

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received AUG 28 1984

date entered SEP 27 1984

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

1. Name

historic Adams-Higgins House

and/or common Higgins House

2. Location

street & number 1215 North Grand Avenue _____ not for publication

city, town Spencer _____ vicinity of

state Iowa code 019 county Clay code 041

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Paul and Paula Brenner

street & number 1215 North Grand Ave.,

city, town Spencer _____ vicinity of state Iowa 51301

5. Location of Legal Description

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

street & number Clay County Courthouse

city, town Spencer state Iowa 51301

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

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

date _____ federal _____ state _____ county _____ local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Condition excellent good fair deteriorated ruins unexposed**Check one** unaltered altered**Check one** original site moved

date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Adams-Higgins House (1884, 1912) represents an example of the combination of a neo-classical roofline and porches with a late Victorian house. Today the house retains most of its very large lot, landscaping, and even a 1917-18 playhouse, all of which combine visually to give this property local importance.

The present house is rectangular on plan (69' by 43' overall, 56' by 34' core building). The original two story frame house survives beneath an eclectic combination of porches and a new roof. Visually dominant is a two story classical portico with pediment and a balcony. Tall square piers and a high porch deck add to the visual effect. The four fluted ionic-style columns are capped with square cut voutes. The plain architrave and frieze have a horizontal feel, and support a cornice and elaborate railing above. Large modillions on the wall plane support the architrave on either side. Single story pergola-like extensions project on either side to form a porte cochere to the north and a sun porch to the south. The front wall of the house incorporates an original square cut bay, which on the second floor provides access to the balcony. Its clustered fenestration is matched by a first floor entryway with side lights and an elaborate surround.

The north face with its exposed wall provides a sense of depth to the plan. Three visually distinct wall sections are in turn defined by a diagonal set of stairway windows, by a centered exterior chimney with flanking windows, and finally by a simple symmetrical window arrangement topped by a gabled dormer. Similarly the southern side face is broken into three component parts. On the left hand side, the conservatory and sun porch are topped by a shed roofed dormer. The two story bay in the center is partly behind the main sun porch and is topped by a gabled dormer (originally a railing on the bay roof created the illusion of a small hidden porch at this point), lastly the main sun porch with french doors on the main floor is topped by a hipped roof dormer at the eavesline. The west wall is that of the original house, with the exception that a single story rear addition (not included in 1911 remodeling plans) obscures the first floor.

Most noteworthy are the new roofline and the window and ornamental details which were employed in the new plan. The new roof created a haphazard array of dormer types, with varied cornice treatments. Broad projecting eaves are most noticeable on the north wall where a jerkinhead dormer matches the eavesline which encloses the chimney on that face. Various bracket types and modillions support eaves and cornices around the house. In terms of window treatment, the plan frequently employed transom lights which are structurally set apart from the windows below. A variety of multi-paned upper sash varieties are employed, including beveled art glass.

The original 1884 Victorian plan had a slightly assymetrical plan which consisted of a nearly square front, with an offset rear wing. Two story chamfered bays projected from the center of the south wall and from the left side of the front. Corner porches were inserted at the southwest and northeast corners. The roof was basically gabled. Gabled dormers projected above each bay. The clapboard exterior was generally plain. A geometrical pattern was created by a band of verticals siding which occured between water table and first floor sill levels, between the two floors and second floor sill levels, and at the cornice line. Corner boards and horizontal boards frame these panels. The division between floors was further

**United States Department of the Interior
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**National Register of Historic Places
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Continuation sheet Physical Description Item number 7 Page 2

marked by a series of bracketted pent roofs which encircled each bay and the porches. Similarly the cornice itself was supported by widely spaced brackets. Large interior chimneys were located at the center of the main part of the house, and in the kitchen at the rear. Windows were tall and thin, those in the bays consisting of bands of very narrow windows. Roof ornamentation was generous and included elaborate gable treatments, gingerbread across the front dormer, and an elaborate built in gutter. The foundation was of ashlar stone with projecting mortar joints. Photos indicate the use of the deck above the front porch for a summer porch with an awning and planter boxes.

An elaborate carriage house with combination jerkinhead and gambrel roof, and a large central ventilator, stood just west of the house. The original property included an entire city block (300' by 300'), but the westernmost 125' was transferred for the use of the First Congregational Church in 1947. The house stood just southeast of the block center, with an orientation to Grand Avenue to the east. Other landscaping features which survive include a 1917-18 playhouse (see below), a concrete kidney-shaped fish pond (14' by 33'), a ten foot high wooden pergola or arbor (c. 1912, 12' by 64') on the south lawn, projecting perpendicular to the house, and a wrought iron fence on a concrete base which encircles the property on three sides.

The 1912 remodeling added a new roof and a new east front to the house. The neo-classical porch, balcony and flanking pergola like side porch and porte cochere incorporated the east bay and added a stair hall in the northeast corner, replacing the original corner porch. A second story sleeping porch was added above a new conservatory which replaced the rear corner porch. In addition to the stair hall, interior alterations included the addition of a library, and the north chimney. The new roof line along with the dormers allowed for a third floor servants quarters on that level.

Alterations subsequently to the remodeling include the loss of some decorative features. The south bay has lost its railing cap. The main porch has lost its screens. Settling and deterioration threatens the south side of the main porch and dryrot threatens the north eavesline and the large columns.

The playhouse (32' by 29') has a cinder block foundation, and a chimney on the east face which matches that on the north side of the main house. The house has a long rectangular plan, with side gables and a south gable. A flat roofed double garage addition is on the southeast corner, with a door on its east end. The eaves are bracketted. Diamond windows are beneath the soffit on each gable end flanking the chimney. Large square picture windows with stained glass surrounds are on each end, and a band of windows is on the north face. This building was relocated to this site behind the main house from the northwest corner of the lot in 1947 to make room for the church. Inside the walls are wainscoted, and the uppermost two feet of the wainscot is a mural depicting children and pets at play. Exposed beams and wood ceiling along with an ornate brick fireplace and built in cabinets are noteworthy.

The main house interior includes a rich array of oak paneling, oak floors (downstairs), an open staircase, staircase railing, built in cabinets around the north fireplace, window seats, mahogany sideboard, beveled glass french door sets,

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**National Register of Historic Places
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Continuation sheet Physical Description Item number 7 Page 3

three fireplaces and a terra cotta conservatory floor. The drawing room retains a landscape oil painting dated 1912 by Chicago artist F. Lundahl.

8. Significance

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

Specific dates 1884, 1912 **Builder/Architect** J. G. Ralston, arch. 1911 remodeling

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Adams-Higgins house (1884, 1912) represents an example of the combination of a neo-classical roofline and porches with an earlier late Victorian house. Today the house retains its very large lot, landscaping details and even a c. 1917-18 playhouse, all of which combine visually to give this property local importance.

Merchant J. Q. Adams platted the 28 block Griffin and Adams Addition in Spencer along with banker M. E. Griffin in 1880. Four years later Adams acquired Block 22 and built this house. This family occupied the house until 1900.

William (? -1943) and Bessie Carroll Higgins acquired the property c. 1900. Higgins had acquired some ten thousand acres of farmland in Clay and Dickinson Counties. The Higgin family was responsible for the 1912 remodeling. Architect J. G. Ralston prepared the 1911 plans. A playhouse for the two adopted children was added c. 1917-18. The family occupied the house until 1950. The house was vacant for some twelve years. In 1947 the lot was partially reduced by transfer of the western end to a local church congregation.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Refer to Continuation Sheet 9-2

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property one and one fourth acres.

Quadrangle name Spencer

Quadrangle scale 1/24,000

UTM References

A

1	5	3	2	5	5	6	0	4	7	7	9	5	1	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification

Block 22 except the westernmost 125', Griffin and Adams Addition, Spencer, Iowa.
Includes house and playhouse.

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

state	N/A	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title James E. Jacobsen, National Register Coordinator

organization Iowa SHPO date 22 August 1984

street & number E. 12th & Grand Ave. telephone 515-281-4137

city or town Des Moines state Iowa 50319

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *John A. Anderson* date 23 August 1984

title Executive Director Iowa State Historical Department

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

Joyce M. Summers Entered in the National Register date 9-27-84
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: _____ date _____
Chief of Registration

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National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
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Continuation sheet Bibliography Item number 9 Page 2

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