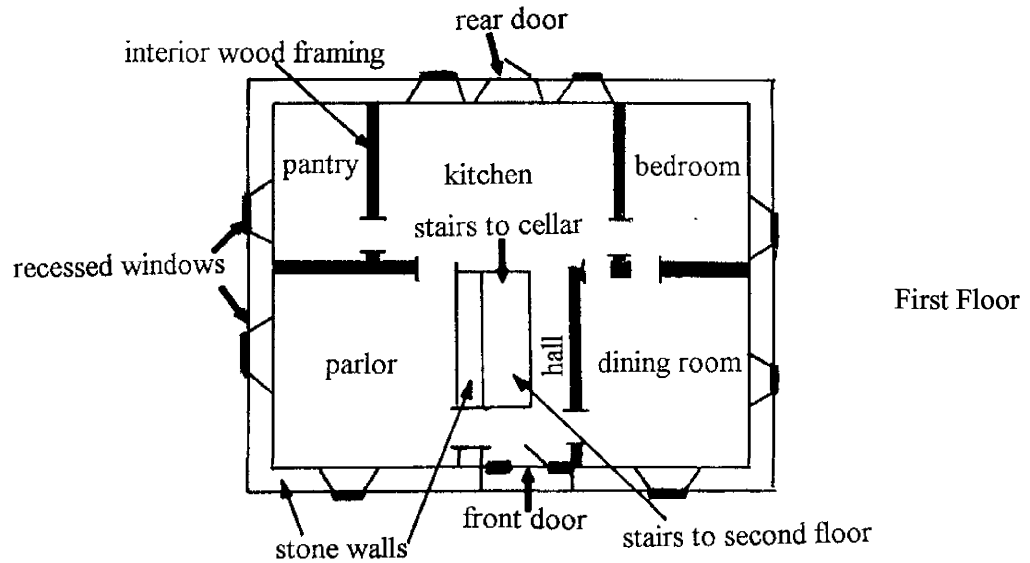
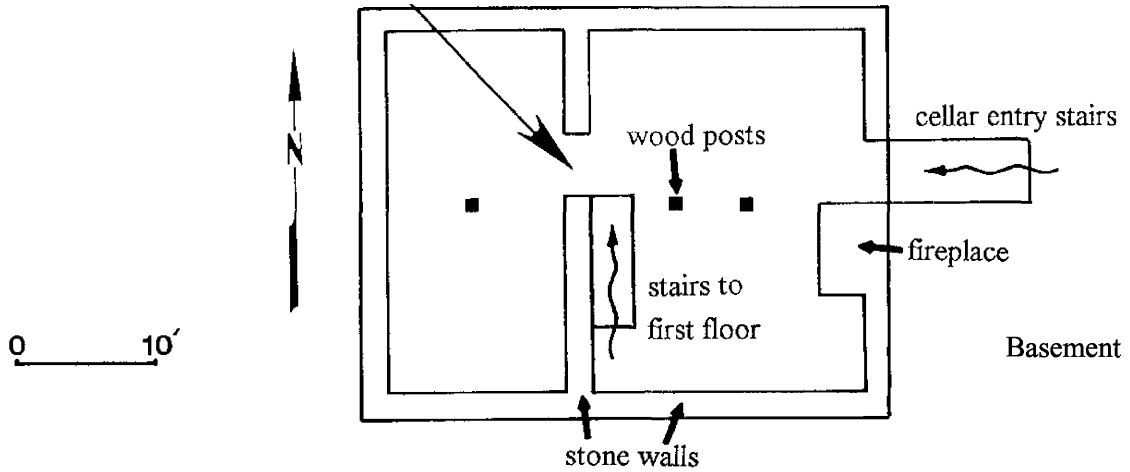
REVEREND GEORGE B. HITCHCOCK HOUSE

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

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Floor Plans

door once covered by "cupboard" door



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Photographs courtesy of Sandy Fairbairn, Hitchcock House Advisory Committee.

ca.1984 Photograph of Hitchcock House Prior to Restoration, View to the NNW



Mid-Late 20th Century Photograph of the Hitchcock House, View to the NNW

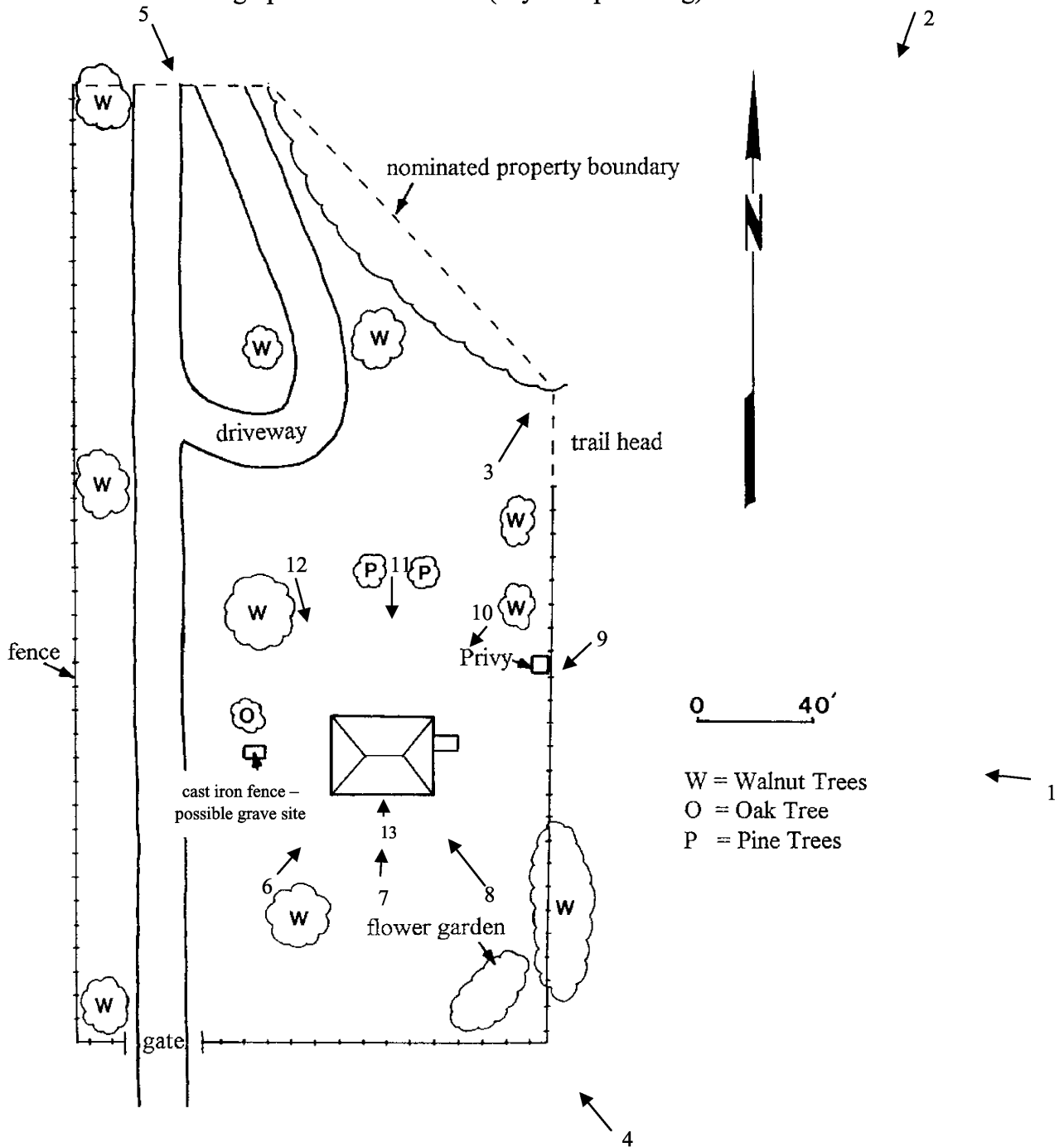


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Photographic Exterior Views (keyed to photo log)

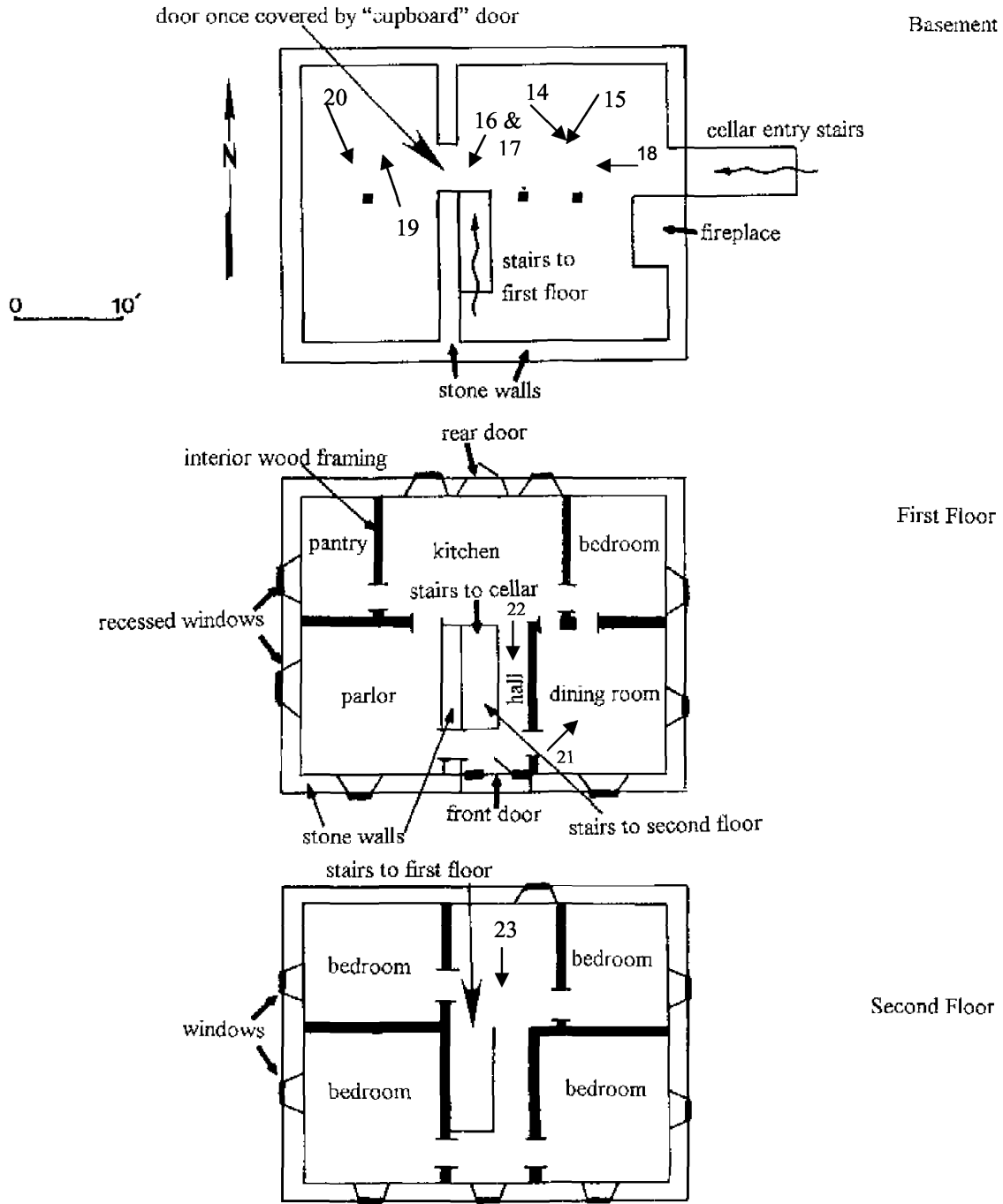


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Photographic Interior Views (keyed to photo log)



REVEREND GEORGE B. HITCHCOCK HOUSE**Page 59**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Black-and-White Photo Log:

Property: Hitchcock House, Lewis, Cass County, Iowa

Photographer: Leah D. Rogers, Tallgrass Historians L.C., Iowa City, Iowa

Date of Photographs: May 6, 2003

Location of Negatives: State Historic Preservation Office, State Historical Society of Iowa, Des Moines

- #1 General view of Hitchcock House property from the suspected site of Hitchcock's original cabin, View to the West
- #2 General view of Hitchcock House property from the Ferry House, View to the SW
- #3 General view from the Hitchcock House property looking to the NE towards the Ferry House
- #4 Closer general view of front of Hitchcock House property, View to the NW
- #5 Closer general view of rear of Hitchcock House property, View to the South
- #6 Front elevation of Hitchcock House, View to the NE
- #7 Front elevation of Hitchcock House, View to the North
- #8 Front elevation of Hitchcock House, View to the NNW
- #9 East elevation of Hitchcock House, View to the WSW
- #10 Rear elevation of Hitchcock House, View to the SW
- #11 Rear elevation of Hitchcock House, View to the South
- #12 Rear elevation of Hitchcock House, View to the SSW
- #13 Detail of front door of Hitchcock House, View to the North
- #14 Interior of basement showing stone fireplace and exterior entry stairs, View to the SE
- #15 Interior of basement east room looking towards interior staircase, View to the SW
- #16 Interior of basement showing detail of interior doorway where cabinet door was affixed, View to the SW
- #17 Closer detail of interior basement doorway where cabinet door was affixed, View to the SSW
- #18 Interior of basement east room, View to the West
- #19 Interior of basement west room, View to the NW
- #20 Interior of basement west room, View to the SSE
- #21 Interior of first-floor dining room, View to the NE
- #22 Interior of first-floor hallway, View to the South towards front door
- #23 Interior of second-floor hallway, View to the South

REVEREND GEORGE B. HITCHCOCK HOUSE**Page 60**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Color Slides Photo Log:

Property: Hitchcock House, Lewis, Cass County, Iowa

Photographer: Leah D. Rogers, Tallgrass Historians L.C., Iowa City, Iowa

Date of Photographs: August 1996 (taken for first NHL submittal; property has not changed)

Location of Negatives: State Historic Preservation Office, State Historical Society of Iowa, Des Moines

- #1 General view of rear of Hitchcock House property , View to the South
- #2 Front elevation of Hitchcock House, View to the NE
- #3 Front elevation of Hitchcock House, View to the North
- #4 East elevation of Hitchcock House, View to the NW
- #5 Rear elevation of Hitchcock House, View to the South
- #6 Detail of front door of Hitchcock House, View to the North
- #7 Interior of basement showing stone fireplace, View to the SE
- #8 Interior of basement showing detail of interior doorway where cabinet door was affixed, View to the SW
- #9 Closer detail of interior basement doorway where cabinet door was affixed, View to the SSW
- #10 Interior of second-floor hallway looking down towards front door, View to the South