

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

SENT TO D.C.

1-16-2002

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 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 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 **Ursa Town Hall**

other names/site number **Ursa Odd Fellows Hall**

2. Location

street & number **109 South Warsaw Street** _____ Not for publication

city or town **Ursa** _____ vicinity

state **Illinois** code **IL** county **Adams** code **001** zip code **62376**

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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.)

William L. Hildebrand / SHPO
Signature of certifying official

1-19-02
Date

Illinois Historic Preservation Agency

State or 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 commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

American Indian Tribe

Ursa Town Hall
Name of Property

Adams County, Illinois
County and State

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

entered in the National Register

See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the
National Register

See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the
National Register

removed from the National Register

other (explain):

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

 1

Noncontributing

 0

buildings

 0

 0

sites

 0

 0

structures

 0

 0

objects

 1

 0

Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

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

N/A

Ursa Town Hall
Name of Property

Adams County, Illinois
County and State

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Social/Meeting Hall
Government/City Hall

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Government/Polling Place
Social/Meeting Hall

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Colonial Revival

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation **Stone/Limestone**

Roof **Metal**

Walls **Wood/Weatherboard**

other

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

Ursa Town Hall
Name of Property

Adams County, Illinois
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.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a 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)

Politics/Government

Entertainment/Recreation

Period of Significance **1895 - 1951**

Significant Dates **1895**
 1908

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above) **N/A**

Cultural Affiliation **N/A**

Architect/Builder **Unknown**

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Ursa Town Hall
Name of Property

Adams County, Illinois
County and State

9. Major Bibliographical References

(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 (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 # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property **Less than 1 acre**

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

Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

1 15 639300 4437200 3 _____

2 _____ 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.)

Ursa Town Hall
Name of Property

Adams County, Illinois
County and State

11. Form Prepared By

name/title **Milo R. Anderson**

organization **Committee of Local Men** date **July 11, 2001**

street & number **R.R. #1, Box 237** telephone **217-964-2391**

city or town **Ursa** state **Illinois** zip code **62376**

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 the SHPO or FPO.)

name **Ursa Township**

street & number **2454 E. 745 Street** telephone **217-964-2426**

city or town **Ursa** state **Illinois** zip code **62376**

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 the 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 Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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URSA TOWN HALL

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION:

The Ursa Town Hall is Colonial Revival. It was built in 1895 and is located near the center of the village of Ursa at 109 Warsaw Street. The building was originally called the Odd Fellows Hall, as stated in the monthly meetings of the township in 1896. In 1902 the same meetings referred to the hall as the Ursa Town Hall. It continued to be called the Ursa Town Hall and all news stories called it by that name.

On February 5, 1895, the trustees for the Marcelline Lodge No. 127 purchased from Samuel and Louise Grimes a tract of land for \$200. Later when the town of Ursa was laid out in additions and lots this would become Leachman Addition, lot number nine (9). The following is the legal description as recorded in a Warranty Deed located at the Adams County Recorders Office, Quincy, Illinois:

Beginning Two hundred and eighty-one and thirty-two hundredths (281 32/100) feet South of the North West corner of the South East quarter of Section Eighteen (18) Township One (1) North of Range Eight (8) West of the Fourth Principal Meridian, thence East One hundred and Nineteen (119) feet, thence South Sixty-six (66) feet thence West One hundred and Nineteen (119) feet, thence North Sixty-six (66) feet to place of beginning.

In an article in the weekly Mendon Dispatch Times on April 16, 1895 it states on page 2 under Ursa Items: "A firm from Canton, Mo., has the contract to build the Odd Fellow's Hall in Ursa. The rock is being hauled and work will soon begin." The only other known information concerning the construction of the hall was found in The Daily Herald of Quincy, Illinois, on October 24, 1895 on page 4 under, Ursa, Oct. 23: "The exercises at the Odd Fellow's Temple last Thursday were very interesting. The building of the altar was done in systematic order. Then Col. Berry of Carthage came forward in his jovial manner and proposed to tell the waiting audience all the secrets of the order. The entire program was received with applause."

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URSA TOWN HALL

The two-story building is of wood-frame construction. The building is rectangular in plan. Its façade is to the west on Warsaw Street. The building is seventy feet (70') long and thirty-two (32') feet wide. There is an extended limestone foundation on the West side of the building. It extends North and South, the full width of the building. It extends West seven feet ten inches (7' 10"). On the North end of the foundation there is an entrance slab of concrete that leads to four steps. On the South end of the foundation, there is a concrete slab that lead to three steps to the foundation and three steps that lead to a concrete sidewalk that follows along the South side of the hall. Originally, the hall had no front porch. The addition of the porch was approved in 1908, as indicated in the Ursa Township meeting records of April 7, of that year. The porch is the full width of the building and extends West nine feet (9'). It was originally supported by four wooden porch supports and wooden balustrade. The porch supports were replaced by four steel porch supports and a steel balustrade. The present Mayor of Ursa, Carl Barlett, says the replacements were made in the Spring of 1974.

The exterior walls of the hall are covered with weatherboarding painted white. The Doric pilasters on the façade are still intact. It had paneled double doors, each with one light. On Nov. 1, 1992, the doors were replaced with two unglazed metal doors. The original doors have been saved.

The door surround has Doric pilasters and a rectangular transom with beveled patterned glass. The Hall has a metal standing seam hipped roof. It has built-in eaves with drainpipes on each corner. The drainpipes on the façade are connected to the eaves on the porch which drain West of the walkway from the hall. There are two chimneys. The façade has a dormer with two small windows. The exterior of the Ursa Town Hall has several decorative elements. On its façade, the dormer projecting from the sloping roof displays the three links which symbolize the Odd Fellows motto, Friendship, Love, and Truth. Directly below the roof, there is a classically inspired element, which resembles a Palladian window that displays the date of construction and the letters I.O.O.F.

There are four paired double-sash wooden windows with four over four lights on the façade. Two are located on the first floor, on either side of the entrance. The other two are located on the second floor, directly above the first floor windows. Beneath the first floor windows is a water table, which runs along the perimeter of the building.

On the South elevation, there are ten wooden framed double-sash windows, six on the second story and four on the first, with four over four lights. Towards the Southeast corner of the elevation is another entrance, with a transom with four lights and a paneled door with four lights. A handicapped ramp with a wooden railing was installed in 1987. Steel, split-lid cellar doors are located near the middle of this elevation. The cellar, which is 30 feet by 12 feet, originally housed a furnace and coal bin.

On the East elevation, there are two wooden framed double-sash windows with four over four lights, asymmetrically placed, with one on the first and one on the second story. A small window with a fixed light is located on the second floor near the southeast corner. A five-paneled wooden door is located near the Northeast corner of this elevation.

On the north elevation, there are ten wooden framed double-sash windows, six on the second story and four on the first, with four over four lights. The smaller chimney, located on the slope of the roof, is visible from this elevation.

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URSA TOWN HALL

Overall, the downstairs has two small east rooms and, adjoining to the west, the main hall. This hall has thirteen (13) double-hung 4 over 4 wooden windows. Each sash is forty-six inches high by thirty-six inches wide. The inside of the main downstairs hall is fifty-two feet nine inches (52' 9") and thirty feet eight and one-half inches wide (30' 8 1/2"). The ceiling is twelve feet (12') high. The flooring is three-inch wide tongue and groove pine and varnished. All walls have wainscoting covering the lower four feet of the walls. The wainscoting has been varnished. The kind of wood is pine. The rest of the walls and ceiling are plaster covering wood lathes. The walls and ceiling are painted a light tan. The paint appears to be the original. The north and south walls have two wood boards each approximately ten feet long with coat hangers placed about a foot apart. The wood molding around the doors and windows is varnished. The ceiling light fixtures originally were hanging lights with frosted ten inch white globes. These fixtures have been removed and replaced by hanging fluorescent light fixtures. Originally there was a raised stage connected to the east wall. The stage has been removed. The date of removal for both the light fixtures and stage is unknown.

There are two adjoining rooms to the east of the main downstairs hall. The northeast room for many years was used as a kitchen. It measures north and south fifteen feet three inches (15' 3"), east and west the room is sixteen feet (16'). The southeast corner has a closet three feet (3') wide and eight feet (8') long which is located under the upstairs staircase. The closet still has china dishes, which were used many years ago. In the Ursa Township meeting book on page 184 on November 10, 1925, there is a list of dishes that the board decided to purchase. This room has three five paneled wooden doors. There is a gas furnace located in the south and west corner. The date of installation is unknown. The 5 paneled wood door in the south wall leads to the south and east room. The southeast room has east and west walls that measure twelve feet five inches (12' 5"). The north and south walls measure fifteen feet (15'). The west wall has a wood five paneled door leading to the main downstairs hall. The north wall has a wood five paneled door leading to the northeast room. This is the same door mentioned in the description of the northeast room. The south wall has an exterior wood double paneled glazed door with a rectangular transom. There is a window east of the door that is a double-hung 4 over 4 with wood sash. A stairway is located in the southeast corner of this room. Facing the east along the south wall there are six steps to the first landing. The stairs have decorative newel posts and turned balusters. The walls in the stairway have pine wainscoting. The stairway follows the east wall up fifteen steps to a landing that is eleven feet ten inches (11' 10") in length and a width of three feet one inch (3' 1"). There is a window on the east wall of the hallway and a wood five-paneled door on the west that enters a room before entering the main upper hall. Overall the upstairs has two small east rooms and adjoining to the west is the main upper hall. All upstairs windows are double-hung and measure 3' 2" by 3' and have wooden sashes. The upper hall and rooms have the same three inch tongue and groove pine flooring and wainscoting, plaster walls and ceiling, as the downstairs hall. The walls are painted light green and the ceilings are light tan. The paint is faded and appears to be the original.

After entering the door from the landing there is a room that measures east and west eight feet eleven inches (8' 11"). Measuring north and south the room is thirteen feet five inches (13' 5"). There is a north window and a closet in the northeast corner. There is a wood five-paneled

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door that enters the south room. In the west wall there is a centrally located four feet six inches (4' 6") wide paneled wooden pocket door which enters the main upper hall. The room to the south of the north room measures north and south seventeen feet (17'). The east and west measurement is eight feet eleven inches (8' 11"). The south room has a similar pocket door in the west wall entering the main upper hall. There is a closet in the southeast corner with a 1' by 1' square window with a fixed light in the east wall. There is a regular sized window centrally located in the south wall. The ceiling in the two east rooms are eleven feet (11') high.

The main hall to the west of the two rooms is fifty-one feet seven inches long (51' 7"). The hall is thirty feet eleven inches (30' 11") wide. There are five windows on the north wall and five windows on the south wall. There is five feet eight inches (5' 8") between each window. There are two double windows on the west measuring three feet wide each (3'). The ceiling is fourteen feet high (14') and is convex. There are three frosted globe lights that hang on chains and two ceiling fans. They are evenly spaced in the central area of the ceiling. Two seven-foot cord droplights are located near the west end of the hall. The floor is covered with worn carpet. Chairs and other furnishing have been there since the hall was built in 1895. The main hall has wood molding. A raised platform with a Baldachinno is located against the west wall. The posts on the Baldachinno have Eastlake detailing.

There was originally a small building about six feet east of the east outside wall of the hall. It housed two outdoor toilets and a small storage area. In 1984, the Village of Ursa installed a sewer system and forbid any outdoor toilets to exist in the village limits. Thus, the township board demolished the building that housed the toilets and storage space. As of the year 2001, the township has not installed indoor toilet facilities, citing the reason to be the cost of installing and maintaining them. This has reduced the use of the hall considerably.

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URSA TOWN HALL

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Ursa Town Hall meets criterion A from 1895 to 1951 for its local significance for Politics/Government for its use as a Town Hall, and Social History, Entertainment, Performing Arts, Recreation center and its use as an I.O.O.F. Lodge. It was and still is significant to the town's people and local farm families as a lodge hall, a meeting hall for town and village meetings, local organizations and businesses. It was and still is the official voting place for Ursa Township. Through the above period, school plays and church suppers were held in the hall.

HISTORY OF URSA THROUGH 1951

The first information that historians have mentioned on Ursa dates to 1828. Its main street was Fort Edwards Road. The fort was built after the war of 1812. The road was a trail to Alton, Illinois. Samuel Groshong, who was a U.S. Government message carrier, traveled this trail by foot after the fort was built. He lived near Ursa and owned land here in 1823. At that time it was known as Bear Creek Territory and was in Pike County. By 1828, it was a small community with a store, blacksmith shop, and hotel. Near the hotel there were pens where drovers could pen hogs and cattle being driven to the market in Quincy. The first store was owned by Peter Vannerst, and his wife. The honorable Richard Johnson established the Post Office on March 12, 1836 and named the town, Ursa, as stated in Ursa Post Office records. The post office was located in the store and Peter Vannerst was the first postmaster. Doctor Pierson was the first medical doctor. In 1833, Rev. Stephen Ruddell established Bear Creek Christian Church; later the name was changed to "Ursa Christian Church". A small number of homes were built in Ursa. At that time the population was less than 100. It was located on the south bank of a creek that was later name Ursa Creek. In 1825, Adams County was formed. Three elected commissioners governed the county. In 1850, a different type of government was established and twenty-three townships were formed including Ursa. All officials were elected including township and county officials, in a designated polling place in each township.

In 1875, an event occurred that would change Ursa completely. The C. B. & Q. railroad was built a quarter of a mile north of Ursa. It was called the Carthage branch. Almost immediately lots were laid out surrounding the intersection of the railroad and Fort Edwards Road. This road would be renamed Warsaw Street. By 1879, the town had almost completely moved to this area. There was a railroad station, a steam operated mill, and an elevator. Ursa became the main shipping center for grain and livestock. In 1895, the Ursa Town Hall was built in the new area. Through 1951, the town would never be incorporated. In 1920, a group of farmers formed a corporation and built "The Ursa Farmers Co-op Elevator". Today, it is the largest business in Ursa. After a major fire in this part of Ursa in 1901, destroyed several buildings, including a small meeting hall above a store, Ursa Town Hall would become the center of social, political and recreation for Ursa. There were two more major fires in the central part of Ursa which occurred in

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1906 and 1933. In 1934 a volunteer fire department was organized and major fires have since ceased. In the early 1920s, it appeared that the Ursa community may be more than just a small town. In 1926, the main highway from Quincy was paved. It came through Ursa and then branched out to Mendon and Warsaw. With all weather, highways, and fast vehicles Ursa lost most of its business to the larger city of Quincy. Today, it is a place where farmers retire and a bedroom town for Quincy. ("People's History of Quincy and Adams County"; page 737; Truman Waite author; Jost & Kiefer Publishers.)

URSA TOWN HALL

A warranty deed was recorded in the Recorder Office of Adams County, Illinois that stated on February 5, 1895, Samuel and Louise Grimes deeded a tract of land to the Trustees of Marcelline Lodge No. 127 I.O.O.F. for the sum of \$200. Earlier that year The Mendon Dispatch reported on January 31, 1895: "Ursa has good prospects of having a Town Hall and entertainment hall combined; also a Masonic hall on the second floor. We hope the prospects will loom up into a fine hall in the near future." The Mendon Dispatch, April 16, 1895: "We understand that a firm from Canton Mo. has the contract to build the Odd Fellows Hall in Ursa. The rock is being hauled and work will soon begin."

On Oct. 24, 1895, The Daily Herald, of Quincy, Ill. reported: "Oct. 23,--The Ursa Odd Fellows Hall was dedicated and an Odd Fellows Official from Carthage, Ill., by the name of Colonel Berry was the speaker."

ODD FELLOWS LODGE

With the completion of the town hall, Marcelline Odd Fellows Lodge 127 search for a meeting hall came to an end. The lodge had moved from Marcelline to Ursa on Nov. 19, 1889. The lodge would use the upper hall. The Masonic Lodge 1129 would share the upper hall. Later when the women's lodges Rebekah and Eastern Star were organized, they also met in the upper hall. The Odd Fellows had built the hall without financial help from any other organization or individual. It was built to accommodate its rituals, being of the right size, and their meeting hall being on the second floor to ensure and protect their secret ritual. The Odd Fellows were well accepted and many new members had joined. It was the custom for the lodge not to solicit new members but for an individual to ask to be a member. The members would then hold a secret ballot and most individuals that applied for membership would be accepted if they were of good character. If even one of the members would cast a negative vote, the individual would not be accepted. This would be "Black Balled". An individual who believed a member would cast a black ball against his membership would hesitate about asking to be a member. It was a method to ensure having members of high quality. It was significant to Ursa to have a fraternal organization that advocated improving and elevating the character of man. This is their

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URSA TOWN HALL

"Objective". The Independent Order of Odd Fellows Lapel pin features three links of a chain. Each link encloses a letter: F for Friendship, L for Love, and T for Truth. This is their motto. On the halls façade the dormer projecting from the sloping roof displays the three links. If any person or child should question the significance of the three-link symbol, there surely would be an Odd Fellows member nearby to explain what it stood for.

The Odd Fellows Fraternity offered its members many benefits. Members and their dependents would never become a public charge. Although the benefits of membership were not lavish, they did eliminate the possibility of being cold, hungry and homeless. The monetary assistance amounted to \$2 or \$3 per week. The lodge also paid funeral benefits that ranged from \$50 to \$500. While these amounts seem rather insignificant today, they were substantial amounts in the period of 1895 – 1951 and certainly had an impact on the economy of the community. The government programs of today often were patterned after earlier programs developed by the Odd Fellows such as Social Security, unemployment benefits, public assistance, low-income housing, senior meal sites, and meals on wheels. A fraternal organization that would offer these benefits was significant to the Ursa community. Another benefit of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows was to visit the sick, which extended to non-members of the community. During the late 19th and early 20th century, visiting the sick could be a daring and bold thing to do. It was a real possibility the visitors would contract the illness or disease. Odd Fellows visit the sick as matter of course and continue to this day to make a special effort to visit all the sick of the community. It was significant to the citizens of Ursa to have this promise. Odd Fellows Lodges conducted funeral and memorial services for members upon request. Caring for widows, likewise, was one of the basic duties of all Odd Fellows, and the lodges continued to include the widows of the members in lodge functions and activities. Orphans of Odd Fellows could expect an education at least through high school. During the period of significance, and continuing today the Odd Fellows and their sister organization, Rebekah's, maintain children's homes and orphanages with highly qualified staff and teachers. Odd Fellows members also enjoy the opportunities for socializing at lodge meetings, dinners and other activities. Many individuals first came in contact with the lodge through a community Christmas or holiday party sponsored by the Odd Fellows and Rebekah's. (June 15, 2001, letter and pamphlets from the Odd Fellows Grand Lodge of Illinois, Lincoln, Illinois 62656.)

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The Odd Fellows designed the lower hall to accommodate local government, business meetings, dinners, and social events. Although, in the beginning, the township didn't own the lower hall, it held its monthly meeting there. At the annual meeting held April 1, 1902 on page 75 of the Town Meeting Journal, it states that the township had purchased the downstairs hall for fifteen hundred dollars and a deed was issued. Since then the hall has been the official voting place for Ursa Township. This is for all township, county, and

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national elections. The small southeast room on the lower floor of the hall was reserved for the Justice of Peace to process any kind of business he may have had, such as Constable arrests, fence line disputes, and marriages. It was used as late as 1949 to process speeding tickets issued by the State Police. The Office of Justice of Peace has been discontinued. During early Mississippi River floods, the hall was used as a distributing point for clothes and food for local flood victims. Such use made the hall an important building within the community. The Ursa Township still holds its monthly meetings at the hall.

**LOCAL BUSINESS MEETINGS &
COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES**

As previously stated the Ursa Farmers Co-operative Elevator was built near the railroad and central business district of Ursa in 1920. Its business has thrived and today it is the largest business in Ursa. The meetings were all-day events with a dance in the evening. Its annual meetings for its shareholders were held in the Ursa Town Hall from the beginning and continued to do so through 1980 when the hall became too small to accommodate the shareholders. The hall is centrally located with a seating area in the main lower hall for two hundred people. The hall was available to most any group as long as they did not serve alcohol and the event was within the limits of the law.

The Ladies Willing Helpers Society of the Ursa Christian Church served a Thanksgiving dinner that was held annually in the hall from 1903 to 1933. They served 500 people or more each year. In 1933, a larger church was built that was able to accommodate the dinner. The Willing Helpers Society paid for one-half of the cost of construction of the new church with the proceeds from their annual Thanksgiving Dinners.

Since the Ursa School did not have an auditorium, and there was no other public meeting hall available in Ursa, the school used the hall on a regular basis for its programs. All school Christmas programs were held each year and the high school had a three-act play there each spring. The plays and programs fostered individual student talent, good work, and play habits. One of the students that participated in these programs was Barbara Rowell (formerly Barbara Grimmer). With her love for the theater, she pursued an education that led to a career in the performing arts. She has been director of The Quincy Community Theater for many years. She directs several live performances each year that range from drama to comedy. The schools used the hall from 1895 to 1947 when the schools in Adams County were consolidated and Ursa lost its high school and grade school. However, other organizations such as 4-H Clubs, farm organizations, Odd Fellows, Mason Lodges, and their sister organizations held dinners, soup suppers, and plays. The Ursa Eastern Star Lodge, as reported in the Mendon Dispatch-Times on page 7, March 8, 1949, would stage "The Twinkle Star Minstrel" with home town talent on March 11 and 12th at the Ursa Town Hall. "From all reports it will be a sure-fire hit from first curtain to finale."

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URSA TOWN HALL

In the early 1920s through the early 1930s, Medicine show performers would rent the hall for one night. A few days before the show an advance man with advertising would arrive in Ursa. He would leave advertising in all the stores that would allow it. Also, any telephone pole or abandoned building was choice spot to place his advertisement. The medicine shows were free. The shows would consist of singing, dancing, and comic routines. They were designed to attract a large crowd for the pitchman and his sales of "wonder-cures" and "snake oil". This offered Ursa citizens some variety and relieved them of some of their loose change.

For a time in the 1930's, there was a weekly black and white movie at the Ursa Town Hall. The people who presented the movie called on any small town that had a hall. At intermission, they sold boxes of Cracker Jacks that contained popcorn and a small trinket. Before the movie started, there would be a brief account on screen of the next week's movie. They had capacity crowds and admission was ten cents a person.

The Mendon, Illinois, 4-Star Library has "The Mendon Dispatch-Times", on microfilm which is a weekly newspaper starting in 1869 and continuing through today. Although a fire in the 1950s' destroyed several issues, there are still enough copies to show the many activities that took place over the years. A few of the articles are partially copied below:

Dec. 23, 1897, page 2, "Ursa Items, The I.O.O.F.'s will give an oyster and general supper on next Friday night.'

April 28, 1898, page 2, Ursa Items, "The Odd Fellows of this place will celebrate their anniversary to-morrow night.'

Oct. 30, 1902, page 2, Ursa Briefs, "The Rebekah's will celebrate Halloween. They will give a supper and play in the Town Hall. "

Nov. 20, 1902, page 2 Ursa Items, "The Rebekah's gave an entertainment and supper last Friday evening. All had a good time, receipts about \$34.00."

May 23, 1916, page 1, Ursa Items, "Club of Quincy's working girls gave a comedy "Miss Fearless" at the Town Hall May 18, 1916."

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URSA TOWN HALL

Feb. 5, 1920, page 1, Village of Ursa, "The finance committee of the C.E. society report having taken in something over \$17 at their social given at the town hall last Saturday night. This is a little wide awake society and much good is derived from their untiring efforts."

Feb. 17, 1921, page 2, Ursa. "Last Saturday night, a social was held at the town hall given by Sunday school class No. 3. The young folks served oyster soup, sandwiches, and coffee. A fish pond and guessing contest also were enjoyed and quite a crowd gathered to spend the evening. The same evening the I.O.O.F. Lodge met in the upper part of the building where quite a number were being installed, and late in the evening they were also served by the young class. Quite a little sum was taken in amounting to \$38."

April 7, 1921, page 2, Ursa Items, "The Old Maids Convention' will be repeated at the Ursa Town Hall Saturday evening, April 9, by the P.K. girls assisted by friends. We promise you some fun. One look will be enough to give you a good laugh. Admission 25 and 15 cents."

Nov. 1, 1923, page 4, Ursa Local, "The Odd Fellows had their annual Roll call last Saturday evening. Dues to the amount of \$100 were paid in. A number from a distance were present. After the regular business meeting an oyster supper was served."

Feb. 5, 1930, page 2, (headline) "3-Act Comedy Play -- Ursa Town Hall, Feb. 7."

Jul. 3, 1930, page 2, "Fried Spring Chicken, all one could eat, mashed potatoes, gravy, creamed peas, salads, preserves, jelly, ice tea, bread and butter and pie made up the menu served by the Eastern Star Chapter last Wednesday evening in the Ursa Town Hall."

Oct. 23, 1930, page 2, "The Ursa Town Hall was filled to capacity on Saturday evening Oct. 18th when the music pupils of Ethel Woodruff Stockhecke appeared in a public recital. People from Marcelline, Lima, Mendon and Quincy were among those present."

Feb. 13, 1936, page 5, "Fireman's Play was a Super Hit, Ursa's amateur actors and actresses, scored highly for themselves when they most ably presented 'Silas Smidge from Turnip Ridge' on Feb. 6 and 7 at the Town Hall. On both nights they play to a full house."

Jan. 14, 1943, page 2, "The war-leaders and co-leaders of the school districts of Ursa Township met at the Ursa Town Hall Thursday evening for instructions concerning the program for National Farm Mobilization day. Edwin Weber, a veteran of World-War I conducted the school."

Dec. 13, 1945, page 3, Ursa -- "Public Installation of officers of Ursa Chapter O.E.S. was held Friday evening, Dec. 7th in Ursa Town Hall."

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URSA TOWN HALL

Feb. 13, 1947, page 3, "The Ursa Farmers' Company held its annual all day meeting at the Ursa Town Hall Wednesday with a bountiful dinner served at the noon hour by the ladies, wives of the stockholders. There was a large attendance."

Mar. 11, 1948, page 2, "At the regular meeting of the I.O.O.F. Lodge Saturday night special honor was given to Wm. Hill who has been a member of the lodge for 55 years. He was presented with a 55 year pin. Refreshment was served and a social hour enjoyed by Mr. Hill. Other members present were Amual Houdyshell, Elmo Warning, Milo Anderson, Bob Voth, Roy Schultz, Cecil Inman, Chris Baker, and Bert Woodruff."

April 22, 1948, page 2, "The Ursa Happy Hour 4-H club of Ursa entertained the Ursa Jolly Juniors, Ursa Indian Grave, Mendon Marvels, Mendon Merry Maids, Rock Creek Advancers, and Ellington 4-H clubs Saturday night April 17th in the Ursa Town Hall. Approximately 100 were present at the rally and every one participated in the Grand March and several square dances."

Feb. 17, 1949, page 2, "Stockholders of the Ursa Farmers' Co-operative Elevator Company held their annual meeting at the Ursa Town Hall. The meeting was attended by more than 325 stockholders. Keith Sickles, manager gave some figures on 1948. A total of 1,015,000 bushels of grain was handled. A total of 208 carloads of grain were shipped."

Dec. 8, 1949, page 1, "O.E.S. Officers Installed at Ursa, The installation of the 1950 officers of Ursa Chapter Order of Eastern Star, was a simple but most Inspiring occasion of last Friday night."

Jan. 19, 1950, page 5, "Installation held by Ursa Masons, Glenn E. Brennecke was installed as worshipful master of Ursa lodge #1129, A.F. & A.M. Thursday night Jan 12."

Mar. 23, 1950, page 5, "Rebekah Lodge has Meeting. A large attendance was present at the regular meeting of the Golden Leaf Rebekah lodge. They will sponsoring a box supper Wednesday, Oct. 24, starting at 6:30 p.m., at the Ursa Town Hall."

Nov. 22, 1951, page 5, "Oyster Supper, Mr. & Mrs. George Grotz and Panchetta entertained at an oyster supper at the Town Hall Sunday evening. They took this means to say thank you to all the friends who assisted them while George was ill."

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URSA TOWN HALL

URSA HISTORY AFTER 1951

The town of Ursa remained unincorporated in 1951 and was governed by Ursa Township. Its officials offered very little for future development of Ursa. The retired farmer felt no need of a village organization that may make laws that hampered his lifestyle. In the early 1960s as the village grew and the young families outnumbered the retired folks, it became increasingly apparent that there were advantages to incorporate the village. So after a "hardsell" by those that believed themselves to be more civic-minded individuals, the town of Ursa became incorporated on Jan. 29, 1964.

The new government was known as the Ursa Village Board. All village meetings and voting were held in the Ursa Town Hall. In 1968 the village received a \$168,000 loan from the Farmers Home Administration to develop a water system. The Ursa Waterworks was dedicated on Dec. 11, 1968. In the beginning 123 homes, 24 businesses, 2 churches, 3 gas stations and 1 grain elevator were connected to the water system. With the new water system a new problem arrived. As early as 1971, it became apparent with the increased use of water the individual septic tanks could not handle the increase of water consumption. In 1984 the village installed a sewer system at a cost of \$1,007,894. To force the use of the sewer the village passed an ordinance forbidding outdoor toilet facilities. The Ursa Township Officials took a dim view of this ordinance. They demolished their outdoor toilets and did not install village water. Repercussions from this action soon became apparent. With no toilet facilities, the use of the hall diminished.

During the period of significance for the Ursa Town Hall, there was a charge for rent that ranged from \$2 to \$3 a day. Today the charge is still quite modest. There is a charge of \$10 in the summer and \$15 in the winter. Because of the lack of toilet facilities since 1984, the halls use as a recreational facility has been drastically reduced. However, it still is the official polling place for Ursa Township and is the town boards monthly meeting place. The Mason Lodge 1129 holds their monthly meeting in the upper hall. The Marcelline Odd Fellows Lodge 127 was closed on June 10, 1980. Most every Friday and Saturday there is a rummage sale. The hall is still available to any person or group as long as they don't serve liquor and their activity complies with the law.

In October of 1998, the following advertisement was received in the mail of Ursa and Quincy patrons and other nearby towns. The Quincy Art Center sponsored it.

"Oct. 1998, DRACULA, Local theater goers will get a real thrill on Oct 29, 30, and 31 when LDM Productions presents the thrilling, chilling mystery vampire play Dracula. It will take place in the Town Hall located in Ursa, Illinois, at 7:30 p.m. Halloween hors d'oeuvres and beverages will be served. Limited seating. Tickets will be \$20 each person."

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On Oct. 29, 30, and 31 the above-mentioned Dracula play was presented. Capacity crowds attended each performance. They did have available several outdoor Porta-Potties rentals for the customers. This is the last theater production presented at Ursa Town Hall. No dances, suppers or meetings have been scheduled. Several Ursa citizens would like the Ursa Township Officials to reconsider installing indoor toilet facilities.

CONCLUSION

The Ursa Town Hall retains sufficient integrity for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The hall has played an important role in the political and social history of Ursa. Many of the village's social events took place there, and the upstairs is still used by the Masons for their meetings. It is still used today for village and town meetings, and serves as the community's voting place.

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URSA TOWN HALL

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Adams County Recorders Office, Quincy, Illinois
Feb. 5 1895, Warranty Deed.

Letter from: Independent Order of Odd Fellows
Illinois Grand Secretary, Wendel Pigg
Lincoln, Illinois 62656

On microfilm at 4 Star Library, Mendon, Il.
Mendon Dispatch-Times. News articles concerning the Ursa Town Hall.
Dates: Jan. 31, 1895, April 16, 1895, Dec. 23, 1897, April 28, 1898,
Oct. 30, 1902, Nov. 20, 1902, Nov. 20, 1902, May 23, 1916, Feb. 5, 1920,
Feb. 17, 1921, April 7, 1921, Nov. 1, 1923, Feb. 5, 1930, Oct. 21, 1930,
Feb. 13, 1936, Jan. 14, 1943, Dec. 13, 1945, Feb. 13, 1947, Mar. 11, 1948,
April 22, 1948, Feb. 17, 1949, Dec. 8, 1949, Jan. 19, 1950, Mar. 23, 1950,
Oct. 18, 1951, Nov. 22, 1951.

People's History of Quincy and Adams County Illinois.
Editor: Rev. Landry Genosky, O. F. M.
Published by Jost & Kiefer Printing Co.
Article on Ursa Township, pages 735, 736, & 737.
By Historian, Truman Waite

Ursa Township meeting journals.
109 Warsaw Street, Ursa, Illinois. 62376.
April 17, 1901, page 90, April 1, 1902, page 75,
Township information.

Quincy Public Library, Quincy, Illinois.
On microfilm The Daily Herald,

Oral history interview with: Maurice Grimes, June 2000.

Memories of the Past
Author and Publisher, Truman Waite, 1993.

Ursa Township, Its People & Neighbors,
Author and Publisher, Milo Anderson, 2000

United States Census for 2000.

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URSA TOWN HALL

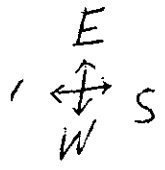
Boundary Description:

The description of the lot as recorded on page 147 in the Adams County Recorders Office, Quincy, Illinois, states from a Warranty Deed; Beginning two hundred and eighty-one and thirty-two hundredth (281 32/100) feet South of the North West corner of the South East quarter of Section Eighteen (18) Township One (1) North of Range Eight (8) West of the Fourth Principal Meridian, thence East One Hundred and Nineteen (119) feet, thence South Sixty-six (66) feet, thence West One Hundred and nineteen (119) feet, thence North Sixty-six (66) feet, to place of beginning.

This is on lot number nine (9) in Leachman's Addition.

Boundary Justification:

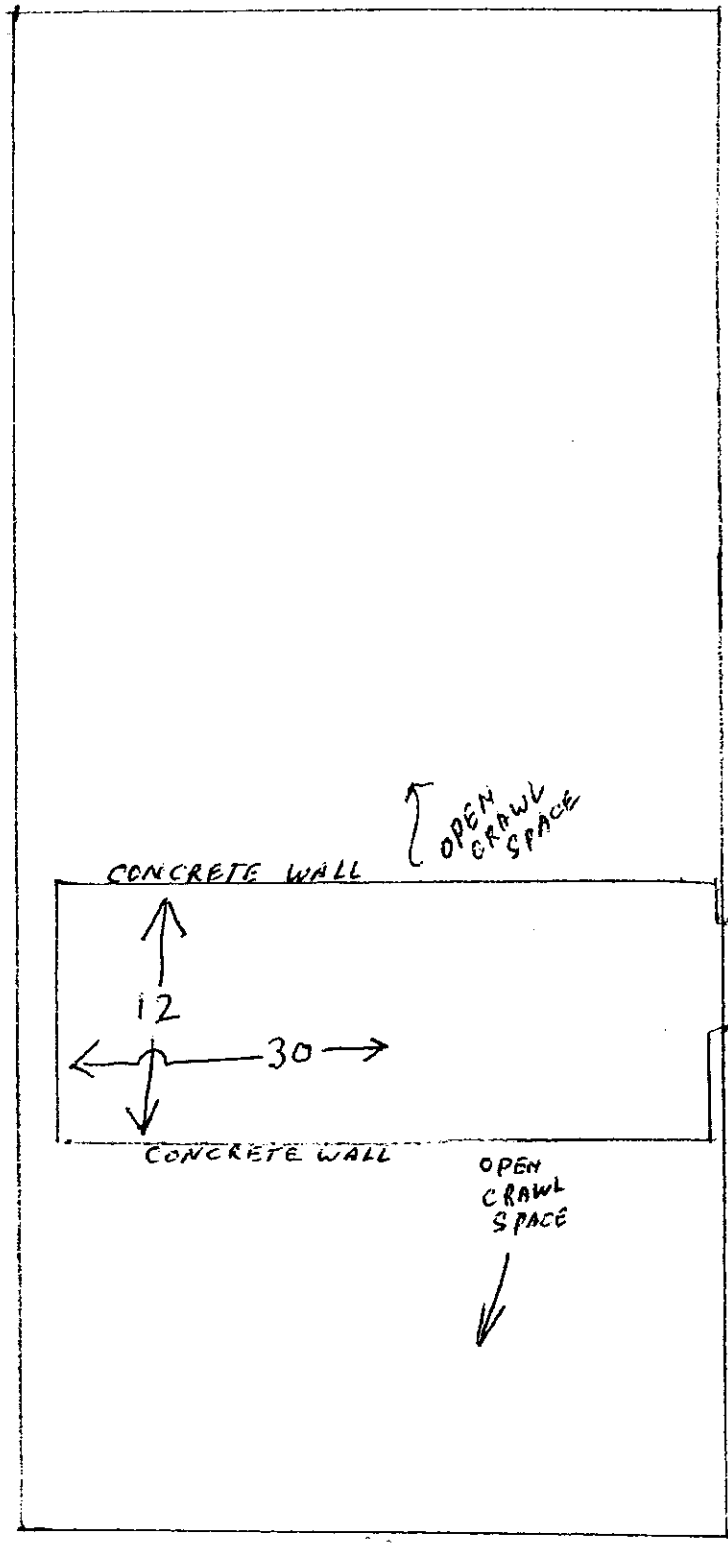
The boundary includes the Ursa Town Hall and the surrounding area that has been historically associated with it.



URSA TOWN SHIP HALL BASEMENT

32'

70'



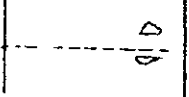
CONCRETE WALL

OPEN CRAWL SPACE

12

30

OUTSIDE BASEMENT STEPS



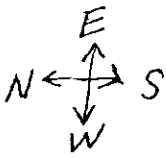
STEEL SPLIT-LID DOORS

CONCRETE WALL

OPEN CRAWL SPACE



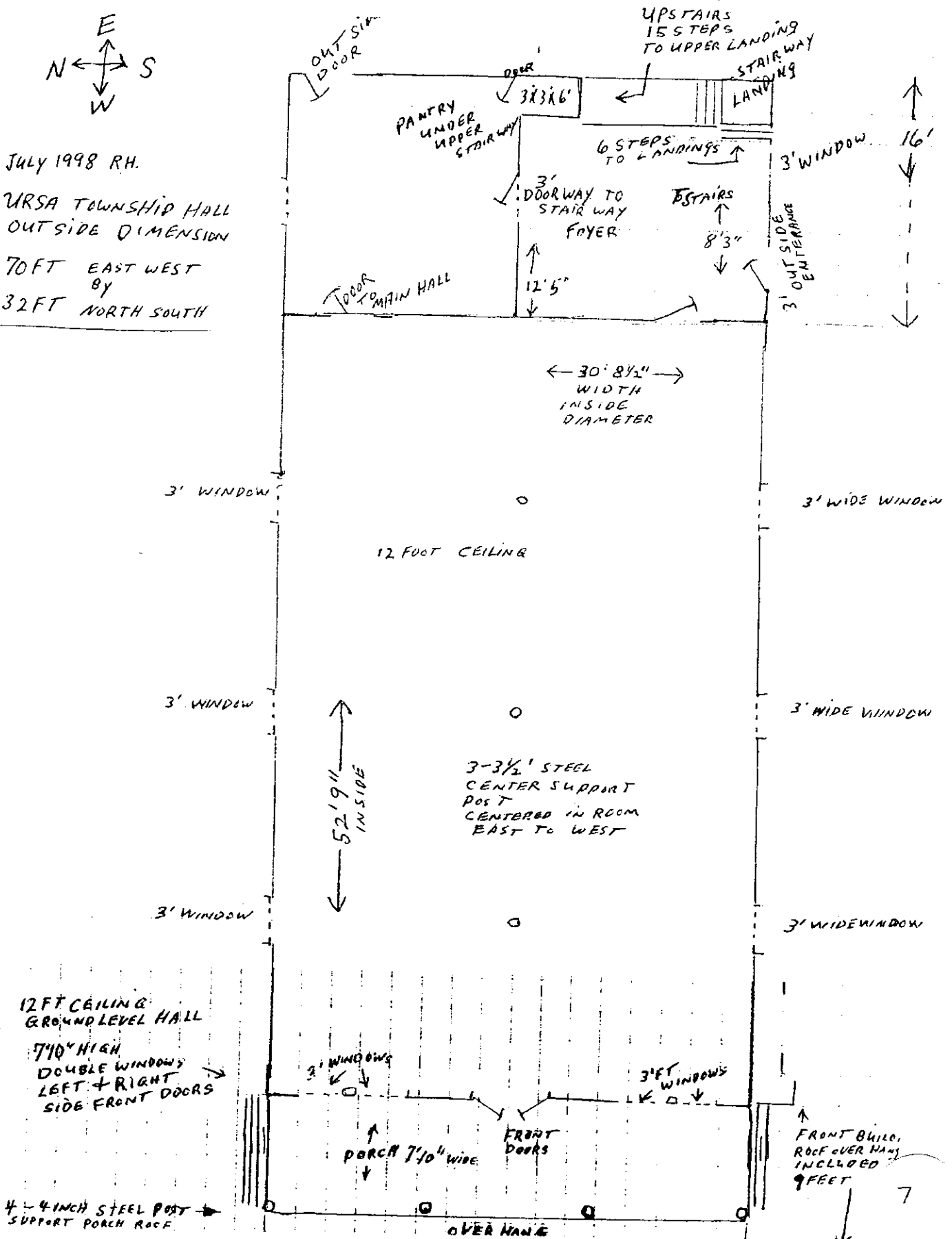
URSA TOWNSHIP HALL - LOWER GROUND LEVEL



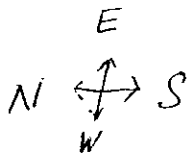
JULY 1998 R.H.

URSA TOWNSHIP HALL
OUTSIDE DIMENSION

70 FT EAST WEST
BY
32 FT NORTH SOUTH



SECOND STORY - UPPER HALL



ARSA TOWNSHIP HALL
 OUTSIDE DIMENSION
 70 FT EAST/WEST
 BY
 2 FT NORTH/SOUTH

