

JUL - 2 1981

# IOWA SITE INVENTORY

MAY 29 1981

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

Site Number 42-009-001  
District Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Map Reference # 42-009-001  
Topo Map Waterloo NK 1:250,000

## IDENTIFICATION

1. Site Name Hardin County Courthouse
2. Village/Town/City Eldora Township \_\_\_\_\_ County Hardin
3. Street Address Edgington Ave. between Washington and 12th Streets
4. Legal Location OT 12  
Urban: subdivision block parcel subparcel  
Rural: township range range section 1/4 section-1/4 section
5. UTM Location: zone 15 easting 492100 northing 4689400; Acreage less than 1 ac
6. Owner(s) Name Hardin County Board of Supervisors
7. Owner(s) Address Courthouse Eldora, Iowa 50627  
(Street address) (City) (State) (Zip)
8. Use: present Courthouse original Courthouse

## DESCRIPTION

9. Date of Construction 1892 Architect/Builder T.D. Allen, Architect  
J.F. Atkinson, Builder
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:  
Aluminum windows and entrance doors.
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

This is a very fine Victorian Romanesque courthouse, richly detailed on the exterior. Note modified Gibbs surrounds on windows, checkerboard patterning in brick and rockfaced stone, the large entrance arch on short, tripled columns, and grouping of statues in a short of bowl about half-way up the tall, slender clock tower.

**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**

**1. OFFICE INFORMATION SOURCES ON THIS PROPERTY**

COUNTY RESOURCE FILE

WINDSHIELD SURVEY

NATIONAL REGISTER

GRANTS-IN-AID: \_\_\_\_\_

DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY

REVIEW AND COMPLIANCE PROJECT:

OTHER \_\_\_\_\_

OTHER \_\_\_\_\_

OTHER \_\_\_\_\_

**2. SUBJECT TRACES**

**3. PHOTO IMAGES** 105/1, 363/34-36,  
577/1-4

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_

d. \_\_\_\_\_

e. \_\_\_\_\_

**CONTINUATION SHEET**

Item Number(s) \_\_\_\_\_

**HARDIN COUNTY**

Hardin County had been attached to Marshall County for revenue and judicial purposes until it was duly organized in February, 1853. Eldora was picked as the county seat, and John Shepherd was the recipient of the first county warrant amounting to \$20, in payment for his services as the surveyor in laying out the town.

The first county courthouse was a two-story frame building erected in 1856. In October of that same year it was destroyed by fire and a new courthouse was built in 1857. At about this time, an effort was organized to move the county seat to Point Pleasant. A vote was taken but the results were contested, sending the matter into litigation. After ten years, the Supreme Court finally decided in favor of Eldora in June, 1868.

The board of supervisors in office during 1871, were in for a surprise gift. Records from that year indicate the following resolution:

“Resolved, by the Board of Supervisors, in behalf of the taxpayers of Hardin county, that we tender our thanks to the citizens of Eldora, for the free and public gift of Court House and grounds to Hardin county, which can, by proper repairs, be made suitable for use of county for several years.”

But few other details can be found relating to the structure discussed in the quotation above. In spite of that secrecy kept by history, a new courthouse was built in 1892, for \$48,000. The structure is quite large, comprising nearly a city block in Eldora. It is made of brick with a large amount of stone to dress up the windows, entryways, and foundation. A number of gables, towers, and turrets make the roofline very interesting. Statues sit in a cove above the north entryway and below the clock. In 1968, a contract for remodeling and restoration of the ageing structure was let by the county. The building was basically sound except for some wooden joints and masonry which were replaced by steel and concrete. The floors were sagging, and cracks in every corner of the rotunda dome were large enough to accommodate one's fingers. The only area which remained untouched by the remodeling work was the oak woodwork in the rotunda area. A \$375,000 price tag was put on the remodeling project. As a result, the exterior of the three-story courthouse can be enjoyed now as it was in 1892.

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