



Villisca National Guard Armory
Villisca, Montgomery County, Iowa
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Introduction

My hometown of Villisca, Iowa is in the first stages of restoring and renovating our National Guard Armory, located at 316 E. Third Street. It was built in 1912 and finished in 1913. It is one of the oldest standing armories in Iowa and has a very rich history and connection with the community. A community member and the Villisca Economic Development Director, Roxanna Seiber, approached me over Christmas break because she knew I was pursuing my architecture degree and knew she needed an architect's expertise on such a project. If enough money is raised to carry out the project to completion, the architect in charge would be Invision Architecture in Des Moines, which is where I have been working for the past year, and who has already wrote some preliminary quotes for construction costs and architectural services.

The Villisca Armory has already been surveyed and evaluated in 2000 (Inventory No. 69-00108) by Leah Rogers, Principal Investigator of Mount Vernon, Iowa for its potential National Register eligibility. The survey was conducted at that time because of plans by the Iowa Army National Guard to close the armory and transfer ownership to the Villisca High School. Ms. Rogers' opinion is that the armory is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places at the local level for its historical (Criterion A) and architectural (Criterion C) significance, although its strongest significance lies in its historical associations.¹

The goal of this paper is to collect pertinent information that would help the Villisca Armory to actually get on the National Register of Historic Places, while also looking at what the future plans are for the building and how certain Secretary of Interiors Briefs would apply to this building.

¹ Rogers, Leah. Intensive Survey and Evaluation of the Villisca National Guard Armory, 2000, pg. 1

National Guard Armories in Iowa

National Guards are military reserve forces with both federal and state missions, and if needed in a community when local law enforcement officials can no longer maintain civil control. The President or Congress can call up the National Guard into federal service and the Governor may call individuals or units into state service during emergencies. Nationwide, the Army National Guard consists of approximately one half of the U.S. Army's available combat forces and about one third of its support organization². In 1838 the Iowa Territorial Militia was organized and was first mobilized in 1839 to go to war against Missouri in a border dispute, later called the Honey War. After Iowa gained statehood in 1846 the Iowa Territorial Militia became the Iowa State Militia, and since then Iowa has provided many troops to fight in all battles and could be considered some of the most loyal to our country. By the end of the Civil war, Iowa had the highest per capita involvement of any state, North or South. The US 34th Division, which included soldiers from Iowa, was credited with more combat days in the WWII than any other division, and was honored with numerous awards and decorations³. The Iowa Army National Guard maintains 45 armories in 44 communities, and of the approximately 135 buildings that were built as armories from 1874-2004, 87 still stand, 42 are still owned by the Guard, and the rest are in private ownership. There are none older than Villisca's which are still owned by the Guard and there are eight older than Villisca that are privately owned⁴. These buildings have strong ties to the history of the communities, as it was on the community to build the building. These buildings serve for social and patriotic organizations. Iowa almost always contributed more than their fair share of support for wartime. Southwest Iowa could almost be considered the strongest supporters and contributors to the Iowa National Guard than any region in Iowa. The evidence why could be that most were of a Northern European decent and that the organizers of the National Guard were from the region.⁵

2 <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/agency/army/arng-ia.htm>

3 *ibid*

4 Jones, Mary, Correspondence, 4-18-08

5 Jones, Mary, Personal Interview, 3-31-08

Atlantic is the only Armory listed on the National Register for Historic Places, while the Cedar Rapids Memorial Building, built as both a community building and armory is also on the Register.

Villisca Armory – Historical Significance

The town of Villisca was formed in 1868 along the Burlington main line, where it was connected a year later. It is located right off of Highway 71, 4 miles south of Highway 34 (Appendix 1, Fig. A). The current population is right around 1,300, where it was as large as approximately 2,500 in the early days of its flourishing. As early as 1876, there was mention of a military unit in Villisca. Records show that several locations were used before the East Third Street armory was built. The unit originally formed as Company I, 5th Regiment, first met in the City Hall by at least 1877. In 1880, the unit obtained a new armory on Third Avenue, after the unit was re-designated as Company B. The building later became Theo Johnson's Livery stable. In February 1892, the company owned its own hall, which was also used as an opera house, and used until the current Villisca Armory was built in 1912-1913. It is unique from most other armories in that it was placed on the town square and built solely for armory use. Excavation for the basement began in July of 1912, and the first drill of the company, then Company F, 55th Regiment, was held in March 1913, and the building was completed in May of 1913. Official dedication took



Figure 1. Front Facade from 1938 IAARNG Annual

place on May 15, 1913, with Governor George W. Clarke and his staff in attendance, along with many local and state dignitaries and high-ranking National Guard officers. It is important to

note that while the date over the entryway reads “1912” the building was not actually open for use until 1913. Architects are listed as W.A. Kelley and Less Arbuckle, while subsequent articles about the construction or dedication failed to mention whom the builder or contractor was for the project. Not much is known about the architects, except that it is likely that W.A. Kelley is William A. Kelley, who was a member of the Villisca unit; less is known about Arbuckle, but a William Arbuckle was the Villisca postmaster during this time and another Arbuckle, Clyde, was a member of company F and was severely wounded during WWI⁶. The new incorporation of the Co. F, 55th Infantry Iowa National Guard Armory Company on May 31, 1912 allowed the purchase of new land and to build a new armory to replace the old building. Funds were both raised and borrowed. The final cost of the building was around \$15,000 according to the local newspaper⁷.

In 1949 minor improvements were made to the building including replacement of the front doors and concrete steps and landing. In the 1950s and 60s a vehicle storage garage was built off the northeast corner and the windows across the front façade were replaced⁸. In 1973, the Villisca Armory was purchased by the State of Iowa through the National Guard Armory Board as part of the Purchase Option Lease Program. The Villisca National Guard Armory Corporation entered the Purchase Option Lease Program in 1953, which consisted of completely State supported procurement with no Federal funding assistance. As part of this program, local non-profit corporations could acquire title to a site or existing building through a long-term mortgage and lease the facility to the Armory Board of the State of Iowa. The Purchase Option allowed the State through the Armory Board to purchase a facility upon expiration of the terms of the lease or upon payment of the outstanding mortgage⁹.

In April 2000 the building was deeded to the Villisca School System for \$1.00 for use of a temporary location for classrooms while construction of a new school was taking place dur-

6 Jones, Mary, “Villisca Armory,” pg. 3

7 The Villisca Review, May 1, 1913

8 Rogers, Leah, Iowa Site Inventory Form Continuation Sheet, 2000, Pg. 1.

9 General Statement – Purchase Option Lease Program, 1973

ing 2000-2001 on the demolition site of the current middle/high school. According to school board member, Stan Schaaf, a few upgrades took place, such as, re-shingling and re-tarring the roof and electrical work, while temporary wall partitions were placed in the gym to house 8 classrooms. A room for art class was also constructed in the added on garage to the northeast, which required additional plumbing for a sink and wiring for electricity. Accommodations had to be made to the basement as well, which was used as the lunchroom and kitchen.

At its closure in 2000, it was the home to Detachment 1, Company A of the 1st Battalion, 168th Infantry. It continues to serve for purposes and functions of school such as a practice gym, weight room and storage after the current VHS was built. Before 2000 the armory had almost 87 years of service and has the longest record of continuous military use in the state of Iowa. It is one of at least 11 extant armory buildings in the state dating from the early 1910s in construction. The others include armories at Red Oak (c. 1910), Eagle Grove (c. 1914), Sioux City (c. 1910), Fairfield (c. 1910), Washington (c. 1913), Davenport (1911 and 1916), Cherokee (c. 1911), Charles City (c. 1910), and Knoxville (c. 1910). A preliminary evaluation done by Lance Foster of ISU indicated that of these eleven buildings, six were eligible or potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Villisca's Armory was listed among the eligible six; mainly because it is the oldest Armory building in use since its completion, and that it is located on the town square. Besides its military use, it also served the community of Villisca through many social, recreational and educational activities throughout its life-span¹⁰. It was the site of high school basketball games, proms, and the annual Fireman's ball. Thus, the Villisca Armory is eligible for the National Register primarily for its historical significance but also for its architectural significance.

Architectural Description

The Armory is a two-story masonry building that measures approximately 61 ft. wide by 122 ft. deep. The 1954 addition on the northeast corner extends onto the adjacent city lot.

¹⁰ Rogers, Leah. Iowa Site Inventory Form Continuation Sheet, 2000, Pg. 3

The front façade differs from the sides and rear by the type and color of bricks used. The front is a 6:1 American Bond load-bearing brick construction with the brick being a polychrome vitrified face brick with a tinted red mortar to match the brick and has coarse sand aggregate, while the sides and rear have softer brick with a lighter reddish-orange color. The front fa-



Figure 2. Personal Photograph, 3-28-08

çade has a recessed central entry marked by a corbelled brick archway with precast concrete lintel and accent details. A single window sits directly above the entryway on the second floor. The lintel has a nameplate highlighted in black reading "10Co. F 55 I.N.C. 12". The front double doors are metal replacement doors from 1949, where concrete steps lead up to the front door, which are also replacements of the original concrete steps and landing. A painted sign over the door reads "DET 1. CO. A / 1st BN. 168th INFANTRY," with the symbol of the Red Bull Division. The entryway is also flanked by symmetrically placed triple sets of windows across the second and first floor façade. The windows are primarily double-hung windows with an interesting 2/3 pane pattern using only horizontal muntins. The set of three windows on the first floor to the left of the entryway has a window with a gridded bar pattern, while two have been replaced, one being completely bricked in, while one has been removed and replaced with plywood and wall air-conditioner (for purposes of a computer room in 2000-2001). The lintels are corbelled brick, while the sills are precast concrete. The windows are all replacements dating from the 1950s-1960s (Fig. 2).

The interior of the armory has two full floors and a partial basement. The first floor has a central hall flanked by offices and storage space to either side in the south half of the building, as well as toilets. The staircases are also located in this area of the building. The majority of the floor to the north is a large hall used primary as a gymnasium that is open to the second

floor ceiling. That ceiling is covered with the original pressed tin ceiling. The north wall has two sets of two large windows with a fire exit at the northwest corner. A door at the northeast corner opens to a flight of stairs down to the added on garage (Appendix 1, Fig. B). The east, west, and south walls of the gymnasium have a balcony level on the second floor, which is lined with benches, and is supported by square wooden columns. The second floor has 3 classrooms, and 2 smaller rooms in the south half, with the balcony level encompassing the north half of the building (Fig. 3). There are also fire escape doors located at the end of the balcony at the north wall on both the west and east (Appendix 1, Fig. C). The basement has bathrooms, a lounge,



Figure 3. Interior looking to SW - 1994 IAARNG Annual

boiler room, old locker rooms, and a rifle range that was converted into a locker room. To the west of the former rifle range is an unexcavated area of the basement level that likely helped soundproof the rifle range (Appendix 1, Fig. D). When VHS took ownership of the Armory, the basement level, specifically the former rifle range area was converted into the lunchroom, with a section in the southeast corner serving as the kitchen.

Additions to the building have included a garage for the armory, measuring approximately 59' by 39', added to the northeast corner in 1954, which was built with textured tile brick walls and concrete block foundation. A modern garage abuts the southeast corner but is not associated with the armory building.

The overall architectural design of the building shows a mixed influence. The round-arched central entry and the use of corbelled brick to raise design details out from the façade shows some lingering influence from the Late Victorian Romanesque Revival style, while the castellations, which impart a monumental castle or fortress look to the building, showed influ-

ence from the Tudor Revival style of architecture then popular¹¹. The loss of the castellations and the replacement of the front façade windows have had an impact on the overall integrity of the exterior of the armory building. The interior retains good integrity, particularly in the gymnasium where the original features are largely intact¹². Although the spaces are intact, there has been some major deterioration of materials. The north part of the building has deteriorated increasingly in the last few years due to water damage. The tin roof has begun to fall off in many areas and paint has peeled even more, while insulation has begun to fall out as well. The wooden gym floor has seen significant water damage. The plaster on the wall has begun to fall off in large quantities in the northeast corner, thus exposing the brick underneath because of water damage, as well (Appendix 2). Overall, while impacted, the integrity is still sufficient to be considered eligible for its architectural significance because the overall plan and design of the front façade remains intact, particularly the round arched recessed entryway and fenestration.¹³

Historical Stories related to the armory

For anybody that is familiar with the town of Villisca, the reason one is, is probably because of the infamous 1912 Axe Murders. On June 12, 1912, the J.B. Moore family and two guests, daughters of Joseph and Sarah Stillinger, were murdered in their beds in the middle of the night. Presumably, an axe was used to crush their skulls, that which was found at the scene. Although arrests were made and trials conducted, no one was ever convicted. Recently, the unsolved mystery has gotten much press, with a documentary, a feature length film and two books having been produced. The Moore home has been restored to the early 1900's period and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It should be noted that the belief that the bodies of the eight victims were laid out in the armory gymnasium is not correct

11 McAlester and McAlester 1998

12 This section is a summary of Iowa Site Inventory Form Continuation Sheet - Narrative Description, Rogers, Leah, 2000

13 Rogers, Leah. Iowa Site Inventory Form Continuation Sheet, 2000, Pg. 1

because the murders and funeral services were held over a month before the excavation for the armory took place¹⁴. The armory was used, although, in relation to the axe murders. In 1917 it was the site of a public meeting to discuss the community's feelings on the crime. Occurring 5 years after the murder, the meeting shows that the community was still torn by the unsolved crime and the incident still under investigation by the county grand jury.

"Villisca Still Stirred – More Meetings to Discuss Moore Murder Case"

Last week there was a public meeting in the armory at Villisca to discuss the famous axe murder case. Detective Wilkerson was present and made his usual talks, and Mr. Jones, whom Wilkerson accuses of being instrumental in blocking the investigation, was also there. The discussion brought no new light on the case, but developed even more acrimony. The city of Villisca is very much divided over the case, and it is too bad. Of course, all good citizens wish the murderer ferreted out...
Adams County Free Press, February 7, 1917¹⁵

Although the Villisca units were very dedicated and loyal to their role in Iowa Military, dramas both in and out of the company's ranks divided the community at times, especially in the early days. The following are stories from various publications collected by Mary Jones, Environmental Specialist and historic guru on Iowa National Guard Armories.

During the Spanish American War, Villisca's unit served as Company B, 51st Iowa. A warm welcome for all units were to take place in Council Bluffs, where each company would have a place to meet their loved ones before the train took them back to their home towns for further celebration.

Villisca, Nov. 2 – Company B will get here Monday night and will be received with appropriate ceremony, but apparently the biggest portion of Villisca's population will go to Council Bluffs to welcome the boys there. The program here includes a reception by the band and a parade, following which there will be a banquet and toasts. The warmest reception will be in the homes when the long absent members rejoin the family circle.

Daily Iowa Capital, November 2, 1899

However, war-time accusations against one of the company's officers, former school superintendent A.F. Burton, caused speculation, rumors and dissention, and put a bit of a pall on the homecoming. The problems started in 1898, with the unit's first lieutenant off to the Klondike and the captain promoted to regimental headquarters, it was left to Second Lieutenant A.D. Poston to lead the company as they left for assembly in Des Moines prior to their deployment to the Philippines. To make matters worse, Lieutenant Poston failed to pass his physical once

14 Rogers, Leah. Intensive Survey and Evaluation of the Villisca National Guard Armory, 2000, pg. 1

15 Jones, Mary, "Villisca Armory," pg. 4

they reached Des Moines, leaving the company in charge of the first sergeant. When the first sergeant declined the captaincy, A.F. Burton's former students and supporters thought of him, even though he was now working in Nebraska. He was offered the captaincy, quit his job, and reported to Des Moines.

Trouble commenced almost immediately....his men say that he tried to introduce the same kind of discipline in the army that he had used in the school and that wouldn't go. At San Francisco things grew worse....They do charge that he treated the sick and dead with brutal indifference and but for the work of the Red Cross ladies the sick would have fared badly and the dead would not have been sent home for burial....The boys assert that he was a stickler for military etiquette....Another charge was that he loaned money to the boys, generally through a non-commissioned officer, charging 50 per cent per month or more for its use. His relations with his non-commissioned officers were not cordial, and more men were reduced to the ranks than in any other company.

Conditions did not improve after the regiment went to the Philippines and the climax came during the campaign before Calumpit. There, it is alleged, when commanded by Col. Miller to move his men under fire, he did not do so, remaining in a ditch with his bugler while his men took up their new position as ordered. [Other news reports state that the men of the company then drew up charges against him alleging cowardice, among other things.] A few days after that he asked to be relieved and his request received the endorsement [sic] of Col. Miller....Thinking he would be allowed to resign, Burton went to Manila, where he remained some time before he learned that his resignation would not be accepted and that, technically, he was absent without leave....Some time before the regiment left the firing line he again assumed command, occasionally taking the men out for outpost duty. He returned with the company on the Senator [the troop ship], and is at present at Villisca, stopping at the Fisher hotel, where he expects to remain several weeks.

In Villisca the feeling is divided. Some believe that Captain Burton is a victim of circumstances and that the boys are unreasonable in their prejudices, while a great number side with the boys and many go so far as to charge the captain with many things of which he is not guilty. The whole affair is unfortunate and for the good of the company it had been much better if some other appointment had been made....the matter should now be permitted to quietly drop out of sight.

Daily Iowa Capital, November 18, 1899

The Dubuque Daily Herald commented, "It is the first case of the kind in the Iowa regiment, and perhaps Iowa pride will be somewhat relieved by the knowledge that Capt. Burton came from Nebraska..." The Waterloo Daily Courier added: "It has now become fashionable for the returning volunteer regiments to bring a first-class scandal with them from the Philippines and the Iowa regiment seems not to be an exception" (October 24, 1899).

Captain Burton died of peritonitis in Salt Lake City, Utah, in 1901, with the Semi Weekly Iowa State Reporter announcing, "Blighted Life Ended" (March 5, 1901). Burton was in his late 30s.

The boys were in trouble again by 1908, with poor inspection ratings and a captain that "neglects" the unit, strong feelings against the first lieutenant and a second lieutenant that didn't live in town and had been absent for a year. Called "hopeless" by the Inspector General, the

unit was mustered out in on July 3, 1909.

The unit was quickly re-formed and as Company B, 55th Regiment, was mustered in at the “old armory” in July of 1909.

There were forty-five members who received enlistment. There must be fifty-eight at the time of the next regular inspection, January 21, 1910, so a few more recruits must be obtained to maintain the company, although all will not be required to attend encampment this year. Immediately upon being mustered in, the company proceeded [sic] to elect officers, and Dr. F.S. Williams, W.A. Kelley and A.J. Wertman received almost the unanimous vote of the company for the offices of captain and first and second lieutenants, respectively.

Adams County Free Press July 31, 1909

By 1910, Company B was making statewide news, but not in a good way:

Captain J.G. Poston, one of the best known national guard officers of the state, who commanded Company B, 55th regiment, at Villisca, must stand trial here soon on a charge of embezzlement from the state. He has been indicted, charged with falsifying his company pay roll, using his armory rental for improper purposes and general mismanagement of the company's financial affairs. There have been suspicions on the part of the military authorities in Des Moines that several company commanders have been guilty of this practice, but Poston is the first officer to be tried.

Waterloo Semi-Weekly Courier, April 8, 1910.

Villisca gave up her boys again for World War II. On March 2, Company F veteran and local drugstore owner “Cap’n Bob” Moore, led his troops to the train departing from the station. In February he had ordered them to “the Villisca armory with ‘3 suits of underwear (either long or short, whichever you wear); 6 handkerchiefs, 6 pair of socks (no silk); 1 white shirt (if you have one. It is not necessary, however)’” (Rick Atkinson. *An Army at Dawn: The War in North Africa, 1942-1943.*) They spent three weeks in town drilling and preparing for deployment.



Figure 4. Lt. Col. Bob Moore's
Villisca Homecoming, 1943
Earl Bunker (World Wide Press)

Shortly before eight a.m., someone spotted the flash of the drum majorette's baton on Third Avenue. “Here they come!” the crowd murmured. Behind the Company F guidance, Bob Moore led his men across the viaduct in perfect march step.

At the station, he commanded them to halt and fall out for final hugs and handshakes and murmured words of reassurance no one quite believed....the men disentangled themselves to heave their packs into the coaches, blowing kisses through the windows. With a shudder, the train lurched forward, and a great cry formed in the lungs of those standing on the platform, a roar of pride and hope and dread of all that was yet to come.

Company F, as part of the 168th Infantry, 34th Division, took part in the battle of Kasserine Pass (Appendix 3) in North Africa, where many of the unit's soldiers were killed or cap-

ture. During one battle of the North African campaigns, now Major Moore, led 420 men, cut off from Allied Forces, to safety. At war's end, a photo of Moore's homecoming in Villisca, snapped by Omaha World Herald photographer Earl "Buddy" Bunker, won the Pulitzer Prize and appeared in Life magazine (Fig. 4).

From 1948 on, an annual banquet was held at the armory to honor the soldiers who served in the war and to remember those who had not returned.

After World War II the unit was re-formed and annual military balls continued. In 1949, Adjutant General Grahl and his wife were to be present and former servicemen were encouraged to take part in the grand march. The Council Bluffs Nonpareil noted, "*Former servicemen who come in service attire may buy tickets at half-price.*" (November 21, 1949).

In 1950 the Chamber of Commerce decided to approach Adjutant General Charles Grahl with a request for a new armory. It was noted that if a new armory were built, the current armory would be used for public functions. This plan didn't come to pass, and in 1953 the armory ownership passed from the Villisca Armory Company to the state of Iowa.

Future Plans

Roxanna Seiber has been heading the efforts for the rehabilitation of the Villisca Armory. She has applied for multiple grants and has received funds totaling \$11,070 from the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs. Funding from direct mail and other grants are currently being undertaken¹⁶. From speaking with her and reading her application for the Cultural Affairs Grant, a future plan is intact for what the uses of the Armory would be. What the community would like to see be in the Armory is a place for permanent displays of history of Villiscans serving in the military, including military artifacts and documents, as well as spaces for art exhibitions of student art. The offices already located on the south end of the building would be used for offices for small businesses, possibly the Villisca Historical Society. The school system has indicated that they would like to continue using the armory as a practice facility as well as a weight room, which also could be used by the community. The large gym would also be used for various community social events, such as wedding receptions, dances/balls, conferences, etc. The vision for the basement is an eatery, with another smaller gathering space for certain events. According to Roxanna many jobs would be created such as, a part-time job

¹⁶ Seiber, Roxanna, Correspondence, 4-20-08

for someone to oversee the historical military artifacts and documents and full-time job for an armory manager. Further jobs will be created by the new small businesses, which will office in the building, and by the eatery, which will be located in the building. Additional jobs will be created by local businesses to serve the mini-conferences and social events held at the Armory. It is estimated that a minimum of two middle management and two owner level positions paying in excess of \$15 per hour and a minimum of five new service level positions. The level of success of the Armory will allow further new positions¹⁷.

These may seem like lofty goals, but living in such a tight-knit community for 18 years, I know that when Villisca is faced with a challenge to raise money for something that would enhance the community as well as provide for new jobs, they stand behind what needs to be done, and the money gets raised.

Suggestions

I have just recently visited the Armory in March 2008, taking many pictures of both the exterior and interior (Appendix 2). I have a good idea of what kind of repairs need to take place, although I haven't explored the structural or mechanical systems of the building. From my visit, I can to the best of my ability assess the condition the building is in. Many Secretary of the Interior Preservation Briefs should be followed concerning the Villisca Armory if it is to be placed on the National Register of Historic Places. I will explore each brief that applies to the armory and what actions should and should not be taken when restoring and rehabilitating the armory.



Figure 5. NW corner - Personal Photograph, 3-28-08

¹⁷ Excerpts from Cultural Affairs grant, Seiber, Roxanna, 4-19-08

Brief 02: Repointing Mortar Joints in Historic Masonry Buildings

As noted previously, there were two types and colors of brick and mortar used on the building. On the front façade there is load-bearing brick construction with the brick being a polychrome vitrified face brick with a tinted red mortar to match the brick and has a coarse sand aggregate, while the sides and rear have softer brick with a lighter reddish-orange color. Although I didn't see any locations that needed major repair, a closer inspection by a consultant probably needs to take place. There are certain places where a couple bricks have fallen



Figure 6. Front facade - Personal Photograph - 3-28-08

out and need replacing (Fig. 5). On the backside, there is evidence of past repointing, which is very evident. It looks as though 3 windows were filled in with brick. Overall, there doesn't seem to be any too big of issues on the backside or sides. On the front façade, the brick is in fairly good condition with some exceptions of cracking and some of the

mortar has eroded away (Fig. 6). Since the mortar is tinted red and has a coarse aggregate, if repointing is to take place in various locations, matching the mortar is probably the most important thing. Also, without close inspection, the brick and mortar should probably be inspected at the roofline. From general pictures, it looks as though some of the mortar has eroded. This is an instance where the root of the problem needs to be fixed, which is the roof. While repairs of the roof are taking place, special note needs to be taken to seal well the areas around the parapet.

It is hard to say what the content of the mortar is without an expert or laboratory analysis. With construction taking place in 1912-13, Portland cement had been used in the U.S. by this time, although not until the 30's was it used in equal parts with lime putty. According to the brief: The objective is to achieve one that matches the historic mortar as closely as possible, so that the new material can coexist with the old in a sympathetic, supportive and, if necessary,

sacrificial capacity. The exact physical and chemical properties of the historic mortar are not of major significance as long as the new mortar conforms to the following criteria: 1. The new mortar must match the historic mortar in color, texture and tooling. 2. The sand must match the sand in the historic mortar. 3. The new mortar must have greater vapor permeability and be softer than the masonry units. 4. The new mortar must be as vapor permeable and as soft or softer than the historic mortar¹⁸. The red pigment of the historic mortar most likely came from brick dust. If modern brick dust is not available, modern pigments are available to match, but should not exceed 10 per cent by weight of the Portland cement in the mix

Brief 04: Roofing for Historic Buildings

The major concern to address at this time, and possibly the largest and most expensive project to take on is repair of the roof. Major problem with leaking have been taking place at an accelerating pace in the last few years. It is important to note that repairs have taken place recently (after VHS took possession). The pitched roof over the gym area was reshingled, which the flat area over the south end and around the north end (that of which drains to the north) was re-tarred (Fig. 7). The design of the roof is a challenge because of the combination of the two types of roofs, and the recent repairs obviously haven't succeeded in preventing leaks. Thankfully the roof is not very visible and does not affect the architectural character. Before any action should take place, a complete internal and external inspection of the roof should be planned to determine all the causes of failure and to identify the alternatives for repair or replacement¹⁹. With the design of this roof, the root of the problem is that all the water drains to the south but is funneled into two small streams on the sides of



Figure 7. Roof facing north - Photograph by Stan Schaaf 4-17-08

¹⁸ National Park Service U.S. Department of Interior Preservation Brief 2

¹⁹ National Park Service U.S. Department of Interior Preservation Brief 4

the gabled roof. The gutters and downspouts may or may not be able to handle all the water, especially in hard downpours.

Because the roof is not visible and does not compromise the architectural character the brief notes that “if the roof is flat and is not visible from any elevation of the building, and if there are advantages to substituting a modern built-up composition roof for what might have been a flat metal roof, then it may make better economic and construction sense to use a modern roofing method.” This is a concern that needs to be addressed as soon as possible and probably the first job to be undertaken.

13 The Repair and Thermal Upgrading of Historic Steel Windows

Although the existing windows are not original steel windows, I wanted to discuss them because they contribute to the architectural integrity of the building. The windows are replacement, operable, aluminum windows from the 50’s and 60’s. They are double hung but with an interesting 2/3 pane pattern. The originals were double hung as well, but no indication as to whether they were wood or metal. The current condition of the windows seems to be in fairly good condition. My only concern for the windows is if they were to be replaced, similar double hung windows need to be selected. Also, on the front façade, the set of three on the first floor, 2, which have been filled in, and one, which has a gridded pattern, should be replaced with the similar double hung windows, which are currently in place.

A more careful assessment should be made of the condition of windows, and if replacement windows are in order, careful consideration should be given to the architectural significance and character of the building, and probably nothing but double hung windows should be used.

Brief 18: Rehabilitating Interiors of Historic Buildings

Looking at what kinds of ideas are in place for the interior spaces, not much of the existing spaces should be compromised. The main space, the gymnasium on the main floor is planning on staying, while actually functioning as it did in the past, as a gym for sporting

events, and holding dances and receptions. The front offices on the south side will still be used for such services. Even if walls are rebuilt and in a different configuration, I don't feel that it would compromise the architectural significance of the spaces. There really are no architectural features in the interior that should be considered restoring or keeping besides the pressed tin ceiling in the gymnasium, which should be patched in areas of deterioration. The balcony on the second floor is also a defining feature of the gymnasium, which should be preserved. Depending on what future uses for the gym would include, the seating should be preserved if events take place that requires many viewers, and an idea has been brought up to continue the balcony on the north side to create a complete balcony for use of a walking track. I feel that the balcony needs be preserved, but it should be put into function. In the basement there are structural columns aligned down the center of the large area (old firing range), which should be kept. I don't see that as a problem, because the plans preserve the open space, using it as an eatery. In conclusion, I've noted important interior features which should be preserved, and according to the plans, I don't think the interior spaces will be compromised that much. It is still important to understand what functions took place in the historic armory and to consider those uses before any changes are made. The careful identification and evaluation of interior architectural elements, after undertaking research on the building's history and use, is critically important before changes to the building are contemplated. Only after this evaluation should new uses be decided and plans be drawn up. The best rehabilitation is one that preserves and protects those rooms, sequences of spaces, features and finishes that define and shape the overall historic character of the building²⁰.

Brief 32: Making Historic Properties Accessible

Local codes, State codes and federal laws should be reviewed and the most stringent accessibility requirements should be followed. When it comes to accessibility, a team comprised of persons with disabilities, accessibility and historic preservation professionals, and building

²⁰ National Park Service U.S. Department of Interior Preservation Brief 18

inspectors should be consulted as accessibility solutions are developed²¹. Priorities are included in the brief and contain 1. Making the main or a prominent public entrance and primary public spaces accessible, including a path to the entrance. The current building would be considered non-accessible. The main entrance has 3 steps leading up to the front doors. The front façade also has the most historical architectural features that should be preserved. A minimal, but up to code ramp needs to be incorporated into the entrance, there is a minor slope to the east, so a recommendation for a ramp along the west side of the entrance is recommended because it would require the least amount of ramp. 2. Provide access to goods, services, and programs. All services on the main level are accessible, while alterations should be considered to make the upper level accessible. The lower level is accessible through the added garage on the northeast side through a non-ADA compliant ramp, but may be able to be altered to make ADA compliant. 3. Providing accessible restroom facilities. The restrooms are not accessible as of now, which needs to be altered. There are also no historic fixtures that should be retained. 4. Creating access to amenities and secondary spaces. A more in depth evaluation should be implemented to assess these. These Standards stress the importance of retaining and protecting the materials and features that convey a property's historical significance. Thus, when new features are incorporated for accessibility, historic materials and features should be retained whenever possible. Accessibility modifications should be in scale with the historic property, visually compatible, and, whenever possible, reversible²². Also, as said above, special accessibility provisions for historic properties will vary depending on the applicable accessibility requirements.

Conclusion

Because of the rich history and architectural significance of the Villisca National Guard Armory, pursuing inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places should be done. Not

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only can tax credits be received to help with the funding of the project, an important landmark in the town of Villisca will be preserved. Creating a place for community members and visitors to visit and use, while showcasing the rich history and dedication to the National Guard Armory will no doubtedly enhance the town of Villisca, making community members and alumni more even proud of their small town than they already are.

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Appendix 1

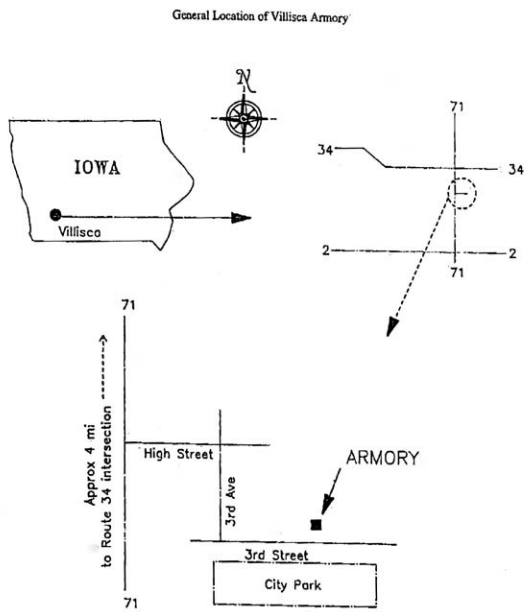


Figure A
Location Map. Rogers, Leah. Iowa Site Inventory
Form Continuation Sheet, Pg. 5.

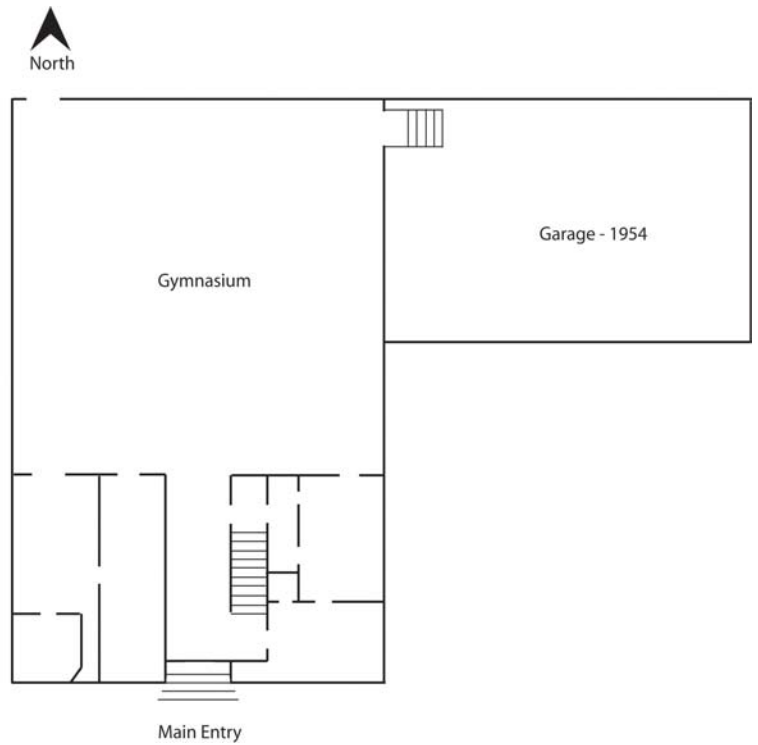


Figure B
First Floor Plan

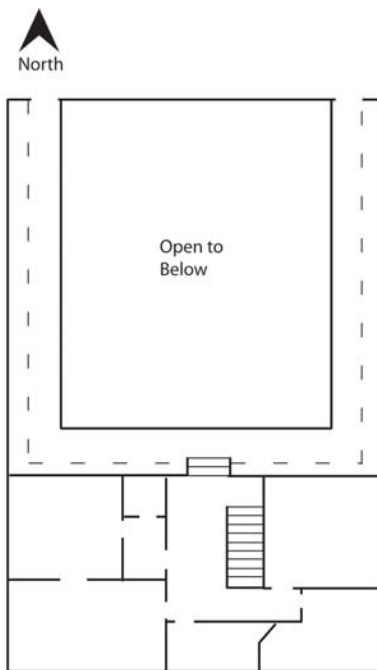


Figure C
Upper Floor Plan

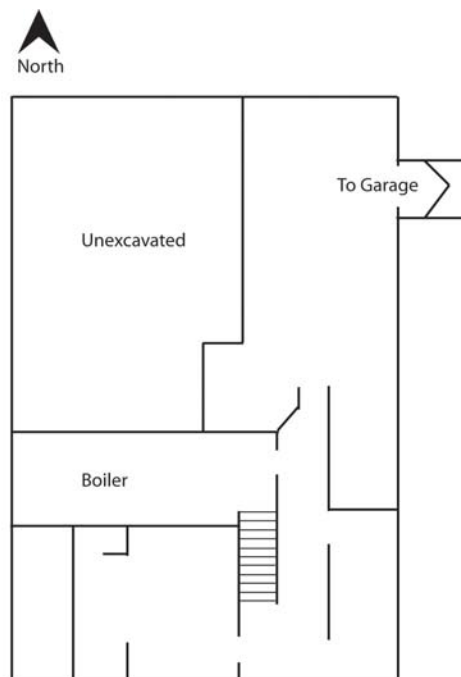


Figure B
Basement Floor Plan

Appendix 2 - Personal photos taken 3-23-08



Clockwise from top left: Gymnasium looking north, Balcony on east side of gym, South room west of main corridor, Evidence of gym wood floor water damage, NE corner of gym, Looking south to main entrance.

Abbey Williams

Villisca National Guard Armory

April 24, 2008

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Clockwise from top left: Office on main floor east of main corridor, On east balcony, East balcony, Damage of original pressed tin ceiling, Upper level classroom.



Clockwise from top left: Stairs from main floor looking to upper floor, Stairs from upper level onto balcony, Stairs leading down to basement, Basement room, Corridor in basement looking north.



Clockwise from top left: Bathrooms in basement, Looking at added-on garage at northeast corner, Fire escapes at northwest corner, Boiler in basement, Old firing range in basement looking north.



Clockwise from top left: North side of armory looking southeast, West facade, In context, Southeast corner.

Appendix 3 - "Villisca Armory," Jones, Mary

The men of the 168th Infantry, 34th Division were called into active service in February 1941. After training in Camp Claiborne, Louisiana, the men sailed for Northern Ireland in early 1942, where they continued their training. In November the division took part in the invasion of North Africa, facing the seasoned troops under the command of Field Marshal Erwin Rommel. At the time of the landing in Algiers, about a third of the men in the 168th Infantry were from southwest Iowa. Two hundred of these men were reported missing in action on February 17, 1943, at the battle of Kasserine Pass. The German victory there highlighted the lack of the U.S. soldier's (and their leader's) training in modern warfare, with tactics and equipment more in tune to WWI. Two Iowa battalions were taken prisoner by the Germans early in the Kasserine battle (with one battalion under the temporary command of Patton's son-in-law.) At the time of the battle's end, the number of telegrams bearing bad news at the home front mounted – with reports of missing soldiers flooding southwest Iowa Western Union offices – Clarinda, 41 men; Atlantic, 46; Glenwood, 39; Council Bluffs, 36; Shenandoah, 23; Villisca, 9, Red Oak, 45.