

**IOWA HISTORIC PROPERTY STUDY OF
THE THOMAS A. GRAHAM HOUSE (86-00024)**

Tama County, Iowa

Prepared For:

**IOWA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
800 Lincoln Way
Ames, Iowa 50010**

Prepared By:

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950 50th Street
Marion, Iowa 52302**

June 2002

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Thomas A. Graham House (86-00024) is a nineteenth-century brick vernacular farmhouse situated on the corner of Church and West Grand streets in the southeastern part of Toledo, Iowa. The house was initially identified in a reconnaissance architectural survey conducted in 1995 by The Louis Berger Group, Inc. (Gade and Pendleton 1995). Intensive architectural survey of the property by Berger's Principal Architectural Historian, Martha H. Bowers, evaluated the house as eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C (Bowers 1998). The purpose of the present recordation project is to provide a documentary record of the Thomas A. Graham House in accordance with the guidelines set forth by the Iowa State Historic Preservation Office regarding historic property studies for houses. Background research for this project was conducted in April 2002. The property was inspected and photographed in November 2001.

Information on the property was gathered through background research, field investigation, and photodocumentation. The research for this report was conducted at the Tama County Courthouse and the Tama County Historical Museum Genealogical Library, both in Toledo. Much of the background research for the project was conducted by Ms. Bowers as part of the intensive architectural survey of the property. Further site-specific research was undertaken by Peggy Beedle, Berger Architectural Historian. Photographer Bruce Harms prepared all supporting graphic materials: maps, photographic documentation, and illustrations, including floor plans. This report was written by Peggy Beedle.

II. THE PROPERTY TODAY

A. LANDSCAPE

The Thomas A. Graham House is situated at the top of a low hill, on the corner of Church and West Grand streets, in Toledo. The streets are narrow and there are no sidewalks; a shallow ditch runs along the east side of Church Street. The house is set back from Church Street approximately 30 feet, with the front elevation facing east. The driveway is behind the house, with the access off West Grand Street. Mature trees grace the front lawn and shrubs are set close to the house on the east and south. There is no sidewalk to the front door. A brick walkway leading from West Grand Street to the side entrance is planted with perennials. A modern garage and breezeway are attached to the rear, or south, elevation. North of the house a vestigial drive leads from Church Street past the house.

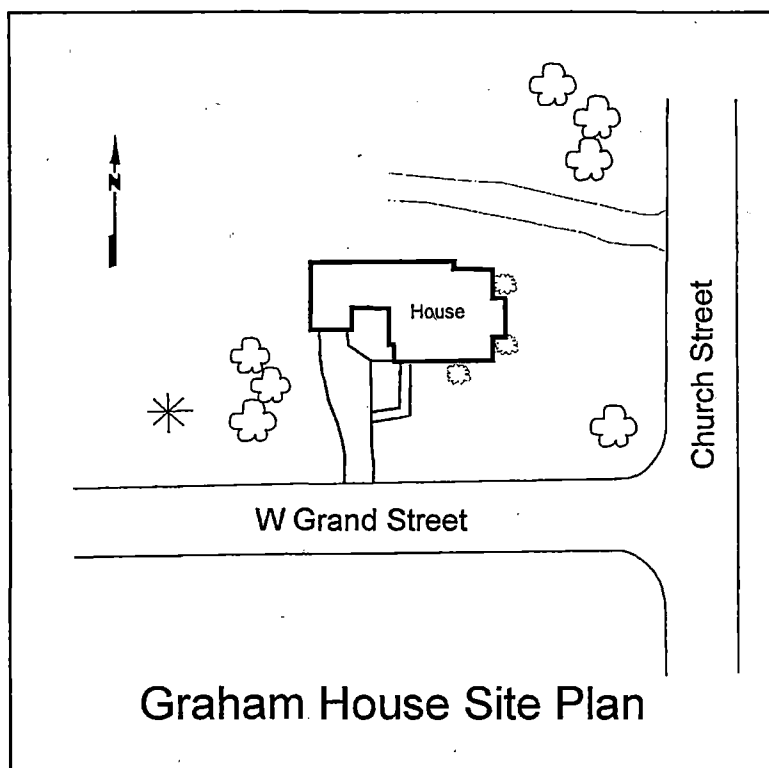


FIGURE 1: Site Plan of the Thomas A. Graham House

B. THE HOUSE

1. Exterior

The Thomas A. Graham House is a one-and-one-half-story brick single-family residence, part of which was evidently constructed before 1875. The foundation of the house is stone, the walls are brick, and there is a modern asphalt-shingle roof. The front facade is composed of the centered porch, with decorative Queen Anne elements, balanced fenestration of one-over-one-light double-hung windows, and a center gable on the side-gabled roof. The windows have stone sills and either

stone lintels or slightly arched brick lintels. The south elevation, which faces West Grand Street, has a bay window on the south end and a side porch, with an entrance leading from the porch to the dining room. The side porch is quite plain compared to the porch at the front of the house. The north elevation is composed of two gables and contains asymmetrical windows. The west elevation has small half-windows under the roof slope, and contains the breezeway and garage.

2. Interior

The front entrance of the house opens into the living room, with the formal parlor, originally separated by double doors (probably French doors) to the right. A bay window is on the left, at the south end of the living room; the double opening from the living room into the dining room is on the west wall. The parlor woodwork is bull's eye block, and the mortises from what were probably French doors remain in the door surround into the living room. The glass in the windows on the first floor is the original wavy glass of the nineteenth century. An entrance from the side porch into the living room has been bricked over.

The dining room is in the southwest corner of the house. The door from the side porch opens into the room, and the stairs to the second floor and basement lead from the room. The doorway leading from the dining room into the kitchen has been widened. The kitchen cabinets and fixtures had been removed before this survey of the house took place. The bathroom opens into a hall between the dining room and the parlor.

The stairs to the second floor, which are on the east wall of the dining room, lead straight to the upstairs hall. Two bedrooms are situated on the east side of the house; the entrance into the southern bedroom is through the northern room. Two more bedrooms open off the upstairs hall to the west. The bedroom walls on both sides of the house slope to conform to the gables.

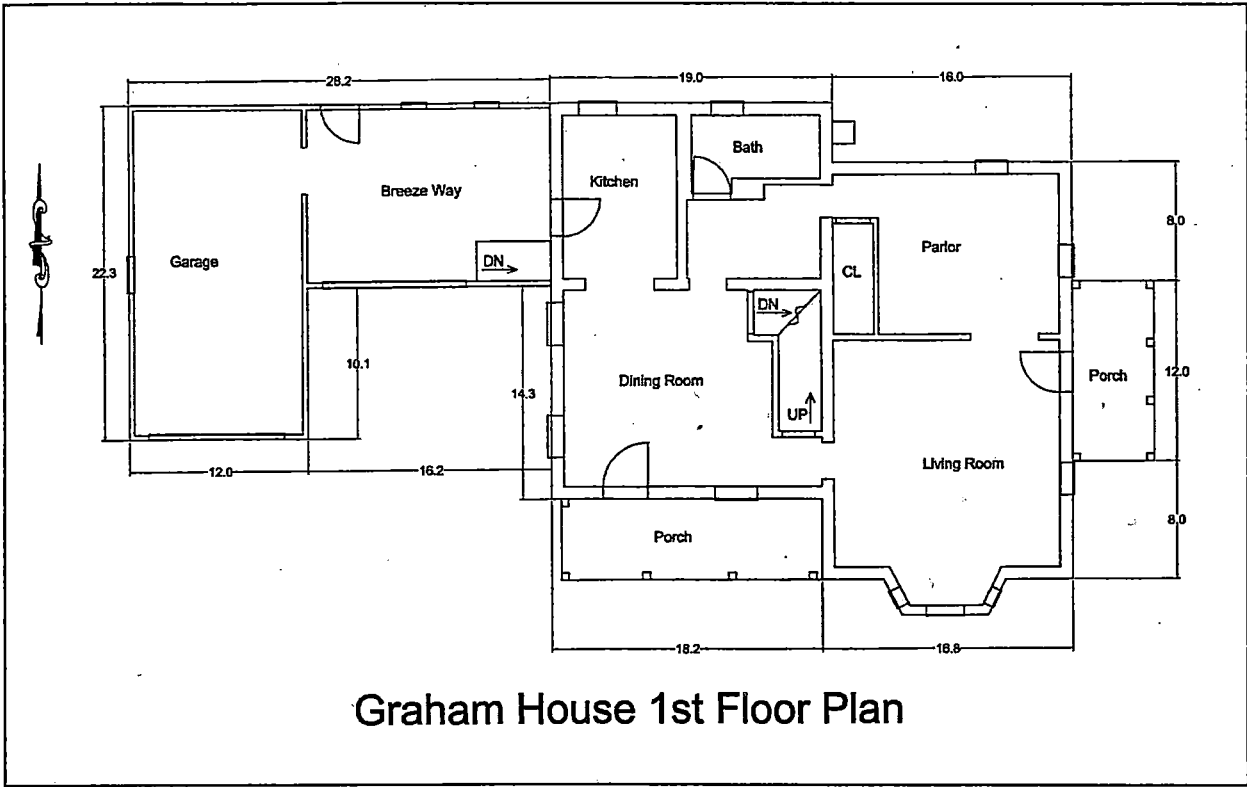


FIGURE 2: Floor Plan of the First Floor

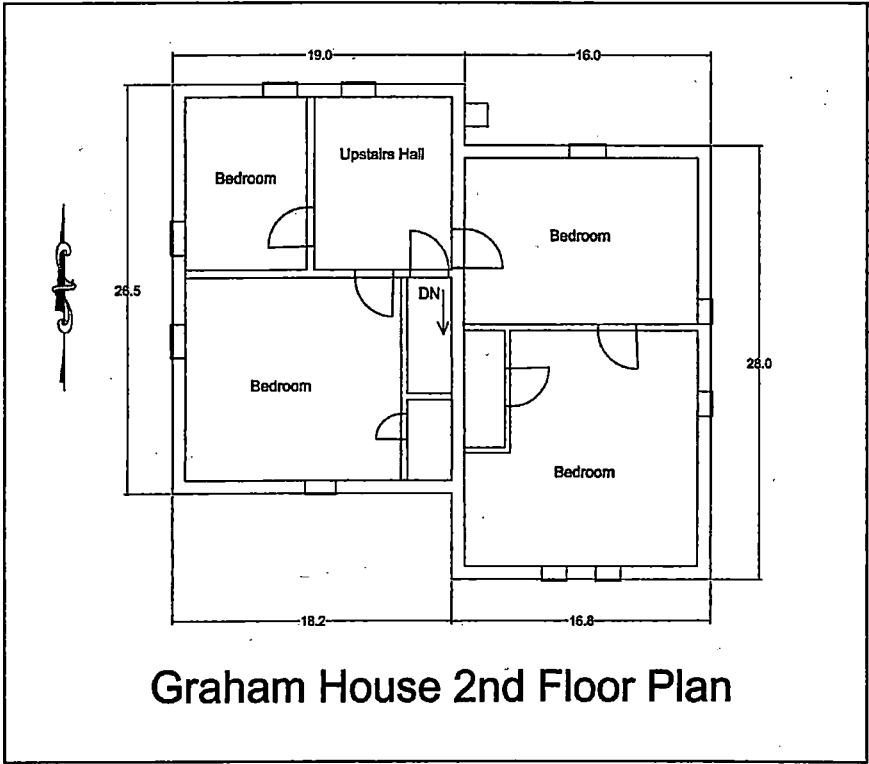


FIGURE 3: Floor Plan of the Second Floor

III. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

A. TAMA COUNTY

Tama County lies within the region ceded by the Sac and Fox peoples to the United States in 1842. Settlement in the county, which began in 1849, was at first intermittent and then surged for a few years around 1852. Tama County was officially established in 1853. Toledo, the county seat, was laid out in the same year. In 1860, there were 5,285 settlers in the county.

Among the first generation of settlers in Tama County were Anglo-Americans and people of Germanic heritage, the latter including both foreign-born and American-born. Settlers from most of the New England and Middle Atlantic states and the states bordering Iowa contributed to the influx into the county, with people from Ohio, Illinois, New York, and Pennsylvania predominating. By 1870, Bohemian immigrants were a noticeable presence in Tama County. By 1870, the Tama County population had reached 16,131.

In 1860, there were 11,000 acres of improved land in the county. Corn and wheat were important commodities, and hogs were the most numerous type of livestock. There were also beef and dairy farms in the region. Soon after settlement, farmers founded societies for the promotion of agricultural improvement. The principal activity of these progressive associations appears to have been the management of annual agricultural fairs. In Tama County, a group of citizens first organized such fairs as early as 1856; the Tama County Agricultural Society was formally established in 1866.

Toledo at this time was a small town of 800 inhabitants. Since no railroads had located near the town, there were no industrial plants. However, the requisite business establishments were present: three dry-goods stores, five grocery stores, two hotels, one drugstore, one jewelry store, one clothing store, two photograph galleries, two tailor shops, two millinery shops, one barbershop, two carriage shops, two harness shops, three blacksmiths, two cabinet shops, one cooper, one agricultural warehouse, one printer, and four attorneys and five doctors. Religious and educational institutions were also present in the town.

The decade between 1860 and 1870 saw a tremendous expansion in settlement and agricultural land use in Tama County. Tama residents were proprietors of 168,000 improved and 100,000 unimproved acres, a large increase from the respective figures of 11,000 and 6,000 in 1860. Toledo continued to grow, achieving a population of 2,200 in 1890. This number had declined to 1,650 by 1920, however, partly because of the growth of the city of Tama, which was a major railroad stop. The southern part of Toledo was subdivided in the late 1800s, with the apparent intention of creating a suburban residential district between the two towns, but the area was not extensively built up until after World War II. The route that became the Lincoln Highway ran through both Tama and Toledo. The route had begun as a series of roads. In 1913 it was selected and designated the Lincoln Highway by an association of business people and individuals promoting long-distance automobile travel. Some of the sections were still simple dirt roads. When the federal highway system was created in 1926, the Lincoln Highway became US Route 30 (Gade and Pendleton 1995:39-40).

B. THOMAS A. GRAHAM HOUSE HISTORY

Thomas A. Graham, born in New Jersey, came to Tama County in 1853 or 1854, and originally settled in Section 36 of York Township (Tama County Genealogical Library). In 1868 he purchased the S ½ of the NW ¼ of the SE ¼ of Section 22, near Toledo. He also owned the S ½ of the SE ¼ of the same section. He was a carpenter, and built the first courthouse constructed in the county. He was also a farmer, and a founding member of the Tama County Agricultural Society. At the 1858 agricultural fair, Graham won a premium for best Poland poultry and best bushel of Irish potatoes. He was described as being “a kind man at heart, with a rather inquiring turn of mind” (Union Publishing Company 1883:401). Besides being a carpenter and farmer, Graham was active in local politics. He was appointed postmaster in 1861 and held the post for nine years. He was also a county judge for three terms. In 1872 he helped found the Old Settlers’ Society, for which he served as secretary.

In 1876 Thomas Graham deeded 20 acres of his 100-acre property to his daughter-in-law, Emma Thomas. It was at about the same time that the house under discussion was most likely built on this parcel. The 1875 plat shows the house present on the land owned by T.A. Graham, with another house on the west side of the property, which was probably also Thomas Graham's house. Graham died in 1882. His wife, Lucy, held ownership of the remaining 80 acres of the property until her death in 1892. In that year the law firm of Struble and Stiger, which also dealt in real estate, began purchasing land in the area, including the 80 acres owned by Lucy Graham. The land was platted and became Summit Addition in 1894. The Graham House was on Block 1, Lot 10. Through the years it has had various owners, none of whom made major interior changes, and apart from the addition of the garage and breezeway, the exterior has been left in its original state.

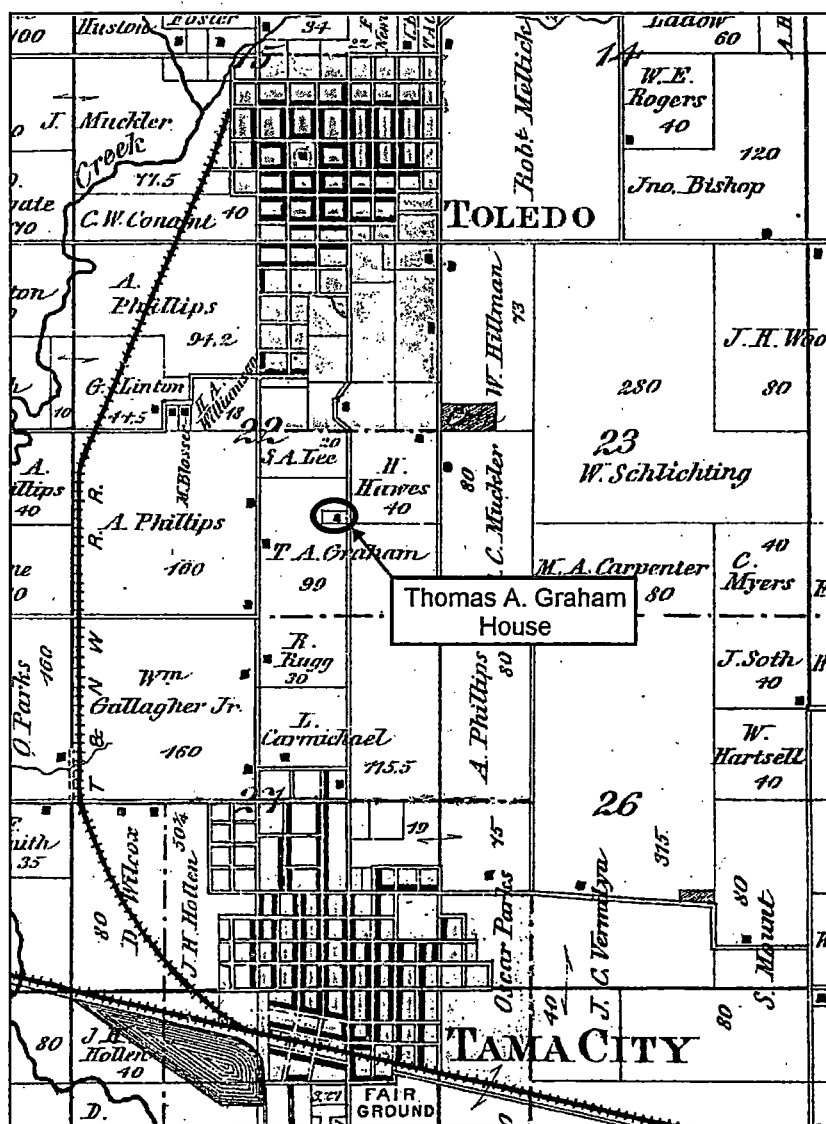


FIGURE 4: Tama County Plat Map, 1875

SOURCE: Harrison and Warner 1875

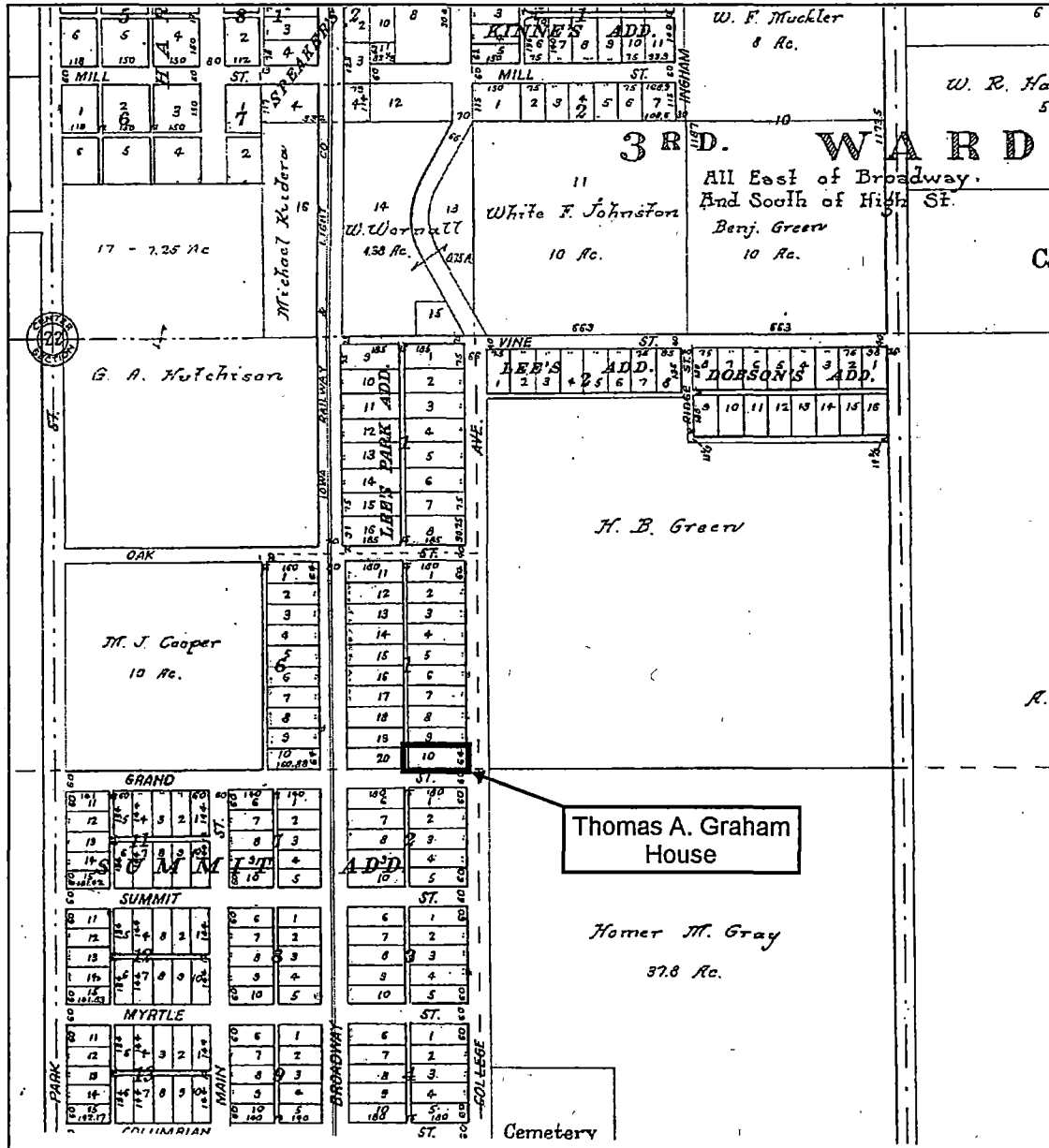


FIGURE 5: Tama County Plat Map, 1916

SOURCE: Anderson Publishing Company 1916

IV. CONSTRUCTION HISTORY

The present version of the Thomas A. Graham House was probably constructed around 1875. It is not known if any outbuildings were associated with the house, but any that were present would have been removed when the Summit Addition was platted. It is also possible that the hipped-roof west section of the house was an addition built to enlarge an earlier structure, which would have been an I-house with a central gable. The floor in the front section of the second story of the house is about a foot higher than the floor in the rest of the second story, which is an indication of an addition. The front porch, with its Queen Anne stylistic features, would have been built at the same time as the hipped-roof addition.

The formal front door, and the parlor, which could be closed off from the rest of the house by French doors, were prominent features of mid-nineteenth-century houses. According to Sally McMurry's (1997) study of nineteenth-century farmhouses, the parlor was gradually eliminated toward the end of the century as people came to reject the empty formality of the room. It is likely that the two side entrances on the Graham House, opening into the dining room and the living room, were used as the everyday entrances. The interior doors that separated the parlor from the living room were removed at some time.

There have been some other changes to the interior of the house: the entry from the dining room into the kitchen was widened, the kitchen itself was modernized, and the kitchen window was replaced. At some time the door into the living room from the side porch was bricked off. The breezeway, which has a garage door opening to the west, probably sheltered the car before the later, larger garage was added. The basement has also been modernized: the interior walls are now concrete block and the floor is covered with modern concrete. Even with all these changes, however, the house retains its basic integrity.

V. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The I-house with a hipped-roof addition is not an acknowledged architectural type, but examples are found in other parts of Iowa, notably along Highway 1 south of Iowa City, in Johnson and Washington counties. The I-house was a common early type of farmhouse, and when farmers grew more prosperous in the later decades of the nineteenth century, construction of an addition in the Queen Anne style of the period gave their houses elegance. Brick farmhouses were also constructed in the northeastern part of the state, and were often a symbol of a prosperous, progressive farm.

The Thomas A. Graham House could have been constructed when Thomas Graham first settled on the land, with an addition built when he deeded the land to his children, or as their family grew. The house has the interior features common to mid-nineteenth-century houses, namely the formal parlor, and a back door, which would have faced the farmstead. The bay window, the stone sills and lintels, and the multitude of gables give the house the stately air associated with prosperity.

As an intact example of a late nineteenth-century residence, the Thomas A. Graham House adds to the understanding of the vernacular farmhouse. Its plan illustrates the popular trends of the time, with the formal but little-used front rooms, and the more casual family rooms oriented toward the farmstead. It is likely that the house was constructed in two stages, an indication of the growth and prosperity of the Graham family during their period of occupancy.

VI. REFERENCES CITED

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Tama County Genealogical Library

Obituary Clippings Notebook. On file, Tama County Historical Museum Genealogical Library, Toledo, Iowa.

Union Publishing Company

1883 *History of Tama County, Iowa*. Union Publishing Company, Springfield, Illinois.

APPENDIX

Black and White Views

Photograph Catalog Field Sheet

Contact Print Sheet

Kodachrome 64 Slides Field Sheet

HADB Form

All original photodocumentation materials associated with this study, including the original 35-mm negatives and Kodachrome-64 slides, are on file at the State Historical Society of Iowa, Des Moines.



Graham House, Exterior View, Facing Northwest



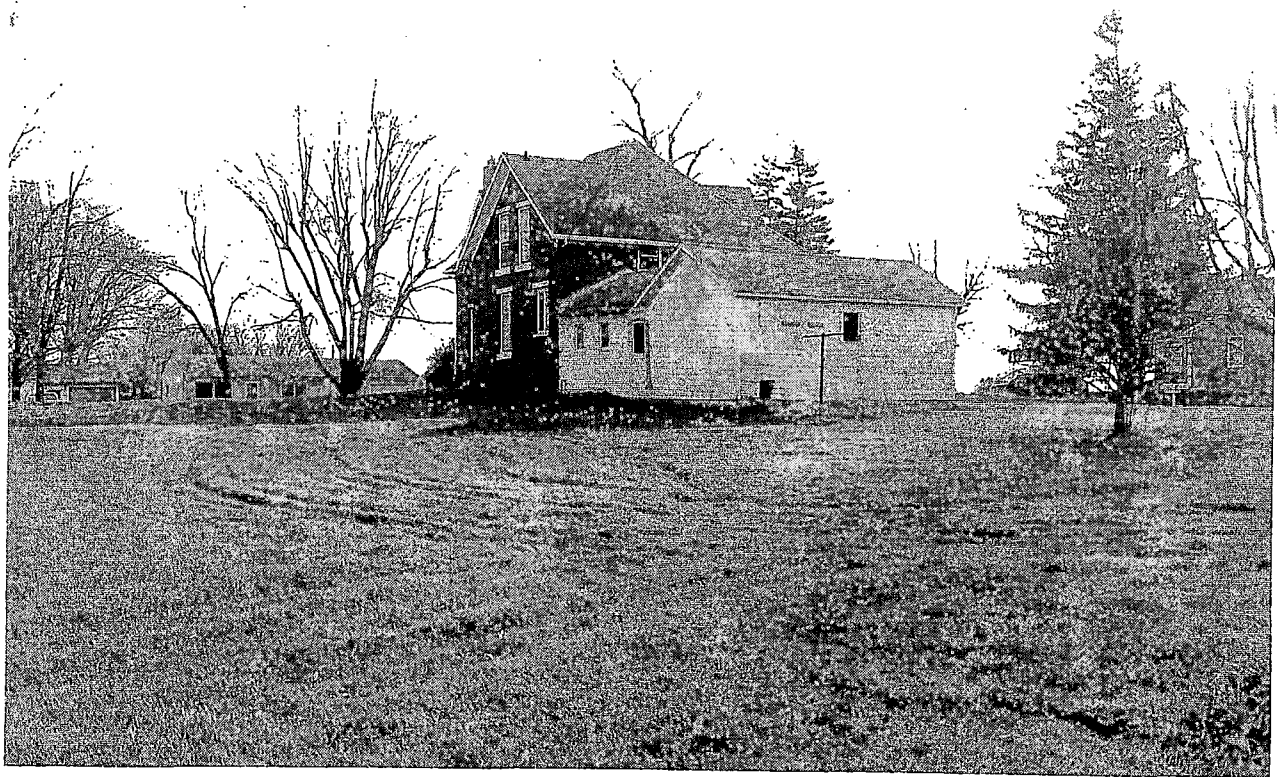
Graham House, Exterior View, Facing Southwest



Graham House, Landscape View, Facing North/Northwest



Graham House, Exterior View, Facing Northeast



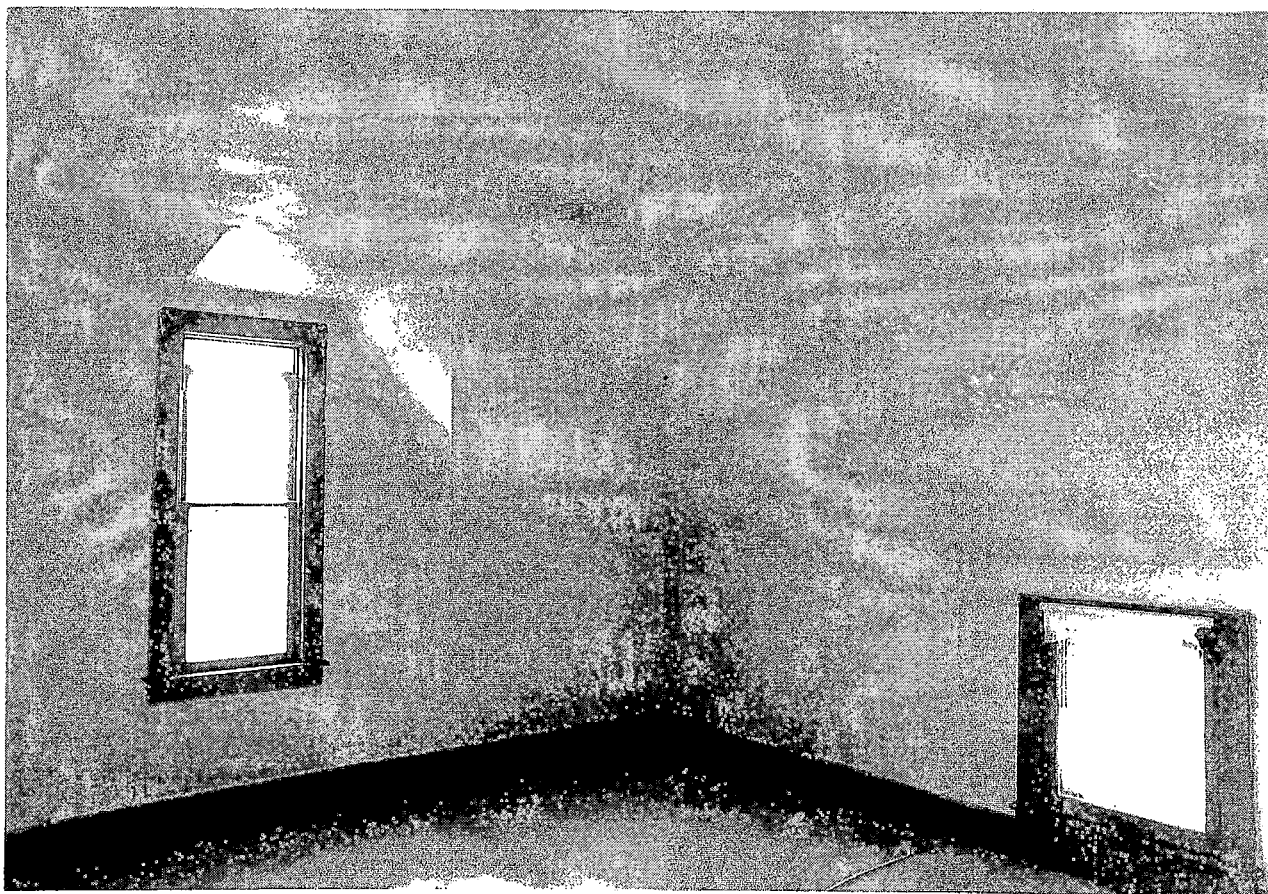
Graham House, Landscape View, Facing Southeast



Graham House, South Elevation, Facing West/Northwest



Graham House, Front Facade, Facing Southwest



Graham House Interior, Bedroom, Facing Southwest



Graham House Interior, Parlor, Facing Southeast

State Historical Society of Iowa
Community Programs Bureau
600 East Locust
Des Moines, IA 50319
(January 15, 1997)

PHOTO & SLIDE CATALOG SHEET

BLACK & WHITE PHOTO ROLL NO: 1

COLOR SLIDE SHEET NO:

Date Entered Into SHPO System:

Photographer	Film Type	Negative Size
Bruce A. Harms; Louis Berger Group, Inc.	Tmax 100	35mm

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3	"	Graham House	Exterior View	SW	"
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6	"	Graham House	Landscape View	N/NW	"
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11	"	"	"		"
12	"	Graham House	Landscape View	SE	"
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14	"	"	"		"
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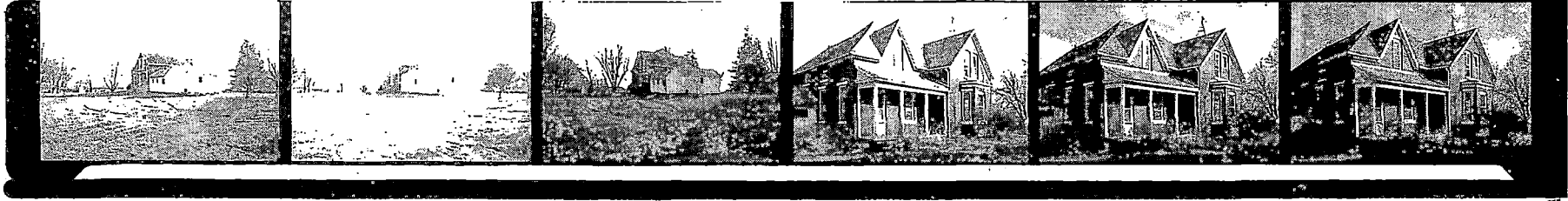
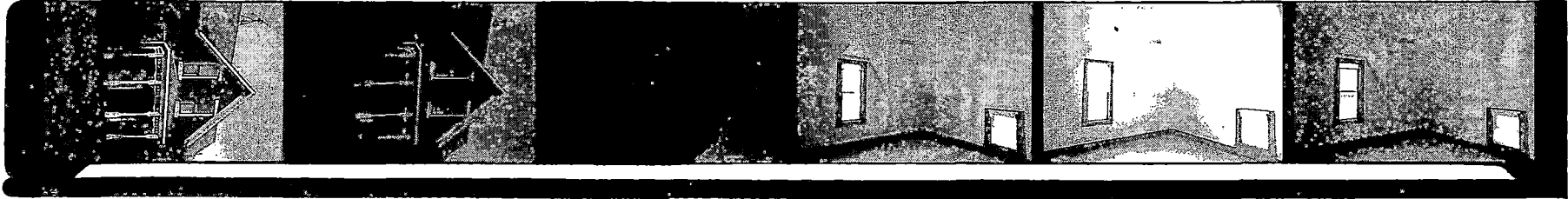
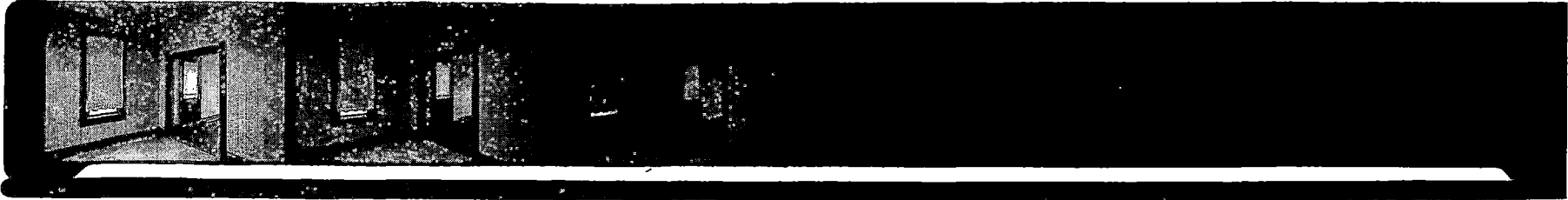
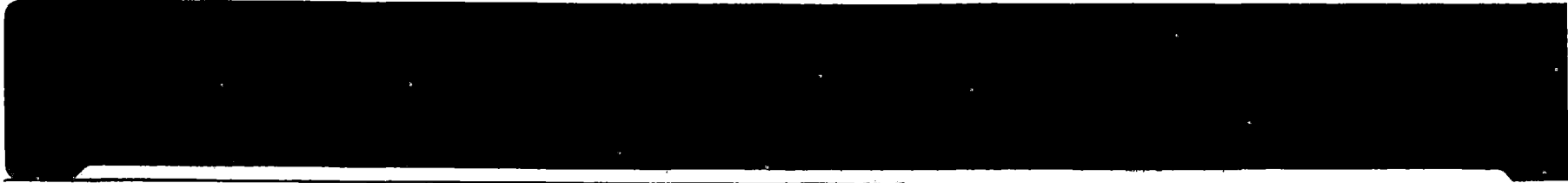
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SUBJECT

DATE

TECHNICAL DATA



State Historical Society of Iowa

Community Programs Bureau

600 East Locust

Des Moines, IA 50319

(January 15, 1997)

PHOTO & SLIDE CATALOG SHEET

BLACK & WHITE PHOTO ROLL NO:

COLOR SLIDE SHEET NO: 1

Date Entered Into SHPO System:

Photographer	Film Type	Negative Size
Bruce A. Harms; Louis Berger Group, Inc.	Kodachrome 64	35mm

FRAME NUMBER	DATE TAKEN	SITE NAME AND LOCATIONAL INFORMATION	BUILDING TYPE, AGE AND OTHER NOTABLE FEATURES	FACING WHERE	SITE NUMBER
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3	"	Graham House	Landscape View	N/NW	"
4	"	Graham House	Exterior View	NE	"
5	"	Graham House	Landscape View	SE	"
6	"	Graham House	South Elevation	NE	"
7	"	Graham House	Front Façade	W/NW	"
8	"	Graham House	Interior, Bedroom	SW	"
9	"	Graham House	Interior, Parlor	SE	"
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Historical Architectural Data Base

Data Entry Form for Studies and Reports

Doc. No.: 86-008

Source of Study: ☐ Certified Local Government Project ☒ Section 106 Review & Compliance Project
☐ Historical Resource Development Program Project ☐ Other

Project Reference #: _____

Authors/Editor/Compiler/Originator:

Peggy Beedle

Author Role: ☒ Consultant ☐ Private Researcher/Writer ☐ Teacher ☐ Student,
☐ Project employee/volunteer ☐ Site Administrator ☐ Other: _____

Title of Work:

Iowa Historic Property Study of the Thomas A. Graham House

Year Issued: 2002

Type of Work Performed:

(check one only)

Survey:

- ☐ Windshield survey minimum level documentation
- ☐ Reconnaissance survey to make recommendations for intensive survey(s).
- ☐ Intensive survey
- ☐ Mixed intensive and reconnaissance survey

Plan:

- ☐ Planning for Preservation/Survey
- ☐ Community Preservation Plan

Property Study:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Iowa Historic Property Documentation Study | <input type="checkbox"/> Historic Structure Report |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic American Building Survey (HABS) | <input type="checkbox"/> Feasibility/Re-use Study |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) | <input type="checkbox"/> Architectural/Engineering Plans and Specs. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Management or Master Plan | |

National Register:

- ☐ Multiple Property Documentation Form

Other (e.g., private research, school project, video): _____

Kind of Work Produced:

(fill in one section only: Report or Monograph or Chapter, etc.)

Report: Published/produced by: The Louis Berger Group, Inc.Place issued: Marion, IowaClient: Iowa Department of Transportation

If applicable, include:

Series Title: _____

Volume #: _____ Report #: _____

Monograph: Publisher Name: _____

Place: _____

Chapter: In: _____ First pg. #: _____ Last pg. #: _____

Journal: Name: _____ Vol. _____ No. _____ Pages: _____ to _____

Thesis: Degree (check one): ☐ Ph.D. ☐ LL.D. ☐ M.A. ☐ M.S. ☐ B.A. ☐ B.S.

Name of College/University: _____

Paper: Meeting: _____

Place: _____

Other: _____

Geographic Scope of Study:☒ City/town ☐ Township(s) ☐ County ☐ Region of Iowa ☐ Statewide ☐ Other: _____State: IA _____County: Tama _____Town: Toledo _____

Township: _____

Range: _____

Time Focus: (check any decades that receive particular attention)☐ before 1830 ☐ 1830s ☐ 1840s ☐ 1850s ☐ 1860s ☒ 1870s ☒ 1880s ☒ 1890s☐ 1900s ☐ 1910s ☐ 1920s ☐ 1930s ☐ 1940s ☐ 1950s ☐ 1960s ☐ 1970s ☐ 1980/later**Keyword:** (Index of any subjects, topics, or people given prominent attention in the report)Graham, Thomas A. _____farmhouse _____
