

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

726

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name "Lockkeeper's" House

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number Whitefish Trail (T70N R12W Sec 12 NW 1/4 NW 1/4) [N/A] not for publication

city or town Eldon [X] vicinity

state Iowa code IA county Davis code 051 zip code 52554

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this [X] 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 [X] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant [ ] nationally [ ] statewide [X] locally. [ ] see continuation sheet for additional comments.

Beverly Mitchell August 31 2009  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

**STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA**

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property [ ] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria. ([ ] See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register. [ ] See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register. [ ] See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:)

[Signature]  
Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Edson H. Beall 10.14.09

"Lockkeeper's" House  
Name of Property

Davis County, Iowa  
County and State

**5. Classification**

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

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

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

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

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

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION/Water-related

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**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

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**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

NO STYLE

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**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE/Limestone

walls STONE/Limestone

roof ASPHALT

other WOOD

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**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**"Lockkeeper's" House**  
Name of Property

**Davis County, Iowa**  
County and State

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

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

**A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

**B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

**C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

**D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

**A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

**B** removed from its original location.

**C** a birthplace or grave.

**D** a cemetery.

**E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

**F** a commemorative property.

**G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**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 # \_\_\_\_\_

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**ARCHITECTURE**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

**circa 1857**  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

**circa 1857**  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

**N/A**

**Cultural Affiliation**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

**Unidentified**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

\_\_\_\_\_

"Lockkeeper's" House  
Name of Property

Davis County, Iowa  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 0.26 acre

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 [1]5 [5]6[7]6[5]1 [4]5[2]6[3]1[6]1      2 [1]5 [0]0[0]0[0]0 [0]0[0]0[0]0  
Zone Easting Northing      Zone Easting Northing  
3 [1]5 [0]0[0]0[0]0 [0]0[0]0[0]0      4 [1]5 [0]0[0]0[0]0 [0]0[0]0[0]0  
 See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Molly Myers Naumann, Consultant mollynaumann@pcsia.net  
organization \_\_\_\_\_ date March 2009  
street & number 167 West Alta Vista telephone 641-682-2743  
city or town Ottumwa state IA zip code 52501-1437

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the complete form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

**Additional items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name City of Eldon (Attn: David Bowen, Mayor)  
street & number City Hall, P.O. Box 367 telephone 641-652-7510  
city or town Eldon state IA zip code 52554

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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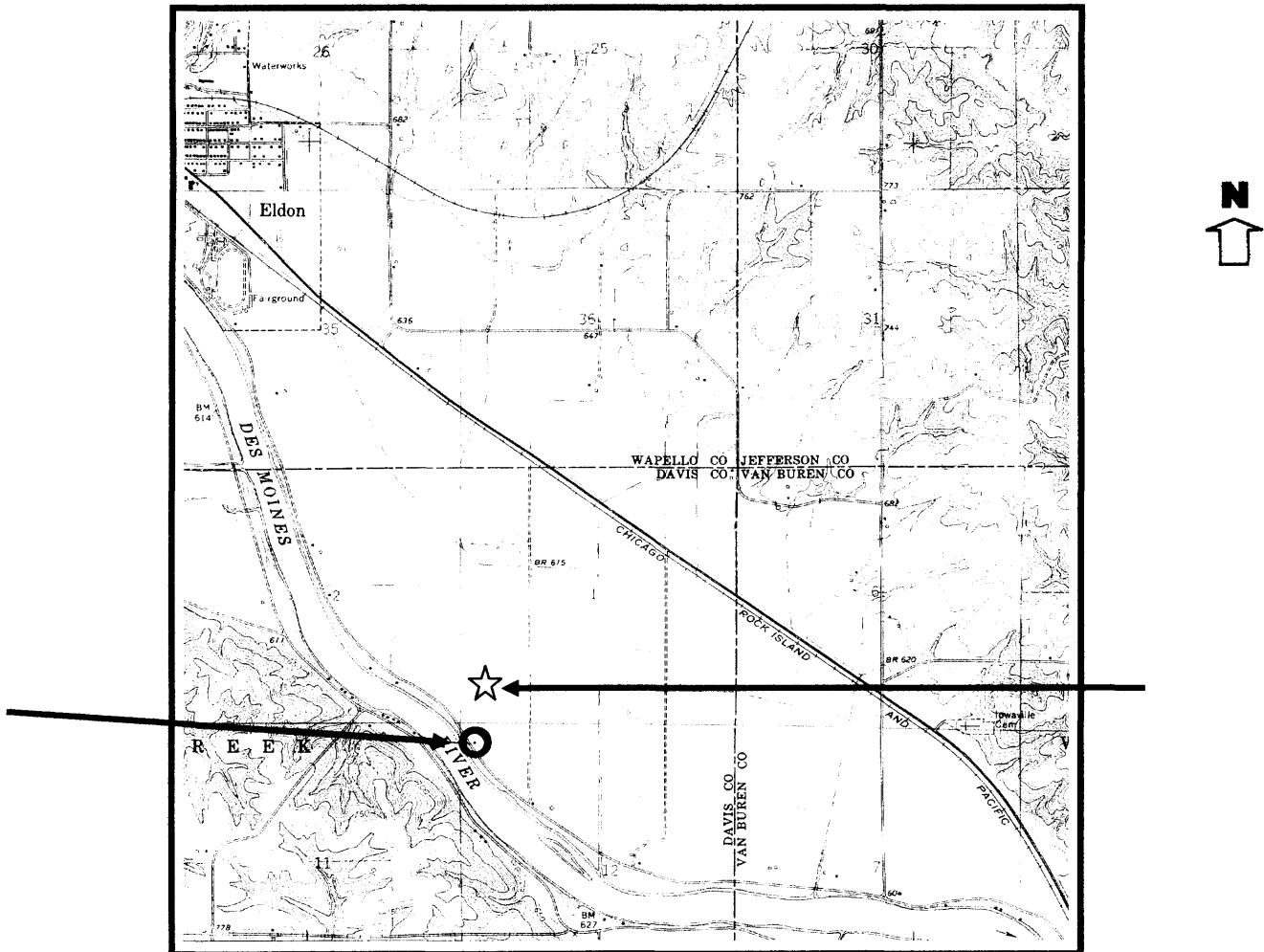
# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

"Lockkeeper's" House  
Davis County, IA

Section number 7 Page 1

### NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION:

The "Lockkeeper's" House (circa 1857) stands on the east side of the Des Moines River, 2.4 miles downstream from Eldon, near the point where four southeast Iowa counties meet: Jefferson, Van Buren, Davis and Wapello. Because it is cut off from the rest of Davis County by the river, the house has always been associated more with Wapello and Van Buren counties than Davis. It is located on the east side of Whitefish Trail, approximately 150 feet from the river, surrounded on three sides by fields of corn. Within the past three or four years Douds Stone has opened a new quarry just north of the house in Section 1. Berms have been constructed to the north and east of the house providing visual separation from this quarry.



U.S.G.S. Map (1965)  
Bottom arrow indicates location of "Lockkeeper's" House  
Top arrow indicates location of quarry  
T70N R12W Sec 12 NW ¼ NW ¼

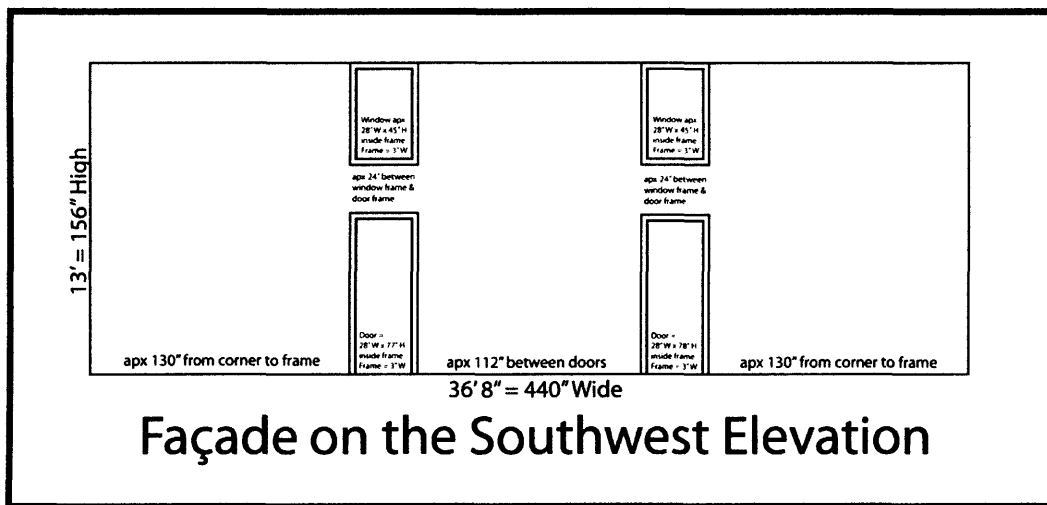
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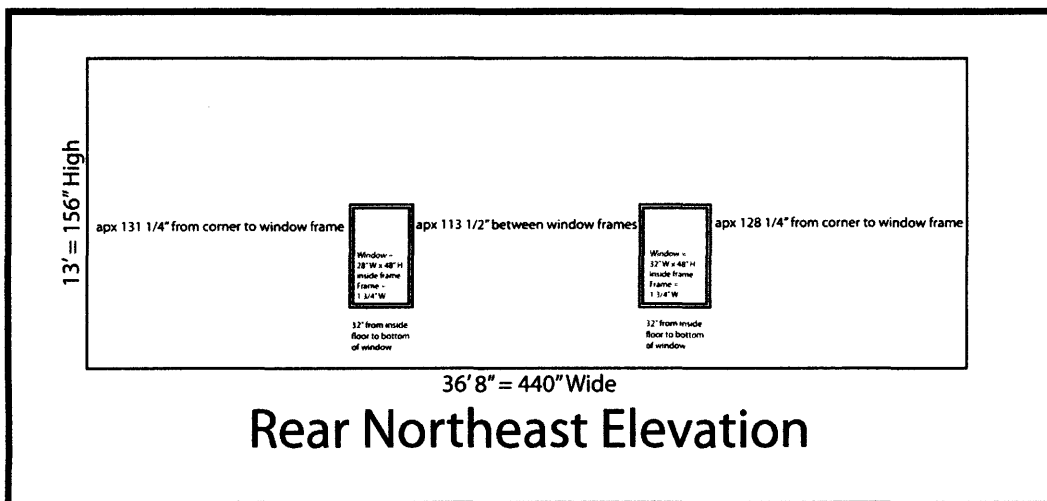
“Lockkeeper’s” House  
Davis County, IA

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The limestone “Lockkeeper’s” House is a one and three-quarter story gable roof rectangle measuring 18 feet 3 inches by 36 feet 8 inches. Due to its relation to both the river and the road, the house has a northwest/southeast axis. It features a symmetrical side gable façade on the southwest elevation with two entrance doors (28 inches wide by 72 inches high) spaced approximately nine feet apart. Half windows (28 inches by 45 inches) are located directly above these doors on the upper level.



Above: Façade of “Lockkeeper’s” House  
(Drawings by Jessi Strom, Eldon HPC)  
Below: Rear elevation of “Lockkeeper’s” House



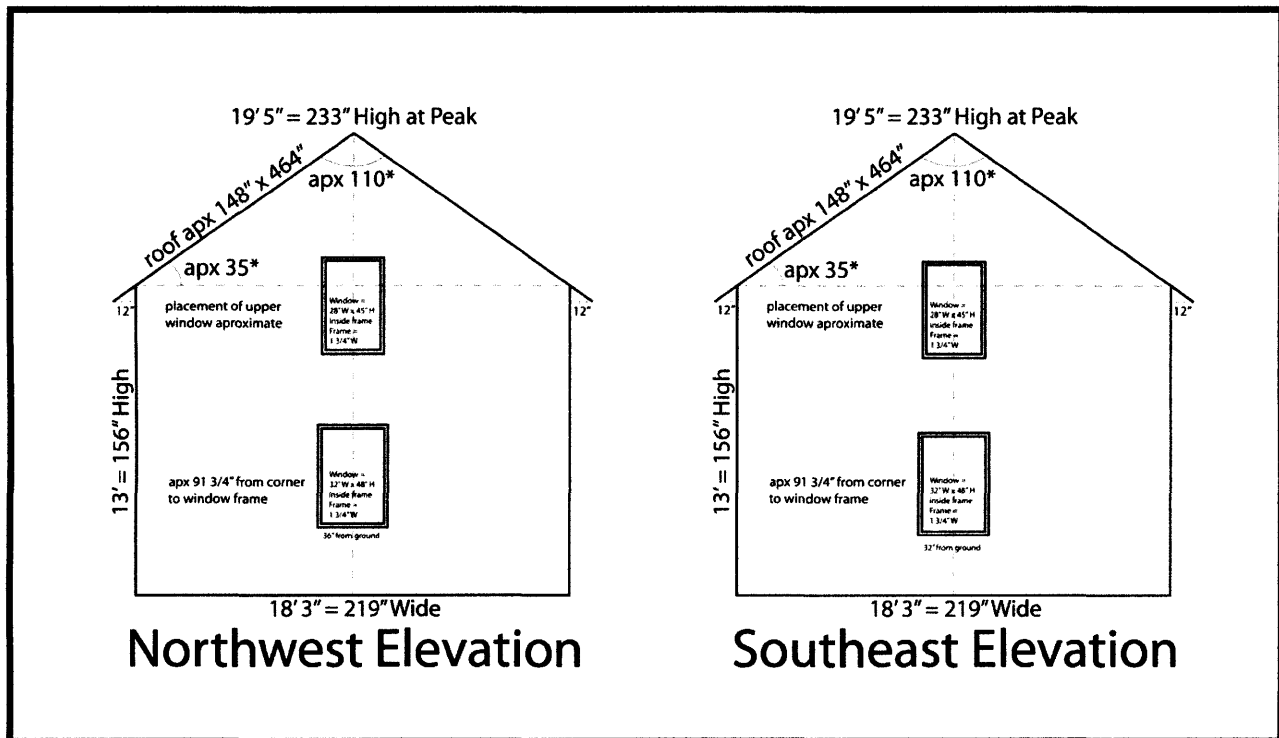
The rear (northeast elevation) has two windows that are directly opposite the front doors. These are unusual because they are two different sizes, the east window being 28 inches by 48 inches while the west window is 32 inches by 48 inches. There are no upper story windows on the rear.

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"Lockkeeper's" House  
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Northwest and southeast elevations  
(Drawings by Jessi Strom, Eldon HPC. Drawings not to scale)

The gable ends (northwest and southeast elevations) have a window on each floor centered in the wall. The first floor windows are 38 inches by 48 inches, and the upper level windows measure 28 inches by 45 inches. The lintels found above the doors and windows vary slightly in both size and material. In several places the lintels are of timber, while others are thin slabs of stone. The exterior walls are 13 feet high on the side gables and 19 feet 5 inches on the end gables. A single stone chimney rises through the center of the asphalt shingled roof.

The 22 inch thick solid masonry walls are of coursed rubble. The stones vary in size from 5 inches by 12 inches, to four inches by 18 inches, to 6 inches by 24 inches. The larger stones are found primarily on the corners where they function as quoins adding stability to the building. The smallest of the stones are used almost as chinking between the larger ones. This stonework continues on the interior. The central wall dividing the space into two equal rooms on each floor contains the chimney flue and stack. The chimney projects slightly on both sides and holes for a stove pipe can be seen opening into each of the four rooms. This wall is pierced on both levels by a door connecting the two rooms.

All doors and windows retain simple wood framing, with one inch by eight inch planks used for doors, shutters, or simple panels to cover the windows. The interior door on the first floor retains a thin coat of green paint and there appear to be traces of the same paint on the frame of the west entrance door. None of the windows show signs of having been painted. There is no flooring on the lower level and only minimal flooring on the second, but some second floor joists are still in place, and empty pockets in the walls indicate the location of the rest of them. The interior stone walls appear at first glance to be

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“Lockkeeper’s” House  
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unfinished but closer examination shows a thin slip coat of plaster was applied to several of them. Over the years vandals (probably area high school students) have scratched their names, initials, and dates in the surface. This slip coat also provides a possible answer to the question of where the staircase was to the second floor. The interior wall of the west room has a diagonal shadow that appears to be the correct angle for a steep narrow staircase.

The “Lockkeeper’s” House shows many signs of deterioration on both the interior and exterior but the integrity of the structure is basically unaltered. The major alteration was due to the roof damage following a tornado in 1978. Much of the west half of the roof was torn off. When it was replaced, although care was taken to retain the proper slope, pre-fabricated roof trusses and synthetic materials were used. It is the west corner of the roof which is presently missing and in need of repair. In Marlin Ingalls’ 2007 evaluation of the house he recommended that the entire west half be replaced in a proper manner. There is a need for masonry repair, including the removal of Portland cement used for re-pointing at some point in the past. Steps are being taken by the new owners of the house (the City of Eldon assisted by the Eldon Historic Preservation Commission) to develop a step-by-step plan for the restoration of the house. Recommendations for this restoration are contained in Ingalls’ evaluation.



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“Lockkeeper’s” House  
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**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:**

The “Lockkeeper’s” House (circa 1857) has great local importance for its widely believed association with the Des Moines River Improvement Project. However, Criterion A significance is not being claimed at this time because no direct link to the Improvement Project has been uncovered and no evidence has been located proving it to have been built as a lockkeeper’s house. It has local Criterion C significance as a good example of mid-19<sup>th</sup> century vernacular design executed in limestone. Though deteriorated, the integrity of both the resource and the site is remarkable.

**Des Moines River Improvement Project:**

The Des Moines River Improvement Project was an ill-fated federally funded 19<sup>th</sup> century project to make the Des Moines River navigable from the mouth at the Mississippi River just south of Keokuk, to the Raccoon Fork, site of Fort Des Moines. A much simplified and abbreviated history of the project will be given here. The earliest steamboat on the Des Moines River was said to be the “S.B. Science” in 1837. In 1843 the steamboat “lone” managed to go as far upstream as Fort Des Moines. The Des Moines was viewed as an inland waterway with great potential for westward expansion. On August 8, 1846, prior to Iowa’s statehood, Congress passed legislation to improve the navigation of the Des Moines. The work was to be financed through the sale of unencumbered odd numbered sections of land lying within five miles of the river on both sides which were granted to the Territory (and then to the State) by Congress. The General Assembly of the State of Iowa approved acceptance of the grant in January 1847 and the following month established a three member Board of Public Works “providing for the improvement of the Des Moines River.” For almost ten years a discussion raged about whether the land grant originally was meant to be just to the Raccoon Fork or if it extended all the way to the Minnesota border. The reason for wanting the land grant to extend to Minnesota was that so much land in the original grant area had already been settled, that more was needed to pay for the improvements. In 1856 it was finally determined that the northern boundary was the Raccoon Fork, thus severely limiting funding for the project.

In the meantime, the Board of Public Works hired an engineer, Col. Samuel Curtis, and surveyors to determine where locks and dams were to be located and to develop specifications for them. It was decided that work would include a series of 28 locks and dams plus several canals. Following this initial survey Curtis wrote in his “Engineer’s Report No. 1, March 20<sup>th</sup>, 1848”:

Capacity, durability and economy should characterize the plans which are adopted so that whatever is done, it may prove permanently useful. With this view of the matter, I would respectfully recommend locks with chambers 44 feet wide and 175 feet long.

As the stone on the river is hard and very expensive to cut into ashlar, I recommend the use of strong rubble masonry rendered tight by the use of Hydraulic cement. The entire chamber should be covered with three coats. Such locks will be much cheaper than cut stone locks, and I see no reason to doubt their entire fitness. The use of Hydraulic cement has been tested in the construction of cisterns, all over the country; and it seems to me therefore hardly necessary to doubt its adequacy. But for abundant caution I recommend that iron bars be laid in the walls, so that there may be a plank revetment on the inside to serve as a protection and prevent leakage.

...  
Dams should be made of stone secured in cribs of timber. When the foundation is good a base of three times the height is in my opinion sufficient. When the foundation is not good, it must be made so by piling, and the plan will be otherwise modified.

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“Lockkeeper’s” House  
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The first 14 contracts covering the river from the Mississippi to just below Farmington were awarded in June 1848. These contracts were awarded to 14 different people or companies. In August 1848 there were 7 more contracts awarded to 6 contractors, taking the work as far upstream as just below Ottumwa. Over one-half of the contractors hired were from out of state. Only two contracts were awarded to people actually living in the area where the lock and dam were to be located. These were William Meek and Son who received the contract for lock and dam #5 at Bonaparte, and Brown and Sanford who received the contract for lock and dam #6 at Bentonsport.

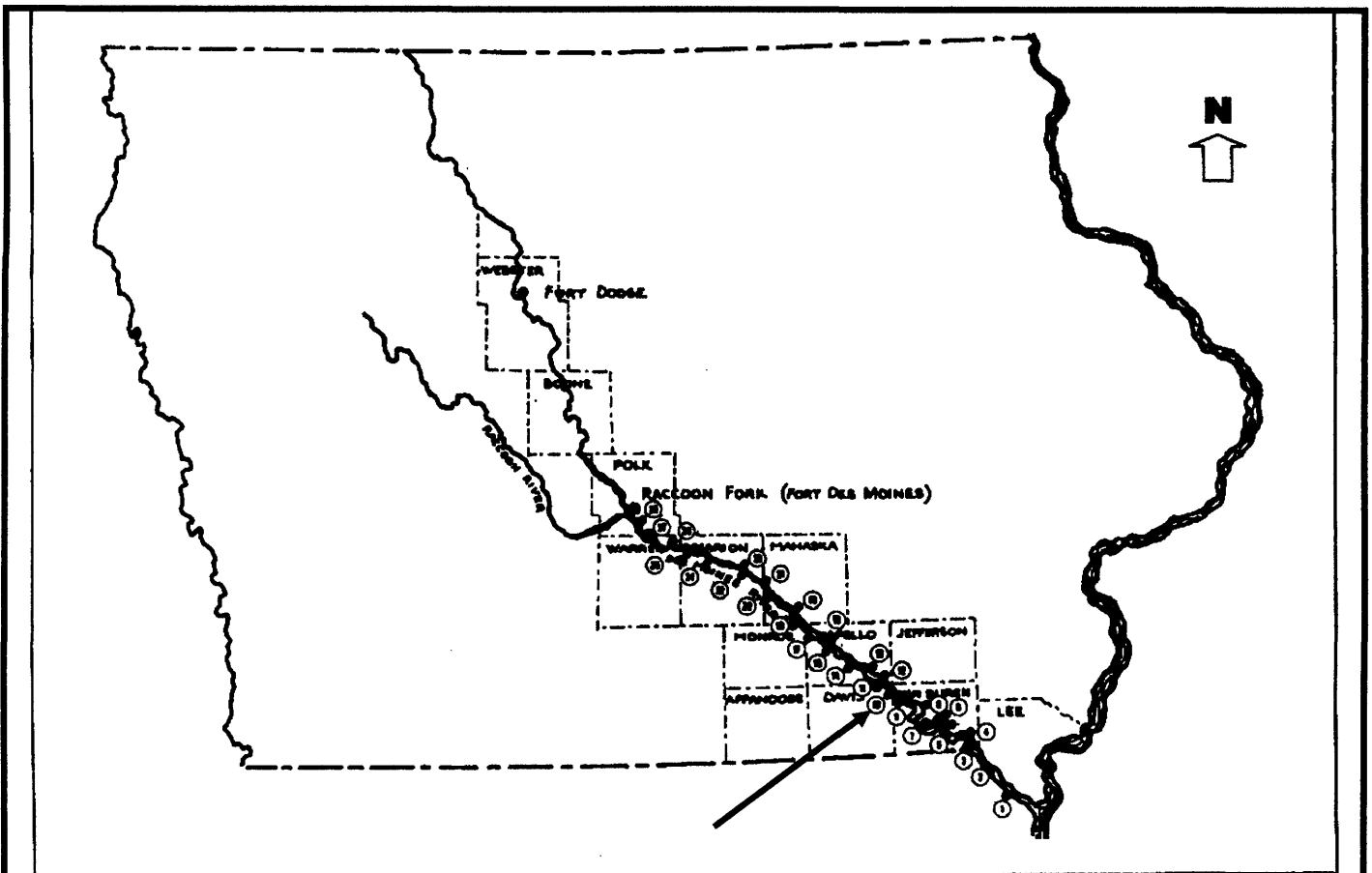


Figure 1-8

KEY TO MAP OF PROPOSED DAMS ON DES MOINES RIVER—(1) St. Francisville, Mo., (2) Cowper's Mill, near Belfast, (3) Tom's Mill, near Croton, (4) Farmington, (5) Bonaparte, (6) Bentonsport, (7) Keosauqua, (8) Philadelphus, near Kilbourn, (9) Portland, (10) Jordan, near Iowa, (11) Kalesback, near Eldon, (12) Rowlands, near Cliffland, (13) Sugar Creek, near Agency (14) Above Ottumwa, (15) Near Chilicothe, (16) Near Chilicothe, (17) Below Eddyville, (18) Above Eddyville, (19) Rocky Ripple, near Givin, (20) Tally's Ford, (21) English Creek, (22) Amsterdam, southwest of Pella, (23) South of Whitebreast Creek, (24) Cordova, just below Red Rock, (25) Bennington, near Swan, (26) Lafayette, (27) Southwest of Adelphi, (28) Levey.

Location of the 28 locks and dams to be built as part of the Des Moines River Improvement Project  
Arrow indicates location of dam #10 at Jordan's  
(Thompson, Transportation in Iowa, p 13)

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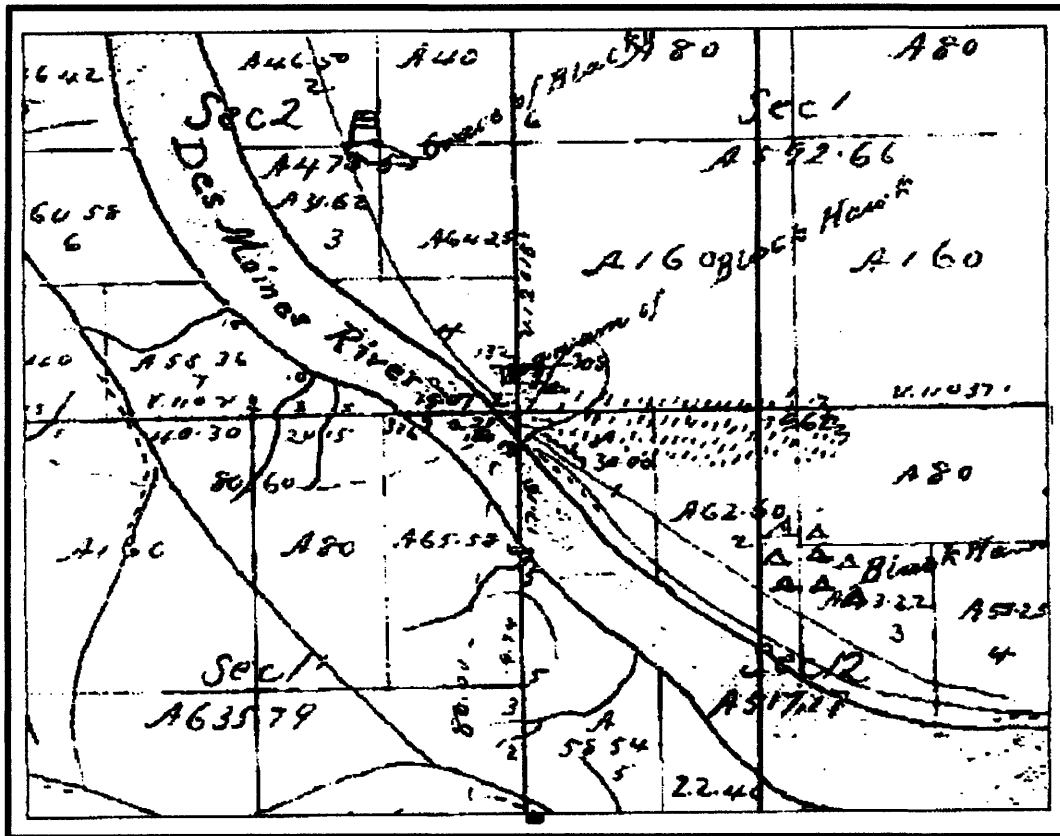
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"Lockkeeper's" House  
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The "Lockkeeper's" House that is the subject of this nomination was associated with lock and dam #10 that were to be constructed just upstream from lowaville (downstream from the present day town of Eldon) on land purchased from James Jordan, an Indian trader. For that reason, this lock and dam were often referred to as being built at Jordan's. The "Lockkeeper's House" is located on the ten acres purchased from Jordan.

Prior to 1838 Jim Jordan had settled approximately 3 miles below Eldon in what was to become Davis County's Salt Creek Township with a license from the government to trade with the Indians. He spent the rest of his life on this land, adding more and more land until he ultimately owned over 1,000 acres. It was on Jordan's land that Black Hawk spent his final days, and his grave was on Jordan's farmstead. An 1840s government survey map shows the location of three different Black Hawk sites: his grave, his wigwam, and his village. Black Hawk's wigwam is shown just upstream from the NW quarter of Section 12. An 1849 map drawn for the Des Moines River Improvement Project shows that lock and dam #10 were to be located in the NW quarter of Section 12, the same quarter where the "Lockkeeper's" House is located.



Map of sections 1, 2, 11 and 12  
General Land Office map from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Survey (1847) overlaid with the  
Black Hawk sites from the 1<sup>st</sup> Survey (1843)  
(Iowa Geographic Map Server)

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1849 Map for the Des Moines River Improvement Project showing location of Lock and Dam #10  
(Drawn by William Dewey, 1<sup>st</sup> Engineer)

The village of Iowa ville is non-extant, with only the Iowa ville Cemetery,  
located on a hillside to the north, remaining.

To say that progress in the construction of the locks and dams was slow is an understatement. Problems were immediately encountered downstream from St. Francisville, Missouri and the decision was made to build a canal, rather than locks, connecting the Des Moines to the Mississippi. The only locks and dams to show progress were those let to local bidders, William Meek and Son at Bonaparte, and Brown and Sanford at Bentonsport. It was in their own best interest to get the project done. The other contractors did not have a vested interest and therefore were in no hurry. In 1851 the Board of Public Lands (originally called the Board of Public Works) was abolished and a new set of Commissioners was selected. They signed a contract with Bangs Brothers and Company of New York to complete the entire project from the Mississippi to the Raccoon in four years (1852 to 1856). Nothing basically was accomplished by Bangs Brothers before their company failed. In 1853 the decision was made to hire another contractor, this one with a fine reputation, Henry O'Reilly, Esq. of New York, to finish construction. He formed a new company, the Des Moines Navigation and Railroad Company, and promised that the project would be complete by 1858, with at least one quarter of the work being accomplished each year. It was during this period of time that work is actually started at the site of lock and dam #10.

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The *Demoine Courier* (as the *Ottumwa Courier* was then known) did not refer specifically to any of the individual sets of locks and dams within its circulation area. All of the *Courier* articles were about the project in general. However, a gentleman by the name of Isaac T. Flint wrote a series of newspaper articles for the *Eldon Star* in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Flint was a teenager in the 1850s growing up on a farm not far north of the river and he watched the events take place. On two occasions, November 11, 1904 and December 8, 1905, he wrote about lock and dam #10. His writings are the only information uncovered about this specific part of the project.

When the Des Moines River Improvement company began operations to put in a lock and dam above lowaville in 1855 – over fifty years ago, people here thought we were strictly in it and speculating on future possibilities. Ten acres of land just below his house was bought of “Jim” Jordan at the then fabulous price of “fifty dollars per acre!” A little shanty town went up almost in a night, teams and men employed at big prices to quarry and haul stone, and a home market sprang up, money began to get plenty. lowaville again began to revive as also did the mercantile grocery and whiskey trade.....

Great were the anticipations of people on the “Des Moines river navigation” that was to make lowaville a metropolis, build up immense factories, and infuse boundless wealth over the country by endless blessings borne in on the angelic wings of a ceaseless commerce. (Dec 8, 1905)

Rude boarding houses went up and as if by magic hundreds of men were soon working some quarrying stone, some hauling. The woods across the river was ringing with axes cutting timbers – in fact, work and enterprise with bustle and bluster was going on such as was never seen here before. For one whole year this lasted. The trowel and hod was kept busy, while the lock for the dam was being built and with all the work and hurry the masonry went on ridiculously slow, while half the ten acre lot and part of the ground west of the road was covered with huge well squared and dressed stone. Also, before the next spring, 1857, a small sea of heavy, dressed timbers were left lying promiscuously near the west bank of the river just below the McClure ford.

By this time the whole business which had been let to one navigation company sold or re-let to another, etc., changing about with every intrigue scheme and jobbing conspiracy to defraud the State, had become so rotten and corrupt it fell of its own weight. Then Jim Jordan, who had sold his ten acres only for the purpose of a lock and dam across the river, like a fellow throwing an apple in a tree to bring down a dozen in return, got it back with all it contained. The work stopped, boarding houses were pulled down and moved and all vanished as suddenly as it began, except several acres of finely, dressed stone on Jordan’s patch of ground.

Those, Jim considered as his part of the spoils, and a settler chancing to want one for some purpose, was reminded that he could have it if he paid enough. Thus they gradually went. Jordan using all he wanted for his own work, until all have vanished except a few yet remaining cemented in the masonry of the lock. (Nov 11, 1904)

On March 22, 1858, the Iowa Legislature passed an act giving all the lands which remained after settling with the Des Moines Navigation and Railroad Company to the Keokuk, Fort Des Moines and Minnesota Railroad Company for the purpose of constructing a railroad from Keokuk up the Des Moines Valley, to Minnesota. The railroad company was to have “all the stone, timber and other materials turned over to the state by the company” except for what was needed to complete the locks and dams at Croton, Plymouth, Bentonsport and Keosauqua.” On March 3, 1860 there was an act passed abolishing the office of commissioner of the Des Moines Improvement. (Waterman, Vol 1, pp 265-266)

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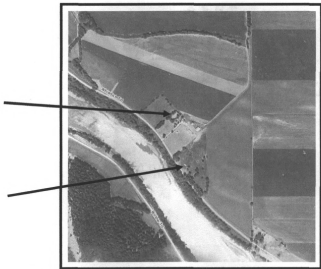
"Lockkeeper's" House  
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Charles Negus summed up the project in these words,

This was a most magnificent grant, embracing some of the best lands in the state; and if the proceeds had been judiciously and properly expended, would have made a great thoroughfare for steamboats, besides affording an immense water power for driving machinery. But through the incompetency of managing the means, and the intrigues of designing men, the whole of the lands below Raccoon Fork, and a large quantity above, were disposed of and very little practical good accomplished toward the navigation of the river. (Waterman, Vol 1, p 266)

Thanks to Flint we have a picture of what took place at one particular spot on the river during the Des Moines River Improvement Project. However, the real importance of his writings for this nomination is that nowhere was there mention of a lockkeeper's house. This is also true of all of the reports provided to the Governor. Only locks and dams (and canals) were noted as part of the navigation project. The so-called Lockkeeper's House, just downstream from Eldon, has no documented relation to the project. Generations of people in the Eldon area have referred to this as the Lockkeeper or Locktender's House, but no specific origin of this "legend" can be found. It is said that the house was built by a local stone mason named Franz Jacob Hem (1808-1903), and his descendents all agree that he was the builder. Unfortunately, no hard evidence of this can be located. It is highly possible that the house was built on this site using stone left over from the lock and dam. Jim Jordan built a fine two story frame house (non-extant) just north of the 'lockkeeper's' house and photos show that the foundation of Jordan's house is of stone virtually identical to that in the stone house.



1960s aerial photo with arrows showing Jordan's house at the top  
with the "lockkeeper's" house below  
(Iowa Geographic Map Server)

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Although no one has lived in the stone house in living memory, it was occupied by a family in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. In an undated interview Keo Riegal said

My folks lived in the stone house when Mina, my oldest sister, was born. That was about 1882. They lived there before Dad had to quit farming. There were two rooms downstairs and two rooms upstairs in the stone house. Its wall were so thick that Mom said it was warm in the winter and cool in the summer to live in. My folks lived there and worked for Jim Jordan on the farm. (Interview conducted by Helen Glasson & Velma Sadler)

Archaeological testing around the house might provide more information about its occupancy. The land it is on remained part of the Jordan family farm until it was purchased by Roger Franklin in the 1960s. It is Franklin who recently donated the house and land to the City of Eldon so it can be preserved.

At the present time no documentation has been located establishing this resource as a part of the Des Moines River Navigation Project, but it has long been associated with it. For this reason it is not presently being nominated under Criterion A, but it is locally tied to the historic event and has often been used to tell the story of the ill-fated project. If a direct connection can be established in the future, Criterion A significance should be added, allowing the "Lockkeeper's" House to join Des Moines River Locks #5 and #7 as symbols of the ill-fated project on the National Register of Historic Places.

**Criterion C:**

The "Lockkeeper's" House is a fine example of mid-19<sup>th</sup> century vernacular design. It is a straightforward, functional design, and it makes use of locally produced material, limestone. The house illustrates the most basic form, a simple gable roof rectangle with side gable entry. Two elements that set it apart from most rectangular gable roof houses in the area are: 1) the chimney enclosed in the center wall; and 2) the presence of two front doors. These doors provide a key to the interior plan, two square rooms on each floor. The plan of this house can be assigned different names depending on your source. It can be referred to as a "double pen" or as a "saddle bag" or even as an "XX" house (to use Henry Glassie's nomenclature). All of these describe a simple floor plan featuring two connecting rooms of the same size, each with its own front entrance. The fenestration reflects its vernacular roots, with the end walls containing single central windows on each floor, but the front and rear elevations have different patterns. The façade features a small window directly above each front entry, but no windows on the first floor. The rear elevation features two first floor windows, and none on the second. The rear windows are two different sizes, perhaps out of necessity due to the windows that were available for use.

The use of limestone as a construction material in this area, the Des Moines River valley, is not unusual, but was not the norm. In other parts of eastern Iowa it was used much more frequently. The village of Franklin in Lee County is composed primarily of limestone houses and buildings. Jackson County, along the Mississippi River, contains so many limestone structures that a Multiple Property Document was prepared, "The Limestone Architecture of Jackson County, Iowa," and over two dozen individual limestone resources were listed on the National Register during 1991 and 1992.

While stone was readily available along the Des Moines River, most early houses and buildings in Van Buren, Davis, and Wapello County were of wood frame or brick construction. The Voltaire P Twombly Building (NRHP) from 1875 in Keosauqua is an example of limestone commercial construction and the so-called Mormon House from the 1840s in the Bentonsport Historic District is an altered example of residential limestone construction. The Mormon House was originally two stories, but the deteriorated condition of the upper story led to its removal around 1980. This house is of ashlar

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limestone blocks and features two entrance doors on the side gable flanked by two windows. Both of these resources are noteworthy because of the use of limestone rather than the more conventional wood or brick. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century limestone from quarries along the Des Moines River in both Van Buren and Wapello counties became a highly valued product for graveled roads.



Mormon House (1840s)  
Bentonsport Historic District (NRHP)

The best known house in southeast Iowa with two entrance doors is the B.F. Pearson House in Keosauqua (NRHP) from circa 1845. It was built by local mason B.F. Pearson as his own residence and combines two building materials: limestone on the first floor and brick above. The house also features double end chimneys.



B. F. Pearson House (ca. 1845) NRHP  
Keosauqua, Iowa



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The feeling of the stone house remains one of a mid-19<sup>th</sup> century building due to its design, materials and workmanship. The relationship (association) between the house and the river remains unchanged. The deteriorated condition of the house is being addressed by the new owner, the City of Eldon, with assistance from the Eldon Historic Preservation Commission. The first two steps in this preservation program have been taken. The evaluation prepared by Marlin Ingalls provides recommendations for how to proceed with the physical preservation. This nomination provides documentation of the resource and a National Register listing will make it eligible to apply for funding to assist the preservation efforts.



The limestone "Lockkeeper's" House stands in isolation on the bank of the Des Moines River, just as it has for 150 years.

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The integrity of the "Lockkeeper's" House is high, despite the deteriorated condition. It has not been moved, the setting differs only in the fact that prairie grass has been replaced by corn and the dirt road graveled. The recent excavation to the northwest by Douds Stone is not visually intrusive due to berms built between the house and the gravel quarry.



2002 Aerial Photograph  
Arrow indicates "Lockkeeper's" House  
(Iowa Geographic Map Server)



2008 Aerial Photograph  
Arrow indicates "Lockkeeper's" House  
Quarry north of resource  
(Iowa Geographic Map Server)

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The majority of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century rectangular side gable houses in Iowa feature a symmetrical three or five bay façade with end chimneys. This can be illustrated by two more examples from neighboring Van Buren County.



Brick Cottage (circa 1845)  
Vernon, Iowa



Brick Residence (circa 1850)  
Pittsburg, Iowa

### Conclusion:

Although no direct link has been found between the so-called Lockkeeper's House and the Des Moines River Improvement Project, for generations the house has been used to tell the story of that venture. The Des Moines River Improvement Project was a major undertaking for the young state of Iowa. In theory it seemed to be a wonderful idea, a way to move people and goods into the interior of the state while providing water power for mills in towns along the river. In reality it turned out to be a nightmare. From the very beginning the Board of Public Lands had problems finding qualified engineers and surveyors, and qualified contractors were even more scarce. For over a decade men tried to make the project work. In the end, the land, the materials, and the money were all given to a new venture, the Keokuk, Des Moines and Minnesota Railroad. Traces of that railroad can still be seen today such as the road bed running parallel to IA Highway 16 just north of the "Lockkeeper's" House and actual tracks running parallel to Iowa Highway 163 between Pella and Prairie City.

Due to lack of documentation linking the "Lockkeeper's" House to the Des Moines River Improvement Project it is not being nominated under Criterion A. However, if future research can locate such a link, this nomination should be amended to include Criterion A significance.

The "Lockkeeper's" House achieves Criterion C significance as a fine example of vernacular design from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century executed in a local material, limestone. It exhibits the basic character defining elements of a double pen/saddle bag/XX plan: rectangular in shape, gable roof, side gable entry, two entrance doors, and an interior central chimney. Although in deteriorated condition, the resource retains sufficient integrity to illustrate this building type.

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**GEOGRAPHIC DATA:**

**Boundary Description:**

Auditor's Parcel "C" in part of the NW ¼ NW ¼ OF Section 12-70-12, Davis County, Iowa, described as follows:

Commencing at the northeast corner of said NW ¼ NW ¼ of Section 12; thence South 00°12'56" East, 909.3 feet; thence South 86°33'17" West, 716.97 feet; thence North 40°27'58" West, along the approximate center line of Whitefish Trail, 428.85 feet; thence, continuing along said centerline, North 31°42'28" West, 77.47 feet; thence North 36°20'29" East, 128.86 feet; thence South 58°11'46" East, 80.00 feet; thence South 38°59'24" West, 164.30 feet to the Point of Beginning containing 0.26 acres, more or less, of which approximately 0.06 acre is public road right-of-way.

The above bearings are based on an assumed meridian and all distances are horizontal ground distances.

**Boundary Justification:**

This is the geographic area on which the "Lockkeeper's" House is located, and is the land that was transferred by Roger R. Franklin to the City of Eldon.

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The photographs submitted with this nomination were taken by Molly Myers Naumann in September and December, 2008.

IA\_DavisCounty\_Lockkeeper'sHouse

0001	View from Whitefish Trail looking East
0002	Façade looking Northeast
0003	Façade and Southeast end looking North
0004	Southeast end and rear elevation looking West
0005	Northwest end and façade looking East
0006	Detail: Hole in West corner of roof
0007	Interior: East room, South corner looking South
0008	Interior: East room, stone dividing wall looking Northwest
0009	Interior: East room, second floor door and wall looking Northwest
0010	Interior: West room looking South
0011	Interior: West room, dividing wall with chimney looking Southeast
0012	Interior: West room, hole in roof with remnants of second floor looking West