

IOWA SITE INVENTORY

Division of Historic Preservation
Iowa State Historical Department
26 E. Market St., Iowa City, Iowa 52240

MAY 29 1981

JUL - 2 1981

Site Number 62-028-001
District Name _____
Map Reference # 62-028-001
Topo Map Oskaloosa 1:24,000

IDENTIFICATION

1. Site Name Mahaska County Courthouse
2. Village/Town/City Oskaloosa Township _____ County Mahaska
3. Street Address Northwest corner of Market and 2nd Avenue
4. Legal Location OT 19 3 & 4
Urban: subdivision block parcel
Rural: township range section
1/4 section-1/4 section
5. UTM Location: zone 15 easting 529890 northing 4571360; Acreage less than 1 ac
6. Owner(s) Name Mahaska County Board of Supervisors
7. Owner(s) Address Courthouse Oskaloosa Iowa 52577
(Street address) (City) (State) (Zip)
8. Use: present Courthouse original Courthouse

DESCRIPTION

9. Date of Construction 1881-86 Architect/Builder H.C. Koch & Co., Architects
O.J. King Co. & John Volk, Bldrs
10. Building Type: single family dwelling multiple family dwelling commercial
 industrial educational other institutional public religious agricultural
11. Exterior Walls: clapboard stone brick board & batten shingles stucco
 other _____
12. Structural System: wood frame with interlocking joints
 wood frame with light members (balloon frame) masonry load-bearing walls
 iron frame steel frame with curtain walls reinforced concrete
 other _____
13. Condition: excellent good fair deteriorated
14. Integrity: original site moved-if so, when? _____
Notes on alterations, additions (with dates and architect, if known) and any other notable features of building and site:
Tower lowered and entrance reworked 1934- aluminum sash windows.
15. Related Outbuildings and Property: barn other farm structures
 carriage house garage privy other _____
16. Is the building endangered? no yes-if so, why? _____
17. Surroundings of the building: open land woodland scattered outbuildings
 densely built-up commercial industrial residential other _____

18. Map

19. Photo

Roll _____ Frame _____ View _____

SIGNIFICANCE (Indicate sources of information for all statements)

20. Architectural Significance

- a. Key structure/individually may qualify for the National Register
- b. Contributing structure c. Not eligible/intrusion

A courthouse in the Victorian Romanesque style. Stone belt courses at lintel and impost level of each floor and wide facades into horizontal zones, in contrast with verticality produced by parapetted gables rising above the cornice line. The 1934 tower and entrance remodeling is Art Deco in style. The tower, in particular, produces an odd effect.

21. Historical Significance

Theme(s) Politics/Government

- a. Key structure/individually may qualify for the National Register
- b. Contributing structure c. Not eligible/intrusion

This courthouse is locally significant as the historical focus of county government, and of the political power and prestige derived from the community's status as the county seat. As center of county government, an Iowa town was reasonably assured of economic and population growth, and a prominent role in local social and political life. The county courthouse represents a significant public investment in a structure built not simply for utilitarian purposes, but also as a monument associated with the historical importance of county organization and development.

See Continuation Sheet

22. Sources (for primary and secondary sources, give complete facts of publication: author, title, place of publication, date, etc.):

- Andreas, A.T. Illustrated Historical Atlas of Iowa. Chicago: Andreas Atlas Co., 1875.
- Pratt, LeRoy G. The Counties and Courthouses of Iowa. Mason City, Iowa: Klipto Printing and Office Supply Co., 1977.
- Stanek, Edward and Jacqueline. Iowa's Magnificent County Courthouses. Des Moines: Wallace-Homestead Book Co., 1976.

Prepared by _____ Date January, 1980
 Address _____ Telephone _____
 Organization DHP

FOR DIVISION OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION USE ONLY

I. OFFICE INFORMATION SOURCES ON THIS PROPERTY

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> COUNTY RESOURCE FILE | <input type="checkbox"/> REVIEW AND COMPLIANCE PROJECT: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> WINDSHIELD SURVEY | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> NATIONAL REGISTER | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> GRANTS-IN-AID: _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER _____ |

2. SUBJECT TRACES

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____
- e. _____

3. PHOTO IMAGES 107/3-4, 257/2 & 4,
248/4, 9-12, 336/13 335/7-12

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CONTINUATION SHEET

Item Number(s) _____

MAHASKA COUNTY

Mahaska County is only able to boast of the exploits and ventures involved in the erection of two courthouses. The first structure was built during the winter of 1844-1845. Town lots were sold and the law had established that the proceeds from such sale could be used only for erecting a courthouse and jail. Settlers assembled and in a festive manner raised the timbers that were to serve as a superstructure. The two-story frame courthouse, measuring 28 by 50 feet, had its courtroom on the first floor and offices on the second. Comfortable benches were provided in the courtroom to seat congregations for church services and audiences for operas. During the winter of 1848 and 1849, an Indian dance was held to acquaint the people of Oskaloosa with a domestic yet foreign culture.

The courtroom was not used by the county after 1855. The old courthouse was leased for various commercial purposes until it was sold in 1867 for \$3,800. The building was moved to a new location and dubbed "Oskaloosa House" by some and "Noe's Ark" by others. The ground which it formerly occupied was used to build a savings bank in 1876.

The question of a new courthouse was raised several times in the interest of saving county records from the ravages of fire. An issue bonded the county for \$75,000 in order to construct a new county building. A tax would have been associated with the provision in order to pay back the bonds. The measure lost by a vote of 2,866 to 995. The money which would have gone for interest on the bonds was instead used to rent office space in various parts of town.

The present courthouse is over three stories tall and is made of brick which rests upon a stone foundation. It is built on what used to be the north half of the east side of the Oskaloosa public park. The building cost the county \$132,500 and was dedicated on February 27, 1886.

--from Stanek, Edward, and Jacqueline Stanek,
Iowa's Magnificent County Courthouses. Des
Moines: Wallace-Homestead Book Co., 1976.