

Iowa Site Inventory Form

State Historic Preservation Office

(January 2016)

State Inventory Number: 44-00414 New Supplemental

9-Digit SHPO Review & Compliance (R&C) Number: _____

Non-extant Year: _____

Read the Iowa Site Inventory Form Instructions carefully, to ensure accuracy and completeness before completing this form. The instructions are available on our website.

• **Property Name**

A) Historic name: Van Allen Building

B) Other names: 2023 downtown survey # DT-121

• **Location**

A) Street address: 111 E. Washington St

B) City or town: Mount Pleasant (Vicinity) County: Henry

C) Legal description:

Rural: Township Name: _____ Township No.: _____ Range No.: _____ Section: _____ Quarter: _____ of Quarter: _____

Urban: Subdivision: Original Block(s): 10 Lot(s): Lot 4 - E 60'

• **Classification**

A) Property category: *Check only one*

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

B) Number of resources (within property):

<i>If eligible property, enter number of:</i>		<i>If non-eligible property, enter number of:</i>	
Contributing	Noncontributing		
<u>1</u>	Buildings	<u>—</u>	Buildings
<u>—</u>	Sites	<u>—</u>	Sites
<u>—</u>	Structures	<u>—</u>	Structures
<u>—</u>	Objects	<u>—</u>	Objects
<u>1</u>	Total	<u>—</u>	Total

C) For properties listed in the National Register:

National Register status: Listed De-listed NHL NPS DOE

D) For properties within a historic district:

- Property contributes to a National Register or local certified historic district.
- Property contributes to a potential historic district, based on professional historic/architectural survey and evaluation.
- Property *does not* contribute to the historic district in which it is located.

Historic district name: Mt Pleasant Downtown Historic District Historic district site inventory number: 44-02280

E) Name of related project report or multiple property study, if applicable:

MPD title Intensive Level Historical and Architectural Survey of Downtown Mt Pleasant, Iowa Historical Architectural Data Base # HADB-02986

• **Function or Use** *Enter categories (codes and terms) from the Iowa Site Inventory Form Instructions*

A) Historic functions

02B03: COMMERCE/TRADE / law office

B) Current functions

02B03: COMMERCE/TRADE / law office

• **Description** *Enter categories (codes and terms) from the Iowa Site Inventory Form Instructions*

A) Architectural classification

05B: LATE VICTORIAN / Italianate

B) Materials

Foundation (visible exterior): 04C: Limestone

Walls (visible exterior): 03: Brick

Roof: 15C: Rubber

Other: _____

C) Narrative description *SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS, WHICH MUST BE COMPLETED*

• **Statement of Significance**

A) Applicable National Register Criteria: *Mark your opinion of eligibility after applying relevant National Register criteria*

- Criterion A: Property is associated with significant events. Yes No More research recommended
Criterion B: Property is associated with the lives of significant persons. Yes No More research recommended
Criterion C: Property has distinctive architectural characteristics. Yes No More research recommended
Criterion D: Property yields significant information in archaeology/history. Yes No More research recommended

B) Special criteria considerations: *Mark any special considerations; leave blank if none*

- A: Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes. E: A reconstructed building, object, or structure.
 B: Removed from its original location. F: A commemorative property.
 C: A birthplace or grave. G: Property less than 50 years of age or
 D: A cemetery achieved significance within the past 50 years.

C) Areas of significance

Enter categories from instructions

05: Commerce

02: Architecture

D) Period(s) of significance

E) Significant dates

Construction date

1886 *check if circa or estimated date*

Other dates, including renovations

1905, 1969

F) Significant person

Complete if Criterion B is marked above

G) Cultural affiliation

Complete if Criterion D is marked above

H) Architect/Builder

Architect

Builder/contractor

I) Narrative statement of significance **SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS, WHICH MUST BE COMPLETED**

• **Bibliography** *See continuation sheets for the list research sources used in preparing this form*

• **Geographic Data** *Optional UTM references* *See continuation sheet for additional UTM or comments*

Zone	Easting	Northing	NAD	Zone	Easting	Northing	NAD
1				2			
3				4			

• **Form Preparation**

Name and Title: Rebecca Lawin McCarley / research by Deb Savage & Pat White Date: March 25, 2024

Organization/firm: SPARK Consulting / Mt Pleasant HPC E-mail: sparkconsulting@octaspark.com

Street address: 1630 Park Ave SE Telephone: 319-200-9767

City or Town: Cedar Rapids State: IA Zip code: 52403

• **ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION** *Submit the following items with the completed form*

A) For all properties, attach the following, as specified in the Iowa Site Inventory Form Instructions:

- 1. Map** of property's location within the community.
- 2. Glossy color 4x6 photos labeled** on back with property/building name, address, date taken, view shown, and unique photo number.
- 3. Photo key showing each photo number on a map and/or floor plan, using arrows next to each photo number to indicate the location and directional view of each photograph.**
- 4. Site plan** of buildings/structures on site, identifying boundaries, public roads, and building/structure footprints.

B) For State Historic Tax Credit Part 1 Applications, historic districts and farmsteads, and barns:

See lists of special requirements and attachments in the Iowa Site Inventory Form Instructions.

State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) Use Only Below This Line

The SHPO has reviewed the Site Inventory and concurs with above survey opinion on National Register eligibility:

- Yes No More research recommended
 This is a locally designated property or part of a locally designated district.

Comments: _____

SHPO authorized signature: _____ Date: _____

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7. Narrative Description

The east portion of this one-story brick building was constructed as a law office in 1886, with a brick addition to the west in 1905 and a frame connector addition to its west in 1969. The original building was constructed as a law office, with an entry with transom, single window, and double window. The openings have segmental brick arch lintels and stone sills. The current windows are replacement vinyl windows that maintain the proportion of the upper smaller sash and lower larger sash. The east elevation is the side of the original building, with has a visible stone foundation and "G.C. Van Allen 1886" cornerstone. This side has two segmental arch windows that match the façade, with a small segmental arch opening above the east window at the attic level. Star tie rods are visible on this side. The 1905 brick addition to the west has two double windows, which reflect the details of the east double window on the original building. The wide cornice with fan brackets was continued across this addition, matching the original building. This cornice was then continued across the space to the west, which was infilled with a frame connector addition in 1969. The wall of this addition is set back from the brick building, perhaps intended to provide space for the oriel window on this section. The addition is clad in vertical wood siding, and the oriel window has later vinyl windows installed.

8. Narrative Statement of Significance

The Van Allen Building appears to be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places as a contributing building within the potential Mount Pleasant Downtown Historic District. The building contributes to the historic commercial character of the downtown, and it reflects the period of downtown development in the 1880s. A law office has operated in this location across from the courthouse from completion of the building in 1886 to the present. Several members of the Van Allen family practiced here, followed by Thomas F. Bell. Thomas J. Vilsack also practiced here in later years, prior to becoming governor of Iowa. The building retains sufficient integrity to convey its significance as a historic commercial building in a historic district.

Based on research and evaluation conducted to date, this building appears to be potentially individually eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The Van Allen family, consisting of three generations of attorneys, are prominent local residents associated with this building. Further research and assessment of the interior features and modifications would be required for a full evaluation of the individual eligibility of the building.

Developmental history of property

The east portion of this one-story brick building was constructed as a law office in 1886, with the west half then built for the law office in 1905.

Omar V. Stough owned all of the S 20' of lot 4 block 10 at the time of the fire on October 2, 1883: The corner building, owned by Omer Stough, was the first to catch from the burning stable. The fire spreading from this, both eastward and westward, swept every thing in its course. J. R. Lippman, who occupied the Stough building, with his bakery and confectionary, saved part of his stock, but lost all his household furniture in the rooms above, which he was occupying as a dwelling... Omer

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Stough's loss on the building is estimated at \$3,000, insurance \$2,500. Theodore Fort, butcher, the owner and occupant of the old Dawson building, also owner of the stable where the fire was supposed to have originated, lost heavily... G.C. Van Allen, books &c, loss \$100... No insurance. (Excerpts, *Mount Pleasant Journal*, October 4, 1883, page 3).

O.V. Stough immediately began clearing the site to rebuild: "His new building will run back twenty-four feet farther than the old, with pressed brick front..." (*The Free Press*, October 18, 1883, page 3). By November 1, O.V. Stough had the brick work on his building nearly done... (*The Free Press*, November 1, 1883, page 3). As O.V. Stough was a brick mason and contractor, he was both owner and builder of this corner building, as well as several other buildings on the east side of the square after the fire. work was done by O.V. Stough, other than H.L. Timmerman building (*Mt Pleasant Journal*, December 13, 1883, 2). With the main building completed at the corner, O.V. Stough then extended the building further to the east. The newspaper noted in August 1884: "O.V. Stough has the foundations laid for a new business house at the east end of his block on the southeast corner of the square" (*The Free Press*, August 28, 1884, page 3). This building, or addition, is a 26-foot width along E. Washington on the east side of the corner building. While it was owned in conjunction with the corner building for several years, it is currently owned in conjunction with the property on the east portion of this lot.

In November 1884: "Van Allen has moved his abstract office into Stough's new building opposite the courthouse. Enter by the second stairway, the one at the end of the building" (*The Free Press*, November 6, 1884, page 3).

On 10 November 1885, O.V. Stough sells the E 23' of the S 20' of lot 4 to G.C. Van Allen (Transfer Book "B", page 2).

In 1886, the new one-story brick building for George C. Van Allen was completed: "One of the novel improvements of our city recently is the new fire proof, brick abstract office of Geo. G. (sic.) Van Allen. Mr. Van Allen has felt the necessity of a fire proof building to keep his record books in for some time, especially since the fire in the Ambler block, which burned up some of his most valuable records which he has been compelled to duplicate at great cost of work and time. He has located his new building on the east end of the lot just across from the court house, north, and built it with arched brick ceiling so no fire can get to his books, should the entire roof burn off. His office is convenient to the court house, is on the first floor and is a model of convenience and neatness, as is all the work done or designed by Mr. Van Allen. As an abstracter Iowa has few men, if any, the superior of Mr. Van Allen, and we are glad he has got the records of his many years of careful searching in a position where they will be reasonably secure from fire, and his office especially convenient for himself and his customers. (*Mount Pleasant Journal*, Thursday, July 29, 1886).

According to the 1886 Sanborn fire insurance map, the building at the corner of Main and Washington was a two-story brick building. To the east of the corner building, facing Washington and abutting the alley was this small, 1-story, brick office building. The office building has an address of #108 Washington. The 1892 Sanborn fire insurance map shows the same footprint for the building at the corner of Main and Washington as the previous map. The small, 1-story, brick office building to the east, at the alley, has an address of 108/130 E Washington. The 1899 Sanborn fire insurance map shows the small, 1-story, brick office building at the alley with the same footprint and an address of 130 E Washington.

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The 1893 Mt. Pleasant City Directory lists George C. Van Allen, Abstracts, 113 E Washington. A biography of George C. Van Allen was included in *Progressive Men of Iowa*, published in Des Moines in 1899. He was listed as a prominent business man of Mt Pleasant, who moved to town in the 1860s and engaged in compiling records for the examination of titles. His son, Alfred M. Van Allen, was born in October 1869, educated at Iowa Wesleyan, and graduated from the law school of the State University of Iowa in June 1894. He then started his law practice in Mt Pleasant. George C. Van Allen died on September 4, 1902.

On 25 September 1903, George A. Stough and wife, via quit claim deed, transfer their undivided interest in the W 127' of the S 20' of lot 4 to Minnie Yerxa and Lottie Stough. On 23 December 1903, Minnie & H.R. Yerxa and Lottie V. Stough sell the W 104' of S 20' to R.S. Galer for \$4,200. They then on the same day sell the W 23' of the E 46' of S 20' to A.M. Van Allen for \$250 (Transfer Book "B", page 20). With the building inherited from his father, A.M. Van Allen then owned the east 46' of Lot 4.

In April 1905, the *Mt. Pleasant Daily News* noted: "Mr. A.M. Van Allen has begun the erection of an addition to his abstract office, which will occupy the small tract of ground between his present office and the rear of the Galer building. When completed, Mr. Van Allen will have a model office" (*Mt. Pleasant Daily News*, April 19, 1905, page 4). A.M. Van Allen, Attorney-at-Law, successor to G.C. Van Allen, advertised at the old Van Allen office, opposite the Court House, in May 1905 (*The Free Press*, May 18, 1905, page 2). Work was then started in May on the addition, which would contain a safety vault for his abstract books (*The Free Press*, May 25, 1905, page 4). In September 1905: "Mr. A.M. Van Allen's new office will be the handsomest and best-appointed law office in this part of Iowa" (*Mt. Pleasant Daily News*, September 18, 1905, page 4).

The 1909 Sanborn fire insurance map shows one-story, brick office building at the alley is now double in size with an addition to the west, with an opening between the two sections. There is a small vacant space between the west end of this building and the rear of the corner building.

The 1911-1912 Henry County Directory advertises A.M. Van Allen (Loans, Lawyer and Abstractor of Titles) at the southeast corner of the square. Telephone directories from 1913 to 1937 lists the law office of A.M. Van Allen at 113 E Washington.

The 1920 and 1942 Sanborn fire insurance maps show the same footprint for the 1-story, brick office building at the alley. The address is 107-109 E Washington on the map.

The 1938 city directory likewise lists Van Allen & Van Allen at 107 E. Washington St. The 1939 and 1944 telephone directories then list the address shifted back to 113 E. Washington St. Alfred M. Van Allen died on September 23, 1945. His son George O. Van Allen continued the firm.

On 28 May 1945, R.S. Galer and Laura B. Galer sell the E 38' of the W 104' of lot 4 to Wayne T. Garretson (Transfer Book "1", page 12). This is the two-story rear 1884 section of the corner building.

Van Allen & Van Allen, Attorneys (George O. Van Allen) appear in the 1948 telephone directory with a 113 E. Washington St address, which remains the same for 1950 and 1952, shifts to 107 in 1955, and makes a final shift to the current address of 111 E. Washington St in 1957. In 1958, when George O. Van Allen

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left the practice of law to go on the bench of the Twentieth Judicial District. He is then listed as a District Judge of Henry County with an office at 207 S. Van Buren.

In June 1958, Thomas F. Bell moved his law office from the second story above Crane's Hardware on the east side of the square to the Van Allen building, across from the court house ("Change of Location," *Mount Pleasant News*, June 5, 1958, page 2).

On 4 May 1959, the Wayne T. Garretson Estate changes title in the E 38' of the W 104' of lot 4 to Ann F. Garretson, and on 7 May 1959, Ann F. Garretson, widow, sells the E 38' of the W 104' of lot 4 to Thomas F. Bell (Transfer Book "2", page 11). Thus, Thomas F. Bell owned the rear two-story 1884 section of the corner building to the west with an address of 105 E. Washington and the vacant space between the two buildings.

Thomas F. Bell, Attorney, is listed in Mt. Pleasant city directories throughout the 1960s at 111 E Washington.

On 30 November 1965, Alma E. Van Allen (unmarried), sells the W 4' of the E 46' of the S 20' of lot 4 to Thomas F. Bell. On 14 May 1969, Alma E. Van Allen (unmarried) sells the E 42' of the S 20' of lot 4 to Thomas F. Bell, according to the last will and testament of A.M. Van Allen (Transfer Book "2", page 11). Thus, Thomas F. Bell owned the one-story building in 1969, as well as the vacant space to the west and rear two-story section of the corner building. With the sale, the *Mount Pleasant News* noted: "Tom Bell, local attorney, who has occupied the building for the past 11 years, has purchased the Van Allen Law Office building. The building was used as a law office by three generations of Van Allens – George C. Van Allen, A.M. Van Allen and the late George O. Van Allen. In 1958, when George O. Van Allen left the practice of law to go on the bench of the Twentieth Judicial District, Bell moved his practice into the building ("Bell Purchases Van Allen Building," *Mount Pleasant News*, May 21, 1969, page 1).

Tom Bell then remodeled the building and constructed the small addition between the two buildings. The vacant space had swinging wood door, and it was used for trash/boxes/etc. Bell hired Stephens and Stoltz, architects from Ottumwa, to combine the two buildings into one with a small addition. The original office just had two rooms. Connecting the two buildings provided a waiting room, a reception/work area, records room, and a vault for holding legal documents. Additional offices were created for three lawyers and two secretaries. George Nuding, a local carpenter, created a beautiful fireplace from cherry wood that Bell owned for the law library. An additional room upstairs could be used as a bedroom/bath (Christie Bell Vilsack 2024).

With efforts to improve buildings and restore them to a turn-of-century appearance, the buildings were sandblasted in 1975, completed prior to the work on the Chamber building to the west in November (Jaynes 1976: 162; *Mt Pleasant News*, November 20, 1975, HCHT clippings). The bay window was found on the frame addition by this date. The faux wood shutters were likely added at the same time.

Thomas F. Bell (1915-1998) conducted a law practice in this building into the 1990s. Thomas F. Bell's son-in-law, Thomas J. Vilsack, practiced law in this office from around 1976 to 1993. The 1986 city directory lists the office of Bell & Vilsack at 111 E. Washington St. Vilsack would become Mayor of Mt. Pleasant (1986), an Iowa State Senator, Governor of Iowa, and eventually the Secretary of Agriculture in the United States, an office he currently in 2024 holds.

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The 2001 city directory lists Bell & Bray Law Office at 111 E. Washington St. The 2011 city directory lists the same firm.

The building is owned by Danny L. and April D. Cornell, who purchased it in December 2015 from Richard J. Bell and Ann Christine & Thomas James Vilsack.

This 1-story, brick building located at 111 East Washington is currently occupied by Cornell Injury Law, a law firm owned and operated by Danny Cornell.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Biographical Review of Henry County, Iowa. Chicago, IL: Hobart Publishing Company, 1906.

Building and sign permits, City of Mount Pleasant, Iowa

City and telephone directories, Mt Pleasant:

Bowron, Watson. *Henry County Directory for 1859-60.* Burlington, IA: Watson Bowron, 1859.

Annawalt & Lawrence's Bi-ennial Mt Pleasant Directory. Burlington, IA: Hawk-Eye Steam Printing House, 1867.

Annewalt, E.H., compiler. *Mount Pleasant City Directory.* Burlington: Daily Gazette, 1870.

Mount Pleasant City Directory for 1893. Mt. Pleasant, IA: Francis D. Craig, 1893.

Mason, George T. *Directory of Henry County, Iowa, 1911-12.* Mt. Pleasant, IA: The News, 1911.

Mount Pleasant Telephone Company. Telephone directories issued in 1913, 1915, 1918, 1921, 1925, 1927, 1937, 1939, 1944, 1948, 1950, 1952.

Groce, W.H. *The City Directory of Mt. Pleasant, Iowa.* Mt Pleasant: Groce, 1938.

Johnson Publishing Co. *Mt Pleasant, Iowa.* City directories issued in 1955, 1957, 1960, 1964, 1966, 1968, 1970, 1873, 1976, 1981, 1986, 1993, 2001, 2011. Manitowoc, WI: Johnson Publishing Co.

Cornerstones. Mt Pleasant: Mt. Pleasant Beautiful Committee, 1991.

Henry County Bicentennial Commission (HCBC). *The History of Henry County.* Dallas, TX: National ShareGraphics, Inc., 1982.

Henry County Historical Society. Vertical files and albums in files at Mt Pleasant Public Library.

Henry County Heritage Trust. Collection of historic images, in files and posted in Facebook albums. Collection in former Saunders School, Mount Pleasant, Iowa.

Henry County Recorder's Office / Henry County Auditor's Office. Property records, transfer books, and deed records. Henry County Courthouse, Mt Pleasant, Iowa

History of Henry County, Iowa. Chicago: Western Historical Company, 1879.

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Koch, Augustus. *Birds-Eye View of the City of Mount Pleasant, Henry County, Iowa*. Chicago, IL: Merchants Lithographing Co, 1869. In collection of Henry County Heritage Trust and Mount Pleasant Public Library, Mount Pleasant, Iowa.

Mount Pleasant Beautiful. Mt Pleasant: Mt Pleasant News Company, 1909. Reprint issued in 1988.

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Naumann, Molly Myers. *Architectural and Historical Resources of Mount Pleasant, IA*. National Register of Historic Places Multiple Documentation Form, May 1991. On file with the State Historic Preservation Office, Des Moines, IA.

Portrait and Biographical Album of Henry County, Iowa. Chicago: Acme Publishing Co., 1888.

Sanborn Map Company. *Mount Pleasant, Iowa*. Fire insurance maps for 1886, 1892, 1899, 1909, 1920, 1942. Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division, Sanborn Maps Collection.

Vilsack, Christie (Bell), Washington D.C., to Pat White, Mt Pleasant, email, March 27, 2024.

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Location map



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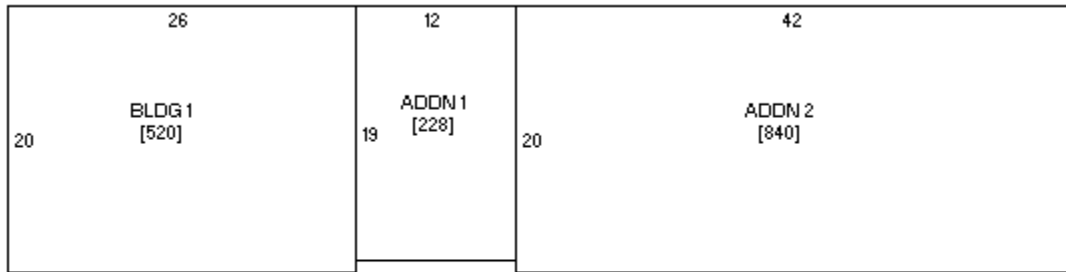
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Building footprint

rear of corner building (1884) 1969 addition 1905 addition original 1886 building



Sketch by www.camavision.com

Henry County Assessor (<https://beacon.schneidercorp.com>)

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Historic images



Van Allen building in 1890s, prior to west addition (HCHT Facebook album)

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Van Allen building in 1960s (HCHT Facebook album)

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View from courthouse across E. Washington to Van Allen building in early 1960s (HCHT Facebook album)

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Building in July 1965, looking northwest from Washington St (HCHT collection)

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New look for Chamber

The large cloud of dust at the corner of Main and Washington is the product of the face-lifting job being done at the Mt. Pleasant Chamber of Commerce building. The building has

had an outside stairway removed, an inside stairway installed and is being sandblasted. Work is expected to be completed by the end of November.

Building at right in November 1975 (*Mt Pleasant News*, November 20, 1975, HCHT clippings)

sandblasted in 1975 prior to this date, addition with bay window visible

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1990 survey photograph (Naumann 1991)

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Digital photographs



Photograph 44-00414-001. South elevation, looking northwest (October 2023)

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Photograph 44-00414-002. East elevation, looking west (October 2023)

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Photograph 44-00414-003. Corner stone on east elevation, looking west (October 2023)