

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received SEP 5 1984

date entered OCT 4 1984

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

1. Name

historic Lancaster School

and/or common

2. Location

street & number R.R.#3 SE of Sigourney not for publication

city, town Sigourney vicinity of

state Iowa code 19 county Keokuk code 107

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" 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 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: not used

4. Owner of Property

name Keokuk County Board of Supervisors

street & number Keokuk County Courthouse

city, town Sigourney vicinity of state Iowa 52591

5. Location of Legal Description

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

street & number Keokuk County Courthouse

city, town Sigourney state Iowa 52591

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Southern Iowa Economic Development Association Regional Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date Summer 1983 No architectural evaluation

federal state county local

depository for survey records Iowa SHPO

city, town Des Moines state Iowa 50319

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Lancaster School is the best preserved of two surviving two story frame school buildings in Keokuk County. As such it exemplifies local educational efforts in that county during the decades of the 1870's and 1880's. The building in its prominent setting offers a fine opportunity for visually interpreting rural education in Southeast Iowa. It is the last surviving public building in the former county seat community of Lancaster.

Rectangular on plan (36' x 22'), two stories in height, this heavy timber framed clapboard building with stone foundation occupies what was the courthouse square in Lancaster. Its primary facade is oriented to the south. That facade has a pedimented entry that originally was a double door. Now a single door, the infill on either side gives the appearance of sidelights. Two 4/4 sash windows on the second floor are symmetrically arranged above the entrance. Corner boards, window surrounds (which include a projecting wooden sill and lintel) and a broad plain frieze further define and ornament the building's exterior surface. Side wall fenestration consists of four 4/4 sash windows, vertically aligned. The rear wall is blank. An open gabled belfry has square corner posts, elaborate eaves treatment and a plain cornice, and an unusual vaulted ceiling above the bell. A brick chimney with a corbelled cap projects at the ridgeline on the north end.

Inside, the building contains two nearly square classrooms, both located on the northernmost two thirds of each floor. Rectangular coatroom/entryways spaces fill the remainder of the interior plan. A narrow wood corner stairway with a single turn connects the floors. One source states that there were originally two such corner stair sets. There is no evidence that there ever was a porch of any sort on the building. Presently there is a concrete slab in front of the entrance. There is no cellar or basement. Heat was provided by stoves on each floor. Interior woodwork is of oak, as are the floors. An oval "Iowa Standard School" plaque above the entrance dates from c. 1929-1936.

The Lancaster school compares favorably with the other two story schools which once stood in Keokuk County. Six such schools are known to have utilized a similar plan and massing. That at Talleyrand (c. 1874) is identical with the same entrance fenestration, but has suffered in terms of integrity, its use as a barn has resulted in the sealing of all openings and the loss of its belfry. That at Coal Creek (c. 1870, non-extant) had two fewer side windows and only a single window above the side entrance. Richland's brick version (c. 1867, non-extant) had no belfry, and had a different end fenestration (off center entrance).

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 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 1881 **Builder/Architect** Reynolds Brothers, builders.

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Lancaster School is the best preserved of two surviving two story frame school buildings in Keokuk County. As such it exemplifies local educational efforts in that county during the decades of the 1870's and 1880's. The building in its prominent setting offers a fine opportunity for visually interpreting rural education in Southeast Iowa. It is the last surviving public building in this former county seat community of Lancaster.

Keokuk County in the post Civil War period had an exceptionally good county superintendent of education, who's efforts included a fine normal school program (a summer workshop for teacher improvement). It is possible that the two story frame school phenomenon in this county can be traced to this commitment to education. At least six two story double sized school houses are known to have been built in the 1870's and early 1880's. There is no evidence that these buildings served either larger districts or that they had more than the average number of pupils. They apparently required two teachers and consequently were more costly to operate. Lancaster school, to the degree that information is available, used the lower floor for pre-literate students (called "chart school"), the second floor for the eight grades.

The town of Lancaster dates from 1844 in terms of first white settlement. It owed its existence to the juxtaposition of Precinct Ridge and a North Skunk River ferry site. The county survey in 1848 laid out a town of thirty five blocks and its service as county seat dates from that same year. It was first called Lafayette. By 1852 two churches were established. Sigourney claimed the county seat function in 1859. By 1874 the town consisted of thirty two buildings, including the churches, a school, hotel and store. A plat of 1887 showed thirty one buildings, with a post office, two blacksmith shops, two stores, a wagon shop, church and school. Real decline appears to have postdated the turn of the century. The post office was lost in 1904, the Methodist Church closed in 1915. Today the Christian Church, the school, and a scattering of residences remain, the majority of the town plat having been reclaimed for farming use.

The first school building, by 1874, was of rectangular plan, and occupied lots one and two on Block 28, located two blocks east of the subject property site. In mid June 1881 the County Board of Supervisors leased the public square (former courthouse site, Block 5 of plat of Lancaster) to J. H. Bott, President of the local independent school district "...so long as the said Block is used for school purposes..." Soon after, on 7 July 1881, the Sigourney News reported under its Lancaster column that "...Reynolds Bros. put in the lowest bid on our new school house." Enrollment figures are sketchy for Lancaster school. In June 1898 one hundred and nineteen pupils attended. By the early 1900's, students numbered only about thirty. By 1964 thirteen students attended the final class. In its final years of use, only the first floor was utilized. The building continues to be used as a voting facility.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Refer to Continuation Sheet 9-2

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property one acre

Quadrangle name Sigourney

Quadrangle scale 1/24,000

UTM References

A

1	5	5	6	9	7	7	0	4	5	6	9	4	4	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 (Disincorporated)

Block 5 or the Public Square, Plat of Lancaster, that platting also being known as the NE 1/4 of the SW 1/4 of Sec. 30, Twp. 74-75 North, Range 11 West. The square contains only the school and a 1980 privy.

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

state	N/A	code	county	code
state		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 Alvin A. Anderson

title Executive Director Iowa State Historical Department date 23 August 1984

For NPS use only

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

Janellous Byers Entered in the National Register date 10-4-84
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: _____ date _____

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Continuation sheet Bibliography

Item number 9

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Bibliography

Hannon, Helen. "Lancaster pays high price in county seat battle." Ottumwa Courier,
28 March 1979, p. 16.

Jaeger, Mrs. Frank. "Rural School Closes At Lancaster." Ottumwa Courier, 20 May 1964.

Record of Lease between Independent School District of Lancaster and Keokuk County
Board of Supervisors, 13 June 1881, Book H, page 631, Keokuk County Courthouse
records.

Sigourney News, 7 July 1881.

Plat Maps of Lancaster, Keokuk, Iowa, 1874 and 1887.

Interview by Sarah L. Smithart with Mrs. Leona Gilliland, June 1893.

Interview by Sarah L. Smithart with Mrs. Eva Regan, August 1983.