

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**COPY**

### National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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 Dahlongega School #1  
other names/site number Dahlongega School

#### 2. Location

street & number Two miles NE of Ottumwa on County Road H25  not for publication  
city or town Ottumwa  vicinity  
state Iowa code IA county Wapello code 179 zip code 52501

#### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Patricia Quirk 7-10-00  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
**STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA**  
State of 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:	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register. <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register. <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register.	_____	_____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register.	_____	_____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (explain): _____	_____	_____

Dahlongega School  
Name of Property

Wapello County, IA  
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	
1	0	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	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)

EDUCATION/School

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

VACANT/NOT IN USE

**7. Description**

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

LATE 19th & EARLY 20th C AMERICAN/ Craftsman

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls WOOD/Weatherboard

roof Asphalt

other \_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

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

Dahlonega School  
Name of Property

Wapello County, IA  
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.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION

ARCHITECTURE

**Period of Significance**

1921-1950

**Significant Dates**

1921

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

KERNS, GEORGE M. (Arch) \_\_\_\_\_

QUINN, JOHN F. (Bldr) \_\_\_\_\_

**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 (38 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

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

Dahlonge School  
Name of Property

Wapello County, IA  
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre

UTM References  
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1 5	5 5 2 9 2 0	4 5 4 5 2 2 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2			

3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4			

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

organization \_\_\_\_\_ date April 2000

street & number 167 West Alta Vista telephone (515) 682-2743

city or town Ottumwa state IA zip code 52501-1437

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed 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 Dahlonge Township Trustees (c/o Richard Black, Chr.)

street & number 8550 Bladensburg Road telephone (515) 937-5305

city or town Ottumwa state IA zip code 52501

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

DAHLONEGA SCHOOL  
WAPELLO COUNTY, IA

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NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION:

The Dahlonega School (1921) is a one room rural school. Facing south, it is a single story wood frame building located near the center of the south half of the Dahlonega Public Square, approximately 50' north of the right of way. Although it was originally ringed by stately elm trees, these were lost to Dutch Elm Disease in the late 1960s and today the school stands in isolation in the Square. The unincorporated hamlet of Dahlonega is approximately 2 miles northeast of the city of Ottumwa and contains only the school plus nine dwellings with associated outbuildings.

The gable roof building is rectangular in shape measuring approximately 28' x 38' plus a 9' x 11' vestibule on the façade (south elevation). The main entrance is on the gable end, with a rear door located on the north end of the east elevation. A single chimney is located at the northern end of the roof. The building rests on a high (3') foundation of rusticated concrete block. Above the foundation is a 10" drip molding, with 3" clapboard covering the walls above. Simple corner boards complete the exterior. Five diagonal eave braces are found on each gable end of the main block, with three braces on the vestibule. The relatively low pitch of the roof and the simplicity of the eave braces are elements of the Craftsman style that was so popular for residential designs of the period. This Craftsman influence is continued in the banding of the five windows on the east elevation. Two individual windows are located on the south elevation flanking the entrance, and two are found on the north. Each of these windows is 40" wide and features nine over nine lights in double hung sash. There are no windows on the west elevation.

The main entry is a single door with transom located in the vestibule. A flagpole stands above the southwest corner of the vestibule. Above this vestibule is a rectangular panel in the gable end which originally contained the name of the school. A belfry, complete with bell, is located directly above the name panel. Entry is at ground level, with a flight of steps rising up to the school room level, and another set leading down into the basement. This full basement is a somewhat unusual feature in one room schools, as most were built directly at ground level. Light and ventilation for the basement were provided by two windows on each elevation except for the east where there is only one.

On the interior, the steps leading up from the entrance open into an east/west hallway with cloak rooms on each end. The hallway opens into the school room on the far east and west ends. This school room features blackboards along the west and north walls, with the band of windows on the east wall. The blackboards and a number of school desks are still in place. These desks are not from the 1920s, but are of 1950s vintage. Woodwork throughout is very simple in design. It appears that few changes have been made to the interior over the years. Due to the coverings on all windows, and the fact that the electricity has been turned off, it was impossible to get a good photograph of the interior.

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**DAHLONEGA SCHOOL  
WAPELLO COUNTY, IA**

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The basement is one large room with a second room located in the northeast corner. The walls of this room are identical to the foundation walls and it appears that this room was used for coal storage (window on north wall opens directly into this room). In addition to housing the heating system the basement was used for storage purposes.

There is no evidence of a playground or playground equipment, but the photographs from the late 1960s show a basketball hoop and what may have been a baseball backstop. A square concrete platform is located approximately 35' south-southeast of the front door. This appears to have been constructed for the water pump, but no pump exists today.

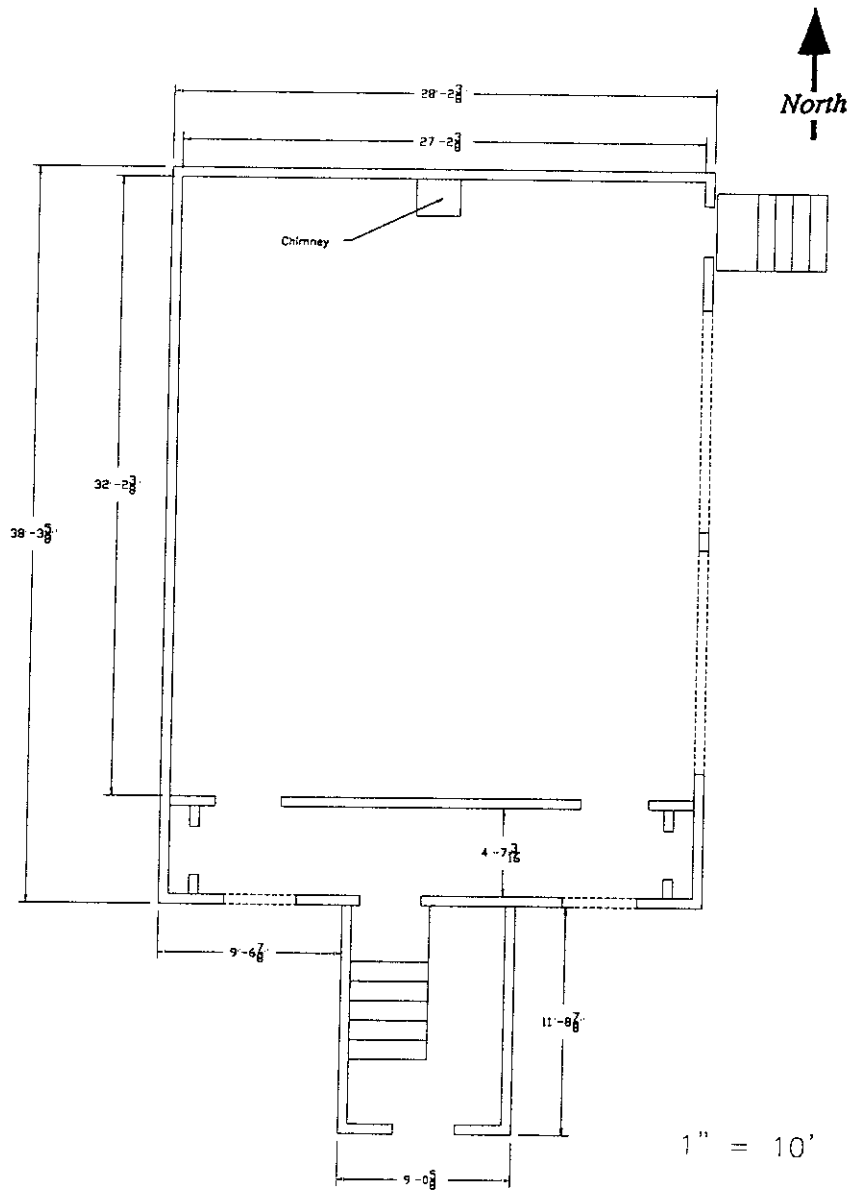
Although no classes have been held in this building since the 1958-59 school year, the building continued to be used as the township polling place through the election of 1986. It has been vacant since that time. There is interest on the part of the Wapello County Board of Supervisors and Dahlonega Township Trustees in the preservation and restoration of this building for use as a tourist center for the Des Moines/Burlington Highway Corridor.

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WAPELLO COUNTY, IA



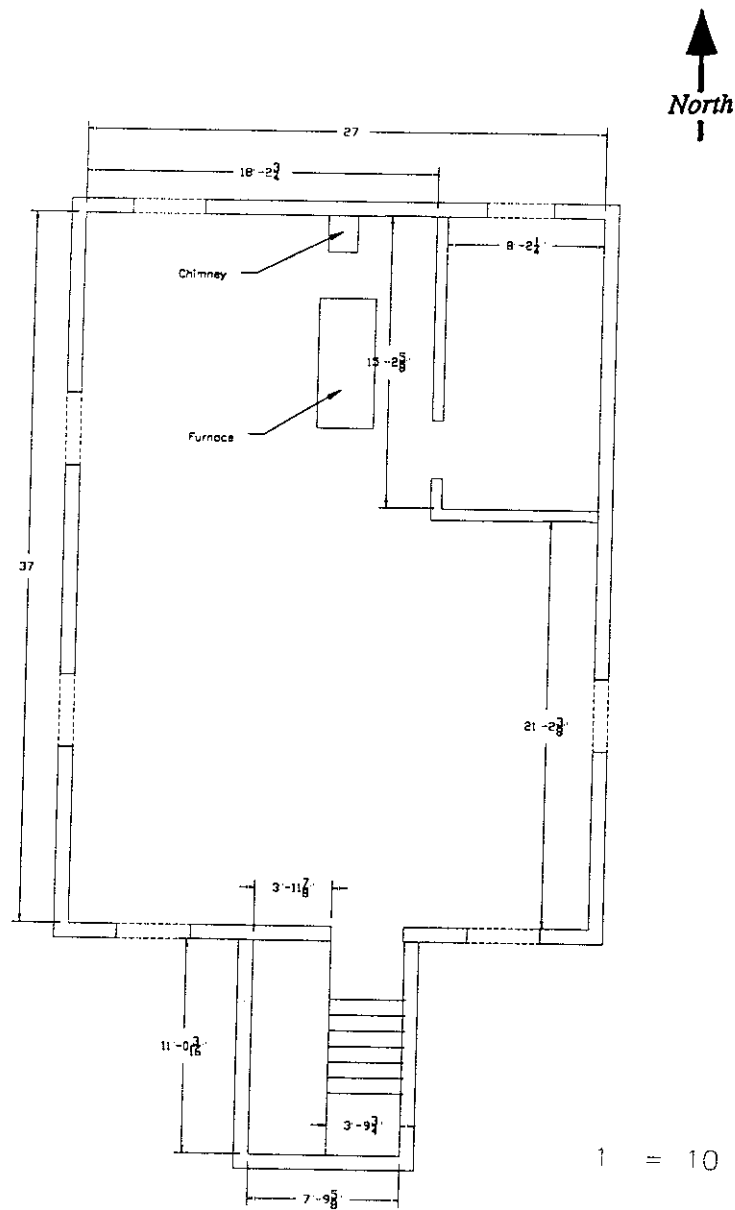
First Floor Plan, Dahlongega School  
(Courtesy of Wapello County Engineer's Office)

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Basement Plan, Dahlonga School  
(Courtesy of Wapello County Engineer's Office)

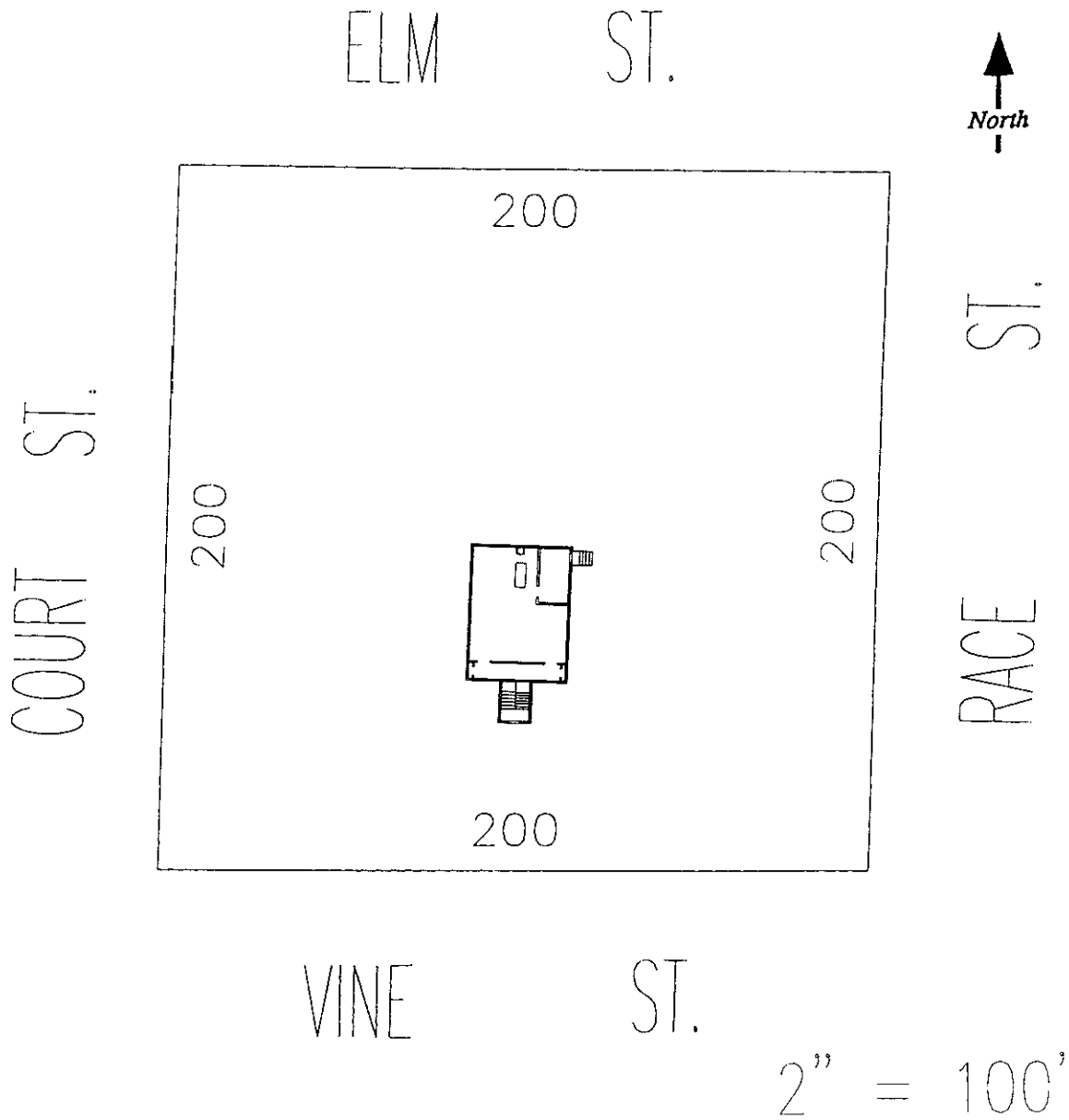


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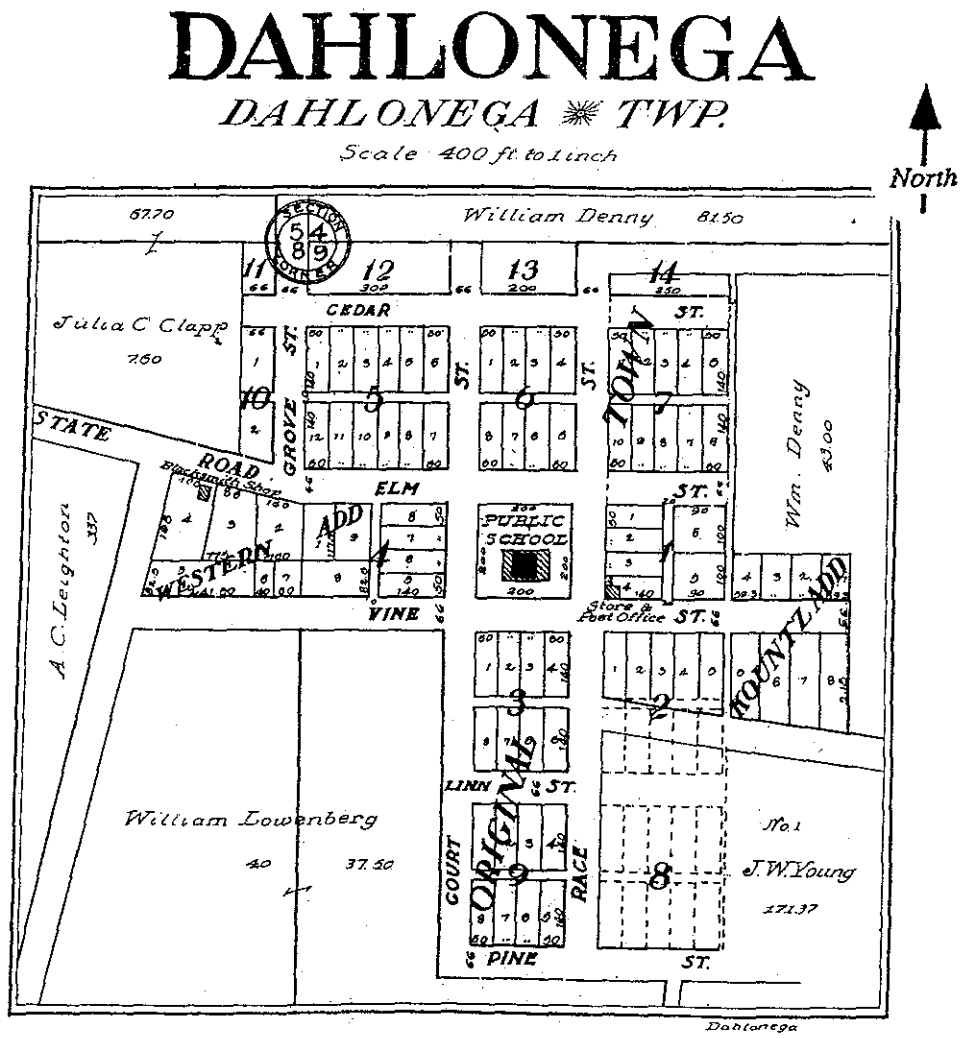
Site Plan of Dahlongega School  
(Courtesy of Wapello County Engineer's Office)

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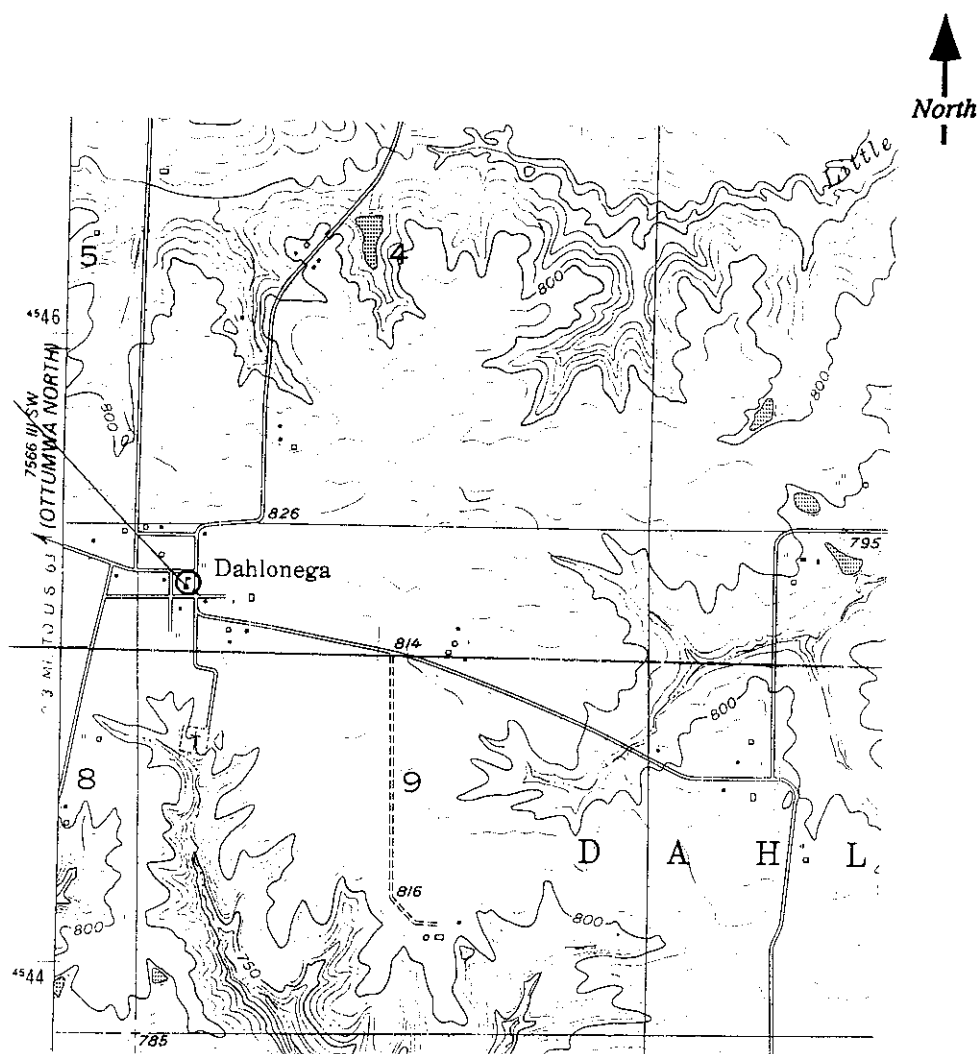
1908 Plat Map of Dahlonga  
Small black square indicates location of present school building  
(Standard Atlas of Wapello County, Iowa, George A. Ogle Co.)

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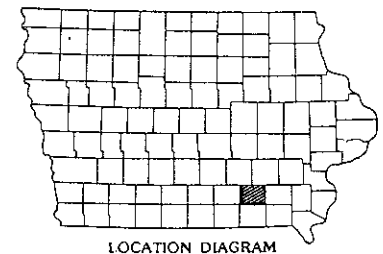
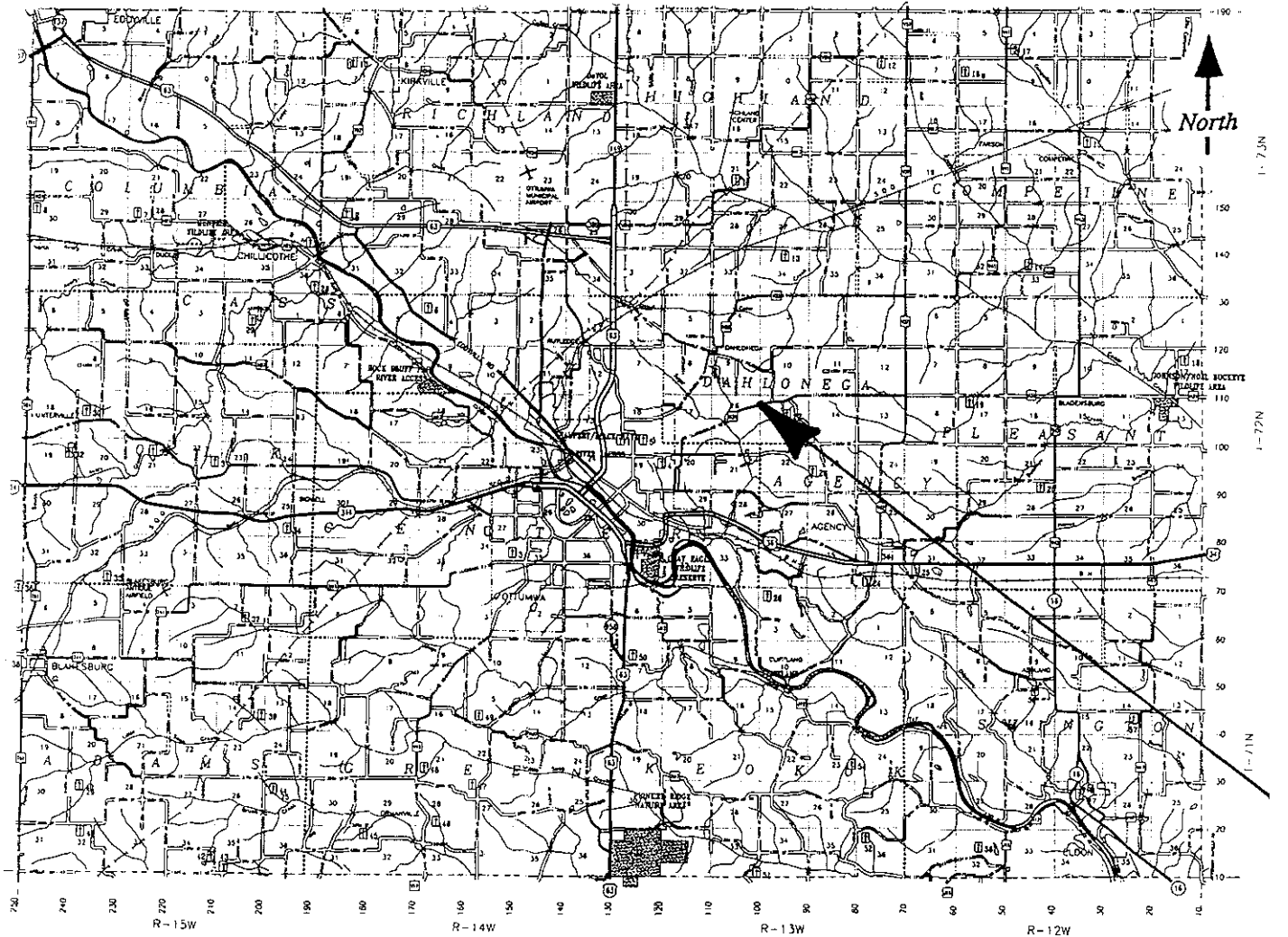
U.S.G.S Map of Dahlonega (revised 1976)  
Location of school is circled

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**DAHLONEGA SCHOOL  
WAPELLO COUNTY, IA**



IDOT Map of Wapello County (revised 1998)  
Location of Dahlongega indicated by arrow

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DAHLONEGA SCHOOL  
WAPELLO COUNTY, IA

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

The Dahlongega School from 1921 is locally significant under Criterion A as an important unaltered example of rural schools in Iowa from the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and is significant under Criterion C as an example of the popular Craftsman style used for institutional purposes, designed by Ottumwa architect George M. Kerns.

The town of Dahlongega was founded in 1843, the year the New Purchase was opened for settlement. The original plat contained 10 blocks, each measuring 200' square, with the central block allocated for the Public Square. Since the town was located on the stage route between Agency and Eddyville, the founders originally believed it would be designated as the county seat. However, the neighboring town of Louisville (now Ottumwa) which was located 4 miles to the southwest on the banks of the Des Moines River, and nearer the geographic center of the county, was named the county seat in 1844. This decision had a profound impact on Dahlongega. The town was never incorporated, and even though it had a population of about 300 in 1856, it steadily declined to a population around 200 in 1875, and by 1914 it was described as "...it is now but a hamlet, in the midst of a rich agricultural region." (Waterman, Vol 1, p 316) In the 1860s the town boasted three stores, one tavern, a comfortable school house, a blacksmith shop, a portable saw mill, two packing houses for beef and pork, a public hall, a good hotel, and an extensive pottery.

The first school in Dahlongega was a log building that was torn down in 1853. This was followed by a brick school, that apparently was used for just a few years and then was sold first to a church society, and then to local farmers for use as a meeting hall. No date has been determined for the construction of the third school building, a two story brick structure located in the Public Square. (Waterman, Vol I, p 316) That brick school was replaced in 1921 with the wood frame building that is the subject of this nomination. The evolution of the Dahlongega school buildings parallels the evolution of education in Iowa.

As new settlers came into Iowa in the 1830s, '40s and '50s often one of their first acts was to set up a school for their children. In many communities these were held in private homes and/or churches. There was no organization to the early school system, and the teachers were often well-intentioned parents or older siblings.

Twelve years after Iowa achieved statehood a bill was introduced into the Iowa Legislature by Josiah B. Grinnell (chairman of the Standing Committee on Schools). Known as the "Public Education for the State of Iowa" bill, this 1858 Legislative Act established a free public school system for the state of Iowa. The civil township was selected as the area for a school district, and incorporated towns of 1,000 or more people became independent districts. These free schools were for the education of students aged 5 to 25 and basically provided elementary education through grade 8. Higher education (i.e. high schools) was left up to the incorporated communities with the anticipation that there would be one in each of the 99 counties. Students in the rural

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areas could attend these centralized high schools if they passed qualifying examinations and if they were willing to provide their own transportation. The 1858 act created the position of County Superintendent of Schools, as well as district (township) boards. The presidents of the district boards and the County Superintendent made up the County Board of Education. This board provided oversight of the high school(s). Hiring of teachers and selection of curriculum was left in local hands.

The 1878 History of Wapello County, Iowa (p 400) noted that there were 107 school districts in the county. Evidently not all of these had a separate building, because these were divided into 85 ungraded (rural) schools and 10 graded, for a total of 95. The book also listed the building material of each: 85 wood frame; 13 brick (one of which was in Dahlongega); 1 stone; and 1 log, for a total of 100.

Wapello County appears to have been one of the first (1887) to have standards for the issuance of an 8<sup>th</sup> grade diploma and to hold an observance of graduation from the rural schools. (Aurner, Vol I, p 379) However, by the late 1880s concern was being expressed about the quality of education that Iowa students (especially those in rural areas) were receiving. In 1888 State Superintendent of Public Instruction Henry Sabin sounded the alarm for the safety of the rural school.....what he considered to be the most important branch of the educational system. He wanted equality of rural students with "city" students. He stressed that more attention need be given to physical surroundings, and to sanitary and hygenic conditions, not only in rural schools, but in the great majority of towns as well. (Ibid., pp118-20) There had been a great deal of discussion at both the state and local level over the years about these same problems. During Sabin's tenure a concerted effort was made to address these concerns. In 1890 the Superintendent of Public Instruction issued, "in response to urgent solicitations from many parts of the state," the "handbook" for rural schools. The first handbook contained a summary of school law, a course of study for rural schools, and an outline of civil government. (By the 1906 edition, only the recommended course of study was included in the handbook.) In the first year following its issue, 95 of 99 counties reported making some changes according to its specified plans. Although the state could not compel adoption of the plans, it could encourage it. (Ibid., pp 129-30)

By 1895 the recommended course of study appears to have been pretty much adopted state-wide and "it was becoming more and more common for pupils who had completed courses in the rural schools to be admitted without examination to the high schools, where they were abundantly able to accomplish as much as those who had come up through the graded system of a single institution." (Ibid., p 131)

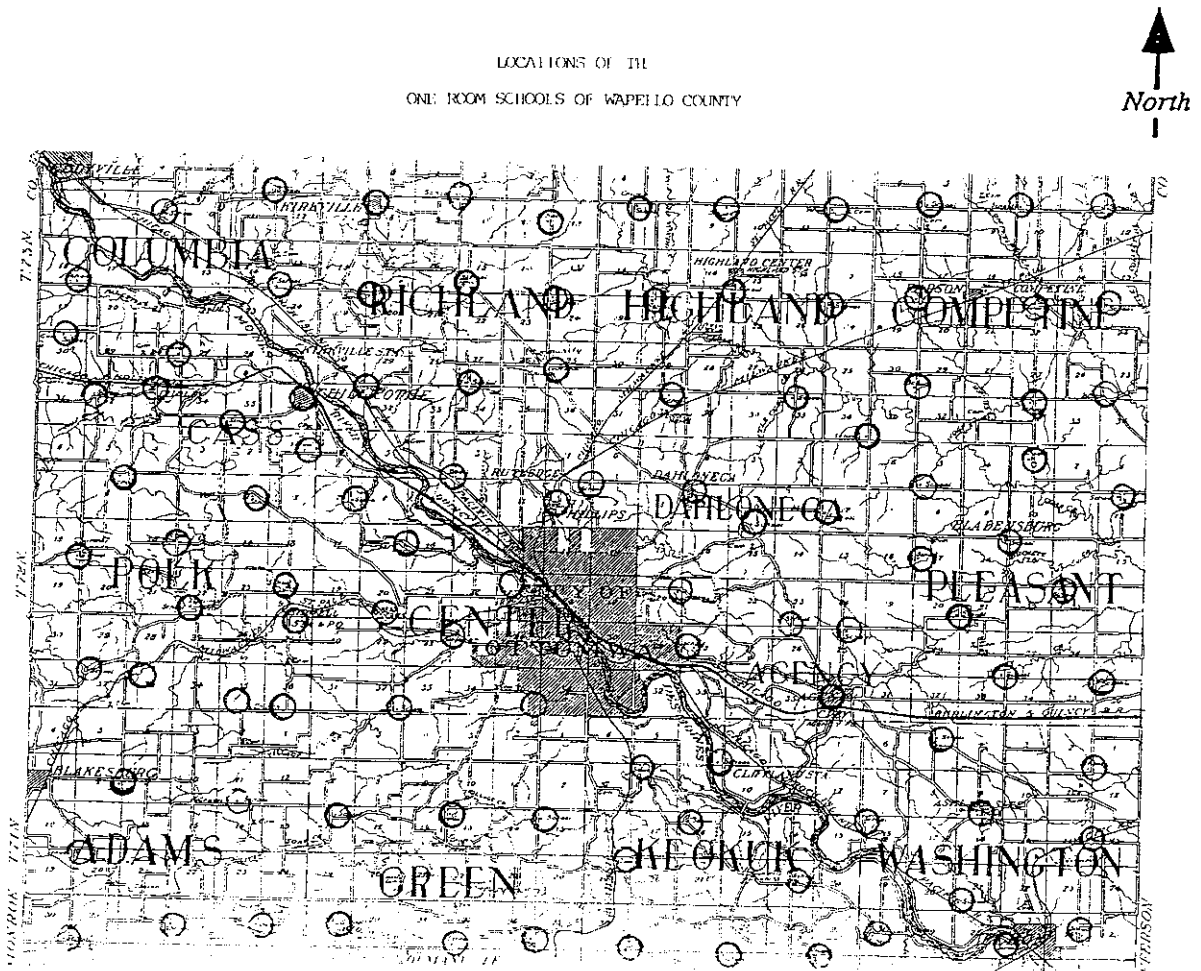
Governor Leslie M. Shaw stated in 1900 that "a graded school should be accessible from every farm." This was a great idea, but with the constant shortage of qualified teachers and a large number of districts, it was almost impossible to do. A state-wide survey that year showed that there were 330 districts with an attendance of less than 5; nearly 3600 districts had less than 10; 6370 districts had less than 15; and 9300 districts had less than 20! A recommendation was made to move toward consolidation

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Map showing location of rural (one room) schools in Wapello County  
(Readin', Ritin', and Rithmetic: A History of One Room Schools  
in Wapello County, Iowa, Ottumwa Public Library, 1994, p v))

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of districts (abandoning the small schools) in 1901. This would help solve transportation and teacher problems, and might help in establishing a central high school. The same arguments that were heard throughout the state in the 1950s and '60s (and even today) against consolidation were raised in the early part of this century. "Neighborhood schools were best for the children; without the neighborhood school the neighborhood would suffer; we will lose control of our children's education," etc. Despite the outcry, by 1904 thirty-five Iowa counties had some form of consolidation underway. By 1913 enrollment in rural schools and independent town district had declined by nearly 60,000 students, while enrollment in towns of more than 1500 had increased. High school attendance had increased by 25%.

The local impact of changing school policies and physical facilities can be seen in Wapello County. New "modern" school buildings were constructed as needed to replace old ones. For instance, in 1908 Ottumwa architect Frank Fiedler prepared plans for a one story school building for Polk Twp., "frame, hard plaster, hot air heat, water closets, lavatories & ventilators" with an estimated cost of \$2000. (*American Contractor*, July 1908, p 48) It has not been determined exactly which of the Polk Twp. buildings was designed by Fiedler. In 1915 four new rural schools were constructed. In May bids were solicited for the Hazel Dell School in Green Twp., in July bids were solicited for the Nasby School in Dahlongega Twp., and in August bids were solicited for two schools, one near Agency and one near Farson. These last two schools were designed by architect George M. Kerns of Ottumwa. Both of these schools were to be one story plus basement, one measuring 26' x 34' and the other 24' x 38', and each was estimated to cost \$1500. (*American Contractor*, various dates) The addition of a basement to plans for a rural school is a modern idea. This raised the building up off the ground providing better ventilation and (perhaps) a healthier environment.

Although there is no information from the *American Contractor* concerning the 1921 Dahlongega School, school board minutes identify Kerns as the architect. It features the same raised basement, but is larger than either of the 1915 buildings, measuring 29' x 41' plus the 11' square entry vestibule. It differs in design from the other 21 rural schools remaining in Wapello County in 1984 (OPL, p ii) as this is the only one in the popular Craftsman style. The Nasby School (1915) has the same band of five windows along the side elevation, but it is not on a raised foundation, and it features a porch across the façade. The Dahlongega building is a strong statement of Craftsman design with the relatively low pitched gable roof, broad eaves and simple diagonal braces on the gable ends. The banded windows are typical of the style and period. This style was popular for relatively small residences, for summer cottages, and recreational facilities. It was not viewed as a "grand" style appropriate for major public buildings, but it would be a good choice for a relatively small one room school in a rural setting.

George M. Kerns (1871-1941 or 1942) was born in Moline, Illinois and became an architect through the apprenticeship system. (Shank, p 96) He worked in the Moline area until 1902 when he moved to Ottumwa and established his private practice there. He designed the Ottumwa Cemetery Gateway and Office (NRHP) in 1906-08, buildings



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for the new Ottumwa County Club around 1910, the Russell Harper Residence (a key structure in the Vogel Place Historic District) in 1915, the Ottumwa National Guard Armory in 1934, and a number of other residences and buildings in the Ottumwa area.

No information has been located as to the reason that this wood frame building replaced a two story brick one, but it could have been either fire or general deteriorated condition. The village of Dahlonaga is centrally located within the township and could serve as the site of a central school. The Dahlonaga School may well have been built as a larger structure due to projected consolidation. When it opened in the fall of 1921, there were 21 students in attendance. Numbers increased by more than 50% during the 1923-24 school year to 35, and remained at that level for most years through the closing of the building in the spring 1959 when 36 students were enrolled.

Talk of consolidation continued throughout the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. By 1930 the number of rural schools in Wapello County had decreased to 96 following the consolidation of some rural districts. The Dahlonaga District was incorporated into the Ottumwa District in 1959. In 1960 neighboring Davis County became the first county-wide consolidated district with elementary buildings in Pulaski and Troy, but the county seat (Bloomfield) was the center of the district with two elementary buildings, junior high, and high school. Not all counties and/or rural districts were so eager to share facilities. In Wapello County many of the rural schools were added to the Ottumwa District, but it was not until all the rural schools were closed in 1966 that other consolidated districts emerged. Wapello County contains the Ottumwa Community District, and parts of the Cardinal, Pekin, and Eddyville-Blakesburg districts. The 22 rural school buildings that remain are used for a variety of purposes: dwellings, housing of livestock, storage, or vacant.

Of the remaining buildings, the Dahlonaga School retains the highest level of integrity, and, with the retention of the blackboards and 1950s desks, it is representative of the last era of the one room school in Iowa. It is in a location that lends itself to preservation and adaptive re-use.

The focus of this nomination project has been only on the historical and architectural significance of the resource. There has been no significant archeological work accomplished. It is believed that there may be archeological potential in this area due to the fact that Dahlonaga was at one time a village of 300 people with businesses, a pottery, and a mill. It is very possible that an archeological survey will be undertaken in the future as part of the development of the proposed tourist center. However, this nomination includes only the resource and an area 10' in all directions.

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Informal Conversations (not true interviews) with former students of Dahlongega School,  
1999-2000.

Minutes of Dahlongega School #1 Board Meetings, 1921-1945.

Photographs taken between 1960-65 by W. Sinclair Venables, housed in the Wapello  
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**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

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**DAHLONEGA SCHOOL  
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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:

T72N R13W Sec 9 NW NW. The unincorporated town of Dahlonega, Original Plat, part of the S 1/2 of the Public Square. A parcel of land beginning 21' south of the SW corner of the school, thence east 39', thence north 72', thence west 49', thence south 72', thence east 10' to the point of beginning.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION:

This is the area historically associated with this resource.

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DAHLONEGA SCHOOL  
WAPELLO COUNTY, IA

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Six of the eight photographs included in this nomination were taken by Molly Myers Naumann in December 1999. The negatives are stored in the files of the Wapello County Board of Supervisors, Ottumwa, IA. Photographs #1 and #3 were made from slides taken by W. Sinclair Venables between 1960-65. The slides and negatives are stored in the collection of the Wapello County Historical Society, Ottumwa IA.

1. Historic view of façade (south elevation) and west elevation looking NE.
2. Façade (south elevation) and west elevation looking NE.
3. Historic view of façade and east elevation, looking NW.
4. Façade and east elevation looking NW.
5. East elevation and rear (north elevation) looking SW.
6. Rear and west elevation looking SE.
7. Detail: Belfry with bell.
8. Façade looking due N.