

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any 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 certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

historic name Robinson, George W. and Mary J. (Maxwell), House

other names/site number Johnston B. Robinson House

Name of Multiple Property Listing Historic Resources of Mt. Vernon, Iowa

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

2. Location

street & number 514 1st Street SE not for publication

city or town Mount Vernon vicinity

state Iowa county Linn zip code 52314

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 at the following level(s) of significance: national statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria: A B X C D

Signature of certifying official/Title: Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer Date

State Historical Society of Iowa
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official Date

Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

 entered in the National Register determined eligible for the National Register

 determined not eligible for the National Register removed from the National Register

 other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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5. Classification

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

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

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

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

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

<u>Contributing</u>	<u>Noncontributing</u>	
1	1	buildings
		site
		structure
		object
1	1	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

DOMESTIC/secondary structure

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

OTHER/American Vernacular

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: STONE/Limestone

walls: BRICK

roof: METAL

other: _____

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Narrative Description

Summary Paragraph (Briefly describe the current, general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

This two-story brick house is located on the south side of 1st Street, near the east end of what is the main east-west street through Mount Vernon. The house is banked into the slope of a large lot that historically was associated with the owner/operators of the nearby brickyard and lime kiln also situated on the south side of 1st Street to the west of this house. The bricks used in the construction of this house were manufactured at this brick yard. The house is of an American vernacular design built in 1887, incorporating at least the limestone foundation of the original c.1865 house. Significant features includes its square footprint, brick walls laid in a running bond either as a veneer or the exterior of a cavity wall construction, a truncated hipped roof, and a large wrap-around porch that features square fluted wooden posts with cornice-molded capitals and frieze-board panels with circular medallions centered on each face. The roof has a moderate eave overhang with covered soffits. The windows have brick soldier-course lintels and wooden-plank sills. The foundation is built of locally-quarried rough-cut limestone blocks and slabs of varying sizes and shapes. A noncontributing detached garage is located east of the house. Overall, the house retains good historic integrity.

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable.)

(Iowa SHPO Additional Instructions: After the main **Narrative Description**, discuss any physical alterations since the period of significance under the subheading **Alterations**, and the seven aspects of integrity as it applies to the property in a Statement of Integrity.)

This two-story brick house is located on the south side of 1st Street, which is the main east-west street through Mount Vernon (Figure 1). Outside the city limits, this road is known as Mount Vernon Road and now extends to the west into Cedar Rapids and to the east into Lisbon. In the early settlement era, this road was known as the Bloomfield (aka, Muscatine) to Marion Road and led northwest into the city of Marion, which was then the Linn County seat of government. In the early 20th century, this road became part of the historic Lincoln Highway. The house is banked into the slope of a large lot that historically was associated with the owner/operators of the nearby brickyard and lime kiln also situated on the south side of 1st Street to the west of this house along what is now known as Hahn Creek. The bricks used in the construction of this house were manufactured at this brick yard. The house fronts 1st Street and has a truncated hipped roof covered with modern standing-seam brown metal roofing. The roof has a moderate eave overhang with covered soffits. The rectangular house has brick wall cladding laid in a running bond either as a veneer or the exterior of a cavity wall construction.¹ The windows have brick soldier-course lintels and wooden-plank sills. The foundation is built of rough-cut limestone blocks and slabs of varying sizes and shapes. This material would have been quarried at the nearby quarry once located to the south of this property. However, the house is unusual in its construction in that the basement level at the rear is built of bricks down to the ground rather than having the stone foundation as the exposed lower wall. Therefore, from the rear, this house appears to be a full three-story brick house, when in fact, the main portion of the brick house is only two stories above ground level. It is known that the house began as a one-story frame house likely with a stone foundation and built c.1865. Then in 1887, then-owner George W. Robinson "decided to rebuild" and changed it "from frame to brick, and making it two stories high" (*Mount Vernon Hawk-Eye*, May 27, 1887). Some of the oddities of the house construction are thus explained by this "rebuilding," with some parts likely dating from the original construction c.1865, but the whole representing the 1887 rebuilding/enlargement. A detached garage to the west of the house is considered noncontributing because it was built outside of the period of significance. Overall, the house retains good historic integrity.

¹ It is recommended that future research study the actual construction of these walls to determine how they are built and, if cavity walls, how they are tied together. Such research was beyond the parameters of the current nomination project.

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Figure 1. Robinson House and Garage looking SW. Photograph taken May 2, 2018.

The house sits at the highest elevation of a large irregular-shaped parcel that slopes to the south and east towards the creek. The house is surrounded by grassy lawn with scattered mature and some young trees, primarily deciduous shade trees. The parcel becomes increasingly wooded to the south. This property was in a deteriorated condition when purchased by the current owners. They set about refurbishing the property including removing overgrown shrubbery that had obscured the house from the street. The owners have made many repairs to the property and have landscaped the lot adding the new sidewalks, arbors, steps, and rear patio. A new concrete sidewalk extends to the west of the house through a modern wooden arbor and a set of wooden steps (over concrete steps) that descend to the gravel driveway and the garage to the west. A second sidewalk turns to the north from the west sidewalk and curves around the northwest corner to connect with the front sidewalk. This sidewalk also extends to the south crossing through another wooden arbor and descends another set of wooden stairs to the new sidewalk that curves around the southwest corner to the modern concrete patio at the rear of the house. A limestone slab retaining wall is along the slope extending out from the southwest corner of the house to the west and then wrapping around to the north on either side of the west sidewalk. The patio has a concrete pony wall with a wide opening to the sidewalk that wraps around from the west side of the house. There is a cast iron hand pump on a concrete-capped well off the southwest corner of the house. There is also a 13-foot deep cistern off the south side of the east addition on the rear of the house. Below the property in the creek valley is now a public pedestrian trail on a paved concrete sidewalk. A modern apartment building is to the east of this property but trees and shrubbery screen the view of this modern building from the historic property. Houses line the street to the north, most built in the mid to late 20th century but including some older houses.

Façade (North Side)²

The façade has symmetrical three-rank fenestration with a centered front door on the first story flanked by single windows and three single windows evenly spaced across the second story and placed directly above the door and windows below (Figure 2). The windows on the first story are modern rectangular single-pane replacement windows with the three windows on the second story being likely original 1/1 double-hung wooden-sash windows. The front door is a wood-paneled door with a rectangular pane of glass in the upper half of the door. The door opening has the same brick soldier-course lintels as the

² In this area of Mount Vernon, the streets are oriented on a southeast to northwest angle. Therefore, in this narrative, "east" is actually southeasterly, "north" is northeasterly, "west" is northwesterly, and "south" is southwesterly."

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windows. The front door is sheltered by a large wrap-around porch that has square fluted wooden posts with cornice-molded capitals and frieze-board panels with circular medallions centered on each face. The posts at the wall are pilasters of the same type as the rest of the porch posts. The wooden railing has turned balusters. The porch has a concrete floor and is a single step above ground level. A new concrete sidewalk leads from the porch at the front door out to the sidewalk parallel to the street. The porch has a shed roof also covered with metal roofing. The front porch represents an early 1900s update to the 1887 house, with the style of this porch being Classical Revival. The concrete slab porch would be a late 20th century replacement of the wooden porch floor and masonry foundation. The porch was in good condition with the current owners purchased the property, with their refurbishment of this porch limited to prepping and repainting. A circa 1910 photograph of the house shows J.B. Robinson and his first wife, Mary, in front of the house (Figure 3).



Figure 2. Façade of the Robinson House looking South. Photograph taken May 2, 2018.



Figure 3. Façade of Robinson House looking South circa 1910 with J.B. and Mary Robinson sitting in front. Photograph obtained from the Mt. Vernon Historic Preservation Commission's archives, www.mvhpc.org, 2019.

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J.B. Robinson married Mary Maxwell (not to be confused with his mother Mary J. Maxwell) in 1908, but she died in 1915. Therefore, based on this history and the fact that the clothes both are wearing in the photograph in Figure 3 appear to be more early 1900s rather than c.1919 when he married his second wife Jessie H. Arbingast, the date of the photograph is assumed to date from between 1908 and 1915, with a c.1910 date used herein. The photograph shows that the wrap-around front porch was then in place, with the bay window partially visible on the right (west) side of the house. The angle of the historic photograph is from slightly lower and looking up more than the current photograph in Figure 2, so it is difficult to tell for certain if the current roofline of the southeast corner brick addition is there yet or not. A large windmill is visible behind the house along with a brick chimney on the west roof slope that are no longer extant.

West Side

The west side of the house features a rectangular one-story, three-sided bay window on the left side of the first story (Figure 4). This bay window has three rectangular single-pane windows that are replacement windows. The bay window is sided with the same brick as the house but may have been an addition rather than original to the 1887 construction because the masonry is not tied into the wall structure of the house.³ The brick work has the appearance of a tie-in but this is actually a faux treatment using smaller brick pieces at the wall to appear as integral to the house wall construction (Figure 5). It is uncertain whether the bay window is an addition, or this was simply the construction technique used when the house was rebuilt in 1887. The fact that the rear porch is attached to the bay window and the porch appears to be a circa 1887 construction suggests that the bay window and the porch were built at the same time (see Figure 5). On the interior, the wooden floor slants into the bay window reflecting the separate foundations and lack of integral wall construction between the bay window and the house.

To the right of the bay window and attached to it, is the open side porch that has square wooden posts and a wooden floor reached by a single concrete step (see Figure 5). The posts have chamfered corners suggesting that they are original to the 1887 construction. There is a door to the right of the bay window underneath the porch roof that is a wooden-paneled door with a rectangular pane of glass in the upper half similar to the front door. This entry also has a modern storm door on the exterior. There is a single 1/1 wooden-sash window to the right of the door. The second story of this side has single 1/1 double-hung, wooden-sash windows to the right and left sides of the wall.

³ Reportedly, this bay window was added during a funeral home use of this house in the early 20th century, with the window used for displaying the casket during funerals.

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Figure 4. West side of Robinson House looking ESE. Photograph taken May 2, 2018.



Figure 5. Left: Closer view of the junction of the bay window and the main wall of the house showing the faux tie-in bricks (the small cut pieces of brick) of the bay window; Right: Detail of rear porch.
Photographs taken December 9, 2018 (left) and May 2, 2018 (right).

Rear (South Side)

The rear of the house has three exposed stories being banked into the slope as noted above (Figure 6). There is a square brick chimney that is built out from the wall and extends up from the basement level piercing the roof eave. This chimney is not original and is built of different colored brick than the bricks of the house walls. The rear of the house has a single 1/1 double-hung, wooden-sash window at the basement level to the left of the chimney. This is the only opening in this wall on the left (west) side of the chimney. To the right of the chimney there are two evenly-spaced 1/1 double-hung windows on the first and second stories and a door with a 1/1 double-hung, wooden-sash window to the right on the basement level. All of these openings have the brick soldier-course lintels seen elsewhere on the house. The sills appear to be wooden planks.

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Figure 6. Rear (south side) of Robinson House looking North. Photograph taken May 2, 2018.

East Side

There is a side-gabled brick addition on the southeast corner of the house that abuts the wrap-around front porch on its east side and projects forward from the rear wall of the main house (see Figures 6 and 7). This addition has two levels, the lower basement-level being banked into the slope but is fully exposed on the south and west sides. This addition has a brick chimney on the east gable end that projects out slightly from the brick wall and flares at the base. There are also two bands of corbelled bricks on the upper half of the chimney. The bricks in the chimney and in the walls of this addition are the same as those used in the main house construction. The rear (south side) of this addition has two evenly-spaced windows on the upper story and the basement level. These windows are all rectangular single-pane replacement windows. The windows on this addition have the same brick soldier-course lintels and wooden-plank sills as the windows on the rest of the house. The west side of the addition has a single 1/1 window above a door that opens onto the rear concrete patio. Both basement level doors on the west side have modern storm doors. The east side of the addition has two rectangular windows to either side of the centered chimney. Both windows are modern replacements. The window to the left of the chimney is the same size as those on the rest of the house, while the window to the right is slightly wider. Both windows have brick soldier-course lintels and wooden-plank sills. There is also a single 1/1 window on the north side of this addition, with a basement level window below.

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Figure 7. East side of Robinson House looking NW (left) and SW (right). Photograph taken May 2, 2018.

The east side of the wrap-around porch on the main body of the house has a modern enclosure where it abuts the side-gabled ell (see Figure 7). This enclosure is of frame construction and is covered with horizontal board siding and has squat 1/1 windows, paired on the east side and a single window on the north side underneath the porch. There are two single 1/1 windows on the second story on the north half of the main body of the house. The window to the right is directly above an entry door on the first story and sheltered by the wrap-around porch.

While the east-side structure could be original to the 1887 construction, it is suspected to be an early 1900s addition, perhaps added at the same time as the wrap-around porch. An interesting interior feature is a round-arched brick cellar that is underneath the porch but accessed via a door in the north wall of the basement level of the east-side addition (Figure 8). The basement level was also heated by a wood or coal stove at one time as evidenced by the round hole now plastered with concrete on the east wall, with a small fireplace added later, perhaps in the 1920s-30s (see Figure 8).

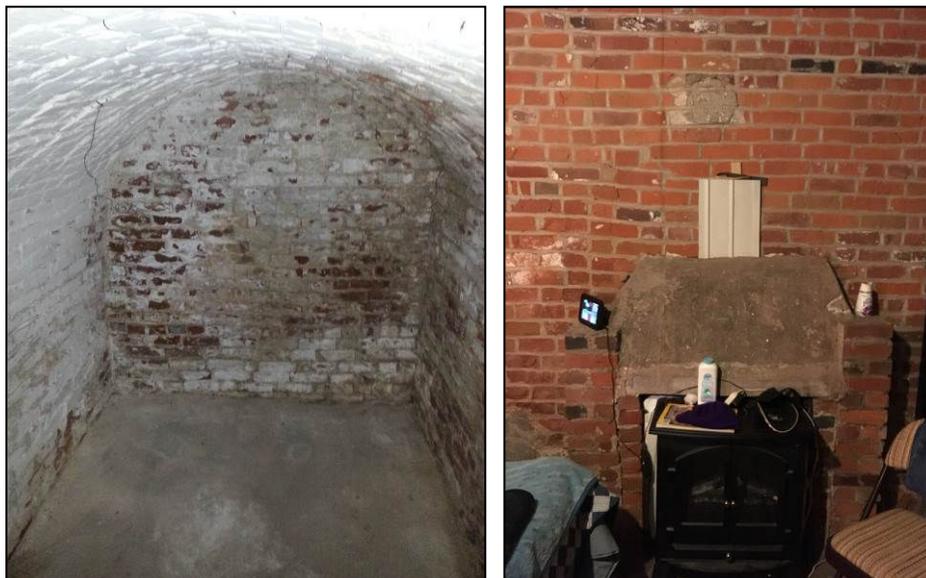


Figure 8. Interior of brick round-arched cellar underneath the wrap-around porch looking North from the basement level of the east-side addition (left) and detail of the fireplace and the former stove-pipe hole above the fireplace in the east wall of the basement of the addition.

Photographs taken September 1, 2018 (left) and December 9, 2018 (right).

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Interior

The interior has an irregular plan on the first floor that has large living room in front with a dining room to the rear and a kitchen in the southeast corner of the front-room space. The staircase is to the east side of the dining room. A bedroom is now in the addition on the southeast corner of the house and is accessed from the dining room and has a bathroom in the modern addition to the south end of the wrap-around porch. The second floor has three bedrooms and a bathroom. The bathroom and one of the bedrooms are accessed off a hallway that is in the center of the east half. The other two bedrooms are accessed via a door in the west wall of the hall and having a second short hall in-between the doors into each of these rooms.

Currently, the home is not only the owners' home but also a commercial bed and breakfast. The interior was refurbished for this business with most of the wall and ceiling finishes recently redone with new materials including drywall and horizontal wood boards. Notable original interior features include the round-arched brick cellar in the basement under the east-side addition (see Figure 8), the 4-paneled wooden interior doors with ceramic door knobs and brass hardware, the plain wooden window and door surrounds, the wooden base boards with quarter-round top and base moldings, and some original hardwood floors (Figures 9-10). Newer floors have been added in some rooms along with an updated kitchen and bathrooms. The interior has been updated with antique furniture for the bed and breakfast.

There are several locations where there is a significant drop in the floor and ceiling levels from the front half (north side) and the rear (south side). These show in a drop in the level of the floors, ceilings and door surround that are sloping to the south between the level of the front northwest room and the level of the flooring in the bay window off that room. These drops suggest the possibility that the front first-floor and the stone foundation underneath the front half are portions of the original c.1865 house, to which George W. Robinson then added a second floor and expanded the house with the south half in 1887 and when the bay window was built. This would explain why the brick and foundation of the bay window is not tied into the wall and foundation of the north half and why the floors and ceilings drop to the south.



Figure 9. Left to right: Dining room and example of wooden-paneled door.
Photographs taken September 1, 2018.

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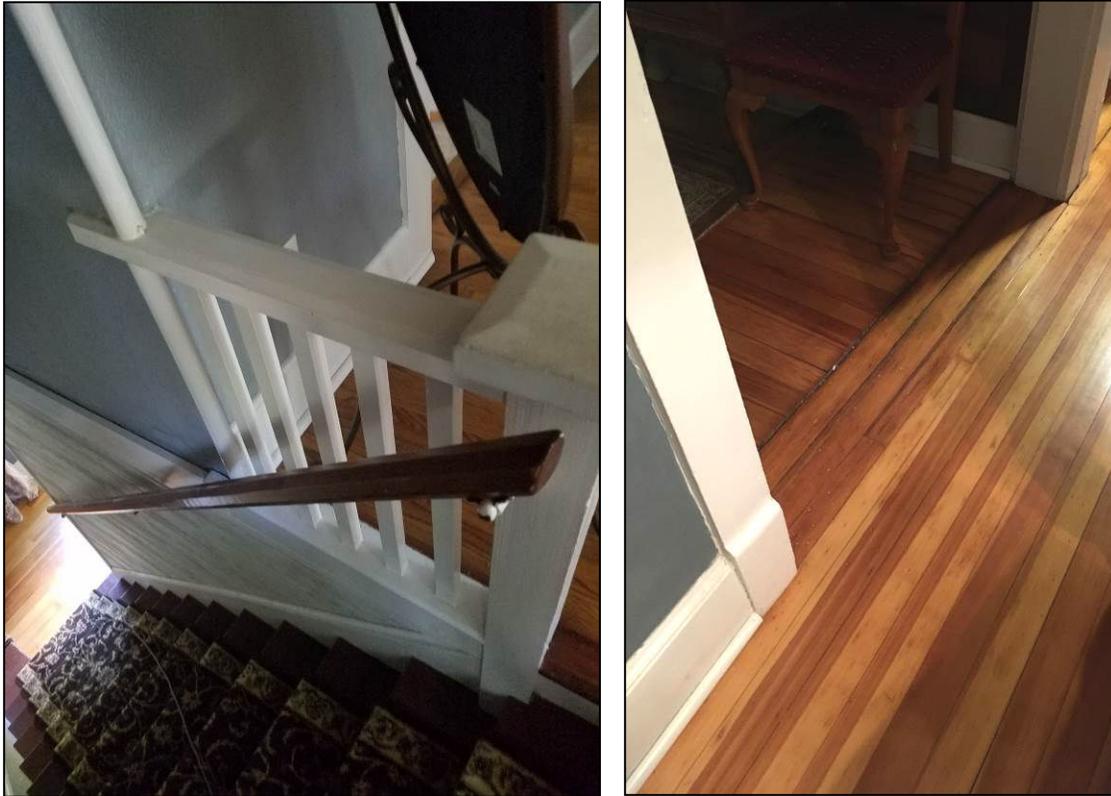


Figure 10. Left to right: simple balusters and newel post on second-floor stairs and transition between the front and rear sections of the house in the different flooring and in the significant drop in the floor from front to back. Photographs taken September 1, 2018 and December 9, 2018.

Garage (Noncontributing Building)

The detached garage is a single-story, front-gabled frame building that is located downslope to the west of the house (Figure 11). This is a double-stall garage with two overhead garage doors on the east gable end. The roof is covered with asphalt shingles, the walls are covered with horizontal wood siding, and the foundation is a concrete slab. The Assessor gives a date of circa 1950 for its construction.



Figure 11. Garage looking WSW. Photograph taken May 2, 2018.

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Statement of Integrity

The significance of this house as a whole lies in its association with the owners of the brick yard, retaining good integrity of association in its representation of the importance of the brick industry in Mount Vernon's architectural history.

The house retains good integrity of materials that include the bricks made in the nearby brick yard used in the wall construction including a somewhat unusual use of brick construction for the exposed basement walls on the rear of the house. The limestone used in the foundation also came from the nearby stone quarry just to the south of this house.

The house retains good integrity of design in its retention of its 1887 form, massing, and exterior materials and may actually still retain some of the original house built on this site as a one-story frame building built c.1865.

The good integrity of workmanship is reflected in the masonry work of the house being bricks manufactured at the original owners' brickyard and the fact that the brickyard owner built this house even in its first incarnation as a one-story frame house.

The integrity of location is also good being the location where this house was originally built, including some portions of the original house.

The integrity of setting is good with this wooded setting historically associated with the Robinson's brick yard, which was sited just west of this house along the creek valley. The house was built on the higher elevation of this property and would have provided a good vantage point for the brickyard owner to oversee his operation.

This house retains good integrity of feeling by still imparting a strong sense of time and place of a late 19th century brick house in the Mount Vernon community.

Modifications have included: replacement of most of the windows; the addition of a modern enclosure to the south end of the wrap-around porch on the east side of the house; and interior remodeling to enhance the current use of the property as a bed and breakfast. However, the majority of the exterior is original or of historic age including the front and west-side porches. The wrap-around front porch is an early 1900s Classical Revival style porch that would have been added to the 1887 house, likely replacing a porch only on the façade, but the west-side porch appears to be original to the 1887 house. The east-side addition may also have been built in the early 1900s when the front porch was built.

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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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1887

Significant Dates

1887

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation (if applicable)

Architect/Builder

Robinson, George W.

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Statement of Significance

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations).

The George W. and Mary J. (Maxwell) Robinson House is locally significant and eligible for listing under the registration requirements for the "Local Brick and Stone Buildings, c. 1840-93" context for the National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Submission, *Historic Resources of Mt. Vernon, Iowa*. The Robinson House is significant under Criterion C as a property that "contribute[s] markedly to the distinctive architectural character of Mount Vernon" through its "wall covering of locally produced brick" on a locally quarried stone foundation and its Late Victorian stylistic influences. The house "exhibit[s] continued local preference for local brick and date[s] from the 1870s-1893 as well as the prosperity that characterized the railroad era in the community." The Robinson House was built on land that included the G.W. Robinson brickyard (c.1865-1889), which was Mount Vernon's main brick and lime manufacturer during that time period. The original house was built c.1865 and was a one-story frame dwelling. In 1887, George W. Robinson rebuilt the house as a two-story brick dwelling that may have incorporated portions of the original c.1865 house. The bricks for the 1887 rebuild came from Robinson's nearby brickyard. The period of significance for the Robinson House is 1887, the year the two-story brick house was built.

Narrative Statement of Significance

 (Provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance.)

(Iowa SHPO Additional Instructions: For properties not nominated under Criterion D, include a statement about whether any archaeological remains within or beyond the footprint of the property were assessed as part of this nomination under the subheading **Archaeological Assessment**.)

Criterion C: Architectural Significance of the George W. and Mary J. (Maxwell) Robinson House

Under the registration requirements for Criterion C of the "Local Brick and Stone Buildings, c. 1840-93" context, the George W. and Mary J. (Maxwell) Robinson House is a "brick and stone [building] that contribute[s] markedly to the distinctive architectural character of Mount Vernon." This house has "a wall covering of locally produced brick" on a locally quarried stone foundation and exhibits Late Victorian stylistic influences. As such, the Robinson House "exhibit[s] continued local preference for local brick and date[s] from the 1870s-1893." According to the description of this property type:

Mount Vernon is blessed with a distinctive collection of brick buildings. By far most are houses. A significant number date from before the Civil War through the 1860s, but there are important examples from the 1870s and 1880s as well. Since locally produced brick continued to be used as a building material beyond the Military Road era (especially for houses), brick buildings are considered as a separate property type. There is overlap with significant examples from the Military Road-era context property type, however. In some cases the date of construction has not been more firmly determined than placing them before 1890. The local brickyard closed in 1893, marking the end of the locally produced brick period for the community. The visual impact of the ... residential examples ... upon the appearance of Mount Vernon is clear.

The houses for this property type are built of deep red-orange local brick. Rooflines vary and include gable-side (the dominant shape), gable-front, crossed-gable, upright-and-wing, mansard, and hipped. Later examples are more likely to be hipped and early examples tend to be gabled. Most are two-story. Foundations are of locally quarried limestone (generally rubble or roughly dressed). Some lintels and sills are also stone. Brick is sometimes used decoratively for cornices, cornice returns, and more elaborate lintels. With the earliest examples, the use of brick with simple details and form results in a simplicity that contributes markedly to the charm of the community (Long 1991:F3).

The Robinson House meets the registration requirements for Criterion C significance under this context, which state:

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Buildings of locally produced brick and stone are a key visual element defining the nature and character of Mount Vernon, and their primary area of significance is architectural. Because of the key visual importance of this property type, most examples from the period c. 1840-1893 which retain their integrity are likely to be significant. Examples built after the Military Road era, that is, after 1870, reflect the continued interest in local brick as well as the prosperity that characterized the railroad era in the community. These later examples are typically more elaborate than those associated with the early settlement period. Together, they constitute a visually distinctive feature that is a major and longstanding visual defining element for Mount Vernon (Long 1991:F3-F4).

The original house on this site was built c.1865 by George W. Robinson on land that also included his brickyard operation. In 1887, Robinson rebuilt his first house into the two-story brick house that exists today but may have retained some portions of the original house in the rebuild. The bricks used in the Robinson House literally represent Mount Vernon's post-1870 continued interest in local brick as a building material, as well as the prosperity that characterized this industry in the railroad era in the community.

The house is an American Vernacular two-story brick hipped roof house, with a wrap-around front porch added in the early 1900s in the Classical Revival style. The form of the house and its architecture reflect the suspected nature of its construction having been a one-story frame house to begin with that was then rebuilt with a second story and brick exterior walls. While not a high-style example, this house does reflect the prosperity of the Robinson brickyard while displaying the brickyard's products and the masonry skills of G.W. Robinson.

George W. Robinson was born in 1833 in Wayne County, Ohio. He came to Iowa in 1856, and to Mount Vernon after serving three years in the Civil War. That same year (1865) he married Mary J. Maxwell, also an Ohio native, and they eventually had one son, Johnston B., born in 1871 (*Mount Vernon Hawk-Eye*, June 14, 1889; *Mount Vernon Hawk-Eye*, November 30, 1888; US Census 1870, 1880; Iowa State Census 1885).

By 1869, Robinson was manufacturing bricks and lime at the same location as the Albright brothers had a decade earlier (Figures 12 and 13). After a storm damaged the brickyard, the *Linn County Hawkeye* provided a glimpse of Robinson's brickyard in its first years of operation:

The storm on last Saturday, was very damaging, destroying some four to five thousand green brick for Mr. G. W. Robinson. But at the rapid rate which Mr. R. makes brick, and good weather, the kiln will not be delayed much. He turns out some seven thousand per day. We also learn that there has been some one hundred and thirty five thousand brick shipped to Clarence [Cedar Co], from this yard this spring. The brick made here, has a good reputation at home and abroad (*Linn County Hawkeye*, June 18, 1869).

The 1870 Federal Census listed George Robinson as a brick maker and his wife, Mary as a milliner. Included in their household was Sarah Gutzler, also a milliner. The Robinsons lived in a small house near their brickyard at the site of the extant brick house, and together made a modest living. In 1874, Mary Robinson opened a successful millinery shop in the business district. Given that she was listed four years earlier as a milliner, she may have operated her business out of their house prior to opening a shop in the business district.

Robinson's brick was undoubtedly used to build many of Mount Vernon's brick houses and other buildings. By 1875, Robinson had "a double lime kiln turning out 7,000 bushels annually" and "a brick yard making each year 200,000 brick" (*Mount Vernon Hawk-Eye*, November 12, 1875).

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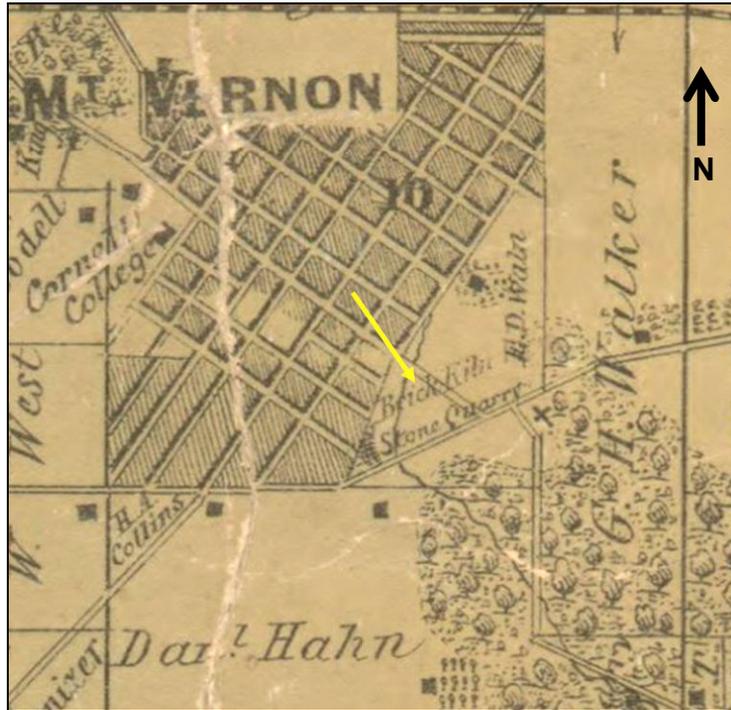


Figure 12. Plat map of Mount Vernon, 1869, showing location of G.W. Robinson brickyard and lime kiln.
The Robinson House is located to the east of the brickyard on the east side of the creek.
Source: Thompson and Everts 1869



Figure 13. Photograph of the lime kiln at the site of the Robinson brickyard on the south side of 1st street (which is on top of the stone retaining wall with round-arched culvert in the upper right). This view is looking NW. The site of this kiln and the brickyard are outside of the nomination boundaries. The date of this photograph is unknown but the kiln is a ruin and the brickyard no longer in operation (so at least after 1908).
Photograph obtained from the Mt. Vernon Historic Preservation Commission's archives, accessed at www.mvhpc.org, December 2018.

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The family had been living in a one-story frame house (probably with a rubble stone foundation) on the same parcel as the brick yard for some time, when in 1887, George Robinson decided to rebuild. As the *Mount Vernon Hawk-Eye* noted: "G.W. Robinson is entirely rebuilding his residence, changing it from frame to brick, and making it two stories high. This will make a big improvement and give them a much pleasanter home" (*Mount Vernon Hawk-Eye*, May 27, 1887). It is suspected that the front half of the extant house contains portions of the original house including the stone foundation, with the second story and the rear half of the house added in 1887 using bricks that he, himself, had made in his brickyard (Figure 14).

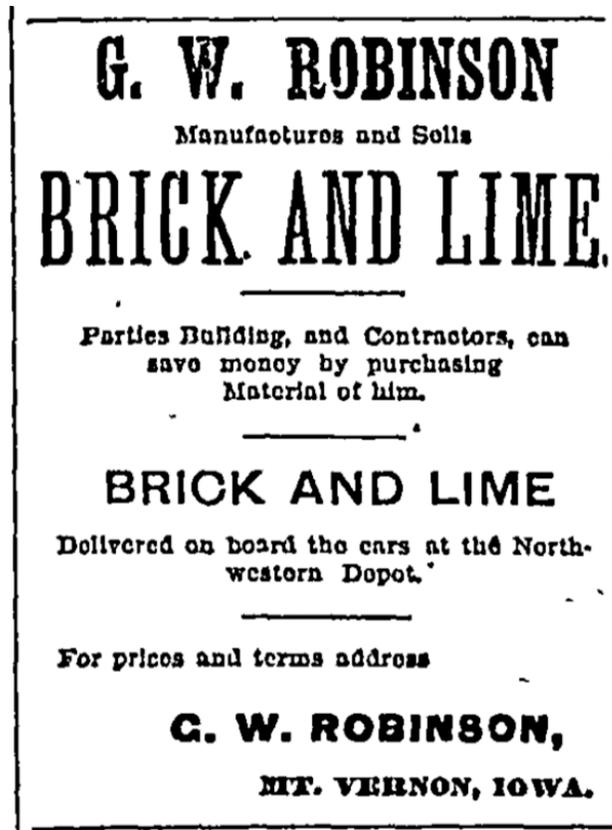


Figure 14. Advertisement for G.W. Robinson's Brick & Lime Manufacturing, 1888
Source: *Mount Vernon Hawk-Eye*, October 5, 1888

George Robinson completed his new brick house, but just one year later, Mary Robinson died suddenly at the age of 54. George died the following year, just 56 years old. As the *Mount Vernon Hawk-Eye* noted, "funeral services were held at his late residence—his beautiful earthly home but now desolate and broken indeed. . ." Robinson's death left his 18-year-old son, J.B. Robinson, alone in the new house with many brick and lime orders unfilled (*Mount Vernon Hawk-Eye*, June 14, 1889; *Mount Vernon Hawk-Eye*, November 30, 1888; Iowa Wills and Probate 1889-1891).

By 1890, J.B. Robinson had taken over the brick and lime business, as the advertisement in the *Mount Vernon Hawk-Eye* shows (Figure 15). Robinson officially purchased the property in 1895. In 1897, he added an ice business to the operation, which he operated seasonally, harvesting ice from the nearby creek.

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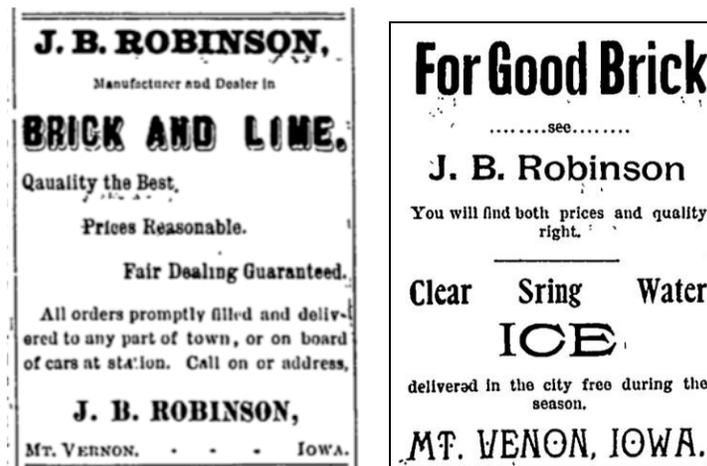


Figure 15. Ads for J.B. Robinson's Brick and Lime business, 1890 (right), and for his new ice business, 1897 (left). Source: *Mount Vernon Hawk-Eye*, August 29, 1890 and April 9, 1897

J.B. Robinson continued in business until 1908, when he sold the brick and ice business and the land on which was located, finally separating the business from his brick residence. The *Mount Vernon Hawk-Eye* reported the event:

An important real estate change completed a few days since was the sale by J.B. Robinson of his brick yard and ice business, situated in the east end of town, to R.C. DuBois, an enterprising citizen who recently moved to this city from Canada. Mr. DuBois secures that section of the Robinson property located west of the creek, which embraces all the grounds of the business mentioned, while Mr. Robinson retains the residence property and adjacent grounds. . . Mr. DuBois also purchases the ice business lately operated by Frank Bartosh, and will continue that enterprise together with the brick yard business (*Mount Vernon Hawk-Eye*, December 31, 1908) [emphasis added].

It was in 1908 that J.B. married his first wife, Mary Maxwell daughter of Robert Maxwell and Elizabeth Bruge. She is not to be confused with his mother Mary J. Maxwell. J.B.'s wife Mary died in 1915, and in 1919 he married Jessie H. Arbingast. When J.B. Robinson died in 1938, his obituary told of his burial vaults and ice business, but barely noted his connection to the brickyard, noting, "when he was sixteen years old, following his father's death, he managed the brick yard, which had belonged to his father" (*Mount Vernon Hawkeye-Record And Lisbon Herald*, November 17, 1938). After J.B. Robinson's death in 1938, the house was purchased by Donald and Doris Pringle (Abstract of Title).

Whether or not George W. Robinson ever owned the parcel on which his brickyard and house were located remains unclear.⁴ The town lot transfers make it appear that Joshua Doran owned the property from 1862 through the period when Robinson's brick yard was in operation and his house was built on the property. Although a brickyard and lime kiln were located here from 1853 to the early 1900s, none of the identified landowners were brickmakers until 1895, when J.B. Robinson finally purchased the parcel that contained his father's house and brick yard business. Specifically, in 1854, Augustus Bauman purchased it from Robert Stinson the year he arrived in Mount Vernon, and owned the parcel for the next year, during the time the Albright brothers were using it as a brickyard. Bauman sold it a year later to Harrison Hall, who sold it to Dr. Joshua Doran in 1862, when Doran first arrived in Mount Vernon. According to the land transfer entries for Linn County, Doran owned the parcel until his death in 1891, when it passed to his sons, then eventually was purchased by J.B. Robinson in 1895, six years after the death of his father, G.W. Robinson. This chain of land title suggests that all of the landowners, from Augustus Bauman to Joshua Doran, felt the best use of this

⁴ In 1873, G.W. Robinson was listed among many others whose property was being sold by the County Treasurer due to non-payment of taxes. Robinson is listed as owning 7 acres in the SW quarter of Section 10 and owing \$21.53. See "Tax Sale," *Mount Vernon Hawk-Eye*, October 24, 1873. One year later, Mary J. Robinson opened her new millinery shop in the business district, perhaps to supplement their income. "New Milliner Shop," *Mount Vernon Hawk-Eye*, October 30, 1874.

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parcel was for brickmaking purposes, since this brickmaking operation was providing abundant building materials for the growing community. George W. Robinson may have had an arrangement with Doran to reside there and operate his business (Land Transfer Books G, K, T and Vols. 186, 189, 192, and 1C, Auditor's Office, Jean Oxley Linn County Public Service Center, Cedar Rapids).

Figure 16 is the 1895 plat map of Mount Vernon, which adds another wrinkle to the parcel's story. This map incorrectly shows "G.W. Robinson" as the owner of the parcel where the brickyard was shown and where the brick house was standing at the time. However, G.W. had died in 1889, and it was in 1895 that his son, J.B. Robinson actually attained title to the property.

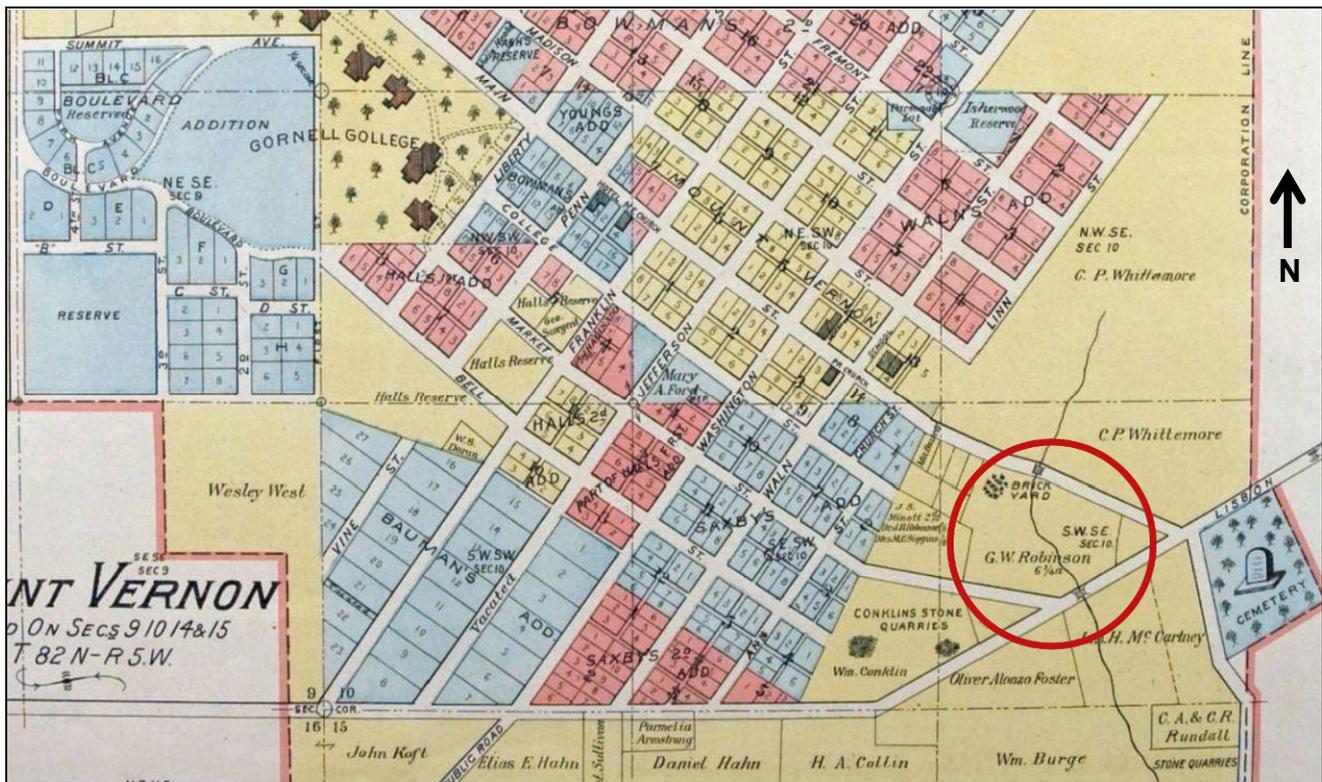


Figure 16. Plat map of Mount Vernon, 1895, showing location of Robinson brickyard.
The map is incorrect and should read J.B. Robinson, who purchased the property that same year.
Source: Bergendahl 1895

Subsequent owners have included: Doris and Don Pringle (1938-1943), Ralph and Marguerite Stauton (1943-1954), D. William and Mary R. Pringle (1954-1959), John E., Jr. and Helen M. Colon (1959-1978), Blaine E. and Pauline K. Johner (1978-1985), and Thomas M. and Veltette M. Heath (1985-2015). The current owners, Paul M. and Sondra L. Meyers have owned this property since 2015 and operate a bed and breakfast in this house.

Archaeological Assessment

The potential for any prehistoric or historic archaeological remains within the property boundary was not evaluated as part of the present National Register nomination. However, the large open yard areas to the sides and rear of the house have a potential for archaeological features such as privies and nonextant outbuildings. The house looks out over the creek valley to the west and would have provided a good vantage point for the owner to keep an eye on the brickyard and lime kiln to the west on the opposite side of the creek. The parcel was separated from the brickyard parcel after the brickyard had ceased operations, with the parcel now much smaller than it would have been when George Robinson built his first house on this spot and then rebuilt it in

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1887. There is a cistern and well off the rear of the house but their potential as archaeological features is currently unknown. The current owners also noted that when they were expanding the driveway and pad in front of the existing garage, they found a herringbone pattern of brick pavement from which they were able to salvage some of the bricks. While there is potential for archaeological site designation in the yard area of the house and for the former lime kiln and brickyard sites, such designations would require archaeological investigation, which was beyond the scope of the nomination project. A surface reconnaissance of the former brickyard and lime kiln location conducted in 2013 showed no obvious archaeological evidence of these operations; however, the location is on a creek floodplain and may have evidence in a buried context (Rogers and Nagel 2013).

Acknowledgements

The completion of this nomination was made possible by the assistance of members of the Mt. Vernon Historic Preservation Commission, who compiled the floor plans, conducted on-site photography, conducted historic research, and reviewed the various drafts of the nomination. The property owners also assisted with the compilation of floor plans, photography, and historical materials and reviewed the draft versions of the nomination. The City of Mt. Vernon provided support for the project and cash match towards the grant.

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1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20204

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9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Ad for G.W. Robinson Brick and Lime, *Mount Vernon Hawk-Eye*, October 5, 1888.

Bergendahl, C.G., compiler. *Atlas of Linn County, Iowa*. Marion, Iowa: S.N. Parsons, W.G. Treat and J.D. Wardle Publishing, 1895.

"Died," [Obituary of G.W. Robinson], *Mount Vernon Hawk-Eye*, June 14, 1889.

"From Mount Vernon," *Mount Vernon Hawk-Eye*, November 12, 1875.

Iowa State Census, 1885.

"J.B. Robinson Died After Long Illness," *Mount Vernon Hawkeye-Record And Lisbon Herald*, November 17, 1938.

Mount Vernon Hawk-Eye, May 27, 1887.

Obituary of Mary J. (Maxwell) Robinson, *Mount Vernon Hawk-Eye*, November 30, 1888.

"R.C. DuBois Purchases Brick Yard," *Mount Vernon Hawk-Eye*, December 31, 1908.

Rogers, Leah D. and Cindy L. Nagel. *Survey and Evaluation of Selected Historic Archaeological and Architectural Properties in Subsections D, L, and R., Linn County, Iowa*. Tallgrass Historians L.C., Iowa City, Iowa, 2013.

Thompson and Everts. *Map of Linn County, Iowa*. Geneva, Illinois: Thompson and Everts, Geneva, 1869.

U.S. Federal Census, 1870, 1880.

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 # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one

(Do not include previously listed resource acreage; enter "Less than one" if the acreage is .99 or less)

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1	<u>41.919956</u>	<u>-91.412401</u>	3	_____	_____
	Latitude	Longitude		Latitude	Longitude
2	_____	_____	4	_____	_____
	Latitude	Longitude		Latitude	Longitude

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The NRHP boundary of the Robinson House is shown as the blue outline on the accompanying map entitled "Site Plan Map showing NRHP Boundary of Robinson House." This property is a rectangular tract in Lot 15 of the Irregular Survey of the SW1/4, SE1/4 of Section 10, T82N-R5W, Linn County, Iowa.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

This property was historically associated with the Robinson House as the house yard encompassing the house south of 1st Street and east of the creek. The nonextant historic brickyard was on a parcel (now Parcel A) to the west of the NRHP boundary and this house.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jennifer A. Price, Ph.D./Consultant and Leah D. Rogers, Volunteer date March 1, 2020
organization Price Preservation Research telephone (319) 594-9513
street & number P.O. Box 5201 email jenniferprice1311@icloud.com
city or town Coralville state IA zip code 52241

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **GIS Location Map (Google Earth or BING)**
- **Local Location Map**
- **Site Plan**
- **Floor Plans (As Applicable)**
- **Photo Location Map** (Include for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map and insert immediately after the photo log and before the list of figures).

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Figure 17. GIS Location Map.
Aerial map obtained from ExpertGPS Pro Mapping Software, 2018.

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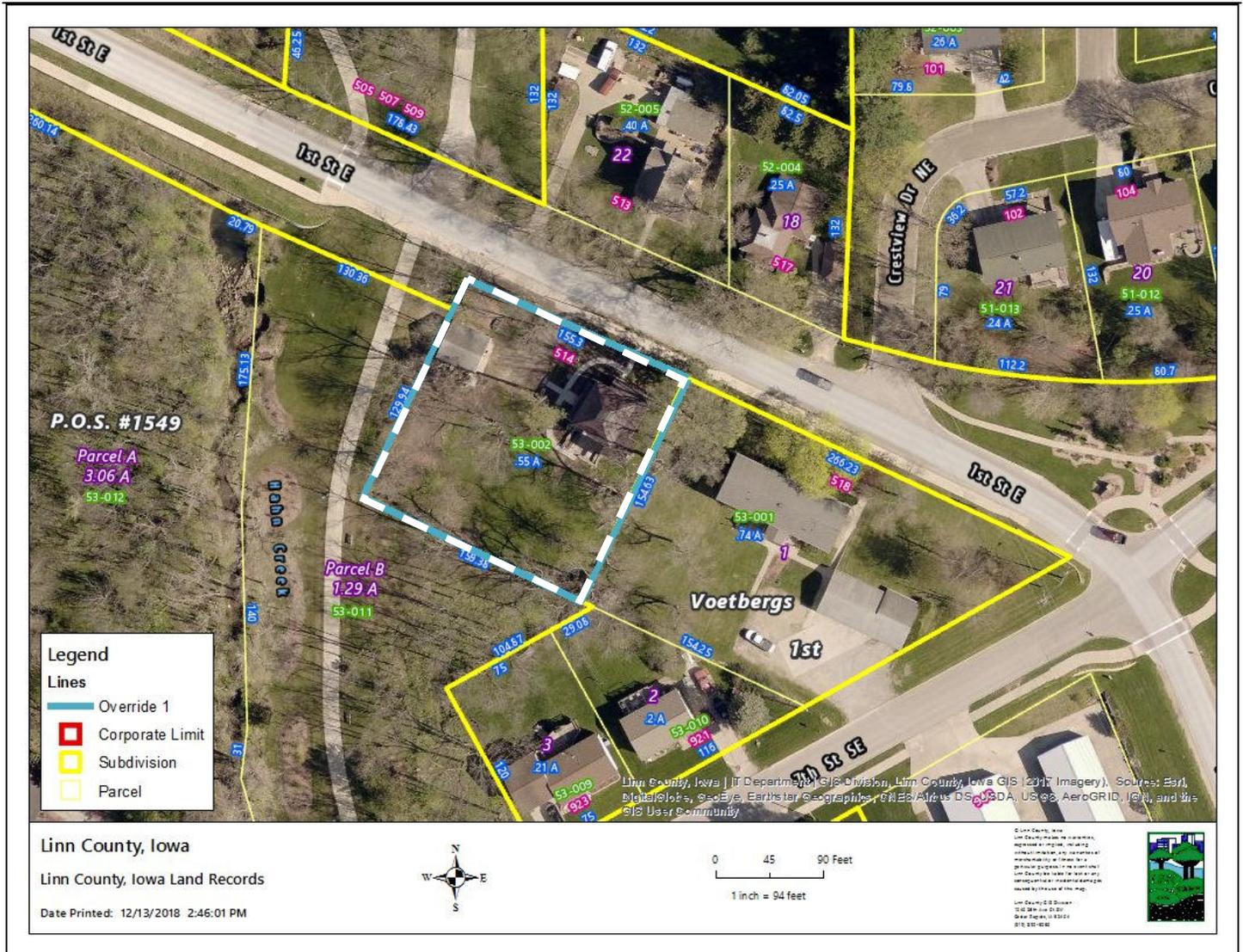


Figure 18. Local Location Map.
Source: Linn County, Iowa GIS, 2018
(white dashed outline = NRHP nomination boundary)

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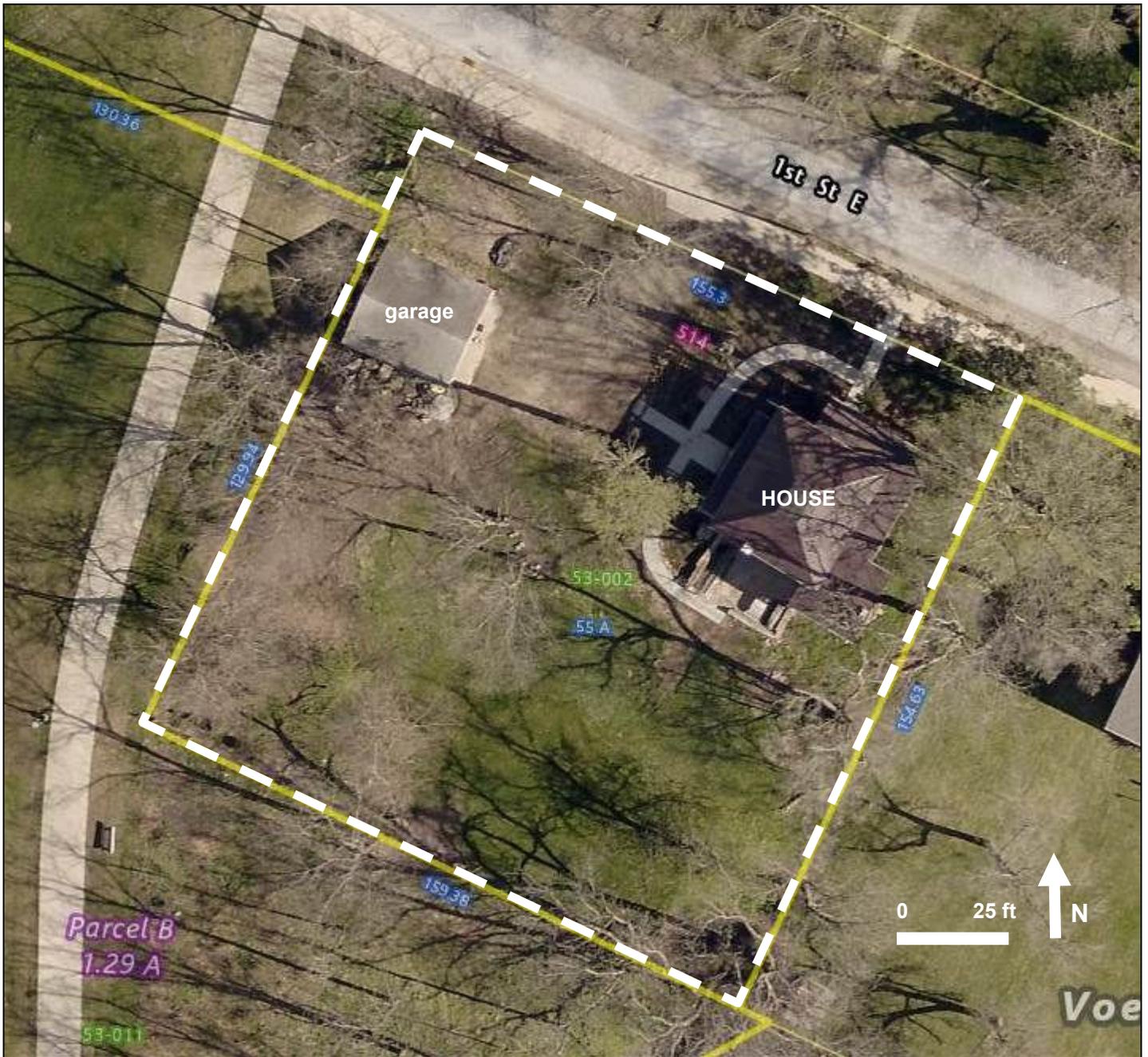


Figure 19. Site Plan Map showing NRHP Boundary of Robinson House.
Aerial obtained from Linn County Iowa GIS website.

(white dashed outline line = NRHP nomination boundary)

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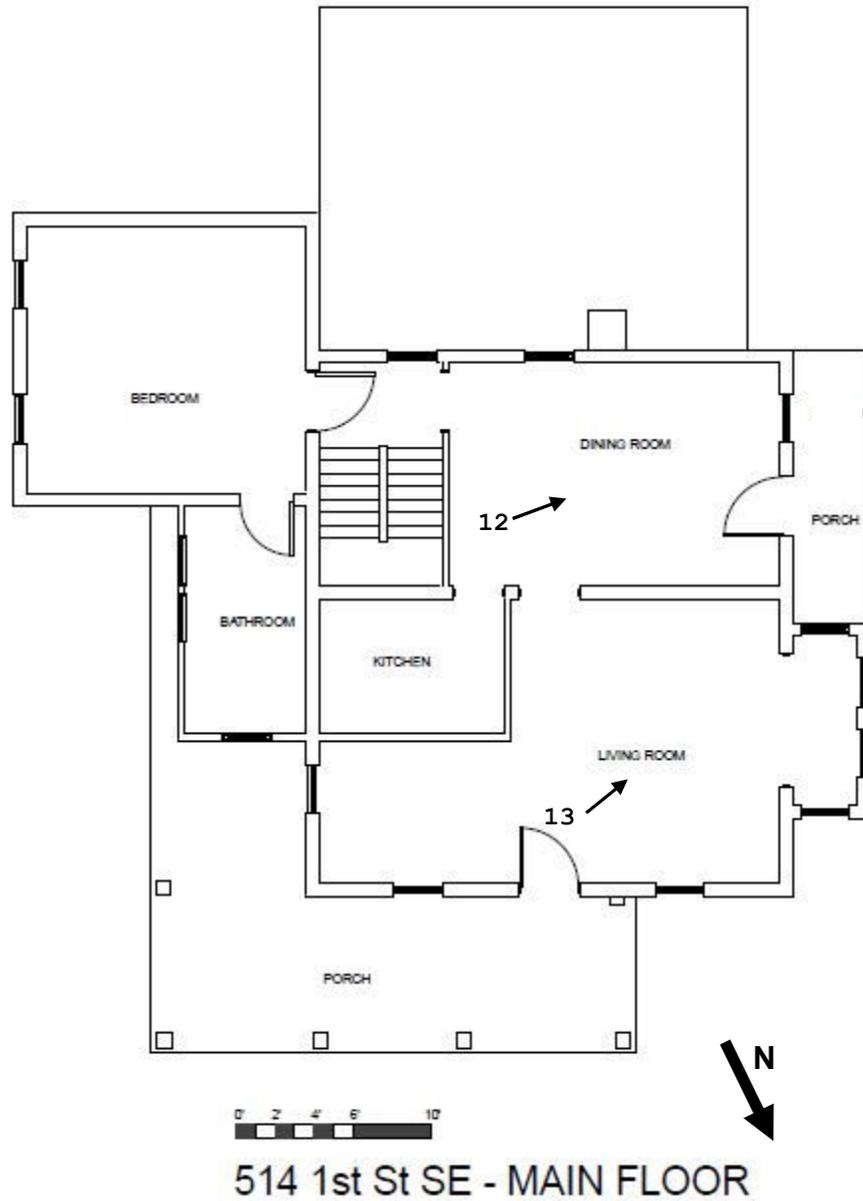


Figure 20. Main Floor Plan and showing directions of photographs #12-13

Drawn by Ed Sauter, Mount Vernon, Iowa

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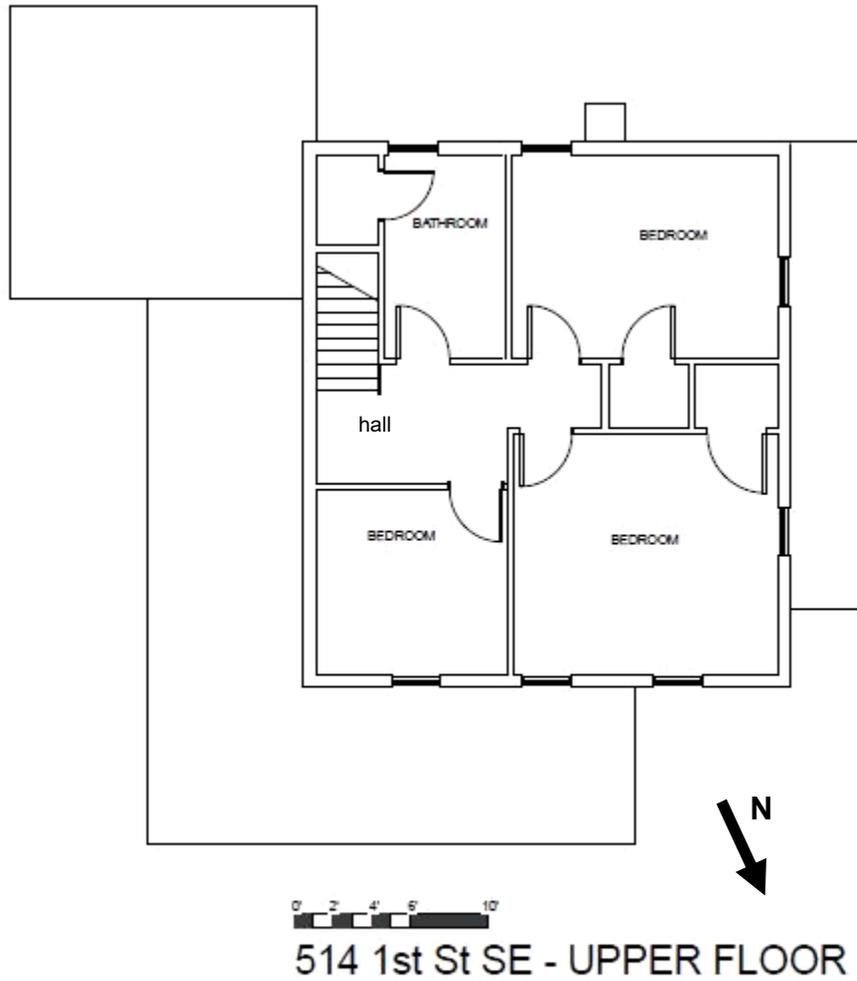


Figure 21. Upper Floor Plan

Drawn by Ed Sauter, Mount Vernon, Iowa

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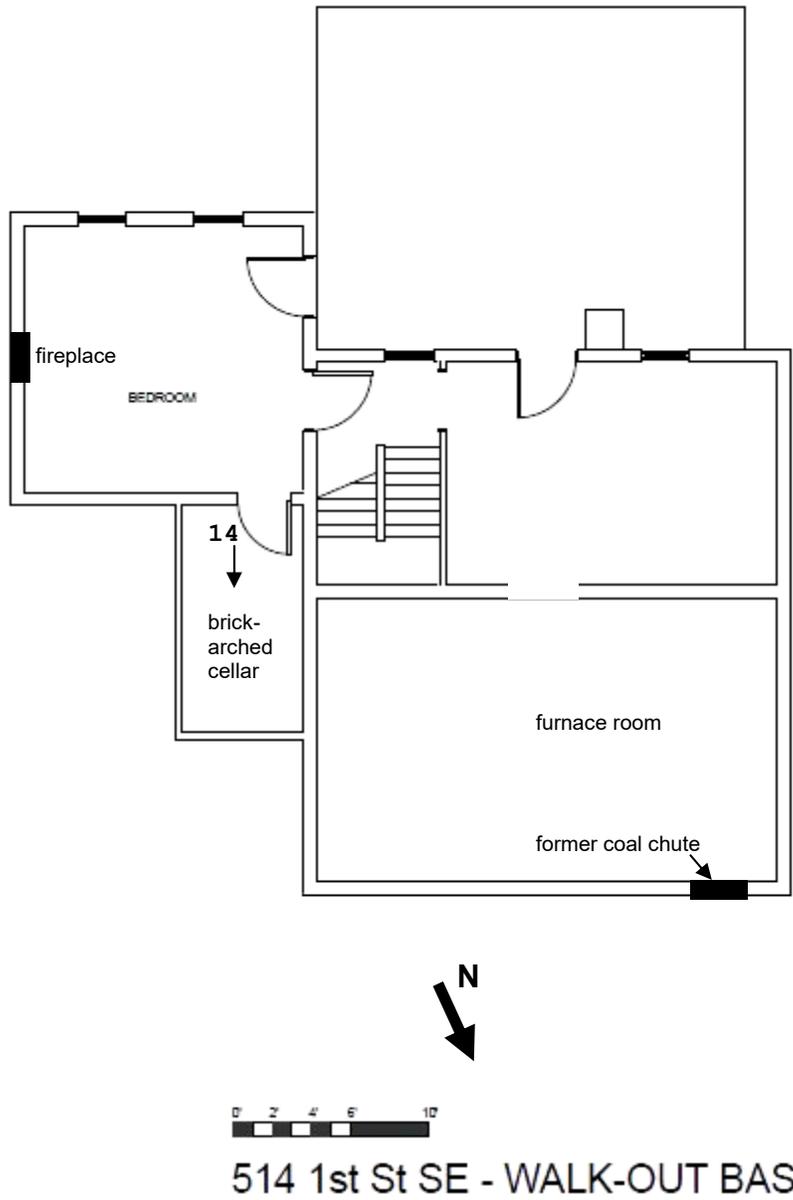


Figure 22. Basement Floor Plan and showing direction of photograph #14

Drawn by Ed Sauter, Mount Vernon, Iowa

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Figure 23. Site Plan Map showing direction of photographs #1-11
Aerial obtained from Linn County Iowa GIS website.
National Register Boundary = white dashed outline

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Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 3000x2000 pixels, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Robinson, George W. and Mary J. (Maxwell), House
City or Vicinity: Mount Vernon
County: Linn **State:** IA
Photographer: Mary Evans and Paul and Sondra Meyers
Date Photographed: May 2, 2018 and September 1, 2018

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- Photo 1 of 14: General view of Robinson House from 1st Street looking SSW
- Photo 2 of 14: General view of Robinson House and garage from 1st Street looking WSW
- Photo 3 of 14: Façade and west side of Robinson House looking SSE
- Photo 4 of 14: West side of Robinson House looking SSW
- Photo 5 of 14: West side and Rear of Robinson House looking NE
- Photo 6 of 14: Rear (south side) of Robinson House looking NNE
- Photo 7 of 14: Rear and East side of Robinson House looking North
- Photo 8 of 14: East side of Robinson House looking WNW
- Photo 9 of 14: East and North (façade) sides of Robinson House looking SW
- Photo 10 of 14: Closer view of front porch of Robinson House looking South
- Photo 11 of 14: Closer view of bay window and west-side porch of Robinson House looking SSE
- Photo 12 of 14: Interior of dining room looking West
- Photo 13 of 14: Interior of living room looking SW
- Photo 14 of 14: Interior of brick cellar looking NNE

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Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.